

Adventist World

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**The
Strength
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Second Advent Gentleness

BY BILL KNOTT

“Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near” (Phil. 4:5, NRSV).

The vitriol arrives in brown manila envelopes, or seeps out through the pixels of the emails on my laptop screen.

“If only you knew the horrible things that _____ is doing,” the author thunders, *“you would be embarrassed to be an Adventist. Where is your editorial about the sins of _____? Cry aloud, and spare not!”*

“Dr. _____ may seem the picture of propriety, but underneath he is a roaring dragon,” another letter writer claims, summoning images of beastly powers with which to indict a teacher he reviles. There is no softening the blow. Sin must be pointed out: the sinner must be shamed.

In an age of rage and brokenness—when those with power frequently misuse it, and those without it cry in helplessness—it should be no surprise that even in the remnant church the decibels are rising. The thoughtful, pointed disagreements of yesteryear have given way to the “gotcha” sound bites that skewer an opponent’s plans, or views, or character. We watch, half in terror, half in glee, as titans hurl words designed, not to persuade, but to belittle or malign. And all this in the name of “gentle Jesus, meek and mild.”¹

But if the apostle Paul is right—and for the record, I believe he is—there’s a deep connection between the gentleness of Jesus’ faithful followers and the nearness of His coming. In Paul’s cryptic formulation, the gentle behavior of believers is both a sign of the presence of the Lord in His church *and* an urgent requirement in light of His second coming. The bond between our treatment of each other (believers and

unbelievers) and the church’s effective witness was unequivocally announced by Jesus Himself: “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

So we should grow concerned, as individuals and as a movement, when the discourse between us and the ways we treat each other no longer show the tenderness of Jesus, for we may be actively undermining the church’s witness and postponing the kingdom we say

we seek. Those who love to cite the example of Jesus denouncing the hypocrisy of the Pharisees as justification for their own churlish behavior haven’t read far enough. Ellen White provides the crucial nuance about Jesus: “He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, never gave needless pain to a sensitive soul. He did not censure human weakness. He fearlessly denounced hypocrisy, unbelief, and iniquity, but tears were in His voice as He uttered His scathing rebukes.”²

As you read this special collection of articles that both celebrate and underline the gentleness of Jesus, pray for a heart made supple by mercy, and a tongue baptized with peace.

*“For not with swords, loud clashing,
Nor roll of stirring drums,
With deeds of love and mercy,
The heavenly kingdom comes.”³*

¹ Charles Wesley, “Gentle Jesus, Meek and Mild,” *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1985), no. 540.

² Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 353.

³ Ernest W. Shurtleff, “Lead On, O King Eternal,” *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, no. 619.

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Something to Live By



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.



Yemi Osibanjo, vice president of Nigeria (right), attended the thirty-third inaugural ceremony at Babcock University in Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State, on August 8, 2021. Osibanjo commended the Adventist Church for investing in high-quality education. “This is the direction many religious organizations must follow,” he said.

Photo: Babcock University

43,866

The number of online viewers during a recent Hispanic camp meeting. Hispanic churches in the Kentucky-Tennessee Conference in the United States organized a weekend revival full of worship prepared for the Spanish-speaking communities in the region and beyond. The theme was “Reconecta2” (Reconnected) and was designed to revitalize the churches after a year full of challenges.

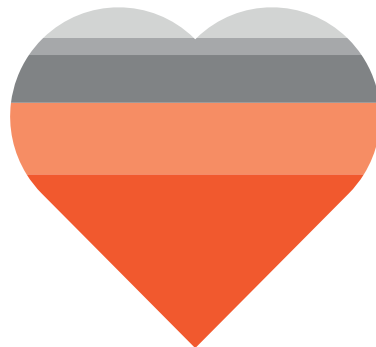
“Our research validates the original hypothesis that working smarter, not harder, gives better results; moderate activity combined with a negative energy diet achieves the best results.”

—Harold Mayer, professor in the School of Physical Education, Health, and Wellness at Southern Adventist University, Tennessee, United States, about a research project he worked on. As part of the research, Mayer and his coresearchers tested 44 females between the ages of 25 and 54 to see if their bodies were efficiently burning fat or inefficiently burning carbohydrates.

Avoiding Anger and Bitterness

As part of the 2017-2018 Global Church Member Survey, researchers asked the question: Do you try to avoid anger and bitterness in your heart?

- 9% Not true at all for me
- 5% Rarely true for me
- 14% Neutral
- 21% Somewhat true for me
- 51% True for me a great deal



Source: ASTR Research and Evaluation Team, n=56,859

15-Year-Old

Byron started a Bible study group at King’s Christian College in Queensland, Australia, during lunchtimes for his classmates. He is part of a Bible Discovery reading group at the church’s teen Sabbath School. He proposed using this Bible study method, and his peers loved the idea. The group grew quickly, with more than 40 students attending now. Byron and the other leaders decided to split into a girls and boys group.

9 Months

The time period that the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) will implement initiatives in Maiwut, South Sudan, to tackle the effects of the pandemic on schools and small businesses, starting August. The initiative will include COVID-19 safe-learning campaigns, increased capital for vendors who lost their businesses, and social behavior interventions within school systems. ADRA has partnered with local Adventist churches, primary schools, and health centers to offer training and mentoring.

“Disenfranchising a lot of people because of the date is not the best thing to do. Though the date is an entrenched constitutional clause, we will look into the possibilities of advocating for a change from the specific date to a day in December, as is done in some countries.”

—Nana Akufo-Addo, president of Ghana, to a delegation of Adventist church leaders. The next election will be held on Sabbath, December 7, 2021. Church leaders met with Akufo-Addo to address religious liberty issues affecting Adventists in Ghana. Akufo-Addo gave his assurance that he will work on these issues that impact the Adventist Church in Ghana.

“I have learned to come closer to God. We needed an additional 45,000 [Philippine] pesos [about US\$890] for a bigger venue, and God brought in a person who paid for that amount. I feel so privileged to be a part of this and to witness God at work! It became clear that God wanted this, so there’s no other way but forward.”

—Amy Goc-Ong, an Adventist-laymen’s Services and Industries (ASI) member, about the Revelation of Hope seminar. ASI members organized and sponsored the seminar in a hotel in Tagum, Davao del Norte, Philippines. The event ended with more than 200 people accepting the Adventist message and being baptized.

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

“Smiling has great health benefits, and young people accepted the challenge to go and share the gospel and a smile with someone who might not know the love of God.”

—Diana Díaz, a volunteer in the East Venezuela Union Mission, about the nearly 9,000 Adventists who participated in distributing supplies and messages of hope to those facing economic challenges. Thousands of young people in Caracas, the capital of Venezuela, took to the streets to distribute bags of fruit and literature in plazas, sidewalks, and hospitals from July 1 to August 7. ➔



Photo: Central Venezuela Conference

Loma Linda Inaugurates New Medical Campus

By Ansel Oliver, Larry Becker, and Sheann Brandon, Loma Linda University News

Loma Linda University Health (LLUH) officially opened the Dennis and Carol Troesh Medical Campus on August 6. The new campus in Loma Linda, California, United States, is home to a state-of-the-art adult hospital and children's hospital tower expansion—a momentous occasion years in the making, as leaders celebrated with a jubilant ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Built to meet updated state seismic codes for acute-care facilities, the campus is home to LLUH's new 16-story medical center and nine-story children's hospital tower. The campus incorporates leading advances in patient safety and comfort and was designed to continue the organization's 115-year legacy of care and health-care education in what has become one of the most medically complex regions in the United States.

The new campus was made possible in part by the philanthropy efforts of Vision 2020—The Campaign for a Whole Tomorrow. Leaders thanked philanthropists Dennis and Carol Troesh for their lead gift of US\$100 million to the initiative.

"This is truly a historic day in the legacy of Loma Linda Univer-

sity Health," Richard Hart, president of Loma Linda University Health, said. "There are no words to adequately express the sincere gratitude and excitement that we feel as we open these doors to the community."

On Sunday, August 8, Hart took part in the transfer of patients to the new medical center on the Dennis and Carol Troesh Medical Campus.

"What a remarkable transition in one lifetime from a quiet sanitarium with a College of Medical Evangelists to a world-renowned academic health center known as Loma Linda University Health," Hart said. "We stand today on the shoulders of many who have made this transition a reality."

The acute-care facility is built upon 126 base isolators to reduce the impact of seismic activity. The medical center is the second-tallest hospital in California and has 320 licensed beds, while the children's hospital expansion adds 84 licensed pediatric beds, for a total bed count of 364.

Kerry Heinrich, CEO of Loma Linda University Health Hospitals, reflected on the Seventh-day Ad-

Facilities are home to advanced patient care, leaders say.

ventist legacy of the organization. He highlighted LLUH's cofounder Ellen White arriving in the area in 1905 and remarking, "This is the very place" that would be used to bring hope and healing. The new campus, Heinrich said, begins a new chapter in that legacy.

"This very place will support the intense efforts of researchers whose discoveries will make an impact around the world," he said.

A special additional ceremony was also held on the new facility's fifth floor for the San Manuel Maternity Pavilion. Leaders thanked the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians for their contribution of US\$25 million. The gift, the largest in the tribe's history, recognized the century-long partnership between the hospital and the tribe.

