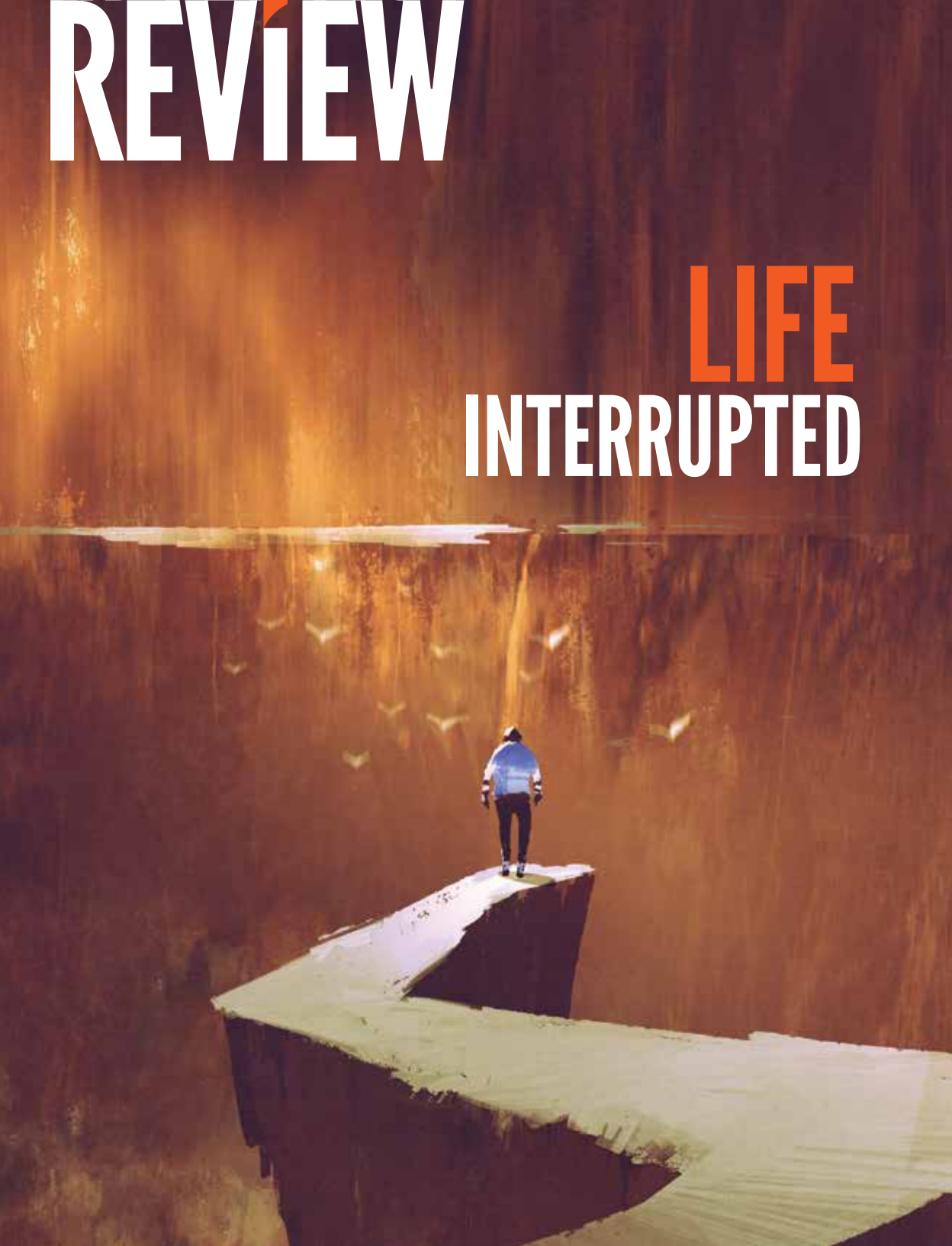


# ADVENTIST REVIEW

**JUNE 2023: WHEN HEARTS ARE BREAKING + IN THE  
FLAMES + WHEN GRIEF IS YOUR COMPANION +  
RESCUED FROM THE QUARRY + DEVELOPING YOUR  
COURAGE CAPACITY**

## LIFE INTERRUPTED





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

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

—Rachel  
Kyaka II Refugee Settlement  
UGANDA

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to watch  
Rachel's story!





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# TRENDING

THE MOST SHARED  
STORIES ON  
ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG  
LAST MONTH:

1



About 600 Attend Fourth Gulf Field Pathfinder Camporee

2



Sanitarium Celebrates 125 Years of Serving Healthy Food Choices

3



She Was Fired. Then She Was Called Back to Explain Her Faith

4



Five Adventist Summer Camps Listed Among the Best in the U.S.

5



Always the Victim



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JUSTIN KIM



*When there was no hope, it was the  
Written Word that dwelled in the  
mind of the Living Word.*

## The Cup and the Cry

They sang a hymn. They walked through the streets under the night light of a full moon. We know, because it was Passover. It was, most likely, quiet. Exhausted pilgrims were coming from all over the empire; sleep was heavy for everyone. The disciples crossed a valley and climbed small foothills called the “Oil Press” Olive Orchard, pronounced *geth-say-ma-ni*. Jesus had taught there many times before, but this night Peter, James, and John noticed His silence.

“And He was withdrawn from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, ‘Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done’” (Luke 22:41, 42).

Socrates, with a philosopher’s dignity, drank the poisonous cup of hemlock; martyrs rejoiced in song while dying; soldiers envisioned glorious deaths in the midst of battle; mystics embraced pain and suffering.

Why, though, did Jesus desire to avoid this cup?

Furthermore, the word *agonia* paints a mental struggle, anguish, a wrestling match; so much so that hematohidrosis—the blood of His capillaries bursting into His sweat pores—occurred (verse 44).

The wrath of God was seated in this cup (Job 21:20; Isa. 51:17, 22; Jer. 25:15; Eze. 23:28-34; Hab. 2:16; John 18:10, 11; Rev. 14:9, 10; 16:19). Is the God of love even capable of wrath? Of course, God’s wrath is not human wrath. We must not abuse our picture of God by imposing the worst human temper tantrum upon Him. He is not a cruel emperor or an abusive parent. Rather, perfect love necessitates perfect devotion to righteousness, as well as perfect hatred against unrighteousness. Wrath is merely another word for perfect justice. A perfect emperor or parent must hate any threat that endangers his/her subjects or children, respectively. To love that threat would signal perversity.

To save humanity, Jesus was alienated from the Father and took upon Him the consequences of sin: full separation from God. Yet Jesus could not bear the thought of this type of grief, suffering, and absence (Isa. 53:4-6). *If it is possible, Lord, remove this from me!* How many of us have prayed this prayer? We look for sympathy when going through some difficult times. But Jesus had none to look to—His own disciples were blissfully snoring and dreaming.

Christ’s agony is apexed at the cross when He cried out the first

verse of Psalm 22: “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Crying in despair and loneliness, Jesus was met only with more silence from heaven: no dove, no voice, no light. He had only the words of the psalm to meditate through—assurance that God had led in the past (verses 3-5); empathy through the prophecy of His shame, rejection, and ridicule (verses 6-8); awe of how the cross experience was foreshadowed (verses 14, 17, 18); help in the form of intercessory prayers (verses 11, 19-21); and the comfort of seeing the results of His sacrifice by faith (verses 24-31). Amazingly, the last phrase of Psalm 22:31 can also be translated from Hebrew as “it is finished” (John 19:30). When there was no hope, it was the Written Word that dwelled in the mind of the Living Word.

Love sent Christ to die and become sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21). Love kept Him on the cross to experience the separation of sin, wrath, and justice of God. Love caused Christ to see beyond His suffering, His death, the Resurrection, to the hope of seeing His friends, God’s children, the church, Christ’s disciples, His people—all saved. ♣

## DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES

What a delight it was to peruse the May issue of *Adventist Review* just received and to read the fine reports on Adventist education! Having spent a lifetime as a consumer and provider of Adventist education, I was gratified to see differing perspectives of our educational system. I was reminded of the Christ-centeredness of our mission, the need to include homeschoolers in our offerings, and the wonders of starting a school from scratch. It was heartwarming to see the innovations and technologies taking place. I especially enjoyed the advice suggesting little or no homework. Indoor school days are long enough for emerging minds. A change of activities after a long day of work is good for all of us.

**Kelly B. Bock**

*Beaumont, California*



## A ROAD MAP FOR SCHOOL PLANTING

I just want you to know that my wife and I thoroughly enjoyed this article by Bill Knott [“The (School) Room Where It Happened”]. Kudos to Kevin and Karey Messina for what they did to reopen Ocala Adventist Academy. Opening a school takes a lot of hard work, but ultimately it pays off in many blessings to the students and families involved.

Back in 1972 my wife and I had the opportunity to open an elementary school at the Coldwater, Michigan, Adventist Church. It took a lot of work to

prepare this school to open for business. We were very fortunate to have the support of the local church leaders and Ken Hutchins, the educational superintendent of the Michigan Conference at the time. I can absolutely assure you that without this level of support, teachers would not be able to do what they need to do for the benefit of their students.

I would like to support the concept of developing a “field guide” mentioned on page 35. This would be an excellent road map for “school planting.”

Thanks to the church members who go out of their way to support

their schoolteachers. The ones who ultimately benefit from that type of support are the students.

**Peter and Linda Peabody**

*Riverside, California*

## REFRESHING AND SATISFYING

The April 2023 issue was one of the more interesting and informative journals that have come from the Adventist denomination. The articles address real-life issues along with reasonable suggestions and helpful solutions to real-world challenges. Kudos to Editor Justin Kim!

Specifically, “Manna From the Web” offered a realistic report on one person’s response to what is a challenge to congregations and organizations around the world. I and others have been concerned that the Adventist Church remained largely silent despite the impact platforms such as Zoom have had on the local church. Ivor Myers has opened a unique response that sets forth a viable option to the situation congregations and organizations face.

“Faithful Through the Lens” I found to be an interesting and thoughtful response to a variety of photo-ready situations and how the resulting photo can sway humans’ thoughts and emotions. Creativity is an amazing gift that, when applied to situations for the purpose of inspiration,



“My church is emptier than ever and I pray for it to be filled again and running over.”

— MARJORIE PLUMLEY

results in an inspiring and thoughtful canvas.

In “More Social, Less Social” the author is on the mark when noting that “something is wrong.” There is more one might identify as pertinent to the situations that we find in the parish and society but that are often ignored or glossed over in Adventist journals. It is refreshing and satisfying to note that there are, within this journal, articles that demonstrate integrity, creativity, and application to real-life situations.

**Lawrence (Larry) Downing**

#### **PRAYER BRINGS CONSOLATION**

I was touched by the article in the April issue of *Adventist Review*, “Prayer Amid Doubt,” by Debbie Howell. As a minister, preaching and prayer have been a part of my life. Jesus was constantly in prayer with His Father; Paul challenges us to pray without ceasing; Isaiah invites us to seek God; and Ellen White admonishes us to talk to God as to a friend. Debbie opened new horizons when we suffer pain and

doubt His love. Read the Bible and pray with Christian music. She says that “prayer is meant to be a beautiful journey of revelation and healing.” I’ve lost many relatives and friends, but the recent loss of my companion of 67 years was the hardest. The cards and the calls brought comfort, but as Machado de Assis, a Brazilian writer, says: “Prayer was the ladder of Jacob ascending to God my supplications and also bringing down the divine consolations.” That was my experience when ministers and friends prayed with me.

**Leo Ranzolin, Sr.**  
*Estero, Florida*

#### **MORE SOCIAL, LESS SOCIAL**

I believe this article by Jared Thurmon (“More Social, Less Social”) to be so true. A couple of non-Adventist friends told me that they are meeting with a group of about 70 for Bible study weekly and said that there are about 60 groups around our country that are meeting to study. One said she is also doing Bible

study online through Zoom. We long for the human touch and it’s working, but many wish they had the whole Adventist message for study. My church is emptier than ever, and I pray for it to be filled again and running over.

**Marjorie Plumley**

#### **STUNNINGLY BEAUTIFUL**

Praising God for the stunningly beautiful pair of stories presented in “At Any Cost,” the second being the everlasting gospel. Thank you, Brother Mato, for making yourself available to share this gift from God with us.

**Jeffrey Carl**

[FROM ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG](http://FROMADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG)

#### **A STEP TOO FAR**

I’ve always found it curious that my “neighbor” really expects me to listen to him, read his stuff, listen to his audio material, and watch his videos, but when I give him a one-liner, possibly as innocuous as “Jesus loves you!” I frequently get a response akin to “I’ve got my own church!” And therein is nested the all-absorbing response! I have come to realize, after more years than I’d like to think about, that we are learning every day and still have much learning—and searching—to do! O that we might be faithful! “Ready” is a state of being!

**Dan L. Kelly**

#### **YOUR TURN**

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

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**“Pathfinders are shining like a bright star in the United Arab Emirates and the Gulf.”**

**—Byard Parks, p. 12**

# NEWS



General Conference treasurer Paul H. Douglas shares his report at the 2023 Spring Meeting on April 10. PHOTO: ENNO MÜLLER

## GC TREASURER CALLS TO MOBILIZE MORE RESOURCES FOR MISSION

**PAUL H. DOUGLAS'S REPORT AT SPRING MEETING EMPHASIZES REALIGNMENT OF FUNDS.**

**ANAIS ANDERSON, ANN, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW**

In times we may consider as turbulent, in times we may consider as troubling, God is in control, and He will supply all that we need for us to do what He has called us to do,” Paul H. Douglas, treasurer of the General Conference (GC) of Seventh-day Adventists, said as he opened his April 10 report at the 2023 Spring Meeting, highlighting the strong financial position of the GC as of December 31, 2022.

Douglas’s report went on to emphasize how, despite prevailing negative economic conditions around the world, God continues to financially sustain His church for mission.

### RESOURCES FOR MISSION

Using the pre-COVID year of 2019 as a reference point for the last “normal” financial year, Douglas said that tithe income over the

past three years has consistently exceeded budgeted expectations except for the year 2020, which saw the biggest financial impact as a result of the pandemic. Nonetheless, the year 2021 saw an immediate rebound as tithe income surpassed the income received in the reference year of 2019 by \$1 million.

Offerings, too, have continued to exceed budgeted expectations, and in 2022 offerings were \$11 million more than the reference year of 2019, a direct result of increased support from church members everywhere. Undoubtedly, this increase allows the church to allocate funds to focus even more heavily on reaching “every nation, tribe, tongue, and people” with the everlasting gospel (Rev. 14:6), Douglas said.

Douglas pointed out the realization of the anticipated pattern of funding the General Conference and its activities from tithe (50 percent) and world mission offerings (50 percent) that is now evident owing “in large part to the generosity of our members to support our global mission and not just the local mission that is administered by the churches where they fellowship.”

### INVESTING IN MISSION

As Douglas reminded GC Executive Committee members of the church’s commitment to invest in mission, he recapped the changes in financial reporting announced during the treasurer’s report at the 2022 Annual Council. “As part of our

## “Mission Refocus is not a slogan. It’s about analysis, and it’s about action.”

—Paul Douglas

commitment to invest in mission, the new descriptions [on financial statements and reports] provide better information on how we are focusing the use of resources toward mission.”

Taking these new descriptions into consideration, Douglas reported that the year 2022 saw the majority of program expenses (43 percent) spent on mission strategy and support, clearly representing the church’s emphasis on supporting the mission and intentionally aligning its financial resources to focus on our calling as Seventh-day Adventists to proclaim the “gospel of the kingdom [to] . . . all the world as a witness to all the nations” (Matt. 24:14).

Douglas went on to discuss the current positive condition of available working capital and liquid assets, the biblically centered investment strategy of the church, and the remaining allocations of the extraordinary tithe fund, before turning to Ray Wahlen, undertreasurer, to report on the operating expense cap.

“This report is a testimony to the power of God and the faithfulness of Christian stewards around the world,” Wahlen said as he took the stage and addressed GC Executive Committee members to highlight the continued pattern of the General Conference to operate under the operating expense cap. Because of an increased tithe income of more than \$400 million above the budgeted amount, vacant positions

were filled, and cost-of-living increases for existing personnel were put into place.

### MOVING FORWARD WITH CONFIDENCE

While every division of the world church has reported increases in local currencies for tithe and offerings, and most have reported increases surpassing 2019 levels, we can be confident that God is in control, Wahlen said. Yet, though God continues to sustain His church as it engages in fulfilling the Great Commission, it is not immune to the economic turbulence facing the world around it.

Douglas reminded church leaders of five challenges the church is facing and will continue to face as the second coming of Jesus approaches. These include balancing growth and stability, ensuring sufficient working capital and liquidity, and moving toward higher levels of self-support. He also mentioned dealing with uncertainties because of geopolitical conflicts, currency volatility, and changes in regulatory environments. As a last item, he listed understanding paradigm shifts brought about by crisis events, new technologies, and changes in generational thinking.

Quoting from volume 9, page 9, of *Testimonies for the Church*, Douglas emphasized that as the church moves forward with a focus on mission, it must recognize that “the Lord desires to see the work of proclaiming the third angel’s message carried forward with increasing

efficiency. As He has worked in all ages to give victories to His people, so in this age He longs to carry to a triumphant fulfillment His purposes for His church.”

### MISSION REFOCUS

As he concluded, Douglas took the time to motivate and encourage church leaders everywhere to remain focused on the mission God has given for this time as they continue to move forward with placing every component of ministry under the umbrella and true emphasis of Mission Refocus.

This realignment includes assigning missionary personnel to move to the front lines of mission work; supporting the entry of church organizations into nonentered and low-entered places in the world; aligning financial resources toward mission impact; and establishing and applying a digital strategy that “facilitates the effective use of technology for mission.”

“Mission Refocus is not a slogan,” Douglas said. “It’s about analysis, and it’s about action. It’s not just about a set of criteria, but a culture of thinking to ensure that everything and everyone is aligned to the urgent and end-time mission for which God has called His church.”

Douglas challenged leaders to engage in the necessary critical thinking to make everything about mission. Besides simply analyzing, he called them to act. “As we go about this work, God is on our side! Let us be positive, let us be purposeful, and let us be prudent!”



Aquatics class at Sunset Lake Camp in Wilkeson, Washington  
PHOTO: SUNSET LAKE CAMP

## ADVENTIST SUMMER CAMPS LISTED AMONG THE BEST IN THE U.S.

FIVE ARE INCLUDED IN A *NEWSWEEK* LIST THAT CHOSE THE BEST 500 AMONG MORE THAN 12,000

MARCOS PASEGGI, *ADVENTIST REVIEW*

**F**ive summer camps managed by the Seventh-day Adventist Church are among the best in the United States, according to a recent list published by *Newsweek* magazine.

The weekly news publication partnered with Plant-A Insights Group to determine the 500 best summer camps in the U.S. from a list of more than 12,000 across the nation. The list, which does not create a ranking but is categorized by state, is based on social media reviews and a comprehensive survey of 15,000 parents.

Below is a brief description of the five Adventist summer camps included in the list.

### MIVODEN CAMP

The camp, located in Hayden, Idaho, advertises itself as “Introducing People to Jesus Since 1940.” Managed by the Upper Columbia Conference, it offers youth and family camps, with seasonal activities that range from skiing to swimming, drama, and crafts.

MiVoden also offers Disciple Trek, a three-week camp for teens ages 15-18. It is advertised as a “dynamic Bible and leadership experience,” which promises to “take your spiritual journey to the next level as

campers and staff dig deep into the Bible to discover and rediscover truths about who God is and what that means in everyday life.”

### CAMP AKITA

Located a three-hour drive southwest of Chicago in Gilson, Illinois, Camp Akita advertises youth and family summer camps. Weekly programs are geared toward specific age groups between 7 and 17. “It’s a week full of fun, nature, adventure, and challenges, and most of all, each camper will be inspired to make Jesus their best friend!” its advertising says.

Family options include a full week with programs “to inspire you to continue making God the center of your home.”

The camp, managed by the Illinois Conference, advertises such activities as mountain biking, archery, and photography. It also includes geocaching, fishing, and canoeing.

### CAMP AU SABLE

Located in Grayling, in northern Michigan, Camp Au Sable welcomes hundreds of kids ages 8-17. “We prioritize spiritual, physical, and mental growth,” the camp website advertises.

