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EDITOR'S NOTE:

The dog ate my homework: a biblical case for avoiding excuses

Jarrod Stackelroth
Senior editor
✉/JStackelroth

“

A real mark of spiritual maturity is to accept accountability . . . and walk a path of confession and repentance if necessary

I was reading 1 Samuel the other day, when something stood out to me. It was an excuse. Blatant and obvious as a dog eating your homework (although I'm assured that this has in fact happened), there it was, the first king of Israel, making an excuse.

Israel's enemy, the Philistines, were building up an army to threaten Israel. King Saul, after some early success in his kingship, can feel the pressure building as well. He sees his people becoming demoralised at the size of the opposition against them. Morale is waning and people are sneaking away.

So he decides to take matters into his own hands. Rather than waiting for the prophet Samuel, as he has been instructed, he chooses to perform the priestly duties himself. Samuel asks Saul "what have you done?" Perhaps Samuel's voice is laced with disappointment or anger. In whatever tone he used, Saul knew he was in the wrong.

"Saul replied, 'I saw my men scattering from me, and you didn't arrive when you said you would, and the Philistines are at Micmash ready for battle. So I said, "The Philistines are ready to march against us at Gilgal, and I haven't even asked for the LORD's help!" So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering myself before you came'"(1 Samuel 13:11,12).

King Saul is caught doing something he should not be doing and his first response is to blame the person who called him out. It is an unfortunately common reaction to attack those who keep us accountable, to try to shift the blame back to them (or at least deflect it onto someone else).

It reminded me of some other significant finger-pointing moments in the Bible. The first one happens on the earliest pages. In the beginning, the man blames the woman, and the woman blames the snake. Instead of trying to salvage their relationship with God and each other, the couple fall to discordance and blame avoidance (read Genesis 3).

Another prominent excuse-maker actually comes from a family of excuse makers. Moses makes some excuses when God tries to call him—five times he tries various ways to get out of his calling in the burning bush scene. But I want to focus on his brother, Aaron. There is a difference between making excuses through lack of confidence and making excuses when confronted with wrongdoing. When approached by Moses, Aaron starts by blaming the people (Exodus 32). Aaron made legitimate arguments that he was under duress. But then he says something rather miraculous. That the gold was thrown into the fire and "out came the calf". This excuse takes the cake. Why did he feel the need to make up a story about the supernatural origin of the idol? Exodus' author has already shown us that Aaron "made" the idol, "cast" it into the shape of a cow and fashioned it "with a tool". He then took it a step further, perhaps in a misguided attempt to give the honour to God, by building an altar as well as the idol.

It's human nature to try to worm our way out of trouble when it finds us. We attack, deflect, shift the blame, even try to confuse or attribute miraculous or divine intervention to our motives and rationales. Yet, all of this is just avoiding taking responsibility for our choices and actions. A real mark of spiritual maturity is to accept accountability (especially when it comes from a respected spiritual leader like Moses or Samuel, or the words of God Himself) and walk a path of confession and repentance if necessary.

Spiritual growth can only come as our characters are refined to look more like Jesus. This can only happen if we are willing to abandon our rationalisations and justifications of our behaviours and decisions, as the Holy Spirit (or Holy Spirit led individuals) are able to point out where we have erred. A word of warning: Be careful claiming for yourself the title of "Holy Spirit led" and using that to justify telling others where they have fallen short.

These biblical examples of excuses highlight these characters' deeper disconnection from God. To grow and move forward in our faith and life journeys, we must take responsibility and stop making excuses.



INSIGHT:

Easter message 2021

Glenn Townend
South Pacific Division president

Easter, 1973. It's an Easter I'll never forget. It was my first as a child in Lae, Papua New Guinea. My family had just moved there, and we loved the place and the people. Dad was away on a preaching and teaching trip.

Easter Sunday afternoon. I was downstairs lighting the fire for the hot water system. Dad would be coming home early from his trip. We couldn't wait. All I could think about was cricket and tennis games with him. The house phone rang, my mother answered it. I heard her cry out, so I ran up the stairs to find my mum sobbing. Dad's mission plane had crashed. He was in hospital in Goroka. Within minutes, we were surrounded by people in our house. There were hugs and more tears. By the time I went to bed, I knew that the pilot and two others had died in the crash. I remember lying awake that night, thinking of the flight our family would take to Goroka the next morning to see Dad.

Dad was lying motionless on the bed, covered in bandages; tubes and wires everywhere. I was horrified. Last time I saw him, he was fit and healthy, and now this. Dad was airlifted to Australia for treatment. I was shocked when he returned to PNG seven weeks later as an invalid. He had back pain, limited movement, no taste, no saliva. Eventually all that came back, but he was never quite the same. Working through that as a kid wasn't easy—we just had to accept it and try to help. I saw my dad model resilience and determination to keep doing God's work, caring for his family, despite the setbacks. He even continued to travel in the mission planes over the next few years.

Why did my dad continue to travel in small planes after this near-death experience? He wanted to share a hope that is stronger than death itself. That hope is the resurrected Jesus. Jesus, our perfect Substitute, took the punishment for our sin and evil. He was killed but rose from the grave and conquered death for everyone.

Those who died in the Goroka plane crash in 1973 can live again. As Paul said, we will continue to preach the resurrected Christ, the power of God to bring salvation to everyone who believes (Romans 1:16).



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SPD president Pastor Glenn Townsend and Dr Wayne Krause with some of the new mission resources. (Photo credit: Daniel Kuberek)

New resources to inspire students for mission

📍 **Wahroonga, NSW** | Tracey Bridcutt

The South Pacific Division (SPD) has welcomed a range of new books and other resources gifted from Global Mission Centres of the General Conference.

The resources, provided by Pastor Doug Venn from the Global Mission Urban Centre and Dr Clifmond Shameerudeen from the Global Mission Centre for South Asian Religions, are aimed at inspiring students and researchers for mission. They have been sent to Pacific Adventist University and Sonoma Adventist College (both in Papua New Guinea), Fulton Adventist University College (Fiji) and Avondale University College (Australia), and to the South Pacific Division administration office in

Wahroonga (Australia).

The materials were written by Seventh-day Adventist missiologists, theologians and practitioners. They support the General Conference's "Reach the World: I Will Go" strategic plan, which includes a focus on reaching people in urban areas.

"These resources will be an invaluable tool in aiding us to make disciples in our cities, which desperately need to know the love of God and His everlasting gospel," said Dr Wayne Krause, Mission to the Cities leader at the SPD.

"We thank the Global Mission Centres for these valuable resources."



PNG frontline workers and Australian Medical Assistance Teams (AUSMAT) demonstrate how to use PPE equipment in Lae. (Photo credit: DFAT)

PAU rolls out COVID-19 safety plan

📍 **Port Moresby, PNG** | Tracey Bridcutt

Pacific Adventist University (PAU) in Port Moresby has rolled out a safety plan in response to a recent surge in cases of COVID-19 in Papua New Guinea.

Vice-chancellor Dr Raul Lozano confirmed that members of the PAU community were among those who had contracted the virus: a female student, a parent of a student and a staff member.

"Fortunately, all these cases are people who reside off-campus, and the few people who had contact with them have been in isolation," Dr Lozano said on March 16.

PAU introduced a lockdown to help protect the university from what was seen as a potential "super-spreader event": the funeral of former prime minister Sir Michael Somare, which was attended by more than 20,000 people on March 12. All academic learning at PAU has moved online.

"We believe this will help to keep PAU safe from the virus successfully," Dr Lozano said.

On March 17 PNG reported 179 cases of COVID-19, the highest daily number since the pandemic began.

The escalation in cases has seen the PNG government introduce a range of measures as part of a "National Isolation Strategy", according to the *Papua New Guinea Post-Courier*.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison has announced that the Australian government is partnering with PNG on a "comprehensive support package to help it respond to the crisis". This includes the supply of 8000 AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines from Australia's stock.

