

# ADVENTIST REVIEW

APRIL 2018: THE END IS NEAR + ANXIETY HACKS +  
THE TWO-MILE RADIUS + NEVER FORGET +  
SKATES, DRESSES, AND THE SATURDAY CHURCH +  
OUR RISEN REDEEMER

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## FEATURES

### DISCOVER

- 19 **SUNDAY IS COMING** | GORDON BIETZ  
While we celebrate Jesus' resurrection, some people tried to prevent it.

### CONNECT

- 33 **THE END IS NEAR** | STEPHEN CHAVEZ  
The future is not all dark.

### ENGAGE

- 53 **MAKE AMERICA RAKE AGAIN?** | JARED THURMON  
America's founders saw value in owning land, but not for the reason most of us think.



**“Under the cover of darkness and the guise of legality, after many speeches about being faithful to the truth, but with the fabrication of false evidence, a death decree is passed. Muffle the message by killing the messenger.”**

# 20

## ARTICLES

### DISCOVER

- 26 **OUR RISEN REDEEMER**  
ELLEN G. WHITE  
Celebrating a Deliverer who died and rose again
- 30 **LIVING THE LESS-THAN-ABUNDANT LIFE**  
DAVID ABBEY AS TOLD TO ATIM P'OYAT  
We all strive for optimum health, but what if we have to settle for less?

### CONNECT

- 38 **POOR STEWARDSHIP, DISASTROUS RESULTS**  
In the United States alone, billions of dollars are spent recovering from natural disasters.
- 40 **COMFORTING THE GRIEVING**  
KAREN NICOLA  
Sometimes the best support comes from letting our actions do the talking.
- 42 **THE NUCLEAR OPTION**  
HORATIUS GITTENS  
What is God's nuclear option?
- 46 **STORM SHELTER**  
CAROLYN SUTTON  
God knows we need protection.
- 48 **ANXIETY HACKS**  
JENNIFER JILL SCHWIRZER  
You may belong to the 30 percent.

### ENGAGE

- 58 **SKATES, DRESSES, AND THE SATURDAY CHURCH**  
MICHELE MCNEAR  
In looking back, it's easy to see God's plan.
- 62 **HE WILL NOT LET GO**  
KATHLYN MAYER  
The Great Physician may not always heal.
- 67 **THE “CLICK THE REMOTE” MENTALITY**  
LORON WADE  
What else is on?

58



## NEWS | OPINION

- » Leadership Summit Includes Frank Discussion About Unity
- » At UN, Adventists Emphasize Compassion for Refugees
- » Vocalist Del Delker Passes Away
- » Undying Influence: Reflections on Billy Graham's Legacy



### EDITORIAL

- 5 **BILL KNOTT**  
BEING RIGHT

### DEPARTMENTS

- 6 **LETTERS**
- 32 **HOUSE CALL**
- 68 **CLOSER LOOK**

### COLUMNS

- 29 **SEARCHING THE OBVIOUS**  
DIXIL RODRIGUEZ
- 51 **INTRODUCING THE WHY**  
JIMMY PHILLIPS
- 65 **JOURNEYS WITH JESUS**  
JILL MORIKONE
- 72 **IN OTHER WORDS**  
COSTIN JORDACHE

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# TRENDING

THE MOST SHARED STORIES ON ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG LAST MONTH:



- 1 "It Is Possible to Be a Very Unhealthy Vegetarian."
- 2 Undying Influence: Mark Finley Reflects on Billy Graham's Influence.
- 3 Adventist Community Services Responds to Florida Shooting.
- 4 Loma Linda Implements Ground-breaking Treatment for Parkinson's.
- 5 At 84, Celebrated Adventist Eye Surgeon Still Operates on 20 Patients a Day.

## VIDEO RESOURCES FROM ARTV



### BEYOND PAIN

Pain doesn't make sense if God is all-loving and all-powerful. Or does it? This video from the *Beyond the Search* series explores physical, mental, and spiritual pain to reveal deeper, life-changing truths.



### HE IS RISEN!

Help your kids understand how they can serve God by telling others that Jesus is risen, with this animated Bible story.



### 13 WEEKS TO PEACE

Learn more from Jennifer Jill Schwirzer about how to conquer stress and anxiety in this 13-part video series.

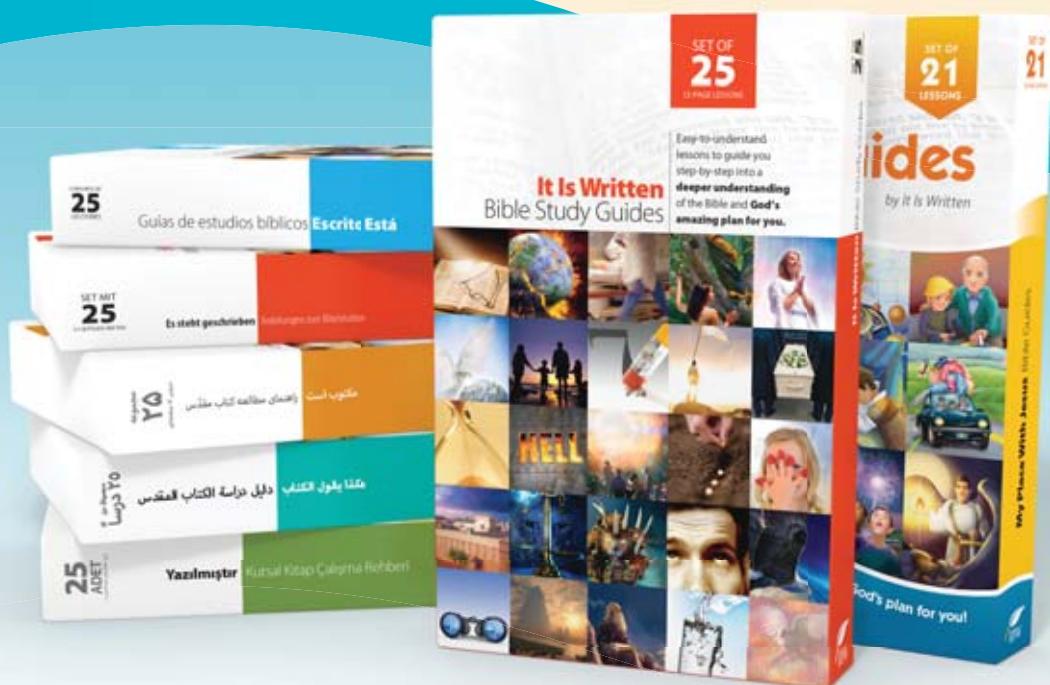
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BILL KNOTT



## Being Right

The storyteller was obviously flummoxed.

"Who knows the right answer?" he asked with barely concealed exasperation to all the children who sat on the sanctuary stairs and stared out at their parents.

One hand went up cautiously. Eric didn't usually offer answers during the weekly children's story, but he felt confident he couldn't miss with this response.

"Jesus," Eric said firmly into the microphone the storyteller extended to him.

The preacher grimaced, and clutched the mic with something like a death grip. "No," he said impatiently. "The answer isn't 'Jesus.'"

"Rhoda," said 5-year-old Amy, who may not have been listening all that closely to the question, but who was still reveling in the story of the biblical girl she had just learned about in Sabbath School—a girl who was right when all the adults were wrong.

"No, it wasn't Rhoda," the preacher said. "That's not what the Bible says. Doesn't anyone know the right answer?"

When no other child was ultimately willing to brave the likelihood of being pronounced "wrong" from the front of the church, the storyteller delivered the answer he had been looking for.

"Methuselah," he announced with enthusiastic conviction. "The oldest man who ever lived was Methuselah. He lived to be 969 years old. Can you children imagine living that long?"

By then all the kids were imagining the pleasures of the coloring books and "quiet toys" awaiting them back in their parents' pews when this weekly interrogation concluded.

"I still think it's Jesus," Eric muttered to Jason on the way back to their seats. "The Bible says that He never had a beginning, and that He never has an end."

And so we learned the importance of being "right"—especially about Bible facts, especially about names and places and events and trees of the Bible that would help your score in the Sabbath afternoon Bible trivia games we played with one eye on the sundown clock.

Being "right"—that satisfying alignment of our personal knowledge with what the authority of the day had determined was the right answer—was one of the highest values of an Adventist upbringing. The highest score always went to the one who had tucked away the greatest number of "right" answers.

"That's not a Sabbath song," I would announce triumphantly to my brother when he lapsed into humming "The Ballad of the Alamo" on the way to Sabbath School. Crestfallen, he would stare quietly out the window for the rest of the short ride, for I had clearly bested him—at least until I forgot myself and started a rendition of "Old MacDonald" on the way home.

And if the culture of correctness was only a function of our childishness, or something believers outgrew with time, it wouldn't be worth highlighting in these lines.

*"You're wrong; I'm right.  
The Bible tells me so."*

But correctness is still the way too many of those who wend their way to church each Sabbath still experience Adventism: *"You're wrong; I'm right. The Bible tells me so."*

None of this should be read as any lessened appreciation for the biblical value of "the truth." Seeing things clearly—learning how sadly ignorant we are of the glories of the gospel; understanding the character of a Father who declares His essence to be love—these are the hallmarks of biblical religion. But one-upping each other in the name of establishing our greater knowledge is the antithesis of what we call the "faith of Jesus."

"I am the way, the truth, and the life," Jesus said to Thomas (John 14:6)\*—pointing us to His definition of being "right"—a life-giving journey that deepens our personal friendship with Him. He understands—as only Jesus can—how "wrong" information is the usual result of inadequate relationship, how tightly we cling to partial information when we think that the final test is all about correctness. On this journey the Lord has enough time to work out the errors we have clung to, and the trivia we thought important. In the end, says the disciple who knew Jesus very well, the saved are those who "follow the Lamb wherever He goes" (Rev 14:4).

So here's to Eric, wherever he may be. I think he got it right.

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Many have been trying to sound the alarm, especially as it pertains to children. Some 800,000 children disappear in North America alone each year.

JOANNE BROWN, NORTH CAROLINA

## PRAYING WITH STRANGERS

I don't know if Sandra Gogel read the book, *Praying for Strangers* by River Jordan, but I did. It touched my heart, but I didn't follow through. Gogel's article, "Prayer With Strangers," inspired me to begin that outreach. There's no one who doesn't need prayer!

Ruth Wright Hoffer  
West Virginia



obeyed, would spread peace, harmony, and happiness throughout the earth. The religion of Christ will unite in close brotherhood all who accept its teachings" (*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 32).

Thank you for addressing this issue. We must raise awareness.

JoAnne Browne  
North Carolina

In the article "Romans 1: What Does It Teach About Homosexuality?" (January 2018), I saw a number of assumptions that I feel are untrue.

For example, "'Constitutional homosexuality,' homosexuality understood as part of someone's original and permanent makeup, is sometimes held to be a phenomenon too modern for Paul to have been aware of. Paul would not have known of permanent, loving relationships with one partner of the same sex." Ecclesiastes states that there is nothing new under the sun.

I also reject the idea that original "makeup" is of a homosexual nature. Later in the article, a reference to Romans 1:26, 27 makes it sound as though homosexuality was part of Creation. Not true; in fact, those verses say that such

## A DIFFICULT TOPIC

Regarding the article "Trafficking People": I applaud the church for tackling the difficult topic of sex trafficking (January 2018). It's a worldwide problem going on in plain sight under our noses. Many have been trying to sound an alarm, especially as it pertains to children. Some 800,000 children disappear in North America alone each year!

I am reminded of what Ellen White said. "We are living in the midst of an 'epidemic of crime,' at which thoughtful, God-fearing men everywhere stand aghast. . . . Every day brings its heart-sickening record of violence and lawlessness; of indifference to human suffering; of brutal, fiendish destruction of human

life. Every day testifies to the increase of insanity, murder, and suicide. Who can doubt that satanic agencies are at work among men with increasing activity to distract and corrupt the mind, and defile and destroy the body? And while the world is filled with these evils, the gospel is too often presented in so indifferent a manner as to make but little impression upon the consciences or the lives of men. Everywhere there are hearts crying out for something they have not. They long for a power that will give them mastery over sin, a power that will deliver them from the bondage of evil, a power that will give health and life and peace. The gospel is a message of peace. Christianity is a system, which, received and



Justification was explained, but never how to obtain it. Only when we come to Christ in contrition and confession does God receive us.

LEONARD LANG, NEWCASTLE, WYOMING

attractions are shameful.

Finally, the paragraph right before the summary is illogical: “Since lesbianism typically was and is not violent or exploitive, it also implies that Paul included loving homosexual relationships by common consent.”

I have been a *Review* reader since I became an Adventist almost 50 years ago, but I am disturbed that such ideas are being discussed here. This seems to be “going the way of the world.” I read the *Review* to be challenged and encouraged, not to read the same thing found in this culture.

**Sharon Walker**

*Mariposa, California*

### BEING JUST BEFORE GOD

It was surprising to note that in the article “How Can We Be Just Before God?” (October 2017), the subject of repentance and confession was never mentioned, yet that is actually how we will be declared just or righteous before God. Justification was explained, but never how to obtain it. Only when we come to Christ in contrition and confession does God receive us “into His favor as if we were righteous.”

**Leonard Lang**

*Newcastle, Wyoming*

## IN A FEW WORDS...

### PREDOMINANTLY BLACK AND WHITE ADVENTIST CHURCHES COME TOGETHER

So happy to hear this refreshingly good news! Keep it up, brothers and sisters in Nashville! May God grant you grace and courage as you unite in love for completing our mission!

**Gregory Whitsett, via Web**

### UNDYING INFLUENCE: MARK FINLEY REFLECTS ON BILLY GRAHAM

Well said! I’ve heard several preachers diminish the work of Billy Graham because of doctrinal differences. God uses all; He is the rewarder of all. Graham’s life was a life lived in service, and I love the reflection Finley provided.

**Connell Byron Hunter, via Web**

### RACE, CULTURE, MISSION!

My thanks to Leslie Pollard for a carefully thought-out discussion of race, culture, and mission. He made important points about the meaning and context of unity.

Two things that would cause me to rethink whether they violate unity, however, would be: (1) learning that there is inequity in funding the various conferences (though the formula needs to be worked out considering multiple factors), and (2) learning that some people are not warmly welcomed with open arms into whichever churches in whichever conferences they choose to attend.

**David Cowles, via Web**

## YOUR TURN

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

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**“When Paul and Barnabas argued, which one was faithful, and which one was stubborn?”**

**—Tom Lemon**

# NEWS



Attendees at the 2018 Global Leadership Summit in Lisbon, Portugal.

PHOTOS: JOANA COSTA/HOPE CHANNEL PORTUGAL

## LEADERSHIP SUMMIT CONCLUDES WITH FRANK DISCUSSION ABOUT UNITY

**ADVENTIST CHURCH LEADERS MEET IN PORTUGAL FOR “OPEN” AND “HONEST” DIALOGUE.**

BY ADVENTIST REVIEW STAFF

Following several days of meetings, presentations, and dialogue, Seventh-day Adventist leaders representing the world Church’s headquarters along with its world divisions concluded the eleventh Global Leadership Summit in Lisbon, Portugal, February 6, 7, 2018.

Participants at the summit grappled with multiple questions, including: Which comes first, mission or church organization? Is it possible to be faithful and loyal to the Church, while adhering to personal convictions? How does the denomination achieve a balance between a centralized church structure and the needs of various world fields? How can Adventist leaders complement discussions on church unity with

attention to other pressing issues?

Summits such as this have been held every February since 2008. Their goal is to facilitate discussion about issues related to the ongoing training of leaders around the world, primarily at administrative and institutional levels, explained General Conference associate secretary Claude Richli. “[Their] format is a series of mostly academic presentations, interspersed with reports from . . . divisions and institutions,” he said. “[Then] roundtable discussions take place to reflect on the topics presented.”

This year’s summit, themed “The Spiritual Necessity of Church Unity and Biblical Authority to Accomplish God’s Mission,” sought to ad-

dress the issue of church unity and authority from different perspectives. Presentations included insights from the Bible, the writings of Ellen G. White—referred to as the Spirit of Prophecy by Adventists—and the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Leaders in attendance characterized both presentations and dialogue as “frank,” “open,” and “honest.”

For many church leaders, including Seventh-day Adventist Church president Ted N. C. Wilson, church unity is a topic of utmost importance. “It is vital to have unity only through Christ’s power as we proclaim the three angels’ messages,” wrote Wilson in an e-mail to *Adventist Review* commenting on the

Leadership Summit meetings included various presentations, along with dialogue and conversation.



summit. "Submission to God's holy Word, prayer, and the leading of the Holy Spirit are key to unity in the Advent movement."

Wilson echoed those thoughts in a keynote presentation at the summit. "True heavenly unity can be accomplished only as we humbly submit to the instruction of God through the Holy Spirit's promptings and our understanding of His will through the holy writings of the Bible and the inspired counsel of the Spirit of Prophecy," said Wilson as he encouraged attendees to consider Christ's "amazing request" for unity recorded in John 17.

Artur Stele, a general vice president of the world church, seconded. "Unity was a great concern for Jesus, as He was completing His ministry here on earth. Only if harmony exists can we truly celebrate the diversity of gifts, talents, services, and ministries."

Michael Ryan, chair of the General Conference Unity Oversight Committee and assistant to the president, agreed. "With the greatest days of the Church before us, it is critical that leadership understands, values, and protects the gift of unity," he told *Adventist Review*.

During the two-day event leaders delved into some of the contemporary implications, challenges, and nuances of church unity for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

### MISSION FIRST

"What comes first, mission or church organization?" asked Mark Finley, assistant to the Adventist

world church president and seasoned evangelist, who shared three presentations during the summit!

In one of his presentations, after reviewing the first chapter of the biblical book of Acts, he explained that church organization grows out of the mission mandate to witness. "Church organization is not an end in itself, [because] God doesn't glory in bureaucratic administration," Finley said. "Organization is always a servant of mission. . . . It's always the means to a greater end."

Ryan agreed. "All functions of the Church serve mission," he said.

Tom Lemon, another general vice president of the world church, also stressed the preeminence and the commitment to mission he sees in church members around the world. "When it comes to mission, no matter who you are or where you are . . . there is no question about the mission, [or] about anybody's commitment to mission," he said.

According to Lemon, the priority of mission is an encouraging sign. "We struggle with unity on certain issues," he wrote, "[but] I don't think we're that divided."

### THE QUESTION OF AUTHORITY

Ella Simmons, another general vice president of the world church, discussed the biblical fundamentals and characteristics of church authority in her presentation at the summit. "Any authority that

the Church or any of its leaders might have is actually as stewards of God's authority," she said. As such, "[church leaders] would have certain responsibilities, which would include requirements and limitations."

