

COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

General Conference Church Ministries Publication January-March 1988

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Studies in Exodus and Numbers

COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

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1. Misery, Midwives, and Murder 6
2. Here Am I—Send Aaron 16
3. Pharaoh in the Hot Seat 26
4. Mary's Little Lamb 34
5. Between the Devil and the
Deep Red Sea 44
6. Heavenly Diet—Earthly Appetite ... 54
7. Keeping Your Cool 64
8. Love, and Do What You Like! 74
9. Symbols From the Sanctuary 84
10. Impossibility Thinking 94
11. Politics and Religion 102
12. Tough Love 110
13. Filling Moses' Shoes 120

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THIS QUARTER'S ARTIST

Jim McClelland's study of wildlife, together with his interest in the visual arts, goes back beyond his memory. It seems that both his love for the things of the natural world and his love for art have always been there. Growing up in rural Michigan provided the stimulus for his informal study while more formal art training later took place at Andrews University and at Michigan State University. Additionally, degrees were earned in English and in Counseling from Andrews University and from Western Michigan University.

Jim, his wife, Huda, and their two children, now live in Lincoln,



Nebraska, where he is Professor of Art at Union College. His work is represented in many private and corporate collections across the country. Jim's paintings have appeared in numerous one- and two-man shows and have captured many first place awards including:

- The 1980 Nebraska Habitat Stamp Competition
 - The 1980 Nebraska Wildlife Federation awards Including:
 - Best of Show
 - Best Watercolor
 - Best Nebraska Species
 - The 1981 Best of Show: Songbirds at the National Wildlife Art Show
 - The 1983 Best of Show: Songbirds at the National Wildlife Art Show
 - The 1983 Best of Show: Birds of Prey at the National Wildlife Art Show
 - The 1984 Best of Show: Songbirds at the National Wildlife Art Show
 - The 1985 Nebraska Habitat Stamp Competition
- Additionally, his work had been represented in the Leigh-Yawkee Woodson International Bird Art Exhibition. His work is also represented by Wild Wings Galleries and is published in the following books authored by Dr. Paul Johnsgard, noted ornithologist and author:
- *The Plover, Sandpipers and Snipes of the World* published by University of Nebraska Press.
 - *Hummingbirds of North America* published by Smithsonian Press.

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GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THE COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

Facts You Should Know

The COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY is based on the conviction that there is transforming power in the Word of God and that one important way of tapping into that power is through group study. It is prepared with Adventist college students and young adults particularly in mind. Its purpose is to provide this group with a resource for devotional study on mutual topics, which can then be discussed together each week in Sabbath School.

Additionally, many who use the adult quarterly find that the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY, since it deals with the same topics as the adult, enriches lesson study and discussion as a supplemental aid.

Adventist colleges and universities, along with young adult church groups, work together in producing the quarterly. The writing at each school is coordinated by the campus chaplain's office. Approximately 200 individuals contribute to the quarterly each year.

Circulation of the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY is about 25,000.

Pointers for Study

1. The Bible passage to be studied for each week is indicated in bold on the introduction page (Sunday's lesson). Read this entire passage in conjunction with the quarterly introduction to give you an overview of the lesson.

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

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

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

Introduction (Sunday) is designed to get your attention and focus your thinking on the week's theme.

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

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

Evidence (Wednesday) approaches issues raised by the lesson from a historical, scientific, philosophical, or theological perspective. It is likely to be the most "scholarly" article of the week.

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

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

5. Through prayer, open your mind to the Holy Spirit's guidance as you study.

The CQ and the Church

The COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY is the General Conference-approved quarterly for the collegiate/young adult age group. It upholds the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. *However, its contents should not be regarded as official pronouncements of the church.* Particularly in the Evidence and Opinion sections, views are expressed which are only individual opinion, not official denominational positions.

INTRODUCTION TO EXODUS

The birth and growth of a child gives joy and hope to parents. When God's spiritual family increases He rejoices too!

The book of Exodus tells the story of the birth of Israel as a nation and her subsequent growth. Abraham indelibly etched the name *Hebrew* upon the pages of human history as he responded to the call of God. His grandson Jacob became a "prince in Israel." Twelve sons were born into his family, and from them stemmed the "twelve tribes of Israel."

When a famine struck hard in the land of the Hebrews, Jacob's family sought bread in Egypt. During their long four hundred years of exile in that land, God shaped His chosen people into one family. Their Exodus really became their birthday as a nation. While in Egypt "the Israelites were fruitful and multiplied greatly and became exceedingly numerous, so that the land was filled with them" (Ex. 1:7, NIV).

God wants His people to increase. Notice the words of the verse again: ". . . fruitful . . . multiplied greatly . . . exceedingly numerous . . . the land was filled with them." These picturesque words trigger an explosion in our minds that God's people can grow! Littleness and cult mentality should not be our lot. God tells us to conquer the complex of the miniature and become great.

The story of the Exodus is "God's way out." This is His way out of sin, slavery, and smallness. It is also His march to freedom, fullness, and future blessedness.

But like all God's promises, the life of prosperity and enlargement is conditional. Jehovah brought all His people out of Egypt, but they did not all march into the Promised Land. Most of the Hebrews who came out of Egypt died in the burning desert sands. Some fell through unbelief; others, because of rebellion; and still others, through a lack of sanctification. May God teach us the great lessons we should learn through the failures of the ancient Hebrews. "These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come" (1 Cor. 10:11, NIV).

As you study these lessons of Israel's march to freedom I believe they will strengthen your faith and cause you to rejoice in your relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Lesson 1, December 27—January 2

Misery, Midwives, and Murder

“The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him” (Deut. 18:15, NIV).



The Sacrifice of Deliverance

by Charles Whiting

A blinding flash of blue light and a searing heat wave blazed through the laboratory room at Los Alamos National Laboratory. Horror-stricken, eight scientists stood as if welded to the concrete floor, their eyes riveted to a sphere of radioactive material. For a brief moment, only the ominous click of a Geiger counter, tirelessly measuring the rapidly increasing radiation level, could be heard as a fission reaction inside the sphere escalated out of control.

The failed experiment had begun innocently. It involved two beryllium hemispheres and a small quantity of enriched fissionable material. As part of a demonstration to another physicist, a Los Alamos scientist planned to surround the material partially with the hemispheres to enhance the radioactive decay. But suddenly, as he lowered the upper hemisphere, the screwdriver he was using as a lever slipped, and the two halves slammed together. The fission reaction increased instantly.

For a split second the scientist performing the experiment stood paralyzed. The huge quantities of radiation being emitted by the sphere meant certain death to anyone who came near. But unless someone did something quickly, the radiation streaming from the sphere would kill or injure everyone inside the laboratory.

Quickly he realized what he must do. He leaped to the sphere and tore the halves apart with his bare hands. Stumbling away, he staggered a few paces, vomited from radiation sickness, and collapsed on the floor. Nine days later he died—having given the ultimate personal sacrifice in exchange for the lives of his colleagues.

Though few are called literally to die for their friends, deliverance inevitably demands a life—at least a committed one. Moses' mother gave her son to the Egyptian princess as part of a divine plan to free the Israelites. At the time she must have lain awake night after night wondering why. And every attempt by Moses to bring about the freedom of his people backfired until he forsook the pleasures of Egypt. But once Moses reached the point where he would willingly herd sheep for the rest of his life, then God transformed his seemingly hopeless efforts and made him an unrivaled hero.

In a similar way, God is waiting to rescue a doomed world. His Son has already died in the effort. Many sigh, "Why doesn't somebody do something?" "Why has Christ delayed?" But few are even willing to give up an hour a day, much less devote their entire life to shepherding. Would you?

INTRODUCTION

Scripture:
Exodus 1:1—
2:25

Charles Whiting is a senior engineering major at Walla Walla College, Washington.

God's Way Out

by John C. Cress

LOGOS

Theme: No matter how hopelessly we seem to be held in the bondage of sin, God has provided a Redeemer who can deliver us.

1. Bondage and Oppression (read Exodus 1:1-22)

"They made . . . [the Israelites] lives bitter with hard labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their harsh labor the Egyptians used them ruthlessly" (1:14, NIV).

The theme of the book of Exodus is divine redemption. God's people, enslaved by Egyptian oppressors, experience redemption, deliverance, and freedom from bondage. Even the title of the book bears significance. In the Septuagint, a translation of the Hebrew scriptures into Greek that was completed three centuries B.C., the Hebrew title *Shemoth*, meaning "names" (from the first several words of the text) was exchanged for a new title. The new name, bearing greater theological significance, was *Exodus*, derived from two Greek words: *ex*, meaning "out of," and *hodos*, meaning "road" or "way." The title underscores the theme—it speaks of a "way out," it predicts "deliverance," and it suggests the essence of the plan of salvation.

On the most obvious level Exodus is the story of how Abraham's descendants, sojourning in Egypt and forced to become slave laborers, receive divine deliverance. But the story also symbolizes and typifies the story of deliverance throughout Scripture. Hebrews 3:5-6 compares Christ with Moses. Zechariah's prophecy concerning the Messiah is framed in the language of deliverance. "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed His people. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us . . . to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days" (Luke 1:68-74, NIV).

Deliverance, of course, presupposes bondage. A situation exists from which one must be delivered:

"The . . . Gospel is bad news before it is good news. It is the news that man is a sinner, to use the old word, that he is evil in the imagination of his heart. . . . That is the tragedy. But it is also the news that he is loved anyway, cherished, forgiven, bleeding to be sure but also bled for." "Beneath our clothes, our reputations, our pretensions, beneath our religion or lack of it, we are all vulnerable both to the storm without and to the storm within, and if ever we are to find true shelter, it is with the recognition of our tragic nakedness and need for true shelter that we have to start. . . . This is, of course where Jesus starts, and His word of tragedy is 'Come unto me, all you that labour and are heavy laden.'"¹

In every age, for every person, Christ's words are eternally relevant: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28, NIV). This is the story of Israel in Egypt—worn and burdened. It is the story of each individual who has ever lived or whoever will. From a life of endless service to self

John C. Cress is an associate pastor at the Walla Walla College Church, Washington.

from slavery to sin, from the decree of death that hangs over our heads the moment we enter this world, we must each experience, for ourselves, God's exodus.

At several points in Israel's colorful history, oppression seems to be self-inflicted. God allows it to happen in hope of turning a wayward nation back to Him. Such is apparently not the case here in the opening chapters of Exodus. What does this tell you about the nature of the people and of sin? About the plan of redemption? About the character of God?

2. A Deliverer Is Born (read Exodus 2:1-10)

"Now a man of the house of Levi married a Levite woman, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months." "When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, 'I drew him out of the water'" (2:1, 2, 10, NIV).

What begins as a tragedy ends like a fairy tale. A slave couple's baby, born under a death decree, is found by the killer's daughter, rescued, and given a royal upbringing. The difference between this and the fairy tale genre is that this is not fantasy. It actually happened!

Exodus highlights the issue in the great controversy between Christ and Satan. God blesses His people, Satan oppresses God's people, and God provides a redeemer. An Egyptian tyrant's death decree seeks to snuff out the life of a deliverer, but God finds a way to protect His chosen one. It is difficult to escape the parallels between the attempts to destroy Baby Moses and the life-threatening decree of another tyrant who sought similar means to get rid of another Deliverer. The story of this Deliverer is the focus of the gospel. It is the focus also of Revelation's "Great Controversy" message. (See Revelation 12:1-17).

Two other concepts characterize the story of Moses' early years. First, ordinary people were the heroes. Women—faithful midwives (Ex. 1:15-21) and a hopeful mother and sister—were used by God to bring about His plan. Godly parents, Amram and Jochabed (Ex. 3:20; Num. 26:59), end up in faith's hall of fame because they trusted God to bring about deliverance. "By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict" (Heb. 11:23, NIV). Faithfulness, expressed by ordinary people, produces extraordinary outcomes.

Second, God's purposes, often unseen by human beings, are being worked out in favor of God's faithful people:

What quietly pulse
What quietly pulses through so much of this record is the remarkable providence of God. At every turn little events (or big ones!) forwarded the purposes of God in Israel and

thwarted the evil intention of the Pharaoh. Yet how unaware were the actors of the providence that guided them all.

"Christians who are aware of God's acts in history should always have a firm faith in the overarching providence of God; and also a reticence to label events as 'of the Lord' too quickly, for we are just as ignorant of the course of providence while in its midst as were the Israelites and the Egyptians.

Silence before the providence of God takes more faith than a ready labeling of events as 'of the Lord.'"²

In what areas of your life is God calling you to faithfulness? What are some of the seemingly impossible situations facing you? Try to imagine (not speculate) how God might be working for your well-being in spite of difficulties.

3. Preparing for Deliverance (read Exodus 2:11-25)

"The man said, 'Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?' Then Moses was afraid and thought, 'What I did must have become known.' When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian, where he sat down by a well" (2:14, 15, NIV).

