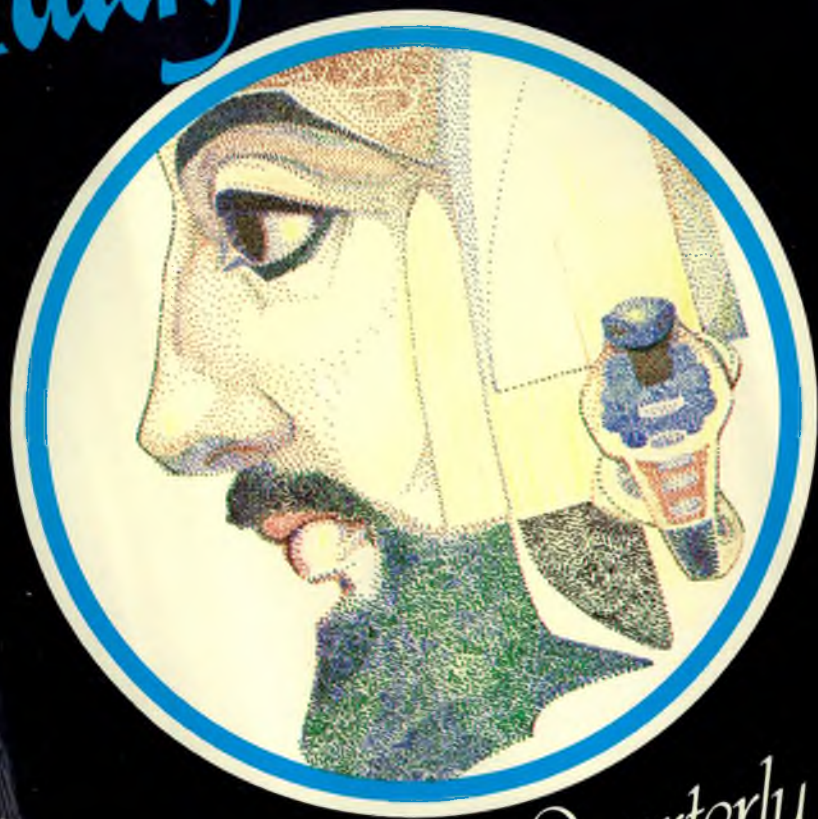


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Collegiate Quarterly

April-June 1983

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Thank you for helping us to help ourselves in this, the "Total Action Division," where we do things with people, not for them. Your Thirteenth Sabbath Special Projects Offering in December, 1980, contributed \$321,000 toward supplying the roofing, windows, and door frames for 127 chapels scattered across this division.

The Marirangwe church in Zimbabwe, pictured at top, was the proud accomplishment of the happy group posing in the foreground. These nine women and two men provided most of the labor. Volunteer builder Don Oltman and his wife organize the purchase of materials in each country and supervise the construction of each chapel.

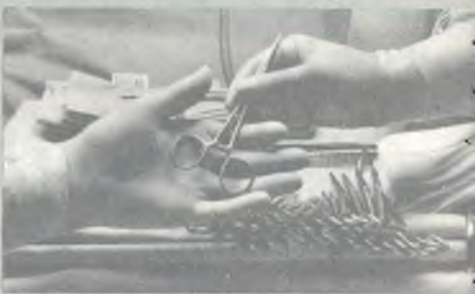
The interior of the Ngocho church, Zambia, the first of the Zambian chapels to be dedicated, needs cement for plastering, window frames, and paint. But our faithful members there are thankful for their sturdy structure and thank you for showing your love for them in such a helpful way.

This quarter's Special Projects Offering will be used to construct 200 children's chapels or Sabbath School facilities in Trans-Africa. Thank you again for your prayers and offerings.

Kenneth J. Mittleider

Kenneth J. Mittleider, President, Trans-Africa Division

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The *Collegiate Quarterly* is written by faculty, students, and friends of the Seventh-day Adventist colleges and universities in North America. Organized under the Union College Board of Trustees, it is coordinated by Campus Ministry and published with the approval of the North American Division Church Ministries Committee.

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THIS QUARTER'S ART

Rabih AbouJaoudé

The portraits of the biblical characters in this quarterly are the work of Rabih AbouJaoudé, who currently resides near Seattle, Washington.

Born in Jordan, Rabih grew up in Lebanon and moved with his family to the United States at the age of 17. He received his formal training in art at Walla Walla College, where he studied under professors Kenneth MacKintosh and Tom Emmerson. He also majored in music while at Walla Walla. Rabih shares the following comments about the art in this quarterly:

"I have been greatly influenced by classical Greek art as can be seen in the idealized proportions in most of the portraits. Lately, however, I have been quite impressed with Egyptian and Byzantine art. In the drawings of Miriam and Caleb there is a mixture of Egyptian art and Semitic features. My research in near eastern archaeology led me to portray Eliezer with a smile and a beard. A serene Lydia is my interpretation of a working woman whose joy is within. In fact, I have given a Byzantine touch to most of the New Testament portraits.

"Onesiphorus is a minor variation on an actual mosaic (c. 400) of the head of the martyr, Saint Onesiphorus. The tilt of the head and the haunting eyes compelled me to bring out the severity in him.

"Onesimus is a loose portrait of a friend who was mortally wounded by a sniper in Lebanon during the spring of 1978.

"I attempted simple and direct symbolism for the Old Testament characters. Miriam has a shadow of the two tables of stone on her forehead. Eliezer is backed by camels. Ruth and the wheat are together. There is even a horn on Hannah (1 Sam. 2:1)!

Our "Bacchus of the Pyramids" is a totally different story with his Semitic face: Caleb!

Rabih AbouJaoudé

Rabih AbouJaoudé
14005 SE 133rd Street
Renton, WA 98506

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An Introduction to the Quarter

God's Ordinary People

Onesiphorus, Lydia, Eliezer, Onesimus. These wouldn't be the first names that come to mind for induction into a Bible Hall of Fame. In fact, if you can say *anything* about these Bible characters before looking through this quarterly, you should get at least three gold stars by your name. Yet, these individuals, with nine others, are the focus of our study this quarter.

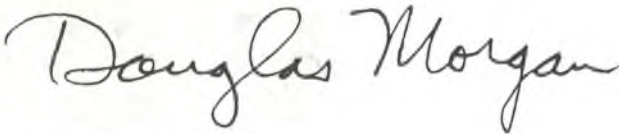
Why study these lesser-known characters, passing by the great themes of theology, and Hall-of-Famers like Moses, David, Elijah, and Paul? In his Pulitzer Prize winning book, *Profiles in Courage*, John F. Kennedy introduces us to legislators from American history like Thomas Hart Benton, Edmund G. Ross, Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Lamar and George Norris. Again, not household words (for non-history majors at least). But each was noteworthy, not for grandiose or dramatic achievement, but simply for carrying out his congressional duties with steadfast integrity.

For example, it took only one courageous vote to make the story of Kansas Senator Edmund G. Ross worth retelling. Under intense pressure to do the politically expedient, Ross cast the deciding vote for the acquittal of Andrew Johnson during that president's impeachment proceedings in 1867. As the time came for him to cast his crucial vote Ross declared, "I almost literally looked down into my open grave. Friendships, position, fortune, everything that makes life desirable to an ambitious man were about to be swept away by the breath of my mouth, perhaps forever."¹

By braving denunciations with this unpopular vote, Ross's otherwise ordinary career became a "profile in courage" for the inspiration of subsequent generations.

Most of the lives we study in this quarter were similarly unspectacular. The only mention we have of Onesiphorus, for example, relates to the assistance he rendered Paul while the apostle was in prison. Other ordinary people to be studied this quarter include a frustrated housewife, a man who ran away from responsibility, a young widow, a businesswoman and a trusted employee.

Each of these ordinary lives, through trust in God and faithfulness to right principles (and sometimes lack thereof), teaches us something significant about how we understand our God and our responsibility to Him. Each "profile in faithfulness" not only enhances our understanding of what it means to follow Jesus Christ, but also gives insight into the love, compassion, and justice of God's dealing with humanity.



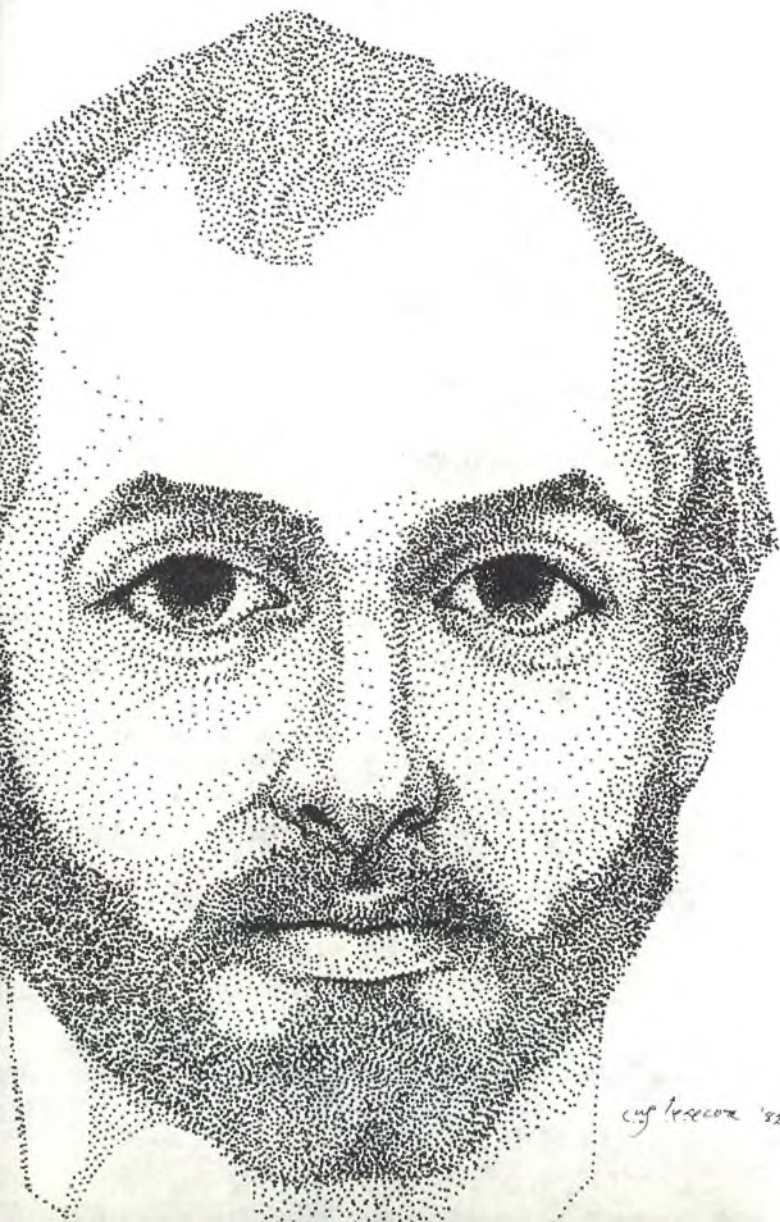
Douglas Morgan
Editorial Director

1. John F. Kennedy, *Profiles in Courage* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1955), p. 139.

Stephen - Faithful to the Vision

"But Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit,
and gazing intently up to heaven, saw the glory
of God, and Jesus standing at God's right hand"
(Acts 7:55, NEB).

Lesson 1, March 27-April 2



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Intent On the Vision

by Harry Krueger

Slavomir Rawicz understood the personal meaning of unflinching, dogged commitment. Through pain, deprivation, sickness, grief, weariness, hunger, thirst, unbearable heat and unthinkable cold he moved to the urgings of an inner drive, an irrepressible desire. All the resources and talents, intelligence and cunning available to one person were pinpointedly focused on one specific, often elusive goal.

"Slav" was a twenty-six year old Polish army lieutenant who in the spring of 1941 escaped from a Soviet slave labor camp in the Siberian tundra with six other fellow prisoners and began a 4000 mile journey to India and the attainment of that one precious goal—freedom. Listen to the intensity:

"As I stood in the yard, one hand holding on to my trousers, the other gripping my parcel, I felt myself shivering with cold and with excitement. There was a great sense of freedom. I told myself 'Slav, my friend, this is goodbye to prisons. Wherever they take you, it won't be to another stinking prison.' I felt faintly elated. Whatever was ahead of me, here I was already breathing in good, clean, cold air and knowing I was going somewhere—not from cell to cell, from prison to prison, from one interrogator to another, but to a new life. . . ."¹

What moves a frail, confinement-scarred man to brave desolate tundra, swift and icy rivers, scorching desert, and vast and forbidding mountains, with death never more than a

step or breath away? It is possible to find such a focus in life—the "normal" lives we live from day to day—that calls out the ultimate in resources, even death itself if necessary? Are the drive and urgency and quiet stability amid the storm possessed by a Slavomir Rawicz just a fascinating oddity, or can they truly become a personal reality?

Stephen and Slav have much in common. Luke says that our prisoner's biblical counterpart was also "full" of vision—a vision toward which he "gazed intently" (Acts 7:55-56). For this no price tag was beyond reach.

Endings of visions are not always "pretty." As the decisions and values of a lifetime break over the shore of finality somehow the drive, the misty dream, becomes reality. Stephen understood as the rocks fell. And so did Slav at journey's end.

"Exhausted, walking skeletons of men that we were, we knew now for the first time peace of mind. It was now that we lost, at last, the fear of recapture.

"They came from the west, a little knot of marching men, and as they came closer I saw there were six native soldiers with an N.C.O. in charge. I wanted to wave my hands and shout, but I just stood there with the other three watching them come. My eyes began to fill and the tears brimmed over.

"Smith stepped forward and stuck out his hand.

"'We are very glad to see you,' he said."²

INTRODUCTION

1. Slavomir Rawicz, *The Long Walk* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1956) p. 25.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 238.

Harry Krueger is a chaplain at the Loma Linda University Medical Center.

☐ March 27
Sunday

A Vision-Directed Life

LOGOS "At their worst, the Jews declared that God had created the Gentiles to be fuel for the fires of hell, at their mildest, they believed that some day the Gentiles would become their servants."¹ Fortunately, they were wrong, and this is one of the major issues Stephen dealt with during his short ministry.

Stephen was one of the seven chosen to be the first deacons of the Christian church: "They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 6:5, NIV). Stephen was chosen because he was a man of honesty and efficiency. The apostles were preaching full-time and felt a great need to have godly individuals to manage the administrative details of the new community of believers (Acts 6:1-6).

"Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people" (Acts 6:8, NIV). In other words, Stephen was a talented man. He became recognized as one who radiated the very power of God through his words and deeds.

In addition to his duties as a deacon, he became a powerful champion of the good news about Jesus in public debate. So convincing were his arguments that his opponents "could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by which he spoke" (Acts 6:10, NIV).

Stephen's charismatic preaching was perceived as an attack on two things which the Jews held very precious. First, the temple in Jerusalem where sacrifices were offered and God could truly be worshipped, and second, the customs and ceremonies of the Mosaic law (see Acts 6:13).¹

Because of these two things, the Jewish leaders thought they had a monopoly on God. But Stephen's forceful preaching about Jesus of Nazareth, the One who fulfilled the law and therefore was superior to it (Acts 6:14), and about a universal God who could not be confined to a building constructed by the hands of men (Acts 7:48-50), threatened their narrow exclusivism.

Unable to answer his arguments, the Sanhedrin resorted to force and arraigned Stephen on charges of blasphemy against Moses and God. In his defense, Stephen traced Israel's sacred history, beginning with Abraham, down to Moses, and finally to the persecutions of the prophets. Stephen's voice was filled with emotion as he told them that they had committed the most terrible of crimes in executing Jesus. The crucifixion of the Son of God was the culmination of Israel's long history of unfaithfulness (Acts 7:51-52).

No accusation could have caused the Sanhedrin greater anger—they were furious and gnashed their teeth (Acts 7:56, NIV). But Stephen was not through yet, for looking up into heaven he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God (vs. 56). With this the Sanhedrin became satanic and insane with rage. They covered their ears and yelled at the top of their voices, and in their rage rushed at Stephen dragged him out of the city, and stoned him (vs. 57-60).

Battered and bleeding from the stones of the self-righteous, the first Christian martyr died, like his Lord, with words of forgiveness for his tormentors: "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (Acts 7:60, NIV).

S. D. P.

1. William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), p. 53.

Wisdom and the Vision

by Dalton D. Baldwin

Stephen was given two spiritual gifts. First, he was given the spiritual gift of wisdom (1 Cor. 12:8). "Learned rabbis and doctors of the law engaged in public discussion with him, confidently expecting an easy victory. But 'they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.' Not only did he speak in the power of the Holy Spirit, but it was plain that he was a student of the prophecies, and learned in all matters of the law."¹ Second he was given the gift of visions. As he was closing his defense he saw a vision of the "Son of Man standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55).

Which was more helpful in the conversion of Saul, wisdom or visions? "Saul had taken a prominent part in the trial and conviction of Stephen, and the striking evidences of God's presence with the martyr had led Saul to doubt the righteousness of the cause he had espoused against the followers of Jesus."²

The dramatic impact of the vision was needed to get Paul's attention. But there were no doubt visions supporting people like Theudas (Acts 5:36) or even Simon Magus (Acts 8:9f). Paul needed a great deal of divine wisdom in order to make sure that the vision expressed divine initiative. Stephen's wisdom supplied this need.

The contrast between dramatic events which are difficult to test and divine wisdom is illustrated in the different methods of selecting Matthias and Stephen. Matthias was selected to take Judas' place among the twelve apostles by casting lots (Acts 1:21-23) and we never hear of him again. Stephen was chosen with the spirit-guided judgment of the apostles. "To cast lots for the officers of the church is not God's order. Let men of responsibility be called upon to select the officers of the church."³ Visions are most helpful when they summarize wisdom and can be tested.

TESTIMONY

Key text:
1 Corinthians
12:7-11

1. *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 97.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 112.
3. *Selected Messages*, Book Two, p. 328.

Dalton D. Baldwin is a professor of theology at Loma Linda University.

March 29
Tuesday

Choosing the Vision

by Harry Krueger

EVIDENCE

Key text:
Mark 8:34, 35

Commitment and conviction invariably involve us in the whirlpool of tension, pressure and consequently, decision. Responses and attitudes have far-reaching and all-consuming consequences. Paul Tournier understands this conflict well and boldly suggests an answer that dispels the blur and fuzz from our lives.

"It takes plenty of courage to live according to one's convictions. That is why it is always so difficult to break away from social conformity, to act differently from everybody else. And it is because everybody conforms to the 'done thing' that it becomes so hard to depart from it. Thus, society becomes a game of personages. 'Dare to detach yourself from the herd,' once wrote Romain Rolland. As soon as a man obeys his inner call, he upsets the game, and brings to light around him the persons buried underneath the personages. . . .

"Even the happiest life is a constant struggle to face the problems it raises, the external and internal conflicts it arouses, which are the very stuff of life itself; a struggle to be true to oneself, to assume responsibility for one's own convictions and talents. 'It is much easier,' I read in a letter from one of my patients, 'to be in the position of a victim than in that of a person conscious of his responsibilities and of the gifts he is endowed with. But it is the only way to inner maturity.'

"Then she adds: 'How difficult it is really to accept one's life as it is. But I know that everything comes back to that acceptance—and that it is the real key to happiness.' That is the point—acceptance of one's life has nothing to do with resignation; it does not mean running away from the struggle. On the contrary, it means accepting it as it comes, with all the handicaps of heredity, of suffering, of psychological complexes and injustices. . . .

"That is what living means—jumping over the hedges of the personage that have gradually grown and hemmed us in. . . . We think that by being cautious we are protecting life, whereas we are slowly smothering it. Our Lord's words come to mind: 'Whosoever will save his life shall lose it' (Mark 8:35). . . . But once we boldly obey the call within us, all these gathering mists are swept away. Life regains its clarity, the person appears, refreshed and able once more to see clearly and to choose.

It has been said that a fruitful life is the realization of an idea. So the person is not reality given in advance, that can be discovered by objective examination. It is created by a quite subjective decision; it is results from a choice. 'I have deliberately preferred,' wrote Kierkegaard, 'to choose the expression "choose oneself" instead of know oneself.' We can understand now the failure of the intellectualism which claims to know man as an object, a thing. . . .

"Choosing also means renouncing. It means defining our person by abandoning resolutely what is not integrated into it by the choice. The intelligence registers everything, turning the person into a kind of limitless museum. It is the will that chooses, and releases the stream of life."¹

1. From *The Meaning of Persons* by Paul Tournier, pp. 204-206, copyright © 1957 by Paul Tournier with permission from Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.

□ March 30
Wednesday

Harry Krueger is a chaplain at Loma Linda University Medical Center.

Dying for the Vision

by Glenn S. Sharman

HOW TO
Key text:
Revelation 2:10

There are certain Christian principles which almost inevitably bring on persecution, the form of which varies with circumstances. For Stephen, holding to the following principles meant martyrdom. They remain valid for us, no matter how threatening the consequences seem.

1. **Have a cause worth dying for.** It is a piteous thing to fly no banner, to have no cause worth dying for. Before the United States entered World War II, I returned from Africa on an American ship displaying the stars and stripes emblazoned on both sides. When the United States declared war, these flags were painted over. The ship was sunk shortly after. The purpose of the flags obviously was to protect rather than proclaim. Stephen was not transient or whimsical in his commitment. He was informed. There was no question in his mind that he had been told the truth and he proclaimed this truth boldly, knowledgeably and with fervor. His declaration to the Sanhedrin, before it was interrupted, requires 49 verses to record.

A cause worth dying for must above all else be a cause worth living for. Stephen had lived his belief and was now prepared to die for it.

2. **Steadfastly maintain integrity.** Chameleons are designed for survival. Stephen, however, didn't change colors through public relations, tact, expediency or diplomacy in order to avoid martyrdom. His approach was clear, calm and full of faith and deep piety.

Stephen possessed unique talents and knowledge. He spoke the Greek language fluently. He was familiar with Greek and Jewish customs. He was able to communicate effectively on many levels and was able to hold his audiences spellbound. No one could successfully contest his wisdom, logic and spirit so they had to martyr him.

3. **Reform the system from within.** Stephen had a thorough knowledge of the Jewish economy. He knew how the system was managed and it's various idiosyncracies. He was an insider. Because of this, his challenges, probings, and exposés were devastating. Criticisms of outsiders can be ignored or passed off with a shrug but it is insiders who are embarrassing because they know too much and must be dealt with. Safer approaches might have included withdrawing from the system, waiting, or modifying his approach to be less controversial.

4. **Value truth over expedience.** While it seems clear that Stephen did not purposefully take advantage of a particularly explosive time to ask awkward questions and force his hearers to confront embarrassing issues, neither did he draw back for reasons of expediency from presenting the truth. Had the foundations not been shaking, and the well-ordered system reeling under the onslaught of truth as presented by Jesus and his followers perhaps Stephen would not have been a threat worthy of stoning. But the weaker the system, the greater the departure from truth, the more urgent its need to use force. Truth can afford to be calm; error cannot. The timing of Stephen's testimony was exquisite for martyrdom—he had to be stoned.

Glenn S. Sharman is Administrative Patient Representative at Loma Linda University Medical Center.

March 31
Thursday

Compelled By the Vision

by James W. Walters

OPINION

Key text:
Acts 4:19, 20

Stories of martyrs move us. The very idea of a man declaring his faith—with abandon—powerfully tugs at our religious sensibilities. No doubt about it—Stephen was a saint of the first order. He fearlessly confronted the august Sanhedrin. He unquestioningly pursued a single course even while the stones were pelting his flesh.

Such a story should be praised and preached. But ought it be analyzed? Questions of how Stephen might have accomplished his purpose without martyrdom strike us as at best irreverent and at worst blasphemous. But similar questions are asked today by the church as she judiciously plans her confrontations with the world. For example, we ask, "How can the church plan an outreach to the Middle East without severe danger to personnel?" Stephen had no plan. He simply preached the word surging up from his immediate experience with Christ. And he happened to strike some raw Jewish nerves as he straightforwardly recast traditional notions of holy places and law (cf. Acts 6:13). In contrast, the church today has professionally educated theologians who attempt to provide the most distinctive Adventist doctrines with a rationale which will not alienate the modern mind. Today church administrators take advantage of the best public relations advice to aid in image enhancement.

**"God needs
... individuals
to arise
and bring the
organized
tradition to
account for
its inner
self."**

Do professional theologians and PR consultants bespeak a corporate faithlessness? Hardly. Such developments in a church of over three million members living in 1983 are inevitable, even desirable. Beyond God's actions through the Spirit-filled figures of an earlier era, He today also utilizes the talents of diverse professionals in His organized church.

However, recognition of God's use of modern organization must not eclipse the eternal power of the ancient sacred story of Stephen—the story of a single believer who stepped out from the congregation. Yes, God needs and uses organization. But He simultaneously needs and uses individuals to arise and bring the organized tradition to account for its inner self. Otherwise, the tradition grows stale from mere self-perpetuation.

Thus in the Judeo-Christian tradition, God's agenda was spurred on by the leader Moses. The prophet Jeremiah advanced it further; the apostle Paul still further. And since Bible times God has been very much alive in the voices of Martin Luther, John Wesley, Ellen White, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Stephen is one in a long succession of individuals God has used in pointing to a new bend in the road for his pilgrim people. As the Adventist church has long taught, beyond timeless truths there is "present truth" which God especially impresses upon His people at a particular time in history.

We unjustly tame Stephen's story if we reduce it to merely an illustration of courage and commitment. Let this story stand for what it is—the eternal Word reminding us that our God does not work only through the cool reason and smooth bureaucracy of the organized religious tradition. He also inspires individual men and women passionately to stand for new truth regardless of consequences.

REACT
Lesson 1

1. Much of Stephen's success lies in the fact that he was full of both wisdom and the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:10). In today's terms he was both an intellectual and an evangelist. But does not intellectual sophistication seem to dampen the evangelistic fervor? And do not those preoccupied with soul-winning often appear to be "anti-intellectual"? How does one go about integrating "wisdom" and "Spirit"?
 2. In the many countries of today's world where human rights are upheld, there are no executions for religious reasons. Does that mean that there are no martyrs in these countries today? If not, what forms does martyrdom take today?
 3. a) The How To article seems to imply that martyrdom is an ideal to be sought. Do you agree or disagree? Explain.
b) Are there qualities to a good martyr that you would add to Sharman's list?
 4. Good came from Stephen's death, including the conversion of Saul. But could he have been even more effective by using diplomacy, living longer, and continuing to witness?
 5. Paul Tournier (Evidence) remarks that "choosing also means renouncing. It means defining our person by abandoning what is not integrated into it by the choice." What did Stephen renounce and abandon in order to be true to the basic choices he had made? Are there things that we as a church and as individuals need to renounce or abandon in order to define our "person" with greater clarity?
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Lydia - A Heart Open

"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel" (Philippians 1:3-5, NIV).

Lesson 2, April 3-9



God's Earthquake and God's Woman

By Bruce and Susan Wilcox

It is one of the great Bible stories. Not quite in a class with David and Goliath or Daniel in the Lions' Den, but good enough just the same.

The story starts out with Paul, Silas and Timothy just a bit at loose ends. They had been traveling from church to church in Asia Minor, but when they tried to enter new territory they got "no" messages from the Holy Spirit. Then, just after Luke joined them at Troas, Paul saw his famous vision of the man from Macedonia saying "Come over into Macedonia and help us." So off they went to Philippi.

On Sabbath, they went out of the city to the river bank. There was a good chance they would find some Jews worshipping there, since it was an old Jewish custom to recite prayers by a river or the sea. Sure enough, they found a little group of women praying there, and made their first convert in Europe: Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth.

Then comes the good part of the story; the part we can act out in Kindergarten Sabbath School; the part Pete Seeger sings about. Paul and Silas got themselves flogged and thrown in Jail. Most everyone knows the rest of the story: Singing hymns, an earthquake that opened the cell doors and unfastened the prisoners' chains, the conversion of the jailer, and finally Paul having the last word by demanding a

public apology from the judges.

Thus was the beginning of the Christian church in Philippi—a church that Paul remembered with affection for the rest of his ministry—a church that he mentions as being unique in sharing with him in giving and receiving.

Somehow, though, the Philippian church does not seem to reflect its turbulent beginnings. It seems rather to be a lengthening shadow of its first member, Lydia, the dealer in purple cloth. Lydia had an open mind and an open heart. As soon as she was baptized she insisted that the apostles move into her home, and it became the headquarters for the infant congregation. It is difficult to say for certain, but there are those who conjecture that Lydia was the archetypical woman, large in her longing for life, powerful in her capacity to create, and abundant in her willingness to nurture.

When God acts, He acts through some thing or through some person. In Philippi, His action through the earthquake caught the people's attention, just as it catches ours. His action through Lydia's infectious warmth and generosity, business sense and management skill provided both energy and resources so the church in Philippi could become an effective agency for expressing His character in the pagan world.

INTRODUCTION

Bruce Wilcox is a professor of biochemistry at Loma Linda University. Susan Wilcox is a therapist in Redlands, Calif.

