

ADVENTIST REVIEW

MAY 2020: HOW ARE WE DOING? + WHERE THIRST IS QUENCHED + "BURN THE SHIPS" + I WANT A CHURCH THAT'S REAL + TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE + DEATH. LOVE. LIFE.



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The Church
I Want to
Belong to Is...

COMPASSIONATE

WELCOMING

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COVID-19 is teaching us new respect for our frontline fighters. But their compassion is in vain if we will not all play our part.

Photo provided by Kettering Adventist Healthcare.

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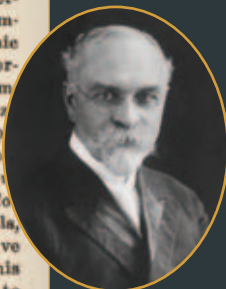
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1918 VERSUS 2020: HOW A PRESIDENT COMMUNICATES

AN OCCASION FOR EARNEST INTER-CESSION

We are amid the evils and perils of the last days. Human wisdom will be powerless to cope with these evils. This was demonstrated last year in the terrible epidemic of infantile paralysis which swept over portions of the country, and it is being demonstrated anew in the epidemic of influenza which is reaping a great toll of lives, especially in our crowded cities. In many places public assemblies are prohibited, and our brethren and sisters are unable to meet for church services. A number of our schools, in common with the public schools, have been closed by order of health boards. This affords occasion for special intercession to God. Pray that deliverance may be sent to afflicted humanity, and that our own dear brethren and sisters may be protected, and that in this time of distress they may become messengers of light and life, giving to others a knowledge of the health principles held by us as a people. Pray that this disease may be stayed, so that the work of the gospel may not be embarrassed; that the schools, both public and private, may resume their work, and that the young people may go on with their preparation. Daily, at every family altar, earnest intercession should be made to God for his interposition.

A. G. DANIELLS.





SABBATH, MAY 9, 2020

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name.*




Seventh-day
Adventist Church
NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

BILL KNOTT



A Nearby Grace

*"If you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?" (Matt. 5:46, NKJV).**

One of the ironies of living in a global village is that we can frequently be kinder to people living half a world away than to those who share a fence line or a pew with us.

We may be moved—and rightly so—by images of refugees or victims of disaster clinging to some makeshift life raft in the Aegean or the Timor sea. Our hearts and wallets may spill open to support the valiant men and women who literally rescue the perishing, care for the dying, give them dry clothes, and offer a hot meal.

But evidence suggests that there is some deplorable law of inverse empathy as people who also deserve our kindness get geographically closer to us.

When the "stranger" is the neighbor who blows grass clippings on our driveway, or the church member who opposes our initiative to redecorate the fellowship hall, we have no difficulty separating ourselves from them. The water is wide: a great gulf is fixed, across which neither love nor empathy can seem to swim.

Too frequently the ones we count our "enemies" are not unknown adherents of different political or theological viewpoints on the other side of the world, but the very men and

women who inhabit our small corner of the planet—the ones who don't yield to our logic, persuasiveness, or wisdom. We can "love" the faceless Communist or animist in some far country we will never visit, but can't find grace to actually behave in loving ways toward those who hold contrary views on things we care so much about: the nature of Christ; the ordination of women to gospel ministry; the expectations of Christian lifestyle; and—let's not forget it—the color of the sanctuary carpet.

An "enemy" is actually someone who must be close enough for us to actively dislike—by name, by face, by opinions expressed in Sabbath School or at a church business meeting. Proximity, not distance, makes enemies.

And so Christ's mandate to disciples—"Love your enemies"—is meant to govern our behavior toward those close enough to "curse" us, "hate" us, "spitefully use" us, and "persecute" us. In short, these are the ones who shelter under the same sanctuary roofs we do; live in the same small neighborhoods we do; work and worship—and disagree—alongside us.

Our "enemies," it seems, might just as easily be our friends, if measured by their distance from us.

And so the "law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2) invites us—no, commands us—to lay down our weapons

Each congregation is designed to be a laboratory of God's grace.

against those we find most difficult to love. The angry advocate of Christian perfection who rails against the sins of others needs grace from us, as well as God. The zealot who fails to "discern the body of Christ" (see 1 Cor. 11:29) in single-minded pursuit of even a good goal deserves the gentleness with which the Savior dealt with Simon the Zealot, or angry, irritable Peter. Belonging to the household of faith doesn't give some mutual exemption from exhibiting the fruits of the Spirit asked of every Christian.

Each congregation is designed to be a laboratory of God's grace, a practice room for kindness needed far beyond the church. Our skirmishes, our "wars," our disagreements, and our forgiveness are meant to be the playing field on which we learn the skills of reconciliation, humility, and teamwork.

This was the real experience of the first-century church, and it will also be the story of the twenty-first-century church. The church of Jesus learns grace by teaching and by practice, by preaching and foot washing. In love, His character is reproduced among us.

The church I want to belong to is . . . *compassionate*.

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Bill Knott

I took on the task of reading as many New Testament versions as I could. This included the ones [Pfandl] mentioned and eight more I added to the list.

ROBERT ROUILLARD, LAKEWOOD, WASHINGTON

WE ARE NOT AFRAID

Coronavirus is here. People are dying, but we can help. Buying groceries for those at risk, educating about bettering the immune system, or offering other needed aid is being Christ's hands and feet. By what we do we could save many people. There is yet no treatment for coronavirus, but we can still fight it. We can share our life-giving health message. We will be able to help when no one else wants to, or no one else can.

Now is the time to be medical missionaries; now is the time to meet people's needs. This is our time to show God's love to the world, when many are fleeing and fearing. We are not afraid. We can have a spirit of power and love, and a sound mind. We can save lives.

Heidi Krick
Clovis, California



HAPPY CEREAL DAY

We are disappointed to see the article entitled "Happy Cereal Day!" written by Wilona Karimabadi in the *Adventist Review* (March 2020). We'd expect that the editorial team would be inclusive and take a worldwide

view of the church and its operations, particularly those that are fully owned and operated by the Adventist Church.

We share exactly the same heritage stemming from Battle Creek Sanitarium and the visionary leadership of Ellen G.

White and her son Willie White, which we continue to uphold today. Instead, the article singularly focuses on our biggest competitor. We would be grateful for your considered worldwide view in future articles.

Julie Praestiin

Sanitarium, The Health Food Company, Australia

Oops! You've reminded us of our commitment to speak to the whole Adventist family and its mission around the globe.

—Editors

LISTEN TO THE WORD

Gerhard Pfandl asked the question in "Listen to the Word": "So which version shall we use?" (January 2020). He mentioned 11 Bibles in the article, and in 2018 and 2019 I took on the task of reading as many New Testament versions as I could. This included the ones he mentioned and eight more I added to the list. I am now on the New American Standard Bible.

I concluded that all the versions say the same thing. My favorite verse, Matthew 11:27, remains intact. "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth

Thank you for practical articles about breaking down barriers and reaching others with tangible demonstrations of Christ's love.

J. J. ARAGON, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him" (KJV).

Thank You, Father, for introducing me to Jesus, and thank You, Jesus, for introducing me to the Father, for You all speak in many versions and in many languages.

Robert Rouillard

Lakewood, Washington

A WHOLE-CHURCH RESPONSE

The interview "Needed: A Whole-Church Response," with Bill Knott and Dr. Peter Landless, was informative and interesting.

Ronny Nalin's article "In Six Days" was a disappointment. Many of us nature lovers do glory in God's creation. We Bible readers also can find many texts that direct us to our Creator God. It would have been helpful, and worthy of his profession, had the writer provided defensible information that would have helped us consider and explore areas in which we have questions about the difficulties with a short creation. The writer is almost suggesting, without saying it, that since we believe the Genesis creation story, we are not even to think about the how, why, and where.

Arleen Downing

San Luis Obispo, California

THE CORONAVIRUS AND THE GOSPEL

Thank you so much for this inspiring article. It has encouraged me to keep believing and trusting in God. Inasmuch as the virus may seem to be stronger than us, God's power is still above it. He is surely going to see us through it.

Tabitha Ezra

via web

AVOIDING EXTREMISM

A far more contagious and deadly virus has infected 100 percent of us. Let's spread love, the only cure—John 3:16! Ellen White wrote: "As soon as there was sin, there was a Saviour" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 210).

This is a timely article that all Adventists should read and contemplate.

John Allen

via web

CLOSER TO HOME

At least three Adventists dead, 53 infected with COVID-19 in Spain.

May God be with our members and everyone.

Innocent Siachitoba

via web

COMMUNITY NEEDS

I loved the articles "One Community at a Time" and "Be Our Guests" (April 2020). I've known Don and Marti Schneider for years, and I could hear Marti's voice as I read her words.

And the article about the Green Lake church's efforts to provide housing to those with family members in the hospital was an outstanding example of serving others when they are at their most vulnerable. What an inspired ministry!

Thank you for practical articles about breaking down barriers and reaching others with tangible demonstrations of Christ's love.

J. J. Aragon

Chicago, Illinois

YOUR TURN

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

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“[The *Oxford Handbook of Seventh-day Adventism*] will be the first one-volume authoritative reference work relating to the church published by a major academic publisher. As such, this work will appear in academic libraries around the world.”

Michael W. Campbell, p. 15



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE INDIANA CONVENTION CENTER

WORLD CHURCH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE VOTES TO POSTPONE GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION

RESCALED EVENT TO TAKE PLACE MAY 2021

BY ADVENTIST REVIEW AND ADVENTIST NEWS NETWORK

The Executive Committee of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (EXCOM) voted March 19, 2020, to postpone the 2020 General Conference session until May 2021. The vote comes after a March 17 recommendation from the General Conference Administrative Committee (ADCOM) to delay the 2020 General Conference session (GC session) by up to two years because of the rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 2021 General Conference session will be held in Indianapolis, Indiana, and is currently scheduled

from May 20 through May 25. It was originally scheduled from June 25 through July 4, 2020.

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

The novel coronavirus, known as COVID-19, has spread globally since the end of 2019. On January 30 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the coronavirus a global health emergency, and on March 11 the WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic. As of now, the virus has infected more than 230,000 people. There have been

more than 9,300 associated deaths.

“The church has consulted with senior representatives of the World Health Organization structure, and we are recommending that the church take a careful approach to large gatherings including the General Conference session,” said Adventist world church Health Ministries director Peter Landless. “We also recommend that each region adhere to the proclamations of their local health organizations to find ways to maintain local church operations and mission through alternative means.”

The ADCOM also proposed to downsize the rescheduled event without compromising the core functions of a GC session.

Meeting from around the world via teleconferencing technology, the Executive Committee considered two recommendations that emerged from a series of official conversations and meetings at Adventist world church headquarters. General Conference session planners, health professionals, legal advisors, and administrators explored possible alternative plans for the 2020 General Conference session in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The General Conference Crisis Management Committee considered possible alternative plans and made two recommendations to the ADCOM, including postponing the 2020 General Conference session.

“After taking into account both the rapid spread of COVID-19 around the world and the uncertain nature of how it will develop over the next few months, the Crisis Management Committee considered postponement the safest and most prudent route to take,” said Geoffrey Mbwana, chair of the Crisis Management Committee and the Session Planning Committee.

The two ADCOM recommendations can be read at <https://bit.ly/3dM5mdn>.

For the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the General Conference session, held every five years, is the largest and most important business meeting of the Adventist world church. During session, delegates elect officers and handle clarifications to the church’s fundamental beliefs, discuss adjust-

ments to the constitution and by-laws, and vote changes to the *Church Manual*. The GC session is also significant because it allows for spiritual visioning, mission focus, and what Adventist world church president Ted N. C. Wilson described as a “super camp meeting and homecoming” for up to 60,000 Adventists from around the world.

PROPOSAL TO POSTPONE AND DOWNSIZE

The first proposal, which was accepted by the Executive Committee with a vote of 187 (yes) to 1 (no), recommended the 2020 General Conference (GC) session be postponed for up to the constitutionally allowed two years, depending on when rescheduling is feasible. In a subsequent meeting on March 19, a combined ADCOM and GC Session Planning Committee recommended the May 20-25, 2021, date.

The ADCOM also proposed to downsize the rescheduled event without compromising the core functions of a GC session. Downsizing includes a proportionate reduction in the number of attendees; inviting only delegates, spouses, and dependent children and a limited number of technical staff; reduction of the number of days of the GC session to four to six days; and omitting both ancillary meetings and exhibits during the session. The proposal also noted the current term of office would continue for the duration of the postponement. Following

the rescheduled event, the next administrative term would end during the scheduled 2025 General Conference session.

“I did not want to, and still don’t want to, change the date of the GC session, though circumstances are forcing us to do so,” explained Wilson, who chaired the Executive Committee meeting. Wilson added that several key factors contributed to the proposed postponement, including the safety and precautions because of COVID-19. Among them, the closure of consulates around the world, which would make acquiring visas difficult, if not impossible. National borders are also being closed and restrictions imposed on international travel.

The chair also explained that the proposal to downsize the GC session is heavily driven by financial concerns. GC Treasury personnel have indicated that the financial effects of the pandemic could result in a significant decrease in tithes as congregations are no longer meeting regularly, because of federal, state, and local regulations limiting the number of individuals that are able to congregate in any public gathering because of COVID-19. Reference was made to the availability of returning tithes and offerings online, where available, during a time when many local churches are closed.

DISCUSSION BY ATTENDEES

The discussion among committee members was started by Viriato

Ferreira, Inter-European Division delegate. He agreed with the decision to postpone the 2020 GC session, but suggested a modified exhibit booth area, giving each entity or ministry a limited number of booths. Wilson explained that specifically for the rescheduled GC session proposed for 2021, the exhibit area would be used for the various business functions of the session, as well as for the large gathering on Saturday (Sabbath).

The downsized 2021 GC session would provide a room with a seating capacity of 3,200 for delegates for business sessions. The area currently allocated for exhibits would be used for other business functions, such as the work of the nominating committee, as well as for the large gathering of general attendees on Friday night and Sabbath, with a seating capacity of around 26,100.

David Trim, director of the General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, added a historical note. While he agreed with both recommendations, he questioned whether or not the constitution and bylaws of the Seventh-day Adventist Church allowed for term limits of elected officials to be shortened. Trim noted that the four times GC session was postponed in the past, the elected officials restarted their new term. Todd McFarland, associate general counsel for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, assured attendees that a close study of the constitution and bylaws allows this delay

to be a “bump” into the next term. He added that the financial implications of moving the 2020 and 2025 GC sessions to maintain a five-year sequence would be prohibitive.

Lisa Beardsley-Hardy, Education Department director for the Adventist world church, also spoke in favor of the recommendations, but asked the nominating committee to be structured in advance of session. She cited the importance of the committee completing its work during a shorter GC session because of the longer time it takes for interdivisional employees to move their families to the Adventist world church headquarters.

Other members asked for clarification regarding the impact of this postponement on officers within divisions, those planning to retire, and leaders appointed following GC session. Wilson explained that according to the GC constitution and bylaws, GC officers and elected leaders would hold their positions until May 20, 2021, or until their replacements are elected. He also said individual retirements will be respected as if the session had taken place. Regarding General Conference appointees and staff normally elected at Annual Councils, these individuals will serve until the Annual Council following the 2021 General Conference session.

Finally, the election and appointment of departmental leaders within divisions will be handled by the executive committee of each division and attached field. Details will be communicated from GC

Secretariat to each division and attached field.

FUTURE OF GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION

The second proposal considered by EXCOM relates to future GC sessions. The ADCOM proposal called for “the General Conference administration, in consultation with divisions, to review the current configuration of General Conference sessions and make recommendations to the General Conference Executive Committee.” The proposal addresses the goal to modify current GC sessions because of the need to “reduce the financial and logistical footprint of General Conference sessions and to be more efficient and effective in the handling of church funds.”

As with the voted measures for the 2021 GC session, the proposal for future GC sessions recommends the number of delegates be proportionately reduced, no special guests be invited, the number of days of the event be shortened, but still include one Sabbath. The proposal also recommends that future GC sessions not include exhibits, booths, or ancillary meetings.

Other than to add GC attached unions and fields to the language, the proposal to explore future GC sessions was approved 191 (yes) to 1 (no).

Wilson affirmed that a broadly based group of division representatives and General Conference officers will bring recommendations to a future General Conference

Executive Committee about the length, scope, and structure of future GC sessions. Any Executive Committee proposals that require General Conference session action will be presented to the session.

Following the vote, GC general vice president Ella Simmons urged that the process of reviewing the future number of GC session delegates be “completely clear and transparent.” Simmons emphasized that in reviewing the associated formula, the church should consider if “all of its elements serve our needs at this time.”

THE WORK OF GOD

“I did not anticipate that we would ever be at this point at this time,” noted Wilson during the meeting. In the same breath, he emphasized the global crisis is a calling for Seventh-day Adventists to minister to others. “This is a time for Adventists to spread hope and encouragement. We should be anchors of stability and pillars of hope,” Wilson said.

Quoting the biblical text 2 Timothy 1:7, the Adventist world church president reminded Executive Committee members that “God has not given us a spirit of fear” (NKJV).^{*} Wilson also shared his conviction that the mission of the church will move forward. “The three angels’ messages are not being stopped by the coronavirus. God’s work will not be inhibited by this virus.”

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STATE-OF-THE-ART ADVENTIST MUSEUM OPENS IN THE GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS

ORIGINS MUSEUM OF NATURE IS A NEW MISSION OUTREACH, ADVENTIST LEADERS SAY.

BY ANDREW MCCHESENEY, ADVENTIST MISSION

In the 1970s, a Seventh-day Adventist biology professor acquired prime land on the Galápagos Islands, which are part of Ecuador, to open a field station for students of Loma Linda University in California, United States.

Nearly 50 years later, hundreds of people descended on the site to celebrate the opening of a landmark museum and research center, where tourists and scientists alike can explore the origins of the earth with state-of-the-art technology.

The Origins Museum of Nature, located on Charles Darwin Avenue in Puerto Ayora, the tourist hub of the Galápagos, combines touchscreen televisions and virtual-reality headsets with fossils and giant tortoise shells to offer visitors an interactive experience in which they can study the rich natural history of the legendary Pacific Islands. Away from the exhibit hall, two museum rooms have been dedicated to scientific research.

“As Seventh-day Adventists, the source of our understanding of our origins, our reason for being here, and our purpose in helping nature to be preserved are found in our relationship with God,” Adventist Church president Ted N. C. Wilson told a packed hall of scientists, government officials, and church members at the inauguration of the museum on February 29, 2020.

“May many people come to know more about origins and God through this museum,” he said.

The Origins museum received a warm welcome from government leaders and scientists at the inauguration.

The vice mayor of Puerto Ayora thanked the Adventist Church for opening the museum and predicted that many visitors would view its exhibits. The Ecuadorian government estimates that each year 250,000 tourists visit the Galápagos Islands, located about 600 miles (1,000 kilometers) off the coast of Ecuador.



Group photo of leaders and volunteers on inauguration day of the Origenes Museum of Nature in Puerto Ayora, in the Galápagos Islands. PHOTO: COURTESY OF TED WILSON FACEBOOK ACCOUNT

Tourists flock primarily to Santa Cruz Island, where the museum is located, but they also go to San Cristobal Island, situated about 60 miles (100 kilometers) away.

