

Adventist World

09/2021

**Finding
God With a
Stethoscope**
Page 10

**The Wounded
Jew**
Page 20

**Celebrating
Recovery**
Page 28

**Finding God
in Many Places**



10 Finding God With a Stethoscope

Thorsen Haugen

14 Finding God in the Arts

Giselle Sarli Hasel

16 Science and Faith, Hand in Hand

Adam Clayton Powell IV

13 Millennial Voices

The Crescendo of Peace

Beersheba Jacob

18 Global View

Challenges to Our Identity and Mission

Mark Finley

20 Devotional

The Wounded Jew

Paul Dybdahl

22 Faith in Action

Sharing the Gospel in Greenland

Sven Hagen Jensen

24 Discovering the Spirit of Prophecy

James White: A Man of Prayer and Action

Gerson Rodrigues

26 Bible Questions Answered

Justified and Perfected

27 Health & Wellness

Vitamin B₁₂

28 May I Tell You a Story?

Celebrating Recovery

30 Growing Faith

We Are Always Faced With Choices

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Where We Pray

BY BILL KNOTT

“For those who pray, each place can be a church.”

Art galleries aren't often places of devotion, or at least the praying others can observe. The carefully curated paintings are usually reminders of the soaring drama of human life, with all its laughter, tragedy, and pain. We admire the genius of the artist; the mastery of light and shadow; the boldness of a color palate; the intimate portrayal of a human face. The art we humans create is a signpost that we existed—that our lives and deeds and rivalries all mattered in the dust of time. Even the finest religious art often celebrates our human response to God.

But there was a day when wandering through a gallery brought me to prayer. An exhibition in Washington, D.C., featured the work of a nineteenth-century American painter, Thomas Cole. Announcements appeared in both local and national media, hinting at what critics called “transcendence”—a glimpse of that which doesn't begin with humanity nor end with summaries of human achievement.

For a change, the media promises didn't disappoint. Not only was Cole's impressive legacy of work centered on the geographical region I consider “home,” but I found myself intrigued by an artist who grasped what has eluded hundreds of talented others: “All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away” (1 Peter 1:24).

It was often difficult to find the human figures in Thomas Cole's sweeping landscapes of the Catskill and Berkshire Mountains of America's Northeast. In some paintings a single, tiny human appeared, dwarfed by the towering reality of a world he didn't create and couldn't control. In another, only human tools—the artist's easel and brushes—appeared, as though he must retreat before forces infinitely greater than himself. The story of human life, as Cole imaged it, is seen on the canvas of God's vast and stellar handiwork. There can be no boasting about battles won, political power exerted, or even human piety. “When I look at your heavens,

the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?” (Ps. 8:3, 4, NRSV).*

And so I prayed—not on my knees, nor with uplifted hands—but with that silent language in which we speak most honestly to God. I prayed to know my real size—a speck of animated dust in uncounted galaxies ruled by the God who still loves me.

We find God in those places where we look for Him, not only in those places where we expect Him. Believers don't restrict their worship or their praying to their morning time alone with God or the public worship in a church. He meets us in the dailiness of raising children, building homes, using media, mingling with friends.

We pray for greater, Spirit-tuned attentiveness—to hear “what the Spirit is saying to the churches” (Rev. 3:22, NRSV). We pray that our dull senses will be awakened to the God who is constantly searching for us.

* Bible texts credited to NRSV are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission.



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, and pray for us as we work together to advance God's kingdom.

After a year of lockdowns and ongoing restrictions, many Seventh-day Adventist schools around the world rejoiced to plan graduation ceremonies in the first half of 2021. The photo shows the graduation ceremony at Zaoksky Adventist University in Zaoksky, Russia, on June 18-19, 2021.

Photo: Zaoksky Adventist University



3

The number of pastors among the 549 baptized after 36 Voice of Youth (VOY) teams finished their efforts in the Northern Luzon Mission in the Philippines. The young people shared the good news in every way possible. They coordinated evangelistic series while following the health protocols set by local government, and conducted in small teams face-to-face evangelistic meetings and house-to-house visits. The VOY teams utilized radio broadcasts and online Bible studies.

“We knew that churches were closed during the pandemic, so we decided to begin a YouTube channel. We uploaded all the videos to the channel so that children around the world could view them. Every week since then, we have been producing kindergarten Sabbath School lessons.”

—Selwida, mother of three children from Penang, Malaysia, explaining about the YouTube channel she and her husband created. Initially it was a hobby, but eventually it became a ministry. The family’s online production is called Double Blessing Home Ministry.

1,090

The number of lettuce heads that the La Sierra University Enactus team harvested in their first crop and donated to campus and community members on July 19, 2021. The Enactus team Freight2Table project involves growing varieties of lettuce and leafy green vegetables, herbs, flowers, and roots inside a 40-foot shipping container repurposed and designed with hydroponics technology.

“In Syria the inhabitants have major problems with the electricity supply. The use of solar cells is, therefore, a well-thought-out solution that ensures that water purification does not suddenly come to a standstill.”

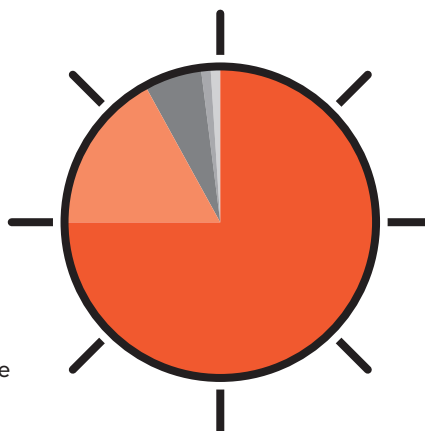
—Insa Deimann, coordinator of ADRA Denmark’s humanitarian projects in Syria, about a water purification project. ADRA Denmark is responsible for setting up a novel system that purifies water without using chemicals and with the help of solar panels. It is intended to provide returning refugees and internally displaced persons with drinking water.

Finding God in His Creation

As part of the 2012-2013 Global Church Member Survey, members around the world were asked if they were spiritually moved by the beauty of God’s creation. Here is the response from 24,828 participants.

- 75% answered 5 | Often
- 17% answered 4
- 6% answered 3
- 1% answered 2
- 1% answered 1 | Never

Source: ASTR Research and Evaluation Team, n=24,828



Want to learn more? Use the QR code to access the complete Global Church Member Survey.

“This is an extremely important moment for the South American Division because we are dealing with the leadership in the local church. Church elders have a pastoral role as they exercise a relevant and an active role in ministry to help the church grow by working together with the local pastor.”

—Bruno Raso, South American Division vice president, in response to the vote to approve a policy document that includes allowing women to serve as church elders across the eight-country division territory.

2022 Special General Conference Session

Official notice is hereby given that a Special Session of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists will be held January 18, 2022, at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists World Headquarters, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States. The meeting will begin at 8:00 a.m. (Eastern Standard Time), January 18, 2022, for the sole purpose of amending the Constitution of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists to allow for virtual participation at future General Conference Sessions. All duly accredited delegates are urged to be present at that time.

Ted N. C. Wilson,
General Conference President

Erton C. Köhler,
General Conference Secretary

More than 600,000

The number of church membership in the South Pacific Division (SPD). The growth of members is driven largely by a significant jump in the number of members in the Papua New Guinea Union Mission. According to the SPD Statistics Report presented to the division executive committee in July 2021, membership in 2020 was 609,868, compared to 567,139 in 2019. The church's growth rate was 7.85 percent, the highest it has been in the past 10 years. ➔



Photo: Adventist Record

Vegetable Gardens Feed 2,000 Families in Madagascar

Rachel Cabose, for ADRA Madagascar

In Madagascar the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) has been training people to grow successful vegetable gardens, raise poultry, and make handcrafts to supplement lost income during the COVID-19 pandemic. ADRA has assisted 2,000 families in and around Madagascar's capital, Antananarivo, that have experienced significant disruption of their livelihoods because of the COVID-19 health crisis and lockdown measures. In a country in which three out of four people survive on less than US\$2 per day, nearly two thirds of households reported a decline in income since the beginning of the pandemic.

"Many households have lost their livelihoods because of the COVID-19 pandemic and are partially unable to meet their food and nutritional needs," Luis Acevedo, country director for ADRA in Madagascar, said. "During ADRA's rapid needs assessment conducted in May, we found that the most frequent strat-

egy people are using to cope with their loss of income is simply to eat less. ADRA is stepping in to help vulnerable individuals grow nutritious food to feed their families."

During the coming year ADRA will help 1,900 households establish climate-smart home gardens where they can grow sweet potatoes, legumes, and vegetables to eat or sell. The families will receive seeds and essential agricultural tools and will be trained in successful growing methods, as well as ways to market their produce and turn it into higher-value products.

In addition, 100 female-headed households will learn how to supplement their income by raising chickens or making handcrafts for sale. Each poultry-raising family will receive one rooster and four hens to begin their flock, while the other families will receive raw materials and tools needed for handcrafting. All participants will be educated on how to make these activities economically viable.

ADRA initiative provides income replacement during the pandemic.

Eliane Rasoarimanana was one of the most active participants in the project. At age 47 she lives in Ampasika, a village about 19 kilometers (12 miles) from the capital city of Antananarivo. Rasoarimanana has been a farmer for years, but the yield from her crops has always been poor. When ADRA implemented the COVID-19 food security project in her area, her situation changed.

"I acquired a lot of new skills and experience from the trainings from ADRA," Rasoarimanana said. "First, we received training in agriculture. I learned a lot of new techniques, such as how to do composting, how to use earthworm compost, how to prepare the soil"

"We were also trained in culinary arts. We learned that after a good harvest, it is important to know how to cook the food and preserve it. Today we can prepare excellent and healthy dishes even with very simple recipes," she added.

Rasoarimanana is grateful for the changes that the project brought to her family, especially for the success of her garden.

"Before, when I planted cassava, I could get only a few small cassava roots. Today, with the right techniques, one root alone is enough to feed the family. I could cook one root in three meals, and I even gave some to my mother," she said.

