

# Adventist World

09/2022

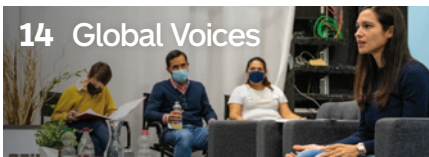
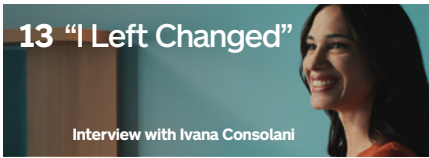
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## Mission-Minded Television





Cover image: Hope Media Europe/Miso Kocic  
The *Encounters* production team films the first scene of the highly anticipated new series.

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## Seek Nothing Less

BY BILL KNOTT

*"Integrity, unswerving integrity, is the principle that you need to carry with you into all the relations of life."*

When I teach seminars on leadership integrity to pastors and church administrators around the globe, I frequently begin where your grammar teacher began: "What is the root meaning of *integrity*?" I'm usually first offered synonyms, such as "honesty," "ethical character," or even "respect for order." All these meanings are in the orbit of *integrity*, but don't get at the core definition.

So I try another approach: "What other words does *integrity* sound like? Think primary school mathematics," I prompt, and soon enough someone lands on it. "*Integer*," they will say—to which I always ask, "And what is an *integer*?" I watch the years of half-remembered definitions roll away until someone sings out: "A whole number. An *integer* is a whole number."

"And there you have it," I add. "A person with integrity is a whole number—a whole person. Yes, integrity requires honesty, and it surely demands an ethical character. But at its root, integrity is all about wholeness—being one and the same thing all the way through."

It should be obvious that broken, inconsistent sinners can never achieve integrity by ourselves. It doesn't cloak us because we are self-disciplined (though self-discipline blesses us) or because we mark out careful boundaries for our behavior—even though that is



common to all with integrity. The wholeness inherent in integrity always begins with the grace available to every sinner through the blood of Jesus Christ. In His name—and for His fame—we hear His declaration that we are justified, and continue to journey with Him as He grows in us the virtues of wholeness: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal. 5:22, 23, NRSV).

Implied in this familiar listing of the "fruit of the Spirit" is a commitment to the integrity—the wholeness—of others. This happens through our faithful witness to the life-changing power of the gospel to make us whole—"until Christ is formed in you" (Gal. 4:19, NRSV). Helping to bring wholeness—physically, mentally, and spiritually—to those around us is the illustration to a watching world that Jesus is transforming us into persons of integrity.

This edition of *Adventist World* traces the theme of integrity in several ways, though the word itself never appears. The remarkable international film project featured here is all about a burning desire to bring wholeness to struggling young adults through the media they embrace. The Global View column by Elder Wilson is an appeal for message integrity as this remnant movement faces the end-time. And the new initiative, "Back to the Altar," reminds us that integrity and wholeness are first learned and best built through consistent family worship experiences.

Pray that a loving Father will deepen and strengthen your personal integrity and that of your brothers and sisters around the Adventist family.

\* Ellen G. White, in *Signs of the Times*, Sept. 18, 1884.

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.





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**Lidya Kirilovna is a member of the Seventh-day Adventist congregation in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. There are only two Adventist churches, seven companies, and 261 members in Tajikistan.**

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

**“The *Adventist Hymnal* has always been an inspiration in our services. And we want, with this new edition, to reinforce our core beliefs in the hearts of our members, strengthen our identity, and boost our greatest hope. We hope these praises will be a constant part of worship in our churches, be part of small groups, be part of family worship, and inspire generations to continue to focus on mission and prepare for that big day.”**

—Stanley Arco, president of the South American Division, about the new Portuguese hymnal that will replace the 1996 edition. After almost four years of work, the committee responsible for the new Portuguese *Adventist Hymnal* in South America was launched in July 2022. The new hymnal brings together 600 hymns.

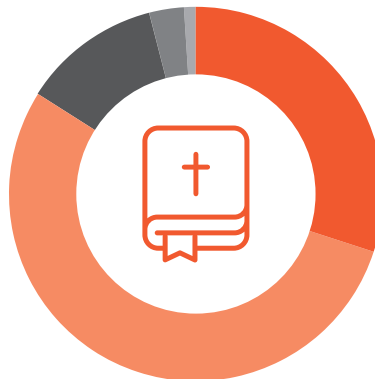
# 2,346

The number of people in the city of Barquisimeto, Venezuela, who received medical services during a joint initiative between the Adventist hospital, the West Venezuela Union Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and the Smiles for Jesus Foundation (Fundasonje), an Adventist lay organization in the country. The three-day event offered medical consultations to patients in need of assistance throughout the region. The initiative provided 104 minor surgeries and treatment in 15 medical specialties, including ophthalmology, ambulatory care, dentistry, and more.

## Learning From Scripture

Church members were asked if they applied what they learned from Scripture to their daily life:

- 30% Strongly agree
- 54% Agree
- 12% Not sure
- 3% Disagree
- 1% Strongly disagree



N=58,105  
 Source: 2017-2018 Global Church Member Survey  
 URL: <https://bit.ly/3FrAKKX>



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**“As an institution we are committed to caring for natural resources as part of our Adventist educational philosophy, as stewards of God. By using solar energy through these photovoltaic [solar] panels, Dominican Adventist University is helping to reduce the production of carbon dioxide, the loss of thousands of trees, as well as the reduction of global warming.”**

—José David Gómez, president of Dominican Adventist University, about the university becoming the first higher-education institution in the country to install a solar-power plant able to supply 100 percent of its electricity. This development covers both the main campus in Villa Sonador and the extension campus in Santo Domingo.



“The pedagogical training provided was based on the areas of greatest need, as reported by those teaching at the school. We covered writing, mathematics, and Portuguese. Additionally, the group carried out deep cleaning throughout the [school] building, removing stains from the walls. They also painted the exterior and interior walls of the school building, and renovated three classrooms, the management and coordination room, and the two bathrooms of the school.”

—Rafaela Reis, one of the project organizers and coordinator of Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in Araguaia, about a mission trip to the São Domingos indigenous community in Luciara, Mato Grosso, Brazil. A group of 15 Adventist education supporters conducted a mission trip to support the local indigenous school, promote pedagogical training for teachers, share informative lectures for the community, and assist in some renovation projects for the school.

# 49

The number of graduates of the nursing program of Antillean Adventist University (AAU) in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, an institution operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, that were recruited by the AdventHealth system in Florida, United States, through a recent collaboration agreement.

“We are proud that our university has been selected by AdventHealth for this recruitment initiative, as it recognized not only the quality of our teaching but also the qualities that characterize our graduates,” Myrna Colon, president of AAU, said.

“The main goal [of the Second Coming mural] is to reach others with the gospel. Our church members are very much excited about the project.”

—Edgardo Beltrán, district pastor of the nearby Ensenada 14 Adventist Church, about the mural project. It took artists Pablo Sánchez, Priscila Rivera, and Luis Medina six days to paint the mural beside a busy street in Ensenada, Baja California, in Mexico. The Ensenada 14 church, one of six in the district, has designated a team to follow up on the people who call in or reach them through the social media information displayed on the painting itself. Church leaders said the mural is scheduled to be displayed for one year.



Photo: Adventus

## From Tears to Singing and Dancing

Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist World*

The first time Maranatha Volunteers International Kenya country director Ron Kedas toured the campus of Kiutine Adventist Secondary School, he couldn't hold back his tears. Because of lack of funds, the dilapidated place was in disarray. The school, begun in 2011 after several Adventist parents banded together with the dream of providing their children with an Adventist education, had never taken off, and as it was, the school did not seem viable.

With tearful eyes, Kedas paced through the student dormitories: makeshift crumbling walls with the blue sky as their only roof—and the “showers”—a muddy corner with a few cups and a couple of buckets. The challenges ahead seemed insurmountable, but Maranatha leaders soon contacted donors and supporters of Adventist education from North America and other places. Together they cast a vision to transform Kiutine from the ground up into a campus that would make church members, leaders, faculty, and students proud of Adventist education and the Seventh-day Adventist Church. By faith they anticipated what Kiutine could become if their leaders were given a chance.

### OFFICIAL INAUGURATION

On July 8, 2022, after years of consistent efforts and hard work, dozens of Maranatha volunteers and regional church leaders, including East-Central Africa Division president Blasious Ruguri, gathered at Kiutine for the official inauguration of several school buildings on the revamped campus.

The Maranatha-funded buildings include a new cafeteria, dorms, classrooms, offices, staff housing, and a new science laboratory. It also includes a deliberate landscaping effort that clearly stands out in a dry, dusty area of Kenya. With the help of a new water well outside the school gates (which is also available to the community), Kiutine is growing a vegetable garden to support the students' dietary needs.

During the ceremony, students, faculty, church leaders, church members, and visitors rejoiced and thanked God for His mercies and abundant blessings at Kiutine. Songs and prayers of dedication complemented the unveiling of the major donors' plaques.

The dedication event also included touring and cutting ribbons in several of the new

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**In Kenya a place of despair becomes a beacon of hope.**

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buildings, and the exchange of gifts, including a calf and several goats, regional symbols of respect and hospitality to visitors.

### BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING

East Kenya Union Conference president Samuel Makori said that the Kiutine inauguration was the latest iteration of God's command to Abram to be a blessing to others. “God told Abram that He would bless him,” Makori said. “Then Abram went and blessed others.”

Makori added, “I have seen Abram's blessing come out of the Bible and bless Maranatha. In turn, Maranatha has blessed us too.”

Ruguri agreed, as he also addressed the various groups supporting Kiutine's educational endeavor. “The Lord Himself must have been working in your hearts,” he told Maranatha donors.

He also addressed Kiutine's dedicated Adventist teachers. “Thank you for making this place warm with the love of God,” Ruguri told them.

### A LOFTIER GOAL

Maranatha executive vice president Kenneth Weiss emphasized he was happy to participate in the inauguration festivities. He also reminded the Kiutine community that beyond a manicured landscape and brand-new buildings, there is a loftier goal.

“Remember that one day, all of these buildings will burn up, but we can choose to ascend to heaven instead of burning with them,” Weiss said. “In heaven we will be able to build much better buildings and enjoy much better schools.” ☺



Kiutine students escort East-Central Africa Division president Blasious Ruguri on the day of the school inauguration.

Photo: Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist World*



## Shelter, Evacuation, and Comprehensive Assistance

ADRA Poland and *Adventist World*

More than 4 million refugees from Ukraine have crossed the Polish-Ukrainian border since the beginning of the war with Russia. The situation, expectations, and needs of this group are gradually changing. New problems are emerging, and it is time for more comprehensive assistance, ADRA Poland Foundation leaders said. The organization has been supporting refugees from Ukraine since the first day of the war.

In the beginning a large group of refugees planned to return home quickly, but today they are more likely to think about a long-term stay in Poland. Refugees report such psychological difficulties as feelings of guilt, meaninglessness, aggression, insecurity, and the need to support their children with their own limited resources.

July 2022 was an especially difficult month for war refugees from Ukraine because of the expiration of government aid and the tourist season. Comprehensive and specialized support is needed to help them recover from war trauma, find their way in the job market, and assimilate into Polish society, ADRA leaders said.

"Initially, people who were completely surprised by the war predominated," reported Karol Templin, manager of the project, "Comprehensive Support for Refugees From Ukraine." "Our first help to such people was to provide accommodation and equipment, evacuation from Ukraine, and support at the border," Templin explained.

### A CHANGING SITUATION

As ADRA Poland organizes humanitarian transportation with



The ADRA Poland Foundation is supporting Ukrainian refugees, helping them to start a new life in the country.

Photo: ADRA Poland

in-kind aid (food, medical supplies, and hygiene products), it has transported 1,167 people from Ukraine to Poland. Earlier in July, workers successfully evacuated 41 residents of Mykolaiv, located right on the front line. More than 2,000 people have so far benefited from shelters run by ADRA, two thirds of whom were women (including girls) and the remainder were minors.

Renata Karolewska, another regional coordinator at the ADRA Poland Foundation, explained that the refugees' perceptions of the immediate future have changed. "At first I heard mainly, 'The war will soon be over; I will return home in a while.' Gradually, however, the situation has changed. Refugees establish relationships with each other and, with their Polish neighbors, become part of the community, find jobs, and plan to stay longer," she said.

### PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

Satisfying basic needs opens up space to address other issues, Ukrainian-born psychotherapist Roksana Korulczyk explained. "In addition to the general adaptation challenges of finding oneself in a new situation, in a foreign country, and lack of language skills, each per-

son has been individually affected by the tragedy of war, including through the death of someone close to them, separation, loss of housing, or work."

Korulczyk is one of four Ukrainian psychologists who provide psychological and informational assistance to Ukrainian refugees as part of an ADRA Poland Foundation initiative. The four of them are on duty by phone and in chat rooms, and they post expert advice online.

### TIME FOR INTEGRATION

The ADRA Poland Foundation is also setting up integration centers for foreigners, places of comprehensive assistance with expert support in the field of psychology, legal advice, learning the Polish language, and even giving relaxing massages. Centers will be set up in, among other cities, Warsaw, Lublin, and Katowice. In a later phase, ADRA plans to open further centers in other parts of the country.

"Many refugees will stay longer with us," Templin said. "This is why we need comprehensive and specialized support to help them recover from the traumas of war, training, learning the language, finding their way in the labor market, and assimilating into Polish society." ©

**617,955**

Membership of the South Pacific Division (SPD) as of June 30, 2022

**“Lately I have tried the discipline of reflection when listening to sermons. I ask: ‘What is God trying to tell me?’ ‘What can I learn from this message?’ ‘What belief or behavior needs adjusting?’ As I have done this, I leave worship sermons more blessed and challenged.”**

— South Pacific Division president Glenn Townend, in a recent message to other church leaders and members across the region. Townend highlighted how setting aside time for reflection is transforming his spiritual experience.

**“We’re very excited about this season’s guests, who will bring additional insights to be shared in Sabbath School classes, and it’s particularly inspiring to hear the ideas from the lesson’s author.”**

—Henrique Felix, producer of the *Sabbath School Quarterly Commentary* podcast and North New South Wales’ digital evangelism strategies coordinator, about the twelfth season for the podcast. The current season features an array of special guests, including Gavin Anthony, the author of the July-September Sabbath School lesson.

**17**

The number of people baptized at the finish of the second term at the independent Aboriginal boarding school Karalundi College in Western Australia, Australia. The big baptismal celebration included 13 students, one senior staff member, and three community members. According to Karalundi chaplain Peniamina (Ben) Cowley, the baptisms are a result of the intentional spiritual focus on campus. Emphasis on prayer is one of several initiatives to help the 36 boarding students and 25 full-time staff grow spiritually. ⬇️

**“We see this program as a breakthrough on so many levels. There was not a single participant who did not see positive changes in their overall health. I was completely blown away by the results. . . . The beauty of using the ‘My Wellness Snapshot’ was that we had written pre-results and post-results that focused on well-being—and well-being is quite often where we see the greatest change in those who complete CHIP.”**

—Adrielle Carrasco, director of Adventist Health Ministries for the New Zealand Pacific Union Conference, about a group of 41 Pasifika men and women who completed the Complete Health Improvement Program (CHIP) in Auckland, New Zealand. This event was a first for the Pasifika (Pacific Islander) churches in North New Zealand.



Photo: Adventist Record





Photo: NASA, ESA, CSA, and STScI

## “What Is Man That You Are Mindful of Him?”

*The wonders of God’s universe are much closer than before.*

On July 11 and 12, 2022, the first set of images captured from the James Webb Space Telescope were released to the public. They included a deep field image speckled with thousands of galaxies, a view of a grouping of five galaxies, images of nebulae with stars enveloped in their variously sculpted dust-rich regions, and a transmission spectrum obtained from starlight filtered through the atmosphere of an exoplanet.

These images mark the highly anticipated beginning of science operations for this space telescope, and they were hailed with press releases around the world because of their stunning resolution, informational value, and intrinsic beauty.

This unprecedented opportunity for cosmic observation naturally engenders a desire for deeper reflection on human ingenuity, God’s creation, and a biblical understanding of our place and meaning in the cosmos.

### THE HALLMARK OF A GOOD CREATION

The successful acquisition of images by the James Webb Space Telescope is the product of more than

30 years of planning and implementation of a complex project by thousands of scientists, engineers, and technicians. From Galileo’s telescope to modern particle accelerators, technology and instrumentation have often been the catalysts for the discovery of new phenomena in nature and have helped us discriminate between competing ideas for their explanation.

Undoubtedly the Webb telescope will similarly contribute to the expansion of the frontiers of knowledge. Irrespective of the scientific advancements that will be made possible by this instrument, however, its very existence and active operation are a testament to human ingenuity.

This incredible artifact built on earth and now located in space about four times farther than the moon’s orbit embodies the essence of what really makes us special: in science as in art, it is the ability to conceive, design, create, and implement something that was not there before. Scientific collaborations of this kind, especially when intended for the benefit of all, are an expression of how humans were made in God’s image.

### LEARNING ABOUT THE COSMOS

What are some of the specific questions expected to be answered thanks to the James Webb Space Telescope?

It is fascinating to think that astrophysicists will be able to use

data acquired by the Webb telescope to extract generalities from the vast array of possibilities in configuration and composition that exist among galaxies, stars, and exoplanets. This ability to make sense of the cosmos, categorizing and understanding the dynamics of its phenomena, is what makes the scientific study of the creation remarkably fulfilling. Intelligibility and consistency occur within a tapestry of innumerable combinations and testify not only to the wisdom and greatness of God, but also to His desire to be known. His thoughts outnumber the grains of sand on our planet, and yet we can reflect upon them (Ps. 139:17, 18).

### BETWEEN THE EARTHLY AND THE HEAVENLY

In looking at the images obtained from the James Webb Space Telescope, I feel a little like David in his contemplation of the night sky. I am made aware not only of my finite state, but also of my value. God assigned to humans the earth as their home. And yet, while grounded daily in the earthly reality, we have been given the opportunity to consider the heavens. About 3,000 years ago David did not know of black holes or exoplanets or galactic collisions. Yet his inspired words of amazement and adoration ring so incredibly true: “Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory in the heavens” (Ps. 8:1, NIV). ©



Focus

# Let's Talk

A new Adventist-produced television series, *Encounters*, is primed to make a global impact.

