

ADVENTIST REVIEW

FEBRUARY 2019: GOD'S GUIDING HAND + THE GOOD NEIGHBOR CHURCH + RECLAIMING THE WORD + LIARS AND THE LIES THEY TELL + GOD, MAKE ME UNCOMFORTABLE + SHOULD I GO GLUTEN-FREE?

ON BEING A BLACK WOMAN IN AMERICA



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FEATURES

- 18 **PAYING THE BLESSINGS FORWARD** | WILONA KARIMABADI
Toson Knight's specialty is reaching out to at-risk youth.



- 22 **GOD'S GUIDING HAND** | STEPHEN CHAVEZ
Ella Smith Simmons didn't ask to become a General Conference vice president; in fact, she never imagined it.



- 28 **LEARNING TO LOVE DIFFERENCE** | PATRICK JOHNSON
God doesn't ignore ethnic differences: sometimes He obliterates them.

- 40 **ON BEING A BLACK WOMAN IN AMERICA** | JOAN FRANCIS
We still deal with centuries-old racial and gender prejudice and stereotyping.

“If we are to learn to love difference, we have to understand that our natural reaction as fallen human beings is to be suspicious of, and inclined to reject, those who are different from us.”

30

ARTICLES

- 34 **EVERYONE HAS A TESTIMONY**
LEWIS HENDERSHOT
How we face trials says a lot about who we are and whom we worship.
- 36 **THE LETTER**
LENORA STACKHOUSE
When a few words on a piece of paper make all the difference
- 38 **GOD, MAKE ME UNCOMFORTABLE**
PRESTON MONTERREY
There’s a reason we are sometimes forced to leave our comfort zones.
- 46 **LOVING OUR ENEMIES**
LYNETTE FRANTZEN
AND LAEL CAESAR
We don’t forgive because we don’t know forgiveness.
- 50 **THE GOOD NEIGHBOR CHURCH**
ROYSON JAMES
There once was a church in Toronto . . .
- 54 **LEARNING FORGIVENESS FROM THE AMISH**
DAVID ZACKRISON
Twelve years ago a terrible tragedy taught a nation about forgiveness.
- 58 **TRUE LOVE AT HOME**
ELLEN G. WHITE
Timeless advice about how to treasure those closest to us
- 60 **WALK IT!**
AUDREY WEIR-GRAHAM
“I’d rather see a sermon than hear one any day.”
- 62 **MERIT OR MERCY?**
HANNAH KOH LUTTELL
Jesus knows about two things: law and mercy.

NEWS | OPINION

- » Innovative Cardiologist Joan Coggin Dies
- » Adventists Lobby Australia’s Parliament
- » Memorial Medallions Designed to Honor Adventists
- » *Envision* Magazine Wins Pacemaker Award
- » Theologians Highlight Discipleship
- » Leadership Conference Encourages Innovation



EDITORIAL

- 5 **BILL KNOTT**
RECLAIMING THE WORD

DEPARTMENTS

- 6 **LETTERS**
- 57 **HOUSE CALL**
- 68 **CLOSER LOOK**
- 70 **VOICES**

COLUMNS

- 27 **TRANSFORMATION TIPS**
DELBERT W. BAKER
- 45 **CURE FOR THE COMMON LIFE**
HYVETH WILLIAMS
- 65 **INTRODUCING THE WHY**
JIMMY PHILLIPS
- 72 **IN OTHER WORDS**
LAEL CAESAR

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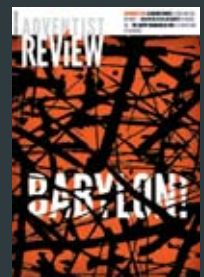
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people's lives changed at the same time. For these reasons, and many more, CORE truly is a life transforming experience.

BILL KNOTT



“The most obvious casualty has been the prominent place once given to the reading of Scripture.”

Reclaiming the Word

The camp meeting worship leader was clearly flummoxed. He searched the faces of the other huddled platform participants to find support for turning down my unusual request.

When none came to his rescue, he cleared his throat and asked with painful politeness, “So you want to have your passage of Scripture read aloud immediately before your sermon tonight? We don’t usually do that here.”

I mentally rehearsed the sequence of e-mails from the conference office months earlier, insisting that the titles—and the Scripture passages—for each of my six messages must be in hand by February 1. I had complied, grimly guessing that the Bible texts would never make their way into either the bulletin or the worship services.

And I was right—again—a fact in which I take no satisfaction. As Adventist worship styles have evolved in a Christian culture of pervasive Pentecostalism during the past three decades, the most obvious casualty has been the prominent place once given to the reading of Scripture in the worship experience and as the foundation of the sermon. In fully half the Adventist congregations I visit each year, the Scripture reading has either completely disappeared or else been relegated to an introductory element of a worship

service that seems designed to keep me “uplifted” and smiling, tapping my toe, and laughing at the preacher’s anecdotes about the challenges of changing diapers.

Let me be clear: I’m not at all averse to worship songs (substantive ones, please) that draw out my affection for Jesus, nor do I have some strange nostalgia for the grim formalism that characterized some of the Adventist worship I knew as a child and young adult. This isn’t a protest about projecting worship songs and hymns on a screen at the front of the sanctuary, though I’ll admit I miss the four-part harmony of hymns once common in many Adventist congregations. It is, however, a cautionary tale about allowing the cultural diminishment of the Bible now standard in many Protestant faiths to become normative for a remnant movement explicitly founded on the public proclamation of the Word.

By definition, Adventists don’t come on Sabbath to hear a beautiful and moving human word about God, whoever He is. We come instead to hear a heaven-inspired and decisive divine word about us, whoever we are. The most brilliant sermon isn’t the one that has me swooning at the preacher’s wordcraft or weeping at the stories, but the meditation that opens up the depths of Scripture with such clarity and practicality that I

can’t forget that Word for the next six days, despite the devil’s distractions.

And it all begins with the prominence we give to the Bible in our worship services. If Scripture is only (weakly) read to introduce the theme we intend to follow—“Friendship” or “The Dangers of Judgmentalism”—it provides us neither guidance nor controls on what we choose to say about the topic. But if those planning the worship service, and specifically the preacher, have sat long enough with the Word to let it get down beneath the feel-good bromides we’re inclined to offer each other, then there is a chance—no, actually a likelihood—that we will see and bow before the Lord whom Isaiah saw: “The Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple” (Isa. 6:1, NRSV).*

When I’m invited to a pulpit, I now routinely offer to read aloud the passage of Scripture about which I will then preach—all 12 or 16 verses of it. And on my better days I remember to add one line before I pick up my meditation on the text: “*You have already heard the most important words you will hear today.*”[†]

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Bill Knott

My thanks to all of you at the *Review* for the stimulating, thought-provoking, and potentially mind-altering magazine you produce every month.

MERLIN NICHOLS, CHETWYND, BRITISH COLUMBIA

BUILDING BRIDGES

I appreciated the messages by Bill Knott and Stephen Chavez as we look to another year of plans and resolutions.

As Chavez wrote, it is good to have a new beginning. Unfortunately, many people start the year with great aspirations and are frustrated as time goes by. The secret is to discipline ourselves daily to have worship, to exercise, and to have a healthy lifestyle. The Lord will help us with our weaknesses. The more we set our priorities, the more they will become a part of our lives.

How timely was the article “A Kite, a String, and a Bridge,” by Bill Knott (January 2019)? He does not need to tell us that we live in “fractious times.” Never before have we seen such division in our world. We need to launch a kite of peace and understanding with our fellow citizens, families, and church members.

More than ever we need to see fervent prayers, reconciliation, and forgiveness as part of our Christian life. Let us make a prayer list, a vow not to criticize, and be the loving force that changes lives.

Leo Ranzolin, Sr.
Estero, Florida



if it offends, or cut off one's right arm if it offends. Surely one's eye or one's arm can commit no offense, but one's mind can and does.

In my opinion, Jesus wasn't asking us to literally gouge out our eyes or cut off our hands. And He never mentioned nor implied resisting a criminal life-threatening assault on ourselves or others.

It seems clear that He was speaking figuratively in order to make the point that one shouldn't be vengeful, but rather seek to have a positive or even redeeming influence. My reading of Jesus' teaching is that rather than always delineating rules to follow, He often spoke in allegory to illustrate principles to live by. We can remember that religious leaders of the day had themselves and their followers all tied up with human rules while they forgot about the actual principles of a loving God that are behind true religion. We can do the same today, but we shouldn't.

I may keep the Sabbath

DOES GOD LIKE MY GUN?

I have a few thoughts to add regarding the article “Does God Like My Gun?” (November 2018).

In Matthew 5 Jesus talks about

turning the other cheek when one is slapped, and walking an extra mile when forced to walk one mile. He also stated that one should pluck out one's right eye

We are a *Review* family, and the favorite column in our home is Searching the Obvious.

P. ANDREW, VIA WEB

slightly different than another Sabbathkeeper does, as I may interpret the principle of Sabbathkeeping differently. Still, I am not entitled to judge and tell others that they are wrong according to my rules. I also cannot tell you that you are wrong and encourage you to violate your conscience while defending myself or innocent others. But on the other hand, by not responding I would have a difficult time living with myself.

Dan Burrington
via Web

WITH THANKS

I was perusing the September 2018 issue of *Adventist Review* from back to front as I frequently do on Friday evenings. I was startled to see a familiar image: a cover image of *Between Rivers*, my latest book. It took a moment for the image to register as it was not expected.

Please pass on my thanks for the book review. My thanks to all of you at the *Review* for the stimulating, thought-provoking, and potentially mind-altering magazine you produce every month. There is seldom an issue that doesn't get read from back to front—or the middle, depend-

IN A FEW WORDS...

CLIFF'S EDGE—AMERICA IN PROPHECY

Wow! America became a global power that fits Revelation 13 only after World War II or 1945, about a full century from 1851. This is a humbling and amazing vindication of Adventist prophetic interpretation. I hope and pray that it will encourage and inspire many Adventists as we study this quarter's Sabbath School lesson so that we might be ready and prepare others for the second coming of Christ.

Elijah Mvundura, via Web

IN MEMORIAM: ELLSWORTH WAREHAM PASSES AWAY AT 104

He was an amazing man. An exemplary Christian and an inspiration to many vegans. May he rest in peace.

Kayla Perrin, via Web

ing on which columnist is there.

I particularly appreciate the depth of Bill Knott's editorials and Cliff's Edge.

Merlin Nichols
Chetwynd, British Columbia

AN INSPIRATION

For several years we have read

Dixil Rodríguez in the *Adventist Review*. We are a *Review* family, and the favorite column in our home is Searching the Obvious. Thank you for the lovely Christmas story ("Room at the Inn" [December 2018]).

P. Andrew
via Web

YOUR TURN

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



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Adventist Child India was conceived and built by Dorothy and Ron Watts. Today, it is led by Bill and Nancy Mattison-Mack.

As a recognized authority in the field of cardiology, Coggin wrote and lectured extensively and shared her expertise through membership in civic, community, and professional organizations.

By p. 11

NEWS



ADRA representatives and supporters take part in “Voices for Justice” at Australia’s Parliament House, December 1-4, 2018: Nathan Brown (left), Jessica Duffy, Natalie Nawaikalou, and John Smilek.

PHOTO: ADVENTIST RECORD

ADVENTISTS VOICE SUPPORT IN PARLIAMENT FOR AUSTRALIA’S POOR AND OPPRESSED

ADRA AUSTRALIA REPRESENTATIVES JOIN OTHER CHRISTIANS TO HIGHLIGHT AID EFFORTS.

BY NATHAN BROWN, ADVENTIST RECORD, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

Four representatives and supporters of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) Australia made their voices heard for Australian aid as part of Micah Australia’s “Voices for Justice” gathering in Canberra, December 1-4, 2018. They joined more than 200 representatives of Christian justice and development agencies from across Australia for two days of worship,

advocacy training, and policy briefing, followed by two days in Australia’s Parliament House.

“Micah lobby groups met with more than 90 of Australia’s elected leaders during this year’s “Voices for Justice,” said Matt Darvas, campaign director for Micah Australia, an umbrella Christian advocacy movement. “This represents a powerful—and faithful—collective voice

for the world’s poor, oppressed, and displaced.”

Amid political uncertainty in the parliament’s last week of sittings for the year 2018, “Voices for Justice” participants were alerted to the challenges and opportunities of the moment. “This is a monumental time to raise our voice on behalf of the poorest and most marginalized people in the world,” com-

INFLUENTIAL LOMA LINDA CARDIOLOGIST DIES

**JOAN COGGIN, 90, HELPED TAKE
OPEN-HEART SURGERY TEAM OVERSEAS.**

BY NANCY YUEN, LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY HEALTH, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

C Joan Coggin, the Loma Linda University Health cardiologist who in the 1960s cofounded the Loma Linda University Overseas Heart Surgery Team, died Thursday, November 29, 2018. She was 90.

In 1963 Coggin's influence extended across international borders when she and Ellsworth E. Wareham cofounded the overseas team, which was established when few hospitals performed open-heart surgeries. The Overseas Heart Surgery Team went on to perform more open-heart surgeries than any similar organization.

Coggin and Wareham pioneered the use of the heart-lung machine in southern California, United States, operating one day a week at Los Angeles County General Hospital. Each week they packed a heart-lung machine and ancillary equipment needed for cardiac surgery into the trunk of Wareham's car for the short drive from the White Memorial Medical Center to Los Angeles County Hospital.

This practice led the two physicians to conclude that they could pack all the equipment in a plane and transport it thousands of miles to make open-heart surgery available overseas.

Coggin and Wareham refined their plans for the Overseas Heart Surgery Team until the U.S. State Department, on the recommendation of then vice president Lyndon Johnson, sponsored the team on its first trip—to Pakistan. From the moment she began working on the project, Coggin was convinced it would be successful. "I always believed in dreaming dreams and not being afraid of failure," she said later.

RECORD-SETTING SERVICE

Coggin participated as a team member on numerous missions to Europe, Asia, and Africa. For more than 50 years the heart team initiated or upgraded open-heart surgery programs in Chile, Greece, Hong Kong, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, North Korea, Pakistan, the People's Republic of China, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe.

In the course of her international travel, Coggin met with heads of state from Pakistan, Greece, Saudi Arabia, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Vietnam, and Nepal. At home she met U.S. presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon.

mented Natalie Nawaikalou, ADRA Connections coordinator for ADRA Australia.

Micah Australia also celebrated the passing of the Modern Slavery Act on November 29, which requires Australian businesses to file annual reports to address modern slavery risks in their operations and supply chains. At the same time, Micah Australia asked Australia's politicians to match this legislation with financial support for the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery. "It has taken years of advocacy to see this bill passed, but we need more of us to raise our voices to continue to urge an end to these despicable practices and to set the oppressed free," said Nawaikalou.

A volunteer regional coordinator for ADRA in Victoria, John Smilek, was a first-time participant at "Voices for Justice."

"It was great to collaborate with Christians from many different groups, and see the passion so many others have on these issues," Smilek said. "Our meetings with politicians were positive, and they appreciated that we knew what we were talking about on the issues we were focusing on.

"I have been reminded how important justice is to us as Christians, as an aspect of our faith that we have sometimes forgotten. It is empowering to speak up on behalf of those whose voices are not heard in these places. This is a practical way in which we can love our neighbors, as Jesus taught." ❧



C. Joan Coggin, the Loma Linda University Health cardiologist who in the 1960s co-founded the Loma Linda University Overseas Heart Surgery Team, died Thursday, November 29, 2018, at 90. PHOTOS: LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY HEALTH NEWS

TY HEALTH NEWS

An authority in the field of cardiology, she held administrative and teaching positions at Loma Linda University Health and wrote and lectured extensively.

Coggin's administrative and teaching capacities at Loma Linda University Health included serving as vice president for global outreach; special assistant to the president for international affairs; associate dean for international programs; and professor at the School of Medicine.

"Joan Coggin was an icon at Loma Linda University. Her passion for helping those in need and her dedication to teaching others how to enhance the level of care in their countries leave a legacy around the world," said Loma Linda University Health president Richard Hart. "She will also be remembered for her sense of humor, which infected those with whom she came into contact and even helped to ease tense situations."

ABOUT HER LIFE AND STUDIES

Charlotte Joan Coggin was born August 6, 1928, in Washington, D.C., to Charles B. and Nanette Coggin. When she was an infant the family moved to California so her father could attend the School of Medicine at the College of Medical Evangelists (CME, now Loma Linda University).

Medicine and research were familiar topics in the Coggin home. Her father graduated from CME in 1935. A member of the Harveian Society of CME, Charles Coggin worked with society members to raise the consciousness at Loma Linda University about the importance of research at a time when many faculty members either could not see its value or felt they did not have time or funding to pursue it.

Joan Coggin was a toddler during the Great Depression when her father became editor of *Harveian*



Cardiologist Joan Coggin (right)

Review, a journal that featured articles and editorials describing the value of research.

She received her undergraduate degree from Columbia Union College, Takoma Park, Maryland, in 1948, and her medical doctor (M.D.) degree from CME School of Medicine as a member of the class of 1953-A.

After completing medical school, Coggin pursued postgraduate training at Los Angeles County General Hospital (1952-1955), and a fellowship in cardiology at Children's Hospital of Los Angeles (1955-1956). In 1958 she was board certified in pediatrics by the American Board of Pediatrics.

She wanted to become a pediatrician until she learned that adult cardiologists did most pediatric cardiology at the time. Intrigued by the challenges associated with congenital heart disease—the types of heart diseases most often seen in pediatric patients—she completed additional study at Hammersmith Hospital in London, England (1955-1957), and a fellowship at The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, Ontario, Canada (1965-1967). In 1987 she earned a Master of Public Health degree from Loma Linda University School of Public Health.

Coggin began her career when women made up less than 5 percent of medical school graduates nationally. During more than 50

years of her involvement, she built a cardiology practice and professional reputation that earned for her a place of distinction in American medical history. Of her decision to enter medicine she stated, "I didn't know any other life than that of a physician. I had my second birthday in Loma Linda when my father entered the School of Medicine. I grew up always wanting to become a physician."

IN SEARCH OF EXCELLENCE

As a recognized authority in the field of cardiology, Coggin wrote and lectured extensively and shared her expertise through membership in civic, community, and professional organizations. Of her decision to pursue cardiology she said, "One of the reasons I changed my mind was that often a child could be so sick one day, and the next day the child would be perfectly all right. What I like about cardiology is that you can figure out what the problem is. You have clues. You have the patient's history. If the heart makes a certain type of sound, you know immediately what the problem is."

The importance of medical research, which her father had impressed upon her as a child, was ingrained in Coggin's career. She was a principal author or coauthor of more than 50 scientific articles published in peer-reviewed publications.

“It just boggles the mind to think of the advances that medicine will make in the next 50 years, if time should last!” she marveled as she recalled discarding a teaching slide she had created titled “Cardiac Conditions for Which There Is No Treatment.” Advances in medicine had made it possible for all 12 of the listed conditions to be successfully treated.

On February 24, 2004, Coggin’s contributions to Loma Linda University Health were celebrated by friends and colleagues as she concluded a half century of service as a teacher, administrator, and goodwill ambassador. The same year she was named professor emerita, Department of Medicine, School of Medicine; and Loma Linda University Health presented her with the President’s Award.

Additional awards she received include: Distinguished University Service Award (Loma Linda University); Lifetime Achievement Award (Association of Adventist Women); Outstanding Woman of the Year in Science Award (California Museum of Science and Industry); Gold Medal of Health (Ministry of Health of South Vietnam), Zella Hobert Award (Columbia Union College); Honorary Doctor of Humanitarian Service (La Sierra University).

A consultant to the television and motion picture industries for medically oriented programs, Coggin was once presented with the Golden Eagle Cine Award at the Venice Film Festival.

In 2003 she edited and published the book *Into All the World: Adventist Hospitals and Dental Clinics Overseas*.

When asked what was most gratifying to her as a physician, Coggin responded: “To see people who were incapacitated—whether young or old—and then seeing them well again. This is what makes medicine very rewarding. 🍀

MEMORIAL MEDALLIONS HONOR SERVICE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

“TIL HE COMES” GRAVE MARKER IS A WITNESSING OPPORTUNITY, SAY LEADERS.