The camp also dedicates three weeks to families. There are special activities for all ages, including scenic nature fun and spiritual events. “Our campers get opportunities to climb, canoe, swim, study God’s Word, and grow their connections with peers,” the facility’s advertising says.

The 800-acre camp is located by Shellenbarger Lake and is managed by the Michigan Conference.

### LONE STAR CAMP

Managed by the Southwest Region Conference, Lone Star Camp is located one hour southeast of Dallas in Athens, Texas. The 300-acre camp, which includes a 25-acre lake nestled among pinewoods, is used for various youth and adult events throughout the year.

According to the camp website, summer specialties offer more than a dozen options, including horse-manship, canoeing, waterskiing, roller skating, archery, and badminton.

“If you are looking for a great camp experience for your family, church, youth program, or convention, we believe Lone Star Camp is the right place for you,” its advertisement says.

### SUNSET LAKE CAMP

One hour southeast of Seattle, in Wilkeson, Washington, Sunset Lake Camp welcomes young people and families to their facilities by world-famous Mount Rainier. The facilities advertise a dozen activities, including archery, art studio, banana boating, biking, and blobbing. It also lists, among others, swimming, wall climbing, and zip lining.

“Imagine summer camp as an expedition up a mountain,” a camp promotion says. “Each summer a new and unexpected adventure awaits, while each step of the journey shapes you to become the leader that God has called you to be.”

Adventist leaders and government officers take a group photo with some of the participants of the fourth Gulf Field International Pathfinder Camporee in United Arab Emirates.

PHOTO: GULF FIELD OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS



## ABOUT 600 ATTEND FOURTH GULF FIELD PATHFINDER CAMPOREE

EVENT IN UNITED ARAB EMIRATES INCLUDED PARTICIPANTS FROM EIGHT COUNTRIES.

GURENI LUKWARO, MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA UNION, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

About 600 participants attended the fourth International Pathfinder Camporee of the Gulf Field of the Seventh-day Adventist Church February 23-26 at the Sharjah Scout Mission campgrounds in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates (UAE). Themed “I Will Go,” the camporee attracted attendees from Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar, the UAE, and the United States.

In a show of appreciation for the impact the Pathfinders have made in the community in the UAE, a high-level delegation from Emirates Scout Association, Sharjah Scout Mission, and other Sharjah government entities visited the camporee and enjoyed a special Pathfinder parade prepared for them. As 2023 is designated the year of sustainability in the UAE, the delegation expressed their appreciation for the many activities that Pathfinders have accomplished, including tree planting and beach cleaning projects, as well as other initiatives that promote sustainability.

“The movement of Pathfinders is carving a path to the top leaders of the area. What adults have been unable to do, God is accom-

plishing through dedicated young people,” Byard Parks, youth coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa Union Mission, said. “An army of kids—showing love, caring for their adopted nation and environment, and with passion to learn—the Pathfinders are shining like a bright star in the UAE and the Gulf.”

Busi Khumalo, director of Adventist Youth Ministries for the General Conference, was the main speaker at the camporee. Khumalo challenged the Pathfinders to be mission-minded in everything they do. Using the story of Captain Naaman’s little maid found in 2 Kings 5 (among other illustrations), Khumalo encouraged everyone to pay attention and look for mission opportunities, just as the little maid did. “When you see opportunities, pray for courage and wisdom from God to seize those opportunities and share the good news,” he said.

“People all around are troubled and are looking for solutions and peace,” Khumalo added. He motivated delegates to share the love of Jesus, “the only [One] who can heal this troubled world and give lasting peace.”

Camporee attendees enjoyed various activities, including 14 Pathfinders Honors that were offered. There were also activities for Adventurers, including Adventurer Awards, Eager Beaver Chips, and Little Lambs Stars. One of the highlights of the camporee activities was the Pioneers Row, a live reenactment of the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Delegates also participated in skills development activities, pin trading, prayer walks, nightly shows, and campfires.

Gulf Field president Marc Coleman encouraged Pathfinders and all others who attended the camporee to enjoy the camporee fellowship, food, honors, and other activities. He asked participants to spend their time at the camporee strengthening the bonds of their Adventist community. “Most of all, we want you to grow in your love for God and His Word so that you can develop into strong men and women who live according to God’s principles and set an example for the world,” Coleman said.

Freinald Matondo, Gulf Field youth director, agreed. “May this camporee inspire all of us to go and share the love of Jesus and invite others to His soon-coming kingdom. Remember that we are Pathfinders strong! And We Will Go!”



The Ukrainian Seventh-day Adventist Church of Chicago meets for their first formal worship service. PHOTO: LAKE UNION HERALD

## IN CHICAGO, UKRAINIAN REFUGEES PLANT NEW CHURCH

UKRAINIAN ADVENTISTS FLEEING FROM WAR ARE CHANGING A LOCAL CONGREGATION.

NICOLE DOMINGUEZ, FOR LAKE UNION HERALD

**A**t 5:00 a.m. on February 24, 2022, Vitalii Hanulich awoke in his hometown of Bucha, Ukraine, to missile explosions and his phone vibrating with incoming messages from friends and family. That was when he knew the war had begun.

That day went down in history as the day Russia invaded Ukraine, creating a critical boiling point in an already destructive conflict that had been escalating since 2014. As a result Europe has faced the largest refugee crisis since World War II.

Nearly 80,000 Ukrainian refugees have found asylum in Chicago and its surroundings in Illinois, marking the beginning of a new chapter in their lives. Among that number are such dedicated Seventh-day Adventists as Hanulich, eager to find active community and peaceful refuge in one of Chicago's Adventist churches.

The Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church has been a mainstay in Park Ridge, Illinois, for many years, providing a space of worship and fellowship. The refugee crisis within Chicago has become a new mission field, doubling the church's attendance and prompting a new and exciting branch of the church to develop.

The congregants, many of whom are Ukrainian, rejoiced at the opportunity to extend aid to the families and individuals in need of

support and community. Members took in families, offered the use of their cars, and aided in employment acquisition. According to Russ Drumi, pastor of the Hope church: "Members have helped cosign for apartments; I've personally cosigned for quite a few apartments. [Congregants] have placed their names on accounts for electricity, water, and car bills. You see, the refugees had to leave everything, their businesses, their homes—they have no credit history."

### HELP FROM OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

Carolyn Schneider, who attends Lombard Seventh-day Adventist Fellowship Church and is an active member of her local Rotary club, heard about the influx of refugees attending the church and reached out to Drumi. Within weeks she had donated 150 pounds of dried beans to the church and connected with other members of her Rotary club.

Though the club is a nonreligious organization, thus preventing organizational donations to the church, individual members were quick to contribute, partnering with Exodus World Service to create Welcome to America kits consisting of kitchenware, toothpaste, toothbrushes, tool kits, and other necessities.

This is only a small portion of

the aid extended by Schneider, who is adamant about following Christ's example of practical outreach. This outreach is more than simple acts of kindness; it is an active investment in those whose lives have been forever altered by war. Such Christian discipleship has cushioned the transition from Ukrainian citizens to refugees to new members.

Far from passive recipients, the refugees were quick to step into the fold, becoming active participants. As it stands, 70 to 80 refugees have joined the church, with two new families arriving nearly every week.

Vitalii Hanulich was one of the refugees who was ready and willing to contribute. He is currently one of the pastors of the church and an Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) project manager with the United Nations, helping with the monthly distribution of 8.8 million pounds of food to Ukraine. He also plans to make use of his psychology degree, partnering with other members to offer group therapy for those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The new members have stepped up as music leaders, developed Pathfinder groups, Bible studies, and Friday meetings, and organized picnics, potlucks, and other events. The result has been a thriving church that has grown beyond its initial origins.

### A CHURCH PLANT TAKES ROOT

The church is named Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church. This highlights a core factor in the decision to plant a new church. Another reason is founded in language. Though all are Ukrainian citizens, many of the refugees are a mixture of different nationalities, some of whom speak Russian as their first language, others Ukrainian, while still others have a combined understanding of both. The result is a linguistic barrier the church must navigate. According to Drumi: "It's still

very personal and sensitive, but the divide is linguistic, not spiritual.”

As it stands, services are a mixture of both Russian and Ukrainian. The goal of the new church plant is to be an independent extension of the Hope church, allowing for services and events to be held in Ukrainian. The Illinois Conference has supported the church plant both spiritually and financially, providing funding as well as aiding in the search for a new church property to rent and a part-time pastor.

Hope church is a community made up of Ukrainian immigrants. The most recent wave of immigration has created two groups within the church. The first group is Ukrainians who came to the United States in previous decades and have had years to assimilate. The newer group is refugees who have fled war and the devastation of their homeland, losing family, friends, and community in the destruction.

Though the circumstances of their relocation are different, both are faithful believers ready to commit to their church. Both Drumi and Hanulich are eager to confirm that the soon-to-be-two churches will remain a unified community, continuing their partnership in church events and fervent outreach to new refugees.

The purpose of the new church plant is to provide options for refugees who are eager to be incorporated into a church community that speaks their first language, fostering a deeper sense of belonging and allowing those leaving a war-torn homeland to find a port in a storm. Hanulich states, “Many of us lost everything in the Motherland, but received huge support from other countries like the U.S. or European countries like Poland and Germany. It is also one of the main achievements—uniting many nations around good things, it gives us a second chance for a new start.”



A panel of experts answers questions from participants in the North American Division Health Summit on April 5.

PHOTO: MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

## THE ADVENTIST TEMPERANCE MESSAGE IS AS RELEVANT AS EVER, EXPERTS SAY

RESEARCHERS DISCUSS WHAT THE CHURCH CAN DO TO HELP.

MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

**A**n April 5 presentation at the Health Summit of the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Lexington, Kentucky, shed light on the context in which the Adventist health message emerged, and discussed the church’s efforts to fight alcohol and other drugs. Keynote speakers were Duane McBride and Alina Baltazar, a father-daughter duo of experienced researchers on the topic.

In their 90-minute presentation they also reviewed current programs the church directs toward policy, prevention, and recovery, and shared best prevention practices that local churches can implement to fight the scourge.

It was first McBride’s turn to provide background on the world in which the Adventist Church was born. “The Declaration of Independence [of the United States] was written in a tavern, not a church,” McBride reminded Adventist health leaders and advocates. “And the first coffee break was a coca break.” The latter statement refers to the nineteenth-century habit of using cocaine, which was widely available.

It is also a topic of personal interest, McBride said as he shared how alcoholism destroyed his mother’s extended family until she became a Seventh-day Adventist.

### IN U.S. HISTORY

Puritans were opposed to drunkenness but not to alcohol, McBride said. Also, during the Civil War, physicians used morphine to treat pain. After the war, many soldiers continued to use morphine, which was easily available.

The popular Sears catalog sold opiates (heroin) and syringes, claiming that it was not addictive and that it relieved pain. “The pope, Thomas Edison, and President McKinley endorsed coca wine,” McBride said. “It was advertised as helping you work



# “Alcohol increases violence of all types, brain damage, cancer, and cardiac problems.”

—Duane McBride and Alina Baltazar

hard, regardless of conditions, with no addictive properties.”

The consequences of such behaviors led to domestic violence, a wide variety of health issues, addictions, lost productivity, and poverty.

At the same time, since the late eighteenth century, various voices across the U.S. were warning against alcohol and drugs and advocating for temperance. Advocates organized societies and published journals to fight alcohol consumption.

## THE ADVENTIST CHURCH, TEMPERANCE, AND PROHIBITION

Ellen G. White called temperance her “favorite subject,” which she discussed while speaking in Adventist and other Christian churches. She famously defined temperance as “[abstaining] entirely from that which is injurious, and [using] judiciously only healthful and nutritious articles of food,” McBride reminded health leaders.

White also encouraged every church member to get involved in an advocacy effort, McBride emphasized. White, he said, called every advocate to “exert their influence by precept and example . . . in favor of prohibition and total abstinence.”

McBride highlighted that White, however, did not stop at fighting the scourge, but also focused on recovery efforts, helping people who had fallen prey and were enslaved by intemperance.

## ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION TODAY

Most serious research studies agree that alcohol consumption has no health benefits, McBride and Baltazar said. They explained that “even in cases where researchers spoke about a supposed benefit, it was often shown that they had altered the measurement model to fit their conclusions.”

McBride and Baltazar added that “alcohol increases violence of all types, brain damage, cancer, and cardiac problems. Other proven consequences include more accidents, poverty, and divorce. And the total economic fallout of alcohol use disorder includes billions of U.S. dollars in health-care costs.”

## WHAT THE ADVENTIST CHURCH IS DOING

Following its historical position, the Adventist Church has implemented multiple initiatives to discourage alcohol sale and consumption. At the same time, it has made a point of supporting those who are recovering addicts or who feel the desire to be free from addictions.

These initiatives include the International Commission for the Prevention of Alcoholism and Drug Dependency, founded in 1952, which advocates policies restricting access. Others include Adventist Recovery Ministries and the Institute for Prevention of Addictions, the latter in partnership with Andrews University.

Research has proved to be a witness of the church’s efforts.

Adventist scholars present papers and publish articles regularly on topics related to addictions and recovery. “An analysis of the online data shows that scientific publications by Adventist scholars on these topics are being read all around the world,” Baltazar said. “And the most-read topics include scientific research on faith and prevention, service and prevention, and alcohol as an unhealthy beverage.”

## THE ROLE OF A LOCAL CHURCH

One of the summit participants, who defined himself as “a recovered addict,” asked McBride and Baltazar what local congregations can do to make sure the church’s message against addictions and its recovery efforts get beyond the sanctuary doors. “Our communities are hurting, and people don’t even know who Seventh-day Adventists are,” he said.

McBride and Baltazar agreed with him, as they emphasized that a local Adventist church can fulfill a key role to advance these ministries and initiatives.

“A local church can work to strengthen faith and families and support Community Services initiatives,” they said. “A congregation can also implement mentoring programs, provide trauma education, and sponsor recovery ministries. Its role is essential to connecting the church with the community and helping people be free from addictions.”

Sanitarium's Corporate Communications team enjoying the birthday celebrations April 27

PHOTO: SANITARIUM HEALTH & WELL-BEING



## SANITARIUM CELEBRATES 125 YEARS OF SERVING HEALTHY FOOD CHOICES

SOUTH PACIFIC COMPANY EMPLOYS 1,200, EXPORTS TO ALMOST 40 COUNTRIES

TRACEY BRIDCUTT, ADVENTIST RECORD

**S**anitarium Health Food Company served up a special event to celebrate its 125th birthday April 27. Speeches, prayers, food, and memorabilia were all part of the event, held at the company's Australian headquarters in Berkeley Vale, New South Wales.

Along with the festivities, it was a time to reflect on Sanitarium's rich history and purpose, as well as to reaffirm its commitment to improving the health and well-being of Australians.

"We believe healthier choices support the potential for every Australian to live a long and healthy life," Sanitarium CEO Kevin Jackson said. "Sanitarium was founded with the core purpose of helping Australians to eat well and live well. This purpose remains just as important today, particularly as families struggle with the growing impacts of lifestyle-related chronic diseases, food insecurity, and cost-of-living pressures."

Glenn Townend, president of the South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, acknowledged the impact that Sanitarium has had across the region over many decades.

"We thank God for the blessing Sanitarium is to the community and church," he said. "They have contributed significantly and have produced healthy, affordable food for generations in this part of the world."

### WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

Sanitarium began in a neighborhood bakery in Northcote, Melbourne, after a small group of Seventh-day Adventists immigrated from Battle Creek, Michigan, bringing foods made by John Harvey Kellogg for patients at his health institute.

In January 1898 Edward Halsey, who had trained with Kellogg, commenced making the company's first ready-to-eat cereals, including Granose wheat biscuits—a forerunner to Weet-Bix—and Sanitarium Peanut Butter. Sanitarium was registered as a business on April 27, 1898.

### TRANSFORMING EATING HABITS

Sanitarium has led the way in transforming Australia's eating habits. It was the first to introduce breakfast cereals, pioneered innovative soy foods, and promoted plant-based eating long before it became popular.

It is now one of the largest Australian-owned food companies, employing 1,200 people across six Australian sites and exporting products to almost 40 countries. It is one of Australia's most trusted food companies, with products such as Weet-Bix, So Good, and UP&GO found in two out of every three households.

### COMMUNITY IMPACT

Sanitarium is also a standout for its long-running commitment

to supporting communities in need. Last year alone it donated more than 4.2 million servings for distribution through a network of charity partners, headlined by Foodbank Australia. And Sanitarium's school breakfast program provides healthy breakfasts to thousands of schoolchildren around Australia.

"We're always ready to help Australians doing it tough, donating food to communities impacted by natural disasters and providing ongoing support to food pantries who offer a lifeline to people in need," Jackson said.

### PROMOTING HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

Health education remains a key area in which Sanitarium continues to invest. "Our goal has always been to give all Australians access to the knowledge, resources, and skills they need to make healthier choices," Jackson said.

"In the late 1980s we launched our Nutrition Education Service. In the decade that followed, we launched the Weet-Bix Kids TRYathlon to lift physical activity rates among primary-school-aged children.

"Today millions of Australians visit the Sanitarium website every year for dietitian-approved plant-based recipes and nutrition advice, and we're excited to see our new partnership with Life Education improving the quality of healthy eating and physical activity education in primary schools." 



### **BIBLE EXPERIENCE FINALISTS GIFTED WITH ANDREWS BIBLE COMMENTARY.**

All North American Pathfinder Clubs that reached the North American Division finals of the annual Pathfinder Bible Experience received a set of the new *Andrews Bible Commentary*. The Bible Experience promotes and encourages Pathfinders to engage in in-depth Bible study and memorization. This year 155 teams from 129 Pathfinder clubs, totaling some 930 Pathfinders, moved all the way through the various levels to reach the finals in Tampa, Florida.



### **IN HAITI, FORUM EQUIPS PASTORS FOR INCLUSION IN MISSION.**

The Adventist University of Haiti (UNAH) held its annual Theological Forum on its main campus in Carrefour, Port-au-Prince, March 9-11. The forum included more than 100 theology students and district pastors in a hybrid online and in-person format. Themed "Toward a Pastorate for All in the Twenty-first Century," the event was hosted by the UNAH School of Theology and sought to equip pastors and theology students for inclusion and nondiscrimination in pastoral ministry.



### **YOUNG ADULTS TRAVEL FROM AUSTRALIA TO FINLAND TO SERVE.**

A group of 40 young adults from across the North New South Wales Conference in Australia volunteered for 15 days at the Koivikko Lifestyle Center in Mikkeli, Finland. They helped the team at Koivikko with multiple renovation projects and outreach in the community of Mikkeli. Volunteers worked on assigned projects, including electrical work, bathroom renovation, and the refurbishment of the top floor of a building used for worship programs.



### **SOLIDARITY TRUCK CHANGES LIVES AMONG BRAZIL'S MOST VULNERABLE POPULATIONS.**

The mountainous region of Rio de Janeiro received a visit from "The Solidarity Truck," a mobile service unit maintained by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in Brazil. The initiative took place a year after the tragedy caused by heavy rains, which killed dozens of people and left thousands homeless. More than 240 volunteers joined the initiative, helping to distribute approximately 3,000 meals and more than 1,600 pieces of clothing. They also offered about 400 free haircuts, legal advice, and medical care. Free services benefited more than 4,400 people.



### **PACIFIC ADVENTIST HEALTH LEADERS COMPLETE "JOURNEY TO WHOLENESS."**

Health leaders completed a Journey to Wholeness program organized by the Trans Pacific Union Mission (TPUM) and the South Pacific Division. The health training program was held at the Coral Coast Christian Camp in Deuba, Fiji, March 14-22. The program aimed to equip attendees from around the TPUM with the skills necessary to become effective lifestyle coaches and addiction recovery specialists. The program included two workshops: the Addiction Recovery Program and the Lifestyle Coaching Skills.



### **PHILIPPINES VOICE OF YOUTH CAMPAIGN RESULTS IN MORE THAN 8,000 BAPTISMS.**

The Unstoppable Voice of Youth (VOY) Campaign in central and southern Philippines, March 18-April 1, resulted in more than 8,000 baptisms, regional youth leaders reported. Unstoppable involved young people in mission and mobilized more than 14,280 young people, divided into 557 teams, to conduct public evangelism. Students on public campuses, young adults, and Pathfinders led these evangelistic efforts.



