

Adventist World

02/2025

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Messy and Dirty Churches

Justin Kim

Agriculture is not my specialty, so I imagine harvesttime to be a romantic time when the fields of grain stretch out to the horizon and when their golden yellow strands meet the autumn sky. With wheat swaying in the wind, harvesters sing aloud in male and female harmonies, coordinating their scything movements with the rhythm of the song. Bales of hay bounce around amid heaps of fruits and vegetables. Adults and children work together abuzz with excitement. The animals rejoice that the harvest will help them endure through winter.

Scripture is not so romantic. Proverbs 14:4 states, “Where no oxen are, the trough is clean; but much increase comes by the strength of an ox.” Oxen are powerful agricultural animals, rightfully symbolizing strength and productivity. They can carry large loads and provide the muscle power needed for various tasks. But with this majestic beast comes also the dirtier parts of animal husbandry. There is the work of feeding it the calories that it needs, as well as the latter part of cleaning up after its digestive process. Cleaning troughs and stalls is just as much a part of the work as the harvest is. Nonetheless, an abundant harvest comes from the strength of an ox. In other words, great results come from messy means.



When it comes to evangelism, the harvest of souls, God involves human beings. And in human beings there is a lot of mess. As troughs must be continually filled, we need continual care, input, and maintenance. As stalls and mangers must be cleansed of their soil, we need cleansing, washing, and upkeep. There’s the foul stench, stink, and stigma. This isn’t from the work of the devil—it’s just natural from sinful human beings: dysfunction, frustrations, misunderstandings, jealousy, pettiness, stubbornness, character flaws,

psychological triggers, discouragement, impatience, and dismay. But in God’s amazing wisdom, just as He sees great promise and strength in the ox, He also endures through our troughs and stalls.

Many have similar romantic views of the church and spirituality, assuming all things religious are perfect and loving, without frustration, failure, or foil. We expect perfect harmony among God’s workers, with perfect results. But we see tens of pastors leave the ministry every month, hundreds of members leave their congregations every year, and thousands of believers leave the faith in every generation. Proverbs is correct not to be so romantic.

The focus is on neither the oxen nor the manger. It is on the harvest. If you envision the harvest, the messiness is worth it. If you see the power of the harvest, it can overcome any discouraged pastor, disgruntled member, or disaffected believer. For we work not for the immediate but for the hope of the harvest. Despite what messiness we experience, may we keep our eyes on the harvest’s “increase” for the Lord.

Pinehill Adventist Academy students in Champhai, Mizoram, India, welcome regional Adventist church and Maranatha Volunteers International leaders with a traditional Mizo musical item. Church leaders, donors, and volunteers have joined forces to build a brand-new school that is expected to double the current 350-student population near the Myanmar border.

Photo: Marcos Paseggi



“I had been to see other specialists and dietitians before, but they just wanted you out the door. Here it was the first time I felt heard, and what they were saying made sense. I knew I could give it a go.”

—Bob (name changed to protect identity), a rural resident in New South Wales, Australia, about the ELIA Lifestyle Medicine Centre. The center is based at the Sydney Adventist Hospital and recently extended its services to those living in rural communities. The center provides both individual appointments and 12-week clinical programs. They include the ELIA 12-week Diabetes Clinical Program and the ELIA 12-week Breast Cancer Clinical Program.

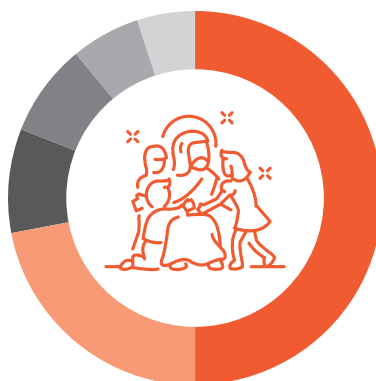
“Today is an important day for our church. As we strive to include women from the community in our projects, we have partnered with our local government to take care of these ladies by providing our professionals, our staff, and our resources [that share] special and spiritual support.”

—Celia Olivo, leader of women’s ministries in the South Ecuador Mission, about the “Florezca,” or Flourish, project. The project took place during Day Against Violence, which is celebrated every November 25. The initiative offered training to strengthen women in spiritual issues, self-love, and healthy ways to channeling emotions.

Contemplating the Life of Jesus

Church members were asked how often they reflect and think about the life of Jesus.

- 50% Daily
- 22% More than once per week
- 9% Once per week
- 8% More than once a month
- 6% Once a month
- 5% Never



Scan the QR code to view the complete survey.



N = 146,970

Source: 2022-2023 Global Church Member Survey

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

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“Missionary work brings the greatest blessing to the missionaries themselves and also extends grace to the youth in the mission fields. I hope this ministry will continue to provide spiritual benefits to Adventist youth in Korea and opportunities for salvation to the youth in Taiwan.”

—Kim GwangSung, senior pastor of the Sanmin Seventh-day Adventist Church, about Public Campus Ministry (PCM) at his local church. In 2024 this youth ministry yielded two baptisms. Through the dedication and participation of the younger generation, the church is becoming more vibrant and future-oriented. The PCM mission of the Sanmin church does not end with such events as baptisms, but serves as a foundation for ongoing spiritual growth.

“We are extremely grateful for the generosity that Sanitarium has shown over the past four years, and their ongoing passion for our mission. Their consistent support has meant we can provide the communities we serve with healthy breakfasts, especially as more and more whānau struggle to put meals on the table.”

—Gavin Findlay, chief executive for New Zealand Food Network (NZFN), about the partnership with Sanitarium, a Seventh-day Adventist health food company. Under the partnership, NZFN's two centralized distribution centers receive, sort, and store donated food, which is then distributed to 65 registered food hubs. Demand for these services is higher than in the past. A 2024 report revealed that more than one in five households with children under 15 years in the region reported that “food runs out often or sometimes,” which is up from 14 percent in 2022.

More Than 120

The number of people that met November 6–10 for the 2024 Center for Adventist-Jewish Relations (JCAR) meeting at the Araçoiaba da Serra Adventist Training Center in São Paulo, Brazil. The event offered keynote lectures, training, and encouragement to Adventist advocates from Argentina, Australia, Brazil, England, France, Israel, New Zealand, Ukraine, and the United States who support building bridges between the two faiths. It also sought to promote the exchange of experiences and motivate the leadership of Adventist communities that seek to establish links with the Jewish community in their respective regions.

More Than 19,000

In 2024 the Southern Asia-Pacific Division empowered 1,744 Voice of Youth (VOY) teams, mobilizing 50,616 young people to share Jesus with their communities. This resulted in 19,240 individuals getting baptized across the Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, Malaysia, Timor-Leste, and Thailand. Launched in 2021, this movement of young people has continued to grow, achieving unprecedented spiritual impact in 2024. VOY is a witnessing program designed to empower young people to share the three angels' messages within their local communities. It provides youth with opportunities, training, and resources to share the gospel in relevant ways. The program not only transforms the lives of those who hear the gospel but also impacts the young people leading the initiative. ➔



Girls at Risk of Being Trafficked Find Sanctuary in Thailand

Tracey Bridcutt, *Adventist Record*

A life-changing Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) program continues to provide protection to vulnerable girls amid the shadow of human trafficking in Thailand.

The Keeping Girls Safe program has been a beacon of hope for two decades, offering safety, education, and the promise of a brighter future to girls at risk of being trafficked.

The program in its current form began under the leadership of Greg Young, now the director of ADRA South Pacific. At the time, he was the ADRA Thailand country director. Initially operating from a rented facility, the program is now run from a shelter in Chiang Rai funded and built by ADRA Norway.

"When we started, it was estimated that there were about 800,000 prostitutes in Thailand under 18 years of age, with 200,000 under the age of 12," Young explained. "Many came from ethnic minority groups in the highlands who had no income.

"People would visit the families, offering 'opportunities' for the girls to return with them to the city as waitresses, nannies, or housemaids, but the fact is, they went into the sex industry, so we saw it as a huge problem."

ADRA Thailand monitoring and evaluation officer Arthur Leung said the program supports girls as young as 5 up to 18. "These girls are not yet being trafficked, but there is a high potential for that to happen to them," he said.

The girls are identified through reports from schoolteachers and the Thailand government's social development department. For boys facing similar risks, ADRA partners with another shelter to ensure they receive support.

This year 19 girls have received care at the shelter, with five successfully reunited with their families as their home situations improved. The shelter has the capacity to host 30 girls. They contribute

ADRA-run Keeping Girls Safe initiative has been active for 20 years.

to the shared life of the shelter by taking on such responsibilities as cooking their meals and cleaning the facility on a roster system.

The program tackles one of the root causes of vulnerability: financial pressures. "Beyond the shelter, we also provide scholarships for children to help support their families," Leung said. "Human trafficking often happens because of financial strain.

"It's best if the children can stay with their families," he added. "If everything goes well, nobody should need to be here, but as long as it's needed, we'll provide help."

The program focuses not only on shelter care but also on community outreach and education. This includes training in schools on topics such as online safety and addressing emerging risks for vulnerable children.

The program's long-term impact is profound, with many former residents pursuing tertiary education and careers. One 17-year-old girl, who has lived in the shelter for 10 years, expressed her gratitude, saying through a translator, "Everything here is joyful." She intends to study accounting after leaving the shelter.

During the recent year-end meetings of the Adventist Church's South Pacific Division held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, a group of division executive committee (DEC) members had the opportunity to visit the shelter and learn about its operation.

Terry Kessar, a DEC member from Western Australia, said visiting the shelter was a "massive education for me. . . I was really touched not only by the girls' circumstances but also by the love, care, and safety provided for them." ©



Sanctuary volunteers from Denmark play games with some of the girls at the ADRA-run shelter in Thailand.

Photo: *Adventist Record*

Adventists Train to Minister to Peru's Deaf Community

Thais Suarez, South American Division, and *Adventist World*

Gathering explores ways to increase sign language interpreters.

