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The Lesser Known of the Three

The story is told of a Scotsman who left his homeland to start a new life in the United States. He had to sell all his personal possessions to buy himself a ticket for the ocean liner that was to take him across the Atlantic on a ten-day journey. By the time he bought his ticket, he had the equivalent of about fifty dollars left and he vowed that he would not spend this money onboard the ship as he certainly would need it to set himself up in his country of adoption.

On the day the ship left the harbor, he went down to the local market and bought himself enough provision for the ten days— bread, biscuits, cheese, fruits, etc. Barely half way through the journey, as he opened his bag of provisions, he was greeted with the unpleasant smell of moldy cheese, stale biscuits, and rotten fruits. He picked and chose the lesser unpleasant items to eat for another couple of days, but come day seven, he could barely withstand the stench. He got rid of it and decided to fast for the remaining three days. On the night before the ship reached its destination, he was so weak that he feared for his life and decided to make the ultimate sacrifice—to spend five dollars on just one meal, just to see him through.

He dragged himself lifelessly to the dining hall where there was a lavish banquet in progress. He went straight to the chief steward, shared his predicament, and offered his five dollar note for just a bowl of soup and some fresh bread. Shocked, the chief steward looked at him and said, “My friend, the cost of your ticket included all your meals; you have been starving yourself when every day, this lavish banquet was accessible to you.”

I wonder if this Scotsman’s sad plight has a sobering lesson for us as leaders, and for our young people who have boarded the ship on the journey to the Kingdom. Scripture says, “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness, through a knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness” (2 Peter 1:3). Our acceptance of Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord opens up for us the powerful presence of the Spirit. God has made abundant provision for a fulfilling and productive journey to His Kingdom. What is my journey like?

On the occasion of Saul’s anointing, the prophet Samuel summed up for us the fourfold blessing of the outpouring of the Spirit (1 Samuel 10:6, 7):

The Spirit of the Lord will come upon you with Power – God will make you strong;

You will be changed into a different person – God will transform your heart;

You will prophesy with them – God will equip you for service;

Do whatever your hands find to do, for God is with you – God will abide in you.

On this side of the cross, what was previously the privilege of kings, priests, prophets, judges, and other chosen few, is now available to all those who choose to know Jesus.

Take time for the third, lesser known person of the triune God; He deserves better acquaintance.

Gilbert Cangy is the director of Youth Ministries for the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He can be reached at CangyG@gc.adventist.org

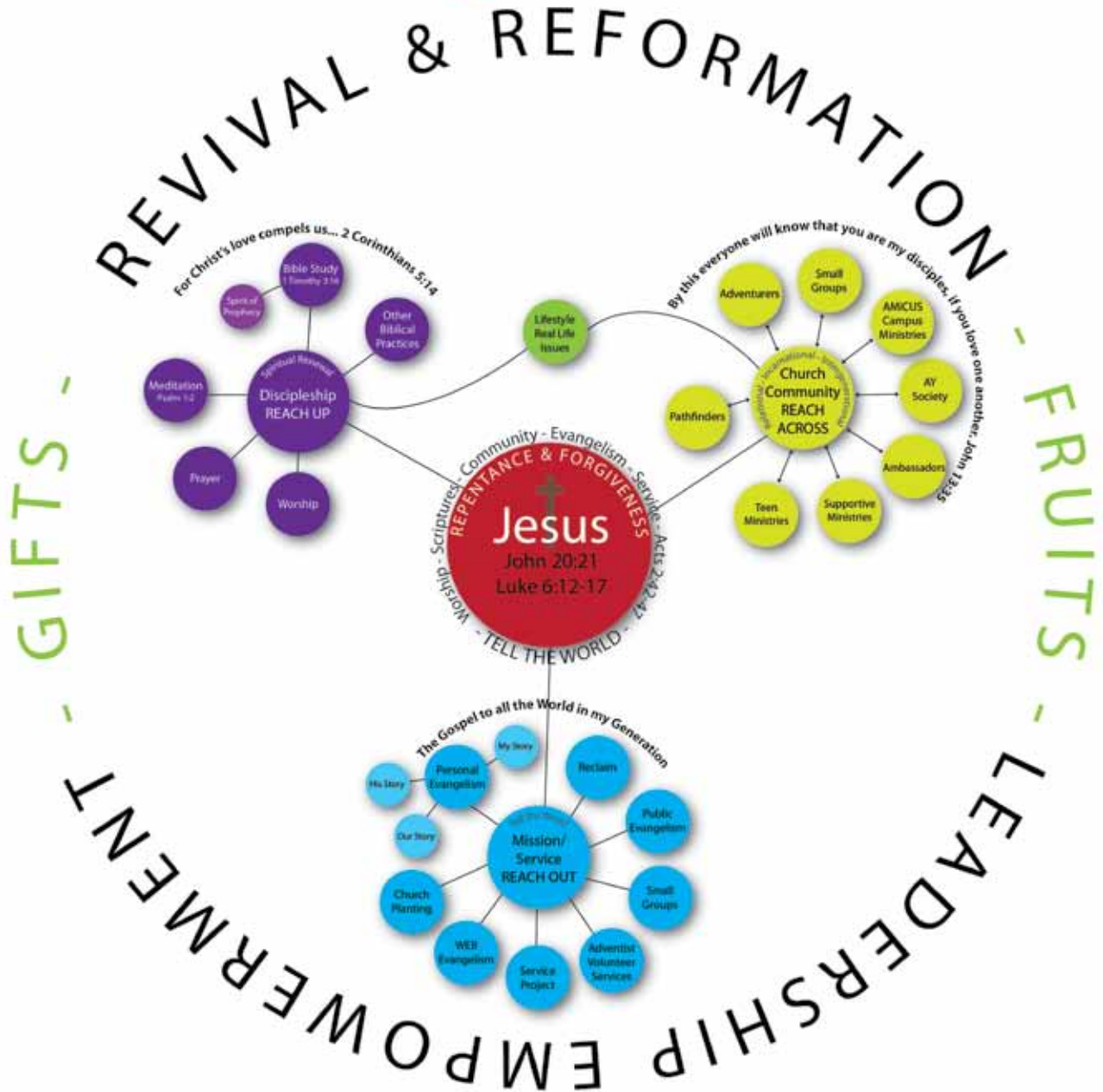


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cover design: *Jonatán Tejel*

re-Visioning Youth Ministries



re-Visioning Youth Ministries

Adopting a new approach to youth ministries in the SDA church
General Conference Youth Ministries Department

The General Conference youth ministries department, in consultation with the youth directors of the thirteen divisions of the world field, has re-Visioned youth ministry and has repositioned Jesus at the center of its existence and mission.

Jesus, The Center

As our motto declares, the love of Christ compels us. Jesus, the Creator of the universe, in whom the fullness of divinity dwells, came down to become like one of us, to restore us to His likeness. He made peace with us through His blood on the cross (Colossians 1: 15-20 NIV).

Jesus Himself says, *“And I, if lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to me”* (John 12:32 KJV).

Global Seventh-day Adventist Youth ministries will elevate Jesus in all aspects of its operation.

1. Repentance and Forgiveness

Mark 1: 1-4: First things first. John the Baptist, the messenger sent ahead of Jesus to prepare the way for Him, preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins to open the door of people’s hearts to receive Jesus and the baptism of the Spirit that He would bring. Repentance and forgiveness are God’s doorway to a new life in Jesus.

2. The Kingdom of God – the essence of Christ’s message

John 20:21: *“As the Father sent me, so send I you.”*

Jesus begins His ministry by proclaiming the good news of God: *“The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news”* (Mark 1:14, 15). Later He would say, *“I must preach the Kingdom of God to other towns also, because that is why I was sent”* (Luke 4:43).



The proclamation and demonstration of the Kingdom of God is at the heart of youth ministry, in obedience to Jesus. The eternal life that begins with confidence in Jesus is a life in His present Kingdom, now on earth and available to all. The message of and about Him is specifically a gospel for our life now, not just for when He comes a second time. It is about living now as His apprentices in Kingdom living, not just as a consumer of His merits. Our future, however far we look, is a natural extension of the faith by which we live now and the life in which we now participate. Eternity is now in flight, and we with it.

3. The Holy Spirit, the power of God in life and mission

John 20:22: *“And with that, he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’”*

The Person, Presence, and Power of the Holy Spirit in our lives as an empowering gift from God is the only context in which our ministry can be carried out.

As reflected in the model, our whole ministry is wrapped up and encircled by the Person, Presence, and Power of the Holy Spirit, producing fruits and imparting gifts for Leadership Empowerment through Revival and Reformation.

4. The faithful proclamation of the Kingdom of God through the power of the Holy Spirit will be attended by the same blessings as on the day of Pentecost.

Acts 2:42-47: A new united and self-sacrificing Kingdom community, where a passion for the Word, Worship, Fellowship, Service, and Evangelism emerged (outlining inner circle).

5. A day in the life of Jesus – A model for the three main focus areas of youth ministry (Luke: 6: 12-19).

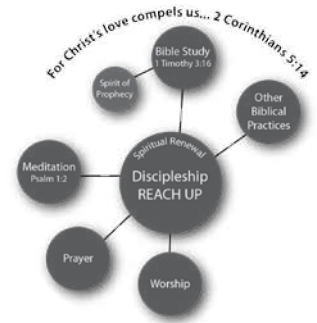
Luke 6:12: *“Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the whole night praying to God.”*

Discipleship – REACH UP Spiritual Renewal

Discipleship has a clear and straight-forward meaning. While followers of Jesus cannot literally be with Him in the same way as His first disciples could, the priorities and intentions, the heart and inner attitudes of disciples are forever the same.

That desire to be like Jesus is naturally followed by a decision to devote oneself to become like Him. The disciple is one who, motivated by their desire to be like the Master, gradually rearranges and reorganizes their life to pursue that very purpose. By these decisions and actions, they enrol in Christ’s training and become His disciples. There is no other way for disciples and disciples who want to make disciples. Becoming a disciple leads into the abundance of life that Jesus said He came to bring (John 10:10).

b. Luke 6:13: *“When the morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them.”*



Church Community – REACH ACROSS Relational, Incarnational & Intergenerational

We should enter into the feelings of the youth, sympathizing with them in their joys and sorrows, their conflicts and victories.

Jesus did not remain in heaven, away from the sorrowing and sinful; He came down to this world, that He might become acquainted with the weakness, the suffering, and the temptations of the fallen race. He, reached us where we were, that He might lift us up. In our work for the youth, we must meet them where they are, if we would help them. . . .

Let us remember the claim of God upon us to make the path to heaven bright and attractive. (E. G. White, Gospel Workers, 212ff). A central feature in the new model is small groups or communities of faith.



