

JANUARY-MARCH 1998

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1 Corinthians: Questions of Lifestyle



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I CORINTHIANS QUESTIONS OF LIFESTYLE

JANUARY - MARCH 1998

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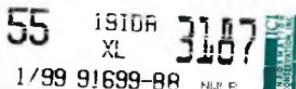
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Sabbath
School



Welcome to *CQ*'s World!

The following pages represent the creative energy of a truly international group of Adventist young adults. The map above indicates the locations of the writing groups that have participated in *CQ*'s writing program for this quarter.

In producing this unique Sabbath School lesson quarterly, more than 300 individuals contribute to *CQ* each year. The wide variety—and occasional repetition—of the content reflects the great diversity of its contributors around the world as they respond individually to the subject under study.

Worldwide circulation of *CQ* is about 59,000. It is published in the English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and Finnish languages.

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You are the most important ingredient in our CQ formula because you can be the answer to our greatest need—the need for caring, committed, contributing authors. If you think you'd like to participate in the writing of a lesson—and get paid for it—write us today:

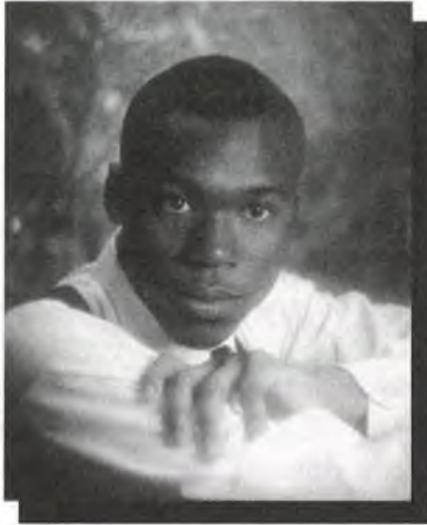
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CQ
COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

This Quarter's Illustrator



Thomas Russel III is a 19-year-old commercial arts major at Oakwood College, Huntsville, Alabama. The sixth of nine children in his family, Thomas hails from Indianapolis, Indiana, where he is a member of the Capital City Seventh-day Adventist Church. Besides drawing, he loves basketball.

Getting the Most Out of *CQ*

Facts You Should Know

CQ is based on the conviction that the Word of God offers transforming power and that group study is one important way to tap into that power. *CQ*'s purpose is to provide Seventh-day Adventist young adults with a resource for devotional study on mutual topics, which can then be discussed each week in Sabbath School. Many who use the adult quarterly find that because *CQ* deals with the same topics as the adult quarterly it enriches lesson study and discussion as a supplemental aid.

Adventist young-adult groups work together in producing this quarterly. More than three hundred individuals contribute to *CQ* each year. The wide variety—and occasional repetition—of the content reflects the great diversity of its contributors around the world as they respond creatively and individually to the subject.

Circulation of *CQ* is about fifty-nine thousand.

Pointers for Study

1. Through prayer, open your mind to the Holy Spirit's guidance as you study.
2. The Bible passage on which each week's lesson is based appears in bold type in the "Logos" (Monday's portion of the lesson). Read this entire passage in conjunction with the quarterly introduction to give you an overview of the lesson.

3. The Bible passage for the week is divided into sections on the "Logos" pages (Monday's portion of the lesson). When studying this section, carefully reread the Bible passages indicated in bold headings before reading the comments beneath the heading.

4. Read the remainder of the sections for the week with the perspective you have gained from your own study of the biblical passage.

5. Keep in mind the purposes of each section of the quarterly:

"Introduction" (Sunday) is designed to stimulate your interest and focus your thinking on the week's theme.

"Logos" (Monday), as described above, is a guide for direct study of the Bible passage for the week.

"Testimony" (Tuesday) presents Ellen White's perspective on the lesson theme.

"Evidence" (Wednesday) approaches issues raised by the lesson from a historical, scientific, philosophical, or theological perspective.

"How-To" (Thursday) discusses what the abstractions in the lesson mean for day-to-day living.

"Opinion" (Friday), a personal viewpoint on the lesson, is meant to encourage further thought and discussion.

CQ and the Church

CQ is the General Conference-approved quarterly for the collegiate/young-adult age group. It upholds the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. *However, its contents should not be regarded as official pronouncements of the church.*

THE INVASION



“He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:8, 9, NRSV).

Faithful Unto Death

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Rev. 2:10

It is August 1996. This is the month for camp meetings in Tanzania. At this particular camp meeting is a 19-year-old woman singing in the choir who is the only Seventh-day Adventist in her family. Her family does not want her to be an Adventist. They have tried every method to stop her from going to church, but her determination is firm.

On the last day of the camp meeting, her mother and brother warn her that if she goes to the meetings she will pay dearly for her disobedience. But she cannot afford to miss the last day of the camp meeting. In the evening, the tradition is to have a musical program. Everyone looks forward to this grand moment. She decides to go despite the threats.

The idea that the Lord has blessed the camp meeting is expressed frequently as people prepare to leave. Some go to tents and cabins on the campground. Others, who live nearby, head for home.

Her mother and brother warn her that she will pay dearly for her disobedience.

She is one of those returning home. Her brother meets her at the door and asks where she has been. She answers that she has been at the meetings. The brother tells her that he will teach her a lesson she will not forget for a long time. Seated nearby, her mother encourages her brother to teach her a lesson.

Though he probably did not intend to, the brother beat the young woman to death. She is now in the grave, waiting for the second coming of Jesus.

Motivated by his love for Christ, Paul sacrificed self and decided to go and preach the gospel in Corinth. When one makes such a decision—to go to Corinth and witness for Christ—the devil may do anything. Ours is to be faithful unto death, and the Lord promises us a crown of life (Rev. 2:10).

By Saustin Mfune, youth director, Eastern Africa Division, Harare, Zimbabwe, Africa.

No Stone Unturned

LOGOS

Acts 18:1-18; 1 Cor. 1:1-9; 16:1-24

Welcome to Corinth, popularly known as *Corai entha*, “Here are girls or whores.” Don’t look so shocked, they’re quite open about it! Why, just up on the hill you’ll find a thousand prostitutes in the Aphrodite temple.¹

Fortunately, Paul wasn’t a Jonah. He followed the Spirit to Corinth and began one of the most exciting evangelistic endeavors of Christianity. The people of Corinth discovered that God was going to leave no stone unturned in His attempt to reach them.

Acts 18:1-3

Paul’s first step in evangelizing Corinth was to *make friends*. He quickly got in touch with a fellow tentmaker, Aquila. Aquila and Priscilla had recently moved from Rome because of persecution for their Christian beliefs.² They were the ideal couple to help Paul begin his evangelistic thrust. Aquila, being Jewish, and Priscilla, probably a Roman citizen of noble descent,³ also provided a unique multicultural mix that allowed Paul to be accepted by both Jews and Gentiles. Making friends proved crucial for Paul’s evangelism. “Social power, sanctified by the grace of Christ, must be improved in winning souls to the Saviour.”⁴

Paul obviously knew the people of Corinth well. Later, we find he often mentions them by name and was in regular contact with them, even when he left Corinth (1 Cor. 1:1, 11, 14, 16; 16:17, 19). He was more than an evangelist; he was a friend.

Acts 18:4

Paul made use of every opportunity to *share his faith*. One Sabbath the rabbi in charge of the synagogue decided he should give this distinguished visitor from Tarsus a chance to speak. Paul didn’t waste any time. He “reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.” He wasn’t going to let a good opportunity pass just because he might offend someone. So he spent a number of Sabbaths sharing why Jesus was the expected Messiah and what it meant to him. Paul could easily have given a quiet talk on Jewish law. He was bold enough, instead, to share the shattering dynamics of his faith.

Acts 18:5

Paul worked *with a team*. He called in reinforcements. Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia to give Paul the support he needed. From that moment, Paul threw himself into preaching. He stunned the Jews with his explanations of how Jesus was the expected Messiah. And while he preached, Timothy and Silas baptized. In fact, Paul records baptizing only three of the converts himself (1 Cor. 1:14, 16). And later, the teamwork stood in his favor. No one could say that Paul was on some self-glorifying mission (1 Corinthians 1, 16).

Acts 18:6-11

Paul remained *undaunted in the face of opposition*. It didn’t take the Jews long to realize that this itinerant preacher had a radical message with far-reaching

implications. Like the heavy clang of a steel gate, they shut the door on his preaching. Paul symbolically shook out his clothes, told them he wanted no responsibility for their actions, and headed for—you guessed it—the house next door. Paul had been so courageous and inspiring that many of the Corinthians followed him, including the synagogue ruler.

But God sent Paul a message of encouragement. “Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city” (verses 9, 10, NIV).

God’s vision is a little different from ours. He had many people in a city of promiscuity and violence! And Paul needed God’s wider vision to lift him out of his discouragement and inspire him to continue preaching.

Acts 18:12-18

Paul learned to let the Holy Spirit take over. When the Jews dragged him before the new proconsul Gallio (known as a mild and peaceful man), they charged Paul with breaking Roman law. Just as Paul was about to speak, the Holy Spirit took charge. The Roman ruler responded by rightly throwing the case out of court. He was so disgusted with the Jews that he let the Corinthians beat up Sosthenes, the new synagogue ruler. They must have literally “beat the hell out of him” because Sosthenes accepted God, was converted, and later joined Paul as a missionary (1 Cor. 1:1).

He wasn’t going to let a good opportunity pass just because he might offend someone.

So ends Paul’s ministry in Corinth. By the time he left, he had established not only a vibrant church but also an exciting example of inner-city evangelism. Knowing that the city was brimming with people waiting to be touched by Christ, how could Paul have left any stone unturned?

REACT

1. Why was Paul so bold in his evangelism? What would be the difference between boldness and tactlessness?

2. In what ways is Corinth like your hometown? How can God use you to reach the many in your own city?

-
1. Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Times* (London: InterVarsity Press, 1967), p. 272.
 2. George Arthur Buttrick, ed., “First Letter to the Corinthians,” in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1989), p. 685.
 3. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, 359.
 4. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 152.

By Alan Parker, associate pastor of Highlands Church, Harare, Zimbabwe, Africa.

Exalting Christ Crucified

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 1 Cor. 1:23, 24

A shoe firm dispatched two marketing officers to a remote area to ascertain market potential. The two discovered that the locals wore no shoes. Officer “A” reported that the area in question had no business potential whatsoever, because the local people wore no shoes. Officer “B,” however, reported that there appeared to be tremendous potential for business in the area, since virtually no one owned shoes.

When Paul first arrived in Corinth, he faced serious obstacles. The wickedness in that city caused him great anguish of spirit, and it almost disheartened him.¹ Ellen White observed, “The city was almost wholly given up to idolatry. Venus was the favorite goddess; and with the worship of Venus were connected many demoralizing rites and ceremonies. The Corinthians had become conspicuous, even among the heathen, for their gross immorality.”²

Paul could have adopted an attitude similar to that of Officer “A” and concluded, “The Corinthians are devoted to idol worship. I can’t possibly hope to establish Christ’s church among these pagans.” Exalting Christ in such an environment was no easy task. As Ellen White explains, “In Paul’s day the cross was regarded with feelings of repulsion and horror. To uphold as the Saviour of

The two discovered that the locals wore no shoes.

mankind one who had met death on the cross, would naturally call forth ridicule and opposition.”³

Yet, moved by the Holy Spirit, he was undaunted. What he saw in Corinth instead (like Officer “B”) was potential for business—opportunity for exalting Christ. Ellen White states that because of this positive attitude, “during the year and a half that Paul spent in Corinth, he had purposely presented the gospel in its simplicity.”⁴ “Paul’s efforts in Corinth were not without fruit. Many turned from the worship of idols to serve the living God, and a large church was enrolled under the banner of Christ. Some were rescued from among the most dissipated of the Gentiles, and became monuments of the mercy of God and the efficacy of the blood of Christ to cleanse from sin.”⁵

1. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 250.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 243, 244.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 245.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 270.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 252.

By Rodreck Mupedziswa, a social-work student at the University of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe, Africa.

Called to Be Saints

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Cor. 1:2

When we look at what biblical heroes did for God, we sometimes wonder whether we qualify to do the same work. The book of Corinthians demonstrates that God's grace can transform any person, regardless of background.

In his introduction, Paul says, "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" (1 Cor. 1:2, NKJV).

Corinth was an important commercial center, a "land-bridge linking N[orthern] Greece with the Peloponnese, and with sea routes to east and west."¹

It was also a center of wickedness, so much so that the word *Corinthianize* was later used to refer to the sexual vices that characterized this city.² The wickedness at one time spread into the church, and Paul says there was "such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father's wife!" (5:1).

Because of its cosmopolitan nature, Corinth hosted a variety of religions. Aphrodite, a goddess of love, was worshiped in a debased mixture of oriental

We sometimes wonder whether we qualify to do the same work.

influences. It was an important center for sports, the venue for the "Isthmian games, which were celebrated, every other year."³

The gospel found the Corinthian Christians in such a background. Paul did not lower standards to accommodate them. He recognized their background, but he accented God's transforming grace (6:9, 11).

The coming of the gospel to Corinth demonstrates two things:

- An important commercial center can also be an important gospel center.
- God's grace is not hindered by adverse conditions. "If the gospel could triumph in Corinth, it can win under any circumstances."⁴

REACT

From what conditions is God calling me? From entertainment? From economy?

1. D. Guthrie, ed., et al., "1 and 2 Corinthians," *New Bible Commentary*, 3rd edition (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1989), p. 1049.

2. Ralph Martin, *New Testament Foundations*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), p. 171.

3. *Smith's Bible Dictionary* (Uhrichsville, Ohio: Barbour and Company, Inc., 1987), pp. 63, 64.

4. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 656.

By Chester Gutu, a Seventh-day Adventist pastor, Harare, Zimbabwe, Africa.

Let Your Light So Shine

HOW-TO

Key Text: Acts 18:8, 9

Several churches have gathered for a social outing. A newly wed young man meets his friends there. They ask him to show them his wife. If the young man were embarrassed to introduce his wife, wouldn't you think something is wrong with his relationship to her?

Why are there times when Adventists fear to let their light shine? Why do they sometimes want to identify with the world? Does this say something about their relationship with Jesus?

Paul presents a Christlike example of what sacrifice means. He ignored the prejudices of his fellow Jewish brethren and went to the corrupt idolatrous Corinth. He did not allow unfounded fears to deter him. He marched on in faith and counted it joy to suffer for Christ.

Jesus' followers are to personalize the great commission of Matthew 28:19, 20. Remember He said, "Lo, I am with you . . . even unto the end" (verse 20). His promises are trustworthy. He said to Paul, "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. . . . I have many people in this city" (Acts 18:9, 10, NIV). God has people in your city, in your residence, in your class. Fear not, tell them.

Sexual immorality and various forms of disobedience to God's law are all

Some want to witness but do not know how to begin.

around us. Preach the saving message fearlessly, knowing that God will protect you. He wants our cooperation, for He says, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" (Isa. 6:8, KJV).

Some want to witness but do not know how to begin. The following steps have proven useful:

1. Ask God to open doors for you. God knows the individual needs of His sheep. As you work for souls, seek His guidance and protection (Acts 10:1-48).

2. Be humble and willing to share your faith. Take the first step, in spite of the fears you have. The Spirit of God goes ahead of you to soften hearts. If they will not repent, preach on (Matt. 24:14).

3. Have love and care for the converted. As babes in the faith, they need encouragement and instruction. Let your own life be a reflection of what you preach. Reveal God's sanctifying power in your life (1 Cor. 1:1-9). Never cease to pray.

REACT

Do you sometimes feel inadequate that you feel you cannot witness for Christ? What do you do in such a situation?

By Wilson Makamure and Solomon Muganda, students at the University of Zimbabwe in educational administration and metallurgical engineering, respectively, in Harare, Zimbabwe, Africa.

God of Encouragement

OPINION

Key Texts: Acts 18:8, 9; 1 Cor. 1:9

What would the world be like without encouragement? Words such as “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Ps. 30:5) may swing the pendulum of a would-be suicide victim. Many inspiring stories such as that of surgeon Ben Carson show that encouragement leads to motivation and the discovery of one’s potential.

Encouragement takes different forms, including a timely word, a look of assurance, a touch on the shoulder. It has the ability to make us dig deeper into hidden reservoirs of strength. It rekindles hope when despair has set in.

When Paul experienced discouragement and apparent failure, the Lord had a timely word of encouragement: “Do not be afraid . . . for I am with you” (Acts 18:9, 10, NIV). These words rekindled the flame and had such a powerful effect of encouragement that Paul spent another year and a half in Corinth. Ours is a God of encouragement.

Encouragement is more than mere words. Words can be cheap, especially in this day and age. Words without sincerity are empty and do not have the ability to encourage.

It is refreshing to know that in a world of hypocrisy, insincerity, and unfaith-

Encouragement is more than mere words.

fulness there is a God we can trust (1 Cor. 1:9)—a God who can effectively motivate us in the Christian way. When the dark clouds of failure, discouragement, fear, and loneliness hover over us, encouragement has the ability to pierce these clouds.

Our God has entrusted us with the ministry of encouragement (Heb. 10:24, 25). May we ever look for ways of supporting one another.

REACT

1. What does it mean to encourage one another?
2. How can encouragement aid witnessing?
3. What can today’s church do to equip its membership adequately to live the gospel in a sophisticated culture?
4. How would you react to a friend who contends that the gospel message of “Christ crucified,” though relevant during Paul’s time, is not for this generation?

By Farai A. Nhiwatiwa, district pastor and chaplain of institutions of higher education in Harare, East Zimbabwe Conference, Africa.

DIVIDED LOYALTIES



“So let no one boast about human leaders. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all belong to you, and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God” (1 Cor. 3:21, 22, NRSV).

Don't Be Divided

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: 1 Cor. 1:10

“Jason,* is it wrong to be talking about my dad like this? I’m so bitter! He’s been leading me astray all my life!”

“Go ahead, Dave,” Jason replied, “It’s not wrong to feel as you do. We all experienced the same feelings when we realized our leaders had deceived us.”

I wasn’t sure where it all began. Perhaps it was the disappointment of returning to a church alive with controversy but dead in sin. Whatever it was, I just knew I was bitter. I was now working with a number of students from our independent institutions. Here I found sympathetic ears that would listen to my complaints. They encouraged my gripes with their own stories of heresies and heretics.

“I remember the time,” Jason continued, when an evangelist went on a talk show to discuss SDA beliefs. We all watched it on TV. At one point he was asked whether the Catholic Church was represented by a beast in Revelation. Dave, I watched him hang his head and say No!”

Back at college I joined an underground group of dissenters, complaining about heretics in the religion department and unhealthy food in the cafeteria. Once I even asked a professor why this college couldn’t be like a certain independent institution.

I wasn’t at all sure about my beliefs.

Vacations became increasingly unpleasant. In conversation my family tiptoed around the issues for fear of another debate. They thought I was constantly condemning their food, and my dad finally shouted, “I’m not going to be lost if I eat cheese.”

I became increasingly miserable. In spite of my firm exterior, I wasn’t at all sure about my beliefs. I was filled with fear of being lost, of being wrong. I felt torn between family, church, and zealous friends. I began searching for someone or something I could trust. I turned for truth from writer to preacher to professor to teacher. One by one, they all let me down. Whom could I trust?

Since then, almost two years have gone by. Jesus has replaced my fear of failure with the joy of salvation! He’s given me a passion for His last-day church. My family and I are reconciled. But I often look back with regret. What could have kept me from experiencing that darkness? If only I had heard Paul declare, “Rely on Christ, not on the wisdom of men” as he did in 1 Corinthians 3:11, 19. If only I had heard him proclaim, “Division is sin” as he did in 1 Corinthians 3:1-4. If only I had heard him command, “*Don’t be divided*” as he did in 1 Corinthians 1:10.

*Name has been changed.

By David J. Cook, a senior theology major, Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee.

Wherever Two or More Are Gathered, They Argue

LOGOS

1 Cor. 1:10-17; 3:1-23

Bad news traveled fast even in the days of Paul's ministry. Members from Chloe's household brought the report of divisions in the church at Corinth. Paul refers to four problem areas that weakened the Corinthian church: factions (1 Cor. 1:10-4:21), incest (5:1-13), lawsuits (6:1-11), and sexual immorality in general (verses 12-20).

Factions

Paul deals with the problems of factions at great length because it is an underlying root to many of the problems in the Corinthian church. Members in Corinth were arguing among themselves because they had aligned themselves with different Christian leaders. Why there is this apparent division is not addressed, but one could imagine some possible reasons for the faction.

Perhaps there were some theological differences among some of the church leadership. Some could have sided with a legalistic approach, or another to a more grace-oriented style. There could have been division over the status of rich members and the ever-present poorer members. Perhaps some even drew lines over which speaker they preferred to listen to and what oratorical skills a certain leader possessed or did not possess. Maybe some of the leaders were not aligning themselves with the established teachings of Paul and were at odds with his message and authority in the church. Perhaps some of the young Christians in Corinth were idolizing the particular leaders who first brought them to the Lord and baptized them into the body of Christ. Whatever the reasons, there were definite divisions.

Focus

If factions are the problem, then unity is the solution. In his wisdom Paul does not side with any particular faction. Rather, he calls all to unity. He is not requiring uniformity on every issue, but a cooperation and peaceful coexistence that heals the wound of divisiveness. Unity does not mean uniformity. Oneness does not mean sameness.

Paul profoundly declares that Christ is not divided, so how can His people be! Neither Paul nor any other contemporary leader was crucified for the world's sin. There is no reason to exalt one leader above the other, even in the delicate arena of who baptized whom and how many. As important as baptism was to the early church, it was not as important as preaching Christ and Him crucified. Dare we say that it is more important to be converted than to be baptized? Paul would seem to indicate to us that baptism does not guarantee salvation, and if it has been unduly stressed, then it is divisive.

Without question, the solution for factions is to focus on Christ rather than human leaders. When people are truly converted, they find in Jesus Christ humility and servitude rather than arrogance and one-upmanship. When one comes to the Cross and encounters Christ there, something eternal takes place. One no longer can see any good in oneself, only the need for a Saviour. One realizes the core

issues of salvation: being touched by God's grace and placing trust in God's divine leading for day-to-day living. Somehow, other divisive issues seem to fade into insignificance.

Future

"The disunity of the church of Jesus Christ remains one of the greatest scandals which compromises its witness today. In John 17 Jesus prayed that His disciples might be united. In Ephesians 3, Paul expounds the unity of the church across the greatest sociological divisions of the ancient Middle East—Jew versus Gentile. The evangelistic potential of a united church extends to the most powerful anti-Christian forces in the universe (Eph. 3:9-12). The only way this unity can have an impact on a non-Christian world is for it to be *visible*.

"Church should be a place where people who have no other natural reason for associating with each other come together in love, but instead it often remains the most segregated aspect of Western society today. Whatever benefits homogeneous groupings have for certain kinds of outreach, a fully mature congregation should integrate people of disparate races, nationalities, socioeconomic strata, and societal status. It should probably also strive to determine as little as possible by a fifty-one percent vote but utilize a consensus approach to crucial decisions, in which a substantial majority of members can agree and in which others can agree to subordinate their interests to the will of the majority.

It is more important to be converted than to be baptized.

"Whatever forces work within a given congregation to promote rivalries around human leaders, divisions over matters not fundamental to preserving the true gospel of Jesus must be lovingly but firmly dissipated. Today this may often mean that generation gaps and disputes over philosophies of ministry can be settled by having alternate services and programs for different groups within a congregation. Still, a far more powerful witness occurs when people agree to learn to sing music they don't naturally like and support activities that are not their highest priorities. Church leadership in return should seek a blend of ministries and experiences in worship that sooner or later addresses the needs of all in one unified body."

REACT

1. Are factions evident in your local congregation? What are the issues? How could they be resolved?
2. What doctrines form the core of your Christian faith?
3. What barriers to fellowship and service exist in your belief structure?

*Craig Blomberg, *NIV Application Commentary, 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), p. 48.

By Ken Rogers, campus chaplain at Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee.

Meeting “a Similar Fate”

TESTIMONY

Key Texts: 1 Cor. 1:10; 3:3; John 17:21

“We must cause distraction and division. We must destroy their anxiety for their own souls, and lead them to criticize, to judge, and to accuse and condemn one another, and to cherish selfishness and enmity. For these sins, God banished us from His presence; and all who follow our example will meet a similar fate.”¹

These chilling words of Satan himself produce a harsh realization; the enemy has partially accomplished his goal. “How often do professed Christians, by their lack of self-control, open the door to the adversary of souls! Divisions, and even bitter dissensions which would disgrace any worldly community, are common in the churches. . . . There is great loss in every dissension. . . . A house divided against itself cannot stand. . . .

“Worldlings look on, and jeeringly exclaim, ‘Behold how these Christians hate one another! If this is religion, we do not want it.’ . . . Thus they are confirmed in their impenitence, and Satan exults at his success.”²

The reason the devil works so hard to cause such separation among us is that he well knows the incredible unified power we *could* have, “for where there is unity there is strength, a oneness which all the powers of hell cannot break.”³

Their love and unity will testify to their connection with heaven.

Jesus prepared us to receive this unity in His prayer that night in the Garden (John 17:21).

“All true laborers for God will work in harmony with this prayer. In their efforts to advance the work all will manifest that oneness of sentiment and practice which reveals that they are God’s witnesses, that they love one another. To a world that is broken up by discord and strife, their love and unity will testify to their connection with heaven. It is the convincing evidence of the divine character of their mission.”⁴

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1. *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 475.
 2. *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 123.
 3. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 151.
 4. *Ibid.*, vol. 7, pp. 156, 157.
 5. *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 30.

By Jennifer Attaway, a religious-education major at Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee.

