

Jan/Feb/Mar 2011
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the resource for adventist youth leaders



IDENTITY

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WHO WAS JESUS?
HOW DID HE KNOW WHO HE WAS?



WHO AM I?
HOW CAN I KNOW WHO I AM?

2011 Youth Week of Prayer

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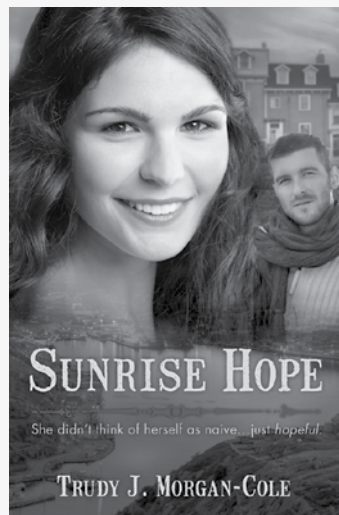
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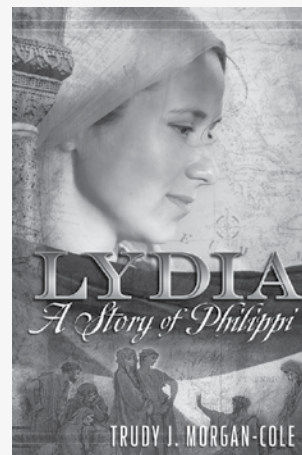
AVAILABLE SPRING 2011



SUNRISE HOPE, When Stephanie Kent accepts a job in a new town working with disadvantaged teens and a cynical boss, she learns some unexpected lessons about God, love, and surrender.

books by
Trudy Morgan-Cole

<http://www.adventistbookcenter.com>



LYDIA: A Story of Philippi, Share in the challenges, conflicts, and triumphs faced by Lydia and the newly formed church of diverse believers in Philippi. Your faith will be renewed in the God of possibilities as you witness their passion and joy in the face of persecution and overwhelming odds!

TELL THE WORLD

I have learned over the years that the best moments with your children are those when you open your ears and really listen to what they say. This was one of those days. I was home helping my daughters, Astrid and Edera, with their schoolwork, when we began talking about their day at school. One of my daughters started to talk about a girl that they both knew at school, who is from a non-Adventist family. My heart cried out in joy as one of my daughters said, “Every time I have an opportunity, I talk to her about Jesus.”

When I was my daughter’s age, my mind was occupied with playing with friends, going to school, or watching my favorite TV shows. I wasn’t concerned, as my daughters are, with talking to others about Jesus. Or at least I don’t remember a specific time when I made the decision to share the Good News. But there in our dining room, in that moment, my daughter taught me an enormous lesson—a lesson that I have learned, but with the busyness and responsibilities of life, often forget. That the most important thing in our lives is to share the love of Jesus with others. For my daughters, at their young age, and even with their busy school schedules, the most important thing for them is to talk to that girl about Jesus.

We have started a new year, 2011, and we all have lists of the things we want to do in the new year, and it seems most years pass and we never complete our “to do” lists. This year, my “to do” list is a short one—only two things to do every day— fill my heart with Jesus, and tell others about Him.

Every morning, when you wake up, the first thing you have to do is to fill up your heart with Jesus, begin your day with Him. Invite Him into your life and let Him transform you completely. Then, **Go and Tell the World.** That should be our focus. There should be nothing more important in the Christian’s life than telling the world about Jesus.

“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”
Rom. 1:16. NIV

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DEVOTIONAL: a handmade woman

by Debbonnaire Kovacs

God created human beings; he created them godlike, reflecting God's nature. He created them male and female. Genesis 1:27, *The Message*

There were only two handmade people in history. Genesis says that God “formed” Adam from earth and Eve from Adam’s rib. He spoke everything else into existence, but people He chose to build, to model, like a sculptor making a statue. Except that no sculptor ever was able to breathe life into his or her creations!

Imagine God bending over the clay, carefully shaping Adam’s nose, creating each finger and toe, deciding how tall he would be and what kind of hair to give him. Imagine Him later putting Adam into a deep sleep, taking a rib from near his heart, and fashioning it into the perfect partner Adam had been longing for, the most beautiful handmade woman the world has ever known.

Then imagine being Eve and opening your eyes for the first time. Hovering over you is the shining face of your Maker, beaming on you with love and joy. You sit up and take a breath. How beautiful everything is!

Then the Maker says, “Here, let Me help you up. There is someone waiting to meet you.”

You take God’s hand and stand, not even knowing what a miracle you are, how amazing it is that your heart is powerfully pumping away and your lungs are extracting oxygen from the rich air and spreading it throughout your strong, perfect body.

“Adam,” says God, “here she is—the one made just for you, the partner who fits with you like two leaves on the same branch.”

You look. Adam looks. Love at first sight, for the first and last time in the history of the planet. His smile, as bright as the sunshine, reminds you of God’s—his Father and yours.

The man says, “Finally! Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh! Name her Woman for she was made from Man” (Gen. 2:23, *The Message*).

“I’ll call her Eve,” Adam adds. “She will be the mother of all the living yet to come.”

You take his hand and the two of you walk with your Maker to explore the fabulous garden home He has created just for you. Your life has just begun. It doesn’t even occur to you to doubt that it will last forever.

Creator of the human heart, You meant us to be so strong, good, and wise. You meant us to be like You. I am weak, faulty, and sometimes foolish. Your dreams for me are too bright for me to see. But I want to. . . I want to!

Help me to open my eyes, to see You walking with me, to dream your dreams after You and know that there, I will find my true self.

And it will last forever, because I am Your growing child. ●



Debbonnaire Kovacs has been writing since she could hold a pencil, and sold her first story to Junior Guide when she was 11 years old. She speaks at camp meetings, women’s retreats, and other events. She urges everyone to take their dreams to God and see whether they are more than just dreams.

This devotional was taken from the book, *My Identity in Christ*, to be released soon.

OUR IDENTITY

by Trudy Morgan-Cole

Have you ever written your name and address in the front cover of a textbook? Sometimes, just for fun, you may have written the longest, most complete address you could think of. When one student in the United States did this, his address looked like this:

J. Smith
Apartment 605
431 Mayweather Boulevard
Commontown, CA
USA
North America
Planet Earth
The Solar System
The Milky Way Galaxy
The Universe

What would your “complete” address look like?

It’s kind of interesting to think of yourself—one human individual—not just in the context of your street and city, but of your country, your continent, our whole planet, and even the solar system and the

universe itself. When you see yourself in that context, how does it make you feel?

Tiny and insignificant? Or important and valuable?

What about in God’s eyes?

Where do you fit in God’s universe?

Who am I?

Who are we?

Regardless of our earthly relationships and our national/cultural loyalties, we are “sons and daughters of God.” This fact calls for a kind of loyalty and living that lifts young men and women above the crowd to stand tall for God. But in this hour it means more than just being loyal to God. You must know who you are and what you stand for—what it means to be a Seventh-day Adventist youth.

Seventh day Adventist youth face the greatest destiny ever faced by a child of God in any age. To us has been committed the task of taking the Advent message to the entire world in “my” generation. There is great danger, however, that in this critical hour for the church other interests may



Trudy Morgan-Cole is a writer and adult-education teacher in St. John’s, Newfoundland, Canada. Her latest book, *Lydia: A Story of Philippi*, is an imaginative re-telling of the story of the New Testament church at Philippi. Her new book, *Sunrise Hope*, will be released Spring 2011.

overshadow this great objective. We may not “remember who we are.” We may settle down among the nations around us to uneventful living, following pursuits that in themselves may be honorable, but which keep us from answering the call of God to finish our task.

We must aim higher than merely making a living, building a comfortable home, buying a new car, raising a family, and becoming respectable citizens of our community. These are limited aims. As Adventist young people, our goal is different. We must think on a higher level. We must plan for eternity. As we do this, our recreation, our choice of lifework, our friendships, and even the way we use our time and money will become more meaningful. There will be sacrificial living and a denial of self. The danger is that we may forget that Seventh-day Adventists have a special message for the world in this end time. As inheritors of the faith of our fathers, we must lift the trumpet loud and clear. We must do this not only in words, but also through our godly lifestyle, upholding the “landmarks” of our faith. We need to realize that our church is not just another Protestant church among many. We have been called out as a special people with a special work to do. Outside of this the church has no reason to exist. Once we realize this fact, all our energies should be geared to remembering who we are. The Bible tells us that all human beings are created by God.

