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General Organ of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

October 8, 1981

Messages
for the Week
of Prayer
and Church
Fellowship,
October 24-31,
1981

General topic:
The family
of God



Message from the General Conference officers

The 1981 Week of Prayer readings deal with the topic "The Family of God." They are challenging indeed and should strike a responsive chord in the hearts of Seventh-day Adventists around the world. Because Seventh-day Adventists *are* to be made up of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people in the world. We are one—one in hope, one in spirit, one in devotion. We come from many cultures, nationalities, races, and backgrounds. In the world such factors are divisive ones. These differences sometimes engender distrust, suspicion, and even hatred. But, as Seventh-day Adventists, we recognize that regardless of where a person comes from, what the color of his skin may be, what his national origin is, or what language he may speak, when he gives his heart to Jesus Christ and joins the Seventh-day Adventist Church he becomes a member of the family of God.

It is a thrilling sight for those of us who attend a General Conference session to see thousands of people from every nation under heaven mingling together, singing together, praying together, worshipping together. There is a bond of fellowship and love that binds our hearts together. We may not be able to speak each other's language, but we shake hands. There is a smile of acceptance and acknowledgment, and we know that deep down in our hearts we indeed love each other because we belong to the family of God.

Your General Conference officers are most anxious that during this week we Adventists renew our bonds of fellowship with one another and that we pray earnestly for the unity of the church in these days of tension and divisiveness in the world. We urge every member to pray for unity within his own family, because the family of God is composed of the families of church members. Satan has made a great inroad into the family. Homes are breaking up everywhere. Unfortunately, even among the people of God homes are breaking up.

Therefore we urge that during this Week of Prayer we renew our vows of dedication and loyalty to each member of our immediate family; father, mother, and children bound together in affection and love and the recognition that we need each other. As we cement our relationships at home, we lay a basis for unity within the church and within the family of God that is made up of all the nations of earth. There are certain privileges and responsibilities in being members of a family, and these are brought to view in our messages for this week.

Your General Conference officers urge that this Week of Prayer be, not just another week, but one of great spiritual awakening. We hope that, in various parts of the world, each member will determine to attend the services. But in addition to our attendance at church, may we have worship in our homes. May those who need to renew the family altar do just that. Let us cement the family together in love and worship of the Lord. Your General Conference officers are praying with you that this will be the greatest spiritual Week of Prayer in its impact and outreach that we have ever had. God bless all of you during this special week.

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God's love and care for His family

The gift of God to the human race is beyond all computation. In the gift of Christ He gave all heaven.

By ELLEN G. WHITE

God made man perfectly holy and happy; and the fair earth, as it came from the Creator's hand, bore no blight of decay or shadow of the curse. It is transgression of God's law—the law of love—that has brought woe and death. Yet even amid the suffering that results from sin, God's love is revealed. It is written that God cursed the ground for man's sake (Gen. 3:17). The thorn and the thistle—the difficulties and trials that make his life one of toil and care—were appointed for his good as a part of the training needful in God's plan for his uplifting from the ruin and degradation that sin has wrought. The world, though fallen, is not all sorrow and misery. In nature itself are messages of hope and comfort. There are flowers upon the thistles, and the thorns are covered with roses. . . .

He Himself has declared His infinite love and pity. When Moses prayed, "Shew me thy glory," the Lord answered, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee" (Ex. 33:18, 19). This is His glory. The Lord passed before Moses, and proclaimed, "The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" (Ex. 34:6, 7). He is "slow to anger, and of great kindness," "because he delighteth in mercy" (Jonah 4:2; Micah 7:18).

God has bound our hearts to Him by unnumbered tokens in heaven and in earth. Through the things of nature, and the deepest and tenderest earthly ties that

human hearts can know, He has sought to reveal Himself to us.¹

The power of God is manifested in the beating of the heart, in the action of the lungs, and in the living currents that circulate through the thousand different channels of the body. We are indebted to Him for every moment of existence, and for all the comforts of life. The powers and abilities that elevate man above the lower creation, are the endowment of the Creator. He loads us with His benefits. We are indebted to Him for the food we eat, the water we drink, the clothes we wear, the air we breathe. Without His special providence, the air would be filled with pestilence and poison.

He is a bountiful benefactor and preserver. The sun which shines upon the earth, and glorifies all nature, the weird solemn radiance of the moon, the glories of the firmament, spangled with brilliant stars, the showers that refresh the land, and cause vegetation to flourish, the precious things of nature in all their varied richness, the lofty trees, the



shrubs and plants, the waving grain, the blue sky, the green earth, the changes of day and night, the renewing seasons, all speak to man of his Creator's love.²

When Adam's sin plunged the race into hopeless misery, God might have cut Himself loose from fallen beings. He might have treated them as sinners deserved to be treated. He might have commanded the angels of heaven to pour out upon our world the vials of His wrath. He might have removed this dark blot from His universe. But He did not do this. Instead of banishing them from His presence, He came still nearer to the fallen race. He gave His Son to become bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, . . . full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Christ by His human relationship to men drew them close to God. He clothed His divine nature with the garb of humanity, and demonstrated before the heavenly universe, before the unfallen worlds, how much God loves the children of men.

The gift of God to man is beyond all computation. Nothing was withheld. God would not permit it to be said that He could have done more or revealed to humanity a greater measure of love. In the gift of Christ He gave all heaven.³

Adopted into the royal family

He who has all power in heaven and earth will restore every repenting, believing soul. . . . Those who receive Him and believe in Him become the spiritual children of God. They are adopted into the royal family, and as they seek to do the will of God, they become conformed into His image.⁴

As we fully believe that we are His by adoption, we may have a foretaste of heaven. . . . We have a nearness to Him, and can hold sweet communion with Him. We obtain distinct views of His tenderness and compassion, and our hearts are broken and melted with contemplation of the love that is given to us. We feel indeed an abiding Christ in the soul. We abide in Him, and feel at home with Jesus. The promises flow into the soul. Our peace is like a river, wave after wave of glory rolls into the heart, and indeed we sup with Jesus and He with us. We have a realizing sense of the love of God, and we rest in His love. No language can describe it, it is beyond knowledge. We are one with Christ, our life is hid with Christ in God. We have the assurance that when He who is our life shall appear, then shall we also

appear with Him in glory. With strong confidence, we can call God our Father.⁵

Jesus teaches us to call *His* Father our Father. He is not ashamed to call us brethren (Heb. 2:11). So ready, so eager, is the Saviour's heart to welcome us as members of the family of God, that in the very first words we are to use in approaching God He places the assurance of our divine relationship, "Our Father."⁶

In calling God our Father, we recognize all His children as our brethren. We are all a part of the great web of humanity, all members of one family. In our petitions we are to include our neighbors as well as ourselves. No one prays aright who seeks a blessing for himself alone. . . .

God dwells in every abode; He hears every word that is spoken, listens to every prayer that is offered, tastes the sorrows and disappointments of every soul, regards the treatment that is given to father, mother, sister, friend, and neighbor. He cares for our necessities, and His love and mercy and grace are continually flowing to satisfy our need. . . .

If you call God your Father you acknowledge yourselves His children, to be guided by His wisdom and to be obedient in all things, knowing that His love is changeless. You will accept His plan for your life. As children of God, you will hold His honor, His character, His family, His work, as the objects of your highest interest. It will be your joy to recognize and honor your relation to your Father and to every member of His family. You will rejoice to do any act, however humble, that will tend to His glory or to the well-being of your kindred.⁷

In Christ we are one

Through faith in Christ we become members of the royal family, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. In Christ we are one. As we come in sight of Calvary, and view the royal Sufferer who in man's nature bore the curse of the law in his behalf, all national distinctions, all sectarian differences are obliterated; all honor of rank, all pride of caste is lost.

The light shining from the throne of God upon the cross of Calvary forever puts an end to man-made separations between class and race. Men of every class become members of one family, children of the heavenly King, not through earthly power, but through the love of God who gave Jesus to a life of

poverty, affliction, and humiliation, to a death of shame and agony, that He might bring many sons and daughters unto glory.⁸

The church of God below is one with the church of God above. Believers on the earth and the beings in heaven who have never fallen constitute one church. Every heavenly intelligence is interested in the assemblies of the saints who on earth meet to worship God. . . . Oh, that we could all realize the nearness of heaven to earth! When the earthborn children know it not, they have angels of light as their companions. A silent witness guards every soul that lives, seeking to draw that soul to Christ.⁹

The Lord's angels are appointed to keep strict watch over those who put their faith in the Lord, and these angels are to be our special help in every time of need. Every day we are to come to the Lord with full assurance of faith, and to look to Him for wisdom.¹⁰

From what dangers, seen and 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.¹¹

He has provided divine assistance for all the emergencies to which our human resources are unequal. He gives the Holy Spirit to help in every strait, to strengthen our hope and assurance, to illuminate our minds and purify our hearts. . . . It is His [Christ's] purpose that every Christian shall be surrounded with a spiritual atmosphere of light and peace. . . . To us today, as verily as to the first disciples, the promise of the Spirit belongs. God will today endow men and women with power from above, as He endowed those who on the Day of Pentecost heard the word of salvation. At this very hour His Spirit and His grace are for all who need them and will take Him at His word.¹²

The gifts of Him who has all power in heaven and earth are in store for the children of God. Gifts so precious that they come to us through the costly sacrifice of the Redeemer's blood; gifts that will satisfy the deepest craving of the heart, gifts lasting as eternity, will be received and enjoyed by all who will come to God as little children. Take God's promises as your own, plead them before Him as His own words, and you will receive fullness of joy.¹³

The people of God are His representatives upon the earth, and He intends that they shall be lights in the moral darkness of this world. Scattered all over the country, in the towns, cities, and villages, they are God's witnesses, the channels through which He will communicate to an unbelieving world the knowledge of His will and the wonders of His grace.¹⁴

The condition of being received into the Lord's family is coming out from the world, separating from all its contaminating influences. . . . We are to be distinguished from the world, and then God says, "I will receive you as members of My royal family, children of the heavenly King." As believers in the truth we are to be distinct in practice from sin and sinners. Our citizenship is in heaven.

We should realize more clearly the value of the promises God has made to us, and appreciate more deeply the honor He has given us.¹⁵

Shall we not regard the mercy of God? What more could He do? Let us place ourselves in right relation to Him who has loved us with amazing love. Let us avail ourselves of the means provided for us that we may be transformed into His likeness, and be restored to fellowship with the ministering angels, to harmony and communion with the Father and the Son.¹⁶

The heart of God yearns over His earthly children with a love stronger than death. . . . He has poured out to us all heaven in one gift. The Saviour's life and death and intercession, the ministry of angels, the pleading of the Spirit, the Father working above and through all, the unceasing interest of heavenly beings—all are enlisted in behalf of man's redemption. . . . Let us try to appreciate the labor and energy that Heaven is expending to reclaim the lost, and bring them back to the Father's house.¹⁷

Called to be sons of God

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1). What a value this places upon man! . . . The sons of Adam may become the sons of God. By assuming human nature, Christ elevates humanity. Fallen men are placed where, through connection with Christ, they may indeed become worthy of the name "sons of God." . . .

Children of the heavenly King! Pre-

cious promise! Theme for the most profound meditation!¹⁸

The Christian's life . . . should not be marked with sadness and self-depreciation. It is the privilege of everyone so to live that God will approve and bless him. It is not the will of our heavenly Father that we should be ever under condemnation and darkness. There is no evidence of true humility in going with the head bowed down and the heart filled with thoughts of self. We may go to Jesus and be cleansed, and stand before the law without shame and remorse. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:1). Through Jesus the fallen sons of Adam become "sons of God."¹⁹

We are of the same faith, members of one family, all children of the same heavenly Father, with the same blessed hope of immortality. How close and tender should be the tie that binds us together. . . . Let us keep drawing nearer to God and to one another. . . . The heart of the Saviour is set upon His followers' fulfilling God's purpose in all its height and depth. They are to be one in Him, even though they are scattered the world over. . . . When Christ's prayer is fully believed, . . . unity of action will be seen in our ranks. Brother will be bound to brother by the golden bonds of the love of Christ.²⁰ □

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- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 230.
- ⁵ *The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 3, pp. 1147, 1148.
- ⁶ *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 103.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 105, 106.
- ⁸ *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 258.
- ⁹ *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 366.
- ¹⁰ *God's Amazing Grace*, p. 201.
- ¹¹ *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 35.
- ¹² *Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 19, 20.
- ¹³ *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 133, 134.
- ¹⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 134.
- ¹⁵ *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 481.
- ¹⁶ *Steps to Christ*, p. 22.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 21.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- ¹⁹ *The Great Controversy*, p. 477.
- ²⁰ *God's Amazing Grace*, p. 210.

Questions for discussion

1. Who are members of God's family? What difference does it make in my life if I believe in God and seek to serve Him?
2. What blessings *now* are mine as a member of God's spiritual family?
3. How does the idea of the family of God affect my understanding of myself? of others?
4. What does human fatherhood teach us about God as heavenly Father? In what ways is God *not* like a human father?
5. What are my responsibilities as a member of the family of God?

Sunday, October 25

How to become a member of God's family

The changing of our nature is God's work, not ours. God is the initiator of the whole salvation process.

By J. R. SPANGLER

In recent years a rather interesting phenomenon has come about that can be summed up in one word—*roots*. Alex Haley's book by that title became a best seller and a renowned TV attraction. Haley persuasively tells the story of the search for his own family roots, which eventually led him to a small African village, the home of his ancestors. This book and TV program have led many, especially adopted persons, to search feverishly for their roots and to learn who their ancestors are. It is even more important that we know our spiritual roots and why being a member of God's family should be our greatest desire.

The first step to membership in God's family of redeemed sons and daughters is to recognize our utterly helpless and fallen condition. In fact, *on our own* we cannot even desire salvation. We may selfishly desire a happy time forever in heaven, and certainly no one in his right mind wants to suffer eternal death. But we are incapable of really desiring to be members of God's family unless the Holy Spirit creates this desire in us.

Originally Adam and Eve were created perfect—they had not the slightest inclination toward thinking or doing evil. Then came the fall, changing *sinless*

beings to *sinful* beings. For us the awful part is that when Adam sinned, he sawed off the limb on which he was sitting, and all his descendants have fallen with him. It seems unfair, but that is the way we are made. Life produces its own kind. Spiders do not produce butterflies, nor do sinful parents produce sinless children. Furthermore, since that sorry day in Eden, all the descendants of Adam have proved this point by *themselves* sinning. Paul expresses it this way: "Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, *because all sinned*" (Rom. 5:12, N.I.V.). All have sinned! The created beings that God designed for such a marvelous potential have become failures and sinners.

Now, the question arises: Am I not still a member of God's family, even though I am a sinner? And if so, why do I need to *become* a member of God's family?

In a sense the whole human race is God's family. Yet we on Planet Earth are the only *rebellious* members of God's universal family, which extends to myriads of populated planets that know not sin. Thus, as rebellious beings on this isolated globe, we are aliens and "foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12, N.I.V.).

But God is too good to leave us in the horrible mess started by Satan's rebellion. With indescribable love, the Godhead fashioned a costly plan to restore full privileges and blessings to the alienated family.

With this brief introduction as a background, we shall note a few important steps to becoming a restored member



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of God's family. Such restoration must of necessity effect a change in our attitude and nature, not merely outwardly, but deep within. The Saviour once skillfully used a dishwashing illustration to make this point. "You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence." To drive home His point more forcefully He continued, "In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness." His solution? "First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean" (Matt. 23:25, 28, 26, N.I.V.).

So with rebellious humanity, our inner nature, the roots, must be changed before the outside is truly changed. This change is the central theme of the seal-of-God doctrine. God puts His seal, His stamp of approval, only on the person who allows Him to make this change in the life. Many doubt that such a change is possible. Many others do not want to submit to such a change. Thus both the doubting and the resisting try to invent doctrines that they hope will restore them to the family of God without being changed.

Such was the attitude of the rich young ruler who had a nature that needed changing before he could qualify for God's kingdom. In fact, his problem was so severe that the Lord said to His disciples, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." How did the disciples respond? "They were greatly astonished and asked, 'Who then can be saved?'" In other words, is it possible for human nature to be changed? The answer Jesus gave was positive and wonderfully encouraging. He said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (chap. 19:23-26, N.I.V.).

"With God all things are possible." This is the key to salvation. This short, pithy statement contains several important basic truths. First, it tells us that salvation centers not on human beings, but on God. It is God's work, not ours. The true way of salvation is by grace through faith in Christ. The Lord is the one who does the saving.

Now, we have established two principles on which to build. The first is that our nature is degraded and needs to be changed. The second is that change is possible, as Jesus plainly stated. "With God all things are possible."

