

# ADVENTIST REVIEW

**JUNE 2018:** APPLYING FILTERS+ TOO STRESSED TO BE BLESSED + IS FACEBOOK MAKING US MEAN? + DADDY'S WORKBENCH + TELLING THE TRUTH + DARE TO BE A DANIEL

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# TRENDING

THE MOST SHARED STORIES ON ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG LAST MONTH:



- 1 Adventist Faces of Longevity
- 2 Once Baptized by the Pope, Italian Banker Is Now a Seventh-day Adventist
- 3 "A Beautiful Church Building Is a Wordless Sermon"
- 4 Adventist Missionary Killed in Papua, Indonesia
- 5 The Bigger Issue Behind Gun Violence



For more, much more, on this issue's theme, *The Mark of the Beast*, go to your AR Online platform, at [adventistreview.org/diggingdeeper](http://adventistreview.org/diggingdeeper)



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BILL KNOTT



## Currency Reform

### IN GOD WE TRUST. ALL OTHERS PAY CASH.

The hand-lettered sign pasted to the gasoline pump outside the Wyoming convenience store had its intended effect. I put my credit card away, searched my wallet in vain for adequate cash, and then drove 50 more miles to the next lonely, windswept exit. They didn't need my business, and I didn't need their attitude.

This small vignette of market wariness probably emerged from real-world losses. Others pumping gas may have driven away without paying; and the store owner was well within his rights to complain about the service fees credit card companies charge vendors. But his response—categorical, distrusting everyone—revealed more about him than it did about those who may have picked his pocket.

It is in the nature of fear to extrapolate from one or two incidents premises that are both unwise and untrue: *"All motorists are likely to steal gas."* *"People driving the interstate in Wyoming think they can get away with anything."* *"New Yorkers are always unfriendly."* *"Church members in \_\_\_\_\_ aren't really committed to the fundamentals of Adventism."* These and numerous other examples of dangerous "categorical" thinking illustrate how easily we slip into the isolating wariness that views even fellow travelers and fellow believers as persons ready to deceive us or eager to

dissuade us. When we give in to the persistent clamoring of our fears, the first casualty is the trust without which our culture—and specifically, this faith movement—cannot and will not thrive.

We too easily forget that there are entire industries built to capitalize on our fear. We hear of a home break-in in a neighboring town, and we hurry to Home Depot or Lowes to purchase extra deadbolts or doorbell cameras. We build high fences along our property lines to keep "their" children out of our yard, and to pretend we need not embrace the changes in our neighborhood. We subtly remind those eager newcomers who join our congregations that Pentecost was a long time ago, and that they shouldn't expect renewal or change in a church as "settled" as ours.

And yes, there are ministries—actually, many of them—who make their name and raise their money by insinuating or actually claiming that the "organized church" is going off the rails, that you can't trust anything that comes from the conference office or the world headquarters. In its more outlandish forms, this fear-based manipulation of believers drives dark conspiracies about Jesuits secretly running the General Conference: more common is the ominous suggestion that your tithe dollars are being wasted by an organization far from you—that you should make your pledges to a ministry led by

*The Lord who frequently admonished His disciples not to be afraid is also calling them today not to be afraid of each other.*

people you "know" better. And yes, cash is welcome.

A culture of distrust is the outcome we may expect from allowing those with dark agendas access to our pulpits and our media. While they hawk their "midnight oil"—*"Buy from me: mine is more pure, from olives pressed in Bethlehem"*—those waiting for the coming of Jesus fall into an exhausted, fitful sleep that makes them even less aware how late the hour really is, how near we are to the Bridegroom's coming.

Trust is the only currency that works in both this world and the next—our trust that the Spirit is living in those who choose to follow Jesus, and our trust that Jesus is still working in and through His end-time church—"the one object upon which God bestows in a special sense His supreme regard."<sup>1</sup> The Lord, who frequently admonished His disciples not to be afraid, is also calling them today not to be afraid of each other.

Extend the hand of welcome. Affirm the integrity of those who give themselves to Jesus. Trust that Jesus is still leading His last-day church, even with its failings; sometimes through its failings.

*"He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him"* (1 John 2:10, NKJV<sup>2</sup>). ♣

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Texts credited to NKJV are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

I appreciated Eric Anderson's view of future of possibilities in the piece "If Time Should Last."

**ARLENE DOWNING**, SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIFORNIA



## **LIVING THE LESS-THAN-ABUNDANT-LIFE**

We enjoyed reading "Living the Less-Than-Abundant Life" (April 2018), by David Abbey. It just warmed our hearts and put smiles on our faces!

**Gerry and Ellen Christman**

## **WHY ARE WE HERE?**

Regarding the article "Why Are We Here?" by Jonathan Burt (March 2018): he quotes 1 Peter 2:9: "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

And what is that light? "And the dragon was wroth with the woman and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:17, KJV). We must never forget who we are. Holding fast to that wonderful established light.

**Robert Rouillard**

*Lakewood, Washington*

## **WOULD LOVE TO KNOW MORE**

I liked reading Adriani Rodrigues' article "Spiritual Change and Growing Understanding" (March 2018). I wanted to know more about the phases of Christ's priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. The article ended too abruptly.

I appreciated Eric Anderson's view of future of possibilities, "If Time Should Last," and his description of land heritage bringing people together.

**Arlene Downing**

*San Luis Obispo, California*

## **STORM WARNINGS**

Time has flown by so quickly from reading the wonderful article "Storm Warnings" in the March 2016 *Review* by Jared Thurmon and Bill Knott. This article is so pertinent for today

as we search for calmness amid the storms of life.

Continue printing such wonderful articles.

**Edna Race**

*Lodi, California*

## **MAKE AMERICA RAKE AGAIN**

While the article "Make America Rake Again" (April 2018) had an interesting thesis, which will no doubt elicit response, one detail troubles me. The author's characterization of millennials as latte drinking, L. L. Bean sweater-buying selfie takers disparages a whole group of people. Surely we have learned by now the potential and real dangers of such generalizations.

Each millennial is a flesh-and-blood human being. Each one has laughed and cried. Each one has his or her own sorrows and joys. All have their own tragedies, victories, and pain. And each individual millennial has the same opportunity for salvation as anyone else. We Christians and Adventists should treat all individuals with respect.

**David Ross**

*Belleville, Ontario, Canada*

## **FOND MEMORIES OF DEL DELKER**

I'm writing to respond to the article "Del Delker Passes Away at 93" with reporting by Stephen



## One of the greatest tributes to this wonderful woman is to hear my 11-year-old grandson say when we get in the car, “Please, Grandpa, can I listen to Del Delker?”

LEO RANZOLIN, SR. ESTERO, FLORIDA

Chavez (April 2018). What a unique voice and life of this beloved contralto and her tremendous impact on the Adventist Church worldwide.

I had the privilege of graduating with her in 1958 from La Sierra College. My father-in-law, R. M. Rabello, pioneer of the Voice of Prophecy in Brazil, was recording programs and he asked me to make announcements. I was able to fellowship with the King’s Heralds and Delker for a couple years.

One day my wife and I traveled with Del from Glendale to La Sierra, and I told her my conversion story.

Del was famous for her vocal ministry, recording in 15 languages. But many people do not know that she was a talented writer and secretary as well. When I retired from the General Conference, she sent me a copy of her biography with another message. I have many notes like “I am looking forward to spending eternity with you sweet people. More than ever, I long for Jesus’ return.” After a General Conference session she wrote, “I hope that the next GC will be in heaven.”

Chavez wrote it well: “For six decades her strong contralto voice unabashedly shared

### IN A FEW WORDS...

#### WHY CHRISTIANS SHOULDN'T LEAVE FACEBOOK

We must go where people are, and not expect them to come to us. There are fewer places better than Facebook to learn what people are really feeling and asking. Our friends are far more likely to listen when they know we really hear. Ultimately, friendships wins hearts. When we know people’s real questions, our conversation will be more relevant.

**Denise Rutledge**, via Web

#### WHAT TO DO WITH MILLENNIALS?

Millennials can see and feel when something is real, and when it isn’t. Their attitude toward the church is an indictment against the quality of our religion. Unlike many of us, they have no time for going through the motions with anything. Many of them have never seen true religion up close.

**Jeremy Vandiemer**, via Web

#### IN GRACE WE TRUST

Thanks to Bill Knott, for his constant reminders of God’s grace. It helps me every time I read them. Never stop!

**Ken Cartwright**, via Web

Christ’s love with rapt audiences around the world.”

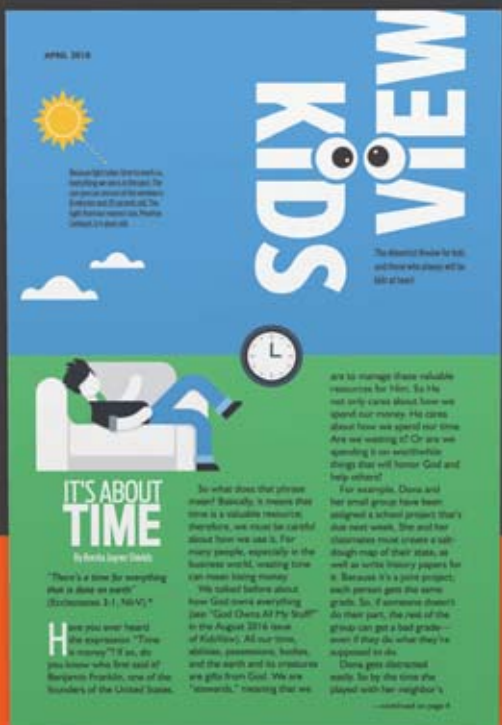
One of the greatest tributes to this wonderful woman is to hear my 11-year-old grandson say

when we get in the car, “Please, Grandpa, can I listen to Del Delker?”

**Leo Ranzolin, Sr.**  
Estero, Florida

### 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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**These young adults consider themselves fans of Jesus but not of the church. Many feel they cannot ask socially pressing questions at church.**

**P. 12**

# NEWS



Juan Prestol-Puesán, General Conference treasurer, giving the financial report at the 2018 Spring Meeting in Silver Spring, Maryland. PHOTO: ANN/BRENT HARDINGE

## SIGNIFICANT ELEMENTS LINE UP FOR POSITIVE FINANCIAL REPORT

**GENERAL CONFERENCE TREASURY STAFF HIGHLIGHT ENCOURAGING TRENDS IN 2017 AT SPRING MEETING.**

BY ADVENTIST REVIEW STAFF

In 2017 the Seventh-day Adventist Church posted a financial gain of US\$1.6 million, said treasury leaders of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (GC) on the opening day of the Spring Meeting of the GC Executive Committee, one of the business meetings of the world church governing body. In a year with financial challenges on several fronts, the church thrived thanks to the faithfulness

of its members, leaders said.

“Twice last year we pointed to the fact that in order to reach a break-even level in our operations, five variables would need to be on our side to make the end result positive,” said world church treasurer Juan Prestol-Puesán. “I am pleased to report that all five came together making our report today a positive one.”

The five elements referenced by

Prestol-Puesán include a positive U.S. financial market, a tithe increase in the North American Division church region, and steady exchange rates in major foreign currencies. It also included an intentional focus on fiscal discipline (that is, holding expenditures down) and maintaining an adequate liquidity level.

### **FINANCIAL MARKETS, TITHE, EXPENSES, AND GIVING PATTERNS**

Prestol-Puesán highlighted specific areas in which church finances did well last fiscal year. “Two thousand seventeen was a positive year for the church’s investments,” he said. The value of church investments increased almost \$8 million more than a year before. While

markets underwent a series of corrections beginning in February 2018, he said prospects for this year remain positive.

Tithe from the North American Division (NAD) region increased more than \$18 million, to \$1.02 billion, shared Prestol-Puesán. The NAD portion is a sizable part of world church total tithe, which in 2017 reached \$2.44 billion. “It helped to end 2017 with a \$1.6 million surplus,” he said. In 2016, the GC had ended with \$1 million in the black

**“I AM HAPPY TO REPORT THAT EXPENSES OF OPERATING THE GENERAL CONFERENCE WERE \$6.1 MILLION UNDER THE CAP AND \$4.5 MILLION UNDER BUDGET.”**

after losing \$19 million in 2015.

Expenses have been decreasing for two consecutive years after an anticipated spike in 2015, the year of the previous GC session. “Travel expenses were under 82.3 percent of the budgeted amount,” revealed Prestol-Puesán, “and headquarters expense

amounted to 87.55 percent of the operating cap limit.”

Prestol-Puesán highlighted other important measurements, such as working capital and financial liquidity. The percentage of liquid assets—those that can be converted into cash quickly—to commitments has increased from 99.42 to 101.92 percent. Working capital, which was 89.2 percent of the recommended amount at the end of 2017, was impacted negatively by a revaluation of a plot of land owned by the GC, which decreased in value from \$11 million to \$6.6 million.

Prestol-Puesán emphasized, however, one measurement that he considers of utmost importance. “Every Sabbath, tithe and mission offerings, adjusted in U.S. dollars, went up from [a weekly average of] \$45 million in 2016 to \$49 million in 2017,” he said. “We are thankful to our members that continue to give generously.”

#### **ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS AND MISSION**

The GC headquarters itself operates on just 2 percent of the gross world tithe, reminded world church undertreasurer Ray Wahlen. He explained that the 2 percent marks the operating cap of its operations, but that expenses came in even under that amount in 2017.

“I am happy to report that expenses of operating the General Conference were \$6.1 million under the cap and \$4.5 million under budget,” said Wahlen.

The GC’s handling of operating

expenses aims to allow the denomination to increasingly support special outreach and evangelistic projects around the world, financial leaders said. A clear example are allocations to the 10/40 Window Contingency Fund. Spring Meeting members voted a special \$2.2 million appropriation to that fund, which supports mission in a region of the world in which most of the population has never heard the Christian message.

#### **GOD’S HAND WAS VISIBLE**

“I realize this year’s report is boring, but in this case, boring is better,” quipped Prestol-Puesán in his closing remarks. He also appealed for church leaders to remember what is, according to him, the most important element in the financial management of the church. “The most important transaction in the church is the gift of a church member,” he said. “When a member gives, this creates a wave of energy around the world.”

At the same time, Prestol-Puesán emphasized that he and his team give all the glory to God for the positive financial results in 2017. “The Lord is helping us, one year at a time,” he said. Prestol-Puesán also quoted God’s promise to Jeremiah, “Call to me, and I will answer you” (Jer. 33:3), and Moses’ words to Israel, “The Lord will fight for you” (Ex. 14:14).

“We believe the Lord has fought for us, and we believe He will. Meanwhile, we will keep striving to do our best,” he said. ▀





Mark Finley presenting morning devotionals at the 2018 General Conference Spring Meeting of the Executive Committee.

PHOTO: ANN/BRENT HARDINGE

## FINLEY: CHURCH SURVIVAL IS GUARANTEED BECAUSE OF GOD'S GRACE

ADVENTIST CHURCH SPRING COUNCIL OPENS WITH A MESSAGE OF ENCOURAGEMENT.

BY ADVENTIST REVIEW STAFF

Despite many challenges, God's church will triumph," said Mark Finley in his devotional message on the opening day of the Spring Meeting, a business meeting of the Executive Committee of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Silver Spring, Maryland, on April 10, 2018. "God's church will rise to its destiny, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."

Finley, a seasoned evangelist and assistant to the world church president, based his message on Matthew 16:15, where Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do you say that I am?"

"This is a question for every heart," Finley said. "It is a question every one of us has to answer." It is something, he acknowledged, that informs members' interactions with God's church.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES

Finley explained that wider contemporary issues present major challenges to a thriving church. "We live in a time of cynicism," he said. "People distrust organizations."

Opposition to church organization transcends ideological approaches, Finley said. "The Far Right and the Far Left have one thing in common: they are united in criticizing the church," he said. "No

matter how conservative you are, there is another person 10 times more conservative than you who will 'shoot' at you."

But going to one extreme or the other is not the answer, he said. "If your religion makes you angrier, there is something wrong with your religion," Finley said. "If your religion makes you tolerant to sin, there is something wrong with your religion."

### THE CHURCH AND ITS MEMBERS

Finley explained that committing to the church does not mean being blind to its shortcomings. "The church is not perfect; there's no doubt that we could do much, much, much better in many areas," he emphasized.

Indeed, part of being a leader is never being content with the present, because Jesus is always leading us to more, Finley said. "If someone would write a book with all the faults of your wife, would you read it and not be ready to defend her?" he asked, referring to publications critical of the church. "The church is Christ's bride," he reminded his listeners.

Finley also observed that the church is not a bureaucratic institution, but is made up of people.

Every believer, he said, is a work in progress. God polishes us until we become what He wants us to be. "The church does not come with stones fully polished," he emphasized. "God is at work to build a temple of truth in which men and women reveal the character of God."

### A COMMITMENT TO CHRIST

No temple of truth is built with one stone, Finley explained. "While Jesus is the foundation, faithful men and women through the ages built upon that." Authentic faith demands a personal response to God's calling, he emphasized. And that commitment is essential to change the world.

"Education, science, military power, formal religion will not change the world. Only Jesus will," Finley said. Changing the world requires one thing: "To know the living Christ, and to be changed by His grace and transformed by His love."

Once we meet Jesus, the church must move forward to accomplish the task set by the Lord Himself. Nothing should distract the church from it, said Finley. "God is appealing to His church not to be so focused on important administrative decisions that overlook the most important thing: preaching the living Christ."

### THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH

According to Finley, the church's survival is guaranteed because of God's grace. Sharing important lessons from Ephesians 5, he reminded that despite its mistakes and weaknesses, Jesus loves His church, and He promises to sanctify and cleanse it. "The future of God's church is glorious," reminded Finley, "because He has promised to present His church blameless."

According to Finley, it is an encouraging thought. "The church of God, the people of God, the truth of God will triumph," he said. ▀



Warm-up activities helped people of all ages attending the Reaching Millennial Generations event at Andrews University to get acquainted and learn about each other.

PHOTO: ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

## WHAT TO DO WITH MILLENNIALS?

**EVENT INCLUDES OPEN INVITATION TO BE PROACTIVE.**

BY MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

For years we have been saying we have a problem with young people and the church,” said Allan Martin during the opening plenary session of the Reaching Millennial Generations event at Andrews University (AU) on April 10, 2018. “Well, we have a problem if we keep repeating that phrase but do nothing about it.”

Martin, a Seventh-day Adventist pastor and researcher, was among the score of presenters and hundreds of people who gathered to network, discuss, and get acquainted with new and proven methods of reaching younger generations for Christ. “We are talking about the largest generation of young adults in human history,” said Martin. “In many senses it’s a generation like no other.”

### OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

For youth leaders, working with millennials can present wonderful opportunities, presenters noted.

“I’m privileged to work with millennials every day of my life, and I know they don’t want business as usual,” said Andrews University president Andrea Luxton in greeting the audience. “We need their creativity, their perspective, their ideas.”

At the same time, relating to millennials presents a unique set of challenges. “How do we reach people who take little pieces of this and that?” wondered Homer Tre-cartin, director of the Adventist Church’s Global Mission centers. “How do you relate to people who think nothing is an absolute in their lives?”

Current developments in technology and society in general have presented challenges never anticipated. “Post-Christian and secular—no doubt, we are living in a very complicated world,” acknowledged Jiří Moskala, dean of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. “Young people are bombarded from every corner.”

But there is a silver lining, Moskala added, as current challenges have triggered essential discussions. “It has led us to reflect on the topic, which is very good,” he said.

Kleber Gonçalves, director of the church’s Center for Secular and Postmodern Studies, agreed. “This is not just a simple event,” he said in a welcoming statement to students and leaders. “It is a platform for dialogue and engagement.”

### FROM PROTEST TO PROACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Martin’s presentation did not sugarcoat challenges to millennials’ engagement in church. He said, “Millennials are asking ‘Does church really matter?’”

These young adults consider themselves fans of Jesus but not of the church. Many feel they cannot ask socially pressing questions at church. Technology gives them answers that seem to make sense, but are not necessarily the truth. “They say, ‘You lost me; you are not making sense to me,’” said Martin. “But if we are going to change the world together, we cannot afford another young person saying, ‘You lost me.’”