According to Simmons, those "limitations" imply making sure that church authority operates "within the express will of God," and does not venture beyond what He has clearly stated. "We are to require or to seek only that which is clear from Scripture, not allowing the authority to extend beyond what God has said," she said. "So we are to prohibit what God prohibits and to require what God requires. Nothing more or nothing less. Anything else would be imposing the traditions or opinions of human beings."

In this context, the role of church leaders is essential, stated Simmons. "[God] has placed us as leaders to take responsibility for the Church's exercise of authority," she wrote. "We must be sure that we align completely with God's will, and that the Holy Spirit is guiding us."

### FAITHFUL OR STUBBORN?

Lemon provided a presentation on biblical leadership at the summit. Basing his study on several keywords, his presentation, entitled "United in Faithfulness, Submission, and Loyalty to Accomplish the Mission," Lemon defined the key terms





World church president Ted Wilson greets Ezras Lakra, president of the Southern Asia Division.

and applied them to several biblical examples. “My basic focus was that all of those things were God-ward directed long before they were man-ward directed,” explained Lemon. “That a failure in faithfulness is a failure against God.”

Lemon went on to discuss differences between faithfulness, submission, loyalty, and stubbornness. “My definition of faithfulness was holding a position and working for mission in the face of immediate uncertainty, shortage, and opposition,” he explained. “Stubbornness is defending one’s own personal viewpoint at the expense of mission in the face of those same things.”

While Lemon acknowledged that some Bible characters easily fit into one of these categories—Saul and David, Cain and Abel, for instance—he said others are more challenging, especially in the New Testament. “When Paul and Barnabas argued, which one was faithful, and which one was stubborn?” he asked. “When Paul came to Jerusalem near the end of his life and [leaders] forced him to the Temple, was he being faithful or submissive or stubborn?”

Lemon didn’t answer every question he posed, though he quoted church cofounder Ellen G. White in cases when her writings shed light on a specific topic. In retelling the experience of Paul in Jerusalem just before becom-

ing a prisoner (Acts 21), for instance, White wrote that in meeting the Jewish leaders’ demands, Paul felt “that if by any reasonable concession he could win them to the truth he would remove a great obstacle to the success of the gospel in other places.” White added, however, that “he was not authorized by God to concede as much as they asked.”<sup>2</sup> Regarding loyalty, Lemon asked, “Does loyalty extend from the grassroots upward, or does it extend from the leadership downward?” In the last part of his presentation, he made a case that leaders “can inspire loyalty, they can extend loyalty, but they cannot demand it, and they certainly cannot command it.”

In comments to *Adventist Review*, Lemon said that the call to unity in John 17 “is a gift that God wants to bestow upon His church” and “not something the Church can achieve” on its own. “I think the Church can receive it, and I believe it will,” concluded Lemon, “but it’s going to take at every level and in every person’s heart a willingness to be humble before God and before each other.” He emphasized that there is value in talking about unity as a way of reflecting and allowing the Spirit of God to use conversations to learn and grow.

Erton Köhler, president of the South American Division, agreed. “Unity has a direct relationship with communication, conversation, and

the integration of leadership,” he shared with *Adventist Review*. “More dialogue among leaders and with God will solve most of our challenges.”

### UNITY, GOVERNANCE, AND LEGAL DOCUMENTS

Karnik Doukmetzian, general counsel for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, provided a legal perspective on unity in the context of church governance.

Doukmetzian emphasized the role legal documents—such as the General Conference model constitution and bylaws—play in furthering unity in mission as well as in providing legal protection. “The wording that has gone into these models over the years has been put in especially to avoid legal issues for organizations,” explained Doukmetzian.

The Church’s lead attorney offered multiple examples of situations around the world in which practices that differed from agreed-upon governance documents created legal challenges. “These matters end up in court, and somebody else is telling us, ‘Hey, you’re not following your own rules,’” explained Doukmetzian. “So not only is it an embarrassment internally that we’re not following our own rules, but then it becomes a matter of public record before the whole world.”

Doukmetzian also reminded attendees that the role of legal documents is crucial in underpinning the historical organizational structure of the Church. “We have



a theology that identifies and keeps us together as Seventh-day Adventists, but we've also agreed in the way we govern ourselves, our polity, the way we govern ourselves within the Church," he concluded. "We're not separate, independent congregations. . . . We are a constituency-based organization."

Richli elaborated on the value of the Adventist organizational structure. "There are also all kinds of advantages that the individual components of the [Church] derive from belonging to a system that is articulated on these premises" he said.

### BEYOND UNITY

While acknowledging the importance of church unity, other related topics should also occupy the minds of Adventist leaders, said Köhler. "[We must] also dedicate time to address . . . the challenge to invest and involve the new generations in leadership, the structure of the Church and the best model to serve our unity and mission, [and] the role of leadership to strengthen our fundamental beliefs in postmodern times," he said.

Köhler believes those and other topics are strategic issues challenging the Church, and the role of Adventist leaders, present and future, is essential for tackling them. "More than solving the issues we have today, [the General Conference] needs to invest in the right people, [in] leaders that will be able to serve

in top leadership positions . . . with balanced vision and clear focus," he concluded. "The future of the Church is directly related to the quality of [its] leaders."

Finley agreed, highlighting that leadership training is an unending task. "It's critical that as leaders we constantly challenge ourselves to broaden our thinking process and to deepen our understanding of the responsibilities of leadership."

Against that background, Finley said he was impressed with the quality of the event presentations, a sentiment echoed by other leaders present. He also emphasized the overall spirit at the summit. "What impressed me the most was . . . the collegial spirit and the unified sense of mission on the part of the people here," Finley said.

Stele agreed. "The atmosphere of the summit was very warm and friendly," he said. "The friendship and the desire to move God's mission forward among leaders was impressive."

Leaders, including Wilson, left the Portugal summit on an optimistic note. "I have full confidence we will see a fully unified church as a sacrificial and submissive spirit takes control in response to the Holy Spirit's leading in our lives," he wrote. ▀

<sup>1</sup> Finley also serves part-time as an editor-at-large for *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World* magazines.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 405.

## AT THE UNITED NATIONS, ADVENTISTS EMPHASIZE COMPASSION FOR REFUGEES

**NEW YORK EVENT BRINGS TOGETHER FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS AND OTHER ADVOCATES.**

BY BETTINA KRAUSE, INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS LIBERTY ASSOCIATION

Migrants and refugees are not "problems to be solved," but vulnerable individuals who must be treated with respect and compassion, said participants at a United Nations symposium cosponsored by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The event, held January 22, 2018, at the United Nations Secretariat in New York, United States, was the Fourth Annual Symposium on the Role of Religion and Faith-based Organizations in International Affairs. It brought together some 250 representatives from the UN community, religious groups, and non-governmental organizations.

"Refugees and migrants are not 'others,' they are us," said UN deputy secretary-general Amina J. Mohammed in her opening address to the group. "They are part of the history and present of the global family story." She urged religious leaders and faith-based organizations to bring their moral voice and experience to bear in caring for these vulnerable people, saying that faith groups are in a unique position to focus on people, rather than politics. "You tirelessly assert the human rights and dignity of migrants and refugees, independent of national interests and agendas," said Mohammed.

Statistics about migrants and refugees are staggering. According



A hall at the United Nations Secretariat in New York, where the Fourth Annual Symposium on the Role of Religion and Faith-based Organizations in International Affairs took place, on January 22. The Adventist Church cosponsored the event.

INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS LIBERTY ASSOCIATION

to the UN, the world is experiencing a movement of people, driven from their countries by conflict, poverty, and many other challenges, that is unprecedented in human history. Last year saw an estimated 65.6 million people displaced from their homes. A vast number of these—almost 50 percent—were children and young people.

Ganoune Diop, Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department director for the Adventist Church, was one of the organizers of the symposium. He told attendees that the event was intended to be more than “just talk.” “We not only want to make a difference on the ground, at the grassroots level, we want to help change the narrative about migrants and refugees,” he said.

Diop said that the Adventist Church remains committed to helping alleviate the suffering of displaced people. He also spoke about the Adventist Church’s “portfolio of services”—including its focus on health care, its worldwide education network, and the global humanitarian work of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA).

Syrian refugee Sana Mustafa gave an impassioned presentation, introducing a theme that was echoed by speakers throughout the day: the danger of “dehumanizing” refugees and migrants. Mustafa, separated from her family who fled the war in Syria, has discovered, firsthand, how disorient-

ing and impersonal the refugee experience can be. “Please, treat refugees as individuals, not as ‘complications’ or ‘social issues,’” she said. Mustafa noted that news reports in the West rarely told stories from the point of view of individual migrants or refugees, but instead tended to focus on the social challenges that newcomers present to a community.

She said that faith-based groups could play a key role in combatting prejudice and discrimination, educating citizens of host countries about the trauma that displaced people have endured and helping people to open their hearts to welcome migrants and refugees.

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency International cosponsored this year’s symposium. ADRA president Jonathan Duffy told attendees that faith-based groups were often valuable local partners for organizations working with migrants and refugees.

“Faith plays an important role in the life of many people. Therefore, in times of distress, they often gravitate toward it,” said Duffy. He cited a case in mid-2016 when up to 5,000 people at a time took shelter in an Adventist compound in South Sudan as civil violence gripped the region. ADRA worked to provide food, clean water, and emergency health care to the men, women, and children who crowded into the facility.

The symposium took place against the background of continuing deliberations at the UN about the plight of migrants and refugees. It marks the fourth time the Adventist Church has helped bring together faith-based groups with representatives of the international community at the UN to discuss significant global issues. Previous events have focused on topics such as peace-making and religious extremism.

Azza Karam, senior advisor on culture and social development at the United Nations Population Fund, and a key partner in the organization of the symposium, was the final speaker. She highlighted some of the themes that had emerged throughout the day. She said it was clear that faith-based organizations have diverse and critical roles to play in engaging with migrants and refugees. Karam added that the symposium series had, during the past four years, sparked a unique “journey of communication and collaboration” between faith-based groups, nongovernmental organizations, and the international community.

Speaking after the event, Diop said that the UN symposium had provided an opportunity for Adventists to contribute to the public discourse in a meaningful way. He said that planning has already begun for a fifth event to be held in January 2019.

“As Adventists, we offer perspectives grounded in biblical values, and shaped by our conviction that every human being has been endowed by the Creator with infinite worth and dignity,” says Diop.

Among the other cosponsors of the symposium were ACT Alliance, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, and the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force for Engagement With Faith-based Organizations. ▀



With accompanist  
Brad Braley at VOP  
headquarters in 1961

## DEL DELKER PASSES AWAY AT 93

**SHE WAS "SINGING FOR A LIVING" SINCE SHE WAS 3 YEARS OLD.**

BY: VOICE OF PROPHECY STAFF WITH STEPHEN CHAVEZ

**B**eloved Voice of Prophecy singer Del Delker passed peacefully to her rest on January 31, 2018, at the age of 93. For six decades her strong contralto voice unabashedly shared Christ's love with rapt audiences around the world. Her more than 40 Christ-centered albums are still enjoyed worldwide. It is estimated she sang in 15 different languages during thousands of performances. "Del had the ability to preach a sermon through a song. Her face was radiant with the love of Christ, and over and over I heard people say that listening to her was a taste of heaven!" said Voice of Prophecy speaker/director Shawn Boonstra.

Adventist world church president Ted Wilson echoed this sentiment: "When we get to heaven, we will meet many people who were not only blessed by Del's voice but were influenced by her Christ-centered singing to make a decision to follow Jesus."

### HER LIFE

Del Delker (born Ardella V. Delker) was born on October 21, 1924, in the small town of Java, South Dakota. At an early age, Del's father left the family, leaving her mother, Martha,

to care for Del and her brother, Stanley. In 1931, as the Great Depression deepened, her mother, with \$59 in her purse, decided to move to California along with her two sisters and brother-in-law. Their money ran out in Yakima, Washington, where they got jobs in a fruit cannery until they could earn enough money to continue their trip to California. They eventually settled in Oakland.

Delker demonstrated a talent for music early on. On one occasion, she went missing at the age of 3. Her mother became frantic and enlisted many of the neighbors to help find her. Suddenly the



Del Delker, well-known  
Voice of Prophecy singer.

phone rang and the manager of a local bank asked if she was missing something. In tears her mother said she couldn't find her daughter, to which the manager replied, "Well, she's down here, standing in front of the bank, singing for a living, and people are putting money in her hot little fists!"

### SIDETRACKED BY GRACE

"I wanted to be a dance band singer," says Delker. "My brother worked in a dance band for a while, but . . . he didn't want me to live that life, because he knew what often went on behind the scenes."

Delker attended an Adventist school during grades 5 through 8, then after graduating from high school, got a job at a bus station. A friend told her about a place he'd discovered in Oakland called the Quiet Hour, and she started attending services there. Although her mother was a baptized Seventh-day Adventist, Delker was not yet a member, but she was impressed by the genuine friendliness of J. L. Tucker and his staff.

She recalls one evening when Tucker preached about heaven. Delker looked back on that sermon about heaven as the time when she gave her heart to the Lord. In another few months, she made her decision to be baptized and join the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

### MUSIC LESSONS

She began using her musical talents to sing on Quiet Hour broadcasts. Within a few weeks of being



Rehearsal with pianist Calvin Taylor

baptized she was asked to sing at a camp meeting held in Lodi, California. An audience of several thousand heard her sing what would become her signature song, “The Love of God.” Then one day the phone rang and someone from the Voice of Prophecy (VOP) asked if she was interested in joining the VOP staff. After praying and seeking the counsel of friends, she decided to walk through the door God had opened for her. Tucker, her spiritual mentor and counselor, put his seal of approval on her decision by loading up his own car with her few belongings and driving her to southern California.

### A NEW VOICE AT THE VOICE OF PROPHECY

Over the next several years Delker worked in several clerical positions at VOP, while occasionally singing on the broadcasts and going out on weekend appointments with the VOP team. Although she felt frustration that she wasn’t singing as much as she would have liked, the ministry’s associate speaker, Elmer Walde, encouraged her to stay the course.

“What I wanted to do after I was converted was go to college,” said Delker. “I wanted to go to college and meet a guy who wanted to be a minister, so I could be a minister’s wife.” Her future at VOP seemed

to be an obstacle to her life goals.

Finally, about three years after joining the staff of VOP, Wayne Hooper, a composer, arranger, and member of the King’s Heralds quartet, told her, “I’ve been watching you. I really believe that the Lord called you here and that He has a place for you in the music ministry of the Voice of Prophecy. I want you to know that you can count on me. If there’s anything I can do to

weekends performing with the Voice of Prophecy team. Delker had a passion for the work of the Voice of Prophecy, and for the decades that followed, her voice (along with the King’s Heralds) became inextricably linked with the ministry and its mission.

### A LIFE WELL LIVED

After spending most of her life in southern California, Delker moved to California’s Central Valley and enjoyed a fairly active retirement. Her goal in life was to spread the good news about Jesus through her music. “The highlights



With the King’s Heralds in the early 1950s, Delker stands between Bob Edwards (left), Bob Seamont, Wayne Hooper, and Jerry Dill.

help you further your career as a singer, I’ll do it.” Delker performed many of Hooper’s arrangements for the next 50 years.

After five years working at VOP full-time, Delker went to college—finishing at La Sierra College (now La Sierra University). While at La Sierra, she spent summers and

of a career like mine are watching people come to Christ because He used you,” Delker said. “I can’t convert anyone; but the gospel does!” She passed away peacefully with that hope in mind. 🕊

To learn more about Delker’s Celebration of Life service and memorial fund, visit [vop.com/del](http://vop.com/del).



## UNDYING INFLUENCE: REFLECTIONS ON BILLY GRAHAM

**GRAHAM PASSED AWAY ON FEBRUARY 21, 2018, AT 99 YEARS OF AGE.**

BY MARK A. FINLEY,  
ADVENTIST REVIEW



Billy Graham, prolific American evangelist, died at the age of 99 on February 21, 2018. PHOTO: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

I first heard Billy Graham preach in Boston in October 1964 when I was a freshman theology student at Atlantic Union College in South Lancaster, Massachusetts. I was deeply impressed with the simplicity of his biblical message and the profound impact it had on his audience. Conservative New Englanders are skeptical of appeals that play on the emotions and can readily detect hypocrisy or showmanship.

The hundreds that responded to Billy's altar call that evening sensed a sincerity, a genuineness, and a commitment to the living Christ that touched them deeply. Here was a man with the message of Jesus that touched hearts and changed lives. It is estimated that in his 60 years of evangelistic ministry he preached to more than 200 million people in 185 countries.

In an age when a significant number of public evangelists faced challenges in moral and ethical areas, Billy Graham was above reproach. A man of sterling integrity, uncharacteristic humility, moral purity, and unwavering commitment to his Lord and his family, he became a model for tens of thousands of young preachers.

Early in his ministry he and a few close confidants met in a hotel room in Modesto, California. They made a lifelong commitment to hold one another accountable in their relationship with Christ, in the handling of finances, and in the area of morality. In this "Modesto manifesto" each man pledged never to be alone with any other woman except his wife, and to be transparent in all their financial dealings. Billy Graham's ethical integrity, his open transparency, and his sincerity are the hallmarks of his 99 years. Although we never met, his influence on my own life was significant.

Here are three specific ways Billy Graham influenced me.

First, I sensed early in my own

ministry that the proclaimed Word has little value if it is not the lived Word. Preachers may draw large crowds, but if their lives do not reflect the gospel they preach, their words will have little impact on their audiences.

Second, I was impressed by Billy Graham's preaching with the simplicity of the gospel. As a prophetic preacher sharing the eternal truths of the three angels messages, I am constantly reminded that the essence of the prophetic message is the everlasting gospel.

Third, Billy Graham was not afraid to make appeals. There was a sense of urgency in His preaching. He made powerful appeals, calling people to decisions. In a secular culture he still believed in the importance of confronting people with the life-and-death message of Scripture.

On a significant number of occasions, individuals who attended his evangelistic meetings and accepted Christ came to my prophetic presentations seeking more truth. Early in my ministry I distinctly recall visiting with a woman who was longing for a deeper understanding of God's Word. She explained that she had made her commitment to Christ watching Billy Graham preach on television.

Countless others now rejoice in the truth of Scripture who had their first flush of faith when they heard Billy Graham preach. He led them to Christ, and Jesus took them on a journey of discovery in Scripture from there. I am reminded of John's poignant words in the book of Revelation: "Then I heard a voice from heaven say, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'that they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them'" (Rev. 14:13).

Although Billy Graham rests in Jesus, this powerful preacher's undying influence lives on. ✎





### UGANDA'S PRESIDENT CONSIDERS ABOLISHING SABBATH EXAMS.

Responding to an appeal by the Seventh-day Adventist Church president to abolish Saturday exams, Uganda's leader announced that he would take steps to accommodate the convictions of Adventist students, and also those of Sundaykeeping Christians and Muslims. Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni tweeted the announcement on February 17, 2018, a day after hosting Adventist Church leader Ted N. C. Wilson for an official visit at his state residence in Entebbe outside the capital, Kampala.