"By helping Papua New Guinea, we are not only helping our Pacific family, we are keeping our nation and our people safe," Mr Morrison said.

Papua New Guinea Union Mission communication director Pastor Cameron Wari described the situation as serious.

"We haven't yet got news if any Adventist is impacted, however the restrictions may impact [church] programs," he said.

South Pacific Division president Pastor Glenn Townsend encouraged church members around the Division to pray for the people of PNG.

"Having spent much of my childhood in PNG, both the country and its people will always have a special place in my heart," Pastor Townsend wrote in a Facebook post.

"So I'm saddened to see that PNG is facing some significant challenges right now . . . For those in PNG, please know that I'm praying for you. And I'd encourage all Adventists around the South Pacific to do the same."



Credit: Pexels.

Celebrating prayer at national summit

📍 Australian Union Conference | Lorraine Atchia

National Prayer Summit was streamed on the Australian Union Conference (AUC) and Adventist Women Australia (AWA) Facebook pages and was watched by more than 110 people.

The Women's Ministries team selected the beginning of March to create an all-inclusive program full of praise, prayer and food for thought to celebrate International Day of Prayer (March 5) and International Women's Day of Prayer (March 6).

The main speaker, Pastor Greg Pratt, inspired those watching to pray without ceasing, as Paul instructed in 1 Thessalonians 5:17. Pastor Pratt reminded viewers that God wants to be part of every aspect in their lives and encouraged them to pray to God throughout the day and not wait until there is a crisis.

Viewers were blessed with personal

messages from conference presidents, Pastor Terry Johnson (Greater Sydney), Pastor Steve Goods (Western Australia) and Pastor Darren Slade (Northern Australia), who shared how the power of prayer has and continues to transform their lives.

Viewers also had the opportunity to ask questions to a panel of specialists about prayer.

The summit ended with a prayer Zoom meeting, where viewers could end the night praying for others and themselves.

The National Prayer Summit was the first of three all-inclusive events that the women's ministries team in Australia is working on for 2021.

To view the National Prayer Summit please visit the AUC or AWA Facebook page.



Zita and Yori Hibo.

Tributes flow for former Church president

📍 PNGUM | Tracey Bridcutt

Tributes flowed for former president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Papua New Guinea, Pastor Yori Hibo, who died on March 9, aged 83.

Pastor Hibo was the first Papua New Guinean president of the Papua New Guinea Union Mission (PNGUM), serving from 1990–1995. Prior to that he was the first Papua New Guinean secretary of the PNGUM from 1985–1990. He also served the Church as president of the Central Papua Mission from 1977–1985 and again from 2000–2001.

Pastor Hibo made a significant contribution to the Church over many years, including being instrumental in securing land for the establishment of Pacific Adventist University.

Former South Pacific Division (SPD) president Dr Barry Oliver described Pastor Hibo as a "wise counsellor and administrator".

"His people skills combined with his knowledge of the customs and cultures of Papua New Guinea enabled him to address issues and solve problems which others were unwilling to consider," Dr Oliver said. "His commitment to his God and his Church was an

example for all of us who worked closely together with him."

When Dr Oliver, his wife Julie and sons arrived in PNG in 1979, Pastor Hibo was the first person they met.

"He took the time to come and pick us up from the airport even though he was the president of the Central Papua Mission. What an introduction," Pastor Oliver recalled.

Current SPD president Pastor Glenn Townend also fondly recalls his association with Pastor Hibo while living in PNG.

"I remember him working with my dad when I was a boy in the mid 1970s," Pastor Townend said. "He was a humble, fun, hard-working, wise pastor. I enjoyed catching up with him a couple of times in recent years. He will be greatly missed."

PNGUM communication director Pastor Cameron Wari said Pastor Hibo "served God with distinction and humility even in his retirement".

Pastor Hibo had been living with his daughter Nancy at the Mount Diamond Adventist School just outside Port Moresby. He is survived by his wife Zita and six children.



The current class at Mamarapha College.

Mamarapha College reopens after closure due to COVID-19 restrictions

📍 Karragullen, WA | Lorraine Atchia

One year after being forced to close due to COVID-19, Mamarapha College has finally welcomed students back into its classrooms.

The government of Western Australia had imposed regional borders within its state to ensure that remote, vulnerable Indigenous communities were not exposed to coronavirus.

This, in addition to state border closures, has meant that students have not been able to attend the college physically.

During the closure, workbooks were posted out to students, but holding virtual classes was difficult, especially for the remote students with limited internet access.

Mamarapha College principal Pastor David Garrard said the college was able to hold Zoom classes for its four pastoral students successfully. He also said the college is "experimenting with recording classes that can be viewed via YouTube or USB, if regional and state borders are reinstated".

Having students back at the college was highly anticipated. "There was a lot of excitement for the staff and students," explained Pastor Garrard. "We had a special prayer to thank God for His goodness and faithfulness to Mamarapha College during such a difficult time."

The first study block has seen the arrival of 19 students, with the college confident these numbers will increase in future study blocks.

"For some students, it is a relief to be back, and it is a sign of things returning to normality," said Australian Union Conference Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Ministry director Pastor Darren Garlett.

"Some students have been waiting 12 months for this day, with one new enrolment deciding to move from Queensland to Western Australia so he could study without worrying about border closures during study blocks," added Pastor Garlett, who is also a guest lecturer at Mamarapha College.

Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students about the Bible, ministry, life skills and health, Mamarapha College has recently introduced a new literacy course.

"We are looking forward to the time being spent with students and seeing how they allow God's transformational power to take over their lives and the witness they will become to their community," Pastor Garlett said.

making headlines

Feeding the hungry

Adventist Social Action leaders in Brazil announced that the annual Easter food drive is returning this year. The efforts seek to assist vulnerable people as a result of the ongoing pandemic. Across South America in 2020, Adventist social initiatives served more than 1.6 million people by distributing 4 million kilograms of food.—**Adventist Review**



Astounding discovery

The Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) announced on March 17 that fragments of scrolls featuring the biblical books of Zechariah and Nahum were found in the Judean Desert. It is the first such discovery since the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in 1947 and the early '50s.—**The Jerusalem Post**

Sounding the alarm

More than 100 Australian faith communities "sounded the alarm" for the climate as part of a major global multi-faith Day of Action on March 11 at 11am local time. Churches rang bells, Rabbis sounded the shofar, Imams called the Azan and other groups held silent vigils to draw attention to a series of demands of Prime Minister Scott Morrison for climate justice.—**ARRCC**

Alcoholism off switch

A study led by Monash University and the Florey Institute uncovered a potential therapeutic target to treat alcohol use disorder (AUD) by focusing on a specific receptor in the brain. The team is deep into a ground-breaking scientific journey to eventually make a drug that stops habitual drinking and decreases the chance of relapse by reprogramming a tiny part of the brain.—**Monash Lens**



The school grounds.



The new classroom facilities.



Some of the volunteers who helped build the new classrooms.

New classrooms built at Tweed Valley due to record enrolments

📍 Murwillumbah, NSW | Vern Parmenter/Record staff

Following years of concern over dwindling numbers, Tweed Valley Adventist College (TVAC) in Murwillumbah (NSW) is celebrating its highest ever enrolment of more than 270 students in 2021, and the construction of new classrooms.

The surprising influx comes after COVID-19 impacted enrolments at a number of private schools in the area last year.

“Credit must be awarded to dedicated teachers and staff who worked tirelessly to provide digital classes to all students during lockdown,” explained Pastor Vern Parmenter, TVAC council chairman.

To cater for the new students, the school’s building committee called an urgent meeting and made the decision to convert the current industrial arts area into three new classrooms. Within a week, 20 volunteer builders arrived to begin the process, completing it before the school year commenced.