In an effort to promote inclusion and reach the deaf community in Peru, the Seventh-day Adventist Church's North Peru Union Mission (NPUM) recently organized the first Adventist Deaf Ministry (ADM) gathering in that region.

The event on the campus of Peruvian Union University in Ñaña, Peru, was titled "Hands That Transform" and led by Edison Choque, director of Adventist Possibility Ministries (APM) in the NPUM. It brought together field leaders, committed laypeople, and deaf people who are already Adventist church members or are getting acquainted with the church.

The meeting sought to train participants in the creation of new ADM groups in several regions. Attendees learned about evangelism, Adventist lifestyle, Peruvian Sign Language (PSL) interpretation, and the fundamentals of establishing this ministry in their localities. In addition, leaders highlighted the importance of inclusion and understanding of the deaf culture, discussing some of the communication barriers they face and the urgency of this mission.

MINISTRY GROWTH

With more than two years of already working on behalf of deaf individuals, the ADM at Peruvian Union University inspired attendees during the event, organizers said. Its director, Hillary Jaimes, stressed the need to learn sign language as an expression of love for others and authentic inclusion. "Many deaf people in Peru live in isolation because of communication barriers. The ADM is an urgent mission to integrate them into the



Deaf and hearing church members combined their talents to present a special item during the recent training event at Peruvian Union University in Ñaña, Peru.

Photo: Thais Suarez

church and allow them to know the truth," she emphasized.

The impact of this first meeting was reflected among the attendees, who discussed the importance of deaf ministry and how it is essential to keep expanding it. Regional church leaders said they expect new ADM groups will be launched in other Peruvian cities, including Chiclayo, Trujillo, Chimbote, Tarapoto, and Lima, by 2025. In those cities, leaders have already identified deaf people who are currently interested in joining the Adventist Church.

TACKLING CHALLENGES

Peru currently acknowledges a roster of fewer than 100 certified PSL interpreters, while approximately 500,000 hearing-impaired citizens live in the country. The deficit represents a critical challenge for a prospective expansion of ADM groups. On the other hand, leaders said that the commitment of those attending the Adventist-sponsored event marks a significant step toward inclusion and accessibility.

The event not only inspired participants, regional church leaders

said, but also highlighted the importance of training more interpreters and strengthening ADM groups across the country. "The Adventist Church encourages all members to be a part of this mission, bringing hope and God's message to the deaf community in Peru," they said.

ABOUT ADVENTIST POSSIBILITY MINISTRIES

APM advocates for the recognition of dignity and respect of every person and for helping to make possible the discovery of unrealized abilities despite stigmas associated with a disability or loss. It affirms that all are gifted, needed, and treasured, that people go where they are welcomed but stay where they are valued, and that value is inherent through Creation and not determined by what a person can or cannot do.

The ministries cater to seven unique people groups, including the deaf, the blind, the physically immobile, and those who have mental health challenges. It also includes orphans and vulnerable children, those mourning the loss of a spouse, and caregivers. ©

Adventist Hospital in Honduras Celebrates 50 Years

Libna Stevens, Inter-American Division News

Staff, leaders, and members reflect on the institution's journey.

Seventh-day Adventists recently celebrated a half century of dedicated service and health-care outreach through the Valley of Angels Adventist Hospital (HAVA) in Valle de Ángeles, Honduras.

The two-day event, held November 15-16, brought together former and current staff, administrators, church leaders, and members to reflect on the hospital's remarkable journey from a humble medical clinic to a cornerstone of health care in the region.

"This has been an extraordinary experience to share with our founding pioneers, former collaborators, church officials, and members of the hospital board, all of whom have contributed in one way or another to the success that Valley of Angels Adventist Hospital enjoys today," HAVA administrator Reynaldo Canales said.

With a staff of 60 physicians and more than 120 support staff, HAVA boasts three operating rooms, radiology, physical therapy, laboratory, dental, and medical consultation services, as well as long-term care for elderly patients.

A VISION BEYOND BOUNDARIES

Part of the anniversary celebration honored the legacy of the late Robert S. Folkenberg, former president of the Adventist Church's Honduras Mission, who envisioned a medical ministry for the region in the early 1970s. After flying over the Valle de Ángeles valley, Folkenberg pointed to the location where the hospital would eventually be built. Thanks to international donations and the dedication of engineers, medical missionaries, and local church leaders, the clinic officially opened its doors in November 1974.

Folkenberg, who later served as president of the church's General Conference in the 1990s, was fondly remembered during the celebrations. His son, Robert Folkenberg, Jr., president of the Southern New England Conference in the United States, traveled from the U.S. to attend the celebration.

SPIRITUAL AND MEDICAL IMPACT

During his message on Sabbath, Folkenberg, Jr., shared a message

with the congregation, drawing inspiration from the biblical story of Elisha, who was surrounded by enemies but remained focused on God's guidance. "There were many challenges to building this hospital, but 50 years later we are here, and God's angels have cared for and protected it," he said. "Just as God has guided us in the past, He will continue to help us face the future."

For Frank and Janet McNeal, who arrived in Honduras in 1974 as the first medical missionary doctors, the experience had a lasting impact on their lives. Janet McNeal shared her family's journey and experiences. "If my husband, who passed away, were here, he would be so happy to see how the hospital has grown," she said.

DEDICATION AND SERVICE

For David Velazquez, HAVA's longest-serving staff member, with 38 years of experience in the laboratory department, the hospital holds a special place in his heart. "I remember when the land for the hospital was purchased. It was the first health-care institution in Honduras to offer physiotherapy and ultrasound imaging," Velazquez said.

Albert Handal, HAVA's first Honduran doctor, reflected on his early years at the hospital. "I met my wife, Darlene, here at HAVA. We have now been married for 46 years," he said.

Matthew Davis recalled fond memories of his early years in Valle de Ángeles, attending the celebration to represent his parents, Tom and Pauline Davis, who served at HAVA from 1981 to 1984. "Seeing the incredible work happening here today fills my heart with joy," he said. ☺



Hospital board chair Adan Ramos (left) speaks during the dedication of a new chapel near the entrance of the hospital.

Photo: Libna Stevens/IAD



Participants gathered in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, for the first-ever conference on Adventist mission in the context of Orthodox cultures.

Photo: David Neal

Conference Discusses Adventist Mission and Orthodox Culture

More than 100 Adventist representatives meet in Bulgaria for a historic first.

In a historic first for Adventism, more than 100 representatives from 23 countries met in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, November 26-28 for the first-ever Conference on Adventist Mission and Orthodox Culture.

The event was a collaborative initiative between several church regions, and its purpose was to examine the role and effectiveness of the Adventist mission in the context of Orthodox cultures. While the conference included academic papers, presentations also provided the basis for strategic recommendations.

What are the unique traditions of Orthodox culture? What do Adventists need to understand about Eastern Orthodoxy in the context of their mission? Can a gathering from multiple countries serve as a platform to develop resources, research, and practical ideas for planting new groups in these territories? The conference sought to answer these and other related questions.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

Welcoming the participants to Bulgaria, Milen Georgiev, president of the Bulgarian Union of Churches Conference, shared some principles for meaningful connection with Orthodox Christians. He suggested considering others superior to ourselves; applying the truth first in our lives before preaching to others; and lifting up Jesus—not our denomination or ourselves.

Latvian Conference president Imants Ģipslis highlighted the need to respect both their faith and national identity. “Don’t expect them to leave their church [right away], but give an invitation to have conversations about their personal experience with God,” he said.

FROM ORTHODOX TO ADVENTIST

Laurențiu Nistor, a lecturer at Adventus University Cernica, Romania, shared the practical challenges an Orthodox Christian experiences when becoming a Seventh-day Adventist. As one new member said, “I love my newfound [Adventist] faith. . . . But I continue to go to the cathedral . . . to be totally showered by the presence of God. I find that in Adventist worship, there is too little music and prayer for the amount that my soul requires.”

In response, Igor Mitrović from Serbia asked, “Is Adventism attractive enough in the aesthetic sense? There is no beauty to inspire an Orthodox person in the arena of Adventist worship.”

Cristian Dumitrescu, also from Adventus University Cernica, connected with this challenge by commenting, “Truth is seen not only through the intellectual channel, but through the emotional channel.”

Just in time for the conference, the prelaunch of a 2025 book, *Adventism Meets Eastern Orthodoxy: Historical, Theological, and Missiological Bridges*, invited the Adventist community to navigate the cultural and theological challenges of engaging with the Eastern Orthodox faith. The 20 contributors of the volume are specialists who connect with Orthodox religion and culture.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Leaders made three core recommendations: (1) develop greater awareness in the church of how the Adventist mission can connect with Orthodox religion and culture; (2) envision pilot projects in the field; and (3) create a global advisory group to guide the first two recommendations.

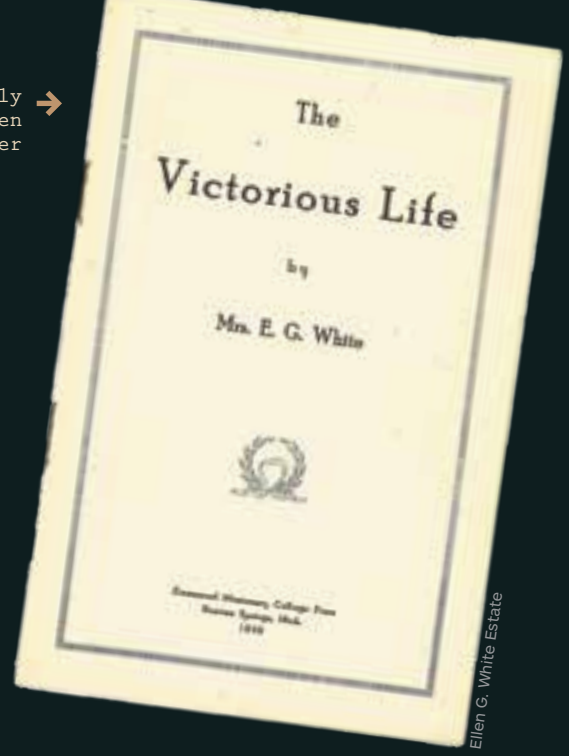
“The most important thing that one should pay attention to when communicating with a representative of any of the Orthodox groups is the example of Christian piety,” Eugene Zaitsev, Euro-Asian Division Research Institute director, said. “It is often the authentic Christian life that provides the most powerful preaching and the most convincing argument for biblical truth.” ©

One of the early
tracts sharing Ellen
White's letter →

Focus

My Dear Sister

Ellen White's last letter



Ellen G. White Estate

One of Ellen White's most encouraging letters is also identified as her last known letter, composed on June 14, 1914. Its message of hope and assurance was first shared publicly in 1916 at union meetings in North America. It was then printed in various tract forms before becoming permanently available in 1923 as the last chapter in *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, titled "The Victorious Life."

