

# Adventist World

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## Resilience on the Rise

BY BILL KNOTT

**T**hey smile at me from family newsletters, Christmas cards, and Facebook posts—all reaching out to celebrate some joy, some moment when the light has overcome the darkness.

Graduations; firstborn children (or grandchildren); marriages; new jobs—each post or letter seeks to move the circle of delight beyond the ones who first experienced it. We smile at the photo of the 4-year old with frosting in his hair—as well as at the image of the svelte young couple posing by the seaside on their wedding day.

All of these are life-affirming moments when the happiness of others quickly, subtly becomes our own. And they are easy, simple—part of the social tapestry that ties us to the ones so dear to us.

But what does “life-affirming” mean when days are dark and choices hard—when couples wrestle with infertility; when those who have lived fourscore or more age into inconsistent memory or struggle with disease? What does it mean to be a people of hope when mosques are blown apart by hate, when violence invades a market, when families grieve a senseless, unexpected loss?

These are the real moments that test the viability of our faith—not just when times are good and skies are blue, when grandchildren make us laugh or weddings remind us of young love—but when we or our neighbors find ourselves like “the people who sat in darkness” (Matt. 4:16). Are we the modern-day “light-bearers”—the followers of Jesus who both illustrate and announce that “in Him was life, and the life was the light of all people”? (John 1:4, NRSV).\*



To be a life-affirming movement, we must make our causes and commitments clear. We stand for life—preborn; for children everywhere, not just our own; for teens who search for space in a torn, confusing world; for marriages, both old and young; for those who age and struggle with their health and with their memories. We dare not settle for only things that easily amuse us or pull spontaneous laughter from our souls. Affirming life and light will always be hard work in a world engulfed with death and darkness.

And so we make Christ’s story emblematic of our own. “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it” (verse 5, NRSV). The life—the Light—whom all the forces of this present darkness sought to overcome and overwhelm emerged still shining, radiant, full of grace and truth. He drained the bitter cup of life-defying pain and still announced that His will be the everlasting kingdom.

“Resilience” is our watchword; “resurrection” is our theme. We preach the everlasting gospel—the good news that still heals the broken; comforts the grieving; lifts the fallen; and stands for kingdom values until His kingdom fully, finally arrives.

**The church I want to belong to is . . . life-affirming.**

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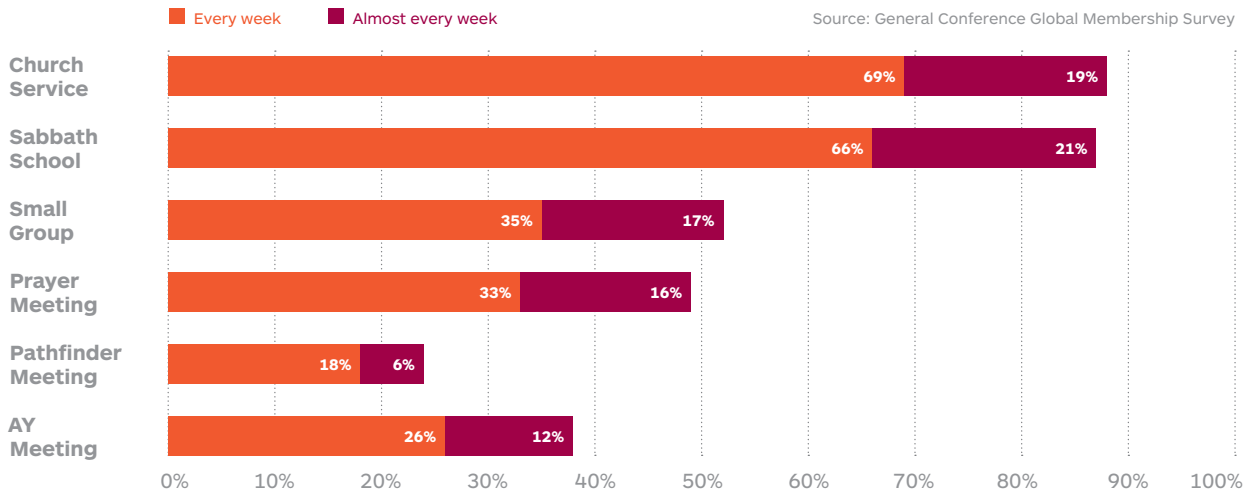
We believe in the power of prayer, and we welcome prayer requests that can be shared at our weekly staff worship every Wednesday morning. Send your requests to [prayer@adventistworld.org](mailto:prayer@adventistworld.org), and pray for us as we work together to advance God’s kingdom.



**As part of a reconciliation process for the Guna-Goreku tribe in Papua New Guinea, people surrender their illegal firearms and other items to be burned. Adventist members and leaders, together with those from other faith groups, were instrumental in bringing peace to the community, which had been fighting for 25 years.**

Photo: Adventist Record

## Attendance of Millennials Around the World



**“Unions are saying very, very clearly, ‘We don’t want the duplication of ministries and departments.’”**

—Glenn Townend, president of the South Pacific Division (SPD), during the region’s 2019 year-end meetings. SPD voted a milestone reorganization of its division office, which now emphasizes broader strategic thinking and planning, along with a focus on discipleship and innovation. The move eliminates several ministry coordinating positions at the division, concentrating their functions at the union conference level—including Sabbath School, Women’s, Children’s and Youth ministries.

**428**

The number of liters of blood (113 gallons) donated by Dexter Emoto, a post-anesthesia care unit and recovery room nurse at Loma Linda University Health, over a period of 45 years. Emoto has been inducted into the United States national Fresenius Kabi Donation Hall of Fame for his blood donations. He is one of the highest giving blood donors in the country and credits his accomplishment to a simple desire to help people.



**“Today we ask forgiveness from our friends of color for what previous generations did to you. We are sorry we did not see you as God’s children, just like us.”**

—Linda Becker, head elder of College View church, a Seventh-day Adventist congregation in Lincoln, Nebraska, United States, on the campus of Union College. The local church recently celebrated its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Leaders set aside time during the commemorative services to offer an apology to people of color in the congregation for ways in which they had been discriminated against at times during the local church’s history.

“We need to stop creating events at the local field, union, and division levels, so that we can allow pastors to be pastors at the church.”

—Ignacio Navarro, president of the church in the Chiapas Mexican Union Conference, commenting during a recent discussion in the Inter-American Division (IAD) concerning losses in membership. IAD has lost 476,807 members between 2015 and 2019, and is tackling the trend by identifying factors leading to it. Among those factors is a need for more in-home pastoral visitation, a traditional pastoral activity that Navarro argues has been sidelined because of a shift in focus to activities and events.

## Three

The number of dump-truck loads of garbage collected by more than 350 young people in Nepal in one day. The community service activity was part of a weekend rally that brought together Adventist members from 48 churches, house churches, and companies to Banepa, a city near Kathmandu.

## 13,000

The number of people in Tanzania who came out for a Pathfinder anniversary celebration hosted in the CCM Kirumba Stadium in Mwanza. In addition to worship services and Pathfinder parades, the event included sharing information on the role and mission of Pathfinder clubs, Pathfinder songs, and personal testimonies. Pathfinders and leaders also took part in community service activities in the area. The day concluded with the baptism of more than 100 Pathfinders.



Photo: Uriel Castellanos

**“When the enemy takes away something that you love, any hope you have can be blinded by pain. I wanted to remind you and strengthen you through this, with the promise of resurrection.”**

—Daniel Gallardo, an Adventist artist in Mexico who encouraged grieving parents Antonio and Mara Gómez with a surprise painting. The Gómezes’ 5-year-old daughter, Ximena, had been kidnapped from her Adventist home in the town of Malpaso and had gone missing for 10 days until her body was found on September 14, 2019. Upon hearing the news, Gallardo went to work creating an artistic portrait that depicts Ximena, surrounded by three angels, being approached by Jesus on resurrection day. He was able to complete and deliver the portrait the day after her funeral.

## Executive Committee Members Debate Proposed Compliance Action

Vote amends motion to change reprimand to warning.

By *Adventist World* and Adventist News Network



Members of the General Conference Executive Committee cast their secret ballots for the vote dealing with proposed actions resulting from the 2018 Compliance Document.

Photo: Adventist News Network

The much-anticipated discussion of possible discipline for church entities deemed not compliant with ordination votes and policies witnessed surprising turns as delegates to the 2019 General Conference (GC) Annual Council wrestled with competing values.

On Tuesday, October 15, 2019, multiple speakers underlined the contrasting importance of preserving church order while also acting with fairness toward church organizations whose constituents have voted for alternate approaches to voted positions on ordination.

On the floor were two separate motions to accept recommendations outlined in the document entitled "Recommendations Resulting From the 2018 Annual

Council Compliance Action." The document proposed warnings for four Seventh-day Adventist union conferences and public reprimands for the presidents of two other union conferences.

Delegates voted to accept the first recommendation to provide warnings to certain unions and voted to amend the second recommendation, altering the recommendation to deliver a public reprimand to two individual members of the committee, to a warning of the respective church organizations they represent.

### INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPOSED ACTION

"This is not at all an easy situation," said Adventist world church president Ted N. C. Wilson as he

introduced the proposal. "I have personally struggled with the Lord over this situation."

Wilson, who chaired the session, then laid out the steps taken by the GC since the action voted by the 2018 Annual Council that outlined a process for addressing perceived noncompliance and disciplinary measures for those deemed noncompliant. The process mainly involved giving divisions, the regional administrative bodies of the General Conference, time to assess and address perceived noncompliance within their territories. In addition, a letter was sent by the GC to the divisions in question on June 4, 2019, reminding them of the stipulations of the 2018 action and requesting they report back on the

status of such organizations within their territory.

