

# ADVENTIST REVIEW

SEPTEMBER 2023: HIDDEN POWER + ETERNITY'S  
COMING + NOT MY WILL, BUT GOD'S + THE  
FINAL GOOD NIGHT + THE ELEPHANT THAT  
CRIED + CHURCH FAMILY



“I just can’t help myself.”

What’s the  
big deal about  
self-control?

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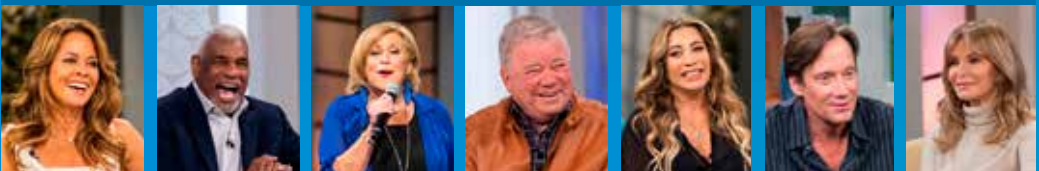
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## FEATURES



18 **HIDDEN POWER** | H. HASKELL WILLIAMS  
Self-control actually isn't all about us.

22 **HOW TO KEEP FROM BEING ANGRY** | WINTLEY PHIPPS  
It's the sin we don't often talk about.

30 **BE CAREFUL, LITTLE EYES** | JARED THURMON  
This article may need a warning label.



32 **ENGINEERED FOR SUCCESS** | VICKI GRIFFIN  
People without self-control often have minds and bodies in need of repair.

34 **THE HEALTH JOURNEY OF A LIFETIME** | DEWITT S. WILLIAMS  
Mastering self-control for a healthier lifestyle.

36 **THE PRICELESS GIFT** | AMIE HUBBARD  
Self-control begins in the nursery.

38 **NOT MY WILL, BUT GOD'S** | JOHN PECKHAM  
Looking for an example of self-control? Start with Jesus.



42 **SELF-CONTROL—A CHARACTER OF CHRISTIANITY** | ELLEN G. WHITE  
Satan is watching to obtain an advantage. Will we yield?

**“Let’s banish the idea that self-control is somehow a “grit-your-teeth, grin-and-bear-it” resolve, and give credit to whom credit is due—the Holy Spirit.”**

**18**

## ARTICLES

**44 CHALLENGES REACHING THE UNREACHED IN MISSIONS**

LIMONI MANU O’UIHA  
Helping others hear the gospel.

**46 RICH AND INCREASED WITH BUSYNESS**

ALISTAIR HUONG  
Work is fine until it begins to define us.

**50 THE FINAL GOODBYE**

LAURA FRARY  
She didn’t know it would be the last time she spoke to him.

**52 SUICIDE AND SUFFERING**

TORBEN BERGLAND  
September is Suicide Awareness Month. What can we learn?

**54 SELF-KILLING IN SCRIPTURE**

ÁNGEL MANUEL RODRÍGUEZ  
Scripture deals with suicide seven times.

**58 PAGODAS, PYTHONS, AND PROMISE**

ERIC B. HARE  
Pull up your chair for a good old-fashioned mission story.

**60 THE ELEPHANT THAT CRIED**

ERIC B. HARE  
This one’s for the kids (we’ll allow adults to listen too).

**62 MINISTRY AND MIRACLES IN MONGOLIA**

MILENA MENDES  
From gangster to God to gratefulness



**50**

## NEWS | OPINION

- » U.S. Supreme Court Issues Ruling Strengthening Religious Accommodation
- » Brazilian Senate Committee Passes National Pathfinder Day
- » Spiritual Struggles Are a Natural Part of Life
- » Mexico Evangelistic Efforts Result in 21,000 Baptisms
- » Avondale University Makes Historic Appointment for School President
- » Trailblazing Educator Humberto Mario Rasi Dies at 88



### EDITORIAL

- 5 **JUSTIN KIM**  
KNOCKING OUT KNUCKLEHEADS

### DEPARTMENTS

- 6 **LETTERS**  
67 **HOUSE CALL**  
70 **CLOSER LOOK**

### COLUMNS

- 29 **CLIFF’S EDGE**  
CLIFFORD GOLDSTEIN  
49 **TRANSFORMATION TIPS**  
DELBERT W. BAKER  
57 **REIMAGING FAITH**  
SHAWN BRACE  
69 **THE LIFE OF FAITH**  
ANDY NASH  
72 **IN OTHER WORDS**  
ENNO MÜLLER

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## THE MOST SHARED STORIES ON ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG LAST MONTH:

# 1



Adventist Church Reaches Out  
to Buddhist Community

# 2



La Sierra University's Founding  
President, Fritz Guy, Passes to His Rest

# 3



The Mayor Who Needed No Briefing Notes  
by David Neal

# 4



A Christian Power Grab  
by Stephen Allred

# 5



Redefining Aggression  
by Shane Anderson

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

Collegedale, TN



JUSTIN KIM



*It was His loving self-control that made Him absolutely worthy of worship.*

## Knocking Out Knuckleheads

In Detroit in the 1930s three young men picked on a man sitting at the back of a bus. Even with the continual taunting and provocation, the man sat silently. When the bus neared his stop, he stood up (at 6 feet 1.5 inches), handed them his business card, and departed. The card read: *Joe Louis. Boxer.* He was the world heavyweight champion from 1937 to 1949, the longest single reign in boxing history. Louis was known to devastate his opponents with one punch.

Fortunately, those young men didn't see a demonstration of this power. He had every right to defend his honor and may have been justified to "knock some sense" into the three knuckleheads. Yet he maintained his dignity and manifested a command of self in a more powerful way than if he had got up and flattened all three. It was his self-control that made him great.

It's at unexpected moments, such as when sitting at the back of a bus, that attacks come flying at your "self." Ego is bruised; your sense of justice is fired up; and the voice of knuckleheads, who didn't exist two seconds ago, now hijack the body, mind, and heart. Here is a sample of the temptations that threaten my sense of self-control:

1. "You can't do that to me. You really don't know who you're dealing with, do you?"

2. "I'm not responsible for this; it's the 'others' who are causing this!"

3. "Everything must be my way. Why wasn't I contacted or included? I didn't approve."

4. "This church/family/business would fall apart if I weren't around."

5. "This is beneath me. You are beneath me."

6. "I'm going to hold on to this. I'm making a list (and checking it twice). I'm not going to forget or forgive."

7. "I don't care that you're a talking donkey! I'm not going to listen to your counsel!"

Joe Louis had his three tormentors; I have these seven and, undoubtedly, more. And before you judge, know that if you are shocked at one, or all of these, it may be because those same temptations have hijacked you, too.

In Philippians 2, Paul points to the greatest Champion in history, who "made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, . . . and being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:7, 8).

Though taunted and provoked, He remained silent and

handed over a card that read: *Jesus Christ. Creator, Savior, and Lord.* Though He could devastate humanity with His pinky toe, His love restrained Him. Though warranted to use His divinity to combat any personal injustices, He maintained His dignity in the most profound way. The Commander Supreme of heaven became the carpenter servant of Nazareth and submitted Himself to the will of the Father. It was His loving self-control that made Him absolutely worthy of worship.

In an age of being easily triggered, tempted, or tired, we are in awe of truly great, influential people who manifest self-control under provocation, temptation, and chaos. The next time you want to react to three knuckleheads, think of Christ's withholding of divine self for humanity's good. This precious fruit of the Spirit causes us to surrender our rights, points to total obedience, sparks the willingness to die to self, and epitomizes the beauty of true character. Ultimately, self-control reflects the humble character of Jesus, which forgives us for our past punches and offers peaceful power to pull our punches. He offers us His business card so that we don't have to muster up ours. ♣

## WHAT WE NEED

The sentiments in “The Accidental Christian Nationalist” (July 2023) present the Christian perspective that is needed in the United States today. We must allow believers to develop independent and godly thinking without letting the frustration of the contemporary chaos and decadence drive us to a place Jesus never went and does not want us to go. We must not cling to a false faith in our native country—whichever country that may be. We need to keep our minds set on Jesus!

**George Odell**



## THE ACCIDENTAL CHRISTIAN NATIONALIST

*A paradigm driven by fear*

BETTINA KRAUSE

48 ADVENTIST REVIEW | 2023

**T**roublesome times are here, filling men's hearts with fear. Freedom we all hold dear, now is at stake! Recently I found myself humming those lines as I twiddled on the magazine I edit—*Liberty*. The mission of *Liberty* magazine is the same today as it was back in 1906, when the first issue rolled off the presses. It exists to promote a freedom that Seventh-day Adventists, in the words of the old gospel song, “hold dear”—the freedom to live and worship according to our deepest convictions, and the ability to share our faith without fear.

Moreover, this freedom is now “at stake.” If we’re to believe the urgent message that resonated on its headlines and social media feeds.

The result? For some of us there’s a sense of looming threat that’s “filling our hearts with fear.” It’s a fear that the cultural tide has turned against traditional

saying So what? How does that help me today in dealing with the issues I’m having? The article does nothing to address this nagging question, other than saying *Hold on to the old ways.*

**Noel Thomas**

## REJECTION CAN BE A GOOD SIGN

After reading “Anonymous Witnessing,” by columnist Lori Fletcher (July 2023), I’m thinking more and more that mass mailings of *The Great Controversy* are a good idea. It can’t be overlooked that there have been persons reached this way. Further, it isn’t necessarily valid to judge an outreach method by what percentage of people embrace and accept it. Strictly speaking, rejection moves the ball forward in terms of a person’s spiritual trajectory just as much as acceptance does. Acceptance and rejection can both be indications that the commission to evangelize is being accomplished.

**Jeremy Vandiemann**

## WHAT IS UNHELPFUL

Alan Reinach’s article “Our Hope Is in the Rock” (July 2023) has left me confused once again. Why do some see nothing wrong with Adventists working toward the goal of prohibition of alcohol because of the harm it brought

## A DIVINELY FAVORED NATION

While I may have misunderstood the context of Bettina Krause’s comment in “The Accidental Christian Nationalist” (July 2023) that we “don’t view America as a divinely favored nation,” I believe the United States has been blessed beyond measure by God. And to realize God’s blessings is one of the first steps to developing a love for God. The belief that God’s blessings depend on a “covenant with God” is an entirely different matter.

**Douglas Abbott**

*Union City, California*

## HOLD ON TO THE OLD WAYS?

Each generation goes through the exercise of studying and understanding the Bible in light of the times in which they live. This usually means that how we understand God’s presence in the world today was not how our grandparents understood it. Holding on to a historicist view of Bible prophecy, as advocated in “Prophecy in Crisis,” by Chris Holland (July 2023), presents the problem of relevancy to our post-postmoderns today. With our longest prophecy ending 180 years ago, most today would be



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# We must not cling to a false faith in our native country—whichever country that may be.

GEORGE ODELL

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to wives and children in the yesteryears but see everything wrong with Adventists working toward the prohibition of the death of preborn children? So very confusing. Why is the former issue apolitical and the latter issue characterized as political? Can we not judiciously stand for what is right and at the same time not get caught up with evangelical fallacies? Is a cause wrong simply because Catholicism and evangelical Christianity are a part of the fight?

Adventists don't need to adopt Rome's subtle agenda, but we can stand for what is right no matter who else might be raising their voices with ours. We didn't lose our way then, and I certainly don't think we'll lose our way today. But what is unhelpful at present is the constant effort to group legitimately concerned Adventists with wine-drinking Babylon.

**Chris Buttery**

## SHOULD WE TRY TO SAVE THE PLANET?

I couldn't help noticing a potential danger in the interpretation proposed by Frank Hasel's article "Have We Rightly Understood Europe's Role in Daniel 2?" (July 2023). The article states that "the end of this globe will be initiated without human hands." Such an interpretation implies

that humans have no role to play in the eventual demise of the planet. As though regardless of humanity's actions, the end of the globe will inevitably be set in motion, independent of human involvement. This perspective may inadvertently undermine the urgency and importance of addressing the ecological challenges we face and lead to a sense of resignation, where our actions and efforts to address environmental issues become inconsequential. It can be disheartening to think that our agency in and responsibility for shaping the future of our planet are futile.

I believe it is crucial to acknowledge the importance of recognizing and addressing the ecological crisis and the role that human actions can play in mitigating its impact. We are bestowed with the responsibility of stewardship of the globe by the Creator. Rather than succumbing to a sense of

helplessness such interpretations may create, we must take responsibility and actively work toward sustainable solutions for a better future.

**Anish Joseph**

## A HAPPY READER

You published an article about a Japanese Adventist named Ruth Nakashima, entitled "Mother's Little Instruction Book," by Kim Peckham (May 2023). Well, Ruth is a member of the Carmichael Seventh-day Adventist Church in Sacramento, California. She is 98 years old.

She was pleased to get a copy of the article, and surprised by a number of old friends who contacted her about the story. Her daughter was also contacted by old friends.

Ruth is unable to attend church and has little contact, so your article made her very happy. Thank you.

**Eleanor Morrison**

*Citrus Heights, California*

## YOUR TURN

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

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## Trading Guns for God

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Rebel assassins have laid down their guns in exchange for a new life in Jesus . . . and they're already leading others to Him!



## Taking a Bold Stand

[awr.org/wisam](http://awr.org/wisam)

Wisam's own family tried to stone and stab him for his belief in God, but today he is an Adventist pastor in the Middle East!



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**“Parents shouldn’t be afraid of discussing the topic of spiritual struggles at the dinner table.”**

**Kenneth Pargament, p. 13**

# NEWS



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## **U.S. SUPREME COURT ISSUES RULING STRENGTHENING RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION**

**DECISION IN *GROFF V. DEJOY* WILL IMPACT WORKPLACE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN THE U.S.**

**BILL KNOTT, CAPITOL HILL LIAISON FOR THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH**

In a unanimous decision issued on Thursday, June 29, the United States Supreme Court has discarded decades-long precedent by strengthening legal protections for workers whose religious beliefs conflict with their job obligations. The ruling in *Groff v. DeJoy* is expected to have a significant impact on job opportunities for Americans of various faiths who have frequently faced challenges because of their Sabbathkeeping practices. The Court’s decision will reshape how businesses offer religious accommodation under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The case centered on Gerald Groff, a devout Christian whose

faith prompts him to keep a 24-hour Sabbath on Sunday. Groff worked for the United States Postal Service (USPS), but faced ongoing difficulties in obtaining religious accommodation from his employer. Though initially accommodated by the USPS, Groff’s repeated appeals for continued freedom not to work on his day of rest and worship were ultimately denied when the USPS signed contracts with Amazon, the massive retail and distribution company, for Sunday deliveries.

Despite Groff’s repeated requests to be exempted from working on Sundays, the USPS denied his requests, citing the precedent from

*Trans World Airlines, Inc., v. Hardison* (1977) that required employers to suffer only minimal hardship. This low threshold, referred to as a de minimis standard, was often used to justify denying religious accommodations.

The Court’s opinion, written by Justice Samuel Alito, specifically addressed the de minimis standard and insisted on a much more substantial reading of “undue hardship.” Alito wrote: “We think it is enough to say that an employer must show that the burden of granting an accommodation would result in substantial increased costs in relation to the conduct of its particular business.”

## The decision in *Groff v. DeJoy* is seen as a significant victory for religious freedom advocates who have long argued for stronger legal protections.

The legal team representing Groff included Adventist attorney Alan Reinach, who serves as director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty for the Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. During the appeals process First Liberty, a prominent religious freedom advocacy group, joined the litigation team and recruited appellate counsel Aaron Streett from the law firm Baker Botts LLP. The case was argued before the Court on April 18, 2023.

Speaking for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and its North American Division, Todd McFarland, deputy general counsel, who also wrote the amicus brief filed by the church, said, “We are very pleased this morning that the Supreme Court took an important step toward protecting people of faith in the workplace. No one should have to choose between their job and their faith. Today’s decision reaffirms that employers cannot use an employee’s religious belief as an excuse to terminate them.”

A diverse group of faith-based and religious liberty organizations filed amicus briefs with the Supreme Court supporting Groff, including the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, the American Center for Law And Justice, the Sikh Coalition, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the American Hindu Coalition, the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, and the Baptist Joint Commission.

Organizations opposing Groff’s petition to the Court included the AFL-CIO, the American Postal Workers Union, the Freedom From Religion Foundation, and the Center for Inquiry and American Atheists.

“Drawing on the 1977 case, employers had to suffer only a bare minimum amount of hardship to justify denying religious accommodation to an employee,” Reinach said. “This standard neutered the law and led to the termination of employment for literally thousands of Americans of all faiths. Seventh-day Adventists were especially harmed in that hourly wage workers are frequently assigned shift schedules including Sabbath hours.”

The Supreme Court’s ruling in *Groff v. DeJoy* not only acknowledged the unfair burden placed on workers with religious conflicts but also highlighted the need for a more robust approach to religious accommodation.

The ruling is expected to have far-reaching implications for workers across the country. By raising the standard for employers to justify denying religious accommodation, the Court’s decision provides greater protection for employees with sincerely held religious beliefs. It sends a clear message that employers must make reasonable efforts to accommodate their employees’ religious practices, even if it requires some degree of hardship.

The decision in *Groff v. DeJoy* is seen as a significant victory for religious freedom advocates who have

long argued for stronger legal protections. It marks a shift toward a more equitable approach that recognizes the importance of accommodating the diverse religious practices of American workers. As a result of this ruling, employees who face conflicts between their job requirements and their religious beliefs can expect increased opportunities to obtain reasonable accommodations from their employers.

Attorney Mitch Tyner, retired associate general counsel for the church and also a former Capitol Hill liaison, was both pleased and cautious about the Court’s decision. “First, kudos to Todd McFarland and team who finally got the Court to right a wrong from 50 years ago,” Tyner said. “I spent more than 40 years working toward that end, and they were able to get the job done. That said, note that the opinion leaves lots of wiggle room for lower courts to decide what constitutes a substantial cost increase in each case. The Court has changed the recipe to be used to arrive at a correct decision. But remember, the ultimate proof is in the pudding, not in the recipe.” As the ruling sets a new precedent for religious accommodation, it remains to be seen how rapidly employers will adapt their policies and practices. Further litigation to clarify the Supreme Court’s new thresholds is anticipated. It is clear, however, that this decision marks a significant milestone in protecting the rights of workers with religious conflicts. 🍪



A group of selected Pathfinders represented the thousands of participants from across Brazil. PHOTO: MARCOS LIMA

## BRAZILIAN SENATE COMMITTEE PASSES NATIONAL PATHFINDER DAY

BILL RECOGNIZES RELEVANCE AND SOCIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE ORGANIZATION.

JEFFERSON PARADELLO, SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

**T**he Education and Culture Committee of Brazil's Federal Senate voted Bill 3936/19 on July 11, naming every September 20 as National Pathfinder Day in the country's official calendar. The next and last step in the long process for the bill to become law will be its signing by Brazil's president, church leaders in South America recently reported.

Leaders said that the vote acknowledges the relevance of the care, instruction, and training of young people through the Pathfinder program throughout Brazil. In his presentation Senator Hamilton Mourão, the rapporteur of the project, emphasized the contribution of the program since the 1950s. "Pathfinder clubs emphasize the importance of education, health, and community service. They foster the wholistic growth of young people, preparing them to be responsible citizens and committed to the well-being of all people."

"I want to congratulate the initiative," said Senator Dorinha Seabra, vice president of the Education and Culture Committee.

The bill was voted unanimously. In the room where the session took place, Pathfinder members and their leaders witnessed the proceedings. One of them was Udolcy Zukowski, Pathfinder director for the South American Division. He had been following the process since it was initiated in 2018 and passed by the Constitution and Justice Committee of Brazil's Chamber of Deputies in 2021.

"As a good Pathfinder, as someone who loves Pathfinder clubs, I am thrilled," Zukowski said. "As I was witnessing the proceedings, I thought of every club director, counselor, club member's parent, and Pathfinder who struggles to be acknowledged and valued. Now we will have a very special day of commemoration. And Brazil is the first country in the world to have it."

During the session Senator Zequinha Marinho asked for the floor to detail some of the contributions of Pathfinders to society. "In my state, Pará, there are 1,028 clubs, with more than 28,400 boys and girls enrolled. I want to commend the initiative."

At just 12, Alícia is one of the representatives of the thousands of Pathfinders who will now have a day in the official calendar of Brazil. She is a member of the Coral Club, in São Sebastião, São Paulo, and says she feels honored by this recognition. "A special day is an opportunity for more people to be interested in a program that can make a significant difference in their lives," Alícia said. "In the past two years I have made many friends and experienced changes in my life and relationship with God."

Zukowski agreed.

"It has been shown that the program is forming good citizens. The good mix of adventure, friendship, and lessons on overcoming challenges help our teenagers to focus on what is useful, good, and pleasant," he said.