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DISPOSA



## SHAWN BOONSTRA

A good friend of mine recently experienced an emotional breakthrough after struggling to come to terms with a life that can be described only as *suffering*. A lesser person would have cracked under the weight of pain she's endured for decades. She's been twice disappointed in marriage. Her first husband was physically and emotionally abusive (to put it mildly) and made a sadistic art of eroding her self-confidence. He beat her, sometimes by kicking her with steel-toed boots, and went to extraordinary lengths to make sure she always felt worthless. When she finally mustered up the courage to leave, the church she attended labeled her with a cruel epithet that implied sexual impurity—and did it *publicly*, from the platform.

She eventually remarried, but her second husband died after a short time, and she suddenly found herself alone, struggling to make ends meet. Then her health began to fail in frightening ways. It was at that point, as she faced the prospect of a premature death, that we became friends.

We had a lot in common and clicked immediately. My wife, Jean, and I now think of her as a family

member. She even refers to me as the little brother she's always wanted, and she has become the sister I never had. Once a week we meet by telephone to study the Bible and pray, and those sessions with the Scriptures usually generate both laughter and tears—and a great deal of the peace that “surpasses all understanding” that Paul describes (Phil. 4:7).

### THE BEST ANSWER

My friend—we'll call her Sarah—has suffered far more than most people. The stories she's shared have underlined the unbelievable cruelty of which even supposed Christians are capable. I find myself awestruck by her astonishing resilience. I have also suffered, and have learned the sacred art of endurance, but as I listen to her, I suspect I would have broken under the load she's been forced to carry. My own suffering pales by comparison, and I know that during the health scare I endured some years ago because of a mystery illness,<sup>1</sup> I failed what I call the “Job test.” At the bottom of that experience, I found myself getting angry with God, demanding to know why I seemed destined to make such a horrible exit from this world, after I had dedicated my life to ministry. (I might be a preacher, but I'm decidedly *human*.)

But as awful as that was, what I endured seems insignificant compared to Sarah's trials. Occasionally she asks me why God allows these terrible things, and often I must answer with a meek “I don't know.” Sometimes that's the best answer, because pretending to know why God sometimes

BLE... Because He Was

**Our fallen  
lives are now a  
cosmic lie about  
the nature of  
the One who  
made us.**



chooses to intervene dramatically and sometimes doesn't . . . Well, it's dishonest to feign knowledge that belongs to God alone, and it usually only adds to the victim's misery.

Of course, as a pastor I'm equipped to explain the existence of suffering in broader terms—the great controversy. God is not the author of our pain and suffering; it is the natural consequence of decisions we have corporately made as a human race. Our fallen lives are now a cosmic lie about the nature of the One who made us.

We have turned Planet Earth into a showcase of pain, and more often than not, the devil uses that showcase as Exhibit A in his case against God, and he's done an incredible job of making us believe it. We struggle, as philosophers have for thousands of years, to explain how a good God can create a universe where evil emerges—and there really is no good reason for its existence.

One of the most profound statements to come from the pen of Ellen White is found, appropriately enough, in *The Great Controversy*:

"It is impossible to explain the origin of sin so as to give a reason for its existence. . . . Nothing is more plainly taught in Scripture than that God was in no wise responsible for the entrance of sin; that there was no arbitrary withdrawal of divine grace, no deficiency in the divine government, that gave occasion for the uprising of rebellion. Sin is an intruder, for whose presence no reason can be given. It is mysterious, unaccountable; to excuse it is to defend it. Could excuse for it be found, or cause be shown for its existence, it would cease to be sin."<sup>2</sup>

I read that statement on the air one time during a broadcast of the Voice of Prophecy and was surprised to receive a letter from an atheist listener stating that she had gone to the library to find a copy of *The Great Controversy* after hearing it. There is no rational explanation for pain and suffering, because it is the result of sin, which has no rational explanation. If you could explain sin, give a good reason for it, it would no longer be sin.

What we do know from Scripture is that instead of eliminating us, which would have been His right, God delayed His just reaction long enough to save us. God is nothing like the capricious deities of Olympus, who loved to toy with human beings, amusing themselves by heaping trials on innocent people. The God of the Bible is love, and He made the impossible decision: God the Son would

become one of us, a new head for humanity, and He would take the wages of our sin on Himself.

## HE ENDURES WITH US

Now that Christ has already paid the price of our redemption, why does suffering continue? It's a good question. Consider the parable of the prodigal son, the boy who demanded his liberty in addition to demanding his share of the inheritance. He wanted the same thing we demanded in Eden: independence from the Father, but please, let's keep the benefits coming. In time, the wayward son ends up squandering his wealth in wildly inappropriate ways, and he finds himself seeking employment, any employment, just to make ends meet:

"So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything" (Luke 15:15, 16, ESV).

Grab a Bible and read the whole story very carefully: the father is found standing in the road peering at the horizon in the desperate hope that his boy will return. But he does not go to the pigpen. He fights the parental instinct to swoop in and rescue his boy. He knows that if his son is ever going to come back, he will have to sit in the filth of a pigsty and experience the consequences of poor choices. Only then will he realize that *home* is better than *this*.

What would happen if God were to rescue us from all the consequences of our bad choices? What if He kept suffering in complete check, so that none of us ever sits in the filth and stench of pigs? What would happen if He allowed us to become comfortable in Babylon? We'd never come back.

And so, with a heart torn by anguish, God allows us to live what we chose. He *could* simply eliminate us, but we are, surprisingly, considered too valuable to a perfect and holy God. He endures the pain *with* us, working a careful plan to ensure that nobody is ultimately lost unnecessarily. "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness," Peter reminds us, "but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (2 Peter 3:9, ESV).

He is far more patient than we are. Occasionally we shake our fist at heaven and demand that God remove all the evil from this world. But then, if our hearts are soft enough to hear the whisper of

## Christ Himself was treated as if He were disposable, and He put Himself in that predicament on purpose.

the Spirit, we hear Him say, “Where, exactly, would you like Me to stop that process? Right before I get to you?” It’s easy for us to see everybody else’s role in perpetuating misery; it is not so easy for us to see that our selfish hearts have made significant contributions to it.

Witness the love and the patience of God as He adopts our form and lives among us. We find Him enduring loneliness, rejection, hunger, sleeplessness, and physical pain. He stood at the grave of Lazarus and wept—not just for His friend, but for *all* of us.<sup>3</sup> He was moved with pity and did the unthinkable: granted the gift of human touch to a leper (Mark 1:41). “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15, ESV).

But now back to my friend. I cannot share details, but she has lived through more pain than most of us. And because she has dwelt in the fiery furnace for so long, I find myself eager to listen to what she has to say. As she speaks, I am reminded that the Son of man *still* comes to join us in the flames. Sometimes we struggle to see Him through our tears, but He always shows up.

“I’ve discovered,” she told me, “I am disposable.” *Oh, no, I thought to myself, she’s succumbed to feelings of worthlessness.* But she continued: “Look: I don’t really know where I belong. Church members have rejected me as if I am a leper. Family has disappointed me; I hear from only *some* of them when they want something. Friends have proved fickle. I have no real place in this world . . . I’m *disposable*.”

She’s not alone. Read Hebrews 11 and witness the people who wandered this earth and found no place that felt like home. The Bible tells us that they were treated as if they were disposable, but the world was not worthy of such people (Heb. 11:38). Sarah can call only one place home: Christ.


Why? Because Christ Himself was treated as if He were disposable, and He put Himself in that predicament on purpose. He was willing to *make* Himself disposable to save us. He was never at home in this world, the way it is, and we should count it a blessing if we feel the same way. Profound discomfort in *this* world is a gift from God. It anchors our hearts in the kingdom.

I cannot explain the particulars of your suffering; I am still struggling to come to grips with my own. Some days it leaves me exhausted. Other days, frustrated. Occasionally it leaves me quite literally weeping. In the darkest moments, as I am reminded that I too have contributed to the collective suffering of all, Christ loves me profoundly. I feel His hand on my shoulder, and I hear Him say, “I understand. I know what this place feels like. You belong with *Me*.”

### WHERE IS GOD?

One of the frequent questions I’ve been asked: “Where was God when . . . ?” It’s a fair question: in moments of deep pain, we want to know why it appears that God has abandoned us. But even here Christ understands perfectly, because He’s lived it: “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34).

Where was God when I was suffering? The most powerful answer to that question came from a famous TV priest who, many years ago, leaned into the camera, paused for a moment, and answered, “In the same place He was when we murdered His Son.”

God’s people suffer, exposing the brutal lies of prosperity preachers, who insist that God wishes, above all, to make us comfortable, wealthy, and popular. The truth: we have enrolled in the school of Christ, and He suffered “for the joy that was set before Him” (Heb. 12:2). We are disposable in this world because *He* was. And soon enough He will wipe away our tears for the last time (Rev. 21:4). 

<sup>1</sup> Yes, it was a mystery. The rumor mill, populated by people I’ve never met who claimed they were in the know, were happy to fill in details that surprised me. Somehow the doctors *missed* what these gossips claimed to know, and I can tell you, firsthand, that gossips only make the suffering worse.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 492.

<sup>3</sup> See Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 533.

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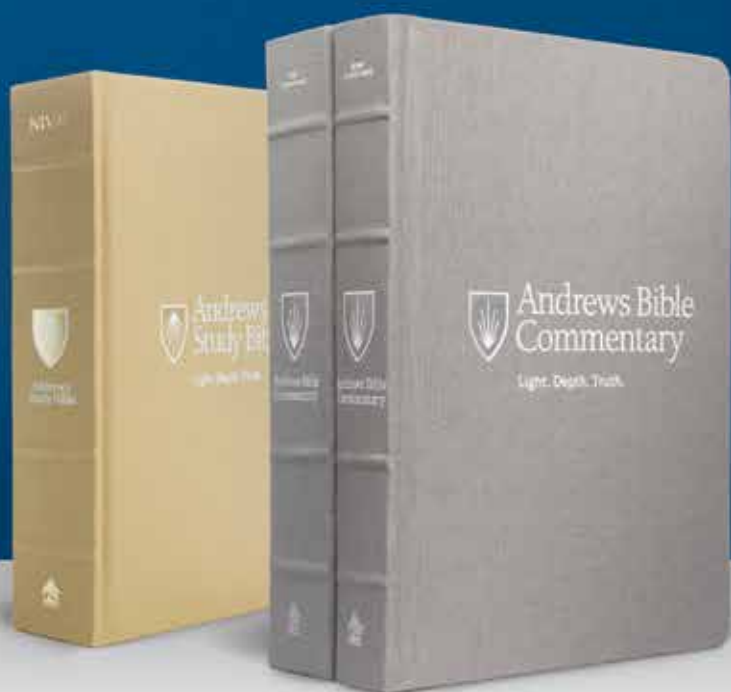
Pastor **Shawn Boonstra** is speaker/director of the Voice of Prophecy.





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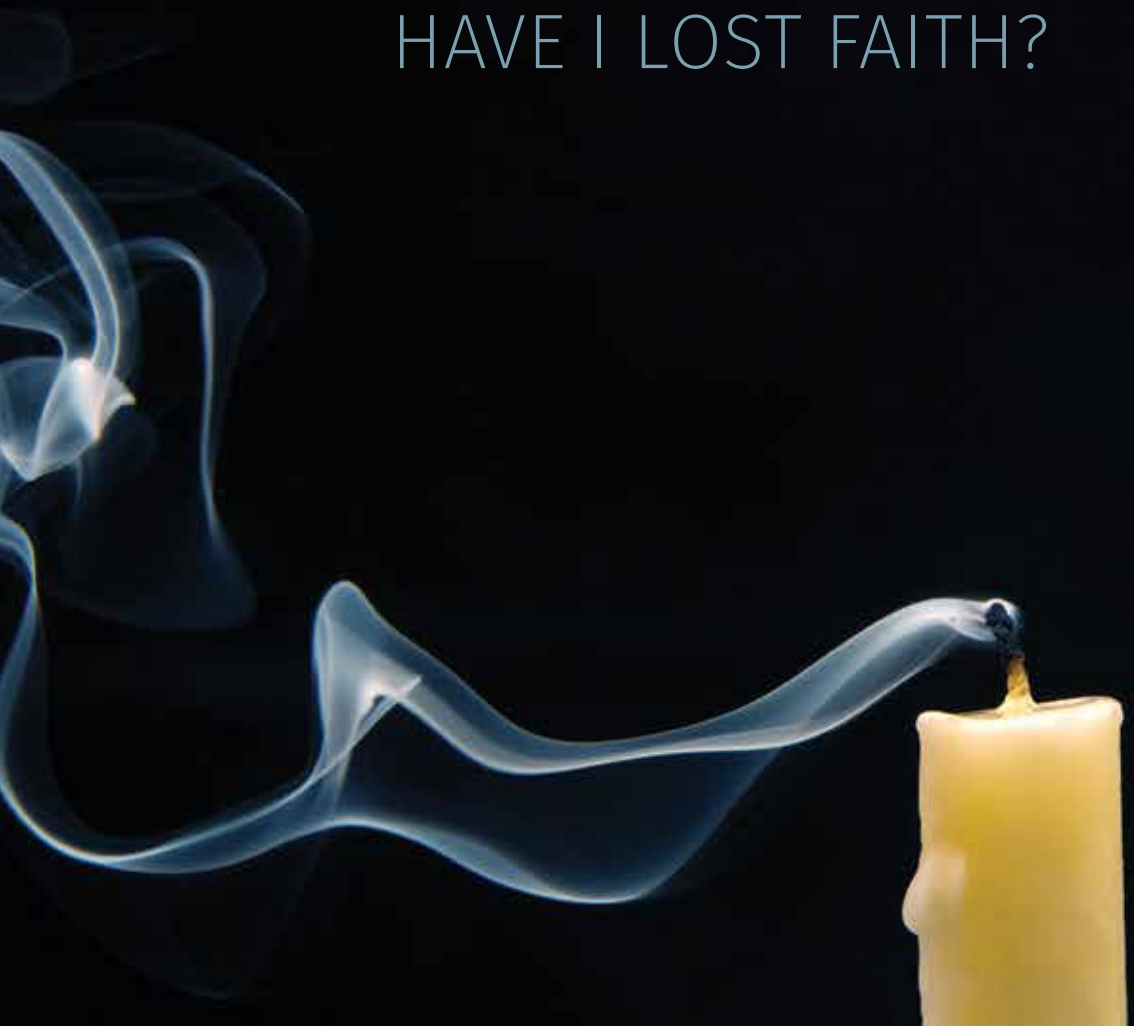
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IF I GRIEVE,

HAVE I LOST FAITH?



## MICHAEL LOMBARDO

When Jacob died and Joseph “threw himself on his father and wept over him and kissed him” (Gen. 50:1, NIV), was he showing a lack of faith? When Hannah was distressed over her infertility and said, “I am a woman of sorrowful spirit” (1 Sam. 1:15), was she revealing a weak faith? When “Abraham went to mourn for Sarah and to weep over her” (Gen. 23:2, NIV), was he showing a lack of fortitude? Should expressions like “My eyes grow weak with sorrow” (Ps. 6:7, NIV) and “How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart?” (Ps. 13:2, NIV) be struck from Holy Writ because they reveal an inappropriate way for a person of faith to think?

### *How to grieve with hope*

Texts like these reveal that God does not condemn our grief and sadness, but understands that it is a normal part of the human experience after the Fall. When the apostle Paul thought he was going to lose a close associate, he told his Philippian friends he would have had “sorrow upon sorrow” (Phil. 2:27) if his friend had died. Should we say to this great leader of the early Christian faith, “Hey, man, where is your faith?” This same Paul said to believers in a different letter that they were not to “grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope” (1 Thess. 4:13, NIV). What did Paul mean? Some have used this text to indicate that Christians are not to grieve, because they have hope.

## A PEOPLE OF HOPE

I was asked to share a grief presentation with a group of individuals at a church near where I worked as a hospital chaplain. This group was being trained to become part of Stephen’s Ministers, a national organization dedicated to preparing people to be with others who are going through a crisis. Before I started the presentation, an older woman on the front row blurted out, “I don’t know why we are having this discussion. When my husband died, I did not grieve, because I had faith.” I thought to myself, *I could be home working in my garden. Why am I here?* Then I remembered my purpose.

I asked the woman if she would read a text for me, and directed her to Acts 8:2. While she was turning to it, I reminded everyone of the background. Stephen had just preached his last sermon and had been stoned for his faithful witness. The woman read to the class, “Godly men—”

I interrupted her midsentence and asked, “What kind of men?” She read the two words again: “Godly men.” I asked, “Would these godly men be considered ‘men of faith?’”

# HOPE UNDERGIRDS US WHEN GRIEF THREATENS TO OVERWHELM US.

Everyone in the class said, “Yes.” Then I asked her to go on.

“Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him.”

I again gently asked the woman, “What did these men of faith do as they buried Stephen?” She was silent, looking down, studying the words she had just read. Then she began to quietly sob. A couple of women came and sat beside her and held her while she let out some long-overdue tears.

When Paul said we are not to “grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope,” he was not saying we shouldn’t grieve because of our faith. He was saying that while we grieve, we don’t grieve like those who have no hope. Our hope undergirds us when grief threatens to overwhelm us.

## A DIFFERENT TYPE OF GRIEF

As a hospital chaplain, I have been privileged to be with individuals of all faiths when they or their loved ones were dying. I have also been with individuals who had no faith, no belief in a here-after, no belief that they could or would see their family members again.

The grief I observed appeared to be a different kind of grief than what Christians experience. When we grieve, we have the blessed hope to hold on to. Paul goes on to share the glorious hope of Christ’s second return with his readers in Thessalonica and then concludes with “Comfort one another with these words” (1 Thess. 4:18).

As Christians, we shouldn’t be expected to suppress our grief over the losses we encounter. We grieve, but we know a better day is coming when all our tears will be wiped away and there will be no more death or sorrow or pain.


As comforting as all the promises regarding the life to come are, if they are forced on a griever during acute grief, it can have a detrimental effect. What would it have been like for Jesus, when He was in the Garden of Gethsemane saying to His disciples, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,” if one of the disciples had said, “Come on, Jesus! Have faith; put on a smile. It’s going to be a beautiful day!”

We are told that “there is a time for everything,” including “a time to be born and a time to die,” as well as “a time to weep” (Eccl. 3:1-4). Rather than grief being a sign that we have lost our faith, it takes more courage and faith to feel and express our pain than it does to pretend everything is OK. Some people live in an “either/or” world. They believe either you have faith or you have grief. A more sensible way to look at this issue is “both/and.” Rather than grief or faith, the biblical model is grief and faith: a faith that helps us to somehow make sense of our losses in this sinful world.

## A BETTER DAY IS COMING

A better day is coming, but for now we still live day by day in this world. It is OK to be sad, mad, fearful, and sorrowful. It’s human to struggle when bad things happen to us. That’s what Elijah (who was eventually translated) did when things didn’t go his way. If I was selected to be on the committee that decided what would go into the Bible and what wouldn’t, I would have probably vetoed the part of 1 Kings 19 where Elijah, running from Jezebel, wishes he were dead. But it’s in there.

The story of Job gets ugly too, when Job has more time to think about all his losses. “I cry out to you, God, but you do not answer. . . . You turn on me ruthlessly” (Job 30:20, 21, NIV). The important thing is that these Bible characters hung around for an answer. They didn’t throw their faith out because of their grief. Their faith became stronger in the end because they waited for God’s answer of comfort.

As followers of Jesus, our perfect model, we need to remind ourselves that He experienced tears, was troubled, experienced anguish, and was overwhelmed with sorrow. Our grief and afflictions are painful but temporary. The psalmist said, “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Ps. 30:5, KJV). That night might last longer than a literal eight-hour night, but by faith we know a glorious morning awaits us! 

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# VACANCY AT THE GRAND HOTEL

One of the most famous thought experiments in modern intellectual history is the Infinite Hotel Paradox. Introduced in 1924 by a German mathematician, David Hilbert, it posits the Grand Hotel, which has an infinite number of rooms, all occupied. However, someone arrives and asks for a room. To accommodate him, the manager moves each guest over one room: the guest in room 1 goes to room 2, the guest in room 2 to room 3, and on . . . into infinity.