Part of the answer, added Martin, is to stop complaining about current challenges and become proactive to empower young adults—defined as post-high school through parenthood—and the ministries that focus on them.

## “Despite what statistics say, it is essential to remember that millennials are not mere numbers but actual people.”

### THREE HANDS-ON SUGGESTIONS

Martin shared three hands-on suggestions that may jumpstart greater engagement and interactions with millennials.

First, he mentioned real dialogue. “We must foster intergenerational relationships with millennials by being willing to discuss science, sexuality, and other hot topics in a non-threatening environment,” he said.

To accomplish this, the influence of older church members is essential. “For millennials, a youth pastor is a paid friend, so it often doesn’t count,” he explained. “They need older meaningful people in their lives who get interested in their activities.” A small, simple act can go a long way to reach them, Martin said. He shared the story of a young millennial, who, when asked why she had stayed and was involved in church when many of her friends had left, told about her experience in a Florida church. Every winter, she said, a group of “snowbirds” attended her home church. As they were preparing to go back north at the end of winter, the women found out that a music concert would take place in church, where young people—including this young woman—would be performing. “The snowbird women changed their [airline] tickets because they said they wanted to support the youth and watch me perform,” the young woman told Martin. “I decided to stay in church because of those women. Thanks to them I am still in church.”

### FORGIVENESS, ACCEPTANCE, AND CONVERSATION

Another element in relating to millennials is showing forgiveness and acceptance. Martin said he is thankful that in many places it is already happening. “Millennials are developmentally in process,” he said. “We must have patience—patience to build relationships before judging them.”

Drawing a parallel with Jesus’ parable of the lost son in Luke 15, Martin said older members should be willing to go the extra mile to reclaim young people who have distanced themselves from the

thing that appeals to millennials. “Taking part in intergenerational mission trips, for instance, is a proven method of creating spaces for meaningful interactions,” Martin said.

### PERSONALIZED PRAYER IS ESSENTIAL

Despite what statistics say, it is essential to remember that millennials are not mere numbers but actual people, said Martin. He invited everyone to think and write down the names of three millennials in their home churches and to pray specifically for each one of them.

Allan Martin, a researcher and teaching pastor at Younger Generation church in Arlington, Texas, invites church members to be proactive in engaging young people in their home churches.

PHOTO: ANDREWS UNIVERSITY



church. “It is the host of the party who chases the elder son and invites him to come back,” he said.

Finally, Martin suggested that older members create spaces for sharing stories. “Starting all your interacting with ‘When I was your age’ is a turnoff,” he said. “A turn-up, on the contrary, is simply replying, ‘Tell me more,’ and being open to listen.”

Talking, however, is not the only

He told of a presentation in one of the church’s world divisions in which he invited people to pray for individual millennials in their home churches. One woman told him, “I can’t recall a single name of a young person I know.”

“It is crucial that we know young people so well that we can pray for their needs and dreams,” Martin concluded. “Prayer will work wonders.”

## NO SAFE LEVEL OF ALCOHOL USE

**ARTICLE COMBINING 83 STUDIES REVEALS INSIGHTFUL DATA ON ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION.**

BY PETER N. LANDLESS  
AND DUANE MCBRIDE



Since 1979, when the French paradox was described (decreased heart attacks in a region of France where individuals ate rich and fatty foods and regularly drank red wine but had decreased heart attacks), scientific literature, popular press, and the alcohol industry have argued that one or two drinks of wine or beer a day is good for heart health.<sup>1</sup> A wide variety of scientific research seemed to indicate that this moderate level of alcohol use was associated with lower risks for a heart attack.<sup>2</sup> The alcohol industry has even advertised its beverages as promoting health.<sup>3</sup> The U.S. Food and Drug Administration appears to recognize that the consumption of one to two alcohol beverages per day is a part of a healthful diet.<sup>4</sup> While the World Health Organization does not recognize any health benefits of alcohol,<sup>5</sup> most nations of the world consider up to two alcoholic drinks per day as being of no risk, and even as promoting good heart health.<sup>6</sup>

A few scientists did publish research articles that showed lifelong alcohol consumption associated with increased risks of death, but the apparent weight of evidence was thought to be in favor of the health benefits of moderate levels of alcohol consumption. Adventists were often virtually alone in standing against the “obvious” scientific evidence of the health benefits of moderate alcohol use. Some Adventists still question the church’s position of alcohol abstinence.

An article that appeared recently in *The Lancet*,<sup>7</sup> a respected medical journal, examined 83 studies that followed drinkers and nondrinkers during a long time period. About 600,000 individuals were followed in these studies. The large number of subjects, the quality of the research, and the scientific quality of the integration of these 83 studies was considered conclusive by this

medical journal, rated one of the best scientific journals in the world.

A number of important findings emerged. First, they did find that moderate levels of alcohol use (one to two drinks a day) was associated with lower levels of myocardial infarction (heart attack). That confirms much of what the scientific literature, popular press, and the alcohol industry have touted for years. However, they found that the consumption of as little as five to six servings of an alcoholic beverage (100 grams of alcohol) per week was related to higher levels of death from all causes, all types of cardiac diseases (except myocardial infarctions), stroke, fatal hypertensive disease, heart failure, and fatal aortic aneurysm. The authors of the study concluded that the consumption of 196 grams a week (almost two drinks a day) compared to 100 grams or less (a bit less than one drink a day) would decrease the average life span of a 40-year-old male by one to two years.

Researchers made a number of important policy recommendations. They concluded that international recommendations for safe alcohol consumption be reduced to five to six servings of beer or wine per week—less than one glass a day. In most of the world, as they note, the consumption of two or three glasses a day is seen as nonharmful and even having health benefits. They conclude those recommendations are not supported by science.

They further note that “there is no clear risk threshold below which lower alcohol consumption stopped being associated with lower disease risk.” In other words, not drinking, or abstaining, appears to be associated with the lowest level of overall disease and mortality risk. There really is no safe level of alcohol use. This same conclusion has been drawn from large studies looking at the cancer-causing propensity



and properties of alcohol. The compelling message is that no recommendation can be made in favor of alcohol use as regarding safety from cancer of various types (including breast and bowel cancer).

In recent years the Seventh-day Adventist Church has often stood almost alone in its position that alcohol is one of the most life- and health-destroying beverages in existence. This despite the fact that it is one of the leading causes of preventable death. Alcohol use ac-

**NOT DRINKING, OR ABSTAINING, APPEARS TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH THE LOWEST LEVEL OF OVERALL DISEASE AND MORTALITY RISK.**

counts for significant levels of societal and individual harms, even at what have been called safe levels. The best and most recent scientific research now has documented the significant number of years of life lost by those who drink at even recommended levels, and the fact that there really is no safe level of alcohol use! <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24582196

<sup>2</sup> time.com/4899823/

moderate-drinker-alcohol-health-benefits/

<sup>3</sup> www.eatdrinkpolitics.com/wp-content/uploads/AlcoholHealthClaimsReportSimon.pdf

<sup>4</sup> https://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/appendix-9/

<sup>5</sup> www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/disease-prevention/alcohol-use/data-and-statistics/q-and-a-how-can-i-drink-alcohol-safely

<sup>6</sup> www.iard.org/policy-tables/drinking-guidelines-general-population/

<sup>7</sup> This article is not yet available to the public.

**Peter N. Landless** is executive director of the International Commission for the Prevention of Alcoholism and Drug Dependency (ICPA). **Duane McBride** is executive director of the Institute for the Prevention of Addictions (IPA).

## ANIMAL AND PLANT PROTEINS ARE NOT THE SAME

COMPREHENSIVE STUDIES SHOW THE FORMER INCREASES THE RISK OF HEART DISEASE; THE LATTER REDUCES IT.

BY JAMES PONDER, LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY NEWS

**A** study conducted by researchers in California and France has found that meat protein is associated with a sharp increased risk of heart disease, while protein from nuts and seeds is beneficial for the human heart.

The study, which was published online in early April 2018 by the *International Journal of Epidemiology*, found that people who consumed large amounts of meat protein experienced a 60 percent increase in cardiovascular disease (CVD), while people who consumed large amounts of protein from nuts and seeds experienced a 40 percent reduction in CVD.

Titled “Patterns of Plant and Animal Protein Intake Are Strongly Associated With Cardiovascular Mortality: The Adventist Health Study-2 Cohort,” the study was a joint project of researchers from Loma Linda University School of Public Health in California and AgroParisTech and the Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique in Paris, France.

The study, which included data from more than 81,000 participants, is one of the few times detailed sources of animal protein have been examined jointly with animal fat in a major investigation.

Gary Fraser, from Loma Linda University, and François Marriotti, from AgroParisTech and the Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique, served as coprincipal investigators.

“While dietary fats are part of the story in affecting risk of cardiovascular disease, proteins may also have important and largely overlooked independent effects on risk,” Fraser said. He added that he and his colleagues have long suspected that including nuts and seeds in the diet protects against heart and vascular disease, while red meats increase risk.

Fraser went on to say that nutritionists have traditionally looked toward what he termed “bad fats” in meats and “helpful fats” in nuts and seeds as causal agents. However, these new findings suggest more. “This new evidence suggests that the full picture probably also involves the biological effects of proteins in these foods,” he said.

Fraser says the team’s research differed in another significant way from previous investigations. While prior studies have examined differences between animal and plant proteins, this study did not stop at just two categories, but chose to specify meat protein and proteins from nuts and seeds along with other major dietary sources. “This research is suggesting there is more heterogeneity than just the binary categorization of plant protein or animal protein,” Fraser said.

Fraser said the study leaves other questions open for further investigation, such as the particular amino acids in meat proteins that contribute to CVD. Another is whether proteins from particular sources affect cardiac risk factors such as blood lipids, blood pressure, and being overweight, which are associated with CVD. <sup>8</sup>



Several members of the Adventist Radio London team

TRANS-EUROPEAN DIVISION NEWS

## ADVENTIST RADIO LONDON GOES LIVE

**STATION WILL FOCUS ON REACHING MILLENNIALS AND SECULAR PEOPLE.**

BY SAM DAVIES, TRANS-EUROPEAN DIVISION NEWS

London residents now have a brand-new radio choice, a station that unashamedly shares the good news of Jesus Christ.

Following months of planning, preparation, and testing, Adventist Radio London (ARL) went live on digital audio broadcasting (DAB) on Sunday, April 8, 2018, with a “Sunday Breakfast” show hosted by two of its millennial presenters, Lynette Allcock and Sam Gungalloo.

On April 7, 2018, in anticipation of going live, the Brixton Seventh-day Adventist Church hosted a dedication service and a time of prayer. The service attracted visitors from across London.

ARL director Michael Hamilton emphasized the purpose of the radio station to “share the everlasting gospel commissioned to this church with the multicultural population of London, with emphasis on millennials, empowering them to make Christ their choice.”

Addressing the congregation, South England Conference (SEC) president Emmanuel Osei read from Romans 1:16, quoting the apostle Paul: “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto

salvation” (KJV). He likened London to the ancient city of Rome, which he said was a city of intellectuals, yet a city in which every grotesque thing was practiced. God wants to touch lives in such places, he said.

Paul longed to preach the gospel in Rome, even though he knew he could face death there. Osei noted that Rome was never an easy place to win souls for Jesus Christ. The same as London, he said, described by some as a secular and difficult place to share the gospel. However, he added, “We are also called to proclaim the Adventist message unashamedly to Londoners because God has given us the means to do so through Adventist Radio London.”

Ofcom, the governing body for issuing broadcast licenses in the United Kingdom, granted the license to ARL in August 2017, much earlier than expected, when preparations were still being made to build a studio. Subsequently, the conference recruited a core team of seven individuals who now produce, present, and manage the programming. Many others voluntarily contribute time and talent to the production of

high-quality programs that will share the good news in engaging ways.

The dedication signaled only a “soft launch,” since the station is still under development. Hamilton nevertheless encouraged listeners to tune in on DAB in the Greater London area, or via various radio apps such as “TuneIn” from the Adventist Radio London Web site ([www.adventistradio.london](http://www.adventistradio.london)), or its dedicated Facebook page. ARL also intends to use major social media platforms to connect with its audience.

The ARL mission statement is based on the method and model of Christ’s ministry. Hamilton said, “Adventist Radio London will unashamedly extend the teaching, preaching, and healing ministries of Christ to the diverse millennial mind-set of London, discipling them to wholistic living and knowing Jesus their Savior, the only hope for humanity.”

Support from the world headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and generous funding from Adventist World Radio, helped the station come to fruition. Collaboration with AWR also provided equipment to get the studio ready for broadcasting and production.

Former SEC media director Vili Costescu and the SEC media team were recognized as being instrumental in the initial stages of obtaining the DAB license and setting the vision for the station, a vision fully and enthusiastically embraced by the South England Conference team to make God known in London. ▀



### EUROPEAN COMMUNICATORS EVENT SHOWCASES POWER OF SYNERGY.

Approximately 120 participants from 20 countries met for the Global Adventist Internet Network (GAIN) Europe Conference in the Spanish city of Canet, Valencia. The event was a joint venture between the Inter-European Division and the Trans-European Division. Presenters highlighted efforts by Adventist communicators to innovate for the sake of mission. A unique aspect of GAIN Europe is the chapter's annual collaborative project, voted on by attendees and implemented synergistically over the next year.



### GENERAL CONFERENCE CORPORATION BOARD REVIEWS AND REFINES INVESTMENT PRACTICES.

The General Conference Corporation board—the property-holding body of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists—met on March 20, 2018, to review and refine current investment practices of the General Conference. The board reaffirmed its “current investment restrictions for companies involved with or in the following industries: alcohol, tobacco, gambling, pornography, meat products, and caffeinated beverages.” The board also discussed investment policies and practices involving companies manufacturing and selling weapons. Read the full story at [AdventistReview.org/GCInvestments](http://AdventistReview.org/GCInvestments).



### PSYCHIATRIST ELECTED AS ADVENTIST HEALTH MINISTRIES ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR.

A psychiatrist from Norway with a heart for the outdoors has been elected Health Ministries associate director for the Seventh-day Adventist world church. On April 11, 2018, Torben Bergland, Trans-European Division health ministries director, was tapped for his new role during Spring Meeting at the denomination headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States. He will replace Fred Hardinge, who retires this summer.



### ADVENTISTS IN BANGLADESH HOST FIRST AUTISM AWARENESS EVENT.

Adventist Church leaders and members in Bangladesh organized a region-wide campaign to celebrate World Autism Day. Students and staff from Adventist schools across the country, as well as leaders from the Bangladesh Adventist Union Mission, hosted parades, organized community discussions, and visited families of autistic children. Approximately 300 individuals united in an effort to raise local awareness and offer much-needed support for special-needs families in partnership with the Society for the Welfare of Autistic Children.



### RACE, PROTEST, AND ADVENTIST LEADERSHIP ADDRESSED IN NEW

**BOOK.** Andrews University Press has published a landmark new book on the subject of race relations in various areas of Adventist life. Written by retired Adventist leader Calvin Rock, the book is entitled *Protest and Progress: Black Seventh-day Adventist Leadership and the Push for Parity*. Rock is a former president of Oakwood University, former chair of the Loma Linda University board of trustees, and retired General Conference vice president who approaches the topic from sociological, theological, and philosophical perspectives.



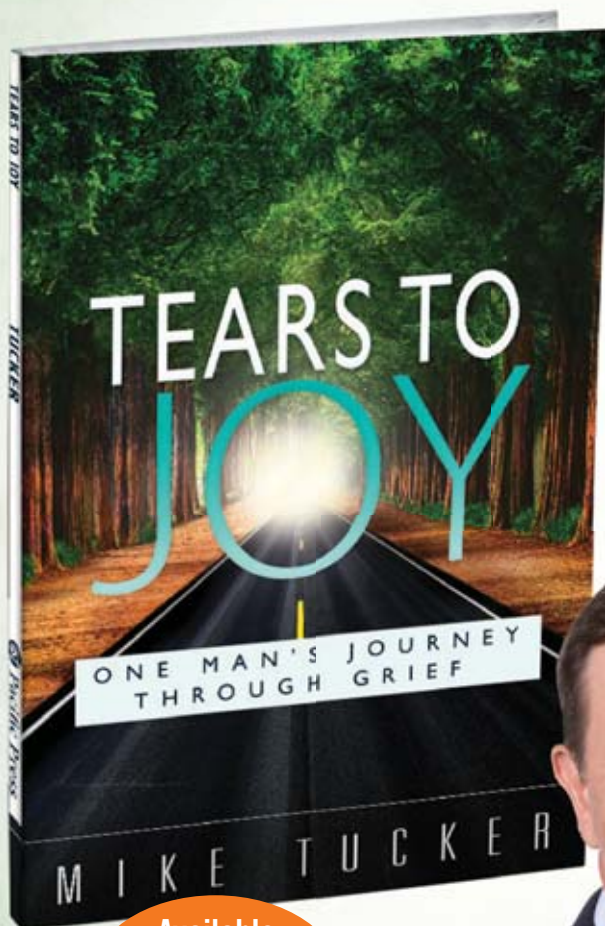
### PACIFIC UNION COLLEGE INSTALLS NEW PRESIDENT.

On April 20, 2018, Pacific Union College in Angwin, California, conducted an inauguration ceremony that officially installed Robert A. Cushman, Jr., as the school's twenty-third president. Cushman, who has spent the past 26 years teaching in Adventist educational institutions, received his bachelor's degree in biology at Walla Walla College (now University), his master's degree in geology at Loma Linda University, and his Ph.D. in geology from the Colorado School of Mines. He succeeds Eric Anderson, who was serving as interim president.

# Inspiring, Restoring, & Building Faith for those who grieve

## A New Book By Mike Tucker

*Mike Tucker details his journey through grief after the loss of Gayle, his wife and ministry partner of 40 years. In sharing his story, Mike also highlights research and material that he found helpful and reliable in the process of recovery. It's all about finding hope in the midst of sorrow.*



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## TELLING THE TRUTH

*Exploring the many facets of being honest*

**W**ith Twitter and other social media forms now connecting our globe in instantaneous communication, fact-checking or information verification is a much needed and growing industry. Its processes regularly surface in the presence of baseless assertions, filtered opinions, doctored statistics, alternative facts, biased propaganda, “fake news,” and an increasing insensitivity to white lies.

That last category came starkly to the public’s attention with a recent admission by Hope Hicks, then White House communication secretary. In a hearing before the House Intelligence Committee (Feb. 27, 2018), she admitted to telling such lies on behalf of the nation’s president.

That Hicks resigned the very next day generated considerable speculation regarding her “post-admission”



**CALVIN B. ROCK**

relationship with Mr. Trump. While the White House may have regarded her statement as an unforced error, her confession was an accurate, if naive, accounts generally reported about White House operations, and more important, the public's own penchant for tweaking information to fit desired outcomes.

Hicks' performance, and the political stir it caused, highlight a number of pertinent considerations with respect to truth-telling. Prominent among these is the question of whether lying in any form is ever justified, even the kindly regarded white lie.

### **INDIVIDUAL RESPONSE**

Theologians, philosophers, and social ethicists, those most likely to answer questions such as this, respond differently. Notwithstanding their varied backgrounds and approaches, their answers usually position them in one of two mutually exclusive belief patterns: those who hold that under no circumstance is a lie justified, and those who believe that there are situations in which lying is allowed. Those who believe that lying is never justified, even a "little bit," are said to embrace "moral absolutism." Those who hold that lying is justifiable when it is beneficial to desired ends are known to practice moral relativism.

For moral absolutists a lie is any statement or act that differs from literal facts or actual states of being. For them the truth unswervingly conforms to those realities. Moral relativism insists that right actions are properly guided, not by truth derived from absolute authority (as do absolutists), but by circumstances. For its followers, there is no final truth, and that which does exist is justifiably disposable if it is hostile to desired ends.

All of which reminds us that the tenants of both absolutism and relativism are skewed by perverse freedoms. Relativism, untethered to absolute authority, possesses unaccountable license to choose in matters of moral dilemma. And absolutism, because of its oft-repeated "God said it, and I believe it, and that settles it for me," functions as an excuse for avoiding the often-painful process of decision making, absolving one from trying to understand why, when, to whom God spoke, and how those principles involved should be applied in modern settings.