Even more, we are created in the very image of God. The creation account in Genesis 1, verses 26 and 27, puts it this way: “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness . . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.’”

What does it mean to be created “in God’s image”? Like our Creator, we have intelligence and the power to choose. Like God, we have the ability to create. Though we can’t bring a planet into existence, we can create a poem or a painting, a cake or a song. We have the ability to feel, to think, and to love. We have the ability to set goals, strive towards them, and succeed—we are all born to win. These qualities in human beings are part of the divine image that is stamped upon each and every one of us.

In the book *Patriarchs and Prophets*, Ellen G. White says, “Man was to bear God’s image, both in outward resemblance and in character . . . Man was formed in the likeness of God. His nature was in harmony with the will of God. His mind was capable of comprehending divine things. His affections were pure; his appetites and passions were under the control of reason. He was holy and happy in bearing the image of God and in perfect obedience to His will” (p. 45). But we are not like God in every way. We don’t have God’s power. We don’t

rule the universe. And, unlike God, we are not immortal. We are born with a limited lifespan, knowing that we will die someday. We have human limitations, yet we bear the image of the One who made us.

If you have a coin in your pocket, take it out now and look at it. What images appear on the front and back of the coin? As I write this, I have in front of me an Australian fifty cent piece, a Jamaican ten-dollar coin, an American twenty-five cent piece, and a Canadian dollar coin. On the back, they have different symbols, representing the nations they come from. On the front, each has a picture of a person. Sometimes it’s the leader of the country, sometimes it’s a national hero or some other famous person who represents that country. In biblical times, coins bore the image of a king or emperor—the ruler of the country. You could tell where a coin came from by recognizing the image stamped upon the front—the image of the ruler. We are like those coins. The image of our Maker is stamped upon us, and that image shows to whom we belong.

Sin and God’s Image

But that’s not the whole story. Genesis 1 and 2 tell about human

What does it mean to be created “in God’s image”?

beings created in God's image in a perfect world. Genesis 3 tells the story of the Fall, how humans rebelled against God in an effort to become their own little gods. While Adam and Eve were created in God's image, the serpent in Eden tempted them by telling them that if they ate the forbidden fruit, they could be "like God" (Genesis 3:3). They were already like God in that they bore God's image, but they wanted to be like God in power and authority too, and that led to their downfall, as it has led to the downfall of every human being and every human society since then.

So what do we have today? We have a world full of people, all created in God's image, yet because of sin, that image doesn't shine clear and true as it was originally intended to do. We are coins with the image of our Maker stamped upon us, but we are coins that have passed through thousands of hands and ridden around in thousands of pockets.

Generations of sin have worn away the image of the King until it is so faint that in some cases it can barely be seen.

But that divine image is still there, and it can be restored! This is one of the great messages of the Bible—that we can be restored to our right relationship with our Creator, so that we can reflect His image as we were intended to do. How does this happen? Remember Eve and the

serpent in Eden? The tempter told Eve that she would become more like God by eating the fruit, because she would reach out and grab the authority and power that belonged to God alone. In reality, as soon as they did this, she and Adam became less like God because they were now sinners. We can be like God—we can reflect His image—but only when we are in the right kind of relationship with God. When we recognize Him as our creator, and our own role as His creatures, then others can see the image of our Maker in us.

Look in the Mirror

Put down this book now, and go to the nearest mirror. Take a good, long look at yourself. What do you see? What does it mean to know that the person in the mirror was created in God's image?

If you're like most young people, when you look in the mirror you see things you like and things you don't like. You might like your smile or the color of your eyes, but wish your hair were a different color or your nose a different shape. Looking beyond the surface, you find the same mixture of things you like and things you don't like. Maybe you have a good sense of humor and like to help others, but you also have a bad temper that sometimes gets you in trouble. Each one of us is a mix of good and bad qualities. In all of us we can see glimpses of that divine image

of the One who created us, but we can also see the results of being born sinners in a sinful world. God's desire for you is to rescue you from the results of sin and to recreate His image in you so that you can reflect Him to the world. By choosing to live as a Seventh-day Adventist Christian, you choose to co-operate with Him in this work.

Why Be a Christian?

Of the six billion people in this world, about two billion are Christians. About another 1.5 billion are Muslims, and about a billion are Hindus. The remaining billion and a half people include Buddhists, Jews, Sikhs, followers of folk and native religions in different countries, and of course those who practice no religion at all. Think back to that image of yourself in the mirror, and to the things you like and don't like about yourself. If the goal of Christianity is to restore God's image in you, is that just another way of saying that the point is to make you a better, kinder, healthier, and happier person?

The truth is that virtually every major religion in the world claims to be able to make people better, kinder, healthier, and happier if they follow its rules for life. And many people who don't believe in any god or religion at all also think they can improve themselves and others—through education, through science,

and through culture. So, out of all those religions and belief systems, why choose to be a Christian? Is it just because Christianity is the largest world religion? After all, can two billion people be wrong? But what would happen if, in the next fifty years, growth in Muslim countries races ahead of the growth of Christianity? If Muslims were suddenly the majority, should we all switch to become Muslims? Of course not. Popularity is no reason to choose a religion.

Christianity isn't "right" simply because it's the most widespread of the world's religions. Jesus began His ministry with only twelve followers, and if He had only twelve today, His teachings would be just as true as if he had a zillion followers.

Back to the question: Why choose Christianity? Many of us are Christians because our parents are, or because we live in a culture where most people around us are Christian. But in the end, each person has to make a choice for himself or herself. What do you believe? And why do you believe in Christianity?

God's Story

It all comes back to the question of God creating humanity in God's own image. That's how the Bible begins. The Bible is a big, complex, ancient book, written by many different writers, in different cultures, over a period of hundreds of years.

But despite its diversity, the Bible tells a story. This story begins where we began this chapter: with creation.

God created humans in His image and placed them in a world that He said was "very good." But sin came to damage and destroy. The Bible is the story of how God attempts to recreate His image in human beings. First, God called a special group of people, the nation of Israel, and made a covenant, or a promise with them. His intention was to reveal His character to the world through these chosen people. This is the story that Christians share with Jews—the story that's told in what we call the Old Testament, the first part of the Bible. But the Christian story goes beyond that, into the part of the Bible that we call the New Testament. Into this community of His chosen people, God Himself came in human form, as the Man Jesus of Nazareth. The four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) all tell the story of Jesus' coming, but in different ways. Here's how John, referring to Jesus as "the Word," introduces his story: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him ... Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:1, 10, 12, N IV).

Jesus, God's "Word," the Son of God, came to this earth that

He created and became a human being like us. By living among us, He showed us what a human being looks like when they allow God's image to shine through them perfectly. By dying and rising again, He made it possible for all human beings to reflect that image once again. In fact, as that passage from John tells us, Jesus took things even further: Not only did He make it possible for humans to reflect the image of their Creator, He adopted us into God's own family. Through Jesus, we are more than just God's creation; we become sons and daughters of God.

The Plan of Salvation

How did Jesus do it? He lived a fully human life. He was "tempted in every way, just as we are" (Hebrews 4:15), though He did not sin. He experienced pain, hardship, and disappointment. Finally, He died the worst kind of death possible in His culture—tortured to death on a Roman cross.

Jesus' death was more than just a horrible way to die. Though we can never fully understand how it works, somehow in His death Jesus paid the price for our sins and took our death upon Himself. Then He rose from the grave, triumphing over death and breaking the power of sin and the devil.

If we trust in Jesus—if we choose to ask forgiveness for our sins, to commit ourselves to Him and follow Him—then His perfect life stands in place of our own sinful lives. He

promises to fill us with His Spirit. When He left earth to return to His Father in heaven, Jesus left behind a little community of people dedicated to Him and filled with His Spirit, and they began to change the world in His name.

That's the Christian story. That image of God that was originally stamped on every human being can be restored—through Jesus, the living bridge between God and humanity. An early Christian writer called Irenaeus once said, "The glory of God is a human being fully alive." Jesus came to show us what that glory would look like. John 1:14 says: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

The promise of the Christian faith is that the glory that was present in Jesus can be in us as well. We can be fully alive, fully reflecting the image of our Creator and Heavenly Father.

Why Be a Seventh-day Adventist?

What have we discovered so far?