“TVAC needed three more classrooms at short notice. It needed money to achieve this as well as quick approval from Conference leadership, the school council and hopefully a government grant,” explained Pastor Parmenter. “This meant of course that the industrial arts faculty needed a new home. And while it was not ready for the beginning of the school year, a large facility will be constructed as soon as plans are finalised.”

The influx of new students comes after the school faced closure 10 years ago, when enrolments dwindled to just 90 students.

“In 2010 the school was struggling to be viable with a declining enrolment and ageing buildings, some of which were affected by regular floods. Families who assisted with the construction [of the school] in the 1970s began to pray that God would intervene. The church agreed that the school should follow the blueprint outlined in the book *Education* by Ellen White, and that the name ‘Adventist’ should feature in the name of the school. The turnaround was remarkable,” said Pastor Parmenter.

Within four years, student numbers more than doubled, with a maximum enrolment of 251 students in 2014. But then in 2018, enrolments declined once more.

A credit to their strong spiritual focus and community orientation, Murwillumbah Church and TVAC united for three days of fasting and prayer with a focus on families who are open to receive the gospel.

“God answered that prayer with more requests than ever before for Bible studies and supplied an additional chaplain to assist,” explained Pastor Parmenter.

TVAC’s strong spiritual emphasis was also evident during 2020, with 12 students baptised. Recently, the TVAC council organised a Friday night service with teachers and staff featuring a devotional message, musical items, prayer, a meal and more than 30 teachers sharing their testimony and commitment to Christian education and mission.

Most families at TVAC come from non-Adventist homes (56 per cent).

“This makes TVAC and indeed all of our Adventist schools a wonderful outpost for evangelism,” said principal Paul Fua. “It is not only the physical growth we praise God for. It is the quality of the families and the ways that God is moving upon the hearts of the students and staff.”



Juice bar a centre of influence in Fiji's tourist capital

📍 Suva, Fiji | Isaac Lal/Record staff

Three churches in Fiji's western division have started what they never would have thought possible—an open bar, but one that sells natural, herbal juices to fight against non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

Votualevu, Namaka and Nadi English Seventh-day Adventist churches teamed up to open Bitu Wellness Centre, or "Bitu Bar" as it is commonly known—a wellness bar in the heart of the nation's tourism capital, Nadi.

With rapidly increasing rates of non-communicable diseases, Fiji is in the midst of a public health crisis that is closely linked to changing lifestyles. The three churches have taken on the responsibility of fighting against lifestyle diseases, which have become the number one killer in the country.

"It is more of a centre of influence for the community where people from all walks of life who have decided to take care of their bodies come and learn how to take care of their body, which literally is the temple of God," says Bitu Bar founder and 10,000 Toes coordinator for the Trans Pacific Union Mission, George Kwong.

"It is through the message of health that we are sharing God's love to our customers who are secular or members of other Christian denominations," he

continues. "It is spreading the message of health, of love, of compassion to not only believers but non-believers as well."

The bar serves natural juices from herbs such as goldenseal (local name layalaya), mile-a-minute ("asiatic tearthumb", or local name wabousucu), and fruit and vegetables like kumquat, carrot or celery, among a range of others.

While herbal juice in Fiji has been used for centuries to treat cuts and illnesses, it hasn't been widely consumed as a means for improving holistic health. By visiting Bitu Bar, Fijians are encouraged to revisit a more natural, holistic approach to health.

"With the Bible as our main charter, this joint venture has been a direct result of the Church's pillar of comprehensive health. And why look further than our own backyard where we find everything that God created for our use?" Mr Kwong said.

"Ellen White also encourages us to find simple remedies all around us. We are seeing these natural remedies [more often], which are now being touted around the globe as super foods from medical and pharmaceutical experts," he continued.

At the bar, enthusiasts can track their health through various initiatives such as

the fat loss program, immune-boosting program, a weekly medical screening and through personalised nutrition. In addition, the community is invited to the premises each Sunday at 6am for two hours of exercise.

Vilisi Yalayala, a registered nurse and midwife at the local hospital, is encouraging her patients to utilise the bar.

"Now medical practitioners and other professionals are lining up at the bar, which is a positive sign that the Fijian population are serious about their health."

One customer, Elisapeci Lasekula, found that visiting the bar improved her health and helped reduce the side effects of traditional medication she was taking due to heart problems.

"I lost weight, my job and my energy for seven years, I was in and out of the hospital without a cure, but I thank God for initiatives such as the Bitu Bar. I am now three weeks into my daily medication (herbal juices), and my health has improved vastly," Mrs Lasekula said.

Mr Kwong says the response has been encouraging from the public and now calls are being made to introduce a registered "health club", and for people who have had health success to become ambassadors.



34 baptised

Thirty-four students from Kukudu Adventist College (Solomon Islands) were baptised in the Piongo River on February 20. The baptisms followed a “10 days of prayer” initiative led by guest speaker Dani Wilson, a chaplain with the Sonship medical outreach in Solomon Islands. —**Facebook, Kukudu Adventist College**



Book donation

The General Conference Global Mission Centre has donated a batch of books focused on outreach in large cities to Fulton Adventist University College library (Fiji). The donation, containing seven different titles, aims to inspire students and researchers to strengthen and diversify their mission approach, especially across the 10/40 Window. The books and cost of shipping was funded by the South Pacific Division and other Division global mission offerings. —**Record staff**



Missional group

Looking forward to re-establishing Sabbath meetings in town, a small group of 16 people from Dannevirke and Woodville in New Zealand had their prayers answered. The group’s pastor found a small hall in Dannevirke to hire and the group formed a large life group with a strong missional focus, on February 27. —**Bruce Mason**



COVID-19 support

Funding from the American Samoan government supported Iakina Adventist Academy (IAA) during the COVID-19 pandemic. The school received funds through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which helped to support teachers and families when face-to-face learning was disrupted. The money was used to host several training sessions for parents to learn more about ways in which they could help their children at home. Children were also given lessons on how to use web services such as Google Classroom for assignment submissions and discussions. —**Conch Shell**



Students shine

A new Adventist Students Association from Nomane Seventh-day Adventist Church in Papua New Guinea’s Simbu Province met for the first time on February 20 at the Nomane Lutheran High School. With 30 active members, the group meets at the school every Wednesday for “Prayband”, as well as on Friday nights. They also attend nearby churches on Sabbath for worship. —**Terrance Deun**



Inspiring vision

With the goal of inspiring and equipping Adventist churches and leaders with the vision of growing the kingdom of God, Multiply TED Talks, an annual church planting event run by the North New South Wales Conference (NNSW), gathered 80 people at the Toronto Adventist Church on February 6.

With inspiring and practical presentations, the event also promoted discussions amongst leadership teams on multiplying disciples, leaders and churches.

According to NNSW church planting director Dr Sven Ostring, the event's central theme was based on how the Bible consistently paints an inspiring vision of multiplication. "God commanded Adam and Eve to multiply and fill the earth. God repeated this command to Noah after the Flood. He promised Abraham that He would multiply Abraham's offspring. Multiplication is also inherent in Jesus' commission for us to make disciples," he explains.

Guest speakers included South Pacific Division president Pastor Glenn Townend, NNSW president Pastor Adrian Raethel and others, covering several topics, including the importance of Adventist identity and mission, growing leaders, discipleship and small groups.

Real-life church planters also shared their experience and testimonies. Pastor Joseph Skaf, Hana Nakagawa and Na Shen led a special segment where they shared their journey in planting a church at the University of Newcastle.— **Record Staff**

have news to share?

