

# Adventist World

05/2022

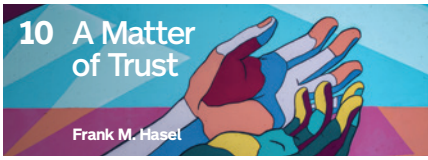
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## A Community of Prayer





Cover image: Tim Mossholder;  
Artwork by: Annabelle Wombacher, Jared Mar, Sierra Ratcliff and Benjamin Cahoon

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## Before the Healing

BY BILL KNOTT

*"If My people which are called by My name shall humble themselves and pray . . ."*

The words evoke far-distant places and long-ago concerts—most of them small, modestly attended, and dripping with the summer heat.

Nine of us—college students all—spent a summer more than 40 years ago in a singing group that toured dozens of small congregations and multiple camp meetings in the northeastern United States. Living closely together for 10 weeks with those who began the tour as friends was its own kind of challenge: the second tenor honestly admitted months later, "This summer pushed friendships to the breaking point to see what they were made of."

Yet every evening, after 75 minutes of carefully rehearsed songs and inspiring personal testimonies, we concluded each concert with a stirring anthem built on the words of 2 Chronicles 7:14. Holding hands (except when wiping the sweat from our brows or chasing away persistent flies), we sang with passion, clarity, and four-part harmony of the results of humility, of seeking God's face, and turning to Him in obedience: *"Then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and heal their land."*

We knew so little about humility—or prayer—at the tender ages of 20 or 21. Our world shone with the luster of bright expectations as we envisioned soaring careers in medicine, teaching, social



work, and ministry. The humility needed was *out there*—from the audience; in the congregation under the big camp meeting tent; among the difficult, hard-hearted souls whom we assumed were hindering God's desire to heal and bless His people. We sang as evangelists of a truth we hadn't yet learned to live, for humility is only occasionally a characteristic of even earnest, twentysomething Christians.

Like so many other graces, humility and prayer are gifts that accompany increasing maturity in spiritual life. One must have lived awhile—probably a broken, painful while—to appreciate God's persistent call to humble ourselves both before Him and each other; to pray both in the quiet place and with two or three who gather in His name. The conditions under which God obligates Himself to hear our prayers and heal our fellowship require us, as the expression has it, "to get over ourselves." We still strive to sing the honest words of the old Shaker hymn—*"To bow and to bend we will not be ashamed."*

This edition of *Adventist World* is an invitation to the same spiritual habits of which our touring chorus sang so blithely many years ago. Prayer without humility is only a soliloquy, a pious monologue that God can hear but that hard-heartedness makes difficult for even Him to answer. Humility is born, is nurtured, raised, and deepened when we join with other believers to claim the enduring promise of the Saviour: *"For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them"* (Matt. 18:20, NRSV).

When you have read this month's edition, find a friend—better yet, find two friends—and ask the Lord for the forgiveness and the healing His remnant people so much need just now.

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





**“Home Safe Home” is an ADRA project in Croatia to support people like this couple from Petrinja (second and fourth from left), who lost their home in an earthquake in December 2021. Newly-built wooden houses will now accommodate these families.**

Photo: Vanessa Pizzuto / Adventist Media Exchange (CC BY 4.0)

### Notice of Regular Meeting of Members of the General Conference Corporation of Seventh-day Adventists

Notice is hereby given that the next regular meeting of the members of the General Conference Corporation of Seventh-day Adventists will be held in The Dome of America's Center, St Louis, Missouri, in the United States of America, on Wednesday, June 8, 2022, at 2:00 p.m. for the transaction of any business that may come before the meeting. The members of this corporation are the delegates to the sixty-first session of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

**Daisy Jane F Orion,  
Corporate Secretary**

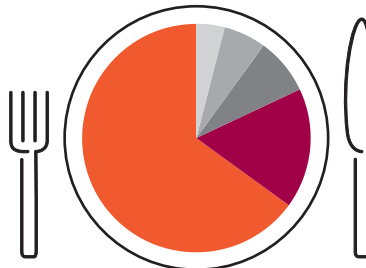
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The number of devices that logged on for the “Games Without Borders” event. Wanting to see the younger generation flourish in the church, several youth leaders across Europe collaborated to create an event for teens ages 13 to 16. On March 5, local church groups logged into the Zoom event. As COVID restrictions still exist in some places, many church groups are not able to meet regularly. This event connected local church youth groups with the global church, allowing teens to experience a virtual event in real time with other groups from across the continent.

## How often church members pray

Church members were asked if they pray outside of meals. Here was their response:

- 4% Never
- 6% Less Than Once a Month
- 8% About Once a Week
- 17% More Than Once a Week
- 65% Daily or More Than Once a Day



N=58,285

Source: 2017-2018 Global Church Member Survey

URL: <https://bit.ly/35odSzW>



“We can now offer more treatment options and give our patients renewed hope. The most exciting feature of the Nuclear Medicine Centre is the new SPECT/CT, which is going to be a game-changer for the diagnostic process for numerous medical fields, such as cardiology, orthopedics, oncology, endocrinology, nephrology, and more.”

—Richard Koh, Penang Adventist Hospital chief executive officer, about the first fully fledged nuclear medicine center in northern Malaysia on March 13. Named the Adventist Nuclear Medicine Centre, the new division marks the beginning of greater milestones for the hospital, offering various diagnostic and medical procedures as it expands services to its patients.

### 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**



# 75

The number of years that Holbrook Indian School (HIS), located in Holbrook, Arizona, United States, celebrated on March 6. Throughout the past 75 years students from many federally-recognized Indian nations have come to Holbrook. Students from HIS have become nurses, teachers, pastors, accountants, dentists, welders, and private business owners.

**“It’s made a difference in the way students think about what’s possible. Having a chance to make a tangible difference allows students to see a way to live that has value and meaning in their community.”**

—Beth Villanueva, an English teacher at Atholton Adventist Academy (AAA), Chesapeake Conference, United States, about a student led fundraising project for Afghan refugees resettling in their local community. From December to March, students raised more than \$5,000 and additionally collected and sorted donations, delivered food and essential items for 18 Afghan families.

Go to [www.adventistreview.org](http://www.adventistreview.org) for everything about the upcoming General Conference Session, June 6-11, in St. Louis, Missouri, United States. See breaking news, videos, and interviews. Read the Session proceedings; watch the “live feed”; listen to podcasts. One place for everything: [www.Adventistreview.org](http://www.Adventistreview.org)

**“It gives me great pleasure to be part and parcel of this new vehicle for evangelism. . . . Radio can reach places where some of us as pastors cannot go.”**

—Solomon Maphosa, president of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, about the launch of the Adventist World Radio online radio station powered by SIDmedia on March 6. More than 150 people, including leaders and guests, attended the event. →



Photo: Manelisi Vala and Noel Sibanda

## Global Youth Day Embraces “The Forgotten”

Beth Thomas, for ANN, Libna Stevens, IAD, and *Adventist World*

Since 2013 the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s Global Youth Day (GYD) has touched millions of lives around the world for Jesus—including the young people who participate each year. This year was no different. On March 19, 2022, youth in every conference, union, and division of the Adventist Church chose to “be the sermon” in their neighborhoods, communities, and beyond.

“People from 183 countries actively shared their GYD activities through Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube using the hashtags #GYD22, #BeTheSermon, #LovingTheForgotten, #yovoy, and others,” Sam Neves, associate Communication Department director of the Adventist Church, reported. “Collectively, they reached more than 30 million individuals by posting or sharing each other’s GYD activities.”

### BEHIND THE THEME

The GYD planning committee chose the 2022 theme “Loving the Forgotten,” based on Matthew 25:31-40. In that passage Jesus com-

mends His followers for serving Him through feeding the hungry, welcoming strangers, clothing the naked, encouraging the sick, and visiting prisoners. Shocked by the praise, Christ’s followers reply that they didn’t know they were serving Him by doing those things. Jesus answers, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (verse 40 NIV).

Embracing these examples, “we focused on reaching individuals that are often overlooked,” Gary Blanchard, Youth Ministries director of the Adventist Church, said. “We challenged our youth around the world to intentionally reach out in love to the prisoner, refugee, elderly, and missing members.”

Blanchard explained that what often happens is that we focus on reaching the homeless, which is a good thing, but we don’t always look a little wider at others around us in need of love. “We wanted to expand our range of care,” he said.

Expanding that range of care involved Pathfinders and youth

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**Adventist young people from 183 countries make a difference for Jesus.**

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buying groceries for poor members, preparing “blessing bags” for homeless in their cities, ministering to refugees, and going door to door, sharing the love of Jesus with those in their neighborhoods.

“This is a lifestyle,” Maria Mander-son, editorial assistant at the Youth Department of the Adventist Church, said. “[It is] not just a one-day event. Even in the midst of everything, the young people are excited, and they are [coming up with] new creative ways to make it work.”

### PURPOSE AND PASSION

“GYD is a special day with many opportunities for young people to impact the community with purpose and passion, where they can serve and testify in a more collective way,” Al Powell, youth ministries director for the Inter-American Division, said. Engaging the community year after year means more than 1 million young people in Inter-America are active every year in serving and impacting their communities, he said.

“There’s been so much excitement, and not just on GYD,” Powell added. “We are seeing a trend now—young people loving the Lord who are zealous in doing something for Jesus every day, not just on GYD,” he said.

