

Adventist World

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a Two-Way
Street**

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Coloring Beyond the Lines

BY BILL KNOTT

One of the first Bible stories that lodged in my childhood imagination had all to do with mission.

Jesus' parable of the sower and the seed (Matt. 13; Mark 4; Luke 8) loomed large because it neatly illustrated the enduring obligation of every Christian to be a witness—even if you were only a 4-year old in a Kindergarten Sabbath School class. I remember gripping my waxy crayons to color images of the fearless farmer scattering seed on different kinds of soil—the rich, brown earth; the sprouting green blades of wheat; the hard, grey ground where nothing takes root; the thieving birds who devoured grain, and the lush thistles that crowded out the germinated seed. Even at 4, I knew this was a “cautionary tale.” Not every seed sown would come to harvest. The world was full of threats, both physical and spiritual.

And like a million other little Adventists who colored the same images, I imagined myself to be the fearless farmer—the one sowing all the seed—even though the parable Jesus told never makes that connection. The takeaway seemed very clear: keep sowing seed, even though only a portion of it will ever yield more grain.

But then, through grace and over time, “I put away childish things” (1 Cor. 13:11). I began to learn that instead of identifying only with the heroic task of broadcasting seed, there were other useful things I could be doing to increase the yield of God's kingdom. For one, I could help to drive away the thieving birds who hover at the edge of every congregation, thus protecting those

vulnerable to heresies and fanaticisms. I could break up that stony ground by kind, consistent care for real-life needs of new believers—supporting their marriages, their parenting, and their new, healthy lifestyle choices. Even the thistles—“the cares of this world”—could be carefully uprooted by wise, patient teaching about stewardship for newly-sprouted Christians.



Mission, as I came to learn, was not about doing just one thing—sowing—but about helping to build an ecosystem of faith in which the

clear proclamation of the Word is matched with attentive nurture for the hearers, and then supported by a caring community of established believers. We dare not say, “It's not our fault that the birds carried them away.” We can't shrug our shoulders and imply that the hearers are to blame when mortgages and marriage woes crowd out their new commitments to Jesus.

According to Jesus' parable, we are in this field as well—and not only as the fortunate ones growing toward Christian maturity. We are covenanted to all whom God's Word is reaching, offering them a safe, enriching place to flourish. The Lord of harvest—He who also initiates the process by sowing the seed in our hearts—expects nothing less from us.

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.

Sandra Björk Ó. Bjerkan records a podcast of the Bible study guide for Sabbath School in the studio of Hope Channel Norway in November 2021. She is one of a group of young people involved in this initiative.

Photo: Tor Tjeransen/Adventist Media Exchange (CC BY 4.0)



“Across the country, in-person gatherings were restricted. Since the coronavirus became a pandemic, most of the churches in Mongolia have been closed, which seems to have led to an estrangement with God. During those challenging times, the faith of many of the members weakened.”

—Sansartsetseg Altantuul, media missionary for the Mongolia Mission (MM), about the mission’s first online camp meeting. Because of the pandemic the annual nationwide camp meeting could not be organized in 2020 and 2021. The virtual event featured seminars centered on women, family, health, children, media, and Sabbath School ministries. Other programs included a talk show, a movie, kids’ time, and physical exercise.

300

Number of families served by a small team from Escrito Está (EE), the Spanish-language program from media ministry It Is Written, traveling to Guatemala to distribute water filters to the Moyuta community who were desperately in need of them. The team helped distribute them and then shared a special message: “God loves the people of Moyuta. You have not been forgotten. Every time you drink this water, remember the One who has promised to give you the water of life. If you drink from it, you will not thirst again. Trust in the love of Jesus.”

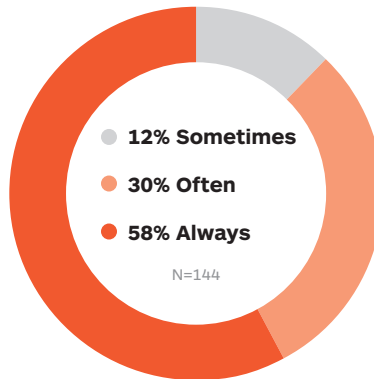


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Number of people in East New Britain, Papua New Guinea, who graduated from an adult literacy program organized by the local Adventist church with support from the Adventist Development and Relief Agency and the New Britain New Ireland Mission. The program has had a significant impact in the community of Mandress by teaching participants how to read, write, count, multiply, and divide. The training also covered topics such as family budgeting, family planning, gender-based violence, child protection, family health, the environment and conservation, pollution, human rights, and the justice system.

Missionaries

Missionaries were asked:



How was your life spiritually fulfilled during your time serving in the mission field?

Source: Data shared by the GC Secretariat and ASTR from the Pilot Study of Returned Missionaries by Kevin Petrie and Missionary Research Team, Avondale College of Higher Education, 2018.

2022 General Conference Session

Official notice is hereby given that the postponed sixty-first session of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists will be held June 6-11, 2022, in the America’s Center in St. Louis, Missouri, United States. The first meeting will begin at 8:00 am, June 6, 2022. All duly accredited delegates are urged to be present at that time. This Session will also be accessible for delegates remotely by electronic means.

Ted N C Wilson, General Conference President
Erton C Köhler, General Conference Secretary

“We set up beds in the auditorium. We had a ton of mattresses that we brought in from our cabins. . . . Then the stranded travelers found every nook and cranny. I’m still finding mattresses in places I would never know that they would be.”

—Evy Conner, Camp Hope staff, about the camp welcoming 271 stranded travelers because of landslides on the nearby highway. The National Public Radio (NPR) in the United States featured the work of the Adventist camp, which is in British Columbia, Canada. The camp came into the limelight in 2021 as the region experienced a series of natural disasters, including forest fires and extensive floods. The camp has repeatedly assisted people who lost their homes or needed places to stay, some even long-term.

7.4%

The average baptismal growth in Samoa over the past 10 years, which is the highest in the Trans-Pacific Union Mission. Focusing on the community has helped the church in Samoa record these numbers. Every second month churches allocate a Sabbath for community outreach, in which members visit homes, pray for the households, and conduct family worship. If they see a need, they will return during the week to help out.

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“Staying active in the club and the church is essential to keeping every member’s faith alive. At this age they want to experience a sense of belonging. They want to feel useful. The Desbrava+ program is there to give them a little push so they can develop skills and continue to be part of the club they love so much. As they do, they can keep being influenced by a Christian environment.”

—Udolcy Zukowski, South American Division Pathfinder director, about a new initiative to encourage Pathfinders who turn 16 to remain engaged in their club activities and opt to join leadership training class, take group classes in the regular program, or even take supporting leadership roles. →



Photo: South American Division News

ADRA Does More Than Fill Empty Stomachs

By Adventist Development and Relief Agency and *Adventist World*

For a project created to fight hunger, you might assume that the main goal would be to fill empty stomachs. But the ultimate goal for the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) food security work in this area is to grow resilience in the communities it serves. One project has delivered success as never before in 16 countries across Africa, ADRA leaders recently reported.

As the potential devastation of the global COVID-19 pandemic first became evident, ADRA's Africa regional office partnered with Adventist women's ministries and youth departments across the 16 countries to try to ensure that communities wouldn't go hungry during the crisis.

ADRA's expertise and the church's resources came together to train women and young people to plant sustainable household and community gardens. In turn, these volunteers trained others in their communities and also provided

seeds and gardening tools, taught cooking classes, and spread awareness about preventing COVID-19 and reducing disaster risk.

Time and time again the results showed that people were able to feed themselves and their families from these gardens; they were also able to earn money by selling excess produce and providing for neighbors. The techniques they were learning ensured that the gardens they planted were climate-safe and sustainable. Also, the additional training they received taught them how to get the most from their produce.

ADRA's team in Zambia referred to their involvement with the project as "garden evangelism" as they built connections with the people in their communities and put compassion into action to serve. In Zambia alone, ADRA trained 90 youth and women in areas hardest hit by the pandemic, and those 90

Agency is boosting food security across Africa.

people spread the word and trained more than 600 others in their communities.

"This project will not stop here. We pray that God continues giving us knowledge and wisdom so that we can help each other," Yorantha, one of the youth leaders in Zambia, said. "And we even encourage those out there, those whom ADRA trains, not to just go home and sit on that gift we are given. Let's work on them. If we don't have the land, we have been also taught how to plant in the sack, in used bottles we can also use. No one can give an excuse, such as we don't have the land. We are trained in everything. So we thank ADRA. May the spirit continue, and may God continue providing for them so they continue to empower more people."

This cascading success was the same in every country, exceeding goals by more than 950 percent in some areas. Families and communities were able to provide for themselves and truly be resilient in the midst of a global crisis.

This project became a success for many reasons, according to the initiative leaders. The close partnerships between ADRA and the Adventist women's ministries and youth departments meant combined resources to make a greater impact. Also, it was community-led. And the project showed the importance of loving one's neighbor. "We loved hearing about newly trained gardeners sharing produce with other community members who couldn't provide for themselves or had fallen sick," ADRA leaders reported. "Many also went out of their way to train others," they said. ©



Yorantha is a youth leader in Zambia who helped train others in gardening.