Her success also impacts her neighbors. Like the other women participants, called Trainers of Trainers, Rasoarimanana had to train 10 other women. "Once they saw my harvest, they straightaway decided to learn as well," she said. "I thank ADRA for these valuable trainings. ©"



ADRA created a nutrition manual to teach women in Madagascar how to cook tasty and nutritious dishes with their garden produce.

Photo: Livatina Ranarison

In Brazil, School for YouTubers Trains Teens for Mission

Anne Seixas, South American Division, and *Adventist World*

A new Seventh-day Adventist-sponsored school in Brazil is set to train a new generation of Adventist young people to become YouTube evangelists, leaders in the South American Division (SAD) said. Feliz7Class is a project born of a partnership between the Adventist Church and Brazil Adventist University (UNASP). The initiative seeks to teach audio and recording techniques and content creation tips to talented young people who want to use their skills to share the gospel with new audiences.

Church leaders said this is a timely project. "If you open YouTube now, you will easily come across content on a variety of subjects, including Christian topics," they commented. According to research published by Cisco in 2019, the platform is now the second-most searched on the Internet. Also, according to the same source, 80 percent of the content found on the web is in video format.

The content is targeted especially at young audiences. "Many teenagers and young people who visit Feliz7Play [the SAD video streaming site] send messages expressing their desire to participate in the series, movies, and the mission to share Jesus through video content. 7Class is a response to these requests," Carlos Magalhães, SAD digital strategy manager, said.

"God uses the most different tools for preaching the gospel," former SAD communication director Rafael Rossi said. Rossi helped develop 7Class.

The goal is "to train and prepare a generation, which already knows a lot about technology and social networks, to serve as missionaries and

Feliz7Class seeks to train talented young people who want to use their skills to share the gospel with new audiences.



Photo: South American Division News

positive influencers in the digital world," Magalhães said.

For Rossi, the pandemic accelerated the migration process. "With the pandemic, we need to reinvent ourselves and migrate to digital. The youth are the ablest to use technology for the gospel. They are the ones who adapt easily to all transitions and a strategic use of communication," he said.

Classes will be offered periodically, leaders said. Students will learn how to plan content for a YouTube channel, receive technical instruction on audio and video, and learn how to distribute and share their channel's content. The plan is to offer 166 video lessons between Portuguese and Spanish, plus 13 extra classes.

The first lesson will be available for free on the Feliz7Play YouTube channel so everyone can get acquainted with some of the content. Those who register will have access to classes through Next, UNASP's distance learning platform.

Class teaches audio and recording techniques and content creation tips.

"Because of the internet, information has become more accessible. However, there is still a gap in access to knowledge," Geyvison Ludugério, UNASP distance learning coordinator, said. "UNASP understands that the experience of the school added to information developments and Christian principles is what constitutes true knowledge."

There are also local pastors and church leaders who will learn and improve their gifts for preaching through the internet. An additional Digital Ministry initiative will be launched in the coming months.

With content focused especially on leadership, the proposal is that church leaders learn to communicate better using new technologies, occupying spaces on social networks, and creating content for YouTube and other platforms.

For Rossi, this is a much-needed step. "It is essential that leaders are ready and get involved in this new and growing way of speaking about Jesus," he said. ©

178,181

Membership of the Inter-European Division (EUD) as of December 31, 2020

“It is up to us to decide how are we going to live . . . the rest of our lives. Always fearful, anxious, or depressed? Challenges and problems will always be with us. What makes a definite difference for good or for bad is how we face them.”

—Mario Brito, Inter-European Division president, in a video message discussing some of the challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic and encouraging church members in his region to keep trusting God.

“Whether it is the intense heat that causes fires, the torrential rains in the middle of summer, or the virus that is shaking the whole world, we cannot forget the massive exploitation of natural resources. What is happening these days is a vibrant call for immediate solidarity, but also for a long-term commitment to a different ecological ethic, with respect for creation.”

—Ruben De Abreu, president of the Franco-Belgian Union Conference, responding to the catastrophic floods that are devastating several Western European countries. At least 164 people died in Germany because of the heavy floods across its western states. In Belgium, 31 were confirmed dead.

80,000

The number of copies of a book set including the “Constantinople Bible” and the missionary book *How the Bible Came Into Existence* that Seventh-day Adventists in Bulgaria shared with the people of that nation. According to some experts, that Bible is the basis of the cultural self-consciousness and identity of Bulgarians. “This is the book that has opened the spiritual horizons of the Bulgarian [people],” poet Ivan Vazov recently wrote.

219

The estimated speed in kilometers per hour (135 mph) of the tornados that struck several villages in the Czech Republic. The tornadoes tipped over cars and buses, uprooted trees, and produced hailstones the size of tennis balls. ADRA set up a hub in Břeclav Adventist Church, located near Moravská Nová Ves, one of the villages impacted by the tornadoes, to organize emergency aid. ADRA met with residents of Moravská Nová Ves to assess damage and needs to then help serve hundreds of survivors in need of immediate assistance. ↓



Photo: ADRA in the Czech Republic

Perspective



Photo: Matt Palmer

Creation Groans

What believers can do as they witness nature come undone.

During the past few years those of us working in the daily news cycle have come to a poignant realization. An incredible amount of news seems to be breaking stories related to natural, often weather-related, catastrophes. From flash floods to unexpected earthquakes to unquenchable fires to relentless hurricanes, the frequency and intensity of phenomena left even experts at a loss.

Disasters causing havoc, destruction, and death are also affecting Adventist believers, including their homes, church buildings, schools, and hospitals. Likewise, natural phenomena are impacting the church members' neighbors and neighborhoods, pushing an unceasing string of needs to previously unknown levels.

HUMANS ARE TO BLAME

Twenty centuries ago the apostle Paul penned a statement as current as our latest newsfeed. He wrote, "For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now" (Rom. 8:22). With a simple but powerful analogy Paul places the groans of creation within the continuum of the plan of salvation. Creation, "subjected to futility, not willingly"

(verse 20), is now groaning, waiting to be "delivered from the bondage of corruption" (verse 21).

According to the Bible, it all started by a conscious choice of disobeying God's rules for this masterfully fashioned planet. Unfortunate consequences soon followed. "Cursed is the ground for your sake . . .," God said. "Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you" (Gen. 3:17, 18). And the prophet Isaiah adds, "The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, because they have transgressed the laws . . . broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore the curse has devoured the earth" (Isa. 24:5, 6).

The original curse on nature is often exacerbated by humanity's irresponsible stewardship. Indiscriminate logging, intensive animal farming, and unregulated industrial pollution are just a few of the many forms a reckless approach to the management of God's creation adopts.

WHAT BELIEVERS ARE TO DO

The Bible, however, proactively moves past a mere diagnosis. As believers wait for the final reversal of the curse, they are called to preach by word and example. In so doing, they are proclaiming they trust God's hopeful plan for the planet.

Some of God's commands to the earthly stewards of His creation seem strikingly simple. He asks, for instance, "If a bird's nest happens to be before you along the way,

. . . with the mother sitting on the young or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young; you shall surely let the mother go, and take the young for yourself, that it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days" (Deut. 22:6, 7). It is a deeply meaningful teaching since, as some Jewish scholars believe, causing needless pain to God's creatures is a form of *hillul hashem*—the desecration of God's name.¹

Ellen White likewise reminds us that animals are paying a hefty price for humanity's sin, including death. "Surely, then, it becomes man to seek to lighten, instead of increasing, the weight of suffering which his transgression has brought upon God's creatures."²

From avoiding meat to promoting recycling to avoiding wasteful spending to showing restraint in the use of natural resources, the mundane behavior of believers can silently proclaim their belief and trust in the God of creation. They know the Lord of all will come back to "destroy those who destroy the earth" (Rev. 11:18). It is a believer's privilege and sacred duty to be part not of the problem but of its ultimate solution. ☺

¹ Quoted in Jonathan Safran Foer, *Eating Animals* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2009), p. 69.

² Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890, 1908), p. 443.

Marcos Paseggi is senior news correspondent of *Adventist World*.



Focus

Finding God With a Stethoscope

Connecting the
dots between
life, faith, peace,
and meaning

T

he Seventh-day Adventist Church has historically placed great importance on medical mission work, following the model established by Jesus, the Great Physician. His healing ministry was an integral part of His mission to save people and transform their lives. Like a church, the halls of a hospital are often hallowed by God's presence; and even

when broken, the human body—like “the heavens”—still shouts the glory of God.

Allow me to share two stories from early in my medical experience that made me aware of God's presence. These are not miracles, just simple events that made an impression on me. As I, a believer, reflect on these events and others like them, my faith has been strengthened.

A POTENT MOMENT

The first of these happened near the end of my residency. As part of a team of surgeons, I helped perform a rare surgery on a 40-year-old man with an aggressive cancer that had taken root in his throat and was creeping down into his esophagus. He had already been treated with chemoradiation, but his cancer had stubbornly resisted. This surgery was his last hope.

I knew this man from his previous clinic visits, where we had talked, and despite his prognosis, we even laughed together. He faced it all bravely.

Stated simply, the procedure involved removing his voicebox, pharynx, and esophagus. His stomach was then pulled up through his chest and sutured to what remained of his throat so he could still swallow.

We had a particularly difficult time getting the empty bag of his stomach to slide behind his lungs and heart and into his neck. We took turns trying to coax it up, but when the pressure of our groping arms on his heart and lungs caused his pulse and oxygen levels to plummet, we would be forced to stop and give his vital organs time to recover.

I still perfectly remember at the end of one of my attempts, after I had let the slippery stomach slide back into his abdominal cavity, leaving my hand in his chest and gently grasping his beating heart. It writhed and contracted with surprising force. In a transcendent moment, it was as if a portal opened between us. Suddenly I was overwhelmed by an indescribable feeling of reverent awe intermixed with a strange intimacy—a feeling that to this day I can still recall with vivid clarity.

The heart is an organ I, as a head and neck surgeon, rarely encounter. But as potent a symbol of life as the heart is, it wasn't the heart itself that sent me into this strange reverie. It was the simple fact that this beautiful living machine, on which we crudely operated, represents a man's life.