### WHAT’S NEXT?

When asked about 2023, Blanchard was quick to share that the theme will be “Love Is a Verb.” “We particularly want to see the world church reach out to students and educators,” he said. “Obviously, the theme also lends itself to all types of outreaches, but those are the two entities we will be focusing on in 2023.” ☺



Photo: Inter-American Division News



## New Facilities Ramp Up Adventist TV and Radio in Chile

By Nuevo Tiempo Chile and *Adventist World*

**Nuevo Tiempo's mission is drawing people to Jesus, leaders say.**



New building for Nuevo Tiempo Chile, in Chillán.

Photo: Jorge Atalido

Nuevo Tiempo Chile held the long-awaited inauguration ceremony of its new facilities in Chillán, Chile, on February 20, 2022. The new communication center for the Adventist media headquarters in the country will boost the production of resources for the Nuevo Tiempo network, which has been ongoing for 20 years, leaders said.

“The previous building did not meet the needs in radio, television, and social networks, so for years we longed for new facilities that met the technical and human requirements,” leaders said. “Thank God, this dream has come true, [something] that will allow us to reach more homes with the message of hope and salvation.”

Patricio Olivares, general director of Nuevo Tiempo Chile, said that, reaching such a milestone is a great blessing. “It is a moment of great joy that will endure over time,” Olivares said. “What we are beginning today still needs more time to keep developing, but we are happy because we have a house, a place to produce new programs, to keep dreaming, grow, and believe

in having a powerful impact on those who yet have to get to know the Lord.”

The goal is to grow—both in quality and quantity—in the area of TV, radio, and Internet evangelism, as the Adventist Church keeps preaching about the second coming of Jesus across Chile and Latin America, leaders said.

Tomás Parra Contreras, director of the South American Division (SAD) Radio Nuevo Tiempo and Radio Novo Tempo networks, said this is a major achievement for the network he leads. “Chile is very important for the network, and we want to continue producing quality content and also relevant content for the salvation of many people,” he said.

For Chile Union Mission president Aldo Muñoz, the joy of the inauguration is only part of the story. “The connection between Nuevo Tiempo and our local congregations is very important,” he explained. “More than 180 Nuevo Tiempo coordinators are visiting homes to deliver Bible studies offered every week through the network,” Muñoz said.

The opening day also featured praise music and a tour of the new facilities. TV director and editor Claudio Johnson reminisced about the history of the ministry in the area. “A long time has elapsed since we began at the previous building. [This development] is something that will change everything for the better.”

SAD president Stanley Arco, who for years served in Chile, also recalled the beginnings of Nuevo Tiempo. He said he hoped God’s plans in the area of communication keep being fulfilled across the region and beyond. “This building is important to keep producing resources not only for Chile but [also] for the South American Division and the world,” Arco said.

Jorge Rampogna, SAD communication director and former director of Nuevo Tiempo in South America, agreed. “Nuevo Tiempo Chile keeps being relevant because from this very place, strategic content of hope and salvation will continue to be developed, so more and more people may know Jesus and accept Him as their personal Savior,” he said. ©

**3,675,689**

Membership of the Inter-American Division (IAD) as of December 31, 2021

**4,213**

The number of people who joined the Adventist Church after six weeks of online spiritual messages. The *Footprints of Hope* Online Evangelistic Series was hosted by the church planners in Jamaica and made possible because of coordinated efforts by evangelism teams on the ground throughout the English-speaking regions of IAD. The territory includes the church regions of Jamaica, the Atlantic Caribbean, the Caribbean, the Dutch Caribbean, and Belize.

**“The world is experiencing many crises today. Millions of people are suffering, are oppressed without hope and living in uncertainty. Others focus on consumerism, pleasure, vices, and idleness, all of which seem to lead them nowhere. But what a blessing it is to see the children and young people of our church celebrating their day, helping, being examples of faithfulness and reflections of God’s love!”**

—IAD president Elie Henry on Global Youth Day, an annual initiative of the world church that encourages Adventist young people to “be the sermon” through acts of service. The 2022 event took place on March 19.

**“We’re looking to continue to provide elders and their spouses with new skills so they can be prepared and equipped to continue teaching, ministering, preaching, and administrating alongside pastors as they adapt to the challenges the church faces today.”**

—Josney Rodríguez, IAD ministerial secretary, about a recent church elder training event during which 43,000 people participated. More than 35,000 of the elders completed the certification program, and the rest are part of the new certification process.

**200+**

The number of children, youth, and adults that cycled 40 kilometers (25 miles) through Bogotá, Columbia, February 25, to launch the first of dozens of initiatives and activities commemorating the centennial of the Adventist Church’s presence in the country. Cyclists also rode to promote healthy living to onlookers and business owners, wearing shirts bearing a logo that stated: I Want to Live Healthy. This IAD initiative promoted the eight natural remedies (nutrition, exercise, water, sunlight, temperance, fresh air, rest, and trust in God), and both professional and amateur cyclists shared smiles and hope. ↓



Photo: Juan Alvis





Photo: Inside Creative House / iStock / Getty Images Plus / Getty Images

## The Middle East and North Africa Union Mission Turns 10

*Statistics and personal testimonies paint a remarkable story of growth.*

Ten years ago the Seventh-day Adventist Church formed the Middle East and North Africa Union Mission (MENAUM) to reach out to one of the world's most difficult regions.

Only time will reveal the full impact of the landmark 2012 decision, but statistics and personal testimonies tell a story of remarkable church growth through the power of the Holy Spirit, church leaders say.

"It is clear that God is moving in the hearts of many, something for which we can thank God," Rick McEdward, MENAUM president since 2016, said.

### **FLEXIBILITY AND MISSION SUPPORT**

Ten years ago, with soul-searching and prayer, the world church established MENAUM from 20 countries that previously belonged to the Trans-European Division and the Euro-Africa Division (now Inter-European Division). The unprecedented decision also attached

MENAUM directly to the world church headquarters and reorganized its services for greater flexibility and support in its mission.

At the time of its organization, MENAUM reported about 3,100 members among a population of 525 million, or one Adventist for every 170,000 people. By 2021 membership had grown by 82 percent to 5,668 people, or one Adventist for every 97,000 people in a region whose population had expanded to 550 million. In addition, the number of house churches more than tripled from 25 to 85 between 2016 and 2021, and the number of small groups increased from 65 in 2017, the first year they were reported, to 157 in 2021.

McEdward saw the figures as encouraging.

"But even with this commendable growth, the odds are daunting," he added. "Today, with one member for every 97,000 people, the chance of someone meeting one of our members and hearing the gospel is so very small."

Only the Holy Spirit can defy the odds and lead people to a church member who can touch them with God's love, he said.

### **TARGETED OUTREACH**

People under the age of 35 represent the largest group to be reached with the gospel in the Middle East.

"Engaging this group, much less speaking to their complex world, presents us with a constantly changing, ever-growing challenge," ChanMin Chung, director of MENAUM Trans Media Group, said. The recently formed multimedia organization is tasked with communicating to both the young and old in the region.

MENAUM is a challenging field to work, church leaders said. People give their hearts to Jesus in the shadow of national crises, social unrest, economic collapse, immigration, war, and personal trauma.

### **WORKERS FOR GOD**

McEdward said that MENAUM has reaped great benefits from the support of the world church, the creativity of the church leaders who shaped the Middle East and North Africa Union Mission 10 years ago, and the faithful service of workers from every country in the region and others from around the world.

"But the challenges are too great for anyone to claim success, solutions, or self-satisfaction," he said.

"Every day, with its seemingly unbeatable challenges, serves as a reminder that the field, the people, and the harvest all belong to the Lord of the harvest," McEdward said.

"We are privileged just to be His workers," he said. ©

Focus

# A Matter of Trust

BY FRANK M. HASEL







Prayer is not  
about us, but  
about God.

*If you prayed for a thousand years, your prayers would not make you any more acceptable to God than when you first prayed.*

**O**ur prayers are answered, not because of what we do or who we are, but because of who God is. This is the consistent testimony that we find in all of Scripture. God responds to our request for forgiveness and guidance “for His name’s sake” (cf. Ps. 31:3; 109:21; Jer. 14:7). The Bible tells us that if we ask Him for something to eat, He will not give us a poisonous scorpion, but enjoys giving us much better things (Luke 11:12, 13). God delights when we call on Him in prayer. God hears and answers our prayers based on His goodness, faithfulness, and love—not ours. Even if we prayed every moment in our life, we could not pray enough to deserve acceptance with God.


#### **GOD-CENTERED PRAYER**

The sobering fact is that our human condition is much more disastrous and self-focused than we think. But the good news is that God’s grace is even more amazing than we can imagine. This holds true for our prayers as well. It is God’s grace that permeates His desire to respond to our prayers and to our needs. Many of our appeals to God are often prayed for quite selfish reasons. I might pray for success in the cause of God because I am also playing an important role in it. I might pray that someone’s life be spared because I do not like living alone. I might pray for the conversion of a person because my life will then be much easier. I might ask God for specific things because I have become used to a certain standard of living and I am not content with less, and the list could go on.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, sin causes us to insert ourselves into the center of our world, making life and many of our prayers all about us. In our self-focus we are driven by *our* wants, *our* perceived needs, *our* feelings. Because we are self-focused, we tend to be scorekeepers and compare ourselves with others, which leads to a life of discontent and envy. But prayer that is pleasing to God is not just praying about getting things—no healthy relationship works that way, much less with a sovereign God. Prayer in which God delights has God in clear focus. Because we delight to remember who He is, we have faith in what He can do.