The light

By ALYCE PICKETT

*Rain hammers noisily overhead
in sharp, staccato rhythm,
and furious, howling storm-winds
attack my sturdy walls.
Overwhelming gloom encompasses
the clouded, dismal noonday.
Sunless.*

*Despairing, I grope in darkness,
and searching
find the Ray a loving Father-heart
gave to dispel the shadows
and gladden His earth-children.
Blessed, everlasting Brightness—
Son-Light.*

There is no equivocation regarding the necessity of this change. Jesus told Nicodemus plainly that he "must be born again" (John 3:7). The word *must* is nonnegotiable; there is no way around it. The new birth and eternal life are inseparable. This is not a popular truth, but it is the unalterable prerequisite for entrance into the family of God.

Ever remember that the changing of our nature is God's work, not ours. God is the initiator of the whole salvation process. The touching parable of the shepherd with one lost sheep out of a hundred illustrates this point. Jesus asks His listeners, "Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?" (Luke 15:4, N.I.V.). Jesus is the Shepherd—we are the lost sheep. God makes the first move to find us. Too many discouraged people, lost sheep, feel they must help the Shepherd find them. They must repent or be good *before* God's love is extended to them. Jesus tried to dispel this terribly mistaken concept, and in so doing was criticized by the church leaders, who sneeringly said, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them" (verse 2, N.I.V.).

Why is this point so important? If a person has the idea that he must change *before* he comes to God, either he will never come or he will come on his own terms. He will attempt to make himself

worthy to come to God. That is what we call salvation by works, and it is at the heart of the system symbolized by the beast in Revelation 13. This system teaches that we can earn the right to come to God—we deserve to be in His family. This is the exact opposite of the truth. If we miss the point that God is the one who initiates the action to save us, then the whole plan of salvation makes no sense and is utterly destroyed. A change in our lives is impossible until we capture this concept and understand it thoroughly. No matter how wicked a person has been, the Saviour is seeking for him. And when the Good Shepherd finds him, bruised, bleeding, and wounded, He takes him tenderly into His arms and with great joy carries him back to the fold of safety. What a magnificent Saviour we have!

Because our Lord took the first step to save us, any desire to be a member of His family and to submit ourselves to Him comes from the Saviour Himself, not from us. It is absolutely impossible for a sinner to be lost if he does not resist the magnetic drawing power of Jesus. We are predestined, if you please, to be saved. There is no favoritism with God. Only our own stubbornness and willfulness can keep us from Christ. If we choose not to resist, we will be drawn to Him.

When a person makes that choice (a choice that itself is a result of the Holy Spirit's work), he is given the spirit of repentance as a gift. But remember, even before we repent Jesus is drawing us. If a person looks to Jesus and accepts the repentance God offers, he is well on the road to becoming a restored member of God's family. It is probably at this point more than any other that most failures in becoming and remaining a member of the Lord's family occur. It is difficult for the human heart to accept its helplessness and depend solely on Someone else.

This point is made in a variety of ways throughout the Scriptures. Jesus underscored this principle to Nicodemus in John 3:14, 15: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." His illustration was taken from the story of the brass serpent in the wilderness. The meaning was clear: There was no healing virtue in the brass object itself; it was the person's faith in God and His word that made the difference. Believing in God's word, obeying His command by looking in faith, emancipated the sick person

from death. The real "fight of faith" that Paul speaks of in 1 Timothy 6:12 comes at this point. Will we look to Jesus, or will we look at self?

The lessons of John 3:14, 15 are so obvious that I will enumerate only a few of them:

1. The wound of sin cannot be healed by any works the sinner tries to perform.

2. There is no scientific basis for healing by looking.

3. Even though we may not be able to arrange the steps for salvation chronologically, the first giant step is to look by faith to Jesus.

4. All attempts to be saved other than by lifting up Jesus in the wilderness of our own heart and looking in faith to Him are fatal.

5. Like Nicodemus, who learned the lesson well, we must search the Scriptures in a way that leads us to Christ as the center of salvation.

6. Controversy regarding the logic or necessity of God's plan of salvation leads to death, not life. Rather, there is life in looking to Him.

7. Look not to self with all of its defects and wounds, but rely on the merits of Christ alone, and the help we need will be ours. If we look at the snakebites of sin, we will only get worse and die.

8. Do not wait until every detail of salvation is plain before looking to Jesus. Do not continue wandering in philosophical doubts and fears. Rather, look *now* in simple faith to the Saviour, who became "sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21).

The greatest battle

It sounds incredibly easy and wonderful, doesn't it? But wait a moment! The greatest battle facing every sinner is over looking to, or not looking to, Jesus. Paul employs a battle term to illustrate this point: "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim. 6:12). The greatest struggle in the life of one who wants to become a member of the family of God comes in respect to this principle. It is a struggle for us to look to Jesus by faith alone. It is so much easier to look at our trials, problems, weaknesses, husband, wife, children, money, TV, sex—the list is endless. It is much easier to *do* something rather than to *look* at something to be saved. It is much easier to doubt than to believe. It is much easier to study the Bible for information rather than for inspiration and salvation. And so the poor human race struggles on in doubts, fears, and perplexities, wait-

ing to die from its wounds rather than fighting "the good fight of faith." Look to Jesus!

What causes us to look to Jesus? My only answer is the working of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead. Nothing precedes the Holy Spirit's work. I cannot even desire to look to Jesus unless the Spirit causes me to. When I, at the instigation of the Spirit, look to Jesus, the goodness of God leads me to repent (Rom. 2:4). Repentance is not the result of my own decision. When I look to Jesus, I will humbly confess my sins and make restitution as far as possible. When I look to Jesus, I will take delight in obeying His will. When I look to Him, I will long for purity of mind and heart. Looking to Jesus means more than merely "life in a look," because I must keep looking to Him as long as my heart beats. All this is the work of the Holy Spirit, who draws me always to look to Jesus.

Perhaps the finest example in Scripture of true repentance is that of King David, who committed the double crime of murder and adultery. I have memorized his great prayer of repentance, found in Psalm 51, and I urge you to memorize it, too. David begs God for mercy; he acknowledges his sins; he pleads for cleansing; he beseeches God to create in him a clean heart and to renew a right spirit within him. He appeals for the presence of the Holy Spirit to remain with him and asks for restoration to the joy of salvation. Finally David proclaims the goodness of God and His righteousness. Take your Bible, and on your knees study this psalm reverently. Ask God to do for you what He did for David. Perhaps you have not, like David, committed such terrible sins as adultery and murder, but any sin can destroy your relationship with the Lord and keep you from becoming a member of His family.

I do not have space to deal with the other steps for becoming a restored member of the family of God. I urge you to take the little book *Steps to Christ* and repeatedly read this precious volume that persuasively and tenderly outlines confession, restitution, consecration, discipleship, and growing up into Christ.

But I do want to climax my message with a most important point. Salvation, like an automobile, comes in a package. If it is to have any meaning or function at all, then it must remain as a package. Remove the engine, clutch, spark plugs, or fuel pump from a car and you do not have an automobile any longer. It may

look like a car, but it does not *function* as a car. So with salvation. Remove or ignore any part of God's plan to save men and women, and you may have people going about who look like Christians, and even claim to be Christians, but do not function as Christians.

Justification is the primary, or foundational, basis for our salvation. But ever remember that—although justification cannot be earned by works, although it is what God does for the sinner, although it is not a mingling of God's work with our work, although it changes our status with God, although it is God's verdict, not our achievement, although it is the basis of our assurance and acceptance with God, although it includes pardon and forgiveness for past sin—justification is never given to us as a gift by itself. God's love is greater than that.

The core of His gift is justification, but along with it comes a change, a new-birth experience, and then a lifelong walk with God that we call sanctification. Justification settles our present account, but it also applies to our future as a covering umbrella from the moment we accept Christ until we meet the Lord. Nevertheless, anyone who leaves sanctification out of the plan of salvation and focuses only on justification is like a used car salesman trying to sell a car without brakes or steering mechanism. Not only does God do something *for* us, He also does something *in* us.

But above and beyond all is the fact that God is the one who initiates, maintains, and consummates the entire salvation process. He is drawing us back to our roots, back to His original plan for us, back to harmony with Himself, back to the family of heaven.

We cannot restore ourselves. We can only cooperate with Him as He restores us. In every aspect of our salvation it is God who is working. He only wants from us our cooperation. □

Questions for discussion

1. Why do so few people accept God's plan of salvation?
2. In what ways do I tend to frustrate God's plan for my life?
3. What hindrances come in the way of my continually looking by faith to Jesus?
4. What may I do to strengthen my desire to keep on "looking unto Jesus"?
5. Is there any difference between the way we first *come* to Jesus and the way we are to *live* in Him?
6. Is sanctification a gift or a human work? How does it fit in with the rest of the salvation package?

The Elder Brother of the family

The Biblical ideas of the Firstborn and Son of man help us to understand the meaning of Jesus as our Elder Brother.

By W. RICHARD LESHER

God has sought to make His relationship to human beings clear by using names from the closest of relations that we experience, the human family. Thus the Father and Son are members of the Godhead, the church is God's family, and the members of the church are brothers and sisters. Jesus is our Brother (Heb. 2:11) and also the Firstborn (Rom. 8:29). These last two titles combined give us another name for Jesus, Elder Brother. This name is not in the Bible, but clearly the concept is there. Christians have adopted it, and in our Week of Prayer theme, "The Family of God," it has special significance.

A name that Jesus called Himself, the Son of man, can also help us to understand His relationship to us, His younger brothers and sisters. Because Jesus is the Son of man, that is, a human being, He can be our Brother (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 638).

To better understand Jesus as our Elder Brother we will first examine the idea of the firstborn son, who, of course, is clearly the oldest of, or elder brother to, his brothers and sisters. Then we will look at the name Son of man to discover what additional understandings of our Elder Brother this will provide. We will

conclude by asking what our response should be to this Elder Brother of ours.

The Firstborn

The New Testament identifies Jesus as the fulfillment of the firstborn symbolism of the Old Testament (Col. 1:15-18; Rom. 8:29). He is the Firstborn for two reasons: (1) "He is before all things" and (2) He is "the firstborn from the dead." Because of both His preexistence in eternity and His renewed existence by the resurrection, Jesus is the Firstborn, our Elder Brother.

What did it mean in ancient times to be the firstborn son? In the days of the patriarchs the firstborn son was to receive a birthright, as the well-known story of Jacob and Esau illustrates. This included both a special share in the inheritance and the position as head of the family and priest of the household, thus the patriarch of the next generation.

When Israel moved out of the patriarchal era into nationhood the Lord gave Moses instructions for erection of a sanctuary and the conducting of sanctuary services. Part of this instruction was that the tribe of Levi be accepted in place of the firstborn in Israel (Num. 3:12). This step moved the priesthood out of the family into the worship functions of the sanctuary. Sacrifices were no longer offered in the family setting, but now at the tabernacle. By centralizing the worship system of Israel, this step brought the patriarchal system to a close. Thus to speak of Jesus as "firstborn" is to attribute to Him the functions exercised by both the patriarchal priests and the Levitical priests.

This brief description of the firstborn

gives us three points to apply to Jesus: (1) the firstborn was a member of the family that he served; (2) he was the head of the family; and (3) he was the priest of the family.

1. *The firstborn was a member of the family that he served.* He was just like his brothers and sisters except that he was born first. He was not an outsider. When he should take over the responsibilities of patriarch he would know his subjects well, because they would be his close relatives.

In the same way Jesus, our Elder Brother, is not an outsider. He was born, was reared, lived, and died in our world. He was a human being, "made like his brethren in every respect" (Heb. 2:17, R.S.V.). And so He is our Brother, not just because we call Him Brother, but because He became one of us.

Here the analogy of the firstborn breaks down when applied to Jesus. The patriarch could be brother only to his brothers and sisters. By marriage there would be in-laws and children who would call him father, grandfather, uncle, and so on. But Jesus is not brother to the husband, brother-in-law to the wife, and uncle to their children. Jesus is above the generations, always living and thus Elder Brother to father, mother, children, and every member of the family of God regardless of age or any other consideration except faith in Jesus and love for Him.

2. *He was the head of the family.* In this position the firstborn held the family together and made decisions that would protect them from the dangers surrounding them. The family looked to him for stability and security.

Jesus is the head of the family, the church (Eph. 5:23). It is He who holds it together and protects it from the dangers that Satan has instigated. All of the brothers and sisters in the family look to Him for stability in doctrine and security in salvation. They are subject to Him (verse 24).

3. *He was the priest of the family.* As priest, he offered the sacrifices for the family. When someone in the family sinned, it was he who approached God through sacrifice in behalf of the repentant sinner.

Jesus is our priest. The book of Hebrews teaches us that He is not an ordinary priest but a High Priest. But by contrast with the sacrifice offered by the earthly priest, the sacrifice is not an animal, but Himself. He is at the same time our priest and our sacrifice. It is only



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He who can approach God in our behalf when we have sinned, and He assures us of pardon full and complete, because of His sacrifice on Calvary. Through our Elder Brother we are accepted in the family as though we had never sinned.

The Son of man

Jesus spoke of Himself with a special name—the Son of man. He gave no explanation for His use of this expression, but in the book of Ezekiel it is the name by which the Lord repeatedly addresses the author. The meaning is simply “man.” In Daniel 7:13, 14 “the Son of man” refers to the Heavenly Being who came to the Ancient of days and received a kingdom that would last forever. These same two meanings are seen in Christ’s use of the name. The Son of man, Matthew records, came eating and drinking instead of fasting (chap. 11:19), but will come in the clouds of heaven with the Father’s glory and with the angels to reward His human children (chaps. 24:30; 16:27). On one occasion the Jews equated the title “Christ,” or “Messiah” (N.E.B.), with “the Son of man” (John 12:34). The context must guide us to the correct meaning in each case.

What were the subjects on which Jesus was speaking when He referred to Himself as the Son of man? The answer to this question helps us see our Elder Brother through His own description and not merely through symbols.

The name “Son of man” appears about 80 times in the New Testament. In about one third of the verses in which it is used Jesus speaks of His upcoming Passion (29 verses). In another one third of the verses Jesus speaks about His second coming (28). The final third of the “Son of man” verses are a miscellaneous group in which the context is redemption (ten verses), His relation to heaven (five), and a variety of other topics (12). Thus, when Jesus was viewing Himself as the Son of man, our Elder Brother, His primary interest was to reveal His relation to two clusters of events: (1) His suffering, death, and resurrection; and (2) His second coming and the judgment.

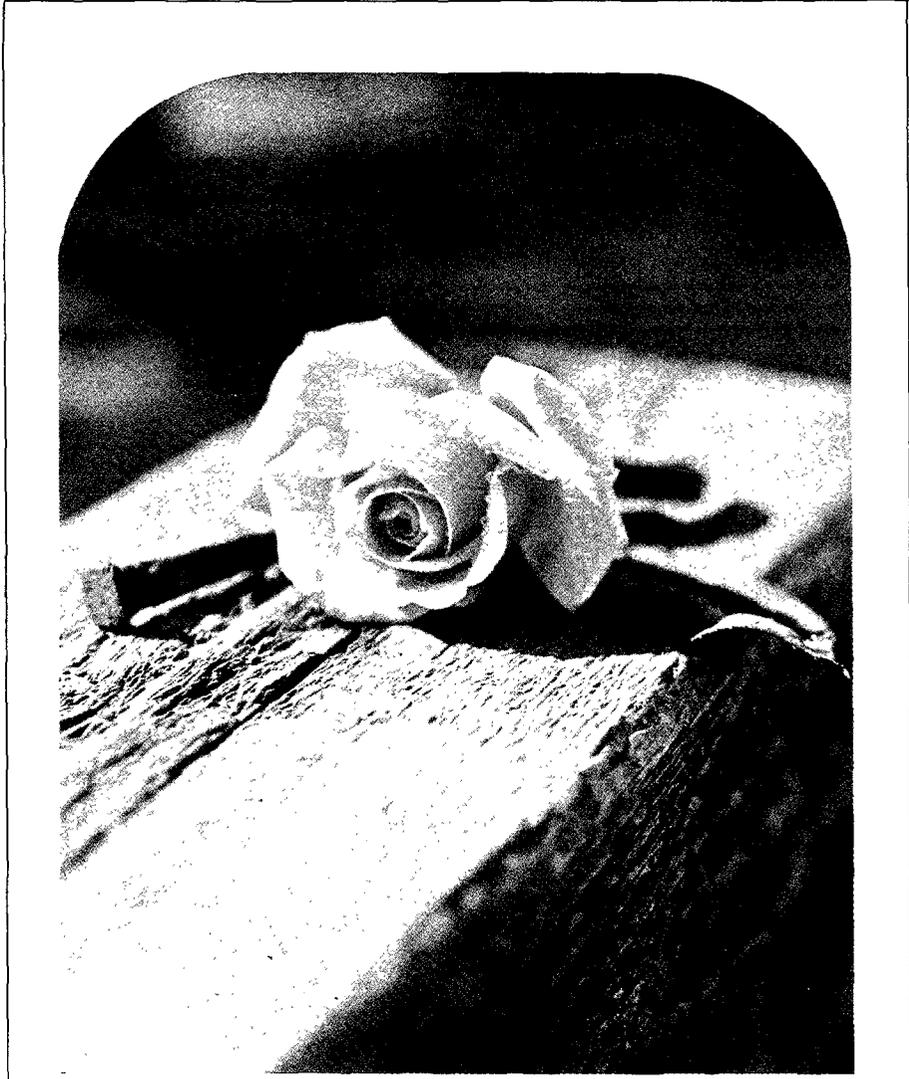
Both Stephen and John had visions of “the Son of man” in heaven. Stephen saw Him at “the right hand of God” (Acts 7:56), and John saw Him glorified and walking among seven lampstands (Rev. 1:12, 13; 2:1). Their emphasis was on the Son of man’s presence in heaven.