Curiously, the letter is simply addressed to "My Dear Sister," with no name provided. While the person was known to Ellen White and her office workers at the time it was sent (and no doubt for some years thereafter), the identity of the original recipient has been a mystery ever since. From recent research into contemporary correspondence, however, we now know her name and story.

Martha Andrea Creeper and her twin sister, Emma, were born in Bristol, England, on June 5, 1883, to Richard and Martha Augusta Creeper. Their German mother met and married their father, a wine merchant, while she was furthering her French and English teaching skills in England. Unfortunately, Mr. Creeper soon suffered bankruptcy on account of a friend's actions, and in this state of distress, he ended up in an insane asylum, where he died in 1888.

Martha's mother, now a widow, cared for six little girls ranging in age from 2 to 8, plus an 18-year-old stepson from Mr. Creeper's first marriage. Sadly, the son secretly left home, and the family was unsuccessful in locating him. Returning to Germany, Mrs. Creeper supported her daughters by teaching English. Providentially, she connected with supportive Seventh-day Adventists and joined the Altona-Hamburg congregation in 1890.

Family members soon began employment at the

newly opened publishing branch in Hamburg. Mrs. Creeper would also serve as head of the nursing department at the Friedensau Sanitarium and assisted the publishing house in translation projects, including *Testimonies for the Church*, *The Great Controversy*, and *The Desire of Ages*, which she especially enjoyed working on.

THE POWER OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Each of the daughters became committed workers in the church—except the youngest, who died of diphtheria at age 5. The eldest married Elder Waldemar Ehlers, who left the Hamburg Publishing House to teach in Brazil. Another married his brother, Johannes, a pioneer missionary to Tanzania (then German East Africa). Other sisters served in either the church's publishing or medical institutions.

Martha—the one who would receive Ellen White's last letter—was baptized in 1896 at age 13. Three years later she began working in the editorial department of the German publishing house, and her evident talent in writing poetry and children's books led to her becoming editor of the children's paper *Unser Kleiner Freund* (*Our Little Friend*) in 1909.

Even with Martha's valuable contribution to the church's German-speaking members, feelings of unworthiness and a lack of assurance before God began to cloud her mind and service. Elder Guy Dail, a longtime friend of the family and secretary of the European Division, shared his concerns about Martha with Ellen White's son W. C. White:

"She is now very nervous, and imagines often that she is such a great sinner the Lord is done with her, cannot let her work any more in His cause, for she is too unworthy. . . . She seems to dread the future so much,



Photo: Courtesy Aribald Wesselow and Chantal Klingbeil

← Martha Creeper, 73, speaking at a Youth Celebration in Hamburg, Germany, in 1956, encouraging 22 young people who had just been baptized

The message received from across the Atlantic Ocean continues to inspire hope and assurance in us today.

fearing about the time of trouble, and about her being cast off of the Lord. . . . According to what she has said to me, there seems to have come over her a feeling of despondency on account of the sins of which she feels guilty—tho she says she has certainly confessed them, and thinks she is forgiven. However, her attitude shows that she cannot absolutely trust herself in the hand of Jesus, knowing that He will take care of her.”¹

Elder Dail expressed hope that if Ellen White sent a few words of encouragement to Martha, perhaps it would give her the comfort and peace she needed.

Upon receiving Dail’s letter, there was an almost immediate response. In a matter of days Elder White replied, “Today I am able to send to you a message from Mother [Ellen White] to Miss Creeper. I am sending two copies. One with the brief note from myself saying, ‘Mother bids me tell you that from her manuscripts she has chosen this, as something essential to the perfection of your Christian experience.’ The last half of this statement is in the words that Mother used when she handed me the manuscript.”

Then he added these words: “Urge her to turn from the manuscript to the Bible, and read the messages of hope and cheer written there, and to bear in mind that these were written for her by Him who knows and loves every one of His children.”

What was Ellen White’s message in this, her last known letter? The complete letter may be read on pages 13-15 of this issue. Among its choicest passages are these words of assurance:

“Do not talk of your inefficiency and your defects. When despair would seem to be sweeping over your soul, look to Jesus, saying, He lives to make intercession for me.”

“It is your privilege to trust in the love of Jesus for salvation, in the fullest, surest, noblest manner; to say, He loves me, He receives me; I will trust Him, for He gave His life for me.”

“Grace is an attribute shown to undeserving human beings. We did not seek after it; it was sent in search of us. God rejoices to bestow grace upon all who hunger and thirst for it, not because we are worthy, but because we are unworthy. Our need is the qualification which gives us the assurance that we shall receive the gift.”²

What was Martha’s response to this heartfelt appeal? If she wrote a reply to Ellen White, it has not been preserved, but we know that she continued to serve God faithfully at the German publishing house until she retired in 1949 after 50 years of service. “Aunt Martha,” as she was affectionately known among her associates, died in 1976 at age 93,³ but the message she received from across the Atlantic Ocean continues to inspire hope and assurance in us today. ©

¹ Guy Dail to W. C. White, May 21, 1914. Early family history was gleaned from Dail to White, Aug. 23, 1912.

² Ellen G. White to “My Dear Sister,” letter 2, 1914 (June 14), published in *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1923), pp. 516-520.

³ Obituary, Martha Creeper, *Advent-Echo* 75, no. 21 (Nov. 1, 1976): 17. Courtesy of Bernd Müller and Markus Kutzschbach.

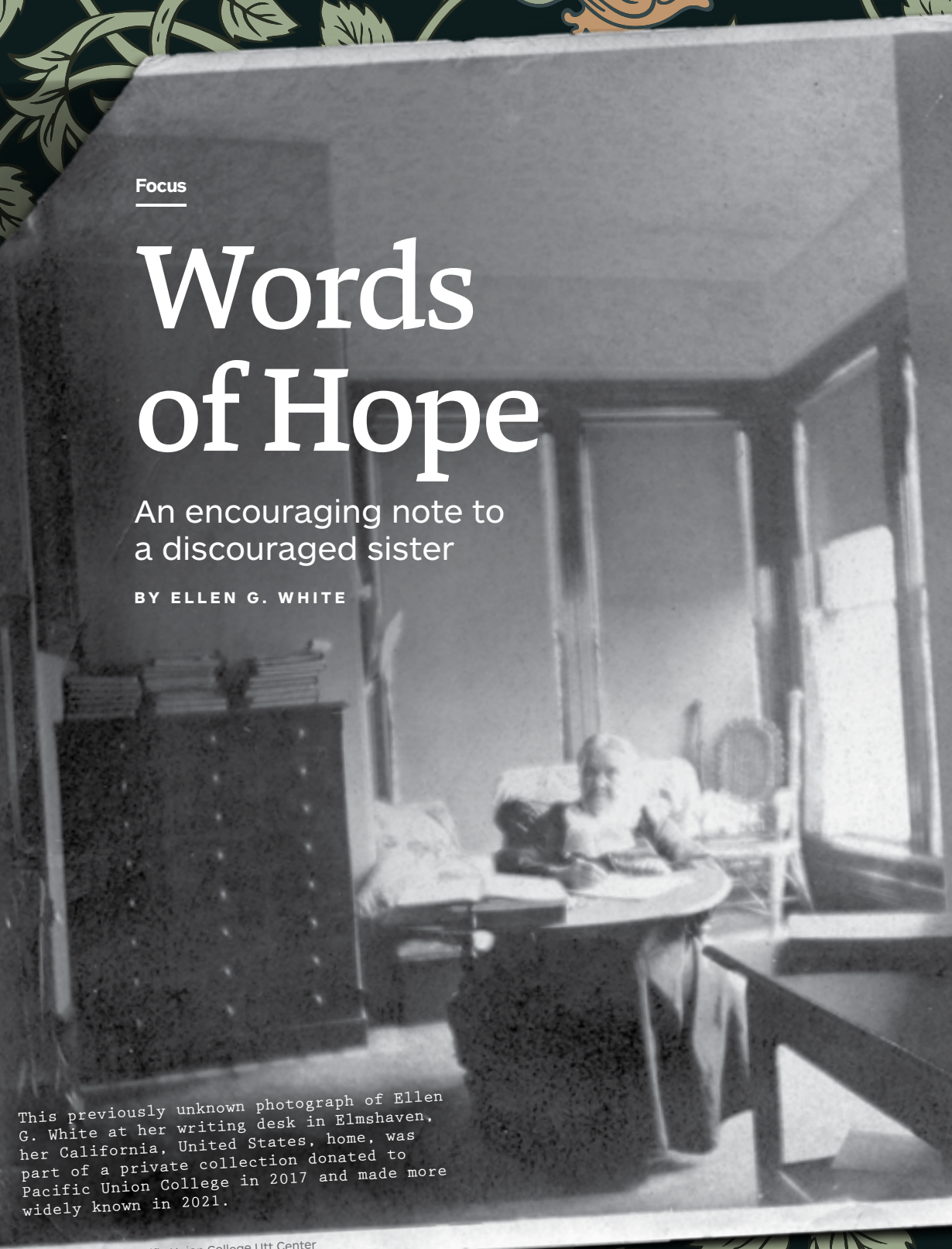
Tim Poirier is vice director and archivist of the Ellen G. White Estate, Inc.