A group of invited scientists, including the director of the Charles Darwin Research Station, which promotes conservation and biodiversity on Galápagos, praised the museum for encouraging environmental stewardship.

The museum also made national headlines, with Ecuador's largest newspaper, *El Universo*, publishing a March 2 report with three photos.

A PLOT OF MIRACLE LAND

The museum is located on land that the late biology professor Lester E. Harris, Jr., acquired on behalf of Loma Linda University nearly a half century ago. Hoping to somehow obtain land for a field station for Adventist students, Harris was traveling by plane to the Galápagos when he struck up a conversation with his seatmate. It turned out that his seatmate was flying to the Galápagos in the hope of somehow selling a piece of land. By the time the airplane landed at

the Balta Island airport, which serves Puerto Ayora, the seatmate had agreed to sell the land to Harris.

"I would say it was providential," said Bill Hayes, a biology professor at Loma Linda University, who related the story in an interview. He represented the university at the museum opening.

Loma Linda University closed the field station in the 1980s and donated the land to the Adventist Church. Today, the 12-grade Loma Linda Adventist School is located adjacent to the museum. It has 271 students on two campuses.

Harris, a renowned biologist who taught at La Sierra University and Washington Adventist University, died in 2012 at the age of 89. He cofounded the field station with Ernest Booth, a professor who started the undergraduate and graduate biology programs at Walla Walla University and later taught at Loma Linda University. Booth died in 1984.

NEW CATEGORY OF OUTREACH

The Origenes museum marks a milestone in the Adventist Church's

efforts to assist people to live better lives physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually through "urban centers of influence." The church operates hundreds of urban centers of influence around the world, including bookstores, fitness clubs, and community centers with language lessons and healthy cooking classes. Origenes, however, is the church's first foray into a high-technology museum.

"This is one of a kind. It's a completely new category," said Magdiel Perez Schulz, assistant to the General Conference president, who has worked closely with a number of urban centers of influence.

A second urban center of influence also was opened during Wilson's visit to the Galápagos: a ground-floor community center offering children's drawing courses and healthy cooking classes in the newly refurbished and expanded San Cristobal Seventh-day Adventist Church on San Cristobal Island.

In the church sanctuary above the community center, Wilson, on February 28, presented a commemoration plaque to 80-year-old Aracely Guevara, who, with her late



Adventist Church president Ted N. C. Wilson (center) using a touchscreen television as he tours the new Origins Museum of Nature on Charles Darwin Avenue in Puerto Ayora, the main tourist town in the Galápagos Islands PHOTO: ANDREW MCCHESENEY, ADVENTIST MISSION

husband, Angel, were the first Adventists in the Galápagos. The couple, public school teachers, sensed a call from God to go to the islands in 1968 and asked the government to send them there to work, the *Review and Herald* magazine (now *Adventist Review*) reported in its issue dated July 17, 1969. Through Bible studies, prayer, and fasting, the couple saw the first 13 people baptized in about four months. Today, the church has 60 members, and the enlarged upstairs sanctuary has 120 seats.

Multiple church entities contributed to both urban centers in the Galápagos. The San Cristobal project received special assistance from the South American Spanish Publishing House (ACES) in Argentina, which provided funding as well as staffing. On the other island, funding for the \$1 million complex, which houses the Origins museum on the ground floor and Central Santa Cruz Seventh-day Adventist Church on the next floor, included the General Conference, the South American Division (SAD), the South American branch of Adventist Risk Management, and a special Sabbath offering collected across South America.

Washington Yanez, president of the South Ecuador Mission, whose

territory includes the Galápagos, expressed special gratitude to volunteers who helped complete the complex. “They worked day and night,” he said at the museum inauguration. “Their work was for God.”

INVITATION TO THINK

In an interview, SAD president Erton Kölher described the Origins museum as “an invitation to think about something different.”

“Our idea is not to confront people who think differently, but to

show them some viewpoints that perhaps they haven’t seen,” he said. “After visiting, they might start to realize that a special hand must be behind the processes of nature.”

L. James Gibson, a scientist and director of the Adventist Church’s California-based Geoscience Research Institute, noted that conservation is a hot topic among scientists in the Galápagos. He voiced hope that the museum’s research center might provide an opportunity to connect care for the environment to the Creation story.

“It’s a great strategy for reaching people who might not at all be open to something that says, ‘This is a creation museum,’” said Gibson, who also chairs the Adventist Church’s Faith and Science Council, which contributed funding to the project. “It can attract the thoughtful person by saying, ‘You see, creationists are interested in

Adventist Church president Ted N. C. Wilson (right) and other church leaders touring a wildlife preserve on an island off Santa Cruz Island in the Galápagos

PHOTO: COURTESY OF TED WILSON FACEBOOK ACCOUNT



PROPOSAL ACCEPTED FOR OXFORD HANDBOOK OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM

EDITORIAL TEAM INCLUDES FACULTY FROM ANDREWS UNIVERSITY AND SOUTHWESTERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY

BY GILLIAN PANIGOT, ANDREWS UNIVERSITY, AND TIMOTHY KOSAKA, SOUTHWESTERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY

caring for the environment.' There is a point of contact that we can work on and explore."

The museum upholds the redemptive philosophy of Adventist education, which seeks to restore



Church leaders cut the ribbon at the inauguration of the complex that houses the Origins Museum of Nature in Puerto Ayora. PHOTO: COURTESY OF TED WILSON

FACEBOOK ACCOUNT

people into the image of their Creator, said Lisa Beardsley-Hardy, director of the General Conference's Education Department, which also contributed to the project.

"What I love about this museum is that it is taking the philosophy of Adventist education and packaging it in such a way that the postmodern mind, which is drawn by stories, which is so media-savvy, can understand," said Beardsley-Hardy, who also supported the museum by helping paint its walls. "It's apologetics for a new generation." ❖

More than two years ago a project was conceptualized that would cover Seventh-day Adventism in the Oxford Handbook series. A proposal for this project was recently accepted by Oxford University Press (OUP). The project will be led by faculty from several institutions, with primary involvement from two Adventist universities in the United States: Andrews University and Southwestern Adventist University.

The completed book will contain approximately 40 chapters written by well-recognized Seventh-day Adventist and non-Adventist scholars who have a demonstrable track record of peer-reviewed publications. The chapters will be organized into seven overarching sections that will address various topics, including the history of Adventism, Adventist theology, organization, and approach to culture, ethics, and politics. Each chapter will provide scholarly and historical overviews for the topics, as well as footnotes and a Further Suggested Readings section.

"We believe this is a very significant academic project for the Seventh-day Adventist Church," said Michael W. Campbell, professor of religion at Southwestern Adventist University and a member of the editorial team. "This will be the first one-volume authoritative reference work relating to the church published by a major academic publisher. As such, this work will appear in academic libraries around the world. It will be the starting point for scholars, students, and others, perhaps unfamiliar with Adventism, to learn about the Adventist Church."

Denis Kaiser, assistant professor of church history at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University and also a mem-

ber of the editorial team, said, "In the past decade, Seventh-day Adventists frequently appeared in the news. Such media appearances highlight aspects of Adventism but are unable to meet the need for a well-rounded, thorough, and nuanced work on the Adventist community. We are excited that Oxford University Press sees value in this project. We are further glad that we could win 40 authors from around the world. Writing from a variety of perspectives, they will certainly offer an enriching kaleidoscope into the history, beliefs, convictions, activities, and cultures within Seventh-day Adventism."

Additional members of the editorial team are Christie Chui-Shan Chow, faculty at the City Seminary of New York and educational missionary to China; Nicholas P. Miller, professor of church history at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University; and David F. Holland, professor of New England church history at Harvard University.

"The *Oxford Handbook of Seventh-day Adventism* provides a unique opportunity to establish an authoritative reference work on the Seventh-day Adventist Church that is intended for the general public," said Ella Simmons, general vice president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. "In recent years Adventist scholars have made significant contributions to religious literature that create a comprehensive and balanced knowledge base about the diverse worldwide Adventist community."

It is projected that the chapters will be completed by summer 2020, with a finished manuscript submitted to Oxford University Press by summer 2021. ❖



Don Jernigan, former
CEO of AdventHealth

PHOTO: ADVENTHEALTH

DONALD L. JERNIGAN, FORMER ADVENTHEALTH CEO, DIES AT 75

CREDITED WITH LAUNCHING THE ORGANIZATION'S COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM

BY ADVENTHEALTH NEWS AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

Donald L. Jernigan passed away on Saturday, March 7, 2020, from complications of a long illness.

Born January 4, 1945, Jernigan was raised in a Baptist family, the son of a Texas rancher and a school-teacher. He learned at an early age that there was no substitute for hard work. His involvement in athletics taught him the importance of teamwork. As a team captain, he learned the value of leadership.

Jernigan graduated from the University of Texas at Arlington with a bachelor's degree in chemistry. Soon after, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy Medical Service Corps, serving as a deputy officer at Bethesda Naval Hospital in Bethesda, Maryland.

After his time in the military, Jernigan earned a Ph.D. in physical chemistry from Baylor University and went on to work as chair of the Chemistry Department at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. He spent the next 10 years working in higher education.

A CLOSER WALK WITH CHRIST

Don Jernigan married his wife, Sharon, in 1978. In 1980, while living in Killeen, Texas, Jernigan was treated at the local Adventist hospital. He was deeply impressed with

the people who cared for him. Sometime later the couple began attending a local Adventist church.

According to them, they "read their way into the Seventh-day Adventist Church." In that first local congregation, they met and made "many dear friends" who "radiated the love of Christ." Jernigan would later become president of the Adventist hospitals in central Texas where he had first received care.

PRINCIPLED LEADERSHIP

Jernigan joined the Adventist Health System (now AdventHealth) in 1982 as administrator for a multispecialty group practice in Texas.

He became known for his principled leadership and commitment to Christian values. He served AdventHealth for 35 years and retired as its president and CEO in 2016. He led physicians, hospitals, regions, and ultimately a complex and sophisticated health-care system that superseded bottom-line metrics and always focused on people.

During his tenure as CEO, the AdventHealth organization expanded its footprint across the country. Always focused on the mission of "Extending the Healing Ministry of Christ," Jernigan fostered a culture of service that grew leaders and

employees who share a passion for delivering whole-person, Christian health care. After retiring as CEO, he embraced his role as a founding faculty member of the AdventHealth Leadership Institute.

RELENTLESS STEWARDSHIP

Jernigan embodied stewardship, driving AdventHealth to be an efficient and effective organization, fulfilling its mission and vision while wisely utilizing the limited resources of time, money, and energy. He authored *The Hidden Power of Relentless Stewardship*.

He spoke on issues of leadership, health care, science, education, and the military. He was also a diplomate of the American College of Healthcare Executives. He served as a member of the board of trustees for the Sanford-Burnham Medical Research Institute and a member of the Governor's Council of the Metro Orlando Economic Development Commission.

CORPORATE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Under Jernigan's leadership, AdventHealth launched its corporate community involvement program to improve the health, prosperity, and well-being of its communities, as the Bible instructs: "Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you. . . . Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper" (Jer. 29:7).

Jernigan is survived by his wife, Sharon; two daughters, Jill and Jana; and three grandchildren. ♣



EVANGELISTIC REVIVAL LEADS TO MORE THAN 15,000 BAPTISMS. The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Tanzania welcomed more than 15,000 new members after a recent revival series conducted by Carlton Byrd, speaker/director of the Breath of Life television ministry. The nightly meetings were broadcast via Internet livestream, TV, and radio to more than 3,000 satellite locations across the country. Revival organizers established the twentieth Breath of Life Seventh-day Adventist church in the world and the first Breath of Life church on the continent of Africa.



CROATIA EARTHQUAKE DAMAGES ADVENTIST PROPERTIES; MEMBERS ARE SAFE. A 5.3-magnitude earthquake and a series of aftershocks struck Zagreb, Croatia's capital city, on March 22, 2020, just after 6:00 a.m. The epicenter was six miles (10 kilometers) from the city center—the strongest earthquake to hit the country in 140 years. The earthquake came at a time of restricted movement because of the novel coronavirus, including a shutdown of the public tram and bus network. No reports had emerged of injuries to any Adventist church members as of this writing, but the Croatian Conference office and several pastoral apartments sustained damage.



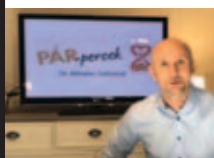
ADVENTIST MEMBER AND OTHERS KILLED IN AMBUSH. The Adventist Church in Papua New Guinea has condemned the recent killing of church members in Pialya, Enga province. According to a report from the Western Highlands Mission, a group of church members and evangelists were heading to Komaga to preach when an enemy tribe ambushed them on March 2, 2020. A deacon was killed, along with two others who were preparing for baptism. Two of the injured were taken to a hospital for treatment.



STUDENTS FORGO GLOBAL YOUTH DAY ACTIVITIES TO TESTIFY ONLINE. In the midst of the coronavirus pandemic that drove world church leaders to suspend Global Youth Day activities planned for March 21, 2020, young people at Montemorelos University continued their impact activities online. More than 1,600 students and young people from the Adventist community in Montemorelos had been scheduled to take to the streets to “be the sermon” on March 14. Instead, young people accepted a social media challenge as an alternate way to testify online throughout the week.



RADIO STATION WINS NATIONAL COMPETITION. An Adventist radio station in Mongolia recently won the National Best Children's Content for Radio contest in a program hosted by the prime minister of Mongolia, Ukhnaagiin Khurelsukh. The competition was open to all local television and radio networks and sought to reward the best works illustrating national heritage and history. Khemnel Radio, managed by the Mongolia Mission of Seventh-day Adventists and supported by Adventist World Radio, won first place and 10 million tugriks (US\$3,600).



ADVENTIST PASTOR CARES FOR MARRIAGES DURING CORONAVIRUS ISOLATION. Gabor Mihalec, a pastor in Hungary and licensed couples therapist, recognized the particular family issues related to lockdown during the coronavirus crisis. He launched Couple-Minutes, a ministry to support couples during social isolation. More than 12,000 people joined his Facebook Live programs, with a portion sharing his advice across their social media accounts. Hungary's leading financial magazine, *HVG*, published an article about the initiative.



ADRA AUSTRALIA HELPS THE MOST VULNERABLE. Amid the COVID-19 crisis, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in Australia is finding innovative ways to serve local communities and their most vulnerable residents. In the state of Victoria, more than 7,000 takeaway containers and 1,000 care packages were made for elderly people who are anxious about going to a grocery store. ADRA projects have been at the front line of reducing the impact of COVID-19 in many remote and disadvantaged communities.



SIX LESSONS FROM THE CORONAVIRUS

Learning
good
through
the bad

BY CLAUDE RICHLI

The world is settling into a new normal, defined by an invisible virus that managed to find its way to almost every country on earth. It has confined hundreds of millions of people to their homes and made it almost impossible to go about their business and make a living. As the new uncertainties of life settle in, our generation is forced to learn some painful lessons.

1

Crisis can come out of nowhere.

At first the world knew next to nothing about the Chinese region of Hubei. But in today's interconnected world something happening anywhere can disrupt life everywhere. This runs counter to our generation's narrative that our institutions and technologies guarantee a level of control over the environment like never before. This is our time of "peace and safety," until what seemed inconceivable suddenly became reality. The apostle Paul suddenly has total relevance, and destruction suddenly strikes just as "people are saying, 'Peace and safety'" (1 Thess. 5:3).

2

Things can happen very fast.

The speed of this catastrophe leaves us dizzy. On January 1 the public had never heard about the "novel coronavirus." On February 27, United States President Donald Trump was still saying, "It's like a miracle. It will disappear." With only 60 cases in the country, that seemed easy to say. Today, all Europe, most of America, and almost every country on earth is under orders to stay at home. Events accelerate dramatically. What was true yesterday is no more today. Overnight, Ellen White's words gained burning actuality: "Plagues and judgments are already falling. . . . The calamities by land and sea, the unsettled state of society, the alarms of war, are portentous. . . . The agencies of evil are combining their forces and consolidating. They are strengthening for the last great crisis. Great changes are soon to take place in our world, and the final movements will be rapid ones."¹

3

Freedom of movement can be lost overnight.

Almost overnight, countries shut down their borders. Air travel, so vital to the global economy, came to a screeching halt. Thousands traveling abroad either rushed to airports in the hope of making it on the last flight out, or resigned themselves to staying where they were for an undetermined period of time. Some missionaries who wanted to leave their country of service missed the last flight out. Others just made it. What a lesson to remind us that such will be the end of the time of probation: "When probation ends, it will come suddenly, unexpectedly."²

4

Ethnic and social hatred quickly reappear. Leading newspapers have both reported and themselves been criticized for “shocking” levels of racism and verbal and physical abuse against Chinese and Asian people once the coronavirus showed up in Western countries.³ Jesus warned His disciples of coming human and natural disasters. Also, of persecution and death, “hated by all nations,” because of Him (Matt. 24:9). Persecution is not new. But human reactions against people who had nothing to do with the pandemic show how quickly irrational hostility, attacks on innocent neighbors, can spring up and flourish, even against those who are trying to serve and help. Today it’s the Chinese; one day it will be those who choose to remain faithful to God’s Word.

5

There are things that humans cannot control. The past decade has vastly increased our perception that we can quickly find answers to almost all our problems. “Just google it” has become the mantra of the day. Our ability to find solutions to complex problems, thanks to digital technology and its global reach, has given us the illusion of being “masters of the universe.” But the novel coronavirus, deadly and invisible to the naked eye, with as yet no vaccine or effective therapy in sight, wakes us up every morning wondering: will it be life today? Sickness? Worse?

My generation has never been confronted on such a scale with the unwelcome thought that we are mortal after all. Who can say with certainty whether we are still going to be around in 14 days? And what about the looming, cascading consequences some are predicting long-term: after the health crisis a global economic crisis, after a global economic crisis, national debts skyrocketing and countries defaulting, then political turmoil and the collapse of global cooperation.⁴

If this is not the time to deepen our sense of dependence on God, then when will it be? For the first time perhaps, my generation can experience what is described in the book of Revelation, not as an abstract prophecy, but as a reality that is felt and experienced in the here and now.

6

This earth is not our home. With so much uncertainty looming, it seems that we are being shaken awake from our slumber. We were being seduced into thinking that the prosperity and peace we enjoyed for the past 10 years or so was our due reward for the collective decisions of our national communities—political, technological, and social—and that these fruits would be enjoyed long into the future. But as C. S. Lewis wrote: “Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in our pains. It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”⁵

Perhaps, before God can rouse a deaf world, He needs to rouse a deaf church and rekindle in us the “longing for a better country—a heavenly one” (Heb. 11:16). This is the time to connect or reconnect—via Zoom, Facebook, and hopefully soon in person—with today’s faithful believers, and stand firm with those “who have longed for His appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8).

¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 9, p. 11.

² *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1957, 1980), vol. 7, p. 989.

³ www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/feb/09/chinese-in-uk-report-shocking-levels-of-racism-after-coronavirus-outbreak, February 9, 2020; news.cgtn.com/news/2020-02-07/Bias-caused-by-coronavirus-sparks-anger-among-overseas-Chinese-NST7NqgiA0/index.html, February 9, 2020.

⁴ www.cnn.com/videos/tv/2020/04/05/exp-gps-0405-take-coronavirus-covid-19.cnn.

