

# ADVENTIST REVIEW

**JANUARY 2020: THE MESSIAH IN BROOKLYN +  
THE DAYS (AND MONTHS) AFTER + LIGHTING  
THE DARKNESS + IMAGINING A *SOLA SCRIPTURA*  
CHURCH + GOD, ARE YOU KIDDING?**

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## FEATURES

The Church  
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FAITHFUL TO SCRIPTURE

LIFE-GIVING

ETHICAL

MISSION-MINDED

INCLUSIVE

- 18 **GRASSHOPPER MYTHS** | GERALD A. KLINGBEIL  
How we see ourselves is not as important as how God sees us.
- 22 **HOW ARE YOU READING?** | GERARDO OUDRI  
Reading the Bible a chore? Not if we do it carefully.
- 26 **IMAGINING A SOLA SCRIPTURA CHURCH** | OLIVER GLANZ  
Once, when the Bible was elevated, reformation was the result.
- 30 **DOGS AND BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION** | JEFFREY O. BROWN  
Honest questions deserve honest answers.
- 36 **READ WITH UNDERSTANDING** | FAZADUDIN HOSEIN  
Our amazing Bible: read and understood by readers of all ages.
- 40 **LISTEN TO THE WORD** | GERHARD PFANDL  
Not many of us can read Greek and Hebrew, but awesome English translations of the Bible are readily available.
- 43 **HOW MANY BIBLES?**  
A snapshot of Bible translations and their worldwide reach

**“How much we read God’s Word is not as important as how we read it; for how we read the Scriptures determines our relationship with God and others.**

**23**

## ARTICLES

- 34 **GOD’S WORD FOR TODAY**  
ELLEN G. WHITE  
There’s a reason the Bible is our only rule of faith and practice.
- 34 **SOMEWHERE IN THE ALABAMA WOODS**  
CAROLYN STUYVESANT  
An impromptu detour led to an opportunity to share.
- 56 **THE DAY (AND MONTHS) AFTER**  
WILONA KARIMABADI  
One date on a calendar does not a year make.
- 46 **LIGHTING THE DARKNESS**  
DIANE THURBER  
For 120 years Christian Record Services has been focusing on Jesus and His Word.
- 54 **REWARDS OF FAITHFULNESS**  
RUDY MICELLI  
From Southwest Airlines to 7-Eleven, everyone, it seems, wants us to be loyal.
- 60 **THE CHURCH I WANT TO BELONG TO . . .**  
We asked our readers what the church looks like where they live.
- 62 **ANGELS IN MY HOSPITAL ROOM**  
CAROLYN SUTTON  
A visit to the ER is never a good thing when one is hundreds of miles from home.



**54**

## NEWS | OPINION

- » Remembering “The Great Disappointment”
- » North American Division Moves Toward Financial Parity
- » “Jesus and Politics” Conference Calls for Reflection and Involvement
- » Robert Kloosterhuis, Former GC Vice President, Dies



### EDITORIAL

- 5 **BILL KNOTT**  
BIBLES I HAVE LOVED

### DEPARTMENTS

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

### COLUMNS

- 33 **CLIFF’S EDGE**  
CLIFFORD GOLDSTEIN
- 49 **TIPS FOR TRANSFORMATION**  
DELBERT W. BAKER
- 65 **CURE FOR THE COMMON LIFE**  
HYVETH WILLIAMS
- 72 **IN OTHER WORDS**  
STEPHEN CHAVEZ

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THE MOST SHARED STORIES ON [ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG](http://ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG) LAST MONTH:



- 1 Ginger Ketting-Weller Installed as President of the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies.
- 2 Middle East University Reaffirms Its Vision to Serve.
- 3 Local Teens Host Summit for Stopping Gun Violence.
- 4 It Is Written Opens New Headquarters.
- 5 Adventists Aid Earthquake Survivors in Albania.

## SAY WHAT?

### 12 COMMON PHRASES THAT ORIGINATED IN THE BIBLE

The blind leading the blind (Matt. 15:14)

By the skin of your teeth (Job 19:20)

Can a leopard change his spots? (Jer. 13:23)

Eat, drink, and be merry (Eccl. 8:15)

How the mighty have fallen! (2 Sam. 1:19)

Nothing but skin and bones (Job 19:20)

At the eleventh hour (Matt. 20:6, 9)

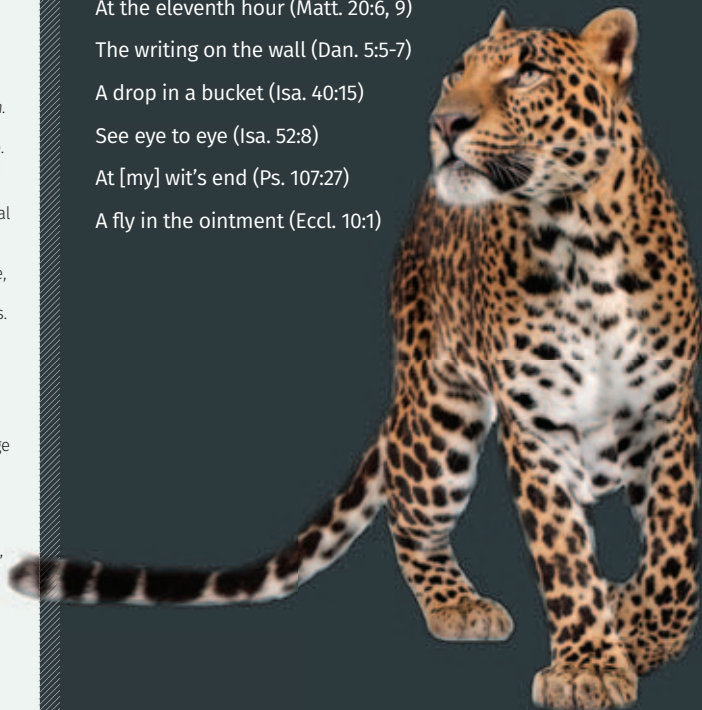
The writing on the wall (Dan. 5:5-7)

A drop in a bucket (Isa. 40:15)

See eye to eye (Isa. 52:8)

At [my] wit's end (Ps. 107:27)

A fly in the ointment (Eccl. 10:1)



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BILL KNOTT



*It is the backdrop of experience;  
the test—the text—by which we  
measure everything.*

## Bibles I Have Loved

The first was a small and shiny volume, barely 2 x 3 inches, containing selected psalms and the Gospel of John. I carried it proudly with the few things I could say were truly my own: my brothers weren't allowed to touch it. And when that childhood portion of the Bible disappeared in the inevitable losing of things that is being 4, I searched; I prayed; I grieved.

The second sits upon my shelf today, a full-text King James Version in a traditional two-column format—the words of Jesus standing out in red. On the presentation page, my mother's flowing script still warms: "To Billy: December 25, 1964. From Mommy and Daddy." It is the only thing I still possess from that long-ago Christmas, and the one I still reach for when my memory needs a prompt for the majesty of the language I heard as my father read to us.

I gave the third away—a white "leatherette" edition I earned for attending at least 10 nights of an evangelistic series when I was 9. An uncle really needed it, I learned: my parents thought it might do him good.

At 14, I was underlining heavily in a battered copy of a paraphrase—the Living New Testament—that still sits upon my shelf. Though I was raised in this faith, and always taught to reverence Scripture, I then immersed myself in grappling intimately with the Word, tak-

ing in its phrases one by one—praying my way, especially through Paul's epistles.

My college copies of the *Harper Study Bible*, an annotated edition of the Revised Standard Version, still hold an honored spot among my Bibles. In their pages, creased and underlined, are notes and exclamation marks I made as I began to frame an understanding of God's Word that moved beyond a childish sentimentality or even a teenager's passion.

The line moves on: a *New English Bible* I read for several years, rejoicing in the newness of the language, discovering nuances I never knew from older, more traditional translations; a series of NRSV editions—end pages filled with Bible study notes and fragments that became the gist of sermons; a French edition I consult to check my recall of a text I memorized more than 40 years ago.

And then there are the digital editions—nine apps by latest count—waiting on my iPhone. I move between them frequently these days, comparing language, seeking a consensus, searching for the words as they lodged in thought so long ago. An audio version of the Word now soothes my harried heart in the pre-dawn darkness of most days, returning me to the sound of Scripture as I first remember it being read to me.

You likely know this story

well, though yours, of course, is filled with different volumes and translations. Among the privileges of being raised in faith is the experience of having lived with the Word—in all its majesty and meaning—since we were conscious of the world and learned to differentiate the Bible from the myriad volumes that filled our lives.

This Word is not just solace and devotion, though it is certainly those as well. It is the backdrop of experience; the test—the text—by which we measure everything; the arbiter of truth among competing claims; the final reference for any life well-lived. "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Heb. 4:12).

With Ellen White, the woman who more than any other leader moved this movement toward God's Word, I urge at the doorway of a new year: "Brethren and Sisters, I commend unto you this Book!"

The church I want to belong to is . . . *faithful to Scripture.*

\* In Arthur L. White, Ellen G. White: *The Later Elmshaven Years, 1905-1915* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1982), vol. 6, p. 197.



## WHAT DO WE BELIEVE?

As an 86-year-old pastor, I was shocked and horrified when I read the results of a recent survey in our church, “Apparent Skepticism

About the Imminence of the Second Advent” (October 2019). The statistics state that only 79 percent of us believe in the Second Advent, and 66 percent believe in end-time prophecies. Half of us don’t expect Christ to return in our lifetime.

If we are lukewarm as the chief proponents of the Second Coming, it is obvious why Jesus continues to delay His return. Most of the world is doomed to be lost without ever being warned. It would be wise and most expedient to urge every pastor and every alert member to revive and proclaim within our own ranks our most fundamental doctrine—the soon coming of Jesus Christ. Noah was not believed, neither was Lot, but sudden destruction surely came.

Habakkuk’s words still ring true: “Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay” (Hab. 2:3).

**Edward L. Richardson**  
Turnersville, New Jersey

## THE CHURCH I WANT TO BELONG TO . . .

I found the article “The Church I Want to Belong to Is . . . Terrible” (August 2019) very interesting. I also find some of its actions very concerning.

Why are we having noncompliance discussions, when in Joel 2 and Acts 2 the Bible says: “I will

pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. . . . Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days?”

*The Andrews Study Bible* comment on this passage is: “God promises to pour out His Spirit in abundant supply, not

limiting the gift by gender, age, or status.” How acceptable are our prayers to God asking Him to pour out His Spirit on the select that we have chosen? Will His answer in Isaiah 1:15 not apply? “Even when you offer many prayers, I am not listening.”

**Gerhard Unger**

## MORE ABOUT JESUS

The December 2019 *Adventist Review* was a welcome visitor to our home. Its emphasis on Jesus, and using our talents and abilities in His service, was outstanding. I hope others were as inspired in reading it as I was. We sometimes forget that our responsibility as Christians is to reflect Christ, not simply to defend our doctrines and lifestyles.

**J. J. Aragon**  
Chicago, Illinois

## A PARENT’S LOVE

I am writing regarding Andy Nash’s article “A Parent’s Love” (July 2019). I would absolutely love it if his words were true. Sadly, they are not. He wrote, “We cannot stop loving our children; we are incapable of it.”

As a foster mom for decades, I know all too well how untrue this statement is. Children are abandoned, abused, and killed by their parents. It is becoming



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If we are honest, even our own parents—great as they are/were—are flawed. We must separate our idea of God’s parental love from how parents are today.

DELORES MOORE, VIA WEB

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an epidemic in our times. Isaiah wrote, “This is what the Lord says: . . . Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!” (Isa. 49:8-15).

There is an epidemic of mothers who have no compassion on their children. Thank God, the statement Nash made next is very true, minus the word “also.” “God also cannot stop loving His children. He also is incapable of it.” Yet comparing God’s love as equal to that of human parents does immeasurable damage to those who cannot compare to the love God has for us.

If we are honest, even our own parents—great as they are/were—are flawed. We must separate our idea of God’s parental love from how parents are today. Human parental love cannot compare. It is certainly unequal to God’s love, for His love is so far beyond anything we can otherwise know or think.

I’m glad Andy Nash had a great childhood, shown by his statement of belief that parents are incapable of not loving their children. Sadly, that is not the case for all God’s precious children.

**Dolores Moore**

## COMMENTS FROM ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG

### CONSTITUTIONAL COURT IN RUSSIA CONFIRMS RIGHT TO WORSHIP IN PRIVATE HOMES

This appears to be straightforward, a welcome enhancement to religious freedom in Russia, and a recognition by the Russian state that God has endowed each of its citizens with an inherent and individual religious freedom to find God and worship in his or her home.

Does this include Jehovah’s Witnesses? We Adventists can scarcely claim victory if it does not.

**Milton Hare**

*via web*

### ICONIC ADVENTIST CHURCH CELEBRATES 125 YEARS, APOLOGIZES TO PEOPLE OF COLOR

This is a great step in healing the wounds and division among all who strive to be united in Christ.

My Millennial children know stories of the like that happened to their grandparents, and now I can add to their memories this wonderful gesture. I grew up accepting these slights, but our children, though spiritual, are not as accepting.

My prayer, a mother’s prayer, is that they will always remain in our dear church.

**Charlene Berry**

*via web*

## 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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**“When I was young, I was told that race was not a religious issue, but a political issue, and shouldn’t be discussed.”**

**Jim Wallis, p. 15**

# NEWS



Adventist Church president Ted N. C. Wilson, and executive director of *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World* magazines Bill Knott, a church historian, led moments of reflection on “Ascension Rock,” where believers may have waited for Jesus to appear on October 22, 1844.

PHOTOS: MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

## HOPE AND LONGING MARK REMEMBRANCE OF “THE GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT”

**WATERSHED MOMENT IN ADVENTIST HISTORY SHOULD BE A CATALYST FOR MISSION, SAY LEADERS.**

BY MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

**A** commemoration, not a celebration.

Organizers stressed at least three times the difference between the two words, as more than 1,000 church members and leaders traveled in mid-October to near Whitehall, New York, United States, to mark the 175th anniversary of October 22, 1844.

The October 17-19, 2019, event, which took place at the William Miller farm, chapel, and environs, sought

to poignantly re-create aspects of the original experience. It also served to encourage contemporary Seventh-day Adventists to keep spreading the gospel as the denomination’s pioneers did 175 years ago.

“From that great disappointment, we are now headed to the great appointment,” said Adventist Church president Ted N. C. Wilson as he gave a missional perspective on the meaning of the weekend remembrance. Farmer-turned-

preacher William Miller and others, who had studied Bible prophecies, thought Jesus would come back to the earth on October 22, 1844. That day, known in Adventist history as the Great Disappointment after Jesus did not come back, would later become a catalyst for the denomination, now with 21 million members worldwide. It would spur believers to take the message of Jesus’ second coming to the whole world—a mission that, Wilson reminded the audience, is unfinished.

“Let us remember that no one in this church is too simple, too uneducated, too humble, to be used by God,” Wilson told attendees gathered under a tent on the premises. “Everyone doing something for Jesus—that is our great appointment,” he said.

Church members and leaders attending the 175th anniversary of October 22, 1844, known to Adventists as the Great Disappointment, gathered in a tent on the William Miller farm for services.



## NO SINGING LIKE ADVENT SINGING

Remembrance events included, on the evenings of October 17 and 18, singing some of the “Millerite hymns,” which the first group of Advent believers sang in the early 1840s. Ellen G. White Estate director Jim Nix related some of the stories behind the hymns and the melodies of such classics as “Together Let Us Sweetly Live,” “You Will See Your Lord a-Coming,” and “Lo, What a Glorious Sight Appears,” among others.

Nix quoted Adventist pioneer James White, who, in the late 1860s, wrote that in those days (around 1844), “there was no singing like Advent singing.” Nix also emphasized how early leaders of the church went to great lengths to make sure people sang at the church’s first gatherings.

“The first Advent believers were so intent on people singing hymns that they even resorted to well-known melodies, which they sang in worship gatherings with different

lyrics,” Nix explained. One early example is the hymn “O Brother, Be Faithful,” which uses a folk melody of the time. The hymn is still sung in Adventist congregations, he said.

During the daytime of the commemoration events, attendees could opt for guided bus tours in the area, visiting places meaningful to the early history of Advent believers. These included some of the Christian churches where Miller was first invited to preach in the early 1840s, and the local cemetery where he and others rest from their labors.

## A GOD WHO DOES NOT QUIT

Friday night vespers included a devotional message by Daniel Jackson, North American Division president.

In remembering the plight of the early believers who waited for Jesus to appear in 1844, Jackson acknowledged that it’s hard to imagine the anticipation these people must have felt, but it’s also difficult to imagine their disappoint-

ment. Nevertheless, Jackson emphasized, the people who gathered at Miller’s farm in 1844 were part of God’s plan for the world.

“What happened here 175 years ago was part of God’s plan to spread this message [of Jesus’ soon second coming] to the whole world,” Jackson said. “Disappointment was not an end but a beginning. God was calling [early Advent believers] to carry on.”

Jackson explained that this reality is based on who God is. “The God I believe in does not quit; He does not stop,” he said. “The will and plans of God would not be thwarted by defeat, ridicule, or disappointment.” It is a reason to hope, Jackson emphasized.

“Our God does not give up on you or the church,” he said. “God will continue to work through His church.”

Jackson also reminded listeners that even though the Advent believers’ early work was both robust and fragile, God did not stop taking care of them, because He had a plan. Contemporary believers are also part of His plan.

“Today God sends us the Holy Spirit and makes us His ambassadors,” Jackson said. “The reality is that Jesus is coming soon, and that is the reason He wants ambassadors, not benchwarmers,” he added. “It is God’s plan that His church today rise.”

## WHEN GOD DISAPPOINTS

In his Sabbath morning message, White Estate associate director Dwain Esmond reviewed how early Advent pioneers longed and

Many of the volunteers for the October 17-19 event at William Miller's farm donned outfits similar to the ones worn in the 1840s.



wished for God's kingdom to come. After briefly reviewing the current state of the world, Esmond asserted, "You have to be crazy not to want the kingdom to come!"

Esmond said that Miller wanted God's kingdom to come because he knew that God's kingdom is first, and that His kingdom will have no end. "It is the promise we have," Esmond said. "By God's grace we'll fly away, and God will start again."

In discussing the experience of those who were disappointed, Esmond said that like them, we never get into a situation for which God has not made a provision.

"Remember that when God disappoints, it's always in the service of something greater," Esmond emphasized. "He makes it better than it was before."

After providing several examples of Bible characters who were disappointed but ended up receiving something better—Moses, David, Mary, and Martha, among others—Esmond turned to the stories surrounding the disappointment of 1844. He specifically zeroed in on the experience of Hiram Edson, who was the first to apprehend the theological meaning of what had happened on October 22, 1844.

According to Adventist history, as Edson was crossing a cornfield to visit some of the disappointed believers on October 23, he understood that the "cleansing of the sanctuary" referred to in the book of Daniel was an event that would start on October 22, but referred not to this earth but to heaven and

Jesus' intercessory work in the heavenly sanctuary.

It changed our pioneers' perspective, Esmond said, and it should also change ours.

"Our pioneers had no education, no money, and no great means of communication. But God used them because they were faithful," he said. "If they were here and saw some of the things we worry about, they would probably ask, 'What's your problem?'" Esmond emphasized. "Remember that from disappointment came the appointment to finish the work."

Esmond said that for today's church members, it's all about remembering that it's not what we know but what we do with what we know.

"Our pioneers gave us truth, but one thing they couldn't give us is faithfulness," Esmond said. "Today God is betting on you and me. He is inviting us to be part of the final warning to the world before His coming."

Esmond called church members and leaders to remember that when God disappoints, it's always in the service of something greater. The key question, he said, is what our role will be.

"Are you going to be that greater thing that came out of disappointment?" he asked.