Focus

Words of Hope


An encouraging note to a discouraged sister

BY ELLEN G. WHITE



This previously unknown photograph of Ellen G. White at her writing desk in Elmshaven, her California, United States, home, was part of a private collection donated to Pacific Union College in 2017 and made more widely known in 2021.

Photo: Courtesy Pacific Union College Utt Center



St. Helena, California, June 14, 1914

My dear Sister:

The Lord has given me a message for you, and not for you only, but also for other faithful souls who are troubled by doubts and fears regarding their acceptance by the Lord Jesus Christ. His Word to you is, "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine" (Isa. 43:1). You desire to please the Lord, and you can do this by believing His promises. He is waiting to take you into a harbor of gracious experience, and He bids you, "Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10). You have had a time of unrest, but Jesus says to you, "Come unto me, . . . and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). The joy of Christ in the soul is worth everything. "Then are they glad" (Ps. 107:30), because they are privileged to rest in the arms of everlasting love.

Put away your distrust of our heavenly Father. Instead of talking of your doubts, break away from them in the strength of Jesus, and let light shine into your soul by letting your voice express confidence and trust in God. I know that the Lord is very nigh you to give you the victory, and I say to you, Be helped, be strengthened, be lifted out of and away from the dark dungeon of unbelief. Doubts will rush into your mind, because Satan is trying to hold you in captivity to his cruel power; but face him in the strength that Jesus is willing to give you, and conquer the inclination to express unbelief in your Saviour.

Do not talk of your inefficiency and your defects. When despair would seem to be sweeping over your soul, look to Jesus, saying, "He lives to make intercession for me" (see Heb. 7:25). Forget the things that are behind, and believe the promise, "I will come unto you," and "abide with you" (see John 14:23).

God is waiting to bestow the blessing of forgiveness, of pardon for iniquity, of the gift of righteousness, upon all who will believe in His love and accept the salvation He offers. Christ is ready to say to the repenting sinner, "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment" (Zech. 3:4). The blood of Jesus Christ is the eloquent plea that speaks in behalf of sinners. This blood "cleanseth from all sin" (see 1 John 1:9).

You desire
to please the
Lord, and you
can do this by
believing His
promises.

Peace
comes with
dependence
on divine
power.

It is your privilege to trust in the love of Jesus for salvation, in the fullest, surest, noblest manner; to say, He loves me, He receives me; I will trust Him, for He gave His life to save me. Nothing so dispels doubt as coming in contact with the character of Christ. He declares, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37); that is, there is no possibility of My casting him out, for I have pledged My word to receive him. Take Christ at His word, and let your lips declare that you have gained the victory.

Is Jesus true? Does He mean what He says? Answer decidedly, Yes, every word. Then if you have settled this, by faith claim every promise that He has made, and receive the blessing; for this acceptance by faith gives life to the soul. You may believe that Jesus is true to you, even though you feel yourself to be the weakest and most unworthy of His children. And as you believe, all your dark, brooding doubts are thrown back upon the archdeceiver who originated them. You can be a great blessing if you will take God at His word. By living faith you are to trust in Him, even though the impulse is strong within you to speak words of distrust.

Peace comes with dependence on divine power. As fast as the soul resolves to act in accordance with the light given, the Holy Spirit gives more light and strength. The grace of the Spirit is supplied to cooperate with the soul's resolve, but it is not a substitute for the individual exercise of faith. Success in the Christian life depends upon the appropriation of the light that God has given. It is not an abundance of light and evidence that makes the soul free in Christ; it is the rising up of the powers and the will and the energies of the soul to cry out sincerely, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

I rejoice in the bright prospects of the future, and so may you. Be cheerful, and praise the Lord for His loving-kindness. That which you cannot understand, commit to Him. He loves you and pities your every weakness. He "hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). It would not satisfy the heart of the infinite One to give those who love His Son a lesser blessing than He gives His Son.

Satan seeks to draw our minds away from the mighty Helper, to lead us to ponder over our degradation of soul. But though Jesus sees the guilt of the past, He speaks pardon; and we should not dishonor Him by doubting His love. The feeling of guiltiness must be laid at the foot of the cross, or it will poison the springs of life. When Satan thrusts his threatenings upon you, turn from them, and comfort your soul with the promises of God. The cloud may be dark in itself, but when filled with the light of heaven, it turns to the brightness of gold; for the glory of God rests upon it.

God's children are not to be subject to feelings and emotions. When they fluctuate between hope and fear, the heart of Christ is hurt; for He has given them unmistak-

able evidence of His love. He wants them to be established, strengthened, and settled in the most holy faith. He wants them to do the work He has given them; then their hearts will become in His hands as sacred harps, every chord of which will send forth praise and thanksgiving to the One sent by God to take away the sins of the world.

Christ's love for His children is as tender as it is strong. And it is stronger than death; for He died to purchase our salvation and to make us one with Him, mystically and eternally one. So strong is His love that it controls all His powers, and employs the vast resources of heaven in doing His people good. It is without variableness or shadow of turning—the same yesterday, today, and forever. Although sin has existed for ages, trying to counteract this love and obstruct its flowing earthward, it still flows in rich currents to those for whom Christ died.

God loves the sinless angels, who do His service and are obedient to all His commands; but He does not give them grace; they have never needed it, for they have never sinned. Grace is an attribute shown to undeserving human beings. We did not seek after it; it was sent in search of us. God rejoices to bestow grace upon all who hunger and thirst for it, not because we are worthy, but because we are unworthy. Our need is the qualification which gives us the assurance that we shall receive the gift.

It should not be difficult to remember that the Lord desires you to lay your troubles and perplexities at His feet and leave them there. Go to Him, saying: "Lord, my burdens are too heavy for me to carry. Wilt Thou bear them for me?" And He will answer, "I will take them. 'With everlasting kindness will I have mercy upon thee.' I will take your sins, and will give you peace. Banish no longer your self-respect; for I have bought you with the price of My own blood. You are Mine. Your weakened will I will strengthen. Your remorse for sin I will remove."

"I, even I, am he," the Lord declares, "that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified" (Isa. 43:25, 26). "I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right" (Isa. 45:19). "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else" (Isa. 45:22). Respond to the calls of God's mercy, my sister, and say, "I will trust in the Lord and be comforted. I will praise the Lord; for His anger is turned away. I will rejoice in God, who gives the victory." ©

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Global View

Called to Be Faithful

The commandments of God and faith of Jesus

BY TED N. C. WILSON

Note: This article is adapted from Elder Ted Wilson's sermon given during the Annual Council on October



12, 2024, in Silver Spring, Maryland. For the full sermon, visit: bit.ly/AC24Sermon.

We are a precious Seventh-day Adventist family, growing rapidly, with more than 23 million believers, to the glory of God and through His power. It is obvious to most people that we are living in unprecedented times, with the world falling apart physically, socially, economically, politically, and spiritually.

As we hurtle toward the end of the world and Jesus' soon second coming, God is calling us as His Advent movement to be faithful to Him and His last-day message more than ever before. Jesus implores us, "Be faithful until death, and I

will give you the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). There are pressures on every side to sidetrack us from our faithfulness, but God wants us to focus completely on Him and His Word.

GOD'S LAST-DAY PEOPLE

The book of Revelation identifies God's last-day people as those "who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:17). And Revelation 19:10 tells us: "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." What a privilege to have received instruction, counsel, and inspiration from God working through Ellen G. White as a part of the Spirit of Prophecy. Stand faithful to God's Holy Word and to His instructions in the writings of Ellen White as the Spirit of Prophecy.

As part of the powerful three angels' messages found in Revelation 14:6-12, we hear the call to

be faithful reinforced in verse 12, again identifying God's people: "Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."

This profound truth of faithfulness to God, His Word, and His commandments is beautifully reflected in Deuteronomy 7:9: "Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments."

TWO GREAT CLASSES

In that marvelous book *The Great Controversy* we read, "In the issue of the contest all Christendom will be divided into two great classes—those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and those who worship the beast and

his image and receive his mark. Although church and state will unite their power to compel ‘all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond’ (Rev. 13:16), to receive ‘the mark of the beast,’ yet the people of God will not receive it [Rev. 15:2, 3].”¹

It is Christ who is the center of all our faithfulness to His Word, His Ten Commandments, and His three angels’ messages. It is His righteousness that is at the core of all that can be accomplished through Him.

Ellen White wrote, “At times we shall be in great perplexity, and not know just what to do. But at such times it is our privilege to take our Bibles, and read the messages He has given us; and then get down on our knees, and ask Him to help us. Over and over again He has given evidence that He is a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God. He fulfills His promises in far greater measure than we expect to receive help.”²

As God’s last-day people called to be faithful in believing and proclaiming His Word, let us be dynamic, faithful people of prayer, depending only on the merits and power of Jesus Christ. We are told, “The greatest victories gained for the cause of God are not the results of labored argument, ample facilities, wide influence, or abundance of means; they are gained in the audience chamber with God, when with earnest, agonizing faith men lay hold upon the mighty arm of power.”³

HE IS FAITHFUL

In 1 Thessalonians 5:24 we are reminded of God’s faithfulness in rewarding our faithfulness to Him: “He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.” Jude admonishes us, in verse 3, “to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” There are

a host of biblical heroes who were faithful, and God is calling us to be faithful as they were—such people as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Jochebed, Moses, Esther, Elijah, Hannah, Samuel, David, Abigail, Peter, Paul, Dorcas, John, and so many more.