#### **HE LOVES TO GIVE**

It is amazing and a mystery of God’s grace that He even listens to the best of our prayers. Yet the good news is that God also hears our most feeble prayer. He is always ready to hear every sincere prayer. He loves to answer our



# When we pray, we are taking a step of faith by trusting God to care for us for His own sake.

prayers and delights to send His help. He has a thousand ways to help of which we know nothing (Jer. 33:3).<sup>2</sup>

The only reason that can explain this amazing fact is that He loves us. He loves us tenderly. He desires the very best for us. In His grace He wants to gift us with what we really need. Because He is our Creator and Redeemer, He knows better than we what is needed. Therefore, He gives in response to our prayers that which we could not even ask.

Ultimately, our relationship to God in prayer is a matter of trust. Do we trust Him enough to commit our lives fully into His hands—without any hesitation? Do we dare to ask things that only He can provide, and do we fully trust Him that He will provide whatever our need is in His own good timing? This will work only if we humble ourselves into the mighty hand of God, trusting that He is good; trusting that He hears; trusting that He is prepared to bring relief and has a thousand ways to help of which we did not even think. This was the experience of many people living in biblical times (e.g., Ex. 14:13, 14; 2 Chron. 14:10-12; 20:15, 29; Luke 1:46-55). When they were confronted with insurmountable challenges and difficulties, God provided help and a way out that humanly speaking couldn't have been expected.

## SAFE IN HIS LOVE

When we pray, we are taking a step of faith by trusting God to care for us for His own sake. When we orient our lives according to His will, we invite Him into our work, our families, our friendships, our dating, our marriages, our parenting. We don't have to be in church to pray to God. It can happen on our commute, while washing the dishes, or doing the laundry. It can happen while we are at our computer or at our workplace. It can take place in meaningful ways when we carve out special time for God.

Prayer cultivates a heart attitude that recognizes and acknowledges God's sovereignty and love.

Such prayer can change our attitude. In fact, it can change our lives by teaching us to focus on God's character and by trusting His timing. Prayer provides a much-needed new perspective that comes only when we have God in clear sight. Being in the presence of God refreshes our life. It strengthens our faith. It ignites hope. It celebrates God's abundant grace. It inspires courage and grants us a holy boldness to approach God. Because we delight in our powerful Creator and loving Redeemer, we are freed from craving the next things or wanting to have more for ourselves. Sin causes us to look horizontally at the things in this world for what can be found only vertically in God's presence.

## OUR FATHER . . .

Perhaps this is the important and beautiful aspect that Jesus wanted to teach us in the Lord's Prayer. It is a prayer that for many unfortunately has become mere lip service. It has morphed into a thoughtless routine because we are repeating it without thinking. And yet, if prayed deliberately and with purpose, it is perhaps the most dangerous and revolutionary prayer there is:

"Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen'" (Matt. 6:9-13, NASB).<sup>3</sup>

Only this focus on doing *God's will*, on fostering *His kingdom*, on worshipping *His name*, on *delighting in who He is* and what He stands for, enables us to become more like Him: forgiving those who have done us wrong, being able to overcome temptations, receiving from Him all we need to live a life that is pleasing to Him and that will be a blessing to others.

If we put God first, if He is our soul's desire, if God is the delight of our hearts, and if He broadens our minds, we do not need to worry. If we grasp a glimpse of who God really is and what He has done for us, we will be in awe and the desire of our prayers will reflect some of that same selfless love and beauty that characterizes God. When our prayers have God in clear focus, we can know that what He gives is enough to satisfy all our longings. ©

<sup>1</sup> See Frank M. Hasel, *Longing for God: A Prayer and Bible Journal* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2017), pp. 42-45.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 330.

<sup>3</sup> Scripture quotations marked NASB are from the *New American Standard Bible*, copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995, 2020 by The Lockman Foundation. All rights reserved.

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**Frank M. Hasel** is an associate director of the Biblical Research Institute at the world headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.



# Forever Ruined for the Ordinary!

Prayer offers us a glimpse into the beauty of God's character

BY MELODY MASON



Once heard the story of a traveler who, while on tour in an Asian country, went to visit a large temple. When he arrived, there was a big crowd worshipping at the large image within the temple shrine. The man watched quietly and noticed something very peculiar. Many of the worshippers took little pieces of paper and covered them in mud. Then they flung them forcefully at the image. After watching this for a time, the traveler asked about the meaning of this strange activity. He learned that the pieces of paper contained the personal prayers of the people. The prayers were wrapped in mud in hopes that this would help them *stick* to the image. The worshippers believed that if their prayers stuck fast to the image, then those prayers would be answered. However, if the prayers fell off the image, and the mud did not stick, it meant their prayers were being rejected by their god.

As Christians, we understand the practice of prayer very differently.

We believe that we pray to the King of the universe, the One who not only put the stars in place but who loves us deeply and personally. He even hears the silent prayers we don't dare pray aloud. But what do we do when we don't always *feel* His love, when it seems as if we pray and pray and pray, and our prayers still aren't getting past the ceiling, let alone sticking to the heavenly throne?

## SEARCH ME—AND KNOW MY HEART

That's when we need to take the advice of the psalmist. "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23, 24, NIV).

While God is always willing to hear our prayers, and delights to answer what is for our good, sometimes there are things that we allow to stand between us and God and that hinder Him from answering. There may be unconfessed sin in our life (Ps. 66:18),

unbelief (James 1:6, 7), unforgiveness (Mark 11:26), unresolved conflicts (Matt. 5:23, 24), worldliness (James 4:3), or self-righteousness (Isa. 64:6). Being unkind toward a spouse (1 Peter 3:7) or turning a deaf ear to someone in need (Prov. 21:13) can also hinder our prayers. Sometimes we are just too busy "doing good things" that we aren't making Him the best thing (Luke 10:41, 42). Other times we don't seek God with an undivided heart because of distraction from electronic devices, social media, or other idols separating us from Him (Ex. 20:3). Whatever the case, we must ask God to wash the muddy hindrances away if we want to see real power and growth in our prayer life. But how are we to get the mud washed away, living in a "muddy place" called earth, in a city called Laodicea?

## A NEW BEGINNING

Let me briefly share a little of my personal testimony.

Like many others, I was raised in the lukewarm wilderness of

modern-day Christianity—rich and increased with goods and thinking I had need of nothing, when in actuality I was poor, blind, naked, and, well, *very muddy*.

I'm grateful that I grew up in the Seventh-day Adventist Church with parents who genuinely loved the Lord. I still remember waking up at 4:00 a.m. as a child and hearing my father praying for me. However, even as a young adult, I still didn't truly understand the power of prayer. Nor did I understand the beauty of the gospel. This may seem strange, as I'd been a Christian my whole life, but my heart felt numb to what Jesus had done on Calvary. It didn't touch me personally!

Thankfully, one day God showed me my true heart condition as a sinner in need of a Savior. As a result, my heart was broken as it had never been broken before. I wept and wept with sorrow over the thought that my sins—*yes, my sins* (it was personal now!)—had put Jesus on the cross. I also cried with joy at His overwhelming and amazing love that poured over me. That day was the beginning of a whole new prayer journey with Jesus.

After this experience, I wasn't content living the typical-ordinary-wilderness Christianity any longer. I wanted more of Jesus, and I dared to ask *Him* for more. I began waking up early each morning and poring over my Bible for hours at a time, often with tears in my eyes, as I fell in love with His Word. As I did this, God slowly began taking me deeper and drawing me to Himself. He began teaching me how to follow Him, and how to pray His Word with faith. As my love for Him grew, I began seeing answers to my prayers—real answers, some amazing answers, often specific answers. I discovered that while He "is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask

or think," often He's just waiting for us to ask (Eph. 3:20).

It has been a few years now since I started this deeper journey, and Jesus is still tenderly teaching me how to love Him and how to pray. However, He has given me a taste of the Promised Land, and I think I've been forever ruined for the ordinary. I simply cannot imagine going without talking to Him each day. Psalm 34:8 tells us, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the [man or woman] who trusts in Him!"

Have you tasted the overwhelming joy of a life more abundant with Jesus? Have you discovered the beauty and power of prayer and time in His Word?

If you are looking for the keys to an effective and vibrant prayer life, it's not complicated. I've discovered that God is not looking for spiritual superheroes. We are told, "Our only claim to His mercy is our great need." He's just looking for those who recognize their desperate need and who will seek Him with all their heart. He's looking for those who will confess their sins, let Him remove the mud from their lukewarm Laodicean condition, and pray in faith—*persevering in prayer until the answer comes*. Most

important, He's looking for those who will put Him first each day, stepping aside from distractions, from phones and technology, even from the many "good things," to spend time at His feet, enjoying the very best thing—*Himself!*

Our world is in upheaval. Pain and suffering abound around us. The fight for survival, and the quest to keep food on the table and bills paid, is often all-encompassing. The allurements of the world still draw us. Yet God is calling us to seek Him first each day. *Be still and know that I am God*, He tells us. *I am your greatest and most urgent need! All other things will be taken care of, but most of all, right now, you need Me.*

Let's not settle for superficial-wilderness Christianity or muddy-covered prayers. The Promised Land is before us. Let's ask Jesus to remove the hindrances that are holding us back, and let's go forward on our knees, daring to ask for more, but most of all, *for more of Him*. ☺

\* Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 161.

**Melody Mason**, author of *Daring to Ask for More: Divine Keys to Answered Prayer*, works with the General Conference Prayer Ministries.

## Five Keys to Take Your Prayer Life Deeper

- 1 Ask Jesus to be your morning alarm.
- 2 Ask Him what sins need to be confessed or addressed.
- 3 Consider a "digital detox." For practical suggestions, read "Unplugged," by Frank Hasel, at <https://tinyurl.com/3mvaxx6t>.
- 4 Pray specifically and pray the Word. For ideas on how to do this, see the resources at <https://tinyurl.com/34sene5w>.
- 5 Pray through until you see breakthrough. Don't give up!