We are dreaming of a movement of young people committed to knowing and experiencing God in a small community of faith, to be equipped to serve and to multiply as numbers grow through their witness.

c. Luke 6: 17-19: *“He went down with them and stood at a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea... who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases.”*

Mission/Service – REACH OUT

Young people will be equipped on three levels:

- *Personal – My story, His story, Our story.*
- *Small Groups (church planting, communities of faith, etc.)*
- *Public evangelism in the form of reaping campaigns.*

Christ’s method will be at the core of youth ministries’ Mission, Service, and pursuit of Justice.

“Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching people. The Saviour mingled with (people) as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then, he bade them, ‘follow me’” (Ministry of Healing, p. 143).



REFLECTIONS

It is our conviction that empowered by the Holy Spirit according to the Divine promise, trusted and supported by leadership at all levels, the youth of the world will stand and take its place at the centre stage of the church. They will honor God in reflecting and proclaiming His Kingdom and preparing the world for His soon coming.

For some time now, there has been a sense of renewal among our young people, and the time is right to entrust to them the mission of the challenge of building a church for this generation and beyond. ●

*guiding young
people in their
journey toward
an authentic walk
with JESUS*

DISCIPLES IN ACTION
YOUNG ADULT CURRICULUM

checkusoutatgcyouthministries.org

Character

“Waste no more time arguing what a good man should be. Be one.”

—Marcus Aurelius, Roman emperor from A.D. 161-180

I recently came across a very interesting book entitled, “When No One Sees: The Importance of Character in an Age of Image,” by Os Guinness. I was intrigued by the title and found that I couldn’t put the book down after I had immersed myself in the first few pages. The book discusses many well-known and some not so well-known figures throughout history and describes how their unique characters played a role in both their successes and downfalls.

In looking at the role of character throughout time, I began to wonder: what does character mean for us today? Is today’s generation showing stronger depth of character than the last? Who do we look up to? Are today’s “heroes” worth emulating?

I posed these questions on our facebook discussion page and received the following answer from General Conference employee Demarrco Smith:

FB: Character—what is it? Why is it important? How does it evolve? A traditional saying says, “Sow a thought, reap an action; sow an action, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny.” What does this mean to you for your spiritual journey? What qualities are found in a person of “strong character”? Who do you want to emulate and why?

DS: *Character is and always will be an ever changing view of who you are. I don’t believe a person’s character can stay the same, especially as a Christian! I mean, through life’s obstacles, through our searching and understanding of the scriptures, and other influences, we must continue to shape our character. Within a Christian, the character we seek is obvious, but what about the person who seeks Him not? What or who is shaping their character? I find myself daily having to deal with worldly views, even from church members. It’s kind of hard to even consider one having a strong character, but a character that can be useful in a way that can also be influential with in our community and church’s?*

I look at Jesus, whose character was perfect. How did His character influence those around Him? I believe the same should be identified in us today. What are we shaping our characters for? Position, wealth, control? I mean, how are we as individuals affecting our community with who we are? The Spirit of Prophecy says, “As one becomes acquainted with the history of the Redeemer, he discovers in himself defects of character; his unlikeness to Christ is so great that he sees he cannot be a follower without a very great change in his life. Still he studies, with a desire to be like his great Exemplar; he catches the looks, the spirit, of his beloved Master; by beholding he becomes changed. . . Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.”

As Seventh-day Adventist Christians, we should constantly be searching the scriptures for that change, not just for ourselves, but also for those who do not know Him so that they can be introduced to Him for the same change of character we have experienced through Him!

It has been said that character is who we are when no one is looking—when there is no one to point out our flaws and mistakes. But as Christians, we know we are never truly alone: Christ sees every laugh, tear, and heartache—our successes and our downfalls. And when we search for and find Him, we have a responsibility to try and share that love with others by setting the best example we can.

We never know who is watching us—maybe a sibling, a friend, even a stranger—and looking to us for guidance. Jesus’ character was resolute. He has never and will never change.

I want to be like that. I want my character to be steadfast regardless of where I am or who I’m with.

I want to be more like Him. Do you? ●

Erica Richards is the Editor of *Plugged-In* and works as an editorial assistant in the General Conference Youth Ministries Department.

facebook: GCYouth Ministries



PATHFINDERS



Honor Handbook

Now Available

The Latest Edition of the Pathfinder Honor Handbook!

The manual includes all honors currently recognized at the General Conference level of Youth Ministry, and it also includes those specialized honors recognized by various divisions. Each honor is designed to be a course of study that introduces a subject. This subject should have practical value and should enhance the lifestyle of the person pursuing the honor. Honor study should assist the person in his/her development as a well-rounded Christian by directly affecting the social, emotional, physical, and spiritual aspects of life. The study of an honor should direct the person to a deeper love of the Creator and should increase their interest in committing their life in service to God and to the community. We pray that this handbook will lead you into many new adventures as you discover the world around you, and we hope that these very enjoyable activities will prepare yo/ung people for the world to come.

download at <http://gcyouthministries.com/Ministries/Pathfinders/Resources/tabid/89/Default.aspx>

continued from page 8

Look up the following verses and fill in the blank spaces with the word that describes a Christian character trait. (Note: verses are from the New International Version.)

1. Job 2:3 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his _____, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason."
2. Psalm 15:1-2 Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain? The one whose walk is _____, who does what is _____, who speaks the _____ from their heart.
3. Joshua 1:7 Be strong and very _____. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go.
4. Nehemiah 9:19 Because of your great _____ you did not abandon them in the wilderness. By day the pillar of cloud did not fail to guide them on their path, nor the pillar of fire by night to shine on the way they were to take.
5. Colossians 1:10-11 That you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great _____ and _____.
6. 2 Corinthians 9:13 Because of the _____ by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the _____ that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your _____ in sharing with them and with everyone else.
7. Genesis 22:2 Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. _____ him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you."
8. Psalm 45:4 In your majesty ride forth victoriously in the cause of truth, _____ and _____; let your right hand achieve awesome deeds.
9. 1 Chronicles 29:18 LORD, the God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep these desires and thoughts in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts _____ to you.
10. Matthew 18:21-22 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I _____ my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."

Answers: integrity; blameless, righteous, truth; courageous; compassion; endurance, patience; service, obedience, generosity; sacrifice; humility; justice; loyal; forgive.

Oh, We Are the Pathfinders Strong!

Henry T. Bergh, Pathfinder Pioneer

May 24, 1918—July 15, 2011

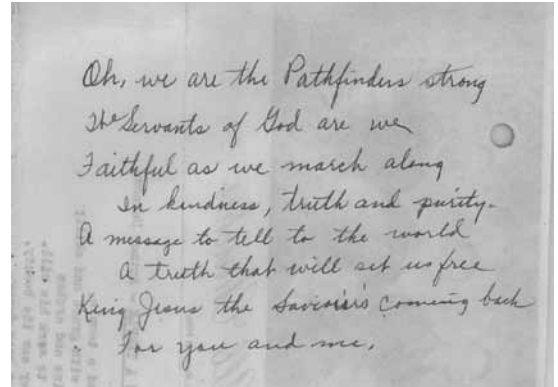
July 15, 2011 marked the end of the beginnings of Pathfinding. On that day, Elder Henry Bergh, the last of our founding pioneers, rested from his labors. He was best known for his God-given gift of composing music, most especially the Pathfinder Song, which begins, “Oh we are the Pathfinders Strong, the servants of God are we...”

Upon hearing of Elder Bergh’s final resting, Dr. Muganda, former World Youth Leader, summed up his appreciation of the man by those very words. Elder Bergh’s own life exemplified the words that followed “...faithful as we march along, in Kindness, Truth, and Purity.”

I had the privilege of knowing nearly all of our pioneers from my earlier Pathfinding years: Lawrence Skinner, John Hancock, Don Palmer, Clark Smith, Harry Garlick, and Lawrence Paulson. Then, while in the offices of the General Conference Youth Ministries department, I met Henry Bergh. All of them (and the few I missed knowing) were very unusual leaders called of God to a very unique task in a very special ministry, but I will admit that Henry was special among the special. I first met him in Puerto Rico at the Second Inter-American Division Pathfinder Camporee (1998). He did indeed, as *The Pathfinder Story* describes him, “prefer to keep a low profile.”

In 1948, while serving as the youth director of the Central California Conference, he began Pathfinder programs, and within a short time twenty-three clubs were up and running in his conference. That same year he started the Pathfinder Area Coordinator program. In 1949 he wrote “The Pathfinder Song,” which he always stated was given to him, words and music, by the Lord. During that year he also wrote a paper that became a booklet, titled *How To Start A Pathfinder Club*, and held the first Leadership Training Camp that summer.

Henry Bergh designed the first Pathfinder flag, which Helen Hobbs sewed into reality. It was later adopted by the General Conference for worldwide use. In 1950 he started *Evangelist*



Original handwritten song. Henry wrote on his way to church on a Sabbath morning. For more information see, *AY Story*, p. 43



Henry T. Bergh at his retirement reception from the Northern California Conference Trust Department.

Meetings with young people as speakers, using sermons prepared by H. M. S. Richards, Sr., a real Voice of Youth effort. In 1951 Elder Bergh held the first Pathfinder fair in Dinuba, California.

In addition to the Pathfinder Song, he wrote a devotional book for juniors, *Upward Trails*, and the first Pathfinder Staff Manual, a manual for use in his Central California Conference, which became the model for the manual later written for the world field.

He was a soft-spoken, kind, patient man who never gave himself credit for the tasks God assigned him. Many of his achievements in youth work would not be known if in later years his grandchildren had not asked their "Grandpa" to write for them his life story. This dear, dedicated, Christian man was never known to "blow his own horn." His story tells how he and his dear Miriam worked tirelessly for God.

Gilbert Cangy, World Youth Director, reflected, "Elder Bergh has gone to his rest, but his legacy will live on for posterity. He deserves to be known by every Pathfinder who has ever sung and will ever sing his signature tune. He was a quiet man who kept a low profile, but the Lord took his work to every corner of the world. Such is the measure of true Christian greatness."

His daughter Karen wrote the following:

"How much all your prayers and love have supported us during the past four weeks. I ask for your continued prayers, especially for Mama. She has loved Daddy for 83 years! He went to sleep in Jesus this afternoon about 2:30... He had a chance to say good-bye to all his daughters [4] and his only nephew who flew down last weekend to be with us. He had special time with his grandkids who are here also. I believe he realized he had done all he could for Mama, and was just tired... There will be a gathering when we sprinkle his ashes in Big Creek behind their Fish Camp home... [the name of the village near Yosemite National Park, California where they have lived]."

"We are so blessed to know how much you have loved our Daddy during his life time. I know he is looking forward to meeting you all in Heaven one day. We have talked of that frequently in the past few weeks."

—Robert Holbrook,
Retired General Conference Pathfinder
Director, 1997-2005

90 **Pathfinders**

H. T. B. HENRY T. BERGH



Oh, we are the Path-finders strong, The serv-ants of God are we—

Faith-ful as we march a - long, In kind-ness, truth and pur - i - ty.