"Whether you respond favorably to the recommendation or not, at least you will know that your officers have done this in keeping faith with the 2018 voted action," said Wilson.

Wilson also clarified the status of the noncompliance committees, established by the GC's Administrative Committee (ADCOM) and referenced in the 2018 action. "They are still there," Wilson said. "They haven't been done away with." The clarification was offered in light of reports over the past few months that the noncompliance committees had been disbanded.

According to Wilson, ADCOM chose not to use the noncompliance committees because they had been "so maligned" following their appearance in the 2018 compliance document. Wilson said the noncompliance committees are advisory committees to ADCOM and reminded attendees that the 2018 action specified ADCOM "may" use the compliance committees.

## THE NATURE OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Wilson next reported that "no appropriate response was provided for changes in the entities that are named within the proposed recommendations," which led to the proposal being considered at this year's Annual Council.

"I know of nothing in the history of our church, unless I'm missing it, where there has been direct action against a voted action by a General Conference session on the part of entities," Wilson offered. "That's why it lifts this to a fairly high profile."

Consequently, the "Recommendations Resulting From the 2018 Annual Council Compliance Action" document called for official warnings to be given to the Danish Union

of Churches Conference, the North German Union Conference, the Norwegian Union Conference, and the Swedish Union of Churches Conference. These entities "have taken actions that are not in harmony with *Working Policy* and practices on credentials," stated the document.

The actions taken by the four unions concern official union-level decisions to commission both male and female pastors (as opposed to ordaining males and commissioning females), among other variants.

A second recommendation concerned two other unions, whose executive committees had previously voted to approve the practice of ordaining women. The document named the Columbia Union Conference and the Pacific Union Conference, both in the North American Division (NAD), and referred to them as being "in persistent noncompliance."

The document recommended the "presidents of the above-named entities as the individuals representing the noncompliant entity be given a 'public reprimand' as provided for in the 2018 Annual Council voted document."

## DISCUSSION ON THE FLOOR

Discussion on the floor began with an invitation from Wilson for any of the presidents representing the unions in question to express their thoughts. While two-minute time limits for speeches were imposed by the delegates, time was extended for these leaders to four minutes each, beginning with the four presidents from Europe whose unions were to be officially warned.

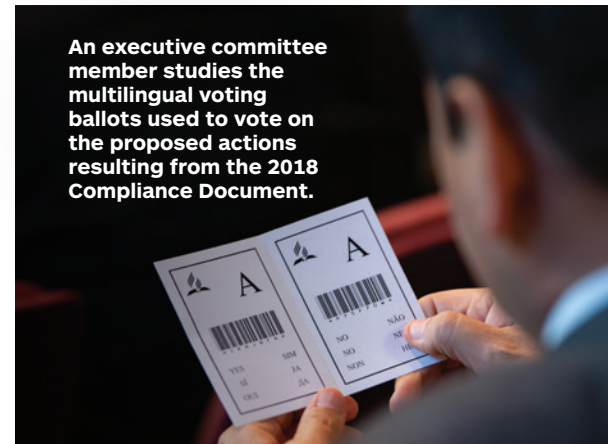
"One third of our pastors in the Swedish Union are women, and I am extremely proud of each one of them," said Robert Sjolander, president of the Swedish Union. "They, along with the rest of us in Sweden, are not insisting on ordination."

Sjolander said his union has respected the San Antonio decision not to ordain women by choosing not to ordain either male or female pastors.

Victor Marley, Norwegian Union president, offered the perspective that his union is abiding by GC *Working Policy* and also Fundamental Belief 14, which emphasize non-discrimination based on various factors, including gender.

North German Union president Johannes Naether added similar comments. "We treat men and women equally," said Naether, "and for us this is a fundamental value, a human right that we think is expressed in the Bible and in Fundamental Belief 14."

Danish Union president Thomas Muller suggested that "we need to dig a little deeper in the toolbox, and find other ways of talking, finding, solving issues." He expressed concerns that in following this course of action "we are alienating our members from the world church."



**An executive committee member studies the multilingual voting ballots used to vote on the proposed actions resulting from the 2018 Compliance Document.**

Photo: Adventist News Network

Speaking in favor of the motion, GC executive secretary G. T. Ng said he appreciated the presidents' speeches because he sees that they are "trying to do their level best to be compliant with the world church." However, as hard as they have tried, said Ng, "they are still in noncompliance." He also reminded committee

members that they are not discussing process, which was voted in 2018. “What we are doing now is to implement the process,” he said.

On that note, Roger O. Caderma, president of the South Philippine Union Conference, reminded attendees that “it is already public knowledge that there are consequences for workers or entities that are out of compliance.”

“I was expecting some level of remorse that we have gone against what has been brought to our forum. I didn’t get that. For the lack of a better term, the open display of impunity is worrying,” said Nana Kofi Nimako, a lay delegate from the West-Central Africa Division. “What if a young person challenges their leadership by saying their conscience mandates them to do something wrong? What would the leadership do?”

Former Adventist world church president Jan Paulsen also reflected on the future. “Where will it take us?” he asked. “What if they [the unions] cannot make the changes that some of the leaders are asking? I cannot see that this is the way God wants us to proceed.”

Others directly acknowledged the conundrum with which the Executive Committee was wrestling. “We have a decision that was

made at the highest levels which needs support, because we can see the trickle-down effects of having, what appears to be, everyone going their own way,” said Oakwood College president Leslie Pollard. “On the other hand, we have a group of colleagues pleading with the body, ‘Please let us do mission in our contexts.’” Pollard then asked rhetorically, “Which one is more urgent, compliance or mission?”

“As a global body I want to appeal to my brothers on both sides of the aisle,” said Kenaope Kenaope, president of the Botswana Union Conference, who offered further thoughts. “The way I understand it, unity means that you don’t necessarily have to agree, but you do have to cooperate for the sake of unity.”

Discussion on the recommendation addressing the two NAD unions named in the document took an unexpected turn with an amendment to the motion to alter the public reprimand of the two union presidents to the same warning given to the unions from the Trans-European and Inter-European divisions.

Dave Weigley, president of the Columbia Union and one of the leaders recommended for public reprimand, said he would “appreciate the amendment” because it would give him a chance to come back to

the Annual Council or ADCOM to “try to explain the ‘why’ behind [the Columbia Union’s action]”

Wilson reminded Weigley that “we’ve been at this for seven years” and added, “We work through a representative system, and the division is supposed to work with you, and we’ve asked them to do that.”

The final comment was made by Ricardo Graham, president of the Pacific Union and the second president recommended for reprimand. “I want to declare that I am a Seventh-day Adventist today, and I’ll be a Seventh-day Adventist tomorrow regardless of what this vote does,” said Graham. “I’ll be a Seventh-day Adventist, believing in the 28 fundamental doctrines, believing in the Spirit of Prophecy, believing in the Bible until the day I die. No one in the Pacific Union is talking about leaving the world church.”

#### THE RESULTS OF THE VOTE

The votes on the two recommendations were both taken by secret ballot. The first motion to warn the four unions from the European divisions passed by a margin of 164 to 124. The now-amended motion to warn the two unions from the North American Division passed by a margin of 190 to 94.

As stated in the document outlining the recommendations, the result of this vote now provides the warned organizations an opportunity to come into compliance with voted actions and policies before any further disciplinary steps are taken.

The document that was released to the delegates, and that contained the original disciplinary recommendations, also stated that “each of the named noncompliant entities have the opportunity to appeal this action through processes already provided for in the 2018 Annual Council document and General Conference *Working Policy*.” ©



Jiwan Moon, director of General Conference Public Campus Ministries, speaks from the floor during the Annual Council 2019.

Photo: Adventist News Network





Photo: Kat J

## God Did Not Design Us for Violence

*He did not create us to perpetuate it, experience it, or even see it.*

“Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence,” reads Genesis 6:11 (NIV). Violence destroys families, harming each member in different ways.

Today domestic violence occurs in families at similar rates inside and outside of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In a study of more than 1,000 Adventists, Rene Drumm found that 33 percent of members reported experiencing physical violence, 44 percent experienced emotional abuse, and 23 percent experienced sexual abuse.

In my own study of more than 100 female Hispanic Adventists, I found that 42 percent of the women identified as survivors and 33 percent reported their abuser was an Adventist. While domestic violence includes threats as well as physical, spiritual, sexual, emotional, financial, and other types of abuse, all are traumatizing. Our Creator did not design us for violence—not to perpetuate it, experience it, or even witness it.

### DAMAGING TO BRAINS AND BODIES

Only recently has science begun to realize how abuse damages our brains and bodies. We used to think that only physical wounds left their marks on our bodies, but even the words we speak change the structure of our brains and the ways it works. Therefore, when violence happens in our homes, all family members are hurt, and the family unit is devastated.

Survivors of domestic violence are more likely than others to develop post-traumatic stress disorder, similar to soldiers who go to war. Survivors also are more likely to experience anxiety, panic attacks, and depression, and are more likely to drink alcohol, smoke, use drugs, and overeat in an attempt to self-medicate. One study found that 90 percent of women with substance abuse problems had experienced physical or sexual violence. Additionally, survivors are also more likely to attempt suicide.