The road to deliverance and the pathway to service for God are seldom without enticing side trips. Moses the deliverer is detoured. A similar temptation faces every individual who chooses to work for God. It is the temptation to do God's will our own way. Jesus experienced the fullness of it in the wilderness. (See Matt. 4:1-11). "Take a shortcut," Satan urged. "Bow down to me. The world you wish to rescue will be yours. I'll turn over the deed. No cross. No suffering. No cleanup crew. Three and one-half years ahead of schedule. Do it now!"

Moses is beginning to sense something of his calling in life, and yet, at age 40, an Egyptian corpse, a vengeful monarch, a nation of cynical slaves, and a long road behind him are all he has to show for his efforts. His sense of frustration is seen in the naming of his first-born child. "Zipporah gave birth to a son, and Moses named him Gershom, saying, 'I have become an alien in a foreign land'" (2:22 NIV).

The amazing thing is that God did not forget Moses. In the solitude of the Midian years God came and taught Moses how to do His work His way. Moses became a family man, learning God's lessons with a shepherd's staff in one hand and diaper pins in the other. God reminded Moses that He hadn't forgotten about His people. Israel's cry for deliverance ascended to heaven. "God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them" (2:24, 25, NIV).

How does God treat us when we detour from His plan? What mission is God calling you to accomplish? Is it entirely clear or still somewhat nebulous as it was for Moses in these chapters? What preparation will be required? What does the period of waiting—Moses in Midian and Israel in Egypt—indicate about the apparent "delay" in Christ's coming as Deliverer?

1. Frederick Buechner, *Telling the Truth* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977) pp. 7, 33.
2. Bernard L. Ramm, *His Way Out* (Glendale, Calif.: G/L Publications, 1974), pp. 15, 16.

Making a Choice

by Edward M. Ammon

TESTIMONY

Key text:
Hebrews
11:24-27

Many today feel that they are caught in the bondage of sin, not being able to turn away from the things it has to offer. However, the Lord has provided a Redeemer who can deliver us.

"Moses was offered the palace of the Pharaohs and the monarch's throne; but the sinful pleasures that make men forget God were in those lordly courts, and he chose instead the 'durable riches and righteousness.' Proverbs 8:18. Instead of linking himself with the greatness of Egypt, he chose to bind up his life with God's purpose. Instead of giving laws to Egypt, he by divine direction enacted laws for the world. He became God's instrument in giving to men those principles that are the safeguard alike of the home and of society that are the cornerstone of the prosperity of nations—principles recognized today by the world's greatest men as the foundation of all that is best in human governments."¹

Like Moses, each of us is faced with a decision. We can either enjoy the sinful pleasures of this world or we can bind up our lives with God's purpose. Binding up our lives with God's purpose means more than just saying, "I'm on God's side." It means that we are choosing to accomplish a work with God.

"In all who have been chosen to accomplish a work for God the human element is seen. Yet they have not been men of stereotyped habits and character, who were satisfied to remain in that condition. They earnestly desired to obtain wisdom from God and to learn to work for Him. Says the apostle, 'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.' James 1:5. But God will not impart to men divine light while they are content to remain in darkness. In order to receive God's help, man must realize his weakness and deficiency; he must apply his own mind to the great change to be wrought in himself; he must be aroused to earnest and persevering prayer and effort. Wrong habits and customs must be shaken off and it is only by determined endeavor to correct these errors and to conform to right principles that the victory can be gained. Many never attain to the position that they might occupy, because they wait for God to do for them that which he has given them power to do for themselves. All who are fitted for usefulness must be trained by the severest mental and moral discipline, and God will assist them by uniting divine power with human effort."²

REACT

1. Does sin exact any less galling service from those who are its slaves than Pharaoh did of the Israelites? What are the wages of sin? Why, then, does Scripture speak of "the pleasures of sin" in Hebrews 11:25?

2. What can we learn today from the choices that Moses made?

1. *Education*, pp. 68, 69.
2. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 248.

Edward M. Ammon is a senior theology major at Walla Walla College, Washington.

The Deliverer as Messiah

by Terrell D. Gottschall

Exodus 2:23 (RSV) records the plight of the enslaved Hebrews in Egypt: "And the people of Israel groaned under their bondage, and cried out for help, and their cry under bondage came up to God." God's response was to commission Moses to emancipate the Hebrews from oppression, thereby making Moses act as a forerunner of a later Saviour. Just as Moses delivered the Hebrews from the bondage of slavery, so does Jesus Christ deliver us from the bondage of sin.

Moses embodied a dual role as the deliverer of the Hebrews. Leading the Israelites on the Exodus from Egypt, Moses liberated the Hebrews from their Egyptian slavery. During the sojourn in Sinai, he provided the Hebrews with a spiritual and moral code, this freeing them from the bondage of misconduct.

God, in fact, has always responded to cries for help, providing a deliverer in time of need. Abraham, Noah, and David served such a role. History, too, is replete with additional examples. Martin Luther broke the shackles of an oppressive church. Abraham Lincoln, the "great emancipator," liberated American slaves. Ellen White led a remnant out of a "spiritual Sinai."

The concept of "deliverer" also brings immediately to mind the idea of a Messiah. Derived from the Hebrew word *mashiach*, "anointed," the term referred to a person chosen by God for a special task. The original Hebraic concept of "anointed" had a general application in the Old Testament, referring to kings (David, for example, in 1 Samuel 16:1), prophets (Isaiah 61:1), and even the Persian ruler Cyrus (Isaiah 45:1).

The messianic concept assumed a more specific meaning as the Hebrews fell again under foreign control, first with the Babylonian exile in the sixth century B.C. and then with Seleucid (third-century) and Roman (first-century) domination. The Hebrews now looked upon the messiah as a liberator, a perception that most often evoked the reign of King David. This Davidic messiah would free the Hebrews from foreign bondage and restore the glory of Israel. Simultaneously, as Hellenism (an intellectual movement denoting the fusion of Greek and Persian ideas) came to influence Hebrew thought in and after the fourth century B.C., many Hebrews hoped for a Mosaic messiah, a new Moses who would purify the law and eliminate its non-Judaic vestiges. With these circumstances, the Hebrews again called for a messiah, a deliverer.

This messianic need in turn prepared the way for the ministry of Jesus. The appellation *Christ*, derived from the Greek translation of the Hebrew *mashiach*, itself evoked the messianic ideal. Appearing to some as a new David and to others as a new Moses, Jesus was both, yet neither. Much more than liberating the Jews from the bondage of Roman oppression or purifying a decadent law, Jesus the Messiah delivered us from the bondage of sin and gave us the promise of salvation.

EVIDENCE

Key text:

Exodus 2:23

Terrell D. Gottschall teaches history at Walla Walla College, Washington.

Chains

by Karen MacIvor

HOW TO
Key text:
Exodus 1:14
and 2:25

Bondage is something I have a hard time relating to. In contrast to the Israelites, I have the right to vote, the right to choose my place of employment, the right to have children without someone's destroying them at birth. To understand truly the type of bondage the children of Israel went through, one must experience it; therefore I do not understand.

Periodically I do feel a victim of fate—in bondage to the circumstances I encounter in life. Chains that take a superhuman effort to shed. Taskmasters, like television, that vie for control of my life. Busyness that makes me so tired I don't want to read the Word or go to church on Sabbath. Negative habits that form strong links, one connected to another and wound ever so subtly about my existence. They are so subtle that I don't even think of them in terms of bondage, but they are every bit as oppressive as the Egyptian taskmasters.

When people come to my office to seek help in breaking their chains, we may initiate a program to change the life style or look at psychodynamics that feed self-defeating behaviors. We work through negative life experiences and encourage the formation of new, positive thought patterns. We capitalize on will power and look for sources of energy that can boost a person's desire to make changes. And, because of my belief system, we look at the power offered us through the Holy Spirit. Many times the experience is successful, and the person goes away feeling better because a link of the chain is broken. This is good. Praise God, He gives us the ability to make changes for the better! But there is always another link that is still intact, attached to another and another to weigh us down. In nothing else, the condition of the human race, the fragility of our environment, and the certainty of death are links impossible to break.

So when I think about the "how to," I can only come up with one answer. The Deliverer has died for us, but the final physical link in our chain of bondage has not been broken. Lord, please come quickly and take us to the Promised Land! We lack both the initiative and the capability to get there by ourselves.

REACT

Does the struggle of the children of Israel, brought to view in Exodus, have application for Christians today? Are we involved, and if so, how? (See 1 Cor. 10:1-12).

Karen MacIvor is director, counseling center, Walla Walla College Washington.

Firsthand Vision

by David Lennox

OPINION

Key text:
Exodus 2:25

Roy was nearly 50, but in his heart he was as youthful as any camper that week. He had been assigned to my cabin. I wasn't sure that my nineteen years of living had prepared me for the job of guardian and helper to this man.

But I liked Roy. He laughed heartily at his own jokes, winked at all the women he met, and played ragtime tunes on the piano with gusto and flourish. His white cane tapped its way into all corners of the campground.

Roy put me at ease, for he seldom questioned my guidance, even when my inexperience called for it. I tried hard to be worthy of his trust, but most of the time I was merely in the way, tripping over his cane or pointing out the obvious. "I'm blind, not deaf," he would bark when I spoke too loudly—then he would smile.

His laughter always came quickest when his handicap was the most obvious. Like the time I forgot to tell him I was leaving, and he ended up talking to an empty chair for several minutes. When I apologized he chuckled at the scene and patted my shoulder. "They don't make you seeing-eye counselors like they used to," he said. Later he told me that he understood: sighted people always forget things like that.

It's true that I have a hard time imagining Roy's situation. When the person to whom I'm talking leaves, I can tell. I've never fallen ten feet down a manhole left uncovered by careless workmen, as Roy has, either. Being blind is far from the realm of my experience. So is the Israelites' problem of making bricks in the hot sun under the whip of a half-crazed Pharaoh's agent.

I do have my own kind of handicap, though. My bondage is easier to ignore, sometimes, and harder to define. It is the kind of spiritual oppression that puts me—and the rest of the human race—in the need of a Deliverer.

Fortunately for me, for Roy, and for the Israelites, our God is watching. Exodus 2:25 gives assurance: "So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them" (NIV). God sees our situation; His concern means soon deliverance. And our Deliverer understands our bondage, because He has suffered under Caesar's whip and has felt firsthand the despair of sin. There's no better preparation for an all-seeing Counselor—I think Roy would agree.

REACT

1. The Israelites had come to Egypt under the guidance of God through His miraculous intervention at the time of Joseph. Why, then, did they find themselves suffering such cruel oppression? Does following God's leading prevent affliction from falling on us? Does God promise to keep us from trouble at all times or does He sometimes allow us to experience trouble for reasons that He knows best?

2. How do I react to affliction—Do I see it as a means of developing greater strength of character or as an evidence that God has forsaken me?

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Lesson 2, January 3 - 9

Here Am I—Send Aaron

“But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong” (1 Cor. 1:27, NIV).



“Lord, Help!”

by Gartley N. Curtis

Moses stood there on Mount Horeb in front of the burning bush. The voice of God spoke explaining how he was supposed to deliver his brothers from under Pharaoh's thumb. And Moses was thinking, “No way, what if . . . ?”

What if I were in my dorm room studying like an engineering major when all of a sudden, out of the clear black night, my desk burst into flames and a deep, persuasive voice told me to take my shoes off and get down on my knees? What if it told me to go somewhere and present myself before some awful leader and make a ridiculously presumptuous speech? I could do it, or I could say, “Hey, can't You get somebody else?”

Suppose God told me, via my flaming desk, to go to a terrorist warlord and tell him to release the hostages he was holding? All I would have to do is fly to a neighboring country, take a bus or hitchhike as far north as possible, then sneak across the border and make an appointment with the warlord. Then I'd tell him and his heavily armed relatives, “You'd better release those hostages, or each and every single Mercedes that your faction owns will throw a rod tomorrow at noon.” I could do it or I could figuratively go back to my flock of sheep. “I can't

do that because—yeah, I've got an impediment that prevents me from speaking the language.”

That's the “Send-Aaron angle,” the “I-can't theory,” that we use when the walls look insurmountable, or when our woods are burning.

I seriously doubt that God will ever torch my desk just to get my attention. Even if He wanted a college student to try a political stunt like petitioning in person for the lives of hostages, the probability that I would be chosen is pretty small because, fortunately for me, there are billions of students.

But what if God asked me to take charge of a situation or burden that was more plausible than our hypothetical hostage escapade, and still apparently undoable? You make up a “for instance.”

I think it's important to remember that God's plan includes everybody, not just world leaders. He isn't forever flooding the planet, dividing the oceans, and crumbling the wall of an impregnable fortress. He often uses little Davids to knock over muscle-bound Goliaths.

So when God puts a load on me, I believe He would rather hear me say, “Lord, this is really heavy, I need Your help,” than, “Here am I, send Aaron.”

INTRODUCTION

Scripture:
Exodus
3:1—4:31

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Did God Really Call *Me*? by Jon Dybdahl

LOGOS Theme: Reading Moses' experience helps us to understand our struggles to hear and understand God's call.

