

Adventist  
 Journey  
 INSPIRATION & INFORMATION  
 FOR NORTH AMERICA





Catastrophic floods & now high food costs for Mission schools in Bangladesh!

Emergency Mission REPEAT Appeal

FEED CHILDREN & HELP ADVENTIST MISSION SCHOOLS



CHILDIMPACT INTERNATIONAL

PLEASE DONATE AS MANY BAGS OF RICE AS YOU CAN TO ASSIST (\$35 PER BAG)

Last year we had a special rice appeal following the catastrophic Bangladesh flooding in 2017. We are repeating the appeal as food costs have remained high and Adventist Mission schools are still struggling with costs. Because of high food costs, non-sponsored children's parents are having trouble paying fees, leaving Mission schools unable to purchase food and incurring debt. The threat of closure is still real. Your gift to the "HUNGRY MONEY" fund will provide rice & vegetables ensuring food for the children and critical financial relief for the school! The Adventist schools in Bangladesh (with over 9,000 students) are the key outreach for the school in Bangladesh. PLEASE HELP!

🌐 : [www.childimpact.org](http://www.childimpact.org) | Project "HUNGRY MONEY" ☎ : (423) 910-0667

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Child Impact International (previously Asian Aid) is a supporting ministry of Seventh-day Adventist church.

\*The Child Impact HUNGRY MONEY fund Bangladesh appeal will only be used to purchase & deliver rice & vegetables to Seventh-day Adventist schools in Bangladesh.

# Adventist Journey

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## My Journey

One Sabbath I was reading my Bible on the floor of our military housing. A captain came in and I could not hide. I started to pray—I could be imprisoned, even killed for having religious materials. When questioned, I did not get into trouble. He said, "Good example." That was one time on my Adventist journey when the Lord intervened. Visit [vimeo.com/nadadventist/ajbemnetmeried](https://vimeo.com/nadadventist/ajbemnetmeried) for more of Meried's story.

**BEMNET MERIED,**  
M.D., evangelist. He creates online and printed biblical/Adventist materials for Eritreans worldwide.



Cover Photo by Mylon Medley

**Dear Reader:** The publication in your hands represents the collaborative efforts of the North American Division and *Adventist World* magazine, which follows *Adventist Journey* (after page 16). Please enjoy both magazines!

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## ADVENTIST JOURNEY

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# FLEEING TO FREEDOM

BY MYLON MEDLEY

An Eritrean Refugee's Unwavering Faith Yields a Worldwide Ministry

**H**e approached the lake in the middle of the night, one of nearly 20 people. The unfamiliar path toward freedom was on the opposite side of a lake, in a country he had never visited—Sudan.

Each person paid smugglers for a seat on a boat that would travel to the other side of the lake. Bemnet Meried squeezed into a space alongside fellow passengers who all happened to be from his homeland. Every passenger needed to keep careful balance while seated to help prevent capsizing.

As the boat began to leave the shore, Meried recalled a passage from Isaiah 43:2: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee" (KJV).

Some of the others prepared for the possibility of the boat flipping over, clutching personal floatation devices.

"I had only my small Bible," said Meried, who was 25 years old at the time. "I prayed the whole half hour it took to cross.

I said, 'God, You promised You would be with me.'"

Meried had secured an interview to apply for a diversity visa for the United States. He was fleeing from a refugee camp to get to Khartoum, Sudan's capital. Once there, he would visit the embassy of his home country, Eritrea, which is where this story begins.

## Eyes on Eritrea

Eritrea is on nearly every watch list of countries compiled by human rights organizations and governments that monitor civil and religious liberties. It is among the U.S. State Department's<sup>1</sup> list of top 10 countries with the most severe religious freedom violations. The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)<sup>2</sup> lists Eritrea as a "Country of Particular Concern," along with China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and North Korea.

By 2017, 486,000 Eritreans had been displaced, making

them the ninth-largest refugee population in the world, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).<sup>3</sup>

Religious freedom violations were not the only factors driving his decision to leave Eritrea; Meried also wanted to become a medical missionary.

