

ADVENTIST REVIEW

APRIL 2017: CHANGE IS GOOD + DIDN'T MEAN TO SCARE YOU + FACING DOWN FEAR + A TELEVISION OR A KEYBOARD? + WHEN AWESOME WASN'T ENOUGH + BEYOND SMOKE AND MIRRORS

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TRENDING

THE MOST SHARED STORIES ON ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG LAST MONTH:



- 1 Film on Desmond Doss's Life Receives Two Academy Awards
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- 3 Desmond Doss and Norman Doss: 'Brothers' in Arms
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ARtv



The ARtv team just filmed a brand new season of **Animal Encounters** in Costa Rica.

Check out behind the scenes production photos on Instagram @artvnow

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*Erica Edwards RN, BSN
Southern Adventist Graduate*



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BILL KNOTT



"Brand loyalty was the stuff on which my generation cut its teeth."

Restating the Brand

At 12 I was all for Ford, NBC, and—though I never drank it—Coca-Cola.

Fordliness was next to godliness, so far as I knew, since my first three cars of memory were a Fairlane, a Falcon station wagon, and a wood-paneled Fairlane station wagon.

The Huntley-Brinkley Report gave me a soothing, managed version of the turbulent sixties each evening during supper. When Chet and David wished each other a gruff "Good night," it seemed—for a moment—that all might be right with the world.

And Pepsi was clearly the upstart, rival soft drink at a time when I was all about tradition.

Imagine my discomfort when Dad drove home a Plymouth Fury III from the Chrysler dealership; when the channel switched to the *ABC Evening News*; and when I learned that Coke's original 1886 recipe included a small amount of cocaine—eliminated not long after.

Brand loyalty was the stuff on which my generation cut its teeth—just before learning to brush them with Crest, which, you remember, more dentists recommend "than all other toothpastes combined."

That loyalty extended to our "brand" as Seventh-day Adventists. There was just one kind, so far as we knew—the carefully behaving, church-attending, vegetarian, non-jewelry-wearing kind: people just like us. We had heard of places where not all these norms were

practiced, but we knew instinctively that these regions—such as coastal California and interior New Guinea—weren't really, fully Adventist. Some of those places allowed guitars in worship services. Some even omitted the Doxology.

And then the world fell apart, or so it seemed, about the time men first landed on the moon and Watergate became our first—but not our last—political soap opera. We were suddenly aware of differences, major and minor, in what we once believed to be a unified brand. One could now be an Adventist and a Democrat (!); an Adventist and go to the movies; an Adventist and wear a wedding band. Both beards and bell bottoms came to church each Sabbath, and those who prized tradition squirmed uncomfortably as the brand began to lose the clear, sharp edges for which we had so valued it. We spoke to friends of a "remnant within the Remnant." We wondered softly to ourselves if 144,000 might, in fact, be a real number, and possibly too large.

Our quandaries multiplied as competing Adventist theologies called us "back" to sanctification or "forward" to the cross. We learned to parse each sermon, each cassette and MP3, for code words that would place the preacher on the spectrum of salvation. Uncertain that the gospel could really be that good, we hesitated when we heard of grace; the brand we knew required effort, sacrifice, and per-

severance. Unwilling, though, to be the dinosaurs who kept the movement focused on the past, we sang new worship songs from screens; discovered that prayer meeting might, in fact, be all of prayer; and learned to navigate the potluck cards that noted "Vegan," "Vegetarian," and "Who Knows?"

If only we could interrogate those well-intentioned ones who branded Adventism for us—the ones who taught us that the faith of Jesus was always this, but never that; that keeping Sabbath meant denying godly pleasure; that only what was difficult was good; that righteousness might be a gift, but a very rare one—and not for all. If only we might ask them what they think of Jesus and His people now—the world-circling fellowship of colors, languages, and tribes; the wonderful varieties of faithful Adventism that flourish through the Spirit's gifts; the many forms of worship now ascending to the Father's throne.

Our real brand has always been—will always be—Christ crucified and risen, interceding in the sanctuary, and coming for His people; though sometimes we sing another tune. Now is the time to tell the world how great and good the gospel is; how love for Jesus transforms and changes lives; why waiting for His coming makes us long for Him like "watchmen for the morning."

Restate the brand this way, and all the world will seek what we have found. ▀

A familiar saying, “A picture is worth a thousand words” comes through loud and clear on the cover of the December 2016 issue. Children look for an example to follow. They want to joyfully walk and jump in full confidence of parental support. What a difference in the life of a child, home, school, and community where nurture, love, honor, and integrity or parents and adults in general is a surety.

Natalie Dodd
Centerville, Ohio



Thank you to Jennifer Jill Schwirzer for having the courage to be honest, vulnerable, and real. Her article “Facing the Specter of Suicide” (January 2017) was refreshing. I wish more of us (myself included) had the courage to share as she did, to be willing to stand up during church and request prayer, even if it makes us “be a demoniac.” We need each other.

Dixie Strong
Moore, South Carolina

Thank you to Bill Knott for his GraceNotes and his team’s support through articles. I trust that before long GraceNotes will be published in a book. May God continue to lead and bless each one.

Richard Anderson
via e-mail

I’m so impressed with the content “cover to cover” in the January *Adventist Review*, “The Many Faces of Emotional Health.” I was surprised to learn that Ellen White had feelings of depression at times. The issue came at the perfect time: just before the holidays, when many are dealing with depression. Thank you, *Adventist Review*, for providing helpful information on a pertinent and sometimes overlooked topic.

Renee Rimmer
Blue Ridge, Georgia

I appreciated the article by Bailey Gillespie, “Linking Arms Instead of Pointing Fingers” (December 2016). It is quite real that the triad of the school, home, and church are important in keeping young people in the Adventist faith.

During Annual Council in October 2016 G.T. Ng mentioned that of the 100 people we baptize, 49 eventually leave the church. It was also pointed out during the focus on Christian education that a large number are young people.

Ted N. C. Wilson, in his Sabbath message, said how important are the teachers who teach our young people and get

I wish more of us (myself included) had the courage to share as she did.

DIXIE STRONG, MOORE, SOUTH CAROLINA

them involved in the local church. His message is *sine qua non* to keeping youth in the church: "Our research shows that having quality homes, churches, and schools increases the possibility of both growing faith and being loyal to the Seventh-day Adventist message and church."

The Pathfinder Club is also an agency that has made a difference in the lives of young people. Those who go on mission trips or serve as student missionaries solidify their faith.

Leo Ranzolin
Estero, Florida

YOUR TURN

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

IN A FEW WORDS...

ANDREWS UNIVERSITY TAKES BOLD STEPS TO FOSTER RACIAL RECONCILIATION

I applaud the administration for the way it handled this situation. To dismiss students' claims, or question the validity of their concerns because specific incidents are not brought up, is demeaning, and treats them as if they don't have the intellectual capability to ascertain their own feelings.

A person's perception is their perception; you cannot argue with how someone perceives something. Just because you don't see it that way doesn't mean it is not valid. It doesn't cost much to offer a listening ear, talk and share, asking questions with an open mind and a caring heart. When someone feels hurt and disrespected, questioning their feelings is not the way to reassure them that they matter. Ultimately, that is all they want.

The administration addressed the concerns, acknowledged their feelings, humbled themselves by looking at where they may have dropped the ball, and apologized. It's not being politically correct; it's being human and Christlike.

Debra McKinney Banks, via Web

DESMOND DOSS AND NORMAN DOSS: BROTHERS IN ARMS

In this time of social and political turmoil, may we all be enabled by the love of Jesus to reach out to all around us with the message that we are all brothers and sisters and that Jesus is coming soon to redeem His children from among every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.

Harold Peters, via Web

REGARDING ONLINE COMMENTS

I have been rereading *Adventist Review* regularly since it became available online. I welcomed many of the changes in style and content.

However, I have reservations regarding the addition of a comments section to most of the online pieces. Some of the comments are encouraging and supportive, but many have become increasingly negative and could be classed as trolling.

Adventist Review is the flagship magazine of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is a site that the public would visit to understand Adventists. These commentators do not represent the nature of the general membership and readers of the *Adventist Review*. Comments should be limited to articles where debate or discussion has been encouraged by the article.

Nomsa Maphango, Dublin, Ireland



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but Jesus
changed my life.

Joanna
Philippines

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Sponsoring microloans is a wonderful way of providing a hand-up, not a hand-out, for impoverished mothers like Joanna. Hearing about the Hope in Jesus, is transforming lives, while their small business is supporting an education and nutritious food for their children - giving them a bright future.

www.avfg.org/ar





Andrea Luxton is greeted by students after the chapel service.

ANDREWS UNIVERSITY TAKES BOLD STEPS TO FOSTER RACIAL RECONCILIATION

STUDENTS' VIDEO MESSAGE TRIGGERS DISCUSSION ON MINORITY RIGHTS, EQUALITY.

BY MARCOS PASEGGI, SENIOR CORRESPONDENT, ADVENTIST REVIEW

Andrews University, a leading Seventh-day Adventist institution of higher learning in Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States, is taking resolute steps to foster racial reconciliation after officially responding to a video message that a group of concerned African American students shared on social media on February 18, 2017. The video requested that school leaders formally apolo-

gize for what the students called “the systemic racism [the school] has perpetuated on its campus.”

The video, *It Is Time AU*, posted by students, was widely shared on social media, prompting many views and responses, mostly of support. As an official response to the request, university president Andrea Luxton addressed the university’s student body during the February

23 weekly chapel service. She shared both a personal message and an official video response from the school’s top administrators, student leaders, and staff.

“WE WILL BE OK”

In her chapel talk Luxton repeated some of the ideas she had shared in a message at last year’s “Journey to Healing and Understanding” event

“We have not yet arrived at where we should be. But I can tell you that we are fully and unequivocally committed to continuing the journey toward healing, understanding, and biblical justice.”



Andrea Luxton

held at the Berrien Springs Village Seventh-day Adventist Church and cosponsored by Andrews University, the Lake Region Conference, and the Lake Union Conference. She had previously quoted parts of that same message in an e-mail sent to Andrews University faculty, staff, and students on February 20, as the first official response to the video.

“We have not listened well,” the president wrote via e-mail. “We have not been sensitive and have not taken action when action should have been taken.” Luxton said she was “profoundly sorry,” and she reminded her audience that being Christians and Seventh-day Adventists demands that we have greater

expectations of ourselves. “We never have an excuse to devalue, to make assumptions of another, because of their race,” she stated.

Luxton acknowledged and validated that the student video “had struck a chord with many,” and inspired “a variety of passionate reactions from all corners.”

Along the same lines, the university president began her chapel message on a hopeful note. “We will be OK,” Luxton said. “I know it, because this community is amazing, something that has become clearer to me in the past few days.”

MENDING RELATIONSHIPS

Luxton also reminded her audience that the heart of the gos-

pel is based on relationships, healing, and connection. Using the gospel story featuring a group of friends who take a paralytic man to Jesus to be healed, she implied that everyone can play not only the role of those friends but also of Jesus.

“Just like Jesus, when someone comes to us to be healed, we have the responsibility to offer healing,” Luxton said. “It is something we must do directly, honestly, and from [our] heart.”

The president’s words reflected an e-mail message sent by university chaplain June Price and Pioneer Memorial church lead pastor Dwight Nelson, who two days before the chapel service had invited the educational community to come together “to seek God for the guidance and wisdom, the correction and healing, we need.” The ultimate purpose, they had reminded their message recipients, is that “we as a campus might reflect to the nation and world a portrait of [God’s] loving character.”

As a first step toward that healing, during the chapel meeting Luxton shared a “Listen. Dialogue. Change.” video message, in which top administrators, student leaders, and staff apologized on behalf of the educational community for not always being fully aware of racial bias and inequality.

“I am sorry,” said multiple leaders, looking straight to the camera. “We must do better.”

University administrators also



SEEDS OF CHANGE

are being raised in Jamaica, thanks to Northern Caribbean University, that recently agreed with the national government to implement an in vitro propagation

program for the Irish potato seed. The school laboratory will help facilitate the production of some 800,000 Irish potato tissue culture plantlets with microtubers.

shared some of the specific steps the school will be taking to foster healing and reconciliation in the next few months, including the hiring of a full-time administrator of diversity reporting directly to the president; mandatory cultural diversity training for faculty, staff, and students; and a strengthened grievance resolution process for students to report injustice and mistreatment of all kinds.

prompted positive reactions, with students praising what some called “the Christlikeness in Luxton’s speech.”

“The way the president addressed the issue appealed to me,” said an Andrews student who asked to remain anonymous. “The administration obviously listened, answered, and told us how they are going to fix the problem by taking steps toward reconciliation.”

it-guided reconciliation releases God’s power to act at the school. The religion and history major also noted the transcendence of the moment.

“The historical significance of the past few days cannot be overstated,” said Ruhumuliza. “I believe the choices that are being made at Andrews University have the potential of impacting not just the Seventh-day Adventist Church but the entire nation.”



“We have not yet arrived at where we should be. But I can tell you that we are fully and unequivocally committed to continuing the journey toward healing, understanding, and biblical justice,” said Luxton.

POSITIVE FEEDBACK

Luxton’s speech and the official university video response were met with a standing ovation and

The same student shared that some of her friends, who supported the *It Is Time AU* effort, were posting the president’s response and speech on their Facebook pages and adding positive comments. “It was a great day for Andrews University,” the student said.

In addition, senior student Jon-Philippe Ruhumuliza said he felt confident that learning to embrace our differences through Spir-

A WORK IN PROGRESS

While the milestone week at Andrews University culminated in a meaningful moment of reconciliation, the process is an ongoing one.

“We must continue the work of addressing racial issues,” said Don Livesay, who serves as president of the Lake Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists as well as vice chair of Andrews University board of trustees. “As we do, it is my hope that all parties would engage in the process in the most productive manner.”

As students, faculty, and staff regroup to focus on creating a brighter future on the university campus, Andrea Luxton is the first to admit that there indeed is a road ahead.

“This is an ongoing journey toward reconciliation,” Luxton concluded. “In the end, however, I am confident and pray that we will emerge from this current situation a stronger, richer, and better university.”



ADVENTIST EDUCATION TRAINING GOES GLOBAL WITH PAN-AFRICAN CONFERENCE

RWANDA HOSTS THE FIRST OF SEVERAL REGIONAL EVENTS

BY MARCOS PASEGGI, SENIOR CORRESPONDENT, ADVENTIST REVIEW

What do you do when a training event you recently offered gets very positive feedback? Judging by the General Conference Education Department, you recharge and do it again, this time even better, and in a global setting.

On February 15-19, 2017, 239 Seventh-day Adventist educators from across the African continent and adjacent Indian Ocean islands met in Kigali, Rwanda, for the first of four worldwide regional conferences on Seventh-day Adventist education. The participants, who came from the three regions—or divisions—of the world church in Africa, represent 45 percent of the 8,208 Seventh-day Adventist schools around the world, 39 percent of its 102,779 teachers, and 52 percent of its nearly 2 million students.

The event marked the first phase of the implementation of a decision made at the well-received Leadership Education and Development (LEAD) Conference on Seventh-day Adventist Education at the world church headquarters last

October. At that conference, hosted during Annual Council 2016—a major annual business meeting of the world church—it was agreed to extend the same kind of training and discussion then offered to the members of the Executive Board of the world church to other church educational leaders and educators on the ground and around the world.

“Annual Council 2016 voted to authorize the Education Department, in collaboration with the various world divisions—or regions—to develop a guiding philosophy and a worldwide, regionally responsive plan for Seventh-day Adventist education,” said Lisa Beardsley-Hardy, education director of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, when explaining the rationale for these regional events.

The topics mentioned in the objectives discussed include establishing measurable goals to increase the number of schools and Adventist students, increasing retention and academic excellence, developing educational resources for

alternative models of education, and identifying innovations that may serve to enhance the affordability and sustainability of Seventh-day Adventist schools.

Similar conferences are planned for other regions in the next few months, as the Education Department tries to cover every major division, or region, of the world church.

“At these conferences, participants will formulate educational plans that incorporate local, national, and regional priorities and objectives,” said Beardsley. “It is also expected that they make recommendations to Annual Council in October 2017 on how to achieve higher visibility for education globally.”

Besides small-group discussions and plenary sessions, participants of the Rwanda conference enjoyed devotional messages by church leaders, moments of worship on Friday evening and Saturday, and even a visit to the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre on Saturday afternoon.

Most participants were not shy at expressing their appreciation for the event. “The conference provided me with many ideas to enhance my leadership,” said one of the participants. “I would like this conference to take place more often, and to consider including school board chairs, . . . treasurers, and even pastors.”

The next LEAD regional conference is slated to take place from May 30 to June 4, 2017, in Slovenia. ▀



STUDENTS FROM MONTEMORELOS UNIVERSITY recently won second place for their film submitted during the ninth national university Hazlo en Cortometraje (Do It Short) film contest, held in Mexico City, Mexico. The short film, *El Árbol de la Poesía* (*Tree of Poetry*), was among 1,130 short films submitted.

NEWS BRIEFS

1



HACKSAW RIDGE, a film that tells the story of Desmond T. Doss, the Seventh-day Adventist United States Army medic who became the first conscientious objector to win the Congressional Medal of Honor, won two Oscars—Best Film Editing and Best Sound Mixing—at the 89th Academy Awards on February 26, 2017. Mel Gibson had been also nominated for best director, and Andrew Garfield as best actor for his portrayal of Doss.