BY LUCAS L. JOHNSON II, SOUTHERN TIDINGS

God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them,” reads Hebrews 6:10.

In just about every war, individuals who have defended our nation have been recognized for their service. Many times that recognition has come after they are deceased, and is very much deserved.

What if a similar form of acknowledgment could be used to recognize Seventh-day Adventists who served on the spiritual battlefield, winning souls for Christ? Just as men and women in the U.S. armed forces receive medals, what if something similar to a medal could be placed on the grave markers of Adventist clergy and educators in recognition of their service?

WHY A MEDALLION?

R. Steven Norman III, Southern Union Conference communication director, came up with the idea for such a medallion.

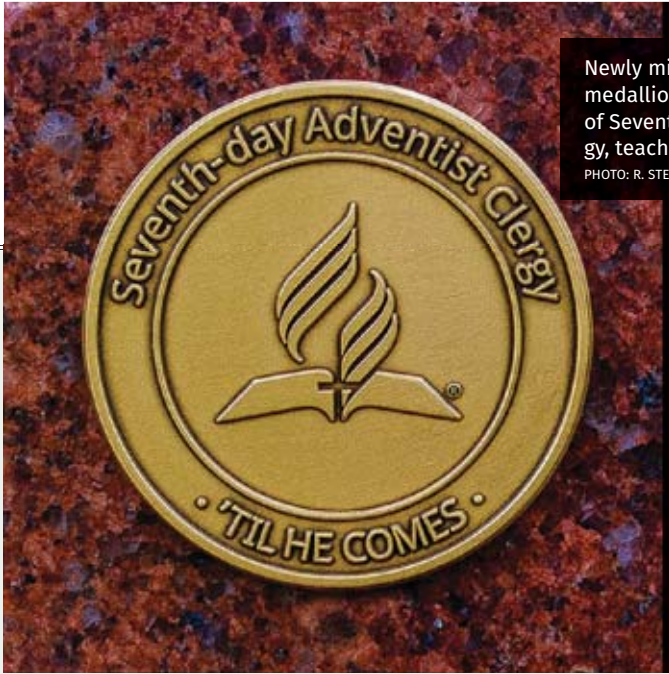
“I was walking in a cemetery and noticed a medallion for Meth-

odist clergy,” Norman said. “There are also medallions for U.S. military veterans. I decided to develop a medallion that can be placed on the grave markers of Seventh-day Adventist clergy and educators who give so much of their lives building the kingdom of God. It is a tribute to their service and a way to express the church’s gratitude to their families.”

The Seventh-day Adventist Clergy Memorial Medallion was developed by the Southern Union Conference Communication Department in collaboration with Roger Hernandez, ministerial director, and Debra Fryson, education superintendent.

Inscribed at the base of the medallion is the phrase, “Til He Comes.” Norman explained how the inscription came about. He said Charles E. Bradford, retired North American Division president, mentioned it including a reference to the Second Coming on his mother’s grave marker.

“I began to look through cemeteries everywhere, and saw angels, crosses, and lambs, but no mention of the Second Coming,” Norman said. “So the medallion



Newly minted special memorial medallions honor the service of Seventh-day Adventist clergy, teachers, and missionaries.

PHOTO: R. STEVEN NORMAN III

says 'Til He Comes' to commemorate the hope of every educator and minister who died in Christ Jesus. It is a silent witness."

Hernandez said that one of his hardest moments as a ministerial director was "participating in the funeral of a pastor."

"When we are able to give the medallion to a grieving family, and we are leaving the place of rest, the medallion will stay as a testament that death is not final, for we have a blessed hope," he said.

"The memorial medallion provides a way for the church to acknowledge the dedicated service teachers and pastors have given to ministry," Fryson said. "Families value knowing that the toil and sacrifice of their deceased loved one are appreciated and have not gone unnoticed."

Medallions will be presented at the funeral or memorial service of all clergy and educators who served the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Families will then arrange to have

the cemetery or funeral home affix them to the deceased's grave marker.

FIRST MEDALLIONS GIVEN

The first two medallion installation ceremonies were held recently to recognize George I. Butler and Anna Knight. Butler died on July 25, 1918. After his funeral in Oakland, California, his body was shipped to Bowling Green, Florida, where he was buried that August. One hundred years later church leaders from the Florida and Southeastern conferences, along with several from the Southern Union Conference, gathered at his grave on August 28, 2018, to pay tribute to Butler's service to the world church as president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (1871-1874 and 1880-1888), as well as president of the Florida Conference (1901-1904) and Southern Union Conference (1902-1907).

Tim Goff welcomed the visitors to the ceremony, and R. Steven

Norman III presented a biographical profile. Gregory Mack, Allan Machado, and Roger Hernandez placed the newly minted Seventh-day Adventist Clergy Memorial Medallion on Butler's grave marker. The brief but historic service concluded with everyone singing the hymn "We Have This Hope."

On September 17, 2018, a medallion ceremony was held for Anna Knight in Soso, Mississippi. Knight died June 10, 1972. In her church career she was the first Black female missionary, a teacher, an assistant director of education, a Young People's Missionary Volunteer member, and home missionary secretary for the Southeastern Conference and Southern Union Conference from 1909 until her retirement in 1946.

Those who attended Knight's ceremony included South Central Conference president Benjamin Jones; Soso Adventist Church pastor Meshach Mauia; and Dorothy Marsh, one of Knight's nieces.

"My sister Florence and I express our sincere appreciation and thanks for recognizing our aunt Anna with the Educator Memorial Medallion," Marsh said. "It is truly a testament to her legacy."

Norman emphasized the witnessing opportunity the medallion represents. "Imagine walking through a cemetery and seeing 'Seventh-day Adventist Educator' or 'Clergy' and 'Til He Comes,'" he said. "What a testimony to Christian service and a witness to Christ's second coming!"



Most of the participants at the AIIAS Annual Theological Forum gather on the campus of the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies in Silang, Cavite, Philippines, November 8, 2018.

PHOTO: ADVENTIST INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES

THEOLOGICAL FORUM LOOKS TO RECAPTURE THE IMPORTANCE OF DISCIPLESHIP

ADVENTIST SCHOLARS DISCUSS STATE OF AFFAIRS, SUGGEST A WAY FORWARD.

BY ADVENTIST INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES, AND *ADVENTIST REVIEW*

At the twenty-first AIIAS Annual Theological Forum, held at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIIAS) in Silang, Cavite, Philippines, regional and international Adventist scholars addressed the issue of discipleship and disciple-making to gain a deeper understanding of Jesus' commission for all believers. The event brought together nearly 350 theologians, pastors, and administrators, November 8-10, 2018.

"BAPTISM IS JUST THE BEGINNING"

Plenary speaker G. T. Ng, executive secretary of the Seventh-day Adventist Church headquarters, cautioned against making baptism the ultimate goal of what the Bible calls the Great Commission, the call of Jesus in Matthew 28 to make

disciples. "The end product of the Great Commission is not to baptize but to disciple. Baptism is just the beginning of the story," Ng emphasized. "After baptism, teaching continues until the church becomes a disciple-making church." Ng urged participants to make discipleship the strongest feature of the church.

Besides Ng, guest speakers included Ekkehardt Mueller, Biblical Research Institute associate director; Andrews University professor Joseph Kidder; and Bienvenido Mergal, Southern Asia-Pacific Division (SSD) vice president for nurture, discipleship, reclamation, and integrated evangelism.

Throughout the three-day event, several forum presentations emphasized the need to balance the quantitative concern with qualita-

tive checks that will help the church fulfill the Great Commission.

Remwil Tornalejo, chair of the forum committee, noted that disciple-making is a relevant topic in the context of church growth and membership retention. By having participants from different disciplines, he said, everyone has a better grasp on this vital topic.

According to Cristian Dumitrescu, AIIAS professor of intercultural studies and missiology, "The assumption that everyone knows what discipleship is and how it should be done is not warranted." Pointing to the encouraging turnout at the conference, Tornalejo noted the positive responses of participants from unions and institutions within the Southern Asia-Pacific Division (SSD) territory, which includes the Philippines.

“Through the theological forum, AIIAS shares biblical, theological, and practical insights of what is the essence of the church existence—to do mission,” he said. “Participants can engage in a dialogue with the presenters and other participants. Thus they will be able to catch the vision and mission of the church and resonate this to their respective ministries.”

PARTICIPANTS’ FEEDBACK

Among conference participants a consensus emerged for the need to make discipleship central in Adventist theology and practice. Pastors and administrators present at the meetings concluded that the loss of membership was not to be blamed solely on those who leave the church but also on the church’s desire to meet baptismal goals. The Great Commission and other messages of the Bible indicate that careful instruction before baptism and continuous growth after baptism are necessary, they said.

According to Ricardo González, AIIAS seminary dean, “everybody in the church has a practical role in the Great Commission. Discipleship is a task given to the Adventist Church to reproduce in this world the life, message, and testimony of Jesus.”

ANDREWS UNIVERSITY’S ENVISION MAGAZINE WINS PACEMAKER AWARD

STUDENT-PRODUCED MAGAZINE IS A PUBLICATION OF THE ADVENTIST SCHOOL.

**BY HANNAH GALLANT,
ANDREWS UNIVERSITY**

On October 27, 2018, Andrews University’s student-produced *Envision* magazine received a Pacemaker award from the Associated Collegiate Press (ACP).

Described by ACP as “collegiate journalism’s preeminent award,” the Pacemaker awards are presented yearly by that nonprofit educational association. Paul Kim, chair of the university’s Department of Visual Art, Communication, and Design, said, “These [awards] are widely referred to as the Pulitzer Prizes of collegiate journalism.”

Entries for the Pacemaker awards span a variety of publication types, including online publications, newspapers, yearbooks, and magazines. Each entry is judged on coverage and content; quality of writing and reporting; leadership; design; photography; and graphics.

Heather Thompson Day, assistant professor of communication at Andrews University and editor of *Envision* magazine, describes the significance of this award. “We competed against schools such as Harvard, Columbia, and Baylor. The top 17 magazine publications in the nation were selected out of approximately 125 entries from their prospective schools. The Pacemaker signifies which schools set the pace for magazine publication in the country.” She adds, “Very few Christian schools were nominated, and I believe we were the only Christian school to win.”

Envision magazine received the Pacemaker award for its tenth issue, featuring Mekayla Eppers, who was crowned Mrs. America 2018. Pictured on the cover holding a #MeToo sign, Eppers described her experiences with sexual abuse. The magazine also included stories pitched by college students on topics such as “Why Are Christians So Fake?” “Can I Be a Christian and a Feminist?” “Facebook Is Making Me Hate My Friends,” “DACA and the Death of Dreams,” and “17 Years a Slave.” Besides publication in the magazine, stories are posted to the *Envision* blog.

Founded in 1874, Andrews University is the flagship institution of higher education for the Seventh-day Adventist Church and offers more than 200 areas of study, including advanced degrees. Its main campus is in Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States, and the university also provides instruction at colleges and universities in 19 countries around the world.



Envision magazine, a student-produced publication at Andrews University, received the Associated Collegiate Press (ACP) Pacemaker award for its 10th issue, which features Mekayla Eppers, Mrs. America 2018, on the cover. PHOTO:

ENVISION MAGAZINE

Church leaders, pastors, and members showed great interest in the topics discussed at the Norwegian Union leadership conference in early November 2018. Plenary sessions were completely full.

PHOTO: TOR TJERANSEN/ADAMS



“SAME OLD SAME OLD” IS AN OUTDATED OPTION

LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE CHALLENGES PARTICIPANTS TO REFOCUS, INNOVATE.

BY WIDAR URSETT, TRANS-EUROPEAN DIVISION, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

The leadership conference held near the Norwegian Union Conference offices northeast of Oslo in Norway the first week of November 2018 was a first of its kind in the country. It was new in the sense that all local church leaders, from children’s and youth departments to elders, church officers and every pastor, collaborated on plans to empower mission on the ground. It is the place, they said, where the hands and feet of members make a difference on a daily basis.

The conference was an attempt to instill a practical approach to God’s mission. To that end, 350 delegates chose between 31 seminars, as well as attend plenary sessions presented by Ty Gibson, Light Bearers ministry codirector.

Norwegian Union Conference president Victor Marley said that the conference had invigorated local leadership. Looking beyond the financial issues of such an event, he said it had been an investment in the leadership of the church. “Our message is emphatic about God’s love. We Seventh-day Adventists are called to pronounce it everywhere in our day. This conference will assist us to that end,” Marley said.

THE POWER OF CHRIST

In his keynote address Gibson emphasized that no superhero had

anything on Jesus. The forte of superheroes was to use force and power more cunningly and ruthlessly than the villains they tangled with. “Jesus had a power far greater and incomparably stronger than the might of the mighty,” he said.

Christ’s power was to allow humanity to hear their worst on Him without becoming sidetracked or troubled by feelings of revenge, Gibson said. Jesus’ love was not romantic or gooey. It was an enduring drive to serve to the utmost until the end under cruel violence, and, in so doing, revealing His beloved Father to the world as He really is.

“By thus walking among us, He created freedom for those who would give Him an ear, to choose Him above anyone else because they wanted to,” Gibson said. “No one forced them or threatened them to do so.”

In a completely filled seminar room, Simon Martin, Trans-European Division discipleship coach, admonished all who want to see church growth to “tear down” their church walls and mingle with people as though they wished them well, to demonstrate what faith looks like. “It was the Savior’s method, and it must be ours if we would make faith a fathomable

option for those who do not know Jesus,” he said.

MESSY CHURCH, NORWAY-STYLE

Two local church leaders from Lillehammer have their own spin on making church accessible. They adapted the concept of “Messy Church” to their context. Messy Church implies doing church for families and individuals who may not find other forms of church appealing and who don’t yet belong to a church. It is typically held once a month and includes hands-on creative experiences, a celebration, and a meal.

Karoline Stølen and Shalini Klausen realized that children and young people growing up in the church are likely to leave unless they find it welcoming and caring. The entire local church is regularly enrolled in making the “mess” happen. However, Stølen emphasizes that it is not just for the sake of doing church differently. “The hobby activities that we plan and provide are not merely hobby activities. It is evangelism, as everything we do connects directly to the stories of the Bible,” she emphasized.

Leaders believe that in a society in which the church, preaching, and Bible teaching are increasingly perceived by some as ridiculous, there are two options. “We can continue doing business as usual or demonstrate the power of Jesus and the compassion of the Father in a language that speaks to modern people,” they said. ▀



ADVENTISTBOOKCENTER.COM CELEBRATES 20 YEARS OF ONLINE

SALES. AdventistBookCenter.com, one of the first online e-commerce sites developed by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, celebrated its twentieth anniversary in October 2018. People from more than 165 countries around the world have taken advantage of the convenience of shopping online for Adventist books, sharing materials, Sabbath School supplies, music, and DVDs. Online sales have grown from \$15.49 in October 1998 to \$1 million annually.



ADVENTIST RADIO STATION TO REACH THE MOST REMOTE LOCATIONS IN AUSTRALIA.

Faith FM, an Adventist radio station in Australia, has hit the airwaves across the remote region known as the outback, reaching a potential audience of nearly 1 million people. Available on Viewer Access Satellite Television (VAST) channel 688, the new radio station was officially launched on November 27, 2018. VAST is an Australian government initiative providing free-to-air radio and television services to Australians living in remote areas outside of normal coverage areas.



ADVENTIST LEADERS IN SCANDINAVIA LAUNCH ADVENTIST COMMUNICATION ACADEMY.

More than 40 Adventist communicators met at Vejlebjerg Junior College in Dugård, Denmark, to discuss the best ways to use media platforms. The weekend of training was a result of a new collaboration initiative in Scandinavia called Adventist Communication Academy—a network of Adventist communication departments in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. Among the network's goals is to avoid any overlapping in the use of resources and to establish a more structured collaboration.



WEST-CENTRAL AFRICA DIVISION DONATES 300 BENCHES TO PUBLIC

SCHOOLS. Leaders and staff at the Adventist Church's West-Central Africa Division recently donated approximately 300 school benches to a school district in nearby Abobo. The district serves 15 primary schools and three kindergartens, with very limited and crowded seating. The donation is part of a comprehensive plan for the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a religious and social entity to support government efforts to improve the lives of its citizens.



INDONESIAN ISLAND HOSTS YOUTH MISSION ADVENTURES.

Adventist young adults in the Southern Asia-Pacific region (SSD) teamed up with mission-oriented young professionals from across Indonesia, Myanmar, and the Philippines for 10 days of volunteer work, November 7-18, 2018. The Mission Adventures trip is the second of its kind in the region. Thirty-two delegates signed up for the 2018 Mission Adventures, which started in Makassar and finished in the Toraja region, 190 miles (about 300 kilometers) north.



PATHFINDER CLUBS TO BE OFFERED IN JAMAICA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

Jamaica's Ministry of Education is taking steps to allow the Adventist young people's organization called Pathfinders to set up clubs in primary and high schools across the nation. Once the protocols are agreed on, officials say it is expected that five to 10 Pathfinder clubs will initially be established in various schools across the island. The Pathfinders organization assists young people in developing life skills and discipline to take up church and community leadership responsibilities.



COMING SOON, ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS ONLINE.

The upcoming *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists* (ESDA) is an official publication and record of the history of Seventh-day Adventist history and institutions. This global church project will produce an estimated 10,000 articles on Adventist history; on crucial events and themes; and on organizations, entities, institutions, and individuals; with accompanying photographs, media, and original documents. The new encyclopedia will reflect the strong growth of the church in the past 50 years or more since the publication of the first edition of the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*.

*A young man
from difficult
beginnings
lives a life to
bless others.*

Toson Knight got off to a difficult life right from the very beginning. “I got kicked out of 13 different schools,” he says. “I got kicked out of preschool, and from that point it was like every year, every school.”

Knight, 32, grew up in the Highland Park area of Detroit, Michigan, “one of the worse areas you could grow up in the city,” he adds. His father wasn’t present in his life, and his relationship with his mother was complicated. The lack of home/life stability and the tough area he lived in didn’t do him any favors, but it’s surprising how the grace of God can work in a life like his, for better things were yet to come.

As Knight bounced from school to school, which involved a lot of time spent with his devout Adventist grandma, his future seemed uncertain. Finally a gentleman in the church offered to pay his way to attend Peterson-Warren Academy, the nearby Adventist school. But even that didn’t provide the greatest experience for him at first. “I hated it,” Knight remembers. “I thought they were playing favorites. I thought they really didn’t care, so I got into a lot of trouble there too. They almost kicked me out.”

Knight rode out his storms at Peterson-Warren and graduated—an achievement many of the young men in his community don’t realize for themselves. Despite his difficulties at school, the tide started to turn in Knight’s life. “Those were like the first people who actually showed me mercy,” he says. “When I say mercy, overall, it was like they still tried to work with me. Even though I was terrible. I was going against the grain. I was acting up. But I remember times

they would call me and all of the teachers in and talk to me. I remember those times.”

Peterson-Warren Academy, like many Adventist academies around the nation, took its seniors on college days trips to explore possibilities for higher education.

It was through one of those trips that Knight got to visit Oakwood University. But a tragic event was what solidified his deep desire to leave Detroit and study at Oakwood.

“I was down at Oakwood College days, and on my way back I got a call that one of my friends had been murdered,” Knight says. “The day I got back I went out to the scene, and saw his blood was still out there. I was crying, I remember that. For me it was final—I need to go to Oakwood. I need to go to Oakwood. I need to get away from this.”

Attending Oakwood University proved to be exactly the transformative experience Knight needed. “Going to Oakwood showed me good people. Good, strong, Christian people who pray with you and are about you and I never experienced that,” he remembers. “It just blew my mind the way they treated you down there—how they treated you like family and they didn’t even know you.”

PAYING THE BLESSINGS FORWARD





Toson Knight (center) with several of the young men he has helped to attend Oakwood University.

Knight describes himself as an independent person, used to figuring things out on his own. So it was no surprise that navigating the often-frustrating paths to clearing finances on a private college campus became a challenge that he surmounted.