Most Christians fashion their actions by the transcendent laws and principles of divine authority and strive to avoid intentional lying. Nevertheless,

even committed believers are sometimes susceptible to bending and breaking the boundaries of truth as seen in their indulging in such common inconsistencies as "Come right in; I'm very happy to see you." "That was a wonderful meal; I really enjoyed it." "It's been years, and you haven't changed at all." "I'll be praying for you." "I look forward to seeing you soon." Even "I really enjoyed the sermon!"

The shades of dishonesty conveyed by verbal and nonverbal statements such as these effectively move the needle of concern from the troubled individuals seen on the evening news to our own individual struggles for truthfulness. Most Christians are absolutist in their regard for duty in "truth-telling." But that is not to say that they are absolutely faithful in doing so.


### **OUR CORPORATE RESPONSE**

Then there is the matter of corporate truth telling. Is a congregation telling the truth when it advertises itself as a refuge where the honest in Babylon can escape its sins, but tolerates the very lifestyles its teaching condemns, as a result of its unwillingness to discipline its members? Is it telling the truth when congregations issue membership reports that include names (sometimes hundreds of them) accumulated over years, even decades, of persons who have long since apostatized?

What about reports of a world membership of 20 million without current and rigorous membership audits? Are Adventist preachers being morally absolute in our public evangelism when, attempting to be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves," they present themselves as "interdenominational" or provide evasive answers in response to honest inquiries?

These and similar considerations are not the only challenges to individual and corporate truth telling in the Christian community. Even more challenging and thought-provoking is telling the truth in the face of loss, including the possible loss of someone's life, or even one's own life. The difficulty for absolutists is that conscious lying, even under such dire consequences as these, is never an option.

What then are our options? Surely the God of mercy who devised a way to deliver fallen humanity from the dire consequences of sin is not pleased with ethical codes resulting in moral repugnance.



**Most Christians are absolutist in their regard for duty in “truth-telling.” But that is not to say that they are absolutely faithful in doing so.**

On the other hand, the God of justice, whose restoration effort required the life of His Son, has not left us to obey moral commands grounded in the fickle quirks of circumstance.

#### **THE ETHICS OF RESTORATION**

By what ethic, then, do Christians avoid the unseemly consequences of literalistic compliance to “turn not to the left hand nor to the right,” without drifting into the humanistic ways of unscriptural relativism?

The answer is a third and morally superior category: the ethic of restoration. By restorationism we mean morality fashioned by the seminal purpose that motivated and embodied the earthly ministry of Christ. In the words of Ellen White: “To restore in man the image His Maker, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created,”<sup>1</sup> was Christ’s mantra and should be for His followers “the great object of life” itself.

Guided by this belief, we see that Christ’s actions, while informed by absolute principles, were never subjected to the tyranny of literalism. His decisions

were inspired neither by implacable facts nor shifting circumstances, but rather the unshakable purpose of restoration (rehabilitation) of individual and corporate humanity.

In carrying out His mission, He worked on the Sabbath by healing the sick; He minimized and even withheld sought-after facts, as when He refused to tell His disciples the whole truth about coming events. He repeatedly departed from the absolutist script of the Pharisees in His compassionate ministry of hope and healing. It is especially enlightening to note that while He attributed murder and lust to thought, not simply overt display, He at times approved, as moral, such gaps of formalized propriety as when Mary tenderly washed His feet (Luke 7:36-50). On the other hand, at the peril of His life, He responded to feckless Pilate regarding His identity with full, factual, even self-incriminating disclosure. His actions were always consistent with the individual and corporate good of those whom He had come to save. Circumstances did not give birth to His principles; but they were critical to the manner in which He utilized them.



## When certainty seems illusive “it is better to err on the side of mercy than on the side of severity.”

It is also plausible, I believe, to interpret, as well, various Old Testament incidents—Jochebed hiding Baby Moses and involving her daughter, Miriam, in the deceptive scheme (Ex. 2:1-10); Tamar’s disguising herself in order to obtain justice (Gen. 38:8-30); Jael’s destruction of Sisera (Judges 4:17-24)—as neither absolutist nor relativistic, but rather restorationist.

Restorationism as a moral ethic is superior to both absolutism and relativism in that it is tuned to the Godhead’s purposes in the warfare between good and evil. It anchors in the fact that humanity’s fall from its original status is tied to the first lie, and regards any act that is harmful to God’s purposes as perpetuating deceit, while those that are consistent with those purposes are “telling the truth.” Further, that in acting upon this ethical premise one’s question should be not simply “What did God say?” but “What was, and is, God doing?”

Restoration ethics sees the words “lying lips are an abomination to the Lord” as speaking plainly to God’s repulsion for false, life-depreciating intentions (verbal or nonverbal). It regards the second part of that statement, “but those who deal truthfully are His delight” (Prov. 12:22, NKJV),<sup>2</sup> as emphasizing His distinct pleasure in actions calculated to lift humanity toward its original ideal in Eden.

### PRACTICAL GUIDES

We have to understand that examples of duty by dedicated persons in the Bible are not to be viewed as “codes” referenced and duplicated with frozen exactitude, but rather as examples or “cases” describing principles to be identified and applied in contemporary society. The question is not “What did Jesus and the other stalwarts of Scripture do?” but, given the principles that guided their actions, “What would they do in a given situation today?” Examples include Paul’s advising the return of the

runaway slave (Philemon 8-13) and Ellen White’s counsel to disobey the Fugitive Slave Law.

We have to understand that principles, though absolute, frequently clash, often requiring difficult choices. A dinner guest, pressed by the host to try another dish, or more of the same, must choose between principles of temperance and common courtesy. Similarly, individuals who have promised financial aid to a needy family, then discovering that to do so would severely cripple their own family unit, must choose between principles of promise keeping and self-preservation.

We have to understand that motives, not “ends” or “means,” best qualify the morality of our actions: “Every act is judged by the motives that prompt it.”<sup>3</sup>

We have to understand that proper morality tests its motives by the twin spheres of God’s character: justice and mercy. When certainty seems illusive, “it is better to err on the side of mercy than on the side of severity.”<sup>4</sup>

We have to understand the significance of all three elements of one’s moral machinery—our “desiring appetites” (see Gal. 5:16, 17), our “deliberating reason” (see Isa. 1:18), and our “deciding will” (see Rom. 7:18, 19). All of these must be consecrated to God. Further, we must understand that while all three are critical to proper morality, the will is decision’s most critical component. In the words of Ellen White: “Everything depends on the right action of the will.”<sup>4</sup>

So how do we know whether our performance has satisfied this formula? Actually, we do not, at least we don’t always know. We have no physical Urim and Thummim to indicate divine will and regard. Our gracious Lord will soon let us know that we have done our best. Meanwhile, our greatest comfort is derived from the assurance gained by the study of God’s Word. By this means our understandings and perceptions are continuously enhanced and primed to act truthfully in the small, as well as large, decisions of life. 📌

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1903, 1952), pp. 15, 16.

<sup>2</sup> Bible texts credited to NKJV are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>3</sup> Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn. 1941), p. 316.

<sup>4</sup> Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 294.

<sup>5</sup> Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 47.

**Calvin B. Rock** has a degree in ethics and has served the church as a university president and General Conference vice president.



# TOO STRESSED TO BE BLESSED

I shook my head, struggling to clear the cobwebs from my tired brain. *C'mon, Jill, you've got work to do. Focus!* My eyes burned as the words blurred in front of me. *You're too young to feel like this!* Taking a deep breath, I began to tackle the next project.

So many deadlines. So much to do. So little time. Well-meaning friends and family had cautioned me, "Be careful, Jill. You've got to rest too, you know." I always smiled and thanked them for their care, but the truth was that I didn't know how to stop. *How do you say you can't do it all? Wasn't that admitting failure?*

The pressure never came from anyone but me. My boss told me to relax, to take some time off. But all I saw were the deadlines, the unanswered letters, the e-mails, and the programs to record. *When would they get done? If I took time off, there would be more when I returned. Better get at it now.* So I kept going, hoping that tomorrow would be better, that I'd somehow be able to accomplish more. The nights grew shorter and began to be filled with dreams of work, of projects, and of deadlines—things I had somehow forgotten. *Would it ever stop?*

In the mornings I kept my time with Jesus, but it was different after a while. Thoughts of work intruded into that sacred space, and I couldn't seem to find Him anymore. Little things irritated me. Another phone call, an interruption at work, something that took my time when I could be working. *I didn't have time for this!*

One particularly long week we were in the middle of recording some programming. I dragged myself into work after spending most of the night in study for the program, as well as dealing with some pressing deadlines. Sitting on the set before we started, I quietly read my Bible. *God, will You speak to me? Please?*

Suddenly an older gentleman turned to me and began to talk. About overwork and burnout. About his own experience and the lessons he learned in life about balance and letting go. Every word seared itself upon my mind. Jumping up, I ran to a little room and closed the door, prostrating myself before my Father in heaven. *God, I need You. I can't make it on my own. I can't do it anymore. I'm through. Finished.*

*Whatever You want for me, whatever You want from me, I'm Yours. I'll do anything, go anywhere, be whatever You want.*

I waited, my heart trembling. Suddenly I felt Him. His peace. His presence. His power.

What had I been lacking before? Jesus. From that day to this, there is still busyness, still obligations. But I now have Someone on whom to depend. Someone to trust. Someone to carry the load.

And *He* makes all the difference! 

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**Jill Morikone** is general manager for 3 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



JUMPING UP, I RAN  
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AND CLOSED THE  
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# IS FACEBOOK MAKING US **MEAN?**

## SOCIAL MEDIA: THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT.

SARI FORDHAM

In his famous *Atlantic Monthly* essay “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” Nicholas Carr argued that the Internet was rewiring our brains and making us less capable of long, sustained reading experiences. Our brains wanted to jump from link to link, not settle down with *War and Peace*.

That was 2008. Now it’s 2018, and Carr’s arguments seem both overly concerned and prescient. In the past 10 years bookstores haven’t disappeared. And millennials—who grew up with the Internet—actually read more books than those of us over 30. Nevertheless, through social media the Internet has significantly transformed the way we communicate with each other: we’re more likely to get our news from social media than our local newspaper; we’re more likely to know what an acquaintance from high school ate for supper than the details of our neighbor’s health (unless, of course, our neighbor is also our Facebook friend); we’re more likely to get into a back-and-forth with a friend’s outspoken uncle than argue with our spouse. These are exciting times. We can sit for hours and look at a screen.

### A LINK TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Social media is prevalent, and it is changing us. It is changing me. Yet I have an uncool confession to make: I love Facebook, even as I work on drawing boundaries.

I grew up as a missionary kid in Uganda and Kenya, and as an adult I have lived in Thailand, South Korea, Uganda, Austria, and the United States. My life has been a series of awkward hellos and sorrowful goodbyes. Then along came Facebook, a party for introverts, populated by some of my favorite people from around the globe. I can check in with friends from Thailand or swap news with classmates from Minnesota; and sometimes my Minnesota friends and my Thai friends interact, and I think I will swoon from the happiness of it all. My 30 minutes on Facebook turns into an hour and a half; then I have problems (more on that, later).

If Facebook was important in my life before having a child (it was), its value was amplified after my daughter, Kai, was born. My husband, Bryan, and I live far from our families, but through Facebook Kai’s grandparents get to participate in the small moments of her day. They can see pictures of the worms she has dug up, read transcripts of conversations we have had with her, and watch videos my husband occasionally takes and shares.

The last video Bryan posted was of Kai praying a singsongy prayer she had learned in preschool. In Tennessee my sister Sonja responded: “We keep watching this, or rather I keep watching this as I share it with each person in the family. She prays the best prayers!” I read the comment to Kai, and she smiled a shy smile.

Beyond connecting Kai to her faraway family, Facebook gives me a village. Parenting is hard. I can type a question into that rectangle at the top of my newsfeed, and the advice will come.

### A MULTITUDE OF COUNSELORS

The first time I took a business trip—traveling to Minnesota to teach a writing workshop for ministers—Kai was a baby and still nursing. We had assumed that in my absence she would adjust to formula. She did not.



## There are new ways to communicate, and they carry with them new responsibilities and new repercussions.

After talking to my husband on the phone and nearly weeping from anxiety, I turned to Facebook: “Hypothetically, if a 7-month-old baby refuses formula and is away from her mother for a week, what options are there? Solids and water? Juice?”

My question quickly garnered 34 responses, as family members, friends, and acquaintances chimed in. Most gave advice:

“La Leche League may be able to connect you with donor milk”

“Maybe disguising the formula by mixing it with solids?”

“Try goat’s milk?”

“Mashed avocado.”

Others offered support: “Sounds like a clear choice for real food. Go, Kai.”

“Praying for you and for her.”

“She’ll be fine. It’s hard, but you guys are doing great.”

I took slow, full breaths. *We are doing great. We are being prayed for. Kai is making empowered choices. Something will work out.* I picked up the essays for my afternoon class and reviewed them with a pen. Kai eventually started taking formula by spoon and each day ticked past, joyful by turns and hard. Through it all I felt sustained by a community of mothers. They were the hands and feet of Jesus.

At its best Facebook is this type of community.

At its worst it’s one long argument. Some evenings my smart husband sits on the couch and reads about California native plants, as I get into pointless arguments on Facebook. A week later he’s planting desert mallow while I’m stewing about the (obviously wrong) opinions others hold on guns, women’s ordination, universal health care, or the Oxford comma.

Sometimes, especially since the 2016 presidential election in the United States, it feels as if Facebook has revealed just how little Seventh-day Adventists

have in common. Or maybe it has revealed how little we trust each other to ethically arrive at opinions. Our discussion skills, honed through years of Sabbath School classes, are brought out as we attempt to “win” a quarrel. After much research I can report that there is no winning an argument on Facebook. You can lose, though. You can lose your time, your kindness, and your credibility.

### OUR UNREALITY

In addition to the ways we argue on Facebook, the site creates unrealistic expectations. We see other people living bright and relaxing lives. They take interesting trips, eat great food, and have wonderful relationships. Why can’t our lives be as full? But of course, everyone curates their Facebook posts. I certainly do. If I need to talk through personal problems, I turn to my family. When I photograph my kid, I tilt the camera so that the clutter is out of the frame.

Life is complicated; and while my connections on Facebook are genuine, I purposely cut away from the messiest corners of my life because Facebook doesn’t feel like the right forum. I’m also bored by my repetitive feelings of failure. In the evening, when I once again haven’t accomplished all I had hoped to, my daughter, Kai, might say something funny, and I will sprint for the computer and transcribe it to Facebook. Life, I tell myself, is more than a to-do list.

After Kai’s asleep, I’ll check to see if anyone has responded to her monologue. Once I’m logged onto Facebook, I might get into a conversation. I might scroll through my newsfeed and read articles friends have posted. Then I’ll realize that more time has passed than I intended, and I still need to grade papers and plan lessons. Perhaps I’ll feel like a failure because I waste too much time on social media.

Facebook makes money from ads, and the longer we spend on their platform, the more ads they can sell. The site is designed to keep us there, connecting, yes, but also gazing at a screen when we should be out participating in all the nonvirtual activities that make up a life.

### TO CONNECT, OR TO DISCONNECT?

So where does that leave us? Where does that leave me?

I could close my Facebook account. Many people do. Others take social media breaks—for



months or years. One Facebook friend wrote that avoiding the site for even a few days created clarity around how much time she was wasting.

Right now I value the Facebook connection I have created between my daughter and our faraway families. Instead of closing my account, I'm choosing to pay more attention to my use. I'm protecting existing boundaries and drawing new ones.

First, I don't have social media apps on my phone. When I'm away from my computer, I'm away from Facebook and Twitter. This works for me.

Second, I'm resolving to avoid Facebook arguments. If I find myself trying to "win" a discussion, I'm going outside. Our desert mallow is blooming and covered with bees. I might cut a few stems and put them in a vase. Here are two truths: God's world is beautiful, and no one is changing their mind during a Facebook argument.

Third, I want to draw boundaries around how much time I spend on the platform. I've noticed I get drawn in after my daughter is in bed. A quick peek turns into an hour. Instead of an abstract glance, I will give myself 30 minutes to check in, then I will return to work, or I will read, or I will socialize in person.

Finally, I want to lean into what I love about Facebook. I log onto the site because

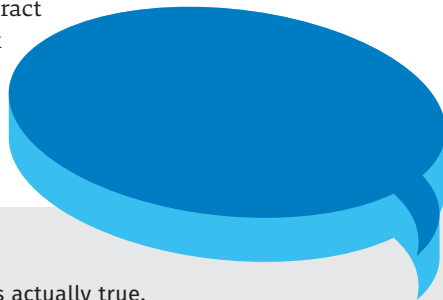
I want to connect with friends and family. To that end, I want to write more personal comments on others' posts and in general be a more active participant.

Facebook and other social media platforms have rightfully drawn scrutiny. They are new ways to communicate, and they carry with them new responsibilities and new repercussions. We are wise to consider whether or not we benefit from having an account. (Maybe we don't!) If we keep our accounts, we can be mindful of how we use them. Facebook doesn't have to make us mean.

In the end, for me it boils down to this: When I'm on Facebook, am I being kind? Am I being fair? Am I being true? 🍌

\* Adrienne LaFrance, "Millennials Are Outreading Older Generations," *The Atlantic*, Sept. 10, 2014, [www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/09/millennials-are-out-reading-older-generations/379934](http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/09/millennials-are-out-reading-older-generations/379934), accessed Apr. 17, 2018.

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## How to Post Responsibly

Before posting, research whether a story is actually true.

Facebook is filled with richly detailed warnings about kidnapping and human trafficking. Both are serious issues, but the warnings posted to Facebook are often false, feeding misinformation and hysteria. Before sharing a story, visit Snopes.com (a Web site that tracks urban legends) and see whether there is any merit to it. In the same way, research all alarming claims before sharing them.

**Evaluate Sources.** If a headline makes you upset, consider the source. Is it from a reputable organization? Web sites such as Addicting Info (liberal slant) or Infowars (conservative slant) run sensational stories designed to create anger and drive traffic to their Web sites. Don't promote their false outrage. If a news story concerns you, it deserves further investigation. See how other news sites are reporting the event. Be wary of conspiracies. We'll be more effective Christian witnesses if we are critical thinkers in all areas of our lives. This has always been true; social media just gives us more opportunities to demonstrate discernment.

**Become Familiar With Satirical Sites:** Satire provides social commentary through invention. The Onion, the Borowitz Report, and NearlyAdventist are all satirical sites. Share for fun, but don't take the headlines literally.

**Don't Post Because You Feel Guilty:** Memes that say "Share if You Love Jesus" or "One Share = One Prayer" exploit your faith. They might also be involving you in a "like-farm" scam. These types of memes are created to gather likes, shares, and comments and then the page is sold. Ignore memes that ask you to prove you're a Christian. Instead, write directly about your faith. Authenticity is attractive.

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# APPLYING FILTERS

For the past seven years I've been systematically integrating the Conflict of the Ages series via the Ellen G. White iPhone app with my digital Bible.

So far I've read *The Desire of Ages*, *The Acts of the Apostles*, and *Patriarchs and Prophets*. The last 12 chapters of *Patriarchs and Prophets* cover the life of David.

As I wrapped up my study, a thought began to percolate: How did David go from a man whose conscience was bothered by cutting off a piece of King Saul's robe (1 Sam. 24:5) to someone who consciously slept with one of his soldier's wives, then one-upped himself by murdering this righteous man (see 2 Sam. 11)?

Odder yet, on the surface David didn't have a falling away from God that would normally precede such acts. In fact, at the end of 2 Samuel 10, David and Israel had ascended to the height of their power, apparently reaping the blessings of faithfulness.

*How did this happen?*

I reread 1 Samuel 24 to 2 Samuel 11. This time I read with much more purpose, filtering for the text's specific instances that suggested cracks in David's seemingly noble character. It was the find function on my Excel spreadsheet.