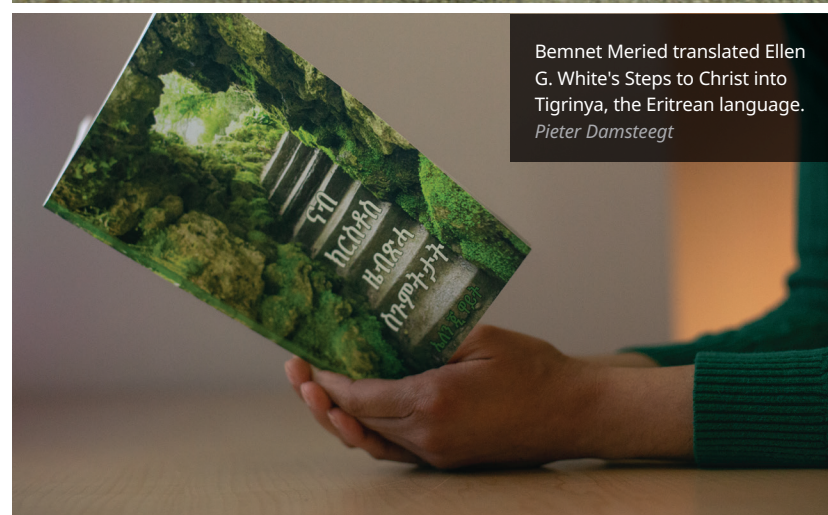
"I was studying the small Bible my dad gave me when I was 7 years old and learning about Jesus," explained Meried. "The more I read about Jesus and how He helped other people, the more I wanted to be like Him. I was 11 [and] I thought that being a doctor would be a good way to become like Jesus. At the time I did not know about medical missionary work or any of these things. I just desired to honor God."

## The State of Religious Liberty

Meried's journey to becoming a doctor was peppered with experiences that directly



Bemnet Meried attends medical school in Eritrea, circa 2007. Photo provided by Bemnet Meried



Bemnet Meried translated Ellen G. White's Steps to Christ into Tigrinya, the Eritrean language. Pieter Damsteegt

aligned with systematic enforcements of religious and civil liberty infringements in Eritrea.

According to USCIRF, the Eritrean government recognizes only four religious communities—the Coptic Orthodox Church of Eritrea, Sunni Islam, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Evangelical Church of Eritrea, which is affiliated with the Lutheran denomination. All other religious groups are considered "illegal." As a result, the government has closed houses of worship—including every Seventh-day Adventist church in the nation—and raided home gatherings, arrested worshippers, and imprisoned or killed faith leaders without trial.

"Even though we could not go to church, I would watch sermons on the Hope Channel and 3ABN [Three Angels Broadcasting Network], and it helped me a lot. I praised God for it," said Meried, who was then approximately 17 years old.

After Adventist churches were closed, he would secretly visit homes of fellow Adventists to lead out in Bible studies. Not long after, however, Meried was forced to join national service as was mandated by the government for citizens between the ages of 18 and 70. He did not want to get out of his obligation to his country, but he was afraid.

"I prayed and fasted. I asked God to protect me. I asked Him to help me keep the Sabbath day holy, and to keep me from bearing arms. The Lord provided ways to help me."

Meried's Bible accompanied him to his training post, an act that was forbidden. It was illegal to have religious possessions while serving. One Sabbath Meried took a moment to go to his sleeping quarters to read his Bible, but one of his officers caught him.

"What are you reading?" asked the officer.

"I'm reading the Bible."

The officer said, "Good example." Then he left.

## Pathway to Medicine

While national service is mandatory, a test is offered for those who want to opt out of the military. Meried passed the test and returned to his family.

He still held on to his dream of becoming a doctor, moving forward in faith and taking general education courses at the University of Asmara. A medical school opened. After completing the necessary credit requirements for admission, he enrolled in the medical school.

In Meried's final year of medical school he began to pray for a way to go to the U.S. to become a medical missionary. He'd heard about a place called "Loma Linda" that he wanted to visit. Moreover, he wanted to leave his



country, since persecution based on religious beliefs seemed to be increasing at an alarming rate. He experienced opposition to the exercise of his faith, particularly observing the Sabbath, throughout his time in medical school. Unbeknown to him, his dean constantly advocated for Meried whenever the government, which controlled the hospitals, would send threatening letters.

Meried applied for the diversity visa in 2009. While waiting to hear more about his visa status, he and another colleague from school worked at a hospital in Asmara, the nation's capital. God blessed their work.

"The medical director was so appreciative of us. He said our work helped to decrease the hospital's mortality rates. God did so many miracles."

### On the Run

Meried's interview date for the diversity visa was set for February 3, 2011, in Kenya. Under Eritrea's dictatorial rule at the time, leaving the country was forbidden except for rare occasions.