### CHILDREN AND TEENS SPECIFICALLY AFFECTED

Children who grow up in abusive homes suffer many consequences, depending on their age, gender, the types of abuse they experience, and how much abuse they witness. Young children may experience bed-wetting, anxiety, stuttering, or sleep problems.

Older kids may have problems learning in school and may experience a lot of headaches and stomachaches. Teenagers can display more behavioral problems, truancy, low self-esteem, and risky behaviors, including drug use, unprotected sex, and depression. In their lifetime children who witness violence growing up are also at greater risk of developing obesity, diabetes, and heart disease.

### VIOLENCE IS NOT OF GOD

Not a lot of research has been done on how abuse harms the abuser, but we know abusers themselves get hurt in the process. Proverbs 3:31 says, “Do not envy the violent or choose any of their ways” (NIV). Violence is not of God.

Some abusers experienced violence growing up, which has already harmed them. Genetic differences were recently found in some people who commit violent crimes. Science doesn’t yet know enough about all of the consequences of violence in aggressors, but we know that a God of love did not design us to hurt others or ourselves.

### BACK TO GOD’S ORIGINAL PLAN

Abuse can be prevented, and those who have been hurt can get better. Together we can work to end the violence and restore peace in our families and homes as God intended. ©

# Statement on the Biblical View of Unborn Life and Its Implications for Abortion

World church executive committee members voted this statement during the 2019 Annual Council on October 14, 2019.

—Editors.

**H**uman beings are created in the image of God. Part of the gift that God has given us as humans is procreation, the ability to participate in creation along with the Author of life. This sacred gift should always be valued and treasured. In God's original plan every pregnancy should be the result of the expression of love between a man and a woman committed to each other in marriage. A pregnancy should be wanted, and each baby should be loved, valued, and nurtured even before birth. Unfortunately, since the entrance of sin, Satan has made intentional efforts to mar the image of God by defacing all of God's gifts—including the gift of procreation. Consequently, individuals are at times faced with difficult dilemmas and decisions regarding a pregnancy.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is committed to the teachings and principles of the Holy Scriptures that express God's values on life and provide guidance for prospective mothers and fathers, medical personnel, churches, and all believers in matters of faith, doctrine, ethical behavior, and lifestyle. The Church, while not being the conscience of individual believers, has the duty to convey the principles and teachings of the Word of God.

This statement affirms the sanctity of life and presents biblical principles bearing on abortion. As used in this statement, abortion is defined as any action aimed at the termination of a pregnancy and does not include the spontaneous termination of a pregnancy, known also as a miscarriage.

## **BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES AND TEACHINGS RELATING TO ABORTION**

As the practice of abortion must be weighed in the light of Scripture, the following biblical principles and teachings provide guidance for the community of faith and individuals affected by such difficult choices:

1. *God upholds the value and sacredness of human life.* Human life is of the greatest value to God. Having created humanity in His image (Gen. 1:27; 2:7), God

has a personal interest in people. God loves them and communicates with them, and they in turn can love and communicate with Him.

Life is a gift of God, and God is the Giver of life. In Jesus is life (John 1:4). He has life in Himself (John 5:26). He is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25; 14:6). He provides abundant life (John 10:10). Those who have the Son have life (1 John 5:12). He is also the Sustainer of life (Acts 17:25-28; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:1-3), and the Holy Spirit is described as the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2). God cares deeply for His creation and especially for humankind.

Furthermore, the importance of human life is made clear by the fact that, after the Fall (Gen. 3), God "gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). While God could have abandoned and terminated sinful humanity, He opted for life. Consequently, Christ's followers will be raised from the dead and will live in face-to-face communion with God (John 11:25, 26; 1 Thess. 4:15, 16; Rev. 21:3). Thus, human life is of inestimable value. This is true for all stages of human life: the unborn, children of various ages, adolescents, adults, and seniors—independent of physical, mental, and emotional capacities. It is also true for all humans regardless of sex, ethnicity, social status, religion, and whatever else may distinguish them. Such an understanding of the sanctity of life gives inviolable and equal value to each and every human life and requires it to be treated with the utmost respect and care.

2. *God considers the unborn child as human life.* Prenatal life is precious in God's sight, and the Bible describes God's knowledge of people before they were conceived. "Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them" (Ps. 139:16). In certain cases, God directly guided prenatal life. Samson was to "be a Nazirite to God from the womb" (Judges 13:5). The servant of God is "called from the womb"

(Isa. 49:1, 5). Jeremiah was already chosen as a prophet before his birth (Jer. 1:5), as was Paul (Gal. 1:15), and John the Baptist was to "be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb"

## **While God could have abandoned and terminated sinful humanity, He opted for life.**

(Luke 1:15). Of Jesus the angel Gabriel explained to Mary: "therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). In His Incarnation Jesus Himself experienced the human prenatal period and was recognized as the Messiah and Son of God soon after His conception (Luke 1:40-45). The Bible already attributes to the unborn child joy (Luke 1:44) and even rivalry (Gen. 25:21-23). Those not-yet-born have a firm place with God (Job 10:8-12; 31:13-15). Biblical law shows a strong

regard for protecting human life and considers harm to or the loss of a baby or mother as a result of a violent act a serious issue (Ex. 21:22, 23).

3. *The will of God regarding human life is expressed in the Ten Commandments and explained by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.* The Decalogue was given to God's covenant people and the world to guide their lives and protect them. Its commandments are unchanging truths which should be cherished, respected, and obeyed. The Psalmist praises God's law (e.g., Ps. 119), and Paul calls it holy, righteous, and good (Rom. 7:12). The sixth commandment states: "You shall not kill" (Ex. 20:13), which calls for the preservation of human life. The principle to preserve life enshrined in the sixth commandment places abortion within its scope. Jesus reinforced the commandment not to kill in Matthew 5:21, 22. Life is protected by God. It is not measured by individuals' abilities or their usefulness, but by the value that God's creation and sacrificial love has placed on it. Personhood, human value, and salvation are not earned or merited but graciously granted by God.

4. *God is the Owner of life, and human beings are His stewards.* Scripture teaches that God owns everything (Ps. 50:10-12). God has a dual claim on humans. They are His because He is their Creator and therefore He owns them (Ps. 139:13-16). They are also His because He is their Redeemer and has bought them with the highest possible price—His own life (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). This means that all human beings are stewards of whatever God has entrusted to them, including their own lives, the lives of their children, and the unborn.

The stewardship of life also includes carrying responsibilities which in some ways limit their choices (1 Cor. 9:19-22). Since God is the Giver and Owner of life, human beings do not have ultimate control over themselves and should seek to preserve life wherever possible. The principle of the stewardship of life obligates the community of believers to guide, support, care for, and love those facing decisions about pregnancies.

5. *The Bible teaches care for the weak and the vulnerable.* God Himself cares for those who are disadvantaged and oppressed and protects them. He "shows no partiality nor takes a bribe. He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing" (Deut. 10:17, 18, cf. Ps. 82:3-4; James 1:27). He does not hold children accountable for the sins of their fathers (Eze. 18:20). God expects the same of His children. They are called to help vulnerable people and ease their lot (Ps. 41:1; 82:3, 4; Acts 20:35). Jesus speaks of the least of His brothers (Matt. 25:40), for whom His followers are responsible, and of the little ones who should not be despised or lost (Matt. 18:10-14). The very youngest, namely the unborn, should be counted among them.

6. *God's grace promotes life in a world marred by sin and death.* It is God's nature to protect, preserve, and

sustain life. In addition to the providence of God over His creation (Ps. 103:19; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3), the Bible acknowledges the wide-ranging, devastating, and degrading effects of sin on the creation, including on human bodies. In Romans 8:20-24 Paul describes the impact of the Fall as subjecting the creation to futility. Consequently, in rare and extreme cases, human conception may produce pregnancies with fatal prospects and/or acute, life-threatening birth

### **God Himself cares for those who are disadvantaged and oppressed and protects them.**

anomalies that present individuals and couples with exceptional dilemmas. Decisions in such cases may be left to the conscience of the individuals involved and their families.

These decisions should be well-informed and

guided by the Holy Spirit and the biblical view of life outlined above. God's grace promotes and protects life. Individuals in these challenging situations may come to Him in sincerity and find direction, comfort, and peace in the Lord.

### **IMPLICATIONS**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church considers abortion out of harmony with God's plan for human life. It affects the unborn, the mother, the father, immediate and extended family members, the church family, and society with long-term consequences for all. Believers aim to trust God and follow His will for them, knowing He has their best interests in mind.

While not condoning abortion, the Church and its members are called to follow the example of Jesus, being "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14), to (1) create an atmosphere of true love and provide grace-filled, biblical pastoral care and loving support to those facing difficult decisions regarding abortion; (2) enlist the help of well-functioning and committed families and educate them to provide care for struggling individuals, couples, and families; (3) encourage church members to open their homes to those in need, including single parents, parentless children, and adoptive or foster care children; (4) care deeply for and support in various ways pregnant women who decide to keep their unborn children; and (5) provide emotional and spiritual support to those who have aborted a child for various reasons or were forced to have an abortion and may be hurting physically, emotionally, and/or spiritually.