A FACE ETCHED IN GRIEF

But alas, not only awe can take your breath away. In a very different way, so can tragedy.

My second story happened even longer ago, when I was a third-year medical student. It took place late at night, this time beneath the fluorescent lights of a Los Angeles County hospital trauma bay. At that point in my career the newness of standing constantly in the shadow of life and death was still overwhelming, which resulted in the impressions being etched all the deeper.

The trauma report alerted us of an incoming single-vehicle rollover involving a mother and her five children. There were multiple fatalities.

We dutifully noted the details and waited for the accident victims to be rolled in on their gurneys through the glass doors, bringing with them the chaos of all they had been through. The moment they arrived, we quickly divided into teams to perform the ABCDEs of trauma on each of the victims. Airway, breathing, circulation, disability, and exposure—a handy way of remembering what was important when it comes to saving a life, but none of which ultimately mattered for the child I worked on.

She was only 9 years old, chubby and cherub-faced. She had suffered a closed-head injury, and there was no blood on her—not even a drop. I half expected her to sit up and smile, but the only movement her little body made was the violent rise and fall of her chest as we took turns counting out the compressions. We did CPR, placed lines, shocked her, and pumped her full of drugs. Nothing. Finally, death was declared.

We learned that the mother, who was a single parent, had been driving her sleeping children home from a midweek prayer meeting when she rolled their minivan. Three died, one was severely injured, and one had only a few fractures. The mother had no injuries at all, at least none that could be detected by a medical test. Nevertheless, it was

Only when God exists are the wrongs in this world a problem. Only with God does any of it matter.

easy to see that her heart had been gravely wounded.

The next morning on rounds I stopped and stood unseen and silent at her door. The light caught her face, and every line of it was etched with grief as she stared tearless and empty-eyed out the window into a world that would never be the same for her again. It seemed as if her pain was a shoreless ocean the whole world could drown in. It's her face I remember. I still cry when I picture it.

As a physician, over the years I have collected many other moments like these. Awe, pain, and a host of other emotions color each of them. For an atheist, events of this sort are no more than the byproducts of nature's indifferent laws. But for a believer, they are evidence of God—His footfalls echoing in the chambers of our lives.

THE MYSTERY OF LIFE

All people, regardless of creed, live by faith. Each of us makes conclusions about where life came from and what it means based on the limited information we have. Practicing medicine is a constant reminder of how limited that information is. Despite all we have learned,

the human body remains a deeply shrouded mystery. And beyond the mysteries of physiology, biochemistry, and other such disciplines is the mystery of life itself. From where did that first spark come?

Much of the modern scientific world has decided that evolution is the great giver of life, the driving force behind all living things. It is said that these bodies of ours, and the wondrous complexity of all that makes us human, arose by chance. In a hostile universe filled with radiation, poison, flaming infernos, and unimaginable cold, a soup of chemicals self-animated, and then over eons became incredibly and improbably complex. Or so it is claimed.

I am not a theologian nor a scientist in a lab. I cannot criticize or defend arguments that greater ones than I have made. I can speak only from my experience. As a surgeon, I know life. I have felt its fluttering frailty, been awed by its complexity, and grieved its passing. Scientific progress has been tremendous, but when it comes to the question of life, we have no answers. Humans have never created life. They never will. God is the only source.

FINDING SENSE

Even in the most controlled lab, with all of life's building blocks at our disposal, we cannot animate the simplest organism. For us, the chasm between life and death is uncrossable. And although not a drop of blood was on her, there was no way for us to bring back the little girl that night in the emergency department. Her breath had returned to God from whence it had come. And the heart that I had cupped in my hand—rightly appreciated, each beat was no less than an act of God.

Life gives me faith. In turn, my faith is a great source of peace. Peace,

because God imparted life, and this adds meaning to our existence.

The question is often asked: How can a good God allow pain? Medicine has taught me that we are asking the wrong question. What we should be asking is: How, with all the pain in the world, could there *not* be a good God? In a godless universe no accusations can be made, and no one can protest when a mother's heart is shattered. In such a universe her pain would be meaningless—no more than a cold fact of existence. And yet anyone who glimpsed that mother's face as I did could not help crying out that this was wrong. Only when God exists are the wrongs in this world a problem. Only with God does any of it matter. And taken a step further, only the cross provides an answer great enough to satisfy.

Our grief, our joy, our love—the things that make us human—may indeed serve a purpose and be explained both biologically and psychologically, but at the same time, they also scream of meaning. We matter! What we do, what we feel, and what we think—it matters. Beyond this, each of us, deep down, recognizes we are accountable for the lives we lead. A moral law is written in our hearts.

Practicing medicine is a frequent reminder of these realities. Medicine indeed is a place where the gospel's message and the reality of God's existence can be clearly seen and understood. And as I have learned over the years, we may be no more than specks of dust in an infinite universe, but our lives and our experiences testify to a God who oversees it all.

God, I believe, holds us in His hands. ☺

Thorsen Haugen is a head and neck surgeon and lives with his family in **Pennsylvania, United States.**

The Crescendo of Peace



My husband and I woke up to the news of the death of a loved one or a church member almost every morning for two weeks.

anniversary traveling. We were looking forward to exploring the Indian state of Karnataka, and made our plans accordingly. But then travel restrictions were imposed in the state, and we celebrated our wedding anniversary indoors. We still tried to make it memorable and did something fun within the city limits.

This prolonged lockdown has changed life. Failed plans and unfulfilled dreams have become the new normal. The college campus where

In 2020 a new normal was forced upon many of us because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Social distancing, the suspension of many normal activities, isolation, and the addition of face masks to our wardrobe became our new reality. The pandemic and the resulting lockdown caused increased levels of stress and anxiety.

As I connected with friends across the globe, I realized that all of us have been affected in different ways. Some of us have lost a loved one; some have contracted the virus; some are out of work, while others are overworked. It feels as if most of our dreams are placed on hold.

The travel restrictions that were placed to limit the spread of this virus have been daunting for enthusiastic travelers like my husband, Andrew, and me. We love exploring. Our own love story blossomed over many trips, camps, and adventures. So we thought it would be fitting to spend our second wedding

I work and that always buzzed with people and activities has suddenly fallen silent. Coping with these changes can be difficult. I tried to remain positive, kept active indoors, made life interesting by cooking up new dishes and learning to paint. But this year the pandemic hit close to home.

In the months of April and May, the peak of the second COVID-19 wave in India, our nation grappled with a severe shortage of medical oxygen and hospital beds. The exponential surge in infections swamped the health-care system. Patients were dying in ambulances and parking lots outside hospitals. Crematoriums were overwhelmed. My husband and I woke up to the news of the death of a loved one or a church member almost every morning for two weeks. We were attending funeral after funeral both offline and online. Death, loss, and pain had never been so real. All that I tried to hold on to seemed to fade, and I knew that I needed my God more than ever before.

In my struggle to finding peace amid this chaos, I rediscovered this beautiful verse. "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You" (Isa. 26:3). Satan is on the prowl to rob us of peace and joy. But in Christ we are promised "perfect peace," a double *shalom*. A peace that is complete, consistent, and encompassing. We can experience this promised peace when we fix our minds on Jesus; when we trust Him completely. This peace that passes all understanding can be ours when we choose to see, hear, and experience things through the eyes of faith.

This world is experiencing a new reality with many disruptions. We all need Jesus now more than ever before. Now is the time to share Jesus, for His love compels us to share His peace. ©

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

Finding God in the Arts

Beauty touches hearts that words cannot reach.

Years ago, while studying in Brazil, I was sick and stayed in the dorm instead of going to Friday night chapel. That evening, alone, I walked quietly down the hall, went downstairs, and gazed out a huge picture window. There, in dazzling splendor, was a gorgeous sunset. I admired the large billowing clouds on the upper tier, outlined with the gold of the sun, its rays penetrating the clouds and the hills below. That image was burned into my memory partially because I felt God calling me through the beauty of His sunset—the aesthetic beauty of His artistic creation.

Later that school year my teacher became frustrated with my sketching instead of “paying attention” to her lectures, when, in fact, it was my way of paying attention. In no uncertain terms she told me in front of my classmates that I was a daydreamer and would amount to nothing in life, except making worthless art. Devastated, after class I ran to that same window and sensed God’s presence again speaking to me through nature. But that experience provided an overwhelming sense of insecurity about my future.

Throughout my life God faithfully demonstrated to me how important art is to Him. Eventually I completed graduate degrees in theology and art, while God consistently reaffirmed the role He had for me to play in sharing His love for art with others. Today I teach art and art history in the largest school of visual art within the Seventh-day Adventist educational system.

Many of the students I have engaged with have experienced misunderstanding or even rejection about their drive to produce art—similar to my own experience. Parents may wonder about the artistic calling of their

children. Even the church is often suspect of young passionate artists who want to serve and bring their gifts to bless others.

GOD LOVES BEAUTY

God’s love for art is one of His greatest attributes as evidenced in His creation and Christ’s vocation as a *tektōn*, or “craftsman,” when He lived on earth. Ellen White noted that “it was Christ who planned the arrangement for the first earthly tabernacle. He gave every specification in regard to the building of Solomon’s temple. The One who in His earthly life worked as a carpenter in the village of Nazareth was the heavenly architect who marked out the plan for the sacred building where His name was to be honored.”¹

The Bible dedicates nearly 50 chapters with extravagant descriptions of the art and architecture of the sanctuary. Bezalel and Oholiab



Sun Breaking Through Clouds Above the Roman Campagna, Johann Jakob Frey, 1844 or after

National Gallery of Art, Joseph F. McCrindle Collection

were the first artisans set aside by God, who filled them “with the Spirit of God, in wisdom and understanding, in knowledge and all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works, to work in gold and silver and bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of artistic workmanship” (Ex. 35:31-33). Together they engaged in building the sanctuary with Christ, the original artist, and were faithful to His calling.

How strange then that aesthetics is so often misunderstood in the church!