"There were checkpoints everywhere, making it very difficult to leave. The only way to leave the country was using smugglers," said Meried.

After much prayer and fasting, Meried received enough funds to pay smugglers to take him out of the country.

"I was able to cross the border safely into Sudan. In fact, we walked the whole night for about 12 hours on foot. Smugglers took us to a refugee camp operated by the UNHCR. We stayed for about a week; then they took us to another UNHCR camp," said Meried.

Food was severely limited at the camp. Meried was given only two pieces of bread and a small portion of lentils to eat each day. During the time it took Meried to secure passage out of the country, the deadline to make it to Kenya for the interview passed, but he was able to contact the embassy to notify them of his status. They pushed his interview date to September, but Meried still needed to find a way out of Sudan.

Official travel documents were required to cross the border, but he had only Eritrean identification, which allowed for travel only within the nation. Meried decided to find Eritrea's embassy in the capital of Sudan to see if they could issue him a passport.

"I had to escape the camp because I did not have the necessary paperwork to leave. Other countries help you with that process, but I was not helped there."

Smugglers were the only people who could aid Meried and other Eritreans who needed to get to the capital. Smugglers agreed to help them leave the camp and take them across the lake that was part of the journey.

"We had no choice but to trust them. I was so scared; the trip tortured me mentally. My mind was racing," said Meried. "It was very hard to keep my balance when we were in the boat. It was such a relief when we got to the shore."

### Securing the Visa

He made it to the embassy and applied for the passport, but had to wait 40 days to receive it. He was careful not to mention that he was a doctor. A medical degree is viewed as the highest level of education one can acquire in Eritrea—the government did all it could to ensure that doctors did not leave the country. If Meried disclosed this information, the embassy would've denied his request for a passport. Further, Eritrean officials would have taken him back to Eritrea.

Meried was able to stay in an apartment that had been rented out to a friend of his sister, who had just left Sudan to travel abroad. The friend also purchased clothes for him. An Adventist Eritrean living in Switzerland somehow heard about Meried and was able to send him the equivalent of US\$100 to assist him through the month.

When Meried got his passport, he could cross the border into Kenya. Meried had been in contact with the East-Central Africa Division (ECD) office of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The division agreed

not only to help Meried travel to its headquarters in Kenya, but to give him accommodations as he went through the process of obtaining the diversity visa. To Meried's knowledge, he is the first Eritrean refugee the division has sponsored.

"I stayed on the ECD property for three weeks. God provided for every need. For the first time in more than two months I had quality food to eat and a comfortable place to sleep and shower. I was so grateful to God."

The visa was granted. It was time to head to America. ECD paid for Meried's ticket to fly to Sacramento, California, where a family was willing to host him.

### Seeking the Need

Meried eventually made his way to Loma Linda University, where he wanted to learn about wholistic medicine, but he heard a sermon that changed the course of his career. The message was on knowing God's call. The speaker said that understanding God's call comes from identifying four things—desire, talent, education, and need.

"The pastor said God can change your call according to the need," said Meried. Then he thought to himself, *Eritrean people don't need a physician; what they need is a missionary. This is what God is calling me to do.*

Later that evening he was struck with a powerful question from the Holy Spirit. "I heard, 'Bemnet, what are you doing for your people?' It was a strong and very clear voice." He reflected on this question for days, often while thinking about the tragedies that have befallen his people.

"Hundreds drowned in the Mediterranean Sea when they tried to escape to Europe. There was even a family who drowned in the same lake I crossed," Meried said. Many Eritrean refugees who cross the Sinai Desert become victims of organ harvesting. "Their abdomens

are cut open while they're still alive and tied up," explained Meried.

"Through tears I asked God, 'Do you really care about my people?'" said Meried.

God helped Meried recall the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church—in particular, "the Great Disappointment." Based on intensive study of biblical prophecy, the denomination's pioneers thought Jesus would return on October 22, 1844, but on that date Jesus took upon His role as high priest in the heavenly sanctuary and moved from the holy place to the Most Holy Place to advocate for sinners before God the Father.

"October 22, 1844 is supposed to be a day of hope. It means Jesus is standing for me before the Father, even though I'm a sinner. It shows that He really cares," said Meried.

This led Meried to begin the Hope 1844 Ministry, which allows him to translate Adventist literature into Tigrinya, an Eritrean language, for distribution in print, and deliver sermons online based on the literature. His first tract was requested by and sent to a man in Ethiopia.

