

ADVENTIST REVIEW

FEBRUARY 2017: FLEEING KUWAIT + A HISTORY OF GOD + ORDINARY PEOPLE + THINGS I CAN'T REMEMBER + WHO IS GOD? + RESILIENCE + THIS IS A TEST + A HARSH VIEW OF THE ATONEMENT

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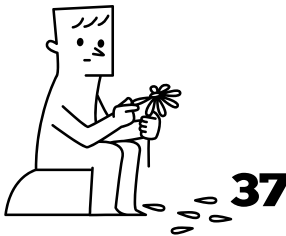
"There's no secret to success." Mike Parnell, Executive Vice President of RED Digital Cinema shares from a wealth of...



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E-mail: revieweditor@gc.adventist.org.

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The *Adventist Review* (ISSN 0161-1119) is the general paper of the Seventh-day Adventist® Church. It is published monthly by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904. Periodicals postage paid at Silver Spring, MD, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *Adventist Review*, P.O. Box 5353, Nampa, ID 83653-5353.

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SUBSCRIPTIONS: Twelve issues of the monthly *Adventist Review*, US\$19.95, plus additional postage outside North America. Single copy US\$5.00.

To order, visit adventistreview.org/subscriptions or send your name, address, and payment to: *Adventist Review* subscription desk, P.O. Box 5353, Nampa, ID 83653-5353

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TRENDING

THE MOST SHARED STORIES ON ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG LAST MONTH:



- 1 The Sabbath and the President
- 2 Movie Story of Desmond Doss, Adventist Medal of Honor Recipient, Gets Six Oscar Nominations
- 3 Ellen White and Depression
- 4 Faithfulness to God, Bible Pays Off for Brazilian Judge and New Mother
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VIDEO RESOURCES FROM ARTV



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What is your picture of God? What are you worth to Him? Host Neale Schofield dives into these questions as he explores how famous painters portrayed God throughout history.



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CAN GOD BELIEVE IN YOU?

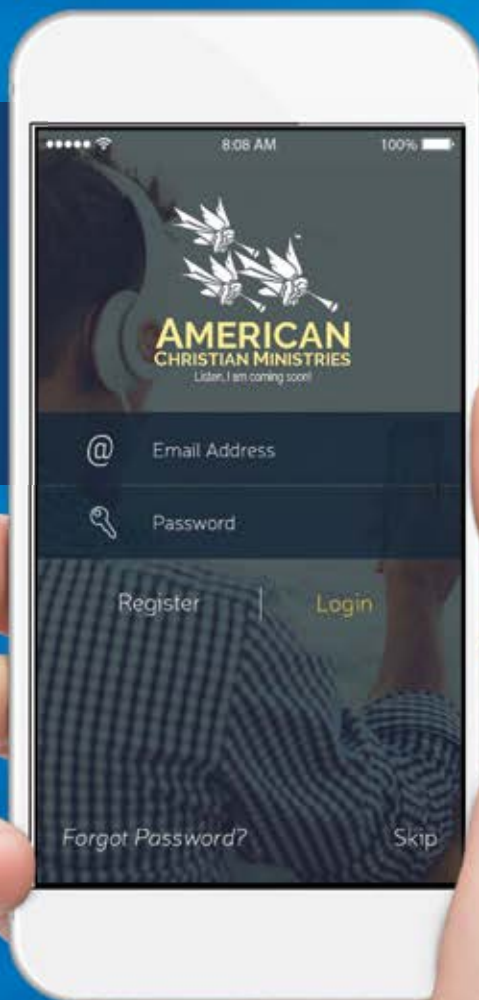
Do you struggle to feel accepted or go through times of darkness? Consider God's love in an entirely different light in this video by Dee Casper.

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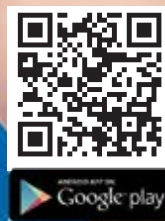
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BILL KNOTT



All our preaching and our teaching must underscore the relational truth at the core of the gospel.

The Season of Hope

Somewhere in frozen February, hope quietly begins. It rarely makes its presence known through bold, dramatic gestures—rushing waterfalls; flocks of warblers in the yard; banks of daffodils emerging as though drawn by Disney animators.

Hope is a much more hidden thing, at least for a while, perhaps for now.

When one small snowy bloodroot has pushed dry oak leaves aside on some south-facing hill in March, I hope.

When months of cold rigidity give way to sounds of dripping icicles beneath the surface of the creek, I hope.

When some brave red-winged blackbird taunts the leaden sky from last year's cattails down beside the pond, I hope.

Hope, at its heart, must build on some experience with the thing it is longing for. This is what separates true hope from what is better labeled "wish." I wish that time travel were somehow available—that I could interview Vivaldi in eighteenth-century Italy and come to truly understand that sweet alignment of mere notes that makes one quarter of *The Four Seasons* truly sound like spring.

I hope, however, in the prophecy fulfilled by the first robin on the lawn this spring, for I have seen robins before. I've heard the liquid chortle over an earth-

worm, seen the head turned sideways in attentiveness, because life requires listening. It's just because I have a long experience of seeing robins that I hope—intensely, fervently—that this one is the signal I've been waiting for.

I can imagine many things, for animators everywhere have given us capacity to "see" unreal, truly unbelievable things. But I hope for just those things that have a piece of memory in them, that touch some once-heard melody in the heart and make me long to hear the music again.

Hope, at its heart, must build on some experience with the thing it is longing for.

When we as Adventists strategically brand ourselves as a "people of hope"—who watch taped *Prophecies of Hope* on a church-owned television network called the Hope Channel—we are reminding our world and each other that there must be a real experience with Jesus that undergirds the happy expectation of His return. It's simply not enough to imagine the second coming of the Lord as captured by the brush of Harry Anderson or Nathan Greene, powerful and gripping as those images are, unless we have included ourselves in the foreground of the canvas. If the Second Advent is the "blessed hope," it's only because we already know the blessedness of time well spent with Jesus, and have already

come to hope—intensely, fervently—that we may spend forever with Him and enjoy Him just as long. We hope for His return just because we can't imagine a future anywhere but with Him.

Thus, all our preaching and our teaching—every Sabbath morning sermon, every Tuesday night Revelation Seminar—must underscore the relational truth at the core of the gospel. Jesus is returning *for* His people because He is on their side, because He can't abide the thought of an eternity without the ones who love Him so intently. Yes, He comes to judge the nations; yes, He comes to cleanse the earth by fire. But He is firstly coming to embrace the ones who have a long experience with Him, who have been listening to His quiet voice behind the screaming of the headlines, who have great memories from hours of thoughtful conversation.

Jesus is coming for His friends, and His friends believe Him—hope in Him—because they know from long experience that He keeps every promise.

This is the beating heart of Adventism, and why we live in hope. ♣

Bill Knott

The answer is really quite simple. We need only ask, “Does this issue involve a clear question of what is morally right and wrong?”

LEONARD LANG, NEWCASTLE, WYOMING

GIVE GOD THE GLORY

I have read *Adventist Review* for more than 60 years, and I appreciate it very much.

However, I was recently disappointed with the article “Well Done” (August 2016). Let’s give God the glory when things proceed positively for the church.

I am still grateful for the *Review*, which keeps us up-to-date on believers around the world.

Norma Mckellip
Macon, Georgia



ALL ON A JOURNEY

The October 2016 *Adventist Review* is relevant to the many issues we face in today’s world of social, economic, and political conversation.

The article “In the World, but Not of It” is a fine example of how early Adventist pioneers faced certain issues in their day. The statement “Ellen White used causes to further God’s agenda and never let herself

be used by a cause to further its agendas” is still relevant.

This *Adventist Review* is a must-read all the way from “The Good Old Days” to “The Do-good Pilot.” We all are on a journey, destination heaven. God’s Word is the only reliable GPS.

Natalie Dodd
Centerville, Ohio

TAKING A STAND

The article “In the World, but Not of It” (October 2016) addresses the question of when God’s remnant people should let their voices be heard in the public arena on the current controversies of the day.

The answer is really quite simple. We need only ask, “Does this issue involve a clear question of what is morally right and wrong?” This is the common denominator in all the points of public debate in which our pioneers participated: slavery, temperance, and prohibition.

This was their criterion, and it should be ours as well.

Leonard Lang
Newcastle, Wyoming

DOING GOOD

Thank you so much for the article “The Do-good Pilot,” by Andrew McChesney (October 2016). I have enjoyed his articles.

Betty Ora
San Clemente, California

IMPORTANT DETAILS

In going through the December 2016 *Adventist Review*, I read Delbert Baker’s interesting analysis of Matthew 27:19.

I’m glad he included some of the details about Pilate found in *The Desire of Ages*, and didn’t mind a bit of speculation about his wife being the Claudia of 2 Timothy 4:21, though we have nothing in the

Thank you for writing about topics that are relevant to me as a person, a Christian, and an Adventist.

EMORY MCCAULLOUGH, ALBANY, NEW YORK

Spirit of Prophecy mentioning her.

A mere 14 pages later in the same chapter of *The Desire of Ages*, however, we have an unimpeachable explanation of what befell Pilate after his wife's warning, thus spurning grace, as Baker put it. It's too bad it was omitted, for it reads: "In spite of his precautions, the very thing he dreaded afterward came upon him. His honors were stripped from him, he was cast down from his high office, and, stung by remorse and wounded pride, not long after the crucifixion he ended his own life. So all who compromise with sin will gain only sorrow and ruin" (p. 738).

Would that you had ended the article with this quotation rather than mentioning "some traditions" that have him being exiled and committing suicide. This is the lone flaw for me in an otherwise brilliant article. The inspired writing of Ellen White always outshines mere traditions.

Jerry Stevens

Fairfield Glade, Tennessee

A WELCOMING PUBLICATION

I get *Adventist Review* as a gift from my church. I am a relatively "new" Adventist, as I am returning to the church, and I have read AR for years. It has

IN A FEW WORDS...

BRAZIL'S SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS MEET COMMUNITY NEEDS IN HARD TIMES

Praise God for this ministry, to bind the broken hearts and weep with those who are weeping.

Tumo Galeragwe, via Web

changed a lot, but it has only gotten better. Thank you for writing about topics that are relevant to me as a person, a Christian, and an Adventist.

I see the conversations are changing toward the "real world," and I think it makes a difference.

I also appreciate Dixil Rodríguez. She is such a humanitarian, who is willing to bare her heart in her writing. She is very inspiring in a vulnerable, appreciated way.

In 2015 I read the story "The Wrong Side of the Tracks," and it moved me to tears. I could relate to it and found it powerful. She reminds me of the small details

of my life and makes me realize how important they are in the big picture of sharing Christ with others, and that is beautiful.

Thank for the changes and upgrades to the magazine. I pray you continue the good work. Thank you for being a welcoming publication to a returning Adventist.

Emory McCaullough
Albany, New York

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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- » PRAYING FOR OUR “KINGS”
- » ADVENTISTS RESPOND TO ATTACK ON MOSQUE
- » ADVENTIST LECTURES IN SERBIA DRAW CROWDS



Volunteers drawn from the more than 750 Adventists who converged in Tucson, Arizona, January 8-11 for the 2017 North American Division Adventist Ministries Convention.

PIETER DAMSTEEGT/NAD COMMUNICATION

ADVENTIST VOLUNTEERS MAKE IMPACT IN TUCSON, ARIZONA

ACTIVITIES SUPPLEMENT ADVENTIST MINISTRIES CONVENTION

BY KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN, NAD COMMUNICATION

More than 750 Seventh-day Adventists converged in Tucson, Arizona, January 8-11, 2017, to worship, learn, share their talents, and network at the 2017 North American Division Adventist Ministries Convention (NAD AMC). They also gathered to serve the local community through three NAD Compassion Movement outreach opportunities: assisting two public schools through Tucson Serve the City, and packing more than 25,000 meals for Stop Hunger Now.*

During their online registration experience, attendees were asked to select a compassion project to volunteer for during the first part

of the convention. Each project was on a first-come basis, and numbers were restricted for each event. At the Stop Hunger Now event held at the convention host hotel, for example, more than 150 attendees helped put weighed dry foods into bags to create the meals that Stop Hunger Now distributes to countries/peoples in need.

The Tucson Serve the City project was held offsite at two under-resourced schools in the city. This outreach partnered NAD AMC attendees with the local Serve the City organization to help clean up and refurbish the schools.

At the Elvira Elementary School

volunteers painted approximately 700 square feet of brick wall (to prepare for a future mural), added fresh paint to an existing desert scene mural, swept walkways, raked leaves from playgrounds, and assisted with a door-cutting project from the kindergarten.

“Separation of church and state’ doesn’t mean what we think it does, and nowhere is that difference more evident than in public education in Tucson, Arizona,” shared NAD AMC organizers. “By saying to schools, ‘How can we pray for you and how can we help?’ and then actually following through with both, churches have been welcomed by the public schools to come alongside and serve. Our attendees fit right in with the service they provided.”

Santa Clara Elementary School has a fresh new look as NAD AMC volunteers painted the entire



FEWER PROTESTANTS IN U.S. CONGRESS

The two self-identified Seventh-day Adventist members of the United States Congress are part of a shrinking cohort of Protestant Christians in the legislative body, Pew Research Center analysis revealed. “Protestants made up fully three

quarters of the Eighty-seventh Congress, compared with 56 percent of the current [115th] Congress. Meanwhile, Catholics, who made up 19 percent of the Eighty-seventh Congress, now make up 31 percent of the body,” Pew noted.

cafeteria. Said organizers: “We set aside time to be salt and light in Tucson in ways that make an immediate, tangible impact, but that also are having ripple effects throughout the entire city.”

Bryant Taylor, Southeastern Conference Communication/IT director in Florida, coordinated at the NAD Compassion Movement outreach project at the Elvira school. Taylor said that the principal appreciated that “we were willing to give of our time to come out on a Sunday morning to paint their school.” Taylor explained that many of the students come from a reservation that is fewer than five miles away, and the school is in one of the poorest areas of the city.

“The principal mentioned that he and one or two others have been painting the school on weekends for weeks. He was ecstatic that we were able to complete one third of their total project in one day. He invited us to like the school’s Facebook page, his primary communication tool with parents and the community, so we could follow the activities at the school.” Taylor added, “We had prayer with him and prayed a blessing on the school.”

*Stop Hunger Now is an international relief organization that distributes meals abroad to people in 74 different countries with whom they partner. They distribute meals through feeding programs operated by partner organizations in developing countries that promote education, encourage children to attend school, improve students’ health and nutrition, address gender inequalities, stimulate economic growth, fight child labor, and address significant global issues.

LEROY LEISKE, FORMER SOUTHWESTERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT, PASSES TO HIS REST

BY MARK A. KELLNER

Seventh-day Adventist pastor and administrator LeRoy J. Leiske was a man who couldn’t stop improving things, friends and colleagues said when remembering the longtime leader.

Leiske, 96, a former Southwestern Adventist University president, was also president of two church union conferences, and for seven years headed church-owned Pacific Press. He passed to his rest on December 22, 2016, in Keene, Texas, where he’d also served as mayor.

Leiske’s improvements ranged from the small, such as noticing a well-worn path on a college campus and installing a paved walkway, to the momentous, such as integrating the faculty and board of trustees of what was then Southern Missionary College (now Southern Adventist University).

That move—along with efforts to integrate the Southern Union Conference’s existing conferences—ended Leiske’s first venture as a union conference president during the turbulent 1960s civil rights period.

Samuel London, a historian

who chairs the History Department at Oakwood University in Huntsville, Alabama, recounted the story in his book *Seventh-day Adventists and the Civil Rights Movement*, published in 2009 by the University Press of Mississippi.

In 2011, less than 50 years after Leiske was voted out as Southern Union Conference president, Ron C. Smith, an African American, was elected union conference president.

Speaking with *Adventist Review*, London had praise for Leiske, although the two had never met. “He was a pioneer when it came to integration within the Seventh-day Adventist Church.”

London observed, “He stood up for what he believed to be right and for what he believed to be biblical. He was able to forgive those who voted him out of office. He had a very loving, Christian heart. . . . He seems to have been a sincere, genuine, Christian man. He was on the right side of history.”

Being so quickly voted out of office, said Karl Konrad, chemistry

“He memorized the ‘look book’ of student pictures, so he could address students by their first names.”



LeRoy Leiske

professor emeritus at Southwestern Adventist University and a friend of Leiske's for more than 45 years, might have embittered some, but not Leiske, who later told Konrad, "When I finished my term, I went to all the people that voted against me and told them I would not have any hard feelings."

After his Southern Union Conference experience, Leiske stepped away from active ministry for a time, becoming successful in several businesses. A phone call from Southwestern Union Conference president Benjamin E. Leach, Sr., brought Leiske back into full-time ministry, serving some small congregations in the Texas panhandle and neighboring New Mexico. Retired Southwestern Union Conference president Max Trevino, who got to know Leiske during those years, said the former union president didn't mind helping to pitch tents in the far north of Texas: "I'm just happy to be working for the Lord," Trevino recalled Leiske saying.

An enthusiastic emissary of Adventism who, while serving as home missionary secretary in Kansas, arranged for roadside billboards to promote local congregations, Leiske didn't remain in small congregations for long. He was called to what was then Southwestern Adventist College in 1968 to head up fund-raising. His business cards read "Director of Development and Frequent Beggar."

