

Adventist World

The
Kindness
Appeal

03/2023

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The Goosebumps of Kindness

By Justin Kim

The pandemic forced us inside and in front of more screens, streaming videos, and boxed conferences than ever before. This resulted in a concoction of social isolation, inwardness, boredom, and self-preoccupation. We have still yet to see the full ramifications of the pandemic on the world’s mental and spiritual health.

Psychology professor Dacher Keltner proposes a remedy in *Awe: The New Science of Everyday Wonder and How It Can Transform Your Life*.^{*} As the title states, the book highlights the unique emotion of awe and wonder. Physiologically, awe occurs when the body experiences tingling, chills, or goosebumps; when the eyes tear up; or is what viewers seek through ASMR (autonomous sensory meridian response) videos. Psychologically, awe is being amazed at something vast and seeing self as tiny in contrast to that vastness.

Keltner gives evidence of awe having positive health effects, namely on the brain, immune and nervous systems, heart, stress resilience, cognitive performance, creativity, and digestion. He offers eight areas of where awe and wonder can be experienced. Termed collective effervescence, movement in unison with larger groups causes awe, such as in rituals, sport celebrations, dances, protests, and concerts. Nature allows us to experience mystery and wonder outdoors. Music, along with visual design—through sound and sight, respectively—are sources of awe. He then highlights other sources that transcend the world, cultures, and human understanding, things like spiritual experiences, moments witnessing births and funerals, and the epiphany of big ideas.



One special area of awe is found in moral beauty, particularly goodness and kindness. When we hear and experience accounts of courage, inspiration, hope, optimism, overcoming, and purity, it awakens our sense of amazement and prevents small-mindedness, as experienced in the pandemic. Kindness sees the fragility of humanity as well as the immeasurable beauty of morality. Kindness considers the other, seeks friendship and understanding in the other, and desires to be generous with the other.

Interestingly, awe is not found in material things, money, technology, consumption, or status. If one were to combine the eight sources of awe (collective movement, nature, music, visual design, spirituality, mortality, big ideas, and morality), we would arrive at worship. “Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him” (Ps. 33:8). Humanity was created by God for worship, and for experiencing continual wonder and awe, specifically of Him. And, surely, the physical and psychological benefits of this worship are so needed now.

As we transition out of this pandemic winter to unmasked spring, may we seek more moments of daily awe, worship before God and His limitlessness, and manifest a fresher, Christ-enabled kindness to the others.

^{*} Dacher Keltner, *Awe: The New Science of Everyday Wonder and How It Can Transform Your Life* (New York: Penguin Press, 2023)

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.

After church services were canceled or moved online during the COVID-19 pandemic, many Seventh-day Adventist members—like these two unnamed men in Norway—said that by late 2022 they were happy to resume the in-person Communion service, including the biblical foot-washing ceremony.

Photo: Tor Tjeransen / AME (CC BY 4.0)



“We believe that this [new office] will bring about a new drive to the mission of the church, and we believe that it is an important step to prepare the people who await the soon coming of Jesus Christ.”

—Jose Luis Ramirez, Ishtmus Conference secretary in Matias Romero Avendano, in Oxaca, Mexico, during the inauguration of a new headquarters building to minister to the growing church and community. The original conference office was declared unsafe after an 8.2-magnitude earthquake hit the region.

Serving Others

Church members were asked if they are able to help and serve others in a meaningful way.



- 4% Not true at all
- 3% Not true at all to somewhat true
- 30% Somewhat true
- 15% Somewhat true to very true
- 48% Very true

N=56,457

Source: 2017-18 Global Church Member Survey

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

“From the moment I began volunteering as a paramedic, it just awakened the desire to help others in need. We want to ensure safeguarding the well-being of those who need us through Vital Pulse.”

—Gustavo Rivera, a third-year medical student attending Montemorelos University in northern Mexico, about running his own ambulance service. The ambulance has also been used for simulation classes held by the Health Sciences Department on campus for students to practice.

“My family encouraged me and was instrumental in my interest in speaking about Jesus. I always saw my father giving Bible studies, and I also wanted to participate with him.”

—Ivens Ferreira, a member of the Evangelism Kids project, which connects young missionaries with evangelistic work. The project is a training and motivation program that prepares children for evangelistic involvement. The initiative recently brought 455 children of different ages together in the cities of Juazeiro and Capim Grosso, in northern Bahia, Brazil.

“I am thrilled about this initiative. We are moving forward by God’s grace and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”

—Daniel Claudet, Gulf States Conference communication director, about the first fully digital church in the Southern Union Conference, which is part of the North American Division. The Gulf States Digital Church was founded with a driving purpose: to share the everlasting gospel in a new and expanding digital society. Services are held weekly, every Friday evening, on social media platforms.

“During the past two years, the consistent humanitarian outreach program by the Tottenham Lighthouse church has significantly impacted the community and the church, resulting in ITV News featuring their latest outreach endeavor in the news on Sunday. The good deeds have undoubtedly given the church a positive presence in its community, with increasing numbers continuing to turn to the church for their supply of groceries and other essential foodstuffs.”

—Sam Davies, British Union Conference communication and media director, about a recent interview with the Tottenham Lighthouse Adventist Church on local media. The church’s Food Hub program serves more than 250 community residents who receive resources for their sustenance.

More Than 80

The number of cyclists who participated in a ride through the city of Medellín, Colombia. The event was organized by the “I Want to Live Healthy” Adventist cycling club and featured the church and its members’ healthy lifestyle. The initiative promoted the eight natural remedies for living a healthy lifestyle, which include drinking water, keeping a positive attitude, eating fresh vegetables, exercising, resting, avoiding poor foods, eating a better breakfast and fewer dinners, and promoting happiness.

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More Than 200

The number of patients treated during an initiative to provide essential health services to isolated villages in Papua New Guinea. Medical students from Divine Word University provided free basic medical care to people living in a remote region of Western Province. Students were assigned to nine different locations, accompanied by a pastor, and carried out basic health checks and provided treatments for various diseases and ailments. →



Photo: Credit

Native Missionary Leads 45 People to Baptism

Jackeline Farah, South American Division, and *Adventist World*

Tamires Flores, 29, is a native of an indigenous community in Sorocaima, Roraima, in northern Brazil. A married college student and a mother, she is also women's ministries director in her local Seventh-day Adventist congregation. A year ago, as she began planning the 2022 evangelism program, she was surprised by a challenge that changed her life forever.

"I was there, attending an evangelistic training led by women's ministries, and we were discussing whom to choose to lead our evangelistic meetings," Flores said. "It was then that I felt a distinct call to preach for the first time in my life."

From that moment on, she began to pray more intensely for the Holy Spirit to enable her for her new-found mission. "My first challenge was to think about how to organize a 14-day evangelistic drive during the rainy season. Our community suffers a lot during those weeks

because everything gets flooded and full of mud."

She added, "In prayer we asked the Lord to show us how to deal with the weather challenge. The other women and I thought of forming missionary pairs to visit and offer Bible studies to the people of the community. That way, it would be an introduction to the evening evangelistic meetings, or if it rained too much that day, people would have already received a study at home."

Leaders helped form 19 female missionary pairs, who went around giving Bible studies from house to house for seven days. Later these families were invited to participate in the church program for the next seven nights.

Another challenge was what to preach about. It was Flores' first time as a preacher, and, once again, prayer made a difference. "I fasted and prayed a lot to hear what God

Evangelism transforms indigenous community in Brazil.

wanted me to bring to those families. 'Talk about water,' He told me. All I had to do was start doing some research on water and its benefits, and I told people in which ways Jesus is our water, a source of life," Flores said.

Flores also had a traumatic experience to overcome. In 2021, during her first year as women's ministries leader, her first evangelistic initiative had been unsuccessful. After many invitations and personal visits, only two women had signed up for the program. "I cried with sadness and despair," Flores said. "I was wondering why there were no more people coming. But on the last day, when I saw those two women giving their lives to Christ, I understood it was all worth it even for those two. Today they are my assistants in women's ministries," she said.

In 2022, besides the challenges mentioned, there was still one more hurdle to overcome, Flores said. In addition to preaching in Portuguese and Taurepang, her native language, Flores would have to preach in Spanish, since there were Venezuelans in the study group. Flores' dedication, prayer, and faithfulness helped her pull through. The initiative ended with 45 people committing to God through baptism.

Flores said that two of Jesus' parables moved her during this period of challenges: the one about the 10 virgins, and the one about the great supper. "When I read those passages, I understood that I needed to be ready for Jesus' return," she said. "This is possible only with faithfulness, prayer, and love for our neighbors." ©



As a result of the evangelistic initiative, 45 people gave their lives to Jesus through baptism.

Photo: courtesy of Tamires Flores

In Czech Republic, Adventists Publish New Testament in Romani

Adventistischer Pressedienst and *Adventist World*

Volume is the result of 12 years of painstaking work.

Christian leaders introduced the first translation of the New Testament in the Abov Romani dialect on November 15, 2022. It was published in the Czech Republic and presented in Smíchov.

The news was announced by Gustav-Adolf-Werk (GAW), of the Evangelical Church in Germany. Deutschlandfunk radio also reported the event on January 6. The translation was published by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Trebechovice pod Orebem.

THE ROMA LANGUAGE

Three native speakers worked on the translation “O Névo Zákonos” for 12 years. The team included translator Koloman Stanek, scholar Zbynek Andrs, and coordinator Daniel Hrdinka, according to the GAW release.

Romani is the language of the Roma. It is spoken throughout Europe and beyond in various country-specific dialects. The New Testament was translated into the so-called Abov dialect, which is spoken in Košice and the surrounding area in Slovakia and is understood by most Romani speakers in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. In the Czech Republic about 3 percent of the population belongs to the Roma minority.