Photo: ADRA

Adventists Welcome Afghan Families to the U.S.

By Evan Knott, for *Columbia Union Visitor*, and *Adventist World*

When families from Afghanistan arrived in the United States following their rapid evacuation from the war-torn country, Adventist Community Services (ACS) stood ready to serve. Chesapeake Conference's ACS team first responded to the crisis by meeting evacuees arriving at Dulles International Airport in Virginia in early September. The ACS team administered emotional and spiritual care as part of its ongoing partnership with the American Red Cross.

CARE AND LOVE FOR EVACUEES

Most evacuees cared for were American citizens returning to the United States because of the rapid military withdrawal. Some of the Americans returning were also of Afghan descent, including some who had to leave family behind in the war-torn country.

"These are people who are having to completely restart their lives," Ignacio Goya, ACS director for Chesapeake Conference, said. "Many are experiencing shock. We're here for them in these moments of change, stress, and loneliness. We're here to show them care and love and to let them know that they're not alone."

ACS team members also offered support for the volunteers and government employees working long hours in response to the crisis, many of whom have felt overwhelmed by what they're seeing.

"No one has stopped to ask many of these people how *they're* doing," Goya said. "Working in a crisis is stressful. Imagine trying to help person after person for an eight-hour shift for 10 days in a



Photo: Chesapeake Conference

row. Many are feeling frustrated because they just don't have enough resources to help those arriving in the way they want. So we listen to them and cry with them and show them care and love."

The latest response efforts have shifted from providing emotional and spiritual care to organizing long-term support for evacuees.

HELP TO RESETTLE

By December ACS Chesapeake had shifted its focus to providing 340 Afghan families resettling in Chesapeake territory (Delaware and most of Maryland) with food and essential supplies as they attempt to rebuild their lives in the United States.

"We're not just giving food or a welcome basket; we're sharing the love of Jesus with them," Goya said. "That's what ACS is all about; that's what the Seventh-day Adventist Church is all about."

Churches across the Chesapeake Conference responded to donation requests for such essential items as cleaning supplies, hygiene products, and basic kitchen equipment. In partnership with ADRA, ACS Columbia Union, and ACS North

Adventist Community Services is distributing essential items.

American Division, team members from ACS Chesapeake organized the donations into welcome baskets and personally distributed them to refugees living in temporary housing in the region.

For those involved in delivering the welcome baskets, interacting with the refugees has been heart-breaking as well as inspiring.

"It's been life-transforming, honestly," Kleyton Feitosa, pastor of Living Word Seventh-day Adventist Church in Glen Burnie, Maryland, said. "You know, we've been hearing the stories and seeing pictures on the news, but it gets real when you actually get to meet them and see the families and the needs."

ACS Chesapeake continues to partner with local government agencies to provide ongoing support and logistical assistance to refugee families.

"Our purpose in these last days as a remnant movement is to be the people that [are] looking for other people's needs," Goya said. "If you see a need, cover the need. Mingle and win their trust and be ready if the Holy Spirit [touches their] hearts to invite them to follow Jesus." ©

More Than 100 Friends to a Bible Study

By Charlise Alves, for South American Division, and *Adventist World*

Martinho Ferreira de Moura has clear memories of his parents encouraging him to share his beliefs when he was as young as 10. The advisor to Brazil's Seventh-day Adventist Entrepreneurs Association recalls distributing Adventist literature. When he was a child, his parents encouraged him to be active in sharing his beliefs. Every Sabbath he would distribute Adventist literature in northern Rio de Janeiro. It's been decades since his childhood experience, but those early teachings still find a place in his heart. An active member of the Rio de Janeiro Central Seventh-day Adventist Church, Moura found a creative way of sharing God's truth with his friends.

A businessman for decades, Moura has been president of a transportation association and is currently a member of the Inter-American Chamber of Transportation. His work experience has significantly expanded his network of influence and allowed him to meet many entrepreneurs across Brazil. Many of them became his friends.

Since most of Moura's friends live in other cities across Brazil,

they usually get in touch online.

A MESSAGE TO SHARE

One day Moura had the idea to start sending short devotional messages to his friends via WhatsApp. He chose Gilson Brito's "This Day With God," which are five-minute, inspiring messages based on faith and the Bible.

Initially the messages were sent to a group of just 20 friends. As the initiative grew, Moura's contact list increased almost sixfold, reaching 114 friends across Brazil. The group gets the video devotional every day. He said the effort has even acquired a name: Friends Sharing Hope With Friends.

Moura said many of his friends have questions about the topics discussed in the video messages. He then spends time helping them to better understand the topic of the day.

INITIATIVE IMPACT

Fernando Carneiro is also a businessman in the transportation area. He is one of the 114 who receive the daily devotional from Moura. In the business world the

Brazilian businessman is reaching out to his colleagues.

two are competitors, but the respect and friendship of 25 years are above their line of work, they said. Carneiro is not an Adventist church member, but he likes to share messages about Jesus. He decided to start a group to resend Moura's messages to his network of family and friends. Then he found out that some of his contacts were sharing those messages with their contacts.

"It's rewarding to exchange experiences with my friends," Carneiro said.

But Carneiro didn't stop there, as he began to read the Bible to go deeper into the contents discussed. Particularly the Bible book of Daniel caught his attention, which led him to further studies.

ONLINE AND IN-PERSON GATHERINGS

Soon the group discussed the idea of meeting in person. Carneiro attended, together with 15 of his friends. Led by Moura, participants were given the opportunity of choosing a topic. "The topic with the most votes was life after death," Moura said.

Other topics being covered were resurrection, spiritual gifts, Jesus' return, the seventh-day Sabbath, the end of the world, the Holy Spirit, predestination, miracles, salvation, and God's law.

Moura said that his local church pastor, Gilson Montin, is usually available to clear the participants' doubts and provide more in-depth information about the topics as needed.

The idea now is to keep expanding the group, Moura said. "Our goal is to encourage other businessmen to share the gospel of Jesus in their area of influence," he said. ☺



Moura shares his faith during a meeting with friends and colleagues.

Photo: courtesy of Martinho Moura

4,262,871

Membership of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division (SID) as of November 4, 2021

120

Number of cooked meals the District Six Adventist Church in Cape Town, South Africa, serves every Sabbath. During the pandemic the church was not able to meet for long stretches, and so church members chose to minister to homeless people. The church partnered with the community to assist in various ways. This interaction showed church members that early assistance to families often prevent a crisis from becoming a catastrophe and for some even prevents them from becoming homeless.

“We are in a movement of destiny. Let’s not forget that. This ship, Zion, it may seem that it is tossed back and forth as if it is about to be fall, but somebody was shown that this ship will make it to the harbor. Let’s stay together. Let’s stay in the ship, and the Lord will abundantly bless us.”

—Solomon Maphosa, president of SID, during a pastors’ meeting for the Trans-Orange Conference in Johannesburg, South Africa. Maphosa encouraged pastors to be focused on the mission of the church.

“When we met with the Seventh-day Adventist leadership in Zambia, one of their biggest areas of concerns was Adventist education. There are more than 1.3 million Adventists in Zambia, and only a handful of Adventist schools. We are hoping to help them change the trajectory of how they utilize Adventist education to serve the country.”

—Kyle Fiess, vice president of volunteer projects for Maranatha Volunteers International, about their partnership with Adventist leaders in Zambia. In 2021 Maranatha provided 232 water wells and 82 One-Day churches in Zambia, as well as expansion and improvement projects at Emmanuel Secondary and Liumba Hill schools. 📍

18

The number of children who graduated at Place of Blessings in Thamaga, Botswana. The facility is one of several centers under the coordination of Susan Williams, director of women’s ministries at the Botswana Union Conference, and with the support of private donors. The centers provide wholistic education to young students in underserved communities across Botswana, including orphans, vulnerable, and destitute children.



Photo: Maranatha Volunteers International




Focus

Being a Missionary Changed My Life

Missionaries go to share the gospel, and discover they are learning more of it themselves.

BY ANDREW MCCHESNEY

Anyone who has served as a missionary—either inside or outside their home country—will tell you that “mission is a two-way street.” You give to others, but you also receive. The following insights into Seventh-day Adventist mission work as well as the worldwide regional stories illustrate this notion.—Editors.



The heavy shelling began abruptly in the South Sudanese capital, Juba. Argentine missionary doctor Peter Fenoy immediately ran out of his office on the compound of the regional headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist church. Security training had taught him about the danger of staying in a building during an attack. If a shell hit the building, he was more likely to be injured than if he was on the street. It was safest to be on the ground, lying near a wall.

Peter saw adults lying on the ground, and children were running. He heard shells falling. He looked around for his wife, Natasha. She was nowhere in sight.

"Natasha! Natasha!" he called.

Running back into the building, he found Natasha sitting at her computer typing a work report.

"What are you doing?" he cried.

Natasha looked up. Her face was expressionless.