### CHURCH ELDERS EMPOWERED TO BAPTIZE IN AUSTRALIA.

A new discipleship initiative from the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia (AUC) will empower local church elders to baptize twice a year. It is the first time that local church elders will participate in such a program, which has received support from the South Pacific Division church region and the General Conference, which coordinates the work of the church around the world. To participate in the program, elders must register for training with their local church pastors.



**ADVENTIST PUBLISHING HOUSE ADAPTS TO CHANGING TRENDS.** From a historic Reformation printing press to the latest in social media apps, Znaci Vremena, the Adventist publishing house in Croatia is taking giant strides in making Adventist literature available and accessible in a rapidly changing world. While books and magazines are still popular, they are looking to new, innovative methods of distribution and marketing to achieve mission success. Strategies include engaging social media influencers with creative content and distributing holiday smartphone wallpaper.



### INTER-AMERICA INTENT ON CHANGING LEADERSHIP CULTURE.

Changing the leadership culture throughout the Adventist Church in the Inter-American Division (IAD) territory is what IAD church administrators have been aggressively seeking to do, with ongoing training geared toward its regional and local church administrators and department heads. IAD recently organized a training program for the governing board members of its administrative units and institutions themed "Transformed to Lead a Healthy Organization."



### ADVENTIST OPHTHALMOLOGIST APPOINTED TO ORDER OF CANADA.

Howard Gimbel, an Adventist ophthalmologist, was recently appointed to the highly coveted Order of Canada. Gimbel, who turned 84 last month, still works full-time, operating on around 20 patients a day at his Gimbel Eye Clinic in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. The world-renowned doctor has no plans to retire. Gimbel pioneered the continuous curvilinear capsulorhexis (CCC), a world standard still used in cataract surgery.



### HACKSAW RIDGE ATTRACTS BEST FOREIGN FILM AWARD.

*Hacksaw Ridge*, Mel Gibson's blockbuster movie on the courage of Adventist World War II medic Desmond Doss, has been awarded the title "Best Foreign Film" at the prestigious Polish award ceremony Bestsellers Empik 2017. The award ceremony recognizes the best-selling books, films, CDs, games, and magazines across the country. In a related development, Natalia Tatarczuch, a Polish resident previously unfamiliar with the Adventist Church, was baptized as a direct result of watching the film.



### PATHFINDER CAMPOREE HELD ENTIRELY ON WATER.

In what is believed to be a world first, a Pathfinder camporee, a weeklong event in the Sepik Mission church region in Papua New Guinea, was held entirely on water. A specially constructed pontoon, afloat on the Sepik River in the northern region of the country, was the site for the camporee. The 164-foot x 131-foot (50 meter x 40 meter) structure accommodated the 350 Pathfinders and staff, including 47 tents. Fittingly, the theme of the camporee was "Floating in the Arms of God."

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# DISCOVER



## SUNDAY IS COMING

*Humans attempt to take care of the problem of Jesus.*

**H**is presence was causing heartburn for the Sanhedrin. They had maintained their authority through a long chain of traditions from the time of Moses, and now the populace was listening to another. Jerusalem was rife with rumors. Everyone was talking about all the new things this upstart rabbi was preaching and doing. He was not an official rabbi, nor was he authorized by Temple leaders.

“Have you heard him speak? It’s wonderful. He speaks as if he knows what he’s talking about.”

“Did you see what happened when he touched the man with leprosy? It was incredible! I was talking to Joseph; he was actually there!”

“I hear he’ll be at Nazareth. Let’s go see for ourselves.”

It was all very troubling. The Sadducees and Pharisees were not sleeping



**GORDON BIETZ**

well; they were nervous. He was attracting large crowds, much bigger than those who came to the synagogue. They couldn't allow self-proclaimed rabbis without a formal education to teach the people.

"The Sanhedrin needs to have some control, or there will be chaos!"

"Things must be done in order. We must bring stability to the population!"

"We can't have some new zealot upsetting the balance of power."

The Jews had always had to maintain a careful balance with the Romans. Together they were keeping the peace. The peace was in jeopardy if some itinerant rabbi was out there teaching with no supervision. Everything would be better if he would just go away.

"It would be better for the nation."

"It would be better for the common folk."

"It's most important for our relationship with Rome and the delicate balance of power."

#### LET'S MAKE IT OFFICIAL

They couldn't think of anyone for whom it wouldn't be better, and so they called that committee meeting, and you can imagine the discussion. It was classic groupthink.

"The other day I was talking to someone who is wondering why we aren't doing anything."

"I spoke to someone who said that he's teaching heresy."

"We had our own people review his teachings. He said he would destroy our Temple."

"I heard him myself: he called us all hypocrites and whitewashed tombs!"

"I have a motion: Whereas there is much turmoil being created in our synagogues; and whereas there are many disturbing questions being put in the minds of the common people; and whereas this man, Jesus, said he would destroy the Temple; and whereas we, the Sanhedrin, have responsibility to maintain proper theological order; and whereas we are charged with sustaining a balance of power with the Roman government; and whereas he threatens that balance of power, for the preservation of our nation and our national heritage, I therefore move, Mr. Chairman, that he be put to death."

"All those in favor?"

"All those opposed?"

"The motion is carried."

It's Thursday; but Sunday is coming.

#### NEXT STOP: GETHSEMANE

Under the cover of darkness and the guise of legality, after many speeches about being faithful to the truth, but with the fabrication of false evidence, a death decree is passed. Muffle the message by killing the messenger. Centuries before Machiavelli they decided that the end justified the means. Their objectives seemed reasonable and logical.

"Save the nation!"

"Protect the relationship with Rome!"

"Safeguard the system!"

"Preserving the nation justifies some injustice."

Groupthink overtook group thought and mobocracy ruled the day. Like a snowball collecting more and more momentum, it cascaded into a consensual roar of opinion as almost every committee member embraced the conviction that this person must go to save all that they stood for.

They became a mob collecting late-night vagrants, rolling out of the committee room through the streets of Jerusalem, through the Kidron Valley, and over to the garden on the Mount of Olives. There in the garden this rabble of radicals rumbled into Jesus.

"Judas, would you betray the Son of man with a kiss?"

A tentative defense by panicked disciples, a flashing sword, a severed then healed ear, and next the mob picks up riffraff; like a hurricane sucking energy from the warm ocean water they roll back into Jerusalem, captive in tow, rushing, lemming-like, over the cliff to the high priest.

There the religious leader, dressed in a three-piece suit, meets the itinerant preacher; the uncommon man in common robe.

"We need an accusation!"

"He said we were whitewashed tombs."

"That won't carry much weight with the Romans."

"He broke the Sabbath."

"The Romans won't kill him for that."

He stands silent before His accusers.

"I demand in the name of the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God."

"You have said it. In the future you will see the Son of man seated in power at God's right hand, coming on the clouds of heaven."

Priestly shock and feigned dismay is immedi-



**“I demand in the  
name of the living  
God: Tell us if You  
are the Messiah,  
the Son of God.”**



ately followed by a torn priestly robe and quick judgment. The mob rushes from high priest to Pilate for a quick veneer of judicial approval.

It's Friday now, but Sunday is coming.

### TRUTH AS A PERSON

There was urgency to all of it. Like breaking into the bank, it must be done quickly before the alarm sounds. It was as if they sought in the rush of activity an anesthetic for the conscience. In the rush of busyness, they found a deadening for the mind. No time for thought or reflection; the decision is made, do it quickly. Let's get it over with.

In front of Pilate the whirlwind of hatred stumbled momentarily like a hurricane crossing land. Pilate, awakened from sleep, was not so quickly sucked into the vortex of their anger. He paused, he questioned, he reflected, and he sought to protect himself from the tidal pressures that this storm of hate was causing him.

They were protecting their traditions; he was protecting his job.

They were looking after their livelihood; he was looking for a future promotion.

They were guarding their turf; he was guarding his reputation.

Everyone was protecting, guarding, and securing:

Their own place.

Their own future.

Their own power.

No one was guarding the truth. No one was speaking out against the torrent of falsehood. And in the eye of the storm the Lamb of God stood calm and unruffled as the demons of hell circled, inciting the mob ever more.

"Crucify him! Crucify him!"

Pilate, you don't understand! It's not a question of reasoned reflection. "What is truth?"

It is not a time of rational inquiry. "I find no basis for a charge against Him."

It is not a time of calm deliberation. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?"

It is an unleashing of hell on earth, and Pilate had no power, for he had yielded his power:

to protect his job,

to guard his reputation,

to employ his skill at controlling mobs.

Pilate had yielded his power to others, and was

now swept along like a broken reed with the winds of evil that swept into Jerusalem. Pilate, the politician seeking shelter from hurricane winds, tried to get a grip in the storm, tried to gain some control over the circumstances, tried to be the governor in charge. Now he's thrashing about for an answer as he sees his ship sinking.

He grasps an opportunity.

"Herod Antipas is in town for the feast; Jesus is from Galilee. Galilee is Herod's territory, so I will send him to Herod. Yes!"

Nice try, Pilate, but the hurricane winds blow full circle and hit him from the other side.

"Therefore, I will punish him and release him."

Be serious, Pilate; you thought you could get some sympathy from this mob? Rule number one in Roman mob control: "Blood increases a mob's thirst for blood."

Another idea: "Barabbas! That's it, Barabbas! Surely they don't want Barabbas back in their midst!"

You don't get it do you, Pilate? You really don't understand the forces driving the tempest.

"If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend."

"Not Caesar's friend?" The arrow of those words pierces Pilate's heart. "Not Caesar's friend?" He can see it all now. The memo:

"To: Emperor Tiberias of Rome

"From: High Priest Caiaphas in Jerusalem

"It is apparent from events recently in Jerusalem that Pontius Pilate, procurator appointed over Judea, Idumaea, and Samaria, is not a friend of Caesar, for he is allowing pretenders to the throne to go free. He invites violence by weak leadership."

Pilate saw the handwriting on the wall, or on the memo: Checkmate; the game is over for compromising politicians who try to save their necks by compromising with evil.

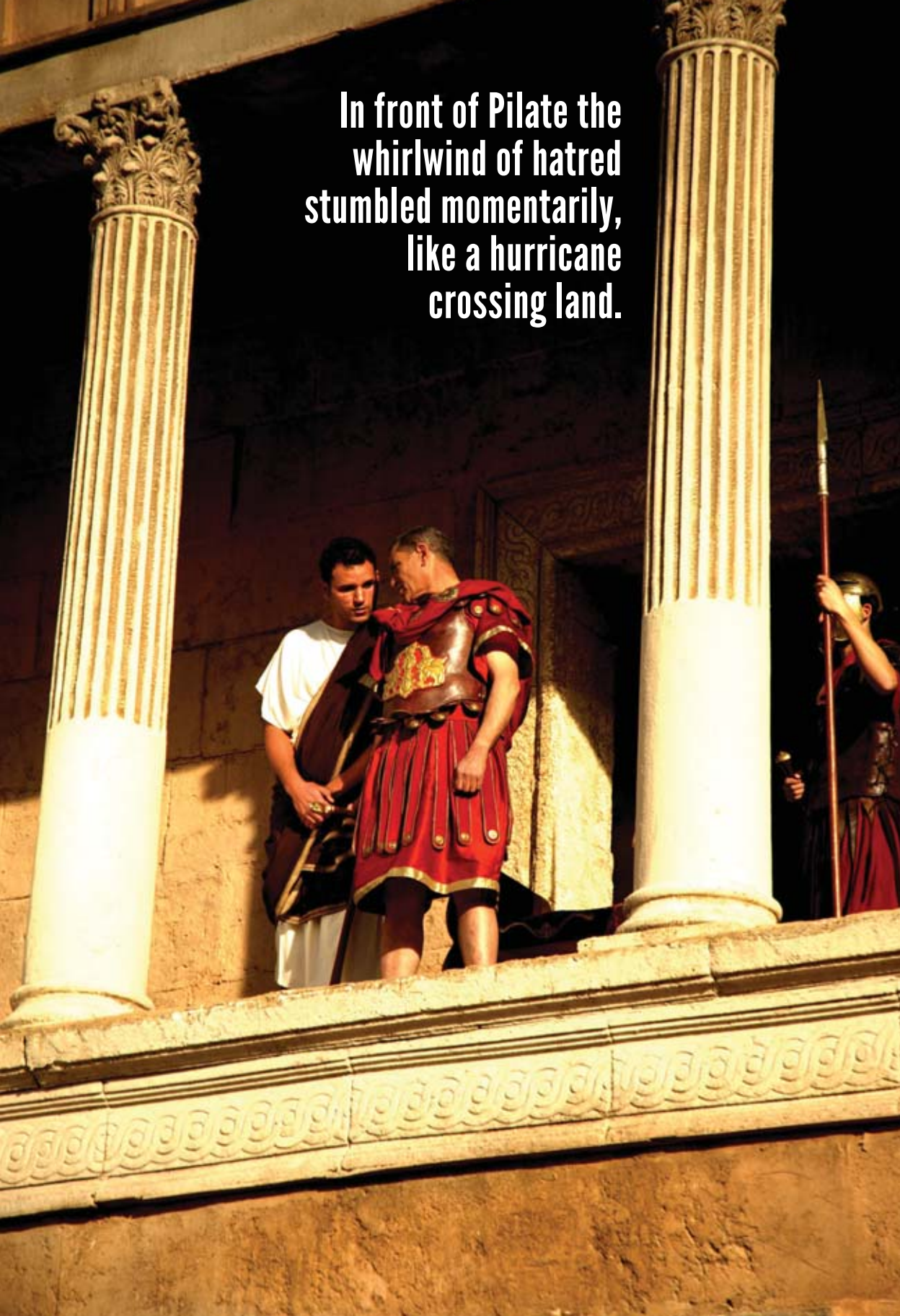
"Not Caesar's friend!"

As the storm of screams crescendos to fortissimo Pilate buckles to the pressure, fortitude blown away like autumn leaves, courage toppled like a rootless tree. He handed Jesus over to be crucified.

Then Pilate quickly called for a basin to wash his hands. He made his hands wet but the water never touched his heart. Like Lady Macbeth in her sleepwalk:

"What, will these hands ne'er be clean? . . . Here's the smell of the blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand."

**In front of Pilate the  
whirlwind of hatred  
stumbled momentarily,  
like a hurricane  
crossing land.**







Getting their wish didn't calm the winds of mob violence—it only fed the fire of frenzy, for theirs was a demon-driven lust for blood. And Jesus was led to the Place of the Skull.

It's Friday now, but Sunday is coming.

### THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

Everything out of place.  
Nails for wood, nailed in a Carpenter.  
Blood for living painted on nails.  
Feet for walking nailed to wood.  
Clothes for wearing divided as spoils.  
Hands for healing squired to cross.  
Eyes for compassion closed in death.  
Knees for children twisted in anguish.  
Heart for loving pierced with sword.  
Tongue for instruction, dry, thirsty, swollen.  
Everything was out of place.

It was as if up were down, in were out, white were black, East were West, North were South.

It's Friday now, but Sunday is coming.

### NEVER NORMAL AGAIN

The raging storm dissipated over the landscape of Jerusalem, the Son of God having absorbed the energy of the mob. With the energy of the mob dissipated, exhausted, scattered, and dispersed, it was back to business . . . keeping Sabbath.

Back to the routine; it felt good to get back into the routine. There was the sundown worship reading of Scripture: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deut. 6:4, 5).

They shared stories of salvation from Egypt with their evening prayers and the Sabbath candle. Enjoy the meal, relax, the storm is over, this too will pass, go to bed.

Forget what you saw!  
Forget what you heard!  
Forget what you did!  
The nation is saved.  
The system is in place.  
We are all secure.  
The leaders know what is right.  
Where shall we go for services tomorrow?  
It's Friday, but Sunday is coming.

### SABBATH, AS USUAL

Sabbath comes, but everything is still out of place.

Soldiers guarding a tomb? Military posted over a grave? What kind of fear appoints guards over the dead? There is the calm of rationalizing on Sabbath. Congratulations were passed around about a purpose accomplished. The satisfaction of jobs that are secure. The confidence that a problem is behind them. The assurance that the nation is in good hands. The hurricane that devastated the landscape on Friday is rationalized on Sabbath.

"It had to be done"

"It cleared the minds of everyone who is in charge here."

There were the usual services that Sabbath day. There was the usual "Good morning, Rabbi Jones."

"Good morning, Pastor Smith."

"Nice to see you at synagogue today."

"Nice to see you at church today"

It was all very usual; there were the usual meals and potlucks. There was the usual conversation:

"The rabbi had a strong voice this morning."

"The pastor was in unusual form this morning."

After dinner conversations included the events of yesterday.

"Pilate sure gave in, didn't he?"

"I don't think we will have any religious zealots to worry about for a while."


"Who do you think will be the next high priest?"

It was business as usual on Sabbath, but Sunday is coming.

### GREAT NEWS!

The soldiers were the last ones to expect it. Hardened Romans had seen it all. Demons were there with the soldiers, guarding the tomb with their spiritual incantations, tightening the seal, locking the door, shutting the tomb.

Then a flash; an earthquake; a broken seal; panic and running. Quickly called meetings and fabricated stories.

Sunday has come!  
Women get the news!  
Peter gets the news!  
Disciples get the news!  
Pilate gets the news!  
Priests get the news!  
We get the news!  
Christ is risen! 

---

**Gordon Bietz** was president of Southern Adventist University from 1998 to 2016. He now serves as an associate director of higher education for the North American Division.





## OUR RISEN REDEEMER

*Christ's greatest triumph benefits us all.*

**W**hen Christ cried out while upon the cross, “It is finished” (John 19:30), there was a mighty earthquake, that rent open the graves of many who had been faithful and loyal, bearing their testimony against every evil work, and magnifying the Lord of hosts.

As the Life-giver came forth from the sepulcher, proclaiming, “I am the resurrection, and the life” (John 11:25), He summoned these saints from the grave. When alive, they had borne their testimony unflinchingly for the truth; now, they were to be witnesses to Him who had raised them from the dead.

These, said Christ, are no lon-

ger the captives of Satan. I have redeemed them; I have brought them from the grave as the first fruits of My power, to be with Me where I am, nevermore to see death or experience sorrow.

### **RISEN WITH CHRIST**

During His ministry, Jesus raised the dead to life. He raised the son of the widow of Nain, the daughter of Jairus, and Lazarus; but these were not clothed with immortality. After they were raised, they continued to be subject to death. But those who came forth from the grave at Christ's resurrection were raised to everlasting life. They were the multitude of captives that ascended

with Him as trophies of His victory over death and the grave.

After His resurrection, Christ did not show Himself to any save His followers; but testimony in regard to His resurrection was not wanting. Those who were raised with Christ “appeared unto many” (Matt. 27:53), declaring, Christ has risen from the dead, and we are risen with Him. They bore testimony in the city to the fulfillment of the scripture, “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead” (Isa. 26:19).