A mes-sage to tell to the world, A truth that will set us free,

King Je - sus the Sav-iour's com - ing back for you and me.

Copyright, 1962, in "Chorus Melodies", Henry T. Bergh, owner

DEVOTIONAL: ...and nothing but the truth...

This devotional was taken from the book, *My Identity in Christ*. Available at www.gcyouthministries.org.

**“If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord,
and believe in your heart that God raised Him from
the dead, you will be saved.”**

Romans 10:9, New American Standard Bible

Many, many psychologists, books, and self-help gurus will tell you that your first task in being whole is to tell yourself the truth. They're almost right. That's your second task. Until you start trying to tell God the truth, letting Him shine His flashlight around the dark corners and to show you truths you never knew were there, it is pointless to even try to tell yourself the truth.

But after you've begun that, then you must also say it to yourself. This could be out loud, or it could be a journal. It is very helpful to have a godly helper such as a pastor, counselor, parent, close friend, to be your listening board. That's one reason alcoholics and addicts put so much emphasis on telling themselves, God, and one other person the whole truth about themselves as they learn it. They've found it essential to getting well.

For instance, God says to you one day, “Remember when that happened to you in the fourth grade? It caused you to begin drawing back on yourself or acting out in such-and-such ways, and look how it's affected your relationships—this one, and that one . . .”

“Wow,” you respond. “I had no idea! What an awesome insight! From now on, I won't [act out, draw back, whatever.]”

Then you go about your life, and to your disgust, the same actions and thoughts still have sway. You may even, as in James 1:24, forget all about the insight that impressed you so much at the time.

That's why I chose the study verse I did, even though it doesn't seem to have much to do with God's command not to lie. It shows the importance of saying what we believe. Remember, the old thoughts and desires and false beliefs that have held us captive have been repeated and repeated, perhaps for years. We'll have to repeat the new truth over and over in order to convince our hearts to really believe it and live by it.

Then, and only then, will we begin to be able to live authentically before our own mirror as well as before God.

Now we are ready to look at the Christian core value of authenticity with others—a much more complex subject!

Great God of Truth, I know that when I gave You my whole heart, You took it, and claimed all of me. I also know there's a lot more for me to learn! Please lead me quickly enough to help me grow, and slowly enough that I don't collapse from the weight of all the lies I've lived by and never even known about. ●

Trinity and Identity

WHO IS GOD?

EVERYTHING IN LIFE
DEPENDS ON HOW WE
ANSWER THIS ONE
QUESTION.

by Debbonnaire Kovacs

The “Big Questions” of life (Who am I? How did I get here? What am I doing? Where am I going?) all tend to center around the self. This is not necessarily a bad thing; it’s where all human inquiry about existence begins. However, this legitimate line of questioning can become a liability, if at some stage, one does not come to the realization that the only satisfying answers center around a different question: *Who is God?* Everything in life depends on how we answer this one question.

In some ways, it’s unanswerable.

The truth is that we couldn’t even know there was a God, let alone know anything about Him, unless He took the initiative to make Himself known. So all we can know is what He reveals, and all He will reveal is what we can—sort of—understand. Take this whole idea of a Trinity, or Triune God, or Godhead. Labels abound, but don’t be fooled—nobody truly and completely gets this! Are there three Gods? One God with three faces? Three Gods, but with only one face?

My favorite description of this conundrum is found in C. S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity*. The chapter called, "The Three-Personal God," found on p. 140, is a fascinating study. Here's a snapshot:

"On the human level one person is one being, and any two persons are two separate beings—just as, in two dimensions. . . one square is one figure, and any two squares are two separate figures. On the Divine level you still find personalities; but up there you find them combined in new ways which we, who do not live on that level, cannot imagine. In God's dimension, so to speak, you find a being who is three Persons while remaining one Being, just as a cube is six squares while remaining one cube. Of course we cannot fully conceive a Being like that . . . But we can get a sort of faint notion of it. And when we do, we . . . [get] some positive idea, however faint, of something super-personal—something more than a person."(p. 142)

So, for Lewis, the very fact that we can't conceive this is one of the things that makes God, God.

Ellen White, in her book *Acts of the Apostles*, page 52, says, "The nature of the Holy Spirit is a mystery. Men cannot explain it, because the Lord has not revealed it to them. Men having fanciful views may bring together passages of Scripture and put a human construction on them, but the acceptance of these views will not strengthen the church. Regarding such mysteries, which are too deep for human understanding, silence is golden (page 52)."

This is an area where mystery abounds, and we cannot explain it. So let's leave it there, willingly accept that God is who He says He is, (Ex. 3:14) and see what we *can* learn about each of these three super-Personalities.

The First Person of the Godhead

In the Old Testament God is described as being like a Father, (Deut. 1:31), a Mother, (Is. 66:13), a King (Ps. 95:3), Almighty (Ps. 84:3), Creator (Ps. 33:6), and dozens of other things. People did not yet have the concept of a Triune God, but as we shall see, all Personalities were at work throughout history. By the time we get to the New Testament writings, God is more clearly the Father, Head of the Triune Godhead (1 Cor. 8:6, John 14:28).

The Second Person of the Godhead

Before He entered human history and presented Himself to us as a man, the Son of God was a mystery to this world. Bible scholars are agreed that the Old Testament designation, "the angel of the Lord," was a visit from God the Son. He's always acted as a go-between, a messenger who brought God's love to the people, to Hagar the slave woman (Gen. 16:7,) to Abraham (Gen. 22:11), even to Balaam, through a donkey (Num. 22)! Of course, the New Testament is the story of His greatest mission as a go-between. In fact, mystery though

He still is (how can a Son have no beginning?) it is really because of Him that we know as much as we do about God. It's as if a three-dimensional being became flattened, went to a two-dimensional world, and tried to describe cubes. They wouldn't get it, but at least they'd know such a thing existed!

The Third Person of the Godhead

Talk about mysteries! People always did know God had a Spirit. Like New Testament Greeks, they used the word "wind," or "breath" to describe Him, but it was clear they didn't just mean ordinary air. This Spirit of God equals God's presence (Ps. 139:7) and fills people from craftsmen (Ex. 31:3) to prophets (Is. 61:1, Ez 3:24) to statesmen (Dan. 5:11). He is promised to come in a mighty way in Joel 2 and other places, and this is especially fulfilled in Acts 1, though He's not finished yet!

The best way to learn who God is and what these three Personalities do is to follow them through history. They can first be seen in the very beginning, in Genesis 1:1.

Creation

All three Persons of the Trinity were active at the Creation. Two are mentioned in Gen. 1:1, 2: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. . . and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." Jesus is not mentioned here, but in

John 1 we are told that “through Him all things were made.”

Most fascinating of all, the Hebrew word translated as “God” in Genesis 1 is *Elohim*. This interesting name is a singular noun that takes plural pronouns. So throughout this chapter, God, singular, creates everything, yet in verse 26 we find Him saying, “Let us make man in our image.” Does this mean there is more than one God at work? No, the very next words say that God created man (male and female) in “His own image” (NIV).

Three . . . but One. It’s still a mystery. What about re-creation, arguably the most vital work God ever did from our perspective?

Redemption

The gospel of John is one of our best references to the fact that all three Personalities are active in the work of redemption. Its first words show Father and Son (the Word) together at the beginning of all things. In John 1:32, 33 John says that he saw the Spirit descend as a dove upon Jesus, and that’s how he knows Jesus is “the One who takes away the sins of the world.” The event to which he refers is Jesus’ baptism, related in the other gospels, when the Father announced from heaven that this was His beloved Son, and the Spirit descended to bless the occasion. Jesus prayed always to “the Father,” and in John 13 through 17, He speaks numerous times of the Spirit. He promises that the Spirit will come in greater fullness than He has yet after

Jesus has “gone back to the Father.” Clearly, it takes all three to accomplish the unimaginable task of returning a fallen race to its Creator.

Restoration

When that task is finally complete, humanity will be truly restored, once and for all, to the heart of its Three-Personality Maker. In this, too, all three are intimately involved. In Rev. 1:1 John says this revelation is “of Jesus Christ” and that “God gave” it to him through angels. But there is an even greater power working in the transmission of these vital messages from God. Verse 10 identifies it—“I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day” (Sabbath). In fact, the three Persons are found in one of Adventism’s most treasured passages. Notice Rev. 14:12, which you probably know by heart: “Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.” There is Father and Son; have you ever noticed verse 13? “‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘they will rest from their labor. . .’” There they are—all three.

And there they are at the glorious conclusion of all this labor and pain, too. Rev. 22:1, 2 describes the city that bears “the throne of God and of the Lamb,” and in verse 17, the Spirit and the bride give the invitation to “Come!”

Conclusion

Clearly, whether we “get it” or not, whether we know how to describe it or not, God has three unified

Personalities, each of which has a distinct role and work, but all of which work together throughout eternity for those God loves.

How does this help us to answer those “Big Questions” of life? What difference does it make to you or to me if the answers are: I am God’s child, I came from Him, I am going to Him, and while I am here, I am doing whatever work He gives me to do for Him? What does it mean to us, with our infinite differences and diversities in personalities, gifts, temperaments, and abilities, to learn that God Himself does different things in different ways? How will learning more about the Three-Person God help you and me to learn what our work in the world is, and to be willing to change direction if God asks? ●



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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 #2 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 Godhead

Engage

Why can't you find English muffins in England?

Why are 25-watt light bulbs more expensive than 40-, 60-, 75-, and 100-watt bulbs?

What is the difference between a lake and a pond? And don't say the size, because even the fields of geography, topography, and geology don't have a definitive line distinguishing a lake from a pond.

In English spelling, why does "i" come before "e," except after "c"? Where did that law come from? Who made that rule?

Ridiculous questions? Perhaps.

Have you ever heard children ask, "How could God have always been?" or, "How long is eternity?" Such questions are frustrating because they seek an explanation. To explain that kind of problem is like trying to fit an adult elephant into a teacup; it's not going to happen.

What do you think about the inquiry of a university student who asked, "Could you please explain the Trinity to me?" The immediate answer should be, "No, I don't think I can." Beware of anyone on earth that claims to be able to explain God. Anyone who examines the nature of God in Scripture and is not perplexed by the mystery is simply not paying attention. Here is one attempt at explaining the Trinity: Of God, there is an indivisible oneness, yet three distinct persons, which cannot be distinguished completely.

Our attempts at trying to state definitively the boundless nature of God is unsatisfying. Take comfort, for when people say, "I'm confused by the Trinity," it may be that you are closer than you think.

We feel confused because we are used to figuring things out—completely removing the mystery. A doctor tries to figure out why a patient is having headaches. It doesn't sit well with a patient to have a doctor say, "The human body is a mystery and so complex I will never be able to say for sure what is causing your pain." A pilot who seeks to understand why his aircraft engine is not responding expects to determine exactly what the problem is, and so do the passengers. "It's a mystery" is not an acceptable answer in our world of figuring it all out.

