

Adventist World

01/2023

**Failed . . .
Again!**
Page 18

**The Prodigal
Son's Older
Brother**
Page 22

Hold the Rain
Page 28

An illustration in shades of orange and black. In the foreground, a man with long hair and a beard, wearing a dark robe, is kneeling on the floor. He is washing the foot of another man who is seated on a wooden stool. The man being washed is also wearing a dark robe and is looking towards the kneeling man. A bowl of water is on the floor between them. In the background, there is a long table with several plates and cups. Other figures are seated at the table, some looking towards the foreground. The overall scene is set in a room with a warm, orange glow.

**Serving as
a Leader**





Cover image: rudall30 / iStock / Getty Images Plus / Getty Images

16 Global View

Leading by Example

Ted N. C. Wilson

18 Faith in Action

Failed . . . Again!

Homer Trecartin

21 Millennial Voices

Resounding Praise

Beersheba Jacob

22 Devotional

The Prodigal Son's Older Brother

Ezrica Bennett

24 Looking Back

Adventists and Religious

Liberty Go to the Fair

Amy Sheppard Ratsara

26 Bible Questions Answered

Clouds and the Messiah

27 Health & Wellness

Adventist Health Studies

28 May I Tell You a Story?

Hold the Rain

30 Growing Faith

Vixie in the Lion's Den

Myron Madden

Emmaus Burning

By Justin Kim

There are defined moments when an “aha” experience results in spiritual light bulbs turning on. They bring a strange burning joy to the heart and mind, especially when they involve the study of Scripture.

When heckled by Catholic high school classmates, I examined and argued the biblical differences between consubstantiation and transubstantiation. I imagined carrying forth the Protestant torch of truth between fourth and fifth periods in the cafeteria.

When confronted by my Jewish university friends about the Messiah, I studied the Hebrew prophecies fulfilled by the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus in the Christian New Testament. I imagined myself at Tyrannus University (Acts 19:10), trained by Paul to dialogue with our synagogical brethren.

When challenged by my molecular neuro-oncology research colleagues, I recall getting into biblical apologetics for Creation, design, meaning, teleology, and purpose. I merely explained what Moses reported: the literal, six-day Creation and the creative and re-creative power of God.

When ministering to those on public universities who had never heard of Adventism, I talked about the heavenly sanctuary, the seventh-day Sabbath, and the justifying and sanctifying power of Christ’s righteousness. I visualized myself during the Second Great Awakening, fulfilling the prophecy of the three angels’ messages on campus quads and dorms.

In addition to these individual memories, however, there are also “aha” experiences when seen back over the course of time.



Brighter than light bulbs, the Light of the world is the One personally teaching us throughout the years. Brighter than Moses, Paul, the reformers, and the pioneers, Jesus explained each verse concerning Himself and brought this burning joy to the heart from the study of Scripture. It is the hope and prayer of this new executive editor to provide more Emmaus burning experiences through the printed page, both in individual issues and on the road ahead.

We start with this edition of *Adventist World* on the topic of leadership. Lowell Cooper addresses our ideas of leadership, especially on power and change in volunteer organizations. Ted Wilson points to influence and example as the primary tools of power for a biblical leader. Randy Siebold and Erich Baumgartner direct our attention to Jesus’ five dynamic areas where practical leadership can be developed.

May this issue not only inspire you to deeper and wider leadership, but also move us as a community to pray for our leaders, present and future alike. As this is my first introduction to the magazine, I request your prayers for this new leader to reproduce the Bible study burning experiences provided by our risen leader, Jesus.

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

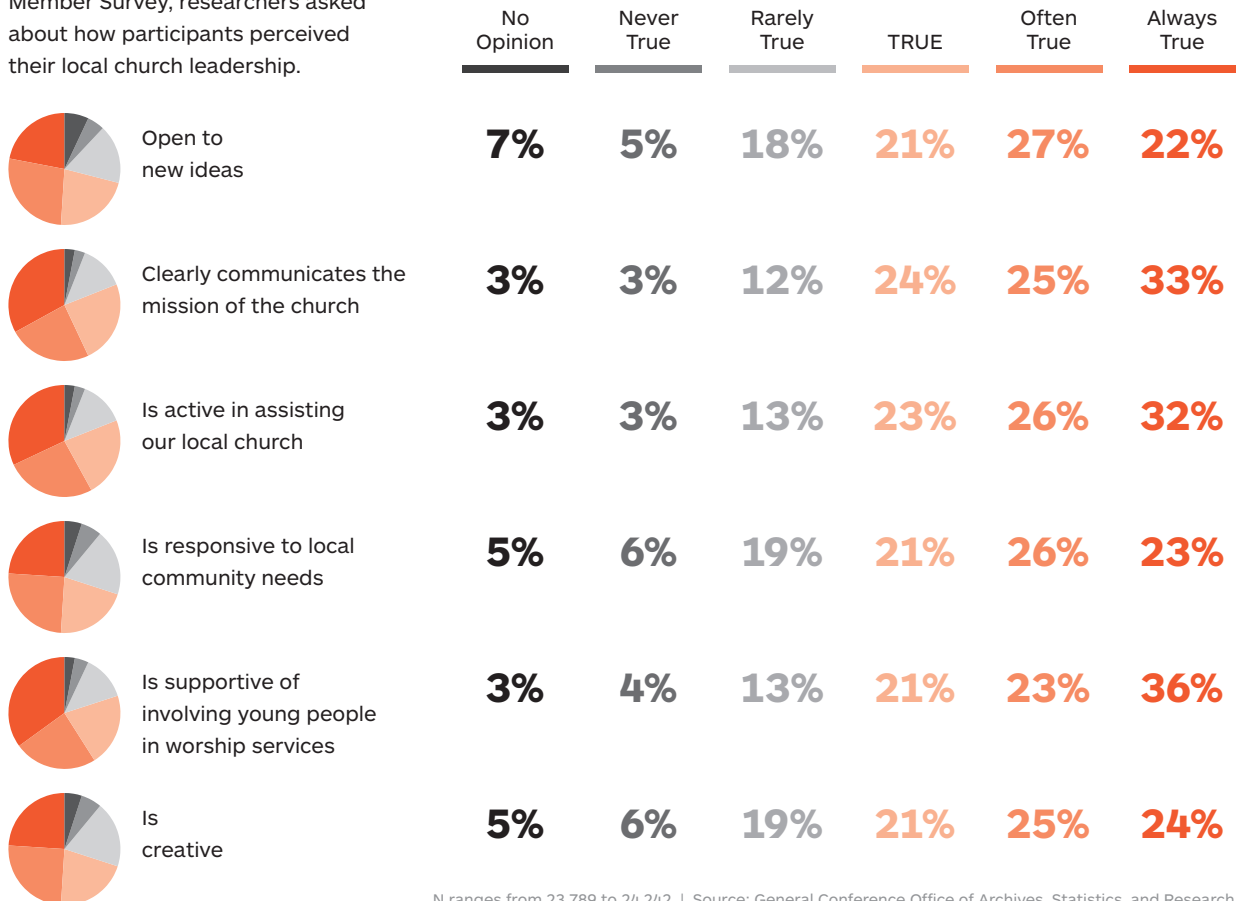
The Filipino Adventists in Nordic Areas (FANA) Angklung ensemble play a version of the hymn “Standing on the Promises” during a musical concert at Norwegian Junior College in Norway on November 19. Angklung is a traditional Indonesian musical instrument of bamboo tubes and rattan (palm) cords.

Photo: Tor Tjeransen / AME (CC BY 4.0)



Leadership in the Church

As part of the 2013 Global Church Member Survey, researchers asked about how participants perceived their local church leadership.



N ranges from 23,789 to 24,242 | Source: General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research

“The church in Inter-America only stops to baptize, like the chorus song says. There’s joy in heaven for each sinner who accepts Christ. There are many struggling families who need hope. Too many around us are suffering from hunger, violence is prevalent, and social issues keep rising. It just tells us that this world needs the hope of Jesus, and we must continue to move forward preaching it.”

—Elie Henry, Inter-American Division president, speaking at the Central Higüey church, in Higüey, Dominican Republic.

“This is about promoting sports and the culture of our healthy lifestyle, and it is a great opportunity to offer another option to students and employees to practice sports in the midst of nature.”

—Rocío González, Montemorelos University legal representative, about an agreement, signed on November 8, to feature a disc golf course in the university’s Oko de Agua Recreation Park, next to the main campus.

“One of the main objectives for this initiative is for the children to read books published by our church, because there is wisdom there.”

—Zoaida Pérez, children and adolescent ministries director for the North Colombian Union, about the region-wide reading competition in northern Colombia. The initiative culminated with a final event and a winner and sought to motivate the reading of books for spiritual growth for children between 12 and 17. More than 480 participants had studied the book since the beginning of the year, competing in their churches, districts, and local fields before the final test at the union level.

“This new facility is designed to cater to video, audio, and social media requirements. It will produce content intended to introduce Jesus and His character to its [target audiences]. It all started with a dream, and now the Lord has granted us this facility. Now it’s time to make this facility perform its purpose of sharing hope and healing of Jesus to others through the digital platform.”

—Mamerto Guinguing II, Southern Asia-Pacific Division (SSD) associate secretary, at the dedication of the new media center on November 8. The center will produce online resources and content for distribution and broadcast to the broader public.

Adventist Review Newsletter

Do you want to keep up with what’s happening in our church? If you want to receive our weekly newsletter that features news stories, inspirational stories, videos, and more, sign up today.



www.adventistreview.org/newsletter-signup

“I believe that the media ministries are not just for those who have an inclination to digital technology. I believe that our coming here has a purpose: to utilize every means of technology that we have to spread the gospel in this new age.”

—Wendsney Arviany Sadi, a local church member from Manokwari, West Papua, about the communication training sessions held by the East Indonesia Union. Under the theme “Scale Up,” church members sought to learn, understand, and develop their skills to create content for different media available both online and in print.

“This is the sixth year of the Let’s Move Day program, and it just gets better and better. More than the medal I received, I am grateful to see more people interested in bettering their health and finding ways to improve our lifestyle.”

—Keiko Le Bao Ngan, who took first place in the women’s 5K category, about the fun run. The Vietnam Mission’s Health Ministries Department has been hosting the fun run for six years to promote wellness and a healthy lifestyle in a positive and upbeat setting. Through numerous health-focused initiatives, this campaign, known as Let’s Move Day, enables the Adventist community in Ho Chi Minh City to forge healthy relationships with others.

More Than 900

The number of people joining from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland who gathered to worship together and dream about the future of the Irish Mission. This was the first large gathering of Irish churches since the breakout of the COVID-19 pandemic. →



Photo: Vanesa Pizzuto/AME, CC BY 4.0

Thousands Welcome Free Medical Care in Venezuela

Marcos A. Izarra, Inter-American Division, and *Adventist World*

For several months in 2022, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Venezuela provided free medical services to thousands of people in Mérida, a city in the Andes Mountains in northwestern Venezuela. More than 70 medical doctors, 15 leaders, and dozens of church members volunteered their time and expertise to assist more than 2,700 people.