1. God Calls Moses at a Burning Bush (read Exodus 3:1-10)

"Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring forth my people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt" (Ex. 3:10, RSV).

Exodus tells the powerful saga about God's deliverance of His people Israel from Egyptian slavery. All Bible stories of salvation for groups of people begin, however, with God's call to a person. God works through the one, Moses, for the deliverance of His many, Israel.

The Lord appears to Moses in a flame of fire issuing from a burning bush and then speaks to him. Moses' call in many ways forms a basis and pattern for other Old Testament calls. An example of this is the image of fire. Ezekiel's call story begins with the vision of a cloud that has "fire flashing forth continually" (Eze. 1:4) and continues with numerous allusions to fire, coals, and torches. Isaiah sees the temple filled with smoke and has his lips touched with a "burning coal" (Isa. 6:4, 6).

Many Christians earnestly desire unmistakable calls from God. They wish their vocation and work sprang directly from an encounter where they heard the divine voice. Identifying with Moses is difficult. On close examination, however, Moses' call is not as clear as we might think. All Moses seems to have seen initially was a burning bush that was not consumed (Ex. 3:3). The burning flames were simply the shape the angel of the Lord took (see Ex. 3:2 in *The Jerusalem Bible* and *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 251, 252). Only when he heard the voice was he able to say the fire was in fact God's messenger.

Further, Moses does not immediately sense God's presence. God must order him to remove his shoes and inform him about the holiness of the place. Only after these commands and God's declaration of His identity does Moses begin really to sense that he has encountered God (Ex. 3:5,6). Time and reflection were needed for this call to have an impact.

How can people tell whether God is really calling them? Can it happen in everyday circumstances of life? How?

2. Moses Makes Excuses (read Exodus 3:11—4:17)

"But Moses said to God, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?'" (Ex. 3:11, RSV).

This entire passage shouts that for Moses, viewing the bush and hearing the voice were not enough. Moses did not see his way clear to respond. He had numerous questions.

First, Moses wondered about himself. How could *he* do this? God promised to be with him and gave him a sign. Second, Moses won-

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dered what God's name was—what was he to tell his people about this God who supposedly called?

God's answer to Moses' second question has tantalized Bible students for centuries. What did God mean when He said His name was "I am who I am" (Exodus 3:14, RSV)? The name given is a form of the Hebrew verb *to be*. The verb is not just a simple present tense. The meaning denotes incomplete action. A proper translation could be in either *present* or *future* tense. A popular idea is that the name refers then to God's being or existence. He is the basis of existence itself and the ground of all being. While God certainly is the source of all things, the idea is more philosophically cultural than the biblical idea. In Scripture God is known by His acts more than anything else. God may have intentionally given a somewhat ambiguous answer. The context of this passage and the story that follows, however, makes it clear that Israel knows this God by what He has done for Israel's fathers—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They will also know Him when He works the Exodus deliverance. Yahweh both is and will be, because He has saved, is saving, and will continue to save His people.

Moses' third objection to God's call should cheer all of us who live in a twentieth-century scientific culture. Moses fears people won't listen to him because they won't believe God came to him. We would feel the same way. Moses had seen a burning bush and heard a voice, but he experienced this alone in the desert. Relentless heat and aloneness can do things to people. Was it all a mirage or a dream? He had been on the mountain of God (Ex. 3:1), and perhaps was psychologically predisposed to hearing voices. We think we are the only ones who wonder whether we have really met God! Moses certainly did, and he is afraid the people will not accept his wild tale of a divine voice from a blazing bush.

God in His mercy gives Moses three signs to convince people that he has a divine message. In spite of all this, when Moses asks his father-in-law Jethro's permission to visit Egypt, he says nothing of the divine voice or call. He states he wants to check on his relatives (Ex. 4:18)! He seems to fear that even his father-in-law will doubt his story.

Moses' last objection is that he can't speak eloquently. God counters that He can take care of that by sending Aaron to help. In the end Moses still asks God to send another in his place! Reluctant responders through the years can take comfort from Moses.

Why do you think Moses asked all these questions? Are they excuses, valid queries, or stages of acceptance he is working through? Is it appropriate to wonder about God's acts in our lives?

3. Moses Returns to Egypt (read Exodus 4:18-31)

"And the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshiped" (4:31).

Moses finally goes to Egypt—not that it was easy! God has to tell him that those who seek his life are dead and then command him one more time to go (4:19). More struggles will follow.

He faces a reluctant Pharaoh. Our hero Moses also has a brush with death on the trip (Ex. 4:24-26). The details are not clear, but Moses had neglected to follow God's commands about circumcision.

Hearing and responding to God's call is never easy. Struggle, questions, self-doubt, and faltering are always present even for heroes of faith like Moses. Can God's children today expect anything different? The final sign and assuring of God's call for Moses was yet future (Ex. 3:12). So for us, the final confidence and surety comes in seeing God's works in the end. Today we still are weak and see through a glass darkly, but God urges us on—giving us more evidence as we continue to march along His path.

*Why was this whole experience such a struggle for Moses?
Would it have been better for it all to be clear and easy? Why?
Are our struggles to hear and understand God's call good or bad?
Why?
Are they struggles of faith or doubt? Why?*

Great Things for God

by Jim Boyd

TESTIMONY

Key text:
Acts 2:1-4

As we can see from the examples of Moses, Abraham, and David, God does use ordinary people to do great things. Great things done in God's service, however, don't always result in the recognition given these three. As Ellen White points out, great things are often done with little credit given in this life.

Take for example her comments about Jochabed, the mother of Moses, a woman devoted to God:

"God had heard the mother's prayers; her faith had been rewarded. It was with deep gratitude that she entered upon her . . . task. She faithfully improved her opportunity to educate her child for God. She felt confident that he had been preserved for some great work. . . . All this rendered her more diligent and careful in his instruction than in that of her other children. She endeavored to imbue his mind with the fear of God and the love of truth and justice, and earnestly prayed that he might be preserved from every corrupting influence. . . . How far-reaching in its results was the influence of that one Hebrew woman, and she an exile and a slave!"¹

Mary, the mother of Jesus, also had a momentous task to fulfill for her Lord. This ordinary woman was to give birth to the Messiah, and was to be His only teacher besides God:

"The child Jesus did not receive instruction in the synagogue schools. His mother was His first human teacher. From her lips and from the scrolls of the prophets, He learned of heavenly things. The very words which He Himself has spoken to Moses for Israel He was now taught at His mother's knee."²

The Lord has a plan for our lives. We can expect to do great things for God; furthermore, the time has come when we must expect the Lord to do great things for us. "Our efforts must not flag or weaken. We are to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord. Before the work is closed up and the sealing of God's people is finished, we shall have the outpouring of the Spirit of God. Angels from heaven will be in our midst. . . . The present is the fitting-up time for heaven, when we each must walk in full obedience to all the commandments of God."³

REACT

1. Give some reasons why God takes people and things that the world considers weak and foolish and uses them to bring down the things that the world considers wise and strong.

2. What spiritual conditions must be met in order to expect God to do great things through us?

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 243, 244.
2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 70.
3. *Letter 30*, 1907.

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The Ultimate Anti-hero

by Julie Lenee Scott

EVIDENCE

Key text:
Exodus 4:13

In his book *The Literature of the Bible* Leland Ryken looks at the Hebrew exodus from Egypt as an epic and compares it to *The Aeneid* of Virgil, a literary epic masterpiece written 1400-1500 years later. His comparison approaches the Exodus from an unusual perspective.”*

In case *The Aeneid* hasn't been on your reading list lately, here is a brief synopsis: It was written by Virgil between 30 and 19 B.C. for Augustine, Emperor of Rome, who wanted a literary epic to glorify the empire and his role in founding it. The twelve books of *The Aeneid* take the hero Aeneas through many wanderings until he finally conquers his foes in Italy and founds Rome. In typical heroic narrative, this empire was a promised land where, under the leadership of a great ruler, the Roman people fulfill their mission to bring enduring harmony and justice to the long-tormented world.

In Exodus we find our hero Moses and the rest of the Hebrews leaving Egypt in a quest for the Promised Land, where they hope to establish a peaceful, exemplary nation. Moses' personal experiences represent many of the values central to our story, just as Aeneas' bravery and heroism exemplify the ideal man of *The Aeneid*. But Ryken points out that, along with the similarities between the Exodus epic and *The Aeneid*, there are some important contrasts—like the kind of hero we find in Moses.

First, Moses is a shepherd and the son of slaves, not a handsome prince in disguise; most heroes have a more impressive lineage. Next, responding to God's call, he asks, "Who am I?" (Ex. 3:11). Moses also complains that no one would believe him or listen to him: "I am not eloquent," he mumbles (4:10). Ironically he has been forcefully arguing with God Himself for a while. Finally, in Exodus 4:13, Moses pleads: "'O Lord, please send someone else to do it'" (NIV). He is anything but an impressive hero.

In spite of all his excuses, Moses still becomes the hero in the Exodus epic. In fact, what the Hebrews accomplish with the help of his leadership has more profound effects on history than Aeneas and his grandiose epic ever did. Moses' role as a less-than-typical hero is tied to those of other Biblical heroes such as David the shepherd, Daniel the captive slave, Jesus the carpenter born in a stable, and the disciples—a bunch of ignorant fishermen.

What is a Christian hero anyway?

* Leland Ryken,
The Literature of the Bible
(Grand Rapids, MI:
Zondervan, 1974).

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Facing Our Fears

by Larry Parsons

Honesty is a strange facet of character. We all would agree that honesty is integral in any relationship. At the same time, though, we recognize that *complete* honesty, down to expressing our exact thoughts and emotions, can ruin a friendship.

On the other hand, saying we're "fine" when we feel rotten is a form of dishonesty. Being honest entails sharing how you feel and, then, what your fears and questions are. Our society, though, has conditioned us to the point that we rarely share our true feelings with people, often not with ourselves.

The dialogue between God and Moses that we've been studying brings up some important points concerning our honesty with ourselves and God.

1. Be honest enough with God to express your fears and doubts. Instead of turning away from God's wishes because of uncertainty, stay open to Him and express your fears. Moses did. He displayed his insecurity by balking and making excuses. It happens to the best of us. But by expressing yourself to Him, your trust will be strengthened.

2. Don't allow your questioning to supersede your basic faith in God. Even though Moses was reticent, he didn't let his reservations completely supersede his faith. Without hesitation he threw down his staff (Ex. 4:3), picked up a snake (4:4), and put his hand in his cloak twice (4:6, 7). He did not question God's power, only his own abilities.

3. Recognize the difference between questioning your own abilities and questioning God's abilities. God didn't become angry with Moses when he questioned himself. On the contrary, he promised to be with him (3:12), gave him signs of His presence and power (4:2-9), and promised to give him the right words to say (4:12). It wasn't until Moses questioned God's power by refusing to do as God asked (4:13) that God's anger "was kindled against Moses" (4:14, NIV). By questioning God, Moses was saying, "Though You created me, you don't have the power to use me."

It is possible to do anything that God asks through Christ who strengthens us.

REACT

Moses was equipped by the Lord to use supernatural means to verify his commission. Should what God did with Moses lead us to expect God to provide supernatural solutions to the problems and decisions that we face in our daily living?

HOW TO
Key text:
Exodus 4:12

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Not Me, Lord

by Lisa Leilani Jervey

OPINION

Key text:
Exodus 3:11

I had just been offered the position of "Christian Life" editor for Walla Walla College's school paper, the *Collegian*. Me, the "Christian Life" editor? The idea was preposterous, or so I thought. Plagued by confusion, I collapsed on my bed to ponder the significance of such a move. Staring at my ceiling did little to help solve my dilemma. Jumping up, I grabbed pen and paper and promptly spent the next two hours bemoaning my doubts, fears, insecurities, and inadequacies in a letter to one of my closest friends.

The exact words of that letter have since been forgotten. I can only remember that I didn't feel "good enough" to take on the responsibility of establishing myself as a Christian "model" on campus. I could never live up to the expectations that others would set for me. I had doubts about where I was going and what I was going to do with my life. I was a relatively new convert to Adventism and I still made lots of mistakes. And, I still asked lots and lots of questions. I was acutely aware that my Christian life would scarcely qualify me as a role model.

This was no burning bush. But, as a twentieth-century Christian grappling with the insecurities of becoming a leader, it's the closest I've ever come to one. As Moses questioned, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" (Ex. 3:11, NIV), so I questioned, "Who am I, that I should be a model among my peers?" And like Moses, I had lots of excuses for not taking such a risk—a risk that would ultimately infringe upon my spiritually static existence. A risk that would force me to define my role as a Christian. Moses knew such risks. That's why he hesitated. That's why I hesitated.

Fortunately, success does not hinge on what I can do, but rather on what God can do through me. Moses was right; he wasn't worthy to be a leader for God ON HIS OWN. He was focusing on his humanity instead of on the divinity of God, judging himself by the "hero standards" of the world. But God used Moses despite his hesitation.