These saints contradicted the lie which the Roman guard had been hired to circulate—that the disciples had come by night and stolen Him away. This testimony could not be silenced. . . .

So those who had been raised were to be presented to the universe as a pledge of the resurrection of all who believe in Christ as their personal Saviour. The same power that raised Christ from the dead will raise His church, and glorify it with Christ, as His bride, above all principalities, above all powers, above every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in the heavenly courts, the world above. The victory of the sleeping saints will be glorious on the morning of the resurrection. Satan’s triumph will end, while Christ will triumph in glory and honor. The Life-giver will crown with immortality all who come forth from the grave.

### THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST

The work of the Saviour on earth was finished. The time had come for Him to return to His heavenly home. “And he led them [the disciples] out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven” (Luke 24:50, 51).

As Christ ascends while in the act of blessing His disciples, an army of angels encircle Him as a cloud. Christ takes with Him the multitude of captives. He will Himself bring to the Father the first fruits of them that slept, as an evidence that He is conqueror of death and the grave. At the portals of the city of God, an innumerable company of angels await His coming. As they approach, the escorting angels address the company at the gate in triumphant tones:—

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift

## At the portals of the city of God, an innumerable company of angels await His coming.

up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.”

“Who is this King of glory?” the waiting angels inquire.

“The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.”

“Again the waiting angels ask, ‘Who is this King of glory?’ and the escorting angels reply, in melodious strains, ‘The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory’” (Ps. 24:7-10). Then the portals of the city of God are opened wide, and the angelic throng sweep through.

There is the throne, and around it the rainbow of promise. There are seraphim and cherubim. The angels circle round Him, but Christ waves them back. He enters into the presence of His Father. He points to His triumph in this antitype of Himself—the wave sheaf—those raised with Him, the representatives of the captive dead who shall come forth from their graves when the trump shall sound. He approaches the Father, and if there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repents, if the Father rejoices over one with singing, let the imagination take in this scene.

Christ says: Father, it is finished. I have done Thy will, O My God. I have completed the work of redemption. If Thy justice is satisfied, “I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am” (John 17:24).

And the voice of God is heard; justice is satisfied; Satan is vanquished. “Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other” (Ps. 85:10). The arms of the Father encircle the Son, and His voice is heard, saying, “Let all the angels of God worship him” (Heb. 1:6).<sup>1</sup>

This excerpt is taken from *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 305, 306. Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry.

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# NEVER FORGET

There are few great honors we are graciously granted. I have experienced the awareness of one honor—carefully crafted, in the background of life in the form of a whisper to the heart, a familiar word, a silent statement: “Do not forget the blessings you are witnessing and living.”

\*\*\*

I turn the small snow globe and watch the silver specks resettle inside the scenery as music plays. *It's perfect. Inside stands an angel, wings spread around two little girls who sit together holding a rose. It's perfect.*

The owner of this store, Marge, is a good friend and knows where and when these gifts will be delivered. Marge wraps the gifts in a manner in which you immediately see the angel, yet the globe is carefully anchored in a beautiful wooden base Marge's husband carves and stains. Trademark packaging.

On the way home I think of the months when the news arrived: adoption approved. My friends Dan and Linda made the call, and every friend in the area gathered with supplies to help create a beautiful space for the arrival of their daughters: two little girls, sisters, finally coming home. Walls were broken down and two rooms turned into a beautiful suite, so the sisters could be together.

The adoption process had begun inadvertently more than a year ago. I was walking out of a late shift at the hospital with Linda, a first responder, when we were paged back to the emergency room. I stepped into the room and met two little girls, sitting together on one of the hospital beds. The elder spoke and signed at the same time. I realized the younger girl was deaf. Their story was painful.

They had woken up to discover that they had been abandoned. The elder sister had cared for the little one, ensuring that they continued going to school. But after a week the lights went out in the house, the water was cold, and packing a few belongings, they walked to a neighbor's house and called authorities. The call arrived at the hospital where Linda and I were just leaving our weekend shift.

As time went by, Linda and Dan worked through an adoption request. Letters written, interviews, visits to the home, family and friends vetted. Linda and Dan learned American Sign Language and had temporary custody of the sisters for a while. It was a beautiful pairing! We read Linda's daily texts: “Please pray for us.” Other families applied to adopt one of the sisters, not both.

\*\*\*

Early morning, family court, standing room only with stuffed animals children can carry around the room. I see them, speaking quietly, standing in front of the judge. As the family name is read for everyone to hear, the girls are wrapped in hugs and the room feels unbearably small, unable to contain all the love we have for them.

Amid my own tears I recognize the pull of these emotions. I am aware of all the careful details that brought us here, the timing of it all, as if an old friend has just whispered them in my ear: “Do not forget the blessings you are witnessing and living.”

I remain humbled to be part of the Holy Spirit's bigger picture. 🍃

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**Dixie Rodriguez**, a university professor and volunteer hospital chaplain, lives in Texas.

SEARCHING  
THE OBVIOUS  
DIXIE  
RODRIGUEZ



AMID MY OWN TEARS  
I RECOGNIZE THE  
PULL OF THESE  
EMOTIONS.





## LIVING THE LESS-THAN-ABUNDANT LIFE

*How to survive while knowing that there are no guarantees*

**L**ap pools, hot tubs, saunas, and back rubs: the story of my life. Swimming laps, having a relaxing soak, and, to top it off, deep tissue massage.

Isn't that what everybody wants? Retirement living at its finest. For most, these activities are simply travel-package options included in their next big vacation. But for me, these are my weekly prescriptions. There is no freshly squeezed lemonade to sip, no sand washing through my flip-flops, no straw hats or hammocks, just an old man and his Ankylosing Spondylitis (AS).

### AN UNWELCOME HOUSEGUEST

Once foreign to me, those two words now roll easily off my tongue. AS is a disease that

introduced itself into my spine two months prior to obtaining my Ph.D. from UCLA. Its discovery brought sorrow to my soul, for I could not imagine myself adjusting to a life with progressive stiffness and immobility.

Once the mystery was solved, I finally had a diagnosis that explained the recurrent and excruciating pain I had experienced since my youth. Having always been physically active and purposeful about everything I do, this was a death sentence. Not surprisingly, within three decades AS put me into early retirement at the height of my career as a professor of biostatistics at Loma Linda University. Nevertheless, as a third-generation Seventh-day Adventist, I strongly believed in our unique health message, so quitting was not an option.

Things got worse before they got better. By the grace of God, and the wonderful medical advice I received along the way, and despite being told I would use a wheelchair for the rest of my life, I now walk with a cane. Life goes on.

### ANOTHER HURDLE

A year ago, I was lying face-down on my massage therapist's table during my normal pain relief session when she noticed a peculiar mole on my right shoulder. "You better have that looked at," she said.

I immediately called my dermatologist. Having similar concerns as my masseuse, the doctor sent a tissue sample off for some lab work. When I returned 10 days later, he dropped some startling news: "David, you have malignant melanoma; an aggressive form of skin cancer."

**DAVID ABBEY  
AS TOLD TO ATIM P'OYAT**

His statement was followed with an inquiry about the amount of direct sunlight I had been exposing myself to. His question answered my unspoken one: How? I had been sunbathing since I discovered I had AS. AS brought with it osteoporosis, and I needed all the Vitamin D I could get. If my busy schedule didn't permit me to go outside, I made sure to lie in a tanning booth once a week. My reasoning: skip the pill, absorb Vitamin D naturally. I was trying to remedy one disease only to give rise to another.

Though I was well aware of the potential risks of too much sun, I had done my research. Having been one of the co-investigators of the Adventist Health Study on Cancer started in 1966, I understood clearly the correlations between cancer and sun exposure, cancer and diet. I had been a vegetarian all my life, a vegan for the last 20 years. I was aware of no history of cancer in my family. Why me?

Well, facts are facts, and one doesn't argue with his doctor. Without hesitation, he surgically removed the mole and sent it off for a thorough lab analysis.

### SOBER THOUGHTS

As memories pressed through my mind, I reflected on the simple fact that I didn't want to die. After struggling with thoughts of despair, I decided to call a few close friends and solicit their prayers. Remembering that God had been with me through the pain and disabilities of my yesteryears, we arranged an anointing prayer service.

On April 25, having finished my breakfast, I walked to the calendar on the wall almost wishing I could delay time a little longer. In a few hours I would discover my fate. Later, as I sat in the dermatologist's waiting room, beautiful nature scenes of Kauai, Hawaii, began to play on the oversized screen. Tears began to roll down my face as I thought of the wonderful time my wife, Judy, and I spent hiking and bird watching there in 1987.

I couldn't take it anymore. I stood up and walked to the corner, out of sight of the other patients, where tears could stream down my face unobserved.

"I'm only 73, Lord," I prayed. "I don't want to leave Judy. We've been together almost 50 marvelous years. You're the one who led me to her in the mountains near Loma Linda. She's just as dear to me now as when I saw her standing with binoculars around her neck as I checked her out through mine.

## I had been a vegetarian all my life. I was aware of no history of cancer in my family. Why me?

We've been bird watching together ever since."

Letting go has always been tough for me. Nevertheless, knowing that God always has our best interests in mind, then and there I came to a place of complete surrender. Whether I was to live or die, say goodbye to Judy now or later, I wanted it to be for His glory.

A little later the nurse called me into the examining room. As I paced the floor, I glanced out the window and saw smoke rising from the crematorium of the nearby mortuary. *There I go in a few weeks*, I thought. Fifteen minutes passed before I heard the doorknob turn.

As he entered the room, the doctor held out his arm and said the best two words I have heard since Judy said, "I do." "Cancer free!" I was given another prescription, one that I would take with all diligence. Absolutely no more tans. From head to toe I was to cover up, no matter the weather forecast. I elatedly grabbed his hand as he gave me a high five that reached the very core of my soul. Praise the Lord!

### LOOKING AHEAD

I am now a cancer survivor. I haven't forgotten that prayer was a big part of this victory. Although I need to see my dermatologist on a regular basis, life is a fragrance of flowers. I still get to enjoy nature with Judy. We have a beautiful daughter and two grandchildren who help keep life ever interesting.

We often forget to praise God amid the enemies of affliction and temptation. We forget that walking through the valley of the shadow of death—or any of life's adversities—is often a means by which the good Lord redirects our focus away from ourselves that we may fix our eyes on Him. He assures us that we will witness His goodness and mercies along the path, despite the road blocks.

When we understand this, the gray shadows remind us of the green pastures that come right after the storm.

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**David and Judy Abbey** enjoy nature in Millville, California, and attend the Palo Cedro Adventist Church. **Atim p'Oyat** lives in Redding, California, and attends the Adventist church in Anderson.

# HOUSECALL



PETER N. LANDLESS

ZENO L. CHARLES-MARCEL

## OPTIMISM

*Does it help me be healthy?*

**Q:** I recently retired, and my wife and children say I'm becoming "grouchy" and cynical. I think I'm being realistic, but they say that I'm pessimistic and that it's healthier to be optimistic. Are they right?

**A:** We cannot determine if you are optimistic or pessimistic, but we commend you for taking your family's comments seriously. Here are some thoughts:

When 1,000 65- to 85-year-olds were followed for 10 years, the highly optimistic ones had a 55 percent lower death rate than the very pessimistic ones. In 2010 a detailed analysis of more than 80 studies looking at the effects of optimism on physical health revealed that persons who were more optimistic not only lived longer but also had less pain, better outcomes from cancer and heart attacks, and better overall function and performance. So yes, it is healthier to be optimistic!

Psychological literature suggests that healthy doses of optimism are helpful in energizing and inspiring us and make life more enjoyable for us and for those around us. Both optimism and pessimism are learned habits of thinking; that means there is hope! To be an optimist is to embrace reality, confront it, and take steps to cope. We can choose to see defeat as temporary and its effects limited to a specific area in our lives (optimism), or choose to see every bad event as long-lasting and each outcome as undermining everything we could have hoped for (pessimism). While the core of pessimism is helplessness, hopelessness, and a "fixed mind-set," optimists have learned to accept empowerment and develop a "growth mind-set" and a can-do attitude.

Winston Churchill is reported to have said, "*The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.*"

Both optimistic and pessimistic thinking can

be cultivated; so whether you are really pessimistic, as your family suggests, or realistic, as you see yourself as being, here are some ways you can cultivate the benefits of optimism:

**REFLECT** daily on what you can be thankful for. Develop an attitude of gratitude.

**REMEMBER** in *whom* you have *believed*; be persuaded that *He* is able to keep that which you have committed unto Him against that *day* (see 2 Tim. 1:12).

**RELEASE** the things and circumstances that you cannot control. Let God deal with them.

**REJECT** negative self-talk. Follow the advice of Philippians 4:8.

**REFRAME** negatives by learning to look for the positive. Practice this!

**REFOCUS** your attention on what's before you today—on what you have, not on what you don't have. Have no anxious thoughts of tomorrow (see Matt. 6:25-34; Phil. 4:6, 7).

**RELENTLESSLY** pursue your calling for this time in your life. You're not over the hill; you are just getting to the peak!

**REINVEST** in making your home a piece of heaven on earth; your church a welcoming place for strangers; your community a place that is as blessed as Potiphar's house because you, as Joseph, are there. And one more: be the grandpa that every child longs for! 🍷

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

**ALSO IN THIS SECTION:**

- » POOR STEWARDSHIP, DISASTROUS RESULTS
- » COMFORTING THE GRIEVING
- » THE NUCLEAR OPTION
- » STORM SHELTER
- » ANXIETY HACKS
- » THEY'LL KNOW WE ARE CHRISTIANS

# CONNECT



EMERGENCY ALERTS



**Emergency Alert**

BALLISTIC MISSILE THREAT INBOUND TO HAWAII. SEEK IMMEDIATE SHELTER. THIS IS NOT A DRILL.





**THE  
END IS  
NEAR**

SO?

## STEPHEN CHAVEZ

**F**or 38 minutes in January, people in Hawaii were pushed to the edge of finality on the authority of five little words: “This is not a drill.”

It’s easy to see why. For months national leaders on both sides of the Pacific had traded taunts and insults. So surely nobody was surprised when the following words appeared on their smartphones and caused people to imagine the worst: “Ballistic missile threat inbound to Hawaii. Seek immediate shelter. This is not a drill.” Their world was about to come to an end.

According to *USA Today*, roads were packed with cars (with people trying to go where?), and people crowded concrete structures. Some people hid in bathrooms or stairwells; one family hid in a steel shipping container. Others knelt in churches and began to pray; all natural and predictable responses.

There was also a desperate rush to contact family and friends with words of love and regret(?). One can only imagine what was on people’s minds as they spoke what they thought were their final words this side of eternity.

### FEAR AS A MOTIVATOR

For Christians the concept of the end of the world is nothing new. For nearly 2,000 years we’ve lived with Jesus’ promise “Look, I am coming soon!” (Rev. 22:12), and known that we’re living on borrowed time. With each new natural disaster, massacre, genocide, and refugee crisis, Christian voices are there to proclaim: “The end is near.”

For a lot of people, like those in Hawaii, the primary emotion is one of fear. In January the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* addressed a letter to “leaders and citizens of the world” that stated: “In 2017, world leaders failed to respond effectively to the looming threats of nuclear war and climate change, making the world security situation more dangerous than it was a year ago—and as dangerous as it has been since World War II.” Accordingly, the Doomsday Clock, which predicts the end of the world, has been moved 30 seconds forward, and is now set at two minutes to midnight.

And lest Christians be tempted to feel smug about preying on people’s fears, Adventists may recall those leaflets and posters used to announce upcoming evangelistic series to our communities: the ones with lightening, mushroom clouds, hourglasses, fantastic beasts, and graphic illustrations of the number 666.

But fear motivate most when there is a threat. When the doctor says a scan reveals something suspicious, that’s when we’re most likely to embrace health reform. But when we receive the all clear, we too often fall back to eating carelessly and habits of inactivity.

### PREPARATION AS THE FOCUS

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus emphasized positive preparation.

“If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and not have let his house be broken into” (Matt. 24:43).

“Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock” (Matt. 7:24).

“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns” (Matt. 24:45, 46).

Along with these imperatives about preparation is the implication of surprise. And for the faithful it’s a surprise based on joy, the joy of being found doing our duty.

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field” (Matt. 13:44).

The man was simply doing his job. He had no expectation that this day would bring anything different from the weeks, months, and years that had come before. It was so far from any reality that he had to be discreet when selling his possessions lest anyone suspect anything out of the ordinary.

One can only imagine how this man’s life was changed as a result of finding that treasure. But it may not be that hard to imagine,

especially when we think that after a lifetime of service, Jesus has another surprise in store: “Well done, good and faithful servant!” He will say. “You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness” (Matt. 25:21).

To which we will say, *When did I do anything out of the ordinary? I was only doing my best to look after Your interests, just as I was supposed to do.*

When we say the end is near, our focus shouldn’t be on the persecution and deception about to be set loose in the world. We should focus less on the tragedies and outrages perpetrated between humanity and humanity, and between humanity and nature, and focus more on how we can surprise others (and ourselves) by doing our duty as followers of Christ.

#### TEMPORARY SOLUTIONS

Of course, there’s always that tension between trying to make a difference and giving up in resignation. If the world is coming to an end and there’s nothing we can do to stop it, why even bother?

Why bother, for example, about poverty? Jesus already said, “You will always have the poor among you” (John 12:8).

He didn’t say we shouldn’t help them, however. Indeed, early Christians went out of their way to make sure to care for those who had less. “All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.

And the Lord added to their number

daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:44-47).

While today we have social programs for people in poverty, the safety net seems to be becoming smaller and weaker. If the end is near, those who are citizens of the better world to come will gladly and naturally do all we can to ease poverty rather than exacerbate it.

And if the day of God will truly “bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat” (2 Peter 3:12), why do anything about rising sea levels, shrinking polar ice caps, and more disastrous natural calamities (wildfires, hurricanes, floods). Shouldn’t we celebrate them as indications that the end is near?

As we realize the indescribable suffering experienced through today’s storms and calamities, and understand that it affects primarily those with the most to lose, loving others as we love ourselves means that even if we can’t undo climate change, we can at least be sensitive to the suffering it causes and try—individually and collectively—to have a smaller global footprint, to be better stewards of the planet with which we have been entrusted.

#### AGENTS OF HOPE

Understanding that the end is near shouldn’t lead to fear or resignation. Instead, we should be agents of hope. Given our understanding of Bible truth, Adventists are uniquely poised to bring messages of hope to our communities by both word and deed.

Let’s start with Creation. We can all trace our ancestry to one couple in the Garden of Eden. We’re all one human family.