Gardens and Temples

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Cor. 3:5-17

A word picture can say more than words alone. Many of the Bible's word pictures depict truths that are still as powerful and relevant today as they were in Bible times. In our passage Paul uses two word pictures to describe the Corinthian church and rebuke them for their disunity. The first is an image of a field (1 Cor. 3:6-9); the second, of a temple (verses 9-17).

Drawing on precedent set by Christ Himself (Matt. 13:3-9), Paul first presents the church as a field, a timeless image of a farmer planting and watering seed but being unable to make it grow. He depends on God for the miracle of life that causes germination, growth, and fruition.

The focus of the image is God as the only significant reason for the existence of the church. God's workers (the farmers) can't take credit for the church (verse 7). It would be like esteeming the paper and ink upon which a letter of good news was written. The paper and ink don't deserve credit for the message they bring. Contrary to the practice of the Corinthians, it is the Message Originator who deserves the credit, not the ministers of the message.

The second word picture is as timeless an image as the first. Paul likens the church to a temple under construction. Elsewhere he refers to individual believers

Paul allows the Corinthians no excuse for their divisive spirit.

as temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19), but here he describes the entire church as a single, united temple. He warns against poor workmanship in its construction and gives, according to one source, "the strongest warning in all the New Testament" against those who tear down and destroy the temple that is God's church. Again the main focus is on God. Jesus is the foundation in Paul's temple picture (verse 11). Without Him there would be no temple, no church, no reason for human teachers.

Paul allows the Corinthians no excuse for their divisive spirit, showing them that human leaders deserve no allegiance and that the church is a single unit founded upon one leader, Jesus Christ.

REACT

1. What lessons about God and the church have you learned from growing a garden?
2. What do you think it means to *build* on the foundation of Jesus Christ? (1 Cor. 3:11, 12). What application does this have in our church today?

By Ryan Ashlock, assistant chaplain at Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee.

Confronting Division

HOW-TO

Key Texts: 1 Cor. 1:1-17; 3

What a testimony the church of Corinth must have been! In the midst of such a wicked city of people with calloused hearts, God had used Paul to pull His believers together as one church united in Christ.

But three years later the news reached Paul in Ephesus that something was splitting that precious church into factions. I can see him falling to his knees to ask for the Holy Spirit's inspiration. How did he confront the problem? We all know the importance of saying things just the right way. Surely he desired with all his heart to write to them in a Christlike manner.

So many times we don't confront one another about problems. We wait until we explode, and someone ends up hurt. Paul's letter offers strong points on what our attitudes should be about division, but upon further inspection, we see a practical way to confront people in a loving way.

1. Be sure the person you are confronting knows that you appreciate him or her. Paul showed he cared by wishing the church grace and peace (1 Cor. 1:3). He wanted them to be happy. He thanked God for them, which showed appreciation (verse 4).

2. Strike common ground. Paul pointed them to a more important topic than the one he was about to discuss: Jesus' return (verse 8). This directed their minds

We wait until we explode, and someone ends up hurt.

to Jesus and reminded them of the bigger picture—the day to which the church was looking forward (and still is).

3. State the problem clearly. Paul made it clear that they must avoid division and work toward unity (verses 10-12).

4. Explain your reasoning. Paul explained that the focus of the church should not be himself but rather Jesus Christ (verses 13-17). He wanted them to see that they were not baptized in his own name but in Jesus Christ's name, and that if the circumstances were otherwise, the Cross would be made void.

If we all take a lesson from Paul in confronting one another, we will already be working toward unity!

REACT

1. Think about ways you might be causing division in your church. If you can think of something, what will you do about it?

2. Imagine that one of your friends has a problem with complaining about fellow church members, which causes division in your church. How would you confront him or her?

By Heather Zinke, an elementary-education major, Southern Adventist University, Colledge, Tennessee.

A Rude Awakening

OPINION

Key Text: 1 Cor. 3:21-23

One mind and one thought? Is that what is actually happening in our churches nowadays? Do we all have a single dominant thought? Is our mind focused as a church on the given message or on the message giver?

Disunity is a problem not at all unfamiliar to the early or to the modern Christian church. In fact, our text tells us this problem occurred nearly two thousand years ago when the apostle Paul wrote a letter to the church of Corinth exhorting them to “be of one mind, united in thought and purpose” (1 Cor. 1:10, TLB). He explained to them that Christ is not divided as they were dividing Him by following or exalting the ministry of Apollos, Cephas, or Paul himself—thus causing division in the church. Paul wanted them to realize that all these apostles were led by the same Christ (verses 10-13). As in a rude awakening, they realized that none of the apostles’ messages belong to any specific group but that the message of Christ belonged to all (3:22).

The issue we are seeing here is that people in our church today are just like those in Paul’s time. They will follow people because of what they say or what they have done instead of focusing on the one behind the message, who is Christ.

People in our church today are just like those in Paul’s time.

We are all under Christ, no matter whether we were taught by this leader or that leader. This gives no excuse to form our own groups or add ourselves to another group because of what one or another leader has said.

Paul is advising us that we are not pleasing God by dividing into groups led by men. Instead, he wants us to know that we are of Christ and that Christ is of God, therefore we should be of one mind and one thought.

REACT

1. Do you see any membership division in your church?
2. Compare and contrast your church to that of Corinth.
3. If your church does have divisions, what can you do to bring it back to one thought and one mind? Be specific.

By Alvin Payne, Orlando Lopez, and Andrew Morenco, religion majors at Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee.

SUCH FOOLISHNESS!



“Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:22-24, NIV).

Love Lasts Forever

INTRODUCTION

Scriptures: Prov. 3:5; Jer. 31:3

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding” (Prov. 3:5, NIV).

I remember as a teenager asking my mom for advice: should I go out with this person or that one? Should I become involved in a serious relationship? What type of part-time job would be best for me? These were important issues at that stage of life. I trusted my mom, knowing she would tell me what was right for me, partly from the knowledge she had incurred and partly from her own experience. Sometimes she would express her ideas and thoughts to me; at other times she would tell me, “Do what you think is right. I don’t want you to come back and say that it’s my fault because you listened to me.” Great advice!

As we study our lesson this week, my prayer is that the Holy Spirit will speak to each one of us, so we’ll receive the utmost from Him that is humanly possible. Without the Holy Spirit’s presence we couldn’t discern the things of heaven, nor could we communicate with the Father. The Spirit works as a two-way communication device between heaven and earth. Jesus says we’re not baptized with water only but, also, with the Spirit.

The Spirit works as a two-way communication device between heaven and earth.

When I read the story of Jesus’ life and death, how He was beaten, spat upon, and mocked, I wonder and marvel at how He endured the shame and torture. He was the Son of God, had lived and ruled in heaven, and had given all that up to save sinners such as you and me! “I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness” (Jer. 31:3, NIV).

God speaks to us in many ways, but the main source is through the Bible. As we study the Bible, He teaches us and shows us His love and concern. Each book has a special, different message for us. We can study all the books we get our hands on, and we’ll learn only about worldly things, which avail us nothing. Only the Word of God can teach us in spiritual matters. Our Father is *always* there and His advice is *never* wrong!

Life, eternal life, through Jesus Christ, is the greatest gift we can possibly receive. And it is free. We have to do nothing to inherit it; it has all been done for us. Hand in hand, let’s walk together and see how the Godhead has been dealing with humankind for, oh, so many years—and why!

By Tony Siffles, a polisher at Southwest Plating Company, Duncan, Oklahoma.

Not of This World

LOGOS

1 Cor. 1:18–2:16

Look to the Cross! Our salvation—our very lives—depend upon what transpired at Calvary. The blood of Jesus, the Sacred Lamb, was shed and sacrificed so that we can be brought back into the fold. No man's life had greater impact on our world; no man's death had more power or accomplished more than the Man of Galilee.

What is it that causes you and me to believe in a virgin birth or in salvation through the atoning blood? "For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly" (Prov. 2:6, 7). Our Father gives us the wisdom and knowledge of His years. Without such we could neither believe nor comprehend the miracle that has been wrought for us. And it all stems from one very little word that has never been defined accurately since the beginning of time: *love*.

Our God, through Jesus, has instilled in our finite minds the wisdom of the ages. If we open our hearts and minds to Him, He will fill our cup to overflowing with knowledge of the mysteries of His great love. All our understanding comes from the great Giver of Life.

"The foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom" (1 Cor. 1:25, NIV). Do we, as mere humans, have any idea what true wisdom is? No! The very best we

Their hearts and souls never left the planet.

can give is nothing in comparison to what the Creator of the universe has done and is doing. He spoke, and it was so! Consider how much you know; how little that is! Humanity has designed many wonders: pyramids, skyscrapers, cathedrals, and castles; invented many wonderful gadgets: TV, telephones, rockets that have gone to the moon, satellites into space. God probably smiles when He looks down on us—trying so hard and yet so immature.

"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding" (Prov. 3:13, KJV). Wisdom imparts happiness simply because we understand. Who wouldn't be thrilled to know that their sins have been forgiven? The book of life has our names written in it; our past mistakes have been covered by the blood of the Sinless One. In understanding this, our burden of woe has been lifted and broken. No more standing in darkness—now we stand in the Light that cannot be hidden.

Humankind cannot know spiritual things unless it has received the Spirit. Before choosing the Saviour, while we walked in the world, we thought of worldly pleasures, of material blessings. We couldn't discern the things of God, for they were foolishness to us. Our thoughts and actions were of a carnal nature. We wanted only to satisfy self. The flesh ruled our minds. The Jews were looking for a king to set up an earthly kingdom and in the process forfeited the greatest privilege given to humanity. Their minds were on earthly treasures, on an earthly rulership. Their hearts and souls never left the planet. They never looked up to

behold the Son of righteousness. They were no less foolish than are so many people today.

"Wisdom is more precious than rubies; and nothing you desire can compare with her" (Prov. 8:11, NIV).

Godly wisdom is a rare and precious treasure. We should strive to obtain it at whatever the cost. Let's be ready to meet Jesus in the air. Nothing of this world should interfere with our salvation.

God gave Solomon a choice: "Ask what I shall give thee." Solomon chose wisdom! Because his answer was pleasing to God, He said, "I'll give you wisdom and riches."

No one has had greater wisdom or more wealth than King Solomon. He thought it more important to rule wisely than to have treasures. King Solomon ruled justly in all matters. His subjects never hesitated to bring their disputes before him, knowing the right solution would be merited. When two women claimed the same child, the king's reply was, "Cut the baby in half." The real mother said No, being willing to give up her child rather than have it hurt. King Solomon knew this, and the rightful mother walked away with her baby in her arms. Solomon was blessed by God and respected by his people (1 Kings 3:1-28).

For more than a year now, part of my morning prayer has been to ask for wisdom and knowledge. I choose to want to deal fairly with everyone I meet during the day's course. The power doesn't lie within me; it has to come from above. "Ask and it shall be given you." I desire to serve my Lord in a way that is pleasing unto Him. It's funny, in a way, that to do honor to my Saviour I have to do things His way, but I also have to use the wisdom and power that come from Him to do it. We should always look up before we look out!

REACT

1. What are some ways people try to buy their way into heaven instead of relying on Jesus' blood?
2. What are some of the characteristics a wise person should possess?
3. What is wisdom to you? Why would God bestow more wisdom to some than to others?

Feelings Inside the Heart

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 1 Cor. 1:18–2:16

My brothers, sisters, and I grew up near the shore of the Red River that flows between Texas and Oklahoma. Our parents worked very hard on the little 16-acre farm to make a living during the terrible depression of the thirties. We spent a lot of our time on the bank of the river or building play farms and towns on the sand bar out of the delightful sand and clay.

Once when the river was rising rapidly from a flood upstream, my brother and I crawled out on a log over the foaming water to watch. It seemed angels were watching and keeping us from falling into the deep, churning water. Even though we had never been to church nor had been taught about angels, we talked a lot about our “helping boards” that took care of us. We knew in our hearts about a loving heavenly Father, without being told. And now in our old age we are faithful Christians and long to tell every boy and girl in the world about the wonderful gospel of salvation.

“He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways” (Ps. 91:11).

“In all ages, angels have been near to Christ’s faithful followers. . . . Christ would have us look to the things which are not seen, to the armies of heaven encamped about all who love God, to deliver them. From what dangers, seen and

My brother and I crawled out on a log over the foaming water to watch.

unseen, we have been preserved through the interposition of the angels, we shall never know, until in the light of eternity we see the providences of God. Then we shall know that the whole family of heaven was interested in the family here below, and that messengers from the throne of God attended our steps from day to day.”*

* *The Desire of Ages*, p. 240.

Show and Tell: Jesus

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Cor. 1:18–2:16

About A.D. 50 Paul visited Corinth on his second missionary journey. The book of 1 Corinthians was written from Ephesus, where Paul spent three years.

Corinth (now called Korinthos) is located on the Peloponnisos, a large peninsula in the Mediterranean Sea appended to Greece by a small isthmus. Corinth is on this isthmus, about 100 miles west of Athens. Corinth (known today as the “Paris of Antiquity”) was an important mercantile city that was so licentious as to become a byword for sensuality. The Corinthians deified sensuality in their god Aphrodite. They had a law providing 1,000 beautiful young women who, as prostitutes, catered to the wealthy upper-class foreigners from whom the city derived a steady income.

Even though the Greeks professed to believe only those things that are reasonable, actually they believed only what they felt emotionally—hence their god Aphrodite. Paul didn’t try directly to dislodge their faith in Aphrodite. Instead, he showed them Christ, who bled on the Cross. For many that became their faith, and they were converted. After their backsliding began to destroy their faith in God, they began again to practice paganism. Again Paul refocused their attention on the Cross and thereby produced the needed revival.

Corinth was so licentious as to become a byword for sensuality.

The Greek people regarded themselves as the most learned and open-minded of all. They were sure they had seen and experienced everything. Having been taught that they should question everything, without Paul there to guide them continually to Jesus Christ, it was natural for them to backslide into confusion.

Today we have the same problem: Christian theologians preaching the gospel by appealing to reason alone as they themselves backslide into Babylon. Christianity has to touch the whole body: heart, mind, and soul.

None of the reasoning power claimed by the Corinthians was of value to them, because their minds were corrupted by satanic influences. Such a mind wasn’t ready to accept a foreign influence. That is why Paul had to explain about fact and foolishness and the definition of both.

The main avenue of the soul is eyesight. When one observes Christian character in another human being, he or she is drawn to Jesus (John 12:32). This is what Paul did in Corinth, what he had to do again by letter to them to keep them in the church.

True Christianity is truly believed only when the Holy Spirit comes into the consciousness and convicts the soul.

By Albert Black, a physician in Wichita Falls, Texas.

Now or Never

HOW-TO

Key Text: James 1:5

Wisdom means little to some; to others it means a lot. We can have only as much wisdom as God gives us, because He controls it all. We have to be willing to listen and learn from Him. If we want to see the next life, we'll have to be full of wisdom to withstand all of the false teachings the devil will throw at us. We want to know the truth, and only God can help us do that.

1. Ask of God, who freely gives. "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5, NKJV). We should get down on our knees and pray that we receive wisdom to be Christian soldiers.

2. Study the Word of God. We must read and study to gain wisdom. "For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding" (Prov. 2:6, NIV). Throughout the Scriptures, God instructs us. If we don't study God's Word as if our very lives depended on it, then we are vulnerable. People who study the Bible for the first time on their own come away surprised at all the wisdom hidden in the pages. Don't listen to what someone else says; study the Word for yourself. God speaks to each one differently.

3. Praise God. "Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and

Don't listen to what someone else says; study the Word for yourself.

power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen" (Rev. 7:12, NKJV). We have to give thanks and glory to the One from whom we receive all things. We have to honor the Creator, not boast of how smart we are. "We can do nothing of ourselves."

As we become older, we hope to become a little wiser. There's only one person who can really help us get true wisdom for our spiritual battles, and that is God. As the time of trouble nears and God withdraws the Holy Spirit from the earth, we will have to know the truth and use all the wisdom God has given us to be able to overcome the devil's false signs and all the new laws the government will pass. We'll have to stand on our own, with wisdom and knowledge that God has imparted unto us. We must study and pray now, so we'll be able to stand in the last days. Our very lives depend on it. It is now or never; take on the whole armor of God.

REACT

1. How do study and prayer prepare us for the end times?
2. Why do we usually have to ask in order to receive from God?

By Shannon Siffles, a painter at Coast Manufacturing, Marlow, Oklahoma.

God's Great Sacrifice

OPINION

Key Text: 1 Cor. 1:18, 19, 22-24

To the unsaved, the preaching of the Cross is foolishness because they don't care about it. It has no meaning to them. To the people who are saved, the Cross tells of the power of God. It's where Jesus overcame everything in the world.

Brilliant people will perish. People think they are changing the world, but it is all through God's power. People are being fooled by Satan every day into thinking their own inventions or innovations have caused things to happen. Human beings are not wise. The credit is seldom given to the One who is really in charge. Our Father is always in control, even when He is on the sidelines or standing behind the curtain.

People didn't accept Jesus Christ when He came. The reason we preach the gospel today is so people will come to know God and His wisdom and to accept and believe in Jesus Christ. Without Jesus, where would we be? What would be the purpose of living? Let's kill those we don't like, steal whatever it is we want, let self run wild, and do whatever feels good. Our Saviour makes the difference, for His lifestyle was completely selfless. He is our example.

The Greeks had their gods, and neither the Jews nor the Greeks believed in Jesus as divine or as the Messiah. Jesus was a stumbling block to the Jews. They

I wonder whether we ever stop to realize the pain He went through.

didn't believe in Him. They crucified Jesus, and when He died, He died for everyone, not just the Jews and Greeks. Everyone put Him on the Cross, because "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23, NIV). It was sin that caused the death of the Son of God.

When Jesus went up to be crucified, He had the wisdom and knowledge of what He was doing and for whom He was doing it. Sometimes when we sin, I wonder whether we ever stop to realize the pain He went through. Would you do the same thing if you were in His shoes? We have to take the wisdom and knowledge that He gives us and take it to heart. Knowledge is the key to success; joy, love, peace, and happiness come from knowing Jesus, and then you can work out your problems knowing God is with you.

REACT

1. Why would life be meaningless without Jesus?
2. How does Jesus solve your problems?
3. What does the Cross mean to you personally?

By Rusty Miller, a grinder at Coast Manufacturing in Marlow, Oklahoma.

THE WORLD OF SPORTS



“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? . . . Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever” (1 Cor. 9:24, 25, NIV).

A Win-Wince Situation

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: 1 Cor. 9:18, 24-27

It was a tense moment. The crowd held their breath as the young American gymnast prepared to take the day's last flying vault. This was no ordinary vault. The U.S. women's gymnastic team's chance at a gold medal hung in the balance. And Kerry Strug took the vault despite an obviously throbbing ankle. After landing, she collapsed in excruciating pain and was taken out of the arena on a stretcher. "Weeping. Wincing. But an Olympic Champion." The U.S. women won the gold medal. The first ever.

"This will go down as perhaps the most memorable moment in modern Olympic history," claimed network news anchors. "Win-Wince Situation!" "No Pain, No Gain!" declared the newspaper headlines.

Kerry Strug felt compelled to take that last vault on behalf of the team. Paul, a servant of God, felt compelled to preach the Word of God—to God's own people. Paul viewed himself and fellow preachers as stewards of the secrets God desires to reveal to His people. It was extremely important to Paul that he be proven worthy and faithful to the trust that God had placed in him. Everything else was secondary.

In comparing the Christian's life with that of the athlete, Paul points out that athletes compete to win a prize, but only one receives it. The athlete undergoes

Kerry Strug felt compelled to take that last vault on behalf of the team.

countless hours of rigorous training, endures tremendous pain, and makes heavy sacrifices despite the knowledge that only *one* can win the prize.

Paul draws a sharp contrast with the Christian's race. The good news is that we do not have to compete to win the Christian race. Christ is our forerunner, our model, and our individual coach. *And, we are assured the victory.*

Like an athlete, Paul was no stranger to sacrifice. He was willing to sacrifice anything and everything for the sake of the gospel. He suffered scorn, abuse, insults, and physical hurts. He saw all this as a necessary component of being a servant of God. "What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make use of my rights in preaching it" (1 Cor. 9:18, NIV). He felt that his life would be unbearable if he failed to preach God's Word. And he was a true preacher in every sense of the Word. Not only did he preach it verbally but he lived it as well.

A "win-wince situation"? Not to Paul. Paul never lost sight of his focus—faithfulness and commitment to God. Never. Not "win-wince," says Paul, but "win-win"!

By Thelma Prime, a free-lance writer from Mountain View, California.

God's Servant

LOGOS

1 Cor. 4:1-21; 9:1-27

"This is the way you should consider us: as the servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. 4:1, Lamsa: from the ancient Eastern text).

Paul writes from insider information; he is very aware of the situation in Corinth and is responding to what he has been told. Corinth is a city filled with luxury—and vice. To be accused of “acting like a Corinthian” was an insult. It was a city of no tradition and every tradition, where anything (or everything) was done. With a fatherly tone, he writes this letter to exhort the members of the church with both instruction and correction, and he is concerned about the dissent and rivalry among some members of the church.

Further, Paul has been discredited because he worked with his hands to support himself rather than accept support from the church. His opponents claim that he could not be a true apostle if he worked like a slave. Paul presents his case and argues why he acted as he did. In the culture of that time, giving support was a form of friendship. However, the giver of the gift was the greater friend, and there was an element of being beholden by the receiver toward the giver.

With the tension that existed between Paul and the Corinthians, and concerned that this uneven relationship could interfere with the spreading of the gospel, Paul refused to be compromised and would not accept this “friendship.” There was

Paul's rebuke carried more than a little sarcasm.

always the possibility for abuse or its accusation. Regardless, whether Paul chose to be a tentmaker or not, as an apostle he had the right, among others, to accept support from the church. Declining to accept this privilege in no way meant ineligibility. His needs, in his mind, were secondary to meeting the task that God called him to do.

As a preacher, Paul was indeed a servant to the Corinthians, but the Corinthians did not rule him. Only God reigned over Paul. What Corinth or anyone else thought of him was not important. Choosing to wait for God to judge, Paul cared little for what people thought. That doesn't mean that what his adversaries said did not hurt, but it does mean that he was not changed by it. Paul was critical of their presumptions about what God's verdict would be. The decision as to whether Paul had been faithful to the ministry that God had given him would come from God and no one else—not even himself.

To Paul, the gospel was most important. The goal of every act was to promote Christ, and he would do nothing that interfered with this mission. He became a slave to Christ, wanting as much as possible to be “all things to all men” (1 Cor. 9:22, NIV) to bring them to their Saviour. Sharing Christ's message with the people of Corinth while asking nothing in return had an added advantage. To anyone who heard the gospel, it was a gift—a gift to be taken as freely as it was given.

As in most situations, the best way to encourage another is by example. A lesson is more convincing if it is seen in action and not merely in words that are heard.

Embodying the Christian beliefs and validating their worth can instruct without speaking at all. Paul, using his own life, demonstrated to the Corinthians how to live a life that was a reflection of Christ. His instructions were clear: imitate him. In Corinth, however, little was visible to exemplify Jesus' message. Paul felt it necessary to send Timothy to remind them how they should act and live in order to be true to their faith and thereby draw others to Christ.

Using the imagery of the games, the Christian life is likened to a runner preparing for a race. Even while knowing that there will be only one prize, every runner strives to be the one to win. This demands persistence and self-control from all athletes if they hope to achieve their objectives, and it is this level of commitment that is necessary if one expects to reach the goal. Resting on past successes does not guarantee the future. The prize we strive toward, however, far surpasses any temporary or passing accolade achieved in earthly endeavors.

The people in Corinth have been called into fellowship with Jesus. Some, however, had become arrogant. Their wealth and life of ease left them complacent, satisfied with their interpretation of Christ's message. Paul's rebuke carried more than a little sarcasm. Comparing his trials and hardships with the comfort of the Corinthians, he reminds them of their objective and the requirements inherent with the Christian life. He clearly asserts that their life must be shaped by the Cross. Their lifestyle is a "cruciform" lifestyle, for their Leader was crucified. This does not mean that the Cross demands suffering but rather that one's life be given for another. It is to be other-oriented. As Paul demonstrated with his own life, it is the emptying out of self for the other that personified Christ's message. As servants of Christ, sharing with others the mysteries of God, Jesus' message takes precedence as our selves are spent on behalf of others. Truly, that was Jesus' first example to us.

REACT

1. Where in our lives is there a place where ease and comfort come secondary to sharing Jesus' message? When? How?

2. Paul was confident about the task God had called him to do. What has God called you to do? What are the risks you encounter in order to fulfill God's plan for you?

3. How does a runner know whether he or she is on course? Is every step a conscious decision?

4. Do we run the race because it is the right thing to do or to win the prize?

5. Did Jesus win our race for us, or did He win the right to award our prize?

6. If our prize has already been won, how can we lose it?

By Alice Heath, student of theology/ethics, Pacific School of Religion, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California.

Response to the Call

TESTIMONY

Key Texts: 1 Cor. 4:5; 9:25

Although Paul did not consider his own opinion of any consequence, he is replying to news received of actions in the Corinthian church. Rash judgments about people were being made. Paul was setting an example for forbearance by not retaliating against his detractors.

What is the underlying reason for judging? Why is this failing so hard to overcome?

“Since you cannot discern motive, you are incapable of judging another. In criticizing him, you are passing sentence upon yourself; for you show that you are a participant with Satan, the accuser of the brethren.”¹

“There is one thing that we have no right to do, and that is to judge another man’s heart or impugn his motives.”²

Those criticizing Paul were among his own converts. Though he had worked to supply his own needs, this did not mean he did not have the biblical right to be supported by those whom he served. He depended on those he served in order to free himself to preach the gospel. He wanted to be all things to all men. He was running a race and putting his all into winning.