When you come face to face with God, you understand that although He is unmistakably real, He remains a mystery. God's desire is not that we try to explain Him, but that we experience Him.

The challenge as you study this doctrine is to maintain an awareness of how God is, in some ways, unlike everything else we think we know. You may know how to drive a car. You know that $2 + 2 = 4$. You should have discovered that men are different from women, hopefully. You have mastered the truth that an ear is not a toe. Congratulations! Do you know your best friend? Well, you probably know a lot about them, but can you fully explain all the complexities, stories, hopes, fears, disappointments, and surprises—all of their thoughts? Of course not. There is still a mystery to them, but your relationship is still rich and meaningful.

Can you know God? John 17:3 claims that to know God is eternal life. Certainly God would not make that impossible, would He? Herein lies the fundamental difference between explaining something and experiencing it. So shift your thinking a little as you read the passages that shape this teaching about the Trinity. You can know God personally, but not entirely. You cannot explain Him—the mystery of His being—but you can experience Him and enter into the promised blessings of that experience.

Discover

As you read the following passages that shape the doctrine of the Trinity, know that you will not find the word “Trinity” in the Bible, but you will see the personal ways in which God reveals Himself. Read prayerfully the

statement of belief and the texts that have shaped our understanding of the Trinity, and perhaps rewrite this statement in your own words and share it with your peers.

The Trinity:

There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons. God is immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. He is infinite and beyond human comprehension, yet known through His self-revelation. He is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation. (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 14:7.)

Highlight or underline the key word or phrase in each verse that shows which person of the Godhead is being referred to. Remember to read these passages to meet God, not to master Him.

Deuteronomy 6:4 “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.”

Matthew 28:19 “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

2 Corinthians 13:14 “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

Ephesians 4:4-6 “There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called— one Lord, one

faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

1 Peter 1:2 “Who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.”

1 Timothy 1:17 “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

Revelation 14:7 “He said in a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.’”

Relate

Where did the story of the Trinity begin? At Creation, when God said, “Let us make man in our image . . .” (Genesis 1:26, 27). While the Old Testament is filled with examples of God’s Spirit at work in the lives of people, when did God the Father get described as the *Father*? When did the Son get introduced to humanity as the *Son*? In John 1:1-3 the disciple claims that there was the *Word* that in the beginning was with God and also was God. They were there at creation, and then in verse 14 it says, “The *Word* became flesh and dwelt among us.”

In the upcoming lessons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), there will be more insight as to the different ways in which God works. You will meet a few people who met this God personally and experienced an awakening as to God's glory, His goodness and His mystery.

Jump into the story with Jacob, who "saw God face to face" and survived (Genesis 32). Or, if you dare, read the first chapter of the book of Job, scan the rest, and witness the divine confrontation between God and Job in Chapters 38-42. Even world powers run headlong into the mystery of God. In Daniel chapter 4, stand in awe with Nebuchadnezzar, one of the most arrogant, powerful kings of earth, as he is made to bow low to the Lord of all kings. And if you are still curious, catch a view of this doctrine from the viewpoint of a boy who had been blind from birth and finds himself in the middle of a community dispute when Jesus restored his sight in John 9. Read all the way to the end, where a young man does, in light of the mystery of God, what all should when we finally see.

Express

Who do you know really well? Or, what person alive today knows you more than anyone else? How much do they know? How much are they not aware of? Is there a connection between the way we know each other and the way we know God?

Of the texts listed in this study, which passage/story gives you the greatest sense of mystery? Which passage/story brings God a little closer?

What person of the Trinity are you the least familiar with?

What are some examples in Scripture where God reveals Himself to people clouded in mystery? What is the response of people who witness these epiphanies? Skeptical? Disappointed? Frustrated?

Which event in Scripture demonstrates the presence of God in all three persons?

How might you live this week in the mystery of God?

Quotes

"Tell me how it is that in this room there are three candles and but one light, and I will explain to you the mode of the divine existence."
—John Wesley

"Bring me a worm that can comprehend a man, and then I will show you a man that can comprehend the Triune God."
—John Wesley

Troy Fitzgerald writes from Washington State. A youth pastor at the Walla Walla University Church, he and his wife Julia are the parents of two sons, Cameron, 14, and Morgan, 8. He loves soccer, being outside, "gardening" or "golfing" as some might refer to it, and food. He hates snakes, mice, and most vegetables (but he eats them anyway—the vegetables).

BACK TO BASICS

The Scope of Truth
—*the Hope of Life*

by Troy Fitzgerald



A practical Bible study on the 28 life-changing beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Written especially for young adults as a guide to help you become a living witness of your faith in Jesus.

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BIBLE STUDY: junior youth

Contributor : Kimberley Tagert–Paul



THE TRINITY

Understanding the Three-in-One

LEADERS NOTES: *As you read through the lesson, remember that the Godhead is one in unity, but with three distinct personalities. Each seeks to draw us closer to God. Help the young people understand that unity is the Trinity's desire for us, also. Each of the Trinity has a distinct role that is needed in our lives to draw us to God.*

Ice Breaker

Water, Water, Everywhere

Water. It's everywhere, at least it seems that way. There are 326 million cubic miles of it on the earth. That's more than seventy percent of the earth's surface. Most of it—ninety-seven percent—is salt water that is contained in the oceans. Of the remaining three percent, only 0.0002% is freshwater that is available for use for agriculture and drinking. The rest is contained in ice caps and glaciers.

In many parts of the world, water is in limited supply. There have been many efforts to smarten the use of this wonderful element essential for life. Some of us just love water and waste quite a bit of it. For instance, did you know that every time you flush your toilet an average of five to seven gallons of water is used? And if you like those long, hot showers, you are using on average fifty gallons—or about five gallons per minute. If you are one of those who leave the water

on while you brush your teeth, you are using at least three gallons of water you don't really need.

Conservation is one of the keys to maintaining our fresh water sources. Did you know that if you cut just one minute off your shower time you can save about 700 gallons of water per month? For those who pay for their water, that would make a difference. Have a dripping faucet? Fix it and save over 1,225 gallons of water per year.

Why is water important? That big wonderful organ in your skull—the brain—is made up of eighty-five percent water. Your bones, which give your body a frame, are made up of thirty-three percent water. Water helps your body to regulate its temperature, ensure that food is carried to the organs as needed, and it helps get rid of excess salt so it doesn't build up in your body and cause health problems. It also is a main part of blood, which helps to transport oxygen to your body, and aids in digestion. You can live without

food for over a month, but don't try that with water. You can't live a week without the life-giving fluid.

Water has another amazing side: it can be in several forms and still be water. You probably remember all this from your science classes; water can be in liquid form, solid form, and gaseous form, and it is all still water. Amazing!

Dig-In

Water—in three forms—but it is still water. Can you think of anything else that might exist in the same way?

There is only one: The Godhead. The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. It is a difficult concept for us to wrap our minds around—how the three most important beings in our lives are one and yet individual. All three have a distinct purpose in helping you come to them. All three love you with an indescribable love. All three have the same plan and purpose for

your life. But like water, they all have distinctions that make them unique and alike at the same time.

Hot Potato

IS IT JUST A SIMPLE ANSWER?

Could the explanation of the Trinity be so simple that we just miss it? A look at Mathew 3:16-17 might help. Jesus was baptized, and what descended from heaven right after He came out of the water? The Holy Spirit. Then a voice was heard—whose voice was it? God, the Father. So can we conclude from these verses that there are three distinct members since they all were named?

If we go on to look at John 10:30, we see that Jesus says that they are one.

So, it is clear from the Bible that they are individual, but all God.

Hot Potato Questions

Is the concept of the Godhead being three, yet one, hard for you to understand? Why or why not? Do you believe that there are three members, each with a distinction? If you try to remove one member, would you still have the Godhead? Why or why not? In other religions, why is it so easy to describe their gods and yet different for us? (*Leaders: note that in all other religions, the god*

was made up by man. Man thought up their ideas and made it simple to understand. God is not human - so He can't be described in human terms.) Are all three members of the Godhead of equal importance? Why or why not? If God is beyond human comprehension, then how can we know Him?

Apply It/Bible Text Discovery:

Genesis 1:26, John 1:1-3 What do these verses have in common? Is it clear from these verses that the Godhead is three separate members with the same purpose and thought? Some churches like to think that Jesus is a created being. Do these verses show that He was there at creation, helping to form our world? Whose image are we created in?

Matthew 28:16-20 These verses are known as the Great Commission. Did Jesus tell the disciples to go and do the work in His name only? Does the Godhead have the same purpose and plan? Were the things that Jesus commanded us the same as we find in the Old Testament? Does this show that the Godhead has the same purpose and desire—even though they are three separate members?

Deuteronomy 6:4 What does this verse say about the Godhead?

Isaiah 44:8, Romans 1:20-23 These verses talk about God the Father. What attributes of His character do you find in them? Does man have to have the Bible to know God? Why or why not? Does reading about God help us to learn more about Him? Why do you think man abandoned the only true God and made for himself other gods? What is your favorite character trait of your Father? (See also John 1:48.)

Isaiah 9:6, Colossians 1:18-20 For what purposes did God send His Son to earth? Does God being willing to send His Son for your sins tell you about the characters of both the Father and the Son? Do the names Jesus is described by in Isaiah 9:6 show that He too is God? Did Jesus come to show us the character of His Father? Why did He need to do this? What is your favorite character trait of Jesus?

2 Peter 1:21, Acts 1:8, John 14:26, John 16:7-13 According to these verses, list some of the characteristics of the Holy Spirit. Do you see that the Holy Spirit was sent to teach, lead, give us power, and to convict of sin? Did He guide men only from the New Testament? How do you know this? Does He still guide and teach us today? Why is His power to convict of sin so important? What would we do if we didn't have the Spirit to show us the cost of sin

and help us turn away from it? What is your favorite character trait of the Holy Spirit?

Extra Gem

Ellen White wrote a lot about the ministry of the Godhead. Read what she wrote for us in the following passages.

“We are to co-operate with the three highest powers in heaven,--the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, --and these powers will work through us, making us workers together with God.”{EV 617.3}

“The Comforter that Christ promised to send after He ascended to heaven, is the Spirit in all the fullness of the Godhead, making manifest the power of divine grace to all who receive and believe in Christ as a personal Savior. There are three living persons of the heavenly trio; in the name of these three great powers --the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit--those who receive Christ by living faith are baptized, and these powers will co-operate with the obedient subjects of heaven in their efforts to live the new life in Christ.” {EV 615.1}

Sharing Time:

Think of another illustration besides water that might work to describe the Godhead. Use these illustrations to help your friends understand that the Godhead is three individuals, but all one in thought and desire for us. Keep it simple. While it is a concept that is hard to explain, it is also simple at the same time.

