

our firm
FOUNDATION

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The Immutable Law of God • Christ Our Righteousness • The Seventh-day Sabbath
The Three Angels' Messages • The Non-Immortality of the Soul • The Sanctuary



THE FAITH OF
Abraham

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Clark Floyd, editor of Our Firm Foundation magazine, has been co-host of the radio program Bible Answers with Clark and Lee and is a licensed attorney and an ordained Seventh-day Adventist pastor. He has spoken internationally and makes his home in the beautiful mountains of western North Carolina.

In a recent editorial I wrote about my wife's ministry to save cats from euthanasia; I mentioned that she has been involved in this ministry for many years. There are many interesting situations that evolve from her ministry.

Very recently she had adopted out a cat that we had had for a year. His name is Big Jasper due to the fact that he weighs at least 20 pounds, a good size for a cat. After the adopting people had taken him home, Big Jasper managed to open the door of their house and escape into the busy neighborhood. Over a period of three weeks he was spotted several times by neighbors ranging within a several block area. He did not recognize their voices and would not come to them. Posters with his picture were placed around the neighborhood. People were unable to catch him. He would eat from food dishes set outside but would not allow any one to get close to him. My wife had gone to the neighborhood on several occasions but did not see the cat. She loves her cats, and this whole situation was somewhat upsetting to her. We prayed on a daily basis that Jasper would return. The days slowly passed.

On the last occasion for her to stop by the neighborhood at the home of the people who had adopted Big Jasper, my wife was calling Jasper's name when he responded to her with his meows. He was somewhere across a fence in a neighbor's yard. My wife went around one fence and finally saw him on the other side of a second fence. She walked along the fence,

and Jasper followed on the other side to a spot where she could lift up the fence. Jasper came under the fence, and she was able to pick him up, put him in a carrier and bring him home. He spoke to her all the way, and is extremely happy to be back home.

Jesus, in speaking of the shepherd and his sheep, says, "...he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice, and a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers."

Jesus is calling out to each of us. This earth is only a temporary home. Do we truly recognize His voice? He

When the storm of persecution really breaks upon us, the true sheep will hear the true Shepherd's voice.

goes on to say, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

How are we responding? He wants each of us to be safe to save. He wants to bring us home to heaven and finally to the earth made new. How do we spend our time?

Do we seek to get to know Jesus better? Are we memorizing Scripture? Do we recognize His voice in our lives? Or do we like the neighborhood of this earth so well that we would just as soon be here?

"Every truly converted soul will be intensely desirous to bring others

from the darkness of error into the marvelous light of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The great outpouring of the Spirit of God, which lights the whole earth with His glory, will not come until we have an enlightened people, that know by experience what it means to be laborers together with God. When we have entire, wholehearted consecration to the service of Christ, God will recognize the fact by an outpouring of His Spirit without measure; but this will not be while the largest portion of the church are not laborers together with God." *Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 21, 1896.

"When the storm of persecution really breaks upon us, the true sheep will hear the true Shepherd's voice. Self-denying efforts will be put forth to save the lost, and many who have strayed from the fold will come back to follow the great Shepherd. The people of God will draw together and present to the enemy a united front.... The love of Christ, the love of our brethren, will testify to the world that we have been with Jesus and learned of Him. Then will the message of the third angel swell to a loud cry, and the whole earth will be lightened with the glory of the Lord." *Ev.* 693.

"When Christ shall come, our vile bodies are to be changed, made like His glorious body; but the vile character will not be made holy then. The transformation of character must take place before His coming. Our natures must be pure and holy; we must have the mind of Christ, that He may behold with pleasure His image reflected upon our souls." *OHC* 278.

Our Mission:

It is the mission of Hope International and the editors of *Our Firm Foundation* to clearly present Christ and His truth. The days remaining for this world are few, and we must work quickly. We must boldly proclaim the historic truths of Adventism that place us on so firm a foundation in the midst of this troubled world. —Editor

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About Hope International:

We are a lay ministry founded, supported, and operated by Seventh-day Adventists to assist God's Church in the proclamation of the Everlasting Gospel in every way that is consistent with the principles of God as revealed in Inspiration.

Invitation to Writers

We are accepting article-length manuscripts (3000 words) for possible publication in *Our Firm Foundation*. We prefer that submissions be submitted in Word.doc format as a computer file. Include a digital picture and a short bio. Please address all correspondence to Editor, *Our Firm Foundation*, 151 Ascension Lane, Marshall, NC 28753, or by email to editorial@hopeint.org.

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THE FAITH OF *Abraham*

By Mrs. E. G. White

EDITOR'S COMMENT: As we near the end of all earthly time, the return of Jesus, I felt that this article could help us better see the relation we need to have with our Heavenly Father. This article is a real challenge to me. How about you. It is long, but, I think, quite profitable for our Christian walk.

Abraham was directed of God to go up to Mount Moriah, and there offer up his son as a burnt offering. There the Lord tested Abraham by a most fearful trial. In taking Hagar for his wife he showed distrust in the promises of God. If he had patiently waited for the promise to be fulfilled in God's own time and manner, and had not sought to make a providence himself, he would not have been subjected to this the closest test that was ever required of man.

Abraham's faith had already been sorely tested

This command of God was calculated to stir his soul to its depths. He was one hundred and twenty years old when this terrible and startling command came to him, in a vision of the night. He was to travel three days' journey, and would have ample time for reflection. Fifty years previous, at the divine command, he had left father and mother, relatives and friends, and had become a pilgrim and a stranger in a land not his own. He had obeyed the command of God to send away his son Ishmael to wander in the wilderness. His soul was bowed down with grief at this separation, and his faith was sorely tried, yet he submitted because God required it.

Looking up at the starry heavens, Abraham was reminded of God's promise many years before

But now a trial was before him which caused all his other afflictions to appear insignificant. The words of the command were sufficient to harrow up his soul and give him the deepest pain. "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." Over and over again did the burdened soul say, Oh! my son, my son, would to God my life would be accepted in the place of thine; then should my light not go out in darkness. Abraham

arose before day, and as he looked up to the starry heavens, he called to mind the promise which God made to him fifty years before. "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them. And he said unto him, So shall thy seed be." And now the same voice had commanded him to slay this only son, through whom this promise was to be fulfilled.

Stricken with grief, he bowed before God, and prayed

Abraham was tempted to believe that after all this might be a delusion. Stricken with grief, he bowed before God, and prayed as never before for a confirmation of this strange command, for greater light if he must perform this terrible duty. He remembered the angels sent to tell him of God's purpose to destroy Sodom, and those who bore to him the promise that he should have this same son Isaac. He walked forth where he had several times met the heavenly messengers, hoping to meet them again and receive some special direction from them; but he gained no light, darkness seemed to close about him, day was approaching, and he must be on his journey before light.

With Satan by his side, Abraham began his journey

He first passed to the couch upon which Isaac slept in peaceful innocence; he was the joy of his heart, the comfort of his old age. Abraham's lips quivered, he turned quickly away, and looked upon the couch where Sarah was quietly sleeping. He knew that Isaac was her pride, that her heart was intertwined with his. Should he awake Sarah, that she might look upon her son for the last time? Should he tell her the requirement of God? He knew that he himself had strength of faith, and confidence in God; he



did not know the strength of Sarah's faith; but he did know the strength of her love for Isaac.

He passed from one sleeper to the other, undecided in regard to the wisest course to pursue. He finally awakened Isaac softly, informing him that he was commanded of God to offer sacrifice upon a distant mountain, and that he must accompany him. He called his servants, and made every necessary preparation for his long journey. If he could unburden his mind to Sarah, and they together bear the suffering and responsibility, it might bring him some relief; but he decided that this would not do; for her heart was bound up in her son, and she might hinder him. He went forth on his journey, with Satan by his side to suggest unbelief and impossibility.

Unable to sleep, he spent the night in prayer

While walking by the side of Isaac, he could not engage in conversation as usual, for a deep sorrow was concealed in his own breast. The night approaches, the longest day Abraham ever experienced has come to a close. He saw his loved son Isaac and the servants locked in slumber, but he could not sleep. He spent the night in prayer. He would pray, still hoping that some heavenly messenger would appear to tell him that it is enough, that he may return to Sarah, with Isaac unharmed. The stars seem to shine forth more beautiful than ever before, reminding him of the promise, As the number of the stars, so shall thy seed be.

No messenger of mercy appeared to revoke the command of God

No new light dawned upon the tortured soul of Abraham. A heavy pressure was upon him, but he staggered not at the promise. He reasoned not that his posterity, which would be as the stars, must

now come through Ishmael, for God had plainly stated that through Isaac should the promise be fulfilled. Then again was that voice ringing in his ears, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest." That terrible command which would leave him childless can scarcely be realized. He rises early to continue his toilsome journey. Satan whispers his doubts, but Abraham resists his suggestions.

All day he had hopes of meeting an angel coming to bless and comfort him, or perhaps to revoke the command of God, but no messenger of mercy appeared. Satan suggested that he must be deceived, for God had said, "Thou shalt not kill," and that it was not like God to require what he had forbidden. The second long day comes to a close, another sleepless night is spent in humiliation and prayer, and the journey of the third day is commenced. Abraham lifts his eyes to the mountains, and upon one he beholds the promised sign. He looks earnestly, and lo, a bright cloud hovered over the top of Mount Moriah. Now he knows it is all a terrible certainty, and no delusion.

Even in his anguish, Abraham did not murmur against God

He was yet a great distance from the mountain, but he removed the burden from the shoulders of his servants and



bade them remain behind; while he placed the wood upon the shoulders of his son, and himself took the knife and fire. Abraham braced himself for his sad work which he must perform. He did not murmur against God, for Isaac had been given to him unexpectedly. He had received him with gratitude and great joy, and though he was the son of his old

age, the son of his love, he yet believed that the same power that gave him Isaac, could raise him again even from the ashes of the burnt sacrifice. He strengthens his soul by the evidences he has had of the goodness and faithfulness of God. Had not God, who had graciously given Isaac to him perfect right to recall the gift, and demand him back?