⁵ C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: HarperCollins, 1940/1996), p. 91, quoted at <https://tollelege.wordpress.com/2010/07/28/gods-megaphone-by-c-s-lewis/>.

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The Offer

When Jesus has company for you

BRENDA KIS

Sandy had just moved out of my basement apartment a few weeks before, and I was enjoying the sole possession of my house once again.

THE DEAL: MY GAINS

“Carla talked to me about needing a place to live,” my friend said. “I told her you have a place that’s free now.”

I winced. *So soon, Lord? I’d just like a little time by myself.*

Shortly thereafter, another friend mentioned that she had referred Carla to me also: *OK, God, I’ll wait for her to contact me.*

But time went on, and she never did. So why was I struggling so with her dilemma? It wasn’t my problem! Nevertheless, I couldn’t get her out of my mind. One day, I finally told God that if He brought her face to face with me in church the next day, I would consider that my cue to invite her to live in my home. *That’s not going to happen! We rarely interact, and she sits in another place in church anyway.* I felt safe in my magnanimous offer. But not only did God bring her face to face with me that Sabbath, He had her sit down beside me for the first time ever! So the next day I called.

“Carla, I understand you need a place to live,” I began. “I have an apartment that’s furnished and ready right now. The only thing is that we will need to share my kitchen. Is that OK with you?”

Sounds of weeping filled my ear. Carla was sobbing out her relief and gratitude. She moved

in that very day. A few weeks later we were locked in together as the governor declared a policy of self-isolation in light of the COVID-19 crisis.

ALL I WOULD HAVE LOST

Had I selfishly refused to let God lead, as I was tempted to do, I would have been alone during those long weeks. And who knows what would have become of Carla? Over time, we found a friendship we had not anticipated. We blessed each other during the days of solitude—worshipping and praying, playing games, sharing our life stories, putting puzzles together, watching inspiring films. I gave her piano lessons, and she helped me improve my Spanish. When I hurt myself and couldn’t get around easily, she cleaned the whole house. When she struggled with the recent breakup of her home, I spoke words of sympathy and encouragement.

I’m thinking now that I, too, have been the recipient of an offer, one much greater. My dilemma did not have to concern God. He had His marvelous Paradise, where nothing could intrude on His joy. So why couldn’t He get me out of His mind? Unlike what I had wished to do, He wouldn’t banish us from His thoughts—He loves too much for that. His offer on the cross was to share His fabulous heavenly home. That day in early 2020, He was teaching me how much people matter to Him—both Carla *and* me.

Brenda Kiš writes from Berrien Springs, Michigan, where she seeks to serve God through spoken and written words.

**My dilemma
didn't have to
concern God. . . .
So why couldn't
He get me out of
His mind?**

TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

How much
compassion
is too
much?

GERALD A. KLINGBEIL

I clearly remember the overpowering sense of relief and release I felt when I heard the words that meant everything in that moment: *I forgive you; hey, you're my buddy!* I had messed up big-time in a relationship with a close friend. We all do sometimes. I had wished that I could, miraculously, take back my hurtful words. But words cannot be unspoken—at least not by this mortal being. I had longed for a restored relationship—and I had been given something even better.

Our friendship grew deeper than before. A new dimension had been added. Mysteriously, forgiveness helps us all to grow and reach new heights. That's why we often struggle to grasp (and trust) the breadth, width, height, and depth of God's grace. His compassion is beyond human imagination and calculation.

THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION

We know Jonah's story. He is a household name in at least three monotheistic faiths. The runaway prophet, saved by a big fish, is a mainstay of illustrators and children's book authors. As a bona fide prophet, he had spoken on God's behalf in the past (see 2 Kings 14:25). Jonah wasn't one of the many false prophets hanging around the royal court in Samaria. He was the real deal.

When God spoke to him this time, however, he started to run in the opposite direction. A month-long dangerous maritime journey to Tarshish on the other side of the Mediterranean sounded more attractive than God's impossible mission to Nineveh.

Jonah knew about the Assyrians. They were a cruel and



merciless bunch. Historical and archaeological records document the brutality of the Neo-Assyrian overlords who dominated the ancient Near East during the eighth century B.C., the time that Jonah ministered in Israel. *Why would God send me to Nineveh? Why would He have a special message for these brutes?* I imagine Jonah asking himself.

Jonah started running and kept going until he finally rested in the belly of a ship bound for Tarshish. Did he say goodbye to friends and family? Sea journeys were extremely dangerous in his time. Would he ever see them again? Did he pack an adequate supply of clothing and food for such a journey? The biblical text is silent about such mundane questions and just communicates the staccato of running feet, desperately trying to get away from God.

PURSUED BY GOD

A mighty storm disrupts Jonah's plans. After the lot cast by the ship's crew has fallen on the silent passenger, questions hit him like the rain and winds that mercilessly pelt the ship. "Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What kind of work do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?" (Jonah 1:8).

What an opportunity to share about the Creator God who controls wind and weather, and tell of His concern for people, cities, and even animals. Jonah's reply, however, sounds rather memorized and monotonous: "I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land" (verse 9). Jonah got his theological facts right, but had the facts really penetrated his heart?

Jonah's problem wasn't fear. Following the sailors' question "What have you done?" (verse 10), he offers a radical solution: *Just throw me overboard if you want to survive* (see verse 12).

The sailors hesitate; they try harder; they pray; then they throw Jonah into a roaring caldron of foaming water. Suddenly, everything becomes quiet. Exhausted men, water dripping from their ragged clothing, fall on their knees and pray.

NINEVEH—TAKE TWO

God intervenes miraculously and uses a great fish to save Jonah, who finds himself in a forced three-day rest in the stomach of the big fish. His heartfelt prayer documents his recognition that

"salvation comes from the Lord" (Jonah 2:9).

Jonah gets it, it seems. Jonah has finally experienced God's grace. When he hears God's word again, he is ready to get up and travel to Nineveh. We know nothing about the journey—weeks filled with searching for appropriate sermon illustrations and fitting ways to make relevant calls. We are in for a bit of a surprise, though, as we listen to his proclamation while he crosses the city: "Forty more days, and Nineveh will be overthrown" (Jonah 3:4). No illustrations, no stories to tug on the heartstrings of his audience—instead, an unambiguous judgment message. *God is on the move*, he is saying, *and I am looking forward to watching Him do His thing.*

Nineveh, that evil city full of abusers, murderers, and idol worshippers, surprises even Jonah. The message falls on receptive ears, and the people of Nineveh, collectively, believe Jonah's message of impending destruction. In typical Near Eastern style, a decree is issued by Nineveh's king to demonstrate a change of heart. Communal fasting and mourning and a king stepping down from his throne and sitting in the dust of the ground all speak a clear language. "Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish" (verse 9).

I TOLD YOU SO

God does—and Jonah's unhappiness is palpable and offensively loud. *This is wrong. This is not right. This is too much.* "Isn't this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That's what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish," Jonah prays. "I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity" (Jonah 4:2).

As readers, we suddenly witness a window opening in the storyline that we haven't yet seen. *I told you so!* is Jonah's way of dealing with God's compassion and grace. He partially prays back to God Exodus 34:6, 7—describing one of the key moments of God's self-revelation to humanity when Moses hid in the cleft of the rock and God passed before him.

We get it now. Right from the beginning Jonah's problem was theological. He had not been afraid of the Ninevites or scared for his life. Jonah had been worried that God would show—again—too much grace and that His compassion would win the day.

Jonah's complaint has been echoed through the

ages. Today we meet people who feel the need to highlight God's wrath and judgment over against His compassion. They speak of "cheap grace"—and we wonder if there ever was a time in history where God's grace was really cheap? They struggle, as we often do too, in finding the balance between God's compassion and grace and His righteousness and holiness. Theologians have wrestled with this issue for centuries.

Jonah's story may offer some help as we struggle to answer our question: "How much compassion is too much?"

First, God takes Jonah's concern seriously and engages His prophet in a frank conversation. Instead of a well-argued presentation rooted in the Torah, however, God begins by asking questions. "Is it right for you to be angry?" (Jonah 4:4). Questions open the way for more conversation even when we begin to talk past each other.

Second, God offers an object lesson to His struggling prophet. By now we understand that Nineveh has long stopped being the focus of the conversation. A shade-giving plant grows overnight and enhances Jonah's well-being as he waits for God to punish Nineveh. Jonah is delighted. Then God commands a worm to damage the plant, which withers away in hours. A hot east wind (also organized by God) does the rest. Jonah is ready (for

We get it now.
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problem was
theological.



the third time in this short book) to die (verse 8). God follows up with another question. "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" (verse 9).

Then He begins to unpack His view of reality leading us to our third point. God has compassion on Nineveh—and this world—because He is the Creator God. *All* human beings, and animals, are His by creation. He knows them intimately, and, like a Father or Mother, He loves them uncompromisingly. That's why He's pursuing not only the Ninevites in Jonah's narrative, but more so His own prophet. And because all humanity is His by creation, He's committed to also make them His by salvation (see John 3:16).

God saved Jonah as he was sinking into the depth of the ocean. He's now saving Nineveh in response to their turning toward Him. What He really wants, however, is to save Jonah from his misconceptions and warped concepts about God's character.

THE PERFECT MIX

Understanding the balance between God's compassion and grace and His justice and holiness can be difficult: the Fall has made us all unbalanced. Bible readers have long understood that the book of Jonah needs to be read with the later book of Nahum, which describes Nineveh's ultimate fall more than a century later. The reach of God's compassion and grace is ultimately limited by human choice. When we accept His compassionate grace, we become part of His kingdom and begin to live according to His values. When we reject His compassionate grace, we join the ranks of the accuser and emulate his pride and selfishness.

God's final appeal to Jonah is not expressed in a summary statement or an authoritative pronouncement. The final question, left unanswered, must have lingered long in Jonah's mind and ultimately reached his heart, for he left us a book describing his foolishness and impertinence as he sought to flee from the presence of the living God: "You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?" (Jonah 4:9, 10). 🗡️

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THE EARLY CHURCH AND COMPASSION

Compassion was Jesus' motive force.

LAEL CAESAR

The song says: “Everyone needs compassion . . . the kindness of a Saviour, the hope of nations.”¹ And the authors explain: “the hope of nations” is a reference to Matthew 12:21: “In his name the nations [Gentiles] will put their hope.”² The nations need a place to put their hope. They need something to hope for. And there is hope for the nations.

NO HOPE WITHOUT GOD

But a brilliant confusion has distracted the nations. The theory of accidental development from nothing to something, from something to something conscious, from something conscious to someone responsible, is not a theory of hope. A theory of bullying, maybe, but not of caring. Semblances of caring occur because entities sometimes end up in relations that profit both parties. This mutual self-interest is said to be enlightened. Mostly, the “light” of hope that nations find in that scenario is being remembered by later generations—until life on this planet comes to its whimpering, hopeless end. No logic of pity debilitates the framework of natural selection and the survival of the fittest. “Having compassion one of another” (1 Peter 3:8, KJV) is not part of the macroevolutionary schedule. Instead, it engenders materialistic measurements of life in which society’s less useful may be thought expendable in times of national economic emergency.³

Oddly enough, millions who claim hope in Christ have united Him to this theory of intolerance. But Jesus is the hope of nations because, instead of bullying and exploiting,

He constantly opens His hand—“at the proper time”—to make sure we all “are satisfied with good” (see Ps. 104:27, 28). Christ’s kingdom confounded the reigning political power from the beginning. Its principles were incompatible with whatever made sense to Rome. Marullus, of Shakespeare’s first act and scene in the tragedy *Julius Caesar*, denounces the frenzied populace that hail Caesar’s triumphant entry into Rome and “strew flowers in his way that comes in triumph over Pompey’s blood.” Slaughter is how Caesar achieved conquest. Christianity, in contrast, is not a story of bloodshed, but one of shed blood, the blood of “the messenger of the covenant” (Mal. 3:1), the one who incarnated the message of the covenant and, in delivering that message, confirmed the covenant with His shed blood.

THE COVENANT

The covenant had been long agreed upon and long misunderstood. Its promises had been variously repeated to multiple historical characters, including a man called fraud, earnestly struggling for moral victory over himself. Until the God whose grace alone granted him his holy victory, rewarded him for it, and changed his name to prince and conqueror (Israel, Gen. 32:28). His father and grandfather had received the covenant before him; as had diluvial Noah, and Edenic Adam.

Fathomed or distorted, the promise was constant: it came stunningly from the Lord Almighty to Jesse’s last son, David: “I have been with you wherever you have gone. . . . Now I will make your name great. . . . I will

Compassion is always connected to Jesus more than all its other usages combined.

raise up your offspring to succeed you, . . . I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. . . . Your house and your kingdom will endure forever . . . ; your throne will be established forever” (2 Sam. 7:9-16). “Forever,” “forever,” “forever!” The Lord Himself would name an everlasting dynasty after the former sheep minder.

Despite the triple forever of the covenant’s Davidic articulation, the infinite dimensions of its promise are never more graphically and profoundly symbolized than when Abram’s—later Abraham’s—God, under cover of night, in the form of “a smoking firepot with a blazing torch,” passes between portions of animal carcasses He had instructed Abram to lay out on ground promised to him and descendants beyond him (Gen. 15:1-21).

Those pieces of meat the fire passed between spoke of the broken body of God’s incarnate Son as the way God’s covenant would be kept. This did not accord with the ritual protocols. In those ancient agreements unfaithful parties agreed to be slaughtered, as the animals had been, if they violated the terms of the covenant. It is wonder enough that God should name His own everlasting dynasty after a former sheep minder. But the wonder of all wonders, for Adam and me and all humanity, is that the impeccable God should bear torture for guilt that I earned by rebellious disobedience: God’s broken law demands the life of the guilty;⁴ but God so loves guilty me [and you], “that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

His covenant with humans has never depended on our politics or genetics; or been influenced by our genius for faux scientific racial distinction, or thoroughly scientific biological discrimination. It has always been the promise of His unflinching love to us all, an all-embracing incorporation where “there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all” (Col. 3:11).

It has never been less than that, and His “all and

in all” leaves no room for more than that. From Adam to Jew and Gentile, God’s covenant with fallen humanity has always been a commitment founded on compassion: “the Lord was gracious . . . and had compassion and showed concern . . . because of his covenant” (2 Kings 13:23).

COMPASSION AND JESUS

Jesus came to teach compassion to His church and to the whole world. His first followers learned to care by being with Him. Speaking of the ordination of the 12 apostles, Ellen White comments that “the first step was now to be taken in the organization of the church that after Christ’s departure was to be His representative on earth.”⁵ That long-term goal depended directly on His immediate intention—that they be with Him (Mark 3:14).

Being with Him was primary. They would also do other things—go out and preach (verse 14); even sensational things—perform exorcisms (verse 15). But most of all they would be with Him. Being with Jesus means being in school: “Come to me. . . . Learn from me” (Matt. 11:28, 29). Jesus called them so He could “send them forth as His witnesses, to declare to the world what they had seen and heard of Him.”⁶ He knew what they needed to learn: “all their weaknesses and errors were open before Him,”⁷ and many of their strengths before us: money (Matthew and Judas), thunder (James and John), skepticism (Philip and Thomas), braggadocio (Simon Peter), nationalism (Simon the Zealot). Compassion? Not listed.

Being with Jesus would teach them compassion, for being with Jesus meant being with compassion. A comparison of English Bible versions provides simple instruction on this truth. The word “compassion” appears 18 times in the *New American Standard Bible’s* New Testament; of those 18 times, Jesus is speaking it or being spoken of 13 times. A selection of other versions shows 14/22, 8/14, 8/12, and 7/10.⁸ Despite the different translation strategies of these versions, compassion is always connected to Jesus more than all its other uses combined. The King James Version also features a single instance in which, rather than speaking or being spoken of, Jesus is addressed by a father on behalf of his son: his word speaks to Jesus as a source of compassion, and one who may be moved by compassion. The father begs, “Have compassion on us, and help us” (Mark 9:22, KJV). It is the wavering hope of a desperate parent; sentiment couched

in uncertainty; tentative insight demanding both clarification and categorical emphasis; help from Jesus: “If [He] can do anything” (verse 22, NIV).

The father’s wish, fed half by hearsay and half by desperation, is nevertheless fully on point. For compassion was a motive force impelling all areas of Jesus’ ministry: He healed the sick because compassion moved Him (Matt. 14:14); He cleansed the leper because compassion moved Him (Mark 1:41); He taught the multitudes many things because compassion moved Him, compassion that transcended His physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion and His need for rest. Stretched and stressed, He and His team attempt to escape the crowds, but “many who saw them leaving . . . ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them” (Mark 6:33). The multitudes outmaneuver Him and show up at His hideaway before He arrives there.

And what is His response? “When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things” (verse 34). “Interrupted as He was, and robbed of His rest,

Compassion was a motive force impelling all areas of Jesus’ ministry.

He was not impatient. He saw a greater necessity demanding His attention as He watched the people coming and still coming. . . . He found a convenient place where He could minister to them.⁹ He had come to earth to teach the truth about compassion, about the God who long ago had promised that humanity’s faithlessness would never exhaust His compassion. If they would repent, “the Lord your God will . . . have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you” (Deut. 30:3). And so it was that He, “being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath” (Ps. 78:38, KJV). In the end, He Himself would incarnate faithful Israel and guarantee, by His sinless and perfect substitution, the application, to whosoever wills, of every blessing and profit of the everlasting covenant (1 Peter 2:24).

AFTER JESUS

Jesus’ disciples did learn compassion. They learned, and taught it to the world. They learned and taught so well that onlookers labeled them Christians—because they all were so much like Jesus the Christ: selling “property and possessions to give to anyone who had need” (Acts 2:45); maintaining a program of daily food distribution (Acts 6:1); institutionalizing mechanisms within the body of Christ that would ensure fair provision for all who were in need (verses 1-6); sharing sacrificially, beyond political and geographic borders, with fellow believers who were in difficulty, sacrificing out of their “overflowing joy and their extreme poverty” (2 Cor. 8:2; see entire chapter).

Early church leader Peter indicates that compassion became Christians’ climactic understanding of following their Lord: “Finally, all of you, . . . be compassionate and humble” (1 Peter 3:8). John showed that apart from compassion, Christian profession is a lie: “If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity [‘compassion,’ KJV] on them, how can the love of God be in that person?” (1 John 3:17).

Christianity’s legacy of compassion has blessed the globe. As nations everywhere confront current public health challenges, they are acknowledging a Christian heritage that now serves all peoples, all faiths, and all political hues. For it was the Christian response of care for the victims of pestilence long ago that invented hospitals. Today, many hospitals have become centers of care, service, and scientific research. As they participate in pursuit of the next vaccine that will deliver us from current global evil, it is not inappropriate to acknowledge the debt owed to early Christians and to their Lord Jesus Christ, the God who is full of compassion (Ps. 86:15).¹

¹ Hillsong United lyrics: www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/hillsongunited/mightytohave.html.

² *Ibid.*

³ www.cbsnews.com/news/coronavirus-texas-lieutenant-governor-dan-patrick-slammed-tucker-carlson-willing-to-die-to-revive-economy/.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 418: “The broken law of God demanded the life of the transgressor.”

⁵ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 291.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Versions in order: King James, New Revised Standard, English Standard, and Kenneth Taylor’s New Living Translation.

⁹ E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 364.