Imagine this: an earthquake strikes a major metropolitan area. As soon as the dust clears, survivors flood the streets, looking for victims in need of help. Their first question is not “Are you Christian,” but rather “How can I help?” Disasters are color-blind and indiscriminate. And people who respond to them should have only one thing in mind: rescue.

But after a few days, certainly after a few weeks, too many go back to their own enclave.

The crisis is past; awkward reality is ready

# Understanding that the end is near shouldn’t lead to fear or resignation.

PHOTO BY PAUL GILMORE



to return to us versus them, Christian versus Muslim, believers versus nonbelievers.

Let's look at the Sabbath. In Isaiah God said the Sabbath is supposed to be "a delight" (Isa. 58:13). But by the time of Christ, the day had been encrusted in so many human restrictions and prohibitions. That's why Jesus had to remind people: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27).

Imagine being commanded to relax, to put aside physical, emotional, and economic concerns and worries for 24 hours, to focus on our relationship with God and with others. Seen that way, the Sabbath becomes 24 hours of opportunities for fellowship and service, rather than 24 hours of restrictions. What could we do if we shared a message like that with our communities?

#### PLANNING FOR THE DELAY

Of course, the greatest reason to acknowledge that the end is near revolves around our Deliverer, Jesus Christ. Yes, the world is an ugly, violent, often dark place. But imagine what it would be without the influence of Jesus and His followers.

During the past 2,000 years Christians have been behind some of the greatest advances in science, education, medicine, art, service, and discovery. Jesus taught by word and example that Christianity is a life of joy and service. As the world grows darker, those who swear allegiance to the One who said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12) will remember that He also said about His followers, "You are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14).

Light doesn't *try* to shine; it just shines. It can't keep from shining. Light, by its nature, shines. Jesus didn't say, "Try to be light"; He said, "You are light." In a world darkened by sin and fear, Christ's followers reflect His light.

One of Jesus' great stories centers on 10 wedding

attendants (Matt. 25). During the past 2,000 years preachers have mostly chosen to focus on the attendants who ran out of oil before the bridegroom arrived. Those attendants have been excoriated for their foolishness and lack of preparation, and for being caught napping. Sleeping is, of course, not bad. The five wise attendants slept too. But they in the end, they were prepared for the bridegroom when he appeared.

#### ANOTHER FIVE WORDS

When I was young, the idea of the time of the end filled me with dread. The way some people talked, when He returned Jesus would be more focused on leaving as many as possible than saving everyone possible. As I examined myself I was fairly certain I didn't have anything to commend myself for His approval.

And I was right. Years later I learned the tremendous truth of Jesus' statement "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Our struggle is not to do good things to make Jesus love us. Jesus already loves us. All we have to do is stay connected to Him.

So if the end is near—particularly if the end is near—our focus has to be on staying connected to Christ. As we connect with Jesus, His character of love, justice, mercy, inclusion, and grace will be reflected in our lives.

Our preparation for the time of the end may never be complete, but at least when we hear that the end is near, that the Bridegroom is coming, we can embrace His return with five simple words: "Come out to meet him" (Matt. 25:6).<sup>✦</sup>

\* [TheBulletin.org/2018-doomsday-clock-statement](http://TheBulletin.org/2018-doomsday-clock-statement).

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







# POOR STEWARDSHIP, DISASTROUS RESULTS

**H**orrific natural disasters in the United States in 2017 incurred comparably horrific amounts of expense. While some Christians and others dispute any relationship between human behavior and earth's haywire meteorology, careful Bible reading points to increasingly grave catastrophes and casts blame: the God who made us His stewards promises to return soon to gather His earth-caring faithful to Himself, and destroy "those who destroy the earth" (Rev. 11:18). The following statistics paint a picture of the dollar amount attached to the weather phenomena that caused disaster across the nation.

Southern tornado outbreak	\$1.1 billion	January
Southeast severe weather	\$2.1 billion	March
Southeast freeze	\$2.1 billion	March
Central tornado outbreak	\$1.8 billion	March
Midwest tornado outbreak	\$2.1 billion	March
California flooding	\$1.5 billion	March
Missouri and Arkansas flooding	\$1.7 billion	April
Central severe weather	\$2.2 billion	May
Upper Midwest severe weather	\$2.5 billion	June
North Dakota, South Dakota, and Montana drought	\$2.5 billion	Spring-Fall
Western wildfires	\$2.5 billion	Summer-Fall
Hurricane Harvey	\$198 billion	August
Hurricane Irma	\$65 billion	September
Hurricane Maria	\$102 billion	September
Northern California wildfires	\$9.4 billion	October



PHOTO BY MILADA VIGEROVA

## COMFORTING THE GRIEVING

*A biblical approach*

The weeks and months following our son's death to leukemia were immersed in the varied experiences of grief: shock, chest pains, fatigue, listlessness, sorrow, despair, lack of focus, anguish, overwhelming memories, guilt, regrets, and baby steps toward adjusting to life without our Dawson.

Interacting with friends, family, and acquaintances had its moments of awkwardness. With our hearts deeply crushed, many

didn't know how to be with us. Sadly, yet common to those who grieve, others ignored us. Their loss for words and limited comforting skills created a perfect storm for our isolation.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we and our church members knew better how to minister to those who mourn? Wouldn't we like to confidently assist others through their seasons of loss? Before Dawson died we, too, wondered what to say or do. We felt inadequate to come alongside and comfort the grieving. Many of us assume that after the burial and traditional meal that follows in some cultures, the bereaved are "over it." Yet in reality they are just beginning their journey through the dark valley of the shadow of death.

### GAINING UNDERSTANDING

Years later, as a grief coach, I have come to understand that the only cure for grief is to grieve. To take the pain away from mourners robs them of the important, necessary, and natural process of grief. When a well-meaning child tries to assist a butterfly struggling to release itself from the familiar cocoon, it only weakens the butterfly's ability to take flight. In the same way, only the griever can do their grieving work. It is not our job to take it from them.

All people grieve, but not all grieve well. People who find the path of healthy grief work with their pain, understanding that pain is a shout for help and attention, not something to ignore or medicate away. They might write a prayer journal about their feelings of loss, sadness, anger, despair, and so

forth. Sometimes they exercise as a way to release confusing emotions. Tears of love are no cause for shame. Mourners often reach out for others' help with ordinary daily activities that are overwhelming under the pressure of grief.

Healthy grievers need people in their lives to listen to them tell their stories, memories, and questions of faith. Healthy grievers need us to let them grieve with support and free of judgment. They don't need us to take their grief away. They don't need us to fix their pain. They don't need us to ignore them or leave the name of their deceased loved one out of the conversation. They don't need us to compare our stories with theirs.

They simply need us to be present; to show up with a listening heart and ask for permission or clarification before we jump in to help. We need to follow their lead, to think about their needs, and allow our time with them to be about them.

### HELPING THOSE WHO DON'T GRIEVE WELL

If these are the needs of a healthy griever, how much more will that be true for someone who doesn't know how to grieve well? Each culture has ways of grieving that more or less direct the bereaved toward adjusting to the death of a loved one. However, not all cultural norms that influence our grief cooperate with the healing God has in store for our broken hearts.

As an example, some cultures suggest we ignore or downplay the pain of loss, while others might create an exaggerated or unnatural display of grieving that leaves emotions frayed and raw, and the griever exhausted. Neither of these cultural extremes cooperates with God's healing.

### SYMPATHY IF NOT EMPATHY

Even if we have not yet experienced grief ourselves, we can still come near to others in their journey with words of God's comfort from Scripture. When we weep with those who weep,<sup>1</sup> together we share the hope in Jesus' second coming and His powerful resurrection. When we feel the burden of sorrow,<sup>2</sup> together we are reminded that God is the expert heart healer who knows how to mend our wounded hearts.<sup>3</sup> When we know the God of all comfort,<sup>4</sup> together we are assured that our God is good. He is profoundly and faithfully restoring the lives<sup>5</sup> of humans all around this planet.

### PRACTICAL SUPPORT

One local church<sup>6</sup> started a grief care team ministry that operated for the express purpose of supporting grieving members for as long as needed. So when the Gomez family was devastated by the sudden death of Mr. Gomez, age 40, the grief care team was prepared to support Mrs. Gomez and her three daughters. After the funeral, and after the extended Gomez family returned to their homes, several women from the church scheduled themselves to spend nights with Mrs. Gomez for as long as she needed their support. A member from the grief care team checked in with Mrs. Gomez every eight to 12 weeks to update changes the grieving family might need. Others in the church wrote weekly or monthly cards or letters of encouragement, always including personal notes to the girls.

The team organized meals, groceries, child care, tuition assistance, yard care, and car maintenance extending well into the first year of their loss. The coordinated help came from church members as well as local professionals who donated legal advice and grief counseling. Several times Mrs. Gomez and her daughters received invitations to Sabbath lunch. Often her closest friends made sure to include the Gomez sisters in play dates with their own children.

This church is a healthy example of Jesus' mandate to comfort one another. These church members overcame cultural myths about grief and stepped close to Mrs. Gomez and her daughters with tangible and useful comfort. Reaching out to the grieving family was sacred work. The comforters went beyond words, using thoughtful action; stepping on hallowed ground as they served.

"Comfort, comfort my people"<sup>7</sup> is Jesus' mandate for each of us who claim to be following Him. 🌱

*Learn more about Karen's ministry at [www.comfortfortheday.com](http://www.comfortfortheday.com).*

<sup>1</sup> Rom. 12:15.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. 6:2.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. 147:3.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. 1:3, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Isa. 61:3.

<sup>6</sup> This is not an actual church but rather a composite of various grief-recovery programs organized and run at several local churches.

<sup>7</sup> Isa. 40:1.

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*Who will stand  
up to prevent  
more disaster?*

# THE **NUCLEAR** OPTION



## HORATIUS GITTENS

Is there anything, any person, who can help settle our minds and depressed spirits as we observe the proliferation of disasters, human hatred and violence, assaultive and abusive behaviors in workplaces, sexual exploitation, and the threats around the world? What perspective can alleviate our anxieties? Who will assert power and/or authority on behalf of God's people? Are we doomed to suffering forever? Or is there some astonishing deliverance in view?

## GLOBAL MAYHEM

Recently, at a meeting I attended, one presenter commented on a commercial for a major business entity that stated, "Mayhem is everywhere."

This well-known phrase, used to sell a popular product in the United States, inadvertently directed my thoughts toward global realities in 2017 and 2018 that generally trouble both religious and nonreligious people. The realities range from manufactured conflicts that revolve around nations' or individuals' functioning or nonfunctioning nuclear devices (buttons) and threats of wars that can lead to national annihilation. And the realities contemplated move across the gamut from there to violence perpetrated by humans against humans, and natural disasters that have had devastating effects on the lives of nations and communities. These portents demonstrate some truth to the statement "Mayhem is everywhere."

Seventeen people were killed and others wounded in a shooting at a school in Parkland, Florida. According to Mass Shooting Tracker, it was the eighteenth school shooting and forty-first mass shooting of the year in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

At least 59 people were killed and 527 injured as a gunman fired on people attending a country music festival in Las Vegas on October 1, 2017. The previous year another gunman killed 49 and wounded 58 at a nightclub in Orlando, Florida, on June 12, 2016.

California's largest and most destructive fires in recorded history occurred in 2017, more than 9,000 of them. They set ablaze approximately 1.4 million acres of the state's land (an area more than the size of Delaware), burning 10,800 structures and killing at least 46 people. These fires behaved as things with no respect for human genius and capacity to extinguish them.

The most expensive hurricane season in United States history occurred in 2017 with 103 deaths.

The rains, winds, and waves behaved as if an evil intelligence guided them to maximum destructiveness. Hurricanes Harvey and Irma attacked the United States with winds of more than 130 miles per hour. Hurricane Maria unleashed her assaults against Puerto Rico and other territories with winds of 155 miles per hour. The calculated cost of damages in the United States exceeds \$202 billion. These damages were wreaked upon the country by 17 named storms between June 1 to November 30, 2017, the most expensive in U.S. history, exceeding the previously high cost of \$158 billion during Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The Caribbean Island territories of Dominica, Turks and Caicos, Virgin Islands, Montserrat, Guadeloupe, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Maarten and the Dominican Republic were all victims of storms as they experienced death and destruction in varying degrees.

Even more daunting than the natural and human-manufactured disasters was the increased tension across the world as the United States and North Korea threatened each other with attacks of both conventional and nuclear weapons. Human beings around the globe watched, wondered, and feared as men with dubious motive bantered about the capabilities of their war-making and country-conquering powers, and about the effectiveness and efficiency of their respective nuclear buttons.

Their threats represented the potential human carnage beyond so much already inflicted upon people by their own governments and armies around the globe. In Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Mexico approximately 90,000 individuals were killed in 2017 (drug wars). Human minds outthinking each other for evil, whether in thought and feeling, or sudden actions and sustained behaviors that descend to the very nadir of human decency.

## WHAT DO THEY MEAN?

Optimists notwithstanding, these hardships, disasters and wars, and the indignities of humanity to humanity, seem to define our times and our world much more so than the goodness and philanthropy of our better natures. And their appearance and practice echoes the testimony of sacred Scripture about the climax of human existence on this earth.

Consider Jesus' response to a question from His disciples: "Tell us," they said, "what will be the sign of . . . the end of the age?" (Matt. 24:3).

Jesus replied: "You will hear of wars and rumors

of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains” (verses 6-8). Jesus was clear about the wars and natural disaster as signs of the end.

Then there are Paul’s references to other signs. “But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God” (2 Tim. 3:1-4). Paul’s narration of the evil in people’s personalities and characters as they lose their focus on God may be repudiated by conscientious humanists, but they are nevertheless conspicuous elements of life all around us. We do not need to lie about what we see all around us, and even—in our moments of greatest candor—within us.

Scripture’s prediction is that these evils will increase as human beings allow their minds to be controlled more and more by evil as we rapidly approach the time for “the coming of the Son of Man” (Matt. 24:27). The times suggest the relevance of the question Jesus posed: “However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8).

### **SOMETHING WILL HAPPEN SOON**

The danger in our age is palpable. Humans seething with hatred against each other, are yet unwilling to investigate truth in secular and biblical matters. This behavior is seen both among those who claim no religion and those who claim religion and spirituality, and may include insensitivity with those who are poor; unwillingness to share food with those who are hungry; governments facilitating the suffering of society’s less fortunate; brutality in wars; proliferation of weapons; and efforts to deliberately enlarge the gap between those who are wealthy and those who are poor. The powers of godlessness are loose in the land, deliberately fighting against God and goodness.

How long will this last? No one knows. According to Jesus, it is not for us to know “the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority” (Acts 1:7). One thing seems certain: it will not last much lon-

**The danger in our age is palpable. Humans seething with hatred against each other, are yet unwilling to investigate truth in secular and biblical matters.**

ger. In the epilogue of Revelation 22, our Lord predicted, “Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End” (verses 12, 13). It has ever been God’s will that we think of Christ’s return at the end of time as imminent and not far distant, for He knows the impact of thought on behavior. As Jesus points out, the person who begins to think “My Lord delayeth his coming” will, on the basis of such thinking, pursue a life of profligacy and violence (Matt. 24:48, 49). He wants us to be ready for Him when He comes or when our time on earth expires.

### **A DELIVERER WILL STAND**

In the book of Daniel, the end of time features Michael, one of Christ’s divine names (Jude 9; Rev. 12:7), as standing to put an end to human suffering. The time of His standing may be understood as a “time of the end” that may culminate in “the end of time,” a time when human history as we conceptualize and experience it will end. This prophetic time is described in Daniel 11:40-45.

It is a time of battles, spiritual in nature, that occupy the whole earth. At its climax “Satan and all his host will be defeated in this final great spiritual battle on earth.”<sup>2</sup>

### **THE SEPARATION**

Scripture indicates that to stand at the “time of the end” involves a position of “judicial and also military responsibility.”<sup>3</sup> Michael’s stand vanquishes the kings of the earth who have been standing and falling in political succession over the centuries. He brings all of them to an end. Moreover, His standing establishes a separation

of people: survivors versus those undone by the time of trouble; His people whose identity is documented in His book versus those who have not been thus registered. His standing also separates the wise from the unwise. In sum, Michael's standing results in the deliberate deliverance of God's people in contrast to the ultimate destruction of those who reject God (Dan. 12:1-3).

It is noteworthy that Christ's faithful survivors have not necessarily escaped all suffering, but have experienced God's deliverance in the midst of suffering, as the Hebrew youth did in the fiery furnace (Dan. 3:8-27) and as Daniel did when delivered from a den of lions (Dan. 6:21, 22). Christ's faithful ones will come through great tribulation to ultimately shine in victorious glory (Rev. 7:14; Dan. 12:3), while those condemned, on the other hand, will have had their days of apparent magnificence, but will come to their end in "shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12:2).

The wise are people who have accepted salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ; the shamed are those who rejected God's salvation and were ashamed to receive and confess Jesus as their Savior from sin (Matt. 10:32, 33), choosing rather the pleasures of sin for a season. Among other things, Michael's standing serves as an act that separates those who are righteous, those who have chosen salvation and have been given eternal life, from those who have rejected salvation and have chosen a destiny of shame and everlasting contempt. The names of the saved are written in the book of life (Dan. 12:1; Rev. 21:27), and they will shine as the brightness of heaven. The names of the rejected ones are not found written in the book of life (Rev. 20:14, 15), and their destiny is the lake of fire (Rev. 19:11-20).

Though it is God's will that all be saved (1 Tim. 2:4), everyone will not be saved. Instead, everyone ends up where they are in the end, based on their personal choice (Deut. 30:19; Joshua 24:15), a choice that will be recognized in this separation, whether for eternal companionship with God or everlasting separation from the pleasure of His presence.

## MAYHEM REVERSED

Humans are afraid of pain, suffering, disease, death, and destruction, the consequences of sin (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). Mayhem strikes terror because, among other things, our pain and distress ends in

that which seems to be the end of all things, death.

But those who know Michael know that death and oblivion are not the end. Michael holds the key and power of ultimate deliverance from earth's mayhem. Michael will end the existence of death forever: the resurrection He generates is the total upending of the kingdom of evil that reigns in torment and concludes in death. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise (1 Thess. 4:16, KJV).

Death is not the end; there is something after death. It may be an everlasting life of peace and happiness, or a resurrection to shame and everlasting contempt. "Just as the fall was a reversal of creation, so the resurrection is a sort of new creation that reverses the consequences of the fall on the human race."<sup>4</sup>

This ultimate reversal of the Fall brings to this lost, little planet the restoration of life as God established it at creation. All things are made new and death and mayhem will no longer reign among us: "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4, KJV).