Given how much I found, it seems I should have been reading more closely all along. In the 18 chapters between these stunning accounts, many signs indicated subtle yet significant compromises, a progressive deterioration of David's moral judgment. Here are a few examples:

In 1 Samuel 29, while running from Saul, David lived among the Philistines. To keep his hosts unaware of his true

loyalty, he made a show of accompanying the Philistines into battle against Israel. During his pretense away from Ziklag all the group's women and children were taken captive by his enemies. Although they were reclaimed, it was David's pretense with the Philistine king that caused their loss in the first place.

At the end of 1 Samuel 25 David proposed to Abigail, the former wife of Nabal. However, the text makes clear that he was already married. He went on to take numerous wives and concubines, opening the door of his mind to act on the lust he felt for Bathsheba.

In 2 Samuel 1:15 David quickly pronounced the death sentence on the man who claimed to have helped Saul commit suicide. The youth died for his lies, part of his outrageous attempt to ingratiate himself with David. Yet the death sentence he received illustrated David's readiness to shed blood, the reason God did not permit him to build the Temple. Devaluing human life makes it easier to murder, Uriah's lot when other cover-ups failed.

While David's life provides many applicable life lessons—both good and bad—these examples give a taste for what can happen when we study with purpose. As we read, let's allow the Holy Spirit to raise questions in our minds. Then before moving on, go back and apply a filter that answers those questions. We never know what we might find, and with whom God might call us to share it. ♣

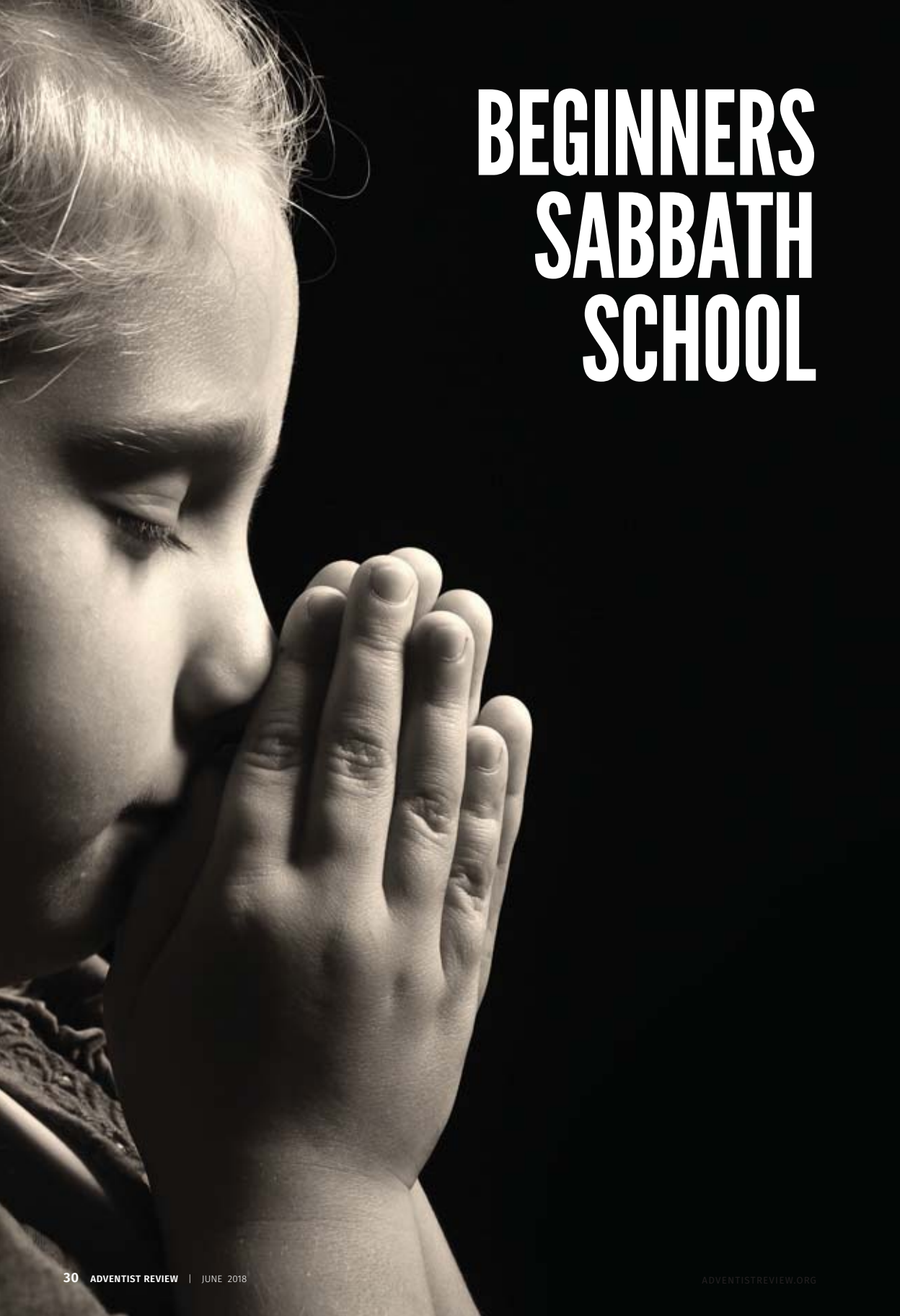
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**Jimmy Phillips** is regional marketing director for Adventist Health Southern California.

INTRODUCING  
THE WHY  
JIMMY  
PHILLIPS



DAVID WAS MAKING  
SUBTLE YET  
SIGNIFICANT  
COMPROMISES THAT  
DETERIORATED HIS  
MORAL COMPASS.



# BEGINNERS SABBATH SCHOOL



## *Much more than “babysitting”!*

**JUDY L. SHULL**

**B**ut they’re just babies,” one church board member explained. “We just need to have someone take care of the little ones so their parents can go to the adult Sabbath School class.” With these words, this church lost a tremendous inreach and outreach opportunity.

### **REMEMBER THE “LITTLE ONES”**

Beginners Sabbath School, formerly known as cradle roll, is much more than a babysitting hour. I realized this more than 30 years ago when, as a new mother, I began attending beginners Sabbath School with my infant son. I noticed a room filled with excited children, from infants in arms to very active 3-year-olds, as well as exhausted parents!

During beginners class, the Sabbath School hour is filled with stories, songs, poems, and many interesting objects. The Sabbath School room is transformed into another world, decorated to create a space for a toddler’s active imagination.

Within a few weeks of my initiation into beginners Sabbath School, the Sabbath School leader quit. My good friend, who also attended this class with her son, a year older than mine, suggested we team up and take over leading the beginners Sabbath School programs and lessons. We both wanted the best for our little boys, and we agreed to the many hours of preparation that are needed for a good program.

I soon learned that leading beginners Sabbath School for one hour was more exhausting than a day of teaching in my Adventist one-room school. I also learned what a profound influence a good program has on these young children and their parents. The more interesting and engaging our program, the more children and parents who attended Sabbath School

each week. The class of four or five grew to a weekly attendance of a dozen. Not only did the children want to be at Sabbath School, but so did their parents.

### **NOT ONLY FOR CHILDREN**

On the faces of those young mothers I noticed the same look that I saw in the reflection of my own mirror—the look of exhaustion. Taking care of an infant and/or a young child requires a great deal of energy. Our fantasies involve getting sleep and finding clean clothes. We long for the days of having time for personal, daily devotions and talking with adults. These mothers, and sometimes fathers, were at Sabbath School for their children, but they needed spiritual feeding as well. For this reason I believe beginners Sabbath School might be the most important Sabbath School class in any church.

Beginners leaders need to be some of the church’s most energetic, creative, and personable church members. This ministry is for our youngest, as well as their parents. Many families who have children of this young age don’t stay for church. Trying to keep a little one quiet during the church service is a more difficult challenge than many parents are willing to face. Sabbath School becomes their only corporate worship and fellowship time each week.

### **A FORM OF EVANGELISM**

Beginners Sabbath School should be considered an evangelistic program. Young adults who have stopped attending church frequently bring their toddlers to Sabbath School. These former Adventists say they have wonderful memories of Sabbath School and that they would like to have their little one enjoy those same experiences. If there is no beginners Sabbath School, or if it’s a weak program, we lose an opportunity to help these former members reconnect with their spiritual roots.

Beginners leaders need to focus on this dual role: the role of leader for little ones and also for their parents. As we tell stories and sing songs, we should think of ways we can encourage and inspire the parents with messages of hope, the love of Jesus, and even parenting advice. But this added layer to leading Sabbath School means the leader cannot just “show up” on Sabbath morning and go through the motions of leading the class. There needs to be intentional preparation before arriving at the church on Sabbath morning.

The ability to be an evangelist, family counselor, and motivational speaker are characteristics not usually associated with beginners leaders. But in a strong program these needs will be taken into consideration when finding a leader.

Some parents will either attend this class with their children or not come to church at all on Sabbath morning. Beginners Sabbath School is not just babysitting.

#### PLAN AHEAD

Making a good program for this age group involves preparation, organization, and enthusiasm.

A good beginners Sabbath School program includes three parts. At the beginning there are welcoming songs, recognition of visitors, mission emphasis, prayer, and occasionally a birthday celebration. The middle part of the program takes up about half the classtime. This is where the theme, or focus, for 13 weeks revolves around one topic. The program topics can be discussed and taught using various means. Children can learn about Creation, heaven, oceans, forests, farms, camping, helping at home, reverence, Jesus’ birth, and other topics that children and leaders find interesting.

The theme is taught using songs, finger plays, poems, visual aids, felts, and objects the children can hold. Children are always kept busy doing something because they are at a stage of development where they are unable to sit and listen for long stretches of time. Each week the leader repeats about three fourths of what they did the week before and varies about a fourth of the songs and activities from week to week. This age group loves and needs repetition and routine. The more predictable their Sabbath School, the more comfortable and cooperative the children are during their class.

At this age beginners are learning to talk, sit on a chair, sing, follow directions, and participate. They frequently get up to go for a walk, put felts on the

board, wave sticks, dress up, discover hidden objects, hold stuffed animals, etc. Most of these things occur while the leader, assistants, and parents sing very simple songs to accompany the actions.

The last 15 minutes of beginners Sabbath School involve lesson study. The children physically move to a new location. They sit around a felt board either on chairs or on a blanket or rug. If possible, a teacher other than the leader of the theme covers the lesson. The teacher uses felts to help the children picture the Bible story from their Sabbath School lesson. When the story is completed, the children individually repeat their simple memory verse. The teacher may need to ask the younger ones to repeat the memory verse word by word. As they get older, the children are able to say more words at one time. Before they are promoted to the kindergarten Sabbath School class, they should be able to say their memory verse from memory, if their parents work on helping them memorize their verse during the week at home. This is an excellent time for parents to begin training their child in the habit of daily Bible study.

#### LET THEM KNOW THEY’RE MISSED

When a child misses a week at Sabbath School, the beginners family could mail them their Sabbath School paper and/or *Little Friend*. It is nice to include a church bulletin also. This practice will help keep parents close to the church. After being absent, many parents have expressed thankfulness for the weekly connections to church that this simple act provides.

Beginners Sabbath School is the place children learn to sit and listen, participate with other children, obey the teacher, and sing. The training done in this class affects behavior in future Sabbath School classes.

Leading children’s Sabbath Schools is a significant ministry. The entire church should be praying that the Lord will impress the right people to help lead our families to the best future possible on this earth and for eternity. If we neglect the spiritual welfare of our children—even the very youngest among us—we are overlooking the most important ministry in our church. Let’s do everything we can to help our children come to know their Forever Friend, Jesus. ♣

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**Judy L. Shull** has served as a teacher in Adventist elementary schools for 34 years. She is director of the independent ministry *Childhoods With Jesus*.



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# A CONVERSATION ABOUT END TIMES

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*There's no one better qualified to engage in a conversation on end-time events than Ellen White. The following interview allows us to hear what her writings have to say about being prepared.—Editors.*

**We've heard the warnings about end-time events for a long time. They may not seem current anymore.**

When God sends to men warnings so important that they are represented as proclaimed by holy angels flying in the midst of heaven, He requires every person endowed with reasoning powers to heed the message. The fearful judgments denounced against the worship of the beast and his image (Revelation 14:9-11) should lead all to a diligent study of the prophecies to learn what the mark of the beast is, and how they are to avoid receiving it.<sup>1</sup>

It is for the interest of all to understand what the mark of the beast is, and how they may escape the dread threatenings of God. Why are [people] not interested to know what constitutes the mark of the beast?<sup>2</sup>

**OK, it sounds important. Can you say what this mark of the beast is?**

The sign, or seal, of God is revealed in the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, the Lord's memorial of creation. . . . The mark of the beast is the opposite of this—the observance of the first day of the week. This mark distinguishes those who acknowledge the supremacy of the papal authority from those who acknowledge the authority of God.<sup>3</sup>

**That doesn't sound good for Sundaykeepers, does it?**

Christians of past generations observed Sunday supposing they were keeping the Bible Sabbath, and there are now true Christians in every church who honestly believe that Sunday is of divine appointment. God accepts their sincerity and integrity. But when Sunday observance shall be enforced by law and the world shall be enlightened concerning the true Sabbath, then whoever shall transgress the command of God to obey a precept of Rome will thereby honor popery above God. . . . It is not until the issue is thus plainly set before the people and they are brought to choose between the commandments of God and the commandments of men, that those who continue in transgression will receive "the mark of the beast."<sup>4</sup>



**It seems far in the future, but it sounds as if you think we should be doing something now.**

The time is not far distant when the test will come to every soul. The mark of the beast will be urged upon us. Those who have step by step yielded to worldly demands and conformed to worldly customs will not find it a hard matter to yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death.<sup>5</sup>

Now is the time to prepare. The seal of God will never be placed upon the forehead of an impure man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of the ambitious, world-loving man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of men or women of false tongues or deceitful hearts. All who receive the seal must be without spot before God—candidates for heaven. Go forward. . . . Search the Scriptures for yourselves, that you may understand the fearful solemnity of the present hour.<sup>6</sup>

**Is there a way to know for sure if one has the mark of the beast?**

When the test comes, it will be clearly shown what the mark of the beast is. It is the keeping of Sunday.<sup>7</sup>

The worshipers of God will be especially distinguished by their regard for the fourth commandment—since this is the sign of His creative power and the witness to His claim upon man’s reverence and homage. The wicked will be distinguished by their efforts to tear down the Creator’s memorial, to exalt the institution of Rome. In the issue of the contest all Christendom will be divided into two great classes—those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and those who worship the beast and his image and receive his mark.<sup>8</sup>

**It doesn’t sound like something to look forward to.**

Satan is ever seeking to bring about a state of things in which righteousness may be termed unrighteousness, and unrighteousness righteousness. What are we to do? We are to keep in living connection with the God of heaven. . . . God has a people who will not receive the mark of the beast in their right hand or in their forehead. God has a place for His people to fill in this world, to reflect light. You are God’s sentinels.<sup>9</sup>

**The spirit of war is stirring the nations from one end of the earth to the other.**

Fearful tests and trials await the people of God. The spirit of war is stirring the nations from one end of the earth to the other. But in the midst of the time of trouble that is coming—a time of trouble such as has not been since there was a nation—God’s chosen people will stand unmoved. Satan and his host cannot destroy them, for angels that excel in strength will protect them.<sup>10</sup>

Live the life of faith day by day. Do not become anxious and distressed about the time of trouble, and thus have a time of trouble beforehand. Do not keep thinking, “I am afraid I shall not stand in the great testing day.” You are to live for the present, for this day only. Tomorrow is not yours. Today you are to maintain the victory over self. Today you are to live a life of prayer. Today you are to fight the good fight of faith. Today you are to believe that God blesses you. And as you gain the victory over darkness and unbelief, you will meet the requirements of the Master, and will become a blessing to those around you.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 594.

<sup>2</sup> *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 7, p. 979.

<sup>3</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 8, p. 117.

<sup>4</sup> Ellen G. White, *From Here to Forever* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1982), p. 278.

<sup>5</sup> Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1992), pp. 173, 174.

<sup>6</sup> E. G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 216.

<sup>7</sup> E. G. White, *Last Day Events*, p. 224.

<sup>8</sup> Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958, 1980), book 2, p. 55.

<sup>9</sup> Ellen G. White, in *Review and Herald*, Apr. 15, 1890.

<sup>10</sup> E. G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 17.

<sup>11</sup> Ellen G. White, in *Signs of the Times*, Oct. 20, 1887.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry.

PART ONE OF A SERIES

ADVENTIST  
**REVIEW**  
DIGGING  
DEEPER



# THE **MARK** OF THE BEAST

HAS THE  
MESSAGE  
CHANGED?



**A**dventists have been turning to this magazine for nearly 170 years to understand the Word of God more clearly, to see their world through a biblical lens, and to hear the voice of Jesus calling His endtime church to a deeper relationship with Him.

During the next seven months—June through December 2018—the *Adventist Review* will feature a key Adventist idea—in print, online, through video, with podcasts—each month. Don't miss any issue!

This month's feature on an often-misunderstood aspect of Bible prophecy brings fresh insights from a long-experienced evangelist and church leader. Editor Bill Knott sat down with Pastor Mark Finley recently to explore Adventist beliefs about the "mark of the beast" described in Revelation 13.

**You've been preaching for nearly 50 years on a challenging concept Seventh-day Adventists colloquially refer to as "the mark of the beast." If you had to summarize your experience of preaching about this Bible topic, what, if anything, would you say has changed in the way you introduce it? And are there essentials you are now underlining even more strongly?**

I think my understanding of the topic has deepened over the years. Initially, I was very straightforward, very clear, in identifying the beast power of Revelation 13 as the Roman Catholic papacy. In my early evangelism, that was probably my primary focus on the subject. Although I in no way minimize the prophetic understanding we have as Bible-believing Christians, the issues to me today are much broader.

**What are those broader issues?**

The real significance of the mark of the beast in Bible prophecy is the larger context of a cosmic struggle in the universe between good and evil, and a battle over the issue of worship. The overarching theme of Revelation is Christ's triumph over the principalities and powers of hell with a central focus on worshipping the Creator. Revelation 4:11 makes this point clear: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things" [KJV]. Throughout Revelation worship and creation are indissolubly linked. Revelation 14:7 calls us to worship the Lord of all creation. Once you focus on creation and worship, you zero in on the very heart, the essence, of this controversy between good and evil. The focus is on the God of all creation in contrast to Lucifer, who desired to usurp Christ's authority as Creator.

Scripture tells us that Jesus Christ, as a co-eternal

member of the Godhead, was the active agent in Creation (Eph. 3:9). Revelation's final issue of worship centers on Jesus and His creative authority and power. The concept of Christ as Creator is at the very heart of Sabbath worship. Jesus consistently underlines the significance of the day of which He calls Himself "the Lord." We see the Sabbath, then, in the context of a refuge in time that God has created through Jesus Christ to constantly remind us of our origins and His undying care. It is an oasis in the desert of this world. Against the backdrop of an evolutionary hypothesis that has taken the world by storm in the last two centuries, the Sabbath leads us to our roots. The Sabbath is an eternal reminder of our identity. It reminds us of who we are as human beings. It places worth on every human being. It constantly reinforces the idea that we are created beings and that our Creator is worthy of our allegiance and worship.

**You've just traced a remarkable connection between a variety of major Bible truths—the cosmic conflict; the importance of true worship; the role of Jesus as Creator; and the enduring significance of the Sabbath. All of those are involved in understanding the mark of the beast?**

When you fully understand the issues surrounding the mark of the beast, you comprehend something much larger than simply the identification of the beast power. You're looking at this controversy between good and evil. You're looking at the struggle between Christ and Satan over the issue of Creation. You're looking at the value and dignity of human worth. If we simply evolved; if we're just skin covering bones; if we're merely an elaborated amoeba molecule; if we're no more than a genetic accident—then human life has little value. So the Sabbath speaks about Creation. It speaks about my value in God eyes.