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SANCTIFICATION

*Can we ever be truly
Christian if we can't feel
what others feel?*



AS EMPATHY

SHAWN BRACE

I've recently started appreciating one of Scripture's most important stories in a new light. It is a well-known story, but perhaps there is more depth to it than generally understood.

DOES JESUS CARE—ABOUT JESUS?

After celebrating the Passover meal with His disciples, Jesus finds Himself in the Garden of Gethsemane, where He has often spent long hours in prayer. This time, however, things are different. He is deeply troubled and noticeably distressed, even mentioning to His disciples that His "soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death" (Matt. 26:38).

Then as He agonizingly stumbles off to His special place of prayer, He utters this astounding request to His three closest disciples, Peter, James, and John: "Stay here," He says to them, "and watch with Me" (verse 38). Unfortunately, as we well know, Jesus returns a little later, and two subsequent times, to discover that the three aren't equal to the task. Instead of finding them alert and fully available to "watch" with Him, He finds them sleeping.

What Jesus basically craves at this moment, when the weight of the whole universe is bearing down upon Him with all its crushing fury, is emotional support. He is looking for an impromptu support group. He is looking for emotional availability.

Ellen White says as much in her seminal exposition of His Gethsemane experience in *The Desire of Ages*. "The human heart longs for sympathy in suffering," she writes. "This longing Christ felt to the very depths of His being. In the supreme agony

of His soul He came to His disciples with a yearning desire to hear some words of comfort from those whom He had so often blessed and comforted, and shielded in sorrow and distress. The One who had always had words of sympathy for them was now suffering superhuman agony, and He longed to know that they were praying for Him and for themselves."¹

This, to me, is one of the most staggering and mind-blowing subjects the human mind could ever contemplate, a truth whose depth seems impossible to fathom. Of greatest relevance for present discussion is the fact that we find in the experience of Christ with His disciples the idea that emotional availability—sympathy and empathy—are the highest height to which human beings can attain, the means of supporting Jesus at this most critical stage of His redemption effort.

Just at this point Jesus cares profoundly about feelings. His own emotions were transparently displayed. So much does sympathy matter to Him that at the peak of His anguished struggle for my soul, what He longs for "to the very depths of His being" is someone to lean on; someone who can offer Him "some words of comfort," some caring action that will tide Him across the abyss of hell He must negotiate. Peter's prayer, as opposed to his panic, was the help his Master needed most in His time of "superhuman agony." The disciples' spiritual lack here is the same as their failure of sympathy: more or less sympathy meant equivalently more or less support for their Lord. Based

Sanctification is learning to love others well.

on this story and the rest of Scripture's testimony, I dare to propose that sanctification is the process by which we become more and more emotionally safe and available for others.

HOW ADVENTIST IS THAT?

Admittedly, this may not land well in the traditional Adventist ear. Adventists are used to defining sanctification in strictly pietistic terms, often devoid of relational and social context. Many tend to focus on outward behaviors that are easily quantified and controlled. Sanctification, in this understanding, is primarily about personal piety—about improving one's diet, dressing modestly, and consuming less entertainment. All this is very rarely if ever connected to any higher relational end.

There are others, of course, who focus more on social realities when it comes to sanctification and Christian growth. For them, being a good and sanctified Christian means pursuing works of justice—feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, fighting for the oppressed.

There is no doubt that growing in Christlikeness largely includes these very important personal and social elements. But what seems so often overlooked or forgotten is the critically important reality that, at the end of the day, what people both want and need most is to love and be loved; to be understood, accepted, and valued.

This is, after all, how Scripture—and specifically Jesus—distills the meaning of the law into its most basic form. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind," He declared to the lawyer who asked Him what the greatest commandment was. "And . . . 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matt. 22:37-39). Loving God with our whole person—heart, soul, and mind—means developing not only our physical and intellectual faculties, but growing in emotional and relational health as well. That

emotional growth enables us to love God and others better and better all the time.

Similarly, Paul, after echoing Jesus' words, sums up the whole law by saying that "love is the fulfillment of the law" (Rom. 13:10). No wonder then, that as Paul elsewhere reflects on the "fruit of the Spirit"—on what it looks like to have the Spirit indwelling and shining through us—he focuses chiefly on relational dynamics. "The fruit of the Spirit," he writes to the believers in Galatia, "is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22, 23). He is speaking of nothing other than Christlikeness and sanctification.

WHERE THIS TAKES US

What all this seems to establish is that growth in sanctification is primarily a relational exercise. At the heart of what it means to be human and what it means to be shaped into Christlikeness is the ability to relate to and sympathize with the thoughts and feelings of others. Obedience to God's law is not the pursuit of arbitrary expressions of piety. It is, if nothing else, the pursuit of greater degrees of empathy—of making ourselves emotionally safe and available for others.

In short, sanctification is learning to love others well.

Many people do acknowledge that love is the chief focus of Christian obedience and growth. But how much does "loving others well" have to do with emotional safety and availability? There is, after all, a lot of talk these days about "safe spaces," about vulnerability and authenticity; but where has it gotten us? Again, we can understand love as action, as providing for others' physical needs. But love as making ourselves emotionally available for others?

By way of answer, a growing body of evidence now suggests that our emotional health is as important as any other aspect of our existence as humans. We are, it seems, in the midst of an emotional revolution with multiple new discoveries about the significance of our emotional life and its overall impact on our health and human experience.

A longitudinal study at Harvard University begun in 1938 and following the lives of 268 sophomores has reported staggering discoveries 80 years later. Researchers found that much as any other factor,

satisfying relationships were critical to health and longevity: “When we gathered together everything we knew about them about at age 50, it wasn’t their middle-age cholesterol levels that predicted how they were going to grow old,” said Robert Waldinger, who directed the study. “It was how satisfied they were in their relationships. The people who were the most satisfied in their relationships at age 50 were the healthiest at age 80.”²

Psychiatrist George Vaillant, another researcher on the team, concluded: “When the study began, nobody cared about empathy or attachment.” That was then. We know now that “the key to healthy aging is relationships, relationships, relationships.”

For reasons like this, and more, researcher Brené Brown has concluded that “we are psychologically, emotionally, cognitively, and spiritually hardwired for connection, love, and belonging. Connection, along with love and belonging . . . is why we are here, and it is what gives purpose and meaning to our lives.”³ Furthermore, the key to relationships, as psychiatrist Bessel van der Kolk articulates, is safe connections. “Being able to feel safe with other people,” he writes, “is probably the single most important aspect of mental health; safe connections are fundamental to meaningful and satisfying lives,” adding that “social support is a biological necessity.”⁴

This will grab every genuine Christian’s attention, especially Adventists, who have historically insisted that the “health message” is part of what it means to grow in sanctification. For what more important part of the health message is there than to experience mental, emotional, and relational health—the very core of what it means to be humans created in the image of God?

HONESTY, THE PROPHETS, AND HEAVEN

I was delighted to encounter this very idea in a book written long before the “emotional revolution” began. In *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, Ellen White lays out this same vision for Christian growth and sanctification, framing the pursuit in empathic terms: “In your association with others, put yourself in their place. Enter into their feelings, their difficulties, their disappointments, their joys, and their sorrows. Identify yourself with them, and then do to them as, were you to exchange places with them, you would wish them to deal with you.”⁵ She labels this “the true rule of honesty”; “another

expression of the law”; “the substance of the teaching of the prophets.” She states in sum, “It is a principle of heaven, and will be developed in all who are fitted for its holy companionship.”⁶

She later adds this categorical statement: “No man who has the true ideal of what constitutes a perfect character will fail to manifest the sympathy and tenderness of Christ. The influence of grace is to soften the heart, to refine and purify the feelings, giving a heaven-born delicacy and sense of propriety.”⁷

This is dynamite! Showing sympathy, being emotionally safe and available for others, is the very “substance of the teaching of the prophets.” Those who are becoming more obedient to Christ and experiencing greater degrees of sanctification, being fitted for heaven, will display these critically important fruits.

What this all means—being an emotionally safe and available person—is that as the gospel penetrates our hearts and we recognize that our security comes in Jesus, it becomes safe for us to process our own stories of shame and pain, and we thus become safer people for others to share their stories with. When they come to us with their brokenness, temptations, pain, guilt, and shame, we respond not with condemnation, ridicule, sarcasm, or condescension, but with love, acceptance, and empathy. They know that we will not run away *from* them but that they may run *to* us. They know they belong—which is the context for the best in spiritual growth.

We will thus find ourselves doing what the apostle Paul encourages us to do—living out a true life of emotional safety and availability, rejoicing with those who rejoice, and weeping with those who weep (Rom. 12:15).

Such a sanctified life is a powerful and attractive witness to the gospel.✚

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), pp. 687, 688.

² news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2017/04/over-nearly-80-years-harvard-study-has-been-showing-how-to-live-a-healthy-and-happy-life/. Thanks to Heather Thompson Day for directing me to this study.

³ Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly* (New York: Avery, 2012), p. 68.

⁴ Bessel van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), pp. 81, 169.

⁵ Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 134.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 134, 135.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

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DEATH. LOVE. LIFE.

*Do death-row inmates
deserve our ministry?*

CHERYL HOWSON

God loves the world so much that instead of death, we are given eternal life by believing in Jesus. Think back to the time you felt most loved by God. Perhaps it was during a period of great personal need, and possibly through the love of another human being. As Christians, we are called to share this love from God. In fact, Jesus commanded us—not politely requested us—to love our neighbors.

THE ENEMY NEIGHBOR

While our neighbor does include the nice family across the street, we are also called to love the people we prefer not to think about, the people we might even fear. The tough, scarred, and broken man or woman sentenced to death for their crimes is also our neighbor.

The United States houses the largest number of prisoners in the world, as well as the highest prisoner ratio, 655 per 100,000 people.¹ While the death penalty in the U.S. is most used in cases of murder, there are other capital crimes involved

sometimes.² Around the world, you can be executed for trafficking drugs, fraudulently disrupting the country's economic system, undermining the constitutional system, and offending or abandoning the country's religion. In Middle Eastern countries, some women on death row have been sentenced to stoning for the crime of adultery.³

Did you know that 43 execution dates have been scheduled for 2020 in the U.S. alone?⁴ Because they have committed a crime, do we assume a convict's life has less meaning than a nonoffender? Are we all right with it because we believe they deserve it?

In his sermon "Loving Your Enemies," Martin Luther King, Jr., suggests we look beyond the sin. "In order to love the enemy neighbor, we must recognize that the negative deed of the enemy does not represent all that the individual is. His evil deed does not represent his whole being."⁵

Indeed, we are not the sum of our sins. Yet we certainly can despise those who sin differently. In the same way, our own good deeds do not repre-



sent all that we are, as much as we'd like them to. Martin Luther King takes self-righteous egos to task when he says, "If we look at ourselves hard enough, and if we look at all men hard enough, we see a strange dichotomy, a disturbing schizophrenia. We are divided against ourselves, split up so to speak. There is something within all of us which causes us to cry out with Ovid the Latin poet, 'I see and approve the better things of life, but the evil things I do.'"⁶ Just like us, criminals on death row make multiple choices. But death is the consequence of some of their choices.

LOVE TRANSFORMS

Execution during Jesus' time was horrific. But even as He was dying, Jesus provided spiritual comfort to a convicted criminal. No theological exchange was necessary; no intellectual Bible exposition took place. The thief saw only Jesus. And Jesus saw through him: past his evil deeds, straight to the core. Unable to say anything beyond "Remember me when you come into your king-

dom" (Luke 23:42), the thief bared his soul. Jesus heard all the unspoken desires of his spirit and responded with a guarantee of hope.

By following Christ's example, we are to share God's love and the promise of eternal life with even the worst, most mean-spirited people. In 1982, Sister Helen Prejean became a pen pal to a death-row inmate. His name was Patrick Sonnier, a resident of the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola, America's largest maximum-security prison.⁷

Prejean began visiting him, providing him with something he didn't have—a compassionate relationship with another human being. In an interview with *Faith and Leadership*, Prejean talked about being true brothers and sisters. That's the type of thing Jesus is about. Compassion brings people together. Relationship is everything.⁸

When Sonnier finally went to his death, Prejean was there to witness it. Before he died, he turned to the father of one of his victims and said he was sorry, then he turned to Prejean and told her he loved her. "I love you too," she responded.⁹ It was

Good deeds don't represent all that we are, much as we'd like them to.

a response Martin Luther King echoed: "When Jesus says, 'Love the enemy,' He's saying love the enemy because there is something about love that can transform, that can change, that can arouse the conscience of the enemy."¹⁰

After Sonnier's death, Prejean resolved to spend her life fighting state-sanctioned executions.¹¹ Her book *Dead Man Walking* became a critically acclaimed movie. Since then, she has provided spiritual comfort to death-row inmates and accompanied six of them to their executions. "In my faithfulness to them and in visiting them, they know my love and care for them, and that I believe in their dignity," she said.¹² Love doesn't just transform the person being loved; it also changes the person providing that love. Prejean's worldview shifted: "I've been with these six human beings in the last hours of their life, and I saw what courage was. I saw what faith in God is, turning your life over to God. I've seen remorse. I've seen sorrow. Sometimes I reflect on that. What is it like to do something irreparable and you can't get it back? That has to be a terrible suffering."¹³

THE CHOICE OF A LIFETIME, LITERALLY

When Jesus comes again, will He ask, "When I was in prison, did you visit Me?" It's easy to have sympathy for the poor, the orphans, the widows, because they all seem defenseless and innocent in their suffering. But what about helping people who have committed murder? With the death penalty, it's not about innocent life, but a guilty life. Yet Jesus asks us to visit them. It's not enough just to pray for them or to donate money to prison ministry. "The best gift we ever give each other is our presence," says Prejean. "And we all long for that—people's undivided attention to be present to us."¹⁴

In the beginning God gave Adam and Eve one law, and they violated it. In the aftermath of that choice, the entire human race was placed on death row. But God left His first human creations with a promise,

and the wages of sin were paid in Jesus' death. Now, because of Him, we can die to sin and thus have life.

Contrast the thief on the cross with another Bible story—that of the rich young ruler. When asked to give up everything to follow Jesus, the rich young man *chose* to walk away. Our first death on earth is inevitable. The second death is a choice. For those on death row unaware of this choice, death comes without love, hope, or a future. We may not be able to save the life of a human condemned to die here on earth, but we can offer them the same hope Jesus offers us. According to Romans 8:38, God's love in Christ Jesus transcends both death and life.

Jesus died a criminal's death, and in so doing gave the whole world a chance to choose life eternal. The work is done. All that remains is for us to reveal the gospel to those who think they have no hope and no choice. ▀

¹ "Highest to Lowest: Prison Population Total," *World Prison Brief, Institute for Crime and Justice Policy Research*, accessed Feb. 27, 2020, www.prisonestudies.org/highest-to-lowest/prison-population-total?field_region_taxonomy_tid=All.

² "Methods of Execution," *Death Penalty Information Center*, accessed Feb. 27, 2020, deathpenaltyinfo.org/executions/methods-of-execution.

³ "Five Crimes That Can Get You Killed," *amnesty.org*, Apr. 15, 2013, accessed Feb. 28, 2020, www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2013/04/five-crimes-can-get-you-killed/.

⁴ "Outcomes of Death Warrants 2020," *Death Penalty Information Center*, accessed Mar. 3, 2020, deathpenaltyinfo.org/stories/outcomes-of-death-warrants-in-2020.

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Cheryl Howson writes from Hosur, India.

A BIBLE PRIMER FOR CRISIS MANAGEMENT

A meme recently read: “Can we uninstall 2020 and install it again? This version has a virus.”

If life were only that easy. Uninstall, redo, go back and correct, or just download a new version. But life is not that simple.

Mistakes, misstatements, crises, and yes, sin, are all tough taskmasters. They make violators pay. In fact, they seldom take captives. They make one pay, if possible, the full extent of the penalty of missing the mark. What would we do without grace and mercy?

But what about surviving and thriving in the midst of this indiscriminate and unusual coronavirus? How can we cope with it on a practical basis?

I write while serving at the Adventist University of Africa, a General Conference institution in Nairobi, Kenya. We are on lockdown, delivering all graduate instruction online. We, like you, are praying, trusting, avoiding large gatherings, and working from home. We are using good hygiene, social distancing, dispensing good where possible, seeking to be proactive (versus reactive), and daily practicing the natural remedies to build our immune systems.

Can we do more? Are there attitudes and actions we can implement to enable us to thrive in the midst of the crisis, rather than just survive?

The Bible depicts a series of crises that literally shook the foundation of people and nations during the times in which they lived. It portrays common men and women who rose to crisis occasions by assuming the attitudes and actions of conquerors rather than of those conquered.

Let’s look at five inspiring examples from the Old Testament.

Noah chose careful preparation over crisis

chaos (Gen. 6:13-22; 7:4-12). Noah was a master crisis mover. People can choose to lose their calm, or they can calmly assess the situation, follow truth, and implement best practices.

Lesson: Spend your time methodically preparing to better the crisis.

Job maintained persistent commitment over understandable capitulation (Job 13:1-16). Job knew that he had done nothing to deserve the massive crisis that affected his family, fortune, and physical frame (the coronavirus of his day). But he didn’t cowardly capitulate.

Lesson: Even if you personally suffer, don’t cave-in and lose faith.

Joseph planned proactively over passive compliance (Gen. 41:25-36). The Joseph story has multiple lessons for maximizing crises. Joseph maximized crisis at every turn (pit, slavery, Potiphar’s house, prison, palace, power), resulting in the saving of his entire society.

Lesson: Don’t just endure a crisis; under God, maximize it.

Habakkuk practiced persistent praise over passive pessimism (Hab. 1:2; 2:2, 3; 3:17-19). Habakkuk argued with God in the midst of a crisis about what he perceived to be divine inconsistency. He lost the argument, but resolved to praise rather than protest.

Lesson: Exercise discipline to praise God in the midst of a seemingly unfair, unfathomable crisis.

Esther championed justice over personal security (Esther 4:10-13). Esther, the favored Jewish princess, had every motive to preserve her own life as opposed to risking her position for the preservation of her people. She heroically chose to aid others.

Lesson: In the midst of a crisis, risk all for the greater good of serving and saving others.

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TRANSFORMATION TIPS
DELBERT W. BAKER



WHAT ABOUT SURVIVING AND THRIVING IN THE MIDST OF THIS INDISCRIMINATE, STRANGE, AND UNUSUAL CORONAVIRUS?

I WANT A CHURCH THAT'S REAL

SUNG KWON

Ask yourself, "If your church were to close its doors, would anyone in the community notice? Would anyone in the community care?"

Church is where disciples are equipped, developed, educated, and sent out to local neighborhoods; the church is to make a difference in individual lives and in its immediate communities.

JUSTIFYING THE QUESTIONS

Why have we asked the above questions? Perhaps because we the church of God must be careful not to forget our chosen status, as other people chosen before forget their chosen status. Perhaps to help us remember who we are to be: God's recognizable, tangible, and visible sign—a witness and foretaste of His dream for the world.

Why are we here? What are we here to do? We do not always know what to do from moment to moment with this current life, but we do have a hope and desire for the life beyond: we want to live with God forever.