- Each of us is a unique creation, a human being made in the image of God.
- We have value because of that divine image within us.
- The image of God in us has been obscured by sin, but it can be restored.

- The Christian story as it unfolds in the Bible tells us that this is possible because of Jesus.

- Jesus was both fully divine and fully human, and it's through faith in Him that we can be restored to our proper relationship with God.

The only problem with choosing to be a Christian is that there are many, many different ways to "be Christian." We sometimes refer to these as different churches or different denominations. This wasn't Jesus' original plan. He left a single group of followers to carry on His work and prayed that "all of them may be one" (John 17:21). But over the years, Christians have disagreed over how to interpret the Bible and how best to follow Jesus. As a result, today there are more than two billion Christians in the world, but those two billion Christians are divided into thousands and thousands (some say as many as 38,000!!) of different types of churches. Out of all those different churches, all those ways of "being Christian," why would you choose to become a Seventh-day Adventist?

Seventh-day Adventism is a large and fast-growing denomination, but it's not one of the largest Christian churches in most countries. It's not one of the oldest—the Seventh-day Adventist church has only existed since the mid-1800s. So, what does it mean to identify yourself as a Seventh-day Adventist? Seventh-day Adventists believe many of the

same core beliefs that most other Christians do. Almost all Christians, no matter what church or culture they belong to, will say that they believe that Jesus Christ is God's Son, that He died for our sins, that He rose again, and that we can be saved through Him. Almost all Christians believe in following the Bible (even though they disagree about what parts of it mean!), prayer, and doing good to others. Seventh-day Adventists share all these beliefs and more with other Christians. But there are some things unique about Seventh-day Adventists.

Advent: The Promise

The word "Adventist" in the name of our church means that we believe in the Second Advent—Jesus' return to this earth. In the 1840s, a preacher named William Miller began to declare that Jesus was coming back soon. Miller's followers eventually came to believe that Jesus would return to earth in 1844—but, of course, He didn't. Their hopes were shattered. Some of those "Millerites" went on to start what we now know as the Seventh-day Adventist church. Why would you want to belong to a church that started with a mistake and a huge disappointment? Because although Adventists have never repeated Miller's mistake of setting an exact date for Jesus' return, we do hold on to the belief that, as He said in John 14:3, "I will come again."

What does this mean for you and me? It means that as we look at the world around us, as we look at the worst that human nature can do—war, terrorism, slavery, crime, drugs, prejudice and hatred—we know that this isn't the end of the story. We don't have to rely on humanity to save itself. Even if history isn't your favorite subject in school, you probably know enough about history to know that humanity has never succeeded in solving all the world's problems. As Christians filled with

given each one of us a vital role to play in His plan.

Sabbath: The Gift

If you are a Seventh-day Adventist, then you have probably already had a conversation at some point with a friend who attends another Christian church. It might sound something like this:

“Are you going to church this Sunday?”

That commandment is just as real and just as important for Christians today as the other nine—not killing, not stealing, honoring your parents, and all the rest. Seventh-day Adventists are among the very few Christian groups who believe in worshiping on God's seventh-day Sabbath. But keeping the Sabbath means so much more than just going to church on that day!

Seventh-day Adventists view Sabbath as a gift from God to humanity. Jesus said “The Sabbath was made for man” (Mark 2:27). On

That image of God that was originally stamped on every human being can be restored—through Jesus, the living bridge between God and humanity.

God's Spirit, we follow Jesus' example in helping others and trying to make the world a better place, but God doesn't expect us to finish the job in our own power. He promises that one day He will return and make “all things new” (Revelation 21:5). Not only will God's image be restored in humanity, but that perfect world that God created in Genesis 1 and 2 will be restored right here on this earth! Seventh-day Adventists believe that a good God created a good world, and that He will come back to restore it. We also believe it's our mission to tell others about His return. He has

“No, we go to church on Saturday.”

“Saturday? Why? Everyone goes to church on Sunday!!”

It's true that most Christians do worship on the first day of the week, because they believe that since it's the day on which Jesus was raised from the dead, it should be the Christian day of worship. But the Bible never commands Christians to worship on Sunday. Rather, the Ten Commandments tell us to “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy ... the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God.”

Sabbath, we get to step aside from all our everyday concerns. We lay aside our work and studies and focus fully on our relationship with God. Sabbath-keeping reminds us not just that God created us, but that He views us as so valuable that He sets aside an entire day just to be with us. It is also a sign of our saving relationship with Jesus (Hebrews 4:4-11).

The Whole Person

Another way in which Seventh-day Adventists are a little bit different from many other Christians has to do

with what we believe about human beings and what happens after we die. Have you ever spoken to a friend who has lost a loved one and heard them say, “Well, I know my Grandpa, or my aunt, is in heaven now, watching over me?” People sometimes find this belief comforting, but it has no basis in the Bible. Many Christians believe we have something called a “soul,” which is separate from the body, and which floats off to heaven or to hell when we die. But this is not the biblical view of human beings. That same Creation story that we’ve looked at so often in this chapter, Genesis 1, tells us that when God created a human body and breathed life into it, that human “became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7, KJV). A soul is not something we have, it’s what we are. This means that there’s no invisible part of you that floats off to heaven when you die. Rather, the whole human being—body, mind and spirit—sleeps in the grave until resurrection.

State of the Dead

When Jesus comes again, He promises to raise us up, fully alive in perfect human bodies! But this way of looking at human beings doesn’t only matter at funerals. It affects the way we live every day. Some Christians teach that the human body is just a piece of junk that will be thrown away when we die, so our soul can be free to live in heaven with God. That is not what Seventh-day Adventists believe.

Here is what we believe, (*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, pp. 391-392):

“Death is a sleep. Death is not complete annihilation—it is only a state of temporary unconsciousness while the person awaits the resurrection. The Bible repeatedly calls this intermediate state a sleep.

“The Person Returns to Dust. To understand what happens to a person at death, one must understand what makes up his or her nature. The Bible portrays a person as an organic unit. At times it uses the word soul to refer to the whole person and at other times to the affections and emotions. But it does not teach that man comprises two separate parts. Body and soul only exist together—they form an indivisible union.

“At humanity’s creation, the union of the dust of the ground (earth’s elements) and the breath of life produced a living being or soul. Adam did not receive a soul as a separate entity—he became a living soul (Gen. 2:7). At death the inverse takes place: the dust of the ground minus the breath of life yields a dead person or dead soul without any consciousness (Psalm 146:4). The elements that made up the body returns to the earth from which they came (Gen. 3:19). The soul has no conscious

existence apart from the body, and no scripture indicates that at the death the soul survives as a conscious entity. Indeed, “the soul who sins shall die” (Eze. 18:20).

“The Spirit Returns to God. Though the body returns to dust, the spirit returns to God. Solomon said that at death “the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it” (Eccl. 12:7). This is true of all, both the righteous and the wicked.”

Our bodies are good creations of God. They matter. That’s why we have teachings about how to treat our bodies, what to put in them, what to do with them. That’s why we have a health message and guidelines about entertainment, dress, and behavior. We believe the whole human being matters—not some invisible piece called the soul, but the whole body and mind that God created in His image.

Seventh-day Adventist Christians believe that all of God’s creation is good—the earth He created and the people He placed on it. We believe that all of it will be restored someday, made new and beautiful again. Sure, there are bad things in the world, just as there are bad things in each of us. But the promise of God’s Word is that through Jesus, everything can and will be made new for those who choose to follow Him.

Sanctuary

These are not the only unique beliefs that we hold as Seventh-day Adventists. Adventists also believe that Jesus continues to have a special ministry for us today in heaven's sanctuary. Each of us will be judged by heaven, and if we have accepted Jesus as our Savior, His sacrifice will stand in place of our own sins. Read what we believe about Jesus' role in the heavenly sanctuary:

"There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle which the Lord set up and not man. In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross. He was inaugurated as our great High Priest and began His intercessory ministry at the time of His ascension. In 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, He entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry. It is a work of investigative judgment which is part of the ultimate disposition of all sin, typified by the cleansing of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. In that typical service the sanctuary was cleansed with the blood of animal sacrifices, but the heavenly things are purified with the perfect sacrifice of the blood of Jesus. The investigative judgment reveals to heavenly intelligences who among the dead are asleep in Christ and therefore, in Him, are deemed worthy to have part in the first resurrection. It also makes manifest who among the living are abiding in

Christ, keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and in Him, therefore, are ready for translation into His everlasting kingdom. This judgment vindicates the justice of God in saving those who believe in Jesus. It declares that those who have remained loyal to God shall receive the kingdom. The completion of this ministry of Christ will mark the close of human probation before the Second Advent. (Heb. 8:1-5; 4:14-16; 9:11-28; 10:19-22; 1:3; 2:16, 17; Dan. 7:9-27; 8:13, 14; 9:24-27; Num. 14:34; Eze. 4:6; Lev. 16; Rev. 14:6, 7; 20:12; 14:12; 22:12.)" —*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 374.