Michael's people understand that the worst things that happen in this life are nothing to worry about in the context of forever. And they understand that death is not the last event. If death claims our lives or the lives of our loved ones, whether through human-manufactured disasters, natural disasters, diseases, or nuclear disaster, whether through sheer accident or intentional evil, death is not the last thing. God's ultimate disruption of Satan's reign of evil will be a glorious resurrection that reverses the fall of Adam's race, and brings to earth and nature and humanity the glory of God's first and final intention in a land where the order of pain and chaos and sin will be forever past, and all things will be new (verse 5).

To God be the glory! 🌱

<sup>1</sup> MassShootingTracker.org/data.

<sup>2</sup> Zdravko Stefanovich, *Daniel, Wisdom to the Wise: Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn. 2007), p. 421.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 434.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 436.

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## CAROLYN SUTTON

The first time I, a visiting West Coast girl, ever heard the chilling scream of tornado sirens was late one night in southeast Tennessee. My husband and I were RV camping in a university parking lot while attending a church conference. Before retiring a half hour earlier, we had commented to each other about that evening's warm, restful breeze. But now the warning wail of sirens jolted us into a state of heart-pounding wakefulness. An authoritative knock brought us rushing to the door of our RV.

"This is campus safety patrol. Tornado warning!" called a man's deep voice. "You need to seek shelter immediately."

Opening the door, my husband asked, "What does 'tornado warning' mean, and where do we go for shelter?"

"It means a tornado is heading our way," said the uniformed man, "and *you* need to head to the basement of the girls' dormitory at the end of this road!"

## ENDURING IMAGES

Two memories from the subsequent events of that interruption-filled night still linger with me. First, while our pickup truck headed down the winding road amid pelting rain, its headlights illuminated the figure of a woman and two children hurrying along the roadside. We slowed and asked, "Where are you going?"

The single mom, as it turned out, answered, "My children and I are temporarily camping in the nearby park. Our car is in a repair shop. We're running from the storm, but we don't know where to go."

"Climb into the back," my husband called over the howling wind. "We'll take you to shelter." After they clambered into the truck bed, we headed toward the base of the hill and safety. *Who would have helped them if we hadn't been there?* I wondered.

Second, the gravity of the approaching storm frightened me as I saw other shelter seekers lining the walls, cell phones in hand. Snatches of nervous, urgent conversation filled the air: "Hey! Wake up! A tornado's coming!" Or: "I'm down here in the girls' dorm basement. You need me to come bring you here too?" And: "Don't waste another second. Just come to the shelter—*now!*"

I'm happy to report that the tornado itself missed that area, though straight-line winds did some damage to trees and area structures. Some time after midnight, when the all-clear signal was given, we drove the woman and her children to their campsite, then headed back to our own RV for a few hours of sleep.

For days I could not get the image of the soaked, fleeing widow's family out of my mind. On the other hand, my mind felt lighter as I recalled the many people streaming through the dormitory basement door—because someone who cared had taken time to warn them. *What if they hadn't?*

## WARNINGS AND SHELTER

Now another tornado—an unprecedented tornadic outbreak, actually—is headed straight toward us! We already see, feel, and hear the signs about us. The dark, turbulent clouds of human suffering on an unprecedented scale; the



# STORM SHELTER

*What to do when the alarm sounds*

angry winds of saber-rattling and wars around the globe; the baffling rise of previously unknown diseases; the churning uncertainty that fills our lives and our futures—all these point to the approaching storm. In fact, Jesus Himself told us what to watch for (Matt. 24; Luke 21; and Mark 13) and how to seek shelter.

And where is the shelter? “The name of the Lord is a fortified tower: the righteous run to it and are safe” (Prov. 18:10). Paul assured the Christians in Rome, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom. 10:13). Solomon emphasized that God’s safe place is in a personal, abiding relationship with Him. “Whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm” (Prov. 1:33).

Yet we believers also have a responsibility from *within* God’s shelter to warn those outside about the approaching storm, and invite them into a saving relationship with Jesus. In Christ’s parable of the great supper, the command of the master to his servant is fraught with urgency: “Go out to the roads and country lanes and *compel* them to come in, so that my house will be full” (Luke 14:23).

Now whenever I hear tornado sirens—or see headlines about the carnage or war, or cringe at the latest report of “wickedness in high places”—I ask God to calm my spirit and use that warning sign as a reminder: first, to double-check that *I* am still in a safe, saving relationship with Him; second, to do whatever I can, not only to invite, but also to transport, others to the Shelter before it is too late. ⚡

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The warning wail of sirens jolted us into a state of heart-pounding wakefulness.



*How much anxiety is too much?*

# ANXIETY HACKS

JENNIFER JILL SCHWIRZER

**A**n anxious person posted: “I’m VERY laid-back. I only care about two things: (1) Every person on earth and their opinion of me; (2) the crushing psychological weight of being alive. We all relate, and about a third of us relate fully. The global lifetime prevalence rate for anxiety disorders is about 30 percent. That means that for nearly a third of us our fears will be diagnosable at some point in our lifetimes.

This shouldn’t surprise Bible students who read of the entrance of fear in Genesis, where the once-calm Adam dives behind some scrub bush, admitting, “I was afraid” (Gen. 3:10).

So here we are, nervous systems aroused, wondering how to get



back to a state of equilibrium. Let me share some information and action steps that have helped me, and others, stay calm in a frantic world.

### WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Almost everyone gets butterflies before public speaking; and most of us have experienced intense nervousness before a high-risk conversation, such as asking someone out on a date or disputing a charge on a hotel bill. Nearly every human being finds large animals such as bears and lions threatening; and which one of us hasn't felt our heart flutter when something went bump in the night? These are examples of normal anxiety in the face of actual potential threats.

It's when anxiety heightens to the point that it is triggered by the *possibility* of danger, rather than its probability, that anxiety becomes unmanageable. Then our productivity and functioning as human beings is harmed by it, and it becomes pathological.

So we arrive at another definition: An anxiety disorder is a mental health disorder characterized by feelings of worry or fear that are strong enough to interfere with one's daily activities. Do our anxieties disrupt our ability to function, to work, to love, or to stay healthy in one way or another? If so, we may have an anxiety disorder.

### ANXIETY EXAMINED

Let's examine the physiology of anxiety. The nervous system can be thought of as having two basic branches: somatic and autonomic. The somatic nervous system is controlled by conscious thought. Lift your arm into the air a foot or two. That was your somatic nervous system working. Now, keep lifting it for another minute, again and again, faster and faster. Because of increased conscious activity, your heart rate and breathing will increase. The autonomic nervous system controls those because they're unconscious. Who has to remember to breathe? Who tells their heart to beat? No one. We can thank the God of the autonomic nervous system for that.

Let's more closely examine the autonomic nervous system. It also has two "branches," or functions: sympathetic and parasympathetic. The sympathetic brings about activation or arousal of the autonomic nervous system and the parasympathetic calms it. The interplay of the two systems

enables us to respond to threats with increased nervous energy (as in fight or flight), but then to calm back down when we realize those threats to be nonthreatening.

Science has recently begun to understand a more nuanced version of the sympathetic response. We've known about fight or flight for a long time, but now we know that persons can experience fight, flight, or freeze. Freeze describes the deer-in-the-headlights response we sometimes experience in the face of a threat.

In any of these fear states, several physiologic phenomena occur: The adrenals increase production of adrenaline, which increases heart rate and breathing. Adrenaline also shunts blood away from the internal organs into the extremities, dilates our pupils, reduces hearing, and shuts down peripheral vision. These changes temporarily turn us into Wonder Woman and Superman so we can fight off or run from the enemy.

In contrast to the fear state, calm sees the blood move back into the internal organs, the senses return to normal, and our breathing and heart rate slow back down to normal. In contrast to "fight or flight," this calm state is sometimes called "rest and digest."

Interesting new developments show that we reach this calm state best when we are socially engaged. That doesn't mean chatting it up at a party. "Social engagement" refers to the state of feeling bonded or connected to others. Apparently we humans experience calm best in a relationship. This validates the truth that we're made in the image of a relational God, a being who, for all His might and sovereignty, lives in a continual state of bondedness. Lonely, isolated people tend to experience more chronic anxiety than those who feel connected.

### IS ANXIETY BAD?

Clearly, anxiety has its use. When I'm standing on top of a seven-story building staring downward, the adrenaline shooting up my back gives me a clear message to secure my position. Because of a working anxiety system, I don't react the same to a man brandishing an AK-47 as I do to a child waving a toy gun. God has allowed for the fear response to help protect us in a dangerous world.

Fear actually drives attention. We can see this in the biblical concept of fearing God. Quite often God tells us to fear Him (see sidebar).

Is this because God wants to control us? scare



# TO FEAR, OR NOT TO FEAR

In the King James  
Version  
of the Bible,  
we're told to:

**"fear God"**  
22  
times

**"fear the Lord"**  
48  
times

**"fear not"**  
77  
times

**"be not afraid"**  
26  
times

us? keep us hidden behind a bush in our own little Garden of Eden, peering out like scared rabbits? Is it because God is, ultimately, dangerous?

Not exactly. It's because He wants to get our attention. The Greek word for fear is *phobos*, which simply means nervous system arousal. God wants to arouse us, get our attention, then get us to examine the perceived threat.

What will we then find? That He isn't dangerous at all. In fact, He is love. And His perfect love perfected in us expels our fear (1 John 4:18). Thomas Chalmers called this "the expulsive power of a new affection." Love comes in and pushes out fear. When we transition from feeling unsafe with God to feeling safe with Him, well, fear is gone.

So the reason God says to fear Him isn't so we *stay* afraid, or even that the predominant emotion we feel toward Him is fear. It's to arrest our attention so that He can ultimately take our fear away. In other words, the Bible's route to a cure for anxiety is through redirecting our anxieties to the God who ultimately calms our fears.

While our fear response has its use, the mechanism itself can go awry and cause an additional problem. Fear, especially for some of us highly sensitive types, tends to take on a life of its own. Once it jumps the track from its appropriate use, anxiety can become a significant threat to the quality of life.

## HOW IS ANXIETY TREATED?

The treatments that help anxiety the most involve all four components of life: physical, mental, social, and spiritual.

The physical aspect of treatment helps because anything that improves the health of the body helps the brain. "Natural doctors" work to improve neurotransmitter balance. Practices such as plant-based eating, exercise, sunlight, rest, the use of water, abstaining from caffeine and alcohol, fresh air, and trust in God all have their place. Science validates these things again and again.

Did you know that hydrotherapy is used in

Europe to help the mood?<sup>1</sup> Would you be surprised to learn that deep, slow breathing can ward off a panic attack?

The mental aspect of anxiety treatment has been addressed through cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT). CBT helps individuals control their thought lives, "casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5).

Ellen White wrote: "If the thoughts are wrong the feelings will be wrong."<sup>2</sup> But those thoughts and feelings can change as we receive the truth in Jesus. He can change our narrative from, "I'm a loser" to "I'm a precious child of God"; and "There's nothing to look forward to" to "There's enough labor in God's field to keep me happy until Jesus comes again."

The social component of healing means that we move away from the isolation that comes naturally to people in emotional distress into relationship with others. A healthy church is an excellent place to find friends and fellowship in a dark world.

I hasten to add that this is why we have to make sure that our churches are safe places for the downtrodden and distressed. Strife over doctrines and issues too often poison our churches and send struggling souls back to the world for refuge. When the world is kinder than the church, we know we need to review our affections.

Finally, trusting God to do for us what we can't do for ourselves will give us a peace that passes understanding. Why not trust in Him who gave His only Son, at infinite cost to Himself, as a free gift? Why not trust Jesus, who gave Himself to a lonely cross so that He could take our trembling selves into His capable, loving arms for eternity? 🌿

<sup>1</sup> [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20178872](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20178872).

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Maranatha*, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1976), p. 222.

**Jennifer Jill Schwirzer**, L.P.C., N.C.C., is director of ABIDE Counseling ([www.abidecounseling.com](http://www.abidecounseling.com)), as well as an author, speaker, and musician.

# THEY'LL KNOW WE ARE CHRISTIANS

**R**ichard Wurmbrand was imprisoned for 14 years in Communist Romania for one crime: sharing the gospel.

During his imprisonment he was repeatedly branded with hot irons, taunted with just-out-of-reach medicine that could cure his tuberculosis-riddled lungs, and placed naked in “freezer” cells with chains on his feet.

But he and his comrades did the unimaginable: they prayed for their torturers.

## DESENSITIZED TO LOVE

I sometimes wonder if we Western Christians are desensitized to love. Oh sure, we have the right words:

“For God so *loved* the world” (John 3:16).

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you *love* on another” (John 13:35).

“*Love* your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt. 5:44).

But what do those words *look* like?

In his book *Tortured for Christ* Wurmbrand posed a question to himself: “Are you for the Communists, or against them?”

His answer is complex. Yet its application is incredibly simple. While Communism as a system is detrimental to humanity, Communists themselves are as precious to Jesus as the one lost sheep. This is the mindset that allows Christians to pray for their torturers while still being abused. This is how, when the tables were turned and many Communists became prisoners themselves, Christians were their closest confidants and allies.

Wurmbrand wrote: “As in the book of Daniel when the three young men who were put in the furnace did not smell like fire upon being delivered from it, so the Christians who have been in Communist

prisons don’t smell like bitterness against the Communists.”\*

I don’t know about you, but as I read those words, I see an incredible contrast with this love, and what passes for love in 2018.

Look no further than the social media dialogue on a supposedly Christian post or page.

And what about within our own church? Online commentary, church board meetings, and yes, our most recent General Conference session have been recently dominated by heated disagreements that threaten to divide our church. But the issues themselves are not the problem; it’s the lack of love that dominates these sites.

If we aren’t prepared to love people who disagree with us on the other side of the keyboard—or pew—can we really love as did the martyrs who lived during the Communist takeover?

Or, since Communism isn’t as widespread as it was 30 years ago, how about ISIS? When we see news clips of suicide bombers, machine gun-bearing fighters, or sword-wielding masked executioners, how do we feel? We probably feel pain, sorrow, and the presence of evil. But do we feel hatred for the executioners themselves?

Through the experiences of martyrs such as Richard Wurmbrand, I am reminded that it is perfectly noble to hate evil actions, and systems that lie, steal, torture, and murder. But in order to truly love as Christ did, we must never hate people, even those who hate us. The love of Christ that revolutionized the world once is the same love in the hearts of His followers that will revolutionize it again.

This is how they’ll know we are Christians. 🍌

\* Richard Wurmbrand, *Tortured for Christ* (Living Sacrifice Books, 1967), p. 63.

**Jimmy Phillips** is executive director of marketing for Adventist Health Bakersfield.

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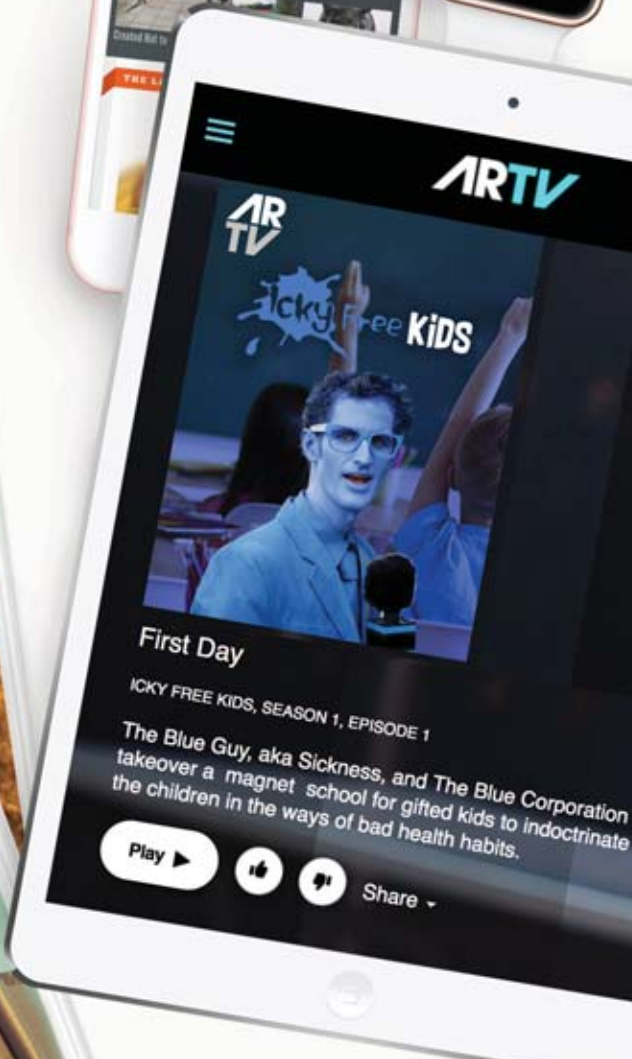


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**ALSO IN THIS SECTION:**

- » SKATES, DRESSES, AND THE SATURDAY CHURCH
- » HE WILL NOT LET GO
- » THE SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE
- » THE “CLICK THE REMOTE” MENTALITY
- » THE TWO-MILE RADIUS

# ENGAGE

## MAKE AMERICA RAKE AGAIN?


*A page from Jefferson's book*

Ask the questions that have no answers.  
Invest in the millennium. Plant sequoias!

**I**n a world dominated by hashtags and slogans, one has soared above the rest: “Make America Great Again.”

Even on the face of it, it's a loaded phrase. It invites a variety of questions: Is America not currently great? Was it truly great in the past? What are the secrets that would make America great . . . again?

### WHAT THE SLOGAN REALLY MEANS

The slogan could—and probably does—imply many different things. At the root of all possible meanings, however, is the premise that 

**JARED THURMON**





making the nation greater than it's ever been—and making any country greater than it's ever been—lies in returning to our roots.

Millions of Americans reportedly believe their jobs have been taken by people willing to work for less, or by individuals producing products overseas that current Americans or their parents once produced in the land of the free. Many citizens celebrated—but some were suspicious of—a number of reported deals reached recently to bring billions in cash home to America to spur manufacturing growth, only to discover that automation is the buzzword of the day.

We feel the threat on many fronts. Untiring robots quietly replace 16 human jobs per robot in a packing plant; agribusiness strips the need for human pickers in the field. Artificial intelligence eliminates the roles that call for human judgment. Most vulnerable are transportation jobs, but retail and fast-food workers are being replaced by impersonal technology that never asks for a raise or ever needs health insurance.

So why did most American Millennials not resonate with the issues about which the other half of the country voted in our most recent election? Truth

## Relatively few Millennials have any significant interaction with agriculture, manufacturing, or other “working class” issues.

is, relatively few Millennials have any significant interaction with agriculture, manufacturing, or other “working class” issues. Many Millennials are college-educated (but not as many as some think).<sup>2</sup> Most work in urban areas, and sip their \$5.25 pumpkin spice lattes while simultaneously ruminating on their mountains of college debt, taking a selfie, and hash-tagging #firstworldproblems.