PANEL DISCUSSION AND HANDOVER CEREMONY

To mark the publication, the Adventist congregation in Trebechovice pod Orebem held a press conference with the translation team and the leaders behind the initiative. The event also included a panel discussion on the significance of the



Photo: Czecho-Slovakian Union Conference

Bible for today’s society, a ceremony to hand over the books to readers, a concert of Jewish and Roma music, and a dinner of Roma specialties.

“Roma, I have translated for you the book that is dear to my heart—the Bible—into the Romani language. I thank God for giving me strength and understanding, and I also thank the people who helped me,” Stanek, the translator, writes in his preface.

Coordinator Hrdinka explained, “The translation brought together people with different life stories and knowledge, including ordinary believers, with whom Koloman Stanek checked the clarity of the expressions. In addition, there were specialists in Romani grammar, proofreading, typesetting, and printing, and donors who contributed to the printing costs. I sincerely hope that readers will feel in this book a spiritual connection to the kind Father in heaven, and moreover, a connection to the roots of their culture.”

“MOST IMPORTANT RELIGIOUS EVENT OF THE YEAR”

“I consider the publication of the New Testament in Romani one of the most important religious events of 2022 in the Czech

Republic,” Mikuláš Vymetal of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (EKBB) said, according to GAW. “Romani speakers will finally be able to read the entire New Testament in their language. At the same time, the event will also draw the attention of non-Roma to the fact that there are many Roma in the Czech Republic who profess the Christian faith,” he said.

Daniela Cincibusová, a member of the Commission for the Roma at the World Council of Churches in the Czech Republic, emphasized that the Romani language is threatened with extinction in the Czech Republic: “The publication of the translation ‘O Névo Zákonos’ can, in addition to strengthening the Roma minority spiritually, also strengthen their language so that it does not die out.”

The Czecho-Slovakian Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, with headquarters in Prague, Czech Republic, comprises the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The territory is divided in the Bohemian, Moravian-Silesian, and Slovakian conferences. As of June 30, 2021, the region has 9,517 baptized members, who worship in 190 churches and companies. ©

1,834,361

Membership of the Southern Asia-Pacific Division (SSD) as of September 30, 2022

“Publishing ministries helps us to sow the gospel seed and bring many lives to Christ. . . . Let the leaflets and tracts, the papers and books, go in every direction. Then everyone can hand them out as they have the opportunity.”

—Frankie Abidin, Sabah Mission Publishing Ministries director, about handing out the missionary book of the year during a three-day motorcycle convoy organized by the Adventist church in Malaysia. Adventist motorcyclists received 200 copies of the book, which they distributed along the way.

“In the book of Ezekiel, God specially mentioned that a faithful man may ‘stand in the gap.’ Who is that person who can stand in the gap? Can I stand in the gap? Yes! Any of us can be that person. We do not have to have amazing leadership qualities; we have to humble ourselves to God, His Word, and be willing.”

—Roger Caderma, SSD president, during the first onsite convention of the Prayer Network of Adventist Youth Ministries after the pandemic. The event took place at the 1000 Missionary Movement headquarters in Silang, Cavite, Philippines.

98

The number of years that the Penang Adventist Hospital has existed and has dedicated itself to serving all people with comprehensive, expert, and outstanding health care as an example of the love and healing ministry of Christ. The institution has grown to become a tertiary health-care institution and remains true to its roots as a not-for-profit hospital. The hospital continues to carry out charitable work via its medical welfare program and funds to assist those in need.

“I still recall when we attempted to organize the union office in Malaysia. God has helped us through the transition by giving us strength and endurance. We were able to refocus our mission thanks to the dissolution. This project has taught us a lot. The road may be challenging, but God will always get us through.”

—Abel Bana, president of the Malaysia Union Mission, about the opening of the new union building in Seremban 2, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia.

“I know that J* often misses school because her family is poor and has no caretaker during the day for the younger children. But I never saw her living conditions. If I had not come to visit J’s family today with ADRA, I would never have known how difficult her life truly was.”

—A school principal reflecting about the situation of one of her students. ADRA’s Keeping Girls Safe project works to prevent children from becoming victims of sex trafficking or exploitative labor and provides study opportunities through subsidized scholarships.

*Name redacted to protect the child’s identity.



Photo: Southern Asia-Pacific Division News

Perspective



Photo: Matt Collamer

A Message for the Haves and the Have-nots

Everyone can help their neighbors tackle the current economic crisis.

Across many countries around the world, the “cost-of-living crisis” has arrived—and it’s real, it’s painful, and it affects almost everyone. The reality of high energy prices is a raw utility knock affecting every home and business. But the knock-on effect is the cost of goods and services. To make things, energy of one sort or another is required, leading to increased costs in goods and services. As a result, many nations have experienced levels of inflation not seen in 40 years.

But we can get through it if we really are all in it together. To support each other and anyone in need is a core value of the Christian community because of Christ’s example. “Encourage one another” (1 Thess. 5:11, NIV) is just one of hundreds of verses in the New Testament with the same message—help and support in both word and deed.

During the 1980s the Royal National Institution for the Blind ran a campaign with the motif “What

blind people need is more tea and less sympathy.” Our compassion works best when we act. Those who “have” are incredibly positioned to bring relief, hope, and cheer to those currently struggling. This includes using a monthly direct debit to support a food bank, a soup kitchen, or a family. Also, ordering a weekly supermarket or grocery delivery to a home in need, or purchasing a card each month for a family struggling to pay their utilities.

On the other hand, the first problem for those struggling is to overcome “pride.” The cartoonist Ben Jennings from *The Guardian* illustrates in an incredibly sobering way the current reality. A father and son sit at an empty table, in an empty kitchen. The son has a plate of food, but the father does not. The son says, “Dad, when will I be grown up enough to not need dinner any more like you?”*

We are not failures, but victims—of national and international economic circumstances beyond our personal control. A visit to a food bank is not a badge of failure, but a necessary godly activity to provide and support family in these desperate times.

There were times in my life, while raising a young family, that I would go to the cash machine

to withdraw funds a week before payday, only to read that painful message “insufficient funds.” Pride kept me from sharing with anybody—and I used the credit card to solve the problem. It did not—it made matters worse.

If struggling right now—recognize reality, put your pride away, and seek help. If in debt, immediately contact creditors to manage repayments. For sure, credit scores are affected, aspiration goes on hold, but the medium- to long-term is repairable. Seek professional help from a free debt counseling service who will also help create a realistic budget. But also confide in one trusted close friend or family who can walk this journey with you. I remember doing this, and our friends shared tremendous helpful advice and practical support.

But it’s possible that during this crisis, we have run out of solutions. For this reason we must also dig deep into our spiritual bank. There is a song I learned as a child: “If I can help somebody, then my living will not be in vain.” God help me and each of us to live that value, particularly in these most challenging of times. ☺

* Benn Jennings on British Parents Skipping Meals, cartoon, *The Guardian*, Nov. 25, 2022.

Focus

The Kindness Appeal

BY ELLA SMITH SIMMONS





The past few years have been unusually challenging. While boasting many advances, they have been characterized by a pandemic, wars and other violent aggressions, more prevalent and open microaggressions, and a general breakdown in human civility throughout the world.

Some have projected that these are just forerunners of what is to come. As we analyze our condition and ponder possibilities for the future, many look to changes in the individual heart for the better. More than ever, these past years have seen cries from the world for kindness—basic kindness.

PLEAS FOR KINDNESS

In a January 2022 commentary a physician pleaded for kindness toward nurses caring for COVID-19 patients after a phone encounter with an irate, aggressively rude, and no doubt frustrated and scared caller who inquired about a patient's condition.¹

In November 2021 a stunned mother pleaded for kindness after her 10-year-old son received his burrito order labeled with the word "stupid" from a popular fast-food restaurant.² A May 2020 article in *Psychology Today* reported, under the title "A Plea for Kindness," a passionate appeal from Dr. Anthony Fauci, the then-director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases in the USA. Fauci, speaking virtually, called the graduates at his alma mater to "care selflessly."³ A simple online search of news items will reveal a growing number of such appeals for kindness.

These have taken on many forms, from public speeches and sermons to automobile license plate slogans, family resolutions, and magazine and journal special issues. Perhaps you have seen the license plate messages comprised of symbols representing the world's major religions that spell out the word "civility," "tolerance," or "coexist." The implication is that religion or faith in a higher being should bring people together in positive relationship.

Interestingly, scores of commercial magazines and periodicals have made this quest for kindness a priority over the past few years in publishing special editions on the subject. A *Time* magazine special edition in 2020, for example, is titled, "The Power of Kindness: Creating a Better Life and a

Better World.” It carried articles on the science and culture of kindness and offered readers ideas on how to be kind through examples of people, animals, and organizations.⁴

DEFINING THE CONCEPT OF KINDNESS

So what is kindness? I asked several people to share with me their personal definition of kindness in a sentence or two. Respondents agreed that kindness is consideration and compassion for others—that it comes from the individual heart and is evidenced by sharing time, talents, thoughts, and treasures without expectation of receiving anything in return.

Kindness is an attitude of empathy that moves someone to do something thoughtful toward someone else, including strangers. It is the golden rule—treating others the way we’d want to be treated. All agreed that kindness at its base is purely altruistic, that when one does something with the expectation of reciprocity the act is not, in fact, kindness. Researchers call this “reciprocal altruism,” which is a “transactional business of making deposits in the favor bank with the understanding that you can later make withdrawals as needed.”⁵ This is self-centered.