What a blessing Isaac had been to Abraham

Isaac had been a comfort, a sunbeam, a blessing to Abraham in his old age, and although this gift of God seemed so precious, so dear to him, yet he was now commanded to give it back to God. The words of God's command showed that he fully realized the pain which Abraham must feel in obeying his requirement, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest." Abraham wanted no witnesses. It was enough that God could look on and not only see the full consecration of his darling Isaac, but read the heart and fully understand how severely he felt the test. He wished no one but God to witness this parting scene between father and son.

Oh, how Abraham wished to die instead of his beloved son!

Abraham knew not how Isaac would receive the command of God. As they drew near the mountain, "Isaac spake to Abraham, his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" These endearing words, "My Father," pierced his affectionate heart, and again he thought, Oh! that I, in my old age, might die instead of Isaac. Still reluctant to open before his son the true purpose of his errand, Abraham answered, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering."

Isaac assisted his Father in building the altar. Together they placed on the wood, and the last work preparatory to the sacrifice is done. With quivering lips and trembling voice, Abraham revealed to his son the message that God had sent him. In obedience to God's command, he had taken the journey. Everything was ready. Isaac was the victim, the lamb to be slain. Had Isaac chosen to resist his father's command, he could have done so, for he was grown to manhood; but he had been so thoroughly instructed in the knowledge of God that he had perfect faith in his promises and requirements.

After fully considering the matter, Isaac comforted his father

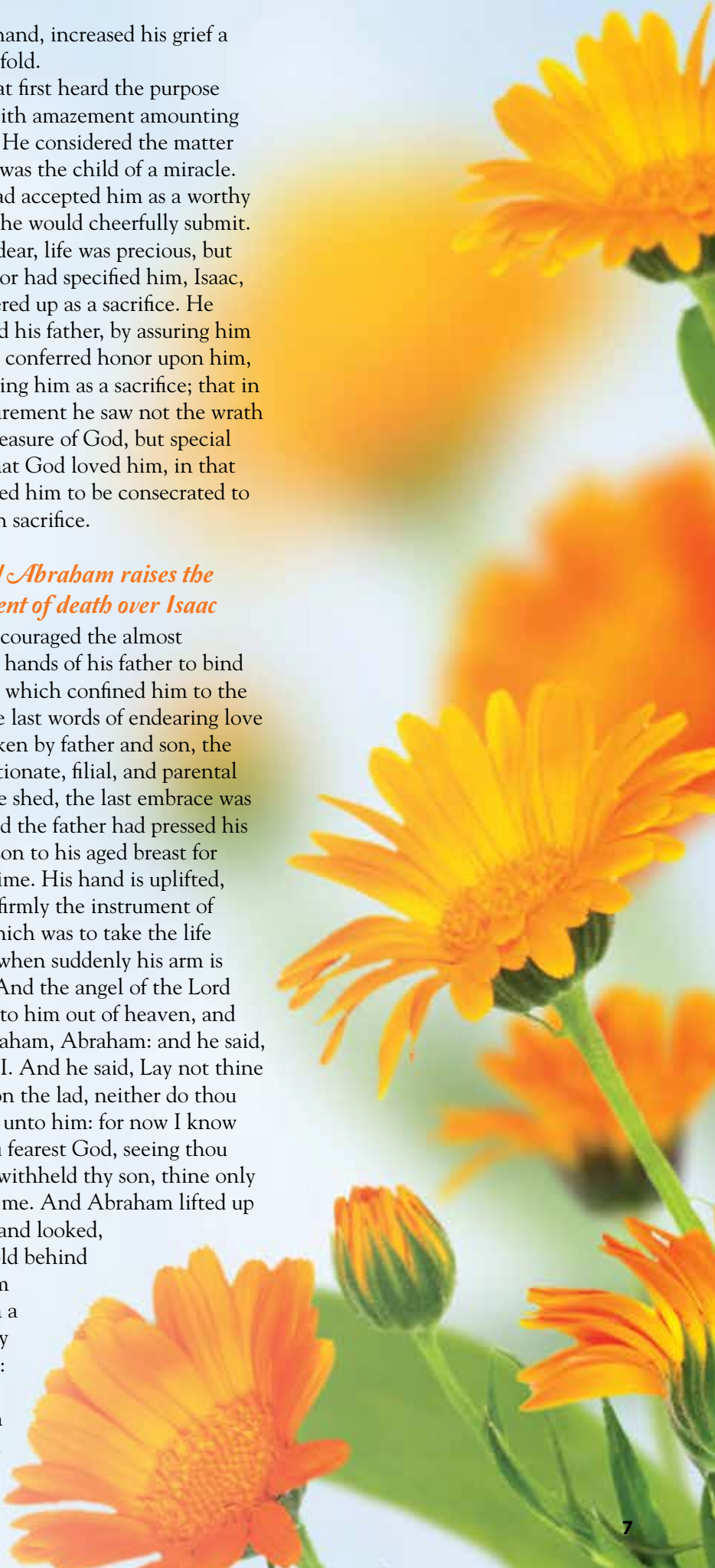
Abraham assured his son that his affection for him was not diminished, and that he would rather give his own life than to deprive him of life. But God had chosen Isaac, and his requirement must be fulfilled to the letter. He told Isaac that God had miraculously given him to his parents, and now he had required him again. He assured his son that God's promise, that "In Isaac shall thy seed be called," would be fulfilled; that doubtless God would raise him to life again from the dead. He told Isaac that he had hoped that the Messiah would spring from him. In this he was disappointed, and then, that his darling son must die by

his own hand, increased his grief a hundred-fold.

Isaac at first heard the purpose of God with amazement amounting to terror. He considered the matter fully. He was the child of a miracle. If God had accepted him as a worthy sacrifice, he would cheerfully submit. Life was dear, life was precious, but his Creator had specified him, Isaac, to be offered up as a sacrifice. He comforted his father, by assuring him that God conferred honor upon him, in accepting him as a sacrifice; that in this requirement he saw not the wrath and displeasure of God, but special tokens that God loved him, in that he required him to be consecrated to himself in sacrifice.

Faithful Abraham raises the instrument of death over Isaac

He encouraged the almost nerveless hands of his father to bind the cords which confined him to the altar. The last words of endearing love were spoken by father and son, the last affectionate, filial, and parental tears were shed, the last embrace was given, and the father had pressed his beloved son to his aged breast for the last time. His hand is uplifted, grasping firmly the instrument of death, which was to take the life of Isaac, when suddenly his arm is stayed. "And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took



the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen. And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.”

Our money, our time, talents and ourselves, all belong to him. He has lent them to us, to test and prove us, and to develop what is in our hearts. If we selfishly claim as our own the favors God has graciously intrusted to us, we shall meet with great loss, for

everything sacred and holy. Such will feel that God’s claims must first be regarded, that nothing is too precious to sacrifice for him. Such will, like Abraham, exemplify their faith by their works.

Isaac was honored that God would choose him for a sacrifice

How many now who profess to believe God, and pass for Christians, will not obey his voice when he calls upon them to deny self, and yield to him their darling treasures. They will hesitate, and cling to earthly things. Their affections are upon the world and the things of the world, and some of these very ones will have the most to say about how much they have sacrificed to obey the truth. Isaac felt that it was a privilege to yield his life as a sacrifice to God. If God could accept him, he felt that he was honored.

Human judgment may look upon the command given to Abraham as severe, too great for human strength to bear. Abraham’s strength was from God. He looked not at the things which are seen with mortal vision, but at the things which are eternal. God required no more of Abraham than he had, in divine compassion and infinite love, given to man. He gave his only begotten Son to die, that guilty man might live. Abraham’s offering of Isaac was especially designed of God to prefigure the sacrifice of his Son.

A perfect lesson in faith and obedience

Every step that Abraham advanced toward Mount Moriah, the Lord went with him. All the agony and grief that Abraham endured during the three days of his dark and fearful trial, were imposed upon him to give us a lesson in perfect faith and obedience, and that we might better comprehend how real was the great self-denial and infinite sacrifice of the Father in giving his only Son to die a shameful death for the guilty race. No trial, no



Our dearest treasure belongs to God

God estimated Abraham’s obedience and unswerving faith, and gave him the name of “Father of the faithful.” The example of Abraham is recorded in sacred history for the benefit of his believing children. This great act of faith teaches the lesson of implicit confidence in God, perfect obedience to his requirements, and a complete surrender to the divine will. In the example of Abraham we are taught that nothing we possess is [too] precious to give to God.

All that we have is the Lord’s.

we rob God, and in robbing him, we rob ourselves of heavenly blessings, and the benediction Christ will give the faithful and obedient: “Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

How many now who profess to be Christians would yield up to God their beloved Isaac? Our dearest treasure belongs to God. A solemn duty rests upon Christian parents to so educate and mould the minds of their children that they will ever have a high respect and exalted reverence for God and

suffering or test, could be brought to bear upon Abraham, which would cause such mental anguish, such torture of soul, as that of obeying God in offering up his son.

Our Heavenly Father surrendered his beloved Son to the agonies of the crucifixion. Legions of angels witnessed the humiliation and soul-anguish of the Son of God, but were not permitted to interpose as in the case of Isaac. No voice was heard to stay the sacrifice. God's dear Son, the world's Redeemer, was insulted, mocked at, derided, and tortured, until he bowed his head in death. What greater proof can the Infinite One give us of his divine love and pity. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

Abraham knew that God's promises were infallible

The meagre conception that many have of the worth of the soul, and the sacrifice of God's dear Son for sinful man, is shown by their works. Should God speak to them as he did to Abraham, Sacrifice your possessions, your temporal benefits that I have lent you to advance my cause, they would look in astonishment, thinking God did not mean just what he said. Their riches are as dear to them as their children, their worldly treasure is their Isaac. To honor God with their substance, they think, is a requirement altogether too great, and they cannot believe that God means it. What have this class sacrificed for God?