April 3
Sunday

Open Heart/Responsive Mind

LOGOS

"Come over to Macedonia and help us" (Acts 16:9, NIV). After hearing these words in a vision, Paul concluded that God had directly called him to preach the gospel to the people of Macedonia. Macedonia was located in northern Greece and was one of four Roman sub-provinces. In responding to the Macedonian cry, Paul became the first missionary to carry the gospel to Europe.

Paul and his companions, Luke, Silas, and Timothy traveled to Philippi, the leading city in the district of Macedonia.

When Paul entered a new city, his custom was to visit first the local synagogue. Apparently, there weren't enough Jews in Philippi to meet the quorum of ten men necessary to establish a synagogue congregation.¹ Nevertheless, a group of women met together for worship. Thus, Luke reports that "On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there" (Acts 16:13, NIV).

One of those listening was Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, and a proselyte to the Jewish faith. Luke observes that "The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message (Acts 16:15, NIV). Like those in Berea, who "received the word with all eagerness, examining the scripture daily to see if these things were so (Acts 17:11, RSV), Lydia possessed a mind that was responsive to new truth. But not only was her mind open to growth and change, her heart was open to the transforming Spirit of Christ.

Lydia and all the members of her household were baptized and she invited Paul and his companions to stay at her home with these words, "If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my house" (Acts 16:15, NIV).

Lydia did not withdraw her hospitality when the opinion of Philippi's financial community turned against the apostles (see Acts 16:16-24). She risked the reputation of her business by allowing the Christians to remain in her home. She abundantly fulfilled Paul's later admonition, "Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality" (Rom. 12:13, NIV).

Paul describes the Philippian church as having a partnership with him in the spreading of the gospel (see Phil. 1:4). Paul had exceptionally warm relations with this church and this is reflected in the tone of his letter to them. Even though the Philippian church was continuously in a hostile environment the characteristics of joy and faith were still seen (see Phil. 1:25).

Lydia's courageous hospitality and openness to truth was a key factor in bringing about the thriving fellowship in Philippi. And without the church at Philippi there would have been no letter to the Philippians, which has given hope and guidance to untold millions through the ages.

S. D. P.

1. *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, Vol. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1971), p. 331.

God Empowers: We Choose

by Dalton D. Baldwin

When Paul preached to Lydia, Luke says that "the Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said" (Acts 16:14). If God opened her heart, what role did Lydia have in the change?

"God's Spirit can only enlighten the understanding of those who are willing to be enlightened. We read that God opened the ears of Lydia, so that she attended to the message spoken by Paul."¹

Is there a conflict between the Bible passage which says that God opened her heart and Ellen White's statement that God only enlightens the minds of those who will let Him do so?

Luther would say, Yes. In his book, *On the Bondage of the Will*, he says that God "alone moves, actuates, and carries along by the motion of his omnipotence all things" in such a way that "all things, even including the ungodly, cooperate with God."²

Since "it is not his will for any to be lost," (2 Peter 3:9, NEB) but only a remnant are saved (Rev. 12:17); we conclude from the underlying harmony of the Bible as a whole that God furnishes all the power but we make the choice.

Ellen White puts it this way: "What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God it's affections; but you can *choose* to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus, your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him."³ This action of the will continues after conversion, throughout the entire Christian life.

"The most precious fruit of sanctification is the grace of meekness. When this grace presides in the soul, the disposition is molded by its influence. There is a continual waiting upon God and a submission of the will to His. The understanding grasps every divine truth, and the will bows to every divine precept, without doubting or murmuring. True meekness softens and subdues the heart and gives the mind to Jesus Christ. It opens the heart to the Word of God, as Lydia's was opened."⁴

TESTIMONY

Key text:
Ephesians 1:3-4;
Deuteronomy
30:19-20

"True meekness . . . opens the heart to the Word of God, as Lydia's was opened."

1. *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, p. 1062
2. *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation* translated and edited by E. Gordon Rupp, Philip S. Watson, A. M. Marlow, and B. Drewery. Library of Christian Classics, Vol. XVII (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969) p. 288F.
3. *Steps to Christ*, p. 52.
4. *The Sanctified Life*, p. 15.

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April 5
Tuesday

Small Groups of Women

by Helen F. Little

EVIDENCE

Key text:
Hebrews 10:
23-25

Our echoes roll from soul to soul, And grow for ever and for ever."

—Tennyson

Two small groups of women, in one of them the poor, humble, and nameless, in the other at least one woman of some social standing and wealth. From each group came an influence that spread blessing through succeeding centuries, the women all unaware of ripples they started through time.

In one group were "three or four poor women sitting at the door in the sun, talking about the things of God" when a young man—wandering between the attractions of his rather rowdy world and his desire for peace with God—overheard them as he passed by. Their talk, John Bunyan reported in *Grace Abounding*, "was about a new birth, the work of God in their hearts." "And methought they spake as if joy did make them speak; they spake with such pleasantness of Scripture language, and with such appearance of grace in all they said, that they were to me, as if they found a new world."¹ Their talk deeply impressed him, made him dissatisfied with his religiosity, and convinced him that the godly life—not the worldly—was the happy and blessed one. Bunyan's great *Pilgrim's Progress* and his *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* "have guided many feet in the path of life."²

The other group—centuries earlier—was a band of Jewish women and that included at least one Gentile convert. They meet on Sabbath days in a quiet spot on the banks of the Gangites flowing past Philippi. Here also a man came by, not poor tinker like Bunyan, but a highly educated, one-time Pharisee—Paul.

Eugenia Price suggests that the Macedonian call that came to Paul in vision was God's response to these praying women. "I have long believed that God will move heaven and earth to reveal Himself as He really is in Jesus Christ, wherever He finds an open, seeking heart. Lydia and her Jewish friends believed in the Lord God, and this Lord God sent Paul and Luke to bring them into full life in Christ."³

What happened to Lydia, the first Christian convert in Europe? Price has another suggestion: "It is interesting to me that even though Lydia became fully centered in her new Christian life, she apparently did not become eccentric. She went on being Lydia, caring for her business, but sharing her home and her energies with God. There is no record that she leaped off dramatically after Paul when he left Philippi, bent on becoming a great worker for Christ. She served Him where she was, in her old business, living her new life fully, in the presence of her customers and her business associates. She gave God a chance to get into the market place with her, and to reach hearts He may never have been able to reach had Lydia begun to hunt for speaking dates and new mission fields . . . And around her there grew the caliber of a Christian church to which Paul could write with such deep affection: 'Every time I think of you, I thank my God.'"⁴

We haven't reached the day when a group of sincere praying folk, humble or eminent, cannot influence the course of history in God's favor. Today more than ever before, in fact, a band of praying women may be a powerful force in God's outreach to open hearts.

"She gave God a chance to get into the market place with her, and to reach hearts He may never have been able to reach had Lydia begun to hunt for speaking dates and new mission fields."

1. John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, quoted in *British Poetry and Prose*, Lieder, Lovett, Root., Vol. 1, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1950), p. 613.
2. *Great Controversy*, p. 252.
3. Eugenia Price, *God Speaks to Women Today*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1964. Zondervan Books ed., 1969), p. 177.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 177, 178.

Helen F. Little is an emeritus professor of English at Loma Linda University.

□ April 6
Wednesday

Recipe for a Warm and Generous Church

by Bruce and Susan Wilcox

The growth of a Christian community such as the church at Philippi is not happenstance. Like a chemical reaction or fine cooking, the proper conditions and ingredients must be present. The story of the church in Philippi is brief, but it contains hints as to the conditions and ingredients needed to establish and cultivate a living, warm and generous Christian church. With a little thought, we can identify some of them.

1. **You need a place.** Lydia and her friends had their place by the river. Later, the church used Lydia's home as its meeting place and headquarters.

2. **You need common beliefs and assumptions.** Paul usually looked for Jews when he arrived in a new city. They shared many of his beliefs and assumptions.

3. **You need customs and rituals.** Paul knew where to find people with a similar outlook: they would be worshipping on Sabbath.

4. **You need behavioral examples.** Paul sometimes cast himself in this role. He used examples from the Old Testament. He pointed people to Jesus as the great example.

5. **You need people who can lead and nurture the community.** Such people must have the personality of leaders: good judgment, the moral courage to make decisions, willingness to take responsibility. They need to say, as President Truman did, "the buck stops here." They must be generous with material resources. Furthermore, they must have access to those resources. You cannot give with empty hands. Some of these people must understand and be adept in the way of the business world. In plain terms, you need some people who can make money and manage it wisely. While you can care about money and not care about people, you cannot care about people and not care about money.

HOW TO

Key text:
Philippians 1:1-11
4:1, 15, 16

The Inspiration of a Balanced Witness

by Alberta Mazat

OPINION

Key text:
Luke 8:1, 2

Lydia of the inquiring mind, the business skills, the generous hospitality—how can we operationalize what we have learned about this remarkable woman? We will surely be missing something valuable if we choose to underplay the implications of her sex assignment. She was a woman in a man's world, and yet she gets high marks for her accomplishments, achieved over and above her culture's restrictions. She was a successful businesswoman before she enters our narrative. Consideration of her life may encourage some female readers who sometimes attribute their personal and professional dissatisfactions to sexual discrimination. Among the male readers, there may be a realization that there have always been men who have accepted women as co-workers in a noble cause.

We read that the Lord opened Lydia's heart. In the wake of this spiritual surgery, several things followed.

First, Lydia was graciously hospitable. This cordiality was not out of need to impress people. What social benefit could be gained by receiving as house guests poor itinerant preachers? It would not be something you would hasten to wish printed in the society column of the *Philippi Times*. This makes her generosity seem the more impressive. She was not so concerned for her own social and business connections (where she might well have been embarrassed) as she was for the needs and comforts of her newly-found spiritual brothers. It should make us ponder our own motives for the invitations we extend. Perhaps we might even wish to dust off our infrequently-used welcome mats.

“Success didn't go to her head, it went to her heart.”

Social interaction in our homes is ever an effective way to demonstrate warmth, cheer, understanding, consideration—a host of win-some graces. People on the verge of despair have been recalled by an invitation to Sabbath lunch; lonely hearts have been cheered by a pizza-supper gathering to meet neighbors; lonely elders have found a new meaning to existence by the sharing of bread.

Second, Lydia was appropriately assertive. Can't you hear Paul demurring? He was always properly reluctant to be a burden—“Too much trouble . . . putting you out. . . . You are such a busy person. . . .” The record says she “entreated the apostles to make her house their home.” She was not a shrinking, easily-talked-down person. She was not willing to retreat from an idea if it did not win instant acceptance. And yet she had apparently learned to be assertive in a thoughtful, gracious manner. What a gift!

Third, Lydia was successful—can we really understand what that implies? She was a successful businesswoman, which suggests organizational, managerial and public relations abilities. And yet she did not lose her ability to be sensitive to others' needs, to have a humanitarian solicitude for people as well as a spiritual concern for God's struggling church and its witness. Success didn't go to her head, it went to her heart. Instead of feelings of self-sufficiency and pride, she displays others-centeredness and generosity.

Will open hearts in our 20th-century church community allow our modern Lydias to achieve more for God? Will modern Pauls accept and allow more in His name? What a great, productive fellowship we might be with each of us working to full capacity!

1. What do you think Luke meant in writing that “the Lord opened her (Lydia’s) heart” (Acts 16:15)? Does the Lord open the heart of everyone who hears the gospel? If so, why doesn’t everyone believe? If not, is He fair?
 2. Eugenia Price, quoted in the Evidence article, observes that through Lydia, God reached “hearts He may never have been able to reach had Lydia begun to hunt for speaking dates and new mission fields.” Explain how this could be true. Suggest specific ways in which Christians can effectively serve God in secular occupations.
 3. What do you think Alberta Mazat (Opinion) means in asking if open hearts in today’s church will “allow our modern Lydias to achieve more for God,” and if “modern Pauls” will accept and allow more? What specific actions do you think are called for?
 4. Do you think Alberta Mazat (Opinion) is right in calling Lydia “appropriately assertive” (note carefully Acts 16:15)? What does it mean to be appropriately assertive in contemporary settings, particularly for those who have been historically discriminated against?
 5. What is your reaction to Bruce and Susan Wilcox’s statement that Lydia’s story shows us that the church needs people “adept in the way of the business world . . . who can make money and manage it more wisely”? In view of recent financial difficulties, do you think the Adventist church should be less involved in financial investments, or is there simply a need for greater efficiency? Give specific suggestions for how the churches business affairs might be handled most effectively.
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Onesiphorus - Trustworthy Friend



"Onesiphorus . . . often refreshed me
and was not ashamed of my chains"
(2 Timothy 1:16, NIV).

Lesson 3, April 10-16

cup to receive '82 ©

by Tony Brandon

The Lonely Apostle

INTRODUCTION

The Apostle Paul, like the Prophet Elijah, experienced loneliness when he was faced with rejection. We remember that the Lord understood Elijah's depression and visited, refreshed and encouraged the prophet. Similarly, the Lord understands Paul's emotional hurt, and He sends Onesiphorus to refresh and encourage him.

The loneliness of Paul, like Elijah's, was incidental and temporary, primarily because he had established and maintained active resources for emotional support. Persons who lack a present and active support system become well-acquainted with loneliness.

These are usually people who lack the necessary skills to harness their social environment to meet their needs of identity and intimacy. Internal insecurities and self-doubts weaken their efforts to connect effectively with available social resources. Their loneliness may escalate into despair.

Paul deals effectively with his loneliness. Although the circumstances limit his options for social outreach, he utilizes the ones open to him to his benefit. 1) *He writes letters.* This is a powerful tool with which to combat loneliness. In his letters, he connects intellectually and emotionally with Timothy. 2) *Through writing he also processes some experiences.* By committing to language what he thinks and feels, he is able to put his expe-

riences into perspective, and evaluate them.

One profitable experience of Paul's during his time of crisis was the friendship he shared with Onesiphorus, a believer from Ephesus. Paul accepts, and relates appropriately to, the acts of friendship from Onesiphorus.

The record of Paul's life presents a person passionately dedicated and committed to a cause (Phil. 3:13; Phil. 1:21). Anyone so committed to an undertaking can become over-identified with his cause, and as a result, lose perspective on his relationship to others. Whenever this is the case, he will tend to disqualify anyone who disagrees with him as disloyal to the cause. Similarly, he will tend to confuse acts of friendship done for him, with those acts done for the cause.

Paul does not seem to suffer any of these ills. He states clearly that "they which are in Asia be turned away from me" (2 Tim. 1:15). He prays for mercy on the house of Onesiphorus, and is aware that the acts of kindness were done for him. He is personally grateful.

It takes a Christian maturity that keeps us aware of our humanity to accept and appreciate the friendship that withstands loneliness and produces refreshment and encouragement. Perhaps only the truly Christian can be truly grateful.

Tony Brandon is chairman of the Department of Marriage and Family Therapy at Loma Linda University.

□ April 10
Sunday

An Example of Genuine Friendship

LOGOS

"May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me. May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day! You know very well in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus" (2 Tim. 1:1; 16-18, NIV).

While preaching in Ephesus, Paul became acquainted with Onesiphorus, who apparently took a special interest in the apostle, perhaps inviting him over to his home for meals, lodging, and fellowship.

It was during this time that a rather serious disturbance broke out in connection with the preaching of the Gospel (see Acts 19:23-41). Many who for so long had worshipped the idol Diana were now suddenly accepting the message of Christ. This angered the craftsmen of Diana images who were feeling the sharp pains of a souring business. As a result, anger and resentment burned within the hearts of heathen men and they sought to counteract the work of Paul. They instigated a riot, which put the whole town in an uproar. The mob rushed to the theater, dragging two of Paul's Macedonian traveling companions, Gaius and Aristarchus. Paul wanted to go in and make an appeal to the people but his friends refused to let him. In the context of this difficult situation, Onesiphorus helped Paul in many ways.

Toward the end of Paul's ministry he was arrested and accused of instigating Christians to burn Rome (see Evidence). Now viewed as "public enemy No. 1", Paul was forsaken by all his friends and converts, except one. Onesiphorus, literally meaning "one who brings profit," did not forget Paul, his friend. He remained true to his name, going to great lengths to bring much joy and encouragement to Paul at a time when other church members were failing him. Onesiphorus was not an "on and off" friend, here today and gone tomorrow, rather he was a friend at all times, a friend when needed. "A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Prov. 18:24, NIV).

The spirit of kindness, love, and self-giving which Onesiphorus exhibited is not unattainable for us. Onesiphorus could not hold back the reins of generosity and Christ-likeness that he had come to know through a relationship with Jesus Christ. All can experience the same relationship with Christ that was so vital to Onesiphorus.

The key is letting Christ take over and begin a new life in the old and sin-burdened one. Jesus Himself said, "Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 16:4, 5, NIV).

Onesiphorus applied these principles and let the love of Christ flourish in his heart to the point where he even risked his own life to help a friend who was experiencing loneliness in a dark, cold prison cell. Onesiphorus is a genuine example of what a Christian friend should be like.

S. D. P.

More Than Precious Pearls

by Dalton D. Baldwin

Who was Onesiphorus? Before studying this lesson, most of us would not have very much to say in answer to that question. Even after reading all that there is in the Bible which refers to Onesiphorus, we do not know very much about him. He has a significance, however, which is important for you and for me.

Everyone needs friends and that includes Paul. "Amidst the constant storm of opposition, the clamor of enemies, and the desertion of friends, the intrepid apostle almost lost heart. But he looked back to Calvary, and with new ardor pressed on to spread the knowledge of the Crucified. He was but treading the blood-stained path that Christ had trodden before him. He sought no discharge from the warfare till he should lay off his armor at the feet of his Redeemer."¹

"Things will go wrong with everyone; sadness and discouragement press every soul; then a personal presence, a friend who will comfort and impart strength, will turn back the darts of the enemy that are aimed to destroy. Christian friends are not half as plentiful as they should be. In hours of temptation, in a crisis, what a value is a true friend! Satan at such times sends along his agents to cause the trembling limbs to stumble; but the true friends who will counsel, who will impart magnetic hopefulness, the calming faith that uplifts the soul,—oh, such help is worth more than precious pearls."²

Everyone, including those in the "humble walks of life" is given the responsibility of being a friend. "Nothing can give you such power, true self-reliance and nobility of soul, as a sense of the dignity of your work—an assurance that you are co-laborers with God in doing good and saving souls."³

"Speak often words that will be a strength and an inspiration to those who hear. We are altogether too indifferent in regard to one another. We forget that our fellow laborers are often in need of words of hope and cheer. When one is in trouble, call upon him and speak comforting words to him. This is true friendship."⁴

Who was Onesiphorus? Paul's friend. Who are you? Somebody's friend.

TESTIMONY

Key text:
Proverbs 27:9

"The true friends . . . who will impart magnetic hopefulness, the calming faith that uplifts the soul,—oh such help is worth more than precious pearls."

1. *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 297.

2. *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 3, p. 1163.

3. *Testimonies*, Vol. 4, p. 615.

4. Manuscript 42, 1901.

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☐ April 12
Tuesday

Paul the Letter Writer

by Walter F. Specht

EVIDENCE

Key text:

2 Timothy 4:1-5,
9, 12, 13, 21

“He chose the form of an ordinary Greek letter as a powerful instrument of religious instruction.”

There can be little doubt that Paul was lonely when he wrote 2 Timothy, his last letter. His loneliness is reflected by his longing for the presence of Timothy, his “dear son” (NEB) in the Christian faith. He writes, “. . . I long night and day to see you, that I may be filled with joy” (1:4); “Do your best to come to me soon” (4:9). “Do your best to come before winter” (4:21). The apostle would have been more than human if he had not felt lonely in the circumstances in which he found himself.

The narrative of the book of Acts closes with Paul in Rome as a “house-prisoner” for two full years (Acts 28:30). This was “the period of time prescribed by Roman law as the limit a prisoner might be held after appeal to the emperor’s court should there be no prosecution of the case.”¹ What happened after these two years? Was Paul tried, found guilty and executed? Did the Jewish plaintiffs allow the case to go by default and make way for his release? Was he tried, found innocent and released? There are evidences for accepting the third view, that he was released from prison, carried on an extensive missionary itinerary, and then re-arrested, again tried, condemned to death, and beheaded.² Ellen White asserted that between the two Roman imprisonments the apostle traveled “from church to church in many lands.”³

In 64 A.D., ten of the fourteen districts of the city of Rome were destroyed by fire. The emperor, Nero, was suspected of being involved, and he, in turn, put the blame on Christians, against whom a terrible persecution was instituted. The great apostle was suddenly re-arrested and returned to Rome where he was confined to a dark, damp dungeon. It was risky for his friends to visit him, and many deserted him. However, Onesiphorus (about whom we know so little), boldly sought him out and ministered to his needs.

Already the first phase of the trial was over when he wrote his second letter to Timothy. No doubt he felt more lonely than at any other time in his life.

In the Introduction to this week’s lesson, the suggestion is made that in his loneliness he wrote letters as a means of social outreach. There is much truth in this, especially in the writing of 2 Timothy. But it is not the full truth. Paul had for many years written letters as part of his pastoral work. He chose the form of an ordinary Greek letter as a powerful instrument of religious instruction. He wrote letters to meet specific needs and problems in the religious lives of Christians in the apostolic churches. The contents of these letters vary according to the needs of his readers. Even 2 Timothy was written to bolster up a timid, but devoted Christian leader (see 2 Timothy 1:6-8). He is challenged to cling to sound doctrine, to teach and preach it with vigor, and to defend it against the prevailing errors.

This does not exclude the fact that Paul was lonely and wanted Timothy to come to Rome as quickly as feasible. Timothy was to bring with him Mark, and because of the cold dungeon, the cloak Paul had left at Troas, and also Paul’s precious manuscripts. But it does mean that Paul had larger, more important reasons for writing.

1. R. N. Longnecker, Z.P.E., V, 654.

2. See the evidence presented in F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1977) pp. 441-455.

3. *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 488.

4. *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 921.

A People Finder

Onesiphorus' kindnesses to Paul in the Roman prison were at a time when the apostle was lonely and friendless. In his account of what Onesiphorus did for him, Paul expressed his deep appreciation:

1) "He oft refreshed me" (2 Tim. 1:16b). Refreshment in loneliness relates to empathy, the ability to feel with another. Onesiphorus felt with Paul, and emotionally supported him. Refreshment also relates to being in touch with one's sources of strength. For Paul, it was the Lord who ultimately restored his soul (Psalm 23:3), but Onesiphorus may well have been the nurturing agent of the Lord.

It is difficult to visit with a person who is going through an uncomfortable experience. "What do I say?" is a common question we ask ourselves in such circumstances. Perhaps what we say to those in pain is not as important as what we allow *them* to say to us. The attentive and genuine listener is more likely to benefit the patient or prisoner, than the visitor with a head full of wisdom and a mouth full of advice. Emotional presence speaks louder than words. Loving, lovable Christians are experienced, rather than heard.

2) "... And was not ashamed of my chains" (2 Tim. 1:16c). One who is ashamed of another says more about himself than he does about the other. The idea of being ashamed of another's condition (Paul's chains) carries with it the flavor of judgment. Christ says: "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matt. 7:1).

When one person is ashamed of another's condition this creates emotional distance between them. If the feeling persists, this will create the need for geographic distance between them. A similar process is present in organizations and institutions. When an organization feels embarrassed by an individual it may seek to dissociate itself with him. In most cases, though, even when the corporate conscience is quieted, this process is a poor substitute for soul searching. The insecurity that causes the feeling of shame and embarrassment is not compatible with Christ.

3) "... He sought me out very diligently, and found me" (2 Tim. 1:17). Onesiphorus spent his energy on behalf of a believer. So often, because of a strong evangelistic emphasis, the church and its members tend to invest their energy primarily on behalf of the "unbeliever". Onesiphorus supported, pastored a minister of the church family, perhaps at considerable personal risk. Even the leaders of the Christian church may at times need to be ministered to. Who is the pastor's pastor?

Paul makes it clear, "... he found me" (2 Tim. 1:17). Paul was "the people finder", who did not give up. Onesiphorus shared that persistence with his friend. He found Paul.

HOW TO
Key text:
Micah 6:8

In the Spirit of Onesiphorus

OPINION
Key text:
Matthew 25:36

It may seem difficult to translate Onesiphorus' courageous assistance to the imprisoned Paul directly into an ethical imperative for 20th-century North American Adventists. The possibility of our religious leaders being at odds with authorities is so remote that we don't even think about it. The thought of the General Conference president or H. M. S. Richards in jail seems absurd.

Of course we can see in Onesiphorus qualities of genuine friendship that should be emulated, and his story should remind us of our duty to minister to the imprisoned. But I suggest that there is an even more direct way in which Paul's poignant phrase about Onesiphorus, "he was not ashamed of my chains" (2 Tim. 1:16) might be applied to us.

Today in many nations there are thousands, perhaps millions of our brothers and sisters in Christ who are suffering various forms of persecution, including imprisonment, because of their commitment to live according to their consciences. Perhaps the most notorious persecution of religion today takes place in the Soviet Union. The following incident reported in *Sojourners* magazine, is not atypical:

"Odessa, May 2. A religious service in a registered prayer house was broken up. KGB men, police, and Garilov, local commissioner of the Council for Religious Affairs, warned that a service must be only two hours long. They constantly shouted through the megaphone how much time was left. As soon as the time was up, the officials broke up the service. A fire engine and fire pump were summoned to assist the police. Several people were arrested."¹

Among these persecuted believers are 20th-century Pauls like Georgy Vins, former secretary of the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians and Baptists in the U.S.S.R. Vins served four years in prison camps for charges including "anti-Soviet slander" before he was released in a prisoner exchange with the United States.²

Not so fortunate, and a little closer to home, was Vladimir A. Shelkov, head of the All-Union Church of True and Free Seventh-day Adventists, who died in a Soviet prison camp at the age of 84 in 1980. Shelkov spend 24 years of his life in prison camps.³ Were you and I concerned or aware enough to do anything to show that we were not ashamed of his chains?

Of course our concern should go beyond just fellow Christians. Those who have the spirit of Onesiphorus will care about anyone who suffers imprisonment and/or torture for the sake of conscience. Yet, surely we have a special responsibility to those within the "household of faith."

What specifically can be done? First, letters can be written to authorities on behalf of prisoners held for religious reasons. Amnesty International, an organization that works for prisoners of conscience regardless of the ideology of the prisoner or the state, is perhaps the best means of awareness and involvement in behalf of those persecuted for religion today.

Second, if you are writing on behalf of a prisoner, bring his case to the Lord in prayer, preferably in a group. Such actions are only sometimes successful, but they are always worthwhile.

Imagine yourself in Siberia. What would it mean to have an Onesiphorus working for you?

D. F. M.

1. "Articles of Faith," *Sojourners*, November 1982, p. 10.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
3. See *Spectrum*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (June 1981), pp. 24-46.

1. Paul writes that Onesiphorus helped him in Ephesus in many ways (2 Tim. 1:18). Try to identify three ways that church members can most effectively "help" their religious leaders today.
 2. What qualities of true friendship do you see in Onesiphorus?
 3. Why do you think Ellen White described the following qualities in friends as more valuable than precious pearls? Give an example of how each attribute might manifest itself, with careful attention to the adjective on the last two.
 - a) Will counsel
 - b) Will impart *magnetic* hopefulness
 - c) Will impart *calming* faith
 4. Tony Brandon (How To) observes that a strong evangelistic emphasis tends to cause church members to invest their energy primarily on behalf of the "unbeliever"? Do you agree? If so, do you think such an emphasis is healthy, or do current members become neglected? How does the experience of Onesiphorus speak to these questions?
 5. What is your reaction to the Opinion author's argument that in the spirit of Onesiphorus, we should speak out against those imprisoned in violation of their human rights today? Does this type of activity unnecessarily antagonize government leaders and cause hindrance to gospel work?
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Hannah - Woman of Faith



"He safeguards the steps of his faithful
but the wicked vanish in darkness
(for it is not by strength that man triumphs)"
(1 Samuel 2:9, Jerusalem Bible).

Lesson 4, April 17-23

by Becky Lacy

The Pressure's On

INTRODUCTION

The other day I ran across a short comic strip that I had cut out of the funnies several months ago. It pictures two kids sitting down on the front porch of an old wooden house. The little girl starts their conversation by saying:

"Percy . . . if it wasn't for you, I'd be the only little kid in Grimy Gulch. I'm glad there's two of us."

"Yeah" Percy says, "It make for a minimum of peer pressure."

To be in a position where there is a minimum of peer pressure is rare indeed. It's all around us; from our personal appearance to our executive seminars. In almost every situation there is the pressure to "be" or "do".

Unfortunately we have associated this pressure almost exclusively with the teenage years. To wear the appropriate length of dress, to frequent the same places of entertainment, to say the right words or buy the right brand of jeans all seem to dominate a teenager's life. To be up to par and fit into the crowd are very real concerns, but they certainly don't stop when a teenager turns 20. Peer pressure is very real in each one of our lives, it just takes different forms.

In order to survive in a world where there are constant demands and where performance and personal credibility hold a high priority, there must be something that Christians can grasp onto for security and for the knowledge that they are worthwhile, not because of some role they fill but simply because they're children of God, created out of Love and made

for a special purpose.