Word gets out about a hotel that always has a vacancy, and a bus pulls up with an infinite number of people who need a room. Knowing his math, the manager has each occupant go to the room number double his own: the guest in room 1 goes to room 2, room 2 to room 4, room 3 to room 6, and on and on . . . His move will free up an infinite amount of odd-numbered rooms for the new guests (though going from room 684,250 to 1,368,500 might take some time).

But this leads to the paradox. If an infinite number of occupied rooms already existed, how do you add one more, much less an infinite number more? The only logical option? Infinity must come in different sizes.

After all, an infinite amount of whole numbers exist: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 . . . But there are also infinitely many *even* whole numbers, 2, 4, 6, 8 . . . But how could what's only part (half, in fact) of the whole have the same number as the whole? It's like me eating half the M&Ms in a bag, but having the same amount left over, as if I had eaten none.

Not quite. Because however big my bag of M&Ms, it contains only a finite number of goodies, and infinity is a radically different reality than finitude. It would seem fitting to say that there's a *quantitative* difference between the finite and the infinite (after all, we're dealing with numbers here), but it is not. As the above examples show, it is a *qualitative* difference.

This leads to my point. "Eternal life," wrote Ellen White, "is an infinite gift. This places it outside the possibility of our earning it, because it is infinite."

Infinity isn't just lots of finite stuff, which is why our every effort to earn eternal life must fail. All our selfless works, all our encouraging words, all our pure motives, added up, multiplied, raised to the tenth (or hundredth) power, whatever, are always and only finite. And because "eternal life is an *infinite* gift," you can no more earn it than you can count to infinity.

And who alone could bestow the "infinite gift" of eternal life except a God who not only is infinite and eternal, but who transcends them too? The Lord, to offer infinity and eternity, must be beyond both.

Jesus said, "In my Father's house are many rooms" (John 14:2, ESV). Maybe not infinitely many rooms, as in the Grand Hotel, but room enough—with every charge, tax, and amenity paid, fully and in advance, by the "infinite gift," the blood of Jesus. ♣

\*Ellen G. White, *Faith and Works* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1979), p. 27.

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CLIFF'S  
EDGE  
CLIFFORD  
GOLDSTEIN



WHO ALONE COULD  
BESTOW THE  
"INFINITE GIFT"  
OF ETERNAL LIFE  
EXCEPT A GOD  
WHO'S BOTH  
INFINITE AND  
ETERNAL?

# When Hearts Are Breaking

*How to comfort effectively*

**KAREN HOLFORD**

**T**he phone rings. The news is shocking and devastating. Someone you know has lost a loved one. You want to let them know you care, but where do you start? How can you bring God's love and care into the lives of those who are bereaved? Before you walk alongside a grieving friend, prayerfully reflect on your own beliefs about death, grief, and comfort. Have you ever experienced a bereavement? What emotions did you experience? How did you manage those feelings? What did people do and say that comforted you, and what made you feel worse? How did your relationship with God comfort you? Which Bible verses soothed your pain?

Perhaps you grew a protective shell around your heart to stop it from being hurt. Is it difficult to feel compassion for others because you were not shown compassion when you needed it? Where are you now on your journey through healing? These are important and challenging questions to ponder when we encounter grief in another person's life. It is difficult for us to comfort others well when we have not received comfort ourselves.

## **THE LIVING SOURCE**

Our loving Father knows we need comfort to help us process the extreme emotional pain of living in this broken world. God Himself is the source of this comfort. He is the "God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2 Cor. 1:3, 4). Before we comfort our grieving friends, our hearts need the comfort of our loving and compassionate Father, so that we can offer His healing comfort to others.

Imagine you are sitting in the lap of your loving Father, and you



# Once we have been comforted by God, we are ready to help Him comfort others.

are telling Him about your deepest grief. He is filled with compassion for your painful loss. His loving heart is strong enough for all your complex emotions—anger, frustration, sadness, fear, confusion—and difficult questions.

As you express your messy emotions, He holds you close to His heart and whispers comforting words into your ear until your sobbing subsides, and you can hear His heart beating with love for you. He is the God who notices every tear that falls (Ps. 56:8), and longs for the day He will personally wipe away all your tears with His loving hands (Rev. 21:4). Once we have been comforted by God, we are ready to help Him comfort others. Jesus told His followers: “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matt. 5:4). And Paul told us to “weep with those who weep” (Rom. 12:15).

Here are some helpful suggestions as you seek to comfort others:

- **Pray that you will be a channel of God’s loving comfort into their pain.** Keep listening to what the Comforter is inspiring you to say and do.
- **Be with those who are grieving.** Be God’s loving and comforting arms. If it’s appropriate, give them a hug. Tell them this is like a hug from God, to show how much He cares right now.
- **Listen first.** Hear their story and listen to their emotions. Listen patiently, give eye contact, offer tissues, accept their confusion, anger, and deep grief. It is normal for people to use words they wouldn’t usually say. Let them go. Don’t judge people for what they say and do in their times of agonizing loss. It will only add to their pain.
- **Don’t offer explanations or advice.** Don’t tell them to stop being sad because we have a future hope. This will not be helpful. A deeply grieving person finds it difficult to access their rational and hopeful brain. Their greatest need is for kind words and immediate actions that will soothe their pain and stimulate the release of oxytocin

to help heal their heart. When someone tries to “fix” their sadness quickly, it usually causes more hurt, confusion, and grief. Unhelpful words can cause deep and memorable wounds that last a lifetime. “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace [blessing] to the hearers” (Eph. 4:29).

Being present with your grieving friend is deeply comforting. Weeping with them is very healing. It shows that you share in their sadness and loss. “Mourning with” might sound like: “I’m so sad that you are so sad.” “Your loss touches my heart deeply.” “I don’t have the words to express how much I care right now. I just want to be here and feel it with you.” Keep it simple and honest. Better to be silent and sad with them than to speak and hurt them.

Each person’s journey through grief is unique, depending on how their family grieves, cultural expectations, personality, previous experiences with loss and comfort, and their personal experience of each loss. Don’t be alarmed by their strong feelings and words. Accept their feelings, and their up-and-down, back-and-forth journey through grief. Be there for them, through the years, when their sadness is triggered by something unexpected.

Imagine you are in their position and think about what you would need most. It may be helpful to offer two or three things you could do for them and let them choose which would be most helpful. One close person who checks in with their needs can often coordinate the most practical and compassionate care through the tragedy.

The journey through grief is a long one. Keep checking in regularly to listen to them, pray, and show care. Help them to experience moments of love, joy, and peace, even in their sadness, to give them hope and healing and sparkles of light in the darkness.

Reflect. What went well? How was the person blessed and comforted? What could I say or do differently next time?

Pray “God, help me to be the best comforter I can be, with You, in the grieving places of this broken world. Amen.”

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\*For more research, visit [southern.edu/100reasons](https://southern.edu/100reasons).



Collegedale, TN



**Editor's Note: Seventh-day Adventists believe in the prophetic ministry of Ellen G. White. During her lifetime she was frequently challenged by poor health. What follows are excerpts from her 1892 diary where she writes of her inability to do her work, the experience of pain, and difficulty sleeping. It is our hope that our readers may find some much-needed encouragement as we also encounter illness and trials. There is hope found in a relationship with Jesus.<sup>1</sup>**

# A DIARY SPEAKS

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*The testimony of an illness*

**ELLEN G. WHITE**

*April 22, 1892*

I do not understand why I am lying here, unable to labor for the Lord; but God understands, and that is enough for me.

*May 14*

The past night has been one of great tediousness. I was obliged to get up six times to change my position, for my back and limbs were full of pain. My neck was so painful that it distressed me to lie on the pillow. But the Lord is good, and He draws near to me as I lift up my heart in prayer to Him, beseeching Him for grace and for restoration to health.

*May 22*

The past night was an almost sleepless one. I am so thankful that I could commune with God, and leave myself without murmuring in His merciful hands. I can use my arms and hands better than I could, and with considerable effort I can dress myself.

Satan is watching to see if I will hide my faith under a cloud of unbelief by murmuring against the One who has done everything for me. I am determined not to distrust God. I shall keep looking up to where the rainbow of promise encircles the throne. I shall triumph in God. Daily my soul is refreshed by the contemplation of the great love of our heavenly Father.

*June 15*

The night has been long and trying. I lay awake from half past ten to half past two, so full of nervous pain that I could not rest. But I will not repine. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15). I shall be glad when the days lengthen and the nights shorten.

*June 16*

Another long, trying night has nearly passed. Daylight will soon come. I slept well during the first part of the night, but when I awoke, the nervous pain came on once more, so severely that I could scarcely compose myself to pray intelligently. After a time the nervousness passed away, and I prayed most earnestly to my heavenly Father. I presented before Him the promise, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matt. 7:7). Even in my pain I can rejoice in the Lord, and this gives me peace. Christ is my personal Saviour. He has pledged His word to accomplish the salvation of all who believe in Him, and He will verify His promise.

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). These words show us why God's wrath descended on His only begotten Son, why the innocent suffered for the guilty, why the just bore the punishment wholly due to the unjust. Jesus came to bear the penalty of man's transgression, to uphold and vindicate the immutability of the law of God, and the rectitude of His government. He came to make an end of sin, and to bring in everlasting righteousness. He can lift sinners from their low estate, and in so doing magnify the law of Jehovah. These thoughts made me almost forget my pain.

*June 17*

During these sleepless hours, the subject of overcoming has been the burden of my thoughts. "To him that overcometh," the Lord declares, "will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 3:21).

*June 18*

Christ is the greatest missionary our world has ever seen, and I have faith that He will heal me.

## June 20

I slept the first part of the night, but during the latter part I could not rest. I committed my case to the Lord, and was comforted by the thought that I am a subject of His care. I do find peace and comfort in prayer, but I should look upon it as a great blessing from the Lord if I could pass the hours of the night in sleep.

## June 21

Another night of restlessness and suffering has passed. I welcome the coming of five o'clock in the morning; for then Emily Campbell builds my fire, and I can be dressed. I will not allow my mind to dwell on the dark side. Jesus has light and comfort and hope and joy for me. I want to face the light, that the brightness of the Sun of Righteousness may shine into my heart, and be reflected to others. It is the duty of every Christian to shine—to shed abroad the light of the grace that Christ imparts. God would have me, even in my pain, praise Him, showing that I realize that His presence is with me.

## June 25

I put my trust in the Lord Jesus. I cry after God. "As the hart panteth after the water books, so panteth my soul after thee, O God" (Ps. 42:1). Here in the home, in my pain and suffering, I must be imbued with the Spirit of Christ. It is now that I must put my trust in the Lord. At times I can do little else than cling to Jesus, saying, "I am thy child. I trust in Thee. I have Thy pledged word, 'My grace is sufficient' [2 Cor. 12:9]." Then relief comes, and I praise the Lord for His goodness and mercy.

## June 28

I am compassed with infirmities, yet I am of good courage in the Lord. Although the enemy is permitted to afflict me, yet I have great blessings from day to day. My head is free from pain, shielded by the hand of the Lord. My shoulders and arms are full of pain, but my right forearm from the elbow to the tip of my fingers is free from pain. I am able to do much important writing.

Trials and disappointments will come to God's workers, but did they not come to Jesus? Shall we cover the Lord's altar with mourning and sighing and tears? God forbid. It comforts me to meditate upon the loving words of Jesus, to think of His courtesy, His sympathy, His compassion. I long to be like Him. I will rest in His care. He will make me a conqueror over evil.

## June 30

I am told by some who come to see me that I shall never again have the use of my limbs. But I do not accept this view as truth. I know that the Lord has a work for me to do, and I will put my trust in Him. The outlook is not cheering, but God knows my situation. I rejoice that I can use my right hand. Bolstered up in a chair with pillows, I write many pages. I am able to keep my workers supplied with all they can possibly do. I could keep two more busy.

Sick or well, I feel that every power of body and mind should be employed in glorifying God. We are not our own, to please and gratify self. We have been purchased by the blood of Christ, and it is our daily duty, as well as our privilege, to consecrate all that we have and are to the Saviour.

## July 9

Last night I was not able to sleep after twelve o'clock. It was my thoughts more than pain of body that troubled me. There are some trials that it is not best to dwell upon, because there seems no clear way out of them. I try to cast my burden upon the Lord, but I do not always leave it there. I take it up again, when I should leave it with the Saviour.

*July 14*

During my wakeful hours I have sought the Lord most earnestly, asking Him to join my weakness to His strength, my ignorance to His wisdom, my unworthiness to His merit, my frailty to His enduring might, my poverty to His boundless wealth.

*July 16*

The Saviour is our comforter. This I have proved Him to be. I do not understand why I am so afflicted. At first I tried to reason out why I did not have strength to bear my testimony to the people in this country.<sup>2</sup> But I try no longer.

*July 21*

My constant prayer is that I may be uplifted into a purer, holier atmosphere. I am pleading with God to remove my suffering. And although I continue to suffer, I am comforted by the thought that Jesus knows, and that He will help me. I shall see light in His light. My right arm is free from pain, and for this blessing I thank the Lord. The dear Saviour will not leave us nor forsake us. . . . He encourages us in all our afflictions, . . . and enables me to rejoice in His great mercy.

*July 28*

Last night I obtained some rest, for which I thank my heavenly Father.

*July 29*

I praise the Lord that in my affliction I may have the light and love of Jesus. His presence is everything to me—comfort, hope, and soothing balm. Sometimes perplexing thoughts crowd upon my mind, but I will not cherish these thoughts. Jesus will take my troubles if I bring them to Him, and ask Him to carry them for me. It is not always easy to have trusting faith. We must behold Jesus by faith as an ever-present help in time of need. We must drink deep of the water of salvation, if we would be spiritually refreshed. The Lord is good and merciful. He is my Saviour, my joy and my crown of rejoicing. I will magnify His name.

*August 4*

During the past night I slept more than usual, and for this I thank my heavenly Father.

*August 11*

Last night I did not sleep well. My mind was troubled, but I tried to lay my burdens at the feet of Jesus. Today I have written twenty pages.

*August 13*

I have passed an unusually disagreeable night. I was afflicted with pain in every limb, and seven times during the night I was obliged to change my position. This means much pain.

*September 13*

We did not get home from the school yesterday evening until after dark. I rested well during the night. I am grateful to my heavenly Father that my strength is increasing. I can use my limbs much better than I could. During my wakeful hours my mind is busy planning how we can best be a blessing to the believers in this country, and how we can best work for unbelievers. ♣

<sup>1</sup> Selected from Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases* (Silver Spring, Md.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), vol. 8, pp. 44-55.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen White was living in Australia in 1892.

**G**rief is a deep emotional response to a great loss. It is important that we allow ourselves the human experience of grief in response to real losses, such as the death of a loved one, divorce or separation, breakup with a significant other, loss of anything meaningful to a person, or other considerable losses in adulthood or childhood. Losses might include loss of innocence or virginity, loss of safety, loss of possessions, loss of friends when making a move, postabortion syndrome, miscarriage, loss of a job, children growing up and moving, losing friends and teachers, loss of control, or losses related to retirement.

Grieving a significant loss takes time. Depending on the circumstances, it will be necessary for those in supportive roles and those grieving to be gentle with themselves, as the process can take weeks to years. Grieving helps a person gradually adjust to a new chapter of life. Full awareness of a significant loss can happen suddenly or over a few days or weeks. While expected loss (such as a death after a long illness) can take a shorter time to absorb because it is anticipated, a sudden or tragic loss can take more time. Similarly, it can take time to grasp the reality of

a loss that doesn't affect one's daily routine, such as a death far away. During this time a person may feel numb, seem distracted, and may obsess or yearn for the lost loved one. Funerals and other rituals may help one accept the reality of one's loss.

#### EVERYONE IS UNIQUE

A person's way of feeling and expressing grief is unique to them and the nature of their loss. Some may feel irritable and restless, while others are quieter than usual or need to be distant from or close to others. Some feel they aren't the same person they were before the loss. Don't be surprised by conflicting feelings while grieving. For example, feeling both despair (about a death or job loss) and relief is expected.

The grieving process does not happen in a step-by-step, orderly fashion. Grieving tends to be unpredictable, with sad thoughts and feelings coming and going like a roller-coaster ride. After the early days of mourning, one may sense a lifting of numbness or sadness and experience a few days without tears. Then, for no apparent reason, the intense grief may strike again. It is important to note that

WARREN WONG ON UNSPLASH

# GRIEVING LOSSES

*It takes time.*

mourning that brings healing doesn't bypass any part of the grief process. It calls forth anger and sorrow and prompts hard questions and gut-level honesty. It takes the person into and through each wave of grief.

While grieving may make one want to isolate themselves from others and hold it all in, it's essential that they find some way of expressing their grief. Talking, writing, creating art or music, or being physically active are all helpful ways of dealing with grief.

There are several gifts associated with going through a grief process. The greatest gift is receiving God's comfort. A person who chooses to stuff or ignore their grief misses out on that greatest of gifts. Another gift that grieving brings is a person gradually getting to the place of letting go of what was taken from them or what (they now realize) was never theirs to begin with.

#### **THE GRIEF PROCESS**

Several years ago Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, a Swiss-American psychiatrist, described grief in stages. While we have learned more recently that



## The grieving process does not happen in a step-by-step, orderly fashion.

grief does not always occur in easily definable stages, it is helpful to know the typical process that most people experience when they grieve.

- » **Denial, numbness, and shock:** This stage protects the individual from experiencing the intensity of the loss. It may be helpful when the grieving person must act (for example, making funeral arrangements). Numbness is a normal reaction to an immediate loss and should not be confused with a lack of caring. As the individual slowly acknowledges the impact of the loss, denial and disbelief will diminish.
- » **Bargaining:** This stage may involve persistent thoughts about what could have been done to prevent the loss. People can become preoccupied with ways that things could have been better. Intense remorse or guilt may interfere with the healing process if this stage is not adequately resolved.
- » **Depression:** This stage of grief occurs in some people after they realize the true extent of the loss. Signs of depression may include sleep and appetite disturbances, a lack of energy and concentration, and crying spells. A person may feel loneliness, emptiness, isolation, and self-pity.
- » **Anger:** This reaction usually occurs when an individual feels helpless and powerless. Anger can stem from a feeling of abandonment through a loved one's death. An individual may be angry at the person who died, at God, or toward life in general.
- » **Acceptance:** In time, an individual may be able to come to terms with various feelings and accept the fact that the loss has occurred. Healing can begin once the loss integrates into the individual's life experiences.
- » **Adjusting to a new reality:** A person moves forward to a life in which what or who they lost is no longer present, and adjusts to enjoying other relationships. The mourner and their

support system need to be willing to practice empathy in navigating a "new normal."

### HOW TO BE HELPFUL

It is essential to allow a person to have their grief process and not try to "fix" them. Often the most helpful thing to do is simply to listen empathically, that is, with all your attention and focus, as if that person were the only person in the world. The "ministry of presence" can be helpful. Just being there with them helps to soothe feelings of loss and loneliness.

Be attentive to providing support after the immediate loss, as it will continue to be needed. Show respect and honor to the deceased (in the case of death). Examples might include tying a black ribbon where the person may have routinely sat in church, or remembering "firsts." Firsts refer to significant first holidays, birthdays, and anniversaries related to the loss. Anniversaries can be full of bittersweet memories. Also, pay attention to practical needs, such as meals, shopping, or mowing the lawn.

The most important way that a grieving person can be helped is through sincere, heartfelt prayer. God is the God of all comfort who comforts people in their pain (2 Cor. 1:1-4). As we are with grieving ones by both our presence and prayer, God moves powerfully in their lives to soothe their pain. Another powerful biblical reality is described in Isaiah 63:9: "In all their suffering he also suffered" (NLT).<sup>\*</sup> Jesus gives the ministry of presence and also of feeling the person's pain, experiencing their loss with them. He is the ultimate source of empathy, the one who never fails to soothe as we open our hearts to receive what He alone can give. 🍃

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# DEVELOPING YOUR COURAGE CAPACITY

In World War II Desmond Doss, a non-combatant military medic, rescued 75 men while operating under enemy fire.

Mother Teresa started a home for poor and homeless individuals in Calcutta, helping underprivileged persons to survive and thrive.

Juliane Koepcke, a 17-year-old girl, survived a plane crash, falling 10,000 feet from the sky, then survived 11 days in the Amazon jungle. Alone.