Despite his love for the campus and his studies—Knight majored in history and education—he decided to take a break after his first year and return to Detroit. Back home he didn't fall back in with his old crowd, but began working in local politics for city council member Sheila Cockrel. He eventually made his way back to Oakwood, where he served as Student Association president for two terms. Graduation came, and Knight, ever the skilled networker, found himself with several job offers to consider. One of those was to be a lobbyist in Washington, D.C., which offered him the most financially lucrative path forward.

But Oakwood University had instilled something in him far beyond the pursuit of academic and professional success: a deep desire to give back. So Knight returned to Detroit with no career options on the immediate horizon. But again, through his stellar networking skills, he found himself seeking a job at one of the schools he'd

been kicked out of years before, with an administrator who clearly remembered him.

"I was in sixth grade. I had pulled the fire alarm at this particular school, and she remembered," says Knight. "When I called her, she said, 'I remember you. You were the boy who pulled that fire alarm. I have just the job.'"

Knight became a behavioral interventionist, running the in-school suspension program. "I got to work with the bad kids. It was great. I loved it, and they were so surprised at how good I was at handling situations." But Knight was far from settling into one role. While there, he also began working for Detroit mayor Michael Duggan's campaign and worked with him for the next few years.

Knight's passion for education and intervention for at-risk youth kept him in an academic trajectory career-wise. He is currently dean of students at Western High School, which he says is the most diverse high school in Detroit. Drawing from his own unique background, Knight isn't fazed by much of his day-to-day duties that deal with students and behavioral infractions, working with teachers on improving classroom management skills, and setting the culture for the entire campus.

CAUGHT UP

During Knight's short break from Oakwood, he worked for one of Detroit's juvenile detention centers. One of the obstacles he sought to tackle was the difficulty young people who have been in the system have in trying to stay on track once they are out. Now well connected as a result of his work for the mayor's office, Knight decided to do something about it. "I wanted to be the guy that tries to help them transition back in to the community." The program he started, Caught Up (which he's run for about four years now), helps kids who have been incarcerated for any number of things—murder, robbery, sexual assault, drugs, guns, etc.—get their lives in order.

Caught Up has made progress in keeping young people out of prison on forward moving paths through its programs. According to Knight, the rate at which kids return to crime and eventual jailtime is about 50 percent. For those kids involved in Caught Up's mentoring and lifestyle programs, it is 30 percent.

Caught Up takes a multifaceted approach through its programming. Saturday Night Live focuses on basketball, Bible study, and food, keeping young men off the streets on a Saturday evening and involved in activities that are good for their minds and bodies. Project Re-Entry, a program for incarcerated kids looking at a soon release, helps them to develop life skills such as resume building, financial literacy, college preparation, etc. Project Empower works with youth at local high schools exposing them to possibilities in higher education, job training, and life skill development, and helps them engage in their community in a positive way.

But for Knight, that's not really enough. Getting a young man into college when he has little to no support or resources of his own has presented the organization with unique challenges. And while he is supportive of sending any of the program's mentees to any college of their choosing, Oakwood University certainly holds a special place in his heart. So Knight will take a group of interested seniors to Oakwood's preview program every fall. If a student decides on that campus, he will personally drive them to Alabama, help them get all their personal and dorm room supplies, and stay with them through their first Sabbath—supporting them through all the registration/financial clearance hurdles college freshmen frequently

encounter. "I actually take a week off work and make sure I'm there with them until they are all clear, right up until the day we go to church on Saturday," Knight says. To date, Caught Up has 15 students enrolled at Oakwood University.

CARVELL

Carvell Goodlow, an Oakwood University student and mentee of the Caught Up program, was very close to Knight. He was tragically murdered in an off-campus incident in Huntsville in September 2018. Goodlow was a regular at Saturday Night Live, coming into the Adventist movement as a result. He was a special kid who had his share of ups and downs like many young people but is best remembered for his passion for Jesus and his way with words, which he used to uplift and encourage the entire Oakwood campus.

His loss has been very difficult for Knight. "It was the most painful, devastating thing that I've ever experienced, even after seeing a lot of my friends die. I never imagined that, because Carvell was actually closer to me than most," Knight says. Goodlow even spent the summer living with Knight before returning to Oakwood for his sophomore year. "There was a group that had gotten really close to me and Carvell was part of that group." The senseless loss of a young man with great potential, and a special "little brother" to Knight is something he will be working through for some time to come.

Knight's experience with a grandma who instilled the importance of churchgoing and spiritual things (he attends Detroit Center church) has certainly had an effect on his own life turnaround. "I started getting involved in church, and that kind of changed me," he remembers. "That was the beginning of my spiritual journey. Then in getting to Oakwood and being out there, it was easy for me to be part of church."

Today Knight's commitment to God and his love for young people who travel a similar path to his own, only serves to spur him to do more through his day job at Western High School and through Caught Up. For a young man coming from difficult beginnings, his life is a true example of what it means to pay blessings forward. ♣

To learn more about Caught Up, or to help, visit www.caughtup.org

Wilona Karimabadi is an assistant editor of *Adventist Review*.



GOD'S GUIDING HAND

*Ella Smith Simmons,
General Conference
vice president,
looks back.*

STEPHEN CHAVEZ

Those who have lived long enough have earned the luxury of looking back on various life events and recognizing them as pivotal moments when God seemed to be present in the choices set before them. They have to have lived for a while before they can recognize God's leading. But when they do, the path is unmistakable.

Ella Smith Simmons, for the last 13 years a general vice president of the General Conference, can trace God's activity in her life, and she has a profound sense of gratitude for the way He's led.

ELEVATED

After a career in education and education administration, Simmons was contacted by Jan Paulsen, then president of the General Conference, about joining the General Conference as a vice president. "I laughed in his face, like Sarah," she remembers. "But when I realized that he was

serious, and I gathered myself, I said, 'Well, [my husband] Nord and I always try to do what God wants us to do. So if God were to call, if we believed God was calling, we would do this.'"

That was in 2005. Simmons' responsibilities since then have been the same as her male counterparts, but they tended also to focus on education, her career specialty. Her tenure at the General Conference is groundbreaking because she is the first woman to serve in this capacity, and the first African American woman to serve at this level. "It's all God," she says, since at the time she had left administrative positions at Oakwood and La Sierra universities to settle into more relaxed educational roles.

Was the pressure of breaking new ground a burden? "No, not for a moment," she says. "There have been some difficult moments, but it's never been a burden."

Simmons' sense of God's calling motivated her. "I felt that I was doing a service, a ministry



Ella Simmons addresses delegates at the Spring Meetings held at the General Conference in April 2018.

“I felt that I was doing a service, a ministry to which God had called me.”

to which God had called me specifically.”

She’s also drawn strength and inspiration from the people with whom she interacts. “It has been such a blessed joy to meet God’s people all over the world,” she says. “And when I say God’s people, I have to say those of us who are members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and those who are not.”

BECOMING ELLA

Ella Smith Simmons grew up in Louisville, Kentucky, and also across the Ohio River in New Albany, Indiana. She was the oldest child in her family, and the only female. Her family regularly attended a Baptist church.

She became an Adventist at the age of 16. Prior to that, she began noticing things in the Bible that didn’t match what they were being taught in church. “This was before Google, of course, so I read encyclopedias and any resource I could find about the Sabbath,” she says. “I could not understand why we went to church on Sunday when they all seemed to say the seventh day was the Sabbath.”

Other things troubled her as well. She remembered seeing deacons in her church performing their duties during worship services properly and with reverence, but between services she saw them standing outside smoking cigarettes. “Now, there’s nothing in the Bible that says, ‘Thou shalt not smoke,’ but I had this deep conviction that this was wrong.”

About this time an evangelistic tent effort came to town and set up right across the street from her home. “I didn’t know what was going on,” she remembers, “but my next-youngest brother was



BRENT HARDINGE / ADVENTIST NEWS NETWORK

always out and about, checking on everything, and he found out what was going on.” The evangelist, Charles Graham, hired Simmons’ brother to be his “tentmaster,” to look after the tent and its equipment when there were no meetings, even spending nights sleeping in the tent.

In an era when evangelistic meetings lasted weeks or months, Simmons remembers, “I was there with my little Bible and pen or pencil in hand. I never missed a meeting.” By the time the meetings were over, “I had each one of my questions answered.”

BECOMING AN EDUCATOR

“I had two great loves [while growing up]: education—teaching, specifically—and research science,” says Simmons. She thought being a science professor would offer the best of both worlds.

But reality interfered. “I was living in Louisville, Kentucky, and little Black girls in Louisville, Kentucky, were not encouraged, and were in fact discouraged, from pursuing science.”

Simmons had had a second-grade teacher who influenced her toward teaching on the elementary level. “I really admired the woman. She personified everything I thought an educator should be,” she remembers. “She was a prim and proper person who was very warm and could get down on the floor with us.”

But behind those and other childhood influences, she felt something else. “I think it was just the Holy Spirit drawing me,” she says. “While social, political, mainly sociocultural circumstances deterred me from pursuing studies in

science, . . . something was drawing me to education. I believe it was just my calling.”

Simmons began her teaching career at South-eastern Junior Academy in New Albany, Indiana. That was her first direct experience with Adventist education. She wouldn’t attend an Adventist school as a student until she started work on a master’s degree at Andrews University.

MAJOR IN ADMINISTRATION

When Simmons and her husband, Nord, also a teacher, began their family, she became a stay-at-home mom. But not for long.

“The woman who ran the day-care/nursery school at our local church was in an accident. . . . The pastor and others realized that I was at home . . . and they asked if I would come and fill in for three weeks while she recuperated. . . . It lasted three years.”

In that role Simmons learned leadership skills that would serve her well in the decades ahead, such as building relationships with parents, staff, government agencies, and the community. Along the way she served as director of a local Head Start program, and eventually as director of Head Start for the entire county. She also served as a junior academy principal.

“I’m very tenacious,” she says. “I can be idealistic because I hold certain ideals based on my values and principles.”

Simmons admits, however, that being an administrator brings its challenges, which she sees as opportunities. “I’m a person who likes to solve puzzles,” she says. “There was a time I was a little more like Pollyanna, and I just didn’t understand why people didn’t get along.”

As Simmons grew in her administrative skills she says she learned to recognize those challenges as opportunities for growth. “I just sort of settled into the Lord,” she says. “I said, ‘I have to do my part, but the Lord will fight my battles.’”

She embraced that philosophy then, and keeps coming back to it now. “I don’t necessarily seek to win over the other person. I am victorious when I have led in the process of a win-win solution for all those involved.”

CLIMATE CHANGES

Ella Simmons has seen a lot of changes in the church and in society during her career as an educator and administrator. When Jan Paulsen

nominated her to serve as the first female to serve as a vice president in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, she didn’t expect her nomination to be approved. She had in mind less-lofty goals. “I thought this was just going to be an exercise in taking a small step forward,” she remembers. “I thought that by allowing my name to go forward, this would get the conversation going.”

During the discussion about her nomination she expected to hear statements from the floor based on ignorance and decades of racial and gender prejudice. Her husband, concerned that what he heard might anger him, decided to stay in his hotel room. “I came alone with a good friend who sat with me,” she remembers. The vote approving her appointment “happened so quickly we couldn’t believe it.”

A MANDATE

Simmons’ leadership as a general vice president of the General Conference is what one would expect from a vice president: capable, stable, and supportive. To the general church membership, she’s most visible when chairing one of the business meetings of a General Conference session. But she also travels around the world, chairing boards and committees, and offering counsel on a wide range of topics.

As she looks back on her life, Simmons glimpses hints of leadership at an early age. It often seemed as if neighborhood children looked to her as their childhood games were organized. In Sabbath school, and at special church events such as Bible bowls, she was asked to help organize and lead out. “I would almost reluctantly accept whatever role I was asked to take,” she says.

That willingness to serve has elevated Simmons to one of the highest levels of administration in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. From this perspective she recognizes two realities: “One, that God can use a woman to do anything He calls a woman to do.

“Two, God can use individuals whom He has prepared in His own way.” She acknowledges that not growing up in a Seventh-day Adventist home, and not going to Adventist schools, makes her unique among most of her colleagues in administration. But when her career goals led her toward education, “God would always press me into administration. God had work for me to do.”

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

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REAL STUDY SPEAKS

Each morning a mother would relax in the living room reading her Bible. After observing this habit for several years, her 7-year-old daughter finally asked, “Are you ever going to finish reading that book?”

The uninitiated may ask the same question of all Bible students: “Will you ever stop studying the Bible?”

The answer: “No, I’ll never stop reading the Word, just as I will never stop eating and drinking.” Bible study is essential to successful living.

Unlike any book ever written, the Bible is limitless in its truth, depthless in its revelations, and endless in sharing its life principles. David shared a deep insight when he said, “The unfolding of your words gives light” (Ps. 119:130).

The Bible illumines and enhances every aspect of our existence. Its study expands our mental faculties, imparts supernatural energy, facilitates life wisdom, increases moral discernment, heightens love for righteousness, and gives us power against sin.

The more we read the Bible, the more our understanding and grasp of temporal and eternal truths and life skills are increased.*

Following are 25 study tips to help you achieve new levels in the study of God’s Word. They are organized as an acronym of the phrase: REAL STUDY SPEAKS and WIDENS LIFE.

REAL (STUDY APPROACH)

A systematic approach to Bible study is crucial to providing a foundation for a lasting love of God’s Word.

- R—Read (Hear)
- E—Explain
- A—Apply
- L—Live

STUDY (CHARACTERISTICS)

Essential characteristics of Bible study are valued and nurtured as they are highlighted and habituated.

- S—Supplication (prayer)
- T—Trust
- U—Understand
- D—Daily
- Y—Yield

SPEAKS (PILLARS)

Principles that empower and undergird personal study.

- S—Spiritual guidance
- P—Providence
- E—Enlightenment
- A—Action
- K—Knowledge
- S—Standards

WIDENS (BENEFITS)

Bible study is not an end, but a means to knowing and trusting Jesus as we navigate life.

- W—Wisdom
- I—Insight
- D—Discernment
- E—Energy
- N—Network with divinity
- S—Sanctification

LIFE (OUTCOMES)

Bible study has a continuous, transforming, sanctifying impact on one’s life and legacy.

- L—Liberates
- I—Initiates
- F—Fulfills
- E—Eternal life

Perhaps you’ll find some or all of these concepts useful in enriching your experience in studying the Bible. Accept the challenge to study God’s Word daily.

* See Ellen G. White, *Mind, Character, and Personality* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1977), vol. 1, chap. 11, “Bible Study and the Mind.”

Delbert W. Baker is vice chancellor of Adventist University of Africa, near Nairobi, Kenya.

TRANSFORMATION TIPS
DELBERT W. BAKER



BIBLE STUDY IS
ESSENTIAL TO
SUCCESSFUL
LIVING BECAUSE
THE BENEFITS
ARE HIGH
AND DIVIDENDS
ARE VAST.



LEARNING TO LOVE DIFFERENCE

Many of the world's problems come from fear of "the other."

PATRICK JOHNSON

While listening to the radio on my drive to work recently, a couple news stories—as well as their sequence—caught my attention. The first was the report of a senior scientist, speaking at CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research based

in Geneva, who had given what was described as a “highly offensive” presentation about the role of women in physics. Alessandro Strumia, of Pisa University, said that “physics was invented and built by men, it’s not by invitation.” He went on to assert that male scientists were being dis-

Only as we learn to value and welcome God's difference will we have a deep appreciation and love for Him.



PAINTING BY JULIUS SCHNORR VON CAROLSFELD, NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

criminated against because of ideology rather than merit.

As you can imagine, his remarks caused great consternation and drew widespread condemnation across the scientific community.

The following news story, which I'm sure was chosen deliberately by the producers, was about the Nobel Prize in Physics being awarded to Donna Strickland from Canada. This was the first time in

55 years that a woman, together with two male colleagues, had been awarded the prize.

Hearing these two stories back to back was another reminder that even in today's modern world, we still have a long way to go in overcoming our prejudices and biases and learning to love difference. This is one of the lessons we can learn from the Bible book of Ruth.

THE IRONY OF LIFE

The opening line of the book reads, "In the days when the judges ruled" (Ruth 1:1). I regard the book of Judges as one of the most depressing books of the Bible. Not only are some of the Bible's most disturbing stories in it, it also outlines a dismal, never-ending cycle. Israel's idolatry; God's withdrawal; enemy oppression; Israel crying out to God; God sending a judge; revival and reformation that lasts only during the lifetime of the judge.

The cycle repeats again and again. To stay positive amid such negative circumstances, God must indeed be a faithful, covenant-keeping God!

The book of Ruth comes as a reminder that even in the darkest times, things are never quite as bleak as one might think. When Elijah thought he was the only person following God, God let him know that 7,000 faithful followers were still loyal to Him (1 Kings 19:18). God always has a remnant, people with whom He can work.

It's refreshing to note that one of the shining stars in this period of sad darkness was a woman, Ruth, especially considering the horrendous treatment that women are described as receiving in the book of Judges. It's as if God wants to tell us how He views women by having this book in the Bible bearing the name of a woman.

The book begins during a time of famine (Ruth 1:1, 2). The author seems to play on the irony of some of the names that are used. Not only did famine hit Bethlehem (Hebrew: "house of bread"), Naomi's family, who were Ephrathites (from the root word meaning "fruitful"), ends up without fruit

Learning to welcome difference lies at the heart of the gospel.

(her husband dies and his sons die childless). So Naomi, whose name means “pleasant” or “my delight,” wants to be known as Mara, which means “bitter” (verses 19, 20). We can all empathize with Naomi that life is indeed a bitter-sweet experience. Living on this side of the second advent we have to remember that our lives will always contain a mixture of good and bad.

But the main lesson to focus on in Ruth is to examine how we deal with difference. Ruth is a Moabite, that is, a descendant of the incestuous relationship between Lot and one of his daughters (Gen. 19:37), which meant that she was from a despised race of people. How do we deal with people like that? The book of Ruth gives us three suggestions.

THE DIFFICULTY OF DIFFERENCE

It’s difficult to welcome difference. In Ruth 1 Naomi tries to send her daughters-in-law back to their original home (verses 8, 11, 12). She was aware that as foreigners they would have no future in Israel. Interestingly, a Jewish tradition says that since Naomi told them to go home three times, this should be used as a pattern for testing the sincerity of converts to Judaism, repulsing them three times. I wonder what would happen to our baptismal figures if we did that to prospective converts.

Anyway, we need to understand that our natural reaction is to reject difference because it takes energy, effort, toil, and struggle to acknowledge and accommodate people who are different. For example, in a journal article entitled “Wanting to Belong,” Christine Welten writes about her mental health problems and acknowledges that people suffering with mental illness can be difficult to be around.

“I was big, loud, smelly, and an embarrassment to the people around me. So people stopped being around me. I do not blame them; it is really hard

to spend time with someone that you cannot relax around. It is hard to visit the house of someone who smells bad and will not let you leave. I exhausted people. I drained them.”¹

So if we are to learn to love difference we have to understand that our natural reaction as fallen human beings is to be suspicious of, and inclined to reject, those who are different from us.

ACKNOWLEDGING DIFFERENCE

Ruth’s famous answer to Naomi (verses 16, 17) shows that she acknowledged the difference between her people, customs, and religion, and Naomi’s people, customs, and religion. Ruth was willing to acknowledge the differences in order to learn more about Naomi’s culture, customs, and worship practices.

One of the great benefits of acknowledging our differences is that it allows greater depth to our relationships. While I was a student at Newbold College I became acquainted with a beautiful blonde, blue-eyed girl named Kari, who came from the northernmost town in the world, Hammerfest, Norway. I was born on the sunny island of Jamaica, so if our growing friendship was to last, we would have to learn to love difference.

We quickly realized that we each had a number of prejudices that we held. It was an interesting journey for us to acknowledge and name our differences. We often found ourselves beginning sentences with words such as, “I thought all White people . . .” or “I had the impression that Black people . . .” This gave our relationship a greater depth, and after 30 years of marriage we’re still learning to love our differences.