Loma Linda University Health comprises eight schools, six hospitals, and approximately 17,000 employees. LLUH is the flagship academic health sciences center of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and it has sponsored numerous missionaries and served as a consultant for the establishment of the six other Seventh-day Adventist medical schools worldwide.

"The future physicians and health-care professionals who learn here will have many opportunities to train in multidisciplinary teams," Tamara Thomas, executive vice president for medical affairs at Loma Linda University Health, said. "It is my hope that the work taking place within these walls will transform the lives of both our current and future health-care professionals and the diverse community we serve." ©

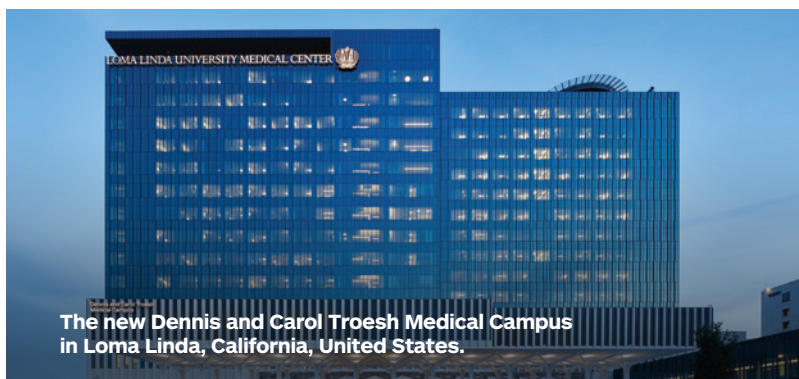


Photo: Photo: Loma Linda University News

ADRA in Haiti Focuses on Long-Term Aid for Survivors

By Kimi-Roux James, Adventist Development and Relief Agency

Since a 7.2-magnitude earthquake struck the southern region of Haiti on August 14, the death toll continued to climb for weeks after search-and-rescue efforts. According to official reports, there have been thousands of deaths and injuries and significant infrastructure loss, with more than 7,000 houses destroyed and more than 12,000 buildings damaged, including hospitals, schools, and churches.

Several cities in the south of the country were the hardest hit and suffered extensive damage and destruction to buildings and homes. In Petit-Trou-de-Nippes there were downed phone lines, which left the city with limited communication services. Haiti's capital city, Port-au-Prince, was rocked by the earthquake, but no significant damages were reported.

Three days after reeling from the recent quake, Haiti was additionally impacted by Tropical Storm Grace, which left torrential flooding in areas of the country, adding to an increase of people in need of humanitarian assistance. On top of this, gang violence has reportedly escalated, displacing more than 19,000 people in the country's southern peninsula.

"The southern peninsula is a hot spot for gang-related violence and has been unreachable for the past few months because of road blockages and security concerns," Fritz Bissereth, country director for the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in Haiti, said. "Humanitarian personnel have allegedly been the targets of repeated attacks. Additionally, the surge in COVID-19 cases has tapered off, but the possible displacement of thousands of



People peek through what remains of an Adventist church in the southern peninsula in Haiti.

Photo: Haitian Union Mission

people has created ripe conditions for a spike in coronavirus infections. It is something that could potentially overwhelm an already weak and overstretched health system that has to assist those injured by the earthquake and tropical storm." According to local authorities, by August only 0.1 percent of the population in Haiti was vaccinated.

Government officers have conducted damage assessments. According to local sources, it will take weeks to determine the extent of damages and humanitarian needs fully.

ADRA has been working on several relocation projects to assist internally displaced survivors of gang violence. The agency is working closely with Haiti Adventist Hospital in Diquini, where injured people can receive critical orthopedic medical care and treatment. The hospital was soon filled beyond capacity, with many wounded and injured people since the earthquake struck.

"ADRA is working closely with the local Adventist hospital to offer logistical and coordination support and provide assistance for transport, food, and purchase of medicine," Bissereth said.

Agency teams up to assist the wounded and displaced.

He added that after assessing the needs of affected populations, ADRA scaled up its plans to provide urgent nonfood items for up to 6,000 people in St. Louis de Sud, Les Cayes, and Camp-Perrin. Purchases of tents, tarps, shelter kits, food, and water were much needed, according to findings from people impacted in those areas.

"Many people have been affected, and families are still recovering, some of whom are trying to make sense of the devastation and unfathomable loss of loved ones," David Poloche, ADRA's regional director for the Inter-American Division of the Adventist Church, said. "Thank you to everyone who has fervently been praying for Haiti and ADRA. We continue to appeal for your thoughts and prayers as we find the strength to help people in Haiti recover through these unforeseeable ordeals. As we join forces with local officials, the Adventist Church, partners, and other agencies, what matters most is working together to ensure that people in Haiti get immediate access to essential items and receive ongoing aid in hopes of getting to a recovery stage." ©

New President of Zambia Is a Seventh-day Adventist

By Innocent Siachitoba and Lubinda Kashewe, Lusaka Conference, and Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist World*



Hakainde Sammy Hichilema was inaugurated as the seventh president of the republic of Zambia in Lusaka on August 24, 2021.

Photo: Lusaka Conference Youth Department

Hakainde Sammy Hichilema, a Seventh-day Adventist church member, has become the seventh president of the republic of Zambia after an official inauguration ceremony in the capital city of Lusaka on August 24. He won the August 12 general election after receiving 2,810,757 votes, outpacing the incumbent president, Edgar Chagwa Lungu, who received 1,814,201 votes. A total of 4,858,193 votes were cast in the national election.

Hichilema's message during the campaigns centered on uniting the country, which has 73 tribes, and re-vamping the nation's ailing economy.

At the church level, Hichilema and his wife, Mutinta Shepande Hichilema, are baptized members of Chilanga Mission District in the Lusaka Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Both were invested as Master Guides in the youth ministry of the Adventist Church in December 2020 by Southern Zambia Union Conference youth director Webster Silungwe after undergoing lessons for one year.

According to Reuters news organization, Hichilema, 59, was born in

southern Zambia in a low-income family. He attended the University of Zambia on a government scholarship and later studied business and finance at the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom. He is now a well-known businessman whose portfolio includes property management, cattle ranching, and financial consultancy.

Adventist members and leaders around the world congratulated Hichilema on his new position. "This is monumental and historical," Adventist Church associate youth director Pako Mokgwane wrote. "Continue to live by the ideals of your Master Guide pin."

Church member Joyce Motsoeneng wrote, "Congratulations! May the Lord be your leader all the way. May He bestow upon your life favor and wisdom, as He did to King Solomon. May you lead with integrity in Jesus Christ's name. May the nation of Zambia know God the Creator of heaven and earth through you."

"Let God lead through you," church member Thucha Emeldah added. "It will not be an easy road, but God is still God, and He will

Hakainde Hichilema has promised to unite the country.

guide you and protect you. We will also keep you in our prayers."

During his campaigns Hichilema promised to promote religious liberties for all faiths in the nation, adding that he wouldn't coerce anyone into joining his church, as alleged by his political opponents. Hichilema was elected on his sixth attempt at the country's top job.

On August 24 thousands of Zambians and foreign dignitaries filled the National Heroes Stadium in Lusaka to witness the inauguration of Hichilema. The ceremony began with the reading of a Bible verse and a prayer to "bless the president with wisdom, so he can continue to promote peace . . . and have peace amid all challenges."

Hichilema's first address to the nation was filled with a deep sense of gratitude to the many stakeholders who made that moment possible. He first thanked God and asked for His guidance. "I pray that God will continue to guide us through our journey; He is our anchor," Hichilema said.

He thanked his predecessor and political opponent Edgar Lungu for his service to the country. Hichilema also thanked his running partner and new vice president, Mutale Nalumango, and his wife, Mutinta. "Words cannot express my gratitude for your support and counsel through the years," he told the latter.

Hichilema vowed to fight for "inclusion, not exclusion; for gathering, not scattering." He promised to serve his country to the best of his abilities. "We will truly be your servants," he assured the citizens of Zambia. "That's our promise to you." ©

889,196

Membership of the West-Central Africa Division (WAD) as of June 30, 2021

“Our institutions are centers of evangelization, and we must use modern means of evangelization to accomplish the work entrusted to us. I pray that these materials will serve to spread the good news in these three institutions and even beyond.”

—Elie Weick-Dido, West-Central Africa Division president, about a donation of projectors to the three colleges in the Côte d'Ivoire Conference. The Adventist colleges of Bouaké, Abidjan, and Divo each received 20 projectors.

“Schools are a powerful factor of evangelism because education and redemption are one and the same. When you have a school with six classrooms, you have six churches. So the more classrooms we have, the more churches we have. And it will boost our missionary work.”

—Charles Assandé, education director for the Côte d'Ivoire Conference, during a dedication service last fall of newly constructed churches and schools. These and other constructions projects were done in partnership with Maranatha Volunteers International, which recently added a new well at the Divo Adventist School that benefits the 1,500 students as well as the 2,500 community members.

