

# Adventist World

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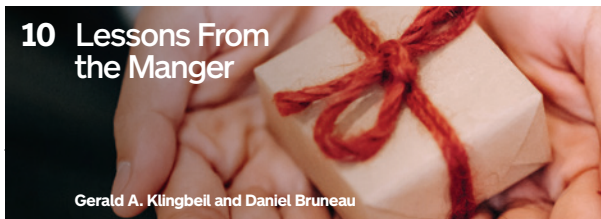
**The Center  
of God's  
Goodness**





**Daryl Gungadoo, director of Adventist Review Media lab, interviews Paulo Sérgio Macedo, Inter-European Division communication director, who is wearing an emotion analyzer that registers his engagement with the questions he is being asked during the GAIN Europe conference, October 17.**

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



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Gerald A. Klingbeil and Daniel Bruneau

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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.

# A Witness to God's Goodness

BY BILL KNOTT

I live only two miles from the highway that marks the path of the first telegraph line between the U.S. cities of Washington, D.C., and Baltimore. In May 1844 inventor Samuel Morse, a devout Christian, sent the first electronic message on his new invention from a room at the Supreme Court along a 40-mile stretch of line to an associate in Baltimore. That unique sequence of dashes and dots tapped out on Morse's transmitter arguably inaugurated the modern digital age, spelling out these words: "What hath God wrought."

It's a phrase I think of often as I cross U.S. Route 1 on my way to and from the church's world headquarters. It has been my signal privilege for the past 25 years to serve the church I love at Adventist Review Ministries, a media enterprise founded on the journal James White launched only five years after Morse's invention. Today that small journal has become a world-circling multimedia platform, underscoring the truth of Ellen White's vision that its message would go "like streams of light . . . clear round the world."<sup>1</sup> Indeed: "What hath God wrought."

From its origins in the minds of then world church president Jan Paulsen and *Adventist Review* editor William Johnsson; through months of financial planning, design drafts, and negotiations with world divisions; to its first print edition in September 2005, *Adventist World* magazine has been a

testimony to the ever-expanding vision the Lord always shares with His people. Launched in two languages and with fewer than 1 million copies per month, *Adventist World* is now published in eight major world languages with nearly 1.7 million copies in print each month. A major new initiative, an all-digital edition serving 2.4 million Adventists in East and Central Africa who speak and read Kiswahili, began in 2020. Quarterly digest editions of the magazine serve several millions more in 15 other languages and dialects. A team of authors, editors, designers, translators, publishing house personnel, digital

## I find myself frequently murmuring, "What hath God wrought."

hosts, and logistics experts have built one of the largest and most complex media platform in the world church.

And remembering how fragile the dream was at the outset, I find myself frequently murmuring, "What hath God wrought?"

After 16 years as executive editor of *Adventist World* I will be transitioning on January 1, 2023, to serve as the world church's liaison to the United States Congress, the White House, and the Washington, D.C.-based diplomatic corps. In that role I will interface with key legislators, executives, and ambassadors to protect the religious freedom and privileges of Adventists and others in the United States and around the globe. And in an intriguing coincidence, I will be often working from an office only 100 meters from where Morse sent his famous telegram.

Succeeding me as executive editor will be Justin Kim, a talented, thoughtful friend of 15 years who has served as a pastor, communication director, and editor of *inVerse* (formerly the *Collegiate Quarterly*). He will discover, as I have for the past 16 years, that the support and prayers of God's people around the globe are an invaluable encouragement.

Had they ever met, I'm confident that Ellen White and Samuel Morse would have shared a common confidence in God's ability to astound us. Listen to her well-known words once more: "As I see what God has wrought, I am filled with astonishment and with confidence in Christ as leader. We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history."<sup>2</sup>

*Bill Knott*

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1915), p. 125.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, in *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Oct. 12, 1905.

## Helping Others

Church members were asked if they dedicated a significant amount of time to help other people.



- 36% Often
- 22% Sometimes-Often
- 24% Sometimes
- 12% Rarely
- 6% Never

N=56,686  
Source: 2017-18 Global Church Member Survey

Data provided by the General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research.

## More Than 130

The number of scriptwriters, actors, camera staff, editing staff, and assistant personnel who attended the film festival organized by the East Venezuela Union. The cinematography film festival, titled UVOfilms, becomes the first to feature 16 short films based on the parables of Jesus. The union held its first film festival in 2019 on a smaller scale. The event took place at the Cultural Central Park Center in Caracas, Venezuela, on October 1.

**“I believe what has been most impactful about being a part of the LeadLab journey is the transformational power of allowing ourselves to truly see how God has been working in our lives right from the beginning.”**

—Sylvia Mendez, Australian Union Conference family ministries director, about the leadership program established by the General Conference Global Leadership Institute. Thirty church leaders from across the South Pacific Division (SPD) gathered for a face-to-face retreat in Launceston, Tasmania, Australia, September 25-29, to conclude a nine-month leadership program.

### Adventist Review Ministries Newsletter

Do you want to keep up with what is happening in our church? To receive our weekly newsletter featuring news, Bible teaching, inspiring stories, and videos, sign up today.



[www.adventistreview.org/newsletter-signup](http://www.adventistreview.org/newsletter-signup)

**“Mission is more than being in a specific location; it’s rather a lifestyle.”**

—Miguel Mamani, a 24-year-old student from Bolivia, attending the I Will Go convention on the campus of Bahia Adventist College in Cachoeira, Bahia, Brazil, about his view on missionary projects. Thousands of people, from more than 50 countries, attended the convention that took place October 19-22 with a common goal: to learn and share ways of better contributing to the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

**“It was the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic that the Scottish Mission churches have come together. Our membership currently stands at 730, and we see more than 500 gathered here today. This is a testimony to a hungry church: hungry for God, hungry to be together, hungry for the gospel. What I saw today with my own eyes in this place is a miracle.”**

—James Botha, Scottish Mission president, about the first large gathering of Scottish churches since the pandemic. “Operation Enduring Faith” took place October 8 in Dunfermline, Scotland.

“Conversations about Adventist identity will always be important because there is a trend among Christian churches to gradually suffer ‘mission drift’ and to lose their original focus and passion. Right now is particularly important for a conference on Adventist identity, as the church grows rapidly in certain parts of the world. With rapid growth comes the danger of a shift in identity. It’s essential we talk about what it is that makes us distinctly Seventh-day Adventist.”

—David Trim, General Conference director of the Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, and co-planner of an Adventist identity conference held at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University October 15-19. The event brought together more than 30 scholars for an interdisciplinary conversation about Adventist identity.

## More Than 180

The number of Adventist communicators who met in Bucharest, Romania, for the 2022 Global Adventist Internet Network (GAIN) Europe October 14-18. The “Forward: Keep Moving” event gathered communication leaders and experts from 35 countries who work in Adventist journalism, radio, TV, and social media. Most of the attendees serve in the church’s Inter-European Division (EUD) and Trans-European Division (TED) regions. Some participants, however, came from as far as French Polynesia, Mongolia, and Mexico.

“The weekend was meant for Adventist students to learn how to better make a positive change among their peers, professors, and campuses; take the time to reflect on God’s guidance and blessings in their life; and become an agent of change for good in their community.”

—Hiram Ruiz, Inter-American Division (IAD) public campus ministries director and main organizer of the PCM weekend. Thousands of Seventh-day Adventist students studying at public universities across the IAD territory took time to fellowship, gain spiritual and professional development, and impact local communities for the annual PCM weekend October 14-16. ➔



Photo: Southeast Mexican Union

## Secretary's Report Unrolls New Criteria for Mission Spending

Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist World*

The General Conference (GC) Secretary's Report at the 2022 Annual Council called leaders to support a plan to refocus the Seventh-day Adventist Church priority missions worldwide. Members of the Secretariat's team presented parts of the report on October 9 at the church's headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

"The Seventh-day Adventist Church was not called to be a parking lot but a launching pad," GC executive secretary Erton Köhler said. "We need to move forward in faith."

Köhler reminded those attending Annual Council that the Adventist Church has been called to a global mission. "We cannot focus only on our local needs; we need to look at our global challenges to finally preach the gospel of the kingdom to all the world," he said.

A slow drift from frontline missionaries to other areas of service has motivated leaders to devise a plan to refocus on the mission of the church, GC associate secretary Karen J. Porter explained as she introduced her report. She explained that 35 percent of the total number of international

missionaries (those sent to serve in another continent) are currently serving in administrative positions. Others serve the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) or in education, medical, or auditing services. "While these categories of assignments are good, we must put more emphasis on reaching the unreached," Porter said.

### NEW PRIORITIES

In April 2022 the GC Mission Board voted on new priorities for sending missionaries. Priorities include direct-contact mission to create new worshipping groups, urban areas of more than 1 million population, and 10/40 window countries and people groups of non-Christian religions. (The 10/40 window is a region of the world where the large majority of people live but where Christianity is in the minority.)

Porter also mentioned as priorities postmodern and post-Christian regions, low Adventist-to-population ratio, and high-impact equipping for direct-contact mission.

The goal is to have 35 percent of the mission and international em-

**Revamped model will help leaders prioritize frontline service.**

ployees' budgets meet the criteria by 2027 and 70 percent by 2032, she reported. "We realize this is a very ambitious goal," Porter said, "but we also realize that with all of us working together in unity, we can effect this change."