The "begging" paid off: "During his time as director of develop-

ment, Leiske organized the Committee of 100 and directed construction of the cafeteria," an SWAU remembrance noted. In 1971 Leiske became president of the school, where enrollment had dwindled to 367 students. Finances were precarious, and the conditions on campus, Konrad recalled, were starting to show some wear.

"He was an optimist," Konrad said. "I once asked him, 'Were you ever depressed?' and he replied, 'Yeah, for about five minutes.'"

That optimism permeated the Southwestern campus, Konrad noted: "When he became president, everything that didn't move got painted." Once, when some new shrubbery was planted around one of the school's original buildings, North Hall, one of the bushes started to die just be-

fore a board of trustees meeting. Lacking time for a new planting, Leiske had the failing plant spray-painted green.

Other capital improvements were more substantial. According to the SWAU announcement: he "oversaw the conversion of the Pultar Pavilion into the Leiske-Pultar Gymnasium. He also designed, fund-raised, and took vacation time with his wife to build what is now known as the Callicott Student Park."

Leiske's interest in the school extended far beyond the physical plant. "He memorized the 'look book' of student pictures, so he could address students by their first names. He liked people, and he was very sociable," Konrad said.

By the end of Leiske's presidency

in 1974, enrollment had climbed from 367 to 700 students. Southwestern honored Leiske with its Pioneer Award during the 2008 commencement.

"I had the privilege to meet with Elder Leiske shortly after becoming president," Southwestern president Ken Shaw said in a statement. "It was an honor to meet him and hear his stories. He still had the twinkle in his eye and the warm personality we've heard so many alumni recall. We are truly grateful for his dedication to our school."

Leiske also served as president of the church's Northern Union Conference, which is now part of the Mid-America Union Conference. From 1977 to 1983 he was president of Pacific Press Publishing Association, then located in Mountain View, California.

In retirement, Leiske returned to the Keene, Texas, area, assisting in the management of a group of nursing homes. He also served as mayor of Keene, Texas, where he worked with state officials to widen Old Betsy Road, the town's main street.

LeRoy J. Leiske was born July 27, 1920, in Bentley, Alberta, Canada. He married Sylvia Lockert on June 1, 1943, in Bemidji, Minnesota; together the couple shared 68 years of marriage before she died in 2012.

Survivors include two daughters, Nanci Slease and Sandra Underhill; three grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren. ▀



ADRA Germany is working with the Greek government to provide more substantive shelter for refugees fleeing political persecution until more permanent solutions can be found.

MSTYSLAV CHERNOV/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

ADRA GERMANY AIDS REFUGEES IN GREECE

HUMANITARIAN GROUP OPENED THIRD OUTPOST IN FEBRUARY

BY ANNA LEFIK, ADRA GERMANY/CD-EUDNEWS

The humanitarian situation of refugees in Greece is still unsettled, with refugees still dependent on emergency shelters, relief supplies, and medical care. Responding to the human needs, ADRA Germany opened an office in Katerini, Greece, to offer long-term support to those fleeing unstable situations at home.

In 2016 ADRA concentrated on two refugee camps, Petra Olympou and Ktima Iraklis, with a total of 1,500 refugees. The poor conditions and hygiene in the camps resulted in the spread of contagious skin diseases. A medical team treated affected people, and their tents were disinfected. Hygiene articles were distributed, and the camp inhabitants were informed about hygienic practices.

ADRA set up five translators, who helped the medical team and provided psychosocial care in cooperation with the nongovernmental organization, or NGO, IsraAID. In addition, ADRA has been providing fresh and healthy food to help prevent malnutrition.

After the onset of winter temperatures, Camp Petra Olympou

was cleared out in cooperation with ADRA and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Because the tents at Olympou were not winterproof, refugees were housed in vacant hotels and apartments in northern Greece.

In December Christian Molke, managing director of ADRA Germany, signed a contract with the Greek government to build another camp in Ktima Iraklis. Iraklis is centrally located, with easy access to shopping, hospital, and schools. The camp will feature 85 heated residential containers, approximately 270 square feet (25 square meters), each with its own electricity connection, kitchen, and sanitary facilities. In addition, service containers that will be used as social rooms and laundry rooms, as well as for education and for medical examinations, will also be set up.

This is designed to ensure privacy and protection, and provide people with facilities to become self-sufficient. This new camp will accommodate up to 550 people. ▀

NEWS BRIEFS

1



COOKBOOK HONORED: An Adventist-published cookbook has been named national Best Health and Nutrition Book winner in the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards. *Food as Medicine: Cooking for Your Best Health*, by Sue Radd, was released by Signs Publishing in October. It features 150 plant-based recipes.

2



SERBIA OUTREACH BEATS CHILLS, FLU: Despite subzero temperatures and a severe bout of flu, 100 visitors joined with 200 Adventists for five public lectures on the topic "Quest for the Meaning of Life." Novi Sad Central church is now focused on a follow-up program in a public hall.

3



VOLUNTEERS BUILD DOMINICAN REPUBLIC CHURCH: Seventh-day Adventists in a community 40 minutes north of Santo Domingo now have a 100-seat church that attracts visitors and not the derision of neighbors. The Portadores de Luz Seventh-day Adventist Church in Villa Mella had a chapel built of scrap metal until Maranatha Volunteers International participants descended on the location and, in 10 days, constructed a church with a galvanized steel frame and concrete block walls.

4



INTER-AMERICA SEMINARY GROUNDBREAKING: The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Inter-America held a groundbreaking ceremony for two of its higher education institutions in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico. Division leaders took part in breaking ground for a new three-story facility that will house the offices of the Inter-American Adventist Theological Seminary and distance-education school Herbert Fletcher University.

5



UNITY STATEMENT: General Conference officers and the officers and union presidents of the North American Division met on January 19, 2017, to discuss unity in mission as it relates to church governance and women's ordination. The group agreed to ongoing consultations to seek positive solutions.

6



AMERICAN SAMOA GETS HOPE CHANNEL: The newest outpost of Hope Channel has opened in the southernmost territory of the United States, American Samoa, a group of five islands with a population of approximately 55,000. Hope Channel officials and Sione Ausage, general secretary of Adventist Church's Samoas-Tokelau Mission, held a dedication service on December 19, 2016.



New AWR president
Duane McKey



Retiring AWR president
Dowell Chow

DUANE MCKEY, ADVENTIST EVANGELISM ADVOCATE, NEW ADVENTIST WORLD RADIO PRESIDENT

**SUCCEEDS DOWELL CHOW, WHO RETIRES
AFTER 50 YEARS OF DENOMINATIONAL SERVICE**

BY MARK A. KELLNER

Duane McKey, an advocate of member-based evangelism who has long been involved in global outreach for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, has been named president of Adventist World Radio (AWR), the movement's global radio outreach.

McKey came to the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in 2015 as director of the world church's Sabbath School and Personal Ministries department, as well as assistant to the president for Total Member Involvement. He previously served as a vice president of the church's Southwestern Union Conference in the North American Division. A former president of the Arizona Conference, McKey has often been found engaged in overseas evangelistic campaigns. In 2016 McKey was coordinator for a nationwide outreach in Rwanda, where more than 100,000 were baptized.

McKey succeeds Dowell Chow, who has been AWR president since 2011, following six years as financial vice president for the broadcasting group.

"AWR is wonderful," McKey told *Adventist Review*. "They have 100 million downloads of their podcasts a month. My interest with that and with shortwave broadcasts is to connect the interests of the people with our local churches."

As such, he said, his AWR work will be supported by his continued association with the Total Member Involvement program: "My love is TMI, and this is a part of that, and an extension of that. We can reach people all over the world, where the church is and the church isn't, so that we can introduce people to Jesus in the end."

Chow retired in January 2017, after 50 years of service to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in a variety of roles and countries. Before his service at

AWR, he served in positions ranging from chief financial officer/treasurer of the Columbia Union Conference in Maryland, president of the New Jersey Conference, and stewardship, trust services, and ministerial director, to that of a senior pastor in Puerto Rico, and mission secretary/treasurer and Book and Bible House administrator in Venezuela. During his years of service Chow was an active member of multiple boards, including Washington Adventist University, Adventist Health, Washington Adventist Hospital, and additional health entities in New Jersey.

"Serving the church through Adventist World Radio has been a privilege. It is a thrill to see the gospel commission being played out in the world, assisted by the ministry of AWR," Chow said. "I would like to express special gratitude to our faithful supporters. Brighter days are still ahead, and it is my prayer that under the leadership of our new president, AWR will grow and continue to be a blessing to world."

During his years with AWR Chow was a tireless traveler. He hiked across mountains in Mexico to deliver audio players to isolated tribal villagers, baptized new Adventists in a muddy pit in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, verified FM signals in the Canary Islands, helped train new producers for Bhutan, and more.

Under his leadership AWR's active broadcasts – heard via shortwave, AM/FM, and podcasts – grew by more than a dozen languages, including Dzongkha, Tibetan, Yemba,



This 1930 Cord L29 was auctioned for \$300,000 to benefit Loma Linda University Children's Hospital.

and Oriya. At last count AWR's daily podcast downloads had reached 18 million. Chow spearheaded the negotiations for the first Adventist FM broadcasts in India (which now serve millions of listeners in 22 major cities). He was thrilled to see plans for four production studios in mainland China become reality. He had a passion for the people of North Africa, and worked closely with the Spanish Union of Churches Conference on FM broadcasts that would serve listeners in multiple colloquial languages.

AWR senior vice president Greg Scott said Chow would be missed, and remembered. "It has been an honor and a privilege to serve with Dowell, as God has used him in a powerful way," Scott said. "As he and his wife, Heidi, move on to the next phase of their life, we truly wish them all the best and pray for God's richest blessings upon them."

From its first broadcast more than 40 years ago, AWR has been carrying the voice of hope to the unreached people groups of the world in their own languages. Initially the church leased shortwave airtime in Portugal, and programs were broadcast to Europe and the U.S.S.R. in 10 languages for 12 hours a week. Today AWR utilizes shortwave radio, national radio networks, local FM stations, podcasts, and solar audio players with preloaded content to provide content in 100 "heart languages" of people around the world. 📌

With reporting from Shelley Nolan Freesland, AWR Communication Director

CHARITY CAR WINS BIG

BENEFITS LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY'S CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

BY BRIANA PASTORINO, LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY HEALTH

A superstar team of Loma Linda University Children's Hospital (LLUCH) representatives was present in Scottsdale, Arizona, on the evening of January 21, 2017, when a 1930 Cord L-29 was auctioned off for \$300,000 at the famed Barrett-Jackson classic car sale.

All proceeds from the Cord's sale will go to LLUCH's Vision 2020, the philanthropic campaign toward building the new Children's Hospital tower. Loma Linda residents Carlton and Raye Lofgren donated the classic automobile to the sale in support of the program.

The Cord earned the second-highest final bid among the charity cars, thanks to the generosity of buyers Paulette and Jeff Carpoff.

Courtney Martin, an ob-gyn at LLUCH, along with her former patient Brittany Stuit, her husband, Ryan, and their quadruplets, took to the stage during the auction, encouraging potential bidders by stating how special the hospital is, serving more than 1.3 million children in California.

"We need you today," Martin said. "If you bid on this car, you stake a claim in the future of all these children who have yet to walk. So we ask that you will play a part in the Vision 2020 campaign building our new hospital."

Martin passed the microphone over to Mrs. Stuit, who was in the hospital for more than two months before her quadruplets were born. Praising the hospital, she said, "When I hear the words 'Loma Linda' I can't even begin to explain to you how important they are. Their staff became my family. If it weren't for Loma Linda, I wouldn't be a mom. They made all my dreams come true."

Steve Davis, president of Barrett-Jackson, then took the microphone, but only after he had already temporarily inherited one of the quadruplets, Lucas, as he presented the Cord L-29 to the crowd of thousands of auctiongoers. "At the end of the day the Cord is special," Davis stated. "Give from your heart, not from the wallet."

The previous owners of the Cord, Carlton and Raye Lofgren, were also on stage when the hammer price was announced. "We are very excited about the result," Raye Lofgren said. Her father purchased the vehicle in 1982, and it had been part of their family ever since. The family, however, discussed the decision to donate the car to LLUCH for the auction, and they all agreed it was a positive move. 📌



Students at Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee, mark the start of the school's 125th anniversary year with something else first seen in 1892, boxes of Cracker Jack. SOUTHERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY

SOUTHERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY KICKS OFF 125TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR

BY JANELL HULLQUIST, SOUTHERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY

Vintage tractors, hayrides, and Cracker Jack recently marked the beginning of Southern Adventist University's official 125th anniversary celebration. While events will continue all year, January 25 (1/25) was chosen as the kickoff date, commemorating the school's start in the spring of 1892.

Students and faculty piled on for the hayrides offered along the Promenade—a broad walkway stretching the full length of campus. Along the way, restored tractors from 1947 to 1960 lined the sidewalk, highlighting the humble farm machine that was actually invented the same year that Southern began. Troy DeWind, assistant director of Landscape Services, and his family provided the nine tractors and conducted the rides.

"We tried to give students a glimpse into the past, a reminder of a bygone era, and what campus would have been like," DeWind said. "We had a great time. The Lord blessed us with beautiful weather, especially for January."

"There is a lot of nostalgia in the air," said Stephen Lopez, sophomore social work major. "I enjoyed

the hayrides and seeing the tractors because it was like a blast from the past. I really appreciate the effort that has been put into planning this celebration."

The Student Association joined the fun by handing out boxes of Cracker Jack—a popular snack food since the 1890s.

"We had a great time celebrating," said Moses Maier, Student Association president and senior finance major. "This was a fun reminder for everyone about a food that was around at Southern's beginning, and that, like this snack, Southern's great experience is still here as well."


"For 125 years students have had similar experiences to mine as they've studied, laughed, and prayed here," said Sheann Brandon, junior journalism major. "It's crazy to think about how God has used Southern for more than a century to help people like me learn and grow. I am awestruck to be a part of this community."

Southern is also using this anniversary to emphasize the university's longstanding tradition of serving others. On Martin Luther

King Day, Southern's annual Community Service Day, the school launched a campaign to collect 125,000 hours of service by the end of 2017. Participants that day logged more than 4,000 hours. Students, employees, alumni, and friends of Southern are invited to enter their hours and check progress throughout the year at southern.edu/125.

"At Southern we aspire to the highest ideals Jesus set forth during His time on earth," said David Smith, president of Southern. "Just as He came to serve and not to be served, His followers are to live lives focused on serving others. For 125 years Southern has challenged our students with this philosophy, and in turn, our alumni have impacted people for God in every corner of the globe. Moving forward, we will continue to motivate students to become all they can be with God's help, dedicated to serving others."

The university has many more celebratory plans for the year, including pop-up musical performances, commemorative pins, a new school song, and a time-capsule opening, to name a few.

"As we celebrate 125 years of providing Adventist education in the South, our goal is to create opportunities for everyone to celebrate with us," said Evonne Crook, director of alumni relations. "As they do, we hope they'll become better acquainted with Southern's history and mission of preparing students for lives of service locally and globally in their communities, churches, and workplaces." 

REMEMBERING MICHAEL CHAMBERLAIN

IT'S TIME FOR AUSTRALIA TO APOLOGIZE

BY BRENTON STACEY, AVONDALE COLLEGE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The memorial service for an Avondale alumnus at the center of one of Australia's most publicized legal cases may lead to a formal apology for wrongful conviction.

Michael Chamberlain and then wife Lindy were charged—she with murder, he with being an accessory after the fact—and convicted after the disappearance of their 9-week-old daughter, Azaria, at Uluru on August 17, 1980. They were exonerated in 1988. Twenty-four years later, a fourth—and final—coroner's inquest found the cause of death: Azaria had been attacked and taken by a dingo.

That drive to the rock divided Chamberlain's life, said solicitor and family lawyer Stuart Tipple during the service at Avondale College Seventh-day Adventist Church on January 16, 2017.

Tipple, who visited Chamberlain in Gosford Hospital the day before he died at age 72 from complications of acute leukemia, issued a challenge to the Northern Territory government: make the apology because “an apology is never too late. . . . In 1980, there was a sacrifice in the wilderness. Michael's expectation that if you're innocent you have nothing to fear died. That expectation was put on the altar of political expediency and it was consumed by rumor, prejudice, and incompetence. And yet Michael remained a decent man looking for the good in others. . . . [He] will not be able to rest in peace unless we remember his legacy and continue the fight on his behalf.”

Norman Young did his part. The conjoint associate professor at Avondale College of Higher Education indexed trial transcripts and coroner reports during the royal com-

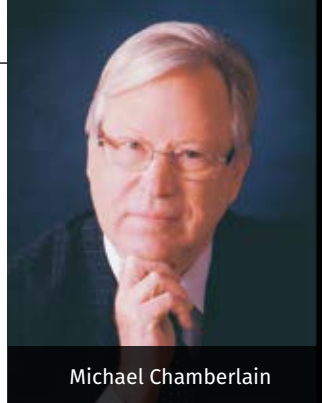
mission in 1987. He wanted to ensure Chamberlain's association with the Seventh-day Adventist Church would not be a cause for prejudice. The research led to the writing of a book, *Innocence Regained: The Fight to Free Lindy Chamberlain*.

“Michael expected sympathy, but he got suspicion,” said Young during the prayer at the beginning of the service. “He expected to be believed, but he was doubted. He expected concern, but he got condemnation. He expected love, but he received hostility. He expected justice, but he got prejudice.”