1,912

The number of newly baptized members that joined Adventist churches after a six-week evangelistic series. This evangelistic series was organized by the Cameroon Union Mission and invited Kingsley Anonaba, executive secretary of the West-Central Africa Division, as the speaker. The sermons were broadcast live on YouTube and Facebook. Small groups of people met in homes and churches to watch the sermons, and other churches in neighboring countries joined as well, including Gabon, Chad, Rwanda, Ghana, and Nigeria. ⬇

More Than 1,000

The number of women attending a women ministries congress. The four-day congress took place at Collège Adventiste Bilingue BOMA de Bertoua. The event was sponsored by the East Cameroon Conference with the theme: “Women for Christ at Work in a World Without Virtues at a Time Like This.”



Photo: provided by the Cameroon Union Mission



Focus

“Your Gentleness Has Made Me Great”

Rediscovering the power
of an essential trait

We don't often hear the words “gentleness” or the even older term, “meekness,” nowadays. They are rarely present in the public discourse where politicians and leaders stake out their turf by projecting strength, power, or capable leadership. Media—including social media—thrives on conflict and tension, but not on gentleness. Spending time reviewing comments on Facebook, news media sites, and even church media sites offers many examples of the lack of gentleness—even among members of the same faith community.

WHAT IS GENTLENESS?

Synonymous words that come to mind when we think about gentleness include kindness, tenderness, mildness. The cultures we live in often equate “gentleness” with powerlessness or being unable to change our reality significantly. Yet the many references to gentleness and being gentle in Scripture offer us a different picture.

Imagine for a moment the following image that illustrates well the idea of gentleness. Envision a tall, muscular fireman rigged out to fight a major fire. He wears a thick, flame-retardant jacket and pants in bright yellow or orange. His hands, covered in special gloves, are huge. He carries an oxygen tank on his back, and a bright-yellow helmet crowns his head. He is covered in grime and looks sweaty. As we zoom in on the image, we suddenly see a fluffy, tiny ball of fur in his hands. The fireman has just saved a kitten from a fire. That picture is ready to go viral. It communicates gentleness, compassion, and care amid chaos, pain, and destruction.

Gentleness is compassion that has become visible—sometimes in small, seemingly insignificant ways. The Bible uses “gentle” (together with a noun that is described further by this adjective) and “gentleness” in a number of distinct contexts. Proverbs, notes Leland Ryken in the *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, includes “two striking images of gentleness in its disarming power.”¹ “A gentle tongue can break a bone” (Prov. 25:15, NIV) offers a unique perspective on the power of language—including also for good as noted in Proverbs 15:1: “A gentle answer turns away wrath” (NIV).

Gentleness and gentle speech, however, should not be mistaken for weakness or feebleness. Psalm 18:35 refers to God’s gentleness on behalf of the psalmist—and, by extension, God’s people. The language uses military imagery (verses 32, 34, 35), but it is God’s gentleness, not military might, that makes us great. The underlying Hebrew term translated with “gentleness” is associated with humility, forbearance, and burden bearing. We are confronted with a clear paradox: only God’s gentleness and grace can make humans great. Only God’s gentle compassion and care can reach and transform our sin-hardened hearts.

THE FIERCE AND GENTLE GOD

We often find this paradox in the many descriptions of divine revelation. While the people experienced the fire and thunder covering Sinai, felt the quakes shaking the ground, and trembled at God’s revelation of power (Ex. 19:16-20), God chooses the “gentle whisper” (NIV) or the “still small voice” (NKJV) to reveal Himself to depressed and disappointed Elijah (1 Kings 19:12). In Scripture God is the warrior (Ex. 15:3; Isa. 42:13), but He is also the shepherd, who gently cares for His flock (Ps. 23). He is the healer (Ex. 15:26; Deut. 7:15), yet He

is also the judge (Ps. 75:7; Isa. 66:16). As judge, lawgiver, and king, God will save His people (Isa. 33:22).

There is one underlying divine attitude that expresses itself in all the metaphors mentioned above. God is driven by an unshakable love toward His creation (1 John 4:8)—and out of love He fights on behalf of His people, judges His people, gives them His life-giving principles (or laws) that bless them, and, ultimately, saves His people.

Exodus 34:6, 7 have been described as the heart of the Old Testament’s talking about God. These verses portray a key moment of divine self-revelation, and while we can see both the fierce and the gentle side of God’s character, we note that His gentleness, compassion, longsuffering, and mercy both precede and balance His righteous justice.

SEEING GENTLENESS IN THE FLESH

Jesus’ coming to this fallen planet accelerated the rhythm and cadence of God’s plan of salvation. The God-man described Himself as “gentle and humble in heart” (Matt. 11:29, NIV)—ready *and* willing to be the sin and burden bearer. He arrived as a helpless babe, born into a poor family; he experienced the anxiety of living as a refugee in Egypt, and then matured in the unsophisticated Galilean town of Nazareth. These life experiences did not mesh with popular messianic expectations. Yet He showed us how gentleness, compassion, and tenderness can affect dramatic transformation. John later describes Him as “the Lamb who was slain,” but through His sacrifice receives “power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing” (Rev. 5:12). “Gentleness is an image of God’s ultimate subversive power that undercuts the power structures of this world,” notes Ryken fittingly.²

Jesus’ compassion and gentleness can be seen in many ways as He engaged with His creation. Seeing the multitudes, He was moved with compassion to heal the sick (Matt. 14:14) and feed the hungry (Matt. 15:32-39). He touched the dead daughter of Jairus before He raised her (Mark 5:42), and gently said “Don’t cry” (see Luke 7:13) to a mourning widow before calling her only son back to life (verses 14-17).

“The Saviour went from house to house, healing the sick, comforting the mourners, soothing the afflicted, speaking peace to the disconsolate,” writes Ellen White. “He took the little children in His arms and blessed them, and spoke words of hope and comfort to the weary mothers. With unflinching tenderness and gentleness He met every form of human woe and affliction.”³

Gentleness is often communicated by touch. We see Jesus touching many people as He communicates God’s love to them. Nonverbal communication is extremely important for the deaf and mute man that receives Jesus’ gentle touch (Mark 7:31-36). Similarly, a blind man feels Jesus’ touch—and receives sight (Mark 8:22-26).

CALLED TO LIVE GENTLE LIVES

References to gentleness appear repeatedly in the New Testament. Paul, the former fanatical persecutor of the church, lists gentleness as one expression of the fruit of the Spirit that doesn't come naturally to human beings (Gal. 5:23). True gentleness can flourish and grow only where God's Spirit is present and at work. Paul also admonishes the church at Colossae, "as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, [to] clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience" (Col. 3:12, NIV). He often highlights his own gentle dealing with the churches to whom he addresses his letters (1 Cor. 4:21; 1 Thess. 2:7). The attitudes listed in these texts reflect the values of God's kingdom that Jesus highlighted in His sermon on the mount (Matt. 5-7). We don't associate these values and attitudes with the powerful and successful people our cultures celebrate today, for they are truly countercultural.

Most of us agree with the assertion that gentleness is an important part of a Christlike character, yet we wonder how we can learn to be more gentle, more compassionate, more kind, and more caring. We like the ideal—but we recognize that our reality falls short of the ideal.

Humility is an essential element of gentleness. When we humble ourselves, we begin to think less of ourselves and more of others. Our value is not based on our achievements or even qualities, but is anchored in God's acceptance and love for us. We recognize that the grace we have received from the gentle Healer miraculously multiplies when we share it with people around us. We begin to imitate the attitudes we can see in the Godhead.

God often uses trials and challenges in our own lives to draw us closer to Him, for it's in these moments that

we recognize His unending comfort. "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world," writes the Christian author C. S. Lewis.⁴ We may feel confounded by the pain and havoc inflicted by God's enemy—and are tempted to denounce the God we blame for it. He alone is our deliverance, but we sometimes curse Him for trying to get our attention.

Paul offers this perspective to the Corinthian members: "If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer" (2 Cor. 1:6, NIV). When we have experienced God's gentle comfort, we are equipped to comfort others around us.

CROSSING THE FINISHING LINE

Gentleness, probably more than any other trait, shows a life hidden with God in Christ. Rather than being a sign of weakness, it powerfully bears witness to the fact that the meek, gentle followers of the Good Shepherd know their value. They are secure in the knowledge that they are loved, and instead of hanging on to selfish power structures, they can share that love through gentleness. Though not always obvious, they know that not the noisy, proud, or ruthless, but the meek "shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5). ©

¹ Leland Ryken et al., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2000), p. 325.

² *Ibid.*

³ Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 364.

⁴ C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), p. 91.

Gerald A. Klingbeil serves as an associate editor of *Adventist World*.



How Gentle Are You?

A Personal Checklist

*The following questions do not represent a scientific survey, but they may challenge you to practice gentleness more consciously and evaluate honestly how you relate to this important value of God's kingdom. Use a 1-10 scale, 10 being most developed, as you consider these questions and think about practical steps of improving your score.**

Have you developed humility and self-discipline in order to be attentive to the hurts and needs of others?

Are you irritable and reactionary when people with needs intrude upon your time or energy?

When you give instructions or responses to

others, do you take into consideration their weaknesses and limitations?

Are you aware of your own character limitations and challenges?

How do you relate to people who offend you or discourage you?

* Adapted from material found on the website of the Christian Institute of Basic Life Principles at iblp.org.