THE BLESSING OF DIFFERENCE

Boaz enters the story of Ruth as a kind, sympathetic character. The orders he gives to his men regarding Ruth capture his attitude well: “Let her gather among the sheaves and don’t reprimand her. Even pull out some stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up, and don’t rebuke her” (Ruth 2:15, 16). God had given a clear harvesting rule to leave the edges of the fields to be harvested by those who were poor or aliens (Lev. 19:9, 10).

The primary principle behind this action was really the golden rule as expressed in these words: “Do not oppress a foreigner; you yourselves know

how it feels to be foreigners, because you were foreigners in Egypt" (Ex. 23:9). God was telling them to remember the foreigner, the other, to remember what it feels like. Why? Because they had been foreigners. They knew what it felt like to be different, to be the other. Hence the words of Jesus: "Do to others what you would have them do to you" (Matt 7:12).

Learning to welcome difference lies at the heart of the gospel. It has the potential to deepen our spirituality and worship. In fact, being able to overcome our biases and embrace the difference of others trains us to appreciate the otherness of God. God is the ultimate foreigner; He's not like us.

The subtle temptation we often fall into is to create God in our image. To take for granted that He likes the things we like, or that He reacts the same way as we do. In fact, when He became one of us to make the barrier between us and Him easier to overcome, when through His words and

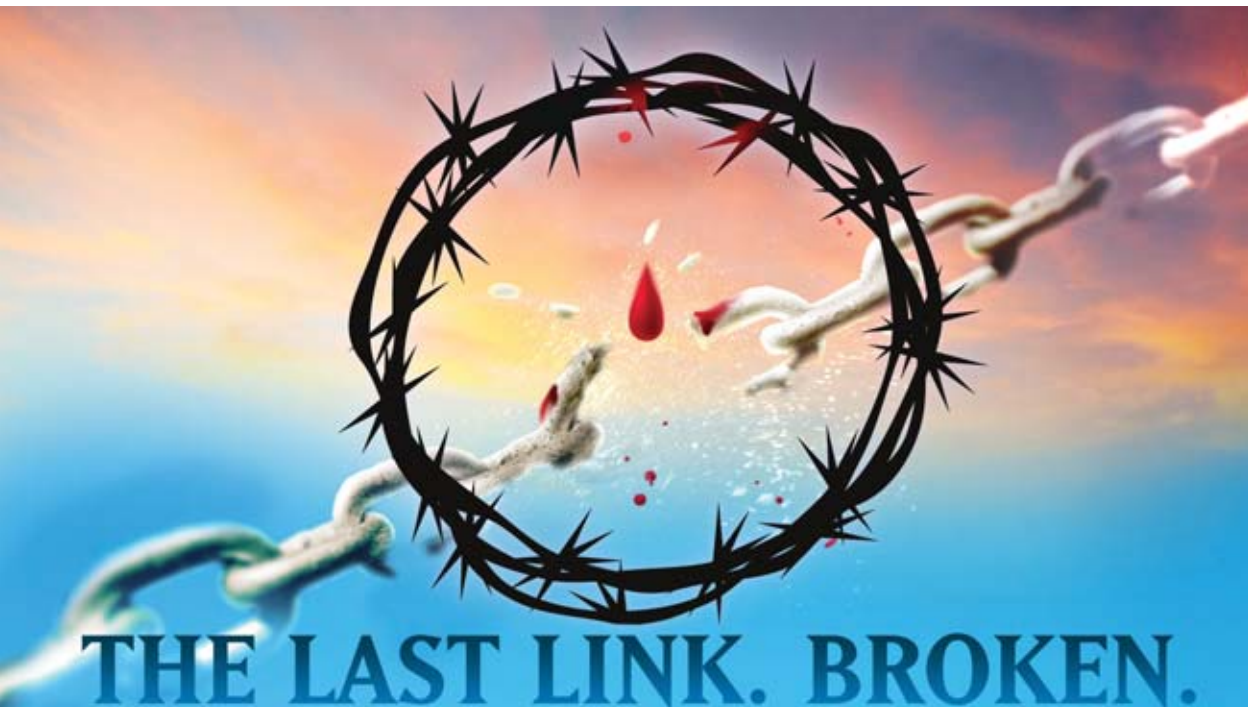
actions He tried to teach us what God is like, we didn't like what He said or did. We rejected Him and killed Him!

Thankfully, we can learn to value and welcome God's difference and grow into ever deeper appreciation and love for Him. And our spiritual growth shows itself in our increasing ability to love difference.

The book of Ruth closes by telling us that Ruth became the great-grandmother of David, thus placing her in the lineage of Jesus (Matt 1:5). A Moabite in the lineage of the Savior! I get the impression that God takes great delight in embracing difference and transforming it into something lasting and beautiful. Do we? ♣

¹ Christine Welten, "Wanting to Belong," *Journal of Disability and Religion*, 18.3 (2014), 286-90 (p. 287) doi.org/10.1080/23312521.2014.928990.

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THE LAST LINK. BROKEN.

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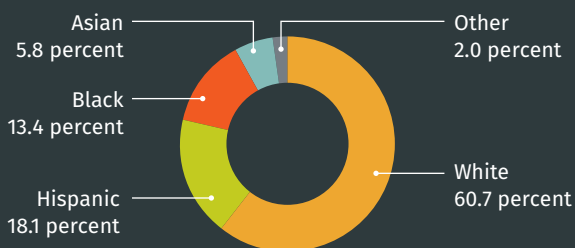
UNITY IN DIVERSITY

E Pluribus Unum (*out of many, one*) is one of the unifying principles on which the United States was founded (along with that of all being created equal). Throughout its history the nation has sought to be a model of equal opportunities for all its citizens, immigrant and native-born. But even equal opportunities are not created equal.

Differences built into our experience—based on education, economics, race, and gender—make it necessary for us to acknowledge those differences and the advantages and disadvantages they entail. In the recent past a great number of voices in the United States have chosen to emphasize that which separates us more than that which unites us.

These differences will no doubt exist until Jesus returns. His followers owe a considered response to every child of God those numbers represent.—Editors.

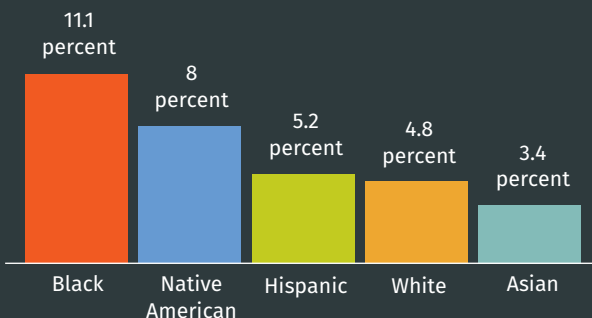
General population of the United States by race:¹



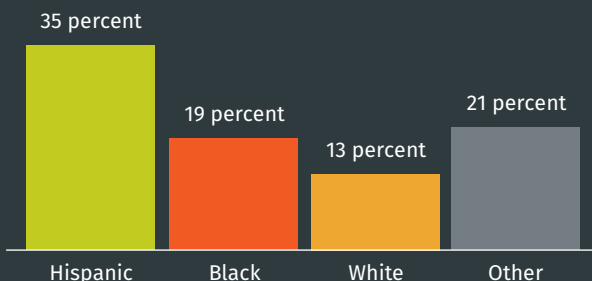
Life expectancy by race:²



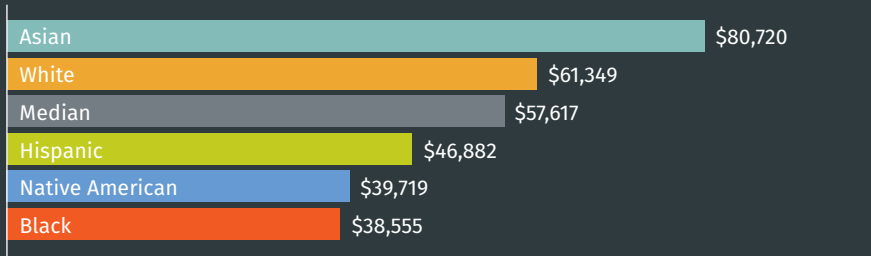
Infant mortality by race (per 1,000):³



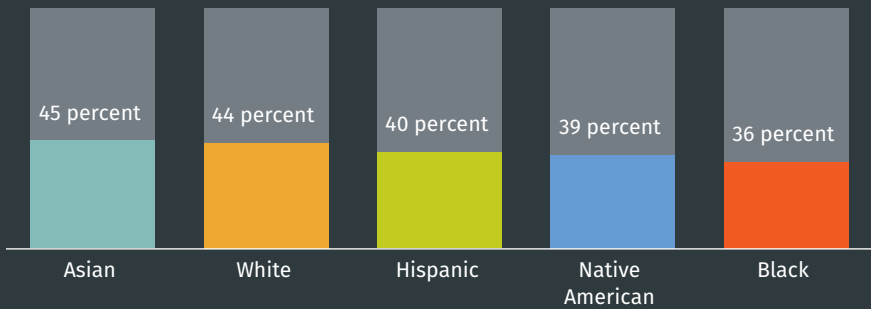
Percentage of those with a chronic health condition who are uninsured:⁴



Median income by race:⁵



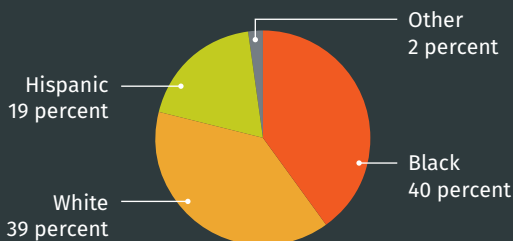
Percentage of those receiving a bachelor's degree:⁶



Percentage of adults who believe in God:⁷



Percentage of those incarcerated:⁸



¹ www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045218

² www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/life-expectancy-by-re/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colld%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D

³ datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/21-infant-mortality-by-race#detailed/1/any/false/870,573,869,36,868,867,133,38,35,18/10,11,9,12,1,13/285,284

⁴ www.urban.org/research/publication/uninsured-americans-chronic-health-conditions/view/full_report

⁵ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_ethnic_groups_in_the_United_States_by_household_income

⁶ nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=72

⁷ www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/compare/belief-in-god/by/racial-and-ethnic-composition/

⁸ www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/rates.html



EVERYONE HAS A TESTIMONY

But some might surprise you.

I have regularly scheduled treatments at AdventHealth's cancer center. Although—thankfully—I do not have cancer, my medical condition requires hourlong treatments every other month, which take place in the same large room where cancer patients come for their chemotherapy. At any given time, between five to 15 patients sit in lounge chairs receiving their IV treatments. Most are there for hours.

If there's ever a time I feel like an ant in a room full of giants, it's in this place—which has become more like a cathedral than a hospital treatment room. The cancer patients who come here are the most courageous

people I know, and I'm always humbled to be in their presence with my insignificant problem.

A SPECIAL PATIENT

During a recent visit I noticed a woman come in and take her place in a chair about three seats from me. She was well-dressed and looked more like someone going to church than to a chemotherapy treatment. The nurses seemed to know her well and immediately began to prepare her for the IV treatment.

Our eyes met and I said hello and asked how she was doing. Her response was "It's been quite a journey."

I said, "I'm sure it has."

Her next statement, however,

caught me off guard. I expected something like “This doesn’t get any easier” or “Never thought this would happen to me” or maybe even “It’s my cross to bear.” Instead, it was a simple, surprising phrase: “This is my testimony.”

As we continued our treatments in silence, I imagined what her life must be like. No doubt filled with inconvenience, uncertainty, pain, and discomfort. But my mind continued to reflect on her words: “This is my testimony.” Again, I felt like an ant in the presence of a giant. What a statement of faith and trust in a loving heavenly Father! She had chosen to turn a tragedy into a testimony.

She was still sitting in her chair, now reading her Bible, as I prepared to leave. Again, I looked her way and said, “You gave me inspiration today. Thank you. With your permission, I plan to share your testimony statement with others.” She simply nodded her approval. Sorry to say, I left without even knowing her name.

ANTS AMONG GIANTS

We have all been given a testimony. Some are ant-size, some are giant-size. But whatever circumstances life has given, we all have a testimony to share. Through the apostle Paul, Jesus assures us, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9). In other words, my weakness can become my testimony through His grace and power.

The Bible is filled with these testimonies. Job, for one, comes to mind. Perhaps no character in all of Scripture, aside from Christ, suffered more loss and affliction than did Job. Yet his testimony was “Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him” (Job 13:15). Certainly David’s testimony in the twenty-third psalm has been a comfort to countless millions down through history, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me” (Ps. 23:4, KJV).

Hebrews 11 is a record of the giants who carried with them this testimony of faith in the midst of affliction, pain, and death. Here’s the most amazing thought: you and I are included in this chapter. After listing all the giants by name, there’s a description of many groups of people who bore a testimony of faith in terrible circumstances, such as confronting lions, fire, sword, torture, stoning, scourging, prison, persecution, destitution, affliction, torment, homelessness. But here we find

I felt like an ant in the presence of a giant.

ourselves included in Hebrews 11:39, 40: “These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.”

So there we are, ants among giants, receiving “something better” by God’s grace through our faith in Jesus. It will be worth whatever circumstance comes our way in this old world. Amid our afflictions we can say, “This is my testimony.” The opportunities to share our testimony may not be in a hospital or a church. Instead, they will likely occur in unexpected ways in the daily course of living our lives at home, at work, at school, at play, in the mundane, in the unusual, and in the tragedies of life—the hurricanes and earthquakes, fires and floods of life.


In one such tragedy, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn wrote a series of books entitled *The Gulag Archipelago*, reflecting on his years of imprisonment in Russian labor camps. In this series he makes an amazing observation: “I turn back to the years of my imprisonment. . . . And I say . . . : ‘Bless you, prison, for having been in my life.’” Sounds a lot like the apostle Paul, a lot like Joseph, and a lot like the woman I met in the hospital. How often I’ve wished that my reaction to adversity had been as positive.

HOW DO WE REACT?

Let’s face it, people observe how we handle the trials of life. Our colleagues are watching, our friends can see, our families are affected. Do our afflictions overwhelm or anger or irritate, or do they become our testimony, whether silent or spoken?

I’ve recently been pondering the impact the woman with no name had on my life. Without saying more than a few words, without even sharing the details of her experience, she was used by God to influence me by her simple expression: “This is my testimony.” 🦋

Lewis Hendershot is a retired Florida Conference president.



*When
choosing
the right words
is the right
thing to do*

THE LETTER

LENORA STACKHOUSE

I used to accompany my husband on fishing trips to Delaware.

On the boat we went out on was a young woman they called the “boat girl” or “captain’s mate.” She was so energetic. When someone called out “Fish on!” or “My line is tangled,” she was always there.

She was often too busy to talk to me, but I did learn that she was 16 years old and that she had quit school.

I gradually began to see a change in her each time we went fishing. She seemed distracted and tired. When we got back to land, I’d see her leave with several men. Sometimes she showed up late for work, and her clothes and hair were untidy.

A SLOW-MOTION DISASTER

The years went by, and I asked the captain why Carla* wasn’t on the boat anymore. He replied that she was too unsteady on her feet to be on the boat. Instead she collected tickets, cleaned fish, picked

up after people, and did other menial tasks such as clean up the galley.

After fishing one night, I was sitting out, enjoying the lovely evening. I watched Carla walk down the street and enter the back door of a house where there was a red light. I knew what that meant.

The next day Carla seemed tired and quiet. When I approached her, she said she hadn’t had much sleep the night before. We didn’t have time to talk.

Later at the office I asked where Carla lived. They gave me directions to the house where she lived with her mother. When I approached the house I couldn’t believe that anyone lived there. It was a battered building resting on stilts that extended over the water.

I climbed the rickety steps and knocked on the door. No one answered. Through the window I could see that someone lived there, but no one was there at the moment. We left the next morning. I didn’t see Carla again that season.



The following summer I asked about Carla, but no one wanted to talk about her, or about where she was.

ONE LAST ATTEMPT

At home I couldn't get Carla off my mind. I made it a matter of prayer, and the Holy Spirit convicted me to write her a letter.

"Dear Carla:

"God loves you very much, and so do I. Your body is a temple, and God wants to live in you. Jesus died on the cross to save you, to forgive your sins, and for you to live in heaven with Him. Just ask Jesus into your heart and life."

I didn't know her address, or even her last name. But I mailed the letter in care of the boat club.

THE APPOINTMENT

The following summer we went back to Delaware to fish. I asked about Carla, but no one seemed to want to talk about her, or about where she was.

One day coming off the boat I noticed someone sitting in a wheelchair near the beach. Fixated, I walked nearer and realized that it was Carla. I

dropped my fishing gear, ran to where she was sitting, and hugged her.

"Don't touch me," she said. "I have AIDS. Why would you want to hug me?"

"I love you," I told her, "and so does Jesus."

"I know," she said. "You told me in your letter."

My husband reminded me that I had to pick up my gear. "I'll be right back," I told Carla.

"I'm not supposed to be here," she said. She was there, she said, because she was hoping she would see me. "I wanted to thank you for the letter," she said. "It changed my life." Then she hurried away.

As she turned to go she pointed up. "I'll meet you there," she said.

Carla passed away three weeks later. She was 23 years old. She said my letter changed her life. Her life was changed by Jesus; I just delivered His message. More than anything I'm grateful that I listened to the Holy Spirit. ♣

*Not her real name.

Lenora Stackhouse writes from Williamsport, Pennsylvania.



GOD, MAKE ME UNCOMFORTABLE

“God, make me so uncomfortable that I will do the very thing I fear.”—Ruby Dee, American civil rights activist.

Daring to do the thing that is right

Fear has been part of our humanity ever since the fall of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:10). Some fears we learn to overcome as we grow older; others linger longer, becoming at times paralyzing. We prefer to stay in our comfort zones rather than venture into the unknown to face the nearly overwhelming challenges of today: poverty, spouse or parental incarceration, salary inequality, racial profiling, political disenfranchisement, etc.

But humanity’s greatest threat is neither the menace of poverty nor that of political corruption: it is the threat to individuality, the individual power of choice.

In the United States a Black family at the White House for eight years may suggest a new and different day for American society, but inequality, poverty, and fear are still very present. Sometimes bringing these issues to the front burner creates discomfort, and we escape through

dismissive language: “just another chapter of socialist class struggle.” But the true nature of humanity’s crisis is not its ethnic, socialist, communist, or imperialist bent. It is its philosophy of choice; of how much individuals are to be respected with regard to their decision-making powers, rights, and freedoms.

MARY’S EXPERIENCES

In the Magnificat,¹ “Mary of Nazareth looks at the world very realistically. She sees clearly the contrasts between the ‘powerful’ and the ‘lowly,’ the ‘rich’ and the ‘hungry.’”²

Centuries before her, the minor prophets, while seeking to bring a change in the hearts of their people, did not waver in their denunciation of injustice and abuses of society’s more vulnerable persons (see, for example, Amos 4:1; 5:11, 12; Zech. 7:10).

Mary’s personal life compounded the difficulties she shared with the rest of her people: her nation struggled under an oppressive foreign government; her land was ruled by a half-Jew, half-Edomite puppet king of Rome and a Roman governor who wielded the real power; the governor’s forces, the empire’s army, occupied her land; the empire’s governor and the Edomite ruled with cruelty.

In her personal circumstances she lived with the recognition that she was just one more lowly member of her society (Luke 1:48); her heart was stung by the scorn of neighbors and others who doubted her story of conception through the Holy Spirit; when her Son was born, she had to cope with the terror of the Edomite king’s command to

slaughter all children of a certain age just because he wanted to be sure he murdered her Baby. Like millions of refugees today, she had to flee her country, crossing the border into Egypt in the attempt to secure her Baby and offer Him the chance to grow up and live the future God had ordained for Him.

References to her “low degree” and “low estate” (see verses 48, 52) are not to be taken simply as expressions of humility: they are descriptions of her poverty. When she spoke these words, Mary was poor, pregnant, and unmarried. What is startling about her character is that in such circumstances she sings!