Currently Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay have 13,809 active Pathfinders clubs and 369,613 members. In Brazil alone there are 288,353 participants. Manaus, with 413 clubs, is considered the world capital of Pathfinders. Next to it is the city of São Paulo, with 362 clubs, and Salvador, with 187. Thanks to the new development, it is expected more clubs will soon be established. ▀

The “Hope, Heal, and Thrive!” Conference on Family Faith and Practice was an all-virtual event in 2023.

IMAGE: GENERAL CONFERENCE FAMILY MINISTRIES DEPARTMENT



## “SPIRITUAL STRUGGLES ARE A NATURAL PART OF LIFE”

**EXPERT SHARES TIPS TO DEAL WITH RELIGIOUS QUESTIONS AND DOUBTS.**

MARCOS PASEGGI, *ADVENTIST REVIEW*

**A** renowned scholar on the integration of spirituality and psychotherapy, in speaking on the topic of spiritual struggle, shared ways to assess one’s moments of questioning and doubt to help oneself and others who may be experiencing similar challenges. Kenneth Pargament, listed as one of the 50 most influential psychologists in the world, was the first keynote speaker during the opening night of the 2023 Adventist Conference on Family Research and Practice on July 20.

Pargament is professor emeritus of psychology at Bowling Green State University and an adjunct professor in the Menninger Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the Baylor College of Medicine.

“Spiritual struggles are not uncommon,” Pargament said. He referenced studies in which 70 percent of people acknowledged going through such struggles at least once in their lifetime. “Spiritual struggles affect all faiths and demographic groups. But they are not a sign of a weak faith. They are a natural part of life.”

The fully online three-day conference is a partnership of the General

Conference Department of Family Ministries (GCFM), the Department of Discipleship in Lifespan Education at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, the School of Social Work, and the Institute for the Prevention of Addiction at Andrews University. This year the event focused on families and emotional health under the motto “Hope, Heal, and Thrive!”

GCFM director Willie Oliver welcomed participants, noting that more than 2,000 people had registered for the event from all over the world. “It’s almost 50 years that this conference has run continuously,” he said. It began in 1975 on the Andrews University campus thanks to John and Millie Youngberg, professors of religious education at that time, who were passionate about the need for healthy families in the church. “Since 2020, because of COVID, we are having virtual events, but next year it will be in-person at Andrews University again,” he announced.

The goal of the event this year, Oliver said, was to “learn what we can do as families to find emotional health and help families we work with to find emotional health.”

### ON SPIRITUAL STRUGGLES

The topic of spiritual struggles—those experiences of tension, strain, and conflict about sacred matters—is a very complex area, Pargament acknowledged at the beginning of his presentation. “Spirituality is a tremendous resource for many people,” he said. “In difficult times people often look to their faith for help in coping, and that coping can be very effective in their lives.”

A statement such as this includes a significant “but” clause, Pargament explained. “When we find internal or external stressors, they shake us to our core. The ground we stand on is no longer secure. And at those times, we can experience spiritual struggles.”

In that sense, he acknowledged, “religion has two sides: It can provide comfort, but also be a source of conflict, struggle, and serious problems.”

Pargament, who, together with other researchers, has been studying the topic for years, mentioned various types of spiritual struggles, including divine struggles (i.e., feeling angry at God or that God is punishing you), moral struggles (i.e., difficulty in following moral or spiritual principles), and ultimate

meaning struggles (i.e., questioning whether life really matters). He also listed doubt struggles (i.e., feeling confused about one's religious beliefs), interpersonal religious struggles (i.e., conflict with other people over religious matters), and demonic struggles (i.e., feeling worried that everyday events in one's life are the work of the devil or evil spirits).

### **PROFOUND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

Pargament explained that clinical psychologists usually work with people facing injury, accidents, or disease. "But we often overlook their spiritual struggles," he said, adding, "We can't help them if we ignore the spiritual dimension of their struggles."

One of the reasons for this, Pargament explained, is that spiritual struggles have profound implications for health and well-being.

Studies on spirituality and health reveal that spiritual struggles are tied to every form of psychological symptom, including anxiety, depression, compulsive behavior, and somatization, Pargament shared.

"In a landmark study on spirituality and health, all types of religious struggles were tied to greater depression, greater anxiety, less life satisfaction, and less happiness," he reported. "In a study of veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan, spiritual struggles were the only significant predictor of suicidality, that is to say, of the likelihood of future suicide attempts."

### **CAN SPIRITUAL STRUGGLES LEAD TO GROWTH?**

At first sight it seems that spiritual struggles might lead to growth, Pargament said. "We think of struggles as a way toward growth and transformation. But is it so?"

He explained that it is true that spiritual struggles "can lead to a change in life priorities, the discovery of personal strength, finding a new life path, or experiencing a greater sense of closeness with others and God." As regards divine struggles, for instance, "an honest expression of negative feelings may increase a sense of intimacy with God or challenge simple ideas about Him. Doubt struggles, on the other hand, can help cultivate critical thinking or clarify what we truly believe versus what we've simply been told to believe," he said.

At the same time, Pargament acknowledged, empirical research has not shown a consistent link between spiritual struggles and growth. "Do not sentimentalize spiritual struggles!" he emphasized, adding, "Pain does not always end in gain; suffering does not always build character."

The key approach, Pargament said, is to see spiritual struggles as a fork in the road to growth and/or decline. In this regard he emphasized that it is key to assess spiritual struggles.

### **PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

Pargament called on mental health practitioners and others to explore the nature of spiritual

struggles in themselves and their clients by assessing what a person is going through. Through a series of questions, health practitioners can help their clients put their struggles into words, leading to a better understanding of a person's specific situation, he said.

One of those methods includes explicitly asking, "Have your problems affected you religiously or spiritually? How?"

Pargament has developed a series of questions for practitioners to ask, including, "What are the deepest questions your situation has raised for you?" and "How has this situation shaken your faith?"

"The key is encouraging conversation about spiritual struggles—listen, listen, listen," he said. It is also important to encourage acceptance rather than avoidance to normalize spiritual struggles, he stated.

At the same time, Pargament emphasized, it is essential to foster greater wholeness by avoiding getting stuck in the struggle and pursuing deeper meaning and purpose instead. Some activities recommended to people going through spiritual struggles include writing and sharing a spiritual autobiography, sharing your spiritual struggles, and visualizing the ideal older spiritual self.

"Beyond talk therapy, families and religious institutions can anticipate spiritual struggles," Pargament said. "Parents shouldn't be afraid of discussing the topic of spiritual struggles at the dinner table." 🍌



Father and daughter David (right) and Adalia (left) Hernández, in the Southeast Mexican Union territory, are prayed for by Eber Olmedo before baptism.

PHOTO: SOUTHEAST MEXICAN UNION

## MEXICO EVANGELISTIC EFFORTS RESULT IN 21,000 BAPTISMS

ONLINE SERIES ENERGIZED THOUSANDS OF LEADERS AND MEMBERS.

FABIOLA QUINTO AND LIBNA STEVENS, INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

**T**he Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mexico welcomed more than 21,000 new members as the first six months of intense evangelism efforts across the nation ended with a national online evangelism campaign from Mexico City, Mexico, on June 24. The eight-day series was the third annual national online evangelistic campaign and saw thousands of church leaders and members sharing the gospel in cities and communities throughout Mexico's five unions since before the start of the year.

Themed “Don’t Give Up—There Is Still Hope,” the series encouraged the more than 800 in attendance at the Central Adventist Church in Mexico City every evening, along with thousands of online viewers and listeners, to cling to Jesus as they navigate through fear, doubt, stress, grief, and uncertainty.

### LIVES TRANSFORMED

It was hard for Jorge Santiago of Mexico City to find Jesus. During the pandemic he spent many hours practicing Santería witchcraft, but

realized that he needed to change his life.

“I began to search videos on YouTube about God, and I found several sermons that helped me learn more about the Bible,” Santiago said. “What’s hurt me the most is that when I accepted Jesus, my family rejected me. But I don’t care, because in Jesus I have eternal life.” Santiago was baptized on June 22, at the Zapata Adventist Church, in Mexico City.

Miguel Ángel Pérez, in his 30s, decided to get baptized for the second time. Pérez had grown up in the church but left it for many years. Numerous problems and challenges and the pleading of his family led him and his family to return. He attended each night of the series at Central Adventist Church, listening intently. “As I heard the messages, I said to myself, ‘I need to return,’ and here I am getting baptized again,” Pérez said.

Among the baptized in the metropolitan area were Shen Zhui and Jim Feg Chen, who were among the first to get baptized in a new congregation that caters to the Chi-

nese community in Mexico City. The evangelism project, which has been ministering for months in the city, has been led by two missionaries from China and overseen by the church’s Metropolitan Mexican Conference, church leaders said.

### COMMITMENT AND HOPE

In Michoacan, a state that is part of the Central Mexican Union, a church member contacted the mayor of his town, who then provided screens, Internet, and audio in the center of the town to project the evangelistic series each evening.

The evangelism impact throughout the union has ignited the membership to spread the hope of salvation, Central Mexican Union president Jose Dzul said. “We are so thankful to see the church embrace, with a spirit of commitment, the evangelism efforts that have brought so many to get baptized.”

During the weeklong online evangelistic series, church members across Mexico turned their homes into “Houses of Hope,” where they invited family and friends every night to watch the messages by Daniel Torreblanca, youth ministries director of the Chiapas Mexican Union. Churches, schools, and even some hospitals were turned into “Centers of Hope” as they streamed the series for the public.

In addition to being transmitted through the Hope Channel Inter-America YouTube and Facebook channels, the evangelistic series was also transmitted via radio and TV Azteca national



television channel. The series was also covered by print media.

### SHARING HOPE

In the Inter-Oceanic Mexican Union, more than 4,300 baptisms took place after church members intensified their efforts in small group ministries, public evangelism, and impact community activities, church leaders reported. In the North Mexican Union, church leaders reported more than 3,300 baptisms across the 14 states comprising the territory.

Father and daughter David and Adalia Hernández in southern Tabasco in the Southeast Mexican Union territory wanted to get baptized together. They had been studying the Bible and decided to get baptized in a river a week before the online national evangelistic campaign began. “We just couldn’t wait any longer to get baptized,” David said. Both are among the more than 2,800 new believers who have joined the Adventist Church in the region this year.

The national evangelism campaign also provided sign language for the deaf community across Mexico. Hundreds of church members involved in deaf ministries in Mexico worked to share the gospel during the months-long efforts in the nation.

“We are looking ahead now for another period of evangelistic series where more than 150 guest preachers will arrive in Mexico City to spread the gospel further,” leaders said. 🍀

## AVONDALE UNIVERSITY MAKES HISTORIC APPOINTMENT FOR SCHOOL PRESIDENT

KERRI-LEE KRAUSE HAS A RECORD OF LEADING STRATEGIC CHANGE, LEADERS SAY.

**BRENTON STACEY, ADVENTIST RECORD**

**A** search for a new vice-chancellor and president of Avondale University has ended with the historic appointment of Kerri-Lee Krause.

Avondale Council approved the appointment at its meeting on July 11. Chancellor and South Pacific Division president Glenn Townend announced the appointment in a recent email to staff members. “Kerri-Lee brings great sector knowledge and experience,” he wrote.

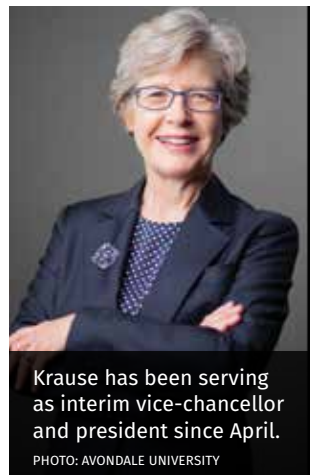
With senior executive roles at some of Australia’s largest universities, including the University of Melbourne, Krause has a record of leading strategic change by engaging students and staff members in cultural transformation.

She is also committed to improving quality, serving as deputy chair of the federal government’s Higher Education Standards Panel, chair of its Advisory Committee for the Transparency of Higher Education Admissions, and board member of the peak body representing independent higher education providers. Her research informs the contemporary student experience, the evolving nature of academic work and higher education leadership, quality, and standards.

The former provost at Avondale, Krause has been serving as interim vice-chancellor and president since April. In that role, “she worked with a taskforce of senior colleagues on a renewal plan that has now been endorsed by [the university] council to secure Avondale’s future,” Townend wrote.

“I am honored to serve Avondale in this capacity and am dedicated to renewing our university’s focus on developing and fostering a ‘greater vision of world needs,’” Krause, a third-generation alumna, said. “I am delighted to lead a university with a long-standing mission of transforming lives and communities. I look forward to the challenge of collaborating with our students, staff members, and industry partners to refresh our appeal to the next generation of learners.”

Building on the legacy of Seventh-day Adventist Church pioneer Ellen White, Krause is the first woman to lead Avondale in its 126-year history. “I admire the tenacity and vision of Ellen White,” Krause said. “She fought so hard to establish this place when resources were tight and when many had trouble imagining how it might work. Now I am privileged to play my part in partnering with students, staff members, and members of the community to bring continued success for all.” 🍀



Krause has been serving as interim vice-chancellor and president since April.

PHOTO: AVONDALE UNIVERSITY

## TRAILBLAZING EDUCATOR HUMBERTO MARIO RASI DIES AT 88

HE MENTORED PROFESSIONALS AND GARNERED SUPPORT FOR ADVENTIST STUDENTS AT PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

**H**umberto Mario Rasi, a Seventh-day Adventist educator, scholar, and former General Conference (GC) director of education, died from cancer on June 28. He was 88. A dedicated supporter and promoter of Adventist education and Adventist professionals, Rasi served the Adventist Church in various roles during his long and productive life.

Rasi was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1935, in the home of an Adventist pastor. He married Julieta Cuchma Cayrus in Uruguay in 1957. He earned a degree in Spanish language and literature in Buenos Aires, and served as a translator and editor at the Adventist publishing house in Argentina.

The couple moved to the United States in 1962. Both served at the Pacific Press Publishing Association (then in Mountain View, California). Rasi participated in translating and editing *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, several of Ellen G. White's writings, and Arthur Maxwell's collections of Bible stories and bedtime stories into Spanish. During those years they also welcomed a son, Leroy, and a daughter, Sylvia.

Rasi was invited to serve at the Modern Languages Department at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, in 1968, becoming

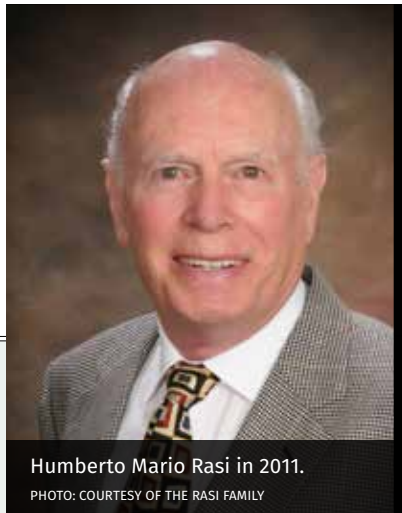
chair in 1971. He obtained a Ph.D. in Latin American history and literature from Stanford University. Later he served as Andrews University dean of the Graduate School. Soon after, Rasi rejoined the Pacific Press as editorial vice president.

In 1980, and while still at Pacific Press, Rasi was ordained as a pastor in a ceremony led by then GC president Neal C. Wilson.

Rasi was called to the GC Education Department, where he worked for 15 years, first as associate director and then as director. In 1989 he launched *College and University Dialogue*, the first journal of ideas for Adventist college and university students studying in non-Adventist institutions. It was also the first publication to be produced simultaneously in four languages: English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish.

He also launched the Institute for Christian Teaching, organizing dozens of international Integration of Faith and Learning seminars. The nearly 1,500 monographs of seminar presenters were published in the 40-volume *Christ in the Classroom*.

In recognition for his service to Adventist education, Rasi was awarded the General Conference Education Department Medallion of Distinction and four doctorates honoris causa.



Humberto Mario Rasi in 2011.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE RASI FAMILY

In retirement he remained very active, mentoring and encouraging younger leaders. He collaborated with the Geoscience Research Institute in coauthoring the volumes *Understanding Creation* (2011); *Entrusted: Christians and Environmental Care* (2013); and *Design and Catastrophe: 51 Scientists Explore Evidence in Nature* (2021).

Ted N. C. Wilson, GC president, sent a message of condolence to the family and commented on the late leader. "Dr. Rasi was an outstanding Seventh-day Adventist leader and consummate educator. He profoundly contributed to the advancement of the Advent movement and the Lord's soon coming," Wilson wrote.

Lisa Beardsley-Hardy, GC education director, agreed. "Dr. Rasi was a champion for the integration of faith and learning from a biblical foundation," she wrote. "He was an astute mentor with a sparkling intellect and wit, all harnessed in the service of the highest ideals of redemptive, Christian education."

Rasi's family also shared their thoughts. "A supportive and encouraging father . . . Humberto Mario has fought the good fight and finished the race [2 Tim. 4:7]," his family wrote. "We look forward to seeing him again when Jesus returns." ❖



**BARRY C. BLACK COMPLETES 20 YEARS AS U.S. SENATE CHAPLAIN.** Black is the first military chaplain, the first Seventh-day Adventist, and the first African American to hold the office of chaplain to the U.S. Senate. As part of his duties, he opens every session of the Senate with prayer. Perhaps one of his most remembered prayers at the U.S. Senate was in the early hours of January 7, 2021, a day after the incidents that affected the regular business of the body. In closing a momentous session, he called out the violence and implored warring factions to unite on behalf of the country.



**ADVENTIST CAMPOREE UNITES MORE THAN 4,500 YOUTH FROM ACROSS INDONESIA.** The third Indonesia Pathfinder Camporee, which took place from June 26 to July 2, 2023, was an important milestone for the Seventh-day Adventist junior youth. More than 4,500 people came to Buperta Cibubur, East Jakarta, to join the camporee organized jointly by the Adventist churches in the West Indonesia and East Indonesia regions. This event, themed “Niscala,” which means “calm” and “firm,” left a lasting impression on the hearts of those who attended.



**PAPUA NEW GUINEA LAUNCHES SOCIAL MESSAGING TOOL.** A new social messaging tool was recently launched at the pastors’ symposium in Kabiufo, Papua New Guinea, that has the potential to reach thousands of people. Known as Hope VA, the new virtual assistant gives free Bible studies and health lessons in a conversational format through the social media platform WhatsApp. Hope VA is a collaborative project that brings together many parts of the Adventist Church for mission. In time it is hoped that this new tool will also be rolled out across other parts of the South Pacific.



**ADVENTIST CHURCH REACHES OUT TO BUDDHIST COMMUNITY.** Recognizing the significance of encouraging a healthy and full life, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Thailand launched its first health program at Singburi Buddhist Temple in conjunction with the cluster of four provinces known as SKUS (Suphan Buri, Kanchanaburi, Uthai Thani, and Singburi), Bangkok Adventist Hospital, and the church region health team. The initiative sought to expand care and compassion across ethnic and religious borders. This event marked the start of a transformative path toward genuine community ties.



**FRED KINSEY, FORMER SPEAKER/DIRECTOR OF VOICE OF PROPHECY, PASSES TO HIS REST.** After a long battle with Parkinson’s disease, Fred Kinsey passed away on Monday, July 17, in Walnut Creek, California, where he had lived most of his life. He was 71. Kinsey had a long career in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He dedicated his life to connecting others to an abundant life in Jesus Christ. He served in various roles, including ordained minister, communication director, communication professor, and speaker and director of the Voice of Prophecy.



**FRITZ GUY, LA SIERRA UNIVERSITY’S FOUNDING PRESIDENT, PASSES AWAY.** Fritz Guy died following an acute cardiovascular event on July 25 in Longview, Washington, at the age of 93. During his many years of denominational service, Guy served as pastor, editor, professor, and as president of La Sierra University from 1990 to 1993 during its first years of reorganization following La Sierra’s separation from Loma Linda University. In 2009 he was honored with the Charles Elliott Weniger Award for Excellence in recognition of his long career in ministry, theology, writing, and education for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.



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**T**oday we live in the world of “self.” Type in “self help” in an Amazon search, and more than 70,000 entries will pop up. We strive to be self-actualized, self-starters. We are told to be true to our self. Taking a “selfie” has become commonplace, and there is even an online magazine dedicated to the subject titled *Self*.<sup>1</sup>

### SELF IN SCRIPTURE

Self does not miss its time in the limelight of Scripture. Among the facets in Paul’s list of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23) is “self-control.” Self-control can be understood in many ways. Different Bible translations render the Greek ἐγκράτεια (*egkrateia*) as “self-control,” “temperance,” “keeping the body under control,” and “having control of oneself.” Greek scholar Joseph Thayer defined it as “the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions, especially his sensual appetite.”<sup>2</sup>

We often equate self-control with self-discipline, which can sometimes conjure mental images of “correcting or regulating ourselves for the sake of improvement,”<sup>3</sup> or powering through temptations through the strength of our own will.

Let’s take a deeper look at this idea of self-control and its place within the fruit of the Spirit.