Millennial Voices

Unreasonable Tears



God can take our frustrations, anger, and tears—whether we have good reason for our feelings or whether we think our reasons are trivial.

I often feel uncomfortable about my tears. For some reason I find it difficult to cry even in front of people I trust. So I was especially annoyed at myself one day when I lay on my bed and cried over lots of “little” things.

At the time, I was working an early-morning shift at a radio station. That meant that when I left work, my friends were still at their jobs, and I had to go to bed just when they were ready to socialize. It was lonely sometimes, and that day I felt extra lonely. I started sniffing because I simply wished a friend could be free to eat lunch with me. Then I started thinking sadly about close friends I hadn’t heard from in a while because they were so busy, and our life seasons were different. Suddenly a rush of other minor irritations overwhelmed me. Besides, I was exhausted. I curled up, put my fuzzy bathrobe over my head, and wept. Yet even as I sobbed, my brain was protesting, “This is ridiculous! You know there are logical reasons for everything that has hurt you. It’s not personal!” As I lay there, I prayed, “I feel as though I shouldn’t be hurt, God. I

shouldn’t be crying. These tears are so unreasonable.” Then I cried all the more because I didn’t want to inconvenience anyone, even God, with such silliness.

That’s when I felt God kindly whisper to my heart, “I want your unreasonable tears.”

God is so much gentler with me than I am with myself. And God invites us all to pour out our hearts to Him (Ps. 62:8). In fact, David says about God, “You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my

tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book” (Ps. 56:8).¹ What detailed care!

God can take our frustrations, anger, and tears—whether we have good reason for our feelings or whether we think our reasons are trivial. He wants the real, unedited version of us. One of my favorite quotes from Ellen White puts it this way: “Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. . . . Take to Him everything that perplexes the mind. Nothing is too great for him to bear, for he holds up worlds. . . . Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice. . . . The relations between God and each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not another soul upon the earth to share His watchcare, not another soul for whom He gave His beloved Son.”²

You may have moments like me, where you are being hard on yourself and wondering if you are burdening God with your concerns. But remember that God welcomes you with compassion and treats you with tenderness. As Jesus Himself said: “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. . . . I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matt. 11:28, 29). ©

¹ Scripture quotations have been taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

² Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 100.

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He Said I Was Worth It

A journey to
recognizing our
self-worth

*"You thought I was to die for, so
you sacrificed your life
So I could be free . . . whole
So I could tell everyone I know
You thought I was worth saving"
(Anthony Brown and group therapy,
"Worth").*

We remember this story: the woman is discovered in the midst of an extramarital entanglement. What a shock this must have been to her, as those who intruded don't care for her privacy. Imagine the look of tormented embarrassment radiating from her face as she attempts to cover herself—to explain why she was found there amid shouts, grabbing hands, and angry fists. Surrounded by men, she attempts to shield herself from her captors by digging her heels into the dirt—to no avail. They are moving, and she is, yet again, out of options.

She wonders why her journey has ended at church, as she knows she is not welcome here. This is the building where love for her ran out ages ago. They are shouting and jeering with wild eyes and unkind curiosity.

Suddenly she notices she is not alone on the ground. The Man beside her is not looking down at her. His eyes show compassion. From her position she cannot read the words He writes into the dirt. He stands and addresses the growing crowd and then returns to the spot where He knelt. As the men leave one after the other, her heart rate slows enough for her to regain her footing. She is again alone with a Man, but there is no anxiety. Imagine her surprise as He turns to her and says, "Where are all the men who lambasted you? I'm not here to condemn you. Go, and live free from sin going forward."*



A PERSONAL TAKE

Now, imagine if this woman were your daughter—or mother, sister, or friend.

In a world in which callous superficiality is the order of the day, a friend like Jesus is not only helpful to have but restorative in how He cares. Jesus is often depicted as gentle, a term that conjures thoughts of mild temperaments and weakness. Is this what we witness in John 8 in even our most sanctified imaginings?

As we dig into this passage, let's consider the men involved. Who were the men that brought the "adulteress" to the temple for judgment? Clearly they were powerful enough to make her feel powerless. What was the station of the man with whom she was involved? High enough to avoid public scorn and rebuke for the same actions for which she was judged. The men in the life of the woman had conspired against her, disrespected, and left her with the exception of Jesus, the "gentleman." Jesus is gentle in this situation in a way we seldom acknowledge.

From the perspective of Christ, the story might have been that a woman was brought to Him in the hallowed courts of the temple by hostile men who constantly disrespected His Father. These men had the audacity to attempt to theologially hem the Son of God into a corner in His Father's house. Christ's divinity must have been reeling at the sacrilege and dishonor they brought to the temple in place of the respect the hallowed ground deserved. On this, the day the crowd chose violence; Jesus, the "gentleman," chose to journal in the dust a literary work so powerful that the men vanished without argument. It is likely that though Jesus displayed compassion for the woman, He was holding

back the rightful judgment He could have executed easily through His authority. Restraining the power to annihilate us is a virtue we seldom think to praise God for. These men walked away with only slight bruising to their egos.

We ought not overlook the other merciful gift that was offered by Jesus, the gentleman in this scenario. The woman was not only protected by His nonviolent reprimand but restored in value. In John 8:10, 11 we can read the exchange:

"When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, 'Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?' She said, 'No one, Lord.' And Jesus said to her, 'Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.'"

SELF-WORTH IS A GIFT

The angle Christ takes to approaching the woman's sin is both humbling and affirming. He has the right and the authority to take her to task for her actions, but He chooses to empower her through this offer of a new beginning by charging her to take responsibility for herself. That she is challenged to accomplish what Jesus believes she can speak volumes about how capable He sees her to be in relation to His sacrifice on her behalf. This should inspire us to look at ourselves—caught in bad situations, often of our own making, yet identified by Christ as worth the effort. We should endeavor to discover what value He sees in us. Valuing ourselves is in step with honoring the sacrifice Christ made on our behalf. We realize our potential by intentionally seeking to honor God when we treat ourselves the way He treats us.

Practical tips for increasing self-worth include:

Jesus has the right and the authority to take her to task for her actions, but He chooses to empower her through this offer of a new beginning by charging her to take responsibility for herself.

- Accepting ourselves as individuals who are loved by God
- Recognizing that people, accomplishments, and praise do not validate us as individuals
- Choosing responses that honor the new person we are in Christ
- Exercising the power God gave us to choose and change our situations

John 8 shows us how Jesus seeks to restore us by giving us the freedom to explore life outside of the confines of sin. It is up to us to realize that this opportunity was bought and paid for with His sacrifice. He laid aside His ultimate power to give each of us access to new life in Him. That's a good starting point to recognizing our self-worth in Christ. ☺

* The retelling of Jesus' encounter with the woman caught in adultery is based on John 8:1-11.

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Focus

Ministering to an Angry World

As the world careens even closer to an end prophecy has warned us about, people are only becoming worse—sicker, unhappier, and yes, angrier. Yet here we are with a job to do. How do we shine light in darkness, heal where there is hurt, and give to the angry that which they need to find peace again? Here are two perspectives on how we can minister to an angry world.—Editors.

In an Angry World, What Can We Do?

The gospel gives us the assurance we need to do better.

Neither Google nor a dictionary are needed to define or discover anger. We all know what it looks like, what it sounds like, and how it feels. Feeling the full weight of someone's anger can be disturbing, shocking, confronting—terrifying!

Anger brings with it a tension that fills the air. "You could cut the air with a knife!" goes the idiom describing the eerie vibe of an angry situation.

Out of the Abundance of the Heart

The intensity behind the words uttered out of my mouth shocked me; the action that followed surprised me even more.

Hand raised, I slammed my palm against my horn, conveying my annoyance. The driver of a white SUV ahead of me seemed distracted, oblivious to the line of vehicles behind him. We were all waiting to make a left turn. For two cycles the green arrow indicating that it was safe to do so turned yellow and then red. Engines revved and horns blared as impatience intensified. Although I was simply heading home, the mild irritation

Dogs can sense human anger, and they typically slink from the turbulent scene with lowered heads and loins in search of safety. Cats know it too, and silently steal away to avoid the proverbial “kick.”

But there are some who are trapped, not dogs or cats, but human beings—who are innocent but stuck in the realm of an angry person, and they can’t escape. My heart goes out to these victims and their misery. Who deserves to be trapped in this kind of world?

I also have compassion for those who suffer from anger that isn’t external but internal. The storm possesses their chests, heads, and hands with gusts, thunder, and lightning. All control is lost. It must be miserable to be possessed by such a perpetual storm where there’s seldom a calm. We know these “sons of thunder”; we know

their fuses are short and the explosions can seem atomic.

Anger isn’t a new human condition. Anger surfaces in our Bible as early as Genesis 4:5 with Cain’s pride-laden but rejected sacrifice. Anger persists through our Bible into Revelation, where we have the memorable words “And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 12:17).

For generations Adventists have sung, “Nations are angry—by this we do know Jesus is coming again!”¹ While some doubt climatic global warming, few doubt that our planet is heating up in terms of anger.

STAYING ABOVE THE FRAY

Rudyard Kipling had a point when he penned to his son: “If

you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs and blaming it on you, . . . you’ll be a man, my son.”