Is it right for those who serve in the gospel ministry to receive support? Should he or she be subservient to a congregation or completely independent? Is it not

Those criticizing Paul were among his own converts.

the responsibility of the members to support, work, and pray with and for the minister? (see 1 Cor. 9:19).

“A working church in travail for souls will be a praying church, a believing church, and a receiving church. A church whose members are found upon their knees before God, supplicating His mercy, seeking Him daily, is a church that is feeding upon the bread of life, and drinking of the waters of life.”³

What relationship does our health have on our mind, our church responsibilities, and our connection with God?

“If those who engaged in this race here upon the earth for a temporal crown could be temperate in all things, cannot we, who have in view an incorruptible crown, an eternal weight of glory, and a life which measures with the life of God? When we have this great inducement before us, cannot we ‘run with patience the race that is set before us’?”⁴

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 314.

2. *Evangelism*, p. 313.

3. *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 205.

4. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 358.

By Edna Jewell, a retired executive assistant to a Silicon Valley CEO and former Pacific Press Publishing Association employee, Nampa, Idaho.

A Timeless Metaphor

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Cor. 9:24-27

Recently a two-week business trip took me to the Far East during the Olympics, where I was able to observe firsthand the global attention given to these contests. Daily television coverage and front-page headlines in Taipei, Hong Kong, Tokyo, and California revealed that high regard for physical excellence is common throughout the world.

Athletic achievement bridges cultures and spans time. The Olympic games were considered of great importance in New Testament times. Some estimate that the Olympics were established more than 1,000 years before Christ was born, though the earliest record of the games dates back to July 776 B.C. when a foot race was won by Coroibos, a cook from Elis, Greece.

Paul compares the requirements for a successful foot race to those of a victorious Christian life (1 Cor. 9:24-27). Basing this metaphor on physical competition allows it to transcend culture and time, making Paul's lesson just as valid for us today as it was for the Corinthians almost 2,000 years ago.

By using a contemporary event to teach a spiritual lesson, Paul follows the example of Jesus. In this way, something already known and easily remembered

Some estimate that the Olympics were established 1,000 years before Christ.

is used as a foundation on which to build levels of understanding. Each level reveals elements of truth that are appropriate for our lives, and, as our needs change, other truths can be uncovered in the same lesson through thoughts guided by Scripture and the Holy Spirit. Once understood, these principles of truth enable us to choose God's plan for our lives by influencing the decisions we make every day.

Paul points out both similarities and differences to reveal truth as he compares our Christian walk to running a race. In both cases success requires that we stay on course, avoid detours, and make winning our highest priority each day. Instead of a single, temporary prize, however, the spiritual reward is eternal and available to all.

Though Paul scratches only the surface of this metaphor, he provides a rich foundation for continued study. By exploring this parallel further, many other components of truth can be found to keep your life on course to receive "a crown that will last forever."

By Greg Richmond, an integrated-circuit engineer for Integrated-Circuit Systems, San Jose, California.

Running for the Prize of Apostleship

HOW-TO

Key Texts: 1 Cor. 4:20; 9:23

Serious runners give their all during a contest. The looks of intense concentration and excruciating effort on their faces speak of their tremendous desire to win. Often spectators gaze with admiration (and even some wistful envy) at the winner of the race flushed with victory.

In the same way, Christians read with admiration (and even some wistful envy) about the lives of Bible heroes. They see a power at work in the spiritual champions of the past and present. But the victory of the apostles is available to every Christian. In 1 Corinthians, Paul shares the story of the obstacles that he faced, the prize for which he worked, and the source of his strength in this spiritual race.

Here are Paul's tips for the runner in training:

Expect obstacles. Paul, the spiritual mentor and giant, faced seemingly insurmountable obstacles in his witnessing work. Verbal attacks, humiliation by others, poverty, hunger, abuse, and persecution were his stock-in-trade. In Corinth, he strained at a day job to provide his daily needs while spending his spare moments sharing the good news of Christ. But then, even his colleagues and converts in the church misunderstood his motives.

Reach out to others. This race is open to all, and everyone on the sidelines should be invited to run. Paul's goal was "to win as many as possible" (1 Cor. 9:19,

Everyone on the sidelines should be invited to run.

NIV). To this end—bringing others into the race for salvation—Paul became "all things to all men" (verse 22).

Live a disciplined life. No serious runner can be in condition for the race without the will to follow a strict program of diet and exercise. Not being in condition will make the race difficult or impossible. Even Paul had to fight his unhealthy desires (verse 27). Habits, appetite, and passions must be brought under the strictest discipline, and they must be surrendered to God.

Stay focused and motivated. The best news, the good news, is last (verse 23). The reason for running is the gospel of salvation. It is the good news of a God who loves and cares enough for humanity that He allowed His Son to die so that individuals could choose to live in a right relationship with Him for eternity. The Christian has the good news as motivation to complete the spiritual race.

REACT

1. How do you define *apostleship*?
2. Are you encouraged by the spiritual victories of the apostles? Explain your answer.
3. How can your Christian race be filled with less spectator "talk" and more apostolic "power"? (1 Cor. 4:20).

By Marc Andres, an English teacher at Mountain View (California) Academy.

The Silent Plague

OPINION

Key Text: Eph. 1:6

Judging is a spiritual virus. It's more than just being critical, finding fault, or jumping to conclusions. It's a reflection of how we view God and His master plan. If you take a good look behind the obvious, you will discover that judging suggests a lack of faith and a disregard for the suffering of others.

Consider God's master plan. The Holy Spirit works tirelessly to change our hearts and regenerate our characters. God works with the knowledge of who we are, who we used to be, and who we can become. His work in us is ongoing, a process that promises we will be better tomorrow than we are today. Therefore, what we see in others is seldom the whole picture of who they are.

Judging anyone by what we see today is a lot like judging the quality of a cake before it is baked. When we draw a conclusion by looking at the batter, we don't give God credit for being a master baker. A master baker knows all the proper ingredients to include in a superior pastry and is well aware of what the outcome will be. When God set out to give the world a Messiah, no focused effort on the part of His enemies, or lack of faith on the part of His people, kept Him from delivering on that promise.

God also has promised that He will work out everything for our eventual good.

The same sins that plague non-Christians plague us too.

When we judge others, we question God's method of operation and His ability to follow through. We also deny that person the liberty to work out his or her destiny with God. In short, judging is an infection that eats at our trust in God and constitutes an intrusion into a person's spiritual privacy.

Another form of judging is more subtle but more damaging. This takes place when we carelessly separate those whom God loves into the classifications of "us" and "them"—us being the Christians and them being the sinners or worldly people. This discrimination suggests that we are superior and they inferior and drives a wedge between ourselves and those God expects us to serve.

Only one thing separates Christians from non-Christians, and the nature of our sins is not it. The same sins that plague non-Christians plague us too. The point where we differ is that we have discovered Christ. We've learned that God is able to save us from sin. Our non-Christian counterparts just haven't learned this yet. They are waiting for us to tell them.

God is powerful. He can make our lives beautiful. That is the secret He expects us to share. Speaking of the wonders of God's grace in Ephesians 1:6, Paul said, "He has made us accepted in the Beloved" (NKJV).

By Nora Profit Ross, a political columnist and freelance writer from San Jose, California.

THE DISCIPLINE COMMITTEE



“You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11, NIV).

Dare to Discipline

INTRODUCTION

Scriptures: Prov. 3:12; Rev. 3:19

Dr. James Dobson published a book with the title *Dare to Discipline*, one of the best approaches to the definition, philosophy, and application of discipline. For Dobson, discipline is one of the truest forms of expressing genuine love.

This concept of love is totally biblical: "The Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in" (Prov. 3:12, NIV); "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent" (Rev. 3:19).

What are the criteria the church should use so that discipline fulfills its objective? How may it be an instrument of surrender and restoration, not one of condemnation or alienation?

Is it possible that all the criteria of discipline the church uses can be employed in all cases, throughout all eras, and in all cultures? In the case of Mary Magdalene, Christ did not use the disciplinary measures for adultery that He, Himself, had established in the Old Testament. Why? Because the situation, the culture, the circumstances, and the individuals were different.

If the rules can be modified, how do we know then, when, how, and for whom they can be altered?

We see in the case of Mary Magdalene that the norms can change.

We see in the case of Mary Magdalene that the norms can change but that principles remain unalterable. The basic principle of discipline is to make sinners conscious of the danger caused by their errors; it is to alert them to the eternal consequences their sins can cause and to give them opportunity to repent, to be restored to the image of Christ. We should never compromise with sin; however, we should love the sinner in such a way that we are willing to give our life for him or her. This is discipline; this is love.

Before the church decides the form and the manner of discipline to apply to one of its members, it would be wise for the church board to read what Ellen White says about this subject in *The Desire of Ages*, pages 440, 441, and 462.

Though we study this subject in depth, there will be difficult cases to solve, since we will never have all the exact details and facts. We will never be able to read the hearts of individuals. Because we are not perfect, there will always be the possibility of error in our judgment; in such cases, injustice could occur. How can we decrease, however, the risk of errors? This is what we will study this week.

By Edson Romero Marques, director of marketing and development, Adventist Media Center, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Renewing the Christian Identity

LOGOS

1 Corinthians 5, 6

The Christian identity is not abstract. It goes beyond objects, brands, logotypes, campaigns, services, and even beyond sermons.

The Christian identity is a person, an individual who allows himself or herself to be filled by the presence of the Lord and whom He begins to illuminate. "You are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14, NIV). This light is nothing more than the glorious image of Christ reflected in three dimensions:

1. Within Yourself

Within the individual, Christ is reflected in the conscience, bringing harmony and interior peace. First Corinthians 5 portrays the experience of new Christians, who, being liberated from the imposed restrictions of Judaism, did not know how to administer this freedom and ended up stumbling on libertinism. Coincidentally, the infraction of one of these individuals occurred in the area of the marital relationship, which is a symbol of the union of Christ and His people. The illicit union, besides destroying harmony and peace, corrupted other members of the community (verse 6).

2. Within the Church

Sin is the greatest enemy of the Christian identity, and it obstructs the vision of individuals. When the conscience loses authority, nothing can contain the soul from being a slave of degenerating influences.

If Paul had not exacted discipline, the young man would not have been saved.

When Paul saw this danger, he reacted immediately. It was necessary to correct the transgressor publicly so he might be saved and so others might be alerted in the same manner to deter an avalanche of licentiousness threatening the church (verses 7, 8).

Upon receiving public discipline, the young man suffered a great deal. Within a few days, he was sinking in despair and regret. Paul immediately reintegrated him into the religious community, demonstrating his profound pastoral love (2 Cor. 2:7-11).

If Paul had not exacted discipline, the young man would not have been saved, nor would the church have been spiritually strengthened (6:11). Therefore, Christian identity was renewed and maintained, and the church resumed its function as a shining light.

3. Before the Public

What good does it do to avoid the disciplinary act and imprison God's children of the church in the slavery of sin? God's great love desires to purify His dear children. Jesus has a deep passion for you and for me. This is the glory of the gospel, to bring us the message of forgiveness and mercy, to restore those who are broken

and wounded from the journey of life, and to transform them into incomparable trophies of His power.

How can those who have been saved by such wonderful grace taint the image of the church before judges and magistrates? How can we take action against someone from the church before earthly courts? With what conscience can we annihilate the beauty of the Christian identity? (1 Cor. 6:6, 7).

Besides the terrible repercussion this practice would cause for the Christian identity, two further dangers are outlined by Paul: (1) the matter of unhealthful foods, remembering we are members of Christ (verses 12, 13); and (2) the danger of illicit sexual contact, remembering we are the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit (verses 15-20).

Christian Renewal

Only the presence of God can renew Christian identity. God operates from the inside out; He operates in the heart—within the individual. The presence of God is like the sun: it cannot shine without illuminating the earth, the heavens, and the sea. It cannot sparkle without giving different hues to the flower, without enhancing the perfume of the flower, without giving flavor to the fruit, without ripening the wheat, and without bringing happiness to the heart. God cannot live in the soul without blessing it, without producing love, purity, and holiness.

God never enters the heart alone. Multiple blessings follow Him: light, purity, and happiness—all results of inner peace.

This is the only way to revive Christian identity.

REACT

1. What can be done when injustices occur in church discipline?
2. Who has the last word in cases of discipline, the pastor or the church as it is represented by the board? Explain your answer.
3. What should be done to assure consistent standards of discipline for those who are influential church members?
4. In what respects is discipline an act of love?
5. In what ways can church members be disciplined lovingly?
6. If there is no repentance on the part of those who are disciplined, how can one evaluate whether it was applied incorrectly or ineffectively?
7. How can the church demonstrate love for those disciplined and at the same time carry out 1 Corinthians 5:9, 11?
8. How can discipline become a legalistic act?
9. How should the church respond to individual members involved in such behaviors as drug addiction, racism, adultery, or homosexuality?

By Assad Bechara, radio and television producer for the Adventist Media Center, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Sensual Bodies or Spiritual Temples

TESTIMONY

Key Texts: 1 Cor. 9:24-27; 6:15-20; Rom. 6:12-14

The patriarchal church (Genesis 6, 19:30-38), the church in the desert (Numbers 25) and the apostolic church (1 Corinthians 5, 6) revealed a common moral weakness: sexual promiscuity. Unfortunately, this weakness has also reached the remnant church. The apostle Paul's vehement exhortation to the church at Corinth is necessary and applicable to our church today; that is, "for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor.10:11).

Although all disciplinary action taken by the church should be administered in a redemptive tone, the following warnings and counsels of the Spirit of Prophecy are equally necessary:

"Seventh-day Adventists, above all other people in the world, should be patterns of piety, holy in heart and in conversation."¹

"Licentiousness is the special sin of this age."²

"I have been shown that we live amid the perils of the last days. Because iniquity abounds, the love of many waxes cold. The word 'many' refers to the professed followers of Christ. . . . Even some who profess to be looking for His appearing are no more prepared for that event than Satan himself."³

"Seventh-day Adventists, above all other people in the world, should be patterns of piety."

"Here the duty of God's servants is made plain. They cannot be excused from the faithful discharge of their duty to reprove sins and wrongs in the people of God, although it may be a disagreeable task and may not be received by the one who is at fault. But in most cases the one reprovved would accept the warning and heed reproof were it not that others stand in the way. They come in as sympathizers and pity the one reprovved and feel that they must stand in his defense. They do not see that the Lord is displeased with the wrongdoer, because the cause of God has been wounded and His name reproached."⁴

"The Lord reprovves and corrects the people who profess to keep His law. He points out their sins and lays open their iniquity because He wishes to separate all sin and wickedness from them, that they may perfect holiness in His fear and be prepared to die in the Lord or to be translated to heaven. God rebukes, reprovves, and corrects them, that they may be refined, sanctified, elevated, and finally exalted to His own throne."⁵

1. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 451.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 346.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 196.

5. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 453.

By Samuel Vallado, a coordinator of the 800-number attendants for the It Is Written telecast, Adventist Media Center, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Love = Discipline

EVIDENCE

Key Texts: 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 1 Tim. 1:5-11

In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul discusses the diverse aspects of sexual conduct, which continues to the end of chapter 7. Today we have the impression that this subject has taken on larger proportions and has become more complex.

Corinth was a city known for its evil sexual practices. When, during that era, someone wanted to refer to some excess or sexual deviation, the verb *corinthinize* was used. The local pagan religion depended on a large number of prostitutes, who conducted their "business" within the temples themselves. Unfortunately, the corrupt and immoral condition of the city was being reflected in the local church.

Together with the discussion of sexual conduct comes the question of discipline in the church. Because of the pride and spiritual insensibility of the church of Corinth, Paul had to demand vehemently that the church assume a disciplinary position. The application of discipline, however, does not have the objective of simply purifying the church or establishing ethic standards. First of all, discipline aims for the salvation of the sinner. It is an act of love.

A. B. is Sabbath School superintendent, yet he is a homosexual.

Case 1: A. B. is Sabbath School superintendent, yet he is a homosexual. Almost one year ago, his sexual preferences became known to the entire church. Trying to avoid a scandal for the church and desiring a nonconfrontational response to A. B., the church ignored the situation. It was as though an unspoken agreement had been made between the church and A. B.: "You don't ask, and I won't say anything." Two months ago, however, A. B. communicated to the church pastor that he was resigning from his church office, and since then he has not attended church.

Case 2: C. D. is a director of music, and he, too, is a homosexual. Almost one year ago his sexual preferences became known to the entire church. On the following Sabbath the church board presented his name to be excluded from the list of members. C. D. felt what it means to be excluded. His friends from the church disappeared. They began to ignore and despise him. He even heard someone say that no one should "keep company" or "eat" (1 Cor. 5:11) with him. Today C. D. no longer has homosexual preferences, and he is no longer an Adventist either. He changed his conduct—and he changed churches. He is a member of another Protestant church.

REACT

1. Why are both of these cases improper responses to a similar situation?
2. What should be done in such cases?

By Marcelo Vallado, studio manager of the Adventist Media Center, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Take a Shower—Become Clean . . .

HOW-TO

Key Text: Ps. 51:7

Feeling dirty is an uncomfortable sensation. When it is too hot and you sweat or you arrive after a trip on a dusty road, there is nothing like taking a shower. To be washed and clean is necessary when we are dirty.

The world is a hot, dusty road. The heat produced by all the running that we do and all the sinful dust that we encounter on the road of life makes us sweaty and dirty.

Jesus, “the Water of Life,” is the only One who can wash and clean us from all sin. All we need to do is to accept Him, choose Him.

Many times magazines, books, films, videos, and conversations are full of immorality and pornography. Soon the heat of excitement is transformed into a sensation of being dirty. But this need not be the end of the road. It clearly shows that the Holy Spirit is working in your life, challenging you to choose Jesus, the only One who can wash, sanctify, and justify your life.

Don’t despair when time after time you feel dirty. This is not the end of the road; it is the beginning of the possibility of being clean. All you need do is accept. The secret of a clean life is to trust in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

Don’t despair when time after time you feel dirty.

Sandi Patti, Gloria Gaither, and Phill McHugh wrote those inspired words of the song: “There is strength in the name of the Lord, There is power in the name of the Lord, There is hope in the name of the Lord. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”

Heaven is available to make you clean. Trust in this. There is strength, power, and hope for you.

When temptation comes and you feel it will be impossible to get through, don’t believe it. It is a lie. You can be victorious. Through the power of Jesus, you can be more than triumphant through the One who gave us the assurance of salvation on the Cross of Calvary. We are cleansed by His blood.

One of the most depressing situations for me to see is dirty, homeless people, under the effect of alcohol and drugs, sleeping in the streets of big cities. It is horrible. Every time I face a situation like this, I remember: Without Jesus, I am like this person, dirty and deformed.

It is not good to live a dirty life. However, we don’t need to. Don’t waste your time; don’t waste your life. Accept Jesus, take a shower, and become clean by the power of the Holy Spirit.

By Williams Costa, Jr., the producer of the Brazilian It is Written broadcast for the Adventist Media Center, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Everyone Does It

OPINION

Key Text: 1 Corinthians 5

A threat surrounded the newly formed church of Corinth. A few bad habits of paganism were being admitted, and this was compromising the stability and the identity of the church. Paul received information that a member of the Corinthian church was having an incestuous relationship with his stepmother, and the church was ignoring this scandalous fact.

The apostle presented the problem in a vehement manner because the sin was not being addressed by the proud and arrogant Corinthian Christians. They were satisfied with their spiritual condition and at the same time so accustomed to seeing, hearing, and in a certain way coexisting with the liberality of the city that they remained anesthetized to the immoral practices around them. They accepted the situation as something common and admissible.

In Revelation 3:17, Jesus exposes the condition of the church at the end of time, in that in her own eyes she seems rich and in need of nothing. However, to Jesus she is blind and needs divine eye salve in order to see with eyes of spiritual discernment.

The modern church, you and I, live daily with a similar problem because we are surrounded by permissive practices, bombarded through the media by an

The apostle presented the problem in a vehement manner.

abundance of demoralizing influences that spread throughout the world: involvement in sexual relationships outside biblical standards, games of chance, violence, etc. The pervasiveness of such practices affects our decisions. We need the eye salve of heaven to free us from the influences of deceit.

The church, following the example of the apostle Paul, needs to uphold its convictions based on God's standards of truth and justice. The church has the duty of disciplining those at fault so they can be directed to repentance and restoration. This involves discipline, bringing the individual to the right path. This is possible only when there is a clear definition and positioning of the church in relation to the principles of the Word of God and to demonstrable love for the sinner.

The individual Christian conscience and the influence of the Holy Spirit on the church (each one of us) are capable of restoring and redeeming us from the shocking and deceitful effects sin produces in the individual.

By Josué de Castro, the radio network director for the Adventist Media Center, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

CHRISTIAN SEXUALITY



“I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that” (1 Cor. 7:7, NIV).

I Do . . . er . . . Maybe I Don't!

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: 1 Cor. 7:32-34

“Another wedding this weekend? How many have you attended this year? Do you really know all these people? How old are they?” These are just a few questions thrown back at me following my response at being asked what I was doing this weekend.

I am in my mid-twenties, and most of my friends who are “tying the knot” are about the same. Fresh out of college, just starting a career, and a life of marriage! When am I going to find Mr. Right? I haven't had a date in who knows how long! I'm not meeting anyone new. I'm feeling the pressure from my peers and society to find “him” and settle down. Am I even meant to be married? Or should I stay single? What does God want for me?

First Corinthians 7:32-34 supports the concept of singleness that our society and church seem to disapprove of. Here Paul makes it very clear that one who is unmarried is concerned more about spiritual things than one who is married.

I'm feeling the pressure from society to settle down.

Genesis 2:18 supports the concept of companionship, and verse 24 of the same chapter maintains that marriage is important. It has also been suggested that marriage is healthier than singleness. This is great for those who want to be married but hazardous to those who do not.

While both points are wrong in taking the truth to the extreme, the Bible does not hold one in higher regard than the other. It is a question of what God's design is for your life.

If you are not sure which state is best for you—married or single—do not feel pressured into making a hurried decision. By taking a patient, educated approach and leaving your life in God's hands, these questions will be clear in good time—and in God's time.

It Is Good Not to Marry?

LOGOS

1 Corinthians 7; Eph. 5:21-33

“It is good for a man not to marry” (1 Cor. 7:1, NIV). To me that is a very troubling statement. I find myself thinking, *Oh, sure, that’s easy for Paul to say, since he was never married.*

However, as I began to dig a little deeper into that statement, I found that my assumptions were not accurate. In fact, although it is not expressly documented anywhere, it is likely that at some point Paul was married. In order to have been a member of the Sanhedrin, he would have been required to marry according to the requirements stated in the Talmud. Also, as a strict Pharisee, marriage was considered a sacred obligation. Furthermore, in several portions of his letters to the churches, Paul counsels on marital matters and leaves a perception of an intimate acquaintance with marital joys and problems.

So if in fact the apostle Paul was married prior to his writing of the above verse, then what was his intention?

It appears that many in the Christian church, particularly in Corinth, felt that a marriage involving sexual contact was sinful and went against the principles of Christ’s life. Probably many of the people felt that, since sex was so much involved in the worship rituals of other gods, it was something to be considered sinful. So Paul is writing the first part of 1 Corinthians 7 as a reassurance more than as a command.

Our secular society is transfixed with sexual connotation and innuendo.

How can we apply this to our own lives and the society in which we live? Although we do not have specific gods today that require sexual rituals, our secular society is transfixed with sexual connotation and innuendo to the point we don’t even notice it anymore. What message is there in what Paul wrote to the Corinthians that can be applied today?

To put it into today’s context, Paul is essentially saying, “Hey, people, if you don’t want to be married, then don’t worry about it. God has so many things for you to do for Him that if you don’t want to be married then that is OK.”

Paul counsels very specifically and candidly about the effects a sexual relationship can have on a person. Throughout the rest of the chapter, he counsels on divorce and marriages between a believer and a nonbeliever—each time stressing that marital fidelity is the most important thing and that the bodies of the married couple belong to each other. Again, this speaks not only directly to the first-century church but to that of the twentieth as well. Repeatedly, we see what the effects of infidelity can do to family, society, and church. Paul suggests in 1 Corinthians 7:14 that fidelity helps sanctify a marriage between a nonbeliever and a believer. How so?

The background for this statement was the fear of believers married to non-believers that by being one flesh they were therefore united in an unholy relation-

ship. Paul is specific about this because many in the Corinthian church felt that divorce was an easy option for people involved in such interreligious marriages. The Greek and Roman laws allowed divorce even under the most mild of circumstances. Even the Jewish law had relaxed many of their beliefs about divorce, and Paul wished to point out that divorce did not have to occur as easily as some members felt it should.

In verses 29-35 Paul gives another warning to the Corinthian church about becoming married. "The time is short," says Paul. He warns of troubles ahead that should be taken into consideration before being married. When we are single, we can focus solely on Christ; but when we are married, our focus is adjusted so that we take into consideration our spouses as well. Paul warns that in the final days before Christ's second coming we will have a conflict of interest we need to take into account. In retrospect, that seems quaint, considering that advice was given a little less than 2,000 years ago. However, many of us have forgotten to put our preparation for the Second Coming into our daily lives. How many of us, when making our plans for being married, think of the Second Coming and its nearness affecting our marriage?

REACT

1. How are you using your married or single status to glorify and serve God?
2. How can marriage hinder one's devotion and service to God?
3. Where did you get your ideas about the proper role of sex in your life?
4. How do we hold each other accountable for the standards outlined by Paul? Should we? Explain your answer.
5. How was Paul better able to serve the Lord as a single person? How might a single person today be able to follow in Paul's footsteps?
6. What advice could you give to a friend who was severely depressed by the fact that he or she had never found a marriage partner? What advice do you think Paul might have given this person? And how might your advice differ from Paul's?
7. What constitutes love? How does Ephesians 5:21-33 apply to today's marriages?