One writer defines kindness as “society’s golden chain.”⁶ The online *Cambridge Dictionary* defines kindness as “the quality of being generous, helpful, and caring about other people.”⁷ Webster’s dictionary is more detailed regarding kindness, defining it as “good will; benevolence; that temper or disposition which delights in contributing to the happiness of others, which is exercised cheerfully in gratifying their wishes, supplying their wants or alleviating their distresses; benignity of nature. *Kindness* ever accompanies love.”⁸

The *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* defines kindness as a “state of being that includes the attributes of loving affection, sympathy, friendliness, patience, pleasantness, gentleness, and goodness. Kindness is a quality shown in the way a person speaks and acts. It is more volitional than emotional.”⁹

The *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* uses Old Testament language, defining kindness with the translation of the Hebrew term *khesed*. It demonstrates that throughout the Old Testament the concept is that of compassion and faithfulness to relatives, friends, and others under your influence.¹⁰ It looks to original New Testament terminology, *chrestotes*, for the concept of kindness as gentleness, goodness, uprightness, generosity, and graciousness. Here it describes kindness as an attribute of God (Titus 3:4), a characteristic of true love (1 Cor. 13:4).¹¹

RESEARCH ON KINDNESS

The general fascination with the concept of kindness has spawned more scientific studies on the topic recently. For instance, after observing a lack of ways to measure kindness, researchers constructed a scale for identifying, analyzing, and gauging acts of kindness. Their study provided a multilayered definition that includes four aspects of kindness and a core element that appears to bind all together.¹²

“Principle-socially prescribed kindness . . . is generated cognitively rather than emotionally. It is thought to align with social graces and is manifested in sympathetic behavior. It makes mental allowances for the actions of others. It tends to put others before self, such as allowing others to go ahead in a queue or patiently waiting for others.

“Principle-proactive kindness is also cognitive rather than emotional



in nature, but goes beyond the passive permissive actions of principle-socially prescribed kindness. It is demonstrated through giving, such as donating blood or giving money to strangers asking on the street.

“Affective-proactive kindness includes emotional responses to the needs of others. It does not rely on social norms for guidance, but rather is inner-driven and personally empathetic. It often involves sacrifice, endurance, and personal suffering to favor others, such as seeing situations from others’ viewpoint, aligning with unpopular causes or persons to uphold right, or giving up one’s desires for others. It is principled in nature.

“Affective-socially prescribed kindness is emotional behavior that aligns with social norms. It is empathetic, but is motivated by circumstance rather than principles. It is friendship-based and manifests itself through responses to simple needs such as opening doors for others or helping others when asked in ways consistent with social expectations. Interestingly, it



How is kindness a key principle of the gospel?

Let the law of kindness be ever on your lips.”¹⁵ What’s more, she says, “The effort to bless others will react in blessings upon ourselves.”¹⁶

Kindness positively affects both the recipient and the giver. Being kind simply makes us happy. We have known from experience that doing good to others makes us feel good about ourselves, and that this state of mind has positive physical effects as well. Research has shown that the happiest nations on earth tend to be those in which equity is greatest, while nations with high levels of inequality tend to be less happy.¹⁷

A 2007 study in the *Journal of Science* reported that when people donate money to charity, whether voluntarily or by requirement, pleasure-linked parts of the brain react.¹⁸ Mounting bodies of research are demonstrating that “compassion reduces anxiety, depression and stress and may also boost immunity—along with longevity.”¹⁹ “Simply witnessing an act of compassion triggers feelings of awe, admiration, warmth and love. . . . At the same time, it increases your desire to be more charitable yourself.”²⁰

BIBLICAL EXHORTATION

Sacrificial kindness is a good choice all around. So why is it that sacrificial kindness is not as prevalent as one should expect? What makes some prone to kindness and others not so much? “The Candle of Kindness,” an article written from

was noted that most people think of kindness in these latter terms.”

Then there is the core form of kindness from which these four appear to emerge, and that is the glue that holds all together. It includes concern for people who are less fortunate or feeling protective for those who are oppressed or abused, seeking to include or provide for others’ happiness. While the scientific measures are complex, the related insights are simple and generally comprehensible. They offer much to understanding the concept of kindness.

THE VALUE OF KINDNESS

In an age when dialogue turns sour, how do Adventists stay above the fray and respond with kindness at work, church, in our circles of influence, and to people who do not agree with us? Why do we need kindness so critically in these last days? How is kindness a key principle of the gospel?

Ellen White appeals: “Let the law of kindness be upon your lips and the oil of grace in your heart. This

will produce wonderful results. You will be tender, sympathetic, courteous. You need all these graces.”¹³ She says, “Your influence reaches the soul; you touch not a wire but that vibrates back to God. . . . It is your duty to be Christians in the highest sense of the word—‘Christ-like.’ . . . Otherwise, if you are selfish, if you are self-exalted, if you are worldly minded, no matter what your position, no matter what your experience has been, or how much you know, if you are not having the law of kindness on your lips, [the] sweet fragrance of love springing from your heart, you can do nothing as it ought to be done.”¹⁴

She charges, “Seize every opportunity to contribute to the happiness of those around you, sharing with them your affection. Words of kindness, looks of sympathy, expressions of appreciation, would to many a struggling, lonely one be as a cup of cold water to a thirsty soul. . . . [We are to] live in the sunshine of the Saviour’s love. Then your influence will bless the world. Let the Spirit of Christ control you.

a secular perspective, poses the most basic questions regarding the existence of kindness in the world:

“What explains the highest impulses born in the highest places? What explains soldiers who dive on grenades to save platoon-mates, sacrificing their own lives . . . to ensure life to others? What explains the first responders who dash into natural disasters when the floodwaters are still rising or brave the sites of terrorist attacks when the fires are still burning, putting their welfare in danger to save others? What explains all of the health-care

providers who are risking—and in some cases losing—their lives to stay at their posts during the coronavirus pandemic?”²¹

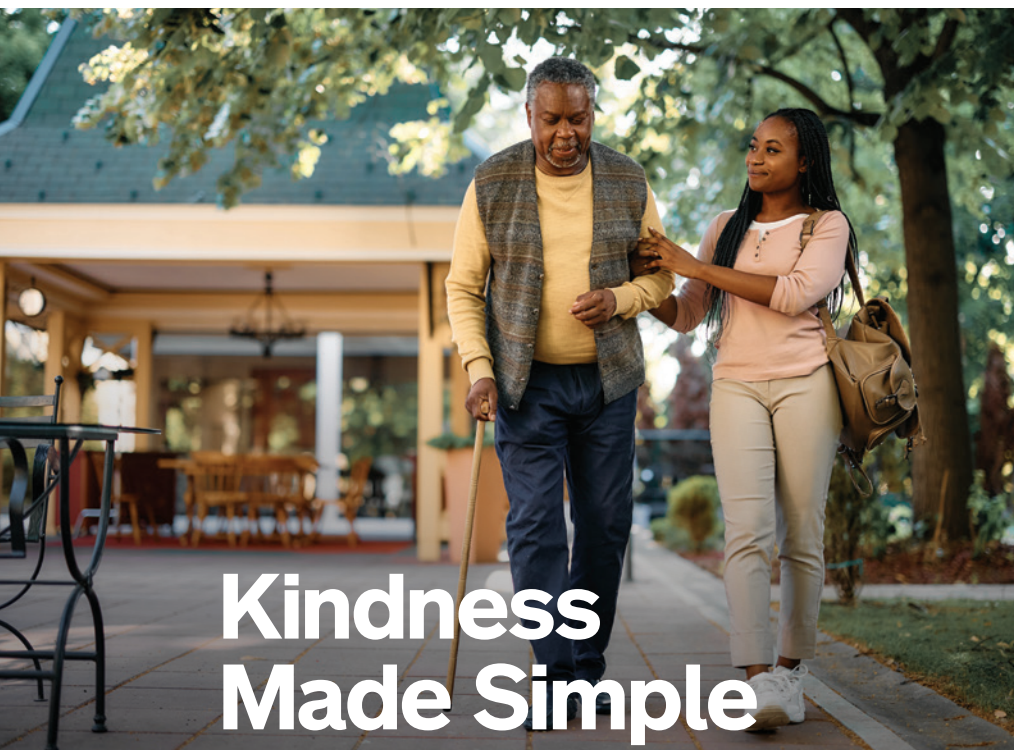
While the questions may come from a secular view, the answers must come from a spiritual base. Certainly there is a power beyond us, our loving God, who is the source of this self-sacrificing kindness.

Perhaps we are most familiar with kindness as one of the fruits of the Spirit. In his exposition of the fruit of the Spirit, the apostle Paul lists kindness right in the center of all. It’s the heart of Christlikeness. He exhorts the believers in Galatia

to throw off the works of the flesh and take on the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

He includes kindness again in his letter to the Colossians when he calls them to clothe themselves as God’s people in kindness, along with compassion, humility, gentleness, patience, meekness, and longsuffering, bearing with one another, and forgiving one another (see Col. 3:12, 13). Paul pointed the Romans to kindness, indicating that God’s kindness is intended to lead them to repentance. He urged them to consider the kindness and sternness of God and to continue in kindness to avoid being cut off from God’s kingdom (see Rom. 11:22).

Inspired by the kindness and the love of God, believers should be gracious, gentle, and forgiving toward others. As a witness to the world, our behavior toward others



Kindness Made Simple

BY AMY AUSTIN

Editor’s Note: This post originally appeared on the FindingJoy4Eternity blog. It has been adapted for Adventist World.

The United States celebrates two important holidays dedicated to love and kindness: Valentine’s Day and Random Acts of Kindness Day. We believe that kindness should be spread far and wide, and that love does not always have to be about romance. Here are some suggestions for reaching those closest to you: your friends and neighbors!