This advice seems to share some similarities with: “Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools” (Eccl. 7:9, NIV). There is also the well-known “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Prov. 15:1). It seems one of the best things we can do is avoid being angry ourselves.

It’s been observed that people become angry when they are in trouble or distress, or are grieving. These are the very times ministry should take place—when people are in trouble, distress, or grief. Yet when people are angry, we often instinctively keep away. Make no mistake: angry people can be dangerous people—the death of Abel at the hands of an angry Cain

soon spiraled to intense fury at “people who don’t pay attention!” When the light turned green for the third time, and before I knew it, I too was honking my horn and yelling at the driver.

Anger—that well-known human emotion—can range from slight annoyance to irrational rage.¹ Our world has grown increasingly angry. Globally, rates of hostility and rage were highest in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic; however, these emotions have been on the increase for the past 10 years.² From road rage to unprovoked attacks in public places, we see small annoyances escalating into violent confrontations. We are inundated with angry headlines and surrounded by angry voices ranting over the airwaves. We sense the rise in emotional tension in crowded spaces—airports, grocery stores,

public transportation—as we all learn to navigate social distancing and mask requirements in an ever-changing pandemic.

Insidiously, this inescapable anger can creep into our psyche and impact the way we interact with others. As followers of Christ, we are called to love, to be peacemakers (John 13:34; Matt. 5:9). In a world rife with anger and its counterparts of fear, frustration, sadness, and worry, we are called to attend to the needs of others. Yet how do we live in an angry world without absorbing its toxic anger and spite? How do we minister amid the daily annoyances and rage-inducing circumstances that are part of life on this planet?

We reach up to God and pursue peace (Heb. 12:14). Daily we are invited to spend time in the presence of the One who *is* peace (Eph. 2:14), and, moment by moment,

we want to align with God’s Spirit, who produces in us love, peace, patience, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-25). Daily we are called to surrender to the One who can renew our minds and transform actions and interactions (Eph. 5:1, 2).

We look within and accept God’s gift of grace (Eph. 2:8, 9). In God’s presence our weaknesses are exposed, and we see our need for help to conquer our human shortcomings.³ We need grace for each day, each moment, each breath we take. I don’t know why the distracted driver missed three green lights—maybe someone was unwell, or maybe the vehicle malfunctioned. A grace-filled heart looks at situations through the eyes of others, listens, empathizes, and recognizes another’s need even as we deal with our circumstances.

We reach out to others with love (John 13:34). This is where lofty

still speaks to the dangers.

However, the reality of the gospel transforms people! It changes how they react to stressors. When we have the ultimate surety, “that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38, 39), our reasons for anger dissipate. When, by the gospel, our horizons are stretched to eternity, the annoyances of the immediate are not so provocative.

There is an important difference between anger and indignation. Injustice, wickedness, and misconduct are the causes of indignation. It is this indignation that is the catalyst for appropriate correction and reformation.

words are put to the practical test. In relationships with others, we sometimes lose patience, experience hurt or wounded pride, and lash out. God wants us to learn to manage our anger so that we don’t hurt others or ourselves (Ps. 37:8). At the same time, some situations stir our righteous indignation; we see injustice, victimization of the innocent, or mockery made of God. We are cautioned to be angry, but not give in to unproductive rage.⁴ In talking with His disciples, Jesus emphasized this salient point: what flows out of the mouth is an indication of what is in the heart (Matt. 15:18; Luke 6:45).

Ultimately, to minister to others, we need God’s heart, God’s spirit. We have God’s promise that this can be a reality: “I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart” (Eze. 36:26, NLT).⁵ What would this world be like if we, as practicing Chris-

When, by the gospel, our horizons are stretched to eternity, the annoyances of the immediate are not so provocative.

It was wickedness and misconduct that prompted Jesus to overturn the money changers’ tables in the Temple. It was the injustices, wickedness, and misconduct within the prominent church of the Middle Ages that inspired people to share the Bible and its truths so that the real beauty of Jesus could be seen and experienced by ordinary Christians.

Tragically, injustice, wickedness, and misconduct didn’t stop in the Middle Ages. These evils are alive, numerous, and global! While we would love to correct every injustice on our aging planet, and we should try our best, and our

inability to do so can torment us, we have the absolute assurance that Jesus, who knows every injustice in minute detail, is coming again! He returns with power—righteous and holy power—and will ultimately resurrect all, judge all, and implement pure justice for all.

It is this irrevocable assurance that our angry world needs to hear from us. ☺

* “Jesus Is Coming Again,” *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, no. 213.

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A grace-filled heart looks at situations through the eyes of others, listens, empathizes, and recognizes another’s need even as we deal with our circumstances.

tians, consistently demonstrated love, patience, understanding, and acceptance, to counter the anger and frustration that has a stranglehold on our world? As we grow in relationship with God and others, let us daily embrace opportunities to extend grace, uplift, strengthen, and encourage one another regardless of life’s circumstances, just as God who is “compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love” (Ps. 103:8, NIV) does for us. ☺

¹ Merriam-Webster Online, “Anger” (2021), <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/anger>.

² Gallup Global Emotions 2021, <https://www.gallup.com/analytics/349280/gallup-global-emotions-report.aspx?thank-you-report-form=1>.

³ Ellen G. White, *Mind, Character, and Personality* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1977), vol. 2, p. 516.

⁴ *Ibid.*; see also Ephesians 4:26 and 6:12.

⁵ Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

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Health & Wellness

A Hostile Attitude

Can it contribute to heart attacks?

My husband, age 40, has had a heart attack. We've changed our lifestyle and have decided to now really live the Adventist health message. I worry about two issues: he has a family history of cardiac disease, and he's very quick-tempered and generally a hostile person. Do these latter issues predispose to repeated heart attacks?

You've made an excellent decision to change your lifestyle. Approximately one in four survivors of a heart attack or stroke will have another one. When believed, practiced, and lived, the Adventist health message has been proved to reduce cardiovascular disease. It's going to take much discipline and the Lord's grace and empowerment, but it's infinitely worthwhile to make this lifestyle change.

The traditional risk factors for coronary artery disease and heart attacks include:

- Age
- Hypertension
- Gender
- Diabetes
- Family history
- High cholesterol and lipid disorders
- Smoking
- Sedentary lifestyle/inactivity

Additionally, night-shift work, stress, and chronic inflammation are now considered risk factors.

All but gender, age, and family history may be changed and modified and reduced by careful, focused treatment and consistent lifestyle interventions. Family history plays a significant role in determining our susceptibility to such diseases as heart attacks and cancer. Work closely with your health-care provider. Additionally, it's important to remember that the lifestyle changes (including for your children) need to be adopted for life, not just for the short term.

Regarding anger and hostility, these emotions stimulate the release of hormones such as adrenaline (epinephrine), norepinephrine (noradrenaline), and cortisol. Heart rate accelerates, the contraction of the heart increases, and the blood pressure rises. This creates an environ-

ment in which fragile plaque (pockets of fat, cholesterol, and macrophages [white blood cells] in the arterial wall) burst open and stimulate the formation of dangerous blood clots, which obstruct the artery and damage the heart muscle during a heart attack. Sustained and repetitive physiological responses to anger and anxiety are not healthy.

It's been shown that heart function can be negatively affected by mental stress and anger in patients with heart failure. There are studies in progress to establish whether ongoing anger and hostility can cause a second heart attack in those who already have had their first cardiac event. It's been demonstrated that patients chronically wrestling with these negative emotions have a higher likelihood of dying with the second heart attack.¹

Ongoing bouts of anger/hostility and anxiety require constructive help. Primarily, we seek divine healing of our emotions. Professional counseling and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) within the Christian paradigm may be needed and can be helpful.

May your family take courage from the promise of the spiritual, emotional, and physical rest that Jesus has given us: "Come to me . . . and I will give you rest. . . . Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt. 11:28, 29, NIV).

"We must not trust at all to ourselves nor to our good works; but when as erring, sinful beings we come to Christ, we may find rest in His love."²

Thankfully—there is hope! ©

¹ Tracey K. Vitori, Susan K. Frazier, Martha J. Biddle, et al., "Hostility Predicts Mortality but Not Recurrent Acute Coronary Syndrome," *European Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing*, Sept. 14, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474515120950913>.

² Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958, 1980), book 1, p. 354.

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The Bible:

A grim
fairy tale
or guiding
light?

The message on the car's bumper sticker was unmistakable. Shown in big, bold letters, it proclaimed for all to see—"THE BIBLE: A Grim Fairy Tale." The assertion was a clever play on words, alluding to the well-known children's fairy tales written by the Brothers Grimm.

The claim itself is nothing new, as atheists, evolutionists, secularists, and others have asserted for nearly two centuries that the Bible is simply an old book filled with made-up tales. Christians, on the other hand, have for centuries defended—sometimes at the cost of their very lives—these sacred writings as God's Holy Word, and as such are to be taken seriously as an accurate historical account of God's dealings with humankind; as prophetic, revealing God's plans for the future; and as divine instruction guiding how one should live today.

Sadly, however, for some time now the nature and purpose of the Bible has become a subject of heated debate even within Christianity, and at the heart of this debate is the authority of the Bible itself.