2



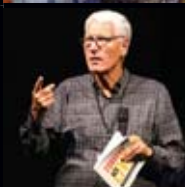
NUEVO TIEMPO CHILE, the Adventist TV ministry, recently reported that a process has been launched to switch to digital TV, which now is available on over-the-air television to more than 5 million people, or 80 percent of the population of the capital city of Santiago. The plan is to extend this digital TV option to other Chilean cities soon.

3



IN RURAL CURAÇAO Adventists took time to celebrate the elderly of Lagun, in the northwest part of the island. Persons 80 years old and older were honored in a special program and presented with a wooden token engraved with a Bible text. The mission-driven activity sought to lead to stronger relationships with the community, organizers said.

4



SOUTH PACIFIC ADVENTISTS learned how forgiveness relates to better health, thanks to a new program demonstrating the life-changing power of forgiveness launched at health summits in New Zealand and Australia. The workshops were hosted by psychotherapist Dick Tibbits, who reminded the groups that “forgiveness is not forgetting. It’s remembering things in a different way.”

5



THE TRANS-EUROPEAN DIVISION voted to ask the General Conference to consider issuing a single credential for those in ministry or to amend existing credentials, making them more inclusive. The request, voted unanimously, comes after months of consultation, listening, advice seeking, and prayer, and results from the complex and challenging situation the church faces in secularized Europe.

6



IN THE BRAZILIAN STATE of Espírito Santo in southeastern Brazil, young Seventh-day Adventists are performing acts of peace. The state has been wracked by violence after the state police were unable to work when family members blockaded their barracks. The region’s Adventist youth marched with messages of hope, prayer, and comfort for the population.

7



AUSTRALIAN RADIO STATION Faith FM dedicated a brand-new studio on February 15, 2017. The facility is housed at the headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia. Officials said the dream of a studio has been realized through a partnership with the Australian Union Conference, Adventist World Radio, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific.

The Adventist school features a comprehensive bilingual program in English and Spanish and integrates technology in its teaching. PHOTO COURTESY OF ESTHER ORTIZ ROCHA.



ADVENTIST SCHOOL AMONG MEXICO CITY'S TOP 20

PRIMARY SCHOOL RANKED SEVENTEENTH OUT OF MORE THAN 3,000 INSTITUTIONS.

BY LIBNA STEVENS, INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION

An Adventist school in the district of Benito Juárez in Mexico City, Mexico, was recently declared one of 20 best primary schools across the federal district. Miguel Ángel Asturias Adventist School, a pre-K-to-ninth-grade institution, ranked 17 out of the 3,036 primary schools in the capital city. The results stated that the Adventist school is considered as a Primary School of Excellence from an online grading system.

The high marks, which were published in several news outlets in Mexico City, brought great pleasure to school administrators and teachers of the 33-year-old Adventist school.

"This accomplishment by the hard work of our teachers shows us that our Adventist schools can shine no matter where they are located," said Esther Ortiz Rocha, principal of Miguel Ángel Asturias Adventist school.

"We believe that the school's

success has to do with the importance that each student is given in both the English and Spanish programs," said Ortiz. "We follow a personalized study plan for each student, with ongoing evaluations."

The school, with 136 students, gets its students involved in English spelling bees every year, said Ortiz. One of the 25 students who enrolled in the spelling bee last year qualified for the finals, but did not take part in the final competition because it was held on a Saturday. In fact, it's held every year on Saturday. But "knowing that they will not get to the international level doesn't stop our students from participating in the event," Ortiz said.

Three ninth graders made it to the spelling finals, and would not participate in the final competition.

From 2007 to 2013 the school ranked among the best 200 schools based on national tests conducted

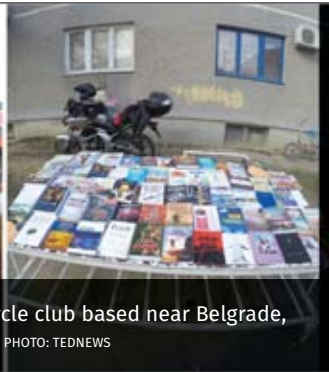
by the government, said Ortiz. In 2014 no report was released, and just this year the results ranked the primary school as number 17. The secondary school is considered among Secondary Schools of Good Education Level, ranking 221 out of the 3,269 across the city.

News of the school ranking drew praise from the Inter-American Division's (IAD) Education Department. "The Asturias school is one of our best schools across the IAD territory," said Faye Patterson, associate education director overseeing primary and secondary schools in Inter-America. "Its quality education, the latest use of technology, and its bilingual program has placed the school among the top schools in our division territory."

Patterson has visited the school several times and stated that it has carried accreditation by the Adventist Accrediting Association, and its exemplary curriculum is ahead of the more than 1,000 primary and secondary schools in Inter-America.

Ortiz, who taught preschool education for five years before becoming principal in the spring of 2016, credits the direction and hard work of its former principal Arminda Valles, who led the school for more than 16 years.

"The Lord has blessed us, and we continue to strive to impart a higher quality education in our school seeking His direction, wisdom, and Holy Spirit to reach His purposes," Ortiz said. ▀



Members of the Three Angels' motorcycle club based near Belgrade, Serbia, share the gospel via literature. PHOTO: TEDNEWS

MISSIONS PROJECTS IN TRANS-EUROPEAN REGION SHOWING RESULTS

MOTORCYCLE MINISTRY, DENTAL CLINIC, DAY CENTER FOR SENIORS AMONG OUTREACHES

BY VICTOR HULBERT, TRANS-EUROPEAN DIVISION

There's nothing better than the satisfaction of giving away money for mission, then finding those possibilities of mission multiplied. A report on no fewer than six mission projects from the South-East European Union, funded in part by the Trans-European Division (TED) Creative Initiatives Evangelism Fund, is a case in point.

In April 2016, the TED mission board voted funds for 12 specific projects across the 22 countries in the church region.

Nine months later Daniel Duda, TED mission coordinator, said he is delighted to find this one union reporting success with projects ranging from a three angels motorcycle club to a dental clinic, a feeding program, TV programs about health, and a day center for the elderly.

The M.C. Three Angels motorcycle club, based near Belgrade, was registered in July 2016. It stands in direct contrast to the reputation of gangs such as the infamous Hell's Angels. Their initial outreach has included a literature stand at a local fair, and using their bikes as a basis for literature evangelism in four towns.

In Montenegro, Radovan Aćimić

is planning to "bring back the smile" to at least 50 people in the capital city, Podgorica. Working with a local dental clinic, ADRA, and Social Services, they aim to help the families not just with their teeth, but by sharing a wholistic program.

Material health is also important for vulnerable families in Sivic, a village of less than 9,000 people in northern Serbia. In this village a program provides basic groceries for 12 families as of way of sharing the practical gospel with those who had never been inside an Adventist Church. The feeding program runs through the worst winter months and makes such a difference that the story was highlighted by *Večernje novosti*, a national newspaper.

Zdravko Bosnić, local church elder, says that the plan is now to buy or build a house for at least one of the most deprived families. His desire to help people comes from his own life experience as one of nine children from a poor family. The church also provides a care package for every newborn child in the village.

Also in the north, some 160 blind or partially sighted residents in Bačka Palanka were given access to braille versions of *Steps to Christ*

and *Hope Beside the Grave*. But there is much more than just books: Adventist members have worked closely with the Association for the Blind to help organize social activities, such as picnics, as well as lectures on psychology, relationships, stress management, and health issues.

Their pastor, Srećko Krstić, says, "We look forward to every new meeting with our new friends and the great opportunity to spread the gospel to this specific group of people."

THE CHURCH PROVIDES A CARE PACKAGE FOR EVERY NEWBORN CHILD IN THE VILLAGE.

In Banja Luka, the second-largest city of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Božidar Prgonjić is using funds to produce a *Life and Health* TV series. These will be aired on a cable network and, it is hoped, on a national TV channel.

Equally focused on health, church members in Novi Sad, Serbia's second-largest city, are running a day center for pensioners in the central church. Three times a week 44 senior citizens get the chance to play board games, enjoy health expos and cooking classes, or even get a pedicure. They also get a weekly doctor's visit. Bible studies are offered each Wednesday.



NORWEGIAN TEACHERS HONOR GOD IN THE CLASSROOM

ADVENTIST EDUCATOR PLEADS A RETURN TO THE BIBLICAL NARRATIVE.

BY WIDAR URSETT, SENIOR EDITOR, NORWEGIAN PUBLISHING HOUSE

Adventist teachers from across Norway met February 6-8, 2017, in Sundvolden, Norway, to learn the skills of sharing their faith within a world of globalization, postmodernism, and consumerism.

"The Christian narrative no longer appeals, because people today are influenced by the new Western imperialism: globalization, postmodernism, and consumerism," said Daniel Duda, education director of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Trans-European Division, or region, in his keynote address at this year's teachers' conference organized by the Adventist Church in Norway.

"Instead of salvation from sin, the modern narrative promises that faith in science and technology will provide a better future,"

Duda said. "This metanarrative is reinforced by three trends: globalization, postmodernism and the rise of consumerism."

GLOBALIZATION

According to Duda, this is the global spread of modern, liberal, humanistic story. In the twentieth century, humanism, which began during the Enlightenment, developed into either liberalism or Communism. With the fall of Communism in 1989, and boosted by rising prosperity, liberalism went global.

POSTMODERNISM

Postmodernism emerged as a reaction to the negative aspects of the modern liberal, humanistic story, said Duda. For example, environmental degradation, increasing pov-

erty, nuclear weapons, economic challenges, and psychological and social disintegration. It challenged the optimism of modernity: maybe we are not moving toward a better world. Postmodernism insisted that it was natural to question the notion of objective knowledge, as well as Christian knowledge.

CONSUMERISM

Duda explained that consumerism is the consequence of the economic growth that followed in the wake of globalization. Economic structures have enriched the West at the expense of all other countries. Postmodernism denied the Christian metanarrative, and consumerism filled the void.

A key takeaway from Duda's presentation was that modern narratives of globalization and postmodernism do not work, challenging attendees to consider a viable alternative. The answer, according to Duda, lies in returning to the central biblical narrative, fostering discipleship, and a renewed focus on community. 🍌



ADRA SLOVENIA started Let's warm Them!, a project to help refugees stranded in Greece survive winter's cold. The initiative, which distributed clothes, shoes and blankets, was officially supported by several

well-known individuals in Slovenia. ADRA Slovenia got front page news coverage for several days, and received generous financial support for ADRA's work in Greece.

"EVENING OF ENCHANTMENT" RAISES MORE THAN \$1.1 MILLION

MORE THAN 1,000 ATTEND IN SUPPORT OF LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

BY BRIANA PASTORINO, LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY HEALTH

Guests at the twenty-fourth annual Foundation Storybook Gala were taken on a magical journey as they entered the Riverside Convention Center. The venue was transformed into a mysterious forest, complete with twinkling trees, blooming flowers, and children frolicking in (artificial) grass.

More than 1,000 guests attended the February 16, 2017, event in support of Loma Linda University Children's Hospital (LLUCH), and they did not disappoint. Their generosity raised more than \$1.1 million for Vision 2020 and the construction of the new Children's Hospital tower.

"This is an exciting time to be a part of our evolving story, and we thank you for playing an important role in our mission," said Scott Perryman, vice president/administrator, LLUCH, as he welcomed guests. "With your belief in a happily ever after we can continue to care for children in Southern California."

Vision 2020: The Campaign for a Whole Tomorrow will allow LLUCH to continue to provide world-class care with the construction of a new Children's Hospital tower that will expand licensed bed count to approximately 359.

In addition to event sponsor-

ships and ticket sales, guests had a variety of ways to give throughout the night. There were 141 silent

which sold for \$8,500; and the hot item of the night, a Bandon Dunes golf trip for four, selling at \$21,000.

The evening of giving concluded with Fund-a-Future, which allowed guests to pledge an amount of their choosing toward Vision 2020 through the use of their smartphone.

"America's Got Talent" season seven finalist William Close and the Earth Harp Collective provided entertainment throughout the eve-



More than 1,000 friends of LLU Children's Hospital came together for a magical journey to create a happily ever after for its patients.

auction items ranging from sporting events to excursions to designer handbags and spa treatments.

The program kicked off with the \$200 Dash, where guests were encouraged to get out of their seats and donate any amount from \$1 to \$200 with a goal of raising \$20,000 in 10 minutes.

Led by auctioneer Jim Nye, eight live auction items were presented and sold to the highest bidder. The top-earning items were a red husky puppy selling for \$8,000; a one-week vacation for two to Ireland,

ning. The Earth Harp rested on the stage while the strings traveled over the audience and attached to the roof of the venue, turning every space into the instrument.

"The success of this year's Storybook Gala will allow Loma Linda University Children's Hospital to rewrite the landscape of health care," said Joanna DeLeon, director of the LLUCH Foundation. "We are here for one reason: the children. And we want to create a happily ever after for every child we treat." 🦋



THE SABBATH AND THE PRESIDENT

BY JARED THURMON, MARKETING LIAISON FOR ADVENTIST REVIEW

Yeah, we observe the Sabbath,” says Ivanka Trump. “From Friday to Saturday we don’t do anything,” the new U.S. president’s daughter shared in a 2015 *Vogue* interview.* She and her Orthodox Jewish husband, Jared Kushner, detailed some of the ways they celebrate this weekly day of rest on Saturday, the seventh day of the week.

“So for Friday, she’ll make dinner for the two of us, and we turn our phones off for 25 hours. Putting aside the religious aspect of it; we live in such a fast-paced world,” says Jared.

“It’s an amazing thing when you’re so connected,” Ivanka says, “to really sign off.”

Ivanka’s father, Donald J. Trump, sworn in as forty-fifth president of the United States, is used to not being able to reach Ivanka or Jared via text, phone, or e-mail from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown.

Ivanka grew up in a Presbyterian home, but converted to Judaism, and Sabbathkeeping, when she married her Jewish husband.

The couple is described as very influential in the Trump administration. Jared was named senior advisor to the president. Both he and Ivanka moved to Washington, D.C., to focus on new duties. Some pundits believe that the couple may

have played a pivotal role in helping Ivanka’s father get elected.

Why does any of this matter? To students of Bible prophecy, it’s always instructive to trace the connections between national leaders and the God-given freedom to exercise one’s religion according to the dictates of conscience. In the long and often painful story of Judaism are moments of crisis when those who put God first didn’t have the freedom to worship on the day He instructed.

The same Bible reminds us that even powerful statesmen and advisors, such as the Hebrew prophet Daniel, were sometimes unable to prevent laws that restricted their own religious freedom and that of others. Proximity to power doesn’t always ensure the ability to influence the way power is used, especially when the rights of religious minorities are concerned.

Celebrating the biblical Sabbath on the seventh day of the week is one of those minority religious experiences in our world that deserves protection. Even the largest group of Sabbathkeepers in the world—Seventh-day Adventists, numbering nearly 20 million global members—is less than 1 percent of the worldwide Christian population. Judaism

in all its branches adds another 15 million Sabbathkeepers to the total.

Seventh-day Adventists have historically understood their mission to call attention to the biblical Sabbath of the Ten Commandments, and to invite others to join them in worshipping on the day the Bible describes as a weekly memorial of God’s creative activity.

They are also acutely aware of the pressures toward conformity for religious minorities in any society, and particularly one in which most Christians worship on a different day. That’s why Adventists have for decades been vigorous defenders of the rights of religious minorities of all kinds. They believe that the freedoms enshrined in the U.S. Constitution and the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights belong to all, and that faithfulness to God is a higher duty than even loyalty to one’s country. History can repeat itself only if citizens forget the hard-won freedoms designed to protect those who, when called to choose, “obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29, KJV).