# How to Start a Prayer Ministry in Your Church

**P**rayer ministry is the bedrock spiritual foundation of your church. When you sense God's call to take up this ministry, consider the following:

**Prepare yourself.** The Bible abounds with advice on approaching God, and He welcomes our turning toward Him at any time. In order for us to minister to others through prayer, however, we have to prepare ourselves spiritually. Spend time in prayer, confessing all your sins, and receive the forgiveness and renewal the Holy Spirit brings when you humble yourself before God.

Along with spiritual preparation, you can do some homework. Go through a guide to prayer ministry, such as the *Prayer Ministries Coordinator Quick Start Guide* from AdventSource.\* Aim to expand your knowledge of prayer practices, and consider the variety of ways prayer can be a ministry.

**Pray for wisdom.** It's worth taking time to pray for the Holy Spirit's insight into your specific purposes. Among them may be to pray regularly for the strength

and protection of your pastor(s) and other spiritual leaders; to ask for and receive guidance for your congregation's ministries; to bring spiritual awakening and growth for fellow members and for yourself; to increase the quality and frequency of fellowship; to intercede before God in times of trial and catastrophe within and outside the church; and so on.

**Meet with your pastor.** Effective prayer ministry is always a goodwill partnership with the congregation's leadership, especially the pastor. It's best to approach the pastor with an attitude of receiving counsel as well as outlining a vision. Invite the pastor to be as involved as he or she can be. Aim to establish the basic outline of the ministry.

**Start with prayer meeting.** Few spiritual gatherings will bring more benefits than this one. If you haven't been in the habit of meeting with church family members for an hour of prayer, you'll marvel at the rich benefits and ministry opportunities it brings when you try it out. It's the superfood of your spiritual diet.

Prayer meeting formats can vary, but the biggest aim is to keep the focus on prayer. While Bible study and discussion should be part of the meeting, watch for mission creep. As Adventists we love to study, and we love to talk, so be sure to reserve a set amount of time to pray (I recommend a 50-50 time split at minimum), and don't allow other activities to crowd it out. Programs such as *40 Days of Prayer* can guide you.

**Teach prayer.** Those who join you for prayer gatherings may not be familiar with the conventions and practices of prayer. To get the prayer ministry going, you might offer a seminar or vespers program, teaching both the spiritual foundations, the practices, and the benefits of taking time for community prayer. Revisit prayer instruction once in a while.


**Expect miracles.** Prayer ministry is not just talk. In fellowship with other believers, we pray to God knowing and expecting that He will reply and act. Miracles are the workings of God in our lives, and you will see His work and His wisdom in ways that you have never seen before. ☺

\* See, for example, <https://www.adventsource.org/store/adult-ministries/prayer-ministries/prayer-ministries-quick-start-guide-21741> for English language material. Your local conference or union will have material available in your own language.

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**Tim Lale** serves as prayer ministries coordinator for the Spencerville Seventh-day Adventist Church in Maryland, United States.





**H**ave you ever been in a storm where the wind is howling, the lightning flashing, and the thunder crashing? It can be a frightening experience. But imagine how much worse it would be on the sea, where the waves seem to be crashing over you while the storm swirls all around.

The apostle Paul found himself in just such a situation. We read about it in Acts 27, where the situation became so dire that the crew and passengers threw everything overboard.

“And because we were exceedingly tempest-tossed, the next day they lightened the ship,” we read in Acts 27:18. “On the third day we threw the ship’s tackle overboard with our own hands. Now when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest beat on us, all hope that we would be saved was finally given up” (verses 19, 20).

That’s a pretty dire situation. And yet there was one on board who hadn’t given up, and that man was Paul. For you see, this was not the first deadly situation the apostle had faced.

He describes his experiences in 2 Corinthians 11:24-27: “From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.”

This man of God had been through a lot! How was he able to keep pressing on through all of these trials and discouragements? I believe the answer is found in what he said

Global View

# Safe in the Storm

Hold on to  
the Rock



while in the midst of that terrible storm on the sea.

### JUST AS GOD HAS SAID

Even though Paul had advised the captain of the ship not to sail further at that time, he still spoke faith-filled words of encouragement. Listen carefully to his words recorded in Acts 27:21-25: "Men, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss. And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.' Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me."

How was Paul able to have such rock-solid faith in the midst of a storm where everything seemed lost? How could he retain hope in what appeared to be an utterly hopeless situation?

Well, you might say, *it's because an angel came to him*. I'm sure that was encouraging; and yet I believe there was something more than just the presence of an angel—I believe it was the God-given message that the angel delivered to him. Notice Paul's words, again: "Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me" (verse 25).

And that is exactly what happened. Although the ship was completely wrecked, Paul, and all on board, were saved. Paul had peace and courage because he had full and total confidence in the word of God—that it would be just as God said.

### A BIGGER STORM IS COMING

Friends, for some time now we have been in a storm—the COVID pandemic, social and political

upheavals, wars, natural and human-made disasters—all around us we see devastation and loss. And yet we are told very clearly that an even bigger storm is coming. "A storm is coming, relentless in its fury. Are we prepared to meet it?"<sup>1</sup>

Ellen White continues: "We need not say: The perils of the last days are soon to come upon us. Already they have come. We need now the sword of the Lord to cut to the very soul and marrow of fleshly lusts, appetites, and passions. . . . The thoughts must be centered upon God."<sup>2</sup>

And what is this "sword of the Lord"? It is the same sword described in Ephesians 6:17: "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, *which is the word of God*."

Dear reader, our only safety, our only security today and in the days ahead, is to take God at His word—as revealed through the inspired Scriptures. The Bible has withstood the test of time over centuries. The prophecies given have so far been fulfilled right on time, and we can rest assured that what remains will also take place just as the Bible reveals. We can "take heart," as Paul says, because we can confidently believe that it will be just as God has told us through His Word.

We have also been given, as indicated in Revelation 12:17 and 19:10, the wonderful gift of the testimony of Jesus, which is the Spirit of prophecy, to help guide us through these last days of earth's history.

In the introduction to the very powerful book *The Great Controversy* the inspired author explains the reliability of Scripture, and the importance of the gift of the Spirit of Prophecy. She writes:

"The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience. 'Every scripture

**"Our only safety, our only security today and in the days ahead, is to take God at His word—as revealed through the inspired Scriptures."**

inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.' 2 Timothy 3:16, 17, R.V."<sup>3</sup>

She then explains how the same Holy Spirit who worked through men in the writing of the Scriptures is still active today, including through the gift of the Spirit of Prophecy. I encourage you to read or reread the very powerful introduction to *The Great Controversy*, written by Ellen G. White.<sup>4</sup> You will be inspired and encouraged.

As we navigate the days ahead, there is no need to worry. As long as we keep our focus on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2), believing and following His Word, being encouraged and instructed through the Spirit of Prophecy, we can be confident in reaching our final destination of heaven in safety, joy, and peace. ☺

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 8, p. 315.


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

<sup>3</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. vii. Texts credited to R.V. are from *The Holy Bible*, Revised Version, Oxford University Press, 1911.

<sup>4</sup> All of the writings of Ellen G. White, including *The Great Controversy*, may be accessed freely in numerous languages at [egwwritings.org](http://egwwritings.org).

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Discovering the Spirit of Prophecy

# The Prayers of the Lord's Messenger

Drawing deep from the well of living water

**T**he Bible faithfully records the prayers of such patriarchs and prophets as Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, Solomon, Jeremiah, Peter, Paul, and especially Jesus. We see an example of this in the beautiful and personal prayer of Jesus in John 17. Ellen White was also a person of prayer. It was a vital part of her Christian experience.

While still a teenager, Ellen found courage to pray publicly with others at her uncle's home in Portland, Maine. She recalled this transformational experience with these words: "As I prayed, the burden and agony of soul that I had so long endured left me, and the blessing of the Lord descended upon me like the gentle dew. I praised God from the depths of my heart."<sup>1</sup> She was filled with assurance and confidence in God. This led her to share her testimony with other Adventists looking forward to the soon coming of Jesus.

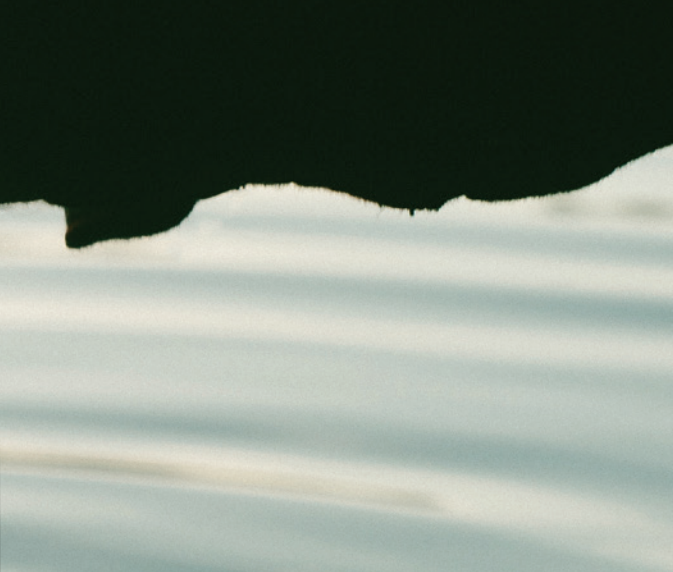
## AN IMPRESSIVE TESTIMONY

In her later years prayer remained an indispensable component of both her public and private experience.