"If it happens, it happens," she said. "If not, it wasn't our time."

It was then that Peter understood how deeply Natasha had been scarred as a child by civil war in her birthplace of South Ossetia in the former Soviet Union. As the shells fell in South Sudan, she felt nothing. Her attitude was "If I die, I die."

Peter and Natasha had moved to South Sudan to bring healing to people affected by a 22-year civil war. Their three-year stint also ended up providing healing to Natasha as she overcame childhood trauma and learned that war is not normal after all.

"When I came to Africa, I learned how abnormal it is," Natasha said. "I had never heard about the trauma that armed conflicts leave on a person and how they change the personality" (See full story on page 12.)

WHY HEARTS CHANGE

Natasha's heart-changing experience has been repeated in the lives of many missionaries, church leaders said. Every missionary who surrenders to the Holy Spirit experiences a change of heart. Missionaries may go to share the gospel, but discover the gospel making a difference in their own hearts.

"The one thing I hear over and over is some variation of the expression 'I expected to help the people, but in fact I'm the one who has been blessed,'" said Gary Krause, director of Adventist Mission and a former missionary kid. "In fact, I hear it so often that it has almost become a cliché."

Change is required just to become a missionary, said Oscar Osindo, interim director of the General Conference's Institute of World Mission, which provides cross-cultural training for all church missionaries. By accepting the call to serve, a missionary leaves a familiar culture and travels into the unknown following the example of Jesus, who left the comfort of heaven for the dark earth.

"As missionaries incarnate the life of Christ in a different culture, they see themselves in others, and the cross of Christ

breaks the dividing wall with others," Osindo said. "The blood of Christ unites the two into one humanity, and the missionary will never be the same again."

Thousands of Seventh-day Adventists have left their homes to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus, who said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19, 20). Currently about 400 families are serving as long-term ISE (Interdivision Service Employees) missionaries, while hundreds go every year as short-term AVS (Adventist Volunteer Service) volunteers. They also go as Global Mission pioneers, reaching out to unreached people groups in their own countries; tentmakers, who use their professions to work in restricted countries; and volunteers with the Asia-based 1000 Missionary Movement and supporting ministries such as Adventist Frontier Missions in the United States.

Most missionaries seek to grow and change in order to fulfill their calling, said Cheryl Doss, a longtime missionary and recently retired director of the Institute of World Mission. "The experiences they face, the intercultural challenges they deal with, the trials and tribulations that always come in the mission field, mean they have to change or break," she said. "Most change into people with beautiful servant hearts open to the needs of the world."

Only missionaries who resolutely resist fail to experience any changes in their lives, Osindo said, adding that those who resist "never finish their terms, or they struggle."

Missionaries who surrender to God and allow their hearts to be molded by Him have remarkable stories, he said. "They learn to trust more in the Lord, and they live to tell incredible stories," he said.



STORY ONE

From War to War

Natasha Fenoy was 10 when a blockade and heavy shelling caused her to flee her hometown in South Ossetia, a breakaway region of the former Soviet republic of Georgia. The town found itself cut off from water, food supplies, electricity, and medical services as pressure grew for residents to surrender during the 1991-1992 civil war. When all seemed hopeless, a 23-year-old local man organized a convoy of trucks to whisk off the children to a peaceful part of the region.

Natasha's parents woke her up at 3:00 a.m. to join the convoy. To reach the waiting trucks, she and her brother would have to cross the central Sovetskaya Ulitsa, or "the street of death," as they called it, because snipers were targeting the street from a nearby hill.

"We reached the street and waited," Natasha recalled. "Parents told a kid to run across quickly. We saw leaves falling as a sniper was shooting. We waited a while longer, and then my mother pushed my brother out into the street and told him to run."

The sniper opened fire when Natasha's turn came to run. She felt hot air as a bullet whistled past her, and she heard leaves falling from trees.

She and her brother were separated from their parents for some time, but they eventually made it to safety.

Years later Natasha met and married Peter, who was working with an aid organization in South Ossetia at the time.

Memories of her traumatic childhood returned after Natasha and Peter moved to South Sudan. The shelling incident when Natasha stayed at the computer occurred during the waning days of the civil war. After a peace agreement was signed in 2005, child soldiers were demobilized, and Natasha worked with many traumatized children.

"I read how to work with them, and I learned about the signs of trauma," she said. "I saw myself in every book that I read and said, 'Wow! That's me.'"

As she read about trauma and assisted the children, she was able for the first time to come to terms with her own childhood. She was able to put the past behind and find new peace in God.

"Assisting people in a conflict situation helped me come out of the trauma that had been part of my life," she said.

Missionaries who surrender to God and allow their hearts to be molded by Him have remarkable stories.



Grappling With COVID

Sharon Pittman, who grew up as a U.S. missionary kid in Pakistan and later served in Guinea, Iraq, and Madagascar, never thought that COVID-19 would emerge as one of her biggest mission challenges.

Two waves of COVID crashed over Malawi Adventist University, each threatening the lives of students and staff, and pushed the institution toward financial ruin. As a third wave hit, Sharon, who came out of retirement to oversee the university as vice chancellor, learned to her dismay that 15 students had just tested positive and another 50 were in quarantine. The path ahead seemed dark.

Running her fingers through graying hair, she prayed, “O Lord, I don’t think this could have been what You had in mind when You called me to mission service!”

Despite 35 years of experience in higher education, she had never felt more bereft of professional insight and wisdom.

“Lord,” she prayed earnestly, “please navigate the challenges that the devil has thrown our way.”

In the emptiness she sensed a quiet voice.

“My daughter, I love this university more than you ever can,” the voice said. “Step into the water, and I will part Wave Three as I have done with Wave One and Wave Two.”

At that moment her heart suddenly felt light. All worry and fear vanished. She called together her team to map a way forward with God’s strength.

When contacted for an interview, Sharon was sitting on a beach on Lake Malawi, preparing to chair a much-awaited Malawi National Conference on Higher Education that had been postponed twice because of the first two COVID waves.

“The water on the beach here at our hotel is beautiful, and the monkeys are playing within sight of my chair,” she mused. “The Lord has a great sense of humor in calling me here. He knew that this was the right type of retirement for me where I can serve but also enjoy a few minutes on the beach as well.”



Sharon Pittman



Nerly Figueroa with some of her students

STORY THREE

Missionary for Life

Homesick for Mexico, Nerly Macias Figueroa sat on a sandy beach in the Marshall Islands, gazing across the crystal-blue water of the Pacific Ocean. She felt certain that God had called her to teach children on Ebeye, but she also wanted to go home.

“Lord,” she prayed, “help me to be a good teacher and missionary for You. Help me not to miss my family.”

After the prayer she felt comforted; her sense of frustration ceased. “I still missed my family, but my mind was focused on my mission work,” she recalled.

Nerly put her heart into teaching while on Ebeye in 2016-2017. When she returned to Mexico, she resolved to remain a missionary for the rest of her life. After receiving a master’s degree in nutrition, she accepted a teaching job at Linda Vista University, an Adventist institution in southern Mexico. The university has become her new mission field, and she has noticed many similarities between her current students and the students she once taught in the Marshall Islands.

“The students have familiar problems, including low confidence,” she said. “I’m teaching them about God—how God has provided for me and how God can provide for them.”

She has seen students change as they develop a relationship with God. The changes remind her of that day on the beach where God eased her mind and brought comfort.

“If you are convinced that God is calling you as a missionary, your life will change,” she said. “You will never be the same.”



Mkhokheli Ngwenya

STORY FOUR

Praying for Food

No one seemed to be ready for Mkhokheli Ngwenya when he arrived at the village where he had been asked to serve as a Global Mission pioneer in his native Zimbabwe. A debate broke out among impoverished church members over where he would live. Finally a church elder took him in.

Life was difficult. The family had little to eat, and Mkhokheli, who preached and walked great distances to make house visits, had not received his stipend.

"I remember spending the whole day without eating anything, and we just ate porridge in the evening," he said.

As he prepared to quit, he sensed a small voice saying, "Mkhokheli, will you not sacrifice for Me?" That marked a turning point. His heart was touched and transformed.

"God, if You want me to work, give this family something to eat," he prayed.

God answered his prayer. A short time later a bus filled with food, soap, and other essential supplies arrived from Adventist-operated Solusi Secondary School. Mkhokheli was astonished.

"From that time, I started to surrender everything to God and to depend on Him," said Mkhokheli, who served as a Global Mission pioneer for three years and is now studying theology at Solusi University.

"Before I became a Global Mission pioneer, I was fearful even of the possibility of failure in ministry," he said. "But the experience of actually working in the field dispelled all fear and brought about courage to face the challenges that come with working for God. My wish is to work for God full-time as a missionary. Wherever He sends me, I will go. I love to see churches planted in unentered areas."

STORY FIVE

Only Life Worth Living

Daisy, a South Korean missionary in southern Asia, felt perplexed when she met a woman who refused to see a physician even though she had been badly burned. The woman would certainly die without intervention. But what could she do?