Why? Because from the vantage point of Gabriel’s revelation she knows that she, the lowly one, the young and fragile, pregnant, single woman, has been raised up by her God to the most distinguished of possible status: all generations will call her “blessed” (verse 48). As her cousin Elizabeth is inspired to declare, she is the mother of the Lord (verse 43). Despised and mocked by those who do not know and understand, she is favored by God to bring the Messiah to birth. So she sings.

Moreover, her song isn’t just about how fortunate she now is. It is not “a solo aria about her own destiny, but a freedom song on behalf of all the faithful poor in the land. She sings a song of freedom for all who, in their poverty and their wretchedness, still believe that God will make a way where there is no way.”³

Confused and bewildered as she felt at Gabriel’s appearance (verse 29), Mary was willing to be the servant whose body would be God’s tool—the location of the most inconceivable of all conceptions the universe will ever know (verse 38). The option she accepted overflowed with risk, humiliation, and slander. But empowered by God’s strength despite being uncomfortable, she did the fearful thing believing, knowing it was the right thing.

MARY’S CHOICE AND WOMEN TODAY

Many of today’s cultures are still strongly male-dominated: women are victimized by virtue of their gender, and deprived of essential human freedoms and rights, such as the right to make significant decisions on their own.

But through His servant Mary God has already shown the world what He thinks of individual human will, specifically, what He thinks of a woman’s power of choice: Mary’s choice in conversa-

God has already shown what He thinks of individual human will.

tion with the angel Gabriel is no incidental, inconsequential, or forgettable detail. It is one of the two most momentous decisions human beings from Adam to eternity will ever make.

The other? Her Son’s choice to be Messiah. She took it on her own, unassisted by sibling or spouse, by parent or attorney, by church board or city council. She chose to become the *vehicle* by which God’s salvation would reach the human race. She did not decide based on how special she was, for she was not. It was the decision that makes her special to all of us today.

Before it she was a girl among girls, a daughter of Adam among daughters of Adam, a poverty-stricken, fragile Jew among poor Jews, one subject in an oppressed society among the people of her nation, an oppressed minority. But the God who endowed her with the power of choice was able to show us, through His respect for her choice, what He thinks of human individuality.

People everywhere, young and old, male and female, in sacred and secular circumstances, stand to benefit from Mary’s example, surrendering ourselves to be slaves of God’s redemptive will. Mary teaches us to choose participation in God’s mission on earth, no matter how uncomfortable and fearful the consequences may be.

Mary is still a lesson for us today. Her canticle is a story of how God can empower the weak, the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized in society, whether their domination be by their fellow humans or by the tyranny of sin itself. Mary’s submission to God’s will is a call for all—women and men, youth and mature, regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality or other, to pray: “God, make me so uncomfortable that I will do the very thing I fear.”⁴

¹ Luke 1:46-55. *Magnificat* is the first word of Mary’s exulting song in the Latin translation of the Bible called the Vulgate: “*Magnificat anima mea Dominum*” (“My soul doth magnify the Lord”).

² *The Canticle of the Blessed Virgin and the Consecrated Life* (Chicago: Servite Provincialate, 1996), p. 155.

³ James F. Kay, “Mary’s Song—and Ours (Luke 1:39-55),” *Christian Century*, Dec. 10, 1997, p. 1157.

Preston Monterrey is a pastor in the Pennsylvania Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

JOAN FRANCIS

Being a Black woman in the United States is still a challenge and a complex set of burdens. Though we have always played a significant role in the development of America, we have often been ignored, insulted and invisible, shamed, stereotyped, and sidelined in spite of our achievements.

PERSISTENT CHALLENGES

We have learned to find humor in heartache, to see beauty in the midst of desperation and horror, to be caregivers and breadwinners, to show strength and resilience, loyalty, love, and affection. Rising above centuries of oppression, long enduring society's racist and sexist misconceptions and mistreatment, Black women today, while still caring for their families, are also prominent in major media organizations and other corporations, the military, and state and federal governments.

Yet as a society and as a nation, it is still not clear how welcome and understood its Black women are in the United States.

Much is still unknown about the psychology of these 19 million people, seven percent of the U.S. population. Their experience in the workplace, the complexities of their romantic lives, the challenges they face as mothers and grandmothers, their spiritual and religious practices—these and so many other aspects of their lives remain largely unknown to the wider community. The result is continuing and significant discomfort on their part in relation to American society. In a June 2002 Gallup poll 61 percent of Black women said they were dissatisfied with “how Blacks are treated in society.” For Black men, the rate of dissatisfaction was lower—47 percent. In the same poll 48 percent of Black women, in contrast to 26 percent of White women, said they were dissatisfied with “how women are treated in society.”

ON BEING A BLACK WOMAN IN AMERICA

Rising to the challenge of being who you are





ELIZABETH EVELYN WRIGHT

Educator With a Mission

A child of former slaves, Elizabeth Wright (1872-1906) learned early the importance of education. Her first schoolroom in Georgia was in the basement of a local church at a time in which getting an education was still a challenge for Black children.

As a teenager Wright attended Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute in Alabama as a night student. Because of poor health she took time off during her senior year

to assist teaching Black children at a school in Hampton County, South Carolina. After she recovered her health, she returned to Tuskegee Institute, graduating with the class of 1894.

Returning to South Carolina, Wright tried several times to establish a school for Black children. But her attempts were unsuccessful because of racist-inspired acts of arson and

vandalism. She was, however, successful in teaching African American men who came to classes she taught in the evenings.

In 1897 Wright moved to Denmark, South Carolina, and, with the support of Booker T. Washington, secured a 20-acre parcel on which to build a school. While gathering funding and support from community churches and citizens, she started teaching in a room above an abandoned store. She called it the Denmark Industrial School for Colored Youth and patterned it after Tuskegee Institute.

In 1900, after outgrowing the space on which the school was located, Wright found a 280-acre property nearby. Ralph Voorhees, a New Jersey philanthropist, donated \$5,000 for the venture, and in 1902 the school opened as the Voorhees Industrial School. It served male and female students in both elementary and high school levels. For several years it was the only high school for Blacks in the area, eventually becoming a fully accredited four-year college.

In 1906, after years of fragile health, Wright sought medical treatment at the well-known Battle Creek Sanitarium. She died on December 14, at the age of 34.



Astonishing myths about Black women in America survive. For too many minds, Black success stories may be dismissed as outliers rather than typical of their Black woman neighbors and fellow citizens. Many hold, instead, to the elements of the insistent stereotype: if a Black woman is strong, she is not supposed to also be beautiful or feminine; if she works at menial tasks to feed and educate her children, she must not be intelligent; if her family unit is collapsing and her children failing, she is somehow to be seen as tough and unafraid; if she maintains her poise while being accosted with sexual harassment, she is probably oversexed or promiscuous; if she travels the globe, she is probably ferrying drugs. She may be as moral and intelligent as ever, but the signals she receives from the wider society too often tell her that she is not; nor can she be.

Distorted lenses are not unique to any ethnic group, but Black women are routinely defined by a specific set of reductive, inaccurate, and unfair caricatures. These survivals of old Hollywood movies and black-and-white television reruns have mutated into contemporary versions of their old selves. The emasculating *Sapphire*, for instance, resides in some episode you chance to stumble upon from *NYPD Blue* or *Law and Order* when police make their way into a poor Black neighborhood: *Sapphire* is harsh, loud, uncouth, usually making other characters seem more professional, more charming, more polished by contrast. *Sapphire* is a twisted take on conscientious striving, the Black women who assume multiple roles and myriad tasks upon the absence of their men lost to murder or prison, fulfilling the stereotype of strong and determined while ignoring the physical and emotional strain and the desperate need for balance in their lives. Their effort becomes a health struggle: soaring blood pressure; the consolation of food—and the wrong foods at that; depression; fantasizing about escaping; the untruth that

they can and must persevere and endure against great odds without being negatively affected.¹

Such stubborn societal myths, stereotypes based on race, gender, and social class are a continuing assault against Black women, invading their inner psyche, becoming permanently internalized, battering them from within even if they're able, for a time, to wriggle free and live the truth. And the effort to cope with or qualify based on an external and unbalanced agenda makes it harder to trust oneself or to trust others who look or behave as you do. Confusing parameters on who you think you are, and what you believe you should or can become, often dictate what you expect, what seems real, and what seems possible.²

PERSISTENT PREJUDICES

The challenges Black women face are sourced in both gender discrimination and ethnic prejudice. With regard to the latter, Black women live with fears similar to those of Black men in the area of law and order. They are concerned that they not appear too aggressive to the police; anxious that they not be dismissed again and again as welfare queens, sponging on the nation's economy; anguished that when shopping they can so often be profiled as potential shoplifters; dismayed that fellow workers wonder what right they have to be in offices of status and social consequence.

They are profoundly frustrated that such academic, professional, or business success as they may achieve makes them appear more threatening than ever to White colleagues and simultaneously more uppity than appropriate among Black friends. Specific health problems ensue from or simply correlate with their life effort. Black women in the United States are three times more likely than White women to die during pregnancy and/or childbirth, and are disproportionately single mothers (67 percent, as opposed to 42 percent among Latinas and 25 percent among White women).

But they can still find a promise of future triumph. It is found in the biographies of their ancestral sisters who lived out in their own time all that their descendants of today most desire and dream of in their own hearts. Today's Black woman has already seen her Black sisters emerge as champions on America's sports teams, breaking Olympic records, sustaining the nation's banner of victory. She has seen them assume prominent places in

The burdens of race and gender do not vanish until the biased are willing to acknowledge their prejudiced perspective.

the past and in the culture of our times both at home and abroad, contributing in such areas as literature, journalism, music, dance, theater, and science. Those pioneers have etched their courage and vision into the cultural landscape.

A sampling of their honor roll of talented, beautiful, deeply thoughtful, and intelligent African American women who have contributed significantly to making America better, would surely include such gems of American humaneness and womanhood as Maya Angelou, Hollywood's first Black woman director and recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom—highest civilian award in the United States; Johnnetta Betsch Cole, anthropologist, museum director, and first Black female president of Spelman College; Mae Carol Jemison, engineer, physician, and NASA astronaut; Toni Morrison, Pulitzer Prize winner, Nobel Prize in Literature; Carol Moseley Braun, diplomat, politician and lawyer; Faith Ringgold, painter, writer, mixed media sculptor, and performance artist; Anna Deavere Smith, recipient of the Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize (\$300,000), and founding director of the Institute on the Arts and Civic Dialogue at New York University; and Alfre Woodard, identified as one of America's most accomplished and versatile actresses. Two biographies in the accompanying sidebar lay out in greater detail what the African American woman has been doing for her children, her people and her nation all along, pointing thus to what she can be depended on to do tomorrow, regardless of the circumstances.

ROLE MODELS

Buoyed by the history of their heroines of the past, Black women are impacting America today in unprecedented ways. Tennis stars Venus and Serena Williams have been able to draw inspira-

tion from the prowess of Althea Gibson, the first Black woman to win a Grand Slam event in tennis (1956). The Williams sisters have taken a page from her book and written multiple volumes based on it. They are arguably as accomplished as any American sibling pair ever, holding between them 121 singles titles, including 30 Grand Slam titles, 14 Grand Slam doubles titles, four Olympic gold medals each, and on and on.

Then there's Oprah Winfrey, talk show host and media executive, actress, television producer, magazine founder, and philanthropist. And former first lady Michelle Obama.

The burdens of race and gender do not vanish until the biased are willing to acknowledge their

prejudiced perspective, and then choose to grow and change for the better. The future of the African American woman is as bright as today's Oprahs, Michelles, and Serenas, and as promising as yesterday's Elizabeth Evelyns, Ruth Janettas, and Altheas. ♣

¹ For more on Sapphire and other unflattering stereotypes of the Black woman, see Shauna Weides, www.skepticink.com/gps/2015/04/28/mammy-jezebel-sapphire-or-queen-stereotypes-of-the-african-american-female/.

² For more on the preceding ideas see Charisse Jones and Kumea Shorter-Gooden, *Shifting: The Double Lives of Black Women in America* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), p. 4.

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RUTH JANETTA TEMPLE

Advocate for Affordable Health Care

Ruth Temple was born in Natchez, Mississippi, in 1892. Her father was a Baptist minister, and her mother was a nurse. Her father, Richard Jason Temple, in addition to emphasizing education, stressed the importance of breaking down barriers based on race, religion, and educational backgrounds.

Temple's father died when she was 10 years old, and the family moved to Los Angeles. When her mother went to work to provide for her family (Ruth and her five siblings), it fell to Temple to care for the children.

She felt led to a career in medicine when her older brother injured himself while experimenting with gunpowder. Another time a neighbor child fell into a ditch filled with oil and was carried about a quarter mile. When the boy was rescued, Temple performed CPR on him until he began breathing again.

Juliette Estelle Roy, an Adventist, gave the Temple family Bible studies, and they became founding members of the Furlong Track Seventh-day Adventist Church, the first African American Adventist Church in the West, founded in 1908.

In 1913 Temple enrolled in the College of Medical Evangelists (now Loma Linda University) and was the first African American woman to graduate from that institution with a bachelor's degree in medicine.

After graduating, Temple worked to provide health services to low-income communities in Los Angeles. Lack of funding forced her to begin small. With the help of her husband, Otis Banks, she turned her five-bedroom home into the Temple Health Institute. It provided free medical care to adults and children, offering immunizations, substance abuse treatment, classes in nutrition, and sex education. She partnered with other community organizations, such as schools, churches, service organizations, and health information centers.

In addition to her community service, she was on the teaching staff of White Memorial Hospital. She retired in 1962 at the age of 70, but continued to provide public health service.

In 1983 the East Los Angeles Health Center was renamed the Dr. Ruth Temple Center. The following year she died at the age of 91.

LIARS AND THE LIES THEY TELL

We live in a media-saturated culture. Not only is our world saturated with breaking news and buzzing social networks—we're inundated with commercial advertising that claims to know what we need or desire. To catch our attention, advertisers display colorful, often Photoshopped images.

One of the most effective ways used to convince us to purchase products is through personal testimonies. These ads emphasize that characters are not actors but real persons. Still, underneath the picture is this phrase, usually in tiny letters: "Results not typical." It's a disclaimer to dispel any dissatisfaction in case the product doesn't live up to expectations.

We struggle with this same "results not typical" in Christianity. We hold up one or two saints and say, "Look at the difference Jesus can make." But results are not typical. People are jaded; fed up with empty claims and puny promises from patriot pastors who use the pulpit to promote politicians and fail to preach a faith perspective that is rooted in Jesus Christ. People are tired of Christians who construct exclusive interpretations of Scripture that fuse and confuse beliefs while repudiating all that is advocated in the Gospels.

We must no longer allow the name of Jesus to be tarnished by charlatans masquerading as Christians. We can no longer be associated with ideologies responsible for tearing humanity apart. We cannot continue to cling to hate-mongering dogmas. As the church of Jesus Christ, we must not impart a message that's like the testimonies of purveyors of material prosperity.

Let us therefore pray: "Dear God, deliver us from liars! They smile so

sweetly but lie through their teeth" (Ps. 120:2, paraphrased).

May we be delivered from liars who tell us that without God human beings are basically nice and good, and that despite the presence of sin everyone is born equal, innocent, and self-sufficient. There are liars who promise the world is a harmless place in which we are born free; if we are in chains it's someone else's fault; our defects can be corrected with just a little more intelligence, effort, or time. Some liars promote fake peace and exalt the inordinately greedy, predatory, and extortionate disposition of fallen humanity. Some liars use words and deeds to block our Christian consciousness from the realization that what we had assumed as truth is, in fact, lies.

May we be rescued from advertisers who claim to know what we need by selling us shadows to cover God's image; entertainers who provide cheap joy; preachers who pretend to instruct us in morality; psychologists who offer to shape our behavior and our morals so that we can live long, happily, and successfully without God; religions that preach political traditions and neglect God's commandments. They endorse the vices condemned by Jesus, holding sexual predators, adulterers, liars, and racists unaccountable.

These liars talk about the world without telling us that God made it; they tell us about our bodies without mentioning they are temples of the Holy Spirit; they instruct us about love without teaching about the God who radically loves us and gave Himself for us.

"Deliver us from liars, God! They smile so sweetly but lie through their teeth." ❖

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CURE FOR THE COMMON LIFE
HYVETH WILLIAMS



WE MUST NO LONGER ALLOW THE NAME OF JESUS TO BE TARNISHED BY CHARLATANS MASQUERADING AS CHRISTIANS.



Do we know who they are?

LOVING OUR ENEMIES

In Matthew 18 we find a story about a slave who doesn't understand the golden rule. We remember him from Jesus' parable as "the unmerciful servant." But his behavior makes one wonder if we shouldn't call him "the unthinking servant" or "the conceited servant." For he doesn't seem to much appreciate that actions in life have consequences. Either that, or maybe he has convinced himself that he's a very smart person.

INSIDE THE SERVANT'S HEAD

Whether unthinking or conceited, our servant knows for himself, by painful experience, what it's like to be condemned. When we meet him he is in major trouble for which he seems to have no one else to blame: trouble he deserves, else he would not own it all as he does. Apparently this is trouble of his own earning. Yet when he is released, it is remarkable that we find no expression of thankfulness on his part that he's been forgiven. No one receives any hint from him that he fathoms the astonishing reality of how much he has been forgiven, or even appreciates the basic fact of being forgiven. Maybe he isn't grateful to anyone. Maybe he's simply unreflective about life, oblivious to the high drama of his experience.

Or maybe he does have a conscious attitude to the high drama of his own deliverance: maybe he counts it as a personal success. Jesus' commentary elsewhere suggests this interpretation. In another story on forgiveness He exposes the spiritual callousness of the Simons and Judases of the world, whose pathetic spiritual lack prevents them from either seeing the point or standing the adoration that flows from the heart of forgiven Marys. In Luke and John, Simon and Judas are embarrassed, indignant, and revulsed at the response of a woman overwhelmed by God's unstinting pardon that has washed over and washed clean away all the shame of her guilty soul. They find it offensive that now she feels no shame in saying "Thank You, Jesus!"¹

In Luke 7:36-50 and John 12:1-8 Jesus is heard exposing the judgmental and hypocritical arrogance that operates in the hearts of Simon and Judas, men who do not understand forgiveness and who in their conceit cannot bear to watch the consequences of gratitude that flow therefrom. Indeed, Jesus' acceptance of the woman's behavior is sufficient basis for Simon to dismiss His spiritual credentials, since,

according to Simon: "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner" (Luke 7:39).

JESUS ON FORGIVENESS

Throughout His ministry Jesus has much to say about the pros and cons of forgiveness: seeking forgiveness is part of the ideal prayer; it may mark out the path to healing; it is a basic life principle; God's commitment to forgive is unlimited; the message of God's forgiveness is part and parcel of gospel proclamation.²

But besides the Simon's house episode and the parable of Matthew 18:23-35, Jesus' ministry contains no other forgiveness narratives. Accounts of the episode at Simon's house show the anti-forgiver's true spiritual condition. Simon and Judas, the protesting figures, are both looked up to by those around them. Jesus alone sees the hypocritical self-righteousness of their superiority. His anti-forgiving superiority would allow Matthew's unmerciful servant to credit himself for escaping the doom he deserved, arguing that it must have been his own ability that set him free. How he acquired his huge debt we are not told, though personal debt is no proof of either flawed integrity or poor business strategy. Everyone in debt is not there because they waste money. Everyone in debt is not guilty of slack economic living. But the promptness and direction of the servant's initiatives is a damning depiction of his character. With regard to his initiative toward his fellow servant his drive is to punish. With regard to his initiative toward the master his instinct is to grovel.

WHAT COMES NEXT

As Jesus shows, all credit (a good word here) for addressing and taking care of the servant's debt belongs to his master, whom the parable identifies as the country's king. The punctuation of this verse in the King James Version builds up the weight of the royal sentence with rapid-fire short phrases compounded by commas: "His lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made" (Matt. 18:25, KJV). But then the scoundrel gets out of trouble. And to the extent that Simon's or Judas' conceit applies, he would be priding himself on his escape, quietly gloating on his skill as a

His master cared much less about money than about the well-being of his slaves and their families.

groveling beggar. His profusion of worshipful supplication—“Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all” (verse 26, KJV)—seems to parallel the intensity of Mary’s gratitude. It is also the strongest evidence that his trouble is his own: he has neither alibi nor scapegoat.