That's an understanding that resonates with Millennials and Gen Xers. If I understand that God created me and fashioned me, He also created the environment of this planet. Sabbath calls me to care for my body, because if I'm going to worship the Creator, I want to respect the essence of that which He has created. It also causes me to be concerned about the environment of which we're supposed to be good stewards. The Sabbath, which according to the Bible pre-dates all our divisions in races and ethnicities, is also a symbol of our common ancestry. At a time of strife between tribes and nations, Sabbath calls us to recognize that we share a common humanity.

You asked how my preaching is different now. As I preach on the subject of the mark of the beast, I'm clear in identifying who the beast is. But I'm also clear in looking at the larger issues in the controversy between good and evil, where the devil attacks the very creative authority of God, tries to destroy our humanity, and tries to destroy our consensus of who we are in Christ. The Sabbath is this refuge. I preach the Sabbath as a symbol, not of legalism or works, but of faith: every Sabbath we rest in Christ. We rest in His love and we rest in His care. And if one meaning of the word antichrist is "another Christ," a substitute Christ, then human works through the antichrist power substitute something else for the God-given Sabbath.

### **You've just connected Sabbath and the understanding of righteousness by faith.**

Here's my contention: Sabbath is the symbol of righteousness by faith, and Sunday is the symbol of righteousness by works. How so? Because in Sabbath, I rest in the Christ who died on Calvary's cross for me. I acknowledge my absolute inability to save myself, and the absolute all-sufficiency of Christ's grace. Every Sabbath I say, "Jesus, You made me. You created me. You died for me. I'm resting in Your love and care."

Why is Sunday—the invention of the beast power—a symbol of righteousness by works?

Because if during a period of church/state compromise the Sabbath was changed by human religio-political leaders, then to accept Sunday is to accept a human work contrary to a divine command. And any time I substitute a human work for a divine command, it's as if I'm bringing Cain's offering yet again. Cain offered his own assessment of what he believed the command required. That's why you can't discuss the mark of the beast outside of the context of Sabbath, outside of the context of the larger issue of the conflict between good and evil.

Sabbath is first a call to identity in Christ, a call to our roots in Creation, a refuge in time. I see it as a call to respect our bodies and the environment. I see it as resting in Jesus from *our* works to accept *His* work on the cross. And I see it as looking forward to new heavens and a new earth that will be re-created as He created them in the first place.

And there's one more highly personal aspect. If God can create the Sabbath—if God can create the world, and the Sabbath is a memorial of that creation—then He can re-create my heart. So the Sabbath is a symbol of His sanctifying power, of what He can do to transform me! For those struggling in the bondage and chains of sin, humanism doesn't help, but the gospel does. And at the heart of the Sabbath is the gospel.

### **So the quick identification of the mark of the beast as being only about the historical phenomenon of the Roman Catholic papacy and its expression of Sunday worship is in some sense not extensive enough to understand the bigger issues?**

It's certainly not wrong, but it's limited. If I preach only that the beast power is the papacy, the question remains: Why? Why is the beast power the papacy? And the reason for that is because a human religious system has substituted its authority for the authority of Christ. A human religious system has changed the very heart of God's law. With the changing of that law we destroy one of the most precious gifts God ever gave to humans—the Sabbath rest.



## MARK FINLEY: EDUCATED BY PRIESTS AND NUNS?

**Seventh-day Adventists, along with Christians everywhere, see the atonement of Christ as the central focus of our faith. Are you saying that the mark of the beast, with its substituted day of worship, is offering a different kind of atonement?**

I am. And let me even develop this a little further. I was raised in a Catholic home, educated for the first eight years of my life by priests and nuns. I have a great appreciation for those of that background—their sincerity, their genuineness. As I began to understand these prophecies, though, it was obvious to me that there had been wide departure in that tradition from the essence of the gospel in its fullest understanding, from biblical truth, and from the issues of worship. In the Roman Catholic papacy, as distinct from the many faithful and devoted members of that faith, we see a human religious system that has departed from the simplicity of the gospel, from the clarity of biblical truth, and from the very essence of worship, which is the Sabbath. The external trappings of religion—incense, candles, and statues—have been substituted for the very essence of religion.

Seventh-day Adventists have a unique understanding of the heavenly sanctuary. We believe that Jesus' sacrifice on the cross was full and complete. The atonement He provided on the cross, however, is applied to individual lives through His intercession in the

*“This isn’t some nineteenth-century theological innovation that Seventh-day Adventists made up.”*

heavenly sanctuary. We need a sacrifice—Jesus. We need a priest—Jesus. Earthly priests can never substitute for the divine Priest. The earthly sacrifice of the mass can never substitute for the atonement provided by Christ. By faith we see the heavenly sanctuary where Jesus ministers. Our eyes aren’t focused on an earthly sanctuary with its incense, its candles, its priests, and its sacrifice of the mass, because we’re focused on heaven. All of this is the vital background to understanding Revelation 13. If you don’t get this right, and you just do the historical identification of the beast power, you miss the essence of what God is saying to you.

And it gets even more personal: any time my human ego and my human pride govern my behavior, the beast power is in me.

**You’re disagreeing, then, with those who critique the Adventist understanding of the mark of the beast as simply an expression of nineteenth-century American anti-Catholicism?**

Yes: they miss the point totally. Does Revelation 13 clearly identify the papal powers? Sure. And it’s an exact parallel to Daniel 7.

Martin Luther, with the other great Protestant reformers, identifies the beast power and the antichrist power as the Roman papacy. And you can go back earlier than that to find courageous voices throughout Christian history who have made the same identification. This isn’t some nineteenth-century theological innovation that Seventh-day Adventists made up. This is the historic chain of truth taught and manifested in the Protestant Reformation.

**You’re saying that maintaining our historic identification of the mark of the beast is an expression of remaining truly Protestant?**

It is. And when you look, for example, at the comparison between Daniel and Revelation, you see in Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 the great parallels. Adventists are on solid biblical ground when they identify the beast power as the papacy and

stand with many of the Protestant reformers. When we describe how the beast power would rise out of the Roman Empire; that it would be a worldwide religious power that would persecute the people of God down through the ages—the Middle Ages—by the uniting of church and state; that it would reign, according to Revelation 12:6 and onward, for 42 months, or 1260 years, we’re underlining what Scripture underlines. When you look at those biblical markers, those identifications, you can clearly see what power did those things. Is prophecy really so mystical? Is it so elusive that you can’t identify its central characters? There’s no question in my mind at all that Revelation 13 identifies the Roman Catholic papacy, and that the little horn in Daniel 7 is the same power.

**Some might ask: “Sure, it’s true. But is it important today?”**

The urgent question is, “Why does God give us these clear identifying signs?” What’s the significance? Is it just to reveal the identity of that persecuting power? Not at all. It’s to deal with these larger issues in the controversy between good and evil. It’s to lead us back to true worship.

It’s interesting that Ellen White defines the antithesis, or the opposite, of the mark of the beast as the seal of God. And she defines the seal of God as “a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved.”<sup>1</sup> The Sabbath, as God’s identifiable day of worship, becomes the visible symbol of that seal. Ephesians 4:30 says, “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” The Holy Spirit becomes the sealing agency that settles us into a commitment to Christ and a commitment to His truth so that we cannot be moved. We dare not slip into an acceptance of human teachings or theories substituted for the Word of God. Sabbath and Sunday become the visible points of a climactic struggle at the end time between good and evil over worship.

## NOVEL IDEAS ABOUT THE MARK OF THE BEAST

**There are dozens—maybe hundreds—of theories available on the Internet about the identification of the mark of the beast. In your many years of public evangelism, you’ve undoubtedly heard some of the more exotic ideas. Which ones do you remember as most unusual?**

Well, that Adolf Hitler’s regime was the mark of the beast.

### **Really?**

Yes, some have said that. Others have taken U.S. presidents’ names and arrived at novel formulations. But one of the funniest was in Russia when I was preaching at the Olympic Stadium in the early 1990s. As I got up to preach, women came up out of the audience—because we had baptized about 1,000 or 1,500 people—to bring me flowers. As I reached down to pick up these flowers, a woman walked down the aisle and grabbed the microphone out of my hands. She then said, “This man is the mark of the beast! This man is the antichrist! Attack now!” About 20 young people rushed the stage. This woman was at that time the leading cult figure in Russia, and



*“The ultimate reception of the mark of the beast is going to be by those who have compromised their integrity by the choices they’ve made.”*

for some reason she saw me as the antichrist.

So these young people ran to attack me. Fortunately, I had baptized several KGB officers and Russian soldiers, and they hadn’t forgotten their skills. They took care of the disturbance. That happened 14 nights in a row!

**You’ve probably heard people express the idea that the mark of the beast is a visible mark or a tiny injectable cartridge.**

I say, and of course, national ID cards.

**What do you say to someone who is sure that what they’ve heard somewhere else is correct, someone who’s looking for something visible, tangible—maybe even injectable?**

I say to them, “I don’t know how the mark of the beast will be enforced. There may be different ways of enforcement. The Bible doesn’t tell us.” And then I say to them, “Did you notice in the text that it says the mark of the beast is enforced in the forehead or in the hand? But the seal of God is only in the forehead? Do you think that we’ll have a tattoo on our forehead that says, ‘seal of God?’” They invariably say, “No, I don’t.” Then I ask, “Why is the mark of the beast in the forehead or in the hand? The reason is this. The devil doesn’t care whether he convinces you intellectually to follow the beast or whether he forces or coerces you to follow with the symbol of the hand. God never uses force or coercion. He only uses choice.”

**This issue, then, is also about free will—God’s gift of choice.**

Exactly! God has given us freedom of choice. I don’t know how the devil’s going to enforce the mark of the beast. There may be some identity card; we don’t know that. But the big issue is what’s going on in your mind—the battle between good and evil. We shouldn’t argue over points that we might not have light on, and that aren’t the heart of the issue. I shift the conversation to what’s

going on in the hearer’s mind and appeal to them to be so strong in Christ that nobody can force or coerce them. If they are teenagers, I talk with them about group pressure, about how it’s so easy to be pressured by friends to use drugs, to get involved in the alcohol scene. And I remind them that the ultimate reception of the mark of the beast is going to be by those who have compromised their integrity by the choices they’ve made.

**Coercion can come from more than just a government?**

Absolutely. If you’re compromising your integrity at a party, or feel pushed into an illicit relationship with your girlfriend or boyfriend outside of marriage, what are you going to do when the mark of the beast comes and says you can’t buy or sell? There’s a fundamental issue of the human heart at work here. The issue regarding the mark of the beast is really a question of whom I trust. Have I completely, absolutely, given my life to Jesus in trust?

**I hear you saying that simplistic interpretations of the mark of the beast—what it is and how it will arrive—don’t always serve us well. You’re calling for keeping the biblical identifying markers along with emphasizing the individual’s personal moral choices.**

Let me make it very plain. After studying and preaching this Bible truth for 50 years, I don’t have one doubt about the prophetic interpretation understood by Seventh-day Adventists. I believe it and I preach it. But merely preaching dates and identification doesn’t transform people within. It may change the intellect; it may somewhat change the thinking. But what I’m going after is the fundamental essence of what it means to change the heart.

## PREACHING “JESUS ONLY”: IS THAT THE FULL MESSAGE?

**Have you known some newly baptized Adventists through the years who had their intellectual understanding of these issues changed, but still lacked an understanding of true worship—who came “into the truth” but not to the gospel?**

They changed their day of worship, but their hearts weren’t changed. Fortunately, that’s not true of many, but I’ve seen it happen. Perhaps more troubling to me today is what we might call the opposite response—persons who say, “Oh, I’m going to preach Jesus, but I’m going to leave out the prophetic aspect. I’m going to preach Jesus, but I’m going to get away from ‘this old mentality.’” There’s no dichotomy between Jesus and a correct understanding of biblical prophecy. There’s no separation between Christ and doctrine. To accept Christ is to accept the teachings of Christ. When I accept Jesus, I accept Jesus’ teachings. And according to Revelation 1:1, the Bible’s last book is “the revelation of Jesus Christ” [KJV].<sup>2</sup> So the revelation of Jesus is given to us by a loving God who



*“There’s one theme in every prophecy through Revelation, and that’s the wonderful truth that Jesus wins and Satan loses.”*

wants us to know the future, wants us to understand that this world is going to face a crisis with the mark of the beast. There *will* be a conflict regarding worship: how do we prepare for that? The living Christ must change our lives and strengthen us for the journey ahead.

**There are multiple YouTube videos and Web sites just now critical of the Adventist Church for not underlining the mark of the beast as some would want it expressed. What do you say to that Seventh-day Adventist or other Christian who thinks that talking about the mark of the beast in the context of the gospel is somehow going “soft” on truth?**

If your understanding of the mark of the beast makes you angry, something’s wrong. If your understanding of the mark of the beast makes you angry at Roman Catholics, angry at church administration, angry at the people who don’t preach it like you think they ought to, then you need to reexamine your heart. Your understanding of the mark of the beast should give you a passion to reach lost people with the gospel of Christ and with the prophetic, unique message of the three angels to prepare the world for our Lord’s soon return. If only the people who are spending time and energy producing videos to attack the Adventist Church and its leadership would get on their knees and say, “Jesus, give me my city; Jesus, give me my neighbors.” If my understanding of prophecy doesn’t make me a more loving, kind, compassionate Christian—then I should reevaluate my understanding.

What’s the bottom line of the book of Revelation? Revelation 1 identifies Jesus as Redeemer, the divine Son of God, and the One who is coming again. Revelation 1 puts forward a Christ who “tabernacled” in flesh, a Christ who came to die,

a Christ who is living again and is “alive for evermore” [verse 18, KJV]. The total ministry of Christ is outlined in Revelation 1. Then you have the seven churches of Revelation 1-3. They end with Laodicea, the judgment, and the coming of Christ. Then you have two chapters, Revelation 4 and 5, that deal with worship in heaven and establish Christ as both Creator and Redeemer. Next come the seven seals. They too climax with the victory of Christ. These are followed by the seven trumpets. They end again with the victory of Christ. Then you go to Revelation 12, which covers the battle down through the ages and ends again with the victory of Christ. Then you go to Revelation 13 and 14, which end with the harvest and victory of Christ. Then you go to the introduction of the seven last plagues, Revelation 15 and 16. They, too, end with the victory of Christ. Then you go to the figure of Babylon, Revelation 17 and 18, and it ends again with the victory of Christ. Then you go to chapters 19 and 20—the victory of Christ. Chapters 21 and 22—the victory of Christ. There’s one theme in every prophetic vision through Revelation, and that’s the wonderful truth that Jesus wins and Satan loses. That’s the theme. Jesus is going to win; Satan is going to lose.

When you present the prophecies of Revelation, if your major focus is on the beasts and mystic images and cryptic symbols, and it’s not on the Christ who is victorious, you’ve missed the mark of Revelation! It’s like Jesus said: “These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone” [Matt. 23:23, KJV]. It’s not enough to warn people what the mark of the beast is. It is vital to introduce them to the Lamb of God. The real issue is a false gospel that substitutes for the genuine, authentic gospel of Jesus Christ.



## AMERICA IN PROPHECY

**I know you have many friends outside of this movement. What do you say to those who aren't members of this faith who ask, "How do we know this is a real threat in our time?" What do you see in 2018 that persuades you that it's somehow more urgent to know this now than when you began preaching 50 years ago?**

I see the Roman papacy gaining in authority, power, and influence around the world. The pope was warmly welcomed at the United Nations: in 2015, he toured the United States and was allowed an unprecedented opportunity to address a joint session of the U.S. Congress. Kings, political leaders, and presidents visit him regularly at the Vatican. From its external appearances, the papacy seems to be softening its image to accommodate the heterodoxy of our age. We're in an age in which the world is looking for moral leadership. Across the political scene today, I see the world crying out for moral leadership.

**Some people say that it's hard to number the world's major moral leaders on more than one hand.**

And they're right. So where today do you find moral leadership? Where do you find somebody you can look to and say, "Where is there someone who is morally fit to lead the world? Who has the ethical respect to emerge as the world's leader?" And



*“The first thing you have to ask, biblically, is whether Revelation 13 in its identification of the lamblike beast is a solid biblical interpretation?”*

if you want to bring the world together today—a world fragmented by ethnic tensions and racism, governments that don’t trust one another, and even allies that don’t trust one another—the question becomes, “Where is there a moral voice in the world that could rise to bring people together?”

How do I see the Roman Catholic papacy rising? In a world of instability and uncertainty; a world of rising hunger and increasing poverty; a world of environmental disaster and a growing threat from nuclear weaponry, the scene is being set to identify the Roman pontiff as the purported moral leader for everyone. It would be easy—very easy—if there were an economic collapse; if there were natural disasters; if there were a limited nuclear strike—for the pontiff to be the one whom the world invites to bring everyone together.

**Seventh-day Adventists, along with some other Protestants, have historically identified the “lamblike beast” of Revelation 13 that cooperates with the beast power as the United States. Together, they become persecuting powers that restrict freedom of conscience and enforce a worship symbolized by a false day. What do you say to that student of prophecy who claims, “America is losing its superpower status, so our interpretation must be wrong”?**

First, I think you never back into prophecy. People back into prophecy by saying, “What I see in the world—in China and Russia rising and America losing its position—means that America’s role in prophecy can’t be what we’ve claimed.” You don’t interpret Revelation 13 through the eyes of current political events. You interpret current political events in the context of Revelation 13. The first thing you have to ask, biblically, is whether Revelation 13 in its identification of the lamblike beast as the United States is a solid biblical interpretation? I believe it is. The second beast comes up “out of the earth,” an unpopulated area. He arises in the same historical era when the first beast was going into captivity—1798—at

the end of the 1260-year prophecy. So the time is right, and the place is right. This second beast is lamblike—with two horns, like a lamb: a republican and democratic form of government. With those clear identifiers, only one nation in the world could be in view—the United States—which emerged with exactly these characteristics at just the right moment in world history.

The perceived loss of American influence in the world today is a temporary phenomenon. America is still the world’s leading nation in so many areas. At a moment of great international tension, or economic stress, or overwhelming natural disasters, populations seek stability and turn to their traditional leaders, which means they will almost certainly reaffirm America’s influence. The Bible doesn’t give us all the information regarding *how* that’s going to happen. But it lets us know that it will.

When I was a young man, people said to me, “Because we have a Roman Catholic president in John Kennedy, the mark of the beast will soon be enforced.” That’s a misunderstanding of Bible prophecy. Revelation 13:14 says, “*They* should make an image to the beast” [KJV]. Ellen White in commenting on the “they” says that this is one of the greatest evidences that the lamblike beast represents the United States with its democratic institutions. The plural “they” comes from “the people.” And then she says, “Even in free America, rulers and legislators, in order to secure public favor, will yield to the popular demand for a law enforcing Sunday observance.”<sup>2</sup> So it’s not that the law enforcing Sunday observance—the mark of the beast—emerges from an autocratic leader at the top; rather, it comes from the bottom up—from those who seek the votes of anguished or distressed people at a time when the economy is falling apart, or there’s been famine, fire, flood, or earthquake. Ellen White predicts that in the end time that is coming, the populous cities will be reduced to ruin. So what you have is a chaotic situation, and ordinary citizens will be the ones demanding their government do something—that they address the crisis in moral terms. At times of



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*“If society’s falling apart, and anything—anything—can bring it together, alliances can form where we didn’t expect them.”*

crisis, events move rapidly and with little regard for previous precedent.

**Many interpreters of prophecy have assumed that the demand for a unified day of worship would come from those they describe as the “religious right,” those concerned with reestablishing moral values in American society. Could an increasingly secular America ask for the same thing?**

There’s something that unites all peoples. Let me give you an example. After the mass shooting at the concert in Las Vegas, where multiple people were killed by a gunman, it wasn’t only religious people who came to the vigil. Scores of secular people came as well. Catholics came; Protestants came; atheists came. Why? Because a crisis brought people together into a common moment of shared experience. If I’m walking along the Hudson River with two atheists, two Jews, and three Muslims, and I see a woman fall into the water with her baby, we don’t ask, “What religion are you?” We go in and save that woman! So, if society’s falling apart, and anything—anything—can bring it together, alliances can potentially form out of necessity where we didn’t expect them. I don’t see a national Sunday law mandating that “everybody has to worship under the Roman papacy.” I expect that Baptists will still be Baptists; Methodists will still be Methodists; Catholics will still be Catholics; and secular people don’t have to become believers to give their approval to a measure that seems to offer hope in a crumbling society.