## BEYOND DISAPPOINTMENT

The Sabbath afternoon program was launched with moments of reflection on "Ascension Rock," a rock formation at the back of Miller's farm, at which a group of believers may have waited for Jesus to appear on October 22, 1844. On a sunny and mild fall afternoon, executive director of *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World* magazines, Bill Knott, also a church historian, narrated how it was to live through the October 22 disappointment, especially on the days and weeks that followed. He told how those who did not renounce their faith or go back to their old churches were mocked and derided.

For Wilson, who closed the moments of remembrance and reflection after Knott's brief presentation, the early believers' plight foreshadows what Adventist believers may experience at the end of time.

"Those who want to stay faithful to God's Word will also be mocked and taunted," Wilson said. "But there's nothing to fear; God will see us through." In that sense, Wilson and other leaders emphasized, the present-day church should be as tenacious and persevering as those early pioneers were. ▀



Randy Robinson (left), treasurer of the North American Division, listens to Juan Prestol-Puesan (right), treasurer of the General Conference (GC), comment regarding the history of tithe sharing between the division and the GC.

PHOTO: PIETER DAMSTEEGT, NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION COMMUNICATION

## NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION DISCUSSES ITS JOURNEY TOWARD FINANCIAL PARITY

**INITIATIVE MAKES NAD'S FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF GENERAL CONFERENCE MORE EQUITABLE**

BY MYLON MEDLEY, NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS

A significant portion of the North American Division (NAD) 2019 year-end meeting business session on November 3 focused on the General Conference (GC) response to a financial parity request from the NAD executive committee. The agenda item was a follow-up from a motion presented at the division's year-end meeting in 2018.

During the 2018 NAD year-end meeting many delegates expressed concerns about the increasing financial challenges that conferences and congregations face as they try to reach their communities. The concerns launched a discussion about percentages of tithe sent from the NAD to the GC compared to other divisions (NAD gives 6.1 percent, and will begin paying 5.85 percent in January 2020, while the other 12 world divisions give 2 percent). Further, members of the executive committee emphasized the desire not to inflict financial harm

on the world church but hoped for the GC to find more equitable ways to assist the advancement of the division's mission.

A motion was passed on November 5, 2018, for leaders of the NAD to meet with leaders of the GC to discuss the issue of financial parity, with parity to be accomplished in two to three years.

From there the NAD administration sent the proposal to GC leadership, which convened a meeting with leaders of all of the church's divisions on January 29, 2019. Leaders drafted a general, unofficial proposal a week later, showing support for the request, but asked for it to be done over a period of five years rather than two or three years. Details were then added to the proposal during additional meetings of world church leaders, including the 2019 Spring Council of the GC Executive Committee, which took place in April 2019.

"There was never a time any comments were made publicly that this was a bad request from the NAD. Just about all the comments were prefaced with, 'We think this is a good, fair request.' Some even said that if it were their divisions, they would make the same request. There was never a hostile attitude toward the NAD," said G. Alexander Bryant, executive secretary of the NAD, during the 2019 year-end business session.

"The General Conference did a tremendous job, in our opinions, in setting the stage to show that the North American Division has carried the 'lion's share' of the load economically for the church for years. They acknowledged that it's time for the rest of the divisions to help carry some of that load so that we can better do the mission the Lord has given us here," he said.

In July, with the knowledge that many of the division's leaders would be present at the Chosen International Pathfinder Camporee in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, an unprecedented meeting of the NAD executive committee was called to give members a report on the GC response, and time to discuss and consider options for an updated proposal. Executive Committee members who were present, or joined the meeting via conference call, voted to recommend a schedule that would decrease tithe sharing with the GC from 5.85 to 3.75 percent over four years.

The voted action was sent to the GC Annual Council in October 2019

# “This journey of North America and the GC in this process is both for you and for us a search of identity.”

—Juan Prestol-Puesán

for discussion and a vote. The final vote was to reduce the tithe percentage of the NAD by 2 percent (from 5.85 to 3.85 percent over four years, beginning in 2021) and have the remaining 12 divisions increase their tithe percentages from 2 to 3 percent over 10 years. The vote also called for reevaluations of the tithe sharing to take place in 2024 and 2028.

“I add my thanks to the General Conference Treasury Department and administration for getting started on this conversation so quickly. The request would not only affect the NAD but would also affect the world divisions. To have this discussion at this point for the world leadership, and about 60 or so days after we voted was, to me, incredible,” Bryant said. “It showed a level of high regard for our request, and very deliberate and determined effort on the part of the GC leadership to try to meet that request.”

## HISTORY OF TITHE SHARING

Juan Prestol-Puesán, treasurer of the General Conference, was invited to share the history of tithe sharing as it relates to the NAD and the GC.

“This is a family conversation. We thought him giving a history would help take away the notion that somehow the NAD is reacting to or retaliating against recent actions that we have seen in the world church. That is not at all the case,” said Randy Robinson, NAD treasurer. “There has been a long conversation about this; it’s got a lengthy history.”

The story spans nearly 30 years, starting when the division officially became its own entity in 1990 with the election of the division’s first officers.

Before the voted action that took place at Annual Council on October 8, 1990, the GC and the financial and operational matters related to North America were intertwined. A general vice president, associate secretary, and associate treasurer of the GC would meet once a week to make decisions for North America, according to Prestol-Puesán. During this time 21 percent of the tithe was sent up from conferences and unions to the GC, where it was then split to fund the operations of the GC and efforts related to education, evangelism, and other projects of North America.

“The affairs of the North American Division were always taken on and taken care of by the General Conference,” Prestol-Puesán said.

A voted action during Spring Council in 1993 transferred the Adventist Church’s media center in North America to NAD ownership and officially organized the Adventist Volunteer Network. Both actions led to a rearrangement of financial distributions for the NAD, with it receiving additional funding for the two entities.

In 1995 tithe percentages were adjusted further. Of the 20 percent of the tithe coming from conferences, and 1 percent from unions, 10.72 percent was given to the GC, and 10.28 percent was given to NAD.

“There’s no magic on how these

things have been evolving,” Prestol-Puesán said. “They took place over a period of time, with discussions and conversations in a collegial spirit, but at the same time, in meetings very straightforward.”

An action taken in 2001 related to tithe sharing was especially significant, according to Prestol-Puesán, because it adjusted the distribution of the 21 percent of the tithe sent to the GC for further distribution to the NAD. The amount given to the GC was reduced from 10.72 to 8 percent, and the amount given to the NAD from 10.28 to approximately 9 percent. The remaining funds were allocated for retirement.

Further, the rest of the world divisions were told to raise their contribution from 1 to 2 percent.

“This was a wake-up call for the divisions,” Prestol-Puesán said. “The overall process took some years.”

Fast-forward 11 years to the 2012 Annual Council, where the world church’s Executive Committee re-examined the church’s tithe sharing and took “one of the most meaningful actions we’ve [ever] taken,” Prestol-Puesán said, with the further reduction of NAD’s tithe-sharing to 5.85 percent.

“This journey of North America and the GC in this process is both for you and for us a search of identity,” Prestol-Puesán continued. “We did in months what could’ve taken years. We could not have done that without the presence of the Lord. We need to continue this in the spirit of prayer.”

As was outlined by Bryant before

Prestol-Puesán's presentation, leaders of the world church have continued to extend support for the division's ongoing journey to parity.

"The GC has been shrinking its footprint," Prestol-Puesán said. "We've done this conscious of the fact that North America has been the bedrock for the world church, and we thank you for it."

"I would not have been able to convince the world divisions, the presidents, and other officers . . . without Elder Ted Wilson's full support," Prestol-Puesán remarked. He added, "I don't want to take full credit here, when it doesn't belong to me. The Lord was in this."

#### WHAT'S NEXT?

Tithe sharing is only one factor in achieving financial parity, according to Robinson. He outlined to delegates the remaining significant issues that need to be negotiated as part of the larger conversation on parity. The items include additional contributions to the health care defined benefit plan, mission funds for NAD, General Conference Auditing Services (GCAS) cost sharing, shared services of Planned Giving and Trust Services, and additional assistance on excess liability premium.

"The next steps for the NAD will be to redefine how we deliver ministry," said Daniel Jackson, president of the NAD. "To think that there will not be cuts or rearrangements of how we do things in the NAD would be to misgauge the future. We have to be able to review what we're doing.

"We have come this far by God's grace, but there is still more self-differentiation for this division," Jackson added.

At the conclusion of the agenda item, upon the recommendation of Jackson, the executive committee voted to affirm and accept the voted actions of the GC and to express appreciation to their colleagues at the GC for responding so quickly.

"Recognizing there are some issues that we will do our best to sort out, and all that Elder Prestol [sic] has said, I have a deep appreciation for the actions of GC Treasury," Jackson said. "They took our request seriously, and we deeply appreciate it." ❖

## "JESUS AND POLITICS" CONFERENCE CALLS FOR REFLECTION AND INVOLVEMENT

**ANDREWS UNIVERSITY EVENT INVITES ADVENTISTS NOT TO DIVORCE THE GOSPEL FROM CIVIL RIGHTS.**

BY JANNA QUETZ, LAKE UNION CONFERENCE, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

The Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University and the Lake Union Conference recently partnered to sponsor a scholarly conference themed on "Jesus and Politics: Christians, Liberty, and Justice Today," on the university's campus in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

More than 100 people registered to attend the event held October 17-19, 2019, some coming from as far away as California, Canada, and Africa. Several hundred Andrews University students also participated.

RELIGION SHOULD SHAPE OUR POLITICS, BUT POLITICS SHOULDN'T SHAPE OUR RELIGION.

Organizers said the focus of the conference was to discuss how Jesus in His time on earth served those less fortunate, and how Seventh-day Adventists must help others, even while avoiding involvement in partisan politics. Plenary speakers talked about the need for speaking out on issues, and panelists provided examples of how to help in different key areas of need.

provided examples of how to help in different key areas of need.

#### RACE AS A RELIGIOUS ISSUE

The first plenary session was open to the public and held at the Pioneer Memorial church. Jim Wallis, founder, president, and editor in chief of *Sojourners* magazine, spoke about topics in his new book *Christ in Crisis: Why We Need to Reclaim Jesus*. Wallis told





Jiří Moskala dean of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary (right), leads panel members in a conversation about Christianity's role in society. PHOTO: ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

his own faith story of growing up in Detroit, and the differences between Whites and Blacks there.

"When I was young, I was told that race was not a religious issue, but a political issue, and shouldn't be discussed," Wallis said. "So I left the church and worked on these issues, to later return."

Wallis emphasized that religion should shape our politics, but politics shouldn't shape our religion. "The Bible has 2,000 references to the poor, and if we cut them out, the Bible is full of holes," he said. Wallis also touched on the issues of mass incarceration, migrants and refugees, voter suppression based on race, and the need for speaking the truth.

### **THE GOSPEL AND CIVIL RIGHTS TOGETHER**

On Friday, plenaries continued in the Seminary Chapel with a presentation by David Trim, the Adventist Church's director of Archives, Statistics, and Research (ASTR), who spoke of early Adventist missionaries and their heritage of social and human rights involvement. "They would not only bring the Word of God but would also teach the people trades and how to stand up to oppression," Trim shared.

The conference partnered with Pioneer Memorial church and One Place, both on the campus of Andrews University, to supply speakers during their Sabbath services. Edward Woods III (who read a sermon by Calvin Rock), Alvin Kibble, Ganoune Diop, and Claudia Allen preached at those venues.

Afternoon presenters included Michael Nixon, vice president for diversity and inclusion at Andrews University, who said, "As Adventists, we tend to eschew collaboration, but we need Christians from the outside who are truly doing the work of anti-racism to come in and show us the way, because we are not doing it," Nixon said. He encouraged everyone to "wake up, let the facade die, and be born again."

### **THE TWO HORNS OF THE LAMB-LIKE BEAST**

Nicholas Miller, professor of church history at the Seminary and Public Affairs and Religious Liberty (PARL) director at the Lake Union Conference, reminded hearers that the lamb-like beast of Revelation 13 has two horns—representing religious freedom and republicanism (a system of government based on equality and checks and balances).

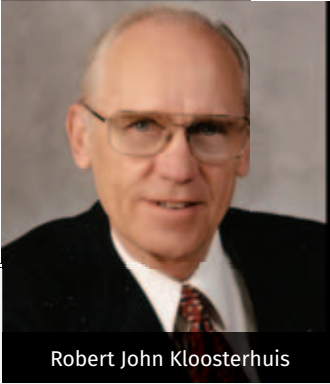
"Adventism can be quick to defend religious freedom but slow to respond about the other horn," Miller said. "Our Adventist founders were not silent on social issues. The Adventist Church [in Germany] supported Hitler because he didn't raise red flags about religious freedom for us."

Miller also explained that many White members of the Adventist Church didn't get involved in the United States civil rights movement, because it was viewed as a political movement. "How much better it would have been to see these issues for what they were in the present time than for the Adventist Church to have had to issue apologies years later (as they have)," Miller said.

### **THOUGHT-PROVOKING PANEL DISCUSSIONS**

Breakout sessions included panels on such topics as "Jesus and the Me-Too Movement," "Jesus Among the Social Issue Activists," "Jesus Among the Migrants and Refugees," and "Jesus Among the Religious Liberty Advocates," among others. These panels supplied practical information, including actions that attendees could take to make a difference in their area of influence.

The weekend concluded with a concert "With Liberty and Justice For All," featuring music by the Andrews University Wind Symphony, directed by Byron Graves, and readings on the topic of the major events in the history of the United States in which liberty and justice were fought for or forgotten. These included historical events such as the Trail of Tears (the forced relocation of Native American tribes), the American Civil War, and the events of September 11, 2001, as well as celebrations of religious freedom and civil rights. ♣



Robert John Kloosterhuis

## ROBERT KLOOSTERHUIS, FORMER WORLD CHURCH VICE PRESIDENT, DIES AT 87

**IN MINISTRY HE WAS KNOWN TO BE AHEAD OF HIS TIME.**

BY PENNY BRINK, FOR ADVENTIST REVIEW

**R**obert John Kloosterhuis, longtime church administrator and former general vice president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, died on November 3, 2019. He was 87.

Kloosterhuis was born on August 22, 1932, in Kalamazoo, Michigan, the youngest of four sons. He spent much of his childhood helping on the small family farm. He was a graduate of Forest Lake Academy in 1950 and earned a B.A. from Emmanuel Missionary College in 1954 with a major in religion.

In June 1953 Kloosterhuis married Ruth Schoun. The industriousness he learned in childhood served him well when he was called to be industrial director at the Franco-Union Institute in Haiti in 1954. Upon returning to the United States in 1960, Kloosterhuis earned a master's degree from Andrews University in New Testament studies. He served for 11 years (1964-1975) as pastor and departmental director in the Illinois Conference in the Youth, Stewardship, and Health and Temperance departments.

Many who served with Kloosterhuis and his wife, Ruth, would say that Robert was a shining light for

Jesus throughout his life. The *Lake Union Herald* published a story written by Kloosterhuis in 1980 entitled, "Let It Shine," in which he related the particular way that Haitian lay members one year attracted people in rural areas to evangelistic meetings in the villages. They would hang kerosene lamps on poles. Curious to see what was happening, people were drawn from afar. The people would join in the singing and hear the messages. More than 3,000 people from 200 such lamp-post sites were baptized that year alone. This happened when Kloosterhuis served as president of the Franco-Haitian Union in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, from 1976 to 1980. Kloosterhuis had also been the president of the Franco-Haitian Seminary, as well as secretary-treasurer for the Franco-Haitian Union.

General Conference president Ted Wilson remembers that "it was during the time in Abidjan that we became well acquainted with Bob and Ruth Kloosterhuis, when we served with them in that division. Pastor Kloosterhuis had a visionary perspective on evangelistic outreach, and it was a pleasure and

privilege to work with him and Ruth. I learned much from him."

Kloosterhuis was elected as the first president for the Africa-Indian Ocean Division in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, serving there from 1980 to 1985. The division was established to take care of the work in the French-speaking countries of West Africa and the Indian Ocean islands. The initially small committee started the work in that region from scratch and, together with faithful workers in that field, achieved the highest growth rate of any of the 10 divisions in the 1,000 Days of Reaping worldwide initiative. "If you want to have the time of your life, begin at zero," Kloosterhuis once said. That division has since become the West-Central Africa Division.

In 1985 Kloosterhuis was elected as a general vice president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (GC), where he served until 2000. During that time he served as chair of the board of trustees of his alma mater, Andrews University, and chair of the Pacific Press board. After his retirement, Kloosterhuis continued to take assignments on behalf of the GC Presidential and Secretariat departments in various parts of the world field.

Since 2014 Robert and Ruth had lived in Florida, where he was when he passed away.

"We salute Pastor Kloosterhuis's dedicated service to God's Advent movement," Wilson said. "Soon we will see him again, by God's grace, when Christ will come in the clouds of heaven to take us home." ❖



### INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR TRAUMA TO PROVIDE SUPPORT, TRAINING.

The Andrews University (AU) School of Social Work is developing a new International Center for Trauma Education and Care. The center's purpose is to provide education and tools to support healing from trauma in organizations, churches, and communities around the world. An interdisciplinary response team, the Post-Disaster Mental Health Team has also been created to provide these services to victims of disasters around the world.



### CUBA ADVENTIST SEMINARY WILL BENEFIT FROM DISTANCE EDUCATION CLASSROOM.

Southern Adventist University (SAU) in Collegedale, Tennessee, United States, helped the Cuba Adventist Theological Seminary become one of the most technologically advanced colleges in that country. The U.S.-based school recently created a distance education classroom with funds donated to the Collegedale Seventh-day Adventist Church, which will allow the seminary to offer three master's degrees. Distance classes are scheduled to begin in the spring of 2020.



### NORTH AMERICAN DELEGATES ELECT NEW LEADERS AT YEAR-END MEETING.

The North American Division (NAD) during its recent year-end meeting elected three new leaders overseeing various aspects of operations at its headquarters. Bonita Shields, previous NAD stewardship director, was asked to serve as vice president for ministries. She replaces Debra Brill, who retired in September. With Shields' transition, Michael Harpe, from the South-Central Conference, was asked to fill the stewardship director role. Judy Glass was elected to serve the division as its undertreasurer.



### ADRA KENYA GROWS GARDENS IN THE MIDST OF DROUGHT.

For the past five years Mandera County in Kenya has been gripped by a devastating drought. People who are traditionally livestock farmers have watched as their livestock and livelihoods succumb to hunger and thirst. ADRA has been active in the region since 2011, providing food relief, pastureland regeneration, kitchen garden training using permaculture techniques, and organizing savings and loan groups that fund new small businesses, such as retail shops.



### CONFERENCE URGES WOMEN TO SERVE, PREACH, AND LEAD WITH LOVE.

Approximately 380 women from across Taiwan met together recently for a women's ministries conference in Kenting, at the southern tip of the island nation. The women represented 54 local Adventist churches. Leaders reported that during the past several years women have been starting small groups in Taiwan, and some have been involved in evangelistic meetings. Weekend celebrations included music, testimonies, skits, time for sharing, and words of encouragement from leaders.



### MISSION EXPERTS DISCUSS HOW TO REACH POSTMODERNS.

Some say that Europe is a secular, postmodern continent, almost religion-proof, or at least it may seem that way from the outside. Reports indicate that Christian denominations struggle to keep church attendees. The executive committee of the Inter-European Division church region of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (EUD) grappled with these concepts during its recent year-end meetings, held this year at Lyon, France. EUD invited special guests to provide the attendees with advice and practical suggestions.



### LOCAL ADVENTIST CHURCH CELEBRATES 125 YEARS, APOLOGIZES TO PEOPLE OF COLOR.

College View church in Lincoln, Nebraska, on the campus of Union College, recently turned 125 years old. As part of the celebration, the church made an honest assessment of the way the congregation related to people of color in the past. Local church leaders set aside time during the commemorative services to offer an apology to people of color in the congregation for ways in which they had been discriminated against at times during the local church's history.