John Bryson wrote a book, too: *Evil Angels* tells the story of the trial of the Chamberlains for murder. During his tribute Bryson noted how “one's being persists in one's consequences.” Addressing Chamberlain personally “to prolong your presence with us,” he said, “Of your biological consequences, we watch your children who carry you with them, as will their children. But look, Michael, how broad are your consequences.”

Bryson spoke of Chamberlain's role as an educator and as an activist against injustice. “All of us touched by the fraudulent charge on which you were once convicted—and Lindy was jailed—carry you with us, as do our children. Through the one legal case in our nation's history in which every eyewitness . . . was a defense supporter, was your supporter, every one of them . . . carry you with them, as will their children. Your consequences . . . are vast.”

Following his and Lindy's divorce in 1990, Chamberlain married Ingrid Bergner in 1994. He became Bergner's full-time caretaker after she suffered



Michael Chamberlain

a stroke in 2011, making her condition the subject of his research and advocacy.

Chamberlain's son Aidan, flanked by siblings Reagan, Kahlia, and Zahra, presented the final tribute. Aidan described his father as “a great man in so many ways, yet so broken and crushed in many others.” Strength—and stubbornness—were recurring themes.

“I love you, Dad,” Aidan Chamberlain concluded. “You did the best that you could.”

That best included writing three books, teaching students at secondary schools in Brewarrina and in Gosford, New South Wales, earning a Ph.D., and accepting appointments as a conjoint postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Newcastle and as a conjoint fellow at Avondale.

Chamberlain's friend and former minister, Lyell Heise, a conjoint senior lecturer in the seminary at Avondale, presented the homily. He reflected on Chamberlain's “putting aside of an easy life, going to the heart of Australia's hinterland to teach largely indigenous students, to take their rugby team to the premiership. Just think: you could have forgiven this bighearted but massively persecuted guy for turning his back on yet another expression of Australia's inland culture. You could forgive him for turning away. But no: Michael was not turning away and not turning his back.”

His wife, Ingrid; children, Aidan, Reagan, Kahlia, and Zahra; and step-children, Darren, Jamie, and Juanita, all survive. ▀

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ALSO IN THIS SECTION:

- » WHO IS GOD?
- » WHAT DO YOU WANT IN A GOD?
- » A HARSH VIEW OF THE ATONEMENT
- » THE SABBATH AND THE BOOK OF SPORTS

DISCOVER



seasons of eternity. Then God's triune genius elected to begin beginnings...

The idyll of flawless reality pulsed and flourished through countless

A HISTORY OF GOD

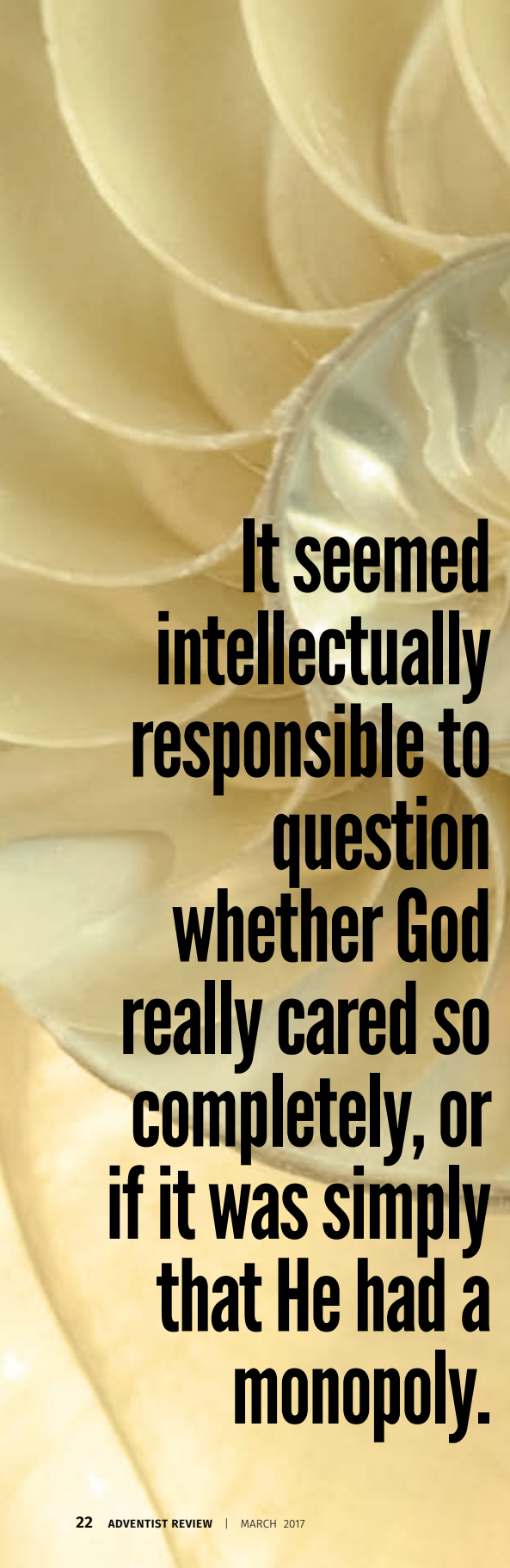
Now we know who He is





LAEL CAESAR

From *everlasting to everlasting*" (Ps. 90:2).¹ History presumes a past. But God, in His house of eternity (Isa. 57:15), is never yesterday; He is. And He has never gone into reverse to catch some better glimpse of what was transpiring as He drove by. Everything to Him is today. He announces, from the beginning, what the end is, or, from our perspective, will be (Isa. 46:10). His name is "I AM" (Ex. 3:13-15).



It seemed intellectually responsible to question whether God really cared so completely, or if it was simply that He had a monopoly.

PARADOXES

"Yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13:8). Paradoxically, the God of permanent present tense also speaks of Himself in terms of yesterday and tomorrow: He was the same yesterday as He is today; and tomorrow, and tomorrow and tomorrow He will be as He now is (verse 8). So there may be some justification for thinking of Him in historical terms, though any thinking about God already provides us paradox enough.

Human existence is constrained by mass and minutes that are in constant tension with the almost-boundless reality we call thinking. Human life thus sustains its own perpetual paradox. Still, the God idea remains our most mind-boggling concept: none of us has ever existed without a body; but God is spirit (John 4:24), which, according to Him, is distinguishable from humans by having neither flesh nor bones, defining elements of human bodies (Luke 24:39). Awkwardly enough, some humans consider the God idea immaterial just because God is not material. Their attitude has been deemed "inexcusable" in the light of ample demonstration of God in His nature book, the material, visible creation (Rom. 1:20).

Besides His nature book, God's book of providence deals with His particular or general care for His creation: "The eyes of all look to You, and You give them their food in due time" (Ps. 145:15); "You give to them, they gather it up; You open Your hand, they are satisfied with good" (Ps. 104:28).

God's books of nature and providence provide secondary support to the primary sources on His history, that is to say, the Word of God and the incarnate God. The status of these sources depends on their composer's authority, not on the time of their composition. From Adam onward, humans have been reading and sharing contributions about nature and providence, books of the category of natural revelation. On the other hand, the Word of God and the Word made flesh are supernatural or special revelation, the latter, conceived by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35), and Scripture, the former, inspired by the same authority (2 Tim. 3:16). Interpreting our other texts without them breeds frustrated guessing, dependent on human limits of time, body, and otherwise. But with them we may

contemplate regions otherwise inaccessible and realities otherwise inconceivable, so long as we begin with Moses, “from everlasting . . .”

BEGINNING THE BEGINNING

“*Before the world was*” (John 17:5). In that everlasting time “before the darkness filled the spaces of [His] reign; all was radiant, all was joyful; none knew loss, and all knew gain.”² The idyll of flawless reality pulsed and flourished through countless seasons of eternity. Then God’s triune genius elected to begin beginnings by creating seraphim, cherubim, and more, of which we still may only guess. They lived, reigned, and rested in His glory; played, worked, and shared in His galaxies; feted and served and worshipped through wondrous eons of His space-time, beyond any notion that His caring solicitude toward each of them deserved critique. His total knowledge and power, equally with His eternity and prodigal affection, were obvious to them: their best proof was their own existence (see Rom. 1:20).

A NEW NOTION

“*God is love*” (1 John 4:8). Somewhere along in the streaming of millennia an astonishing notion began to occur, one that still survives, that all reality should be measurable. From the first beginnings of beginnings, things begun had always been measurable, whether absolutely, like the amount of dark matter in the universe, or relatively, like the superior persuasiveness of the covering cherub’s arguments relative to those of some other angel. God, on the other hand, had never been considered quantifiable. The core of the question “How much?” asked in relation to God, was simply nonsensical.³

Once mooted, though, thoughts about the precise extent of the much-vaunted divine love, as well as other virtues and powers, became more difficult to blithely dismiss: it seemed intellectually responsible to question whether God really cared so completely, or if it was simply that He had a monopoly.

What if there were other ways of caring, perhaps even better than His? Why was no one permitted to demonstrate, or even explore, these other ways? If seraphim and cherubim could be so accurate

about dark matter, why couldn’t they develop instruments that determined the dimensions of divine knowledge, or at least explored its edges? Again, did claims about His total power facilitate frank and free discussion, or simply silence alternatives? Besides, what accounted for His arbitrarily extolling the greatness of one of His sons over all the others (Ps. 2:7; Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5-12; 5:5)? After all, they were all His sons (Job 2:1; 38:7)! So how could that be fair?⁴ At their root, the questions could all be summarized into one: What kind of lover God is He?

MISDIRECTIONS

“*The wages of sin*” (Rom. 6:23). These intriguing queries about fairness and trust included a latent function: simply thinking of them made angels feel different, burdened, as if an invisible weight rested on their shoulders or their heads. The gratitude protocol, too—life and its sustenance have a unique Source, to whom all praise belongs (Rom. 11:36)—seemed to increase the burden. It became almost obvious to the sight which angels were carrying this weight. And besides appearances, some angels remembered the great lift of spirit they sensed when they determined to trust their Ruler rather than harboring ideas about how to measure Him.

Nevertheless, the new preoccupations led to an unprecedented development in God’s history: a significant number of spirits concluded that they and their questions were not being treated as they deserved; that the discrimination in favor of one particular son needed to be stopped; that God was probably just as autocratic as the covering cherub suggested; that they could no longer conscientiously continue under these oppressive working conditions.

It all related to an outrage that God’s chief angel, whom we know as Lucifer, felt had been perpetrated upon him: the Godhead had laid plans for creation of Planet Earth without soliciting his opinion.⁵ Many of his companions exulted at the new creation. He found no joy in it, only offense at his exclusion, a disappointment he shared with willing listeners.⁶

Eventually, when God’s patient forbearance determined that it was time to handle the issue



God has shared significant details about future stages of His history.

openly, Satan (a name he earned for his adversarial behavior) spoke boldly against the fairness of God's rule, against his omission from the divine council, and particularly concerning discrimination being shown in the arbitrary exaltation of Michael, the Son of God.⁷ He made clear that the Son could expect no subjection from him and that he had a large following. Loyal angels could not contain their grief as he cast aspersions on their loving Commander. Whereupon the Father announced that he and his followers must be turned out of the realms of glory.⁸

Their concerted reaction produced a "celestial earthquake." In the subsequent outbreak of hostilities between the Father and the would-be liberators, Michael, the exalted Son, directed the loyal hosts and expelled the malcontents from the center of universal operations.

GOD AND PLANET EARTH

"In the beginning God" (Gen. 1:1). Sin-inspired self-centeredness may exaggerate humans' sense of their importance to the scope of God's history.⁹ But God does care completely about humans. He has no intention of ever losing us, though we have been as treacherous to Him as might be imagined: we answered the scintillations of His Creation week (Gen. 1; 2) by turning to Satan and plunging the whole world into chaos (Gen. 3); the world's descent into global violence necessitated His cleansing it with a global flood (Gen. 6-9); Abram's descendants through whom He meant to give His history of love to the world chose instead to be like the world He had called them from (1 Sam. 8:1-5), and ended up under the sandals of Assyrians (2 Kings 18:11) and Babylonians (2 Kings 25). After He restored them from exile to reconstitute His holy nation, they perpetrated history's most dastardly crime, the murder of His Son, whom He sent to rescue the world for love (Matt. 21:33-45; 27; Mark 15; John 3:16).

But these disastrous responses of ours to His care have only exposed it more: "where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (Rom. 5:20). Paradoxically, the Son of God we murdered was God's gift of Himself as the perfect sacrifice we needed to satisfy the demands of His

unchangeable law (2 Cor. 5:14-21). He gave Himself for our salvation (Gal. 1:4; 1 Tim. 2:6; Titus 2:14). "There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin; He only could unlock the gate of heaven, and let us in."¹⁰ And He did, proving beyond any human conceit, how completely we matter to Him.

Interestingly enough, Satan understands this love so well that it influences his planning: he assured his followers that once he led Adam and Eve to disobedience, God's determination to restore them would open doors for the reinstatement of the rebel angels as well.¹¹ Against all his slander of God as tyrant Satan knew that it was the Lord's mercies that kept him from being consumed, and he continued to presume upon God's compassions (see Lam. 3:22).

Satan's success with the first man and woman mirrored his earlier success with angels: he persuaded Eve that her arbitrary God was withholding from her what she deserved. Then he led Adam to focus on the misery that life would be without his Eve (Gen. 3:1-6). Both successes depended on doubting God's love. Then, just as he predicted, God's unconquerable love immediately unfurled a plan for their rescue and reinstatement, a plan that the trinity had settled on before the foundations of the world were established.¹² As Paul exclaims: "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32).

No wonder humans believe that we are all-important to God! His dealings on Planet Earth provide consistent witness to Satan's crucial understanding about Him. In His book of nature His love "is written upon every opening bud, upon every spire of springing grass."¹³ His book of providence serves up wonderful data on His loving care for His children. He sends "rains from heaven and fruitful seasons"; He satisfies our souls "with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17).

With a clarity not always understood in nature and daily life, His written Word declares, "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love" (1 John 4:8, NIV). Above all these, we see His prefoundation plan work itself out to deliver humans from the hell they deserve, by lifting Jesus up on the cross to draw us all back to Himself. "For

God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

NEW HEAVENS AND EARTH

"I will come again" (John 14:3). For us who live with yesterday, today, and tomorrow, God has shared significant details about future stages of His history, details more astonishing than ever: for the God who became human to save humanity, who burst death's chains and broke through hell's doors to deliver us from all evil, now reigns in glory "in the form of humanity."¹⁴ Soon enough He is coming again to take to Himself all who believe in Him (John 14:3), that they may all be part of His forever reign. Until that mind-boggling event, no greater purpose thrills any human life than relating His awesome history to the world, urging people everywhere to join, share, and revel in His love, beginning now, and continuing forever, through all the ages of His endless tomorrow. 🏹

¹ Except as otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations in this article 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.

² Bill Knott, "The Light of Christ," © Bill Knott, December 2016.

³ On God's unfathomable existence, wisdom, works, and greatness see, e.g., Job 5:9; Ps. 145:3; Rom. 11:33; 1 Tim. 6:16.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890): "To dispute the supremacy of the Son of God, thus impeaching the wisdom and love of the Creator, had become the purpose of this prince of angels. To this object he was about to bend the energies of that master mind, which, next to Christ's, was first among the hosts of God" (p. 36).

⁵ Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1864), vol. 3, p. 36.

⁶ Ellen G. White letter 78, 1900.

⁷ E. G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 37.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁹ An example of our myopia or conceit may be Karen Armstrong's *A History of God* (New York: Random House, Ballantine Books, 1993), which studies Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and begins with Abraham.

¹⁰ Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-1895), "There Is a Green Hill."

¹¹ Ellen G. White, in *Signs of the Times*, Jan. 16, 1879.

¹² Rev. 13:8; 1 Peter 1:18-20; Ellen G. White, *From Heaven With Love* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1984): "Before the foundations of the earth were laid, Father and Son had clasped hands in a solemn pledge that Christ should become the surety for the human race" (p. 555).

¹³ Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 10.

¹⁴ Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 65.

Lael Caesar, an associate editor of *Adventist Review*, is thrilled to be part of God's history.

GOD IS...

The size of the words below correlates to the number of people who responded when answering the following question:

What words do you think of when you think of God?



Source: Poll conducted by e-mail January 9-12, 2017, among a group of 600 Seventh-day Adventists. There were 176 responses for a total of 520 words. (Responders were asked to limit their answers to three words.)



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DISCOVER

WHAT DO YOU WANT IN A GOD?



Learning to let Him take over

HEATHER VANDENHOVEN

often ask myself, what do I want in a teacher. People are asked what they want in a president; what they want in a job, marriage, school, computer device, or hometown. We even ask what we want in ourselves.

What about what we want in God? Or need in God? Is it right or wrong to ask these questions or, perhaps, to think them? Their answers may be just as powerful as the questions themselves.

MY DAUGHTER, THE TEACHER

My teen daughter has already taught me that I have more questions than answers. I got the other stages down—diapers, healthy meals, and sand toys; new shoes, chore teaching, and parent-teacher conferences; laughter, “I love you,” and hugs a-plenty. But this teen stage: I don’t have it down. Worse yet, I don’t have the feelings down that go with it.

I love my daughter. I love “us.” But “us” is changing into questions. I want to rise to meet that. I pray God’s shoulders are broad and strong enough for my insecure parade of motherhood questions. I need help sorting out the important ones from the “let it ride” ones. And while I’m sorting, she may also be asking herself: “What do I need in a mama?”