- 1 If you can bake, make and deliver some cookies, brownies, or cupcakes to their door.
- 2 Take someone out for lunch or dessert.
- 3 Visit an elderly neighbor and provide them with some much-needed companionship.
- 4 Put a friendly note, sharing tract, and treat in your mailbox for the mail carrier.
- 5 Offer to babysit for free!
- 6 Help neighbors clean up their yard, weed their garden, water plants, paint their fence, or mow their lawn.
- 7 If you’re handy around the house, see if they have any small home improvement projects you can do for them.

should reflect God's graciousness, His loving-kindness, toward us.²²

When we accept Jesus into our lives, a new power begins to operate within us. The old negative perspectives and selfish desires can be discarded. Kindness becomes our nature. This loving-kindness produces in us a love for all humanity as equal creations, children of God. It is, in the original language, human kindness toward another, the graciousness of a sovereign toward a subject, and the sympathy of humankind for those in trouble. All are facets of God's love (in Greek, *agapē*; see on 1 Cor. 13:1).²³

DEVELOPING KINDNESS

While there are probably as many ways to develop traits of kindness as there are cultures and people in the world, I will leave you with a few observations. Perhaps the most obvious is modeling desired traits, especially when trying to teach

children and youth to be kind. For both younger and older learners, provide books or videos that share stories of kindness.

Create a culture of giving and helping in the family circle, church congregation, and social community. Intentionally seek out those in need and lead your group to respond with kindness as needed. Without flattering, find ways to celebrate acts of kindness, especially those that extend beyond the immediate family and cultural group.

Let us be the gold standard for kindness at all times, in all places. An unknown voice calls out to us: "If you can be anything, be kind." ©

¹ David Tam, "A Plea for Kindness, Compassion," *Commentary, Cape Gazette*, Jan. 18, 2022, Capegazette.com.

² Daniel Woodruff, "Mom Pleads for Kindness After 'Stupid' Written on Utah Boy's Fast Food," *KUTV Utah*, Nov. 23, 2021, <https://www.kutv.com>.

³ Susan Hooper, "A Plea for Kindness," *Psychology Today*, May 28, 2020, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/detours-and-tangents/202005/plea-kindness>.

⁴ J. Kluger, "The Candle of Kindness. The Power of Kindness: Creating a Better Life and a Better World," *Time*, Special Edition, 2020, p. 5.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Lee Rowland, "Kindness—Society's Golden Chain?" *The Psychologist*, British Psychological Society, Nov. 13, 2017.

⁷ *Cambridge Dictionary*, 2023, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/kindness>.

⁸ *American Dictionary of the English Language*, 2023, <https://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/kindness>.

⁹ W. A. Elwell and P. W. Comfort, eds., *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), p. 773.

¹⁰ J. Cathey, "Kindness," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), p. 984.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² D. E. Youngs, M. A. Yaneva, and D. V. Canter, "Development of a Measure of Kindness," *Current Psychology* (2021), International Research Centre for Investigative Psychology, School of Human and Health Sciences, University of Huddersfield, Ramsden Building, Queensgate, Huddersfield, UK., <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-021-01882-6>.

¹³ Ellen G. White letter 84, 1899.

¹⁴ Ellen G. White letter 37, 1891.

¹⁵ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 7, p. 50.

¹⁶ Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 79.

¹⁷ M. Heid, "The Evolution of Kindness. The Power of Kindness: Creating a Better Life and a Better World," *Time*, Special Edition, 2020, p. 14.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁹ C. N. Pagan, "The (Real) Secret to Happiness. The Power of Kindness: Creating a Better Life and a Better World," *Time*, Special Edition, 2020, p. 81.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Kluger, pp. 4, 5.

²² J. L. Dybdahl, ed., *Andrews Study Bible Notes* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2010), p. 1594.

²³ F. D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1980), vol. 7, p. 370.

Ella Smith Simmons, Ed.D., recently retired as a general vice president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

- 8 If their car is dirty, offer to wash it for them.
- 9 If you have snow in the winter, scrape snow and ice off their car windshields so they can get to work on time. If you are shoveling your own sidewalk or driveway, take some time to shovel your neighbors', too!
- 10 Take an animal gift to an animal shelter if there is one in your area.
- 11 Buy a grocery card for someone you know who needs a little help.
- 12 If your neighbor is overwhelmed, offer to take some of the burden by running such errands as picking up groceries or dry cleaning.

- 13 If you're musical, take your talents door to door or call someone and play or sing music for them over the phone.
- 14 Give someone a compliment or just express your appreciation for all they do.
- 15 Pick up trash from neighborhood yards, streets, parks, and nature trails.
- 16 Call or text someone you haven't spoken to in a while.
- 17 Take time to listen to someone. Whether they are troubled or delighted about something in life, people appreciate being sincerely heard or understood.
- 18 Bring your neighbors' trash cans off the street before they blow away.

- 19 If your neighbors have pets, buy a box of treats for them.
- 20 Walk a neighbor's dog.
- 21 Give away flowers. You can attach a little greeting or sharing tract.
- 22 Take a meal to a family who is struggling, dealing with health issues, has a new baby, etc.

There are countless ways to show people in your life that they are appreciated and loved. Go out and spread some love this week! ©

Amy Austin is a pastor's wife who lives in **Michigan's Upper Peninsula, United States**, and loves finding creative ways to share Jesus with others.

Kindness, an Essential Fruit of the Spirit

One of the steps in
becoming Christlike



The aim of God's Word is to inspire hope, to lead us to fasten our hands to this ladder and climb step by step heavenward, with ever-increasing vigor. It is the key to the sense in which we partake of the nature of God. We attain a likeness of character to God by the imparting of His own grace. . . .

There are still additional steps to take. Add "to godliness brotherly kindness." [2 Peter 1:7.] Thus there will not be merely a profession of Bible religion, but a sincere, earnest practice of godliness. We must be partakers of the divine nature before we can represent the Christlike character and practice the works of Christ. The climbing Christian will not sit passive, claiming the promises, enjoying the grace given him of God, but will work from principle. He is a worker together with God. The grace given him of God teaches him how to be kind and tender and helpful to his brethren. There is no waiting for an over-powering, magical change to be wrought into the conversion

of others without any action of our own. Life becomes a humble but earnest working out of salvation with fear and with trembling, knowing that God worketh in us both to will and to do of His own good pleasure. The very exercise of brotherly kindness assimilates the soul to Christ and brings him into sympathy with Christ. . . .

The Word of God enjoins upon every one of His children: "Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous." 1 Peter 3:8. Now, unless godliness was added to patience, man would not show that brotherly kindness. In His mission to our world, Christ has shown man the graces of the Spirit of God, which, when accepted, fashion and mold the entire man, externally as well as internally, by abasing his pride and leading him not to esteem himself highly but to esteem his brother as precious in the sight of God because Christ paid an infinite price for his soul. When man is valued as God's property, then we will be kind, amiable,

and condescending toward him.

The religion of Jesus Christ is a system of the true heavenly politeness and leads to a practical exhibition of habitual tenderness of feeling and kindness of deportment. He who possesses godliness will also add this grace, taking a step higher on the ladder. The higher he mounts the ladder, the more of the grace of God is revealed in his life, his sentiments, his principles. He is learning, ever learning, the terms of his acceptance with God, and the only way to obtain an inheritance in the heavens is to become like Christ in character. ©

Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827–1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry. This selection was taken from manuscript 13, 1884, in *Letters and Manuscripts, Volume 4* (1883–1886).

Millennial Voices

Sharing With Passion and Joy



Church work isn't supposed to be a competition.

Kim, talked to parents and private academies about sending students to Adventist schools. He talked with parents for hours, building relationships with them and winning their confidence as he talked about family happiness, character building, and other practical benefits of studying the Bible. Junghyun Do, a theology student, brought many children to Jesus.

In the beginning of 2021 Jaehwa felt called to start a church plant. He noticed that some of his friends stopped attending church during COVID and didn't come back even after services became legal again. He wanted to create a space that they would feel comfortable to join. And Elder Kim knew some academy owners who had been letting them use the academy rooms rent-free for Bible studies!

If I hang out only with Adventists, without sharing my faith, my spirit dies," my friend Jaehwa said to me. "But if I teach just one non-Adventist kid," he continued, "I feel so inspired. There were two students who had never been to church before. They had no interest in God until they met us. Yet they told me, 'Sharing the Bible is so much fun. It helps me live a better life.'"

Jaehwa is a young Adventist involved in a church planting project happening close to my house. Every Sabbath a retired pastor, a theology student, an elder, and young adult Adventists meet to study the Bible with families who are interested in learning more about Adventist beliefs.

The project began in 2020. An Adventist bookstore owner, Elder Namkeun

"We have a unique way of doing church," Jaehwa explained to me. "Traditionally, kids are expected to sit and listen during church, but here they're encouraged to share, and they get so much fun out of it. During the Sabbath School lesson time we train them to dig deep into the Bible and articulate what they've learned—even first-timers, non-Adventists. Kids preach occasionally, too. There's a lot of enthusiasm; they share the Bible with each other with such passion and joy."

Jaehwa didn't want to fight over attracting existing church members; instead, he and his friends wanted to reach people that nobody else had reached. "I believe the Bible has everything we need if we can package it right. That's where we come in."

The project is collaborative, as baptized students and their families have joined several local Adventist churches after they studied with us. "Church work isn't supposed to be a competition," says Jaehwa. "I saw so much hope and power in coming together to reach someone who's not in our religious circle."

More than 60 people have been baptized between 2020 and 2022. The new members are then welcomed into different local churches who can serve them best.

