

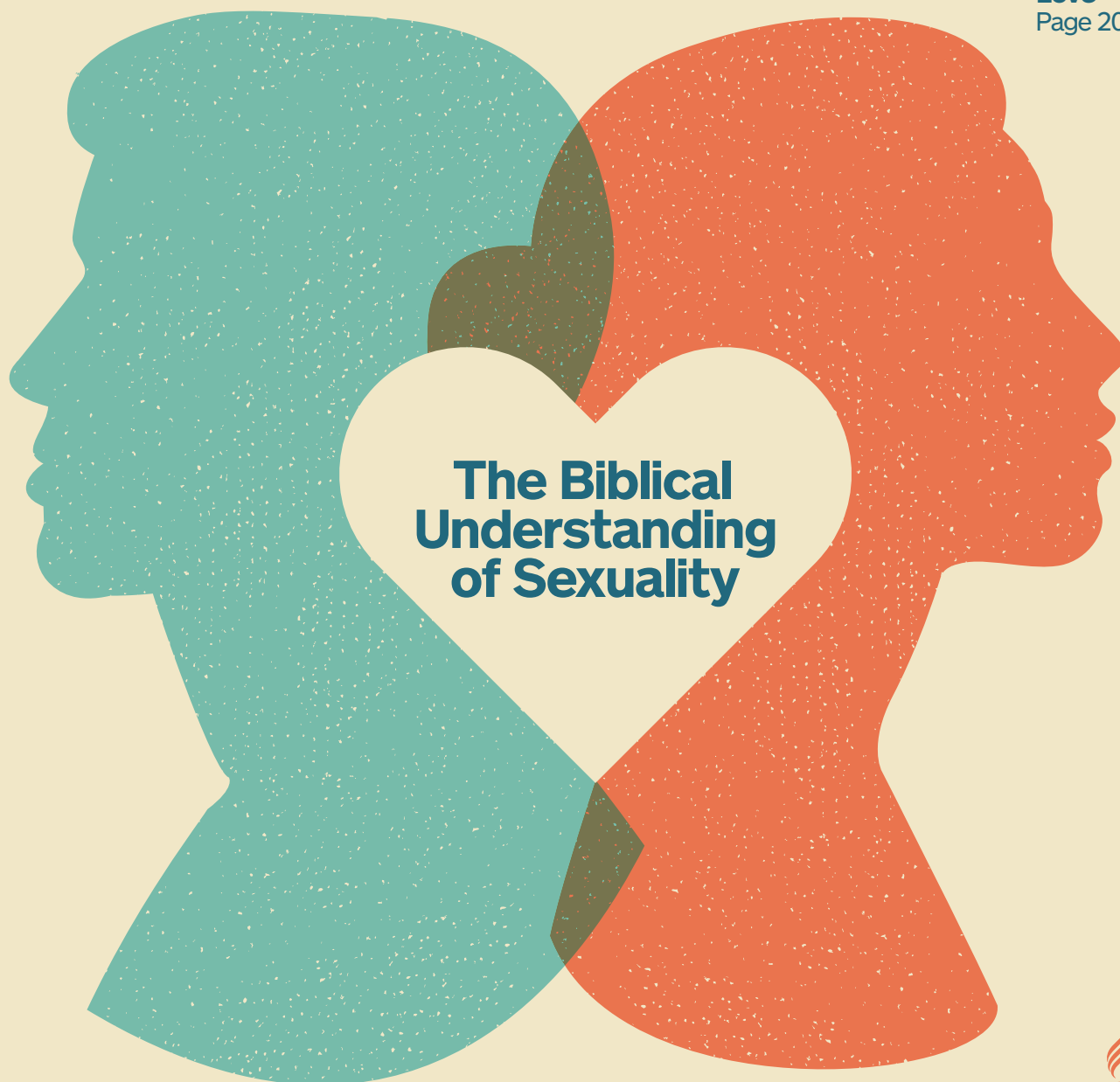
Adventist World

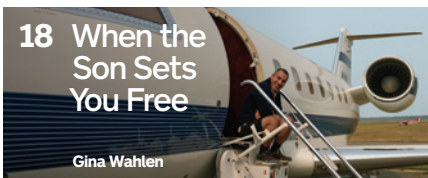
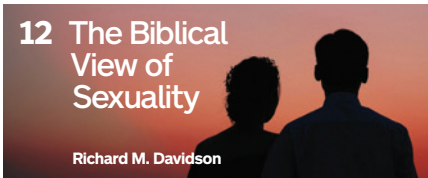
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Cover Photo: Lightstock / Pritel Creative

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Two From Eden

by Justin Kim

Not one, but two. Genesis starts with two Creation accounts. Skeptics are quick to call out the inconsistency of the entire narrative. But there are in fact two stories, each emphasizing a particular climax. The first is familiar, starting in the first verse of the first chapter. It progresses through the six days of God's ex nihilo creation and culminates with the seventh day in Genesis 2:1-3. Clearly the pinnacle of the first week is the holy Sabbath, when God rests, blesses, and sanctifies.

The second account of Creation starts in verse 4 of chapter 2 and continues until the end of the chapter. The trees were already created on the third day. Some animals were created on the fifth day; the remaining creatures and the first couple made on the sixth day. Clearly the order of Creation events is not the point of the second account. Rather, the story establishes the activity of Adam and his single status in the midst of his work. The apex of the second account focuses on the coupling of man and woman in holy matrimony, when God introduces and fuses them.

Whereas worship is at the core of the Sabbath, sexuality is at the core of matrimony. Both are sacred gifts God has given to humanity. The former shows the closest bond between the divine and human experience. The latter shows the closet bond between the male and female experience. And as such, both gifts are precious, exquisite, and simply good.

Being the two remaining institutions from the Garden of Eden, the enemy seeks to attack both gifts. The deceptions and misunderstandings regarding the seventh-day Sabbath and biblical sexuality abound. Seventh-day Adventists are called to restore the scriptural understanding of both, in experience, in lifestyle, and in doctrinal understanding.



Sabbath teachings have been obscured throughout human history. Our movement has been called to shine light back onto the wonderful gift of Sabbathkeeping, the value of Sabbath rest, and the role of the Sabbath, especially in the last days, as the sign of God's seal upon His people.

Sexuality teachings have been distorted throughout human history as well. Our movement has been called to shine light back onto the wonderful gift of happy marriages (to those who are called), the value of spiritual families, and the role of healthy sexuality, especially in the last days, as darkness continues to intensify.

As Sabbath points to God as the Creator of time and space, sexuality points to God as the Creator of the human body and the human experience. Just as the grace of God pardons as well as empowers, may we take courage as we navigate through the world's currents while standing firmly on the institutions of Paradise—not one, but two.

A pastoral couple embraces during a marriage vow renewal ceremony in the Dominican Republic on September 11. The couple was among the more than 3,000 pastors who participated in three separate Inter-American Division ministerial retreats held in Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and El Salvador in September.

Photo: Daniel Gallardo/IAD



“I had a wonderful experience meeting incredible women dedicated to God’s work, which inspired me to be more confident, loving, caring, and kind. I loved the convention so much and hope to attend again in the future.”

—Serimah Usek, Petaling Jaya English Adventist church, about the first women’s ministries convention that was held in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia. Nearly 800 women attended the conference, which featured leaders from various Adventist organizations, including Malaysia Union Mission, Southern Asia-Pacific Division, and Northern Asia-Pacific Division. The messages underscored the importance of spiritual growth and highlighted the crucial role women play in the church’s mission.

Adventist Review Newsletter

Would you like to keep up with what’s happening in our church? Sign up today to receive our weekly newsletter that features news stories, inspirational stories, videos, and more.



www.adventistreview.org/newsletter-signup

When did you join the Adventist Church?

Church members were asked at what age they joined the Adventist Church.

- 44% In church since birth
- 7% Joined as a child (with family)
- 4% Joined as a child (without family)
- 15% Joined as a teenager
- 25% Joined as an adult
- 5% Left and returned



Scan the QR code to view the complete survey.



N=142,547

Source: 2022-2023 GlobalChurch Member Survey

Data provided by the General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research.

175

The Jackson Seventh-day Adventist Church in Jackson, Michigan, United States, celebrated its 175th anniversary. It is the oldest continuous Seventh-day Adventist congregation in the world. The celebration highlighted the church’s role as a spiritual and historical landmark within the denomination, including a rich legacy of firsts that continues to inspire generations of Adventists. From the very beginning the church was a place of pioneering “firsts.” It was here that the first Sabbathkeeping Adventist church in the Midwest was established in August 1849. This tiny congregation would grow into a cornerstone of the early Adventist movement, sending ripples across the region and beyond.

30 Years

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in Mongolia held its thirtieth Founding Anniversary Celebration in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. ADRA Mongolia started in 1994 and has worked since then in partnership with individuals, communities, organizations, and governments to improve the quality of life for Mongolians through various projects. Since its beginnings the agency has focused on such areas as education, disaster and emergency management, economic development and livelihoods, health, and food security. To date, ADRA Mongolia has implemented 194 projects, with a total funding value of approximately US\$34 million.

“Literature reaches where we cannot go. I think God has opened marvelous doors through the use of literature to do evangelism. . . . I think that we must continue to utilize the resource of the printed page.”

—Eglan Brooks, British Union Conference president, during the Stanborough Press’s 140-year anniversary. On September 8 hundreds of church leaders, members, and guests gathered at Stanborough Press in Grantham, Lincolnshire, England, to celebrate this milestone of service of the publishing house. The press was set up in 1884 and was given the mission to spread the Word of God outside of the U.S., in the English territories.

More Than 70

The number of scientists and researchers that gathered from eight countries for the fifth Conference on Faith and Science in South America. The conference took place from September 4 to 7 in the city of Cochabamba and Torotoro National Park in Bolivia. Keynote speakers delivered lectures, offered workshops, and led an expedition to study the largest record of dinosaur fossil footprints on the planet. The meeting also marked the launch of the book *Contributions to the Teaching of Creationism*, which offers strategies to integrate creationist teaching with scientific knowledge.

“We firmly believe that taking care of the environment is a way of honoring God’s creation. We have a duty to preserve nature, and activities like this allow us to accomplish that purpose.”

—Carlos Rangel, volunteers co-ordinator for the Metropolitan Panama Conference, about the 400 Adventist young people that joined in the Panama City’s efforts to clean up Costa Del Este beach on September 1. The effort sought to reaffirm the commitment of young people caring for the environment, a principle that is part of their life and religious beliefs. ➔



Photo: Panama Union Mission

Lay-led Chinese Convention Unites Global Ministries in Malaysia

Alyssa Haijon, Malaysia Union Mission, and Southern Asia-Pacific Division

The first-ever Chinese Outpost Centers International convention, held July 10-14 at Aeon Health Care in Tampin, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia, drew 300 individuals from across the globe with a shared mission: to inspire and connect supporting ministries worldwide. The event gave attendees a platform to explore profound spiritual insights and strengthen their relationship with Christ through encouraging sessions.

Outpost Centers International (OCI) is a global network of lay ministries dedicated to advancing the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. By connecting and nurturing hundreds of supporting ministries worldwide, OCI plays a vital role in organized gospel outreach, mobilizing the laity to actively share the Adventist message across diverse communities, organization leaders said.

COMMITMENT TO JESUS

Pavel Goia, editor of *Ministry* magazine and associate Ministerial secretary at the Adventist Church's General Conference, led a number of sessions to kick off the convention. Goia emphasized the importance of

prioritizing genuine love for Jesus. The opening session, "Do You Love Jesus?" urged participants to examine their commitment to Christ, highlighting the dangers of allowing material attachments to hinder spiritual growth.