Adherents of other major world religions don’t have to become Christians to affirm and even support the observance of Sunday. Muslims and Hindus may say, “Look, for the betterment of the world, for the

betterment of society, we accept Sunday as this socio-political, religious enactment.”

But what will Seventh-day Adventists be saying at that critical moment? “We can’t go along, because we believe in the integrity of the Word of God. We believe in the authority of the Bible. We accept the moral foundations of God’s law. We accept the Bible Sabbath.”

**How quickly do you think these developments will occur—even if pushed along by some natural or man-made catastrophe?**

I think the mark of the beast will be formed gradually. When I read *The Great Controversy*, I find that you initially could have a decree that commands people not to work on Sunday. Then, later, “If you work on Sunday, you’ll face these economic penalties.” Then when worship on Sabbath is antithesis to what they want to accomplish, authorities say, “You’re not cooperating to build up the social order.” It’s very interesting when you look at the history of the change of the Sabbath under Emperor Constantine in AD 321. His decree didn’t say anything about worship. It mandated, “On the venerable Day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed.”<sup>3</sup> So it began as a social day to bring all the Roman Empire together, to unite it. Church leaders accepted this compromise. Pagans and Christians were agreed on its social value to society as a whole.

**They bought their peace. But it evolved into something much more.**

That’s right. I see the national Sunday law as not just happening overnight. I see a lot of debates taking place. I think that’s all part of God’s plan, because it sensitizes people—and it enables us to proclaim God’s truth in



*“Separate the Sabbath from the messages, and it loses its power.”*

a critical moment. Enforcement may begin with fines, initially; then later imprisonment; then not being able to buy or sell; and, ultimately, the climax: a death decree for those who refuse the perceived social good of a common day of rest and worship.

These sound like dramatic events, and, of course, they are. But there’s an internal logic in Seventh-day Adventist interpretation of prophecy that grew out of the book of Daniel and applied its principles to the prophecies of Revelation.

If you deny the beast power as the Roman Catholic papacy, you have a real challenge with accepting the Protestant Reformers, for they were clear in their identification. But there are other major problems as well. Seventh-day Adventists accept the prophetic ministry of Ellen White, and she wrote extensively on this topic. If you deny the identification of the Roman papacy as the beast power of Revelation 13, and if you deny the United States as the lamblike beast of the same chapter, how then do you interpret *The Great Controversy* and Ellen White, which are so clear on it? You end by denying the prophetic gift and reducing the inspired writings of Ellen White to those of a helpful devotional writer.

### **You’re underlining the interconnectedness of Adventist beliefs again.**

If, as some claim, there’s no real conflict over the law of God; if there’s no eschatological conflict over the commandments; if there’s no issue over worshipping the Creator, then where do Adventists find themselves with the Sabbath? Ellen White says to Seventh-day Adventists, “Separate the Sabbath from the messages, and it loses its power.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Do you see any political or legislative developments on the near horizon that cause you to believe that a national law requiring rest on Sunday is imminent?**

Those I talk to who are knowledgeable in our Religious Liberty department tell me they don’t see any specific legislation currently in the United States Congress precipitating a national Sunday

Law. There are, though, a number of troubling current issues that seem to be eroding the wall of separation between church and state. Now, that doesn’t mean that our religious freedoms could not evaporate quickly. Obviously there will be a prolonged legislative debate over these issues so that everyone can search the scriptures for themselves and be informed of the issues. But I think we are on safer ground as Seventh-day Adventists to simply say, “Here’s what the Bible teaches. These are the facts of history.” We can appeal to honest-hearted people based on what Scripture teaches, not on a piece of legislation currently before Congress, or a case being argued before the Supreme Court.

### **What would you say to those who have made it an article of faith to be matching up a short timeline of current political events with biblical prophecy?**

The longest time prophecy of the Bible ran out in 1844, so earnest people who are obsessed with “time” are looking in the wrong place. What God is looking for now is the preparation of a people who understand the gospel, whose lives have been changed by the gospel, to reveal to the world the glory of God. I say to my brothers and sisters whose minds are fixated on time, “Switch your emphasis to the heart. Look at what Jesus wants to do in your life. And look at what Christ wants to do for you: to take away our coldness and our cynicism, to take away our criticism and our gossip, our lust, and our materialism.”

Time prophecies are important, but there is something more important: knowing Jesus and His life-transforming power. Now is the time to prepare a people for the coming of Jesus who are in love with Him and in love with His gospel.

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Hagerstown, Md.: Reivew and Herald Pub. Assn., 1955, 1977), vol. 4, p. 1161.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1950), p. 592.

<sup>3</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church: Vol. II: From Constantine the Great to Gregory the Great A.D. 311–600* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1867) p. 380, note 1.

<sup>4</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 1, p. 337.





## MARK OF THE BEAST?

*How they hit the mark*

**LAEL CAESAR**

Protestants have long considered the “beast” of Revelation 13:1-10 and 14:9, 11 to be the system of church government that the pope has presided over. Many late eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century English-speaking Protestants believed that the three angels of Revelation 14 represented a continuing return to truth from beliefs and practices of that apostate system. For some the reformation from medieval church practices had already taken place. But for others, the angels’ proclamations and the realization of the content of those proclamations was still in the future.

### **MILLERITE TO SABBATARIAN VIEWS**

The Millerite movement of the first half of the nineteenth century placed much more emphasis on the first and second angels’ messages than on the third: fulfilment of the 2300 days prophecy showed clearly that the hour of God’s judgment had arrived (Rev. 14:7). The Reformers’ exposure of the system of false teachings called Babylon, and major departure out of that system, the medieval church, by those who followed the Reformers’ teaching, showed that Babylon was fallen (verse 8).

But it was principally the conclusion of Sabbatarian Adventists in the middle of the nineteenth century that the beast’s mark (Rev. 13:16, 17; 14:9) would be an identifiable religious phenomenon that contrasted with one that identified God’s true people. Believers were quite conscious of their greater focus on the first two angels’ messages than on the third. But for them this was entirely reasonable since the third angel is prophetically

scheduled after the first and second angels have finished their work. As the text states: “A third angel followed them” (verse 9). Their developing understanding of the beast’s mark grew out of the increased attention paid to the third angel’s message following the Millerites’ great disappointment of October 22, 1844, when Jesus did not return to this earth to transport His followers to glory as they had expected and preached.

Various proposals were entertained with regard to the identity of the beast and its image, including the Papacy and paganism (William Miller’s view), and a double reference to the Papacy (Charles Fitch’s view).

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF VERSE 12**

First James White, then by January 1849 Joseph Bates as well, came to embrace Revelation 14:12 as part of the third angel’s message. That inclusion alerted them to the way the three messages, particularly the second and third, set the beast, its mark, and its image over against the followers of God and their obedience to His commandments. The third message showed that beast and image would both share some feature that distinguished their apostasy from the purity of the everlasting gospel. The metaphor of “image” signified that whatever the prophecy meant to identify as image would of necessity have to resemble what it identified as beast.

The beast’s mark would be something borne by that entity no longer identifying with the beast, now distinct from but resembling the beast, and sharing, despite its distinctness, some trait that nevertheless acknowledged the beast’s ascendancy, something that showed the image as bearing the beast’s mark. Hiram Edson came to argue that the establishment of a Sunday law would both challenge freedom of conscience and show the beast’s image as ruling in the same manner that the Papacy had been known to rule. Worshiping the beast would be keeping the pope’s Sabbath, the first day of the week, instead of the Sabbath of the Lord. Thus, legally mandated Sunday worship would constitute the mark of the beast. The “forehead” and the “hand,” where the mark of the beast is received (Rev 14:9), were seen as symbols of a *doctrinal* and *practical* acceptance of that day of worship. ♣

**Lael Caesar**, associate editor, *Adventist Review*, is thrilled to hear and bear and share God’s good news of deliverance from beasts.

# How to Activate Young Adults in Your Church

When You Don't Have Any

# “If our church doesn’t get more young people soon, we’re going to die,” blurted the head deaconess during my pastoral interview.

I looked around the room at the dedicated group of 60- and 70-year-old church leaders. I respected their openness about the reality in their church (and many other churches in North America).

We didn’t have young adults bringing their personal flavor and spirituality into our worship service. We didn’t have young adults leading ministries on our church board.<sup>1</sup> We didn’t have a young adult group organizing Bible studies, socials, and service projects. We didn’t have a young adult Sabbath School class.

When you don’t have many, or any, young adults in your church, what do you do?

Here are four things that *anyone* in *any* church can do to activate young adults in your church whether you don’t have many or any.

## 1 PRAY

God has many people (including young adults) ready to take the next step with Him if given the opportunity. The solution is not more young adults sitting in pews or holding titles on a nominating committee report, but more people activated in reaping the harvest.<sup>2</sup> Jesus says this happens through prayer.

I began praying for God to bring us young adults whom we could send into His harvest field. The first answer came sooner than I expected. On my second Sabbath at my new church, I walked Nik and Shayla. I was excited to meet the young couple with their 4-month-old son.

“Have you been here before?” I asked.

“I came here once 13 years ago [half his lifetime] when we first moved here,” Nik responded.

“This is my first time in a Seventh-day Adventist church,” said Shayla.

After the service I greeted them on their way out and asked about seeing them next week. “Yeah, we should be back,” Nik replied.

I prayed God would bring Nik and Shayla back to church. The next Sabbath God answered. So began a meaningful friendship with Nik and Shayla. They continued attending church and joined our home Bible study group. A few months later they were baptized. Nik and Shayla joined one of the praise teams. Shayla's baking became famous at church potlucks. Nik shared a powerful testimony during an offering call about how since he started returning tithe, God had blessed him with three promotions at work in three months.

God answers prayer. He will send more workers into His harvest field if we ask Him.

**2 NOTICE**  
How did David go from being an obscure shepherd to the most respected king in Israel's history? How did Esther go from being a helpless orphan to the brave queen that saved her people? How did Timothy go from being unaccepted to an influential young leader in the early church? How did John the Beloved go from being a futureless fisherman to a death-defying apostle?

The answer is simple. Someone had to recognize their gifts.

In my church, whom did God want me to notice? Every Sabbath I began looking for the young adults God was bringing to us. I wanted to make sure that a young adult never made it out of our church without feeling noticed and cared about.<sup>3</sup> The greeters made sure to introduce me to new young people who came in the door. I started a list of names and contact information about all the young adults who visited our church. Through the process I began to better notice the handful of young adults God had already brought.

I got to know 18-year-old Dusty better. Through our conversations I discovered that he had a passion for youth ministry. So I asked if he would help me lead a Sabbath afternoon youth outreach activity. Largely because of Dusty's creativity and enthusiasm, the youth loved it; moreover, Dusty loved it, and I loved it.

A few months later I asked Dusty to preach. He had never done that before. He knew I believed in him, and he knew Jesus would take over. Dusty preached a powerful sermon, and the whole church was moved to see this young adult fired up about Jesus.

**I wanted to make sure that a young adult never made it out of our church without feeling noticed and cared about.**

Dusty wants to become a youth director, and I believe God will use him to do amazing things. Whom is God calling you to notice?

**3 CONNECT**  
In these last days God promises to pour out His Spirit: "Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions" (Joel 2:28). I want to know what "visions" God is giving the young adults around me. The only way to find that out is to connect with them.

Timing is crucial. When young adults show up at church, I may get only one chance to connect with them and discover their passions. The best conversations happen over meals: potluck, at my home, or in a restaurant. One secret I have discovered about young adults: A genuinely caring person offers to treat them to the restaurant of their choice. They will almost always say yes.

When I saw a new young man in his early 20s during the worship service, I made sure to catch him in the lobby afterward. I learned that he had grown up in the church and just moved back to town. "You should be seeing me around here now. Except in a couple weeks I will be in Oklahoma to film a movie," Forrest said.

"Wow! What a sweet opportunity! So you know



how to do stuff with video?" I was intrigued.

Forrest's face lit up. He pulled out his phone and started showing me a video with all kinds of special effects he had made. I discovered his passion.

We exchanged contact information and set up a time for a meal together. We brainstormed all kinds of ideas that could be done with video to advance God's kingdom. Then I asked which one or two projects he would like to pursue first. We made a plan and prayed together.

Our first project was an announcement video for our Christmas brunch. The members loved it! They shared the video on social media to invite their friends. The brunch was wonderfully well attended, and the video still is the most popular on our church YouTube Channel. Forrest began receiving more requests from other ministries in the church to use his video gifts for God's glory.

## 4

### ACTIVATE

Remember Joshua, the courageous young leader of the people of God? How was he activated for God's cause? Joshua's debut in Scripture comes from an insightful story in Exodus 17. The Amalekites attacked, so Moses called on Joshua, a young adult, to lead the charge. The Israelites rallied behind Joshua. Moses stood on the hilltop and raised his hands in prayer for the success of Joshua. "As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning . . . So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword" (Ex. 17:11, 13). As long as we hold up our hands in prayer and support of our young adults, God will give them victories.

Whenever I discover a passion of young adults in my church, I immediately try to identify or create needs for their passion. Sometimes young adults already have ideas; other times I need to get creative. Then I do everything I can to dump fuel on their fire and set them up for success.

I met Marcus and Caitlin during greeting time at church. Although I only saw them sporadically, I continued to connect with them whenever they were at church. During one conversation I found out that Caitlin was a graphic designer. Immediately the wheels began turning in my head. By the next time I saw her, I had an idea.

"Our church will be launching a wave of small groups next month. Would you be willing to

design a brochure with all the group options that we can distribute at church and mail out to our interest list?" I asked.

"Sure!" she replied. "What's your budget?"

"Let's aim for \$100; we can adjust it later if needed." I was fully prepared to pay the money myself if the church board chose not to.

Caitlin designed an outstanding brochure. Her passion had been engaged. She saw a difference that she could make for the kingdom of God and was willing to go all in. As a result of those brochures, dozens of people from both our church and community joined groups, including Caitlin. God had used her to multiply His mission. All we had to do was rally behind her and hold up her hands.

### YOU AND ME

How do you activate young adults in your church when you don't have many or even any? It starts with you and me. As we pray, notice, connect with, and activate young adults, God will unleash them as a powerful force in ministry to usher in His soon return. Ellen White wrote, "With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Saviour might be carried to the whole world!"<sup>4</sup>

Could it be that our greatest assets for reaping a harvest will walk into our church within the next few months in the form of young adults? Let's pray for laborers, welcome them, connect with them, and activate them. Then let's rally behind them to prepare the world for Jesus' soon return! 📌

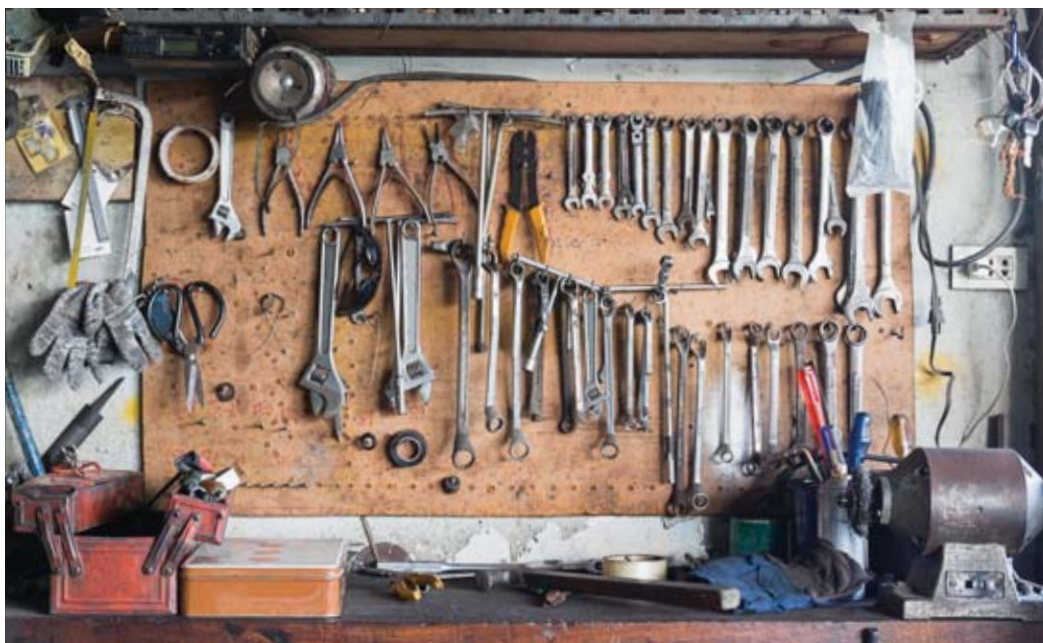
<sup>1</sup> Recent research indicates that while the vast majority of "engaged" Adventist young adults attend church services more than once per month (97 percent), return tithes (71 percent) and offerings (60%) regularly, and attend Sabbath School more regularly than once per month (61 percent); only 35 percent hold some type of church office. See Barna Group Seventh-day Adventist Young Adult Study, 2013. [www.youngadulthood.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Barna-SDA-Millennials-Report-final.pdf](http://www.youngadulthood.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Barna-SDA-Millennials-Report-final.pdf) (accessed June 16, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> For more on this concept of "Total Member Involvement" in reaping the harvest, see [tmi.adventist.org](http://tmi.adventist.org).

<sup>3</sup> Recent research in the Adventist Church discovered that only 17 percent of "unengaged" young adults say they don't plan on ever returning to church. Whenever some of the other 83 percent show up, will we notice them? See Barna Group, Seventh-day Adventist Young Adult Study 2013, [www.youngadulthood.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Barna-SDA-Millennials-Report-final.pdf](http://www.youngadulthood.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Barna-SDA-Millennials-Report-final.pdf) (accessed June 16, 2017).

<sup>4</sup> Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1903), p. 271.

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## DADDY'S WORKBENCH

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*Taking the brokenness out of being broken.*

**W**hen I was a little girl, Daddy's workbench seemed to be the "fix all" place for anything. Located on the side wall of our garage, Daddy made the bench himself with what must have been the remnants of Noah's ark. He made it so that the top was used for fixing and the bottom for storage. Over the years it became textured with oil stains and hammer dents, nail holes, and many a permanent scratch or chip.

As a little girl I remember feeling as if I had the strongest, manliest, most capable daddy in the world whenever I saw him working there. Most important, broken things could be fixed there. If it was Barbie's broken arm, I'd

put it on Daddy's workbench and Barbie would be magically healed the next day. Daddy would tell me to be careful with her multiple outfit changes and plastic horseback riding, but in my mind, she was "good as new" and ready to play again, thanks to Daddy and his workbench. If it was my new back-to-school belt that didn't have enough holes to fit my tiny waist, I'd put it on Daddy's workbench and the fashion fix was magically delivered to my new stack of Crayola markers and jeans ready for use. If I dropped a tea party plate on the floor, no problem. Daddy glued the pieces back together, to me "as good as new!"

I never really knew what all the Craftsman drawers were full of, or what the organized pegboard of hanging tools was for. I didn't know how he used the many screwdrivers or weird socket wrenches. I didn't feel the need to. My part was to put bro-

ken things on his workbench. In a child's innocence and trust, I put stuff there and skipped off merrily without a doubt or concern in the world. The workbench was a place of capable fixes, no matter what; and Daddy was the man for the job.

#### **WHEN THINGS NEED A FIX**

Now a woman, I often wish there was a "Daddy's workbench" for all the broken parts and pieces of life. Not only do I wish there were a specific location, I wish it felt as innocent and easy to drop stuff off. It's not so easy now when an arm gets broken, or worse, a heart. Broken things are more complex, as is the gravity of things affected. Projects are bigger and priorities are immediate, or so it seems. It's not easy to lay problems down and trust they will be fixed perfectly in the hands and timing of someone else. Of particular concern is my inability to keep up the "Mama workbench" my child looks to for her fixes, especially if I can't figure out how to leave my own broken stuff on my Father's workbench.