Tie the Knot and Keep on Serving

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 1 Cor. 7:32-34

God created the marriage institution, and Jesus endorsed it by performing His first miracle at a wedding feast. Ellen White states, “Those who regard the marriage relation as one of God’s sacred ordinances, guarded by His holy precept, will be controlled by the dictates of reason.

“Jesus did not enforce celibacy upon any class of men. He came not to destroy the sacred relationship of marriage, but to exalt it and restore it to its original sanctity. He looks with pleasure upon the family relationship where sacred and unselfish love bears sway.”¹

Paul warns that marriage may make the life of Christian service difficult (1 Cor. 7:32-34). However, marriage can also enhance it: “Marriage does not lessen their usefulness, but strengthens it. They may make that married life a ministry to win souls to Christ; and I know whereof I speak, because for thirty-six years my husband and I were united, and we went everywhere that the Lord said Go. In this matter we know that we have the commendation of God in the marriage relation.”²

Ellen White provides these sobering words of caution, “There is not one marriage in one hundred that results happily, that bears the sanction of God, and

“Marriage does not lessen their usefulness, but strengthens it.”

places the parties in a position better to glorify Him.”³ And also, “Satan seeks to lower the standard of purity and to weaken the self-control of those who enter the marriage relation, because he knows that while the baser passions are in the ascendancy, the moral powers grow steadily weaker, and he need have no concern as to their spiritual growth.”⁴

“God asks us to give His service the first place in our lives, to allow no day to pass without doing something to advance His work in the earth. He does not expect from all the same kind of service. . . . God accepts the offering of each. It is the consecration of the life and all its interests, that is necessary.”⁵ Doing something for Him each day while married may mean warmly welcoming your spouse home from work, teaching your two-year-old to share his toys, or welcoming a new neighbor with a loaf of homemade bread.

1. *The Adventist Home*, p. 121.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

3. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 504.

4. *The Adventist Home*, p. 124.

5. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 221.

By Rebecca O'Ffill, a married and full-time mother of two young children from Columbia, Maryland.

From Corinth to New Jerusalem

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Cor. 7:2

The ancient city of Corinth was an important center of trade, with a reputation for luxurious extravagance. Further, the principal deity of Corinthian society was Aphrodite, the goddess of love in its lowest form, licentious passion. Members of the Corinthian church were recent converts from this culture, and they continued to suffer from its influence. If you live or have lived in a metropolitan area, watched popular television or movies, or have simply taken note of what society considers cool, perhaps you can relate to the influence of immorality on the Corinthian Christians.

In their struggle against societal influences, the Corinthians asked Paul for help with certain questions regarding sex and marriage. Paul replied that, though marriage is not mandatory for Christians, it is the only relationship within which sex can be properly experienced without being sin. Of course, most Christians accept this limitation. When I was in college, most of my friends limited the definition of fornication to intercourse outside of marriage. In fact, 1 Corinthians 7:2 speaks of fornication literally, “fornications.” The plural doubtless refers to the many forms of sexual vice practiced in Corinth. Any form of sex outside marriage

We may have more in common with secular Corinth than we would care to admit.

is unholy.

If we are seeking straightforward advice, Paul delivers. He provided all the information necessary to live a holy life in which sex and marriage are concerned: If we desire sex, we must be married; have sex only with our spouse; and then stay married (even if we are married to a nonbeliever). However, if we are unmarried and can live without sex, Paul suggests that by avoiding the obligations of marriage we may have an easier time committing ourselves to the Lord’s work.

If Paul were here today, would we even ask his advice on sex and marriage? As evidenced by the way we live—premarital sex, infidelity, divorce, one-parent families—we may have more in common with secular Corinth than we would care to admit. If it is guidance we seek, we have only to read Paul’s letter. But this knowledge we have had. It is wisdom—the judicious use of knowledge—that many of us lack. Sin has left us with a void we each attempt to fill. While the Holy Spirit is the only lasting filler, Satan is clever in his tireless pitch of sex to fill that void. We must pray for strength to keep pure our thoughts and actions while we dwell in this modern Corinth.

By R. Scott Handel, an accountant in Silver Spring, Maryland.

How to Make That Decision?

HOW-TO

Key Text: 1 Corinthians 7

“How to Please Your Mate,” “10 Things to Drive Your Lover Crazy,” “What Makes a Woman Feel Good.” Are these familiar to you? At every newsstand, magazines display such familiar titles to catch your attention. In today’s world, sex seems to occupy a prime spot in the limelight. It is everywhere—TV, movies, newspapers, books, and a familiar topic in everyday conversation. So we may ask, where do we as Christians fit into this picture? How should I deal with the pressures that surround me on a daily basis?

1. The decision is mine. After reading Paul’s words to the Corinthians, these questions seem very familiar. The Corinthians seemed to be dealing with many of the same pressures we have today. Paul implies that it may be best to remain single. However, he stresses that marriage is in no way bad or wrong—in fact, it is a wonderful thing created by our heavenly Father. So the final decision remains a personal one.

2. Am I in love? The issue of marriage and sexuality raises many questions and not very many easy answers. Many of us struggle simply to understand the concept of love—which is so closely tied to sexuality. As Paul suggests, sexual feelings are

The Corinthians seemed to be dealing with many of the same pressures we have today.

a normal part of our being. “Love is not only something you feel. It’s something you do” (David Wilkerson). This quote hangs on my refrigerator as a constant reminder that to love was my decision.

3. Did I make the right decision? A huge percentage of marriages today are ending in divorce. The reasons for this range from incompatibility and lack of interest to unfaithfulness. Paul spoke to the Corinthians about marriage—he stressed the importance of making a marriage last. He never once encouraged breaking a home apart. An added note—abuse is not part of God’s plan, whether verbal, sexual, or physical. Those who find themselves in such a relationship should seek guidance from their pastor or a Christian counselor. It is the dream of many of us since childhood to find that perfect spouse, have a perfect little family, and live happily ever after. For some, children may never be an option; for others, marriage itself may never occur. However, God has a plan for each of us. Rather than feeling remorse caused by singlehood, perhaps it would be a good idea to ask God what His plans are for you.

By Carla Reimche, a public-information assistant for the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists, Bethesda, Maryland.

The Object or the Person

OPINION

Key Text: Mark 14:6

I think it started out in the junior division of Sabbath School. It was also certainly mentioned more than a few times in earliteens and on into youth.

Not everything in my young mind added up as I tried to come to grips with some of the Bible truths and how they related to me. My religious world would chorus, “You should look to Jesus to see how He dealt with various issues. He, too, lived on this earth and knew what it was like to be tempted.”

Actually, this usually worked for me—enough to calm my inquiring mind anyway. Then I became older. I got a girlfriend and then another and then one I wanted to marry. Life was changing very quickly, and I found myself facing issues not unlike the ones in this week’s lesson. I was entering territory, however, that Jesus had apparently not; and that was very uncomfortable for me. Jesus had never married and—apart from dinner with Mary and Martha—had never dated either! What *would* Jesus do in this sort of situation?

Jesus may not have been married and may not have dated, but He did go to parties and speak to prostitutes and was tempted in every way we are. And every time Jesus came in contact with others who were thought of by society as nothing,

I was entering territory, however, that Jesus had apparently not.

He treated them with nothing but respect. Jesus showed love to those who wanted to see it, no matter who they were.

Jesus may not have had the ideal marital relationship that we can all look to as our example; however, we can see how Jesus treated everyone He came in contact with.

In every case, Jesus treated others as God’s children. Jesus was able to look beyond the image standing in front of Him to the person.

Issues of sexuality and relationships are there whether we are married or single or engaged or want to be married or want to be single! But no matter what, we can look to Jesus as our example. In all our relationships, whether it is with our spouses, fiancés, friends, or family, we would do well to look beyond the image standing there in front of us and begin to see the person—God’s child—and what he or she really needs.

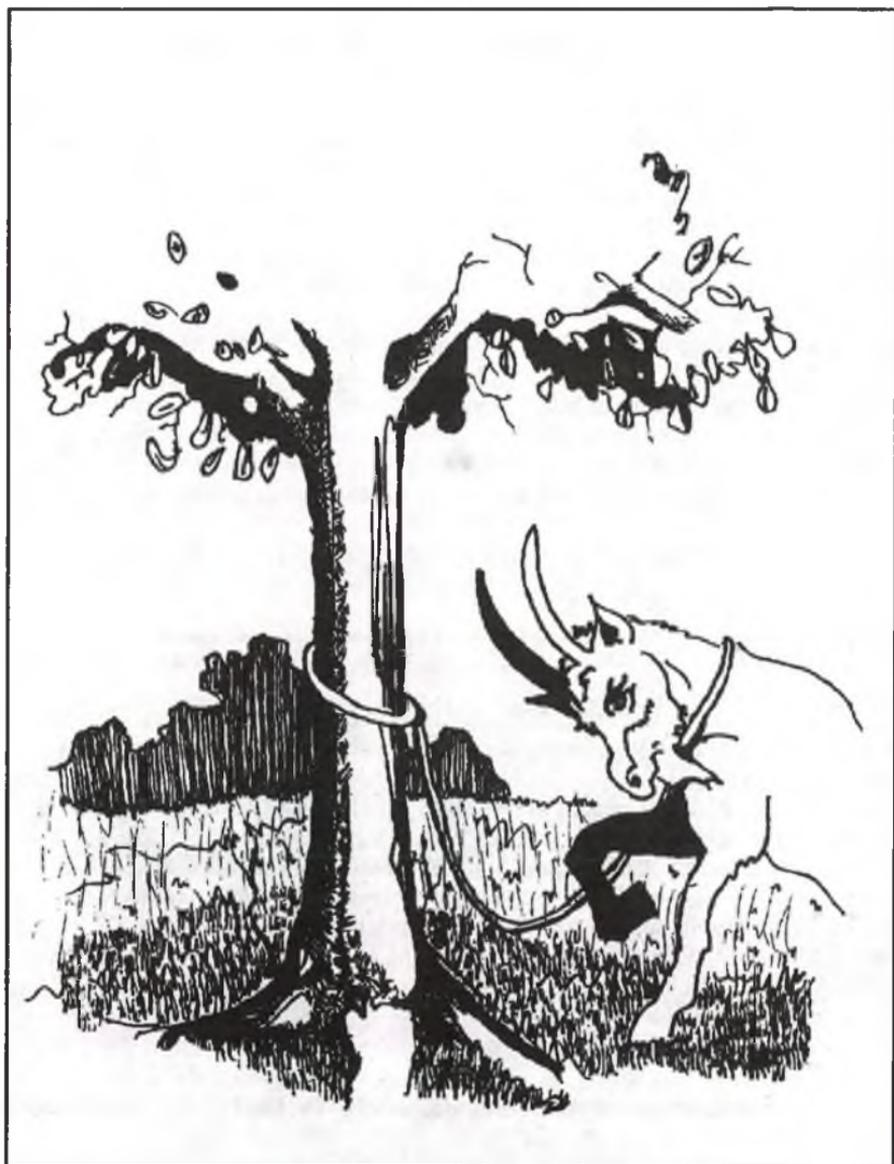
REACT

1. If you see an object instead of the person, is that the fault of you or the object? Why or why not?

2. What difference does it make to any of our relationships when we remember that everyone is first a child of God and then our friend/spouse, etc.

By Stephan Eastwood, youth pastor of the Spencerville (Maryland) Seventh-day Adventist Church.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT



“Take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling-block to the weak” (1 Cor. 8:9, RSV).

Eating the Idol's Food

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: 1 Cor. 8:9

I think I am the only person in my Sabbath School class who has eaten meat offered to idols. I lived in Nigeria when I was a little girl. Back in the bush about half a mile from our house was a Juju shrine. Often there were baked goodies, bottles of palm wine, and other things to eat left for the gods. One time we even found a baby goat tied to the Juju tree. I knew my mother would have had a coronary if she knew I was out there tasting the Juju food!

Though I was relieved to read in the Bible that eating food offered to idols was not a sin, I couldn't figure out what it had to do with Christians today. In most modern-day cultures, eating food offered to idols is uncommon. Yet I firmly believe everything in the Bible was included for a purpose and has meaning for everyone today. Surely God did not include it for the few people like me! Perhaps, as with anything else, we need to look past the details to the principle behind the rule.

Christianity is the great liberator that frees us to live and grow in the Lord without always looking over our shoulders, wondering which rule we may have inadvertently broken. His requirements of us are simple: accept His atoning

Paul is just repeating what God told Cain.

sacrifice. Yet, sometimes our actions may be misinterpreted or misunderstood by others, particularly those who have not understood His liberating love. Misunderstanding our behavior, they may be driven farther away.

Are we responsible for this? Paul gave us a resounding *Yes*. Even if what I am doing is not a sin in God's eyes, by discouraging others and causing them to drift farther from Him into sin, *is* a sin. Paul is just repeating what God told Cain: You *are* your brother's keeper. It *is* your responsibility. What other people think *does* matter.

By Sally Dillon, a freelance writer from Timberville, Virginia.

Corinth

LOGOS

1 Corinthians 8; 10:14–11:1

“Facts Are Stubborn Things”

—*Alain Rene Lesage*

Corinth: A model city rebuilt by Rome; a transportation and economic hub; a diverse, wealthy, and vibrant city that was also a showcase of pagan religions. In fact, you could hardly buy food in the marketplace that hadn't been offered to idols.

The custom was to sacrifice animals or offer other foods to idols in the temples. Then the priests were given a share, and the rest was taken to market. This was just one of the problems faced by the church that Paul had founded three years earlier. Some Corinthian church members were so young in the faith, so close to their idolatrous past, that they could not dissociate the eating of meat offered to idols from the worship of idols. Others in the church ate food without questioning its origin, and this without guilt. The church had no doubt questioned Paul on this topic in a letter, perhaps referencing a Jerusalem Council letter to the Gentiles (Acts 15:23), which forbade eating food that had been offered to idols.

Paul's response was in two parts. On the one hand, he explained that idols are nothing but wood and stone figures and that food offered to idols was no different from any other food. Paul suggested that they shouldn't ask about the meat in the

The denial of self for the benefit of others is the Christian's duty.

market but eat it with a clear conscience. Corinth worshiped many gods, he said, but the church knew the one God who judges our worship by our thoughts and motives and not by our actions—the one God who gives all good things through His Son Jesus Christ. It is because of this gift of Christ that Christians are freed from the law, but our freedom to do certain things doesn't mean that those things are beneficial.

Some in the church felt that their knowledge of the freedom provided through Christ allowed them to do as they pleased without regard for others. Their thinking went like this, “If I can with liberty and clear conscience eat meat offered to idols, why shouldn't I?” This brings up Paul's second point: knowledge without charity is nothing, and the golden rule of Matthew 7:12 should guide our actions, not human knowledge. The denial of self for the benefit of others is the Christian's duty. If church members whose consciences would not allow them to eat meat offered to idols saw other members eating that same meat, it might be a stumbling block. In other words, they might think that denying conscience is all right and may begin to deny conscience in other areas. Paul is clear that acts performed without a clear conscience are sins (1 Cor. 8:11-13) as are acts that cause others to sin—even though in a different situation they would not be sins. Chapter eight closes with Paul stating that if by eating meat he causes a brother to sin, he will never eat

meat again. He was willing to deny himself a liberty that was his in order to protect those of weak faith.

In chapter 10 Paul extends the believer's responsibilities even to nonbelievers. If a nonbeliever invites you to dinner, Paul says, accept graciously and eat the food that is offered you with a clear conscience. But if your host, sensitive to your beliefs, tells you that the food has been offered to idols, kindly decline it for your host's sake. Even though your conscience may allow you to eat such food (indeed, it is your liberty to do so), consider your host first. He was kind enough to be sensitive to your religion and may think that you do not take your religion seriously if you eat the food. He has no knowledge of your liberty as you do. In fact, why not take this opportunity to witness to him? "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (10:31, NIV). Jesus ate with nonbelievers.

Paul's counsel is that we not be stumbling blocks to anyone around us—believer or unbeliever. How are we to accomplish this? Only through the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Paul is also clear that believers are not free to participate in pagan temple feasts or freely to partake of food offered to idols. He stresses that idols are nothing and that food offered to them is not any different from other food. His concern is with the participation of believers in the pagan ceremonies, which honor demons. We cannot be participants with demons and with God. Paul wanted the Corinthian believers to buy and eat food from the market with a clear conscience (1 Cor. 10:25) but to maintain a distance from participation in or knowledge of that food's pagan past. Of course, most of us don't face the problem of eating food offered to idols, but the principle of brotherly love always applies.

REACT

1. What other actions might be considered sins in one circumstance but not in another?

2. Have you ever found yourself doing something (perhaps a Sabbath activity) that bothered your conscience but that you assumed was OK because you had seen a respected church member do it? How does 1 Corinthians 8 relate to such issues?

By Duane White, a second-year medical student at the University of Virginia School of Medicine at Charlottesville.

Am I My Brother's Keeper?

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 1 Cor. 8:9-12

The question Cain posed after he had killed his brother still haunts us today. As we contemplate how our influence can have eternal consequences, we should begin to feel a sense of responsibility, each for the other, that will bond and bind us to the community of believers.

“Take heed lest by your example you place other souls in peril. It is a terrible thing to lose our own soul, but to pursue a course that will cause the loss of other souls is still more terrible. That our influence should be a savor of death unto death is a terrible thought, and *yet it is possible*. With what earnestness, then, we should guard our thoughts, our words, our habits, our dispositions. God calls for personal holiness. Only by revealing the character of Christ can we cooperate with him in saving souls.”¹

“Every day of life is freighted with responsibilities which we must bear. Every day, our words and acts are making impressions upon those with whom we associate. How great the need that we set a watch upon our lips and guard carefully our steps! One reckless movement, one imprudent step, and the surging waves of some strong temptation may sweep a soul into the downward path. We cannot

“Take heed lest by your example you place other souls in peril.”

gather up the thoughts we have planted in human minds. If they have been evil, we may have set in motion a train of circumstances, a tide of evil, which we are powerless to stay.

“On the other hand, if by our example we aid others in the development of good principles, we give them power to do good. In their turn they exert the same beneficial influence over others. Thus hundreds and thousands are helped by our unconscious influence. The true follower of Christ strengthens the good purposes of all with whom he comes in contact. Before an unbelieving, sin-loving world, he reveals the power of God’s grace and the perfection of His character.”²

REACT

1. What is our responsibility to Christian brothers and sisters?
2. How can Christians enjoy freedom in Christ if they must constantly monitor how their actions are perceived by others?

1. *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 158, emphasis supplied.
 2. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 348.

By Bruce Dillon, a computer specialist from Timberville, Virginia.

So What's the Big Deal?

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Cor. 8:1-3

What made the meat offered to idols so upsetting to Jews and some of the early Christians?

For years, being a fifth-generation Adventist, I thought it was because they were eating meat. If they had eaten Vegelinks offered to idols, it might have been OK. However, Veja-Links weren't that important to the early Christian church. More important to them was the question With whom were you having lunch?

Do you ever wish you could just go out to lunch with God and relax and visit together? Many friendships have been made over a pizza. Having lunch together is a social activity, a sign that we like each other. God thinks so too. Clear back in Moses' time, God made a way for His people to "have lunch" with Him. The person would bring an animal to the temple. It would be killed, drained, and then part of it would be placed on the altar and burned (God's lunch), while the person would take the other part back and eat it with his family.

If having lunch with God was your family habit, what implications would eating meat offered to idols have? As a follower of Jehovah, could you in good

More important to them was the question With whom were you having lunch?

conscience sit down to lunch with Baal or Ashteroth? If you were newly converted to Christianity, how would you feel seeing one of your church leaders doing just that?

Just as upsetting to them was the fact that God had told them their meat should be drained of all blood. Moses had received clear instructions from God in how to kill animals by slitting their throats and draining them completely before they were acceptable for food. Meat offered to idols had obviously not been prepared by God's recipe.

Usually the animal was strangled, not only keeping all the blood inside but filling it with the adrenalin any mammal releases when struggling for its life. Any blood that was spilled during the butchering and preparation process was caught and added to the meat during cooking.

The combination of sitting down to lunch with the enemy and eating blood, a forbidden food, was too much for them to handle. After all, God gave these laws to keep them healthy. Surely His laws hadn't changed! Or had they? It was so different from what they had been taught.

A big deal? Yes, it was!

By Sally Dillon, a freelance writer from Timberville, Virginia.

How Not to . . .

HOW-TO

Key Texts: Romans 14; 1 Corinthians 8; 10:14–11:1

It is important to understand which of our actions may cause us to become stumbling blocks for other Adventists, fellow Christians, and even non-Christians. Compared to the other two, stumbling blocks for Adventists are relatively easy to find—just look for controversy. To find stumbling blocks for non-Adventists, Christian or not, look for stereotypes.

A few controversial topics, in Adventist circles, that come to my mind are music, Sabbath activities, dating, dancing, jewelry, and movies. I'm sure you can think of others, but I'll bet (is that allowed?) that you have heard arguments on each side of these topics and you have chosen your side in the debates.

It's more difficult to describe common stumbling blocks for non-Adventists, so I'll throw in a few extra words in explanation. As I see them, a few things that may cause non-Adventists to stumble are apparent hypocrisy, holier-than-thou attitudes, and attempts to convert others. It is a challenge to keep others from tripping on your actions.

Here are five tips for reducing disputes over differences of opinion. Before reading them, though, take the time to read Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8:9-12.

1. Determine your beliefs and the reasons behind them (Rom. 14:5, 22, 23). Come to your own convictions regarding matters of conscience. Explore any con-

It is not *humanly* possible for us to live without causing someone to stumble.

troversy about your beliefs and examine each side. Make informed decisions and be firm in them.

2. Refrain from judging others (Rom. 14:3, 4, 13). Though you are free to determine what actions you think are acceptable, keep yourself from judging individuals.

3. Do as your conscience allows, but remember that we are accountable to God (Rom. 14:4, 7, 8, 12). In areas in which God remains silent, do what you're comfortable with. If you have a clear conscience about things that separate you from God, you will be held accountable.

4. Be mindful of your appearance to others. Do not cause them to stumble (Rom. 14:13; 1 Cor. 8:9-12). Don't offend. Don't cause others to sin. Ask for guidance around others.

5. Practice love, acceptance, and tolerance (Rom. 14:1, 15, 19). It is not our place to tear down those with whom we do not agree. We should be caring and supportive of each other.

As always, remember to pray. It is not *humanly* possible for us to live without causing someone to stumble. Only with God's help can we limit the number of people we trip and the number who trip us.

By Jeremy White, a computer science major, New Market, Virginia.

What's a Stumbling Block, Anyway?

OPINION

Key Text: 1 Cor. 8:9

It's a blistering 95 degrees in the shade. It's also Sabbath. The air conditioning at church is not working. All I can think about is the swimming pool in my backyard. *Ah, I think, what a perfect way to cool down this afternoon.* I barely hear the sermon. I make a beeline for the back door after the service, hoping no one will stop me on the way. *I must get to that pool, I think.*

When I get home, I quickly find my bathing suit, and I'm out on the patio in a flash. About 20 minutes later, as I'm relaxing in the refreshing water, I hear my neighbor coming out of his house. He is not an Adventist, but we've talked about religion a number of times. I've made sure to witness to him on the uniqueness of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He sees me lounging in the pool. I wave. He stands there for a minute shaking his head. Then he turns around and walks away. *That's kind of odd, I think, he didn't even say Hello. I wonder why?*

It is quite obvious what he was thinking: *Who does this guy think he is? All he can do is talk about the sacredness of the Sabbath and how we should honor God and not self on that day. And look what he's doing! I don't want to have much to do with that religion if the people are going to be so hypocritical.*

Just because something is not a sin in itself does not mean I should do it. I see

Swimming on Sabbath, if it will appear hypocritical to my neighbor, is wrong.

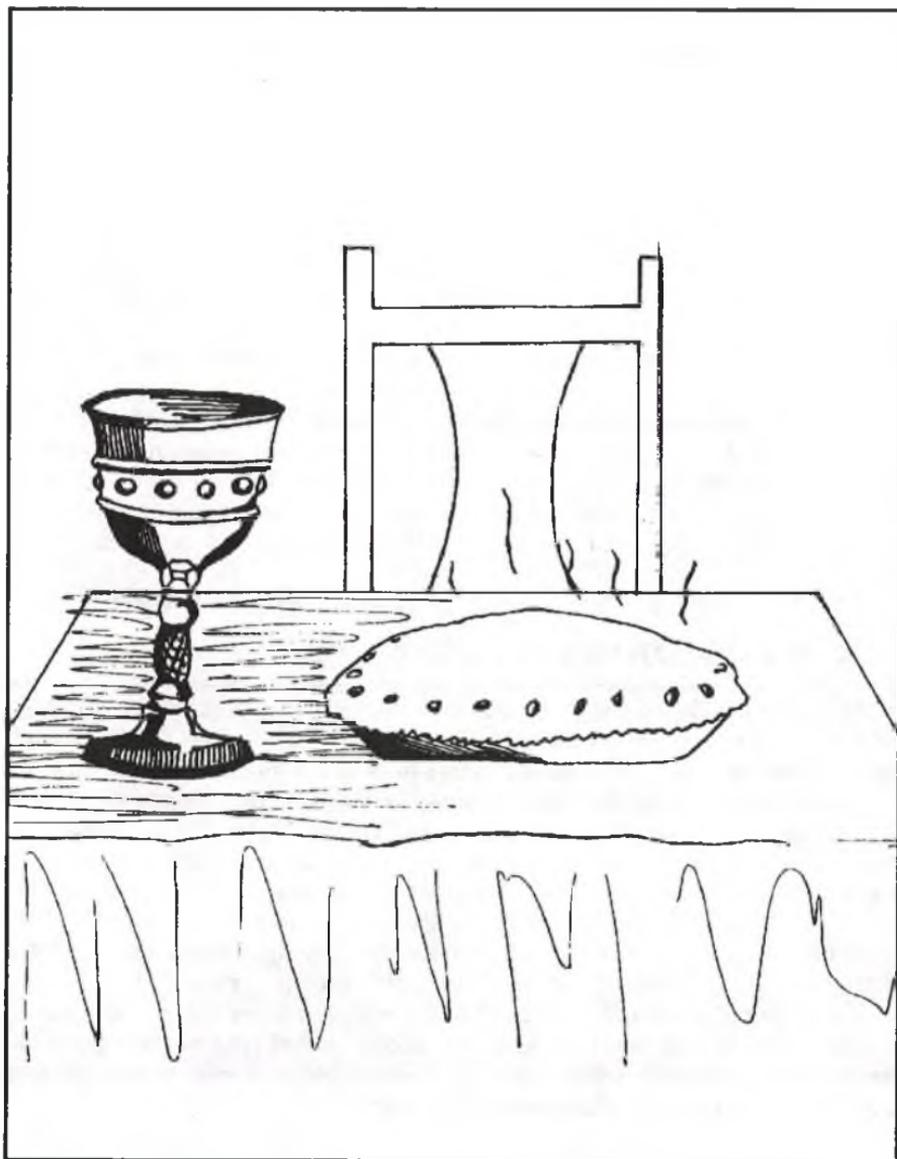
nothing wrong with lounging in the pool on a sweltering Sabbath afternoon. I think God would want us to be as comfortable as possible on hot days. But it is a sin if my liberty of actions causes someone else to miss out on knowing God better.