In the subsequent session Goia addressed the subtle ways in which distractions can derail believers from their spiritual focus. He called for a renewed sense of urgency in preparing for Christ's return, stressing that now is the time to set priorities in alignment with divine purpose.

The theme of total surrender to God was further explored, as the session challenged attendees to go beyond seeking blessings and to focus on deepening their relationship with God. Goia emphasized that true spiritual transformation can occur only when believers are fully committed to serving others and making God their ultimate treasure.

GOD'S GUIDANCE

The program's emphasis shifted to the importance of daily worship and obedience to God's guidance. Participants were reminded that success in spiritual endeavors requires a steadfast focus on God's presence

Three hundred people gather in support of initiatives around the world.

and the willingness to follow His commands, even when they challenge conventional understanding.

Workshops run by renowned speakers covered such topics as Family Relationships, True Education, Personal Ministries, and Leadership. These sessions provided practical insights and strategies for applying spiritual principles in various aspects of life and ministry.

The event provided opportunities for delegates to share their stories through powerful testimonies on Sabbath afternoon. Representatives of supporting ministries from around the world shared their experiences, offering a moving glimpse into how God is working through diverse initiatives. This session, which included the contributions of Dosung Kim, OCI field president for South America, who shared about the work in Bolivia, served to inspire participants to further commit themselves to the cause of God.

The 2024 OCI convention concluded on a high note. Attendees left with a renewed commitment to advance God's work. Goia's final charge to "go forward for the cause of God because God is with us" resonated deeply, setting the tone for future efforts in global ministry.

While the date for the next convention has yet to be finalized, it is expected to take place in late July or early August 2025, organizers said. At the same time, they emphasized how significant the event was. "This inaugural Chinese OCI convention has set a high standard for future gatherings," organizers shared. "It demonstrated the power of unity and shared purpose in advancing God's kingdom." ©



Three hundred participants came together for the first Chinese Outpost Centers International convention, which took place in Malaysia.

Photo: Loud Voice Ministry

Impact of Digital Evangelism Continues to Grow in the Bay Area

Brennan Hallock and *Adventist World*

More than 150 people are now interested in Bible studies, counseling, and God.



Photo: San Francisco Central Seventh-day Adventist Church

San Francisco, in California, United States, is a diverse community that is difficult to reach through many traditional methods of outreach. More than 40 percent of the residents speak a language other than English, and some of these languages include Spanish, Portuguese, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Russian, and Korean. The language barriers, cultural differences, and accessibility issues make it a good place to implement digital evangelism and see its direct impacts. Digital missionaries use social media platforms to connect with each person in their own language, helping God reveal His love to them through these resources.

Mark Ferrell, lead pastor of the San Francisco Central Seventh-day Adventist Church, explained, "It's challenging to go door-to-door since most homes have gates. Handing out brochures is also tough because people receive so many already. So we're always seeking new ways to connect with people."

People in today's world are often more interested in their phones than in talking to people face-to-face, and many people find this frustrating. However, this societal

change can be used in ministry. "There's an ancient wise saying that states, 'Don't curse the darkness, but light a candle,'" Ferrell said. "And our church decided to light the candle by reaching out to the people in our community through their digital doors—phones and computers. This is what digital evangelism is all about. Digital evangelism is reaching out to people through their smartphones and through social media."

Ceejay is one example of the ongoing impact this ministry is having in the Bay Area. Ceejay is a registered nurse in a hospital's emergency department, but he was having some problems at his work. "I was just browsing my Facebook page, and a San Francisco Central prayer request ad came up asking, 'What specifically can we pray for?'" He responded by saying he'd like them to pray about the job he had recently begun.

"I started with a conversation about my concern, and I praise the Lord because I'm still currently working at the same hospital," Ceejay said. Not only has he been able to do well in his new job, but he also began Bible studies and is even attending the local Adventist church.

Michelle Derecho, one of the local missionaries in the digital evangelism campaign, spoke directly to Ceejay in June. Through their online conversation she helped connect him with the San Francisco Central Adventist church and led him in Bible studies.

"I did not tell him about our religion. I did not tell him I wanted to give him Bible studies. We had an online conversation. I asked him about his life, what has happening to him, and he started to share his concerns," Derecho said. A few days after their online conversation began, Derecho met Ceejay in the Stonestown Mall in San Francisco, along with another one of Derecho's Bible students. This led to starting Ceejay's own personal Bible studies, and they are now halfway finished with these studies.

The digital evangelism group in San Francisco now has more than 150 people interested in Bible studies, counseling, and learning more about God, local leaders said. "In today's digital age the church ministry is reaching into the lives of people through their computers, their phones, and leading them to Christ." ©

“It’s Not I but God,” Trans-European Division Leader Says

Alex Mareniuc, with tedNEWS

The European Pastors’ Council (EPC) 2024 of the Seventh-day Adventist Church concluded August 31 in Belgrade, Serbia, with more than 1,200 pastors, departmental directors, Bible workers, and spouses from across Europe gathered to reignite their passion for ministry.

The event, organized by the Trans-European Division (TED), highlighted the challenges faced by today’s pastors, including political polarization, declining church attendance, and the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through a blend of inspiring sermons, practical workshops, and moments of worship, the EPC provided a much-needed opportunity for pastors to refocus their efforts in service to God and their communities.

CONNECTING WITH CULTURE

During the closing ceremony pastors were challenged by Gary Krause, Adventist Mission director, via video interview to reflect on the imperative for churches to connect with diverse cultural groups authentically.

“What we are comfortable with talking about in a church needs to be translated,” he emphasized,

“not just into a different language, but into their cultural language so it connects with their understanding.” Critiquing the reliance on “pre-packaged ways of communicating,” he advocated instead for ministries to invest time in “walking the streets, talking to people, listening, and asking questions to understand the people we’re trying to reach.”

FACING OUR CHALLENGES

Confronting the myriad challenges facing modern ministry, TED president Daniel Duda turned the challenges on their head.

“I want to talk to you about why this is a great time to be in ministry,” he said, “because I do believe that this is the time for the church to shine. The church can be at its best when the world is at its worst.” He urged pastors to view these difficulties as opportunities for God to work through their ministries.

Duda also addressed feelings of inadequacy common among ministers, recounting the frequent internal refrain of “but I” that hinders many from fulfilling their divine calling. “‘But I,’” Duda explained, “is a phrase we often use to excuse

Daniel Duda calls pastors to continue trusting God amid challenges.

ourselves from the calling of God.” He encouraged attendees to focus instead on “But God”—a reminder that God’s strength works through human weakness.

“God is bigger than your ‘but,’” he stated. “Stop excusing yourself from God’s calling on your life.” He illustrated this through such biblical examples as Moses, Esther, and Jeremiah, who all expressed self-doubt when called by God.

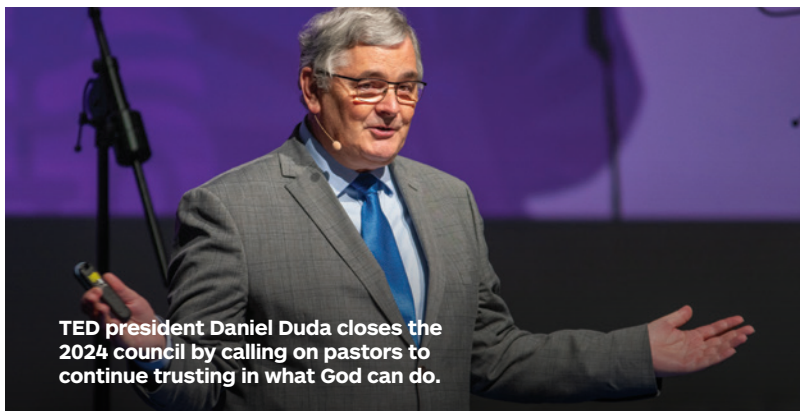
“God never disagrees with these statements,” Duda noted. “But He responds with ‘But God,’ turning our weaknesses into strengths through His power.”

VISION FOR A TRANSFORMATIVE CHURCH

Looking forward, Duda painted a vision of a church that is thoughtful, innovative, and deeply engaged with contemporary issues. He drew parallels to Jesus’ decision to take His disciples to Caesarea Philippi, a place outside their cultural comfort zone, to teach them lessons they could not learn within the familiar surroundings of Galilee.

“Just as Jesus exposed His disciples to new ideas and cultures, we too must be willing to step out and engage with the world around us,” Duda urged.

Concluding his message, Duda challenged pastors to choose between focusing on personal inadequacies or embracing God’s mission with confidence. He encouraged attendees to devote their lives to building communities that reflect God’s love and transformative power, stating, “God has done it before. He has not lost His power. The Holy Spirit is still available.” ©



TED president Daniel Duda closes the 2024 council by calling on pastors to continue trusting in what God can do.

Photo: Jimmy Botha, Adventist Media Exchange CC BY 4.0

Mission Focus



New resources and Bibles will support converts in Papua New Guinea, such as these young students baptized in May.

Photo: Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist Review*

Thousands of Bibles and Other Resources Heading to PNG

They will be used to nurture local churches and the newly baptized.

Thousands of Bibles, picture rolls, bookmarks, and training resources are being delivered to Papua New Guinea (PNG) to equip the local churches to nurture the newly baptized and those who made commitments during the PNG for Christ evangelism program in May.

South Pacific Division (SPD) leaders are working closely with the Papua New Guinea Union Mission to provide support as it negotiates the rapid growth of the church. A shipment of 100,000 World Changer Bibles has recently arrived in PNG, with an additional 200,000 on the way. The Bibles are accompanied by World Changer reading guides that outline the Fundamental Beliefs of the Adventist Church.

SPD ministry and strategy director Sven Östring revealed the scale of the investment. “We have mobilized 2 million Australian dollars’ [about US\$1.345 million] worth of resources because it’s critically important to assist the local teams

as they manage the vast number of people who have joined the church as a result of PNG for Christ,” Östring said. “However, this level of investment still doesn’t meet the need, and we would encourage local churches and church members to donate to the follow-up efforts.”

SPD discipleship strategy leader Danny Philip spoke about the urgency to care for those who have made decisions to follow Jesus. “We feel a deep sense of responsibility to nurture these people, keeping their interest in following Christ alive as new disciples,” he said.

The SPD is shipping a huge number of resources, including 1 million gift bookmarks, 50,000 harvest model booklets, and 50,000 new disciple retention guidebooks. Resources are being developed in both English and Pidgin. Additionally, 250,000 baptismal certificates are heading to PNG.

Recognizing the importance of catering to a predominantly visual culture, the SPD is developing a set of picture rolls. These rolls feature hand-painted biblical scenes accompanied by Scripture and are expected to play a crucial role in evangelism, particularly in rural areas where literacy levels may be lower and access to technology is limited.

Children’s ministries have also been a key focus, with Alive in Jesus training being provided to equip

children’s ministry directors from across PNG. “One of the most effective ways to grow and empower new disciples is through families,” Östring said. “Parents play a crucial role in nurturing their children’s spiritual development, which in turn strengthens their own.”

One of the SPD’s primary goals is to ensure that the resources reach the country’s rural and remote areas. “We’re working hard to ensure that the resources get to the villages, not just the big cities,” Philip said. “We want our materials to reach the remotest part of the country, where people have been overlooked in the past.”