Jesus told us the survival secret when he answered the Pharisee's question about the greatest commandment. Jesus said ". . . Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matt. 22:37, RSV).

Jesus is saying to the Christian—"I want you to be content with living, loved by me alone, with giving yourself totally and unreservedly to Me, with having an intensely personal and unique relationship with Me. I won't give you things you request if they will take you away from me.

"Don't be anxious and don't worry. Don't look at the things you think you want. Just keep looking way up to Me or you'll miss what I have to show you.

"And when you're ready I'll surprise you with a love far more wonderful than any you would ever dream. But until you are satisfied exclusively with Me and the life I've prepared for you, you won't be able to have the peace that comes with the knowledge that I am always beside you. I want you to be enjoying concretely the everlasting union of beauty, perfection, and love that I offer you with Myself. Know that I love you utterly. Just believe and be satisfied."

This week we focus on a woman who lived by these principles. She lived in a society of tremendous role expectations. In her struggle to compete in her world she found a refuge; a power that she lived by and a power that she demonstrated. Her name was Hannah.

Becky Lacy was a ministerial intern at Loma Linda University Church at the time of this writing.

□ April 17
Sunday

Remembered by God

LOGOS

Hannah was married to a Levite who was probably wealthy and prominent in the community. She and her husband Elkanah, lived in the hill country of Ephraim in the 11th century B.C., during the time of the judges. Because Hannah had not borne any children, Elkanah had married another woman, Penninah, who had borne him many children. To be barren, for a Hebrew woman, was pure anguish. Nothing was more important for a Hebrew woman than to give her husband a child—especially a son and heir.

In addition to the continual ache of being childless, Hannah had to live with the arrogance of Penninah. **“And because the Lord had closed her womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her”** (1 Sam. 1:6, NIV).

Every year Elkanah and his family went to Shiloh, the location of the sanctuary at that time, to sacrifice to the Lord. **“Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the Lord had closed her womb”** (1 Sam. 1:4, 5, NIV).

Peninnah routinely taunted Hannah on these occasions. With tearing words she cut into Hannah’s heart. **“This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the Lord, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat”** (1 Sam. 1:7, NIV). Elkanah would try to reassure Hannah of his love by asking her, **“‘Don’t I mean more to you than ten sons?’ ”** (1 Sam. 1:8, NIV). But despite Elkanah’s expressions of love, Hannah could not forget the taunts of Peninnah.

“In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord” (1 Sam. 1:10, NIV). Hannah did not forsake her trust in God even under the stress of keen disappointment. She promised God that if He would give her a child, she would dedicate him to God’s service all the days of his life.

God heard the humble prayer and in His great love answered it. **“So in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, ‘Because I asked the Lord for him’ ”** (1 Sam. 1:20, NIV).

Hannah was committed to a nurturing family life and she brought Samuel up in the ways of the Lord. She remained true to her word and when Samuel was weaned she took him to the temple where he was dedicated to the Lord’s work and where he lived his childhood days.

Hannah meekly endured the trials of a home life which was not pleasant and God in turn blessed her not only with a child but with divine character training.

“In many an unhappy home there is yet to be found a meek, loving soul grieving over deferred hope of a husband or children saved, and compelled also to bear scorn, and perhaps ill treatment, from those most dear. A patient, Christlike spirit is the Divine counterpoise of such suffering.”¹

Hannah’s experience with God led her to this fervent expression of praise: **“My heart exults in the Lord; my strength is exalted in the Lord. . . . There is none holy like the Lord, there is none besides thee, there is no rock like our God”** (1 Sam. 2:1, 2, RSV).

S. D. P.

1. *The Pulpit Commentary: Samuel*—Vol. 1 (Chicago: Wilcox & Follet Co., n.d.) p. 6.

Anticipations of Messianic Triumph

by Dalton D. Baldwin

After telling the story of Hannah and Samuel's birth, the author of 1 Samuel records an insightful prayer by Hannah. In a *Signs of the Times* article, Ellen White commented on this prayer. Here are some excerpts:

"My heart rejoiceth in the Lord . . ." (vs. 1).

In her [Hannah's] exultation, there is no vain triumph of self. She rejoices not in Samuel, not in her own prosperity, but in the Lord."

"There is none holy as the Lord . . ." (vs. 2).

"She extols the perfection of Deity. In the character of God, are wisdom, purity, truth, goodness, and mercy combined, immutable and complete. All human holiness is mingled with imperfection. All idols of the nations are vain and worthless. God is our only refuge and support; and those who trust in him will never be confounded."

"The bows of the mighty men are broken . . ." (vs. 4)

"How often, even in this life, do we see the ungodly brought to shame and confusion. Do they aspire to distinction and worldly honor? Are they proud of their valor and military skill? Their bows are broken, and they themselves overcome by a weak and despised company, for God hath girded the stumbling ones with strength. Do they trust in their riches, and indulge in luxury and extravagance while trampling upon the rights of the poor? They may themselves meet with reverses, and be reduced to the necessity of toiling for bread to satisfy their hunger, while many who have endured hardship and privation are blessed with plenty."

" . . . The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them. The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed" (vs. 10).

"Hannah's words were prophetic, both of David, who should reign as king of Israel, and of Christ, the Messiah, the Lord's anointed. Thus in a sublime and sacred song, referring first to the proud boastings of an insolent and contentious woman, were ultimately set forth, the humiliation of the proud and exaltation of the humble, the destruction of the enemies of God, and the complete and final triumph of his faithful servants."¹

TESTIMONY

Key text:

1 Samuel 2:1-10

**"In her
[Hannah's] exul-
tation, there
is no vain
triumph of self."**

1. "The Birth of Samuel," *Signs of the Times*, October 27, 1881.

Dalton D. Baldwin is a professor of theology at Loma Linda University.

April 19
Tuesday

A Woman Who Knew How to Love

by Becky Lacy

EVIDENCE

Key text:
James 5:7-11

Herbert Lockyer in *The Women of the Bible* has this to say about our personality for this week:

“The Bible has been called ‘The World’s Gallery of Lasting Fame,’ and in this gallery the portrait of Hannah occupies a conspicuous place. All that is recorded of this mother, who was one of the most noble Hebrews who ever lived, is an inspiration and a benediction. . . . The story we have of her is ‘a harp-note of the immortal triumph of patience,’ Hannah is a beautiful example of how the most unpleasant and untoward circumstances can produce a character blessing the world.”¹

Hannah withstood life with Peninnah because she was a special kind of woman. She was indeed the favored wife, but she never used this as an argument against Peninnah. She was never guilty of any unwomanly, retaliatory conduct. In this situation we see Hannah’s character and sanctity. Many a woman in her position would have become bitter, but she became a better child of God as she was driven close to the one who would understand.

After one meal when Peninnah’s gloating was particularly agonizing, Hannah stopped eating, got up from the table, ran to the temple crying, and fell down on her knees. “ . . . Her pain found a refuge in prayer. In God’s house she besought the creator ‘to raise her into the empire of motherhood,’ and to interfere with the law of nature on her behalf. How moving is the episode of Hannah pouring out her soul before God in His house and vowing that if he would give her a son, then she would give him back to God for His exclusive use! She bargained with God, and kept her bargain. She took her particular sorrow to God, and prayed not that Peninnah’s joy might be less, but that he would take away the cause of her own anguish. She gave herself to prayer, and in the presence of God her sorrow burst it’s bonds.”²

“The story . . . is ‘a harp-note of the immortal triumph of patience.’”

Hannah prayed sincerely, with every fiber of her being. She was in Shiloh for worship and sacrifice but this time her coming to God in the temple was not part of the yearly tradition. It wasn’t part of the service, or required by the priest. Her prayer was internal, it came from deep within. She was praying with her soul, her lips moved but there was no sound. The scene was so unfamiliar that Eli thought she was drunk! He confronted her and asked her to sober up (1 Sam. 1:14). Hannah responded to this situation no differently than she had when Peninnah taunted her. She had good reason to retort but didn’t. She explained her behaviour and Eli understood.

1 Samuel 2:1-10 shows us that Hannah’s prayer for a son wasn’t her last heartfelt prayer there in the temple at Shiloh. A few years later, after Samuel had been weaned, it was time for Hannah to fulfill her promise to God. She took young Samuel and they walked the ten miles from their home in Ephraim to Shiloh.

Hannah’s second recorded prayer was not a request, but a prayer of praise. She was thankful that she could carry out her promise to God and serve Him through the life of her son.

In just two chapters we learn of Hannah’s sanctity, sorrow, faith, dedication, and sacrifice. No wonder Samuel became a solid man of God; his mother had passed on to him her own unwavering faith from the day of his birth.

1. Herbert Lockyer, *The Women of the Bible*, (Zondervan Publishing House: Grand Rapids, Mich., 1967), p. 65
2. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

Living in the Family When the Going Gets Rough

by James F. Dyer, Jr.

HOW TO

Key text:
Psalm 37:5, 6

Getting along as a family unit can be difficult, especially when there is an unhappy triangle! What insights about coping with interpersonal conflict did you gain from Hannah's story? Here are a few possibilities:

1. **Face up to unpleasant feelings.** At first, Hannah internalized negative feelings to the extent of losing interest in eating. She did, however, express her feelings privately to God and a trusted counselor, Eli. "She was deeply distressed, and she cried bitterly as she prayed to the Lord." She said to Eli, "I am desperate, and I have been praying, pouring out my troubles to the Lord" (1 Sam. 1:10, 15, TEV).

Sharing difficult feelings with God in prayer can be an important first step in working through conflict. Expressing negative feelings to loved ones can be awkward or painful. Work towards sharing and clarifying feelings with family members. This process can create opportunities to negotiate problems and reconcile our differences.

2. **Maintain a positive self-worth and healthy individuality.** Part of Hannah's self-worth must have originated from a deep trust in God and a belief in His goodness. A recent Gallup poll revealed people with high self-esteem see God as loving, caring, and forgiving.¹ Learn to appreciate your individual strength and develop a reasonable security in expressing your differentness. Don't be afraid of defining yourself to others. Learn to be comfortable in expressing your individual preferences, values, and opinions. When necessary or appropriate, define your unique strength and gifts.

Set clear and reasonable limits with persons who are being manipulative or abusive. However, develop the art of being tactful, respectful and winsome as you assert your differentness. Refrain from blaming and treading on the right of others. A statement that is simple, straightforward, yet kind, often reaches others most effectively. Develop awareness as to what choices or rules of living enhance one's self-worth versus choices that undermine self-worth.

3. **Trust in God.** Like Hannah, there are times when we feel overwhelmed by a sense of helplessness. This is when we especially need to trust God with our inner thoughts and feelings. Reaffirm your understanding of God's character. Recall from your past experiences and from the Bible examples of God's love, protection, and concern. Attempt to experience the power of oneness with God through prayer and reflection. Remember God's promise to always be available as you focus on specific parts of the problem. Be willing to tolerate inner anxiety or fear while attempting to find solutions. Validate positive change with verbal praise and celebration.

1. Reported in *San Bernardino Sun Telegram*, June 5, 1982.

James F. Dyer, Jr. is a clinical social worker in the Department of Psychiatry at Loma Linda University.

April 21
Thursday

Making Deals With God

by Deane Nelson

OPINION

Key text:
Psalm 40:1-3

The story of Hannah brings to mind a critical issue in the taking of our problems to God. In our anxiety we sometimes resort to making deals with God.

Because we are human, we usually aren't able to live up to our own expectations or even the expectations of our family, our peers, our church or society. Like Hannah, we find a conflict between "what we ought to be" and "what we really are." It's almost like having two selves—our idealized self (that person we think we ought to be) and our actualized self (what we end up being). This is not abnormal or wrong—it's just the way we are.

Similar to Hannah we may become anxious in trying to achieve the fine balance between what we ought to be and what we are. Most assuredly we take our problem to the Lord for resolution. How often have we heard bargain arrangements such as: "Lord, if you help me make it through this test, I'll promise to study better next time." "Lord, I don't want to die. If you save me, I'll dedicate my life to service for you."

The critical issue here is this: When we make deals with God, what are we revealing about the kind of relationship we have with Him? Will God love us more or bestow more good things upon us if we in turn do something good for Him?

Bargain arrangements are dangerous on several counts. If we have made an agreement with God and everything works out as to our arrangements, it's easy to erroneously conclude that we can get God to do good things for us if we likewise do good things for Him.

On the other hand, if we have prayed for something that God sees is not best for us and we don't get what we expect, we may conclude that God hasn't heard us. Our prayers then become repeated cries for help, as if shouting loud enough and long enough and maybe getting others to help us will get God at long last to hear us.

We could also conclude that the reason our requests were not answered was that we didn't make as good a bargain as we should have. Maybe we should give a little more, maybe pledge a bigger sacrifice. Our picture of God becomes distorted into some sort of tyrant who demands more blood before he gives us any pleasure.

Consider an alternative. When we take our problems to the Lord, instead of making a bargain with Him "with promises to keep," would it not show greater faith to petition for courage and strength to bear whatever conflict or suffering we are called to endure?

Several points strengthen this alternative. First of all, it's based upon the premise that God loves us and desires the best for us. To ask for strength to endure without specific demands for the outcome is to express confidence in God's love and His sovereignty over our lives. Second, there's value in "waiting patiently upon the Lord." This patient waiting provides opportunity for growth in faith, which promotes inner peace. Third, it gives us the freedom to respond to God in love without any strings attached. We can serve Him free of any prior commitment which might restrict the direction of our growing relationship with Him.

"It's easy to erroneously conclude that we can get God to do good things for us if we likewise do good things for Him."

REACT
Lesson 4

1. a) Deane Nelson (Opinion) argues against making bargains with God. But didn't Hannah make a deal with God? Does that make it an ideal way for us to relate to God?
b) What are the dangers of bargain arrangements with God discussed by Nelson? Do you agree with him? Are there other dangers you would add?
c) Do the philosophies behind modern religious slogans like "possibility thinking," "expect a miracle" and "the ABC's of Prayer" fit into the category "deals" with God?
d) Is it ever proper to make specific requests from God beyond asking for strength and courage to cope with any circumstances?
e) The Opinion article states that there is value in "waiting patiently on the Lord," for it promotes faith and inner peace. How does waiting upon the Lord promote inner peace?
2. After Samuel was born, how do you think Hannah was able to avoid making her own good fortune the center of her rejoicing rather than God? Do our "blessings" today sometimes cause us to lose sight of God? Explain.
3. Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2:1-10 declares God to be on the side of the poor, oppressed and humble and opposed to the comfortable, powerful and proud. To which category are you and your church community closer? What are the ethical and practical implications of 1 Samuel 2:1-10 for each group?
4. a) Discuss the suggestions given in the How To section. Are there additional lessons for dealing with interpersonal conflict in this week's story (see 1 Sam. 1:2-8)?
b) Are there ways in which each of the following might have acted differently by following the How To suggestions, thereby lessening the tension in Elkanah's home?

Peninnah
Elkanah
Hannah

Onesimus - Runaway Slave



"I appeal to you
for my son Onesimus,
who became my son
while I was in chains"
(Philemon 10, NIV).

Lesson 5, April 24-30

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Men At the Crossroads

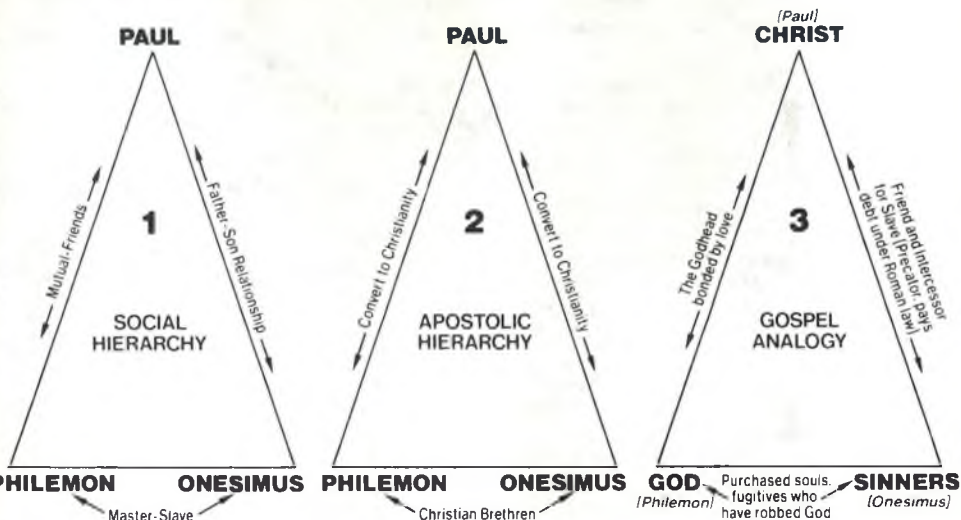
by Dorothy Minchin-Comm

INTRODUCTION

It was the year A.D. 63, and the apostles were busily consolidating the infant Christian church. In the midst of the flurry of correspondence relating to doctrine and church administration, there emerges a little gem of a personal letter from the Apostle Paul to Philemon, a prominent member in the church in Colossae, in Phrygia.

Philemon's slave, Onesimus ("useful"), a thief and a runaway, had reached Rome, a logical place of refuge. There he met Paul. Although he repented and became a Christian, he had not yet made restitution. It was still necessary that he return to Philemon who had absolute power over his life. No doubt the young man's friendship had been a great solace to the aging Paul. So the apostle wrote this letter in behalf of the hapless slave.

The story, however, is deceptively simple. It can profitably be studied on at least three levels:



The institution of slavery, like a cancerous growth, has eaten away the vitality of the nations which have been founded upon it and has culminated in rebellion. The ancient world, nevertheless, considered it a legitimate—even "necessary"—part of society. Some wealthy Roman landowners had as many as 20,000 slaves, none of whom had legal rights under Roman law. Hence, the book of Philemon was understandably unpopular up to the 4th century A.D. because of the subject and the way in which it was handled.

Even as late as the 18th and 19th centuries, slave owners in the Americas were still arguing that slavery was proper in a Christian society. For support they pointed to Old Testament slave-owners like Abraham and to New Testament Philemon who was asked only to "receive" Onesimus, not to emancipate him (vs. 17). Christianity, however, laid down broad principles which eventually would destroy the institution of slavery.

Dorothy Minchin-Comm is a professor of English at Loma Linda University, La Sierra Campus.

□ April 24
Sunday

Onesimus the Useful

LOGOS

The letter to Philemon is unusual among Paul's epistles in that it deals with a purely private matter—Paul's concern that Onesimus be received into the good graces of Philemon. In this short letter, Paul identifies himself as "a prisoner of Christ Jesus," instead of giving the usual opening reference to his apostleship. He is writing as a friend to a friend, asking a favor, though he can't avoid references to his apostolic authority.

Here is a free translation by F. F. Bruce of the letter to Philemon:

"Paul, prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon, our dear friend and fellow-worker, with our sister Apphia and our fellow-soldier Archippus, and the church that meets in your house: grace and peace be yours from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

"I always thank God, my dear friend, when I remember you in my prayers, for I hear good news of the love and loyalty which you show to our Lord Jesus and all his holy people. So I pray that your Christian liberality, springing as it does from your faith, may lead you effectively into the experience and appreciation of every blessing which we have as fellow-members of Christ. Your love has brought me great joy and comfort, my dear brother; you have refreshed the hearts of God's people.

"I am sending him back to you, though it is like tearing out my very heart to do so."

"That is why I am making this request of you; I am making it for love's sake, although I could quite well exercise my authority in Christ's name and *command* you to do the proper thing. Yes, I could command you as Paul, ambassador of Christ Jesus; but I don't do that: I prefer to ask you a favour as Paul, *prisoner of Christ Jesus*.

"The request I am making is for my son. My son? Yes, my son; I have acquired one here, prisoner though I am. His name is Onesimus—profitable by name and profitable by nature. I know that in former days you found him quite unprofitable but now, I assure you, he has learned to be true to his name—profitable to you, and profitable to me.

Well, I am sending him back to you, though it is like tearing out my very heart to do so. My own inclination is to keep him here with me, and then he could go on serving me while I am a prisoner for the gospel's sake—serving me as your representative. But I do not want to do anything without your consent; I do not want the good turn you are doing me through his service to be done by you willy-nilly, but on your free initiative.

"For aught I know, this was why you and he were separated for a short time, so that you might have him to yourself for ever, no longer as a slave, but something much better than a slave—a dear brother, very dear indeed to me, and surely dearer still to you, since he is now yours not only as a member of your household but as a fellow-believer in the Lord. You look on me as your partner, don't you? Well, Onesimus is my representative; give him the welcome you would give me. Has he done you any wrong? Does he owe you something? Never mind; put that down on my account. Here is my I.O.U., written with my own hand, 'I will make it good, *Signed: Paul.*'

"(I scarcely need to remind you, of course, of the debt that you owe me; it is to me that you owe your very life!)

"Yes, my dear brother, let me have this *profit* from you as a fellow-Christian. Refresh my heart in the name of Christ, to whom we both belong.

"I write like this because I have every confidence in your obedience; I know you will do more than I say. And, by the way, please get the guestroom ready for me; I hope I shall soon be restored to you, thanks to your prayers.

"Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner for the sake of Christ Jesus, sends you his greetings; so do my fellow-workers Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke.

"May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, all of you."¹

Several themes stand out in this poignant letter. Looking at the story on the level of social hierarchy (fig. 1, Introduction), we see that the conversion to Christ leads people to face reality, not escape it. Paul did not make excuses for Onesimus' past. In sending Onesimus back to Philemon, Paul shows that Christianity is not an easy escape that will allow one to avoid his past or run away from it. Rather it helps one rise above his past and make a new place for himself in the world. Freely forgiven for the guilt of his past, Onesimus dealt responsibly with the consequences of his past by returning to Philemon.

On the level of apostolic hierarchy (fig. 2, Introduction), we see the power of the gospel in the life of a runaway slave. Before meeting Paul and hearing the Good News, Onesimus had been "useless" (vs. 11). But after coming to Christ through Paul, Onesimus was transformed into a man worthy of his name's meaning—"useful."

"The last thing Christianity is designed to produce is vague inefficient people; it produces people who are of use and can do a job better than they ever could if they did not know Christ."² Thus, through Paul's ministry, Onesimus becomes profitable to Philemon, and on a much deeper level than just service—as a "beloved brother" in Christ (vs. 16).

On the level of gospel analogy (fig. 3, Introduction), we see Paul's offer to pay whatever Onesimus owed Philemon (vs. 17-19). Here is a living illustration of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, who pays in full the sinner's debt to God.

It is safe to believe that Philemon accepted Onesimus back or else Philemon would never have allowed the letter to circulate so that it could be included in Scripture. Writing to the Colossian church at large, Paul described Onesimus as a vital part of the community of believers—"a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of yourselves" (Col. 4:9, RSV).

It is likely that Onesimus gave many years of useful service to Christ following his conversion. A letter from Ignatius of Antioch to the church at Ephesus (ca. 110) identifies the bishop of Ephesus as Onesimus. Though not certain, it is very possible that this Onesimus, bishop of Ephesus, had once been Onesimus, runaway slave.³

S. D. P./D. F. M.

"He is now yours not only as a member of your household, but as a fellow-believer in the Lord."

1. F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), pp. 393-394. Used by permission.

2. William Barclay, *The Letters of Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press), p. 280.

3. Bruce, pp. 402-403.

A Runaway's Return to Freedom

TESTIMONY

Key text:
2 Corinthians
3:17

Ellen White mentions the story of Onesimus only once, and that is in *Acts of the Apostles* (pp. 456-60) where she amplifies and comments on Paul's letter to Philemon:

"Among those who gave their heart to God through the labors of Paul in Rome was Onesimus, a pagan slave who had wronged his master, Philemon, a Christian believer in Colosse, and had escaped to Rome. In the kindness of his heart, Paul sought to relieve the poverty and distress of the wretched fugitive and then endeavored to shed the light of truth into his darkened mind. Onesimus listened to the words of life, confessed his sins and was converted to the faith of Christ.

"Onesimus had endeared himself to Paul by his piety and sincerity, no less than by his tender care for the apostle's comfort, and his zeal in promoting the work of the gospel. Paul saw in him traits of character that would render him a useful helper in missionary labor, and he counseled him to return without delay to Philemon, beg his forgiveness, and plan for the future. . . . Being about to dispatch Tychicus with letters to various churches in Asia Minor, he sent Onesimus with him. It was a severe test for this servant thus to deliver himself up to the master he had wronged; but he had been truly converted, and he did not turn aside from his duty.

"Paul taught principles which struck at the very foundation of slavery and which, if carried into effect, would surely undermine the whole system."

"Paul voluntarily proposed to assume the debt of Onesimus. . . . How fitting an illustration of the love of Christ for the repentant sinner! The servant who had defrauded his master had nothing with which to make restitution. The sinner who has robbed God of years of service has no means of canceling the debt. Jesus interposes between the sinner and God, saying, I will pay the debt. Let the sinner be spared; I will suffer in his stead. . . .

"Paul's letter to Philemon shows the influence of the gospel upon the relation between master and servant. Slaveholding was an established institution throughout the Roman Empire, and both master and slaves were found in most of the churches for which Paul labored. In the cities where slaves often greatly outnumbered the free population, laws of terrible severity were regarded as necessary to keep them in subjection. A wealthy Roman often owned hundreds of slaves, of every rank, of every nation, and of every accomplishment. The slightest mistake, accident, or carelessness was often punished without mercy. . . .

"It was not the apostle's work to overturn arbitrarily or suddenly the established order of society. To attempt this would be to prevent the success of the gospel. But he taught principles which struck at the very foundation of slavery and which, if carried into effect, would surely undermine the whole system. 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,' he declared 2 Corinthians 3:17. When converted, the slave became a member of the body of Christ, and as such was to be loved and treated as a brother, a fellow heir with his master to the blessings of God and the privileges of the gospel. On the other hand, servants were to perform their duties, 'not with eyeservice, as men pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.' " (Eph. 6:6).

The New Testament: Pro-Slavery?

by Herbert M. Carson

Editor's note: The practice of slavery and the shadow which it has cast down the centuries is an issue inherent in any enlightened discussion of Onesimus' story. The following articles grapple with this issue in contrasting ways. They are presented to help you think through the issue for yourself and thus better understand how God's will for contemporary life may be discerned through Scripture.

It is . . . surprising that there is no condemnation of slavery as such in the New Testament. . . . It is not enough to say in reply that slavery was so much a part of the social fabric that to attack it would have been revolutionary doctrine, which would have called forth the opposition of the authorities. The apostles were not governed by expediency, but by truth. After all, idolatry was also part of the social cement of life in the Roman Empire, yet they attacked it unsparingly; and indeed it was this very attack which was the reason for much of the hostility which they incurred. . . .

If, then, the New Testament writers did not attack the essential element of slavery, what did they say which revolutionized the thinking of the Christian on the subject? In the first place masters were taught that they had a responsibility towards their slaves. To us this seems an obvious truth; but it was far from obvious to the Roman world. A master had no obligations whatever to a slave, who was simply a living chattel in his household. Paul insists, however, 'Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal.' So the labour of the slave is to receive an adequate and fair reward. But if this is applied, it lifts his status to that of the free man who is under contract. It means that payment is not a mere pittance to keep the slave sufficiently healthy for further work. It means rather that he is to be recompensed in accordance with the service rendered, and this clearly involves food, clothing, and the ability to maintain a family life. This kind of slavery is far removed from the wretched servitude of the unfortunate serfs in the average pagan Roman household.

Then Paul teaches slaves that they are to regard themselves as persons. When he says 'Servants, obey in all things your masters', he is really taking a completely new attitude to slaves. To exhort someone to a course of action is to treat them as responsible moral beings. But this was precisely what had not been done in the past; and the result must have been seen not only in the mind of the slaves' owner but of the slave himself. Treat a man with a brutal disregard and he will lose all self-respect. He will become a servile cringing creature. He will cease to look on himself as a man. He will become brutalized. So Paul teaches the Christian slave a new self-respect. He is not like a beast of burden compelled by force to do a job. He is a child of God, conscious of his responsibility before God, and seeing even his condition as one where he can glorify his Saviour.

The final stage is reached in Philemon. Here the master-servant relationship is not denied; but it is caught up into a new relationship which transmutes the former. Onesimus is to be received no longer as a slave but as a brother. In Christ both master and servant stand together, for they are one in Him. When Paul urges Philemon to receive Onesimus as a beloved brother he has set the slave in a position where the legal title of slave ceases to be of primary importance.

EVIDENCE

Part 1

Key text:
Ephesians 6:5-9

"Here the master-servant relationship is not denied; but it is caught up into a new relationship which transmutes the former."

Excerpted from Herbert M. Carson, *Colossians and Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960) pp. 21-24.

Herbert M. Carson is Vicar of St. Paul's Church, Cambridge, England

**April 27
Wednesday**

Paul the Hierarchist

by Kenneth Matthews

EVIDENCE

Part 2

Key text:

Titus 2:9, 10, NIV

Though often beautiful, Paul's letter to Philemon raises dark questions about his compliance with slavery. In my view he explicitly approves it in Titus 2:9-10; here he allows for it, recognizing slavery in both economic terms (he offers to reimburse Philemon's losses on his investment in Onesimus), and in legal/political terms (he admits that Onesimus owes obedience to Philemon and must return to him). He implies that Onesimus' conversion has made his legal obligation to Philemon a moral obligation also, that it has made Onesimus a better slave (vs. 11, RSV).