### A NEW ASSESSMENT SCALE

It's all about acknowledging that the Adventist Church could improve the way it uses resources for mission, Porter said. But at the same time, it will be done carefully and methodically, not randomly. For instance, GC Secretariat has created a scale to evaluate primary budgets, asking seven questions with seven key strategic questions, which reflect the priorities voted by the Mission Board. She explained that each question had been assigned a range of points, and each budget was analyzed based on how closely the position focused on the priorities. "Three hundred twenty-seven individual budgets have been put through this matrix," Porter reported.

Porter reported that next, the Mission Board is planning to review the budgets of international missionaries with divisions and institutions, and that divisions and institutions will work on a plan to reassign budgets to mission priority areas. "As we refocus our mission resources, I challenge you to think about what sacrifices you are willing to make so that those who haven't heard about Jesus . . . can also hear this message," Porter said.

Köhler agreed. "Our main challenge is to keep focused on what our real priority is," he said. "It's time to work together . . . to refocus on our mission." ☉



GC executive secretary Erton Köhler during the Secretary's Report at the 2022 Annual Council.

Photo: Enno Müller, *Adventist Review*

## Treasurer's Report Unveils Major Shift in Use of Funds

Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist World*

Seventh-day Adventist leaders hope that a major shift in the use of funds will contribute to less spending on administrative positions and more on frontline missionary activities around the world. It was a notion General Conference treasurer Paul H. Douglas emphasized several times during his report to members of the GC Executive Committee October 10, 2022. Douglas' presentation, titled "Investing in Mission," crowned the Treasury Department's financial report during the 2022 Annual Council in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

"There is an old adage that says, 'Put your money where your mouth is,'" Douglas told the delegates. "I would like to translate that adage to us today by saying, 'We need to put our money where the mission is.'"

### HIGHLIGHTING MISSION

Douglas shared five elements that can inform this shift toward dedicating more funds to frontline mission.

First, he said, it is important to prepare financial reporting to highlight mission. Douglas revealed that starting in January 2023, the new financial reporting will focus more on mission strategy and support, educational institutions, and media and publications. Besides regular office operations, it will also seek to zero in on leadership development and accountability.

### INCREASING SELF-SUPPORT

Another key element is to promote higher levels of self-support for organizations. "We need to be more targeted, more strategic, in our use of appropriations," Douglas said. He explained that there are



GC treasurer Paul H. Douglas presents his report to the 2022 Annual Council.

Photo: Enno Müller, *Adventist Review*

some tough questions leaders need to ask themselves. "Are we supporting the administration of a division, or are we supporting the mission activities in the territory?" he asked. "We will need to adjust how we look at appropriations and shift to support the strategic decisions related to the use of our resources."

### MISSION, NOT MACHINERY

The idea, Douglas said, is to learn ways of positioning resources toward mission and not machinery or administrative expenses. Presently, he said, most of the funds are spent on administration professionals—"in the machinery, not the mission."

Douglas explained that an analysis of the current use of budgets for mission shows that out of 31 possible points, the average score worldwide is 8.1, something that highlights the church's mission drift and the need to refocus mission resources.

"We need to move from 8.1 points to 31," he said.

### MISSION OPPORTUNITIES

Douglas also said it is essential to provide information about mission opportunities. He called to identify, broadcast, count the cost, and allow people to own these opportunities.

More funding should be directed to frontline mission, he said.

He explained that in the 1930s, 60 cents of every dollar were allocated for world missions. Today that number is 3.5 cents. "Just imagine what we could have done if we had sustained that level of giving!" Douglas said.

### FRONTLINE MISSION

As a last element, Douglas shared how in 2021 the GC received a large contribution from a member's estate. "We could have easily taken [them to] balance the budget," he said. "But the General Conference administration decided . . . to assign and make these funds available for local churches to get involved in 'I Will Go' initiatives."

Douglas quoted Ellen White, who in the May 5, 1904, issue of the *Review and Herald* wrote, "Our church members should feel a deep interest in home and foreign missions. Great blessing will come to them as they make self-sacrificing efforts to plant the standard of truth in new territory. The money invested . . . will bring rich returns."

Douglas said he couldn't agree more, because "when we marshal all of our financial and human resources to preach the gospel, the end will come." ☉

## 285,915

Membership of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division (NSD) as of June 30, 2022

## More Than 40

The number of churches that broadcast their Sabbath worship online in the Japan Union Conference (JUC). Before the pandemic only 10 churches broadcasted their worship service, but because of the pandemic other churches prepared online services. In response to the growing need of digital church services, the JUC opened the Digital Evangelism Center in Tachikawa, Tokyo. The center recruits, trains, and supports digital missionaries.

**“We face many challenges, and many solutions are needed to solve them, but . . . if I had to choose one solution, it would be to pray for the Holy Spirit in unity. When we gather together with one mind, prayer exerts tremendous power beyond our imagination.”**

—Yo Han Kim, Northern Asia-Pacific Division president, in his first editorial in the region’s *News & Views* magazine, after being elected for the position in June 2022.

**“We are grateful for ADRA Mongolia through the SAFER-2 project and its successful implementation to develop our agriculture sector and increase the quality of our vegetable products. Experts say that our province can supply 40 percent of its vegetable products domestically.”**

—D. Bayirjan, governor of Bayan-Ulgii province, who shared with ADRA Mongolia board members. The board members visited the Sustainable Agriculture, Food and Economics Resilience II (SAFER-2) project in Bayan-Ulgii, Mongolia. 📍

## More Than 50

The number of people that attended the thirteenth Adventist-laymen’s Services & Industries (ASi) general session and convention in the Northern Asia-Pacific Division (NSD), which was held in the Philippines September 22-25. The NSD ASi is a group of Adventist laypersons across the NSD territory who are committed to sharing Christ in their respective working environments and to financially supporting church missions. The two main guest speakers for the convention were Kenneth Swansi, dean of the graduate school at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIAS) and chair of its Business Department, and NSD president Yo Han Kim.



Photo: ADRA Mongolia



# Perspective



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

## Bill Knott Is Ready for New Challenge After 25 Years

*Outgoing executive editor will join church's public affairs and religious liberty arm.*

After a quarter century of editorial involvement with Adventist Review Ministries, the last 16 years as executive editor, Bill Knott said he is ready for his next challenge.

"It became clear to me that I needed to make a life-giving choice," Knott said about his decision to not seek reappointment to the media ministry position. "I needed to move in a direction that brought joy and meaning to what may very well be the last act of my career. And I wanted to do that to assure a dignified transition between myself and whoever might follow," he said.

On January 1, 2023, Knott will become an associate director of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department, a post to which he was elected on October 9, 2022, during the denomination's Annual Council.

Justin Kim, currently an associate director of Sabbath School and Personal Ministries for the world church, will become the new editor of the *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World* magazines, succeeding Knott.

"I think the Adventist Church deserves a journal, a media platform, as good as the people I've been blessed to know and serve over 43 years," Knott said. "It's a remarkably wonderful group of people."

It's also an expanding, changing group of people: There were 15.6 million baptized members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 2007, when Knott became editor. Today membership stands at roughly 22 million, a nearly 50 percent increase. Serving such a large and diverse community—most Adventists reside outside of the United States, where the movement began and is headquartered—has meant changes in the way Adventist Review Ministries presents its message.

Print magazines still exist for *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World*, the latter birthed in 2005 with the idea of providing a unifying periodical for a global church community. But electronic media—the Internet, podcasts, video, and even the WhatsApp mobile communications platform—now provide important, virtually instant links for news, information, and ministry.

"You're really out there in search of an audience that you think will see the values that you have communicated and the content you've curated," Knott explained.

Delivering to the audience for printed magazines has become a physical and financial challenge, he said, pointing to recurring issues in getting *Adventist World* to members in East Africa.

"We looked at it every way we could; for years we tried pilot projects in Tanzania and Kenya," he said. "We looked at the logistics, and it looked like it might almost bankrupt us. But then, during the pandemic, up pops an opportunity to use the WhatsApp platform to translate a full magazine into Swahili, [and add] additional content."

That switch has brought Adventist content to millions who speak Swahili—a cohort that comprises 11 percent of world church membership—at a highly reasonable cost, he said.

### A DIFFERENT PASTORATE

When William G. Johnsson, his predecessor as editor, first invited Knott, then pastor of the campus church at Walla Walla University, to become an associate editor, Knott admitted some misgivings.

"I felt distinctly called to pastoral ministry, and 43 years later I still do," Knott said. "The biggest conundrum of my life was when the invitation came to be an editor, and I couldn't see initially [a] continuity between 18 years of pastoral ministry and the opportunity to be on the editorial team of a major magazine. It was only when I figured out that this was a different way of pastoring that I began to understand what God was doing and why it made sense to make that transition." ©

**Mark A. Kellner** served from 2007 to 2014 as news editor for *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World* magazines.

Focus

# Lessons from the Manger

Imagine 365 days of Christmas cheer



BY GERALD A. KLINGBEIL  
AND DANIEL BRUNEAU

**D**ecember is a busy month for many of us in some regions of the world. It doesn't matter if we are parents, aunts, uncles, or grandparents—the festive Christmas season keeps us busy. There are Christmas concerts to attend, Christmas celebrations to organize, and Christmas church programs to help with. Even those living in more secular societies get their full dose of Christmas cheer. Myriads of elves and Santa Clauses appear in shopping centers or on TV, together with reindeer and other holiday-themed paraphernalia. In the Philippines Christmas decorations come out in September and stick around until early January. Whether in the Northern or Southern Hemisphere, Christmas has a way of pushing into our lives.

But the story of the birth of Jesus is more than glitter, reindeer, parties, gifts, and relentless advertising. Most biblical scholars agree that the birth of Christ did not happen in December, but earlier, most likely in the autumn of the year.<sup>1</sup> Yet regardless of the specific time, it's the important transformative dimension of Christ's birth that matters as we consider God's plan of salvation that Christians (and Adventists) all around the world remember in December, for that moment in history changed everything.