From this brief look at “the Son of

man” texts, we find four points to help us learn to know our Elder Brother better: (1) the Son of man’s goal was to save the lost; (2) He suffered, died, and was resurrected; (3) He ascended to heaven, to the presence of God; and (4) He will return to earth in glory.

1. *The Son of man’s goal was to save the lost.* This was His consuming desire. Nothing else mattered except that their salvation be accomplished within the boundaries of the principles of the character of God. Jesus said that “the Son of man is come to save that which was lost” (Matt. 18:11). He had to take the initiative if we were to be saved, for no sinner would choose on his own to

seek salvation. These lost ones were His brothers and sisters, and the Elder Brother came searching for them as a shepherd seeks a lost sheep. Jesus longed for them to respond as does a father who waits for a wayward boy to come home. It was this desire to save that impelled Jesus to become the Son of man, an earthling alongside His earthly brothers and sisters. It motivated every decision He made. Because of it He could flout customs that interfered with His saving acts and face the ridicule and anger of the most dignified and respected men of the nation when they sought to dissuade Him from His saving purpose. As Isaiah had prophesied, His face was set like flint



“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”—John 15:13.

(chap. 50:7), and the Elder Brother would accomplish His goal.

2. *He suffered, died, and was resurrected.* He was not compelled to do this; He gave Himself for us from a Brother's heart of love. He chose to suffer and die because this was the way in which He and His Father had agreed that redemption must take place. He thus had the possibility of bringing His brothers and sisters into His everlasting kingdom. Some may feel that it is a small thing to die if one knows he will come back to life. But the Elder Brother's sojourn in this world was a risk. He might have succumbed to Satan's temptations and lost all. It is difficult to comprehend the risk involved *after* it is past and it has been avoided, but during His sufferings the risk was real. Praise the Lord, He was victorious! The risk is over. Salvation is assured to every believing soul.

There are many facets of meaning in Christ's sacrifice. An important one is that Jesus, our Elder Brother, dying on the cross provides the point to which every sinner may look by faith and in effect say, "I confess that I am a sinner and am the one who should have died; I repent and choose to be like Him in character and behavior." When I believe this way about Jesus and myself, then the Elder Brother's death has brought salvation. Then His death is mine, and my life belongs to Him. God counts me as righteous because I believe in Jesus, the Righteous One.

By the resurrection Jesus is Elder Brother to every believer. His life has continued as generation after generation of His family has been overtaken by death, now awaiting the Elder Brother's

call for a resurrection assured by His resurrection.

3. *He ascended to heaven, to the presence of God.* One of our own flesh and blood is with God! What an assurance it is that "the Elder Brother of our race is by the eternal throne" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 329). There He introduces the members of His earthly family "to God as His sons and daughters" (*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 363), and ministers to each of them the blessings that result from His sacrifice at Calvary. To the Elder Brother no one is just a number. Though we have not seen Him, He knows our names and individualities, and loves us as if each were His only brother or sister. Our Elder Brother presents the requests made by us in prayer to His Father "as His own request" (*ibid.*, p. 364).

From this heavenly vantage point the Elder Brother leads the members of His family, directing their work and caring for them even beyond what He could do if physically present with them.

4. *He will return to earth in glory.* If the Elder Brother would die for His brothers and sisters, would He not desire to be with them (John 17:24)? It may seem inappropriate to speak of the Second Coming as a family reunion, but from one point of view that is exactly what it is. Every redeemed brother and sister of Jesus has been in touch with Him, although it has been a relationship at a distance. And many brothers and sisters are in the grave. But when the Elder Brother comes back, all of the brothers and sisters will be alive and together, and He will take them to be where He is. Then the family will be

united forever, for Jesus will give to His brothers and sisters a life span that equals His own—eternity.

Every act of the Elder Brother's life as Messiah was done to bring about this moment of family reunion.

One by one the Elder Brother's great acts for us have passed into history—His decision to redeem the world, His coming as one of us in Bethlehem, His suffering, death, and resurrection for our redemption. We are now in the time of His heavenly intercession for the application of the redemption already secured. We await His return. His coming must not be seen in isolation from the other acts. His great culminating act is the purpose for all that precedes it. While we may weep with Him at Calvary, we can rejoice at the prospect of His return. He is coming soon. An Elder Brother He will be only to His family—to others a Judge. Keep faith in the Elder Brother, for He will bring the family through to eternity. □

Questions for discussion

1. In what ways do our experiences with an older brother help us to understand Jesus better? In what ways are these a hindrance?
2. What human relationships other than "brother" help us to understand Jesus better? Which are the most effective?
3. In what ways is the church a family?
4. Evaluate the practice of church members' calling each other "brother" or "sister."
5. What implications do you see in the stability of the home for teaching children about Jesus and the church?
6. What do you think is accomplished in God's plan by the second coming of Jesus? Why should His coming take place?

A psalm for modern Israel

By MARIAN FERNER

*We have lost our lambs, gentle Shepherd.
While we were busy they wandered away.
Now night grows dark and wolves are howling
And we cannot find them.
We have cried and prayed until we are sick with grieving.
Our sadness and remorse are so great we cannot bear them.*

*So we bring them to You, dear Saviour.
We are not able to save ourselves, let alone our children.
How wonderful that You love them even more than we do.
Our bleating avails nothing, but they will hear Your voice.
We have no hands, dear Jesus;
Please carry them home for us.*

Sharing the good things of God

The very purpose of the Advent message is to present the saving work of Christ so clearly that it will unite a people around Him.

By WALTER R. L. SCRAGG

The national bank in Bogota, Colombia, houses a golden hoard dug up from the sites of the ancient Inca civilization. Inside a heavily protected vault, armored glass cabinets display the wealth and craftsmanship this people achieved.

Protection for the treasure is sophisticated and extensive. Even the guards cannot reverse or delay the arrangements. When you enter the vault a timing device takes over. While you are still absorbing the breathtaking beauty of the golden artifacts, a warning sounds, the lights begin to dim, and the door closes inexorably.

How often our lives are like that! We see beauty, opportunity, hope, but it lies beyond our grasp. Doors of circumstances, distance, or denial roll across and cut us off from what we desire or need.

It is not that way with God.

“For in Christ our release is secured and our sins are forgiven through the shedding of his blood. Therein lies the richness of God’s free grace lavished upon us, imparting full wisdom and insight” (Eph. 1:7, 8, N.E.B.).

God spreads before us the riches of

grace. He erects no barriers, closes no doors, but keeps heaven open to our needs. He offers a banquet of love and with His own hands serves us from His plenty. “‘He has brought me to his banquet hall, and his banner over me is love’” (S. of Sol. 2:4, N.A.S.B.).

Around this abundance of heavenly treasure God invites His people to gather. Here at the table of our Lord we find unity, togetherness, and harmony. “‘But now in union with Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near through the shedding of Christ’s blood. For he . . . in his own body of flesh and blood has broken down the enmity which stood like a dividing wall between them’” (Eph. 2:13, 14, N.E.B.).

All the good things that unite us in Christ come from His acts of sacrifice and love. In Him we may proclaim the unity of heaven and earth. “‘With this in mind, then, I kneel in prayer to the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth takes its name, . . . that through faith Christ may dwell in your hearts’” (chap. 3:14-17, N.E.B., margin).

We are as diverse as culture, economics, education, language, and race can make us. As no other denomination, Seventh-day Adventists are going about the business of undoing the effects of the Tower of Babel. When mankind fled from the shattered Babel of his own achievement, God already had in view the Tower of Golgotha, which according to His purposes again would draw together the divided races of earth. “‘And I shall draw all men to myself,

when I am lifted up from the earth’” (John 12:32, N.E.B.).

The very purpose of the Advent message is to present the saving work of Christ so clearly and effectively that it will unite a people around Him. Our work is to prepare a people, “‘a vast throng, which no one could count, from every nation, of all tribes, peoples, and languages, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb’” (Rev. 7:9, N.E.B.).

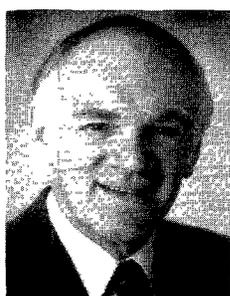
John himself knew a divided world. As he surveyed that throng his mind would go to the Roman Empire, with its motley array of provinces and subject kingdoms. As he listened to the voices of the vast throng, perhaps he could detect not only his native Aramaic language but even the beloved Galilean dialect of his youth. All were there, around the Christ he loved.

A carnal mind dwells on the divisions between people. The spiritual person perceives the uniting influence of Jesus Christ in the church. Satan would have us class people by categories, call them by group names, and dismiss them by groups. Thinking this way can produce the horrors of Auschwitz and Belsen. Even if it does not go that far, it splits nations from each other and divides groups within nations.

The evil of racism

This evil we call racism. It should not surprise us that in a multinational, multiracial community such as the Adventist Church, racism does, at times, rear its hideous shape. Against this threat our hope does not lie in human solutions that range all the way from strict segregation to legislated integration. God’s cure creates one people who “‘follow the Lamb wherever he goes’” (chap. 14:4, N.E.B.). “‘There is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and freeman, male and female; for you are all one person in Christ Jesus’” (Gal. 3:28, N.E.B.).

Racism breeds in an environment of ignorance and suspicion. Within the community of the church constructive efforts should be made for people to understand one another. Wherever a minority exists in a local church, the likelihood of misunderstanding is present. Careful efforts should be made to dispel those misunderstandings. Tensions can be lifted by talking freely with one another. Where larger groups of diverse origins warrant it, the church frequently arranges special workshops



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and seminars to create better understanding. At times we legislate to help in difficult situations or to undo patterns that are fixed by culture or history but are not correct for the community of Christ. But all these efforts must find their genesis in our basic unity and equality before Christ.

"To crown all, there must be love, to bind all together and complete the whole" (Col. 3:14, N.E.B.).

Uniting the individuals of this church family

Much that is in modern society has the effect of dividing the church family. Pressures of work, differences in education, and city living seldom encourage close encounters between members other than on Sabbath. With more than 21,000 organized church congregation families around the world, it is important to think of the local church and its role in promoting unity.

At the 1980 General Conference session research presented showed loneliness as a major factor in apostasy. Every time a brother or sister leaves the family of God, the unity He is seeking lessens. How tragic that a church member, or even a whole family, can feel so isolated within the community of believers that he chooses leaving above staying!

What creates loneliness? We neglect one another—not deliberately, but usually because of our busy lives, our own involvements. Would it not help our church life and prevent many leaving the church if *everyone*—workers, laymen, youth, children—had a friendship partner who watched when he or she missed Sabbath school or church and then followed up to see what was wrong?

Paul pleads for concern toward one another: "If then our common life in Christ yields anything to stir the heart, any loving consolation, any sharing of the Spirit, any warmth of affection or compassion, fill up my cup of happiness by thinking and feeling alike, with the same love for one another, the same turn of mind, and a common care for unity. . . . You must humbly reckon others better than yourselves. Look to each other's interest and not merely to your own" (Phil. 2:1-4, N.E.B.).

Both centrifugal forces, pushing us apart, and centripetal forces, pulling us together, operate within the church family. Selfishness has driven people from one another and from God from the moment of the first sin. How often a family flies apart when self-justification,

self-gratification, and self-exaltation dominate.

In contrast with human selfishness, the pure selflessness of Jesus pulls us together. "Christ was innocent of sin, and yet for our sake God made him one with the sinfulness of men, so that in him we might be made one with the goodness of God himself" (2 Cor. 5:21, N.E.B.). The call to "press together, press together, press together" (*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 374), which Ellen White makes over and over again to God's people, projects an image of people from all over the world constructively seeking the way of unity.

Self and its perversions flee before the new nature. "But now you must yourselves lay aside all anger, passion, malice, cursing, filthy talk—have done with them! Stop lying to one another, now that you have discarded the old nature with its deeds and have put on the new nature, which is being constantly renewed in the image of its Creator and brought to know God" (Col. 3:8-10, N.E.B.).

The new nature we have in Christ is a garment that constantly needs renewing. The people of ancient Israel were given garments and shoes that did not wear out. So God renovates His robe of righteousness every day of our lives. We cannot live successfully with one another in the church family without it. "There is no question here of Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman; but Christ is all, and is in all" (verse 11, N.E.B.).

"Let the message of Christ dwell among you in all its richness" (verse 16, N.E.B.). If we analyze that message we see why it united the early church. In their shared love for Christ, their shared experience of His saving grace, they found common ground. They had something to talk about together, something to sing about together, something to live for together.

They also saw themselves as different from the world in which they lived. They became *Christians*, called so by their neighbors.

An Adventist Christian also finds uniting strength in a sense of difference. Our neighbors see us as different. We have our diet, our day, the messages of Ellen White, a common sense of history and origin anchored in the 1844 movement, our sanctuary message. And in a world that increasingly makes the Christian way of life a minority activity, it becomes vital for us to be known for our

Christian mode of living—our love for Christ.

The genius of Adventism lies to a degree in its sense of being a part of God's unfinished business. He has not yet finished perfecting the saints, or edifying the church, or proclaiming the gospel to the world. We unite that we may grow in grace, that we may know more of His Word, that we may witness for Him. We are here to finish the work. The unfinished affairs of God in this world consume our energies, our time, our talent, and our resources. We are moving through history with God, at His bidding, toward a climax that He Himself is planning.

So let us go together

Ellen White saw the people of God as a tiny band high up above the world, moving along a difficult and ever-upward path toward the kingdom (see *Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 58-61). In this vision she shares ideas with the writer of Hebrews, who calls Christians "strangers and pilgrims" (chap. 11:13). His vision of a people in motion together, called to go together, matches well the mood of our faith today in this difficult and troubled world.

"Let us," he appeals, "therefore be diligent to enter that rest" (chap. 4:11, N.A.S.B.). God wants His church to be at rest in the provisions of His grace. He asks us to go across the Jordan of works-righteousness and *together* enter the promised land of rest.

"Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need" (verse 16, N.A.S.B.). Come with me, come, let us go together, he asks, to the place where the divisiveness of sin cannot enter. Come and let us gather around the Source of grace and power so that we may not only see one another as truly brothers and sisters but be able to live *together* as one family.

"Let us advance toward maturity" (chap. 6:3, N.E.B.). Adventists have built their faith on the Bible and its earnest study. Around the Word of God we have found and will continue to find unity. For the family of God to stay *together* it must learn from the same source through Sabbath school lessons, Biblical preaching, and personal study.

"Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith. . . . Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering; . . . let us consider how to

stimulate one another to love and good deeds" (chap. 10:22-24, N.A.S.B.). So faith, hope, and love join *together* as motivations in our joint pilgrimage.

"Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus" (chap. 12:1, 2, N.A.S.B.). Do we see our path beset with difficulty? Are there persecutions we must bear? trials to suffer? *Together* we fix our gaze on Jesus, who not only calls us forward toward Him but also, in another way, runs with us through life.

"Let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come" (chap. 13:13, 14, N.A.S.B.). The Advent Movement has always denied the permanence of earthly systems and institutions. Just as the ancient order of the Jewish sacrificial system passed away, so all worldly orders will yield to the Lamb of God. We do not seek our Lord within systems of government or the wise plans of mankind. We go where God has placed our salvation. We go *together* to Jesus Christ.

In societies where suspicions drive people apart and fear isolates countless individuals, where self dominates motivations and greed drives brother to prey on brother, where spurious love breeds disillusion and unhappy people cling like parasites to one another, God calls His people to His focal point. He calls us to Jesus. At the foot of the cross let us lay aside our selfishness, surrender our differences, and together press forward to victory. □

Questions for discussion

1. What significance do you think the following issues that threatened the unity of the apostolic family of God have for us today?

a. Lawsuits (1 Cor. 6:1-9; Matt. 18:15-20; Col. 3:15). See also the *Church Manual* counsel on lawsuits.

b. A party spirit within the church (1 Cor. 3:1-15; Acts 6:1; 1 John 4:1-3).

2. What minority groups exist in your church, your country? What steps might be taken to understand them better? Can witness be effective when it operates from a position of ignorance about the other person or group?