GERALD A. KLINGBEIL

**P**erspective is critical for most things in life. Perspective can order chaos and offers a framework that enables us to see the big picture.

Two people, looking at the same situation but coming from distinct backgrounds and contexts, may reach surprisingly different conclusions.

In one of my classes on biblical history, I used to show my university students a black-and-white line drawing,<sup>1</sup> asking them for a detailed description of what they saw. Inevitably some would describe the profile of an old woman with dominant nose and chin and a light cloth covering most of her hair. Others would protest that description and tell me, emphatically, that they clearly saw a young petite

woman, looking to her right, with dark curly hair and a veil covering part of her hair.

Don't ask me how the artist did it, but once one has heard both descriptions, it's possible to see *both* images in the drawing.

The point of the exercise was this: regardless of media and content, most things can be interpreted in more than one way. What we see is not always what is there. Psychologists may offer us a rationale as to why different groups see two completely distinct figures in the same picture. Perhaps it is a question of age, gender, or cultural background. What is clear, however, is that our perception of reality is always limited and subject to other influences.



# GRASSHOPPER MYTHS

*Perspective changes everything*



## THE REPORT

A huge crowd pressed forward trying to catch every single word of the report. Forty days earlier 12 men, representing Israel's 12 tribes, had left the wilderness camp to scout out the land that God had promised to Israel. *Canaan! The Promised Land!* It sounded right. It felt grand and auspicious. Two of the scouts carried a large cluster of grapes between them hanging over some poles. They also brought plenty of tasty pomegranates and figs. *This is the real deal*, they said. *The land flows with milk and honey* (cf. Num. 13:27).

This phrase is the standard description of Canaan in the Exodus and conquest narratives (Ex. 3:8, 17; 13:5; 33:3; Lev. 20:24; Deut. 6:3; Joshua 5:6; etc.). The land is fertile enough to produce milk (from animal husbandry) and honey (produced by bees, though some have thought this a reference to highly concentrated fruit nectar). Intriguingly, recent archaeological discoveries at Tel Rehov, an important 26-acre Late Bronze Age site in the Beth Shean Valley, suggest a robust honey industry in Canaan during the time of the conquest.<sup>2</sup>

The phrase is also used in later prophetic texts metaphorically as a shorthand for God's goodness and His gracious covenant dealings with His people (e.g., Jer. 11:5; 32:22; Eze. 20:6, 15).

The next word, however, quenches all enthusiasm and excitement. "Nevertheless" translates the New King James Version in Numbers 13:28. The English Standard Version prefers "however," while the New Revised Standard Version uses "yet." All versions try to communicate a strong contrast following the description of the goodness of the land. Then it pours out: *the people are strong, the cities are fortified and very large, the descendants of Anak live in them.*<sup>3</sup> The land is good but the general consensus is clear: We can't attack those people; "they are stronger than we are" (verse 31, NKJV). Verse 33 reiterates this bad report. "There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight" (NKJV).<sup>4</sup>

We can sense a little of the fear of the 10 scouts. *We feel like grasshoppers.* The metaphor communicates insignificance and helplessness (cf. Isa. 40:22). *We cannot take the land, for we feel too small and inconsequential compared to the people we will face in Canaan.*

This sounds familiar. We, too, often look at reality

and anticipate defeat and disappointment where God sees possibilities and potential. We, too, often feel like grasshoppers as we face the giants in our lives: a devastating medical diagnosis, the loss of a loved one, the pain of separation and divorce, the terror of being alone, the trauma of financial insecurity. That list could be continued endlessly, for fear and loss and pain are nauseating realities.

## THE RESULT

What happens next is well known. Israel follows the majority report and chooses to ignore the minority report of Caleb and Joshua. They shout out their anger and fears. They agitate to return to Egypt. They pick up stones—ready to silence once and for all the echo of God's gentle voice in their midst.

Moses' intercession saves most of them from immediate annihilation (Num. 14:13-25). God forgives, and they live—except that they will spend another 40 years in the wilderness (verse 34). God, the gracious, the long-suffering, the merciful, the forgiving, holy, and righteous God—He will bring their children into the Promised Land, the little ones and teenagers who don't have too many memories of Egypt. The very ones they were so afraid to lose (verse 3) will cross the Jordan by faith and take the land.

## THE REVERSAL

Nearly 40 years later we find a new generation encamped on the plains of Moab across from Jericho at the border of the Promised Land (Num. 22:1). This time, however, Israel's enemies tremble with fear as they look over the seemingly endless rows of tents of the Israelite camp.

We need to pay careful attention to the words of the Moabite King Balak as he describes what he sees below him through his messengers urging Balaam, the well-known prophet for hire, to come and curse this wretched people. "Look, a people has come from Egypt. See, they cover the face of the earth, and are settling next to me! Therefore please come at once, curse this people for me, for they are too mighty for me" (Num. 22:5, 6, NKJV; cf. verse 11, NKJV).

The verse contains a reference that connects directly to the grasshopper imagery found in the bad report of the 10 scouts. In Hebrew the phrase to "cover the face of the whole earth" is a shortcut

## Somehow, during the period of 40 years, Israel had morphed from a tiny grasshopper to a mighty and fierce locust plague that was covering the face of the earth.

for a locust plague. The phrase appears in Exodus 10:15 in the context of the eighth plague hitting Egypt. Both Egyptians and Israelites knew that this was not just another localized locust plague. The biblical author recognized this as something entirely unnatural. While most people living in the ancient Near East were familiar with regional locust plagues, this one felt different. It exceeded normal bounds (i.e., it rested on every square inch of Egyptian soil); it is described as unprecedented, something never to be replicated again (Ex. 10:14).<sup>5</sup>

Balak and his people describe Israel in terms of a locust plague covering the face of the earth. What an ironic intertextual link and reversal! Israel's perception of its smallness and insignificance ("we are like grasshoppers") following the disturbing and discouraging report of the scouts is now replicated by Balak's fearful description of Israel's (imagined) power to "cover all the earth."<sup>6</sup> Somehow, during the period of 40 years, Israel had morphed from a tiny grasshopper to a mighty and fierce locust plague covering the face of the earth. Perspective truly is key as we look at life and face seemingly insurmountable difficulties.

### WHAT DO YOU SEE?

The beginning of a new year is often filled with good intentions and ambitious resolutions. We promise to exercise more, eat less, love more, and fear less. The grasshopper-locust stories of unprecedented reversal found in Numbers 13 and 14 and 22-24 contain a number of relevant applications for people living in the wilderness and ready to step by grace into the Promised Land that our Saviour has prepared for those He calls His own.

1. *Our perspectives and angles are always limited.* We cannot peek around the corner. We cannot always fathom God's final schedule. A limited perspective should lead to tentative suggestions—not definite conclusions.

2. *Fear is a bad counselor and clouds our judgment.*

I know some Adventists already living in fear of the final persecution. Others fear that this movement has lost its way and passion to proclaim our soon-returning Saviour. Fears may vary, but when our judgment is informed by fear, we are prone to make bad decisions.

3. *When God says "yes" He truly means "yes."* God had acted again and again on Israel's behalf during their wilderness journey—yet it appears as if Israel lived in a constant state of doubt and distrust. They struggled to take God at His word. Perhaps His promises just felt too good to be true.

4. *God's grace covers even our worst decisions.* Israel's doubt led that generation to die in the wilderness, but God did not abandon them. For 40 years He guided them and dwelt in their midst in the tabernacle. He fed them, He protected them, He revealed Himself to them. The fact that we know very little about these 40 years does not diminish their importance in the lives of the first generation and the new generation getting ready to conquer the land.

Most people are not afraid of a single grasshopper or locust, for it's a rather small creature. Millions of grasshoppers, however, suddenly become a reality causing fear and trepidation.

Perspective is critical for most things in life. 🦋

<sup>1</sup> See the image: [www.frontiersin.org/files/Articles/103880/fnhum-08-00566-HTML/image\\_m/fnhum-08-00566-g003.jpg](http://www.frontiersin.org/files/Articles/103880/fnhum-08-00566-HTML/image_m/fnhum-08-00566-g003.jpg). Since I don't know the copyright information we will not be able to print it in the magazine.

<sup>2</sup> The 2005 and 2007 excavations of Tel Rehov have revealed the remains of at least 100 ceramic beehives that were arranged in orderly rows, suggesting that "the apiary was a specialized industrial enterprise whose goal was to recover large amounts of bee honey and wax." Cf. Leslie J. Hoppe, "A Land Flowing With Milk and Honey," *The Bible Today* 51 (2013): 174-179, esp. 175.

<sup>3</sup> Most Old Testament references to Anak refer to a person of large stature (Deut. 2:10, 21; 9:2; cf. Num. 13:33, which links the Anakim to the infamous Nephilim).

<sup>4</sup> Texts credited to NKJV are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations from the English Standard Version are from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Bible texts credited to New Revised Standard Version are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission.

<sup>5</sup> Robert C. Stallman, "arbeh, locust," in *New International Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), vol. 1, p. 493.

<sup>6</sup> See for more details, Berel Dov Lerner, "Timid Grasshoppers and Fierce Locusts: An Ironic Pair of Biblical Metaphors," *Vetus Testamentum* 49 (1999), pp. 545-548.

**Gerald A. Klingbeil** serves as an associate editor of *Adventist Review* and yearns to catch God's perspective.

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# HOW ARE YOU READING?

*Ten commandments for Bible interpretation*





## GERARDO OUDRI

I first met Marcelo on a hot summer day. I was pastoring in northern Argentina, having a weekly Bible study with a couple who lived in a tiny village. Their house was small, and its tin roof made the heat almost unbearable.

Two weeks before, they had spoken to me about Marcelo. “He lives in San José,” they said. “He wants to study the Bible with you.”

They gave me his address, but I didn’t have anything on which to write it, so I forgot all about it. The following week the same thing: directions to Marcelo’s house, nothing to write on, I forgot.

Then on this hot afternoon, as we were nearing the end of our lesson, we heard someone outside clapping their hands (no doorbell). It was Marcelo. He had walked almost an hour at midday, with temperatures above 100F, because he was thirsty for the truth. After a short introduction he proceeded to ask question after question; about God, the Sabbath, the end-times, etc. Then he paused and said: “Pastor, I may sound confrontational, but don’t think I am trying to argue with you; I honestly want to know God’s truth.”

I felt guilty, humbled, and inspired. How can someone have such a passion, hunger, and thirst for God’s Word to walk an hour in the scorching sun simply to meet a stranger and ask him questions about the Bible? I had more factual knowledge about the Bible than Marcelo, but he had more passion and hunger for God’s Word than I did.

### NOT HOW MUCH BUT HOW

Reading the Bible is crucial to a healthy spiritual life. But how we read it is even more important. Whenever we hear “We ought to read the Bible more,” we should reply with a hearty “Amen!” But *how much* we read God’s Word is not as important as *how* we read it; for *how* we read the Scriptures determines our relationship with God and others.

There are different reasons to read the Bible: as a routine; “it’s the Christian thing to do”; to argue with others; for doctrinal knowledge; or to know and experience God. The ultimate purpose in reading the Bible should be to know God more intimately, to know Him as He really is. For this to happen, we need to read it the right way.

I maintain that there is a crisis of Bible interpretation. In 2011, in an article for *Christianity Today*, Todd Billings alluded to this crisis and observed: “The crisis does not simply involve a

decline in the Bible’s authority. Even when the Bible is turned to as *the* authority, it’s not necessarily interpreted *Christianly*.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, not only are Christians not reading the Bible as much—they are not reading it well.

### JESUS, SALVATION, THE BIBLE

Jesus spoke about how to read the Bible. “On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. ‘Teacher,’ he asked, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’” (Luke 10:25). The question is a good and important one; after all, is anything more important than eternal life?

Luke’s account leaves no room for doubt: the question was asked “to test Jesus.” Jesus did not dodge the query. He replied, as He often did, with questions of His own: “‘What is written in the Law?’ he replied. ‘How do you read it?’” (verse 26).

I find it interesting that to the question “How can I be saved?” Jesus replied, “How do you read the Bible?” This is a profound and remarkable statement! Our spiritual health as followers of Jesus, both individually and corporately, as well as our eternal destiny, is directly related to how we read the Bible. In theological terms this “how” is called hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics comes from a Greek word that means “to interpret.” At its most basic level, hermeneutics deals with the following aspects of the Bible: the author/s, the text, and the readers (us). In other words, our presuppositions, attitudes, and approaches to the author/s, the text, and reader/s make up the “how” of reading the Bible.

Key to reading the Bible rightly is the question of authorship. There are different theories about the authorship of various books of the Bible. And we must look diligently at all the factual evidence so that we can stand on solid ground when we espouse a specific position. Beyond the human authorship of individual books, whether or not we believe in God as the ultimate author makes a big difference.

Even if one believes that God is the author behind the authors, what does that mean? Adventists believe in *thought*, not *verbal* inspiration. Ellen White wrote: “The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God’s mode of thought and expression. . . . Inspiration acts not on the man’s words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts.”<sup>2</sup>

# We need each other, not just for support and encouragement, but also for input and spiritual insights.

Once we accept that the Bible is inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16), we no longer see it as just another book. We Adventists consider ourselves heirs of the Reformation precisely because of our high view of the Bible. Like the Reformers, we believe in the principle of *sola scriptura*.

Richard Davidson presents a list of principles of biblical interpretation under the umbrella of *sola scriptura*, using the Latin terms by which these concepts first became known during the Protestant Reformation:

1. *Sola scriptura*, “the Bible and the Bible only,” which highlights the primacy and supremacy of Scripture.

2. *Tota scriptura*, “the totality of Scripture,” which implies that all Scripture is inspired by God; that the canon was divinely (not humanly) established; that all Scripture is a divine-human indivisible union; and that the Bible is equivalent to (and not just contains) the Word of God.

3. *Analogia scriptura*, “the analogy of Scripture,” which involves three ideas: that Scripture interprets itself, and that there is both consistency and clarity throughout Scripture.

4. *Spiritualia spiritualiter examinatur*, “spiritual things are spiritually discerned,” which relates to the role of the Holy Spirit in understanding and interpreting the Bible, as well as to the spiritual life of the interpreter.<sup>3</sup>

Can readers be totally objective and completely neutral in reading and interpreting God’s Word? Certainly not. Does that mean that interpretation equals relativism, or that there is no objective truth whatsoever? Not at all. What then?

We have to acknowledge that we each come to the text with our own limitations, with cultural and contextual baggage; we all see and understand the world differently. In this sense, there is never

pure objectivity and neutrality in interpretation.

But whereas we each see the world in unique ways, we do not have to share prevailing assumptions about it.<sup>4</sup> Rather, we have to recognize our presuppositions and humbly acknowledge that our views, as objective as we try to be, are always limited and partial.

## READING GOD’S WORD RIGHT

Here are 10 commandments for reading the Word of God, based primarily on Nehemiah 8.<sup>5</sup> The first five deal with the text of God’s Word, and the other five deal with us as readers.<sup>6</sup>

### ABOUT THE WORD OF GOD

1. *Read Carefully and Slowly* (Neh. 8:3). We live in a world in which faster is better: fast food, fast computers, fast cars, etc. There’s nothing wrong with being effective and maximizing our use of time. But there are areas in our lives for which slower is better. Reading God’s Word belongs here. Slowing down helps us focus and pay attention to details, as well as to reflect, understand, and absorb better.

2. *Read Frequently* (Neh. 8:18). It doesn’t matter how many times we read a Bible passage: chances are that every time we read it we will find something new and substantial that we have not seen before. Charles Spurgeon said, “Master those books you have. Read them thoroughly. Bathe in them until they saturate you. . . . Little learning and much pride comes from hasty reading.”<sup>7</sup>

3. *Read Aesthetically* (Ps. 119:103). We have to be careful not to pursue biblical truth at the expense of biblical beauty. The beauty of God’s Word often supports and informs God’s truth. Christians sometimes use truth to prove other people wrong and win arguments. We should rather use the beauty of God’s Word to inspire. There is beauty in poetry; there is beauty in testimonies of hope and victory; there is beauty in grace and forgiveness. The Bible contains all of these and more.

4. *Read Contextually and Intertextually* (2 Tim. 2:15; Luke 24:27). You may have heard this basic maxim of interpretation: “A text without its context is a pretext.” Every text must be understood in its context. First, its immediate context: the passages before and after our passage in question. Then the wider contexts: the book in which the passage is found, the section of the Bible, etc. Because God is the ultimate author, we must consider the

entire biblical canon as the overall context.

This means reading intertextually, comparing texts and ideas with the rest of Scripture. As Jesus exemplified on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24), all Scripture points to Him.

5. *Read Literarily (Neh. 8).* We have to pay attention to literary features, such as the structure of each passage. Nehemiah 8, for example, is written in a chiastic/parallel structure. The use of unique words, combinations of sentences and ideas, the genre used (poetry, parable, narrative, etc.) are all important to our understanding of Scripture.

## ABOUT OURSELVES

1. *Read Prayerfully (Neh. 8:5, 6, 10).* If we believe that the Bible is God's Word, that He is the author behind the authors, we need to approach the Bible with the right spiritual attitude. Prayer is essential—not just a quick prayer as a formality before we start a meeting. We *need* an attitude of constant prayer to be able to receive God's guidance and illumination. We need humility, total surrender, and acknowledgment that true wisdom comes only from God.

2. *Read Judiciously and Rigorously (Neh. 8:8).* Spirituality should not be used as an excuse to ignore rigorous study. The Holy Spirit is the one who leads to all truth. But like the Bereans (Acts 17:11), we must do our part and examine the Scriptures. We need to use as many tools as we have at our disposal (concordances, commentaries, etc.), to study God's Word carefully and responsibly.

3. *Read Corporately (Neh. 8:3; 2 Peter 1:20).* We should never run "solo" as we pursue Bible truth. It's acceptable to have personal convictions, but if I'm the only one who sees things a certain way, I may be missing or adding something extraneous. When we become followers of Jesus, we become members of His body. We need each other, not just for support and encouragement, but also for input and spiritual insights.

4. *Read Practically (Neh. 8:9).* Bible study should impact our lives here and now. If I gain only head knowledge and abstract theological concepts but do not experience a transformed life, I have to revisit the text. When it is studied diligently, under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, the Bible brings about a burning desire for change and transformation (Luke 24:32).

5. *Read Morally (1 Cor. 13:1, 2).* One of the dangers in Bible interpretation is to read our views

into the text instead of allowing the text to inform our views. Throughout history, people have used the Bible to support all kinds of wrong causes and sinful behaviors (racism, anti-Semitism, slavery, etc.). Reading the Bible correctly, however, should lead us to love people more and better. The teacher of the law who came to test Jesus asked, "Who is my neighbor?" because he wanted to "justify himself" (Luke 10:29). That was his "how."

Jesus replied to this question with a story, the well-known story of the good Samaritan. This story teaches us that going the extra mile, being willing to sacrifice ourselves for the well-being of others, even risking our lives to assist those in need, is often good evidence that one is reading God's Word the right way.

## SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT

I met with Marcelo several times after our first encounter. We studied the Bible together in his home in San José, and he eventually decided to give his life to Jesus. I was privileged to witness one of the most beautiful things in this life: when spiritual hunger meets spiritual food, and spiritual thirst meets spiritual water.

Jesus offers spiritual food and water for humanity, and He can be found primarily and most fully in His Word. He said: "You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about Me" (John 5:39).

To Jeremiah He also said: "You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13).

That is how we ought to read the Scriptures. 🍌

<sup>1</sup> [www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2011/october/how-to-read-bible.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2011/october/how-to-read-bible.html) (Emphasis original.)