Sabbathkeepers everywhere can hope—and pray—that those like Ivanka and Jared Kushner, who cherish the biblical Sabbath, remain influential in the life of the new leader of the free world. ▀

*www.vogue.com/11739787/ivanka-trump-collection-the-apprentice-family/

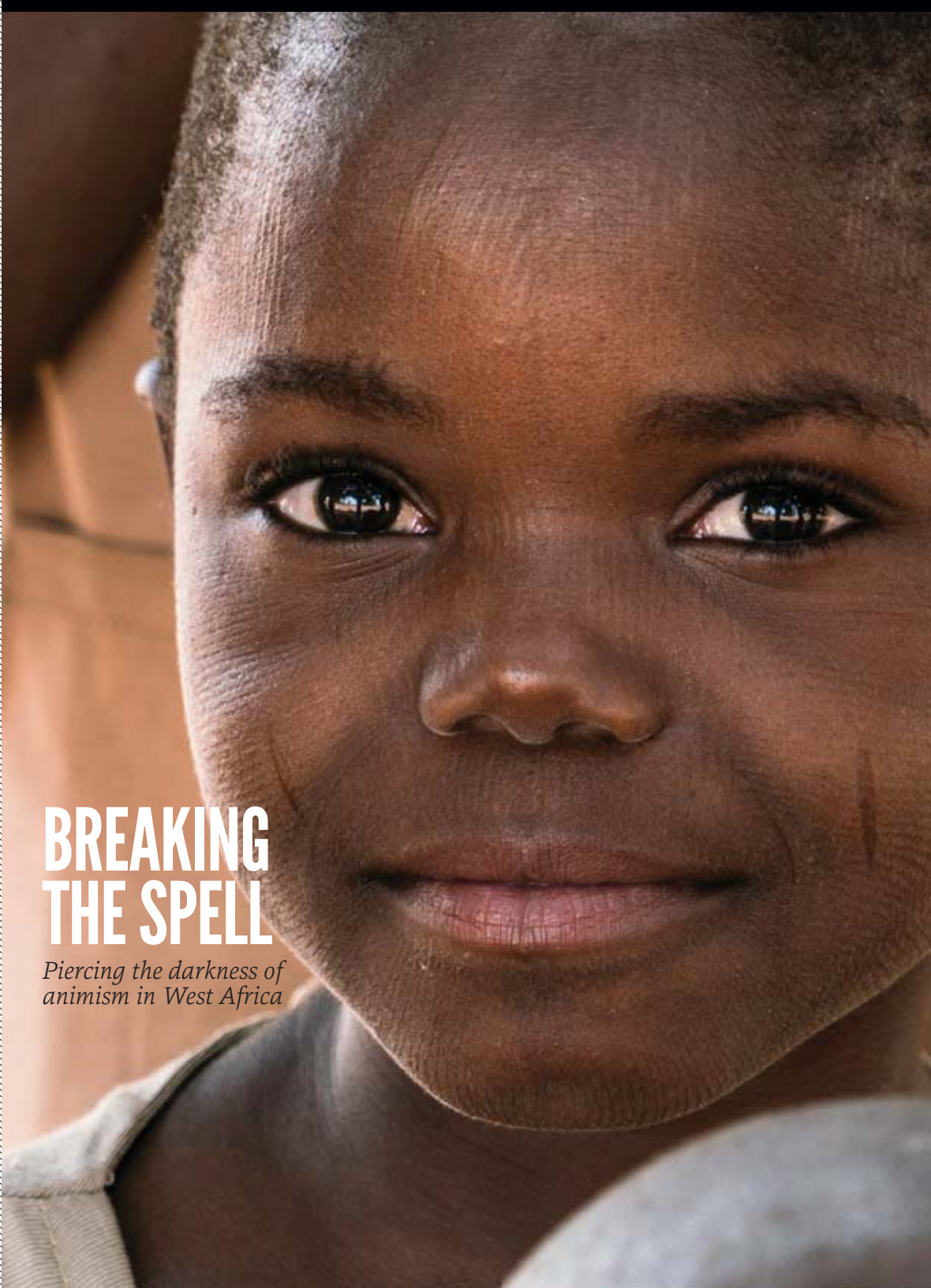
ALSO IN THIS SECTION:

- » FOUR DIMENSIONS OF A FULL LIFE
- » WHEN AWESOME WASN'T ENOUGH
- » WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF?

DISCOVER

BREAKING THE SPELL

*Piercing the darkness of
animism in West Africa*





Worldviews on what happens to us after we die are as diverse and numerous as the cultures that encompass our planet. Buddhists believe that after death they will be reincarnated as another being, and that this new life is dependent on past actions and deeds. Islam teaches that the souls of Muslims live on after death and wait to be judged for their actions in life on the day of judgment. Many evangelical Christians say that when people die they go directly to heaven or hell, depending on whether they have accepted Jesus as their Savior.

Seventh-day Adventist Christians base their beliefs about death solely on the Bible, which confirms that only God is immortal, and that when someone dies they are in “a state of temporary unconsciousness while the person awaits the resurrection”¹ and the day of judgment. Bible calls this state a sleep (1 Cor. 15:51, 52; 1 Thess. 4:13-17; 2 Peter 3:4).

Another prominent world religion is animism. Although animistic beliefs are held largely in African countries, certain Western beliefs also

give a nod to animism.² Some estimates indicate that 40 percent of the world’s population is animistic.³ Animists believe that their ancestors continue to exist in a conscious state after death, and that they and other spiritual beings inhabit both objects and living beings. They deem that everything is conscious and has a soul,⁴ and that they have power over human affairs.⁵

Into this culture of animism Adventist Frontier Missions (AFM)⁶ worker Jason Harral, originally from Wyoming, and his family began sharing the love and power of Jesus. One of the methods Jason used to reach them was to break an ancient curse.

THE ORIGIN OF THE CURSE

About 1915, near the beginning of World War I, among the Otammari tribe in the region of Natitingou in Benin, West Africa, someone presented a sacrifice to the spirit of his ancestor to curse the children of his tribe. At that time French colonists were forcing Otammari youth to fight in the war, and missionaries were sending them out of the region to attend school. The adults saw this as a threat to their culture, so the petitioner asked his ancestor to limit the children’s knowledge and skills so they would be useless to the colonists

A slightly different version of this article appeared in the October 2016 edition of Adventist World magazine. It appears again because this is the season when Christians around the world commemorate Christ’s resurrection. This article reminds us that, for Christians, death is nothing to fear.—Editors



and missionaries. The tribal people believe this curse is still in effect today.

"They've tried to break this century-old curse, and they can't," explains Jason, who served in the Natitingou region from 2011 to 2016. "They feel hopeless."

The Otammari people believe the curse continues to prevent them from advanced development and success in society, according to AFM workers in Benin. Indeed, statistics indicate that most Otammaris do serve in low-key positions.

"This curse causes them not to have any ambition," says Ulrike (Uli) Baur-Kouato, an AFM worker from Germany who has served in the region for 18 years. "They don't see a need to help their children get an education higher than pri-

mary school because they say, 'It's useless. We can't go any further because this curse is on us.' People don't even try to get higher positions in society. Most of them just live from hand to mouth. They work their fields and just barely scrape by."

Tribal spiritual leaders, or fetishers, have been unable to break the curse, Uli explains, because the one who pronounced the curse is dead and no one knows exactly what he said or what sacrifice he used. So according to tribal beliefs, the curse can't be broken.

PRESENTING THE CURSE BREAKER

"That's where our evangelists come in," Jason says. "We've told them, 'Look, we know Someone who was there. His name is Jesus, and He knows



Local AFM evangelist Jean Akolim (blue shirt), assisted by evangelist Charles Korrobessaga (red shirt) teaches villagers about Jesus under the official “meeting tree” in Kounitchangou.

how to break this curse. His story is told in the Bible. Do you want to listen to this story?”

He adds, “This is a very powerful tool to develop their interest in studying the Bible. We teach them about Jesus, the one who became a curse for us because He was hung on the tree and broke the original curse that occurred in the Garden of Eden. And if He broke that big curse, we tell them, He can break this little curse on your tribe, too.”

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

Jason and his wife, Magnhild (Maggi), from Norway, joined AFM in 2009 and served as AFM missionaries in Benin for five years. They and their three young children—Reuben, Kaia, and Petra—feel at home there.

“In the beginning we went through culture shock and had some very hard times, but soon we felt that we belonged, that we were part of it,” Jason says.

Before Jason’s arrival in Natitingou—a city of some 100,000 people—Uli, along with AFM worker Suzie Baldwin, ministered in Benin for almost a decade. Both came in 1999. They first worked with another missionary family, who left in 2003. Uli then married a Beninese man, Toussaint, in 2007, so there were just the three of them before the Harral family arrived. They focused on getting to know the people, becoming familiar with the culture, helping with community needs, strengthening the local Adventist church, and developing trust.

“Toussaint and I have put a lot of effort into



Ulrike (Uli) Baur-Kouato, an AFM worker from Germany who has served in Benin for 17 years, sits outside the door of her home.



Jason and Magnhild (Maggi) Herral and their three children (from left): Reuben, Kaia, and Petra

neighborhood ministry,” Uli says. “We’ve especially tried to help the children and the youth to develop, to study, and to advance in their education.”

CULTURE-SENSITIVE EVANGELISM

When Jason and Maggi arrived, Maggi began assisting with community ministries. Since much of the relational groundwork had already been laid, Jason focused on evangelism. Jason’s main goal was to train local people who had already accepted Christ and joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church to become evangelists. He says the villagers would never as fully respond to AFM team members, whom they view as outsiders, as they would someone from their own culture who could speak their own tribal dialects. So he began weekly evangelism training sessions. About eight to 10 people, mostly men, attend, including AFM workers, local church leaders, and other interested individuals.

“We used to have more women come and be a part of it, but the women’s lives in Benin are very full,” Jason explains. “We don’t get as many women as we would like.”

To be sensitive to the Otammari culture, the group developed Bible studies that present the gospel in a way that is relevant to the people and that are based on the curse still plaguing the community. Studies begin with a strong focus on Bible stories, then become more thematic, many dealing with societal issues such as polygamy and alcoholism. Eventually they branch out into leadership development.

LOCAL EVANGELISTS

Three local men who attend the training sessions and are playing integral roles in sharing the

gospel message in surrounding villages are Hyacinthe Tianati, Jean Akolim, and Charles Korrobosaga. Hyacinthe, who has served as an evangelist for many years, lives in Boukoumbé, about 30 miles (50 kilometers) from Natitingou. He leads the Boukoumbé church and coordinates AFM’s evangelistic meetings in several nearby villages. Jean and Charles teach and give Bible studies in Natitingou and other nearby villages.

“Hyacinthe goes to the villages as an Otammari man saying, ‘I grew up in this culture, under this curse. I want to see our people set free from this curse. I’m free from the curse today because of what Jesus has done.’ The people can hardly resist this,” Jason says. “Hyacinthe cannot tell this story without starting a group of people wanting to study the Bible, wanting to meet every week. It’s so powerful. Now he’s training young people, young men, who are going with him and learning how to do evangelism and how to tell this same story. It’s a beautiful thing!”

Jean, originally from Togo, attended secondary school in Boukoumbé and learned the local language. He now lives in a small mud house in Kouaba and holds weekly Bible studies and Sabbath worship services in his home and under trees in nearby villages. The first time Jason attended one of Jean’s study classes he says he was both amazed and thrilled.

“That was a reward for me, seeing Jean teach, seeing the energy,” Jason says. “He was sitting there in front of 40 or 50 people explaining to them the origin of evil. As I watched him I thought, *He’s got it!* I’ll have that image with me for the rest of my life.”

“The villages where Jean has been working for

more than a year now have been resistant to religions other than their own," Uli notes. "Churches that other religious denominations tried to establish there have since been closed or abandoned. People predicted that Jean's meetings wouldn't last more than a few months, but they are still going strong. The Lord is definitely blessing."

BEGINNING WITH THE CHIEFS

The local evangelists' insight and knowledge of the culture helped open the doors when they initially entered the villages to share the gospel.

They first approached the village chiefs to ask permission. "The chiefs said OK," Jason explains, "then when the people gathered together the evangelists talked about the curse and how the Word of God tells how the curse can be broken. So they really had a captive audience. No one could say, 'Don't do this in our village,' because the chief was part of it and had accepted it.

"There was some initial resistance because the villagers were afraid that the evangelists were there to destroy their culture," Jason adds. "But Hyacinthe was very tactful and said, 'We don't want to destroy what is good in your culture. And we're not going to force anyone to do anything. We're not going to break any altars. We're just presenting a message; and it's your choice whether to accept it.' So that calmed them down."

TALKING RELIGION

Broaching the subject of religion among the Otammari isn't very difficult, Uli notes. Describing the people as "open and friendly and joyful," she says it's rare to find atheists in Africa.

"Even people who are not Christian know that God is there," she says. "It's a very religious people. In Benin some people are Muslims, some are Christians, but most are animists. Many mix their beliefs into their own system. So it's not difficult to talk about faith. But when it comes to Adventist biblical doctrines, there are certain lifestyle issues that are extremely difficult for people to adopt, such as not drinking alcohol. Alcohol is a very big problem in Benin."

Animism has a strong hold in the region, Uli explains, because Otammari believe that everything surrounding them has a living soul—not only people and animals, but also places, rocks,



The Republic of Benin

Benin is 43,483 square miles (112,622 square kilometers) in size; borders Niger, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, and Togo; and has a population of about 10 million. Almost half of the people are under 15 years old, with most living in the southern and central regions. The climate is tropical, with both rainy and dry seasons. Porto-Novo in southeastern Benin is the capital, but the seat of government is in nearby Cotonou, Benin's largest city.

Although the national language is French, more than 50 languages and dialects are spoken.

About half the population earn their living in agriculture, although the lack of passable roads in rural areas makes it difficult to transport agricultural products to market. Men do the heavier farming tasks such as clearing land, but women help plant, harvest, and process the food. They also carry wood and water and take care of the many household tasks. Women received legal equality status in 1977, but this is often ignored in practice. About 24 percent of women are literate. Families arrange most marriages, but it's becoming more common for individuals to choose their own spouse. Polygamy continues to be an acceptable practice.

Cooking is mostly done outside, even in urban areas, and many homes don't have refrigeration. Basic meals consist of a starch, such as yams, rice, or corn, prepared as a mush and eaten with a sauce containing vegetables and meat or fish. Many varieties of tropical fruits are also available.

About 30 percent of the population is Christian (mostly Roman Catholic), 25 percent is Muslim, and the rest follows indigenous belief systems in which ancestors are considered part of the community after death. Both Muslim and Christian beliefs in that region, however, are mixed to some degree with animism.*

*Based on information from www.beninembassy.us/about-benin.html, www.everyculture.com/A-Bo/Benin.html, and www.iexplore.com/articles/travel-guides/africa/benin/history-and-culture.

and all of nature. They say that when a person dies, the soul continues to live on and to some extent influences daily life.

“When someone gets sick, when someone dies, when they have a bad harvest—everything that is happening has a reason in the spiritual, or unseen, world,” Uli says.

Uli believes, however, that the Lord is blessing the efforts of the AFM team and that they are making a difference.

“When AFM missionaries go into a country, they are asked first to live with the people and observe them; to study the language, the culture, the traditions, and the religion of the people,” she says. “Once you have that knowledge and have built friendships and trust, you can then find the best ways to touch their hearts.”

MOVING ON

The AFM project in Benin is almost complete and will likely phase out within the next two years. The local full-time evangelists will continue, supervised by the local pastor and the mission headquarters. Uli and her husband will remain in Africa.

“I fell in love with Africa and the people here, and with an African,” Uli says. “Toussaint and I have decided that we will continue to use our gifts to work with the children and youth in Natitingou.”

Their goals include building a home for orphaned and abandoned children on land they personally own.

Suzi also married a Beninese man, Fidel, and

transferred from Natitingou to Tanguiéta in 2014, where they have started a new AFM project. Following the interviews in 2016 for this article, Jason and his family left Benin and moved to Norway, where they are preparing to return soon to a different region of West Africa. It was not, however, an easy decision for them to make.

“In some ways we could have stayed there forever, but the work was wrapping up, so we chose to move on,” Jason explains. “It wasn’t because of a desire to leave there; it’s just that the time had come to leave the work with others.”

Jason and Maggi’s prayer, however, is that the Lord will continue to bless the people of Benin, that His message of love will touch their hearts, and that the light of truth from His Word will shatter the curse and the darkness of animism. 📌

Note: Since this article was first written and printed in the October 2016 Adventist World, and after many months of attending meetings and thorough Bible study, 14 tribal villagers have been baptized.

¹ www.sdanet.org/atissue/books/27/27-25.htm

² www.marketfaith.org/animism-in-todays-world-2/

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Animism

⁵ www.missiology.org/old/folkreligion/chapter1.htm

⁶ AFM is a supporting ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church; www.afmonline.org.

Sandra Blackmer is an assistant editor of *Adventist Review*. This article is based on interviews conducted by Blackmer, as well as video footage and interviews done by **Henry Stober**, a professional videographer and photographer living in Germany.



Henry Stober, a professional videographer and photographer living in Germany, traveled to Benin on an assignment for AR and spent two weeks with the Adventist Frontier missionaries and the local tribes. He captured the heart and soul of the Otammari people and their culture in his incredible photographic images and video footage. The AR team produced an enlightening documentary that opens to the world the daily lives and beliefs of the people in that region of West Africa, as well as the efforts of the AFM missionaries and local evangelists to share with them the gospel message and the love of Jesus. The documentary can be viewed on our ARtv apps on Apple TV, Roku, Samsung Smart TV, Amazon Fire TV and Google Chromecast. ARtv is also available as an iOS and Android app or you can view over 500 videos on the website: artv.adventistreview.org.

FOUR DIMENSIONS OF A FULL LIFE

In Genesis 25 the eulogy for Abraham says simply that he died “an old man and full of years” (verse 8). In English this phrase, old and full of years, seems redundant. But in Hebrew it means Abraham died having lived a rich and blessed life of many years, satisfied both emotionally and spiritually. His life ended, not with a struggle and string of regrets, but with a deep sense of contentment and satisfaction.

We see four dimensions that gave Abraham’s life fullness and allowed him to conclude his years in this exemplary manner.

First, he made peace with the unpredictability of life. Called from Ur of the Chaldees, Abraham left his stable life and became a nomadic wanderer in obedience to God’s call. He never was a king or military general, nor a monarch or prince. He was a common man, made remarkable because of his calling, courage, and choices. At each stage of his life he maintained a peaceful attitude of trust (Gen. 15).