The ministry is taking a different form than Jaehwa originally envisioned, becoming more of a missionary training center than a traditional church plant. But he is excited to see how God will work.

He says, "I'm really confident that when we set our hearts on God and say, 'I want to share this message of eternal hope,' heaven is so ready to help us when we step out in faith. Our job is to do what we are capable of doing, faithfully."

Please continue to pray for Jaehwa and other Adventists in Korea who are seeking to share the gospel with a younger generation. ©

Lynette Yoon teaches English in **Seoul, South Korea.**



Feature

“In These Last Days”

BY TED N. C. WILSON

How do we make friends and influence people regarding who Seventh-day Adventists are and what they believe?

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a mandate from heaven to share God’s end-time message with the world, and this mandate has become even more important and pronounced as we now face what I believe is the very end of time.

As my wife, Nancy, and I travel around the world, we see many changes taking place—cultural changes, societal adjustments, political and economic changes, and ecumenical changes. In this article, let me affirm to you the role of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and what I fully believe in my own heart to be God’s truth about how Seventh-day Adventists are to be witnesses at the very end of time.

SHARING OUR FAITH

The Bible says in Romans 12:18, “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.” The Bible also shares in 1 Peter 3:15: “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.”



The question is sometimes asked, “How can we share our faith with members and leaders of other faiths without compromising our faith or being involved in unbiblical alliances?”

First of all, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is not and never will be engaged in ecumenical activities as defined as compromising our precious belief in Christ and His 28 fundamental beliefs as expressed by the church. We believe in and advocate complete religious liberty and freedom of conscience for all faiths, including Seventh-day Adventists.

A STRONG FOUNDATION

For Adventists, religious freedom has a strong biblical, historical, and theological foundation. It also has an important eschatological dimension. The first article

on this topic was written by John N. Andrews in 1851, and he understood the importance of religious freedom in the context of the end-time. In the late 1880s the small Adventist Church made a difference in the United States by opposing Sunday laws and publishing and distributing 500,000 copies of the *Sabbath Sentinel* (later *American Sentinel*). Very active years led up to the 1889 launching of the National Religious Liberty Association. In 1893 this organization became the International Religious Liberty Association (IRLA), and in 1946 the IRLA opened its membership to those who were not Seventh-day Adventists, but who shared the vision of religious freedom. It also facilitated the organization of partner associations around the world, such as the International Association for the Defense of Religious Freedom in Europe.

The Department of Religious Liberty was organized in 1901 by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and in 1906 the department began publishing *Liberty*, a magazine of religious freedom. It became the only magazine on religious freedom in the Americas.

Today the church’s Public Affairs and Religious Liberty (PARL) Department represents and introduces the Seventh-day Adventist Church to governments, public officials, and international organizations, endeavoring to maintain good relationships with all. PARL also continues to promote religious freedom around the world through diplomacy, events, and communication.

NEVER COMPROMISE BELIEFS

Over the years PARL has shared our Seventh-day Adventist beliefs and biblical perspectives with thousands of members and church leaders of other denominations. However, it never compromises our beliefs. During this time the church has associated with various organizations that help others to know what Seventh-day Adventists believe. While the Seventh-day Adventist Church does not hold membership in these various organizations, we participate to provide accurate information regarding our faith. Rather than participating in activities that diminish our faith, we are witnessing to God’s profound Bible truth.

World public forum organizations understand that Seventh-day Adventists are not involved in any attempts to integrate the Seventh-day Adventist Church into any other church organization or to compromise Seventh-day Adventist biblical beliefs in any way. Interfacing with some of these organizations provides opportunities to help others better understand who Seventh-day Adventists are and what we believe on our own terms. In many cases the contacts made have helped local Seventh-day Adventists to be better under-

stood when they find themselves in difficult situations in particular countries.

The Bible very clearly urges us to be careful in how we relate, and it tells us that we will be brought before governors and kings to share our faith. God promises to provide us the answers: “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. . . . You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But . . . do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you” (Matt. 10:16-20).

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

In the future this will become even more prevalent as religious liberty is curtailed and attempts will be made to force us to believe and act differently from what the Word of God teaches. Freedom of conscience in relation to religious and biblical beliefs will be threatened. It is important to stay personally close to the Lord so the Holy Spirit will speak through us whenever we are found in a setting to defend the Lord’s truth as found in the Bible.

How important it is to place ourselves in various settings now where the voice of Seventh-day Adventists can be heard in clear biblical tones led by the Holy Spirit. Many times I am in a situation meeting with a head of state, a governor, a civic leader, a religious leader, a local government official, or others during which I have shared who Seventh-day Adventists are, what they believe, and what they do, all to God’s glory.

MISINFORMATION AND MISREPRESENTATION

Unfortunately, there are those who use a photo or some piece of information to construct a completely different picture from what reality is. There are those who have made preposterous and completely erroneous claims about Seventh-day Adventist leaders being part of compromising ecumenical activities. There are those in various organizations who will attempt to take advantage of Seventh-day Adventist leaders by taking a picture of themselves with the Adventist leader and the picture is later misrepresented to be an affirmation that Seventh-day Adventists are connected with some type of compromising activities. In other words, any of us can be accused of guilt by association when in reality it is completely false. It’s important for church members to find out if such a photo is being misused and find out the actual truth. Generally speaking, you will find that the story someone concocted about a picture or some event is vastly different from reality.

FAITHFUL TO GOD’S WORD

Let me categorically say that the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is not and never will be involved in any attempts to compromise our biblically based faith nor to be involved in ecumenical unity. The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is faithful to the Word of God and will never compromise on religious liberty. In fact, as has already been stated, as a church we are actively involved throughout the world in protecting the religious rights of individuals, whether they are Seventh-day Adventist or not. Any attempts to destroy religious liberty for one is an attempt to destroy religious liberty for all.

If you see or hear something you consider unusual, call or write to the Seventh-day Adventist Church entity involved, asking for an explanation so rumors and slanderous accusations are not believed or accepted.

LAST-DAY REMNANT

What a privilege to be part of God’s last-day Advent remnant movement as indicated in Revelation 12:17. God has called the Seventh-day Adventist movement for this time in earth’s history. We are told, “Seventh-day Adventists have been chosen by God as a peculiar people, separate from the world. By the great cleaver of truth He has cut them out from the quarry of the world and brought them into connection with Himself. He has made them His representatives and has called them to be ambassadors for Him in the last work of salvation. The greatest wealth of truth ever entrusted to mortals, the most solemn and fearful warnings ever sent by God to man, have been committed to them to be given to the world.”¹

The Seventh-day Adventist Church believes, accepts, and promotes the Word of God and the Spirit of Prophecy. We believe in the prophetic books of Daniel and Revelation. We believe in the Seventh-day Adventist historic prophetic interpretations of Daniel 7, 8, 11, and 12 and further revealed in Revelation 6-18. Seventh-day Adventists believe in the explanations and interpretations given by inspiration to Ellen White when she wrote the amazing book *The Great Controversy*. The explanations of the religious movements, persecutions, and trials that God’s people will go through are absolutely accurate, and our prophetic understanding of these events informs our activities today.

My fellow church members, what a privilege it is to be part of God’s last-day movement and to share His three angels’ messages of Revelation 14 and the fourth angel’s message of Revelation 18 with a world that is waiting to hear biblical truth from Seventh-day Adventists. This is our destiny and task. “In a special sense Seventh-day

Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the Word of God. They have been given a work of the most solemn import—the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels’ messages. There is no other work of so great importance. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention.”²

I encourage you to be part of Total Member Involvement in doing something for Jesus and sharing your faith in challenging and difficult settings, always lifting up Christ and His Holy Word. In the book *Steps to Christ* we read, “The church of Christ is God’s appointed agency for the salvation of men. Its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. And the obligation rests upon all Christians. Everyone, to the extent of his talent and opportunity, is to fulfill the Savior’s commission. The love of Christ, revealed to us, makes us debtors to all who know Him not. God has given us light, not for ourselves alone, but to shed upon them.”³

STAND UNITED

Let’s unite our voices⁴ through the power of God in these last days of earth’s history, not allowing division or disunity in our church but looking steadfastly unto Jesus, who is the Author and Finisher of our faith. He will see us through. He is our Leader and Savior. The Lord’s messenger tells us, “I am instructed to say to Seventh-day Adventists the world over, God has called us as a people to be a peculiar treasure unto Himself. He has appointed that His church on earth shall stand perfectly united in the Spirit and counsel of the Lord of hosts to the end of time.”⁵

Let’s unite in standing for religious liberty as we see the approach of the end of time and Jesus’ soon return. God will be victorious! And one day this will be eternal reality: “The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all flow life and light and gladness throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love.”⁶

What a privilege to be followers of God and members in the Seventh-day Adventist movement. May we all be faithful to God’s Word as we pray earnestly for the latter rain of the Holy Spirit and the second coming of Christ. ☺

¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 7, p. 138.

² *Ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 19.