Our sense of justice is outraged—we instinctively feel that Onesimus' personal rights have been violated. But for anyone in Paul's time, our reaction would seem most *unnatural*. The reason is not that they were stupid and cruel while we are enlightened and humane, but that since the late 18th century, the dominant philosophical model of the universe has emphasized the supreme dignity and rights of each individual; whereas for Paul, the universe was not individualistic, but hierarchical. C. S. Lewis explains what the hierarchical universe meant to someone like Paul:

[The hierarchical conception] belongs to the ancient orthodox tradition of European ethics from Aristotle to [Samuel] Johnson. . . . According to this conception degrees of value are objectively present in the universe. Everything except God has some natural superior; everything except unformed matter has some natural inferior. The Goodness, happiness, and dignity of every being consists in obeying its natural superior and ruling its natural inferiors.¹

That Paul unquestioningly accepts this hierarchical model is clear when he claims that by virtue of his apostleship, *he* has the same superior status—and therefore, authority—over Philemon, as Philemon has over Onesimus: "In Christ I could . . . order you" (vs. 8, NIV). Given these philosophical assumptions, it simply does not occur to Paul to condemn slavery as such. For Paul, barring the odd, cruel master or truculent slave who may need reproof, slavery legitimately expresses in human terms the universal hierarchy, and thereby has its own kind of logical beauty. Onesimus simply is not Philemon's equal: Therefore, he must serve and obey.

Paul is a Classical Hierarchist; but we are Romantic Individualists, incorrigibly so, especially as Americans: our culture defines itself in such documents as The Declaration of Independence and The Bill of Rights, Lincoln's "Emancipation Proclamation," and Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience." Philosophical models, of course, are in themselves neither good nor bad: all have their beauties, all leave room for abuses. Nevertheless, the fundamental difference between our model and Paul's poses an interesting problem or two, for having (rightly) rejected slavery on these grounds suggests that we should go on to question *all* biblical social paradigms based on the hierarchical model—husband ruling wives, parents ruling children, excluding women from church governance, to name a few. Such a reexamination of ideas may seem dangerously iconoclastic, or even heretical. But then, so did the abolition of slavery to those who wanted to preserve it.

1. C. S. Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (London: Oxford University Press, 1942; rpt. 1977), pp. 73-74.

How to Relate To Paul's Worldview

Paul's letter to Philemon was not addressed to 20th-century Adventism, it was sent to a slave-owner two thousand years ago. To read the letter outside this historical context would not only misrepresent Paul, it could mislead us. In his letter to Philemon, Paul tolerated social and ecclesiastical hierarchies which we may have difficulty agreeing with 20 centuries later. We should not feel uneasy about this, just as we no longer feel compelled to kill Philistines, tear down non-Adventist churches, or offer up sacrifices every time we sin.

1. **Though Paul complied with slavery, we should not try to reestablish it.** Slavery as an institution is no longer legal, but its legacy of social inequality still is. Do we have a right to value one individual more than another? Just because a person is more useful, does that give him more value? Does being handicapped, ugly, single, non-white, or female justify second-rate status? Should we value the young more than the old, the intelligent more than the unintelligent, the rich more than the poor? Should we treat any person worse than another?

2. **Though Paul asserted his apostolic authority, we may not have that right.** As an inspired apostle, Paul told Philemon what he should do and indirectly, what he should believe. But are any of us, or even a committee of us, inspired enough to dictate the religious practices or beliefs of other human beings? Is a pastor, teacher, or church leader any closer to God or truth than the individual believer? Does a hierarchical church government give human beings more religious authority than they should rightfully have?

Though Paul may have approved of slavery and exercised spiritual authority over others, we should not condemn him just as we should not copy him. Our duty is to examine what he did in his day, and then re-interpret and re-apply that to our times.

HOW TO
Key text:
Galatians 3:28

This article was adapted for publication by the editors from a manuscript submitted to the *Collegiate Quarterly*.

April 28
Thursday

Slavery: An Abominable Act of Injustice

by Cordell A. Briggs

OPINION

Key text:
Exodus 9:1

The "modern" Christian can probably accept philosophically the idea that Paul approved of slavery. The fact that the "modern" Christian in the 1980s can openly *discuss* this topic of slavery suggests that he has taken a philosophical perspective on the most inhumane system of injustice—slavery. Indeed, the tension that arises between the "ancients" and the "moderns"—between an hierarchical order and an individualistic order—about man's view of slavery is intriguing. It raises a poignant issue—can or should the "modern" Christian impose his moral view of the universe onto the ancients to assert that principles regarding life, freedom, and personal dignity should not be structured by a "world view?" Instead, should not such principles be governed by the Holy Scriptures, which teach man about the sanctity of life, about his will to choose, and about his need for respect from his peers.

Other questions about morality should also be raised. First, is the "modern" Christian ready to accept the idea that a moral view of the universe should be defined by man rather than by God? Second, is the "modern" Christian willing to discard any philosophical model that conflicts with principles regarding life, freedom, and personal dignity taught in the Bible? Finally, is the "modern" Christian willing to believe that God permits the enslavement of some people while He delivers other from bondage?

"Some 'modern' Christians who are Seventh-day Adventists continue to enslave others."

Whether the system of slavery existed during ancient Israel's time, during the first century A.D., or during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the Americas, the "modern" Christian would probably agree that the physical or mental enslavement of a human being is an abominable act of injustice to that person's life, freedom, and personal dignity. Referring to this kind of injustice in *The Souls of Black Folk*, the early twentieth-century sociologist W. E. B. DuBois notes:

... few men ever worshipped Freedom with half such unquestioning as did the American Negro for two centuries. To him, so far as he thought and dreamed, slavery was indeed the sum of all villainies, the cause of all sorrow, the root of all prejudice; Emancipation was the key to a promised land of sweeter beauty than ever stretched before the eyes of wearied Israelites. In song and exhortation swelled one refrain—Liberty; in his tears and curses the God he implored had Freedom in his hand. At last it came—suddenly, fearfully, like a dream. With one wild carnival of blood and passion came the message in his own plaintive cadences:

Shout, O children!

Shout, you're free!

For God has bought your liberty!¹

To the "modern" Christian's disdain, the converted Onesimus was not emancipated. By accepting God, this slave gained "a hope of liberty," although he was not physically free—a freedom that would come only with death.

Even today, the vestiges of slavery remain. Some "modern" Christians who are Seventh-day Adventists continue to enslave others. They may foster a false image of superiority; they may restrict the number of different individuals who may associate within their group; they may deny different individuals the opportunity to hold positions of leadership and responsibility.

How long will slavery last? Until Jesus Christ returns?

Cordell A. Briggs is an assistant professor of English at Loma Linda University, La Sierra Campus.

1. *The Souls of Black Folk*, (New York: The New American Library, 1969), p. 47.

1. Note the models for the three ways of viewing Onesimus' story. What to you is the most significant lesson to be derived from each of the three models:
 - a) Social hierarchy
 - b) Apostolic hierarchy
 - c) Gospel analogy

 2. Is slavery a dead issue today, or does it still exist in other forms? Is it possible for the following to involve slavery?
 - Hierarchical structures (family, academia, church)
 - Mass media (advertising, propaganda, stereotypes)
 - Materialistic western culture
 - Totalitarian forms of GovernmentCordell Briggs (Opinion) suggests that forms of slavery may exist in the Adventist church today. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

 3. Though Paul did not condemn slavery, he taught principles which "struck at the very foundation of slavery" (see Testimony). Is it possible that there are prevailing opinions today which Christianity would destroy if taken to its ultimate ends, opinions not explicitly condemned by Scripture but just as erroneous as slavery?

 4. What is your reaction to Kenneth Matthews identification of Paul as a Classical Hierarchist and us as Romantic individualists?
 - a) Do you think the difference between our model and Paul's is as fundamental as Matthews suggests?
 - b) How does Paul's statement of equality in Christ (Gal. 3:28) fit into the picture?
 - c) Should we as Matthews suggests, rethink all biblical social paradigm based on the hierarchical model?
 - d) Do you think Paul's expectance of an imminent second coming (1 Thess. 4:15) had anything to do with his not attacking unjust social structures?

 5. The New Testament apparently does not mount a frontal attack of the social abuses of the first-century Greco-Roman world, like slavery. Does this mean the church today should accomodate itself to the current social situation, or should it speak out against social wrongs? In other words, should we not attempt to apply biblical principles to the society regarding issues like abortion, prayer in schools, nuclear weapons, women's rights, etc.?

 6. Philemon is one of the most personal of Paul's extant letters. What does it tell you about Paul's personality, his humanness?
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Ruth - Heroine of Experienced Redemption



"Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God" (Ruth 1:16, NIV).

Lesson 6, May 1-7

A Splendid Short Story

by Charles B. Bellah

The Book of Ruth is a supplement to the Book of Judges and an introduction to the books of Samuel. Its story of beauty and blessing is placed among battles and bloodshed. Like the glorious rainbow in the dark stormcloud, it flings its golden luster over all the dark landscape. . . .

The book is not a history; it is a biographical episode in history—the love story of the girl from Moab. It records a romance that triumphed over all racial and religious barriers. It is a story, yet a true story; and none is more beautiful in the whole range of the Old Testament. In the entire gallery of Scripture portraits, very few are more fascinating. It speaks not to the hearts of the Hebrew people alone, but to the hearts of men and women always and everywhere.

And the bewitching, captivating spell of the Book of Ruth is Ruth herself. Although she was a member of a hated and hating race, there is not found a flaw in her charming character. The story is one of the rarest and most beautiful idyls in any literature. There is no artistic elaboration in the style, nor is there any attempt at fine writing. Nothing is done to

excite the imagination or to impart more luster than it actually has. But in simple, readable language, without adornment or decoration, the reader finds himself treading hallowed ground. . . .

Rarely, if ever, has any human story more impressively demonstrated the unspeakable worth of common, lowly people. God is always interested in the private life of plain individuals. Notoriety or fame does not count for much in the eyes of God. One whole book of the Bible is thus devoted to the simple story of simple people, to the fortunes and failures of a yeoman's family in a lowly village among the hills of Judah. God touched their lives and thereby made them sublime.

The Book of Ruth leads the reader away from the crowded highways of history into secluded by-paths. There are glimpses of the domestic lives of men, women, and children of their honest work and homely talk. There are births, marriages, deaths, burials, tears, loves, memories, prayers, and pilgrimages. It is one of the old books of God and is written for ordinary men and women.

INTRODUCTION

Excerpted from
Charles G. Bellah, *Ruth
and Redemption*
(Nashville: Southern
Publishing Associ-
ation, copyright 1952 by
the Voice of Prophecy),
pp. 8-10.

May 1
Sunday

Ruth the Redeemed

LOGOS

The great OT scholar Hermann Gunkel once commented that the moral of the Book of Ruth, if one must be found, would be "Men, watch out for these women; they'll get you yet!" He was at least partially right. The Book of Ruth is a simple, yet well-crafted short story about two women who, despite adversity and their apparent powerlessness in the social structure of the time, "got" the man they sought. But there is more to it than that, for though the author does not moralize, we can see subtly woven into the story the theme of a God who but accomplishes His redemptive purposes through the everyday planning, struggling and loving of His people.

The story can be divided into four scenes.

1. Ruth's courageous decision (1:1-22)

Set in the time of the judges, the story opens with a famine in Judah which leads Elimelech of Bethlehem to move to the country of Moab with his wife and two sons. The only thing told us about the stay in Moab is the death of all three men in the family, leaving as widows Naomi, Elimelech's wife, and Ruth and Orpah, the Moabite girls who had married the two sons.

With the famine in Judah over and her husband dead, Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem. Her daughters-in-law desired to accompany her, and even started out on the journey with her. But Naomi urged them to return to Moab.

Orpah finally took the older woman's advice. Ruth, however, found that her emotional and spiritual bonds with Naomi and Naomi's way of life and belief were much greater than those with Moab. Her immortal words to Naomi reveal her to be a woman of strong affection, deep compassion and steadfast faithfulness. "Don't urge me to leave you or turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God" (Ruth 1:16, NIV).

2. Ruth in the field of Boaz (2:1-23)

Ruth's choice to stay with Naomi meant experiencing economic hardship; Naomi had complained "the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty" (1:20, NIV). So upon their return to Bethlehem, Ruth took advantage of the Deuteronomic law that allowed the poor to glean in the fields, picking up the grain left by the reapers (see Deut. 24:19). She "found herself" (2:3) working in the field of Boaz, a "man of standing" who was a relative of Naomi (2:1).

Boaz was immediately attracted to Ruth. He inquired about her, and then approached her, urging her to remain in his field. He granted her special favors—his men were not to touch her, she could drink from the reapers' water jars, he invited her to lunch with him and the servants were even instructed purposely to leave bundles behind for her to pick up (2:8-9; 13-15).

3. Ruth Becomes Engaged to Boaz (3:1-4:12)

Despite his interest in Ruth, Boaz did not take the initiative and ask her to marry him. He was older than Ruth and possibly uncertain of her feelings toward him (see 3:10). So, Naomi hatched a scheme whereby Ruth could gain a husband and the lineage of her late husband Elimelech could be continued in Israel.

The plan was to induce Boaz to exercise his rights as a kinsman-redeemer. When relative's property was in the hands of a creditor, or there was a childless widow with no prospect for seeing that her husband's name survived, the kinsman-redeemer must do all in his power to restore the situation to normal. He must buy back the property and marry the widow so that their first born son could carry on the name of the dead husband.

To encourage Boaz to fulfill these functions, Naomi gave Ruth these instructions: **"Tonight he will be winnowing the barley on the threshing floor. Wash and perfume yourself, and put on your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor. . . . When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down"** (3:2-4, NIV).

Ruth followed the instructions and when the startled Boaz found her at his feet she said, **"Spread the corner of your garment over me since you are a kinsman redeemer"** (3:9, NIV). Ruth's bold action placed both she and Boaz in a tricky situation, which called for wise and circumspect action. Boaz desired Ruth, but he was aware of a nearer relative to Naomi who could function as a kinsman-redeemer.

H. H. Rowley explains the situation: "It is clear that he was attracted by her, and flattered that she should come to him. But it is also clear that the nearer kinsman had not alone a prior duty, but prior rights. And if Boaz had responded to Ruth's approach before he were given the first refusal, he would have had grounds of complaint, and perhaps worse.

" . . . [F]or Ruth to go to the next-but-one-of-kin without first seeking the next-of-kin was to commit a serious mistake, and to infringe his rights. . . . [T]he next-of-kin must first release her or he could charge her with adultery. Presumably this was why Boaz cautioned Ruth to slip home quietly and very early in the morning and to make sure that no one knew whither she had been"² (See 3:13-14).

Boaz's next step was to approach the next-of-kin. Wisely, he brought in the picture a piece of land to which Naomi held the title. The kinsman would have to buy or redeem that property as well as marry Ruth, and he could not do this without jeopardizing his own economic interests.

" . . . He [Boaz] kept his own desire for Ruth completely in the background, and appeared primarily as the economic benefactor of Naomi. . . . [B]y bringing in the property he could place the next-of-kin in a real dilemma. And thus he maneuvered him into a renunciation of his rights and duties, and then dramatically assumed what the other had declined"³ (see 4:1-12).

4. Ruth—the ancestress of David

Through the initiative of Ruth and Naomi and the skillful diplomacy of Boaz, the story comes to a happy conclusion: **"So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. And the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son . . . And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David"** (Ruth 4:13, 17, NIV).

Ruth, the humble outsider, is thus incorporated into the process of salvation history through God's resourcefulness working in the routine affairs of life.

D. F. M./S. D. P.

1. Quoted in Ronald M. Hals, *The Theology of the Book of Ruth* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), p. 2.

2. H. H. Rowley, *The Servant of the Lord* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), pp. 188-189.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 190.

An Unlikely Hero

by Steve Daily

TESTIMONY

Key text:
Ruth 3;
4:13-17

When one examines the Ellen White index in search of references to Ruth, it is rather surprising to find only three such references listed. What is even more surprising is that when you look the passages up, you find that two of the statements are identical. That leaves only two references to consider, and both of these are only passing statements about Ruth. In both cases her name is only briefly mentioned with other names, so one gets the impression that Ellen White did not consider her a Bible character who deserved much attention.

There are two things about Ellen White's silence regarding the life of Ruth, which seem most striking. First, she writes a great deal about other characters in Scripture who have their names identified with a book in the Bible or who in some cases are even quite obscure. Secondly, it seems curious that as a female writer she would all but ignore a rather significant female personality in Scripture. One can only speculate regarding the reason Ellen White omitted discussion of Ruth.

Ruth is the hero of the book that bears her name, because she demonstrates such a tremendous, unselfish and unconditional love, which is rooted in a radical faith in God. When compared with the other heroes of the Bible she is a very unlikely hero for several reasons.

First, she was a woman living in a patriarchal society. Jewish women in the ancient world did not have the dignity of being respected on the basis of their own personhood. Rather, they were considered to be the possessions of men. Therefore, their self-worth and value in society were defined strictly in terms of the services which they provided for the male segment of their culture.

Secondly, Ruth was a Moabitess. She was a Gentile, a heathen, or as the Jews often referred to Gentiles, she was a "dog." The Moabites worshiped Chemosh as their national God along with several other local deities. Such polytheistic practices were an abomination to any devout Jew, and it is therefore quite remarkable that Ruth gained the elevated position in Jewish tradition that she did.

Thirdly, Ruth was poor. Like Naomi she was a widow who was left alone without any family or males to provide for her. Poverty was frowned upon by many Jews as a condition which reflected the disapproval of God. The widow in Israel was often left with few attractive alternatives to choose from simply in order to survive. So Ruth like Tamar before her, plays the role of sexual attractor (see Ruth 3:6-13, Genesis 38) in an unselfish effort to produce progeny in the name of her dead husband.

She is looked down upon as an outcast because of her sex, her race, her economic position, and her religious standing (she would have been considered "unclean" by orthodox Jews). But in spite of all this, she emerges as a woman of radical love and faith which rivals if not surpasses that of Abraham himself. For she went out from her people without a promise or an inheritance because she loved and believed. She is listed with Tamar, Bathsheba and Rahab in Christ's genealogy. These are women who testify to the fact that the gospel has come to break down every sexual, racial, religious, and economic barrier.

"She is looked down upon as an outcast because of her sex, her race her economic position, and her religious standing."

May 3
Tuesday

Steve Daily is campus chaplain at Loma Linda University, La Sierra Campus.

The Theology of Ruth

by Edward F. Campbell, Jr.

The Activity of God

It is correct to observe that God's activity in the Ruth book is very much that of the one in the shadows, the one whose manifestation is not by intervention but by a lightly exercised providential control. It is equally correct to say as well that God is the primary actor in the drama. His presence is signaled not only by the direct assertion of the story-teller at 1:6 and 4:13, but also by a constant stream of blessings and invocations, together with Naomi's complaint, which are spoken in his name. Of special note among these occurrences in speeches is that crucial occasion in 1:17 when for the one and only time in the book the name "Yahweh" falls from Ruth's lips—at the climax of her "return" to join the people of God. More subtly, his presence is indicated by four delightful touches of the story-teller: he is obviously, but of course not explicitly, behind the "luck" which brings Ruth to Boaz' field in 2:3; twice, his activity lies behind the emphasizing particle which introduces just the right person to the scene at just the right time (Boaz in 2:4, and the near redeemer in 4:1); finally, he hovers behind the words of Naomi at 3:18, when she advised Ruth to "sit tight" until she sees "how the matter will fall out."

The single most characteristic way in which the story-teller makes God manifest, however, is by working out a correspondence between the way God acts and the way people in the story act. Blessing, invocation, even complaint, all express ways in which God is expected to work out his will for the people who are involved in this openly human story—and in each case it is the people, living as they are to live under God's sovereignty, who proceed to work it out. Boaz describes God as the one under whose wings Ruth has come to seek refuge, but it is the wing of Boaz under which Ruth finds the resolution of her needs and the needs of the mother-in-law for whom she has taken responsibility (1:12 with 3:9). Naomi in her bitterness complains that Yahweh has brought her back "empty," implying that it is he who ought to get at rectifying the situation, but it is Boaz who will not send Ruth home to her mother-in-law "empty" (1:21 with 3:17). Naomi invokes Yahweh as the one to grant the girls to find security, but it is she who plans the way to gain security for Ruth (1:9 and 3:1). It is Yahweh who is implored to do *hesed* [covenant love or kindness] with the two girls and is blessed for not having forsaken his *hesed* (1:8 and 2:20), but it is first the two girls, and then Ruth even more so, who carry out that *hesed* (1:8 and 3:10). God is present and active in the Ruth story especially in the way in which the people behave toward one another. God it is who brings about *shalom* in the context of this town, among these people, through the caring responsibility of human beings for one another.

The Prospect of hesed-living

The Ruth story does not represent the style of life which exercises caring responsibility as a foregone conclusion for God's people. It is portrayed as attainable, but elusive. Two particular motifs indicate the difficulties involved. The first is the way in which Orpah and the near redeemer behave. It can be said of Orpah that she like Ruth has

EVIDENCE

Key text:
Zechariah
8:16-17

"God it is who brings about *shalom* in the context of this town, among these people, through the caring responsibility of human beings for one another."

☐ May 4
Wednesday

exercised *hesed* in her life with her mother-in-law after the death of all the men of the family in Moab. If the story-teller means this, he has thereby heightened the remarkable character of Ruth, who will be praised by Boaz for two acts of *hesed* at 3:10. The near redeemer is a foil for Boaz in somewhat the same way. There are, then, people who do not do all that ought to be done to bring about needed relief in the very mundane matter of caring for widows and keeping alive one of the families of the town.

The second motif which points up the difficulty is the subject of the mysterious scene at the threshing floor. With intricate artistry, the story-teller gets across that the outcome is by no means predictable. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that temptation is a distinct ingredient here, temptation combined with risk. We cannot be sure that things would have been substantially altered had Boaz had intercourse with Ruth there and the act been discovered. But the point seems to be that under very compromising circumstances these two proceeded to carry forward the story's almost burdensome determination that things will be done in the proper manner.

The impact is that living out a righteous and responsible life is a matter of determination to do so. The story-teller, not by being preachy but by portraying people living so, commends for his audience one of several available choices. Combined with this is a particular way of looking at the matter of reward. In a sense it can be said that such living is rewarded, but it must also be said that such reward lies with the God who first himself "rewards" his people with his presence as their God. Before one concludes that Ruth is mechanically rewarded for her faithfulness to her mother-in-law and for her sense of responsibility, one wants to recall that there has been an inexplicable famine which set this story in motion, and there has been an inexplicable series of calamities which complicated the situation severely. Furthermore, there has been an amelioration of the famine in Judah, which sets the stage for the return of Naomi and Ruth. And there is the undercurrent of complaint. . . . There is no mechanical doctrine of reward and punishment here; there is instead the commendation of a style of living which can be blessed by the God who would have it so among his people.

"Under very compromising circumstances these two proceeded to carry forward the . . . determination that things will be done in the proper manner."

God's Ways in Ruth

Though there is little explicit teaching in the book of Ruth, the story has much to say about how God relates to people.

1. God's ways are sometimes subtle.

In Ruth, God works largely behind the scenes. He is involved in everyday, routine events in ways that aren't immediately apparent. Ronald M. Hals argues that this "hiddenness" of God's activity is in fact one of the major theological points of Ruth: "The reason for the book's deliberate subtlety lies in its aim to stress one particular aspect of God's providence, namely its hiddenness. The author hides God's action during the entire body of the story, simply because he feels it is by nature hidden. The Book of Ruth is then a story about a hidden God.

". . . Apart from his sly hints and subtle anticipations, which would have to be classified as indirect at most, the author refrains from giving any kind of interpretive orientation to his tale until its very end. . . . Only with the mention of David in the story's last verse is the interpretive framework suddenly and fully provided. At once it becomes clear that this has all been *Heilsgeschichte* [salvation-history]!"¹

In other words, not until the conclusion of the story is it revealed that God has been working through the struggles and affections of the characters to establish the lineage of David and his messianic descendant, Jesus Christ. So, today, if we are not experiencing the dramatic or spectacular, we need not conclude that God is not active in our lives. Ruth informs us that those who are in a relationship of trust and fidelity with God can be confident that He is guiding them in hidden, subtle ways.

2. God's ways are sometimes surprising.

God sometimes defies conventional wisdom in accomplishing His purposes. Who would have predicted His choice of a heathen Moabitess as a great-grandmother of King David?

It is also significant that Ruth is one of only four women included by Matthew in the genealogy of Jesus (Matt. 1:1-17). The others were Tamar, who skillfully maneuvered Judah into impregnating her with Perez (See Gen. 38), Rahab, the prostitute of Jericho, and Bathsheba, who complied with David in adultery and became his wife only after David had her first husband murdered. Why Matthew should single out these four is uncertain, but it does seem clear from this genealogy, and the entire book of Ruth, that God's redemptive purposes are sometimes accomplished through unexpected means.

3. God's ways sometimes are worked out through our mistakes.

It was probably a mistake for Elimelech to move his family to Moab. And, if scholars such as Hals and Rowley are correct, Naomi and Ruth were at least injudicious in their scheme to secure Boaz as Ruth's husband. But God, in His inexhaustible resourcefulness, weaved these very mistakes into the fabric of His overall plan.

The repentant sinner, though acutely aware that his misdeeds inevitably cause hurt and suffering, can rejoice in the conviction that "in all things God works for the good of those who love him" (Rom. 8:28, NIV, emphasis supplied). D. F. M.

HOW TO

Key text:
Romans 8:28

Women In A Man's World

by Steve Daily

OPINION

Key text:
Ruth 4:7-12

It was extremely important in Hebrew culture that a man's bloodline not die out. For this reason the law of levirate marriage (Deut. 25:5ff) provided that if a married man died childless his next of kin was obligated to marry his widow so that children from their union would qualify to receive the dead husband's inheritance. If this sounds complicated, it only illustrates the lengths to which the Jews went to preserve a patriarchal system which flagrantly discriminated against women.

The whole Book of Ruth illustrates how highly the Jews regarded the law of levirate, while at the same time saying something very important about the nature of male-female relationships today, in 1983. To encapsulate the story, Naomi is a Hebrew woman who moves to a foreign country with her husband and two sons who marry wives from there. After the husbands of all three women die without children, Naomi returns to her homeland and Ruth unselfishly follows. Life is very difficult for them but finally Ruth manages to meet, attract, and marry a Hebrew kinsman ensuring the bloodline of her dead husband which eventually produces King David and Christ.

The irony of the story is that while each action and event takes place in the context of preserving male offspring, the heroes of the story are all women who demonstrate a remarkable amount of courage, cogency, and creativity to accomplish a male end. Until the husbands die, the story is told by a narrator, and the characters are described in third person. But at the point where women take over in the story (Ruth 1:8) narration yields to dialogue and the women are allowed to speak for themselves. Those who have been considered non-persons, are now given personhood. These women are no longer just wives or daughters, but they are given specific names in spite of the fact that culturally they have been stripped of all identity because they are widows without children (specifically male children). Though dead in the eyes of their society, they have come alive as human beings in their relationships to each other and by the fact that they must now provide for themselves in a world that is unfair and hostile to women.

As Naomi suffers with feelings of inferiority and worthlessness because she "has no more sons in her womb" (Ruth 1:11), she discourages her daughters-in-law from wasting their lives by following after her. But Ruth is unwilling to define personhood in terms of the superficial cultural mores which the society of her day valued so highly. Instead, she affirms her unconditional love for Naomi as an individual human being who has value simply because she is a person. Her self worth is not defined in terms of any kind of external standard, especially those which were naturally imposed on women in such a male-dominated society, but rather she experiences the realization of personhood in the context of her *relationship* with Ruth.

When Boaz is introduced to Ruth, he asks the typical patriarchal question, "Whose maiden is this" (2:5). He does not ask her name but the identity of her owner. In the eyes of men she is still a possession not a person. But in the eyes of God she and Naomi have both discovered their personhood, and though outwardly they preserve the bloodline, inwardly they will never be the possessions of men again.

"Ruth is unwilling to define personhood in terms of the superficial cultural mores which the society of her day valued so highly."

May 8
Friday

Steve Daily is campus chaplain at Loma Linda University, La Sierra Campus.

1. What traits do you find most admirable about Ruth? Discuss the incidents in her life that reveal those traits.
2. The Evidence author says that God is the primary actor in the drama of Ruth. Do you agree? If so, in what ways is God made manifest in the story? What does the story tell us about His character?
3. If God works in hidden ways, as the How To article asserts, what evidence can we point to that shows He is in fact working in our lives? Is it possible to distinguish clearly and objectively between happenstance and God's guidance? Explain.
4. What do you think is the significance of Matthew's listing of Ruth with Tamar, Rahab, and Bathsheba in the genealogy of Christ? Why did he single out these four? What, if anything, does Ruth have in common with the other three?
5. Do you, like the Opinion author, see in Ruth implied affirmations of the personhood of women which contradicted the traditional concepts of Hebrew culture? Explain why or why not? To what extent do the concepts and practices of male domination linger in the church today? What, if anything, should be done to overcome them?