Given our future hopes, we should be asking, "What is God up to right now, right here, in this neighborhood?" "What are the ways we need to change in order

Will you miss my church if it moves?

to engage the people in our community who no longer consider church a part of their lives?" Christ's earthly work was a lifetime commitment to the community

—a matter of relationships. We, too, must establish a faithful presence for God in our communities until the second coming of Christ. Christianity is a progression; it is about connecting the church with the community through life-on-life evangelism.

Note Timothy Keller's comment on the explosive growth of early Christianity: "Christians' lives—their concern for the weak and the poor, their integrity in the face of persecution, their economic sharing, their sacrificial love even for their enemies, and the high quality of their common life together—attracted nonbelievers to the gospel."¹

It seems fair to ask: What are we doing as a church if not constantly improving our tools for impacting our neighborhood, community, society, and the world? If not growing, equipping, developing, educating, and enlightening our church members to be the light to the world that Jesus announces that we are (Matt. 5:16)? If we aren't doing these things, why do we exist? Is it for



striving for material possessions and social status? For Christians, financial success, external beauty, and career advancement matter only to the extent that they serve God's purposes. Brennan Manning has said, "The greatest single cause of atheism in the world today is Christians who acknowledge Jesus with their lips and then walk out the door and deny Him by their lifestyle. That is what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable."²



The purpose of being disciples is not only to proclaim the good news, but also to demonstrate the love of God to people in need.

Every Adventist's desire must be faithfulness in God's service and for His mission. We must reach out to everyone—sharing, caring, and proclaiming the good news of God's redemptive work, so that people can see us as a recognizable, tangible, and visible sign of the kingdom of God on earth. Adventism is not about being the best church *in* the community; it is about being the best church *for* the community.

REACHING OUT FOR GOD

God came from heaven to earth; He reached out. Therefore, we must reach out to our communities as our Christlikeness conforms to His: "The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. *It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world.* From the beginning it has been God's plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. *The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light, are to show forth His glory.*"³

God's church was organized for service, community outreach. Church planting is just that. The

church's program, the items outlined in its bulletin, should be an expression of how God has reached out to us first. Jesus said; "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Matt. 20:28). We are created, saved, called, commissioned, and commanded to serve God and His people. This is our mandate, and this is the life we ought to live.

Jesus lived as a humble servant. The bottom line of our Christian journey is to be servants of God by serving His people—not just the "chosen" within the walls of the church building, but everyone within and outside the walls of the church.

John Stott wrote: "[Jesus'] words and deeds belonged to each other, the words interpreting the deeds and the deeds embodying the words. He did not only announce the good news of the kingdom; He performed visible 'signs of the kingdom.'"⁴

The purpose of being disciples is not only to proclaim the good news, the word of salvation, but also to demonstrate the love of God to people who are in need. We must pray for God's intervention in our lives and look for opportunities to serve and demonstrate His love by listening to people's struggles and challenges. When we intentionally and sincerely approach people who are disenfranchised, disassociated, and marginalized in our communities, we will witness changes in their lives—and changes in our communities. The problem isn't individual *ability*, but total *availability*, and availability for all we know God craves: active, working compassion to banish poverty; to stop world hunger; to end human trafficking; to help build happy homes; to live lives of integrity, humility, and peace.

THE ADVENTIST COMMUNITY SERVICE FOCUS

That is why Adventist Community Services (ACS) has been focused on equipping church members to be engaged through critical service learning. By incorporating a conceptual framework of service-learning in four levels of engagement presented by Tania Mitchell,⁵ and four ways of social ministry opportunities presented by Sider, Olson, and Unruh, members are able to create a sustainable impact in their communities.⁶ The four are service, learning, service-learning, and critical service-learning.

Service is demonstrated in cleaning up a riverbank by picking up trash; or as a *relief* operation providing food, clothing, etc.: *service* is simply giving a hungry person a fish.

Learning is students in a science classroom look-

ing through a microscope at water samples collected from the riverbank just cleaned; it is *individual development*, transformational ministries that empower a person to improve their physical, emotional, intellectual, or social status: *learning* is teaching a person how to fish.

Service-Learning is those students taking samples from local water sources, analyzing them, documenting the results, and presenting the scientific information to a local pollution-control agency; it is *community development*, such as providing day-care and after-school programs: *service-learning* is providing a person with fishing equipment.

Critical Service-Learning is those students using the science they're acquiring to create public service announcements that raise awareness of the human impact on water quality; it is their learning in the service of better community attitudes and behaviors; it is *structural change*, which means transforming unfair societal, economic, environmental, and cultural institutions and systems: *critical service-learning* is helping everybody get fair access to the fishpond.

I want to belong to a church that empowers members to be change agents; that embraces differences and makes a positive impact on families, neighbors, and communities; that becomes the voice of the voiceless; that examines critically the issues of power, privilege, and oppression; that questions the hidden biases and assumptions of race, class, and gender. As the apostle Paul said: "The creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21). I want to belong to a church that is working to liberate people from physical, social, mental, and spiritual bondage. It is the church becoming a defender of people who cannot defend themselves: Church being real!

The church I want to belong to will replicate for the community what God did in Jesus. The beloved apostle John laid out God's action in Jesus, the one from the beginning whom "we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, . . . looked at and our hands have touched—. . . the Word of life. . . . We have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us" (1 John 1:1, 2). Through His church today, people must hear, see, and touch the God of love in tangible, recognizable, transforming ways.

In the midst of confusion and loss of identity,

Adventists and other Christians discern the signs of God's purpose being fulfilled and live expecting the soon coming of our God, our Lord and Savior, Christ Jesus. Preparing for that return means serving God and His people, working for the healing of human community as we wait and hope for the wholeness of God's entire creation that Christ's second coming will bring.

SUMMARIZING

Honoring God means being so close to the people that they would miss us if they lost us. Ellen White wrote: "If less time were given to sermonizing, and more time were spent in personal ministry, greater results would be seen. . . . We are to weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice. Accompanied by the power of persuasion, the power of prayer, the power of the love of God, this work will not, cannot, be without fruit."⁷

Not buildings in a community, but the engagement of individual church members constitutes the faithful presence of the kingdom of God. We must follow Christ's methodology, focused on wholistic engagement for the well-being of the whole person—physical, social, mental, spiritual; whether through a "Showers of Blessings" mobile van, as in the Greater New York Conference, or a "Shower + Laundry" trailer, as with the Gulf States Conference.

Serving communities in Christ's name is the ACS mission, one that keeps expanding the scope of services from relief to reform, from charity to social justice. We seek to equip the church of God for dedicated and committed service by all Christ's disciples as we contribute together to God's redemptive work. ♣

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² Brennan Manning, in Daniel Joseph and Toby McKeenan, "What If I Stumble?" recorded by DC Talk (Forefront/Virgin Records, 1995).

³ Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 9. (Italics supplied.)

⁴ John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2008), p. 29.

⁵ Tania D. Mitchell, "Critical Service-Learning as Social Justice Education: A Case Study of the Citizen Scholars Program," *Equity and Excellence in Education* 40, no. 2 (2007): 101–112.

⁶ R. J. Sider, P. N. Olson, and H. R. Unruh, *Churches That Make a Difference* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002), p. 86.

⁷ Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), pp. 143, 144.

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WHERE THIRST IS QUENCHED

COVID-19 has significantly changed life as we knew it and forced us on a journey. Like the children of Israel, we must go forward by faith, not knowing exactly where we're going. But unlike them, we cannot and should not allow unpleasant experiences to retard our progress toward our Promised Land. Let's press on by drawing lessons from an event in the journey of ancient Israel tucked away in Exodus 15:22-27.

In this short episode of their very long journey, the whole camp of Israel, led by Moses, walked from the Red Sea into the wilderness of Shur. There they got a glimpse into the future. And what a glimpse it was: for Shur was actually a place full of serpents and scorpions, a place of drought and the shadow of death. Shur, which also means "wall," was an uninhabited wasteland the Egyptians used as a border fortress. It became a great barrier between the Israelites and their Land of Promise.

Angry and bitter as they left the pleasant shores of the Red Sea, they trekked through the parched heat of the desert for three long days and found no water (verse 22). Their fresh water from the Red Sea springs had evaporated and their vessels were empty. Metaphorically, they themselves were drained and empty, which was demonstrated by their complaining and criticism of Moses.

Note that the text does not say "there was no water," but rather "they found no water." Water may have been present, even in the desert, if only they had had the faith, strength, and desire to look for it. And although they couldn't find water, Moses kept them moving, walking, seeking, hoping to find water. And they did

when they came to an oasis called Marah.

Imagine their relief: water in Marah. But their sweet joy quickly turned to bitter sadness when they couldn't drink the desperately desired liquid. Marah means "bitter," and so was the water. It increased their thirst rather than quenched it.

How utterly ironic—to finally chance upon a seeming source of survival, only to find the water undrinkable! Even worse, to later learn that God had led them there to test them (verse 25). That which they thought would enable them to survive the desert turned out to be a deterrent. Their disillusionment that they might die in the desert increased, making them even more bitter than the waters of Marah.

Bitterness caused God's people to blame Moses for their dilemma. But he didn't defend himself or retaliate against them. Instead, he turned to God and, get this, cried out to the Lord. The Lord showed Moses a piece of wood. Moses threw it into the waters, and the waters became sweet (verse 26).

Israel's journey didn't end at Marah. Unbeknownst to them, God had already provided a way of escape to Elim, just a few miles away, where 12 springs of fresh water and 70 palm trees waited for them (verse 27). They learned, as we must, that what they lacked was faith and strength of conviction because Elim, which echoes the word *alim*, meaning "strong or powerful," by God's marvelous grace, was always nearby and waiting to sustain them, as it also is for us. ♣

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CURE FOR THE COMMON LIFE
HYVETH WILLIAMS



ISRAEL'S JOURNEY DIDN'T END AT MARAH; GOD HAD ALREADY PROVIDED A WAY OF ESCAPE TO ELIM.



HARRY ANDERSON © REVIEW & HERALD / GOODSALT

HIS ENDURING MERCY

How Jacob's experience parallels ours

ELLEN G. WHITE

Jacob's experience during that night of wrestling and anguish represents the trial through which the people of God must pass just before Christ's second coming. The prophet Jeremiah, in holy vision looking down to this time, said, "We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. . . . All faces are turned into pale-

ness. Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." Jeremiah 30:5-7.

When Christ shall cease His work as mediator in [humanity's] behalf, then this time of trouble will begin. Then the case of every soul will have been decided, and there will be no atoning blood to cleanse from sin. When Jesus leaves His position as [humanity's] intercessor before God, the solemn announcement is made, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." Revelation 22:11.

Then the restraining Spirit of God is withdrawn from the earth. As Jacob was threatened with death by his angry brother, so the people of God will be in peril from the wicked who are seeking to destroy them. And as the patriarch wrestled all night for deliverance from the hand of Esau, so the righteous will cry to God day and night for deliverance from the enemies that surround them.

Satan had accused Jacob before the angels of God, claiming the right to destroy him because of his sin; he had moved upon Esau to march against him; and during the patriarch's long night of wrestling, Satan endeavored to force upon him a sense of his guilt, in order to discourage him, and break his hold upon God.

When in his distress Jacob laid hold of the Angel, and made supplication with tears, the

heavenly Messenger, in order to try his faith, also reminded him of his sin, and endeavored to escape from him.

But Jacob would not be turned away. He had learned that God is merciful, and he cast himself upon His mercy. He pointed back to his repentance for his sin, and pleaded for deliverance. As he reviewed his life, he was driven almost to despair; but he held fast the Angel, and with earnest, agonizing cries urged his petition until he prevailed.

THE WIDENESS OF HIS MERCY

Such will be the experience of God's people in their final struggle with the powers of evil. God will test their faith, their perseverance, their confidence in His power to deliver them. Satan will endeavor to terrify them with the thought that their cases are hopeless; that their sins have been too great to receive pardon. They will have a deep sense of their shortcomings, and as they review their lives their hopes will sink.

But remembering the greatness of God's mercy, and their own sincere repentance, they will plead His promises made through Christ to helpless, repenting sinners. Their faith will not fail because their prayers are not immediately answered. They will lay hold of the strength of God, as Jacob laid hold of the Angel, and the language of their souls will be, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me."

Had not Jacob previously repented of his sin in obtaining the birthright by fraud, God could not have heard his prayer and mercifully preserved his life. So in the time of trouble, if the people of God had unconfessed sins to appear before them while tortured with fear and anguish, they would be overwhelmed; despair would cut off their faith, and they could not have confidence to plead with God for deliverance.

But while they have a deep sense of their unworthiness, they will have no concealed wrongs to reveal. Their sins will have been blotted out by the atoning blood of Christ, and they cannot bring them to remembrance.

HEARTFELT CONFESSION

Satan leads many to believe that God will overlook their unfaithfulness in the minor affairs of life; but the Lord shows in His dealing with Jacob

Jacob's history is an assurance that God will not cast off those who have been betrayed into sin.

that He can in no wise sanction or tolerate evil. All who endeavor to excuse or conceal their sins, and permit them to remain upon the books of heaven, unconfessed and unforgiven, will be overcome by Satan. The more exalted their profession, and the more honorable the position which they hold, the more grievous is their course in the sight of God, and the more certain the triumph of the great adversary.

Yet Jacob's history is an assurance that God will not cast off those who have been betrayed into sin, but who have returned unto Him with true repentance. It was by self-surrender and confiding faith that Jacob gained what he had failed to gain by conflict in his own strength. God thus taught His servant that divine power and grace alone could give him the blessing he craved.

Thus it will be with those who live in the last days. As dangers surround them, and despair seizes upon the soul, they must depend solely upon the merits of the atonement. We can do nothing of ourselves. In all our helpless unworthiness we must trust in the merits of the crucified and risen Saviour. None will ever perish while they do this. The long, black catalogue of our delinquencies is before the eye of the Infinite. The register is complete; none of our offenses are forgotten. But He who listened to the cries of His servants of old will hear the prayer of faith and pardon our transgressions. He has promised, and He will fulfill His word. ♣

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 book *Patriarch and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890, 1908), pp. 201-203.



MAKING MY LEGACY

Looking for something that lasts

CHANTAL J. KLINGBEIL

The house had just disappeared. I couldn't believe it. It was literally gone. My husband, Gerald, and I had often spoken about the little white house bordering on the park route we walked almost every Sunday morning. Then one day, after having been away for a few weeks, we realized that the house was gone—a little house, nestled in the middle of a grassy lot. Yes, it was just a little house and it needed some repair, but still it looked cozy.

We walked over to take a closer look. All that was left of the little house was a small driveway and a mailbox—nothing more. The demolition crew had worked

quickly and thoroughly. Within a few weeks the grass had grown over the spot where the little house had stood.

Somehow, I felt sad. I wondered about the people who had worked hard to pay for that house. I imagined that it must have been someone's dream house. I thought of all the spare time they had spent painting and repairing over the years. I thought of the many hours they had spent cutting the lawn. I wondered if they had sometimes lain awake in that little house worrying about paying the rent. Now there was nothing to show for all that investment of time, emotional energy, and money.

The disappearance of the little house made me sad because I identify with the little house or the people inside. I work, I worry, I invest time and energy, then I wonder what will last. I'd like to leave more than a grassy spot.

TIME TO CHOOSE

Really leaving something that will last seems hard to do. Our schooling is for the most part preparation for the world of yesterday and not tomorrow. Things change so quickly.

Countries considered peaceful and stable can quickly erupt in riots, civil war, even genocide. Ideologies that have dominated the political landscape for decades can change overnight. A virus can leave the whole world reeling.

I'm reminded of Baruch. He also lived in a world that was about to turn upside down and inside out. His country, Judah, found itself a pawn in the power

game for world supremacy between Egypt and Babylon. As much as they would have liked to forge their own path and do their own independent thing, they were constantly being forced to take sides.

I can identify with Baruch. There are many similarities between his world and ours. We are all collectively and individually caught up in the cosmic conflict between God and Satan. In the end, there will be no neutral ground. Through the prophecies of Jeremiah, faithfully copied down and distributed by Baruch, God clearly told His people and the larger world which side to invest in. For nearly 50 years God sent detailed messages through Jeremiah, foretelling what the consequences would be for their choice of allegiance. We have much more than 50 years of prophecy to look back on. God has given us in the Bible a prophetic picture of what our future will hold, depending on where we put our priorities.

BARUCH'S WORLD—AND OURS

What did this all mean for Baruch as he tried to build a life for himself?

Baruch, a talented man with good connections, made his choice for God and tried to support God's cause by being Jeremiah's scribe. Under the promising reforms of King Josiah, he probably hoped that he could be part of something big, make an impact on his world, and leave a lasting legacy. All around him people were striving to get ahead in life. Baruch, with his good education, may have dreamed of a distinguished career at the royal court that would bring with it a beautiful home and a high standard of living.

Soon enough, however, Baruch came to the realization that his career choice was not the dream job he had hoped for. Baruch found himself hiding as the angry ruling class turned on him and blamed him for Jeremiah's messages (Jer. 43:2, 3).

We live in a materialistic world. We know the pressure to be more and have more. It's easy to carry that mindset over to our spiritual lives. We begin to measure our life worth, our legacy, and even God's favor by looking at what we have and what we can do rather than who we are. Following God doesn't always mean that we find the perfect spouse, have a wonderful, meaningful job, and lead a sunny life that all will call "blessed." Perhaps

Countries considered peaceful and stable can quickly erupt in riots, civil war, even genocide.

we all need moments like Baruch's to bring a sense of perspective to our lives.

When the king of Babylon finally came and put Jerusalem under siege, all that people were living for suddenly became inconsequential. Of what consequence was a good career in court as Jerusalem suffered an 18-month famine? The great walls would be breached. Soon their city would be a pile of rubble. The beautifully furnished homes that had been the envy of the neighborhood would be nothing but ransacked, burnt shells. The Temple that the people regarded as their security would be destroyed. The important positions that everyone desperately wanted would soon be the most dangerous.

Until that day came, Baruch had to live by faith with an eye to the future, even as the wicked were living around him in apparent prosperity. Perhaps God's special message to Baruch is also a message to me when I feel discouraged: "And do you seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them; for behold, I will bring adversity on all flesh," says the Lord. "But I will give your life to you as a prize in all places, wherever you go" (Jer. 45:5, NKJV).*

Baruch learned to see his everyday life in the light of Judah's end-time. Rather than seeking great things for himself, he made his legacy by finding and fulfilling his own small duty in supporting the larger purposes of God.

Perhaps today would be a good moment to rethink the investment portfolio of my life. Am I investing in eternity? Am I laying up for myself treasures in heaven by investing in those around me today? 📌

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Chantal J. Klingbeil serves as an associate director of the Ellen G. White Estate.



For more than four decades now, the month of May has featured celebrations of the culture and contributions that Asian and Pacific islanders have made to North America. This issue of *Adventist Review* recognizes the contributions of Adventists of Asian and Pacific Island heritage to the development and success of Adventism in the United States.—Editors

AT HOME IN NORTH AMERICA

*Korean Adventists
nurture their mission
culture.*

Seventh-day Adventists in the Republic of Korea (South Korea) have a rather significant profile. They operate Sahmyook University, one of the largest universities in the country, and Sahmyook Medical Center and Children's Hospital. More than 115 years since the first Koreans were baptized, Seventh-day Adventists in the Republic of Korea now number 250,000.