So right now what I’m asking myself most is *What do I need in a God?*

A SHOPPING LESSON

Recently my family and I went back-to-school shopping. The stores buzzed with people and merchandise, their shelves stacked with new lines ready for anxious fingers and credit cards. We

were enjoying the ride: three sizes of jeans and several shirts hanging from our wrists, multiple jackets draped over what was left of arm-length room. Along the way we noted families with hungry, tired toddlers, or older retired couples out with nary a worry for anything.

We felt excited and accomplished as we headed to the checkout stand. Having been a teen myself, I know looking the way you want brings its share of confidence. Perhaps it shouldn’t be that way, but for young girls it simply is at their age. So because it’s relevant to some of her confidence, my teen daughter’s fashion happiness is relevant to me. We work on the real sources of confidence plenty. Today was fun confidence. We headed to the checkout line, and I hugged my daughter, wishing these times together, no matter how complicated or fun, would last forever.

My husband was paying at the register when I saw them: two noticeably rugged-looking men walking straight into the store with driven purpose. They didn’t seem to be there to shop. Their focus went way beyond afternoon meandering or meeting up with family. I watched as they exchange looks, then split off in different directions—no store bags, kids, or company, just stressed jeans, plain T-shirts, and highly intense faces. My eyes became glued to them and their movements.

They paused in the middle of the store, and started loosely flipping through display shirts, though their eyes paid no attention to the clothes. They walked around some turnstile racks, and logged a few connected looks together. My husband joined me in monitoring them. We were in a big-city store in the middle of a big-city mall full

I'm not safe without Jesus Christ. I need the protection of His armor.

of masses of people where what you hate to even think of still happens.

Were they bad men? Were we about to become pawns of terrorists? Was this another perfect setting for mass killing and mass attention to it? I could panic, and thus frighten my child, and everyone else too. Or I could take her hand, tell her to walk with me, and lead quietly away. Without a word between us, my husband and I chose the latter, collected our suddenly unimportant bags, and began to walk out. Our daughter wanted to linger and look some more, her loose fingers wriggling and moving in my hand. I needed to put on my mama bear hat. I said, "Walk and walk now. Don't let go of my hand. Follow Daddy!"

If gods were on order, I would have wanted a God who takes over. Life was at stake, as far as I could tell. My daughter's life was at stake. A big takeover God was in order, and a big takeover surrender was necessary. I took over as I prayed and walked. Our daughter surrendered and followed, confused and questioning. Outside the store we continued down the sidewalk, still sandwiching our daughter between us. When we were far enough away, I let go of her hand, but not my focus. When asked what was going on, I answered, "When I see something I don't think is safe, your job is to trust me to take care of you and obey."

WHAT DO YOU WANT IN A GOD?

The evening news said nothing about my imagined incident, or even about arrests that prevented it. But my imagination that day hardly reflected the true danger that constantly threatens our destinies. There are city malls where danger lurks, and there are private places where some soul is breaking apart, or even wrestling with the forever questions. It is easier to feel safe when we're not the ones affected by tsunamis, ruin, or war. The God we most identify with is in church on Sabbath and in prayer in hospitals.

But the God we all most need may well be the

God of my shopping mall incident. The biggest rescue humanity needs is from the battleground within our souls. Terrorism has hit there in so many ways. It hits when we succumb to the distractions and dangers of this worldly life. It hits whenever we allow the devil to insert his savage behavior into our thoughts, homes, and lives.

I open my Bible to Ephesians 6:10-18. I read it, read it again, and read it again. I write it down. Then I read it again. The Holy Spirit moves around me, igniting my heart and empowering me with protection. Some of my questions are answered in my reading on the armor of God: "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (verses 10-12).

I need truth buckled around my waist; I need the breastplate of righteousness; I need my feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace; I need the shield of faith to extinguish all the evil one's flaming arrows, the helmet of salvation, and the weapon of God's Word. Finally, I need to pray in the Spirit, constantly and in all kinds of places. I need to pray for myself, and I need to pray for you.

WHAT HE NEEDS FROM ME

My struggles with terrorism in my heart, my struggles with the devil's schemes, and my struggles with the dangers of this world are all far too advanced for me. I'm not safe without Jesus Christ. I need the protection of His armor. I need to ask Him lots of questions when I'm confused. But what does God need from me? He needs me to be His daughter, to obey and walk when He knows, though I cannot always understand, that it is time for Him to take over. I need to let Him hold my hand, and He needs me to let Him hold me.

"Follow Daddy," He may say. And while I'm following, He answers the confusion of my mind by saying to me: "When I see something I don't think is safe, your job is to trust Me to take care of you."

I'm all in, Lord. Please hold my hand. I surrender all. Please take over. Please.

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

A HARSH VIEW OF THE ATONEMENT

Years ago I read a statement about substitutionary atonement. At the time it sounded so harsh, so stark and cold. If we sin, if we violate God's law, we die. Period. The violation, that of God's law—which itself in no circumstances could be waived, or even softened—had to be fully and absolutely paid for. No plea bargains, no reduced sentences, no time off for good behavior. God's wrath on sin had to be poured out in full. Which meant that, because of Adam's sin, the human race was doomed to eternal destruction; the law demanded nothing less.

The only option, the only way out for us, was for Christ, one equal with the Father (Phil. 2:6), to pay the penalty Himself, because, again, the legal structure of God's universe required absolute payment. Thus Christ Himself, in facing God's divine wrath against sin, paid the penalty for our sin, thus satisfying the expiatory requirements that violation of the law demanded.

As I said, the whole thing felt so cold, like steel cut and hewed into sharp edges; nothing soft, pliant, malleable about it.

Then I thought again: So what if it felt that way to me, a being arising at the far end of a sin-infested gene pool? That's what Scripture teaches. Besides: Was God obligated to devise a plan of salvation that gave me the warm fuzzies?

Yes, it can sound so stark, so harsh, so cold. But what is sin if not stark, harsh, and cold? Look at the ravages, the suffering, the destruction, the evil, and the pain it causes. See the gas chambers, the

bloated bellies, the blown-off limbs, the demented, the dying, the dead. Each one of us, meanwhile, is a unique testimony in our own wretchedness and sorrow to just how devastating sin is.

Of course the atonement is harsh; it's supposed to be. When sinners in the Old Testament brought an innocent lamb to an altar, then slid a knife across its throat until its life drained out in a pool of blood, what was the message?

A warm and cuddly God?

No, the message was that sin is so bad, so deadly, that it took the unjust and unfair death of the innocent in order to atone for it, to pay the legal penalty that God's law (the moral background of His universe) demanded. If afterward, when the legalities are satisfied, and sinners, grateful to be forgiven, become friends with God, fine. But to ignore the legal aspect of the cross is like expecting a rocket to lift off the ground while not putting in an engine first. The sin problem, to be solved, needs more than just an attitude adjustment on our part.

It needed, based on God's moral government, a cosmic legal resolution. And it was found in Christ Himself, the Creator of all that was made (John 1:3), bearing in His own body the death that sin, by its very nature, brings to us all.

Harsh? Of course. 🍌

Clifford Goldstein is editor of the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*. His next book is tentatively titled *Baptizing the Devil: Evolution and the Seduction of Christianity*.

CLIFF'S
EDGE
CLIFFORD
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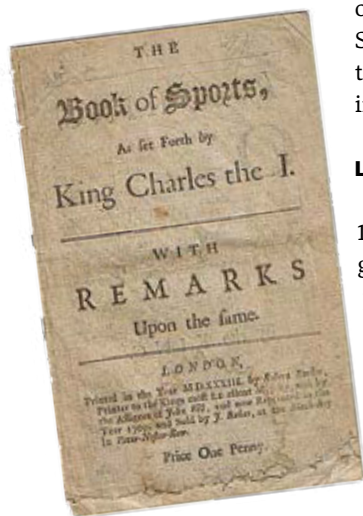


OF COURSE THE
ATONEMENT'S
HARSH; IT'S
SUPPOSED TO BE.



The Sabbath and *The Book of Sports*

*How they drove 35,000
Puritans to America*



When we think of the Sabbath, we typically think of a weekly day of worship, or a work sabbatical. But when our ancestors “remembered the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,” they sometimes took their lives in their hands.

LEGISLATING MORALITY

The English Parliament of 1584-1585, on behalf of the growing Puritan movement, passed a bill requiring strict observance of the Sabbath (in their case, Sunday, the first day of the week). The bill forbade markets and fairs, and recreation such as bear baiting, hunting, hawking, and rowing barges during church service time. It was argued for two weeks before passing and being sent to Queen Elizabeth I.

The queen vetoed the bill, in line with her policy of religious tolerance (though Catholics remained on the naughty list):

“And yet at last when it was

agreed on by both the said Houses, it was dashed by Her Majesty, at the last day of this Parliament, . . . that she would suffer nothing to be altered in matter of Religion or Ecclesiastical Government.

The Puritans who yearned for this strict Sabbath observance were not a separate denomination, but a movement within the Church of England that sought to purge the church of its Roman Catholic roots. Puritans were vocal and refused to compromise their beliefs.

Nicholas Bownde’s scholarly book *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, published in 1595, urged Christians to sanctify the Sabbath as a day of meditation and spiritual exercises (morning and afternoon preaching services). These Sabbaths were meant to follow the Old Testament scriptures about keeping the Sabbath holy by not working or “doing your own pleasure,” as a moral imperative. Sabbaths were to be solemn and sober, with no secular speech or acts. Queen Elizabeth and the archbishop of Canterbury decreed that copies of Bownde’s book be collected and burned in 1600 and 1601.

In 1601 the House of Commons passed a bill that restricted markets and fairs on Sundays, but allowed other secular activities. The House of Lords killed it.

When Queen Elizabeth died two years later, and King James I came to the throne, his authority was threatened by Puritans and other Calvinist dissenters (such as the group that became the Pilgrims), whose influence was growing ever stronger and whose sermons and pronouncements conflicted with his authority.

KEEPING THE SABBATH HOLY

One of James's first acts was to commission a new version of the Bible that stressed the sovereignty of God and the hierarchy of worldly kings and princes. The Authorized (or King James) Version was published in 1611. Puritans hated it, preferring their 1560 Geneva Bible, with its commentary, illustrations, hatred of the Roman Catholic Church (In the Geneva Bible, Revelation 11:7 specifically named the beast as the pope.), and elevation of common humanity.

Their continued agitation all over England earned them the name "dissenters."

In 1617-1618 the king went on a progress (on tour) through the country, holding courts and meeting his subjects. One of the complaints he heard was that the usual workweek being Monday through Saturday from dawn to dusk, people needed at least a half day for recreation, markets, fun fairs, visiting family, and the like. The Puritans were preventing that by holding two long services on Sunday.

As answer to the problem of overwork and an unbalanced life—and that should he need soldiers for war, they'd be puny and weak—King James wrote *The Book of Sports*. The 1,500-word booklet directed his subjects to go to church on Sunday morning and religious holidays as required, but to spend the afternoon enjoying life.

He commanded that "no lawful recreation shall be barred to our good people," and listed appropriate activities for those days: "such as dancing, either men or women; archery for men, leaping, vaulting, or any other such harmless recreation, nor from having of May-games, Whitsun-ales, and Morris-dances; and the setting up of May-poles and other sports." Women were granted permission "to carry rushes to the church for the decorating of it, according to their old custom."

The Book of Sports not only allowed certain recreational activities—it also forbade "all unlawful games" such as bear and bull baitings, and bowling.

But what might have been the reason for prohibiting bowling? The answer turns out to be that "a Bowling-Green, or Bowling-Ally, is a place where three things are thrown away besides the Bowls, viz., Time, Money, and Curses, at the last ten for one."

The king further commanded that *The Book of Sports* be read in every church, and held the bish-

ops, ministers, and churchwardens accountable that it should be done "by the book."

A NEW KING

After King James's death in 1625, the book was reissued several times by his son Charles I. In an attempt to control the Puritan (and other nonconformist) uprising, King Charles decreed that *The Book of Sports* be read again in all churches. Churches were also required to conform to the Church of England's *Book of Common Prayer*, which was also hated by the Puritans. Puritan ministers who did not conform were "silenced" by being removed from the pulpit and denied a preaching license. Some were imprisoned, a punishment that could be a death sentence because of disease and exposure to extremes of cold and hunger.

Further, *The Book of Sports* included this command: "The Bishop, and all other inferior churchmen and churchwardens, shall for their parts be careful and diligent, both to instruct the ignorant, and convince and reform them that are misled in religion, presenting them that will not conform themselves, but obstinately stand out, to our Judges and Justices: whom we likewise command to put the law in due execution against them."

However, there was a loophole in *The Book of Sports* that many Puritan ministers latched onto: "Constraining them to conform themselves or to leave the country."

LEAVING THE COUNTRY

Leaving, however, presented its own complications: the king didn't want them to leave the country because he would lose all their tax revenue; if they did sneak out, they couldn't go to Catholic France or Spain; again, such Protestant nations as Lutheran Germany and Austria were at war with France, Italy, and Spain. The Netherlands was a destination of hope. Some, like the Pilgrims of England, went there for 10 years before they sailed to Massachusetts. Among their leaders was John Robinson, one of my ancestors 12 generations back. His chapter on the first-day Sabbath in his book *A Just and Necessary Apology* was published in 1625, the year he died.

For most Puritans there was no place to go but to America, still under English rule but 3,000 miles away by dangerous ocean journey from the king and the archbishops of the Church of England.

Some of us carry the DNA of those godly pioneers in our bodies, but all of us have inherited their moral fiber in our Western culture.

Some ministers escaped the long arm of the law by hiding with the help of sympathizers such as the earl of Lincoln, until the earl was imprisoned. The senior pastor of St. Botolph's Church, John Cotton, was one of many ministers who had to hide before escaping to New England. Ten percent of the citizens of Boston, Lincolnshire, emigrated to Massachusetts Bay Colony with him or shortly after Cotton went there. Cotton had been asked to come to Massachusetts several times, but kept declining invitations until fear of being imprisoned forced him out of England.

Entire towns in many English counties emptied and sailed to the new Boston (the New Jerusalem, they hoped) between 1630 and 1640. About 35,000 people are estimated to have settled in New England during that decade. When the English Civil War began, with Puritans in ascendancy, thousands of the emigrants moved back to England. In May 1643 angry Puritans burned *The Book of Sports* in London.

TESTED AND TRIED

Christians who experienced the threat of persecution and death were deeply convicted of the truth of their beliefs. They followed biblical laws to the letter to prove to God that they were worthy of salvation. The fourth commandment, to keep the Sabbath holy, was one of the factors that caused their persecution in the first place. Obedience to God was worth moving across the world, or dying for.

Both on their ships and in New England they followed stringent regulations about Sabbathkeeping. English Church holidays such as Christmas and Easter were prohibited, and people were expected to work as usual. Church services with required attendance were held Sunday mornings and afternoons. During the Sabbath there was no alcohol consumption, no unseemly walking, no court or corporal punishment, no work that could be done another day, no swimming, no buying or selling, no

games or dances, no unnecessary travel, no hunting or fishing. Music or literature was sacred, never secular. Sabbath began at sundown on Saturday evening and ended the night before Monday.

Adventists in the 1840s, many of whom lived in Puritan (later Congregational) New England, learned about the seventh-day Sabbath from Seventh-Day Baptists.

People in Sabbatarian denominations (Seventh-day Adventist, Seventh-Day Baptist, messianic synagogues, Church of God, etc.) came to see the Sabbath as a gift, a special grace dispensed by God. Others see seventeenth-century culture and marvel at the legalism of the Puritans and their spiritual descendants. But even in their stern legalism, these Christians demonstrated a strength of character, a profound integrity, an obey-God-rather-than-men resolve, that compels our admiration. Some of us carry the DNA of those godly pioneers in our bodies; *all of us* have the privilege of accepting the heritage of their moral fiber in our Western culture.

"All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them" (Heb. 11:13-16).

My ancestors settled near Salem, Massachusetts, emigrating there as Puritans, fleeing *The Book of Sports* style of Christianity. They risked beatings, fines, and imprisonment by converting to Baptist beliefs. They moved to Rhode Island, which had the first Seventh-Day Baptist congregation in America; then to New Jersey, where they formed a town and congregation. The Sabbatarians shared their Baptist minister with a first-day congregation. That branch stayed Seventh-Day Baptist until the twentieth century. Sabbatarianism skipped two generations (who were Methodists), and my parents became Seventh-day Adventists in 1964. 🦋

* www.greyclay.com/library/playingbowls.html

Christy K. Robinson is a self-employed editor, author, music teacher, and church keyboardist. Her historical books and blog articles are related to religious liberty.

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soul



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Shall We Return to Rome?



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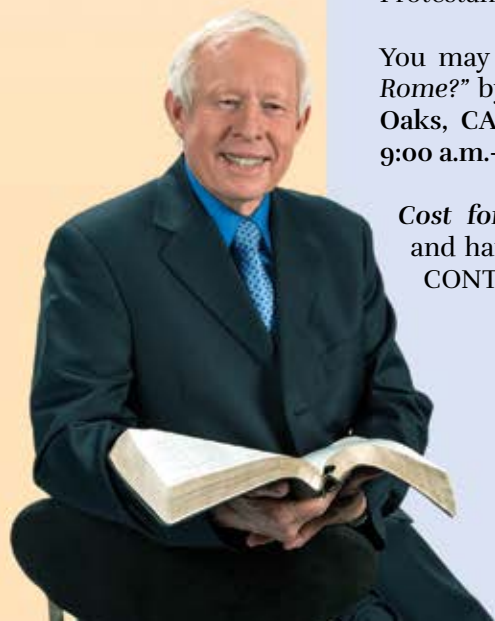
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DOES GOD LIKE ME?