The nineteenth century Dutch impressionist painter Vincent Van Gogh wrote to family that he felt “called” by God, but largely rejected by his Christian community. In a letter to his mother and brother Theo, Van Gogh wrote that God had sent him to preach the gospel to the poor, but that he must “first

have it in his own heart.”² Van Gogh learned that God beautifully expresses His love through art. He believed God’s beauty, as seen through nature, is one way that brings us to a sublime experience of life, in line with the revealed truths found in Scripture.

The Greek word *aisthetikos* implies that we can come to know through perception and our senses. True aesthetics can be a life-generating force given to us by God. This knowledge is incomplete but serves as the first attraction that beckons us to desire God (Rom. 1:20). When Van Gogh’s pastoral ministry was misunderstood by the official Dutch Reformed Church, he took up art as a way of expressing his deepest religious convictions. He claimed, “Our purpose is self-reform by means of a handicraft and of intercourse with Nature—our aim is walking with God.”³

Van Gogh was filled with self-doubt about his artistic calling and lived a life in obscurity, hardly selling any paintings. Van Gogh’s deep depression might eventually have led to his death. From a shallow “prosperity gospel” perspective, Van Gogh was unsuccessful, and many contemporaries could have doubted God’s blessing during his lifetime. Yet Van Gogh sought to be faithful to God’s calling deep within his soul. Today millions, both secular and religious, flock to museums around the world to experience the wonder and beauty of God’s creation he so desperately tried to paint onto his canvas. Someday he may know the impact of his life’s work.

GOD CALLS US THROUGH BEAUTY

As I reflect back on that view from the picture window in Brazil where I sensed God’s calling for my life, I think today about the hundreds of students I have taught who also feel the calling to become

Aesthetics can be one of the most powerful languages God uses to call people into a relationship with Him.

artists. I have come to understand and appreciate art so much more and have concluded that aesthetics can be one of the most powerful languages God uses to call people into a relationship with Him. When we answer God’s call for making art, we participate in worship. This form of worship is more attractive to postmoderns because they thirst to see truth applied in unexpected and sincere ways. Because of modern media, our worshipful approach to art can reach people in a way that is unprecedented. For art to have power it has to be true, and, similar to Van Gogh’s experience, it has to penetrate “the surface of things and portray them as they really are.”⁴ ☉

¹ Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1900), p. 349.

² Johanna van Gogh-Bonger and Vincent Willem van Gogh, eds., *The Complete Letters of Vincent van Gogh*, 3 vols. (Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, 1959), letter 94.

³ *Ibid.*, Letter 377.

⁴ Philip Graham Ryken, *Art for God’s Sake: A Call to Recover the Arts* (Phillipsburgh, N.J.: P & R Publishing, 2006), p. 39.

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Focus

Science and Faith, Hand in Hand

What God teaches us through science and engineering

Science and faith went hand in hand for centuries, as numerous pioneers of mathematics and science were devout Christians, including Kepler, Pascal, Mendel, Kelvin, and Carver. They would have affirmed what David wrote: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork” (Ps. 19:1). These scientists saw study of the laws of nature as an expression of their faith, like an act of worship.

Today talk about God and science gets clouded by evolution or cosmology, though I consider these in the category of empirical models of the past, rather than the scientific method of repeatable experiments.

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

In my own life the faith-science nexus has brought meaning and focus, personal development, ethics, and humility. As an engineering professor, I use targeted experiments to solve a problem. My own work at the intersection of materials, mechanical and chemical engineering, focuses on metal production and energy generation, conversion, and storage for greenhouse emissions reduction, elimination, or drawdown. Indeed, my focus on this topic is based in large part on my faith as a way to use my gifts to address an urgent problem.

The most direct intersection between my faith and work comes when I pray for insight. This is clearest when my own effort fails, as prayer clears my mind and focuses me, and humbles me. In one situation, after a conference presentation in which I had results only by God’s grace, an audience member approached me and asked whether I was Christian—he said that he could see humility in my demeanor, humility that had come from seeing God’s power in my weakness (cf. 2 Cor. 12:9).

Faith has also led me to prioritize people and their development. I often encourage students to change to a different

institution or research group after completing a degree or milestone to further their careers, when my research might benefit more if they kept working with me. Again, this is not unique to science; all of us can and should promote the interests of those around us.

More specific to science, being at the forefront of a discipline, however narrow that discipline is, helps one see how much we don't know and will likely never know. Harvard's original crest had one of its three books facedown to represent the limits of reason, and the need for God's revelation. Two hundred years after its design, Harvard turned the third book forward, as in 1843 its regents saw rapid progress in science and believed that all knowledge had either been revealed or soon would be. Because nearly all compulsory science education and media coverage of technology focus on settled facts and accomplishments, it is hard for many to understand limits and uncertainty.

PUTTING THEORY INTO PRACTICE

But it is even more humbling when people don't act based on well-established knowledge, like the buried talents referenced by Jesus (Matt. 25:14-30), or Psalm 127. For example, in the COVID pandemic, United States scientists learned quickly about the virus and developed the first and most effective vaccines. But mixed messaging hobbled prevention efforts, and the infection rates and excess death rate of the United States dwarfed many significantly less developed economies.*

It is similar in my field of climate mitigation, where the United States is humbled by Norway's switch to electric vehicles—many made in the USA; and even more by Bhutan

and Costa Rica, which already are or soon will be carbon-neutral.

As a high school student, I verbalized this dichotomy between technology and its useful deployment. As an engineer, I wanted to help solve the world's "little problems," which I listed as:

- agriculture, to feed a growing planet;
- medical research, allowing people to lead longer, healthier lives;
- human interactions with the environment, for sustainable development;
- information access, as the biggest enemy of a dictator is the truth.

All of these are important, but if scientists and engineers do our jobs well, we help the artists, economists, social workers, church leaders, and politicians to address the "big problems," which I listed as:

- peace between nations, and security in our neighborhoods;
- averting and mitigating famines;
- education to build agency and confidence, particularly for the marginalized;
- health care for those who need it most;
- justice, including fair economic distribution;
- truth in journalism and history;
- purpose and meaning for our lives, and artistic expression of that purpose and meaning;

TOLERANCE OF DIFFERENCES

An important consequence of this understanding of "little problems" and "big problems" is that being a scientist or engineer requires faith that our work will be used for good and not for evil. Even if we don't work on nuclear science or weaponry, the events of September 11, 2001, showed that even if one focuses on nonmilitary technologies, a civilian jetliner—built to bring people together—can be abused, by people with

sufficient hatred, as a weapon of mass destruction. This frightened me as an engineer, and I believe it requires us to have more faith in the people, institutions, and systems surrounding technology.

I would rather live in a world in which we solve the big problems but not the little ones—one with democracy, but also challenges with energy or nutrition, rather than the other way around, as in fascism or in dark visions of technological perfection. This doesn't mean that work in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) doesn't matter. Rather, it's an enabler: new technology can dramatically reduce the impact of a pandemic, and the cost of reducing climate emissions. With economic incentives and research and development funding, wind and solar energy prices fell by 75 percent and 90 percent, respectively, from 2007 to 2019.

Thus we continue to explore God's creation, more vast than even our imaginations can fathom. And we work hard to use God's gifts of material and knowledge to fashion tools for improving each other's lives. But we are humbled by our limitations, and must remain open to considering that what we think we know could be wrong. This openness is the essence of scientific pursuit, of engineering design, and of the Christian walk, as they go forward hand in hand. ©

* See <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2021/05/27/covid-19-is-a-developing-country-pandemic/>.

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Challenges to Our Identity and Mission

Safeguarding Divine Truth

The tired, weary-worn, battle-scarred evangelist was concerned—concerned for the fledgling Christian church. He knew they would soon face ridicule, mockery, imprisonment, and persecution. The apostle Paul gathered the elders of the Ephesian church together at Miletus and warned them that “savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock” (Acts 20:29). Difficult times loomed on the horizon. There was trouble ahead. Believers were soon to face fierce persecution in the Roman Empire.

Nevertheless, this was not Paul’s only concern. His deeper concern may well have been the challenge from within the Christian church itself. He counseled these church leaders: “Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking

perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (verses 30-32).

The New Testament church leaders’ concerns about erroneous teachings entering the New Testament church were well founded. Paul warned young Timothy about Hymenaeus and Philetus, who declared that the resurrection had already taken place (2 Tim. 2:17, 18). He wrote to the Galatians about righteousness by faith in Christ alone at a time when some were leading believers back to dependence on the law as a means of salvation. The apostle Peter warned the church that “there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies” (2 Peter 2:1). Writing in Revelation 2, John warns against the Nicolaitans, who did away with the law of God and lived lives of unrestrained indulgence (Rev. 2:14, 15).

SAFEGUARDING DIVINE TRUTH

Christian leaders must always be concerned about maintaining the integrity of the biblical, Christ-centered truths of divine revelation. Here is my simple point: church leadership on all levels has the solemn responsibility before God to nurture believers in Christ, safeguard and proclaim biblical truth, and prioritize mission.

What does this specifically mean for the Seventh-day Adventist Church today? It should not surprise us that erroneous teachings are sometimes taught in our Sabbath School classes, from our pulpits and in our classrooms. The devil’s

strategy is to erode the very essence of Adventism. If the Seventh-day Adventist Church is merely another denomination, what unique message can we offer to the world? If the Seventh-day Adventist Church is not a divine movement raised up by God with a special message for the world to prepare a people for the coming of Jesus, why send missionaries to the ends of the earth? If as Adventists we lose our prophetic identity, our message to the world will lose its power.

THE MARK OF THE BEAST

Let me be more specific. Adventist identity is tied closely to our prophetic understanding. Subjects like the sanctuary, the 2,300 days, 1844, the coming crisis over the law of God and the Sabbath, the three angels' messages, and the mark of the beast are part of our DNA. To downplay or minimize the prophetic scenario of last-day events calls into question the great prophetic truths of Daniel and Revelation.