Spirit of Prophecy

Seventh-day Adventists also believe that God gave our church a special messenger, Ellen G. White, whose inspired writings played a special role in guiding our people as our church took shape. You will often see Mrs. White's writings quoted in Adventist books and papers, including this book, because we believe that God gave her important truths to share with us. We do not believe her writings are on the same level as the Bible—she herself called her work "a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light" (the Bible). But we do believe they are full of inspired guidance, which we need. This is an hour of dedicated service to the needs of the church both in your own country and beyond. We must give ourselves to the finishing of God's work.

Whether in organized denominational employment or as a self-supporting layperson, our supreme task is the same, and it can only be accomplished as we fully accept the challenge to remember who we are.

As you can see, all the doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist church point back to a loving Creator God who greatly values every human being He has created. Each one of us has value in His eyes—we are truly born to win!

Back to the Mirror

When you finish this chapter, go back to the mirror and look at yourself again. After thinking about your place in God's plan, do you see yourself differently now? I hope that when you look at your reflection, you will see the tremendous potential you have as a child of God. I hope that you will see a winner by God's power, someone saved by grace through faith in Jesus, a human being fully alive, in whom God's image is being restored.

Think back to that idea of writing down your complete address. What does your entry in God's address book look like? Perhaps it will say:

Your name
Seventh-day Adventist
Christian
Created in the Image of God
Saved by Jesus
Adopted into God's family
Waiting for Jesus' return! ●

THEME: PERSERVANCE

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

A STUDENT'S HOPEFUL JOURNEY

by Erica Richards

Hans Fredric Daniel von Walter has always liked his name. But it wasn't until the summer of 2009 that he realized just how valuable it could be.

Von Walter, a junior biochemistry major at Southern Adventist University, made an interesting discovery while searching online for a summer job. Von Walter came across the *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* website, which stated that the game show was holding auditions in Tampa, Florida in June. A native Floridian, Von Walter found himself thinking this could be his big shot.

“Growing up I was just always very competitive,” says Von Walter. “I think I was in third grade when I went to watch my school’s geography bee and realized I knew most of the answers.”

Von Walter became the first fourth grade winner of his school’s geography bee and then went on to be the first person in his school’s history to make it to the state level. In his eighth grade year, he won the Florida geography bee and represented his state in Washington D.C. at the national bee, hosted by *Jeopardy’s!* Alex Trebek. In his junior year in high school, Von Walter placed fifth nationally.

But the geography bees were just the beginning of bigger and better things. Von Walter decided to attend the audition in Tampa for *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* and then struck gold in his discovery of an online message board.

“It’s a whole community of people who have been on *Millionaire* or auditioned to be on the show,” says Von Walter. “They give pointers and advice, and I thought I would have a real edge over the other people at the audition.”



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GCYouth Ministries



Courtesy: Jeopardy! Productions, Inc.

Hans von Walter won \$25,000 for his third-place finish on the Jeopardy! College Championship.

The process to be a contestant begins with a 30 question test to weed out the competition. The questions on the test come from previous shows, and people on the message board had typed up every single question that had ever been on the show. Von Walter spent four weeks reading over the questions and said that his mind “just about exploded” with all the new facts he learned.

His mother accompanied him on the trip to Tampa where the auditions were held at a hockey stadium. The audition wasn’t until seven in the morning, but Von Walter and his mother noticed people beginning to line up at two a.m. They managed to be tenth in line. By seven a.m., Von Walter says he guesses there were about five or six hundred people behind him.

“We walked in and all of a sudden you could just feel this professional atmosphere,” says Von Walter. “There were producers with their *Millionaire* logos and people filling out paperwork—and a news station. I actually caught a clip later where they showed me walking into the stadium.”

Then it was time for the test. Out of the first testing group of about 400 people, approximately 40 passed. Von Walter was one of the 40.

“They treated us like [celebrities] after that,” says Von Walter. “I had my picture taken with my name and filled out a questionnaire about my personality quirks, my most embarrassing moment, what I would do with a million dollars.”

The next step was the interview. Three producers took turns calling out the names of those who had passed the test to conduct a short interview with each of them. Von Walter said he noticed that some people were getting “shuffled off” and told they would receive a postcard in the mail, while others received a yellow sheet of paper and were told to stay by.

He also noticed that one of the producers just wasn’t handing out any yellow sheets. Of course, she called out “Hans von Walter.”

“I thought, *I’m going to make the best lemonade out of these sour lemons,*” says Von Walter. “So I bounded up there and said hello. The first thing she said was ‘Hans von Walter. That’s an interesting name.’”

The interview was short, and Von Walter says he thought he had blown it, but to his surprise, she handed him a yellow piece of paper and asked him to stand by for a live interview. Out of the 40 who had passed the test, only about 10 got the second interview.

During the second interview, they asked about Von Walter’s name again.

“I thought, *OK, my name is a good hook.*”

When Von Walter explained that he had found out about the auditions while looking for a summer job, the interviewer asked what kind of job he could have been searching for that involved the word “millionaire.”

“I told him I had lofty ambitions,” said Von Walter, smiling.

Von Walter had read on the message board that the video interview was the last step before getting on the show. Unfortunately, the postcard arrived explaining that he had not been chosen.

“It was a real bummer because I thought I had all the stuff they were looking for,” says Von Walter. “I had a cool name, I was young. But the people on the message board said that sometimes it’s just about the numbers.”

But Von Walter didn’t give up on his dream of game show fame. A couple weeks later, he took an online, 50 question test for a college tournament on *Jeopardy!*.

“It’s a tough test,” says Von Walter. “A lot tougher than the *Millionaire* test. This one isn’t multiple choice and you only have 15 seconds to answer



Hans von Walter and Alex Trebek, host of *Jeopardy! Tournament of Champions*

each question. Even if you pass, there's a random component; they just draw randomly from those that pass. So even after I passed, I didn't think too much of it."

But about a week later, Von Walter received an email congratulating him on being selected to participate in a live interview for the college *Jeopardy!* audition in Atlanta. Approximately 300 people are invited to the audition and there are only 15 spots. After that, the participants join in a mock *Jeopardy!* game to assess how energetic and entertaining they are.

"Your smarts book end your experience," says Von Walter. "You have to be smart enough to pass the test, but then you have to be interesting enough to be on the show, and then do well enough to stay on."

Von Walter prepared for his *Jeopardy!* audition by keeping up with the message board and putting together personal anecdotes that he hoped would set him apart.

"I have heard so many stories about people who try out over and over again, never giving up," says Von Walter. "The most recent winner of the *Jeopardy! Tournament of Champions*, Vijay Balse, had his first try out for *Jeopardy!* back in 1993, 16 years before he actually got on the show. As a young person, sometimes defeats and disappointments take a harder toll than they should, but when I read stories like that, it really helped put everything into perspective."

On September 23, 2010, Von Walter's determination finally paid off: while sitting in his biochemistry lab at Southern, his phone lit up with a call from California; he had been chosen to compete on the *Jeopardy!* College Championship, the first student to ever represent Southern Adventist University.

"I was completely speechless when I got the call to be on the show," says Von Walter. "I couldn't concentrate on anything for basically the rest of the semester. I couldn't believe that a

lifelong dream was actually becoming a reality."

When he arrived in California, Von Walter became discouraged when he saw his competition and began to wonder if he was out of his league. However, he decided to make the most of it and resigned himself to being happy "just playing the game." Von Walter advanced round after round, and before he knew it, he had made it into the finals!

Von Walter finished third in the competition, winning \$25,000 and taking away wonderful memories and new-found friends.

"It felt great to finish in third place. I played against two of the most amazing, brilliant people I've ever met, and I feel absolutely no shame in coming in behind them. It never once crossed my mind that I 'lost.' I won an amazing experience, and to get a little cash and a high placement was an extra bonus on the side."