When God came to live with and serve us as a human being, He didn't choose a royal palace to make a Hollywood-style grandiose entrance. John tells us that Jesus came into His own—and His own did *not* receive Him (see John 1:11). The imagery of a newborn baby lying helplessly in a filthy manger used normally to feed animals communicates something about God's character and priorities. Jesus came to serve, not to be served (cf. Matt. 20:28). When we read the Nativity story in the Gospels, we can sense the uncertainties, perhaps even fears, of Jesus' parents. We can, however, also catch a glimpse of the joy of the moment when shepherds bow and angel choirs shout a Hallelujah chorus that even Händel could never replicate.

#### THE HEART OF CHRISTMAS

Most of us enjoy the carols or hymns associated with the season—at least for some weeks of the year. We cherish time with family and friends. We enjoy special meals together. But if Christmas is only about singing, eating, or celebrating community, we might as well go to a soccer game or a football game at which people sing,

## The key attributes of unselfish acts that define the Christmas season can impact our brains.

dance together, and enjoy plenty of food and drinks.

What makes Christmas special? Here are five key concepts that moved to the top of the list as we thought about the meaning and relevance of the festive season:

**1** Christmas helps us to see each other more clearly and more realistically. Gift giving is a big part of most Christmas celebrations and a reflection of God's biggest Gift, whose life began in a manger and ended—at least for a limited time—on a rough-hewn cross. As we see each other—*when* we truly see each other—we recognize that our own brokenness and flaws can also be seen in others. We recognize that we are all sinners and in need of grace, the grace that transforms and renews. Thinking about a neighbor, a family member, a grandchild, or a work colleague helps us look away from ourselves. A spirit of selfless giving is an entry-level antidote against selfishness and self-centeredness.

**2** Once we have recognized the needs of the world that surrounds us (including our neighborhoods, our families, and our churches), we begin to engage. Jesus' first coming is all about engagement. He engaged a lost world, found sin-sick people, and offered hope and encouragement to the hopeless and discouraged. We give because He has given us everything. Volunteerism during the months of November and December is usually very high. Giving selflessly of oneself not only is a blessing to others but also has significant health benefits for the person volunteering. Serving others strengthens our own organism, improves our moods, and lessens stress.<sup>2</sup> But beyond being a physical and emotional blessing to our lives, engagement and giving works miracles in our hearts—and not just in November and December.

**3** Christmas usually draws us together. The last 10 days of December are generally some of the busiest travel weeks during the year, especially when we look at the numbers globally. We look forward to seeing each other and enjoying each other's company. It turns out that community was also important at Jesus' first advent. Lowly shepherds were guided by angels to see their Saviour. As they entered the humble and, we imagine, cramped place of Jesus' birth and saw a little baby in a manger, they pressed forward to worship Him whose words had spoken galaxies into existence—they just couldn't see Him yet clearly, for He was tiny. Worship drew them together. Did Mary grow concerned as the shepherds pushed closer and closer to get a better glimpse? How did Joseph and Mary feel about the Wise Men, who looked so different from the people they were familiar with in Nazareth or Bethlehem? Christmas without a shared community is like a Northern Hemisphere winter without snow or the tropics without rain.

**4** Fear is an ever-present reality in the Nativity story found in the New Testament Gospels. Mary is "troubled" when she meets the angel Gabriel (Luke 1:29). Shepherds are terrified when they see the glorious light surrounding an angel host (Luke 2:9). Herod and all Jerusalem are disturbed when they hear about the star the Wise Men from the East had been following (Matt. 2:3). Joseph must have been worried sick about his wife and the newborn as he is told to flee to Egypt by an angel of the Lord (verses 13-18). Like us, the members of the cast of the Nativity story knew real fear. However, they also knew deliverance and deep joy. Simeon, holding Jesus in his arms, rejoiced and praised God (Luke 2:25-35). As the Wise Men returned home, we can imagine them singing praise songs the entire journey. The shepherds rejoiced as they saw the "desire of all ages." Christmas is all about overcoming fear and

experiencing life-changing joy—the joy that transforms darkness into light and hopelessness into vision.

**5** Hope saturates all the nooks and crannies of the Christmas story as the antidote of fear. This hope is based on God's promises—those given long ago by prophetic vision (cf. Dan. 9:24-27), and also those uttered directly by divine messengers to some of the cast members of the narrative (e.g., Luke 1:26-38). Isaiah's vivid description of what hope can really do offers this striking imagery: "But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint" (Isa. 40:31, NIV). Other versions, such as the NKJV or ESV, use the verb "wait." Hope, both as a noun and as a verb, describes the activity of waiting patiently. Our trust-filled waiting is an expression of hope. God's people waited anxiously for the arrival of the Messiah in the first century A.D. They may have had wrong expectations about the kind of Messiah they waited for—but they waited. First-century Judaism was a hotbed of messianic expectations. This hope drove Simeon and Anna to wait in the temple to see the promised Saviour. This hope moved the Wise Men to travel large distances to see the promised King. And this hope comforted a young mother who kept all the promises given to her in her heart—even though she may not yet have understood them all. Christmas is a hopeful season, where light and music promises a different tomorrow.

#### **CHRISTMAS IMPACTS OUR MIND**

It's important to note that even our reference to the Christmas season points to how, from a secular perspective, the spirit of goodwill associated with Christmas has somehow been boxed into a "season" of no more than the month of December (give or take)—after which we resume our normal course of living in the "I world" that has defined the human condition since humanity's fall in Eden introduced sin into this world.

In fact, the impact of the Christmas season and the marked change in many from an attitude of self-centeredness into one of other-centeredness—the common denominator rippling through acts of unselfish giving and positive relationships, and critical to overcoming fear and providing hope for the future—has led scientists to try to understand the impact that Christmas has on our brain. One small-scale study conducted by researchers at the University of Copenhagen, for example, attempted to locate the "center" of the Christmas spirit within the brain using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI).<sup>3</sup> The researchers showed Christmas-themed images to their study participants

## We can truly “be” only when we experience the “we” of our existence.

and found that among the participants who celebrated Christmas, there was an increase in brain activity in regions of the brain that all play a part in an individual’s sense of spirituality, as well as one’s bodily senses and the ability to decipher facial emotions. While this was a small study that requires replication on a large scale to validate the key findings, what it does do is point to the fact that the key attributes of unselfish acts that define the Christmas season can impact our brains.

Interestingly, the documented effects of unselfish acts on our brain and therefore how we subsequently think and behave toward others has been studied extensively. Numerous studies have pointed to the fact that acts of kindness boost levels of oxytocin—sometimes called the “love hormone” because it is critical to forming social bonds and trusting other people.<sup>4</sup>

God, in His infinite love, has hard-wired our brains to think, behave, and live as other-centered beings. However, while other-centeredness can reward our bodies and minds, one act of kindness cannot carry us through a few days or even a few hours. Waguih William IsHak, a professor of psychiatry at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, frames this best: “The trick you need to know: Acts of kindness have to be repeated. . . . Biochemically, you can’t live on the three- to four-minute oxytocin boost that comes from a single act.”<sup>5</sup>

In order to fully realize the rewards of kindness and what it means to live in other-centeredness, as God originally designed us, acts of other-centeredness have to be repeated and have to be practiced—daily, hourly, not just for a season at Christmas. In other words, the goodwill of the Christmas season needs to be habitually lived out throughout the year because it’s these habits that will direct how we respond to life situations that will ultimately define our character. Put another way, our character ends up being the sum total of the habit patterns that were formed while living and responding to life’s unique experiences. “Never forget that thoughts work out actions. Repeated actions form habits, and habits form character,” noted Ellen White.<sup>6</sup>



Why is this important? The bottom line is this: Our character ultimately determines our destiny—not because of inherent goodness or what we can bring to the table, but rather because of how much we allow God’s Spirit to mold and shape us to reflect His image that He originally created us in: “The harvest of life is character, and it is this that determines destiny, both for this life and for the life to come.”<sup>7</sup>

### CHRISTMAS EVERY DAY

Looking beyond our own needs and engaging with the world that surrounds us in ways that blesses others cannot be part of what we do and who we are just once a year during the month of December. It needs



## How Can We Learn Christmas Lifestyle Habits?

to become part of the patterns of our lives and the attitudes we develop daily. Just as God reached deep into this world through the coming of Jesus as a little babe lying defenselessly in a dirty manger, we are called to live the other-centeredness visible in God's rescue mission to Planet Earth. This focus on the needs of others helps us look beyond our own fears and experience a sense of community, for we can truly "be" only when we experience the "we" of our existence.

Christmas cannot just be a day, a week, or a month. Christmas needs to become a habit that reflects God's unselfish giving and informs how we live our daily life, how we relate to one another in our families and neighborhoods, and how we deal with a world that is often cruel and painful. We need more than the occasional three- to four-minute oxytocin boost—we need the Holy Spirit to reprogram our inner core being, as intimated by Paul in Romans 12:2: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (NIV). Christmas every day is a result of this transformation. ©

<sup>1</sup> A thorough and helpful discussion of the biblical and extrabiblical data can be found in Andrew E. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul: A Biblical Chronology* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), pp. 219-255.

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.volunteerhub.com/blog/volunteer-health/>.

<sup>3</sup> Anders Hougaard et al., "Evidence of a Christmas Spirit Network in the Brain: Functional MRI Study," *BMJ*, *com*, Dec. 16, 2015, online at <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.h6266>.