## UBIQUITOUS COURAGE

The Bible is full of courageous luminaries. Abel standing up to Cain, Noah building the ark, David confronting Goliath, Esther saving her people, John the Baptist speaking to power. And of course the quintessential example of courage: Jesus dying on the cross.

Courage includes the readiness to do small and big things that can positively impact the world. It is daily action performed with bravery and determination. It is standing up, speaking up, and helping out to make a difference. It is the willingness to face a terminal illness, danger, difficulties, and opposition with a spirit of resolve and fortitude.

An admirable quality that can be nurtured and developed, courage is that internal capacity that urges us to do the right thing according to a higher conviction.

## COURAGE CATEGORIES

Courage research reveals there are at least four types of everyday courage, which can be remembered by the acronym DIME.

*Disciplined courage* operates for noble purposes and remains deliberately and strategically steadfast, despite anticipated setbacks and failures.

*Intellectual courage* is motivated by an understanding of lofty principles, educational and ethical teachings, moral absolutes, and compelling convictions that lead us to challenge old assumptions or current practices.

*Moral courage* is inspired by righteous indignation that inspires us to stand and speak out when we see basic human rights violated, injustices perpetrated, and people treated unfairly.

*Empathetic courage* is acting altruistically and intentionally on behalf of others to help them realize their hopes and dreams, despite having to move away from one's personal bias and class-centric orientation.

## GROWING COURAGE

Whatever type of courage you may need to exercise, there are some helpful principles for how it can be nurtured and grown.

Foundationally, courage flows from character. Character is who you are and encompasses the values and principles you believe in. Paul outlines the building blocks of character in Philippians 4:8: thinking and acting on things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy. These are the characterological qualities that cultivate courage and provide a platform for the believer when the moment comes to act courageously.

Regardless of the outcome, courage materializes when we purpose to do good because it is the right thing to do, and it has the potential to make the world a better place.

Let us embrace opportunities to affirm and support courageous words, acts, and causes. Accept the challenge to develop your courage capacity today. 🦋

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TRANSFORMATION TIPS  
DELBERT W. BAKER



COURAGE IS THAT ADMIRABLE QUALITY THAT ALL HUMANS HAVE THAT CAN BE NURTURED AND DEVELOPED.



RUSS HARLAN © RHPA VIA GOODSALT.COM

## IN THE FLAMES

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*We can choose never to be alone.*

**MERLE POIRIER**

**F**our of our church members lost a parent in the same week. Two young mothers I know are dealing with aggressive cancer. Another is fighting brain cancer. A man died unexpectedly from a brain aneurysm. A teenager committed suicide. Another, in a serious car accident, might never walk again. A church administrator didn't wake up one morning. A baby

born four months too soon struggled for his life.

This long list of unfortunate incidences happened in the same year all within two weeks. In each circumstance the individuals were Christians. I'm guessing each of us could make a list of our own circumstances involving people we know, family members, or even strangers we encounter as we scroll through our social media feeds. Because we live in an evil world, we aren't surprised that bad stuff happens, but when it happens close to home, we are shaken.

A favorite Bible story for children, and perhaps all of us, is found in Daniel 3. Here we find Nebuchadnezzar with his famous golden image surrounded by a crowd of potential worshippers. We discover three of Daniel's friends—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego—standing in the midst of the crowd while the rest bow as directed. As things escalate, threats are made by the king, and the penalty for those who are disobedient is seen nearby in the form of a furnace, black smoke curling into the air as the fire is stoked to higher temperatures.

### REWRITING THE STORY

If allowed, I could easily rewrite the story of the three Hebrews. In my version the three Hebrews would have gotten lost on their way to the plain of Dura. Or they would have woken up with the biblical version of the flu. Or the furnace would have unexpectedly refused to light that morning. Or a mighty wind from nowhere would have blown over the

statue, and the event would have been canceled. Any of these would have prevented the young men from being where they were—standing between a hotter-than-hot furnace and an exceedingly angry king.

For comparison, let's look briefly at another Bible story, one I much more prefer, found in 2 Kings 6. Here we find the Syrian army encamped around the house of Elisha. Elisha's servant sees the vast army and panics. But then Elisha asks God to open the eyes of his servant. When He does, a greater army of angel chariots is revealed. This is exactly what I want to see. I want to fully embrace Psalm 34:7: "The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them." I want to imagine that everywhere we go—or where my long list of family, friends, colleagues, and church members go—everything will be OK because we are followers of Christ. I want to believe that evil loses every time because we're surrounded by a circle of angel chariots. But bad things happen. Cancer. Accidents. Suicide. Unexpected and unexplained tragedies. Why the furnace instead of the army?

John Calvin, the well-known theologian, points out that God could have easily snuffed out the flames to save the three men, but He [God] saved them *in* the fire, not *from* the fire.\* While I might want to rewrite the story, God didn't. God chose to preserve their lives, not by extinguishing the flames or avoiding the entire experience, but instead joining them in the furnace. In so doing, the Hebrew young men became a testament of a greater God to a pagan king and those surrounding the image. Being thrown into a fire isn't what anyone would choose, but they were saved in their experience.

While we can accept this, it isn't completely satisfying. Sometimes we aren't saved from the fire. Sometimes cancer wins. Sometimes people don't wake up. Sometimes accidents are fatal. It can appear that the fire wins after all.

### COMPLETING THE THOUGHT

But listen to what Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego say *before* their fiery experience: "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us

**I want to imagine that everywhere I go, everything will be OK because we are followers of Christ.**

from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up'" (Dan. 3:16-18).

Did you catch it? Three simple words: *but if not*. We choose to worship God no matter what challenging circumstances this sinful world brings. What's crucial is that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego made this decision *before* their walk to Dura. They determined this before they ever saw the fiery furnace. It was a choice and commitment made much earlier and practiced each day.

We can agree that angel chariots are preferable to fiery furnaces. But at some point we too must accept God as all-knowing and all-powerful. We must choose to serve Him in spite of our circumstances. Even if what happens causes incredible pain, we accept His plan. We may get tossed into the furnace, but we are never alone. When we choose to serve Him, God is always walking in the midst of the fire.

These words I write are much easier to say in the midst of calm than in the middle of chaos. When bad things happen, it's easy to lose our focus. It's easy to look down in our despair, but we must remember and practice each day, Immanuel, "God with us," so that when trouble comes, we do not fear, despite being assaulted by flames. We may not always feel His presence, but whether or not we perceive His presence, Jesus is there and always will be, either to save *from* the flames or *in* the flames, if not today, for eternity. ♣

\*John Calvin, *Daniel 1*, p. 143.

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# WHEN GRIEF IS YOUR COMPANION

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*Experiencing life's journey  
alongside an unexpected  
partner*

## AUDREY ANDERSSON

They were simple questions: Date of birth? Age? I looked at the form and felt paralyzed. I wanted to write born October 23, 2016; age, 6½. Anyone looking at me would tell me not to be so ridiculous. I am clearly a middle-aged woman. However, both facts are true. I am middle-aged, and I am also 6½. A split-second accident six and a half years ago killed my husband. His life ended, and my life changed completely. Life as I knew it and the future we had taken for granted disappeared in that instant. A new life began. A life I had never anticipated. A life I definitely didn't want began. I had to learn to negotiate a new world, where I didn't know the rules.

Six and a half years on I realize that this is a journey in which there are no quick fixes or magic solutions. It is a journey that will last for the rest of my life. An unwanted journey watered with tears and blessed by the sunshine of God's grace. A journey in which I have learned to know the goodness of God in new and amazing ways.

## A UNIQUE JOURNEY

Everyone's experience of significant loss is unique. Two siblings mourning the loss of a parent will experience it differently. Their personality, life experience, and relationship to their parent will determine how they respond to the death.

Following my husband's death, someone said, "Welcome to the club no one wants to join." I didn't understand. She explained that once you have experienced significant

loss, it changes you. After a while you recognize others who have shared that experience. One becomes sensitized to loss and resonates with it in others. It may be the death of a spouse after a long illness, or sudden, traumatic loss. The death of a child, born or unborn. The gradual loss of a parent through Alzheimer's or dementia, until death finally completes the process. Significant loss comes in many different forms.

Although everyone's journey is unique, there are commonalities—experiences that seem to cut across all kinds of significant loss and resonate with others. For example, a friend whose husband died recently commented to a colleague that her brain felt as if it were enveloped in fog, and she was permanently exhausted. The colleague immediately understood what she was talking about. Her experience was very different. Her son committed suicide, yet she understood the foggy brain syndrome and was able to offer comfort and understanding. Very different situations, but there was a touchpoint where they connected. The acknowledgment that someone else had gone through this and survived gave her courage, and assured my

## Grief is not a process that you go through, and once you have ticked off all the stages you are able to continue as though nothing has happened.

friend she was not going mad. Being vulnerable and open to share brings benefits and blessings.

### LIFE ON HOLD

In the immediate aftermath of death, everything seems to go into a state of suspended animation. Some immediate decisions need to be made about the funeral. Decisions that cannot wait. Days pass in a blur. People come and offer condolences and support, sending flowers and cards. The day of the funeral comes, and afterward people drift back to their everyday lives. The only problem is you can't. The life you want to go back to no longer exists.

At this stage people often offer fake comfort: "I know it doesn't feel like it, but time heals all things." Death is not an illness, something to be cured, or that you get over. Grief is not a process that you go through, and once you have ticked off all the stages you are able to continue as though nothing has happened. Loss is something that you learn to integrate, to live with, but you don't get over it.

### LOVE DOESN'T DIE

Grief has been described as "love that has nowhere to go." Death cuts off our ability to interact with someone. Suddenly it is not possible to share the trivial happenings of the day, ask for their advice, go for a walk, or do all the things that make a relationship meaningful. Death doesn't change the fact that we love someone, but it changes the way that love is expressed.

When you love someone, you talk about them. You tell others about your experiences together and share memories. Initially others indulge you, whispering, "It's all part of the grieving process." As time progresses there is less understanding. It is not uncommon to hear "You really mustn't dwell in the past; you need to look forward" or "It's not healthy

to keep talking about . . . ; you need to move on."

They are correct: talking is one way of processing, but that is only part of the picture. Those shared experiences are part of who you are. Yes, that part of your life is finished, but that doesn't change the fact that it is part of who you are. Acknowledging the past is one way of integrating that love and moving forward.

### REDRAWING THE MAP

Although life and plans changed when my husband died, there were some things that we had talked about that seemed important to continue: delivering a promised birthday treat for a sibling; arranging a trip to England for my mother-in-law. It wasn't the same, as he wasn't there; but doing things that I knew would have given him pleasure provided a breathing space.

Inevitably the day came when there were no more joint plans and projects. I was on my own. Sometimes I asked myself then, *If Lars were here, what would he suggest?* My imaginary conversations helped me redraw the map. Again, it provided a breathing space.

As time passes, the distance between our lived experience and my current situation is so significant that I recognize those decisions must be made by me. One of the hardest lessons on this unwanted journey is to reach out and ask for help. People are willing to help; they just don't know how.

### CHANGED RELATIONSHIPS

Death impacts all our relationships. In the immediate aftermath of significant loss, there are people you believed that you could count on no matter what happened, yet when the unthinkable happens, they are not there. There are many reasons, but the most common is that they feel uncomfortable, afraid that they might say the wrong thing or hurt you by reminding you of what you have lost.

People you didn't know well take a more prominent role in your life, providing support and understanding. Often they are people who have either experienced significant loss or have seen it at close quarters. Some of these people may come for only a short while; others become friends for life.

As time progresses, social networks will change. Couples often feel uncomfortable inviting a widow or widower. Some things that could be done with

a spouse cannot be done alone, creating a natural change in companions or activities.

Learning to let go of friendships that no longer work is difficult. Holding on and trying to make something work creates additional pain. Finding ways of celebrating what was and being open to creating new friendships and networks is an essential tool in integrating loss into your new life.

### **MULTIPLE LOSSES**

Death is the largest and most significant loss that anyone can face. In the case of the death of a spouse, the surviving spouse suddenly must face life alone. Life patterns and plans change at every level. From small habits, such as who takes the garbage out, to life-impacting decisions regarding housing or retirement.

As time progresses, other losses emerge. The inability to share significant life events, such as graduations, weddings, or the birth of grandchildren. Their absence is felt more keenly on these occasions. However, the grief is not just for their absence; it is also for the life that they did not get to live. All the dreams that they did not get to fulfill. In death there are no winners, only losers.

### **RECURRING LOSS**

When someone dies, everyone talks about the first year. The first birthday, Thanksgiving, and Christmas without them. The first birthday they didn't get to celebrate. It sounds like if one can only get through that first year, everything will be better. You will have "gotten over the worst of it"; you will have "moved on." When the first anniversary or deathiversary arrives, there is a sense of relief at having survived the year of firsts, only to realize that there is a year of seconds, and thirds, and . . . the years stretch out.

With each passing year loss and grief change. The raw pain of immediate loss recedes. The heart-shaped hole that someone leaves behind remains and becomes part of the landscape of our lives.

As we move forward, events will happen, forcing us to revisit and reprocess our loss. Recently I moved to the United States. Having moved many times, I didn't anticipate that this would be any different from any other move. It was. I had made all the other moves as part of a family or with my husband. Suddenly all the decisions were mine, and I found myself having to take time to sit and

reprocess and remember that I was only 6½ and didn't have all the answers. Sometimes being 6½ in an adult world can be exhausting; at times like this, be kind to yourself. Give yourself the compassion that you would offer to someone else.

### **A DAMAGED BLUEPRINT**

According to God's original blueprint, we were created to live forever, enjoying ever-deepening relationships with Him and each other. When human beings chose to listen to the serpent, sin damaged the blueprint, and death entered our world. Ever since, humanity has struggled to deal with the pain of separation from God and those we love.

### **MOVING FORWARD**

Easter Sunday, six months after my husband died, I stopped to admire a beautiful cherry tree on my morning walk. As I looked, I remembered that nine months earlier we had had a bad storm, and a very large branch (almost half the tree) had been ripped off. My husband and I had noticed it on our morning walk, and he had stated quite categorically that they would need to cut the tree down. It couldn't possibly survive. But here it was in full bloom.

As I looked at the tree, I saw the scar where the branch had been. Yes, the tree was misshapen; yes, there was a scar; but the tree was still beautiful. Even the scar had a beauty—cherry wood has a lovely reddish grain. It was one of those moments it seemed as though God tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Yes, you are scarred, but some scars are beautiful. They remind you of love and loss. The scars make you who you are; be proud of them and what they represent. However, don't focus on the scar. Remember the abundant blessings I have given you. Blossom and flourish and draw strength from what has been."

There will be times you'll feel that everything is fine, and at the most unexpected moment a sight, smell, word, or action will make your loss feel unbearably heavy. In joy and grief God is there. Moving forward after loss is the work of a lifetime: learning and relearning about the goodness of God and how to recognize it in the most unexpected places. In my experience God has never failed in the past. He is with me today, so I have nothing to fear as I look to the future. 🍀

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**Audrey Andersson** is a general vice president of the General Conference.



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## RESCUED FROM THE QUARRY

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*Cutting, chiseling, and polishing for eternity*

LEO J. POIRIER

**M**y great-grandson Connor is 7 and enjoys all things outdoors. He's drawn to sticks, rocks, and will never turn down a good splash in the creek. I guess that's not surprising with children everywhere.

For Christmas this past year, Connor's parents gave him a rock polisher. He was super-enthusiastic as he hunted for rocks to drop into the polisher. Once they were gathered, he

placed them carefully inside. As the polisher was turned on, it made quite a racket, so much so it was eventually moved to the garage, where it wasn't such a bother. It was all very exciting until my great-grandson learned that it didn't take hours to polish a rock, not even days, but weeks! That meant a lot of noise and time to wait for the finished product.

There's definitely a spiritual lesson found in rock polishing. It reminds me of trips years ago with my son, Connor's grandfather.

"Look what I found!" Those were the words I often heard from Tim during one of our favorite father-and-son activities. We would visit old gem mines to sort and poke through piles of broken stones and debris, looking for unusual rocks or minerals for his rock collection. On this particular occasion I stumbled and climbed over the debris to reach his side and see what he had found. Tim was holding a black object in his hands, bar-shaped, about three or four inches long, which looked like it had been broken off from a longer piece. After further study, we suspected he was holding a large piece of black tourmaline, one of the more popular gemstones. A very exciting find!

### TAKEN FROM THE QUARRY

When searching a mine or quarry, one can often see the marks made by the stonecutters. Sometimes there are long straight vertical lines where a drill bit cut through. In other places the marks of a jackhammer can be seen. Still other marks show the use of a sledge-



hammer or small hammer and chisel. All these marks tell a story of the rough cutting and painful work that must be done to begin the creation of an object of beauty. Taken from the quarry, what can look like an unremarkable stone will undergo a transformation. The stone will experience finer chiseling, sanding, and polishing before its unique luster can be seen, whether it be marble, granite, or one of the many precious or semiprecious gems.

The whole world is a quarry, and we are the rough stones that God, the Master Craftsman, wishes to refine and polish for His kingdom. For the unique characteristics of each individual Christian to be portrayed, the Holy Spirit cuts, chips, buffs, and polishes the rough edges of our personality. Notice how this process is described by Ellen White.

“By God’s mighty cleaver of truth we have been taken from the quarry of the world and brought into the workshop of the Lord to be prepared for a place in His temple. In this work the hammer and chisel must act their part, and then comes the polishing. Rebel not under this process of grace. You may be a rough stone, on which much work must be done before you are prepared for the place God designs you to fill. You need not be surprised if with the hammer and the chisel of trial God cuts away your defects of character. He alone can accomplish this work. And be assured that He will not strike one useless blow. His every blow is struck in love, for your eternal good and happiness. He knows your defects, and works to restore, not to destroy. He sends trials to you to make you strong to do and to suffer for Him.”<sup>1</sup>

### REFINING AND POLISHING

Whatever trials God permits to come our way, they are never easy to endure. They may involve heartache, pain, and a sense of being very much alone in our suffering. Like Connor’s rock polisher that takes longer than our patience may wish to endure, the trial may be extended, even for a lifetime. But we are never out of God’s hands and care. As the rock gives way to the hammer, our part is to place ourselves in His capable hands and trust Him.

Ellen White helps us understand this tremendous love of God. “You are mine. I have bought you. You are now only a rough stone, but if you

**The whole world is a quarry, and we are the rough stones that God, the Master Craftsman, wishes to refine and polish for His kingdom.**

will place yourself in My hands, I will polish you, and the luster with which you shall shine will bring honor to My name.”<sup>2</sup>

Reading a bit further, we find that a warning comes along with this polishing process.

“This process is severe and trying; it hurts human pride. Christ cuts deep into the experience that man in his self-sufficiency has regarded as complete, and takes away self-uplifting from the character. He cuts away the surplus surface, and putting the stone to the polishing wheel, presses it close, that all roughness may be worn away. Then, holding the jewel up to the light, the Master sees in it a reflection of Himself, and He pronounces it worthy of a place in His casket.”

The process of extracting and crafting a precious jewel from a quarry is similar, whether from a physical stone quarry or a spiritual one. It’s not the quarry or the stone that makes the quality of the final jewel, it’s the craftsman. Many a fine diamond has been unearthed from its resting place far beneath the surface, only to have it mistakenly cleaved, destroying its potential beauty and worth. But we have nothing to fear when the Master Craftsman begins His work on us. He hammers and chisels in love, shaping and preparing a masterpiece—an eternal gem that will belong to Him forever. “Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh” (Eze. 11:19).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>In *Review and Herald*, June 20, 1907.

<sup>2</sup>In *Review and Herald*, Dec. 19, 1907.

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*This is a lightly edited version of a sermon preached on January 28, 2023, at the Triadelphia Seventh-day Adventist Church in Clarksville, Maryland. Elements of the oral presentation have been retained.*  
—Editors.

**H**ave you known real terror?  
We've all been afraid and anxious, but there are some moments when fear is absolutely raw.

It happened many years ago, but I remember it as if it were yesterday. We were living in Peru and decided with a group of friends to travel high up into the Andes Mountains, on the altiplano, to a tiny village. After an adventurous journey involving delays and missed turns, we finally arrived at our destination in the dark. The little village high up in the Andes couldn't be accessed by road. We had to leave our cars parked on the side of the road and hike up a narrow path to reach the village. Because it was already dark, we were met and guided to the place where we would stay. Our guide had a flashlight out in front, and the rest of us just held on to each other as we went to the house. We entered the large room by climbing up a flight of stairs.