3. Why would you think it important to have as much information as possible about someone you are praying for? Whom does your knowledge help?

4. What has been the fate of those who have sought to disrupt the unity of God's people? What factors do you think have prevented the Advent Movement from dividing on racial or nationalistic lines?

5. What role does the Holy Spirit have in preserving the unity of the church?

Wednesday, October 28

Strengthening the family

Unless a genuine desire to love as God loves undergirds our efforts to build up the home, they will be doomed to failure.

By BETTY HOLBROOK

It is Friday afternoon, and the sun's rays are creeping slowly toward the horizon. It has been an eventful day—the most important day of a very special week.

The man, tall, ruddy, and handsome, springs to his feet. Who is this woman at his side, perfect and beautiful? Just hours ago he had felt so empty. Every animal he had seen had a companion, but he was, in a sense, an oddity—not God, not an angel, not an animal. Where did he fit in? Deep within he felt a need for someone like himself to love and to be loved. Is this woman to fill that need?

Then God comes near, takes the hand of Adam, joins it with that of Eve, and pronounces them husband and wife. What a special moment! And how fitting that within hours of each other God established the first home and the first Sabbath—a place of rest and a time of rest. Both were to be a blessing clear to the end of time.

Home—a place of rest. Where each member has a sense of belonging. Where we can talk about our joys and satisfactions, as well as our fears and disappointments. Where we can be less than perfect, but still loved. Where we help one another grow and succeed. Where good memories are frequent enough to crowd out the bad ones. Where we can walk through the door and feel at peace.

It is not always like that today.

Sometimes the place of rest has become a place of turbulence. Sometimes a family member is missing—a father, a mother, a child. When we ask, "What is a typical family today?" the answer is not clear-cut and reassuring. But rather than become morbid about what is happening in the world around us, and too often in our own church family, let us direct our thoughts back to God's perfect plan, to the day He created man and woman and pronounced His creation *very good*.

He chose the home as one of the ways to reveal Himself and His love to us. It was to be the tenderest earthly tie we could ever experience. The completeness of husband-and-wife love would be a living demonstration of God's love. Each would bring a voluntary submission to the other, the wife loving and respecting her husband and the husband loving his wife in the same way that God loves the church.

Husband and father

Of all the Biblical examples of the husband-father relationship Abraham stands out most vividly. Of him it was said, "He will command his . . . household" (Gen. 18:19). There was no oppression in that commanding, however. Abraham had a way of making his family sharers of his faith. When the ultimate test came for Isaac to be offered as a sacrifice, there was no physical struggle. The faith of Isaac mirrored the faith of his father, and the son willingly submitted to what he believed was God's plan.

The picture we see of Abraham is not that of a dictator, but of a wise and able leader and teacher. He managed a household of more than 1,000 members, and as he did so he taught them his methods of family government. His great concern was to prepare them for what lay



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ahead, the primary task of every father.

Abraham associated easily with people. He was affable, benevolent, and did not shut himself away from family and friends. But when it was necessary he was willing and quick to lead through difficult and dangerous tests.

There was also an unselfishness about Abraham that in today's world seems incredible. In spite of the fact that he was the head of house, the chief of his people, he could say to Lot: "Let there be no strife . . . ; for we be brethren. . . . If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left" (chap. 13:8, 9). He was not concerned about his individual rights and preferences—concerns that have torn apart many homes. He practiced what Paul encourages: "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another" (Rom. 12:10).

There was a strength in Abraham that allowed him to love his family as Christ loved the church. He was not a perfect man, but he was a great man, and his greatness was shown by his home leadership.

The same greatness was passed down to Isaac and then to Jacob. Although tormented by the recollection of his own sins and failures, Jacob could, through

his faith and the strength that comes with it, lead his family.

The years with Laban had been long. Now with fear Jacob moves his household and belongings back toward Canaan. His family is in turmoil. He sees traits of jealousy, selfishness, and cruelty in his own sons. How can he go on toward Canaan in this kind of spirit? How can God bless?

So Jacob calls his family together. "Put away the strange gods that are among you," he commands. "Change your garments: and let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God" (Gen. 35:2, 3). With his family around him and with deep emotion Jacob repeats the story of his first visit to Bethel, when he had left his father's tent, fleeing for his life. It was at this very spot where the Lord had appeared to him in the night visit. As he reviews the wonderful dealings of God, his own heart is softened and his children also are touched by a subduing power. He has taken the most effective way to prepare them to join in the worship of God when they arrive at Bethel. (See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 205.)

It took a strong man to gather his family around him, remind them of his own sins, and then in thanksgiving recount the marvelous blessings of God.

No wonder his children were touched. The same subduing power can reach hearts today if the father, as priest of the household, will confess to God his own sins and the sins of his children committed through the day. (See *The Adventist Home*, p. 212.) Is Dad perfect? Mother? Grandparents? Children? Not yet! What a strength it would be to families if we would admit that we are not perfect, ask forgiveness for wrongs, and then praise God for His blessings and dealings with us.

"A soul saved in your own family circle . . . will shine as brightly in your crown as if you had found that soul in China or India."—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 2, p. 1009. The promise is for fathers, as well as mothers, today.

Wife and mother

What about wives and mothers?

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands" (Eph. 5:22). How often those words have been spoken as a decree of superiority. How often they have been used to give a husband license to treat his wife as a second-class citizen. But how beautiful they are when rightly understood.

Paul says to both husband and wife: "Submit yourselves to one another because of your reverence for Christ" (verse 21, T.E.V.). His statement begins to put into perspective the command that wives submit to their husbands. Later Paul amplifies it by adding that wives should submit themselves to their husbands just as the church submits itself to Christ. How does the church submit? Willingly—knowing that Christ was willing to die for us, that He took the basin and washed the disciples' feet first, that He led, not with fear and authoritarianism, but with love and compassion. As one wife remarked, "If my husband loved me as Christ loves the church, I wouldn't mind at all being subject to him."

The more we read about God's plan for the wife and mother, the more we are convinced of her importance. While the roles of husband and wife are different, there is no hint of superiority. "She [wife and mother] should feel that she is her husband's equal—to stand by his side, she faithful at her post of duty and he at his."—*The Adventist Home*, p. 231.

Solomon, the wisest king who ever reigned, recognized this fact. Picture the scene.

Solomon is seated on his throne.

Faith

By CEOLA MEWHINNEY

*The heart of faith stays tuned to God—
It overflows with song;
Faith sees beyond the outward signs
When everything goes wrong;
The arms of faith stretch heavenward
To grasp the distant star,
And gazing upward, sees the gates
Of love and hope ajar.
Our dearest prayers reach pinnacles;
Our fondest dreams unfold—
Faith is the soaring ecstasy
That serenades the soul!*

Around him are his retinue of counselors and sages. The room is a magnificent one. For anyone to enter and to approach the king requires ceremonies and rituals. No one would be presumptuous enough to walk in casually, without invitation.

It is into this grand setting that Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, comes. When she enters the room, Solomon goes to her and bows low. Then he has another throne brought, has it placed at his right side, and seats her on it. In her presence he is only her son.

"Her children arise up, and call her blessed" (Prov. 31:28) were not just idle words for Solomon. Perhaps he had seen in his mother the qualities of the capable wife and mother described in Proverbs 31:

Her husband can have confidence in her; she does him good, never harm.

She is busy, a hard worker, strong and industrious.

She is generous to the poor.

She knows the value of everything—food, clothing, real estate.

She is a manager, always planning, always providing for the future.

She speaks with a gentle wisdom, is highly respected.

She has a close relationship with her Lord.

No wonder the wise man laments that such a wife is hard to find and far more precious than jewels! It is this kind of wife and mother who will recognize that her job is the highest mission anyone can have. It may not bring the human accolades of a Nobel Peace Prize, but there is a scene I am looking forward to: "When Samuel shall receive the crown of glory, he will wave it in honor before the throne and gladly acknowledge that the faithful lessons of his mother, through the merits of Christ, have crowned him with immortal glory."—*Ibid.*, p. 536. I have a feeling that other sons and daughters are going to remove their crowns as they too give honor to their mothers.

Husband and wife

When husband and wife build mutual respect, when they nurture a love relationship, and when they develop a cooperative partnership, only then will they strengthen their home. There is nothing better they can do for their children than to nourish the deepest and tenderest of earthly ties. It will be a constant reminder to the family of God's love and a basis for their future relationships.

A family that has such solid foundations will have a security that the world lacks today. There is nothing more reassuring than the fact that God loves us, that we are valuable. "He who has paid the price for its redemption knows the worth of the human soul."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 140. In fact, the Lord is disappointed when we place a low estimate upon ourselves. He wants us to value ourselves according to the price He has placed upon us. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 668.) That price puts people on an equality. No long lists of virtues or talents make one person more valuable than another. He created us, He redeemed us, and He says to us as He did to Jeremiah: "'I chose you before I gave you life, and before you were born I selected you'" (Jer. 1:5, T.E.V.). "'I have called you by name—you are mine,'" He declares (Isa. 43:1, T.E.V.).

Worth originates with God

Sometimes we are afraid to admit that we are valuable because we fear pride. But there is no connection between worth and pride. Worth originates with God, whereas pride originated with Lucifer, when he wanted to become "like the most High" (chap. 14:14). His lists of talents and virtues were never long enough. It was not enough for him to be first of the covering cherubs; he wanted to be like God. Jesus illustrated pride with the parable of the Pharisee who prayed, "I'm thankful I am not like this poor publican" (see Luke 18:11). Pride is a comparison. It makes us completely self-absorbed—and miserable.

When we can rest assured in our worth, we can forget self and be concerned about others. We can listen and try to understand. "Someone who is sure of himself does not talk all the time," says the wise man. "People who stay calm have real insights" (Prov. 17:27, T.E.V.).

Peter must have been very insecure when he first became a disciple. He "was always speaking unadvisedly, from the impulse of the moment. He was always ready to correct others, and to express his mind, before he had a clear comprehension of himself or of what he had to say."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 812. It was only after Peter had denied his Lord, after he, too, had wept alone in the garden, that he understood himself and his Saviour. He came out of that experience a different man—still enthusiastic, but no longer impetuous, self-confident,

and self-exalted. The new Peter was calm, self-possessed, and teachable. The new Peter was not so defensive, more open to honest discussions, and more able to relate to others.

Strengthening the home begins with our relationship to God and spreads to our relationships with one another. There are no short, clever gimmicks that can replace that fact. There are many things we can do—conduct family worship, meet in family councils, celebrate the Sabbath together, build family traditions, learn the skills of communication, discover new ways to deal with anger and resentments—but unless a genuine desire to love as God loves is at the foundation of all our doing, our efforts ultimately will be doomed to failure. The original, perfect plan was His, and only with His help can we return to it.

In the days of Ahab and Jezebel, violence, sexual perversion, and idolatry of all kinds were rampant. It was into this vile atmosphere that Elijah stepped fearlessly. He called for repentance and for a rebuilding of the altars of Jehovah. The parallel is too clear to be denied: "The world today has its Ahabs and its Jezebels. . . . Multitudes have a wrong conception of God and His attributes, and are as truly serving a false god as were the worshipers of Baal."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 177.

The message of Malachi sounds both a warning and a promise: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (chap. 4:5, 6).

The time has come to strengthen our families. □

Questions for discussion

1. In what practical ways can the church help to strengthen families?
2. Are there ways in which the church is fracturing the family unit?
3. Why is it important for the father to take a spiritual leadership role in the family?
4. If the father is absent or if he is unable or refuses to take his role, what can the mother do to nurture spiritual growth within the family without shutting him out?

For the family members to answer when they are together:

5. What are the strengths of your own family? Be specific as you list them.
6. In which areas is there room for growth? How could this be accomplished?

The family's responsibility to the disadvantaged

An unshakable sense of God's love for the world is the fountainhead of our relationship with all members of the human family.

By W. S. BANFIELD

If I can stop one heart from breaking,
I shall not live in vain;
If I can ease one life the aching,
Or cool one pain,
Or help one fainting robin
Unto his nest again,
I shall not live in vain.

—Emily Dickinson

A Christian with a compassionate heart is worthy of the name he bears. Christians who do not transmit compassion with their works of mercy are as rainless clouds or as those who "passed by on the other side" (Luke 10:31, 32).

Holiness is practical goodness. When we are saved, one way we demonstrate our salvation is by deeds of loving kindness. As musicians express the music within them, Christians express their salvation by their lives. The secret is in our relationship with Christ. God's will for us is that we live out the love we have as a result of our salvation.

Men and women were created in God's image (Gen. 1:26, 27). Humanity and divinity were inseparably united at Creation, so whatever makes us more godly also makes us more human. To be truly human is to be concerned with the

welfare of others, to be kind, considerate, tender, compassionate, merciful, and loving. The cynic said, "I could have made a better world than this." The sage replied, "That is why you were put here. Go ahead and do it."

God's grace enlarges our humanity. By accepting Christ as Saviour and making Him Lord of our lives, we become light in a darkened world and caring in a care-less society. In this task the human side of the church is at its noblest.

The revival dominated by Jonathan Edwards in the mid-eighteenth century, known as "The Great Awakening," was a counterpart of the work of the Wesleys and George Whitefield. This revival period was marked by great social reform. Every age of revival or evangelism has been so characterized in Christian history. The expectation of the imminent return of Christ has strongly encouraged works of charity. Revivals not only make us more spiritual; they also make us more humane.

The family

A family is a group of people related by ancestry, marriage, or commonly shared experiences and beliefs. "I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God" are lyrics of a favorite song. These lyrics summon from within some of the deepest feelings I have.

I am a part of the family of God by creation. Acts 17:26 says: "And [God] hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before

appointed, and the bounds of their habitation." Genealogically all men and women are descendants of Adam and Eve. As members of the same human family, we owe to one another a recognition of that kinship. A knowledge of this biologically and Biblically confirmed fact, however, is not enough. Our recognition of this physical kinship must be elevated into a spiritual affinity.

I also may become a part of the spiritual family of God by redemption. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12, 13). "Then rejoice that through Christ you have become connected with God, members of the heavenly family."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 493. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:1-3).

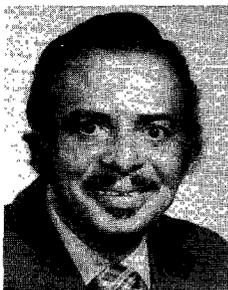
Christians are aware not only of their biological identity but of that oneness that they have in Christ, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, not in the shared flesh of humanity, but in the broken and shared body of Christ. We are not merely members of one flesh, but members of that one body. We have our oneness not alone in the common blood of our physical life, but in the fact that we are one in Christ Jesus.

There is in Christians a spirit of cohesion for which the world at large is not ready, a spirit of oneness that is ultimate and indivisible, a bond stronger than mere physical kinship. Between Christian and Christian flow lines of communication that do not exist where non-Christians are involved.

Facing differences

What God is doing is nothing short of a miracle. Through Jesus Christ He abolishes the barriers that divide human beings from one another in order to create a new single humanity.

Difference in people is a problem for most of us. It is a problem in families, on the job, in the neighborhood, at school, and in the church.



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We are most comfortable with those who think like us, look like us, eat like us, speak like us, worship like us, and who share our economic level. With them we are at ease. The greater the differences, the more uncomfortable we are. Differences are difficult to handle and frequently become a threat to family unity. This is especially true of the disadvantaged—people whose differ-

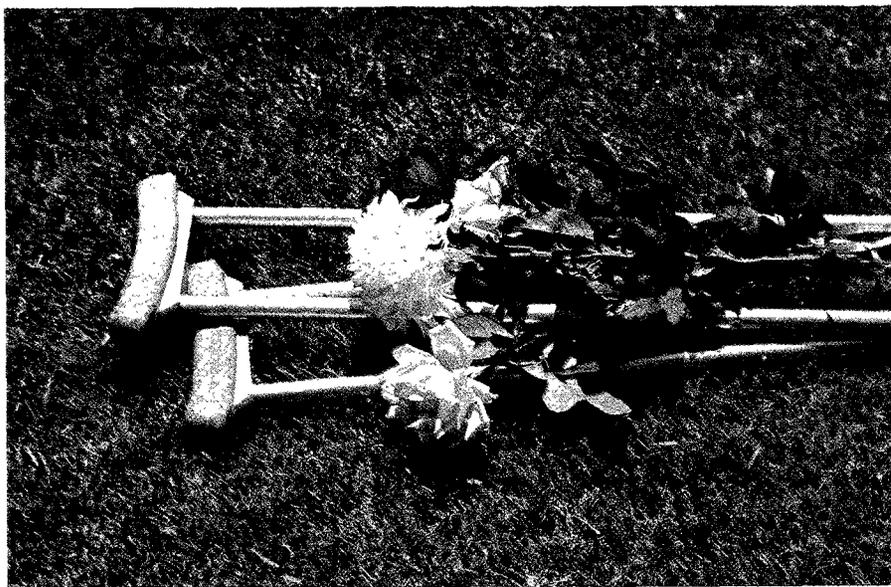
The Bible clearly identifies the disadvantaged and leaves little room for doubt as to our responsibility to them in relation to our biological and spiritual kinship.