Email info and photos to <news@record.net.au>



Moving forward

Suva Adventist College (Fiji) held a week of prayer from February 15-19 with the theme "Moving Forward With God". A special feast on the final day celebrated the induction of 24 student leaders. Thanks were given to God for His many blessings, including the outstanding performance of students in the 2020 external examination. "By the final day, students and staff reached the consensus and conviction that our one purpose in life, as we live daily, wherever God may send us is to move forward with God," said school chaplain Melisa Vakaloloma.—**Conch Shell**



Pastor Peterson ordained

Pastor Adrian Peterson, pastor of Plenty Valley Church (Vic), was ordained to ministry alongside his wife Lyndelle on February 27. Having graduated from Avondale in 2010, Pastor Peterson has ministered to the Kellyville and Epping Adventist churches. The sermon was presented by Pastor Martin Vukmanic. Pastor Brendan Pratt, ministerial association secretary for the Adventist Church in Australia (AUC), gave Pastor Peterson his charge to ministry, and Pastor Graeme Christian, president of the Victorian Conference, offered the prayer, surrounded by all ordained and commissioned pastors in attendance.—**Record Staff**



Pastor Leighton and Ato Kasimo

Helping women stay above the poverty line in PNG

With a passion for improving the welfare of women and their families in Papua New Guinea (PNG), Pastor Leighton Kasimo has repaired and helped to distribute more than 1600 sewing machines since 2014 to upskill and empower women in need.

"I noticed that there is a great need for women and families, so I discussed with my wife and decided to assist with necessary skills. We have to address social issues affecting families," he says.

Being in pastoral ministry since 2008 and ordained in 2012, Pastor Kasimo currently serves the church as stewardship and family ministries director for the Western Highlands Mission (WHM). It wasn't until an Australian man by the name of Brian O'Hare from Perth taught Pastor Kasimo to repair sewing machines in 2014, that he made it a focus of his ministry.

"Mr James Ua introduced Brian to us at Kimininga Mission Headquarters and that is where I grabbed the opportunity as a hobby, but it has turned into a ministry to meet the needs of others," he explains.

Lacking the finances to buy sewing machines for the women themselves, Pastor Kasimo and his wife Ato, who he partners with in the ministry, rely on the generosity of ADRA and people from Australia and overseas to support and sustain their work.

In one instance, stewardship and health director Anita Kup requested funding from ADRA in 2018, which was used by Pastor and Mrs Kasimo to provide 23 manual sewing machines to women in need and conduct training in how to use them.

"God has blessed me and my family abundantly to become blessings to many families who are struggling to live above the poverty line, by repairing their sewing machines and also imparting other skills to them so they can earn income to sustain their lives like putting food on the table and paying school fees for their children."

In addition to sewing classes, Pastor and Mrs Kasimo also train women in draping, flower arranging, tailoring, music sight reading, financial literacy, sewing machine repair, and nutrition and healthy living.

"[My wife] is gifted in draping, flower arranging and tailoring and therefore as partners in ministry we are a witness to others that Jesus loves and cares for them," he says.

Pastor Kasimo organises his sewing machine ministry around trips to districts and other appointments during the year.

"I follow my yearly planner and go to the districts with my wife and other facilitators to conduct the training. There I also conduct evangelistic meetings, workshops on stewardship and family ministries and visit churches or women's groups upon request apart from my departmental duties," he explains.

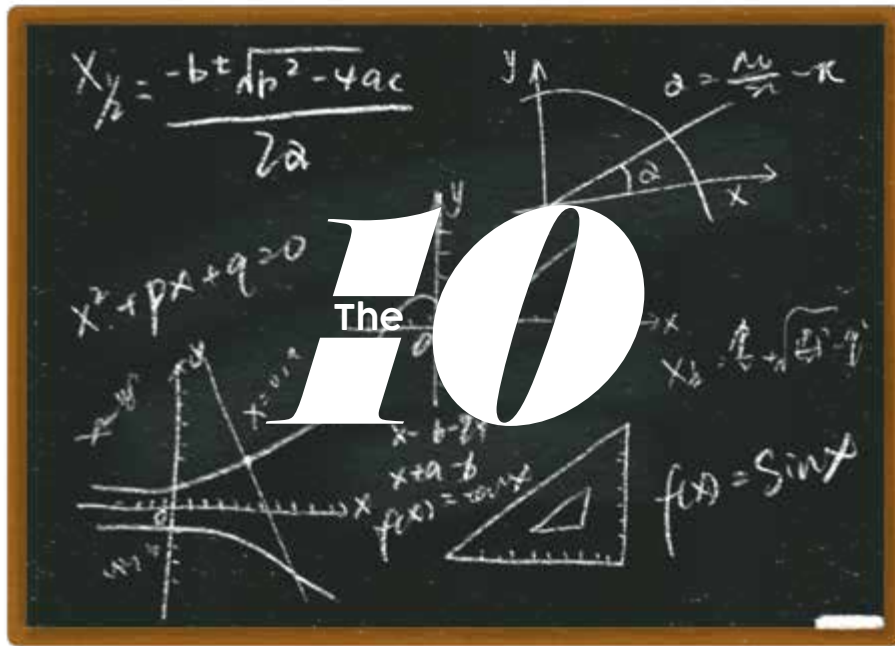
When asked why he is so determined to improve the lives of women in this way, Pastor Kasimo replies, "Women play an important role in managing family affairs. Women are [often] seen as second class [yet] must become breadwinners for their families. I want to help those who are unfortunate through domestic violence and abuse."

In addition to donations of funds and sewing machines, Pastor Kasimo says other items are needed to continue his ministry, including: a quality camera to capture photos and videos for *Adventist Record* and other news outlets, a used vehicle so that the team can travel to the more remote districts to conduct training, fabrics appropriate for sewing clothing, a generator for electricity in remote places, French curve rulers in different sizes for pattern design and cutting, and a tent for the team when they conduct training in remote areas.

"I am convinced that God has blessed me and my wife with many skills and motivated us to share what we have with others to improve their living standards. Women are good managers of homes, therefore by equipping them with skills means a lot in nation building," he says.

If you would like to support Pastor Kasimo and his team in their important work, you can contact him further via email at <LeightonKasimo@adventist.org.pg>.

Maryellen Hacko,
Assistant editor, *Adventist Record*



Biblical events that defy the laws of physics

Sun standing still

In Joshua 10, “the sun stood still and the moon stopped, till the nation avenged itself on its enemies” (verse 13). Talk about an unfair advantage!

Walking on water

In Matthew 14:22–33, the disciples go out in the boat to see Jesus walking on the water toward them. Other than Peter, no man has achieved this since. I mean, it is impossible . . .

Axe head floating

When one of Elisha’s disciples dropped a borrowed axe head into the water (2 Kings 6:5), Elisha threw a piece of wood into the water to make the axe head float. Correlation or causation? Neither seem plausible here!

Parting the Red Sea

In Exodus 14, Moses parts the Red Sea and the Israelites walk through on dry land. Who needs swimming lessons when you have God on your side?

Fire raining from heaven

The Bible records six instances of fire raining from heaven: to destroy Job’s flocks (Job 1:16), on Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24; Luke 17:29), upon the soldiers sent to arrest Elijah, twice (2 Kings 1:10, 12), and three times to consume sacrifices—David’s (1 Chronicles 21:26), Solomon’s (2 Chronicles 7:1) and Elijah’s (1 Kings 18:38).

Things not burning up

God prevented things from burning a few times: the burning bush (Exodus 3), Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego (Daniel 3), and the apostle John who was thrown in boiling oil (although this one isn’t recorded in the Bible).

Walls of Jericho falling

In Joshua 6:1–27, the walls of Jericho fell after the Israelites marched around the city for six days, and seven times on the seventh day and blew their trumpets. I wonder how loud those trumpets were?

Elijah ascending to heaven

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it’s Elijah on a chariot of fire, defying physics, and ascending to heaven (2 Kings 2:3–9)!