After a full day of travel, including some altitude sickness, we just put down our sleeping bags and were all soon sound asleep. I woke up in the middle of the night realizing that I needed to find a bathroom. It was pitch-black. I found my way to the door by carefully feeling along the wall, and slowly opened the door. Outside it was as dark as inside. A night without any moonlight. Clouds must have covered the sky, because I couldn't see a single star or even a shadow.

I slowly felt my way down the flight of stairs and along the rough mud wall to the corner of the building, and then I paused as I had heard something. I realized that I wasn't alone. I heard something breathe. All the hair on the back of my neck stood up. I froze in terror. Somewhere near me was something, and I had no idea what it was. Then I heard the heavy breathing again. This sounded big. I don't know for how long I froze there, but suddenly I had a burst of energy, and I practically flew back up those stairs. I no longer needed to find a bathroom.

# TIMES OF TROUBLE

*A survival guide*

The next morning dawned beautiful and clear. Together with the group I made my way down the stairs. I was interested to see if there was any evidence of my nocturnal encounter. I made my way to the corner of the house and was met by a shoulder-high wall. Peering over the wall, I looked into the large, long face of a—donkey.

## **NO JOKE**

My brush with terror ended humorously. When we talk of terror, however, we normally don't think it's funny. Mention to most Adventists the phrase "the time of trouble," and one can almost see the fear in the air. Today I'd like to go back to the original "time of trouble" mentioned in Scripture, which serves as both a preview and a map of all the times of trouble. Jacob's time of trouble is described in Genesis 32. But before reading the story, let's review the background to this time of trouble.

Times of trouble always have a backstory. Jacob's time of trouble had a troubling backstory. We remember that Jacob was one of twins. His brother, Esau, was the older of the twins, and when Jacob was born, he apparently grabbed his brother's heel. This is what inspired his name in Hebrew, which had a double meaning. The "one who grabs the heel" is also a deceiver or a cheat. That's not a complimentary name. All wasn't bad, however, because his mother had been given a divine message before his birth that the younger would inherit

the birthright and become the heir and continue the line from which the Messiah would come.

What Jacob, born a deceiver, really wanted seemed out of reach. His potential just was never seen until maybe he believed that he didn't have any.

Jacob hustled for the blessing. He wanted that birthright. He wanted the spiritual blessings that would come with it. We can see that Esau was clearly not fit to receive this inheritance by the way he quickly sold it for a pot of lentil stew. This whole exchange is somewhat suspect. How can one buy or sell a blessing?

## **DECEIVING—AND BEING DECEIVED**

Jacob's sad story involves more scheming—this time with his mother—to get the blessing finally by pretending to be his brother. Life takes a sharp downturn for Jacob after this. He is forced to flee, for Esau has vowed to kill him. He flees to his uncle, and there the tables are quickly turned, and Jacob finds himself the victim of many painful schemes. He gets tricked into marrying the wrong woman. He has his wages continually changed on him. And then he becomes what seems to be a helpless pawn to his wives, who are two sisters, as they compete to have children. Despite all this headwind Jacob is blessed and flourishes financially. But homelife certainly isn't easy. Finally, God tells Jacob to leave and go back home. After a tense getaway, with his father-in-law in hot

pursuit, Jacob is finally able to leave. Having escaped his irate father-in-law, however, Jacob suddenly faces another challenging situation that leads to his great time of trouble.

### **A LONG JOURNEY HOME**

Genesis 32 describes what causes Jacob's time of trouble. But I wonder: What causes times of trouble in general? I think it's a combination of things. Sometimes circumstances outside of our control play into creating the perfect storm. But we also know that our great adversary, the devil, delights in causing as much pain and trouble as possible. In Jacob's case we see lots of things that play into the devil's plans. There is the sibling rivalry from prebirth. The parenting he had certainly didn't make things better. And then there were Jacob's choices. His desire to get the birthright was not bad. It was based on a belief in God's promises. But Jacob still had to learn how to wait for God's timing. Jacob hadn't learned that God isn't interested only in the result of our actions; He uses the process to draw us closer to Him. God will even use times of trouble.

Genesis 32:1, 2 begin on a very positive note with an angelic encounter intended to encourage Jacob on his journey home. He sees angels. This should be enough to encourage him and keep him confident through any issues ahead, right? How can one have a time of trouble after seeing angels?

Wait a minute. Have you ever been encouraged in your life? Has God ever done something special for you? Have you ever seen God's providence or perhaps even a miracle? Have you noticed that as encouraging as that past experience was, when we're faced with a crisis all of the past evidence seems to evaporate?

Jacob has sent messengers ahead to announce to his brother that he's on his way back (verses 3-5). No one likes surprises—especially unpleasant surprises. Jacob calls himself "your servant" and Esau "my Lord." He wants to make it clear that he's not a threat; that he's not coming home to claim the birthright. The report that comes back, however, instead of calming him, increases his anxiety (verse 6).

Spoiler alert: In this time of trouble God is about to become real and personal in more ways than Jacob can ever imagine. We get insights into Jacob's state of mind as he prays. He is claiming the promises, which is one of the best ways to

pray (verses 9-12). But his prayer doesn't bring instant relief. Have you ever prayed and not had instant answers? I have. Sometimes God seems very silent. I suppose I often can't hear Him over the noise of all my anxieties and fears. For Jacob, fear and tension grow, along with it a terrible sense of guilt. Jacob looks at his children, his wives, the servants, and he realizes that he has put them all in danger.

Ever the strategist, he divides his group into two, hoping to provide some sense of hope. He tries again to make contact with Esau by sending a pretty substantial gift along with the disarming message, and then in verse 24 we find him all alone.

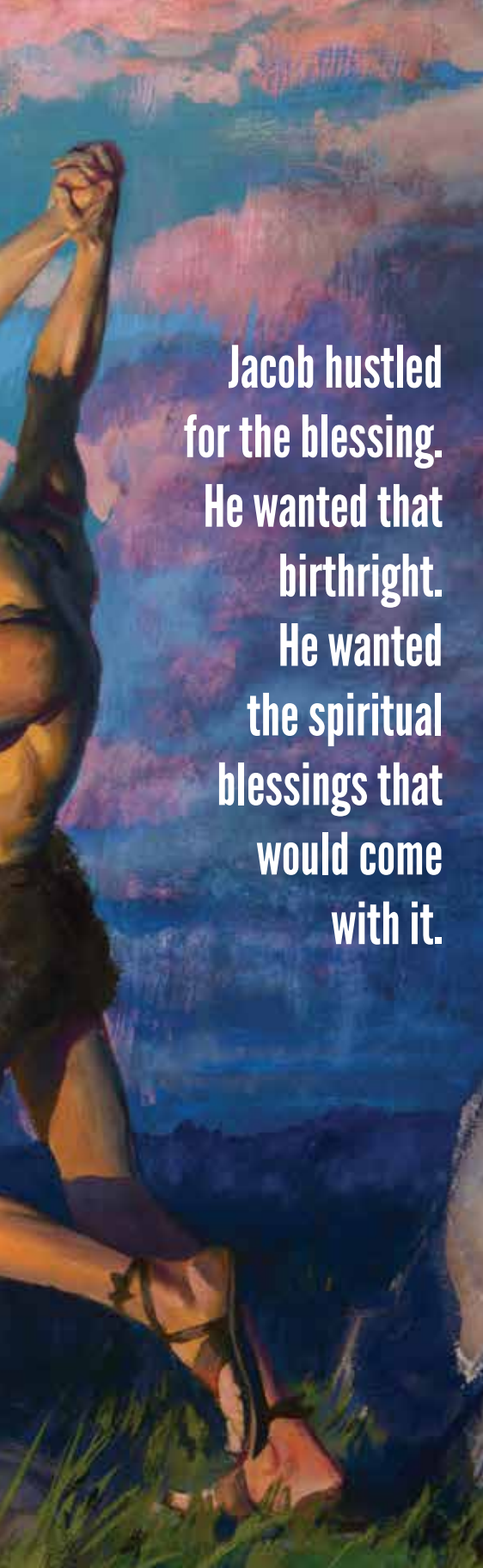
### **ALONE—IN HIS PRESENCE**

This is not the first time Jacob has been alone. Running for his life, he slept under the stars with a stone for a pillow (see Gen. 28). It was there that Jacob was comforted by a wonderful vision of a ladder reaching from the earth to the heavens, with angels ascending and descending on it. When he woke up, he called the place Bethel, the "house of God." It was there that he committed his life to God in a new way. When all earthly help and comfort is stripped away, those are the moments God comes through. He doesn't leave us hanging. He is present.

Once again Jacob is alone, and this time the stakes are even higher. This time he is responsible for many more lives. This time he realizes that the consequences of his sins are affecting many more people than just himself. And so Jacob begins wrestling. Wrestling with his sense of guilt. That's a fight each of us must fight in our own personal times of trouble.

Satan has an extremely effective strategy. When we're tempted to do something, say something, react in some way, or make a choice that is wrong, he makes it seem so inconsequential. But once we've made that choice, once we've taken that step, once we've taken a bite from that fruit, suddenly his strategy changes. Guilt overwhelms us. He tells us that we've gone too far, that we can never go back. We are no longer loved or lovable. This is such an effective move. It keeps us alone in the dark. Too scared, too guilty, to come to God.

And yet God couldn't be clearer. There are so many verses. Remember John 3:16 or Isaiah 49:15,



**Jacob hustled  
for the blessing.  
He wanted that  
birthright.  
He wanted  
the spiritual  
blessings that  
would come  
with it.**

or, one of my favorites: “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you” (Jer. 31:3). The list goes on and on. Yet in these moments we struggle to believe these verses. It’s easy enough to tell others that God loves them, but often it’s most difficult to really believe that God loves me. This is a faith struggle. Faith can sound like a real big and complicated concept—but it isn’t.

As Jacob is wrestling with his own sense of guilt, he suddenly feels a hand on his shoulder. He spins around, and with a burst of adrenaline he tries to shake off his supposed attacker. Apparently the Hebrew word translated “wrestle” in this chapter is expressed elsewhere as “embrace.” Terrified Jacob, guilt-ridden Jacob, spends the night fighting off God’s embrace.

Through those many hours of struggled breathing, straining muscles, and palpable fear, not a word is said. Near dawn something happens. Suddenly the divine Wrestler reaches out and touches Jacob’s hip. Jacob is defeated by a simple touch. And then Jacob’s wrestling partner speaks. All at once Jacob realizes that this is no enemy—this is a friend. Everything then changes for Jacob.

#### **THE BLESSING**

Jacob realizes that he has been wrestling God. Instead of fighting to get away, Jacob—with his dislocated hip and in great pain—fights to hold on. With every bit of energy and strength that he has he hangs on and refuses to leave even when the stranger says that it’s time to let go. Jacob finally believes that he is holding everything he’s ever wanted, everything he’s ever dreamed of. Jacob knows that all of his planning, all of his scheming, all of his trying, is no good. If he is to get that blessing that he’s always yearned for, it will have to be a gift. The only thing he can do to get it is to hang on with all his might and ask for it. It won’t be earned. It will come only as a gift.

Then something very wonderful, unexpected, happens. Jacob doesn’t just get a blessing. He receives a new name (verse 28). His new name is Israel. From now on his children will not be known as the children of Abraham or the nation of Isaac or even as the descendants of Jacob the cheat, the liar, or the man with a very difficult family situation—no, he is now Israel. Why? Because he has learned to hang on to God. He has learned that he



He has learned  
that even when  
we're in physical  
pain, even when we  
are blinded by guilt  
and fear, we can  
hang on, and that's  
all we can do.

brings nothing to the table. He has learned that even when we're in physical pain, even when we are blinded by guilt and fear, we can hang on, and that's all we can do. This is what God counts as victory!

The next morning a tired, pale, limping Jacob (or better, Israel) meets Esau unafraid. As we look back over Jacob's time of trouble, we realize that while Jacob may have felt overwhelmed, terrified, and alone—he never was. God was working. God was intervening. God was speaking to Esau, and God longed to take Jacob in His arms. It took many hours of painful wrestling for Jacob to realize this, but once he did, he became a victor.

### OUR TIMES OF TROUBLE

I don't know where you are today. Are you facing a personal time of trouble? Are you wrestling with guilt? Are you trying to figure out if your bad choices have brought you to where you are or if you've just been hit by terrible circumstances? Are you afraid? Are you facing physical pain? emotional pain? Are you wrestling with worry for children, for parents, for a loved one? Do you feel alone? We are told that one day for those living in the last times of earth's history there will be a great collective time of trouble too. How will we be able to face that? The same way that we face these smaller personal times of trouble.

What can we learn from Jacob's time of trouble? First, we bring our guilt—no matter where it comes from—to God and leave it there. We hang on to and store away in our memories His great and powerful biblical promises. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Then, instead of fighting off or wrestling out of His embrace, we hang on. In faith we hang on. We hang on to Jesus—even when it's dark. Even when we don't understand. Even when our past comes back to haunt us—we hang on and let Him lead us as the Good Shepherd through the dark valley, knowing that surely goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives and we shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. 📌

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**Chantal J. Klingbeil**, Ph.D., has been a cross-cultural missionary for nearly 30 years and served as an associate director in the Ellen G. White Estate from 2013 to 2023. She has recently moved with her family to Germany.

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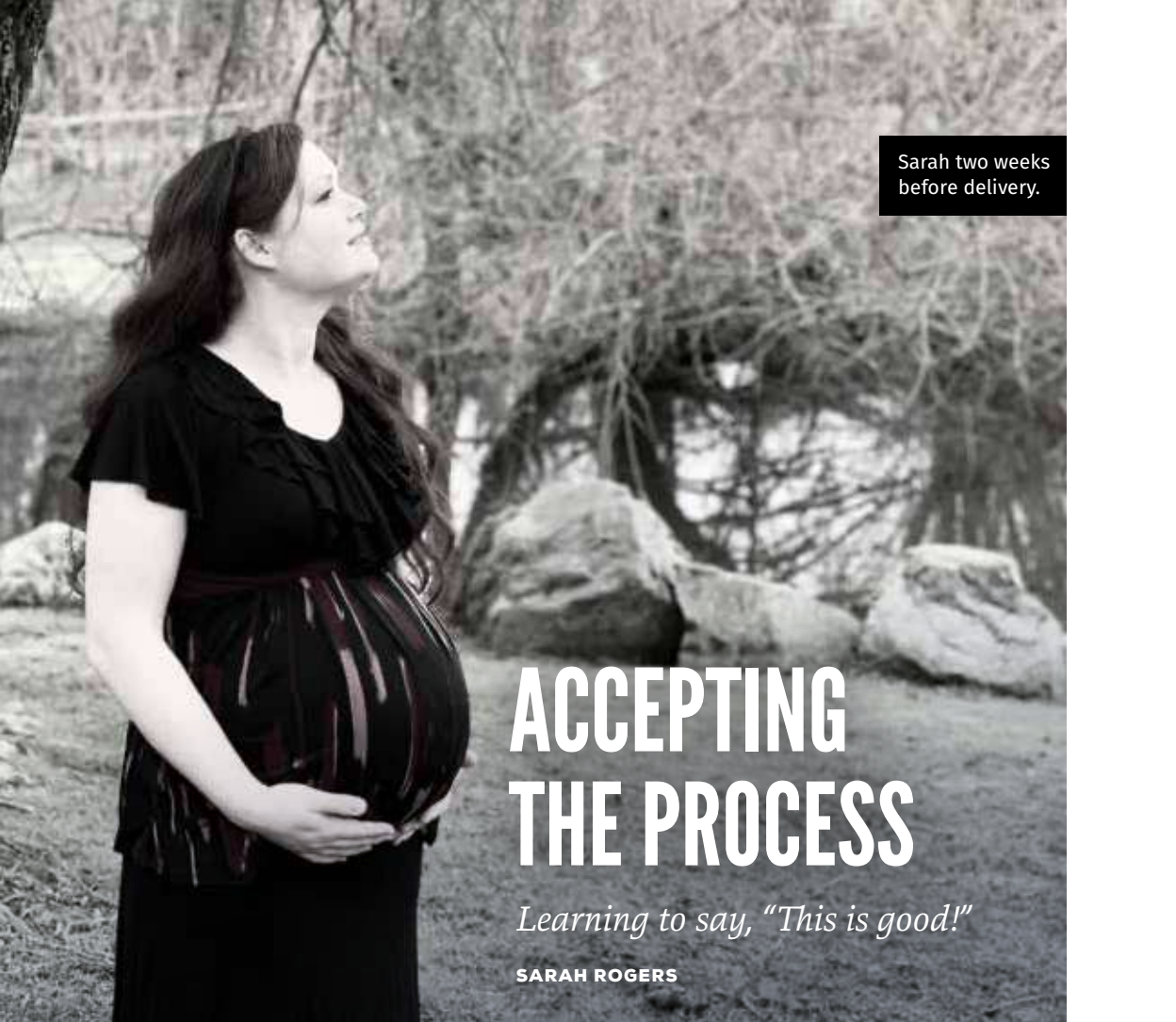
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Sarah two weeks before delivery.

# ACCEPTING THE PROCESS

*Learning to say, "This is good!"*

SARAH ROGERS

**M**y heart pounded inside my chest, and I was suddenly out of breath. Once again my breathing intensified, and I sat down heavily on the closest chair to ensure that I, along with the growing baby inside my belly, would not plummet to the ground. *Lord, why do I keep having these near-fainting spells? Please take this dizziness from me!* It seemed this was one prayer that wasn't being answered in the way I was hoping for, but in the meantime I trusted God.

My blood pressure remained quite low throughout my pregnancy, and yet none of the tests the neonatal and cardiac specialists performed revealed the cause. Routine tasks, sometimes even sitting, produced these debilitating moments. Many times the alert on my Apple watch would sound the alarm that something was wrong with my heart. A Holter monitor was used to track these episodes for a period of time, and although they were well documented, everything showed that my heart was working properly and that there was nothing to be concerned about. So I went about my days, drinking lots of water and praying for strength—and for God to remove this malady from me.

The pinnacle moment was early one Sabbath when I joined the prayer team at Church in the Valley for our regular morning prayer walk. I was touching each seat, praying for the people who would sit in them for worship when the dizziness suddenly hit, and I had to sit down. This heavily pregnant woman caused quite a stir for those in the sanctuary that morning! My husband was even called to my side. Once again we prayed, this time with the prayer team joining us. I was reminded of the 31 Days of Prayer we had been a part of nearly two years prior, and how I had written down a simple



private request for a baby to join our family at the appropriate time. This baby nestled in my womb was the miracle I had asked God for. So why was the path to welcoming this little one marred with such terrifying moments? I didn't have to wait long for my answer.

### **SURVIVING PREGNANCY**

Soon after, while 36 weeks pregnant, the specialists sent me to a new cardiovascular surgeon. Upon meeting, Dr. Khambati extended his hand and said, "Congratulations on surviving your pregnancy!" His words immediately caused my ears to tingle. Was this real? My surgeon continued to explain that what had been presumed as a scar from a previous injury on my abdominal aorta was actually an extremely rare and dangerous saccular aneurysm. Making it rarer still was the fact that I was pregnant. Were it to burst, my unborn baby and I would die within minutes. Suddenly the reason that my blood pressure kept plummeting for all of these months became clear. My husband and I found ourselves praising God for not answering our prayers in the way that we had asked, because He was literally preserving my life and our baby's! Had my blood pressure been raised as requested, we would have both perished.

The following week was a flurry of excitement and anxiousness as my baby was born via C-section (to prevent the aneurysm from bursting). I now needed to recover from the birth and have the problem corrected with a stent at a later date. In the meantime I was able to focus on getting to know this sweet baby girl that had joined our family of boys. But all too soon our excitement was dampened by the news that I did not qualify for a stent. A simple, nearly painless procedure that had me going home the same day was now turning into a seriously invasive surgery, one in which I would not even be able to carry my baby for two months, with a total recovery time of one year. Those were tough days. The Lord brought this verse to my mind more than once: "'Not by might nor by power, but by My spirit,' says the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 4:6).

Most days I had to live day by day, and sometimes it was a moment-by-moment process. The pressure and burden of living a real-life game of roulette is not easy. It can present itself as a drain-

ing vortex that makes us feel an immense pressure of responsibility to stay alive for family and friends. I wanted my children to have a mother and my husband to have a wife. I wanted to grow old with him and to see my children graduate, marry, and start families of their own. I carried on as normally as I could, and learned in the process to say every day, "This is good."