<sup>4</sup> "The Science Behind Kindness and How It Benefits Your Health," *UniversityHospitals.org*, Oct. 8, 2020, online at <https://www.uhhospitals.org/Healthy-at-UH/articles/2020/10/the-science-behind-kindness>.

<sup>5</sup> "The Science of Kindness," *Cedars-Sinai Blog*, Feb. 13, 2019, online at <https://www.cedars-sinai.org/blog/science-of-kindness.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Upward Look* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1982), p. 89.

<sup>7</sup> Ellen G. White, *Reflecting Christ* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1985), p. 341.

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Thought patterns are changed by conscious decisions and deliberate actions, which in turn translate into habitual patterns of behavior that focus less on self and more on others. Here are a number of practical suggestions that may help in this process.

- Make the conscious decision to live a lifestyle of other-centeredness every day.
- Focus daily on deliberate acts of unselfishness toward others.
- Write down in a journal your daily experience of helping someone—not to gloat or to feel good about yourself, but rather as a means to reflect thoughtfully on the experience.
- Ask yourself how these deliberate acts have had an impact on you.
- Think about what this focus on the needs of others tells you about the character of God.
- Look for the joy of allowing God's Spirit to transform your heart—for it's all about Him and not about us.

Millennial Voices

# God of the Small Things



I was getting worried. Time was racing away, and I still hadn't found the right venue for my December wedding. "Part of me feels like it's silly to pray about wedding details," I messaged a friend, "because they're not important in the cosmic big picture."

"You can absolutely pray for wedding details!" my friend encouraged. "Nothing is too silly for God. God sees when a sparrow falls; He knows the numbers of hairs on your head; He knows the very fibers of your heart; and He has

delighted in bringing your heart together with your fiancé's. I believe that God's looking out for the wedding details is something that He lavishes on our hearts as women, and I think God enjoys meeting our stresses over what we feel are little things."

As I read my friend's message, I let out a long sigh and reminded myself that God was a loving Father who welcomed all my prayers, even the "silly" ones. I was long-distance wedding planning from Korea, which was sometimes stressful. My parents had been visiting my short-listed venues back in the United Kingdom, but nothing was quite right. Until the last place.

That last chance turned out to be perfect. It was a quintessential English country house, with a sense of charm, lots of history, and a host who was keen to do everything possible to help. There was an open fireplace in the grand hall, beautiful grounds, and even something as "silly" as the kind of chairs I prefer. Additionally, we were given the venue for a lower fee than expected. It felt as though God was smiling, offering me this wedding present from Him, saying, "Look, I took care of the details you thought were too small and silly for My attention. Remember again, I am the God of small things, too."

I often struggle with asking God for "small" things, especially in the face of the world's tragedies and challenges—whether or not those small things are material, like the details of a dream wedding. Also, I've found that the church often focuses on service and self-denial, which can make praying for personal requests sometimes feel selfish.

I certainly believe there is a time for self-denial, but I increasingly believe that there is also a time to accept good gifts from God that seem extravagant or unnecessary. A time to ask for "small" things that would bring us joy. Whatever God's answer, I believe He welcomes those requests. After all, He is the Creator who intricately crafted so much "unnecessary" beauty in the world. He is interested in our happiness.

"Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father," says James 1:17.<sup>1</sup> And Ellen White comments, "He who upholds the unnumbered worlds throughout immensity, at the same time cares for the wants of the little brown sparrow. . . . No tears are shed that God does not notice. There is no smile that He does not mark. If we would but fully believe this, all undue anxieties would be dismissed. Our lives would not be so filled with disappointment as now; for everything, whether great or small, would be left in the hands of God, who is not perplexed by the multiplicity of cares, or overwhelmed by their weight."<sup>2</sup> "Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice."<sup>3</sup>

As I get married, I am rejoicing not only in this new chapter of my life, but also in the reminders surrounding my wedding, that my God is the God of the small things. ☺

<sup>1</sup> From the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 86.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

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Global View

# A Guiding Light

Follow the Star

**T**he night was dark and clear. Stars sparkled high above the hills of Bethlehem, where for centuries shepherds had watched their sheep. Frequently the shepherds would keep each other company through the long night, sharing their thoughts and hopes for the future. This night seemed no different as they “talked together of the promised Saviour, and prayed for the coming of the King to David’s throne.”<sup>1</sup>

Suddenly the still night was broken with a flash of heavenly light! “And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid” (Luke 2:9).


Seeking to calm their fears, the angel said, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (verses 10, 11). After the angel explained how to find this precious Babe, “wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger” (verse 12), it was as if heaven itself could no longer contain its joy as an unnumbered host of angelic beings sang out in glorious praise: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!” (verse 14).

## **AN UNUSUAL STAR**

The shepherds were not the only ones who beheld the supernatural light radiating from the heavenly host that night. Nearly 900 miles (1,458 kilometers) to the east, in the land of Mesopotamia, Wise Men, known as “Magi,” noticed an unusual star in the night sky.

These Wise Men belonged to a wealthy and influential class of nobles, honored for their integrity and wisdom. Ellen White tells us, “As these magi studied the starry





heavens, and sought to fathom the mystery hidden in their bright paths, they beheld the glory of the Creator. Seeking clearer knowledge, they turned to the Hebrew Scriptures.”<sup>2</sup>

They were familiar with the prophecy of Balaam, who, himself from Mesopotamia, had centuries earlier declared: “A Star shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter shall rise out of Israel” (Num. 24:17).

Could this be the Star? these Wise Men wondered as they eagerly searched the inspired ancient scrolls. As they studied the prophecies of Isaiah, Daniel, Micah, and more, they became increasingly convinced of the unusual star’s significance and were determined to learn more.

#### **FOLLOWING THE STAR**

“The magi had welcomed the light of heaven-sent truth; now it was shed upon them in brighter rays,” wrote Ellen White. “Through dreams they were instructed to go in search of the newborn Prince.”<sup>3</sup>

With precious gifts in hand, the Magi mounted their camels and followed the mysterious star. Traveling by night, they reminded one another of what they had studied, and “at every pause for rest they searched the prophecies; and the conviction deepened that they were divinely guided. While they had the star before them as an outward sign, they had also the inward evidence of the Holy Spirit, which was impressing their hearts, and inspiring them with hope. The journey, though long, was a happy one to them.”<sup>4</sup>

#### **SURPRISING RECEPTION**

After traveling for several weeks, the Wise Men at last arrived in Jerusalem. They eagerly inquired, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him” (Matt. 2:2). But to their surprise, their questions were met with fear

and astonishment. No one seemed to be aware of the newborn King.

Even the religious leaders were unable to provide answers. Rather than embracing the inquiries from these visitors from the East, the priests simply rehearsed their long-standing traditions, turning away in contempt that Gentiles would presume to understand the Hebrew Scriptures better than they.

Before long, word reached Herod’s palace, and the Magi were invited for an interview with the jealous king. “Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also” (verse 8), said Herod deceptively.

Leaving the palace somewhat deflated, the Magi’s spirits rose again at the sight of the star. Eagerly they followed this guiding light to the Christ Child. “And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him” (verse 11).

Through their study of Bible prophecy, and the insight of the Holy Spirit, these men were able to look beyond humble appearances and in Jesus recognized “the presence of Divinity. They gave their hearts to Him as their Saviour, and then poured out their gifts.”<sup>5</sup>

#### **A GUIDING LIGHT**

Friends, today we still have the guiding light of Bible prophecy. The apostle Peter assures us: “And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts” (2 Peter 1:19, NASB).<sup>6</sup>

And yet today, just as in the time of Christ, there are those who doubt His soon return. “Where is the promise of His coming?”

**By seeing their exact fulfillment in the past, we can be confident that what is yet to be will take place, exactly as the prophecies predict. Let’s follow this guiding star.**

they scoff. “For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation” (2 Peter 3:4). But they are willfully ignorant, not recognizing that his coming “is near, even at the doors” (Matt. 24:33, KJV).

“Wise” men and women are studying the prophecies today. These inspired writings reveal the past, the present, and the future. By seeing their exact fulfillment in the past, we can be confident that what is yet to be will take place, exactly as the prophecies predict. Let’s follow this guiding star.

“For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith” (Heb. 10:37, 38). ©

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

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

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>6</sup> Scripture quotations marked NASB are from the *New American Standard Bible*, copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995, 2020 by The Lockman Foundation. All rights reserved.

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**Feature**

# “’Tis the Season” for... Loneliness?

Loneliness waits for no season, but there are things we can do to help ourselves.

**W**hile the holiday season brings with it reunions of family and friends, it's also a time of great difficulty for many people. Some find themselves far from home and unable to travel, or circumstances don't allow for celebrations with others. But even within a crowd of loved ones, it is possible to feel very much alone. What can be done when those feelings of loneliness seem beyond our control?

First, recognize that loneliness is a feeling. It's a feeling that indicates a person is not connecting with others as much as they

might like to. Loneliness is a symptom of disconnectedness. And prolonged disconnectedness is not good for people. Still, loneliness is a common experience that most people experience at times in life. It's the flip side of being an independent individual that sometimes stands alone.

But we must understand a very important fact: loneliness and aloneness are not the same things. One can surely feel lonely when alone, but one can also feel lonely among people, including friends and family. Loneliness is the feeling a person has when their need for connection isn't fulfilled. And the feeling of disconnection is indeed painful.

It's important to be able to have alone time without feeling lonely—to spend hours or a few days alone without desperately craving connection. In life there will be such moments and circumstances of being away from the people who matter most. But if these times are prolonged or involuntary, it's only natural for loneliness to creep in.