The prophet Daniel speaks of the rise of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and a little-horn power rising out of pagan Rome's 10 divisions that would attempt to change "times and law" (Dan. 7:25). Revelation 12 speaks of an end-time remnant who "keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. 12:17). Revelation 13 speaks of a time when loyalty to God means facing an economic boycott and no one will be able to buy or sell unless they receive the mark of the beast. Eventually a death decree will be enforced on believers (Rev. 13:15-17).

Revelation 14 announces the last-day messages of the three angels. It reveals that the "everlasting gospel" will be proclaimed by a Spirit-filled church to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (Rev. 14:6, KJV). In the light

of heaven's end-time, pre-Advent judgment, the first angel calls men and women to worship the Creator (verse 7). In contrast to those who worship the Creator, there are those who worship the beast (verse 9). This final crisis of the great controversy between good and evil develops a people who through the power of the Holy Spirit "keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (verse 12).

DIFFERENCE FROM SEVENTH DAY BAPTISTS

More than 100 years ago Ellen White wrote to an Elder K, who, although he believed the Sabbath, minimized its relationship to last-day events and the coming crisis. Her words are extremely instructive for the church today. Elder K's sentiments are still expressed by some. She wrote, "As far as the Sabbath is concerned, he occupies the same position as the Seventh Day Baptists. Separate the Sabbath from the messages, and it loses its power; but when connected with the message of the third angel, a power attends it which convicts unbelievers and infidels, and brings them out with strength to stand, to live, grow, and flourish in the Lord."¹

This is an extremely significant statement. Seventh-day Adventists have rightly understood the relationship between Christ's judgment-hour ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, the law of God, the Sabbath, and the final events of this world's history as outlined in the book of Revelation. When the Sabbath is "separated" from the third angel's message, which warns against receiving the mark of the beast, and the final events connected with that message, the Sabbath loses its power. Although God continues to reveal new understandings of truth to His people and new truths shine with

beauty from His Word, new truth never obscures previously discovered truths. Since God is the originator of truth, future revelations will never negate what He has previously revealed. We may see new aspects of our prophetic understanding, but we can never logically dismiss previous revelations of truth God has given to His people. We would do well to ponder this statement:

"Every truth that He [Christ] has given for these last days is to be proclaimed to the world. Every pillar that He has established is to be strengthened. We cannot now step off the foundation that God has established."² We can expect the very foundations of our faith to be shaken, but, as Jesus declared, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18, KJV). In Christ, His church will triumph at last.

The Bible's final book describes a people who are redeemed by Christ's grace, transformed by His power, and motivated by His love. The hope of His soon return inspires them to passionately share the good news of the gospel to the ends of the earth. Adventism at its best is a Christ-centered, Bible believing, grace-filled, prophetic movement, compassionately caring for others, with an urgent message of hope for a dying world. May we rise to fulfill our destiny and accomplish the mission He has called us to complete! ☺

¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol 1, p. 337.

² Ellen G. White manuscript 129, 1905, in Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases* (Silver Spring, Md.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1993), vol. 20, p. 151.

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Devotional

The Wounded Jew

Sometimes we don't even recognize a friend.

We don't care much about him. Even scholars barely glance his way. When we do acknowledge his presence in the parable, we view him as the victim, the problem to be solved, an anonymous prop whose purpose is to reveal the hearts of other, more prominent characters. He is simply the wounded Jew.*

If you've been a Christian for even a few years, you're probably familiar with the story. This nameless man, traveling between Jerusalem and Jericho, is attacked by thieves. He is beaten, bloodied, stripped of his clothes, and left for dead. A priest and a Levite both see him there, but neither of these respected religious leaders stops to help. Finally, a Samaritan, traveling the road, sees the dying man. Moved with compassion, he bandages him, anoints him with oil and wine to soothe and cleanse his wounds, places him on his own donkey and pays in advance for his continued care at an inn. When Jesus finishes telling this parable, He highlights the neighborly love of the good Samaritan and tells His audience, "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37).

ANOTHER CAREFUL LOOK

We usually don't pay much attention to the injured man. We are more likely to explore the history of the deep and sometimes deadly animosity between Jews and Samaritans. We lament the priest and Levite, the two religious figures who were either too afraid of thieves or too concerned with their own ritual purity to stop to help their fellow countryman. We may study maps and pictures of the barren landscape and muse about the dangers of the road between Jerusalem and Jericho.

Perhaps most of all, we highlight the good Samaritan as the undisputed center of the story. As a Samaritan, he would have been considered perpetually unclean by the Jews, who saw him as religiously, morally, racially, and culturally inferior. Yet in the parable Jesus presents him as the model of what it means to be a neighbor and as someone we are all to emulate.

So, lost in the shuffle of apparently more interesting historical details and a more noble character, the wounded man remains faceless, nameless, and thus forgotten. We pass him by. But this is a tragic mistake, the same mistake the priest and the Levite made. If they had known him—if they had seen him as an elder brother, a sister, a spouse, a friend—of course they would have rendered aid! But they didn't recognize him. Neither do we.

WHO IS THE WOUNDED JEW?

The first clue to the identity of the wounded Jew is the road Jesus chose for the setting of the parable. In our typical discussions of the story, we tend to emphasize the barrenness of the landscape and the danger from thieves along the route. But this was a main thoroughfare, a well-traveled and well-built road. Even today we can trace the route and, in places, actually walk on the large paving stones that were there at the time of Jesus. Certainly there were other dangerous and even more desolate roads Jesus could have used as the setting for the story. Why did He specify this one in particular?

Jesus knew something. He knew that He would be traveling this same road between Jericho and Jerusalem on His way to the cross, and He tells the parable so that the wounded man by the side of the road foreshadows His own experience.

Once we realize this connection, we wonder how we could have missed it. The parallels are numerous and powerful.

The man in the parable began his journey on foot, but concluded his trip on the back of the Samaritan's donkey. Jesus likewise headed for Jerusalem on foot,

We usually don't pay much attention to the injured man.

and with the triumphal entry He too ended his journey on the back of someone else's donkey.

The man in the parable and Jesus are the only two people in the Gospels who were stripped of their clothes. Both were beaten, abandoned, and left for dead. Jesus also found Himself in the midst of thieves, one on His right and one on His left. Priests and other religious leaders who should have defended Him instead left Him to suffer and die.

But help arrived. The bruised and broken body was wrapped and anointed by unexpected hands. In the parable it was a Samaritan, but for Jesus it was a member of the Sanhedrin and some women from Galilee who acted with amazing compassion. In both the parable and Jesus' own experience the tragic story becomes a story of restoration and even salvation. Death was cheated, and love won.

Yes, Jesus tells the parable so that the man by the side of the road prefigures His own experience. The wounded Jew is Jesus.

This may be true even today. As we journey through life, working to ensure our own comfort and busy with our own religious agenda, Jesus is the one who lies crumpled by the side of the road. Often He is abandoned, forgotten, and silent. He is the bruised and broken one, the stranger we pity and yet pass by. The "least of these" is Jesus, always Jesus.

When we recognize this, Jesus' appeal at the end of the parable to "go and do likewise" suddenly means something more, something different. Rather than just a challenging word of instruction to be kind to strangers, it becomes a personal appeal. "Please," Jesus is saying, "help Me."

Forgive us, Jesus, for passing You by. And open our eyes so we can see. ☺

* Respected New Testament scholar Darrell L. Bock summarizes the prevailing view nicely (albeit incorrectly!): "The victim is only minimally described since he is not the focus; those who react to him are." See Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), p. 1029.

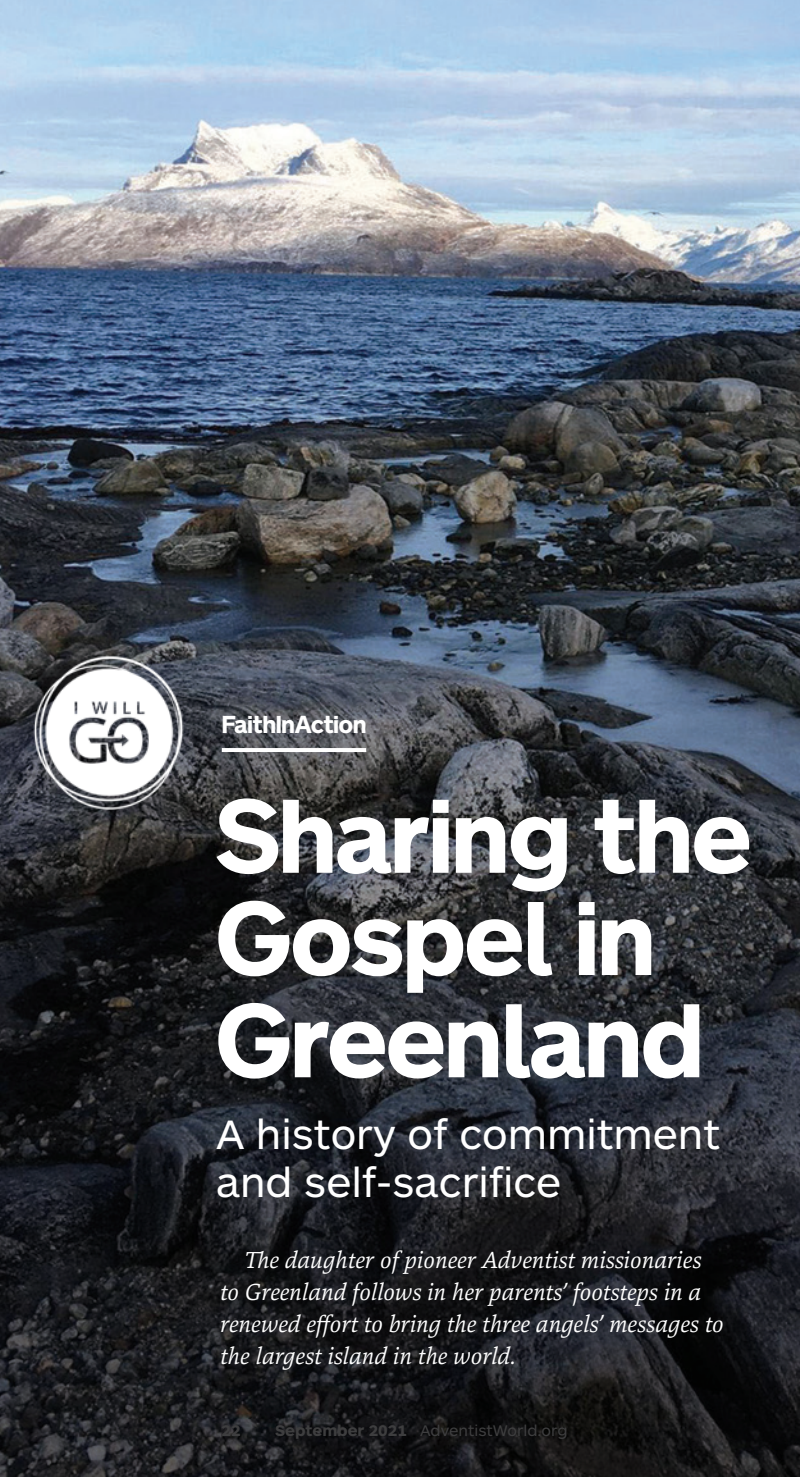
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Tony and Elsebeth Butenko visiting in Nuuk



The pastor's house, clinic, and church in Nuuk



FaithInAction

Sharing the Gospel in Greenland

A history of commitment and self-sacrifice

The daughter of pioneer Adventist missionaries to Greenland follows in her parents' footsteps in a renewed effort to bring the three angels' messages to the largest island in the world.