The issue of abortion presents enormous challenges, but it gives individuals and the Church the opportunity to be what they aspire to be, the fellowship of brothers and sisters, the community of believers, the family of God, revealing His immeasurable and unfailing love. ☺

## LIFE-AFFIRMING

# I Will Advocate for Life

Personal reflections on the abortion discussion

**H**ave you been outraged lately? It's difficult to follow any news announcement or scroll through any social media feed without being bombarded with angry comments by outraged people. Of course, there is a reason for that—more outrage means more clicks and more shares. Unfortunately, very often this angry outrage spirals into name-calling and worse. All the while our worlds shrink as we listen to our own echoes reinforcing our indignation. We all learn to talk *at* each other and not *with* each other. While we may feel reinforced in our moral high ground, we lose the ability to reason from cause to effect, to see the big picture.

If there is one issue that causes outrage—perhaps even in a world that conjures more than its fair share of outrage—it is abortion. For some the word immediately associates with babies, murder, greedy medical systems, and selfish people who want to live immorally and shy away from consequences. For others, the same word conjures up a harsh history of young women, some barely out of their childhood themselves, being used and abused, then left to carry the pain and shame of an unwanted child—deserted, alone, and branded for life with no possibilities, no voice, no choice. Still for others, abortion immediately calls up something they want to forget, a desperate secret that has been carried for

years, a dull ache that time will not heal, a “what if” that has left deep scars on the soul.

### LET'S CHANGE THE TONE

In this world of confusing noise of angry people shouting I want to be different—I want to advocate not for a cause, or a right, or even to be right. I want to advocate for life.

I want to step out of the noise and say that I know from experience that life can be messy and extremely complicated. I don't want to condemn or try to be your conscience—I want to be your friend. I want you to know that I believe in a Creator who has shared His gift of life with us. I want you to know that life can be beautiful, even if difficult here, and that there



is a much better fuller life that can stretch out into all eternity.

I want to advocate for life—yes, the unborn, the born, girls, women, boys and men, old men and old women. I want them each individually to have an opportunity to embrace life—not just survive. I want them each to know that God’s plan is to thrive. I want to advocate for life not by being outraged but by spreading hope. Hope, rather than giving me a tunnel vision that will divide my world into friends and foes, will give me wings. I will be able to listen and learn as I come alongside you, because ultimately whoever you are and wherever you find yourself, by choice or circumstance, I want to introduce you to “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

As I advocate for life I realize that this is a task for life. For me it will not mean waving a placard somewhere or writing my comments in all caps on other people’s social media feeds. It will not mean investing myself in political agendas. Advocating for life means that I will begin every morning consciously connecting with the Source of life through prayer and Bible study. I will ask to be able to embrace for myself that “abundant life” that He offers.

Then I want to begin at home advocating for life. I want my marriage and my home to be such a clear reflection of committed love that, with and without words, my children will understand and choose to embrace the gift and responsibility of life. I want my children to grow up with happy, healthy memories and effective role models who can help them make wise choices. I pray that they will choose to wait for a loving marriage to exercise the privilege of participating in the creation of life. And even if they make different choices or mistakes, I will still love them and still want to be a positive part of their lives.

#### **BEYOND MY HOME**

Advocating for life will have to go beyond my home. Hopelessness is all around me. I don’t need to trade in guilt. The fact that so many are desperately trying to normalize life-destroying habits and lifestyles speaks volumes to the attempts to cover the emptiness. If any judging is to be done, I will have to start with myself.

Am I destroying my quality of life and even shortening my life by my unhealthy lifestyle choices? Are there things I am addicted to that I refuse to give up? How about the way I use my words—am I promoting life or killing reputations and hope?

## **I want to advocate for life not by being outraged but by spreading hope.**

Advocating for life is like dropping a pebble into a lake—the ripple keeps expanding. It moves quickly beyond theory and into practice in my church and in my community. It makes me ask the nitty-gritty questions. How can I befriend and nurture the children and youth who come from broken homes and backgrounds? How can I practically help the single moms I know? What about the boys? Can I support a strong mentorship program for boys that can role-model what a godly man is? What can I do to help stem the flood of pornography that threatens to annihilate relationships and intimacy?

No, I’m not always a good advocate for life. I sometimes defer to neatly packaged answers that save me the complication of involvement. But once again, right now, I want to commit to advocate for life—not just a slice of life, not just for the beginning of life, or a moment of life. After all, it’s the least I can do as a follower of the “way, the truth, and the life.” ☺

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**Chantal J. Klingbeil** serves as an associate director in the Ellen G. White Estate and lives with her family in **Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.**

# Life Is Beautiful

The unique ways in which Adventists affirm one of God's greatest gifts.

*As a faith movement whose message is centered on the Life-giver, Jesus Christ, how do we take that message into all the world? Three Adventists from vastly different regions share their thoughts. Perhaps in reading their words, you might find inspiration to share with others Christ's special way of affirming the life He has given us.—Editors.*

## Our Longing for Identity

**W**e live in a world that values work (career) and education. We spend most of our time gaining an education for that dream job we think will ultimately bring happiness. And we measure our self-worth by happiness. If we are successful, we feel good about life; if we fail, we question life. Thus, according to the world, when we “do,” then we “become.” But according to God, we “become,” then we “do” (Eph. 2:10).

I had a friend who played professional rugby. Because he made a living from the sport, he saw himself as nothing else but a rugby player—until a car accident ended his career. He became depressed and suicidal because his identity was dependent upon a career that was now over.

Our longing for identity and affirmation is not a selfish one; it's an inherent desire to be loved and appreciated. It gives us a reason for our existence.

The first time the word “love” appears in the New Testament is during the baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3:17.

Before Jesus even began His formal ministry, God uttered the profound: “This is my beloved Son.” That is identity. Then He said, “in whom I am well pleased,” the most powerful affirmation.

In this world, we work to achieve our identity, then seek affirmation. But with God, we stand still and receive our identity, then through His Word find our affirmation. The church is a gathering of those affirmed who have received their identity from Christ at baptism. Our identity as sons and daughters of the Most High gives us purpose and meaning. When this is established in the heart, we will no longer measure our worth based on what we do in life—both in the church and in our communities. Rather, our worth is counted and affirmed by who we are in life, who we are in the eyes of God. ©



**Rome Ulia** was associate school evangelist for the North New South Wales Conference in **Australia**. He has recently accepted a call to the **Washington Conference** in the **United States**. He is married to Keti Ulia,

and they have five children. Rome has a passion for ministering to those who are unchurched and leading people to Jesus.

## Hope Amid Pressure

**M**y religion has been tested on life's sea, but through its trial and battery, I have tasted flavors and caught aromas of grace from my God, who still commands the calm at the height of the storm.

I was in the womb when my parents chose Jesus, Adventism, and baptism.

Childhood Sabbath School classes taught me to memorize, share, and learn. Being an active youth leader taught me to stand up front and speak into a microphone; to plan a great program and motivate people to action. Pathfinders taught me to be strong; innovative; sing in my heart; and cheer someone along.

Adventist education chiseled and formed me from elementary through graduate school, wearing a uniform; learning much about math, Adventist pioneers, writing, and winning spelling bees. Most important, I learned faith—faith that with God I could make it through anything.

As His student missionary, He took me from tiny Tobago, population approximately 61,000, to India and its indescribable 1.4 billion, for six months of wonderful food and people living out the gospel at every turn. He took me there and brought me home.

The Lord took me into adulthood, where neither church employment nor marriage lasted. Divorce stained me. Fellow church members did not know what to do with me or for me; what to say or not say. I struggled to breathe, to believe, to find support. Where were my friends? Where was my church? Where was God, after I'd given Him everything? Something kept me going Sabbath mornings; some hope that I would hear a helping word.

I did. Under the pressure of life's scorching hot oil, my tiny mustard seed of faith popped open. Miraculously, I tasted aromas of grace and mercy and caught whiffs of heavenly care that drew my battered, fainting heart right back to God. Now more than ever, I'm an Adventist because of the way my church has grown my faith to face life's battering storms. ☺



**Carissa-loy Andrews**, a young adult from **Scarborough, Tobago, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago**, served the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the field of education for more than 10 years.

## Food: Life-giving, Life-sustaining, Life-enriching

**P**otluck is a great Adventist tradition. In many congregations, people eat together regularly after the worship service. Rice, salads, delicious desserts, hearty soups, homemade breads, pasta, and cakes—the spread is always mouthwatering. The more international the congregation, the more colorful and interesting the buffet. It's a real taste experience that tells stories of foreign countries and cultures with exotic spices: cinnamon, coriander, nutmeg, saffron, and turmeric. All delight the eye and palate.

Our potlucks in the Adventist church in Stuttgart, Germany, are often joined by visitors, some of whom struggle with life and its many challenges. A friendly smile, a warm meal, and a tasty dessert mean a great blessing for them. In winter, we love to provide large bags of good food they need so desperately. They set off for home happy.

Food connects. Eating together is an excellent way to preserve and celebrate life. Jesus knew that. The Bible tells us that He often ate with His disciples and other people, such as scribes and tax collectors. This serves as an example for us as a church. Potlucks or fellowship luncheons are great opportunities to share healthy and nutritious meals with members and visitors, for we share more than just food. Caring fellowship is one way of sharing Jesus.

Jesus also invites us to eat together in the future. "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb" (Rev. 19:9, NIV). We can already look forward to the great wedding feast we will all have together in the New Jerusalem. Our Saviour will sit at the head of the table and celebrate the reunion with the redeemed of all the ages.

Will it be a potluck? I don't know, but one thing I do know: It will taste heavenly! ☺



**Claudia Mohr** serves in the Department of Public Relations of the Seventh-day-Adventist Church in **Germany**. She lives with her husband, Jens-Oliver, and their daughter, Melody, in **Ostfildern**.