[To protect her work in a country hostile to Christianity, *Adventist World* is not publishing Daisy's full name or identifying her location.]

Daisy prepared a simple dressing for the wound and prayed with the woman. The next day she returned to the woman's home to replace the dressing and to pray again. She also prayed in her own home, and she solicited the prayers of friends. A month passed, and, to Daisy's joy, the wound healed completely.

"It was an incredible miracle in my missionary life," Daisy said. "It was an awesome answer to prayer."

But what amazed Daisy the most was the change that occurred in her own life during that month. She thought that she was helping only the injured woman by praying for her, but in praying for her every day, she was receiving help from the Holy Spirit as well.

"Through prayer I came closer and closer to God," she said. "God gave me a chance to grow."

Daisy is convinced that God called her to become a missionary to change her into His likeness.

"Since I have become a missionary, I pray more, and I have seen many miracles," she said. "I am so happy to be a missionary, and I cannot imagine any other life." ©

Andrew McChesney is editor of the *Mission* quarterlies at Adventist Mission, headquartered at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in **Silver Spring, Maryland, United States**.

Some Helpful Resources

- Mission stories and mission news: AdventistMission.org
- Long-term and short-term mission opportunities: VividFaith.com
- Adventist Volunteer Service: adventistvolunteers.org
- Global Mission Pioneers: bit.ly/GMpioneer
- Tentmakers: TotalEmployment.org
- 1000 Missionary Movement: 1000mm.or.kr (NSD) or bit.ly/1000MMssd (SSD)
- Adventist Frontier Missions: afmonline.org
- Institute of World Mission: instituteofworldmission.org

Through Veteran Eyes



Mission *quarterlies* editor Andrew McChesney talks with Oscar Osindo, interim director at the Institute of World Mission, and Cheryl Doss, recently retired director at the Institute of World Mission, about the missionary experience.—Editors.

Why are missionaries' lives changed through service?

Oscar Osindo: It happens because there's no one way to present Christ to the nations. As missionaries we must make the gospel meaningful in people's social context. Missionaries learn new ways of making themselves and the gospel relevant to their host societies. In the process they also experience transformation. We just finished a reentry seminar last week, and all returned missionaries testified to how mission service impacted them. Incidentally, one of the reasons we hold these seminars is that mission service has changed missionaries' lives in ways that sometimes cause them to experience reverse culture shock on their return.

Cheryl Doss: First, hearts are changed because of missionaries' willingness to answer God's call. God doesn't just call; He empowers

those He calls. Second, because of their commitment to serve wherever they're called. If God has placed them there, then they can trust He will care for them there. Third, because successful intercultural working and living requires learning to see through others' eyes. If they want to do what God has called them to do effectively, they must understand the people they're serving and change the ways they do their work to best represent the gospel message in that context.

Do you see any trends in how lives are changed?

Osindo: In the rare instances that the missionary life remains unchanged, it might be a case of cultural imperialism, in which the missionary feels that his or her culture is superior to that of the host society.

Doss: A growing world trend is the mingling of different cultures because of migration, globalization, and media. This has resulted in opposing trends: idealizing multiculturalism and cultural xenophobia. Missionaries must learn how to maintain their self-identity while embracing change. This learning is what the world and the church need today to address the opposing trends. Having a learner's heart, a willingness to adapt, and the primary identity of being a child of God—as opposed to an ethnic, racial, or national primary identity—tends to assure positive personal growth and change and successful mission service. The same mindset would help communities and the church to address current world trends.

Osindo: No culture is superior or inferior to another, but only the gospel corrects every culture. With that in mind, the missionary is humbled and goes to the mission field as a learner before earning the right to suggest changes to others' lives. ©

Focus

Rich or Poor?

Being a missionary fulfills our desires.

God used the mission field to change my life. When I was baptized at the age of 15 in 1997, I was the only Seventh-day Adventist in my family in the Philippines. I felt called to become a pastor, and the missionary who had held month-long evangelistic meetings in my village encouraged me to study theology.

But when I enrolled at the Adventist University of the Philippines, I found that it would take eight to 10 years for an impoverished working student like me to become a pastor. I also decided that I wanted to make more money than a pastor. So I opted for a four-year degree in English education with an eye on studying law and becoming a well-paid lawyer.

After graduating, I wasn't sure what to do next. My law school plans were not materializing, and I felt very sad because no one in my family had been baptized even though I had witnessed to them for nine years. I felt like a sinner and a broken vessel.

Then I remembered that I had longed at one time to become a missionary, even for only a year.

"God, if You open a door to serve You, I will go," I prayed.

That same year, in 2006, I was called to serve as an eighth-grade teacher at the Yap Seventh-day Adventist School in the Guam-Micronesia Mission. Then I married my college sweetheart.

NOT AN EASY LIFE

Life was not easy. I remember one year, when we were expecting our third child, my monthly stipend amounted to US\$250, while my wife earned \$230 as a teacher. But we decided to keep serving God, trusting that He would provide.

We fell in love with the mission field, and we stayed in the Guam-Micronesia Mission until 2020, teaching at schools in Yap, Ebeye, and Majuro. Along the way, God



provided a way for me to finish a master's degree in education at La Sierra University, and today I'm a missionary, principal, and teacher in the United States.

Looking back, I realize my heart was not right with God when I began to serve Him. But He accepted and molded me. During my first year as a missionary, my father, mother, and all my siblings were baptized. *Wow!* I thought. *I worked so hard for that to happen, but God gave me the desire of my heart only when I gave up and focused on His work as a missionary.*

DOING THINGS GOD'S WAY

Once I thought that serving God would make me a very poor person, but God has given me much more than I could ever want. I've traveled widely for my work, including recruiting student missionaries across the United States, and received a master's degree without going into debt. God truly owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Ps. 50:10).

I've found that if you seek Him first, then all these things will be added unto you (Matt. 6:33). Give all your life to God. If you do, you'll receive it all back! "Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back" (Luke 6:38, NLT).* ©

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Raian Villacruel serves as a teacher and principal in the **United States**.

What's Your Success Story?



Sometimes we get caught up with our routines. We are busy with our checklists and miss out on what is important and irreplaceable.

played was that of Pichai Sundararajan, also known as Sundar Pichai, the CEO of Google's holding company Alphabet. His life of hard work and achievement is inspiring.

"What's your definition of success?" I asked the same question to my first-year nursing students at Lowry Adventist College, my Sab-

What's your definition of success?" I have asked this question repeatedly over the past year. Some of the responses I received from teenagers and young adults were: "Success is achieving your goals." "Success is becoming famous and rich." "Success is living your dreams."

After hearing their definitions of success, I asked, "What does success look like?" and then showed them a series of pictures. The first picture was that of Neeraj Chopra, Indian gold medal winner in the javelin throw in the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, beaming into the camera with his gold medal. He is a man who made India proud. I asked them if success looked like this. I saw hands go up, heads nod, a couple smiles, and a loud "Yes!" That certainly looked like success.

The next picture was that of Albert Einstein, one of the greatest physicists of all time. We still study his theory of relativity and quantum mechanics at school. This elicited a feeble response. Not many felt that Einstein looked like success.

Next up was a picture with stacks of money and a celebrity. I saw hands shoot up. Many of them thought that becoming rich and famous truly marked success. One of the last picture dis-

bath School class, which is comprised of mostly college students, as well as to a group of teenagers and young adults at a youth camp. Their responses varied widely. Here are some that intrigued me the most: "I want to be so rich that I don't have to glance at the price tag." "I want to be so famous that I don't need an introduction." "I want to build a home for my family." "I want to start a care home." One student even shared his 10-year plan, which included working in the United Kingdom as a nurse and saving up money to invest in land and buildings.

Success means different things to different people. To some it's ticking off items on their bucket list, to some it's being happy, and to others it's living in peace and having a well-settled life. After hearing a number of different answers, I asked the young adults to divide into groups and visually chart out their success story. I told them to include all the elements that would be a part of this venture.

After they had drawn out their success story, I asked one more question: "Where is God in all this?" There was silence.

This made me wonder how I defined success and whether God was involved in all those details in my life. Sometimes we get caught up with our routines. We are busy with our checklists and miss out on what is important and irreplaceable. Our definition of success says something about our identity and purpose. It reflects who we think we are, what we identify with, what we wish to be known for, and what we think we are here for.

So, allow me to ask you once again: "What's *your* definition of success?" ©

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

Wonderful Light From the Word of God:

The Three Angels' Messages



The mention of the three angels' messages immediately stirs the Adventist camp. A great majority embrace the messages as one of the doctrines defining the identity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Nearly all Adventist mission statements reference Revelation 14:6-12. Yet there are remote corners of the Adventist camp that groan when the messages are mentioned. In these corners reactions vary from outright denial of the interpretation to excess worrying over the reaction of the proclamation.

There are those standing on the edges of the three angels' messages landscape. The debate is over the proclamation. Hovering on one side are those calling for a scalding, in-your-face revelation of the beast and the fire and brimstone awaiting those choosing the mark of the devil's authority. On the other edge come voices clothed in what appears to be the sophisticated, academically superior armor of new light. They demand the old identities of Adventism be revised or thrown out and claim that a smooth message resonating with the collective wisdom of the world will usher in a great harvest where an invented new grace negates the need for repentance, reform, and holy living.