Barnabas - Apostle of Encouragement



"Joseph, . . . whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet" (Acts 7:36, 37, NIV).

Lesson 7, May 8-14

You say you are a Christian, I agree,
For when others cursed my name
And condemned me in my shame
You saw the good in me.

You made forgiveness real
By giving me another chance,
When others who professed His name would glance
And shake their heads in Pharisaic zeal.

Your God is practical, not abstract,
For when you saw the poor with nothing to eat,
You laid your wealth at the disciples feet,
And gave them more than a prayer or a tract.

You have a faith that will not tolerate
The boastful and exclusive view,
That God is the possession of the chosen few
Who claim to hold the key to heaven's gate.

Your religion thrives on servitude,
Taking the shadow though chosen first
You bowed to Paul for better or for worse
And never let it change your cheerful mood.

When you say you are a Christian, I believe,
For you care about the weak and the oppressed,
Because of you the underdog is blessed,
And the burdens of the friendless, you relieve.

This week we meet a very special man named Barnabas. The name Barnabas means, "Son of encouragement" (Acts 4:36). No name could be more fitting for this humble hero who took it upon himself to become the friend of all who were discouraged, depressed or dispossessed. He shared his wealth with the needy. He saw great potential in Paul and Mark when others had rejected them. He was later willing to give up the spotlight

of leadership to Paul, and step into the shadow as a supporter, without damaging his ego or becoming jealous. He played a significant role in breaking down the barriers between Jew and Gentile, which had been erected by Jewish exclusiveness. He is a man who deserves much more attention that we usually give him, for like another ancient Jew, "though he was rich, for the sake of others he became poor."

Profile of an Early Christian Leader

by James Hayward, Jr.

LOGOS

As a New Testament personality, Barnabas is not a center-stage figure. Most references to him relate to experiences he shared with his companion, the apostle Paul. Of the duo, Paul was the more prominent individual, the spokesman (Acts 14:12) and the writer of epistles.

But there can be no doubt that Barnabas himself made important contributions to the fledgling Christian community. Acts 11:22 reports that "he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith" (NEB). Before associating with Paul he demonstrated his commitment and generosity by presenting the proceeds from a personal real estate sale to the apostles (Acts 4:36, 37). Significantly, it was Barnabas who took the initiative to search out Paul (Acts 11:25), thus commencing a long and productive relationship.

Barnabas was an aggressive witness to the Good News and an encouragement to believers. "When he . . . saw the divine grace at work [in Antioch], he rejoiced, and encouraged them all to hold fast to the Lord with resolute hearts" (Acts 11:23, NEB). "For some time Paul and Barnabas stayed on [at Iconium] and spoke boldly and openly in reliance on the Lord" (Acts 14:3, NEB). "[The Jerusalem church council] listened to Barnabas and Paul as they told of all signs and miracles that God has worked among the Gentiles through them" (Acts 15:12, NEB).

As Barnabas, Paul, and countless Christians since have discovered, spreading the Good News can precipitate unexpected and often unsettling situations. For example, in Lystra Paul had healed a faith-filled cripple. In ecstatic wonder the polytheistic town folk presumed the preachers to be gods come down to earth addressing Paul as Mercury and Barnabas as Jupiter. Some even suggested that sacrifices be offered to them. But despite their divine treatment the apostles adamantly proclaimed their total humanness to the disappointed people (Acts 14:12-14).

The close relationship between Barnabas and Paul was not without its problems. Once a question arose as to whether Jewish Christians should associate with uncircumcised Gentile believers. Cephas (or Peter) had customarily eaten with the Gentile converts. "But after certain friends of James arrived he stopped doing this and kept away from them altogether for fear of the group that insisted on circumcision" (Gal. 2:12, 13, Jerusalem Bible). Other Jews, including Barnabas, joined Cephas in this pretense. This presumably created strains in the relationship between Barnabas and the more radical Paul, who years later remarked that "even Barnabas . . . played false like the rest" (Gal. 2:13, NEB).

But the sharpest conflict between the two apostles developed over John Mark, cousin of Barnabas. John Mark had deserted his companions on a previous missionary journey. So when plans for another trip developed, Paul had no intention of including John Mark. However, Barnabas felt his cousin deserved a second chance. "After a violent quarrel they parted company . . ." (Acts 15:39, Jerusalem Bible).

The Paul and Barnabas evangelistic team thus came to an abrupt and not too happy end. But the falling out failed to dampen the missionary zeal of either individual. "Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed for Cyprus, while Paul chose Silas . . . and travelled through Syria and Cilicia bringing new strength to the congregations" (Acts 15:40, 41, NEB).

A Man Who Thought the Best

by Steve Daily

The most effective way to self-destruct in life is constantly to dwell on the negative. It is something we are all naturally inclined to do as sinful human beings. It is so much easier to see the faults and shortcomings in others than it is to look for their good qualities and affirm the positive. Unfortunately, even the waters of baptism do not cure the temptation to "speak evil of one's brother". From my own pastoral experience, I know of no greater problem in the Christian church than the division and hard feelings which result from negative gossip, back-biting and criticism expressed by church members.

Here again, the life of Barnabas offers us a shining example of what practical Christianity is all about. Barnabas not only looked for the good in others, but he found the good when all others were focusing on the obviously negative qualities in certain individuals. The following paragraphs, written by Ellen White, describe two such encounters in the life of Barnabas which deserve our consideration.

"Barnabas, who had liberally contributed of his means to sustain the cause of Christ and to relieve the necessities of the poor, had been acquainted with Paul when he opposed the believers. He now came forward and renewed that acquaintance, heard the testimony of Paul in regard to his miraculous conversion, and his experience from that time. He fully believed and received Paul, took him by the hand, and led him into the presence of the apostles."¹

"There was a sharp contention between Paul and Barnabas concerning Mark, who was still anxious to devote himself to the work of the ministry. Paul could not excuse in any degree the weakness of Mark . . . and urged that one with so little stamina was unfit for the gospel ministry . . . Barnabas, on the other hand, was inclined to excuse Mark, who was his nephew, because of his inexperience. He felt anxious that he should not abandon the ministry, for he saw in him qualifications for a useful laborer in the cause of Christ."²

In both of these cases Barnabas stood in the face of popular opinion to affirm the good in individuals who were disliked and distrusted. Had he not taken these stands, it is possible that we never would have heard of Paul or Mark. Paul was known only as a persecutor and murderer of Christians when Barnabas chose to embrace him with his trust. And Mark had proven himself a coward and quitter when Barnabas elected to oppose his closest friend Paul, who was much more intolerant, in order to give Mark the second chance he so desperately needed. In both cases Barnabas was right. His risks paid off by producing two of the greatest witnesses in the history of the early Christian Church.

We all need Barnabases at times in our lives. People who will encourage us and support us even during the most difficult times. Make a list of the people you can think of in your life who have been Barnabases to you. How many do you count? Now list the people that you have been a Barnabas to. Which number is greater?

TESTIMONY

Key text:
1 Thessalonians
5:19

"Barnabas stood in the face of popular opinion to affirm the good in individuals who were disliked and distrusted."

1. *Sketches from the Life of Paul*, p. 36
2. *Ibid.*, 48

Steve Daily is campus Chaplain at Loma Linda University, La Sierra Campus.

May 10
Tuesday

He Delighted in Service

By William Barclay

EVIDENCE

Key text:
Acts 4:32-37

The early church was a society in which people knew the joy of sharing things. No man who had enough could bear to see someone else having too little and so they pooled all they had and shared it with each other. Barnabas, we are told, was a Levite. That in itself is suggestive. The Levites' work was in the Temple, but it was work which was seldom seen. It was the priests who occupied the limelight. It was the priests who carried out the great sacrifices which everyone could see and admire. The duty of the Levites was to sweep the floors, to open and shut the doors, to act as temple police, to do all the menial jobs in the holy place. But they were proud to do it because they were doing it for God.

In the Roman Empire the greatest honour that a city could have was to house the temple where Caesar was worshipped as a God. The title that such cities received was the Greek word *Neokoros*, which means *temple-sweeper*. They felt it an honour to be the temple-sweeper of the sacred shrine of Caesar. That is what the Levites felt about their work for God, and Barnabas was a Levite. He was from the beginning a man whose one delight was to serve. Now Barnabas was a wealthy man who had a large estate. But he looked around upon his needy fellow human beings and saw many of them who were slaves, many of them who were poor, many of them who were hungry. Thereupon the kindly Barnabas made a decision, He sold his land and took the money and laid it at the disciples' feet and told them to use it to help others who never had enough.

We must all think what we are going to do with our possessions. Are we going to keep them all to ourselves? Are we going to live life only to see how much we can get out of it? Are we going to live on the principle that it does not matter what happens to others so long as we are comfortable and at ease? To be honest, that is what most people do. Or are we going to say, whatever I have, God gave it to me not to keep, but to share? Are we going to think more of what others have not than of what we have? That is what Barnabas did, and that is what Jesus did. If we are to be like Barnabas and Jesus, to give and not to get will be our motto.

“Are we going to live on the principle that it does not matter what happens to others so long as long as we are comfortable and at ease?”

Excerpted from William Barclay, *God's Young Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), pp. 89-90.

May 11
Wednesday

William Barclay was an author, theologian, and Professor of Biblical Criticism at Glasgow University until his death.

He Played the Second Fiddle Well

by Steve Daily

The average college freshman who has taken an introductory course in psychology can probably quote to you Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of basic human needs: 1) physiological, 2) safety, 3) love and belonging, 4) self-esteem, and 5) self-actualization. Today, there is a tremendous emphasis in America on self-assertion, self-realization, self-actualization. Self-oriented programs and books abound which promise to bring greater happiness and fulfillment to those who take them seriously. Everyone seems to be concerned so much about meeting their own individual needs, that we have become the most narcissistic or self-centered culture in the world.

There is a basic problem with these so-called philosophies of self. Jesus identified that problem by saying that you cannot find yourself by seeking for self (see Mark 8:35). Jesus, in fact, spoke of a basic human need that Maslow never listed in his hierarchy. It is the need which, if met, will bring the greatest rewards and fulfillment in life. This need is the need to love others with an unconditional love. He who loses his life, in total commitment to loving God through humanity, will find it.

The life of Barnabas offers us a beautiful picture of unselfish love. As we have already noted in our study this week, Barnabas demonstrated an unconditional love for the poor, the needy, and the oppressed by selling his own land and giving the money to meet their needs. He demonstrated an unconditional love for the underdog by sticking up for Paul and Mark when no one else wanted to trust them or believe in them. And finally, in Acts 13, Barnabas demonstrates a third kind of unselfish love.

In this chapter it is clear that at the beginning of his ministry, Barnabas is the one in charge. His name comes first, it is Barnabas and Paul (Acts 13:2), not the other way around. He in fact had chosen Paul to be his companion. But by the time they have completed their work together in Cyprus, it is no longer Barnabas and Paul, but Paul and his company (Acts 13:13). Paul is now in the lead and Barnabas is not mentioned. There is nothing more difficult than to accept the role of playing second fiddle once you have been number one. Yet Barnabas does not offer a word of criticism or complaint. Rather, he supports Paul and loves Paul as his closest friend. Here is a man who knows what practical Christianity is all about, for he had discovered the secret of unconditional love.

But the practical question that we need to consider is, how will we find this secret? How will we become more loving, giving, unselfish human beings? We have already acknowledged the fact that there is no natural impulse in man which leads him to this discovery. By nature we hate our fellow men and women. But when we become self-condemned by the cross of Christ we will respond to Him through other human beings. If we do not see God in the fellow human beings that we encounter every day in our lives we will not find him at all. As Christians, the most practical concept that we can grasp is that our love for God is revealed precisely in the way we treat each other.

HOW TO

Key text:
Phillipians 2:1-4

Steve Daily is campus chaplain at Loma Linda University, La Sierra Campus.

☐ May 12
Thursday

He Rejected the Shut Door

by Steve Daily

OPINION

Key text:
Acts 10:34, 35

The first Christians were Jewish Christians who had a rather limited concept of salvation and God's universal love. The Jews believed that they alone were God's special chosen people, and that all Gentiles were unclean unless they became proselytes or converts to Judaism. This attitude carried over into the early Christian church and caused some rather significant problems.

According to Acts 10, Peter was the first Jewish Christian to challenge the validity of this "shut door" attitude towards the Gentiles, and he did so only because of a direct vision from God. But it was in Antioch, the third greatest city in the world at that time, that Christians as a group began to proclaim the gospel message in an unlimited way to Gentiles as well as Jews. When the church in Jerusalem got wind of this departure from church policy and tradition they decided to send a representative to investigate the situation.

It is here that the church in Jerusalem made a very wise choice. They decided to send Barnabas (Acts 11:19-29) to check out the unorthodox practices which they had heard about in Antioch so that he could return with a full report of the situation. When Barnabas arrived in Antioch and saw how the former religious and racial barriers which had been maintained by the church had now been broken down, he did not hesitate for a moment but immediately rejoiced with his fellow believers and praised the Lord for this broader understanding of salvation and God's universal love. Barnabas didn't waste any time. He rejected the old closed door view of salvation and advocated the new "open door" policy towards the Gentiles which would eventually gain full acceptance in the Christian church, although some would strongly oppose it.

"Like the early Christian church had done, Adventists gained a new and broader understanding of salvation and God's love."

In early Adventist history there was also a problem with a "shut door" view of salvation that plagued and hindered the community for several years. From 1844 to at least 1850, nearly all of our early pioneers including Ellen White believed that probation had closed and the door of salvation had been shut on October 22, 1844. Such a view led to a very exclusivistic form of religion which prevented the community from becoming actively involved in evangelism, meeting the social needs of the world, and initiating a program of world mission.

Fortunately, Ellen White and the other pioneers recognized that they had misinterpreted the will of God, and rejected the shut door mentality in the early 1850's. Like the early Christian church had done, Adventists gained a new and broader understanding of salvation and God's love. As the church became less exclusive in its understanding of Christianity, it began to realize tremendous growth.

In life, as well as in the church, we find these same two kinds of people, mentalities and attitudes. There are those who shut doors and those who open them. There are people who are quite content with their own little clique, club, organization, or group of friends, and who make it a point to never welcome outsiders or strangers. Then there are others who have open hearts and open arms which make inclusive circles rather than exclusive circles. What sort of circles are we making?

May 13
Friday

Steve Daily is campus chaplain at Loma Linda university, La Sierra Campus.

1. Was Barnabas being naive when he sold his land and laid the money at the disciples' feet? Would you do the same today, especially in the light of the church's recent problems with financial investments?
 2. The early church pooled its resources and gave to each according to his need. Does this mean that God prefers a socialistic structure to capitalism? If not, what does it mean and what are the implications for us today?
 3. The unselfish love which Barnabas exemplified contrasts quite obviously with the self-centered emphasis in our culture today. What can Adventist college students as a group do to combat the selfishness of this generation? Do you have any practical suggestions?
 4. a) Have we as Adventists rejected the "Shut Door" mentality as thoroughly as Barnabas did? Or are we still attempting to outgrow the problem of exclusiveness in the church today?
b) Is it possible to define the term "Remnant" in an inclusive rather than an exclusive sense (See Opinion)? Explain why or why not.
 5. Barnabas' trait of standing up for the unliked and untrusted was vital to the success of the early church (see Testimony). Discuss specific situations in which the gospel may call us to take the side of the unpopular or distrusted, whether it be in the setting of school, church, or society in general. What might be the positive consequences for taking such stands today?
 6. Barnabas risked his life for the sake of Jesus Christ (Acts 15:25-26). Does this level of courage and commitment hold meaning in a time and place where Christianity is not being persecuted? Explain why or why not.
-

Abigail - Woman of Understanding

"David said to Abigail, 'Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me. May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day' "
(1 Samuel 25:32, 33, NIV).



cup her own '92 ©

Twentieth-Century Abigail?

by Carla Freeman

Maria heard someone whispering her name as she went about closing the largest drugstore in the toughest section of New York City. She spun around and met the scared eyes of Benji, the head clerk. He glanced warily over his shoulder as he went on whispering, "Maria, we are in trouble! Your husband, Antonio, insulted Bronte, the most powerful gang leader in the whole area. I can hardly believe he did it, because he knows that Bronte's gang has totally protected us from robbery for the past three years."

Maria could see out of the corner of her eye that Antonio was smiling as he slouched over his pot belly while sitting at his desk tallying the day's profits. She quickly stepped into the storeroom and motioned for Benji to follow. "Now tell me exactly what happened," she demanded. Benji's whole body trembled as he blurted out what he knew. He told her about the violent gang war that had erupted the night before and how many of Bronte's guys had been cut and wounded severely. Bronte had sent some of his gang to ask Antonio for some first aid supplies but Antonio had refused to help.

Even as Benji spoke Maria's face saddened as she thought of the pain that such a rebuke must have brought to Bronte. She remembered the peace of the last three years since his gang had moved to their part of the City. Bronte was different as a gang leader—in fact he had provided more protection to the local businesses than the whole police force. Benji in-

terrupted her thinking as he continued, "The worse part is that Bronte and 15 members of his gang had taken a blood oath that the rest of the gang will kill them if they do not kill all your family and employees."

Maria lost no time! She moved rapidly with a smoothness and grace that matched her remarkable beauty. She gave Benji instructions to bring the panel truck to the back door and to bring two stock boys. When the truck was loaded she took the wheel as Benji and the stock boys hopped in the back. She drove directly to the gang's headquarters and instructed her helpers to wait.

Even careful planning could not have prepared her for the spectacle that met her when she stepped quietly into the fourth floor hideout. Here were sixty young men and boys in the middle of sharpening knives and placing silencers on rifles. Bronte, himself, had just stood up in the middle of the room—his body looking lumpy from all the concealed weapons—and he was shouting, "It's been useless—all my watching over this fellow's property. I want you to promise me that you will kill me if I do not personally kill Antonio and his family."

Maria moved forward and in quietness said, "Bronte, I'll take the blame for all of this. I was not there at the time of the request, but I am willing to be responsible. Even now God is using me to stop you from acting foolishly. . . ."

Would we say she was crazy?

INTRODUCTION

At the time of this writing, Carla Freeman was Lead Teacher at Loma Linda University's Learning Advancement Program.

May 15
Sunday

Conciliation For a Crisis

by Paul Hood

LOGOS

Nabal and Abigail seem a strange match indeed. Imagine a woman of such beauty, tact and intelligence (who could ask for more?) married to a lout like that!

David could easily have exacted payment for the protection his presence afforded while Nabal's flock grazed near David's camp. A few shepherds with slings and staves would hardly argue with the six hundred swords in David's band. But, assuming an ordinary measure of gratitude and common courtesy on the part of Nabal, David politely asks for a gift instead (see 1 Sam. 25:6-8).

Nabal's rude reply (vs. 10-11) shows that he lacks not only these qualities, but common sense as well. His churlish behavior puts his entire household in jeopardy. Abigail, on the other hand, demonstrates an admirable talent for dealing with sticky situations. She knows how to speak diplomatically. And she knows when swift action is called for. Fortunately, Nabal's shepherds know the score and one approaches Abigail with this warning: "David sent messengers from the wilderness to ask our master politely for a present, and he flew out at them. . . . Think carefully what you had better do, for it is certain ruin for our master and his whole family. He is such a good-for-nothing that it is no good talking to him" (1 Sam. 25:14, 17, NEB).

Abigail wasted no time in indecision; and it was a good thing because when David's men returned with Nabal's reply, his response was "buckle up your swords, all of you." So they buckled on their swords and followed David, four hundred of them, while two hundred stayed behind with the baggage" (vs. 13, NEB).

Meanwhile "Abigail hastily collected two hundred loaves and two skins of wine, five sheep ready dressed, five measures of parched grain, a hundred bunches of raisins, and two hundred cakes of dried figs, and loaded them on asses" (Vs. 18-19, NEB).

Without telling her husband, she rode out to intercept David and when she saw him "she dismounted in haste and prostrated herself before him, bowing low to the ground at his feet" (vs. 23, NEB). This was no time to stand on her dignity! And her words to David were like oil on troubled water. "Let me take the blame, my lord. . . . [T]ake [no] notice of this good-for-nothing. . . . [T]he Lord has restrained you from bloodshed. . . . Here is the present which I, your humble servant, have brought; give it to the young men under your command. . . . [T]here will be no reason why you should stumble. . . . because you have shed innocent blood. . . ." (vs. 23-31, NEB). The whole appeal is beautifully done and David relents.

Having averted certain disaster, what does Abigail find when she returns home? Is Nabal preparing the defense against the attack he should have known would come? "She found Nabal holding a banquet. . . . so drunk that his wife said nothing to him, trivial or serious until day-break" (vs. 36, NEB). Nabal obviously didn't deserve what he had, and in a few days "the Lord struck him again and he died. . . . So Abigail made her preparations with all speed and, with her five maids in attendance, accompanied by David's messengers, rode away. . . . and she became David's wife" (vs. 42, NEB).

Leave a Track of Light

by Rick Williams

David was deeply moved by the demeanor, countenance and words of Abigail. As Ellen White describes it, "These words could have come only from the lips of one who had partaken of the wisdom from above. The piety of Abigail like the fragrance of a flower, breathed out all unconsciously in face and word and action. The Spirit of the Son of God was abiding in her soul. Her speech, seasoned with grace, and full of kindness and peace, shed a heavenly influence. Better impulses came to David, and he trembled as he thought what might have been the consequences of his rash purpose. 'Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God' Matthew 5:9. Would that there were many more like this woman of Israel, who would soothe the irritated feelings, prevent rash impulses, and quell great evils by words of calm and well-directed wisdom.

"A consecrated Christian life is ever shedding light and comfort and peace. It is characterized by purity, tact, simplicity, and usefulness. It is controlled by the unselfish love that sanctifies the influence. It is full of Christ, and leaves a track of light wherever its possessor may go. Abigail was a wise reprover and counselor. David's passion died away under the power of her influence and reasoning. He was convinced that he had taken an unwise course and lost control of his own spirit."¹

For many of us there is significant risk involved in stepping in to someone else's life for the purpose of helping them to improve their thinking and behavior. Ellen White indicates that the motive of one's own heart must be that of love if this is to be successful. "It is a very delicate thing to deal with human minds. You may stand up stiffly, and never, never, soften their hearts; or you may come close to the afflicted soul and with a heart full of love lead him away from the enemy's battleground, not drive him there and leave him there to become the sport of Satan's temptations."²

"We may never know until the judgment the influence of a kind considerate course of action to the inconsistent, the unreasonable, and the unworthy. If after a course of provocation and injustice on their part, you treat them as you would an innocent person, you even take pains to show them special acts of kindness, then you have acted the part of a Christian; and they become surprised and ashamed, and see their course of action and meanness more clearly than if you plainly stated their aggravated acts to rebuke them."³

TESTIMONY

Key text:
Proverbs
17:17, 27

"Would that there were many more like this woman of Israel, who would soothe the irritated feelings, prevent rash impulses, and quell great evils by words of calm and well-directed wisdom."

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 667.
2. Letter 102, 1897. (*Mind, Character, and Personality*, 1977, p. 435).
3. Letter 20, 1892. (*Medical Ministry*, p. 209, 210, or *Mind, Character, and Personality*, 1977, p. 432).

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May 17
Tuesday

To Risk Takes Meaning

by Linda Hoey

EVIDENCE

Key text:
Romans 8:28

“Given an ultimate security in God’s eternal love . . . a man can forget his own welfare and for the first time look at his neighbor free from the gnawings of self-concern.”

Abigail’s ability to create her fascinating relationship with David is predicated on two components—actual interpersonal skills and a willingness to risk using them. In *Shantung Compound*, a book describing his experience in a Japanese prison camp during World War II, Langdon Gilkey discusses the spiritual meaning foundational to taking the risks that build relationships.

“The ultimate concern of each man must raise him above his struggles with his neighbor instead of making these conflicts more bitter and intense. Given an ultimate security in God’s eternal love, and an ultimate meaning to his own small life in God’s eternal purposes, a man can forget his own welfare and for the first time look at his neighbor free from the gnawings of self-concern.

“From this we can perhaps now see what the man of real faith is like. He is the man whose center of security and meaning lies not in his own life but in the power and love of God, a man who has surrendered an overriding concern for himself, so that the only really significant things in this life are the will of God and his neighbor’s welfare. Such faith is intimately related to love, for faith is an inward self-surrender, a loss of self-centeredness and concern which transforms a man and frees him to love.”¹

“The question of the ultimate meaning of life, and so of its historical context, is always posed when the mortality of human schemes of order is revealed, and when as a consequence the normal meanings of daily life are threatened or destroyed . . . it follows that to live with courage, serenity, and real love of life in the midst of such uncertainty is a difficult task.”²

“Our particular jobs of salesman, professor, or senator may prove useless in a camp or even in the next historical moment. But our neighbor is always with us, in the city, in the country, or in the camp. If the meaning of life on its deepest level is the service of God—which in turn means the service of the neighbor’s needs and fellowship with him—then this is a task that carries over into any new situation. The creation and preservation of life so that it may be enjoyed by all, the development of community in the direction of justice, the satisfaction of the needs of all our fellows through some practical work well done, and finally the creation of fellowship with others—these fundamental tasks, communal expressions in each case of the love of one’s neighbor, are present in any historical situation. In each circumstance they call for courage, integrity, self-sacrifice, energy, and intelligence: and on them depends the life of civilization.

“On these two bases, therefore—the universal lordship of God and the universal presence of the neighbor with whom we can establish community—a significant vocation or task with religious roots cannot be removed by the ups and downs of historical fortune. On these terms, it is possible to be realistic without fear about our own mortality and that of the things we love, and to affirm without fanaticism our life and its values. Such deep-seated security about our own fate in God, plus a forthright allegiance to what we value and support in the world, will be increasingly necessary for our culture in the years ahead.”³

1. From *Shantung Compound* by Langdon Gilkey, p. 234, copyright © 1966 by Langdon Gilkey. Reprinted with permission from Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 238
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 241-242.

The Joy of Lex

by Rick Williams

For a recent birthday my sister gave me a book entitled *The Joy of Lex*,¹ a masterful compilation of serious and humorous ways in which we enjoy using words. In developing interpersonal skills we are most conscious of the joy and sorrow that our words can bring to relationships. The first of the following five points on "how to" develop positive relationships is not, however, specifically related to words.

1. **Develop positive non-verbal communication.** Go to any party or meeting in which you have an opportunity to mingle and talk with others and you will know within five minutes whether a person likes you or not—regardless of whether or not they have verbally indicated that they do. We are masters at hearing what a person is telling us by the manner in which they talk (para-language) and by the movements and positioning of their body while they are talking (kinesics). Very few of us are proficient in lying non-verbally. Consequently, the extreme importance of developing a positive attitude toward all of God's people is critical to the genuine communication for which we all strive.

2. **Recognize the equality of all people.** Related to item number one is the necessity of recognizing that every person with whom I talk is of equal value to myself. If I do not believe this I will begin to structure my conversation with criticisms and condescensions that will seriously inhibit the development of a meaningful relationship.

3. **Incorporate the seven facilitative characteristics of a helping relationship.** As elaborated on by Gerard Egan, these include important interpersonal skills such as empathy, respect, genuineness, concreteness, confrontation, self-disclosure, and immediacy.² It is well worth our time to evaluate our current communication and see the degree to which we use these concrete skills that build relationships.

4. **Make "I" statements.** An "I" statement is a statement about the way I *feel* and it usually contains an element that indicates how another person's behavior has contributed to those feelings. I always have the right to feel even though my feeling may not be a good one. By stating how I feel and why, i.e. "I am scared because it is hard for me to be home alone," I allow other people to take responsibility for their own actions but at the same time I give them information so that they could change their action if they wished to help me out. "I" statements replace "You should" and "You are" statements and significantly improve everyone's ability to perceive themselves as equals and important.

5. **Be willing to confront.** Many of us do not confront effectively because we do one of two things. Either we pretend that a problem does not exist until we are totally incensed over the issue (non-assertive) or we overreact by demeaning another person and their ability to think and behave appropriately (aggressive). Many relationships can continue on a superficial level without confrontation but there are virtually no deep meaningful relationships that continue without a willingness to confront one another.

As one looks through the story of Abigail and David it is evident that she used many of these important skills—and in a few moments' time began a relationship that lasted a lifetime.

HOW TO
Key text:
Proverbs 11:9

"There are virtually no deep meaningful relationships that continue without a willingness to confront one another."

1. Gyles Brandreth, *The Joy of Lex*. (New York: William Marrow and Company, 1980).

2. Gerard Egan, *The Skilled Helper: A Model for Systematic Helping and Interpersonal Relating*. (Monterey: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co., 1975.)

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May 19
Thursday

Only Three To Make or Break

by Rick Williams

OPINION
Key text:
Philippians
4:11-13

Albert Ellis, the developer and chief proponent of Rational Emotive Therapy, believes that there are basically only three beliefs that a person has that make or break relationships.¹ These beliefs each have a positive statement which leads to good mental health and good relationships and a negative statement which causes the opposite.