Korean Seventh-day Adventists in North America aren't as widely recognized, but they're reaching their communities with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

MISSION DNA

Sukho (Joseph) Shon is pastor of the Korean Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gilbert, Arizona (a suburb of Phoenix). Shon has pastored Adventist congregations in the Republic of Korea; Pennsylvania; and Vancouver, British Columbia.

Before describing the ministries Shon and his congregations have been involved in, mention should be made of a training experience that colors everything he does.

Before coming to the United States, Shon spent 14 months as a volunteer in the 1,000 Missionary Movement, a mission initiative started in the Republic of Korea by Jairyong Lee, then president of what was the Adventist Church's Asia-Pacific Division, to train young people in outreach activities. After orientation and training, volunteers spend a year in voluntary mission service. Shon spent his year in the Philippines, near Mount Pinatubo, serving people who lived in mountain villages without electricity or running water.

In a classic example of understatement, Shon says, "It was not difficult to come to North America. We had a greater dream to serve God, . . . serving more people, ethnic groups, and languages."

STEPHEN CHAVEZ



Shon and his wife, Sunok Esther Jung (also a pastor), received seminary training, worked for a while in Korea, then moved to Vancouver, British Columbia. Shon's portfolio at the Vancouver Korean Adventist Church included ministry to youth and young adults, as well as to international students. One of his major challenges was engaging with second-generation Korean Americans, helping them to "be light and salt for Christ in serving the community."

Bridging the gap between first- and second-generation immigrants is a challenge faced in every ethnic congregation, not just those who are Korean.

Jonathan Park, executive secretary of the South-eastern California Conference, was born in the Republic of Korea and moved with his family to the United States when he was 10 years old. "I am what we call the 1.5 generation," he says. He sees himself and others like him as a bridge between first-generation Koreans and those who are second- and third-generation immigrants.

Park first heard God's call to ministry as a child, growing up in the Republic of Korea. His name was the same as that of the president of the Republic of Korea at the time, leading some to suggest (facetiously) that he pursue a career in politics. But he was baptized at age 9 and influenced by an uncle who was an Adventist pastor in the United States. "I thought it would be cool to have God as my boss," he says. From then on, Park has followed God as He led him into pastoral ministry and then into administrative roles.

According to Park, first-generation Korean Adventists in North America had to operate in a "survival mode" when they first arrived in the United States, having had to establish their racial identity in a new cultural setting. What they didn't have to learn is their identity as Christians. While today's Republic of Korea is increasingly secular, more than 25 percent of its population practices some brand of Christianity. He points

out that only the United States sends out more foreign missionaries than do Christians in the Republic of Korea. As of 2018, there were nearly 14,000 Korean Adventists in North America, worshipping in 140 churches.

When he pastored in Philadelphia, Shon used a variety of community outreach methods. They included evangelistic meetings, health seminars (in partnership with the church's medical professionals), Vacation Bible Schools, art classes, etc. Shon chose a ministry to the community's homeless population to bridge the cultural gap between ages, ethnicities, and immigration status.

Even though the United States is home to the largest concentration of Koreans outside of the Republic of Korea, Koreans make up less than 1 percent of its population. So the work of overcoming prejudice and being enculturated is never ending. Shon has found community engagement one of the keys to accomplishing that.

Park, who pastored Korean congregations in both Maryland and California, cites cross-generational leadership development as another reason for the vitality of Korean congregations. He refers to a "kimchi-flavored" ministry that combines a strong church community with a family-oriented atmosphere. He observes that in the church he attends, "there are three different worship groups, three different leadership teams."

First-generation immigrants typically worship in the Korean language. Generations 1.5 and 2 often prefer to worship in English, but also worship in Korean when the service is conducted in that language. Third-generation immigrants prefer to worship in English, because they're likely to invite friends who don't speak Korean. When they all worship under the same roof, different segments of the congregation "own" different parts of the service, such as separate Sabbath School classes and worship services. So each group develops leaders to organize and implement each study and worship experience. They all have in common the fellowship dinners, at



“Church is more than a location to worship. It becomes a weekly family reunion, where [members] show their gratitude to God for His grace, a place to fellowship and give and receive encouragement.”

which every generation enjoys the same fellowship and the same great Korean food.

FROM CHURCH TO COMMUNITY

Sukho Shon explains his motives in reaching the community. “I led our church to serve the community, gain their trust and confidence.” Some of the activities his congregation provided in its yearly outreach calendar included classes in English as a second language; computer/smartphone classes; music lessons; art classes; citizenship classes; assistance in signing up for social security, food stamps, medical insurance, senior assistance.

Bible studies are also part of the congregation’s outreach program. Evangelistic meetings based on the NEWSTART health program were offered every spring, and evangelistic meetings featuring the gospel and prophecy were offered in the fall.

That kind of activity means more members for whom Korean is not their native language. “Synergy affected our growth and worship together, from grandparents to grandchildren,” he says. The church offered two worship services each Sabbath, one at 9:30 a.m. and the other at 11:30. The services alternate between Korean and English, with Sabbath School in between. Congregations from both services join for fellowship dinners afterward.

Two pastors, one for English-speakers and another for children and youth, joined the staff to support the congregation’s outreach to the community.

Not surprisingly, all this activity caused growing pains. After renting from other churches for several years, the congregation bought their first church building three years ago, with classrooms and 11,000 square feet of worship space. They’re building a multipurpose building for community services, and a gymnasium. “Garage sales, car washes, the sacri-

ficial dedication of church members from children to grandparents, and the blessing of God helped fund most of the \$3.3 million project,” he says.

Jonathan Park also cites the generosity of Korean Adventists. “They have the mentality: ‘Everything I have, I give to the church.’” They do it to “make sure the church is financially solvent, but they are also generous with their time and efforts for the greater good of the church.” Korean Adventists, says Park, are models of ethnic congregations that bridge the gaps between generations, cultures, and different religious traditions.

LOOKING FORWARD

“The church is a place where first-generation Koreans find identity,” says Park. “Church is more than a place to worship. It becomes a weekly family reunion, where [members] show their gratitude to God for His grace and for a place to fellowship and to give and receive encouragement.”

This is the atmosphere they hope to share with younger generations. Park cites a survey taken among Korean American students at the University of California at Los Angeles. They were asked whether, after graduation, they intended to attend an “American” church or a Korean one. More than 80 percent indicated their preference as Korean.

In North America the number of ethnic Korean Adventist congregations is second only to Hispanic congregations. This, according to Park, is because of “the ability to adjust, grow, and remain relevant to both first- and second-generation Korean Americans, while continuing to grow a community that is welcoming to all ethnicities, with English worship services and community outreach.”

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



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PART OF THE 2 PERCENT

*Growing Samoan
Adventists in
North America*

Meshach Soli, a young Samoan-American pastor from southern California, was invited to give a presentation at the North American Division's 2017 eHuddle meetings in Florida. As a Pacific Islander pastor, he was asked to share insights about why young people, especially of his ethnic background, are leaving the church.

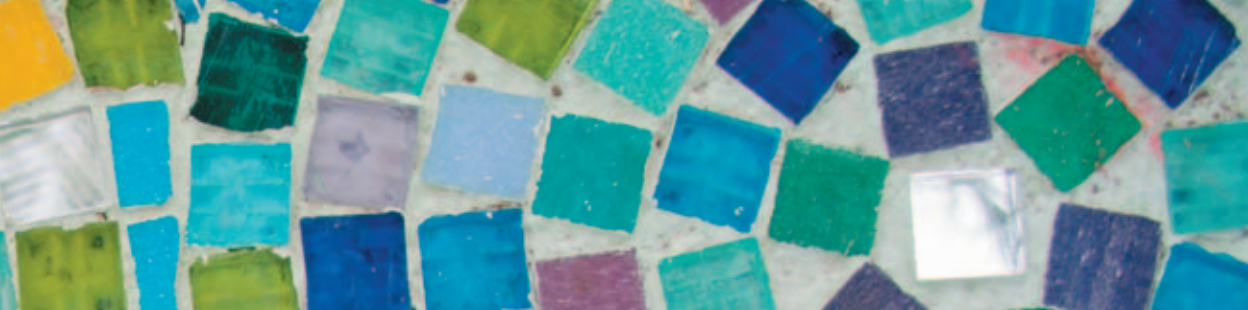
"So I'm over there getting ready, feeling like 'What am I doing here? How am I supposed to present this to all these important people?' he remembers. As intimidation grew, he prayed, "Lord, just help me get through this."

A presenter before him touched on the cultural demographics of the church in North America. Then he got to the part where Pacific Islanders weren't even labeled. Instead, they fell under a nameless group representing just 2 percent of North American Seventh-day Adventists. "At that point the Lord spoke to my heart and said, "This is why you are here,"" says Soli.

ROOTS

Seventh-day Adventists arrived in Samoa, October 22, 1895. Dr. and Mrs. F. E. Braucht settled in Apia, Western Samoa, and began medical missionary work. Progress was slow. By 1904, there were only eight members of the church in the country—Europeans and American missionaries. It wasn't until 1915 that the first Samoan converts were baptized. But the church pressed on, slowly gaining members as recognition for its medical and educational institutions grew.

Pacific Islander immigration to the United States swelled in the 1960s and 1970s. Outside of Hawaii, southern California became a popular destination. "The church that I pastor [Compton Samoan, near Los Angeles] became the first organized [Pacific Islander church] in 1973," says lead pastor Eliu Lafo. "Basically, Samoa was evangelized by missionaries coming from the United States. But United States [Samoans] were evan-



gelized by Samoans who came from Samoa, which is interesting,” he adds. “The work here, particularly in southern California, became the birthplace of Samoan Adventism in the United States, state-side. Particularly the Compton Samoan church—this is the church that actually gave birth to many of the [Samoan] churches in the Southeastern California Conference.”

Today, there are 13 Samoan churches and one group in the North American Division, most of them clustered in the western United States.

THE SAMOAN ADVENTIST EXPERIENCE

Similar to other ethnicities, family and community are the backbone of Samoan culture. But for second-generation Samoan Adventists, there comes the extra challenge of living in a dual-cultured world. Are they American? Samoan? Samoan-American? Should worship be in Samoan or English? “Honestly, even if I wasn’t connected to the language, I liked the style of fellowship in the Samoan church,” says Soli. “The family and community aspect of the Samoan church was one of the things that really kept us together—this second generation. We were there Friday, Saturday, Sunday, then maybe Monday for choir practice, Wednesday for prayer meeting, then you’re back again on Friday.”

One of Christianity’s greatest virtues—loving one’s neighbor—has always resonated well with Samoan converts. “How can you not help your neighbor out?” asks Soli. “The essence of community is embedded in our culture. When the Christian faith came over to the islands, there were a lot of similarities within the faith that were already there in the culture. It was easy for that transition to take place.”

Faith and family are closely linked within Samoan culture, and when Samoan Adventists make a stand for Christ, it’s rarely with a solitary mentality. “You know the saying ‘It takes a village to raise a child’? We literally believe that. It’s just

part of the DNA of who we are. Even as Adventists, embracing the Sabbath comes naturally, because part of observing the Sabbath is focused on family. It’s about community. It’s about God. It’s very hard to find a Samoan atheist,” Soli laughs.

In Samoa now, the church is also integral to the village. Soli, who last visited in 2018, remembers the local church being the most beautiful structure in the entire neighborhood, even if the homes were much simpler. The idea is that the church is God’s house, and thus God’s house should be the best house on the block. In the United States, that notion is not reflected by the church building being posh, but by the sacred place it holds for each family.

THE CHALLENGES THAT COME

One of the biggest challenges for Samoan Adventists has to do with a cultural worldview that competes with the worldview of the church and American culture. “Ministry stateside is what you call need-based,” says Pastor Lafo. “We see a need in the community, and we perhaps tailor our ministries to meet the needs of that community. One of the challenges with Samoans is that those needs don’t really exist on the island. I’m talking about homelessness, drugs, and crime. In terms of ministry, homelessness doesn’t really exist in Samoa. So when we come to the urban context, there’s no experience with it. Also, a lot of times Samoans self-govern. If there is a problem in the village, the village chief and the village leaders and families get together to figure it out.”

In the church/culture context, the pastor can be regarded as the village leader. There’s less emphasis placed on individual Bible study and Adventism as a worldwide movement, and more weight placed on what the local pastor says. “Samoans can be very dependent on the pastor. They almost depend on the pastor to feed them spiritually,” says Soli. “I’m not going to say all of them, but a good amount of our seasoned mem-



One of Christianity's greatest creeds—loving one's neighbor—has always resonated well with Samoan converts.

bers are dependent on the pastor to teach them the Word. Instead of this being a supplement to a personal study of the Word and devotional life, it can become a substitute, and the by-product for the next generation is that your kids aren't going to be interested in a lot of those things to their full effect." This, of course, can contribute to why the culture's young people eventually walk out of church altogether.

An interesting phenomenon involves families and church ownership. Because the family bond is so strong, church attendance is affected, and Samoan churches can begin to blend into "family churches."

"In most Samoan churches," says Lafo, "you'll see several families being part of a church. When you have a certain number of families, there can develop a sense of the church belonging to a family, rather than a church that belongs to God." What can happen next, especially among second-generation Samoan Adventists, is sort of a challenging of loyalties. "I've heard young people who no longer go to church say they don't because they are so rooted in the Samoan church, and so loyal to their parents and to the elders who established it, that they would rather not go to church at all than go to another church," adds Soli.

Culture can also compete with the gospel. "A lot of times pastors and chiefs and elders start trying to interpret culture from the perspective of the gospel," says Lafo. "Over the years it's been the other way around. Culture seems to take precedence over the gospel. So a lot of times you get an indigenized gospel that fits the culture of a church. That can present some challenges, because, ultimately, there's a point in which your [cultural] . . . position on a doctrine [ought to] become secondary to what God desires."

MULTIPLYING THE 2 PERCENT

While the Samoan work shares a common mission with other North American churches to grow its membership and keep its young people, unique challenges require out-of-the-box thinking and a willingness to adapt to shifting times. But it's encouraging to note that there's a growing hunger for young Samoan Adventists to connect with each other through their Adventist faith.

Last summer more than 900 people attended the 2019 North American Division Samoan camp meeting in Washington State. The six-day event melded culture and faith, with more young people attending than older, causing event planners to rearrange meeting space accordingly. Pastor Soli has seen a fire for the Word of God slowly burning stronger among that group as well. "Our youth and young adults want something more. A deeper understanding of the Word," he says. "So we try to deliver that, and we are starting to see this group of young people wanting to get into ministry. For two generations nobody answered the call. Now we're seeing a greater number of young Polynesians, maybe in junior high or high school, saying 'I feel called to ministry.'"

Pastor Lafo echoes this: "I see more and more young people, some with so much natural talent that it's clear that God [alone] gifted them. These young people always have their ear to the ground about what's going on among their people. And when you call them, they make themselves available. It leads me to believe the Samoan work is in very capable hands, as long as these young leaders and professionals continue to develop as their society changes." ♣

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

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Evaluations. Performance reviews. Feedback.

Quality assurance appears to be a topic of much conversation today. There is a genuine interest to know how “we” are “doing.”

I recently called my bank to report a stolen credit card. After completing business, the customer service representative asked: “Would you please stay on the line to complete a short survey for feedback on the service provided?” Suddenly our pleasant conversation became a complex numerical transaction rating the experience from one to five.

Feedback requests are everywhere: surveys arrive requesting evaluations from my dentist, grocery store. Printed receipts have numerical codes listed next to toll-free phone numbers you may call to evaluate the service provided. Feedback. “How are we doing?”

In a reward-based transactional world, what happens with feedback provided? Does quality truly improve based on my observation? What if there were no changes, repercussions, or rewards to any feedback, and we all agreed that a “job well done is truly its own reward”? What would be left to improve on? What would be the measure of our improvement from feedback? What are the measures of our improvement from feedback about us?

A colleague recently requested a recommendation letter for her teaching portfolio. Teaching interviews are unique. Not only are you interviewed by administrators; you also present a lesson (teach a class). The topic is assigned to you, and the audience is a mix of future colleagues and administrators who act the role of students.

“Two of the audience members behaved as disruptive students,” said my friend over dinner. “How is this a fair evaluation? Feedback in numbers and comments from strangers?” She moved food around her plate. “Every day in the classroom I am *consciously effective* because someone is watching me, assessing; I am nice because someone is observing me; behaving because you never know who is recording you on their cell phone.”

I smiled but quickly realized the depth of what she was observing: that “something” about our *self* requires editing because of feedback by others. Being a “good person” has no significant *gravitas* without the proper numbers to back it up. Any form of feedback affects more than just our professional esteem. We often fret over lingering thoughts of what others think or speak about us. Whose evaluations keep us up at night? Friends? Coworkers? Employers? Family?

I’m still pondering the conversation about evaluations and how these often highlight imperfections. It appears that evaluation methods limit the person. All of us have different abilities and spiritual gifts that transcend borders of evaluation. At the end of the day, we’re evaluated by no rubric, but through Jesus Christ. Having accepted Him as my Savior, my defective self is replaced by perfection that’s not mine, but motivates me to excel in my self-development, my desire to serve Him. I’m motivated to care for others, and my reward is fulfilling a mission of service for Christ.

Yes, there are human limitations of feedback toward one another. There are days we fumble through rough terrain and days we seem to sail safely through adversity. When no one is watching, in our service toward one another, *how are we doing?* ▀

Dixil Rodríguez serves as a chaplain at Kettering Medical Center in Ohio.

SEARCHING
THE OBVIOUS
DIXIL
RODRIGUEZ



ALL OF US HAVE
DIFFERENT ABILITIES
AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS
THAT TRANSCEND
BORDERS OF
EVALUATION.

SIGNS OF THE END?

*Being ready
means more
than being
smart.*



You don't have to look far these days to see headlines declaring that epidemics are a sign of the end of days. In fact, just recently I saw a headline that read, "The Bible predicts more pestilences just before the end of days."

WHAT'S WITH PESTILENCE?

A pestilence is not a good thing. It's usually a fatal epidemic disease.

COVID-19 has already been fatal for thousands, but does it qualify as a pestilence of Bible prophecy? If it does, how does that change how you react to it? If it doesn't, how does that affect our view of it?

Looking at events around us and wondering what they mean is nothing new. We read that after a Savior was promised to Adam and Eve, after they understood that He would be one of their descendants, they kept believing that son after son might be the One.

Noah had no early signs to validate his message of a coming storm. Nor do we know of any historical sign given to Sodom. So, is it signs we need for faith, or is there something more?

Scripture tells us, "Surely the Sovereign Lord God does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). He doesn't have to be so generous with information. He isn't compelled to keep us informed.

But in line with His amazing and beautiful character, God our counselor and friend does reveal things to us beforehand, and even explains why: "I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe" (John 14:29). And: "I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am who I am" (John 13:19).

God goes out of His way to reassure us in moments of perplexity that He hasn't forgotten us, that He loves us, and that the trial or perplexity we're going through hasn't caught Him off guard.

THE DARK DAY

One moment that the pioneers of the Advent movement saw as a sign of fulfilled prophecy was the Dark Day, May 19, 1780—a day on which, at 9:00 a.m., birds went back to their roosts and cows to their stalls, believing the sun had set for the day. Many of the citizenry thought it had to be a

sign of the apocalypse and hurried to churches to confess and pray. Others concluded that if their world was about to end, they would make the most of their last moments on earth and celebrate in the nearest bar. As Congregationist clergyman Timothy Dwight wrote: "A very general opinion prevailed that the day of judgment was at hand."