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), book 1, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Davidson, "Interpreting Scripture According to the Scriptures: Toward an Understanding of Seventh-day Adventist Hermeneutics," [adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/interp%20scripture%20davidson.pdf](http://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/interp%20scripture%20davidson.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> See Jens Zimmermann, short video on hermeneutics, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wPTV5hyB0Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wPTV5hyB0Y).

<sup>5</sup> This chapter contains a beautiful story about God's people experiencing revival and transformation that is centered on the Word of God.

<sup>6</sup> This is adapted from a presentation for a Sabbath School class made by Jacques Doukhan on November 9, 2019. I use the content (with minor adaptations) with his permission.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, p. 35.

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# IMAGINING A *SOLA* *SCRIPTURA* CHURCH

**OLIVER GLANZ**

I have been teaching biblical languages for many years, but in every new class I have the same experience: students are inspired by the ideas and concepts communicated in the text of the original language, while at the same time surprised by how much of the meaning of the source-text is absent or hidden in modern Bible translations and Christian theology.\*

## **LETTING IN THE LIGHT**

I remember teaching a Hebrew course at the Protestant Theological University in the Netherlands. After I had translated a text from the Abraham narratives, a theology student from the Reformed tradition rose from his chair and said, "This is astonishing! Imagine we would abandon all of our doctrines and traditions and would start learning about God and life from scratch with just the Hebrew Bible and the Greek New Testament!" A general sense of excitement about this notion was palpable in the classroom.

We are fascinated by the idea of seeing the world in a new, different, and truer way, somehow starting from scratch. Jesus Himself was critical about the religious traditions and doctrines of His time, and called His followers to revisit what was actually written in the Bible of His days (see Matt. 15:1-9).

How we see the world, how we assess ourselves and others, and how we define our values and beliefs might be quite different from how Scripture sees, assesses, and defines these important matters. Thus, if we want to follow Jesus and the apostles, we need to do three things: (1) develop a healthy skepticism toward our own beliefs and values; (2) trust the Scriptures more than current or long-held understanding of any particular doctrine; and (3) be willing, through the Scriptures, to see, assess, define, and live more truthfully.

I try to incorporate these three things before I start my personal devotions: I confess to God that I do not claim to know anything, that I am willing to unlearn everything, and that I want to think and live more like Him.

The Internet age gives us access to the maximum information we can tap into if we want to learn and change our lives. This maximum of information can turn into the challenge of over-information, in which more information does not lead to more wisdom but to a cluttered mind and existence. There is nothing wrong with information. But information becomes beneficial only when it comes in an order and hierarchy.

This is the wisdom of the ancients. In the ancient world, each major culture and religion had a canon



## The power of the Word made new

that authoritatively informed faith, ethics, and life. The ancients lived by a ranking of information. The highest-ranked information was the canon. For Greeks this was Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, for Romans it was Virgil's *Aeneid*, for Muslims it is the Koran, and for Jews it is the Tanakh. "Canon" is a Greek word that simply means "measuring stick" or "rule by which to live" (e.g., Gal. 6:16).

Imagine the canon as fertile soil on which one should plant one's life and faith like a tree. As Protestant Christians, we plant our faith into the canonical soil of the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments. A *sola scriptura* church does not argue that only the Bible should be used for informing one's life. No, the Bible is just one of many sources. However, the Bible is regarded as standing alone (*sola*) as the highest authority (*scriptura*) for faith, practice, and hope. *Sola scriptura* is therefore another term for "canon."

### VIBRANT NEWNESS THROUGH NEW READINGS

What my Reformed Hebrew student in the Netherlands envisioned corresponds directly to the DNA of the Adventist movement. Imagine if we would learn faith and hope from scratch again! Church often becomes boring because nothing new is taking place. The mind can get bored and the soul

tired by constantly hearing the same songs, prayers, sermons, and ideas of previous generations.

Imagine the times of Jesus' earthly ministry. Many people joined His events, but it was not because they agreed with everything He said, or wanted to become His disciples. They joined because something *new* was happening. This is what a *sola scriptura* church should feel like. Using Scripture as the point of departure for new ideas and visions that are relevant and applicable to our lives here and now.

Of course, Jesus' ministry was not about "the show," but about dedicating one's life to God and His kingdom. But without His new Scripture-driven insights, He would never have been so critical toward the practice of the religion, faith, and lifestyle of His day. His fresh ideas, His pertinent critique, and the feasibility of His lifestyle drew people to Him.

The very core and passion of the early Adventist movement was to question Christian doctrines and traditions on the basis of the Word, and be willing to (re)learn Christianity in faith and practice from scratch. We know from history that these attitudes translated into a fast-growing and vibrant movement that drew not only the attention but also the commitment of thousands.

Each generation of faith, then, must expose itself anew to the biblical texts, if it wants to grasp its own past and prophetic future.

#### CANON: A RISK TO ALL IDEOLOGIES

But what does a *sola scriptura* church look like today? I propose that we cannot envision such a church without understanding well the nature of our canon. Once we understand what our canon is made of, we can start shaping our ideas about what a *sola scriptura* church should be made of.

Ancient canons were the central textbooks for education. Greeks had to learn entire passages from the *Odyssey* by heart, and Jews did the same with large text portions from the Pentateuch. From a modern perspective, these old textbooks have a very low pedagogical quality.

For example, a modern textbook on history is so much easier to read and understand than the Bible books of Joshua to 2 Kings. Why? Today's textbooks expose students to isolated topics and themes, rather than engaging them in the reading of complex narratives. Today a good educational book is known for its well-organized structure, theme-shaped chapters, and a clear, common thread that follows a logical order.

Before one can write a good educational book for today's students, one must first define central themes and topics that can be used as a frame for a clear organization. Simplified conceptual organization stands at the beginning of our modern attempts to write educational texts. Students and readers, then, are expected to understand the text by following the book's explicit logic, adopting its outlined thought models, and processing the obvious themes. This is very different from ancient practice. Antiquity's great educational texts, such as the Gilgamesh Epos, *Odyssey*, *Aeneid* or Torah, consisted mostly of narratives and poetry, appropriated by means of recitation. One had to first memorize entire and usually complex texts before the contained themes and topics became accessible.

But in modern pedagogics the keyword is *simplification*. This stands in stark contrast to the ancient world. As a textbook, the Tanakh could not be more different from today's textbooks. Its texts are dense and long-winded; they are complex and often difficult to understand; their organization does not simply emerge through a table of contents, indexes, charts, and simple definitions. It's difficult to abstract from biblical texts a single dominant theme that functions as a backbone to textual organization. Ancient textbooks are a challenge to any student.

Ancient readers, however, would not perceive their canons as chaotic or of low pedagogical quality. A text claiming to reflect history or dealing with complex life is not readily simplified and reduced to a limited number of themes and topics. By its very nature, life is complex and resists reductionistic explanations. Reality comes with substantial mysteries that cannot be solved by rational abstraction. They can be approached only by presenting them in the form they appear, as *narratives* that trigger *poetic* expressions.

This, therefore, is the nature of ancient canons, including the Bible. Narratives and poetry are able to weave with language the fabric of life and history. Consequently, ancient pedagogy in general, and biblical pedagogy specifically, demand text memorization (Deut. 6:7) to accomplish the clearest access to topics, themes, and arguments.

The quality of ancient readers was measured by their ability to participate in the text's narrative, emotion, and thoughts while testing their own character. They attempted this by determining with what narrated participant and which expressed emotion and thought they could most likely identify themselves. The reader was called to imagine the narrated world and poetic cosmos without compromising the text's communicative intent. The more successful the imagination's entry into the textual reality, the better they were able to learn from the text as they identified its themes and topics.

The difference in ancient and modern educational methods has consequences for how we envision a *sola scriptura* church. The literature of the Bible initiates by its very nature a culture of reading. Intrinsic to poems and narratives is that they call for readers who make sense out of them in responsible ways. Each careful reader needs to submit to the authority of the canonical texts. Unlike modern textbooks that minimize the reader's involvement in the process of understanding through presenting cognitive abstractions and interpretative conclusions, the narratives and poems of ancient textbooks call for continuous textual visitation: understanding life's mystery and history is a matter beyond mere human rational abstractions. If the Bible properly reflects the complex ongoing event that is life and history, then properly accessing its message(s) means memorization and repetition again and again by each new generation of Christians.

This fact constitutes a warning against final understanding or articulation of some doctrine, a warning against ever marking the end of the biblical reading process. Rather, doctrines should be celebrated as a testimony of a fruitful and, hopefully, faithful reading process that is ever ongoing and ever open to more insightful future understandings. Momentary conclusions receive their authority from the text and inform our ethics, our beliefs, and our lives. However powerful and transforming, they remain *temporary*. Their greatest impact depends on understanding them as *present* truths. At the moment that they become *static* truths, canonical reading has ended and fossilization has begun.

### **SOLA SCRIPTURA: LEGACY OF EVERY GENERATION**

Each generation of faith, then, must expose itself anew to the biblical texts if it wants to grasp its own past and prophetic future. No dogmatic work, although necessary to the Christian community of faith, can shortcut this task. The foundations of faith, its themes and topics, must be received through a humble and curiosity-driven reading process by each generation anew.

As I have shown, reflecting the nature of our biblical canon impacts how we define what we mean by a *sola scriptura* church. This does not mean that the present truths of the past are necessarily wrong and must be proven false. It means that established understandings only keep their life-changing impact as new generations appropriate them through personal discovery. The validity of "past" conclusions as truth is not received by tradition but by a new canonical reading of each new generation. No believers can have salvific ownership over their beliefs through doctrinal inheritance. *Sola scriptura* believers can have ownership over any belief only by procuring it through a renewed Spirit-driven reading of the canon. Only then can faith remain fresh, vibrant, and full of impact.

Imagine if we all started learning about God and life from scratch—with just the biblical canonical text and good translations. 🍀

\* All translators have to deal with certain inherent limitations, a problem studied in the field of translation theory.

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**JEFFREY O. BROWN**

**T**he question was from an 11-year-old. It came to me on Hope Channel's Bible Helpdesk via Instagram, a page moderated by the young person's mother: "I read the story of Noah, and how God saved two animals (male and female) from every type. When Jesus comes back, will He take animals to heaven too?"

**HARD ANSWERS?**

I had to answer a difficult question, and I did the best I could.<sup>1</sup> Truth can be trickier when the matter concerns someone or something close to you. Like your beloved pets. No wonder that best-selling animated movie of three decades ago declared "All dogs go to heaven." Dogs have been called humans' best friend. Many people love them. Yet some societies, including from Bible times, have had unflattering words for dogs. Consider this slap: "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs" (Rev. 22:14, 15); leading one writer to declare, "No dogs go to heaven."<sup>2</sup>

**HOW THEY SEE IT TODAY**

What more does society have to say about dogs? Rather unpleasant things sometimes. In 1992 prolific African American female writer Terry McMillan authored the novel *Waiting to Exhale*, later made into a movie that caused a public stir, especially among single men and women. Some viewers lamented McMillan's negative characterization of men as consistently degrading, abusing, and eventually destroying women, all summarized in the derogatory metaphor of men as dogs. In response, McMillan maintained that her story had no such hostile intention, but merely reflected how her personal experiences with unfulfilling and sometimes explosive relationships inspired her writing.

One aggrieved male author reacted to McMillan's work with a demand that the scales be balanced. His book response bore a title long enough to express his objection somewhat sarcastically to the metaphor grouping him with dogs: *If All Men Are Dogs, Then Women Are Dog Groomers*.<sup>3</sup> These contentions over a metaphor only expound more perfectly on the paradoxical truth that dogs are both loved and hated among us, adored and despised, cherished and detested.

**HOW THE ANCIENTS SAW IT**

Scripture passages such as Revelation 22:15—"Outside are the dogs"—bring biblical scholars into the conversation about dogs, obliging them to shed what light they may on our emotional dilemma so charged with moral implications. Despising an animal or cherishing it as a member of the family is an emotional thing, but identifying dogs as in company with sorcerers, whoremongers, murderers, idolaters, and liars, in contrast with righteous-robed saints eating from the tree of life, is a distinctly moral matter.

We are free to pick and choose our house pets. For love of our kids, our selections may depend

# DOGS AND BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

*Seven principles  
for handling  
interpretive  
challenges*





on which animals they most favor even when the selection may be one that provokes allergic reactions in us—and even in the kids themselves. We take antihistamines to help our spasms of sneezing rather than deprive our precious child of a puppy. But when it comes to moral matters, we cannot conscientiously pick and choose our principles to live by or trample upon. So we seek a word from the Lord that may guide our understanding of His repudiation of dogs. Why does He leave the dogs outside His holy city?

The answer requires a class in culture for Westerners hard pressed to fathom the negative allusion to dogs. A glance at pet insurance plans shows savings of more than \$11,000 for a dog's gallbladder treatment—surgery, x-rays, hospitalization, and medications—if we take the correct insurance plan.

By contrast, the Eastern world of Jesus' time would not likely understand about canine health insurance plans. Egypt's god-dog Anubis was not the norm. The norm was hungry and feral dogs wandering through both urban and rural territory scavenging on dead bodies and other offal. Ahijah sends King Jeroboam's wife home to inform her husband: "Dogs will eat those belonging to Jeroboam who die in the city" (1 Kings 14:11); and Jehu ben Hanani delivers a similar message to Baasha, who discharges God's assignment to wipe out the house of Jeroboam, only to follow the same idolatrous practices of his predecessor. So "dogs will eat those belonging to Baasha who die in the city" (1 Kings 16:4).<sup>4</sup>

"Dog" is what you called your enemy (Ps. 22:16, 20); if you felt treated with disrespect, you asked people if they thought you're a dog—Goliath to David (1 Sam. 17:43); Hazael to Elisha (2 Kings 8:13). Dogs were ritually unclean animals. They could have no place inside the Holy City, where nothing unclean is allowed to enter.

## HOW TO SEE IT RIGHT

These remarks about dogs highlight significant differences in perspective between Eastern first-century and Western twenty-first-century readers. Instead of competing perspectives and clashing conclusions, we may experience more comity in Bible study by respecting seven guidelines for interpretation built on the acronym C-O-N-T-E-X-T.

**C** is for *cultural awareness*. The fact that we are called to rightly divide the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15) implies that we can do it wrongly. Everyone views Scripture through some particular cultural lenses. But as with Moses in the wilderness, we need to approach the Word of God with awe, taking off our cultural shoes, because the ground on which we stand when we come to the Holy Scriptures is holy ground (see Ex. 3:5).

**O** is for *openness*. We need to be open to hearing new things that the Spirit may be saying (Isa. 43:19; 1 Sam. 3:9). Ellen White unites her acknowledgment "that we have the truth," to a major caution: "we must not look with suspicion upon any new light which God may send."<sup>5</sup>



## We need to be open to hearing new things that the Spirit may be saying.

Progress in the truth is no threat to longer established truth.

**N** is for the *New Testament*, which explains much that would not otherwise be clear to students of the Old Testament, even the prophets who received and recorded Old Testament revelations: while they “spoke of the grace that was to come . . . , [they] searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow” (1 Peter 1:10, 11). The nexus between prediction and fulfillment is not always obvious. One reason for this is the conditional nature of some divine predictions, for example, of boon or disaster dependent on Israel’s behavior (Deut. 28:1-66; Jer. 18:1-10).

Another is the nature of biblical typology in which people, places, things, actions, descriptions, and institutions all hold meaning beyond their immediate historical occurrence. By way of illustration, Babylon, first a tower (Babel) and then ancient Mesopotamian city, nation, and empire, comes to represent the sum total of earthly institutional rebellion against God and all He stands for (Rev. 17, 18).

**T** is for *textual analysis*. Scripture’s literal and non-literal meanings deserve to be understood. One sound practice in that direction is studying all uses of any word or term in a given book, and beyond this, to its every other occurrence throughout the Bible, before concluding on what it signifies.

**E** is for *eisegesis*. Imposing one’s own interpretation onto the text is called eisegesis. Scripture is not to be subjected to private interpretations (2 Peter 1:21). The existence of objective guidelines is evident from the interchange between Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. Like his Master before Him, Philip opened scripture after scripture and showed

his student Jesus (Acts 8:30-35; Luke 24:27).

**X** is for *exegesis*. Exegesis is drawing out a text’s meaning in accordance with what the author most obviously intended. When one use seems more easily explainable it may often be used as an aid to grasping its uses in more obscure places and passages, a better aid than consultation with secular dictionaries and literature. Any light from those is best sought after intrabiblical study has communicated all insight on meaning that it has to offer. The Bible, God’s book, deserves God’s explanation. It does an excellent job of being its own interpreter (2 Tim. 3:16; Isa. 28:10).

**T** is for *trust and prayer*. No matter our level of experience or expertise, we need to always approach the Word of God with humility, assuming the posture of a learner: God “guides the humble in what is right and teaches them His way” (Ps. 25:9). “Those who prayerfully study the Bible go from each search wiser than they were before. Some of their difficulties have been solved; for the Holy Spirit has done the work spoken of in the fourteenth chapter of John: ‘The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.’”<sup>6</sup>

### SEEING THE BIG PICTURE

In your Bible study, don’t ever lose sight of the big picture: it’s all about Jesus (Matt. 6:33; John 12:32; Col. 1:20). Simple text or complex metaphor, it’s always all about Jesus: Jesus for you, and for you to share with the world. Tell everyone, dogs included, how much Jesus has done to get them all inside the Holy City. 🐾

<sup>1</sup> [www.hopetv.org/shows/biblehelpdesk/episode/ml/-/episode-for-september-4-2019/](http://www.hopetv.org/shows/biblehelpdesk/episode/ml/-/episode-for-september-4-2019/)

<sup>2</sup> [www.patheos.com/blogs/religionprof/2012/12/revelation-2215-no-dogs-go-to-heaven.html](http://www.patheos.com/blogs/religionprof/2012/12/revelation-2215-no-dogs-go-to-heaven.html)

<sup>3</sup> Isaac Newton, *If All Men Are Dogs, Then Women Are Dog Groomers: Debunking the Myth and Rethinking Relationships* (Freeport, Trinidad: H.E.M. Enterprises, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> See also 1 Kings 21:19; 22:38; 2 Kings 9:10, 36; Jeremiah 15:3; Psalm 59:6.

<sup>5</sup> Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1946), p. 33.

<sup>6</sup> Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1930), p. 259.

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# THE MESSIAH IN BROOKLYN

In the 1990s signs and bumper stickers appeared in Brooklyn and Israel that read *Moshiach Now*. *Moshiach* is Yiddish for *Messiah*. These Orthodox Jews thought the Messiah was about to appear.

This was not, of course, the second coming of Jesus but rather the first coming of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, known as the Lubavitcher Rebbe, or just the Rebbe, the spiritual leader of the Chabad-Lubavitcher dynasty of ultra-Orthodox Jews. For decades, from his iconic headquarters in Brooklyn, the Rebbe guided his movement, which under his spiritual and practical leadership expanded from Bangalore, to Richmond, and to parts in between (there's a Chabad house in Kinshasa, Congo). One of the most influential Jewish religious leaders of the twentieth century, Schneerson was so revered that some Chabadniks claimed he was the long-awaited Messiah.

Yes, for many the Messiah had come. And he could be found at 770 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, New York. Though never claiming to be *Moshiach*, the Rebbe didn't exactly deny it, either. In the early 1990s messianic fervor among some Lubavitch reached critical mass: Rebbe Schneerson was not only the Messiah but would very soon reveal himself as such to the world.

Then on 3 Tammuz 5754 (June 12, 1994, by the *goyische* calendar), Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson died, but not the messianic fervor around him. On the contrary, it only increased. Why? Because many claimed that according to the sacred Scriptures the Messiah had to die first, then after being resurrected he would reign as King *Moshiach*.