### **GAINING A NEW PERSPECTIVE**

What if we don't get the miracle we have asked for? What if the pain and suffering doesn't end in the way or the timing we ask? On the path to learning to say, "This is good," I came to this place of agreement that it wasn't only about me, and I grieved what I needed to grieve. The more I practiced saying "This is good," as the seemingly bad things presented themselves in my life, the more it became action within me. I was able to let go of doing things on my own, and allowed God to do His work within me.



**I learned that my suffering does not change or diminish God's power, but His influence in the midst of my suffering changes and empowers me.**



Sarah with her daughter, age 3.

“Ask, then; ask, and ye shall receive. Ask for humility, wisdom, courage, increase of faith. To every sincere prayer an answer will come. It may not come just as you desire, or at the time you look for it; but it will come in the way and at the time that will best meet your need. The prayers you offer in loneliness, in weariness, in trial, God answers, not always according to your expectations, but always for your good.”\*

I went through with the big surgery when my daughter was 9 months old. I am so grateful for the many friends and family members God blessed me with who gave meals, funds, child care, encouragement, and tended to me and my baby with round-the-clock care. The time spent in the hospital and the road to recovery was difficult, painful, and long with many challenges. I learned that my suffering does not change or diminish God’s power, but His influence in the midst of my suffering changes and empowers me. I continue to thank Him for the painful situations I go through! He saved my life and that of my daughter, and

then He showed me the good through my disappointments and challenges of recovery. And the best part is that now He sends people my way to minister to, people who face similar challenges.

O Lord, when our eyes are so blinded by circumstance, worry, and care, help us remember to lift up our eyes and know where our help comes from. It is not always in the seeing, but in the doing, in spite of the darkness of our situations. Please fill us with Your Holy Spirit and give us divine opportunities to serve You even as we accept the process of suffering. We want to continually say, “This is good!” and to acknowledge You as the God of provision; therefore, we ask for You to empower us in the midst of our suffering and that of others. We ask this all in the precious name of Jesus. Amen! 🙏

\* Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1915), p. 258.

**Sarah Rogers** lives in British Columbia, Canada, with her husband, Walter (children’s pastor at Church in the Valley), and their four children. She serves as the prayer ministry coordinator for the British Columbia Conference.

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A nest of sticks is in the foreground, and a glowing orb is in the background against a blue sky with clouds.

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# “NOT JUDGING, BUT DOING”

For more than a decade my favorite book by Ellen White was *Steps to Christ*. I'd read it at least yearly, buying a new copy every time to read it “afresh.” It was an elixir for my soul as I sought to ground myself in God's love and His plan to save me.

All that changed a few years ago, however, because of two pages in another book of hers that I finally read. The book? *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*. The pages? The first two pages in a section called “Not Judging, but Doing.”\*

There, reflecting on Jesus' words in Matthew 7:1, “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (KJV), White explains how being insecure in God's love leads people to judge others. Such people, she writes, “pile up human exactions as a barrier against sin.” They construct a “system of human invention” and create “multitudinous exactions,” becoming “self-centered judges and petty spies,” and judging all “who come short of [their] prescribed human standard.” What's more, they intrude “upon the province of conscience” and condemn “one another in matters that lay between the soul and God.”

What she describes is essentially what Jews call *chumra*, or “building a fence around the Torah.” Afraid of going anywhere close to violating the law, and thus forfeiting their status as God's chosen people, they pile up rule upon rule, believing their security comes from staying as far from disobeying God's commands as possible. Such a practice inevitably leads to an attitude of judgment toward those who ignore the fence.

In reflecting on this spirit, Ellen White pulls no punches. “Do not set yourself up as a standard,” she thus writes. “Do not make your opinions, your views of duty,

your interpretations of Scripture, a criterion for others and in your heart condemn them if they do not come up to your ideal.” We should not “criticize others, conjecturing as to their motives and passing judgment upon them,” she says. After all, we can see only the “outward appearance” and cannot “read the heart.” We should thus leave such concerns to Christ, who alone “knows the secret springs of action, and who deals tenderly and compassionately.”

I could, of course, multiply examples of how we often judge others, trying to compel them to measure up to our “interpretations of Scripture.” But in so doing I'd be guilty of the very thing I'm writing against.

Suffice it to say, however, that no single “faction” of our faith community has the corner market on such a spirit. Looking at others with condescension, and judging them by our standards, is endemic in all of us—liberal and conservative alike—especially including me.

Instead, I wonder what would happen if we all committed ourselves to regularly reading these two pages, genuinely asking the Holy Spirit to show us how we participate in such an attitude, and then asking Christ to grow us in His love and away from such an attitude.

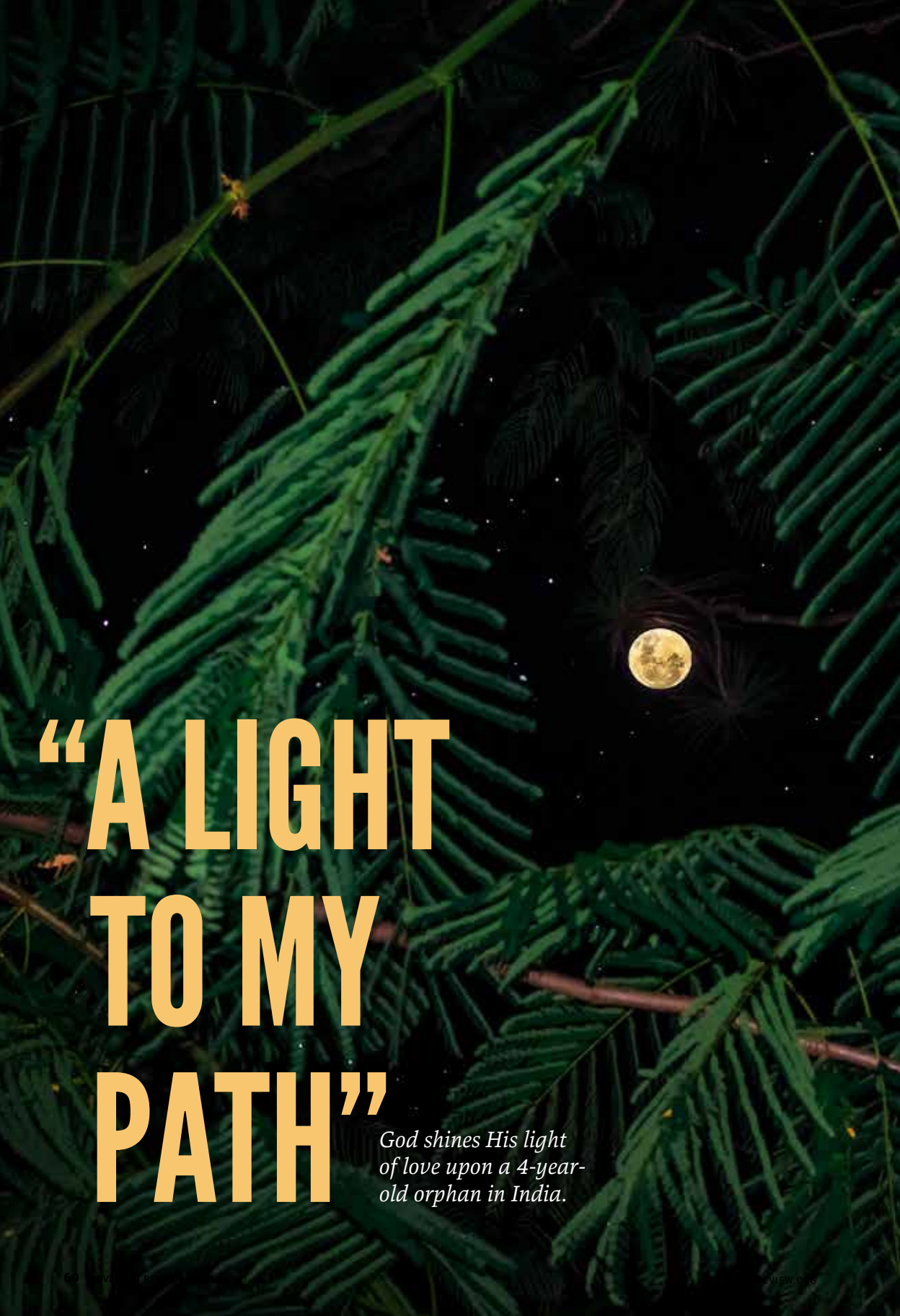
I think if we all committed ourselves to such a regular exercise, the world would be drawn into such a beautiful community of love. ♣

\* Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), pp. 123, 124.

**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.



LOOKING AT  
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INCLUDING ME.

A night scene featuring lush green ferns in the foreground. In the background, a full moon is visible against a dark sky filled with stars. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

# “A LIGHT TO MY PATH”

*God shines His light  
of love upon a 4-year-  
old orphan in India.*

## SANDRA BLACKMER AS TOLD BY BUJI STEFFEN

**A** small house made of clay and mud, with only one door as an entrance. No windows, no bathroom, no kitchen, no beds to sleep on—just straw. Only the jungle, lots of fruit trees, and a small stream surrounded the house.

These are Buji Steffen's memories of home when she was 4 years old. She, her two older sisters, and her mom and dad lived in an isolated jungle region of Ranchi, the capital of the Indian state of Jharkhand in northeastern India.

"We were very poor," Buji says. "And there were no other people around us except for an older couple who lived on the top of a hill."

Buji describes her parents as being "really quiet."

"My dad mostly stayed inside the house," Buji recalls. "Sometimes I would see my mom outside doing things, but not very often."

Buji was very close to her sisters. In the mornings they would play in a nearby pasture and eat fruit from the fruit trees. They would also take fruit home to their parents.

Then something happened to her oldest sister.

"One day she just disappeared. I never saw her again, and never found out what happened to her," Buji says. "She was about 12 years old at the time, so I don't know whether she was married off or got kidnapped. She was just gone."

Life, however, went on for the family until the day Buji's mom became ill. Buji recalls her mom coughing frequently and being nauseated. She also developed sores all over her body. And then, tragically, she died.

"My dad told my sister and me to go to the neighbors' house and bring the people back with us; so we did. The woman checked my mom and then told us that she had passed away and that she wasn't going to be our mother anymore."

"I was so young," Buji adds, "that I didn't realize what that meant."

The neighbors dug a grave next to the house and buried Buji's mom. But then a second tragedy occurred.

"The very next day my dad died," Buji says. "I think from a broken heart."

So the sisters again walked up the hill to the neighbors' home, and the couple came and buried her dad.

## SEARCHING FOR NEW PARENTS

Despite the girls being so very young, the neighbor woman told them, "Children, you need to go to the marketplace, where you will find a new mommy and daddy."

Buji describes the marketplace as a large outdoor area with open booths, where vendors would come to sell food and merchandise. So she and her sister walked by themselves to the marketplace.

"I don't know how long we walked," Buji says, "but when we arrived, my stomach was growling. It'd been a long time since we'd had anything to eat."

The girls discovered that if they held out their hands, people would give them food.

"I think it was because of the way we were dressed—in ragged, torn clothes," she surmises.

The girls continued strolling around, looking at everything. And then suddenly Buji's sister was no longer beside her.

"I didn't know what had happened to her," Buji says. "I was so scared. I ran around calling and screaming my sister's name until the sun began to go down and people were packing their stuff and getting ready to go home—but I couldn't find her."

Buji seems to recall someone who looked like her sister walking with a man who was holding her hand and getting onto a

train. Whether that was her sister, she doesn't know for sure. What she does know is that she never saw her sister again.

After the last person had left the marketplace, Buji headed back home by herself. Even though she was alone, there was Someone still caring for her.

"As I was going through the jungle, I clearly remember a huge, bright moon," she recalls. "It was so bright that I wasn't scared. It seemed like somebody was leading me back home. Today it reminds me of the Bible text 'Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path' [Ps. 119:105]."

Buji made it safely home, but the next morning the neighbors came to the door and asked, "What are you doing here? You're supposed to be at the marketplace finding a new mommy and daddy."

So she went back.

#### **A LIFESAIVING INTERVENTION**

Buji doesn't clearly remember what happened after that, but she somehow wandered into the streets of Calcutta, where she was found by Mother Teresa.

"I was later told that when Mother Teresa and the nuns found me, I was almost dead. I was very weak, my belly was big, and I had flies in my ears. I was hospitalized for about six months."

Every morning while Buji was in the hospital, Mother Teresa would visit her.

"She would talk to me and hold my face and pray for me. Then before she left, she would always kiss my forehead," Buji recalls.

When Buji recovered, she was transferred to an orphanage, where she met other children and went to school. On Sundays the children attended worship services at a church near the orphanage. Her first encounter with Jesus, Buji says, was at this church.

"The children would sit on the floor, the nuns would sit around us, and the priest was at the front. Behind the priest was a picture of Jesus hanging on the cross," she says. "I would stare at that picture and wonder, *Who is that, and why is He hanging on a cross?*"

In time Buji was adopted by a family in Oregon in the United States, but she wasn't with them very long.

"The father told my mother, 'We can't have her here anymore. She needs to move because she's

not learning American culture.' So I had to leave."

Buji, however, was soon adopted again.

"God found another family for me," she says. "The second family that adopted me was a big family. My dad had lots of brothers and sisters. They went to church every week, and when I was about 10 years old, I was baptized into their church."

Buji says she was very excited about being baptized. She believed in Jesus, but deep in her heart she felt that something was still missing.

"I felt a hole in my heart," she says, "and I didn't feel complete."

#### **FAST-FORWARD**

As Buji grew older, she began to drift away from her relationship with Jesus and no longer lived a Christian lifestyle. When she was 23, she met a man with whom she fell in love. She then became pregnant with his child.

"I asked him, 'Are you going to marry me? Are we going to raise this child together?' He said, 'No, but I can pay for you to get rid of it.' I was so devastated and hurt. I looked at him and said, 'I will have this child with or without your help.' And I walked away and never looked back."

After Buji gave birth to her son, Austin, she says that Satan strongly harassed her by tempting her to feel worthless and telling her that she'd messed up her life.

"I felt that no one was ever going to love me again and that I wasn't going to be forgiven," she says.

When Austin was 3, Buji and her family moved to Silverton, Oregon, where she enrolled at a local college to study early childhood education. She also grew interested in studying the Bible.

"I read the book of Revelation, and it really scared me. What are these creatures all about?" she remembers wondering. "I prayed, 'Lord, I know that one day You are going to reveal this to me so that I can understand it.'"

#### **THE INFLUENCE OF A FRIEND**

At college Buji became good friends with a woman named Kimberly, who invited her to attend a Revelation Seminar at her church. Kimberly explained they would be studying the books of Daniel and Revelation. Buji agreed to go.

"When I walked into the church, I saw those pictures of the dragon and the other beasts. They looked hideous!" Buji says. "I told my friend, 'Those are the





**“I felt I had to share with others about Jesus, because I just love Him, and I wanted others to know and love Him too.”**

creatures I was reading about in the Bible! What are they?” Kimberly answered, “We will learn about them. Our pastor will teach you what they are.”

Buji didn’t miss a meeting. At the end of the seminar, 75 people were baptized; Buji and Kimberly were two of those who committed their lives to Jesus.

“I felt that the hole in my heart was beginning to be complete,” she says.

Buji faithfully attended a local Seventh-day Adventist church, where she met another good friend named Betsy. One summer Betsy invited Buji to attend camp meeting with her.

“They had amazing speakers, and I learned so much,” Buji says. “At the end there was a call for those who wanted to be rebaptized or recommit their lives to Christ. Betsy and I grabbed hands, walked out into the river, and got rebaptized.

“When I came up out of the water, I felt overwhelmed. That hole that always made me feel like something was missing was completely filled, and I felt totally at peace.”

Betsy gave Buji books by Ellen G. White to read, such as *The Desire of Ages* and *The Great Controversy*. These books helped Buji to grow in her relationship with Jesus and her understanding of Scripture.

“I felt I had to share with others about Jesus, because I just love Him, and I wanted others to know and love Him too.”

### **FREEDOM FROM GUILT**

Satan, however, wasn’t done with Buji. She continued to carry guilt for her past life and felt she hadn’t fully confessed her sins to Jesus. “Satan

came back with a vengeance, whispering things in my ears,” she says. One night she got down on her knees by her bed and poured out her heart, asking forgiveness from Jesus for her sins. She continued this same prayer for many nights, and then Jesus answered her in a dream.

“In this dream there was a beautiful white light, and it was coming toward me,” Buji says. “I wanted to look up, but I couldn’t because it was so bright, so I kept my head down. Then the silhouette of a figure came closer and closer. My whole body started shaking, and I was crying. He was dressed in this beautiful white outfit, and again I wanted to look up, but the light was too bright. But the next thing I knew, these hands came right up to my face, and I saw them—His pierced hands. Then with this beautiful soft voice that was so gentle, He said, ‘My child, I forgive you. Sin no more.’

“I suddenly woke up, and my whole body was shaking with joy and excitement. I finally got to hear those words that I was forgiven. I got down on my knees and I thanked Jesus—over and over and over. I knew that I was finally free from the grasp of Satan.”

“Take everything to God in prayer; hold on to His promises,” she says. “His invitation—with His hands extended to us—is always there. From when I was a child until now, the Lord has never failed me. He will never fail any of us.”

*To listen to Buji share her testimony, go to [www.meridianadventist.org/past-sermons/item/295](http://www.meridianadventist.org/past-sermons/item/295).*

**Sandra Blackmer**, now retired, served as an assistant editor for *Adventist World* and *Adventist Review* for more than 18 years.

**Buji Steffen** is a home caregiver in Idaho and is a member of the Meridian Adventist Church. Her son, Austin, lives in Oregon.



# DUTIES OF THE FATHER IN THE HOME

*Highlighting the awesome responsibility of fathers everywhere*

**ELLEN G. WHITE**

**F**ew fathers are fitted for the responsibility of training their children. They, themselves, need strict discipline that they may learn self-control, forbearance, and sympathy. Until they possess these attributes they are not capable of properly teaching their children. What can we say to awaken the moral sensibilities of fathers, that they may understand and undertake their duty to their offspring? The subject is of intense interest and importance, having a bearing upon the future welfare of our country. We would solemnly impress upon fathers, as well as mothers, the grave responsibility they have assumed in bringing children into the world. . . .

## **FATHER'S INFLUENCE**

The father's duty to his children should be one of his first interests. It should not be set aside for the sake of acquiring a fortune, or of gaining a high position in the world. In fact, those very conditions of affluence and honor frequently separate a man from his family,

and cut off his influence from them more than anything else. If the father would have his children develop harmonious characters, and be an honor to him and a blessing to the world, he has a special work to do. God holds him responsible for that work. In the great day of reckoning it will be asked him: Where are the children that I intrusted to your care to educate for Me, that their lips might speak My praise, and their lives be as a diadem of beauty in the world, and they live to honor Me through all eternity?

In some children the moral powers strongly predominate. They have power of will to control their minds and actions. In others the animal passions are almost irresistible. To meet these diverse temperaments, which frequently appear in the same family, fathers, as well as mothers, need patience and wisdom from the divine Helper. There is not so much to be gained by punishing children for their transgressions, as by teaching them the folly and heinousness of their sin, understanding their secret inclinations, and laboring to bend them toward the right. . . .

The father should frequently gather his children around him, and lead their minds into channels of moral and religious light. He should study their different tendencies and susceptibilities, and reach them through the plainest avenues. Some may be best influenced through veneration and the fear of God; others through the manifestation of his benevolence and wise providence, calling forth their deep gratitude; others may be more

deeply impressed by opening before them the wonders and mysteries of the natural world, with all its delicate harmony and beauty, which speak to their souls of Him who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and all the beautiful things therein.

Children who are gifted with the talent or love of music may receive impressions that will be lifelong, by the judicious use of those susceptibilities as the medium for religious instruction. They may be taught that if they are not right with God they are like a discord in the divine harmony of creation, like an instrument out of tune, giving forth discordant strains more grievous to God than harsh, inharmonious notes are to their own fine musical ear. . . .