Today, more than two centuries later, scientists committed to naturalistic explanations about everything suggest that forest fires causing dense smoke everywhere blocked out the heavens. But the faith of many remained firm in the conviction that it was nothing other than a sign of the end.

ANOTHER FULFILLMENT?

Seventh-day Adventists have been known to search vigilantly for evidences of the fulfillment of prophecy. Those of the Millerite movement saw in the moments around the Dark Day a clear fulfillment of Jesus' words: "Immediately after the distress of those days 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light'" (Matt. 24:29). Looking at their own time in context of the previous half century of history, they saw equal prophetic value in the rest of this verse: not only would "the moon . . . not give its light," but "the stars will fall from the sky" (verse 29). Seventh-day Adventists, as the Millerites before them—the movement from whom they emerged—believe that this last sign was fulfilled in November 1833 with an event that matched the prediction of Scripture: they saw the stars fall from heaven.¹ Looking at signs and identifying their fulfillment in prophecy is nothing new for Christians, especially Seventh-day Adventists.

DOES IT MATTER?

I hope what I say next won't rattle anyone . . . too much.

What's the connection between any or all of these signs and your faith in Jesus? How do you align May 19, 1780, with November 13, 1833, and October 22, 1844? The last of those events didn't happen just as Millerite believers had thought it would. For many, it shook their faith so much that they threw out all trust in biblical prophecy.

My question: Where does our faith find its foundation? If it's in the events of prophecy, could it be possible that when some predicted event ends up

Is it our fear or our faith that's increasing?

being seen differently or finds another explanation, our faith would be so shaken that we lose our grasp on all the promises we hold confidently? What's the balance between some esteemed interpretation of biblical prophecy and the more sure word of prophecy, "something completely reliable," to which "you will do well to pay attention," recognizing that it's "a light shining in a dark place," a light God has given us for guidance right up to the glorious moment when "the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:19)? Could I conceivably be stuck with an explanation that actually came about by some individual's or group's "own interpretation of things" (verse 20)? William Miller and others were convinced that the seven last plagues had occurred in the past, before 1844. I wonder how a new understanding that those events were yet future affected their faith.

Jesus has promised to never leave or forsake us, but are we growing in Him, in peace and joy every day? Is it our fear or our faith that's increasing? If the former, we should ask if we're planted on the rock or on the sandy opinions of humanity.

IMMINENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

A recent global church survey found that a growing contingent of our movement doesn't believe that the imminent second coming of Jesus is closer than 20 years out. But I don't think it takes a rocket scientist to recognize that this planet and its fragile systems are in need of a Savior, and sooner rather than later.

I remember when my dad died a few years ago. The pain was so great that I just wanted the world to be over and to escape the hurt and sorrow I was going through. I realized then that my faith was built for imminence but not for sustainability. I was ready—or so I thought—for Jesus to come in days, months, maybe a year or so. But as I look back, I realize my faith was not sustainable to last decades.

What God has in store for those who love Him

is beyond our greatest imaginations. But how many of us live in fear and can run the race just a little longer before we burn out, stress out, or die out? What systems of faith do we have in place so that if Jesus' return was still 30 years away, we would have a sustainable, joyous experience and relationship with Him that would last, grow, and thrive as the world around us seems to crumble?

Please hear me clearly: I believe the systems of this planet are breaking and won't last much longer. I don't want to be shocked out of my wits because some event marked "final" all over it takes place earlier than I thought it should. And I suspect you wouldn't want that either! We've been given more than enough light to know we've been living on borrowed time for decades. According to Jesus, fulfilled prophecy is a sign (Matt. 12:39; 16:4; Luke 11:29). The prophetic "signs" that depend on chronology have all been fulfilled. It now seems that pretty much all that's needed is a trigger—a black swan event—that no one has been looking for; something that will take us all by surprise. And though the prophetic calendars have run their course and believers are attentively proclaiming His soon return, His coming will still involve a significant element of surprise (Luke 21:34).

"It is in a crisis that character is revealed."² The virgins all thought themselves prepared until it was too late. "So now, a sudden and unlooked-for calamity, something that brings the soul face to face with death, will show whether there is any real faith in the promises of God. . . . The great final test comes at the close of human probation, when it will be too late for the soul's need to be supplied."³ And if those four patient angels who hold the winds of environmental and political destruction in their hands continue to hold for the same reason they've held for decades—until God's servants are all sealed (Rev. 7:3)—then we should be living a life that can withstand the storms of life and that doesn't need signs to confirm it.

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 334: "Many who witnessed the falling of the stars, looked upon it as a herald of the coming judgment, 'an awful type, a sure forerunner, a merciful sign, of that great and dreadful day.'—'The Old Countryman,' in *Portland Evening Advertiser*, Nov. 26, 1833. Thus the attention of the people was directed to the fulfillment of prophecy, and many were led to give heed to the warning of the second advent."

² Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1900, 1941), p. 412.

³ *Ibid.*

Jared Thurmon is director of marketing for Adventist Review Ministries.



PETER N. LANDLESS ZENO L. CHARLES-MARCEL

AM I CRAZY TO PREPARE?

Q: Am I “losing it” because I’ve started to buy extra stuff for a time of need? Am I mentally ill?

A: There’s not enough space to fully deal with your question in one column, so we’ll address the serious issue of “hoarding” in a later one.

Rational people prepare for a rainy day. But it’s not rational to buy 96 rolls of toilet paper for a family of three for what would likely be a two-day blizzard, or even a two-week isolation period. There’s a clear distinction between disaster preparedness and panic buying, which is what we suspect you may be concerned about.

Panic buying is often fueled by anxiety and is exacerbated by fear of the unknown, herd mentality, loss aversion, and stress-induced irrationality. It’s a gain-control maneuver in times of uncertainty, but it’s not a solution to the underlying problem.

Some people, referred to as “preppers,” are perpetually preparing. They may or may not be “hoarders,” who have a psychological condition. Preppers see their actions as a practical way of living. They believe every rational person should engage in this to some extent. In a 2010 study, researchers surmised that predisaster shopping is not characterized by panic and antisocial behaviors. Rather, preppers are simply organized individuals who heed warnings of impending disaster.

Those who delay preparing often cite conflicting information from forecasters and a lack of resources as reasons for waiting until the last minute. We conclude that those who don’t heed warnings may actually be the ones who may be mentally troubled. If your motivation is simply to be prepared for known eventualities in your area or even in the world, then this may be a sign of wisdom rather than mental illness.

In general, people feel the need to do something that’s proportionate to what they perceive is the

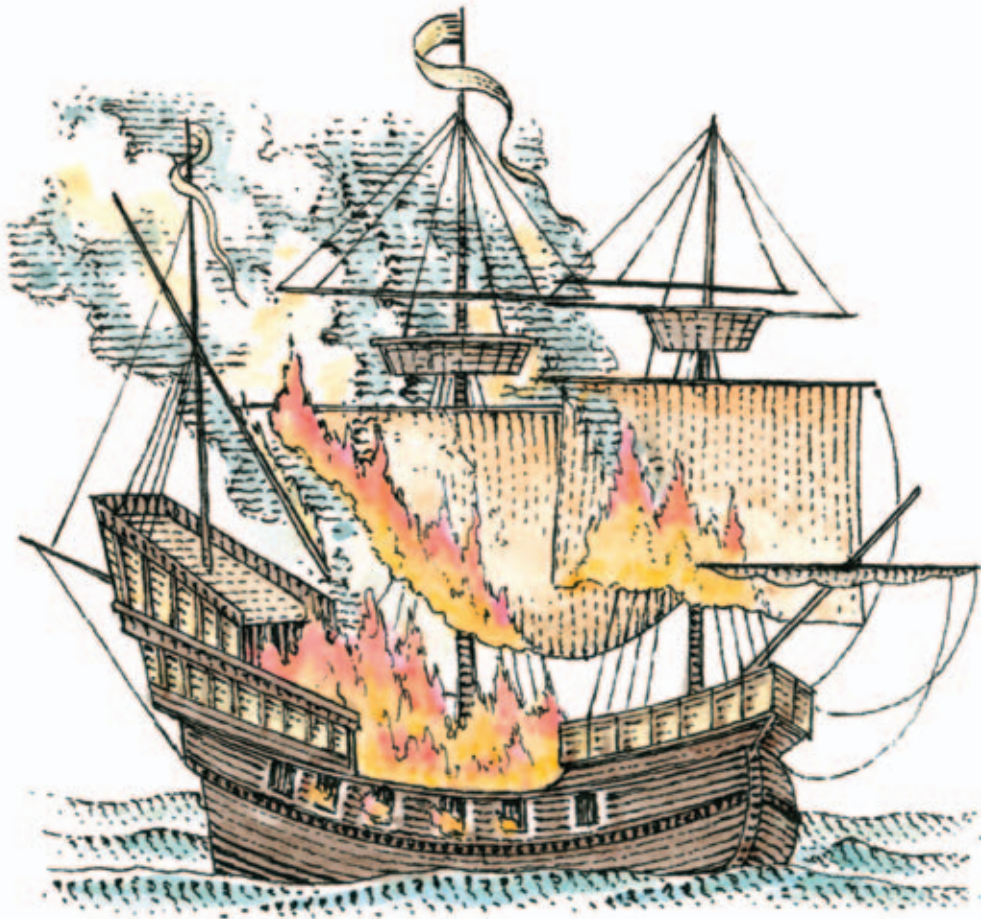
level of the crisis. In the case of respiratory disease epidemics, hand washing, hygienic practices, and social distancing go a long way to protect individuals and curb the spread. Nonetheless, for many people hand washing seems just too “ordinary.” Dramatic events intuitively require dramatic responses. That leads some people to act irrationally to acquire and store things in hopes of protecting themselves from the unknown. People who are overly anxious and distressed should seek a mental health evaluation and psychological assistance.

If your motivation is simply to be prepared for known eventualities in your area or even in the world, then this may be a sign of wisdom rather than mental illness.

Most authorities recommend some actions along the spectrum of disaster- or crisis-preparation activities. We can see for ourselves that life situations may change quickly and drastically. Those of us who study, appreciate, and understand apocalyptic literature are advised to be prepared for what is to come in all aspects of our lives: physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and especially spiritually. It’s reasonable and healthy to prepare. But even in times of crisis, whether we are fully prepared or only partially so, “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7, NKJV).*†

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“BURN THE SHIPS”

With the arrival of COVID-19, and the resulting disruption it has caused in our families, careers, and plans for the future, we hope this article will provide inspiration as we put the pandemic behind us and walk the path that God has set before us.—Editors

*When it's time to
chart a new course*

GORDON BIETZ

In 1519, Hernán Cortés arrived in the New World with 600 men and, upon arrival, made history by destroying his ships. This sent a clear message to his men: There is no turning back.¹

There are other phrases for the same idea, such as “cross-

ing the Rubicon,” “the die is cast,” or “burning one’s bridges.” The message of all these idioms is that we must forget the past and move into the future. “Burn the Ships,” performed by Australian duo For King & Country, is a song

about moving into the future. The lyrics ask,
“How did we get here?”
“All castaway on a lonely shore?”
And then draws on sentiment made famous by
Hernán Cortés: “Burn the ships. . . . Step into a new
day.”²

GETTING THE BEST START

Often enough, the best start to a new venture, a new school year, a new marriage, a new career, a new journey of any kind, requires burning the ships. The apostle Paul knew the importance of burning the ships and forgetting the past. I’m sure he had a lot of things he was happy to forget. Paul has three things in Philippians 3 to remember as we “step into a new day.”

“*Forgetting what is behind* and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13, 14).

Bitterness and unhappiness are often the result of an unwillingness to forget and forgive. People who don’t “burn the ships” carry the wound of bitterness that will destroy their joy of living. British statesman John Morley said, “The proper memory . . . is one that knows what to remember and what to forget.”³

A soldier captured at Wake Island during World War II was confined for years in a prison in China. He was left partially paralyzed when an enemy soldier struck him with a rifle butt. I met him 13 years after the war, living in San Francisco. He told one story after another about how barbarically he had been treated. With vile language and intense emotion, he spoke of the tortures he endured and of his utter hatred for the Japanese.

He had been horribly wronged, no question about it. His misery and pain could hardly be measured. But the greatest tragedy was that he was a bitter man. He had been released from the prison camp. But he was still bound in the prison camp of bitterness, fighting a battle that should have ended years before.

There is no torment like inner torment. There is no life as miserable as one that is miserable from the inside. The New Testament has this counsel: “See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many” (Heb. 12:15).

**The prize we seek is not to conquer
a new land but to receive a new land
prepared for us.**

We don’t always have a choice about all that we will experience, but we can choose which memories we will put on the mantelpieces of our minds to be looked at every day and which memories will be placed on a high shelf in the bookcase to collect the dust of time.

The greatest victims of the bitter memories we carry in our hearts are not those who receive our ire, but we ourselves. When we don’t experience the grace of God in our own lives, we are not able to extend God’s grace to others; we are not able to truly forgive others. The antidote for this poison of bitterness is forgiveness, not just for those who ask, not just for those who are sorry, but for everyone all the time. We give grace even when it’s not sought. We must be forgiving, not just for the benefit of the other person—it is a requirement for our own peace of mind.

Paul was not forgetful, but he intentionally put some things out of his mind. Some memories he chose to neglect. God’s grace enables us to heal some of those wounding experiences in our past.

GETTING THE BEST FUTURE

“*Forgetting what is behind* and *straining toward what is ahead*, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (verses 13, 14).

When Cortés arrived in the New World, major problems confronted him. He was committed to the goal of visiting what is now Mexico City, and he made his commitment clear by destroying “all of his ships but one, which he sent back to Spain for King Charles. The fear of his men returning to Cuba, rather than embarking on the journey to the Aztec Empire, made him decide to demolish his ships. They no longer had any option but to accompany him on this journey.”⁴

We don't always have a choice about all that we will experience, but we can choose the memories we put on the coffee tables of our minds.

There is work to do; lives to live; people to serve; God to worship. There is a new journey for all of us. Look to tomorrow, not to yesterday. Have you ever noticed how small children look ahead? They are eager to be older. If you say to a child, "I'm guessing you are 4 years old," they would likely respond indignantly, "No! I'm 4½." They can't wait to be older, old enough to go to school, then old enough to drive, then old enough to go to college, then old enough to get married. The young are excited for the future. Christians should be ever young.

Ask an older person how old they are, and you might get the response "None of your business!" More than likely they are looking back, back to the "good old days," and thinking about the past rather than being excited about what lies ahead. We don't lose our excitement for tomorrow because we grow old. We grow old because we are no longer excited about tomorrow.

"Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, *I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus*" (Phil. 3:13, 14).

Nothing can compare with the prize we seek. Our little injuries of the past pale into insignificance as we look at the Lord. Our injuries look like nothing when compared with the injuries that the Lord incurred. There is much we can forget for the sake of the prize.

In the poem "The Land of Beginning Again," Louisa Fletcher longs for

"some wonderful place . . .

Where all our mistakes and all our
heartaches

And all of our poor selfish grief
Could be dropped like a shabby old coat at the
door,

And never be put on again."⁵

In Christ we have a land of beginning again. Every day is a new day; every moment is the first moment of the rest of our lives. When we live in the grace of Jesus our past is past and our future is new with opportunities and possibilities.

We are on a journey, and our journey is to our heavenly home. The prize we seek is not to conquer a new land but to receive a new land prepared for us (see John 14:1-3). Heaven is our home; we are just passing through; anything that is an obstacle should be burned, freeing us to "[s]tep into a new day," inspiring us to "rise up from the dust and walk away."⁶

BLOOMING WHERE YOU'RE PLANTED

Once upon a time deep in Fenton Forest, so deep in the dark part of the woods that Freddy the Fox rarely went, and Lightfoot the Deer never darkened the forest floor, deep in the forest past Ivy Lane and Pine Nut Street, there were no forest paths and no homes of any Fenton Forest folk. Deep in the dark part of the forest by some moss-covered stones was a seed.

It was a flower seed buried in the dirt and forest refuse at the foot of the old gnarled oak. It decided that it was no use to bloom there in the dark part of Fenton Forest, for no one would see it there, no one would notice, and it was no use to waste its energy by blooming. Who cared about it? So it withdrew into its shell.

But one day a big drop of dew fell from the limb of the old oak, and water tickled the shell of the flower seed, causing a stirring deep within the seed. A beam of sunlight broke through the forest canopy, warming the soil all around the little seed. Try as it might, the little seed couldn't resist the call of life hidden deep within its hard-shell exterior. The shell broke open, and the little seed burst from its hard shell and broke through the forest floor.

The green shoot shot upward, and a flower opened. It was a pretty flower, with waxy yellow pedals and a pale-green stem. It lifted its head above the dark, dank forest floor and opened wide its pedals to the scarce light that filtered down through the trees to its place at the base of the old oak tree.

There it stood, a solitary spot of yellow, like a splash of paint, on the dark landscape of the primeval forest floor. It sent out its perfumed flower

fragrance on light breezes, hoping for some bee that might have strayed from its flight path and followed the scent to its side.

There it grew, droplets of dew glistening from its canary-colored pedals. Day after day it was there in the deepest, darkest part of Fenton Forest. Week after week it was there in the obscure recesses of the forest. During the entire season of its life it was there—blooming.

But no errant bee found its delightful nectar there by the big oak; no passing bird saw its splash of yellow; and no meandering forest inhabitant observed the glory it brought to its little dark glen.

The season of its life came to an end as its golden saffron petals faded onto the colorless mat of the forest floor to provide nutrients for a future flower generation.

The old oak said to it as it faded its last, "It was hardly worth it, was it? Such color wasted in the deep darkness of the forest."

Its reply as it died there by the roots of the ancient oak was, "I just bloom where I am planted, and God sees."

Or as Paul would say, "I've got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward—to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back" (Phil. 3;13, 14, Message).⁷

¹ For historical accuracy: the ships were not actually burned but scuttled. But the point is important: there was no turning back. www.success.com/to-be-successful-burn-your-boats/.

² "Burn the Ships," written by Matt Hales, Seth Mosley, Joel Smallbone, and Luke Smallbone, Curb/Word © 2018.

³ John Morley, first viscount of Morley of Blackburn, en.wikiquote.org/wiki/John_Morley,_1st_Viscount_Morley_of_Blackburn.

⁴ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hern%C3%A1n_Cort%C3%A9s#Destroying_the_ships.

⁵ Louisa Fletcher, "The Land of Beginning Again," from *The Land of Beginning Again* © Nabu Press, 2011.

⁶ "Burn the Ships."

⁷ Texts credited to Message are from *The Message*. Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.

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A LITTLE FIRE

*An unexpected journey of
blood and faith*

Our 2013 was filled with life or death, hope and faith.

One Sunday night our family watched a movie about faith. As the movie came to an end, I looked at our two precious children asleep on Daddy's lap, then down at my growing tummy. I wanted what the people in the movie had: unwavering faith, the kind needed to raise these three little ones for the Lord.

As my husband, Eric, and I climbed into bed, we agreed to pray for stronger faith.