This liberty is definitely limited by how it will affect other people, which adds a whole new dimension to how we should be thinking. The world is watching us; we must remember that. Instead of merely trying to decide whether some action we are contemplating is right or wrong, we should also be thinking about how people are going to perceive this action. Relaxing in a swimming pool on a hot Sabbath afternoon, if it will appear hypocritical to my neighbor, is wrong. It shows that I have not taken into account other people's feelings or needs.

Back during the church service, if it had occurred to me how my swimming would affect my neighbor, I would have realized how selfish I was being. I could have dismissed those thoughts from my mind and gotten an even bigger blessing because I would have paid attention to the sermon!

By John Fairbanks, a music teacher at Shenandoah Valley Adventist Elementary School, New Market, Virginia.

SUPPERTIME!



“For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Cor. 11:26, RSV).

A Toast to Mrs. Dinci

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Luke 22:14-20

The twins spent most of that winter morning hacking away at the ice on the Dincis' porch. Bobby's shovel broke through the splintered floorboards. "Uh-oh! Miz Ditzzy's gonna have a cow," moaned Jimmy.

Expecting a tongue-lashing, they were surprised when she said, "Never mind, It's an old porch." Glancing at her watch, she continued, "It's almost lunchtime. Want some of my famous potpie?" They followed her, grateful for mercy and—being hungry boys—for food.

Mrs. Dinci lived alone. A widow since the Depression and childless, she lived modestly, rarely speaking of her past. Instead, she lavished attention on the boys, taking them to museums, the zoo, the circus, even to church. And then there was "church lunch"—she'd serve Dinci potpie on her best china, and they'd toast each other with grape juice in crystal goblets, just like grownups. Their parents were loud people, screamers, the kind of folk pinched by worries and frustration. Visiting Mrs. Dinci was like an oasis in a desert. She exuded the calm and tenderness that was lacking at home.

Years passed, and the boys became men. Jimmy joined the Navy, and Bobby got a job at the Piggly Wiggly. They pestered Mrs. Dinci for the potpie recipe, but every

"Uh-oh! Miz Ditzzy's gonna have a cow."

time she would reply, "It's the only thing I can give you that's truly my own. I'm keeping it so you won't forget me."

They didn't realize it at the time, but Easter 1962 was their final church lunch with Mrs. Dinci. Without a will, the state claimed her assets, leaving Bobby and Jimmy nothing to remember her by. They figured the recipe was lost forever.

"It was a scrap of paper under the Dincis' marriage license!" Bobby shouted over the static into the phone. "Brush two Swanson's potpies with egg, top with Parmesan cheese."

Across the Pacific in Okinawa, Jimmy laughed. "Secret recipe, huh? Who would have guessed something that extraordinary was really a store-bought, frozen potpie!"

Later, when the brothers were together for their annual Memorial Day family gathering, it struck Bobby and Jimmy that a legacy greater than the Dinci bloodline existed. They had shared the Dinci zest for life and church-lunch tradition with their children, who passed it on to *their* children. They'd see to it that no one forgot.

"To Mrs. Dinci," they said, raising their crystal goblets.

A Place of Remembrance

LOGOS

1 Cor. 10:1-13; 11:2-34

Trusting in Religious Ceremony (1 Cor. 10:1-13)

Paul feared that Christians of his day who participated in baptism and the Lord's Supper were beginning to believe they would be immune to temptation. He reminds them that their spiritual ancestors had experiences like theirs but were overtaken by temptation anyway.

In the crossing of the Red Sea, Paul saw a type of baptism. He viewed the eating of the manna and drinking of the water from the rock as similar to Communion. William Barclay writes: "In verse 5 Paul speaks of them drinking of the rock which followed them. This is taken not from the Old Testament itself but from Rabbinic tradition. Numbers 20:1-11 tells how God enabled Moses to draw water from the rock for the thirsty people; the Rabbinic tradition was that that rock thereafter followed the people and always gave them water to drink. That was a legend which all the Jews knew."

The Israelites of the Exodus received many spiritual blessings. They may have viewed these experiences as a spiritual immunization, protecting them from danger. Yet they so displeased God through their lack of faith, gross immorality, and idolatry that almost none of them saw the Promised Land.

Security never comes from mere participation in religious ceremonies. Our only defense against temptation can be found in relationship with God. It is He who, "with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13, NKJV).

Remembering Traditions and Customs (1 Cor. 11:2-16)

It appears that Paul approved of a larger role for women in worship services than they experience in many churches today. He did not object to their praying or prophesying—another word for preaching (verse 5). In this passage, however, Paul addresses a problem related to custom, not theology. Its literal application was limited to the church of Corinth and has nothing to do with whether or not a woman should cover her head in church today.

"For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head" (verse 10). The Greek language of this text literally means that she should retain "her authority upon her head." Even today many Eastern women wear the *yashmak*, a veil covering all but the forehead and the eyes while not quite reaching to the feet.

In Paul's day the veil was even more concealing. A respectable woman would never appear in public without it. The veil provided the woman with dignity and protection, since it made her "invisible" in the street. No man would pay attention to a woman who was properly veiled. Without the veil, she was vulnerable to attention and unwanted advances. Her modesty and chastity were no longer protected. A woman's veil gave her authority and dignity.

In Corinth, perhaps the most immoral city in the world, the women had been affected by the Greek culture and were given the right to sue for divorce and appear in public with head uncovered. Paul's message of the believer's freedom in Christ

may have actually added to the problem, causing Christian women to feel free to do as they wished on the street and in church. Paul felt it was better to follow a custom that, though it restricted a woman's rights, provided for her protection and removed a stumbling block from others.

Remembering That Differences Should Not Divide (verses 17-22)

The Agape, or Love, Feast was much like our church potluck. Everyone brought something and shared a meal together. For the Greeks, supper was a social occasion. People sat down and forgot about the time and enjoyed one another's company. At Corinth, however, things got out of hand. The rich, who could afford to bring plenty, ate apart from the poor, who could bring little. The rich ate quickly in their exclusive little group to ensure that they would not have to share with the poor who had next to nothing.

Paul says that the Christian church should be the one place on earth where there are no divisions of any kind. All are to be united by the blood of Christ. Such unity will engender a genuine concern for the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ. A church where members who have much do not share with those who have little is not a church at all. A true Christian is eager to share what he has with others.

Paul approved of a larger role for women in worship services than they experience in many churches today.

Remembering What the Lord's Supper Is About (verses 23-34)

There is no more important service to the church than that of the Lord's Supper. It is to remind us of our need and Christ's provision. Bread and wine were essential to physical survival for first-century believers. The body and blood of our Lord are essential to spiritual survival for every believer in every age. Without Christ's body and blood, there is no remission of sin and there is no salvation. This is the gospel.

The Lord's Supper reminds us of God's gift (verse 24). Jesus' gift to us is not only the gift of His death but the gift of His life, His ministry, His teaching, His resurrection, and life eternal to each believer. The Lord's Supper reminds us of the need publicly to proclaim Jesus as our Lord (verse 26).

The passage ends with a warning that symbols this holy should never be used without proper self-examination. Those who participate must confess their sins and proclaim Jesus to be the Lord of their lives. They must be willing to obey, and they must live in harmony with others.

*William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), p. 88.

By Michael D. Tucker, senior pastor, Arlington (Texas) Seventh-day Adventist Church.

God Will Make a Way

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 1 Cor. 10:13

I'm sure there are times when we wonder whether God is with us or not. When we find ourselves in a tough spot, we often claim that promise "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear" (1 Cor. 10:13, NIV).

The Corinthians were not to think that the conditions under which they were expected to live faithful lives were exceptional. Their trials and temptations were no different from those experienced by humankind the world around. This statement seems to be added to the warning of the preceding verse as an encouragement. The Corinthians were in danger of falling and must watch, but they could take heart because the temptation would not be beyond their strength to endure successfully.

"God is true to His promises, true to the call He has extended to men to serve Him. If He permitted temptations to come to His people that were beyond their strength to overcome, then His promises would appear to be wholly unreliable. The faithfulness of God is the Christian's source of security against the enemy. There is no security in depending on self, but if the believer relies entirely on the promises of our covenant-keeping God, he will be safe."

Christ wants us to live victorious lives.

There is safety only in Christ. Being an overcomer can happen only as we surrender to Jesus. Then His strength becomes our strength, His will becomes our will, and we safely abide in His presence and grace.

Can we avoid temptation? Satan is always there to tempt us. Can we resist the sin the devil is tempting us to do? Most certainly!

Christ wants us to live victorious lives. Part of becoming a spiritually mature Christian is facing the challenges of temptation. If we are confident in the promises of God and do not attempt to beat the devil in our own strength, we won't suffer setback after setback, but we will grow increasingly strong in the Lord and His mighty power.

So take courage as a Christian in knowing that, though temptations and trials may come, you have a Deliverer, a Saviour. When you are drawn into sin, don't fight alone, because that is a battle you will lose. Call on Jesus. He will deliver you.

REACT

1. Explain how victory over sin helps the Christian grown spiritually.
2. What can you do or your church do to make the Communion service a more joyous time?

**The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 6. p. 744.*

By Bernie J. Anderson, II, youth pastor at the Arlington (Texas) Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The Communion: A Personal View

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Cor. 10:3-6

First Corinthians 10 opens with a simple description of the first 40 years of ancient Israel's history. In five short verses Paul lays out the tragic desert years.

Some people fail to remember why the children of Israel wandered for 40 years. It was for the same reason we so often wander about spiritually today: "They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert. Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did" (1 Cor. 10:3-6, NIV).

Although God delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, from Pharaoh's army at the Red Sea, and was with them physically in a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, they still did not believe. This should serve as a reminder to us today that dramatic intervention by God will not necessarily bring us to greater faith.

First Corinthians 11:26 says, "Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." This verse not only proclaims "the

It was only a funny-tasting piece of bread and small plastic cup of grape juice.

Lord's death" but should also remind how God has provided for our salvation.

When I was younger, I did not appreciate the Communion as I do now. Then it was only a funny-tasting piece of bread and a small plastic cup of grape juice. Now that I am older, the rich symbolism of this event washes over my mind each time I participate. Each time I sit there listening to the sermon I remember how God has been there for me, before I even knew I needed Him. Sadly, I also remember how, just as the children of Israel doubted God, I often forget that He has never left me in need. But I am comforted by the words "This is my body, *which is for you*; do this in remembrance of me" (verse 24, italics supplied).

Christ provided salvation. As Christians we commemorate this with the Communion. When we come together for this common spiritual experience, we must be careful that we are not "setting our hearts on evil things as they did" (10:6).

REACT

1. What evidence is there in your life that you have not forgotten the meaning of Communion?

2. Do you think of your commitment between you and God during Communion? What does it mean to you?

By Kevin Wells, development consultant, Professional Development Institute, Richland Hills, Texas.

Your Relationship With God and Others

HOW-TO

Key Text: 1 Cor. 11:25, 26

My first memory of Communion is significant to me. I was probably five or six years old. I remember being curious about the service. My parents did not allow me to participate, explaining that I needed to be older. My grandmother found this to be an opportunity to spoil me. The next day she had bought me some Welch's grape juice and crackers. Though I loved this, even at that young age, I knew Communion was more significant than drinking grape juice and eating crackers at home.

Significance in Communion begins with a commitment between you and God. God made this commitment at Creation, but Christ sealed it by His death on the cross. When we participate in the Communion service, we are recognizing Christ's death as a means to our personal salvation. As humans we have a tendency to forget things over time. This is why we need to have an ongoing renewal of this commitment. By participating in a Communion service, we remind ourselves of the purpose of our relationship with God and renew this relationship.

Another memorable Communion service occurred when I was sitting with Greg, my boyfriend at the time, and my friend Laura. Suddenly Greg's glass broke,

She had bought me some Welch's grape juice and crackers.

spilling the juice. We frantically tried to clean up the juice and stifle our giggles. Even though that day our Communion service was interrupted, three friends left there with a very strong bonding memory.

Some may not relate to this experience, because it detracts from its seriousness. However, by Christ's example, this is not a ritual to be performed alone, but one we share with others in a public way, whether it is a small group of believers or a large church. It demonstrates a commitment of your heart to fellow believers. It provides a way for believers to recognize as individuals and as a group the sacrifice Christ made for each of us.

Furthermore, the Communion service should also be a joyous one. The very reason we are gathered together is that Christ died for our sins, and we will each be able to spend eternity with Him in heaven. This is the greatest reason of all to be joyous. I do not recommend breaking cups to make this occur, but I know I will always smile when I think of that Communion service with my friends.

By Elizabeth O. Page, a social worker at John Peter Smith Hospital, Fort Worth, Texas.

The First Supper in Heaven

OPINION

Key Text: Matt. 26:29

"I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26:29, NIV).

The promises of Jesus are precious and uplifting to us all.

Imagine the night. Jesus knew the events that were soon to occur: Peter's denial, His arrest, being mocked, put on trial, and then suffering humiliation and death before His family, His followers, and His beloved disciples. Even though Jesus had knowledge of the events that would shortly transpire, He chose this opportunity to give His disciples and the generations to follow a meaningful, holy celebration to remind us of His grace and His promise to forgive all.

The day of my baptism I was a nervous nine-year-old. The instant the minister lifted me out of the pool, I felt a calm reassurance with the knowledge that Jesus loved me unconditionally. It was such a reassuring, comforting thought that by His grace and through His death we would be able to have eternal life. Jesus' promise that He will be waiting for us in the kingdom to live eternally with Him and to celebrate the Lord's Supper is a promise that can offer hope to us as Christians today.

The day of my baptism I was a nervous nine-year-old.

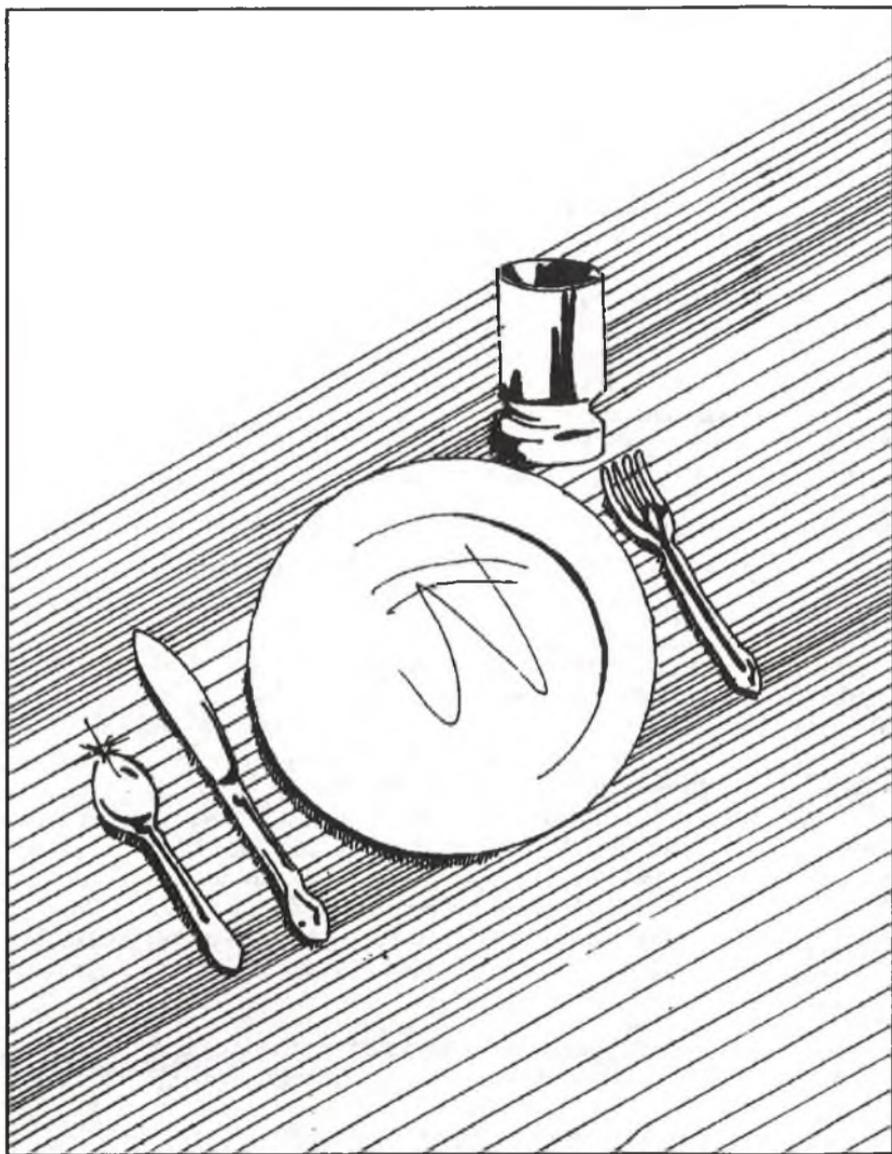
Each time we participate in the ordinances of humility and partake of the Lord's Supper, that feeling of peace should be maximized within us. We should be glorifying God for the gift of His Son and should thank Him for the emblems He has given us as a reminder of His sacrifice. Thoughts should be of Christ and His endless love, which He displayed for us by taking the cup and drinking from it. If Christ were able to love us, the lowly sinner, in an unbiased, nonjudgmental manner, we must follow His example and show love to those who are around us. Since we profess to be Christians and possess the desire to be more Christlike, we should pray that Christ will allow our characters to be changed to reflect His. The finish line is far ahead. It is in heaven at a table where Jesus will prepare the ultimate feast to be shared with His redeemed children.

REACT

1. What feelings and thoughts do you have during Communion?
2. How do you feel knowing that you will participate in communion with Jesus in heaven?
3. What things must I do in order to properly prepare myself to receive Communion?

By Wendy Wood, a registered nurse at Baylor University Medical Center, Dallas, Texas.

BODY LANGUAGE



“If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it” (1 Cor. 12:26, NIV).

The Potluck of Christ

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: 1 Cor. 12:12

I grew up hearing many stories illustrating how the church is like the body of Christ. I have heard it compared with the human body, the body of believers globally, the different parts of a tree or a vine, and even one of many sports teams. Have you ever thought of it as being like an Adventist potluck?

Being a third-generation Adventist, I have consumed my fair share of potato salad, veggie patties, and fake meats. I've seen some good potlucks where the dessert is incredibly plentiful and the macaroni is freshly made. I've been to some bad potlucks where three-week-old date squares are the dessert and the macaroni was someone's supper last Sunday. I don't claim to be an expert, like some of our members who have been around longer, but I know what makes a potluck work. You need people, a place, tables, plastic utensils, paper plates—and most important, good food. Some people would claim that they go for the fellowship, but let's be honest. Are you really there to watch the kids running around or are you there to get a serving of each type of cheesecake?

You need good food to make a good potluck. What would happen if the person who normally makes a tasty Jell-O with carrots and pineapple decides that she

We should reconsider our evangelism approaches and start inviting people to potlucks.

wants to make the rice instead. What if that little old lady who makes the great cheesecake decides that instead she's going to bring Brussels sprouts? What if—horror of horrors—nobody brought gluten? It just wouldn't be the same. I'm not suggesting that it would be a total breakdown of the potluck festivities, but it just wouldn't be as fantastic as a potluck could be.

So it is with the church. We need all people to do their part to have a functioning, healthy menu of believers. You see, it is not enough just to do your part. We need to have those people with the right spiritual gifts doing the right task. Those who are leaders need to be leading. Those who are teachers need to be teaching. Those who are chefs need to be cooking for the potlucks. Imagine if we as a denomination really got together on this one and determined everyone's spiritual gifts. Then we placed those with the right gifts in the right place. Not only would church rock, but we'd be bringing a whole lot more people to the Rock.

Whoever invented potlucks needs to be commended. I believe they are such a good thing that we should reconsider our evangelism approaches and start inviting people to potlucks. One look at the smorgasbord of vegetarian delights, and they'll be sold on Adventism. And imagine the money we'd save!

By Paul Soper, a third-year preministry student at Canadian Union College, College Heights, Alberta.

Family of Faith

LOGOS

1 Corinthians 12

There is a saying that a chain is as strong as its weakest link. A chain has many links, each as important as the next, supporting the whole. Suppose that the links come in many shapes. Some links are square while others are triangular, round, oval, or some other shape. Despite the variety of the links, one characteristic all must have and that is equal strength. If one link is weaker than the rest, it can cause the breakup of the chain.

In 1 Corinthians 12:12-17 Paul speaks to the brethren at Corinth concerning a growing problem within the church: disunity because of diversity. Paul clearly explains the necessity of unity, using the example of the human body. He points out that the body is one whole but has many parts, and those parts are complex and different. Paul says that just as the human body is composed of many parts but is one body, so the body of Christ is one, despite the diversity of its members. In 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 Paul makes three very important points. He states that there are:

- diversities of *gifts*, but the same spirit.
- differences of *administrations*, but the same Lord.
- diversities of *operations*, but the same God that worketh all in all.

Gifts are our natural abilities or talents. They are the talents God has given each person. According to Paul, God gives everyone different gifts. To some He

God's love and their common goal kept them focused on Christ.

distributes the word of wisdom, to others faith, the word of knowledge, the gifts of healing, miracles, prophecies, etc. But what do we do with this variety of gifts? The word *administrations* means "management." Even if people are given the same gift, each has a different way of managing it, a different use of the talent to serve the Lord. *Operations* is defined as "the way things work." There is a diversity in the way in which people set out to finish a task.

How does God expect us, as a church of so much diversity, to achieve unity? Notice that Paul didn't just say:

- people have different gifts.
- people have different ways of using or managing a gift.
- people have different ways of completing a task.

Instead, he added something very important to the end of each point:

- people have different gifts—but the same spirit.
- people have different ways of using or managing a gift—but the same Lord.
- people have different ways of completing a task—but the same God.

The one constant in this diversity is God. We may not be the same, but God has been, is, and will be, and through Him we are united. When we try to manage the talents of others instead of using our own, we waste the precious gifts He has given us to glorify Him. We must instead focus on God, accept our God-given differences, and let Him unite us.

Consider the 12 disciples during the three years Christ ministered on earth. Each of the apostles had different personalities, and each wanted glory. Often they bickered about who was greater and who had greater position. After the Cross, however, on the day of Pentecost, the disciples suddenly appear to have become almost angelic. The New Testament extols how they were of one mind, that they were of "one accord" (Acts 2:46).

What happened? Does this mean there was a sudden change in their personalities and opinions? No, they still had differences and disagreements, but it was about *how* to accomplish things, not *what* to accomplish. What they were trying to accomplish was the same thing. They were of one mind to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ because of the unity of God's love, which is always the same. God's love and their common goal kept them focused on Christ, and so, despite their differences, they got the job done. The gospel spread quickly and efficiently, something that could have happened only where there was harmony.

Paul gives us one more thing to keep in mind and to help us maintain unity in diversity. He points out that when one suffers, the whole group suffers. As the one weak link in the chain weakens the whole, so one person who has or creates a problem, affects the whole (1 Cor. 12:26). Paul points out, however, that members should care for, support, and respect one another, just as the human body supports and takes care of each of its parts (verse 25). Confidence in our brothers and sisters is essential, because unity of action in our fight with Satan enables us to be strong and to survive the trial. We cannot do this if we are not unified in Christ.

A chain is a family of links. Our church is composed of many links of all different shapes. As one, we bind together in Christ, our common factor, to create a family of faith.

REACT

1. What should be our common goal today?
2. If we have a common goal and profess Christ's love, is there unity in our church? If there is no unity, why not, and how can we fix it?
3. If unity is so important, can God, being a God of order, be where there is disunity? How does this apply to your church today?
4. How do we deal with the issue of unity as it relates to liberal/conservative views and the different age groups in the church?

United, Yes or No?

TESTIMONY

Key Text: John 17:22, 23

Jesus prayed that His followers would “be one” (John 17:22). Is it possible for the Seventh-day Adventist Church to be united in this way?

First of all, what does unity mean? If unity means that I must preach like my pastor, I can’t be one with my church. If unity means that you must share your relationship with Christ in the same way your grandparents or your brother share Him, you can’t be one with your church.