#### **WHEN LIVES ARE BROKEN**

I have a friend who suffers from a myriad of life's broken parts and pieces. Some of the pieces have broken on her; some she has broken herself. Either way the results have been hard, and hard to fix. She never had a constant father, and definitely not a daddy. For her, "father" is scarcely a term of endearment. Divorce, confusion, infidelity, and death killed those opportunities ideally afforded to little girls and boys.

Foster homes gave way to feelings of abandonment; her mom eventually gained back custody only to continue on the neighborhood move circuit. Friends were scarcer with each wave goodbye, and a handful of memories were left behind without the town and school routines that normally secure a child's stability.

My friend didn't grow up leaving broken things for fixing; rather, she grew up being the broken thing, or at least feeling like it. She learned to feel unfixable and learned to feel life around her was unfixable. She still gravitates toward insecurity and seeks the competitive comfort of being the most broken one in the room, whether it's true or not. She's tried her own tools to fix them but has come up empty.

It begs the question: Where's the workbench

**Are you broken? Yes.  
Am I broken? Yes.  
How long will it last?  
We don't know.**

for putting broken people back together? How do you put yourself back together if you're in bondage to broken pieces and failed fixes?

I don't know. I don't know how for her, or me, or you. But I know who. And He alone has the right tools for the job. He's a carpenter trained in Nazareth, and His workbench is in the shape of a cross. He's Jesus Christ. I imagine His hands. I imagine what He can do if unharnessed brokenness is placed on His workbench.

#### **BEGINNING AGAIN**

Some time ago I traveled to visit a friend after a long illness finally took her to the intensive care unit. Visiting hour gave way to one very honest conversation. She did most of the talking; I did most of the listening, while praying inwardly. She sat in a corner by the hospital room window, blanket around her lap, blue gown wrapped loosely around her body, head bowed in discernment. Pale, stripped of makeup and facade, she was very weak. Fluid seeped steadily from an IV bag into her body, infusing the minutes and hours as she sat broken.

I found myself thinking that she looked like a little girl lost and alone, washed up in a world gone way out of control. I felt sympathy for her and sorrowed at how someone's life can go from delivery room to recovery room in just a few short years.

Yet I'd never seen her more alive than at that moment. To be real is to be alive, and when that reality is unveiled the room becomes electric. Brokenness begins to break, and a heart begins to beat with life. That's what I saw in her. I'm certain that's what Jesus saw.

As I sat and listened I felt as if angels had taken part of her to the Father's workbench, and she'd been freed from the gripping vice of troubled identity. She talked quietly and unhurriedly about

# I wish a lifetime of brokenness could get fixed with just one remarkable moment.

how things had gone so wrong for so many years. She spoke of how she didn't know how she'd gotten so broken, but that she didn't want to be. She spoke about how she loved her kids and her husband and wanted to be more than just broken, for them. Pouring her heart out, one broken piece at a time from past to present, she admitted confusion and moved to pure desire: she poured out the need for help, for fixing, for life.

As I listened, I began to understand how brokenness can steal identity in ways we can't begin to describe or comprehend until we meet it in the ICU of life.

Praise Jesus, His workbench can meet us anywhere, anytime, and under any circumstance!

As I continued to listen to my returned prodigal friend, I struggled to keep tears from welling up in my eyes. It was hard to keep from saying, "The Father brought His workbench here. Drop your stuff off, and let's go shopping for a new beginning for you!"

But you can't just tell someone to take their mess to a father's workbench when they don't see "Father" as someone they can trust. You can't start jumping for joy at the reality of your moment when their mirror moment is raw and revealing. You can't tell them how much you've missed them when they're just beginning to figure out that they've succumbed to brokenness for a very long time. You can't jump in and fix it. You can only jump in and tell Jesus you yearn to be the right tool whenever He's ready to use you. This was her "thief on the cross" moment of truth. This was her "lost lamb in a thicket" rescue. This was the Father's moment of fixing the broken! Nail by nail, child by child, piece by fixable piece.

I firmly believe that He was fixing some of my brokenness as I prayed for Him to fix hers. "God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

## CHALLENGING TIMES AHEAD

Much time has passed since that hospital room experience. My friend has been in and out of the hospital, sometimes with the same discernment, often not. It's a struggle for her, one that has been cultivated by the devil. He's a devastating enemy to anyone who wants to get unbroken. Whether in a real moment or not, I believe soul searching is happening deep within her and she yearns for the help and change she desired that day in the ICU. She's on a journey, one day at a time, like most of us.

She surfaced for a phone conversation recently, and I was infused with emotion when I got off the phone. I wish a lifetime of brokenness could really get fixed with just one remarkable moment. Yet I believe she's on the journey to wholeness. It will take surrendering on the Father's workbench again and again. It's that way for all of us. Not because He needs us to do that multiple times, but because we need to do that to commit fully to Him.

I continue to pray for her, sometimes wanting to be the Lord's tool for her, sometimes tired and needing to focus on my own workbench surrenders. No matter what, I'm thankful that in my weakness, and in her weakness, He is strong and never tires.

## HOPE FOR THOSE WHO ARE BROKEN

Are you broken? Yes. Am I broken? Yes. How long will it last? We don't know. Will we ever be fixed? Yes. Soon. Very, very soon we'll be going home, hospital gowns sailing beneath as heavenly gowns enfold us. We'll be face to face with freedom, exuding love and joy in every aspect of life. Most of all, we'll be welcomed home to wholeness in the very arms of Jesus Christ.

Until then, we have to put our stuff on the Father's workbench, where broken things get fixed, where broken people get fixed. Whether we see a heartbeat in ourselves or not, He does. Whether we see ourselves as broken or not, fixable or not, He does. He comes to the ICU in which we find ourselves, carrying hammer and nails, to work until we are "good as new." He wants to work until we are His.

"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit" (Ps. 34:18).

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**Heather Vandenhoven** is a freelance writer who lives in northern California with her husband and daughter.



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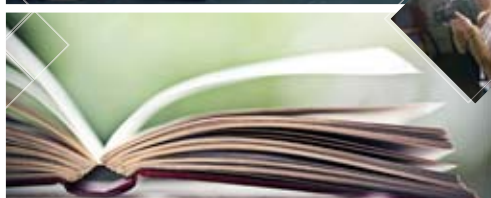
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## EVEN IF I DON'T SEE IT WITH MY OWN EYES

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*Isn't that what faith is for?*

I walk, pretending to be familiar with my surroundings. I have traveled the gamut of transportation to get here: automobile, train, bus, walking. The sidewalks and neighborhoods are unfamiliar, a reminder that I am far from home. Young people standing at the corner talking and laughing stop their actions for a moment as I walk past them pretending to have “missed” the conversation. Buildings and small houses

around me appear locked together, no space between them, no architectural reason for the dissonance of height, frame, damage to the structure, chipped paint. *Paint!* It feels as if I am walking inside a large paint swatch, walking away from the bright, beautiful colors on the grid into a lackluster gradient space.

As I walk past dark but noisy alleys, the reality is I may be entirely lost. Then I see it! The building with a dark-blue door! There is dead silence around me, as if everyone has disappeared. There is an urge to run, to get off this transitional path. I run up two stairs at a time toward the dark-blue door. My hands touch the metal: it's warm. *Someone else has already arrived.*

### OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME . . .

I stand at the “Paint Specialist” booth at the local Home Depot, where Randy (the “paint expert”) explains color variance between whisper white and crystal blue snow. *They look the same to me.* Randy pulls out a key ring with colorful cardboard-like book markers, fans them out. He demonstrates the “gradient” that occurs, from deep saturation to a faint whisper of color. “Simply commit,” he says. “If you don't like the outcome, return the paint, and we'll find a new color.”

Back at home unpacking paint supplies, I am grateful for the phone call that interrupts my task. Talking to my friend, Eve, all concerns of paint are forgotten. She has returned from a weekend volunteering at The Mission,<sup>1</sup> a shelter for “transitioning” young people: run-

aways. "It's a safe space," says Eve. "Most have day jobs. They ran away from bad situations." Eve, a police officer, serves as part of the security team. Young people go to The Mission for food, clothes, supplies, medical checkups, a place to get a warm shower, a place to sleep for a night. *The Mission needs volunteers.*

Two days later, returning from work, I fail to find my phone (apparently lost in my purse?) to answer a call. The message left is brief: "The Mission . . . paperwork approved . . . can you attend training and certification this week?"

I listen to the message twice. This is a big commitment! I gaze at the entrance to my home office, cans of paint stacked, as if waiting on some promise I made them. Looking at the cans of paint I find an emerging thought lingers: unlike the paint, this opportunity for ministry is not *something* I can "return." There is no need to experience the *outcome* of this ministry to realize the need that shaped it. I have prayed about this opportunity. As my friend Randy said: "Just commit." I pray in gratitude for the opportunity to serve others, for strength. Then, I call The Mission and *commit*.

#### **YOUR KINGDOM COME, YOUR WILL BE DONE . . .**

"Hello! I'm Amy." Through the dark-blue door, I am in a room full of picnic tables. Amy, director of The Mission, greets me with a kind smile that emulates the warmth left by her hands on the doorknob. She gives me a tour of the four-story warehouse. The first floor has a dining room with 24-hour food service. I hear volunteers talking and laughing as they prepare a warm meal. As we walk past a floor-to-ceiling spice cabinet, I smile, certain that "joy" is stacked among the spices.

The second floor has a small medical triage area, and two rooms equipped with individual "hygiene cubicles" (private bathrooms). Each room contains bins full of packaged toiletries, and plastic containers where old, dirty clothes may be placed for washing, mending, or maybe left behind, forgotten on purpose.

As we enter the third floor I notice our muted footsteps. Shelves line the wall; mismatched small round tables, chairs, and instruments are everywhere! The rug is frayed at the seams, the piano is scratched, books misarranged. Here young people gather, talk to counselors, chaplains, friends, play music, sing, read, or just sit by the

## **In 48 hours I have walked the entire colorful gradient of human emotion.**

windows and look at the stars.

I stand at the wall of windows, stare at the clouds; a storm is coming. *Who will stand here tonight, grateful to be out of the rain?*

In the back of the room is a door labeled "STORE." Inside are clothes of all sizes, shoes, backpacks, blankets, and more. Donations are never a problem. Volunteers care for clothing items that need mending and washing. I pick up a backpack bag and inspect it. One strap has been sewn back on in expert fashion. *I wonder where it has been.* Guests are welcome to take what they need. I appreciate the used donations. I have seen many traumas at the hospital: a young adult was beaten, stabbed, and robbed (at minimum) for new clothes.

The fourth floor is the Resting Area. Cots are arranged with plenty of room to walk among them. During the night security teams ensure a safe rest. Every cot has a plastic pillow, pillowcase, clean sheets, blanket.

As we walk downstairs to meet other volunteers, Amy tells me that as a child the lyrics to a church song inspired this to be her life's work: "I have no riches now, but I have a mansion in heaven." She smiles. "This is the home God helps me build for them *right now, while heaven comes.*"

#### **GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD . . .**

Young people (guests) arrive after dark and greet volunteers. Some get a tray of food, sit, eat quietly but fast, then get seconds. Others talk about mutual friends, trying to locate them. Volunteers sit with them, engage in conversations. I join a table, listen as heartbreaking conversations

**“I know you can’t talk about religion here,” she says. “Would you pray with me? It’s been a while since someone prayed with me.”**

are shaped into casual dialogue. Guests share experiences, lessons learned, employment stories; they move the food around their plate in silence when the name of a friend who has gone missing is mentioned. They share. They are kind.

One guest brings juice for everyone at the table; another brings extra sandwiches and several bowls of soup. Some guests share that they haven’t had a meal in days, yet nobody is surprised. *The bread they are breaking together is more than physical sustenance—it is a spiritual meal that feeds souls and mends hearts.* They advise one another on where to find work and where to stay “clear from.” No one is greedy. *This is a transitional place; everyone bears hopes and dreams!* If I close my eyes, a different image emerges: guests gathering for fun, not necessity.

The security team begins to encourage guests to clean up, visit, and rest. I watch as most guests grab prepackaged snacks, crackers, cookies, fruit. They head out to different locations.

#### **FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS, AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS . . .**

I walk through the aisles of the Resting Area, carrying extra blankets and pillows, grateful that I don’t have to say much. *What could I say? What words would not sound heavy with pity?* Then it happens: I am asked to speak.

“Ma’am?” I see a young girl sitting on her cot holding a pillow without a pillowcase. She holds it up to me and smiles. “Sorry to bother you. Do

you have an extra pillowcase?”

I wonder why she would imagine a pillowcase to be a *bother*. I smile and hand her a new pillow with pillowcase. As I walk away she says: “I’m Lisa. Thanks.” As lights dim I use a small flashlight to follow the perimeter the security team walks, making sure everyone is tucked in.

As I walk past Lisa’s cot she asks if I am “new here.” I nod. She speaks in a whisper, telling me she comes here often. “It’s just a shame they can only take so few at once.” She reaches under the cot and grabs her backpack and a few extra toiletry bags fall out. She assures me the bags are for friends not here tonight. I slowly sit on the floor at the foot of her cot and ask if she would like more toiletry bags. She shakes her head no. I get a glance of a music notebook in her backpack. Respecting those around her, Lisa whispers her life story to me.

Lisa works washing dishes in a local restaurant, getting paid daily for long hours of hard labor. She lives between shelters and some nights sleeps outside. She finds the world is full of kind people, like the woman in the food truck on Third Street who gives her a sandwich and apple juice every day when Lisa is done working. She eats in the park, sharing her meal with hungry pigeons, writing in her music notebook. She plays the piano. With the lack of a piano, she practices in a stairwell close to the metro line, sitting on a step and pretending the one above is the piano.

As she speaks of future goals I notice that her backpack has a broken zipper, that sneakers under the cot are torn at the front. In a few months she will begin community college and one day will teach music to high school students, teach how powerful music is. How a song can make you feel compassion; how lyrics can remind you of beauty; how a chorus can bring peace to pain.

“I could be angry,” she whispers. “My mom died. My father hurt me, badly. I have no siblings. I prayed to get out, and now I pray that I won’t be angry, ever. That by forgiving those who hurt me I will remember not to hurt anyone, not physically, but with words, lies, or bad advice.”

Lisa yawns, begins to unfold her blankets. “Am I allowed to ask what you do for a living?”

I smile, place another blanket at her feet in case she gets cold, then sit down on the floor. I am a college professor, writer, and volunteer hospital



chaplain. She points at her backpack and asks me to pull out the music notebook. Inside is a collection of songs she is transcribing note by note. The songs are etched in color pencils. Most of the songs are familiar to me, having played them at church. Suddenly a mental picture of Lisa's household comes to mind: *prayer, forgiveness, music, hymns, church. She knows the bigger picture.*

I look up from her notebook, attempting to break my own train of thought. We talk about favorite classical musicians, times we volunteered our musical gifts to play in places in which people usually don't have the beauty of music around them. For a moment we both forget where we are and get lost in memories.

"What was your biggest concern, like two weeks ago?" she asks.

"Writer's block. I thought painting my office would inspire me."

"I get it. What color did you choose?"

"Something with words 'crystal' and 'blue' in it. I haven't painted yet."

She laughs and points to her backpack containing a silver lockbox with color pencils and encourages me to find a better color for the walls. Her generosity is humbling. She owns but a few items that bring her happiness, yet she is willing to share. We select a color together and I get to keep the pencil. After hours of talking, I wish her a good night. As I walk away she calls me back.

"I know you can't talk about religion here," she says. "*Would you pray with me?* I pray. It's been a while since someone prayed with me."

There have been many moments in my life when I recognize the words in our prayers are placed there by the Holy Spirit. I feel their weightlessness, all cares, carried to heaven. We pray together. That night I sit on the frayed carpet, watch the rain fall, and thank God for keeping us all safe and warm.

### **DO NOT LEAD US INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL . . .**

I walk through the STORE. I find the black backpack I had seen earlier, pack it with supplies (fewer weathered shoes, more toiletry bags, a sweater, a poncho). Back in the Resting Place I quietly place the backpack at the end of Lisa's cot. *Maybe she will accept these few items.* I can imagine how tempting it must be to give up on hope, give up on goals,

dreams. Daily evidence that goodness abounds can be difficult to find. As the light from one of the security team flashlights crosses Lisa's backpack I notice a small Bible in the side pocket of her backpack. *She is searching.* I have a small Bible in my backpack. *Why not?*

### **FOR YOURS IS THE KINGDOM AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY FOREVER . . .**

Early morning, a warm breakfast served by 4:00 a.m., guests leave quietly before sunrise. Helping other volunteers, I lose track of time. When I reach the Resting Place, I notice some cots are missing blankets (probably stowed away in backpacks). *I doubt anyone will complain.* Lisa was a no-show at breakfast, but I hear she took plenty of individually wrapped food in her backpack. Under her cot, neatly organized, are Lisa's torn backpack, torn shoes. A small scroll is hiding under the backpack. It's a torn page from the notebook. At the top, in blue pencil, a note: "*Thanx 4 the book. C'ya soon!*"

I look at the song and smile. I look up and see God's canvas: the colors create a new day. With one word He can change these young lives. He will. *Even if I don't see it with my own eyes, He is watching over them.*

As I exit the building, I glance at the closed dark-blue door. Tears blur my vision. I pray my work was acceptable, honest in God's sight. I begin my long journey home. I take out Lisa's music from my backpack and hum: "*Jesu, joy of man's desiring; holy wisdom, love most bright.*" Reading through the colorful pencils used, I recognize how much black and white has permeated my daily living. *In 48 hours I have walked the entire colorful gradient of human emotion.* God's canvas creates a beautiful portrait of mercy for all. What would be the names of the colors we use to minister?

"*Word of God, our flesh that fashioned with the fire of life impassioned . . .*" I look at the pencil that Lisa and I decided was the perfect color for my home office. I will call Randy, the "paint specialist," with an inspired request to change the color. I am ready to commit.

**AMEN.**<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> All organization and proper names were changed for privacy and protection.

<sup>2</sup> From Matthew 6:9-13, New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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



Refugees at a temporary accommodation in Germany.

## IT TAKES A “VILLAGE” OF CHURCHES

---

*A story of Iranian refugees in Germany*

**BIRGIT BRACKMANN**

I work professionally as a caterer, and one of the tasks is the delivery of lunch meals to schools. Toward the end of the summer holidays in 2015 my boss asked me and my coworkers if we would volunteer to participate in food distribution to refugees. About 150 refugees who needed to be fed were soon to be accommodated in the school gym of our town Bergheim/Erft in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. Help was needed in the evenings and on weekends. As an early riser, I agreed to help with the preparation and delivery of breakfast on Sundays.

### **FIVE OPEN-MINDED MEN**

The refugees—which included many children and elderly people—had gone through terrible experiences. As helpers, we particularly noticed five young men who were exceptionally polite and had soon learned to say, “Good morning. How are you?” in German. Two of them were brothers, along with their cousin from Iran. They had been joined by two men from Syria.

One Sunday my family and I invited the five men to our home after lunch. They sat in our living room on the sofa, and we asked them many questions about life

in their home countries, and about their flight to Germany. Afterward we had fun playing board games. For dinner we wanted to order pizza for all of us, but they politely declined. Instead, they prepared a wonderful meal for us from ingredients and leftovers we had on hand in the house. It was a great evening!

Five days later my family and I were celebrating my birthday and invited the five young men to join us. Three of them came; the other two were attending the Muslim feast of Eid-el-Kabir (“Feast of the Sacrifice”). As part of the birthday celebration I had also invited some friends from the local Adventist church. One of the young men, Hemin,\* a Kurd from Iran, talked to a couple from our church. Their conversation turned to religion. Although he had grown up in a Muslim country, Hemin identified himself as an atheist. For him, the Muslim faith was out of the question.

### CHANGE OF LOCATION

After a certain period of time of staying in the initial reception facility, newly arrived refugees are relocated throughout Germany. Hemin had to move to a small village called Uedem. It lies northeast of the Ruhr area, the largest industrial region in Germany, not far from the border with the Netherlands. In the next larger town, Kevelaer, there is an Adventist church. Since I personally know Christiane, the wife of the local pastor there, I asked her to look after Hemin. At the same time I kept in touch with him through social media. From Christiane I learned that Hemin was regularly attending the worship services, that he was very comfortable in the church, and that he had even begun to pray.