July 3, 2021, marked 300 years since Hans Egede, a Danish-Norwegian Lutheran minister, traveled to Greenland to bring Christianity to this cold and extensive region in the far north.

Then 67 years ago, in 1954, another courageous and dedicated Christian minister, Adventist pioneer Andreas Nielsen, set foot on the island. He was sent by the Northern European Division to share the gospel message with the people.

Nielsen began his ministry by visiting Amon Berthelsen in Sisimiut, about 320 kilometers (200 miles) north of Nuuk. Berthelsen and his son had been introduced to Adventism through literature that fishermen from the Faroe Islands had distributed, and they began keeping the Sabbath. Later that year Berthelsen was baptized.

REACHING THE PEOPLE

Nielsen and his wife, Aase, and their two children settled in Greenland's capital city, Nuuk. They visited Nuuk residents in their homes, and Pastor Nielsen also traveled by boat to places along the coast to tell as many as he could about Jesus.

Soon after Nielsen's arrival in Greenland, the tract titled *Look Up* (*Ardlorit* in Greenlandic) was translated and distributed throughout the island. The books *Steps to Christ* and *The Great Controversy* were also later translated. These books and other Adventist literature were sent to many remote places and helped to break down prejudice to the gospel. Nielsen became known throughout many regions of Greenland.

NO ROOM AT THE INN

When the Niensens first arrived in Greenland, opposition from the Lutheran State Church was severe. On one occasion, when Nielsen and a fellow minister, Ernst Hansen, arrived in Ilulissat, in western Greenland, they learned that the rural dean of the Lutheran State Church in Nuuk had sent a letter of warning to the residents against the "heretics." When their baggage

had been unloaded from the boat, they went looking for lodging, but no one would take them in. They couldn't even find anyone willing to let them stay overnight in their outside shelters.

As it grew dark, the only option left to the two ministers was to set up their tent in an area swarming with hundreds of wild dogs. Thankfully, one Greenlander finally took pity on them and invited them home. "It could be fatal to stay there overnight," he told them.

As Nielsen traveled throughout Greenland, he built friendships with several people with whom he could stay whenever he was ministering in their area.

In 1954 the Northern European Division financed the building of a house for the pastor and his family in Nuuk. A clinic and church, also financed by the division, were added and dedicated in 1959.

Nielsen and his family ministered in Greenland for 10 years and led several people to Jesus and to join the Adventist Church. Other pastors and clinic workers followed and helped to grow and preserve the church. They also created good will among the people.

Unfortunately, after about 40 years of mission in Greenland, economic challenges in the local union resulted in the discontinuation of paid pastoral work on the island. In 1998, the church-owned house, clinic, and church were sold, but the Adventists that remained in Greenland still had a spirit of mission. In the years to follow, contact with the church in Denmark was maintained through the annual Ingathering campaign, visitation, and letters.

THE WORK CONTINUES

The daughter of pioneers Andreas and Aase Nielsen, Elsebeth Butenko, who lived in Greenland as a child and later served twice on the island as a physiotherapist, longed to continue the mission work that her parents had started. In the summer of 2019 she traveled from her home in Denmark to Greenland with a large supply of Ellen White's book *Steps to Christ* printed in Danish and Greenlandic and began going home to home in Nuuk, visiting the residents and giving out the books.

In 2020 her husband, Tony, a pastor in Denmark,



A woman in Nuuk holds a Greenlandic copy of *The Great Controversy*.

joined her. The couple added *The Great Controversy* and a Greenlandic translation of the children's book *Jesus: Bible Truth for Children*, by Ruth Atwood, to their toolkit.

When Tony had to return to Denmark to care for his churches, Elsebeth stayed on in Nuuk, distributing books through the end of December. She then had additional copies of the books printed, and in the new year she relocated to Sisimiut, where her father had baptized the first Adventist convert.

Elsebeth was encouraged to learn that several families still remembered her father. She has reported many encouraging stories of how she and her husband and their books have been well received by Greenlanders. Bible studies have been initiated, friendships developed, and plans are being made to develop a website to help further the mission on the island.

The population in Greenland may be small, but through active witnessing efforts empowered by the Holy Spirit, many precious souls may be won for the kingdom. ©

To read more about the history of the mission work in Greenland, go to <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=CCS5&highlight=david%7Cdown>.

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Greenland—*Kalaallit Nunaat* in Greenlandic—is a beautiful island country with snow-covered mountains, icebergs, and curtains of colored lights occasionally visible in the night sky. In summer the landscape is carpeted

with green plants and tiny flowers. It's located between the Arctic and Atlantic oceans, east of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago.

Greenland is the world's largest non-continental island. Only about one fifth of its

territory—an area about the size of Norway—is ice-free; the rest is covered by an ice cap. A population of about 56,000 people, almost 90 percent of whom are Inuit, live there today, primarily on the southwest coast.

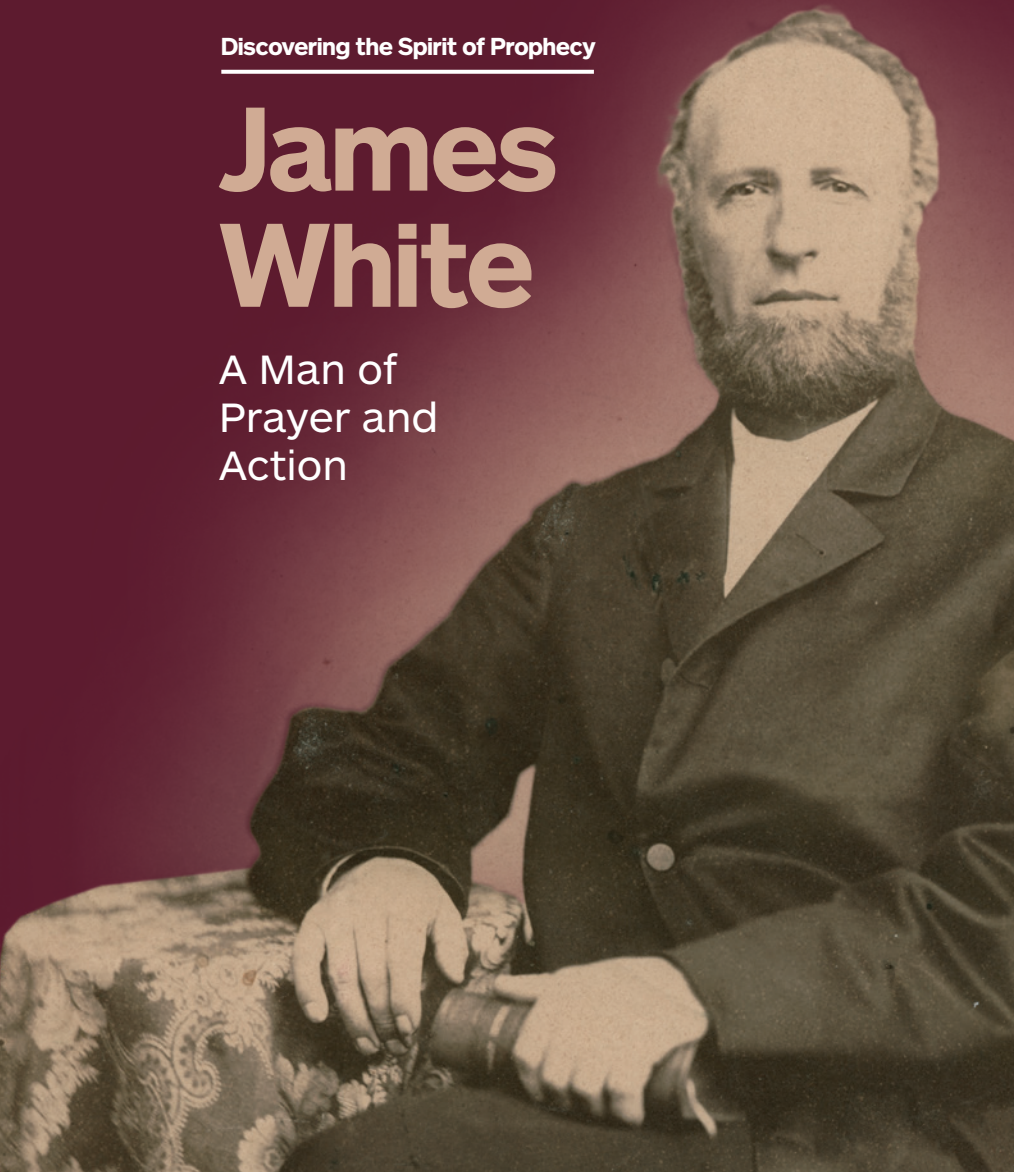
The Seventh-day Adventist movement began under divine guidance, with James White, Ellen White, and Joseph Bates as its primary leaders. James was the main leader and organizer of the emerging church during both its embryonic and growing stages. He stood side by side with his wife as a “faithful warrior” for 36 years “in the battle for truth.”¹ This year marks the 200th anniversary of James’s birth. His story must be remembered.