H.M.S. Richards, Sr., founder of the radio broadcast ministry Voice of Prophecy, vividly remembered a prayer offered by Ellen White at a meeting in Boulder, Colorado, when he was only 15 years old: "I was sitting at her left hand about, oh, 15 feet from her. The platform was about a foot . . . high, and she had the big thick Bible, and she was preaching, faithfully giving God's message." After concluding her message, she and the audience knelt in prayer.

"I can hear her now. She said not "Our Father" but "Oh, my Father." And from that moment on, it was a personal communion between her and her heavenly Father. In just a minute or two there seemed to be such a mighty power come over that meeting. I felt it. I was just a boy . . . and I could feel that power, until finally I was afraid to look up for fear I would see God standing right there by her. She was talking with Him. She had forgotten all about us, and she was in the presence of the Lord. . . . A minute or two more went by and that whole crowd, you could hear them weeping, crying, over their sin. A tremendous revival—spiritual revival—the mighty power of God."<sup>2</sup>





## The public prayers of the Lord's messenger brought powerful changes to the lives of those who prayed with her.

Richards then made a profound observation: "When she preached, God blessed her as a preacher; but when she began to pray, He honored her as His prophet before the people." The public prayers of the Lord's messenger brought powerful changes to the lives of those who prayed with her.

### PRAYERS OF ELLEN WHITE

In her writings Ellen White frequently refers to both personal and group prayer. The White Estate has records of nearly 40 prayers, many of which were prayed in connection with a talk or sermon she gave. Several are quite lengthy, like the one Richards described.

Here are excerpts from some of her prayers. And while they contain somewhat archaic worship language, they are profoundly personal and tender.

At a morning talk for the 1903 General Conference Session, she prayed, "O my Father, my Father! melt and subdue our hearts. We desire this morning to make an entire surrender to Thee. . . . We love Thee, dear Saviour; Thou knowest that we love Thee. We see in Thee matchless charms. . . . Come, Lord Jesus, come and take us as we are, and put upon us the robe of Thy righteousness. Take away our sins. . . . Banish darkness, turn away the deceptive powers of the enemy, and let Thy voice and Thy Spirit and Thy love come into our souls."<sup>3</sup>

While praying at a 1905 meeting, she exclaimed, "Oh, my Saviour, my Saviour, who is like unto Thee? None, none that can save to the uttermost but Thee. We give ourselves to Thee this evening."<sup>4</sup>

Her heart longed for the blessing of the Holy Spirit as she prayed, "My heavenly Father, imbue us with the Spirit. Let the Holy Spirit of God rest upon us, my Saviour. . . . Come, Thou heavenly Dove, I pray Thee to put Thy disposition in the hearts of the people here today. Thy converting power we want to see, and we want to sense."<sup>5</sup>

There are also a few personal private prayers she recorded. These are touching and reveal the depth of her connection with God. They draw us to the heart of our loving Father, Savior, and Comforter.

She wrote in her diary, "I awoke at three o'clock a.m. I feel deeply the need of casting my helpless soul upon Jesus Christ. He is my helper. He is my all and in all. I am weak as water without the Holy Spirit of God to help me."<sup>6</sup>

In a letter to her son Edson, she described how she had prayed, "Lord, help me. I am determined to cast my helpless soul upon Thee. Satan is the destroyer. Christ is the Restorer. This is Thy word to me. I will try to walk by faith."<sup>7</sup>

For me, Ellen White's most compelling public prayer is one she repeated on numerous occasions while speaking of Jesus and His sacrifice for us. At her funeral Elder G. B. Starr reflected on his memories of this prayer: "I think I have never heard any other person speak of love for Jesus, personal love, as I have heard her speak. Many times, in large congregations, I have heard her break forth in the expression [prayer], 'Jesus, I love You; I love You, I LOVE You!' Some here know that; they have heard it; and it has thrilled the audience. We have felt the influence of that love for Jesus."<sup>8</sup>

These brief reflections on Ellen White's prayer life and ministry give us a window into the reality of God's presence in her life and the way the Holy Spirit worked through her prayers. "Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. . . . Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him."<sup>9</sup> We too are invited to find a prayer connection with God that is like living water for our dry and thirsty hearts. ☺

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1915), p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Transcribed from a recorded video recollection. Ellen G. White Estate, Inc.

<sup>3</sup> Ellen G. White manuscript 16, 1903, in *General Conference Bulletin*, Apr. 2, 1903.

<sup>4</sup> Ellen G. White manuscript 170, 1905, in Ellen G. White, *Sermons and Talks* (Silver Spring, Md.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1994), vol. 2, p. 273.

<sup>5</sup> Ellen G. White manuscript 142, 1906, in Ellen G. White, *Letters and Manuscripts*, vol. 21.

<sup>6</sup> Ellen G. White manuscript 177, 1897, in E. G. White, *Letters and Manuscripts*, vol. 12.

<sup>7</sup> Ellen G. White letter 114, 1895, in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Australian Years* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1983), vol. 4, p. 228.

<sup>8</sup> G. B. Starr, in Ellen G. White, *The Retirement Years* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1990), p. 216.

<sup>9</sup> Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 93.

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**Merlin D. Burt** is director of the Ellen G. White Estate in Silver Spring, Maryland.

# The First Adventist I Ever Met

And never forgot

BY LOU V. MARION,  
AS TOLD BY VIOLET  
MARION



Lou V. Marion (middle row, far right) with the other men who worked in the kitchen at the San Sabba Annex camp.

**T**here he was, with a few empty bags in hand and a couple of young people helping him carry the groceries.

As I think back many years ago to my first encounter with Sabbathkeeping Adventists, I remember a very special elderly man.

I was only 19 years old in 1952 when I decided to elude Army service in Yugoslavia and cross the border to Trieste, today's northeast corner of Italy. At the time, the free zone of Trieste was occupied and ruled by the Allied Military Government. Approximately 10,000 refugees were in Trieste when I arrived there. They were spread throughout five refugee camps. After spending three weeks at the camp at Opicina, some 10 kilometers (six miles) from Trieste, where all the vaccinations and medical checks were done, the refugees were allocated to one of the four other camps. Those who were sick were sent to the camp in Prosecco, which was used as a hospital. Single young men were sent to an abandoned prison in the old section of Gesuiti. The remaining refugees were divided between San Sabba Main and San Sabba Annex in Trieste.

The San Sabba Annex camp, where I was sent, was the best of the camps. The healthy people were sent there. It consisted of 44 barracks where mostly families stayed. I felt, even then, God's blessing that I had been sent to the San Sabba Annex and not to the Gesuiti prison.

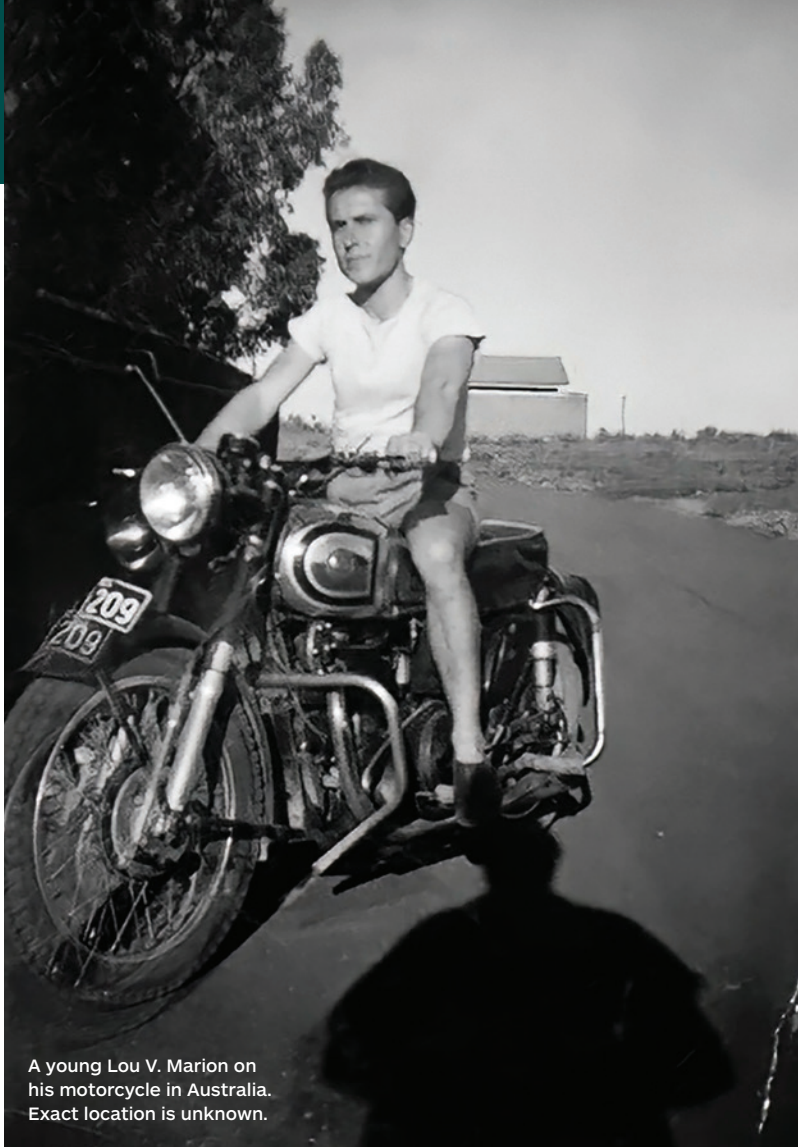
After I learned that it would likely take months or even years to emigrate from Trieste, my main concern was to find employment. Food and bed were free to all, but I didn't want to be idle. Only a month after settling into the Annex, a vacancy became available in the camp's kitchen, and I applied for the job. The money wasn't very good. I was paid only 6,000 lire (US\$4.00) a month, along with a few extra clothes. Emigration, however, seemed to happen more quickly for those who showed a willingness to work.