Do today's Millennials still believe in the much-storied “American dream”? Why should they, when the golden promise of their generation—that technology will lead us to a new Promised Land—

hasn't resulted in increasing prosperity? They sit uncomfortably in Starbucks, far from the land that grew the wheat that made their frosted scones possible, wondering how the world's wealthiest nation can be growing more food than ever while more American kids go hungry. Disparities and contradictions loom on every side—between rich and poor, “red” and “blue,” rural and urban—in what *Time* magazine recently, and adroitly, termed “the Divided States of America.”

### STARTING WITH THE BASICS

To get some background, we first need “ground”—in this case, the soil that nurtures real roots.

My understanding of Bible prophecy teaches me that America was designed by God for a role it would play in the history of nations—and not just through geopolitics. Did you know, for example, that America has more farmland with easy access to river transport than any nation of the world? Or that it's drastically cheaper to transport both farm products and manufactured products by boat than by rail or truck? I believe Providence intended America to be an economic powerhouse, and, in turn, the breadbasket of the world. But the only way to make that design work is agriculture.

The rich farmland of present-day America was largely confiscated from its original inhabitants, and massively deforested through the back-breaking labor of generations who wrestled a living from the land. Nevertheless, what America has now become resulted from the unique confluence of geography, liberty, faith, and tilling the soil.

In the very nation where prophecy predicted that the bread of life would be sustained, the bread that nourishes hungry appetites would be the economic engine of this safe haven, a sanctuary for men and women seeking God according to the dictates of their own consciences.

Was God, through America's founding, opening a way for religious and political refugees escaping Old World cities and tyrannies to return to the way of life He originally planned? Humans were created to live in a garden, to “work it and take care of it” (Gen. 2:15). Have we outgrown that idea of paradise?



Like me, most Millennials have been educated by a system that often inculcated the idea that manual labor—agriculture or manufacturing work—is something for the economically disadvantaged or those who are undereducated. We recoil—at least internally—from the idea that men and women with our advantages and education might ever spend our work lives picking cabbages, pruning orchards, or running dairy herds. On a recent trip to India, I heard the same sentiments being shared by the rising Millennial working class.

Aside from the implicit arrogance of these notions, a bigger issue looms: most Americans under the age of 40 have relatively little contact with the land—specifically, the farmland—that made this nation great.

#### WHAT JEFFERSON SAID

More than 230 years ago the man who would become this nation's third president, and who authored its Declaration of Independence, addressed the question of America's unique identity among the nations of the world. As he watched the Industrial Revolution begin to change both the landscape and the population of a nation he dearly

## Jefferson argues that freedom—and good government—are best preserved by those who have a living connection with the soil.

loved, he asked if Americans were, in fact, intended by Providence for a special relationship with the soil. Should Americans be growing raw materials, or should we be manufacturing products?

Jefferson is, in large measure, a flawed apostle for the values he advances. His own connection with the land of which he writes might best be termed “vicarious,” given the more than 200 African American slaves who worked his Monticello estate—men, women, and children who hoed the corn and grew the fruit that ended on his table. He might have better grasped his own truths in wielding an axe or weeding a garden. That said, his words still hold their worth, despite the chal-

lenge of implementation today. Jefferson wrote:

“The political economists of Europe have established it as a principle that every state should endeavor to manufacture for itself: and this principle, like many others, we transfer to America, without calculating the difference of circumstance which should often produce a difference of result. In Europe the lands are either cultivated, or locked up against the cultivator. Manufacture must therefore be resorted to of necessity not of choice, to support the surplus of their people.”<sup>3</sup>

In Europe they have to make “stuff” (manufactured goods) because there are so many people, and limited permission to work the constantly diminishing farmland.

“But we have an immensity of land courting the industry of the husbandman [farmer]. Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people, whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue. It is the focus in which he keeps alive that sacred fire, which otherwise might escape from the face of the earth.”<sup>4</sup>

That's his thesis: —that those who grow things are knit closely with the divine.

“Corruption of morals in the mass of cultivators is a phenomenon of which no age nor nation has furnished an example. It is the mark set on those, who not looking up to heaven, to their own soil and industry, as does the husbandman, for their subsistence, depend for it on the casualties and caprice of customers.”<sup>5</sup>

Jefferson believed it was virtually impossible for a nation's morals to degrade because its citizens spent too much time in their gardens.

“Dependence begets subservience and venality, suffocates the germ of virtue, and prepares fit tools for the designs of ambition. This, the natural progress and consequence of the arts, has sometimes perhaps been retarded by accidental circumstances: but, generally speaking, the proportion which the aggregate of the other classes of citizens bears in any state to that of its husbandmen is the proportion of its unsound to its healthy parts, and is a good-enough barometer whereby to measure its degree of corruption.”<sup>6</sup>

When populations are completely dependent

on others for sustenance (food and housing), they inevitably injure both society and their own souls. In Jefferson's view, a healthy society depends on those who live in closest contact with the land. Societies that ignore this truth will move inevitably toward corruption.

"The mobs of great cities add just so much to the support of pure government, as sores do to the strength of the human body. It is the manners and spirit of a people which preserve a republic in vigor. A degeneracy in these is a canker which soon eats to the heart of its laws and constitution."<sup>7</sup>

Against the centuries-old trend of urbanization and industrialization, Jefferson argues that freedom—and good government—are best preserved by those who have a living connection with the soil.

When AI (artificial intelligence) has replaced all drivers; when retail and fast-food outlets no longer need humans to check you out as you purchase your L. L. Bean sweaters or sample McDonald's latest offerings; when factories are assembling products and housing with robots who never laugh or cry or think; if current trends continue, fewer jobs will be filled by humans. And what will be the result of avoiding sweat and toil and dirt?

"It is the manners and spirit of a people which preserve a republic in vigor!"

The secret of any successful nation, Jefferson argues, lies in its foundational commitment to manual labor, contact with the soil, and the independence that naturally results from these.

Jefferson's haunting words have more than an echo in lines written by Ellen White, Adventist pioneer and visionary. Writing more than a century after Jefferson, she also described the intimate connection between growing things and growing character:

"It was God's plan for [humans] to till the earth." Adam, "ruler of the whole world," and "many of the world's greatest men, its real nobility," have been farmers. The field serves the king himself (Eccl. 5:9). And God Himself instructs and teaches the farmer (Isa. 28:26). Whoever tends the tree gets to eat its fruit (Prov. 27:18). Agriculture is a deliverance from temptation that affords "unnumbered privileges and blessings denied to those whose work lies in the great cities." Little in the business world can provide "so real an independence and so great certainty of fair return for . . . labor" as does agriculture.<sup>8</sup>

Elsewhere, Ellen White wrote about God's plan

for Israel: "Every family had a home on the land, with sufficient ground for tilling." People would lead "a useful, industrious, and self-supporting life. And no devising of men has ever improved upon that plan." Its decline greatly contributes to "the poverty and wretchedness that exist today."<sup>9</sup>

## ULTIMATE CONSEQUENCES

Ellen White's vision extends beyond the boundaries of the Seventh-day Adventist movement she helped to found. She pondered the beneficial impact of these ideas upon societies that may not yet recognize the rule and providence of God:

"Thus, also, our schools could aid effectively in the disposition of the unemployed masses. Thousands of helpless and starving beings, whose numbers are daily swelling the ranks of the criminal classes, might achieve self-support in a happy, healthy, independent life if they could be directed in skillful, diligent labor in the tilling of the soil."<sup>10</sup>

I get it: This is strong, countercultural stuff. It runs against the current of the times, and thus challenges some of the "sacred" norms of today's Millennials. But it is a question both worth asking and knowing the answer to: Is the secret to making America and the character of its men and women great literally beneath us?

In the beginning, humans were given a garden to live in, work in, and in which to grow. Scripture tells us that at the end of 1,000 years in heaven we will return to this earth, again to live in close connection with the soil: "They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit" (Isa. 65:21).

Now, that's a millennium every thinking Millennial ought to be investing in. 🍌

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Farmer **Jared Thurmon** is liaison for strategic partnerships for Adventist Review Ministries.

<sup>1</sup> Wendell Berry, *Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front*

<sup>2</sup> [themillenniallegacy.com/the-millennial-generation/well-educated/#.WEGDmneZMcg](http://themillenniallegacy.com/the-millennial-generation/well-educated/#.WEGDmneZMcg); [www.alternet.org/education/surprise-majority-millennials-dont-have-college-degree-thats-going-cost-everybody](http://www.alternet.org/education/surprise-majority-millennials-dont-have-college-degree-thats-going-cost-everybody)

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Jefferson, "Query XIX: Manufactures," *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Richmond, Va.: J. W. Randolph, 1853). Originally written, 1781; first published, 1784.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> See Ellen G. White, *Education*, (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1952), p. 219. White, *Education*, p. 219.

<sup>9</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 183.

<sup>10</sup> E. G. White, *Education*, p. 220.





## SKATES, DRESSES, AND THE SATURDAY CHURCH

*One thing just led to another.*

**B**ack in the 1970s my hairdresser invited me to a roller-skating party sponsored by her church. Her church, the Rehoboth Church of God in Christ, had chartered a bus to take us from the Bronx to the Empire Dome roller-skating rink in Brooklyn.

Gospel music was blasting when we walked inside the roller rink, and a lot of people were there already, talking and skating. I checked my coat, rented a pair of skates, and headed for the floor. I hadn't skated since I was in elementary school and used those metal skates you put on over your shoes.

I had to be careful just going around the rink. I took my time; I didn't race. I tried to skate on the outer edge of the rink so I could hold on to the rail. I did that for about 20 minutes.

Then, feeling a little more confident, I let go of the wall and

skated with the flow of traffic. Before I knew it, I began to skate, listening to and enjoying the music. Around and around we went. The lights were bright and there were lots of young people about my age (13), some older, some younger. Members of several other churches were there.

### **OOPS!**

I was having fun when the inevitable happened: I fell on my bottom. Just as I was getting up, a cute boy came over to help me to my feet. "Are you OK?" he asked.

He had friendly brown eyes and he smiled brightly as he introduced himself. Then we started skating together. He and I skated together the rest of the evening. Near the end of the party we exchanged telephone numbers. We headed back to the buses and mine drove me back to the Bronx.

Within a week or so he called, and we talked for a long time. He said he and his family attended the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I spoke to his aunt and asked about her church. "We keep the Ten Commandments and worship on Saturday." That's all she said. Jesus used that family.

### **SPECIAL DELIVERY**

A couple years later my mom asked me to deliver a package to our hairdresser. She wanted the package delivered on Sunday morning, when our hairdresser would be in church.

I wasn't excited about going to church; I didn't want anybody to invite me to stay. To make sure, I wore a dirty T-shirt and raggedy jeans. (I have to smile when I

think that a lot of young people wear clothes like that today.) It worked. I delivered the package and nobody asked me to stay. I happily walked away.

After I had walked about a block, it started to rain. I had an umbrella, so I opened it as I started to cross the street. Then I heard a woman's voice: "Young lady, young lady!"

I turned and saw a woman dressed all in white: white dress, white stockings, white gloves, white head cover. She looked like a deaconess on Communion Sabbath. "May I walk with you under your umbrella?" she asked. "I'm on my way to church."

I invited her to join me. She said, "Do you go to church?"

When I answered no, she said, "Honey, you should go to church. You don't know what a blessing you're missing."

My mind began to race. I wanted to get to her church so I wouldn't have to listen to her. We finally reached her church, a cozy little storefront church. She invited me to attend the next Sunday. I said I would.

That next Sunday I didn't go to church; I went to the movies instead.

Several Sundays came and went. My conscience began to trouble me. *You told that woman you were going to church.*

*I know, but I don't have anything to wear.*

*So make something.*

*I don't have any money.*

That week someone gave me \$20 that I wasn't expecting. I went to the fabric store and looked through the pattern catalog until I found a nice dress pattern. Then I chose some beautiful red and white gingham fabric and accessories (buttons, zipper, thread). I made a beautiful short-sleeve A-line dress that hung just below my knees and had a sash that tied in the back.

The next Sunday I went to church. The woman was happy to see me, and I was happy to see her. Everyone was so nice, and the service was a blessing.

When the service was over, the woman gave me a big hug. She invited me back the following week. *No promises!* I told myself.

Besides, how could I explain that I was vain; that I didn't want anyone to see me wearing the same dress two weeks in a row (I had only one).

The following Sunday I went to church, but to a different church. It was nice, the service and the

people were wonderful, but I never returned because I had only one dress. For four Sundays I went to four different churches.

## THE SATURDAY CHURCH

Once as I was walking down the street I wondered: *Why are there so many churches? They're almost all the same. Remember that family from years ago? Try the Saturday church. You have only one dress, and you haven't been there yet.*

*I'll try it.*

Trouble was, I had no idea how to find one.

But that Saturday afternoon, members of the City Tabernacle in Manhattan came through my grandmother's neighborhood handing out literature stamped with the church's name, address, and phone number.

I found the people very kind. Although I couldn't put my finger on it, I felt completely at home. I was invited to participate in the afternoon program and I made many new friends. When I got home that evening, I knew I wanted to go back. But I had only one dress.

God blessed me with some money, and I ended up making four dresses. I used the same pattern, but different fabric to make them unique.

## THE NEXT STEP

I began studying the Bible. At first the people's love kept me going to church. But the services and Bible studies opened my heart to Christ's love.

One day I was standing in our kitchen, looking out the window at the few cloud formations. One of the clouds looked like a throne. It reminded me of God on His throne, the same God who sent His Son to die for me.

Suddenly the Bible lessons I had studied for a year became clear. I knew that Christ had died for me. The Bible story was true. The Holy Spirit was real. I wanted to give my heart to the Lord. I fell on my knees and sobbed.

I attended City Tabernacle for several months. Then I started attending services at the Washington Avenue Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Bronx and was baptized there. At 17 years old I knew I had made the right choice. My life is a testimony to the words: "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth" (Eccl. 12:1). 🍌

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Michele McNear writes from Bronx, New York.

ADVERTISEMENT

# CHICKEN BONE GIVES WAKE-UP CALL



CARTER REPORT  
**ADVENTIST  
HEROES**

Julia Outkina received a Ph.D. in linguistics at Leningrad State University. She did not come to our meetings to understand the Bible. She wanted to hear English spoken. The day came when 2,530 other Russians were baptized in the Volga River. “Not me,” she said. Then a chicken bone gave her a wake-up call...



**D**r. Julia's big problem was the Sabbath. So inconvenient. On her way home from The Carter Report meetings, she stopped to go shopping. It was Sabbath. As she prepared the meal, a sharp chicken bone drove up under her fingernail. It became infected and everyday that chicken bone told her, *"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."* This is the story she told us in 1992 as we met with her brother, the Governor of Nizhny Novgorod, Boris Nemtsov.

Julia told us her unexpected encounter with the chicken bone had helped her decide for Christ, baptism, and His holy day.

Today Dr. Outkina, once an atheist, is a Seventh-day Adventist Christian. She serves as director of 3ABN Russia. She has her own TV program that touches the lives of thousands. ❖

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## HE WILL NOT LET GO

*How I came to truly trust*

**Y**ou have late-stage Lyme disease.” Those six words brought an initial sigh of relief. Finally, at age 24, I had a diagnosis.

### THE BEGINNING OF SORROWS

It all started when I was 10 years old: the neck pain, chronic fatigue, and nausea. I had joined Pathfinders and gone on as many camping trips as I could. We’d pull ticks off of us all the time, thinking them only a brief nuisance. While I was growing up, my doctors tested me for anything and everything. When the tests came back either negative or normal they dismissed my symptoms and insisted that my problems would resolve in time.

Instead, my initial three symptoms intensified, and more symptoms appeared. In 2010,

while serving as a literature evangelist in Colorado, I noticed a bullseye rash on my leg. Then I experienced flulike symptoms. Unaware of the significance, I waited two weeks until the program was over to go to a clinic. The nurse practitioner saw my rash and tested me for Lyme. Since the results were negative, she said I didn’t need any treatment. I believed her.

I continued working hard and graduated summa cum laude from Andrews University in 2013. Immediately following my internship, I married the love of my life, Stephen Mayer. I thought since school was over my health would improve. However, I got dramatically worse. That’s when I finally met the doctor who gave me the diagnosis of late-stage Lyme disease.

She then informed me that the test I had been given for Lyme was wrong 50 percent of the time, but that my list of now more than 40 symptoms pointed to classic textbook neurological Lyme. I was encouraged by the knowledge. I thought I could take a few pills and move on with my life. Yet unbeknownst to me, that day I was embarking on a lifelong journey.

### MORE YEARS OF PAIN

Over the years I’ve been to many doctors, naturopaths, and specialists. I’ve tried multiple antibiotics, natural supplements, diets, and therapies. I’ve had some improvement, but I still suffer from many debilitating symptoms—mainly chronic exhaustion, severe pain, seizure-like episodes, and brain fog.

It has become clear to me that unless I receive an act of divine

## God doesn't get rid of every bad circumstance

intervention, Lyme will always be a part of me. There's something about having a disease with no definitive cure that makes you think. It makes you think the age-old question: Why? Why does God allow bad things to happen to His people?

I thought the answer was easy: there's sin in the world. However, personal suffering makes the question more confounding and desperately important.

One day I asked God, "Why me? I was working for You when I received the bullseye rash!" I knew, deep down, that Satan is the one responsible for my suffering. But I still thought: *Where was God when this happened? Doesn't He promise to protect those who are working for Him?*

Then I heard God's thoughts: *How much is a soul worth to you?*

I thought: *What if one soul gave their life to Christ as a result of that summer's work? If my affliction never ceased would it have been worth it?* The realization hit my heart: it would be a privilege and an honor to see that person in heaven, and whomever they brought with them through their influence.

### CONTRASTING RESPONSES

A friend shared her thought with me that maybe my prayers were not being answered because I either didn't have enough faith or hadn't surrendered to God. Maybe my suffering was all my own fault! I wondered, *Was that God's response to my anguish?*

I prayerfully delved into the Scriptures. I found them full of examples in which faith played a pivotal role in healing: the woman with the issue of blood (Luke 8:43-48); the centurion with the sick servant (Matt. 8:5-13); the Syrophenician woman (Mark 7:25-30); even the father who didn't have enough faith (Mark 9:23-25).

But I also discovered examples of people of faith whose prayer requests were not granted: Paul's thorn in his side (2 Cor. 12:7-10); or the story of Job. The more I read Job's story, the more I felt that it was just for me. God was giving me a peek into secrets of His administration, secrets Job never learned about what was happening or why. The circumstances of his disasters were beyond the pale of his knowledge or favor.

Then there's Jesus, praying, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as You will" (Matt. 26:39). God was

teaching me to pray "not as I will, but as you will."

I also found the following statement very helpful: "There are cases where God works decidedly by His divine power in the restoration of health. But not all the sick are healed. Many are laid away to sleep in Jesus. . . . If persons are not raised to health, they should not on this account be judged as wanting in faith."<sup>1</sup>

The three Hebrew youths demonstrated their understanding of this concept when standing before King Nebuchadnezzar: "The God we serve is able to deliver us from [the burning fiery furnace], and He will. . . . But even if he does not, we want you know, Your majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up" (Dan. 3:16-18). I am convinced that with one word, God can intervene in my health. If He doesn't, He is still God, and I will serve Him.