"From there it reached many people around the world. That's how the ministry began," said Meried.

### Into the World

A series of providential events would connect Meried to a woman living in Harrisonburg, Virginia, who had been praying for a way to help the growing Eritrean population in her community. A large number of Eritreans live in the Maryland, Washington, D.C., and Virginia area, according to Meried. This woman learned about Meried through his online ministry and connected him to the pastor of the New Market Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Potomac Conference. They helped him relocate to northern Virginia, where he could anchor

"Eritreans are located almost everywhere. Reaching the Eritrean people is like reaching the whole world."

his ministry and assist the church's efforts within the community.\*

Meried has used nearly every technological resource at his disposal to create content for his people in their language, whether its conducting weekly Bible studies over the telephone, producing a YouTube series with sermons in Tigrinya, sharing messages of hope through videos on a messaging app called Viber, or creating a community with more than 4,000 people on Facebook. Meried also runs a special ministry that he was able to employ in Ethiopia once he became a U.S. citizen.

"I work with the church's mission field in Ethiopia to travel to the refugee camps for Eritreans. I've visited one of the camps twice to minister and provide medical services," Meried said.

Meried has committed his life to serving Eritreans. Viewers, listeners, and followers of his ministry are located in Africa, Europe, South America, Australia, and the U.S. "Eritreans are located almost everywhere. Reaching the Eritrean people, I believe, is like reaching the whole world."

\*Meried is a member of the New Market Seventh-day Adventist Church in northern Virginia. He assists with Eritrean outreach and translation services for the Potomac Conference and the North American Division.

<sup>1</sup> "Religious Freedom Designations," [www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2018/12/288006.htm](http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2018/12/288006.htm), accessed on May 8, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2017," [www.unhcr.org/5b27be547.pdf](http://www.unhcr.org/5b27be547.pdf), accessed on May 8, 2019.

Mylon Medley is an assistant director of communication for the North American Division.



Bemnet Meried distributes materials such as this tract to those in several countries who speak an Eritrean language. Pieter Damsteegt





Jonathan Logan/Lake Union Conference

## 2019 PBE TURNOUT AND SUPPORT STUNS YOUTH LEADERS

During a Chosen International Camporee year, clubs show outstanding commitment to studying the Bible.

BY MYLON MEDLEY, NAD OFFICE OF COMMUNICATION

The 2019 Pathfinder Bible Experience (PBE) Division Finals on April 26-27, 2019, drew a record-breaking 210 teams to Rockford, Illinois, located nearly 100 miles northwest of Chicago. This was the first time in PBE's history that more than 200 teams participated in the division-level testing. Approximately 3,500 people filled the sports complex of the Rock Valley College, a number that shocked organizers.

"One of the things that really surprised us is that there are so many clubs coming in an Oshkosh year. We anticipated attendance would be less, but we are pleasantly surprised that parents, families, and churches rose above and beyond the planning for Oshkosh to make Bible study and the celebration of young people learning Scripture a priority," said Tracy Wood, director of youth ministries for the North American Division.

"Oshkosh" refers to the Chosen International Pathfinder Camporee that occurs every five years in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. Leaders anticipate that more than 50,000 people will attend this year's camporee, which will take place August 12-17. Clubs have worked to raise enough funds to cover the \$195 ticket cost, transportation to Oshkosh, travel insurance, and camping supplies, including food for meals.

### The Test Takers

Since 2012 the journey to the PBE division level has been a four-step process. The teams, which are comprised of up to six people, are first chosen by their clubs to compete in their local districts after months of Bible study and memorization. Those who score within 90 percent of the highest score advance to the conference level. The same pattern continues through the union level, all the way to the division.

While 240 teams qualified for division level, 210 participated in the testing. The teams were asked 90 questions based on the biblical book of Luke. Those that scored within 90 percent of the highest score were awarded first place, which was given to 155 teams. Nine NAD union conferences were represented along with an unprecedented 43 teams from conferences and missions within the British Union, including North England Conference, South England Conference, Irish Mission, Scottish Mission, and Welsh Mission.

"Parents, families, and churches rose above and beyond the planning for Oshkosh [Pathfinder Camporee] to make Bible study and the celebration of young people learning Scripture a priority."

### Across the Pond

The featured speaker for the first day of PBE was Dejan Stojkovic, youth director of the British Union Conference. When he accepted the role two years ago, he made a commitment to revitalize PBE teams throughout the territory, not just in the South England Conference, which had been consistently sending teams to the NAD PBE events.