### REVIEWING THE FRUIT

When our life shows love, it is a Spirit-given virtue, not an attribute we self-generate. By God’s grace we choose to love even when a person is “unlovely” and “undeserving” of love. Joy exuded by

us is God’s gift, not autogenerated enthusiasm. It is present because we know who God is, what He has done, and what He will do, despite the appearance of all present circumstances. Long-suffering is not biting our lips and summoning an inner reserve of willpower to force ourselves to duty, but prizing the way Christ has treated us and welcoming the heavenly bestowal of forbearance in our hearts.

“No outward observance can take the place of simple faith and entire renunciation of self. But no man can empty himself of self. We can only consent for Christ to accomplish the work. Then the language of the soul will be, Lord, take my heart; for I cannot give it. It is Thy property. Keep it pure, for I cannot keep it for Thee. Save me in spite of myself, my weak, unchristlike self. Mold me, fashion me, raise me into a pure and holy atmosphere, where the rich current of Thy love can flow through my soul.”<sup>4</sup>

We could continue through this marvelous list of precious qualities called the Spirit’s fruit, which we treasure in our life and experience. Their characteristics are all externally originated and granted to believers to the measure they are willing to receive them. None are internally generated.

Is it not exactly the same with the last item on that list? When we succeed in exercising self-control by a choice of our will, it is because we have given the Holy Spirit permission to control our “self.” We ask Him to conquer our selfishness as we contemplate the overwhelming generosity of God (Rom. 8:32; 2 Peter



# Hidden



Where does true self-control come from?

# Power

## Self-control must be understood as “control of self,” not by some higher nature within ourselves, but by the Holy Spirit.

1:3). We invite Him to remove our self-importance by replacing self with Christ—“He must become greater; I must become less” (John 3:30, NIV). Our self-reliance is humbled by realizing that “apart from [Christ] [we] can do nothing” (John 15:5, NIV). However, we “can do all things through Christ who strengthens [us]” (Phil. 4:13) as we trust Him. Any demonstration of self-control outside of the Holy Spirit’s work in the life is mere self-exaltation as humans try to convince themselves and others that they can be good on their own.

God-given self-esteem requires abandoning any notion of self-importance or self-success. It means we realize our true worth and ultimate identity as God’s children, redeemed by His love. Thus, self-control is the equivalent of self-denial, or being “crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:20, NIV).

Jesus said: “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Matt. 16:24). At issue is the fact that “self” has been the problem all along—self-assertion, self-determination, self-centeredness, self-importance, self-indulgence—the list could go on.

### NOT REALLY DIFFERENT

Let’s banish the idea that self-control is somehow a “grit-your-teeth, grin-and-bear-it” resolve (or anything that we manufacture internally), and give credit to whom credit is due—the Holy Spirit. After all, we’re discussing spiritual fruit, not carnal power. Our privilege is to daily surrender self to His control to have a self that is controlled by the Spirit; to have our self “crucified with Christ” in such a way that our self no longer lives, but Christ lives in us (Gal. 2:20, NIV).

If we identify the first eight components of the fruit of the Spirit with righteousness by faith, we should not revert to a righteousness by works on the last one. This century-old clue helps us get on the right track: “What is justification by faith?” it asks. “It is the work of God in laying the glory of man in the dust, and doing for man that which it is not in his power to do for himself. When [men and women] see their own nothingness, they are prepared to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ.”<sup>5</sup>

Pleasing to the ego? Absolutely not. Self-control must be understood as “control of self,” not by some higher nature within ourselves, but by the Holy Spirit. Otherwise, knowing our human nature, we would be putting the fox (self) in charge of the henhouse. Eugene Peterson captures well the essence of Christ’s words in his popular paraphrase: “Anyone who intends to come with me has to let me lead. You’re not in the driver’s seat; I am. Don’t run from suffering; embrace it. Follow me and I’ll show you how. Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to finding yourself, your true self” (Matt. 16:24, 25, Message).<sup>6</sup>

### A PLACE FOR RESOLVE

Not that biting my lip is always inappropriate, and there’s definitely a place for the will. It’s just that our human nature (the self) insists on insinuating itself into the divine processes to offer itself a measure of self-fulfillment.

Benjamin Franklin was intent on self-improvement. After a friend’s suggestion, he determined that humility was a virtue he needed. He tackled the task valiantly, even learning to feign it when it was missing. Finally he had to admit: “Even if I could conceive that I had completely overcome it, I should probably be proud of my humility.”<sup>7</sup>

True self-control is to surrender our self-interests, self-desires, and self-exaltation to the control of the Holy Spirit and the will of Christ. Only then can self be “controlled.” That is the victory that is promised to all who put their trust in Christ (Eph. 1:17-23; 3:16-21).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> www.self.com

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/kjv/egkrateia.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/self-discipline>

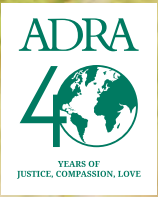
<sup>4</sup> Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1900, 1941), p. 159.

<sup>5</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), p. 111.

<sup>6</sup> From *The Message*. Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H. Peterson. Used by permission of NavPress. All rights reserved. Represented by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

<sup>7</sup> [www.ushistory.org/franklin/autobiography/page42.htm](http://www.ushistory.org/franklin/autobiography/page42.htm)

**H. Haskell Williams** is the ministerial director for the Carolina Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. This article was originally published in the *Adventist Review* in February 2012. Pastor Williams has refreshed his ideas for this issue.

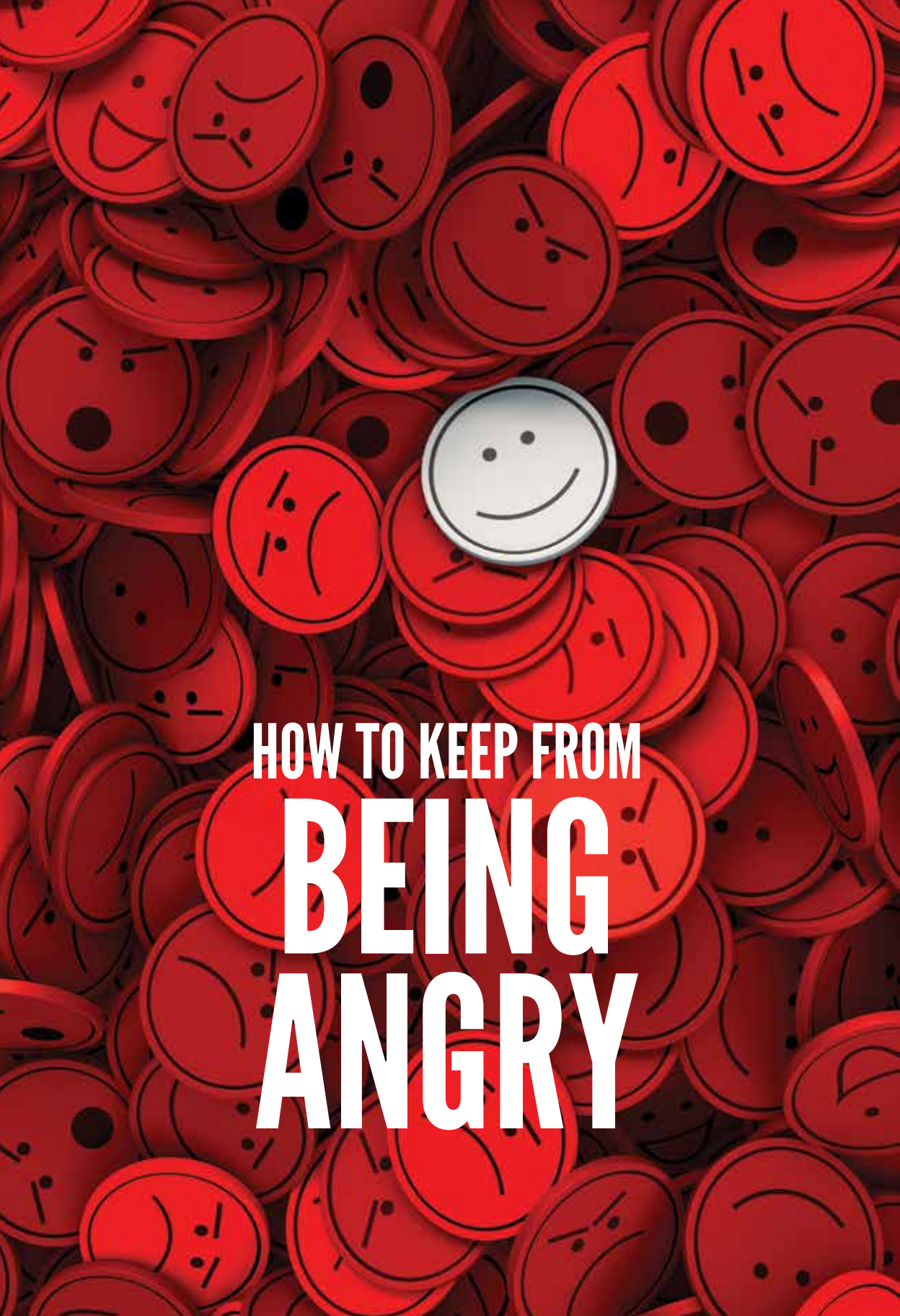


# CLEAN WATER SAVES LIVES



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HOW TO KEEP FROM  
**BEING  
ANGRY**



# Let's talk about a **sin** we don't often talk about.

## WINTLEY PHIPPS

*This article is based on a sermon at Palm Bay Seventh-day Adventist Church on August 14, 2021. Elements of the oral presentation have been retained.—Editors.*

It was a morning when the earth was young. Creation still gave clear evidence of the grandeur and symmetry of the marvelous handiwork of God. Along the side of a babbling brook, two brothers, I imagine, walked together. As they strolled alongside the waters they talked of their love for God and of their love for each other. Yet even though they had so much in common, in so many ways they were so different. They had come from the same womb, shared the same nurture and upbringing; yet in character and personality they were worlds apart.

## THE PROBLEM

The elder brother, Cain, was a moody soul who carried in his heart feelings of resentment against God. You see, while the rest of the family accepted God's punishment for sin, Cain would often question why it was necessary to punish humanity so severely for one mistake—and something as simple as eating a forbidden fruit. To be cast out of the Garden of Eden for that seemed to Cain arbitrary and unfair.

But God in His wisdom had ordained a plan that made offerings and sacrifices part of the plan of salvation. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. 9:22). Cain and Abel built identical altars, but what they placed on the altar

revealed their hearts and the measure of their faith.

Abel brought a sacrifice of a lamb from his flock, in harmony with the Lord's directions. Scripture tells us that "the Lord respected Abel and his offering" (Gen. 4:4). God showed His favor toward Abel and his sacrifice, and as Abel stepped back from his altar a single volley of a white-hot flame came shooting out of the sky. The altar came ablaze with a holy fire, showing them both the blessing and benediction of heaven upon Abel's offering. The fire danced around Abel's sacrifice, consuming it in divine approval.

But Cain ignored the direct and explicit command of God and presented an offering of his own choosing. He brought to the altar a sacrifice not of a lamb but of the fruit of the ground. And as he stepped back from his altar, this time there was no fire from heaven, as with Abel's sacrifice. No sign from above that God was pleased with the sacrifice of Cain. Cain stood there before his altar embarrassed but unrepentant. Cain was saying in his heart, *God, if You can't find pleasure in my offering too, so be it. As for my offering, You can take it or leave it.*

Abel begged Cain to comply with the requirements of God, but his pleadings made Cain more determined to follow his own will and go his own way. The servant of the Lord says that "Cain and Abel represent two classes that will exist in the world [and in the church] till the close of time."

As Cain continued to complain of the injustice of God, he would often angrily reproach his brother, and attempt to draw him into controversy concerning God's dealings with them. All this caused Cain's

anger to burn the hotter. Reason and conscience told Cain that Abel was in the right, but his anger took from him the ability to think straight.

Perhaps one day Cain said to Abel, “Brother, this tension between us must stop. Let’s go for a walk and talk it over.” The Bible says that as they walked together in the field, Cain suddenly, and viciously, out of anger and resentment, attacked his brother, Abel, and killed him.

Abel lay there on the green grass, his innocent blood flowing with the dew. Oh, but the memory of his life and faithfulness will never be forgotten.

Is it not significant that the first violence that the world ever knew was the result of anger? How do we know that Cain was angry? Because God said so.

The Bible says that when Cain saw that his offering was rejected by God, he was very angry, and his face was downcast (Gen. 4:5). Then the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?” (verse 6).

Cain had an anger problem.

### **IT’S A SERIOUS PROBLEM**

In my study of God’s Word, I came upon this list in Galatians 5:19-21. It is a list of actions and behaviors that will keep us out of heaven. Depending on our own character weaknesses, we may overlook some things on this list and speak out against others. But the truth is that the Bible says practicing everything on this list will cause us to be lost if we don’t repent. There is a sin on this list that is not often spoken of, but represents a deficit of character that many of us deal with and all those who inherit the kingdom of God must overcome: the sin of angry outbursts.

Angry people are not going to heaven.

I did not make this up. It is right here in God’s Word. Angry people are not going to be changed on the trip from earth to heaven. Those who choose to live with and live by a spirit of anger will not inherit the kingdom of heaven, the Bible says.

For angry people who repent of the sin and habit of anger and turn from it, there is a crown waiting and a mansion prepared in heaven. Second Chronicles 7:14 says, “If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” “If we confess our sins, He

is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

There are some Christian people who would rather stay angry than follow Christ. Too often, when we think of serious sins, we think of such sins as adultery and murder. But this nasty habit of uncontrolled anger has not only created wars and turned homes into battlegrounds—this nasty little habit will keep some of us out of heaven if we do not repent.

Have you noticed that you can’t hide anger? You can suppress and even repress anger—but if anger lives in you, it will eventually come out. And anger can poison your health and leave you sick and diseased. Anger affects your digestive system, your nervous system, your respiratory system. Every system responsible for your health is affected negatively by festering anger. Anger affects your blood pressure.

People do strange things when they are angry. Some yell and scream. Some withdraw their emotions and affections. Some even reject their commitment to act and speak like Christ just so they can be angry for a while. They say to themselves, *So what? I’m angry, and I’m expressing my anger. It’s my right, and that’s all that matters right now.* I have only one question: Does uncontrolled anger feel so good to you that you are willing to jeopardize your soul’s salvation just to give the offending party a piece of your mind?

Did you know that the devil was the first angry soul? And angry souls who choose to hold on to anger have the devil as their father.

### **IT’S A HUMAN PROBLEM**

Some of the most spiritual people have struggled with controlling their anger. Moses struggled with it.

Samson fell prey to it. One day Jesus sent messengers to go to a village of the Samaritans to make things ready for His visit there. But the message came back that He was not welcome there. They knew Jesus was tired and needed some place to rest, but they did not open their doors to the heavenly guest. The disciples were offended, and in their anger they asked Jesus to call down fire from heaven to consume those who had disrespected their Leader. But Christ rebuked their anger, their indignation, and their zeal for His honor.

Yes, they were angry. And we all will feel angry

feelings at some time or another. The question is: Do you indulge it, or do you smother anger with love? Have you noticed that when you are angry you have no desire to forgive anybody? Sometimes we get angry at ourselves, but have you noticed we often can forgive ourselves much sooner than we can forgive others, and we often stay angry with others much longer than we stay angry with ourselves?

*But Jesus got angry, some say, when He drove people out of the temple.*

First, that was righteous indignation, and there is usually nothing righteous about our indignation. And second, Jesus was angry about deceit, and corrupted systems, and institutions that distorted and misrepresented the true loving character of His Father. Never once in the Bible did Jesus express unrighteous anger to an individual. That kind of anger comes from Satan himself. Did you know that you cannot indulge your temper and have your own way, and still call yourself a child of God?

In Matthew 5:22 Jesus says He considers anger a form of murder. And Jesus says if you are bound for heaven, there is some baggage you can't bring with you, and your anger is one. Whether your angry outbursts are public or private, regular or occasional, uncontrolled anger will keep you out of heaven.

Isn't it interesting how we are selective with how and where we express our anger? So many of us take out our anger on those who love us most. Perhaps because we believe that no matter how badly we behave in our anger, they will still love us. I say don't treat those who love you like a dumping ground for your anger.

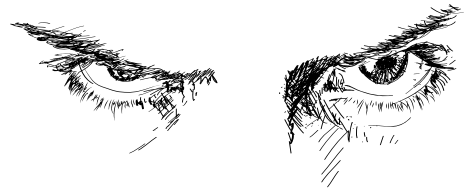
#### **PRACTICAL STEPS**

It takes a great deal of humility to admit one's struggle with anger. For some of us, getting victory over anger will take a struggle. But God can help us. Here is one practical tip that the Lord has taught me.

First, there are stages that lead up to anger. And some people advance through those stages quickly, and some advance through those stages slowly. Here are the five stages of anger God showed me.

The first stage is annoyance. What annoys you will be a cause of frustration, and annoyances and frustrations are triggers for anger. Now, I will tell you a secret. Annoyance is the easiest stage of anger to manage. And each succeeding stage that follows becomes more difficult to manage and slow down the moving train of anger.

God has taught me that if you can handle annoyances in a spiritual, cheerful, and healthy way, you won't move on to the other advanced stages of anger. So the best way



Is it not  
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that the  
**first**  
**violence**  
that the  
world ever  
knew was  
the result of  
anger?

to win the battle against anger is to win at the stage of annoyance. And to win at the first stage of annoyance you have to tell yourself, *With God's help I will let nothing anyone says or does ever annoy me.* Develop a resilience, a positive outlook, a steadfastness that is grounded in your faith in the God who controls all things. Win the battle at stage one.

The next stage of anger is aggravation. Now annoyance has escalated to aggravation, and you are like a rocket on the launchpad ready to blast off. The fuel is all there; the countdown is on: six, five, four, three, two, one—abort, abort! Unless you abort, you become aggravated.

After aggravation we move on to the next stage: arousal. Arousal is how you feel in response to annoyance and aggravation. Annoyance and aggravation then become your justification for your emotional decision to respond. Maybe somebody lied about you or stole from you. You are about to lose something you value, and out of fear you are aroused to fight back.

That's when your anger moves to the next stage: aggression. Aggression manifests itself in name calling and threats. Aggression shows up in outbursts of fighting and fighting back. Aggression shows up in verbal outbursts and, God forbid, sometimes physical outburst. Aggression manifests itself in words and actions, accusations and attitudes, temper and tone.

The fastest horse cannot catch a word spoken in anger, and believe me, for some people adrenaline-fueled aggression is a form of getting high. They actually thrive on it and love it. Some people actually enjoy losing their heads and losing control of themselves.

*But Pastor, I have to defend myself.* Who ever said that self-defense requires anger? An old man once told me: "Don't get mad; get smart." And using anger in self-defense is never smart. When you are in that stage of aggression, your judgment is gone. And open aggression culminates in rage.

An IED is an improvised explosive device, a bomb constructed and deployed when attached to a detonating mechanism. IEDs are commonly used as roadside bombs in Iraq and Afghanistan. Well, there is another kind of IED. They are IEDs used in relationships, and they are every bit as deadly. In the psychoanalytical world this IED stands for intermittent explosive disorder. Intermittent explosive disorders can hurt, and burn, and maim for life. They can bring pain and suffering into our homes.

Now remember, there is overt aggression and there is passive aggression, and passive aggression is every bit as deadly. Passive aggression is letting people suffer silently when you could do something to alleviate their suffering.

The final stage of anger is depression. Because anytime we are not our best selves, anytime we act out in a way that is un-Christlike, if you have a conscience and a decent bone in your body you will regret it, and your disappointment in yourself will show up as sulking, and resentment, and depression. Anger and depression are emotional contagious cousins. Anger unchecked gives the devil an opportunity to wreck what God is doing in your life. And anger will leave you hostile and bitter.

So you would like to make a change? First, analyze why you get angry. Identify your triggers. Then acknowledge where you've been wrong and take ownership of the fact that angry outbursts are never spiritual and they will keep you out of heaven. Then ask for divine assistance. And remember, when not handled at the annoyance stage, more of God's Spirit is needed exponentially to handle the subsequent stages.

In the annoyance stage, remember to focus on the big picture—the great controversy meta-narrative and that God wins. Try to remember that every day someone you care about will say or do something that will annoy you and that in love you will need to forgive them. Learn to forgive the annoyances and don't let them bother you, and you will never have to deal with aggravation, arousal, or aggression. There will be no IEDs in your house—buildup, sparks, explosions, and painful aftermath. 🍂

\* Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890, 1908), p. 72.