# A More Abundant Life

For all who seek it

I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10), said Jesus, the ultimate life-giver. The context of this well-known passage is John 9 and 10. Jesus had just healed a blind man. Although the man was rejoicing, the Pharisees were not. Instead, they condemned the man and threw him out of the synagogue. But Jesus found him and revealed Himself as the Son of God. The man believed and worshipped.

But the Pharisees did not. Instead they asked, “Are we blind also?” (John 9:40). To which Jesus replied, “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, ‘We see.’ Therefore your sin remains” (verse 41).

Jesus continued by explaining that thieves enter a sheepfold by climbing over the wall or some other way, but “he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep” (John 10:2). Bringing

His point home, He told these false shepherds, “Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. . . . The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (verses 7-10).

Jesus brought hope and healing everywhere He went. But to receive Christ’s gift of abundant life, people had to believe—and obey. The blind man followed Christ’s instructions and washed in the Pool of Siloam (John 9:7). The lame man at the Pool of Bethesda had to “rise, take up [his] bed and walk” (John 5:8). The man with the withered hand had to “stretch out [his] hand” (Mark 3:5) to be healed. Even Lazarus, though dead, responded to Jesus’ command, “Lazarus, come forth!” (John 11:43), and was restored to life.

Christ continues to offer life abundantly through His Word, His Spirit, and His church. Through the pen of inspiration, God has uniquely positioned the Seventh-day Adventist Church to be a church that offers abundant life physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually.

## **INESTIMABLE VALUE**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church recognizes human life, including the life of the unborn, as precious in God’s sight. In its recently voted Statement on the Biblical View of Unborn Life and Its Implications for Abortion,<sup>1</sup> the church acknowledges that “God upholds the value and sacredness of human life,” and “God considers the unborn child as human life.” The statement is clear that “human life is of inestimable value” “independent of physical, mental, and emotional capacities” “regardless of sex, ethnicity, social status, religion, and whatever else may distinguish





them.”<sup>2</sup> All life is a God-given gift meant to be treasured.

We Seventh-day Adventists recognize that an abundant life comes from following God’s divinely inspired directions regarding care for our bodies, which are the “temple of the Holy Spirit” and not our own (see 1 Cor. 6:19, 20). Further, Adventists view human beings in their God-given totality, meaning that rather than seeing body and soul as two separate entities, we believe that body, mind, and spirit are connected, making the person a “living soul.”<sup>3</sup>

## NEWSTART

Through the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy much divine counsel has been given to us regarding living the abundant life God desires to give us—physically, mentally, and spiritually. The NEWSTART<sup>4</sup> acronym is a helpful way to remember these important, God-given principles.

**Nutrition.** What we eat and drink has a direct effect upon our body, mind, and spirit. The Bible and Spirit of Prophecy promote a plant-based diet, as was given in the Garden of Eden (see Gen. 1:29, 30). Eating meat, with its high concentrations of protein, cholesterol, and fat, has been closely tied to high blood pressure, heart disease, cancer, and many other diseases. A beneficial diet includes fruits, nuts, vegetables, grains, and legumes. In addition, limiting intake of sugar and refined foods, not eating between meals, and eating a big breakfast, lighter lunch, and only a light (or no) supper can be very beneficial.<sup>5</sup>

**Exercise.** God designed humans to be active. Regular physical exercise gives incredible benefits—increased energy, endurance, and muscle strength. It reduces stress, cholesterol, blood pressure, and the risk of disease. It improves sleep

and mood and helps us maintain a healthy weight.<sup>6</sup>

**Water.** More than half of our body is made up of water. Drinking at least eight glasses of water each day improves metabolism, helps filter toxins and poisons, and leads to clearer thinking. No other liquid can take the place of water in giving so many benefits. Some beverages, particularly alcohol and caffeinated drinks, such as tea, coffee, and some soft drinks, have been shown in numerous studies to be detrimental to one’s health.<sup>7</sup>

**Sunlight.** Sunlight stimulates the production of essential vitamin D, giving us healthier skin, an improved immune system, and an improved mood. While getting too much unprotected sunlight can damage one’s skin, many health benefits come from getting some sunlight every day.<sup>8</sup>

**Temperance.** Temperance means self-control and is usually associated with avoiding harmful substances and using only in moderation things that are good. Studies have shown that Adventists live longer than average largely because they abstain from alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, and illegal drugs.<sup>9</sup>

**Air.** While we need air to breathe, our quality of life and health can be much improved by the *quality* of air we breathe. Regularly open windows for good ventilation and spend time outdoors each day, breathing deeply. If you live in a city, go to a park with trees to breathe cleaner air.<sup>10</sup>

**Rest.** Proper rest and relaxation are essential for physical and mental health. Going to bed early and rising early has been shown to bring the best restorative sleep. Some behaviors that can help induce good sleep include eating a last meal several hours before bedtime, exercising regularly, not

drinking caffeinated beverages, and eliminating unnecessary stressors from life. Observing God’s weekly day of rest, the seventh-day Sabbath, brings many physical, mental, and spiritual benefits.<sup>11</sup>

**Trust in God.** Maintaining an active life of faith and trust in God promotes peace and health. The Bible promise is: “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You” (Isa. 26:3). Jesus gives our lives purpose and meaning, and through Him we find health and salvation.

By recognizing and teaching biblical tenants regarding the inestimable value of all human life, and by accepting, observing, and teaching health principles given by God through His Word and through the gift of the Spirit of Prophecy, God is indeed working through His remnant church to promote the abundant life that He freely and generously offers to all.

If you haven’t already done so, I hope you will accept His abundant life today. ☺

<sup>1</sup> Statement voted at the Annual Council, Oct. 16, 2019. Official statement available at: [bit.ly/2QWEkqF](http://bit.ly/2QWEkqF).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> See “The Nature of Humanity,” at [tinyurl.com/Fundamental-Belief7](http://tinyurl.com/Fundamental-Belief7).

<sup>4</sup> Much of the material in this section comes from the *Discipleship Handbook: A Resource of Seventh-day Adventist Church Members*, published by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> See “Seventh-day Adventist Diet: A Complete Guide,” [Healthline.com/nutrition/seventh-day-adventist-diet](http://Healthline.com/nutrition/seventh-day-adventist-diet).

<sup>6</sup> See “The Benefits of Exercise,” [tinyurl.com/thebenefits](http://tinyurl.com/thebenefits).

<sup>7</sup> See “Caffeine Not a Nutrient, It’s a Drug . . .” [tinyurl.com/caffeinedangers](http://tinyurl.com/caffeinedangers).

<sup>8</sup> See “The Protective Blessings of Sunlight,” [tinyurl.com/sunlightblessings](http://tinyurl.com/sunlightblessings).

<sup>9</sup> See “Adventist Health Studies” at [tinyurl.com/AHStudies](http://tinyurl.com/AHStudies).

<sup>10</sup> See “8 Laws of Health,” [tinyurl.com/8lawsofhealth](http://tinyurl.com/8lawsofhealth).

<sup>11</sup> See “Rest and Sleep,” [tinyurl.com/importantrest](http://tinyurl.com/importantrest).

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## Millennial Voices

# Dream Big for God



**God is still in the business of transforming dreams into reality.**

**C**hurch has always been an integral part of my life, especially growing up as a pastor's kid. As a family, we moved many times, and often the only place offering comfort and familiarity for me was the church, the family of God. Each church catered to our needs differently and nurtured us. We are blessed by the church, and in turn, hope to be a blessing.

The English Seventh-day Adventist church in Tambaram, Chennai, has recently encouraged me, inspired me, and helped reignite my passion for God's church. I first heard of this church from my sister, Suzanna, who was pursuing her bachelor's degree in the vicinity and decided to join the small group. At first she was concerned about the church service being in a language in which she wasn't fluent, but with time and many prayers, the small English Sabbath School group grew into a full-fledged English-language church. My sister's excitement was infectious. I was happy for her, but I didn't realize the enormity of God's work in that church until I became a part of it last year.

As I got to know the church members and listened to their stories, I came to know the way the church had grown. It's a familiar path that many church plants take. A small group of members started out worshipping together in English in a classroom. Others who were eager to attend an English-language worship service became part of the group. Soon the classroom became too small for them to worship in conveniently. Members then dreamed of worshipping in a church building that would accommodate their growing needs. A call went out to raise funds for a new church building. Everyone, even children, were ready to contribute and participate.

In September 2016, construction began on the first floor of the existing Tambaram Tamil church. The members, including men, women, and children, offered their time, effort, prayers, and finances for the construction of the church. Finally, on March 26, 2017, the English Seventh-day Adventist church at Tambaram was officially dedicated and inaugurated.

That was a day of celebration and thanksgiving. God had answered many prayers and had granted the desire of the members' hearts.

Every member, pew, and equipment had a story to tell. These stories inspired me. Above all, it was a joy to see dreams become a reality. I was again reminded that God is still in the business of transforming dreams into reality.

The Tambaram Seventh-day Adventist English Church is not just housed in a beautiful building. The passion of its members to worship the living God in a restless world is an even greater blessing. My family and I were blessed to be part of this church, and I'm sure it will continue to bless many who become a part of it.

We all are called to dream for our church. Because God is a visionary, we His people, created in His image, are called to dream for His church.

I am glad that we serve a big God. That means we can dream big! ©

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**Beersheba Jacob** recently joined the staff at Lowry Memorial College, **Bangalore, India**, as human resources coordinator and assistant to the vice president. She is married to Andrew.