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27). “Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will

And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour” (chap. 15:25-28).

Ellen White adds: “In the great cities are multitudes who receive less care and consideration than are given to dumb animals.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 189. “But we need not go to Nazareth, to Capernaum, or to Bethany, in order to walk in the steps of Jesus. We shall find His footprints beside the sickbed, in the hovels of poverty, in the crowded alleys of the great city, and in every place where there are human hearts in need of consolation. In doing as Jesus did when on earth, we shall walk in His steps.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 640.

As Christians we recognize our biological and spiritual kinship to all humanity. This kinship has at its base a concern for people and their importance and worth as individuals. We are concerned with the improved utilization of personal resources regardless of a person’s physical, mental, economic, social, or spiritual disadvantages, or disadvantages that accrue because of sex, race, culture, or political persuasion. We are concerned with how people interact and with the acceptance of people who are different on the basis of their dignity as beings created in God’s image and worthy of His atoning sacrifice.



ences are a liability, handicap, or hindrance to their survival. Sometimes it takes deliberate effort not to be repulsed by people with speech defects, a missing arm or leg, ugly features, a crippling malady, a physical deformity, crude mannerisms, shoddy dress, or a gross lack of gentility or spirituality. For them also to be poor or to lack education only intensifies our rejection.

For several weeks I took a group of blind adults to school. Their physical disadvantage made a stark difference between us. I was glad for the opportunity to be helpful, but was initially troubled by such thoughts as, What can I say or do to keep this saddened group of people happy? How inconvenient and time-consuming it will be to have to wait on them hand and foot. How mistaken I was! They were interesting, happy, jovial, resourceful, and quite independent. I enjoyed each trip. What a fellowship, what a joy divine, this experience turned out to be! How different people seem once you take an interest in them and get to know them.

deliver him in time of trouble” (Ps. 41:1). “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. . . . Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matt. 25:34-40).

“I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame” (Job 29:15). “They brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them” (Matt. 4:24).

“Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs.

There is a destiny that makes us brothers;

None goes his way alone:
All that we send into the lives of others
Comes back into our own.

I care not what his temples or his creeds,

One thing holds firm and fast—
That into his fateful heap of days and deeds

The soul of man is cast.

—Edwin Markham

Regardless of the nature of their disadvantage, people must find in life meaning, security, and acceptance lest they suffer a loss of identity. Loss of identity is a failure in relationship between the individual and society. Those who suffer from a sense of anonymity (a loss of identity) would feel better if they believed that society needed them and was concerned about them. Among the important needs we have as

individuals is the one for communities in which we may experience belonging, acceptance, and social support. It is in such communities that our basic identities are shaped and supported by others with similar interests and concerns. The less certain a person feels of his place in the scheme of things, the greater the loss of identity. Nothing is so frightening as nonbeing.

Fulfilling God's purpose

We must have a sense of God's purpose for the lives of human beings that will lead us to include in our thinking, planning, and varied activities the blind, the deaf, the paraplegic, the poor, the culturally deprived, the refugee or newly arrived immigrant, the socially maladjusted, the prisoner, the sick, the uneducated and unskilled, and even the mentally retarded. Where possible, personnel should be trained and buildings designed or redesigned with the needs and comforts of the disadvantaged in mind. We should treat all people as persons of worth and value. This will give a sense of belonging to those whom society has abandoned or who suffer from benign neglect.

In the final analysis all Christian theology is a theory of divine love. This love shines forth in the life and death of Jesus. Jesus identified Himself with the cause and interest of all human beings. He was destined to lay down His life for them.

This divine love not only justifies our love for those who are disadvantaged but facilitates it. It is in the lives of those in whom His love provokes love that we witness so vast a passion, a devotion so comprehensive. When "it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20, R.S.V.), His love of necessity brings love for all human beings: It no longer matters whether people are amiable. As objects of His love in life and death they are precious in God's sight.

This unshakable sense of God's love for this world is the fountainhead of our relationship with all members of the human family. We have also been given this assurance: "If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon day: and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not" (Isa. 58:10, 11).

O divine Master,
Grant that I may not so much
Seek to be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are
pardoned; and
It is in dying that we are born to
eternal life.

—From a prayer by
Francis of Assisi

Questions for discussion

1. What does practical goodness have to do with holiness?
2. What are the two levels of our kinship with the human family?
3. What is characteristic of every age of revival or evangelism?
4. Who are the disadvantaged?
5. What are some ways to walk in the footsteps of Jesus?
6. What is the fountainhead of our relationship with all members of the human family?

Friday, October 30

The young and the aging in God's family

To neglect the special needs of the youth and aged would be an abdication of our God-given responsibilities.

By ALFONSO P. RODA

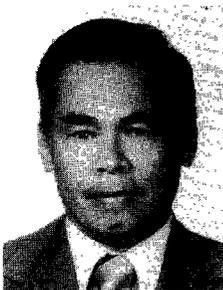
God's family on earth is made up of people from all age groups. First is the very young—the babes in arms and children of kindergarten, primary, and elementary school age. These are the dependent ones who must be fed, clothed, and looked after much of the time. The group ranges from birth to 12 years of age.

The second group is made up of young people. The youth are maturing physically and beginning to feel the urge of sexual desires; they are desiring freedom

from parental and other adult control; they are perplexed by current philosophies and doctrines, wondering which, if any, are true; they are wondering about their future as they prepare for participation in the workaday world. There is a tumultuous age when decisions for now and eternity are made.

The third group consists of those persons who carry the burdens and responsibilities of business and economics, government, the military, education, religion, health, and so on. They make the wheels of the world go around now, and also take responsibility for the world of tomorrow. They are in the productive years—from about 23 to 70.

Finally, there is the aging group—the senior citizens. Their years of greatest productivity are over. They are now in the sunset of life and have given way to younger persons—whose knees are stronger, whose eyesight is clearer, whose insight is keener, whose energies



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seem boundless. These older ones have now been placed on the shelf, as it were—good primarily for reference purposes.

The second and fourth groups of God's family are the subject of this study.

The apostle Paul writes: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10).

Certainly the church has an obligation to all people everywhere. We are our brother's keeper. This is a duty placed upon the shoulders of all who name the name of Christ. The above verse suggests, however, that the church should give priority to taking care of its own members. This is true both in spiritual and material matters. The church will be unable to serve the world acceptably unless its own house is in order. If we neglect those who are members of our family, those who are nearest and dearest to us, how effective will be our message to the world? If we cannot take care of those in need among us, how can we take care of those from outside?

The young and the aging are particularly vulnerable. It seems they are the subject of Satan's most vicious attacks. They have particular problems that the church should be concerned about. To neglect these problems—to close our eyes to their existence or to relegate their solution to others (that is, to the society as a whole or to government-established agencies)—would seem to be an abdication of our God-entrusted responsibilities.

Both these groups are important to the church. To disregard them would be detrimental to the church and would place its future in jeopardy. We should not neglect our youth—they are the future of our church. We cannot with clear conscience forsake the aging and relegate them to an anonymous existence. Both groups need to be assured at all times that they are fully accepted as part of our families and the larger family of God. In spite of their shortcomings, their feelings of inadequacy, or their fears of being liabilities to us or to society, they must be made aware that they do have worth. Regardless of how we may disagree with their thinking, attitudes, or behavior, we must not make them feel as if they were outcasts. If rightly related to, both groups may become contributing members to the overall program of the church in accomplishing its goals and objectives of

church growth, fellowship, and successful, victorious proclamation of the gospel.

The youth

What problems do we have regarding our youth? Accurate statistics may not be readily available, but college administrators and deans of student affairs, academy principals, teachers, and even church pastors testify to the fact that there is an increasing number of our youth engaging in practices once thought to be the exclusive life style of "worldly" youth—delinquency, petty crime, teenage gangs, sexual promiscuity, vandalism, worldly amusements, smoking, drinking, and using drugs. These practices have crept in among the youth of the church. We indeed have many right-thinking and well-behaved young people who are a credit to our church, concerned and ready to help in its work. But many are engaging in deleterious, pernicious, unwholesome, and destructive behavior.

The roots of such behavior are not easy to trace, but it seems that the rapid urbanization of nations has brought about a breakdown of family and social ties, thus lessening parental influence and magnifying the impact of peer pressure on young people. Working parents have little or no time for their children. Add to

this the baleful influence of television entertainment and the attitude, being injected into young minds by the schools and current popular literature, that they can "do their own thing"—live their own life and make their own decisions, disregarding family, church, and school counsel. The tragedy is that so many are making the wrong decisions, based on impulse and feelings of immediate pleasure, forgetting the long-term results.

As a church we need to address ourselves seriously to restoring family togetherness. Too many families have no chance to get to know one another in the family—their varied activities separating them most of the day and part of the evening. Parents and children need to work together harmoniously in household chores and should plan interesting togetherness activities for all members of the family. The appointments and activities planned should be as seriously kept as appointments with one's superior.

We should have a revival of family morning and evening worships—of spending time together studying the Word of God and praying earnestly for one another. We need to show genuine interest in the various activities of the young people and together work out solutions to any problems encountered.

Unscramble

By CELIA MADDOX

*The scrambled pieces of my life
Lie strewn about—divine design
Made void by clumsy, willful hands.
The plan my mortal mind conceived instead
Prov'n impotent in my uncertain hand.
I bow my head in shame to
Ask aid of Him who knows my end.
O give me insight to rearrange the parts,
Faith to alter as Thou seest best, and
By the power of Thy love
Make me once more whole indeed—
Piece fitted on piece with utmost care
To make anew from that old life
A picture, Lord, of Thee.*

The saying "The family that prays together stays together" is certainly true.

A sociologist who studied the growing teen-age delinquency in Russia came up with the following conclusions:

1. About 70 to 80 percent of juvenile offenders come from broken homes.

2. The higher the vocational skills among the youth, the lower the crime rate.

3. Children whose parents have a secondary or higher education are only half as likely to break the law as those whose parents went only to elementary school.

Even though we live in widely divergent cultures, I believe these conclusions may be applicable anywhere. How important, then, for us to keep family ties strong and show love, affection, and concern for one another. Let us keep the youth busy with worthwhile activities—for example, learning to play a musical instrument, learning a vocational skill, or keeping busy with school assignments. Let us demonstrate sincere interest in our children's schoolwork, their play, and who their friends are.

It is said that a father takes his boy to the circus but sends him to church, which means that the father shows interest in his child's entertainment but not in his spiritual growth. Are we parents guilty of this? Shall we not rather take our children both to the circus (or approved recreational activities) and to church? It is further said that a child up to the beginning of teen-age years will follow what you say, but after childhood will follow what you do. Parental example is therefore imperative in teaching spiritual values.

Ellen White has pertinent counsel for us. Labor for the youth should be regarded as "missionary work of the highest kind," and "it requires the most delicate tact, the most watchful consideration, the most earnest prayer for heavenly wisdom. [Further,] the youth are the objects of Satan's special attacks; but kindness, courtesy, and the sympathy which flows from a heart filled with love to Jesus, will gain their confidence, and save them from many a snare of the enemy.

"The youth need more than a casual notice, more than an occasional word of encouragement. They need painstaking, prayerful, careful labor. He only whose heart is filled with love and sympathy will be able to reach those youth who are apparently careless and indifferent. . . . There must be more study given to the

problem of how to deal with the youth, more earnest prayer for the wisdom that is needed in dealing with [youthful] minds. . . .

"We should seek to enter into the feelings of the youth, sympathizing with them in their joys and sorrows, their conflicts and victories."—*Gospel Workers*, pp. 207-209.

Much is being said about a "generation gap" between fathers and sons, mothers and daughters. I would venture to say that if parents were doing their duties diligently and being truly loving and understanding, there would be no generation gap. If we as a church work unitedly on this important matter, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the prophecy of Malachi may well be fulfilled in our day: "He [the prophet Elijah] will reconcile fathers to sons and sons to fathers" (chap. 4:6, N.E.B.).

The aging

One of the most neglected groups in our midst is the aging. It seems we are prone to forget those who have contributed so much to our lives—to our growth and development. We become bored with them and consequently leave them to themselves. The fifth commandment, to "honour thy father and thy mother," is still binding after our parents reach the age of 60. To honor our parents throughout their living days is the clear injunction.

One of the most moving experiences in the United States and in many other lands, I believe, is a visit to a home for the aged. In these homes are old men and women sitting and doing nothing, most of the time looking blank, but often dreaming of times that used to be. Most of these people are feeling sorry for themselves. Whenever I see this, I have asked myself, Where are the sons and daughters of these aged fathers and mothers? Are there none among their beloved children and grandchildren to take care of them in the familiar surroundings they used to love and know? The culture may be somewhat different in Western countries from that where I come from—the Orient—where there are still no homes for the aged. But for whatever reasons, I still think that our aging parents deserve something better than the treatment so many receive.

When and if it becomes necessary to place elderly parents in a home for the aged, we can still do much to make them feel needed. Frequent visits, telephone calls, and letters will let them know we

love and remember them. If they are physically able, we can take them on excursions or home with us for weekend visits. This is not ideal (the ideal being to keep them in our homes), but it may be the only solution possible for some families.

If the natural children are gone or not available, then the church should do something for these needy ones. "The household of faith" (Gal. 6:10) is to care for its helpless ones. "Whenever they are able to do so, it should be the privilege of the members of every family to minister to their own kindred. When this cannot be, the work belongs to the church."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 204. Have we been delinquent in this?

One thing that depresses the aged more than anything else is that they now feel useless and have become parasites on their families or society. Soren Kierkegaard wrote: "Oh, the desolation of old age, if to be an old man means this: Means that at any given moment a living person could look at life as if he himself did not exist, as if life were merely a past event that held no more present tasks for him as a living person, as if he, as a living person, and life were cut off from each other within life so that life was past and gone, and he had become a stranger to it."

How true this is! Do we treat our aged ones this way, by cutting them off from all activity so that they "become a stranger" to life? Should we not rather bind them close to all our activities and thus make their lives as happy and fulfilling as we possibly can?

Ellen White says that we should "help them [the aged] to feel that their usefulness is not at an end. Make them feel that their help is valued, that there is something yet for them to do in ministering to others, and it will cheer their hearts and give interest to their lives."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 204.

If we are to follow this instruction, then we will need to take time to plan that these dear aged ones be given the opportunity to give counsel. We will need not only to bring them into our various activities but to give them responsibilities in keeping with their age and abilities. We should always make them feel welcome in our midst.

Ellen White says further: "Let . . . [the aged] remain among friends and familiar associations. Let them worship among those whom they have known and loved. Let them be cared for by loving and tender hands."—*Ibid.*

God's family reunited

The Adventist goal is for whole families, made whole in Christ, to be united with the family of God in heaven and earth.

By NEAL C. WILSON

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse” (Mal. 4:5, 6, R.S.V.).

This serious yet glorious prophetic picture of God's loving purpose to restore and reunite hearts and lives also describes the Christian home where the Elijah message has been proclaimed and where the Elijah mission has been accomplished. It pictures the ideal family situation on earth, and symbolizes the ultimate family relationships that will become a reality in the heavenly home. We are reminded “that the home on earth is to be a symbol of and a preparation for the home in heaven.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 363.

A right sense of values

It is ironic, and perhaps it even sounds cynical, to observe that never have homes in the Western world been more comfortable, more pleasingly decorated, more attractively furnished—and yet so seldom enjoyed by families. One is led to wonder how the mutual heart-turning of parents and children can take place when, as in many cases, they rarely see each other for any significant length of

time. For some it may be that the very pursuit of the so-called comforts of home ultimately cheats them out of enjoying those good things.

Ellen White observed: “The sweet word ‘Home’ is perverted to mean ‘something with four walls, filled with elegant furniture and adornments,’ while its inmates are on a continual strain to meet the requirements of custom in the different departments of life.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 151.

Some observers predict that the family, the unit of society as we know it, will all but disappear in some areas in a relatively short time. There are indeed many disintegrating forces that disrupt and destroy family relationships. Individual family members seem to be susceptible and often seem to succumb to these forces because of a perverted value system. The lure of materialism keeps fathers and mothers running on the treadmill of more and “better” things so that they may attain to what some call “the good life.” Adults appear to be preoccupied with trying to keep up with the “norms” in a highly competitive society; children and youth are subjected to a strong peer pressure to go more, get more, do more, enjoy more. Pleasure-seeking in a world filled with professionally produced, superficial entertainment has a magnetic drawing power on young and old alike, and usually leaves them in an emotionally intoxicated and unreal state of mind. Someone has observed that it costs more to amuse today's child than it did to educate his father.