More than 170,000 people were baptized during PNG for Christ—the largest number of baptisms in the history of the nation. With many churches yet to submit their numbers and hundreds of thousands of commitments made, the final number is expected to increase significantly.

Östring highlighted the strength of evangelism in PNG’s culture. “It doesn’t just stop after one program; it’s an ongoing cycle,” he said.

Inspired by PNG’s success, the Australian Union Conference, Trans Pacific Union Mission, and New Zealand Pacific Union Mission are formulating their own missional strategies. “We’ve committed to supporting all unions in their evangelistic endeavors,” Östring said. ☉



Focus

Broaching the Subject

A sensitive topic that
needs addressing

BY JUSTIN KIM

Not only is it a behemoth topic, but it also spills over into hundreds of other fields and disciplines. In some parts of the world it's all that's talked about; while in the rest, it begs not be mentioned in public. For some, that public includes the church. One place that does speak about its importance, however, is in Holy Writ. Sensing the challenges of discussing this grand topic of sexuality and its implications in society, the home, and the church, the editors have pulled together experts, leaders, pastors, and scholars to present articles and resources to help our last-day movement people.

The range of the implications of biblical sexuality is vast. So over the course of the past year, different topics have been spotlighted, in partial relation to sexuality. As you will see, both publications of *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World* have sought to bring more light than heat, to provide clarity and hope.

May 2024 was dedicated to the understanding of sin and its solution. Sexual sins are by no means the greatest and most egregious of sins. They are all part of the same problematic category, which Christ came to solve by giving up His life. In this series of articles, not only is sin defined, but the solution of righteousness by faith is clearly explained.

November 2023's issues of *Adventist World* and *Adventist Review* addressed the topic of where the Christian's true identity is found. Many people base their identity on gender, race, sexuality, and a variety of other categories. In the politicized world we are in, these values often eclipse the new identity that Christ has intended, created, redeemed, and offers to us. As Christians, our identity is rooted in Christ and His Word.

March 2024 sought to provide clarity and balance to the pragmatic issues of church discipline. Seeing that unrepented sexual sins cannot coincide with church membership as well as leadership, our two publications delved into the real purpose behind church discipline and revealed the grace-oriented manner in which church discipline should be understood. Our churches must make a case for and utilize church discipline carefully, gracefully, and redemptively for Jesus' sake.

This brings us to the current issue in *Adventist World* and her sister publication *Adventist Review*. Though there are a myriad of sexual sins, our intention is not to highlight the evils of one type. But when we compare Scripture with the predominant popular culture, it is plain we need clarity on the biblical understanding of sexuality, especially in the arena of same-sex attraction. Moreover, the editors seek to offer support and grace-filled counsel to the Adventist community that is wrestling with relatives and family members engaged in alternative sexual lifestyles. We pray that our hope of His return also extends to hope on this earth as well.

Before you dive into the articles on sexuality in this current issue, we invite you to revisit or discover for the first time the articles in our previous issues that build up to this topic. We trust that the articles here can stand alone. But it will certainly be a richer experience when you think of all the issues highlighted as a complete package.

This will not be the only time we address sexuality. There is much left to be said, particularly on the affirmative aspect of God's purpose in gifting humanity with sexuality for enjoyment, procreation, pleasure, and satisfaction. In a world in which the devil is unafraid to promote a false narrative about human sexuality, we must strive to point to the beauty of biblical truth.

Justin Kim is the editor of *Adventist World*.

Read More

ISSUES ADDRESSING OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST:



AR11.23 <https://adventistreview.org/review-magazine/november-2023/>



AW11.23 <https://adventistreview.org/world-magazine/november-2023/>

ISSUES ADDRESSING CHURCH DISCIPLINE:



AR03.24 <https://adventistreview.org/review-magazine/march-2024/>



AW03.24 <https://adventistreview.org/world-magazine/march-2024/>

ISSUES ADDRESSING VICTORY OVER SIN:



AR05.24 <https://adventistreview.org/review-magazine/may-2024/>



AW05.24 <https://adventistreview.org/world-magazine/may-2024/>



The Seventh-day Adventist Church has voted several statements that relate to the topic of human sexuality.

Of particular relevance to this issue of *Adventist World* magazine is the one found when you follow this QR code: <https://gc.adventist.org/guidelines/responding-to-changing-cultural-attitudes-regarding-homosexual-and-other-alternative-sexual-practices/>

This list suggested by the author does not constitute endorsement by the editorial staff of *Adventist Review*.

The background of the entire page is a photograph showing the silhouettes of a man and a woman from behind, looking out at a sunset. The sky is a gradient of orange and red, transitioning to a darker blue at the top. The man is on the right, wearing a light-colored shirt, and the woman is on the left, with her hair pulled back. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

Focus

The Biblical View of Sexuality

Ten points from
Genesis 1 and 2

BY RICHARD M. DAVIDSON

Genesis 1-2 sets forth God’s design for human sexuality, and this profound portrayal at the beginning of Scripture is foundational for the treatment of the topic elsewhere in the Bible. Many biblical passages deal with sexuality, and a whole book of the Old Testament—the Song of Solomon—extols the beauty of married sexual love. This article focuses on the divine design for sexuality established in Eden, with implications for LGBTQ+ issues. The biblical understanding of sexuality may be organized under 10 major headings.¹

1 CREATION ORDER OF MALE AND FEMALE

In lofty grandeur Genesis 1:27 portrays the creation of humankind: “So God created humankind in his own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (CJB).² Sexual differentiation is created by God, and not part of the divine order itself. In contrast to the pagan creation accounts in the ancient Near East, in which humans are created by the sexual union of male and female deities, the Genesis account radically separates sexuality and divinity.

Furthermore, humans are created “male [*zakar*] and female [*neqebah*].” According to Scripture there are only two genders, and biology, not social constructs (as claimed in transgender theory), determines these genders. The etymology of the Hebrew terms for male and female alludes to the biological male and female sex organs respectively, and Genesis 1:28 specifically relates these terms to their roles in reproduction: “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth.” When God created humans in His own image, male and female together were blessed to be able to procreate—to be cocreators with God. Throughout Scripture the binary pairing of male and female, man and woman, remains constant without exception.

2 HETEROSEXUAL MARITAL FORM

The first marriage—that of Adam and Eve—was between a “man” and a “woman” (Gen. 2:22, 23). Genesis 2:24 states: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” By using the word “therefore,” referring back to what precedes, the verse indicates that the marriage of Adam and Eve provides the divine model for all succeeding marriages. According to the divine pattern established with the first couple in the Garden (Gen. 2:18-24), the sexual relationship is to be between “a husband and his wife”—literally, “a man . . . and . . . his wife” (verse 24). This terminology identifies a *heterosexual* marriage relationship between a man and woman as the Edenic model, and this pattern remains the norm throughout Scripture.

Scripture does not condemn those with same-sex attraction who by God’s grace do not harbor or act upon their same-sex lustful thoughts (Rom. 8:1, 4; James 1:14, 15). However, both Old and New Testament passages consistently, without exception, implicitly or explicitly condemn same-sex sexual relations (Gen. 19:4, 5; Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Deut. 23:17, 18; Judges 19:22; Eze. 16:48-50; 18:10-13; Rom. 1:24-27; 1 Cor. 6:9, 10; 1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Peter 2:6-10; Jude 7, 8). *Porneia* (“sexual immorality”), condemned by Jesus (Matt. 5:32; 19:9; Mark 7:21-23), includes homosexual practice, as evidenced by the Jerusalem Council’s decision in Acts 15:29, which cites the same four prohibitions in the same order as Leviticus 17-18 and uses the term *porneia* to encompass all illicit sexual intercourse mentioned in Leviticus 18, including same-sex sexual relations.

The church is a hospital for sinners.

3 MONOGAMY

In Genesis 2:24 the pairing of the noun “man/husband” (Heb. *’ish*) with the noun “woman/wife” (Heb. *’ishah*), both in the singular and not plural, clearly implies that the marital relationship is to be not only heterosexual but *monogamous*. Jesus affirms this: “The *two* shall become one flesh” (Matt. 19:5). Although biblical characters at times sinfully deviated from this divine mandate, such practices were never cited approvingly by Bible writers and were tacitly condemned by depicting the disastrous results of polygamous relationships.

4 EQUALITY AND MUTUALITY

In Genesis 1:27 both the male and the female are given dominion over other living creatures, not over each other (Gen. 1:26, 28); both are to share alike in the blessing and responsibility of procreation (Gen. 1:29, 30). In short, both participate equally in the image of God.

Genesis 2 reinforces the position of Genesis 1. In Genesis 2 woman is created from a rib taken out of Adam’s side to show that she is to stand by his side as an equal. She is man’s “helper comparable to him” (Heb. *’ezer kenegdo* [Gen. 2:18]), a phrase that in the original language does not indicate a subordinate helper or assistant, but an “equal, mutual partner.” Genesis 2:24 summarizes the ideal of equality

and mutual submission of husband and wife to each other (without denying the validity of Gen. 3:16 as a remedial provision of the husband's servant leadership when necessary for couples in their fallen condition to preserve unity and harmony in the home).

Scripture provides very few gender-specific commands, such as a woman presenting oneself as a woman and not as a man, and vice versa (Deut. 22:5; 1 Cor. 11:2-16). Most gender stereotypes come from current culture, not the Bible. In fact, biblical men and women often defied contemporary gender stereotypes. See, for example, the amazing description of the model "woman of strength" described in Proverbs 31:10-31, and Jesus' countercultural views of masculinity and femininity. Today those experiencing gender dysphoria may find freedom in the realization that one can be a woman (or man) without being *stereotypically* woman (or man).

5 WHOLENESS Genesis 2 presents a wholistic view of the marriage relationship: the husband and wife need each other to be "whole." The Genesis 2 creation account opens with the creation of the man, but he is incomplete, alone, and this is "not good" (verse 18). He needs a partner. Adam in effect exclaims at his first sight of Eve, "At last, I'm whole! Here's the complement of myself!" (see Gen. 2:23).

Genesis 2:7 presents a wholistic view of the human being: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being [*nephesh*]." The Hebrew *nephesh*, commonly translated "soul," never in Scripture refers to an immortal soul existing as separate from the

body. According to Genesis 2:7 a human being does not *have* a soul, but *is* a soul! There is a psychosomatic unity in human beings ("souls") as God created them. This passage rejects any dualism between body and soul. The Bible nowhere distinguishes between an "inner self" (or soul), which may have a different gender identity than the person's biological sex, as is usually assumed in transgender theory. Gender dysphoria, a disorder ultimately arising as a consequence of the Fall, is not sin in itself, but it may lead to sinful choices if transgender people do not commit to ordering their lives according to the biblical teachings on sexuality and marriage.

6 EXCLUSIVENESS According to Genesis 2:24, man is to *leave* father and mother. At the time Genesis was written, it was assumed that the woman would leave her parents' house when she married, but Moses announces that in God's plan the man also must leave! Both are to leave. The "leaving" of Genesis 2:24 indicates the necessity of exclusiveness: freedom from outside interferences that would encroach upon the independence of the marriage relationship. Note that the biblical passages forbidding same-sex sexual intercourse do not make exceptions for homosexual sexual relationships that are exclusively between two committed partners: all same-sex sexual relations are outside of the creation order and condemned by God.