What it means to be God's friend

DAVID ASSCHERICK



How could a God like You love a person like me?"

How many of us have asked God that question? It would be the rare person, even the rare, committed Christian, who hadn't in some form wondered that very thing: *Why should God be interested in me?*

Indeed, the psalmist said, "What is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?" (Ps. 8:4).

We're going to look at one of the central themes of Scripture: Genesis 1 and 2, Creation.

The very first words of Scripture are: "In the beginning" (Gen. 1:1). But the first words God spoke were "Let there be light" (verse 3). In Genesis 1 God is presented as speaking things into existence. The psalmist would later say, "For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm" (Ps. 33:9).

So God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God's Word, apparently, is creative in and of itself. When God says something, it comes to be.

When Jesus was at Lazarus' tomb, He said, "Lazarus, come out!" (John 11:43), and Lazarus came out.

In Genesis 1 and 2 God speaks things into existence. "Let there be light," and there was light. "Let there be a galaxy," and there was a galaxy. "Let there be a planet," there's a planet.

The picture presented in Scripture is of a God who says, "Let there be light," and light happens. He is a God who *speaks* things into existence. He just spoke, and the universe came to be.

A MORE PERSONAL GOD

In Genesis 1 we're presented with what might be called a sequential or chronological picture of Creation. In Genesis 2 Moses recapitulates Creation. Genesis 1 is largely sequential and chronological; Genesis 2 is largely relational: "Then the Lord God formed a man" (Gen. 2:7). But how did He form man? "From the dust of the ground." In the opening chapters God is speaking: "Let there be light," and there's light. But Genesis 2 says the Lord God formed a man, humankind, Adam, from the dust of the ground.

Moses paints a picture of a God who is close, who is intimate, a God who is invested. Moses is painting a God who, we may well imagine, is on His hands and knees. He's in the dust, in the dirt.

There's dirt under God's fingernails, and He's digging in the dirt. He's forming. He's fashioning. This is a God who's invested, who's close.

He didn't say, "Let there be Adam," which He could have done. Moses has already made it abundantly clear that God can speak things into existence. He could have said, "Let there be a man," and there would have been a man. But no.

It's OK to speak universes into existence. It's OK to speak galaxies into existence. But when it comes to making a companion, you have to get close. So the picture is of God on His hands and knees forming a man. This is a God who's invested. This is not a distant God. This is an intimate God.

"Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground," and what does your Bible say? "And breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (Gen. 2:7). Talk about proximity! There are only three people on the planet whose nostrils I am comfortable breathing into! My wife's, and those of my two little boys. But here's God: He forms a man. The man's not alive. He's not thinking; he's not acting. He is a cadaver. He is not yet the companion of God. So God breathes into his nostrils.

And the first thing Adam sees is God's face. And God says, "Welcome to life, Adam."

So the first thing we're introduced to in Genesis 1 and 2 is a God who is distant in a sense. He speaks the universe, the planet, these things into existence. But when it's time to form a man, God is invested, God is involved. God is *with* humanity.

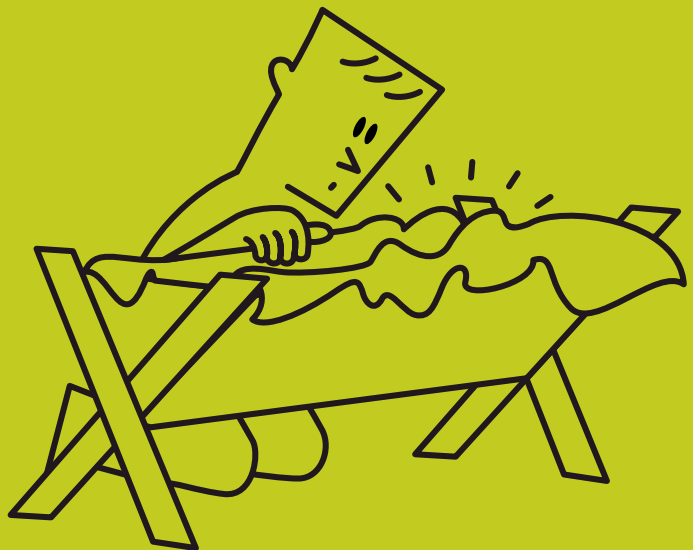
STILL MORE PERSONAL

Let's go now to Luke 1. A woman named Mary is pregnant, and she's confused about her pregnancy. An angel appears to Mary and says, "You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus [Yeshua, Deliverer]" (verse 31). An angel also told Joseph, "You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

Matthew applies a messianic prophecy from Isaiah to Jesus: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means 'God with us') (verse 23).

In Genesis 1 and 2 we have this picture of God's proximity, of God's investment, of God's intimacy with humanity. But humanity's rebellion, obstinacy, and sin caused a division. Jesus came to repair that breach! And the fullest, most powerful

**The reason God
became human
is that we
couldn't relate
to Him if He
hadn't.**



God, the infinite, illimitable, eternal God of the universe, has people for friends!

application of this name, Immanuel, would apply to the incarnate God. The Incarnation is the “infleshing” of God. God becomes a man. God becomes a man so He can be *with us*!

There are *billions*—some say 200 billion—galaxies in the universe, and most of those galaxies contain *hundreds of billions* of stars. The God who made it all, the God who spoke it into existence—that God became human!

The reason God became human is that we couldn’t relate to Him if He hadn’t. Theologians use the expression “wholly other,” that is, entirely different from us. How could we possibly understand God? God is omnipotent, all-powerful. None of us is all-powerful! You and I can’t relate to that.

God is omnipresent. It means that while He’s here, He can also be there. We are bound by this thing called space. God, in His godness, is not confined by space. But when God became a man, He couldn’t be in Jericho if He was in Galilee. And if He was in Jericho, He couldn’t be in Jerusalem. God’s presence was limited to where He could get by walking. If Jesus wanted to go to Bethany, He walked. We can’t relate to omnipresence, but we can relate to walking.

God is omniscient: He knows everything. We can’t relate to that, either. We can’t relate to any of these things. The apostle Paul said, “We do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses” (Heb. 4:15). Why does he put it in the double negative? Because it’s the very thing we would be tempted to think: *How can God relate to me?* Paul’s double negative anticipates this objection. He says, “We do *not* have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses.” He could have truncated the double negatives and said, “We have a high priest who can empathize,” he anticipates our doubt and reassures us with “God can relate to you!”

Isaiah’s Immanuel promise declares, “He’ll be with you.” In Genesis 1 we see God with humanity face to face. And now, sin notwithstanding, there’s a very real sense in which we have already seen the face of God. The apostle Paul wrote: “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6). We have seen God in His incarnation, but we have not seen the face of God in its full glory.

FUTURE INTIMACY

We find this idea of God's proximity again in Revelation: "Then I saw 'a new heaven and a new earth,' for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea" (Rev. 21:1).

Many of us have wondered about that verse: "there was no longer any sea." Is John making a geographical or a geological statement? Hardly. Where is John when he receives the Revelation? He's on the island of Patmos, a penal colony located 25 miles into the Aegean Sea. John was put there because of the testimony of the Lord and the Word of God.

He may have been in his 80s or even older, the last living apostle, separated from everything near and dear to him. For him, the sea meant separation. Then the Lord showed him "'a new heaven and a new earth,' for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and [he says] there was no longer any sea." He's saying, "The thing that separates will be gone."

Notice verse 2: "I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband." You cannot get a more intimate picture than that. Then he writes in verse 3: "I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.'"

Three times John says God will be *with us*, and we will be *with Him*. There will be no separation.

BRIDGING THE GAP

God begins close to humanity. Then there's separation, that which comes between. It's humanity's obstinacy, humanity's rebellion, humanity's disobedience.

But a Man named Jesus would come, called Jesus because He would save His people from their sins. Sin separates! But Jesus is also called Immanuel, which is God *with us*! He's bridging that gap.

In Revelation we see that gap completely bridged. John says, "He will be *with us*, and we will be *with Him*! We will see His face" (see Rev. 22:4).

This is one of the great themes of Scripture: to have proximity restored. Our Bibles have two covers. On one cover there is Eden—Genesis 1 and 2. On the other there is Eden restored—Revelation

21 and 22. Everything in between is God seeking to restore that face-to-face relationship. Scripture reveals God's desire to be with His people.

LOVING AND LIKING

Now a simple question: Do you like to spend time with people? Whether we're extroverts or not, God has made us social beings.

And a second question: Whom do you like to be with the most?

Perhaps you have heard of this clever and significant distinction between liking and loving someone. What if we applied the consideration to our relationship with God? The Bible is perfectly clear about God's love for us: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son" (John 3:16). We say God's love is unconditional. That means that God's love for us is not conditioned on our response. God doesn't love us *more* if we do a, b, and c. Neither does He love us less if we do x, y, and z. God's love, His unconditional love for humanity, tells us a great deal about God.

But does God like us? What if God *likes* me? Is that different? It is. Totally different.

In 2 Chronicles 20 a man named Jehoshaphat is praying. The Ammonites and Moabites are coming against Israel, and Jehoshaphat and all of Israel are concerned. Jehoshaphat stands in the congregation of the people, and begins to pray. His prayer makes no distinction between the God who loves and the God who likes: "Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem in the temple of the Lord in the front of the new courtyard and said, 'Lord, the God of our ancestors, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you'" (verse 5).

Translation: "You are God! No one can withstand You. You are mighty. You are powerful. *You are God!*"

And he continues: "Our God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend?" (verse 7). For King Jehoshaphat, the God who rules, the God who is mighty, the God who is omniscient, omnipotent, eternal, had a buddy named Abraham. Abraham was a friend of God's. How radical is that?

In Christianity it's perfectly appropriate to ask,

**God doesn't love
us more if we do
a, b, and c.
Neither does He
love us less if
we do x, y, and z.**



“How is your relationship with God?” We understand very well that we can have a relationship with God, that God is invested in us. But Scripture teaches that the sovereign and subject relationship is not the overarching theme of Christianity. Christianity says that Abraham was a friend of God’s. Not just His subject, or just a good citizen of His kingdom; he was God’s *friend*.

In case someone inclines to think that this only applies to Abraham, we should note the comment of Exodus 33:11: “The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend.”

No one can communicate this adequately. But God, the infinite, illimitable, eternal God of the universe, has *people* for friends!

OUR FRIEND, JESUS

Jesus, speaking to His disciples, said, “Fellows, I’m leaving. But don’t be troubled. You believe in God? Believe in Me. In My Dad’s house are many mansions. I’m going to go and prepare a place, and I’ll come back and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, you’ll be there with Me” (see John 14:1-3).

The very next chapter He talks about the vine. “If you abide in the vine, you will bear fruit” (see John 15:4).

Then He turns to His disciples in those poignant, somber, sad moments just before the cross, and He says, “No longer do I call you servants. I can’t call you servants anymore. There is too much limitation to the strength of the servant-sovereign metaphor. I’ll call you My friends. A servant doesn’t know what his master is doing, but I’ve told you everything; you are my friends” (see verse 15).

Abraham was a friend of God’s. Adam was a friend of God’s. Moses spoke to God face to face. And Jesus says to us all, “You’re My unique you. You’re it, and you’re special, and I like you just that way!” God doesn’t just love us; He *likes* us.

When we look in the mirror we may think, *My nose is too big. My ears stick out. My teeth are crooked.* But when God looks, He thinks, *I like that! There’s something about that little crooked tooth. I like the way she laughs, the way her cheek kind of goes up.* God says, *I like the choices she has made. When I look down at her, she is growing and maturing. She’s becoming one of My beautiful daughters. I love her. I loved her when she did that, although I wish she hadn’t done it. And she wishes she hadn’t done it. But*

that’s not the person she is anymore. I don’t just love this girl, I like her. She’s My friend!

MOSES AND ELIJAH

When Moses died on top of Mount Nebo, it looked like quite a sad story. We think, *Ah, Moses didn’t even get to go into the Promised Land.* But that’s just a half-truth: “The archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not himself dare to condemn him for slander but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you’” (Jude 9). Jesus came down to get Moses.

He missed him. He couldn’t leave Moses in the ground. He *missed* him! And in anticipation of the cross, in anticipation of redemption, He said, “I know what’s coming, and I’m confident. So I’ll resurrect him. Moses, come with Me.”

God started to like this guy Elijah. Elijah was a bit of a scaredy-cat. He could stand up to 850 false priests, but he was afraid of a woman, Jezebel. Apparently Elijah was afraid to die. So God said, “You know what? I won’t let him die. I’ll bring him to heaven. Elijah, step out of that fiery chariot. Meet Moses!”

On the Mount of Transfiguration, when Jesus’ face was as bright as the sun, Ellen White says in *The Desire of Ages* that Elijah and Moses were whispering in Jesus’ ears, “Please go through with it, because we like heaven, we like God. So please go through with this.” She says that Jesus on the Mount was strengthened by their words—Moses representing those who will be resurrected, and Elijah representing those who will be translated.*

Moses and Elijah showcase the fact that God wants to be with people. He likes people. Adam was a friend of God. Abraham was a friend of God. Moses was a friend of God. Jesus says, “No longer do I call you servants. Now I call you friends.” God invites you to be friends with Him, to be with Him today and forever. 🌟

*Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898): “The decease to be accomplished at Jerusalem is the subject of their conference with Jesus. . . . These men, chosen above every angel around the throne, had come to commune with Jesus concerning the scenes of His suffering, and to comfort Him with the assurance of the sympathy of heaven” (pp. 422-425).

David Asscherick is cofounder of ARISE, and is pastor of the Kingscliff Adventist Church in Chinderah, New South Wales, Australia. This article is adapted from a sermon he preached at Oakwood University in 2011.

*How sweet to be
reminded of God's
love and care*

GOD'S CARE

ELLEN G. WHITE

God with us" is the surety of our deliverance from sin, the assurance of our power to obey the law of heaven.¹

Christ sought to teach the grand truth so needful for us to learn, that God is always with us, an inmate of every dwelling, that He is acquainted with every action performed on earth. He knows the thoughts that are framed in the mind and endorsed by the soul. He hears every word that falls from the lips of human beings. He is walking and working in the midst of all our transactions in life. He knows every plan, and He measures every method.²

GOD SEES ME

"Thou God seest me." Genesis 16:13.³

God is a vigilant observer of the actions of the children of men. Nothing occurs in earth or heaven without the knowledge of the Creator. Nothing can happen without His permission. He on whom the fate of an empire may depend is watched over with a vigilance which knows no relaxation by Him who "giveth salvation unto kings," to whom belong "the shields of the earth." And the poor man is as tenderly watched over as the monarch upon his throne.

God is constantly at work for the good of His creatures. . . . Times without number God has interposed to avert death, to keep men, women, and children in safety when Satan purposed a result wholly disastrous. . . .⁴

As the artist transfers to the canvas the features of the face, so the features of each individual character are transferred to the books of heaven. God has a perfect photograph of every man's character.⁵

God wants you to recognize the divine presence.

His peace and comfort and grace and joy will change the shadow of death into bright morning and blessed sunshine. . . . A reverential spirit realizes that the heart must be kept by the power of God. Ministering angels open the eyes of the mind and heart to see wonderful things in the divine law, in the natural world, and in the eternal things revealed by the Holy Spirit.⁶

GOD CARES FOR ME

“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.” Isaiah 41:10.

The Lord is in active communication with every part of His vast dominions. He is represented as bending toward the earth and its inhabitants. He is listening to every word that is uttered. He hears every groan; He listens to every prayer; He observes the movements of every one. . . .

God has always had a care for His people. . . . Christ taught His disciples that the amount of divine attention given to any object is proportionate to the rank assigned to it in the creation of God. He called their attention to the birds of the air. Not a sparrow, He said, falls to the ground without the notice of our heavenly Father. And if the little sparrow is regarded by Him, surely the souls of those for whom Christ has died are precious in His sight. The value of man, the estimate God places upon him, is revealed in the cross of Calvary. . . .

God’s mercy and love for the fallen race have not ceased to accumulate, nor lost their earthward direction.⁷

It is true that disappointments will come; tribulation we must expect; but we are to commit

everything, great and small, to God. He does not become perplexed by the multiplicity of our grievances, nor overpowered by the weight of our burdens. His watchcare extends to every household, and encircles every individual; He is concerned in all our business and our sorrows. He marks every tear; He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

All the afflictions and trials that befall us here are permitted, to work out His purposes of love toward us—“that we might be partakers of his holiness,” and thus become participants in that fullness of joy which is found in His presence.⁸ 🍌

¹ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 25.

² *Review and Herald*, May 30, 1899.

³ Bible texts are from the King James Version.

⁴ *Australasian Union Conference Record*, Jan. 1, 1902.

⁵ *Signs of the Times*, July 31, 1901.

⁶ Letter 14, 1900.

⁷ *Signs of the Times*, Nov. 17, 1898.

⁸ *Bible Echo*, Sept. 1, 1889.

This excerpt was taken from *My Life Today* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1952), pages 290-292. Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry.