Ten men worked in the kitchen, five per shift. We fed 1,400 people of various nationalities, cultures, and religions. One thing that specifically caught my attention, though, was a group of people living in barrack 43. They were different from the rest. Not only did they meet and sing together on Saturdays—unlike anyone else in the camp—they also cooked their own food in the little kitchen in the middle of the camp. Every morning that I was on duty, my coworker and I would take a container of milk from our main kitchen to the door of that little kitchen. On Fridays it was a bigger container of milk, but on Saturdays we didn't take anything. I often wondered why those people lived differently from everyone else in the camp. I remember my coworker once saying that "before the last war, [these people] were almost nonexistent, but now they grow like mushrooms on a warm autumn day after a rain."

The main kitchen was the delivery point for the food. Groceries for the small kitchen were picked up from our storeroom twice a week by an old man and his helpers. What impressed me the most about this man was his gentlemanlike behavior. He would always approach us with a smile on his face, and he was always polite. My coworker, who considered himself as being religious, would verbally assault the old man with phrases that were not very pleasant, even to me at that time. To all this the old man remained calm, and with his replies he showed which of the two men really behaved as a follower of God.

That elderly man truly represented God's people in a most unusual place and time. I don't know where that man ended up after he left the refugee camp, but I'm certainly looking forward to the day I will meet him again.





A young Lou V. Marion on his motorcycle in Australia. Exact location is unknown.



Lou and Rosa Marion at the Melbourne Botanical Gardens in the late 1960s.

This account, written by my father, Lou V. Marion,\* describes his first encounter with an Adventist—an encounter that left an indelible impression on his mind. It was a seed sown by a faithful believer.

From this camp in the mid-1950s my father immigrated to Australia. As a young man he traveled across the country and worked in various jobs until he settled in a town called Geelong, Victoria. He experienced encounters with other Adventists, who watered the seed, and my father was later baptized into the Seddon Seventh-day Adventist Church in Melbourne, about 65 kilometers (40 miles) northeast of Geelong. This is where he met my mother, Rosa.

My dad faced many challenges during his lifetime, but he remained a faithful servant of God until his death in August 1994.

I look forward to the day—which I believe will be very soon—when I will see both my father and mother again. I also long to meet my precious Savior and heavenly Father face to face in my forever home.

Until then, my prayer is that we all remain faithful and true representatives of our heavenly Father, no matter the circumstances in which we find ourselves.

*“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us” (Heb. 12:1, NIV). ©*

\*This personal account was lightly edited for clarity.

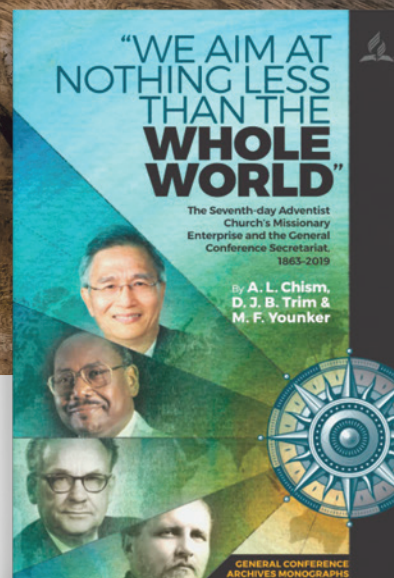
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Following the heightened tensions between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union in the early 1950s, **Lou V. Marion**, originally from **Yugoslavia**, lived the rest of his life in Australia. His daughter, **Violet Marion**, resides in **Heidelberg, Victoria, Australia**.



# The Heart of Mission

**A. L. Chism, D.J.B. Trim, and M. F. Younger, “We Aim at Nothing Less Than the Whole World”: The Seventh-day Adventist Church’s Missionary Enterprise and the General Conference Secretariat, 1863-2019 (Silver Spring, Md.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2021), 312 pages, reviewed by Ronald Kuhn, associate director, Institute of World Mission.**



**B**y the end of 2022 the world population is expected to reach the staggering number of 8 billion people. Reaching the whole world with the gospel of Jesus is, humanly speaking, an ambitious and impossible task, but even more so when considering that the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDAC) has a relatively small membership of about 22 million. In “*We Aim at Nothing Less Than the Whole World*” the three authors look at the history of the Secretariat missionary enterprise and the General Conference (GC) between 1863 and 2019 by assessing decisions and actions taken.

The book is likely the most accurate picture of the General Conference history during the past 150 years in terms of cross-cultural mission to the world. It is based on solid statistical assessment with a balanced understanding of hidden aspects that most people would generally disregard when looking at the raw data.

One of the reasons for the book was to assess “whether the current priorities of the International Service Employee program are the same as of makers of the Adventist Church’s missionary-sending program a century and more ago” (p. xvii). The authors offer valuable historic information that shows progress and trends, but, most important, some real challenges pointing to evidence that “in recent years priorities have changed” (p. xvii) that the church must confront if it wants to reach the unreached with greater results.

The book is organized in two parts. Part One provides a historical overview of the missionary enterprise with statistics to help the reader recognize trends and patterns. It defines what a missionary is and the role of the administrative structure. It also suggests that with growth come challenges, such as the “medicalization” and bureaucratization. Part Two focuses on the history of the mission structure of the GC Secretariat. Chapter Seven analyzes the trends during the past 70 years, highlighting that with the growth and geographical expansion of organized church work and its demand for greater oversight, the number of missionaries declined significantly. Furthermore, insufficient time was left to plan for and to promote mission.

Billions still haven’t heard the good news of the salvation in Jesus Christ. The church, as the authors point out, “is not yet even close to

a victory lap. . . . This book is a call to action—more pointedly, an urgent call to change course and to embrace many elements of an earlier mission-focused vision” (p. 248). Despite tremendous growth during the past century, “both the actual number of cross-cultural missionaries engaged in mission to unreached peoples, and the proportion of church membership that they represent, have fallen precipitously” (*ibid.*).

The book calls for the urgent implementation of less bureaucratic systems, structures, and processes that will foster innovation and will reignite a passion for cross-cultural mission. This will be possible only by intentional action of the organization, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. An example of these possibilities was the creation of *I Will Go*—a bottom-up movement led by students of Universidad Adventista del Plata in Argentina. As a result of this mission awakening, hundreds of students and volunteers have been sent to many countries to serve in many projects and unentered areas.

A picture speaks a thousand words, and this book is, in my view, the best picture of the church’s missionary enterprise. It should be read by all administrators, missionaries, teachers, students, and those interested in cross-cultural mission. It’s both an evaluation of what the church did right and what needs to be changed, revised, or improved. ©



# Hold My Hand



**After we crossed a creek and took a short break, I sat on a rock, completely helpless.**

As we hiked past some caves and saw the hills along the road, I tried to distract myself by thinking about biblical characters and their stories. We finally reached the top.

We imagined that the upward trek had been hard enough, but the harder part was getting down. My friends had been better prepared, so they faced that stretch with less difficulty. My right knee, however, had a different story to tell. I must have injured it during the climb, and felt excruciating pain. Yet I stubbornly kept on walking, saying, "I'm fine."

But there came a moment that I couldn't hide the pain anymore, and my friends distributed the contents of my backpack among themselves so that I could travel light, get my knee bandaged, and lessen the pain.

**A**lthough I enjoy trekking and have climbed a few mountains, there was one particular summit I had wanted to climb since I was a child.

Pathfinder leaders usually organize a trip to that place, and it's often used to complete some of the requirements for the Master Guide investiture.

Several months ago we went with a group of friends from church. They had been training and started climbing effortlessly, but I wasn't in good shape and carried extra weight in my backpack.

I had known about the challenges of climbing and the importance of being well trained. But there I was, disregarding the advice and suffering the consequences. (Has that ever happened to you?) I struggled, breathing more and more heavily with each step I took. All my muscles were sore. The physical and mental efforts took their toll on me, and I thought about how all this applied to my current spiritual life.

I limped for 10 kilometers (six miles) and had to swallow my wounded pride.

After we crossed a creek and took a short break, I sat on a rock, completely helpless. I felt I was a burden to the group, and I was struggling with guilt.

Before starting this trip, I had prayed to have a special encounter with God so that He would heal me from some emotional pain that I had struggled with over the past months, and also show me areas in my life in which I needed to grow in grace.

I realized the list was longer than I had expected, but the lessons learned were filled with love.

As we were descending the steep slopes, my friends took turns to help me take each step. They were literally holding my hand so that I would not fall. I was reminded of the hymn "Hold Thou My Hand!" and I felt comforted by the thought that Jesus was walking beside me and using my friends as instruments to answer my prayers. My attitude changed after I looked at things from that perspective.

I sometimes struggle with shame, and feel as though I must always show the polished version of my Christian life, based on my mistaken concept of perfection (which often differs from that of the Bible). My friends helped me understand that it's OK to show vulnerabilities and accept that we cannot do everything ourselves. What matters most is not whether we are dependable or not, but that we never forget God is, and that He enables us to "make it to the end."


This adaptation of 2 Corinthians 12:9 summarized the trip well for me: His grace was sufficient once again, because His power was made perfect in my weakness. ©

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Devotional

# The Cross Still Stands



**C**onsider this scene inside a funeral home: a grieving family gathered around the casket of a departed loved one. The camera captures the lines of grief etched on their faces: the pain is heartbreaking; the tears flow freely. They look so hopeless; so abandoned; so alone. Even God seems to have deserted them. Then the camera moves a few steps back and captures the same scene. But from this wider angle, we see more than just the grieving family; we see the wall behind them. And hanging there is a picture of Jesus with His arms outstretched—looking down in love and compassion upon the beavered. *You are not alone, says Jesus. Even as you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I am with you* (see Ps. 23:4).