Loneliness is also a subjective experience. If a person feels lonely, then that feeling is true. It does not matter what others think or say about the situation. And for many, the worst kind of loneliness may be emotional disconnection—the feeling that others do not see, acknowledge, understand, and appreciate what's inside you.

## **WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?**

Does Jesus care about our moments of loneliness? Absolutely. Jesus knows what loneliness is. He understands our feelings and has compassion for us. Hanging on the cross in midair between heaven and earth, awaiting death and abandoned by most of His friends and family, He cried out to God: “Why have you forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46, NIV). But we know He wasn't alone.

Surrounding the cross were soldiers and spectators, but they were not there to comfort and connect with Christ. Rather, they ridiculed and harassed Him. Even with those He loved there with Him at the cross, Jesus still felt lonely. But He persevered. And in the end Christ conquered death, and He also conquered loneliness. He experienced extreme loneliness, thus He knows what it feels like and suffers with every lonely person.

Even though we may not feel it, we must remember that “neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38, 39, NIV).

In your pain and suffering, go to Jesus and pray in the words and spirit of King David: “Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. Relieve the troubles of my heart and free me from my anguish” (Ps. 25:16, 17, NIV).

#### NEXT STEPS

■ **When loneliness comes, take it seriously.** Acknowledge your feelings and seek out others who may respect and care for your feelings.

■ **Admit the problem.** There is no shame in being lonely. This doesn't make a person a failure. Let the feeling of loneliness be a prompt to think and act in appropriate ways.

■ **Consider the causes.** Where is the loneliness coming from? Is there a lack of people to connect with, or is connecting emotionally with the people in our lives difficult? What fears and obstacles stand in the way of connecting with people? Are we seeking connection with the right kind of people—people who can see and appreciate who we are and what's inside us?

■ **Accept what cannot be changed.** Life is full of changes and transitions, and moving forward entails leaving something behind. Leaving home, family, friends, colleagues, and classmates may create temporary feelings of loneliness. But appreciate the new opportunities for connection that are out there.

■ **Alter what can be changed.** It's important to have at least one person in our lives that we can be open with. Seek true connection, not

popularity or attention. Get involved with other people in something you are interested in or by volunteering for some cause you believe in.

■ **Eat with people.** We need to eat together. Inviting someone to your home or to go out to eat—this is often where relationships are formed and connections are built.

■ **Consider getting a pet—if you're in a position to do so.** Caring for something other than yourself—feeding it, walking it, petting it, etc., especially with a dog, who seeks contact—may be a great solution. Keep in mind, however, that getting a pet is a long-term commitment and involves a lot of responsibility.

■ **Get professional help.** If you don't know what to do proactively to improve the quality and quantity of meaningful relationships, then seek professional help. Talking with a physician, counselor, therapist, psychologist, or psychiatrist to assess even possible issues with depression is extremely important.

#### SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER

Even in the worst life experiences, we can trust that God will work with us for something good to transpire. Don't let loneliness pacify you, but rather allow loneliness to drive action. The experience of loneliness can push you toward seeking a deeper connection with God—a real lived experience in connecting with God.

If you are experiencing loneliness, seek what you can change in your social life, but also your spiritual life. True connection is possible. If you seek it, you will find it. It's what God wants for you. ☺

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**Torben Bergland, M.D.**, is a psychiatrist and associate director of Health Ministries at the General Conference.

## A Special Prayer

Dear Jesus,

You know what loneliness is. You know how I feel, and You look into my heart with understanding and compassion. You created me for connection with You and with other people. Show me what stands in my way of connecting deeper and truer with You and others. Show me what I may do, and give me the courage to do it. And while I am working to conquer my loneliness, make me a blessing to others who suffer from loneliness.

Amen

## Learn more about loneliness and how to deal with it through these links:

■ <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/loneliness/>



■ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loneliness>

■ <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2019/05/ce-corner-isolation>



■ <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/the-facts-on-loneliness/>

■ <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/feeling-lonely/>





Faith in Action

# Commonwealth Health

A time of transitions and insecurity

↑  
(Left) Neville Duncan, the oldest volunteer for the North England Conference health and evangelistic outreach at the Commonwealth Games in the UK, served faithfully every day for nine consecutive days.

**T**he United Kingdom (UK) has undergone profound changes in the past years, from Brexit<sup>1</sup> to recurrent changes in prime ministers; from the pandemic to a global energy crisis; and, most recently, the passing of the much-loved monarch, Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth II.

On a happier occasion, in February this year, Queen Elizabeth II became the first British monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee, marking 70 years of service to the people of the United Kingdom, the Realms, and the Commonwealth (an association of 54 independent countries, almost all of which were formerly under British rule). This was celebrated across the United Kingdom, albeit in a climate of transition and uncertainty.

The climax of these celebrations were the Commonwealth Games, an international multisport event among athletes from the Commonwealth of Nations held in the second-largest city in the UK, Birmingham. The high-profile Commonwealth Games were indeed a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for outreach, which gave inspiration to the Health Ministries Department of the North England Conference to launch its largest health evangelism program to date, called Commonwealth Health.

## THE HEALTH MESSAGE: THE RIGHT ARM OF THE GOSPEL

The general mental and physical health in the UK has starkly declined since 2020. More than 1.6 million people suffering from depression, anxiety, and drug and alcohol misuse contacted mental health services in 2022 alone.<sup>2</sup> With the pandemic backlog, the health services, obesity- and lifestyle-related diseases such cardiovascular diseases, and cancer have increased.<sup>3</sup> People continue to mourn more than 150,000 COVID-related deaths.<sup>4</sup>

The Jubilee and Commonwealth Games festivities took place in a year of upheaval, worry, anxiety, and grief, with people trying to find their footing in a shifting reality. The signs of the times are obvious, and

once again we're reminded that comprehensive health ministry is the right hand of the gospel, whereas medical missional work in particular is to serve as the right hand to the third angel's message.<sup>5</sup>

What the Adventist message has to offer is assurance of salvation, comfort, and hope. It is this message that the churches of Birmingham brought to their communities.

Two large health expos were organized near Alexander Stadium (the main venue of the Commonwealth Games) and at the Jamaican Independence Festival. The interactive and fun expos about nutrition, exercise, water, sunshine, temperance, air, rest, and trust—the NEWSTART principles<sup>6</sup>—were presented to the public. Volunteers collected visitors' health data; identified their actual health age; checked their blood pressure, lung capacity, heart age; and much more.

The expos were based at Perry Beeches church in Birmingham, where the volunteers worked from morning till evening to reach not only the larger community around the church but also visitors from across the globe. To achieve sustainability and legacy, the brand "Commonwealth Health" was created along with an interactive website ([www.commonwealthhealth.co.uk](http://www.commonwealthhealth.co.uk)), which signposts national and international visitors to Adventist churches across the Commonwealth.

## THE HARVEST WAS GREAT; THE WORKERS WERE MANY!

"The message of the soon coming of the Saviour must be given in all parts of the world, and a solemn dignity should characterize it in every branch. A large vineyard is to be worked, and the wise husbandman will work it so that every part will produce fruit. If in the medical missionary work the living principles of truth are kept pure, uncontaminated by anything

that would dim their luster, the Lord will preside over the work. If those who bear the heavy burdens will stand true and steadfast to the principles of truth, the Lord will uphold and sustain them.”<sup>7</sup>

The call for volunteer support for the Commonwealth Health initiative received an unprecedented response, with more than 230 local volunteers getting involved. Some took annual leave in order to participate, nurses and doctors worked extra shifts, elderly individuals engaged tirelessly, and young people helped with promotion. Volunteers joined together daily and ran the health expo stations with expertise and experience, mentoring those who participated for the first time. Church members even recruited their non-Adventist colleagues to take part, making them eyewitnesses to health ministries in action. With the expo running for nine consecutive days, it was possible for visitors to return and continue to have meaningful conversations with pastors and prayer warriors.

Volunteers also supported the Commonwealth Games themselves as wardens, police chaplains, and chaplains to the athletes.

More than 300 visitors passed through and showed genuine interest in our health message and church. Many expressed a desire to join prayer meetings, Bible studies, and Sabbath worship, and they received Bibles and health and other literature.

### A YEAR TO LOOK FORWARD TO

Once the Commonwealth Games were concluded and the expos dismantled, the tired volunteers returned to their home churches, but the enthusiasm did not die; instead, it increased. The months of August and September saw more health expos spring up across the North England Conference than ever before. A health champions group was established, whose mem-

bers teach church groups, pastors, and health ministry leaders how to run comprehensive health ministry programs. Follow-up programs in Birmingham, such as the signature health program “Reversing Diabetes” at Camp Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church, is currently running with great success.

“A clarion call to medical evangelism is due at this time. Thousands, yes, tens of thousands of people today are asleep to the condition of their spiritual and their physical health. They are far from the better way of life and do not sense their peril. Faithful watchmen are needed to point out the way of health and holiness.”<sup>8</sup>

Comprehensive health ministry encompasses not only physical health but also mental and spiritual health. Mental health workshops on emotional resilience, healthy boundaries, and depression and anxiety recovery are greatly needed in the current times and are being held in Liverpool and Manchester, with more churches joining in. Spiritual health and the restoration of the connection to Jesus as our Lord and Saviour is also a key focus for the years to come through collaboration with Possibility, Family, and Women’s ministries. Katia Reinert, associate director for Adventist Health Ministries at the General Conference,

trained facilitators in the North England Conference to begin the Journey to Wholeness program and to minister to families, churches, and communities.