Moses was an ordinary man whose achievements stemmed from his acceptance of his dependence on the divine. And he became a great Old Testament hero. I'm far from being another Moses. I realize God's plan for my life will probably take me in a much different direction.

My friend wrote back. He said, "Lisa, be yourself! That's enough, insecurities and all. God will use you where you're at." That's advice I can use.

REACT

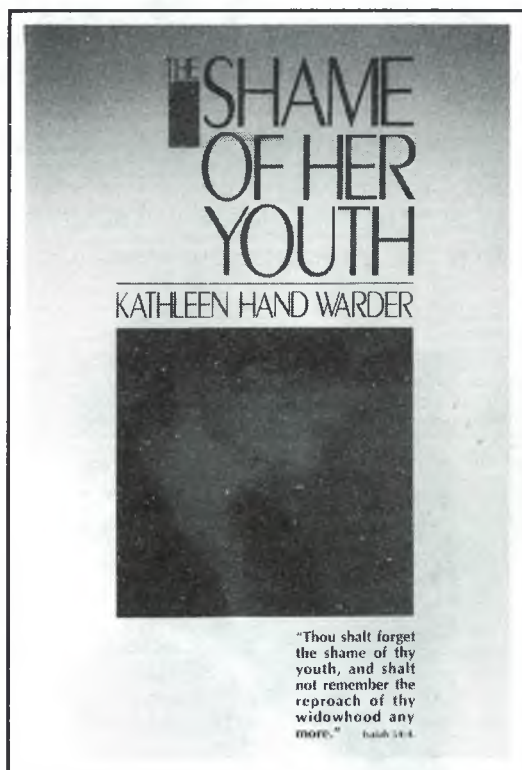
1. Do I accept God's claims on my life even in minor areas or do I make excuses for not following God's commands?
2. Do I trust God to provide the means and power to fill successfully the role He has assigned me in witnessing for Him?

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Beyond Divorce

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from
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Jennie Shelby had always thought that marriage was forever. Divorce never entered her mind. But it did Larry's. There was another woman, and Jennie had no choice. Suddenly, she was a single parent with little experience and almost no skills.

Shattered, she managed to pull her life together. Yet the questions persisted. Would she ever marry again? *Could* she? Did God's Word permit it? She determined one thing: God would be in control. She would only marry again if she could be certain that it was a part of His plan.

But turning her life over to God proved to be more confusing at times than just telling herself she would. Then one day she found God's promise, and life was never the same again.

This book is not about the good life. It's about the real life of a divorced Christian and the frustration—sometimes the pain—of putting God first.

Pharaoh in the Hot Seat

“If you make the Most High your dwelling—even the Lord, who is my refuge— then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways” (Psalm 91:9-11, NIV).



Pharaoh's Last Words

by Gary Tetz

As the waters of the Red Sea closed over his noble head, Pharaoh couldn't help feeling remorseful. Slaves had seemed like a good idea at the time, but if he had to choose between pyramids and drowning . . . well, he wasn't sure.

Looking back, he knew he had handled things badly. "If only I had known then what I know now." He shook his head sadly, and sank into a corner of his chariot. "So many things would be different."

Memories floated by. A strange man with an annoying stutter. A few harmless magic tricks. A ridiculous request in the name of a God he'd never taken seriously. Who could blame him for laughing?

Bad to worse. He hadn't meant to drag the whole country down with him, but it had become a matter of pride. And national interest. A king can't just go freeing all of his slaves without suffering some sort of political backlash. Hanging tough was a calculated gamble. He never would have played this game if he hadn't honestly thought

he could win. "Of course, all this is somewhat irrelevant now," he muttered as the chariot came suddenly to rest in a bed of muck.

You can't help feeling sorry for Pharaoh. Certainly he was stubborn and proud, and had every opportunity to save himself and his country from plagues of unusual severity. But he had never met the Hebrew God. He threw himself recklessly, even ignorantly in the path of a deity who had promised to deliver His people regardless of human opposition. How could he have known?

As the waters of the Red Sea obliterated his Egyptian army, Pharaoh inwardly resolved never to underestimate the tenacity and power of a living God. "I guess I learned an important lesson," he stated.

Then he settled back, tucked his knees under his chin, and shook his head slowly, disbelievingly, somewhat despondently. "They were only Israelites," he whimpered as the end drew near. "I didn't think He'd get so mad."

**INTRO-
DUCTION**
Scripture:
Exodus
7:14—10:29

Promises

by Darold Bigger

LOGOS

Three thousand years ago a colossal confrontation took place in Egypt between competing gods. It was a fight to the death over a population of slaves.

One "god" had used them to build huge monuments immortalizing his power.

The other wished to fulfill a promise made hundreds of years earlier. Yahweh (probably pronounced "Yah-way" and translated LORD in most English Bibles) was His name, and He had told the slaves' ancestors they would inherit Palestine. Many slaves had forgotten the promise. But to the LORD a promise is a promise.

The stakes were high. Yahweh risked His reputation as God above all gods, the only true God.

The Egyptian Pharaoh (who called himself a god) risked a way of life for himself and his people. Egypt could not exist as it was without cheap labor, exploitation of minorities, and religious repression. On the line for him was the end of an era.

1. The First Triad of Plagues (read Exodus 7:14-8:19)

"The magicians said to Pharaoh, 'This is the finger of God.' But Pharaoh's heart was hard and he would not listen, just as the Lord had said" (8:19, NIV).

A number of puzzling details in the plague stories remain unsolved. We don't know how much water turned to blood, what kind of frogs covered the land, or exactly what kind of insects attacked, et cetera.

Regardless of the details, the most important truth taught by the plagues stands firm: Yahweh God proved more powerful than the best Egypt had to offer. Even the magicians testified to that. Yahweh took them head on and left them baffled. Duplicating the first two plagues, they couldn't produce the third, but retreated in failure.

What must God do to convince us that He alone is LORD? How do you understand the statements about God hardening Pharaoh's heart?

2. The Second Triad of Plagues (read Exodus 8:20—9:12)

"But on that day I will deal differently with the land of Goshen, where my people live; no swarms of flies will be there, so that you will know that I, the LORD, am in this land. I will make a distinction between my people and your people" (8:22, 23a).

The second series of plagues, more than simple annoyance, brought suffering, personal pain, and loss of property.

The intensified miracle discriminated between the Egyptians and the Israelites. For the first time God separated the two groups and delivered His people. He became their Saviour.

Pharaoh offered his first concession during the swarms of flies, and the magicians gave up and went home with painful boils. They flinched.

Darold Bigger is senior pastor of the Walla Walla College Church, Washington.

In what ways do we concede God's authority only while under stress?

3. The Third Triad of Plagues (read Exodus 9:13—10:29)

"Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and said, 'Go, worship the LORD. Even your women and children may go with you; only leave your flocks and herds behind' " (10:24, NIV).

The severity of the last three plagues left little question as to their source. The hail and locusts devastated the land and terrified the people. A continued barrage on personal property brought the Egyptians to their knees. Many Egyptians swung over to Yahweh's side. Even Pharaoh's adviser urged him to give in.

The Egyptians worshiped a number of animals, as well as the Nile River, so several of the plagues demonstrated the impotence of their gods. The nine plagues conclude with an attack on the chief Egyptian god, Ra, or Amen-Ra at this period, the god of the sun, was the purported tie of the Pharaoh to the gods. The huge temple at Karnak, much of which still stands, stood in his honor. Now the land of the sun god choked in darkness.

Pharaoh gave in during each of these final three plagues. But each time he included a condition. During the hail he gave in—but changed his mind after the thunder and hail stopped (9:28-35). During the locusts he gave in—but wanted to keep the women and children (10:8-11). During the darkness he gave in—but wanted the Israelites to leave their animals behind.

In each case Moses was intransigent. Yahweh didn't need to negotiate. The only God, the all-powerful God, would deliver all His people and all they had. Unconditional surrender. That's what Yahweh wanted.

God gave in to the Israelites several times—gave them the quail in the desert, for example. Why couldn't He bend a little with Pharaoh?

4. Plagues With a Purpose

The plagues had a purpose. Yahweh wanted to do more than just prove Himself invincible.

He wanted Pharaoh and others to recognize and give Him the honor the Creator deserves (9:14, 15). He wished others to come to know Him (9:16). He wanted the Israelites to know Him as their God (10:2).

Salvation, not destruction, was the intent of the plagues. God offered deliverance to all who would acknowledge Him as the true God. A promise is a promise.

On God's Side

by Paul Haffner

TESTIMONY

Key text:
Isaiah 27:13

"Before the infliction of each plague, Moses was to describe its nature and effects, that the king might save himself from it if he chose. Every punishment rejected would be followed by one more severe, until his proud heart would be humbled, and he would acknowledge the Maker of heaven and earth as the true and living God. The Lord would give the Egyptians an opportunity to see how vain was the wisdom of their mighty men, how feeble the power of their gods, when opposed to the commands of Jehovah. He would punish the people of Egypt for their idolatry and silence their boasting of the blessings received from their senseless deities."¹

"It was the hand of God, and no human influence or power possessed by Moses and Aaron, that wrought the miracles which they showed before Pharaoh. Those signs and wonders were designed to convince Pharaoh that the great 'I AM' had sent Moses, and that it was the duty of the king to let Israel go, that they might serve the living God."²

"The eye of God, looking down the ages, was fixed upon the crisis which His people are to meet, when earthly powers shall be arrayed against them. Like the captive exile, they will be in fear of death by starvation or by violence. But the Holy One who divided the Red Sea before Israel, will manifest His mighty power and turn their captivity. 'They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.' Malachi 3:17. . . . 'In the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me.' Psalm 27:5. Christ has spoken: 'Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity.' Isaiah 26:20,21. Glorious will be the deliverance of those who have patiently waited for His coming, and whose names are written in the book of life."³

"The day of wrath to the enemies of God is the day of final deliverance to His church."⁴

REACT

1. The seven last plagues will be poured out on an unrepentant world as the sure result of world-wide apostasy and persistence in sin. What specific warning is given to God's people in the last days? (See Rev. 18:1-8).

2. How do we come out of "Babylon?"

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 263.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 264.

3. *The Great Controversy*, p. 634.

4. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 727.

Paul Haffner is a senior theology major at Walla Walla College, Washington.

A Question of Methodology

by Ed Boyatt

EVIDENCE

Key text:
John 2:23

God is the Master Teacher. His repertoire of teaching methods is endless. Throughout the history of the great controversy we see that one of the ground rules of His classroom is that He will not force His will on anyone. Therefore, God uses a variety of approaches to win our allegiance and to lead us to accept the wisdom of His ways.

The scripture this week illustrates a teaching method that many master teachers do not hold in high esteem. Physical correction is even illegal for most teachers to administer today. But God chose this negative reinforcement model of instruction. Pharaoh's opposition is easily understood; he did not want to liberate his slaves. Therefore, God brought Pharaoh into submission by physically punishing every Egyptian. God simply stated that He wanted everyone to know that "there is none like me in all the earth" (Ex. 9:14).

At another time God used a different teaching method. Again His behavioral objective was clear; He wanted to persuade people to see the reasonableness of His will and to have them place their confidence in Him. This time He personally visited our planet and performed miracles of healing. "Many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did" (John 2:23).

In the first instance, God performed supernatural acts of destruction to change a person's mind—the "hot seat" approach. On another occasion He healed broken bodies to win the respect of His audience—an approach that clearly demonstrated mercy and compassion.

REACT

1. In what circumstances does God use the "hot seat" instructional approach?
2. Why does God use the negative, or destructive, approach when we think He should use the positive or constructive approach?
3. Which teaching method do you prefer to use with young children—physical punishment (plagues) or a helping hand (healing miracles)?
4. With so little evidence of the supernatural today, is God currently using either method?
5. "How long will you refuse to submit?" (Ex. 10:3, Moffatt). What other teaching methods could one use to bring submission?

Ed Boyatt is associate director of education at the North Pacific Union Conference.

When the Dog Bites

by Elaine Blake

HOW TO Key Text: Psalm 91:9-11

It is 2:45 A.M. The stage is set, and the burglary is choreographed down to the millisecond. The hit will take place in exactly five minutes. The house is dark.

It is 2:50 A.M. Quietly you steal over the fence, sneak across the lawn to the window, and prepare yourself for the task at hand.

Suddenly a bark; then a growl. Something attaches itself to your pant leg. The resident Doberman. An unexpected, and painful, element. For the next five minutes you struggle to free yourself from a dog instead of struggling off with the expensive TV as planned.

When Moses asked that his people be let go, Pharaoh said No. But he hadn't planned on the Dobermans.

God has promised to deliver His people. Those who resist Him and stand in the way of His ultimate plan will be destroyed. But those who take note and live their lives in harmony with Him are destined for eternal life, despite adversity.

During adverse conditions Pharaoh repented and promised to free the Israelites. But as soon as things returned to normal—Pharaoh's promise was empty.