## **WHEN ALL ELSE IS GONE**

When tragedy strikes, it's tempting to become so focused on our loss that we fail to recognize that God is still with us. When all else is gone, what remains is God. No one understood that better than Job. In a single afternoon he lost everything—his health, his wealth, his children, his friends; even his wife turned on him: "Curse God and die," she told him (Job 2:9). But what did Job do? "Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped" (Job 1:20, KJV)—and he blessed the name of the Lord (see verse 21). What gave him the strength? The answer is found in Job 19:25. And Job said: "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth." Notice where his focus is? Not on what has been taken away—but on what remains. Everything is gone—but God remains. The lesson for us: If through all our trials our dependence on God's faithfulness remains intact, then, like Job, we have the foundation on which to rebuild.





## THE SHADOW OF A CROSS AROSE

This truth was driven home to us in a most dramatic way. The Reaching Hearts congregation purchased a piece of land in the West Laurel area of Maryland, on which we planned to build our future church. In the middle of the property stood an old house that we converted into a multipurpose building. Then, on Friday night—May 18, 2007—a mysterious fire destroyed the building. Eyewitnesses reported that as the fire raged, it created a huge hole in the midsection of the building. The two brick ends remained standing—but the rest of the building was completely destroyed. Through the large opening created by the fire, the shadow of a cross arose. It so happened that someone had planted a wooden cross behind the building only a few days earlier. And now, as columns of thick, black smoke rose into the night sky, the cross stood tall.

The words of an old hymn by John Bowring immediately came to mind: “In the cross of Christ I glory, towering o’er the wrecks of time.” On that fateful night the cross stood like a sentry—towering over the smoldering remains of what was once our meeting place. On the night of the fire, the only thing that remained unscathed was the cross; everything else was turned to ashes.

Out of the fire God spoke to us—loudly and clearly.

Here are four lessons that shone out to me after this experience:

**1 Don’t place your trust in earthly treasures.** One day—it may be today—they could all go up in smoke. On the night of the fire the only thing that remained was the cross. So cling to the cross; it’s the safest place to be.

**2 Let nothing get in the way of the cross.** The house that

burned down was used for prayer meetings, small-group gatherings, committees, and planning sessions. A beehive of activity—good, wholesome activity. But it was all human activity. Unfortunately, that’s how religion is often perceived—what we do *for* God. Yet through all our feverish activity *for* God, the cross stood in the background. From the fire God spoke to us in no uncertain terms: “I want to be front and center in the life of your congregation. The cross ought to be in the forefront—not behind some building where no one can see it.” As important as human activity is, we must never forget that Christianity is first and foremost a religion of the cross; it’s the story of what Christ has done *for us*.

That same Sabbath evening we uprooted the cross from behind the burned-down building and planted it along Brooklyn Bridge Road, on the front end of our property. Yet there is more.

**3 God is closer than you think.**

From the cross Jesus cried out: “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matt. 27:46). Yet God uses the cross—the ultimate symbol of separation, alienation, and forsakenness—to win us back to Himself. The cross was heaven’s deepest entry into the human experience. It was there that Christ endured the pain of separation from the Father—so that we don’t have to be separated from God any longer. It’s because of the cross that our Savior can say to us in our times of deepest anguish and pain: *I know how you feel; I’ve been there, and I am going to walk with you every step of the way.*

**4 We serve a God who can pick us up from the ashes—and give us a new beginning.** The cross continued to stand by Brooklyn Bridge Road

## Out of the fire God spoke to us— loud and clear.

together with the charred remains of the old house sitting amid the ashes. About a year later the county stepped in and ordered us to tear the building down and haul away the debris. In time the entire area was covered with grass, and with it all memory of that old house was wiped away.

For more than a decade after the fire, the cross continued its lonely vigil—keeping a watchful eye over our church property. Drive down Brooklyn Bridge Road today, and you’ll see a miracle of God’s redeeming grace: the beautiful Reaching Hearts Seventh-day Adventist Church—standing literally upon the ashes of the old burned-down building.

### THE CROSS STILL STANDS

Today that cross still stands—no longer beside a lonely road in West Laurel, Maryland, but behind the pulpit of this new church building—a constant reminder of God’s faithfulness to His people. The God who created this world out of nothing came through for us. He can do the same for you—no matter how broken and messed up your life might be right now. ☺

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**Pratap Gopala Rao**, a retired clinical laboratory professional, lives in Laurel, Maryland, United States.

# Rest Without Worship?

Q

**A Sundaykeeper told me that since in the Bible the Sabbath was a day of rest, not of worship, the Sabbath found its fulfillment in our rest of grace in Christ, making it unnecessary to keep it today. Is this argument biblically correct?**

A

The arguments that you have summarized are used by most evangelical Christians as well as by Catholics to argue that Christians are no longer required to rest on any day. They go on to argue that Christians choose to worship, not to rest, on Sunday, adding that it was impossible for Christians in Roman society to have a day of rest. Here are three key concepts that suggest otherwise.

## **SABBATH IS A DAY OF REST AND WORSHIP**

Clearly the Sabbath was a day of rest as a memorial of God's rest at Creation (Ex. 20:8-11; Gen. 2:1-3). What is not correct is to affirm that it was not a day of worship. First, by disconnecting the Sabbath from worship, it becomes a secular day during which people simply take a free day to stay at home. Such secular understanding of time is unknown in the Bible. Second, the Bible closely connects rest and worship. Exodus clearly establishes that the Sabbath was a day of rest (Ex. 20:8-10), and then it provides the reason for considering it a day of worship: It is the day to remember the Creator who blessed and sanctified it (verse 11). In Deuteronomy the Sabbath is a day of rest (Deut. 5:13, 14) and a day of worship during which we are to remember our redemption (verse 15). Remembering our Creator and redemption lies at the very core of biblical worship.

## **SABBATH IS ALWAYS A DAY OF REST AND WORSHIP**

The conviction that since Sabbath rest was set aside when Christ fulfilled it lacks biblical support. No biblical passage shows that Christ anticipated the setting

aside of the Sabbath. In fact, He anticipated that His followers would keep the fourth commandment (e.g., Matt. 24:20). For Jesus, the Sabbath was not just a day of rest but particularly a day of worship during which He pointed to His Father as a merciful and loving God. Even the Old Testament itself anticipated the permanency of the fourth commandment. Isaiah described the Sabbath as a day of fellowship with the Lord (Isa. 58:13, 14), and looking into the eschatological times, when the Lord will create a new heaven and a new earth, he quoted the Lord as saying, "From new moon to new moon [every month] and from Sabbath to Sabbath [every Sabbath] all mankind will come to bow down [to worship] before Me," says the Lord" (Isa. 66:23, NASB).<sup>1</sup> The biblical combination of rest and worship during the Sabbath and the universalization of the commandment should not be ignored.

## **SABBATH MEANT REST AND WORSHIP AMONG EARLY CHRISTIANS**

It has been argued that in Roman society having a day of rest was practically impossible. This is hardly the case. The historical evidence we have demonstrates that the Jewish Sabbath was so well known throughout the empire that many non-Jews rested on the Sabbath, probably for superstitious reasons.<sup>2</sup> The New Testament shows that there were Gentile Sabbathkeepers, called "godfearers" (e.g., Acts 10; 13:16; 17:4). They benefited from the rights granted to the Jews by the Roman government to rest and worship during the Sabbath.<sup>3</sup> Therefore it is groundless to argue that in Roman society it was impossible to keep the Sabbath as a day of rest and worship.

Rest in Christ is not incompatible with keeping the Sabbath, because it is a memorial of His work of the redemption that fills our heart with love and that moves us to bow down before Him in worship. ☺

<sup>1</sup> Scripture quotations marked NASB are from the *New American Standard Bible*, copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995, 2020 by The Lockman Foundation. All rights reserved.

<sup>2</sup> See Victor A. Tcherikover, "The Sambathions," in *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), vol. 3, pp. 43-53.

<sup>3</sup> See Irina Levinskaya, "Godfearers," in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, 5 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), vol. 2, pp. 619, 620.

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# Brain Health

Lifestyle habits make a difference.

*I'm 30 years old and have seen two of my grandparents struggle with memory loss from their mid-60s, which ultimately turned into full-blown Alzheimer's. I'm concerned about myself, but I read that in some countries there are medications that can reduce or reverse cognitive dysfunction and decline. Can I hope that there will be a cure when I need it?*

**C**ognitive decline (decreased ability to process thoughts) affects one's memory, thinking, orientation, comprehension, calculation, learning capacity, language, and judgment. It doesn't affect consciousness. Loss of motivation, mood changes, and loss of emotional control may precede dementia.

Alzheimer's is the most common dementia (60-70 percent of cognitive dysfunction conditions), affecting mainly the aging population. Dementia is common, with approximately 10 million new cases identified every year, and more than 50 million people living with dementia worldwide. More than 60 percent of these people live in low- and middle-income countries, where newer and more costly medications are not readily available.

Apart from Alzheimer's, other causes of dementia include Lewy body disease, degeneration of the frontal lobe of the brain, stroke-related dementia, infections such as HIV, repetitive brain injuries, and nutritional deficiencies.<sup>1</sup>

Medications are in development that show limited efficacy in slowing the progression of Alzheimer's dementia. There's currently no curative treatment. There's good news, however, for everyone, but especially to a 30-year-old—take heart! There is a powerful way to protect the brain through a healthy lifestyle!