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# ETERNITY'S COMING (WITH OR WITHOUT US)

In July I stood in the shadow of the Great Pyramid, built about 2550 B.C. by Pharaoh Khufu. The edifice was a tomb, his attempt to achieve personal immortality. About 4,500 years later, at the moment of death, some people have their heads (surgically beheaded) immersed in liquid nitrogen (−238°F or lower). When the technology allows, their preserved neural connections, called connectomes, can be (they hope) uploaded to a computer, and they will live, perhaps (as long as the hardware works) forever. (So far, though, the only fully mapped connectome is the roundworm *C. elegans*, a one-and-a-half-millimeter organism). In a poem about visiting a museum, Wisława Szymborska wrote about these artifacts: “The crown has outlasted the head/The hand has lost out to the glove/The right shoe has defeated the foot.”<sup>1</sup>

Like all other living things, we die; unlike all other living things, we know it, and that knowledge haunts us. “This combination of the fact of mortality with our awareness of mortality contains,” wrote Frenchman Luc Ferry, “all the questions of philosophy.”<sup>2</sup>

He’s right. I have read multitudinous secular cogitations over the purpose of life, and the question always comes down to what death—our inevitable and eternal (in their thinking) and absolute death—does to our vaporous and contingent and fleeting life. If in 100, 1,000, or 1 billion years you are gone, and every memory of you is gone, and anyone who ever knew you is gone, and anything you or anyone ever said or did has vanished

into eternal nothingness, what can your life ultimately mean, anyway?

In *Norwegian Wood* Japanese author Haruki Murakami wrote: “Death is not the opposite of life but an innate part of it.”<sup>3</sup> Sorry, Haruki, but (however much I loved your book) you got this wrong, dead wrong. Death is an intruder, an invader no more built into life than wreckage was built into a car.

This is why we have been promised: “The last enemy that will be destroyed is death” (1 Cor. 15:26). After all, should not the self-sacrifice of the One who created all creation (John 1:1-3; Heb. 1:2; 11:3)—from electrons to galaxy superclusters—be more than enough to give us the “eternal life” promised us in Scripture?<sup>4</sup> Anything short of “eternal life” would be unworthy of the price paid for our redemption.

Look, each one of us came out of nothingness, and not of our own choice, either. That’s why the gospel says, basically, to each one of us: you can have, through Jesus, the eternal life that God had originally planned for you. Or you can go back to the nothingness from which you first arose.

Eternity’s coming. The question before each one of us is whether it will be with or without us.

Choose. 🍌

<sup>1</sup> Wisława Szymborska, *View With a Grain of Sand* (New York: Harcourt, 1993), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Luc Ferry, *A Brief History of Thought* (HarperCollins), p. 13. Kindle Edition.

<sup>3</sup> Haruki Murakami, *Norwegian Wood* (Vintage International) (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group), p. 273. Kindle Edition.

<sup>4</sup> See Matt. 19:29; 25:46; Mark 10:30; John 3:15; 6:54; 10:28; 12:25; 17:3; Acts 13:48; Rom. 6:23; Titus 1:2; 1 John 2:25; Jude 21.

CLIFF'S  
EDGE  
CLIFFORD  
GOLDSTEIN



DEATH IS AN  
INTRUDER,  
AN INVADER NO  
MORE BUILT INTO  
LIFE THAN  
WRECKAGE WAS  
BUILT INTO A CAR.



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## BE CAREFUL, LITTLE EYES

*The art of self-discipline at the media buffet*

If you want to stir up many Christians, ask them about their feelings about those folks who have sex with people of the same gender. They will quickly get riled up and begin talking about how immoral it is.

But ask the same person their feelings about their own sexual purity and practices, and you might see some awkwardness emerge.

It's easy to look at other people's "sins" and feel less guilty about your own. Two thousand years ago the Man from Nazareth made some points about this on multiple occasions. One of the most prominent was the time all the priests were ready to stone a woman for being caught in the act of adultery. Jesus hears them, sees the stones in their hands, kneels down calmly, and starts to write with His finger in the dust.

One by one these esteemed men of Israel begin to walk away as their sins, I presume some sexual sins, are written out. Jesus then challenges them: Whoever is without sin, go ahead and wind up and start throwing stones at this woman.

This rage from the religious about other people's sins is not a relic of the past. We see outspoken religious leaders share their disdain for the immoral of the world, only to find out later they are as "defiled" as those they despise.

But this isn't about calling people out for their sins. I want to discuss sexual self-control.

In a world in which we have any sexual fantasy or fetish a few clicks away, what is the answer to finding the discipline not to gorge at the buffet of licentiousness?

The Bible is clear that the Creator of humanity created the pleasure centers of our reproductive organs. The God who wanted this race of beings on earth to make more of ourselves via procreation also gave us guidelines to keep sane and sustainable.

Even in the commandments given at the base of Mount Sinai, there are multiple commandments about sexual temperance.

The seventh commandment says: Don't commit adultery, i.e., don't sleep with people you aren't married to. There's also the tenth commandment: Don't look at another person's spouse with the desire to sleep with them. Jesus doubled down on this when He said: If you look at a woman to lust after her, you are guilty of breaking of this commandment. It's not just the physical act that makes you guilty, but the mental act as well.



## STEWARDSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY

I personally see the Bible's stance on sex as one about stewardship and sustainability. Sex is to be pleasurable, and it serves the purpose of making more humans. When we divorce sexual pleasure from the sanctity of a loving marriage, we weaponize the very things God meant for good.

So to answer what sexual stewardship and discipline look like: Are you seeking to please the other person or yourself? Is this within the confines of the relational dynamic in Eden between a man and a woman?

With all that being said, allow me now to step on some toes. If those are the criteria and questions, how about being in a marriage to someone of the opposite sex but still finding ways to derive sexual pleasure—by yourself?

It has different terms: self-pleasure, masturbation, or the term nineteenth-century author and pioneer Ellen White uses, self-abuse. This practice has become so common that there are challenges in November to go a whole month without pleasuring yourself called No Fap November. There are influencers such as Andrew Huberman and Jordan Peterson going on podcasts talking about all the reasons you need to get away from this practice or, as Ellen White also calls it, this soul-destroying vice.

But what is the harm? You're not committing adultery, are you? What's the problem?

To all the single folks out there, the struggle is real, but mounting evidence on this topic does not support the practice. Take from this article all you can to build better habits and run like the plague from ones that are so addicting you feel you have no hope.

To the married folks out there, the ones coping with sexless marriages or selfish marriages or somewhere in between, this article is primarily for you.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF INTIMACY IN MARRIAGE

The purpose of marriage is to become one. In the very beginning we hear the words of God in Eden saying, "Let us make man in our image," and then we see a man and a woman created. Sex has been described as the glue that holds a marriage together.

The spark, the romance, the connection, should start just as we see through Scripture and the great controversy. The formula is laid out in the New Testament. Ephesians 5:25 says: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave

Himself for her." And then verse 28: "So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself." Men should be the most loving, kind, and caring individuals in a woman's life. Love her like Christ loves us, and the response will be a woman madly in love with you.

The Bible also describes the vital role of intimacy in a marriage. "Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control" (1 Cor. 7:5).

Going against the very grain of God and pleasing ourselves sexually by ourselves is not what we were made for. It's why so many people involved in this vice feel guilty about it. It's just like any other vice. It's fun for a moment, but guilt follows. God never wanted guilt to haunt us. Adam and Eve felt this when they knew they had done something wrong in Eden, and God came looking for them—He didn't abandon them.

Self-pleasure is all the more tempting and destructive in a world of pornography on demand. So many people today who are addicted to pornography are finding that once they are married, they are often sexually broken. Arousal mechanisms malfunction; the brain has been rewired from experiencing pleasure by pleasing someone else to, in some cases, needing surreal circumstances to achieve normal sexual satisfaction.

To anyone reading this who has deceived themselves into thinking this is a safe practice even in marriage, hear me clearly. You're missing out on true pleasure, which lasts long after the bedroom high. Don't deprive your spouse of the joy God intended because you are so selfish and want to let desire run wild without any temperance of this God-given chemical system hardwired in us for mutual pleasure. Take it as seriously as if you were addicted to some harmful drug. It will be the end of you if you don't recalibrate things for the use they were created for.

After you realize how serious it is, plead with God to bring victory into your life. But this must be a joint effort between your will and God's grace. It will be the saving of your sanity, your marriage, and will ultimately lead to joy (and pleasure) you've perhaps yet to experience. ♣

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**Jared Thurmon** resides in Adairsville, Georgia. He has advised and helped Adventist Review Ministries in various capacities for the past eight years.



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## ENGINEERED FOR SUCCESS

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*A guide to renewal, recovery, and restoration*

**H**urricanes Harvey and Irma captivated the news for weeks. In August 2017 Harvey pounded Texas with such violence that it put a large percentage of Houston under water. Irma followed shortly after, crushing the Caribbean islands, pounding Florida, and wreaking havoc on surrounding islands. Aside from the indescribable human and private property loss, these hurricanes inflicted more than \$200 billion in damage.

Storm-ravaged cities have two major challenges. Damaged infrastructure such as communication and transportation systems shut down normal operations. The result is weakened defense systems that make the city vulnerable to violence and vandalism. The city goes into survival mode; it needs comprehensive renewal,

recovery, and restoration. Have you ever had times you have been in “survival mode”? I think most of us have!

Notice this vivid comparison of just such a city with humanity in its broken and vulnerable condition: “A man without self-control is like a city broken into, and left without walls” (Prov. 25:28, ESV). Yes, that broken city powerfully illustrates the broken brain, a brain that may have been broken down over time by chronic stress, depression, unhealthy lifestyle, and addictions. The battle is for the brain—the seat of our thoughts, emotions, and actions—and that’s where recovery begins. A healthy, well-functioning brain can make better choices and more clearly hear the guiding voice of God.

### THREE AREAS AFFECT THE BRAIN

**Genes.** You cannot change your gene structure, but its function and activity are dramatically influenced by diet, lifestyle, exercise, and even the way you think.

**Environment.** Your internal environment is how you think. Your external environment is what surrounds you. God has a wonderful restoration plan for your life. He's got the power to change your brain, emotions, desires, actions, environment, and your life!

**Choice.** Every choice you make, to a greater or lesser degree, affects emotional, mental, and physical health. Every day presents you with opportunities to make choices that will influence brain/body systems and even the activity of your genes.

God has a plan for physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual renewal. The great news is that "experiences, thoughts, actions, and emotions actually change the structure of our brains."<sup>1</sup> Rebuilding a broken city requires a plan—and so does rebuilding a broken brain. Your brain is constantly reshaping itself according to what it learns. This is called "plasticity." Scientists now know that "the brain is a far more open system than we ever imagined, and nature . . . has given us a brain that survives in a changing world by changing itself."<sup>2</sup>

#### **CHOICES MAKE THE DIFFERENCE**

Behavioral and lifestyle choices build a better brain, better habits, better health, and a better life—for good! Here are some key pieces:

**Environment.** The internal environment of how you think and the external environment you surround yourself with are critical for achieving and maintaining positive change. Repeating God's promises replaces faulty internal monologues. His Word is living, powerful, and true. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13). Focus on what you can change in your surroundings; focus on solutions and the power of God to guide you, not problems and obstacles.

**Lifestyle.** Lifestyle choices strongly affect physical, mental, and spiritual health. "Physical and mental exercise, proper nutrition, and adequate sleep will help anyone gain cognitive clarity and emotional stability."<sup>3</sup> Nicotine, caffeine, alcohol, and refined sugar dampen immune health, fan the fires of inflammation, and promote stress, addictions, and depression. Food is medicine. Replacing empty calories, unhealthy fast foods, and high-fat animal products with nutrient-rich fresh vegetables and fruits, beans, whole grains, and nuts creates real strength, lowers stress hormones and inflammation, and boosts mental and physical energy. Mod-

## **Lifestyle choices strongly affect physical, mental, and spiritual health.**

est positive choices pave the way for breaking big, bad habits. Daily exercise improves circulation and improves every level of brain function, including learning, problem-solving, creativity, and mood.

**Connections.** Your associations and interests have a profound shaping effect on your values and goals. Take time to connect with others. Connecting with God through prayer and time in the Bible open the gates of power, guidance, and courage for life's journey. "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go. I will guide you with My eye" (Ps. 32:8).

**Managing stress.** You need practical strategies to tap into when confronting challenges and stress. A healthy lifestyle lowers stress hormone activity, protects the brain and body from stress damage, and improves problem-solving ability.

**Assessment.** It is always important to work closely with your physician or health-care provider. Lifestyle changes may reduce or eliminate the need for certain medications over time. Medicine or medical procedures may be essential.

God cares about your welfare. He has a plan and the power to renew your heart, recover broken health, and restore emotional and mental strength by practicing self-control in these areas. Grace and strength will be given to you for every trial. For those who trust Him and commit their lives to Him, the promise of heaven and a new earth in which there will be no more pain, suffering, or disease is assured (see Rev. 21:4). Restoration and hope begin now. Will you choose God's plan? He is waiting to help and bless you. 🍀

<sup>1</sup> John Ratey, *User's Guide to the Brain: Perception, Attention, and the Four Theaters of the Brain* (New York: Vintage Books, 2002), p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Norman Doidge, *The Brain That Changes Itself: Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain Science* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Ratey, p. 356.

**Vicki Griffin**, M.S. in human nutrition, is the former director of Lifestyle Matters, a program designed to help others discover the keys to wholeness of body, mind, and spirit. This article was adapted from a pamphlet of the same name on LifestyleMatters.com.



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## THE HEALTH JOURNEY OF A LIFETIME

*Experiencing God's power for self-control*

I was born into a Seventh-day Adventist family right as World War II started. My family didn't know all the health principles I know now, but the ones we knew we practiced diligently. We ate lots of fruits and vegetables, drank plenty of water, and got our exercise through hard work. We didn't eat unclean meats, but had clean meats at almost every meal. We never had alcohol or caffeine, so I have never smoked or done drugs. I am grateful that I was raised to know these health principles and to follow these healthy habits.

### WHAT I DIDN'T KNOW

But several things my family didn't know about were the harmfulness of eating a lot of sugar and the blessings of a

plant-based diet. One of my earliest memories is my father making punch for our meals. In my mind I still see the five-pound bag of white sugar under my father's arm with the sugar streaming into the big pot full of water and ice, and my father stirring until he had a delectable ice-cold liquid. We each drank two or three glasses of ice-cold punch with our meals. For breakfast I wolfed down Frosted Flakes, after adding two or three tablespoons of sugar. The little white gooey residue left at the bottom of the bowl, made up of milk and sugar, we liked the most. But we didn't know that we were harming ourselves. We just lived up to what we understood.

There was one total vegetarian (vegan) at our local church, Ebenezer in Philadelphia. Her name was Sister McCloud (back then young people didn't know adults' first names). She made delicious soy ice cream in the

hot summers, a sure way to all our hearts. Sister McCloud was old enough to be my grandmother, but she was full of energy. One time while my father was walking the four flights of stairs from the church basement to the attic, Sister McCloud whizzed past him and was waiting for him in the attic. It was her energy that convinced my father, who did manual labor for a living, to become a vegetarian.

My father became a vegetarian first. It took me decades to finally become one. I loved meat. When I joined the General Conference Health and Temperance Department in 1983 as an associate director, my supervisor, Dr. Mervyn Hardinge, told me that he wanted me to read *The Ministry of Healing*, by Ellen White. I had grown up reading Sister White, but hadn't read that.

While prayerfully reading *The Ministry of Healing*, I was strongly convinced that I must become a vegetarian. I was in my early 40s. I struggled at first and wondered whether I had enough self-control. The text that kept going through my mind was "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1). I decided that being acceptable to God would be my highest priority.

### VICTORIES THROUGH CHRIST

Shortly after I made my decision to be a vegetarian, I was invited to speak at a camp meeting. I spoke at the Sabbath service about my experiences in Africa as a missionary. I had many people who wanted to talk to me afterward, so was waylaid from a meal that I knew was awaiting me at a saint's house.

When I finally arrived at the home where I was to eat, I knew I was in trouble. The barbecue meat smelled so good. The guests were eating it with such gusto and relish. I went to the bathroom to wash my hands and prayed fervently that I would have the power and self-control to resist it. I must have been in there a long time, because my wife came and knocked on the door and asked why I was taking so long. I told her my dilemma and asked her if she would pray with me and for me. We prayed together in that bathroom for God to give me the power and self-control to remain a vegetarian. I don't know what happened, but when I came out of that bathroom, I no longer desired to eat any meat.

Little did I know that the Lord would lead me

**We need a power that comes from above to help us implement our knowledge.**

to another health adjustment. When I turned 76, I was almost 200 pounds and had become a diabetic. I happened upon several statements by Sister White advising two meals a day. I had been eating three meals a day my entire life. But as I had with meat, I prayed for strength to do what I believed God wanted me to do. I started to eat two meals a day instead of three. It wasn't always easy—and I quickly realized how much I enjoyed eating and counted on each meal—but God helped me, and I quickly got used to it. I also prayed for special strength to stop eating sugar, my strong weakness. I replaced cookies and cakes with dates, raisins, and other healthy sweets. I also learned not to buy sugary desserts and bring them home, where they would be a constant temptation.

In a short while I lost 30 pounds. Most incredibly, I no longer had diabetes. Under my doctor's supervision, I was able to discontinue the blood pressure, cholesterol, and stress medications I had been taking for years. To me it was a miracle!

We need knowledge, but knowledge is not enough. Peter advises that we should add to our knowledge self-control (2 Peter 1:5, 6). Temperance or self-control is a fruit of the Spirit and a gift from God (Gal. 5:23). God is willing to give us this gift if we ask Him for it. We need a power that comes from above to help us implement our knowledge. Thankfully, "God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control" (2 Tim. 1:7, ESV). 🍌

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To read more from the author on the two-meal-per-day plan, scan the code.

A mind shift in teaching self-control

# THE PRICELESS GIFT

AMIE HUBBARD

Shopping is not my favorite pastime . . . ever. Shopping, however, with three young children in tow puts shopping at the very top of my do-not-like list. What's not to like, you ask? First, remembering everything I need, even with a list! Somehow I manage to forget important things even as I am making the list, so when shopping, I scan the items in each aisle as we methodically trace our way through the store, hoping that I will see items that missed the list. Sometimes it works; sometimes it doesn't. For example, thinking I need peanut butter, only to realize that that was a month ago and I now have four peanut butter bottles in my pantry.

Second, the music. How can anyone concentrate with the music blasting through the store? All I

want is to get out of there and experience some peace and sanity! Third, trying to speed the children through the store is an extremely difficult task. You know . . . you've made it nearly to the back of the store when one of the older children timidly pipes up, "Mommy, I have to go to the bathroom." Seriously? We are almost finished! "Can you wait a few more minutes, honey? We are almost done!" No can do. So we head to the front of the store, where the restrooms are located, then return to where we left off. Only to have the baby start crying because he's legitimately hungry, and the 2-year-old in the cart is really tired of being in the cart and wants out, and the 4-year-old, whose bladder is feeling better, is tired of walking and just wants to go home. Then they all join the baby in the weeping symphony, lifting their voices together in their unified sorrow.

The time has come to demonstrate self-control.

## AN IMPORTANT GIFT

Teaching our children self-control is one of the greatest gifts we can give them! It begins with us, however. We teach self-control by showing them self-control when *our* circumstances are difficult. Self-control is a battle with self, a battle against doing what you *feel* like versus what *is* right. Ellen White writes, "The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God, requires a struggle; but the soul must submit to God before it can be renewed in holiness."<sup>1</sup>

Self-control may not be as challenging when life is easy or



things are going our way. Self-control becomes especially difficult when we are tired, hungry, discouraged, or frustrated. Self-control begins with a mindset, an understanding that this moment shall pass, but the victory that is gained by choosing to think right, speak right, act right, will last forever. God wants us to have the victory! “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22, 23).

“By some a constant battle is maintained for self-control. Daily they strive silently and prayerfully against harshness of speech and temper. These strivings may never be appreciated by human beings. They may get no praise from human lips for keeping back the hasty words which sought for utterance. The world will never see these conquests, and if it could, it would only despise the conquerors. But in heaven’s record they are registered as overcomers. There is One who witnesses every secret combat and every silent victory, and He says, ‘He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.’ If you refuse to storm or fret or scold, the Lord will show you the way through. He will help you to use the talent of speech in such a Christlike way that the precious attributes of patience, comfort, and love will be brought into the home.”<sup>2</sup>

Isn’t that beautiful? As parents, we love our children so much; we want the very best for them! We see the defects in their characters and our own; anger and frustration may manifest itself through harsh words, tantrums, striking out, or disobedience and defiance. Our greatest desire is to see them happy, helpful, and loving children—children who love Jesus and are ready to meet Him when He returns.

### THE FIRST LESSON


Once again we read, “Well may the mother inquire with deep anxiety, as she looks upon the children given to her care, What is the great aim and object of their education? Is it to fit them for life and its duties, to qualify them to take an honorable position in the world, to do good, to benefit their fellow-beings, to gain eventually the reward of the righteous? If so, then the first lesson to be taught them is self-control; for no undisciplined,

**We are tempted to modify bad behavior to good behavior rather than remembering we have a greater work.**

headstrong person can hope for success in this world or reward in the next.”<sup>3</sup>

We are tempted to just modify bad behavior to good behavior rather than remembering we have a greater work, that of reaching our children’s hearts. We teach our children to submit to God by our own example. When *we* choose to speak kindly, when *we* choose to stop and pray before acting rashly, when *we* choose to consistently instruct our children to value self-control and celebrate the victories gained each day, however small they may be, the Lord will bless our efforts! Remember the goal: the purpose of discipline is not to punish bad behavior, but to teach righteousness, to draw hearts to Jesus.