7 PERMANENCE Genesis 2:24 also states that man is to *cleave* (be joined) to his wife. The original imagery of the Hebrew word *dabaq* is that of permanence in bonding: "clinging, sticking, as skin to flesh and flesh

to bone." In the Old Testament it is often used as a technical covenant term for the permanent bond of Israel to the Lord (see, e.g., Deut. 10:20; 11:22; 13:4). In Genesis 2:24 this term indicates the mutual commitment of the couple expressed in a formal marriage covenant, paralleling what may be described as the "marriage vows" expressed by Adam to Eve (verse 23), and it also emphasizes inward attitudinal dimensions of devotion and unshakable faithfulness between the marriage partners.

Permanence and mutual faithfulness in same-sex marriages, however, do not legitimize such relationships. The same Bible that enjoins faithfulness in marriage also forbids same-sex sexual relations and same-sex marriage.

8 INTIMACY According to Genesis 2:24, after the husband and wife are legally joined together in holy matrimony, they are to become "one flesh." This phrase refers particularly to the act of intimacy in sexual intercourse (see 1 Cor. 6:16). The "one-flesh" union comes *after* the "cleaving" and thus according to the divine design occurs within the context of the marriage covenant relationship, not as premarital sex. The Bible describes at least 12 kinds of intimacy between human beings: physical (sexual), work, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, crisis, conflict, aesthetic, commitment, creative, recreational, and communication. Many of these may be legitimately experienced between two persons of the same sex in a relationship of deep friendship and fellowship (such as David and Jonathan, and Ruth and Naomi), but sexual intimacy (intercourse) is reserved by God for the relationship of a man and woman within the context of marriage.



God's Edenic design for sexuality is indeed beautiful, joyous, and awesome!

9 PROCREATION

Procreation is part of the divine design for human sexuality, as a special added blessing to be taken seriously and acted upon freely and responsibly in the power that attends God's blessing (Gen. 1:26). A same-sex sexual relationship subverts the original blessing of being procreators with God in whose image humans are made.

At the same time, sexuality cannot be wholly subordinated to the intent to propagate children. The priority of the unitive over the procreative purpose of sexuality is highlighted in Genesis 2:24 by the complete absence of any reference to the propagation of children. This omission is not to deny the importance of procreation (as becomes apparent in later chapters of Scripture). But by the "full stop" after the "one flesh" in verse 24, sexuality is given independent meaning and value.

10 THE WHOLESOME BEAUTY AND JOY OF SEXUALITY

According to Genesis 1:31, "God saw everything that He had made"—including human sexuality—"and indeed it was very good." The Hebrew expression *tov me'od* ("very good") connotes the quintessence of goodness, wholesomeness, appropriateness, and beauty. In the beginning God declares that sex is

good, very good. It is part of God's perfect design from the beginning and willed as a fundamental aspect of human existence.

After the formation of woman, the Lord God "brought her to the man" (Gen. 2:22). The Creator Himself officiated at the first wedding! Sexuality within heterosexual monogamous marriage is wholesome, yes, holy, because it is inaugurated by God Himself and hallowed (like the Sabbath [Gen. 2:3]) by His presence.

A final word on God's Edenic ideal for sexuality in the Genesis creation accounts comes in 2:25: "And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed"—or more precisely, according to Hebrew grammar: "they were not ashamed *before one another*." The sexual relationship is designed by God as an experience of love, pleasure, celebration, and bonding between husband and wife, a blessing to be enjoyed without fear, inhibitions, shame, or embarrassment. God's Edenic design for sexuality is indeed beautiful, joyous, and awesome!

GOD'S GRACE

For those who have fallen short of His plan, committing sexual sins—whether heterosexual or homosexual—God has not forsaken us. All of us are sinners, in need of the grace of God (Rom. 3:23). And

all sins, even those most strongly condemned by God, can be forgiven by Him (1 John 1:9)! He has promised to spiritually "revirginize" us as He did for repentant Israel (Hosea 2:14-23; cf. Rev. 14:4). The church is a hospital for sinners. We need to provide a "safe," encouraging, empathizing spiritual family for those who have chosen to follow God's will (Mark 10:29, 30). We need to assist those involved in same-sex and transsexual sexual activity to move from brokenness into chastity and healing by the power of God (1 Cor. 9:11). We need to "love the sinner and hate *our* sin" of hypocrisy and insensitivity. God has promised to send His gift of love—the "flame of Yahweh" (S. of Sol. 8:6, New Jerusalem)³—to ignite our hearts and homes and churches, leading us "back to Eden" in our experience of sexuality, ablaze with His holy flame! ©

¹ For further biblically based discussion of the issues dealt with in this article, see especially Richard M. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson; 2007); and Ekkehardt Mueller and Elias Brasil de Souza, eds., *Sexuality: Contemporary Issues From a Biblical Perspective*, Biblical Research Institute Studies in Biblical Ethics (Silver Spring, Md.: Biblical Research Institute and Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2022), vol. 2.
² Bible texts credited to CJB are from the *Complete Jewish Bible*. Copyright © 1998 by David H. Stern. All rights reserved.
³ Texts credited to New Jerusalem are from *The New Jerusalem Bible*, copyright © 1985 by Darton, Longman & Todd, Ltd., and Doubleday & Company, Inc. Used by permission.

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Love in Practice

LGBTQ and the Church

BY LUISE SCHNEEWEIB

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a clear biblical position on human sexuality.¹ When we meet a person struggling with same-sex attraction, however, we realize it is not just about a doctrine, but about people and their lives. This article shares aspects and approaches for ministry toward individuals struggling with their sexuality.

To love means to be willing to learn. When it comes to LGBTQ issues, some misconceptions must be cleared up.

A person's sexual orientation is the gender someone feels attracted to. That they do not *feel* heterosexual is a shock for many Christians. *Feeling trapped* in the wrong body and struggling with one's sexual identity is equally difficult.

INFORM YOURSELF

Most people are unaware of the differentiation between sexual orientation and sexual behavior. The Bible speaks about same-sex behavior, not orientation.²

In pastoral care, to declare someone's orientation itself a sin is problematic, even if it is a consequence of our fallen nature. Christians with same-sex feelings often suffer from feelings of shame

and guilt. But temptation is not in itself sin.

Biblically, there is nothing to prevent a person tempted with homosexual *feelings* from being baptized, working in the church, or even holding a leadership position if they reject the temptation.

People in the early church who had same-sex inclinations were accepted without being seen as second-class Christians, provided they rejected the behavior (1 Cor. 6:9-11).³

Our primary identity lies in Christ, not in gender or sexual orientation, as existentially close as these may be to us. Therefore, there is no reason to reduce people to their sexuality. Everyone has a place in our church regardless of their sexual orientation.

HOW DO I REACT WHEN SOMEONE COMES OUT?

If someone reveals their sexual orientation and comes out to you, prove trustworthy! Appreciate their courage, and don't react with shock. Be discreet, not revealing their orientation to others. Maintain the relationship and pray for them, even if they make decisions you don't support. Show love and acceptance of the person (not the sin).

Don't withdraw, as if their orienta-

tion is contagious. Behave naturally, allowing appropriate closeness. Don't place every expression of friendship under suspicion, as if the person is attracted to *everyone* of the same gender (which is not the case with you, either). If you feel disgust, hatred, or discomfort, be sure to deal with it prayerfully until you come to a different attitude (see Mark 2:16, 17).

Refrain from moralizing. The individual probably knows what Adventists think about homosexuality. Do not put someone under pressure (possibly even with the withdrawal of love) to end an existing homosexual relationship. Decisions are sustainable only if someone makes them out of their own conviction.

You don't have to hide your biblical position. But bear witness to the truth in the greatest possible love, and leave room for the work of the Spirit. Remember, we can encourage people on their journey of faith regardless of church membership or their behavior. God can work with them and guide them in how they should shape their lives. This is a *lifelong process*; be patient.

NO FALSE PROMISES

Some think that enough prayer and faith will set you free from your homosexual orientation. (This is

often accompanied by the idea that the orientation itself is considered sinful and must therefore be overcome.) All things are possible with God, and some have experienced transformation. This simplified view, however, can be problematic when it implies that unchanged feelings mean a lack of faith. This mindset has caused emotional and spiritual harm, for example, in so-called conversion therapies.

The causes of homosexual orientation are controversial. Some consider it to be genetically determined, ruling out any change. Others attribute it mainly to developmental problems (trauma, family ties), making speculations that are overreaching. Current research assumes a complex interplay of several factors.⁴ There is no simple explanation.

As biographical and personality-related influences can play a role, some find therapeutic support helpful. This, however, should not be associated with the goal or promise that you will *feel* heterosexual afterward, even if some have experienced minor or major changes during their lives.

OPENING UP LIFE PROSPECTS

The solution for people with homosexual feelings is not to *pray them back to health*, but to provide an attractive perspective even if their sexual orientation persists, and to accompany them in living faithfully.

We need a church culture where a meaningful, happy life without marriage is possible.

Unfortunately, our natural emphasis on marriage and family often results in marriage becoming the status symbol of being a *good Christian* or a reward for spiritual maturity or prayer. This marginalizes the unmarried and harms LGBTQ people by depriving them of an attractive life perspective.

The Bible presents two models of life: marriage (a metaphor for Christ and the church) and singleness (modeled by Jesus, who

was fully human but not sexually active). Both are equally valuable!

There exists a misconception that celibacy requires a special *calling*, and that this is recognized by feeling drawn to it. Thousands of Christians, however, are living celibate lives (single, widowed, separated, or divorced) who did not plan or choose to do so. Yet they are called because God's call is not necessarily *into* marriage or singleness, but *within* it!⁵

Our task is to support each person on their spiritual journey. We need a new perspective on friendship and a church that is not divided by marital status.

AN EMOTIONAL HOME

Honest, deep conversations; hugs; fun; joint activities; vacations—we should become more creative in giving unmarried people an emotional home. People go where they are loved and feel they belong! Do we have something to offer? Whether we can continue credibly to defend our teaching on marriage and sexuality will be decided not by more theological lectures only but

in the lived practice of the church.

No matter how lovingly and thoughtfully you present your biblical stance, it can always be read as homophobic and inhumane from the perspective of a secular culture. Nevertheless, our sexual ethics has missionary potential. It can show the world a love that is greater than sex, and a family whose cohesion cannot be explained without the God of love. "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples" (John 13:35, NIV). ©

¹ See statements of the General Conference ("Homosexuality" and "Same-Sex Unions"): <https://www.adventist.org/official-statements/homosexuality/> and <https://www.adventist.org/documents/same-sex-unions/>.

² Although it was apparently already known in antiquity, see, e.g., Bernadette J. Brooten, *Love Between Women* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Thomas Hubbard, *Homosexuality in Greece and Rome* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California, 2003).

³ It is inappropriate to declare homosexual intercourse the greatest sexual sin, while we make light of sins from the heterosexual spectrum (adultery, premarital sex, pornography).

⁴ See, e.g., Andrea Ganna, "Large-Scale GWAS Reveals Insights Into the Genetic Architecture of Same-Sex Sexual Behavior," *Science* 365 (2019), eaat7693, DOI: 10.1126/science.aat7693; Dean Hamer, "Comment on 'Large-Scale GWAS Reveals Insights Into the Genetic Architecture of Same-Sex Sexual Behavior,'" *Science* 371 (2021), aba2941, DOI: 10.1126/science.aba2941.

⁵ Those who are married are *called* to live a Christian marriage; those who are currently unmarried are *called* to live a Christian single life.

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Book Recommendations

The authors are Bible-oriented Christians from other denominations. However, regarding the topic of LGBTQ, they have valuable insights and experiences from which we can benefit (1 Thess. 5:21).