Von Walter gave his advice for any young person who is pursuing a dream: "Go for it! Like the saying goes, 'you miss 100% of the shots you don't take.' Even with this dream in the history books of my life now, there's still a whole lot of living to do, and I'm excited to find out what else God has in store for me!" ●

***Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* is an American television game show that offers up to a million dollars for correctly answering multiple choice questions. *Jeopardy!* is the number 1-rated American television game show, hosted by Alex Trebek, which features trivia questions on categories such as history, literature, science, and geography.

BIBLE STUDY: senior youth/young adult

Contributor : Troy Fitzgerald, Ph.D.



HOPE FULL

The Scope of Truth, The Hope of Life Young Adult Bible Studies on the 28 Fundamental Beliefs

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is lesson #7 in the Bible Studies series that explore our 28 Fundamental Beliefs as Seventh-day Adventist Christians. The entire series will be available soon. Contact your local ABC, AdventSource or online at www.gcyouthministries.org.

THE NATURE OF MAN

ENGAGE

Kemper and Lonnie looked nervously at the aged man of God. The police officer had taken the two young boys to the pastor at the local church because he was tired of taking them to jail. At first, the thought of prison had scared these two rebellious kids into staying out of trouble, but that fear eventually wore off and they were back to stealing, vandalism, disturbing the peace, and destroying public property. They were too young to go to prison. The parents had no control or influence. Some described the boys as demon-possessed. Others just wanted them gone. The officer didn't know what to do anymore, so he made one last effort with the church.

The boys came to the church every day as part of their community service discipline. The pastor worked them pretty hard, but he also worked with them. They became more comfortable around the patient old man. He would talk with them, and they would tell him all the things they would get in trouble for. He would shake his head and smile, saying, "You are better than this. You are made with heavenly material. Look at your hands. You are destined for better things." Over time, they came to believe that he truly believed what he said about them. Eventually those two boys began to believe it themselves.

When people say, "I'm only human," what do they mean? Often what it means to be human is described in the context of a

mistake or an apparent weakness that has been exposed. "I'm only human" really infers that "I'm not God, supernatural, or flawless." According to the account in Genesis, God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground" (Genesis 1:26). How did He do this? The Bible says that "the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7). Once the body that God made from the dirt was infused with the breath of life, the Bible says that they "became a living being" (or soul). But the other animals have this formula as well. What makes humanity different?

DISCOVER

Read the statement of belief below and note the aspects of human nature that you had not thought of before. As you read each verse carefully, reflect on the complexity of what it means to be a human, created in the image of God. What responsibilities does that involve? What possibilities are available?

Man and woman were made in the image of God with individuality, the power and freedom to think and to do. Though created free beings, each is an indivisible unity of body, mind, and spirit, dependent upon God for life and breath and all else. When our first parents disobeyed God, they denied their dependence upon Him and fell from their high position under God. The image of God in them was marred and they became subject to death. Their descendants share this fallen nature and its consequences. They are born with weaknesses and tendencies to evil. But God in Christ reconciled the world to Himself and by His Spirit restores in penitent mortals the image of their Maker. Created for the glory of God, they are called to love Him and one another, and to care for their environment.

As you study the following sections of Scripture, highlight or mark the three passages that are speaking to you today. Why are these verses particularly interesting to you today? As you resonate with the theme of what it means to be human, in what areas of your life do you want to experience the best of God's intentions when He made you?

Genesis 1:26-28

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

Genesis 2:7

“The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”

Psalms 8:4-8

“What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?

You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.

You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.”

Acts 17:24-28

“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men,

that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’”

Psalms 51:5

“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”

Romans 5:12-17

“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned—for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.

But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned

through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ."

2 Corinthians 5:19, 20

"That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God."

Psalms 51:10

"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."

1 John 4:7, 8, 11, 20

"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love ... Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen."

Genesis 2:15

"The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it."

RELATE

The great narrative of God and people is a story filled with hope. At the creation of the world our story began, as children of God (Luke 1:37). Even though being human often means being broken, David sings, "When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?" (Psalm 8:3-5). When you look at David's story there is a sense of wonder. Do you ever wonder how David could stoop to steal another man's wife and then murder her husband? When David came to his senses he must have wondered, "What kind of person am I?" Yet he could still say, "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalms 139:14). Human nature is dangerous, but it is still linked to the divine. From the pages of Scripture we know that human nature can become so bad, the only way out is death. Read the description of the Nephilim, the people who lived in the era of Noah (Genesis 6:4-6). Every thought—always—totally evil. Can human nature sink any deeper?

The life of the human family is filled with painful failure, but also with possibilities. Between these struggles we find people who discover the awesome joy of going from being broken to restored. Read the story of how Peter and the disciples heard the good news and the bad news about

their humanity all in the same moment (Luke 22:24-34). If you read Paul's words in Romans you will see how this great apostle felt the tension between the best of humanity and the worst that lived in his own nature (Romans 7:14-24). Mary of Magdala is known for being a sinful woman who had seven demons expelled from her by Christ (Luke 8:1-3), yet she became perhaps one of the most devoted disciples of Christ on earth.

Can a human love unconditionally? Ask anyone who is a parent. Can a member of the human family genuinely forgive their worst enemy? It happens all over the world. Is it in humanity to selflessly serve someone else? Undoubtedly. In fact, the most amazing moments of the human experience are found in moments like these. Why? Because we are created in the image of God. And when we behave like we are destined for more, it's like stepping into the skin that fits perfectly. Have you ever wondered how Jesus could say, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48)?

EXPRESS

Who can you think of in Scripture that is an example of someone coming to know what it means to find their true destiny?

Who do you know that celebrates the best possibilities in people instead of focusing on the worst? How does that affect the people they come in contact with?

What does it mean to be made in the image of God? How or in what ways are we “like” Him, and in what sense are we not at all like God?

In what areas of your life do you resonate with Paul, who cried out, “For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do” (Romans 7:15)?

In what way has humanity experienced some of the things that God originally designed for them at Creation?

Make a list of the qualities of God that you love about Him. Identify which qualities are possible for people to achieve with God’s help, and which are for God alone.

QUOTES

“When man transgressed the divine law, his nature became evil, and he was in harmony, and not at variance, with Satan.” –Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 505

“Man was originally endowed with noble powers and a well-balanced mind. He was perfect in his being, and in harmony with God. His thoughts were pure, his aims holy. But through disobedience, his powers were perverted, and selfishness took the place of love. His nature became so weakened through transgression that it was impossible for him, in his own strength, to resist the power of evil. He was made captive by Satan, and would have remained so forever had not God specially interposed. It was the tempter’s purpose to thwart the divine plan in man’s creation, and fill the earth with woe and desolation. And he would point to all this evil as the result of God’s work in creating man.” –Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 17

“Man is rational and therefore like God; he is created with free will and is master over his acts.” –Irenaeus

“There is a God-shaped blank in every heart.”
–Blaise Pascal ●

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BIBLE STUDY: junior youth

Contributor : Kimberley Tagert–Paul



MY UNIQUENESS

Loving Me the Way God Made Me

LEADERS NOTES: *Youth are their own harshest critics. The media today likes to present the message that they need to be perfect—but who decides what perfect is? God! He created each of the youth! Encourage your young people during this study to accept themselves as the wonderful person God made them to be. Compliments go a long way in the lives of youth!*

ICE BREAKER : *Eagle Eyed*

Have you ever heard the term “eagle-eyed”? It has become a catch phrase in many cultures—and for good reasons. Most eagles have eyes that face forward. They have eyes so large that they cannot move them easily. So, the eagle must turn his head to see to the side. That means eagles are forward seeing. Eagle’s eyesight is up to eight times better than humans. It can spot a rabbit or fish up to two miles away. Eagles also see in a great amount of detail. They can adjust the focus of their eyes at lightning speed. They keep a sharp focus as they swoop down from the sky and plunge in a fast dive toward their prize.

When eagles mate, they mate for life. They work together to build a nest that can reach up 9 ft. in diameter and weigh up to two tons! The nesting pair will often return to this nest over and over, repairing and replacing it as needed. Since eagles can live up to 30 years in the wild, that’s a lot of nesting seasons. Both parents guard the eggs in the nest. Their eggs are plain white and only slightly bigger than a chicken’s egg. The eagle may start out small, but it becomes the King of Birds.