*A Messiah who dies and is then resurrected?*

In 2007 the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* ran an article titled "The Lubavitcher Rebbe as a God." The gist of the article, written by a skeptical reporter, was that some of the Rebbe's most devoted followers believed the Rebbe was God. The author quoted one messianic Lubavitcher as saying about the Rebbe: "God chose to imbue this world with life through a body. So that's how we know the Rebbe can't have died, and that his actual physical body must be alive. The Rebbe is the conjunction of God and human. The Rebbe is God, but he is also physical"

A divine Messiah who assumed a human body and dies in that body but who then comes back to life? Sounds like Jews for Jesus, not ultra-Orthodox Hasidim. Which explains why many other Jews, including other Orthodox, even other Chabadniks, were appalled. It was bad enough, the notion of Schneerson as the Messiah (especially when, having been afflicted with a stroke in 1992, he was unable to speak and was confined to a wheelchair), but then after his death to claim that Schneerson was going to be resurrected from the dead and reign as *Moshiach*? Talk about affirming what Christians have been saying for centuries!

Though controversy still exists regarding the messianic pretensions of the late Rebbe that echoed out of 770 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, not that far away, at 121-83 Springfield Boulevard, that is, at the Montefiore Cemetery, Queens, Rebbe Schneerson remains where they placed him almost 25 years ago.

What a contrast to Rebbe Jesus, whose tomb has been empty now for almost 2,000 years. ♣

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CLIFF'S  
EDGE  
CLIFFORD  
GOLDSTEIN



FOR MANY THE  
MESSIAH HAD COME.  
AND HE COULD BE  
FOUND AT 770  
EASTERN PARKWAY,  
BROOKLYN,  
NEW YORK.



PHOTO BY KWIHUG ON UNSPLASH

## GOD'S WORD FOR TODAY

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*Whatever our circumstance, the Holy Spirit has a message for us.*

**W**ritten in different ages, by men who differed widely in rank and occupation, and in mental and spiritual endowments, the books of the Bible present a wide contrast in style, as well as a diversity in the nature of the subjects unfolded. Different forms of expression are employed by different writers; often the same truth is more strikingly presented by one than by another.

And as several writers present a subject under varied aspects and relations, there may appear, to the superficial, careless, or prejudiced reader, to be discrepancy or contradiction, where the

thoughtful, reverent student, with clearer insight, discerns the underlying harmony.

### **GOD'S INSPIRED MESSENGERS**

As presented through different individuals, the truth is brought out in its varied aspects. One writer is more strongly impressed with one phase of the subject; he grasps those points that harmonize with his experience or with his power of perception and appreciation; another seizes upon a different phase; and each, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, presents what is most forcibly impressed upon his own mind—a different aspect of the truth in each, but a perfect harmony through all. And the truths thus revealed unite to form a perfect whole, adapted to meet the wants of [men and women] in all the circumstances and experiences of life.

God has been pleased to communicate His truth to the world by human agencies, and He Himself, by His Holy Spirit, qualified men and enabled them to do this work. He guided the mind in the selection of what to speak and what to write. The treasure was entrusted to earthen vessels, yet it is, nonetheless, from Heaven.

The testimony is conveyed through the imperfect expression of human language, yet it is the testimony of God; and the obedient, believing child of God beholds in it the glory of a divine power, full of grace and truth.

In His word, God has committed to [humanity] the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are to be



accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience. "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16, 17, RV.\*

Yet the fact that God has revealed His will to [humanity] through His word has not rendered needless the continued presence and guiding of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, the Spirit was promised by our Saviour, to open the word to His servants, to illuminate and apply its teachings. And since it was the Spirit of God that inspired the Bible, it is impossible that the teaching of the Spirit should ever be contrary to that of the word.

#### THE HOLY SPIRIT'S LEADING

The Spirit was not given—nor can it ever be bestowed—to supersede the Bible; for the Scriptures explicitly state that the Word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. Says the apostle John, "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." 1 John 4:1. And Isaiah declares, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isaiah 8:20.

Great reproach has been cast upon the work of the Holy Spirit by the errors of a class that, claiming its enlightenment, profess to have no further need of guidance from the word of God. They are governed by impressions which they regard as the voice of God in the soul. But the spirit that controls them is not the Spirit of God.

This following of impressions, to the neglect of the Scriptures, can lead only to confusion, to deception and ruin. It serves only to further the designs of the evil one.

Since the ministry of the Holy Spirit is of vital importance to the church of Christ, it is one of the devices of Satan, through the errors of extremists and fanatics, to cast contempt upon the work of the Spirit and cause the people of God to neglect this source of strength which our Lord Himself has provided.

## The Word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.

In harmony with the word of God, His Spirit was to continue its work throughout the period of the gospel dispensation. During the ages while the Scriptures of both the Old and the New Testament were being given, the Holy Spirit did not cease to communicate light to individual minds, apart from the revelations to be embodied in the Sacred Canon.

The Bible itself relates how, through the Holy Spirit, men received warning, reproof, counsel, and instruction, in matters in no way relating to the giving of the Scriptures. And mention is made of prophets in different ages, of whose utterances nothing is recorded. In like manner, after the close of the canon of the Scripture, the Holy Spirit was still to continue its work, to enlighten, warn, and comfort the children of God.

Jesus promised His disciples, "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: . . . and he will shew you things to come." John 14:26; 16:13.

Scripture plainly teaches that these promises, so far from being limited to apostolic days, extend to the church of Christ in all ages. The Saviour assures His followers, "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Matthew 28:20. ♣

\* Bible texts credited to RV are from The Holy Bible, Revised Version. Oxford University Press, 1911.

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 passage was excerpted from *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), pp. vi-viii.



## READ WITH UNDERSTANDING

*How to enhance your understanding of Scripture*

Today more than ever the origin, credibility, and historical reliability of the Bible have come into question. It is faulted for not being immaculately inerrant, and critics proffer a barrage of apparent contradictions in attempts to discredit the Bible.

Are their criticisms valid?

Perhaps we should first determine what constitutes a genuine contradiction. A contradiction occurs when two or more statements or situations stand in opposition to each other: "Jack is bad." "Jack is good." These two appear mutually exclusive, but perhaps we should interrogate them. Are the two Jacks the same person? At what times were the two statements made?

Might Jack have changed? Again, who are the readers? How should readers understand the words "bad" and "good?"

I remember once after preaching that a young friend blurted out: "Man, you bad!" He meant that I had done very well. Acknowledging the range of important elements that come into play—time, place, language, social norms and customs, etc.—this article considers eight of the many salient principles that deserve our consideration before Bible enthusiasts or critics may state valid claims. Hopefully, the examples that accompany these principles serve to reasonably clarify the contradictions that seem to be involved in each instance.

### PRINCIPLE 1:

#### KNOW THE AUTHOR'S PURPOSE

Although the Bible bears one common theme, it was composed by about 40 different personalities at various times, authors whose styles, purposes, and use of literary conventions, whose foci and agendas varied significantly from person to person.

*Example: The Temptations of Jesus.* The Gospel writers' varying order of the temptations of Jesus coincides with the goals of each author's book. In Matthew, where majesty is a major theme, Jesus' climactic temptation is Satan's offer of world kingdoms (Matt. 4:9, 10), placed second in Luke (4:9-12). The bulk of Luke's Gospel is a travel narrative (Luke 9:51-19:47), showing Jesus headed toward Jerusalem where He would die for sinners. In keeping with this purpose Luke's climactic temptation situates Jesus on the pinnacle of the Temple.



## **PRINCIPLE 2: UNDERSTAND BIBLICAL INTERTEXTUALITY**

Bible writers used an exegetical method in which later biblical texts, whether in the Old Testament or New Testament, are sometimes written in the light of, or within the matrix of earlier biblical references or other noncanonical or extrabiblical sources. This may take the form of echoes, allusions, or quotations. Guided by the Holy Spirit, Bible writers exposed new contexts not originally contemplated, citing otherwise odd or incongruous parallels. This approach in biblical writing creates inconsistencies for some readers.

*Example: Paul's Allegory.* In Galatians 4:21-31 Paul uses the narrative of Sarah and Hagar (Gen. 21) as an allegory to describe two covenants: slave woman Hagar is the earthly Jerusalem and the old covenant; free woman Sarah is the New Jerusalem and the new covenant.

*Example: Matthew's Messianic Fulfillment Passages.* Matthew's first four chapters introduce Jesus, the interpretive clue for understanding the rest of his Gospel. Jesus is Israel personified, who succeeds where Israel has failed. Matthew uses multiple Old Testament references to substantiate his fulfillment theme that Jesus is the New Israel. He reappropriates original context, place, and name in this endeavor.

"Out of Egypt have I called my son" (Matt. 2:15) harks back to Hosea 11:1, which in its original context adds that the son's heart was hardened. This is an unexpected parallel. Again, Matthew 2:17, 18 intertextually refers to Jeremiah 31:15, in which Jeremiah speaks of the Babylonian Exile and the promise that God's people will return to Jerusalem. Matthew reapplies that prophecy to Herod's slaughter of the children in Bethlehem.

## **PRINCIPLE 3: DO NOT BE DISTURBED BY IMPRECISSIONS**

Figures of speech such as exaggeration and hyperbole, etc., in the service of truth is no modern invention; nor are rounding off numbers, or categorically binary opposites: God loves Jacob and hates Esau (Mal. 1:2, 3).

*Example: David and the Showbread.* In the accounts with David and the showbread, Mark identifies the high priest as Abiathar (Mark 2:25, 26); 1 Samuel 21:1ff. identifies him as Ahimelech (cf. 1 Sam 22:11, 15-20; 23:6-9). Jeremiah's

application on the purchase of the potter's field (Jer. 19:1-3; 32:6-12; Matt. 27:9, 10) to the fulfillment of words spoken by Jeremiah may also illustrate this point since, in the Bible, they occur as Zechariah's words (Zech. 11:12, 13).

## **PRINCIPLE 4: RECOGNIZE EXPANDED MATERIAL**

Writers on the same topic often have different emphases. Witnesses to a given event see different things. The Synoptic Gospels are not carbon copies of the same thing. Each bears its own message.

*Example: "Blessed Are the Poor."* While Luke's report of the Sermon on the Mount celebrates the poor—"Blessed are the poor" (see Luke 6:20), for Matthew, Jesus commends "the poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:3). The apparent contradiction need be no more than each author's discreet employment of common material. "The poor" is a theme in Luke. Here he honors individuals who make themselves poor for the kingdom's sake. Because Matthew's audience is predominantly proud religious leaders, he shows that poverty of spirit is a crucial need.

## **PRINCIPLE 5: STUDY HOW BIBLE CHRONOLOGY WORKS**

Bible writers did not always write in what a modern may deem perfect order, or in the sequence as events occurred. Order and sequence served an author's theological focus. Highlighting the central theme is his main intent. The books of the Bible are not arranged in chronological order. Dates and times may be stated in different ways, both of which are in fact correct. Beware of arguments from ignorance—criticisms based on personal or even a general lack of information. Many perfectly legitimate literary devices employed in the Holy Scriptures are easily recognizable in nonbiblical writing, both ancient and current.

*Example: Events in the Synoptic Gospels.* Matthew's account of the healing of the centurion's servant (Matt. 8:5-13) is situated before the healing of Peter's mother-in-law (verses 14, 15). Luke locates it before the raising of the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-16). In another instance, Matthew puts the cleansing of the temple (Matt. 21:12, 13) immediately after the triumphal entry (verses 1-11), and before the cursing of the fig tree (verses 18-20). Mark positions the cleansing of the temple (Mark 11:15-17) on the day after the triumphal entry

(verses 1-10), but after the cursing of the fig tree (verses 12-14). These sequences of events seem to differ from each other. While the Synoptic Gospels have the basic general outline of events with a broad chronology, synoptic writers seem to be focusing on thematic and topical arrangements unique to each author's overall literary and spiritual purpose: Matthew seems to be more thematic and didactic; Mark more sequential.

### **PRINCIPLE 6: PARALLEL TEXTS MAY DIFFER**

This commonly happens with the Synoptic Gospels. The key is to decipher the main point the writer is trying to establish. He may arrange items to reflect his theological agenda or the time of the writing. In the process he may vary in some detail from another author's report on a similar topic.

*Example: Sending of the Twelve.* In Mark 6:7-13, at the sending of the twelve, the disciples were instructed to take their staff, no bread, bag, money, or extra tunic, and wear sandals. The parallel text (Matt. 10:5-15) dismisses all considerations for personal insurance including dispensing with staff and sandals. Because staff and sandals would be generally necessary, and neither of them is a luxury item, both Mark and Matthew communicate the principle of Jesus, total dependence on the kindness of others and total self-abnegation. The main idea is to travel light and depend upon the hospitality of others. Differing minor details offer two statements, both of which sharpen that understanding.

### **PRINCIPLE 7: CONSIDER THE GRAMMAR AND/OR SYNTAX**

Sometimes a study of the original language clears up a seeming contradiction.

*Example: Creation of the Animals and Humans.* Contradiction is claimed regarding the two Creation accounts. In Genesis 1:24, 25 God creates animals before humanity; in Genesis 2:19 animals are created after humans and brought to Adam for him to name them. A pluperfect rendering of the verb "had formed" solves the problem, meaning God had formed animals in the farther past. Once the pluperfect tense is used, the contradiction evaporates.

*Example: "Hearing With/Without Understanding.* On the road to Damascus, Saul's fellow travelers heard the voice but did not see anyone (Acts 9:7, KJV).

This seems contradicted in Paul's later account where his fellow travelers did not hear the voice of the one who was speaking to him (Acts 22:9, KJV). The solution to the seeming contradiction lies in the Greek grammar. In the first instance, the Greek verb "to hear" is used with the genitive case, signifying that they heard but did not understand. In the second situation, the same verb is used with the accusative case, signifying that the hearing is with understanding. In this instance, saying they did not hear means they did not get the sense; they did not hear with understanding. Conclusively, they did not distinguish an articulate voice.

### **PRINCIPLE 8: BE AWARE OF TEXTUAL DIFFERENCES**

A comparison of the best manuscripts available sometimes provides the basis for the best translation of a biblical reference. This involves a technical study of the apparatus of the Greek and Hebrew Bibles. A study of original languages is an asset for this exercise. This study can be very rewarding in settling claims of contradictions.

*Example: Revelation 22:14.* The King James Version renders this text: "Blessed are they that do His commandments." This reading is supported by late-ninth-century manuscripts. More reliable and older manuscripts, such as the Codices Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus (fourth and fifth centuries), render a more accurate variant: "Blessed are they that wash their robes." The former reading appears to be a scribal revision intended to be consistent with Revelation 12:17 and 14:12.

### **CONCLUSION**

The above principles can help to unravel perceived contradictions in the Bible. The Bible was written many centuries ago, and the principles and procedures for interpreting its contents are available, though the content being analyzed may be far removed from our time. Diligent Bible students must necessarily study the Bible against the backdrop of a Middle Eastern society in antiquity in terms of its manner of speaking and writing. Figuratively put, we must study the Bible with ancient Middle Eastern lenses. The Spirit is ever available to guide us in our reading. 🦋

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The first page of the letter to the Hebrews as it appeared in the 1611 edition of the King James Version of the Bible.



Do who at sundry times, and in diuers manners, spake in time past vnto the Fathers by the Prophets,

2 Hath in these last dayes spoken vnto vs by his Sonne, Whom he

hath appointed heire of all things, by Whom also he made the Worlds,

3 \* Who being the brightnesse of his glory, and the expresse image of his person, and vpholding all things by the

word of his power, When hee had by

himselfe purged our sinnes, sat down on the right hand of the Maiestie on high,

Being made so much better then the Angels, as hee hath by inheritance

received a more excellent Name then

any of them: For vnto which of the Angels said he at any time, Thou art my sonne, this

saith hee, Thou shalt be to him a Father, and he shall

call him a Sonne.

6 And againe, When he bringeth in the first begotten into the World, hee saith, And let all the Angels of God worship him.

7 And of the Angels he saith: who

LISTEN  
TO THE  
WORD

*Translations  
and Bible study*



**A**ncient Bible versions were of vital importance for taking the gospel to pagan nations during the early centuries of Christianity. Similarly, during the time of the Reformation translations of the Bible into the vernacular facilitated the spread of Reformation ideas in Europe. Since then the Bible has been translated into many languages. According to the 2019 statistics of the Wycliffe Bible Translators, the complete Bible has been translated into 698 languages, the New Testament into 1,548 languages, and one or more Bible books into a further 1,138 languages. This makes an aggregate of 3,384 languages, out of a total of about 7,000 languages spoken in the world.<sup>1</sup>

To translate the Bible into English involves knowing the original languages—Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek—and the skill to write English well. It also requires manuscripts that are as close to the original biblical text as possible. The first complete English translation is credited to John Wycliffe, a lecturer at Oxford University in the fourteenth century. A century and a half later William Tyndale translated the Greek New Testament into English. Church officials opposed the circulation of his translation; they bought copies and burned them. Tyndale himself, after being betrayed by a friend, was imprisoned and executed in 1536 in Belgium.

After James I became king of England, he authorized a new translation, which since its publication in 1611 has been known as the King James Version (KJV). It captured the best of all the preceding translations and far exceeded all of them in terms of popularity. It has justifiably been called the “noblest monument of English prose.”<sup>2</sup> For more than 400 years the KJV has remained “the Bible” *par excellence* wherever English is spoken.

### THE KJV CONTROVERSY

Since the time of the KJV, a number of older Greek manuscripts have been discovered. The most important among them are two manuscripts from about A.D. 350. One is called Codex Vaticanus, because it was found in the library of the Vatican; the other is called Codex Sinaiticus because it was discovered in 1844 in the library of Saint Catherine’s Monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai. In 1881 two English scholars, Brooke F. Westcott and Fenton J. Hort, published *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, which was based primarily on the ancient codices Vaticanus and

Sinaiticus, rather than on Greek manuscripts from the Middle Ages called *Textus Receptus* (the “received text”), which had been used for the KJV.

This Greek New Testament is attacked by KJV-only defenders, because modern translations are no longer based on the *Textus Receptus*, but on the Westcott and Hort text and later revisions of the Greek text. One of the chief arguments of KJV-only defenders is that the King James Bible translators relied on the *Textus Receptus*, because it was providentially preserved from scribal mistakes and intentional changes through the centuries.

By contrast, the Westcott and Hort Greek text, it is alleged, is based on manuscripts produced during a period of apostasy in the church (i.e., the fourth century A.D.) and not providentially protected from scribal changes. “Translations based on them are therefore unreliable.”<sup>3</sup> These interesting assumptions, however, lack any historical evidence.

It is interesting to note that as far as we know, other European languages do not have this problem with their Bible translations, which are based on the same Greek text as modern English Bibles. Martin Luther’s German New Testament, published in 1522, has undergone many major revisions during this period.

One of the arguments of the KJV-only defenders is the supposed omission of terms connected with the divinity of Jesus. For example, the KJV uses the phrase “Lord Jesus Christ” 80 times (e.g., Acts 15:11; 16:31; 1 Cor. 5:4; 2 Cor. 11:31; etc.). Modern versions use this phrase only about 60 times. The omission of the word “Christ” in 20 texts is seen as diminishing the evidence for Jesus’ divinity. This completely ignores the fact that in a number of places modern versions are stronger and clearer about the deity of Jesus than the KJV. For example, John 1:18 in the KJV says, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” Modern versions such as the *New American Standard Bible* (NASB) read “only begotten God,” and the *New International Version* (NIV) translates “but God the one and only” instead of “only begotten Son.”

Two lengthy passages (Mark 16:9-20 and John 7:53-8:11) are not found in the earliest manuscripts. Most modern translations indicate their omissions in the ancient manuscripts in various ways. Because we do not have the original autographs, we do not know whether these stories were

## The first complete English translation is credited to John Wycliffe, a lecturer at Oxford University in the fourteenth century.

lost in the process of transmission or whether they were later additions of oral reports. Whatever the case, the fact that modern translations indicate that these passages are not found in the most ancient manuscripts does not warrant the charge that modern Bibles have changed God's Word.