THE RIGHT FOCUS

Is it not time to call for a three angels' messages reset? The edges of the church must draw together. The proclamation of the three angels' messages is not optional. Too long have these messages been interpreted as bad news. But they are not bad news; they are good news.

The Three Angels' Messages Committee at the General Conference is moving forward to energize this reset. All Seventh-day Adventists are called to pray, study, and with divine urgency reshape their perception, asking, "Do I see and embrace the good-news hope of the three angels' messages?"

Divine counsel from Ellen White provides that from which both edges of the debate can benefit. She writes, "The proclamation of the first, second and third angels' messages has been located by the Word of inspiration. Not a peg or pin is to be removed."¹ She also writes, "We should not, upon entering a place, build up unnecessary barriers between us and other denominations, especially the Catholics, so that they shall think we are their avowed enemies. We should not create a prejudice in their minds unnecessarily. . . . From that which God has shown me, a great number will be saved from among the Catholics."²

Research³ indicates that a small percentage of members are unclear on how to embrace the distinctive doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, including the three angels' messages. If the proclamation of these messages is the work of the church just before Jesus comes, would it not be in the interest of every member to consider the good news of these vital messages?

One of the primary purposes of the three angels' messages is to identify the characteristics of God's remnant people. These characteristics include: (1) having the faith of Jesus (Rev. 14:12); (2) keeping the commandments of God (Rev. 14:12); (3) being

guided by the testimony of Jesus, which is the spirit of prophecy (Rev. 12:17; 19:10). To strengthen our understanding of these messages, let's briefly consider each one.

THE FIRST ANGEL

Overview: God's end-time remnant church will proclaim Jesus' life, faith, sacrifice, love, mercy, grace, righteousness, and victory to everyone. All will know God's judgment is real and happening now (Rev. 14:7). Everyone will be called to give the Creator glory and recognize the Sabbath as the mark of the true gospel.

For deeper study:

- Everlasting gospel: John 3:16; Rom. 1:16; 16:25, 26; Col. 1:26, 27.
- Fear God: Deut. 6:24; 10:12; 1 Sam. 12:24; Ps. 33:8; Prov. 16:6.
- Give glory to God: Ps. 29:2; 96:8; Rom. 4:20-22; 1 Cor. 10:31.
- Worship the Creator: Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11; Deut. 5:12-15; Mark 2:27; Rev. 4:9-11.

THE SECOND ANGEL

Overview: The second angel announces the collapse of a false gospel and system of worship. The true gospel triumphs. End-time Babylon is a global apostate religious power, a threefold union, composed of Roman Catholic, Protestant, and spiritualistic forms of false worship.

For deeper study:

- Babylon has fallen: Rev. 13; 17:3-7; 18:4-11.
- Collapse of the false gospel: Rev. 18:4-11.
- Triumph of the true gospel: Dan. 7:27; Matt. 24:14; Rev. 14:12.

THE THIRD ANGEL

Overview: The third angel warns against worshipping the beast and his image. The beast represents the Papacy, and the image of the beast is formed when the United States makes and enforces laws for the observance of Sunday. The mark of

the beast is received when Sunday is observed as the day of worship because it is commanded by law. As a final part of the judgment, evil and all who cling to it will receive its justice and be destroyed by fire—unquenchable until only smoke remains, the effects of which are eternal.

For deeper study:

- Warning against worshipping the beast and his image: Rev. 12:17; 13; 18:1-5.
- Christ uplifted and a people prepared: John 12:32; Rom. 3:22-26; 8:1-4; 1 Cor. 1:2, 7, 8; 1 Thess. 5:23, 24; 2 Thess. 1:10; Titus 3:5-7; 2 Peter 3:10-12; Rev. 12:17; 14:12.
- Smoke . . . day and night: Ps. 37:20; 68:2; Isa. 34:10; Mal. 4:1; Matt. 3:12; Jude 6, 7.

GOOD NEWS

Not long ago my wife and I were part of an off-road four-wheeler group traveling across the rugged back country of Utah. Carefully we crept down the wall of a huge gorge as we prepared to cross a small stream. Just as we were beginning to relax, we rounded a hairpin curve and found a sign at the bottom of the canyon: "WHEN FLOODED, TURN AROUND, DON'T DROWN". No one criticized those who posted and proclaimed such a negative message. Each person looked that stream over very carefully. And though it appeared the sign had been there many years, and there were only three inches of water in the stream at the time, the signs of a raging torrent were strewn high up on the bank of that little stream. To all, the sign was good news. That old Utah sign made me wonder what Noah's sign looked like (see Matt. 24:37-39).

PROCLAMATION: GETTING STARTED

The revival of commitment and urgency are among the church's greatest needs. How do we get started? Prayer and Bible study must

Too long have these messages been interpreted as bad news. But they are not bad news; they are good news.

be our constant companion. With the Holy Spirit all things are possible.

In the late twentieth century, when cereal maker Kellogg's realized that most people had heard of Kellogg's Corn Flakes but few had tasted them, the company came up with a slogan: "Taste them again for the first time." You are invited to "taste the three angels' messages again, maybe for the first time." Urgently study these themes of Revelation 14:6-12, using the Bible as the infallible standard of truth.

Complement your study with *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* and visit the Three Angels' Messages Committee website (threeangels.info), where you will find many helpful materials prepared by multiple entities of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I urge you to visit the website today. ☺

¹ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958, 1980), book 2, p. 104.

² Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), pp. 573, 574.

³ "2017-2018 Global Church Member Survey Concerning the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Reach the World 2015-2020 Strategic Plan: Meta-Analysis Final Report," Oct. 2, 2018, online at <https://bit.ly/AdventistGlobalMemberSurvey>.

Michael Ryan is chair of the Three Angels' Messages Committee at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.



What We Believe

Stewardship

The Dog That Barters

Giving is an attitude—
not just an action.

Our dog Molly is a West Highland white terrier with a cute and yet infuriating trait. She has learned the art of bartering. Not *barking*, which she already does well, but *bartering*. It goes like this. She will grab one of my wife's shoes, the newer and nicer the better, and race off with it. No coaxing gets her to return it. In fact, she relishes it when you lunge after her and she gallops off at high speed around the furniture and under the bed with her contraband. She'll chew on it, but mostly she lives for the thrill of the chase. However, she has learned to barter with us. If we come back to her with a squeaky toy or some tasty dog treat alternative she thinks is attractive, she will trade the valued shoe for the offered item.

Some people have taken a Bible verse to mean that they can barter with God. Malachi 3:10 says, "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this," says the Lord of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it."

Here it is, they think. God has guaranteed success and prosperity to everyone who returns a faithful tithe. They treat this verse like a barter system. I give God 10 percent, and He is supposed to bless me with abundance. They treat it like a quid pro quo—God owes me.

Do we return a tithe because of what we think we will get at our end of the bargain? Does God owe me?

BLESSED FIRST

The prophet Habakkuk taught a different joy than the prosperity gospel espoused by some well-known ministries today. He points out that our service to God is based on something better than a spiritual quid pro quo.

"Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls—yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Hab. 3:17, 18).

Our joy in returning to God His tithe is not built around some kind of divine barter system. We return His tithe and our offerings because, prosperity or not, He is our Savior. We are the recipients of His grace. And in gratitude we recognize that all things belong to Him. We hold them only in stewardship.

There are many Christians who are faithful to God in returning His tithe and their freewill offerings. And yet they never become wealthy, outshine all their neighbors with the largest house or the latest vehicles, or have a "special" touch with their finances. While they are faithful, they don't seem to be getting ahead in the



world. And yet, God has not forgotten to bless them. As the psalmist promises: “I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread” (Ps. 37:25).

Even as God promises a blessing to follow our faithfulness, the fact of the matter is that there is a blessing that has come first, and our returning His tithe is an acknowledgment that we already have been blessed. Returning God’s tithe is more than a duty or the fulfillment of a command. It’s more than a divine transaction. It’s an expression of gratitude for blessings already received that we didn’t bargain for.

GIVING TO GET

When I first began in ministry, I had the privilege to attend some presentations by Mel Rees, then the premier Seventh-day Adventist teacher of stewardship and fund-raising by local churches for capital campaigns. Rees described a condition that he observed in human nature he called “giving to get.” He said you saw it in places like some Christian churches conducting raffles, bingo games, and other fund-raisers where the concept was that you might walk away with something of value, perhaps even more valuable than you “contributed.”