When hatched, the parents take turns bringing food to the young. The adults shelter the eaglets from bad weather and intense heat by covering them with their wings. As eaglets grow and take their first flight, the adult birds do not abandon their young. They often continue to bring them some food and teach them hunting methods for up to one year.

Eagles do not usually eat carrion. What’s that you ask? It is otherwise known as road kill, or better yet, crow pizza. They hunt and fish for small game and fresh fish, preferring life-giving foods. But if an eagle does eat something that makes him sick, he does something interesting. He flies to the highest rock—and goes spread eagle—and lies there letting the sun bake the poison out of him.

DIG-IN

We can learn some valuable lessons from the eagle. The Bible uses the strength and uniqueness of the eagle to teach us about our Heavenly Father. And if we look closely, we can learn valuable lessons about who we should be!

God made you as unique as He made the eagle. He created you with strengths, abilities, and choices. Like the eagle, we need to be forward focused. We have to keep our eye on the goal before us and not let things around us distract us. That's not easy in this world of instant living. The only way to survive is to keep our eyes Heavenly focused.

The eagle is the "King of the Birds." Do you know that God sees you in the same way? You are His crowing glory of creation. Yes, if you are like everyone else, you may not be perfect. But God wants to make up for that by infusing you with His character. Like the eagle's egg, you may start out small and plain, but God has a plan for you. A big plan—just like the eagle.

God stays close to us, just like the eagle parents. We are His children. He doesn't abandon us to the wolves. He teaches us and sets us free—but He is always close to watch and help and guide us until we learn we can't stand without Him.

Like the eagle, we often get desperate and do things that we know are not the right thing for us. What a lesson we can learn from the eagle. We need to go to the Rock, the highest Rock, and like the majestic bird, go spread eagle and let the Son bake the poison out of us.

HOT POTATO

What's Poisoning You?

If you listen to the media, you probably think that you are far from perfect. Unless you have a trim and fit figure—or the perfect nose—or wear the best of fashions—the media can easily convince you that you are not good enough. So you may constantly strive to make yourself better according to their standards. The problem is that you will never reach perfection according to the world. It's a constant chase—and if you ever did get to the end, you'd be pretty lonely there by yourself.

God created you just the way He wants you to be. He may have doused you with freckles, given you a silly laugh, or a bone structure that makes you not fit into a size small—but He is the Master Designer. And He loves you—without hesitation.

HOT POTATO QUESTIONS

Why is it so hard to look into the mirror and accept yourself the way God made you? Is everything about you a product of God's design—or are some things your choice? What ways do you wish you could be different? Can you do anything about these choices? Do you think it is O.K. for Christians to have feature altering cosmetic plastic surgeries to change the way they look?

Why or why not?

APPLY IT/BIBLE TEXT DISCOVERY

Psalm 139:13-14 God knew you in the womb! Can you accept that God designed and planned for you before you were even born? How does a mother feel about the child in her womb? What things does she do to protect that child? Do you think that that is how God feels about you? If God thinks you are of value, shouldn't you feel that way, too?

Deuteronomy 32:10 - 11 Have you ever felt like you were all alone in a desert land? Has the devil ever tempted you to look at yourself and make you think that you are not all you should be—or reminded you of things that hurt you and make you think less of yourself?

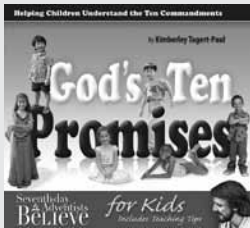
What does this verse say that God calls you? What does that phrase—"the apple of His eye" mean to you? What do you need to do to see that you are the apple of God's eye?

How can you help others to feel that way, too?

Deuteronomy 32:4, 31 Do you believe that God has a plan for your uniqueness in His world? Like the eagle, we have a Rock to turn to when we are in need. When you have listened to the poison that others may try to feed you about yourself, can you trust God to point you to His plan for you? Will God always be faithful when others fail you?

Verse 31 is saying, 'My dad is better than your dad.' We like to think that our fathers are the best father, loving and thinking he world of us. How much more our heavenly father!

1 John 3:1 What word does this verse use to talk about God's love for us? Lavish - what does that word mean to you? When you lavish, does it mean that you hold back something or you give extravagantly? God doesn't hold back anything good from us. Do we ever hold anything good back from God? Do you think that accepting yourself is important to God? Could it make you different from the rest of the world? Would you be able to accept those differences and still be happy?



GOD'S TEN PROMISES

by Kimberley Tagert-Paul

<http://www.adventistbookcenter.com>

In *Gods Ten Promises* you will find a refreshingly different approach to learning about this important topic. Join twins Cameron and Kaitlynn as they discover something exciting—the commandments are not a list of dos and donts. Rather, they are promises. In them, God is saying, "If you let Me, Ill make you into someone who wouldnt even think of stealing."

Isaiah 40:30-31 and **Isaiah 40:28**

How can you have the strength of an eagle? As a young person, why would you need this kind of strength while living in the world? The Bible says that your strength will be renewed if you hope in the Lord. Does the message of the world ever make you weary? Do you ever feel like you need God's message renewed in your life? Will God ever get tired of working for you? How do you know this? How can you listen more to God's message of acceptance—and soar like an eagle?

EXTRA GEM

Ellen White wrote about eagles, too. Read the following . . .

"In her endeavors to reach her home, the eagle is often beaten down by the tempest to the narrow defiles of the mountains. . . At last she dashes upward into the blackness, and gives a shrill scream of triumph as she emerges, a moment later, in the calm sunshine above. The darkness and tempest are all below her, and the light of heaven is shining about her. She reaches her loved home in the lofty crag, and is satisfied. It was through darkness that she reached the light. It cost her an effort to do this, but she is rewarded in gaining the object which she sought. This is the only course we can pursue as followers of Christ. We must exercise that living

faith, which will penetrate the clouds that, like a thick wall, separate us from heaven's light. We have heights of faith to reach, where all is peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." (MYP 103.1)

SHARING TIME

This week, find someone you know is searching for acceptance but is having a difficult time. Compliment them. Encourage them to see that they have worth in God's eyes. Look especially for someone that others might miss reaching out to. It may be hard to do this - but you will be blessing them, and you will receive a blessing in return.

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

Take a good look in the mirror. Make a list of things that you wish you could change. Now, cross off of that list the things you can't do anything about.

Copy on another page the things you can do something about. Make a plan to tackle them one at a time. Now, take the list of things that is crossed off—and in prayer, give them up to God. Yes, it may be difficult, but persist. Then, tear up the list and throw it away. You will have begun to accept the unique person God made you to be. And don't go digging around in the trash for those bits you have thrown away. Trust God who created you perfectly! ●

FOCUS : Identity



THE MAGIC MIRROR

By Kimberley Tagert-Paul

PROGRAM TARGET:

God thinks that we are perfect because of His grace. It is a free gift that we must choose to accept. Following as He leads will help us to make choices that will bring our happiness.

CENTRAL BIBLE TRUTH:

You were created by God. You are perfect in His sight.

SCRIPTURE:

Psalm 139:1-16

SETTING:

A bare stage with a large mirror on a stand or base. The back of the mirror would face the audience and be just that - plain and simply the back of the mirror. The mirror is covered at the beginning with a cloth so no one can see the back.

PROPS:

A large mirror on a stand or base, back facing the audience and covered by a cloth of some type (tablecloth, sheet, etc. . .)

CHARACTERS:

Sonia, a young woman. Luke, a young man. (Age doesn't matter in this skit; use ages that fit your group.)

Sonia and Luke enter the stage and approach the mirror already in a conversation.

Sonia: So, you really have a magic mirror, huh?

Luke: I told you I did. Don't you believe me?

Sonia: I thought you didn't believe in magic.

Luke: O.K. You're right. But, give my mirror a chance, will ya?

Sonia: I don't know. (She walks around the mirror studying it.) So, you think it will really tell me if I'm beautiful or not?

Luke: I already answered that, but my mirror will have some things to say, too.

Sonia: Uh huh. I bet. (She walks around the mirror again.) O.K. I guess I'll give it a try. (She smiles at Luke.)

Luke: Great. Stand back over there behind it.

Sonia: Like this? (She stands facing the audience, but behind the mirror.)

Luke: Perfect. O.K. Here goes. (He pulls the cloth from the mirror and piles it on the floor.) We're all ready. So, what do you see?