Sam Allberry, *Is God Anti-Gay? and Other Questions About Homosexuality, the Bible, and Same-Sex Attraction* (Epsom, U.K.: The Good Book Company, 2013).

Sam Allberry, *Seven Myths About Singleness* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2019).

Ed Shaw, *The Plausibility Problem: The Church and Same-Sex Attraction* (Lisle, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 2015).

Preston Sprinkle, *People to Be Loved: Why Homosexuality Is Not an Issue* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015).

Preston Sprinkle, *Embodied: Transgender Identities, the Church, and What the Bible Has to Say* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: David C. Cook, 2021).

Preston Sprinkle, *Does the Bible Support Same-Sex Marriage? 21 Conversations From a Historically Christian View* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: David C. Cook, 2023).

As a child, Samir knew he was gay. Attracted to boys, he began experimenting sexually with his playmates but never talked about it.¹ Homosexuality was taboo in the Muslim country in which he was raised. Samir and his family moved to Sweden when he was 16. He was delighted to live in a country in which homosexuality was welcomed.

Samir learned Swedish quickly and rose to the top of his high school class. Following graduation he worked as an aerobics instructor and was active in Stockholm's gay bar scene. Although free to live the life he felt born to live, Samir wasn't happy. He decided to move to Los Angeles, California.

"L.A. is extremely gay," he recalled. "Beautiful cars, beautiful people . . . I was in 'gay heaven.' All the men were asking me out on dates."

Samir took real estate training and was soon negotiating multimillion-dollar deals in star-studded Beverly Hills. Before long, Samir changed his name to Sam Jacobson, assuming it would sound better in America.

Well-known throughout Hollywood, he had a contact list that was filled with celebrities with whom he did business and socialized regularly. Before long, Sam was approached by one of the wealthiest men in Hollywood, inviting him to be his boyfriend. The two became one of the hottest couples in the city. Nevertheless, Sam still didn't have real happiness. And neither did his friends.

"My boyfriend was a billionaire, but woke up every morning with anxiety, terrified he would lose it all," he said. Trying to ease his own anxiety and depression, Sam took a cocktail of antidepressants and other treatments, but nothing helped.

SEARCHING FOR SATISFACTION

A severe blow came with the death of Sam's mother. Desperate, Sam went deep into the occult, attending high-powered séances. During this time Sam's niece, Vala, visited from Sweden. They had been best friends since childhood.

In California the two attended highly spiritualistic sessions. Sam asked the spirits to put him in touch with his dead mother; Vala, whose life was full of drugs and alcohol as she attempted to drown out her childhood pain, simply wanted to "find the truth."

The demons posed as Sam's "mother" and warned him that Vala was a "child of darkness." They ordered him to immediately cut all contact with Vala, so Sam quickly sent her back to Sweden.

God, however, heard Vala's cry and miraculously led her to Himself. "Jesus set me free," she said later. "In just one day I became drug-free. He cleansed me, and I felt His love."

Sam kept trying to contact his mother, but the spiritualistic rituals didn't work; he could no longer access the spirit world. Meanwhile, his niece was praying for him, half a world away.

"JUST BE MYSELF"

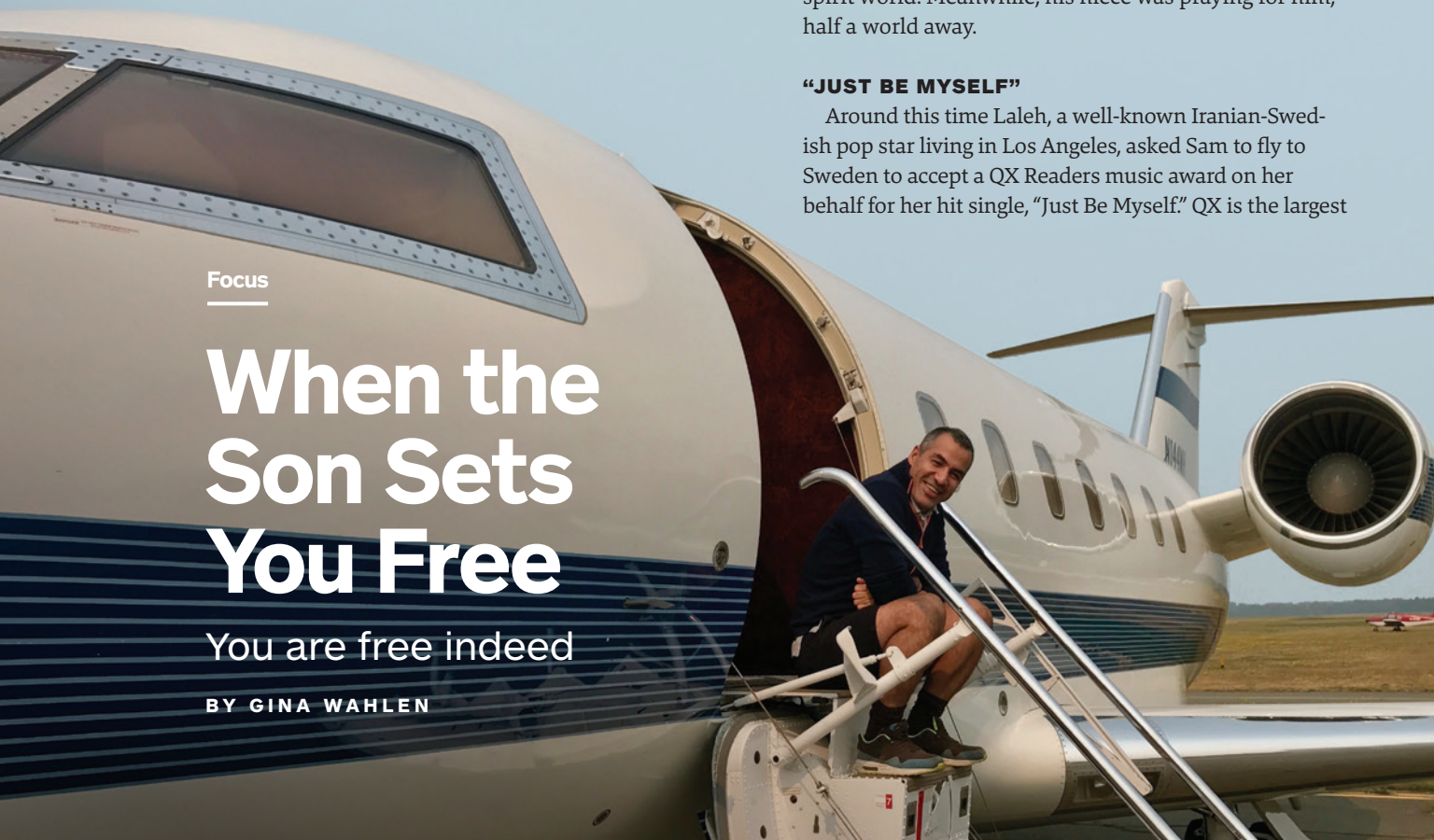
Around this time Laleh, a well-known Iranian-Swedish pop star living in Los Angeles, asked Sam to fly to Sweden to accept a QX Readers music award on her behalf for her hit single, "Just Be Myself." QX is the largest

Focus

When the Son Sets You Free

You are free indeed

BY GINA WAHLEN



LGBT-media publisher in Scandinavia, and its yearly Gaygalan Awards is broadcast on national television.

Standing on the QX Gaygalan stage was a high moment for Sam as he encouraged everyone to “come out and just be yourself!”

Throwing himself further into the gay life, Sam had multiple sex partners and dove deeper into drugs. He finally ended up in the hospital. After 30 days of rehab, Sam was still at a loss; nothing seemed to help.

He got in touch with his niece and was shocked to hear she was doing well. “Vala had never been doing well,” he recalled. Something had drastically changed.

“She told me God opened her eyes to see the spirit world; to see the evil. Then she told me, ‘We have a God.’” Vala found her Savior in Jesus Christ. Encouraged, Sam began to search for himself.

He searched for “Jesus” on YouTube and watched Christian videos. He started reading the Bible. Sam’s heart warmed as he read the teachings of Jesus, and peace finally came.

“It was a completely new element,” he recalled. “I could say no to drugs and sex, and I could sleep during the night.”

THE TRUTH

Then Vala called. “Just so you know,” she said, “if you’re going to follow Jesus, you have to repent from homosexuality.”

“How can God ask me to deny who I am?” Sam fumed. “I am who I am!” He was about to walk away from God, yet didn’t want to lose the peace in his heart.

Sam called a local Christian pastor who said, “God is love. If you get married, you can be gay and have Jesus. It’s the promiscuous gay life that God rejects.”

It was exactly what Sam wanted to hear. But somehow he knew the answer wasn’t right. He couldn’t deny the profound changes taking place in Vala’s life.

“God,” he prayed, “show me the truth.”

For three days Sam was in agony. “I read the Bible for myself, which is abundantly clear about homosexuality,” he said. “I was facing a battle between rejecting the truth and accepting it. Then on the third day I woke up 100 percent convinced that homosexuality is a sin, and I needed to repent. I realized God wanted to remove something that was harmful to me. I went on my knees and cried. I know You are God and You are real, and I know what You want. But how? This is the only life I know!”

Then Sam remembered Abraham and how God had asked him to leave his country, his people, not knowing where he was going.

“I told God, ‘OK, I’ll leave.’” From that moment a peace and joy as he had never known washed over Sam, and he knew he was free.



← Samuel and Vala witnessing in Stockholm, Sweden

Björn Björnson

A NEW LIFE

Realizing he needed to leave his old life behind, Sam broke up with his boyfriend, wrapped up his business affairs, and returned to Sweden, where God led him and Vala to become members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

In 2022 Samuel shared his testimony to a packed house during a special weekend event titled “LGBTQ—Can You Choose?” Ironically, QX magazine covered the event, and quoted Samuel’s appeal:

“To all of you who live in LGBTQ, I want to say, there is a deep inner deception going on. You have been tricked into thinking you are fighting for something beautiful, like love and equal rights. It sounds very nice, but it is not true. You and I are not our sexual desires and urges; we are made in the image of God, and when we receive Jesus, we are adopted as children of God, and the peace and joy that comes with that passes all understanding. When you have tasted true freedom, you will gladly leave not only homosexuality but everything else that can separate you from Jesus.”²

Reflecting on his experience, Samuel says, “When I tell people I have repented from homosexuality and I now follow Christ, many feel sorry for me and think that I am denying my identity or that I turned my back on the gay community. But the truth is, God saved me from a life of pain, selfishness, and self-destruction. I wish more people would give Jesus Christ a chance.”³

¹ This article was originally published in *Adventist Review* online on September 7, 2023.

² “Han kom ut som stolt gay på QX Gaygalan—föreläser nu som ‘ex-homo’” (“He came out as proudly gay at the QX Gaygalan—now lectures as an ‘ex-gay’”), *QX*, Sept. 5, 2022, bit.ly/QXSamJacobson.

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Global View

Begin With Love

Understanding biblical sexuality

Sex has always been a hot topic—now more than ever, as definitions have proliferated and practices broadened. As Seventh-day Adventists, how can we approach this subject in a compassionate, biblical, and practical way?