Feature

# Kindness and Compassion Go a Long Way



**H**ave you ever tried making orange juice without oranges, or apple pie without apples? That’s what it looks like when we attempt to build a durable and wholesome marriage and family without kindness and compassion as essential ingredients.

While it’s true that honesty is one of the most important components of a strong and healthy marriage and family, it’s equally significant to grasp how to best communicate the truth for positive results. Any comedian can say the first thing that comes to mind. Cautious, careful, and emotionally intelligent persons, however, edit their thoughts to affirm, nurture, and protect the feelings of those they claim to value greatly.

Everyone arrives at adulthood with emotional baggage. We are products of our families of origin. We are who we are, to be sure, because of the interactions—positive and negative—we engaged in or were privy to while growing up within our families. As a result, we are all wounded to some extent, and it doesn’t take much for us to be incredibly hurt if someone targets the weak or vulnerable areas of our lives.

Our marriage relationships, as well as the interactions in our respective families, are meant to help us grow in as healthy a manner as possible: emotionally, intellectually, physically, spiritually, even financially. To achieve this objective, we must follow this counsel: “Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” (Phil. 2:4).

Neither women nor men should use hurtful words when they speak to their spouses or other family members. Although speaking the truth is important and should not be avoided, care ought to be exercised to communicate kindly and with compassion. A good rule of thumb is to think about how you would like people to communicate with you before uttering a word. Essentially, employing the *golden rule*: “Do to others as you would have them do to you” (Luke 6:31, NIV).

Speaking the truth means much more than simply being honest. It means deliberately employing kindness and compassion in all of our interactions. It is creating an environment of warmth and good feelings that is fertile ground for building relationships that will stand the test of time.

In marriage and family we must resist the urge to *keep it real*, as invariably advocated by the fashionable urban preference of disclosing

unvarnished truth. After all, it isn’t very wise to practice being boorish, crude, ill-mannered, or offensive. Rather, the wise man counsels: “A soft answer turns away wrath. But a harsh word stirs up anger” (Prov. 15:1).

If you have been hurt by something your spouse or another family member has said to you, rather than harboring feelings of anger, resentment, and hurt, ask God to give you the right spirit to confront the situation with kindness, compassion, and patience. Rather than accusing the other person by employing *you messages* such as “You are a terrible person,” to begin the conversation, use *I messages* instead, such as “I feel hurt when you refer to me in those words” to convey and own your feelings.

Our prayer is that every marriage and family will take this message to heart, and by employing kindness and compassion in all their interactions, build strong marriages and families for the kingdom of God. ☺

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**Willie and Elaine Oliver** are directors of the Department of Family Ministries at the world headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They are the authors of *Hope for Today’s Families*, the 2019 missionary book.



What We Believe

*The Nature of Humanity*

# The Lens of Glory

We truly see  
each other  
only when we  
look at Him.

One night, as September changed into October, my daughter was born, made in my likeness and according to my image—a girl with cheeks like mine and hair like mine, eyes blue like mine. Now a toddler, my daughter speaks the way I do, packs her purse the way I do, and loads the dishwasher the way I do.

I imagine that when Adam and Eve became parents, they were as interested and amazed as all parents who have come after them, wondering at the features of themselves that they saw in their children. The Bible tells us that Adam fathered a son “in his likeness, according to his image” (Gen. 5:3).<sup>1</sup>

This description of Adam and his son is a copy of the description used for the relationship between God and humanity. “Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness’” (Gen. 1:26; compare with Gen. 5:1, 2). God is very clear that human beings are created in God’s image and likeness (Gen. 1:26, 27; 5:1, 2; 9:6).

## **IN HIS IMAGE**

It sounds grand, but what does it really mean? It’s easy to see how my children are like me—they share my brown hair, my regional dialect, some of my mannerisms.



Yet people of all colors, languages, cultures, and abilities are created in the image of God, so God's image cannot be located in any of those specifics. What can we know from Scripture about the image of God in humanity? Here are seven insights from God's Word:

1. *It bestows upon humans a special dignity.* When God prescribes the strongest possible punishment for those who murder, he explains that it is because "in his own image God made humankind" (Gen. 9:6). Humans are of special value to God.

2. *It remains even after the Fall.* Sin has undoubtedly corrupted human hearts and societies, but the stamp of God persists on individual people. The sentence against murderers in Genesis 9:6 is issued long after sin had poisoned the world, but the image of God in humanity is still cited as reason to respect human life.

3. *It entails a royal responsibility.* In the Creation account, God braids together the divine image in humanity with a unique role for them as royal superintendents over the earth, fruitfully filling and carefully subduing it. This elevated role is specified immediately after each mention of the image of God in humanity (Gen. 1:26, 28). David marveled at the specialness of this God-given privilege. In amazement he wrote, "What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet" (Ps. 8:4-6).

4. *It applies to both male and female.* The image of God as male and female is emphasized in the Bible, and the directives for dominion and fruitfulness were given to man and woman together.

This means that men and women both bear the image and likeness of their Creator and are endowed with nobility and responsibility.

5. *It reflects God's triune nature.* Humanity has been designed for creative fruitfulness and royal caretaking, and only together in cooperation and interdependence can humans fulfill their calling. The image of God is seen in us when we work out His calling, not as solitary individuals, but as a complex unity of persons united in love, just as the three persons of the Godhead work cooperatively and deferentially with one another to bless the world.

6. *It finds its complete expression in Christ.* Humans were made "in" the image of God, or "according to" the image of God, but Christ Himself is the image of God, the fullest and truest expression of God (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15).

7. *It is the design for a glorious destiny.* The original and ultimate purpose of God for humanity is that we would be conformed to the image of His dear Son (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:24). The plan all along was that God's human images, righteous and holy like their Maker, would grow up in glory to become ever more like Him.

### FINDING OUR PLACE

Like orphans in an immense cosmos, human beings yearn to find their place in this vast world and in this universe that appears so cold and indifferent. Told that they originated from lower life forms battling it out in the violent, self-interested survival of the fittest, people wonder if "humanity" means anything at all.

It's true that like every tree, flower, and stalk of grass, we are built from the stuff of the earth. We share the elements and the environment in common with every plant on the planet. Like every beast, bird,

## We can reach higher and press farther in our pursuit of His best for us.

and bug, we are animated by the breath of life (Gen. 1:30; 2:7). Yet human creatures stand out among creation as unique. God has gifted us a special dignity, a special role, and a special destiny; God has made us in His image.

We must understand this in order to understand ourselves. When we appreciate the beauty, nobility, and glory that is God's design for us and within us, we can grasp the high value that human beings have in God's sight. We can reach higher and press farther in our pursuit of His best for us.

Understanding the image of God in humanity will lead us to safeguard human life and dignity from abuse and exploitation. We will see one another through the lens of glory. As Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote: "You cannot worship God and at the same time look at man as if he were a horse." ©

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 **Read more about  
What We Believe at**  
[www.adventist.org/en/beliefs/](http://www.adventist.org/en/beliefs/)

Faith in Action

# Backyard Evangelism

Unnoticed  
listeners find  
new hope  
in Jesus.

↓ New members who were  
baptized into the Cifuentes  
Adventist Church following the  
evangelistic series



**E**smiarito and Dalkis heard about the meeting to be held at the church next door. They wondered if the noise would bother them at night. The little house church in Cifuentes, a small town in the north-central region of Cuba, seemed to come alive on Saturday mornings when the Adventists arrived for worship. But now they were going to have meetings every night for more than a week. Esmiarito and Dalkis decided to keep to themselves and stay indoors.

The first night the couple could hear the music. The church was too small for the crowd of visitors, so the meetings were being held in the backyard, with wooden benches set up for pews. The singing was just a few feet from their little block home with jalousie windows. It almost felt as though they were part of the program. But it was OK; no one could see them and know that they were listening in.

Soon they could hear Henry and Arlene Stubbs speaking. The speakers rotated the preaching responsibilities with giving health talks before the sermon. Henry and Arlene are adept speakers, having worked in Cuba for 23 years as directors of World Youth Group,<sup>1</sup> an Adventist-laymen's Services and Industries (ASI) affiliate.<sup>2</sup> As the Stubbses laid out the case for living a life in Christ, Esmiarito and Dalkis became more interested. They were intrigued by the health teachings about how to live a better life in Christ. No one had ever told them the things they were learning about Jesus—about how He wants to live in our hearts.

### GROWING INTEREST

Instead of considering them just noisy meetings, the gatherings began giving Esmiarito and Dalkis hope for something better. They quickly found little projects outside their home to work on, so they could casually keep an eye on the happenings next door. One evening Esmiarito cleaned the same window three times while she listened to Arlene preach. As they listened night by night their interest grew, and with little more than a barbed-wire fence between them and the yard benches of the church, they started standing at the “back” of the meetings. Then they asked if they could come over and join in.

The neighbor couple went up to the front one evening toward the end of the series during the appeal and said, “We want to be baptized.”

Henry responded, “Well, let’s study, and in a few weeks when you understand all the teachings, you can be baptized.”

“No, we want to be baptized this Sabbath,” the couple said. “We understand the teachings. We live next door; we’ve listened every night. We believe in Jesus Christ. He is our Saviour, and we don’t want to be missed when He comes.”

### FINDING THE BLESSED HOPE

At the end of the campaign more than 16 others joined Esmiarito and Dalkis in the newly built baptismal pool in the backyard of



↑ Esmiarito and Dalkis, who live next door to the Cifuentes Adventist Church in Cuba, found new hope in Jesus while listening “over the fence” during an evangelistic series held there.

the house church. This more than doubled the church membership.