Second, he managed the diverse relationships of his life. Abraham managed the domestic interactions with his first wife, Sarah, his concubine, Hagar, then his second wife, Keturah. He daily handled the challenges of raising his sons, Ishmael and Isaac, and later daughter-in-law Rebekah, nieces, nephews, relatives, and a large, diverse line of grandchildren (Gen. 21).

Famously, he had conflicted relations with his nephew Lot, and Lot’s family and staff. He had dynamic and sometimes hostile relations with kings, and shifting relations with the citizens of Canaan, Egypt, and Sodom and Gomorrah and other cities. Though not perfect or exem-

plary, Abraham managed his relationships patiently, in a learning mode, always in light of his calling (Gen. 13).

Third, he leveraged the unintended consequences of life. A full life is not necessarily an intended life. Abraham’s life wasn’t ideal, and it didn’t proceed along expected lines. However, in each case, when experiencing nomadic wanderings, rebounding from questionable practices, attempting bold undertakings, or recuperating from failings, Abraham always moved ahead in the goodness of God. Whatever the situation—the near sacrifice of Issac, the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael, separation from Lot, intercession for Sodom and Gomorrah—Abraham sought the way of adaptability, humility, and resilience. Whether right or wrong, Abraham centered his life with tenacious trust in divine providence (Gen. 19).

Finally, Abraham responded to life events with a God-centered faith. Abraham saw his relationship with God as the North Star of his life. It gave meaning to all other events and relationships. The apostle Paul highlighted this centrality of Abraham’s relationship with God as a model of faith when he wrote: “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness” (Rom. 4:3). Abraham’s understanding of the righteousness of God given to him by faith was the ultimate stabilizing source in his life, death, and future hope (Gen. 17).

May Abraham’s life’s end be a motivating inspiration to each of us. 🍀

TRANSFORMATION TIPS
DELBERT W. BAKER



ABRAHAM SAW HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AS THE NORTH STAR OF HIS LIFE.

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

WHEN AWESOME WASN'T ENOUGH

Experiencing the fear of God in the wilderness

BY ANDREA JAKOBSONS

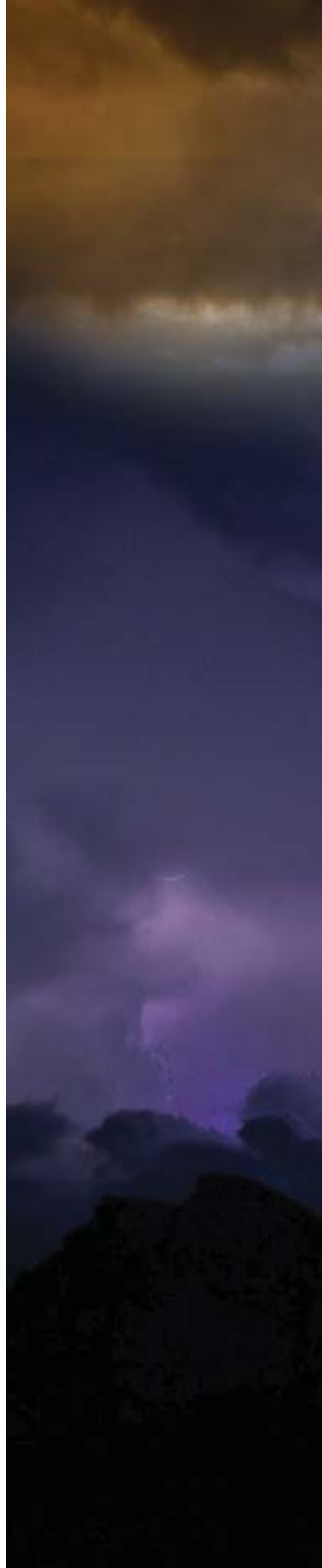
How do I connect with a God who is the Creator of the universe? Should I relate to Him as my buddy? Should I treat Him as my go-to guy? Interestingly, when the Bible tells us how to relate to God, one phrase appears over and over: “Fear God.” What does that really mean?

Of all the rooms in my grandparent’s third-story apartment, I remember best the living room, mainly because of a picture that hung on the wall. Actually, I don’t remember the picture itself, just the words written across it. They read: “Fear God and give Him glory.”

One day we visited our grandparents, and I asked, “Dad, what does it mean to fear God?” I can still hear myself asking that question. I don’t know why it has stuck in my memory, because I don’t really remember when and how I learned most biblical concepts. But I do remember this one. Perhaps because it was such an intriguing subject to a kid who had been taught that God is love. Why fear Him?

THE RIGHT FEAR

My dad told me that “fearing God” doesn’t mean to be scared of God, and to tremble or cower before Him in fear. Instead, it means





Is it possible that Moses understood that true holiness can only come from being in the presence of God?

to hold Him in high regard and respect Him. Other descriptors would be to be in awe of Him and to treat Him with reverence. Throughout Scripture, whenever God reveals Himself or sends His angel, people fall to the ground in fear. Each time, they are told, “Do not fear.” Clearly God doesn’t want us to be afraid of Him. Rather, when we are told to “fear God,” we look at a loving, holy, and powerful God who wants us to know Him.

One story has especially puzzled me when it comes to the concept of the “fear of God.” The story is found in Exodus 19 and 20. It appears that in this story God *does* want Israel to fear Him, to be scared, and to tremble before Him. If so, why?

AT THE MOUNTAIN

Three months had passed since the Israelites had left Egypt and had arrived in the Wilderness of Sinai. When they settled at the foot of the mountain, God sent a message to the people through Moses: “If you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people. . . . And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex. 19:5, 6).¹

The people answered God: “All that the Lord has spoken we will do” (verse 8).

God knew that their pledge was just a promise they made in the “heat of the moment.” It wasn’t a wholehearted commitment, as evidenced by the golden calf episode a short time later. With Moses not being around, they started worshipping a golden idol. Thankfully, however, God never gives up on His people. It was time for God to do something they hadn’t seen before; time for them to experience more of who God really is.

God told Moses to consecrate the people, because on the third day He would meet them at the mountain. God wanted Israel to sense the importance of this moment. Israel had to wash up and refrain from any sexual activity. To add to the sacredness of the encounter with God, Moses also built a barrier under God’s instructions to prevent anyone from coming up the mountain and irreverently “gaze at the Lord.” Apparently, some in the camp of the Israelites had little respect toward God or anything godly.

The long-awaited day finally arrived. On the third day, God came down to meet His people. The mountain was noisy. It was covered in smoke and a thick cloud while thunder and lightning struck

over and over as if to tear the mountain apart. Then the trumpet started to blow. The shofar started softly, then grew steadily in intensity. The noise was deafening, and the whole mountain shook. The people, who stood close to the mountain, were terrified. They trembled in fear.

Then everything went quiet, and God spoke. Israel heard God speak as He shared the Ten Commandments. The people had been brought close to the mountain when God came down, but we are told that by the end the people “stood afar off.” They had retreated because of the terrifying encounter.

Ellen White describes the scene: “The awful power of God’s utterances seemed more than their trembling hearts could bear. For as God’s great rule of right was presented before them, they realized, as never before, the offensive character of sin, and their own guilt in the sight of a holy God. They shrank away from the mountain in fear and awe.”²

Following this experience, the Israelites approached Moses, pleading with him to speak to God by himself, then relate to them what God had said. They didn’t want to go through the same experience again. They didn’t want to hear God or meet Him again, because His presence was terrifying. The story ends with Moses telling the people “Do not fear.” Then he continued: “For God has come to test you, and that *His fear* may be before you, so that you may not sin” (Ex. 20:20).

BE SAFE—AND HOLY

Reading this story made me wonder about God’s purpose in presenting Himself in such a powerful way—and doing so in order that they may not sin. What was God trying to accomplish by allowing the Israelites to experience fear and trepidation? Perhaps God was acting like a father who sees his little 2-year-old boy about to wander across a busy street. In that moment he’s not going to speak softly. He will shout: “Stop! Don’t move!” God used this powerful experience as a way of getting Israel’s attention.

God demonstrates His power and His holiness. He desires for His people to pay attention to how they live—and “not sin.” He wants His people to be holy.

I vividly remember the time one of my friends called me “Ellen White”—and it was not meant as a compliment. Unfortunately, today holiness is frowned upon, even mocked. Being holy means being separate, set apart. It doesn’t mean that we

are perfect, but that instead we choose God, act in a way that glorifies Him, and when we mess up we turn to Him for forgiveness and transformation. In fact, we can’t make ourselves holy. We can be holy only because God’s presence in our lives makes us holy.

Intriguingly, there’s one part of the story I have passed over every time I read it. The passage ends with the following description: “The people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was” (Ex. 20:21). I had never paid attention to the contrast this verse presents. Hebrews 12:21 informs us that during this experience Moses himself exclaimed, “I am trembling with fear” (NIV). His experience was no different than the rest of the assembly. They all trembled because they were in awe of a holy God and their own sinfulness was stark in their minds as God presented the law. Yet the experience of God’s holy presence being manifested drew Moses to God even more. Unfortunately, the people had the opposite reaction and instead went away from God.

Is it possible that Moses understood that true holiness comes only from being in the presence of God? That’s what God was really telling them. *Spend time with Me! I will make you holy when you walk with Me.* He was trying to get their attention so they would desire to be with Him.

THE FEAR-GOD LIFESTYLE

This story teaches us that to fear God is a lifestyle. “To fear God” means to cultivate God’s presence in our everyday life, to make our decisions in respect to Him and His law. It corresponds to loving and obeying God. There is nothing extraordinary or magic in the phrase. It simply means to enjoy His presence constantly, and be aware that He is here to help as a caring father watches over his child. We can admire, relate to, and follow such a God.

When God says “Fear Me,” He wants us to draw near to Him so He can work in us. Has God been trying to get our attention lately? He wants to make us holy by His presence. How will we respond? 🌿

¹ Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

² Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890), pp. 309, 310.

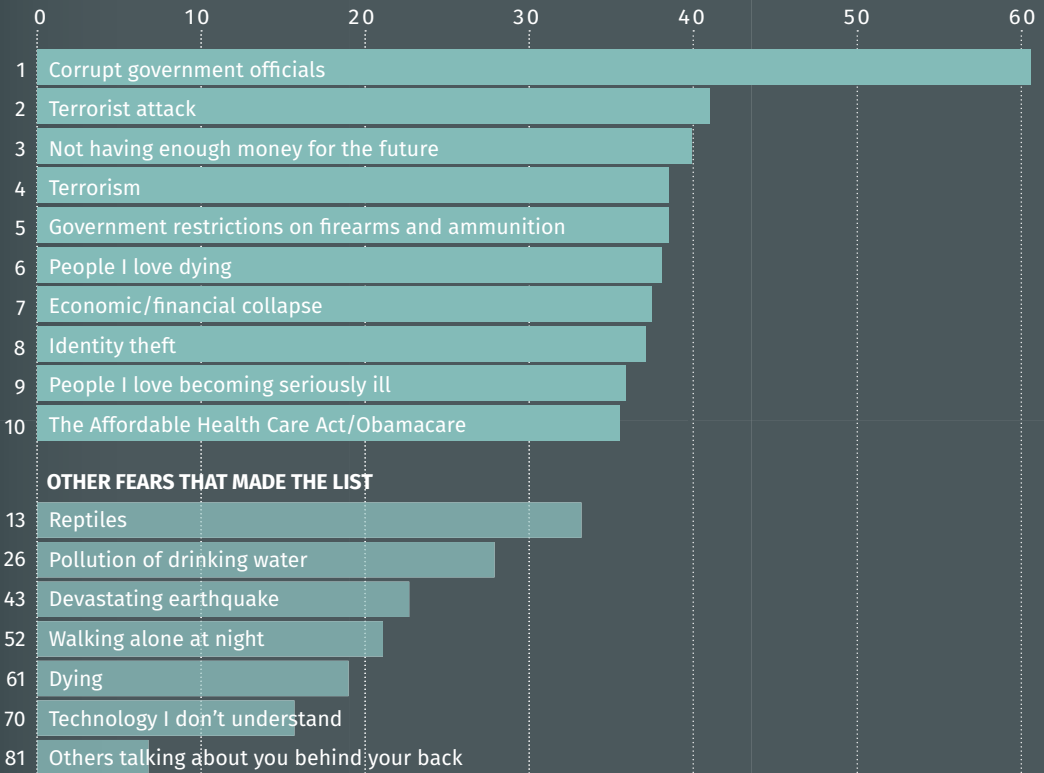
Andrea Jakobsons serves as an associate pastor at Spencerville Adventist Church in Maryland.

WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF?

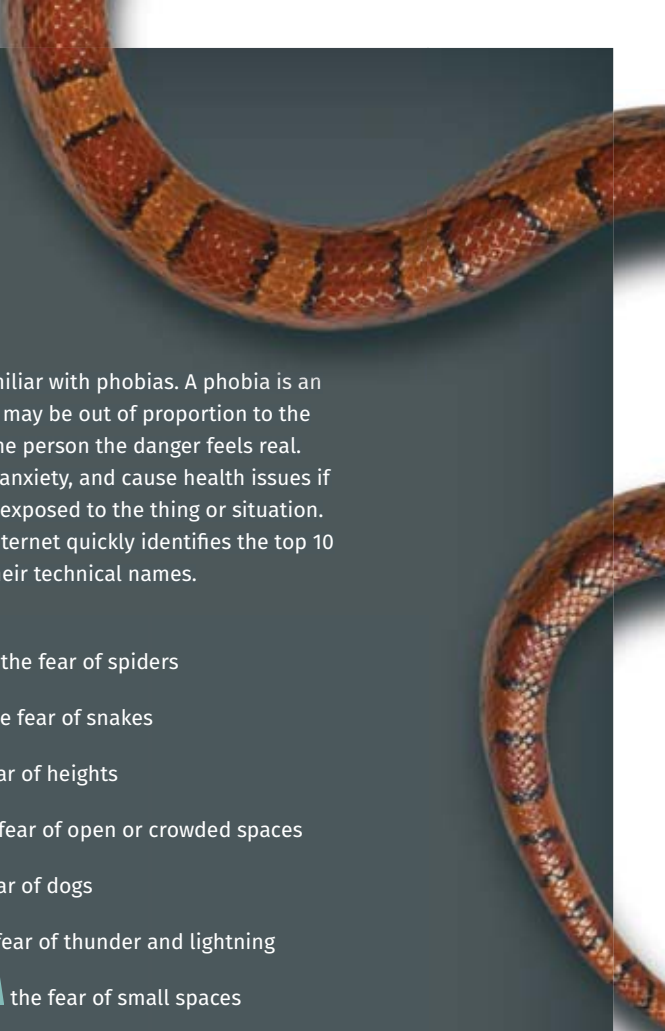
For the past three years Chapman University, located in Orange, California, has surveyed Americans about their top fears. The most recent survey, conducted in April 2016, asked a random sample of 1,511 adults* their level of about 80 different fears categorized within 11 domains: crime, economic, environment, government, illness and death, immigration/demographic changes, human-made disasters, natural disasters, personal fears, relationships, and technology. Below are the top 10 fears for which the highest percentage of people surveyed reported being “Afraid” or “Very Afraid.”

TOP 10 FEARS

PERCENT AFRAID OR VERY AFRAID



*AGE 18 AND OVER, ENGLISH LANGUAGE SURVEY



Perhaps you are more familiar with phobias. A phobia is an intense fear reaction that may be out of proportion to the potential danger, but to the person the danger feels real. Phobias can cause worry, anxiety, and cause health issues if a person with a phobia is exposed to the thing or situation.

A quick search of the Internet quickly identifies the top 10 phobias, complete with their technical names.

ARACHNOPHOBIA the fear of spiders

OPHIDIOPHOBIA the fear of snakes

ACROPHOBIA the fear of heights

AGORAPHOBIA the fear of open or crowded spaces

CYNOPHOBIA the fear of dogs

ASTRAPHOBIA the fear of thunder and lightning

CLAUSTROPHOBIA the fear of small spaces

MYSOPHOBIA the fear of germs

AEROPHOBIA the fear of flying

GLOSSOPHOBIA the fear of public speaking

Other common phobias include:

Nyctophobia—the fear of the dark

Trypanophobia—the fear of medical needles

Nosophobia—the fear of contracting a disease

Coulrophobia—the fear of clowns

Dentophobia—the fear of the dentist or dental procedures





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ALSO IN THIS SECTION:

- » DIDN'T MEAN TO SCARE YOU
- » FACING DOWN FEAR
- » THE FAITH OF A CHILD

CONNECT

BEYOND SMOKE AND MIRRORS

Celebrating the power of Resurrection morning



“And face it—if there’s no resurrection for Christ, everything we’ve told you is smoke and mirrors, and everything you’ve staked your life on is smoke and mirrors. Not only that, but we would be guilty of telling a string of barefaced lies about God, all these affidavits we passed on to you verifying that God raised up Christ—sheer fabrications, if there’s no resurrection. If corpses can’t be raised, then Christ wasn’t, because he was indeed dead. And if Christ wasn’t raised, then all you’re doing is wandering about in the dark, as lost as ever. It’s even worse for those who died hoping in Christ and resurrection, because they’re already in their graves. If all we get out of Christ is a little inspiration for a few short years, we’re a pretty sorry lot” (1 Cor. 15:14-19, Message).¹



BY GERALD A. KLINGBEIL

Based on all we know, the Corinthian church was a complex church.² Most of the believers had joined the nascent Christian movement from Gentile backgrounds. Thieves, swindlers, drunkards, idolaters, and adulterers—the Corinthian congregation apparently included them all (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Idol worship had been deeply ingrained in them (1 Cor. 8:7; 12:2); temple prostitution, so normal to Greeks and Romans, had been part of everyday life (1 Cor. 6:12-20).

Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians reflects many of these challenges. It's not easy to transform people with a deeply ingrained worldview. In fact, the new birth Jesus spoke about in John 3 suggests a complete reboot. We need to be born again—not just adapt practices, tweak opinions, or slightly adjust convictions.

Now imagine this assembly of sinners becoming a "family." Romans and Greeks settled disputes in secular law courts; Jews were forbidden to do so. How would Christian brothers and sisters resolve disputes (cf. 1 Cor. 6:1-6)? Theirs was not a beautiful temple, or an impressive synagogue with a well-established administrative structure. They met in house churches. Scholars estimate a group of about 50 members spread out all over the city.³ Without Paul's presence, they struggled to keep the faith. And they tended to forget what they had already learned.



Has God really forgotten
His beloved Son? Does He
plead deafness when His
children suffer and cry
and wonder where He is?



BELIEVING IN VAIN

In his letter Paul reminds the Christians in Corinth that they had already received this gospel (1 Cor. 15:1); that they had been saved by this gospel (verse 2). It seems, however, that established gospel truth had been replaced by disturbing “new light” in Corinth. Some claimed that there was no resurrection (verse 12).

Christianity without the Resurrection does not make sense. Paul’s preaching surely included this most essential of all gospel truth: the God-man Jesus died for our sins on the cross (in itself foolishness to Gentiles; cf. 1 Cor. 1:18)—and then He rose again on the third day.

Paul’s passion to preach Christ crucified and risen shines through every word he writes in his letters. This is the heart of his message. If this would not be true, whom had he really seen on his way to Damascus? Who had appeared to the disciples prior to the Ascension? Had it all been just a big mistake?

CAN YOU SEE THE CROSS?

Paul’s urgent (and logical) appeal to the cross and the resurrection of Jesus remind us of the centrality of the cross.

So, just for a moment, let’s reflect on this monument of shame and grace and Jesus’ last moments leading to the cross.

We find the Master kneeling in front of His disciples. Washing their feet and sharing a meal, He teaches them invaluable lessons of service and grace (John 13:1-17). “Eat” and “drink” connect to the symbolism of the Passover celebration, yet also anticipate death and dying and another glorious meal in the Father’s kingdom (Matt. 26:26-29). Prayer at Gethsemane tells us that this is not a show or charades. “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me,” cries Jesus in anguish, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will” (verse 39).⁴

Ellen White offers valuable insights into the inner battles of Jesus: “As Christ felt His unity with the Father broken up, He feared that in His human nature He would be unable to endure the coming conflict with the powers of darkness. In the wilderness of temptation the destiny of the human race had been at stake. Christ was then conqueror. Now the tempter had come for the last fearful struggle. For this he had been preparing during

the three years of Christ’s ministry. Everything was at stake with him.”⁵

Everything hangs in the balance—and the disciples fall asleep again and again. Peter denies the Master three times; the crowds, which some days before had shouted “Hosanna to the Son of David,” now scream “Crucify him!” Forgotten, lonely, and bruised, Jesus finds Himself carrying a cross through the streets of Jerusalem. People yell at Him, pull His hair, spit in His face, beat His bleeding body. Surrounded by an angry crowd, Jesus feels utterly abandoned.

He is unable to carry the cross any farther, so Roman guards force Simon from Cyrene to carry the heavy burden. Following their arrival at Golgotha, soldiers drive nails through the wrists and feet of Jesus. They breathe heavily as they push the cross into an upright position. As it crashes into the prepared hole in the ground, Jesus feels unimaginable pain. Hanging between heaven and earth, He hears and physically feels the scorn and mockery of His enemies.

A strange darkness settles over the area. “Eli, Eli, lemah sabachthani,” the bystanders hear Jesus cry out with a loud voice (Matt. 27:46). “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Has God really forgotten His beloved Son? Does He plead deafness when His children suffer and cry and wonder where He is?

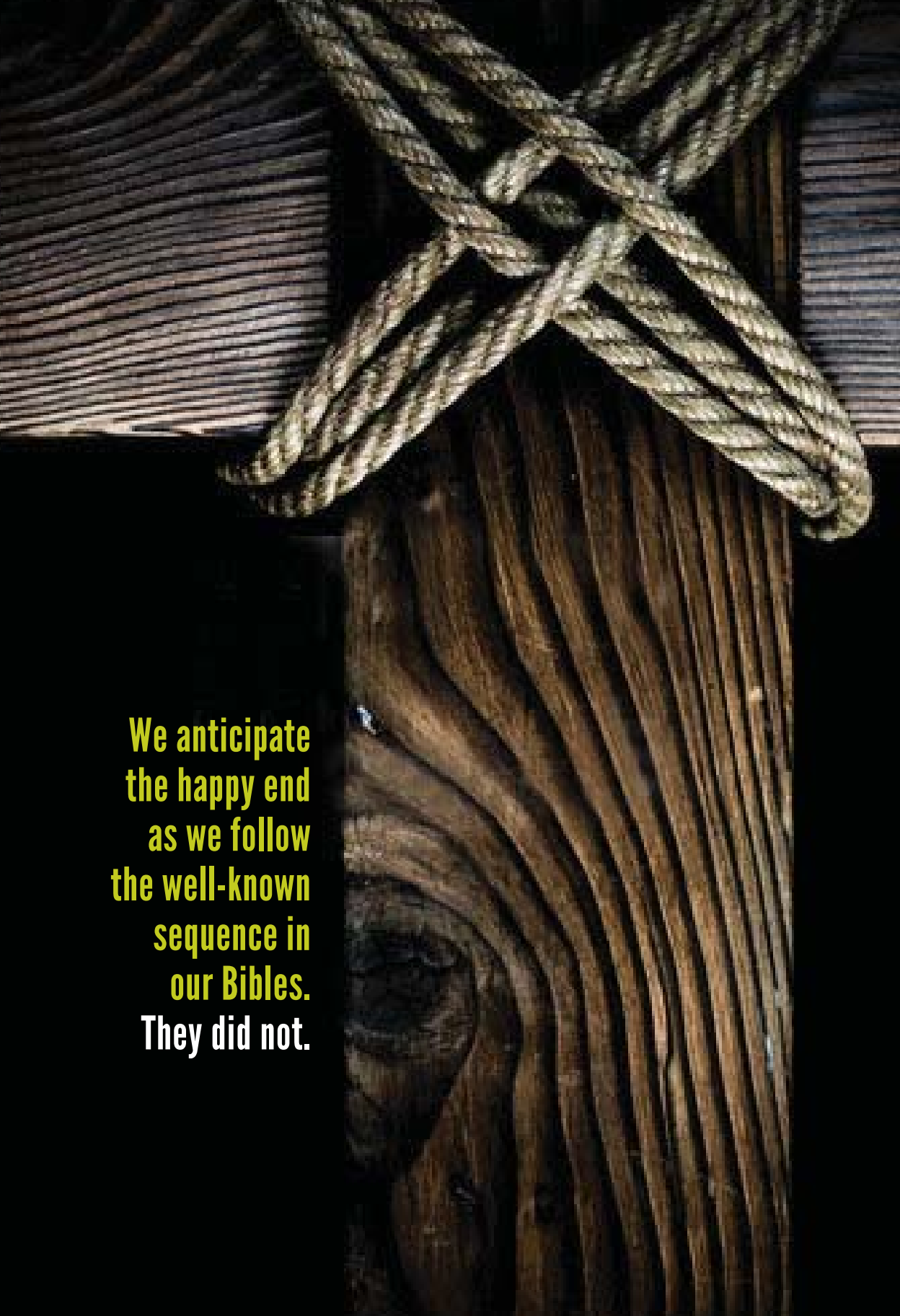
Is this the end? Are these the last words, dark and doubtful, we hear of the Son of God?

No, there is one more. Jesus’ final “It is finished” (John 19:30) proclaims victory and promises more.

RESURRECTION MORNING

The rest of the story of that fateful Friday is quickly told. Following His death, Jesus’ lifeless body is hastily taken down from the cross and laid in a nearby tomb that had been prepared for somebody else. Sabbath does not offer any rest for the anguished hearts of the disciples. Yet Jesus rests peacefully in His tomb, awaiting a new morning.

Sunday morning, however, changes everything. Accompanied by a violent earthquake, an angel frightens the Roman guards, rolls away the huge stone covering the opening of the tomb, and calls forth the Son of God. Ellen White describes this scene vividly: “The soldiers see him [the angel] removing the stone as he would a pebble, and hear



**We anticipate
the happy end
as we follow
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our Bibles.
They did not.**

him cry, Son of God, come forth; Thy Father calls Thee. They see Jesus come forth from the grave, and hear Him proclaim over the rent sepulcher, 'I am the resurrection, and the life.'⁶

When the women (and later the disciples) see the empty tomb, their hearts tremble with fear. Who has taken their Master? Where are the remains of their beloved Teacher? Then they hear it: "Do not be afraid," the angel proclaims triumphantly, "for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said" (Matt. 28:5, 6).

He is not here, for He is risen, as He said. I wonder if the followers of Jesus caught the final "as He said." Had they *really* listened as the Master had repeatedly foretold His death and resurrection (Matt. 20:19; Mark 9:31; Luke 9:22)? Do we listen when the words don't make sense as we hear the living Word talking into our lives?

We cannot truly imagine the rush of adrenaline and the joyous realization the disciples must have felt. We know the story from the end. We anticipate the happy end as we follow the well-known sequence in our Bibles. They did not. Yet when the realization finally hits home they know first that *everything has changed*. Death has been vanquished; the serpent's head has been crushed; righteousness and mercy have finally met.

WHEN WE ANTICIPATE RESURRECTION MORNING

The telephone rang noisily early one February morning in our home in Libertador San Martín in Argentina. At the time, I served as a professor of Old Testament at River Plate Adventist University. This was our eighth year of mission service in South America.

The voice on the other end sounded familiar, yet the message did not make any sense. "Gerald, you must come home immediately; I just received news that your father has died." My mother's voice crackled slightly; I heard tears and pain.

Life changes quickly when we receive this kind of news. Priorities shift in nanoseconds, and what seemed urgent and important at the outset of the day suddenly becomes insignificant and inconsequential. I had last seen my father during our annual leave in Germany eight months earlier. He had been in great health and had just celebrated his retirement a couple years earlier. Now he was dead. He would never know our third daughter,

who was born at the end of that year. Death had separated us, it seemed, forever.

BACK TO CORINTH

Not forever, I hear Paul say to the troubled flock of believers in Corinth. Christ has been raised from the dead, offering us the sure hope that we, too (and those we loved), will be raised. His resurrection is the down payment on eternal life for those who believe in the Son. He who shouted "I am the resurrection and the life" will also speak victory and comfort into our hearts. He is the firstfruit of grace completed. He is the promise of life eternal. He is the balm of Gilead that heals our hurting hearts.

Even in the cold, stark reality of death the hope of a resurrection "hello" is not smoke-and-mirror charades. Absolutely not; for we have the down payment on the blessed hope, Jesus Himself, who died, rose, and now lives to make intercession. "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command," writes Paul in another letter, "with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4:16-18).

No, we have not staked our lives on smoke and mirrors. Resurrection morning changed everything. He rose to assure us that we will rise too.

"But the truth is that Christ has been raised up, the first in a long legacy of those who are going to leave the cemeteries" (1 Cor. 15:20, Message). 🌟

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² This summary is based on the data discussed in S. J. Hafemann, "Corinthians, Letters to the," in *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1993), pp. 164-179.

³ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1983), p. 158.

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations have been taken from *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

⁵ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898), pp. 686, 687.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 780.

Gerald A. Klingbeil is an associate editor of *Adventist Review* who anxiously awaits resurrection morning. It can't come too soon!

DIDN'T MEAN TO SCARE YOU

Should Christians be afraid . . . ever?

KIM PECKHAM

The other day I was scared of a grocery bag. Really. The bag was blowing across the lawn, and when I first caught a glimpse of this thing charging toward me, I thought I was being attacked by a rabid badger or something. I ended up with much more adrenaline than is usually necessary for dealing with trash.

It was embarrassing. Especially when I thought about my friend Sam. Sam is a new Adventist. I know this is wrong, but I like to talk to him about his former life of sin. It is absolutely epic. You could program a whole season of HBO out of his time in the 1980s.

It reminds me of those Christian books describing the testimony of a guy who was in a gang, or a girl who was in a rock band. The chapters before the baptism were always able to grip the attention better than the chapters at the end, right?

Anyway, the thing about Sam is that he has been in horrifying situations and never seems to get



scared. Like the time in the Marines when he did a HALO jump at 30,000 feet over a jungle filled with people who wanted to kill him. "It was a rush," he recalls.

Or the time he waded into a motorcycle gang after they touched his Harley. "I thought I was probably going to die, but you don't mess with my bike," he says.

And we can't forget the time he faced down a guy holding a pistol in the club where he was a bouncer. "If you want to take me on, you're gonna be sorry, gun or no gun," he told the drunk.

In his stories Sam faces death with steely-eyed confidence. In contrast, after being raised my whole life in the faith of Jesus, I can be scared of anything. I worry about heart disease, big government, and bugs crawling in my mouth while I sleep.

TRUE OR FALSE: CHRISTIANS ARE FEARLESS

Isn't this wrong? Shouldn't Christians be fearless? Didn't early Christians face death with the suave demeanor of James Bond? "So you're throwing me to the lions? Pity. I'm really more of a dog person."

The Bible seems to tell us that believers should be brave. "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil," said David (Ps. 23:4).

As for me, I can't even walk to the car without fear. I'm thinking of a Sabbath afternoon when we went to visit some friends at a cabin in the Appalachian Mountains. It was beautiful. We ate food cooked over an open fire and talked until the sun went down. Our friends pointed to where they had seen a bear. "Really? How interesting," I said.

Night covered the mountain when my wife, Lori, and I decided to head back to the car. A narrow trail wound through the dark woods for about a quarter mile to the parking lot. We chatted as we made progress through the trees. But we talked in a louder-than-normal tone of voice. Then Lori suggested we sing "When the Saints Go Marching In." We belted out the lyrics with vigor. We sang as if our life depended on it. We hoped that the noise we made would scare the bears before they could smell how delicious we were to eat.

KNOWING AND FEELING

In theory, Christians have nothing to be afraid of. We know this time on earth will pass from view as quickly as chocolate cake at a church potluck. Even death should not scare us, because

We know this time on earth will pass from view as quickly as chocolate cake at a church potluck.



we know that it is a rest from all our trials. No more pain. No more sorrow. No more telemarketing calls.

But what we know and what we feel are two different things.

Let's talk about a boy in the South who finds a snake. If it's a copperhead, the boy will know he should leave it alone. But if he recognizes it as a harmless garter snake, he may catch it. His level of fear depends on the top level of the brain. This is a function of data processing.

Now, when the boy's mother finds the snake in her bathtub, her reaction may come from a different part of the brain. It is an instinctive 220-volt burst of fear that overwhelms any high-minded analysis about whether or not the snake is dangerous. This is a function of emotion. (By the way, Mom, I know a lot of years have passed, but I'm still sorry about the snake.)

Fear of spiders and fear of heights spring from some deep, mysterious web of human experience. Other fears appear to come from the tidal pull of culture. For example, every modern mother is afraid of child kidnappers. They don't even let a 10-year-old wait for the school bus without deploying a Secret Service detail.

This is in marked contrast to when I was a kid. I don't think our parents ever worried about us as we roamed suburbia. They got upset only if we were late for supper. "If you end up a long way from home at suppertime," they might have said, "catch a ride home with a stranger."

LIVING WITH FEAR

Just as we learn fear, we can also unlearn it. At least at the top parts of our brain. This is where we hear sermons and study the Bible, and this is where we learn to push back against fear. This is where we learn that God can be trusted to work all things for good.

I wouldn't suggest that conversion wipes away all fears instantly and completely. David, with all his talk about walking through the valley of death, had his clenching fears. Abraham, God's vice president in charge of starting monotheistic religions, was afraid that Pharaoh was going to kill him.

Then there was Jesus. Even the perfect Son of God felt that fear that comes up from the basement of the brain like a beast. In the garden of Gethsemane, He shuddered to think of losing His

connection to the Father forever.

Fear is part of the sin problem in the same way that indigestion is part of eating too many Stripbles. That is not to say that our struggle with fear is hopeless.

My friend Diane tells about going on a mission trip. Flying through the upper atmosphere in what is basically a tinfoil tube makes her nervous, really nervous. As she boarded the plane to her mission destination, she found herself sitting next to an off-duty flight attendant. She had professional help, in a way of speaking.

On the way back she sat next to a man who had just reconciled with his girlfriend and was full of the joy of life. His singing and loud talking annoyed the other passengers, but was just the distraction Diane needed. She believes that God, in His mercy, created a detour around her fears.

THE CHRISTIAN ADVANTAGE

Which brings me back to Sam. Last year his wife, Laura, was admitted to the hospital. Her whole body was shutting down. "I don't think she'll make it," said the doctor.