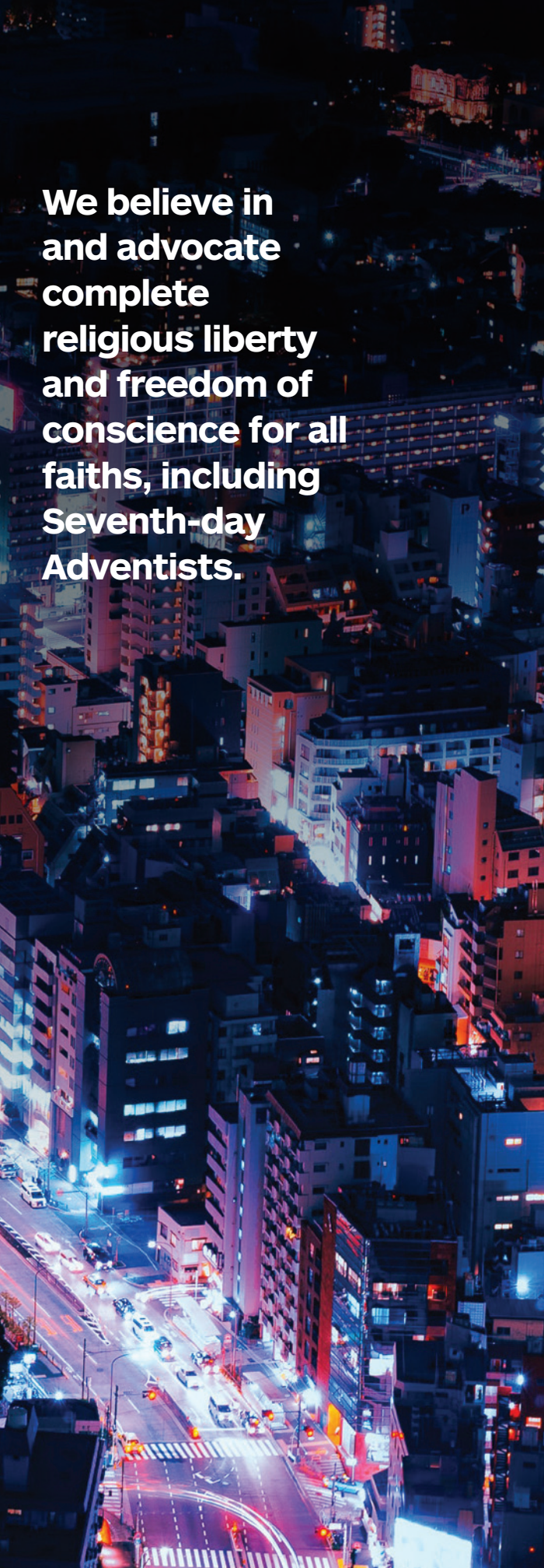
³ Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 81.

⁴ See “What Does God Say About Unity?” <https://adventistreview.org/news/what-does-god-say-about-unity/>.

⁵ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958, 1980), book 2, p. 397.

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

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



**We believe in
and advocate
complete
religious liberty
and freedom of
conscience for all
faiths, including
Seventh-day
Adventists.**

What We Believe

The Remnant and Its Mission

No Elite Spiritual Club

What's the link
between the
remnant and
God's mission?

Precarious situation," "possibility of nuclear annihilation," "large-scale destruction of human life caused by the ecological crisis," "the menacing problems of mass starvation and overpopulation," "uncertain political, social, and economic conditions," "widespread racial and national unrest," "unprecedented insecurity and anxiety," and "intense quest to secure life and preserve existence." Depressing words from today's *New York Times*? Perhaps from a recent speech at the United Nations? No. They all come from one long sentence Adventist scholar Gerhard Hasel wrote a half century ago.¹

In his book *The Remnant* Hasel traced the concept of the remnant from the earliest days of human history. He argued that the remnant idea surfaces at crucial moments when people feel their lives are threatened.² In the face of times of uncertainty and chaos, "the urgent prophetic call to turn to God in faith, confidence, and trust" is the only basis for survival. If we wholeheartedly turn to God, we will receive "true security, real peace, genuine love, and lasting hope with the assurance that one is a member of the remnant."³

CATALYST—NOT A CLUB

More than 50 years after Hasel wrote those words, we need hope and assurance more than ever. But with that hope and assurance comes responsibility. The remnant isn't an exclusive religious club that focuses on its own needs, comforts, and security. It doesn't access secret passwords and codes that gain special blessings from God that aren't available to anyone else. Certainly it focuses on and upholds the importance of biblical truth, but just as important, it lives the truth. And rather than focusing inward, its passion is to share and show that truth.

Instead of an elite spiritual club, the remnant is more like a human catalyst—situated in the world to bless it, change it, and love it. It's a catalyst that goes into all the world and demonstrates God's message of hope and salvation. Centuries ago



Isaiah described His remnant going to places “that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory.” Their task was to “proclaim my glory among the nations” (Isa. 66:19, NIV).

A biblical remnant doesn’t just declare that glory in words and by sharing distinctive beliefs. It demonstrates that glory through the way they live. Again and again the biblical prophets tell the remnant of Israel and Judah that God is weary of words. He wants to see changed lives. The prophet Amos rebukes the “remnant of Joseph” because they’re dishonest and mistreat the poor (Amos 5:7, 12, 15). Likewise, the prophet Zechariah calls the remnant a curse because they’re blind to the suffering around them and don’t care for the widows, the orphans, the foreigners, and the poor (Zech. 7:9, 10; 8:12).

But Zechariah says that if they changed, the remnant could become “a blessing” among the nations (Zech. 8:13). That blessing would lead people from different nations and speaking different languages to stream to Jerusalem to find God. Envisioning that beautiful scenario, Zechariah says: “In those days ten people from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, ‘Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you’” (verse 23, NIV).

It’s a mission vision of what the remnant could be.

REMNANT RESISTANCE

A faithful biblical remnant also resists cultural and political pressures that surround it. Like salmon swimming upstream, the remnant goes against the flow. It protests and opposes dominant belief systems that oppose God’s values. The remnant works to give God a good name but doesn’t enter any popularity contests. The book of Revelation depicts a remnant toward the end

of time surrounded by corruption, apostasy, and persecution. But they remain faithful in their mission: they keep the commandments of God and have “the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 12:17, KJV). This description is also found in Revelation 14, immediately after the message of the three angels: “Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Rev. 14:12, KJV). In the face of those who oppose or just ignore God’s ways, the remnant stays firm and endures in its commitment.

The remnant is like a resistance movement against beliefs and systems that have been set up in opposition to God’s truth. I’m reminded of John Weidner, a Dutch Seventh-day Adventist businessman who organized escape lines for Jews during World War II. Despite being imprisoned and tortured, and regularly putting his own life in danger, he helped rescue hundreds of Jews. His brave resistance to the forces of evil earned him numerous medals and recognition by the Israeli government as a righteous Gentile. At Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem, a grove of trees was planted in his honor.

The faithful, resisting remnant of Revelation lives its life in obedience to God. And it can enthusiastically join the three angels in proclaiming the everlasting good news to “every nation, tribe, tongue, and people,” directing them to the Creator God, alerting them to a coming judgment, and warning them that false systems of worship are a dead end (Rev. 14:6-11).

This mission was uppermost in Adventist minds when the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists moved to Takoma Park, Maryland, in 1903. At the time there were fewer than 78,000 Adventists worldwide. They were a

The remnant works to give God a good name but doesn’t enter any popularity contests.

tiny remnant from other Christian denominations, a “little flock,” as they often called themselves.

Their arrival made an impact. While no doubt being good neighbors, they resisted mainstream thinking and behavior. They were nonsmoking, vegetarian, teetotaling health reformers. They were anti-war. They cared for the poor and the sick. They worshipped on the seventh day. The God they loved didn’t burn sinners in hell forever. The list went on. Some years later *Washington Post* journalist Nicole Arthur wrote that Adventists were “considered a little subversive.”⁴

That’s what a faithful remnant is all about. It has a countercultural, resistance mission. It undermines established ways of doing things while blessing the community. It remains faithful to God and shares with the world His everlasting message of salvation. That message is timely and timeless. And, to borrow Gerhard Hasel’s words again, it’s the only message that brings “true security, real peace, genuine love, and lasting hope.” ☺

¹ Gerhard F. Hasel, *The Remnant: The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea From Genesis to Isaiah* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1972), p. vii.

² *Ibid.*, p. 402.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 403.

⁴ Nicole Arthur, “Weekend’s Guide to Takoma Park,” *Washington Post*, Apr. 16, 1999, pp. 25, 36.

Gary Krause is director of the General Conference Office of Adventist Mission.

A newspaper clipping tells the story of Rafael Urbina's daring revolt.

Looking Back

A Rebel, a Revolt, and a Miracle in Curaçao



Four men walked toward the S.S. *Van Rensselaer* anchored in the La Guaira, Venezuela, seaport. William Baxter,¹ president of the Caribbean Union; secretary-treasurer Charles Knight; missionary secretary Fred Steeves; and literature evangelist Pedro Sanoia were set to board for a missionary trip to the Caribbean Dutch island of Curaçao, just north of Lake Maracaibo, Venezuela. It was July 1924.

When they arrived the next day, they set out across the island selling religious books and planting gospel seeds. About a year later Charles and his wife, Deborah, moved to Curaçao. Deborah was a true pioneer. While her husband traveled back and forth to Venezuela, she remained on the island. She preached like any experienced minister, gave Bible studies, and did visitation. She organized a little company of believers, although none were baptized as of yet.² Two years of hard labor were fruitful in establishing a church in Curaçao.

The Knights left the island, and David Babcock and his wife were called to minister to the little

group of believers. They needed their own place of worship. It was just too much to be moving from place to place. In March 1929, after significant fasting and prayer, David petitioned the government for a plot of land to build a church.³ It would take a miracle for this to happen. The group continued to pray, presenting their need to the Lord, and God answered in a strange and dramatic way.

UNEXPECTED MEANS

On Saturday evening, June 8, 1929,⁴ two trucks carrying nearly 45 Venezuelan rebels under the leadership of Rafael Simón Urbina, came into Curaçao and captured the governor by force. Rafael knew Curaçao very well,⁵ including the movements of the soldiers, whom he knew personally. He had been captured and held in isolation there a year before. Because of good behavior, Rafael had been allowed to do chores around Fort Amsterdam and had had ample time to observe the movements and routine of the military. He knew where the ammunition was kept.