It is the first time free medical services have been extended for more than a few days throughout the West Venezuela Union territory. The effort is part of a larger strategy to assist the many who are not able to access or pay for such services, church leaders said.

The dozens of health professionals who took part in the citywide effort included some from the local region. Others traveled to Mérida for specific days to offer services in various areas, including general medicine, physiotherapy, dentistry, nutrition, psychology, ophthalmology, pediatrics, and gynecology. Volunteers in the group also per-

formed dozens of minor surgeries and laboratory services.

The headquarters office of the Central Andean Venezuela Mission and two outreach centers located in various spots throughout the city were opened for the services sponsored by the mission and the *Sonrisas para Jesus*, or *Smiles for Jesus*, Foundation. *Smiles for Jesus* is an Adventist lay organization in Venezuela that has been partnering with the church's community health ministry for years.

"It has been a historic medical journey in this Andean city," West Venezuela Union personal ministries and evangelism director Jean Carlos Rivas said. "It was very surprising to see how people in Mérida would come close to us to be cared for, and that opened more doors to better connect with people." The evangelistic plan was to provide medical services for several months and end the initiative with a week of evangelistic impact, he said.

"The insights we have received [as a church] on the impact of

Adventist Church reaches out to people in dire need.

medical missionary work has really allowed us to see miracles and open the doors to an extraordinary [evangelism] work to impact the city," Rivas said. "It has been a wonderful strategy to reach people."

As a result of the eight-day evangelism campaign led by church leaders and theology students from the Adventist University Institute of Venezuela, a new church and two new congregations were organized, with 106 baptisms and dozens of people now taking Bible studies.

"We are extremely happy with what has taken place here in Mérida; it's just an extraordinary work done here," Leo Acosta, dean of the Venezuelan Theological Adventist Seminary at the university in Nirgua, said. "The coordinated efforts have impacted a city which is . . . very grounded in their beliefs, but health and evangelism is something that doesn't fail." Many would ask for Bible studies at the different centers, he said. More than 679 visits were carried out thanks to the medical ministry.

Luis Betancourt, general coordinator of the *Smiles for Jesus* Foundation, said it was wonderful to "to feel the collaboration and the teamwork with the Adventist university, the Adventist hospital, the mission, and the union, united in the fulfillment of the mission."

Rivas agreed. "We praise God for this wonderful medical impact, and we consider that this work must continue strong with the work of discipleship, because it's not just about reaching 106 baptisms. Our purpose is to focus on forming leaders, grounding new believers in the truth who can defend and love this cause deeply," he said. ©



Church member volunteers take the blood pressure of a person in Mérida, a city in the Andes Mountains in northwestern Venezuela.

Photo: West Venezuela Union

Leaders Coordinate Mental Health Training in Vietnam

Edward Rodriguez, Southern Asia-Pacific Division, and *Adventist World*

The Adventist Church has a role to fulfill to assist others, organizers say.



Group photo of the leaders who participated in the Vietnam training.

Photo: Southern Asia-Pacific Division News

Adventist health leaders in the Southeast Asia Union Mission (SAUM) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church met in Vung Tau, Vietnam, south of Ho Chi Minh City, from November 14 to 16, 2022, to conduct a regional mental health training. This was following a three-day mental health summit in Silang, Cavite, Philippines.

General Conference associate health ministries director Torben Bergland attended this inaugural SAUM meeting on mental health. Several leaders from various church departments attended the meeting, with the goal of learning how to cope with mental health crises and figure out how to bring Christ's healing and hope to individuals who are experiencing mental health issues.

The program centered on an in-depth exploration of trauma, depression, anxiety, and how God's Word and mental health can work together to share hope and healing effectively. The addition of physical activities to the training regimen was an interesting improvement.

Delegates were encouraged by the organizers to participate in walking exercises while experiencing the local environment. Attendees were able to apprehend the significance of the process and how essential each discussion was

in bringing healing to those dealing with mental health issues. It was possible, leaders said, thanks to the holistic approach and practical implementation of mental health development proposals.

Bergland introduced the ReMindEd program during the training. The ReMindEd mental health program is being developed as part of the General Conference's response to the growing global concern about mental health. The initiative aims to assist people of all ages who are struggling with this issue around the world. The program is a comprehensive, holistic, evidence-based mental health resource.

From a whole-person perspective, leaders expect that ReMindEd will support and enhance mental health while also benefiting physical, relational, and spiritual health. In addition to serving people with mental illness, ReMindEd will also be valuable for anyone wanting to improve their mental well-being or support those with mental illness.

The ReMindEd curriculum aims not only to enlighten but also to empower and instruct. This approach is founded, Bergland said, on "evidence and statistical data." It is something that helps the program's designers in developing tools and materials that include

spirituality in treating mental health problems. It is expected to be officially launched online in early 2023, Bergland said.

During his address Bergland stressed the significance of the church's role in assisting those who are in distress. Pastors, young people, women, teachers, and health professionals are expected to discuss mental health, serve as sources of knowledge and inspiration, and actively promote mental health development on social media as the church equips its members, he said.

"The consequence of mental health issues may be prolonged suffering, maybe even deterioration, as opposed to optimizing management and recovery, and with that, quality of life and functioning. God created humans as whole beings; therefore, we should care about the whole, not just some parts," Bergland said.

Delegates of the training recognized that the holistic method is an approach that will enable the church to connect and help the community attend to this growing global challenge. Organizers said they expect this trend to continue. "We look forward to another intensive training on this issue in 2023 involving more delegates from within the Southeast Asia territory," they said. ©

179,425

Membership of the Inter-European Division (EUD) as of September 30, 2022

“Our goal has been to create the environment and the spirit and the community that may think more as ‘we’ and less as ‘I.’ We keep creating a community that is willing and wants to work together.”

—Adrian Duré, Hope Media Europe producer and coordinator of network projects, about the Happiness project. This project was launched during the 2022 Global Adventist Internet Network (GAIN) Europe convention. The cross-media initiative was created and coordinated by Hope Media Europe, the EUD, and the Trans-European Division. It also included cooperation of the Inter-American, the North American, and the South American divisions.

“The challenges we are experiencing in secularized Europe are a preview of the same challenges [that] other regions of the world [will experience] more or less soon. The way we are facing [those challenges], and in many cases overcoming them, will open perspectives and paths for the church in those regions. Beyond the mission here, it is an invaluable contribution that, once again, the [Adventist] Church in Europe is seeking to contribute to the advancement of the work.”

—Mario Brito, EUD president, during the region’s year-end meeting in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, November 8, 2022.

“Lately we have been facing crisis situations with no way out, but ADRA Romania is always at work to fill people’s hearts with hope for tomorrow. Together with our partner, we respond promptly to the needs of Ukrainian refugees [in] our country, especially children who will spend their first holidays away from home.”

—Cătălin Mantu, ADRA Romania project manager, about the refugee colder winter season project. The project, implemented by ADRA Romania in partnership with the Norwegian Refugee Council, supporting Ukrainian refugees in the territory of Romania, is being carried out for five months, starting on October 1.

More Than 220

The number of women who attended an Adventist Women’s Ministries (WM) congress in Schwäbisch Gmünd, Germany, organized for participants from Austria, Switzerland, and Germany. The WM directors from these countries organized a varied and refreshing program. In addition to the main presentations, Dagmar Dorn, EUD WM director; Melanie Eckart, from the organization Open Doors; and Raquel Arrais, from the Northern Asia-Pacific Division’s WM Department, made short presentations.

80

The Italian Adventist University Villa Aurora celebrated its eightieth anniversary with an exhibit tracing its history. The exhibition is also available online. The school was founded in 1940 and is located in Florence, Italy.



Photo: ADRA Romania

Perspective



Photo: MULLU

Golden Treasure From Heaven's Mine

What does God say to me today from the ancient book of Daniel?

Some time ago my wife and I took our granddaughter Macy to a museum where guests pan for gold in a stream. Plunging her arms into the water, she carefully shook the sand around in the pan, seeking the shiny gold specks. With a sense of triumph, she placed her small treasure in a glass vial to take home.

Macy's discovery echoes these words: "The study of the Bible demands our most diligent effort and persevering thought. As the miner digs for the golden treasure in the earth, so earnestly, persistently, must we seek for the treasure of God's Word."^{*} What about familiar portions of Scripture like the book of Daniel? Has this mine been thoroughly dug out?

I've reopened Daniel with a simple question: What does God say to me today from this ancient text?

Consider with me Daniel 2 and the praise hymn that is the theme of the entire book. Before Daniel explained the dream to Nebuchadnezzar, "Daniel blessed the God of heaven" and prayed, "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever,

for wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings" (Dan. 2:19-21).

While the dream image carries the time line of history, this praise hymn reveals treasure for those of us who live during the in-between time. Consider these five spiritual lessons Daniel supplies for our faith journey.

EVERY PROBLEM A CALL TO PRAYER

As Daniel and his fellow exiles faced death, his first action was to gather his friends for prayer. When faced with difficulties large and small, imagine the transformation in life, family, and church if the very first reaction to problems became "It's time to pray."

WHEN GOD ANSWERS, BE THANKFUL

When God answers our prayers, we often quickly move on to the next thing. Daniel remembered that the circle of answered prayer is not closed until we earnestly return to the throne of grace. A friend recently reminded me, "If you don't learn the language of gratitude, you'll never be on speaking terms with happiness."

GOD IS SOVEREIGN IN HUMAN AFFAIRS

The dysfunction and sinfulness of society can drive us to despair. Daniel's prayer declares of God, "He changes the times and the seasons"

(verse 21). This theme saturates every chapter before and after. What a reassurance it is that the same Lord, bending history to His glorious end, also directs our lives for the season we are given on this planet.

WE HAVE TRUTH TO SHARE

The prayer of Daniel echoes through the ages to us today: "He reveals deep and secret things" (verse 22). There is truth, and it is available for all who seek it from the true Source.

GOD'S KINGDOM FILLS THE EARTH

The zenith of human existence will not evolve from a political system, economic theory, or technological advancement. The ever-decreasing worth of earthly kingdoms will be usurped by God's never-to-end kingdom.

No wonder Daniel exalted God in this hymn of praise. His prayer is golden treasure that shines forth from the heavenly mine of truth. There is so much more that awaits our discovery. All of it shall serve us well as we await the stone kingdom of righteousness soon to come.

^{*}Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1903), p. 189.

Bradford C. Newton is the president of the Pacific Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, based in **Westlake Village, California, United States.**



Focus

Searching for Leadership

Achieving
success
in the
church

BY LOWELL C. COOPER

Local churches, conferences, unions, divisions, the General Conference, and their institutions frequently need leadership for various positions. Retirements, resignations, transitions, and sometimes deaths create a revolving door in leadership offices. How does an organization find the “right” leader for the times? Is there only one? How can such a person be recruited and retained? What is the nature of leadership in Seventh-day Adventist Church infrastructure?

Because leadership roles are so important in church and institutional life, recruitment, selection, performance, and accountability processes deserve careful consideration. There may even be ways to improve upon time-honored practices.