Men will show all the faith they have. If God should speak to them and command them to go and offer one of their beloved children, they would think God a hard master. Yet he has done more than this for them. No such command will come to test and prove them. God knew to whom he spoke, when he gave the command to true and faithful

Abraham. Abraham knew that it was God who had commanded, and that his promises were infallible. Had God commanded him to offer his gold, his silver, his flocks, or even his own life, he would have done so cheerfully. He would have felt that he was but yielding back to God that which belonged to him.

But there are many who know not what self-denial, or sacrifice, or devotion to God,



is. They never can have extended and elevated views of the infinite sacrifice made by the Son of God to save a ruined world, until they surrender all to God. If God should speak to them in a command, as he did to Abraham, they would not be enough acquainted with his voice to understand that he did really require something of them, to show their love, and the genuineness of their faith.

Hearts are hardened by the love of the world

The claims of God upon our love, affection, and possessions, our talents, and ourselves, are





correspondingly great as was the infinite sacrifice made in giving his Son to die for sinful man. Those who really appreciate the work of the atonement, those who have a high sense of the sacrifice Christ has made to exalt them to his throne, will count it a special honor to be partakers with Christ in his self-denial, sacrifice, and suffering, that they may be co-workers with him in saving souls.

There are many who profess the truth, who do not love God half so well as they love the world. God is testing and proving them. Their love of the world and of riches darkens their minds, perverts their judgment, and hardens their hearts. God has, to some of them at least, revealed his will, and called for a surrender of their Isaac to him. But they refuse to obey, and let golden opportunities pass. Precious time is bearing into eternity a record of duties unfulfilled and of positive neglect.

Many neglect to learn the hard lesson of self-denial

Nothing we have is of true value until it is surrendered to God. The talent of means devoted to the cause and work of God, is of tenfold more value, than if selfishly retained for the gratification of our own pleasure. The faith of the devoted martyrs was like that of Abraham, it was genuine. they valued the precious truth, and in their turn, although despised of men, hunted from place to place, persecuted, afflicted, and tormented, were valued of God. There was no place for them upon the earth, but of them, says the apostle, the world was not worthy. Those who clung to precious truth in face of prison, torture, and death, had faith that few now living possess.

Many have chosen a life of ease. They have exalted their earthly interests above the spiritual and

eternal. They neglect to learn the hard lesson of self-denial, and of surrendering all to God. They do not count anything interesting, save that which is learned without much effort, and without involving any sacrifice of temporal enjoyment; and it is forgotten as soon as learned, because it cost them nothing.

The example of Abraham is left on record for us upon whom the ends of the world have come

The deepest poverty, with God's blessing, is better than houses and lands, and any amount of earthly treasure, without it. God's blessing places value on everything we possess; but if we have the whole world without his blessing we are indeed as poor as the beggar, for we can take nothing with us into the next world.

Those who profess to be looking for the soon coming of our Saviour, should have Abrahamic faith, a faith that is valued because it has cost them something, a faith that works by love, and purifies the soul. The example of Abraham is left on record for us upon whom the ends of the world have come. We must believe that God is in earnest with us, and that he is not to be trifled with. He means what he says, and he requires of us implicit faith and willing obedience. Then will he let his light shine around about us, and we shall be all light in the Lord.

ST, April 1, 1875



Ellen G. White, 1827–1915, received the spiritual gift of prophecy, and the fruits of her life and work accord with the biblical tests of a true messenger of God. To this day, her counsels are an incalculable blessing to God's people around the world.

Hope for Health



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HOODIA GORDONII EXTRACT

Hoodia gordonii is a South African succulent that, because of its prickly green appearance, is often mistakenly referred to as a cactus. Recently scientific research has proven what the Kalahari San bushmen have known for thousands of years: hoodia gordonii is a highly nutritious food that is extremely effective at reducing the appetite.

Researchers have discovered that hoodia gordonii contains a molecule that is many times more effective than glucose at decreasing hunger pangs. In fact, in clinical studies, participants that took hoodia for just two weeks showed a significant reduction in their average daily calorie intake and body fat content when compared to the placebo group!!

CHICKWEED

Most commonly used as an aid to burn fat, chickweed helps you lose weight by breaking up fatty deposits throughout the body, working as a natural diuretic (to remove excess water weight), and by suppressing the appetite. A valuable weight-loss tool, chickweed also helps to promote a healthy digestive system! Glucomannan (from the Konjac plant) Glucomannan is a soluble dietary fiber found in the cell walls of some plant species. It promotes weight loss by increasing the feelings of fullness. In one 8 week double blind trial involving 20 obese patients, a placebo or a glucomannan fiber supplement of 1 gram was given to the subjects one hour before each meal. No changes were made to the diet or exercise habits of the patients. The study found that over the 8 week period, the glucomannan group had an average weight loss of 2.5 kg (5.5 lbs.)

GARCINIA CAMBOGIA

Garcinia helps suppress the appetite and burn fat!! Garcinia helps do this by promoting synthesis of glycogen and signalling the brain that enough food has been eaten. Glycogen is the stored form of glucose, one of the body's primary sources of energy. Normally when you eat, you produce and store glycogen in the process, thereby signalling the brain's satiety center when enough food has been eaten (or glycogen has been stored). However, with garcinia, this signal is sent and the brain is tricked into thinking you are full, even if you haven't eaten. This has made this herb very effective for helping control weight. For this reason, it is recognized as a fat-burning herb all over the world!

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*Combining nature, faith, and
love to bring healing to the world.*

IS THERE SUCH A THING AS LUCK?

By Joe Olson



Do we live in a world that is controlled by chance? Or, another way of asking it is, do we live in a world that is not in control? Do things just “happen” to us, or are there real and justifiable explanations for everything that happens? Are we just the pawns of the universe that are blown whichever way the wind goes?

A lot of people, supposedly intelligent people, believe that. Stardust just happened to collide; circumstances just happened to come together to create life. We just happened to crawl out of the primordial soup, etc., etc. Really? Is that really how everything happened... and is happening?

Trusting in our Creator is not blind faith

As Christians, we know better. We know that there is a God who created everything. We know that He designed everything as He wanted it to be. We know that there is purpose to life and that there is existence after life in heaven, and then on this earth. Whether or not others believe it, we know it to be true... because we have tasted the Lord and know that He is, and that He is good. It is no more blind faith than the child who runs to his mother to protect him and believes she will. He knows by experience that his mother is there and that she loves him.

Even many Christians believe in luck

But this world is filled with the opposite ideas that constantly bombard our existence. And we know that there is a devil, and that his desire is to trip up our faith in God and cause us to despair. So, all day long we are under attack. Attacks from the papers, from TV, from billboards, from schools, from unconverted co-workers, from our own family who do not believe. As a result, many people, including Christians, believe in luck.

Webster defines luck as: “The seemingly

chance happenings of events which affect one.” I find it interesting that even Webster noted that the events “seemingly” happened to be by chance. It was as if he was not ready to admit to luck either.

Do things just "happen"?

But is there such a thing as luck, as blind chance, as happenstance or coincidence... whatever word you want to use to describe it? Are there things that just... happen? Let's turn to the only book that actually reveals to us the truth of all things, for our answers. “Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing?” Amos 3:4. The book of Amos is a prophecy against the nations for their iniquities. God had determined that they had done enough and that the time had come for a more decided



course of action. As you have heard me say several times, God always prefers the easy way. He would rather bless and help and give to get us to see the truth and light. But if that will not work, then He will remove the blessings and see if that works any better.

And if that does not work, then He will go a step further and see if punishment and sorrow might reach our hearts. And in each step of the way, He lets us know what is coming.

There is always cause and effect

Here in Amos, and specifically in the first few verses of chapter three, He reveals that there is nothing that happens by chance. Now let's read verse four again... "Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing?" Amos 3:4. In other words, will a lion roar for no reason? Will a young lion cry out if he has no food to bellow about? The next verse continues the same theme... "Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him? shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all?" Amos 3:5. How can a bird be taken in a snare if no snare has been set? How can a snare snap shut when nothing has caused it to trip? These are all questions relating to things happening and how or why.

God says there are reasons for everything. And in reality, how could it be otherwise? These verses say that there is always a cause and an effect. There is nothing going on without a reason behind it. Things don't just "happen." There are actions and reactions.

There are ebbs and flows. Everything that happens in this world is done and occurs because something else was done that prompted it. We talk about luck and chance and coincidence as if there were no God behind the scene, or no reactions to our actions.



There was a mastermind behind the creation of the watch

But there is no such thing as a lucky break, or a mere coincidence, or a roll of the dice, or that maybe fortune will smile on us. Like a clock, each piece moves in a very precise order and a specific way, because it was made that way. It moves the way it does because of certain motions that were set in order. Someone made it. Someone made it that way. Someone determined that they wanted the pieces of the watch to interact as they do. There was a mastermind behind the creation.

We, unlike watches, were made with power of choice. We have been constructed to think and to determine our own destiny. But that in no way negates the fact that we were made. And that everything that happens in this world happens because of a certain set of circumstances, that once decided upon by whomever was involved in the process, effected the eventual outcome. Because the process is so overwhelming to our minds, we tend to back off and call it chance or good luck or bad luck.

We have to take responsibility for our choices

But there is no luck involved. It is we who are involved. And very often, we do not want to be the ones responsible for what happens to us or to others. But we are the reasons for what happens to us most of the time. Our choices determine why people suffer or why people are blessed. We must take responsibility for what happens in this world. Not only for ourselves, but for many other people in the world.