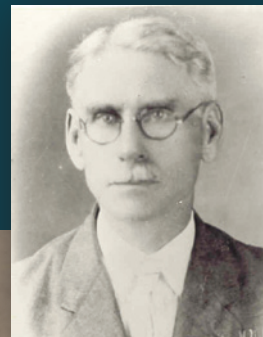
While Rafael was in confine-

ment, fellow Venezuelans who worked at the Shell refinery went on strike. They demanded release of the Venezuelan prisoners being held at the fort. The captain in charge of the fort asked Rafael to speak to the leaders of the strike. Rafael said he would do so only after receiving the guarantee that he would not be sent back to Venezuela. Since Holland and Venezuela had maintained good relations, Rafael knew that they would want to send him back to Venezuela. This would have meant his end. The strike at the refinery had the desired effect, and Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands ordered his deportation to another country. He went to Colombia.

Rafael did not appreciate the treatment he received from the Curaçao government, and decided he would teach them a lesson someday. He prepared for almost a year. Eight days before the June assault, Rafael came to Curaçao using a Mexican passport with another name. At the wharf his comrades were waiting for him. They took him to a little house beside the refinery where his com-

God uses even difficult circumstances to further His work.

Charles Knight, one of the first missionaries to Curaçao



The S.S. *Van Rensselaer* anchored in the La Guaira, Venezuela, seaport



The Babcock family

panion was waiting for him. There they finalized plans for the assault.

Rafael and his men, armed with only machetes and two automatic pistols, attacked the garrison in the fort, killing three Dutch soldiers. Despite military resistance, the rebels gained control.

Rafael went to Governor Leonard Fruytier, demanding that he accompany him outside and permit him and his men to leave the island by boat. If this demand was not granted, he would set the oil refinery on fire—which would be a great tragedy for the island. A little past midnight the governor and others were taken prisoner and obliged to board the ship *Maracaibo* for Venezuela.⁶

Ship captain Arthur Morris protested that he could not leave the harbor without clearance papers and a crew, since his crew had fled when they heard the commotion. Rafael told the captain to make out the papers and forced the governor at gunpoint to sign them.

While at sea, Captain Morris⁷ overheard that the rebels were planning to kill the governor and throw him overboard. The captain told Rafael

that it would be a great mistake, because the man he was holding prisoner was not the one who was governor at the time he was incarcerated. The other governor had gone back to Holland. Captain Morris argued that this man wanted to treat everyone fairly.

Swayed by his advice, Rafael demanded disembarkation with his men at Coro, Venezuela; then the ship could take the governor and other prisoners back to Curaçao. The trip ended sadly for the rebels. They were captured by the Venezuelan army and imprisoned.

NEW HORIZONS

The return of the *Maracaibo* ended a bitter chapter for the island and the government, but opened new horizons for the struggling Seventh-day Adventist church. God used and continues to use difficult circumstances to further His work.

Back in office, Governor Fruytier called Captain Morris and told him that out of gratitude for saving his life, he would grant him whatever reasonable request he made. Captain Morris' wife was a Seventh-day Adventist, and he usually attended

the services with her when he was in port. Knowing of the difficulties they had in obtaining a piece of land for the church, Captain Morris requested the governor grant the Adventists their petition and let them have the land on which to build their church.

Two months later 1,200 square meters of land was turned over to the Adventists. This was the site where, in early 1930, the first Seventh-day Adventist church building was erected along with a parsonage. The church united in prayer and thanksgiving to the Lord for answering their petition in such a speedy and remarkable way. ©

¹ The Caribbean Union at the time covered the territories of Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana, and the Lesser Antilles.

² Personal interview with Daisy Labega, 1991.

³ Copy of letter sent by Elder Babcock is in possession of the author.

⁴ The newspapers of the time, *Amigo*, *La Union*, and *De Curaçaosche Courant*, among others, wrote extensively on this drama. Copies of these are in the National Archives of the Netherlands Antilles in Willemstad, Curaçao.

⁵ Rafael Simón Urbina, *Libertad, Dolor y Tragedia* (1936).

⁶ The *Maracaibo* had just docked coming from Aruba the very same day with 15 first-class passengers, 9 second-class, 113 on deck, and 29 in transit. See *De Curaçaosche Courant*, June 14, 1929.

⁷ Captain Morris shared this story with his wife, who was a Seventh-day Adventist, and a couple of other church leaders. It was not something to speak about, as it was a delicate matter then.

Daniel A. Duffis is a longtime pastor, administrator, and author of several books on church history.

Immortal Soul and Eternal Gospel

Q

To what extent does the teaching of the immortality of the soul impact the significance of the gospel?

A

Adventists believe that the Bible does not teach the inherent immortality of the soul, and affirm that humans are an indivisible unity of life in bodily form. Hence, immortality is a divine eschatological gift inseparable from the resurrection of the body. Unfortunately, the Christian church has aligned itself with the Platonic view of an inherent immortal soul. Let's look at both positions individually.

IMMORTAL SOUL

First, the claim that the soul is immortal results in the teaching that the life of a person outside the body is indestructible. Second, this immortal soul (whatever it may be) is something that belongs by nature and function to a human being. The soul is in fact the disembodied human being existing by him- or herself. Third, that being the case, it's obvious that at no point in the history of sinful humanity has the life of the soul—the soul itself—been at risk at all. Certainly, the body dies as a result of sin, but the soul lives on forever. Fourth, if we are correct in our previous statements, then the soul itself has no need of salvation, because nothing can threaten it. Fifth, some would probably argue that it is the sphere where the immortal soul continues to exist that introduces the need for salvation, but not for the salvation of the soul. In other words, they would probably argue that the soul needs to go back to the sphere of God through Christ in order to escape the second sphere of existence consisting in burning in hell forever and ever.

IMMORTALITY AND THE GOSPEL

The inherent immortality of the soul teaches that there is something in our nature that we would never lose no matter our spiritual condition. It doesn't need to be saved in itself. The Bible, however, teaches that sin has permanently damaged the totality of the person—the inner life as well as the spiritual, physical, and social life—leaving humans in need of salvation. The only option is to become a new creation through the saving sacrifice of Christ.

Since human existence was never at risk, the depth of the sacrifice of Christ and the divine display of God's love manifested through it is diminished. He did not give His life for my soul, because the soul is immortal! Although sin required the reconciliation of the soul with God, some argue, it didn't damage the inherent life of the soul. The damage that sin and rebellion caused to human nature that would lead to our extinction is redefined, and consequently, the magnitude of the sacrifice of Christ is diminished. The significance of the sacrifice of Christ consisted in descending to the depth of our predicament in order to give us back the life we lost. Restricting the damage of sin in our lives would be clouding the magnitude of the sacrificial love of God displayed on the cross.

Finally, the teaching of the inherent immortality of the soul distorts God's loving character as revealed on the cross by redefining eternal death as the eternal burning of the soul of the wicked in hell. What kind of a God would burn people forever for living a short sinful life on this planet? This is one of the greatest doctrinal tragedies in the history of Christianity and is unquestionably the result of accepting the belief in the inherent immortality of the soul. ©

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

Seventh-day Adventist Hospitals

Are they really making a positive difference?

I'm in my final year of medicine and wrestling with where I should work when qualified. I'd love to go to one of our Adventist hospitals, but I hear negative comments about facilities and even their commitment to mission. Are our hospitals around the world making a positive impact?

The short answer is yes, our hospitals around the world are making a very positive difference in the lives of many millions of patients every year.

I personally experienced similar misgivings as my own graduation approached. Since then I've had the privilege of working with and for the Adventist Church's health work throughout my entire career, and I would do it all over again in a heartbeat!

I shudder when I receive harshly critical and even vitriolic letters regarding some of our hospitals around the world, but at the same time I'm comforted by the many, many more messages of appreciation for the excellent work being done in those very hospitals and many others!

On Christmas Day in 1865 the Lord gave Ellen White the vision embracing the social and mission aspects of health ministry and the philosophy for operating health-care entities. Institutions should practice "whole person" care, addressing physical, spiritual, and moral needs. Shortly after the 1866 GC Session, she urged that Seventh-day Adventists have an institution of their own. This started the health-care initiative that now has a footprint over much of the globe. Despite humble beginnings, and by God's grace, Seventh-day Adventists are presently the largest Protestant faith-based health-care provider in the world.

It troubles me, however, that we struggle to recruit and retain Adventist health professionals to work in our hospitals, clinics, and medical and nursing schools. As an organization, we need to intentionally review remuneration policies and prioritize the strengthening of governance, operation, and maintenance to sustain these initiatives. Additionally, I appeal to young health-care professionals like you to prayerfully consider joining and enriching our dedicated and excellent team of workers with your talents and energy. I can testify that it's a

wonderfully fulfilling experience.

As a church, we've been blessed with a privileged revelation of how to live life to the full. It's a sacred duty for us to care for our own and our patients' body temples, and to spend and be spent in service to a broken world crying out for a grace-filled revelation of Jesus Christ through His followers and the precious truths entrusted to them. Comprehensive health ministry, including health care, is integral to this mission.

"We have come to a time when every member of the church should take hold of medical missionary work."* This includes health professionals of all disciplines as well as health-care administrators. We are called to graciously share, care, preach, teach, heal, and disciple.

Worried that the system is not optimal? Get involved and make a difference. A key way to be an agent of change is to work from the inside.

Be a part of the solution—serving as and how Jesus may call you! ©

* Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 7, p. 62.

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



An Angel Ladder



**“May I Tell
You a Story?”**

BY DICK DUERKSEN

Alejandro was a colporteur, a young man who walked the humid mountains of Central America searching for families who needed the truth-filled books he carried in his backpack. It wasn't a way to become wealthy, but had proved to be a good way to earn “just enough” to cover his college tuition.