This Week's Challenge

The Holy Spirit was sent to give us power in what we do for God's kingdom. How often do you ask for this power? Remember to ask God to give you the Holy Spirit and His power to work in your life. Keep a journal entry about how things are different for you when you ask for the power God promises. ●

Kimberley Tagert-Paul writes from Michigan. An internationally published author, her passion is writing for young people. She enjoys crafts, photography, and reading. Her loves include Jesus, her husband, two sons, and her energetic grandson.

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Sabbath: The Beginning

(Unless otherwise noted, the New King James version of the Bible is used in this sermon.)

Scripture Reading:

“The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord. All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight; But the Lord weighs the motives. Commit your works to the Lord and your plans will be established. The Lord has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil.” (Proverbs 16:1-4, NASB)

Introduction

We are Seventh-day Adventist Christians. We believe in the Seventh-day Sabbath. We believe in the Investigative Judgment. We believe we are the remnant church that John speaks of in Revelation. We are different, set apart, unique.

Many of us have been in the church our entire lives. Many have joined Adventurers and Pathfinders, gone to Vacation Bible School, and attended Adventist schools. We may already have a solid understanding of our beliefs. We may have heard the same stories for years: Ellen White and the rock, the Great Disappointment, the 2,300 day prophecy. If you haven't, don't worry. You're about to learn. But for those

who have heard it all, it's easy to get bored by the same rhetoric over and over again. By now, you know what you believe.

But *why* do you believe it? How do your beliefs affect your life? Knowledge of doctrines alone relegates them to simple bullet points—interesting truths that ultimately serve no purpose. How can we make our faith the focal point of our lives, as opposed to it being a footnote?

We will explore the true essence of Adventism—what we believe and why we believe it. We'll discover our origins and discuss how it relates to us today.

Let's start our journey at the beginning.

Creation to the Fall

The first few chapters of Genesis cover a large portion of human history very quickly—Creation to the Flood—the first 1,656 years of our existence in less than 4,000 words. Genesis 1:1 through Genesis 7:12 is one of the most fast-paced sequences in scripture. The earth is created. Humanity is created. Humanity falls. And the earth is destroyed.

Yet despite such brevity, there is much we can learn from these stories. The opening chapters of God's Word give us deep insight into His character.

Genesis 1 describes our planet as a formless void, obscured by darkness. So with His first act on earth, God created light. Out of the dark and into light, God then separated the water from the sky. He formed land and the vegetation it yields. He made the sun and moon to distinguish night from day. He populated the sky and sea with birds and fish. And that was just the first five days. In five days, God crafted an intricate and complex world—a world teeming with life, beauty, and wonder. But He wasn't done.

On the sixth day, God completed His masterwork—mankind. He said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth” (Genesis 1:26).

The creation story shows us that God is not an arbitrary God. His work has purpose and meaning. The earth was shrouded in darkness, and He conjured light. He made

all manner of wildlife. Then He appointed man to rule over them.

This sense of purpose is evidenced throughout the Bible. From the creation of the Sabbath, to Noah's Ark, to manna falling from the sky, to Christ's incredible sacrifice, we see God's master plan at work. When He acts, there is a reason.

God acted with purpose and reason when He made man. We read that "God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them" (Genesis 1:27, 28). This is a significant verse. It sets us apart from the rest of creation as the only direct reflection of the Creator. We are His children, His creation, His greatest love. It is imperative that we remember this truth. We are God's agents, created in His image and commissioned to reflect His nature.

This sense of intimacy between God and man has been diminished since sin first entered the world. Sin has created a chasm of what was once closeness. Yet despite this forced separation, God still yearns to be with us. Take, for example, Genesis 3.

Adam and Eve had just eaten from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. And just as soon as they did, they were awash in an emotion completely foreign to them—shame. Compelled by their new-found embarrassment, they scrambled to fashion crude clothing out of fig

leaves. Suddenly, they heard God walking through the garden. One would think, after spending their entire lives in the presence of God, they would rush toward the sound of His voice, confess their sin, and beg forgiveness. Yet, instead of running to their Friend and Creator, they hid in unfounded terror.

Now God, in His omniscience, knew what they had done. He had already explained the ramifications of disobedience: "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you should not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:16, 17). He could have simply walked away and left them to suffer the consequences of their actions. He could have struck them down right there in the garden, and the universe wouldn't have raised an argument. He would have been completely just and fair in His actions. But that is not what He did.

God, in His infinite mercy and grace, called out to His children, gently asking, "Where are you?" (Genesis 1:9). He knew where they were and what had happened. But rather than immediately condemning them, God gave Adam and Eve a chance to explain themselves, a chance to reconcile with Him. What follows is a back-and-forth between God and man. God reaches out and asks Adam to explain himself. But instead of admitting his mistake, Adam blames Eve, who then blames

the serpent (Genesis 3:10-13). We see in verses 9, 11, and 13 that God gives them three chances. And each time man does not repent or ask forgiveness, but instead shifts the blame. Now, they must face the consequence. God delivers the sentence: "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). In *Patriarchs and Prophets*, Ellen White describes their departure from the garden: "In humility and unutterable sadness they bade farewell to their beautiful home and went forth to dwell upon the earth, where rested the curse of sin ... As they witnessed in drooping flower and falling leaf the first signs of decay, Adam and his companion mourned more deeply than men now mourn over their dead" (62).

This pattern between God and Man is repeated throughout history. God, in His love, gives us immeasurable gifts. We, in our selfishness and rebellion, turn away. God, in His longing to be with us, reaches out in forgiveness. We, in our sinful pride, push Him away.

History Repeats Itself

We see this pattern re-emerge through the story of Noah. Genesis 6:5-7 says, "Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only

evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the Lord said, 'I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.'" Man's sin had grown so large that "every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil *continually*." And God was in such pain from the separation caused by sin, He had to destroy man and begin anew. Yet once more, He offered us a way out, a hope for salvation. He offered us a lifeboat.

In Genesis 7:14-16 we see God's wisdom, purpose, and planning manifest through His thorough instructions for Noah's ark. God tells Noah *exactly* what to build and how to build it. He tells Noah to use gopher wood and to cover it in pitch. He details its exact dimensions and even the placement of its windows.

God then sent Noah to warn the world and to share with them a message of hope. Ellen White writes in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, "While Noah was giving his warning message to the world, his works testified of his sincerity. It was thus that his faith was perfected and made evident . . . All that he possessed, he invested in the ark. As he began to construct that immense boat on dry ground, multitudes came from every direction to see the strange sight and to hear the earnest, fervent words of the singular preacher. Every blow struck

upon the ark was a witness to the people." Yet, like man is prone to do, they chose to disregard Noah's warning and God's outstretched hand. Ellen White continues, "Many at first appeared to receive the warning; yet they did not turn to God with true repentance. They were unwilling to renounce their sins. During the time that elapsed before the coming of the Flood, their faith was tested, and they failed to endure the trial. Overcome by the prevailing unbelief, they finally joined their former associates in rejecting the solemn message" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 92-95).

Conclusion

Today, we face this decision again. Slaves to our sinful nature, we're subject to the consequences of our actions. Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death." But thankfully, like He's done throughout our existence, God has once again offered us a way out. The verse continues, "but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Of all our doctrines, this is the most crucial.

We can eat the right food, attend church on Sabbath, read prophecy; but if we don't reach out and accept God's greatest gift, it all means nothing. Everything we believe culminates at the cross. Ellen White said, "The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood

and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary. I present before you the great, grand monument of mercy and regeneration, salvation and redemption—the Son of God uplifted on the cross" (*Gospel Workers*, 315).

As Adventists, as the remnant church, this truth should be the focus. We all know *what* we believe. But Christ's sacrifice is *why* we believe it. ●

Questions

1. What are some practical ways we can keep our doctrine in context and avoid practicing cultural Christianity?
2. Ellen white says, "every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary." What does she mean by this?
3. What are the pros and cons of growing up in an exclusively Adventist community?
4. How does an understanding of one's history help define it in the present?
5. Do you feel you practice your faith out of habit or out of conviction? Explain why.

IDEAPAC



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▶ salvation/grace: **The Chrononaut**



PROGRAM TARGET: To challenge people to identify and then use their spiritual gifts for the glory of God.

SCRIPTURE: 1 Peter 4:10, Romans 12:4-8, 1 Corinthians 12:8-11

CHARACTER: Micah, Gwen

PROPS: table, 2 chairs, Cup o' tea, Cup o' Coffee, Hardback book, journal, coat

In a small coffee shop, MICAH PETERSON sits sipping a steaming cup of spiced tea and writing in his journal. GWEN walks by, clutching a large hardback book and a cup of coffee. She pauses when she sees Micah. He seems familiar. And then she remembers from where. She looks at the back of the book she's carrying.

GWEN: Oh wow! It's you! You're Micah Peterson!

MICAH: And I wouldn't mind if you kept it down a little bit.

GWEN: Oh. Oops. Sorry. I just . . . you know. It's not every day you actually meet your favorite author.

MICAH: "Favorite author?" Sit down. Enjoy your drink with me.

Gwen sits down in the chair opposite Micah.

GWEN: Okay, maybe not my favorite author, but definitely my boyfriend's.

MICAH (disappointed): Oh.

GWEN: You're his favorite sci-fi fantasy writer ever. I've never really gotten into them. Something about laser swords and pointy ears. It just doesn't do it for me. But he begged, so I'm reading this one. He said it was your best.

MICAH: And which one is that?

GWEN: The Chro . . . chrono . . . how do you say that word?

MICAH: Chrononaut. Just how it looks.

GWEN: I guess.

MICAH: Just think “astronaut.” Then drop the “astro” for a “chrono.”

GWEN: Oh I get it. Clever.

MICAH: Actually, we stole it from a comic book.

GWEN: Oh.

MICAH: And it’s not the title I wanted, but publishers can be demanding people.

GWEN: What did you want to call it?

MICAH: “The Day I Saw God.”

GWEN (thinking about it) : Doesn’t sound very science fictiony.

MICAH: You sound just like ‘em.

GWEN: Who?

MICAH: The publishers. “They’re gonna think it’s a self-help book, or some Christian devotional book. We need something that tells everyone who sees it exactly what it is that book is about!” Which is just frustrating. The book isn’t science fiction or fantasy.

GWEN: It’s about a guy who travels through time.

MICAH: It’s an autobiography.

Gwen laughs.

MICAH (sighing)

Everyone laughs . . .

GWEN: I’m sorry, you just said it was a true story.

MICAH: Making it “non-fiction.”

Gwen laughs again.

MICAH: I’m an idiot.

GWEN: Why do you say that – all obvious reasons aside?

MICAH: Because you’re not going to believe me no matter what I tell you, but that’s not going to stop me from telling you my entire story. When I was sixteen, I discovered I had the ability to bend space and time.