The eternal significance of the task, and the evident shortness of time available in which to accomplish the divine objective of preparing the family for a



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There is a blessing in following Ellen White's counsel in this matter. Caring for the aged gives us “precious opportunity to co-operate with Christ in His ministry of mercy and to develop traits of character like His. . . . The young may bring sunshine into the hearts and lives of the aged. Those whose hold on life is weakening need the benefit of contact with the hopefulness and buoyancy of youth. And the young may be helped by the wisdom and experience of the old. Above all, they [youth] need to learn the lesson of unselfish ministry. The presence of one in need of sympathy and forbearance and self-sacrificing love would be to many a household a priceless blessing. It would sweeten and refine the home life, and call forth in old and young those Christlike graces that would make them beautiful with a divine beauty and rich in heaven's imperishable treasure.

“In placing among them the helpless [aged] . . . to be dependent upon their care, Christ tests His professed followers. By our love and service for His needy children, we prove the genuineness of our love for Him. *To neglect them is to declare ourselves false disciples, strangers to Christ and His love.*”—*Ibid.*, pp. 204, 205. (Italics supplied.)

These are strong words from the inspired servant of God. Could it be that we have lost a blessing for ourselves, as well as our children, by neglecting our senior citizens in homes for the aged?

Our youth and the older members of God's family certainly need more than passing, casual attention. They need tender care and regard and our close attention to their unique problems.

As we prayerfully consider these matters, may God give us the courage to do what is right concerning these beloved ones. □

Questions for discussion

1. Should the church give priority to doing good to those who are of the household of faith? If so, why?
2. What does genuine acceptance of the young and the aging mean? Does this include even those who are at variance with us in their attitudes and behavior and those who may be a burden to us?
3. What are some practices we need to change in our home life in order to improve family togetherness?
4. What are the areas in which we can improve our relationship toward our senior citizens?
5. What blessings have we lost by neglecting our elderly parents?

heavenly home, make it imperative for Christian parents to develop a truly Christian value system. God's inspired messenger admonishes, "Teach the children . . . that new tastes must be created, new motives inspired. They must have help from Christ."—*Child Guidance*, p. 515.

By precept and example parents must demonstrate the kind of home simplicity that should characterize a household awaiting the imminent return of Jesus. "Parents have a sacred duty to perform in teaching their children to help bear the burdens of the home, to be content with plain and simple food, and neat and inexpensive dress. . . . Oh, that we could be satisfied with less heart-longings, less striving for things difficult to obtain wherewith to beautify our homes, while that which God values above jewels, the meek and quiet spirit, is not cherished. The grace of simplicity, meekness, and true affection would make a paradise of the humblest home."—*Ibid.*, pp. 141, 142.

Adequate communication

Ministers, marriage and family counselors, child psychologists, and sociologists in the United States are agreed that a multitude of families suffer from inadequate communication. In large part this is a consequence of the value distortion discussed above, with its overemphasis on the treasures and pleasures of the material world. Preoccupation with things leaves little time for talking and listening, which are imperative ingredients for really knowing, respecting, and appreciating one another.

"'No time,' says the father; 'I have no time to give to the training of my children, no time for social and domestic enjoyments.' . . . It is the cry of many mothers: 'I have no time to be with my children.'"—*The Adventist Home*, p. 191.

Research has revealed that the inability to respond becomes intolerable for many maturing children and youth. According to published statistics, thousands of youth from 11 to 17 years of age leave home each year in the United States. Because of cultural and sociological restraints, this tragic phenomenon may not be typical of other parts of the world. On the other hand, the same urges may exist in the hearts of young people in many places.

Social workers who must deal with this gigantic problem of dislocation, and who have carefully studied the cause-

and-effect relationships in the matter, declare that the majority of runaways sever home and school ties because they cannot communicate with parents, peers, or teachers. When this frustrating situation becomes unbearable, they choose to run away, hoping to find someone with whom they may have rapport and enjoy congeniality. Authorities are quite well agreed that excessive TV-viewing accounts for much of this communication failure.

"Some parents do not understand their children and are not really acquainted with them. There is often a great distance between parents and children. If the parents would enter more fully into the feelings of their children and draw out what is in their hearts it would have a beneficial influence upon them."—*Ibid.*, p. 190.

God's messenger warns that if "children do not find in their parents and in their home that which will satisfy their desire for sympathy and companionship, they will look to other sources" (*ibid.*, p. 192). How can we afford to take the risk of endangering both mind and character of those who are so precious to us?

The wider circle

At this point I want to enlarge the scope of our concern. Not only are we responsible for our own children but we will be held accountable for all the youth in the church. Even beyond this, we must sense the awesome responsibility and privilege of becoming spiritual parents and brothers and sisters to everyone, young or old, who comes within the sphere of our influence. We must pray for, and seek to win to Christ, all those who are unprepared for His second coming. Every human being for whom He died is precious to Him and should be to us, also. While we should give priority to our immediate family, Jesus has a much wider circle in mind when He asks, "Where is the flock that was entrusted to you?" (Jer. 13:20, N.E.B.).

Christian psychologists and sociologists also cite the prevalent manifestations of humanism, with its preoccupation with self, as a cause of low concern for others and communication inadequacy. It is obvious to careful observers that current attitudes of "me-ism" focus on self so much that others, even close family members, are neglected and passed by with little or no effort for verbal exchange. Relationships become tenuous where this situation exists.

The following statement is invaluable

as we seek to draw our children and others into God's spiritual family: "Give some of your leisure hours to your children; associate with them in their work and in their sports, and win their confidence. Cultivate their friendship. Let parents devote the evenings to their families. Lay off care and perplexity with the labors of the day."—*Ibid.*

Good communication is essential for mental health and social happiness in the home and in the church, and it is critically important that the counsel God anciently gave His people be wisely applied. Deuteronomy 6:3-9 records God's command to communicate diligently His expressed will to family members. The wording indicates that this communication is to be integrated into the total activities of the day. We are convinced that God's ancient instructions to His people are just as valid in our society.

Genuine freedom

True freedom is the rightful heritage of every follower of Jesus, but a philosophy of life that recognizes no authority but self, that abhors rules and boundaries, and that operates without self-control is a false freedom and is contrary to the spirit of heaven.

In speaking of the parents' duty to prepare their children for life and its duties, Ellen White declares, "The first lesson to be taught them is self-control."—*Child Guidance*, p. 91. It is wise to bear in mind that self-control is learned perhaps as much through example as through precept. Those who must exercise authority can gain the confidence of those in their charge only as they live lives worthy of respect and as they respect others. "Show respect for your children, and do not allow them to speak one disrespectful word to you."—*Ibid.*, p. 98.

Consistent parental integrity and priorities

Absolute authoritarianism will not combat false freedom or promote true freedom. Unless we nurture in young people growth of thought, feelings of self-respect, and confidence in their own ability to perform, we will produce a class who are weak in mental and moral power. It is therefore essential for us to train our youth to think and act for themselves within reasonable rules governed by principles of self-discipline.

Youth are disappointed and disillusioned when they see in adults practices

that appear to be artificial, unreal, inconsistent, or hypocritical. "It is because so many parents and teachers profess to believe the Word of God while their lives deny its power, that the teaching of Scripture has no greater effect upon the youth. At times the youth are brought to feel the power of the Word. They see the preciousness of the love of Christ. They see the beauty of His character, the possibilities of a life given to His service. But in contrast they see the life of those who profess to revere God's precepts."—*Ibid.*, p. 218.

The religious experience that will lead to salvation is not a responsibility that can be discharged by proxy or substitution. This sacred work must be given priority and cannot safely be assigned to other agents or agencies.

Satan would deceive our youth and hold them captive as truly as were the children of Israel captives in Babylon. But God's promise to parents then and now is unequivocal: "Thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children" (Isa. 49:25).

One big happy family

To keep families together in preparation for the soon return of Jesus is an awesome but rewarding task. To succeed in that task is a most glorious goal. The marvelous truth is that God has made provision for such efforts to be successful.

We may sow in tears and amid many discouragements, but if with earnest prayer we sow beside all waters, such seed-sowing will not be in vain.

"In your work for your children take

hold of the mighty power of God. Commit your children to the Lord in prayer. Work earnestly and untiringly for them. God will hear your prayers and will draw them to Himself. Then, at the last great day, you can bring them to God, saying, 'Here am I, and the children whom Thou hast given me.'"—*The Adventist Home*, p. 536.

It should give every Christian a thrill of solemn joy to know that the great day of which Ellen White speaks is not far away. It is for this reason that I renew once more my appeal made at the General Conference session in Dallas to make Friday evening Family Night, whether the home is composed of a family unit or a single individual. I am persuaded this could become a source of invincible spiritual strength to each one involved and to the whole church as we witness to the world and persuade many to join us in preparing for the soon coming of our Lord. Renew your covenant with the Saviour and one another this coming Friday evening and each Friday evening until Jesus returns to gather us together for the larger family reunion.

The Bible describes the physical glories and benefits of the future life, and they are wonderful. But gates of pearl, streets of gold, fabulous mansions, and the many other real things promised will seem as nothing compared with the eternal values of relationships with God the Father; with our Saviour; with the Holy Spirit; with angels; with the saints from every kindred, nation, tongue, and people; *and with our families.*

While we wait we struggle to understand and to be understood. Human communication at best seems faulty and inadequate. We misread motives and misjudge actions. But when Jesus comes

we will learn what it really means to communicate. "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Cor. 13:12).

No more shattered personalities, fractured families, or disrupted communion. Wholeness and wholesomeness will be universal. Physical, mental, social, and spiritual integration will make heaven and eternity the perfect fulfillment.

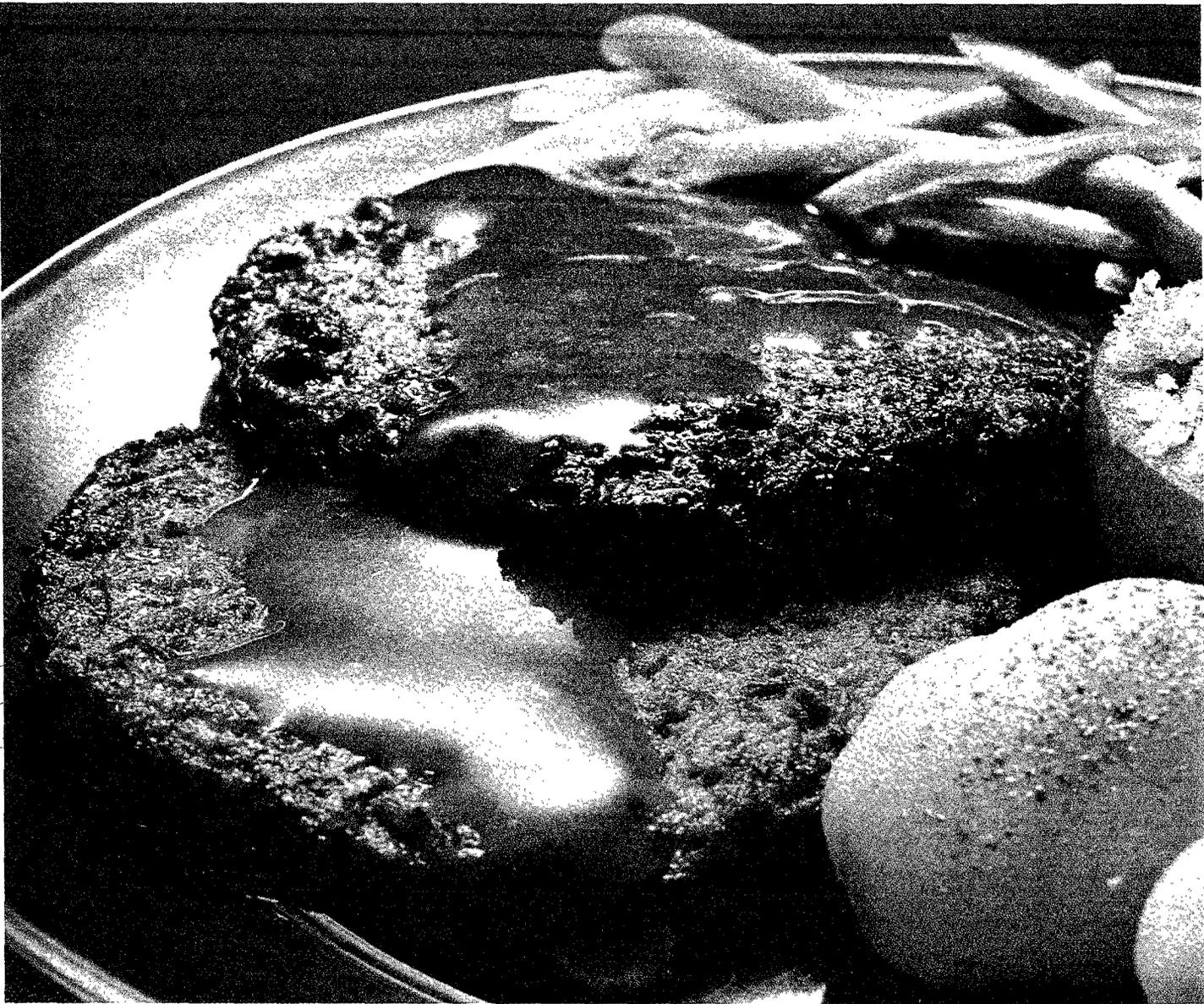
Physical pain, mental anguish, emotional stress, and spiritual unease make existence miserable for millions today. In God's tomorrow all forms of suffering will be over. Feelings of guilt, which were the hardest of all to bear, will have been left behind, erased for the penitent by God's amazing grace in and through Jesus Christ. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4).

Jesus is coming—very soon. The goal is *whole families*, made *whole* in Christ, united with *the whole family of God* in heaven and earth. It's time for the family reunion of the ages. □

Questions for discussion

1. What are the chief barriers to communication in the family?
2. What ideas can be suggested for improving communication?
3. What activities can be used to make Friday evening a true Family Night?
4. How can single parents meet the divine plan for Christian families?
5. How may TV-watching be handled so as not to weaken family ties?
6. How may spiritual nurture among teenage family members be promoted?

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The family of God

By KAY KUZMA

To Parents, teachers, and leaders: No one knows exactly what was said as God the Father and God the Son planned the creation of man. No one knows the conversations that took place among the angels as they witnessed the great controversy. But we do know that the great controversy occurred and is about to end. We do know the issues involved and that Christ sacrificed Himself for His erring family so that we may someday live with God, as He planned in the beginning.



Kay Kuzma is associate professor of health sciences at Loma Linda University. The mother of three children, she directs parenting seminars and has authored 11 books.

In order for children to choose to be members of the family of God they need to understand what the choice means. They must understand that no one else can make this choice for them. It is up to them to choose life or death.

Encourage the children to question, "Did this really happen?" You may have to say, "The Bible doesn't tell exactly what was said (or done), but we do know . . ." Tell them the facts that we have been given.

Ask feeling and thought questions, and encourage the children to search their Bibles for answers. For example: "How would you feel if you were the angels watching Jesus being hurt on earth? How do you think Jesus felt when the people He had created began nailing Him to the cross? Do you think it hurt Him? Was He heartbroken? What does the Bible say He said? Find the answer in the Bible and read it. What do you think you would say if someone did that to you? Jesus came to show us how to live here on earth so that we can live with Him in heaven. Do you think it is possible to live as He did? Why?"

The objective of the stories is to encourage the children to choose to want to be a part of God's family in heaven. They should understand that this is not a one-time decision, but a daily decision, an hour-by-hour decision, about how they live their lives. It is the little choices they make that will ultimately determine whether they choose life or death.

First day

In the beginning

One day God the Father said to His Son, Jesus, "Let Us create a special family."

"That sounds like a wonderful idea," Jesus said. "What kind of family?"

"Well," God the Father answered, "I was thinking about a special family, a family just to enjoy and love—a family like Us."

"Yes, I'd like to create another family to love and enjoy," said Jesus.

"We could make them in Our image. That is, so they would be like Us but not really Us," added God.

"That's right," said Jesus. "Even though each one of the humans looked exactly like Us—they still couldn't be Us. Only God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit can be God. And We three are God because We have always been—there was no beginning with Us. No one ever created Us."

"That's right," God the Father said. "No created person can ever be God. And," God added "if We made everybody look exactly the same, it would be very hard for the new family to tell who's who. Oh, I value uniqueness and specialness

too much to make a lot of carbon copies!"

"Then We want each member of this new family to look different but to be like Us in character—in the way We love each other, don't We?" Jesus added.

"Yes, that's what I've been thinking," said God the Father. "And in addition,

there is one more special way they can be like Us in a way that angels never can be."