Water coming from a rock

The Israelites miraculously received water from a rock two times (Exodus 17:1–7, Numbers 20:1–14). Both times Moses hit the rock, but the second time He was supposed to speak to it instead. Who knows—maybe the rock would have talked back?

Calming the storm

After waking up from a peaceful nap, Jesus casually calms the storm in Mark 4:35–41 by talking to it, “Peace, be still!” Talk about a POWER nap! (Pun intended).

LIVING KINGDOM

Hunting for treasure

Matthew 13:44–52

Kingdom of heaven: Treasure, pearl, gems and a fishing net

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it” (Matthew 13:44–46).

I’ve always thought of the parables as a treasure map. The more I read them, the more clues and insights I have to the treasure that is Jesus.

I recently read an article about the eccentric art dealer Forrest Fenn from Santa Fe in the United States. You may have heard of him. He’s a big fan of treasure hunts, so much so, he created his own.

Forrest was a collector: he collected artefacts, artworks, gold, jewellery, everything! He continued this collection until 1988 when he was diagnosed with cancer and advised that it was most likely terminal. This inspired the millionaire to create an intricate mystery by hiding a chest of treasures somewhere in the Rocky Mountains, which could also serve as his final resting place when he died.

Somehow, he managed to recover from his cancer and lived for many more years, but his master plan was too exciting to give up on so he set to work creating his epic adventure.

Forrest wrote a 25 chapter memoir of his own life entitled *The Thrill of the Chase*. In 2010 he self-published his book which included a poem in chapter 23. This poem included nine clues that were said to lead to a chest of treasure containing

an estimated \$US2 million worth of gold that Forrest himself had hidden.

What followed was a frenzy of amateur treasure hunters from around the world seeking to explore and discover the precious cache. More than 40,000 copies of the book were sold, and treasure hunters studied every inch of its pages for clues, learning all the details and adventures of Forrest’s life story along the way. Some of these treasure hunters devoted their entire lives to the search for Forrest’s treasure; some quitting their jobs, even losing their lives in the pursuit.

Forrest lived through the entire search and seemed to love every bit of it. In 2017 he admitted to the *New York Times* that his “hidden treasure pulls families into the Rocky Mountains to search and hike and observe the raw nature that is there. They go home with a whole new perspective on what life is all about.” He stated further that “In this troubled world, we need some of that.”

Forrest never cared about the chest of gold—the real treasure was in the search. He wanted people to learn the joy of the pursuit, the “thrill of the chase”, but the treasure was only to be found by the one who understood the poem.



In June 2020 it was announced that the treasure had been found, however the alleged lucky treasure hunter remains a mystery. Some believe it still hasn't been found, but to add to the intrigue, Forrest died three months later in September 2020, leaving the whole story shrouded in mystery.

I always thought Jesus used parables to just make His lessons easier for everyone to understand. But in Matthew 13:11 Jesus explains that the parables were actually full of meaning that only the disciples would grasp. The parables were almost like a treasure map written in invisible ink. Only those who had "ears to hear and eyes to see" would ever interpret the true meaning and treasure hidden in them. Just like Forrest's poem, so many people read it but only very few could interpret its meaning, even less chose to pursue it. But for the people who did attempt to find it, they managed to find the true treasure, the joy of being in nature and exploring.

In each of His parables about the kingdom of heaven, Jesus repeats similar stories, while revealing new clues and insights to their meaning each time.

In the parable of the hidden treasure a man stumbles across a treasure in a field—he wasn't even looking for it but when he found it, he gave up everything to keep it. However with the pearl, the merchant knew what he was looking for, he pursued it and again sold everything to be the owner of it. The parable of the drag net is slightly different—this time Jesus is talking about the choices we make in regards to the kingdom of heaven. Here He points out that if we choose to see the kingdom of heaven as a treasure then we too will be treated as a treasure and kept aside, not thrown away.

Finally, He relates every teacher of religious law to being like a homeowner who brings out new and old gems from his storeroom. When we realise the real treasure that is the kingdom of heaven, even those who have been stuck in their ways will see a new freedom that Jesus has offered. This treasure was the teaching that Jesus had given the disciples. Because they understood the teaching they now had the opportunity to bring out these "gems" and share them with everyone.

Since we are also disciples, we have this privilege too. I remember in my gap year after school trying to work out what to do with my life. I felt God put on my heart to go to Avondale and be in ministry. I wasn't even in a church at the time and I remember asking God, how could I possibly teach people about You? What authority do I have? I didn't even feel like I fit in to the "club" that I saw as church at that time. But God showed me that I had already chosen to be a disciple in my heart, and because I was pursuing the treasure of the kingdom of heaven, it meant I also had gems of truth both new and old to share.

It was only when I realised this that I was able to be all in, to give up everything, move away and pursue what God was calling me to. Jesus asks for a childlike trust for us to enter the kingdom of heaven. To give up everything seems childish and immature, but that's actually what God calls us to. I thought that my childlike, immature faith was the thing that was holding me back from being a disciple and teaching others about the kingdom of heaven, when in reality it was exactly what qualified me for it.

Jesus said in verse 12 of Matthew 13 "to those who listen

to my teaching, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them." At the time when Jesus tells these stories, many people were still searching for the Messiah and waiting for the kingdom of heaven to arrive.

In a sense, the parables distinguished those who were already on the fence (ready to become disciples and ready to search for truth) from those who were ready to harden their hearts against Jesus.

Forrest's poem led lots of people down the wrong track because they did not understand what they read, possibly not truly understanding Forrest himself.

Until we begin to truly understand who Jesus is, the parables won't make much sense to us either. Jesus wants us to see the hidden treasure right under our noses—the kingdom of heaven—because it is already here!

God's master plan is already well underway, and we are already a part of it. When the disciples understood this, they gave up everything to follow Him; they were sold-out for Jesus and the joy and peace He offered. If we're not listening, exploring and pursuing with spiritual eyes and ears, we'll miss it, we won't see the meaning behind the poem, we won't find the treasure we have right in the 66 book collection penned by the inspiration of God.

When Jesus came to earth many people didn't believe He was the Messiah—many still don't. They were waiting for a big triumphant entry! But just like the parable of the valuable pearl, the arrival of the kingdom of heaven was subtle, but powerful. The kingdom of heaven isn't about the riches and rewards we will one day receive, the kingdom of heaven is here, it is now, and it is alive. The closer I get to God, and the more I pursue Him, the more I am finding the real fullness of joy and peace that Jesus wants for my life.

I don't know about you, but I want to be all in. He's given us the map, I'm ready to give up everything to find the treasure He offers.



Kim Parmenter

Pastor at Haven Campus Church, NSW, and enjoys painting, cooking and anything in the water.



The humility and humiliation of Jesus the Christ



Lessons from Jesus' death and ministry that teach us how to live and love.

I. Humility

Humility is a characteristic that is not easily described. It's simpler to say what it is not. Humility is not fawning or behaving obsequiously. It is not an attempt to ingratiate oneself to a superior or to curry favour. Such attitudes are feigned humility, and are more akin to the unctuous self-proclaimed "umbleness" of Dickens' Uriah Heep in the novel *David Copperfield*.

At the other extreme are those who dismiss humility as equivalent to weakness and affirm "hardness" instead, as Adolf Hitler did: "I want the young to be violent, domineering, undismayed, cruel . . . There must be nothing weak or gentle about them."¹ In this connection one expects to see pride, arrogance, hubris, narcissism, boastfulness, with a total disregard for others. Hitler dismissed as "namby-pamby utterances" such virtues as "sympathy and care for others". Yet these were the concern of Jesus.

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30, italics added).

There's nothing harsh, hard or ruthless here. Nor is there any boastful arrogance in these utterances from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5):

- Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth (v5).
- Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy (v7).
- Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God (v8).
- Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God (v9).