GWEN: Oh! Just like that Japanese kid on –

MICAH (interrupting) : Exactly like him. All I had to do was think about it, and I could be there. I was traveling space and time at the speed of thought. The summer I discovered it, I spent a year in the past. My parents thought I hit my growth spurt that summer. Nope. I just lived one year in three months. And as long as I came back to the present in the same moment I left it, no-one could ever catch me. As soon as I realized what I could do, I knew I had to use it for good.

GWEN: With great power comes great responsibility.

MICAH: Yep. So the first thing I did

was tackle John Wilkes Boothe before he could assassinate Abraham Lincoln. The next day, the newspaper’s headline read “Assassination Attempt Foiled!”

GWEN: Oh, that’s in your book!

Gwen flips through the pages, finding a picture in the middle of the book.

MICAH: That’s not PhotoShopped. That’s the real deal.

GWEN: That’s impossible. Everybody knows Lincoln was assassinated. If you changed the past, the present would be totally different.

MICAH: And that’s what I was trying to do. I was trying to make everything better by fixing all the little things that happened along the way. Because all those little things added up to this big thing we’re dealing with now.

GWEN: What big thing?

MICAH: Everything! Turn on the news! Everything you see is the result of something else. All of history has been leading us to this very place. And this place stinks like yesterday’s Special-K Loaf. And I was hoping that if I changed all the bad things from yesterday, that maybe today would turn out better.

GWEN: But . . .

MICAH: I discovered something.

Micah tears a piece of paper out of his journal and holds it up for Gwen to see.

MICAH: An event in time is very much like this piece of paper. It exists. You can see it. You can learn from it. And, with the right powers or abilities, you can change it.

Micah folds the paper into a paper airplane or something origami-ish.

MICAH: Maybe even make it better. But the minute I left the past and came back to the present . . .

Micah quickly unfolds the paper and holds it flat again.

MICAH: Time fixed itself. Time wouldn't let me change it. Except it had been changed. That's why I have countless newspapers back at my apartment, declaring different things from World War II being averted to Martin Luther King Jr. dying of old age. Because, at one time, time was changed and I was allowed to keep a souvenir. Look at this paper. Even though it looks the same as it did before I folded it, it still has creases. It still carries evidence that, at one time, it was folded. And that's the day I met God. I realized that there must be some force, some knowledgeable Being that knows how time is supposed to play out. He could see the whole picture and was dealing with all the problems at one time. It's like we're brush strokes in a huge, living painting. The only thing we can see are the strokes around us. And we, being the cocky little strokes we are, want to change those around us. "Hey, stop being purple. Knock it off Red or I'll turn you blue!"

We don't realize there's a Painter who can see the whole picture and that flawed or not, each stroke was put in the right place for the right time. Which is to say, the world's problems are not sex, drugs, and rock 'n roll. The world's problem is Satan. If that's the case, abstaining from sex, drugs, and rock 'n roll is not the solution to the problem. God is the solution to the problem. We could put all our energy into trying to solve this one problem, right here, but that wouldn't fix all these others. We need to fight the source of all this evil with the source of all that is good.

A moment of silence and then Gwen leans back in her chair.

GWEN: Wow. You're really good. You should be like an actor or something. You sound just like your main character! I mean, you really know the part!

Micah sighs.

GWEN: What?

MICAH: I told you I was an idiot.

GWEN: No, you're not a . . .

MICAH: Do you have any idea how many times we've had this conversation?

GWEN: What?

MICAH: I met you here three weeks ago and I told you all this and you didn't believe me. So now I'm going back and trying to find you at other

times to try to convince you of the truth and you never, ever believe me.

GWEN: Now you're just . . .

Micah snaps his fingers, freezing time. He stands up, closes his book, and walks off. As soon as he's gone, time resumes.

GWEN: . . . being stupid? Am I talking to myself again? I must be losing my mind.

Micah enters, without his journal and wearing a coat.

GWEN: Oh wow!

MICAH: What?

GWEN: You're the author of the book I'm reading!

MICAH: Looks that way.

GWEN: Can I ask you a question?

MICAH: Can you walk and talk? I'm actually a little late for a meeting . . .

GWEN: Sure. It'll only take a second.

Micah and Gwen walk off stage.

THE END

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▶ doctrinal: The Trinity

PROGRAM TARGET: To encourage people to explore the complex nature of the Trinity.

CENTRAL BIBLE TRUTH: The Trinity, while having three separate entities and personalities, is singular in focus and purpose.

SCRIPTURE: Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19; and Ephesians 4:4-6

CHARACTERS: Freddy, Sonny, Holly

Three best friends, FREDDY, SONNY, and HOLLY, enter the stage. They face the audience, and introduce themselves.

FREDDY: Freddy.

HOLLY: Holly.

SONNY: Sonny.

FREDDY: Our parents had a sense of humor.

HOLLY: I was born at Christmas time – hence, “Holly.”

FREDDY: My parents hoped that I would be a natural leader. And apparently, when my parents think of great leaders, their minds immediately went to that ascot-wearing, Mystery Machine-driving, Scooby-Doo-owning, bell-bottom wearing . . .

HOLLY (interrupting): Freddy.

Freddy and Holly turn to Sonny. It's his turn.

SONNY: I don't want to talk about it.

HOLLY: Oh, come on!

FREDDY: We shared ours!

SONNY: Well, you've got reasonably cool names.

FREDDY: Freddy?

SONNY: At least your parents knew who they were naming you after. I've got the wrong name.

HOLLY: Now you have to share.

SONNY: My parents are big fans of U2.

HOLLY: So?

SONNY: The lead singer of U2 is Bono.

FREDDY: I'm sorry. I'm not quite seeing the connection.

SONNY: My parents wanted to name me after Bono but inadvertently named me after Sonny Bono. *Note the different pronunciations: U2's Bono is “Bah-no” and Sonny Bono is “Boe-no.”*

FREDDY: If it makes you feel any better, I would have picked on you just as much either way.

SONNY: That means a lot to me.

HOLLY: We grew up together – completely inseparable.

FREDDY: Yep.

HOLLY: You couldn't invite one of us without getting the other two.

SONNY: Which is why we're here.

FREDDY: The pastor asked Holly if she could share her thoughts on the Trinity and she said she couldn't do it without us.

HOLLY: I thought it would have a nice symmetry to it.

SONNY: When I was little, I used to say “in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Toast.”

HOLLY: And that's exactly why the three of us are up here.

FREDDY: Sonny misunderstood and . . . well, we still don't completely understand it.

SONNY: How do you have three

separate entities that are the same entity?

FREDDY: Scientifically speaking, it's impossible for two things to inhabit the same space – let alone three.

SONNY: Is it like one guy with three heads?

Freddy, Sonny, and Holly step as close to each other as possible. Sonny, in the middle, has to put his arms around Freddy and Holly. Freddy and Holly each put one arm behind Sonny.

FREDDY, SONNY, HOLLY (together): I am the One true God. I am the God of your father, and of Abraham, and of Isaac.

SONNY: Now fetch me a shrubbery!

HOLLY: A shrubbery?

SONNY: A bush will do. I want to burn it!

FREDDY: One being ...

HOLLY: With one heart.

SONNY: And one purpose.

They separate.

HOLLY: But with three separate identities.

FREDDY: The Father.

SONNY: The Son.

HOLLY: The Holy Spirit.

FREDDY: The King.

SONNY: The Creator.

HOLLY: The Comforter.

FREDDY: The Judge.

SONNY: The Sacrifice.

HOLLY: The Translator.

FREDDY: Justice.

SONNY: Love.

HOLLY: Mercy.

FREDDY: Patrick, when sharing the Gospel with the Irish for the first time, explained the Trinity using a shamrock.

HOLLY: Each heart-shaped leaf represented one of the Godhead.

SONNY: Yet they were all connected and still, essentially, one.

FREDDY: The Irish took this to heart and created a piece of art called the Trinity Knot.

SONNY: It is three circles ...

HOLLY: The circle being the only geometric shape that has neither a beginning or an ending.

SONNY: Interlocked with each other.

FREDDY: Three circles. One piece of art.

HOLLY: You see why I needed these two? I'm not sure it's a concept the human mind can fully grasp.

SONNY: There's more analogies and metaphors we can use!

FREDDY: A marriage, a team, a family, the *Star Wars* trilogy.

Sonny and Holly look at Freddy.

FREDDY: The original *Star Wars* trilogy.

Sonny and Holly continue to stare at Freddy.

FREDDY: C'mon. It sticks with the theme. Three separate things that belong to one bigger thing.

SONNY: You couldn't say a sandwich or ...

HOLLY: Special K Loaf?

SONNY: Ew!

FREDDY: The *Spider-Man* trilogy?

HOLLY: Okay, we're done here. I hope we were able to help.

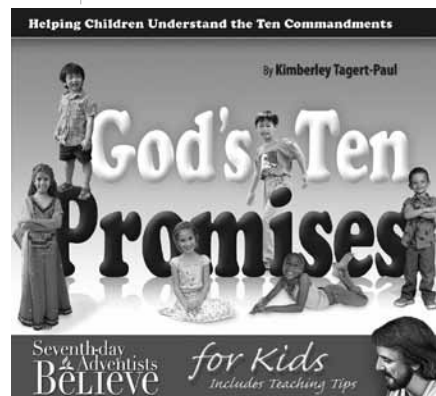
Holly leads the way off stage. Freddy and Sonny follow her.

SONNY: You should have said the *Godfather* trilogy.

FREDDY: Aw, man! Can we do it over? Can we go back?

THE END

<http://www.adventistbookcenter.com>





▶ salvation/grace: The Testimony

PROGRAM TARGET: To discuss how the experience of salvation changes a person.

CENTRAL BIBLE TRUTH: The Trinity, while having three separate entities and personalities, is singular in focus and purpose.

SCRIPTURE: 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

CHARACTER: Paul

Paul stands on the stage. He's a soft-spoken, almost meek, individual.

PAUL: I'm not who I used to be.

[singing] Amazing grace / How sweet the sound/That saved a wretch like me!

[speaking] I know I can't carry a note, but I've got a song to sing. Who I am today is not who I was yesterday.

[singing] I once was lost / But now I'm found ...

[speaking] I used to be a real bully. I don't know if it came from a place of insecurity or if I subconsciously thought I was somehow better than everyone else. But for the lack of a better word, I was a real bully. I wish my testimony was a little more original and a little less cliché, but it's the truth.

[singing] Was blind / But now I see!

[speaking] I guess me and Moses are spiritual brothers in that respect: Beating up people until we came face-to-face with God.

[singing] Through many dangers, toils, and snares / We have already come!