Identification and selection of leadership is not the only concern when it comes to leadership in an organization. There are other dimensions in the overall framework of leadership dealing with continued training, performance evaluation, workplace culture, and mentoring. An organization must look beyond the leadership selection process and adopt systems and strategies that contribute to leadership success and perpetuity of the entity.

THE NATURE OF LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH

The church exists in societies with differing paradigms for leadership in government, in commerce, and in the military. Yet none of these offers a model of leadership structure and performance for the faith community. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has adopted a team approach to leadership with ultimate authority in a group rather than in an individual. Furthermore, the mentality of Christian leadership is service rather than control. “Leadership is not so much the exercise of power itself as the empowerment of others.”¹

The human tendency is to exercise power and authority, at least to some degree, in the interest of self—the desire to be first, to climb the ladder of success, to put down others, to be regarded as powerful, to reap prestige and praise. Christlike leadership is exercising power and authority for the good of others. The words of Jesus form the basis for Christian leadership: “I am among you as the One who serves” (Luke 22:27).

The church, like all volunteer organizations, responds to authority differently than that found in rigidly hierarchical structures. “Because leadership is necessarily an exercise of authority, it easily shifts into an exercise of power. But the minute it does that, it begins to inflict damage on both the leader and the led.”²

Christlike leadership is exercising power and authority for the good of others.

Those “whom the Lord calls to important positions in His work are to cultivate a humble dependence upon Him. They are not to seek to embrace too much authority; for God has not called them to a work of ruling, but to plan and counsel with their fellow laborers.”³

Christian leaders do not abandon the use of authority but exert their power under the constraint of sacrificially living for the good of others. It is a leader’s ability to forget self that is often the mark of distinction. “God never designed that one man’s mind and judgment should be a controlling power. He never designed that one man should rule and plan and devise without the careful and prayerful consideration of the whole body, in order that all may move in a sound, thorough, harmonious manner.”⁴

THE LEADERSHIP SELECTION PROCESS

Most leaders who serve in elected roles are chosen through a nomination process resulting in a recommendation to delegates voting in a membership meeting. In many cases the Nominating Committee is expected to fulfill, within a few hours, its duty of recommending names for a wide variety of leadership roles. This is a daunting task, and, in the interest of time efficiency, some aspects of effectiveness may be compromised.

Several organizations have adopted bylaw provisions permitting the formation and functioning

of the Nominating Committee well in advance of a constituency session. These arrangements offer a more deliberative environment for recommendations on executive leadership.

Furthermore, if a new executive leader is recommended for election, they have more time to consider the possible selection of team members. Having more time for Nominating Committee and nominated executives to reflect, research, and evaluate is important, because human judgments of people tend to be rather superficial. The prophet Samuel, when faced with such circumstances, learned that “man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7).

Sufficient time for a review of potential leadership candidates is also important to permit exploration of a wider spectrum of possibilities. Under time constraints a Nominating Committee can revert to a pattern of focusing on a narrow age range and a limited pool of candidates. Insufficient attention on these matters may overlook the contributions of youth, seniors, minorities, or gifted persons who have not been in the mainstream of public attention.

In the annals of divine history God has often chosen unlikely leaders through whom His power is displayed. Ellen White draws attention to more than social roles, academic attainment, and experiential qualifications through the reminder that “it is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God.”⁵

Institutions have sometimes used executive search organizations to assist in the search process. These organizations employ a systematic process in the selection

of potential leadership candidates. It is important that individuals or groups conducting a leadership search begin with an up-to-date job description.

Potential candidates’ résumés will be evaluated in view of what the job requires. As the search process begins to focus on a short list of individuals, it is imperative to interview each candidate and explore references provided as well as any information from previous employers.

Leadership life is primarily relational. One’s qualifications for leadership may depend on knowledge and expertise in specific fields. In addition to the technical, academic, and practical know-how that a person brings to the job, there is urgent need for interpersonal skills. Search committees can too readily focus on professional qualifications and overlook the importance of the relational components of organizational life—trustworthiness, communication and listening habits, teamwork mentality, respect for colleagues, and thoughtfulness about the long-range impact of decisions and actions.

Unless the job description specifies eligibility prerequisites, nominating or search committees may be required by entity bylaws to include male and female candidates as well as representatives of minorities in their search process. Doing so, whether or not required, reflects the official Seventh-day Adventist philosophy on the family of God as multiracial, multiethnic, and gender-inclusive.⁶ Current church policy recognizes one exception by reserving ordination to the gospel ministry for males only.

LEADERSHIP SUCCESS

The governing body’s role in *leadership success* is as important as its role in *leadership selection*. Individu-

als elected or appointed for the first time must not be left to figure out for themselves what the responsibility involves or how it should be accomplished. In the local church the pastor and board members should ensure that persons entering new assignments receive appropriate training and orientation for their new responsibilities.

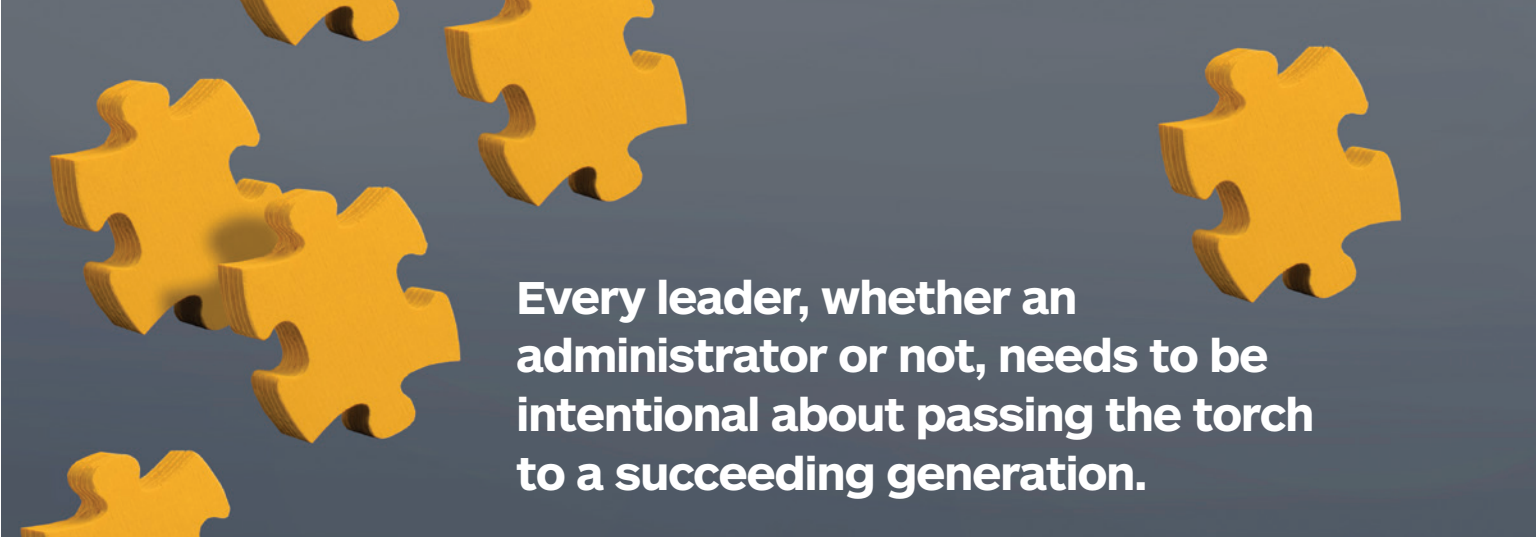
Elsewhere in organizational structure, the executive committee or board should ensure that there is adequate orientation for new leaders along with opportunity for ongoing education related to the responsibilities borne. Various leadership training initiatives have arisen in divisions and at the General Conference. There is still room for progress in systematizing leadership training and orientation throughout church and institutional infrastructure.

Another way that governing bodies can support and facilitate leadership success is through periodic leadership evaluations. When done constructively and in the interest of supporting and developing leaders, an evaluation reveals both strengths and opportunities for growth. Leader evaluation tools abound or can be created as needed. A 360-degree evaluation gives opportunity for colleagues, supervisors, and those supervised to reflect on the performance of the leader and yield multidimensional perspectives on a person’s performance.

THE LEADERSHIP LEGACY

A top leadership priority is to think about what a person leaves behind when he/she quits the job or retires. Leadership is not just about what can be done today. It is also about preparing people and the organization for the future.

The responsibilities one carries today will shift to the shoulders of another tomorrow. Every leader, whether an administrator or not,



Every leader, whether an administrator or not, needs to be intentional about passing the torch to a succeeding generation.

needs to be intentional about passing the torch to a succeeding generation. This involves equipping people with skills, engaging their creativity and commitment, enabling them to comprehend and embrace the mission of the organization, and teaching them the art of leadership. One of the priorities for leadership is to build the pool of candidates for leadership in the future.

The life of Barnabas, seen through brief glimpses recorded in the book of Acts, is a powerful example of a leader who left a legacy of building people. Barnabas was instrumental in the life and leadership of the apostle Paul. When the disciples were wary about accepting the now-converted Paul, Barnabas took great personal risk to encourage Paul and to convince the disciples of Paul's authentic spiritual experience.

In Antioch, a place where a church was planted without official sanction by and involvement of the "accepted" leaders, Barnabas saw the grace of God rather than the weaknesses and mistakes of this fledgling congregation. Remaining in Antioch, seeing the needs there and perhaps recognizing his own limitations, Barnabas called for Paul to come and join him in the work. Barnabas recognized talent and ability and was big enough to bring other gifted people into leadership.

Though partners in mission for some time, Paul and Barnabas eventually separated over a disagree-

ment on the presence of young John Mark. Barnabas served as a mentor for John Mark, and eventually Paul himself recognized John Mark as a valuable companion.

GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

Leadership in church entities is not only the responsibility of individuals in elected office. The governing body (executive committee or board) itself has a crucial leadership role. In Seventh-day Adventist organizational structure, the most important decisions are made by a group—the church board, executive committees of conferences, unions, divisions, the General Conference, and, in the case of institutions, the board of trustees. Every individual leader is accountable to a group. The highest authority granted to any entity of organization is always a group rather than an individual. Ultimately, from a leadership standpoint, the success of the organization is dependent on the governing body.

The challenge here is that effective group decisions do not arise spontaneously. They require deliberate designs in structure and social dynamics. Therefore, appropriate training for executive committees and board members is essential to ensure effective and efficient governance. Members of the governing body ought to have training as to what they should know about the organization, what

they should have in order to participate in responsible decision-making, and what they should do to fulfill governance responsibilities effectively and efficiently.

CONCLUSION

Every organization needs leadership. The Seventh-day Adventist Church encompasses ecclesiastical and institutional structures around the world—all having multiple leadership roles. Each entity in denominational structure is engaged in a long-term mission that outlives its present generation of leaders. Therefore, every organizational unit needs to give careful thought to the processes by which leaders are chosen, the nature of Christlike leadership, the systems through which leadership is nurtured, and the strategies that provide a continuing supply of new leaders for changing and challenging times ahead. May God grant wisdom to address the nature, status, and performance of leadership in every church entity. ©

¹ Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), p. 80.

² Eugene Peterson, Introduction to 2 Corinthians, *The Message: The New Testament, Psalms and Proverbs* (NavPress, 1996).

³ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 9, p. 270.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958, 1980), book 3, pp. 16, 17.

⁵ E. G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 322.

⁶ General Conference Working Policy, BA 60, Human Relations, and BA 60 10, Official Position.

Lowell C. Cooper served for many years as a general vice president for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.



Focus

The Leadership Priority

The five dynamics of leader growth

BY RANDY SIEBOLD AND
ERICH BAUMGARTNER

"There is no issue in our church more important than . . . leadership—none. We may have some issues that are equal to it, but none is more important."—Christon Arthur, Ph.D., Provost, Andrews University.

We find much agreement around the world: leadership is crucial to the future of our church. Yet while organizational leaders are crucial, God wants each one of us to be an influencer (Acts 1:8). This becomes clear when we see how Jesus trained the future leaders of the church—the disciples.

In this article we share an approach to leadership development that Jesus modeled and is supported by the leading literature on how leaders grow. We encourage readers to experiment with these principles and support others to grow as leaders.

JESUS AND HIS GROWING LEADERS

To Jesus, it seemed that nothing was more important to the advancement of His kingdom than this expanding group of leaders. During His brief time on earth, He was intentional with both their selection and training. In short, Jesus made leadership development a priority in His ministry. Perhaps we should as well.

When Jesus was on earth, He called ordinary people and created a new community of leaders, the disciples. This close-knit group learned with each other as they learned from the Master Teacher. Ultimately, their experiences with Jesus and each other proved to be just what was needed for growing leaders God could use to reach the world.

Notice that early in their training Jesus did not gather His disciples into a classroom to lecture, although interestingly, He did have extensive instructions for them at the end of His earthly ministry (John 13-17). Rather, He gave the invitation: "Follow Me" (Matt. 4:19). This call to action launched their journey as growing leaders and began to reveal Jesus' action-oriented approach to leader development. The extraordinary results became clear only after His ascension, when people "took note that these [ordinary] men had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13, NIV). Thankfully, Jesus is still in the business of developing leaders today (Heb. 13:7, 8).

The practices Jesus used to develop leaders are timeless. Remarkably, they were common

activities built on key principles of human growth. Yet they were combined with the presence of the Master Himself. Today the combination of these practices and the activating power of the Holy Spirit in the life of a growing follower of Christ provide an opportunity for exponential growth in one's leadership; we have seen this combination work time after time.

THE FIVE DYNAMICS OF LEADER GROWTH

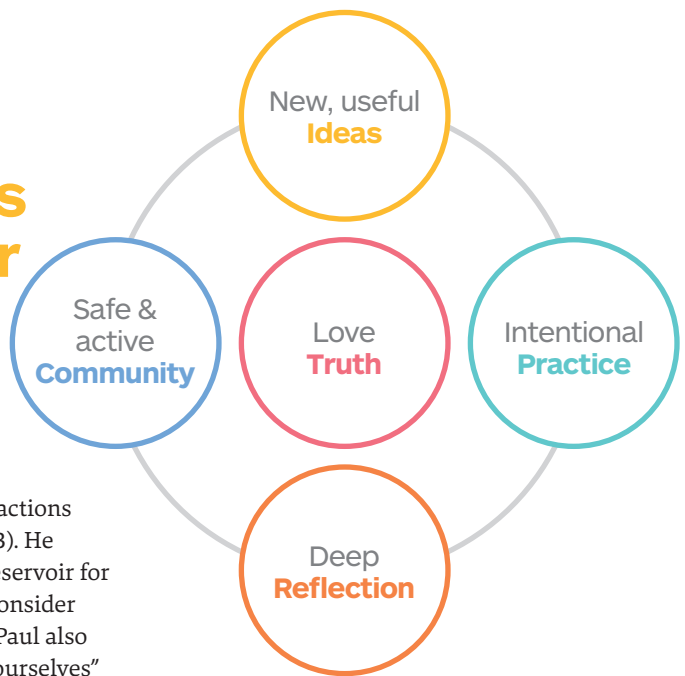
The *Five Dynamics of Leader Growth* are based on the components found in how Jesus developed His disciples. Yet they are also consistent with learning principles found in the book *Education*, current research and theory on adult learning, and the practice of our leadership programs in the School of Leadership at Andrews University. To be practical and memorable, they have been organized into a simple graphic. Below we briefly describe each dynamic and include a thought on its practical use.

Ideas: Jesus shared the principles and practices of His kingdom. While His disciples learned the new, they also needed to unlearn. He drew new ideas and practical lessons from Scripture, nature, and daily life. Thus, to grow, leaders must engage with useful, new ideas.

Practice: What Jesus taught, He practiced; and He encouraged His disciples to follow His example. Action is a fundamental principle of "real development." Ellen White emphasizes, "It is the use [we] make of knowledge that determines the value of [our] education."¹ To grow ourselves and support the growth of other leaders, we should find ways to put ideas into practice.

Reflection: Jesus encouraged His disciples to think (Isa. 1:18). He asked questions that required

Five Dynamics of Leader Growth



them to reflect on their actions and thoughts (Mark 9:33). He pointed to nature as a reservoir for leadership reflection; "Consider the lilies" (Luke 12:27). Paul also exhorts us to "examine ourselves" (2 Cor. 13:5). Reflection is a key to learning. Reflecting on our ideas and experiences provides leaders with an essential tool for integrating thought and action.

Community: In the active learning space Jesus created with His disciples it was a safe place to bring up their questions (Acts 1:6), puzzles (Mark 6:30), and issues that confronted them (Matt. 15:33). Today's leaders should follow this same community approach to learning. That is why small groups "as a basis of Christian effort" is still part of the "plan that has been presented before me by One who cannot err."² Learning groups (as we call them) should be safe and active; they are essential to support exponential growth in leaders.

Truth in Love: Finally, the center of the graphic represents the ultimate dynamic—Jesus. He is the truth, and God is love. Thus, *truth in love* is the heart of all true learning and growth. While these five dynamics were interwoven in the leadership development practices of Jesus, they still provide direction for our leadership growth today.

Globally, leadership development is a billion-dollar enterprise. Academic institutions and training

programs often offer tools that promise leadership success. We certainly need a special set of tools to navigate the growing complexity we face as church leaders today. But even the best programs will fall short of their full effectiveness without an experiential approach and presence of Jesus.

These five dynamics are deceptively simple. Still, they are challenging to integrate into a meaningful approach to developing leaders. Be intentional about growing your own leadership. Then support the growth of others. We are commissioned, "Go . . . and make disciples"—go and make leaders for God's kingdom (Matt. 28:19). ©

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 402.

² Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), p. 115.

Randy Siebold, Ph.D., and **Erich Baumgartner**, Ph.D., lead the Global Leadership Institute (GLI) at Andrews University and are faculty in the AU School of Leadership. The GLI's flagship program, LeadLab, is a part of the General Conference Leadership Development Program and has documented life-changing effects on participants and their leadership careers.

Leading by Example

Strengthened by the Lord



As the new year begins, it is natural to wonder what the future holds. While we don't know exactly what each day will bring, we have a "hope that burns within our hearts, hope in the coming of the Lord."¹

And as we look for the Lord's soon return, it is important that we each take up our God-given responsibilities in leading others to Christ, and especially in training young people to become strong leaders for the Lord.

Jesus tells us, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). As branches, we are to be grafted into the main Vine, Jesus Christ. What is contained in the personal treasure of our hearts is fundamental before we can share the truth with anyone else. It is not possible to share what you don't have.

Leading and training young people is one of our most important responsibilities. Whether parents, grandparents, teachers, pastors, youth leaders, or some other capacity, I encourage you to work with young people to instill in them their identity in Christ, helping them to be fully involved in the service and mission of the church.

Young people need to be challenged to read and live God's Word. They do not need to be entertained. Feed them from God's Word and put them to work in

service for God and others. They are one of the most vital parts of the final proclamation of the three angels' messages, with Christ and His righteousness at the very core of those three messages. Through the Holy Spirit's power, they are to turn people back to the true, biblical worship of God.

GOOD OR EVIL?

Jesus tells us, "For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. . . . A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth the good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks" (Luke 6:43-45).

Clearly, out of our heart comes good or evil; it all depends upon what we are focusing. What consumes our thoughts and activities? Whom are we, as sons and daughters of God, constantly leaning

on for our personal lives and direction? Do we look to ourselves? to “experts”? social media? others? Or do we lean on Jesus Christ, His Word, and His Spirit of Prophecy? What are the words coming from the abundance of our hearts?

Our professed connection with Christ does not necessarily bear fruit—we need to be truly grounded in Him. What a privilege to spend time with Him every day in His Word, in the Spirit of Prophecy, and in prayer, earnestly seeking that strong connection and asking for the latter rain of the Holy Spirit. What a privilege to be in Christ and then, through His power, produce “much fruit” (John 15:5)!

The fruit we produce will be seen by our young people as we share with them the goodness of God and Christ’s justifying and sanctifying righteousness, covering us with His robe of righteousness, and dwelling in us to help us to become more and more like Him.

As you share the life-changing principles of the Bible with young people, Christ’s righteousness and His plan of salvation must reign supreme—young people will recognize that Christ is our All in All. As God’s last generation of people—and who would not want to be part of God’s last generation and see His coming without seeing death, all through Christ’s righteousness?—we are to exemplify His justifying and sanctifying righteousness in our living and witnessing, all through His power.

CONNECTED WITH CHRIST

Christ’s righteousness unfolded in the sanctuary service is one of the most powerful ways to help young people understand Christ’s work for them and how to be connected with Him. That marvelous cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary began in 1844, as

prophesied in Daniel 8:14, and is ongoing now. Share this amazing doctrine of the sanctuary and how you can be grafted into the life of the Humble Lamb, the High Priest, and the Judge—all of whom are Jesus Christ, the life-giving vine and producer of “good fruit” in us.

Every doctrine we have has Christ at the very center. The distinctiveness of the Seventh-day Adventist message as it is found in Jesus Christ is to be proclaimed with Holy Spirit power since it is the embodiment of the three angels of Revelation 14 and the fourth angel of Revelation 18. As leaders and mentors of future leaders, we are to make plain the full Bible truth as it is in Jesus so no one will be deceived by the great deceiver, Satan.

OPEN CHANNEL

In *The Desire of Ages* we read, “Abiding in Christ means a constant receiving of His Spirit, a life of unreserved surrender to His service. The channel of communication must be open continually between man and his God. As the vine branch constantly draws the sap from the living vine, so are we to cling to Jesus, and receive from Him by faith the strength and perfection of His own character.”²

Transformation happens when the Word of God is presented, when Christian love is shown, and when the Holy Spirit has a chance to change a person into a new creature in Christ. This is our mandate for helping young people and older ones, in finding Christ and His power to save.