SOMETHING WRONG

Monday morning arrived. I had reached 12 weeks in my pregnancy. During the past week I kept feeling pain in my stomach. The doctors equated it with stretching ligaments, as normal in all pregnancies. I went about my day as usual, until I realized

that I wasn't picking up my 1-year-old, Annabella, or allowing my 4-year-old, Austin, to climb up on the couch next to me for fear they might touch my sore tummy.

I stood up to a popping sound and felt something I will never forget. Blood instantly soaked through my jeans, filling my shoes. I grabbed the phone as I rushed to the bathroom.

My mother and sister arrived within minutes and began praying over me as Eric rushed home from work, carried me to the car, and rushed me to the hospital. I remember Eric praying for me and our baby. But my head told me that our little one was gone.

The doctor's concern was about the amount of blood I had lost. After I was stabilized, an ultrasound was performed. The moment the technician touched my tummy, Eric grabbed my arm and gasped. He saw a wiggling baby with a strong resounding heartbeat. I couldn't look, thinking it was only a matter of time before the heartbeat stopped.

The technician explained that in all her years she had never seen anything like it. Approximately 50 percent of my placenta had ruptured. Our baby had what looked like a black curtain covering half of its little home. With tears in my eyes, I turned to catch a glimpse of the baby I would never hold.

The doctor came to our room with sorrow written all over his face. He explained that it was only a matter of time until my body expelled the failing placenta, ending the life of our baby.

Eric asked, "What are the chances the baby could make it to a viable 25 weeks?"

The doctor looked squarely into our eyes and replied, “None.”

We were given two options. Either complete bed rest until the inevitable miscarriage or have an abortion to avoid further life-threatening bleeds. I grabbed Eric’s hand and mumbled through tears lyrics written by Chris Tomlin:

“Our God is greater, our God is stronger.
God, You are higher than any other.
Our God is healer, awesome in power,
Our God.”*

With tears in my eyes I said to the doctor, “Thank you, but we’re in God’s hands. His will be done.”

TAKING THE RISK

At our next doctor visit, we were told unequivocally not to get our hopes up. The ultrasound not only detected a heartbeat, but a very strong heartbeat. Hearing ‘*ba boom, ba boom*,’ my entire soul filled with hope.

Again, the doctor explained, “According to medical science,” she said, “a baby cannot survive and grow with less than half a placenta.”

Eric stopped her midsentence and said that at this point our baby was alive and in God’s hands.

The staff informed Eric that women who have this rare separation-bleeding condition have an inherent possibility to bleed internally and unknowingly until it’s too late. Every night as Eric laid his head on his pillow, the enormity of our circumstance became more real.

Two weeks later, lying flat in bed, I was suddenly awakened by a blow to the stomach. A force so powerful not only took my breath away, but shook the bed as well. I knew that something had ruptured and that bleeding would start any moment. Tears started to flow as I prayed, “God, please give me strength to trust in Your plan.”

I stood up. No bleeding, no pain.

HOPEFUL SIGNS

A week later, to the doctor’s amazement, our baby was not only alive, but growing according to schedule.

The goal now was to make it to 25 weeks. We discovered that our baby was a boy. His name would be Aiden Page Stevens, which means “Little Fire.” To call him by name somehow made all this real. *I may never get to hold my sweet little boy*, I thought. Doctors repeatedly told us that at any

Again we said, “Aiden is in God’s hands”

moment the remaining placenta might tear away. Even if it did hold on somehow, Aiden would have multiple life-threatening health issues.

At 23 weeks I started having sharp contractions and was back in the hospital. Our assigned doctor didn’t monitor the baby, only examined me. The diagnosis was contraction and spasms on account of loss of muscle while on bed rest. The doctor informed us we needed to think about our little boy’s quality of life if we made it a few more weeks. Again we said, “Aiden is in God’s hands.”

Week 25 came and went. Aiden not only grew but measured larger than average. With family, friends, and an entire praying community, we made it to 36 weeks.

While being prepped for surgery, the nurse mentioned the name of the doctor who would be delivering, the same doctor who had given our little guy no chance of making it. Not only had God given my family an opportunity to gain faith; He was about to teach the doctor the power of faith.

At 4:20 a.m., September 2, weighing 6.7 pounds, our miracle arrived with bright-red hair fitting to his name.

Shortly after he was born, Aiden started having trouble breathing because of fluid in his lungs. Staff from different departments in the hospital saw him, giving us the opportunity to tell everyone Aiden’s story.

Needing more care than the hospital could provide, Aiden was transported to a nearby neo-intensive-care unit. Again, Aiden’s story and word of God’s amazing healing spread like wildfire. Aiden was released with a perfect bill of health one week later.

It stills brings tears to my eyes when I hold him and think about those long months of not knowing God’s plan for us. Eric and I were forever changed, and our faith is stronger. “Our God is greater.”

* “Our God,” Chris Tomlin, Jesse Reeves, Jonas Myrin, Matt Redman, © Capitol Christian Music Group.

Erin Stevens and her husband, Eric, are happily raising their three children, Austin, Annabella, and Aiden.

THE WRONG HOUSE AT THE RIGHT TIME

God knows where we're going, even if we don't.



RAY ESCOE

Jesus said, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). Whatever our profession, position, and status in life, we are to be witnesses to those around us.

When my wife and I got married, we promised God that we would give our lives in service to win people to Jesus. What better way to do that than to talk to people about the Lord? That led me to be a literature evangelist, visiting people in their homes and selling Christian literature. It’s hard work, but very rewarding.

FOLLOWING LEADS

We live in south Georgia, where there are many small towns. One day I was in a town where someone had asked for information about the books I was selling. The address on the card I had in my hand said just “Route 1” and the mailbox number.

I went to the post office to get more information, but it was noon, and the post office was closed. So I put the card in my pocket and spent the afternoon knocking on doors. I visited many homes, but I didn’t sell any books. That was typical, because most of my sales came in the evening, when people were home.

I hadn’t been having a good week as far as sales were concerned. I was hoping for a good day, so I prayed that the Lord would lead me to the right homes.

When it started getting dark, I decided to pick a street on the edge of town and start knocking on doors. So as not to frighten people when they answered the door, I would step back, show them one of the books I had, and say, “I’m visiting Christian families.”

Because it was dark, not many people were opening their doors. I went back to my car and prayed that God would help me sell something. I went to



It was almost as if
they were waiting for
me; it was the family
I was looking for
earlier that day.

the next house, and a woman came to the door wearing her housecoat. I knew it was getting late.

Going back to my car, I prayed again. The impression came: Just keep going.

A LIGHT ON THE PORCH

OK, I said to myself, I'll keep going. By that time most of the houses were dark. But I saw up the street that at one home children were playing on a screened porch. I went to the door with a children's Bible book in my hand.

As the woman came to the door, she looked at the book with surprise. "I sent in a card for that book," she said. "I never heard from them. Come on in."

It was almost as if they were waiting for me. I pulled the card out of my pocket, and sure enough, it was the family I had been looking for earlier that day.

The strange thing was that it wasn't even their house. They lived out in the country. They were

visiting their pastor and his wife. As I showed the books, the father of the children turned to the pastor and asked if he should buy the books. The pastor replied, "Yes, they're good books."

Ellen White wrote: "As an earthly shepherd knows his sheep, so does the divine Shepherd know His flock that are scattered throughout the world. . . . Jesus knows us individually, and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He knows us all by name. He knows the very house in which we live, the name of each occupant. He has at times given directions to His servants to go to a certain street in a certain city, to such a house, to find one of His sheep."*

I believe that God led me to that home on the edge of town that night. How could I not? 📌

* Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 479.

Ray Escoe lives in Jasper, Georgia.



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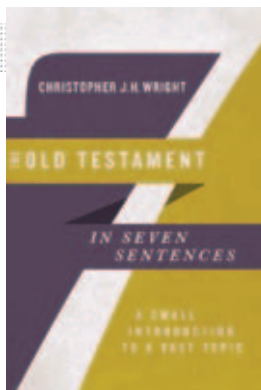
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CLOSER LOOK



A Quick Survey of the Old Testament

The Old Testament in Seven Sentences: a Small Introduction to a Vast Topic, Christopher J. Wright, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 2019, softcover, 174 pages, US\$16.00. Reviewed by Lael Caesar, *Adventist Review*.

Christopher Wright's introduction to the Old Testament may not weigh as much as the Old Testament introductions usually do, but it is not, for that reason, to be misrepresented as lightweight. In 174 pages, Wright covers the 39 books of the Old Testament while giving readers, in seven chapters on seven Old Testament texts, a commentary on the Old Testament that they can handle whether as scholars of the Old Testament Scriptures or as believers reading devotionally. Bible reading will now bring their souls deeper satisfaction and richer nourishment than previously because, thanks to Wright's accessible introduction, they now understand more of, and about, the Old Testament than they previously could.

Wright's chapters use terse titles to convey his focus: Genesis, Abraham, Exodus, David, Prophets, Gospel, Psalms, and Wisdom. That's it. Each chapter is supported by a Bible text whose particular message captures some recognized value of Old Testament history and theology. As the chapter titles indicate, the book begins where the Bible begins—with God beginning life on the planet. Wright's text for his first chapter is the Bible's first verse. He proceeds from there to another beginning, with Abraham, through whom God starts to establish a

holy nation of people on earth. His text for the Abraham chapter highlights the Christocentric character of his Old Testament reading: "All peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen. 12:3).

Wright claims that his chapter 4 was the most difficult to settle on. His choice of focus there is consistent with his earlier selections, giving narrative and theological centrality to that chapter's numerical centrality—fourth of seven. And he builds to it: through the Exodus, God's great, historical liberation and the focus of chapter 3, God provides His own powerful representation of His ultimate liberating action.

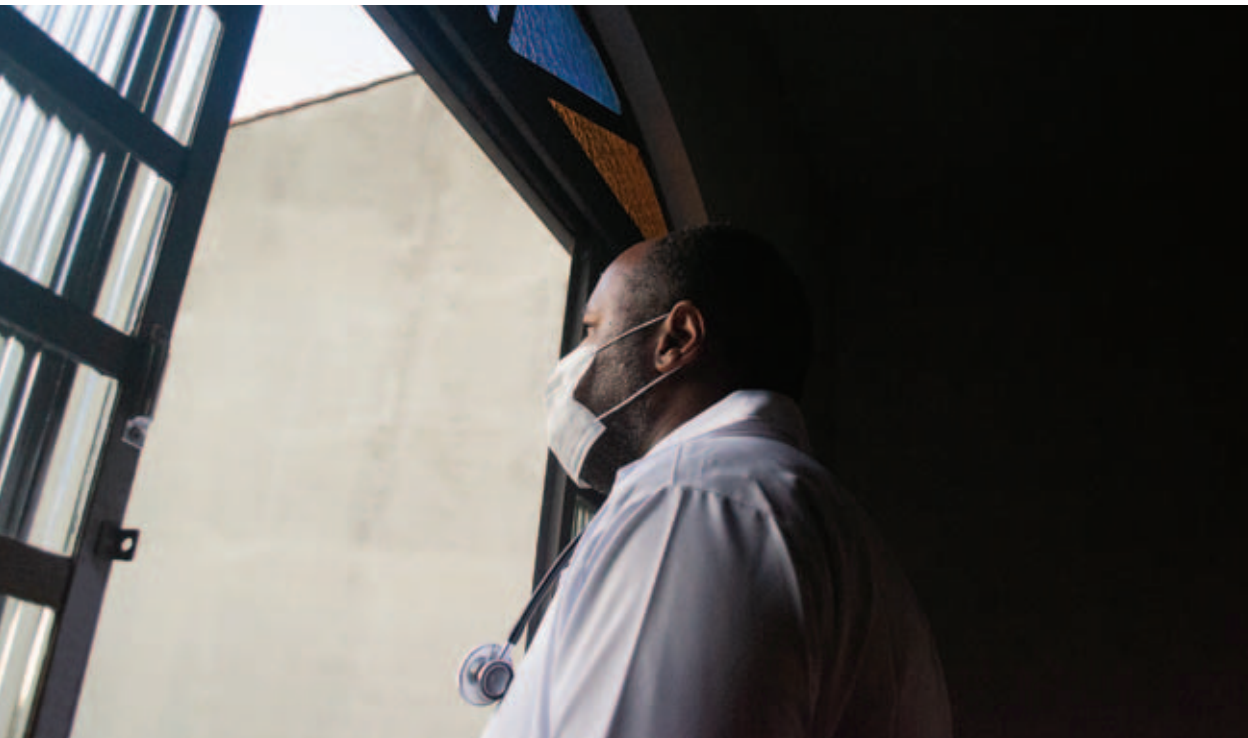
Wright progresses from Exodus to David, from God freeing His people to setting them up as a nation, from a people of enslavement and wilderness wandering to an everlasting dynasty named after David. He justifies selection of David as the best axis for traversing Israel's lengthy history from exodus to exile and return. It is a deserving choice for the book's structural center, because Jesus Christ, seed of David and true king of the eternal Davidic dynasty, is how God keeps all His promises to the world.

Beyond David there are two chapters on prophetic literature, and a concluding focus on the Psalms. The book ends with 34 discussion questions on its span of themes, three and a half pages of endnotes, and three and a half more that index scriptures cited throughout the book.

Perhaps the most significant counsel Wright gives in this Old Testament introduction is that there is gospel in the Old Testament. Two of the more reasonable queries he should hear involve his uncertainty about dating the primal history and how he balances Old and New Testaments. The former suggests that he may be dubious about the careful genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11. As for the latter, Wright describes the entire Bible as a seven-act drama, with the Old Testament occupying three of those acts. *Why only three?* I wonder, seeing that the Old Testament is approximately 75 percent of the Bible. It is a small question, and one that should in no way diminish or distract from all the good that Wright here contributes toward intelligent Bible study. ♣

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

WHY COMPASSION?



Many of today's great humanitarian institutions that exist to bring healing and education began as reflections of the compassion human beings saw in the character of God. At times of crisis or tragedy, religious people are among the first to bring aid and assist in reconstruction. The same compassion that motivated Christ during His earthly ministry is demonstrated still among His followers. For the Christian, compassion is not just a suggestion, but an imperative.—Editors.

"The first service one owes to others . . . consists in listening to them. Just as love to God begins with listening to His Word, so the beginning of love for [others] is learning to listen to them. It is God's love for us that He not only gives us His Word but also lends us His ear. So it is His work that we do for our brothers and sisters when we learn to listen to them."

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

"While women weep, as they do now, I'll fight. While little children go hungry, as they do now, I'll fight. While men go to prison, in and out, in and out, as they do now, I'll fight. While there is a drunkard left, while there is a lost girl upon the streets, while there remains one dark soul without the love of God, I'll fight—I'll fight to the very end!"

WILLIAM BOOTH



“Jesus saw people and felt their pain, loneliness, misery, hopelessness, and desperation—even when it was hidden in plain sight from everyone else. The Greek verb translated ‘had compassion’ or ‘moved with compassion’ in the Gospels is the word *splagchnizomai*. It means to be deeply moved in the inward parts. Today, we might say it means to be so moved that we feel it in our core, deep within ourselves—in our gut. But to feel compassion is not only to encounter and emotion, it’s to be moved to action.”

CHRISTINE CAINE

While you were sleeping, 30,000 kids died of starvation or diseases related to malnutrition.

TONY CAMPOLO

“Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how He has had mercy on you.”

JESUS (MARK 5:19)

“Instead of allowing yourself to be so unhappy, just let your love grow as God wants it to grow. . . . Love more persons more; love them more impersonally, more unselfishly, without thoughts of return. Never fear, the return will take care of itself.”

HENRY DRUMMOND

“It is the duty of every Christian to be Christ to his neighbor.”

MARTIN LUTHER

“If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?”

JOHN (1 JOHN 3:17)

“Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.”

PETER (1 PETER 3:8)

“At the end of the day, you have to be able to look yourself in the mirror and say, ‘I stood up for the voiceless and for the poor and the hungry.’”

PATRICIA HEATON

“Jesus’ decree to love and pray for our opponents is regarded as one of the most breathtaking and gut-wrenching challenges of His entire Sermon on the Mount, a speech renowned for its outrageous claims. There was no record of any other spiritual leader ever having articulated such a clear-cut, unambiguous command for people to express compassion to those who are actively working against their best interests.”

LEE STROBEL

“If to be feelingly alive to the sufferings of my fellow-creatures is to be a fanatic, I am one of the most incurable fanatics ever permitted to be at large.”

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE

“The same compassion that reached out to rescue Peter is extended to every soul who has fallen under temptation. It is Satan’s special device to lead [men and women] into sin, and then leave [them], helpless and trembling, fearing to seek for pardon. But why should we fear, when God has said, ‘Let [them] take hold of my strength, that [they] may make peace with me; and [they] shall make peace with me’? Isa. 27:5. Every provision has been made for our infirmities, every encouragement offered us to come to Christ.”

ELLEN G. WHITE (CHRIST’S OBJECT LESSONS, P. 156)

PLEAT BY PLEAT

*"She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands" (Prov. 31:13).**

A few years ago, my mom handed me a package, declaring, "I thought you might want to keep this. I'm sorry that some of your badges/pins are missing." It was my high school uniform.

Surprised, I placed it in my closet and wondered why, of all the things I'd left behind when I moved away, she would bring this particular item.

Then it dawned on me: this was more about her than it was about me. It represented a period in our lives when Mom was able to leave tangible evidence of her faithfulness as a mother.

At age 11, I took the island-wide high school entrance exam. Much to the delight of my family (especially my mother), I gained entrance to one of the few prestigious high schools in the country—St. Augustine Girls High School. The student body comprised those who had scored very high on the island-wide high school entrance exams, and those who were placed because of their family's affluence. (The prime minister's daughter attended, as did a friend whose father was a cabinet member, and another whose family owned the largest soft drink bottling company in the country.)

"She layeth her hands to the spindle" (verse 19). "She maketh herself coverings" (verse 22).

After the first year, our uniform, which consisted of a blue skirt, white blouse, and necktie, was changed to overalls and a white blouse. This change added a huge expense to our already-fragile budget.

Everyone was required to purchase the uniform material from the school.

Additionally, the uniform had to be made to code, the pleats had to be of a specific width flowing in a specific direction and falling a stipulated number of inches above the knee. Mom thought that paying a seamstress would be too expensive, so she purchased exact material. She decided to make the uniform herself.

And she did! I remember her tracing out the pattern, measuring, cutting, and arranging/pinning the fabric pleat by pleat. With each fold she implanted love, care, support, and strength. The final product was flawless, made to code, and, I felt, quite flattering to my physique.

Two years later, a general school inspection determined that all uniforms that appeared faded or short would have to be replaced. Well, Mom had other ideas. She wasn't going to spend money on new material. Instead, she decided to deconstruct the uniform, take out the original stitching, and turn the material over.

She reversed the pleats, resetting them pleat by pleat so that they would once again flow in the appropriate direction. It worked! I returned to school with a uniform that looked like new.

"Her children arise up, and call her blessed" (verse 28).

I may have caused Mom some anxious moments while in school, but as I observed her faithfulness and diligence I determined to make her proud. I believe to this day that my mom, Elvira, could do anything to which she set her hands. ♣

*Bible texts are from the King James Version.

Marvene Thorpe-Baptiste is acquisitions coordinator for Adventist Review Ministries.

MOMMY HAD OTHER IDEAS. SHE WASN'T GOING TO SPEND MONEY ON NEW MATERIAL.



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