Someone chose to make a nuclear bomb, and now others have suffered as a result. Someone chose to become a



LOTTERY

those choices, came upon the scene of an accident, and helped save the victim. There was no “luck” involved... it was the working out of choices that were made years before... or that morning... or both. God is talking about accountability!

God allows affliction to get our attention

The theme continues here in verse six of Amos 3... “Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?” God continues the questioning about how we would respond to certain stimuli, about the sheer logic of how we react when certain things happen. Just as the snares do not snap shut for no reason, just as the lion roars when he has found prey, the trumpet is not blown unless there is a problem. And no one stands idly by when that trumpet is blown. If the snare shuts, there is a reason. If the trumpet is blown, there is a reason.

And the second part of this verse was interesting to me as well. It is translated that if there is an evil in the city, has not the Lord done it? But God does not do “evil” so it cannot be translated correctly. The word translated as evil, is also translated as affliction. Now THAT God *does* give to us to try to get our attention and draw us away from our deceptions. And if there are afflictions, are there not reasons for them?

Everything that has happened, or is going to happen, depends on choices

The point again in all of this is that everything happens for a reason. Nothing takes place in this world without a complete and perfect explanation.

Everything is precision like a clock. No chance; no luck; no circumstances without reason. God has been stating what was going to be happening to all of these nations, including

His own people, for the sins they have committed. This is earlier in Amos - Damascus;

doctor, and then chose to go a certain way in the morning to work, and as a result of

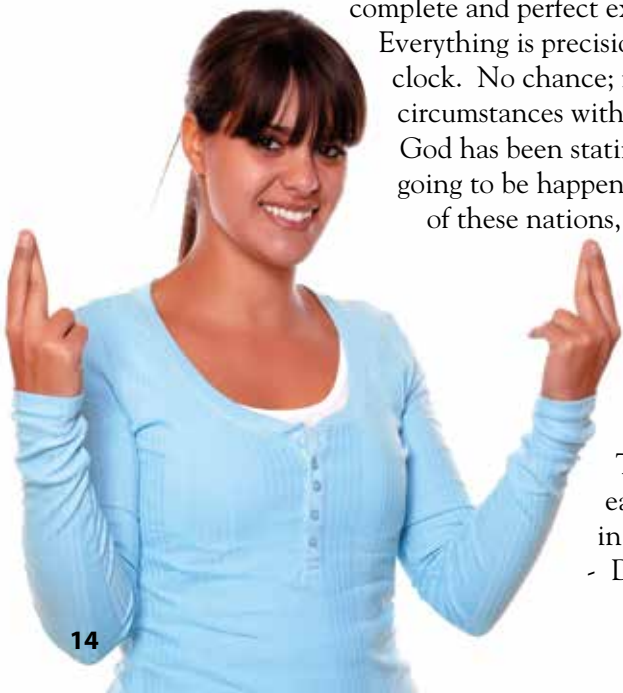
Gaza; Tyrus; Edom; Ammon; Moab, as well as Judah and Israel. All of these peoples were addressed in Amos 1 & 2 and their punishment revealed. God is saying in chapter three of Amos that no one is to be surprised that these things are coming, because this is only what the people are guilty of and must pay for. This is righteousness being worked out in total and complete fairness.

What has happened in the past, what is happening to us now, and what will happen to us in the future, will be the working out of a certain set of circumstances that every individual on this planet has caused by the choices they have made. There is no willy-nilly, topsy-turvy, “spinning top” kind of life we are living here. Everything has a specific and determined course based on what we individually have chosen to do. No wonder it is so desperately important that we always think about what we are doing and do the right thing! Every choice we make is fraught with eternal consequences!

Is gambling really just “luck”?

I want to be clear here. When I use the watch analogy, I am not trying to say that our destinies are fixed like a watch’s parts. I am saying that when we make a choice, certain gears are set in motion and they will have a certain impact. Like driving a car... when you choose to turn right, everything that follows, will happen and take place, because you chose to turn right. Does that make sense to you? We just call it luck because it is too deep for us to follow.

Another example about things not being “luck” is gambling. Have you ever seen a casino go out of business because they had bad luck? The people just kept winning and winning and winning? No. You know why? Because those slot machines are computer driven to pay out exactly when and how they are programmed to. Blackjack is not luck. The cards were shuffled a certain way, then people chose to take a card or not to take a card, and there is a finite number of cards in the deck. Some people win at blackjack because they can keep up with what cards have been played and which ones are left. It is a precise mathematical equation, but too deep for most of us... so we call it luck.



The decisions we make today affect our children and grandchildren

Here is another verse to indicate how things follow precise paths... “The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.” Num. 14:18.

What does it mean that God is visiting the iniquity of the fathers of children unto three and four generations later? That verse is referring to us passing down our hereditary tendencies to our children and grandchildren and great grandchildren! Not only that, but the living conditions and situations we create for our posterity impact them. When we sin, we can be sure that has an impact on our children, grandchildren and great, and even great, great grandchildren.

However, if we do **right**, the exact same thing occurs. Accountability. All of what Amos is addressing is accountability. If you eat a cholesterol-laden egg, it deposits cholesterol into your veins and arteries. Do it again and there is more cholesterol in your body. Do it a hundred or a thousand times and you can see where you end up. Then we have a stroke, and we say how “unlucky” we were. There was nothing “unlucky” about it - we *caused* what happened to us. Same way with effort in education. Someone tries real hard and does well and is successful, and is considered lucky. Luck had nothing to do with it.

I know that some people suffer or are blessed for inexplicable reasons. But actually they are not inexplicable, or

unexplainable... they are just that way to us because we cannot comprehend the intricacies of all of our decisions. And sometimes, the decisions are not ours, but as the scripture noted above addressed, it could be the sins or the right decisions of three to four generations past.

Each decision starts a chain of events that will have consequences

In this life, we will, more often than not, be unable to discern why things happen to us. All we can do is trust that God will make all things new and right if we will give our hearts to Him today. But He is trying so desperately to show us that our decisions, all of our decisions matter. Each one starts a chain of events that will have consequences in the future; maybe for you; maybe not for you; maybe for your child; maybe later in life than that. But our Lord is showing us that they do have consequences. Every decision has consequences, some small; some very, very large.





Her son was silent for a long time and then finally spoke. He noted how much he wanted to join the Navy and how he had longed for it for years, but... if it meant making his mother suffer like what he was witnessing, he would not go. So, he turned in his uniform and called for his belongings from the ship. He made a decision that day that would impact his life and the lives of many others.

So many other sons had left their mother's sides and joined the Navy, but this was not to be for this son. He chose a different course for himself. His mother chose not to remain silent and begged him to stay. Those decisions would impact the world. It was not luck. It was not fate. It was not mere happenstance. It was a choice. A choice of a mother. A choice of a son. A choice to stay home instead of embarking on exciting adventure.

Others influence our decisions

It reminds me of a story I read about a young boy who wanted to join the Navy. True story. Lots of young men dream of joining the Navy and visiting parts of the world unknown and impossible for many to attain otherwise.

When I joined the Army, that was one of the things the recruiter brought up to me - join the Army and see the world.

No doubt this inspired that young man as well. Even more, his big brother had joined earlier, and had come home with stories of his adventures. Sometimes his big brother's friends would come over for dinner and he would be mesmerized by their storied exploits. THIS is what he wanted to do as well.

Every decision has its consequences, his big brother's, his big brother's friends, and now his. He was going to join the Navy! All he needed to do was convince his mother. That wouldn't be easy. He was her baby. Her husband had died only five years earlier and the idea of her youngest child leaving the nest was not a comforting thought. But, she relents and lets him have his way. He is happy beyond words.

A mother's choice can be life-changing

He joins the officer's training program and graduates as a midshipman. He is in his officer's uniform, standing before his mother to say goodbye. Everything is in order and his belongings are aboard the ship. As he turns to leave, something unexpected happens. His mother, who has stoically stood tall and quiet, finally breaks down and begs him not to go. She cannot stand the idea of losing her son. She cannot endure any more heartache. Even though her older son was trying to extol the virtues of Navy life and the potential for adventure, the mother would not relent. He must stay home and be there for her.

That boy's, and his mother's, ultimate choices even affect us today

The boy... for he was just a boy... was only 15 years old. He had joined and was prepared to serve... in the British Navy. He had planned on quite a different direction for his life than for what we know him for. How different might this country have been, this world have been had this 15-year-old boy chosen his original course. But he did not, and because of that, he is a household name to everyone in America.

His choice has affected each and every one of us. His name? George Washington. He had no idea how his choice to stay home and help his mother would impact his life and all of ours. But that was one of the most important choices he ever made.



How often are we faced with choices that seem as if they will have very little impact on us? How important do you think prayer is in the choices we make? To go to school. To go directly to work. To choose an occupation. To choose a mate. To choose to follow Jesus or not. Do you think it matters little what choices we make? Do you think George had any idea what would result from his choice? How about his mother's choice to beg him to stay?

Satan wants us to believe it is all based on luck

Who knows where our choices might lead? Well... there's only One. "God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof. For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven;" Job 28:23, 24. God does know what decisions will lead to what.

You see, it is the devil that wants you to believe that there are no real educated choices to make in this life. He wants you to think that everything is based on the luck of the draw. You may or may not be rich. You may or may not find a good spouse. You may or may not have successful children. You may be lucky... or you may not be. It is all luck. That's what he wants you to believe. You see, if it is luck, then you cannot be held responsible for the choices you make.



The sins of the fathers...

I just read an article in an issue of Newsweek entitled, "Sins of the fathers..." They have recently found out what God has told us from the beginning... The choices we make in this life will affect our children, our grandchildren, our great grandchildren and even our great, great grandchildren! What we eat, what we drink, even the environment we are in, will affect our unborn progeny for up to four generations.

Doesn't that sound suspiciously like... "The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." Num. 14:18.