### WE FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT

After years of trials and tribulation, our church family in the North England Conference had the opportunity to come together and work actively for the Lord. Years of lockdowns and closures, of estrangement and disruption, of disorientation and insecurity, encouraged us only to work harder, to open up and invite in visitors, to grow closer together in Jesus, and to join hands as workers in God’s vineyard. The third angel’s message was preached loud and clear to the unreached.

To God be the glory! ©

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.government.nl/topics/brexit/question-and-answer/what-is-brexit>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mental-health-services-monthly-statistics-performance-may-provisional-june-2022>; see also <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-services-monthly-statistics>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9234890/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-59923936>

<sup>5</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 6, p. 288.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.newstart.com/about/>

<sup>7</sup> E. G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 289.

<sup>8</sup> Ellen G. White, *A Call to Medical Evangelism and Health Education* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2010), p. 7.

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What We Believe

*The Great Controversy*

# The Battle Is On

How the great controversy  
plays out in our lives

**I** witnessed three major categories of “battles” affecting me personally in February 2022. One night, serving as a chaplain volunteer at a hospital, I came into a room and saw a young couple on their knees praying for the life of their baby girl who had been born prematurely. The battle for this girl’s life was so vivid: nurses and doctors were performing CPR on an 18-inch baby who weighed barely four pounds. We prayed together. I embraced them. Tears ran down our faces. The battle was real, but, sadly, the baby girl died.

On February 24 darkness covered Ukraine, and a senseless war began: homes were destroyed, and thousands of people lost their lives while others became refugees. As Ukrainian Americans, my wife and I traveled to Ukraine in April to support orphans affected by this war. After spending a day with the orphans in western Ukraine, we saw that the battle was real and recognized the brokenness of these children’s lives.

During a discussion in a course I teach, one of my students opened up and shared that exactly two years ago her husband and her brother were shot. Listening to her story, all students in the class felt that the battle in her life

was real, as her husband and her brother later died.

These stories illustrate one essential truth about our complex and unique lives: we all experience suffering. Two fundamental questions haunt us when we face the inevitability of suffering: Why do we suffer? How can we avoid suffering?

## **A COSMIC CONFLICT**

Scripture tells us that the free will that God grants to all of His creation allows evil not only to exist but also to find new ways of multiplying.<sup>1</sup> The free will of one of the angels,

later known as Satan, led to the beginning of this cosmic conflict. Lucifer, the “morning star,” who was in the presence of God (Eze. 28:12-15), allowed his pride to lead him to think that he might be equal to God Himself (Isa. 14:13, 14). Lucifer started a “polemic”<sup>2</sup> (or “war”) against God and challenged His character. His campaign successfully deceived some of the angels to join him in this rebellion. Surprisingly, God did not immediately eradicate evil. Satan, with his angels, was cast down to earth (Rev. 12:7-9).

Adam and Eve hurt themselves and all of their offspring when they chose to leave God’s presence and questioned His righteous rule (Gen. 2:17). Satan aided in this deception as he spread the seeds of doubt by calling God a liar (Gen. 3:5). They allowed Satan’s attack on God’s character to bear fruit (verses 1-5).

We are faced with a free choice to do the will of God and bring forth the fruit of “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22, 23). This fruit of God heals, restores, and resurrects our lives and those around us. Alternately, when we choose “the desires of our sinful nature,” we bring forth the fruit of “sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like” (verses 19-21, NIV). This fruit destroys our lives and the lives of others and leads to suffering. Yet there is another side: we suffer because we live in a world where evil and death are not destroyed yet.

#### **EVIL DEFEATED BUT NOT YET DESTROYED**

Tragically, in the Garden of Eden, the first Adam gave away his right to rightfully represent God’s

righteous rule. As a result, this earth became a battlefield where good competes with evil. Sin reigns and leads to death (Rom. 5:21). But on the cross, triumphantly, the Second Adam defeated evil and death so that “grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (verse 21). Jesus became the true king of this world because the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil (cf. 1 John 3:8). Jesus already reigns, seated at the right hand of God (Heb. 1:3). Yet there is still work to be done before Jesus’ reign is fully realized.<sup>3</sup>

#### **NEW CREATION**

The apostle Paul exclaims in 2 Corinthians 5:17: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.” Christ is the victor, and He established a new world with a new creation. Yet humans still need to learn how to live in this new world. Paul encourages those who want to pledge their allegiance to Christ in Colossians 3:1: “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.”

#### **LIVING IN A CONFLICT ZONE**

It’s not easy to live in a conflict zone, where evil comes to steal, kill, and destroy. Yet God’s children are called to experience life abundantly in and through Christ (John 10:10). Let’s return to the three stories I started with. What helps parents to keep living despite the loss of their baby girl? What restores the broken lives of orphans who were robbed of their parents? How can a young widow continue to live life in spite of her brokenness after the killing of her husband and her brother?

Victor Frankl, a Holocaust survivor whose wife, parents, and brother were murdered in concentration camps, concluded that the quest

## **These stories illustrate one essential truth about our complex and unique lives: we all experience suffering.**

for meaning helped him survive the atrocities of the Holocaust. He identified three sources of meaning that help one go through the most challenging times: (1) purposeful work or creativity; (2) relational experience or love; and (3) courage in facing difficulty or attitude.<sup>4</sup> Fascinatingly, these three elements are also foundational values in Christianity that help us endure suffering.

First, we are created in God’s image, and are given the task to edify, not to destroy; to heal, not to kill; and to care compassionately for those around us. Second, we are a new creation in Christ, and we are called to imitate the loving relationships of the Trinity among us. Third, we are daughters and sons of the righteous King who defeated evil on the cross and will destroy it completely when He returns. We can face evil today with courage because we know we are on the victor’s side. ©

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps one of the best treatment of these questions is presented in John Peckham, *Theodicy of Love: Cosmic Conflict and the Problem of Evil* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> The English word *polemic* comes from the Greek word *polemos*, meaning “war.”

<sup>3</sup> Oscar Cullmann introduced the concept of “already but not yet,” stating, “It is already the time of the end and yet it is not the end.” In other words, Christ’s first coming became a mark of the beginning of the last days. But it will be Christ’s second coming that will be a mark of the end of the last days. Cf. Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*, trans. Floyd V. Filson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950), p. 145.

<sup>4</sup> Victor E. Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006).

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Discovering the Spirit of Prophecy

# Lifelong Friends

My experience  
with Ellen White's  
writings

**M**y parents consciously chose not to have a television during my childhood. Some might view this as a deprivation; I regard it as a blessing. In almost every room there was an abundance of books, a constant source of pleasure and knowledge, offering windows into new and fascinating worlds. Early on I discovered there are books you read once, then abandon. There are others you may return to from time to time. The real treasures are the books that become familiar friends—even lifelong friends. Ellen White's books fall into the latter category.

As with many friendships, it's hard to pinpoint when our friendship began. Her books have been a constant. As a young child I remember admiring the shelf of books with the beautiful red binding. Through the years bindings and covers have changed, but the content has remained constant.

## **A SHAPING INFLUENCE**

We used the Ellen White devotionals for our family worships. Sometimes I struggled with the words and understanding the concepts. My first meaningful personal encounter with her writings came when I was given a copy of *Steps to Christ* at my baptism. I was a teenager, and it encouraged me to commit my life more fully to Christ. It stimulated me to read more of her books. Beginning with *Patriarchs and Prophets*, I read through the Conflict of the Ages series. Each one expanded my understanding and shaped the life decisions I was making.

A few years later a family summer road trip through New England to Battle Creek,



Michigan, brought new perspectives. Ellen White had been just a year older at her baptism than I had been at mine. She was 17 when she experienced, in 1844, the devastation of the Great Disappointment, when, contrary to expectations, Jesus did not return. Like many others, she struggled to understand what had happened. Somehow the fact that the early Adventist pioneers had been mainly young people had eluded me. The rather stiff formal portraits of Adventist pioneers with suits, beards, and serious faces had created the perception that the church had been organized by middle-aged administrators. The reality of a youth-led, dynamic movement gave a new perspective and appreciation for Ellen White's writings. When she wrote about her wonderful, beautiful Saviour, it was based, not on a well-honed theory, but on her personal experience.

#### **AN UPLIFTING COMPANION**

The commitment to give my life more fully to Christ led me to Newbold College to study theology. At the beginning of my third year, I applied for one of the colporteur slots for the following summer. Although not mandated, there was an expectation that all theology students should spend at least one summer as a colporteur. I had put it off for two summers, so it was now or never. I was secretly relieved when I was turned down. I had tried. My conscience was clear.

Nine months later, as the end of the college year approached, I was worried. I did not have a summer job. I had applied to all the usual places. Either I was unsuccessful or received no response to my applications. I couldn't understand it. I prayed, but I still couldn't find a job. I needed the money to return for my last year. Two weeks from

the end of the year, the principal called me into his office and asked if I would like to go to Norway as a colporteur. I wanted to say no, but without any other options, I said yes. The next day I received another job offer, but I had committed myself and went to Norway.

Six weeks later I found myself in a caravan on the outskirts of Aalesund, a shipping port on the Norwegian west coast. The friend who came with me had left. I was alone. I didn't speak the language. Sales were not bad, but they were not what I needed to make a scholarship. It was one of those "why" moments. *Why, Lord, did You bring me here?*

I picked up my copy of *Steps to Christ* and began to read. When I came to the chapter on the privilege of prayer, words that I had previously underlined jumped off the page:

"Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him."