There are several key factors in understanding the difference between empty promises and genuine confession, which leads to harmony with God's will and, eventually, salvation. And in understanding adversity.

1. Use bad experiences to fine-tune listening skills. It is human nature to listen more carefully when we're in trouble. A "Beware of Dobie" sign may not catch your attention when you're intent on breaking into a house. A barking Doberman is more likely to get your attention, but a biting Doberman is guaranteed to do so.

C. S. Lewis in his book *The Problem of Pain* suggests that we are more likely to listen to God during adversity because His voice is too loud to ignore and demands our attention. "God whispers to us in our pleasures," he writes, "speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."*

2. Remember that genuine confession and repentance lead to change. Reaction to adversity can be either fear for oneself, as with Pharaoh, or true repentance, which is a result of God and His power. Biting Dobermans may thwart a burglary because you fear for your limbs, and they make you determined to choose a house with no dog next time. Or biting Dobermans can be a painful reminder of the eighth commandment—a chance to stop and think about the consequence and implications of your actions.

3. Response to adversity can result in increased, intensified adversity or it can result in an opportunity to learn. When the dog bites, you can bite back, hit with a flashlight and ignore the warning, or you can turn around and walk (or run) away. Pharaoh bit back, and it resulted in continuing adversity, eventually death.

The choice to use adversity to strengthen harmony with God allows one to be a part of His plan, rather than part of the opposition.

* C. S. Lewis,
The Problem of Pain.
(New York:
Macmillan, 1962),
p. 93.

Elaine Blake is a senior communications major at Walla Walla College, Washington.

Who Are God's People?

by Pam and Gary Mohr

OPINION

Key text:
Exodus 10:13-15

Writing this opinion about Pharaoh and the plagues would be easier if I could just talk with God for a few minutes. Every time I read about Egypt's devastation I am troubled. Instead of rejoicing in Israel's release, I think of the untold sorrow the plagues brought Egypt. I wonder why God acted so harshly.

The passage seems to portray God as having little concern for the Egyptians. Through the plagues God wanted to accomplish two things. He wanted Pharaoh to release Israel, and He wanted to show His power so that His name could be declared throughout the earth (see Ex. 10:13-15). He used brute strength to show His power and deliver the Israelites.

Egypt was probably no better or worse than other ancient societies. Unlike Sodom, where God's purpose was to destroy evil, Egypt probably did not "deserve" the plagues. I cannot but contrast God, who related to the Egyptians through physical suffering and destruction, with Christ. I find it hard to reconcile the harsh powerful God portrayed by Old Testament Jewish writers with the understanding Christ of the New Testament.

If asked, God may explain that sometimes the only way He can make a point is through suffering. Or, perhaps Egypt was completely evil. I am uncomfortable with both of those explanations. In my own fashion I have tried to understand the harsh image of God. The Old Testament was written from a Jewish perspective. The Jews, as the chosen of God, had a vested interest in portraying God as powerful and concerned only with the Jewish nation. The Jews believed they had a monopoly on God and the truth. Given this perspective, how could the story of the plagues have been written any other way? But, what would the story have been like and how would God have been portrayed if an Egyptian had recorded the events?

The theme this week is about God's power to deliver Israel and how He will use His power again to deliver His people at the end of time. Because we view ourselves as people of God, it is natural to read the story of the plagues from a Jewish perspective. We are Israel. God will protect us and destroy others. But, it is shortsighted to read the story too quickly. No individual, organization, or nation has a monopoly on God or truth. Yes, God will deliver His people, but perhaps at the end of time His people will include some Egyptians, as well as Israelites. God will not save people based on nations, groups, or organizations. Instead, He will save the seekers of truth in every walk of life.

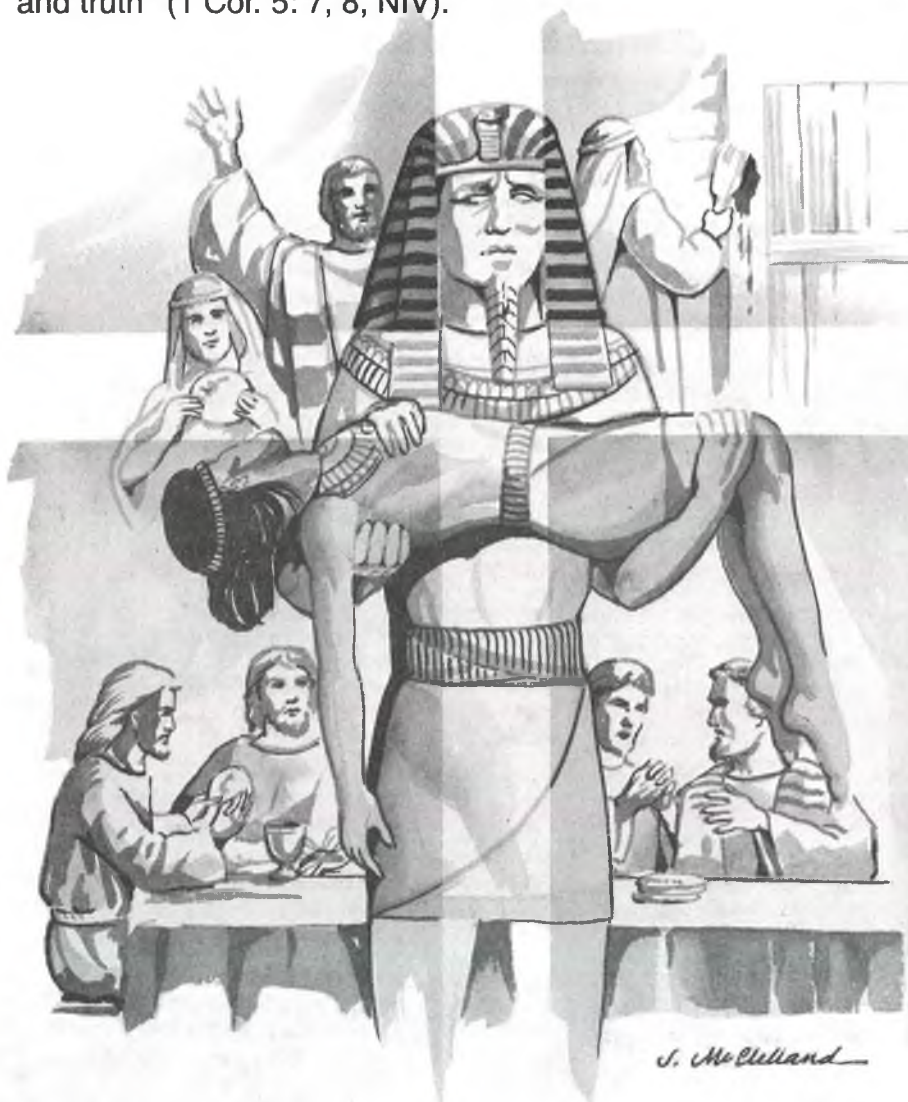
REACT

1. Adventists claim to be God's people. Does this give them special privileges with God? Why?
2. How do you feel about the author's opinion that God acted harshly with the Egyptians? Did the Egyptians treat the Israelites any differently? Could this be a case of the Egyptians reaping what they had sown? Explain.

Pam and Gary Mohr are recent alumni of Walla Walla College writing from Seattle, Washington.

Mary's Little Lamb

"Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. 5: 7, 8, NIV).



Fear Can Never Change a Heart

by Leanne Kaiser

"Say you're sorry."

"But I'm not sorry."

"Billy, go tell Jan you're sorry this minute, or you *will* be sorry."

Maybe it was the fearsome look of the teacher, or perhaps the memory of the teacher's paddle; whatever it was, Billy was convinced—for the moment at least.

But as he stumbled off, Billy could be heard mumbling, "Just wait 'til I'm big—I'll show you."

Billy complied (Billy wasn't stupid). But was there any real change of heart? No. Fear subdues, it does not transform. Fear can never change a heart.

"Let my people go."

"Who is Jehovah that I should obey Him?"

Blood, frogs, lice, flies, murrain, boils, hail, locusts, darkness, and now—a warning: death of the first-born.

Why doesn't Pharaoh fall to his knees and repent? Why doesn't Pharaoh fill with remorse and change his way (permanently) and serve the

Lord?

More important, why is the Lord putting up with this wishy-washy monarch? There was no need for ten plagues — one could have done the job.

But what would this have done to the Israelites? How would Israel have perceived this God of whom they had little other knowledge? Yes, they would have obeyed Him, but could they ever have loved Him?

Perhaps this is why another rebellious leader, Lucifer, was not immediately crushed six thousand years ago. A whole world would suffer because of him. Like Pharaoh, he was shown the end of his course. He saw the misery. He saw the suffering. He saw the defeat. Yet this knowledge did not alter his path. It did not move him to repentance. Fear can never change a heart.

God could have destroyed the wayward angel. It wasn't a question of power. But He knew. Fear can never change a heart, only love can. So, instead of coercion, He chose Calvary, instead of compulsion, He chose a cross.

**INTRO-
DUCTION**
Scripture:
John 3:16

A Sensory Experience by H. J. Bergman

LOGOS **Theme:** The Passover story tells us that God is in control, and when the time comes to take action He will do so decisively.

The Passover is one of the oldest, if not the oldest, religious festival in the world. Practiced for more than three millennia, it still has the power to move deeply the emotions of those who take part in it. In addition, it provided the basis for one of the great ceremonies of the Christian church. Why should this festival have had such an impact while innumerable others have never achieved more than a limited acceptance or have long since been forgotten?

Three chapters in the book of Exodus (11, 12, 13) provide at least the basic answers. The events described contain all the elements of the most fascinating stories—a powerful, cruel, and stubborn king; an equally stubborn messenger of the almighty God, and an enslaved people gaining their freedom as the result of a dramatic and miraculous event at literally the midnight hour. Most important for the future, however, were the great symbols that were either directly specified by the Lord or would be perceived by those who would later learn the story.

There are four major segments of that story. The first (Ex. 11:1-10) tells of God's final demand to Pharaoh through Moses to let His people go free. The threat is specific and chilling. Resist, and all the first-born males, men and animals, die. The second (Ex. 12:1-28) segment is also a warning of death, only this time to Israel. They will suffer the same fate as the Egyptians unless they perform a very specific ceremony symbolizing their acceptance of God's provision for their protection. The third (Ex. 12:29-42) describes how Israel was finally set free. They accepted the word of the Lord, Pharaoh did not, and the consequences followed exactly as foretold. Finally the Lord explains in detail (Ex. 12:43—13:16) His wish that a memorial be established so that what had happened would never be forgotten. Although not specified at the time, these were also symbolic implications for events in the future unimagined by any of the participants at the time.

1. Pharaoh Warned (read Exodus 11:1-10)

"Then say to Pharaoh, 'This is what the Lord says: Israel is my firstborn son'" (Ex. 4:22, NIV).

The concept of Israel as God's first-born son is a statement of profound implication. When one remembers that the first-born in ancient times carried in him the promise of the future for the family or, in the case of the king's son, the future of a nation, the terminology used by God to describe Israel takes on additional meaning. Pharaoh, by his enslavement of Israel, was directly thwarting the purposes of God. The Israelites were slowly but surely being reduced to a condition scarcely human, and if the process had continued much longer they might never have been able to function as an independent nation, thus making their role as God's first-born

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meaningless. Certainly the difficulty God would have raising them to spiritual maturity in the years and centuries ahead is evidence of how close they had already come to being unable to serve God's purposes. No wonder then that He was ready to take not only the final drastic measure He did against Pharaoh but to symbolize the enormity of Pharaoh's evil policies against Israel by striking down the king's own first-born.

Are we of the "first-born"? What implications might there be to our answer in terms of our spiritual responsibilities?

2. Israel Warned (read Exodus 12:1-28)

"Then the people bowed down and worshiped. The Israelites did just what the Lord commanded Moses and Aaron" (Ex. 12:27, 28, NIV).

The Israelites obeyed Moses and Aaron under the threat of death to their first-born. It is unlikely that at the moment they understood the meaning of the blood on the doorpost or any of the other requirements imposed on them that night. For the moment, the Lord required only unquestioning obedience. Understanding would come later. Our relationship to God may well follow a similar pattern. In the beginning we may need to live a "thus saith the Lord" kind of life with a maturity of understanding and faith coming gradually through experience and study. One sees a similar development, of course, in children, and we accept that as natural. We should not then feel uncomfortable because our or others' spiritual experience follows that pattern. The tragedy comes when we fail to move beyond a mere adherence to rules and regulations. As Paul tells us, the law is intended to help guide us to spiritual maturity, but those who only keep the law with no understanding of its meaning are slaves to the law instead of being free in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:2). Unfortunately, during most of their history the people of Israel never matured spiritually and thus never saw in the feast of the Passover anything other than the celebration of a historical event.

How does one mature spiritually?

Why is blind adherence to rules a form of slavery?

What do Christ's words in Matthew 23:23, 24 tell us about the keeping of the law?