BY GERALD A. KLINGBEIL



Actors Anne-Marie Agbodji and Jürgen Heimüller on the cramped set. To save money, *Encounters* was shot with at least two cameras per scene.

**T**he space for real conversations has become ever smaller in a world mired in conflict, suspicions, hasty answers, and deeply held convictions. That's why *Encounters*, a recently released true-to-life series spearheaded by Hope Media Europe in Germany, offers a unique opportunity to foster real and meaningful conversations with those who may have no association with Christianity and a Christian worldview.

"*Encounters* is a tool for reaching people who are searching or who are not yet Christians, and [is designed] to start a conversation with them about spiritual things," says Sven Fockner, principal script author and coproducer of the five-part series that went live on July 1 ([www.encounters.show](http://www.encounters.show)).

Fockner, together with director Adrian Duré, began work on the series more than seven years ago. The TV show depicts the experiences of two university chaplains at an international Christian university somewhere in the heart of Europe, and the challenges they face in their work, dealing with young adults grappling with big questions.

## HOW IT ALL STARTED

"The original idea," says Fockner, "was actually to develop it as a Bible course for our Bible correspondence school here." Early one morning in late 2014 Duré came into Fockner's office and told him: "Hey, I've seen a show about a therapist. We could do something like this with a pastor and his work." Both immediately saw an opportunity that could be filmed in a studio, and was

more economical to produce for TV. Before the 2015 General Conference Session in San Antonio, Texas, United States, Hope Media Europe decided to invest in a one-day "shoot" as a proof of concept to show stakeholders, with the invitation to help fund the product. The feedback they received was extremely helpful—and encouraging. Gilbert Cangy, who then served as director of the General Conference Youth Ministries Department, suggested to pivot from a pastor to a chaplain because many young adults live every day in a university setting and would resonate better with that context.

The Hope Media Europe team took this advice to heart, and started the long process of fundraising. The budget they considered necessary to produce a quality TV show was





To watch *Encounters* online, visit: [www.encounters.show](http://www.encounters.show)

above US\$1 million, and they were off to a good start, with several large entities committing funds. Because of a number of changes beyond their control, however, the financial situation changed rapidly in 2017. “We lost about four fifths of our budget in one week,” says Fockner. Two partners had to pull their support. It was the lowest point of the project.

#### “THAT GAVE ME HOPE”

A WhatsApp message from a friend teaching at River Plate Adventist University in Argentina offered a new perspective and encouraged the team to push forward. Duré, originally from Argentina, had sent the pilot show to a professor who showed the pilot to his students and asked them to offer their critique. One of the students, who had just

tragically lost her best friend in a car crash, was experiencing devastating depression. She struggled to get out of bed in the morning or to motivate herself to go to classes. But on the day the professor showed the video, she found enough motivation to get up and go to school. After he showed the class the 20-minute episode of *Encounters*, something unusual happened for the student. She resonated especially with the final sentence the chaplain shared with one of the students onscreen: “I am with you on this journey.” It was as if God had spoken directly to her. God would not leave her alone in her pain and loss.

The professor forwarded a WhatsApp message the student had sent him to Duré and Fockner: “Where can I watch it?” the student wrote. “That was so powerful. That gave me hope.”

“That’s when Adrian and I looked at each other and said: ‘Wow.’ This was just one day of production, and it helped a person,” remembers Fockner. “We should do something. No matter how limited the budget will be, we will do whatever is possible—and it will be a blessing to at least someone, one person.”

Duré adds: “For me personally, one of the most important purposes of *Encounters* is telling simple stories.” Like all our stories, these true-to-life realities contain problems, struggles, pain, and hard situations. “Some of the solutions [to these difficult experiences] can be found through dialogue and discussion with others; others find their solution in the Bible,” continues Duré.

*Encounters* was back on track—with a smaller budget but with the same drive to tell stories that would help an audience ask real questions.

#### THE BIG QUESTIONS OF OUR LIVES

*Encounters* features the work of two very different university chaplains, Alex and Sofía, and how

## Storytelling can really touch and go directly to the heart of people.

their lives intersect with students studying at a Christian university close to Frankfurt in secular Europe. The slow storytelling of *Encounters* offers insights into life stories facing pain, a cancer diagnosis, the quest for purpose, relationship struggles, the question of human suffering and justice—and many more. This is not an action series, but one that helps the audience see developments as protagonists struggle and grow and wonder. It feels real, and many times viewers will catch themselves wondering about the responses Alex and Sofía would give as they engage the big questions their student clients raise. What becomes clear, however, is that the chaplains’ own lives aren’t free of anxieties, fears, and challenges. The script writers didn’t produce some unbelievable stereotypical hero characters whose lives feel disconnected and unreal. Instead, they offer authentic people played by actors who understand their craft.

Some of the big issues touched on in the scripts of the five episodes of *Encounters* include the quest for meaning in life, the sense of self-worth that many of us (regardless of age) have struggled with or are still wondering about. Death and human suffering, fear, doubt, the existence of evil, and the question of where we come from are also touched on in the episodes. Along with relationship issues involving love and the big

unknown of the future, they all represent credible questions in the mind of young adults and others living in our communities.

The anticipated audience of the series focuses on non-Christians living in a secular context. While the context of the unnamed Christian university is secular Europe, the themes are relatable to non-European audiences. Fockner remembers some of the comments he received from broadcasting partners located in Brazil: “We don’t have something like this. We don’t have something for those who are really struggling with faith, for people for whom the Bible is not a given but who wonder about this book.”

This relatability was not only achieved by careful scriptwriting but also reflected in the broad international cast of actors representing distinct cultures. The series was shot in English and is currently being dubbed and subtitled in six different languages. It was recorded in three weeks from September to October

2021 in Germany under COVID-19 restrictions. Additionally, the Hope Media Europe team also produced five study guides that can be used with *Encounters* in the context of small groups, evangelistic meetings, or even for responding individually to the issues raised in the series.

#### **PARTNERSHIPS**

*Encounters* would never have seen the light of day without the strong support Hope Media Europe received from many of the unions of the Inter-European Division (EUD), covering such countries as Austria, Switzerland, Romania, France, Belgium, Bulgaria, and Germany. Other important international partners were the North American Division (NAD) communication department, the South American Division, which will feature the production on its video-streaming platform feliz7.play.com, as well as the Inter-American Division (IAD) communication department, whose reach covers many Spanish-speaking countries in

Central America, including the Caribbean. Later the South-Pacific Division (SPD), representing Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific islands, joined the partnership and committed finances to the global project.

#### **THE POWER OF STORYTELLING**

Duré, the project’s director, highlights the power of touching human lives through careful, true-to-life storytelling. “Storytelling and the way you can touch specific topics is very effective,” he says when asked about the decision to produce a TV series instead of a documentary or other possible genres. “I can see this movement toward storytelling not just in the secular film industry but also in the growing world of Christian media productions,” he adds. “Storytelling can really touch and go directly to the hearts of people.”

Scriptwriter and coproducer Fockner reminds us that “Jesus told a lot of stories, and He used parables to teach. Some Bible texts tell



It’s a wrap! The production team in front of the Hope Media Europe studios near Frankfurt, Germany.





us that He taught nothing without using parables. I think there's a lesson in what Jesus does, and we should imitate that, because the stories we remember much better than an abstract teaching, for stories connect with our emotions."

Christianity is not just an intellectual agreement to a certain number of truths, but our ability to invite people into a meaningful relationship with their Creator and Saviour. "There is an emotional aspect to it," says Fockner. "Stories are really predestined for conveying an emotional message." Stories can reach the inner core of a human being beyond just sharing mere facts.

Fockner was struck by the craft and ability of the actors to communicate complex emotions, convictions, and realities. "The actors really leaned into this and brought out the best in the message. It was amazing to see that."

## THE FUTURE

*Encounters* premiered at the Sonscreen Film Festival at Loma Linda University in April 2022 and went live on July 1, 2022, at [www.encounters.show](http://www.encounters.show). The series is available in all languages from its website. Asked if there are plans for another season of *Encounters*, Fockner replies: "Yes, of course, we would love to continue. There are a lot of unresolved questions. We do have the screenplays. We are ready, but now it depends on the reception the show will get and donations. We have already started the crowd-funding project on our website."

*Encounters* sits right at the cutting edge of Adventist media work and follows in the footsteps of those who were willing to use new creative forms and media to tell the old story of our desperate need for salvation and grace. ©

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

# "I Left Changed"

Interview With  
Ivana Consolani

*The following offers short excerpts from a longer interview that Adventist World associate editor Gerald Klingbeil conducted with Ivana Consolani, an Argentinian-German actress living in Spain, who played chaplain Sofia Serrano, one of the key characters of the Encounters series.*

**GK: Ivana, I found it intriguing how you really connected to your role. What attracted you to this production and role?**

Ivana: There were many reasons. One was the spirit of human beings overcoming struggles, their difficulties. I love those topics. I think human beings have a lot of potential to give, and it's awesome to find ways to untap that. The other reason was to have the privilege to play a Latina, from Latin America.