“If parents would take up their God-given work and would teach self-restraint, self-denial, and self-control to their children, both by precept and example, they would find that while they were seeking to do their duty, so as to meet the approval of God, they would be learning precious lessons in the school of Christ. They would be learning patience, forbearance, love, and meekness; and these are the very lessons that they must teach to their children.”<sup>4</sup>

Jesus has promised to be with us. He has promised to give us wisdom, courage, and victory. He has overcome the world! He longs to impart to us, to our children, the fruit of the Spirit, that our homes may be a taste of heaven here on earth. Press on, dear fathers, mothers, and children, for the victory is ours through Jesus! 

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1952), p. 443.

<sup>3</sup> Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1954), p. 91.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

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A woman with long, wavy blonde hair is shown in profile, looking down at a smartphone she is holding in her hands. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue and white, suggesting an outdoor setting. The text "NOT MY WILL," is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif font.

**NOT MY  
WILL,**

A close-up shot of a person's hands clasped together in a prayerful gesture. The person is wearing a light-colored, long-sleeved shirt. Below the hands, an open book with text on its pages is visible. The text "BUT GOD'S" is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif font.

**BUT  
GOD'S**



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## The key to self-control

JOHN PECKHAM

Soon Jesus would be crucified. As the day drew near, Jesus was deeply distressed and withdrew with His disciples to Gethsemane to pray. He instructed Peter, James, and John to also pray and keep watch.

While Jesus prayed, however, they slept.

Finding them sleeping, Jesus lamented, “Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:40, 41).

### THE STRUGGLE

The flesh is weak indeed. Have you ever felt as if you face a war inside your own mind? As Paul describes this struggle: “I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members” (Rom. 7:22, 23).

Why do humans struggle so much with self-control, and what can we do about it?

The answer to the first part of this question is simple. Since the fall of humanity in Eden, we are vulnerable to the deceptions and attacks of the fork-tongued serpent of old, “the devil,” who “walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8), and we inherit a bent or inclination toward sin—what Paul referred to as “the law of sin which is in my members.”

Have you ever experienced two conflicting desires at the same time?

Perhaps you want to eat another plate of a delicious meal, but you also do not want to do so because you do not want to gain weight. At one level you desire to eat more (a first-order desire), but at another level you desire not to desire more (a second-order desire).

When faced with real temptations, we just need stronger willpower, right? If I just try hard enough, perhaps I can impose my better will over my lesser inclinations. I might achieve some success by sheer willpower. Yet, insofar as my inner desires and incli-

nations continue pressing me in the opposite direction, relying on sheer willpower will amount to setting myself up to fail—sooner or later.

What we need, then, is not merely to resist such inclinations, but to be transformed at the level of our deepest inner desires, because sooner or later our actions follow what we desire most deeply—consciously or subconsciously.

What can we do, then?

In three words: Look to Jesus.

More specifically, look to Jesus—“the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:2)—as our perfect example and intercessor.

### JESUS, OUR PERFECT EXAMPLE

Jesus provides the supreme example of self-control.

In Gethsemane, Jesus faced the ultimate trial.

While His disciples slept, He prayed that, if possible, the Father would deliver Him from the suffering and death of the cross, but He also prayed, “Nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done” (Luke 22:42).

He thus surrendered His will to be aligned with the Father’s will.

At one level Jesus wanted to live rather than suffer and die. This was not a sinful desire, but it conflicted with His deeper desire to save the world, in accordance with the Father’s will.


He chose not to avoid the cross as He desired, but “for the joy that was set before Him” Christ “endured the cross” (Heb. 12:2).

As Christ faced the cross, He could not see through the clouds of darkness. He could not then feel the joy that would result from His sacrifice for us. He could not safely rely on His emotions, His bodily impulses, or His immediate desires. Instead, He relied on the truth of divine revelation about God’s will, which revealed what was really for the best in the long run, even when circumstances seemed otherwise.

Jesus overcame through fervent prayer and surrendering His will to the Father’s will.

In contrast, His disciples failed.

Not long before, Jesus foretold that Peter would deny Him three times, warning that Satan demanded to “sift” Peter like “wheat” (Luke 22:31, 34). Peter protested, but after Jesus was arrested, Peter did just as Jesus foretold, cursing and vehemently denying that He even knew Jesus (Matt. 26:69-75).



# The great controversy is primarily a conflict at the level of our minds—relative to what we believe and will, ultimately coming down to whom we trust and love.

RUAN CARLOS / LUKASZ SZMIGIEL

The other disciples fell away also, just as Jesus foretold (verse 31).

In contrast, through fervent prayer and surrender to the Father's will, Jesus stood firm in the face of the ultimate trial—so severe that He even sweat drops of blood (Luke 22:44).

This was no easy task for Christ. Although Jesus had no inclination toward sin, the temptations He faced were far greater than any we will ever face. He carried the weight of all the world's sins on His shoulders. As Ellen White put it: "Never will man be tried with temptations as powerful as those which assailed Christ."<sup>1</sup>

Imagine the temptation in Gethsemane and beyond. Imagine the pull to just walk away.

Though divine, Jesus was not to use His divine power for Himself, so He did not employ His divine power to resist this or other temptations. Instead, He prayed to the Father for strength and sustenance, surrendering His will to the Father.

Christ's self-control was inseparably tied to His surrender to the Father's will and reliance on power from on high through prayer.

## TRAINING IN PREPARATION FOR THE TRIAL

Jesus, however, did not *begin* praying and surrendering to the Father's will in Gethsemane. Both were His continual practice throughout His ministry. When severe trial came, He was already prepared.

Earlier, when Satan tempted Him in the wilderness, Jesus met each temptation with Scripture—"It is written" (see Matt. 4:4, 7, 10).

If we are to stand, particularly during the final crisis of the last days, we must follow Christ's example of ongoing fervent prayer, utter surrender

to the Father's will, and internalizing and following the teachings of Scripture—living "by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (verse 4).

To do so, however, requires more than a surface reading of Scripture. Even the devil can quote Scripture—as he did while tempting Jesus in the wilderness (see verse 6). But Satan quoted Scripture out of context, twisting it. We can also do so or be susceptible to others doing so if we neglect careful and deep study of God's Word, if we neglect to understand each part of Scripture in light of the whole of what Scripture teaches.

The great controversy is primarily a conflict at the level of our minds—relative to what we believe and will, ultimately coming down to whom we trust and love.

This is why Paul emphasizes "bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). This can be accomplished not merely by wishing away corrupt thoughts; discipleship of one's mind requires *filling* one's mind with good things—through Scripture and prayer.

This requires discipline and regular practice, like an athlete training for a contest. One does not simply wake up one day and run a marathon in the Olympics without first training long and hard. The contest Christ's followers face, however, is far greater than any marathon, especially in the last days.

Employing the metaphor of training for a race, Paul writes, "I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (1 Cor. 9:27).

As the end draws near, such "training" becomes more important. Throughout the great controversy the devil wages a war of disinformation, seeking

to intoxicate people with the teachings and practices of Babylon (see Rev. 12:7-9; 14:8). Powerful delusions and trials will come upon the world before the end that, if it were possible, would cause even the elect to fall.

Ellen G. White wrote, “The coming struggle will be marked with a terrible intensity such as the world has never witnessed. Satan’s deceptions will be more subtle, his assaults more determined. If it were possible, he would lead astray the elect.”<sup>2</sup>

As the end draws near, self-control—particularly in terms of surrendering to the will of God—will become ever more countercultural. Even now the world regularly preaches self-indulgence—do and be whatever you want, whatever makes you feel good. Scripture, in contrast, calls to self-denial and self-control, seeking to know and follow the truth.

In an age of self-indulgence, self-control is more crucial than ever.

As Peter wrote: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world” (1 Peter 5:8, 9).

As we have seen, Peter knew what he was talking about.

Although he was at first self-reliant and adamant that he would never fall away like the others (Matt. 26:33), Peter learned that one can stand against Satan’s attacks only through God’s power, and thus he added, “May the God of all grace . . . after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you” (1 Peter 5:10).

We must look to Christ, then, not only as our perfect example but also as our continual intercessor.

### **JESUS, OUR PERFECT INTERCESSOR**

Even now Christ intercedes for believers as our high priest in the heavenly sanctuary, working for and in all who accept Him as Savior *and* Lord. He is “able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25).

Likewise, we need the work of the Holy Spirit, who “makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom. 8:26).

Although the time of the devil’s power is running out (Rev. 12:12), he remains a powerful foe,

against whom none should think they can stand in their own strength.

Enduring victory in this conflict can come only through Christ and the power of the Spirit. Indeed, “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness,” and last but not least, “self-control” (Gal. 5:22).

As we near the close of earth’s history, the enemy’s snares and temptations will only increase, particularly against God’s people.

Some have the mistaken idea that following Christ will be easy. But Scripture teaches that Christ’s followers will face severe trials. As Jesus Himself foretold: “In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

As the day draws near, then, we need to be more diligent and vigilant:

- (1) praying and watching fervently,
- (2) surrendering our will to God’s will—not my will, but God’s be done,
- (3) disciplining ourselves and taking every thought captive according to the Word of God, and
- (4) being sober-minded and prepared to stand against the enemy’s deceptions and assaults in this cosmic conflict.

This all requires continual reliance on God’s work for us and in us—recognizing that Christ and the Holy Spirit continually intercede for us. As Ellen White put it: “Not one moment can we be secure except as we rely upon God, the life hidden with Christ. Watchfulness and prayer are the safeguards of purity.”<sup>3</sup>

Our self-control is inseparably tied to our surrender to God’s will and reliance on His power. Even as a branch dies if disconnected from the vine, apart from Christ we can do nothing (John 15:5). But with Christ the final victory is assured.

Christ will never leave you nor forsake you. He will always help you. Give yourself to Him and trust in Him. You will find self-control in total surrender to Him. ♣

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 4, p. 45.

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

<sup>3</sup> Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1917), p. 84.

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# SELF-CONTROL— A CHARACTER OF CHRISTIANITY

*Unpacking one of the fruit of the Spirit*

**ELLEN G. WHITE**

*This is an excerpt from a letter written in Adelaide, Australia, October 17, 1892, to J. H. Kellogg.—Editors.*

**I**t is the positive duty of all Christians professing to believe the truth to reveal its principles at all times and in all places. They are enjoined to fight the good fight of faith. Satan is walking about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour; he works with his angels to put every soul off his guard in little things.

Those who with becoming fortitude recognize great tests and bereavements and calamities in life as ordered or permitted of God, and rely upon God for grace according to the day, are upset and lose self-control over some petty vexation or some words spoken. And the enemy, walking about, watching his chance, and seeking whom he may devour, is full of exultation, for he can work with his satanic cunning to separate very friends. He [who] would repay the deepest injury with kindness is irritated and loses his self-control by an act of discourtesy or an act of scorn. The man

who feels at times sincerely, and would willingly give his life to save a soul from death, will fail to conquer a spirit and habit, and will by wrong words and unwise actions imperil a soul and throw him on Satan's battleground where he cannot be rescued.

## **THE ONGOING STRUGGLE**

Now, my brother, you will meet with trials in little things, but hold fast your integrity. I know whereof I speak. "Having done all to stand." [Ephesians 6:13.] Never show anything but a noble spirit, for all the universe of heaven is watching the result of the battle. Satan is watching to see you off guard, to see you stirred up to act impetuously, that he may obtain the advantage to sift you as wheat. . . . There must be no inconsistency in your faith and practice.

As a representative man it makes the matter more serious, for such things would injure the religious tone of your character. You who can stand as it were between the living and the dead, having a firm nerve and clear discriminating eye in critical operations which decide the destiny of human life, must not in any way, at any time, lose your Christlike dignity and self-control. You are worn, and now you need as never before to place your hand in the hand of Christ, and by an experimental knowledge [realize] that you can stay your soul upon God.

Believe me when I tell you that it is your privilege and duty to possess your soul in patience under insult and provocation. You can do this only through Christ Jesus. Why, He is your staff, your wisdom, your sancti-

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fication and your righteousness. Your character cannot be divided into parts, one made of great and noble things and regulated by the law of God, and the other made of little things and subjected to nervous irritations, to variations and caprices of natural traits of character that obtain the ascendancy. Such a course would cut off a large part of your service for the Master. The want of self-control, a calm spirit, robs God of His proper right to reveal His perfection of character in you, and produces new difficulties for you. . . .

### KEEPING CLOSE TO CHRIST

Your work is most difficult and trying, and you must have Jesus close beside you every moment, as a counselor, as a refuge wherein you may run and be safe. Do not allow your thoughts to get wrought up over any of the vexatious troubles that are constantly arising. Keep calm and think of Jesus who is close by your side, and what you can do to please Him on this occasion. [Say], "I am to represent Christ," and then you can act manfully, nobly; and the grace of Christ, the Holy Spirit which is God's gift for you to grasp, will strengthen [you] with all might in the inner man. . . .

You are so situated in your responsible position that you must necessarily meet all classes of people with all kinds of characters. Is it any wonder that you shall very often meet professed Christians who are inconsistent in practice? The force of a corrupt nature allowed full liberty over the little things, shall, when brought to the point of decision against inclination, disdain all restraint and claim entire independence.

A course of consistency becomes doubly difficult when it is made to contradict not only natural inclination but also acquired habits of a lifetime. When you jostle against the elements manifested by those who have no Bible religion but only a profession, do not forget that you are a Christian. You greatly lower your influence and mar your own Christian experience when you lose your self-control, and give them the least occasion to think that you have ill-treated them. Leave not this impression upon their minds, if you can possibly avoid it. In this probationary time we are forming our characters for the future immortal life, but that is not all, for in this very process of character building we need to be extremely cautious how we build, for others will build after the pattern we give them.

**In this probationary time we are forming our characters for the future immortal life, but that is not all, for in this very process of character building we need to be extremely cautious how we build, for others will build after the pattern we give them.**

### KNOWN BY OUR ACTIONS

We may never know until the judgment the influence of a kind, considerate course of action to the inconsistent, the unreasonable, and unworthy. If, after a course of provocation and injustice on their part, you treat them as you would an innocent person—you even take pains to show them special acts of kindnesses—then you have acted the part of a Christian, and they become surprised and ashamed and see their course of action and meanness more clearly than if you plainly stated their aggravated acts to rebuke them.

If you had laid their wrong course of action before them, they would have braced themselves in stubbornness and defiance; but to be treated in tenderness and consideration they feel more deeply their own course of action and contrast it with yours. Then you have the staff in your own hands; you occupy vantage ground; and when you show a solicitude for their souls, they know that you are no hypocrite, but that you mean every word you say. . . .

God wants you to be a strong man in self-control, strong because you have the meekness and lowliness of Christ. . . . The continuity of Christian influence upon minds trains the soul after Christ and puts through human instrumentalities the new life implanted by the Spirit of God after His own divine likeness. ♣

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Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry. This selection was taken from letter 20, 1892, in *Letters and Manuscripts*, 1891-1892, vol. 7, p. 197.

# CHALLENGES REACHING THE UNREACHED IN MISSIONS

*A personal reflection on the need*

Less than  
2 percent  
Christian

## LIMONI MANU O'UIHA

I visited Bangkok for the first time 20 years ago. On this visit my wife accompanied me to the Chiang Mai Mission Institute. The city is renowned for its rich cultural heritage, as well as its scenic beauty and natural surroundings. Chiang Mai has more than 300 temples, many of which are open to the public. Temples such as Wat Phra Singh, Wat Chedi Luang, and Wat Chiang Man are among the most popular in Chiang Mai. A field trip to a few temples made me think about the sacred call to ministry. It brought home the urgent need for more missionaries to reach unreached people groups with the good news of salvation.

## UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS

The Joshua Project studies unreached people groups around the world.<sup>1</sup> It reports 7,382 unreached people groups, which represent about 3.4 billion people. Among these unreached people groups, less than 2 percent of their population is Christian, and gospel access is limited or nonexistent. About 42 percent of the world's population lives in unreached communities. Most of these people groups live in Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa.

Islam (25 percent of the world's population) and Hinduism (15 percent) represent the most unreached people groups. We have unreached people groups in all countries worldwide.

7,382 unreached  
people groups  
(about 3.4 billion people)

About 42 percent of  
the world's population  
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## CHALLENGES FACED BY MISSIONARIES

As missionary families at the mission institute shared their stories about trying to reach the unreached in the mission field, several challenges stood out to me.

Language and cultural barriers were significant obstacles. Linguistic diversity makes communication with unreached people challenging. These people groups often have deeply ingrained religious and ideological beliefs. In some countries political and social instability create a dangerous environment for gospel workers and make it difficult to reach people groups.

Significant resources, including finances, transportation, and technology, are necessary to share the gospel with the unreached. Especially in remote and underdeveloped areas of the world, it isn't easy to secure and manage these resources. The way of life of many unreached people groups

has been passed down from generation to generation, making them resistant to change. Sometimes they may be closed to new ideas or perspectives, and view outsiders with suspicion and mistrust. Because of these complex issues, sharing the gospel in these areas requires time and patience.

Perhaps one of the biggest challenges is the shortage of workers. Additionally, workers may not be well trained or equipped to share the gospel effectively among these people groups. Lord of the harvest, please send out reapers. The harvest is plenty, but the laborers are few (Matt. 9:37, 38).

### LESSONS FROM THE MINISTRY OF PAUL

I read again about the experiences of Paul on Mars Hill, recorded in Acts 17:16-34, and found several crucial lessons still relevant for us today.

I found that understanding the culture and beliefs of the people we are trying to reach is critical. Paul takes the time to understand and engage with the Greek culture and beliefs of the Athenians, using their religious language and references to make his message more relatable to them. It makes me wonder how much time we have spent engaging with people of different religious persuasions. Have we found opportunities to build bridges with our Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Catholic, or Wesleyan acquaintances?

The gospel message has power to challenge and transform the hearts and minds of unreached people. Paul urged the Athenians to turn away from idolatry and false gods and place their trust in the one true God through the message of Jesus. He was willing to adapt the message and approach to different audiences. But although Paul contextualized his message to the Athenians, he didn't compromise the essential message of the gospel. When we share Jesus, there is a need for humility and open-mindedness. But with a firm commitment to the principles of Scripture.

We must refrain from hasty judgments of other people or their cultures. Even though many rejected Paul's message, he did not give up on the Athenians. He was persistent and patient as he shared the gospel with them, trusting that the seed he planted would one day bear fruit (cf. 1 Cor. 3:6, 7; 2 Cor. 9:10). Despite facing opposition and persecution, Paul remained bold and courageous in sharing the gospel message with the Athenians.

The gospel message has power to challenge and transform the hearts and minds of unreached people.

### WHAT CAN WE DO?

There are many ways each of us can help reach people who have not heard the gospel of Jesus. Here are some things to keep in mind:

*God is, by nature, a missionary God.* Saving people is God's mission (Luke 19:10). Let us partner with God in the mission of saving souls.

*Focus on the gospel.* We have no power besides the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is what we should share.

*Pray.* It is the key in the hand of faith. Pray for the harvest. Pray for workers. Be persistent, patient, bold, and courageous when praying for God's leading.

*Engage.* Paul's experiences remind us about the importance of understanding and engaging with the culture and beliefs of the people we are trying to reach. Be willing to adapt and contextualize your message and approach to make it easier for people to understand the good news of salvation. Remain humble and open-minded.

*Partner.* Work with local churches and organizations to establish relationships with people in the community and provide support and resources for sharing the gospel. Support missions through prayer and finances.

*Be creative.* Use your talents in art, music, or other creative expressions, and social media skills, to share the gospel in a meaningful and relatable way with others.

*Appeal to others.* Revitalize and encourage the missionary spirit. Inspire (or sponsor) young people to train as missionaries, especially to reach the unreached.

The most important principle is to be guided by the love of Christ. So while the challenges of missions to unreached people are great, we have nothing to fear. Greater is He that is in us than the one who is against us (1 John 4:4). 🍌

\* <https://joshuaproject.net>, accessed July 20, 2023.

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# RICH AND INCREASED WITH BUSYNESS

ALISTAIR HUONG

ESTHERPOON / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS / GETTY IMAGES

**S**o, what do you do?" How many times have we asked or been asked this seemingly benign question during introductions with someone new? Usually referring to our profession or career, this question reveals the subconscious assumption that who we are is inextricably determined by what we do.

Work is a good thing. God gave us work in the garden, and it was one of the institutions that remained after the Fall, albeit with more sweat involved (Gen. 3:17-19). In fact, the Bible makes clear that "in all toil there is profit" (Prov. 14:23, ESV), cautions that "if anyone will not work, neither shall he eat" (2 Thess. 3:10), and warns bluntly that "if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Tim. 5:8).