DISRUPTIVE

1. I *must* be loved and approved of by practically every significant person in my life—and if not, it's awful and terrible.
2. I *must* not make errors or do poorly, and if I do, it's awful and terrible.
3. People and events *should* always be the way I want them to be.

HEALTHY

1. It's definitely nice to have people's love and approval—but I can still accept and enjoy *myself* without it.
2. Doing things well is satisfying—but it's *human* to make mistakes, and I learn from them.
3. People and events are often going to be the way they are regardless of what I want them to be.

“Abigail did not shrink from the task ahead of her because she might not do it perfectly.”

An evaluation of how Abigail used these three principles lends some credibility to Ellis' proposal. First of all, Abigail did not whine or cry over the fact that David was planning to kill a major part of her family. She accepted herself as a valuable person in God's eyes and it gave her the strength to act courageously.

Secondly, Abigail did not shrink from the task ahead of her because she might not do it perfectly. She did not need a week's notice so that she could practice her speech—rather she accepted the fact that she might make a mistake, and she could handle that. We can often be comforted by the fact that Jesus can make up for our deficiencies when we are doing our best.

Thirdly, Abigail reacted in a similar manner to the three Hebrew worthies who were thrown into the fiery furnace when they said, “. . . the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods. . . .” (Daniel 2:17-18, NIV). Abigail was willing to risk death with David and thus was clearly cognizant that the event may not be “just like she wanted it to be.” To accept the third healthy belief takes considerable faith in God. One must truly believe that God has power to influence events and protect us if it is His will

I submit that if a person truly believes the three healthy beliefs most if not all of the manipulative behavior and whining that disrupts our human relationships would be eradicated.

1. Susan R. Walen, Raymond DiGiuseppe, and Richard L. Wessler, *A Practitioner's Guide to Rational-Emotive Therapy*, (New York: Oxford University Press), 1980.

1. How would you evaluate the ethics of David's behavior in this week's story? Did he have a right to expect generosity from Nabal? Was Abigail justified in not telling Nabal what she was doing?
 2. Why do you think Abigail was successful in changing David's intention?
 3. Note the seven characteristics of a helping relationship discussed under point three of the How To article. How many of these did Abigail incorporate? In what way?
 4. a) Do you agree with the How To author's argument that willingness to confront is necessary to deeply meaningful relationships?
b) Should not Christians be peacemakers seeking to avoid confrontation?
c) What possible benefits are there to confrontation?
d) What can we learn from the way Abigail handled her confrontations with David and Nabal?
 5. What are the components of real faith, as Langdon Gilkey describes them in the Evidence article? In this week's story, how did the key characters—Nabal, Abigail and David—demonstrate, or fail to demonstrate these components?
 6. This week's Opinion suggests that acceptance of the three beliefs for healthy relationships in Rational Emotive Therapy would eradicate almost all disruption in interpersonal relationships. Do you agree? If not, what else would be necessary? Discuss whether or not Abigail's behavior was in fact consistent with these three concepts.
-

Eliezer - Man of Responsibility

“Praise be to the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned his kindness and faithfulness to my master. As for me, the Lord has led me on the journey to the house of my master's relatives” (Genesis 24:27, NIV).

Lesson 9, May 22-28



Chickens, Camels, and Eliezer

by Myron Widmer

The summer's highlight of my younger years was our family's two-week vacation on my grandparents' farm in Nebraska. The usual drive across America seemed to never end, yet, soon enough we were driving down the white-picket-fence-lined driveway leading into their farm.

The barn always looked the same, the old John Deere tractor was still sheltered in the passageway of the corncrib, and new hay bales in the hayloft were awaiting another "fortress" to be built.

Our vacation always seemed like a dream. It still does. It was a two-week delight! Even the feather-tick blankets were dreamland style as I sometimes had to share a bed, and covers, with Grandpa. I still remember crawling out of bed early in the morning, only to find I had missed helping Grandpa do the chores. But there were more chores to be done that my sister and I could do—like weeding the 160 acres of sunflowers and smut-infested corn ears, feeding the chickens, and cleaning the barn.

When egg collecting time came each day, I would run and get the old metal bucket and always receive Grandma's admonition, "Make sure you get all of them, and don't drop the bucket. You'll break them." Through the yard's swinging gate I went on a run to the white-painted wooden chicken house. Quietly I tried to sneak into the house without the chickens noticing (it

never worked!). And to the tune of unintelligible clucks and screeches, I claimed all the white prizes I could find in the many straw nests. And I didn't miss any though sometimes Grandpa, with his hands, came to my rescue and chased a sharp-beaked setting hen off her nest so I could gather the eggs from under her. Carefully I laid each egg in the bucket and then made sure the latch was closed securely on the chicken house as I made my way back to the kitchen for Grandma's approval of my work, and her hearty praise.

Only once during all those summers did I ever accidentally break some eggs—when I dropped the bucket too close the yard's gate. And oh, the mess! Yet sorting out and washing the remaining good eggs wasn't half as unpleasant as facing Grandma with the bucket of broken eggs and feeling as though I had let her and Grandpa down in fulfilling the responsibility they had given to me.

Servant Eliezer might have felt a similar feeling if he could have looked months into the future and seen himself returning from Nahor with an extra, empty camel and no wife for Isaac. As he accepted the responsibility from Abraham of finding the next mother of the covenant race, Eliezer trusted in God to crown his 2400-mile journey with success, returning not with a "bucket of broken eggs" but with a chosen wife for Isaac.

INTRODUCTION

Myron Widmer is an associate pastor of the Walla Walla College Church.

□ May 22
Sunday

A Faithful Servant

LOGOS

A Syrian, born in the encampment of Abraham, Eliezer was in sole charge of Abraham's possessions. Abraham had him made chief servant because of his faithfulness and reliability.

Abraham entrusted the important task of finding a suitable wife for his son, Isaac, to Eliezer. Abraham called Eliezer to him and said, "I want you to swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac" (Gen. 24:3, 4, NIV).

Eliezer then asked if he should take Isaac to Nahor in case the woman was unwilling to come back with him. Abraham knew that God had called him out of Mesopotamia and therefore felt that neither he nor his son was at liberty to return, even for a visit.¹ Abraham replied, "Make sure that you do not take my son back there. The Lord, the God of heaven, who brought me out of my father's household and my native land and who spoke to me and promised me an oath, saying 'To your offspring I will give this land'—he will send his angel before you so that you can get a wife for my son from there. If the woman is unwilling to come back with you, then you will be released from this oath of mine. Only do not take my son back there" (Gen 24:6-8, NIV).

Upon reaching the city of his master's people, Eliezer stopped by a well and prayed to the Lord for wisdom and guidance in choosing a wife for his master's son.

Eliezer was logical in his search for a bride for Isaac. He didn't wander around thinking that God would mysteriously show him "the one." He prayed for guidance from God to be revealed through practical characteristics of a potential bride not through a magical sign. Then Eliezer prayed, "May it be that when I say to a girl, 'Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too'—let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master" (Gen 24:14, NIV).

Before Eliezer finished praying, a beautiful girl named Rebekah came out with a jar on her shoulder. When she offered to water the camels, which was not a custom required, along with her offer to let Eliezer drink from her jar, he knew that God had answered his prayers. In Rebekah he saw the golden traits of generosity and helpfulness.

Eliezer not only prayed for guidance from God but he also expressed his gratitude and thanks upon receiving it. He recognized that it was only through the kindness and faithfulness of God that he was able successfully to carry out this challenging responsibility.

"Blessed be the Lord," he declared, ". . . who has not forsaken his steadfast love and his faithfulness toward my master. As for me, the Lord has led me in the way to the house of my master's kinsman" (Gen. 24:27, RSV).

Rebekah agreed to return with Eliezer and when Isaac saw her, he "brought her into the tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her" (Gen. 24:67, RSV).

S. D. P.

1. *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1, p. 360.

selected by
Myron Widmer

Actions of Destiny

"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much." Luke 16:10. The importance of the little things is often underrated because they are small; but they supply much of the actual discipline of life. There are really no nonessentials in the Christian's life. Our character building will be full of peril while we underrate the importance of the little things.

"He that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." By unfaithfulness in even the smallest duties, man robs his Maker of the service which is His due. This unfaithfulness reacts upon himself. He fails of gaining the grace, the power, the force of character, which may be received through an unreserved surrender to God. Living apart from Christ he is subject to Satan's temptations, and he makes mistakes in his work for the Master. Because he is not guided by right principles in little things, he fails to obey God in the great matter which he regards as his special work. The defects cherished in dealing with life's minor details pass into more important affairs. He acts on the principles in which he has accustomed himself. Thus actions repeated form habits, habits form character, and by the character our destiny for time and for eternity is decided.

Only by faithfulness in the little things can the soul be trained to act with fidelity under larger responsibilities. God brought Daniel and his fellows into connection with the great men of Babylon, that these heathen men might become acquainted with the principles of true religion. In the midst of a nation of idolaters, Daniel was to represent the character of God. How did he become fitted for a position of so great trust and honor? It was his faithfulness in the little things that gave complexion to his whole life. He honored God in the smallest duties, and the Lord cooperated with him.¹

The divine command given to Moses found him self-distrustful, slow of speech, and timid. He was overwhelmed with a sense of his incapacity to be a mouthpiece for God to Israel. But having once accepted the work, he entered upon it with his whole heart, putting all his trust in the Lord. The greatness of his mission called into exercise the best powers of his mind. God blessed his ready obedience, and he became eloquent, hopeful, self-possessed, and well fitted for the greatest work ever given to man.

A man will gain power and efficiency as he accepts the responsibilities that God places upon him, and with his whole soul seeks to qualify himself to bear them aright. However humble his position or limited his ability, that man will attain true greatness who, trusting to divine strength, seeks to perform his work with fidelity. Had Moses relied upon his own strength and wisdom, and eagerly accepted the great charge, he would have evinced his entire unfitness for such a work. The fact that a man feels his weakness is at least some evidence that he realizes the magnitude of the work appointed him, and that he will make God his counselor and his strength.²

TESTIMONY

Key text:
Luke 16:1-13

"Our character building will be full of peril while we underrate the importance of the little things."

1. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 356.
2. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 255.

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May 24
Tuesday

The Covenant Link

by Jon Dybdahl*

EVIDENCE

Key text:
1 Chronicles
29:18

**“God cares
enough about
who Isaac
marries to lead
Abraham’s
emissary
in a very
specific way.”**

The 67 verses of Genesis 24—the longest chapter in the first three books of the Bible—tell the story of Eliezer’s match-making journey. Why is this tale so important that it takes two or three times the space of the average chapter in Genesis? A definitive answer to this question is not possible, but some suggestions can be helpful.

In the Bible story, Isaac is never as crucial a character as his father Abraham or his son Jacob. These two both merit more space in the biblical record than Isaac. Yet, Isaac does form the vital link between them. His importance lies in being a valid transmitter of the covenant promised. Isaac’s own credentials are impeccable. He is the promised heir, the son of Abram and Sarah. The Genesis 24 story establishes Rebekah’s position as a worthy wife for Isaac and mother for Jacob. She comes from Abraham’s own family and is also the result of a search of faith. The whole book of Genesis gives a major place to the women who are the wives of the patriarchs. They are major rather than minor characters and are seen as necessary to the whole story of the covenant people.

Two major themes pervade the story of Eliezer’s search for a wife for Isaac. The first is the guiding providence of God. There are no flashy miracles or fire from heaven. Through prayer and God’s quiet action in the sphere of man’s everyday activities, Eliezer finds the right girl for Isaac. God cares enough about who Isaac marries to lead Abraham’s emissary in a very specific way.

The second major theme is faith. The Old Testament concept of faith is best epitomized in our word faithfulness. Abraham, Eliezer, and Rebekah are seen as examples of this steadfast faithfulness. Even though he is nearing death, Abraham sends the most-trusted servant in his household on a journey of many months so that he might be faithful to the covenant. His son must not marry a Canaanite or return to live in Mesopotamia. Eliezer lays aside any resentment he may have had against Isaac who had taken his own place as heir of Abraham (see Gen. 15:2, 3). He “faithfully” performs the responsibility Abraham has laid upon him even though he easily could have deviated. Rebekah is made of the same stuff. She believes the report of God’s leading and is willing to leave home—immediately! Early readers of this story most likely pictured Rebekah as a girl of her early midteens—perhaps as young as 12 or 13.¹ Girls of her time commonly married at this age. Rebekah is faithful and courageous—she really is worthy.

One guiding God and three faithful people enable the covenant to go on. These 67 verses really are an important link!

1. Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, Volume 1, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), p. 29.

Commitments are to be Kept

by Pam Ellis

So what about responsibility? It's easy to pat Eliezer on the back for doing such a fine job. But what about us, now? We are not slaves and we aren't likely to be sent out to find a wife for the boss's son. How can we put Eliezer's example into practice?

For a moment, let's think about some commitments we've made and the responsibilities that go along with them.

1. Many of us have made the commitment to attend school. Being responsible is taking your decision seriously, all the time. Why not try to make it to class, not only every time it meets, but on time. Also, if you come to class having read or done the assignment, you've done your part in making the class better. Your questions or comments may help someone understand the material more easily.

2. And there's always work. Getting to work on time and not calling in sick when you really aren't sick, are ways of showing your boss and yourself that you are taking seriously your commitment to work.

3. What about a boyfriend, or girlfriend, or spouse? You've chosen to establish a close relationship with that person and responsibilities go with that choice. Remember to set aside time to spend with that person, to listen to them and share yourself. This is especially important when you are busy or upset and you really don't think you have the time. Take it!

4. Most important, let's consider the commitment most of us have made to an experience with God and thus church membership. Just as others close to us need our time and attention, God needs our attention too. Don't put off making daily contact with Him just because He isn't a class assignment that will make a difference between an A or a B. To our church, think about offering your talents. Volunteer to teach a Sabbath School class, or ask if your accounting or building skills can be used. Consider approaching the church with the question Eliezer must have asked each day: How can I serve?

HOW TO

Key text:
Proverbs 28:20

It's More Than a Good Feeling

by Pam Ellis and Myron Widmer

OPINION

Key text:
Genesis 24:9

After experiencing a decade called the "Me Generation," our vocabulary had become sprinkled with the psychological clichés of the "Me Philosophy." People speak of "getting my head together," "finding myself," and of "really being me." Self-discovery and the emotional state of *feeling* happy are the ultimate goals. Words such as duty, obligation, and responsibility are rare and have the distasteful suggestion of disciplined self-denial.

For Eliezer, fulfilling his responsibilities seemed to be a normal way of life. His desire to serve is revealed in Genesis 24, especially in accepting the responsibility of finding a wife for Isaac. It was not an easy task, for it involved an arduous, 2400-mile journey by camel with an uncertain outcome. However, Eliezer willingly committed himself to the task and performed it with steadfast purpose. It was his trustworthiness and faith in God's leading and choosing that helped Eliezer accept and fulfill the duty of finding a wife for Abraham's son.

In our struggle to survive and to *feel* happy, we sometimes dislike the words responsibility and dependability. They imply to some that we might be required to do some tasks that we may not *feel* like doing, even though at some point we made a commitment—to a specific task or to an overall purpose. When it comes time to face the tasks and thus our responsibility, we might want to reject them because they no longer make us feel good, or important or help us. It's always more fun to do the exciting or easy parts of a job and to leave for someone else the less-exciting, complicated, or commonplace parts. And sometimes—much more than we might think—we do those less-exciting tasks just to get them "done" or just to get someone off our backs. The work is half-done, poorly done, but we walk away without any guilt feelings because our minds are so good at coming up with reasons why we didn't have to do it any better. Have you heard yourself or someone else say: "I ran out of time;" "It's not worth the effort;" "What did they expect from me, I'm busy;" "Why care?" and "What difference does it make, anyway?" The next time that you realize (if your mind will let you!) that you have not completed your work the way it should have been done, ask yourself what excuse *you* are using to alleviate any guilt feelings that might arise!

I doubt if Eliezer ever used any excuses. We certainly weren't around when Eliezer was living, yet from the biblical records one might suppose that he took seriously all his responsibilities, the exciting and the less-exciting, and fulfilled them. Abraham considered making Eliezer his heir (Gen. 15:2). This could not have been considered on the basis of genealogy, but upon Eliezer's worthiness shown through years of trustworthy service.

As with Eliezer, once we have accepted a commitment, we should do our best. And our best begins with bringing it to the Lord and asking for his guidance and strength to fulfill our commitment. He is able!

And one more thing, if you don't like some parts of a task, don't commit yourself to the overall whole. But if you do, then, please, do it even if it doesn't feel good anymore.

"Words such as duty, obligation, and responsibility are rare and have the distasteful suggestion of disciplined self-denial."

1. Should we ask for direct signs from God, as Eliezer did?
 2. What could Eliezer have done if the Lord had not chosen to interface with circumstances in a way that made plain His choice? What options do you have when external evidence is lacking and a decision needs to be made?
 3. The How To article discussed taking seriously the Christian's various commitments. Sometimes, though, these commitments conflict with one another. What course of action would you recommend in the following situations?
 - a) A friend is lonely and depressed and badly needs you to spend some time with him, but you have a crucial test the next day for which you must study. Do you honor your commitment to your friend or your schoolwork?
 - b) A pastor and his family are about to leave on a long and eagerly anticipated 10-day vacation. But the phone rings—a church member has died and the family very much wants the pastor to have the funeral and needs his presence. It would mean taking four days away from the vacation. Does the pastor honor his commitment to his church or his family?Discuss other conflicts in commitments that occur to you. Can you suggest a set of principles for resolving such conflicts?
 4. Knowing that you don't have time to complete a task as it should be done, would it be better to not do it at all (for example, call on Friday night and say that you can't do the special music you'd promised for church the next day), or to do it with below-par results and not give the organizer the chance of getting someone else to do it?
 5. This week's Testimony urges us to be conscientious about even the smallest duties of life. Does this mean Christians are to be perfectionists about their responsibilities? Are there dangers to perfectionism? (The theological issue of perfection is not being raised here, only the question of how we relate to our everyday tasks).
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Dorcas - Compassionate Disciple



"In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which, when translated, is Dorcas), who was always doing good and helping the poor" (Acts 9:36, NIV).

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Lesson 10, May 29-June 4

by Julie Woods

Dorcas Revisited

INTRODUCTION

When I was a little girl, Dorcas was a small brown house that had been donated to the church. Mom and I would make an annual trek to Dorcas as soon as we had finished spring cleaning. We took bags and boxes of too-small shoes, too-short skirts and high-water pants to the ladies at Dorcas to give to other people. From Sabbath School I remembered that some of my things would be sent to the poor naked African boys and girls so they could wear clothes and shoes like civilized people (the white man's burden was ingrained early).

Going to Dorcas was a real adventure! Piles and piles of sorted clothes, shoes and toys. Friendly grandmotherly sorts, distinguished only by a different printed cotton shift, mended and prepared the cast-offs. All of these ladies volunteered their time and probably felt a warm satisfaction knowing that they were doing a needed service. The rest of the members of the church, my mother and I included, were doing our missionary duty by proxy. We felt justified because we were really very busy, and we were also giving a bunch of dear retirees something to do.

Reading through Acts 9:36-42

brought back all of my memories of the visit to Dorcas, but I am impressed that Dorcas' name has been wrongly attributed to that little brown house and other little houses like it. I think what is done by grandmotherly little ladies in the church is important and useful, but Dorcas probably wouldn't have done it in that way. A revised interpretation, from a college-age perspective, could see Dorcas as relatively young, with lots of other interests that could keep her busy, yet full of empathy for poor widows around her in Joppa. Acts describes the widows showing Peter the things that Dorcas had made for them. I can visualize the very fine handiwork they wore. Not sending her creations to overseas missionary relief programs, but seeing them everyday on her dear friends and others that she had made them for, probably made her take extra care.

Extra care for those she loved seems to be what Dorcas demonstrated, and as a Christian, she loved widely. Looking at Dorcas like this, instead of how I remember Dorcas as a little girl, gives me a definite example to follow for right now—I don't have to wait until I'm a grandmother.

Julie Woods is a senior history major at Walla Walla College.

May 29
Sunday

The Antelope Lady

LOGOS Tabitha was her name in Hebrew, meaning "gazelle," "antelope" or "doe." In the Greek Tabitha is translated "Dorcas." "Gazelle" or "antelope" gives the impression of quickness, gracefulness and quietness. This is how Dorcas was, quick to help the poor, and armed with a willing, generous nature which made her beloved by the people of Joppa. She was "always doing good and helping the poor" (Acts 9:37, NIV).

Dorcas became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room (see Acts 9:37). When the people heard that the apostle Peter was in Lydda, a town not far from Joppa, they sent two men to him, urging him to come at once.

"Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them" (Acts 9:39, NIV).

Peter, like Jesus had done prior to the raising of Jairus' daughter (see Mark 5:40), sent everyone out of the room. He needed quiet and solitude in order to commune with God—he "got down on his knees and prayed" (vs. 40). Peter recognized his utter need of divine power, and did not act until assured of that power. With the faith which only God can give, Peter turned to the dead woman and commanded, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes and seeing Peter she sat up. He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called the believers and the widows and presented her to them alive" (Acts 9:40-41, NIV).

Peter's manner of performing the miracle is noteworthy. If our modern faith healers felt they were about to perform such a miracle, they would no doubt see that it was televised world-wide, live via satellite. Perhaps they would have even wanted to delay the event for awhile so that it could be promoted through TV and radio spots, direct mail and billboards. But Peter "avoided ostentatious display of power."¹

It was indeed a tremendous miracle, though. Imagine the interest that was aroused in Joppa. People must have begun asking how, why and from whom did this power come? And all the public relations benefit went to God, not Peter. "This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord" (Acts 9:42, NIV).

Peter knew that the kingdom of God must grow, and just as a mustard seed which is planted grows and becomes a tree (see Luke 13:18), so the people of God must grow. They grow up into families, communities and congregations. Because of the resurrection of Dorcas, the community of believers at Joppa grew, and the message of salvation through Jesus Christ was more widely promulgated.

S. D. P.

1. *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, p. 243.

Warm Falling Teardrops

In Joppa . . .

In Joppa there was a Dorcas, whose skillful fingers were more active than her tongue. She knew who needed comfortable clothing and who needed sympathy, and she freely ministered to the wants of both classes. And when Dorcas died, the church in Joppa realized their loss. It is no wonder that they mourned and lamented, nor that warm teardrops fell upon the inanimate clay. She was of so great value that by the power of God she was brought back from the land of the enemy, that her skill and energy might still be a blessing to others.

Such personal, prayerful, and preserving fidelity as was possessed by these saints of God is rare; yet the church cannot prosper without it. It is needed in the church, in the Sabbath school, and in society.¹

In the Church . . .

"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

In a special sense Christ has laid upon His church the duty of caring for the needy among its own members. He suffers His poor to be in the borders of every church. They are always to be among us, and He places upon the members of the church a personal responsibility to care for them.

As the members of a true family care for one another, ministering to the sick, supporting the weak, teaching the ignorant, training the inexperienced, so is the "household of faith" to care for its needy and helpless ones.²

In the World . . .

While God in His providence has laden the earth with His bounties and filled its storehouses with the comforts of life, want and misery are on every hand. A liberal Providence has placed in the hands of His human agents an abundance to supply the necessities of all, but the stewards of God are unfaithful. In the professed Christian world there is enough expended in extravagant display to supply the wants of all the hungry and to clothe the naked. Many who have taken upon themselves the name of Christ are spending His money for selfish pleasure, for the gratification of appetite, for strong drink and rich dainties, for extravagant houses and furniture and dress, while to suffering human beings they give scarcely a look of pity or a word of sympathy.

What misery exists in the very heart of our so-called Christian countries! Think of the condition of the poor in our large cities. In these cities there are multitudes of human beings who do not receive as much care and consideration as are given to the brutes. There are thousands of wretched children, ragged and half starved, with vice and depravity written on their faces. . . .

The work of gathering in the needy, the oppressed, the suffering, the destitute, is the very work which every church that believes the truth for this time should long since have been doing.³

TESTIMONY

Key text:
Isaiah 58:6-8

"As the members of a true family care for one another . . . so is the 'household of faith' to care for its needy and helpless ones."

1. *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 5, p. 304.
2. *Ministry of Healing*, p. 201.
3. *Welfare Ministry*, pp. 188-189.

Dorcas the Disciple

by Rosemary Radford Ruether,
selected by John C. Brunt

EVIDENCE

Key text:
Acts 9:36-43

Dorcas' significance lies not only in her good deeds and her resurrection, but also in her designation as a "disciple." This says something about the status of women in Luke's narrative of the church's early days. With reference to the role of women in Acts, Rosemary Ruether says:

"There were also other women with special status, including one who was referred to as a "disciple"—a Jewish woman of independent means, a seamstress living in the Jewish city of Joppa, who was called Tabitha (also referred to as Dorcas) (Acts 9:36-43). Tabitha was evidently well known and admired for her charitable work, her fine craftsmanship as a seamstress and her graceful manner (Tabitha means 'gazelle'). Like Paul and Barnabas, she was never named with 'the Twelve.' Unlike them, her designation as 'disciple' has been minimized by the Church. Contrary to popular belief, there is no agreement in the New Testament itself as to how many disciples there actually were, or who they were. The term can imply one who is merely a follower, or it may refer to one who is under the instruction of a specific rabbi or teacher and part of a small elite group of his adherents. Whatever the specific significance of the title 'disciple' as applied to Tabitha, she was felt to be so valuable to the Christian community in Joppa that many widows wept at her death and Peter rushed to her side from a neighboring town to raise her from the dead—the first such miracle performed by an apostle. To be recorded as raised from the dead, and to be the focus of the first such miracle by a fellow disciple, she must have been considered indispensable to the congregation. Her exact status remains unknown, but that she was much more than merely one of the many followers is clear from the story about her."¹

"Contrary to popular belief, there is no agreement in the New Testament itself as to how many disciples there actually were, or who they were."

1. Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Religion and Sexism: Images of Woman in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), pp. 144-145. Reprinted by permission of Simon and Schuster, a Division of Gulf and Western Corporation.

Dorcas' Whole Point

by Julie Woods

OK, practicality page—the one that is easy to intellectualize and time-consuming to actualize.

Dorcas set up a pretty tough standard of unselfishness and service. As one who has experienced resurrection, she is a prototype for the final resurrection of the saints—somewhere we all ought to meet. So, how to?

We can't all sew, and many of us may have few practical talents (college doesn't always emphasize those these days), but we do have Christian love flowing through our veins—that should be worth a lot. Here are some suggestions for being of service and loving someone in a special way (which seems to be the whole point of Dorcas' life.)

1. Dorcas devoted her time and energy to a lonely group of widows. You and I can give a little of our love and warmth to a lonely person in a hospital or nursing home. I made one very special friend who was nuts about stewed tomatoes; the nursing home let me bring them in and we enjoyed stewed tomatoes.

2. Find lonely students and befriend them. There are more around than you think!

3. How about an overworked, underappreciated element of our society—faculty members? Give one a call that has kids and offer an evening of free kid-sitting. If a faculty member is single or might be lonely, find out if they would like an evening of pizza with you and a few friends (*you* make or buy the pizza and clean up).

4. Check out a big brother/big sister or adopt-a-grandparent program through your student association.

5. Volunteer to teach a Sabbath School class to your peers or even little kids—excellent motivation to study the lesson!

6. Take a Sunday morning and weed a garden for free. You'll remember how it was when you were at home and forced into slave labor in the backyard by your parents. (Just think, you won't have to do this every Sunday.)

7. Consider your particular talents: music, art, cooking, wood-working, gardening, or just talking. Try to make something you really enjoy or excel at make someone else feel loved.

HOW TO

Key text:

Proverbs 17:17

Julie Woods is a senior history major at Walla Walla College.

June 2
Thursday

Dorcas and Inclusive Discipleship

by John C. Brunt

OPINION

Key text:
Luke 8:1-3,
Acts 9:36; 17:4

The terms “disciple” and “discipleship” are currently in vogue in Christian circles. We hear them all the time. Luke’s account of Dorcas’ resurrection in Acts 9:36-43 is particularly important for the “discipleship” discussion, for by example it helps provide content for the term “disciple.”

Luke calls Dorcas a *mathētria*— a feminine form of the commonly used Greek word meaning disciple. This, however, is the only time that the feminine form of the word is used in the New Testament. Throughout Luke’s writing, in both his gospel and Acts, Luke emphasizes the important role that women play in the gospel story.

For example, Luke begins with infancy narratives that stress the roles of Elizabeth, Mary, and Anna. In Luke 8:1-3, he is the only gospel writer to inform us that there were certain women, in addition to the twelve, who followed Jesus. Later in describing Paul’s ministry in Thessalonica (Acts 17:4), he reminds us that not a few of the leading women accepted Paul’s message. And here Luke includes the story of Dorcas, and shows us that she was a “disciple.”

**“Witness
need not be
knocking
on doors;
it might be
kindness
to widows.”**

His purpose, at least in part, is to proclaim that discipleship is inclusive—it knows no sexual boundaries. It is possible for all people, both men and women, to learn from Christ, follow Him and become disciples. (Does this not at least raise the question of whether the Christian ministry should be limited by exclusive boundaries of sex?)