Perhaps a good way to begin is with love. What is love? Some say, “Love is love.” Others point out that such a statement is circular reasoning, something like saying, “Faith is faith.” As Christians, when we look for the real definition of “love,” we turn to the Bible, where we read, “God is love” (1 John 4:8). So, to truly understand love, we must know who God is, and He reveals Himself most clearly in His Word—the Bible.¹

GOD DESIGNED SEX

The Bible tells us God created human beings in His image, and as male and female (Gen. 1:27). Thus, He gave us our identity. He shaped every part of our bodies, designing us in such a way that we have the possibility to procreate. Unlike the animals, however, which can repro-

duce, the sexual act between a man and a woman—husband and wife—has a far deeper meaning than mere copulation. God designed the sexual union to be reserved for the sacredness of intimacy in a lifelong commitment, enjoying the experience within the protection of a marriage covenant. We read in Hebrews 13:4, “Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled” (ESV).²

As we are all too aware, however, we live in a sinful world, and God’s design has become distorted. And when His design is distorted, love is distorted.

In the area of sexuality, there are many distortions. Sadly, these distortions of God’s design have not only become commonplace but are widely celebrated by some. As we consider these growing challenges, our only safety is in the Word of God. Following the Bible as our guiding compass, we can be compassionate, loving, and effective.

SAFETY IN GOD’S WORD

The Bible tells us, “Put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering” (Col. 3:12). There is never an excuse to treat anyone unkindly or rudely—as if they are less than human. All are God’s children, precious in His sight.

We must remember that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Interestingly, just two chapters earlier Paul lists several sins: “sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; . . . whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful” (Rom. 1:29-31).

All these sins break our connection with the Savior. Nevertheless,

Photo: manas rb

He is more than willing to forgive when we come to Him in true repentance—"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). This verse gives hope—not only will God forgive, but He promises to "cleanse us from all unrighteousness." We do not have to stay stuck in the sin, "which so easily ensnares us," but can instead "run . . . the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:1, 2).

SUPPRESSING TRUTH

In Colossians 2:8 we read, "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit." Some people—even highly respected individuals—will try to twist the words of the Bible. Paul warns us, don't let anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit. Stay close to the Word of God.

Returning to Romans 1, we notice an important point in verse 18: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, *who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.*" There are some, even in the church today, who attempt to suppress the truth found in this passage, particularly verses 24-28:

"Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator. . . . Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful

acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error. Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done" (NIV).

Those attempting to suppress the truth of this passage claim it doesn't really mean what it says. The Bible, however, is explicit. God asks us to be faithful, sharing the truth of His Word, even if others are against us, denigrate us, or dismiss us.

PROACTIVE LOVE

It is time to be proactive in love and respect, sharing what the Bible says because it is the way to true freedom. Jesus said, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31, 32).

Jesus came to set the captives free (see Luke 4:18), and this is the calling He gives us today. No one is beyond the reach of His healing hand. There are many beautiful passages giving hope and encouragement, pointing to a better, happier life—a life God intended, as outlined in His Word.

Interestingly, the passage found in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 in many ways parallels Romans 1:27-31, and ends with a wonderful testimony:

"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. *And such were some of you.* But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." "And such *were* some of you"—

Our only safety is in the Word of God. Using the Bible as our compass, we can be compassionate, loving, and effective.

past tense. There is power in God's Word—power to change us as we submit to the Holy Spirit taking control of our lives. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

We become new creatures in the Lord. We then have a story to tell, and our story is to bring people into reconciliation with themselves and, most important, with God. As Seventh-day Adventists we have a great responsibility to show care and love for all people and, in that process, point them to the One who can change us all into new creatures in Jesus Christ.

For more Bible-based, practical material, visit humansexuality.org, which includes articles, stories, and many resources, including links to the statements and guidelines on human sexuality voted by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. ©

¹ This article is abridged and adapted from "Embracing Human Sexuality: Guided by God's Word," by Ted N. C. Wilson, in the October 2024 issue of *Ministry*, International Journal for Pastors, www.MinistryMagazine.org.

² Scripture quotations marked ESV are from *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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Spirit of Prophecy

Truth-Teaching Devices

Tools and techniques for greater efficacy

Christ's Parables and Symbols

We should seek to follow more closely the example of Christ, the great Shepherd, as He worked with His little company of disciples, studying with them and with the people the Old Testament Scriptures. His active ministry consisted not merely in sermonizing but in educating the people. As He passed through villages, He came in personal contact with the people in their homes, teaching, and ministering to their necessities. As the crowds that followed Him

increased, when He came to a favorable place, He would speak to them, simplifying His discourses by the use of parables and symbols.

Charts Should Be Used. You have given much study to the matter of how to make the truth interesting, and the charts you have made are in perfect accord with the work to be carried forward. These charts are object lessons to the people. You have put intensity of thought into the work of getting out these striking illustrations. And they have a marked effect as they

are presented to the people in vindication of truth. The Lord uses them to impress minds. Instruction has been given me clearly and distinctly that charts should be used in the presentation of truth. And these illustrations should be made still more impressive by words showing the importance of obedience.

Prophecies Taught by Simple, Inexpensive Charts. The use of charts is most effective in explaining the prophecies relating to the past, the present, and the future. But we are to make our work as

simple and inexpensive as possible. The truth is to be explained in simplicity. In no case are we to follow the example of outward display set by the world.

Effective Use of Appropriate Devices. Elder S is now making an effort in Oakland. . . . He has pitched his tent in a central location and has secured a good hearing, better than we had expected.

Brother S is an intelligent evangelist. He speaks with the simplicity of a child. Never does he bring any slur into his discourses. He preaches directly from the Word, letting the Word speak to all classes. His strong arguments are the words of the Old and the New Testaments. He does not seek for words that would merely impress the people with his learning, but he endeavors to let the Word of God speak to them directly in clear, distinct utterance. If any refuse to accept the message, they must reject the Word.

Brother S dwells especially upon the prophecies in the books of Daniel and the Revelation. He has large representations of the beasts spoken of in these books. These beasts are made of papier-mâché, and by an ingenious invention, they may be brought at the proper time before the congregation. Thus he holds the attention of the people, while he preaches the truth to them. Through this effort hundreds will be led to a better understanding of the Bible than they ever had before, and we trust that there will be many conversions.

A Sound Pedagogical Principle. The labors of Elder S remind me of the labors put forth in 1842 to 1844. He uses the Bible, and the Bible alone, to prove the truth of his arguments. He presents a plain “Thus saith the Lord.” Then if any oppose his words, he makes it plain

that they must have their controversy not with him.

He has large lifelike representations of the beasts and symbols in Daniel and the Revelation, and these are brought forward at the proper time to illustrate his remarks. Not one careless or unnecessary word escapes his lips. He speaks forcibly and solemnly. Many of his hearers have never before heard discourses of so solemn a nature. They manifest no spirit of levity, but a solemn awe seems to rest upon them.

Catholics Attracted by Symbols. Elder S is arousing a good interest by his meetings. People of all classes come out to hear, and to see the life-size images that he has of the beasts of Revelation. A great many Catholics come to hear him.

Methods to Be Used in Closing Work. I am pleased with the manner in which our brother [Elder S] has used his ingenuity and tact in providing suitable illustrations for the subjects presented—representations that have a convincing power. Such methods will be used more and more in this closing work.

Young Men Study How to Present Symbolic Truth. The Lord has been working with Elder S, teaching him how to give to the people this last warning message. His method of making the words of the Bible prove the truth for this time, and his use of the symbols presented in Revelation and Daniel, are effective. Let the young men learn as for their lives what is truth and how it should be presented. We are living in the last days of the great conflict; the truth alone will hold us securely in this time of trouble. The way should be prepared for Elder S to give the message, and our young men should attend his evening meetings.

Such methods will be used more and more in this closing work.

Workers to Originate Devices.

Let the workers for God manifest tact and talent, and originate devices by which to communicate light to those who are near and to those who are afar off. . . . Time has been lost, golden opportunities have been unimproved, because men have lacked clear, spiritual eyesight, and have not been wise to plan and devise means and ways whereby they might preoccupy the field before the enemy had taken possession.

Devices to Teach, Not Entertain. By the use of charts, symbols, and representations of various kinds, the minister can make the truth stand out clearly and distinctly. This is a help, and in harmony with the Word of God. But when the worker makes his labors so expensive that others are unable to secure from the treasury sufficient means to support them in the field, he is not working in harmony with God’s plan.

The work in the large cities is to be done after Christ’s order, not after the order of a theatrical performance. It is not a theatrical performance that glorifies God, but the presentation of the truth in the love of Christ. ☺

Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry. These excerpts are taken from “Truth-Teaching Devices” in *Evangelism*, pp. 203-206.

The Gospel to Malawi

A case study of early Adventist mission



← The Branch family (center) with the Booths (right), first official Adventist missionaries to Malamulo Mission.

mission was renamed Malamulo (Commandments) Mission. The first official Adventist missionaries were Thomas Branch,³ with his family, and Joseph Booth.⁴

GROWTH FACTORS

At the 1905 General Conference Session, President A. G. Daniells singled out Malawi by calling for the church to “materially strengthen our missions in Nyassaland [sic], Rhodesia, China, Korea, Ceylon, Turkey, and Egypt.”⁵ As time passed, Malamulo Mission became widely known among Adventists, partly through the writing of Josephine Cunningham Edwards. Mission work gradually expanded to other mission stations that functioned as hubs for church planting. In 1958 the territory was reorganized into fields, which later became conferences. By 2023 the Malawi Union claimed 712,000 members.⁶

What can account for the outstanding progress of Adventist mission in Malawi? A major part of the answer is in the committed and effective Malawian leaders who worked alongside early missionaries and eventually assumed full leadership responsibilities. This article focuses on factors in the early phases of Adventist mission in Malawi that can be seen elsewhere when patterns were established that are still bearing fruit. What are those factors?

First, the Holy Spirit was active in the work of missionaries, local workers and in the hearts of the people who responded to the gospel invitation. Without the Spirit, the very best methods would have been ineffective.

Second, the traditional religious belief in a Creator God (called *Mulungu* or *Chiuta*) was enhanced by the Bible’s teaching about God. God had been at work in the hearts of local people to create an attitude of receptivity. The unique life,

The story of Christian mission in Malawi, Africa, is a story of receptivity and growth. Malawians take their name from the Maravi, an ancient people group of the region. The nation’s preindependence name was Nyasaland. Today the small nation is appropriately called “The Warm Heart of Africa.” Malawi had a population of about 2.9 million in 1950; today’s population exceeds 20 million.¹ The traditional religion of Malawi was a variation of African traditional religion. Today about 80 percent of Malawians self-identify as Christian.

David Livingstone trekked through Malawi in 1859, and the first Christian missionaries arrived in 1861. George James, a Battle Creek College attendee from England, went to Malawi in 1893 as an independent Adventist missionary. He itinerated in the villages, playing his violin, singing, and preaching. Unable to sustain mission work alone, he departed, intending to join missionaries at Solusi Mission in Zimbabwe. Sadly, he died along the way and rests in an unknown grave.²

Malawi followed South Africa and Zimbabwe as the third recipient of Adventist mission initiatives in sub-Saharan Africa. In 1902 the General Conference purchased Plainfield Mission from the Seventh Day Baptists. The

teaching, and saving work of Jesus Christ was a new factor that was highly attractive and broadened their religious experience.

Third, Bible translation into local languages began very quickly. When people had the Word of God in their original language, they had a sense of personal ownership of the gospel. Thus, Malawian culture was affirmed because local languages were considered valid vehicles for the Word of God. Becoming a Christian did not require knowing the missionaries' foreign language. Adventists relied on the work of multidenominational Bible societies for Bible translation, but they also wrote and translated other materials. A printing press went into operation at Malamulo Mission in 1926. Literature sales and distribution have been an enduring part of the mission strategy in Malawi.