Jesus preached about the "kingdom of God/heaven". The disciples welcomed "the good news of the kingdom" (Matthew 9:35) but then had difficulty grasping its humble nature. They were preoccupied with the question: "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" (Matthew 18:1). Jesus replied, "the least among all of you is the greatest" in the kingdom of God (Luke 9:48). "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and slave of all" (Mark 9:35). To enter the kingdom of God required that one accept the lowly status of a child (Mark 10:15).

Even the mother of James and John thought it appropriate to urge Jesus to grant her sons a privileged status in the kingdom of God, which meant that neither she nor they had grasped the humility that was at the heart of the kingdom of God, as Jesus conceived it (Matthew 20:20-22; Mark 10:35-38). Incredibly, the dispute in Galilee over which of them was the greatest (Mark 9:33,34) still prevailed during the last supper. There arose "a dispute . . . among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest" (Luke 22:24).

This was to evaluate greatness in the terms of the world where those who are served, such as kings and authorities, are esteemed as great. But Jesus was among them as One who serves and waits on tables (Luke 22:27). Furthermore, "the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many [for all others]" (Mark 10:45).

With the bread and the wine on the table before Him, Jesus declares His ultimate service to be the crucifixion. In the midst of the tension of the disciples' dispute among themselves over which of them was the greatest, and

during the meal itself, Jesus “got up ... took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him” (John 13:4,5). He who was their Lord and Master did for them what none of them were willing to do, that is, take the role of the slave and wash their feet. Jesus lays aside (*tithēmi*) His garments just as He was soon to lay down (*tithēmi*) His life for His sheep (John 10:11,15) and for His friends (John 15:13).

II. Humiliation

Whereas humility describes “a modest opinion of one’s own importance”, humiliation refers to the ridiculing of others in order to destroy their self-respect. The devices used to this end are sarcasm, mockery, sneering, shaming, belittling, bullying and taunting. How did Jesus understand Himself? The Christmas announcements provide an answer:

• “He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:32,33).

• “To you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord” (Luke 2:11).

Frequently, Jesus is affirmed as the Messiah (Matthew 16:16; Luke 24:46; John 20:31; Acts 2:36; Romans 9:5); a title that He accepts (John 4:25,26). The Messiah, or the Christ, is the ideal, hoped-for Davidic king, the Anointed One.² It is this claim—that Jesus is the Messiah—that is ridiculed and mocked throughout the trial of Jesus.

In his film *The Passion of the Christ*, Mel Gibson devotes 10 minutes of his 126 minute movie to the scene of the scourging with all its horror and brutality. This is not where the Gospels place their emphasis. In their view, it is not the physical pain that is important, but the mockery and shame He endured for us. “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame” (Hebrews 12:12, NKJV).

The mocking began as soon as they brought Jesus before the high priest and the council (Mark 14:53–65). There is no disdain or insult more demeaning than human spittle directed at a fellow human being, and that’s where it started in the case of Jesus: “Some began to spit on him, to blindfold him, and to strike him, saying to him, ‘Prophesy!’ The guards also took him over and beat him” (v65). The humiliation of Jesus continued after they led Him bound to the Romans (Mark 15:1).

“They called together the whole cohort. And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some [fronds] into a crown, they put it on him. And they began saluting him, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him” (Mark 15:16–20). Here we have barracks buffoonery of the worst kind. Every element of it, from the draped cloak and the mock crown to the spitting, beating and feigned homage, is calculated to show the mercenary troops’ total disdain of this Jewish King (Messiah).

The unrelenting abuse continued at the cross (Mark 15:29–32). Passersby reviled Him and sneeringly asked Him to prove

His claim to be able to destroy and to rebuild the temple in three days by saving Himself from the cross. In the same spirit, the religious leaders mockingly addressed Jesus in the third person: “Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe [in Him].” Those who were crucified with Him also taunted Him.

III. Conclusion

On the night of His betrayal, Jesus reminded the disciples that He had given them an example to follow (John 13:15). More is meant here than the washing of each other’s feet: “We know love by this, that he laid down (*tithēmi*) his life for us—and we ought to lay down (*tithēmi*) our lives for one another” (1 John 3:16). We are “to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all *humility* and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another *in love*” (Ephesians 4:1,2, italics added).

“Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a *humble* mind (1 Peter 3:8).”

“Be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in *humility* regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited to his own advantage,
but he *emptied* himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself

and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:2–8 NRSV, adapted, italics added).

“As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, *humility*, meekness, and patience . . . Above all, clothe yourselves with *love* (Colossians 3.12, 14, italics added).”

Love and humility are twin sisters, as is clear from Paul’s famous praise of love in 1 Corinthians 13:

“Love is patient; love is kind;
love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude.
It does not insist on its own way;
it is not irritable or resentful.”

In all humility let us “live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us” (Ephesians 5:2).

1. Adolf Hitler, as quoted in Jonathan Glover, *Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century*, 337; who is quoting Alice Miller, *For Your Own Good: The Roots of Violence in Child-rearing*.

2. Both the terms “Messiah” and “Christ” refer to the anointing ritual involved in a royal coronation.

Dr Norman Young

Former senior lecturer at
Avondale University College.



Orange & Mango Green Smoothie

A beautiful blend of sweet fruits and fresh spinach, this is a great starter recipe for someone who's new to green smoothies.

Ingredients

- 1 ½ cups So Good Unsweetened Almond Milk
- 1 orange, peeled and chopped, seeds removed
- 1 small banana, fresh or frozen
- ½ cup mango cubes
- 2 cups baby spinach leaves

Method

1. Place all ingredients in a blender jug and puree until smooth.
2. Serve immediately, or prepare smoothie the night before and store in a covered container in the fridge.

Subscribe to receive free weekly recipe inspiration:
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Do you need to drink eight glasses of water *per day?*

Healthy bodies need water. While the food you eat—especially fruits and vegetables—will help to hydrate you, water is the best way to make sure you're replacing the fluids you lose each day. The easiest way to know if you're well-hydrated is to check the colour of your urine. If it's yellow and smelly then you probably need to drink more water. But if it's a lighter yellow or almost clear, it's a sign you're drinking enough.



8 reasons to drink 8 glasses

Drinking water can help reduce the frequency of headaches, help you stay alert and is a natural way to detoxify. It can also help keep you slim, prevent wrinkles, smooth joints, keep bowel movements regular and regulate blood pressure. That's 8 great reasons to stay hydrated.

Tips to boost your water intake

Start early

Drink your first glass as soon as you wake up. Also, offer infants and children water to quench their thirst—it's a great habit to learn from an early age.

Carry it with you

Water bottles are a great way to keep tabs on how much you've drunk through the day.

Jazz up your water

Add a slice of lemon, lime, fresh mint leaves or frozen berries.

Go herbal

Try it hot or iced. Herbal teas are a fantastic alternative to water. As well as being hydrating, they are high in antioxidants, calming and caffeine free!

They saw Him

The Stars in starry skies saw Him;
Formed clusters to light the earth,
And shone o'er Bethlehem's manger.

The Demonic legions saw Him,
Trembled and cowered in terror;
And begged Him for dear life.

Death and Hades saw Him,
And open their steeled graves;
And released their rightful prey.

The raging and angry waves saw Him,
And calmed their angry roars;
And made a path for Him to tread.

The waters inside large stone jars saw Him.
They blushed at the Saviour's presence,
And water turn to wine.

Myriad kinds of diseases saw Him,
And fled from His holy presence,
And multitudes received healing.

The fish and bread in a lunch box saw Him,
And multiplied themselves a zillion times,
And the multitude feasted in abundance.

The noon day sun saw Him,
Crucified on Golgotha's hill,
And withheld its light for three hours.