In this unusual time in earth’s history we are called to be faithful to the Word of God. We are clearly told, “God has given sufficient evidence upon which to base faith if he wish to believe. In the last days the earth will be almost destitute of true faith. Upon the merest pretense, the Word of God will be considered unreliable, while human reasoning will be received, though it be in opposition to plain Scripture facts.”⁴

My friends, we are living in those very days. The Word of God is being neglected, despised, and twisted to reflect human reasoning rather than what the Bible actually says. This is most notable in what God calls sin in its many forms, including the biblical truth about human sexuality. We are called to be faithful to God and His Word.

As we head into the very last battle against Satan and sin, God is calling us to be faithful to Him, His Word, to the Advent message, and to the proclamation of the three angels’ messages, which focus on Christ’s righteousness and His beautiful Ten Commandments, showing that His character is based on His everlasting love for each of us.

ALL ARE CALLED

Everyone has a place in God’s work and is called to be faithful in proclaiming God’s last-day message. We are told, “We have no time, no words to spend in controversy. . . . There is need of sanctified energy. The armies of heaven are on the move and where is the human agent to cooperate with God?”⁵

Everyone has a place in God’s work and is called to be faithful in proclaiming God’s last-day message.

The personal stories and witness of each of us are to be shared with the world as we faithfully testify of Jesus and His saving power. As we lean on Him, He will empower us to be faithful because He is our all in all. Being faithful to His Ten Commandments through His power is not legalism but a highlighting of His justifying and sanctifying righteousness since Jesus Christ is our sufficiency.

Are you willing to be part of Global Total Member Involvement (TMI) in sharing God’s message to the world? Are you willing to answer Christ’s plea—“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season?” (Matt. 24:45). You are chosen for mission and called to be faithful. Move ahead and say, “Yes, Lord, I will go.” May God bless you as you are faithful to Him. Maranatha! ☺

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 450.

² Ellen G. White, in *Pacific Union Recorder*, Dec. 26, 1912.

³ Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1915), p. 259.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1864), vol. 3, p. 94.

⁵ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Southern Africa* (Cape Town, S.A.: South African Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1977), p. 44.

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Feature

The Sanctuary and the Mission of the Church



BY ROY E. GRAF

From the early days, Adventist pioneers understood the importance of the biblical doctrine of the heavenly sanctuary as a central element shaping their belief system. In Ellen G. White's words, the subject of the sanctuary "opened to view a complete system of truth, connected and harmonious."¹

Accordingly, Ellen White and other Adventist pioneers recognized that the sanctuary doctrine holds many crucial implications for the mission of the church, which includes proclaiming the present truth of the heavenly sanctuary as highlighted in the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12.

Because they recognized the centrality of this message to the mission of the church, the pioneers placed great emphasis on the doctrinal instruction of those who would become members of the church. This involved particular emphasis on the sanctuary, the investigative judgment, and preparing for the second coming of Christ.²

Over time, however, some Adventists have paid less attention to the role of the sanctuary as a fundamental factor that shapes our understanding of mission and guides our practice. Some have imitated mission approaches that focus almost exclusively on people making a decision for Christ at the beginning of their Christian experience, with little concern for subsequent spiritual growth and discipleship. Such an approach often tends to lack emphasis on people making a significant commitment to biblical doctrines and lifestyle.³ This has contributed to new members sometimes not being deeply rooted in the Adventist faith and easily departing from it later on, as well as frustrations of various kinds in the life of the church.

TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE MISSION FROM THE SANCTUARY PERSPECTIVE

How can a biblical and Adventist understanding of the sanctuary help to change this scenario?

As mentioned, the pioneers articulated Adventist doctrines around the sanctuary doctrine. My conviction is that the current Adventist understanding and practice of mission should also be articulated from this perspective. The sanctuary is at the heart of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12, the first of which announces that the hour of judgment has arrived. Adventists have historically regarded these messages as the focus of their preaching. How then can the sanctuary shape the understanding and practice of mission?

In what follows, I want to highlight four aspects: (1) the sanctuary shapes the biblical understanding of salvation that underlies the practice of mission and discipleship, (2) the sanctuary shapes the content of the message to be proclaimed, (3) the sanctuary shapes the vision of the church as the covenantal, priestly, and missionary community to which new converts come to belong, and (4) the sanctuary shapes the final events that guide the mission at this time.

1 The Sanctuary Shapes the Biblical Understanding of Salvation

The approach taken in mission is closely related to the way salvation is understood. In the Bible the understanding of salvation is articulated around what I call the relational pattern of the sanctuary. The sanctuary is more than just a real physical structure in heaven. God relates to the world through that complex structure by which He dwells in the universe with His creatures, receives worship from them, and conducts the plan of salvation to its final resolution.

In this framework the sanctuary shapes and manifests the biblical understanding of salvation. Salvation requires a process of atonement, that is, a process by which God seeks to reconcile fallen human beings with Himself and eradicate the problem of sin (2 Cor. 5:19-21; Rev. 21:4, 5). From this perspective, atonement is not only what Christ did on the cross. It encompasses the entire divine plan to eliminate sin.

On the individual level, the application of this plan of salvation is also a process, not a one-time event, as some people may believe. This process encompasses, among other things, justification and sanctification. Justification is nothing other than divine forgiveness (Rom. 4:6-8), which is required, continually and daily, every time someone sins (1 John 2:1; 1:9). This forgiveness is obtained through the ongoing intercession of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary (Mark 11:24-26; John 14:13). Justification in turn allows the believer to develop a life of holiness thanks to the work of the Holy Spirit sent by Christ from the heavenly sanctuary as His representative (Rev. 5:6). Without justification there is no true sanctification (Rom. 6 and 8). But without sanctification, there is no justification either (Col. 1:21-23).

This biblical view of salvation as a process that, in light of the sanctuary, encompasses both the ongoing reception of divine forgiveness and growth in holiness implies that the mission of discipleship should also involve a process. Discipleship should be a process (Col. 2:6). It is not right to focus only on people accepting Christ and attaining baptism; new members should be trained before and after baptism as well. Just as there is both a pre-forgiveness process that encompasses recognition, repentance, and confession of sins (Ps. 51:4; Luke 18:13; Acts 2:38; 3:19; Ps. 32:5) and a subsequent process of growth in holiness and Christian lifestyle (Rom. 6:22), discipleship should include pre-baptismal and post-baptismal preparation to assist in that process.

2 Sanctuary Activity Shapes the Content of the Message

Understanding the biblical message of salvation is very important in reaching people who are not familiar with that message. Christ's activity in the heavenly sanctuary articulates the plan of salvation. Thus, Christ's work is a major theme in the New Testament (see, for example, Acts 5:31; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 8:1; 1 Tim. 2:5; 1 John 2:1; Rev. 5:7, 8). Consequently, Christ's activity in the sanctuary now should shape the content of the remnant people's message today (as set forth in Rev. 14:6-12).

If Christ is interceding for believers in the pre-Advent investigative judgment, that subject should be a significant part of the Adventist message. Therefore, the Adventist mission today cannot be understood only in light of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20. It should also be understood in the light of Revelation 14:6-12, the three angelic messages, which constitute the present truth for this time.⁴

This implies that the fulfillment of the mission and the discipleship process must include strong doctrinal preparation of new believers that allows each person to understand the message of the sanctuary and the judgment in order to make a conscious and practical commitment to that message. In the heavenly sanctuary God deals with human wills that must make informed decisions, not based on sentimentality or momentary emotional outbursts. It is not surprising therefore that the New Testament widely highlights the need to teach doctrines and the centrality of the Word in that process (1 Tim. 4:13, 16; 6:3; 2 Tim. 3:15, 16; 4:2, 3; Titus 1:9; 2:1, 7).

3 The Sanctuary Shapes the Vision of the Church

Those who accept the gospel message become part of the church. The church is a spiritual temple, a community made up of the spiritual inhabitants of the heavenly sanctuary (1 Cor. 3:16; Rev. 11:1; 21:3) who have entered into a covenant bond with God by which they commit themselves to obey His law of love (Jer. 31:31-33; Rev. 12:17; 14:12).

The church's members belong to a priestly and missionary community, a holy nation, whose task is to "proclaim the excellencies of Him who" called them "out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9, NASB; see Ex. 19:6).⁵ Through such proclamation, in their role as missionary

It is time to allow the sanctuary to reshape the Adventist understanding of its message and mission.

priests, they draw others to Christ, the high priest of the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 8:1, 2), from whom they receive the power to live holy lives in obedience to the requirements of the covenant. The end-time remnant people are distinguished by this (Rev. 12:17; 14:12).

Believers are already, in a sense, citizens of the New Jerusalem and worshipers belonging to its sanctuary by faith (Gal. 4:26; Eph. 2:18, 19; Phil. 3:20; Heb. 11:10, 16; 12:22; 13:14), where Christ represents them and is their forerunner (Heb. 6:20). On the new earth, believers will dwell in the New Jerusalem, considered “the tabernacle of God,” in whose center God and the Lamb will continue to receive worship for eternity (Rev. 21:3; 22:3).

In this context baptism is a sign of acceptance of the terms of the covenant and of entry into the covenantal, priestly, and missionary community, just as circumcision was the covenantal sign in the Old Testament (Col. 2:11, 12) that someone belonged to the priestly and missionary community of Israel (Ex. 19:5, 6). Therefore, it must be taken very seriously. The one who is baptized publicly expresses that he or she wants to be a member of the community, accepts the terms of the covenant expressed in the commandments (Rom. 6:1-6), and desires to be a missionary priest as part of the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:9). The Sabbath

is in turn the sign of permanence and continuity in, and of fidelity to, the covenant terms (Ex. 31:17; Rev. 14:6, 7). This implies that whoever accepts baptism must be adequately instructed regarding the commitment he or she assumes by participating in that rite.