### MODERN VERSIONS

We have many modern versions of Scripture today, and any translation is also an interpretation.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF SOME ENGLISH VERSIONS

- » The *New American Standard Bible* (NASB) attempts to adhere to the original languages of Scripture as closely as possible, which leads to wording that might seem awkward.
- » The *New International Version* (NIV) is a dynamic equivalency translation, that is, a phrase-by-phrase translation that seeks to be faithful to the original thought of the biblical writers.
- » The *New King James Version* (NKJV) represents a careful updating of the KJV. It preserves the accuracy, as well as the rhythm and beauty of the original KJV.
- » The *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV) is a literal translation that eliminates masculine-oriented language where possible.
- » The *English Standard Version* (ESV) is a literal translation of the Bible in contemporary English. It emphasizes word-for-word accuracy and literary excellence.

This has made it necessary to carefully consider which translation we are going to use and for which purpose. First, we need to recognize that there are three basic types of translations:

1. The *formal*, or *literal*, translation attempts to translate as close as possible to the original wording. Translations in this category include the KJV (1611), the New King James Version (1982), the NASB (1995), and the English Standard Version (2001).

2. The *dynamic equivalency* translation is not so much concerned with the original wording as with the original meaning. Translations in this group include *The New English Bible* (1970) and the NIV (2011).

3. *Paraphrases* of the Bible seek to restate in simplified but related ways the ideas conveyed in the original language, e.g., *The Living Bible* (1971), *The Message* (2002), *The Clear Word* (2006). Paraphrases are more like commentaries than translations. For example: Colossians 2:9, "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (NKJV), is rendered in *The Message* as: "Everything of God gets expressed in him, so you can see and hear him clearly. You don't need a telescope, a microscope, or a horoscope to realize the fullness of Christ, and the emptiness of the universe without him."

So which version shall we use? For serious Bible study and preaching, it is helpful to consult several good versions. Good modern standard translations are the NKJV, the NIV, the NASB, and the English Standard Version. For personal and family devotions a paraphrase may offer a fresh way of connecting to God's Word. 📖

<sup>1</sup> See [www.wycliffe.net/statistics](http://www.wycliffe.net/statistics).

<sup>2</sup> J. H. Skilton, "English Versions of the Bible," *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. J. D. Douglas et al. (Leicester, Eng.: Inter-Varsity, 1962), p. 333.

<sup>3</sup> S. Thompson, "The Great Bible Versions Debate," *Record*, July 22, 1995, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Scripture quotations marked NASB are from the New American Standard Bible, copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. Bible texts credited to NIV are from the Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

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**Gerhard Pfandl**, Ph.D., originally from Austria, served as pastor, Bible teacher, field secretary, and associate director of the Biblical Research Institute.

# HOW MANY BIBLES?

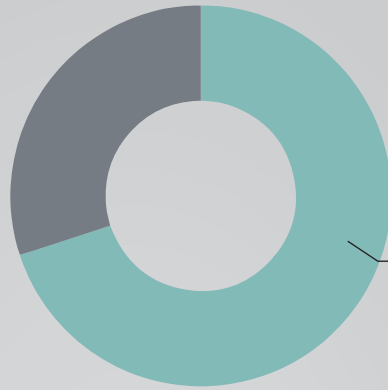
Number of full Bibles distributed by UBS since 2015

**107 MILLION**

Number of Bibles downloaded

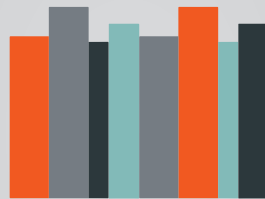
**7.9 million**  
in 2017

**S**ome of God's most wonderful work in gospel advance across the earth is done by Bible societies, organizations dedicated to bringing the Word of God to His children in their own language, and disseminating the Holy Scriptures in every creative way conceivable. Figures below are drawn from the United Bible Society's (UBS) report for 2017,\* its latest available, with data collection continuing until the end of March 2018, and responses elicited from 80 percent of the world's Bible societies. Lines that mention no specific year apply to 2017:



**70%**

Percentage of full Bible translations provided by Bible societies



Number of Scripture items—Bibles, Testaments, Gospels, smaller Scripture items—distributed/downloaded in 2017

**355 MILLION**

## TOTALS OF BIBLES BY REGION IN 2017

### AMERICAS

**Full Bibles**  
17,861,206  
**Total Scriptures**  
278,773,238

### EUROPE-MIDDLE EAST

**Full Bibles**  
3,620,551  
**Total Scriptures**  
9,887,404

### AFRICA

**Full Bibles**  
6,145,686  
**Total Scriptures**  
8,208,982

### ASIA-PACIFIC

**Full Bibles**  
10,981,901  
**Total Scriptures**  
58,079,037

\*[www.unitedbiblesocieties.org/scripture-distribution-report-2017-one-in-five-bibles-distributed-online](http://www.unitedbiblesocieties.org/scripture-distribution-report-2017-one-in-five-bibles-distributed-online)

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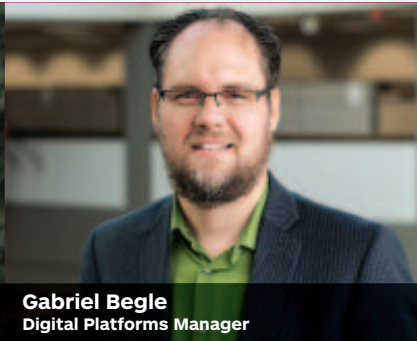
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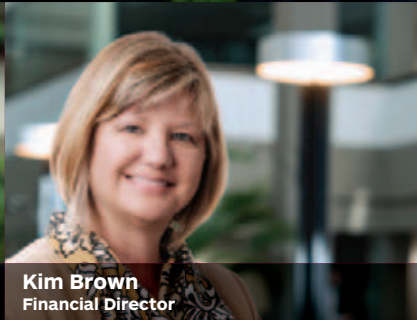
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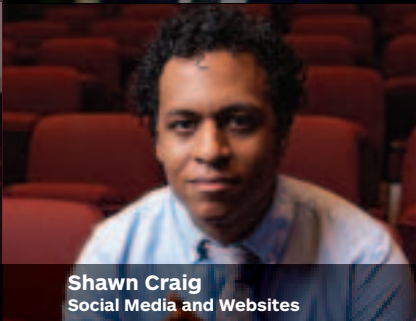
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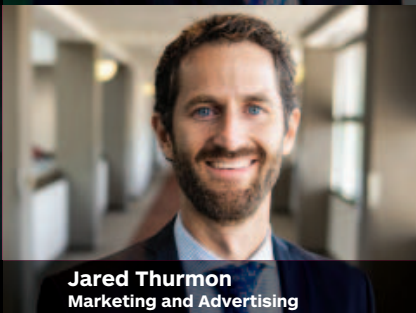
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KAREN CHAMBERS

**Carol Anne Chambers started reading *Children's Friend* in Braille, and has gone on to read *The Invitation*, as well as books of the Bible.**

Through this ministry and the body of Christ, God chooses to fulfill the promises of Isaiah 42:16 and assure His children who are blind that they are needed, gifted, treasured, and never forsaken.

### **GROWING IN JESUS**

Carol Anne Chambers has received services since 2015, when she and her parents were searching for stories about Jesus in Braille. Born prematurely, weighing only one pound six ounces, Carol Anne, now 34, has been blind since birth and is mildly autistic. She lives with her parents, who provide the care and support she needs.

One of Carol Anne's greatest joys is reading the Braille magazine *Children's Friend*, which includes stories about outdoor adventures, missionary endeavors, peer pressure, health, and the Bible. This Braille magazine has been produced and distributed by Christian Record since 1937.

Carol Anne's mother, Karen, wrote, "My daughter receives *The Children's Friend* and loves them! She looks forward to receiving them in the mail. She is totally blind, but loves to walk to the set of mailboxes at the end of our block to see what might be there for her. She snatches it out of our box like a treasure and clutches on to it with her right arm while holding onto me with

## LIGHTING THE DARKNESS

---

*Giving sight to those who are blind*

*"I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them" (Isa. 42:16).*

**C**hristian Record Services for the Blind serves individuals who are blind and has done so for 120 years. The ministry was founded when the Holy Spirit impressed 27-year-old Austin O. Wilson, blind since the age of 9, to begin printing Christian Braille resources for blind people. It continues to offer materials and programs that "empower people who are blind to engage their communities and embrace the blessed hope."

**DIANE THURBER**



her left as we make a trek around our neighborhood and back to our house.

Her mother added: "Carol Anne loves to read, although it is rare to find publications that are Christian at her third-grade level of comprehension. She has so grown in her interest in God's Word through these *Children's Friend* magazines."

Carol Anne reads *The Children's Friend* out loud to her mother from the kitchen table. "She finds the stories encouraging, knowing that there are kids who want to please God first in their lives," wrote Karen.

She is determined to read a devotional for her mother and father, too, and does so after their Sunday dinner each week. "She reads one chapter of her Braille Bible that you sent her. We follow along in the print . . . all at the kitchen table. We have never [before] had a devotion at all in our 35 years of marriage." Carol Anne finished reading the book of Matthew in Braille, then started Mark; additional books of the Bible will be sent to her from Christian Record as requested.

Carol Anne also received *The Invitation*, by Alejandro Bullón, in Braille. *The Invitation* shares steps to building a relationship with Christ in story form. Her mother was uncertain whether the book's content would be truly meaningful to or understood by Carol Anne, since "it is a big book and full of adult words and stories," she said. But Carol Anne was determined to read it, and did so as her mother worked in the kitchen.

Her mother shared her surprise: "What wonderful stories! She had to reread the first story to her dad on his day off work. . . . Carol Anne has already called her blind friend about it and is going to let her read it next."

We are excited to see the Lord working in the life of Carol Anne's family as she shares what she is learning with her parents. God is leading Carol Anne to the assurances of His faithfulness found in His Word as she receives and reads Christian resources from Christian Record.

## RECOMMITMENT TO JESUS

Robert "Bobby" Cavanaugh was 9 years old when he first attended a camp sponsored by National Camps for Blind Children (NCBC), a Christian Record program that began in 1967. He said, "I had so much fun at camp. I cried when it was time to go home. I was sad the week was over,

**A study published by the National Institutes of Health confirms that 48.4 percent of people who are legally blind experience moderate to severe loneliness.**

and I was going to miss my friends."

Bobby returned to camp a few more summers, but eventually stopped attending when the NCBC blind camp in his area was no longer offered.

Fast-forward a few years. The camp chose to partner with NCBC again. Now 24, Bobby decided to attend camp again. Once more he said, "I think I might cry this time, too. I just wish I could see my friends all the time."

Bobby works part-time, testing new technology for people who are blind. He lives with his parents and uses public transportation, but it is still difficult to meet up with friends. The social outlets for people who are blind are not always the same as those for the sighted, and transportation can be a challenge. Even in adulthood, Bobby continues to appreciate the opportunities camp offers for fellowship, activity, and support.

Though Bobby was raised in a Christian home, he no longer has that spiritual influence in his life. At camp, Bobby can grow in his journey with Jesus in a natural setting where he can have spiritual conversations with caring, supportive staff, and participate in meaningful worship services that highlight the blessings of a relationship with Jesus. Last summer Bobby was one of five campers at the camp he attended who chose to recommit his life to Jesus.

Bobby also learns more about his abilities as he tries new adventures at his blind camp, which offers such activities as horseback riding, go-carts, swimming, archery, boating, zipline, and rockwall climbing. The experiences campers have each summer bring joy throughout the year, too, as they reflect on the positive memories and remain in contact with friends from camp, both old and new.



**Bobby Canvaugh rode horses as a child at one of Christian Record Services camps for the blind. As a young adult, horseback riding has not lost its allure.**



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHRISTIAN RECORD SERVICES

This is significant because many who are blind share that they are lonely.

A recent study published by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), titled “Loneliness Among Adults With Visual Impairment,”<sup>1</sup> confirms that 48.4 percent of people who are legally blind experience moderate to severe loneliness. It has been noted in another study by the NIH, titled “Social Isolation, Loneliness in Older People Pose Health Risks,”<sup>2</sup> that social isolation and loneliness are linked to higher risks for a variety of physical and mental conditions, including high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, weakened immune system, anxiety, depression, cognitive decline, Alzheimer’s disease, even death.

Through the programs and services provided by Christian Record to individuals often marginalized and forgotten by their own families, churches, and communities, people who are blind are reminded that they are not alone. Doors of opportunity are opened to them. The darkness they may experience in life is lessened. Quality of life is improved. They are given a glimpse of

the One who promises never to forsake them, the One who will return on that day “when every eye will see him” (Rev. 1:7).

It’s easy to brighten the path of someone who is blind. Befriend people in your community and open your heart and home for fellowship. Refer people who are blind to Christian Record to receive services, or partner with Christian Record so more can benefit from life-changing, confidence-building resources and programs. 📌

*Interested individuals may visit the website, [crsb.org](http://crsb.org); e-mail [info@christianrecord.org](mailto:info@christianrecord.org); or call 402-488-0981.*

<sup>1</sup> Audun Brunes, Marianne B. Hansen, and Trond Heir, *Loneliness Among Adults With Visual Impairment: Prevalence, Associated Factors, and Relationship to Life Satisfaction, Health and Quality of Life Outcomes*, [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/30709406](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/30709406), published online Feb. 1, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> *Social Isolation, Loneliness in Older People Pose Health Risks*, National Institute on Aging, [www.nia.nih.gov/news/social-isolation-loneliness-older-people-pose-health-risks](http://www.nia.nih.gov/news/social-isolation-loneliness-older-people-pose-health-risks), published online Apr. 23, 2019.

**Diane Thurber**, president, Christian Record Services, Inc., with Christian Record staff. Based in Lincoln, Nebraska, Christian Record Services for the Blind serves approximately 17,000 people in North America and around the world.

# 2020: A YEAR OF PRAISES

New Year's Eve, at the stroke of midnight, some party and drink as if there's no tomorrow. Some weave intoxicatedly through traffic behind the wheel of a potential killing machine. Some seek the thrills of sensual pleasure. Some set off fireworks or exchange kisses. Others sit at home, envy the masses at New York's Times Square, and wish they were there.

But another group of people scattered throughout the world won't be drinking, driving, shooting off fireworks; they won't be sitting at home wishing they were somewhere else with someone else. Instead, they will intuitively follow the counsel: "Seek first [God's] kingdom and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). Without condemning innocent rituals, this group will usher in New Year's Day, as any other, by seeking God's kingdom first.

Let's not get caught up in the attitude of "eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." Instead, let's declare New Year's Day, and every day in 2020, to be a time of growth and advancement, to declare our PRAISES to God.

Here are a few declarations for your consideration:

**Peacemaking:** "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Rom. 12:18).

In a world of antagonism, grudges, and revenge, peacemakers are at a premium. Let's take the high road of peace and spread love, acceptance, and forgiveness.

**Rejoicing:** "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" (Phil. 4:4).

Whatever the situation, let's declare that God is our rock, joy, and inspiration. We will not give up, give in, or give way. In all things let's rejoice and declare that

the Lord is near and in charge.

**Aspiring:** "I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14).

Set a target and pursue it. Take one step at a time. Focusing on targets consistent with our life mission is the key to success.

**Initiating and completing:** "My only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me" (Acts 20:24).

"The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step." But why stop there? Let's go beyond, further, and higher. Initiative is the self-starter that keeps us advancing.

**Sanctification:** "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

Sanctification is never for its own sake. Seeking sanctification is our path to fulfillment and productivity.

**Energized living:** "I pray that you may enjoy good health" (3 John 2).

Good health is foundational to our energy and vitality. Since the body is the medium for the mind, and the mind is the facilitator of character, health is essential for a rich and fulfilling life.

**Sharing faith:** "It is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved" (Rom. 10:10).

Genuine Christians live in two dimensions. They believe in Christ and the gospel, and they live their beliefs through consistent practice and honest witness.

Declare your convictions for 2020: Make peace. Celebrate in the Lord. Aspire toward your ideals. Stick with Jesus and never give up. Grow in grace. Live abundantly. Share your faith.

TRANSFORMATION TIPS  
DELBERT W. BAKER



LET'S DECLARE NEW  
YEAR'S DAY, AND  
EVERY DAY IN 2020,  
TO BE A TIME OF  
GROWTH AND  
ADVANCEMENT.

**Delbert W. Baker** is vice chancellor of Adventist University of Africa, near Nairobi, Kenya.

An aerial photograph of a two-lane road winding through a dense, lush green forest. The road is the central vertical element, with a small blue car visible in the distance. The surrounding trees are vibrant green, creating a textured background.

*When a detour turned into an opportunity*

# SOMEWHERE IN THE ALABAMA WOODS

## CAROLYN STUYVESANT

Lord, it can't be!" I exclaimed half aloud. "The needle on the gas gauge is sitting on empty, where it was the last time I had to fill the tank. But this time is so soon! I promised then that I'd be more careful."

It was embarrassing! It was dangerous! "I'm out here with pine trees on the right and pines trees on the left." One more traveler complaining to the Lord. "Please, if You can get me to a gas station on an empty tank, I promise to never let this happen again."

Did my heavenly Father smile as He heard another one of His children making bargains with Him?

### OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

After a mile or so, I saw a small town with several highway exits and not a car in sight on the beautiful divided highway. But I somehow missed every exit. I pulled off the road and studied my map. There were no more exits for 10 miles, and nowhere to turn around. I drove on. After 10 agonizing miles, a lone exit sign welcomed me. My 6-year-old Dodge Dart cruised up the off ramp, and I saw a tower advertising a Union 76 station with a convenience store. That was all. Not a city or even a town in sight.

While filling the tank, I took in the surroundings. A narrow unpaved road wound down a hill through a pine forest. How I like to follow little country roads!

*I think I'll drive three miles to see what I can see, I decided. No one on the planet has any idea where I am; but that's OK.*

Even though the needle on the gas gauge registered empty, it took only 9.2 gallons to fill the tank. I could have easily driven another 90 miles.

After paying for my fuel, I turned onto the dusty road. Little curls of smoke rising here and there among the trees identified the location of scattered, small, humble dwellings. Ragged garments flapping in the breeze on leaning clotheslines told stories of endless struggles with poverty.

Having driven two miles, I thought I should turn around. Just then a rusty gray car pulled up on the opposite side of a wide spot by the road and stopped. Two young men got out.

I continued driving. In my rearview mirror I saw the men walk on the other side of the road toward the gas station. *Was their car out of gas?*

It seemed that God was telling me to go back.

Perhaps I could at least give them a copy of *The Great Controversy*. I had a whole case of the books on the back seat. It was another mile or so before I could turn around, so there was time to seek the Lord's counsel. What would they think of a single woman approaching two strangers?

### ENGAGED

Turning my car around, I started back. The two had crossed the road and were nearing the gas station. I pulled alongside, stopped, and rolled down the window. "Hi!" I called. "I'd like to talk to you." They moved in my direction.

Not knowing what else to say, I blurted out, "Have you been wishing for some books about the Bible?"

They shook their heads in silence.

"Well, I don't know why I'm here, but it seems to me that God wants me to talk to you," I said. They moved closer.

"Do you believe that Jesus is coming back to this earth soon?" I asked.

"Yes, we do," one answered. "That's what we were talking about. I just told my friend here that the Lord is coming sooner than we think."

By that time both of them were leaning on my car door. "Look," I said, "I don't know what you know, or what you don't know, but you can use your Bibles and this book to help you understand." I handed the book to one of them. "I know that God sent me to give you this book. He loves you. He wants you to live with Him forever. You can talk to Him and listen to Him as He speaks to you in the Bible."

"We finished high school, but we aren't great readers," the other young man said.

"Do you have a church here?" I asked.

"Yes, we go every Sunday," they said.

"How about taking this book to your pastor?" I suggested. "Tell him you want him to help you read it. You can study it together and pray about it. God will help you." Then we prayed.