3. Israel Goes Free (read Exodus 12:29-42)

"The dough was without yeast because they had been driven out of Egypt and did not have time to prepare food for themselves" (Ex. 12:39, NIV).

The history of God's people could well be described as long periods of waiting for God to act and then unexpected moments of intense activity. The children of Israel had been in Egypt for more than two centuries, but when the time came for them to leave, it

came so abruptly that they could not even bake bread for the journey before they had to go. There are several points that could be made here. For example, God has His own calendar and when, as in the case of the birth of Christ, the "fulness of the time was come," the event took place. We need to be aware, too, that our sometimes laboriously crafted scenarios for the events preceding the Second Coming could, when the moment finally arrives, take place with such limited warning and in so brief a time that we could be left behind waiting for events to take place in the way we think they should. The only safe position, obviously, is to be always ready, just as Christ recommended, and not spend too much time worrying about whether or not we have figured out God's calendar.

Why hasn't God given us more detailed information about His calendar?

How can we be always ready for the Lord's coming?

How important is it that I know just when the Lord is coming?

4. A Memorial Established (read Exodus 12:43—13:16)

"Then Moses said to the people, 'Commemorate this day, the day you came out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery, because the Lord brought you out of it with a mighty hand . . .'" (Ex. 13:3, NIV).

A memorial is something that helps us remember an event or a person of importance to us. We remember best when we repeat in word and deed at least some elements of the event or of the life we are honoring. This was particularly true in times before easy access to books and other forms of recorded communication, but we still learn best when several of our senses are involved. It is interesting to note when celebrating either the Passover or the Lord's Supper that in one way or another all the senses are used and that all the participants share in re-enacting the original events.

It might also be well to note that, while God has not specified a large number of memorials to be observed by His people, He has been very specific about those He has appointed. The Lord's Supper, for example, requires both participation and a process (1 Cor. 11:25, 26). But, as in the case of the development of a greater spiritual maturity, the greatest blessing comes when we move beyond merely a knowledge of the process to an understanding of what the process is intended to teach us.

How are the senses involved in learning?

How are the senses used in the Lord's Supper?

What similar lessons are taught by the Passover and the Lord's Supper?

Living by Faith

by Barton L. Soper

The Passover, Israel's most important festival, revolved around its deliverance from slavery:

"In commemoration of this great deliverance a feast was to be observed yearly by the people of Israel in all future generations. 'This day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever.' As they should keep the feast in future years, they were to repeat to their children the story of this great deliverance, as Moses bade them: 'Ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses.'"¹

"The Hebrews went out from Egypt an independent nation. The Lord had commanded that the Passover should be yearly kept. . . . Thus from generation to generation the story of this wonderful deliverance was to be repeated."²

"The Passover was to be both commemorative and typical, not only pointing back to the deliverance from Egypt, but forward to the greater deliverance which Christ was to accomplish in freeing His people from the bondage of sin. The sacrificial lamb represents 'the Lamb of God,' in whom is our only hope of salvation. Says the apostle, 'Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.' 1 Corinthians 5:7. It was not enough that the paschal lamb be slain; its blood must be sprinkled upon the doorpost; so the merits of Christ's blood must be applied to the soul. We must believe, not only that He died for the world, but that He died for us individually. We must appropriate to ourselves the virtue of the atoning sacrifice.

"The hyssop used in sprinkling the blood was the symbol of purification, being thus employed in the cleansing of the leper and of those defiled by contact with the dead. In the psalmist's prayer also its significance is seen: 'Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.' Psalm 51:7.

"The lamb was to be prepared whole, not a bone of it being broken; so not a bone was to be broken of the Lamb of God, who was to die for us. John 19:36. Thus was also represented the completeness of Christ's sacrifice.

"The flesh was to be eaten. It is not enough even that we believe on Christ for the forgiveness of sin; we must by faith be constantly receiving spiritual strength and nourishment from Him through His word."³

REACT

1. Is it possible to carry an analogy too far in applying it to our lives?
2. If so, how far can an analogy take us?
3. What did Jesus mean when He said, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life" (John 6:54, NIV)?

TESTIMONY

Key text:

Exodus

11:1-13, 16;

1 Cor. 5:7, 8

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 274.

2. *The Desire of Ages*,

p. 77.

3. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 277.

Barton L. Soper is a senior business-administration major at Walla Walla College, Washington.

Gracious Blood

by Alden Thompson

EVIDENCE

Key Text:

Exodus

11:1—13:16

A great gulf is fixed between the people of the first Passover and modern Christians. The hardening of Pharaoh's heart, the slaughter of the lamb, the sacrifice of every first-born domestic animal—all that contrasts sharply with our world of padded pews, plush carpets, and stained glass windows.

Because we see the Passover as a shadow pointing to our redemption in Jesus Christ, it is easy to overlook the vividness of the original symbols. But just try to imagine a live lamb, bleating in terror as it is brought inside my church, your church, and to the pulpit on a Sabbath morning. The knife. Blood on the carpet. The bleating gradually fading into silence. The odor of roasting flesh. Vegetarian Adventists gathering around to eat. . . .

Can you imagine the horror, the incensed telephone calls, the irate letters to the editor that such a scene would arouse?

Yet according to Scripture, it was our God who ordained it all. What was He up to when He asked Israel to "celebrate" in such a manner?

We find it extremely difficult to bridge the cultural gap. About the best we can say is that in an age when blood flowed more freely, God used blood to teach great truths to His people.

We must recognize, however, that the Old Testament gives no clue that Israel saw the death of God's Son mirrored in the death of the Passover lamb. That application of the symbol would only come clear after the death of Jesus on the cross.

Nor did the death of the Passover lamb directly address the issue of redemption from specific sins. Other sacrifices were much more pointed in that respect.

But the blood of the Passover lamb did speak volumes about redemption and grace. There was cost to the recipient, to be sure, for each family brought a lamb from its own flock. But that was no sacrifice at all compared to the life and the freedom bestowed at the sign of the blood—the first-born in every family received the gift of life through that blood. And then an enslaved people marched out of Egypt, laden with wealth. They were free.

Christians no longer re-live the Passover. We celebrate the Lord's Supper instead. The bread and wine are much tamer symbols and much less costly. But they are still symbols of death—and symbols of the gift of life purchased by that death. When we ponder those symbols we discover new meaning in the sacrifice of One who came and died as our Passover lamb.

This time we did not give from our flock. God gave His. By the gracious blood of His Son we are free.

REACT

Why do you think God required that blood be painted on the doorposts in order for Israel to be saved? Was this not demanding too much of a public profession of a person's faith? What light does Romans 10:9, 10 and Matthew 10:32 provide for these questions.

Alden Thompson is provost and dean of academic administration at Walla Walla College, Washington.

Sacrifice

by Loren Dickinson

I've never been a sacrifice. For that matter I've never sacrificed anything. And I'm intrigued when trying to fathom what it must mean to sacrifice.

That's why the story of Abraham leading cooperative Isaac up to that altar on Mount Horeb is one of the most gripping stories I've ever read. It's quite clear to me that Abraham in a very real sense did sacrifice Isaac.

I feel the same way about people who stage hunger strikes for a cause. Almost no one dies that way, but I assume they make a commitment to die—a mental sacrifice—before their strike begins.

Should I be making sacrifices? No. Not without a very compelling cause. God the Son and God the Father sacrificed only because of a compelling cause—eternal deliverance from evil. A very compelling cause.

The question, then, I must pose to myself and to you is this: What are the very best ways to deal with sacrifices—the ones I make and those made for me?

1. I'd like to be so committed to compelling causes that I would be willing to sacrifice. *Willing* is the key term. That's an attitude, a disposition, a commitment I hold and carry in my head, ready to be expressed.

2. I'd like to be so grateful for sacrifices made for me that I'm compelled to think and behave with high regard for those who made them. Unconditional regard. (I'm now convinced, in retrospect, that my mother made a number of sacrifices for me, and before she died she knew how I felt about them.)

3. What shall I do if I have no causes for which I'm willing to sacrifice? Well, let me offer a perspective you may not accept. No causes, no satisfactions. No causes, no future. How do you like that idea?

Late in 1986 a metropolitan fireman rushed to the scene of a truck accident. The driver, thrown from his rig, was hanging by his fingers from a bridge over the freeway below. Momentarily, he went unconscious, dropped his grip, and fell into the arms of the fireman.

Both survived the trauma. But two days later in ceremonies honoring the selfless fireman, the truck driver "forgot to show up," according to the "CBS Evening News."

Someone sacrificed for the trucker. How could he forget that for a minute? Where was gratitude? Where was high regard?

Then again, where's yours or mine?

REACT

1. What do you think would happen to a person spiritually who refused to participate regularly in the Lord's Supper?

2. How does participation in the Lord's Supper express gratitude for Christ's sacrifice as our Passover?

HOW TO

Key text:

Genesis

22:10-12

Loren Dickinson is professor of speech communication at Walla Walla College, Washington.

The Power of the Blood

by Greg Dickinson

OPINION

Key text:
Exodus 22

The symbolism of the Passover blood is obvious. Those who put the blood of an unblemished lamb on the doors are spared the horrible effects of God's wrath. The symbolism becomes more powerful as the blood outlines the cross on the door. Plainly, this points forward to the day when Christ died for us. But what is often missed is the necessity of actually putting blood on the doors.

It is inadequate merely to understand the symbolism (vague, I think) without acting upon the principle behind the symbolism. Imagine, for instance, an Israelite father, knowing what he needs to do, feeling comfortable in his knowledge and failing to paint his doors a bloody red. His mere knowledge would not save his first-born son.

We must act on the words of the Lord. The only way to save the first-born son was actively to kill the unblemished lamb, catch the blood, and display it on the door of the house. To do less invited certain death.

It would not be enough to discuss the implications of the symbol philosophically, or decide what size hyssop frond to use. Yet how often we do the same to excuse ourselves from duty. Talking assuages our conscience and lets us live actionless lives, keeps us sedated until it is too late. We are often so caught up in thought experiments and verbal battles that the lie we argue for somehow gets lost in the shuffle.

It would be easy for an Israelite to sit in his doorway and criticize his neighbor for the way he killed the lamb or his application of the blood, but unless the criticizer also kills the lamb and spreads the blood (to his own specifications) his talk amounts to nothing. In fact, it is worse than nothing: it costs the life of his first-born son.

As Paul says in the first verse of 1 Corinthians 13, "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal" (RSV).

Knowledge of the saving power of the blood is not enough to save. "Faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead" (James 2:17, RSV). What was significant in the time of the exodus, is significant now. We must actively engage in the principle behind the symbol. We must conspicuously live the symbol. We can't just believe in or talk about Christ's blood; we must, like the Israelites, act on His sacrifice. And after taking the blood on ourselves we must remember and we must celebrate the saving grace and power of the blood.

REACT

1. Have I experienced the freedom from guilt Christ has provided by His sacrifice?
2. How do I apply Christ's blood to my heart?
3. Is application of Christ's blood a one-time or a continuous experience? Explain.

Greg Dickinson is a senior communication major at Walla Walla College, Washington.

A True Love Story

Mix two fiercely independent personalities with mutual attraction and you have the perfect recipe for trouble—especially when one is a city slicker and the other a farmer's kid.

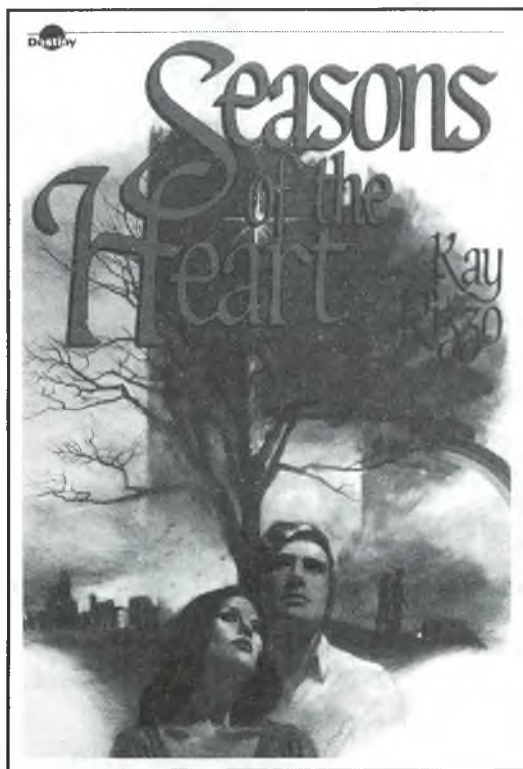
Raised on Chicago's south side, Kari grew up defending herself against wolves on the street and a lecherous stepfather at home.

Marc, on the other hand, grew up ten miles from the nearest town, the son of a hard-working Wisconsin dairy farmer.

Can Kari learn to see Marc as a different kind of man from those she knew in Chicago?

Can Marc recognize that Kari is not just interested in getting her own way?

Can a commitment to Christ turn a recipe for trouble into a recipe for growth?



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Between the Devil and the Deep Red Sea

“ ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you.’ ” (Isa. 43:1, 2, NIV).