Fourth, starting within a very few years, people were evangelized by fellow Malawians who used the vernacular Bible, understood the Bible from their cultural perspective, and contextualized the message to the local culture. Local evangelists and pastors fanned out from the mission station hubs into the villages, where churches were planted.

Fifth, schools that taught basic literacy were established, using the Bible as a major textbook. A school was started at Malamulo, with Thomas Branch's daughter, Mabel, as the first Adventist schoolteacher in Malawi. In 1905 a group of seven boys from the school were baptized. As time passed, the school system expanded to become a significant part of mission.

Sixth, pastors, teachers, medical workers, masons, and carpenters were trained. One of the early converts was Morrison Malinki, who was Thomas Branch's translator. Malinki became a teacher and then a pastor, and his sons, James and

Joseph, followed in his footsteps. James Malinki went on to become a cross-cultural missionary, planting churches in surrounding nations. Schools to train teachers and pastors were established at Malamulo Mission. Carpenters and masons were trained at Matandani Mission.

Seventh, a discipleship model of mission was used. Evangelism typically occurred at camp meetings, which drew attendees from surrounding churches to a central location. Calls were made, and people who responded were enrolled in a one-year "Bible class" that met during Sabbath School in their home churches. At the next camp meeting they graduated to a "baptismal class" that met for another year. They were baptized as full church members when the next camp meeting arrived. This in-depth approach provided an excellent grounding in a preliterate, pre-Christian society.

Eighth, modern health care was provided in a setting in which tropical disease took many lives. A medical clinic was opened in 1915 by nurse Irene Fourie. Carl Birkenstock became the first physician to work at Malamulo in 1925. Specialized work for leprosy patients started in 1926. As time passed, medical clinics were established at the other mission stations and in some isolated areas. Medical and dental offices and hospitals were opened in Blantyre, Limbe, and Lilongwe. From its humble beginnings Adventist medical ministry has become a significant provider of Malawi's national health-care services. Those services include some medical specialties, dental care, and training nurses, medical assistants, and laboratory technicians. Adventist Health International, based at Loma Linda University, now has a highly valued partnership with Malamulo Hospital for providing the only Adventist surgical residency training for physicians in Africa.

Without the Spirit, the very best methods would have been ineffective.

Finally, beginning slowly but steadily gaining momentum, a pattern was set for replacing expatriate leaders with Malawians. The first ordination of five pastors occurred in 1929. Malawian teachers and pastors carried heavy responsibilities from the earliest years. Malawians pioneered the opening of Luwazi Mission and Lunkija Mission. B. B. Nkosi became the first Malawian field president in the 1960s. The process of nationalizing administrators culminated when F. A. Botomani became the first Malawian union president in 1980.

INTO THE FUTURE

As the Malawi Union looks forward into the twenty-first century, its effectiveness within its own territory and capacity for service in the world field are excellent. God has indeed blessed the "Warm Heart of Africa," and Malawian Adventists can share His blessings with the world. ☺

¹ General population and demographic statistics are from Internet sources.

² Gorden Doss, "George James: Pioneer in the Malawi Work," *Adventist Review*, Nov. 11, 1993, pp. 17, 18.

³ See <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/search-results?term=thomas+branch>.

⁴ *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1996), vol. 11, pp. 12-17.

⁵ A. G. Daniells, "The President's Address," *Review and Herald*, May 11, 1905, p. 9.

⁶ *Annual Statistical Report*, 2024.

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Transformed!

Q

What does the Bible say about the resurrected body of the righteous?

A

The Bible shows elements of similarity and difference with our present bodies. The difference could not be absolute, otherwise it would not be a resurrection. In this topic our model will be Jesus Christ, who was resurrected with a glorified body. At His coming He will “transform the body of our lowly condition into conformity with His glorious body” (Phil. 3:21, NASB).*

A PHYSICAL BODY

The resurrected body is not a disembodied soul, but a physical body. After Christ’s resurrection Mary touched and firmly embraced Him (John 20:16, 17). He let the disciples touch His hands, side, feet, His bones and flesh; He was not a ghost (Luke 24:39; John 20:20). He was present in His own glorified body. The physical nature of Christ’s resurrected body was witnessed by many others. In one case He appeared to the 11 disciples on a mountain (Matt. 28:16, 17) and to “more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time” (1 Cor. 15:6, NASB; cf. Acts 1:3; 13:31). Not everyone saw Christ, but the time is coming when every eye will see Him coming in the glory of His resurrected body (Rev. 1:7).

A SPIRITUAL BODY

Jesus’ resurrected body was not exactly as His earthly body; an element of discontinuity was also present. Mary heard His voice and at first did not recognize Him (John 20:15, 16). Two disciples walked with Him to Emmaus and did not recognize Him until Jesus blessed and broke the bread (Luke 24:30, 31). At that moment God opened their incredulous eyes. Since Christ was recognized by the disciples, we will be able to recognize Him and our loved ones. His appearances also indicate

a change in the body of Christ. He appeared to the disciples and then unexpectedly and in a supernatural way left them (John 20:19, 26; Luke 24:31). Christ now belongs to the heavenly realm. The phrase “spiritual body” does not designate an immaterial being, but a person who is no longer in the sphere of the present age; a body that permanently belongs to the heavenly realm of glory. Therefore, Christ’s appearances to the disciples and others were supernatural manifestations of His presence on earth. We need not assume that His resurrected body was capable of passing through solid walls. He appeared whenever and wherever He thought it necessary. Walls were not barriers He had to overcome.

A TRANSFORMED BODY

Our resurrected body is not formed by the exact same particles that formed our earthly body (1 Cor. 15:35-38). It is the character of a person that is preserved and brought back to life in bodily existence. At the resurrection the extraordinary and mysterious will happen. The perishable will be raised imperishable. What was planted in dishonor will be raised in glory; what was sown in weakness will be raised in power (1 Cor. 15:42, 43), and the mortal will be dressed in immortality (verse 53; John 8:51). Our bodily human existence will be perpetually free from the damage sin caused to our bodies and nature. Although our bodies will be transformed, food will be compatible with that glorified body, as it was with Jesus (Luke 24:41-43; Acts 10:41). We shall eat from the tree of life (Rev. 22:2) and from the fruits of the land (Isa. 65:21). We know that gender distinctions (male and female), established at creation, will be preserved, although we, like the angels, will not procreate (Matt. 22:30). In the new earth our vision will be perfect, enabling us to recognize our loved ones in the splendor of their resurrected bodies. ©

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The Dangerous Truth About Alcohol

Unveiling the risks

I read there are possible cardiac health benefits from alcohol, but the church does not recommend its use. Is it time to change our position?



Robust evidence has successfully challenged the longstanding belief that moderate alcohol consumption might be harmless or even beneficial. The research indicates that there is no safe level of alcohol intake, particularly concerning its links to cancer and heart disease. This shift in understanding has been reinforced by the findings of global health organizations and task forces focused on alcohol-related harm.

One of the most compelling arguments against any level of alcohol consumption comes from its association with cancer. Alcohol has been classified as a Group 1 carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC),¹ meaning it is a substance that is definitely capable of causing cancer in humans. Specifically, alcohol consumption has been linked to a variety of cancers, including those of the mouth, throat, esophagus, liver, breast, and colon.

Recent studies have shown that even low levels of alcohol intake can increase the risk of cancer. *The Lancet Oncology* highlighted that light drinking (defined as up to one drink per day) could still increase the risk of breast cancer in women.² The mechanism behind alcohol's carcinogenicity involves the metabolism of ethanol into acetaldehyde, a toxic chemical that can damage DNA and proteins, leading to mutations that can initiate cancer development. Additionally, alcohol can exacerbate the harmful effects of other carcinogens, such as those found in tobacco.

The relationship between alcohol and heart disease is more complex and has been the subject of considerable debate. For many years some studies suggested that moderate alcohol consumption, particularly red wine, might offer protective effects against coronary heart disease because of the presence of such antioxidants as resveratrol. Newer and more comprehensive research, however, has refuted these claims.

A study published in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* in 2024 revealed that even moderate alcohol consumption is associated with an increased risk of coronary heart disease, especially in women.³ Furthermore, alcohol's impact on blood pressure and cholesterol levels can contribute to an overall increased risk of cardiovascular disease, counteracting any potential benefits from antioxidants found in some alcoholic drinks.

In 2016 alcohol use resulted in more than 3 million deaths worldwide and is one of the leading causes of preventable deaths worldwide.

Younger people between the ages of 20 and 39 years were disproportionately affected. Alcohol results in more deaths than tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, and diabetes. A little more than 5 percent of the global population live with alcohol use disorders (AUDs).⁴

The evidence is clear: no level of alcohol intake can be considered safe, especially when it comes to cancer and heart disease. A recently published book entitled *Alcohol: All Risk, No Benefit*, edited by Peter N. Landless and Duane C. McBride, addresses this important topic.

The church cannot change its stance on alcohol. Thankfully, the world of health science has changed its position. Still, implementing interventions to reduce global consumption will be a slow and arduous journey. ©

¹ S. M. Gapstur, V. Bouvard, S. T. Nethan, J. L. Freudenheim, C. C. Abnet, D. R. English, et al., "The IARC Perspective on Alcohol Reduction or Cessation and Cancer Risk," *New England Journal of Medicine*, published online Dec. 28, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMs2306723>.

² Benjamin O. Anderson et al., "Health and Cancer Risks Associated With Low Levels of Alcohol Consumption," *The Lancet Public Health* 8, no. 1 (2023): e6-e7, [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667\(22\)00317-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667(22)00317-6/fulltext).

³ "Alcohol Raises Heart Disease Risk, Particularly Among Women," *American College of Cardiology*, published online Mar. 28, 2024, retrieved from <https://www.acc.org/About-ACC/Press-Releases/2024/03/28/11/58/alcohol-raises-heart-disease-risk-particularly-among-women>.

⁴ World Health Organization, "Global Alcohol Action Plan 2022-2030 to Strengthen Implementation of the Global Strategy to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol," July 2021, retrieved from https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/alcohol/alcohol-action-plan/first-draft/global_alcohol_action_plan_first-draft_july_2021.pdf.

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Dusty Roads



“May I Tell
You a Story?”

BY DICK DUERKSEN

Wyoming roads run dusty, each turn of the wheel puffing yellowish clouds into heavy air. There are places today, many of them, where you can follow the deep ruts made by thousands of iron-rimmed wheels, circuses of “covered wagons” carrying hopeful settlers from Eastern cities across Nebraska and Wyoming to the promised lands of Oregon and California.

I have often stopped, stood, and imagined beside those tracks. The wagons were narrow, hardly wide enough to carry the plows, shovels, and other tools the dreamers carried. There was seldom enough space for the whole family beneath the wagon’s canvas covering. Most folks walked. Flocks of small children tossing stones into prairie dog burrows or loudly complaining of thirst and exhaustion.

Day after dusty day the wagons became havens of hope. Fathers used charcoal-tipped sticks to draw designs for new plows on the canvas. Mothers imagined better ways to make blueberries into pies. Children dreamed of soft beds in safe cabins and hoped for school-rooms in which they could learn “readin’ n’ ritin’.” Everyone prayed, urging God to guide them to safety and quickly!

In 1843 Jim Bridger, a grizzled mountain man who had lived most of his life in and around Wyoming, planted “a safe place for stopping” on a fork of Wyoming’s wild Green River. Fort Bridger, he called it, and welcomed wagon-sore travelers personally.