Their faces brightened as they thanked me.

Somewhere in a secluded Alabama woods, two young men took a copy of *The Great Controversy* home, a book whose writer was inspired by our wonderful God who made the meticulous arrangements for its delivery. Surely His ways are past finding out (see Rom. 11:33). 📖

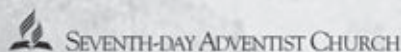
**Carolyn Stuyvesant**, a former missionary, is retired and lives in Yucaipa, California.



# Educate a child, save a community

**PICK A CHILD TO SUPPORT AT**  
[www.AdventistChildIndia.org](http://www.AdventistChildIndia.org)

**QUESTIONS? CONTACT US**  
Email: [childcare@adventistchildindia.org](mailto:childcare@adventistchildindia.org)  
Phone: 866-7-ACIKID (866-722-4543)



For just \$35 a month, you can send a child from one of the poorest Adventist families in India (earning less than \$100 a month) to an Adventist school and cover the cost of tuition, dorm, food, and clothes. Or you can make general fund donations for healthcare and other needs. You can see children through school and even college, so they can grow up to support their family, church, and community.

## **WE STAND APART**

- Run by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Southern Asia Division.
- Give 94% of sponsor funds directly to support children, retaining only 6% for administration.
- Support kindergarten through college education.

*Adventist Child India was conceived and built by Dorothy and Ron Watts. Today, it is led by Bill and Nancy Mattison-Mack.*



PETER N. LANDLESS

ZENO L. CHARLES-MARCEL

## CIGARS

*Tobacco by Any Name Would Still Be Poison*



**Q:** I am a cigarette smoker transitioning to vaping. My father, a cigar smoker, says that cigars give all the pleasure of smoking without the risk. Are cigars safer than cigarettes?

**A:** The short answer is: no. Cigars are rolls of tobacco wrapped in tobacco leaf or tobacco-infused paper; cigarettes are chemically treated tobacco wrapped in paper. Premium cigars use aged, fermented, additive-free tobacco. Cigars burn slowly, and, according to some researchers, the nonporousness of the wrapping may produce smoke that is more dangerous than cigarette smoke. “Little cigars” look like cigarettes in size, shape, and packaging, and may even have a filter attached, but they are taxed at a lower rate, making them less expensive.

In the United States, cigars are marketed as symbols of sophistication, luxury, and successful lifestyle; and cigar smoking is often linked to high-end consumer drugs such as expensive alcohol and specialty coffees. Cigars are traditionally offered by individuals who are celebrating a special occasion, such as the birth of a child, and to individuals who have achieved a milestone socially or professionally. Both cigars and cigarettes are often considered stress-relievers. Cigars may even have aromatic flavors, but we should not be fooled: tobacco kills, and cigars are tobacco.

A very robust analysis of 22 studies showed that ongoing, exclusive cigar smoking with no history of previous cigarette or pipe smoking was associated with increased death from any cause; cancers of the mouth, throat, esophagus, lung, and pancreas; and increased risk of potentially fatal heart and blood vessel diseases. The number of cigars smoked per day and the degree of inhalation of the cigar smoke strongly correlated with oral, esophageal, laryngeal, and lung cancers. Even those who did not inhale had

highly elevated associated risk of dying from oral, esophageal, and laryngeal cancers.

Tobacco in all forms contains the highly addictive stimulant drug nicotine. The average smoker absorbs about two milligrams of nicotine per cigarette smoked. The typical cigar contains about seven times the amount of tobacco compared to the average cigarette. But while most cigar smokers don’t inhale, prior cigarette smoking makes a person more likely to inhale.

Although you did not ask about your vaping, we want you to know that the chemicals in the e-liquid have been linked to death.

Your best course of action, then, is not to switch to vaping, which is dangerous and addictive, but rather to eliminate these dangerous chemicals from your life and be free. Adopt a new pattern of naturally stimulating life-giving or lifesaving activities rather than the artificial, chemically induced life-taking ones: vaping and smoking. Start training for a triathlon; engage in short-term missions; join a band or singing group and listen to melodic instrumental music; engage in outdoor sports; get first-responder training; volunteer for your local fire department, etc.

These kinds of activities stimulate the same pleasure centers in the brain as nicotine but without harm. Prayerfully consider these along with an effective smoking-cessation program, and you’ll be better off than doing even what your dad suggests. ♣

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



# REWARDS OF FAITHFULNESS

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*Spiritual lessons from a frequent flier*

**A**s a frequent flier for nearly 15 years, I've learned that the best way to travel is to use the same services from the same companies. I fly with the same airline, rent cars from the same car rental company, and either stay in the same chain of hotels or reserve lodging with the same hotel-booking website. I choose the ones that reward me for being a frequent customer.

That's the word: "reward"!

Then I stay faithful to them.

Well, I guess *that's* the word: "faithful"!

As such, my wallet is full of "jewelry." Gold, silver, platinum, even diamond!

If they were the actual precious materials, I'd be very rich. But



## Faithfulness and reward apply most significantly to our relationship with the Lord, our heavenly Father.

they are only plastic cards with titles that include such words as “executive” and “priority.”

Some travelers choose to buy special memberships with these companies so they can receive the perks, but I’ve never purchased them. They can be very costly; certainly more than I can afford. Instead, I maintain my status by being a frequent customer.

### STATUS MAKES A DIFFERENCE!

These “plastic titles” make a huge difference with my travel experience. Life on the road is much easier when you have them.

In the event of flight disruptions, for example, while other travelers are on their phones listening to “on hold” music or anxiously waiting in long lines to find other flight options, I get a call on my cell phone from an airline representative apologizing profusely for the trouble and telling me that my next potential flight is already booked and confirmed.

With car rentals I never choose expensive cars. I always choose economy. But in most cases I actually have to refuse the car they offer me because it’s too big and luxurious for just one person. It’s not practical for me. So I choose something nice but smaller. And the best part? I get the upgraded car for the same price as the economy car I initially reserved. They *reward* me because I’m *faithful*.

On one of my recent trips I was on a completely full flight. Because of my status, I often get upgraded to first-class, but this time I didn’t. My chance to board first was guaranteed, however, and I had a good seat on economy. So I was fine. No complaints.

Moments after the flight took off, though, a flight attendant walked down the aisle, stopped at my row, and said, “Hello, Mr. Micelli! Thank you for flying with us again today. If there is anything you need, please don’t hesitate to let us know. We’re here to serve you.”

Everyone around me turned to look at me, probably trying to figure out who this person was who was receiving such special treatment. As I sheep-

ishly thanked the flight attendant, I felt gratitude as well as some embarrassment. But the experience got me thinking about those two words again: “faithfulness” and “reward.”

### A SPIRITUAL APPLICATION

Faithfulness and reward apply most significantly to our relationship with the Lord, our heavenly Father.

He wants us to come to Him every time, for every need, at every moment. And the “perks” for that are the best—and they’re unending and eternal.

We can’t even come close to deserving or earning that kind of VIP treatment; instead, the very high price for this type of membership has already been paid. We receive this “status” as a gift. We are in! We are gold! We are priority!

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession” (1 Peter 2:9).

Talk about VIP membership!

So why do we look all over the place for what we need? Why, instead of going to the same source for everything, do we “shop around” and then wonder why we end up so unsatisfied? All we get is the nameless “who are you?” kind of treatment; the mediocre “get what you pay for” treatment.

In our heavenly Father’s kingdom we’re known by name, and we are truly appreciated. We are jewels!

God offers the best kind of membership; the closest kind of relationship: “I have called you by your name; *you are mine*” (Isa. 43:1, NKJV).\*

I want to be more and more frequent with my Lord and take advantage of this gift He so happily gives us. Being faithful to Him results in indescribable rewards—especially our ultimate, eternal reward of being with Jesus forever.

Keep up the faith! 🍀

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**Rudy Micelli**, born in Brazil, sings in English, Spanish, and Portuguese, and has ministered for Jesus through music in nearly 40 countries.

# THE DAY (AND MONTHS) AFTER

*Christmas is over,  
and a new year is here.  
Now what?*



## WILONA KARIMABADI

**F**rom the time that first tinge of orange creeps across a once green leaf, the “holidays” quickly descend upon us. I say “holidays” because that time of year rarely provides the rest and relaxation commonly associated with the word. From pumpkin-hued and flavored everything; to the frenzied preparation of a November feast best consumed in stretchy pants; to the business of gifts and giving; with concerts and travel thrown in, the Christmas season is a lot.

With a cheerful heart and a determination to stay calm, the holiday season can be enjoyable for all, albeit tiring. After all, coming at the tail end of another year filled with ups and downs for many, the smells of cinnamon and pine, bursts of red, green, and gold; carols reflecting on the babe sent to be the Saviour of the world, do represent a higher point in the year’s calendar.

But the season is only fleeting, and it begins winding down almost immediately on December 26. By January 2, most of us (kids included) may be back in work and school as if nothing happened the entire month before. It can be an anticlimactic end to an exciting period of time; and for some it brings a sense of let-down or even loss of purpose. If you really love Christmastime? Forget it. You might find yourself downright distraught that it’s over.

### HAPPY NEW YEAR?

So what happens once you pack up the Christmas decorations, carefully wrapping heirlooms to be reopened in a year’s time? How do you “reenter” normal life in a meaningful way? With winter and its seasonal depression, increases in colds and flu, and cabin fever for those living in blizzard-prone places, it can seem there isn’t much to look forward to. But it doesn’t have to be that way, for now is a great time to set a few things in order.

### REFLECT

Reflection is a powerful tool for helping us cultivate gratefulness. Start by making a running list on your phone or iPad of all the ways God has led you in the past year. The act of recalling blessings is often a pick-me-up. The purpose of keeping a running list is to get in the habit of adding to it. With a brand-new span of 12 months ahead of you, there will surely be more trials and deliver-

ance ahead. So make sure to mark those moments and log the hand of God in all of them. Every time you feel down or anxious for what is to come, read the list and see the proof that God is faithful.

### SPIRITUAL GOAL-SETTING

If the previous year and the holiday season were nothing but positive for you, that’s wonderful. But if the exact opposite was true, don’t despair. Because in both situations a strong connection to the Lord is important—faithfulness in good times and bad.

So what is it you want to accomplish in the coming year to make that possible? Do you want to read the Bible through, start a Bible study series, volunteer more in church, listen to more spiritually-themed podcasts, or have a more committed devotion time? There are many spiritual goals to choose from.

I advise starting small and choosing one or two goals that are doable. You can always reevaluate as the year goes on and add what you need. But focus on mastering the few that you do choose now. Really commit to making your spiritual goals happen.

### SERVICE

It has been said that when a person is feeling down, there is no better healer than to do something good for someone else.

So how and where can you serve? Are there areas in your local church that could use your help? What about your local community? More Seventh-day Adventists need to be involved in the secular world of their local communities. Find out about volunteering opportunities that appeal to your interests and individual gifts and do something.

This is also an excellent way to let the world learn more about the One in whose name you serve.

### EXPLORE CREATIVITY

Creativity can be a therapeutic balm for many emotional stressors. If you’ve ever entertained the idea of trying something new, such as a couple’s pottery class or an intimidating class at the gym or learning to play an instrument, why not go for it? Immerse that side of your brain in creative pursuits. I can tell you from personal experience, hand-knitting chunky yarn blankets is super-easy,

## Are there areas in your local church that could use your help? What about your local community?

calming, and a skill I picked up from YouTube. Now I have a new creative outlet and something special to share with someone else—once I get my blankets to look less like fishing nets, of course.

### SELF-CARE

It's so easy to take care of everyone else and forget yourself in the process. It may seem as though you're being selfless, but in the long run you may be doing more damage than good.

If your health plan allows for reimbursement for massage therapy, try to take advantage of this benefit. If you don't have something like that, look out for significantly discounted deals on sites like Groupon. A massage can make you feel better—mentally and physically.

You can also indulge in easy and inexpensive home “spalike” treatments. Fill your tub with hot water and add lavender-scented Epsom salts (very good for sore muscles and better sleep), light some candles, play some soothing music (Pandora actually has a spa music channel), and soak away the stresses of the day.

Drink lots of water and make an effort to eat foods that make you feel good—colorful fruits and vegetables, fiber-filled whole grains, nuts, and seeds. Maybe invest in a new cookbook or visit a healthy eating website to try something new.

Exercise shouldn't be hard to remember since you'll be bombarded with New Year's resolution fitness ads pretty much everywhere. The trick to committing to an exercise routine is to find an activity you enjoy and be consistent. It doesn't have to be complicated.

Don't neglect your annual physical, and be sure to stay on top of anything that bothers you by speaking to your doctor early on.

Last, if you feel down in a way that you can't

seem to shake, talk to a mental health professional as soon as you can. Take care of your mental and emotional health needs just as much as your physical ones.

### A WINTER GETAWAY

If the post-Christmas, winter-is-awful letdown is too distressing, plan activities that give you something to look forward to. It could be something as simple as game nights with friends, or day trips to nearby cities or quaint towns, to something a bit more exciting, such as a little winter vacation. Work within your individual budget and decide on something that makes sense for you and your family. The months between the new year and spring often spark a string of travel deals. Look into Airbnb, cheap plane tickets, road trips, or new attractions in your area to explore. Be proactive about planning something so you can look at your calendar with happy anticipation.

### ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE

One of the best things we can do when in “recovery” from a jam-packed holiday season is to focus on all the good that came with it, while looking forward to the good that is to come.

I used to have a very hard time with Mondays and getting back to the grind. But I recently read a blog post written by someone who said that Monday was her favorite day of the week (what?), because she chose to look at it as a fresh start and a clean slate. Each new week ahead became one filled with new opportunities and blessings to enjoy.

I started to look at things that way, and my Monday blues aren't so blue anymore. Perhaps we can take that approach to looking at a brand-new year.

The year 2019 has come and gone, and we've sent it out with aplomb through the festivities of the season. Now 2020 represents a fresh, new start brimming with new joys and opportunities to discover. As long as we start each new day with Jesus and walk with Him through whatever is to come, we can be confident that as long as He is by our side, there will always be something to look forward to.

And just think: we're that much closer to summer! 🍀

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Wilona Karimabadi is an assistant editor at *Adventist Review*.



# MISSIONS

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# CORE

CORE is a 9-month mission training program for young adults. It empowers young people to own their faith, to see and experience Christ in Adventism, and to immerse them in life changing service for Him.

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people's lives changed at the same time. For these reasons, and many more, CORE truly is a life transforming experience.

# The Church I Want to Belong to Is...

## GOD'S MASTERPIECE

Poet Robert Frost famously said, "Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in."

The same could be said about the church. For millennia, the church, whether it met in homes, in nature, or in great cathedrals, has been the odd collection of saints and sinners, healers and those wounded, citizens and strangers, who come together for one reason: to demonstrate their loyalty to Christ and the principles upon which He founded His kingdom.

Not long ago we put out a call on social media for photographs that complete the sentence: The Church I Want to Belong to Is . . . These pages feature a tiny cross-section of what it means to be part of Christ's body in different parts of the world. While we may not see ourselves in these photos, we are part of the palette God is using to paint His masterpiece of love, mercy, grace, and justice in our communities—His church. —Editors.



Chad Loquinte, Philippines



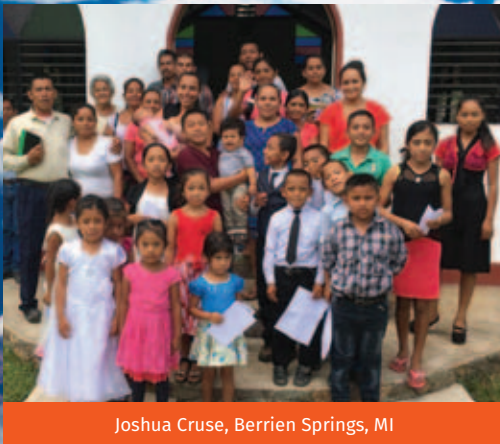
Jeff Berger, Ocala, FL



Geraldine Toms, Chatham, Ontario, Canada



Jaclyn Knight, New Market, VA



Joshua Cruse, Berrien Springs, MI



Joshua Cruse, Berrien Springs, MI



Victoria Shewbrooks, Perkasie, PA



Glen Basilisco, Philippines



## ANGELS IN MY HOSPITAL ROOM

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*The pain was intense, but the support was heavenly.*

I lay alone in the hospital room and thought, *We don't know a soul here! We're seven hours from our home; half a continent away from our kids in California. No one except God even knows we're here.*

The previous day had dawned as “normally” as any other Sabbath when my husband, Jim, and I were on the road for a weekend to speak in a church district on behalf of Adventist World Radio (as volunteers). The day before we'd spoken at the Biloxi Gulf Coast Seventh-day Adventist Church in the morning, then in the afternoon at the Bay St. Louis Seventh-day Adventist Church 30 miles away.

Saturday night, tired from a full day of ministry, we fell into bed early, hoping for a good night's sleep.

Around midnight, I awoke with chest pains so severe I could

scarcely breathe. Trying not to wake up Jim, I slipped out to the car to look for a bottle of aspirin should I be having a heart attack. The creaking hotel room door woke Jim when, hunched over in pain, I slipped back into the room.

Fifteen minutes later a fully engaged ambulance, lights flashing and sirens screaming, rushed me to a nearby hospital. Medical personnel ran all manner of tests for possible issues of the heart, gallbladder, and lungs. My severe pain continued, though paramedics had ruled out a heart attack as soon as they'd run tests on me in the ambulance.

Jim left me briefly to return to the hotel to shower, put on fresh clothes, and grab a bite to eat. Scared and hurting, I lay alone in that hospital room with our immediate future and my malady looming like big question marks in my mind.

### NEWS TRAVELS FAST

Just then an early-morning phlebotomist pushed open the door to my room.

“Good morning,” she said in a quiet yet cheery voice. “I'm here to draw some blood—Carolyn?” She stopped short. “Carolyn, is that you? Didn't you and your husband speak at our church yesterday?”

Through my pain I stared at her an instant before remembering. “Bay St. Louis? Second pew on the right? Melinda?”

Melinda put down her equipment and slipped off her latex gloves before taking my hand. Her warm, caring, flesh-and-blood touch meant everything to me at that moment. “I don't know why you're here,” she continued calmly, “but before I do anything



more, let me pray for you.” I relaxed into the comfort of her words, “Dear Father in heaven . . .”

Within the next few hours Jim and I learned that we were not alone after all. We had a loving family right there, where we “didn’t know a soul.”

Almost as soon as Jim returned from the hotel, the hospital room telephone rang. The caller was Sonny, the jovial praise team leader from the Gulf Coast church we’d met the day before.

“Mr. Sutton?” he asked when Jim answered the phone, “I just heard that your wife is in the hospital. May I pray with you over the phone? First, though, I want to remind you that God already has this. Second, I wonder if I could drop by and get any dirty laundry you might have. We’ll wash it and return it. In fact, if you’d like to move out of the hotel, you could stay in our guest bedroom.”

Jim was wiping tears from his eyes by the time he hung up the phone.

That afternoon Gloria, whom we’d also met at the Gulf Coast church, dropped by asking if we followed a vegan diet. If so, could she cook some healthful dishes and bring them to the hospital for us? She chatted briefly and prayed before she left.

The next day Tammie, with whom we’d prayed in the Gulf Coast church’s early Sabbath morning prayer circle, sat by my bedside, offering her help before praying over me.

By now, despite ongoing chest pain, fever, and headaches, I had the distinct impression that angels were entering my hospital room every time another church member arrived to share concern, care, and offers to meet our very real needs. The next evening Alice, the hospital ministries leader from the Gulf Coast church, showed up after a long day at work in another nearby medical facility.

Throughout the next few days, several other church members dropped in and “loved on” us. Some shared a favorite Bible promise before prayerfully claiming it for our unresolved situation.