Out of the Frying Pan

by Cliff Dolph

I got gypped! It seems as if it's been a year since I went to those meetings. It's been only a month. Nothing ever sounded quite so good to me. The preacher talked about a new life. He talked about being forgiven and said that God gives us the power to get on the right track. He talked about peace and victory. To a guy locked in the grip of alcohol and wallowing in self-pity all the time, that sounded pretty good. I could hardly live with myself. I burned with a desire to start over and do it right. So I joined this church and fought to live the way it taught.

Right away I lost my job—Sabbath problems. And tonight I got home and opened an empty refrigerator, the second day it's been empty, and I'm not sure where the money for the next light payment is coming from. Anyway, tonight I get home and find a note taped to the empty refrigerator.

Dear Carl,

I'm sorry. I've tried, but I just can't understand what you're doing. I don't know whether I can live with you never knowing how we're going to make it. You lose your job. You went and paid a tenth of your last check to that church. And you act as if you're so much better than I am, praying before meals and

reading your Bible and not drinking. I know you don't ignore me, but you just seem so distant.

I don't know you. Maybe you feel better, but I feel as if everything's gone. I'm taking Joey and I'm not coming back.

Linda

Well, I guess they got what they wanted. I paid my tithe this month, and I got a receipt. And that's about the only attention I've had. It's easy for them to talk about how beautiful this Christian life is. Maybe I was miserable before, but at least I had work and a family. Now I'm not even sure where God is. I wish somebody had told me it would be like this.

I'm sure Carl began to wish, just as the Israelites did, that he were back in "Egypt." Maybe it's not so great there, but it beats losing your wife or drowning in the Red Sea. When everything goes wrong it's pretty easy to forget that God has acted before, and we begin trying to bail ourselves out. But God led Carl into the church and God led Israel out of Egypt. If that's true, then even when those routes seem only to lead to the Red Sea or to a broken family, God still holds the end in His hand. He will part the sea.

**INTRO-
DUCTION**
Scripture:
Lamentations
3:19-23

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Sing to the Lord

by Ernest Bursey

LOGOS Theme: God delivers His people when they cease to depend on their own efforts and place their trust entirely in Him.

1. Divine Guidance (read Exodus 13:17—14:4)

"When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, 'If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt.' So God led the people around by the desert road toward the Red Sea" (13:17, 18, NIV).

God sends His people on a detour. That's what this roundabout route looks like. He needs to show them He is a capable warrior and more than a match for the prestigious Egyptian army. Then when they face the entrenched Canaanites they won't bolt for Egypt. So with cunning He tricks Pharaoh's trackers, who report to the king that the horde of slaves have hopelessly lost their bearings in the desert. Then God directs Moses to position the Israelites in a spot where they can't escape the Egyptian cavalry.

Let's pick up a detail in verse 18 that slips by the speed reader. The hordes of Israelites are lined up for this march as if they were an army in procession. As the drama unfolds we'll see the reason for this readiness.

Yes, God intends to show His people why they should trust Him. But God still has unfinished business with Egypt. He tells Moses that in the battle ahead "the Egyptians will learn that I am Yahweh" (14:4, Jerusalem). At last there will be the decisive answer to Pharaoh's arrogant words, "Who is Yahweh, . . . that I should listen to him and let Israel go?" (Ex.5:2, Jerusalem).

2. Pharaoh's Pursuit (read Exodus 14:5-9)

"The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, so that he pursued the Israelites, who were marching out boldly" (14:8, NIV).

Once more Pharaoh changes his mind. Convinced he was wrong in letting Israel go, he gathers together hundreds of war chariots that can rapidly close the gap with the Israelites, who left on foot.

And once more the Lord strengthens Pharaoh's stubbornness. Blind to the influence of God in his own life, Pharaoh takes off to retrieve the slaves on whom the Egyptians have come to depend.

By reading carefully, we avoid the mistake of thinking God forced Pharaoh to fight. Instead, Pharaoh was incited to carry out his own plans in such a way and at such a time that would maximize the lesson for both Israel and Egypt.

Does God still work this way in our world? Can you see any evidence that God manipulates the affairs of nations?

3. Divine Encouragement (read Exodus 14:10-18)

"Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Why are you crying out to me?"

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Tell the Israelites to move on' ” (14:15, NIV).

Trapped beside the sea, the Israelites believe the charioteers are about to slaughter them as runaway slaves.

They shout at Moses, “Didn’t we try to tell you in Egypt, ‘Leave us alone?’ ”

Moses quiets them. “Watch in silence what God is about to do.”

Now the Lord gives His battle orders. The army of Israel is to march forward. Moses’ raised rod and stretched arms seem to split the sea. It is for this moment that Israel has been arranged as an army. Though the salvation comes from the Lord, both Moses and Israel are commanded to act in concert with Him. They are commanded to do what lies in their power. The people can move with military efficiency, and Moses can lift up his arms. God gives them the dignity of working with Him. Later, when raising Lazarus, Jesus commands the helpless mourners to roll away the stone and then to unwrap the grave clothes from Lazarus (John 11:39, 44). What is our part in God’s work of saving us today? See Philippians 2:12-14.

The last words of God’s second speech with Moses focus on the Egyptians who are about to honor as Yahweh, the Lord: then “the Egyptians will learn that I am Yahweh!”

Why is God determined that the Egyptians will see and acknowledge His power? At the end of time every one in the universe will acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord (Phil. 2:10, 11). It isn’t going to do the wicked any good, is it? Then why bother?

4. Miraculous Passage (read Exodus 14:19-22)

“And the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left” (14:22, NIV).

First the angel separates the Israelites from the pursuing Egyptians. Then the sea is divided and rolled back by a strong wind. In a replay of Creation dry land appears, and Israel enters the causeway.

Was it a wind that divided the sea? Was it Moses’ rod? Was it God? The story blends the divine and the human, the natural and the supernatural.

How does God lead us today? Why do some see His hand in natural events while others do not?

5. Divine Deliverance (read Exodus 14:23-31)

“Let’s get away from the Israelites! The LORD is fighting for them against Egypt” (14:25, NIV).

Read these words as the “praise” that desperate charioteers of Pharaoh’s elite force shout at one another before God commands Moses to release the pent-up seas. God merely bogged down the wheels of their fighting machines. With the bogged wheels comes that moment of insight God had predicted. The Egyptians admit the

Lord's power. But they do not call upon Him for help. Still trusting in their own resources, they make a desperate retreat. Not a single soldier survives.

The Israelites watch the corpses wash up on the shore, and feel a new fear, the fear of the Lord. They seem ready to entrust themselves to the care of the Lord and His helper Moses.

Look what it took to get the Israelites to believe in their God. What does it take to get us to entrust ourselves to God? If the Lord resorts to spectacular rescues on our behalf could that show He is working extra hard to overcome our distrust in Him?

6. The Song at the Red Sea (read Exodus 15:1-21)

Maybe this chapter looks like a TV commercial that interrupts a good program. We can quickly wade through the poetry and reach the end of the chapter, where the action starts again. No, let's not do that. The story about Marah lies in next week's territory. Besides, there is a lot of action at this celebration. Whoever called a "spiritual" a space filler before the sermon? At least let's read these verses out loud and try to imagine a million cheering voices belting out, "I will sing to the Lord. . . . The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea. . . . They sank down into the depths like a stone. . . . They sank like lead" (15:1-10, NIV).

Then Moses and the male chorus stretch out the victory of their God to cover the encounters still ahead with Philistines, Edomites, Moabites.

"The people of Canaan will melt away;
Terror and dread will fall upon them.
By the power of your arm
they will be as still as a stone. . . .
The LORD will reign for ever and ever."

With tambourines, Miriam and the women dance and sing, calling for the men to keep on praising the Lord, "for He has triumphed gloriously" (15:21, RSV). Back and forth they pass the shouts of praise as they declare the Lord is able to handle the armies ahead.

It wasn't enough to pitch the armies of Pharaoh into the sea and then move on. His people need to voice their confidence in Him.

So much lies between this exuberance on the shores of the Red Sea and the crossing of the Jordan forty years down the trail. But the Lord has engineered the most convincing demonstration imaginable. After this they ought to coast on into Canaan.

All right, we know this excitement won't continue. The infant faith of the Israelites will die somewhere in the desert ahead. We know, too, that you can't live on emotion. But who says worship has to always be sedate? Isn't there a time to break out in shouting and cheers for the Lord? When was the last time you raised your voice?

Help!

by Elizabeth Munson

Often God is unable to help us unless we let Him. The children of Israel learned this lesson while escaping from their Egyptian captors. We can learn from the Israelites' story and apply this lesson to our own lives:

"God may permit a train of circumstances to come that will lead them to flee to the stronghold, by faith pressing to the throne of God amid thick clouds of darkness; for even here His presence is concealed. But He is ever ready to deliver all that trust in Him."¹

"Of the abundant provision made for every tempted soul, the apostle Paul bears eloquent testimony. To him was given the divine assurance, 'My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' In gratitude and confidence the tried servant of God responded: 'Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.' 2 Corinthians 12:9, 10.

"We must cherish and cultivate the faith of which prophets and apostles have testified—the faith that lays hold on the promises of God and waits for deliverance in His appointed time and way."²

"It was 'by faith' that 'they [the children of Israel] passed through the Red Sea as by dry land.' . . . In marching down to the very water, they showed that they believed the word of God as spoken to Moses. They did all that was in their power to do, and then the Mighty One of Israel divided the sea to make a path for their feet.

"The great lesson here taught is for all time. . . . Those who defer obedience till every shadow of uncertainty disappears and there remains no risk of failure or defeat, will never obey at all. . . . Faith courageously urges an advance, hoping all things, believing all things."³

"When the Israelites were overtaken by dangers and difficulties, and their way seemed hedged up, their faith forsook them. . . . The divine command was: 'Go forward.' They were not to wait until the way was made plain, and they could comprehend the entire plan of their deliverance. God's cause is onward, and He will open a path before His people. To hesitate and murmur is to manifest distrust in the Holy One of Israel. God in His providence brought the Hebrews into the mountain fastnesses, with the Red Sea before them, that He might work out their deliverance and forever rid them of their enemies. He might have saved them in any other way, but He chose this method in order to test their faith and strengthen their trust in Him."⁴

REACT

At what moments in your life have you realized your own helplessness apart from God? In what ways do you find yourself trying to take control of your own life and not trusting God?

TESTIMONY

Key text:
Exodus 14:10-18

1. *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 157.
2. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 387.
3. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 290.
4. *Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 25, 26

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The Best (and Worst) of Times

by Gary Brendel

EVIDENCE

Key text:
Exodus
14:10-18

Our casual recollections regularly confirm the observations of poets, artists, philosophers, and theologians. It is memorably stated by Charles Dickens in his classic *A Tale of Two Cities*. We have all observed that: these are the best of times, the worst of times. It seems as though often these two extremes are juxtaposed against each other in our lives. The best of times, the worst of times.

The experience of Elijah recorded in 1 Kings 19 reminds us of how the best of times are balanced in life by the worst of times. Elijah's triumph over the prophets of Baal was followed by his flight in terror from Jezebel. In Exodus 14 and 15 we see that the euphoria that must surely have been a part of the celebration of the Israelites over their deliverance from Pharaoh's armies at the Red Sea, was followed by Israelite discouragement and depression over being separated from their former Egyptian life-style.

For the most of us, when it is good, it is really good, and when it is bad, it is terrible. Our exalted experiences, be they emotional or spiritual, are often followed by depression and discouragement. Why does this seem so common?

Some have speculated that this is a psychological reaction to a peak experience that is impossible to sustain. Others have considered it to be the human response produced by Satan's efforts to break our hold on God. In the experiences of Elijah, the Israelites, and you and me, the crucial element of faith, which could sustain us during these times, eludes us.

Erik Erikson argued that achieving a sense of "basic trust" is a crucial task in personality development. A similar form of trust is essential in the development of an active Christian life. It allows an Elijah to return rather than run, it prompts the Israelites to praise for deliverance rather than plead for return, and it is the ingredient of our lives that can provide us a consistency in our religious experience rather than the all-too-common cycle marked by highs and lows.

REACT

1. Why does discouragement often follow exalted spiritual experiences? Is it only a psychological reaction or does it also involve Satan's effort to break our hold on God?
2. Why would Satan choose such moments to attack a Christian?

Gary Brendel is a teacher of psychology at Walla Walla College, Washington.

Giving God a Chance

by Ben Cawthra

It was time for a miracle.

As the chariots of Pharaoh bore down on the Israelites, the cloud-followers found themselves caught between the surrounding rugged terrain and the sea. The line of freed slaves stretched for miles, slowly gathering near the edge of the sea as the might of Egypt sped on. Only a miracle could save the host from disaster.

The name "Children of Israel" is accurate; as far as trust in God went, they were spiritual infants. And they had every reason to be as scared as defenseless children when they reached the sea. Showing both His unbounded love and His power, God gave them one of the greatest miracles by parting the sea and destroying the enemy.