With clearer understanding, my burden has taken a swan dive from off my shoulders! I don't think I could have heard God's voice any clearer if it had been audible! He has answered my question of what He expects of me. He expects me to believe and while I wait, to trust His decisions, timing, goodness, and love for me.

### AND YOU?

I don't know what struggles you are going through. But whatever challenges you may be facing, I encourage you: look to the darkest period in earth's history and see God's light. Here's the light: Jesus rescuing us by dying on the cross, showing that God doesn't get rid of every bad circumstance; and, at the same time, that God will bring His purpose out of the worst of situations. He will not let go.

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 230.

**Kathlyn Mayer** lives in New York with husband, Stephen, fights Lyme disease, keeps house, shares Jesus with all and sundry, and cares for her parents.

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# THE SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE

I stretched my aching back and looked at the pile of letters on my desk. They poured in with no end in sight. Some pressing, others not. Suggestions and stories, complaints and concerns, praises and prayers—they covered all topics. I shuffled through the stack and picked one up at random. Cursive handwriting. Overseas postage.

I casually slit it open, and everything else disappeared as I read. This woman—I'll call her June—didn't have a lot of money, but 3ABN had ministered to her life. She knew the gospel message of grace and salvation needed to be spread around the world, and she wanted to help. June decided to cancel her Internet subscription so she could save that money and send \$20 every month to help others learn about Jesus and the truth in His Word.

Tears filled my eyes. *Had I ever sacrificed like that? Absolutely not.*

I recently sat in church as *Mission Spotlight* was played. A young man had gone as a Global Mission pioneer to Bangladesh. The story followed the villagers, none of them Christians, as they lived in poverty and drank water from the same stream they bathed in. They became ill, and the young man gathered them each evening for a prayer season. At the end of the week they were well! Many accepted Christ, and a church was organized in that far-off village.

My heart broke. *Had I ever prayed or given or served like that? Probably not.*

The loud buzzer sounded, and the double doors swung open. They closed


behind me as my shoes clicked on the institutional floor. A nurse led me and a friend from church to the door of one of the patients' rooms. Sally\* didn't even look up. She just sat, crying on her bed. Rocking from some inner pain. We tried small talk and hugs. Nothing. The tears continued unabated. I reached out and held her hands as we prayed. Nothing.

*Would anything get through? She wasn't always like this. God, how do we reach her?*

Acting on impulse I picked up my Bible and flipped to one of my favorite psalms: Psalm 91. I began to read, inserting Sally's name into the scriptures. "Sally will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I will trust.'" The rocking ceased as the Word of God flowed forth. Her sobs became quieter, then stopped altogether. By the end of that psalm a smile began to emerge.

I had seen the power of God's Word before, but never as dramatically as that day with Sally. As I drove home, I thought about the spirit of sacrifice.

Was I called to give sacrificially? to travel overseas? Or just to visit a hospital? To me, the spirit of sacrifice comes each today. Today serving Jesus; today sacrificing myself; today walking in obedience to His voice.

Whatever that is. Wherever it may be. Forever. 

\*Not her real name

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**Jill Morikone** is general manager for the Three Angels Broadcasting Network, a supporting Adventist television network. She and her husband, Greg, live in southern Illinois and enjoy ministering together for Jesus.

JOURNEYS  
WITH JESUS  
JILL  
MORIKONE



WE TRIED SMALL  
TALK AND HUGS.  
NOTHING. THE  
TEARS CONTINUED  
UNABATED.





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"Over a year ago I was rebaptized. In finding a renewed desire for the Word, I found myself searching YouTube during the week and after Sabbath church to hear sermons. I then had a conversation with my father-in-law who mentioned American Cassette Ministries, and he said 'they may not be around anymore but search the internet and perhaps you'll find something'. Well... I definitely found something!!! I now listen through the ACM app at least twice a day and its enriched my life so much!! Thank you so much for what you do. Thank you for keeping your integrity and not compromising. Thank you for providing such precious messages from servants of the Lord who are sleeping in Christ. May the Lord bless you and this wonderful ministry."

—John



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# THE “CLICK THE REMOTE” MENTALITY

And a cure for “remotism”

LORON WADE

“**N**ah, I don’t go anymore,” Jerry said when I talked to him about church. “I wasn’t getting anything out of it, so I quit.”

## JERRY AND THE CLICKER

Jerry’s generation seems to be infected with “remotism,” a click-click mentality that sticks them to the remote control. Jerry’s TV at home is supposed to give him something quite specific, like a happy feeling, a laugh, something exciting: *OK, let’s see, here’s channel 27: Yikes! Some skinny woman is talking about how she gets her calcium by drinking milk. Click. Channel 28: The local school district is floating a bond issue. Jerry clicks again. Seinfeld rerun! “Click, click, click” goes the remote.*

The last time Jerry dragged himself to church, he missed his remote. Before the sermon was over he got up and left. Maybe he’ll be back again; maybe.

Going to church suffering from “remotism” means that the church and the preacher can compete only by becoming a show that draws you in and makes you feel good so you won’t just click them away.

## HOW GOD KEEPS CHURCH

One day when God brought His people together to talk about church He said: “If you will listen obediently to what I say and keep my covenant, out of all people, you’ll be my special treasure. The whole earth is mine to choose from, but you’re special: *a kingdom of priests, a holy nation*” (Ex. 19:5, 6).<sup>\*</sup> Peter explains: “You are the ones chosen by God, . . . for the high calling of priestly work, . . . [and] to be a holy people, God’s instruments to . . . tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you—from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted” (1 Peter 2:9, 10).

It’s God’s two-part, failproof way to avoid click-click “remotism”; and it goes a long way toward revitalizing personal religious experience and conquering church

boredom and apathy. First, God calls us to be “*a holy people*”—people who focus constantly on keeping our relationship with Jesus Christ strong, growing, and active. We cooperate with Him by finding things that contribute to a healthy friendship and avoiding whatever may weaken or cripple it.

God also wants us to be a “*kingdom of priests*.” A priest is an intercessor—a two-way talker who talks to God about the people and talks to the people about God.

## INTERCEDING

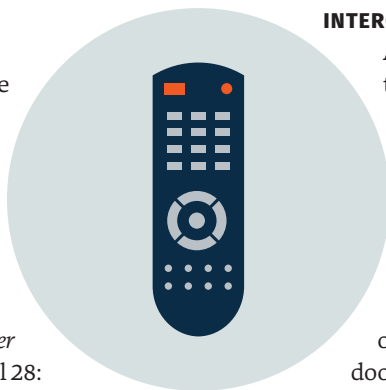
Are you talking to God about that woman at work who irritates you so much? If you are, He may be able to help you understand why she acts the way she does. And your kids’ doctor seemed quite upset the last time you were in his office; and the teenager next door constantly blasting away that awful music on his car stereo. Are you interceding with God about these people?

The other side of priestly two-way talk means that we also talk with the people on behalf of God, testifying to them about “*the night-and-day difference He made*” for us. God Himself deeply cares about these people. He wants to help us find the moment that’s just right for sharing with them about Him.

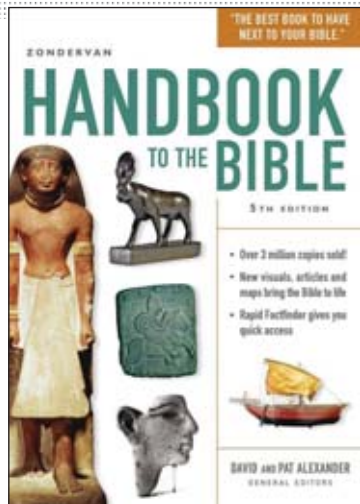
Living this way, actively seeking holiness and caring deeply about people and their needs, we will never suffer from “remotism” at church. We won’t go there looking for a laugh. We will realize that church is us and that God wants us to be the real show: the display of His grace that brings joy and love and life to everyone who sees it; who sees us, that is. 🍏

<sup>\*</sup> Scripture texts in this article are from *The Message*. Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group. (Italics supplied.)

Retired professor of religion, **Loron Wade** lives in Montemorelos, Mexico.



# CLOSER LOOK



## Zondervan Handbook to the Bible

David and Pat Alexander, eds., Zondervan Handbook to the Bible, 5th ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 816 pages, \$44.99. Reviewed by Gerald A. Klingbeil, *Adventist Review*.

**T**he Bible can be quite intimidating. It clearly hails from a different time and echoes cultures that can feel strange to us. It is long and can be dense reading—especially for the uninitiated.

That's where the *Handbook* comes in. Now in its fifth edition, it's a treasure trove of information relevant to those who not only want to read the Bible but engage with it more deeply and in a readable format. It offers a useful guide to all the books of the Bible and contains numerous maps and charts (68 maps and 20 charts to be precise). Sixty-seven international scholars contributed 127 additional articles, such as "A Story Through

## Longing for God

*Longing for God: A Prayer and Bible Journal*, Frank M. Hasel (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2017), 352 pages, \$22.99. Reviewed by Melody Mason, author of *Daring to Ask for More: Divine Keys to Answered Prayer*.

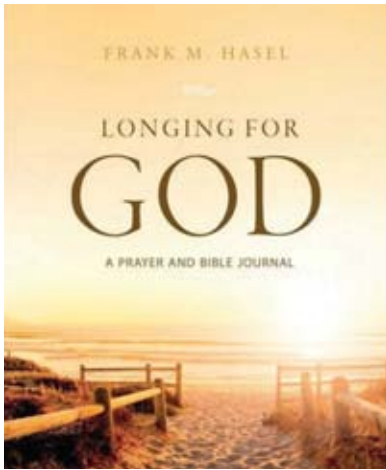
**I**f you're longing for fresh vibrancy in your walk with God; if you're yearning for a renewed love of God's Word and for practical tools to go deeper in your personal prayer and Bible study, *Longing for God* may be just the book you've been waiting for. Rather than being merely another Bible reading guide with check marks to cross off each day, or a prayer journal with a few inspirational thoughts and wide-open spaces for notes, *Longing for God* combines the best of all Bible-reading-and-prayer-journal worlds. In fact, readers may have a hard time putting this book down, as it is a treasure chest of inspirational bite-sized nuggets and prayer thoughts.

*Longing for God* is unique in that it constantly draws readers to the true focus of prayer and Bible study: *to know God more intimately, and to worship Him more purposefully*. Throughout the book God and His Word are seen as the foundation for all true growth in our relationship with Him. Laid out in an attractive format and easy-to-follow

Women's Eyes (Ruth)," "The Qur'an and the Bible," or "A Way of life—the Ten Commandments." What really distinguishes it, however, are the more than 700 superb color photos and illustrations that offer a visual window into the world of the Bible.

Bible readers should invest the time to work through the first 80 pages of the *Handbook*, where we find our introduction to the Bible. It starts from the very basic (What is the Bible? How can I read the Bible?) to the more advanced concepts of the Bible and its physical, cultural, and historical settings, and also focuses on the Bible's transmission history.

It also poses relevant questions that contemporary readers, often unchurched, are asking: What cultural perspectives



Bible reading style, the 352-page journal walks readers through the entire 66 books of Scripture in one year (focusing on both the Old and New Testament or Psalms simultaneously).

However, while the journal is formatted to follow the calendar year, the readings can be started at any time and can be completed at one's own pace. Each Bible reading assignment offers short journal entry spaces where one can record special Bible promises or brief spiritual insights from that day's reading. There's also a place to record daily praises, thanksgiving, and/or prayers, as desired. Hasel reminds readers that these disciplines are not rigid requirements or recipes to success, but are all aimed at helping one

avoid spiritual forgetfulness.

Since the spirit with which we open God's Word often affects the outcome of our study, right from the beginning Hasel encourages readers to cultivate attitudes that are conducive to productive Bible study and spiritual growth. Readers are challenged to continually ask thought-provoking questions and to read God's Word with open eyes and heart, making personal application from what is learned. Each month also includes an inspirational section on prayer, with practical tips and suggestions to help readers understand God's nature more clearly, to be more focused in their prayer time, and to learn how to pray more effectively for others.

Hasel addresses difficult questions relating to prayer, such as: *What does it mean to pray in a way that truly pleases God? What does it mean to fast and pray? How do I overcome bitterness? What happens when my prayers are not answered as I'd hoped?*

This book is not just an inspirational or intellectual exercise. Hasel shares part of his personal journey including the tragic loss of his wife to cancer in 2009. When he speaks of praising God, finding reasons to be grateful, and praying while waiting for answers, he's speaking from deep personal experience. This journey has deepened Hasel's own longing for God, and it is this longing in turn that compels him to share with others. 📖

of the Bible are relevant for me? How do I relate to Jesus and His stories in a pluralistic society? How does the Bible relate to other religions? How can women or scientists look at the Bible? Every page includes more than just words. Apart from its excellent images, readers can find useful sidebars, factoids, or didactically color-coded timelines.

Following the introductory section, the editors guide readers through the Bible book by book. All the coverage is not equal in length, and reflects some of the editorial choices regarding importance and (perhaps?) relevance. Leviticus is covered in 13 pages; Genesis gets 43 pages; Isaiah is dealt with in 22 pages; Matthew is given 28 pages.

Predictably, comments in such books as Daniel or Revelation are less extensive and avoid some of the more challenging topics.

All in all, the Alexanders have done a marvelous job of updating a well-loved resource and maintaining its relevance. For those who have a soft spot for books that can be touched and carried, the *Handbook* is a great and accessible resource. While I am not aware of any plans to make this compelling content available in digital format, the publisher may consider this, as it would offer a great way to connect to younger readers who prefer to live in the digital reach of their smartphones. 📖



## REASONABLE APOCALYPTICISM

A Jewish saying goes like this: “If you have a sapling in your hand and they tell you that the Messiah has arrived, first plant the sapling, then go out to greet Him.”

We asked our readers, “As you think about living between now and Jesus’ return, how do you intend to live? How will you reflect Christ’s character in tangible ways?”

Here are some of their responses.—Editors

**Y**ou never know how the sapling will turn out, or how it will grow. Just let it grow and enjoy the outcome.

**BILL, MARYLAND**

**L**ive a life that provokes the curiosity of a question that will afford sharing the secret sauce: the gospel. Then share Christianity’s unique response to meaning, satisfaction, freedom, identity, justice, and hope found only in Jesus.

**CHRIS, MARYLAND**

**L**ive life as if people notice. Even when alone, be the best you can be. Your character will be remembered by the legacy of love and compassion you create. How do I know? I study and write history. Someday we’ll all be history. Make it juicy—and inspiring!

**CHRISTY, ARIZONA**

**A**s a cancer survivor, I consider each day a gift. I try not to waste my time with minor issues. I prefer to focus on Christ’s love, mercy, and truth, and reflect that to as many people as I meet throughout the day.

**CLAUDIA, OREGON**

**L**ive all your moments for the Messiah; then you’re ready to meet Him when He comes.

**DEBBIE, MARYLAND**

**T**he best life is living for Jesus and leaving the results to Him.

**ERIC, MASSACHUSETTS**

**S**ome see the signs of Jesus’ return in the disasters that rock our world. I see signs of Jesus’ return in the acts of bravery and sacrifice done by average people, such as the bravery of teachers who lost their lives trying to protect their students at the high school shooting in Florida.

**HEIDI, TEXAS**

**T**ry to live with no regrets. When I make mistakes, I apologize and try to undo the damage. When I have an opportunity to do something for Christ’s kingdom, I take it. We never know where our modest efforts will do some good.

**KENT, MONTANA**

**I**f I knew Jesus were coming next week, I would not change this week’s plans.

**KERMIT, MARYLAND**



**L**ove God, love my neighbor, and do whatever I can to relieve suffering in the world and promote a relationship with a loving God.

**LUIS**, MEXICO

---

**H**aving grown up Lutheran, I think of a quote attributed to Martin Luther: "There are two days in my calendar: this day and that day." Pray for wisdom in every decision, for guidance for every choice each hour, and over each dollar. Jesus' words, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand," apply. Study, dig deep, and share.

**MICHAEL**, TENNESSEE

---

**P**repare for the final gospel harvest in North America in a way that extends seven generations into the future.

**SKIP**, MISSOURI

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**I** will live for Jesus every day.

**STANLEY**, OKLAHOMA

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## The Two-Mile Radius

**H**ere's a challenge: Park your car in front of your local church and start walking. Limit yourself to a two-mile radius and note what you see and experience.

Odds are you will discover an intricate network of small businesses, parks, residential areas, schools, and community centers. Within each are people. Both individually and together as a community, people in that two-mile radius struggle with an array of challenges, celebrate life in unique ways, and share similar dreams and aspirations.

**THIS IS MORE THAN JUST A GEOGRAPHICAL CALL TO ACTION, IT'S A CHALLENGE FOR ADVENTISTS TO PRACTICE AND MODEL THE MINISTRY OF PRESENCE.**

Now imagine your local church "adopting" that two-mile radius—visiting every business; getting to know the owners and if possible buying their products and services; knocking on every residential door and simply greeting the people; meeting with community leaders and offering your church building for community events; providing tutoring at the schools.

The challenge is to be present within that two-mile radius until every person, business, and organization not only recognizes the presence of Adventists, but appreciates the value they add to their community.

From a missional perspective, the scenario is somewhat challenging for Adventists. We are commissioned to reach the entire world, the entire country, the entire city—which is both biblical and logical.

Thus we struggle at times with "limiting" mission to a smaller area and applying a relational, community-centered approach to it. Yet a biblical model of mission exists that may be helpful.

Jesus left early Christians with a prom-

ise that doubles as a missional model. "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).


Notice the concentric circles that move out like ripples in a pond. Jerusalem is the epicenter, or perhaps the backyard. Judea is the broader area, and Samaria is the neighboring territory. Then—and only then—do we get to "the ends of the earth."

In other words, effective mission begins in our two-mile radius and ripples out from there.

This is more than just a geographical call to action, and it's certainly not a grow-your-church-quick scheme. It's a challenge for Adventists to practice and model the ministry of presence. It involves spending time with people and listening. Most of all, it involves being genuinely interested in people, their unique stories, and their best interests.

Jesus modeled it well. He had unhurried conversation with a woman drawing water from a well, and He attended multiple social events. He met with a Pharisee after dark, and joined two disappointed friends as they walked to Emmaus, allowing them to work out their frustrations and connecting them to a greater reality.

Now it's our turn. As witnesses of what Jesus has done for others, and for us, we extend His ministry in His way to our communities, to our cities, to our nation, and ultimately to the ends of the earth.

It all begins with a simple walk. 

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**Costin Jordache** is director of communication for Adventist Review Ministries and news editor for *Adventist Review*.



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