That same concept goes even further, when individuals donate to a cause, expecting public recognition,

perhaps even getting a building named after them, or being motivated to see their name on a wall display, or receive an award at a public gathering. Those are not bad in and of themselves unless the motive to give was to receive some type of reward instead of the altruistic desire to serve and help others. Rees told a story a little closer to home of the time a devout church member, who was a quiet and otherwise reserved middle-aged lady, approached her pastor one day. She stated that she resented every dime of tithe that she paid because she would like to spend more of her income on the kind of clothes she liked. In fact, she resented the offerings she gave as well, because she felt that kept her from being able to afford to go to the kind of places she wanted to travel to. But she was staunchly dutiful and wanted to follow the rules.¹ It would appear that rather than having a spirit of gratitude and recognizing that she was already blessed, she was “giving to get,” in order to fulfill the divine requirements and hope to gain heaven, even though she resented the appearance of a sacrifice here.

GRATEFUL HEARTS

In speaking about God’s people of today and the blessings that they have already received, Ellen White goes on to say, “They are to pay tithes of all they possess, and to make offerings of that which he bestows upon them. His mercies and blessings have been abundant and systematic. He sends down his rain and sunshine, and causes vegetation to flourish. He gives the seasons; sowing and reaping-time come in their order; and the unfailing goodness of God calls for something better than the ingratitude and forgetfulness that men render to him. Shall we not return to God, and with grateful hearts present our tithes and offerings?”²

There is the key. Instead of seeing our actions of stewardship as some kind of barter, we recognize they are an expression of grateful living. Like Habakkuk we can rejoice even if there few resources in our pockets. We experience joy in the God of our salvation. And when we get to heaven and the new earth, it will be because of the bountiful grace of our heavenly Savior, not because we were such shrewd, grasping negotiators, like my dog Molly with my wife’s shoe. ☺

¹ Adapted from Melvin E. Rees, *God’s Plan for Social Security* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1970).

² Ellen G. White, in *Signs of the Times*, Jan. 13, 1890.

Ray Hartwell is director of Grateful Living, Stewardship, and Planned Giving Trust Services ministries of the Georgia-Cumberland Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in **Georgia, United States.**



Faith in Action

Providing a Safe Haven

My life took a sharp detour in August 2021 when I landed in Bolivia as a student missionary from Southern Adventist University in Tennessee, United States. Working at Familia Feliz, an orphanage and boarding school located on the outskirts of Rurrenabaque, Bolivia, was certainly a dramatic contrast to my life as a business major at Southern. It didn't take me long to realize that God had much for me to learn.

Familia Feliz is a refuge and safe haven for neglected, abused, and orphaned kids who have nowhere else to go. The Seventh-day Adventist-run facility is located on a beautiful 100-plus-acre campus and is home to 70 kids and 30 volunteers. Familia Feliz has been operating for more than 16 years, and the staff is committed to placing the children in homes run by supportive house-parents. This helps ensure that these kids are finally placed into stable home environments.

LEARNING THE ROPES

When I first arrived at Familia Feliz, I experienced a fusion of feelings. I was scared, excited, and unsure of what I was getting myself into. The moment I saw the kids' smiling faces as they ran to hug and greet me, however, all my doubts flew out the window.

As a volunteer houseparent, I get to love and nurture children who are unable to be with their biological parents, usually for serious reasons. I also help to teach music class, and my students sing for church once a month.

I live in what is called the House of Lions. This is one of six homes on campus. The boys help with chores, do homework, and play out imaginative scenarios—all with a bit of the usual sibling rivalry and the challenge of sharing of toys that make for a typical home. I live with 12 boys, all between the ages of 3 and 10. Each child is filled with boundless energy. I'm very grateful for our resident lion tamers, Brother Juan and Sister Emiliana, whom I aid every day.

THE STORY OF ALEX

Each of our boys has a story, but one of our most recent lions is Alex. Alex loves to run and race and he had an adorable smile. The police found Alex wandering on the road alone after he'd escaped from a home where he had been frequently beaten and locked up. I feel a special connection to Alex; he makes me smile often as I watch him grow and change.

"I like it here; I like living here," Alex says. "My favorite part is going to school."

This is what Familia Feliz is all about! Just a few months ago Alex was in an abusive home, locked in rooms, and beaten frequently. Today, however, he's in a safe environment that allows him to live



Facing page: Student missionary Zachery Kirstein and some of the boys he cares for at Familia Feliz. Left: Emiliana and Juan run the campus home where Zachery helps care for 12 boys.

Familia Feliz is about making connections, forming deep relationships with children who are in desperate need of attention and love.

and grow in a loving atmosphere. He now attends an Adventist Christian school and church, and daily experiences a beautiful example of what a family should look like.

Familia Feliz is about making connections, forming deep relationships with children who are in desperate need of attention and love. I work at this every day by playing games with my kids, laughing with them, hugging them, and embracing them in every aspect of their lives.

GROWING THE CAMPUS

One current project to support campus growth is the addition of a greenhouse, which will help to sustain a garden during the rainy season.

The rainy season in Bolivia lasts from December to February, when it rains almost every day. The plants become flooded and die, and prices skyrocket. Being able to grow vegetables in a greenhouse will both ensure an ongoing supply of vegetables for our campus and provide the

means to start a small business of selling vegetables in town.

CHRIST'S LEADING


In my time at Familia Feliz I've seen Christ leading me to make a difference in the lives of these children. My perspective of mission work and serving as a missionary has totally changed since my arrival here. I now view mission work as a lifestyle. It's how I live my life—from the smiles I give to my kids in the morning, providing a shoulder for them to cry on, and being there for them when their parents have chosen not to be.

Every day is an opportunity for me to rely even more fully on Jesus and to show the kids that I love them and care for them. ©

To learn more about Familia Feliz, please visit www.familia-feliz.org.

Zachery Kirstein, a business major at Southern Adventist University in **Tennessee, United States**, is currently serving as a student missionary at an orphanage in **Bolivia**.

Desiring Jesus



Ellen White
and worship

In his recent book, *Desiring the Kingdom*, James K. A. Smith states that “our ultimate love is what we *worship*. . . . It’s what I desire, what I love, that animates my passion.”¹ Worship is more than following a traditional or contemporary liturgy. Worship is longing for, loving, and desiring God.

Some think “desire” is a prophetic name for Christ as the coming Messiah. “‘And I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,’ says the Lord of hosts” (Haggai 2:7). This prophecy not only speaks about the Christ who was to come, but also the longing of all people of the earth. For ages, humanity has desired Him. As the psalmist wrote: “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God” (Ps. 42:1).

Ellen White intimately understood this when she wrote *The Desire of Ages*. For decades she longed to write a comprehensive work on the life of Christ. In the 1890s she was afforded the opportunity while living in Australia. Her “desire of ages” sprang from her devotional life, in which she experienced profound worship in the presence of one she came to understand as a loving friend. When she started writing in 1892, she quoted the hymn “Jesus, Lover of My Soul”² in her diary.

When she concluded the book in 1898, she again quoted a hymn, “What a Friend We Have in Jesus.”³ For Ellen White, desiring Jesus was the only reasonable response to the love of God in Christ. Nothing satisfied her like being with Jesus. “My whole being longs after the Lord. I am not content to be satisfied with occasional flashes of light. I must have more.”⁴

In the preface the publishers of *The Desire of Ages* state, “It is God’s design that this longing of the human heart should lead to the one who alone is able to satisfy it. The

desire is of Him that it may lead to Him, the fullness and fulfillment of that desire. That fullness is found in Jesus the Christ, the Son of the Eternal God.”⁵

When reading *The Desire of Ages*, we often think the book presents a historical view of Jesus. The purpose goes much deeper, however, seeking to cultivate in the heart of the reader the attitude of worship. It asks, *What is your heart's desire? What or whom do you worship?*

THE WORSHIP PERSPECTIVE

I suggest that the church reconsider the entirety of Ellen White's writings, particularly the Conflict of the Ages Series, as a treatise on worship. The great controversy between Christ and Satan centers on the critical issue of love for God or love of self. Desiring God is the only reasonable response to His loving-kindness for us (Rom. 12:1, 2). Keen readers of the Conflict of the Ages Series have been quick to note the poetic first and last sentences of the entire work: “God is love.”

The first book, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, begins with these words; the fifth book, *The Great Controversy*, concludes with a most profound, doxological passage: “From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love.”⁶ White frames and centers the narrative on worship.

Two paragraphs earlier she wrote:

“And the years of eternity, as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His char-

acter. As Jesus opens before them the riches of redemption and the amazing achievements in the great controversy with Satan, the hearts of the ransomed thrill with more fervent devotion, and with more rapturous joy they sweep the harps of gold; and ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of voices unite to swell the mighty chorus of praise.”⁷

How does Ellen White incorporate this worship perspective into her third volume of the series—*The Desire of Ages*? Like a chiasm, the heart of the work is the most important, centering on desiring Jesus. She begins the book by declaring Jesus as the “Immanuel,” God with us, the image of God, the outshining of His glory. “It was to manifest this glory that He came to our world.”⁸ What is this glory? This is His glory: the light of His love, His radiant character.⁹

JESUS' MISSION

Jesus came to praise the Father by revealing His benevolent character. He prayed for His disciples: “I have declared unto them Thy name”—“merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth”—“that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”¹⁰

Most important, Ellen White states the purpose of Christ's mission was for worship. “*Jesus had come to teach the meaning of the worship of God.*”¹¹ Every miracle, every conflict, every act of mercy, was to reveal the glory of God, to inspire the desire and affection of human hearts toward God in worship.