**How did you prepare for the role of a university chaplain at a Christian university?**

I had a lot to learn and to relearn. I did a lot of research on the topics, on Bible studies, because my role was an expert. Sofia is a theologian and has a PhD on the subject. In preparing, I spoke with chaplains in universities, in Sagunto [at the Adventist college in Spain], for example. I also talked a lot to director Adrian Duré about Christian lifestyle.

**Did any of the existential questions that are tackled in the five episodes somehow resonate with you in your own life? Were they relevant questions?**

Yes, so many questions were eye-opening and [offered] new perspectives to approach and to reflect on in my personal life. I real-

ized that other people, regardless of their backgrounds or religious affiliations, ask these questions about purpose and meaning.

**Do you think that a nonchurched secular audience can relate to these big, existential questions?**

Yes, everybody has these questions. The stories that *Encounters* portrays are very real. People from every country or every background will be able to identify with the stories that the characters are in—that's international. They will watch the stories and be like "That happened to me" or "That happened to my sister or a friend of mine."

**This has been the first time you worked with an Adventist media production. What did you think of the experience?**

I loved it, and I will tell you why and what happened. It was my first experience in a big project, like a TV series, so I was very nervous. My takeaway from this experience was the supportive and kind, loving set we had. That was unique because everybody was so kind and respectful. This doesn't happen in every organization. Speaking personally, I left changed. If you operate from a place of love, the outcome is always much better. ©

# ENCOUNTERS



Review

## A God of Encounters

A young adult's take on the *Encounters* series

**T**hey are authentic stories. They are genuine stories. The *Encounters* series offers a complex tangle of different people's journeys as they collide in the offices of two university chaplains somewhere in Europe. The main characters are two chaplains and the students they meet. The different characters represent a diverse international presence with varying worldviews, perspectives, values, and culture. This gives the series global relevance as it explores humanity's quest for purpose, value, meaning, and acceptance.

The series doesn't shy away from hard questions. Rather, it asks the questions we often wonder about silently but fail to verbalize. Nothing is sugarcoated. Topics range from addictions, relationships, abuse, religious identity, purpose, death, and conflict.

No character is perfect. They all carry baggage—even the chaplains. The characters make mistakes. They struggle. They cry. And yet there is hope. There is laughter. There is spiritual growth.

The script feels real. It tactfully adds information and perspectives that hint at the hours of research conducted to create this series. It's not a neatly organized simple plot with black-and-white answers. The plots are situations that could well have happened to us, our classmates, coworkers, our families. They offer an exploration and a journey of finding God in the hard places, the valleys, and the question marks.

The series is gripping, thought-provoking, and enriching. Ultimately, in the wrestling we can learn more about the beauty of God; the pain that comes to the forefront again and again hints at the spiritual war we face and the hope of falling in love with a good God.

The series reminded me again that Christianity is more than neatly packaged answers. It's more than a theological discourse. It's a call to the gospel in action. It's about building a relationship with the God of encounters. Somehow, in the midst of our questions, our pain, our loneliness, our fears, and even our guilt, He finds us, and we can finally meet Him. ©

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**Sarah Klingbeil** is a senior at Southern Adventist University, where she is pursuing a double major in mathematics and English with an emphasis in teaching English as a foreign language.

## Global Voices

*Encounters is a global cooperative project that offers a blueprint of thinking together about mission in a secular world. Here are some of these global voices representing some of the international partners of Hope Media Europe.—Editors.*

“ Since 2017 we have been experimenting here in South America with the use of audiovisual productions such as series, films, and animations to dialogue with new generations of Adventists and other Christian denominations. For this reason we created the video streaming platform Feliz7Play.com. *Encounters* was dubbed into Portuguese and will be featured on the streaming platform. We believe that it will be very important, especially for dialoguing with young undergraduates. We imagine that this audience will identify with the story, the characters, and the dilemmas experienced by the characters.”  
—**Carlos Magalhaes**, digital strategy manager, South American Division





Production Chaos: The set is still missing a wall, but actors Govinda Choletti and Ivana Consolani are already rehearsing.



To watch *Encounters* online, visit: [www.encounters.show](http://www.encounters.show)

“*Encounters* is an historic project for Adventist media. In the North American Division, the Seventh-day Adventist Church was always at the forefront of using media to engage society, to carry out evangelism. In the 1970s Faith for Today developed its first scripted drama series, a regular TV series about the fictional *Westbrook Hospital*. This series was broadcast on the networks, through syndication, available to a mass audience. We are excited that after more than 40 years we will have a scripted drama to share with a broad audience. For our initial distribution phase we are promoting the online version of *Encounters* on the show's website, as well as streaming it on Sonscreen.com, the website for the NAD-sponsored Sonscreen Film Festival. As partners with Hope Media Europe, we want to help build viewership on the online platform they have developed for the series.”  
—**Julio Muñoz**, associate director, communication department, North American Division

“Best results happen when the whole church is involved, not only a union. Hope Channel France has started to work with the communication and personal ministries departments of the Franco-Belgium Union so that every church member becomes aware of the existence, and, most of all, the quality of the series that has been produced. We don't want to rush to communicate. We'd rather communicate in depth in a concerted action plan to generate organic growth that would inspire in local church members involvement in the project. It takes more time than just communicating about it, but *Encounters* is worth the effort. Our union is also going to translate the Bible study guides that are provided by Hope Media Europe, and as we believe in small groups, we will encourage families to watch with their friends, then discuss around the topic of the study guides. *Encounters* delivers a vision of spirituality that is very relevant.”  
—**Jéthro Camille**, director, Hope Channel France, Franco-Belgian Union

“For Hope Channel Inter-America it's a great opportunity to be able to participate as one of the partners of the *Encounters* project, because by having the series as part of our programming, we offer messages of hope through different formats than those we have used before, both from its series layout, as well as its quality, and of course the contents structured in a drama that includes different important topics for our audiences. We decided to caption the series in Spanish, because most of the audiences in our territory prefer to hear the original language and sound effects and read the second language on screen. We are working on translating the Bible study guides into Spanish so that they can become part of our course offerings at Hope Bible School. We hope that the first season will capture the attention of many people who have questions in life and who have not found answers in television programs of other formats.”  
—**Abel Márquez**, director, communication department, Inter-American Division

# Hold Fast What You Have

## Jesus Is Coming! (Part 2)

Photo: Szabo Viktor

Let's continue to review several vital truths from God's Word that He would have us hold fast.

### HOLD FAST TO:

11. Faithfulness to God's unique Advent movement. Do not compromise by entering into ecumenical activities that take away and distract your understanding and belief in the pure Word of God. Look only to Jesus and His full biblical truth.

12. The core of our salvation and the everlasting gospel—Christ's righteousness—His justifying righteousness by faith and His sanctifying righteousness by the Holy Spirit working in us. In contrast to self-centered salvation by works, Christ calls us to an understanding that His death on the cross, His current intercession for us in the most holy place of His literal heavenly sanctuary, and the promise of eternal life at His soon second coming are all gifts to us through His grace.

13. All 28 fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, including our understanding of prophecy culminating with the final announcement of Daniel 8:14 and the 2,300 day/year prophecy ending in 1844 with the beginning of the investigative judgment in heaven, revealing God's great love for His people as demonstrated in the plan of salvation and sanctuary services. God's prophecies are rock-solid and true.

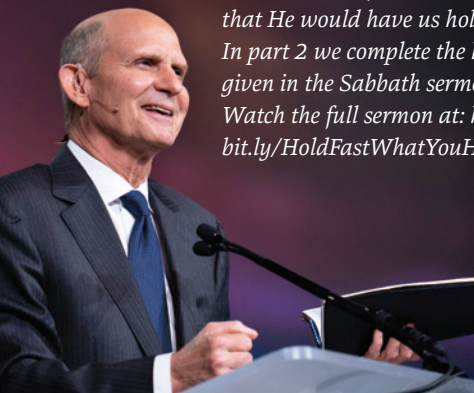
14. Daily leaning on the Lord through personal Bible study and prayer. God's Word will sustain you in all that you face.

15. Simple biblical church worship patterned after Revelation 4, giving glory only to God and not to human beings.

16. Proactive, widescale circulation of heaven-inspired Spirit of Prophecy books. Be part of The Great Controversy Project 2.0, distributing millions of the full version of *The Great Controversy*. My brothers and sisters, this precious book is not the Bible. We believe in the Bible as our only rule of faith; it's the foundation. But the Spirit of Prophecy, including *The Great Controversy*, are messages given to us from God Himself through His servant, Ellen White. I believe the Spirit of Prophecy is one of God's greatest gifts given to the Seventh-day Adventist Church to point us to the Bible, the written Word, and to Jesus, the living Word. Ellen White said she wished *The Great Controversy* was circulated more than any other book she had written. Don't let any church



*This is the second of three parts taken from Pastor Wilson's sermon to the General Conference Session on June 11, 2022. In part 1 we acknowledged that regardless of the many obstacles we face, we are to hold fast our belief in God's Word and His love for His church. We reviewed 10 vital truths from God's Word that He would have us hold fast. In part 2 we complete the list given in the Sabbath sermon. Watch the full sermon at: <https://bit.ly/HoldFastWhatYouHave>.*



Josef Kissinger





leader, any conference president, any union president, any division president, or even the General Conference president ever tell you not to distribute *The Great Controversy*. God wants us to deliver truth to people, and this book has brought hundreds of thousands of people to an understanding of the Christian era from beginning to the future. God will bless you and your local church for it.