Sam looked at Laura, lying unconscious on the hospital bed. Eight different IV machines were arrayed around the bed, trying to beat back the infections. "She was my soul mate," says Sam.

They had gone to the same tattoo artist. They had stayed sober for each other. They had raised two kids. This tough man realized a fear like nothing he had felt before. It made him sick in his stomach.

Sam sat beside Laura and held her hand. The machines beeped, and the ventilator inhaled and exhaled. There was a time Sam would not have known how to deal with this great dread forming within him. But now his new faith gave him a clue. While he held her hand, he prayed. He prayed for days. He prayed for weeks. He prayed until Laura recovered enough to come home.

When it comes to fear, Christians have an advantage. We experience moments of grace that distract us or dampen our fears. We have prayer. We also have a hope that can help us see beyond the terror. But all of us—even those as brave as Sam—are waiting for a cure. 🌱

Kim Peckham is a freelance communication specialist and the author of *Stop Laughing: I'm Trying to Make a Point*. He and his wife, Lori, attend Willow Brook Seventh-day Adventist Church in Boonsboro, Maryland.



FACING DOWN FEAR

*Collective wisdom
from young adults*


**GINGER KETTING-WELLER
AND JIM C. WELLER**

Threats and fears have plagued human beings ever since sin entered the world. In these fast-changing times it seems that just as we figure out how to manage one set of threats, the context and culture change, and the next generation finds itself navigating new fears. During the twentieth century children and young adults in the United States worried about nuclear disaster, about wars, about friendships, finding love, and fitting in. Now,

in the twenty-first century, what fears do young adults face?

In pondering this question, we thought we'd ask the experts, young adults themselves. We ran a survey inviting university students to answer two questions: (1) What are your top fears? and (2) What strategies do you use to deal with fear?

Although this was an informal research study, we learned some interesting things from the nearly 90 young adults who responded to the survey. It may be helpful to note that not all of those responding to the survey were Seventh-day Adventists. However, all were students enrolled in a Seventh-day Adventist university, and they were candid in writing about their fears.



Young adults think constantly about the future, and they have a sense that the future is not secure.

“WHAT ARE YOUR TOP FEARS?”

The greatest fear identified by young adults is the fear of failure. Young adults—particularly those in college or graduate school—think constantly about the future, and they have a sense that the future is not secure. They are afraid of failing in life, failing in their academic studies, failing in meeting their parents’ expectations, failing at finding love, and failing to meet the goals they set for themselves.

The popular culture, their parents, and their teachers set high expectations for them. One student mentioned the fear of “feeling like you can do more but simply not achieving it.” Their characterizations of failure were poignant: “Not living up to my full potential,” “Being mediocre,” “Never becoming a successful adult,” “Not making a difference in the world.”

In a world in which young adults can collect constant electronic and immediate affirmation, and in which they set high value on what others think of them, they develop unrealistically high

expectations of what their own lives should become. The fear of not realizing those expectations is a deep and abiding one.

The second most frequently mentioned fear is that of death. But it wasn’t their own death that young adults most frequently feared, although a few were afraid of dying in painful ways. More often they mentioned being afraid of the death of a family member, or fear of a loved one suffering and dying. “My parents dying before I do,” said one respondent. “Losing my children,” said another. “Losing a family member while I am abroad.” Millennials typically experience close and abiding relationships with their families and friends, and the thought of losing any of these treasured people creates great dread.

The other fears mentioned by young adults were far less frequent than failure and death, but they are interesting: heights, spiders, bugs, snakes, rejection, spiritual loss, rape and violence, financial distress, and public speaking.

There was just one mention of “end of the world,” and being among those who are lost when Jesus comes again. But not a single mention of some of the deep eschatological fears voiced by some of Adventism’s previous generations, such as the close of probation and standing up for one’s faith in the face of laws limiting religious freedom.

“HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH FEAR?”

We also asked young adults for their approaches to dealing with fear. Responses revealed a handful of strategies in common, plus some that were less frequently mentioned but apparently effective.

Young adults’ most-cited strategy for dealing with fear was turning to another human being for support, consultation, and social strength. They wrote of seeking out close family members, spouses, friends, and pastors to talk with them, advise them, and comfort them. “I am close with my family, which allows me to open up and share my fears,” wrote one. Another wrote, “[I] surround myself with people I love, call someone if I am upset.”

Almost as often as they mentioned seeking out emotional support to face fear, young adults responded that they deal with their fears by avoiding them. They distract themselves with other activities, stay away from things that would

Our fidelity to God, and our service to others, is always more important than the appearance of success.

threaten or tempt them, and choose not to focus on their fears. One individual mentioned singing hymns, and another said, "Working on a personal project with my hands helps. The best cure to sorrow is work." Others pursue strategies to prevent their fears from becoming real. "I plan ahead," said one young adult, "and make good decisions."

Many respondents mentioned deliberately choosing constructive attitudes in the face of fear. "I stop thought patterns before they stop me," said one. "Sometimes I just picture Jesus and sunflowers as a happy thought," said a respondent who indicated having survived a trauma in life. Another wrote: "Every day I try to consciously remind myself how blessed and fortunate I am. The mind is a muscle; if trained through daily effort to be positive, it will be positive. This effort helps remove fear from my life by reminding me how many good things happen every day as opposed to the bad. Just knowing that the vast majority of what happens in my life is good helps reduce my fear of the few bad things that happen from time to time."

Again and again these young adults indicated that they deliberately choose attitudes to help them successfully fight their fears.

Young adults also frequently mentioned turning to prayer, meditation, and dependence on a relationship with God. "I pray to make the nightmares go away," said the student who had experienced a personal trauma. "[I] pray until I fall asleep," said another young adult who had fears related to physical safety and sustaining a faithful marriage. A student who feared the death of loved ones wrote, "There is no strategy to deal with death, other than taking God at His word that one day all things will be made new. Humans were not designed to die or deal with the deaths of those we love. It's entirely unnatural, and, as hard as we try, we cannot healthfully confront death without trust in God."

Another strategy young adults used was that of personal effort, simply facing up to their fears and working to overcome perceived threats. "Do something and get progress done," said one who feared failure. "Make myself qualified for more opportunities," said another who feared not succeeding in career and never attaining financial stability. "Give my best with everything I do and be OK with it," said another. It seems that paralysis in the face of fear is not an option for most of these young adults.

A smattering of other interesting approaches for dealing with fear were shared. These included exercising, being willing to fail and learn from the experience, breathing techniques, writing in a journal, seeing a therapist, having a sense of humor, making music, and going to church. Only a few mentioned alcohol and substance abuse, or of turning to self-harm in face of fear.

A FEW SUGGESTIONS

The collective wisdom of these young adults impressed and touched us. Drawing from their responses and adding the guidance of Scripture, we suggest the following strategies for dealing with fear:

Arm yourself. God's Word is full of wisdom for dealing with our fears as He provides for our needs. Spend time collecting and meditating on key passages. Don't overlook God's invitations to rest and recalibrate. In times of worship and reflection the Holy Spirit can pull us back from things that take our energy and prevent us from developing our strengths.

As His words sink deep into our hearts, our lives will be changed. God, speaking through Isaiah, said, "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Isa. 41:10). Other helpful Bible verses include 2 Timothy 1:7; Romans 8:15; 1 John 4:18; Matthew 6:33; and Matthew 11:29, 30.

Diversify your support system. "Where there is no guidance the people fall, but in abundance of counselors there is victory" (Prov. 11:14, NASB).^{*} Seek out a variety of advisers, listen, then chart a course based on their collective wisdom. This same principle may work when

seeking affirmation. When we move in various circles, we have more sources of consultation and feedback.

Diversify your efforts. Solomon wisely said, “Sow your seed in the morning and do not be idle in the evening, for you do not know whether morning or evening sowing will succeed, or whether both of them alike will be good” (Eccl. 11:6, NASB). Since the future is uncertain, let’s work diligently at those things that exercise our strengths. But let’s avoid weakening our impact by trying too many things at the same time. It’s been said, “You can do anything, but you can’t do everything.”

Avoid dependence on click approval. A “like” in social media brings a sudden release of dopamine that provides a tiny burst of pleasure and a brief sense of belonging. Dopamine is the self-produced chemical that is also released by other addictive behaviors such as smoking, drinking, gaming, and gambling. We know that teenage drinking arrests social development. The affirmations found in social media, as pleasurable as they can be, may keep us from building the off-screen social networks we need as we face real-life threats, disappointments, and trials.

Fortify yourself. No matter how much we know about managing fear, our emotions can crowd out our best thinking and allow fear and dread back into our hearts. When facing an event, an evaluation, or other situation that leaves us vulnerable to the judgments of others, we can fortify ourselves with the encouragement found in Hebrews 12:1-3. Jesus ignored the shame (emotional/social baggage) of the cross as He focused on the joy of what would be accomplished. We are encouraged to follow His example. So try this:

Visualize. See through the anxiety-producing event to reconnect with why it is coming. What is to be gained? Can we take the perspective of the people we will be serving, performing for, or communicating with? How can we meet their needs and share with them a taste of God’s glory? Our fidelity to God, and our service to others, is always more important than the appearance of success.



Endure. Focus on the vision; simply hold on. Time will pass, and we will still be here. Twenty-four hours (or a week, or a month) from now it will be over, and we will continue with our lives. In fact, Ephesians 6:10-20 tells us all about the weapons of spiritual warfare, but it never actually tells us to fight. Four times it tells us to “stand.” When times are confusing, we can plant our feet and let time pass as we wait for clarity. Often it is seen in the rearview mirror.

Remember this encouragement from Joshua 1:9: “Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (NASB).

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

Ginger Ketting-Weller is dean of the School of Education at La Sierra University in Riverside, California. She has been an educator for 31 years. **Jim C. Weller** is principal of Loma Linda Academy Junior High. He has been an educator for 37 years.

THE FAITH OF A CHILD

It was time for my weekly catch-up phone talk with the nephews. *How they were growing up!* Jonathan, the oldest, is now 10 and into soccer and swimming.

Stephen, at 8, loves soccer, swimming, basketball—and any other activity that involves running. Joshua, 3, can kick the ball with amazing accuracy and strength.

Our conversations focused on their school and sports, punctuated with shouts, excitement, and other indefinable background noise. I struggled to make sense of what they were saying amid so much activity. As always, Caleb's turn came last. Not because he was the youngest,

but because he wanted to savor "Auntie Jill time" all to himself.

At 5 he is the most articulate, the most able to express how he feels inside. Grabbing the phone, he carried it into the other room. The background noise receded to a dull roar.

"Hi, Caleb! How are you today?"

"Oh, Auntie Jill, I'm so happy!"

I chuckled, wondering what new Lego set had made him happy today. His next words, however, startled me out of my complacency.

"I'm happy because I asked Jesus into my life."

Silence swirled around me. *Had I heard correctly? Did he just give his life to Jesus?*

"Auntie Jill? Are you there?"

I tried to keep my voice steady. "Yes, sweetie, I'm here. I'm so proud of you! What a big decision—and the best one you could ever make."

His childish voice prattled on. "I can't read the Bible yet, but when I want to be mean to my brothers, I just ask Jesus to help me."

Was that all there was to the Christian walk? Just ask for help?

"I love God more than anything else, and I get to talk to Him every night!"

For weeks his words lingered in my mind. *Had Caleb uncovered the essence of Christianity?*

I thought about the simplicity of his faith as I talked to a distraught woman on the phone. "If I could just know Jesus forgives me, I'd be OK," she said. "Do you think He'd accept me after what I've done?"

As she spoke, I heard a childish voice in my mind: "Auntie Jill, I'm so happy because I asked Jesus into my life!"

The next day a coworker stopped by my desk. "I'm so irritated by this other woman. I can't seem to get past her meanness!"

Again, I heard a little voice: "When I want to be mean, I just ask Jesus to help me."

Shortly afterward I received an e-mail: "I know I shouldn't because I'm married, but I'm having feelings for someone else."

As I read the e-mail and grieved for this woman's pain, again I heard Caleb's voice: "I love Jesus more than anything else!"

Is that the secret to walking with Jesus?

A childlike faith—Jesus has accepted and forgiven me.

A childlike request—Help me, Jesus! Give me victory.

A childlike love—I love only You, Jesus, above everything else.

Oh, Father, restore in me the faith of a child. 🌱

Jill Morikone is administrative assistant to the president of 3ABN, a supporting Adventist television network. She and her husband, Greg, live in southern Illinois and enjoy ministering together for Jesus.



JOURNEYS
WITH JESUS
JILL
MORIKONE

WHEN I WANT TO BE
MEAN, I JUST ASK
JESUS TO HELP ME.

ALSO IN THIS SECTION:

- » PEACE, BE STILL
- » FEAR NOT
- » CHANGE IS GOOD
- » A TELEVISION OR A KEYBOARD?
- » HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE
- » DO NOT HINDER THEM

ENGAGE

ELEGY

How a personal loss inspired art.



**WILONA KARIMABADI
WITH NICHOLAS LIVANOS**

Every academic year at Southern Adventist University ends with a showcase of the best work from students in the School of Visual Art and Design (SVAD). To open the multimedia show of fine art, graphic design, film, and animation, faculty members create a top-secret introductory film. When finally revealed, this piece sets the tone and builds anticipation for the evening to come.

In 2015 that film was *Elegy*, and it served a bigger purpose than being an opener for the end-of-year show, at least for Nicholas Livanos, as director and SVAD professor. “I got the news of my father’s death in January of 2015 and processed my grief, in part, through making the film,” he says.

The loss left him with a lot of questions. His father, Jason Livanos, had been a conscientious objector during the Vietnam War, but had broken his vow of noncombatancy by taking the lives of Vietcong in order to rescue American captives.

Late in life, when Livanos asked him about how he dealt with the trauma of the incident, his father said this: “I just don’t think about it.” Through tears, he wondered out loud if God could forgive what he had done.

“I still don’t know if my father ever reconciled his guilt with God’s loving forgiveness,” says Livanos. “But I do know that art often provides a path for asking questions that language struggles to articulate.”

A WAY TO ASK QUESTIONS

Livanos’ personal goal for the project was to wrestle with some of those hard questions, rather than just arrive at conclusions. He recalled Job’s desire to question God in the midst of his suffering, but in the Bible, God does not provide Job with direct answers.


As a result, the film is especially poetic and symbolic. There are elements left intentionally ambiguous enough for personal interpretation. For Livanos, the girl’s coin represents those things we must let go of in



Elegy director Nicholas Livanos (left), talent Rachel Rupert, and Nick Lindsay watch cinematographer David George’s shot.

**“Art often provides a path for asking questions
that language struggles to articulate.”**



A close-up shot of a hand holding a circular, textured object with a small, detailed face or figure inside. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the textures of the hand and the object.

Livanos' film, *Elegy*, is an allegory that uses stylized images of Elijah's encounter with God (1 Kings 19) to highlight the eternal struggle between light and darkness, mortality and immortality.



order to be reconciled with God. God takes our burdens on Himself, if we let him. He doesn't force grace on us.

An elegy is a sort of funeral poem, but the inspiration for this short piece doesn't begin and end with death. The imagery also evokes Elijah's encounter with God from 1 Kings 19, when God was not in the wind, the earthquake, or the fire, but in a still small voice.

At the end of the film, a whispering Hebrew voice asks the same question God asks Elijah in the cave, "What are you doing here?" "I think there is a connection between this moment and my father's story: Elijah ended up hiding in a cave because he was afraid of Jezebel, even though he had recently called down fire from heaven on Mount Carmel. He had experienced God's greatness, but had lost sight of it," says Livanos. His dad grew up an Adventist believer, but doubted God's ability to forgive his actions in war. He had experienced God's greatness, but had lost sight of it.

POETRY

The film also contains a poem, in voice-over, that incorporates text from Ecclesiastes. Solomon's lament on meaningless existence merges with Livanos' original poetry. Of course, in mourning it becomes easier to feel that life is meaningless. *Elegy*, however, makes efforts to end on a hopeful note—imagining a dramatic transformation for the lead character. She emerges at the end of the film visibly different because of her sacrifice to self. Livanos shares this same hope for the end of his father's life.

All these fine details inject an intentionality into the whole film that he hopes will move audiences. No one needs to agree with the meaning, but it is hoped that viewers take some time to think about what it means for themselves. "A lot of people worked extremely hard to make the film a reality, and each of them rose to the occasion, adding their own details and owning a piece of the story," says Livanos.

***Elegy* is now available on ARTv on Apple TV, Roku, Samsung Smart TV, Amazon Fire TV and Google Chromecast. ARTv is also available as an iOS and Android app or on the website: artv.adventistreview.org**

Production for *Elegy* took one and a half days on location with SVAD students and faculty working side by side as crew. In order to capture all the footage on such a short time line, SVAD professor and film program coordinator David George led two camera teams at once. There are a number of stunning special effects visuals, and everything was done practically on set. When you see fire, that's *real* fire, every time. Licensed pyrotechnicians helped keep the crew safe and the explosions dazzling. Makeup and wardrobe created unique looks from scratch, including blue glitter for the finale. The lead actor, SVAD graphic design alumnus Rachel Rupert, performed her own stunts—falling backward off a 15-foot tower into a foam pit below. Locations manager Tom Smith (*42, Water for Elephants*) secured an abandoned steel foundry for the primary shooting venue.