CRISIS OF AUTHORITY

In his outstanding book *Understanding the Living Word of God*, the late Gerhard Hasel cited an example of the Bible being interpreted in different ways and wrote, "The crisis of the authority of the Bible is thus very much a matter of how it is interpreted; the crisis is deeply influenced by hermeneutics (the principles of biblical interpretation)."¹

Further, Hasel writes, "The consistent historical position of representative Seventh-day Adventists has been that the Bible is our *only* infallible rule of faith, doctrine, reforms, and practice."²

This reflects well our first fundamental belief as Seventh-day Adventists:

1. Holy Scriptures

"The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration. The inspired authors spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to humanity the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the supreme, authoritative, and the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the definitive revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history. (Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20, 21.)"³

This balanced, biblical belief in Scripture recognizes that while God did not dictate the Bible word by word (sometimes known as "verbal inspiration"), the Holy Spirit played a vital role in inspiring the biblical authors, who, although coming from different backgrounds and time periods spanning approximately 1,500 years, speak with amazing consistency throughout this collection of ancient documents known as the biblical canon.⁴

UNDERSTANDING SCRIPTURE

In understanding Scripture, as Seventh-day Adventists we subscribe to the historical-grammatical, or historical-biblical, approach to hermeneutics. This means the text should be understood based upon what the author and his audience would have understood it to mean, taking into account the grammar, history, and literary contexts of the passage. It also means that symbolic or metaphorical language needs to be recognized and interpreted in accordance with definitions found in Scripture. This contrasts with historical-critical and literary methods, which exclude the supernatural element of Scripture and place the reader in charge of deciding what the text means and how it should be understood, rather than allowing the Bible to interpret itself.

While we are not able in such a brief article to go into depth on this very important topic, the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Biblical Research Institute has recently released a helpful book titled *Biblical Hermeneutics: An Adventist Approach*, edited by Frank M. Hasel, that is available on the BRI website.⁵

GOD'S VOICE IN SCRIPTURE

How one views Scripture is very important because it determines how one will respond to it. Is it simply a piece of literature—a story to be read without chapter or verse, much like a fairy tale in which one might find some good moral lessons? Or perhaps it is something to be dissected, comparing it with scientific “evidence” to determine what (if anything) is true, and the rest to be discarded?

Ellen White is very clear in addressing this issue. In *The Acts of the Apostles* she writes: “The warnings of the Word of God

regarding the perils surrounding the Christian church belong to us today. As in the days of the apostles men tried by tradition and philosophy to destroy faith in the Scriptures, so today, by the pleasing sentiments of higher criticism, evolution, spiritualism, theosophy, and pantheism, the enemy of righteousness is seeking to lead souls into forbidden paths.

“To many the Bible is as a lamp without oil, because they have turned their minds into channels of speculative belief that bring misunderstanding and confusion. The work of higher criticism, in dissecting, conjecturing, reconstructing, is destroying faith in the Bible as a divine revelation. It is robbing God's Word of power to control, uplift, and inspire human lives. . . .

“The follower of Christ will meet with the ‘enticing words’ against which the apostle warned the Colossian believers. He will meet with spiritualistic interpretations of the Scriptures, but he is not to accept them. His voice is to be heard in clear affirmation of the eternal truths of the Scriptures. Keeping his eyes fixed on Christ, he is to move steadily forward in the path marked out, discarding all ideas that are not in harmony with His teaching. The truth of God is to be the subject for his contemplation and meditation. He is to regard the Bible as the voice of God speaking directly to him. Thus he will find the wisdom which is divine.”⁶

TRANSCENDING TIME AND CULTURE

The Bible is God's way of communicating with us, transcending time and culture, working through the Holy Spirit, who inspired these writings and protected them over millennia so we could hear Him speaking in an active, living way to us today.

How one views Scripture is very important because it determines how one will respond to it.

In 2 Timothy 3:16, 17, we are given a clear definition of what the Bible is: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

The Bible is far more than just a good “story.” And it is much more than just a “proof-text manual.” It is the lamp that gives light to our path (Ps. 119:105), and is “sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12).

This divinely inspired, living Word is sent by the Creator of the universe to speak to, connect with, teach, admonish, inspire, inform, direct, comfort, and encourage all who will take the time to listen and commune with Him. ☺

¹ Gerhard F. Hasel, *Understanding the Living Word of God* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1980), p. 17.

² *Ibid.*, p. 73.

³ “Official Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church,” <https://www.adventist.org/beliefs/>.

⁴ See Hasel, pp. 13, 14.

⁵ Available at <https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/product/biblical-hermeneutics/>.

⁶ Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 474.

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This devotional is a condensed version of a sermon preached at the Spring Meeting of the Executive Committee of the General Conference in April 2021.—Editors.

From the Psalms' pilgrim worshippers to God Himself, the response of "I will go" is found throughout Scripture. Though the Hebrew term is common, its translation as "I will go" by itself can be found only in a few places. One noteworthy passage is Genesis 24.

Verse 1 provides context, saying, "Now Abraham was old, well advanced in age; and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things." Life is coming to an end, and the great patriarch feels a heavy burden for his unmarried son Isaac. Abraham calls his servant Eliezer and makes him swear not to find a Canaanite to be Isaac's wife. Being familiar with the locals, Abraham wanted Isaac to have a wife who would be receptive to God's covenant and His promises. He knew the importance of having a wise and godly spouse.

THE JOURNEY

Eliezer has traveled a long time to get to Haran in Syria. He finally arrives at the town's well around noon. In the desert nobody usually retrieves water from a well at noon, but rather early in the morning or later in the evening. Drawing water was part of the domestic duties of women at that time, so wells were a prime place to find a spouse for the master's son.

In verses 12-14 the servant arrives in the evening and prays for his mission's success. However, the very next verse starts with "Before he had finished praying . . ." (verse 15, NIV). There are many circumstances and problems that we simply don't know how to solve. But before we say amen, God already is orchestrating a solution to these issues. This passage offers us the assurance that God hears us before

we even conclude our prayers.

Verse 15 continues to mention a jar upon Rebekah's shoulder. While some might imagine a delicate porcelain pitcher, there is archaeological evidence of large clay pots that were used for carrying water. In a time without plumbing, the only running water for cleaning, drinking, and cooking was with women "sprinting" back and forth. Rebekah's shoulder was not slim and delicate, but must have had some muscle to have carried these pots! Second, wells were not nicely canopied holes, but rather underground springs in caves and caverns. Verse 16 balances her beauty and purity with her ability to go spelunking by herself while carrying a clay waterpot.

TEN CAMELS

Eliezer meets Rebekah and asks her for a drink of water (verse 17). Though Rebekah has not been asked, she goes above and beyond the request, especially as she offers to give the 10 camels water "until they have finished drinking" (verse 19). Though not the most beautiful, these desert beasts are wonderfully designed by God. They can close their nostrils to sandstorms. They have long eyelashes to prevent dust in their eyes. Their mouths have hardened protrusions called papillae that allow a diet of cacti. Though these animals often have poor temperaments as well as the habit of spitting out foamy saliva, they can endure the harshness of desert conditions.

Camels have been known to drink 190 liters (50 gallons) of



Devotional

Ten Camels and Three Angels



water in three minutes, when *not* thirsty. At minimum, Rebekah was running around carrying 1,900 liters (500 gallons) of water and dodging saliva from 10 cantankerous camels—all with some grace!

But did Rebekah know who this man was? Did she wake up that morning saying, “Today is the day when everything will change; today I am going above and beyond my normal self”? Her innocence and service are expressions of her character.

WILL WE GO?

Would you have given water to, essentially, a nobody and 10 camels? The powerful part of this passage is that it was in Rebekah’s innate character to be kind above conventionality, to mingle with strangers, to desire to quench their thirst, to show loving sympathy to their needs, to minister to their camels, and to win their confidence. “Success in this life, success in gaining the future life,” writes Ellen White, “depends upon a faithful, conscientious attention to the little things.”*

We are so busy (even with a pandemic) that we have lost clarity of the moment in little things. We don’t recognize the spiritual importance of little things. We worry about and focus on repercussions and circumstances. But when it comes to God’s last-day movement, which is called to preach the three angels’ warnings, His people need a heightened clarity, a sensitive sobriety, and a faithfulness in little things to seemingly inconsequential people and their 10 camels. How many liters or gallons might we be carrying?

LIKE BROTHER, NOT SISTER

Contrast Rebekah to her brother Laban in verse 30, who sees a costly ring and bracelets. Unlike Rebekah, Laban sees the reward first, and the kindness is shown second. Indeed, Laban also goes above and beyond in his service, but the intention is for some profit, when he says smoothly, “Come in, O blessed of the Lord! Why do you stand outside? For I have prepared the house, and a place for the camels. . . . And he [Laban] unloaded the camels, and provided straw and feed for the camels, and water to wash his feet” (verses 31, 32).

Laban’s character is later fully revealed in his dealing with Jacob and the bride price of 14 years. The biblical text tells us that he attempts to postpone the return of the servant (verses 54-57). The dialogue concludes with Rebekah being able to choose her future when she is asked, “Will you go with this man?” (verse 58).