He had been born in these mountains, had grown up eating wild mangoes and guavas, sucking on sugarcane, and helping care for his family's hillside farm. He had named and fed goats, chickens, three milk cows, doves, and multiple families of kittens. He loved it here. The humidity. The cool night breezes. The blue/black butterflies that seemed to follow him everywhere. The happy songs he sang with friends at church.

His parents valued education and had made sure he attended the local elementary school and then a nearby high school. When he graduated, they took him on a long bus ride to the Seventh-day Adventist college near the capital city. It was far from home and much more expensive than the family had expected.

“I think there may be a way,” one of the financial aid counselors said. “The conference is offering a scholarship

to students who work as colporteurs during the summer. You know, selling Bibles, prophecy booklets, and other materials in the high mountain villages. If you're interested, I'll see what I can do to connect you.”

A few weeks later Alejandro had a backpack full of books and 10 days of training. And a map with several small villages circled in red. And a new pair of good mountain walking shoes.

Alejandro had not expected that the training would focus so much time on “how to pray” and “depending on the Holy Spirit.” He had thought there would be more about “surviving in the woods” and “the right words for selling.”

“The Holy Spirit and God's angels will be with you every step of the way. Talk to them often,” the leader had reminded the colporteurs many times.

He had been doing a lot of talking, especially during the past couple weeks. A group of rebel soldiers had shown up in the hillside coffee plantations, demanding money and food, harassing the villagers, and stealing animals. There were rumors that soldiers had shot several village men. Now there were also government soldiers in the hills, and everyone was trying to stay out of the way of the guns.

Alejandro kept on earning his scholarship, walking the hills, going from one

small wooden house to the next small wooden house. Talking with wives, mothers, and their men. Showing *The Desire of Ages*, *The Great Controversy*, and the dozen other books in his backpack. Explaining the gospel again and again.

The next house had never been painted. Alejandro imagined the new friends he would make, and walked up the hill. After climbing the three stairs, he knocked on the old wooden door. A woman answered, a woman whose face was lined with worry and whose fear flicked her eyes from left to right.

"Go away," she said in a voice slightly above a whisper, a voice crisp with terror.

"But señora, I have books that will give you peace and hope," Alejandro said, reaching for his backpack.

"Go away," she said again. "It's not safe. Many soldiers are near."

Then she closed the door and locked it with the sliding of a large metal bolt.

Alejandro stood there for a moment, listening as all the normal forest sounds died away. The birds, the cicadas, the frogs, even the old burro all had gone silent. The soggy afternoon air pressed down and chased him back down the steps toward the muddy path.

There was no place to run. Nowhere to hide. No barn. No neighborhood with a "safe house." Nothing but a few trees, some tall bamboo, and the coffee plants.

And an ancient brown bamboo-slat chicken coop.

Alejandro sprinted across the path, under the bamboo, and joined the chickens.

The quiet had become a war zone. Rebel soldiers were shooting at government soldiers, and government soldiers were shooting the rebels. The chicken coop was in the middle of the mess, and Alejandro and his backpack were scrunched down into the chicken dust—watching the battle from beneath the broken bamboo.

How am I ever going to get out of here alive? Alejandro thought. Then he remembered his trainer's words and began

talking with the Holy Spirit and the guardian angels. He told them his problem and begged for them to somehow get him out before the bright hot bullets ended his life. He was very clear in his request!

Alejandro's breath caught as he saw a stranger, tall and dressed in white, sprint across the path toward the chicken coop. He followed the colporteur's lead and joined him in the dirt with the chickens.

"What are you, crazy?" Alejandro asked the newcomer.

"Hello. Sorry to have to join you." The stranger smiled when he spoke, as if it were a nice quiet day in the village.

They talked for a few minutes, and then the stranger glanced at his watch.

"Oh, no!" he exclaimed. "I am supposed to be in another village down the road right now. It was good to meet you, but I must go."

He slipped out under the bamboo, stood tall beside the chicken coop, dusted off the dirt, and walked calmly toward the path, not bothering to dodge the bullets screaming through the village. When he reached the center of the path, he turned, waved to Alejandro, and walked slowly up an invisible stairway into the sky. At the top of the stairs he disappeared.

Alejandro lay still, staring through the broken bamboo to the empty place where there had been a stairway. Then he smiled, breathed an eloquent "Thank you," grabbed his backpack, and slipped out under the chicken coop wall. Outside he stood tall, brushed off the dirt, and walked calmly toward the center of the path. There were no stairs, but the shooting had stopped, and the woods were silent.

When Alejandro arrived at the center of the path, he stopped, looked toward the rebels, looked toward the government troops, and pointed up into the sky.

"I have an appointment in the next village," he said loudly, "and must be going now." Then he walked down the road to safety. ©

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

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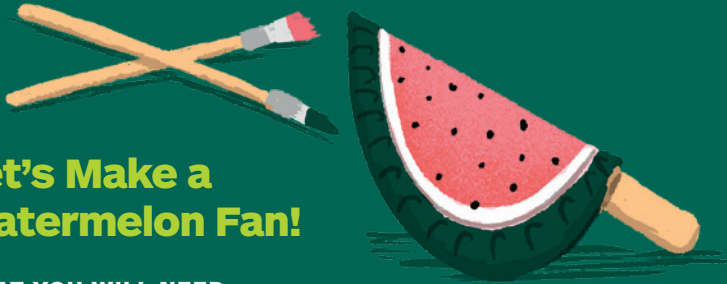


Seventh-day
Adventist Church

Behold the Mighty Watermelon

Fun Facts About Watermelons

- Watermelons are both fruit and vegetable.
- While we tend to eat the inner, sweeter part of the watermelon, you can eat the entire thing.
- Watermelons have that name because they are 92 percent water.
- Seedless watermelons are actually grown from seeds.
- In Japan there are watermelon growers who have figured out how to grow them in different shapes. Have you ever seen a watermelon cube? It's a thing.



Let's Make a Watermelon Fan!

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- white paper plates (the flimsy kind)
- large Popsicle/craft sticks
- masking tape
- paint (pink, red, green, and black)
- paintbrushes
- cotton swabs (optional)



WHAT TO DO:

- 1 Turn your plate over so the food-serving side faces down. In a small bowl, pour a little pink paint and add a drop or two of red and mix to get close to the color of a watermelon. Paint the inner circle of your plate with this color.
- 2 Now pour a little green into a small bowl and paint the outside (rind) with that color. You will be painting the part where the grooves of the plate are, and leaving a white ring between the pink and green sections.
- 3 Pour a little black paint into a small bowl and, using a cotton swab, “dot” the pink part with black paint to look like watermelon seeds. Set the painted plate aside to dry completely.
- 4 Once the plate is dry, fold it in half with the painted side facing out. It'll look like a slice of watermelon. On the bottom, center, and inside, use the tape to securely fasten a large popsicle stick. This will be your handle. You can then close the “slice” over the stick and use more tape or a stapler to seal it shut. Now you've got a watermelon fan to keep you cool in a hot place!

Spiritual Thought

Though watermelons aren't mentioned specifically by name in the Bible, the verse we have chosen talks about these “seeded” foods that God made for us to enjoy. Watermelons are not only delicious but are very good for us because of all the water they contain. When you are hot, or maybe even sick with a fever, this treat can help you cool down and feel better.

Do you like to eat your water-

melon chilled from the fridge or at room temperature? Either way, they are a delicious and healthy treat for us! What a wonderful God we serve, who made foods for us not only to enjoy, but that provide hydration and nutrients.

Humans aren't the only ones who enjoy watermelons. Have you ever seen a hippopotamus crush an entire watermelon in its mouth? These animals have super-strong jaws and teeth to be able to do

that. If you look around carefully, you will find many things in nature that God made for us to enjoy—not just for their beauty but also because they provide things we may need to be well and strong.

So the next time you use your watermelon fan or eat a slice of this juicy treat, remember the wonderful Creator who made so many amazing things to bless our lives with, and say a little prayer of thanks. ☺



Bible Treasure

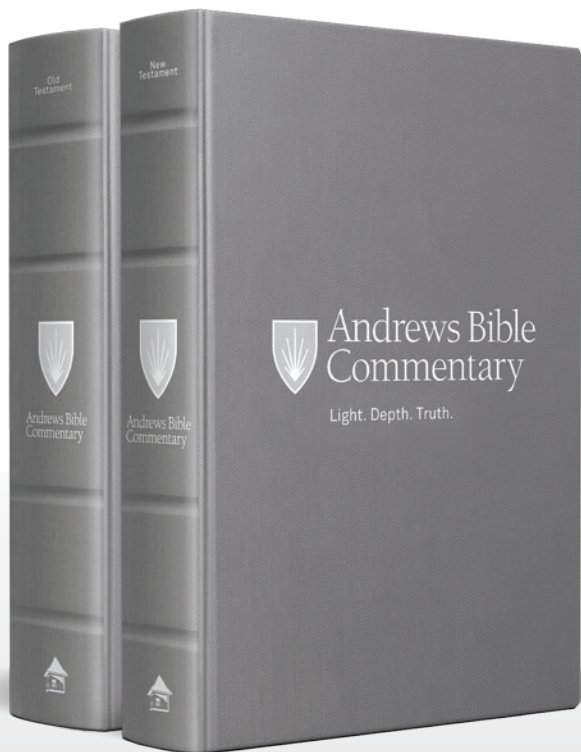
“Then God said, ‘Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.’ And it was so.”

Genesis 1:11, NIV



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Mark Finley, *world evangelist*

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