Everything happens for a reason

Things are not accidental! Things happen... *everything* happens for a reason. And one more thing I'd like to address here about nothing being by accident. Sometimes what happens to us or our children or parents has nothing to do with what we have done. Sometimes it is because of what someone else has done. If someone makes a choice to drink, and as a result, their child chooses to drink, and that child chooses to get drunk on a particular night and then chooses to drive... your child might be killed by that drunk driver. What happened had nothing to do with you

or your child. But it certainly was not bad luck, it was a choice, or it was many choices of other people that led up to this accident. There are intricacies so far beyond our understanding that we simply attribute things that happen as the luck of the draw.

It was not bad luck that a person was born with Down's Syndrome. Choices were made by someone or some people, over the years, that caused this to happen. I have no idea what people or what choices, but it most certainly was decisions that were made, or not made, by us. Maybe it was a factory that poured pollutants in the water and the

child's grandfather drank that water that caused a gene to mutate. Maybe it was some chemical preservative in a can of food that the mother ate. Maybe it was the chem trails from planes that fly overhead. We don't know... but not knowing exactly how it happened doesn't mean it was luck. It means bad choices were made somewhere down the line by someone.

And many times what happens to us is the result of good choices too. Think of George and his mother. Our choices... all of our choice... will prove to be a blessing, or a curse.

What choices we will make?

Now that we know this... what choices will we make for our lives and those of our children and grandchildren and on down the line? And what is the most important choice you will ever make in this life, both for yourself and all your family that comes after you? "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." Josh. 24:15. Choose to serve the Lord... then no matter what happens in this life, all will be made perfect and whole again very, very soon.



Joe Olson serves as the executive director and chairman of the board of Hope International. He also travels as an international speaker.



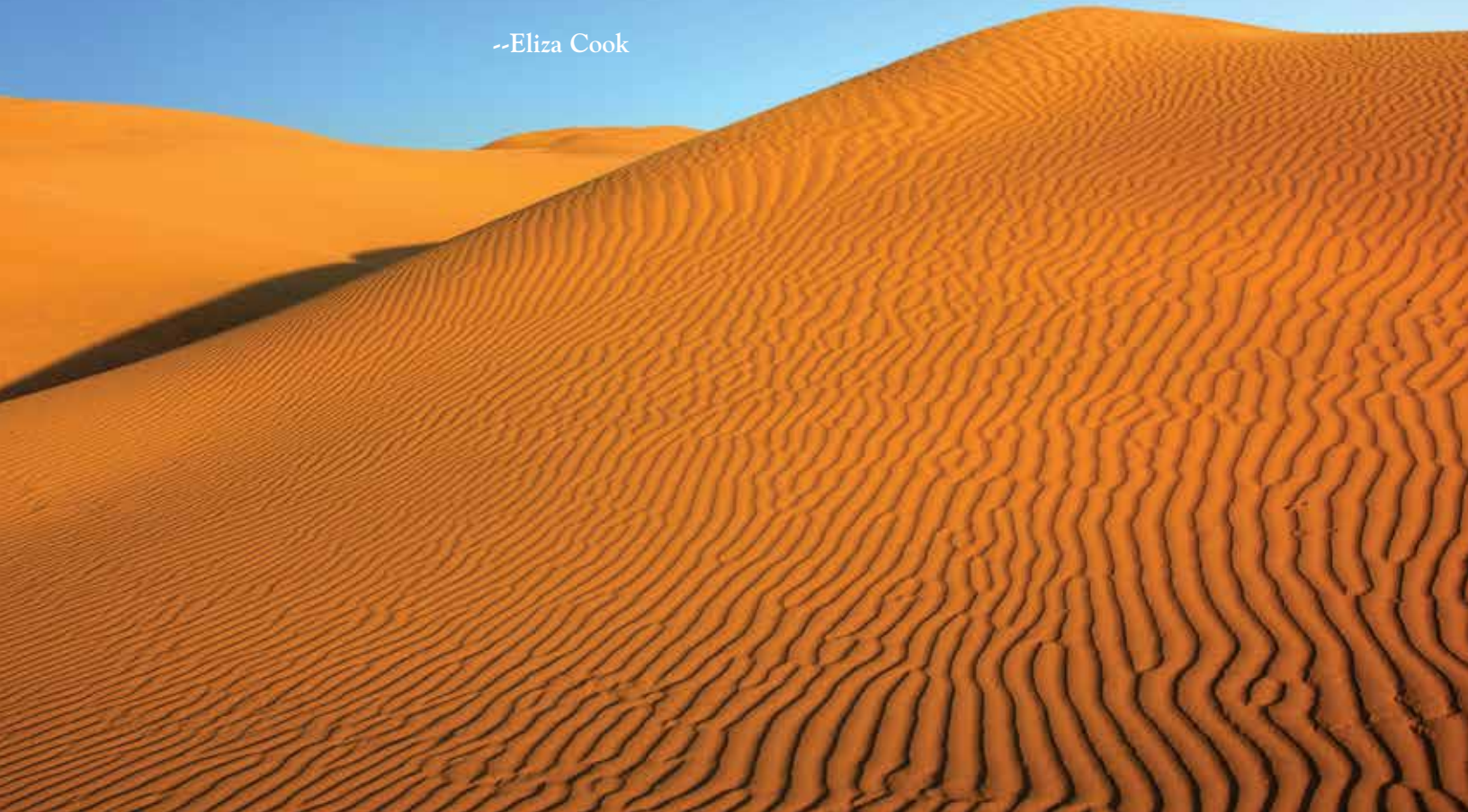
Building on the Sand

'Tis well to save, 'tis well to have
A goodly store of gold,
And hold enough of shining struff,
For charity is cold.

But place not all your hope and trust
In what the deep mine brings,
We cannot live on yellow dust
Unmixed with purer things;
And he who piles up wealth alone
Will often have to stand
Beside the coffer chest, and own
Tis "built upon the stand."

"Tis good to speak in kindly guise,
And soothe where'er we can;
Fair speech should blind the human mind,
And love link man to man.
But stop not at the gentle words;
Let deeds with language dwell;
The one who pities starving birds,
Should scatter crumbs as well;
The mercy that is warm and true,
Must lend a helping hand,
For those who talk, yet fail to do,
But "build upon the sand."

--Eliza Cook



The Power of Integrity

LESSONS FROM THE LIONS' DEN

By Emmanuel Machakaire

The story of Daniel in the lion's den is one of the best-known and best-loved stories in the Bible. Little children love it and Sabbath school teachers love to tell it. It has encouraged the people of God for thousands of years. The story is filled with unexpected twists and turns and Daniel wins big and the adversaries are torn to pieces. Along the way we learn the secret of Daniel's success - his 'integrity'. "Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity." Job 31:6. To help us understand the subject of integrity, here is a partial definition of integrity: "Integrity is the possession of firm principles and steadfastly adhering to high moral principles or professional standards, moral soundness, an undivided or unbroken completeness or totality with nothing wanting."

We can live for God in the hostile environment of the world

Christians live in a world of spiritual hostility where the

temptation to compromise our faith is with us every day. The world doesn't want its conscience pricked and doesn't reward those who dare to stand up for what they believe is right. In some parts of the world, standing up for Christ means suffering and death. In some societies it means ostracism, ridicule, scorn, and perhaps being passed over. It often leads to tension at home and on the job.

The book of Daniel tells us how to live for God in a hostile environment. His example shows us that it can be done but not without discomfort. If you don't compromise, you are sure to come into trouble sooner or later. The story of Daniel and the lion's den reminds us that there is a spiritual battle raging all around us. Therefore, it should not surprise us if the devil has an army of supporters whose major call in life is to harass us, trick us, and trip us up if they can. The people who hated Daniel were no friends of God. They came after his faith because they could find no fault in him, and they had

no answer for what he believed.

Remember these two facts: 1) Daniel is now a very old man. He came to Babylon as a teenager. All his adult life has been spent serving in the courts of various pagan rulers.



Now he is over 80 years old. 2) He is now serving under a new king named Darius who rules over a new kingdom, the Medo-Persian Empire. The names have changed but the spiritual challenge is the same. Will he remain faithful when the pressure is on?

Marks of godliness even unbelievers can see

As this story opens Daniel is once again about to be promoted to high office. Evidently, Darius recognized him as a man of integrity and wanted to make him second in command over the entire kingdom. That's when the intrigue begins. At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy, and

neither corrupt nor negligent. Finally, these men said, "We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God" (Daniel 6:4-5). This is what his enemies discovered when they examined his life:

- He was faithful in his duties.
- He was faultless in his character.
- He was fervent in his prayers.

These are three marks of godliness even unbelievers could see. The people who watch you can tell if you work hard at your job. They know what kind of character you have. And if they watch long enough, they will learn whether or not you are a person of prayer. In Daniel's case even his enemies had to admit he had no glaring weaknesses. No finer thing

could be said, than for your enemies to admit that they can find nothing wrong with you. Horace Greeley once said that, "Fame is a vapor, popularity an accident, riches take wings, those who cheer today may curse tomorrow, only one thing endures—character or integrity."

Will we be able to survive the same scrutiny as Daniel?

Daniel was hated because he was successful and he was godly. God may want to teach us that even when we do everything right, we can still get in trouble and we have to trust in God. Doing right is no guarantee everything will go right.

Let's suppose that your enemies decided to check you out the way the adversaries came after Daniel. Suppose someone hired private investigators to look into every aspect of your life, public and private, past and present. What would they uncover? Suppose they checked out your personal records - how you treat your children, your phone calls, your WhatsApp, Twitter and Facebook messages, your Internet usage, your favorite TV programs, every relationship you've ever had, your tax returns, business deals, how you act on the job, how you deal with the opposite sex, your vocabulary at home, jokes you tell, how you treat your spouse, and the places you visit; just to name but a few. Could any of us survive that kind of scrutiny? Daniel did. The investigation revealed that he had no obvious moral weaknesses. Try as they might, his enemies found nothing wrong in his life. He lived so consciously in God's presence that he was a man "above reproach".