What he does next makes sympathy for him the greatest of challenges. His king certainly gives up any such idea. And Jesus shows how mean-spirited he is by the sequence of actions connecting his pardon from the king to his mistreatment of his fellow slave.

The phrase “in process of time” (KJV) is occasionally used to show that there is a lapse of time in the sequence between two stated actions within a narrative: In Genesis 38:12 it represents the time between the death of Judah’s second son, Onan, and the growth to maturity of his third son Shelah.

In 2 Chronicles 21:19 it is a two-year period at the end of King Jehoram’s life. But no such lapse of time is indicated between the slave’s pardon by the master and his victimization of a colleague. Rather, there seems to be purposive immediacy between the reception of pardon and the launching of assault: “His lord commanded him to be sold. . . . So the slave fell *to the ground*,” begging. “And the lord . . . forgave him the debt. But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke *him*, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe’” (Matt. 18:25-28, NASB).³

IT IS OF THE LORD’S MERCY

We gawk at one man’s viciousness with his fellow so soon after receiving mercy. His refusal to show mercy to one who owed so little in comparison contradicted everything their master had just showed that he stood for. Jesus encountered just this unmerciful spirit in His dealings with the Phar-

isees, and felt compelled to remind them of their own Scriptures: “Go and learn what this means,” He told them, then quoted Hosea 6:6, “I desire mercy, not sacrifice” (Matt. 9:13). For the Pharisees, “Show me your company and I’ll tell you who you are” was cardinal doctrine. Jesus’ preferred company was people they distinguished from themselves by labeling them “sinners” (Matt. 9:11; Luke 15:2).

But Jesus’ standard defense of His behavior and social preferences could not be more damning to His critics: “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Matt. 9:13). His reply showed the Pharisees that their vocabulary choices and definitions eliminated them from the possibility of His help. The conceit that declared them better declared them doomed. Their view of themselves as enjoying spiritual health was the blindness that proved them hopeless: “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick” (verse 12).

LOOKING FOR ENEMIES

The parable of the unmerciful servant is not what usually comes to mind when we think of enemy stories. But unconventional is not synonymous with illegal. And now that we have considered the story on its own terms it seems less odd to consider it in relation to the question of enemies. We usually know who “enemies” are: they hate us; wish us harm; don’t want us to succeed or be safe or happy. Who would our unmerciful servant think of as his enemy?

His master, perhaps. We can acknowledge his frustration through the long seasons of his deep and deeper indebtedness—days of futility and nights of tossing and turning, casting about for some strategy for escaping the horrible doom that would totally destroy him the day his boss called him to account. In his moments of most imaginative perversity what events did he conjure up that might bring some ill to the man? Not murderous schemes, but a single, momentarily incapacitating mishap, if only because it might bring him temporary reprieve while his creditor focused on recovering his health.

But then, in one short exchange, he discovers that although he has lived in interminable dread of the man, his boss is not his enemy: his boss does not wish him harm; has no desire to see him destroyed; is as blithe about debt collection as he, the slave, is desperate about it. His master is not his enemy.

What of his fellow servant, then? After all, the man owed him money that he wouldn’t pay. He

reasoned with himself in irrational spite: *If “fellow servant” had paid me my money things would have been better for me right now.* He knows full well that 100 denarii (pennies) is standard wage for 100 days of labor, while 10,000 talents works out to 5,000 lifetimes of labor.

But there is no equilibrium to his thinking, and no objective voice to draw him back to reality. There’s only his conscience, seared through years of serving self and scorning the other: “fellow servant” must be his enemy. Convinced of this, servant 1 launches a vigorous counterattack upon the unsuspecting man, seeking him out and hurling upon him everything the master has so recently delivered him from.

“Fellow servant” begs and pleads to no avail, using the very words he himself used first in his groveling before the master. But servant 1 cannot recognize himself in his fellow servant. Truth is, servant 1 does not know himself. So that were he to see himself somewhere he would be unable to recognize himself. In a spirit of unenlightened vengeance, he gives “fellow servant” what he deserves and feels better about himself for several seconds.

But only for seconds. For there are other slaves around. Remember, the boss here is no bit player: he is the king. No small business operator would ever be able to sustain an enterprise with accounts receivable from a single purchaser of their product that amounted to 5,000 lifetimes worth of work. This master’s hacienda is an entire nation that roars with round-the-clock life, that flows with myriad machines of providence purring along at perfect pace to supply a world of customers with whatever each may need just before they realize they do. Through these willing servants he supplies all of everyone’s needs in accordance with his spirit of integrity and fairness. The servants see what servant 1 has done and know it contradicts their master’s *modus operandi*. They do not report it because they are his enemies. They do not mean him ill. But they cherish and strive to maintain the sense of fairness and justice the master has instilled in them.

FINDING THE ENEMY

God, the Master of earth’s hacienda, whose ways are “just and true” (Rev. 15:3), has “set eternity in the human heart” (Eccl. 3:11). We are surely not independently capable of all we long for; we are surely not always innocent of what we condemn

in others. But our sense of justice, even when our own conscience rebukes us, is because the fall from Eden’s idyll has not entirely undone the human consciousness of God’s eternal norms. Our consciousness of those norms is our consciousness that we can never attain them on our own, and that all that preserves us from the condemnation and destruction we deserve is the Master’s mercy.

Mercy is big with Him, belonging to “the weightier matters of [His] law” (Matt. 23:23, KJV). Missing mercy is the same as self-destruction because it is the Master’s mercies that keep us alive, “because his compassions fail not” (Lam. 3:22, KJV). We survive every day because He never shifts from His graciousness to us (Mal. 3:6), renewing His mercies toward us every morning. Servant 1 missed that. There is no forgiveness in his gospel proclamation, if he has any. And, absent mercy, he destroys himself: lacking compassion, failing to understand mercy, failing to recognize that his survival depended exclusively on the master’s mercy made him his own worst enemy.

If he had cared enough about himself to listen to the Spirit and think straight, he would have known that his hope came from the Lord (Ps. 121:2); he would have grasped that the mercy of forgiveness is a gift from heaven (Acts 5:31). It was not found in his groveling: it was the master’s grace. It was not in his penance: it was in the master’s mercy. His master cared much less about money than about the well-being of his slaves and their families.

Servant 1 didn’t need an enemy. None of us does. If we only knew where to begin counting the days of our lives—with the mercy of God, we would find it very difficult to have any enemies. If we knew our own condition, owing and forgiven unconditionally our 5,000 lifetimes of debt, there would be no time left for us to abuse or extort anyone else for pennies: we would spend all our time in shameless gratitude. ■

¹ See the Gospels’ narratives on the feast at Simon’s house: Matt. 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; Luke 7:36-47; John 12:1-6.

See Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4; Matt. 9:2-7; 12:31, 32; Mark 11:25, 26; Luke 6:37; Luke 23:34; 24:46, 47.

³ Scripture quotations marked NASB are from the New American Standard Bible, copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

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Lael Caesar contemplates God’s mercy every new day he awakens to continue working as associate editor of the *Adventist Review*.



PHOTO BY MWANGI GATHECA ON UNSPLASH

North American city to visit in 2019, and for good cause. Canada's calling-card city played host to the General Conference session in 2000 and continues to show off its charms. Since then, as before, about 100,000 newcomers swell the population each year. It's a desirable, enchanting, and successful city with bulging real estate prices, stifling rush-hour traffic, and eager entrepreneurs chasing the next big thing.

And at the other end of the spectrum: a growing underclass.

DIFFERENT LOCATION, SAME CHALLENGES

When the General Conference came calling in 2000, my congregation had just moved from downtown Toronto to the suburbs, as far north and west as you can go and still be inside the city borders. But in so doing, we were not eluding those who were poor. Out there, in Rexdale, the Toronto West Seventh-day Adventist Church is located in the middle of the city's poorest ward.

A recent map of the city, entitled the "color of poverty," shows how my church's area—and other suburban locale filled with marginalized people—are disproportionately Black and Brown.

Into such landscapes of limited opportunities, social housing, higher unemployment, comparatively poor educational outcomes, and mental health disorder the drug trade finds productive recruits. Organized gangs are a natural outflow, and with that, gunplay and disproportionate violence.

Within six years of moving to

THE GOOD NEIGHBOR CHURCH

A community church that emphasizes community

At times the soaring rhetoric of a pastor from Boston, Massachusetts, ricochets off the walls of my church in Toronto, Canada.

The echo of Eugene Rivers' 2006 screed finds particular resonance every time we talk about "another murder" or "guns and gangs" in this most livable city where 60 murders a year in a population of 3 million Torontonians is considered a crisis.

National Geographic magazine lists Toronto as the number two

ROYSON JAMES

Rexdale, our church was front-page news. A youth was shot on the front steps of our building as he attended the funeral of another youth who had been shot. The headline on the story I wrote for my newspaper, the *Toronto Star*, read: "My Church, the Crime Scene."

Our perspectives changed that day. There is a moment that one is thrust into the maelstrom of events, and the stark choice is to sink or swim; to engage or disappear into irrelevance; to be a church *in* the community or a church *of* the community. Toronto West Adventist Church really had no choice. Its history dictates an Esther-like response "for such a time as this."

And if we were tempted to hesitate and prevaricate and find excuses, the circumstances—God inspired and directed—wouldn't let us.

In 1961 Toronto had no more than four Adventist congregations. Only a few Black immigrants were allowed into the country, to the point of sparking protests from Caribbean political leaders. So the sprinkling of color in those White congregations created some unease among the believers.

With relaxed immigration rules, the floodgates opened and before long the islanders organized a church where the style of worship and the opportunities of service reflected their active Adventist participation "back home."

LEADERSHIP'S RESPONSE

In a most tumultuous and racially explosive period of North American history, the 1960s, the Ontario Conference of Seventh-day Adventists uneasily recognized and established a congregation in Toronto that nurtured the early influx of Caribbean immigrants.

In short, a Black church, the first for Adventists in Canada. Three years later the conference hired its first Black pastor, Rudy James.

From 38 Charter members in a rented church on the edge of downtown Toronto, the Toronto West Adventist Church would spark an explosion of Adventist membership that now populate numerous congregations across the province and Canada. Three of the five largest Adventist churches in Canada (Toronto West, Apple Creek, Toronto Perth) are direct descendants from these pioneers. As many as 40 churches in Greater Toronto and Hamilton have

By the time I was 16 years old I had received more positive messages than most Black kids will get in a lifetime.

a majority West Indian membership. One estimate in 2011 suggests that as much as 60 percent of the Adventist population in Ontario has West Indian roots.

More than 200,000 West Indians would arrive in Canada between 1960 and 1980. Like other Black churches, Toronto West Adventist Church was settlement and immigration counselor, information center, social convener, spiritual guide and comfort, community resource, and go-to hub. For a people with multiple marginalizations—race, class, newcomer, immigrant, and peculiar religion—that church, raised on the backs of the quiet revolutionaries, holds a special place in Toronto's history.

A FULL-MESSAGE, FULL-BODY EXPERIENCE

When my stepmother immigrated in 1963, the church was her village. I arrived in 1969 to a similar advantage over my fellow immigrants.

The 11:00 a.m. worship service featured boisterous singing, dramatic spoken word, creative drama, liturgy, and a total experience best described as a celebration.

Souls satisfied, the members feed their stomachs, often at one of several communal lunches at someone's home, a weekly feast that lacked nothing in culinary creativity and expression.

As digestive juices flowed, the informal schooling of a people endured. They dissected immigration challenges, shared employment leads, circumvented racist practices, comforted the lonely, assisted the unemployed, filled the basket of the poor, and tackled educational obstacles in the way of the children. They encouraged,

Instead of looking for a green field site to build a modern megachurch, we've voted several times to stay in Rexdale and be salt and light.

succored, empowered. And the most dynamic part of the day was still to come—one that ended in a social spiced with fantastic food and clean, vigorous family fun stretching into the night.

This youth-focused afternoon program often stressed education, social and community responsibility, healthful lifestyle, community development, social graces, environmental stewardship, and public service. The message drummed into every young person was: you are a child of God. You are meant to be great. You can do anything through Christ who gives you strength. No matter what happens to you in society, God has a higher purpose for your life.

MISSION SHARPENED

I get chills writing about this because I know that the Black kids I saw in the neighbourhood, my Black school friends, did not have access to one tenth of this positive, life-transforming food. By the time I was 16 years old I had received more positive messages than most Black kids will get in a lifetime. Talk about a village. And surrogates. How could I possibly fail?

So here I was, 30 years on, sitting in my church that had just been shot up, and Eugene Rivers, invited to explain how Boston addressed similar gun violence decades earlier, was about to call out the comfortable: The crisis in the Black community, he said, is a direct result of the failure of the Black church to “get from behind the public, put our lips with our hips, get down in the gutter, hallelujah, and love these young people.”

“We the church have sinned against God to the extent to which we have turned our backs on the

young people that are now engaged in violence. The violence we see, and the blood outside that door, the blood in the streets is blood that drips from our hands, the hands of indifference, the hands of self-centered comfort, hands of religious tradition that elevates the created above the Creator, hands that preoccupy ourselves with big stadiums we call churches, wealth and more wealth at the expense of the poor.”

My church hasn't been the same since. Our mission has sharpened. We pray and fast and plan and study and now yearn to become so indispensable to the Rexdale community that if, in the future, we would decide to move, the community would rise up and protest.

So instead of looking for a green field site to build a modern megachurch, we've voted several times to stay in Rexdale and be salt and light.

We are adding a new wing, the community evangelism wing, the Rexdale community development center, where we plan to propagate in all community youths the very same wonderful things we pour into our own youth. (If you have \$1 million looking for a home, our e-mail contact is twest@adventistontario.org.)

Members have not waited for construction to begin. There is a food bank run by the Community Services department. Once a month the youth take food downtown to those who are homeless. We teach English as a second language and prepare tax returns for free. Every Sabbath members hold a story hour for neighbourhood kids. At Christmas we partner with the Toronto *Star* to deliver 1,400 gifts to needy Rexdale kids. In August we host a Love and Care Day when we dispense health tips, food, and back-to-school goodies, and we also stage an anti-drug and violence march.

In 2018 the number of murders spiked again. And with it, Rivers' voice reverberates: “From this day forward, every church in this town should be challenged to live by biblical standards that say in thirty-third chapter of Ezekiel that you're supposed to be the watchman on the wall, and if you're not the watchman the blood of the innocents is on your hands.”

Who knows if our congregation has moved to this part of the city for such a time as this? 🍌

Royson James, a former columnist for the Toronto *Star*, is now a freelance contributor to the newspaper. He focuses on urban issues.



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Terri Roberts and David Zackrison talked together in Terri's sunroom about what the Amish refer to as "The Event." PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

LEARNING FORGIVENESS FROM THE AMISH

A remarkable example of God's grace

I was browsing through Facebook when a posting caught my attention. It read, "My Son Shot 10 Amish Girls in a Pennsylvania Schoolhouse" by Terri Roberts.

I remembered hearing about this back in 2006. Charlie Roberts, a milk truck driver from Nickel Mines in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, had barricaded himself inside an Amish schoolhouse, shot 10 girls, killing five of them, then killed himself.

As I continued to read I was captivated by the theme of the article. The families of the victims had gone to the family of the shooter to express their condolences for their loss and to extend forgiveness. An

Amish neighbor of the Roberts had come over that same day to see Terri's husband. "Roberts, we love you." He said. "This was not your doing; you must not blame yourself. I think the devil used your boy." The man stayed for more than an hour consoling them and affirming his love, forgiveness, and support. There were several other encounters like this as well, in which Amish neighbors and friends extended their sympathy toward the Roberts family for their loss.

At Charlie Roberts' funeral the media were there in force. But also in attendance was a group of about 30 Amish who emerged from behind a nearby shed. They fanned out in a crescent between the grave site and the media crowd, their backs offering a solid wall of black to the cameras. They did this as a show of compassion for the family of the man who had taken so much from them.

A NEW LEVEL OF FORGIVENESS

This was a level of forgiveness I had never seen nor even heard of; way beyond my ability to understand. I wanted to learn more, so I purchased and read Terri Roberts' book, *Forgiven*; found her online blog, *Joy Through Adversity*; watched the movie *Amish Grace*, which is based on this event; and read

all the books and online articles on the topic I could find.

The story was especially touching to me because I was dealing with desires for revenge and unrelenting unforgiveness toward a church “friend” who had sexually molested my daughter when she was 5 years old, the memories of it not coming to life until she was 17. I was boiling with anger toward my church and some of its employees because of the way we had been treated while going through this ordeal. No way was I going to forgive; I wanted revenge.

Despite my feelings at the time, I can see in hindsight that God was gently leading me through a process of healing. It took 10 years, but when the time was right and I was finally receptive, God brought the appropriate people into my life, and I was willing to listen.

MEETING WITH TERRI

In September 2016 I began corresponding with Terri* through her blog. In late October I took a road trip to Pennsylvania and visited Terri at her home in Strasburg.

On October 27, 2016, I arrived at Terri’s house. We spent about an hour together in her sunroom talking about what the Amish refer to as “The Event” at the Nickel Mines schoolhouse, the effect it had on her and her family and the families of the victims (whom she still keeps in contact with), the unforgiveness I was dealing with, and the grace of God. It was sad to watch this mother express her grief and incomprehension of how her son could have done such a terrible thing to those girls.

We then got into my car and drove to the cemetery in Nickel Mines where her son Charlie is buried. His grave has no marker, just a patch of grass. The family has never been willing to place a marker on the grave because of the circumstances of his death.

Terri showed me the shed where the Amish had come from and where they stood to create the barrier between the family and the media at Charlie’s funeral.

We drove by the site where the schoolhouse once stood. It had been torn down within days of the shooting. The only remaining memorial are five trees planted on the site where the schoolhouse once stood.

I felt like an ant in the presence of a giant.

A LESSON IN FORGIVENESS

Terri and I also visited an Amish dairy farm. When we arrived at the house, a petite middle-aged woman answered Terri’s knock and exclaimed, “Oh Terri! I’m so happy to see you!” Then they embraced.

After touring the farm Terri said, “I was concerned about one of their daughters, who is having surgery on her shoulder.”

Curious, I asked, “Is this the family of one of the shooting victims?”

“Yes it is,” she said. “They had one daughter killed, one injured, and one who escaped from the schoolhouse before the shooting took place.”

A wave of realization spread over me. I had just witnessed the forgiveness and reconciliation that God’s grace brings. The mother of the shooter and the mother of one of the victims embracing each other and saying, “I’m so happy to see you.” The spirit of anger and desire for revenge that had possessed me for so long began to fall apart. How could I hang on to such feelings in the presence of such a miracle?

THE WAY TO FORGIVENESS

When I got home I started looking for books dealing with forgiveness that were not tied to the Amish shootings. God led me to *Forgive Instantly and Live Free* by Terry Stueck. It was in the pages of this book, and in God’s Word, that I found the way to forgiveness. In Scripture we read: “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Matt. 6:12).

“For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins” (verses 14, 15).

“Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many” (Heb. 12:14, 15).



As a reminder of God's grace and forgiveness, David Zackrisen asked his oldest daughter, Alanna, to draw this picture of Terri Roberts and her Amish friend on the Amish family's front porch. It's titled, "I'm so happy to see you."

There was no doubt: I was being called to forgive the man who had molested my daughter, to let go of the anger and bitterness I had toward my church, and to relinquish the desire for a different past. I was being called to place my faith in God: "Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord" (Rom. 12:19). I was being called to stretch my faith in an arena where I had never before ventured, "forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead" (Phil. 3:13).

I was being called to forgive everybody for everything, to forgive others the way Christ had forgiven me. I was being called to say the words "I forgive you. You don't owe me anything anymore. Your debt to me is canceled and forgiven."

Easier said than done. On my first try I gritted my teeth and in a forced growl said: "Dear Jesus, be with that guy who molested my daughter. Amen." I felt a tiny bit of the load lift from me.

The next day I said the same thing, but it was a little easier.