17. Your firm belief that Jesus is coming soon, and you are to get involved! Share with the world that we can be ready for His coming, can hasten His coming, and can share this hope of salvation through complete dependence on Christ and His justifying and sanctifying righteousness. Total Member Involvement engages everyone in a year-round program of comprehensive evangelistic witnessing and outreach in all its forms.

18. Biblical inspiration, rejecting humanism and popular social culture that attempt to destroy God's revelation given in His Word.

19. The beauty of the sanctuary and its services, which point to the everlasting gospel—Jesus Christ, the Lamb slain on the cross. "The enemy will bring in false theories, such as the doctrine that there is no sanctuary. This is one of the points on which there will be a departing from the faith."<sup>1</sup>

20. The biblical day/year principle of interpreting biblical prophecy, allowing the Bible to interpret itself. The historicist approach shows how history has accurately unfolded according to God's Word.

21. The historical biblical/historical grammatical approach to interpreting Scripture. It is the only hermeneutical approach approved by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.<sup>2</sup>

22. The biblical and Spirit of Prophecy understanding that the shaking of God's church will take

place before Christ returns. "Soon God's people will be tested by fiery trials, and the great proportion of those who now appear to be genuine and true will prove to be base metal."<sup>3</sup> "The church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall. It remains, while the sinners in Zion will be sifted out—the chaff separated from the precious wheat. This is a terrible ordeal, but nevertheless it must take place."<sup>4</sup>

23. The precious understanding that we are God's worldwide remnant Seventh-day Adventist Church in more than 200 countries who support each other, avoiding the mission-destroying concept of congregationalism. "The home missionary work will be farther advanced in every way when a more liberal, self-denying, self-sacrificing spirit is manifested for the prosperity of foreign missions; for the prosperity of the home work depends largely, under God, upon the reflex influence of the evangelical work done in countries afar off."<sup>5</sup>

24. The wonderful foundation of God's government based on love—His eternal law, including His Ten Commandments. We do not keep God's law through our own power, but only as we lean on Christ and His righteousness. "When the religion of Christ is most held in contempt, when His law is most despised, then should our zeal be the warmest and our courage and firmness the most unflinching. To stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the majority forsake us, to fight the battles of the Lord, when champions are few—this will be our test. At this time we must gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason."<sup>6</sup>

25. God's special plan of health reform and comprehensive health ministry as you advocate a healthy lifestyle of God's eight

## Focus fully on God's Word and Spirit of Prophecy counsel, giving us connection to God, hope for the future, and our reason for being Seventh-day Adventists.

natural remedies—good nutrition, regular exercise, ample use of water, temperance in all things, pure air, adequate sleep and rest, and trust in divine power. God's health plan rejects alcohol, tobacco, illicit drugs, and improper lifestyles incompatible with biblical and Spirit of Prophecy principles. God's plan offers the most abundant life possible on this earth. Read and follow God's counsel for health as part of the third angel's message.

My brothers and sisters, as we have reviewed these 25 points, and others could be added, stand firm for God's amazing biblical truth for this time. Do not be distracted, but rather focus fully on God's Word and Spirit of Prophecy counsel giving us connection to God, hope for the future, and our reason for being Seventh-day Adventists. ©

*To be concluded in next month's Global View*

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1992), p. 177.

<sup>2</sup> See official "Methods of Bible Study" document, [www.adventist.org/documents/methods-of-bible-study/](http://www.adventist.org/documents/methods-of-bible-study/).

<sup>3</sup> E. G. White, *Last Day Events*, p. 180.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 6, p. 27.

<sup>6</sup> E. G. White, *Last Day Events*, p. 180.

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**Ted N. C. Wilson** is president of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church. Additional articles and commentaries are available from the president's office on Twitter: @pastortedwilson and Facebook: @Pastor Ted Wilson.

**H**ow can we share the life-changing gospel message with every Australian? In the car, at home, on the construction site, while picking the kids up during the afternoon school run? On a tractor on a farm or a smartphone on a train? At 6:00 p.m. or at 3:00 a.m.? These are the questions the team at Faith FM is answering using people, technology, and an enormous amount of prayer to proclaim the saving message of God's grace in the context of the three angels' messages.

Paul<sup>1</sup> was an atheist who had gone through a marriage breakup and had reached a low point in his life when he happened upon a Christian radio station. What he heard grabbed his attention, and for the next few years he found himself listening exclusively to this station called Faith FM. One day after hearing a message about giving your life to Jesus and the importance of baptism, Paul decided to show up at the nearest Adventist church to ask the pastor to baptize him.

### Faith in Action

# Airwaves to Ambassadors

Australia's Faith FM radio station is reaching hearts for Jesus.

BY FAITH FM STAFF

Paul's story is more common than you might think! "As we look back on just the past few years, we are in awe of what God has done," says Michael Worker, secretary of the Australian Union Conference (AUC). "We have seen people all over Australia connecting with the church and making decisions for baptism through the opportunities Faith FM has created."

"Local churches often contact me with stories very similar to Paul's, where someone just showed up at church requesting Bible studies or baptism after listening to Faith FM," says Robbie Berghan, content and promotions manager at Faith FM. "Many 'everyday Aussies' in our increasingly secular country are quietly listening, and the Holy Spirit is slowly working on their hearts, until one day they take the step to connect with the local Adventist church."

### **HUGE GROWTH FROM SMALL BEGINNINGS**

Faith FM began in 2008 with a small group of volunteers, a single low-powered FM license, and a potential population reach of about 500 people. In 2015 AUC saw the enormous potential for Faith FM to become a missional tool for





↓ Faith FM presenters (from left) Fabiano Niyonkuru, Garry Hodgkin, and Nick Creta in the Faith FM radio studio in Adelaide, South Australia



Andrew Ganczarzyk

the entire Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia. In 2016 AUC leadership began building a Faith FM team based at their offices in Melbourne. With additional investment from local Australian conferences and Adventist World Radio (AWR),<sup>2</sup> Faith FM has been able to launch several live programs, such as *The Breakfast Show*, *Drive-time*, *Tassie Encounters*, and numerous other morning and afternoon shows, totaling about five hours of live programming each day.

According to the Faith FM station manager, Michael Engelbrecht: “Today, the Faith FM network is made up of more than 200 low-powered broadcast sites and has a potential population reach of just over 6 million people.” This equates to a national network covering one in four Australians, and it serves as a flagship ministry in Australian communities for the Seventh-day Adventist Church 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Faith FM carries the everlasting gospel of Jesus into cars, homes, and workplaces. The Faith FM app connects with listeners not only across Australia but around the world.

As a voice without barriers, Faith FM proved its value during COVID-19 lockdowns when other forms of

outreach were not possible. Faith FM not only continued to operate but also saw record levels of growth in listener engagement.

“God is truly blessing the work of Faith FM,” says AUC president Terry Johnson. “We have seen listener engagement grow 300 percent over the past two years, and in the same period we have seen requests for free Christian literature and resources increase by 700 percent.”

“We have reimagined what a radio program could be,” says Berghan. “All new content for Faith FM follows a very intentional format with specific engagement opportunities, and as a result we have seen phenomenal results in listener engagement.”

By employing a range of new technologies such as an interactive smartphone app, SMS bots, and intelligent evangelistic offers, the Faith FM team has been able to streamline and scale processes that have allowed for smarter and faster follow-up.

“The aim of the gospel content we air on Faith FM is to take a real person on an intentional journey, ultimately bringing them to a lasting decision for Jesus. We call this journey ‘Broadcast to Baptism,’”

“We have seen how the gospel flourishes during challenging times, but we have learned that none of this happens without a great deal of prayer.”

says Berghan. “The journey goes far beyond the airwaves, and the sooner a listener is connected to a local community of faith through one of our local ambassadors, the more likely their Christian experience will thrive.”

#### SUSAN'S STORY

It was the Faith FM ambassador program that helped Susan not only connect with a local church but ultimately decide to follow



A Faith FM broadcast tower outside the town of Kiama, New South Wales

Michael Engelbrecht



A Faith FM community dinner in Armidale, New South Wales, Australia

Luke Reeves

Jesus and be baptized. Susan did not grow up in a Christian environment. She had a difficult childhood and faced many challenges, including financial hardships and physical abuse. Finally, she left home at age 14. Susan continued to live her life as most Australians do, with no faith—until the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Every evening the news broadcasts were filled with grim reports and death counts from all around the world, and Susan began to wonder what would happen if she died. A few days later while driving, she stumbled across Faith FM, and the first message she heard was on the biblical teaching about death. Wanting to learn more, Susan contacted the station and requested a free resource on the topic.