Daniel was a victim of his own integrity

But Daniel did have one "flaw" - he was utterly predictable in his daily prayers. He prayed every day at the same time in the same way so that his enemies realized this was where they



could catch him. I'm sure you've heard this question: "If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?" When they arrested Daniel for being a man of prayer, the evidence against him was overwhelming.

So the adversaries asked Darius to pass a 30-day law forbidding anyone to pray except to Darius himself. So Darius signed the law, knowing that it could not be repealed, not even by him. He had no idea that Daniel was the intended target.

Meanwhile the antagonists knew



Daniel would break the law; that is, they knew Daniel would keep on praying just as he had always done. Daniel was a victim of his own integrity. He was predictably faithful to God. If he had been a flaky believer, this evil plot would never have worked. His troubles came not from his weakness, but from his strength.

The lions win when we are silent

Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. Note

the last phrase—"just as he had done before". For perhaps 85 years Daniel had prayed three times a day. I did the math after asking myself, "How many times would Daniel have prayed if he prayed three times a day for 85 years?" The answer comes out to over 93,000 prayers. No wonder he simply went back to his room and started praying.

An 85-year habit is hard to break. For him, prayer was like breathing. He wasn't about to stop praying just because some adversaries threatened his life. So when they tricked Darius into signing the 30-day law, Daniel just went ahead with his daily routine. He went home, knelt down, faced toward Jerusalem, and offered his prayers to God. He did it knowing that his adversaries would catch him.

If all of us would begin to pray on a regular basis, the volume of prayers going to heaven would dramatically increase, and we would see remarkable answers from God. Remember who Daniel is. He's one of the top three men in the Medo-Persian Empire. No doubt he had a plate full of heavy



responsibilities. Yet he still had time to pray three times a day. Prayer was so important to him that he was willing to die rather than give up his right to pray to God. If you stop praying, the world will stop bothering you. The lions won't come near you. The lions win when we are silent. The great mark of true faith is that we keep praying.

So what do you do when they call for the lions?

It's easy to think of reasons why he might have disobeyed. He could have simply closed the windows and the adversaries wouldn't have seen him pray. Or he could have said, "I'll pray in my heart. No one will know." After all, he was being forced to do this against his will. And it was only for 30 days. Certainly he must have known that if he didn't go along with the law, the lions would eat him alive. But none of those excuses were needed because long ago Daniel had made up his mind to serve God no matter what. In a sense, his prior obedience made it easy for him. He had no decision to make. He just kept on doing what he had been doing all along. So what do you do when they call for the lions? You don't change a thing. Keep on serving the Lord, keep on doing right, keep on living for Christ, and then let the chips fall where they may.

Darius now realizes he has been tricked. He likes Daniel, and immediately begins seeking loopholes to prevent his being thrown to the



lions. But even the king could not repeal his own law because that would make him look weak and ineffective. No, the law must stand and Daniel must go to the lions' den. But Darius is rooting for the old man. In verse 16 he wishes Daniel well with these words, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!" (Daniel 6:16). What a testimony this is to the reality of Daniel's faith. Even unbelievers recognize true faith in God, and they respect it.



The Lord entered the den of lions with Daniel

That night the king didn't sleep well, but Daniel slept like a baby. The king refused all offers of entertainment, and even refused to eat. Early in the morning he rushed to the lion's den, hoping against hope that Daniel had somehow survived. When all is said and done, it is better to be a child of faith in a lions' den than to be a king without God in a palace.

It's true that God didn't prevent him from being thrown in the den. But the Lord went in with him. That's why, when morning came, he was still alive, unharmed in any way. Though he was an old man, he came out as healthy as when he went in. God takes care of his own. God shut the mouths of the lions so they could not harm his servant.

Faith believes God, even when belief is unbelievable

Back to Darius for a moment, when he came rushing to check on Daniel early in the morning, he cried out, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?" Daniel 6:26. The

pagan ruler is cheering for Daniel's God to come through. He recognized the genuineness of Daniel's faith and though he did not believe himself, he hoped that Daniel's God would deliver him. Verse 23 tells us why the miracle happened - "He trusted in his God." For over 80 years Daniel's faith had rested in the God of Israel. That wasn't about to change at this late date. Daniel simply kept on trusting

I'm sure he was praying as they flung him into the darkness. Then he hit bottom, slid along the dirt and came to rest on his backside. He could hear the sound of the lions breathing a few feet away. But there were no roars, no menacing movements, no teeth tearing into his flesh. As the seconds ticked away, he began to relax. Minutes passed and then hours and the lions did not touch him. Daniel later said that an angel came to rescue him. When Christ calls a man, he bids him 'come and die'. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said: "If a man hasn't discovered something that he will die for, he isn't fit to live."

Daniel had discovered something worth dying for, which is why he kept on praying when others would have quit. Since he wasn't afraid to die, he had the courage to live for God in a hostile pagan world.

When Christ calls a man, he bids him 'come and die'

So Daniel is thrown into the lion's den, which was a pit dug into the ground with an entrance from the side for the lions and with a huge boulder placed over the top so there could be no escape. No one ever got out alive. The fear of death keeps many of us paralyzed in the time of crisis, but evidently Daniel was not afraid to die. He may have suspected that God would rescue him, but he could not be sure until the moment came. I do not doubt that he had some anxiety when they took him to the pit. And



in God, and as a result, the lions couldn't touch him. Faith believes God, even when belief is unbelievable.

The end of the story comes quickly. First, the enemies who plotted against Daniel are thrown to the lions, along with their wives and children (verse 24). Then Darius offers public praise to "the God of Daniel" (verses 26-27) who is the living God who endures forever. He rescues and he saves, and he is the One who delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. What amazing words coming from the lips of a pagan king.

LESSONS FOR MODERN-DAY DANIELS

1. It is possible to live a pure life in the midst of a thoroughly pagan world.

Daniel's story demonstrates that if you make up your mind to serve God, you can do it even in the very center of pagan government. We have to face the fact that not everyone shares our faith, and then we have to go on from there. You can live for Christ on the job, in your office, in your classroom, or in your neighborhood. There is always a way to compromise for those who want to compromise. And there is always a way to obey God for those who want to obey God.

2. Christians who live for God should expect opposition.

Daniel had his share of opposition and he lived a blameless life. If you set out to live for the Lord, sooner or later trouble will come your way. The jealous satraps are never far away. Ironically, the more honest you are, the sooner they will attack.



3. God can use us to touch unlikely people when we are faithful to him.

Daniel 6 emphasizes the powerful effect that Daniel's personal integrity had on Darius. While it is true that many of his colleagues envied Daniel and plotted to kill him, it's also true that he made a huge impact for good on the mightiest man in the world. We never know who is watching us or what they are looking for, but this story teaches us that not every unbeliever hates Christians. For every adversary out there planning our downfall, there is a Darius keeping an eye on us, hoping that our faith may prove to be genuine. Some Darius has his eyes on you right now. Be careful about what you do and say. Your example may be leading someone to heaven, or through



carelessness you may be leading them in an entirely different direction.

4. God is able to deliver his people from any danger they face.

If God can deliver Daniel from the lions' den, he can surely deliver you. That same God is sovereign over those who plot against you. And he is sovereign over the lions which surround you. Take heart and trust in God. He can deliver you from whatever is troubling you this

very moment.



5. God always delivers in his own time and in his own way.

This is the necessary balance. Does God always deliver his people? Yes, indeed, but not always in the way we expect. Not all our prayers are answered in the way we pray them. And in the end, we must confess that it is good that God has veto power over our fervent petitions. Sometimes God overrules because he sees the bigger picture and knows that he can glorify himself in some way other than by delivering us from a difficult situation. This story



**If we remain faithful,
God can use us to
touch the life of a
Darius**

The Word of God not only sets forth the great principles of truth and duty which should govern our lives, but it presents also, for our encouragement, the history of many who have exemplified these principles . . . “Except the one perfect Pattern, there is not described in the Sacred Pages a single character more worthy of emulation than that of the prophet Daniel. Exposed in youth to all the allurements of a royal court, he became a man of unbending

ought to be a great encouragement to us because from it we learn that God can and sometimes does deliver in amazing and miraculous ways. Therefore, let us pray with confidence to a God who can stop the mouths of any lions we may face.

integrity and fervent devotion to God. He was subjected to the fierce temptations of Satan, yet his character was not vacillating, nor his course changeable. He was firm where many would be yielding; he was true where they would be false; he was strong where they would be weak. Daniel was a lofty cedar of Lebanon.... Would that the faith, integrity, and devotion of the prophet Daniel might live in the hearts of God’s people of today. Never were these noble qualities more needed in the world than now.... ” OFC 106.

The same God who rescued Daniel will

rescue you from any kind of hostility you may face because of your faith. And for all of us there is much to encourage us in this beloved story. In the days to come we will all face hostility in one form or another because of our Christian faith. Those who serve the Lord never have an easy road in this world. If we will be faithful, God can use us to touch many people, including some in high places who watch us from a distance



and cheer us on, hoping that our God will deliver us.

Lord, I do not ask for an easy road but for courage to walk the path you set before me. I thank you that my life is in your hands and that I have nothing to fear because all my days are appointed by you. Give me the faith of Daniel. I do not pray for a den of lions but I ask for courage to go there if that be your will for me. Above all else, may you be glorified in my life so that others will see Jesus in me, for there is power in integrity, Amen.



Emmanuel Machakaire is a(n) SDA writer who is based in So. Africa. He enjoys studying, writing, and sharing Bible truths.