Esmiarito and Dalkis found the hope that had been missing in their home. Their new Adventist family shared with them lessons from Scripture and better ways of living. Today they are baptized members of the Cifuentes Seventh-day Adventist Church, sharing their newfound hope with their neighbors and in turn growing the church exponentially.

And that noise from the house church next door? It’s always a welcome sound as Esmiarito and Dalkis join the singing of praise with their new church family each Sabbath. ©

*For more information, go to [www.missionsonlight.org](http://www.missionsonlight.org).*

<sup>1</sup> [worldyouthgroup.org](http://worldyouthgroup.org)  
<sup>2</sup> [asiministries.org](http://asiministries.org)

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# Guilty as Charged

## Seventh-day Adventists and health

Imagine being hauled before a court to answer charges, not for keeping the Sabbath, but for the Adventist health message. What would you say if a judge, staring down from the bench, asks, “Why are Seventh-day Adventists so big on promoting health?” Then banging the gavel, the judge demands: “Defend yourself!”

If I were in that scenario, this is how I would answer.

### DEFENDING OUR PHILOSOPHY

Your Honor, if I may: The work of health care and healing is core to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Our mission statement says, among other things, that “affirming the biblical principles of the well-being of the whole person, we make healthful living and the healing of the sick a priority and, through our ministry to the poor and oppressed, cooperate with the Creator in His compassionate work of restoration.”

In addition, Your Honor, in a book on our basic beliefs we state:

“Because our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, we are to care for them intelligently. Along with adequate exercise and rest, we are to adopt the most healthful diet possible and abstain from the unclean foods identified in the Scriptures. Since alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and the irresponsible use of drugs and narcotics are harmful to our bodies, we are to abstain from them as well. Instead, we are to engage in whatever brings our thoughts and bodies into the discipline of Christ, who desires our wholesomeness, joy, and goodness.”<sup>1</sup>

For this reason, Judge, Seventh-day Adventists abstain from the use of tobacco, alcohol, and recreational drugs and narcotics. Our denomination encourages a balanced vegetarian diet and avoiding unclean foods as listed in the Old Testament. Since the earliest days of the Adventist Church, health, wholeness, and well-being have been part of the organization’s DNA.

As early as 1863, Ellen White,

cofounder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, helped shape the church’s philosophy and emphasis on health. Long before medical evidence emerged, Ellen White spoke out strongly on the dangers of smoking and other issues, including the use of alcohol and poisonous medications, such as those containing arsenic and mercury-based drugs.

She strongly discouraged the drinking of tea and coffee and the use of stimulants, as well as eating flesh food. She promoted a balanced vegetarian diet as best. In addition, she encouraged the use of fresh, clean water (inside and out), pure air, adequate exercise, rest, faith, appropriate exposure to sunshine, integrity, and social support. These principles form the foundation of our health education and practice today.

### PROMOTING TEMPERANCE

Sir, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Seventh-day Adventist





Church led the way in smoking-cessation initiatives by developing the famous Five-Day Plan to Stop Smoking. This program was subsequently revised twice, and now functions as BreatheFree 2.0, which is used today in countries around the world.

Our denomination has a strong history of promoting temperance. It continues to do this work through the auspices of the International Health and Temperance Association and the International Commission for the Prevention of Alcoholism and Drug Dependency. The latter organization began in 1953 and has a footprint in more than 120 countries.

### THE ADVENTIST ADVANTAGE

Your Honor, if I may humbly add, others have seen the health advantages that Adventists have been promoting. For example, *Time* magazine reported the positive outcome of the first Adventist Health Study, describing the results as the “Adventist Advantage.”<sup>2</sup> Significant

reductions in most cancers and cirrhosis of the liver were observed.

Subsequent studies have shown a significant increase in longevity among those who live the Adventist lifestyle. The results of meta-analyses have been so compelling that the National Institutes of Health allocated US\$19 million to conduct Adventist Health Study II, with a special emphasis on the differences in malignancies between Adventists and the general population.

The Adventist lifestyle received further international recognition after the November 2005 issue of *National Geographic* ran a feature on “secrets of living longer.”<sup>3</sup> This led to a book, *The Blue Zones*, showcasing places where people live healthfully into their 80s, 90s, and even 100s. Loma Linda, a city in Southern California with a large Seventh-day Adventist population, is one of only four blue zones in the world.

There’s more. In February 2009 *U.S. News and World Report* posted 11 habits that will help you live to 100. Number 8 stated, “**Live like a Seventh-day Adventist.** Americans who define themselves as Seventh-day Adventists have an average life expectancy of 89, about a decade longer than the average American. . . . Followers typically stick to a vegetarian diet based on fruits, vegetables, beans, and nuts, and get plenty of exercise.”<sup>4</sup>

### A HEALING MINISTRY

As good as this is, Your Honor, more important than living a few years longer is the injunction to “do the works of him who sent me [Jesus]” (John 9:4, NIV). Seventh-day Adventists believe that God has given consistent guidance about how we can be healthy, happy, and holy. Health and wellness are to be channeled into His service—conduits of His grace to a suffering world with no strings attached.

## What would you say if you were taken to court and asked to defend the health message?

Finally, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has seven medical schools, more than 70 nursing schools, and 783 hospitals, clinics, and dispensaries around the world. More than 250,000 employees work in the various denominational health systems, which, I might add, are all nonprofit. More than 22 million outpatients and 1.5 million inpatients are served each year. The Adventist hospital systems in the United States provide more than US\$1.1 billion worth of charity medical services every year. This number is significantly augmented by the charitable work done by Adventist hospitals around the world.

I stand before you accused of teaching, promoting, and generally being excited about the Seventh-day Adventist health message, inspired through the writings of the Bible and Ellen White and backed by robust scientific evidence. Your Honor, I plead guilty as charged. ☺

<sup>1</sup> *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* (Silver Spring, Md: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2018), p. 317.

<sup>2</sup> *Time*, Oct. 28, 1966; Gary E. Fraser, *Diet, Life Expectancy, and Chronic Disease: Studies of Seventh-day Adventists and Other Vegetarians* (Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> Dan Buettner, “The Secrets of Long Life,” *National Geographic*, November 2005.

<sup>4</sup> *U.S. News and World Report*, Feb. 20, 2009.

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# Wind or Spirit?

Q

I found a Bible translation that instead of reading “the Spirit of God” in Genesis 1:2, it says “a mighty wind.” Is this a correct translation?

A

Technically speaking the answer is yes. But other translations have been proposed, such as “wind from God.” Some biblical passages can be translated in different ways, requiring careful examination of the immediate and larger contexts. There are passages in which even the context allows for different interpretations, and in such cases we should be humble enough to acknowledge that reality. But in the case of Genesis 1:2, the linguistic and contextual arguments favor a more traditional reading.

## 1. A MIGHTY WIND

Several arguments are used to support “a mighty wind.” First, previous phrases in the verse describe the chaotic conditions of the earth before its organization by God—formless, empty, and dark—suggesting that the phrase under discussion is describing a state of disorder, hence the rendering “a mighty wind sweeping over the waters” (Gen. 1:2, NABRE).<sup>\*</sup> Second, it is correctly argued that *ruakh* means “wind” as well as “spirit.” Third, the word *’elohim* (“God”) is sometimes used in Hebrew to express something outstanding or incomparable. The best example is Jonah 3:3: “Nineveh was an exceedingly great city” (literally, “a great city to God” [see also Gen. 23:6; 30:8; Ex. 9:28]). Fourth, since the verb *rakhap* (“hovering”) is here associated with “wind,” it could be translated “[a mighty wind] was sweeping over the face of the waters.” Finally, it is argued that the idea of a mighty wind is also found in some ancient Near Eastern Creation stories.

## 2. THE SPIRIT OF GOD

The translation “Spirit of God” has been the traditional rendering among Christians, although “wind” was held by some Church Fathers, as well as in some Jewish writings. The following arguments have been used to support the traditional reading, “the Spirit of God.”

First, nowhere in the Old Testament does the phrase “Spirit of God” mean “a mighty wind,” making it most unlikely to assign this meaning to Genesis 1:2. Second, the noun *’elohim* (God) is used 32 times in Genesis 1, and it always means God. Arguing for the superlative in one case seems to be unlikely. Third, in verse 1, *’elohim* (God) is identified as the Creator, making it practically impossible to justify the use of the same term in verse 2 to designate a chaotic power (a “mighty wind”). Third, it has been argued by some that the use of *’elohim* is not required in the texts, given that translating it as God would still make sense. Even if this particular use is possible, the context would be decisive. Fourth, although the previous phrases describe a state of disorder, the reference to the Spirit of God is not one of them but serves to prepare the way for God’s creative word that follows in the narrative. While there was disorder, the Spirit was protectively caring for the raw materials of the earth. Fifth, this idea is expressed by the verb *rakhap* (“was hovering”). In the two other places where this verb is used in the Old Testament, it does not refer to the movement of a mighty wind (Deut. 32:11; Jer. 23:9). The best parallel is Deuteronomy 32:11, in which it designates the movement of the wings of an eagle as it cares for its young. The personal character of the Spirit of God is not absent from the Old Testament (see Ps. 104:30). Finally, the meaning of our text is not determined by alleged parallels from ancient Near Eastern texts. ©

<sup>\*</sup> Texts credited to NABRE are from the *New American Bible*, revised edition © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, D.C. All rights reserved.