FLEEING KUWAIT

God's providence for a young family in a perilous place.

It was 5:00 a.m. Ratna Samuel, a young Adventist mother, wife, and nurse was brushing her teeth, preparing for work. Her little girls, ages 9 and 4, were still sleeping, and her husband would soon rouse from his slumber to drive her to work that day.

"I heard thunder," Ratna said. "[In Kuwait], we never heard anything like that. I said, 'What is that noise?'"

The Samuel family lived in an area called Ahmadi, associated with the Kuwait Oil Company, where both she and her husband, Pushparaj, were employed

as nurses. The crime rate there was so low that even the sound of police car sirens was foreign. So even the sound of thunder, at that hour, was very strange.

Driving to work, the pair noticed the large telecommunications tower, so integral to modern Kuwaiti life, had been knocked down.

Ratna began her workday preparing to administer insulin injections to diabetic clients before the formal start of her shift. But she soon noticed something out of the ordinary. "The Kuwaiti patients were coming in for insulin, yet everyone was gossiping in the corners," she remembers.

At first she didn't bother with it. "Then I asked someone, 'What's going on today? Why are people whispering?' Then someone told me: Iraq is here already."

It was August 2, 1990.

WILONA KARIMABADI

◀ **The Samuel family: Veena, Pushpraj, Ratna, and Tina.**

HAPPIER DAYS

In the 1980s Kuwait, a tiny yet wealthy country, provided opportunities for many Indian nationals to come there to live and work, enjoying a comfortable lifestyle supplied by the lifspring of the nation—oil. Pushparaj went first, gaining employment as a nurse with a clinic associated with the Kuwait Oil Company. Ratna joined him a little later, soon after completing her nursing education and securing her necessary certifications. Their little girl, Veena, joined them later, with Tina's birth completing the family in 1986. By their account, they had a great life. Employees in the oil sector, which was literally surrounded by oil wells, were provided safe and comfortable housing, and the Samuels used their income to build a lovely home for themselves back in India for their eventual return. The family enjoyed trips to Cyprus, Egypt, and the Holy Land with relatives, and they treasured worshipping with the small community of Adventists in the area, many of whom were in Kuwait under the same circumstances. Life was good.

IT BEGINS

Ratna knew of no real warning that an invasion was imminent—just an ominous threat over oil conflicts from Saddam Hussein on August 1, 1990, saying that the next day (August 2) the Iraqi army would have breakfast in Kuwait.

By 2:00 a.m. Iraqi tanks had indeed rolled in.

As soon as she heard the news of the invasion, Ratna called her husband. "We are under siege," she told him. "Go, go, go! Tell everybody." Pushparaj "then called his brother, everyone, and they ran to buy supplies, withdraw our money, and all that. There was a big commotion."

For the next few weeks the family tried to figure out what to do next. Pushparaj continued his night shifts at his clinic, now used to cater to Iraqi soldiers. While he and other male friends worked, the women and children would gather in one home for the night. Tales of Iraqi soldiers forcing their way into random homes, assaulting women, and plundering houses emerged quickly. But the

Samuel family and their friends were untouched.

"There was this time we were home and my dad went to work," recalls daughter Tina. "There were tanks on the street outside, and we could just hear shooting and all kinds of stuff. My mom was praying, just praying. Then someone started banging on the door! It was my dad, but we didn't know it was he at first. He was trying to get inside because there was shooting. We thought it was soldiers, and my mother was just crying, and praying, and praying."

Iraq and India had enjoyed peaceful diplomatic relations before the war. As a result, the large Indian community in the country were in a better situation, safety-wise, than their Kuwaiti neighbors. But within two weeks grocery stores were ransacked and it became increasingly difficult to get supplies, especially for families with small children. "We decided it was no longer safe to stay. We didn't know at what point America was going to come to the rescue, and didn't know what to do if our safety was no longer there. We needed to leave," says Ratna.

EXODUS

At first the plan was to drive from Kuwait to Basra, Iraq, to Iran, then to Pakistan and on to India, recalls Pushparaj. Their trek involved a small Toyota Corolla, packed to the roof with as much as they could carry, and two little girls in the back seat. Five families formed the fleeing caravan.

"Before all this happened, I was just a pastor's daughter."

On their first attempt, the border was closed! "They said it was open, but before we reached the place, it was closed. We waited for three days in Basra, on the roadside," says Pushparaj. The roadside actually bordered the Euphrates River, which served as a place to bathe and, for the kids, to play. There was also a Sheraton hotel across the road that graciously allowed the group to use its bath-

“Jesus, this is Your doing. I know it is.”

rooms. There were two more attempts made to cross; then the group realized this option was too risky.

Out of options, they returned to their homes in Kuwait. “What the Iraqi soldiers used to do was occupy whatever homes they wanted,” says Pushparaj. “Our house was wide open for three days, but everything was still there [when we returned]. The food and everything was still there.”

The Indian government began an operation to get their nationals out in what became one of the largest airlifts ever accomplished—involving more than 100,000 civilians evacuated. Within this group were the Samuels and six other Indian Adventist families. “We had lost hope,” remembers Ratna. “There was no more going by car, but the Indian embassy gave us another option because we had small children.”

The family boarded school buses bound for Basra, Iraq. From there they would travel via Indian Air Force military planes to Bombay. They were instructed to carry just 15 pounds of luggage—for a family of four. So into a small black carryon bag went their money, documentation (including work certifications for India), photos, food for the girls, and gold, which Ratna tucked into pockets of her jeans.

Multiple planes were supposed to be ready to take the evacuees to India, but for some reason, only one plane arrived that day. Throngs of fleeing Indian citizens waited in the airport, which was essentially nonfunctioning, unsure of what to do. Finally, the decision came down that just women and children could go, but everyone refused. So now, in order for the flight to leave with all passengers on board, all luggage had to be left behind.

In the exhaustion of the past several days, Ratna failed to tag that important little bag, and left it on the tarmac. With minutes to go before takeoff, she realized her mistake and sent Pushparaj racing

off the tail ramp of the military plane to the piles of luggage for that precious bag.

But he got the wrong one.

“We were sitting in the plane, and it was taking off and I was crying,” says Ratna. “I didn’t know how I’d be able to go home. ‘Jesus,’ I prayed. ‘How can we go home with nothing in hand? At least the certificates, something.’ I was crying and crying and praying, ‘Jesus, please.’” But the plane left Iraq and winged its way east, toward India.

Then, one hour into the flight, the pilot announced a technical problem and that they were going right back to Basra! “I said, ‘Jesus, this is Your doing, I know it is,’” remembers Ratna. “I was so happy. We could have landed in some other country for this technical fault, but we were going all the way back to Basra, where all our things still were.”

Another miracle awaited them—all the luggage left behind had been placed securely in a room, left unharmed. So the little black bag was secured. This time, more Indian Air Force planes were waiting with enough room for everyone and all their luggage. On landing in Bombay, they learned that the Indian government was providing 5,000 rupees, and free airline tickets to anywhere in the country, for all its citizens fleeing Kuwait.

RESTORED

After about a year in India the Samuel family returned to their Kuwaiti home. Once Iraq was defeated and regular life resumed, Pushparaj was called back (as nurses were needed), and the whole family followed. They stayed in Kuwait for several more years until the girls were older, before emigrating to the United States, where they now reside in Maryland. Veena and Tina are married with children of their own now, making Ratna and Pushparaj, who still work as nurses, the proud grandparents of four.

The experience, while harrowing, will never leave them. But now it serves best as a profound reminder of God’s faithfulness to His children.

“Before all this happened, I was just a pastor’s daughter,” says Ratna. “We did the routine things, such as going to church, etc. But I really, really saw the hand of God during this time. It was God’s protection. We were safe and taken care of. And when we went back, life was normal again.”

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ORDINARY PEOPLE

The best part of public transportation is the rare opportunity to sit back and observe everything around you. There is no concern about speed, starts, and stops, just an ordinary journey to a destination.

Then again, as the train stops midrail and lights flicker, I question my choice of transportation. Today I travel to the city. It appeared prudent to take the train, exit at the street across from my destination, instead of driving for two hours. An overhead announcement alerts passengers to “remain seated.” We are stopped next to the highway, distanced from rushing cars. I have time for a delay.

I pull a small notepad from my purse. In one hour I will present a grant request to fund a clean water project abroad. I read over main points, research, necessity, and finances requested for aid. Dear God, help me persuade the committee to provide aid for this humanitarian project.

In the train, traveling companions are restless. A little girl crawls onto her mother’s lap; our eyes meet as she embraces her mother. “I’m thirsty, Mama,” she whispers. Her mother explains they will arrive home soon. The girl hides her face.

A small brown paper bag in my purse contains two small water bottles: visual aids for my presentation. With a quick explanation I hand them to the mother, who thanks me. As I watch the child quench her thirst, the task ahead becomes obvious: she is not the only thirsty child in this world.

Inside the building my destination is Floor 25, Conference Room 5.

“Good morning, ma’am. What floor?”

A gentleman wearing a uniform match-

ing the colors of the lobby décor stands waiting for a response. As we begin the journey he smiles and offers me a bottle of water. Water? I am about to request funding for water. I accept the gift. As the door opens, the gentleman points to the conference room: “I wish you well in your presentation.” As I walk down the corridor, I pray for the Holy Spirit to touch the hearts of all who can make a difference today. Then I step forward.

Four hours later I wait. I will know the outcome of my presentation when I arrive at a “meet and greet” gathering inside a lobby reception room. As the elevator doors open I see the man again. This time he simply presses the LOBBY button. As we begin our descent he shares: “I grew up where we worked to make water clean, drinkable.” He pauses, looks away.

“I help ordinary people reach their destination here. I watch, listen, know why they come. I believe ordinary people accomplish extraordinary things when guided by God’s grace; we’re reminded not to forget where we came from and to move forward, to help others”

Sometimes it’s a thirsty village or a thirsty little girl on a train.

The elevator doors open at the lobby, and I see the reception room. My travel companion hands me another bottle of water. “Congratulations on the grant. God bless His ministry.”

The elevator door closes. I look at the water bottle: Ordinary people, humbly invited to work in God’s extraordinary projects. Amen. ▀

Dixil Rodríguez, a college professor and volunteer hospital chaplain, lives in Texas.



ORDINARY PEOPLE
ACCOMPLISH
EXTRAORDINARY
THINGS WHEN
GUIDED BY
GOD’S GRACE.

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ALSO IN THIS SECTION:

- » THINGS I CAN'T REMEMBER
- » THIS IS A TEST
- » RESILIENCE

ENGAGE



PICTURES OF GOD →

It all depends on your perspective

I See God Through People

MYLON MEDLEY

I saw God a month ago.

He was focused, yet vulnerable as he lay with his arms outstretched.

The goal? To save as many lives as possible.

He knew there would be a degree of discomfort and pain; but he knew that long before he arrived. In fact, he'd done this before.

So there he was with blood leaving his arms through a needle. What was the purpose?

I witnessed the gentleman at a blood donation center. Was this man God? By no means. But his actions were of God.

The consequences of sin revoked our privilege of seeing God. When God told Moses to lead the Israelites to the Promised Land, Moses had doubts. He knew God was with them, but he needed a confidence boost; he needed to see God. In response God said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you. . . . But you may not look directly at my face, for no one may see me and live" (Ex. 33:19, 20, NLT).*

We've all had Moses moments, when we need to see evidence of God. He can sometimes feel too distant to be an intimate God. But Scripture assures us that while we cannot see Him, we can find Him in expressions of love. Whether found in a smile shared between strangers or in a donated unit of blood, when we want to see God He makes Himself known.

We just need to make sure we don't miss Him when He passes by. 🍌

*Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Mylon Medley is an assistant producer for Adventist News Network in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Seeing God Through Illness

LORI ROMERO

My picture of God is one of everlasting love and tenderness. As a child I saw God as my protector and heavenly Father. As I've grown older, I've become closer to Him and have learned to lean on Him more fully.

About a decade ago I became ill with a rare disease for which there is no cure. It is difficult to treat and challenging to bear. To slow the progress of the disease, the doctors have now added chemotherapy to my treatment, which causes me great pain, nausea, and weakness. Despite these trials, I would not trade this experience. It has taught me the importance of trusting God and depending on Him for my every need. I've come to realize that I am truly and completely in His hands.

When my illness threatens to overwhelm me,

with tearful pleas I go to the Lord in prayer, asking Him to strengthen me and to give me unflinching courage. I need Him to lift me up and carry me when I cannot stand. Sensing the Lord's presence provides me with the trust and faith that I need, and I am overcome with gratitude and thankfulness to Him. He fills my heart and soul with peace.

I've learned that to stay close to God I must pray to Him continually, not just during periods of severe pain. Several times each day I say aloud, "I choose Jesus." I want Him to hear me and to understand that my faith and trust are in Him.

I know my Lord will carry me through the storm, and I look forward to receiving that precious eternal healing at Jesus' second coming. 🍌

Lori Romero writes from Silver Spring, Maryland.



While we cannot see
Him, we can find Him in
expressions of love.

Face to Face

RONNY NALIN

At times I have been jealous of the disciples because they could touch, see, and listen to God when He became flesh. I can't use my eyes or hands to have direct physical access to God.

In spite of this "blindness," I experience His presence permeating everything around me. In fact, His closeness is such that in Him I live and move and have my being (Acts 17:28). I don't see God's face, but He sees mine and cares for every little detail of my life. I can't hold God's hands, but I can detect His presence, His actions, and His thoughts.

God is the Word (John 1:1), and I encounter Him every time I read a passage in the Bible. God is Spirit (John 4:24), and I experience His intangible

presence every time I listen with my mind in silence and pray. God is the Creator (Gen. 1:1), and as a geologist, I have the privilege of admiring both the brilliance of His thoughts, expressed in the beautiful workings of our planet, and the power of His action, recorded in geological history.

There is so much I don't know and understand yet about God, because I see Him through a mirror, dimly (1 Cor. 13:12). I look forward with anticipation (a mixture of holy fear and longing) to the time I will see my Father and Maker face to face.

Ronny Nalin, Ph.D., is an associate scientist at the Geoscience Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and lives with his wife, Elisa, and daughter, Gioia, in Mentone, California.

How I See God

BONNIE MCLEAN

I grew up being told I was a child of God, and to boldly come before His throne of grace. So I did.

My parents told me that I could do whatever God asked of me. Clinging to His promises in the Bible, I have spent my life pursuing His call. If I truly believe that I am His child, then my best witness is to serve for His glory. I carried God's promise through my college education, master's degree, and Ph.D. I grew to hear God's still small voice in my life, and I followed it to the path of education, one my husband has also chosen.

I'm always astonished when I hear others criticizing me for not having children, not being "traditional," speaking out against inequality and

oppression, or boldly believing that God will bless me because I am doing His work and have asked for His blessing.

Because of what He said about His followers in the Bible, God does not look upon outward appearances. Rather, He sees the heart of service and uses it.

I came to Him an empty vessel, eager to serve. He filled me with purpose and treated me with the kind of equal love that I have come to recognize in a Savior who died for everyone. Therefore, when I see God, I see a God who believes in His children as equals—He saves both women and men alike, and joyfully blesses their work for His kingdom. 🏹

Bonnie McClean is a lecturer at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

I See God as . . . My Father

LISA GIEBEL BJELLAND

After my daughter, Maddy, died, my soul literally felt as if it were on fire. The pain was so real. I remember entering our home for the first time without my beautiful daughter being alive; the deep sadness I felt was overwhelming.

I found that I could not stay inside. I had to be where I felt closest to God, so I had to be in the elements. It was February and cold. I remember walking outside with my arms reaching toward the sky, to be as close to God as possible, wanting Him to hold me, to comfort me, to talk to me, and bring her back to me.

Sometimes I wailed, letting the cold tears freeze on my cheeks. I stayed outside deep into the night and throughout the coming days. I was so drawn to extreme elements because I not only needed to talk to God—I had to feel His power, His beauty, His comfort, and His creation.

I believe that not only my soul was on fire, but His was as well. I believe my Father wept. He wept bitterly, longing for this pain to end.

As the old hymn goes: "It is well with my soul!" I cry every time it is sung in church now. I truly believe that my soul will not be well until I am in the arms of my Father. This world is not my home, and I hunger, as never before, for heaven.

Before Maddy's death I thought of heaven and longed for it. Now it is implanted in my being. It is written in my soul. Grief has a way of changing you greatly. I'm thankful for that fire in my soul. It is my prayer that we all have a fire in our soul, so that soon we can be reunited with our Father, and me with my Maddy.

Lisa Giebel Bjelland is a trauma therapist. A mother of two, she faced her own trauma when her oldest daughter, Madison Baird, passed away in February, 2015. After Madison's death, her friends created and used the hashtag #MaddyStrong to share what it means to live life with intention, spreading happiness wherever one goes, being a light in this dark world.



The Journey of Trust


MELISSA OTTO

Does God like me? It's *the* big question! It's the belief that has the power to steer our whole life's path. It has been the inspiration behind every song I have written.

I am usually taken to be a bit of a dreamer without a care in the world. The truth is, I have had some serious struggles with anxiety and depression that almost swallowed me up. I realize now that these were driven by fear of failing God, of disappointing Him, and that He would give up on me because of my inability to overcome my weaknesses.