Faith FM's listener relations team connected Susan with Brian,<sup>3</sup> the local station ambassador, who formed a friendship with her and connected her with his local church. During the next few months Susan's life changed dramatically. She joined a small group, made new friends, and went through a Bible study course that culminated in a decision to follow Jesus and to be baptized.

#### **“BROADCAST TO BAPTISM” STRATEGY**

The ambassador program is just one aspect of the “Broadcast to Baptism” strategy. To help create further opportunities for listeners to connect face to face, Faith FM has been piloting what they call Faith FM community dinners throughout Australia. These events are designed to provide listeners an opportunity to meet and greet Faith FM presenters and personalities over a meal. The presenters share TED Talk-style messages, which link with upcoming programs conducted by the local church.

This partnership with local churches is proving highly successful. A real sense of connection between the community and Faith FM's presenters develops, and almost half of all attendees are joining the follow-up programs.

“I am so impressed with the number of listeners who attended our Faith FM dinner,” says Luke Reeves, pastor of the Armidale Seventh-day Adventist Church in New South Wales. “Everyone was excited to meet the presenter, and the interest in the follow-up seminar was fantastic.”

Faith FM is a demonstration of what Total Member Involvement looks like practically, and there are plenty of ways for local church members to contribute. “It might seem that Faith FM is a corporate radio network,” says Johnson. “But Faith FM depends on teen groups, young professionals, singles, older people, and everyone in between. Whether we're recording a devotional message on a smartphone or helping to find a local broadcast site, Total Member Involvement is vital to us in accomplishing our mission.”

When asked how people can help, Engelbrecht says, “We have seen how the gospel flourishes during challenging times, but we have learned that none of this happens without a great deal of prayer. I would simply ask people to pray for Faith FM—for our content creators, our ambassadors, our scheduling, our donors, and, of course, our listeners.”

Prayer definitely changes things, and miracles still happen.

*To find out more or to receive the free Faith FM Sound Bites eMagazine, please visit [faithfm.com.au/newsletter](http://faithfm.com.au/newsletter). ©*

<sup>1</sup> The names of people in this article who have come to know Jesus through Faith FM are pseudonyms.

<sup>2</sup> <https://awr.org>

<sup>3</sup> Not his real name.



# When You Pass Through the Waters



**T**hese past few months have involved many dark nights. We are constantly confronted with changes. Some of them we plan and hope for; others come unexpectedly, often leaving us uncertain as to what we should do next.

During the past year I experienced several traumatic moments, and consequently I was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). I am not the only one—you may know someone in your life who has experienced trauma recently.

These events or losses can shift many things, and we have to readjust to new realities. These new realities are often associated with unpleasant symptoms, such as nightmares and flashbacks, among others. That's just the way our brains process things.

The Bible is full of stories of people whose anger, tears, fears, disappointments, and shortcomings made them turn to God for healing and understanding. The stories of Job, Joseph, David, Elijah, Mary and Martha, and Jesus Himself show us that it's normal to feel overwhelmed sometimes. All of these people were desperately longing for God's presence—even in the midst of their varied crises. We can learn from their lives that we can rejoice and trust in the Lord even if we don't feel like jumping for joy. These stories have been a source of courage for me as I walk through this valley.

Not long ago I shared in church the story of the paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda. One simple question by Jesus ("Do you want to get well?") and a little faith by the man was enough to result in a miracle.

But what if God has a different timing and way for every person's healing process? What if Jesus' question finds us in different situations? Can we still be healed?

The miracle of the paralytic resulted in the man walking again.

Jacob's story, however, is very different. One of the most important encounters he had with God, one of the moments of greatest spiritual healing, resulted in his hip being critically injured.

Jacob had deceived his father, escaped his brother, lost his home, endured the schemes of his uncle, lost his mother, and was now returning to everything he had managed to avoid for many years.

He was terrified of retracing his steps to his native land. However, despite the reproaches of his own conscience and the memory of his sin, each step of the way God reminded him of His company and His promise.

Sometimes, remembering the traumatic events I faced seems more than I can bear. However, going to church, receiving love, support, and encouraging words from church members and friends, has been a constant reminder of the promise God made to Jacob many years ago, on a very dark night: "I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you" (Gen. 28:15, NIV).

In Isaiah 43:2 we read: "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you."

It says, "*when* you pass," not "*if* you pass." We all must pass through dark valleys, but He promises to be with us.

After Jacob passed through the waters of the river Jabbok, his hip still hurt, but his face reflected peace. Mental health professionals have helped me understand and navigate PTSD, but above all, I thank God for this beautiful and invaluable reminder in the Bible: there is a post-traumatic blessing phenomenon—and it's available to us all. ©

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**Carolina Ramos** studies translation, English teaching, and music education at River Plate Adventist University in **Argentina**.

What We Believe

*The New Earth*

# Time and Eternity

We were made  
for more.





**G**uillermo Díaz-Plaja, notable Spanish poet, described the transience of time in this brief poem:

"Fast-running deer, / The future slips away.  
O moving target! / Insubstantial arrow!  
How you pull from me: / Elusory tomorrow,  
Unwritten poem, / Love up in the air.  
How, irredeemably / Today becomes undone  
Soaked in the giddiness / Of nobody's future."<sup>1</sup>

These elegant and despairing poetic phrases find a profound echo in each heart. In one way or another, all of us painfully recognize that life is transitory. All of us feel, in an unavoidable way, whether we want to or not, that we are "inserted" in time, in a process of continuous change.

The incessant ticktock of the clock; the fluctuating pace of life's different stages; the unstoppable and even cruel decline that we experience in old age; the unwanted and fatal presence of death. All remind us relentlessly that we are finite and mortal creatures.

As the psalmist recognized in this well-known statement of profound drama: "As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more" (Ps. 103:15, 16).<sup>2</sup> And Job, in the midst of his pain, compared the human life with a "shadow" that flees and "continues not" (cf. Job 14:1, 2).

But that's not all.

## ETERNITY IN OUR HEART

We are not just as fleeting as a cloud that passes. We also yearn for permanence and thirst for eternity. God has put in the human soul an irrepressible longing to live forever. As Israel's wise king and poet, Solomon, said about God: "He has put eternity into man's heart" (Eccl. 3:11).

We are not content with a few years of life. We want to continue without barriers the adventure of learning and facing noble challenges. We want to enjoy without interruption the affection of the people we love. We desire to cherish our relationships with friends. We want to be forever in the resplendent presence of God, source of all good. We want to live in the perfect kingdom that God will establish, free of injustice, disease, pain, and death.

Here is a vision about this new and eternal world that John the revelator had on the island of Patmos: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. . . . [God] will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. And he who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new'" (Rev. 21:1-5).

## But this great and eternal God is also a good God.

How does one reach eternity? How does one enjoy a life without disappointments or limits? Let's first point out that only God is eternal, as is indicated in God's revealed Word. In contrast to the transitoriness and smallness of humanity, the Scriptures underline the permanence and greatness of God. He is before and after all things.

"Lord," assured Moses, "you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. . . . For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night" (Ps. 90:1-4).

And Jeremiah asserts, "The Lord is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King" (Jer. 10:10).

But this great and eternal God is also a good God.

## A PRECIOUS GIFT

He desires that we, mortal and finite creatures, will receive the blessed gift of eternity. He told us so in this well-known verse: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Paul reiterated this precious promise: "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). When we believe in Jesus Christ as our Saviour and accept the merits of His sacrifice on the cross, eternal life has already begun for us: "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life" (John 3:36). The temporal death that every believer suffers at the end of their days is merely a fleeting dream, because their "life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3).

Soon the miseries of the present time will be left behind, and the perfect eternity that God offers us freely in Jesus Christ will begin. Praise be to His holy name! You and I will be able to live forever.

It will be a life without end, as the stars, and full of richness, as the mercy of God. ☉

<sup>1</sup> Guillermo Díaz-Plaja, *Poesía junta* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1967), p. 37. The English translation is the author's.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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**Tulio N. Peverini**, a retired pastor, served for 27 years as the editor of the magazine *El centinela*.



Discovering the Spirit of Prophecy

# Back to the Altar

**T**he atmosphere that fateful day on Mount Carmel<sup>1</sup> was charged, though an eerie silence hung above the assembly. In previous times this elevated mount was lush and beautiful, but all that had changed. What used to be green was now burnt and bare, the result of a painful three-and-a-half-year drought.

## THE DROUGHT WITHIN

Perhaps greater than the physical drought that gripped the nation was the spiritual drought that left God's people soul-thirsty and faith-depleted. Israel was ruled by the evil King Ahab and his wife, Jezebel, perhaps the worst choice ever in a mate. Ahab's Sidonian bride had helped change his allegiance to God.

Ahab's small acts of religious compromise soon became full-grown apostasy. Ahab built Jezebel a temple to Baal in the capital of Samaria and erected an Asherah pole as well. Eight hundred fifty prophets led the pagan worship of these deities, but even this did not appease Jezebel. Her

first recorded act in Scripture is "prophet genocide." False worship and true worship cannot coexist. One has to die for the other to live. The Bible says in 1 Kings 16:33: "Ahab [and Jezebel] did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him." Israel had God's full attention.