### HIS INTUITION

It should be the parents' study not to arouse the combativeness of their children, not to excite them to anger and rebellion, but to interest them, and inspire them with a desire to attain to the highest intelligence and perfection of character. This can be done in a spirit of Christian sympathy and forbearance, the parents realizing the peculiar dangers of their children, and firmly, yet kindly, restraining their propensities to sin.

The parents, especially the father, should guard against the danger of their children learning to look upon him as a detective, peering into all their actions, watching and criticizing them, ready to seize upon and punish them for every misdemeanor. The father's conduct upon all occasions should be such that the children will understand that his efforts to correct them spring from a heart full of love for them. When this point is gained, a great victory has been accomplished. Fathers should have a sense of their children's human want and weakness, and his sympathy and sorrow for the erring ones should be greater than any sorrow they can feel for their own misdeeds. This will be perceived by the corrected child, and will soften the most stubborn heart.

The father, as priest and house-band of the family circle, should stand to them as nearly in the place of Christ as possible—a sufferer for those who sin, one who, though guiltless, endures the pains and penalty of his children's wrongs, and, while he inflicts punishment upon them, suffers more deeply under it than they do.

### FATHER AS AN EXAMPLE

But if the father exhibits a want of self-control before his children, how can he teach them to govern their wrong propensities? If he displays anger or injustice, or evidence that he is the slave of any evil habit, he loses half his influence over them. Children have keen perceptions, and draw sharp conclusions; precept must be followed by example to have much weight with them. If the father indulges in the use of any hurtful stimulant, or falls into any other degrading habit, how can he maintain his moral dignity before the watchful eyes of his children? . . .

The dangers of youth are many. There are innumerable temptations to gratify appetite in this land of plenty. Young men in our cities are brought face to face with this sort of temptation every day. They fall under deceptive allurements to gratify appetite, without the thought that they are endangering health. The young frequently receive the impression that happiness is to be found in freedom from restraint, and in the enjoyment of forbidden pleasures and self-gratification. This enjoyment is purchased at the expense of the physical, mental, and moral health, and turns to bitterness at last.

How important, then, that fathers look well after the habits of their sons, and their associates. And first of all he should see that no perverted appetite holds him in bondage, lessening his influence with his sons, and sealing his lips on the subject of self-indulgence in regard to hurtful stimulants. . . .

The father, above all others, should have a clear, active mind, quick perceptions, calm judgment, physical strength to support him in his arduous duties, and most of all the help of God to order his acts aright. He should therefore be entirely temperate, walking in the fear of God, and the admonition of his law, mindful of all the small courtesies and kindnesses of life, the support and strength of his wife, a perfect pattern for his sons to follow, a counselor and authority for his daughters. He should stand forth in the moral dignity of a man free from the slavery of evil habits and appetites, qualified for the sacred responsibilities of educating his children for the higher life. ♣

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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 Health Reformer*, Oct. 1, 1877.



# HIS Impact On Me

## Finding Peace



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

You can help other students like Ariana find God's peace, despite their circumstances. To to make a gift, visit [HolbrookIndianSchool.org/donate](https://HolbrookIndianSchool.org/donate).



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# TWO OR THREE

Several years ago I was taking a graduate theology class with other Adventist pastors. One day, as we discussed the subject of grace and forgiveness, another pastor shared his most personal story.

He came home from work one evening to hear his wife tell him that she was leaving him for another man. Dazed and reeling, the pastor had suddenly lost the love of his life.

Over time, the pastor's heart found healing, and he married a second wife.

But then the twist. The pastor received a phone call from his first wife asking for forgiveness for what she had done. Also on the phone call was her husband, who also asked for forgiveness. While it was too late to turn the clock back, the couple wanted to repent of their sins.

The couple then asked for something more. They asked the pastor if he would rebaptize them.

A few weeks later, on a Sabbath morning, the pastor stepped into the waters of baptism with his former wife and the man she had left him for. One at a time, the pastor placed his hands on their backs and lowered them into the cleansing waters of forgiveness in Christ.

What kind of love is this? What kind of grace?

During the past year, I've been working on a book on the story of redemption—our relationship with God from Genesis to Revelation. What surprised me as I moved through the Scriptures is that the story of redemption isn't just about our relationship with God. It's about our relationships with one another.

In the Old Testament the stories leap from the pages. Esau forgives Jacob. Joseph forgives his brothers. And of course, Hosea and Gomer.

Maybe it shouldn't surprise us that God cares about our relationships with each other. As parents, how do we feel when our kids don't get along?

If there's any doubt from the Old Testament about how much God cares about our relationships with each other, all doubt is removed in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

When Jesus spoke the well-loved words "For where two or three gather together in my name, there I am with them" (Matt. 18:20, NIV), He wasn't talking primarily about corporate worship (Jesus doesn't need a minimum of two or three people to be with us). He was talking about reconciliation—about believers in conflict coming together in His name.

In the verses leading up to Matthew 18:20, Jesus said: "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along . . ." (verses 15, 16, NIV).

Jesus cares so much about our relationships with one another that He promises to be with us when we come together in His name, to forgive as we also have been forgiven. 🍃

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**Andy Nash** ([andynash5@gmail.com](mailto:andynash5@gmail.com)) is a pastor, professor, and author who leads study tours to Israel for all ages.

THE LIFE  
OF FAITH  
ANDY  
NASH



IF THERE'S ANY  
DOUBT FROM THE  
OLD TESTAMENT  
HOW MUCH GOD  
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ALL DOUBT IS  
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LIFE AND TEACHINGS  
OF JESUS CHRIST.

# Want to Have a Seating Problem at Sabbath School?

Could you imagine the biggest complaint at your church being, "I can't get a seat at our Bible study?" What would it be like if you had to take seat reservations at your Sabbath School so that your large group of visitors could even get in? Roy Ice has discovered how to do just that and more, and he and his team would love to share how God can do the same thing with your community by starting a Bible Lab.

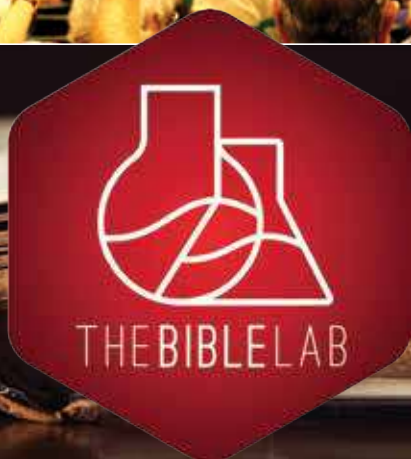
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PETER N. LANDLESS ZENO L. CHARLES-MARCEL

## MOVING EXPERIENCES:

*How much exercise is enough?*

**Q:** I'm so busy that it's hard to stick to my exercise plan. How much exercise do I need to see benefits?

**A:** The amount of exercise that's beneficial varies depending on an individual's age, fitness level, type of exercise, exercise regimen, and health status. In general, any amount of physical activity is better than none, and incorporating short bursts of high-intensity exercise into your daily routine can provide health benefits.

One scientific review of published research showed that very short bursts of high-intensity exercise can improve cardiovascular and metabolic health, even in individuals with chronic conditions, such as heart disease and diabetes.\*

Intensity is another way to look at "minimum exercise." High-intensity interval training (HIIT) alternates short bursts of intense exercise, such as sprinting or jumping jacks, with periods of rest or low-intensity exercise. This cycle is repeated several times, usually for a total workout time of seven to 30 minutes. The health benefits include improved cardiovascular health, increased endurance and strength, and burning more calories in less time than traditional steady-state cardio workouts. It is popular among people who have limited time to exercise or who want to add variety to their routine.

An alternative mixture of low- and high-intensity movement has also been studied and shows promise for busy, sedentary adults. Low-intensity interval training (LIIT) involves alternating periods of low-intensity exercise with brief bouts of higher-intensity movement. Like its high-intensity counterpart, LIIT can improve cardiovascular and metabolic health

in overweight and obese individuals, improve muscle strength and endurance in older adults, and improve insulin sensitivity, blood pressure, strength, endurance, and physical performance.

But you don't even need a "workout routine." Household chores or leisurely walking are considered low-intensity activities, but they are associated with a demonstrable reduction of cardiovascular risk and death from any cause when experienced regularly over a period of years.

In fact, low-intensity daily movement has been shown to reduce inflammation and improve insulin sensitivity in overweight women, improve muscle strength and function in older adults with mobility limitations, and even improve cardiovascular health in individuals with heart disease.

A study published in the *Journal of Sports Science and Medicine* in 2018 found that low-intensity movement may even improve cognitive function and brain health in

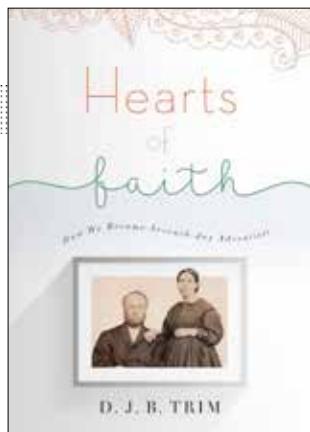
older adults. Overall, the studies suggest that low-intensity physical activity *can* provide health benefits. It's best, however, if you tailor the duration and intensity of exercise to your current fitness level, ability, and goals, and be regular! Even if you are very busy, can you find 10 minutes dispersed during your day to add some high-intensity movement intentionally? God made us for movement. Ask Him to help you with this! "In Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). ▀

\* Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6763680/>.

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# CLOSER LOOK



## Hearts of Faith

D.J.B. Trim, *Hearts of Faith: How We Became Seventh-day Adventists* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2022), 127 pages (available on [adventist-bookcenter.com](http://adventist-bookcenter.com)), \$15.99. Reviewed by Merle Poirier, operations manager, Adventist Review Ministries.

Perhaps you are old enough to remember Paul Harvey's radio program *The Rest of the Story*. The program presented little-known facts or forgotten stories on a variety of subjects usually centered on a well-known individual or historic event. The tagline always came at the end: "And now you know . . . the rest of the story."

To read David Trim's latest book, *Hearts of Faith*, reminds me a bit of this same idea. Trim, director of the General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, has written the history before the Seventh-day Adventist Church organized in 1863. Often we focus on an event. We celebrate it; preach on it; and count the years since it happened. But we often fail to look at what led up to its occurrence. This book does this in a complete and informative way.

The book expands on the two decades between the Great Disappointment in 1844 and the organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1863. By its conclusion the reader will understand that following God while leading people who have their own ideas wasn't an easy experience for our pioneers.

Anyone who knows David Trim personally will

## The Significant Pastor

*The Significant Pastor: Leading in a Disrupted World*, edited by Kayle B. de Waal and Brendan Pratt (Warburton, Victoria, Australia: Signs Publishing, 2023), 211 pages (available in Kindle format on Amazon.com), US\$9.99. Reviewed by Jarod Thomas, pastor, southeastern Michigan.

**W**e live in an era in which pastoral ministry is struggling. During the COVID-19 pandemic multiple news sources reported that up to 40 percent of pastors were considering leaving the ministry because of burnout from recent social upheaval and overwork. Church strategists across all denominations are forecasting an impending clergy shortage. In the challenges of this present age, what does it mean to be a pastor, and what tools are most necessary for pastoral success?

Editors Kayle B. de Waal and Brendan Pratt attempt to answer this question in their recently published volume, *The Significant Pastor*. De Waal explains the use of "significant," describing influential pastors who are sorely needed in the

hear his "voice" throughout the book, especially in the first several chapters. The book was compiled from earlier lectures and presentations. Once the book hits about the sixth chapter, it begins to settle into a clear narrative voice compared to the previous oral presentation echoes. It's definitely a book you want to finish, so stick with it even if the first chapters are harder to follow. This is a history well worth reading, and kudos to Trim for recognizing the need of its inclusion in our reference libraries. It is, as Paul Harvey would say, "the rest of the story." ■

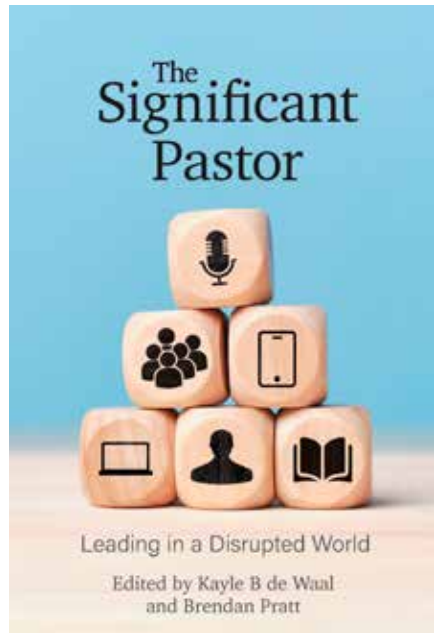


post-Christian West. Published in Australia and disproportionately representing contributors from Australia and New Zealand, the volume also includes authors from Germany, South Africa, England, and the United States, all countries that reflect similar missional challenges of secularization and postmodernism—a milieu in which the church struggles to get a foothold.

As a pastor, I found this book to be helpful for pastors and other local church leaders. I very much appreciated some of the practical advice tempered with spiritual fervor. At the outset Felix Cortez shares principles of hermeneutics that are theologically and spiritually sound, appreciable by the erudite yet accessible to a broader readership. He makes it clear that sound biblical interpretation is not merely a scholastic exercise and that it is best done in the light of personal faith and a surrendered will.

In the heart of the book, Brendan Pratt addresses the pastor's need to resist the rampant consumerism that characterizes much of today's church and to convert church consumers to kingdom producers, working in harmony with their giftedness. The book concludes with a few stirring vignettes of Seventh-day Adventist Church cofounder Ellen White's development in her understanding of her own ministry, as well as that of the pastorate. De Waal makes the final appeal—a call to pastoral resilience in troubled times that stems from a Jesus-modeled, spirit-filled dependency on God.

I expected a bit more from Denis Meier's chapter on preaching. Yes, we have been guilty of the Christless preaching of prophetic scenarios that at times have instilled fear in the minds of our hearers, and this is unfortunate. But to infer that Adventists who have proclaimed the three angels' messages (a term he takes issue with) have served as "prophets of doom," painting "gruesome scenarios of the future," seems incongruent with the messages themselves. Are they not prefaced with a proclamation of the everlasting gospel? And is it fair to suggest that violence is a demon that



**At the outset Felix Cortez shares principles of hermeneutics that are theologically and spiritually sound, appreciable by the erudite yet accessible to a broader readership.**

must be exorcised from Adventist preaching? Of course, political agendas and hate speech should never enter the pulpit, but the insinuations and extreme terms in which Meier speaks leave me scratching my head.

With that said, I found value in this book, both in the articles and the well-documented footnotes that have inspired research of my own. If you are an Adventist pastor in the Western world, you may want to consider this resource for your ministry. ▀

## LIFE-CHANGING WORDS

Whenever we encounter a new experience, the wiring of our brain changes. In the realm of neuroscience, we call this plasticity, and it is one of the many utterly wondrous God-created functions of our brain that has caused ripples in the brain-behavior research community since its formalized discovery a few decades ago.

In fact, as you interact with others, microscopic parts of your neurons undergo a gradual daily change, as branchlike dendrites become bushier, and their associated neural connections become more efficient in the signals that they transmit. In other words, your interactions with others—be they friends, family, or even strangers—plays a significant role in contributing to the structure and function of your brain and is essential to our wholeness as human beings.

We were created to be social creatures, and who we are, how we act and behave, and what we say can have a powerful effect on those around us. For example, if you raise your voice when interacting with someone, you can affect what goes on inside the other person's body, such as their heart rate and the chemicals carried in their bloodstream. Similarly, if a loved one is in pain, you can lessen their suffering merely by holding their hand.

Ellen White vividly describes the tenderness of Jesus' visage and His impactful words as He approached the man at the Pool of Bethesda: "The sick man was lying on his mat and occasionally lifting his head

to gaze at the pool, when a *tender, compassionate face* bent over him, and the words, "*Wilt thou be made whole?*" arrested his attention. Hope came to his heart. He felt that in some way he was to have help."<sup>1</sup>

In actions and then in life-changing words of power, Jesus arrested the attention of the paralyzed man and ultimately healed him.

Our words can have a profound effect on others. In fact, as experimental psychologist and neuroscientist Lisa Barret reveals, we regulate each other with words.<sup>2</sup> For example, a kind word may calm you, whereas a negative, hateful word may cause your brain to perceive a potential threat. In both instances our breathing, heart rate, and metabolism are affected, because the many brain regions that process language also regulate our heart rate, are involved in adjusting the glucose entering our bloodstream that fuels our cells, and drive the change in the flow of chemicals that supports our immune system.

According to Barret: "The power of words is not a metaphor; it's in our brain wiring."<sup>2</sup>

It is a sobering statement and one that Scripture has long taught us through the God-given wisdom of Solomon: "Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones" (Prov. 16:24).<sup>♣</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 83. (Italics supplied.)

<sup>2</sup> <https://ideas.ted.com/peoples-words-and-actions-can-actually-shape-your-brain-a-neuroscientist-explains-how/>

**Daniel Bruneau** has a Ph.D. in human-computer interaction and is the director for experience design and innovation for Adventist Review Ministries.

WE WERE CREATED TO BE SOCIAL CREATURES, AND WHO WE ARE, HOW WE ACT AND BEHAVE, AND WHAT WE SAY CAN HAVE A POWERFUL EFFECT ON THOSE AROUND US.

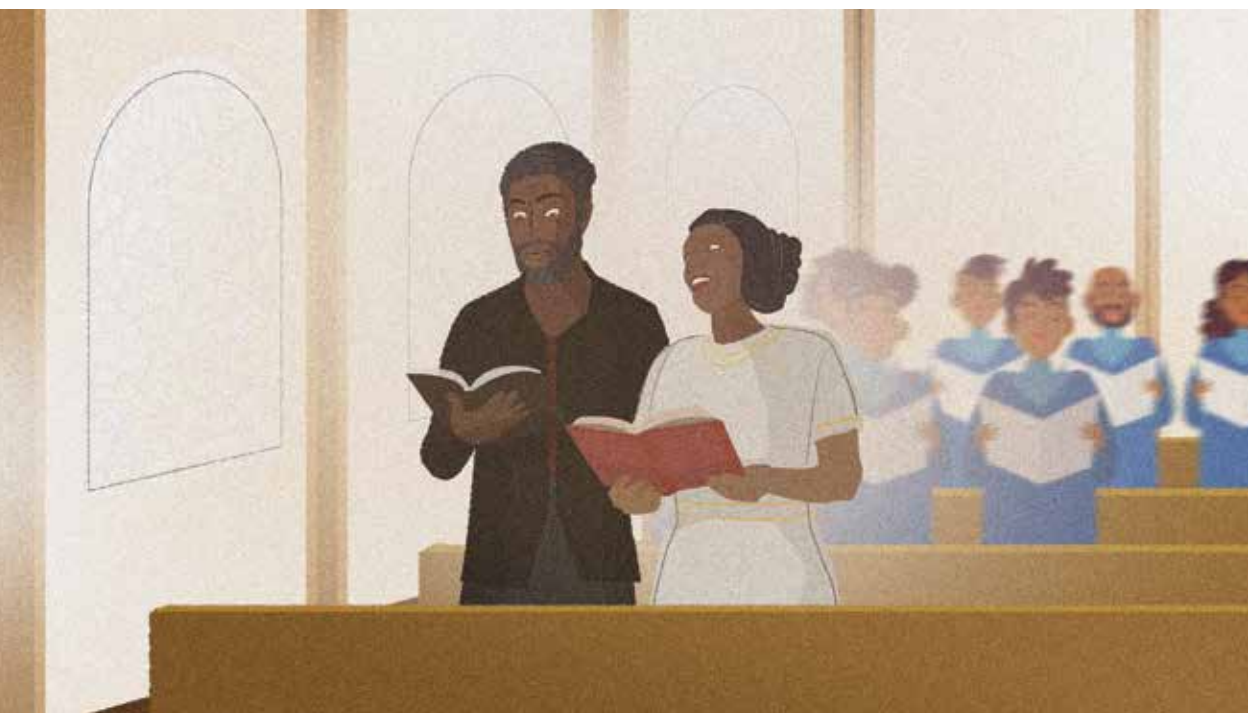
# Sherry and Gary

are ready to retire next year.

They need some advice on tax implications and ways to navigate this next stage in life. They are prepared to get more involved at church but want to ensure their bills are taken care of before they retire and give a significant donation to the children's programs.



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