Many of my songs have come from times He met me in the midst of my struggles and failures with

only understanding and compassion and unending love. Even though I became a mom just two years ago, God has been able to give me such beautiful insights into His true heart for me. My girls cannot know how much I love them. It's crazy love. Whether or not they make mistakes in life has absolutely nothing to do with how I feel about them.

Realizing God's love for me through my girls has given me a deeper rest in Him. It really is truth about who He is and how He feels about us that makes us free. We cannot be who we were created to be until we know how loved we are. 

Melissa Otto is a singer, songwriter, and stay-at-home mom.



I believe my Father wept. He wept
bitterly, longing for this pain to end.



Even though things may not go as planned, we must not allow our disappointment to affect our love for our son.

God is Family

JANNA STEWARTSON

I see God as an all-knowing traveling family.

I've grown up in an established family, a group of people I trust and depend on. But a family can't be with you 24 hours of each day. Even a family may not realize everything I'm going through physically or emotionally.

That's why I recognize God as an all-knowing traveling family. He travels with me everywhere I go. He knows how I feel, even if I don't directly tell Him. Just like my family, God wants the best for me.

In certain instances in my life when I have lost,

not turned in, or simply messed up on an assignment, I have seen teachers who usually show no mercy help me get back the points I lost. I know God is watching out for me when events like that happen.

Although I know each person in my family like the back of my hand, I don't think I have reached a place where I relate to God in the same way. Over time, I hope to get to know God better, and build a stronger family bond with Him.

Janna Stewartson, 14 years old, is in eighth grade. She attends Sligo Adventist Church in Takoma Park, Maryland.



The Greatest Parent

MANOJ AND ARLENE PAULSON

As first-time parents, with a brand-new baby boy, we've begun reflecting more on God as our Creator. Even before we set out on this path of creating our baby, we spent a long time dreaming about our children's future, the plans we have for raising them, even how to recruit them to our own side of the Redskins-Cowboys divide!

This reflection on our role as parents has given us a new appreciation of the Creation story, and a little better understanding of the care and planning that went into the creation of humanity—the hopes, dreams, and excitement God must have had going into it, and His disappointment after the Fall.

Pregnancy has forced us to evaluate our role as parents and confront our desire to control and protect our son from every bad thing that may happen. We are trying to learn from the greatest Parent that even though things may not go as planned, we must not allow our disappointment to affect our love for our son.

It is amazing to think how God can love us unconditionally no matter what decisions we make, good or bad. So as parents, we must remember that even when we don't agree with our child's decisions, we shouldn't rush to judgment. If he decides it was a bad decision, we should be there to help him process. And if he believes it is the right decision, we should give him that freedom and understand.

Just like our Father. 🍌

Manoj and Arlene Paulson write from Kensington, Maryland. Their son, Jonah, will be two months old this month.

Who Is God?

JOHN REEVE

Three passages of Scripture shape the core of my concept of God. In Exodus 34:7 we find our most explicit and concise presentation of God, as Moses relates God's own description of Himself during his awesome experience on Mount Sinai. Our God describes His character as the compassionate, patient, tender-loving judge, who both forgives and sets all things right.

In John 14 we have a view of the unity of the Godhead in preparation for the sacrifice of the Son as the Savior for our sins and the preparation of a place for us to be with Him in heaven. When Philip asked to see the Father, the answer he received was the demonstration of the Father through the life of loving service of the Son and

the promise of the continual presence of the Spirit to comfort, teach, guide, and enable obedience. The Three work together for our salvation just as they did for our creation.

The capstone text for me, Revelation 21:3-5, not only reveals the plans for all things being made new and the eradication of all tears, but, most important, announces the close relationship that God will have with us forever. This has always been His wish, and is His current invitation.

Our creation and our salvation were carefully orchestrated so that each of us, so I, can have a loving relationship with my awesome friend. God is my sovereign Lord, my parent, my sibling, and my friend in whom I can always trust. 🍌

John Reeve, Ph.D., teaches church history at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University.



THINGS I CAN'T REMEMBER

But they make all the difference

BY KAREN SULLIVAN WILLIAMS

It's a typical Sabbath morning at our church. Members of all ages and backgrounds are arriving. The only difference this week is that I am stationed near the door as a greeter, a new experience for me.

I'm not the only greeter this morning. As always, Everett Palmiter—or "Uncle Ev," as he is affectionately known—is in the lobby welcoming children to church. Each child gets a personal welcome, a kind word, and the opportunity to choose a sticker. I know the routine well because my 8-year-old gets a sticker from Uncle Ev each Sabbath. Every week this man personally teaches my daughter that church is where she is wanted and loved, and every week she skips off to Sabbath School with a sticker on the back of her hand as a reminder of her own belongingness.

Today I watch Uncle Ev in action. Children begin arriving early, and Uncle Ev is ready for them with several sheets of stickers. The little ones all know the routine and run to greet him.

During a lull Uncle Ev sidles up to me and confides that he has been welcoming children to church for 30 years. I am stunned. Thirty years? But there is no time to ponder this.

More children stream in: "Good morning! Do you want a sticker?"

It is such a simple ritual but profound in its constancy. Uncle Ev isn't young anymore, and sometimes his long trucking days catch up with him. Yet here he is every week as predictable as opening prayer.

"THEY'RE ALL MY KIDS"

Sabbath School is in full swing now. If someone took a tour of the children's department, they would find a sticker on the back of each dimpled hand: *This child is loved. So is this one. And this one. They belong here.*

Uncle Ev edges up to me again. "They are all my kids, you know. It doesn't matter how old they get; they are always my kids." He points across the parking lot to a little sidewalk I had often wondered about, a pathway leading nowhere. He describes a trailer that used to sit there years ago when the church was smaller. "I taught earliteens out there," he says, and squints in that direction as if seeing it as it once was. "Yup. Every last one of 'em is still my kid."

The door opens, and a young unsmiling woman enters the lobby. Before I can extend a hand in greeting, Uncle Ev jumps forward and



RYAN KLINTWORTH/LIGHTSTOCK

He sees only what is before him: the essence of a beautiful soul. He sees one of his kids.

envelopes her in a hug. “Hello, beautiful girl!” he says, exhibiting the same enthusiasm with which he greeted the littlest child. She is no child, though, for the sweetness and vulnerability of childhood are obviously long gone. It doesn’t matter to Uncle Ev. He sees only what is before him: the essence of a beautiful soul. He sees one of his kids.

My breath catches in my throat. I am humbled by this man’s simple but profound ministry. I am grateful for it, because I have a daughter who receives the same treatment. As I stand there fighting tears an echo comes threading its way forward from the past.

MY OWN STORY

I was an eighth grader in a small church school in another state. Skinny and tall, painfully shy, I wore braces on my teeth, complete with headgear that my dad affectionately called a kissing guard. I was mortified by the term, convinced no one would ever in this lifetime want to kiss me. To make matters worse, my hair was a frizzy mess. My mom called it a mop—an apt description—and determined to tame it. One day she got ahold of me while my nose was in a book and gave me a much-improved short haircut. Twice, though, I was mistaken for a boy. I felt utterly unattractive.

One morning I arrived at school to find a note

in my desk: "Hi, pretty girl! Have a wonderful day!"

Pretty girl? Me? I felt warm with pleasure. The note had to be from Nancy. She and her husband were a childless couple, outgoing and fun, and for a season of their lives had adopted the entire church youth group as their own. They also did occasional repairs around the church. Nancy liked me. My straight-as-a-stick figure and frizzy hair were irrelevant. My shyness was simply enveloped in her warm acceptance. Sabbath after Sabbath I was enthusiastically welcomed to church. Just like Uncle Ev's kids, my inner self was treasured and loved.

I stand in the church lobby remembering this chapter from the past. In a flash it zips forward in time and merges with the present. I feel for a moment that I am a single speck in a joyful, glittering galaxy, and that I am being swept along in a sea of unknown matter that I cannot perceive but that holds my very being together. How many Uncle Evs and Nancys have I bumped up against in the swirl of life? How many encounters have I forgotten that shaped my world and infused me with God's love? How many people has God used to bring me here to church each week, worshipping Him with joy?

PASSING ON THE LEGACY

Proverbs 22:6 is so familiar it is almost a cliché: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (NKJV).^{*} How true these words! I cannot forget even the things I cannot remember. They are embedded in my psyche as surely as God put them there by the hands of my fellow travelers: parents and Sabbath School teachers, Pathfinder leaders and academy staff. The hugs and smiles that welcomed me into the family of God, the undeserved grace I was given, the time spent teaching me the principles of the Bible—these along with the simple fact of being accepted as a child and a youth have given me a bedrock of belongingness on which to build a firm faith. How can I ever thank those of you who make a lifetime of loving God's kids? More important, how can I be sure to pass on the legacy?

Like many church members, I could easily fill this space airing grievances with God's people: the hurtful words that should never have been spoken, the conclusions that were hastily reached, the attitude of condemnation that occasionally rises to the surface of a congregation like a skiff of slime.

Why are we so outraged by the inevitable hurts that come our way? Do we really expect to walk into church and find a group of people who never misunderstand us and never make mistakes? It's unfortunate that the church sometimes gets blamed for these painful chapters when in reality it is the enemy using us against one another with every dart in his arsenal. I'm convinced that for every moment my feelings have been hurt, there are a hundred more moments I have been uplifted and carried by grace, propelled into God's arms by large and small encounters I have mostly forgotten.

God loves us through other people. It is the Uncle Evs and Nancys, the church members and schoolteachers, the pastors and classmates, the dedicated parents, the energized youth, the elderly widowed, who reach out to His children and love them into His fold.

Whoever you are, however you serve, thank you for the smiles you bestow, the grace you extend, the picture of God you place on the felt board each week. It isn't just a Bible story. It isn't just another teen barely acknowledging your greeting in the hall. When you find a way to befriend a young person (or an older person, for that matter), you are building the house of God brick by brick, Sabbath by Sabbath. All over the world you have brothers and sisters touching the lives of God's kids in a million ways.

While we travel to camporees and prepare VBS crafts, while we build schools and map out a course, God is doing His best work right under our noses, sometimes by our very own hands. Our children receive gifts they may never recall, may never even realize have been handed to them. But no matter where they go or how far they wander, they cannot depart from those treasured gifts of acceptance and love.

I smile as I watch the young woman walk away, her step a bit lighter. I am inspired by Uncle Ev's ministry, suddenly aware of potential on all sides. I can hear the words echoing through time and space, winding upward as sweet incense before the throne of grace: *Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.* 🍀

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

Karen Sullivan Williams teaches in a Seventh-day Adventist elementary school in Apison, Tennessee. She and her husband, Greg, have four children.



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(FORMERLY ICC AUSTRALIA)



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but Jesus
changed my life.

Ariyon,
Thailand

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Sponsoring a child is a wonderful way of providing an uncompromising level of care and safety, a loving home and empowering future to a vulnerable child like Lilly who will benefit from getting to know the hope in Jesus, be granted an education, nutritious food and bright future.

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THE ANATOMY OF BELIEF

I vividly remember having a conversation with my dad during my teenage years, otherwise known as the snarky, sarcastic, and slightly know-it-all phase.

We were discussing the question of salvation, specifically, the exact process by which a person is saved.

As dads often do—particularly technically proficient ones, like mine—he was drawing out his answer, giving all the details he could pack into a series of run-on sentences.

As teenagers do, I cut in. “Dad, this isn’t rocket science. The Bible says, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved’ [Acts 16:31].”

“It’s not that simple,” he replied.

“It couldn’t be any clearer,” I said.

DO WE REALLY BELIEVE?

I’ve pondered that conversation over the years as I’ve studied justification and sanctification. Certainly we’re not saved by our own merits; the blood of Christ and His intercession on our behalf are the only means by which we attain eternal life. But what, exactly, is our role? Is it simply to “believe,” as the text says?

In John 5 we find the story of a paralyzed man lying next to a pool of water. This man had been unable to walk for 38 years. According to tradition, an angel periodically came down to stir the water, healing the first person who got into the water.

One day Jesus came along and asked about the man’s desire to be healed. The man wanted that more than anything, but lamented that he had no way of getting into the water.

Jesus did not reason with him. Instead

he simply said, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk” (John 5:8). The man did not question Christ. “He picked up his mat and walked” (verse 9).

In the man’s response we find the key to true belief. Despite being unable to move for nearly four decades, he truly believed that Jesus had healed him that very moment. And because he really believed, he was really healed.


Ellen White wrote, “He *willed* to walk, and he did walk. He acted on the word of Christ, and God gave the power. He was made whole.”¹

I’ve found that many of us—including me—minimize the act of true belief. It starts in the mind, but all too often we stop there. If we really believe something, we will act on it without waiting for heightened emotions or special feelings.

“Do not wait to *feel* that you are made whole,” wrote Ellen White. “Say, ‘I believe it; . . . not because I feel it, but because God has promised.’”²

In Acts 16:31 “believe” is a verb, an action word. We know that “faith without deeds is dead” (James 2:26). So by definition, belief without action isn’t true belief.

When we really believe Jesus’ words, we will possess the power to overcome any temptation or human deficiency. Despite the sin that has paralyzed our lives for years, we will hear the words of Jesus, take up our mats, and walk.

It will be so, because we believe it to be so. 

¹ Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 50.

² *Ibid.*, p. 51.

Jimmy Phillips is executive director of marketing at Adventist Health Bakersfield.

INTRODUCING
THE WHY
JIMMY
PHILLIPS



JESUS SIMPLY
SAID, “GET UP!
PICK UP YOUR MAT
AND WALK.”

THIS IS A TEST

Don't worry—it's an open-book test.

STEPHEN CHAVEZ

Most of us wouldn't call ourselves theologians. We tend to reserve that term for those with advanced degrees and people who enjoy thinking deep thoughts.

Most of us, saints of the rank and file, are satisfied just making it through the day without losing our temper or blowing our diet. With all the balancing we do with our jobs, families, and volunteer activities, we don't have time to consider the "godness" of God or to debate the finer points of theology, the study of God. We leave that to the professionals, the theologians.

Not so fast.

Truth is, we're all theologians; we just don't call ourselves that. But if we call ourselves Christians, we're saying in some form or fashion: *This is what God is like.* And that requires at least a basic understanding of "practical theology" (as they call it at the seminary), even if we wouldn't call it that.

So what kind of God is reflected in our everyday lives?

A GOD LOVES ME ONLY IF I'M GOOD

Some years ago I worshipped at a church where one of the kids had managed to remove one of those little rubber inserts that cushion the Communion glasses in those holders fastened to the back of the pew. The kid, finding himself unable to squeeze the little rubber thing-a-ma-jig back into the hole, turned to an adult, a deacon, for help.

"I told him, 'You took it out; you put it back,'" the deacon boasted to me. Implication: If you get in a jam, don't expect God to bail you out, especially if you did it yourself. Too many Christians see their relationship with God as some kind of cause and effect: Things going wrong in your life indicate God's displeasure. When things go well, God is pleased.

That attitude should have died with the disciples, who asked Jesus, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:2).

Jesus' answer—"This happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him" (verse 3)—indicates that we, God's followers, are responsible for taking even bad situations and making them better, as Jesus did. The deacon, having an opportunity to set things right, should have helped the little guy make things right, especially at church.

B GOD LOVES ME WHEN I OVERCOME TEMPTATION

I grew up where some of the Adventists I knew had an unhealthy obsession with living without sin. They had the notion that they were capable of achieving through their efforts a kind of sinless state, thus pleasing God. Their preoccupation with sinlessness placed a burden on them, and on everyone who came into their orbit.

As I grew older, I understood that while "the wages of sin is death," that death sentence comes with a remarkable promise for those who accept Jesus as their Savior: "but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). Salvation isn't something we earn—it's something we are given. "By grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9).

God isn't waiting to love us sometime in the future; He loves us now. Our challenge is to reflect that love to those around us, especially those we find difficult to love.



C GOD DOESN'T LOVE ME, NOR DOES HE CARE

Without a doubt the world is becoming more divided, more violent, more chaotic, than at any time in recent history. And while we watch social norms disintegrate, it's tempting to believe that God is uninterested in what we're going through, that He isn't paying attention.

That's been God's problem since sin entered the world: how to demonstrate His character of love, mercy, and justice without being overbearing and still allowing His creatures to make their own decisions.

Throughout the Old Testament God communicated to His friends through dreams, visions, and impressions. When the Israelites were on their way to the Promised Land, God "tabernacled" with them in the wilderness, directing them with a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day whether to leave or whether to stay.

Then, to bring it even closer to home, God became a man, demonstrating in flesh and blood, bones and muscle, what God is like. Jesus spent most of His time with people who seemed unlikely recipients of God's favor: those who were poor, those who suffered disabilities, those who were castigated by religious leaders. His message to all of them was the same: "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

That remains our challenge. How can people believe in a God who cares? By demonstrating His concern on His behalf. As we read the Bible, we see that Christ placed a premium on acting, not just believing. Countless opportunities exist in our communities to demonstrate Christian concern. They're already there; we don't have to reinvent the wheel. All we have to do is ask, "How can I help?"

D GOD LOVES ME ALL THE TIME

We may not call ourselves theologians, but we do call ourselves Christians. And for that reason we owe it to our families, friends, work associates, neighbors, and fellow pilgrims on this planet called earth to reflect a true and correct picture of God.

That doesn't mean that we won't sometimes mess up or that we can perfectly reflect in our lives the fullness of God's character. But it does mean that we have a mandate: to read the Bible and reflect well—in word and deed—what makes Christianity attractive, and why people would want to spend eternity with this One we call "Our Father in heaven" (Matt. 6:9).