### FRIENDSHIP CAMP

The North Rhine-Westphalian Conference, to which we belong, organizes a Friendship Camp once a year. This camp meeting is intended for church members and their non-Adventist friends. There are recreational activities such as games and excursions, but also spiritual programs. This allows interested people to learn about the Adventist faith and church in an informal environment. I decided to invite Hemin to Friendship Camp.

Meanwhile, Hemin’s brother, Amez, arrived in Germany from Iran. He was assigned accommodation in a small village near Oldenburg, in northern Germany. Amez had been severely tortured in Iran

and has suffered from schizophrenia ever since. In order to live near his brother, Hemin applied to the appropriate authorities to move to the same place, and his request was granted. I contacted the pastor of the Adventist church in Oldenburg and asked him to take care of Amez, which he did. I then also invited Amez to Friendship Camp. Although both brothers now lived in another federal state (Lower Saxony), the North Rhine-Westphalian Conference agreed to pay for their camp costs. I took care of the costs of their train travel.

### A BLESSED EXPERIENCE

On July 20, 2016, Friendship Camp started, and I picked up Hemin and Amez from the train station. I was startled when I first saw Amez because his face was marked by torture scars. He had already had 10 operations, but the injuries were still visible.

Friendship Camp proved to be a great blessing for the brothers, especially for Hemin. The very reserved Amez, though, gradually warmed up and took part in all the programs. At the end of the camp meeting when a person was baptized, it moved Hemin to entrust his life to God. Sometime later he told me that he wanted to be baptized. Amez also occasionally attends services at the Adventist church in Oldenburg.

### WHAT IF?

What would have happened if I had not followed “God’s voice” and had not volunteered for the food distribution in the refugee shelter? What would have happened if I had not invited the five men to our home? What would have happened if the Adventist churches in Kevelaer and Oldenburg had not looked after Hemin and Amez?

Sure, God has a thousand ways to work that we know not of. But I am proud of the wonderful spiritual family of Adventism. Although I did not personally know most of my brothers and sisters of faith in the other places but contacted them only through social media and telephone, they opened their hearts, and together we were able to help people who had been persecuted in their home countries to find a new spiritual home. ♣

\*Names in this article have been changed.

**Birgit Brackmann** is a member of the Adventist church in Bergheim/Erft in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. She and her husband have two adult children.



# PROPHET URGES <sup>Worthless</sup> LAND PURCHASE

## CARTER REPORT ADVENTIST HEROES



*This painting of Ellen White by Eric Were hangs in her Sunnyside home in Cooranbong, Australia.*

Courtesy of the Ellen G. White Estate, Inc.

“This soil is worthless, it won’t support a bandicoot,” said the government expert. “Not so!” said the prophet, “This land is good land.” The place was Cooranbong, Australia. The prophet was Ellen G. White. The year was 1894. Where some saw disaster, she saw destiny. She worked to convince the doubters. The property of 1450 acres at \$3.00 an acre was eventually purchased by the fledgling

church. All with a gentle, persistent push from Ellen. She saw a flourishing college where others saw only gum trees and kangaroos.

I became a student at Avondale when I was 16. Her influence at the college, so many years after her Aussie pilgrimage, was pervasive and persuasive. In my boyish enthusiasm, I felt I was walking on holy ground...



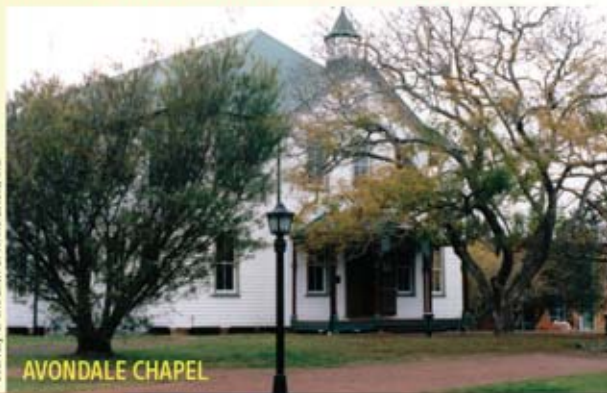
## ADVERTISEMENT

Everywhere I looked, I could see the results of her ministry. Pastor Archibald Heffren, my English teacher, remarked, "See how wide apart are the nails in the chapel floor. That's because the pioneers led by Mrs. White had so few resources." They did what needed to be done, inspired by a frail woman who stretched the faith of ordinary men. They persevered and triumphed in the midst of tough times and learned to march to the beat of a different Drummer. Ellen White showed the way.

At Avondale, so far removed from the bustle of city life, I read her books. Especially meaningful to me was *Desire of Ages*, written during her Australian years. This book told the story of Christ. The chapters on His death, atoning sacrifice, and glorious resurrection, moved me to

become a minister of the Gospel. Later on, her book *Evangelism* confronted me with the disturbing truth that only Jesus saves. The revelation that, "there is no other name," pushed me out of my comfort zone to become an evangelist. ✦

**For God's glory, we proclaim Ellen Gould White a Carter Report Adventist Hero.**



Courtesy of the Ellen G. White Estate, Inc.

AVONDALE CHAPEL



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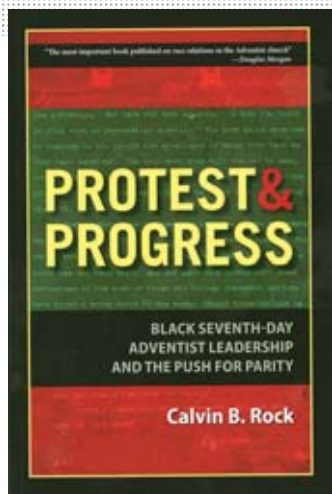
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# CLOSER LOOK



## Protest and Progress

*Protest and Progress: Black Seventh-day Adventist Leadership and the Push for Parity*, by Calvin B. Rock, Andrews University Press, Berrien Springs, Michigan, 2018, 318 pages. Softcover, US\$19.99. Reviewed by Stephen Chavez, *Adventist Review*.

**R**eading *Protest and Progress* is to read an instant classic. It is a detailed, well-annotated account of the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as it relates to its African American members.

The author, Calvin B. Rock, is retired after serving as a general vice president of the General Conference, president of Oakwood University, and chair of several important boards and committees. His is a voice of credibility. Beyond that, Rock is a bridge between Adventist past and its present. His maternal grandmother, Etta Littlejohn Bradford, was among the first 16 students to enroll in Oakwood Industrial School (now Oakwood University).

With amazing (and sometimes overwhelming) detail, the author traces the positions of White Adventist pioneers—

almost all of whom were abolitionists—comparing them with later administrators, most of whom practiced, though they did not publicly advocate, separation between Blacks and Whites. In the process he tells the stories of such captivating personalities as Charles Kinny, Lewis Sheafe, James Howard, and W. H. Green, who worked, with varying degrees of success, to bring the races closer together.

The story of Black inclusion in the life and leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church reflects in many ways the experience of African Americans in the wider population in the United States. Through the last half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, Black and White individuals in both spheres were expected to know their place and behave accordingly.

But the gospel's imperatives of equality and inclusion permeate the book, which is divided into three parts: The Protest Movements, The Challenge Ahead, and Appendices.

The first section deals primarily with attempts by Black Adventist leaders to be represented at all levels of church administration. It details their incremental progress in what was essentially a segregated system. Particularly heartbreaking is reading the correspondence between church, school, and hospital administrators and Black constituents as to why Blacks (or Coloreds as they were then known) could not be accommodated in their respective institutions. It is a chapter in our history that we would rather forget, but dare not.

In *The Challenge Ahead*, the author examines the pros and cons of “regional conferences,” the accommodation the church developed in the 1940s to give Blacks more autonomy in charting their own course administratively. Arguments both for and against are presented objectively, leaving it to readers to decide the best path forward.

The appendices are remarkably comprehensive, containing letters and minutes of meetings at which relationships between the races were discussed and catalogued.

Sadly, the church has often been a step or two behind society in grappling with these issues. But current news headlines and newsfeeds remind us of society's continued struggle with them and demonstrate that this book about the past is compellingly relevant today. *Protest and Progress* is a great tool for helping us learn our lessons about race. ▀





PETER N. LANDLESS

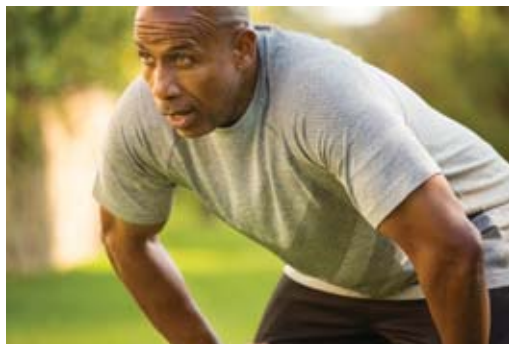
ZENO L. CHARLES-MARCEL

## Marathon! Me?

*I don't think so.*

**Q:** I've been a couch potato, but this year I'm changing that. In January I started walking more, and I've been working out in a fitness center once a week since Valentine's Day. I haven't lost any weight, but my clothes fit a little better. Some high school friends are encouraging me to "move up" to running marathons with them to slim down and "really get in shape." Do I have to run marathons to improve my health? I hope not!

**A:** The short answer to your question is no! While marathon running is at an all-time peak, neither you nor anyone else *needs* to run a marathon to get fit, to optimize body weight, or to get the health benefits of regular activity. You don't have to run to get the benefit of moving (aerobic) exercise. Regular activity of almost any kind delivers some benefit, but you have to do enough for it to be beneficial. The National Runners' Health Study (113,472 runners, of which 40 percent are marathoners) and the National Walkers' Health Study (42,000 walkers) showed that walking can be as beneficial as running. Equivalent amounts of running and walking provide the same degree of benefit in terms of blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes, and heart disease outcomes. The more energy walkers and runners use, the more their cardiovascular health improved up to the cutoff level, which was way less than marathon running. For example, aerobic exercisers doing 75 minutes of vigorous exercise per week (equivalent to running about 4.5 to 7.5 miles [7.2 to 12.1 kilometers] per week) have a 40 percent lower risk of heart disease and a 40 percent reduced risk of developing high blood pressure. Surprisingly, runners have about 20 percent lower risk of degenerative arthritis and hip replacement than leisure walkers. This is probably because of better joint mechanics and better weight management, as suggested by the observation that higher-mileage runners (15 to 23 miles [24 to 37 kilometers] per week) have a 16 percent lower risk of osteoarthritis and a 50 per-



cent lower risk of hip replacement than those who run fewer than eight miles per week.

Marathoners are more prone to accidents and injuries, especially anterior knee pain, Achilles tendinitis, blistering, chafing, falls, shin splints, stress fractures, and overuse problems. Some 35-50 percent have training-related ailments. Additionally, marathoners may have depressed immune function beyond a 10-kilometer [6.2 mile] run. And, ironically, most marathoners don't lose weight.

Some studies show a "reverse J-shaped" relationship between running intensity and health risks. This means that as the intensity of exercise increases, the risk of heart disease decreases but then rises when sustained intensity is too high. Nonetheless, should you wish to train for a marathon, a pretraining evaluation for silent heart disease is prudent, and it is better to increase training intensity gradually. The frequency and regularity of physical activity should be the initial goals. It takes the heart nine to 12 months to reach its maximal training potential. And remember, health is more than any ONE thing. Take care of all the other aspects too! ♣

**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.

## FACING THE FUTURE UNAFRAID

We recently asked our readers to respond to the following questions: Thinking about our traditional Adventist interpretation of prophecy and end-time events, what are you most looking forward to? What causes you the greatest anxiety? In what kind of preparation are you involved? Here are a few of the responses we received.—Editors.

When I was growing up the idea of the time of trouble crowded out the joy of seeing Jesus return. I looked with suspicion at other Christians because they didn't go to church on Sabbath. Now I look for good in everyone. I just want to be like Jesus when He returns.

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**ABBIE, FLORIDA.**  
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It's been 50 years since I was converted. I've pretty much shed my expectations, good or bad. It's about living the Christian life. If God thinks this worthless slave/unprofitable servant belongs in heaven, I'll be there; if not, I won't. It's His call.

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**DANIEL, MICHIGAN.**  
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I'm looking forward to Jesus' coming, but I wonder if I have confessed everything, and if my character is what it should be.

-----  
**DEBBIE, MARYLAND.**  
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I've pretty much given up trying to interpret the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. But I'm still committed to being the best husband, father, neighbor, and employee I can be. God is in charge of the rest.

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**FRANKLIN, PENNSYLVANIA.**  
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I'm looking forward to sitting at the welcome table, so I can eat with Jesus, family, and biblical characters. I love to eat and chat, so that will be exciting. The only anxiety I feel is that I haven't done enough to share the good news. I'm involved in helping kids to know Jesus, and planting the seed of His love in their hearts.

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**GERRY, MARYLAND.**  
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**M**y family and I lead a small group studying different Bible topics, mostly those related to the Second Coming and what the New Jerusalem will look like. I would like to see Eve's innocent, beautiful face, and to see how she is the image of Jesus, her descendant. My anxiety is "Father, please be patient while my relatives make up their mind in favor of the eternal gospel."

**ISRAEL, SONORA, MEXICO.**

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**S**itting and listening to Jesus tell stories.

**JANA, NEVADA.**

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**I**am most looking forward to Jesus coming again!  
Soon!

**KERMIT, MARYLAND.**

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**N**o more pain. No more death, cancer, disease,  
and sorrow.

**MELODY, CALIFORNIA.**

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**J**esus said false christs and false prophets would deceive, if possible, "even the elect" (Matt. 24:24). But He also said, "I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). I have no time for those who emphasize fear over hope. I choose to live in hope and joy.

**MARVIN, ILLINOIS.**

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**T**he outpouring of the Holy Spirit as it was on the day of Pentecost. (2) Not knowing when to leave the cities, and where to go. (3) No preparation.

**NEELAM, CALIFORNIA.**

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**I**am looking forward to seeing my grandmother in heaven. She lived the biblical example of Lois. Her faith was passed on to generations that followed her as a lasting legacy. My husband and I are writing a book about the biblical role of grandparenting to help others catch a glimpse of how all who follow in the family tree can be impacted by the life they lived.

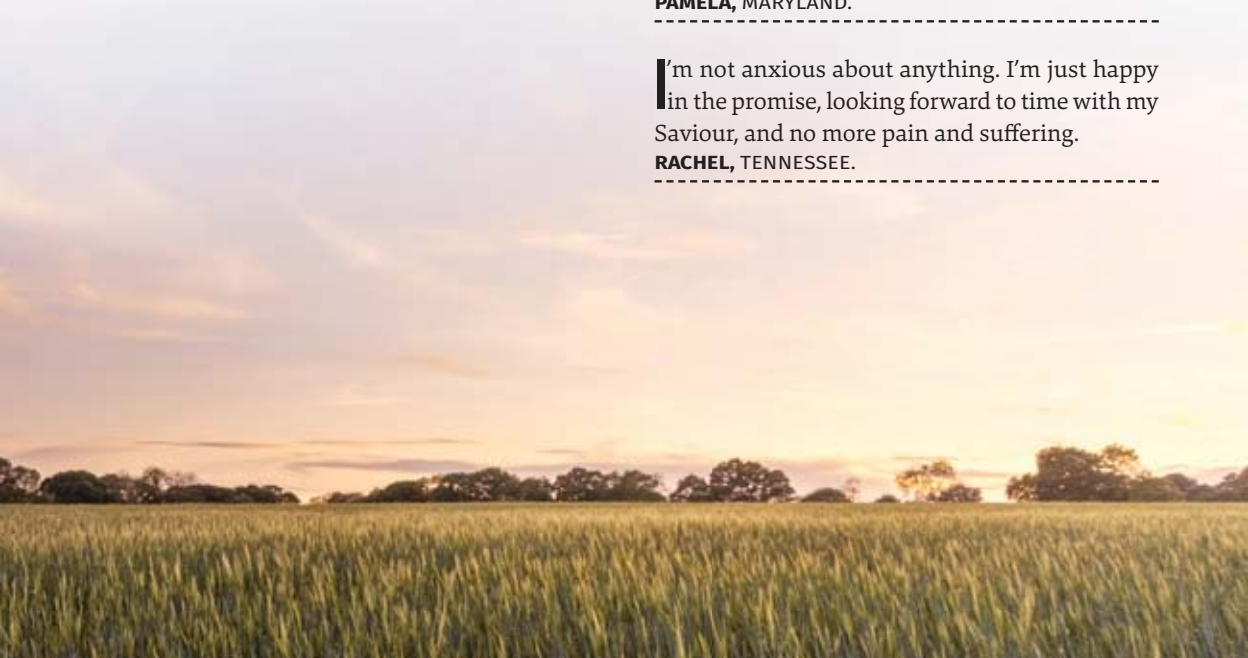
**PAMELA, MARYLAND.**

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**I**'m not anxious about anything. I'm just happy in the promise, looking forward to time with my Saviour, and no more pain and suffering.

**RACHEL, TENNESSEE.**

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## Dare to Be a Daniel

**F**resh out of teacher's training college, I was referred by one of my friends for a position at a private high school that she was unable to accept. St Dominic's Convent was scheduled to reopen in less than two weeks, and they needed someone desperately.

Sister Moira-Ann Roach, the mother superior, was an impressive individual, soft-spoken with an unmistakable aura of authority, yet approachable and warm, with a pleasant twinkle in her eyes.

In our discourse I stated that I would be present at Mass in the mornings to take charge of my class, but would be unavailable for any extracurricular activities held on Saturdays because of my religion. She knew what my religious beliefs entailed and indicated that all would be well.

All went well until the midsemester staff meeting, where the discussion centered on the annual fund-raising fair that the school hosted. Every classroom was expected to participate by providing some type of refreshment as well as a musical number for the concert, which was the highlight of the evening. Teachers were expected to supervise their students, especially during the concert. The fair was scheduled for the last Saturday in November.

*Lord, what do I do now?* I thought. After taking a deep breath I pledged my support in preparing for the event, although I made it clear that I wouldn't be attending.

"Is this a test, Lord?" I cried silently. "Because if it is, I'm relying on You for support."

My class was to be responsible for the

fruit punch and a Christmas song. I shared with the students my expectation of total obedience to Cassandra, the senior helper, who agreed to fill in for me at the fair. The song "O Come All Ye Faithful" was to be sung in Latin. We practiced pronouncing the words phonetically, singing in two-part harmony, and walking on and off stage, all while taking cues from Cassandra.

Some weeks later Sister Moira enquired as to our progress for the fair, and I took the opportunity to remind her of my non-attendance. She expressed her concerns for the decorum, or lack thereof, that might be on display in my absence. And since the holy father and other priests would be attending, she felt that I might want to reconsider my stance just this once. I reassured her that my students would be on their best behavior, even though my heart was doubtful.

That Sabbath a special session of prayer was offered up by family and friends on behalf of my students. On Monday a beaming Cassandra couldn't wait to report on how well the girls had behaved, and of the surprise on the faces of the nuns, including Sister Moira, when the girls began singing in Latin "Adeste Fideles"—so much so that all the nuns joined in sing. Later they congratulated me on a job well done even though I wasn't there, and Sister Moira showed me an additional measure of respect.

All the praise for that event belonged to God, and gratitude to the angels who surely sang with my class that day. Thinking of Sister Moira still transports me back many years to the day I dared to stand.

**Marvene Thorpe-Baptiste** is editorial assessment coordinator for *Adventist Review*.

**I PLEDGED MY SUPPORT FOR THE EVENT, ALTHOUGH I MADE IT CLEAR THAT I WOULDN'T BE ATTENDING.**

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**GOYANG, KOREA**

August 8 - 12, 2018

Global Adventist Internet Network (GAiN) is a conference designed to foster the use of technology, media and the internet to help the mission of the Adventist Church. Through annual, worldwide events, we seek to educate and train communication and technology professionals in finding new ways to reach their communities. Who is GAiN for? GAiN is a conference for people who work in communication, media and technology both professionally and in their local churches.



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