They spoke to me in the silence and loneliness of that caravan in a way that had not impacted me before. I desperately longed for a friend. Someone to talk to. Someone who understood my language. Someone who knew how difficult it was to make myself get up in the morning, go out, and knock on doors. I poured out my heart. I talked to God in a way I had never talked to Him before. He remained God, Lord of lords and King of kings, my Creator and Redeemer, but He became my friend. The one to whom I told my deepest longings, fears, and joys. Unlike my friend who had left, here was a Friend who didn't leave me. He was with me 24/7. The Lord answered

## **Through the years bindings and covers have changed, but the content has remained constant.**

my prayers. During the next six weeks He provided courage, protection, and comfort.

#### **ILLUMINATING FRIENDS**

Shortly afterward, I found myself in an apartment with someone who was very aggressive and tried to prevent me from leaving. The Lord provided me an invisible wall of protection. All attempts to stop me were thwarted. As I closed the door, a neighbor came out of their apartment to ask if all was well. They had seen me go into the apartment and were worried, as "bad things happen to people in there." I knew that my angels had worked overtime. My sales improved, allowing me to return and finish my studies.

I count myself truly blessed that I was introduced to Ellen White's books at a young age. They have become lifelong friends, a source of counsel and wisdom, helping me to gain a clearer picture of my beautiful Saviour. As the world today seems to implode, they provide insights into the controversy, which is coming to a climax. They reassure me that, if faithful, I will get to meet the author and, more important, the Jesus she consistently lifts up. ☺

\* Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 93.

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# The One God, the One Lord

Q

## What does “The Lord [Yahweh] is one” (Deut. 6:4) mean?

A

Here is the full quotation: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord [Yahweh] our God [’*elohim*], the Lord [Yahweh] is one!” (Deut. 6:4). This verse, called the Shema, is of fundamental importance in the Jewish faith—*shema*’ is the Hebrew word translated “hear.” It’s an appeal to Israel to listen/obey the Lord. The meaning of the rest of the verse is a matter of debate.

### POSSIBLE INTERPRETATIONS

The statement “Yahweh our God, Yahweh is one,” is difficult to interpret for several reasons: we don’t have another biblical nominal sentence like this one; the numeral one (*’ekhad*) is not normally used with a personal name; and the full statement lacks a verb. In nominal clauses one usually supplies the verb “to be.” Based on scholarly consensus, the most probable translation is “Yahweh [is] our God/Yahweh our God, Yahweh [is] one.” What does that mean? Some would argue that this is about monotheism—there is only one God, Yahweh. Others find here the exclusive worship of Yahweh (“Yahweh is our God, Yahweh alone/only” or “the One Yahweh”). Some of those retaining the translation “Yahweh is one” understand it to mean that Yahweh is not a regional God (e.g., the God of Samaria; the God of Jerusalem) worshipped in different ways—Yahweh is one and the same everywhere.

### IS THERE A WAY OUT?

Given the difficulties associated with the passage, scholars suggest only possible readings. If the most natural translation is “Yahweh is our God, Yahweh is one,” it’s clear that we are dealing here with two

statements or predicates about God: He “is our God” and He “is one.” Perhaps the first leads to what the text goes on to say: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart” (verse 5). The second one is probably about the unity and uniqueness of Yahweh. The verbal root *’akhad*, related to the numeral “one/’*ekhad*,” means “to be united.” Perhaps the emphasis would be on the oneness and uniqueness of God in the sense that there is no one like Him; He is the one of His kind. This is basically biblical monotheism (Deut. 4:35) and is supported by Zechariah 14:9, that, echoing the Shema, envisions a future when anyone competing with God for supremacy will be overcome, and then “the Lord is [Yahweh will be] one and His name one.” He will be worshipped as the one whose very nature (i.e., His name) is one (Ex. 3:13-17); there is no other like Him.

### ONE GOD

The Shema is alluded to in the New Testament affirming the fact that God is indeed one (e.g., Mark 12:29; 1 Tim. 2:5; James 2:19). Such declaration is a biblical nonnegotiable conviction that has been affirmed without questions by Christianity while teaching a plurality within the Godhead. This is possible because the numeral “one” could be used to designate a single unity that includes within itself a plurality. The best well-known passage is Genesis 2:24: The man will “be joined to his wife, and they shall become one [*’ekhad*]”; where one is constituted by two persons. Perhaps the most amazing allusion to the Shema is found in 1 Corinthians 8:6, where Paul identifies the “one God” with the Father and the “one Lord” (Greek *kurios*) with Jesus Christ, specifying that Jesus belongs to the biblical understanding of the unity of the one God.\* ©

\* See Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), pp. 210-218.

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# Adopting a Vegetarian Diet

Is it healthful even for young people?

*I'm a young Adventist and have chosen to follow the Adventist Church's recommendation of a vegetarian diet. My family continues to eat meat regularly, and I'm worried because we have heart disease and colon cancer in our family. Does science support the benefits of avoiding red meat even in young people?*

**T**he Adventist Church recommends a balanced vegetarian diet, and we salute you for choosing the benefits of such a diet. Balanced nutrition includes variety; minimal processing and refinement; and all the essential nutrients, including vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, whether in the foods or as fortification or as supplements.

You mention important family risk factors such as colon cancer and heart disease. Apart from the possible genetic influences, diet is a known environmental factor for both these specific diseases and many others. Persons eating meat have a three- to fourfold increased risk of colon cancer. Interestingly, those consuming legumes (beans) at least four times a week reduce this increased risk significantly.

Smoked and/or barbecued meats hold particular risk of bowel cancers and are best avoided. Heavily spiced and salted meats are also best excluded from the diet because the nitrites in these meats promote cancer.

The World Cancer Research Fund/American Institute for Cancer Research recommends the following as preventives for cancer.<sup>1</sup> It's noteworthy that these guidelines apply to the prevention of coronary heart disease *and* to cancer, giving a double benefit.

- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Be physically active (at least 30 minutes of exercise per day).
- Eat a diet rich in whole grains, vegetables, fruit, and beans.
- Limit consumption of "fast foods" and other refined and processed foods high in fat, starches, and sugars.
- Limit consumption of red and processed meats.
- Limit consumption of sugar-sweetened drinks.
- Limit alcohol consumption.
- Don't use unproven supplements for cancer prevention, such as beta-carotene and vitamin E.
- Mothers, breastfeed your baby, if at all possible.
- Don't smoke, and avoid other exposure to tobacco.

Researchers are consistently reporting that high consumption of vegetables—especially legumes, lettuce, and the cruciferous group

(broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, bok choy, brussels sprouts, turnips, watercress, rutabaga, kohlrabi, curly kale, and horseradish)—lowers the risk of liver and other cancers. For maximum protective benefits, it's best to choose one's foods wisely, exercise, avoid tobacco and alcohol, avoid sweetened and sugary drinks, and strive for a normal body weight/mass.

Do even young people benefit from a healthful diet? Norwegian researchers have recently published a modeling life expectancy study<sup>2</sup> showing that consistent consumption of a diet rich in plant-based foods—especially legumes, whole grains, and nuts—and less red meat could ultimately extend the life expectancy of a 20-year-old by up to 13 years. The earlier the changes are made, the greater the benefit. For older individuals the benefits would be smaller but remain substantial.

The health studies done on Adventists during the past 40 years are being confirmed by much recent research, affirming the advice of God's Word and His messengers (see 2 Chron. 20:20). ©

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.aicr.org/research/third-expert-report/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1003889>

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# The Judge Came to Church



“May I Tell  
You a Story?”

BY DICK DUERKSEN

*“Speak carefully. You will probably go to prison for what you say.”*

**T**he country has laws about religion. Laws that make having a Bible, reading a Bible, talking about the Bible, and holding meetings about the Bible illegal. The state has approved one way to worship. All others are to be eliminated. Yet, for some unexplained politically expedient reason, the Ministry of Religion had agreed to allow a small Seventh-day Adventist group to hold two weeks of public meetings about the Bible.

“It must have been God’s plan,” says Pastor Ed. “The group’s leader called me and asked if I would come to hold evangelistic meetings. Then he added the caveat *‘Speak carefully. You will probably go to prison for what you say.’* I listened, thought about living in a dark dusty dungeon with slobbering rats, and knew I had to go.”

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They advertised throughout the town. Quietly. They talked about the meetings with their friends. Quietly. They prayed for God to send the right people to the meetings—loudly.

On the first night every seat was filled, and people were leaning in the windows.

Certain that the government would be planting spies in the congregation, the local members looked around carefully to see who might be taking notes for the police. Everything looked safe until the local judge and his wife walked in and settled into seats near the front.

One of the church leaders whispered the news to Pastor Ed.

“I thought about the dungeon and wondered if I should change my sermon,” says Pastor Ed. “Then I remembered how Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever—and knew I should move right ahead with my message about Jesus and His love.”

Pastor Ed preached as if the judge were the only person in the congregation. He used his illegal Bible, quoting from passages that were against the law to read out loud, telling Bible stories that people were not to know, and uplifting an understanding of God that was contrary to the government’s accepted view.

Pastor Ed spoke truth as though God was giving him the words to say.

The judge took notes. His wife dabbed tears from her eyes. The congregation, fully understanding the danger of what was happening, seemed to listen

without breathing. All the way through the closing prayer.

The next night was the same. The meetinghouse was full, the judge and his wife were in their seats, and Jesus was lifted up as the congregation held their collective breath.

\* \* \*

The congregation prayed all day and much of the night, members meeting in small groups and as families, praying for Pastor Ed, praying for the words of the messages, praying for each person who was coming to the meetings. Praying for safety!

The third and fourth nights everyone relaxed, a bit. No one had been arrested. The police had not come to break up the meeting. The Holy Spirit was bringing conviction, and many in the congregation were responding positively. The judge and his wife attended each meeting, listening carefully and taking notes. The judge's wife was smiling.