Surely providing for the family is honorable, and that requires working to acquire wealth. After all, God Himself reminds us that "it is He who gives you power to get wealth" (Deut. 8:18), and He encourages His servants to grow their talents (Matt. 25:26, 27).

Ought not the Bible-believing Christian to pursue work and wealth for the glory of God? Clearly, yes. But is it possible that what we call "work" today is something else entirely?

## WORKISM AND WORSHIP

In a 2019 article in *The Atlantic* the term "workism" was coined. It is defined as "the belief that employment is not only necessary for

economic production but is also the centerpiece of one's identity and life purpose."<sup>1</sup> Identity and life purpose are things often considered under the purview of religion. Can it be that many in Western society are looking to work to supply what ought to be provided by faith? In fact, that same article argues this very point. "In the past century, the American conception of work has shifted from *jobs* to *careers* to *callings*—from necessity to status to meaning."<sup>2</sup>

"Perhaps long hours are part of an arms race for status and income among the moneyed elite. Or maybe the logic here isn't economic at all. It's emotional—even spiritual. The best-educated and highest-earning Americans, who can have whatever they want, have chosen the office for the same rea-





## Is it possible that what we call “work” today is something else entirely?

son that devout Christians attend church on Sundays: It’s where they feel most themselves.”<sup>3</sup>

Is it any wonder that many of the most lionized heroes of modern society today are the high-octane, hard-charging, always-working executives, entrepreneurs, leaders, and business moguls? They are held up as paragons of success; their hustle is the benchmark of how hard one should work; and their wealth is the envious aspiration of many.

It’s evident that these values permeate the culture when people as young as high school or middle school ages proudly declare how busy they are with school assignments, music lessons, sports, and a myriad of other extracurricular activities. Apparently “busyness” is a virtue, a badge of honor to display like a patch on our Pathfinder sash.

Or is this no different than a modernized golden calf?

We all worship something, and human nature is prone to worship that from which we derive our identity.

Do many of us live in a world, even those of us blessed to work in “ministry” positions, in which the Protestant work ethic is supplanted with the religion of workism and the gospel is substituted by the American dream? In which the mere activity of being busy *for* God is worshipped in place *of* God?

### THE IDOLATRY OF LAODICEA

Laodiceans are “rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing” (Rev. 3:17, KJV). Can it be that many people feel no need of identity or life purpose from the Eternal Source because they are too busy trying to find fulfillment through their professional and material pursuits? Can it be that the hustle and bustle of being busy has crowded out the quiet knocking of Jesus at the door?

Work is a God-given blessing and should be undertaken for His glory and the advancement of His kingdom, but when abused, it is a poor substitute for a deity—one no less fickle and capri-

cious than the pagan gods of old. “And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ” (Col. 3:23, 24).

### THE SABBATH: THE INTERSECTION OF WORK, REST, AND WORSHIP

At the heart of the three angels’ messages is a call to worship our Creator (Rev. 14:7)—a distinct reminder of the Sabbath.

Integral to the Sabbath commandment is six days of labor, so true Sabbathkeeping requires meaningful work. But the Sabbath is the escape valve one day each week, providing temperance from our work and reminding us who is truly worthy of our worship. It recalibrates the relationship of work within the context of how it was given to humans and its purpose from the hand of a benevolent Creator. Most of all, it reminds us of the source of our true identity—sons and daughters of God—first by creation and again through redemption.

In a world worshipping at the altar of workism, this message is needed more than ever. The three angels’ messages and the truth of the Sabbath speaks to the very need of Laodicea and the world around us. It is the reminder that work doesn’t define who we are; it’s merely the service we render to the One who does.

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/02/religion-workism-making-americans-miserable/583441/>

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

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# Bill and Jill

## now realize more than ever that life is not guaranteed

and want to ensure that their kids would be taken care of if something were to happen to them. But life is busy, and they don't know the costs and time considerations of creating a will.



To learn more about Bill and Jill's story, scan the QR code or visit [willplan.org/Billandjill](https://willplan.org/Billandjill)



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# FIVE WAYS TO UPLIFT AND TRANSFORM ANY ENVIRONMENT

**W**hat is a distinguishing relational quality that can add value in any context? Encouragement.

Encouragement is a powerful personality trait. Whether inherent or learned, encouragement is the ability to inspire and build people through positive attitudes, words, and actions. It is a change catalyst that is transformative and has a positive effect on the producer and recipient.

## OBJECTIVE AFFIRMATION

A classic Bible example of encouragement is Barnabas, the “son of encouragement” (Acts 4:36; 11:24). The apostle Paul also wrote about this relational principle (1 Thess. 5:11, NIV).

Encouraging words and actions create an atmosphere of life, hope, courage, and truth. The Holy Spirit can use an encourager to reflect Christ and give glory to God.

Relationship researcher John Gottman suggests that in healthy relationships there should be at least five positive interactions for each negative one. That’s a five-to-one-ratio goal of being encouraging over being discouraging.

## ENCOURAGEMENT MOMENT

Some years ago an evening service was interrupted in a large church on the West Coast. An unkempt homeless man walked into the packed church. None of the ushers greeted or assisted him, and nobody made space for him as he walked down the aisle.

Getting to the front of the church, he awkwardly sat down on the floor, cross-legged, right in the middle of the aisle. At just that moment, a deacon walked from the back and sat on the floor beside the man!

Wow! That man was a “Barnabas type” who created an encouragement moment (EM). In a group of 500-plus people, he was one encourager who made all the difference in the life of a man who eventually became a believer.

## CREATING ENCOURAGERS

At this time of social divisiveness, the challenge is to be a kind, intentional encourager. How is that possible? Here are five simple tips on how to be AWAKE and create EMs. Be . . .

**Actively Alert:** Keep your eyes and ears open for opportunities to uplift those in your environment.

**Winsomely Warm:** Sometimes words and acts aren’t appropriate. Just your empathetic presence and prayers can create a healing atmosphere.

**Attentively Agile:** Whenever you intentionally demonstrate a genuine loving concern for people, they will be keenly aware of your goodness, and it will mitigate against discouragement and negativism.

**Knowledgeably Kind:** The most effective encouragers are learning, listening leaders. They sensitively seek to understand how to create good and develop solutions.

**Enthusiastically Empathetic:** Encouragers (1) see people and situations as storehouses of potential because they discern what they can be and how far they can go, and (2) know circumstances and conditions are changeable with encouragement.

You can transform any environment by being humble, authentic, and committed to being AWAKE to act on any encouragement opportunities around you. 🍀

TRANSFORMATION TIPS  
DELBERT W. BAKER



ENCOURAGING WORDS AND ACTIONS CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE OF LIFE, HOPE, COURAGE, AND TRUTH.

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# THE FINAL GOOD NIGHT

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*Learning how much we cannot know*

**LAURA FRARY**

**O**n December 19, 1999, I said good night to my dad for the last time. He had just dropped me off at my mom's apartment earlier that evening. Over the summer my parents had separated, and when I started fifth grade that fall, I began alternating weeks living with my dad in my childhood home and my mom in her new apartment. Each night I would call whichever parent I wasn't currently staying with to say good night before bed. I would even call on Sunday evenings, such as the evening of December 19, despite having just "switched" homes a few hours earlier.

Before hanging up that evening, I remember my dad giving me a reason for why I might not be able to get in touch with him the following evening—he said he had a meeting of some sort.

I remember thinking it was odd, because he didn't usually have meetings, but I had no reason to suspect my dad wasn't being honest with me.

Sure enough, the following evening when I called, he didn't answer. My mom let me stay up a few minutes late that night just in case he called back, because we had never missed a call. He never called, but I don't remember being too worried about not hearing from him, since the night before, he had provided what felt like a reasonable explanation.

## **FINDING OUT**

The next day, Tuesday, was my last day of school before Christmas break. I left school that day with a bag full of Christmas goodies that I couldn't wait to show off to whoever was picking me up. I don't remember who it was supposed to be, since, because of work schedules, my dad often helped pick me up during my mom's week with me, but I am positive it was not supposed to be my aunt, who was the one standing at the end of the sidewalk waiting for me. I don't recall what explanation she gave me for why she was there in place of either of my parents, but I remember immediately thinking back to my missed phone call with my dad the night before. I also remember the feeling in my gut that something was terribly wrong. My mom was waiting for me at my aunt's house, and when I arrived, she explained that when my dad hadn't shown up to work for two days in a row, his employer had contacted her. She had been the one to find him.

When I tell people that my dad died by suicide, the first thing people want to know is how. I don't know if I'm alone in this, but I hate this question so much. I'll never understand the desire to know or want to discuss the method a person chose for ending their life.

"Why?" is always the next question. He didn't leave us a note or an explanation. I remember my mom trying to explain depression and mental illness, in words that an 11-year-old child would understand, to help me comprehend what had happened. I remember her saying that he wasn't thinking clearly, that something had changed in his brain so he wasn't himself anymore. "Daddy wasn't Daddy when he did this," she said. I am forever grateful that he was thinking clearly enough to wait until I wasn't home and wouldn't be the one to find him. I'll always wonder if he knew that night when we were on the phone. Had he already decided before he drove me to my mom's that afternoon?

We found out after his death that he had seen a doctor and had been given medication for depression, as one might expect for a person going through a painful life experience such as divorce. But friends speculated that he hadn't been taking the medication, since he had mentioned to them that he didn't like the way it made him feel.

### PROCESSING

Looking back now as an adult, I see so much that my 11-year-old self missed. I can recognize now that my dad was not acting like himself those last few months. There is a lot of guilt in wondering: *What if I had noticed back then what I can clearly see now? Could I have spoken up and gotten him help?* Of course, I understand that I was far too young to hold myself responsible for not knowing. It is both comforting and alarming hearing that other family members and friends have since verbalized the same thing: looking back, they can see the cries for help, but they too were too late in understanding his pain.

A few years later a girl at school told me that my dad wouldn't be in heaven, because "suicide is a sin, the breaking of the 'thou shalt not kill' commandment, and once you die you can't ask for forgiveness." I've heard similar arguments over the years since my dad's death. I always think back to what my mom said to me on that day: "Daddy wasn't Daddy when he did this."

I'm so glad that it's  
God's job, not ours,  
to determine who is  
saved in the end.

Several weeks before my dad's death he had been invited by a friend to attend church with them. I remember going once or twice with him. While I often attended church with a school friend, this was the first time in my life either of my parents had attended a church. What seemed like an odd change in his behavior at the time now brings me comfort.

Losing a loved one to suicide left me with so many unanswered questions, especially regarding what would happen next for my dad. We later found out that my dad had sought out counseling with the pastor of his new church. This gives me hope that before his darkest moments my dad had begun developing a personal relationship with the Lord. While as an adult I have a deeper understanding of chemical imbalances and what happens in the brain when a person experiences depression, I don't believe any of us can say for sure what that means for the salvation of a person who takes their own life.

I find my peace in knowing that God is a fair and loving judge who knows my dad far beyond what I can ever imagine. I'm so glad that it's God's job, not ours, to determine who is saved in the end. Each day I do my best to leave it in His hands and choose instead to spend my time and energy doing what I can to reach those around me who may be facing a similar struggle, and help them to feel less alone. 🍀

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MART PRODUCTION

# SUICIDE AND SUFFERING

*Ministering to those in the shadow of death*

TORBEN BERGLAND

**W**hen life is smooth and things go well, the questions of life’s meaning and one’s future aren’t very troubling to most (cf. Eccl. 5:20, NIV).<sup>1</sup> But when the inevitable pains of living in a sin-broken world wash over us, we may ask, “Why all this suffering? Is it worth it? Is there any way out?” Suicide is one way out. Death is an end to suffering. But it’s not a solution to the problems.

None of us want to suffer. Yet suffering comes to all of us. When it does, it may feel unbearable. When suffering dispels all sense of joy and purpose, we desperately seek solutions to the problems, to put an end to the suffering, and find a way out. Suicide is an escape option, but it’s seldom a genuine desire for death. Every cell in the body has the “breath of life” (Gen. 2:7) and fights against death. The better way out of suffering is not suicide, but to alleviate the suffering and find ways to manage and cope with it. As a psychiatrist I have yet to meet a patient I thought really wanted to die.

## WHAT IS SUICIDE?

Suicide occurs when people harm themselves with the intention of ending their life, and they die as a result. There is, on average, one suicide every 40 seconds, or more than 2,000 suicides per day. Suicide is a leading cause of death for teenagers and young adults around the world.

A suicide attempt occurs when people harm themselves with the intention of ending their life, but they do not die. Estimates are that for every suicide, there are about 20 to 40 suicide attempts.

This means that someone, somewhere in the world, attempts suicide about every other second. Females are more likely than males to attempt suicide, while males are more likely to die from suicide, as they often resort to more lethal methods.

## WHO IS AT RISK OF SUICIDE?

Suicide does not discriminate. Anyone may become suicidal. People of all genders, ages, ethnicities, and religions may be at risk. Suicidal behavior is complex, and there is no single cause. The most common risk factors for suicide include:

- depression, other mental disorders, or substance use disorders
- chronic pain
- family history of a mental disorder or substance use

- exposure to family violence, including physical or sexual abuse
- exposure, either directly or indirectly, to others' suicidal behavior

Fortunately, most people who have risk factors will not attempt suicide. And many who have suicidal thoughts will not act on them. It is therefore difficult to predict the risk for suicide. Some important warning signs may indicate acute danger and a need for immediate attention:

- talking about wanting to die or kill themselves
- talking about feeling empty or hopeless or having no reason to live
- talking about feeling trapped or feeling that there are no solutions
- withdrawing from family and friends
- giving away important possessions and putting affairs in order
- saying goodbye to friends and family
- taking great risks that could lead to death, such as driving recklessly

Other serious warning signs that someone may be at risk for attempting suicide include:

- displaying extreme mood swings, suddenly changing from very sad to very calm or happy
- planning or looking for ways to kill themselves, such as searching for lethal methods online, stockpiling pills, or buying a gun
- talking about feeling great guilt or shame
- using alcohol or drugs more often
- acting anxious or agitated

Stressful life events (such as the loss of a loved one, legal troubles, or financial difficulties) and interpersonal stressors (such as shame, harassment, bullying, discrimination, or relationship troubles) may contribute to suicide risk, especially when they occur along with other suicide risk factors.

It is important to note that suicide is not a normal response to stress. Suicidal thoughts or actions are a sign of extreme distress and should not be ignored or dismissed. If these warning signs are evident, get help as soon as possible, particularly if the behavior is new or has increased recently.<sup>2</sup>

## HOW TO HELP SOMEONE WHO HAS SUICIDAL THOUGHTS AND PLANS

Whenever you have a suspicion that someone might be suicidal and you are not aware that someone else is taking care of the person, you

## You might help save a life.

should engage with the person about it, or make sure someone else does. You might help save a life. I have found that the best way to address such concerns is a straightforward approach, being direct, respectful, empathetic, and caring. Here are some recommendations on what to do:

*Ask:* "Are you thinking about killing yourself?" or something similar. It's not an easy question, but studies show that asking at-risk individuals if they are suicidal does not increase suicides or suicidal thoughts. The more comfortable and direct you are able to be talking about it, the easier it may be for the person to be open and honest in return.

*Be there:* Listen carefully and learn what the individual is thinking and feeling. Research suggests that acknowledging and talking about suicide may reduce rather than increase suicidal thoughts.

*Keep them safe:* A person who is suicidal should never be left alone. Stay with them until someone else can take over. Ask them how they would kill themselves, and eliminate, if possible, a suicidal person's access to lethal items or places. If in doubt about what you should do, reach out to a suicide hotline and ask for advice.

*Help them connect:* If someone is having suicidal thoughts and plans, they require social and professional support. Depending on what they want, who is available, and what seems appropriate, help them make a connection with a suicide hotline, or a trusted individual, such as a family member, friend, pastor, or mental health professional.

*Stay connected:* Staying in touch after a crisis or after being discharged from care can make a difference. Studies have shown the number of suicide deaths goes down when someone follows up with the at-risk person.<sup>3</sup> 📌

<sup>1</sup> This article is an adaptation of an article written for *Elder's Digest*: Torben Bergland, "Suicide: Ministering to Those in the Shadow of Death," *Elder's Digest*, October/December 2022, pp. 12-14.

<sup>2</sup> National Institute of Mental Health, "Suicide Prevention," [www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/suicide-prevention](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/suicide-prevention), accessed July 28, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

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ALEXANDER GREY

## SELF-KILLING IN SCRIPTURE

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*What can we ascertain?*

The emotional scars left to family and friends in the wake of suicide are deep and produce not only feelings of loneliness but often a sense of guilt and disorientation. These negative feelings may be compounded by the plaguing question of what the Bible says about suicide. In this article we will attempt to provide some guidance on this question by making a few observations.

### IN THE BIBLE

The Bible lists seven cases of suicide and one of an attempted suicide. The best-known story is that of Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus' 12 disciples. Disappointed that Jesus was not setting up an

earthly kingdom, Judas tried to force His hand by betraying Him. Yet, when confronted in Gethsemane, Jesus still refused to fight. Seeing the failure of his plan, Judas was so emotionally disturbed that he hanged himself (Matt. 27:5).

Another well-known story is that of King Saul. After being seriously wounded in battle, he asked his armorbearer to kill him. When his armorbearer refused, Saul killed himself (1 Sam. 31:4). Seeing what the king did, the armorbearer "also fell on his sword, and died with him" (verse 5). Their actions were motivated by fear of what the enemy would do to them.

Other less-known stories include that of Ahithophel, one of the counselors of King Absalom, who hanged himself after realizing that the king had rejected his advice (2 Sam. 17:23). Abimelech, mortally wounded by a millstone thrown at him by a woman, asked his armorbearer to kill him to escape shame (Judges 9:54). Zimri became king after a coup d'état, but realizing that the people did not support him, he went into "the citadel of the royal palace and set the palace on fire around him," killing himself (1 Kings 16:18, NIV). Samson took his own life in battle against the enemy (Judges 16:29, 30).

In response to a vision, Paul and Silas journeyed to Philippi, where they baptized the influential Lydia, cast a demon out of a slave girl, and were unceremoniously thrown into prison. As Paul and Silas sang and prayed that night, an earthquake opened all the doors and



loosed all the chains. Fearing that the prisoners had all escaped, the jailer “drew his sword and was about to kill himself” when Paul called out to reassure him that not one prisoner had escaped (Acts 16:25-28). Thankfully, Paul managed to convince the jailer to abandon his plans to end his own life and instead begin a new life in Christ.

## OBSERVATIONS

Most of the suicides in these biblical accounts took place in the context of war, during which the individuals were already immersed in the immediate context of death. We also see fear or shame as a significant factor in the accounts of self-killing. Correspondingly, there is evidence of a low self-image in some instances, as well as guilt in others. This highlights how an individual’s mental health state can impact the decision to take one’s own life. All incidents take place in the context of a highly emotional state of mind.

We must take a moment here to distinguish between suicide and martyrdom. The distinction lies in one’s view of life. Martyrdom is the willingness to surrender one’s life for fundamental convictions and values that are held as nonnegotiable. It also encompasses heroic acts of self-sacrifice that result in the preservation of other lives (a soldier throws himself or herself on a grenade to save others). Martyrdom is grounded in a respect and love for life. On the other hand, suicide is fundamentally a denial of the value of the present life. It is a person’s final solution to a life perceived as unbearable.

In these Bible stories the self-killing is mentioned without passing any judgment on the morality of the action. That is not to say the action is morally neutral, nor does it mean that it is morally right. The lack of judgmental statement merely indicates that the biblical writer is simply being descriptive and not prescriptive.

How then do we determine the moral impact of suicide? We must arrive at a biblical understanding of human life and use the entirety of the Bible’s teachings to reach our conclusions. We know from Scripture that God created life and that we are not the owners, to use it and dispose of it as we please. For a Christian, then, suicide does not constitute a morally valid solution to the predicament of living in a world of physical and emotional pain.

It was Christ’s purpose in coming to this earth to give us life—abundant life (John 10:10). He

**It was Christ’s purpose  
in coming to this earth  
to give us life.**

wants us not only to experience the physical reality of life, but in all aspects of our emotional, spiritual, and mental states He wants us to thrive.

## REALITY

There are cases, however, in which an individual fails to find any other course of action and chooses death by suicide. How, in those situations, should we relate to this reality?

First, psychology and psychiatry have revealed that very often suicide is the result of profound emotional upheaval or biochemical imbalances associated with a deep state of depression and fear. We should not pass judgment on the person who, under those circumstances, opted for suicide.

Second, God’s justice takes into consideration the intensity of our troubled minds. He understands us better than anyone else. We must place the future of these individuals into His loving hands.

Third, with God’s assistance we can face any feelings of guilt that may plague us in the aftermath of the suicide of a loved one in a constructive way. Keep in mind that often those who die by suicide needed professional help that most of us were unable to provide.

Finally, if you are ever tempted to take your own life, there are medications that can help overcome depression, there are friends who love you and would do all they can to help you, and there is a God who is willing to work with you and through others to sustain you as you walk through the valley of death. Never give up hope!