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## Health & Wellness

# So Many Acronyms!

## Why such an emphasis on health?

*I am a young person and a new Adventist. I have heard of many different health programs related to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Why all the acronyms, and why do we emphasize health so much?*

It's great that young people are asking health questions. It's often thought that we need to pay special attention to our health only as we age. For best health throughout the life cycle, we need to take care of our health starting in childhood. Having said that, it's never too late to begin making wise health choices and living life to the fullest.

Yes, we emphasize numerous health programs, and most of them make use of instruction given to our church through its cofounder Ellen G. White. Before science had addressed the issues that are key to health, Ellen White wrote the following:

*"Pure air, sunlight, abstemiousness, rest, exercise, proper diet, the use of water, trust in divine power—these are the true remedies. Every person should have a knowledge of nature's remedial agencies and how to apply them."*<sup>1</sup> The acronyms derive from these italicized health principles.

Ellen White also emphasized the importance of consistently maintaining the health entrusted to us, reflecting tremendous insight into the challenges of behavior change and health behavior:

*"The use of natural remedies [as noted above] requires an amount of care and effort that many are not willing to give. . . . Those who persevere in obedience to her laws will reap the reward in health of body and health of mind."*<sup>2</sup> She consistently emphasized wholistic well-being that includes physical, mental, spiritual, social, and emotional dimensions.

Additionally, Ellen White strongly encouraged learning about the wonders of the human body and physiology. We should gain this information from credible and scientifically sound sources. The way to test the reliability of such material is to ensure that they are biblically based, in harmony with the Spirit of Prophecy writings, and consistent with peer-reviewed, evidence-based health science.

She wrote: "Too little attention is generally given to the preservation of health. It is far better to prevent disease than to know how to treat it when contracted. It is the duty of every person . . . to inform himself in regard to the laws of life and conscientiously to obey them. All need to become acquainted with that most wonderful of all organisms, the human body. . . . They should study the influence of the mind upon the body, and of the body upon the mind, and the laws by which they are governed."<sup>3</sup>

This is timely and needed advice—given by our heavenly Father through Ellen White—an unschooled conduit of His grace and caring. Modern science continues to confirm this amazing and practical health message. We encourage you to remember through these health program acronyms, that we are God's CREATION (HEALTH)<sup>®</sup>, for a life filled with CELEBRATIONS<sup>®</sup>, so make a NEWSTART<sup>®</sup>, and CHIP<sup>®</sup> your way to optimal health.

Start today! Our loving heavenly Father wants us to "have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10, NIV), and He has graciously given us the tools. ☺

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 127. (Italics supplied.)

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

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

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# Denise's Leftovers



**“May I Tell You a Story?”**

**BY DICK DUERKSEN**

**D**enise and her family attend a small church that has big dreams. And bigger prayers. Each year the congregation asks God to lead them to a place in which they can “make a difference” for Him. Sometimes God sends them to a place nearby, but often the call is to a needy community in a neighboring country. Usually Mexico.

“When we’re planning a mission trip the first thing we do is pray for God’s leading,” Denise explains. “Once we know where we’re going to work, we send someone to visit and listen to the folk, to see what they might like us to do. Then we start raising money for the construction, travel, food, and a hundred other expenses.”

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This time God led Denise’s church to a small congregation, Iglesia El Buen Pastor, in Juárez, Mexico. They sent a member to see exactly what the congregation needed. The report was grim. The Juárez church building needed to be painted inside and out. The roof was leaking and would have to be rebuilt. They also needed new chairs, lots of materials for the children’s programs,

some plants around the church, and tons of Spanish Bibles.

“Mission trips like this are the best thing our church does,” Denise explains. “They bring us together in service. Sure, they take a lot of work, but because we’re doing the work together, and because we have to pray our way through all of the challenges, these adventures in faith make our congregation stronger.”

“Our mission team worked hard right along with the members of the church in Juárez. The weather was hot, and we all quickly sweated through our clothes. The men rebuilt the roof and worked on a dozen other maintenance projects. All of us painted the church—inside and outside—till it shone like new.”

When Denise’s team was done with everything on the list, they decided to hold a celebration party, a *huge* party, for all the local church members.

“We thought that maybe 40 or 50 people might come to the party. So I went to the store and bought 40 packages of cookies, crackers, and doughnuts, along with 25 gallons of juice,” Denise says. “At first about 20 people came, then 30, then 45, then 70. Finally more than 150 people crowded into the small church.”

# As the people began coming, I knew for sure that we wouldn't have anywhere near enough of anything.

Every chair was filled, and people were standing like sardines against the wall."

The pastor led the evening's worship service, and the entire congregation sang, prayed, and celebrated God's love. At the end of the service 35 people wiggled through the crowd to the platform and gave their lives to Jesus Christ. You should have heard the celebration! These were 35 people who had never even set foot in a church before that night.

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It was a wonderful evening, but now it was obvious that Denise hadn't gotten enough food and juice for everyone. It was too late to go back into town and buy more, so Denise slipped over to the pastor and told him the terrible truth.

"We don't have enough food and juice for the crowd. We were told to expect 20, so we planned for 50. But there are 150 people!"

"No, Denise," the pastor said, "there are more than 150 people. You didn't count the ones standing outside hoping to get in. But it's OK. Let's just pray and give out what we have."

Denise and the pastor prayed over the food and asked everyone to line up and come past the tables that had been set up in the back room of the church.

"We put out some cookies, crackers, and doughnuts, and one of the women poured cups of juice," says Denise. "As the people began coming, I knew for sure that we wouldn't have anywhere near enough of anything, but we kept on pouring the juice and setting out the cookies, the crackers, and the doughnuts anyway.

When the crackers or cookies ran out, I reached into the big cardboard box and

pulled out another bag. When we needed more doughnuts, I just pulled out a box of a dozen more. When the juice had all been poured, I reached into the refrigerator and pulled out another gallon. We had been able to squeeze only 25 gallons of juice into the refrigerator, and I didn't even think to count how many I pulled out. I just kept pulling and pouring and smiling and celebrating with the crowd."

Somehow, through God's powers of multiplication, and a lot of work from the angels from "supply," there was enough for everyone to have firsts, seconds, and even thirds. People were really hungry!

After the crowd left, Denise opened the refrigerator, which should have been empty, and saw that it still held seven gallons of juice. Surprised and overwhelmed she then went to the trash bins and began counting the empties.

"I counted more than 80 empty plastic juice jugs and far more than 100 empty boxes of cookies, crackers, and doughnuts in the trash bins," Denise remembers. "I had bought only 25 gallons of juice and 40 boxes of snacks! Even crazier, the big cardboard box was full. It had 12 untouched boxes of crackers, 12 unused boxes of cookies, and 12 brand new boxes of doughnuts!"

Remember the story about Jesus feeding 5,000 people on a hill beside the Sea of Galilee? He started with one little boy's lunch and had 12 baskets of food left over. Later, when He fed the 4,000, there were seven baskets of food left over! Just like Denise's cookies and juice!

"Where did all the cookies come from, and how did the juice get into the refrigerator? I don't know. It just came from God," Denise says. "Whenever I reached in for more, God gave me what we needed. It just appeared! I have seen the blessing of food as God made an abundance come from the little bit we had. He even multiplied the doughnuts!" ©

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Seventh-day  
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# Kind Words From a Kind Heart

**A fun craft to share kindness with someone**

Have you heard of conversation hearts? They are little heart-shaped candies with Valentine messages written on them, such as “Be Mine,” “You Are Cute,” “I Love You,” etc. This craft is inspired by those hearts and is an activity we hope will help you spread kindness and kind words throughout the year. You can do this as a Sabbath School craft, at home with family and friends, or even by yourself.

## Setup

If you are in a classroom, write each child’s name on a small piece of paper. Fold the papers in half so the names are hidden, and have your teacher mix them up in a large bowl. Each student will draw a name without telling anyone whose name they draw. If doing this at home, think of one person you would like to make this craft for (this is an important step).

## Supplies

- a paper plate
- thin cardboard (large enough to trace a paper plate)
- pencil
- scissors
- heart pattern
- construction paper (in colors you love)
- markers, crayons, paint pens
- glue sticks

## Directions:

- 1 Trace the paper plate onto your cardboard, then draw another circle inside that one with about an inch of space between the two circles.
- 2 Cut out this “ring” you created. It will be the base for your wreath.
- 3 Fold a piece of scrap paper in half, and use your heart pattern to cut the shape of a heart on it (your teacher or parent can help with this part).
- 4 Trace several half-heart shapes on a folded piece of construction paper. You should be able to fit three hearts on the paper. Do this on a variety of colored papers for a total of 12 hearts.
- 5 Cut out all the different-colored hearts and press out the creases. Now think about the person whose name you drew (or the person you chose on your own) and write kind words about them on each of the hearts.
- 6 Arrange the hearts on your wreath shape. Once you like how it looks, glue the hearts down to the wreath with your glue stick.
- 7 Once your project is completed and dried, each student can take a turn reading off the kind words on their wreath, and the rest of the class can try to guess who the wreath is for. Once you have solved that puzzle, present the wreath to the person you made it for.



## Bible Treasure

“May the Lord  
now show you  
kindness and  
faithfulness,  
and I too will  
show you the  
same favor  
because you  
have done this”

(2 Sam. 2:6, NIV).

**Present this  
special gift  
from your kind  
heart to another  
kind heart that  
inspired you!**



WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITH GREAT WEALTH?  
MEET RADIM PASSER. THIS IS HIS STORY.



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