Sonia: (She turns back and forth looking at herself in the mirror.) I guess I could lose a few pounds. And it probably wouldn't hurt to get my hair cut. . . So, what do you see? (She tries to peek around the mirror but Luke pushes her back.)

Luke: Hey, no peeking. Here's what I see. . . You are perfect, fearfully and wonderfully made. The hairs on your head are even numbered.

Sonia: Come on, that's a copout.

Luke: Not according to the Bible. Matthew 10:30 says . . . "And even the very

hairs of your head are all numbered." Psalms 139:14 says. . .

Sonia: I know. . . I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

But, don't the choices I make change some of that?

Luke: So you think God doesn't love you when you have a bad hair day, or you gain a few pounds? I think His love goes way beyond all of that. I see something else. Do you want to hear about it?

Sonia: Of course. Go on.

Luke: I see a beautiful young woman who loves the Lord. She has made some wonderful choices that weren't easy for her. She read the Bible, and found truth, and she's putting it first in her life. Her family can't yet see that the choices are good for her - but in time they will. She's healthier and her skin glows as brightly and as awesome as her eyes. Most of all, her heart glows and shows in everything that she does. That makes her special, and perfect according to my mirror.

Sonia: (She steps to the side of the mirror so everyone can see her bright smile.) Your mirror is pretty smart. Can I see it now?

Luke: Sure, take a look. (He gestures with his hand that Sonia can look on his side.)

Sonia: (Steps around to the other side. She turns and faces Luke who has turned toward the audience.) But. . . it's just the back. There's nothing there. How does that help you to see anything?

Luke: That's easy, Sonia. It helps me to see you. . . with God's eyes.

(Luke and Sonia exit the stage, both smiling) ●

FOCUS : Obedience



FREEDOM FROM BONDAGE

By Kimberley Tagert-Paul

PROGRAM TARGET:

To help youth understand the difference between works and obedience and show them how to find freedom in Christ.

CENTRAL BIBLE TRUTH:

Communion and foot-washing are a miniature form of baptism to remind us of God's great sacrifice.

SCRIPTURE:

- Eph. 2:8 - 9
- Heb. 9:22
- Romans 11:6

PROPS:

Have pieces of fabric strips long enough to tie legs and hands together and to make blindfolds. You will need one strip for each youth.

INTRODUCTION:

Today, we are going to explore legalism and how it relates to Christianity. Or does it? We will have to see. But first we are going to have fun with an activity.

WHAT TO DO:

Make sure you are in a large space clear of obstacles because you will need lots of space for this activity. Divide your group into four groups:

Group One

Tie their hands behind their backs.

Group Two

Tie their legs together at the ankles.

Group Three

Blindfold them so they cannot see.

Group Four

Tie either the hands or legs of two youth together.

With the youth standing, combine the four groups to form a circle. Tell them you will call out different commands and they are to do them.

Shake hands with the person to your left.

Trade places with the person two spots to the right.

Wink at the person directly across from you and when they have winked back, shout "Oh my!"

Hop on your left foot to the center of the circle and back.

Do three jumping jacks.

Sit down at your place in the circle and then stand up again.

Turn around once to the right - then turn around twice to the left and face the middle of the circle.

Pretend you are catching and throwing a ball.

Put your right foot forward and wave at your neighbor to the right.

(Feel free to add others that you think of - this activity should take 15 - 25 minutes.)

Leader: *(Let the youth remain in the circle in their handicapped state.)*

Some of you did not do the activities as I called them out. Why was it such a problem? What if anything could be done to help you do as I asked? Was it fun to try to do the things I asked while you were tied up? Would you like your freedom? *(Have everyone help take off their bindings.)*

Gather the group into your meeting room if you used a different area.

It is no fun to be in bondage, is it? We all want to be free and be able to do the things we choose to do with all of our capabilities. But many Christians are in bondage - and they don't know it. It all started a long time ago with two brothers: Cain and Abel. Cain thought that he had some sort of righteousness within him, so instead of bringing a sin offering to God, he brought a thank offering. A thank offering didn't acknowledge his sin, or his need of a Savior. Abel though, brought a lamb, and acknowledged his sin and need of mercy. He realized his only hope was the unmerited love of God. God accepted Abel's offering but not Cain's, and we all know what happened as a result.

Today, the church isn't much different. There are those who accept Christ's righteousness and are covered in the merits of their Savior—not their own. Then there are those who think they

have some merit and assert their independence. They think that something they do can earn them salvation. They couldn't be more wrong. We aren't called to be achievement centered. We can't earn our way to heaven. Yet so many try. We are called to be Christ-centered. If we put ourselves totally in His hands, then we won't be spiritually self-sufficient, and we will find our sufficiency in Christ alone.

Discuss: How many find that hard to do? Don't be afraid to raise your hands. We've all learned things that make us think we have to do things the right way or else. Do we have to have works in our lives in order to please God? Is there a difference between works and obedience? How does Ephesians 2:8 and 9 relate to this? How many of you do good things for someone you love? Do you do these because you must, because you are afraid they won't love you if you don't? Or do you do them because it is a manifestation of your love? Why does love call for obedience?

Read John 8:31 -36 out loud. Christ is the One that can set us free from our bondage. Only Christ. But we must surrender to Him. And that is where the problem usually lies. It is hard for us to surrender our wills and control. Don't think you are the first - or that you will be the last. It started with Cain and Abel and it will continue as long as we are on this earth.

Conclusion: Remember the prodigal son? He was the one who thought he had a better way than what his father had, so he took his inheritance and split. Where did he end up? Eating the corn cobs the pigs did.

Now, he was living among the pigs when he decided he should go home because his father's servants had better than he did. Do you think he took a bath before hand? No. He didn't have the resources. He was dirty and he smelled like pigs. Pigs don't smell too good. But he came as he was and what did his father do for him? He saw him coming and he got out a robe for him. He cleaned him up and put on him his own clothing. That's what Christ does for us. We don't have to clean ourselves up before we come—it wouldn't do any good. We come as we are, and then Christ does the cleaning up and covers us with His robe. That's one of the beautiful things about Jesus. That's what salvation is. Once we are there, then we grow in justification. Obedience develops our character and provides evidence of our love for Jesus. Obedience is not works. It is love in action. Can there be a better gift than that?

End in Prayer.

This would be a good time to give the youth a chance to give their hearts to God. ●

▶ FOCUS : Identity



PERFECTION

By Kimberley Tagert-Paul

PROGRAM TARGET:

To help young adults explore who they are with God, and who they would be without Him and to decide who gets to determine perfection.

AIM:

To help people see that they are a perfect creation—only in God. They can not do enough in the world's eyes to be perfect. But God sees them as perfect because of His son, Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURES:

Ephesians 2:4-5, Psalms 52:8, Hebrews 2:11, 1 John 4:10, Romans 5:7-8, Philippians 4:13, Acts 17:28

TO PREPARE:

If doing the skit, keep the mirror in the room and set it beside you as you open the program; otherwise, place a mirror where all can see it. You'll also need notebooks or paper and pens for everyone. It would be good to have a digital camera available for group shots after the program.

LEADER:

(If possible, start with the skit, Magic Mirror, on page 28. Afterwards, open the program.)

(Read—Don't ask for answers yet.) Who defines who we are? The media, our friends, our family? Who gets to make the choice of how we fit into our world. Do we let others make that choice for us?

For many, the answer is that they let others define them. They listen to others opinions and take them to heart and let their words mold them into the person they are. Do you think that's how God wants us to define ourselves?

TO DO:

Give each participant a small notebook - or paper and pen. Ask them to write the questions listed on a blank page:

1) Whom do you say you are?

2) How would you be different if you weren't a Seventh-day Adventist Christian?

We are going to take a few minutes to see if we can define how we see ourselves by asking two important questions. First, Whom do you say you are? Second, If you consider yourself a Seventh-day Adventist Christian, do you think you would be different if you weren't one? *(Tell your group to take the papers and pens and really explore these two questions for the next few minutes. Don't be afraid to write things down, these are for you only. You will decide what you want to share with others, so be honest with yourself. These are important questions for everyone to answer—including the leader.)*

Provide time and space for people to be able to write freely. The suggested time is 10 - 15 minutes to give time to

adequately answer the questions, but if your group is getting restless before that, you may want to call them back together.

LEADER:

How do you feel after answering the questions? Were you surprised at the results? Let's look at the first question. Anyone want to share some of their responses?