THREE ANGELS

In a single, punctiliar moment, salvation history can go left or right. Rebekah recognized that moment and replied, “I will go.” Not for selfish gain or driven by material calculations, she ultimately chooses to partake in the Abrahamic covenant, to be a blessing to all the families of the world, and to be part of a lineage of messianic progenitors. Her family blesses her, saying, “Our sister, may you become the mother of thousands of ten thousands” (verse 60). And Rebekah does become part of a salvation plan for myriads.

In a single, punctiliar moment, salvation history can go left or right.

It’s not only big decisions in councils, committees, and deliberations. It’s also in seemingly random moments with strangers that we must say, “I will go,” and be part of God’s salvation plan, to be part of the three angels’ messages, and to tell the world about Jesus’ second coming.

God calls Rebekahs today—those willing to give strange people and their 10 camels a little water. His glory, or Christlike character, is revealed through little things. As God Himself is looking for a people (or bride) for His Son once again, may we ask Him to grant us the grace to be faithful not only in big things, in character, in our communities, in our families, but in the seemingly little things too. ©

* Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890, 1908), p. 574.

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↓ The early Adventist church in Caracas, Venezuela. Rafael López Miranda sits in the middle of the second row.

Looking Back

Rafael López Miranda

An Adventist martyr in Latin America



The first Puerto Rican Seventh-day Adventist didn't begin his spiritual life auspiciously.

After the death of his firstborn son, Rafael López Miranda (1883-1922) often found solace in alcohol, frequently terrifying his wife and children with his rages. To the delight of his family, however, he responded when Adventist missionaries began preaching in Puerto Rico in 1912. He attended Bible studies and participated in prayer meetings, culminating in his baptism that same year.¹ According to Adventist historian M. E. Olsen, López was the first Puerto Rican to become a Seventh-day Adventist worker.² López later traveled to the Dominican Republic, and then on to Venezuela. He arrived in Venezuela in 1919. He sold copies of the newly translated Spanish edition of A. O. Tait's classic on Bible prophecy, *Heralds of the Morning*.

As he pressed into the jungle interior, López found a family who accepted the Adventist message. This family was soon joined by others, and the small group grew into a company of 35



Visitors to the house where Rafael López Miranda spent the night before he was murdered

GC Archives



Courtesy of Lourdes Morales-Gudmundsson



Rafael López Miranda at
about age 38 or 39

Courtesy of the Author

“Yesterday an attempt was made on my life with a machete, but here is a list of eighteen people interested in the truth, and I cannot leave them.”

—Rafael López Miranda.

believers. Local religious leaders became jealous and incited mobs to burn López’s books. Some converts, however, tenaciously held on to the precious copies of truth-filled literature.

SEARCHING FOR LIGHT

In June 1920 López, dressed in a black suit, entered a store. An onlooker noted his “simple smile,” a small defect in one eye, and his balding head when he took off his hat. López walked up to the onlooker, grasped his hand, and asked in Spanish: “Are you Mr. Julio García?”

When López had first come into town, people he talked with told him that Julio García, a town resident, was interested in Christian literature, and they directed him to the store where he could find him.

“Yes, sir,” García replied. “At your service!”

“My name is Rafael López.” He then described a health book he was carrying, and after about 10 minutes García agreed to purchase it. When García asked where he was from, López responded that he was from Puerto Rico, but that “he had no

home, no country, and that he was a pilgrim in this world.”

That afternoon López went to García’s home, where he met the family and studied the Bible with them.

“I learned more in that hour and a half’s study than in the study of previous years, even with the Bible in my possession,” García said. “At the close of the study [López] asked me if I would not like to pray, whereupon with a trembling voice I presented in broken phrases my supplication to God.”

López again visited García’s home later that evening, and once more at 5:00 the next morning. As López saddled his donkey to leave, he offered words of “counsel and admonition” to García and the family.

PERSECUTION AND SPIRITUAL FRUIT

On July 3, 1920, the García family kept their first Sabbath. This decision brought “a peace” they said they had not known before. That October they were part of the first group of 17 believers who embraced the truth in Camaguán, Venezuela.

On January 6, 1921, Elders W. E. Baxter and D. D. Fitch visited the García family, but some people incited a large mob that gathered outside their home. The mob chanted, “*Los curas de Julio García han llegados*” (“Julio García’s priests have arrived”). As the group swelled to some 200 people, Julio García said he wished the earth would swallow him up. Pastor Baxter stood on the balcony and “addressed [the mob] in excellent Spanish,” speaking of the Word of God and “its power to transform lives,” calming the crowd.

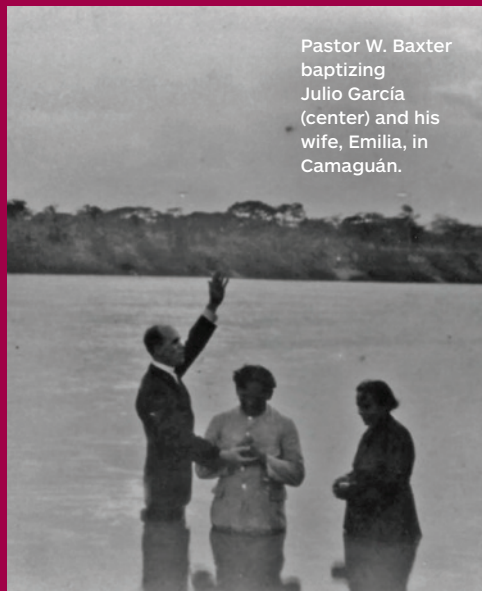
Later that year the García family was struck with influenza, which took the lives of two of the children. López sent García a letter to encourage him: “Don’t forget that faith is not to be exercised only when things go smoothly.”

García, along with six other believers, were later imprisoned for their faith. Friends in Caracas contacted the chief of the nation, Juan Vicente Gómez, who interposed on their behalf. On the eighth day of their imprisonment, the believers were released. When they walked into the church, the other believers described their release as a miracle.



Burial site of Rafael López Miranda in the town of El Cobre's cemetery.

GC Archives



Pastor W. Baxter baptizing Julio García (center) and his wife, Emilia, in Camaguán.

Courtesy of Lourdes Morales-Gudmundsson

THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE

A bout of malaria forced López to return home to Puerto Rico. After his recovery, however, he resumed his post in Venezuela.

"I felt that I must return to the work here, even at the cost of my life!"

These ominous words were followed by another letter: "The mission office has advised me to leave this place at once, as my life is not safe here. Only yesterday an attempt was made on my life with a machete, but here is a list of eighteen people interested in the truth, and I cannot leave them." Thankfully, López's mule outran the assailants.

Despite the dire circumstances, a request by the mission office to government leaders for protection fell on deaf ears.

Only a few days later, on May 15, 1922, López was ambushed as he traveled by mule down a lonely road in the Andes. Bullets struck him, and he fell to the ground dead.³ Later was found "on his person the equivalent of about \$400,"⁴ indicating to some that the motive wasn't robbery.

Another missionary, who investigated his murder, would later deliver López's book orders. Eventually an Adventist church

would be built in the town of El Cobre, near the site of his murder, as a silent monument to this "martyr of the Andes."

When the García family heard that their friend who had led them to Christ had been assassinated in the Venezuelan Andes, the news struck them like "an unexpected avalanche." They remembered that they were indeed pilgrims striving for a better land, and their faith was severely tested.

MURDER INVESTIGATION

After hearing the tragic news, mission leader D. D. Fitch set out on a 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) trek on mule to establish what had happened to Brother López. He found that López had made his last home in a *posada*, or boardinghouse, in San Cristóbal. The woman who had hosted him told Fitch that her guest had prayed with her every morning, and she had become interested in studying the Bible. López had also left much of his money with her before he headed out to deliver his books. The woman gave the money to Fitch.⁵

Fitch also discovered that the site by the creek where López had fallen was marked by a small wooden cross. "I saw hundreds

of such crosses as I traveled over these mountain trails," said Fitch, "each marking the spot where someone had been killed." He replaced the wooden cross with an iron one on which he marked López's name and date of death.

Eleven days later two of the assailants were captured, and in their possession was found López's bullet-ridden hat.

Julio García afterward described López as "a martyr for Christ"—who died at the hands of assailants, thereby giving his life to advance the Adventist message in Latin America.⁶ ©

¹ For basic biographical details, see the *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*, s.v. Rafael López Miranda, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=GHHM&highlight=lopez>; see also his obituary in *Review and Herald*, Aug. 10, 1922, p. 22.

² M. Ellsworth Olsen, *A History of the Origin and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1925), p. 547.

³ Varying sources note five, nine, and 12 bullets. Whichever number is correct, the robbers who were waiting in ambush in a nearby cave accomplished their purpose.

⁴ D. D. Fitch, "The Murder of Brother Rafael López," *Review and Herald*, Jan. 4, 1923, pp. 18, 19.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁶ Julio García, "A Martyr for Christ," *The Life Boat*, September 1923, pp. 260, 261, 273, 275-277.

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Sin Is More Than Just an Act

Q

There is some debate in my church about the nature of sin. Could you share with us a biblical perspective on the topic?

A

For our purpose, sin is the ethical, moral, mental, and spiritual decomposition of the human being, originally created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26). Decomposition is about being involved in a process of spiritual putrefaction that upon progression results in the disintegration of God's good creation. This process leaves behind spiritual and moral fetidness that is repulsive to the Lord. This concept of sin, understood as the dissolution of our inner being and our wholeness, helps us to realize that it is already active within us and that it is much more than a thought or an action.