One of the wagons Bridger welcomed carried Marcus and Narcissa Whitman, missionaries of the gospel who were traveling to grow a church among Native American tribes 700 miles to the north. Since they arrived in late autumn, Bridger encouraged the Whitmans to stay over the winter and travel on in the spring. They agreed, spending the frozen months telling everyone in the fort about Jesus. Bridger’s heart was so touched by how the Whitmans loved and trusted God that he sent his daughter, Mary Ann, with them to the new mission in Walla Walla.

RUNNING LATE

Our young family stopped at Fort Bridger one summer as we were traveling east across the state, on our way to the Seventh-day Adventist camp meeting on the top of Wyoming’s Casper Mountain. No, we were not traveling in a cramped covered wagon, but were driving an ancient Dodge van and pulling a small travel trailer. There were five of us, Mom, Dad, and our three children—Jeremy, Julene, and Joy, ages 8, 6, and 4.

We spent too much time at Fort Bridger. Jeremy wanted to see the blacksmith shop, and Julene wanted to try on costumes in the store while Joy was admiring the horses.

Mom kept reminding me to hurry. “Remember,” she said, “you are the speaker for tonight’s meeting.”

I remembered, but when we finally left, we really needed to hurry.

We drove at full speed on the wide Interstate highway. Much of the time Jeremy was beside me, asking questions about covered wagons, Jim Bridger, the Whitmans, and how people might have prayed when they were traveling on the old Oregon Trail. “They had so many troubles,” Jeremy said, “they must have talked to God a lot!”

We made good time, all the way to Sinclair, and then north on a smaller road up toward the evening camp meeting. Often Mom Brenda reminded me that we needed to hurry.

Rather than take the safe, well-paved state highway through busy downtown Casper, I chose a narrower road that

would save us miles and time. I hoped.

All went well.

Until it didn't.

The road I chose shifted quickly from blacktop to gravel and then became a dusty wagon road that climbed the side of a very rocky cliff. Worse still, the road was made of rotten gravel that was full of rolling ruts and ridges, as if a giant cardboard box had been split apart and laid on the roadbed. "Corrugated dirt road," the locals called it. "It gets this way because heavy trucks travel on it."

The van was laboring to pull our trailer up and over each of the corrugated hills. Sure, the ruts and ridges were only a few inches high, but the van acted as if each one were an insurmountable mountain.

I shifted into first gear and pressed harder on the accelerator. The engine roared loudly and moved not at all.

I stopped, turned off the van, and walked up the road, hoping to discover that the rolling ruts would become a nice flat surface just around the next corner.

Instead, the road got progressively worse. I stood a long time, talking to God, apologizing for being late, asking for a miracle.

We should have started earlier. We should have left Fort Bridger sooner. We should have stayed on the main road. We needed to hurry.

THE PRAYER OF FAITH

I looked at my watch, shook my head, and walked slowly back to my family. The van's air was charged with negativity. "We're not going to get there, are we, Daddy?"

"No. We're probably not going to make it until very late tonight."

"That's not right, Daddy." Jeremy's voice was strong and determined, unquestioning, positive.

"How is that?" I tried to sound encouraging, but my words trembled.

Our 8-year-old spoke with a contented smile.

"Because I prayed. I asked God to have the angels push us up the road and over the big hill. He said they would."

I slipped into the driver's seat and reached for the ignition key.

We moved slowly, but we moved!

"Wait," said Mom. "We need to thank God for answering Jeremy's prayer."

Her prayer was brief, laced with sniffles of thanksgiving.

I turned the ignition on and prayed silently. For the engine, for the transmission, for the road, and for God not to let my son's faith fail.

I shifted into first gear, pressed the accelerator to the floor, and watched the temperature gauge slide into the red danger area.

Nothing moved.

Then, after what seemed to be an hour of hoping, I felt the wheels shift. Just a bit. Then a bit more. Then the wheels dropped down into one of the corrugated valleys and began climbing the next three-inch hill.

One corrugation at a time we climbed. No, that's not quite correct. One corrugation at a time the angels pushed hard on the back of the trailer. We moved slowly, but we *moved!* Up and over and down and up and over and down and . . .

All the while Jeremy was looking out the window and smiling.

Twenty minutes later we climbed the last of the corrugated mountains. We had given the angels a good workout.

I put the transmission into park and let the engine cool down.

"The angels did it, just as I asked."

Jeremy said calmly, looking pleased. "I knew they could do it."

Mom and I hugged our son, and then the three of us sprinted together to the back of the trailer, wondering if the angels might have left handprints in the dust; glad they had left handprints on the heart of our son. ©

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Seventh-day
Adventist® Church



Joey's Grateful Heart

Eleven-year-old Joey lived with his parents and little sister, Emma, in a comfortable home just outside of town. Joey loved many things: playing soccer with his friends, reading stories about brave adventurers and explorers, and exploring the woods behind his house. But there was one thing Joey sometimes forgot—to be grateful for the little things in life.

One sunny morning Joey woke up to the sound of birds chirping outside his window. He jumped out of bed, excited to start his day. As he rushed downstairs, he smelled the delicious aroma of fresh bread, scrambled eggs, and fried potatoes. Joey loved potatoes!

“Mmm, my favorite!” Joey exclaimed as he sat down at the breakfast table.

“Good morning, Joey,” his mom said, placing a plate in front of him. “Did you sleep well?”

“Yeah! Boy, am I hungry!” Joey said quickly, as he picked up his fork and dug into his food.

After breakfast Joey grabbed his soccer ball and ran outside to meet his friends. They played

for hours, laughing and kicking the ball back and forth. When it was time for lunch, Joey's stomach rumbled. He waved goodbye to his friends and hurried home.

As Joey walked through the front door, he noticed Dad out working in the garden. His dad waved and said, “Hey, Joey! How was soccer?”

“Great, Dad!” Joey replied. “I'm hungry. What's for lunch?”

Joey's mom had prepared rice, beans, and salad for lunch. When the family all gathered around the table, Joey gobbled up his food without saying much. Mom and Dad exchanged a glance, noticing that Joey seemed to take some things for granted.

IN EVERYTHING, GIVE THANKS

That evening Joey's family gathered in the living room for their nightly family worship. They read a story or verse from the Bible and talked about it together. Joey's dad opened the Bible and read, “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thess. 5:18, NIV).

Joey was quiet, and although

he heard the verse, he wasn't thinking much about it. He was already daydreaming about the next day's adventures.

The next morning Joey woke up with a terrible cough and a sore throat. His mom took his temperature and frowned. “You have a fever, Joey. You'll need to stay in bed today.”

Joey groaned. He hated being sick. “But I have a soccer game today! I can't miss it!”

“I'm sorry, Joey, but you need to rest,” his mom said gently.

Joey spent the whole day in bed, feeling miserable. He could hear his friends playing outside, and he felt sad and left out. His mom brought him soup for lunch, but he barely touched it. He missed running around and having fun.

The Bible verse Joey's dad had read the night before came to his mind as he lay quietly in bed. “‘Give thanks in all circumstances;’” he mumbled to himself. “How am I supposed to give thanks when I feel so awful?”

That evening Joey's dad came to check on him. Seeing Joey's glum expression, he asked,



“What’s on your mind, Joey?”

Joey sighed. “Dad, how can I be thankful when I’m sick? I missed my soccer game, I can’t play with my friends, and I feel terrible.”

His dad sat down on the edge of the bed and smiled gently. “I understand, Joey. It’s hard to be grateful when things aren’t going well. But sometimes, being thankful is about finding the small blessings even in difficult times.”

“Like what?” Joey asked, skeptical.

“Well,” his dad began, “you have a warm bed to rest in, a family who loves you, and a mom who makes you soup. And this time of rest will help you get better so you can play soccer again soon.”

Joey thought about this. It was true—he did have a lot to be thankful for, even if he didn’t feel great right now.

The next day Joey felt a little better, but he still wasn’t allowed to go outside. His friends came by to see how he was doing, but they couldn’t stay long. Joey’s dad brought him some books to read, but Joey couldn’t focus on the stories. He felt bored and frustrated.

By the third day Joey was feeling much better and was allowed to go outside for a short walk. As he walked through the backyard, he realized he had never really noticed how nice everything was around him. The garden was brimming with colorful flowers and vegetable plants; the house was tidy and cozy. *My parents really work hard to make our home nice and comfortable*, he thought. The sun was shining, the flowers were blooming, and the birds were singing. How wonderful it was to be outside! Fresh air had never smelled so sweet.

That evening Joey’s family gathered in the living room as usual. As Dad read from the Bible, Joey listened quietly. He thought about the verse they had read before—about being thankful in all circumstances.

He remembered how miserable he had felt while he was sick and how he had taken his health and other good things for granted. He realized how much he had to be thankful for: his family, his friends, his home, and the beautiful world around him.



Bible Treasure

“Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

1 Thessalonians
5:18, NIV

SIMPLE JOYS

The next morning Joey woke up feeling grateful. He thanked his mom for breakfast, helped his dad in the garden, and played with Emma in the backyard. He noticed how happy his little sister was when he spent time with her, and felt a warm glow in his heart.

That afternoon Joey’s soccer team had another game. Joey played with all his heart, grateful for the chance to run and play with his friends. After the game he thanked his coach and his teammates for a great game.

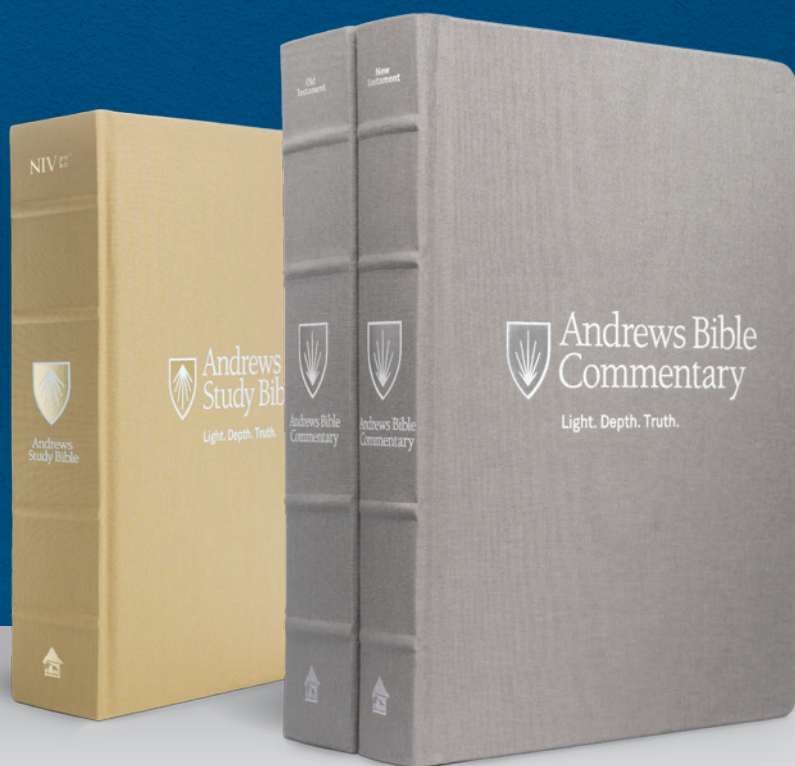
Ever after, Joey tried to remember to give thanks in all circumstances. He realized that being grateful made even the simplest moments feel extraordinary. And whenever he started to forget, he would think of the Bible verse and remind himself to appreciate all the blessings in his life. ©

Beth Thomas is assistant editor of *Adventist World*.



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