Before Jesus and His disciples went to Gethsemane, He showed how highly He valued unity by praying that His followers be unified. Seventh-day Adventists claim to be followers of Christ. Can Seventh-day Adventist Christians provide the answer to Jesus’ prayer? One of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church wrote about what unity means and how the SDA Church becomes united:

“The Lord desires His chosen servants to learn how to unite together in harmonious effort. It may seem to some that the contrast between their gifts and the gifts of a fellow laborer is too great to allow them to unite in harmonious effort; but when they remember that there are varied minds to be reached, and that some will reject the truth as it is presented by one laborer, only to open their hearts to

Possibly my words can make a difference in the lives of the people my pastor can’t reach.

God’s truth as it is presented in a different manner by another laborer, they will hopefully endeavor to labor together in unity. Their talents, however diverse, may all be under the control of the same Spirit. In every word and act, kindness and love will be revealed; and as each worker fills his appointed place faithfully, the prayer of Christ for the unity of His followers will be answered, and the world will know that these are His disciples.”*

When I allow the Holy Spirit to use my words to reach people, I can be assured that someone will discover a better understanding of Christ. I may not use the same word pictures and phrases my pastor uses, but possibly my words can make a difference in the lives of the people my pastor can’t reach. When you allow the Holy Spirit to guide you as you share your relationship with Christ, you can be confident that your experience will touch the lives of the people whom your grandparents or brother can’t reach.

REACT

1. How can you be sure you are contributing to the unity of the church?
2. What talents can you use to fill your “appointed place”?

**Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 145.

By Myra Nicks, a sophomore journalism student at Canadian Union College, College Heights, Alberta.

Some Kind of Unseen Power

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Cor. 12:11

Having been raised in the church, I often heard talk of spiritual gifts. When I was younger, however, I had no interest in this area of Christianity. I was more concerned with keeping the Sabbath and telling my friends not to eat pork. Later, however, I developed an interest in this mysterious gift from God. What was my spiritual gift? I hungered to know.

In a spiritual-gifts seminar, I was handed a book about the Holy Spirit and ushered through a two-hour series of tests and personal interviews. I found it fascinating. Finally I was about to find out what my spiritual gift was!

When I received my results, I had three gifts in the areas of biblical knowledge, faith, and wisdom. I was ecstatic! These were some of my favorite areas of ministry! I was even affirmed in these areas by some of the other participants. I praised God He had revealed the talents and gifts that He had given to me. Now I knew what I should do with myself, where I should focus my Christian life—or so I thought.

You see, I decided that God had “built” me to be a minister—specifically, a

Finally I was about to find out what my spiritual gift was!

pastor. Upon arriving at college to begin my training, however, I found that my gifts often went unused, were unaffirmed by the people around me, or were tested to the maximum (as in the case of faith). As well, I noticed that other gifts that had not registered previously (such as the gift of healing) began to emerge in my life. I wondered whether I had made a mistake somewhere in my spiritual-gifts testing.

Not until I read the following passage did I begin to understand what God truly had been doing in my life: “You will notice a distinct difference when you read about the gifts of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12. These are nine supernatural gifts that are available to all Christians at any time according to the need that arises before them as they serve the Lord.”*

First Corinthians 12:11 says, “But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills” (NASB). I see now that God uses His servants not as they see fit but as He sees fit. “‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,’ declares the Lord” (Isa. 55:8). The key to understanding spiritual gifts, I have found, is simply to be willing to let the Lord lead you as He will. And trust me, the results are astounding!

*Garrie F. Williams, *Welcome, Holy Spirit* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association., 1994), p. 269.

By Jerry Smith, a fourth-year theology student, Canadian Union College, College Heights, Alberta.

Uncommon Gifts for the Common Good

HOW-TO

Key Text: 1 Cor. 12:4-7

One of the most embarrassing things I have ever had to do was collect a stool sample and take it to the medical lab. Suffering some severe digestive problems, I responded to the counsel of my physician, collected the sample, and headed for the lab. I'll never forget walking through the lab doors and being greeted by a very attractive nurse. "I . . . I have a . . . um, a . . . I have a stool sample . . . for you."

She smiled politely, took the sample, and replied, "Thank you, sir."

Successful living means sometimes trusting others' expertise. When I am sick, I go to my doctor. When my car is acting up, I see my mechanic. If you want to get by in life, you've got to put your trust in the abilities of others. And, as it is in the temporal realm, so it is in the spiritual.

If the body of Christ is going to thrive, then individual members are going to have to trust one another. "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:4-7, NIV).

God is concerned with the "common good." Thus He empowers His body with

Individual members are going to have to trust one another.

a wide variety of gifts to meet the needs of a complex world. The difficulty is that those gifts are becoming increasingly diverse. Thus, we have increasing tension within the body of Christ.

The answer is simple yet not so simple. It is simple in terms of our trusting God to do what He says He will do. For the common good, God empowers His body with a variety of gifts to meet the needs of a complex world. Our part, and this is the not-so-simple part, is to trust the diverse functions of these gifts—even if that means occasional discomfort.

When tensions arise, as they will, we must learn to communicate. Tragically when we become offended, frustrated, or uneasy, our instinct is to stop talking. But our discomfort is a signal that we must talk until we gain understanding. We may not like what someone else is doing, but we can come to appreciate it in the overall work of the body of Christ.

Finally, we should pray for one another and rejoice in the successful function of the diverse parts of the body of Christ. "God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have *equal concern for each other*. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it" (1 Cor. 12:24-26, italics supplied).

By Steve Little, chaplain of Canadian Union College and Parkview Adventist Academy, College Heights, Alberta.

Side by Side We Stand?

OPINION

Key Text: Mark 12:30, 31

Many Seventh-day Adventist churches today have been split into conservatives and liberals. Bitterness and animosity are all too common when one group leaves the other, either to return to the world individually or to form another church collectively. Somehow we need to find a way to tolerate—even enjoy—the differences that make us unique and valuable children of God. If we do not, the church will continue to fragment.

So what can we do, as individual members, to stop this division? We can begin where we were meant to. God never asked us to change the world. You and I are lone individuals. But let's not sell ourselves short by stopping there.

Through His grace, we can profoundly affect the people around us. We can encourage unity by showing others that there is so much more to this thing called Christianity than proving I'm right and you're wrong. The gospel is much simpler than we often allow it to be, and Jesus showed this: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. . . . 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:30, 31, NIV).

What can we do, as individual members, to stop this division?

What is left for us to do but show that we are one church with many parts, each doing different things but filled with a unity of purpose? Unity in our desire to express our love to God? Unity in reaching others for Jesus? Unity in the desire to share His love in everyday life?

We need one another. Unity does not exist when one side gets its way most of the time. To those of us who are conservatives, we need those liberals to keep us current, able to reach a changing world. To those of us who have pitched our tents in the liberal camp, stop and think of all the crazy things we might allow ourselves to do if we didn't have tradition and conservatives to pull us back to reality.

Unity in purpose does not mean conformity in method. Since the beginning of time, people have been trying to force their ideas on others. If God wants love that is given freely, can we do any differently? Why would a God who means so many different things to so many people stifle the different ways those same people seek to return their love to Him?

REACT

1. What is more important to you, doctrine or people? How does your life reflect that priority?
2. How did Jesus balance His priority for people with the need for truth?

By Dave Crofton, a secondary-education major, Canadian Union College, College Heights, Alberta.

LOVE STORY



“And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13:13, NRSV).

Giving Love a Bad Name?

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: 1 Cor. 13:4-7

Have you ever wondered what love *really* is? Some of us may think we know all about it, but whatever *you* think, the media, Hollywood, and the music industry bombard us with their opinions of love. So, what is love?

Well, the Beatles tried to tell us how important it is: "All you need is love!" What about Bon Jovi's thoughts: "Love is a prison; you can't break free." Perhaps Pat Benatar can enlighten us: "Love is a battlefield!" Are they right? Before you try to answer, there's more to think about. What about "making love," "I love my rabbit," or "I love chocolate"? Do they all mean the same thing? *Love* is probably one of our most widely used, least understood, words.

Once we begin to look at the true concept of love, it's easy to see how feeble our own attempt at understanding and expressing it really is. "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Cor. 13:7, RSV). Does this mean that we will suffer because of love? If you go by Bon Jovi's definition, it probably does. But there's more: "Love is not jealous or boastful" (verse 4). That is one of the hardest parts of the definition to live up to, but still the true description continues: "It is not arrogant or rude" (verse 5), and so on. What we really begin to look at in 1 Corinthians 13 is the *complete* and *true* description of love—a description given by God. Paul spells out exactly what

“Love” is probably one of our most widely used, least understood, words.

God's idea of love involves.

As we've studied the earlier part of Paul's letter to the Corinthians, we know they had love all wrong. Their love was self-gratifying, selfish, and mixed with sexual overtones. They gave love a bad name. Two thousand years later, have the world's thoughts of love changed all that much? Paul shows us that love—true love—has nothing selfish about it. In fact, it is completely selfless, focusing on other people and their needs first. Paul suggests that it is not until we get to heaven that we are going to understand love properly.

As you study this week's lesson, keep a couple of thoughts in mind. First, how does God's description of love compare to the world's understanding? How does it compare to how you see love shown in your own life?

By Colin Holman, a social-security employee of the federal government, Geelong, Australia.

Your Key to Eternity

LOGOS

1 Corinthians 13

Love may seem to be a “spiritual milk” subject, but if you study deeper, you will find enlightenment beyond human understanding. Love is your key to eternity.

The love chapter, as 1 Corinthians 13 is known, was written by Paul in the context of explaining the foundation for spiritual gifts. Writing about love at first seems a little out of character for him, but Paul discusses this topic like no one else. He shows his commitment to the moral principle of unconditional love and was certain that life was useless without it.

It is part of human nature to desire respect and admiration. In a church, spiritual gifts are the currency for admiration. The Corinthian church members desired social empowerment and did this by cultivating a hierarchy of preferred spiritual gifts. The first three verses of 1 Corinthians 13 suggests that the Corinthians’ preferred spiritual gifts were:

- speaking in tongues
- prophecy
- miracles
- humility
- martyrdom

Paul gently brought their attention to this hierarchy with a clear explanation of the key foundation of spiritual gifts. Each spiritual gift has its place in the church; each is extremely valuable since each part is needed to complete the body of the church. The Holy Spirit determines the distribution of gifts; each person and each gift is equal in the sight of God.

A building cannot be constructed from the top down. Would you trust a builder who started building the roof frame before laying the foundation? I would start looking for escape clauses in the building contract! A building’s foundations must be laid before progress can be made on the walls or roof. Spiritual gifts are the walls of a church, but love is the foundation.

A labor of love can be quickly forgotten. You may prepare a special meal for your closest friend by finding exciting new recipes, focusing on elegant presentation, and even dressing up for the occasion. All this effort is worthless if your friend arrives frustrated, leading you to return harsh comments, and no one enjoys the meal. A moment can dissolve the best of intentions.

Love opens the way for the Holy Spirit to make spiritual gifts effective. Without love, spiritual gifts will not bear wholesome fruit (Gal. 5:19-22). Christianity is lifeless without love.

Divisions Among You

The Corinthian church not only preferred some gifts above others, but it was strongly divided. The division occurred because different groups admired and followed the different qualities in prominent spiritual leaders—Paul, Peter, Apollos. Paul’s letter confronted these divisions and tenderly directed them to “the most excellent way” (1 Cor. 12:31, NIV)—love.

Only love builds up. Church members need to be constantly built up with love. Love is in short supply on this earth, yet it is an essential element of spiritual growth.

Faith, hope, and love are a winning combination. They have the power to heal or prevent divisions in a church. When people are working together in love, they will grow beyond their greatest expectations.

On Love

First Corinthians 13 is a precious portrait of love. Today the word *love* is diluted by overuse, its meaning unclear without explanation. It is possible to fall in love, experience love at first sight, be head over heels in love, love on the run, love something or someone, love anonymously, love completely, or love just a little.

Any discussions of love provide as many interpretations as viewpoints. The only real way to convey love is by action, and distrust is so prevalent, loving actions are often misinterpreted. The love of most is growing cold (Matt. 24:12) as a result of the obscurity of love's meaning.

A society filled with corruption and immorality promotes a distorted view of love. Paul defines love in ways that expound its boundless beauty. He seemed determined to ensure that love could not be misunderstood.

The Greatest of These

The love chapter closes with reference to the eternal nature of love. It includes reference to our childlike understanding of love and our inability to see the full-

In a church, spiritual gifts are the currency for admiration.

ness of love. We see love as we would see our face in unpolished brass, a mere shadow.

Faith, hope, and love are associated together in many New Testament writings (1 Cor. 13:13; Rom. 5:2-5; Gal. 5:5, 6; Col. 2:4-8; 1 Thess. 1:3, 8; Heb. 6:10-12; 1 Pet. 1:21, 22). The early Christian church commonly linked these three motivating forces and foundational elements.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:3, faith is linked to works, love to labor, and hope to patience. In Revelation 2:2, John encourages the Ephesian church to remember the passion of its first love by referring to works, labor, and patience. What other connections can you find?

Paul considered love the greatest because of its eternal nature. Love is not limited to our earthly situation. For now, these three are equally important and cannot be ordered in importance (and there is no hierarchy). When we finally see Jesus face to face, we won't need to have faith, hope will be fulfilled, but love will be a foundation for eternity.

REACT

1. Consider how often you use the word *love*. Does this use dilute its meaning to you?
 2. Are hierarchies among spiritual gifts in effect today? Explain your answer.
 3. What can you do—specifically—to improve the unity of your church?
 4. Which part of Paul's description of love appeals most deeply to you?
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By Karle Duke, a computer analyst/programmer for Telstra Customer Billing Systems, Melbourne, Australia.

Being Tutored in Love

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 1 Corinthians 13

As a relative newcomer to the Adventist Church, I have learned (and I'm still learning) a great deal about Ellen G. White. She has a great deal to say to our church about love. I suspect that this is because we have a great deal to learn about it! Yet what Mrs. White says is not complex or difficult—she provides us with a challenge: “Read this chapter [1 Corinthians 13] every day, and from it obtain comfort and strength. Learn from it the value that God places on sanctified, heaven-born love, and let the lesson that it teaches come home to your hearts. Learn that Christlike love is of heavenly birth, and that without it all other qualifications are worthless.”¹ It doesn't matter how long you've been an Adventist or how close to God you feel. First Corinthians 13 should remind us constantly whom God wants us to be. Ellen asks *all* of us (even me) to read daily and learn of God's love. She wants it to become as familiar to us as our phone numbers, for only then will we be able to act lovingly. Of all the texts in the Bible, this chapter provides the foundation for our Christian life.

“Love is a precious gift, which we receive from Jesus. Pure and holy affection

As with any gift, pleasure is gained from giving and receiving.

is not a feeling, but a principle. Those who are actuated by true love, are neither unreasonable nor blind. Taught by the Holy Spirit, they love God supremely, and their neighbor as themselves.”²

As with any gift, pleasure is gained from giving *and* receiving. Love is no exception, for when we love others, we do so because we are inspired by God, who first loved us. This sort of love does not easily change from just a feeling to an instinctive principle, but we all can learn in God's “school of love” as we progress in our Christian walk. We are taught by the Holy Spirit, as in school. We have our textbook—the Bible. Jesus is the experienced student who shows us the way. God is the principal of the school, unlike all school principals in that He loves *all* His students. If we listen and learn in God's school, the day that we are all finally called to His office will be a great one indeed.

REACT

1. What differences could there be in your life if you read and applied 1 Corinthians 13 every day?
2. Who needs you to share God's gift of love with them this week? How?

1. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1091.

2. *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 358, 359.

By Jodie Holman, a primary-school relief teacher, state school system, Geelong, Australia.

“The Power of Love”

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 John 4:8

First Corinthians 13 addresses our most fundamental need—to be loved and to be a loving person. There is only one source of love that touches people—God (1 John 4:8). Proof of this is how easily the name of Jesus could replace the words *love* or *charity* in 1 Corinthians 13. All the characteristics of love were manifest in Jesus’ life on earth.

In 1 Corinthians 13 other attributes like faith and understanding, which are prominent elsewhere in Scripture, are considered worthless without love (verse 2). The importance of this is made plain by the importance God places on faith. Faith in Jesus is the basis of salvation (Eph. 2:8). Action that is not based on faith is sin (Rom. 14:23). Effective faith can move the impossible problems we face (Luke 17:6). Indeed “without faith it is impossible to please God” (Heb. 11:6, NIV). Faith can never be underestimated though it is better to desire love more.

Yet understanding must not be undervalued. King Solomon advises us that if we receive anything in life, it should be understanding (Prov. 4:5, 7). Understanding is more precious than all human desires and riches (3:14, 15). It makes possible a knowledge of God and brings a long and peaceful life (3:16-18; 2:3-9; 4:10, 13). Yet Solomon was a prime example of what happens to a person who uses understanding imprudently. When he and his son Rehoboam relied on understanding without God, they hurt all Israel (1 Kings 11:31-40; 12:6-11, 13, 16; Prov. 3:6).

Action that is not based on faith is sin.

Without God or without love, understanding is of no lasting benefit. For God’s revelations are to be sought more than the mere reasoning of humankind (Rom. 11:33). Quite simply, faith and understanding are gifts from the Almighty God of love. They become ours when we ask for them (Prov. 2:4, 5).

When Paul suggests in 1 Corinthians 13 that love can supply all the benefits of God (given faith and understanding), he speaks about principled love, *agape* love. This is not just a feeling of the moment. It is the action love Jesus mentions in Matthew 25:34-40. *Agape* love sees “even the least” as equals, as worth all the care and affection we can give. *Agape* love is not just talking about the good things of God or intending to do right. It is action, Jesus-type action.

Without *this* love we cannot begin to understand God or His laws, let alone have a relationship with Him (1 Cor. 8:3; 1 Tim. 1:5-7). Love is therefore the centerpiece. Love affirms that He is a God of law and order. The intent of His law is love and is thus a legitimately binding and applicable regulator of our lives (Matt. 22:36-40; Ps. 1:2; 119:70; James 1:25; Eph. 5:1-14). God’s laws provide us with an alternative to the hurtful life of sin we otherwise live. The power of love is that it helps us to realize that these laws are provided to us by a God who cares.

By Hugh Heenan, a public-policy student at Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.

“I Want to Know What Love Is . . .”

HOW-TO

Key Text: 1 John 4:8

People today want someone to show them love. Remember the song by Foreigner: “I Want to Know What Love Is”? Some, like Tina Turner, are so skeptical they don’t think real love is possible: “What’s Love Got to Do With It?”

But God is love (1 John 4:8), and it is up to us as Christians to show the world this love. Loving as God loves is a daunting task when we think of all the unlovable people around. Does God make exceptions for the girl who cheats off your work at school or the guy who constantly spreads rumors at work? Fortunately for us, God sees us all equally: all deserve love. “I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matt. 5:44). This is difficult.

How can God expect so much of us? Surely the legalist trying to work his way to heaven or the rapist sitting in his prison cell do not deserve the same amount of love as the kind and caring lady who always gives everything she has or the young missionary to a remote village in Tibet. But God says all deserve the same amount of His love and our love.

To make a cake, we need to add various ingredients such as eggs, sugar, chocolate, nuts, or fruit to add flavor. Likewise, to live a life of unconditional love, we need a recipe. God is like flour, the main ingredient, to help us rise to our full potential. Only with God can we love Him and one another. Here is how I see the ingredients to a loving life:

But God says all deserve the same amount of His love and our love.

1. Surrender to God. To be able to love God’s way, we need to be in tune with Him. To do this, we must surrender our whole heart unconditionally. Then God will be able to communicate to us through His Holy Spirit, and only then can we hope to obtain this Christlike love (Rom. 5:5).

2. Have faith in God. Loving God’s way is not easy, but it is possible if we believe in the God of love. It is faith that overcomes the world. This faith is lived out by following God’s principles (1 John 5:3-5).

3. Love God. If we do not love God enough to have faith in Him, then there is no hope. This love needs to grow and develop. Solomon said, “The passion of love bursting into flame is more powerful than death, stronger than the grave. Love cannot be drowned by oceans or floods, it cannot be bought. No matter what is offered” (Song of Sol. 8:6, 7, CEV). This is strong love.

4. Just do it. You learn to ride by riding, not just learning or reading about riding. You learn to write by writing and to teach by teaching. Likewise, to learn to love we do not just read about it or talk about it. We just do it (1 John 4:7, 8).

By Andrew Morton, a telephone technician for Telstra, Melbourne, Australia.

“Love Don't Come Easy”

OPINION

Key Text: Col. 3:12, 13

You are sharing a confidence with a friend at church when another person overhears, misinterprets your conversation, and spreads a devastating rumor. How can you demonstrate a loving attitude? This week we have learned the essence of being Christlike. I hope you now can say “I am patient, I am kind” and put yourself in the rest of the verses of 1 Corinthians 13. This reminds you how to live ideally toward others. But daily practicing these traits is not easy.

Paul writes more thoughts on Christian living to the Colossians. “Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (Col. 3:12, 13, NIV). He reminds us that there are many aspects to being a wholly loving person. In living this way, we might mistakenly believe we are to become door mats for love’s sake.

Jesus lived a life of unconditional love, but He was no door mat. He demonstrated each of the criteria of love to the right people at the right time. He cared for the rich (Matthew, the tax collector); the poor (widows); the able-bodied; the physically and mentally challenged (the lame man and demon-possessed); the arrogant (Pharisees); and the humble (Mary Magdalene). His love was strong and

Jesus lived a life of unconditional love, but He was no door mat.

knew no class distinction or social barrier.

Jesus says, “A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (John 13:34). It is even possible to love someone without his or her knowing of it; for example, some colleagues at work are saying how bad the manager is at his job. You may show love and respect for your manager by saying something positive about him. Whatever, your manager may never know what you said or didn’t say.

Loving others does mean we risk not receiving love in return. Thankfully, our ability to show love to another human being is not dependent on his or her returning our actions or sentiments. God gives us a bountiful and endless supply of pure love to fill any emptiness we could possibly have. Our understanding of how to love as God does is so limited by our human boundaries that we can portray only a poor reflection. We can look forward to the day coming soon when we shall know truly how to love to its fullest capacity.

I encourage you to excel in being less proud, not so easily angered, and to show a higher degree of faith and trust. The Lord has already promised us His help, and He is our ultimate teacher. What better way to gain a fuller understanding than by being a student of the “love Creator”?

By Julie Duke, customer-service representative/bank teller, Commonwealth Bank of Australia, Hoppers Crossing.

WORTHWHILE WORSHIP



“So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church” (1 Cor. 14:12, NIV).

What Is Your WQ?

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 14

Most of us are familiar with the IQ test. It would even be safe to assume that the majority have taken the test at some point in their lives. Some might even have based their self-worth on the score of this test.

But have you ever taken the WQ test (also known as the worship quotient test)? If such a test did exist, would we be tempted to base our own spiritual value on the resulting score?

Well, here are some questions to think about to test your WQ:

1. You visit a church service where people are speaking in tongues. You: (a) join in and pretend to understand; (b) take an authoritative stand and stop the service; (c) leave quietly and find another church; (d) stay and meditate on God's Word.

2. A homeless man enters your church during the hour of worship. You: (a) ask him quietly but politely to leave; (b) pretend he doesn't exist; (c) invite him to join your Sabbath School class.

3. You are teaching the lesson in Sabbath School, and an outspoken visitor shares beliefs different from yours. You: (a) demand he leave the class; (b) pretend to agree, to avoid a debate; (c) get into a long-winded, heated debate; (d) listen, speak your views, and then invite him to your group Bible study.

Have you ever taken the WQ test?

4. You have the gift of music, and the church board nominated you to lead the choir. You: (a) graciously decline and say you don't have time; (b) eagerly accept but fail to commit; (c) humbly accept and request guidance.

5. The pastor requests you to give the opening prayer. You: (a) suddenly develop a sore throat; (b) volunteer your brother; (c) say Yes and ask God to fill you with His Spirit.

The church is filled with individuals who have been given spiritual gifts but who are not being utilized in public worship. It has been stated that an average person uses only 10 percent of his brain. Is this also true of our spiritual gifts in regard to worship?

It must be our goal to have a Spirit-filled worship led by those who are willing to raise their WQ by having a close relationship with Christ through prayer and study of His Word.

By Magenlino and Rowena Manuel, an electrician and registered nurse, respectively, from Loma Linda, California.

Talk About Worship

LOGOS

1 Corinthians 14

Prophecy and Tongues (1 Cor. 14:1-25, 39)

After Paul compares and contrasts several fruits of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 13 (faith, hope, and love), he turns to a couple of the gifts of the Spirit in chapter 14 (prophecy and speaking in tongues). Both these verbal gifts are a blessing to the recipient and possibly the hearers, if the speaker is motivated by love. The busy evangelist, however, reasons that prophecy is better since it does more good for more people. In fact, this is a theme that runs throughout the chapter: spiritual gifts are given for the good of the Christian community. These gifts are not to be used to impress others, to disrupt worship services, or to be flaunted.

Although speaking in tongues may impress others about the existence and power of God, prophecy offers insight, warning, and encouragement to believers and nonbelievers alike. The gift of tongues is recorded only a few times in Scripture. On the Day of Pentecost the gift of tongues was given to communicate to Jews (Acts 2:2, 3) so they would become baptized Christians. Later, the gift of tongues was given to Cornelius and his household so that Peter and his companions would learn that the Holy Spirit did not belong to Jews only (10:44-48).

Some are suspicious of such phenomena as “the Toronto Blessing,” which has swept through Christian circles since 1994. Are the spasms, “resting in the Spirit,” *glossolalia*, animallike noises, and laughter inspired by the Holy Spirit? Since Paul is proud of his speaking in tongues (1 Cor. 14:18) and suggests, “Do not forbid speaking in tongues” (verse 39, NIV), one cannot dismiss the issue. Knowing how to respond to such phenomena can be difficult, since we cannot know people’s motives or integrity. Fortunately, the Bible does offer advice for evaluating claims to gifts of the Spirit: “By their fruit you will recognize them” (Matt. 7:20).