But sinful mortals saw Him,
And called Him the prince of demons,
And credits His works to Beelzebub's fiat.

At Pilate's hall, the bloodthirsty crowd saw Him,
And roared in unison to crucify Him,
And had Him crucified Him on a Roman cross.

A grand kindness

A poem based on John 19:38-42

As Palestinian skies glowed,
The ev'n sun set o'er western horizon,
And seagulls in a flock flew east,
And night's chill set around Calvary's hill.

His maimed and lifeless body hanged hapless,
Between heaven and earth in humid heat.
The hand that healed many was nailed,
And the body of God's only son, hung crucified.

Poor Galilean disciples could not help.
They had no influence against the powerful,
They feared for their dear lives and hid.
Many deserted Him at the first sign of terror.

Nicodemus and Joseph of Arithmathea stood,
With love born of admiration for God's Son,
They cast their lots with the crucified Saviour,
To offer Him the tenderest kindness possible.

They sought Pilate's consent for His body,
Took Him down from the tree for burial.
Poured their wealth to embalm Him,
And rendered Him a kind and stately burial.

When the crucified Lord needed human aid,
They dared and stepped forward in holy boldness;
As debased mortals and demonic legions,
Aligned in hellish rage to crucify Him.

They enveloped the Saviour with love,
They poured their love on His dead form,
They bandaged His wounded body,
Clothed His naked body with fine cloth.

Their deeds immortalised in eternity,
As ounces of human tenderness poured,
From sin-soiled hearts, renewed by grace;
That earth is not utterly lost to the enemy.

Simon Davidson
Lecturer, Sonoma
Adventist College, PNG.

HI KIDS!

Kids Speak



GLOBAL YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S DAY

Following in the footsteps of Jesus is becoming more like Jesus in action. Doing what Jesus would do. Loving and caring for others and telling others about the good news of His love for everyone.

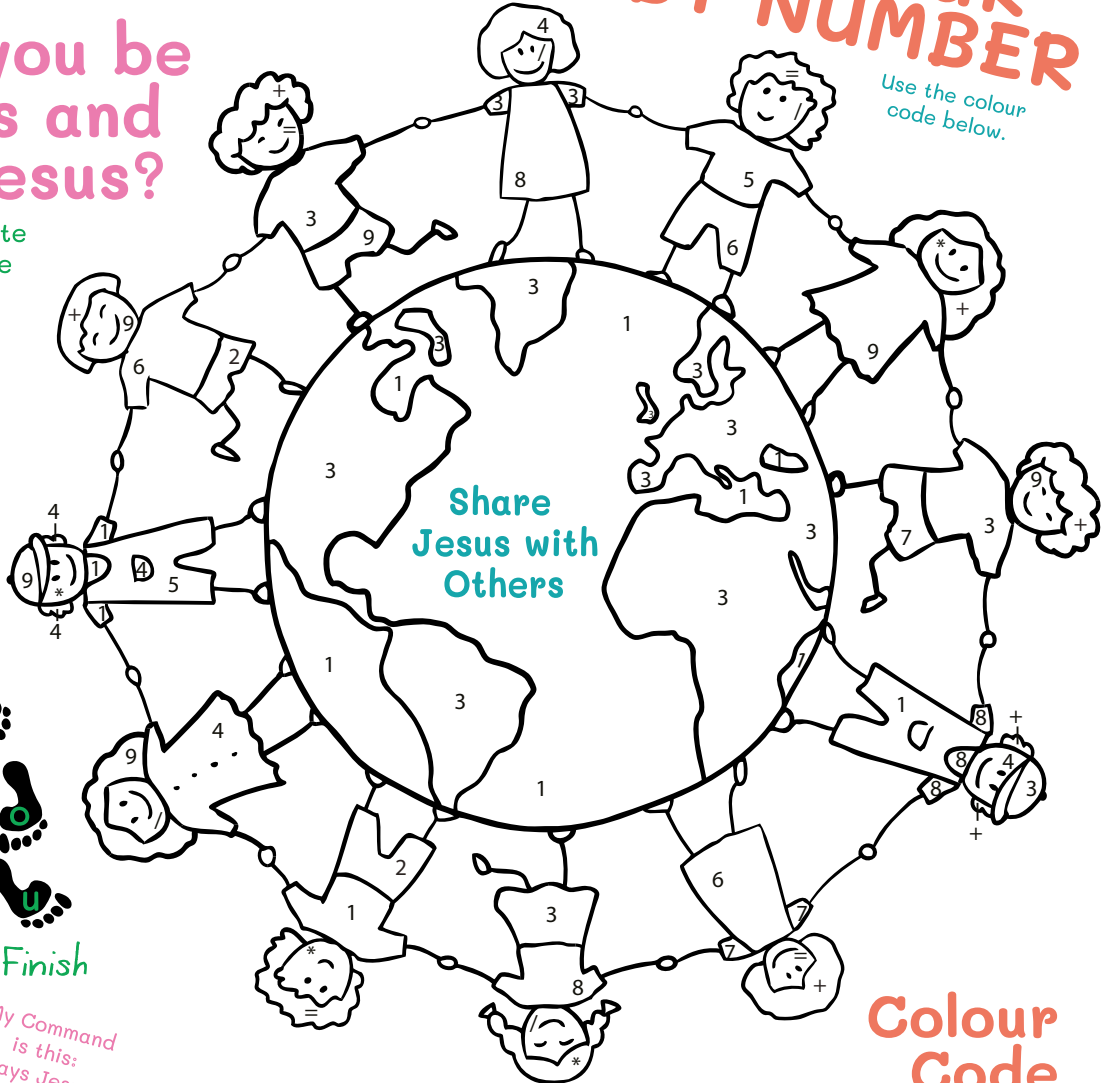
How can you be the hands and feet of Jesus?

Follow the feet and write the letters to finish the memory text.



COLOUR BY NUMBER

Use the colour code below.



Colour Code

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John 15:12.

Go to <http://thetuis.tv/> to find the Tui family's latest adventures.



Conversations

Justice revealed

Thank you for “Aunty Ellen and Social Justice” (February 20)—a synopsis of social justice as seen through the pen of “Aunty Ellen”. The year 2020 saw the rise and influence of social justice movements like never before.

When you look closely into these movements you will find they are not really advocates of equal justice. Social justice, based on their usage of the term, does not promote justice at all. It promotes injustice. It promotes advantage toward a preferred group to the disadvantage of another; often using violence as a means to achieve the end.

As “Aunty Ellen” states, there is only one true source of justice and it is revealed in “Christ and Him crucified”.

A place where one finds “mercy, tenderness and forgiveness, blended with equity and justice”. This is the only social justice movement that we, as Seventh-day Adventists, should champion. Let’s shout it from the roof tops!

A E Hobbs, *via website*

Set the record straight

Re: “Pioneer Indigenous Missionaries” (March 6).

Would just like to set the record straight re the wedding photo of

Dick and Jessie Richardson. The minister’s name in the photo caption, Pastor PB Rudge is actually incorrect. This photo was taken by my mother, Pearl Broad nee Brandford. The minister shown in this photo is actually Pastor James L Brandford who, with Pastor Rudge, established the Mona Mona Mission.

Carol Williams, *via email*

Thoughtful and helpful

“Church responds to conversion therapy bill” (February 6) is a thoughtful and helpful report on Australian legislative actions. Thank you.

The legislation banning sexual orientation conversion therapies is welcomed and past-due. The dangers are well known.

The article’s tone and general position, just a few years ago, would not have been welcomed—sincere evidence of growth and development.

The report addresses three church concerns—the perceived “ambiguous wording” in the legislation, the resulting challenge to a “biblical sexual ethic”, and the probable negation of “human free will”, which is “central to an understanding of humanity created in the image of God”.