I invite the global church to reconsider reading Ellen White through her own lens—Christ's purpose on earth was to reveal God's love so we would, in turn,

Christ's purpose on earth was to reveal God's love so we would, in turn, love and desire Him.

love and desire Him. This is genuine worship. Furthermore, because our resurrected Lord lives, He gives us His Holy Spirit to enable and enliven our worship. He liberates our wills and quickens our affections. He draws us into His presence, stirring up in us a desire for Him.

Jesus has ever been the Desire of Ages. He asks you today, Will you desire Him over all else? Will you worship Him? ☉

¹ James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), p. 51. See also James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016).

² *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1985), no. 489.

³ *Ibid.*, no. 499.

⁴ Ellen G. White manuscript 20, 1892.

⁵ *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940).

⁶ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 678.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 19.

⁹ Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 10.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹¹ E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 84.

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Wondering About Gambling

Q

Is gambling wrong in itself, or is the problem gambling addiction?

A

I suspect that most ethicists would argue that it is pathological gambling that is ethically wrong. Many Christians, including Adventists, consider gambling to be in open conflict with Christian values, and consequently they reject it. Allow me to describe the problem, consider the biblical principles for its rejection, and add a pastoral appeal.

1. THE COST OF GAMBLING

Gambling is commonly defined as the attempt to win money by betting money or playing games whose outcome is determined by chance (e.g., horse races, casino games, lotteries, raffles). In many parts of the world gambling has reached epidemic proportions. The problem has been exacerbated by online gambling, which allows individuals to risk their limited financial resources gambling from the privacy of their homes.

Unfortunately, gambling has the support of large segments of the population and is legally protected and promoted. Compulsive or pathological gambling results in financial problems for the individual and for family members, and quite often brings with it physical and verbal abuse in the family. It is also accompanied by depression and has a profound negative impact on the mental and physical health of the individual, sometimes resulting in suicide. Among many other social problems, gambling increases crimes. It has been calculated that North America invests annually about \$50 billion a year to deal with the negative social impact of gambling.^{*} The high risk of becoming addicted to gambling should be enough for Christians to avoid this epidemic at all cost.

2. GAMBLING AND CHRISTIAN VALUES

The Bible does not contain a law against gambling, but it does provide values and principles that can be used to evaluate the practice. First, gambling is grounded in selfishness and greed, both used to motivate individuals to gamble. Feeding selfishness goes against the Christian gospel, with its stress on sacrificial love (1 John 4:7-9). The attempt to increase our wealth at the expense of others is not an expression of Christian love (Matt. 7:12). Second, placing our hope on chance is a rejection of God's providential care for us, who in His love guides us always (Matt. 6:25-31). We should seek to increase our faith in the Lord by not relying on chance. Third, biblical stewardship rejects gambling by reminding us that all we have belongs to the Lord and that we should use it to glorify Him (Ps. 24:1; 50:9-12; 2 Cor. 8:19, 20). God gives us strength to earn a living through honest work and thus He provides for our needs, for the mission of the church, and for the benefit of others (Eph. 4:28; 2 Cor. 9:10, 11; 1 Tim. 6:17). The biblical call to Christian generosity should rule out raffles that are often promoted as intending to achieve something good.

3. RELAYING ON THE LORD

We often experience difficulties that require financial resources to address them. Gambling could tempt us to find what would appear to be a simple solution to our needs, but it is an enslaving and devastating idol. The biblical call is to always trust in the Lord, even in the midst of our most severe trials. Resisting this demonic invention requires that we strengthen our relationship with the Lord through prayer and the study of the Bible.

The best antigambling measure is never to start gambling. If by any chance you are a compulsive gambler, you may need professional help together with faith in the Lord to overcome this damaging addiction. The Lord, who gave His life for you, can make you victorious. ©

* Earl L. Grinlos, *Gambling in America: Costs and Benefits* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 177. The number is most probably higher now.

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Health & Wellness

Mission Opportunities for All?

Or must you be on the church payroll?

Are there opportunities for health professionals not employed by the Adventist Church to engage in real mission for the church? My personal circumstances and commitments preclude overseas service.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has had a strong emphasis on health and health ministry from its earliest days. The health work and our health message are broadly termed the right arm of the gospel.

Jesus set the example in His own ministry. We're told that He spent more time healing than preaching. Much of His work revolved around healing and caring for people's needs. As He did so, He gained their confidence and invited those He served to follow Him.*

Caring, service, and wholistic healing were modeled in Jesus' day-to-day ministry. He would address the issues of physical illness and also urge those He healed to sin no more. He addressed the problems of guilt and shame. He touched the untouchables, fed the hungry, and met people just where they were.

As physicians, we both have spent our entire careers in service and mission, and it's important to state up front that health evangelism and health ministry are not just for medical doctors. Nurses, dental professionals, physical therapists, occupational therapists, administrators—all those engaged in some aspect of the health work—are key to mission and called to extend the healing ministry of Jesus in whatever discipline they may be qualified. We're all a part of this blended ministry, caring for the physical as well as the spiritual needs of those we serve.

One does not need to be on the payroll of the church to be part of its mission. Work with the church in supporting its community outreach programs as well as teaching, leading, and guiding, using the expertise and learning with which God has equipped, entrusted, and commissioned you. Service in the ministry of healing is a wonderful privilege.

We've had the sacred opportunity to minister both physically and spiritually to world leaders, speak in parliaments and legislative assemblies, lead in academic settings, teach students and residents, plant congregations, establish and administer lifestyle programs, share the good news of Jesus, preach, teach, and baptize. We have the sacred responsibility to be always ethically conscious and sensitive and never to abuse the trust and vulnerability of those we serve. Never should we take advantage of those seeking or needing our services; we must model Christlike compassion and respect individual choices and decisions.

By God's grace we've seen atheists embrace Jesus as Lord, the sick miraculously healed, and the reversal of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) through balanced application of the principles God has given us for wellness and for the prevention and even healing of common diseases. We've had the sacred privilege of walking with those who have now tasted the first death, sharing the blessed hope!

The harvest is plentiful; the workers few. You can be the difference serving just where you are. Ask Him daily for at least one opportunity to be His heart and hands. He will not disappoint you! ☺

*See Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 143.

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“May I Tell
You a Story?”

BY DICK DUERKSEN

123 Watermelons



It's boiling up here in the summer, well above 90 degrees Fahrenheit (32 degrees Celsius), and I've got a number of crews out working in the sun. They're sweaty and dirty and tired, and I'm the boss—coming to visit and see how the work is going. Well, I get out of the truck, put down the end gate, and call everybody over to help me carve watermelons. I bought 123 of them during the summer heat and gave every one of them away to hot, tired, sweaty workers. I think that's what Jesus would have done."

"Oh, and I forgot to mention the doughnuts. I figure that when Jesus fed the 5,000, He gave them fish and bread, right? So I give the crews watermelon and donuts, and they love it!"

Lorin is a farmer, rancher, construction manager, and boss for several crews who are working on oil and gas lines in North Dakota, United States, and across the border in Canadian Saskatchewan. He's a big man, intimidating because of his size. Then he smiles, and you forget how big he is. All you see is the smile wrinkles standing like mountains around his eyes. This is a man who knows how to laugh.

"One nastily hot day we were lifting some metal beams up to serve as part of the roof on a new building," one of the workers remembers. "The beams were so heavy it took three of us to lift them into place, and we were quickly exhausted. In the hot afternoon Lorin came over, lifted one of the beams all by himself, and held it in place while we set the bolts. All by himself! And he was laughing and telling jokes the whole time."

You know how some workers are fearful of their bosses? Not on Lorin's crews.

Lorin's workers love him. When he's carving watermelons, he's also talking to the workers, asking about their families, commending each one for something he had seen them do, encouraging, teaching, and supporting each one personally.

"I've got a garden at home," Lorin says with a grimace. "Nah, I'm not a great gardener, but I think Jesus would have had a garden in Nazareth, so I have one in North Dakota. It's where I walk with God. It's the training ground that He's created for me to walk beside Him and receive His messages. A lot of learning happens out there in the tomatoes."

Lorin's tomatoes are not normal tomato plants. They stand seven to eight feet (2.1 to 2.4 meters) tall. Last summer, a hailstorm came through, and balls of ice crunched into the plants. Usually this would have marked the end of the tomatoes for the summer. But remember that this is the garden where Lorin and God walk together. Instead of breaking down the plants, every time a hailstone hit, the plant put out a new branch! They bushed out so much that Lorin had to take a machete and whack a tunnel through so that he could harvest all the ripe red tomatoes.

"God and I got 500 pounds [nearly 227 kilograms] of tomatoes this year. Then we gave every one away. Some went to the workers; others went to people who just drove into the yard and said they were hungry and wondered if I had any tomatoes. I ask God to send those folks, you know, and He always makes sure every tomato has a family."