4 The Sanctuary Shapes the Prophetic Events That Guide the Mission

Finally, the sanctuary activity shapes the prophetic events that guide the Adventist mission. The sanctuary activity is linked to Christ’s first coming (Dan. 9:24-27; Gal. 4:4) and is also linked to His second coming (Dan. 7:13, 14; Matt. 25:31). The end-time mission of the remnant church (Rev. 12:17) is to cooperate in the preparation of a people for Christ’s coming (Rev. 14:6-12). God gathers the church into Christ—its head (Eph. 1:22, 23) and high priest (Heb. 8:2)—all who agree to belong to the covenantal community and to be part of His universal end-time missionary priesthood (Rev. 1:6; 5:10). In turn, those who join the covenantal community make a commitment to be missionary members wherever God appoints them, “looking for and *hastening* the coming of the day of God” (2 Peter 3:12, NASB). In cooperation with divine power, God’s people are to do their part to advance the final preaching work of the gospel (Matt. 24:14) as Christ

concludes His work in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 9:28). In this way, sanctuary activities provide the framework for final events and guide the mission of the final remnant within that framework.

CONCLUSION

The sanctuary articulated the doctrines and mission of Adventism in the past. In recent times, however, some have emphasized the initial experience of those being disciplined at the expense of their doctrinal preparation and Christian lifestyle. This carries with it the serious risk of the church losing its identity and diluting its distinctive message to the world. In the past the sanctuary fostered the discovery “that God’s hand had directed the great advent movement and” revealed “present duty as it brought to light the position and work of His people.”⁶ It is time to allow the sanctuary to reshape the Adventist understanding of its message and mission. ©

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 423.

² See P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 295, 296.

³ See Russell Burrill, *Radical Disciples for Revolutionary Churches* (Fallbrook, Calif.: Hart Research Center, 1996), pp. viii, ix.

⁴ See, with some qualifications, Burrill, pp. 75-81.

⁵ Scripture quotations marked NASB are from the *New American Standard Bible*, copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995, 2020 by The Lockman Foundation. All rights reserved.

⁶ E. G. White.

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Feature

God Works the Night Shift



The story of Sharath Babu Nakka

BY PRATAP GOPALA RAO

It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness." For Sharath Babu Nakka it is more than a nice-sounding cliché—it is a guiding principle of his remarkable life.

Sharath Babu Nakka, professor of theology and missiology at Spicer Adventist University in Pune, India, has lived in a world of total darkness for the past 55 years, but that has not deterred him, or robbed him of his zest for life. Instead, he greets each new day on the tiptoe of hope and expectancy, and with a smile as broad as his face. He is, without a doubt, one of the most positive and joyous Christians you will ever meet.

On a recent visit to India I observed him step out of the house, breathe in the fresh morning air, and exclaim, "Oh, what a beautiful day!" Though sightless, he *sees* more clearly than many of us who have eyes yet fail to appreciate the beauty around us. Psalm

118:24 best sums up his attitude toward life: “This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.” This day. Not tomorrow. Not the day after that, or some distant time when life will be perfect and beautiful again. But today, even amid life’s struggles and disappointments. For Sharath Babu, joy is not predicated on circumstances; it is rooted in the unfailing promises and faithfulness of God.

IT HAPPENED SUDDENLY

Sharath Babu was raised in the remote village of Srirangapatnam, in the state of Andhra Pradesh, in southern India. Surrounded by lush green rice paddies and luxuriant coconut palms, the place itself was little more than a scattering of mud huts with thatched roofs and narrow dirt roads. Few, if any, enjoyed the benefits of electricity and indoor plumbing.

Some might wonder what good could possibly come out of a place like that. But the young lad was a dreamer, and his dream of becoming a high school teacher someday took him to the Seventh-day Adventist boarding school at Narsapur. There he excelled academically. He was loving life and loving school, and showed early signs of a promising future. And then it happened.

Without any warning he lost all vision in both eyes. Overnight he was plunged into a world of complete darkness from which he has never recovered.

The oldest of four children—and the only son—born to Subhakara Rao Nakka, an Adventist village pastor, and his wife, Kamalarathnam, Sharath Babu was his parents’ pride, and their security in their old age (in the Indian culture a son means everything). “I was just 10 years old then, but I still remember everything that happened that day,”

he recalls. He especially remembers turning to his grieving parents and pleading, “Please don’t cry. God will take care of me.”

The village doctors were baffled, and referred them to Christian Medical College in Vellore. There some of the best eye surgeons in the country worked on Sharath Babu, while his father sat outside the operating room, praying and begging God for a miracle. But the devil was there too, taunting him: “Aren’t you a pastor, a man of prayer? What good is your religion now? Where is your God when you need Him? How can you bear to see your blind son condemned to a lifetime of begging along the dirt roads of your village and at the local railroad station? You might as well kill yourself, and take your son with you.” His father needed no reminding of the miserable plight of blind individuals, especially in a place like India. The country leads the world in the number of blind and visually impaired persons. They are everywhere, begging for a few coins or a piece of bread to feed their empty stomachs.

His dad would later confess that he came close to taking his own life that day, recalls Sharath Babu. But in the providence of God, he heard other voices that day: sweet, melodious voices coming from down the hall where staff and patients at this Christian hospital gathered every morning and evening to sing and pray together. They were singing in the Tamil language, but he could follow some of the words: “In the time of your trials and troubles, God will *see* you through.” Buoyed by the message of that song and his son’s unshakable faith in God, Subhakara Rao Nakka began to believe too.

“Take him home,” said the doctors. “There is nothing we can do to restore your son’s eyesight. His optic nerve is damaged beyond repair; it’s



the worst case we have ever encountered. It’s a miracle that he is still alive.” His young-boy dreams, just beginning to take hold, were cruelly snatched away. Before him was a desert of despair and hopelessness.

GOD MADE A WAY

Sharath Babu remained at home for the next two years, lost in a world that seemed darker than a thousand nights. Although helpless, he was not without hope. His faith in God remained unshakable. And God did not fail him. Providentially, he was led to a Christian school for the blind not far from home. It was run by a Pentecostal group. The school would become his home for the next five years. There he learned to read and write in braille and master basic life skills.

By the time he completed the seventh grade, he was already 18. But since he was a good student, he was permitted to skip the next two grades and go directly to the tenth grade. That year he appeared for the high school (pre-college) certificate exam administered by the state—and passed.

Spicer Memorial College (now Spicer Adventist University), the only Adventist college in all of India back then, was Sharath Babu’s next stop. Almost 1,000

kilometers (more than 600 miles) from home and in a totally different cultural environment, Sharath Babu found adjusting to hostel (dorm) life challenging. He was totally dependent upon others to take him by the hand and guide him from place to place—classroom, church, library, cafeteria. A senior student was assigned by the college administration to serve as his reader and to help with his homework. In the classroom he relied on a cassette player to record the lectures. By his junior year he had mastered braille sufficiently to keep pace with his professors. Soon his lecture notes were so complete and detailed that his classmates would often come to him for help.

Cut off from all extracurricular activities and distractions, he was able to focus entirely on his studies. Registering for 19 credits a semester and all summer school sessions, Sharath Babu was able to complete the bachelor's in religion in three and a half years. But no one would offer him a job, so he decided to pursue a master's degree at a public university close by. But God had other plans for his life. That same year Andrews University introduced the master's in religion degree, offered entirely on the Spicer College campus. Sharath Babu was one of the first Spicer graduates to be admitted into the program. He graduated in 1985 with a master's project titled "The Concept of Salvation in Hinduism." Once again there were no job offers, but unbeknown to him, God was working behind the scenes.

June 21, 1990, is a day Sharath Babu will never forget. He heard his name announced over the college public address system. He was to report immediately to the president's office. He knew that could mean only one thing: *trouble!* But his fears were soon allayed. "I know God has a plan for your life,

Sharath Babu, but I don't know what it is," said the college president, M. E. Cherian. "In the meantime, I'd like to offer you a job. We lost several faculty this year, and we need to fill those slots. Starting tomorrow, you will be teaching in the Religion Department." Today, 34 years later, he still teaches there, and loves every moment of it. Eschatology, Daniel and Revelation, church history, and the doctrine of the Sabbath are some of the courses he loves to teach; and, of course, Hinduism.

MIRACLES COMPOUNDED

There was another life-changing event that took place that same day, June 21, 1990. Sharath Babu was still in a state of disbelief as he stepped out of the president's office—he had not applied for the job. Waiting for him was his sister Jeevana, who was then a resident in the women's hostel on campus, and pursuing a master's in English at Pune University. "Wait until you hear what I have to share with you, *anna* [meaning big brother]," she said, unable to contain her excitement. "I have a roommate."

"Her name is Sumathi," Jeevana continued. "She was orphaned as a young girl, but with financial aid through the Christian Children's Fund and the support and encouragement of a loving Indian couple, K.S.D. Charles, and his wife, Seleina, she was able to complete her high school education and is now pursuing a degree in home economics." Then came the words that would transform Sharath Babu's life forever: "Sumathi has been observing you for a while, and she likes you, *anna*," continued Jeevana. "If Mom and Dad are willing to accept her, she wants to marry you."

And so it was that on June 21, 1991, exactly a year later, Sharath Babu and Sumathi Kisku were married in his native village of Srirangapatnam. For a whole 10

days leading up to the wedding, torrential monsoon rains had turned the village and its surroundings into a gigantic mudslide. It was too late to change the wedding date or arrange for an alternate venue. Miraculously (it could only have been the hand of God), the day before the wedding the rain stopped, and the sun beat down hard, rendering the mud roads and walkways passable once more. The first guests to arrive for the wedding had to wade through knee-high water and carry umbrellas—for rain was still coming down hard in the surrounding towns and villages. Srirangapatnam was the only dry spot for miles around.

The newly married couple set up home on the Spicer College campus, where Sharath Babu resumed his teaching responsibilities. Sumathi worked in the attendance office and later at the Ellen G. White center. In time, their precious daughter, Seleina, would complete their family of three.