Like Paul in that Philippian prison, we may be the ones to help someone choose life. By God’s grace we may bring encouragement to someone about to give up. 🗡️

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# The Gift of Hope

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[www.Impact-Hope.org](http://www.Impact-Hope.org)



# WHAT GOOD IS TRUTH?

It's perhaps the most staggering quote from Ellen White I've ever read. Tucked away toward the end of her chapter on the Sermon on the Mount in *The Desire of Ages*, she shares some sobering reflections on the destructiveness of truth if it doesn't transform the character.

"The greatest deception of the human mind in Christ's day," she writes, "was that a mere assent to the truth constitutes righteousness." With such a mindset, people had a "jealous regard for what is termed theological truth," but possessed a "hatred for genuine truth as made manifest in life."

Throughout religious history, she goes on to explain, "the darkest chapters . . . are burdened with the record of crimes by bigoted religionists." Sadly, having a zealous commitment to "so-called orthodoxy" actually led these people to "crucify the Lord of glory."

We see this reality today, she notes. "Many take it for granted that they are Christians," she explains, "simply because they subscribe to certain theological tenets. But they have not brought the truth into practical life." Such a combination is not merely unfortunate; it's deadly and destructive. For, as she proposes in the climax, "Men may profess faith in the truth; but if it does not make them sincere, kind, patient, forbearing, heavenly-minded, it is a curse to its possessors, and through their influence it is a curse to the world."<sup>1</sup>

Talk about an eyeful!

In other words, truth is a dangerous weapon in the hands of those who've not been transformed by it—people who aren't "sincere, kind, patient, forbearing," and "heavenly-minded." And it would

therefore be better to forgo sharing truth than to have it shared through insincere, unkind, impatient, and resentful instruments.

Indeed, the world is better off not hearing truth than hearing it from people who aren't living the ways and love of Jesus.

We should focus as much on forming lovely characters as on figuring out ways to share the right information with people.

Such an idea is probably challenging to us Seventh-day Adventists who—rightfully—place a premium on proclaiming the truth. We eagerly disseminate, through print and proclamation, the teachings of Scripture that will prepare people to stand in the last days.

But truth, Ellen White says, must not only be proclaimed; it must be demonstrated. It must be lived out. It must take hold of our hearts and transform our characters, instilling in us the fruit of the Spirit and the loveliness of Christ.

Indeed, as my friend Ty Gibson has shared before: "Love is the defining characteristic that gives credibility to the church of God. . . . What we say is only as believable as what we do."<sup>2</sup> Anything short of this leaves truth literally unbelievable, in the worst sense of the term, and pushes people further away from God, rather than toward Him.

So let us, by God's grace, not only *proclaim* truth; let's live it. Let's give people reasons to believe through the conduct of our lives. Let's truly show the "*patience* of the saints," living as those who *keep* the commandments of God, not merely as those who proclaim them (Rev. 14:12).<sup>✚</sup>

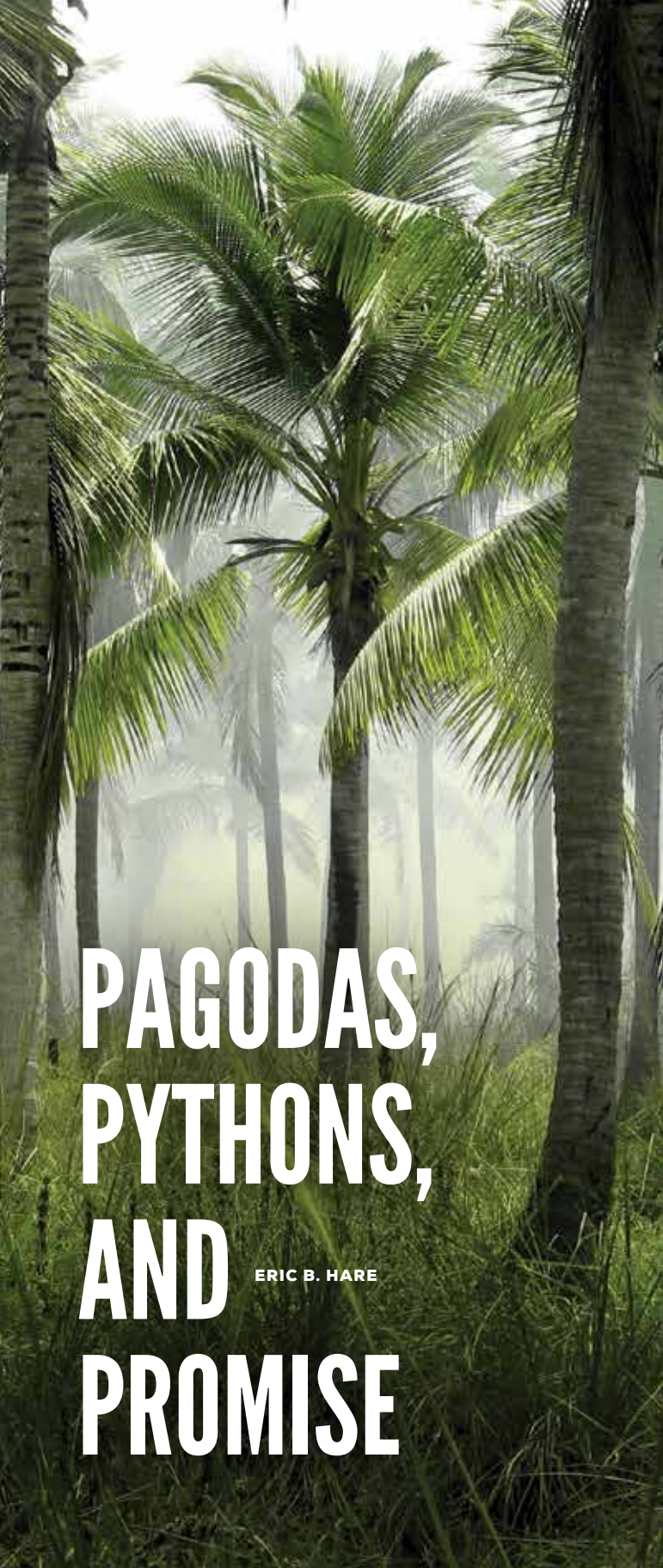
<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), pp. 309, 310.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/p/B0BhqwjHQu/?igshid=OGiZyTJhMTRmYQ==>.

REIMAGINING  
FAITH  
SHAWN  
BRACE



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# PAGODAS, PYTHONS, AND PROMISE

ERIC B. HARE

*In the early days of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, mission stories were highly circulated and valued. Eric B. Hare, born in Australia, served as a missionary to Burma (now Myanmar). He became well known as a storyteller of his missionary experiences between 1915 and 1934. He passed away in 1982 after 47 years of dedicated service to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. His stories still continue to thrill people of all ages. The story below was featured in January 1921.\* We've edited it for today's publication. Another one of his stories appears on page 60 of this issue.—Editors.*

**M**any years ago, so the story goes, when our grandmothers and our grandfathers were little boys and girls, there were hostile feelings between the Talaings and the Shans in the Salween district of Burma. The Talaings built a flourishing village on the west bank of the river on several small hills, and raised 33 white pagodas to give glory and excellence to their kingdom. The Shans settled on the east bank in a beautiful flat area, which they made even more lovely by planting coconut palms. Before long, one village was called the "Village of the 33 Pagodas" and the other the "Village of the Cluster of Coconut Palms."

The bad feeling grew and grew between these two villages until, it was said, if the people of either village crossed over to the other side of the river, they would be instantly killed.

Then the people of the palm village thought to also build a

pagoda for themselves, thinking the pagoda would protect their people from their rivals across the river. They called together their best workers, masons, and brickmakers and set to work with a will.

By and by, the beautiful glistening white pagoda was done, except the top piece. They called a great festival for this occasion and proclaimed a feast, but the evening before their work was to be crowned, a terrible storm came, and half the pagoda was broken down. The festival was put off until the damage had been repaired. Then the same disaster overtook them—the lightning flashed, the thunder roared, and some say the earth quaked, and the pagoda was badly damaged again. Undaunted, they repaired it a third time, fully expecting their work to stand. But when they finally completed the pagoda, it was again destroyed by a storm more furious and destructive than before, and the work was abandoned.

#### **OVERGROWN VILLAGE**

Then British occupation came to the city of Moulmein (now Mawlamyine) and lower Burma. Gradually the two tribes faded away, leaving the once-popular villages deserted. The story was told that the jungle grew up and covered their shrines. The houses fell and rotted away. The roads and streets were overgrown and lost. The tiger, barking deer, and sambar deer flourished in the valleys and cozy nooks in the Village of the 33 Pagodas, while snakes and mythical dragons inhabited the Village of the Cluster of Coconut Palms.

Because of the custom of burying treasure at the bottom of pagodas, robbers and thieves came to break them down and steal the treasure. From one of the 33 pagodas a man took away seven elephant loads of silver bricks. But the people believed that the spirits, fearing that the treasure of the unfinished pagoda in the palm village would be taken, cursed anyone who tried to reclaim the treasure, saying, “Let him die in the hole he digs.” It was said that the spirits placed two big pythons—as big as houses—to guard the place. Although he knew of the curse and pythons, a man came and dug until he had dug quite a hole in the base of the pagoda. All of a sudden a big stone fell in on him and hurt him so badly that he could only crawl home in time to die. Then another man tried with exactly the same result,

# The lightning flashed, the thunder roared, and some say the earth quaked.

just able to reach home in time to gasp his last. So the place was forsaken and shunned, and remained “haunted” and desolate.

#### **ON A MISSION FOR A MISSION**

One hot day in 1914 Pastor G. A. Hamilton sat in a canoe slowly creeping up the edge of the river. He was anxious and weary. He had already traveled from east to west and from north to south, for he had been looking for a location for a mission station among the Karen people. While he had found several places, he was sure there was something better, and now he was two days’ journey above Moulmein, the first day by river steamer and second by canoe.

The district he found himself on this day had a Karen population of 33,000, only 200 who were Christians. This was surely a needy district, but where could he find a suitable place that would be central enough? As the sun neared the horizon, the trees on the bank stood out in contrast and reflection. As he looked ahead he saw a lovely cluster of coconut palms. How peaceful they looked, slowly nodding in the gentle breeze. Were they beckoning him to look further?

The canoe crawled until it was in the shadow of the palms. Brother Hamilton got out to look. It was a lovely spot, commanding a view of about eight miles of river, with mountains in the background. This was the place! Further observation revealed one or two solitary houses. Part of the ground belonged to them, and they were quite eager to sell. The rest of the land belonged to the government, which gladly gave a grant. So in 1915 Brother Hamilton established an Adventist mission on the site of the ancient Village of the Cluster

of Coconut Palms that included the trees and the broken-down pagoda. That same year a clinic was opened, and hundreds of people came from the surrounding villages for healing.

#### **WATER AND LIGHT**

In 1918 the mission established a school. The superstition of the people in the district was a great drawback, but with the Lord's help students came—one from a village, two from a family—until there were 38 attending the school.

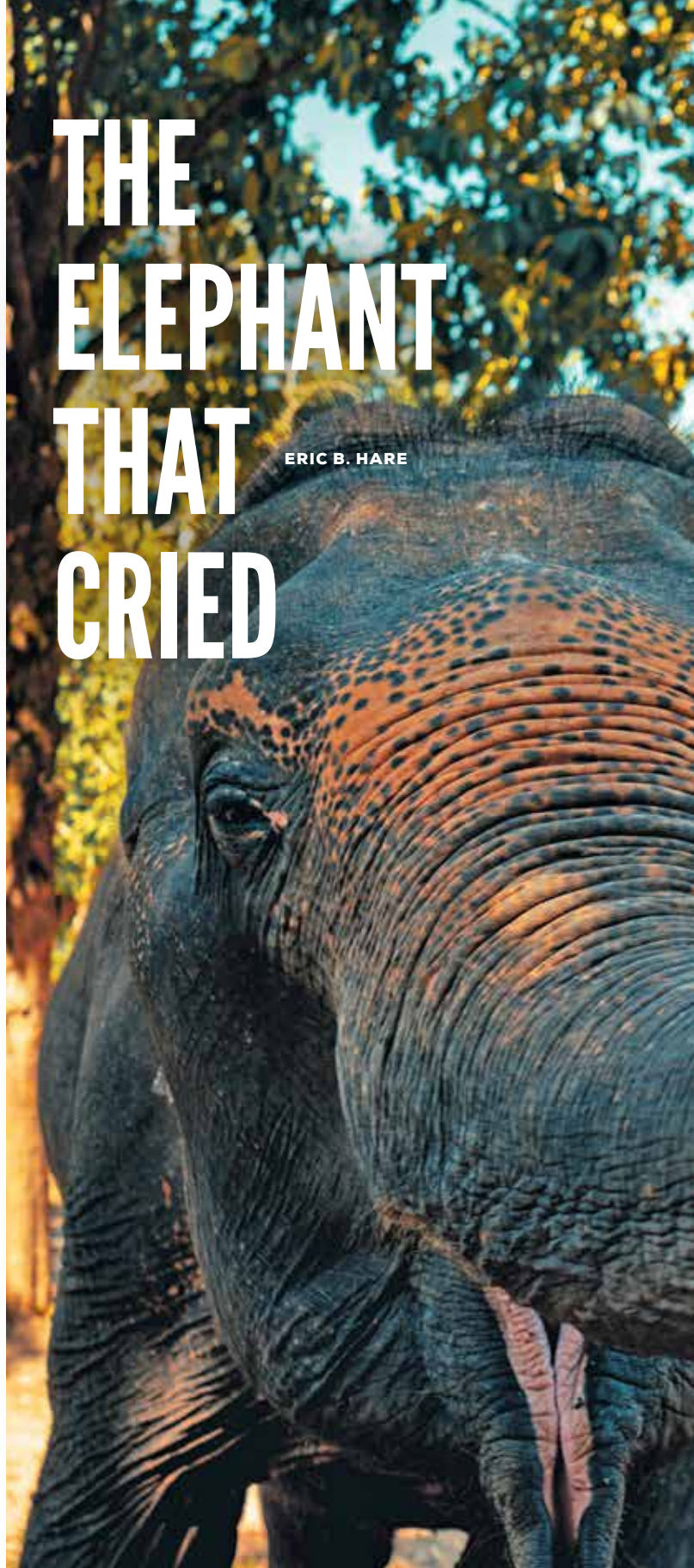
Later we dug a well and found beautiful living water, but we didn't know where to find bricks to keep the well from caving in. Then we thought of the ancient pagoda and found bricks among the ruins to shore up the well. We neither saw nor feared the enormous pythons or the curse, although we did discover a big hole in the base of the ruins where someone had dug for treasure, and large cracks in the rocks where the pythons were supposed to live.

While the Village of the Cluster of Coconut Palms sat for a long time in darkness, it became a great light. Those bricks from the pagoda—the symbol of false religion that was never completed—became the walls of a well of living water. I think when Jesus comes there'll be some to meet Him who met Him in the Village of the Cluster of Coconut Palms. ♣

\*This story originally appeared in *The Missionary Leader*, January 1921, a publication now out of print but was printed monthly for the Australasian Union Conference by the Signs Publishing Company in Warburton, Victoria, Australia.

# THE ELEPHANT THAT CRIED

ERIC B. HARE



This story originally appeared in the *Adventist Review* on March 24, 1983. It had been adapted from the book *Dr. Rabbit*, part of which first appeared in *Guide*, July and August 1969. In *Dr. Rabbit* Eric B. Hare writes about his work with the Karen tribe in Burma (now Myanmar). When this story happened, Hare (“Dr. Rabbit” to the Karens because of his name) was training a nurse, Harold Baird, who became known to the Karens as “Dr. Bear.”

One morning one of the schoolboys rushed into my office. “Dr. Rabbit! Dr. Rabbit!” he cried breathlessly. “Dr. Bear wants you at the dispensary quick! He says to tell you it’s a big lady patient. She’s so big he can’t get her through the front double door of the dispensary. Please hurry!”

I was instantly on my way. *Whatever could it be?* I thought to myself as I raced along. But very soon I understood, for there in front of the dispensary, with six jungle workmen standing around her, stood a huge female elephant! “Dr. Bear!” I said. “What can I do to help you with your big lady patient?”

“Look there!” he directed, pointing to her hip. “She was gored by a male elephant’s tusk, and now the wound is infected.”

I looked and saw a huge swelling as big as a five-gallon can. The poor elephant was in agony. She stamped her foot restlessly and tried to reach the sore place with her trunk.

“Tell the men to have the elephant lie down.” Dr. Bear got into action. “We’ve got to make that hole big enough to get the hose in so we can wash it out with some carbolic solution,” he explained.

It took a little time to cut a bigger hole in the elephant’s hide—it was an inch thick. Then I worked the pump while he directed the flow of the solution to all parts of the swelling. To finish up, he packed in several yards of gauze and said to the thankful owner, “Come again tomorrow.”

He did come again the next morning, and marvel of marvels, it took only one command from the owner, and the huge patient lay down for her treatment.

“She’s much better,” said the owner. “She’s not so nervous anymore.”

Dr. Bear gave the wound another good hosing out and said, “Come again tomorrow.”

While we were at breakfast the next morning the elephant owner came running up the stairs into the house. “Have you seen my elephant anywhere?” he cried. “We gave her her food last night at our camp three miles away. But this morning we can’t find her anywhere.”

“Surely no one would steal a sick elephant!” I said. “Did you look over at the dispensary?”

He ran off to look, and in a minute he was back with a big grin on his face. “She’s there, all right,” he said, “lying under the tree waiting for her treatment!”

You may have read that elephants have remarkable memories and are very intelligent. Take it from me, this is true. For six weeks after that, Mrs. Elephant came *by herself* to the dispensary every morning and lay down *by herself* and waited for her treatment.

When the six weeks were up and the wound was healed, the owner mounted her head and said to her, “We’re going away now. Say *Salaam* to the doctors.” The big lady patient knelt down and saluted us with her trunk. I thought she deserved a going-away present, so I gave her a small loaf of bread. As she took it with her trunk and put it in her mouth (I know you won’t believe this, but it’s true!), tears ran out of her eyes and flowed down her cheeks! I think Dr. Bear had tears in his eyes too. I didn’t look. I was too busy blowing my own nose. 🐘

Buka, seated far left, with members of the Arkhangai congregation



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

# MINISTRY AND MIRACLES IN MONGOLIA

## *Pastor Buka's journey of faith*

MILENA MENDES

It is safe to say that not many who look at Buyanbileg Ishjargal, 38, sharing the gospel today from the church pulpit would imagine that he was once part of a nationalists' gang that persecuted and beat foreigners at the command of their leader. At the event of his father's death, Buka, as his parents' Russian coworkers had nicknamed him as a child (meaning "little monster"), started questioning, "Can there be life after death?" He didn't know this at the time, but God had begun changing his life.

Born during the USSR years in Mongolia, Buka grew up with shamanism, from his mother's side, and Buddhism, from his father's—the two leading spiri-

tual groups in Mongolia, respectfully coexisting in his family. It wasn't until he was about 11 years old that he learned about Christianity, when his mom started visiting a church on Sundays. Buka really liked that group of people because they always helped his family by donating food and clothes.

### THE BIRTH OF SPIRITUAL LIFE

In 2003, when Buka's father suddenly passed away, he questioned the monk who performed the funeral rituals at his home: "Why do people die? Am I ever going to see my father again? And can Buddha bring my dad back to life?" The answers he got from the monk were not nearly convincing, leading the 18-year-



old young man to try to relieve his frustration with alcohol, rock music, and unhealthy friendships. Buka's mom became mentally ill following her husband's passing, and she quit going to church.

Around this time Buka was invited to join one of Mongolia's biggest gangster clubs, made up of extreme nationalists under the leadership of a top member of the government whose primary mission was to foster hatred for foreigners. One day one of Buka's good friends invited him to go to his favorite place, another church. As his friend explained a little to him about that church, Buka agreed to go and be there for a short time, and never visit again, since he believed all foreigners were evil people who came to Mongolia to try to change the locals. What he found at the church were smiling, welcoming people who were great at music. This challenged his expectations. What he also didn't expect was for the pastor to begin the sermon with the question "Why do people die?" Several times he interrupted the pastor to ask questions in the middle of the sermon, until the pastor kindly offered to sit with him and answer all his questions after the service.

That was Buka's first time at a Seventh-day Adventist church, and though still in the gangster club, he kept visiting week after week. Six months later his mom fell terribly ill, and he had to find a job to afford her medication. One day she suddenly collapsed. He couldn't hear her breathing. That was the first time he ever prayed to God by himself, asking Him to bring her back to life.

About 10 minutes elapsed before the fragile woman took a deep breath and opened her eyes. Buka helped her sit up. Looking around and not seeing anyone else, she asked Buka, "My son, who helped you lift me up? I felt this strong push on my back, and breath came into my lungs. I also felt a hand help me to get up. Who was it?" she questioned. For the first time, Buka understood that God answers prayers, and that He was right there, right then, proving Himself to him.