Most of these new friends—all total strangers to us just a day or two previously—were among the thousands who had lost everything in Hurricane Katrina and were still struggling emotionally and financially. At least two of our visitors had adult special-needs children living with them at home in addition to working full-time themselves.

Near midnight the third night of hospitalization my Middle Eastern cardiologist quietly approached my bedside. With quiet joy he exclaimed, “I say

thank You to my God, who, too, is answering my prayers for you. I am also praying, like your many friends.” Our many new church-family visitors, whom the doctor had noticed praying, now gave him the freedom to reveal his faith in God as well.

The eventual medical findings on my second day of hospitalization revealed I had experienced a sudden, severe onset of pneumonia and pleurisy. Both, in the reassuring words of a doctor, were “resolvable.”

## REMINDERS FROM THE FAMILY

We returned home from our four-day “vacation” to the Gulf Shores with two reminders from our new family.

First, when lay members pitch in, not expecting the pastor to do everything, it has a powerful “Welcome to our family!” impact. As one of those visiting members explained: “As a church we finally got it. We realized that the text doesn’t read ‘I was sick, and the pastor visited Me.’ It reads ‘I was sick, and you visited Me.’ We let our pastor train us in hospital ministry, then we took it from there.”

Second, we are saved to serve. The members of this church district (a wonderful mix of ethnicities) had not allowed Hurricane Katrina, resulting financial uncertainty, nor any other personal loss to steal God’s purposes for their lives. Not the loss of home; not the loss of money (when in one case Katrina’s toxic flood waters literally ruined a large sum of paper currency the family was saving); not the challenges of single-parenting; not special-needs adult children living at home; not full-time jobs; not the continual needs of toddlers; not concern over their own family members; nothing kept these church members from ministering to us. God had saved them; now they were serving others in His name.

We felt as if angels were visiting with us. They were, for real, coming through the door with each church visitor. Jesus was there as well.

Today somebody within your sphere of influence—whether inside or outside the church—needs a visit from a heavenly guest. Why not ask Jesus where He wants you to go to comfort and encourage? Then let Him use your feet, your phone, your offers of help, your resources, your prayers. People who walk with Jesus are the real encouragers, not just cards and helium balloons. ♣

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**Carolyn Sutton** writes from northwest Alabama, where she lives with her husband, Jim.



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# THE BIBLE: THEN AND NOW

**A** little learning is a dangerous thing," wrote Alexander Pope. "Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring; there shallow draughts intoxicate the brain, and drinking largely sobers us again."

This bit of verse by a eighteenth-century British poet can apply to Christianity today because there's so much talking and so little learning in Christianity, especially when it comes to Scripture. That's a dangerous thing, because teachers and preachers assume that their congregations are familiar with everything read, preached, or taught from Scripture.

For example, preachers often say "You're familiar with the story . . ." or "You remember the verse . . ." as if everyone knows what's being spoken about. Worse, listeners aren't given the opportunity to ask questions, in order not to feel or look foolish. Some don't ask, and we don't tell. Thus we've inadvertently created a culture in which a little learning is a dangerous thing.

Let's begin with a few facts about the Bible. Are you aware that the names of the first five books of the Bible we know as Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy are not their original names? When these five books, originally recorded in Hebrew, were translated into Greek, their names were summarized into one word to capture the essence of what that book was about. But in Hebrew these books were named for the first words in the book.

The first book, called Genesis by Greek translators, focuses on the origin of all things. In Hebrew the name of the first book is *bereshit*, meaning "in the beginning," the first words in the first chapter.

Greek translators, concluding that the

second book of the Bible was about the Israelite's escape from Egypt, called it Exodus. But in Jewish Scripture it's called *Shemot*, "names," a reference to the first verse: "These are the names of the sons of Israel," referring to the sons of Jacob who went with him into Egypt.

Skipping down to Deuteronomy, the fifth book of the Bible, Greek translators called it "copy," or "repetition," because it represents the second giving of the law by Moses. But its Hebrew name is *devarim*, "words," an appropriate title because it begins with "These are the words" that Moses spoke to all Israel.

Deuteronomy's power is that it is essentially Moses' last will and testament. He recounts God's leading and His instruction as the children of Israel prepare to enter and occupy the Promised Land. Moses' imperative is stark: "See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. . . . Love the Lord your God, . . . walk in obedience to him, and . . . keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess" (Deut. 30:15, 16).

We, like the ancient Israelites, are on the brink of our Promised Land, and the words of the Bible—Old and New Testaments—challenge us to be all in for Jesus. While it's interesting to know how our Scriptures came to be, we can succeed only as we believe and practice "every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).

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

**CURE FOR THE  
COMMON LIFE**  
HYVETH  
WILLIAMS



**WE, LIKE THE  
ANCIENT  
ISRAELITES, ARE  
ON THE BRINK OF  
OUR PROMISED  
LAND.**

# Jesus for Asia

...because people are dying without Jesus



## Persistence Pays Off for Eternity...

**S**elvi is a Jesus for Asia Bible Worker in South India. She learned about a small village on a rocky mountainside called Amaravadi.

The villagers in Amaravadi live in tiny mud and stone huts, with palm-frond roofs that leak in the rain and turn their floors into mud so that they have to sit on rocks to stay dry.

They gather firewood to sell in nearby towns and the little money that brings them is hardly enough for one meal a day. Several children die from hunger each year.

When Selvi first visited Amaravadi, the villagers were so shy to speak to her because of their low caste. They were ashamed of their old, dirty clothes and their poor living conditions.

Selvi made it her mission to show them that they are valuable to God.

It wasn't easy!

Selvi went to Amaravadi every day and cooked food for the villagers. They accepted the food, but still did not trust her. She brought sarees and dresses for the women, and told them gently, "Don't be shy. I've come here to tell you good things. I am one of you." And she would touch them, which is very meaningful to people who are considered "untouchable."

Selvi did this faithfully for three months before they finally warmed up to her and began to see she was there to help them. She could have given up, but she knew God loved those people, and she did too.

Now, the villagers are welcoming Selvi. We have been able to open an evening school with free meals. The whole village praises the Lord for the good food and education the children are receiving, and the Gospel which shows them their value. And no children have died since the evening school was opened!

Please pray for Selvi as she continues to serve the people of Amaravadi.



You can sponsor a Bible worker or evening school at:  
[Jesus4asia.org/selvi](http://Jesus4asia.org/selvi)

We are receiving many calls from church leaders across India with requests for Bible workers like Selvi. There are lay members whose hearts are touched with the love of Christ who would like to work full time. All they need is a small stipend of just \$90/month. We are praying for 1,000 Bible workers for India!

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# CLOSER LOOK



## Faith That Matters

*Engage: Faith That Matters*, Nathan Brown, Signs Publishing, 2018, 120 pages, US\$9.99 (Kindle edition). Reviewed by Stephen Chavez, *Adventist Review*.

**H**ere at *Adventist Review* we've had the good fortune to have hosted many talented writers over the years as interns, some of whom still appear in our pages as columnists.

Nathan Brown, while not technically an intern, did spend a summer in one of our cubicles as he pursued a graduate degree in literature several years ago.

A talented writer and editor, Brown excels in being able to observe social conditions perceptively and connect them to spiritual principles revealed in the Bible. His book *Engage* is Nathan Brown at his most perceptive.

The book's 38 chapters began as columns on the *Adventist World* website. Consequently, they're short (fewer than 1,000 words), self-contained, and varied, touching on a wide variety of topics. It's the kind of book one could well

## Reflections on Organization

*Lessons From Battle Creek: Reflections After 150 Years of Church Organization*, Alberto R. Timm and James R. Nix, editors, Review and Herald, 2018. Softcover, 224 pages, \$19.99. Reviewed by Stephen Chavez, *Adventist Review*.

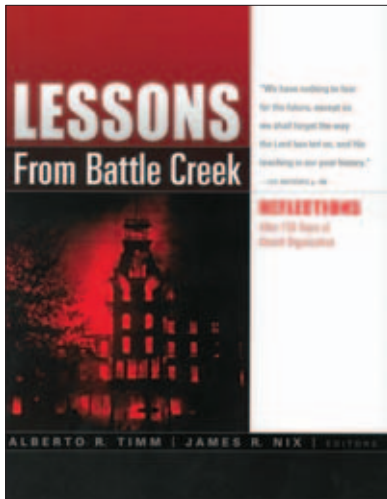
**T**here was a time that Battle Creek, Michigan, was synonymous with Seventh-day Adventists and breakfast food. Now, Kellogg's Foods still remains a Battle Creek institution, while the Seventh-day Adventist Church has gone on to become a denomination active in almost every country of the world. But the church was founded in Battle Creek.

The book *Lessons From Battle Creek* contains papers prepared for and presented when church leaders, academics, and historians met in Battle Creek in 2013 for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the movement's founding in 1863. The book contains accounts of the church's early pioneers, the challenges they faced, and the issues they had to resolve as the movement grew and developed—issues such as race, mission, authority, and spiritual complacency. The chapters, heavily sourced

leave on a kitchen table or a nightstand, where it could easily serve as a quick shot of inspiration before heading out for the day or as a meditation before going to sleep at night. In any case, readers will find much that stimulates thought and reflection and, one would hope, Christian action.

This is more than a book full of warm, fuzzy thoughts (although there are some). It's about the intersection of faith and practice: what does it mean to be a follower of Christ in a world in which Christians are too often as culpable as

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



and well written, are rarely boring. The individuals described, and their growth as leaders, seem as contemporary as today's news accounts in *Adventist Review*.

Stories about such pioneers as James and Ellen White, Uriah Smith, and Joseph Bates will be familiar. But the chapters in this book go way beyond stories told in denominational Bible classes at Adventist schools. Many of the stories are about people who are likely unfamiliar to the general Adventist population. And that's unfortunate.

The degree to which the Adventist movement has been successful is in direct proportion to the number of supporting players, many of them

nearly anonymous, who defied stereotypes and used their talents as missionaries, authors, teachers, and leaders. Their stories are just as valuable as those of the pioneers who founded this movement, because their contributions are so much part of today's legacy.

The authors of the chapters read as a Who's Who of Adventist leaders and writers of the early twenty-first century: Delbert W. Baker, Merlin D. Burt, Bill Knott, James R. Nix, Barry D. Oliver, Ella S. Simmons, and David J. B. Trim. A transcript of Ted N. C. Wilson's Sabbath sermon delivered that weekend, in addition to his closing remarks, round out the book's contents.

Not everything about the Adventist movement's founding and early development is contained in this volume. It's a snapshot, not an encyclopedia. But it's easy to see how characteristics of those early days are still part of our Adventist identity.

One caveat: don't be put off by the book's cover. A 1902 photo of the Battle Creek Sanitarium engulfed in flames, along with the words "Lessons From Battle Creek," seems an odd way to celebrate the progress of a movement now nearly 157 years old. The chapters inside, and the stories they contain, speak not of guilt and regret, but of hope and vision. ♣

non-Christians in some of the scandals that rock society?

Brown's strength is in mining the Bible for counsel that informs today's conversations, and not just those inside the church. A few of the chapter titles reveal something of his unique perspectives: "Reclaiming 'Radical,'" "Of Waiting and Discontinuity," "The Missing Chapter on Revival," "Racism Is Atheism," "In Praise of Empty Churches," "A 'Boring' Way to Change the World."

Many Adventist writers turn out good material that other Adventists find uplifting and inspirational. Brown offers his readers a window on the world, in which he challenges Adventists

to take their faith to a public in which many within and outside the church are dying slow deaths of loneliness, despair, lack of purpose, and meaninglessness.

The author's solution is to take another look at the timeless truths of the Bible. The Bible's prophetic voice, whether interpreting Daniel or Leviticus, speaks pointedly to the issues we face today. *Engage* helps us hear and handle those issues. It's not unlike the promise "Whether you turn to the right or the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying, 'This is the way; walk in it'" (Isa. 30:21). ♣

## GOD'S WORD

A voice that challenges and inspires.

What do you call a book that has inspired countless generations to know and love God? As the Bible is read more, it reveals our human condition, as well as God's character of love and grace, justice and mercy. To read the Bible is to be challenged and encouraged, for it is the sword of God, the Holy Spirit. In the following notes we hear His words and those of others who have responded to the challenge and encouragement of His Word. —Editors.

"By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. . . . For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm."

**PSALM 33:6-9.**

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"Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him."

**AGUR, SON OF JAKEH (PROV. 30:5).**

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"The Holy Scriptures are our letters from home."

**AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO.**

---

"Apply yourself wholly to the Scriptures, and apply the Scriptures wholly to yourself."

**JOHANN A. BENDEL.**

---

"Don't fall into the trap of studying the Bible without doing what it says."

**FRANCIS CHAN.**

---

"The more I have read the Bible and studied the life of Jesus, the more I have become convinced that Christianity spreads best not through force but through fascination."

**SHANE CLAIBORNE.**

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"I've read the last page of the Bible. It's all going to turn out all right."

**BILLY GRAHAM.**

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"The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever."

**ISAIAH (ISA. 40:8).**

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"Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."

**JESUS CHRIST (MATT. 4:4).**

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"The Bible is very easy to understand. But we Christians are a bunch of scheming swindlers. We pretend to be unable to understand it because we know very well that the minute we understand, we are obliged to act accordingly."

**SØREN KIERKEGAARD.**

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"Scripture cannot be set aside."

**JOHN 10:35.**

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"God's word is not chained."

**APOSTLE PAUL (2 TIM. 2:9).**

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"The sword of the Spirit . . . is the word of God."

**APOSTLE PAUL (EPH. 6:17).**

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"The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word."

**APOSTLE PAUL (HEB. 1:3).**

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"By God's word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water."

**APOSTLE PETER (2 PETER 3:5).**

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“The word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

**APOSTLE PAUL (HEB. 4:12).**

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“Most people are bothered by those passages of Scripture they do not understand, but the passages that bother me are those I do understand.”

**MARK TWAIN.**

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“Let me be: ‘a man of the book.’”

**JOHN WESLEY.**

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“Nothing less than a whole Bible can make a whole Christian.”

**A. W. TOZER.**

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“Whoever will prayerfully study the Bible, desiring to know the truth, that he may obey it, will receive divine enlightenment. He will understand the Scriptures. ‘If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching.’ John 7:17, R.V.”

**ELLEN G. WHITE (THE DESIRE OF AGES, P. 459). (BIBLE TEXTS CREDITED TO R.V. ARE FROM THE HOLY BIBLE, REVISED VERSION. OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1911.)**

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“The Bible isn’t magic, but it is corrective. . . . It is a relationship book. When I confront God’s Word, I am confronted; when I read God’s Word, it reads me; when I see God’s presence, He seeks me.”

**MIKE YACONELLI.**

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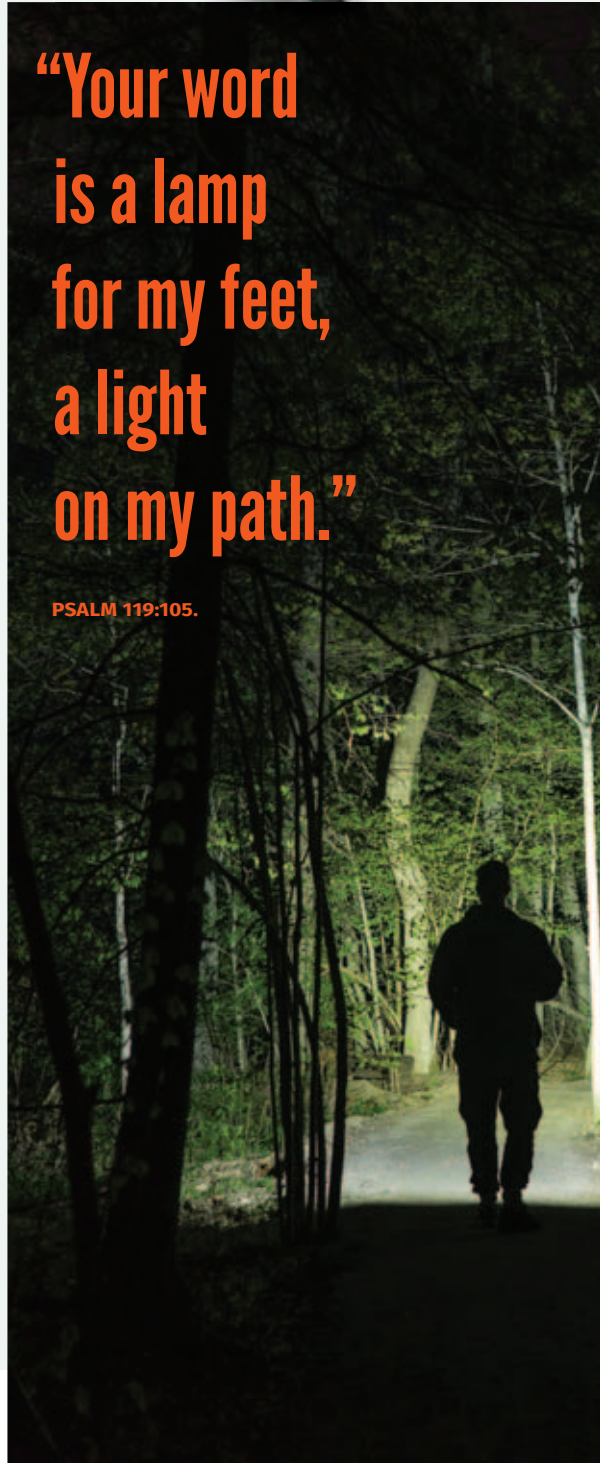
“I read the paper every day and the Bible every day; that way I know what both sides are up to.”

**ZIG ZIGLER.**

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“Your word  
is a lamp  
for my feet,  
a light  
on my path.”

**PSALM 119:105.**



## GOD, ARE YOU KIDDING?

**Y**ou've likely heard a sermon at least once in your life in which the preacher quoted Jesus' words: "Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you" (Matt. 5:42).

It's part of the passage that also includes this mandate: "Do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well" (verses 39, 40). I've yet to hear a sermon in which the preacher suggested that these words are to be understood literally.

**WAS JESUS  
SERIOUS WHEN  
HE SAID THAT?**

The relationship between God's Word and God's people has always been fraught. Jesus told the Jewish leaders: "You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life" (John 5:39, 40).

For many Christians, the Bible is like a municipal code: a really good lawyer can find a loophole or get us off on a technicality.

Are we obligated to obey everything in the Bible? Or just those things that we find convenient? Was Jesus serious when He said we should invite those who are poor, crippled, lame, and blind to our dinner parties, instead of our friends and relatives (see Luke 14:12-14)? Did members of the early church really sell property and possessions to make sure that everyone was clothed and fed (see Acts 2:44, 45)? Was that a model for us, or just

some unrealistic ideal?

These questions are not rhetorical. What is our Christian responsibility in view of the social issues roiling our culture? What does the Bible say about serving those who are marginalized because of poverty, disease, social, racial, or religious prejudice? Who would take the Bible seriously if it meant paying higher taxes so that people in poverty can access affordable health care?

Anyone who reads the Bible sincerely knows that the claims of the Bible are not trivial or trite. While we like to quote texts reminding us that not a sparrow falls outside the notice of our heavenly Father (see Matt. 10:29-31), doesn't that text also apply to those who sleep under overpasses, in prison cells, and in subsidized housing? If God cares about them—as He cares about us and sparrows—what are we doing to demonstrate that concern on a practical level?

In the words of twentieth-century preacher Peter Marshall: "There are aspects of the gospel that are puzzling and difficult to understand. But our problems are not centered around the things we don't understand, but rather in the things we do understand, the things we could not possibly misunderstand. Our problem is not so much that we don't know what we should do. We know perfectly well, but we don't want to do it."<sup>\*</sup>

<sup>\*</sup> In Peter Marshall, "By Invitation of Jesus," *Mr. Jones, Meet the Master: Sermons and Prayers of Peter Marshall*.

**Stephen Chavez** is an assistant editor of *Adventist Review*.

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