[speaking] When you come face-to-face with the truth of God's love ... when you realize how insulting sin is to Him ... and when you realize you can't hide your sins from Him ... it's humbling – to say the least. Because when I stand up here, I clothe myself in these rags and hide my scars from you. I don't want you to know where I've been or what I've done. So I hide it – but I can't hide it from God. I stand naked before the Lord.

[singing] 'T'was Grace that brought us safe thus far / And Grace will lead us home!

[speaking] It's okay to giggle. "Standing naked in front of Jesus." If it wasn't so beautiful, I'd giggle too.

[singing] The Lord has promised good to me / His word my hope secures ...

[speaking] That's the strangest part to me. That's the part I didn't understand before. But when He brings you in, you're not just a guest staying in His house. You're not just some bum off the street. You become part of Him. You become part of the body of God. I am part of the body of God.

[singing] He will my shield and portion be / As long as life endures!

[speaking] So I stand before you today, the proud but humble pinky toe of God. Which might not sound like much, but I used to be a stumbling block for the body of God. I used to be Saul, but now I'm Paul. Because when you experience salvation, it changes you. I know you don't want to be changed. You probably like you. But let me tell you: Who you are without Him is just a shadow of who you could be. He changes you. He brings you in. He transforms you and begins preparing you for eternity. And when that happens, it doesn't matter how tone-deaf you are, you have to sing!

[singing] When we've been there ten thousand years / Bright shining as the sun / We've no less days to sing God's praise / Then when we've first begun / Amazing Grace / How sweet the sound / That saved a wretch like me / I once was lost, but now am found / Was blind, but now I see!

THE END



▶ salvation/grace: The First Day of the Rest of Your Life

PROGRAM TARGET: To explore the nature of baptism and the new life granted to the sinner through Jesus.

SCRIPTURE: Acts 16:30-33, Acts 22:16, Romans 6:1-6, Acts 8:26-40, John 1

PROPS: Biblical costumes, scroll

CHARACTERS: Philip, Ethiopian

The ETHIOPIAN sits reading a scroll. He shakes his head as he reads, clearly not understanding what lays in his lap. PHILIP enters, looks around, and then spots the Ethiopian.

PHILIP: Ah. There you are.

ETHIOPIAN: Do I know you?

PHILIP: No, not yet. I was just curious about what you were reading and if you were actually able to understand it.

ETHIOPIAN: How can I? It's a bunch of thees and thous and begats. How's anybody supposed to make heads or tails of this?

PHILIP: By asking questions, of course!

ETHIOPIAN: Could you help me?

PHILIP: Of course! What are we looking at?

ETHIOPIAN: The prophet Isaiah writes, "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the

shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth."

PHILIP: Look at that. Not a single "thee", "thou," or "begat."

ETHIOPIAN: Was Isaiah writing about himself? Or was it somebody else? He writes with such passion. It's such a tragic – yet somehow noble – story he's telling. It's obviously a prophecy, but who is Isaiah talking about?

PHILIP: Tell me what you know about Jesus of Nazareth.

ETHIOPIAN: He was a teacher. Some say He was healer, as well. He was executed by the Romans.

PHILIP: And that's who Isaiah was talking about.

ETHIOPIAN: What? Why? Why would Isaiah concern himself with one of the thousands of Jews killed by the Romans? What made Him so important?

PHILIP: It's because of who Jesus is.

ETHIOPIAN: Was.

PHILIP: No, is. Now this is the super-abridged version of the story, but what you need to understand about Jesus is that just as much as he was a man, he was God. He came here to live and die so that we might have eternal life.

(The Ethiopian thinks about this.)

ETHIOPIAN: You mean to say he took the place of the sacrificial lamb?

PHILIP: Forever. Because He died, there is no reason for us to sacrifice animals. If we confess our sins to God ...

ETHIOPIAN: The blood of the lamb will wash them away, making our souls white as snow. Well what am I supposed to do? I was just heading into the city to make my sacrifice. What do I do now?

PHILIP: Be baptized. By being baptized, you are accepting that Jesus was the ultimate sacrificial lamb and that He took your place. You are accepting the fact that your sins have

been atoned for. When you come up out of the water, you might not feel different. You might not look different. People might not treat you differently. But you will be. You'll be a new creation.

ETHIOPIAN: But what if I sin again? In the past, I would just sacrifice another lamb. If Jesus has replaced every sacrificial lamb, what about my future sins?

PHILIP: They have been atoned for as well. If you return to God and offer your heart-felt regret and pray for forgiveness, it is yours.

ETHIOPIAN: Will I need to be baptized again?

PHILIP: No. Just as Jesus' single death was enough, just one baptism is enough. At our last meal together, Jesus showed us what we are to do. If you have been cleansed from head to toe, in the future all you'll need is a simple foot-washing.

ETHIOPIAN: I don't think I understand.

PHILIP: You don't have to. You just have to have faith.

ETHIOPIAN: That I can do! Look! Right over there! There's a river right over there! Baptize me now!

PHILIP: Absolutely!

Philip gestures "after you," and the Ethiopian walks off stage, followed by Philip.

THE END

20 | Discussion Questions

Heavenly Identity

Essence

Let Your Kingdom Come

Let your kingdom come. Let your will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.
(Matthew 6:10)

We shouldn't pray, "Dear Father, let us come into your kingdom," as though it's a place to which we travel. Instead we pray, "Let your kingdom come." For if we're to receive it at all, God's grace and kingdom with all its virtues must come to us. We will never be able to go to him. In the same way, Christ came to us – from heaven down to earth. We didn't go up to him from earth to heaven.

Another mistake of those who pray the Lord's Prayer is that they only think about their eternal happiness. They understand the kingdom of God to mean nothing but joy and pleasure in heaven. Thinking from an earthly, physical perspective and fearing hell, they only seek their own benefit and advantage in heaven. These people don't realize that God's kingdom is nothing but godliness, chastity, purity, gentleness, tenderness, and kindness. His kingdom is full of every virtue and grace. They don't know that God must have his way and that he alone lives and reigns in us. This should be our first and foremost desire. We are

saved only when God reigns in us, and we become his kingdom.

We don't have to seek or ask for joy, happiness, or anything else that we may desire. Rather, all of this comes along with God's kingdom....

– Martin Luther, *By Faith Alone*, Aug. 14

The Opposition of the Natural

Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with its passions and desires"
(Galatians 5:24).

The natural life itself is not sinful. But we must abandon sin, having nothing to do with it in any way whatsoever. Sin belongs to hell and to the devil. I, as a child of God, belong to heaven and to God. It is not a question of giving up sin, but of giving up my right to myself, my natural independence, and my self-will. This is where the battle has to be fought. The things that are right, noble, and good form the natural standpoint are the very things that keep us from being God's best. Once we come to understand that natural moral excellence opposes or counteracts surrender to God, we bring our soul into the center of its greatest battle. Very few of us would debate over what is filthy, evil, and wrong, but we do debate over what is good. It is the good that opposes

the best. The higher up the scale of moral excellence a person goes, the more intense the opposition to Jesus Christ. "Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh..." The cost to your natural life is not just one or two things, but everything. Jesus said, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself..." (Matthew 16:24). That is, he must deny his right to himself, and he must realize who Jesus Christ is before he will bring himself to do it. Beware of refusing to go to the funeral of your own independence.

The natural life is not spiritual, and it can only be made spiritual through sacrifice. If we do not purposely sacrifice the natural, the supernatural can never become natural to us. There is no high or easy road. Each of us has the means to accomplish it entirely in his own hands. It is not a question of praying, but of sacrificing, and thereby performing His will.

– Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, December 9

Breakout time (divide into small groups)

Discuss how all is God's initiative in our direction. What is the significance of understanding this?

Discuss: "God's kingdom is nothing but godliness, chastity, purity, gentleness, tenderness, and kindness."

How can our realization of God's present kingdom help us be better

ambassadors of that kingdom in our present earthly reality, rather than being accused of "being so heavenly minded we're no earthly good"? How might this relate to Luther's assertion that we "become his kingdom"?

Discuss Luther's statement that we need not seek "joy, happiness, or anything else that we may desire" in light of Christ's statement in Matt. 6:33.

Discuss the idea that it is too often those things that are good in and of themselves rather than the "filthy, evil, and wrong" that "keep us from being God's best." What are the implications of this? How can we guard against anything standing in the way of the "best"?

Discuss: "The higher up the scale of moral excellence a person goes, the more intense the opposition to Jesus Christ."

Discuss: "There is no heaven that has a little corner of hell in it. God is determined to make you pure, holy, and right, and He will not allow you to escape from the scrutiny of the Holy Spirit for even one moment. [Matthew 5:26]... The moment you are willing for God to change your nature, His recreating forces will begin to work. And the moment you realize that God's purpose is to get you into the rights relationship with Himself and then with others, He will reach to the very limits of the universe to help you take the right road..."

– Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, July 1

Scripture

Consider what the following texts say regarding the importance of Christian growth:

- Eph 4:15
- Heb 6:1
- 1 Pet 2:2
- 2 Peter 3:18

Consider the following practices suggested for growth in the Christian life:

- Romans 12:12
- James 1:25
- 1 Cor 16:2
- Heb 10:25

Consider

I like the story of the little boy who fell out of bed. When his mom asked him what happened, he answered, "I don't know. I guess I stayed too close to where I got in."

Easy to do the same with our faith. It's tempting just to stay where we got in and never move.

Pick a time in the not-too-distant past. A year or two ago. Now ask yourself a few questions. How does your prayer life today compare with then? How about your giving? Have both the amount and the joy increased? What about your church loyalty? Can you tell you've grown? And Bible study? Are you learning to learn?

– Max Lucado, *When God Whispers Your Name*, p. 135 ●

Knowing and Being Known (Discipleship)

Essence

I walked in the sunshine with a scholar who had effectively forfeited his prospects of academic advancement by clashing with the church dignitaries over the gospel of grace. “But it doesn’t matter,” he said at length, “for I’ve known God and they haven’t.” The remark was a mere parenthesis, a passing comment on something I had said, but it has stuck with me and set me thinking.

Not many of us, I think, would ever naturally say that we have known God. The words imply a definiteness and matter-of-factness of experience to which most of us, if we are honest, have to admit that we are still strangers. We claim, perhaps, to have a testimony, and can rattle off our conversion story with the best of them; we say that we *know* God – this, after all, is what evangelicals are expected to say; but would it occur to us to say, without hesitation, and with reference to particular events in our personal history, that we *have known* God? I doubt it, for I suspect that [what] most of us experience of God has never become so vivid as that.

Nor, I think, would many of us ever naturally say that in the light of the knowledge of God which we have come to enjoy, past disappointments and present heartbreaks, as the world counts heartbreaks, *don’t matter*. For the plain fact is that to most of us they do matter. We live with them as our “crosses” (so we call them). Constantly we find ourselves slipping into bitterness and apathy and gloom as we reflect on them, which we frequently do. The attitude we show to the world is a sort of dried-up stoicism, miles removed from the “joy unspeakable and full of glory” which Peter took for granted that his readers were displaying (1 Pet 1:8 KJV). “Poor soul,” our friends say of us, “how they’ve *suffered*.” And that is just what we feel about ourselves!