(After someone shares, ask the group if they see the person this way. Don't allow this to turn negative, however. This is a time to explore, but nicely. Use the next 10 minutes to let everyone share some of their answers.)

Let's look at some scripture texts. Assign people to read the following: *Psalms 52:8, Acts 17:28, 1 John 4:10.*

Do these scriptures help us to see our true identity? Where does Psalms 52:8 say we flourish? Do you think that your relationship with God helps to define the best part of who you are? Why? How? *Give time for discussion and answers.*

Does the world want us to feel good about ourselves? Does God want us to feel good about ourselves? Let's look at some more scripture: *(read) Ephesians 2:4-5, Romans 5:7-8, Philippians 4:13.* How do these texts answer our questions?

Now, let's look at the second question. Did you have a hard time

answering it? If you have always been a Christian, you may have had a hard time. If you've come into the church from outside of it, it may have been easier depending on how you lived.

Do you ever feel cheated that you can't do things that may seem off limits if you are a Christian? Is there anything on your list for question two that makes you think you'd be a better person if you were like that? *(Give time for discussion. You may need to share an answer from your own page to get things started. This part should last between 5 - 10 minutes.)*

Do you think your choices affect who you are as a Seventh-day Adventist Christian?

(Give time to allow for answers.)

So, who do you think gets to decide what perfect is? Who get's to decide what good enough is? Don't you think it is your Creator that knows what perfect is—and that His grace makes you perfect in Him? Isn't that the best place to be—under His loving judgment and not the worlds? Let's look at Hebrews 2:11. **Say aloud**, "If Jesus isn't' ashamed of us, why should we be ashamed of ourselves?"

End in Prayer. *(Now is a good time to use your camera and take some great shots of your group if you have one available. Let them pose and have fun and feel good about themselves.)* ●

plugged in

with erica richards

Welcome to the first edition of **Plugged-In!** As you may have read in the last issue of *Accent*, **Plugged-In** is a new section—designed just for youth—by youth! Our latest discussion on Facebook led us to a search about faith and works—and there were passionate responses on all sides. The following is the Facebook post that began the discussion:

I recently lost a loved one to a sudden and tragic accident. She was only 23 years old. I didn't know her very well during her life on this earth, but at her funeral, I was able to know her better by what people had to say about her life. Some of the people who spoke about her had only known her for a day, but the impact she had on their lives was so great that they wanted to share their experiences. Some people spoke of how her passion for helping others was contagious; some spoke of her positive outlook on life and how she was always smiling; still others spoke of her free spirit and how you never knew where she might be because she was always putting others before herself. These memories touched me, but they also

left me with a big question on my mind: she didn't believe in God or the Bible. Was she going to be in heaven? How could someone live such a Christian life, without being a Christian? The Bible tells us that the righteous are saved through faith alone, not works. But we are also told that we must love others above all else, which my cousin seemed to practice. So I'm left with a difficult question: Can we be "good" without God? Are we judged by what we know...or what we do...or...?

Many of the responses had a common theme: that we are saved through our acceptance of Jesus Christ. Therefore, being "good" is not enough. However, it became clear through the responses that there were no clear-cut answers. Doesn't God look at the heart? What if she had never heard about Christ? What kind of experiences had she had that would make her reject God? Here are some of your responses:*

"You don't need God to be good, but you do need Him to be saved. It's impossible to live a Christian life without knowing the Guy you're following." (CN)

"It is said that God winks at our ignorance, but that's when we don't know. When we do know, and still choose to live without Him, it makes a difference, no matter how good you are." (BA)

"It is our actions that reflect our heart. Just as water dripping out of a pipe implies a leak, and your car not starting implies something is wrong INSIDE ... we humans look at what we do—God knows why we do it." (MS)

"Just because one knows God does not mean that they live a life that HONORS God. And just because one does not know God does not mean they don't live a life that would make Him a lot happier than watching His "followers" sin again and again and claim Him as their Savior." (BE)

"Remember what Jesus said to His disciples when they confronted Him about a person who was performing miracles in His name, but He was not His follower? (Mark 9:38-41). You can be sure that even when your relative was not a professed

Christian, the way she acted and the way she was showed what Christ Himself said we should be as Christians. The tree is known by the fruit it bears.” (MD)

This discussion originated from a topic close to my heart. The loved one spoken about was my cousin. After leaving her funeral, these questions lingered in my mind. In my personal study, I found that Ellen White had a lot of useful commentary on questions like mine. In *Christ’s Object Lessons* she wrote, “We may claim to be followers of Christ, we may claim to believe every truth in the Word of God; but this will do our neighbor no good unless our belief is carried into our daily life.”

These words reminded me that just as there are people serving others without giving credit to Christ, there are also those of us who claim His name but do not follow His bidding to us to love as He loves.

For those of us who have always known Christ and were raised in the church, it is sometimes difficult to understand those who dismiss religion and/or God; we may even dismiss their love and service as insufficient or unjustified. But we must be careful in our judgments of others, for we can never truly know what is in their heart.

Mrs. White goes on to say this: “Wherever there is an impulse of love and sympathy, wherever the heart reaches out to bless and uplift others,

there is revealed the working of God’s Holy Spirit. In the depths of heathenism, men who have had no knowledge of the written law of God, who have never even heard the name of Christ, have been kind to His servants, protecting them at the risk of their own lives. Their acts show the working of a divine power” (COL).

I humbly admit that I do not have all the answers, and I am grateful that the ultimate judgment is not mine to make. However, with a new year ahead of us, I would challenge you to try and view others through Jesus’ eyes—in love, without judgment or condemnation. You are blessed

to know Christ and to recognize what He has done for you. Others may never have heard of His love, or perhaps they have become disillusioned with false religions and people who don’t practice what they preach. But there are those who, despite not knowing Christ the way you do, find ways of showing love to those around them, sacrificing their time and resources to serve others. Praise them for their efforts. Join them in their efforts. And along the way, I pray that you will be touched by their sincere love, and that they in turn will learn of the Source of that love—our one and only Savior, Jesus Christ. ●

*The quotes are followed by the initials of the author.

*You gave on the way a pleasant smile and thought no more about it.
It cheered a life that had been dark the while
Which might have been wrecked without it.
And so for that smile that was given there,
You’ll have a reward sometime-somewhere.*

*You spoke one day a cheering word, and passed to other duties.
It cheered a heart; new promise stirred and painted a life with beauties.
And so for that word of golden cheer,
You’ll have a reward sometime-somewhere.*

*You lent a hand to a fallen one; lift in love was given.
You saved a soul when hope was gone and helped him on toward heaven.
And, so for that help you proffered there,
You’ll have a reward sometime-somewhere.*

Untitled and Author Unknown

GOOD WORKS

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	6		7		8		9	
10			11				12	13
14								
15							16	
	17	18				19		
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22								

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DOWN:

- A D was willing to share his dinner with others (John 6:9).
- If an elderly or sick person has a fireplace, we can help bring in D for it.
- When we do good works, we the a better place to live in.
- We can send a note to a newly couple before or after their marriage.
- The Royal Law says for us to to others as we would have them do to us (Jas 2:8).
- One who just on someone needing help, but does nothing, is not really helping (Psalm 35:17).
- Everything should be done in an ly way, including the way we keep our room at home (I Corinthians 14:40).
- W Jesus when we do good to others (Matt. 25:34-40).
- One who the yard of our neighbor or shut-in at autumn time is doing a good work.
- Let us THANK GOD for OTHERS. Give the initials of that phrase.
- THE SON of God DIED for our sins (I Cor. 15:3). Give the initials of that phrase.
- OTHERS, EVERYONE, ANOTHER should be in our thoughts all the time. Give the initials.
- Sometimes just a drink of iced during a hot summer day is helpful (Matt. 25:34-40).
- Give the initials of the LORD GOD.
- Give the initials for PRAY ALWAYS.

ACROSS:

- In the summer, sometimes the elderly need help getting their .
- Sometimes a busy person's pet needs AFTE .
- The Royal Law is for us to do others as we would have them do to us (Jas. 2:8).
- We should be willing to help those who are L TED to us and those who are not.
- We should stay busy our doing helpful things to others.
- Theme of this puzzle.
- It is not (abbreviation) to leave undone the good we should be doing (John 4:17).
- Another word for encouraging others is to IFY them (Rom. 14:19).
- When someone is in WLE U sorrow with them.
- Good works can include writing a note or telephoning our Grandpapa or .

introducing:

identity

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