## MEETING ON THE MOUNTAIN

It was into this devastating spiritual crisis that God called the prophet Elijah, whose name means "Yahweh is my God." God birthed Elijah for this moment! Of Elijah Ellen White comments, "There dwelt in the days of Ahab a man of faith and prayer whose fearless ministry was destined to check the rapid spread of apostasy in Israel."<sup>2</sup>

When Elijah confronted Ahab, Ahab accused God's prophet of troubling Israel. Perhaps that was understandable, for it was Elijah who declared that not a drop of rain would fall except at his word. Three years later Ahab's resolve was broken. When Elijah ordered Ahab to



meet him on Mount Carmel, along with all the prophets of Baal and Asherah, he meekly obeyed. Such was the spiritual authority vested in God's servant. How so? He was on God's mission to rebuild Israel's broken altar.

On Mount Carmel Elijah set out the terms of the contest. Two altars would be erected. Jezebel's prophets would lay their sacrifice on one and Elijah would do the same on the other. "Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord; and the God who answers by fire, He is God" (1 Kings 18:24), Elijah concluded. The entire nation agreed, and as we know, the prophets of Baal screamed and cried, cutting themselves until they bled, but nothing happened. Their god never responded.

It was then that Elijah called the people near and repaired the broken altar of the Lord, the altar to which God sent fire to consume Elijah's sacrifice. This demonstration of God's power was unprecedented and unforgettable! In an instant God restored His supremacy and reordered Israel's spiritual priorities.

#### A HIDDEN GEM

Often missed in this amazing biblical narrative is a note hidden in 1 Kings 18:36. It was "at the time of the . . . evening sacrifice" that Elijah prayed for the fire to fall from heaven, for God to show that He was Israel's God. Morning and evening worship experiences were the spiritual bookends of Israelite life.

God had instituted this personal/family worship experience to develop a devotional cadence in His people: "One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight" (Ex. 29:39), said God. In a very real sense, Elijah was not just calling the nation back to the altar of true worship; He was calling the nation

back to the altar of regular, systematic worship of the true God. Israel's corporate worship altar was broken, but Israel's personal and family altars had been broken long before.

Might we be facing a similar fate today in the Seventh-day Adventist Church when it comes to personal and family worship? A 2018 worldwide survey of Seventh-day Adventists found that only 34 percent of Adventist homes are engaging in regular morning and evening worship, and only 52 percent of church members have any personal devotions at all.<sup>3</sup> Can a church with an end-time message centered on worship—the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12—deliver this solemn message if its members are not faithfully engaged in personal and family worship? In other words, can we proclaim effectively what many are not doing daily?

Ellen White comments, "There is nothing more needed in the work [of God] than the practical results of communion with God."<sup>4</sup> She writes further, "Like the patriarchs of old, those who profess to love God should erect an altar to the Lord wherever they pitch their tent. . . . Fathers and mothers should often lift up their hearts to God in humble supplication for themselves and their children. Let the father, as priest of the household, lay upon the altar of God the morning and evening sacrifice, while the wife and children unite in prayer and praise. In such a household Jesus will love to tarry."<sup>5</sup>

#### OUR MOST PRESSING NEED

The restoration of personal and family worship among Seventh-day Adventists is perhaps the most pressing need of our time. But it will not be easy. Today we face the challenge of technology that increasingly occupies our time and

## Might the altar be the antidote to our frazzled minds and restless hearts?

alters our minds. Our addiction to media, especially social media, has left us anxious, irritable, lonely, stressed, depressed, sleepless, and unhappy with our station in life.

Ironically, personal and family worship has the opposite effect. It calms our minds, decreases loneliness, reduces stress, increases peace, fulfills our emotional needs, and teaches us contentment. Might the altar be the antidote to our frazzled minds and restless hearts?

Now more than ever, God is calling us back to His heart, to consistent times of refreshing in His presence. It is for this reason that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has launched the *Back to the Altar* initiative, a landmark effort to rebuild the broken personal and family altars in God's church. By 2027 we hope to see at least 70 percent of Adventist members engaged in morning and evening, personal and family worship. You will hear much more about this initiative in the days ahead, but we can all start right now. If we go back to the altar with God, we will be transformed into His image and empowered to finish His work! ☺

<sup>1</sup>This story can be found in 1 Kings 16-18.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1917), p. 119.

<sup>3</sup>Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, "The Global Church Member Survey" (Silver Spring, Md.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2018), p. 14.

<sup>4</sup>Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 6, p. 47.

<sup>5</sup>E. G. White, *Child Guidance* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1954), pp. 518, 519.

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# Redefining a Word Redefines a System

Q

## Why was Saul so quickly rejected as king?

A

The story of Saul is dramatic and complex, raising questions about the way God interacted with him. We will examine the experience of Israel at that time and the specific sins of Saul.

### GIVE US A KING

During the judgeship of Samuel, Israel went through one of the most significant leadership changes in the history of the nation. On Sinai God transformed the 12 tribes into a “holy nation” (Ex. 19:6), and He was recognized by the people as their king (verse 8; cf. Ex. 15:18). Thus the theocracy was established. In Canaan God appointed administrative assistants, the judges, but He continued to be the exclusive king of Israel. At the time of Samuel, Israel’s leaders were supplanting God’s administrative structure with a new one, namely, human kingship à la the surrounding nations. This model was in many respects incompatible with faith in the Lord. If accepted, it would have to be transformed or reformulated. The first book of Samuel is about this redefinition of the proposed new system.

### THE IDEAL KING

The redefinition required, among other things, first, a person that would be “a servant of the Lord,” totally loyal and submissive to God’s will as king. The phrase “servant of the Lord” became a messianic title (e.g., Isa. 53:11). In fact, the king would be a “leader/prince” under the Lord (Heb. *nagid*; e.g., 1 Sam. 9:16; 10:1; 13:14). Second, the king/prince, chosen by God, would have to be “a man after His own heart” (1 Sam. 13:14), fully supporting the divine agenda for the people.

Third, the king would be a servant of the people, walking before them as their humble leader (1 Sam. 12:2; 1 Kings 12:7). Fourth, God would use a prophet to guide, instruct, and, if necessary, discipline the king (1 Sam. 10:8).

### SAUL THE FIRST KING

Although at first Saul was humble and even timid, once he experienced success, he changed. The first test came when he could not wait for Samuel to offer the sacrifice before going to battle (1 Sam. 13:9-14). He feared the people would abandon him and instead of waiting he acted independent of the Lord and offered the sacrifice. His decision revealed his unwillingness to function within God’s redefinition of kingship. Samuel had told Saul to wait for he would tell Saul what to do (1 Sam. 10:8). Saul rejected prophetic guidance. The fact that he could not wait for fear of failure reveals a major spiritual flaw: Saul did not trust in God’s saving power. Consequently, he was not a servant of the Lord.

The second test came after Saul’s failure to destroy the Amalekites as commanded by the Lord (1 Sam. 15:7-9). Saul preserved alive the king and the best animals. This was an act of blatant insubordination, a rebellion against the Lord. When confronted by Samuel, Saul offered excuses, e.g., the animals were intended to be offerings for the Lord. At this point Samuel provides a profound interpretation of Saul’s inner being: “Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft [divination or knowing the future; cf. 1 Sam. 28:8], and stubbornness [doing what pleases you] is as iniquity and idolatry” (1 Sam. 15:23). What Saul did was the equivalent of witchcraft and idolatry, thus manifesting that he had rejected the Lord, and now the Lord rejected him. He remained on the throne until God found a person “after His own heart”—David. David became the ideal king, a type of the coming Messiah, the true Servant of the Lord (Phil. 2:7). ©

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# Monkeypox

Am I at risk?

*I am 35 years of age; my work includes regularly meeting international guests. Monkeypox breakouts have occurred in different parts of the world. Is monkeypox as dangerous as smallpox was, and will it be a danger to me and my family as I meet overseas visitors?*

**M**onkeypox is a viral disease caused by a DNA orthopoxvirus originally transmitted to humans from animals (a zoonosis). Monkeypox occurs primarily in Central and West Africa, but since 2003 has been reported in nonendemic areas, including the United States, Israel, the United Kingdom, and Singapore.

Natural hosts include rope squirrels, tree squirrels, Gambian pouched rats, dormice, and nonhuman primates. It can be transmitted from infected animals to humans, and from human to human through close contact with skin lesions (blisterlike rash), body fluids, respiratory droplets, or materials such as bedding contaminated by the virus. Ongoing research has confirmed that the virus may also be sexually transmitted.

The clinical presentations of monkeypox and smallpox are similar, although monkeypox is less contagious and generally less severe. Smallpox had a 30 percent mortality rate compared to the significantly lower mortality rate of monkeypox, which is between 3 to 6 percent for recent outbreaks.

Smallpox was declared eradicated in 1980, after the last naturally occurring case was diagnosed in 1977 following a global campaign of vaccination and containment. In 1796 the smallpox vaccine, discovered by Edward Jenner, was the first successful vaccine to be developed. Those who have received the smallpox vaccine prior to 1980 will most likely have protection against monkeypox.

The incubation period of monkeypox (time from exposure to the onset of disease) is between six and 13 days. The first phase of the disease is characterized by fever, headache, swollen lymph glands, general muscle pain, and loss of energy. Then follows the typical blisterlike skin rash, mainly on the face, palms of the hands, and soles of the feet. It's usually self-limiting and resolves within two to four weeks.