This wave of inspiration made its way to the Welsh Mission. Of the mission's 600 members, approximately 70 are children, and half of that demographic are eligible to participate in PBE. After rounds of testing, two Welsh teams made the finals and did a lightning round of fund-raising to make it to Rockford.

"Parents are so excited to see their kids dropping their tablets and phones and picking up the Bible. When we see this excitement in children, we need to support it and nurture that excitement," said David Rancic, Pathfinder sponsor of the Welsh Mission. "It has been a really great journey for us."

### "Are You Ready?"

In the middle of the testing floor of 210 teams was a sign with the number 137. It was next to a small team from the Northern California Conference—the Paradise Prayer Warriors. The Pathfinders are members of the Paradise Seventh-day Adventist Church, located in a region of California that experienced

the deadliest fire in the state's history. The November 8, 2018, blaze destroyed more than 18,800 buildings, and claimed the lives of 85 people.

The fire burned not only the church, but also the homes of nearly every Pathfinder of the church. Only four homes of the club's 30 Pathfinders survived; and all 12 of the club's staff lost their homes. Each of the four Pathfinders representing Paradise at PBE lost their homes because of the fire.

Nearly three weeks after the fire, Terry Parsons, Paradise Prayer Warriors club director, had already moved in with her daughter in the state's Bay Area when she got a text message asking if the club could still meet.

"I said, 'Are you ready?' and they said, 'Yes, we're ready.' I thought, *If one more kid says, 'I'm ready,' we're doing this.* Then it happened."

Parsons drove three hours each direction on Sabbaths to hold Pathfinder meetings. She said the PBE team was not able to practice in person because of the lack of a central location to meet, so they used video chats. "I told them to just study, and we'll trust that God will bring us as far as we can come. I reminded them they've already been victorious."

Thoughts of restoration and renewal, not only for their community but their spirit, continue to be the thread that has kept the team together and focused, even though each Pathfinder is still displaced.

Members of the Paradise Prayer Warriors from Paradise, California, converse between questions during the testing. Jonathan Logan/Lake Union Conference



Jonathan Logan/Lake Union Conference



“If they can remember only one lesson, I hope they remember they can always come back to the Father. That’s Luke. That’s the gospel.”

**Enlarged Territory**

With groundbreaking attendance comes the challenges of accommodating sizable numbers. The venue was able to accommodate only a limited number of spectators while the Pathfinders tested. To address this and help expand the experience beyond the Pathfinders, Tracy Wood and Vandean Griffin, associate director of NAD youth ministries, hosted an off-site testing center for parents and supporters that would allow them to answer the same questions presented to the Pathfinders, but without the stress of having their answers scored. They were also able to watch a livestream of the testing.

With the added growth comes increased evidence of the ministry’s impact. A scan around the testing floor showed more than 1,000 young people fully engaged in the intricacies of Luke’s

Gospel. With this year’s emphasis on Luke, the Pathfinders had a chance to absorb the details of popular parables, including the prodigal son, the lost coin, and the lost sheep.

“PBE is an event that changes lives,” said Armando Miranda, associate director of NAD youth ministries. “If they can remember only one lesson, I hope they remember they can always come back to the Father. That’s Luke. That’s the gospel. That’s the story of salvation. That’s Jesus Christ sacrificing Himself so we can come back to Him.”

*In 2020 PBE division testing will take place in Centralia, Washington. Pathfinders will be tested on the Old Testament books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Click on <http://bit.ly/2JL3WUBPBE19> to read the full report and watch a short video summary of the event.*

↓ Teams celebrate the end of testing. Pieter Damsteegt (left photo); Jonathan Logan/Lake Union Conference



NAD NEWS BRIEFS



↑ The Oaks Adventist Christian School students attend class in one of the school's renovated classrooms. Photo provided by the Southwestern Union Record

**THE OAKS ADVENTIST CHRISTIAN SCHOOL REBUILDS AFTER HURRICANE HARVEY**

More than a year after record-setting Hurricane Harvey made landfall, the damage done to Texas still seems harrowingly fresh. This is no surprise, considering that 50 inches of rain flooded homes, schools, and businesses. Many people are still struggling to recover from the category 4 hurricane.

The Oaks Adventist Christian School (the Oaks), in Cypress, Texas, is counting its blessings after the tragedy. It took two weeks to gain access to the Oaks campus after the hurricane. Even then, staff needed a boat to reach campus. The gym, sitting on high ground, sustained 19 inches of water damage. A water level of seven feet flooded the elementary school.