DREAM FULFILLED AND FUTURE

In 2007, with the support and encouragement of his wife, Sharath Babu launched an international ministry. It began with a 21-day evangelistic series in London that resulted in nine baptisms. That was to be the first of many visits to the British Isles. Soon invitations came pouring in from other distant places: Monze, Zambia; Manado, Indonesia; Kisii, Kenya; Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a temporary interruption, but the invitations have picked up since; and at 64, Sharath Babu shows no signs of slowing down. Every year, during Christmas and summer break, he takes students along with him, traveling around the country, conducting revival meetings—something he

has done since his undergraduate days. Also, every Monday for the past 10 years he has appeared on the GoodNews Television channel out of Hyderabad, India. And three years ago Path to Salvation (another non-Adventist TV channel) invited him to do a daily presentation on prophecy and last-day events. He also continues to be a regular on Hope India, a subsidiary of Hope Channel International.

"My dream was to become a high school teacher," says Sharath Babu. "Today I am a college and seminary professor, training future pastors and teachers. I was a boy of 10 when the devil taunted my father that I was destined to become just another blind beggar on the streets of India. Fifty-five years later I still reside in a world of pitch darkness, yet God has used me to shine the light of His glory and grace in some of the darkest places on earth. To Him be all the honor and all the praise."

When I asked him what the source of his strength and positive outlook on life was, he was quick to respond: "The numerous promises in the Bible, especially the hope of Christ's soon return, help me keep things in proper perspective. My tribulations are only for a season; life will take hold again someday."

In joyous anticipation he looks forward to that day when his sightless eyes will see once more—not the lush green paddies of his native village nor the coconut palms swaying gently in the breeze with the mountains in the distance. What he wants more than anything else is to look into the face of his loving Savior, who has been his constant and never-failing friend through all these many years.

"Next I want to see my dear wife, Sumathi," he said, choking back tears. "We were married for 29 years [she died of a ruptured brain aneurysm in 2020], but I never got

to see her face. She sacrificed a normal life for herself so she could be my hands and feet—and especially my eyes—in an often dark and cruel world. I owe everything to her."

He also longs to see his precious daughter, Seleina. "I've often wondered what she looks like. She too has sacrificed a lot, and continues to care for me with inexhaustible love, patience, and devotion."

"Were it not for my blindness," Sharath Babu reflects, "I might have been tempted, like so many others, to put self-advancement (power, position, prestige) ahead of the advancement of God's kingdom. I have no such agenda. His business is my only business."

Sharath Babu's father lived to the age of 80, and had the joy of seeing his son marry and become a father, be ordained to the gospel ministry in 2000, earn a doctoral (D.Min.) degree from Andrews University in 2001, attain the academic rank of college and seminary professor, and be appointed an adjunct professor of religion at Andrews University, Michigan, USA. The devil is a liar.

Perhaps you are passing through a dark season—divorce, terminal illness, financial challenges, career disappointment, even physical blindness. Maybe you find yourself facing a *night* that seems to have no ending? Do not despair. The God who works the night shift, the God who neither slumbers nor sleeps (Ps. 121:3, 4), is by your side. This same God who guides the moon across the traceless heavens—even through the darkest night—has promised to be your guide through your own dark night.

Sharath Babu's story is proof positive that *night cannot win* when God is on your side. ☺

Pratap Gopala Rao, a retired clinical laboratory professional, lives in **Laurel, Maryland, United States**.

This same God who guides the moon across the traceless heavens—even through the darkest night—has promised to be your guide through your own dark night.

Sanctuary Overview

Q

Could you summarize the doctrine of the sanctuary?

A

The sanctuary doctrine integrates God's end-time message into a cosmic narrative that unifies the doctrines of God, creation, origin of sin, salvation, the church, and last things, with the intended purpose of disclosing, through Christ, the loving nature of God.

GOD'S NEARNESS

In eternity God made a decision, of cosmic proportions, *to reside within the time and space He created for His creatures* (cf. Ps. 93:1, 2, 5; Jer. 17:12). He dwells within a creation that cannot contain Him (1 Kings. 8:27; John 1:1-3). Divine condescension? Yes. A sacrifice. God's self-giving love moved Him to descend to be near His creatures. Intelligent beings will enjoy fellowship and companionship with Him, and His localized presence will provide coherence to cosmic history.

REBELLION, PROMISE, AND TEMPLE

Two events damaged creation. First, a cherub aspired to be like God in the heavenly dwelling (Isa. 14:13, 14), initiating a conflict that would exclude him and his supporters from God's dwelling (cf. Rev. 12:7, 8). Second, humans joined the fallen cherub (Gen. 3:1-7), fracturing their relationship with God. But to restore this relationship, the Son of God chose to descend to the world of sinful creatures (John 1:14).

First, a Savior was promised to humans (Gen. 3:15, 21), through whom they may have access to the heavenly temple (cf. Rom. 3:21-26; Heb. 10:19, 20). Second, God accompanied humans as co-sojourner in a land of sin and death, keeping hope alive through sacrifices (Gen. 8:20; 22:9-14). Third, God created a nation, Israel, entrusted to it the promise of a Savior (Gen. 12:1-3), and chose to dwell in an earthly tabernacle that mediated the benefits of the work performed in the heavenly

sanctuary (Ex. 25:8, 9; 1 Kings. 8:29, 30). Fourth, the tabernacle was a type of the heavenly temple (Heb. 8:5) and the priestly work prefigured Christ's work (verses 1, 2). The year was segmented into two services—the *daily* work of reconciliation (Lev. 17:11; Num. 28:3, 4) and the *annual* work of judgment (Lev. 16)—performed in the holy and most holy places of the sanctuary, respectively, differentiating the two ministries and revealing progression in the atoning process.

MESSIAH AND TEMPLE

Next came the descent of the Savior, the Immanuel (Gal. 4:4; Matt. 1:23). After His ascension, cosmic history was segmented into two periods, corresponding to the earthly priestly work. Daniel locates the work of the Messiah in the heavenly temple within a prophetic period of 2300 days. The first part of the prophecy (70 weeks [Dan. 9:24-26]) takes us to the arrival of the Messiah and the initiation of His priestly work (daily ministry) in the holy place in A.D. 31, consisting in applying the benefits of His sacrifice to believers.

The second segment identifies 1844 (Dan. 8:14; cf. Heb. 9:23) as the time Christ begins the antitypical day of atonement in the most holy place (cf. Rev. 11:10; 14:6-12). His work as judge ends the cosmic conflict (Dan. 7:9, 10, 13, 14, 21, 22, 26; 12:1). The judgment solves, first, the problem of sin on earth through a pre-Advent judgment that vindicates God's people and fully restores to them access to God's dwelling (John 14:1-3). Second, the judgment of the wicked resolves the cosmic problem of sin. Standing before the Lamb, they will see Christ's sacrifice on the cross (Rev. 14:10; 20:11-15) and will realize that, as impenitent sinners, they deserve death (cf. Rev. 6:15-17). The judgment closes with universal acknowledgment of God's loving and righteous character (Phil. 2:9-11; Rev. 5:11-13). Finally, we will have access to God in His heavenly temple, now located on Planet Earth (Rev. 21:2-4). ©

Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, Th.D., is retired after a career serving as pastor, professor, and theologian.



Jeroen Hoogeveen

Health & Wellness

From Old Patterns to New Possibilities

A path to better health

What are the steps to breaking bad health habits and starting good ones?

Breaking old habits and building new health behaviors requires a structured, prayerful approach. This includes recognizing the need for change, careful planning, and intentional persistence. Consider these steps to assist in the transition from old patterns to healthier behaviors:

1 Identify the habit and its triggers.

Identify the habit you want to break. Recognize how the habit affects your health and why it's important to change.

Understand possible triggers, such as specific times, emotions, or environments. For example, overeating may be triggered by stress or boredom.

2 Define clear and achievable goals.

Set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals (e.g., exercise more, lose weight).

Focus on one or two habits at a time to avoid feeling overwhelmed.

Instead of saying, "I want to eat healthier," specify: "I will eat three servings of vegetables daily for the next month."

3 Understand your why.

Reflect on the deeper reasons for change. Linking your goals to personal values, such as honoring our Creator God, feeling more energetic, or serving others, reinforces motivation.

4 Replace, don't just remove.

Replace old habits with healthier behaviors. For example, exchange sugary drinks for pure water, and carefully increase your consumption of whole, fresh fruit.

5 Create a step-by-step plan.

Break the process into manageable steps. For example, if your goal is to exercise regularly, start with 10-minute walks, gradually increasing duration and intensity. Prepare workout clothes in advance to reduce excuses.

6 Leverage environmental cues

Modify your environment to support new habits. Remove junk food from your home and stock up on healthy snacks.

Use visual or auditory cues as reminders, such as placing your running shoes by the door or setting phone alarms.

7 Build accountability.

Share your goals with a friend, family member, or a support group. Encouragement keeps motivation alive.

Track your progress in a journal or app; celebrate small wins.

8 Practice consistency.

Consistent practice repeated over time strengthens new habits and weakens old ones. Researchers suggest it takes an average of 66 days to form a new habit.

9 Be patient.

Expect setbacks; approach them as learning opportunities. Reflect and adjust your strategy.

Focus on progress rather than perfection.

10 Reward progress.

Reinforce new habits with nonfood rewards on hitting a milestone (e.g., attending a concert or buying a new book).

11 Reflect and adapt.

Periodically evaluate your progress and adjust your goals accordingly.

You may feel your decisions and resolutions are like ropes of sand. Take courage: "Through the right exercise of the will, an entire change may be made in your life. By yielding up your will to Christ" "you will have strength from above to hold you steadfast."¹

By God's grace you *can* intentionally transition away from old habits and embed healthier practices into your lifestyle. Maranatha.² ©

¹ Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 48.