The Adventist health message and lifestyle have promoted such healthful habits for many years. Dr. Rudolph Tanzi, a neuroscientist at the McCance Center for Brain Health at the Massachusetts General Hospital, recently summarized the healthy habits that promote and preserve brain health in the acronym SHIELD.<sup>2</sup> These practices help to prevent other age-related diseases such as diabetes, cancer, and heart disease:

**Sleep**—Get seven to eight hours of sleep each night, giving the brain the time needed to eliminate amyloid beta, a toxic protein.

**Handle stress**—Walk in nature, garden, or work on a favorite hobby. Foundationally, we trust in God, pray, and study His Word.

**Interact with friends**—Meet and spend time with close friends or family you trust and can confide in at least once per month.



**Exercise daily**—Take 5,000 to 10,000 steps every day, or exercise for 30 minutes daily.

**Learn new things**—Read nonfiction books; try a new recipe. This is how we make new connections (synapses) in the brain.

**Diet**—Eat healthful foods each day (we recommend a balanced vegetarian diet).

“Pure air, sunlight, abstemiousness, rest, exercise, proper diet, the use of water, trust in divine power—these are the true remedies. Every person should have a knowledge of nature's remedial agencies and how to apply them.”<sup>3</sup>

Lifestyle change needs to be intentionally incorporated into everyday living.<sup>4</sup> Determine to focus on one habit each day until you're ultimately focusing on *all* habits *every* day!

Don't forget to “take up the *shield* of faith” and “pray in the Spirit on all occasions” (Eph. 6:16, 18, NIV). God will strengthen your resolve. He is faithful! ©

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/dementia>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.massgeneral.org/neurology/mccance-center/clinic/shield>

<sup>3</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 127.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.healthministries.com/celebrations/>; <https://www.healthministries.com/lifestylecoaching/>

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# God and Marvin



## “May I Tell You a Story?”

BY DICK DUERKSEN

**W**hen Marvin drove his giant flatbed truck into town, he was drinking a case of beer every day and nursing a \$300 per week cocaine habit. Nothing was going well. The voice in his head was what bothered him the most, a voice that kept telling him that he had to get right with God.

“There were so many things going on inside of me,” he says. “I’d been drinking since seventh grade, and now I had dizzy spells and anxiety attacks, and was eating horribly. And a voice kept insisting that I get right with God.”

“If it’s so important to me, then why don’t I get it?” Marvin kept asking the voice.

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He was 30 years old when he just couldn’t go any further. He stopped, looked up, and said: “I can’t live my life like this anymore, God. You’ve got to do something. You’ve got to do something different in my life. I can’t go on like this.”

That day’s mail included an invitation to a Seventh-day Adventist evangelistic series. He read the brochure and thought that maybe God was offering a way out of his mess.

A dream woke him up that night. In the dream he was singing “Amazing Grace” with many other people, singing with all his heart. He knew the begin-

ning, but the people were on the second verse and he didn’t know the words! Marvin woke up panicked.

“I wanted to sing,” he says. “I so wanted to sing, but I did not know the words!”

Marvin went to the Adventist church and sat on the left-hand side, five rows back. The first night the evangelist had everyone sing “Amazing Grace.” Just the first verse. The second night they sang it again. On the third night the evangelist led the group through all four stanzas, with all the words up on the screen.

“We were all singing, and on the second verse I was singing as I had wanted to sing in the dream. *’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved; how precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed!*”

Marvin sang through all the verses and then sat back in the pew as a small voice spoke into his head. “Keep coming back,” the voice said. “There’s more. Keep coming back.”

Marvin didn’t miss any of the meetings, and at the end he was baptized.

“I had a new life now, a reason to live better. Different. As though I belonged to God.”

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Marvin knew a lot of things would need to change. He quit drinking and dropped the drugs. He began to read the



Bible and learn more and more about living as a Christian. To keep track of all he was learning, he needed to organize it in files, so he bought a filing cabinet and a bunch of manila file folders with dividers. Then he added colored file folders to make it easy to find the different topics.

"Then I decided I needed to buy several sets of sticky labels to put on the folders. That way I would be doing this like a professional. Right?"

He went to the office store, bought some pens and paper, but forgot the sticky labels. Four or five times he did this, always forgetting the most important thing on the shopping list.

"I was so frustrated and angry with myself, certain that I was a terrible failure, that I shouted at God about it. I told Him, 'These labels are important to me, so they must be important to You, because I'm important to You. I don't know how You're going to provide them or where they're coming from, but I know You're going to provide them for me.' So there. I'm not going to go looking for them anymore."

A week or two later Marvin was in his truck, sitting at the side of the road doing paperwork on a delivery he had just completed, when a large service truck came squealing around the corner. As it spun by, one of the side doors opened and some stuff flew out onto the sidewalk.

"I ran out to flag them down, but as fast as they had come, they were gone. I didn't even see the name on the side of the truck. When I looked down at what had fallen out, it was a box of sticky labels for file folders. I could almost hear angels rejoicing as I picked up their gift."

"Why would God care about sticky labels?" I asked Marvin.

"Here's what I know about that," he told me. "There is nothing too small for God to care about it. God knows it all and wants to talk with us about even our smallest 'sticky label' problems."

Imagine this: God cares so much that He'll take time out of His day to find a truck, put the sticky labels near the door, and have the driver drive too fast when he's going around Marvin's corner.

He wants us to know He hears even the smallest prayer. Even more, He wants people, groups of people, many people, to tell Him their needs and ask Him to be actively involved with even the simplest parts of their lives. He wants us to know He is ready for us to ask.

\* \* \*

In 2007 Marvin and his Seventh-day Adventist wife, Lynda, were thinking about having children, a very big decision they had been sharing with God several times each day, asking for wisdom. About that time their old car died, and they bought a new Honda. When they picked it up at the dealership, the salesman told them that they should go right on over to the Department of Motor Vehicles a couple blocks away and get a new license plate. "No need to wait three months for it to come in the mail," he said. Marvin went over, gave the clerk his paperwork, and waited for her to hand him his new license plates.

"You're sure lucky," she said as she handed him the plates. Several people in line also noticed the number on the plates. It was "515•DAD."

"Glad those are yours," one man said. "I already have three kids. Hope it's a boy!"

Marvin's and Lynda's son was born nine months later, on May 15.

It seems as though God keeps using strange ways to speak to Marvin. Such as the evening he and his 3-year-old son, Billy, were walking together. Suddenly Billy stopped, looked up, and said, "Daddy, Jesus is coming soon."

"That kind of blew me away," says Marvin. "I cried because his certainty made me think about my life, my family, and Jesus' return. It was like a huge reminder that some things are much more important than others. A knock on the head to tell me to spend more time with God. It's funny how God goes to so much trouble to catch us wandering sinners and lead us home." ©

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# Taught by a Kid Just Like You!

It was a typical Sabbath in the Primary division. My assistant and I were arranging the chairs and organizing our lesson materials. I welcomed arriving children into the room. Before long I noticed Ritchie running through the door, barely missing a younger boy. Ritchie was bigger and louder than anyone else in Sabbath School. The boys would often follow his behavior, and the girls rolled their eyes and sighed whenever Ritchie was disruptive.

As expected, Ritchie started poking the boy beside him right

after the opening prayer, and he kept kicking at a nearby chair during the mission story. During the lesson study he gave his best impression of a lion's roar to go with Daniel's dungeon prayers.

I decided to try something different and asked Ritchie if he would like to lead song service the next Sabbath. By getting him involved, I hoped he'd behave better, at least for a little while. Ritchie's eyes widened at my question, but he didn't hesitate. "Can I be in charge of

the whole program?" he asked.

I was surprised. "Well, OK," I hesitated, not sure if this was such a good idea after all. Ritchie and I talked about plans for next week's Sabbath School. I promised to call him to see how his program was coming along.

When I called Ritchie on Wednesday, he had his plans already. On Sabbath morning, as I walked toward the classroom, I heard music. Was it coming from the primary room?

Yes, Ritchie was already there with a tape player going. "These



## To do:

Make a list of what your gifts are. Are you skilled in music, sports, art, socializing?

Now make another list of how you will go about putting a plan into action.

Now make a list of ways you might use those gifts to contribute to the church, school, your friend groups, and your neighborhood.

Last, tell us about it! Email [kidsview@adventistreview.org](mailto:kidsview@adventistreview.org) and tell us what you are going to do, or have done and how it went!



## Bible Treasure

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

**2 Timothy 2:15, NIV**

are my favorite Sabbath songs,” he smiled. “I thought the kids might like them.”

Sabbath School went well that day. Everyone sang along to Ritchie’s music. He had arranged for a nature object lesson from one of our regular storytellers. His mother told the mission story, and we broke into groups for the lesson.

After Sabbath School I told Ritchie, “You are already using your talents to serve Jesus.” He grinned and said it was a lot of work, but kind of fun, too.

Ritchie didn’t volunteer to lead out again, but his behavior changed after that day. He became a leader for the younger children instead of a distraction. A few months later Ritchie moved to the Junior division. I found myself missing Ritchie’s enthusiasm, maybe even his animal sounds.

In a book called *Gospel Workers*, on page 211, author Ellen White suggests that “youthful talent, well organized and well trained, is needed in our churches. The youth will do

something with their overflowing energies.”

Ritchie is now all grown up. Some time ago I saw him receive his college degree with the same excitement he showed years earlier in Sabbath School. I was happy that he had used his leadership gifts for Jesus as a boy and later as a young man. And I was glad I gave him a chance all those years before.

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This story first appeared in *KidsView* in July 2008.

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