Faculty and staff decided to do everything possible to continue providing Adventist education. Even before plans could be made, people

from all over the world began to offer help and send donations.

The gymnasium became a temporary classroom for all grades. Nearly 300 volunteers from across the Southwestern Union Conference gathered to remove debris and clean the school. This helped the school compile an inventory. It also made it possible for classes to resume on campus just three weeks after the storm.

The Oaks expected to experience a decrease in enrollment after the storm. Instead it experienced the highest enrollment in the history of the school. With an increased enrollment came an increase of cash flow that helped with replacing curriculum materials and rebuilding.

As the Oaks continues to grow in enrollment, they will also work toward earning full academy status starting in fall 2019.

—Makala James, for the Southwestern Union Record

**Adventist Education Pilots a Women in STEM Conference Initiative**

The North American Division piloted a Women in STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) conference initiative in partnership with Ophelia Barizo, STEM coordinator at the Chesapeake Conference, in April 2019 at Spencerville Adventist Academy in Silver Spring, Maryland. Middle and high school students were invited to participate in the conference, which included a panel of women from government agencies and the private sector who are leaders in the field of STEM.

Those on the panel shared their experiences and highlighted the unique challenges in their fields, as well as the unique contributions they make every day. Presenters also outlined processes and procedures for securing internships in their organizations.

The National Science Foundation reports that STEM employment continues to grow at a faster pace than other occupations, yet not all Americans have equal access or equal representation in STEM fields.\* Even though women make up half the population, they account for under 30 percent of participation in STEM-related careers.

“The students who attended the event are highly intelligent and motivated students who are looking for ideas of where and how they can best direct their talents and energy in STEM fields,” said Leisa Morton-Standish, director of Elementary Education for Adventist Education in North America. “The objective of this event is to expose young women to potential careers in STEM fields, and to provide more opportunities such as this to our students across North America.”

—Adventist Education, NAD

\*Women, Minorities, and Persons With Disabilities in S&E,” nsf.gov/statistics/women/, accessed on May 9, 2019.





Last year we had a special rice appeal following the catastrophic Bangladesh flooding in 2017. **We are repeating the appeal as foods costs have remained high and Adventist Mission schools are still struggling with costs.** Because of high food costs, non-sponsored children's parents are having trouble paying fees, leaving Mission schools unable to purchase food and incurring debt. The threat of closure is still real. Your gift to the "HUNGRY MONEY" fund will provide rice & vegetables ensuring food for the children and critical financial relief for the school! The Adventist schools in Bangladesh (with over 9,000 students) are the key outreach for the school in Bangladesh. **PLEASE HELP!**



Supporting this appeal will achieve two goals:

- Children will be fed and receive sufficient nourishment
- Adventist mission schools will get financial relief and avoid closure

Providing rice and vegetables for daily meals will mean children **won't go hungry** and schools **won't face closure.**

With 9,500 children attending more than 80 Adventist mission schools, mostly in poor rural areas. Education is critical to the evangelistic outreach in Bangladesh.

**Help us provide 5,000 (110lb) bags of rice (feeds 105 children one meal) to feed the hungry children. Each bag is \$35. Help now with 1, 2, 5, 10, 50 or 100 bags or just donate any amount. Help these kids!**

**Donate to Child Impact International: [www.childimpact.org](http://www.childimpact.org) | 423-9100667  
Post to Rice appeal, Child Impact PO Box 763 Ooltewah TN 37363**

Child Impact International is a registered 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization and is a fully supportive ministry of the Seventh day-Adventist church.



Emergency  
Mission  
**REPEAT**  
Appeal

BY PHILIP BAPTISTE

# Come and See

Discipleship is more than going to church.

The Great Commission contains this mandate: "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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:19, 20, NIV).

This robust mandate and mission statement given by the Master Himself is our guiding principle for evangelism, and the impetus behind everything we do to share our Adventist message of hope and wholeness.

But as we preach, teach, and evangelize, how important is discipleship to us? Have we fully understood what it means to "go and make disciples"?

A disciple is defined as one who accepts and assists in the spreading of the gospel message of Jesus.

### Giving the Assist

In my experience we Seventh-day Adventist Christians do a great job of empowering and equipping people to accept the gospel of Jesus. We aren't always, however, the greatest at helping individuals learn how to assist in spreading the gospel of Jesus.