It is also instructive to notice how “discipleship” was manifested in Dorcas’ life. The evidence of her experience as a follower of Jesus was seen in her sewing and her kindness to widows. This should certainly warn us against any attempt to identify true discipleship with any one form of ministry and mission or with any single program of witness. It is not only in the pulpit, but also at the sewing machine that one can be a disciple. Witness need not be knocking on doors; it might be kindness to widows.

Dorcas is testimony to both the inclusiveness and the diversity of true discipleship.

REACT
Lesson 10

1. Discuss why Dorcas was so indispensable to the church at Joppa. Couldn't most anyone make clothes for the needy? What qualities made Dorcas special?
2. This week's Testimony calls the church to the "work of gathering in the needy, the oppressed, the suffering, the destitute." How well do you think the Adventist church has responded to this challenge? In what ways could improvement be made?
3. In what ways could you and your Sabbath School group reach out to others in the spirit of Dorcas? See the How To section for suggestions.
4. What is the significance of Luke's designation of Dorcas as a disciple? Does Rosemary Ruether's discussion of Dorcas as a disciple change your image of Dorcas? Explain.
5. Is the designation of Dorcas as a disciple a valid argument for the ordination of women to the ministry? Explain.

Caleb - Warrior of Faith



"Because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it" (Numbers 14:24, NIV).

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The Final Challenge

INTRO- DUCTION

Things hadn't changed much in Hebron since the reconnaissance mission forty-five years earlier. Caleb still thought it was the best part of an "exceedingly good land" (Num. 14:7, RSV). But the Anakim (sons of Anak) were still there, too. They were the guys who had made Caleb's espionage cohorts feel like grasshoppers. For a Hebrew to fight an Anakim would have been something like Gary Coleman (Different Strokes) going one-on-one with Kareem Abdul-Jabbar.

So, at 85 Caleb was facing the biggest challenge of his life. No soldier of Israel's army would have been more highly decorated than Caleb. No one's spear would have had more notches carved in it. He'd fought with bravery and intensity in all the great struggles of Israel's Egypt-to-Canaan epic. He could recall the Amalekite threat in the wilderness, where under the blessing of God through Moses' uplifted hands a motley crew of ex-slaves drove off the fierce desert raiders. Then, forty years after the rebellion on the borders of Canaan, came the stunning routs of Balak of Moab, Sihon of Heshbon and Og of Bashan. And, after the crossing of the Jordan, the crash conquest of Jericho, and the humiliation at Ai. Most recent in his memory was the sun that stayed in the sky at Joshua's command, shedding light for the mop-up operation on the confederation of five kings.

Now only one obstacle stood between him and rest in his own land of promise—the

Anakim. Throughout Israel's battles Caleb had seen the hand of Yahweh act in marvelous ways. His faith was strong. After participation in the spy mission, he had confidently declared that Yahweh would "bring us into this land and give it to us" (Num. 14:8, RSV).

But now, decades later, as he faces this last challenge, Caleb is uncharacteristically tentative. After studying the situation, Caleb comments that "it may be that the Lord will be with me, and I shall drive them out as the Lord said" (Josh. 14:12, RSV). *May?* Couldn't he now count on God for sure?

Perhaps the experience at Ai taught him that you can't carry God in your hip pocket, or like a sword in a sheath or an arrow in a quiver. Perhaps long experience had tempered his conviction that God must necessarily be on his side. Perhaps he now realized that God ignores the limits of human strategies and structures.

But he moved ahead in faith anyhow. Acting on a "maybe" usually beats stagnating on a certainty. And the final challenge was conquered: "Caleb drove out from there the three sons of Anak" (Josh. 15:14, RSV).

What was so special about his faith? What was there about him that qualified him to be part of the tiny minority of two who experienced both the exodus and the conquest? How could someone so steeped in blood and gore be a man of God? What can we learn from him to help us face our challenges? These are our questions for this week. D. F. M.

A Different Spirit

LOGOS

Expectancy was high as the tribes of Israel reached Kadesh-barnea, in the northern part of the Sinai peninsula. Yahweh, their God had acted mightily among them in the liberation from Egypt, the pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night, the miraculous deliverance at the Red Sea, and the law given amid thunder, lightning and trumpets at Sinai.

These mighty acts were preludes to Israel's final destiny—possession of a land in which they could live as God's covenant people. Now they were ready, in the words of Moses, to **"Go up and take possession of it as the Lord, the God of your fathers, told you. Do not be afraid, do not be discouraged"** (Deut. 1:21, NIV).

As a precaution, Moses sent a leader from each of the twelve tribes to go and **"See what the land is like and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many"** (Num. 13:18, NIV). Caleb was selected from the tribe of Judah.

The "spies" were unanimous in reporting the facts discovered by their mission: Canaan was indeed a good land, flowing with milk and honey. But the inhabitants were large and powerful, and so were the cities they lived in. The difference came in the recommendation part of the report. The majority report was, **"We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are"** (Num. 13:31, NIV).

Not one to be intimidated by peer pressure, Caleb issued a forthright minority report: **"We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it"** (Num. 13:30, NIV).

The negative majority report produced mass hysteria in the camp of Israel. Loud weeping and grumbling led to calls for a new leader who would take them back to Egypt.

Caleb, with Joshua, urged the people to move ahead, trusting in the same Lord who had acted so marvelously in their behalf in the past. **"If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land . . . and will give it to us"** (Num. 14:8, NIV). For Caleb, soldier that he was, the key comparison between the Israelites and the Canaanites did not involve military hardware, it involved divine benefactors. **"Do not rebel against Yahweh,"** he urged, **"And do not be afraid of the people of this land; we shall gobble them up. Their tutelary shadow has gone from them so long as Yahweh is with us"** (Num. 14:9, Jerusalem Bible). The phrase "tutelary shadow" is a figure of speech drawn from the protection given by large rocks in the desert. Caleb is expressing confidence that Israel indeed has a protecting Rock in Yahweh (see Deut. 32:4), but her enemies have none, no matter what their physical prowess, weaponry, or fortification.¹

These words of courage just further infuriated the assembled people. Plans to stone Caleb and Joshua were quelled only by a special manifestation of God's presence in the sanctuary. Because of their unbelief, the Israelites must now turn their backs on the land of promise to live as nomads forty more years. Those over twenty would never see their dream of a new homeland fulfilled (see Num. 14:10-23).

Caleb, on the other hand, was singled out as one of only two who would live to receive his inheritance in Canaan. Why? **"Because,"** said the Lord, **"my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly"** (Num. 14:24, NIV).

D. F. M.

1. The Interpreters Bible, Vol. (Nashville: Abington Press), p. 210.

by Robert Cornelisse

Unwavering Trust

Though the Bible says little about Caleb, what is written reflects a man with whom God was well pleased. A man who had great confidence in God's promises. A man who had "another spirit in him." A man who was allowed to enter into the promised land and receive his inheritance because he had "followed the Lord fully."

1 Corinthians 10:1-11 tells us that what was written about Israel's history is for our admonition. Thus, we can draw some very important personal lessons for today from Caleb's story.

Three times we are told that God's blessing on Caleb was based on the fact that he had "followed the Lord fully" (Josh. 14:8; Num. 32:11; Deut. 1:36).

It is God's desire that each one of us live a fruitful, happy, and abundant life here on earth (John 10:10). "The glorious possibilities set before Israel could be realized only through obedience to God's commandments. The same elevation of character, the same fullness of blessing—blessing on mind and soul and body, blessing on house and field, blessing for this life and for the life to come—is possible for us only through obedience."¹ Caleb's obedience to God continued for 45 years, even though he had not yet received his inheritance.

The decree that Israel was not to enter into the promised land was a "bitter disappointment to Moses and Aaron, Caleb and Joshua; yet without a murmur they accepted the divine decision."² Disappointed, but not despairing, Caleb trusted the words of God and looked forward to when he and his people would be able to enter Canaan.

"All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us."³

Even though his own people wanted to stone him, Caleb stood firm for his principles (Num. 14:10). How easy it would have been for Caleb to go along with the majority rule. But "it was Caleb's faith in God that gave him courage; that kept him from the fear of man, even the mighty giants, the sons of Anak, and enabled him to stand boldly and unflinchingly in defense of the right."⁴

TESTIMONY

Key text:
1 Samuel 2:30

1. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 305.
2. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 392.
3. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 668.
4. *Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 378.

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June 7
Tuesday

God of War

by Ronald A. Iwasko

EVIDENCE
Key text:
Exodus 15:3

Editors Note: The bloody wars fought by Israel in the name of the Lord have long troubled Christian thinkers. This week's lesson on Caleb, the warrior, raises this issue. Following are two contrasting treatments of the problem.

Because God is God He has the inherent right to destroy both nations and individuals. He gives life and He takes it away. Such is the analysis of Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong" (Job 1:21, 22). However we may object to the fact, if God is God He has the inherent right to order the events of the universe. . . ."¹

Second, in the case of Canaan, the justice of God is revealed. It must be remembered that according to God's standards the Canaanite nations were a grossly immoral and wicked people. God declared to Israel that He was destroying those nations, not because of righteous merit on the part of Israel, but because of the gross wickedness of the Canaanites (Deut. 9:4, 5). Recent archaeological discovery² has brought to light concrete testimony to this wickedness, consisting of unimaginably degenerate forms of polytheism and sexual perversity. Exaltation of public religious prostitution (male and female), public rites of bestiality, and infant sacrifice were common. In the graphic words of Scripture, "The land vomited out its inhabitants" (Lev. 18:25).

"God . . . was destroying those nations, not because of righteous merit on the part of Israel, but because of the gross wickedness of the Canaanites."

The Canaanites had received ample warning. Thousands of years prior, Noah had pronounced Canaan, the ancestor of the Canaanites, accused and the servant of Shem due to the immorality of his father, Ham (Gen. 9:25, 26). Later, in the days of Abraham, judgment had fallen upon Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19) because of the gross wickedness of the inhabitants, a judgment which served as a warning to the neighboring peoples. God had already promised four generations (i.e., 400 years) for the Amorites to repent because their evil was "not yet complete" (Gen. 15:13, 16). Following the Exodus from Egypt forty years elapsed before the start of the conquest of Canaan, ample time for the idolatrous nations to repent (who certainly recognized God's impending judgment, see Joshua 2:8-11). Even the conquest was not a blitzkrieg but "little by little" (Deut. 7:22). Still there was no repentance.

Third, it must be understood that God's policy was, in overall perspective, one of mercy and good. Sin is essentially self-centeredness as opposed to God-centeredness. It corrupts and does so gradually. . . . In order to remove the corrupting influence of gross immorality, lest it spread to all the people, it was necessary at this point to destroy many (who deserved it) to preserve the few through whom God's purposes were being accomplished.

This was particularly true in the case of Israel, the nation established by God as the avenue through which the Messiah would come. They must be kept a separated, distinct, and holy nation. T. B. Maston³ states, ". . . The Lord's promise to make Israel 'a people holy to Himself' is conditioned upon their keeping His commandments and walking in His ways (Lev. 28:9). This condition under-

scored the ethical requirement of holiness. Walking in the ways of God meant the purging of evil from the midst of them."

It may be objected that this then is a policy of "doing evil that good might come." We reply that the surgeon who amputates a gangrenous limb is not condemned for removing a limb but praised for having saved a body. It is necessary that the rotted flesh be cut off if the patient is to survive; it is unfortunate that the limb must be destroyed. God's course of action is therefore to do ultimate good.

It may still be objected that it is unfair to subject the innocent Canaanite children to such harsh punishment. We can answer such an appeal in two ways. First, God, who is the discernor of the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Heb. 4:12), is also revealed as the righteous Judge (Gen. 18:25, Ps. 98:9). If our earthly life were the totality of our existence, then the death of the innocent would be an unthinkable act for a righteous judge. But if for the righteous, as the Bible claims there is life after death in an existence far superior to the earthly (as Paul claims in Philippians 1:21-23), then death for the innocent is righteous judgment indeed. If, on the other hand, one is irremediably guilty, the judgment is truly just.

Excerpted from "God of War" by Ronald A. Iwasko in *Christianity for the Tough-Minded*, John Warwick Montgomery, ed., (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1973) pp. 102-104. Copyright © 1973 by Bethany Fellowship, Inc. Used by permission.

1. Greene, op. cit., p. 331.
2. Gleason A. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody, 1964), p. 261.
3. T. B. Maston, *Biblical Ethics* (Cleveland: World, 1967), p. 30.

Nimrod vs. the Ballerina

by Vernard Eller

Our wars (including our anti-war wars, or what commonly is known as the "peace" movement) are *Nimrodian* in character. That is, they take place in the city of Babel, state of Shinar, land of Nob. Their track is eastward from Eden, away from the presence of the Lord. They represent man's attempt to build security for himself—and the security of *peace*, it must be said, for ultimately this is what both the militarists and the pacifists are after. But in either case, it is to be done "like God," by means of our own wisdom, power, and piety. . . .

Over against the Nimrodian wars, the wars of *man*—of which we were speaking—stands the war of Yahweh, the war fought for his purposes, in his way, at the time and place and against the enemy of his choosing. Man's role in this war, obviously, will be that of a ballerina rather than a Nimrod.

What we are going to find in Joshua and his successors, then, is an absolutely sincere, conscientious, devoted attempt to fight the war of Yahweh in the ballerina mode. Sad to say, the understanding of these people was flawed on some points, and their grand attempt failed. But let it be said in deepest seriousness that, until we are ready once again to try the experiment of Joshua, there is *no* hope that the peace that God intends ever can become a reality. Nimrodian wars of whatever mode simply won't do it.

. . . Where—even with their best intentions (better than ours)—did these old Hebrews get off the track? Let's retrace that track and see if we can find out.

They started with the assumption that Yahweh has a plan, something he has in mind to accomplish in this world, a kingdom he is

EVIDENCE Part 2

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intent to establish. In this they were right, very right. They realized, too, that there was in their midst that which was inclined to resist and oppose Yahweh's plan—and "that" meant WAR. In this, too, they were right, very right. They felt certain that Israel had been tabbed for a special role in Yahweh's plan. Right again. They were wise enough to see, however, that Israel was not herself the *end* of that plan, that Yahweh's purpose was not simply to heap favors upon Israel, that Israel was nothing or had done nothing to deserve such but rather had been chosen for use as an instrument in a larger plan. They were very right on this one, too, and deserve respect for seeing something that few peoples in this world (including ourselves) ever have accepted. The next one is a little more difficult to support from the texts, but it is quite possible that Joshua and company understood that the end of God's plan involved the totality of mankind, that his kingdom (the *peaceable* kingdom) was to be for all peoples without distinction. God's promise to Abraham, who lived long before Joshua, is recorded as "By you all the families of the earth will bless themselves" (Genesis 12:3, RSV). And if they did understand it so, they were right on this one, too.

"This, then, is faith, true faith: to believe that God has ways of achieving his purpose without contradicting his purpose in the achieving of it—even when, from our position, we can't begin to imagine what those ways might be."

From this they should have drawn the conclusion that MAN IS NOT THE ENEMY. But this one they missed. It is not an easy truth to grasp—particularly so for finite man who must view God's plan from a rather limited, short-term, politically oriented perspective. As they saw it, God's plan includes an intention for Israel. Yet there are some people who threaten Israel's existence and would frustrate her God-given destiny. Therefore, if God's plan is to move forward, these people must be taken out of the way; it *must* be God's will and desire that we fight them.

The logic is altogether correct, but what also is involved is a failure of *faith* in the capabilities of God. *As far as man can see*, the only alternatives are either to let the plan of God be frustrated or to take out the obstructionists. . . .

Yet, on the other hand, if God's fight is *for the sake of man*, all men, then certainly he must have the wherewithal for getting us there without crunching some men, *any person*, in the process. This, then, is *faith*, true faith: to believe that God has ways of achieving his purpose without contradicting his purpose in the achieving of it—even when, from our position, we can't begin to imagine what those ways might be. That we get into binds where we can't act without contradicting ourselves is obvious; that God should get into such a bind is inconceivable.

But when the squeeze came, Israelite faith wasn't quite adequate, and the people fell back on the conclusion that man *must* be the enemy: there is no way for God's plan to go forward without fighting men, so this must be what God wants. And once they were sure (or thought they were sure) of their conclusion, they followed God with a right good will—you have to give them credit for that!

. . . Modern man—even most modern *Christians*—are in no position to dismiss, criticize, or put down Joshua. Until we try as hard to be "the people of Yahweh" as he and his compatriots did, he had better be looked up to and emulated.

Excerpted from Vernard Eller, *War and Peace from Genesis to Revelation* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1981), pp. 41-43, 58-60, 62.

Caleb, along with Joshua, refused to succumb to the "grasshopper complex"¹ of the other ten spies, who declared the Israelites to be like grasshoppers compared to Canaan's giants (Num. 13:33).

But the congregation was easily swayed by those with the negative report: "And all the congregation lifted up their voice and cried; and the people wept that night. . . ." (Num. 14:1). Caleb was distressed at the rebellious attitude his fellow people adopted and tried to stop the rebellion by again proclaiming the goodness of the land and the strength of God (Num. 14:6-9). The people responded by threatening to stone him. God then pronounced their fate—40 years in the wilderness. Those twenty years old and up who had murmured against Him would perish there, never to reach the Promised Land. Caleb, on the other hand, did live to see Canaan, and as one allowed to enter the promised rest, he possessed characteristics worthy of our consideration.

1) Caleb dared to reprove sin to quash rebellion against his God. He wasn't afraid to speak out and stand for the right. "He was bold to stand in defense of the word of God; he did all in his power to counteract the evil influence of his unfaithful associates."² But he did this in a positive way with words of hope and encouragement. He reminded his brethren of glories to come, for he had seen another land—the land of Canaan. We can catch a glimpse of the heavenly Canaan by having meaningful fellowship with God through Christ each day. When "we respond to His invitation, Come, learn of Me, . . . we begin the life eternal."³

2) Caleb was enthusiastic and he shared his enthusiasm with others.

3) Caleb "had another spirit with him." Scripture repeatedly testifies of his wholehearted consecration to God. "My servant Caleb . . . hath followed Me fully . . ." (Num. 14:24). "Caleb . . . hath wholly followed the Lord" (Deut. 1:36). "He wholly followed the Lord God of Israel" (Joshua 14:13, 14). A spirit-filled "Caleb" commits everything to God—choice of friends and mate, diet, entertainment and career.

4) Caleb had a positive frame of mind. He had no doubts that God would be with them. "We are well able to overcome it" (Num. 13:30), he declared. His faith was steady, his belief strong. Caleb was ready to enter Canaan, but his "church" was not. He did not give up his faith, though, when God sent them back to the wilderness. He could have rebelled against God at sending him back along with his unfaithful brethren, but he continued to believe they could possess the land. He trusted God's judgment unswervingly. Thus, the modern Caleb has a positive outlook believing that (a) Christ is coming, (b) the church of God will triumph, (c) we will meet our loved ones again, (d) God answers prayer, and (e) we will inherit the heavenly Canaan.

HOW TO

Key text:
Numbers 13:30

1. Morris Venden, *From Exodus to Advent*, (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1980), p. 61.

2. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 388

3. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 331.

Kadesh-Barnea Revisited

by Morris Venden

OPINION

Key text:
Hebrews 4:1-11

The unbelief manifested at Kadesh-barnea, which resulted in the people of Israel not occupying the Promised Land at that time, we see repeated in the history of the Advent people. We have had our Kadesh-barneas when the time was ripe and God tried to get the message through to us to go in to the heavenly Canaan. But because of our unbelief we could not and did not enter.¹

At the end of the 1880s there began an increased interest in the subject of righteousness by faith in Jesus. God evidently was leading the Advent movement once more to the borders of the Promised Land. We find comments like these directed to the church at that time. "We are now upon the very borders of the eternal world" (*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 2, p. 264).²

The evidence is that the loud cry and the latter rain, the finish of God's work, began during those times when God brought us to the peak of emphasis about Jesus as our only hope. In 1892 she [Ellen White] said, "The time of test is just upon us, for the loud cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer. This is the beginning of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth" (*Selected Messages*, Book One, p. 363).

"If the loud cry began at the end of the last century, something happened to it, or we wouldn't still be here."

Whenever the message of Jesus and our hope of salvation in Jesus alone begins to rise, you will know that the latter rain and the loud cry are upon us. But the question here is, If the loud cry began in 1888, can it go on for seventy, eighty, ninety years? We face only one conclusion. If the loud cry began at the end of the last century, something happened to it, or we wouldn't still be here. And what we're suggesting on the basis of our authority is that we had our opportunity to enter the Promised Land, but we turned it down and headed back into the wilderness.³

As the message of the 1890s began to get off the ground, some accepted it; others rejected it. And some, halfway in between, simply felt confused. Evidently they were unwilling to study it out for themselves. As a result, the whole issue began to get cloudy.

Even though a few talked and taught and studied the subject, gradually it faded away. And that is the only explanation of why we're still here. Because if we had continued to emphasize Christ as our only hope of salvation, this great theme, the loud cry, the latter rain, would have come to its fullness. God's work would have been finished.⁴

When God told the children of Israel that their prayer had been answered, that all of the people twenty years and older who had left Egypt would die in the wilderness, and that they would wander there for forty years, what happened to the people under twenty? Why did they wander in the wilderness? I want to suggest that it is possible in the history of the Advent movement that we have had a period of wilderness wandering for reasons initially beyond our control. But there arrives a time when God once more urges, "Go in and possess the Promised Land."⁵

1. Morris Venden, *From Exodus to Advent* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1980), pp. 63, 64.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 73, 74.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 77, 78.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

1. Do you agree with the Introduction writer in seeing a switch from certainty (Num. 13:30) to tentativeness (Josh. 14:12) in Caleb's belief that God would be with him in his military endeavors? If so, do you think Caleb's faith strengthened, weakened, or stayed the same over the years? If not, how would you explain the apparent contrast between these two passages?
2. Caleb's "different spirit" enabled him to stand against pressure from peers and society to go against God's will. Try to identify one specific way in which you've felt or are feeling the pressure to conform from friends, family, associates, or society in general. Does anything in Caleb's experience help you in better dealing with that pressure?
3. Do you think Morris Venden's (Opinion) comparison between Israel's experience at Kadesh-barnea and Adventism in the latter part of the nineteenth century is valid? Explain why or why not. Discuss the characteristics of Caleb which you think are most crucial for those hoping soon to enter the heavenly Canaan.
4. Ronald Iwasko (Evidence, Pt. 1) presents three major arguments defending Israel's wars of extermination, in which Caleb participated. Summarize these arguments and discuss the validity of each.
What is your reaction to Vernard Eller's argument that God never intended Israel to conduct military campaigns against the Canaanites? Weren't the wars fought at God's command?

Miriam - Gifted Prophetess

"I sent Moses to lead you,
also Aaron and Miriam" (Micah 6:4, NIV).

Lesson 12, June 12-18



Indispensable: Sisterly Solitude

by John B. Walthour

Micah has placed my name after that of my two brothers—but if it had not been for me neither of them would have arisen to take his place in history. Prove that? Easily.

You will remember that Moses called Aaron to help him—so without Moses there would have been no Aaron in history. And since without me there would have been no Moses—therefore without me they would never have been heard from. It happened this way.

I was very young when a terrible decree was issued by the Egyptian Pharaoh. Frightened by the birth rate among my people, Rameses II ordered his people to drown every male child born to the Hebrews. Shortly after this order was given, my mother gave birth to a son. For three months she successfully hid him from the Egyptian "Searchers." But then he grew so large that she feared he must soon be found.

Now mother knew that Pharaoh's daughter was accustomed to bathing in a certain pool of the Nile. And she gambled on the fact that no woman could destroy any baby as handsome as my brother. So she made him a small cradle-like boat and left him where the princess would find him. Then, leaving me to see that no harm should come to Moses, she went on to her

assigned duties.

It all came about as mother had foreseen. Pharaoh's daughter saw the floating cradle and sent one of her attendants to fetch it. When she saw little Moses—and he began to cry—her heart was touched. She knew that he would die unless she took him home with her. That was my cue. I stepped forward and said, "Wouldn't you like to have me get one of the Hebrew women as a nurse for the baby?" And when she agreed, I hurriedly found my mother. . . .

So you see—unless a small girl had been resourceful the greatest prophet of the Hebrews would have died as an infant. . . .

I am *Miriam*, the third leader of the Hebrew nation as it came out of Egypt. I was the poet, whose songs were to carry in their depth the hopes and aspirations, the beliefs and dreams of my people. Energetic, resolute, and resourceful, I was devoted to the welfare of our nation. But, because I had a marked degree of influence I wanted more—and my ambition caused me to misjudge my own brother. Success and honors are wonderful to receive—but unless they keep a person humble that person may find that pride has led to downfall.

INTRO- DUCTION

Excerpted from John B. Walthour, *Who Am I?* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), pp. 76-77.

When he wrote this, John B. Walthour was Chaplain of the United States Military Academy.

☐ June 12
Sunday

Israel's Female Administrator

LOGOS

Though not typical, female leadership was not unheard of in ancient Israel. Miriam is an outstanding example. She was on the same level of leadership as her brother Aaron during the trek from Egypt to Canaan (see Micah 6:4). Scripture gives us only three brief glimpses into Miriam's life but they reveal that she had all the components for success: resourcefulness, enthusiasm, charisma, ambition, etc.

We first see Miriam as a girl, watching over her baby brother Moses hidden in a papyrus basket among the reeds on the banks of the Nile (see Introduction).

We next see Miriam leading out in an uninhibitedly joyous celebration of the Lord's deliverance of His people at the Red Sea. The celebration began with Moses leading a song extolling God for His matchless power and His mighty deeds on Israel's behalf (Ex. 15:1-18). Then apparently as a sort of antiphonal response, "**Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing. Miriam sang to them:**

'Sing to the Lord

for he is highly exalted.

The horse and its rider

he has hurled into the sea' " (Ex. 15:20-21, NIV).

Miriam obviously had the enthusiasm and inspirational quality crucial to great leadership. And, her actions here remind us of the importance of expression, response and motion on the part of God's people in worship. Beyond its intrinsic joy, such worship strengthens the spiritual bond between us and God.

Our final glimpse at Miriam's life reveals the dangers of ambition, status-seeking and prejudice. "**Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife. . . . 'Has the Lord spoken only through Moses?' they asked. 'Hasn't he also spoken through us?'**" (Num. 12:1, 2, NIV).

Miriam and Aaron's basic concern seems to be that they were not getting the recognition or authority they deserved as ones possessing the prophetic gift. Apparently they felt Moses wasn't allowing them enough input on important decisions.

But there was also an element of racial prejudice in their criticism. Moses' Cushite wife (Zipporah), to whom Miriam and Aaron objected, would have had a darker complexion than the Hebrews. And Num. 12:1 strongly implies that they complained about her because she was a Cushite. Their opposition to Zipporah may have been a smokescreen in a drive for greater power, but even so, it displayed a dehumanizing attitude that God cannot condone.

God called the three siblings of Israel's "first family" into the sanctuary and there affirmed the uniqueness of Moses' authority.

Miriam was then struck with leprosy, but Moses, identified in the same chapter as the humblest man on earth (vs. 3), proves that characterization true by interceding with God for her healing. Miriam was healed, but only after being confined outside the camp for seven days. "**The people did not move on till she was brought back**" (Num. 12:15, NIV). The dissension caused by Miriam's jealousy and prejudice thus caused a delay in the progress of God's people towards Canaan.

D. F. M.

Discipline for a Divisive Spirit

Aaron and Miriam had occupied a position of high honor and leadership in Israel. Both were endowed with the prophetic gift, and both had been divinely associated with Moses in the deliverance of the Hebrews. "I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam," (Micah 6:4) are the words of the Lord by the prophet Micah. Miriam's force of character had been early displayed, when as a child she watched beside the Nile the little basket in which was hidden the infant Moses. Her self-control and tact God had made instrumental in preserving the deliverer of his people. Richly endowed with the gifts of poetry and music, Miriam had led the women of Israel in song and dance on the shore of the Red Sea. In the affections of the people and the honor of Heaven she stood second only to Moses and Aaron. But the same evil that first brought discord in heaven, sprung up in the heart of this woman of Israel, and she did not fail to find a sympathizer in her dissatisfaction.

In the appointment of the seventy elders, Miriam and Aaron had not been consulted, and their jealousy was excited against Moses. At the time of Jethro's visit, while the Israelites were on the way to Sinai, the ready acceptance by Moses of the counsel of his father-in-law had aroused in Aaron and Miriam a fear that his influence with the great leader exceeded theirs. . . .

Yielding to the spirit of dissatisfaction, Miriam found cause of complaint in events that God had especially overruled. The marriage of Moses had been displeasing to her. That he should choose a woman of another nation, instead of taking a wife from among the Hebrews, was an offense to her family and national pride. Zipporah was treated with ill-disguised contempt.

Though called a "Cushite woman," (Num. 12:1, RV) the wife of Moses was a Midianite, and thus a descendant of Abraham. In personal appearance she differed from the Hebrews in being of a somewhat darker complexion. . . .