One assumption, evident although not explicitly identified in the report, links all three and its embrace permits, or may even promote, the abuse identified as conversion therapies. Specifically, the appeal to free will implies a central role for choice.

While individuals may have a choice about personal disclosure and resulting behaviour, this does not extend to sexual orientation. The big lie behind conversion therapies is that individuals can “un-choose” their sexual orientation, because they “chose” it in the first place.

While there remains much to learn about sexual orientation—“choice” is settled. Sexual orientation is about physiology, not volition—and is definitely not a measure of faith.

If we can develop our thinking that “choice” is not relevant to this conversation, then we can better frame a biblical sexual ethic—one rightly focused on a relationship with a God of love and grace and on full participation in a community of believers. Then, rather than fearing criminalisation for praying with “struggling” individuals, prayers could be of rejoicing and security in the arms of God—irrespective of one’s orientation.

D Graham Stacey, *NSW*

Anniversary



WARD, Martin and Olga (nee Hill) were married by Pastor J Cole on 21.12.1960 in the Nunawading church, Vic. They celebrated their 60th anniversary with family and friends. They have four children, 11 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Martin and Olga spent half of their married life in education and library mission work in the Pacific, East Africa and Thailand and are now retired and living in the Adventist Senior Living retirement village at Cooranbong (NSW).

Obituaries

DOHERTY, Alfred Charles (Mannie), born 26.10.1930 in South Africa; died 30.1.21 in Brisbane, Qld. On 3.6.1949 he married Katie who predeceased him in 2009. Mannie is survived by his children, Thomas (Gold

Coast), Beverley Felton (Gold Coast), Estelle Mackay (Brisbane), Gavin (Sydney, NSW), Charles (Sydney) and Leeann Turner (Sydney). Mannie worked hard all his life but was always smiling. He loved the Lord and actively shared his faith, touching many lives.

Bob Possingham, John Phillips

LLOYD, Richard Mark, born 16.11.1951 in Ferntree Gully, Vic; died 29.1.21 in Port Macquarie, NSW. On 27.6.1974 he married Tina. Mark is survived by his wife (Port Macquarie); and children Ramon (Ballarat, Vic) and Jessica (Port Macquarie, NSW). As a paediatrician, Mark brought many lives into the world. He was loved and highly respected by his family, friends and colleagues.

David Kosmeier



MCCROW, Margaret Elizabeth, born 31.8.1938; died 22.2.21 in Avondale House, Cooranbong, NSW. In 1958 she married Ivan McCrow in the Concord church in Sydney. She was predeceased by her husband in 2002. Margaret is survived by her children, David and Ingrid (Central Coast), Colin

and Penny (Dakabin, Qld) and Jeanette Conley (Sydney, NSW); six grandchildren; and seven great-grandchildren. Along with her husband, Margaret was one of the supporting founding members of the Central Coast Adventist School. Over many years she was actively involved in several church ministries. In later years she was a dedicated volunteer at Sydney Adventist Hospital. Margaret was a people person and strong of faith.

Roger Nixon

RAFANOWICZ, George Mark, born 8.6.1951; died 9.11.20. He is survived by his wife, Maggie (Wallangarra, Qld); and children Marilyn, Matthew and Melissa. George was the son of a pastor. He was full of life and the Spirit. He is remembered by so many for his bear hugs, generous smile and what he called funny jokes. He was always positive, treated everyone with the utmost respect and to the day he died, never stopped witnessing to others, those in his BMW bike club, his neighbours, and to the doctors and nurses in Stanthorpe hospital where he died, about His love for Jesus Christ and His second coming.

Afi Tuaoi

SCALE, Elwyn Stewart, born 10.6.1943 in Warragul, Vic; died 9.11.20 in Taree, NSW. On 28.4.1966, he married Helen Birkett. Elwyn was predeceased by his daughter, Delwyn in 2009 and younger brother, Geoff in 2008. He is survived by his wife; sons, Daz and Neda (Yandina, Qld), Roo and Marg (Bulahdelah, NSW) and Chub and Nicky (Bulahdelah); 11 grandchildren; one great-grandchild; and younger brother Warren (Scas). Elwyn had a passion for loving and helping people. He founded Delhuntie Park Youth Care and designed and constructed the Pinnacle of Terror mobile motivation units. He served as senior elder in Moe church (Vic) as well as Pathfinder director.

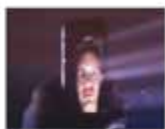
Oscar Sande, Graham Stewart, Blake Penland

Advertising

GIANT BOOK SALE

Bargains. 800 books, some priced \$A3 each. Cash only. EG White commentaries, religious, children's, Bible stories, CDs, gardening, craft, virus lockdown activities. Books for lay preachers, SS teachers and church libraries.

THIS MONTH *in Signs...*



FINDING TRUTH IN THE AGE OF DEEP FAKES
New technology allows ultra-realistic renderings of people into videos where they are not present. What are the implications for truth?



WHY SHALL WE "NEVER FORGET THEM"?
Does remembering the Anzacs include accepting the death, destruction, war crimes and racism that are a part of war?



THE POWER OF BROKEN BREAD
It's not just about the food. How the traditional Passover elements really point to the loving sacrifice of Jesus Christ.



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SIGNS OF THE TIMES AND RECORD ON CD

The SPD's Christian Services for the Blind (CSFBHI) produces a monthly audio compendium of articles from recent *Record*, *Adventist World* and *Signs of the Times* issues, along with Sabbath

school lessons, for the vision impaired. If you or someone you know could benefit from this service, mail or email CSFBHI including postal address. Email <CSFBHI@adventistmedia.org.au> or write to Christian Services for the Blind, Locked Bag 1115, Wahroonga NSW 2076. For the legally blind in Australia and New Zealand, CSFBHI also has a large audio library of Christian and denominational books available.

AVONDALE FAMILY FUNERALS offers a comprehensive funeral service, personalised with utmost care, compassion and respect to communities from Sydney to Newcastle. As committed Adventists, our family is here to guide you every step of the way. Contact Mark Windus on 0411 797 854 or <director@avondale-familyfunerals.com.au>.



Positions vacant

SENIOR BUSINESS ANALYST—EDUCATION

Adventist Schools Australia, location negotiable

The Seventh-day Adventist Church (AUC) Limited is looking for a business analyst to join our technology services team with Adventist Schools Australia. This full-time position is a great opportunity to join a collaborative and welcoming culture that operates across nine companies consisting of around 50 schools. This role will assist with improving business workflows associated with learning management systems, student information systems, accounting and finance systems. It will have an emphasis on gathering, validating and documenting the schools and schools' companies business requirements as well as working with the broader team to facilitate the introduction of processes to achieve the desired business outcomes, all while identifying issues and any risks involving business impacts along the way. For more information please contact <MelissaHill@adventist.org.au> or visit the Adventist employment website. Please note that the appointing body reserves the right to fill this position at its discretion and to close applications early. Only those who have

a legal right to work in Australia may apply. **Applications close April 7, 2021.**

CAMP MANAGER

Camp Mornington, Wokalup, WA

This is a new, exciting and diverse role that oversees all operations of the new Camp Mornington campground. The successful applicant will be involved in marketing and promotion, managing the campground and ensuring appropriate standards are adhered to with regards to cleaning, maintenance, office administration, guest services and overall presentation. We are looking for a person with a passion for ministry, engaging customer service skills and a "can-do attitude". To apply, please email a cover letter, your CV/resume, three-work related referees and the contact information of your Seventh-day Adventist church pastor to Pastor Brad Thomas at <bradthomas@adventist.org.au>. Only those who have current Australian work rights will be considered for this position. The appointing body reserves the right to fill this position at its discretion. **Applications close April 5, 2021.**

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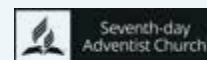
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