In April 2004 Buka got baptized, but he didn't tell anyone that he had not quit the gangster club, occasionally joining in their gatherings. The club leader then demanded they fight a group of 60 Chinese who worked at a local factory. He went along, saw his friends beat and seriously injure some of the men, and decided in his heart that it

**For the first time, Buka understood that God answers prayers and that He was right there, right then, proving Himself to him.**

was time to quit that life. Some of his friends from that time are in jail today. The next year Buka learned to play the guitar and piano; he dreamed of becoming a songwriter, and God gave him his first song. He wrote it, and the members started singing it in church. In 2007 he joined the 1,000 Missionary Movement and was sent to Selenge, a northern province bordering Russia. He was really excited about it, because that's where the woman of his dreams, Enkhjargal Tserendug, was living. They had met the previous year when she visited Buka's church along with a singing group from the capital, Ulaanbaatar. Since then, he had been praying that God would give her to be his wife, not knowing that she also had taken a liking to him and was also praying about a future relationship. They started dating, and got married in 2008.

#### **THE LITTLE GIRL'S ACCIDENT**

One afternoon Buka was riding his bicycle to church when, startled by a car honking at him, he hit a 6-year-old girl who was playing all by herself by the side of the road. She began crying a lot, complaining that her eyes hurt. Not finding any adults around, he took her to church and asked the members to pray for her. They noticed her eyeball was moving involuntarily from side to side as she continued crying in pain.

He then took her to the hospital, but the doctors couldn't find anything wrong with her eyes. Buka believed it was another miracle from God. Two months later the girl's mom visited Buka's church, guided by the little one. She questioned him if the eye accident story was true, and he confirmed it. She was shocked to know that prayer had healed



24 Tsagaan

her daughter. To complete the miracle, the mom found a Christian church near her home and soon became a believer.

#### MIRACLE AT THE “HAUNTED” BUILDING

In 2009 Buka was invited to lead a fledgling congregation in a small town in Arkhangai, a province in the center of the country. The place he and his family chose to rent was in a two-story, long building named 24 Tsagaan (“white” in Mongolian). They soon found out that they were the only family occupying one of the 24 apartments in that building. On the first floor there was only a hair salon, which would close before it got dark. There was a rumor in town that 24 Tsagaan was a haunted place; a few people had died in it, and so people had been avoiding it for years.

What Buka and his family experienced in that apartment challenged and ultimately strengthened their faith. For a year they heard voices of people talking, animal noises, windows banging and breaking, and their 3-year-old son, Munkh-Ayalguu, would even see people in their home, frightening him.

But their worst experience started when Munkh-Itgel, the couple’s youngest son, began having convulsions. Some days the infant would have four to five episodes. Doctors kept giving him medicine, adult dosage, until they realized that all it was doing was harming his immune system. They couldn’t find the source of his convulsions.



Munkh-Itgel experiencing a convulsion

The episodes went on for two years. “God, You healed my mom, that little girl’s eyes, so why won’t You heal my little boy?” Buka prayed. In 2013 he joined an evangelistic meeting in South Korea, leaving the children with relatives back in Mongolia. For 10 days many attendees fasted and lifted up Munkh-Itgel’s health in prayer.

When Buka returned home, he found, to everyone’s delightful surprise and relief, the boy’s health restored; the convulsions were no longer an issue. The church members praised God for yet another miracle, and a few members came over to their building to pray by each apartment’s door, asking God to cleanse whatever evil forces seemed to be operating in that building.

For another six months they lived there, and no more weird noises or supernatural experiences happened in 24 Tsagaan. New rumors ran around town—about how God took care of Buka’s family—and soon more apartments were occupied.

**In the middle of the countryside darkness, with no road lights and with freezing temperatures outside, Enkhjargal heard her three children's voices crying from different directions, and struggled to open the car door.**

Wreckage of the accident that Buka's family survived

The number of believers in Arkhangai increased quickly. Buka and his wife wrote and recorded 10 songs, and made 700 CD copies to distribute in the community and share their story of faith.

#### **CAR ACCIDENT**

The Mongolian winter is extremely harsh, with temperatures as low as  $-22^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$ ). In 2018 Buka was serving the church of Yarmag, in Ulaanbaatar. The apartment where the meetings were held, and also home to Buka's family, had been having heating issues for a few winters. It didn't matter how many times the plumbers tried to fix it—nothing seemed to work.

That winter Buka told his wife to take their three children and stay with her mom in a different province until the winter was over and the apartment was warmer. She packed everyone up and hit the road. As night came, so did the unexpected: their car hit something on the road and fell off a 13-foot-high (four-meter-high) bridge.

In the middle of the countryside darkness, with no road lights and with freezing temperatures outside, Enkhjargal heard her three children's voices crying from different directions, and struggled to open the car door. She managed to break the window and crawl out. Munkh-Ayalguu, then 9 years old, was the one crying the hardest, and complained of pain around his neck, unable to move.

Enkhjargal tried to use her cell phone to call for help, but there was no signal in that area. She climbed up the ditch to try to get one of the few passing cars to stop and help them. They finally got a ride back to Ulaanbaatar. On the way she managed to call Buka and explain what had happened. Buka left town right away to meet them halfway.



The car was completely destroyed; Munkh-Ayalguu suffered a broken collarbone; Enkhjargal and the other children came away with only scratches. The whole family felt an overwhelming sense of gratitude to God for having protected them from the worst.

All these challenges could have led some to stray from their faith. But not Buka and his family. Through it all, they've recognized God's hands over their lives. In 2019 they finished their second CD, distributing 1,700 copies to share their faith with others. Today they serve as church leaders at the Central Church of Ulaanbaatar. 📌

**Milena Mendes** is a Brazilian journalist and English teacher living with her Mongolian husband, Deegii, in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.



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PETER N. LANDLESS ZENO L. CHARLES-MARCEL

## IMPROVING THE ZZZZ'S:

*Helping your teenager sleep better*

**Q:** I'm a single mom with two daughters, ages 12 and 16. The academy teachers say my 16-year-old seems chronically tired and falls asleep in class. She was an A student before, and is now barely getting by. What can I do so she will sleep better, improve her performance, and discourage my "tween" from following her sister's path?

**A:** We can only assume that the problem you are highlighting is "poor sleep" in your teenager. As a general principle, all students at academic risk should be screened for a comorbid sleep disorder or other medical conditions, so a medical evaluation is strongly advised. We commend you for taking your girls' risk seriously.

As children go through adolescence, they may normally experience a shift (delay) in their circadian rhythms and an accompanying slowing of the "sleep drive." To the internal biological and psychological developmental factors associated with adolescence, academy (high school) may also contribute some external pressures, e.g., extra-curricular activities, excessive homework load, evening use of electronic media, and use of energy drinks. The combination of these factors may cause inadequate sleep among teenagers.

Poor or abruptly declining academic performance may be a tip-off to other consequences of inadequate sleep in your daughter. Apathy, irritability, inattentiveness, mood disturbances, and impaired ability to concentrate and retain information may accompany the academic slump you are seeing. Unfortunately, the risks may go even deeper, to her potentially engaging in behaviors such as alcohol and substance use; an increased rate of car accidents; increased risk of obesity and

metabolic conditions; and high-risk negative thoughts.

Constructive two-way communication with your girls is essential and of the highest priority. Form an alliance with their teachers and school administrators. Seek feedback from them as to your daughters' behavior in school. Offer support and understanding, and help your girls manage their schedules to allow for sufficient sleep.

Actions speak louder than words, so be a role model for the girls to the best of your ability and work with them to develop a consistent sleep schedule and a workable, relaxing routine that includes age-appropriate family devotions and excludes screens and strenuous exercise for at least one hour before bed.

Since regular exercise or manual labor can promote better sleep quality, academic performance, and overall well-being, encourage your daughters to engage in these activities during the day. Help your teen to eliminate caffeine use, and as a family, avoid heavy meals close to bedtime. If necessary, establish reasonable consequences for late-night activities that violate the home routine (e.g., time-limited curtailment of social outings, or screen access).

Last, create a sleep-friendly bedroom environment: cool, dark, quiet, and free of electronic devices.

In general, a wholistic lifestyle and improved study habits are closely intertwined and can significantly impact academic performance and overall adolescent well-being. And don't stop praying. To paraphrase James 5:16: The prayers of a righteous, *devoted mom* are powerful and effective! 🙏

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

**As children go through adolescence, they may normally experience a shift in their circadian rhythms and an accompanying slowing of the "sleep drive."**

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# CHURCH FAMILY

**D**uring the past year I've experienced something I'd practically forgotten about: loneliness.

It's been awhile since I've known this feeling. I knew it in middle school, when the awesome elementary school playground gave way to awkward hallway walking. (Hated that.) And I knew it again in early college before I found my place in the world and the love of my life. Truly, from the day I married Cindy and we began having children, I didn't know loneliness for a long, long time.

For so many years our family was in the center of absolutely everything: school, church, community—an embarrassment of riches. That changed this past year when our final daughter left the nest, and along with her, all the activities that had essentially become our social life. Additionally, I took a sabbatical from full-time pastoring to work on a book. Suddenly life became shockingly quiet.

In a sense, the loneliness has been good for me. It has resensitized me to how some people feel all the time. And I regret not thinking enough about people on the edges when I was in the middle of it all. For many years church was just one of many spiritual communities for our family, and I didn't realize (enough) how for many people, church was everything.

Jesus, of course, knew all this ahead of time. He knew some people would have large families and communities, while others would have only small ones, or sometimes none at all. And that's why He invented the church—so that everyone would have community.

So I'd like to say a word to two groups of people.

First, to the lonely, bruised, and broken: I am so sorry. When I was abounding in community, I wasn't sensitive enough to those who weren't. Having been reacquainted with loneliness during this season, I promise I will never forget again.

Second, to the loved, busy, and blessed: You should rightfully praise God for seasons of abundance. If you live and move within strong healthy communities, you're absolutely living the life that Christ intended—the one we will all enjoy fully forever and ever. In the meantime, don't forget those who need your community. Even when going to church feels like one more thing, remember that for many people, church is everything.

A few weeks ago I sat with a tour group of 50 people on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. As the evening breezes blew, our group spent an hour together singing and sharing, laughing and crying. It's always amazing to me how, in one week's time, a group of strangers walking together in Jesus' steps can become the closest of friends. No one is left out; everyone is included and special.

Across the same lake, Jesus of Nazareth had also sat with a group of strangers, looking into their eyes, telling them He was now their family. And then He asked them to do for others what He had done for them. ♣

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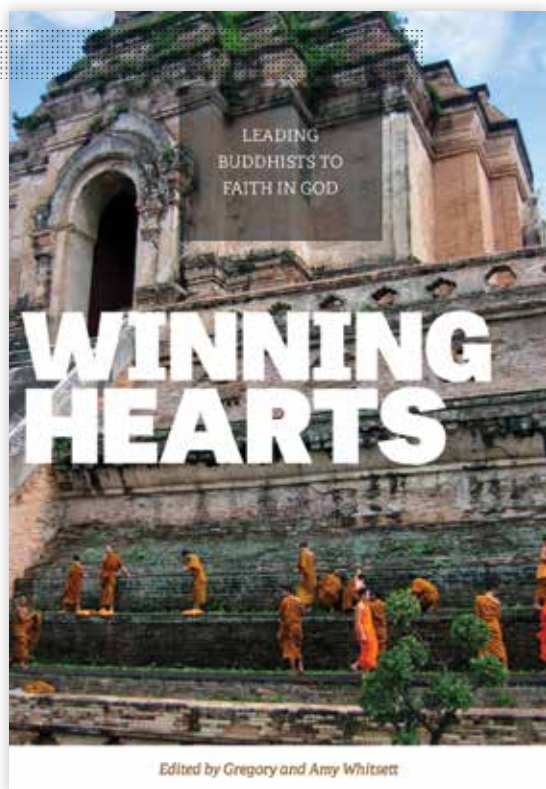
**Andy Nash** ([andynash5@gmail.com](mailto:andynash5@gmail.com)) is a pastor, professor, and author who leads study tours to Israel for all ages.

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# EDITORS' PICKS



## Winning Hearts: Leading Buddhists to Faith in God

Gregory and Amy Whitsett, editors, *Winning Hearts: Leading Buddhists to Faith in God* (Silver Spring, Md.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2016), ISBN 13-978-1-94-3507-07-8 (paperback), 230 pages, US\$9.03. Reviewed by Justin Kim, editor, *Adventist Review*.

**C**hrist's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'<sup>1</sup>

Coeditors Gregory and Amy Whitsett oversee this special volume of papers about this well-known quote, but apply it in the specific context of East Asian Buddhism. Originally presented at a Global Mission Center for East Asian Religions conference, each of the steps of Christ's method are

elaborated upon, with special emphasis on the aspect of winning confidences as Jesus did. The book is divided into two parts. The first part lays out the principles of leading Buddhists to Christ, and the latter focuses on various case studies that exemplify these principles.

The most pertinent chapters are found at the beginning of the book in the coeditor's first two chapters. Gregory Whitsett shares different principles of measuring success in mission and the importance of hosting and facilitating personal encounters with God, respectively. It is the role of the missionary/minister to develop friendships and win trust that result in seekers encountering God directly for themselves.

The other chapters in the first section supplement these principles. Richard McEdward highlights the incarnational mission of Christ and its missional ramifications today. Felix Cortez presents the dilemma of whether Paul's ministry was focused on mission or charity work, using the Corinthian contribution as a biblical case study. Amy Whitsett delineates the three levels of poverty alleviation (relief, rehabilitation, and development) and examines the importance of ministering to needs in a way that empowers in the Asian Buddhist context. Gary Krause shares practical implementation of the Christ's method quote through Life Hope centers, while Scott Griswold offers practical insights on the sowing of Adventist doctrines to Buddhists.

Gregory Whitsett wraps up the first section with a brief Protestant and Adventist history of Buddhist evangelism, statistics, Adventist blind spots, practical recommendations, and the status and challenges of this specialized ministry in the Adventist context.



The second section is a compilation of fascinating case studies. First, Danielle Koning emphasizes the importance of researching cultural worldviews. She shares practical questions that can be utilized in studying and understanding the people groups. Doug Venn creatively applies the story of 2 Kings 5 to medical ministry in the urban context of Bangkok. Gavin Johns and Htwe Lay share case studies from Myanmar; Grace Lee from leper groups in the Chinese and Japanese context; and Prakasit Lekasuwan, David Tan, Kyle Tumberg, and Christopher E. Sorensen all share from Thailand.

This book is neither an introductory textbook nor a handbook for the practitioner in Buddhist ministry. Rather it is a balanced theoretical and

practical discussion on the importance of Christ's method, not only within Christianity, but in every missional context, including that of reaching Buddhists. After reading this compilation, one takes away the importance of understanding worldview issues and their differences. For someone to change their worldview necessitates an experience that challenges their assumptions. Second, this work is appreciated for its desire to explore different, yet still biblical, evangelistic methodologies, as encouraged by Ellen White:

"The worker in foreign fields will come in contact with all classes of people and all varieties of minds, and he will find that different methods of labor are required to meet the needs of the people. A sense of his own inefficiency will drive him to God and to the Bible for light and strength and knowledge. The methods and means by which we reach certain ends are not always the same. The missionary must use reason and judgment. Experience will indicate the wisest choice to follow under existing circumstances. It is often the case that the customs and climate of a country make a condition of things that would not be tolerated in another country."<sup>2</sup>

One does not need to be a minister to Buddhists to appreciate this book. On one level, with the world becoming more globalized, individuals living in any non-East Asian country will be bound to encounter someone from this part of the world with a Buddhist background. Being knowledgeable in some of the nuances of approaching and leading Buddhists to faith in God is always another welcome tool in the box. But on another level, this book is a study on the application of Christ's method of reaching people, regardless of worldview, language, culture, or religion. It is a call to live selflessly, love wholeheartedly, and serve sacrificially out of a love for and duty to God and souls all over the world. ♣

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1915), p. 468.

**“The worker in foreign fields will come in contact with all classes of people and all varieties of minds, and he will find that different methods of labor are required to meet the needs of the people.”**

## WHOM WE MISS SEEING

**Y**ears ago a researcher at 3M named Spencer Silver was curious about what would happen if he mixed an unusual amount of monomer into a polymer-based adhesive. The result was an adhesive that when applied to a piece of paper could stick that piece of paper to another with the ability to restick after being removed. And there would be no residue left on the second piece of paper. The discovery was useless to 3M at the time.

It wasn't until Arthur Fry, a chemist with 3M, had an issue in the choir loft of his church that a purpose for this adhesive was found. During his practices and performances, the small bookmarks he had in his hymnal would frequently fly away, and he would lose his place. One day while trying frantically to pick up his bookmarks, Fry remembered Silver's adhesive. Soon after, his new bookmarks metamorphosed into the handy Post-it Notes that now can be found in many stores throughout the country.

My favorite Bible book, Romans, is full of rich and deep theology. Paul shares how salvation works, the meaning of Jesus' death on the cross, what the righteousness of God looks like, and how we are justified, and more. The book of Romans gave the early church, and it gives us today, an immense understanding about who God is.

Besides the theology, I find a few verses very interesting in the epilogue of the book. In Romans 16:1, 2, Paul says, "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way

worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me" (NIV).

And then in verse 22 he adds, "I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord" (NIV).

Romans is a powerful book. And it seems that if it were not for Phoebe, this book may not have been as widely distributed as it was. She made sure that Paul's letter was shared and understood. Tertius also played a major role by writing down what Paul dictated. If it were not for him, who knows whether Paul would have even had the chance to share his thoughts.

Neither Phoebe nor Tertius is often talked about when we discuss the book of Romans. But we have this book because both helped write, preserve, and share it. Paul must have appreciated their ministry. Both of them are included in his letter by name.

We often overlook people who are not in the spotlight, yet their contribution is invaluable. Those who organize social events, greet us at the door, host Bible studies during the week, work on the church website, connect with others on the church's social media accounts, and run the AV system, for instance.

You may not be the center of attention, but your contribution to the church's life matters greatly. Your inconspicuous service can enable someone to hear the good news. Because of what you did, someone may be led to God or refreshed while struggling. 🍀

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# Called to Serve: Arbee Tabo

I have always had a heart to do service and missions. My passion started when I was attending La Sierra University (LSU). I was helping with maintenance in the girls' dorm when the director of Home Base Missions approached me and said, "God talked to me and told me to tell you to work for me." After thinking and praying about it, I decided to accept her offer and join Home Base.

One of the schools that Home Base visited was Holbrook Indian School. My group was in charge of recruiting [for LSU] and doing a week of prayer. One night after the program, a group of us were standing outside behind the girls' dorm, looking at the stars. I mentioned to one of my friends, "I can see myself living here one day." Little did I know the plans God had in store for me.

While working with Home Base, I came into contact with students who were returning from the mission field. After spending time with them and getting to know them, I developed a desire to become a student missionary. Post graduation from LSU, I decided to go to Pohnpei in Micronesia for two years. It was in Pohnpei that I told God that I would become a teacher—but only if it was at an Adventist school where I was able to tell others about God.

Upon my return from Pohnpei, I finished my master's degree in curriculum and instruction. At that time, I was asked to be a youth pastor at the Loma Linda Japanese church (Mission Road SDA). I inquired of the pastor why he had asked me when my background was not in religious studies or theology but in physical education. He said, "It is because you have more experience than anyone that has just graduated with a degree in religion." Reflecting on his words brought back to my mind a quote that was taped up at Home Base. It stated, "God does not call the qualified; He qualifies the called." I was humbled and accepted the position.

During my first year at the Japanese church, I was offered a job by Dr. Janet Claymore-Ross to work at Holbrook Indian School as a physical education teacher. I was torn; here was an opportunity to work full time and do something I had prepared my life for,

but I had just begun work as a youth pastor. Good relationships take about two years to develop, and it didn't seem right for me to leave all of a sudden after the bond had been made. That was one of the reasons I had decided to be a student missionary for two years instead of one. I wanted to let the students know that I was invested in them and that I truly cared about them. Sadly, I told Dr. Ross that I would have to decline her offer.

By 2010, I had worked for the Japanese church for three years. I also did substitute teaching and coaching part-time to make an income. It was still in my heart to become a teacher at an Adventist school, but the job opportunities at that time were slim. I needed something more stable. I decided I was going to pursue a different career, something that was in demand, so I applied to Loma Linda University to become a Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA).

While working on my prerequisites for the PTA program, I received a call from La Sierra University that they were doing teacher interviews, and I was welcome to join. During the teacher interviews, I became reacquainted with Dr. Ross, the principal at Holbrook Indian School. She remembered me and asked, "Are you ready to work for me?" I said yes, but I didn't think much about it since, in my mind, I was going to go to Loma Linda University...



To read the full story, visit [HolbrookIndianSchool.org/staff-stories](https://HolbrookIndianSchool.org/staff-stories)



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