W. C. White described his father as a man who “prayed with earnestness and with solemn reverence.”² James’s niece Lillian Belden remembered him often going away by himself and praying in “lonely attics or haylofts” when the “sun was dropping down . . . wringing his hands,”³ pleading with God until he received an answer. James considered prayer to be a sacred duty; however, it “was never designed to take the place of justice, benevolence, true repentance, and mercy.”⁴ To him, prayer and action went hand in hand.

Discovering the Spirit of Prophecy

James White

A Man of Prayer and Action



EARLY DAYS

James was born on August 4, 1821, in Palmyra, Maine. Raised by active and devout Christian parents, he learned to be a man of prayer and action. He experienced true conversion when he was 13. Feeling “pressed with the weight” of his sins, he cried to Jesus for forgiveness and acceptance,⁵ and was later baptized into the Christian Connexion Church.

James was unable to go to school during his childhood because of cross-eyed vision and a digestive disorder. When he was 16, his physical impairments resolved. He began a brief course of study and, three years later, achieved his academic dream of becoming a teacher. Unfortunately, he traded time with God for his studies and lost the taste for Bible study.

During that time William Miller’s clear arguments and powerful exhortations convinced James to go back to the Bible. James’s hope of secular prosperity was replaced by spiritual convictions, and he began working enthusiastically for the Millerite cause.⁶ James was changed from a secular man to a spiritual leader. He identified as a Christian Connexion minister during his Millerite preaching in the fall of 1842.

BEGINNING OF SABBATARIAN ADVENTISM

After the 1844 disappointment, James did not abandon his faith in the soon coming of Jesus, but immersed himself in Bible study. Along with other dedicated followers of the Bible, he helped to organize the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1863. As a man with “a burning zeal in activity, in harmony with an overmastering faith,”⁷ James dedicated his life to preaching the Adventist message.

On August 30, 1846, James married Ellen Harmon. The beginnings of their married life were characterized by poverty and poor health. One time, to make enough money to support his family and attend his first Sabbatarian conference in Rocky Hill, Connecticut, James went into the woods to chop cordwood. He developed severe pain and was unable to sleep. Prayers arose night after night to relieve James's pain and give him strength.⁸

That summer the Whites were invited to attend meetings in western New York. James "took a large job of mowing, and when fainting beneath the noonday sun," he "would bow before God" and "call upon him for strength" to be refreshed and mow on again.⁹ After five weeks he earned enough to attend the conference. Thus, in action and prayer, James found strength and relief.

James and Ellen were significant sources of encouragement to each other through 35 years of shared joys, losses, extensive travels, and ministry. Their letters reveal the very real nature of their marriage. When a disheartened James said, "Wife, it is of no use to try to struggle on any longer," Ellen was there to encourage him.¹⁰ When Ellen questioned the ways of God, James was there to utter, "Hush, the Lord has not forsaken us. He gives us enough for our present wants. Jesus fared no better."¹¹

JAMES AND THE CAUSE

James was an enthusiastic and industrious man who did not give up easily. He was a prolific writer, initiated the first regular Seventh-day Adventist periodical in 1849 (now *Adventist Review*), and founded the Review and Herald and Pacific Press publishing houses. He considered the publishing ministry his "burden" and "work."¹² His fund-

raising and business skills assisted church institutions facing heavy financial difficulties. He declined the office of president of the newly established General Conference in 1863, although he later served several terms as president, for a total of 10 years. He had an eye to find and connect talented and consecrated people, such as Annie and Uriah Smith, John Andrews, John Loughborough, and others, to the work of the church. His entire adult life was interwoven with the Adventist cause and its progress.

STROKES AND LAST YEARS

James engaged himself in "continued physical and mental strain, without the least relaxation from labor for more than ten years," resulting in tragic consequences.¹³ On August 16, 1865, he suffered the first of a series of strokes. The effects of these strokes afflicted him for the rest of his life.

While living in Greenville, Michigan, and experiencing difficulty in performing mental or physical labor, the Whites united more ardently in constant prayer. "My husband and I," wrote Ellen, "visited the grove frequently and pleaded with God for health and strength to continue to labor in His cause."¹⁴

On August 6, 1881, James passed away. His last days were spent in intense prayer. "About two weeks before his death," Ellen penned, "my husband often asked me to accompany him to the grove, near our house, to engage with him in prayer. These were precious seasons." They confessed to each other and supplicated "for the mercy and blessing of God."¹⁵ James also confessed to others and asked for the forgiveness of his brethren, recognizing his fallibility, limitations, and frailty.

Ellen deeply missed James and their prayer moments. She wrote,

This year marks the 200th anniversary of James White's birth.

"How I miss him! . . . How I long to hear his prayers blending with my prayers for light and guidance, for wisdom to know how to plan and lay out the work!"¹⁶ "The best way in which I and my children can honor the memory of him who has fallen is to take the work where he left it, and in the strength of Jesus carry it forward to completion."¹⁷ ©

¹ E. G. White, "Notes of Travel: The Cause in Vermont," *Review and Herald*, Nov. 20, 1883.

² William C. White, "Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White: Early Memories of Our First Home," *Review and Herald*, Feb. 13, 1936.

³ Mrs. H. J. Gilbert (Lillie Belden-Gilbert) to M. E. Olsen, Jan. 19, 1913, Ellen G. White Estate correspondence file, in James R. Nix, "Our Praying Pioneers," *Adventist World*, NAD edition, October 2011.

⁴ James White, *An Earnest Appeal* ([Battle Creek, Mich.]: 1874), p. 40.

⁵ James White, "That Sweet Morning," *Youth's Instructor*, February 1854.

⁶ James White, *Life Incidents* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1868), pp. 65-72.

⁷ William C. White, "Sketches and Memories of James and Ellen G. White: The Man Who Couldn't Wait," *Review and Herald*, Feb. 28, 1935.

⁸ Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1860), vol. 2, p. 88.

⁹ James White, *Life Incidents*, p. 274; E. G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2, p. 94.

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 1, p. 89.

¹¹ Ellen G. White manuscript 19, 1885, in Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases* (Silver Spring, Md.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), vol. 6, pp. 131, 132.

¹² James White, "The Power of the Press," *Review and Herald*, July 19, 1881.

¹³ James White, "The Future," *Review and Herald*, Jan. 10, 1871.

¹⁴ Ellen G. White manuscript 6, 1868.

¹⁵ Ellen G. White, "A Sketch of Experience," in *Memoriam: A Sketch of the Last Sickness and Death of Elder James White* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Review and Herald Press, 1881), pp. 46, 47.

¹⁶ Ellen G. White letter 196, 1899, in Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958, 1980), book 2, p. 259.

¹⁷ E. G. White, "A Sketch of Experience," in *Memoriam*, p. 55; E. G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 111.

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Justified and Perfected

Q

What is the relationship between justification by faith and Christian perfection?

A

They are certainly related, but they are not the same, and I should add that never should Christian perfection be conceived as preparing the way for justification by faith. The question requires a definition of both concepts and a clear understanding of how we are saved. We need to look at Christ's work outside us and in us.

1. CHRIST'S WORK OUTSIDE US

Here is a fundamental idea when we study the concept of salvation: God decided to save us without asking for our opinion. Long before God created us, He formulated a plan to restore us to fellowship with Him (Rom. 16:25, 26; Eph. 1:9, 10). In our absence the Lord made decisions that would affect us: The Son of God would offer Himself to become human (John 1:14, 15); would minister to suffering humanity to reveal God's infinite love (1 John 4:9); would take our place and die, bearing our sins as our substitute (Rom. 5:8; 1 John 3:5; 4:10); after being buried and resurrected, He would ascend to heaven to be our high priest (Heb. 4:14, 15). His sacrifice would remove the barrier of sin that separated us from the Father, making it possible for us to return to Him (2 Cor. 5:19, 21). God did all of this one-sidedly, without consulting us.

God also decided to send the Holy Spirit to entreat us to accept His gracious saving work (John 16:13). In all of this our obedience or lack thereof played no role (Rom. 5:8; 1 Peter 3:18). It was all God's doing! Unilaterally God determined that His Son will come back to earth to take His people to the Father's house (John 14:1-3). He also established that at the Second Coming He would

transform us (1 Cor. 15:51-54) and remove us from an environment characterized by sin, suffering, and death, and would finally create a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21:1, 4). All of this free of charge! The only thing required from us is to accept the gift of salvation through faith in Christ—the righteousness of Christ imputed/credited to us. At that moment we are freed from the enslaving power of sin (Gal. 6:15; Col. 1:13, 14).

2. THE WORK OF CHRIST IN US

Based on what I have said, I would suggest that Christ's work in us is not what saves us but that it is rather a manifestation of His power, through the Spirit, procuring to restore in us His image. It is the Spirit that enables us to grow into the likeness of the Son of God while at the same time we are constantly depending on His atoning work for us. This is precisely what Christian perfection is—we are daily growing in grace in order to be like Him (1 Peter 2:1-3, 21; 1 John 2:6), while concurrently placing our faith exclusively in Christ's forgiving grace for the assurance of our salvation (1 John 2:1, 2).

These two aspects of the Christian life should not be confused with each other. There are many reasons to justify our need to develop a character like Christ's, but probably one of the most important is to make our service to others more effectual (1 John 4:11; 1 Peter 2:12). Then unbelievers will see our "good behavior in Christ," and they will be ashamed (1 Peter 3:16, NIV). Peter adds, "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others" (1 Peter 4:10; NIV). This is our response of gratitude, prompted by the Spirit, to God's loving grace that grants us eternal life through His Son. ☺

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Health & Wellness

Vitamin B₁₂

Why is it important in our diet?