As we focus on mentoring young people to be faithful leaders for the Lord, let us realize that much depends on our own relationship with Christ, focusing upon heavenly truth and not being distracted by the world’s allurements. God tells us in Romans 12:2: “Do not

Young people need to be challenged to read and live God’s Word. They do not need to be entertained.

be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

We can help our young people find this true maturity in Christ as we ourselves reflect Christ in our personal spiritual connection, in our study of God’s Holy Word, in our personal prayer life, in our service and mission outreach, in our personal lifestyle matching God’s ideal for our lives, in our choice of music, entertainment, and free-time activities, in our relationship with our spouses and families, in our personal stewardship, in our healthful approach to what we eat and drink, in our love for that which is true, noble, just, pure, lovely, praiseworthy, and of a good report—all through the righteousness of Christ working in us to will and do of God’s good pleasure.

Through the power of God, let’s lift up the standard of Christian living for young people and let them rise to the height of God’s ideal through the power of the Holy Spirit working in us and in them! ☺

¹ Wayne Hooper, “We Have This Hope,” *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, no. 214.

² Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 676.

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

Faith in Action

Failed... Again!

Or did you?

BY HOMER TRECARTIN

There he sat. On the rubbish heap where fire licked slowly at his wobbly legs and whitewashed neck. With a gasp I rushed over to the burning pile, grabbed a long stick, and poked at the smoking masterpiece. It was my wooden horse. The one I had made with my own hatchet. I had split the boards, chopped them to the right lengths, pounded in bent nails with the back of the hatchet, and given him a good coating with whitewash left over from doing the barn walls.

I was willing to admit he wasn't very pretty. He couldn't stand up well and certainly wouldn't have held up my baby brother. But burn him?

After a couple of days of looking at his charred legs and smoked-up back, I realized he was a flop. A few more days passed, and I slipped him onto the next burn pile and hoped the old rusty nails wouldn't poke into my bike tires when I rode through that area in the future.

Years went by. I was older and more skilled. My folks had a very rustic cabin up in the woods in Vermont. We had a wood cookstove and an outhouse, and our water was running only when we ran with a bucket of water from the spring.

It was a fun place to go, but it could get a bit boring after a week or two, especially for a teenager. One summer vacation I was looking for something to do, a project with which I could demonstrate my budding abilities.

Then I noticed Mom and my sisters struggling to get up into the door of the cabin. The rocks we had piled there as steps weren't solid and rocked precariously. Suddenly I had a brilliant idea—I would make stairs!

I cut two birch poles for the rails, and after hours of cutting and chiseling and nailing, I had a very good-looking set of steps. In fact, I was getting really excited about the possibilities of a career designing magnificent staircases for the world's fanciest buildings.

Then out of the corner of my eye I noticed a movement. Almost in slow motion I watched my younger brothers count "one, two, three" and then jump from the cabin doorway. As they landed, my beautiful steps collapsed into a heap of rubble.

Hot tears stung my eyes as I yelled at them. But down deep inside I knew the truth—my steps had been field-tested and failed.

* * *

Christian author and lecturer John C. Maxwell in his book *Failing Forward*¹ tells the story of a pottery teacher who tried an experiment. Half the class would be graded on the quantity of work they produced, and the other half would be graded strictly on quality.

The "quantity group" could get an A if they produced just 15 pounds of pottery. No questions asked. No judgment made as to how the final product looked. The grade would be based simply on the weight of the pottery.

The "quality group" would be graded on only one piece of pottery. They didn't have to make four different styles or use three different media. Just make one nice piece, and they would be evaluated for form, creativity, beauty, construction, and so forth.

On the final day of class, the quantity group lugged boxes of pottery up to the scale. There were many A's, and, surprisingly, several gorgeous pieces. They had done some very nice work.

When it was the quality group's turn, there were no *oohs* and *aaahs* when they unwrapped their specimens. There wasn't one nice-looking piece of pottery among them. They had spent so long trying to be perfect and were so fearful of failing that they hadn't turned out one usable or pretty piece of pottery. The difference was that the quantity group had tried and failed so many times

Perhaps we need to change the way we look at failure.

that they had mastered many techniques and produced some amazing work.

Perhaps we need to change the way we look at failure. Maybe it isn't really a brick wall that marks the end of a dream. Maybe it's really a stepping-stone that will help us accomplish our dreams.

And maybe, just maybe, it isn't a failure at all.

* * *

You know the biblical story. Jesus calms the sea and then casts demons out of two terrifying men. The demons rush into a herd of pigs. And the pigs (all 2,000 of them) plunge over a cliff and drown. Word spreads quickly, and soon the people politely chase Jesus out of the region. (See Luke 8:26-39; Matt. 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20.)

Failure? Had Jesus misread the Father's will for that day? Had He rushed into a situation and made the wrong decision? It certainly looked like it—until He came back later, and the whole region flocked to Him because of the testimony of those men (see Matt. 14:34-36; Mark 6:53-56).

God looks at life differently from the way we do. Maybe what we think is a failure really isn't one at all.

* * *

Daddy came bouncing into the kitchen and pulled a beautifully wrapped little box out of his pocket. Mommy's eyes sparkled as she carefully began to open it. She finally pulled out a tiny glass bottle with a rubber squeeze bulb on top. "Oh, Ralph!" she exclaimed as she gave Daddy a big kiss.

What could possibly be so exciting about a little glass bottle with a rubber squeeze ball? we wondered.

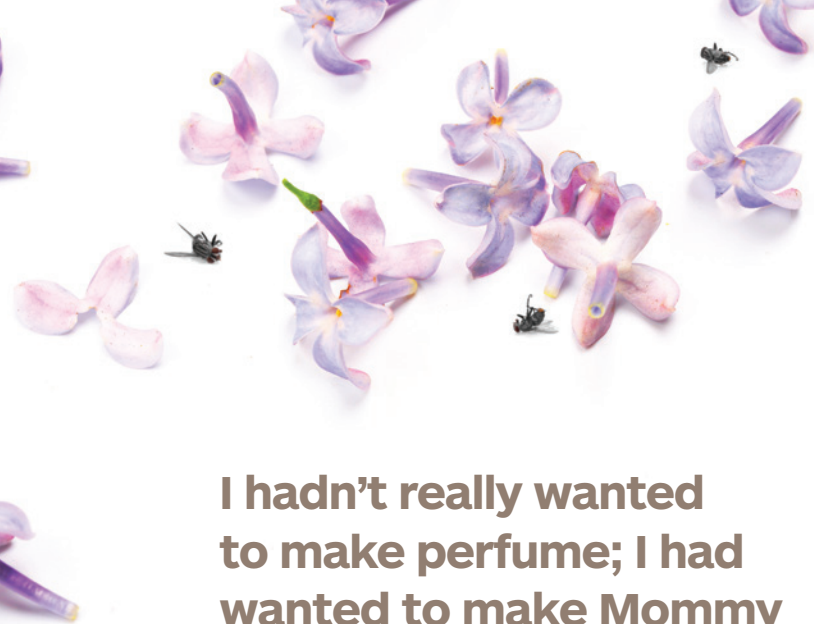
"Boys, it's perfume," she said. It smelled like lilacs.

Mommy sure had gotten worked up over that little bottle, so my brother, Lowell, and I decided that if Mommy could get so excited over a little bottle of perfume, we would make her buckets of it!

We didn't, of course, know how to make perfume, so we asked Daddy how to do it.

"Well," Daddy said, "probably with bug juice and lilac blossoms."

We believed him.



I hadn't really wanted to make perfume; I had wanted to make Mommy happy, and in that I had succeeded.

Lilacs were in bloom down by the chicken coop; we also found lots of flies. We borrowed a pie plate from the kitchen when Mommy wasn't looking, stripped mountains of blossoms off the back side of the bushes, and piled them into our pie plate. Then we sprinkled dead flies over the lilac blossoms. But now what?

Lowell suggested that it probably had to cook. We couldn't go into the kitchen to cook it, so we climbed up into the rafters of the chicken coop and opened a small window onto the roof. We put the pan out on the roof, poured water over our precious mixture, and left it to cook in the hot sun.

An hour later we returned and smelled our pie plate of blossoms and flies, but it didn't smell yet. Another hour later it still wasn't doing anything. We then mashed up the mixture and kept checking it until the next afternoon—when we held our noses as we backed away from the rotting pile of crushed blossoms and mangled flies.

We never told Mom about our attempt to make perfume. Time went on, and we forgot all about it. But as I got older, I started writing out some of the childhood experiences I remembered—including our failed attempt at making perfume—and sent them to Mom and Dad. They loved reading them. Then one day Dad called me and said, "You should have seen your mother last night when we read about you trying to make perfume with dead flies and lilac blossoms. Your mom's eyes got all soft, and she said, 'What precious boys.'"

Right then I realized something about failure. Mom got excited as she recognized not the gift, but the love in two little boys' hearts. So I hadn't really failed after all! I hadn't really wanted to make perfume; I had wanted to make Mommy happy, and in that I had succeeded.

Obviously, I didn't turn out to be a famous perfume maker. In fact, I never tried again. And one day I even read a Bible text that would have saved my brother and me a lot of trouble if we'd read it back then: "As dead flies cause even a bottle of perfume to stink, so a little foolishness spoils great wisdom and honor" (Eccl. 10:1, NLT).²

But I did learn a valuable lesson: God looks at me the same way my mom did. He doesn't see the "things" we give Him or do for Him. The very best we can give is no better than that smelly mass of flies and blossoms. Instead, He sees the love in our hearts that wants to do something special for Him.

* * *

On the cross Jesus cried out, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). To His closest followers it looked like another failure. Jesus had said the wrong thing to the wrong people one too many times. He'd gone to Jerusalem when He should have stayed away. What a waste of life and potential! What a terrible failure!

Except it wasn't a failure at all. That shout wasn't a shout of defeat; it was a victory cry. This wasn't failure; it was the greatest triumph the universe had ever seen. It just might not look like victory until the scene depicted in Revelation 7:9, 10 takes place. A great multitude, which no one can number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, will be standing there before the throne. And then it will finally be clear that Jesus' life and death wasn't a failure at all.

And neither is yours! Not in God's sight.

As we look back over our lives, we may feel we really made a mess of things. And maybe we did. But whether we've actually failed or whether it just appears as though we did, the next step is the same—talk to God about it, take His hand, and get up and try again and again and again. Because the only real failure happens when we fail to get up. ©

¹ John C. Maxwell, *Failing Forward* (New York: HarperCollins Leadership, 2000).

² Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Homer Trecartin has worked as a pastor, teacher, administrator, and missionary. He served for several years in the Middle East, and recently retired from working with Global Mission and the Office of Adventist Mission at the General Conference in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

Resounding Praise



Do we pause to praise when we feel overwhelmed by work or face a daunting deadline? Do we think of praising God amid pain, chaos, or suffering?

On October 16, 2022, we welcomed our firstborn, Judah, into this world. The moment we had been anticipating for months had finally arrived. Our baby greeted the world loudly before he was carried away by the pediatrician. All the hours of painful labor and the months of discomfort vanished at the sound of his piercing cry. As I faded in and out of consciousness in the delivery room, the only thing I remember was saying, “Thank You, Lord.”

Praise, the linchpin in our Christian journey, is an expression of love and admiration of our God. The Israelites burst into praise with songs of joy and deliverance after they crossed the Red Sea. David danced before the Lord with joy; the patriarchs built altars of praise; and the 24 elders bow before the throne saying, “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power” (Rev. 4:10, 11, NIV).