MAKING THE ROUNDS

Since its premiere at the 2015 SVAD end-of-year show, *Elegy* has made the rounds throughout the United States, connecting with Christian and nonbelieving audiences alike. At the International Christian Film Festival, Livanos was nominated for best short film director and won second place for best short film. *Elegy* earned gold elsewhere, as well as several official film festival selections.

Livanos recently re-edited the source footage into a music video for the song "Omega," by Swedish band Immanu El. "I don't know how they heard about it, but I guess they liked it. Seeing the same material take on a different tone and form was an unusual experience, but it was kind of a beautiful thing. Just at the end of its life, this film about death was reborn—you might even say 'resurrected,'" Livanos adds.

He began another collaborative student production in February. The film is still untitled, but revolves around themes of trust, faith, and the notion that we as humans must actively choose what we believe about God's character. It's also a sci-fi comedy. Livanos hopes to continue to create stories with spiritual themes that have the ability to connect with nonspiritual audiences. "After all," he says. "Jesus always used stories and illustrations like these when speaking to the crowds." 🍌

Wilona Karimabadi is an assistant editor for *Adventist Review*. **Nicholas Livanos** is a professor of film production at Southern Adventist University's School of Visual Art and Design.



FEAR NOT

What are we to do with the Bible's frightening images?

STEPHEN CHAVEZ

When I was growing up, the Second Coming was always spoken of in terms of joy and anticipation. Then why did it so often cause me nightmares?

Frankly, I didn't think I was prepared. After all, hadn't we been told Christ was returning only for those who had overcome every fault? And even if everything looked good on the outside, an investigative judgment, even now under way, would reveal all the unconfessed sin I kept hidden.

The Second Coming surely wasn't a problem for my parents, grandparents, pastors, and teachers. But based on what I'd heard in sermons and evangelistic meetings, when Jesus returned I'd be among those calling on the rocks to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb.

AN UNHEALTHY EMPHASIS

"Do not let your hearts be troubled," said Jesus. "If I go and pre-

pare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:1, 3). I found those words incredibly hopeful.

But I also remember hearing Jesus' words "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48) as an indictment of my best efforts to live a life that pleased God.

I also heard: "Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy" (Prov. 28:13). Problem is: Had I confessed each and every sin? What about the sins I couldn't remember? Would they always remain on my record, keeping me out of heaven?

Then there was the "unpardonable sin," whatever that was. That would surely be enough to keep me out of heaven. But how could I know if I'd committed it?

Add to this were all the stories they told us in Bible class about

the Waldenses and the Reformers, many of whom were chased and hunted, imprisoned and tortured in demonic-inspired attempts to get them to give up their beliefs. Then there were stories of Daniel in the lions' den, the apostle Paul in prison, and John the beloved disciple on Patmos.

Plus, every time the preacher mentioned Revelation, the description of the "great dragon . . . that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan" (Rev. 12:9) seared itself on my subconscious. That was followed by the account in Revelation 14 about those who will have to "drink the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath" (verse 10).

A BETTER WAY TO LIVE

Looking back, I had an unhealthy preoccupation with sin and my own unworthiness. I can't blame that on my parents or grandparents; I grew up in a loving Adventist family. But I was exposed to an unwise and unbalanced focus on overcoming.

Indeed, overcoming is a good thing, something I heartily endorse. But there's a wrong way, and a right way, to overcome.

The wrong way is to focus on the sin in our lives. Are we sinners? Without a doubt. Do we need any help understanding that reality? Probably not.

If all we do is focus on the sin in our lives, we'll see it everywhere; it doesn't rest far beneath our surface existence.

But if we want to overcome, better than focusing on bad habits is creating new, positive ones. It's like being on a diet. Which is better? To focus on forbidden foods, or to focus on foods that tend toward health? Which resolutions are more likely to be kept through February, March, and April? Avoiding bad habits, or cultivating good ones?

AN IMPORTANT LESSON

In fact, better than looking at Christianity as a set of behaviors, I've come to see Christianity as a quest to be like Christ.

Much of my childhood, teenage, and even young adult years were spent trying to please a God whom I had come to believe was not really eager about saving me. I felt that if I made it to heaven, it would be against His protest.

Then I discovered the truth about the judgment: "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an

If I wasn't careful, Jesus would come when I was doing something I shouldn't be doing.

advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One" (1 John 2:1). Jesus isn't against us; He's for us. The Father isn't against us; He's for us.

In the judgment Jesus stands beside us as our Advocate, our defense attorney. We don't have to figure out how to please Him. We just—and this is important—have to live as He lived.

Hear me: We don't have to live as He lived to reach some ethereal standard of righteousness. Once we experience salvation, we live as He lived to show those around us how much we admire and embrace the values He lived and died for.

Jesus' life and ministry was expansive and inclusive. He went out of His way to reach people who didn't measure up to common perceptions of the orthodoxy of His day. "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them" was how the Pharisees characterized Jesus (Luke 15:2).

When we know God's grace we will be as expansive, inclusive, and welcoming as He was.

Contrast that with the prevailing view in contemporary media of Christians as narrow bigots who seem preoccupied with straightening out everyone else while at the same time ignoring their own spiritual deficiencies (see Matt. 23).

THE LAST WORD

Jesus told several parables about being prepared when He returns. The message I heard as a child was that if I wasn't careful, Jesus would come when I was doing something I shouldn't be doing. I may have started the day being saved, but that was before I fought with a playmate or told a lie. Thus, my salvation was always in doubt.

But if our supreme desire is to reflect Christ's character to the people around us—and if we live out that desire, asking ourselves, *How can I be more like Jesus?*—it doesn't matter when He returns. We'll be ready. We have nothing to fear. 📌

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



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*In the presence of
the One who conquers
fear and death*

The sun had set, and the blackness of night settled down upon the stormy sea. The waves, lashed into fury by the howling winds, dashed fiercely over the disciples' boat, and threatened to engulf it. Those hardy fishermen had spent their lives upon the lake, and had guided their craft safely through many a storm; but now their strength and skill availed nothing. They were helpless in the grasp of the tempest, and hope failed them as they saw that their boat was filling.

PEACE, BE STILL

Absorbed in their efforts to save themselves, they had forgotten that Jesus was on board. Now, seeing their labor vain and only death before them, they remembered at whose com-

mand they had set out to cross the sea. In Jesus was their only hope. In their helplessness and despair they cried, "Master, Master!" But the dense darkness hid Him from their sight. Their voices were drowned by the roaring of the tempest, and there was no reply. Doubt and fear assailed them. Had Jesus forsaken them? Was He who had conquered disease and demons, and even death, powerless to help His disciples now? Was He unmindful of them in their distress?

Again they call, but there is no answer except the shrieking of the angry blast. Already their boat is sinking. A moment, and apparently they will be swallowed up by the hungry waters.

Suddenly a flash of lightning pierces the darkness, and they see Jesus lying asleep, undisturbed by the tumult. In amazement and despair they exclaim, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" How

ELLEN G. WHITE

can He rest so peacefully, while they are in danger and battling with death?

MASTER OF THE OCEAN

Their cry arouses Jesus. As the lightning's glare reveals Him, they see the peace of heaven in His face; they read in His glance self-forgetful, tender love, and, their hearts turning to Him, cry, "Lord, save us: we perish."

Never did a soul utter that cry unheeded. As the disciples grasp their oars to make a last effort, Jesus rises. He stands in the midst of His disciples, while the tempest rages, the waves break over them, and the lightning illuminates His countenance. He lifts His hand, so often employed in deeds of mercy, and says to the angry sea, "Peace, be still."

The storm ceases. The billows sink to rest. The clouds roll away, and the stars shine forth. The boat rests upon a quiet sea. Then turning to His disciples, Jesus asks sorrowfully, "Why are ye fearful? have ye not yet faith?" Mark 4:40, RV.*

A hush fell upon the disciples. Even Peter did not attempt to express the awe that filled his heart. The boats that had set out to accompany Jesus had been in the same peril with that of the disciples. Terror and despair had seized their occupants; but the command of Jesus brought quiet to the scene of tumult. The fury of the storm had driven the boats into close proximity, and all on board beheld the miracle. In the calm that followed, fear was forgotten. The people whispered among themselves, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"

PEACE IN THE MIDST OF THE STORM


When Jesus was awakened to meet the storm, He was in perfect peace. There was no trace of fear in word or look, for no fear was in His heart. But He rested not in the possession of almighty power. It was not as the "Master of earth and sea and sky" that He reposed in quiet. That power He had laid down, and He says, "I can of mine own self do nothing." John 5:30, KJV. He trusted in the Father's might. It was in faith—faith in God's love and care—that Jesus rested, and the power of that word which stilled the storm was the power of God.

As Jesus rested by faith in the Father's care, so we are to rest in the care of our Savior. If the disciples had trusted in Him, they would have been kept in peace. Their fear in the time of danger

revealed their unbelief. In their efforts to save themselves, they forgot Jesus; and it was only when, in despair of self-dependence, they turned to Him that He could give them help.

How often the disciples' experience is ours! When the tempests of temptation gather, and the fierce lightnings flash, and the waves sweep over us, we battle with the storm alone, forgetting that there is One who can help us. We trust to our own strength till our hope is lost, and we are ready to perish. Then we remember Jesus, and if we call upon Him to save us, we shall not cry in vain. Though He sorrowfully reproves our unbelief and self-confidence, He never fails to give us the help we need. Whether on the land or on the sea, if we have the Savior in our hearts, there is no need of fear. Living faith in the Redeemer will smooth the sea of life, and will deliver us from danger in the way that He knows to be best.

HE CALMS OUR FEARS

There is another spiritual lesson in this miracle of the stilling of the tempest. Every man's experience testifies to the truth of the words of Scripture, "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest. . . . There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Isaiah 57:20, 21, KJV. Sin has destroyed our peace. While self is unsubdued, we can find no rest. The masterful passions of the heart no human power can control. We are as helpless here as were the disciples to quiet the raging storm. But He who spoke peace to the billows of Galilee has spoken the word of peace for every soul. However fierce the tempest, those who turn to Jesus with the cry, "Lord, save us," will find deliverance. His grace, that reconciles the soul to God, quiets the strife of human passion, and in His love the heart is at rest. "He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven." Psalm 107:29, 30, KJV. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever." Romans 5:1, KJV; Isaiah 32:17, KJV. 

*Bible texts credited to RV are from *The Holy Bible, Revised Version*, Oxford University Press, 1911.

This excerpt is taken from the book *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898), pages 334-336. Seventh-day Adventists believe **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry.

TOUGH QUESTIONS

Photo: Shutterstock



PLAIN ANSWERS WITH PASTOR JOHN CARTER

- **WHAT CONSTITUTES MARRIAGE?**
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CHANGE IS GOOD

It's time for a change!

This is echoed from our pulpits and in our politics. But change, as we know, can be painful. That's why change is so strongly resisted whenever or wherever its time has come.

Some people change when they see the light. Others change only when they feel the heat. Where is the change in our church since the recent call for revival and reformation, issued more than a decade ago?

A biblical master plan for change is provided by the apostle Paul in Colossians 3: 1. Set your mind on things above, not on things on earth (verses 1-11). 2. As those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience (verses 12-14). 3. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which you were called in one body, and be thankful (verses 15-17).

When we practice this master plan and follow its instructions faithfully, who or what will we be? The answer is found in 1 John 3:1: "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" We are children of God, not only by adoption, but the Greek word for child indicates that He personally gave birth to every believer.

We are children of the King of kings, and the world does not know us because (1) it doesn't know that He, God, once walked this earth; (2) like those in the world, we are exposed to the common calamities of life: temptation, transgression, depression, death; (3) the world has

no idea that our presence preserves them (1 Cor. 2:6-9).

We are now children of God, but it has not yet been made manifest "what," not "who," we will be (1 John 3:2). Right now, as we wait for the second coming of Christ, we are born-again, bought-and-paid-for children of God. And we should be like Him, filled with life, light, and love (Col. 3:4). But in order to know "what" we will be, we have to live by hope and wait by faith until Jesus comes. We have a present duty not only to look like Him but to be like Him. As children of God, we have not just His name, but also His nature; we are joint heirs with Christ by rebirth and regeneration (Rom. 8:16, 17).

Those who have their hope fixed on Christ change or purify themselves, just as He is pure (1 John 3:3). As our Lord is holy, we are to be holy (1 Peter 1:15). We are not like hypocrites who make allowances for the gratification of impure desires and lusts; but as children of God we allow Him to cleanse our heart from all unrighteousness (James 4:7-10).

So let's not only speak of change, as do those who think of changing others more than changing themselves. Let's not get frustrated that we cannot change the world or make others as we wish them to be. Let's turn our eyes upon Jesus, the only one who can change us, and who knows what we will be. 🍏

Hyveth Williams is a professor at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University.

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THOSE WHO HAVE
THEIR HOPE FIXED ON
CHRIST CHANGE OR
PURIFY THEMSELVES.

A TELEVISION OR

**Josias De Trinidad believes
"God sent an angel" to teach
him how to play the piano.**

3M MINISTRY



A KEYBOARD?

The choice was life-changing.

BY SANDRA BLACKMER

When 34-year-old Josias G. De Trinidad sits down to play the piano, listeners say they feel transported to heaven's throne room.

"He is awesome proof that God is with us," says Lael Caesar, an associate editor of *Adventist Review* who was in the audience during De Trinidad's performance at the Adventist Church's world headquarters on September 15, 2016. "God has placed His hand of blessing on Josias' shoulder."

Because he's so highly skilled, it wasn't surprising to learn that De Trinidad first began practicing on a keyboard when he was only 12 years old. What is remarkable, however, is that he's had virtually no formal musical training.

A LIFE-CHANGING DECISION

De Trinidad, one of five children, was born in Nicaragua and raised in Guatemala. He was a shy child who stammered and was partially blind. His

father, Guillermo, was a pastor; his mother, Andrea, a stay-at-home mom. The family owned only one television—which was black and white and boasted only two channels.

"Two channels were enough to waste the time of us five kids," De Trinidad says.

One day the TV burned out, and Josias' father had to make a decision: "Should I buy a new television or a keyboard?" Guillermo chose the keyboard. His hope was to have one of his children learn how to play it so they could provide music to accompany his sermons. Josias accepted the challenge.

"All we had at home was the Adventist hymnal," De Trinidad says. "My dream was to play hymns for the Lord. My father's dream was to have music wherever he went to preach. So I opened the Adventist hymnal and prayed, 'Lord, I want to play the piano for You, but we don't have money to pay a teacher, and there isn't a teacher in this area anyway. I don't have a real piano; I just have a

"I can't stop playing—I believe that God gave me this skill for a purpose."



3M MINISTRY

“I believe that once you give your life to serve the Lord, He will train you.”

simple four-octave keyboard. So please help me understand music, because I want to play hymns for You.’

“I can’t explain what happened,” De Trinidad says, “but I think that maybe God sent an angel, because after a year I could play every hymn in the entire hymnbook—without having a teacher. It was as though someone was telling me, ‘You have to put your hands here, and you need to play it this way.’

“I believe that once you give your life to serve the Lord, He will train you.”

ON TO MEDICAL SCHOOL

When he turned 16, De Trinidad left home to enroll in medical school at Montemorelos University in the northern Mexican state of Nuevo León. In 2008 he graduated summa cum laude, earning such high grades that he was exempted from taking his licensing exam. Desiring to remain faithful to God, he chose not to apply for residency in Mexico because he would have been required to take the admission exam on Sabbath. Instead, although he spoke very little English, he decided to pursue an opportunity offered to him in the United States. In June 2016 he completed his residency in internal medicine at Kettering Medical Center in Ohio. Amazingly, however, while most medical students sacrifice all other pursuits to study full-time, De Trinidad continued to develop his musical gift by practicing one hour a day.

“I learned that one hour with God’s blessing was better than many hours without His blessing,” he says. “When you are busy working for God and faithfully keeping His Sabbath, He is busy working for you. He has performed many miracles in my life.”

The first time De Trinidad played a piano rather than a keyboard was at Montemorelos. After arriving at the school, he met some people who wanted to begin a singing ministry and were looking for pianist. To accommodate them, he had to be able to play by ear, but he knew only how to play by note. So he did what he had often done before—he prayed.

“Lord, I want to help these people who want to sing, but I can’t play by ear; will You give me the skill to play by ear?” he asked.

De Trinidad again is unsure of how it happened,

but after six months he said he began hearing the music in his mind and could envision what chords to play.

“That’s the reason that even with my career in medicine I can’t stop playing—I believe that God gave me this skill for a purpose,” he says.

AN EXHAUSTING SCHEDULE

De Trinidad is now working in Browning, Texas, providing medical care for the underserved through a network of community clinics. A believer in treating the whole person, De Trinidad tries to meet not just the physical but also the emotional and spiritual needs of his patients.

“My first goal is to be a friend to my patients, to develop a relationship with them and learn about their lives, how they feel, what they believe, what needs they have,” he explains. “I provide them with access to other types of health counseling and spiritual care, and at the end of every session I ask if I can pray with them. I also invite them to my concerts. We become friends.”

Even amid his taxing medical practice, De Trinidad still finds time to share God’s love through music.