Public Worship (1 Cor. 14:26-34)

Worship is intended to glorify God, not self or other participants. In addition, public services are to be beneficial to all in attendance. No one is to sing or speak only for self-gratification; rather, each out of love must think of others. Worship is not only for those fortunate enough to serve on the platform. All are advised to “weigh carefully what is said” (verse 29).

Of course, styles of worship range from informal “celebration” services to formal “high church” services. Paul wisely does not endorse any particular type of service or music. Instead, the advice is “Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way” (verse 40). A specific counsel is to allow only one person to speak at a time. This applies also to those with spiritual gifts. Paul convincingly argues that the God of order can control when the Spirit is sent to worship services in the gift of tongues.

In these few verses, Paul addresses the content and process of worship, continuing the emphasis on attitudes. One is reminded of King David’s exclamation of God’s greatness: “Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness” (Ps. 29:2). Just as a beautiful rainbow can come from storm clouds, meaningful worship can come from sinful but repentant and willing servants.

Can Women Speak? (1 Cor. 14:34-38)

“Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak” (verse 34). Could Paul be more clear than this? Yet why do Adventists—claiming to follow the Bible—allow women to be Sabbath School teachers, elders, and (in such crazy places as Southern California), pastors? Is there a contradiction between the Bible and Adventist practice?

Several points should be considered in answering these questions. A major point to acknowledge is that Paul is not speaking about *all* women. Rather, the command is given to wives of Christian men. Since men of that time received formal religious training while women did not, it certainly would be more practical for the sake of the worship service for the husbands to answer their wives’ questions at home, after the service (verse 35).

Elsewhere Paul teaches that women receive gifts of the Spirit. Women can pray in public (11:5, 13) as well as prophesy (Acts 2:17, 19; 21:8, 9). Biblical examples of women who did not remain silent include Deborah, who served as a prophetess and military leader (Judges 4 and 5), and Priscilla, who helped evangelize as well as more fully explain the gospel to Apollos (Acts 18:26). A number of other biblical characters, such as Miriam, Esther, and Dorcas, show that the recipients of God’s Spirit and gifts are not limited to men.

The Bible was written in the context of a male-dominated society. Paul must have realized that it would not be wise for the fledgling religious movement to be known for attacking and disrupting the entire social order. Although Paul was

It certainly would be unwise today to follow every word of Scripture to the letter.

accused of turning the world upside down (Acts 17:6), he did so through radical theology, not through rude or shocking behavior. It is possible that the women of Corinth were giving Christianity a bad name by speaking up too much and perhaps even speaking in tongues excessively. For the sake of the gospel, Paul also did not challenge the social order in his implicit acceptance of slavery (Titus 2:9).

Godly wisdom is needed to determine which portions of Scripture are limited in time or to particular situations and cultures. Examples of the latter include Paul’s advice to Timothy to “stop drinking only water, and use a little wine” (1 Tim. 5:23) and to “greet one another with a holy kiss” (Rom. 16:16). It certainly would be unwise today to follow every word of Scripture to the letter. Godly principles, though, will outlast all earthly culture and wisdom. Again, Paul’s advice, “everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way” (1 Cor. 14:40) is a reasonable standard as we apply God’s Word to our actions, no matter in what culture we live.

REACT

1. How can an orderly worship service not become a dull and boring worship service?
2. What is the biblical reasoning for allowing women to teach in church yet not serve as ordained ministers?

By Jim and Marlynn Banta, a statistical analyst at the County Department of Behavioral Health and a registered nurse and marriage and family-therapy intern at Loma Linda (California) University, respectively.

Revival in Worship

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 1 Cor. 14:1

“God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.”¹

How do you spell relief? Try a new spirit. Many times we think of worship in terms of revival. Although it is true that worship will involve relief, it is not based on that. “True worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.”²

After a long and hard week, my best friend and I would look forward to a refreshing Sabbath. We would put all our problematic issues aside and begin with worship. Our worship would consist of reciting short verses from the Bible, singing a hymn or two, and end with a thankful prayer that the Sabbath is finally here. After we were done, we would feel refreshed once again, and our spiritual energy would be revived.

Many times we think of worship in terms of revival.

Ellen White says, “In order to serve Him aright, we must be born of the divine Spirit. This will purify the heart and renew the mind, giving us a new capacity for knowing and loving God. It will give us a willing obedience to all His requirements. This is true worship. It is the fruit of the working of the Holy Spirit.”³

REACT

1. How are we instructed to worship the Lord?
2. What attitude is indicative of a spirit of humility and of true reverence in worship?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 189.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*

By Ofren Domingo and Miriam Manuel, a senior architect student at Woodbury University, Burbank, California, and accountant at Loma Linda (California) Academy, respectively.

Striking the Right Balance in Worship

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Cor. 14:12, 26

Anthropology has identified routinization and repetition as common features of all religious performances. Despite variations, liturgical performances tend to involve the use of repetitive themes and highly stereotyped and stylized patterns of behavior. This supports the basic religious tenet of an ordered universe; this serves to ensure a secure feeling of belonging to a community of believers.

This interdependence is seen in Paul's pervasive use in his writings of the Greek word *allelon*—"each other" (see Rom. 12:5; Eph. 4:25).¹ The recognition that we are all part of God's family should diminish any sense of self-importance among individual members. Paul's representation of the church body made up of many parts reflects the nature of the Godhead in its unity and diversity. Though the body is unified by "one and the same Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:11, NIV), it is important that it allow the free expression of its individual parts. Similarly, Paul urges believers in 1 Corinthians 12 through 14 to strike a balance between expression of diverse gifts, on one hand, and mutual, yet disciplined, expression of gifts that edify the body on the other.² Paul further points out that there are a variety of gifts and that each believer has a gift to offer, which in turn must be used to edify (1 Cor. 14:26).

Various styles of worship services may be biblical.

"Where the gifts are not exercised, the Spirit is not operating. But where the body is not edified, the Spirit likewise is not operating."³

Those who exercise a dominant worship style should remember Paul's principle of balance. Various styles of worship services may be biblical, and those who think their style is the only one should realize that God accepts different worship styles as long as they adhere to biblical principles. Each church could learn from others that worship differently in order to achieve and maintain a balance of strong Bible teaching, fellowship, and praise. Indeed, a church that is Spirit-filled emphasizes its own giftedness without the intolerance, self-importance, and independent spirituality that clearly threaten the principle of *allelon*. The church, like the individual worshiper, is part of a larger body, which must work in harmony and order.

REACT

How can a church establish and maintain a balance between free expression of gifts and edification of the church body?

1. Wendy Murray Zoba, "Father, Son, and . . .," *Christianity Today*, June 17, 1996, p. 22.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*

By Russ Bermejo, a social worker in Loma Linda, California.

Preoccupied With Black and Decker

HOW-TO

Key Text: 1 Cor. 14:12

I grew up in a church in which many youth are talented performers, scholars, and athletes. Coupled with brilliant minds and charming appearances, they sometimes make those of us with gifts in nonperformance areas a bit self-conscious. Though it is nice to know that have spiritual gifts, there is a higher calling for us than to gain distinction in a church congregation.

God provides us with different spiritual gifts that can be used to minister, to carry out His mission, and to praise and worship Him. Sometimes we forget that though our particular talents may not receive as much recognition as those of a performance artist, they contribute just as much to God's universal order. Egocentrically we think that what we consider worthy is what matters most. We forget that God's perspective and what He thinks is important are superior to our own. Sometimes the things on which we place virtue are superficial in the larger scheme of things.

Though we may easily be enchanted by or even envious of others' talents, it might be wise to keep two important points in mind:

1. Purpose. Each person has a talent and a God-given purpose for it. Though

Egocentrically we think that what we consider worthy is what matters most.

some may be more or less apparent, this does not take away from the dignity of its calling. The highest calling for each is in the key text for today. We must use our talents to build the church. It is a calling that bears as much weight as Jesus' charge of Peter in John 21:15-17. Of us all, He inquires, "Do you love me?" It is to each He addresses: Feed My sheep.

2. Motive. Paul covers everything in such simple terms in 1 Corinthians 13. Love feeds the spirit as food does the body. Though our talents help supply the food to live, love provides the reason. Without it we would be only an animated shell of a church. When love is the motive behind even those talents we consider menial, they maintain a dignity that we should rightly term prestigious. When in doubt of our individual contributions, we must not forget the nobility of our own talents and calling when impassioned by love from God.

Spiritual or otherwise, our talents are only tools for the calling—God's calling. We must never become so preoccupied with Black and Decker that we forget the Carpenter.

REACT

What is the larger scheme of things, the big picture, that will allow us to put all other details into the correct perspective?

By Elwyn Garaza, a sophomore medical student at Loma Linda (California) University School of Medicine.

What Is Worthwhile Worship?

OPINION

Key Texts: 1 Cor. 12:7-11; 14:12, 26

When I was young, I watched my father serve as a deacon during Communion service and wondered what it was like to participate in Communion or in any worship service. Eventually I involved myself with the church worship services, and now I find myself coordinating many on my own. My greatest wish is for the congregation to leave worship blessed and strengthened in Christ. My idea of worthwhile worship, however, may be incompatible with another's, and the only satisfactory solution is compromise, by using a variety of participants and worship styles—from traditional to contemporary.

God has given “each one the manifestation of the Spirit . . . for the common good. . . . All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines” (1 Cor. 12:7, 11, NIV). God has given each of us a spiritual gift to use and sharpen. But when we participate in worship, everything should be beneficial to the worshipers (14:12, 26). Participants must be motivated by Christ's love, thus joining in ways that will strengthen others. This doesn't mean every worship service must be unexuberant. Sometimes worship services should cause us to reevaluate our personal beliefs and understand what is strengthening to one another's spiritual needs.

My idea of worthwhile worship may be incompatible with another's.

The difficulties with creating a worship service that strengthens a congregation are the varying opinions on what is appropriate for worship. What may be suitable for a 16-year-old teen may not be suitable for a 50-year-old grandmother. But who is to say what is suitable for worship and what is not? Each person's idea of worthwhile worship is different. Each person's spiritual needs are different. A contemporary Christian rock concert can bless believers as well as the traditional pastor's sermon. Unfortunately, the appropriateness of a program has been the subject of many heated debates among church members, thereby shifting our focus onto ourselves and away from who really matters—Christ.

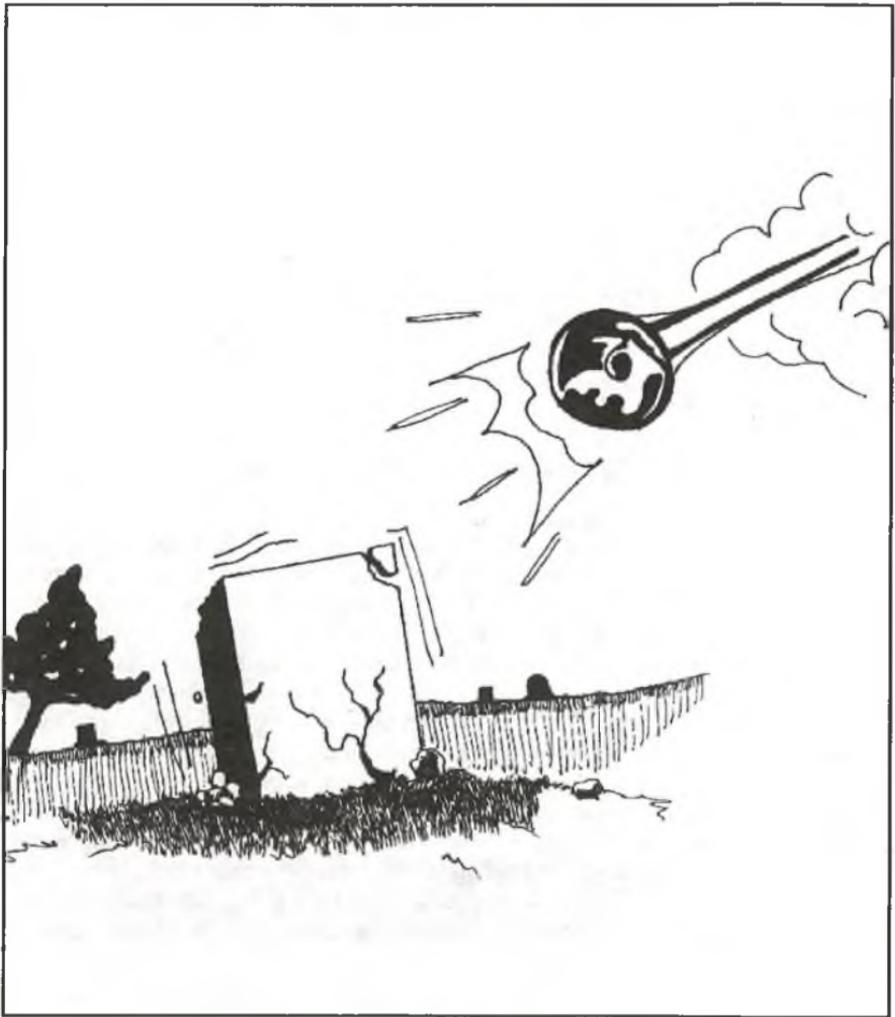
I am not saying it is pointless to discuss the appropriateness of a program. It isn't. In fact, it is necessary. We need always to remember that Christ is the focus of our worship and that these discussions are reality checks, ensuring that we continue to keep Christ in the center of our worship and that we participate in ways that will strengthen the faith of one another.

REACT

1. What is worthwhile worship?
2. In your ideal worship service, what could be considered inappropriate by other members of your church? How would you accommodate their concerns?

By Ghinette H. Tamano, a registered nurse in Redlands, California.

THE REALITY OF THE RESURRECTION



“Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet” (1 Cor. 15:51, 52, NIV).

Job's Observation

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Job 14:1-15

Job asked the age-old question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14). He understood the plight of his race, for he wrote: "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower, and withers; he flees like a shadow, and continues not" (verses 1, 2, RSV). Job understood that humanity was and is unclean because of sin and is condemned to death and that he can do nothing of himself to change that (verses 4, 5). He compares humankind to the tree: "For there is hope for a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its shoots will not cease. Though its root grow old in the earth, and its stump die in the ground, yet at the scent of water it will bud and put forth branches like a young plant" (verses 7-9).

Because of sin, humanity does not have that life within that the tree has. We should note here that the tree is living after the way it has been created to live. The tree is better off. Does humanity have such hope?

The resurrection is one of the most ridiculed beliefs of the Christian today. It is considered impossible simply because science cannot prove it. Modern humankind has not changed much. The Sadducees didn't believe either (Matt. 22:23).

The resurrection is one of the most ridiculed beliefs of the Christian today.

And others "when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked" (Acts 17:32).

Yet Jesus said: "Every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:40, KJV).

"A kindergarten teacher was determining how much religious training her new students had. While talking with one little boy, to whom obviously the story of Jesus was brand new, she began relating His death on the cross. When asked what a cross was, she picked up some sticks and fashioned a crude one. She explained that Jesus was actually nailed to the cross and died. The little boy with eyes down-cast quietly acknowledged, 'Oh, that's too bad.' In the very next breath, however, she related that He rose again and that He came back to life. And his little eyes got big as saucers. He lit up and exclaimed, 'Totally awesome!' "

Man's hope lies not in what he can do for himself, but in the incarnate resurrection of Jesus Christ! It is our desire through this week's study that the reality of the resurrection will become "awesomely real" to you.

*Charles Swindoll, *Growing Deep in the Christian Life*.

A New Body

LOGOS

1 Corinthians 15

Paul, champion of the resurrection, is about to tell the Corinthians a mystery. The word *mystery* refers to a particular aspect of God's plan. The author may possibly make an allusion to revelations that he has received personally or to something Jesus said that was never recorded in the Scriptures. He attracts the attention of His hearers with a small word: *look*. This adds importance to what follows. This mystery, the sudden transformation of the living, has been revealed to him.

Paul certainly does not imagine himself among the living at the time of the Second Coming; this would be contrary to other reasoning found in his writings (1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 3:11). He says "we" on behalf of all the faithful, but he stresses the fact that, alive or dead at the Second Coming, believers will be changed.

The transformation mentioned in verse 52 is not progressive. It takes place suddenly, at a precise moment: *en atomo* (an indivisible moment). He even adds "in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. 15:52). By that he means that the time this transformation takes is so short it cannot be calculated. The precise moment when the transformation occurs will be announced by the instrument generally used to call the assembly together, to strike camp, or to announce the festivals (Num. 10:2-10). Traditionally, the trumpet was the instrument that announced change (Matt. 24:31; Rev. 8:2).

The resurrection is the passage from one state to another.

The resurrection is the passage from one state to another. In the author's mind, it does not simply mean a coming back to life, but this resurrection is characterized by entry into an incorruptible state. Paul stresses the fact that the passage from the temporal to the eternal will take place at a precise moment without any help from man; it is a divine initiative meant here. He gives no indication concerning the time when this passage from corruptible to incorruptible will take place, but he underlines the fact that the trumpet will indicate that it is time to put an end to death.

What Paul is saying here is beyond our understanding and shows us that the miracle of Creation and that of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which are impossible for us to analyze, are about to be repeated.

The resurrection of Jesus is at the center of the apostolic message. I participate in my salvation by my adherence to the truth as it is in Jesus. The truth to which Christians adhere is not an abstract truth. They attach themselves to a Person, and not just any person.

All creation must be delivered from the power of death. It is only in the context of this redemption that an individual, corporeal resurrection has a place. This redemption has already been accomplished in Jesus, but it will be fully realized at the end of time. Death is neither liberation from our carnal prison, as the Greek

philosophers maintained, nor the passage to a new form of existence. For there to be a resurrection there must be a miracle, and consequently, the intervention of the power of God.

Christ's resurrection is not an isolated event. Paul underlines that fact several times in his letter to the Corinthians. It assures the believer of his future resurrection and leads him, through baptism, to die to his life of sin and to his new birth with Christ. Our Saviour's resurrection inaugurated life. From here on, eschatology is in touch with the present. As the cause of our own resurrection, the resurrection of Christ, already now, has an influence on the believer. The resurrection affirms the lordship of Christ over the universe and the complete, definitive victory over death.

God's glory is revealed in Christ's triumph over death. At His resurrection, God gave Him a first victory over death and sin and, by this victory, we can overcome the enemy, but this enemy remains ever present and menacing. By Christ's complete triumph, the enemy will be finally defeated at the Second Coming.

Christ offers humanity eternal life, a glorious life, by His resurrection: "But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:22, 23, NIV).

It is not Paul's aim, through the logic of his reasoning, to convince those who deny the resurrection that it is possible because Christ was raised from the dead, but He wants them to understand, and us as well, that it is indispensable (or unavoidable) because of His resurrection. It cannot be otherwise, because Christ is the first fruits.

As far as Paul is concerned, there is no question of being influenced by Greek philosophy. He is a disciple of Jesus Christ, and this is what influences him to say, "The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we [the living] shall be changed" (1 Cor. 15:52, KJV).

REACT

1. What is your reaction to death?
2. Why did Paul write a whole chapter about the resurrection to the people of Corinth?
3. Did Paul really think he would be among the living ones at the second coming of Christ?
4. What is the real meaning Paul gives to the word *resurrection*?
5. Why is it so important to us as Christians to believe in the resurrection of Jesus?
6. Did Paul really think he would be among the living ones at the second coming of Christ? Explain your answer.

The Lost Generation's Victory

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Phil. 3:10

Close your eyes and imagine for a moment that “A halo of light and glory centered about the time of Jesus’ death and resurrection, immortalizing the sacred truth that He was the Saviour of the world.”¹

Quoting Baxter, Ellen White describes the believers’ attitudes in the hope of the resurrection: “‘The thoughts of the coming of the Lord,’ said Baxter, ‘are most sweet and joyful to me.’ . . . ‘It is the work of faith and the character of His saints to love His appearing and to look for that blessed hope.’ ‘If death be the last enemy to be destroyed at the resurrection, we may learn how earnestly believers should long and pray for the second coming of Christ, when this full and final conquest shall be made.’”² The promise of the resurrection is also for this generation.

Satan tried to harm the early Christians but could not destroy them. “He could have power only over the body. He could not make believers yield their faith and hope. And even in death they triumphed with a bright hope of immortality at the resurrection of the just.”³

Jesus declared, “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25, NIV) and “He who has the Son has life” (1 John 5:12). “In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived. . . . The divinity of Christ is the believer’s assurance of eternal life.”⁴

“A halo of light and glory centered about the time of Jesus’ death and resurrection.”

The promise of the resurrection is also for this generation.

Taste the assurance of life now. “The Word of God contains our life insurance policy. . . . Those who thus partake of the Son of God become partakers of the divine nature, one with Christ. They breathe a holy atmosphere, in which only the soul can truly live. They carry in their lives an assurance of the holy principles received from the Word—their lives are worked by the power of the Holy Spirit, and they have an earnest of the immortality that will be theirs through the death and resurrection of Christ.”⁵

1. *Early Writings*, p. 197.
2. *The Great Controversy*, pp. 303, 304.
3. *Early Writings*, p. 225.
4. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 530.
5. *The Upward Look*, p. 78.

By Bruno Vertalier, a professor of practical theology, Centre Universitaire et Pédagogique du Salève, Collonges-sous-Salève, France.

The Incorruptible Life

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Cor. 15:35-38

Many Christian Corinthians had doubts about the resurrection. So Paul emphasizes the incorruptible nature of the Christian life (1 Cor. 15:42-54). The Greek root of the word for *corruptible*, which is found about twenty times in the New Testament, appears here nine times.

The powerful contrast with the incorruptible, the first being the signatures of the world. The incorruptible are the work of God and the believer's heritage. This powerful, spiritual reality is already within our grasps through Christ, whose resurrection is the guarantee of the believers' resurrection.

Today we live in the hope of that resurrection and of incorruptible life coming from God. In verses 50-53, we notice a change of tense. Paul uses the *future*: "we *shall* not all *sleep*, but we *shall* all *be changed*. . . . For the trumpet *shall sound*, and the dead *shall be raised*." But this declaration appears between two statements in *present tense*, that seem to be contradictory: "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (verse 50) and "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (verse 53).

For the Christian, the resurrection means not only a far-off event but eternal and incorruptible life. Speaking of the believer's death, Paul generally uses the word

The Christian does not die at the moment of his death.

sleep. In other words, the Christian does not die at the moment of his death. He simply falls asleep to wake up forever at Jesus' return. Since Christ's victory over sin and death, death is no longer a permanent threat but just an interruption. We can go even farther. In order to give birth to a plant, the seed must die in the soil. The growth of the plant, or more exactly, the passing from death to life, does not happen by itself but is the work of God. In the same way, man has to die like the seed in the soil, the gift of life being the work of God.

Corruptibility is not only the nature of the passing human life or life before conversion but also a *state of mind*. We need to become more and more aware each day of our attachment to earthly things, to give up "our life," to put on incorruption, life from God, life with God. Even though the resurrection means complete liberation from sin, the final victory over death (verses 54-56), the incorruptible life begins today, "for this corruptible must put on incorruption."

At the end of this argument, Paul does not invite the Corinthians to believe from now on, but to stand firm, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Belief in the resurrection is not only an intellectual conviction but the goal is an incorruptible transformation of the Christian life.

By Doris Vargas Hordosch, a Greek teacher at Centre Universitaire et Pédagogique du Salève, Collonges-sous-Salève, France.

Prepare to Hear the Trumpet

HOW-TO

Key Texts: 1 Cor. 15:52; Matt. 24:31

The hope of the resurrection is the principle hope of the Christian. Only Jesus has the power to call the dead back to life. The proof: He resurrected Lazarus. Already in the Old Testament we find the same message: "Thy dead shall live, their bodies shall rise" (Isa. 26:19, RSV).

Who is going to be resurrected incorruptible?

A navigation company decided to hire a radio officer. The applicants waited patiently for what seemed like forever. Still no one was called. Suddenly a man, who until then had kept quiet and discreet, got up quickly and went into the office where the interview was to be held. A few minutes later he came out smiling, contract in hand. What happened?

The representative of the company came out and addressed the others. "The man who got the contract was the only one among you to respond to the order that we gave over the loudspeaker in Morse code: 'The first one who understands this order and comes into the interviewing room will be hired.'"

What if the last trumpet is to be heard only by those who have eyes and ears for Jesus their Master, who know the language of His heart? In a time when saying

My life became like a house that just changed owners.

that we believe in the resurrection makes us look somewhat ridiculous, we must still witness to the reality of eternal life through Jesus. I believe in the resurrection because Christ has bought back my life by the price of His blood on the Cross. When I accepted this, by faith, my life became like a house that just changed owners. Jesus has cleaned every room, until the light of the resurrection filled me. And He continues day after day.

Tell others that Jesus Christ, our King and Saviour, has come to save humanity from their sins and that today He wants to meet with them, to forgive their sin and give them life. Tell them that they possess the guarantee of Christ's heritage if they put their lives in His hands. And this life flows like living water in you from the throne of God. Give your friend to drink, your neighbor, your colleague at work; they are thirsty. Get away to a secret place with the Lord to pray. Tell Him you want to drink from the fountain of life eternal and to eat of the fruit from the tree of life.

REACT

1. What did being quiet have to do with hearing the call?
2. How can you help others to be more attentive?

By Françoise Neuenschwander, a third-year theology student at Centre Universitaire et Pédagogique du Salève, Collonges-sous-Salève, France.

Christ, Also My Resurrection

OPINION

Key Text: 1 Cor. 15:12, 13, 32

After His resurrection, Jesus was seen by Cephas, then by the 12, and by more than five hundred brethren at once. He was seen by James, by all the apostles, and last of all, He was seen by Paul on his way to Damascus.