Praise naturally flows during our mountaintop experiences. We respond in worship, awe, thanksgiving, tears, and joy during these intimate moments spent in the presence of God. At times

we wait for something dramatic to occur to find ourselves bowing before the Lord. Whether it be a burning bush, a talking donkey, a parted sea, or a miraculous healing, exuberant praise is often preceded by extraordinary events.

But how about praise in the ordinary? Do we pause to praise when we feel overwhelmed by work or face a daunting deadline? Do we think of praising God amid pain, chaos, or suffering? It’s not natural, and it

doesn’t come easy. This reminds me of my fellow students from Ukraine that I have the privilege of teaching English online as part of my scholarship work. I always begin by asking about their welfare. I have received mixed responses, spanning from “so-so,” “OK,” “good,” to sighs with a look of uncertainty. How would I respond if I were in their situation? Would I praise under these circumstances?

One admirable quality reflected in David’s psalms is praise and worship even in dire times. David had found the secret to surviving in this broken world. “Praise!” Just praise! Praise moves our gaze from ourselves and our circumstances to our mighty God—our God of joy and peace. This attitude of praise then generates a sense of hope and confidence.

Yadah, a Hebrew word that describes praise, invites us to raise our hands in thanksgiving. It also invites us to lift our hearts in praise even if the wait seems long or the hope of deliverance grows dim. It reminds us to lift our petitions in prayer and thanksgiving even when our heart aches or our dreams feel shattered. *Yadah* eventually leads us to lift our lives to the only One as we realize our helplessness and recognize His awesomeness.

We praised God as we read together the first passage of Scripture for Judah: “I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear of it and be glad. Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together” (Ps. 34:1-3). May this year be one of resounding praise. ©

Beersheba Jacob is a doctoral student in missiology at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, **Cavite, Philippines**. She is married to Andrew.

Devotional

The Prodigal Son's Older Brother

Hope in our seasons of burnout

And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours'" (Luke 15:31, NASB).*

There are seasons when it seems like the weight of your consistency bears heavily on your heart. You've tried your best and been diligent in effort or prayer, and yet you've nothing to show for it. Worse still, it's almost as if every time you look up, someone around you is being "blessed."

Perhaps you've prayed longer or worked harder, but it appears as if the prayers of others are answered without delay and yours are not. You're used to being happy for everyone around you, celebrating their blessings and miracles, but in the secret parts of your heart you wonder to yourself, *When will it be my turn to be happy for me?*

What do we do when we feel as though we've labored but have nothing to show for our effort? What can we do when it seems all our effort is met with silence?

WHAT TO DO?

When we feel as if we've labored in vain, a beautiful story to reflect on is the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32. Perhaps you've heard the story. In the parable the son approaches his father and asks for his inheritance. Although his father doesn't have to oblige, he willingly acquiesces to his son's desire. The son leaves for a faraway place where he frivolously spends all his inheritance living as he chooses. When famine hits, he finds himself desperate enough to eat the food of the pigs he is taking care of. Only then does the prodigal realize that the lowest servant in his father's home is treated better than he's living right now.

The son resolves that he'll go to his father and ask to be one of the servants. Upon arriving home, he's brought face to face with his father's love. Not only is his father waiting for him when he comes home, but he gives him his best robe, puts a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet, and throws a feast in celebration of his return.

When we think of the story of the prodigal son, God's unwavering love is often presented as the key theme. But for a moment I would like you to reflect on the experience of the third

character in this story, the older brother. I believe the encounter with his father can give respite to the weary soul.

THE OLDER BROTHER

We're introduced to the older brother as he's working in the field. His attention is brought to his brother's return when he hears music and a celebration. The Bible tells us that he is filled with anger and refuses to join. When the father inquires about the reason for his absence from the celebration, in frustration the older brother responds that he has been in his father's house tirelessly working and obeying all the commands, but never once has there been a celebration for him!

Often the bitterness of the older brother is emphasized when exploring this parable, but let's evaluate the situation through his lens. Not only does his younger brother receive the gift of his inheritance preemptively and then squander it, but upon returning home after his poor choices, he receives an additional gift of celebration. From the older brother's perspective, all he sees is his brother being celebrated for his unfaithfulness to his father. All the while he never once receives either of the gifts his brother has been given, though he has been faithful.

From that perspective his frustration is understandable. Perhaps he feels unseen or exhausted, and he wonders where his reward is. Perhaps he feels angry because it seems as if his brother's negligence has been rewarded, while his own diligence has gone unnoticed. Perhaps he feels envious. Maybe he wonders what his life would have been like or what joys he could have experienced if he had taken his inheritance and lived on his terms.

The older brother seems as though he's suffering from burnout. But the father's response to his weary son comprises words we can apply to our lives when we feel exhausted beyond relief. To the older brother the father says, "Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours." What is the significance of this response? The father has sought to show his older son that the gift to be desired is not the inheritance, the perceived freedom, or the celebration—but the father himself. The gift all along was the love of the father.

HOW DOES IT APPLY TO ME?

It's easy to believe that when we pray for a job, a relationship, financial stability, or some form of success and we attain it, it's a sign of God's blessing and goodness toward us. Likewise, when the things we pray for and seek become unattainable, when we're disappointed, or denied, or can't discern an answer, we often conflate this with a sign of God's rejection. It's also easy, as did the older brother, to think that our consistent effort is the way to garner favor with God. But at some point we'll end up just as the brother did—angry when things don't go according to our plans and bitter when they do for others.

Christ wants us to understand that what we seek can't be found in tangible things such as inheritance, financial stability, relationship, or success. Nor can it be discovered in habits that we so often pride ourselves on, such as obedience or diligence or consistency. There's no satisfaction in working mindlessly toward these goals. The deepest longing of our heart is for God, and He's already ours. And just as the father met the prodigal son on that road when he was returning home and he met his older son tired out

The deepest longing of our heart is for God, and He's already ours.

in the field, God will consistently meet you and remind you that He was the gift all along. He'll repeat this truth to you in small and intimate ways. You are His child; therefore, you have full access to everything you need, whether you can feel it now or not.

When you've worked and given all you can, and your soul feels exhausted; when you're tempted to question if you've been forgotten and overlooked, challenge yourself with these questions: What am I truly looking and working for? What do I think I will find if I receive exactly what I want? How would my mindset and behavior change if I cherished the idea that I already have the greatest gift of all, which is the love of God? How can I reframe my mind to see that every season, be it a season of abundance or waiting, and every gift—whether intangible or tangible—is simply an extension and reflection of the love God has freely given?

Are you tired and feel as though you have little to show for your effort? Take comfort in the promise made to the older son: Everything that belongs to your Father also belongs to you. ☺

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

Ezrica Bennett is a young adult leader at the Loma Linda University church in southern **California, United States.**

The 1893 World's Fair, hosted in Chicago, Illinois, United States, commemorated the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus arriving in North America. In the decades leading up to the World's Fair there was a large Sunday Law movement in the United States. Sunday laws were very popular in the 1800s, and courts blatantly leaned on Christianity for justifying the legislation.

Sunday laws were used as tools of religious intolerance in multiple American states. Sabbathkeepers would be prosecuted for doing labor on their own property on Sunday, when Sundaykeepers guilty of the same conduct were not prosecuted at all.

With Sunday's popularity, it's no surprise the question arose: What about Sundays at the fair? The construction of the World's Fair was a massive endeavor, requiring a significant amount of capital. As the fair grew closer, the board of directors needed more money to finish in time, and they petitioned the U.S. Congress. In late

1892 Congress authorized funding for the fair, with the condition that it would be closed on Sundays.

INHERENT PROBLEMS

The Sunday movement had been well organized in securing this outcome, and it seemed to catch most off guard when the provision passed. Protests arose, and Congress held hearings January 10-13, 1893, to determine whether it should revoke the Sunday closing position.

Those who supported the closure of the World's Fair on Sunday did so because they envisioned a particular type of national community whose political identity was inextricably linked with religious belief. This runs contrary

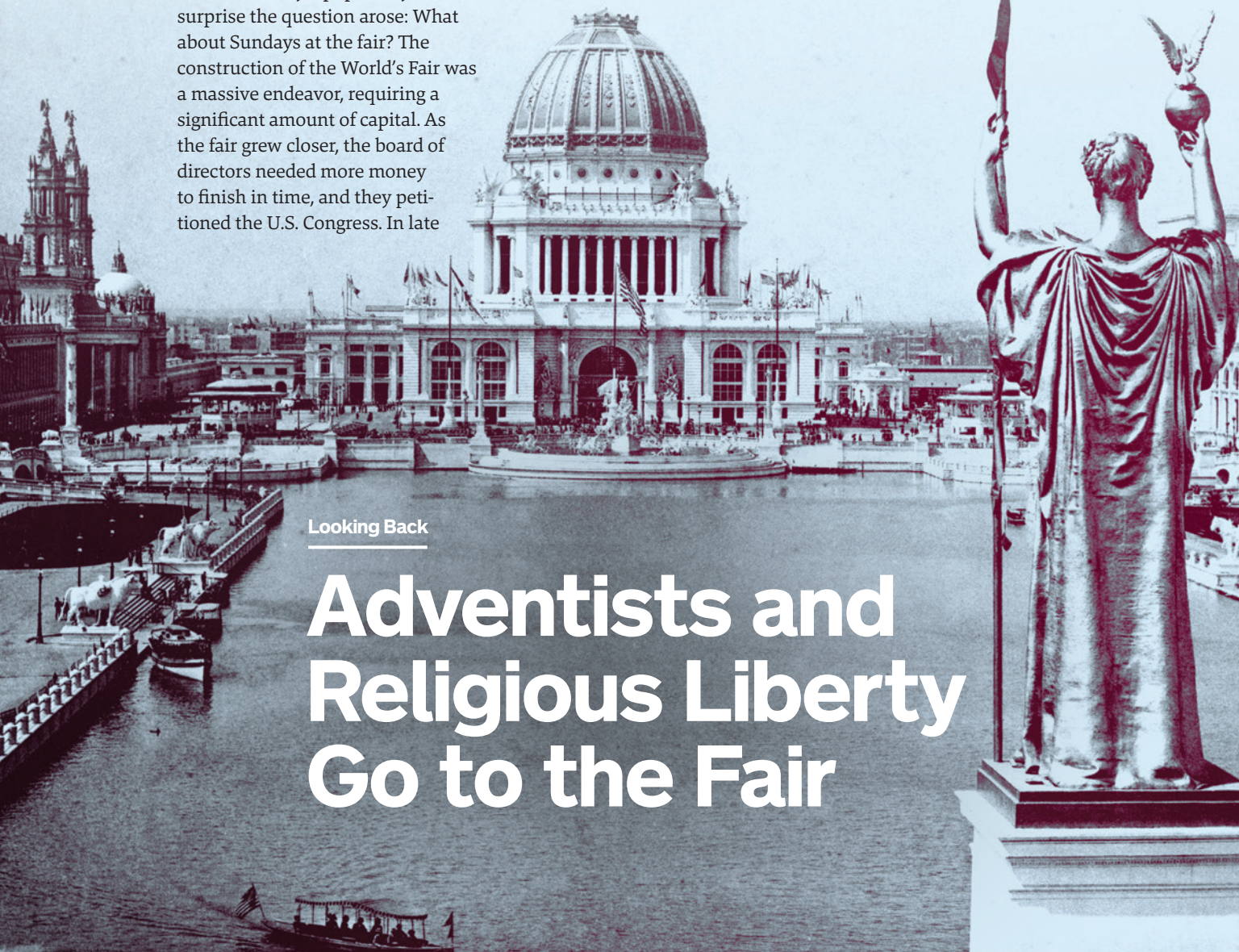
to what both the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy teach.

"Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, . . . but now My kingdom is not from here'" (John 18:36). "Not by the decisions of courts or councils or legislative assemblies, not by the patronage of worldly great men, is the kingdom of Christ established, but by the implanting of Christ's nature in humanity through the work of the Holy Spirit," noted Ellen White.¹

Many recognized the inherent problem with a legislative body dictating the fair's being closed on

Looking Back

Adventists and Religious Liberty Go to the Fair



Sunday, based on religious reasons. Among them was Seventh-day Adventist pastor, editor, and educator Alonzo T. Jones.

When Congress signaled it was willing to reconsider the concerns to the condition of the provision, Jones appeared to testify before Congress. He criticized the Sunday closure as the result of Congress interpreting Scripture and imposing that interpretation on the nation, at the expense of communities outside the majority. It was a violation of the U.S. Constitution.

This was not his first time testifying before Congress on the issue of Sunday laws. In 1888 there was a national Sunday rest law pending before a committee in Congress where he testified. There, rather than rely on constitutional arguments for religious liberty, he relied on biblical arguments.

Jones suggested that Christ's admonition in Matthew 22:21 to

render unto God what is God's and render unto Caesar what is Caesar's established a hard and fast rule that civil government could not violate. He argued that through this statement there are areas of life over which the civil government has jurisdiction, just as religion has jurisdiction over other areas of life. In no way, however, do these two spheres overlap. Civil government could not legislate in any way religious observances. Drawing the line between what the civil state can regulate and what it cannot, Jones argued, "In the things which pertain to our duty to God, with the individual's right of serving God as one's conscience dictates, society has nothing to do."²

The civil government, according to Jones's theory, could make laws regulating things that pertain to a person's relationship between them and their fellow individuals. Jones cited the structure of the Ten Commandments as the support for this feature of his argument. The first four commandments deal with a person's relationship with God. In contrast, the last six commandments have to do with a person's interaction with other humans. Jones argued that if the conduct that the government desired to regulate fell within the last six commandments, then the legislation was appropriate. If the legislation was akin to anything in the first four commandments, though, it would be illegitimate, and a civil government could not pass such laws.

Jones then made arguments that could have come out of only an Adventist understanding of Revelation 13. He pointed to early Christianity as being persecuted by Rome, only eventually to have the two unite, to a disastrous effect, and the development of the Papacy. He warned that if Congress followed through with a Sunday law, it would follow in the same footsteps and establish a similar power.

Sunday laws were very popular in the 1800s, and courts blatantly leaned on Christianity for justifying the legislation.

WHY BOTHER?

Why did Jones, as an Adventist looking for Jesus' soon return, bother testifying before Congress in 1888 and 1893? A few days before Jones's 1888 testimony, Ellen White wrote in the *Review and Herald*: "We have been looking many years for a Sunday law to be enacted in our land; and now that the movement is right upon us, we ask, What are our people going to do in the matter? . . . We should especially seek God for grace and power to be given His people now. God lives; and we do not believe that the time has fully come when He would have our liberties restricted."³

Scripture, Spirit of Prophecy, and the experience of early Adventists illustrate that opportunities to advocate for religious liberty may arise in unexpected arenas. But we can be prepared and equipped to do so, and it is a prophetic duty to advocate for religious freedom as long as possible. ©

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 509.

² Senate Miscellaneous Document No. 43, 50th Congress, 2nd Session, 1888, p. 74; see also *The National Sunday Law: Argument of Alonzo T. Jones Before the United States Senate Committee on Education and Labor, in Washington, D.C., Dec. 13, 1888*.

³ Ellen G. White, in *Review and Herald*, Dec. 11, 1888.

Amy Sheppard Ratsara is an attorney and lives with her family in Michigan.

Clouds and the Messiah

Q

Is the coming of the Son of man mentioned in Daniel 7:13 a reference to the second coming of Christ?

A

Some interpreters have argued that the New Testament interprets Daniel 7:13 as referring to Christ's glorious second coming because in both cases He is coming on the clouds. Before we reach any conclusion, we need to examine the biblical evidence.

THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN IN DANIEL 7:13

Daniel sees in a vision one like a Son of man—suggesting that He is more than a human being; He is the Messiah—coming on the clouds. He is moving from one place—to where the Ancient of Days is now located, in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary—a horizontal movement. He is joining God to participate in a judgment that occurs after the little horn oppressed God's people for 1,260 prophetic days (A.D. 538-1798). Legal decisions are made based on the analysis of what was written in the heavenly books. At the close of the judgment, the Son of man receives glory, power, and kingship. It's obvious that in his vision Daniel sees and describes for us what will be transpiring in heaven at a specific moment in the prophetic calendar.

THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

When we examine the New Testament passages where the phrase “the Son of Man coming on the clouds,” or a similar one, is found (Matt. 24:30; 26:64; Mark 13:26; 14:62; Luke 21:27; Rev. 1:7), this is what the texts indicate: the Son of man is being seen by all

human beings, “even they who pierced Him” (Rev. 1:7; cf. Matt. 24:30); He is coming from heaven to earth on the clouds—a vertical movement (cf. 1 Thess. 4:16, 17); the texts are describing the second coming of Christ; the Son of man is coming to gather His people and to defeat His enemies (Matt. 24:30; Mark 13:26; Rev. 1:7); He comes with great power and glory (Matt. 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 21:27), not to receive those attributes. It's absolutely clear that the New Testament is describing an event that will transpire on earth visible to all and not just to a prophet.

COMPARING THE EVIDENCE

When we analyze the information listed above, the conclusion is unavoidable: we are dealing with two different prophetic events that are, nevertheless, related to each other. They are chronologically connected in the sense that what takes place in heaven is followed by what will take place on earth, the coming of Christ. Notice that after the 1,260 prophetic days the Son of man receives glory, power, and kingship. Now, at the return of Christ, what was granted to Him in heaven is made visible to humans. This is not about a double-fulfillment prophecy but about two prophecies, each one fulfilled at a particular moment. The use of the phrase “the Son of Man coming with the clouds” found in Daniel is alluded to in the New Testament for at least one particular purpose. I would suggest that the allusion intends to identify Jesus Christ with the Messiah that in Daniel received the right to rule as king and that is human and yet much more. The allusion legitimizes His divine appointment as God's Messiah. ©

Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, Th.D., is retired after a career serving as pastor, professor, and theologian.

Adventist Health Studies

Do they apply worldwide?

Our Adventist health literature relies heavily on the findings of the Adventist Health Studies.¹ I understand that these studies have been conducted in North America. Are the findings applicable to Adventists around the world? Is there data from other regions?

We're very blessed to have the Adventist health message. And you're correct—the initial two Adventist Health Studies, as well as four additional studies focusing on the health of Adventists, have been conducted in the United States, anchored and guided by Loma Linda University in California.

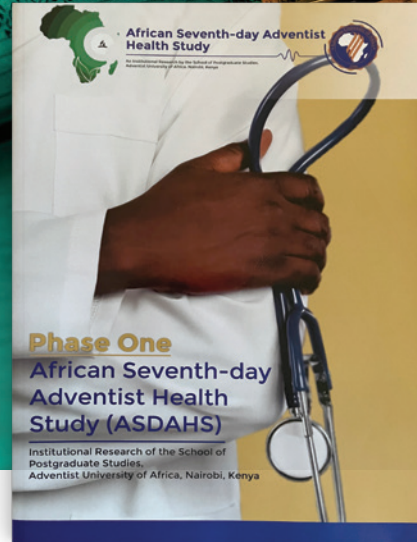
Adventist Health Study 2 (AHS 2) continues to study participants drawn from across North America (U.S. and Canada). Having enrolled close to 100,000 subjects, the study provides greater ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic diversity than previous studies. Until recently, Gary Fraser—internationally renowned researcher, scholar, and clinician—has guided AHS 2 as principal investigator, with outstanding leadership and service. Dr. Michael Orlich is now serving in that role.

Three U.S.-based studies are ongoing: AHS 2, the Adventist Religion and Health Study, and the Adventist Health and Smog Study. Europe, South Korea, and, most recently, Argentina and Africa have initiated Adventist health studies.

Phase one of the latest study of the health of Seventh-day Adventists has just recently been published. Daniel Ganu, professor of public health at the Adventist University of Africa (AUA), has spearheaded the African Seventh-day Adventist Health Study (ASDAHS).² This study is being conducted across the three divisions in Africa and is examining whether the health teachings of the Adventist Church have affected the health, mortality, and morbidity of African Adventist Church members. Additionally, the data gathered will sample the health and well-being of Adventist membership in Africa and inform health education strategies/interventions needed to improve wholistic health outcomes.

The overall data accumulated from the studies are carefully processed and take into account age, gender, race, and ethnicity of the subjects. The studies have adequate numbers of subjects and are powered appropriately, enhancing credibility and applicability across global population groups.

Our column has frequently emphasized the robust consonance of Adventists' improved health outcomes by worldwide peer-reviewed health science. We fully believe that what *Time* magazine termed "the Adventist Advantage"³ applies globally to all takers and results in less cancer, less diabetes, better heart health, and—possibly—improved longevity!



We salute the leadership and initiative that has guided the various Adventist Health Studies in North America, Europe, South Korea, Argentina (all ongoing), and now Africa. We are blessed as a church to have had inspired health instruction from the Scriptures and from the pen of Ellen White—sound principles that have been confirmed again and again by health research and science.

"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience" (1 Peter 3:15, 16, NIV).

Our hope and salvation are in Christ. His will is that we enjoy shalom—life to the full—even in our brokenness. We've been given the wholistic health message and even the evidence that it's effective. By His grace, let's live it! ☺

¹ <https://adventisthealthstudy.org/studies>

² <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1erjCAjDg9gY-jy8sVcXdyrNekAdLD62/view>

³ *Time*, Oct. 28, 1966; Gary E. Fraser, *Diet, Life Expectancy, and Chronic Disease: Studies of Seventh-day Adventists and Other Vegetarians* (Oxford University Press, 2003).

Peter N. Landless, a board-certified nuclear cardiologist, is director of Adventist Health Ministries at the General Conference.

Zeno L. Charles-Marcel, a board-certified internist, is an associate director of Adventist Health Ministries at the General Conference.



Hold the Rain



“May I Tell You a Story?”

BY DICK DUERKSEN

If it rains, I cannot land. Rain would make the clay landing strip so slick that the plane would slide right off the end. Pray! Maybe God will hold the rain off a few more days.”

Actually, rain was not the worst of their problems. It was 1989, and Peru had become a dangerous place to operate a mission clinic and school. If you were helping people with education, health care, farming, or any other “kindness” activity, the *terroristas* were promising to kill you. Right now!