² Adventist Health Ministries provides a tool for health professionals, pastors, and health enthusiasts to facilitate the behavior change process for those they minister to using a lifestyle coaching approach. <https://www.healthministries.com/lifestylecoaching/>

Zeno L. Charles-Marcel, a board-certified internist, is the director of Adventist Health Ministries at the General Conference.

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The Sabbath That Jesus Came to Church



"May I Tell You a Story?"

BY DICK DUERKSEN



There are times when the incense of heaven fills your heart.

Jesus called the school on Thursday afternoon. "Hello," He said. "I am Jesus, and I will be coming to church this Sabbath to share a message with the church."

The school secretary panicked and called the elder in charge. The pastor, you see, was away for the weekend. The elder called the pastor, told him about the call, and asked what to do.

"Be kind to Him," Pastor Dale said.

Instead, they panicked, called the conference office, and then the local police. Sabbath morning they were ready—eager, even—for Jesus to come.

RECEIVING JESUS

Jesus, partly paralyzed and dependent on an aluminum walker, arrived in a taxi and clumped his way through the front doors of the church.

"Yes, I am Jesus," he declared. "And I have a message."

The church threw him out.

They told Pastor Dale what had happened. "I imagine it was a bit like being thrown out of Nazareth," Pastor Dale cringed.

Tuesday, when he returned home, Pastor Dale found out where Jesus lived, asked a church elder to join him, and dropped by for a visit.

Jesus was a little man, living in a small house, his heart filled with kindness and hope.

"I wanted to tell the church that God wants them to care for the people who are hurting and hungry," Jesus said. "That's all."

"How about coming to church with me this Sabbath?" Pastor Dale invited. "You'll be my guest."

"Wow," Jesus said. "It's been 40 years since I was baptized there. Thirty since the last time I was inside the doors. I'd love to come with you."

So it was arranged, and Pastor Dale began planning for Sabbath. "God told me that the sermon was to be about blind Bartimaeus shouting at Jesus beside the Jericho gate, especially the part where people told the loud blind beggar to 'be quiet!' God also told me there was to be an anointing during the service."

The anointing was for Angela. She and her husband, Gil, are both 100 percent First Nation Navajo.

Angela had recently accepted Jesus, but was going through some terrible health challenges. "So I asked Jeff, one of our church leaders, to anoint her," explains Pastor Dale. "It was his first time doing anything like that, but he agreed, and I brought my special frankincense oil."

Pastor Dale told blind Bart's story while his special guest, Jesus, sat quietly in the second pew, his walker waiting in the aisle. When Pastor Dale asked Jesus to join Angela and Jeff up front with him, Jesus pushed his walker forward, praying quietly during Angela's anointing.

"There's another anointing we also need to do today," Pastor Dale spoke to the entire congregation. "This man here is a new friend of mine. His name is Dennis, though some of you may know him as Jesus. Angela, would you be willing to anoint Dennis and pray for him today?"

Angela took the oil and dabbed a couple drops on Dennis.

"Wow, that smells better than my aftershave!" Dennis said loudly. "Can I have some more?"

"Give him all he wants," Pastor Dale told Angela. She dumped half the bottle into Dennis' hands, and he quickly patted it all over his face and rubbed it into his hair.

Dennis, his voice full of tears, shouted. "Wow! This is so good!" And the congregation joined the celebration.

SCRIPTURE COME ALIVE

After the potluck meal, Dennis told Pastor Dale and Angela about coming to church the Sabbath before.

"As I was getting ready to leave home, God told me to put all my cash in my wallet. I didn't know why until I was in the taxi and the driver started telling me about all the trials he was going through. His family is in a financial bind, and his kids are having trouble making it through other problems. His life is really tough!"

Dennis was so overwhelmed by the taxi driver's story that he opened his wallet and gave the driver all the cash God had told him to bring. "For you," he said. "From Jesus."

As Dennis told the money story, Pastor Dale's mind went to the day Jesus saw a widow woman slipping her last two mites into the temple treasury. "It was like Scripture coming to life right here in our small town!"

Sabbath night Angela brought her husband, Gil, to "Underground Oasis," an evening meeting Pastor Dale leads in an old warehouse downtown. Gil had not accepted Jesus and was battling demons that were making life hell on earth. The demons attacked in the middle of the meeting, and Pastor Dale's wife, Simona, walked over to Gil and commanded the demons to "come out of him right now!"

The demons obeyed.

And Gil, empty and eager to be filled, prayed for Jesus to come into his life, and asked to be baptized!

Everyone rejoiced. "It was just like when the demons were cast out of the Gadarene wild man!"

After the celebration calmed down a little bit, but while the meeting was still going on, one of the visitors, a very large man, asked Pastor Dale if he could talk to him. The two moved over to the side of the room.

"My name is Eric," the man said. "I'm a 100 percent native Eskimo from Alaska, but right now I'm driving a taxi here in town. I'm recovering from a bunch of stuff, and life has been really tough. Some people aren't comfortable with

a big Alaskan like me. Then, a couple weeks ago, a man named Dennis hired me to take him to the Seventh-day Adventist church on Saturday morning. He was a nice old guy who needed one of those fold-up metal walkers to lean on. A very kind man. Well, in the taxi he asked about my family, and though I usually don't tell anyone about my family, something made me tell Dennis everything. I told him about my kids, our financial troubles, my wife's illness, and how we were living on the edge."

Pastor Dale listened with wide eyes, in awe at how God was fitting so many stories together.

"While we were in the taxi," Eric continued, "Dennis took out his wallet and handed me a large wad of paper money. Said it was for me, from Jesus. I accepted it, but was really uncomfortable. It was a lot of money: \$1,700, to be exact! In fact, I was so uncomfortable that I haven't spent any of it on myself or my family. Dennis has called me several times and asked if I would be willing to go to the market and buy some groceries, and to the hardware store and buy some other things he needed. He always offered me more money, but I refused, and instead used the money he had given me. I've spent several hundred dollars of Dennis's gift money to buy things for him."

Pastor Dale started to ask a question, but stopped when Eric pushed a small paper bag toward him.

"Pastor, this is the money Dennis gave me. I have spent hundreds of dollars of it, but the full \$1,700 is still here in the paper bag! How is this possible? I've decided that it's God's money and that I need to give it back to Dennis. Do you think that would be OK?"

Pastor Dale smiled, thinking of a widow and her son in the small town of Zarephath. ☺

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Adventures for God

They're always rewarding!

Musical-sounding horns and the sounds of a foreign language hit me like the hot tropical air as I exited the airport. Brightly painted jeepneys wound in and out around Mercedes and BMWs as we rode through downtown Manila in the Philippines. A bicycle loaded with seven empty 45-gallon barrels weaved in the opposite direction on the crowded street. At our first stop we could smell the pigs even before we could see them. A triple-decked truck packed with squealing pigs was just pulling out of the gas station. On the back of the truck a colorful sign boldly proclaimed, "God Bless Us."

Later our mission group waited hours on hard benches for a ferry to arrive. At dusk we finally boarded the boat, and despite initially choppy water, I immediately fell asleep. After

the ferry ride, we still had to drive another two hours. At last, after 36 hours of travel, we reached "Glair Inland Resort," our home for the next two weeks. The name sounded inviting, and I was sure ready to relax in a resort. But reality was different. My husband and I were assigned to a tiny room with a small table and a bed with only one thin sheet and blanket. In the morning we awoke to a steady stream of ants marching around the room. We shared a bathroom with five other people. The shower was either "on" or "off." When it was on, the spray was so hard it felt as if it could take your skin off! The water was always cold, and the resort didn't provide towels.

When I went outside, however, the world began looking better: the burning tropical sun peeked through the coconut palms and

sparkled off the ponds surrounded by brilliant flowers. And when we sat down to a breakfast of mangoes, pineapple, and other tropical delicacies, I decided I could get used to this!

I was part of a team that simultaneously conducted 22 evangelistic series in different villages. We all stayed together in a central compound. Every afternoon a colorfully painted jeepney transported us to various villages, where we conducted evangelistic meetings with the help of local church members. I quickly fell in love with the happy people and easygoing culture. Even more thrilling was the opportunity to present health talks and participate in evangelism in an outlying village.

One evening a frog hopped past the bench where I sat, and another time a dog joined us in



Bible Treasure

“And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.’”

Mark 16:15, (NASB)*



the church. Insects swarmed around the lights and covered the computer display. Often we had to sweep them off the white sheet we used for a projection screen. Twice the sound system quit working, and a couple of times the power was out, so we had to use a generator. The generator room was also the outhouse, making any trip to the little room noisy.

A group of little girls loved to follow me wherever I went, peeking through cracks in the building walls and giggling. Riding on a motorbike after dark with a burned-out headlight just added to the adventure!

On our last Sabbath in the village, I met Arlene. Shyly she told me, “A few weeks ago I was sleeping in my dorm room when I saw you and your husband in a dream.” At that moment a friend phoned her and woke her up.

The friend was calling to invite her to our meetings. When she attended, she remembered us from her dream.

Another man dreamed he saw Jesus. The next day he walked past the church where our meetings were to be held and saw a banner with a picture of Jesus advertising our meetings. “That’s the same picture I saw in my dream!” he said. He began taking Bible studies, and when our meetings began, he attended. What a thrill to see that God still sends messages to people!

During our last weekend there we traveled to the ocean for a baptism. We joined a long caravan of vans, tricycles (a motorbike with a tiny sidecar), jeepneys, and motorbikes. Thousands of people from all 22 meeting sites joined us, and 1,176 people were baptized in just 45 minutes.

I’ve seen firsthand how God can use dreams to lead someone to Him. But I’m so glad He gives us a part in the excitement. I’ve found my greatest joy in being in a place where the Holy Spirit is working. If you ever have the chance to go on a mission trip, don’t hesitate! Do it! If you can’t travel far away, I challenge you to share your faith in your community! Get involved in outreach at your church, tell someone about Jesus, or invite a friend to church. Become part of the adventure. It’s always rewarding. ☺

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