Work to a Purpose

By A.T. Jones

MANY a young person fails in life for want of a purpose; and many more do not accomplish half that they might if they only had some specific object in view when they enter school. Spending long years in school, poring over books, with no definite object in view, only to acquire “mental” training and crowd the mind with abstract facts, is not education. There is much to-day that passes for education that is of no practical value, and all the time spent on it is worse than wasted. These are times when it is better to have a thorough knowledge of one or two things than to be in possession of a smattering of information on a variety of subjects. In mechanics it is better to be master of one trade than to be “Jack of all trades, and master of none.”

Every student who enters any of our schools this fall should not do so without first deciding to what use he is going to put the knowledge that he gains. Then if he will work to this object, whatever it may be, he will accomplish two or three times as much as he could possibly accomplish with no definite object in view.

“If I had only known...”

The other day we saw a practical illustration of this: A young man in the Review and Herald Office has been working here for nearly two years. Like many other boys of his age, he had no object in view except to “learn the trade”. This being so, he took no pains to learn anything beyond his daily routine work; his thoughts were dismissed from his work the minute the whistle blew at six o’clock. The result is that while he has done as well as boys of his age usually do, he has not accomplished half that he might have accomplished if he had taken a keen interest in his work, and labored with some definite object in view, and with his mind thoroughly set to accomplish it. Now there is a prospect that he will go to a foreign country; and a knowledge of printing, such as he might have secured, but which he has not obtained, would prove highly valuable. “If I had

only known that I was to be called off in this way, I would have worked differently,” he says; “I would have learned much more about the business than I now know. I wish I could stay here six months longer.”

Put all your energies into whatever work falls to you

The thought we desire to impress on our young friends is that opportunities for qualified workers are increasing every year. Whatever work falls to you, put into it all your energies. Master your work as you go. Then if you are thus called off, you will not be a bungler, but will be able to do well what comes to your hand.

“He that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.” A student who learns a lesson simply to recite it does not really learn the lesson, and does not know it. Only he who learns his lesson to know it, really knows it. The boy who “learns a trade,” or a part of a trade, to get a job, will not be fit for the job when he gets it. He will be a bungler. He who learns a trade or a part of a trade to know it, to be master of it, will be fit for any job in that line, and can not only get it, but can keep it, because he is fit for it.

“Whatsoever thy hand findeth [not what your eyes see] to do, do it with thy might.”

NOVEMBER 15, 1898, ADVENTIST REVIEW & HERALD, 737,738



God's Tender Care

God cared for Paul and Silas,
He cared for Peter too;
And don't you think dear pilgrim,
That He will care for you?

He also rescued Daniel,
From lions fierce and strong;
Also the Hebrew children,
In flames, received no wrong.
He cared for weary Jacob,
And gave him sweet repose,
Who dreamed of beauteous angels,
Ere from his sleep he rose.

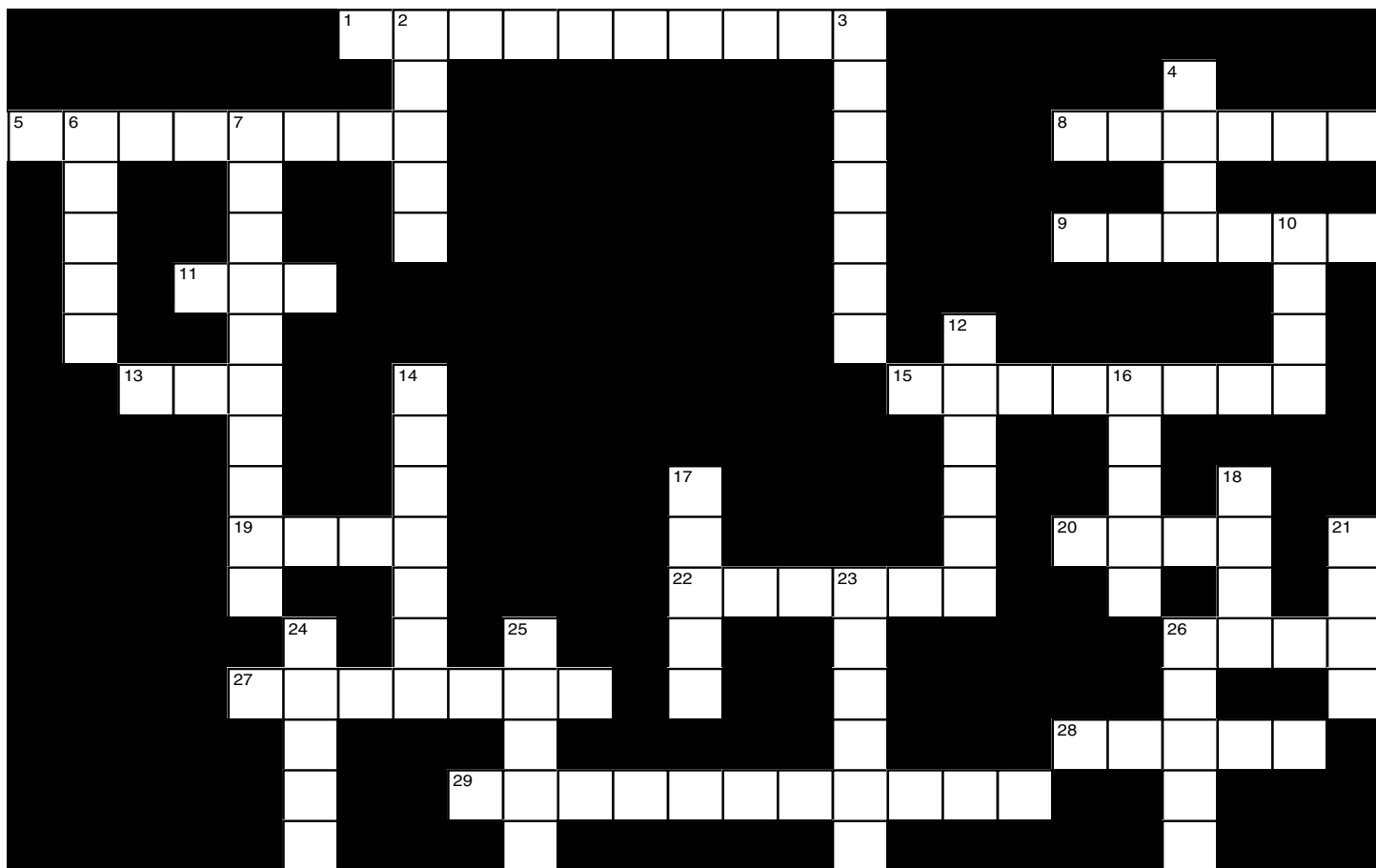
He cared for tender Joseph,
While in a foreign land;
Though hated by his brethren,
God led him by the hand.

God cares for all his children,
And keeps them day by day,
From sin and every evil,
Upon the narrow way.

Gospel Banner



Christian Crossword



ACROSS

1. What king did Nehemiah serve?
5. Who gave the 70-year prophecy concerning Jerusalem in Babylon?
8. "With His stripes we are healed," according to which prophet?
9. Job's friend that was a Shuhite
11. What extra thing did the five virgins have?
13. The father of Joshua
15. Where was Paul traveling to when he was converted?
19. He gave up his birthright for lentils
20. They will never praise the Lord
22. The Shunammite's son was raised from the dead by this prophet
26. How many thousand years from the Garden of Eden to the cross?
27. The name of the archangel
28. How many epistles did John write?
29. In which Book are the 10 Commandments repeated after Exodus?

DOWN

2. The harlot that the spies met at Jericho
3. He had a vision of Jesus standing next to His Father
4. The Lord "departed" from this king
6. The seventh from Adam who prophesied
7. A tribal enemy of Israel during the period of the Judges
10. Which prophet spoke of God doing nothing without revealing His secrets?
12. A sister of a person Jesus raised from the dead
14. One of Abraham's concubines
16. What chapter of Daniel concerns the changing of the law?

17. Moses was to do what to the rock to bring forth water?
18. The father of Zechariah the prophet
21. "In the beginning was the ____."
23. Which commandment do the Catholics leave out completely?
24. The king of the Amorites
25. Who wrote, "judgment must begin at the house of God"?
26. The age of Isaac when he married Rebekah

Answers from Christian Crossword published in the July 2013 issue of Our Firm Foundation



Hope for Health



Are you trying to lose weight but just can't seem to do it? Have you tried every diet out there but end up falling off the wagon? Give your body the extra push it needs with Super Acai Slim!!

Super Acai Slim helps nourish the body, cleanse it of impurities that are causing you to feel fatigued, boost your metabolism and energy, and give you the help you need to finally get the weight off for good!

Super Acai Slim

Super Acai Slim is a fat-blasting, metabolism and energy-boosting blend of:
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WHAT IS ACAI AND HOW DOES IT HELP WITH WEIGHT LOSS?

Acai (pronounced ah-sigh-ee) is a berry found in the Amazon river basin in Brazil, and is generally regarded as a "super food" which helps boost energy and aid in weight loss. Acai berry is *packed* with vitamins and minerals that can aid in: weight loss, muscle building, and can help boost energy levels! It is rich in antioxidants, fatty acids, fiber, and other plant compounds that can improve overall health.

There are several key ways that the Acai berry contributes to healthy weight loss. The omega fatty acids in Acai berries kick-start your metabolism, allowing you to digest food quicker and more efficiently. The large amount of fiber found in the Acai berry helps suppress

your appetite so you can easily eat less and feel more full faster. Another way the Acai berry helps with weight loss is by boosting energy and stamina. One way it is able to do this is through antioxidants. The antioxidants rid your body of toxins that can weigh you down, which makes you feel more awake and energized, giving you the extra boost you need to head to the yard, garden, or gym and work off those unwanted pounds.

When your body is healthy and well-balanced, it will be easier to reach your perfect weight. Something unique about Acai: It's one of the few fruits, besides avocados, that contain monounsaturated fats (MUFAS). MUFAS work to help keep you feeling satisfied so you're less likely to overeat.