“We worried about it every day,”

says Patti. “Knowing we might have to flee at any minute, we had our passports and Bibles packed in a small suitcase.”

Nearly seven years had passed since Dale and Patti Duerksen had opened a small clinic along the Pachitea River downstream from the small town of Puerto Inca in Peru’s Amazon basin. The people were thrilled to have good basic health care and had welcomed the missionaries with open arms. Before long the clinic had added a school that was packed with eager students.

“Our mission center was developing just as we had hoped,” remembers Patti.

Patients, and students, poured in every day. Some walked miles down jungle pathways. Others rowed up or down the river in boats their parents had built. Everyone came eager to learn, to find balm for aching muscles, to talk with Dale or Patti about the health of their children, or just to play games in the field behind the new school.

“We didn’t really have much, but we offered the best we could for the people,” Dale says.

Dale and Patti had been inspired by reading about George Müller and Hudson Taylor living sacrificially so that people in distant lands could learn the good news of the gospel. They had previously served in Bolivia and Puerto Rico. Now they felt God calling them back to a mission field, but weren’t sure where, when, or how their dream might come to life. Then they discovered the needs of the jungle people along the Pachitea River, and they knew it was the right place. Now their

calling had a name, a river, and hundreds of people who would be thrilled to have a clinic and a school.

“We were an hour by boat from where we could find basic supplies, and it was a long day’s trip out to Pucallpa, where we could purchase medicines. Every three weeks we’d make the trip, especially to purchase the medicines I needed in the clinic,” Patti says. “The medicines cost about US\$1,000 every month, and we depended totally upon the Lord to provide. It was very faith-building, and somehow there was always just enough money in the bank so I could buy the medicines for my patients.”

The school grew. The clinic prospered. And the garden provided fresh vegetables. Then the politics of Peru began to unravel. The history books describe a conflict over profits from the cocaine trade, mixed with a thirst for power and a terrorist group that was determined to destabilize the country. Before long the terrorists were winning, and they decided anyone doing “kindness” for the people had to leave the country. Or be killed.

That included Dale and Patti—the clinic, the school, and the church God was growing in the region.

Across the jungle, in the city of Pucallpa, the Seventh-day Adventist Church had established a mission aviation program. The church plane carried pastors, teachers, and supplies from the city into the jungle villages. In 1987 the church asked Bill Norton to move to Pucallpa as pilot and mechanic.

Bill and Bonnie made the move, excited about the possibilities of ministering in the jungle. Bonnie was extra-excited because the mission plane could reach her parents, Dale and Patti, in just 45 minutes of jungle flying.

"They were in just a little niche on the river," Bonnie remembers. "We visited them at the clinic, and they visited us in Pucallpa. But, as the terrorists gained power, all travel became much more dangerous, and we talked mainly by radio."

Bill continued ferrying pastors in and out of the jungle villages, often being away from home for a week or more, carefully landing the plane where it would be safe from attack. If he was flying near Dale and Patti, he'd air-drop their mail into their backyard.

"Doing this work was the lifelong end of all our preparations to serve God," says Bill. "But we were quickly in a world without law and order, where the terrorists were directly threatening the police, people in government, and all missionaries."

Bill told Dale that they needed to find a place for him to land the plane near their clinic. That was a challenge, because there was no open space on the school's side of the river, but Bill saw a pasture across the river that might work.

The rancher gave permission, and the school students began clearing stones, chopping out stumps, and chasing away cattle to make a landing strip just long enough for the mission plane. It was a field that needed tender care, but when the strip was 75 percent cleared, Bill flew in.

"I made a couple very light trips, and then told the folks that it was getting too dangerous to do much more. I told them to pack a suitcase and be ready to leave with an hour's warning. Then we all prayed for God to hold off the rain."

The rainy season dumps barrels of water onto the Peruvian jungle, and the rains were already a couple weeks late. Any day now the carefully cleared



Dale and Patti Duerksen

landing strip would turn into a clay quagmire. Landing, and taking off, would be impossible.

Every time he'd land at his home airbase, Bill would put just enough fuel in the Cessna 185 for a round trip to the clinic. Ready to carry two passengers and a small suitcase.

Three terrorists showed up at the clinic on a Sunday morning. Walking slowly. Asking hard questions. Wanting to know details about Dale and Patti's lives. They finally left. The next morning Dale called Bill on the radio. Bill listened, and said, "This is it. I'll be there in 45 minutes. Just the suitcase, OK?"

"I flew 50 feet above the trees that day," Bill chuckles, "not wanting to advertise that I was coming. In fact, I flew behind a couple hills and then popped up when I was near the too-short landing strip. Patti and Dale had come across in the clinic's small boat and were standing motionless on the grass. If they were still, that was the signal that it was safe to land."

Dale and Patti climbed in and wept as Bill bounced the plane into the air.

Seven years on the Pachitea River. Thousands of people treated at the clinic. Scores of children in the school. Songs sung, sermons preached, families baptized, lives changed. All knowing God's love down there in the jungle.

Thirty minutes later the rain began. ©

Dick Duerksen, a pastor and storyteller, lives in **Portland, Oregon, United States.**

Adventist World

Publisher

The *Adventist World*, an international periodical of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The General Conference, Northern Asia-Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists, is the publisher.

Executive Editor/Director of Adventist Review Ministries

Justin Kim

International Publishing Manager

Hong, Myung Kwan

Adventist World Coordinating Committee

Yo Han Kim, chair; Joel Tompkins; Hiroshi Yamaji; Hong, Myung Kwan; SeongJun Byun; Lyu, Dong Jin

Associate Editors/Directors, Adventist Review Ministries

Gerald A. Klingbeil, Greg Scott

Editors based in Silver Spring, Maryland, USA

Sandra Blackmer, Wilona Karimabadi, Enno Müller

Editors based in Seoul, Korea

Hong, Myung Kwan; Park, Jae Man; Kim, Hyo-Jun

Digital Platforms Director

Gabriel Begle

Operations Manager

Merle Poirier

Editorial Assessment Coordinator

Marvene Thorpe-Baptiste

Editors-at-Large/Advisors

Mark A. Finley, John M. Fowler, E. Edward Zinke

Financial Manager

Kimberly Brown

Distribution Coordinator

Sharon Tennyson

Management Board

Yo Han Kim, chair; Justin Kim, secretary; Hong, Myung Kwan; Karnik Doukmetzian; SeongJun Byun; Gerald A. Klingbeil; Hiroshi Yamaji; Joel Tompkins; Ray Wahlen; Ex-officio: Paul H. Douglas; Erton Köhler; Ted N. C. Wilson

Art Direction and Design

Types & Symbols

To Writers: We welcome unsolicited manuscripts. Address all editorial correspondence to 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600, U.S.A. Editorial office fax number: (301) 680-6638

E-mail: worldeditor@gc.adventist.org

Web site: www.adventistworld.org

Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible references are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Texts credited to NIV are from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. Bible texts credited to NRSV are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission.

Adventist World is published monthly and printed simultaneously in Korea, Brazil, Indonesia, Australia, Germany, Austria, Argentina, Mexico, South Africa, and the United States.

Vol. 19, No. 1

 Seventh-day
Adventist® Church



Vixie in the Lion's Den

Vixie wanted to scream, but she couldn't. She knew that any little noise might alert the beast outside to her presence—then she would be a goner. The animal got closer, and Vixie quickly slapped her trembling hands over her mouth. She pushed herself into the farthest corner of her tiny makeshift shelter and fought back tears. She had never been so scared in her life. *Where is God?* She wondered. Had He really brought her out here to die?

BEFORE THE BEAST

Vixie wanted to scream—she was so excited! She and her classmates were participating in the biggest event of the school year: Survival Week. For an entire week the students had been learning how to make fires, find food and water, and build shelters. Now each student was

going to spend 24 hours alone in the wilderness to put his or her new survival skills to the test.

Vixie was excited because she loved to spend time alone with God in nature. It was quiet, so she could hear His voice, and she got to worship while surrounded by His creation. She couldn't wait!

Just as she was getting ready to spend her day with God, all of Vixie's dreams came crashing down. The students were divided into sections on the mountain where they would be camping, and she discovered that she had been assigned to the first section.

It's not fair! Vixie thought. She wanted to be all the way in the last section, where she would be far from everyone but God. Just as she was about to complain, she remembered what she had prayed the night before. She

had asked God to put her where He wanted her to be. Did God want her to be in the first section? *I guess so*, Vixie thought. With a sigh she began hiking.

THE LION'S DEN

Before long, Vixie came to a place where the rock jugged out, creating a little cave beneath. All of Vixie's excitement returned—it was time to build her shelter! She used rocks that had fallen to make a wall on one side, and pushed a log against the other. Then she used strips of bark to close off the side with the log and shoved pine needles and leaves into the cracks to keep the shelter warm and comfortable. She cut herself a little while she was working, but she knew a little bit of blood never hurt anyone.

After spending some time with God, Vixie decided it was time to go to sleep. She climbed into



Bible Treasure

“Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life. You stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes; with your right hand you save me.”

Psalm 138:7, NIV

her shelter and was just about to doze off when she heard a noise. Vixie's head snapped up.

It's probably just a deer, Vixie thought, trying to keep calm. Everything's going to be all right. Vixie tried to go back to sleep, but she heard the noise again. Closer this time. Mustering all her courage, she peeked out of the shelter to see what the sound was. It was a little dark at first, but the moment she saw it, her heart skipped a beat. It was not a deer. It was a mountain lion! And she was sleeping in its den!

TRAPPED

Vixie did not know what to do. She could yell for help, but the mountain lion might attack her before anyone got there. She could use the knife lying beside her, but she was too scared even to look at it. Maybe if she stayed really, really still, it

wouldn't even . . .

All of a sudden the lion looked in her direction. It licked its lips and started to sniff the shelter.

Oh, no! Vixie thought, looking at the cut on her arm. *It can smell the blood!*

As if it could read her thoughts, the lion started scratching the log outside of her shelter. It wouldn't be long until the only thing standing between Vixie and the lion was gone.

Horrified, Vixie knew there was only one thing left to do. She tuned out the sound of claws scraping against wood and started praying as she'd never prayed before. But she didn't pray for herself. No, somehow that didn't seem right. Instead, she prayed for her friends. She prayed they would find peace, be safe, and be warm. And the more she prayed for her friends, the more peace she felt.

Finally Vixie decided it was time. She opened her eyes, ready to face her fate, but the lion was nowhere to be found. She had been so busy praying that she hadn't even heard it leave. Relief flowed all through the exhausted survivor, and she fell asleep praising God and still praying for her friends. Tomorrow morning she would wake up to find pawprints as big as her hand outside, but for tonight all she knew was that God had protected her. She may have been alone in the middle of the wilderness, but she wasn't really alone at all. ©

This story first appeared in *KidsView*, October 2014.



What we do now shapes what comes next, and what we do **together** has the potential to reach our entire hurting world.

We are grateful for your partnership with ADRA and thank you for helping us serve humanity so all may live as God intended.



Scan this code to see the impact you are making.