* * *

Five hundred pounds of tomatoes. Seventy-five quarts of canned corn. A hundred twenty-three watermelons. Seven gallons of Christmas cookies. Eight carrot cakes with genuine butter frosting. And giant bars of dark chocolate. Lots of chocolate!

"I buy only the very best chocolate, not the cheap stuff, but the good dark chocolate," Lorin says. "Jesus wouldn't have settled for second-best, so I buy the finest I can, and give it away with a smile!"

In Lorin's truck there's always a tasty treat waiting to be given away. Like on

the day he was driving down a farm road and saw a tired man sweating to get his fence wires pulled tight. Lorin saw the problem and knew a little help would be appreciated. But first he stopped his truck at the edge of the road, grabbed the chocolate bar and a bottle of cold water, and offered them to the farmer. No one's ever turned down one of Lorin's chocolate bars. The two men laughed together for a few minutes; then Lorin helped him repair the fence.

"He's known as the Chocolate Man," a friend chuckles. "Always giving something away, especially those giant bars of fine dark chocolate. Scattering smiles the way Jesus did in Galilee."

"I just do what Jesus did when people came to Him. He met their soul needs. Even though He didn't usually give them what *they* thought they needed, He gave them what they really *did* need. He showed them that He was there for them, that He really cared, and then He gave them more than they understood at the time. He genuinely loved them, and I think that's my mission too. To model my life after Him. To be a giver. Someone who really cares."

Lorin has a hard time staying in North Dakota. Every year he leads a couple construction teams building schools in Africa and India. On the way over, his luggage is heavy with tools. Extra hammers, saws, power drills, and the like. On the way back, his luggage is very light. All the tools were left behind with new friends who needed them.

There's always one other bag of goodies in his luggage: a bright-yellow pouch filled with knife sharpeners. Each evening Lorin is out in the village sharpening someone's kitchen knife. And machete. And plow. But he's not just *doing* the sharpening. He's teaching others to use his sharpeners, and then giving them away.

"I'm just trying to make sense of this world I'm in, you know, and I want to live the way Jesus lived and make it across the finish line with Him." ©

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Seventh-day
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Fat Crows

I heard this story as a pastor told it to a group of people high in the mountains of the country of Lesotho (located in southern Africa), who had just been baptized, they understood the message.

Once upon a time a new Christian was just about to be baptized. He had given his heart to Jesus, his life had changed, and his former friends were mad. One of them determined to do anything he could to get him to somehow go back to his old ways.

The friend knew that the new Christian's favorite food used to be crow. He liked it boiled, baked, fried; he just loved it all. But now he didn't think of it anymore. He didn't hunt crows. And he didn't hang out with

his friends after a good day of hunting crows. So the friend came up with a plan, one he was certain would work.

It was baptism day, and the new Christian was on his way joyfully humming various hymns to himself as he walked along. His friend gleefully sneaked along in the bushes not far away until he quietly slipped ahead and around a corner where the new Christian had to pass. He pulled a fat, beautiful crow out of his coat and dropped it by the edge of the road. Then he slipped back into the bushes to hide.

The new Christian came humming and singing along the road. He rounded the corner, saw the crow, and kept on going without even a backward glance or a pause in his singing. But in

his mind he thought, *Look how God has changed me. I used to like those things.*

The friend was disappointed but not discouraged. He followed along in the bushes, watched the baptism from the bushes, and decided he would try again on the way home. After the baptism the new church member was happily walking along with his new church family. They were all talking, singing, and praising God.

The friend had to be really careful this time. But he rushed on ahead in the bushes and bravely dropped the crow again. This time the new member glanced twice at it and kept going. In his mind he thought, *This is strange. I never could catch those things before, and now that I don't eat them, I have*



Bible Treasure

“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour”

1 Peter 5:8, NIV

seen two real beauties.

The friend in the bushes noticed the second glance and smiled. “I will do it again. I’m going to get him yet.”

Sure enough, as he rounded the next corner, there was another fat crow. This time the new convert poked at it with his foot. His mouth was watering. He thought, *Crow sure did taste good. I wonder why God says they are unclean.*

He started to lag behind the group. The next time he saw the fat crow by the road, he stopped, looked both ways, and quickly picked it up and put it under his coat. His face was flushed. He was nervous. Suddenly his friend came out of the wood grinning from ear to ear.

My crow story may disgust

you much more than it amuses you, since you have likely never thought of eating fat crows. Nevertheless, something else may be tempting you. I know, too, that just like the sneaky friend following in the bushes, Satan is doing everything he can to get you to sin. Peter calls him a roaring lion looking for whom-ever he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could guarantee that once we accepted Jesus, suddenly everything will be easy for us until Jesus comes? But you and I both know that it will not be. People fail. Mistakes will be made. We will sin. Then what?

When a baby who is learning to walk falls, do you say to them, “Don’t ever do that again! You are embarrassing! If you can’t

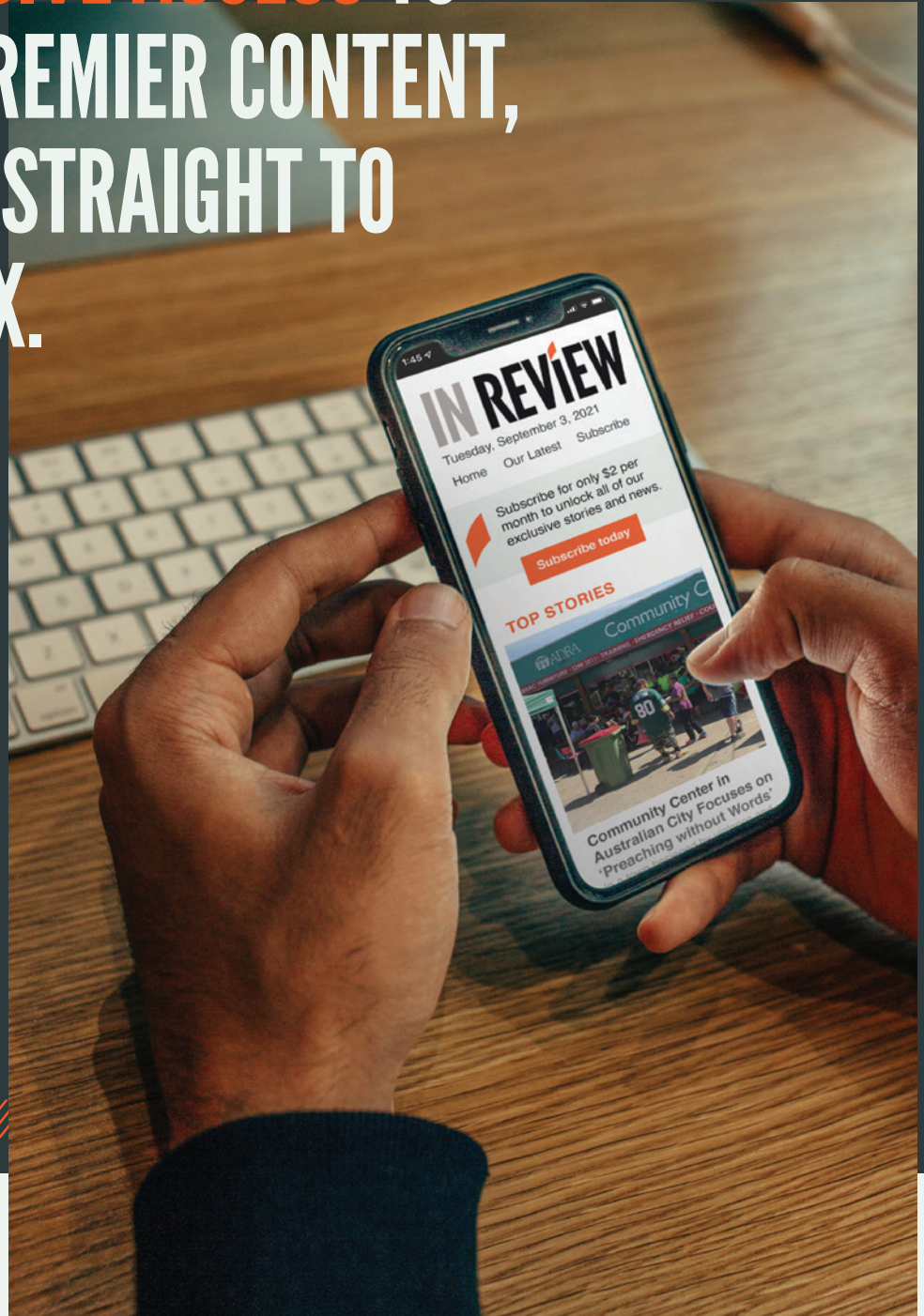
walk, don’t bother trying any-more!” Of course not! And that isn’t the way it is with God, either.

God will never leave us alone. Remember that our God is our help (Ps. 46:1). Also remember that we can help others.

The sneaking enemy, Satan, just like the friend in the story, is dropping all the fat crows he can, not only in front of you, but also in front of your family and friends. So the next time you see someone eyeing a fat crow, try distracting them by pointing to Jesus. ☺

This story is reprinted from KidsView, June 2016.

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