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*These statements have not been evaluated by the FDA. This product is not intended to prevent, diagnose, treat, or cure any disease.

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- It contains antioxidants, such as "anthocyanins" that help destroy free radicals and lower bad cholesterol, helping improve general heart health. Anthocyanins are the antioxidants found in red wine, which is why red wine is recommended to help with heart problems. But why drink wine? The Acai berry has over 20 TIMES more anthocyanins than any type of red wine!

GARCINIA CAMBOGIA

- Helps to burn fat and promote a stable blood sugar level.
- The hydroxycitric acid found in garcinia cambogia has several different effects on the body. The most notable of these effects is its ability to inhibit the uptake of carbohydrates that are stored in the body as fat. By *prohibiting* the fat storage, the carbs are burned as energy thereby increasing energy levels and decreasing fat levels. HCA also works to prevent cravings for sugar-laden and carbohydrate-heavy foods, promote healthy blood sugar levels, and increase the serotonin levels in the brain which signal to us that we are full faster. Some studies have shown two to three times the weight loss when using garcinia cambogia as compared to a placebo!

CHROMIUM PICOLINATE

- Chromium is a trace mineral that your body has to have to regulate blood-sugar levels properly - helping keep you energized all day long.
- According to the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, chromium picolinate appears to promote weight loss by helping build lean muscle tissue and burning fat!
- Chromium picolinate also promotes weight loss by reducing sugar and carbohydrate cravings, suppressing the appetite naturally, and promoting a feeling of fullness - all helping you to eat less and lose more weight!

CAMU-CAMU

- Camu-camu fruit is rich in limonene, a phytochemical which has shown the ability to reduce the appetite and aid in weight loss.
- It has the highest recorded amount of natural vitamin C known on the planet. In comparison to oranges, camu-camu provides thirty times more vitamin C, ten times more iron, three times more niacin, twice as much riboflavin, and 50% more phosphorus! Studies show that when the body is satisfied nutritionally, cravings are diminished!

SUMA ROOT

- Also known as Brazilian Ginseng, suma root is used to increase energy, stamina, endurance, and immunity.
- Helps fight mood swings, combat stress, and boost mood.

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CBS/AP/ July 7, 2013, 2:04 AM Plane crash at San Francisco airport, 2 dead

This aerial photo shows the wreckage of Asiana Airlines Flight 214 after the Boeing 777 crashed at San Francisco International Airport in San Francisco, Saturday, July 6, 2013. / AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez

Last Updated July 7, 2013, 6:32 a.m. Eastern SAN FRANCISCO Officials now say they have accounted for all of the 307 people on board an Asiana Airlines flight from Seoul, South Korea, that crashed while landing at San Francisco International Airport on Saturday, killing at least two people. The crash left the runway littered with debris, and forced passengers to jump down the emergency inflatable slides to safety.

Dozens missing in Canada rail crash, fire; 13 dead

Firefighters spray water on smoldering rubble in Lac-Megantic, Quebec, Sunday, July 7.

Two days after a runaway oil tanker train derailed in Canada, up to 40 people are still missing; explosions and fires destroyed part of a town, killing 13 people.

LAC-MEGANTIC, Quebec — Hazardous conditions hindered firefighters' attempts Monday to search for up to 40 people still missing after a runaway oil tanker train exploded over the weekend, killing at least 13 people, officials said.

Meanwhile, crews are working to contain 27,000 gallons of light crude that spilled from the tankers and has made its way into nearby waterways.

"This is an unbelievable disaster," said Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who toured the town Sunday and compared it to a war zone. "This is an enormous area, 30 buildings just completely destroyed, for all intents and purposes incinerated. There isn't a family that is not affected by this."



AP Photo: The Canadian Press, Ryan Remiorz

End Time Perspective: "Disasters by rail will become more and more frequent. Confusion, collision, and death without a moment's warning will occur on the great lines of travel. The end is near, probation is closing. Oh, let us seek God while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near!" Last Day Events 24

Health Gem



“Our Saviour warned his disciples that just prior to his second coming a state of things would exist very similar to that which preceded the flood. Eating and drinking would be carried to excess, and the world would be given up to pleasure. This state of things does exist at the present time. The world is largely given up to the indulgence of appetite; and the disposition to follow worldly customs will bring us into bondage to perverted habits, — habits that will make us more and more like the doomed inhabitants of Sodom.”

Eat and drink, eat and drink...

Those serious cautions of Ellen White were written in *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene* over 120 years ago. How much closer to the mark should we consider them today? TV and radio commercials, magazine ads, billboards, and the internet scream food and drink at us from every direction. If food and drink weren't

A Liquid Diet By Reen Swindle

on your mind to begin with, they probably will be soon after looking at or listening to any one of those! We seem to be bombarded even by *healthy* eating and drinking suggestions. We can even take good things to excess, and we need to consider if we might have crossed that line.

Food and drink get a lot of attention

Eating and drinking are pretty important to our existence, right up there with breathing, so it's difficult to ignore the attention given them by the media. It might surprise you, as it did me, to learn how often these two topics are addressed in scripture. According to the EGW Comprehensive Research CD, the King James version of the Bible uses the word “eat” 583 times, and the word “drink” 327 times! I'm not even including the references to different tenses of the words. I'm also not including the number of passages which refer to specific foods, drinks, meals and feasts. Granted, all of these are not speaking of the physical consumption, many are used in spiritual terms, but that is still a lot of attention given to the subjects of food and drink!

The ultimate juicing machine

This month I want to draw a little attention to a popular way of ingesting nutrients that has literally swept the nation, and beyond, and that is juicing. Juicing has been around for a long time, but suddenly it seems that more people have juicers on their counter-tops than toasters! Juice has replaced many meals, and that can be a good thing/bad thing. Let's first look at some of the good things about juicing.

Juicing is a very natural activity; we all came equipped with our own natural juicer! In his book *Wheatgrass, Nature's Finest Medicine*, page 97, Steve Meyerowitz says, “The mouth is the ultimate juicing machine.” No set up, no clean up, but he also points out that it is a little difficult to get the quantity of juice needed for medicinal purposes if you depend entirely on chewing, so he recommends home juicing or going to a juice bar for freshly expelled juices. No one would argue that juicing is one of the quickest ways to get nutrients into the cells, so it is very beneficial to good health from a foundational level.

Ellen White even did juicing... sort of

Did you know that Ellen White speaks of juicing? Here is her special juicing recipe: one raw egg in a glass of grape juice. That's it. Not exactly mouth-watering, but she refers to this healing recipe in a few places:

“I have received light that you are injuring your body by a poverty-stricken diet. . . . It is the lack of suitable food that has caused you to suffer so keenly. You have not taken the food essential to nourish your frail physical strength. You must not deny yourself of good, wholesome food.... Get eggs of healthy fowls. Use these eggs cooked or raw. Drop them uncooked into the best fermented wine you can find. This will supply that which is necessary to your system . . .” CD 203, 204.

“I dreamed of having the care of a child that was weak, and seemed unable to rally. I thought the same physician stood by the cradle, and said, ‘Have you any wine in the

house? Beat up a raw egg, and give it to the child with grape wine [i.e., the unfermented juice of the grape], three times each day. He will rally.” Letter 112a, 1897.

And one other time in 12MR168: “Get eggs of healthy fowls.. Drop them uncooked into the best unfermented wine you can find.” [DR. KRESS ACCEPTED THIS COUNSEL. HE FOLLOWED THE RAW-EGG AND GRAPE-JUICE REGIMEN REGULARLY UNTIL HIS DEATH IN 1956 AT THE AGE OF 94.]

Her use of lemon juice also served a medicinal purpose: “I use lemon juice freely. It is the best thing you could use for rheumatism, for your head, and for malaria.” Letter 119, 1896, p. 3.

Too much liquid in the diet

As useful as liquids are to our systems, there are cautions issued by Ellen White concerning their over-use. Even the consumption of large amounts of foods in a liquid consistency, like soup or porridge, is not encouraged:

“I am advising the people wherever I go to give up liquid food as much as possible. Taken in a liquid state, your



food would not give healthful vigor or tone to the system. But when you change this habit, and eat more solids and less liquids, your stomach will feel disturbed. Notwithstanding this, you should not yield the point, you should educate your stomach to bear a more solid diet.” HL 90.

“Taken in a liquid state, your food would not give healthful vigor or tone to the system. But when you change this habit, and eat more solids and less liquids, your stomach will feel disturbed. Notwithstanding this, you should not yield the point; you should educate your stomach to bear a more solid diet.” CD 105.

“Some honestly think that a proper dietary consists chiefly of porridge. To eat largely of porridge would not

ensure health to the digestive organs; for it is too much like liquid.” CD 394.

Achieving balance

None of this is intended to discourage the use of intense juicing in certain cases, but to remind us of the importance of balance in our systems. The reasons for balancing our intake of nourishment in any form are best summed up in these statements:

“Respect paid to the proper treatment of the stomach will be rewarded in clearness of thought and strength of mind. Your digestive organs will not be prematurely worn out to testify against you. We are to show that we appreciate our God-given intelligence by eating and studying and working wisely. A sacred duty devolves upon us to keep the body in such a state that we shall have a sweet, clean breath. We are to appreciate the light God has given on health reform, by word and practice reflecting clear light to others upon this subject.” CD 101.

Reen Swindle, copy-editor of Our Firm Foundation magazine, is an artist who lives in the beautiful Smoky Mountains. She enjoys walking, reading, research, creative work and caring for several rescued dogs.

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"When we do not know which way to turn,
light direct from God will come to us, if we
will follow His directions." - UL 56

"And thine ears shall hear a word behind
thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it,
when ye turn to the right hand, and when
ye turn to the left." - Isaiah 30:21

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