But these private mock heroics have no place at all in the minds of those who really know God. They never brood on might-have-beens; they never think of the things they have missed, only of what they have gained.

“But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ,” wrote Paul. “What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him.... I want to know Christ” (Phil 3:7-10). When Paul says he counts the things he lost *rubbish*, or *dung* (KJV), he means not merely that he does not think of them as having any value, but also that he does not live with them constantly in his mind: what normal person spends his time nostalgically dreaming of manure? Yet this, in effect, is what many of us do. It shows how little we have in the way of true knowledge of God.

– J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, pp. 24-25

Breakout time (divide into small groups)

Discuss the effect that having a larger worldview has on one’s perspective of life’s challenges.

Is there any experience you can point to in your life where you can – or *would* have been able to – say you *have known* God? What might this mean?

What might it take in your life for “past disappointments and present heartbreaks” not to matter in light of your personal knowledge of God? What effect might this have on your life and witness? Explain.

Compare and contrast what people often refer to as their “crosses” with what Christ had to say about picking up one’s cross? In what ways are they the same/different? Why must we be careful about how we throw around biblical jargon?

Should people looking upon us as Christians have an idea of how we’ve *suffered*? Why/why not? Are there different answers for different circumstances? Explain. Use Scripture to support your answers. ●

Knowing and Being Known (Evangelism)

Essence

How can we turn our knowledge *about* God into knowledge *of* God? The rule for doing this is simple but demanding. It is that we turn each truth that we learn *about* God into matter for meditation *before* God, leading to prayer and praise *to* God.

We have some idea, perhaps, what prayer is, but what is meditation? Well may we ask, for meditation is a lost art today, and Christian people suffer grievously from their ignorance of the practice.

Meditation is the activity of calling to mind, and thinking over, and dwelling on, and applying to oneself, the various things that one knows about the works and ways and purposes and promises of God. It is an activity of holy thought, consciously performed in the presence of God, under the eye of God, by the help of God, as a means of communion with God.

Its purpose is to clear one's mental and spiritual vision of God, and to let his truth make its full and proper impact on one's mind and heart. It is a matter of talking to oneself about God and oneself; it is, indeed, often a matter of arguing with oneself, reasoning oneself out of moods of doubt and unbelief into a clear apprehension of God's power and grace.

Its effect is ever to humble us, as we contemplate God's greatness and glory

and our own littleness and sinfulness, and to encourage and reassure us – “comfort” us, in the old, strong, Bible sense of the word – as we contemplate the unsearchable riches of divine mercy displayed in the Lord Jesus Christ. ... God help us, then, to put our knowledge about God to this use, that we all may in truth “know the Lord.”

– J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, pp. 23

Breakout time (divide into small groups)

Discuss: “The rule for [turning knowledge *about* God into knowledge *of* God] is simple but demanding. It is that we turn each truth that we learn *about* God into matter for meditation *before* God, leading to prayer and praise *to* God.”

What false impressions of God have you overcome through the years?

Why is it important to “clear one's mental and spiritual vision of God”? Discuss examples in the Bible of wrong notions of God. In what ways is this idolatry, or worship of a false God? Why, then, is it so important “to let his truth make its full and proper impact on one's mind and heart”?

What is one to do with this contemplation? What are the implications for evangelism? Note that Jesus regularly took time alone with God, but this time was always followed by action. Is that which we learn of God in meditation to be kept to ourselves?

Consider

Write down the “various things that [you know] about the works and ways and purposes and promises of God” and spend time in meditating on these, thinking them over, dwelling on them, and applying them to yourself. ●

www.gcyouthministries.org

WHAT IF YOU GAVE CHRIST EVERYTHING?



EXPLORE • DISCOVER • SURRENDER

2012 Youth Week of Prayer

There is HOPE

The following information was taken from the Adventist AIDS International Ministry series entitled, *“Journey of Hope.”*



Understanding HIV/AIDS

HIV stands for Human immune-deficiency Virus. A virus is a tiny structure that you cannot see without the aid of a microscope. Like all other viruses, HIV must use living cells to replicate itself. When a person is infected with HIV, it attacks and weakens the immune system. An HIV infection, if not treated, will reach the stage of AIDS.

AIDS stands for Acquired immune-deficiency Syndrome. A person has AIDS when his or her immune system gets so weak that it can no longer fight off infections like pneumonia and tuberculosis. Without treatment, a person will reach the stage of AIDS in 3 to 10 years after infection, depending on how strong his or her constitution is. A person with AIDS is susceptible to infections that would not cause illness in a person with a healthy immune system. These infections are called Opportunistic Infections.

Transmission of HIV

In HIV infected persons, the virus is mainly found in blood, semen, vaginal fluids, and breast milk. HIV has been detected in very low concentrations in other body fluids (such as saliva and tears), but these have not been reported to cause infection.

HIV is transmitted through three major sources: 1) sexual intimacy with an infected person, 2) introduction of HIV contaminated blood into the body, and 3) mother to child transmission. You **CANNOT** get HIV through casual contact such as dry kissing, sharing food or drink, or sneezing or coughing.

Symptoms of HIV Infection

A person may become infected with HIV and have no symptoms, or may believe that the symptoms are caused by another disease. A blood test is the only effective way to determine if a person has HIV. Possible warning signs of an HIV infection may include but are not limited to:

- Unexplained fatigue
- Dry cough
- Unexplained weight loss, lack of appetite
- Recurring fever or night sweats
- A thick, whitish coating of yeast on the tongue or mouth
- Swollen lymph glands
- Depression, memory loss, and neurological problems

Note: In many cases, people infected with HIV experience NO SYMPTOMS, but they can still transmit the virus to others.

Prevention of HIV Infection

HIV can be prevented by avoiding sexual contact before marriage and maintaining a faithful, monogamous relationship with an uninfected person in marriage.

Condoms are used for family planning and disease prevention. Condoms should be used by married couples if one or both spouses are infected by HIV (or any other STI) to prevent infection of the uninfected partner. Therefore, condoms should also be used for discordant couples (a pair of long-term sexual partners in which one has a sexually transmitted infection and the other does not). When both partners are infected by HIV, condoms will help prevent reinfection.

Appropriate screening of blood and blood products, and avoiding the use of unsterile needles for injections,

FAITHFULNESS



ABSTINENCE

Abstinence and faithfulness are the natural result of a Christian character.



CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

Exercising our choice to adhere to our values and principles builds character.



DEVELOPING CHRISTIAN VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

We base our values and principles on our role model.



OUR ROLE MODEL: JESUS CHRIST

In putting together an action plan for a youth HIV/AIDS program, we begin by recognizing Jesus as our role model.

BUILDING UP THE CHARACTER OF THE YOUTH

reduces the risk of HIV transmission in the clinical setting.

Alcohol consumption is directly related with increased sexual risk-taking practices and behavior that may lead to HIV infection. Alcohol suppresses the immune system.

Treatment of HIV/AIDS

At present, there is no cure or vaccine for HIV infection. However, advances in drug combination therapies have helped to reduce the number of people with HIV who develop serious illnesses and die from AIDS. It is extremely important to prepare the patient before starting treatment. In 1995, treatment using a combination of drugs known as HAART was introduced. This treatment aims to almost totally stop the reproduction of HIV. Suppression of HIV to almost undetectable levels is usually possible if the patient strictly adheres to the treatment. The opportunistic infections can be treated to some extent with a variety of treatments.

Guidelines and Summary Action Plan for the Organization of a Church-based Youth Support Group

Today's youth are tomorrow's leaders. Providing our young people with the knowledge, tools, and support systems that they need to protect themselves from HIV and

“Building up the character of our youth”

Living positively with HIV/AIDS:

7 tips for a healthy lifestyle

1. Eat a balanced diet.
2. Avoid smoking and alcohol.
3. Keep fit; get lots of fresh air and exercise.
4. Get sufficient rest.
5. Get involved helping others.
6. Find people you can share your challenges with.
7. Trust in God.

Values and Principles to highlight:

- Honesty
- Integrity
- Dignity
- Chastity
- Modesty
- Respect
- Confidentiality
- Tact
- Discretion
- Citizenship
- and others...

AIDS is important. This is an essential part of developing strong, Christ-centered individuals. An effective Youth HIV/AIDS Prevention Program will, in addition, include comprehensive information about HIV and AIDS.

Objectives:

1. **Create a youth-friendly church.** Work with church members to develop a non-judgmental, accepting attitude towards the youth. Build up relationships and connectedness with the youth. Give them responsibilities, trust them, and involve them.
2. **Develop a strong relationship with Jesus.** Recognize Jesus as the role model. Helping youth to develop a personal relationship with Jesus is the strong foundation that will give them the resilience to stand firm and give them the capacity to make the right choices.
3. **Organize mentoring programs.** Encourage church members who relate well to young people to take a special interest in at least five young people in the church. Young people need to have a relationship with a person of significance to whom they can turn to for guidance and advice.
4. **Encourage service to others.** Create a sense of belonging, achievement, and respect. In serving others, the youth gain a sense of accomplishment; they feel useful and needed. Studies have shown that service to others strengthens resilience and the ability to cope in spite of challenges.
5. **Promote spiritual enrichment.** The program needs to begin by building the youth's relationship with Jesus. This can include: regular meetings, praying together, Bible studies, sharing testimonies, singing.
6. **Ensure knowledge empowerment.** Discuss with and inform youth about topics such as: human sexuality as God's gift, gender relations, family planning, HIV/AIDS.
7. **Enhance community outreach.** Allow youth to become involved caring for the community through social service and support. Use resources such as skits, Christian music programs, video, and social networking.

For more information, please visit www.aidsministry.com ●

The Global Movement of SDA Youth
United for Service and Empowerment



THE POWER OF ONE

IMPACT SOUTH AFRICA 2013

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS

July 1 - 5, 2013 in Cape Town, Pretoria as well as neighboring countries to South Africa.

CONGRESS

July 8 - 13, 2013 in Pretoria, the Capital City.

CONGRESS REGISTRATION IS \$200, and covers the dates July 8 to 13, 2013.

Included in the registration:

- Two meals per day (lunch and dinner only)
- Registration package
- Round-trip transportation from designated hotel to congress venue
- One day tour

A separate costing package for motels/hotels will be made available shortly. These may or may not include breakfast.

Information on the service projects and related costs will be available on the GC youth website after January 1, 2012.

NOTE: The \$200 registration fee **does not include hotel accommodation**. Each person is responsible for making their own hotel arrangements.

2013 impact South Africa

Jesus in the city

3rd World Conference on Youth and Community Service

Pretoria - South Africa

Service Projects & Evangelism / July 1-5
Congress / July 8-13



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