In John 1, after Philip accepted Jesus' invitation, he was so excited that he went, found his friend Nathanael, and said, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip" (John 1:45, 46, NIV).

We need to develop this "come and see" philosophy. We must allow our passion and love for Christ to so fill our lives that we are overflowing with a desire to tell everyone we meet to "come and see"

When was the last time you were at the supermarket or grocery store and you told someone about Jesus? When was the last time you invited a friend at your job or at school to attend your church so that they could "come and see"?

### Invitation

Being a disciple is more than just attending church and Sabbath School and carrying a big Bible. Being a disciple is a commitment to a "come and see" lifestyle. A commitment to reach out daily to the least, the lost, and the last. Being a disciple means that we will prayerfully commit to never let an opportunity to witness or give a "come and see" invitation pass us by.

Simon, Philip, and Nathanael began the foundation of the Christian church. John the Baptist directed two of his disciples to Christ. Then one of these, Andrew, found his brother Simon. Philip was then called, and he went in search of Nathanael. These examples teach the importance of making direct appeals to our families, friends, and neighbors.

I challenge you to live a "come and see" lifestyle. Can we live in such a way that we are consistently scanning our surroundings to look for people whom we can invite to church, Bible study, or a Sabbath activity?

Philip did not engage in a Bible study with Nathanael. He did not try to convince him that his newfound religion of Jesus was better. He merely said, "Come and see." This is powerful because Jesus proclaims that "when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" (John 12:32, NIV).

Is Jesus Christ lifted up in our homes, in our marriages, in our parenting, in our friendships and relationships? Is He lifted up in the way we interact with others, handle our anger, and communicate?

When Jesus is reflected in our lives and lifted up in our characters, others will be drawn to Him. This starts with inviting others to "come and see."

*Philip Baptiste is secretary/treasurer for Adventist-Laymen's Services and Industries.*

Being a disciple is a commitment to reach out daily to the least, the lost, and the last.