After several weeks of forcing myself to do this, I was finally able to let go of the desire for revenge and begin to trust that God would do justice for me. Eventually I was able to pray that God would extend His grace and mercy to the perpetrator

and save him for His kingdom. God is in the business of saving people. This guy might be my neighbor in heaven someday, and I have to be in a frame of mind to rejoice with the angels that he got there.

I let go of my anger and bitterness toward the church and gave it to God to deal with. I have forgiven and released everyone from all debts—real or perceived. Some people I forgave in person; others I communicated with via e-mail or set up an empty chair in a room and spoke to it as if the person were there.

SWEET FREEDOM

Life has become sweet again. A great sense of freedom came over me when I canceled every debt I held against others. I continue to carry scars from what my family and I went through, and certain things still trigger the past anger and desire for revenge. But the never-ending mercy and grace of God and His promises, the ability to pray and to ask for forgiveness and cleansing—they keep me on the narrow road that leads to life. 🍌

* Sadly, following a battle with cancer, Terri Roberts passed away in August 2017.

David Zackrisen writes from Knoxville, Tennessee, where he works in property management for a commercial real estate company. He also has served as a missionary in Central and South America.



PETER N. LANDLESS ZENO L. CHARLES-MARCEL

Should I Go Gluten-free?

Q: A few of my friends have gone gluten-free as a health practice. They say they feel less bloated and better overall, but their diet seems so restrictive. Is going gluten-free healthful, and will it decrease my bloating?

A: Your question is a fairly common one, and we commend your friends for not being passive regarding their health.

Current estimates are that only .5 to 13 percent of the population have a diagnosable condition that warrants eliminating gluten, namely, celiac disease, nonceliac gluten sensitivity, and wheat allergy. Household members may also adopt a gluten-free diet for solidarity, ease, and elimination of cross contamination. But when market researchers ask gluten avoiders about their reasons for this dietary choice, about 40 percent say it is better for overall health. Some 45 percent cite reasons other than gluten intolerance or sensitivity, and more than 80 percent have no substantiating medical diagnosis. So your friends are not alone in this.

People with celiac disease have an immune reaction to ingested gluten, leading to widespread inflammation and damage to the gastrointestinal (GI) tract that interferes with the absorption of nutrients from food. This results in a host of symptoms and may lead to such problems as osteoporosis, infertility, nerve damage, seizures, and an increase in the risk of intestinal cancer.

Nonceliac gluten sensitivity may cause symptoms similar to celiac disease but without intestinal damage. Celiac disease is diagnosed by a special blood test and biopsy of the intestine. Even a very small amount of gluten can cause problems for those with celiac disease, so going gluten-free is, for them, not just very helpful—it's a must!

Gluten is actually a set of proteins found in certain grains such as wheat, rye, and barley. They are not essential to your diet, but because gluten is part of commonly used grains, eliminating it is tricky. Breads, cereals, pasta, and beer all have



gluten, and it hides in sauces, "natural flavorings," vitamin supplements, some medications, even toothpaste. Most people without celiac disease on a "gluten-free" diet are usually not *strictly* gluten-free.

On the other hand, about one in every five Americans suffers from bloating, or trapped intestinal gas. This is far more common than gluten sensitivity. Smoking, acid reflux, certain medications, and mouth breathing may contribute to the overinflated sensation. Unabsorbed foods, such as lactose, gluten, and processed soy, and the overeating of foods that contain FODMAPs may also be implicated. FODMAP is an acronym for fermentable oligosaccharides, disaccharides, monosaccharides, and polyols, complex names for a collection of molecules found in food that can be poorly absorbed by some people. Wheat, rye, onions, beans, and mushrooms all contain FODMAPs. (Visit the link below for a more complete list.)

Removing or reducing FODMAPs from your diet may eliminate bloating. Since every individual's gut is different, try avoiding them for a few weeks to see how your body responds, then add them back one by one to find the culprit(s). This is far easier than going completely gluten-free and is less dangerous. Be sure to get adequate fiber and B vitamins in your otherwise health-promoting diet and lifestyle for the health and well-being that God desires we experience. 🦋

* www.monashfodmap.com/about-fodmap-and-ibs/high-and-low-fodmap-foods/

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.



TRUE LOVE AT HOME

Timeless tips to deep, elevating love

ELLEN G. WHITE

Ellen White wrote to a Brother M, counseling him on the many ways in which he could attain fulfillment in his relationship with his wife.—Editors.

Isaw in regard to your family, Brother M, that you were not happy. Your wife has been disappointed, and you have been disappointed. Your wife expected to find in you a person of more noble, refined organization. She has been very unhappy. . . .

She is not demonstrative. It is not natural for her to make advances and manifest affection. She looks upon the manifestation of affection between husband and wife as weak and childish. She has felt that if she encouraged affection, it would not be answered by fine, elevated love, but by the lower order of passions; that these would be strengthened, but not pure, deep, holy love.

Your wife should make strong efforts to come out of her retired, dignified reserve, and cultivate simplicity in all her actions. And when the higher order of faculties is aroused in you, and strengthened by exercise, you will better understand the wants of women; you will understand that the soul craves love of a higher, purer order than exists in the low order of animal passions. These passions have been strengthened in you by encouragement and exercise.

If now in the fear of God you keep your body under, and seek to meet your wife with pure, elevated love, the wants of her nature will be met. Take her to your heart; esteem her highly. . . .

HUMAN FAILURE

Brother M, you fail to encourage the confidence of your wife. You are lacking in courteousness and in constant, kindly regard for her. You sometimes manifest love, but it is a selfish love. . . . You have sought for your own amusement, leaving her at home lonely and often sad. You pursued this course before moving to this place and have continued to do so since in a less degree for want of opportunity or excuse.

Your wife would scorn to let

you know that she marked the deficiencies in you. She has a fear of you. Had you possessed genuine love, which such a nature as hers requires, you would have found an answering chord in her heart. You are too cold and stiff.

You have at times manifested affection, but it has not awakened love in return because you have not been courteous and attentive, and manifested a kind regard for your wife by consulting her happiness. You have too many times felt at liberty to saunter off in pursuit of your own pleasure without consulting her pleasure or happiness at all.

CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE LOVE

True, pure love is precious. It is heavenly in its influence. It is deep and abiding. It is not spasmodic in its manifestations. It is not a selfish passion. It bears fruit. It will lead to a constant effort to make your wife happy. If you have this love, it will come natural to make this effort. It will not appear to be forced. If you go out for a walk or to attend a meeting, it will be as natural as your breath to choose your wife to accompany you and to seek to make her happy in your society.

You regard her spiritual attainments as inferior to your own, but I saw that God was better pleased with her spirit than with that possessed by yourself. You are not worthy of your wife. She is too good for you. She is a frail, sensitive plant; she needs to be cared for tenderly. She earnestly desires to do the will of God. But she has a proud spirit, and is timid, shrinking from reproach. It is as death to her to be the subject of observation or remark.

Let your wife be loved, honored, and cherished, in fulfillment of the marriage vow, and she will come out of that reticent, diffident position which is natural to her.

A LOVING RESPONSE

Only let a woman realize that she is appreciated by her husband and is precious to him, not merely because she is useful and convenient in his house, but because she is a part of himself, and she will respond to his affection and reflect the love bestowed upon her. Let your wife be the object of your special and hearty attention.

When you feel as God would have you, you will feel lost without the society of your wife. You think her faith not worth having, yet it will bring answers sooner than the faith which you possess.

A house with love in it, where love is expressed in words and looks and deeds, is a place where angels love to manifest their presence.

Brother M, you fail to understand the heart of a woman. You do not reason from cause to effect. You know that your wife is not so cheerful and happy as you wish to see her, but you do not investigate the cause. You do not analyze your deportment to see if the difficulty does not exist in yourself.

Love your wife. She is hungering for deep, true, elevating love. Let her have tangible proof that her care and interest for you, shown in her attention to your comfort, is appreciated and returned. Seek her opinion and approval in whatever you engage in. Respect her judgment. Do not feel that you know all that is worth knowing.

HAPPY THE HOME

A house with love in it, where love is expressed in words and looks and deeds, is a place where angels love to manifest their presence, and hallow the scene by rays of light from glory. There the humble household duties have a charm in them. None of life's duties will be unpleasant to your wife under such circumstances. She will perform them with cheerfulness of spirit and will be like a sunbeam to all around her, and she will be making melody in her heart to the Lord.

At present she feels that she has not your heart's affections. You have given her occasion to feel thus. You perform the necessary duties devolving upon you as head of the family, but there is a lack. There is a serious lack of love's precious influence which leads to kindly attentions. Love should be seen in the looks and manners, and heard in the tones of the voice. ♣

This excerpt was taken from *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 2, pp. 414-417. Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry.



People are watching (yes, they are).

AUDREY WEIR-GRAHAM

One of the songs indelibly impressed upon my memory as a fourth-generation Adventist who regularly attended Sabbath School is “A Sermon in Shoes.” It contains these lines:
“Jesus counts upon you to spread the gospel news,
So walk it, and talk it, a sermon in shoes.”

For the past 23 years I have been employed as a public high school history teacher. Not long after I started I realized that teaching in a poverty-stricken school district was God’s mission field for me. That song often reverberated in my head, especially when confronted with the challenges of low student motivation, disinterested parents, mediocre teachers, and limited funding.

A sermon, Lord? Really?

Fortunately, having a prayer partner buoyed my spirits when tough days caused me to question if this was where God wanted me. We prayed for me to have a God-like spirit in the classroom, when I cannot openly talk about Jesus. We prayed for difficult students by

name, those who unknowingly scream for me to give them some “mama love.”

But recently I prayed that the Lord would use me to lead someone to know Him and become a Seventh-day Adventist.

Enter Helen.

A BOND ESTABLISHED

That fall I saw Helen in the hallway between classes. We smiled and spoke to each other, and I asked if she was a substitute. She was a retired principal from a neighboring district and was substituting to earn travel money to see the world. I asked for her phone number, so that I could request her as a substitute in my classroom when I had to be absent. When she gave me her number she went on to say, “I’ve been watching you. There’s something different about you.”

WALK IT!

She apparently could tell that her comment caught me off guard, because she went on to say, “I mean in a good way.”

We both laughed and she asked, “Are you a Christian?” I told her I was, and she asked, “What denomination?”

“I’m a Seventh-day Adventist.”

Without missing a beat, Helen stomped her foot on the ground and said excitedly, “A Seventh-day Adventist! I’ve been wanting to know how I can become a Seventh-day Adventist.”

I couldn’t believe my ears. Not wanting to overreact, I calmly responded, “Well, I can certainly help you with that.”

She had no idea how excited I was. Imagine: me, a preacher’s wife; a former Bible teacher; a public school teacher wondering if I was making a difference.

SEEKING GUIDANCE

I went home that afternoon asking the Lord to show me how to win her to Him His way.

The Holy Spirit whispered to me to invite her to have lunch in my classroom the next time she came to substitute. On the day we scheduled lunch I brought spaghetti and salad. I brought real plates, real utensils, and real glasses, not paper products. It was as if the Holy Spirit had said, “Make her feel special.”

Helen was elated. She couldn’t believe spaghetti could taste so good without meat.

Next the Lord told me to give her a Christmas present. So I gave her a CD of pianist Sam Ocampo playing classic hymns as only Sam can play them. She loved it!

I was then impressed to send her *Message* magazine, but I didn’t tell her that I was sending it to her. One day, after substituting for another teacher, she popped into my room and said, “You’re sending me *Message* magazine, aren’t you?”

“Do you like it?”

“I’ve never seen anything like it!”

THE NEXT ASK

In June, with the school year nearly over, I ran into Helen in the faculty lounge. The Holy Spirit said, “Invite her to hear you speak at church in two weeks.”

So that’s what I did. I asked if she would like to go to church with me. Doing the “Helen stomp,” she stomped her foot and said, “I’d love to go to church with you!”

Inasmuch as I was the guest speaker, I was concerned that she not be by herself. So I invited a dear Christian, Andrea Smith, to come to church with us and sit with Helen throughout the service.

The Lord blessed us that Sabbath. Members of the Capitol City church embraced her; the food at the potluck after church was good; and the Word that the Lord had given me fed her heart. As we drove home from church Helen said, “God is calling me to higher ground. I’ve been a Baptist all my life, but I can’t stay a Baptist with the knowledge I have now. It’s time to go to higher ground.”

Once again that still, quiet voice spoke to me. I asked, “Would you like to have Bible studies?”

She stomped her foot and said, “I’d love to have Bible studies.” Knowing that I was going to be away most of the summer traveling with my husband, I asked Andrea if she and her husband, Ron, would give her Bible studies. Andrea gladly consented.

I received a text message from Helen that July, asking if I would be in Stockton at the end of August. I was there to see Helen get baptized at the Mayfair Seventh-day Adventist Church by Lanston Sylvester.

A sermon in shoes. It’s a catchy tune. I’m glad I never got it out of my mind. “So walk it, and talk it, and teach it, and preach it, a sermon in shoes!”

Audrey Weir-Graham lives in Stockton, California, and travels around the Pacific Union Conference with her husband, Ricardo.



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MERIT OR MERCY?

*Whining or exulting
before Jesus*

I tried snowboarding once. “Once,” here, is not to be taken as introduction to a fairy tale. It’s not about once upon a time. It is reality; it means what it says; and it gives you a clear idea of how amply successful my experience was. It was “once.”

PARALYSIS

When I awkwardly slid off the ski lift and onto my behind, a huge board strapped to my feet on top of slippery snow, it dawned on me that I would need my nonexistent ab muscles to be able to heave myself up. There is nothing quite as demoralizing as sitting on the freezing snow unable to move, while

watching other snowboarders effortlessly rise up in one fluid motion and gracefully glide off into the sun. Yet no matter how hard I tried, I simply could not get up on my own. I might as well have been glued to the frozen earth beneath me. Think of me in my sad (and awkward) immobility as being temporarily paralyzed.

There is a character in the Bible who understood that helpless feeling of not being able to stand, though for him it was a lot longer than I found myself on that cold mountainside: not a matter of minutes of discomfort, but a lifetime of discomfort—38 years. We do not know his name, but we meet him in John 5. He lies paralyzed by the Pool of Bethesda, along with “a great multitude” who were sick; for legend had it that at certain times angels stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first was healed.

Their ailments may have differed, but they were one in their goal of being the first into that pool. Much like our world today, every broken person around Bethesda was waiting for their big break, trusting that if they were to succeed, they would be healed, and their lives would be transformed.

THE HOUSE OF MERIT

It’s ironic that the name Bethesda means “house of mercy,” while here in actuality it was much more of a “house of merit”—a tragic misconception of the character of the God of life and wholeness; a distortion that came to be part and parcel of a community’s thinking, and a deception that was most pun-

ishing to the society's most vulnerable. After all, the prize went to the one who had the sharpest eyes or ears and could first detect the angelic ripple; the one with the fastest legs that could propel them in. In it you could hear a first-century expression of sociobiology more firmly established by our world's mid-nineteenth century and forward establishment of the theory of evolution with its mantra of "survival of the fittest."

The pools of Bethesda around which we lounge may take varied forms and engender any amount of modern and different lamentations from those of the paralytic and his close yet unfriendly company. But their moral, intellectual, and spiritual similarity to his distressing first-century experience are still quite recognizable. Many of us still spend our lives camped out by our houses of merit: if only I could just be smart enough; if only I could be good enough; if only I could be the perfect son/daughter/parent, then God would heal whatever is wrong with my life.

The first problem of the house of merit is believing that we can heal our brokenness through our efforts.

LAME EXCUSES

Jesus comes up to this paralyzed man, and asks him a seemingly crazy question: "Do you want to get well?" (verse 6).

Here was a pointed, dramatic question. How would the man respond? In answer to Jesus' out-of-the-ordinary question he also departs from the standard "Yes, of course!" or "Not really!" or even "What do you mean, sir?"

Instead, he responds glumly, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me" (verse 7).

That's a pretty lame excuse (pardon the pun) to give the Great Physician standing right before you. Yet it's the kind of thing we often say to God. Do we really want Jesus to heal the hurts in our lives, or is it easier just to hold on to the hurt? When God asks if we want to be loosened from our chains of addiction, do we whine, "But God, it's too hard to give up!"

As much as we may hate to admit it, the reason many of us find ourselves stuck where we are is that there are actually benefits to our brokenness. Why else would we stubbornly cling to our hurts,

The pools of Bethesda around which we lounge may take varied forms and engender any amount of modern and different lamentations.

habits, and hang-ups? Let's face it: we sin because it feels good!

For the paralyzed man by Bethesda, I can think of many worse places to be than sitting by a pool every day. If he were healed, would he have to start working? to stop depending on others to bring him food and do his laundry?

All too often we hold on tightly to the things that paralyze us spiritually. Our lame excuses belie our belief that there are benefits to being broken, that the rewards of staying outweigh the advantages of leaving.

The second problem with the house of merit is basically preferring the bondage of our efforts to the freedom God offers. It's worth taking a moment to pause and think: Do we truly want Jesus to heal us and release us from the bondage of our brokenness?

IT TAKS FAITH

So how do we get out from the house of merit? For the paralyzed man, "Jesus said to him, 'Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.' At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked" (verses 8, 9). It was as simple as that!

It would have been easy for the man at the pool to laugh off Jesus and dismiss Him as a nut. But fortunately, he had enough faith to take Jesus at His word and act on it.

It takes faith to trust God enough to leave our house of merit. But Jesus gives us the grace we need to walk in newness of life. The apostle Paul reminds us, "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32). Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. The blood He shed washes

The Sabbath is a chance to look at things with the eyes of faith and trust that God will give us all we need.

us from sin and its bondage. The very fact that He rose from the dead demonstrates His victory over Satan's oppression, and we can be part of that victory if we only reach out to Him in faith. He still calls to us: "Get up and walk!"

A PARALYZED RELIGION

If you saw a man who had been bedridden for 38 years suddenly start walking, I'm sure the first thing you would say to him—after your initial shock—would be "How come you're walking?!"

Yet there were people in the streets he walked who apparently missed the obvious. In the story's turn from physical paralysis to commentary on its spiritual dimensions the first thing out of their mouths was, "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat" (John 5:10). Jesus' command to the man to take up his mat on the Sabbath was His bold and headlong dive into spiritual and theological controversy with His society's religious elite. Even though this bed was no Tempurpedic, memory foam, 1,000-coil spring mattress but rather just a thin mat, Jewish traditional law provided strict regulations regarding the carrying of objects on the Sabbath.

Jesus intentionally used this dispute to invite the religious leaders to dialogue with Him. It enraged them and made them all the more determined to kill Him (verses 16-18). But Jesus felt it was important enough to engage the Jews in this, and it also provides a lesson in comparison between them and the paralyzed man. After all, just as the paralytic almost missed the fact that he was talking to the Master Healer, the Jews missed the fact that they were talking to the Creator of the Sabbath. The paralytic had initially limited how God could work through the stirring of the waters, just as the religious authorities limited how God could keep the Sabbath.

Do we have a paralyzed religion as those religionists did? When God has provided abundantly for us out of His mercy, do we miss the obvious and complain about what we don't have? Do we look so long at the closed door that we miss the open window?

When someone comes to church who hasn't been there for a long time, do we miss the obvious and say, "Why is your skirt so short?"

When a church leader shares a prayer request about a struggle over sin, do we miss the obvious and gossip, "How can someone like that be a leader?"

Rather than being a religion founded on mercy that resulted in a growing faith walk with God, the religion of the Jews had become a works-based, critical, and harsh religion that limited God and stunted their spiritual growth.

THE SABBATH: SYMBOL OF MERIT OR MERCY?

In a real sense, Jesus' hostile contemporaries occupied a house of merit that brought them much pride. Their evaluations included some of the highest points that could be earned for not breaking the law, including the Sabbath.

Ironically, God created the Sabbath to be a house of mercy. We may spend all week trying to inch toward our pools of merit. But God's gift of the Sabbath is our chance to stop and rest in God's pool of mercy. Whether we are striving for better grades, a higher promotion, extra cash, or additional fun, the Sabbath is a chance to look at things with the eyes of faith and trust that God will give us all we need.