“Sometimes, medical emergencies mean that I barely have time to go home, take a shower, and drive to a local church not only to play but sometimes to preach and teach,” he says. “Sometimes I work from Monday to Friday, then on Friday I drive or fly to another place to do musical performances on Sabbath and Sunday.”

De Trinidad admits that to maintain such a schedule can be difficult and requires sacrifices, but “when I go and share, I come back refreshed,” he says. “I am ready to begin the next week.”

CREDITING HIS PARENTS

De Trinidad credits his parents’ consistent encouragement and their faith in God for his successful ministries in music and medicine. His father, he explains, came from a poor family of 10 children, of which he is the only Adventist. He has served as a pastor in Guatemala now for 33 years. His mom joined the Adventist Church at a young



Dr. Josias G. De Trinidad serves others through both his medical and musical ministries.

3M MINISTRY

age, a decision that resulted in her being forced to leave her parents’ home. She was unable to finish high school until she was 25. Of the couple’s five children, however, four are now physicians, and one is an engineer.

“My mom sometimes feels bad that she doesn’t have a career, but I’ve told her that we are her five diplomas,” De Trinidad says.

“My parents taught us the best lessons for life,” he adds. “They taught us that if God is with us, we should always do our best and dream big. I remember telling my father, ‘Someday I would like to play a real piano.’ He said, ‘One day

you will play a real piano.’ I said, ‘Someday I would like to make a CD.’ He said, ‘Someday you will make a CD.’ Nothing was too big for the God of my father. The God of my father became my God.

“I remember my father every morning kneeling down and praying and studying his Bible. I am so grateful for that. I encourage all parents to make the home a place where you can lead your children to Jesus. I tell young people that the best way they can enrich the gifts that God has given them is to determine to serve Him. He will never let them down.”

De Trinidad has performed with renowned Christian musicians such as Jaime Jorge, Junior Marchena, and Ysis Espana, and has recorded two instrumental CDs. He has ministered to hundreds of churches in numerous countries, including Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and the United States. During his internship in Mexico, and following a most-welcome donation of a missionary piano—an electronic, portable, full-size piano donated for mission use—he founded 3M Ministry (Medical, Musical, Missionary). Through this organization he travels to wherever he is invited to preach, give seminars, play concerts, or raise funds to support missionaries and medical students. 📌

To learn more about De Trinidad’s musical ministry, e-mail ministerio3m@gmail.com.

Sandra Blackmer is an assistant editor for *Adventist Review*.

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PETER N. LANDLESS ZENO L. CHARLES-MARCEL

High Blood Pressure

A problem even for the young?

Q: I am in my mid-20s, and I read *Adventist Review*. Are diseases such as high blood pressure and its complications relevant to my age group?

A: High blood pressure (hypertension) is a very common condition. More than 1 billion people in the world have uncontrolled hypertension. It is a dangerous condition, even so because it often has no visible symptoms. It has therefore been called the silent killer. Is this relevant to young adults? Most definitely. Recent research shows increased hypertension in young adults. In 2011 it was estimated that 19 percent of young adults (between 24 and 32 years of age) in the United States were estimated to have high blood pressure, showing a worrying and relentless increase in young people.

Although many people develop hypertension as they get older, it is not a characteristic of healthy aging. Approximately 5 percent of hypertension is associated with a definable cause such as kidney disease, blood vessel abnormalities, hormone-producing tumors, alcohol, and cocaine, to name some. Most cases of high blood pressure are what is known as essential hypertension, a genetic condition. This means that the tendency to develop high blood pressure is embedded in our DNA. This genetic component is strongly influenced by environmental factors, such as the use of tobacco, alcohol, obesity, and lack of exercise—the sedentary “death style.”


Young people with elevated blood pressure followed over 25 years were more likely to have signs of heart disease by the time they reached middle age. They were also more likely to have problems with the heart muscle of the left ventricle (the strong pumping chamber of the heart). To function efficiently, the heart must contract well (systolic phase) to supply oxygen-carrying blood to all body cells. The heart must adequately and rapidly relax after contraction (diastolic phase), to receive an adequate amount of blood to main-



tain adequate circulation. In the presence of hypertension, both functions may be impaired. As we age, the heart muscle becomes stiffer and less able to relax; uncontrolled blood pressure accelerates this degenerative process.

The complications of uncontrolled hypertension include heart disease (acceleration of coronary artery disease and heart failure), increased strokes, and kidney damage/failure. In severe, untreated hypertension, the blood vessels of the eye may be permanently damaged. There is also much discussion and debate on the effect hypertension may have on cognitive function (thinking, memory, and reasoning processes).

Lifestyle interventions are essential for all. Young people, especially those who have risk factors for the disease, should intentionally exercise daily, reach and maintain ideal body weight, and avoid added salt. Tobacco and alcohol must be avoided. Regular follow-up is essential, and medications should be used as needed.

Adequate treatment of hypertension has resulted in decreased complications, including stroke. It is thought that cognitive function over the life cycle will be better preserved by keeping blood pressure controlled, an important incentive for us all, especially for young people who wish to avoid, or at least delay, debilitating dementia. 

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.

CLOSER LOOK




Beyond Death Video Documentary Series

Reviewed by Wilona Karimabadi

Tackling what is perhaps one of the toughest topics we will ever struggle with—death—this special installment in the *Beyond the Search* series is a must-watch.

The *Beyond the Search* documentary series is produced by Hope Channel in Australia in affiliation with the South Pacific Division and features Australian evangelists Geoff Youlden, Danielle Synot, and Johnny Murison.

In this particular episode Youlden, Synot, and Murison examine questions about death through the lens of popular culture, personal experiences, and biblical truth. Youlden travels to Romania to explore the birthplace of Vlad Dracula and society's current fascination with the undead. Murison visits Alcor, a cryonics foundation in Scottsdale, Arizona, to learn about the notion that through scientific discoveries it may be possible for the dead to actually live again—after being preserved in nitrogen, of course. Finally, Synot takes the viewer through her very personal story of losing her baby boy during pregnancy and her search for answers during her recovery. All three bring the viewers right back to the source of all answers to questions regarding death and eternal life—the Bible.

The episode is extremely well done; from on-location settings, music, cinematography, storytelling, and biblical evidence, this video is one to keep on hand for anyone you may encounter who is unfamiliar with the truth and hope about death found only in the Word of God. It's an excellent witnessing tool. 

To learn more about this episode and others in the series, visit www.beyond.info. This series is also available at artv.adventistreview.org.

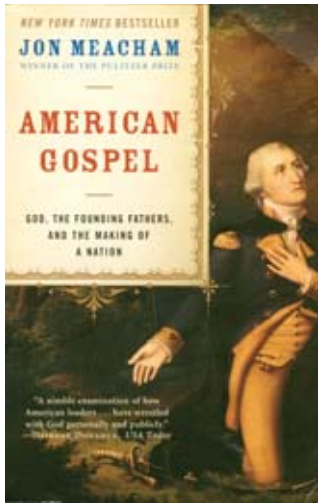


Come Before Winter

Come Before Winter: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and His Companions in the Dying Gasps of the Third Reich, Stories That Glow Collectors, 69 minutes, 2017, US\$19.95. Reviewed by Stephen Chavez, assistant editor, *Adventist Review*.

Come Before Winter tells a story with which most of us are familiar: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, theologian and pastor, and the ethical struggle he faced between the claims of Christianity and his desire to end the horrors of Germany's Third Reich. Other characters in the film, unmentioned in most tellings of Bonhoeffer's story, show how many people who never saw action on a battlefield still contributed to the demise of the Third Reich.

This film is unique in that it is as much docudrama as documentary. Interspersed with actors who portray real characters



American Gospel

American Gospel: God, the Founding Fathers, and the Making of a Nation, Jon Meacham, Random House, New York, 2007, 421 pages, paperback, US\$17. Reviewed by Lael Caesar, associate editor, *Adventist Review*.

This Jon Meacham work on politics and religiosity in America has particular relevance for the United States of 2017. The book comprises an introduction, six chapters, two worthy appendices, copious source notes and bibliography, author's acknowledgments, an Afterword that did not appear in the 2006 hardcover, and an index of names and subjects.

The foundational and ample introduction that precedes the six chapters reflects and insists upon the secular-religious equilibrium that has consistently been America's goal and focus. Appendix A

in a true story are Bonhoeffer scholars and personal acquaintances who add their insights to this complex story. Faculty and students of Southern Adventist University were instrumental in the production of this film.

Even if you already know Bonhoeffer's story, *Come Before Winter* will add to your appreciation of the details of his story, and his attempts to be both a citizen of earth as well as a citizen of heaven. 🍏

For information, visit: ComeBeforeWinterMovie.com.

consists of nine documents on religion in America, such as the prayer of a Jewish congregation in New York City during the Revolutionary War; Washington's farewell address; a treaty between the United States and the Islamic province of Tripoli of Barbary; and Robert Ingersoll's definition of secularism.

Appendix B lists the presidents' choices of Bible verses for 34 inaugurations, from Martin Van Buren to George W. Bush. Presidents have most frequently selected passages from the Psalms, Proverbs, and Isaiah.

Meacham's six chapters cover the first colonies; the founding and the Revolution; Lincoln and Darwin; Jim Crow and the Great Depression; Martin Luther King, Jr., through the Reagan years; and a final discussion about how the United States' past may instruct its future.

His treatment protects the founders from unwarranted beatification, saves the nation's history from appropriation by zealots who insist that it began as a Christian institution, and preserves America's public square from the amoral indeterminacy that prohibits any official reference to God and the supernatural.

Rather than any distinctly denominational characteristics, the conspicuous virtues of America's public religion are tolerance and reverence, and its pervasive atmosphere is "consummately democratic" (p. 23). The remarkable breadth and latitude of Jefferson's Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom offers protection for Jew and Gentile, Christian and Muslim, Hindu and infidel. The founders and the United States' early presidents expected such diversity to increase.

Their particular genius that has kept the United States sane and strong for centuries was the founders' stand against a union in which the state might define or finance religion, or religion might qualify or disqualify aspiration to public service. Their continuing legacy is the privilege of free and cordial conversation on matters of religion and politics.

Meacham knows that just now the United States is not exploiting the benefits of this inheritance. One could hope that the insights of this book may lead to better appropriation of the blessings bequeathed to their children by the men (literally) of our national ancestry and better equip us to honor their legacy of respect for God and country—in that order. 🍏

WHEN I'M TEMPTED TO BE AFRAID

I cry out to God, as Hannah did. I avoid being raw, hurt, and angry in God's presence. I feel unworthy to have those emotions, since He is God and I am not; who am I to tell Him He's doing His job wrong?

But more and more He tells me to fight with Him, as Jacob did; to cry out to Him with the full weight of my misery, as Hannah did. And to be sure in faith that He sees me, and that my situation matters to Him, just as Hagar was sure of it.

I do the very thing I avoid because that's where the intimacy happens and the breakthrough happens. My problems that cause fear are not the actual problem. The thing that needs solving is my need to be more and more fully formed in love (1 John 4:18).

VANESSA, EDITOR

I pray to my Father in heaven and imagine my angels surrounding me.

FAITH, EDITOR

I pray, and I sing, "Teach me to trust when there is cause to fear."

JOCELYN, ACCOUNTANT

I trust in God. Although it's an easy answer, these situations should show how strong our faith is when tested; when we think of being confronted with sickness, unable to pay our bills, or being afraid of the unknown.

Again, there are times when, as for the past three weeks, I've been in a group that doesn't share my faith. I realize that I needn't be afraid of what others may think or say, but simply "trust." I show that my faith is embedded in God, and let Him live through me. It proves to be a real blessing.

CARL, TRAVEL AGENT

I'm afraid when I'm not in control. The default response should be to pray, since God promises to masterfully handle our anxieties and fears. But since I'm fallible, and at times obsessive, I often clumsily take matters into my own hands.

MYLON, COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST

I do the very thing I avoid because that's where the intimacy happens and the breakthrough happens.

I ask myself, *Who knows more, me or God?* Since it's a rhetorical question, and I already know the answer, I end up feeling better.

RICHARD, FOUNDER OF ONE MUSTARD SEED MINISTRY

When I don't put my trust in God, I can become afraid of my enemies. But when I put my trust in Him, I am able to overcome my fears, and I'm no longer afraid of what humankind can do to me. Therefore, I will endeavor to trust in God continually and wholeheartedly. I will trust His Word, and I will not be afraid.

RICHARD, CONFERENCE PRESIDENT

Life, because of sin, is fear; it's a constant in a sinful world. Then there is God (life), an alternative to fear. He is love; there is no fear in Him. I face fear; I connect to God. I am connected to God, there is no fear.

RODOLFO, ASSOCIATE MINISTERIAL SECRETARY

When I am afraid, I ask God to help me trust in Him, to help me fix my eyes on Him, to let all my fears get washed away in His presence.

PEDRO, PASTOR



At the beginning of 2014 I memorized Isaiah 41:10 as my text for the year, something I have never otherwise done. When my husband, Greg, died that June, God brought that verse back to me time and again to remind me not to be afraid: “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” (KJV).

“Be not dismayed” means “not to anxiously look about.” I take God at His word; He hasn’t let me down yet. Though from that time various trials, all laced with the potential of great fear now follow my days or nights, I listen for His voice to remind me anew that He *is* with me. His words are still for me. I choose to trust His love.

LESA, FAITHFUL FOLLOWER

If He doesn't save me in just the way I think He should, I know He is with me anyway because He promised.

I remember what the Lord has done for me in the past.

BLAKE, PASTOR

Fear appears in my life when depending on self inevitably fails. It’s the result of me trying to play God instead of allowing God to be God. Fear is an invitation to repent from my lack of trust in God, and an opportunity to surrender control yet again. God is my pilot; He’s not my copilot.

KENDALL, PASTOR

I remember what God has done in the past, and what He is capable of doing in the present and future. Psalm 46 says He is the Lord of hosts and my refuge. In other words, He is my protector and warrior, my offense and defense!

GUIBERT, PASTOR

When I’m am afraid I sing the song “What a friend we have in Jesus.”

The powerful words—Oh, what peace we often forfeit, oh, what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!—always give me peace and reassurance.

JUNIOR, TECH GUY

If I feel afraid my thoughts go immediately to Jesus and His promise to always be with me — “Lo, I am with you always...” or “I will never leave you” and to stories I may have just read such as the story of Peter walking on the water showing Jesus’ saving power and His care for me as well. In order not to be afraid these verses and others like them and many stories are a great comfort. We have only to ask and He is there! If He doesn’t save me in just the way I think He should, I know He is with me anyway because He promised.

JUDY, RETIREEE

My NIV reads: “When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise—in God I trust and am not afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?” When I’m afraid I turn to God, I turn to His Word. As I read the scriptures it is there that I find encouraging promises. I’m also heartened by the stories of men and women who have claimed God’s promises in the past and have witnessed the salvation of the Lord. These stories give me confidence and boldness to trust in God when the devil’s darts overwhelm me.

LUIS, HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

Do Not Hinder Them

The history of the United States is also a history of racial, ethnic, and religious prejudice and persecution.

I know, the United States is also “the land of the free and the home of the brave”; the land of “give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.”

But hidden between those lines of freedom and opportunity are indisputable facts: immigrants have always had to fight their way into the mainstream of United States society. Our original pilgrim for-

bears had to deal with immigrants from Scotland, Ireland, Germany, and Sweden. Those original Protestants soon were forced to absorb Roman Catholic immigrants. Struggles between those two branches of Christianity were often violent.

Most cities in the United States now feature neighborhoods known as “Germantown,” “Little Italy,” “Chinatown.” Those weren’t neighborhoods where people went to eat foreign cuisine in quaint restaurants—they were places where people who shared a common heritage lived without fear of physical or emotional abuse based on their ethnicity.

Waves of legal immigrants have settled in the United States, first from Northern Europe, then Southern Europe, then Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Immigration is nothing new.

What is new (at least for this generation) is the backlash against immigrants from parts of the world where Christianity is not the dominant religion. The same tropes used against German immigrants 100 and 85 years ago, and against Japanese 75 years ago, are now made to apply to Muslims.

What’s different now is that immigrants aren’t seeking entrance to the United States so they can eat at McDonald’s and shop at Target. In many cases they are fleeing conditions that are intolerable in terms of life, safety, and security. Imagine living in parts of the world where people simply disappear. Sometimes mangled, dismembered corpses appear; often they’re just never seen again.

That’s why people are willing to risk their lives in dangerous journeys. They want what every United States citizen takes for granted: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

God’s people know something about being pilgrims, strangers, immigrants, foreigners. After God rescued His people from Egypt, He told them: “The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God” (Lev. 19:34).

Ruth, a Moabite, became part of Jesus’ genealogy by accompanying her mother-in-law, Naomi, to Israel.

Mary and Joseph had to flee a murderous despot after Jesus was born. “And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘Out of Egypt I called my son’” (Matt. 2:15).

Some people resist immigration because they think society will change; that even legal immigrants will bring new and strange customs, foods, traditions, languages. And they will. Nearly 400 years of immigration to the United States has proved that each new wave of immigrants brings something new to our culture.

That’s what makes America great. 🍷

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

IMMIGRANTS AREN'T SEEKING ENTRANCE TO THE UNITED STATES SO THEY CAN EAT AT MCDONALD'S AND SHOP AT TARGET.

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