When Zipporah rejoined her husband in the wilderness, she saw that his burdens were wearing away his strength, and she made known her fears to Jethro, who suggested measures for his relief. Here was the chief reason for Miriam's antipathy to Zipporah. Smarting under the supposed neglect shown to herself and Aaron, she regarded the wife of Moses as the cause, concluding that her influence had prevented him from taking them into his counsels as formerly. . . .

This manifestation [Miriam's leprosy] of the Lord's displeasure was designed to be a warning to all Israel, to check the growing spirit of discontent and insubordination. If Miriam's envy and dissatisfaction had not been signally rebuked, it would have resulted in great evil. Envy is one of the most satanic traits that can exist in the human heart, and it is one of the most baleful in its effects. Says the wise man, "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?" (Prov. 27:4). . . .

. . . The judgment visited upon Miriam should be a rebuke to all who yield to jealousy, and murmur against those upon whom God lays the burden of his work.

TESTIMONY

Key text:
Proverbs 27:4;
James 3:16

"Envy is one of the most satanic traits that can exist in the human heart, and it is one of the most baleful in its effects."

Excerpted from *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 382-386.

June 14
Tuesday

Miriam, Moses and the Lamb

by J. Orr

EVIDENCE

Key text:
Revelation
15:2-4

“And as the defeat of Pharaoh was the natural sequel to the exodus, . . . so will the defeat of Christ’s enemies in the end appear as the appropriate sequel to his work upon the Cross.”

We cannot fail to connect in our thoughts the circumstances of this magnificent triumph-celebration [in Ex. 15] with that other scene, described in the Apocalypse. . . . The “sea of glass” has obvious reference to the Red Sea, made to roll back, and stand up like a sea of crystal (vs. 8), yet illuminated and filled with lurid radiance, by the fiery glow of the pillar which shone on Israel. The “sea” is the symbol (in this instance) of deliverance achieved, of victory won, of enemies judged and overwhelmed—the fire in the crystal pointing to the burning wrath which consumed them.

The song of the redeemed over the defeat of the Antichristian powers at the end—over the defeat of *all* their enemies—is the true counterpart of this song of Moses, and the one (the latter) remains for ever the background of the other (the former), and is blended with it in the united celebration. Glancing at the two songs, this in Exodus, and that in Revelation, we note—1. That the *scope* of both is the same—the defeat of hostile, pursuing, persecuting powers. And as the defeat of Pharaoh was the natural sequel to the exodus, and confirmed to Israel that redemption then achieved, so will the defeat of Christ’s enemies in the end appear as the appropriate sequel to his work upon the Cross, and will complete the deliverance of his Church from those that trouble her. (2 Thess. 1:6). 2. That the *attributes of God* extolled in both are the same. This of necessity, for the work being similar, so must be the attributes revealed in it—holiness, power, unchallengeable supremacy, justice and truth, which here include mercy. “Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty,” etc. (Rev. 15:3). The effects produced on the nations by this display of God’s attributes are also similar—“Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name . . . for all nations shall come and worship before thee.” A higher result this, however, than in the case of the type. 3. The *singers* in both cases are the same—those viz. who have experienced the deliverance which they celebrate. Would we join them? We, too, must be in Christ, and partakers with those who, in the strength which he gives, are overcoming the world (1 John 4:4).

Excerpted from *The Pulpit Commentary, Exodus*, vol. 11, H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell, eds. (Chicago: Wilcox & Fallot Co., n.d.), pp. 8-9.

June 15
Wednesday

The Rev. J. Orr was a contributor to the *Pulpit Commentary*.

What the White Christian Must Do With His Church

by Columbus Salley
and Ronald Behm

Editor's note: One of the problems exhibited by Miriam and Aaron was racial prejudice. The following gives white Christians suggestions for dealing with racial problems that remain in the church today.

Because racism is a multiheaded monster, its destruction demands a diversity of responses, programs and solutions. The individual who commits himself to the abolition of racism must deal initially with his own racist attitudes and fears. If he doesn't, he will merely help further racism, not abolish it.

First, anyone who calls himself a Christian (in the biblical sense) must *repent* of any attitudes that would give him a sense of superiority in respect to another man (James 2:8-9; 2 Cor. 7:8-10; 1 John 1:9-10). The beginning of the elimination of white racism is the admission of guilt: the admission that I am wrong, that I have offended, that I have benefited from a society that assumes my superiority because I am white and the black man's inferiority because he is black.

A white man who says, "I never owned slaves," or "I never raped a black woman," or "I did not kill Emmett Till," or "I did not bomb the four black girls in Alabama," or "I have not opposed open housing," is escaping a confrontation with his own guilt. His guilt is the guilt of ignorance, the guilt of insensitivity to the cry and the struggle of black people, the guilt of omission which refuses to stop the continual oppression and domination of blacks by whites.

... The last group that will help eradicate racism in America are whites who simply weep and wail about their guilt. A change of attitude, based upon the admission of guilt must in order to be valid, issue in change of action. Specifically, in whatever ways necessary whites must actively support blacks in their survival struggle against institutional racism as manifested in housing, employment and other forms of discrimination.

... In light of biblical support for Christian involvement in the total society on behalf of the good of the *whole* man, we believe that it is the proper mission of the Christian church to actively support leadership and programs working (1) to destroy the forces of institutional racism and (2) to create a society in which the justice of God is realized in the institutions of men.

This active support may take on many forms. In one instance financial support may be primary, e.g., money for the building of black community enterprises; in another instance, an individual Christian or organization of Christians may join in active cooperation with the program of others, e.g., local pressure groups for black inclusion in trade unions and local educational control; in another instance, Christians may provide leadership to programs which seek to promote racial justice and harmony, e.g., educating *whites* in the larger society at *all* levels concerning the need for social and attitudinal change.

To those white Christians who invariably ask, "What can we do?" we say without equivocation, "De-honkify (de-whiten) your church: its curriculum, its investment and purchasing programs, its leadership and its attitudes."

HOW TO
Key text:
Ephesians
2:14-16

"To those white Christians who invariably ask, 'What can we do?' we say without equivocation, 'De-honkify (de-whiten) your church.'"

Excerpted from *What Color Is Your God?* by Columbus Salley and Ronald Behm. Revised edition © 1981 by InterVarsity Christian Fellowship of the USA and used by permission of InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL 60515

When this was written, Columbus Salley was an editor at Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., and Ronald Behm was a pastor in Chicago.

June 16
Thursday

The Ministry of Authority

by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

OPINION Editor's note: Miriam's misguided attempt to grasp for more authority raises the issue of the true basis of authority in the church, which is discussed by Bonhoeffer in today's selection.
Key text:
Mark 10:42-45

"Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister" (Mark 10:43). Jesus made authority in the fellowship dependent upon brotherly service. Genuine spiritual authority is to be found only where the ministry of hearing, helping, bearing, and proclaiming is carried out. Every cult of personality that emphasizes the distinguished qualities, virtues, and talents of another person, even though these be of an altogether spiritual nature, is worldly and has no place in the Christian community; indeed, it poisons the Christian community. The desire we so often hear expressed today for "episcopal figures," "priestly men," "authoritative personalities" springs frequently enough from a spiritually sick need for the admiration of men, for the establishment of visible human authority, because the genuine authority of service appears to be so unimpressive. There is nothing that so sharply contradicts such a desire as the New Testament itself in its description of a bishop (1 Tim. 3:1 ff.). One finds there nothing whatsoever with respect to worldly charm and the brilliant attributes of a spiritual personality. The bishop is the simple, faithful man, sound in faith and life, who rightly discharges his duties to the Church. His authority lies in the exercise of his ministry. In the man himself there is nothing to admire.

"The Church does not need brilliant personalities but faithful servants of Jesus and the brethren."

Ultimately, this hankering for false authority has at its root a desire to re-establish some sort of immediacy, a dependence upon human being in the Church. Genuine authority knows that all immediacy is especially baneful in matters of authority. Genuine authority realizes that it can exist only in the service of Him who alone has authority. Genuine authority knows that it is bound in the strictest sense by the saying of Jesus: "One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren" (Matt. 23:8). The Church does not need brilliant personalities but faithful servants of Jesus and the brethren. Not in the former but in the latter is the lack. The Church will place its confidence only in the simple servant of the Word of Jesus Christ because it knows that then it will be guided, not according to human wisdom and human conceit, but by the Word of the Good Shepherd.

The question of trust, which is so closely related to that of authority, is determined by the faithfulness with which a man serves Jesus Christ, never by the extraordinary talents which he possesses. Pastoral authority can be attained only by the servant of Jesus who seeks no power of his own, who himself is a brother among brothers submitted to the authority of the Word.

From *Life Together* by
Dietrich Bonhoeffer,
pp. 108, 109, copyright ©
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June 17
Friday

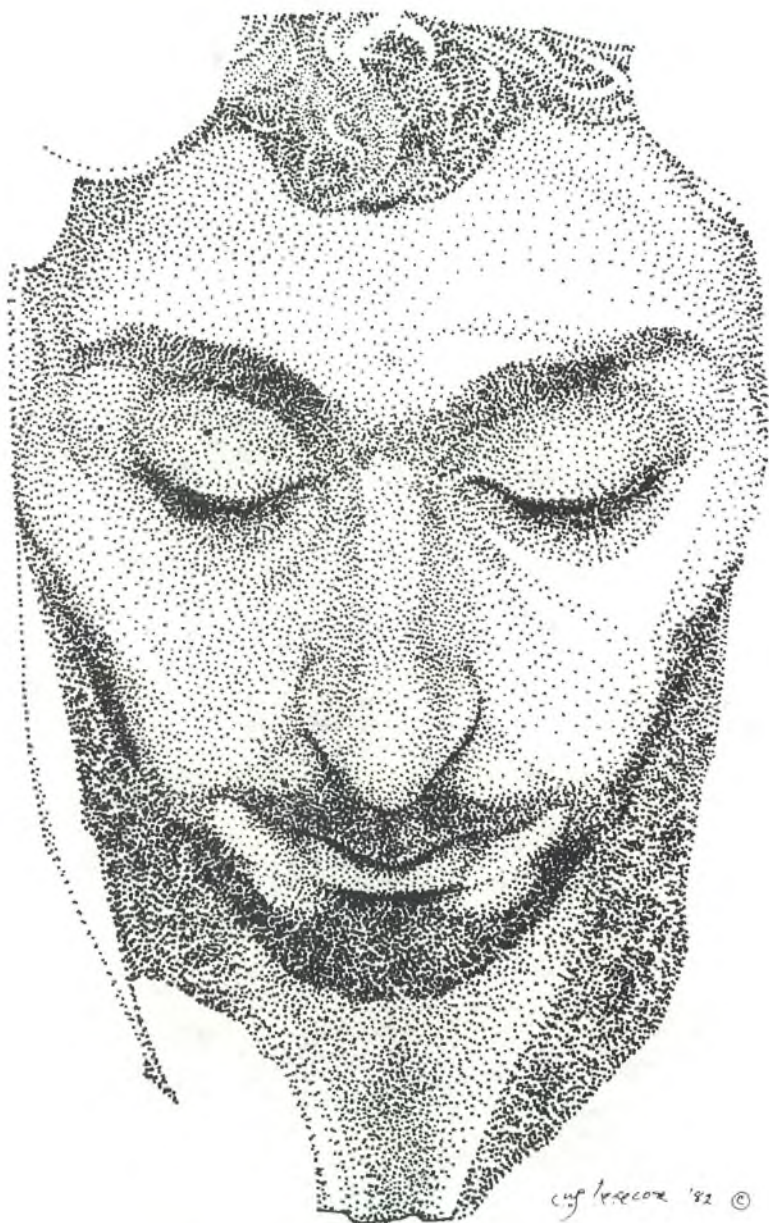
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Dietrich Bonhoeffer was one of this century's leading German theologians.

REACT
Lesson 12

1. Does Miriam's prominence as a leader in Israel suggest that female leadership is appropriate in today's church? Should greater involvement in ministry and church administration on the part of women be encouraged? If so, what specifically should be done?
 2. The songs of Moses and Miriam (Exodus 15) are indeed exalted expressions of praise to God. But should a Christian exult over the demise of his enemies, particularly in light of Christ's command to love one's enemies?
 3. Why do you think God felt it necessary to strike Miriam with leprosy? Are we given any indication as to why Aaron was let off the hook? Does God still issue specific punishments for sins today? If so, what form do they take?
 4. Ellen White (see Testimony) warns us against attacking those whom God has given leadership responsibilities in the church. How would you apply this warning in light of developments in the church over the past few years? Is it possible to take such counsel too far? Can criticism of specific individuals or policies be expressed constructively? Explain.
 5. What is your reaction to the suggestions in the How To article regarding race relations? How would you assess race relations in the Adventist church as a whole? In your local church? Can you think of practical suggestions for improving race relations?
 6. Do you think Bonhoeffer's (Opinion) concept of authority in the ministry is valid? Explain why or why not. Do the principles of service and self-giving apply to vocations other than ministry, such as business, law, medicine, construction, etc? Discuss the complications involved in applying such concepts to the various vocations.
-

Jonathan - Unassuming Star



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"Jonathan became one in spirit with David,
and he loved him as himself" (1 Samuel 18:1, NIV).

Lesson 13, June 19-25

A Prince and a Promise

by Minon Hamm

INTRODUCTION

It was not a day for valiant deeds, for any hope of winning independence from intolerable bondage; it was time to slink away for one's life, before sick fear paralyzed the will.

But two men set out that day to scale the rocky cliff to the enemy garrison. They did not wait for anyone's encouragement. Instead they asked God for a sign. When they made their presence visible in the depths of the ravine, if the enemy above should say, "Come on up here!" it would be a token that God had given them into His servants' hands.

Spying the two Israelites, the enemy lookouts taunted, "Look! The Hebrews are crawling out of the holes they were hiding in. Come up to us, you scum, and we'll teach you something."

It was the token they'd asked for. The king's son and his friend pulled themselves up the cliff, repeating to each other, "The Lord has given them into the hand of His people."

Such an endeavor would have been wildest insanity but for one thing: a portion from the Book of the Law (Lev. 26:7, 8) which must have burned deep into Jonathan's brain. Here were spelled out provisions of the great agreement God had made with Abraham and his descendants, renewed to Israel after their miraculous deliverance from Egypt. "One of you will rout a thousand, because the Lord your God fights for you, just as He promised" (Josh. 23:10). This was God's covenant, confirmed by an oath.

Gaining the summit, with just one sword between them, the

two men quickly felled some twenty of the garrison. Panic struck the enemy. God entered the battle tangibly now. The ground began to shake, as though thousands of horses and chariots rumbled from some secret arsenal. Philistine soldiers began frenzied flight, lifting their swords to slay anyone in their path. Since there weren't any Hebrews around, the fiercer victims were their own comrades. Two men, brave but helpless agents of the God of war, were actually routing thousands, just as the promise predicted.

Aside from the excitement of a good story, there's compelling reason to ponder Jonathan's exploit. The reason: we are eligible to be parties to the same covenant he had. In fact, it's available to us in greatly strengthened form. In ancient Israel people were always breaking their part of the agreement, forfeiting their right to its blessings. But when Jesus came to earth, He undertook to fulfill the human side of the covenant. He said His spilled blood sealed a "new covenant" for His people. Now any one who wants to make a covenant with God can do so through Jesus who makes "better promises" (Heb. 8:6) than those Israel made over and over. Everyone doing this is "Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29).

Our enemies may be the unseen variety, yet they may even be more cruelly discomfiting than the Philistines. But the promise is no less to us than to Jonathan: "One of you will rout a thousand."

Minon Hamm is a Professor of English at Union College in Lincoln, Nebr.

□ June 19
Sunday

A Man in Conflict

by Kurt D. Davis

LOGOS The scriptures portray Jonathan as a man in conflict. He was courted on either hand by love and loyalty, by fairness and fealty, by ambivalence and ambition. It fell his lot to live between a father he could not respect and a rival he could not hate. Fealty to his father meant treachery to his friend, and faithfulness to his friend meant treason to his father. It was a noble character indeed that survived those conflicts without being a Benedict to his father or a Judas to his friend.

Let's look briefly at Jonathan's life. Of his debut it is recorded that he "... defeated the garrison of the Philistines which was Geba" (1 Sam. 13:3, RSV). Saul managed to be elsewhere with twice as many men and still get the credit (vs. 4)! When the Philistines mustered for retaliation against the Israelites, who were armed only with farm implements, Jonathan, alone with his bodyguard, entered the enemy camp and miraculously routed the entire army while Saul fearfully dallied nearby. Word of the rout spread and Israel's army quickly responded. As the ensuing chase got under way, Saul, always eager to make political hay out of a religious rite, commanded a solemn fast for the duration of the battle. The penalty for breaking it was death. Jonathan, ignorant of the decree, tasted some honey, but when he learned of the command he remained impenitent. He was the loyal Prince in loyal opposition. He blamed the incomplete victory on his father's foolish decree but Saul blamed it on his son's violation of the vow. Saul was about to execute his son when the men quickly objected saying, "'Should Jonathan die—he who has brought about this great deliverance in Israel? Never! . . . He did this today with God's help.' So the men rescued Jonathan . . ." (1 Sam. 14:45, NIV).

Perhaps the worst conflicts came to Jonathan as a result of his friendship with David. It galled Saul that his son cared not to wear the crown, but would cede it to safe-keep a mere friendship. To him it was sentimentalism that imperiled the dynasty. Once Jonathan's life was endangered while interceding for David, Saul erupted: "'You bastard! Now I know you are taking sides with David and are disgracing yourself. . . . Don't you realize that as long as David is alive you will never be king. . . ? Now go and bring him here—he must die!' 'Why should he die?' Jonathan replied. . . . At that Saul threw his spear at Jonathan to kill him. . . ." (1 Sam. 20:30-33, TEV).

Though engulfed by his own conflicts, Jonathan still found it possible to impart strength to David in his time of need. While Saul was pursuing David in the wilderness, it is recorded that "Jonathan went to David . . . and helped him find strength in God. 'Don't be afraid,' he said. 'My father . . . will not lay a hand on you. You will be king . . . , and I will be second to you' " (1 Sam 23:16, 17, NIV). These words were, no doubt, an invaluable encouragement to David's weary heart.

Jonathan died beside his father in battle, loyal to the end. David eulogized both, but his heart was in these words to his beloved friend: "How the mighty have fallen in battle! . . . I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women. How the mighty have fallen!" (2 Sam. 1:25-27, NIV).

by Clay Peck

Expect Great Things

"In Jonathan, the son of Saul, the Lord saw a man of pure integrity, one whom He could draw nigh, and upon whose heart He could move. . . ."¹ He impressed Jonathan and his armor-bearer, "who also was a man of faith and prayer,"² to make a secret attack upon the Philistines.

"Jonathan believed that God was able to work for them and save by many or by few. He did not rush up presumptuously. He asked counsel of God, then with a fearless heart, trusting in Him alone, he moved forward."³ "Angels of heaven shielded Jonathan and his attendant, angels fought by their side, and the Philistines fell before them."⁴

"These two men gave evidence that they were moving under the influence and command of a more than human general. To outward appearance, their venture was rash, and contrary to all military rules. But the action of Jonathan was not done in human rashness. He depended not on what he and his armor-bearer themselves could do, he was the instrument that God used. . . ."⁵

As Christians, we are faced with a challenge to take the good news of Jesus "to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (Rev. 14:6). From a human point of view this challenge is impossible. Not only are we confronted with a vast, ever multiplying population, but we must battle "against the unseen power that controls this dark world, and spiritual agents from the very headquarters of evil" (Eph. 6:12, Phillips).

Today God is looking for men and women of faith and prayer who are willing to be used as instruments to do great things for Him. The same angels that fought by the side of Jonathan and his armorbearer will fight for us. God is honored when we believe the *He is able* "to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20).

"It is not the capabilities that you now possess. It is that which the Lord can do for you. We need to have far less confidence in what man can do and far more confidence in what God can do for every believing soul. He longs to have you reach after Him by faith. He longs to have you *expect great things* from Him. . . . Put your talents into the work, ask God for wisdom, and it will be given you."⁶

TESTIMONY

Key text:

1 Samuel 14:6;

Ephesians 3:20

1. *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 208.

2. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 623.

3. *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4, p. 70.

4. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 623.

5. *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 208.

6. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 146. (emphasis supplied).

Clay Peck is a junior theology major at Union College.

□ June 21
Tuesday

Another I

by Deborah J. Leonard-Lethbridge

EVIDENCE

Key text:

1 Samuel 18:1;
2 Samuel 1:17-26

**"But if you
tame me, then
we shall need
each other.
To me, you
will be
unique in
all the world.
To you I
shall be
unique in
all the
world . . ."**

"And it came to pass . . . the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (Sam. 18:1). What can it mean to have one's soul "knit with" the soul of another? Friendship seems too frail a word to express such an ethereal relationship. Perhaps people in love come closest to knowing what it is like to be this involved with what is essential, elemental, in another person.

The word friend seems frail and watery only because we use it so freely, apply it so indiscriminately in our conversation. We say someone is a friend of ours when in reality he or she is no more than schoolmate or acquaintance. So when we mean someone who is more than a casual acquaintance, we must say "real friend," "true friend" or "special friend." In an essay entitled "The Death of Words," C. S. Lewis says, "A skillful doctor of words will pronounce the disease to be mortal at that moment when the word in question begins to harbour the adjectival parasites *real* or *true*. As long as *gentleman* has a clear meaning, it is enough to say that So-and-so is a gentleman. When we begin saying that he is a 'real gentleman' or 'a true gentleman' or 'a gentleman in the truest sense' we may be sure that the word has not long to live."¹

With no adjectives for enhancement or embellishment, then, Jonathan and David were friends.

David had numerous proofs of the quality and depth of Jonathan's friendship, and was aware of the treasure it was. Jonathan had pleaded with his father to spare David's life; Jonathan had risked his life to go to David to warn him his life was in danger; and despite the fact that by all earthly laws and traditions Jonathan should have inherited his father's throne, Jonathan accepted that God's will was that David be the next king.

Jonathan must have been a very big man inside, to nourish a friendship above all jealousies, instincts for self-preservation, and to be so willing to abdicate what he had grown up knowing was his inheritance in favor of his friend.

The Little Prince in Antoine de Saint Exupery's wise fable by that name is searching for friends. When he comes upon a fox who says "tame me," the Little Prince is confused. The fox explains, "It is an act too often neglected. . . . It means to establish ties." He goes on to say that until you "tame" someone, he or she is just like hundreds of thousands of other little boys or foxes. " 'But if you tame me, then we shall need each other. To me, you will be unique in all the world. To you, I shall be unique in all the world. . . . ' " The Little Prince is busy and has much left to understand. " 'One only understands the things that one tames. . . . Men have no more time to understand anything. They buy things already made at the shops. But there is no shop anywhere where one can buy friendship, and so men have no friends any more. If you want a friend, tame me. . . . ' "²

Perhaps this is the secret of friendship: To take time, to "tame" each other until your souls "knit with" each other. The philosopher Diogenes Laertis wrote in the second century, "When Zeno was asked what a friend was, he replied, 'Another I.' "

1. C. S. Lewis, *On Stories: and Other Essays in Literature* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Jovanovich, 1982), p. 106.

2. Antoine de Saint Exupery, *The Little Prince* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1943), pp. 80-84.

□ June 22
Wednesday

Deborah J. Leonard-Lethbridge teaches English at
Union College in Lincoln, Nebr.

Lessons From a PK

Jonathan was the ultimate “preacher’s kid.” Son to the king, he had all eyes on him from the moment of birth. And surprisingly, like today’s Prince Charles of England, he turned out to be a responsible, even admirable, guy.

So what can we learn from his life? Three things:

1. **Learn to live with, and overcome, circumstances.** Jonathan was born to a high estate. Most of us are not. Some of us come from unbelievably tragic or mean backgrounds. That’s not important. What is important is how we react to that background. Jonathan could have become a playboy prince, squandering his inheritance and using his influence to control others. He didn’t. He took life seriously and gave God the glory. The temptation for most of us, on the other end of the social scale, is to go through life putting the blame everywhere but where it belongs—on our own shoulders, and then at the feet of Jesus.

2. **Sacrifice is good, healthy and noble.** This was tough for Jonathan, and even tougher for you and me in this materialistic, even hedonistic, age. We tend to look at nuns, ascetics, fasters, and others who voluntarily give up something as perhaps having a screw loose. But Jonathan proved that he could give up a kingdom and still be emotionally healthy. He saw God’s will that David should become king, and he was willing to accept it—to see his natural place in the order of the universe as something less than it might have been. That’s a hard lesson, but one you may be called to learn—when the college scholarship doesn’t materialize, when the boy next door finally marries another girl, when the promised promotion never comes. The important thing is to praise God anyway and go on with life.

3. **Find a friend and make a real friend of that person.** Friendship is a rare and valuable commodity. Jonathan and David hit it off together from the very start. They shared interests and opened themselves to each other in a way that bonded them for life. Despite their radically different backgrounds, they cemented a friendship that has become a model for the very word. Friendship always involves risk. Two men or two women run the risk of having labels attached to their friendship. The same is true of a male-female relationship that is platonic in nature. Jonathan and David may have endured that kind of gossip. But it didn’t keep them from trusting one another.

Take the time and effort to make yourself that kind of friend. Even if you only find one friend of that quality during your lifetime, you’ll be doing better than most.

HOW TO

Key text:
Proverbs 18:24;
27:6-9, 10

On Laying Down One's Life

by J. B. Lethbridge

OPINION

Key text:
John 15:13

What does it mean to lay down one's life for a friend? What benefit can possibly accrue for the one who is dead? And there are many objections to doing such a thing: the dead are often better off than the living; and is it selfish to deprive one who loves you of the very thing which may be more precious to him than his own life? Certainly at the moment of making the supreme gesture of Christian love, the temptations come crowding around, eager to slam the door of heaven in one's face at the latest possible, irrevocable second: the temptation to die out of cowardice, or selfishness; to die for the glory of the act; or hoping to step into heaven by such works. And there is, of course, the temptation not to go ahead.

Luckily perhaps, a situation where the sacrifice is necessary or possible is likely to be sudden. There is little time for ratiocination as you fling a coat over your head and dash into a burning building, which suggests that we should make up our minds before such a situation is likely to occur.

But to return to our question. To be willing to die for someone else, as Jonathan was, means being willing to substitute their life in the world for your own. You would rather, if you were willing to die so that someone else could continue to live, that their life continued than your own—even though it could do you no good once the deed were done. It is, if purely done, an unselfish act, which is why it is so Christian. The act requires that you love the person whom you are about to die for *more* than yourself. The saying of Jesus "Love your neighbor as yourself" is a lesser demand than laying down one's life—at least cold-bloodedly. If one loved a friend merely as one's self, if he were merely "another I", one could prevaricate, rationalize: I am as good a man as he; I have greater potential; I am younger; I have a wife and children. But the moment one's love for a friend supercedes love for one's self, then the friend becomes a treasure whose preservation means more to one than one's continued existence and enjoyment of that treasure. Dying to preserve a friend demands an exceptionally pure and sublime love. This is a love that I can only assume lies completely in God's gift—but it is one of the marks of a Christian.

But fortunately, Jonathan's risk did not result in death. That would have left ambiguous echoes in the mind. Jonathan died in a cause perhaps less sublime, but nobler and less ambiguous: he died defending his father's spiritual, political and military errors. Jonathan could have joined David's camp; David was in the right and was to be the next King by the command of God; Saul was in the wrong and God had forsaken him. No one would have thought less of Jonathan for doing so. Except Jonathan.

So Jonathan and Saul were not divided in death, and we are left with no qualms about Jonathan's conduct. He had preferred David's life to his own, and was willing to demonstrate that on several different occasions; but though Saul was this friend's enemy, he was first of all Jonathan's father. So he died defending a lost cause for another's sake. What strikes me above all about Jonathan is the humility implicit in the attitude to life evident in his biography.

"He died defending a lost cause for another's sake."

1. Our lesson characterizes Jonathan's two-man attack on the Philistine army (1 Sam. 14) as an act of faith and bravery. What distinguishes such an act from rashness or foolhardiness? How do you distinguish between expecting God to do "the impossible" and being presumptuous?
 2. Evaluate Jonathan's ethics at the following points in his life. Was he right or wrong in
 - a) passing on misleading information to Saul about David's whereabouts (read 1 Sam. 20 carefully)?
 - b) making a covenant with David regarding the transfer of royal power while David was still an outlaw (1 Sam. 23:15-18)?
 - c) fighting with Saul against the Philistines (1 Sam. 31) after Saul had visited the witch of Endor (1 Sam. 28), and with the possibility that David would be in the opposing army (1 Sam. 29)? Note also the Opinion article.
 3. Discuss the characteristics of friendship demonstrated by Jonathan.
 4. Discuss the passage from *The Little Prince* cited in the Evidence section. What does it mean for human friends to "tame" each other?
 5. Jiggs Gallagher (How To) suggests that fear of gossip regarding sexual involvement sometimes inhibits the development of deep friendships. Do you agree? What might be done about this problem?
 6. What do you think David meant by saying about Jonathan, "Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women" (2 Sam. 1:26)?
 7. After reading this week's Opinion, do you think it is right for one to lay down his life for the other in all instances where such action is possible? Why or why not?
-



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