LIVING IN THE HOUSE OF MERCY

Do you want to be made well? Do you long to bid your house of merit goodbye forever and join the once-paralyzed man in God's house of mercy? To live in the house of mercy means leaving behind our tired efforts to heal ourselves, seeing with eyes of faith how God can provide in better ways than our houses of merit ever can. It means looking at ourselves, our situations, the people around us, and at God with eyes of faith without limiting how He is going to work. Then acting in faith to get up and walk with Him daily into a new life.

Welcome to Bethesda! 🏠

Hannah Koh Luttrell is a producer at Hope Channel.

TIME TO GET ANGRY

In your anger do not sin.”

Throughout the millennia anger has so often been the companion to all kinds of commandment-breaking escapades—at both the group and individual level—that it’s easy to forget that these words are actually in the Bible. Every time I turn to Ephesians 4:26, there they are, a constant reminder that by itself anger is not wrong. In fact, the apostle’s charge implies that anger can be channeled for good.

An Old Testament example is found at the beginning of King Hezekiah’s reign. Hezekiah summoned the Levites to restore the Temple services and celebrate the Passover for the first time in decades. What followed was revival across the entire country, highlighted by a mob that “went out to the towns of Judah, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. They destroyed the high places and the altars throughout Judah and Benjamin and in Ephraim and Manasseh” (2 Chron. 31:1).

SALVATION BY VIOLENCE

One of the most confusing verses in the Bible may be the one in which Jesus said, “the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence, and violent people have been raiding it” (Matt. 11:12).

I don’t think most of us see either violence or anger as positive. While there are many interpretations of this verse, I hear Jesus saying that God’s people are often pushed into conflict by the many evil forces entrenched in our world. If we want a place in the kingdom of heaven we can’t just go with the flow; we have to push back.

I’ve been a sports nut for as long as I can remember. As a kid, when I wasn’t in school I was playing basketball, football, or baseball with my neighborhood friends. This “love of the game” has followed me into my adult years.

I never thought of sports as an “idol,” because it’s never gotten in the way of going to church, redirected my tithe, or, by my own definition, become an outright obsession.

Yet when celebrating my wedding anniversary this fall, I checked the score of games a few too many times. When my team starts going downhill my mood has a corresponding slide, and those around me suffer the effects. By worldly standards I might not be obsessed. But that doesn’t mean I’m living up to heavenly ones.

When Hezekiah ascended to power, idols in the kingdom were robbing God’s people of their joy and spiritual rest. The only way to reverse that was to get a little angry and violently destroy the things that kept them away from God. Although my idols aren’t made of wood or stone, I’ve realized that I need to violently push back, getting rid of whatever is preventing me from a closer walk with my Savior.*

Yes, “in your anger do not sin.” Let’s channel our anger to take our place in the kingdom of heaven. ♣

* I’m not implying that it is within my power to cleanse myself. The only one who can do that is Jesus. However, the presence of idols in our lives minimizes the effectiveness of the Holy Spirit. Our job is to respond to the Spirit’s promptings so that we can go to the next level in our walk.

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

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**IF WE WANT A PLACE
IN THE KINGDOM OF
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JUST GO WITH THE
FLOW; WE HAVE TO
PUSH BACK.**

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RUSSIAN GOVERNOR PROTECTS FOREIGN EVANGELIST



CARTER REPORT
HERO

Boris Nemtsov sent guards to protect John Carter and his team when gangs of hooligans tried to close down The Carter Report meetings in Nizhni Novgorod, Russia. The year

was 1992. Huge crowds had filled and surrounded the biggest hall in town, the Palace of Sport. Fire bombs had been thrown on the stage by gangsters as John Carter stood up to preach...

Our brave Russian pastors doused the flames and the smoke cleared. The crowd cheered and urged the evangelist to carry on. Then a silence so deep that it could be felt descended on the audience. John Carter had come to Russia at the request of the Russian Church. The people, long kept in the darkness of atheistic Communism, were hungry for God. Pastor Carter preached his heart out. After sixty minutes, thousands came forward during the altar call to accept Christ as Lord and Savior.

Dr. Boris Nemtsov, physicist, patriot, and defender of freedom, was governor of the city and province of Nizhni Novgorod. He had refused to be intimidated by the ruthless Soviets, and successfully opposed the construction of a nuclear power plant in Nizhni. His courage earned him the respect of the Russian people. They had shown their gratitude by electing Boris as their governor.

When the Mafia descended on the Russia Hotel where The Carter Report team was staying, Governor Nemtsov sent his militia to protect the foreigners. Later on, as thousands continued to pack the Palace of Sport two times a day, the governor sent an invitation to meet him at the Nizhni Kremlin. Pastor Carter and some of his team finally got to meet the big Russian whose decisive actions had saved the meetings.

The governor's team sat on one side of the long table, with Boris Nemtsov in the middle. John Carter and his team sat on the

opposite side, with the evangelist and the governor facing each other. An animated discussion then commenced about the Bible, Christ, democracy, freedom of speech and religion. John and Boris quickly established a warm rapport. After two hours of dialogue, Dr. Julia Outkina, the governor's sister, joined the group of Russians, Australians, and Americans. She told Boris she had attended The Carter Report meetings, found Christ, and been baptized. The governor expressed his amazement and support.



Julia today is in charge of the large 3ABN Center in Nizhni Novgorod. Boris is no longer with us. The big Russian whom we learned to love and respect was gunned down by assassins on the bridge next to the Moscow Kremlin. We shall never forget him. He protected us when our lives were in danger. Today a street in our national capitol is named in his honor. ✦

*We gratefully proclaim
Dr. Boris Nemtsov a Carter Report
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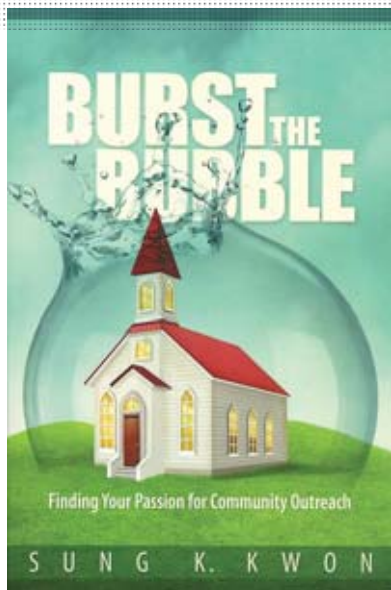
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CLOSER LOOK



Burst the Bubble

Burst the Bubble: Finding Your Passion for Community Service, Sung K. Kwon, Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2017, 153 pages. Softcover, \$15.99. Reviewed by Stephen Chavez, *Adventist Review*.

It's sometimes useful to ask ourselves questions regarding our identity and purpose as a church. For example, if something happened so that our churches were locked or otherwise removed from our communities, would they be missed? That's the question asked by Sung Kwon, executive director of Adventist Community Services for the North American Division, in his book *Burst the Bubble*.

The premise of the book is that there is more to our role as responsible community members than faithfully showing up in the aftermath of natural disasters. Adventists can, and should, do more to be visible in our communities on a regular basis

Adventist Review commentary on books, films or other items here considered does not constitute endorsement of items analyzed in such commentary.

Pura Vida

Pura Vida: The Animal Encounters Movie, ARTv and Stimme Der Hoffnung, in cooperation with Esperanza TV Costa Rica and Esperanza TV InterAmerica, 2018, 1 hour, 26 minutes. Reviewed by Stephen Chavez, *Adventist Review*.

P*ura Vida* (Pure Life) bills itself as a film about second chances. It's based on the video series *Animal Encounters*, two seasons of which appear on ARTvnow.com.

This movie-length feature traces the adventures of Gabi Pratz (from Germany), Cássila Carvalho (from Brazil), and Carolina Trisia (from Argentina/Mexico) as they visit several sites in Costa Rica. The purpose of their journey is to chronicle some of the rich variety of flora and fauna found in that country, to highlight the vibrant colors and exceptional diversity of the creatures they encounter, and to point out some of the dangers of human influences on the ecosystems those creatures call home.

The film is divided into 10 sections, correlating to the 10 days the trio spent on their journey. In the process viewers are taken to sanctuaries where moths, butterflies, frogs, toucans, monkeys, and dogs (yes, dogs) are protected and nurtured. Nearly

through greater community engagement in the form of carefully devised service activities.

The book's six chapters are presented in three sections: Why, What, How.

The first section—Why Do We Do What We Do?—covers familiar territory by reminding readers that Jesus' ministry was incarnational: He became a man and served humanity. Serving others was how He demonstrated God's love.

The second section—What Are the Components to Revisit and Reframe?—encourages readers to remember why the church exists and what is its mission. Too many Christians seem content with simply taking up space. On that perspective the



they are, but are often uninformed about their names, individual habits or creature traits such as their diet, age span, or habitat.

A similar missing feature relates to the identity of the three travelers themselves. While we are given their names

and countries of origin, nothing more about them is mentioned. Are they professionals? If so, what is their specialty? When they speak, are they speaking as lay travelers, or as the voice of expert opinion?

every encounter reveals something about how either the animals or their environments have been harmed or threatened. It also contains images of how, in some of these sanctuaries, some of the damage is undone: e.g., a toucan's bill is repaired with a plastic prosthetic; monkeys, formerly held captive in horrendous conditions, are given food and shelter long denied.

Throughout the film the three travelers are filmed reflecting on the sites and sensations they experience. Their reflections often cite the creativity and genius behind what they experience, as well as the love of God that inspired it.

The photography is almost uniformly beautiful. However, there is very little commentary about the creatures pictured. We're shown how adorable

Pura Vida is a visual treat for a Friday evening or Sabbath afternoon as well as a basis for meaningful reflection about life: for it reminds us that humanity's effect on nature can either reflect or impair the image of God as seen in human character and nature's beauty. Thanks to *Pura Vida* we may consider nature's charms and challenges without ever having to travel to Costa Rica.

Pura Vida is available for iOS and Android operating systems, and on Amazon Fire, Apple TV, Roku, and at ARTvnow.com.

author observes: "We must overcome institutional myopia and cultural differences and see the world as the setting for our calling, commission, and commandments as Seventh-day Adventists."

The third section—How Do We Change Our Way of Thinking and Doing?—challenges readers to evaluate their congregations' outreach methods to see if they are still compatible with a rapidly changing society; and if not, how they can be refined to be more effective. The success of this activity, according to the author, requires that as many members be involved as possible, not just as participants but as decision-makers.

Burst the Bubble is not light material. It reads

more like a classroom textbook than a devotional book about witnessing. It covers substantial topics that require deliberate, disciplined reading. To rush through it would defeat the purpose of crafting a community service model that creates buy-in from members and has a positive impact on the community.

The author's writing style is accessible (reflecting his personality). And the rewards of reading books such as this may include following more closely the One who *mingled* with people, *ministered* to their needs, *won* their confidence, and then said "Follow Me."

OUR PROPHETIC VOICE

One of Scripture's plain teachings is the believers' duty to care for those who are poor, disadvantaged, marginalized, and oppressed. Our prophetic voice means that we not only paint a canvas of future events, but also keep an eye on current issues that affect those who live in our communities. Our voice for those who have no voice demonstrates our connection with the One who is just and saving too (Zech. 9:9).—Editors.

"The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love" (Ps. 33:5).

"The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern" (Prov. 29:7).

"Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth" (Isa. 42:1-4).

"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I" (Isa. 58:6-9).

"Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow" (Isa. 1:17).

"Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!" (Isa. 30:18).

"Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely, who conduct their affairs with justice" (Ps. 112:5).

"I know that the Lord secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy" (Ps. 140:12).

"Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (Amos 5:24).

"The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them" (Matt. 23:2-4).

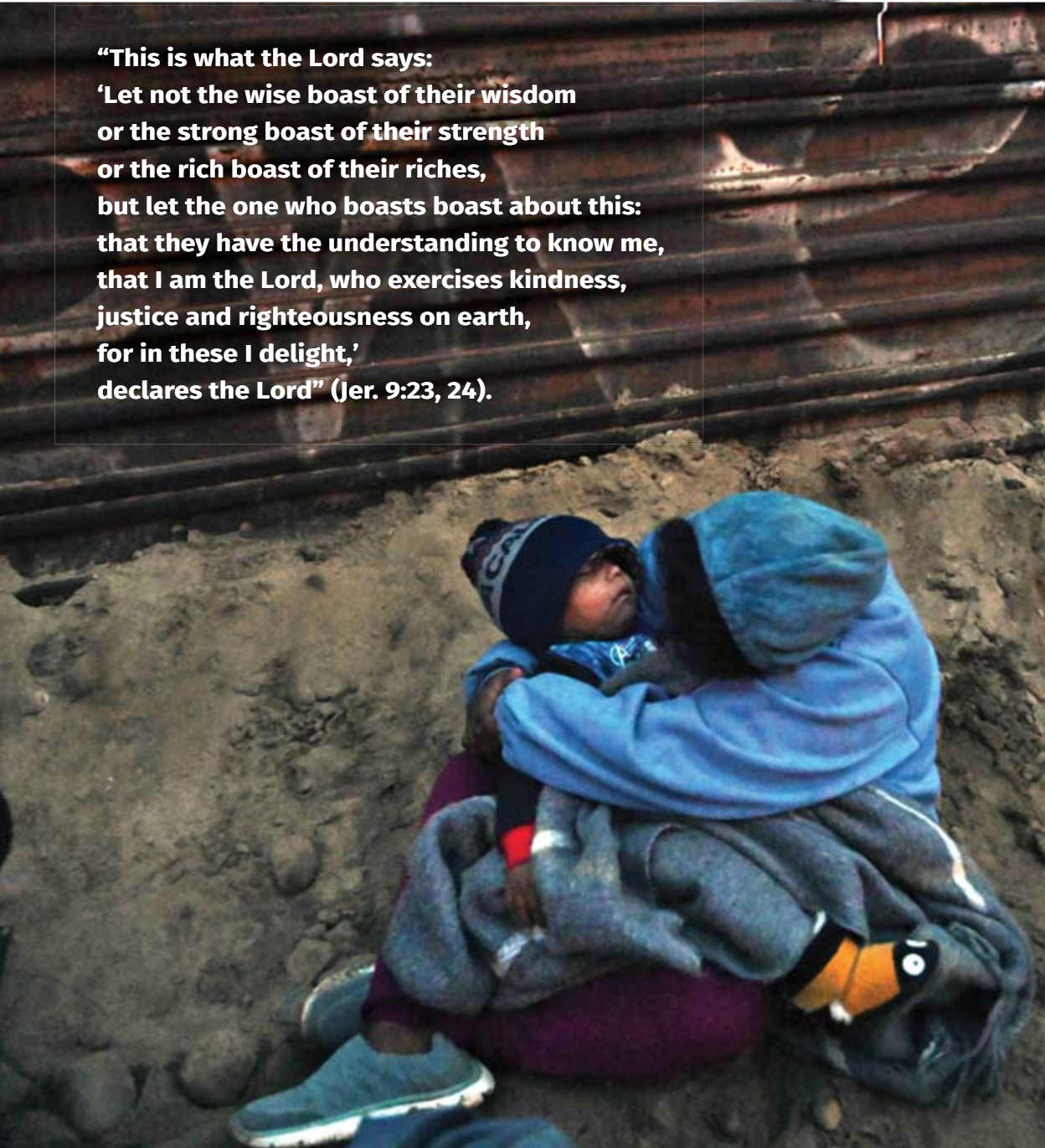
"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former" (Matt. 23:23).

"Will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:7, 8).

"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (James 1:27).



**“This is what the Lord says:
‘Let not the wise boast of their wisdom
or the strong boast of their strength
or the rich boast of their riches,
but let the one who boasts boast about this:
that they have the understanding to know me,
that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness,
justice and righteousness on earth,
for in these I delight,’
declares the Lord” (Jer. 9:23, 24).**



RACES

Which ones are worth winning?

Races come in all dimensions: fast and slow; high and low; long, short and middle; Black, White, other, mixed, economic, and none of the above. Some are lost on all sides even in the presence of recognizable standards for identifying winners and losers.

Jamaican giant Usain Bolt won on land with charisma off the track and speed on the track.

Jacques Mayol won in water, the first person to reach 330 feet (100 meters) below the surface of the water without supporting equipment.¹ Austrian Herbert Nitsch eclipsed him, setting multiple free diving records, including the free diving depth record in June 2012 of 831 feet (253 meters).²

**WINNING AT
EVERYONE ELSE'S
EXPENSE PRODUCES
TOO MUCH LOSING.**

Back on terra firma, there are those who compete to be the slowest on wheels, manipulating bicycle brakes and pedals to be stagnant without losing balance: the last person standing—better, sitting, on their bike—or the one farthest back from the end of the track when time's up wins the race.

In the socioeconomic “race to the bottom” speed is facilitated by limiting the rules, as governments strive to attract investment in their territories by requiring a minimum of taxes and red tape within the business environment. At times, in these races to the bottom, corporations and environmentalists are seen as each other's nemesis, and not without reason. World economic history examples signal blunders committed while competitors pursued the financial prizes attained at the bottom: the Exxon Valdez giant oil spill in Prince William Sound, Alaska, March 1989; the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf

of Mexico, April 2010; the building collapse in Dhaka, Bangladesh, April 2013, that left more than 1,100 dead, principally garment workers whose low-cost production generated vast wealth for others above them up the manufacturing chain.

Racing to the bottom may spur economic investment and growth, but it rings hollow—a race where my winning costs you too much losing. For whatever the differences between athletic, ethnic, economic, and political rivalries, the values of true success are hardly served by the evolutionary option of destroying vulnerable participants.

America's long continuing race of races remains undecided in the presence of measures of socioeconomic status [SES] for determining race outcomes. Faith in the meaning of such measures may sustain our efforts to emerge triumphant, or fuel our gloating as we flaunt our medals gained. But SES as proof of human victory reduces to absurdity the reason for existence of the human race. Correcting the wretched imbalances between teams and individuals in that particular competition is not to be found in adjusted time keeping, length of track, or depth of water; or in some fantastic new age in which positions are reversed and the long-trampled become trampers of their former abusers. Affirming such awkward answers would validate the lamentable spirit of humanity's first unseemly rhetorical question—the contemptuous outburst of earth's first murderer: “Am I my brother's keeper?” Is that the way to win? 🍌

¹ Nov. 23, 1976, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacques_Mayol.

² en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herbert_Nitsch.

Lael Caesar, associate editor of *Adventist Review*, loves his brothers and sisters across the world.

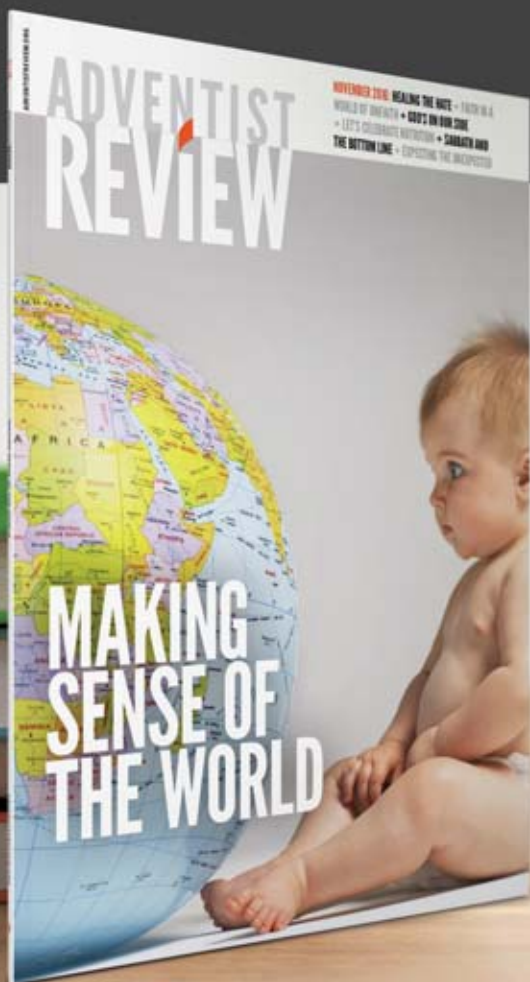
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