The more severe cases occur in children and individuals with underlying immune deficiencies or generally poor health. Complications include bacterial infections; pneumonia; brain inflammation (encephalitis); and infection of the cornea, which may cause impairment or

loss of vision. Care includes optimal hydration and nutrition, and appropriate treatment of bacterial infections. Tecovirimat, a smallpox antiviral, may be helpful but has limited availability in Europe.

Regarding the possible risk to you and your family, those presently under 40 years of age have no immunization protection from smallpox vaccination. Smallpox vaccine is being selectively used in areas of monkeypox breakouts; a newer vaccine has been available since 2019. Some countries are developing policies that would offer vaccination to higher-risk individuals, including health-care workers, rapid responders, and medical/biological laboratory workers.

Avoiding unnecessary and prolonged personal contact with monkeypox patients; careful hygiene; and healthful living, including the nonconsumption of animal meats (in general, but especially in high-risk regions), help in the primary prevention of monkeypox. With such measures you responsibly safeguard your own health and that of others with whom you come in contact. ©

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**“May I Tell  
You a Story?”**

BY DICK DUERKSEN

# Gratitude Attacks

A Reg Maas story

*“Reg Maas works on a small worldwide team of engineers who are developing miracle ceramic surfaces, removing layers of several dozens of atoms at a time. That’s the way he approaches everything. Carefully. With precision. Yet with an intense kindness. He is truly a man without guile. A man who walks with God. I don’t think I know a more beautiful soul.”*

—Pastor Tim Mayne, Reg’s pastor

**R**eg and his brother, Randy, are the original let’s-do-it-ourselves kind of people, and Randy had decided to build a new house—a house with three levels away from the big cities—in Peck, Idaho, United States. Knowing his brother would be good help, he called Reg and asked him to come and help.

“No problem, brother; let’s make it a family reunion!”

Reg packed his tools and drove the 400 miles (645 kilometers) to Peck. Looking around the new house, he saw that construction included a strong, safe, fireproof chimney that would be six feet (two meters) on each side and would go from the basement right on up through all three levels of the new house.

“There was a double row of concrete blocks in the basement, set in concrete with steel rebars running up through them to make sure the chimney would be straight and solid,” Reg describes the construction. “It was a good start!”

The weekend was packed with family, great food, and lots of conversation about God. Even one of the nonbelieving relatives jumped in, and the weekend quickly became a spiritual feast.

\*\*\*

Sunday afternoon Reg was working on the soffits at the edge of the upper family room wall when he noticed a nest of hornets at the soffit edge. He grabbed a can of wasp spray and climbed up to take care of the enemy. Once there, he discovered there were a whole lot more hornets than he had expected, and they were angry.

As he pushed the spray button, a swirling ball of black hornets flew toward him. Reg quickly stepped backward and into the opening that was to become the chimney. Twenty-seven feet (eight meters) from the attic hornets to the basement blocks.

“He fell cleanly through the top level of the house,” says one of his friends. “Then his shoulder hit the middle floor, sending him spinning onto the rebar and blocks in the basement below.” Reg



landed flat on his back, and skewered himself with the tall steel rebars.

The first rebar came right up into his arm to his wrist. The second rebar struck beside his spine and punctured up through and out of his chest.

"I was lying there, my white T-shirt covered with bright-red blood, and my first thought was *Wow, this doesn't look good.*"

Reg's brother, Randy, is an emergency medical technician, and was working on the construction scaffolds. He heard Reg yell, but had no idea what had happened or why his brother was yelling. Everyone ran upstairs, but Reg was nowhere to be found. Then someone shouted from the basement.

"Randy! Reg is down here in the basement! He's skewered! Hurry!"

Randy ran to the basement—and stopped short. His brother was lying on the cement blocks with about two feet of rebar sticking up out of his chest!

Emergency response training says you must leave the rebar where it is and get Reg to a hospital immediately. But Randy couldn't follow his training, because there was no way to lift Reg high enough off the cement blocks to cut him free from the rebar.

\* \* \*

Randy felt a strong impression to go against his training. To save his brother's life, he needed to crawl down on his stomach beneath Reg, and then carefully lift him two feet up and off the rebars. Randy thought that that probably wouldn't work, but he followed the impression, got down on the floor, and began pressing Reg up and up and up.

All this time Reg was trying not to breathe, for fear he would bleed out from the exertion.

Moments later Reg was free of the rebars, standing in the arms of Randy and a nephew. He walked a couple steps and said, "I don't feel very well."

The emergency responders were ready with a rescue helicopter that could fly Reg to the area's very best trauma center, but an ambulance was already on its way from a small hospital nearby. They

settled for the ambulance, and Reg was soon on the way to the emergency room. He was not expected to live.

"I was at home in Oregon, more than 400 miles [645 kilometers] from Reg, when the phone rang," says Pastor Mayne. "Please come and help us. Reg is dying. He needs you. Hurry!" I hurried, driving all night, hoping to see my friend before he died."

Both of the doctors who had been assigned to Reg were nonbelievers. They came out of the operating room shaking their heads in awe.

One of the doctors met Pastor Mayne in the hospital lobby. "I do not believe in God," the doctor said, "but God saved that man!"

"Look at this CAT scan," one of the doctors told Reg. "The rebar that went into your arm missed all the major blood vessels. All it left was a scar. However, the bigger miracle is what happened with the second rebar. It sliced in right beside your spine, touched the edge of your heart, and twisted around your liver, stomach, kidneys, and lungs, and then exploded out your chest without doing any major damage. This rebar did not travel in a straight line. What it did is not possible."

"I expected to bleed out hanging on the rebar in the basement," Reg remembers. "Then I realized Someone else was taking care of this. I've never had that kind of peace any other time in my life."

A week later Reg Maas walked out of the hospital to the amazed cheers of relatives, friends, caregivers, and Pastor Mayne.

"I came expecting to perform a funeral," says Pastor Mayne. "Instead, I shared in a miracle celebration!"

"I got two things from my miracle," says Reg. "A couple scars, and regular gratitude attacks. I would rather fall down a chimney with God than walk down a sidewalk without Him." ©

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# The Sparkler Disaster

**A**ll the kids had been looking forward to this party for weeks! All the cousins would be there, all the aunts and uncles, and there would be yummy food. Best of all, there would be so many cousins to play with.

Elly couldn't wait. It was always fun to have the entire family together. As the oldest of all the kids, Elly was also used to keeping an eye on the younger kids and making sure that they were having fun and that no one got hurt. If you've ever had a large family gathering with many children playing and running around, someone usually takes a tumble at some point. Elly's job

was to keep an eye out for those things. But that didn't mean she wouldn't have a great time.

It wasn't long before the sun dipped down and the party was in full swing. There was so much food! It seemed as though all the aunts got together and made everyone's favorites too. Of course, before the meal the entire family gathered to pray, and as usual, a special mention was made for Jesus to protect each person no matter where they were or what they were doing.

Elly thought that that was a nice part of the prayer, but she couldn't imagine what any of them would need protection from. Still, it was nice to say

that. All the cousins sat on a sheet put out for them to catch spills from the food and drink before any stains formed on the floor. All the grown-ups were eating and talking and laughing. As usual, there was a flurry of activity in the kitchen as everyone helped bring out more food and take out empty dishes. Elly looked around and thought about how happy having a big family made her. There were always people to play with and lots of aunts and uncles who made her feel special.

After the meal was finished, Uncle announced he had a very special surprise for all the kids. They could play with sparklers





## Bible Treasure

“Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge.”

Psalm 16:1, NIV

outside! If you haven't seen a sparkler before, they are long, thin metal sticks with a special flammable material that creates sparks as it burns. The sparks flame out quickly after being lit.

When you play with sparklers, you are supposed to hold them out far away from your body—especially clothes, as fabric can catch fire easily. You should remain relatively immobile and not be too close to anyone else who has a sparkler going off near you. And most of all, you should never play with sparklers without an adult with you.

Uncle handed out a sparkler to all the kids and went around lighting each one. How beautiful

the sparkles looked against the night sky. But as happens with kids and something new and fun, everyone got excited—a little too excited. Cousins began chasing each other with their flaming sparklers. Sure, they tried to hold the sparklers out in front of them and away from their bodies, but that also meant they were holding them closer to someone else.

That's when it happened. A cousin was running too close to Elly with the sparkler popping off, and a spark landed on Elly's dress and caught fire! All the kids started screaming, and before Elly knew what was happening, Uncle was whacking her

back with his bare hands to put the flames out. It all happened so fast. Luckily, the only damage to be found was one ruined dress. Elly was unhurt, and even Uncle's hands seemed to be OK. Somehow, a greater disaster was averted. It was as though they were protected.

And then Elly remembered the prayer before dinner and especially the prayer for protection she thought no one really needed. It all made sense now.

The sparklers were disposed of, and Elly says they were no longer part of family parties anymore. But the prayers for protection were always there, and Elly would have it no other way. ©

**10** DAYS OF  
PRAYER

# BACK TO THE ALTAR

January 11-21, 2023

“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.”

JOHN 4:23, NKJV

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