One evening in the second week of meetings, Pastor Ed told the church leaders that he was going to make a call for baptism. They agreed that it was the right time and were excited to see who would stand. They were also terrified. Tonight they would all be breaking the law together. Purposefully. Right in front of the judge!

"This could be the last sermon you ever preach," the leaders told Pastor Ed. "The judge knows every word you have spoken. He knows you believe in Jesus, in the Sabbath, in God's grace, and so much more. None of this is OK with the government. Maybe the judge has been here every night just waiting for you to make an appeal for baptism so he can arrest you. We may all go to jail tonight!"

They thought dungeon thoughts together.

Pastor Ed watched the judge and his wife come through the doors and take their seats near the front. When the time came to make a call for spiritual commitment and baptism, he looked over at the judge, thanked God for courage, and asked the Holy Spirit to move in the

hearts of *everyone* present.

"It is time for you to make a decision about your life and your future," Pastor Ed said. "Tonight God is calling your name."

There was a stirring in the crowd as many raised their hands in agreement. Some stood. Some sang out loudly. Pastor Ed responded to each one, and then glanced over to see how the judge was doing. The judge was frowning, and the seat next to him was empty. Pastor Ed almost gasped, and then saw that the judge's wife was kneeling at the front of the meeting room, arms lifted high in acceptance of the invitation!

\* \* \*

At the baptism Pastor Ed raised the judge's wife from the water into a room dark with fear. Then a clear "Amen" flashed through the silence. One strong voice of affirmation that began a celebration of joy. The judge had spoken.

That afternoon Pastor Ed visited the judge and his Seventh-day Adventist wife in their home. "I am a Saul of Tarsus," the judge said. "I have persecuted Christians since the day I became a judge. It was my responsibility to make sure nobody became a Christian in my territory. I brainwashed the children to believe Jesus was fake. I sent a man to prison for 22 years for passing out one piece of Christian literature. That was my responsibility. But now my wife has accepted Jesus as her personal Saviour, and I don't know what to do!"

"God is calling you," Pastor Ed told him.

"No. I don't believe God can save someone like me," the judge responded.

"But you just told me you were a Saul of Tarsus," Pastor Ed said. "Let's read that story again."

There, in the living room of the judge's house, Pastor Ed, the judge, and the judge's wife reread the story of Jesus calling Saul on the road to Damascus. With Saul, the judge broke down and wept. "Yes," he said, "It's true. God is saving even me!" ©

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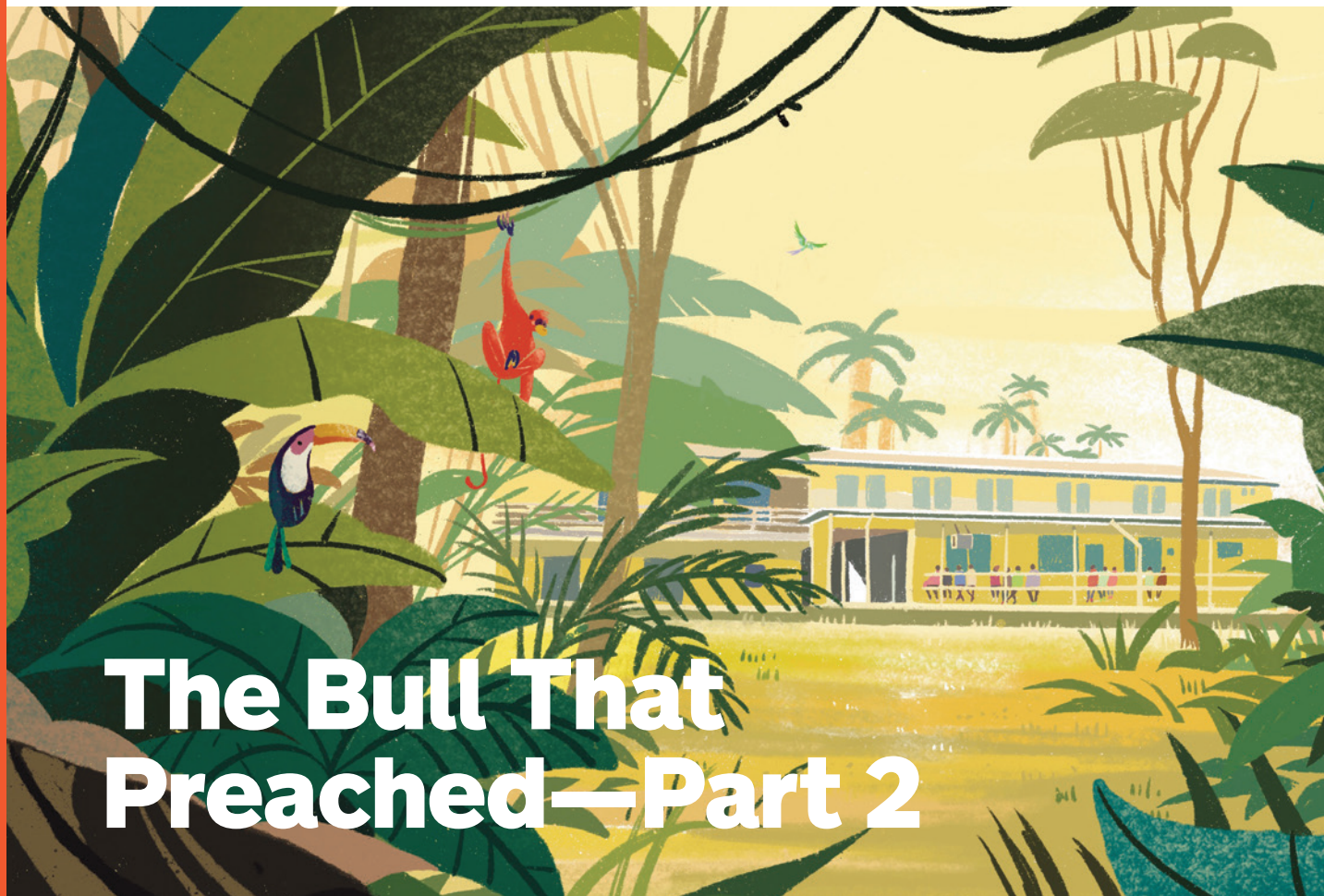
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Seventh-day  
Adventist Church



# The Bull That Preached—Part 2

This is the second and final part to the story. The first part can be found in the October issue of *Adventist World*. –Editors.

**P**astor Timothy waited, but the bull said nothing more. The pastor dropped to his knees in the field and began to cry. “I’m supposed to be a spiritual leader,” he moaned. “But instead I’ve been teaching my church members the wrong things! I’m sorry, Lord.”

The pastor and his family immediately headed back to their house, taro plants and weeds forgotten.

“I must look up the text the bull mentioned,” Pastor Timothy said when they reached home. He found the passage in his Bible and read it aloud: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set

you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations’ [Jeremiah 1:5, NIV].”

“What does that have to do with the Sabbath?” asked Bofanta.

“I think God is saying that I need to share this message with others,” his father replied.

Pastor Timothy called the entire village together and told them what had happened. “It was the voice of Jesus that spoke to me through the bull,” he said. “We must not do any work today. We must begin resting on the Sabbath.”

The people stared at him in amazement. But they respected their pastor and chief, so everyone in the village kept that Sabbath.

Early the next morning Pastor Timothy set off through the bush

toward Atoifi Adventist Hospital. Questions rushed through his mind as he walked along the steep rocky mountain trail. There were so many things he needed to ask the Adventist pastor!

After a four-hour hike through the lush tropical forest, he reached the hospital and approached the first employee he saw.

“My name is Timothy, and I’m the chief of Kwaibaita,” he said. “I am looking for Pastor Bata.”

“Who told you about Pastor Bata?” the puzzled employee asked.

Pastor Timothy didn’t answer the question directly. “I have a story to tell Pastor Bata,” he said.

Someone took him to the village where Pastor Bata was working. “I’ve already kept the Sabbath,” Pastor Timothy told



him. "I need to know more."

The two pastors studied the Bible together for three months. "I want to be baptized," Pastor Timothy decided. "And I want to do it in my village so that all my people can see the choice I'm making."

Pastor Timothy's baptism was a big event in Kwaibaita. Most of his church members showed up to see the man who had warned them against Adventism become an Adventist himself.

"For many years I taught you things that I knew were not according to the Bible," Pastor Timothy confessed. "I ask your forgiveness for leading you astray."

He looked out over the crowd, full of people he cared about. "I've shared with you many of the things I've learned from the

Adventist pastor. I believe them to be the truth. Will you join me in following God's Word? If you will join me, come stand over here to my right. If you want to stay with your current beliefs, stand on my left."

For a moment no one moved. Then several people jumped up and strode purposefully toward Pastor Timothy's right. A few, with looks of horror on their faces, headed in the opposite direction.

As more and more people in the crowd chose one side or the other, Pastor Timothy's face broke into a broad smile. The majority of the villagers were taking their stand with him to follow God's truth!

Soon a new church was built in Kwaibaita where Pastor Timothy and his people could worship God every Sabbath.

And the talking bull? He hasn't said a word since. He doesn't need to. He lets Pastor Timothy do all the preaching about the Sabbath. ©

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*Guide's Greatest Animal Stories*  
(Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2005).

#### **DRAW IT!**

Put your imagination to work. Draw a picture of the bull talking to Pastor Timothy. If you'd like us to see it, send a scan of your drawing to us at [kidsview@adventistreview.org](mailto:kidsview@adventistreview.org).



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