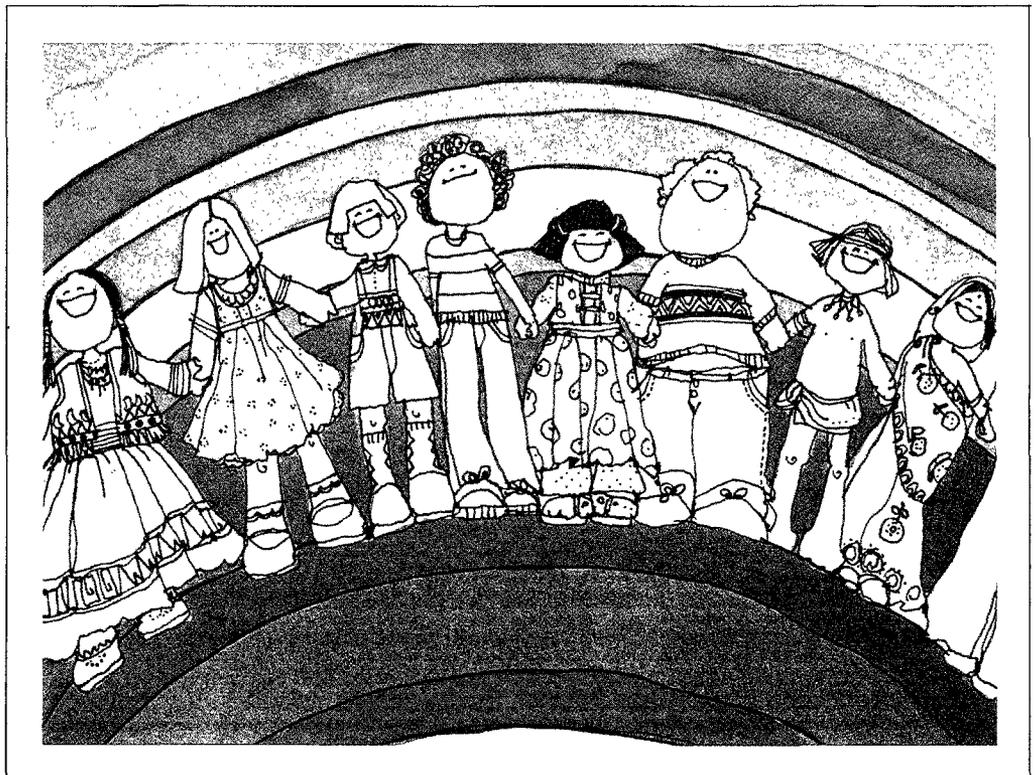
"The angels can eat and sleep; laugh and cry; walk—and fly, but—but they can't create. They can't make more angels."

"That's absolutely right. And wouldn't it be wonderful if this new human family

could experience the joy of creating other family members?"

"That really is an exciting idea," exclaimed Jesus. "We could create humans to live in families like We three—so close that We are in perfect harmony, even though there are three of Us."

"Yes. We could create two



kinds of humans, male and female, who would love each other in a special way. Then they could set up little families, and because of their love they could reproduce tiny little humans who would grow up, set up new families, and rear other little humans."

"Then the older humans, the mother and father humans, could teach the little ones about Us by loving each other so much that the two of them would become as one—just as We three are one in what We want to do (purpose) and how We think, feel, and act (character)."

"It's a wonderful plan! But it will work only if they have Our love in their hearts," added God the Father.

"I can hardly wait to get started," said Jesus. "You know how much I enjoy creating. But most of all I am looking forward to loving each one. And won't it be wonderful to share their joy as each new human is born?"

"They will be My sons and daughters," said the Father.

"And My brothers and sisters," said Jesus.

"And Our Spirit will be with them every minute of the day."

"What a happy family we will be!"

And so, in the beginning, God created the human family to be a very special part of His family.

Aren't you glad you're a part of the family of God?

Second day

Trouble in God's family

News spread fast.

"Have you heard? Isn't it exciting? God the Father and God the Son are planning to create a new family."

"Wow! A new family! Humans, you say. Not angels? This is really fantastic news! I can hardly wait to see the expression on Lucifer's face when he hears the good news."

And so the word spread throughout heaven, up through the angel ranks until

it reached clear to the top.

"Preposterous!" objected Lucifer when he heard. "It can't be! I'm the head of the angel family. I was the first one created by God. I sit next to God on His throne. I'm the smartest, most clever, most intelligent angel of all. If this idle gossip were true, I would know. I——"

"But it is true, Lucifer. We heard it first-hand."

"Can't be!" declared Lucifer. "I am always consulted first. I'm God's number one messenger. If it were true I would be telling you, and not you telling me! Off with you—you gossipers!"

With drooping wings the angels left Lucifer's presence. But the talk continued, and everyone was delighted with the new plans—everyone except Lucifer.

"Why didn't God consult me?" he pouted. "It's not fair. How dare God talk only to His Son Jesus! I'm God's son too. I'm His first created son. If God's Son Jesus can help with the planning, why can't I? I'm as good as He is. In fact, I'm better!"

"What about it?" Lucifer said to his friends. "Don't you think I'm a pretty important angel?"

"Well, yes," they admitted.

"In fact, don't you all consider me the best angel of all—the number one messenger for God? The mighty prince of the angels?"

"Yes." They nodded their heads.

"Then can you imagine God's not consulting me about this human family He is planning to create?"

"Well, no," they admitted.

"Wouldn't you say it's unfair that God planned all this with His Son Jesus and didn't even respect us angels enough to consult us? Here God is planning to create another family and doesn't even ask the angel family—His first family—whether or not we approve."

"It seems unfair," the angels agreed.

"I tell you," Lucifer continued, "this is serious. I don't think God really loves us. All He wants us for is to

work, work, work. Carry a message here. Carry a message there. It's hard work! And some reward for all this service—not even asking us whether we wanted another family or not!"

"Not fair, not fair, not fair," chanted Lucifer's friends.

"If you ask me," said Lucifer, "we ought to revolt. God has too many rules. And He never even asked us what rules we wanted, did He?"

"No, He didn't," the angel friends admitted.

"Then why should we obey all these rules? We'll just make our own rules, and then we'll show God that He can't push us around," suggested Lucifer.

"He can't take us for granted!" Lucifer's friends shouted.

"And God the Father had just better consult me before making any more plans," declared Lucifer.

"Right! Let's show God we mean business." And after thinking about the matter for a long time they decided to revolt.

"Don't revolt," God pleaded. "I love you."

"I love you too," said Jesus. "You will always be Our special angel family. Our love for you will not change just because We create another family."

"Why wasn't I consulted?" challenged Lucifer.

"Because," God answered kindly, "you are not God. I created you. And no created being can ever be God."

"I can," yelled Lucifer defiantly. "I want to make my own rules. And," he continued as he beckoned to his friends, "all you angels who would like to make your own rules, follow me."

Once more Lucifer looked back at God and threatened, "I'll just show You, God. If You go ahead and create that human family You're planning, they will revolt against You. I'll make sure of that."

Then Lucifer turned away from God, and with one third of the angel family he left heaven.

And God cried because He loved His angel family.

Third day

Creation

God the Father and His Son continued the plans to create the special human family. Because They loved the people in it, They wanted to create a perfect place for them to live. A place with light and hills, mountains, brooks, and seas.

God wanted them to have trees and flowers, delicious bananas, walnuts, and watermelons.

God knew His children would enjoy the sun, moon, and the countless twinkling stars.

But God's plans were not yet complete. "I think the little boys that will be born would enjoy puppies—and kittens—and maybe hopping frogs, too. And I know those little girls would enjoy ponies to ride. And butterflies." God smiled. "I can just see those little ones playing tag with them as the butterflies dart out of their reach and then light on top of their heads when they are not expecting it. And they must have giraffes and elephants and lions and parrots and goldfish and——"

"And," added Jesus, "We will put all of these wonderful things in the most beautiful garden in the world. We'll call this special home Eden."

"I'll go for walks with the family every day," said God the Father. "What fun we will have together!"

So the plans continued, and the faithful angels could hardly wait. But all heaven was worried about one thing. There was one trouble spot in God's perfect kingdom. It was Lucifer and his bad-angel friends. Would they spoil all these perfect plans?

"Get rid of them," the good angels pleaded. "It is not worth having them around. They will ruin everything."

"I can't destroy them," explained God. "Everyone in My family must make his own choice whether to follow Me or to follow Lucifer. If I killed Lucifer and his angels now, then My family would follow Me because they would be

afraid of Me. I don't want that.

"I love My family. I want everyone to keep My rules because they love Me and not because they are afraid I'll punish them if they don't!"

"What will happen if the new human family chooses to obey Lucifer?" the angels asked.

"Unfortunately, they will die," replied Jesus, as His voice cracked. "Everything that is alive on earth will die."

"You mean the trees and flowers, the birds, fish, all the animals, and—and the human family?"

"Yes," said God, "the wages of sin is death."

"Then warn them!" pleaded the angels. "Tell them not to listen to Lucifer. And please don't allow Lucifer to follow them around. The way he keeps nagging, he would be a terrible nuisance. No one would even have time to enjoy the beautiful Eden garden with him around spreading all of his lies."

"We will do that," said God. "But We must let the new family choose whether or not to obey Us."

"We love our family too much to force them to obey," added Jesus.

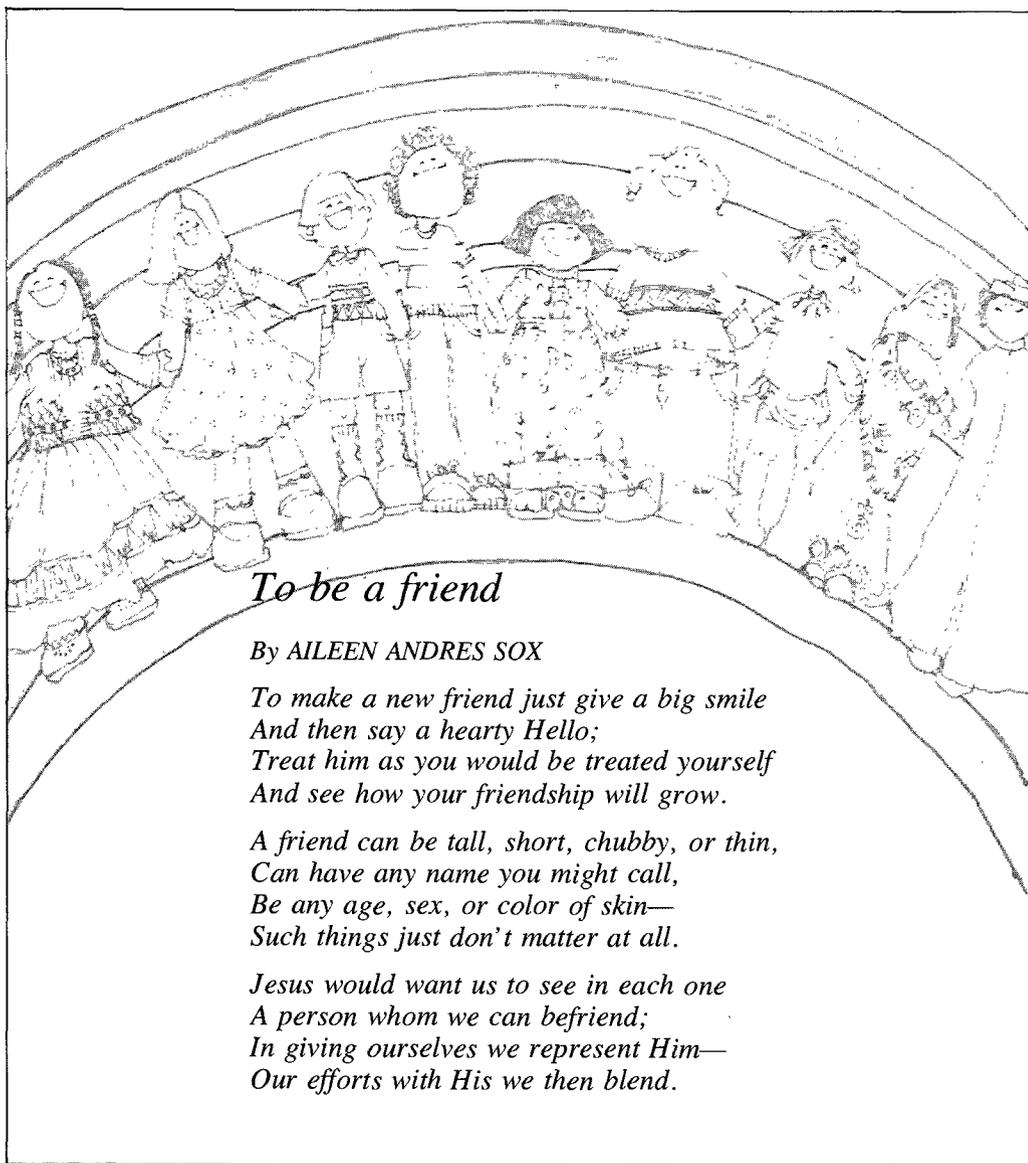
And so with the plans for the new family completed, God began Creation. God spoke, and there was light, and land, and seas, and plants, and the sun, moon, and stars, and fish and birds and animals.

And when everything was ready God made Adam and Eve—the very first people in the human family. God loved them very much. He walked and talked with them. God warned them about Lucifer. He told them not to go close to Lucifer's tree. He told them not to talk with Lucifer. He told them if they chose to love and obey God, then they would live forever. But if they chose to obey Lucifer, then they would die.

God loved them so much He let them choose life or death.

And God's special family chose death.

You too have a choice. What will you choose?



To be a friend

By AILEEN ANDRES SOX

*To make a new friend just give a big smile
And then say a hearty Hello;
Treat him as you would be treated yourself
And see how your friendship will grow.*

*A friend can be tall, short, chubby, or thin,
Can have any name you might call,
Be any age, sex, or color of skin—
Such things just don't matter at all.*

*Jesus would want us to see in each one
A person whom we can befriend;
In giving ourselves we represent Him—
Our efforts with His we then blend.*

Fourth day

God's plan for His family

"They disobeyed! They disobeyed!" The cry filled heaven. "God's special family disobeyed. They listened to Lucifer. They believed Lucifer's lies. They did what Lucifer said, and now they are going to die. Everything on earth will die. Adam and Eve chose death instead of life. How could they do such a thing?"

"I don't know," God the Father said sadly. "There is no excuse for disobedience. There is no excuse for sin."

"God warned them about the consequences," said Jesus, "and they chose not to believe Him. Instead they believed Lucifer's lies."

"But, God, Adam and Eve are Your special family, the family You have been planning for so long. How can You just leave them alone now? How can You just stand by and let them die? You must do something. Can't You give them a second chance? Please," the angels pleaded.

"We have a plan," said God. "In the very beginning, before Creation, We made a plan in case this might happen. But We were hoping We would never need to put this plan into operation."

"A plan! A plan! Oh, good,

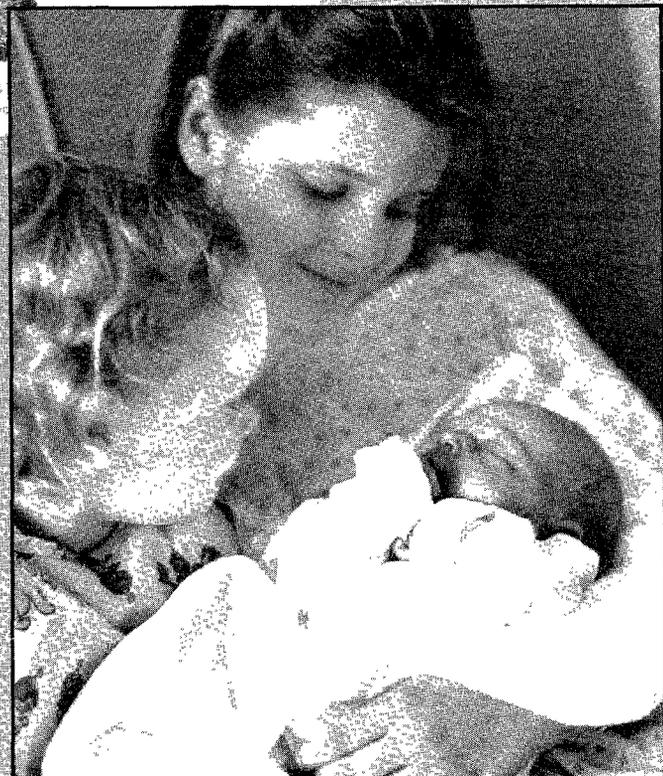
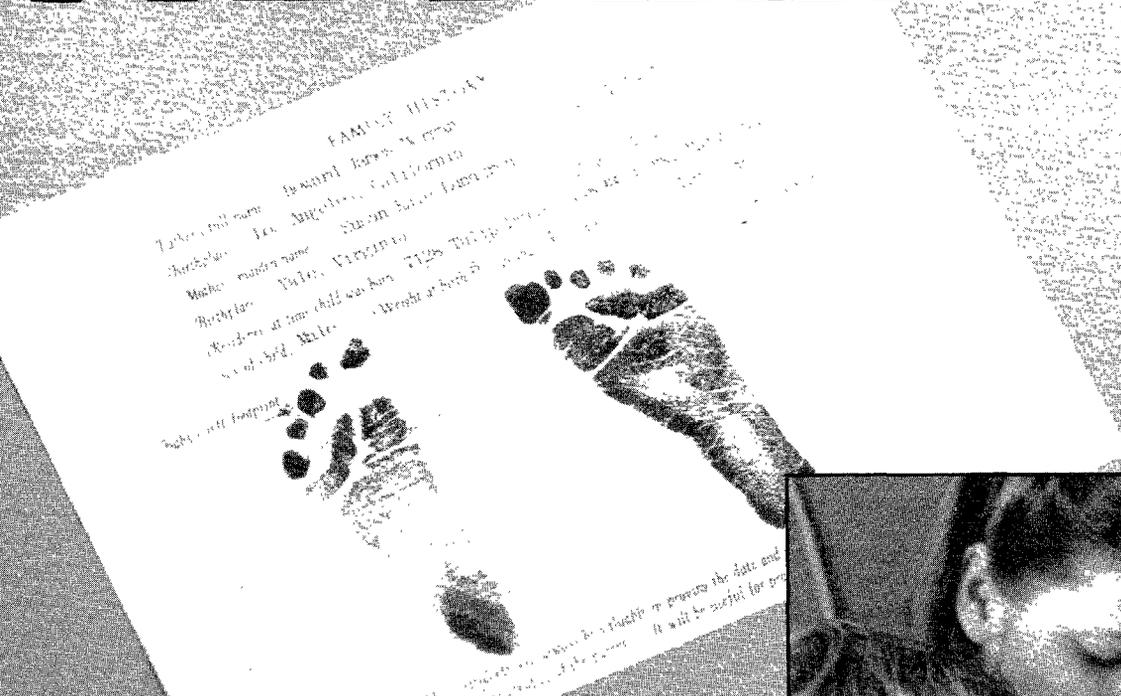
there is a plan! Tell us what it is. We want to know. We can't stand the suspense. How are You going to save this special family from the death they chose?"