What we have to avoid is coming across as the only ones who know God or whose view of Him is altogether correct. In the Old Testament book of Job the main character in the story suffers unimaginable grief and heartache. Fortunately (or not), Job had several friends to help him make sense out of the horrific circumstances that had befallen him.

In chapter after chapter Job's friends rebuke and remonstrate with him, urging him to repent and admit that he was punished for a purpose. But at the end of the story God tells Eliphaz the Temanite, "I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken the truth about me" (Job 42:7).

That was the challenge then, and it continues to challenge us now: to let our words and actions tell the truth about God.

We can do that, even if we don't call ourselves theologians.

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



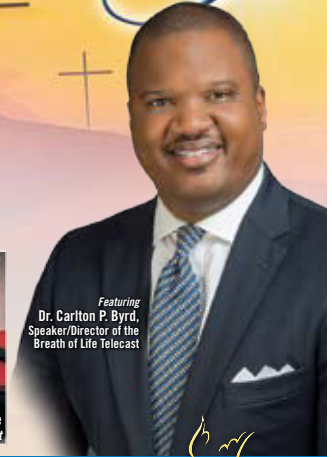


NBC EASTER SPECIAL

The Rising

Filmed *LIVE* at the Oakwood University
Seventh-day Adventist Church

This special, which was aired on ABC in 2016, will now be shown on NBC in 2017! "The Rising" includes an Easter message from Dr. Carlton P. Byrd, Speaker/Director of the Breath of Life Television Ministry and Senior Pastor of the Oakwood University Church in Huntsville, Alabama, along with music by Grammy Award winning vocalist, CeCe Winans; violinist, Jaime Jorge; and the internationally renowned Oakwood University Aeolians Concert Choir.



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RESILIENCE

How can we instill this quality?

Q: You have addressed issues of smoking tobacco and marijuana and the use of alcohol in your column. Can we drugproof our young people?

A: Addictions are a rampant and growing problem. Whenever we address addictions and at-risk behaviors, we include the importance of prevention. We were raised repeatedly hearing that “prevention is better than cure.” The more we work with the addictions ravaging society, the more we posit that prevention *is* the cure!

Rehabilitation for those in the shackles of addictions is needed, but it is extremely expensive and requires specialized personnel and facilities, and recidivism is very high. We as a church family—both within the household of faith and as we attempt to be relevant within our communities—must dedicate time and effort to the prevention of at-risk behaviors in all age groups. Addictions are on the increase in young and even older adults. Prescription drugs are a problem in the latter group.

So, in prevention, what works? Education is very important. We have correctly been urged to “educate, educate, educate.” Education alone, however, is not enough. Two additional vital factors are essential.

First, the introduction of a set of values; as Seventh-day Adventist Christians, we have a set of values that is informed and embodied within the Word of God and exemplified by the life of Jesus Christ.

The other vital component is social support and connectedness for young and old. Scientific evidence is robust: college and university students who report high levels of social support also report significantly lower levels of stress. Social support is associated with improved academic performance. Students and scholars who experience connectedness with a set of values

and individuals of significance in their lives are less likely to engage in experimentation with drugs, alcohol and tobacco, and premarital sexual relationships.

What is social support? In a word, social support is love. Love and caring are health giving. Sincere, honest relationships promote good health. These all lead to the development of resilience. Resilience is the capacity to maintain competent functioning despite the adversity of life stressors, including the transitions of adolescence, domestic dysfunction, abuse, political chaos, and unrest. Resilience develops over time and requires intentional effort. The hallmark of resilience is the ability to cope under difficult circumstances.

Mentoring is key to building resilient, drug-free young people. Mentored youth are:

- 46 percent less likely to initiate drug use.
- 27 percent less likely to initiate alcohol use.
- 53 percent less likely to skip school.
- 37 percent less likely to skip class.
- much less likely to hit someone.
- more confident in schoolwork.
- more likely to get along better with their family.

Spiritual values, social support, mentoring, and connectedness build resilience and help young people make wise choices and resist at-risk behaviors. By knowing, loving, and mentoring young people, we reveal to them the characteristics of our loving heavenly Father, who has loved us with “an everlasting love.”

Not only does He love us, but I’m sure He likes us! Someone described it this way: God likes you so much that if He carried a wallet, your picture would be in it. What a God we serve! 🍌

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.

Tell the World

Available for purchase (\$4.99) at Adventist Book Centers, or free through tellttheworld.adventist.org, ARtv, or YouTube. Reviewed by Merle Poirier, operations manager, *Adventist Review*.

Adventists, for the most part, find great satisfaction in telling their history. And why not? It's a great story. Beginning with William Miller, the farmer who finds himself a preacher, to Ellen White, the one least expected to become a prophet, to Joseph Bates, the sea captain turned temperance advocate. Now this story is available through a twenty-first century film production.

Released in 2016, "Tell the World" was produced by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia. Available as a full-length feature or in six episodes, the history begins with Miller, who determines through Bible prophecy that Jesus is coming in 1844. The film unfolds the drama from this small beginning to the eventual birth of the Seventh-day Adventist movement.

I watched this series twice and would suggest that, if able, viewers do the same. The story benefits from multiple viewings. Tackling 40-plus years of history in six 28-minute time blocks is challenging. Sometimes



Freedom Brad Nickel

(available on iTunes and at www.bradnickelmusic.ca). Reviewed by Gerald A. Klingbeil, associate editor of *Adventist Review*.

Lacombe, Canada, based singer-songwriter Brad Nickel was raised as an Adventist, but when he turned 17, he left the church and faith to pursue a promising career in the glamorous world of modeling. God, however, did not leave Brad, and once he recognized his brokenness and the depth of the Savior's love, he gave up a career and a lifestyle, and started sharing his journey through music.

"Reaching In," taken from Brad's latest production *Freedom* (which is an EP, or extended play, single, including six songs), won first place in the 2015 inSpire songwriting contest, organized by Church Support Services, a research and development entity for creative ministry in the Pacific Union Conference (www.visitinspire.org).

His acoustic guitar-driven sound is both engaging and soothing. In "Reaching In" Brad tells his story, making clear that he "ain't stepping off this road," shared with other followers of Jesus. In

the script reflects this, sometimes making it hard to follow.

Of the approximately 168 minutes of film, 75 minutes are given to William Miller. This can make the beginning of the film seem to move slowly through the early years, then suddenly take off at a gallop. Because of the time spent on Miller, the Ellen Harmon, James White, and Joseph Bates portion seems rushed at times.

I commend the actors and their portrayals. Personally, I enjoyed Joseph Bates, as he was closest to what I imagined. Ellen White, however, comes to life



To hear a sampling from the album, visit AdventistReview.org.

“Looking at You” we catch a glimpse of what Brad sees when he looks at Jesus and notices truth shining through: “Beautiful, beautiful mercies falling on me; washing my sins and setting me free; incredible love full of mercy and truth; I can’t see myself if I am looking at You.” “Perfect Peace” starts off with a sequence of big synthesizer harmonies and God’s invitation: “Keep your eyes on Me, keep your eyes on Me; when your world is crumbling and you have no peace, keep your eyes on Me, keep your eyes on Me, I will come on your raging seas, keep your eyes on Me.”

In a crumbling world that hungers and thirsts for peace and answers to life’s big questions this final invitation of *Freedom* feels comforting. Keeping our eyes and minds on Him is indeed good counsel. 📌

His acoustic guitar-driven sound is both engaging and soothing.

much differently than I expected, which at times is refreshing. The actor’s ability to show emotion is well done, although she is portrayed much healthier than she was in actual life.

While there is great attention to detail as it relates to the actors, costumes, and props, I think the film neglects two significant points.

The entire production was filmed in Canada. While filmed in an authentic setting for the period, the Seventh-day Adventist Church actually owns the William Miller and Joseph Bates properties. Since this is largely a New England story, the film doesn’t offer the scenery those familiar with the northeastern portion of the United States might expect. This would seem to have been a great

opportunity to do some filming on actual locations.

Eventually the time arrives for the small band of believers to vote themselves into a full-fledge denomination. They struggle with a name, the climax builds—and the name is mispronounced! This seemed careless on the part of the producers. While you may have heard different versions of how to pronounce Seventh-day Adventists, it is all about the Advent.

Kudos can still be given to the Australian Union Conference for developing a well-crafted film version of our history. After all, it’s a great story. 📌

LO, THIS IS OUR GOD! Voices from Scripture tell us how men and women viewed and identified their God.

FAMOUS NAMES

ADAM—Creator of my helper-equal from bone of my bones (Gen. 2:23)

EVE—Giver of redemption's Seed (Gen. 4:1)

NOAH—Lord of the rainbow of covenant (Gen. 9:12-17)

SARAH—Maker of laughter (Gen. 21:6)

JACOB—the One at the head of the ladder (Gen. 28:13)

LEAH—the One who hears that I am unloved and blesses me with children (Gen. 29:32-35)

MOSES—the Rock, whose work is perfect, whose ways are judgment (Deut. 32:4); our dwelling place in all generations (Ps. 90:1)

HANNAH—He who gives seven to the barren (1 Sam. 2:5)

ELI—the One who calls children to His service (1 Sam. 3:9)

SAMUEL—the Glory of Israel, the one who will neither lie, nor change His mind (1 Sam. 15:29)

NAOMI—the one who grants rest (Ruth 1:9), who is kind to the living and the dead (Ruth 2:20)

RUTH—the God of her mother-in-law and the God she wanted, no matter what the cost (Ruth 1:16)

DAVID—my Shepherd, supplying all I need (Ps. 23:1); King of glory (Ps. 24:8, 10)

SOLOMON—Ruler over all, who gives abundant peace (Ps. 72:8, 7)

JONAH—the One who is gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, abundant in lovingkindness, relenting of calamity (Jonah 4:2)

DANIEL—He to whom righteousness, compassion and forgiveness belong (Dan. 9:7, 9)

GABRIEL [ANGEL]—Messiah the Prince (Dan. 9:25); Commissioner of good news (Luke 1:19); He for whom nothing is impossible (Luke 1:37)

MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS—One worthy of unconditional obedience (John 2:5)

MATTHEW—Son of David, Son of Abraham (Matt. 1:1)

STEPHEN—the One who reigns in heaven (Acts 7:55, 56)

PETER—the impartial One (Acts 10:34, 35)

CORNELIUS—One who hears Gentile prayers (Acts 10:2, 3)

PAUL AND SILAS—the One who is worthy of our midnight praise (Acts 16:25)

PAUL—He who purchased the church for Himself with His own blood (Acts 20:28); the One who appointed me His witness to the Gentiles (Acts 22:15-21); whose I am and whom I serve (Acts 27:23); who gives the spirit of power, love, and discipline (2 Tim. 1:7); whose salvation brings eternal glory (2 Tim. 2:10)

JAMES—Father of lights, giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17)

JOHN—King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16)

NOT-SO-FAMOUS PEOPLE

ZOPHAR—He of undiscoverable depths (Job 11:7)

ELIHU—He whose breath gives understanding (Job 32:8)

HAGAR—the One who sees (Gen. 16:13)

HATERS

THE PHAROAH OF THE EXODUS—the One I do not know (Ex. 5:2)

THE PHILISTINES—the incomparable, the mighty, who smites His enemies with all kinds of plagues (1 Sam. 4:7, 8)

BALAK—the One whose servants I can pay off (they all have their price) (Num. 22:1-17)

BALAAM—the horns of a wild ox (Num. 24:8); not a man that He should lie (Num. 23:19)

THE FOOL—the One who is not (Ps. 14:1)

PHARISEES—companion of tax collectors and sinners (Mark 2:16)

SCRIBES FROM JERUSALEM—demon-possessed (Mark 3:22)

SNEERING RULERS AND A DYING THIEF—the One who cannot save Himself or us (Luke 23:35, 39)

THE DRAGON—the One who cast me out of heaven (Rev. 12:9); the Father who protects His children (Rev. 12:14); the Father whom His children obey (Rev. 12:17); the One whose children bear witness to Him (Rev. 12:17)



NAMELESS PARTISANS

THE EGYPTIAN MIDWIVES—the One who built us houses (Ex. 1:21)

ISRAELITES—glorious in holiness, awesome in praises, doing wonders (Ex. 15:11)

ELDERS AT BETHLEHEM'S GATE—the One whose nation builders are women (Ruth 4:11)

THE WOMEN OF BETHLEHEM—the One who restores and sustains the aged; who provides a redeemer (Ruth 4:15, 14)

KORAH'S DESCENDANTS—the health of my countenance (Ps. 42:11; 43:5)

THE SHULAMITE—love's brightest flame (S. of Sol. 8:6)

SHEBA'S QUEEN—He who loves Israel forever (1 Kings 10:9)

NINEVEH'S KING—the One whose mercy may spare our lives (Jonah 3:9)

MAGI—the Babe of the star in the east, King of the Jews (Matt. 2:2)

CROWDS AT A HOUSE IN CAPERNAUM—Doer of the unprecedented (Mark 2:12)

A THIEF ON A CROSS—the dying Innocent whose kingdom is to come (Luke 23:41)

OUT OF THIS WORLD

DEMON-POSSESSED MAN—holy and having no business with devils (Mark 1:23, 24)

ANGEL CHORUS—a Savior wrapped in cloth strips, lying in a manger (Luke 2:11, 12)

THE INNUMERABLE MULTITUDE—Author of our salvation (Rev. 7:10)

AN ELDER, ONE OF THE 24—He who wipes away all tears (Rev. 7:17)

AN ANGEL—Master of time (Rev. 10:6)

LOUD VOICES IN HEAVEN—Inheritor of all kingdoms (Rev. 11:15)

THE 24 ELDERS—He who is, was, and reigns (Rev. 11:17)

THE 144,000—The Lamb worth following—anywhere and everywhere (Rev. 14:4)

AN ANGEL—The Lord and Creator of heaven and earth and all (Rev. 14:7)

THE THIRD ANGEL—The Judge of pure and perfect wrath (Rev. 14:10)

ONE OF THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES—The Eternal Judge, minister of wrath (Rev. 15:7)

THE ANGEL OF THE WATERS—The Judge who is and was, who is righteous and holy (Rev. 16:5); the One who metes out just deserts (Rev. 16:6)

THE 10 LAST KINGS—The Lamb who overcomes us (Rev. 17:14)


A VOICE FROM HEAVEN—Babylon's strong Judge (Rev. 18:8)

A GREAT MULTITUDE—the Owner of salvation and glory and power (Rev. 19:1); the Almighty who reigns (Rev. 19:6); the glorious Groom (Rev. 19:7)

A LOUD VOICE FROM THE THRONE—He who will dwell with His people (Rev. 21:3); He who wipes tears away and who banishes death (Rev. 21:4)

GOD HIMSELF—the One who makes everything new (Rev. 21:5); the Alpha and Omega (Rev. 21:6); Beginning and End (Rev. 21:6)

ONE OF THE SEVEN ANGELS—the One whose words are faithful and true (Rev. 22:6)

JESUS—the One who is coming quickly (Rev. 22:20) 

The Vacation

God cares about the seemingly mundane aspects of our lives

Omy Father, how did I get here?" I murmured. "What did I do to deserve this?"

I cried silently, tears coursing down my cheeks, as I sat alone on the upper balcony. The night was still, with a cool breeze blowing around me. These were not words or tears of despair but rather of immense gratitude to a God who had proved His faithfulness once again to His child.

Anytime you embark on an adventure (in this case, a much-needed vacation) and your teenager has more spending money than you do, you know you are scraping the barrel. The last-minute decision to use my spending money on a ticket for said teenage offspring resulted in this dire lack of funds. My maternal intuition prompted that decision in the hope that the experience would encourage him to take his education seriously. My hope was that he'd catch a glimpse of the struggles of family members he'd never met to obtain some of the things he took for granted.

With just \$100 in spending money to last three weeks, I was unfazed. I'd planned on staying with my family, and simply trusted God to show up. And He did, in a *huge* way!


A dinner with family culminated with my sister-in-law bestowing on me a monetary gift (just because . . .); an uncle I hadn't seen in years thought I would enjoy some English pounds (currency); delivering a package for a friend resulted

in them pressing a monetary thank-you into my hands despite my protest. Another family member invited us on a three-day trip to one of the islands to stay in a luxurious beach house, all expenses paid. Unbelievable! These individuals hadn't any knowledge of my dire circumstances. What a blessing!

So there I was, sitting on the balcony of that beach house—in the stillness—having a wonderful conversation with my heavenly Father. As the cool breeze caressed my cheeks I felt as if they were being gently brushed by His very hands. I couldn't help thanking Him repeatedly for His love and care.

Who would have thought that God would be interested in ensuring that I had an enjoyable vacation, experiencing my homeland through the eyes of my son. Watching him interact with family members he'd never met. Sampling different foods and fruits he had only heard about, such as guava and cocoa pods; climbing a mango tree and actually picking the fruit by hand. The midnight beach tour to watch the yearly ritual of giant turtles that swam ashore guided by unseen hands to lay dozens of eggs on the beach before covering them with sand and returning to the sea. Visiting historical sites and beaches he may never see again.

Most of all, it was rewarding to see him return to school with a sense of purpose that was reflected in his grades and that continues to this day.

Praise God! He really cares! 

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

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THANKING HIM
REPEATEDLY FOR HIS
LOVE AND CARE.**

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