In the same way Christ appeared to me, after ten years of living far away from Him. I received a strict education, and this brought me a false picture of God. Because of that, I was cold and uncaring toward others, which led me to be dishonest, always rebelling at any religious institution. Finally, after I spent months reading the Bible and in prayer, the Holy Spirit enlightened my heart. The love and the grace of the Lord helped me to be converted and repent.

At the age of 24, some time just before Easter 1992, one evening while I was on my knees, praying with an elder of the church, the Holy Spirit came deep into my heart, and at that moment I felt how poor and miserable a sinner I was. Now everything changed. I had found the real solution to my life and destiny. I could say with Paul that I am what I am, only through the Lord's grace.

I have turned a new page of my life. Today I am achieving my fourth year at the Centre Universitaire et Pédagogique du Salève, Collonges-sous-Salève, in France.

I had found the real solution to my life and destiny.

During the past three years, I have had the opportunity to preach more than sixty times. The main theme of all my preaching is Jesus Christ, my Lord and Saviour.

Unbelievers were joyful at the moment of Jesus' crucifixion and death, but nothing could be so powerful as to hinder Jesus to rise from death. According to recent statistics, it is sad to note that 92 percent of humanity believe there is life after death—the dogma of natural immortality. Only 8 percent believe in the resurrection. Paul said, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (1 Cor. 15:14).

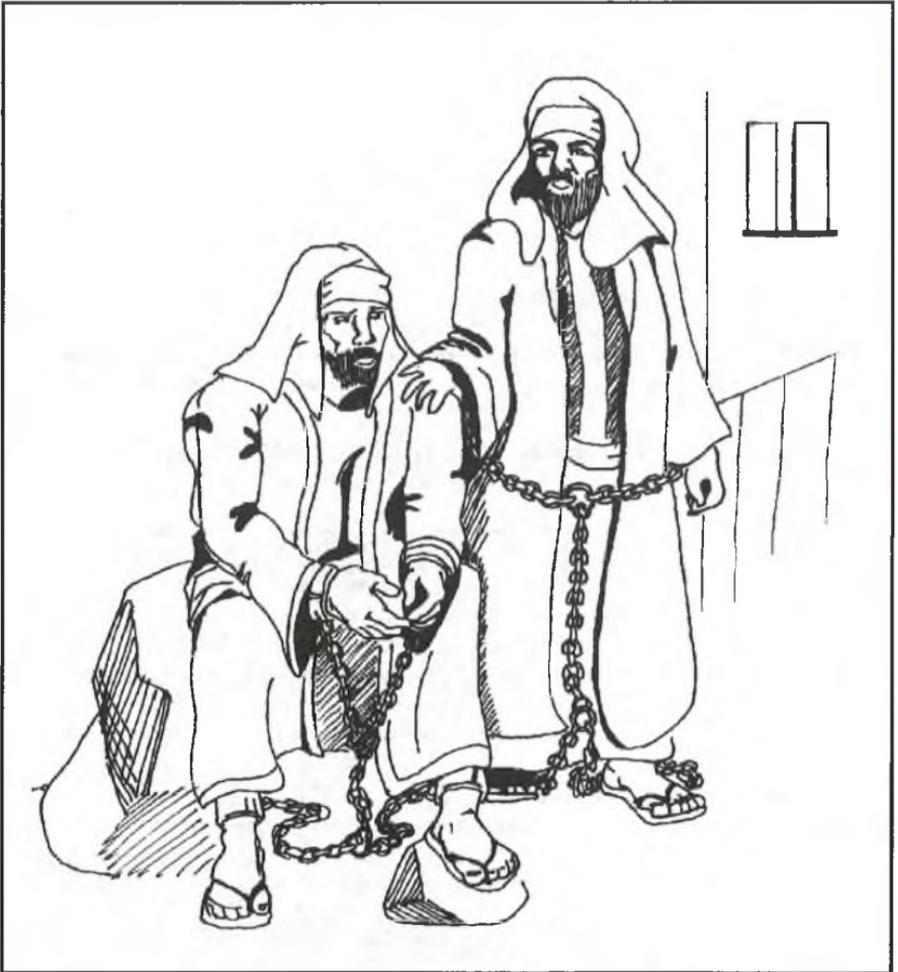
The resurrection of Christ is such an obvious truth. It allowed my own resurrection from my former way of life. Jesus Himself is the first witness of His rise from death, and He is the guarantee of our resurrection. We need to accept the gift of salvation, to say together with Paul: "Christ is my life, or the risen Christ is faith's reality."

REACT

What does it signify for you that only a minority believe in the resurrection of Christ?

By Matthias Maag, a fourth-year theology student at Centre Universitaire et Pédagogique du Salève, Collonges-sous-Salève, France.

SINGING IN THE DARK



“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13, NKJV).

Freedom in Captivity

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Ps. 105:1-3

The prisoners walked slowly behind the guard. As they passed through the dark corridor, they were welcomed by jeering inmates. One of the newcomers strolled as if in a park, a peaceful look on his weathered face. His serene bearing caught everyone's notice. The younger man limped behind him, trying to keep up with the guard, who barked instructions with every step. They passed the cells and waited as the guard unlocked a heavy door. It screeched as it opened. Inside, they were fastened to the stocks. They sat silently there, reliving the events of the day: the public beating, the false charges, and now, the dank prison cell.

Paul and Silas surveyed their situation. Cold, injured, wet, and hungry, they could not move, yet they were thankful. Maybe they remembered something Jesus said not too long before: "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven" (Matt. 5:11, 12, NIV). This marvelous promise must have warmed their hearts to think of their Saviour's love. Their hearts so overflowed with joy that, forgetting their pain and plight, they burst into song.

The guard and inmates couldn't believe their ears. Sweet melodies of praise to God filled the air, instead of the usual cruel sounds of the prison. Everyone wanted

The guard and inmates couldn't believe their ears.

to know: "How can these men sing in such a desperate situation?" Paul and Silas had something to sing about. They were assured of the presence of the Most High, and to Him they raised their voices in praise and thanksgiving.

Can we praise God in the midst of hard times? The Bible says we can. In 1 Corinthians 10:13 we find a wonderful promise; you read it in this week's verse. God sifts through the trials and temptations and allows us to face only those we can handle. But He takes it a step farther. He will also equip us with the tools we need to find our way out of those trials. Isn't that enough reason to praise and glorify the Lord? Yet there is still more. That promise and hundreds of others found in His Word are solid as a rock. Take them to the bank and cash them in, because they are as good as gold. God does not fail us. He has given everything to grant us eternal happiness. He spread Himself between heaven and earth and died with His hands and feet nailed to a tree. I have to praise a God who would love me that much. Don't you want to praise Him too?

By Sandra Araujo-Delgado, director of public relations and alumni affairs, Antillian Adventist University, Puerto Rico.

Praise in Temptation

LOGOS

1 Cor. 1:4-9; 3:21-23; 6:19, 20; 10:13; 13:12

“Pastor, I can’t handle this situation. I can’t understand how I’m supposed to praise God through all this. I can’t do it.” Young people walk into my office with statements like this quite often. Many ask themselves, *Is it possible to praise God when being tempted?*

During this week we have the opportunity to analyze what the apostle Paul wanted to tell us in 1 Corinthians 10:13. I’d like to share this message of hope, praise, and joy. Perhaps up to now you’ve never considered the possibility of praising God in the midst of conflict; let us consider this verse and extract a lesson for our lives.

“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man.”

We all recognize that, because sin entered the world, we will stand trials and temptations. The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* points out that the term *temptation* comes from the Greek *peirazo*, which means “to try,” “to tempt,” or “to put to the test.”¹ We are tested every day. Even Jesus was tempted. “The Saviour came to our world to bring to every tried, tempted soul strength to overcome even as He overcame. I know the power of temptation; I know the dangers that are in the way; but I know, too, that strength sufficient for every time of need is provided for those who are struggling against temptation.”²

“Christ will never abandon the soul for whom He has died.”

“And God is faithful.”

The strength of a believer is founded in God’s faithfulness. This is the joy young people can experience. Today you can declare, like the prophet Jeremiah, “Great is thy faithfulness” (Lam. 3:23), because no matter what trials or temptations may come your way, God has promised to be by your side—and His promises are true.

“He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.”

Here Paul reminds us that we will be tempted. We will face hard times, but God will not allow us to go beyond what we can stand. E. G. White comments: “The Lord knows all about our experiences; He understands about our inconveniences; and He has a care for all who follow on to know the Lord. He will never allow His children to be tempted above that they are able to bear.”³

“But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”

This is why we can praise God in the midst of temptation or trials, because He has promised that we can overcome. “Christ will never abandon the soul for whom He has died. The soul may leave Him and be overwhelmed with temptation, but Christ can never turn from one for whom He has paid the ransom of His own life.”⁴

Today we can stand on the promises of “Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy” (Jude 24, NIV).

REACT

1. How do I act when I face temptation?
2. Can I speak to Jesus in the midst of temptation? Why?
3. Under what circumstances is it difficult for me to praise God? Why?
4. How can I help a friend who is being tempted?
5. What benefits do I receive from praising God?
6. What promises apply to me today?
7. Does God have guidelines for praise? If so, what are some of them?
8. Are there times when you’ve felt that God hadn’t come through for you? Why?

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1. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, p. 822.
 2. *Messages to Young People*, p. 81.
 3. *Evangelism*, p. 237.
 4. *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 118, 119.

By Pedro Fernández, senior pastor, University Church, Antillian Adventist University, Puerto Rico.

Made to Praise

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Rev. 4:2, 3

Why do God's promises produce in believers an urgent desire to praise Him?

The expression *Thank you* recognizes an unexpected favor, something for which we are not worthy, or something we are just happy to receive. Think of all the things we receive from God every day. Our gratitude is expressed through sincere praise. Humanity was created to give God honor and glory (Isa. 43:7), and in doing so we satisfy a need placed in our soul by our Creator.

In His mercy, God seeks to satisfy humankind's search for happiness. He is the safekeeper of all that is good, and He makes it available to us through His promises in the Bible. How can we be sure that God will fulfill His promises? "The honor of His throne is staked for the fulfillment of His words unto us."¹

"The rainbow of promise encircling the throne on high is an everlasting testimony. . . . It is an assurance to us of strength and protection as long as the throne itself shall endure."² In other words, God's promises will stand forever. Using the rainbow as a symbol of God's faithfulness, Sister White makes the following statement: "The rainbow spanning the heavens with its arch of light is a token of the

"The rainbow . . . is also a token to God's children of His covenant of peace."

everlasting covenant between God and every living creature. And the rainbow encircling the throne on high is also a token to God's children of His covenant of peace."³

Just as the promise of salvation finds its origin in God, so does the act of making it available to us. His presence surrounded by the rainbow of promise will forever stand as evidence of God's desire for peace and happiness for His children. This without a doubt creates a debt of gratitude in all those who, without deserving it, enjoy God's bountiful blessings.

The dramatic expression of worship and praise found in the insatiable "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come" (Rev. 4:8, NIV) is the reaction of those heavenly beings who are eternally thankful to God for all that He has done.

May our prayer be that God's marvelous promises will touch our hearts in such a way that we will burst out in praise and thanksgiving—after all, that is what we were made for.

1. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 148.

2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 493.

3. *Education*, p. 115.

By Ramón Araujo, a professor in the religion department of Antillian Adventist University, Puerto Rico.

A Faithful God

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Cor. 10:13

When Paul wrote his first letter to the church in Corinth, its members were going through serious apostasy. They were introducing new ideas and customs that were against the gospel they had first accepted. In addition, their faith had been severely undermined. Knowing their situation, Paul encouraged them to believe that in the midst of temptation and hard times God is faithful.

What does Paul mean when he says that God is faithful?

The Greek word used in this verse to describe not just a virtue but the very essence of God's character is *pistós*. This word means "reliable," "trustworthy," "faithful." In other words, Paul is saying that when God speaks, He fulfills His words. It is as simple as that. In the book of Numbers, we find a stunning statement about God: "God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?" (Num. 23:19, NIV). That is why in Hebrews 4:16 we find the invitation, "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

"In the midst of temptation and hard times God is faithful."

Throughout the Word of God, we find so many evidences of God's faithfulness (Num. 23:19; 1 Thess. 5:24; 2 Thess. 3:3). When we acknowledge God in all our ways (Prov. 3:6), His promises become a reality in our lives. His help and awesome power will be on our side in hard times, "and sustained by His enduring might, under strong temptation, we may resist in His all-powerful name and overcome as He overcame."

God invites us today to trust Him completely because He is faithful. Writing to Timothy, Paul says, "If we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself" (2 Tim. 2:13, NIV). Therefore, if we have such a great God who will not fail us, how can we doubt Him? The key to unlock the storehouse of heaven is to believe. If we believe, He has promised to be faithful.

REACT

1. How can I experience God's faithfulness in my life?
2. In what ways has God fulfilled His promises to me?

**In Heavenly Places, 1968, p. 251.*

By Angel Heredia, a fourth-year theology student at Antillian Adventist University, Puerto Rico.

A Temple for His Honor

HOW-TO

Key Text: 1 Cor. 6:19, 20

In his many Epistles, the apostle uses the human body to illustrate spiritual truths. In this instance, the body is equated to a spiritual temple in which the Holy Spirit could abide. To the Corinthian believers, the idea of a temple as the spiritual residence of a deity was nothing new. They were surrounded by temples and shrines dedicated to the many gods they once worshiped. So they understood the importance of having God's Spirit living in their temple.

Paul also points out that these temples have been bought at an incredibly high price—the blood of the Son of God. No one could ever pay a higher price than Jesus paid for each of us. In return, God asks us only to honor and obey Him.

There are many ways of praising God in our temples. Here's a look at some of them:

1. Maintain your mind under His direction through prayer. The Bible says we should pray continually (1 Thess. 5:16). This, of course, doesn't mean you will be kneeling with your eyes closed all day long. It's more like carrying your cell phone and using it often. Once you are connected to Him through prayer, He will guide not only your thoughts but your actions too.

2. Keep your body from sexual perversion and immorality. That is not so

Sexual innuendoes are found even in toothpaste commercials.

easy to do these days. Sexual innuendoes are found even in toothpaste commercials. It is possible, however, to stay sexually pure by keeping our minds on "whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable" (Phil. 4:8, NIV).

3. Be selective. Don't you know that you are a prince? (1 Pet. 2:9). Then act like one. Don't be swept away by everything the entertainment industry dishes out. Pick and choose what's best for you. Look out for what you are putting into your body. You have a right to get premium gas, not the regular stuff.

4. Watch your output. If your input is good, you won't need to practice what we preach. God doesn't need your lip service; He needs your heart. So why not give it to Him? He'll take care of the output.

Our temples should ring out with praise to our Maker. God takes care of setting everything up; He will play the strings of your heart, and you'll make wonderful music. So all you have to do is ask the Master to do the work in you, and your life will be a life of praise.

REACT

As a young adult living in the 20th century, how can I relate to 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20?

By David Vélez, director of the humanities department at Antillian Adventist University, Puerto Rico.

A Time Bomb

OPINION

Key Text: Ps. 103:1

“Amen!” I was ready to pull out my stopwatch. Why must he say it so loud, and drag it out so long? He is a friend from church, quite odd, most would say. My mother, on the other hand, waits for the congregation to say Amen, and then she joins in. I know of another man who at the time of singing holds his hymn book in one hand and with the other sort of directs the song as he smiles. So there I stand, in the midst of all of this, feeling like an atheist. “Is that how I’m supposed to praise you, Lord? I just don’t know how!”

When I began thinking of reasons that make it seem natural for some people to praise God, I came to the conclusion they have a lot to be thankful for. Taking a look inside, I’d have to say that I, too, have a lot of thanking to do. But why can’t I? Why do I feel embarrassed, weird? Why do I associate praise with making a fool out of myself? Maybe I haven’t had the whole picture on this praising business. You see, it’s a little complicated. It’s as much an outward, spontaneous expression of thanks to God as it is the inaudible language of my “inmost being” (Ps. 103:1, NIV) toward my Creator.

It’s been a few years since I looked oddly at people who spontaneously

Taking a look inside, I’d have to say that I, too, have a lot of thanking to do.

expressed their love for God. At times it is still hard for me to be so open in my praise; but I have learned that one begins by listening to Jesus’ voice saying “I love you.” Next, we must believe that He is faithful to keep His promises, and then the praise comes naturally. There is no shame involved, and I can praise God in many different ways. So now, if I’m singing a song and it stirs my heart, I know I’m praising God; if the thoughts of my mind please my Lord, I know He sees it as praise.

I can now understand my mother—and my friend from church. God blessed them, and their happiness was so great that like a time bomb they exploded at any given moment. Look at your life. Look around and count your blessings. Surely you, too, have reasons to explode in praise.

REACT

1. What has God done for me this week for which I may praise Him?
2. In what ways can I express my thanks to God for His blessings?

By Zoraida Vélez, a fourth-year history student at Antillian Adventist University, Puerto Rico.

Next Quarter's Lessons

Sermon on the Mount

If you have not received a copy of *CQ* for second quarter 1998, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

Lesson 1: The Kingdom of Heaven

Scriptures: Exod. 20:19; Matt. 5:1, 17-20; Matt. 13:33; Luke 17:20, 21; John 1:11.

Theme: The Seventh-day Adventist Church believes it has been entrusted with special last-day truth about God. How best to share its insight into the kingdom of heaven is our subject this week.

Lesson 2: The Poor in Spirit

Scriptures: Matt. 5:3-11; Luke 4:18, 19; 6:20; 14:21; 2 Cor. 8:9; James 2:5.

Theme: In the Beatitudes, Jesus sought to outline the prescription for true happiness. This week, we shall discover who the "poor in spirit" are and examine the blessings Christ pronounced upon them.

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My Dear Brother M . . .
Paul A. Gordon

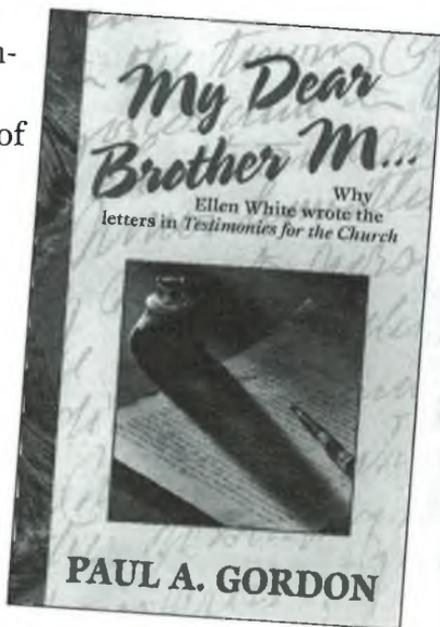
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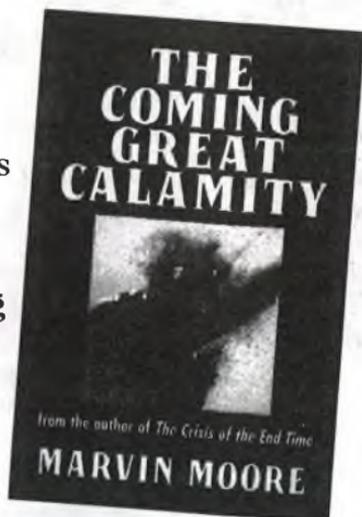
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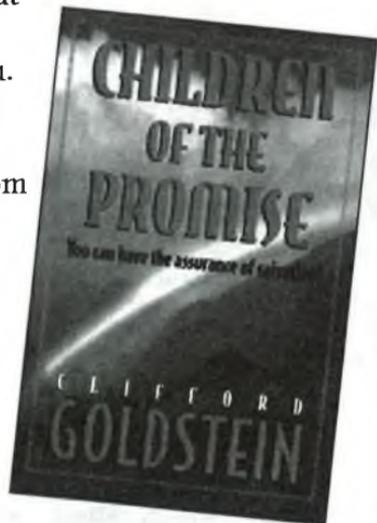


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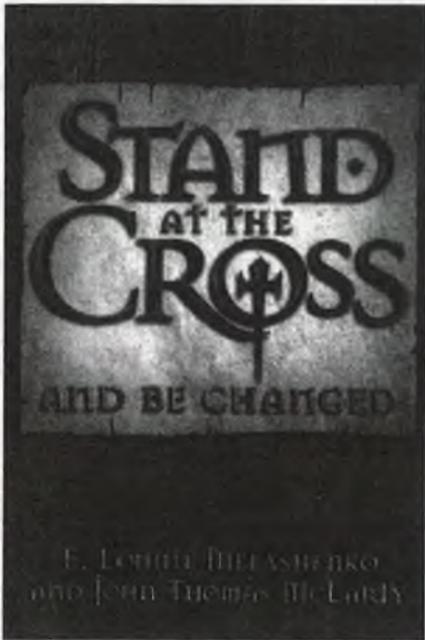


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CHRIST
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THERE . . .

NOW YOU
CAN SEE HIM
THERE TOO.



STAND
AT THE
CROSS
AND BE CHANGED

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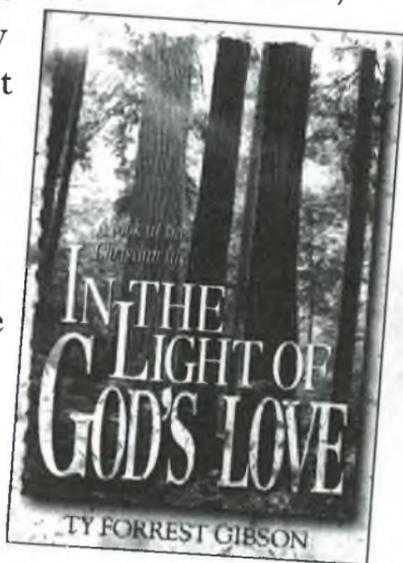
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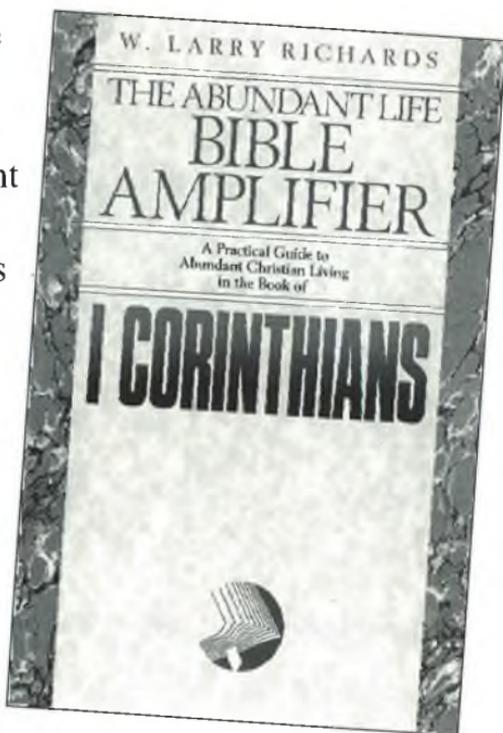
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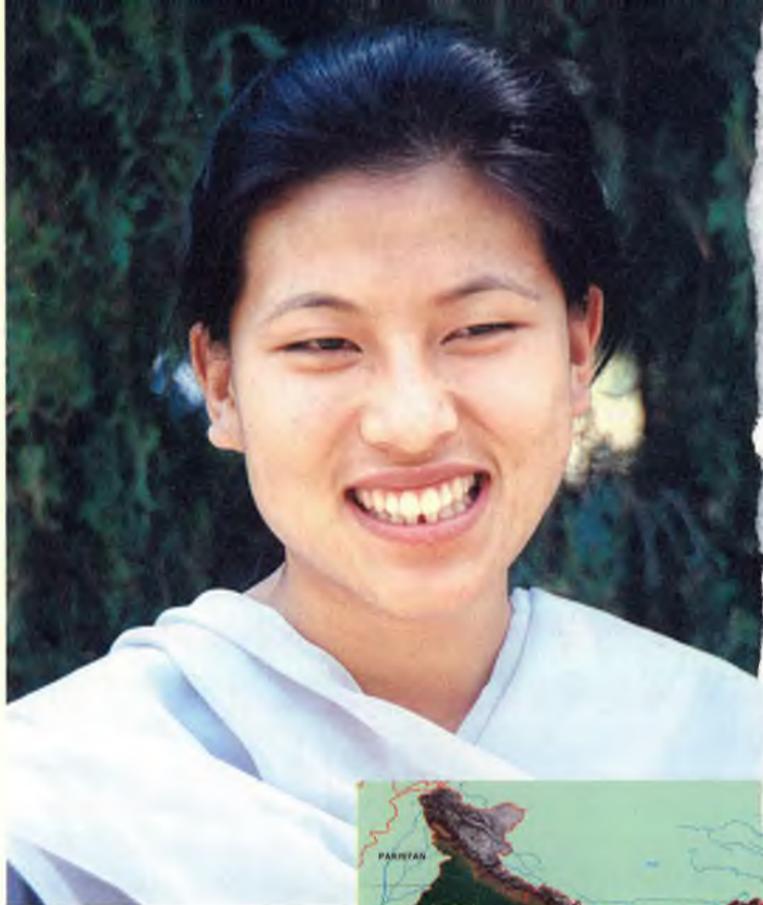


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MISSION PROFILE



Southern Asia Division

NAME:

Dehanlue Han Puii

COUNTRY:

Manipur, India

CURRENT SITUATION:

The school Han Puii attends has scheduled its final exams on Sabbath and if they do not make an exception for her she may have to take the whole year over. She hopes to go to Spicer Memorial College next year where she won't have those problems.

YOUR OFFERING:

Part of the special mission offering taken this quarter will go toward a new women's dormitory at Spicer Memorial College so Han Puii and others like her can attend a Christian school.