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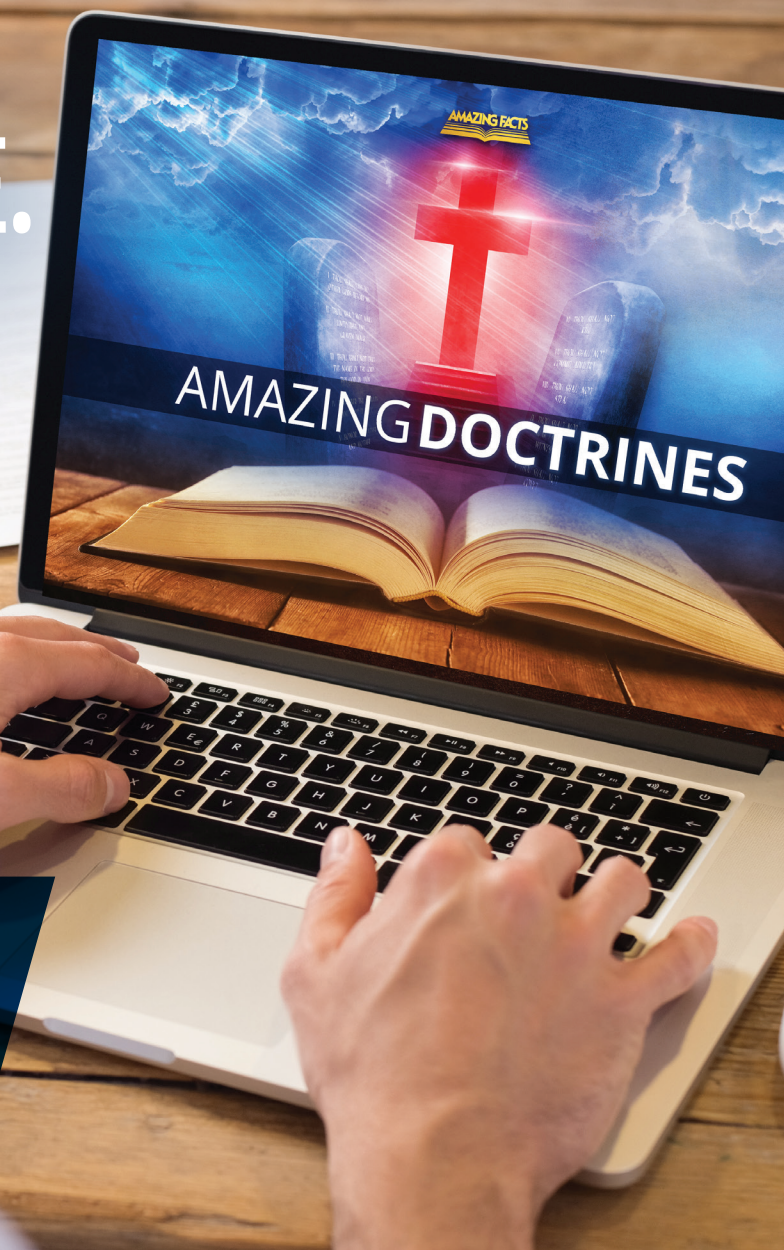
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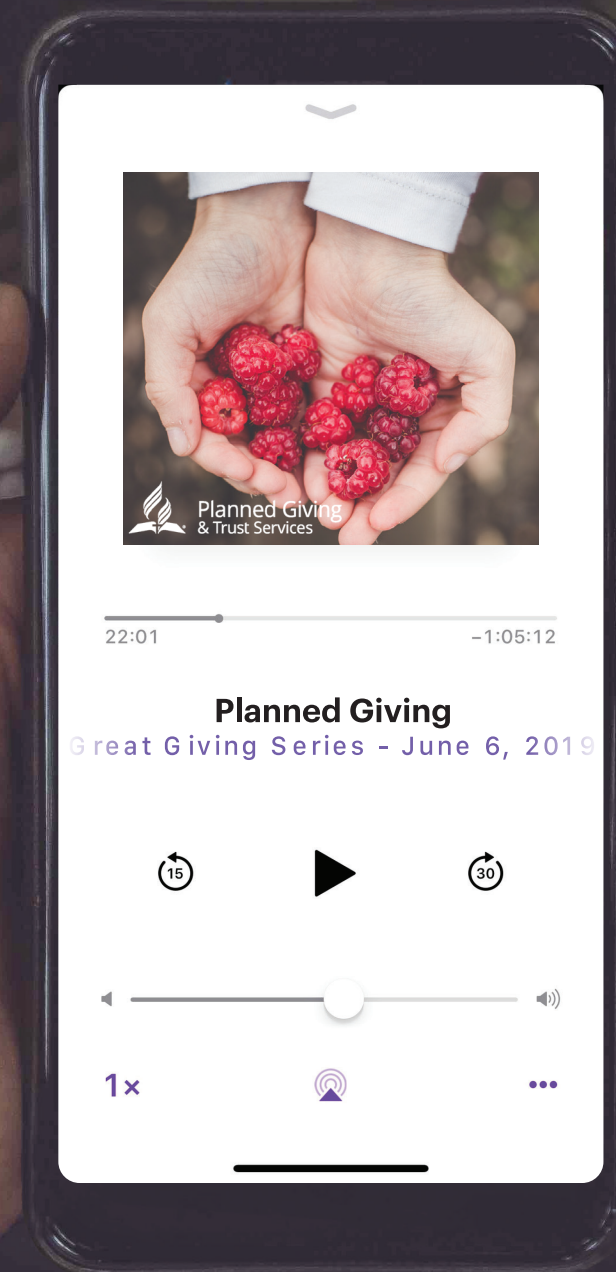
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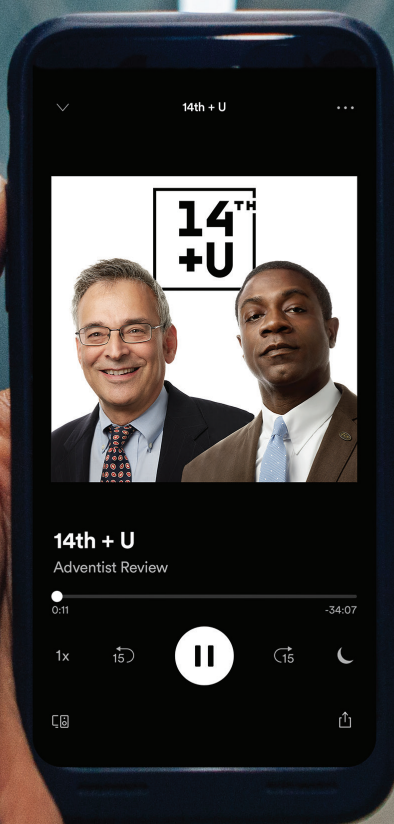
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