During the recent General Conference virtual global camp meeting, there was an interesting discussion on vitamin B₁₂. What is the role of vitamin B₁₂, and why is it so important in our conversations regarding a vegetarian diet?

Vitamin B₁₂ is an essential nutrient required to produce DNA in the body. It's also vital in the production of red blood cells and the maintenance of nerve cell tissue, especially the myelin sheaths. Myelin ensures the normal conduction of electrical impulses along the nerve fibers. B₁₂ also lowers the level of homocysteine, an amino acid that may be linked to dementia and heart disease.

Deficiency of B₁₂ results in decreased production of red blood cells (anemia) and nerve tissue degeneration and dysfunction. In severe cases this can be fatal; hence the original description of this condition as pernicious (deadly) anemia.

B₁₂, or cobalamin, is a water-soluble vitamin that has a complex structure similar to that of the heme molecule of hemoglobin, which carries oxygen in the red blood cells. The recommended daily allowance for men and nonpregnant women is 2.4 micrograms (µg) per day, and 2.6 µg per day for pregnant women. Cobalamin is produced by microorganisms (bacteria and other single-celled organisms), and humans are dependent on the diet for B₁₂. The absorption of B₁₂ is complex, beginning in the mouth and then finally absorbed in the ileum (end of the small intestine). It is then stored in the liver (an amount that may cover five to seven years' needs). Tiny amounts of B₁₂ may be produced by bacteria in the mouth, but this isn't sufficient to provide for daily requirements.

B₁₂ is important in our conversations regarding a vegetarian diet because B₁₂ is not present in adequate quantities in plant foods.

Risk factors for B₁₂ deficiency are:

- inadequate intake (total vegetarians or vegans)
- older lacto-ovo vegetarians
- previous stomach or bowel surgery (gastrectomy or ileal resection)
- autoimmune process, e.g., pernicious anemia
- alcohol use
- Crohn's disease
- medications—prolonged use of metformin (diabetes), proton pump inhibitors, and histamine-2 receptor antagonists (lowering stomach acid)

In some parts of the world vitamin B₁₂-fortified foods, milk equivalents, and B₁₂ supplements are available. (It's important to read the labels of the foods you use to ensure you're getting an adequate supply of vitamin B₁₂.) If these are not readily available, carefully use dairy products and eggs, and/or use a 500 µg supplement at least four times weekly. A B₁₂ blood-level test can confirm whether you're taking in adequate B₁₂.

We've given a very brief overview in answer to your questions; please visit our website for a comprehensive, well-referenced review of this very important topic (<https://www.healthministries.com/vitamin-b12-for-the-vegetarian/>).

Robust scientific evidence confirms the advantages of being a vegetarian. As we responsibly practice healthful, balanced vegetarianism, we have well-founded reasons for what we do, and may enjoy life to the fullest!

"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15, NIV). ☺

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Celebrating Recovery



“May I Tell You a Story?”

BY DICK DUERKSEN

As long as you surrender yourself, God will do the heavy lifting.

Hi, Jonathan. You don’t know me, but I’m Mark. My cousin is in your Celebrate Recovery group, and he tells me you help people who are desperate. Well, I’m desperate, and I need help. I’m about to lose my wife and my children, but I just can’t stop drinking.”

The man’s voice sounded like his heart was breaking, a sound Jonathan hears far too often as he serves more than 100 people each week as leader of his church’s Celebrate Recovery ministry.

Jonathan listened, asked several questions, and then told Mark that he wanted to think and pray about his request for a couple days, and then talk again.

“But first,” Jonathan said, “you must commit to not drinking. Go home, talk this through with your wife, Carol, and

pour out all of the alcoholic beverages you have in the house.”

When the two men talked a couple days later, Mark was still very emotional and very committed to wanting to change his life. He and Carol had agreed to not drinking, and they had poured out all of their alcohol. Knowing that this was a big step that would require a major commitment of time and energy, both Jonathan and Mark agreed to start a 30-day trial run.

“I encouraged him that this was something we would be doing together,” remembers Jonathan, “and told him that each morning we would do a Bible study together, and that each night he would call me, and we’d talk about his day. You’ve got to be all in, sharing the good parts and the bad parts as we get to know each other, I said. As long as you surrender yourself, God will do the heavy lifting. And, whenever you feel like drinking, you must call me right then.”

The 30-day trial included three other expectations. First, Mark was to attend the Celebrate Recovery group that Jonathan led at the church. Second, Mark was to get involved with a church. Third, Mark was to join another weekly small Bible study.

“I really encouraged him to see that if he was serious about getting his life to

change, he was going to have to make some significant decisions about his relationship with God and choose to begin some new behaviors.”

There was one other *very important* thing. Jonathan told Mark that in all his conversations with his wife he was to begin speaking with her softly and gently.

Mark was good with that, and immediately began attending Jonathan’s group on Monday evening, and choosing new words for conversations at home.

At the end of the trial period, Mark had not drunk any alcohol for the 30 days. He had also done everything else Jonathan had asked him to do. He was amazed at the new person he had become, at the new way he was thinking, at the new way he was behaving, and at the new way he was seeing other people. He was excited about how God was changing him!

“I’m not the same person anymore,” Mark told his Bible study group. “I’m different, and I like the new me!”

For a long time Mark had used alcohol, and any other excuse he could find, to avoid his family. Now the Holy Spirit was moving mightily on Mark’s heart, urging him to share his new discoveries with everyone, especially with his wife, Carol. It took some convincing, but the two of them began getting up before the kids every morning and praying their way together through a marriage devotional book.

About 10 days after starting morning devotions with Carol, Mark called Jonathan and asked, “Do you think I should be praying with her before we do the devotional each morning?”

“Yes! Thank You, Jesus,” Jonathan said.

The marriage began to heal, and as their love blossomed, Mark wondered if he ought to also start leading a daily devotional and prayer with his children. Whatever the Holy Spirit challenged him to do, Mark talked it over with Jonathan and Carol, and then ran with it.

Mark bought a children’s devotional book and began reading it at the dinner

table with his 16-year-old son, their adopted 6-year-old daughter, their 4-year-old son, and their 2-year-old daughter. The kids wanted to know more about the story and asked a lot of questions. Those conversations transformed the family.

“It’s going really well,” Mark told Jonathan during their devotional one morning. “Do you think I ought to also start praying with my kids at the dinner table?”

“It was incredible to see how Mark was responding to God,” says Jonathan. “As he spent time personally in God’s Word, he became a happier person. As he met with the Celebrate Recovery groups and studied with me and Carol every day, the Holy Spirit continued moving on his heart, encouraging him to make other positive changes in every part of his life.”

Mark has now celebrated six months of not drinking. He and his family are active participants in their church. Mark has been baptized. Carol has been baptized. The whole family is involved in small group Bible studies. Mark now gives Carol two nights “off” each week so she can be refreshed and renewed by spending time with other women from the church.

Choosing a personal relationship with Jesus and growing through a study of God’s Word and prayer is turning their lives inside out!

“We are discipling people to become disciple-makers,” says Jonathan. “We’re building leaders all the time. When people like Mark cry out for help, our goal is to raise them up to be a leader, someone who can guide others to a new life in Jesus. Key to making that happen is focusing them on serving others. Family first, then into the community. When we’re no longer focused on ourselves, but energetically serving others, the Holy Spirit grows us farther and faster than we have ever dreamed possible.” ©

To learn more about the Celebrate Recovery ministry, please visit <https://www.celebraterecovery.com>.

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Seventh-day
Adventist Church



We Are Always Faced With Choices

Destinations depend on the decisions we must make.

Life is a result of all the choices you make.” That’s something my mom said while we were talking on the phone one day. She continued speaking for a few moments, then stopped. “Hey, that was pretty good advice, wasn’t it?” Of course, I agreed. It was good advice.

Right now I have to make a lot of choices. I have one more year of college. Knowing I need to figure out where I want to live and work in 365 days makes that amount of time feel a lot shorter than it

is. My mom’s comment is in the back of my mind as I realize that now is the time I will make some of the most important choices of my life.

There are a lot of people in the Bible who were faced with big decisions. Learning about Bible characters helps us learn about ourselves.

One of my favorite stories in the Bible takes place within only four verses. Jesus is hanging on the cross, surrounded by soldiers and other onlookers who are there primarily just to see Him, despite the two

criminals hanging by His side. One of the men on a nearby cross makes fun of Jesus for not saving Himself and them. But the other says, “We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong” (Luke 23:41, NIV). Then he turns to speak with Jesus and says, “Remember me when you come into your kingdom” (verse 42, NIV).

In this story two men have a lot in common. They made some bad choices because those had caused them both to be cruci-



Bible Treasure

“Truly I tell
you, . . . you
will be with me
in paradise”

(Luke 23:43, NIV).

fied. At the end of their life they were still faced with a choice. One turned to mockery, while the other asked for mercy.

When we are faced with decisions, there are always ways we can react. Sometimes it's easier to follow what everyone else is doing, even if it isn't right. But making the right choice can have positive results.

Our choices always take us somewhere. I'm not sure how much the thief knew about Jesus before he dedicated his life to Him. Maybe he knew of Him from what others had

said; maybe he had seen Him throughout the streets; or maybe he had attended an event at which Jesus was speaking or preaching. But it's possible he didn't know much about Him at all. Either way, he realized that where Jesus was, he wanted to be also. He decided that Jesus was the right choice.

The story ends as Jesus answers him, “Truly I tell you, . . . you will be with me in paradise” (verse 43, NIV). I'm sure when Jesus looked him in the eye and promised him a place in

Paradise, he knew he had made the right choice.

We are always faced with choices, and many of them affect us for the rest of our lives. But when I think about the decisions I have to make, I realize that as long as I am sure of my ultimate destination, all the other things I face will be small in comparison. ©

Juliet Bromme is a senior communication major at Union College and was a summer intern at *Adventist World* in 2021.

10 DAYS OF
PRAYER

Materials by
Mark Finley

THE THREE ANGELS CALL TO PRAYER

January 5–15, 2022

“Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people.”

REVELATION 14:6, ESV

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