1. SIN AS REBELLION, ENSLAVEMENT, AND ALIENATION

Sin is indeed an enslaving power (Rom. 6:17), one that we have voluntarily embraced in an act of rebellion against God (Gen. 3:1-7). In its original manifestation, sin was an incomprehensible act of rebellion against the good Creator, but it immediately became a permanent, disrupting, and destructive inner attitude expressing itself in all sorts of evil thoughts, words, and actions. To be a sinner is to be characterized—indeed, defined—by a state of inner conflict against God, others, and self (Rom. 8:7; 7:23; James 4:4). If sin is a state of rebellion against God, then it is also a state of alienation from Him (Gen. 3:8), the very source of life, and sinners are in fact heading inexorably to extinction. Rebellion creates distance, separation, and it implies independence (Eph. 2:12). Death, the decomposition we mentioned above, is almost by definition separation in a condition of animosity against God. Such alienation shows itself in sinful behavior.

2. SIN AS BEHAVIOR

Most of the time we conceive of sin as a serious behavioral problem, and this is correct. In fact, the Bible states that sin is a violation of the law (1 John 3:4). The Bible emphasizes wicked behavior in its portrait of sin because actions reveal the inner condition of the human being. They are the objective evidence of the state of the human heart as the corrupted center of existence. Jesus stated it in univocal terms: "For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly" (Mark 7:21, 22, NIV). There is something deeply wrong with humans; there is rottenness at the very core of our existence. An understanding of sin as a behavioral problem is hardly adequate to reveal the deep darkness of the human predicament. A limited understanding of the human condition leads to a limited comprehension of the costliness of the sacrificial death of the Son of God.

3. RESOLUTION OF THE SIN PROBLEM

The final solution to the problem of sin is not behavioral modification, even if it occurs through the power of the Spirit, but death. Christ died a most awful death, separated from the Father (Matt. 27:46). The corrupted human nature is not to be patched up, but to be destroyed. It was executed on the cross of Christ! What He required was nothing less than a new birth (John 3:5), a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), brought into existence through the power of His resurrection (1 Cor. 15:44, 45). For now, we struggle in a world of sin, but at the coming of Christ our sinful human nature will be removed, and we will be dressed with incorruptibility (verses 52, 53). ©

Angel Manuel Rodríguez is retired after a career serving as pastor, professor, and theologian.



Maria Elena Gonzalez de Guzman



“May I Tell You a Story?”

BY DICK DUERKSEN

She arrived at the rural clinic just before lunch, trudging bare-foot through a mountainside raspberry field steeper than the Eiffel Tower’s stairway.

The triage nurse, a teenager on her first mission trip, greeted her and her silent husband.

“Name?”

“Age?”

“Married?”

“Where does it hurt?”

She spoke no English or Spanish, only the Quechua she had learned from her grandmother. Her voice was as soft as rabbit fur.

“Maria Elena Gonzalez de Guzman.”

“More than 80—at least.”

“To him. Forever.”

“Everywhere.”

Maria Elena Gonzalez de Guzman touched his elbow lightly, guiding him to where two cold wooden chairs sat together. They sat and waited. Together, just as they had done everything since before the volcano made the mountains. Together.

The clinic manager, a United States Air Force medic who had chosen to retire

so he could teach teenage kids how to care for ancient women, stopped by her chair and stopped breathing. It wasn’t the woman’s perfectly brushed bowler hat or her layers of woolen clothing that brought him to a halt. It was her feet. They were bare. They were ugly.

Maria Elena’s well-used feet had gnarled like the roots of an ancient tree. Wherever she set them down, they blended deeply into the muddy ground, as if they were more earth than human. Her ankles, burnished to the rich hue of ironwood burl, rose above the cartoonish feet, their toes pointed forward as if urging the feet to follow.

She waited her turn, feet planted deep on the concrete floor.

Their numbers were called together, husband and wife having blended into one person on the hillside, and they shuffled into the physician’s circle of cold chairs. Together, just as they had always done everything.

From here on, the mountain clinic had two lines. One for men and another for women. He looked deeply into her eyes and then finally let her go, uncertain that it was wise, but reluctantly agreeing to follow the rule.

The doctor rubbed softly, pretending that the foot belonged to her own mother.

The female doctor, a slim Army emergency room resident who had come along hoping she might find herself on this mission trip into the Andes, stood and welcomed Maria Elena Gonzalez de Guzman into her examination circle.

Blood pressure, pulse, respiration, lungs, other basic questions, and then the exam became personal.

“Where does it hurt?”

“Everywhere.” Her grimace and wave did not need translation.

“Especially my back. It’s hard to carry the firewood and the water uphill anymore.”

The doctor reached for Maria Elena’s hands and raised her to a semi-standing position, carefully following protocol as she checked eyes, ears, and strength. When the exam was over, Maria Elena steadied herself on the doctor’s arm and painfully returned to a sitting position.

The exam was conclusive: Maria Elena’s twisted back would bring a cry of personal pain from any chiropractor with the courage to examine it.

Her body is strong, but her spirit is even stronger, the doctor thought to herself. She works the stubborn land as she always has, but more slowly now, coaxing life from it without complaint. Her lot in life has always been work, from childhood until now. Her eyes, a shade darker than the brown of her face, are still clear and bright, and through them she sees life as I never will—uncomplicated and predictable.

Then the doctor looked down. Way down to the brown roots supporting the bent-back woman sitting before her like an Incan queen.

The remaining toenails were cracked, split, and hammered like the crude

grub hoes their owner carried to the field every day.

The doctor wiggled her own toes deep inside her boots and asked, “Maria Elena, do you have shoes?”

“Yes, but they wear out quickly. It feels best when I walk in my own feet.”

Inside her new hiking boots, the Lady Doc was protecting a recent pedicure that included a red, white, and blue eagle on one of her carefully trimmed toenails.

“Please bring me a basin of water,” she asked one of the teenage workers. “And I’ll also need the pink towel that is hanging over the back seat in our bus.”

Moments later the female doctor from an Army base in America knelt before Maria Elena Gonzalez de Guzman, a red plastic basin of miraculously warmish water between her knees, and a bright-pink towel safely draped over her left shoulder.

The right foot came first, accumulated dust turning the water into a puddle of copper-colored mud.

The doctor rubbed softly, pretending that the foot belonged to her own mother, the woman who had hoped her daughter would grow up to be a missionary doctor.

A hand, powerful from picking generations of raspberries, reached out and rested on the doctor’s shoulder. Their eyes touched, igniting a fire of honor between them, then leaking love into rivers that merged into an unstoppable torrent.

When both feet were washed and the tears quenched, the new sisters stood together. One, a slim young Army doctor, standing taller than she had ever stood before. The other, a bent memory of the wife who had once run with her husband through the mountain fields. They stood, together. Linked by something greater than either could describe.

Later, carrying their new treasures of vitamins and Tylenol, the Andean couple walked across the road and up the mud steps toward their raspberry field and their comfortable mud home.

Her feet, quickly covered with fresh dust, were clean. ☺

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Seventh-day
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Something to Live By

Are you familiar with the word “racism”? If you are not sure what that is, let’s start with a definition.

The simplest way to explain racism is that it is the idea that people with different skin colors, or who are from different countries and speak different languages, are not as good as other people and deserve to be treated unfairly and unkindly.

That doesn’t sound very nice, does it?

It’s not only not nice—it’s also wrong. Laws, practices, and personal attitudes that support racism are wrong. A person with white- or beige-colored skin and blond or brown hair is no better than someone with dark-brown skin and curlier hair, and the other way around. Someone who speaks Spanish is no better than someone who speaks German. Someone who speaks English with a British accent is no better than someone who speaks English with an Indian

accent. No one type of person is better than others.

The problem of racism occurs in every country around the world. That’s what happens on a sin-filled planet. So what can we do about it?

Jesus gave us wise advice in what is often referred to as the eleventh commandment: John 13:34.

Did you notice? Jesus didn’t say anything about loving people who look like us or sound like us, or even worship like us. He just



Bible Treasure

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another”

(John 13:34).*

said to love one another. It's not a suggestion, either. He commands us to do that. That means loving one another is as important as the commandments that tell us not to kill, or lie, or steal, etc.

When we say we love Jesus and want to follow Him, that's serious. It means that just as Jesus loves every single one of us—all people created differently *on purpose*—our job is to love others and treat them kindly.

In some of our families—even Christian ones—we may hear

remarks about different kinds of people that Jesus is not happy to hear. Remember, saying those things is being hurtful to people He loves very much, and it hurts His feelings, too. You may be young, but you can resolve to not join in those conversations and promise that those words and ideas won't find a place to live in your heart and mind. We can choose to be better.

If you ever wonder if something you have heard is racist,

think back to John 13:34. Do those things support the commandment of loving each other? Would those words line up with Jesus loving us?

Make your interactions with all kinds of people filled with love. Even if it's hard sometimes, we can ask Jesus for help, and He will work in our hearts. Showing love to all is something that fills His heart with pure joy! ©

*New International Version

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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