Jesus looked out over the angels whom He loved so much. His voice became very soft. He swallowed hard and said, "I will die for them."

"But You can't," the angels cried. "You are God, the only uncreated Son of God. Never! Never! We will never let that happen. We love You too much. Let one of us die. Let all of us die. But not You, Jesus."

"It is the only way," sighed God as He wiped a tear from His cheek. "We have spent hours, days, thinking of

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Christopher Teutsch (2½) and Michelle Teutsch (11) visit their twelve-hour-old sister in the sibling visitation room.

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every possibility. If there were another way, We would certainly choose it. The thought of My Son Jesus dying is almost more than I can bear."

"Why? Why can't we die for Adam and Eve?" questioned the angels.

"Because," God explained, "you are not God. Created beings can never become God—nor can they take the place of God."

"You see," said Jesus, "Adam and Even broke the law of God. The result of breaking this law is death. Just as God's love will never change, neither can His law change. To allow sin to live forever would, in the long run, not be the loving thing to do. We cannot change the consequences."

"But," continued God, "nothing prevents Us from taking the place of this special family and dying for them. Only a person who has lived a perfect life has the right to live forever. And no human can ever do that now. There was a chance when Lucifer was confined to one tree. But now Lucifer—that Satan of a person that he has become—has won the right to claim the earth as his territory. We can't keep him in his tree anymore. He will tempt every human who is born on earth. And he will become so cunning in his lies that even the best of My special family will be deceived and at times choose to follow him."

"Therefore," said Jesus, "the only way that eternal death can be prevented is if I die the death that the human family deserves. Then all those who love Me and are sorry for their mistakes will have a second chance.

"This is how Our plan works. If I live a perfect life, then Satan can't claim Me when I die, and My Father can resurrect Me. It is risky. But it is the only hope the human family has. It is the only way they can still choose to be part of My family.

"If the plan is successful, then Satan will lose his claim to the earth that I created. And I will have the right to bring My human family home to live with Me forever."

"When will this happen? How? Where?" questioned the angels.

"At a special time," explained Jesus, "I will go to earth to live among My human family. I will show them how to live successfully on earth."

"But You can't! You can't," cried the angels. "That's Satan's territory. He will tempt You more strongly than he has ever tempted anyone before. He will make life miserable for You. You know how jealous he is of You. You know how much he hates You. He'll kill You. We can't let You go."

"There is no other choice," replied God. "If the human race is to live, God must die."

And so the special family that was to bring God His greatest joy brought Him instead His greatest sorrow.

Fifth day

Jesus, the Son of man

It was zero hour—the hour that Jesus, the Son of God, was to be born as a son of the human family—the Son of man.

"Can you imagine how blessed the human family is?" exclaimed the guardian angel to his angel friend. "Never, ever, throughout all the aeons of history has God been born into a family."

"The humans must be mighty proud to be able to welcome Jesus, the only uncreated Son of God," agreed his friend. "I hear the chosen parents are right now on their way to Bethlehem, the place where Jesus is to be born. The town has probably rolled out the red carpet, and the welcome band is ready to play."

"And I expect that the top-floor suite of the best hotel in town has been reserved for their stay . . . and the mayor will no doubt hand them the keys to the city and, and . . ."

Mary and Joseph were dusty, tired, and hungry when they arrived in Bethlehem. But there was no red carpet, no welcoming band, and no place for them to stay. So

Jesus, the Son of God, was born in a cattle barn.

* * *

"Why do you look so sad?"

"If I told you the truth you'd never believe me!" said the guardian angel.

"Try me," said his friend. "I'm curious."

"Well," said the guardian angel, trying to explain, "it was my turn to help guard Jesus. And I've been looking forward to this duty for weeks. It's such a pleasure to be close to our Jesus, even though He's still a little boy and is just learning about us angels. You should see His eyes light up every time His mother tells Him about how Gabriel came to her and told her she was going to have a baby boy. Before she's even finished, He says, 'Tell it again! Tell it again, Mommy!' He loves to sing and listen to the birds, and He's beginning to read God's Holy Book. He remembers everything His mother tells Him—He's a smart little boy! And He's growing like a young plant."

"OK, OK," said the angel friend. "I love to hear about Jesus, but what does all this have to do with your looking so sad?"

"Well, you see, I was on duty guarding Jesus as He started to pet a baby lamb that belonged to the flock next door. All at once the neighbor boys began calling Jesus terrible names and throwing rocks at Him and—"

"And you kept Him from getting hurt, right?"

"Right. But can you imagine those human children treating our Jesus like that?" the angel asked. "It makes me so sad."

"The children just don't know any better. I'm sure when Jesus grows up and the people know who He is, they will treat Him with the love and respect that He deserves," reassured his friend.

Jesus grew up. He waved good-bye to His mother and said, "I must do My Father's work." He needed helpers, so He said to Andrew and Peter and to James and John, "Leave your fishing nets and

come, follow Me." They followed—and told others—and soon Jesus had twelve helpers and many followers.

Wherever Jesus went He helped people, He healed them, and He told them how to live. "Love your enemies," He said. "Do nice things for people who are mean to you. If someone hits you, don't hit back. If you are asked to carry something for a mile, offer to carry it for two. Do not show off when you give an offering. Don't buy lots of things, but use your money to help people learn about God. Don't judge people—you're probably worse than they. Don't worry about tomorrow. If God cares for the sparrow He will care for you. Go and be good; your sins are forgiven."

But some people didn't want to do what He said. "Nobody can tell us what to do! Why should we obey Him? We want to make up our own rules. And who does He think He is, forgiving people's sins? He thinks He is God. We'll just show Him a thing or two."

So they finally took Jesus as a prisoner. They tied Him up. They spit on Him. They called Him names. "Ha, ha, ha, King of the Jews," they ridiculed. They beat Him until His back was bruised and bleeding. Then they took a hammer and nailed Jesus' hands and feet to a cross.

Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing."

And then Jesus died. God's specially created human family killed Him.

"How could they do such a thing?" The angels shook their heads and cried.

Sixth day

The family reunited

Time passed. The human family, for the most part, forgot that God had lived among them. Some never knew. Others didn't even care. But always there were a few of God's special family who did care. They loved God more than anything on earth.

They obeyed God's laws and kept His Sabbath day holy. They loved everyone—even people who were mean to them. They studied God's holy Book, learned their memory verses, and talked to God every day—sometimes all day long. They told others about how God created them, about God's life on earth, His death, and His resurrection. And they believed God's promise to return and take them to live with Him in heaven.

Time passed. Heaven was a flurry of activity. The angel family was hurrying and scurrying, hustling and bustling, here and there.

An angel who had been away on a long extended mission shook his head when he saw how busy everyone was. "What's going on here?" he asked.

"Haven't you heard? We don't have much time left," answered Gabriel as he finished planting a golden rose-bush in front of a silver

mansion. "There," he said, as he brushed the sparkling soil from his hands, "Jennifer will have her rose of pure gold. She always wanted one. And I just couldn't disappoint her. All the other angels have their last-minute work to do, so I find myself putting on a few finishing touches—just to make sure everything is perfect."

"I'm heading over to Bryan's mansion now. He ordered some lions and tigers and a silver-and-gold trumpet. Do you want to tag along and help me?"

"Sure," said the angel. "I'd be glad to. But while we work, please explain to me—why the rush?"

"Haven't you heard? Earth time has almost ended. Jesus has finished His work in the sanctuary. He has checked every human name 'way back to Adam and Eve and has erased out of the book of life everyone who chose death. Now He has closed the book, and we are making sure we

have a special place prepared for each person whose name is in the book of life."

"I've never had so much fun in my life," said Gabriel. "I can hardly wait to see Timmy's face when he sees I don't have a halo. But I polished up the one he ordered and had an extra one made for me to wear when we're together. I don't want anyone to be disappointed when he gets to heaven. We've waited a long time to bring God's specially created human family home."

"Did you remember the little white colt Kari wanted?" the angel asked.

"Yes, he's nibbling grass by the back door of her mansion."

"And did you remember that extra bedroom in the Nelsons' mansion so Brett can have a room all to himself . . . and the velvet dress Tracy wanted for her mother . . . and an inner tube for Smuts? You know, he's always wanted to float down the river of life."

"Yes, yes. Everything is ready," replied Gabriel. "Everything is ready."

And then God spoke the day, the hour, and the very minute when He would leave heaven to go to earth to get His special family.

"This is it," the angels whispered. "For 6,000 years this is what the universe has been waiting for."

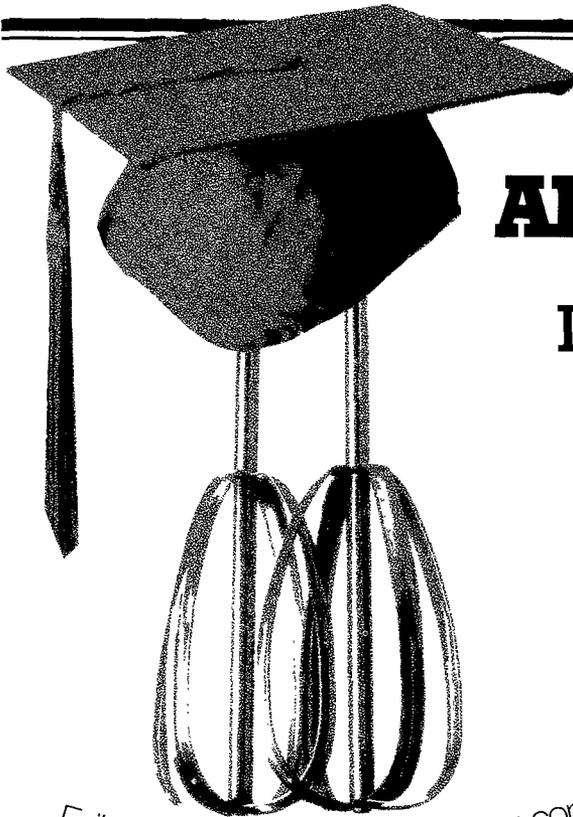
All heaven was quiet. And God spoke again: "It is done."

The trumpets blasted. The angel family sang for joy.

Jesus moved through space in a glorious chariot formed by angels. And as the human family looked toward heaven, they heard Him say, "Come, be with Me."

And God's special family that He created to love and enjoy, at last went home to live with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, forever and ever.

I want to be a part of that family of God. Don't you?



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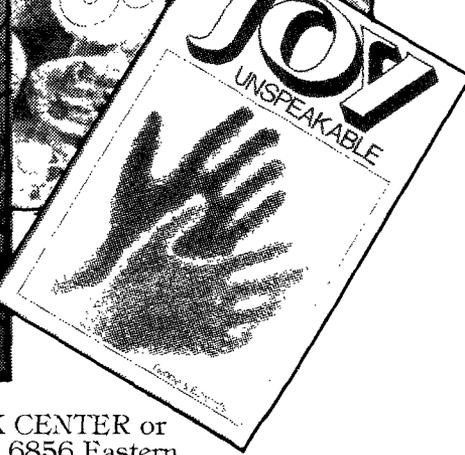
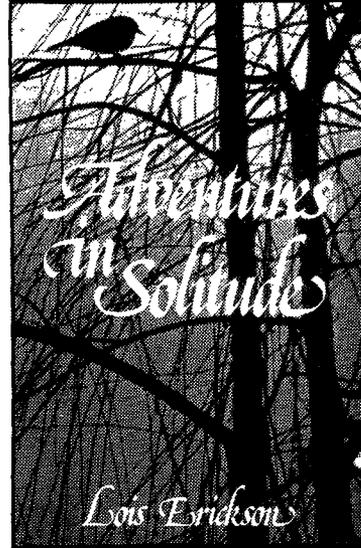
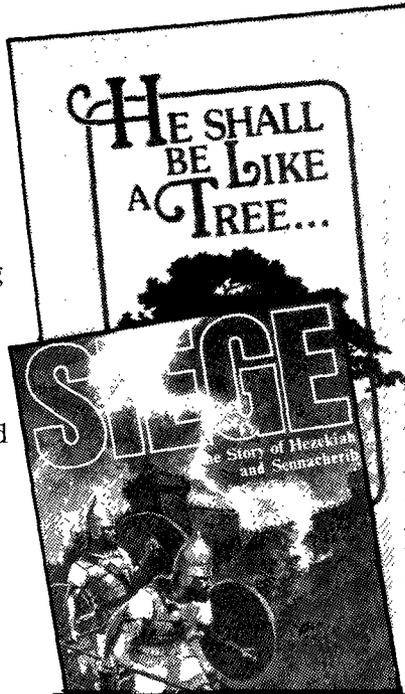
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**REVIEW AND HERALD
PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION**

A message from the General Conference president

This year's Week of Prayer messages have focused on different aspects of God's family—His relationship to us and ours to Him; our relationship to one another in the church community, in the world, and in the home; our relationship to people with special needs within our church and home families; and the final reuniting and completion of God's family in heaven.

We have felt that this theme was especially important in the light of the fragmentation that is rampant in every aspect of today's society. When sin brought separation between God and His human children it also brought separation between individuals. God has asked His remnant people in every age to be repairers of the breach; to tell people who have not yet heard that God reaches out to His children and that they no longer need to be alienated from Him; to demonstrate that healing the breach between God and people will also heal the breach between people.

We need, with the Spirit's help, to examine our relationships with one another. How is it in our homes? Are husband and wife, children, and elderly relatives receiving the support, love, and respect that they need to be happy, well-adjusted individuals? Are our homes the "heaven on earth" that they are intended to be?

How is it in our church? Are we providing a nurturing environment for each member, especially for the members—singles, widowed, divorced, those from divided or non-Adventist homes—who must depend on the church to take the place of homes that were designed to provide needed care and loving attention? Are we utilizing the talents of members? Do we work together in harmony? Do we demonstrate true Christian affection one to another?

Finally, how is our relationship with God? Do we long to do His will and study and pray to discover that will? Do we listen to His voice and seek His guidance? Do we long to meet our Saviour face to face, and do we work to hasten the day of His coming?

I believe that these are some of the important challenges facing our homes and church in these difficult days of earth's history. I also believe that one way in which to achieve success in meeting these challenges is through communication with one another. We usually find it difficult to misunderstand or mistrust someone whom we know. Christ came to earth to communicate personally with the human family; He confirmed God's teachings and character in His written Word, the Bible, and He has further communicated with us through His messenger, Ellen White.

We need special means of communication with one another in a church as large as ours. It has been encouraging to me to find that wherever I visit, worldwide, ADVENTIST REVIEW readers know what is happening in their church family. I have concluded that this is because the REVIEW is at the very heartbeat of Adventism. It is my conviction that the REVIEW should be available to every member (especially possible now since 12 editions in four languages—English, Spanish, Portuguese, French—and Braille are published). I believe that under the blessing of the Holy Spirit it can be an instrument to generate unity and strength in our church family.

Neal P. Wilson