Often we, like the Israelites, have to be backed up against one of life's Red Seas to recognize our need for God. The Israelites needed a graphic display of God's power in order to believe. Even though He has provided us with Christ's example and with Scripture, we sometimes demand a dramatic display in order to believe.

A few things to remember:

1. Although God does not guide us through the day in a pillar of cloud, we do have the Bible. It not only provides us with written examples such as the Exodus and the life of Christ but also challenges us to use our minds to explore ideas for ourselves. We can take an active part in seeking God.

2. We should not feel superior to the Israelites, who obtained and then lost the faith of children. As St. Augustine said, having faith first allows us to use our reason. Our weakness occurs when we rely completely on ourselves in our effort to follow God.

3. God needs a chance to show us His love. If we call God on our own terms, when we deem it necessary, then He can't help us, because there is no basis for our belief. He provides the tools with which to build our faith, but if we don't use them we can't expect a parting of our Red Sea.

God gives us the opportunity to live enlightened Christian lives without relying on ourselves. He loves us so much that He provided the ultimate sacrifice—His Son—to give us that chance.

REACT

1. Why do we become like the Israelites when trying times come? (See Ex. 14:10-12.)

2. Why is it easy to remain strong in faith when life goes smoothly and then our faith falls apart in a crisis?

3. What determines our spiritual success in dealing with a crisis?

HOW TO

Key text:

Exodus

14:23-31

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Extraordinary Trust

by Rosa Rodriguez

OPINION

Key text:
1 Cor. 10:13

"Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey."

The familiar hymn makes it sound simple. Obedience to defined laws seems obvious. Trust, though, is a different matter.

As we may have experienced, being obedient Christians will not shield our lives from the same kind of problems and frustrations non-Christians experience in this imperfect world.

As Christians, we may even expect to be tried more intensely than others: "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8, NIV). "If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also" (John 15:20, NIV). Christians in Roman times knew this all too well. The early Christians probably didn't pray for an easy life, but for the strength to live it for the Lord. Extraordinary strength comes from true trust: "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" (1 Cor.10:13, NIV).

The promise is there. We have to trust Him to do it. It has to be an extraordinary trust. Why? Because we are to be extraordinary people—sons and daughters of the Creator of the universe. Our trust has to be tough enough to withstand the next-to-the-greatest force of the universe. After all, why should Satan bother with those who already belong to him? With God on our side we have power from the greatest force in the universe.

Yes, it is sometimes difficult to believe in that power. Put yourself in Carl's shoes (see the Introduction). As a new Christian he is still spiritually young and weak. The Israelites were also young. They needed dramatic displays to believe in God's care. They still did not know God well enough to trust in His power. Trust is not an instantaneous quality. Instilled through faith, it can be developed and strengthened only through spiritual growth and shared experiences—good and bad. Sometimes these trying experiences do demand the extraordinary from us. But Christians are extraordinary people because they serve an extraordinary God.

REACT

1. Has God miraculously intervened at some point in your life to save you from sure physical death?

2. Has this helped or hindered your faith in God? Explain?

3. List some specific situations when God has "provided a way out" from temptations that seemed overwhelming. What factors prevented Him from doing so on other occasions?

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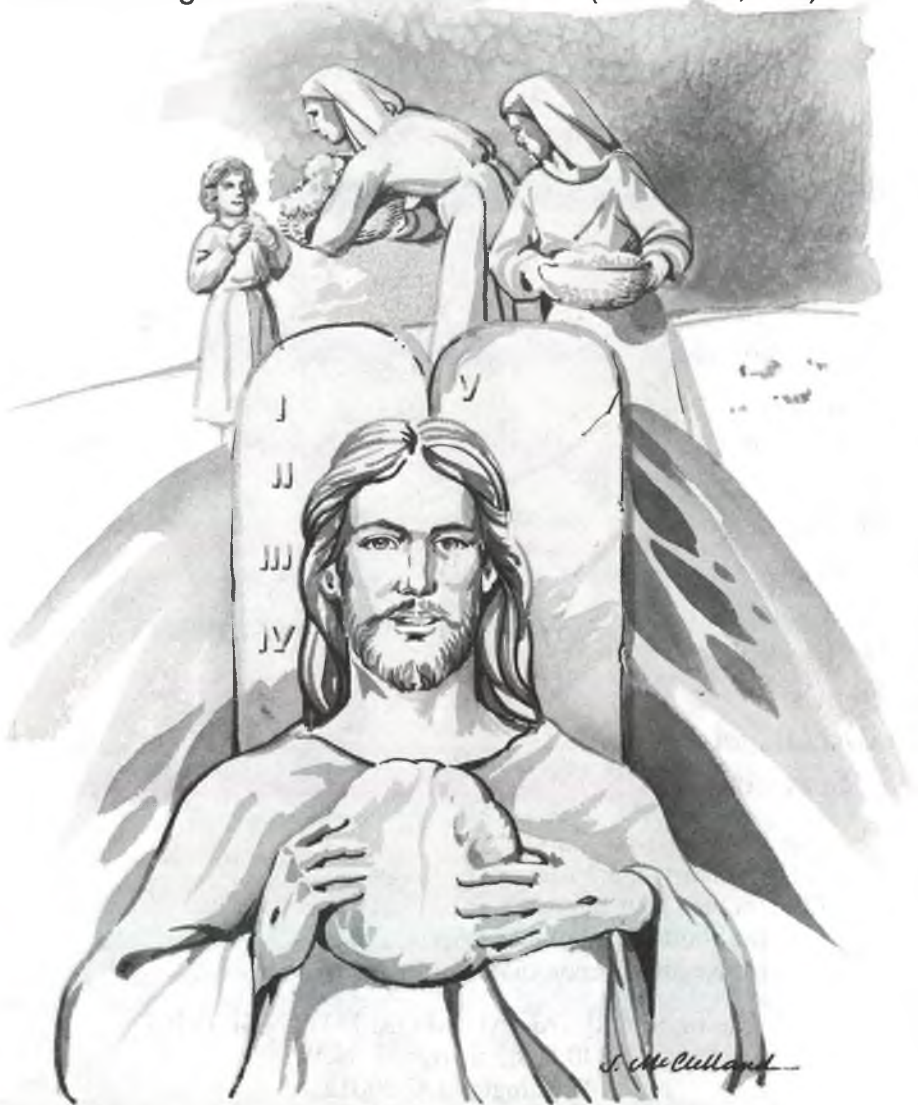
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Lesson 6, January 31—February 6

Heavenly Diet—Earthly Appetite

“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If a man eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world’ ”(John 6:51, NIV).



J. McCulland

Banana Splits!

by Anne Lawrence

My brother, Dave, loved bananas. He imagined, fantasized, and drooled over big banana splits. Although he had never seen or tasted one, he built up an idea of what it would be like if he could actually eat one all by himself. He would listen with envy as his grade school buddies would describe their love for banana splits.

He pondered the "I do not think you'd like it" routine my parents gave every time he asked for a banana split. And reasoned that they thought it was probably too big, too sweet, and too delicious for him to eat all on his own. (But didn't they know that was exactly what he wanted?)

He promised to be good, feed the dog, help the gardener with the yard work, and collect the eggs. Before long, Dave pestered Mom and Dad into buying him a big, sweet, delicious banana split.

He waited with great anticipation for what he believed to be the eighth wonder of the world. As Dad carried it to the table, Dave's eyes gleamed with excitement. His mind danced with pictures he had created from his friends' descriptions of banana splits.

The excitement vanished from his face as the dish was set before him. He stared with horror at the long deep dish in which his banana lay split open, smothered with ice cream, and oozing with thick sticky fruit toppings. A lone cherry peered over the edge of the mound of whipped cream, threatening to topple onto his precious banana.

"This is a banana split?" he wailed.

Dave is now in college. Together we laugh at his banana-split encounter.

"After all," Dave says, "banana splits are kids' stuff. We are grown up and have more important things on our minds."

But have we really changed?

Many times I've found myself telling God how much better off I'd be, or how I would serve Him more completely, if only He would give me more of the things that I desire. In my mind I'd build up a picture of what I'd be like if only . . .

But God says, "Trust Me. Those things will not satisfy you."

And I, in a frenzy to satisfy my earthly appetite, plead (just like the Israelites) for Him to give it to me anyway.

INTRODUCTION

Scripture:
Exodus 16:1-36
and Numbers
11:4-34

Angel Food Ain't Always Great

by Rich Carlson

LOGOS Theme: God supplies our needs, but not always our wants.

When one tries to describe extreme tolerance, the expression "the patience of Job" usually surfaces somewhere in the discussion. But why the patience of Job? Why not the patience of God? As we consider the scriptures in this week's lesson we are again reminded that the only being in existence who could tolerate the murmuring of Israel would have to be nothing shy of Deity. Exodus 16 and Numbers 11 reveal a multitude of attitudes on both the part of God and that of the children of Israel.

One month after they left Egypt "the Lord permitted difficulties to surround them, and their supply of food to be cut short, that their hearts might turn to Him who had hitherto been their Deliverer."*

1. A Failure of Faith (read Exodus 16:1-10)

Talk about fickle followers with a false faith! They were unwilling to trust the Lord any farther than they could witness the continual evidence of His power. They forgot (1) their deliverance from bondage, (2) their children being spared from the destroying death angel, (3) the Red Sea display of God's power, (4) that they crossed that sea safely and the enemy was overwhelmed by His controlling influence—even over nature itself. They saw and felt only their present inconveniences and trials, and murmured against the Lord.

And God heard their murmuring and answered with a miraculous demonstration of His concern for the needs of His people. Israel's failing faith was followed by the Father's forbearance and fill of food. "You may not realize it yet," said God, "but I really am interested in supplying your every need."

It seems incredible to us that the Israelites could so quickly lose sight of God's mighty acts and doubt His ability to provide for their needs. At what junctures in our Christian experience are we inclined to forget God's blessings and begin to murmur and complain to Him?

2. Physical and Spiritual Needs Supplied (read Exodus 16:11-30)

God provided quail and manna in response to the cry of His people, and in abundance so that they would never feel anything except full. Psalm 78:27 makes it clear that, though many scholars have attempted to interpret "quail" as flying fish or locusts, He did in fact send feathered fowls as we know them today. Manna, on the other hand, is a bit more perplexing. The translation of the two Hebrew words *man hu'* have long troubled scholars. It seems that the most probable interpretation is found in the LXX "What is this?" or in the RSV "What is it?" This interpretation is supported by the next phrase in verse 15, "for they did not know what it was" (RSV). Though they had never seen anything like this before and did not know what it was, they were satisfied, at least for the time being,

* *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 292.

Rich Carlson is the campus chaplain at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.

for God had once again met their needs.

After learning a quick lesson about leftovers (verse 20), morning by morning they gathered as much as they could eat. But it seemed that as long as there were Jews in the Bible, there were God's chosen people murmuring about their physical needs. In John 6:31-59 Jesus is reminded by His chosen people that if He really is the Messiah He should at least be able to duplicate the miracles of Moses and give them bread. The spiritual lesson of Exodus 16 is explained in John 6. As the Jews were looking for someone to fill their stomachs, Jesus was looking for some way to fill their souls. "I am the bread of Life," said Jesus (verse 35). Anyone can fill your stomachs and keep you alive for another day. Jesus came to fill us with the living Bread, which will keep us alive for all eternity. But to keep the parallel lesson intact, perhaps the gathering of manna in the morning is significant. Yesterday's manna was no good for today. If you tried to make it stretch, it would grow rotten. Perhaps the Living Bread should be sought after for spiritual life as diligently as manna was sought after for physical food. It seems that God was saying to the children of Israel, and Jesus was saying to the Jews of His day, "Every day, first thing in the morning, gather from Me the strength you need for the day."

Keep the parallel going, and the Sabbath takes on a whole new and fresh purpose. No manna was available on the Sabbath day. God did not provide any. He expected His people to rest and enjoy the manna He had previously provided. Perhaps the attempt of parishioners to search for God and the pastor's attempt to "feed the flock" on Sabbath is not God's plan. Possibly the Sabbath is a time to enjoy the spiritual feeding that we have partaken of throughout the week, and to rest and reflect and respond to the daily miraculous gifts of eternal life provided for us to partake of and to grow with throughout the week. Have we been neglecting the manna all week and then spending Sabbath looking for the manna that is not there?

The spiritual test God set before His people consisted of daily trusting Him to provide for all their needs: daily having to turn to Him to seek the nourishment they needed for the day; daily knowing that He does provide for all our needs. And then, on Sabbath, to learn more than just not to go out and work, but to celebrate the care and keeping of the God who provides for all those needs.

Jesus made it clear that it is essential for us to eat the bread of life, which is His flesh (John 6:51). How do we "eat" Christ's flesh? What spiritual lessons can we learn from the directions God gave Israel concerning the gathering of the manna and our relationship to the Sabbath (Exodus 16:22-30)?

3. The Gift Rejected (read Numbers 11:4-34)

So I learn the value of feeding daily on the food that God provides. Did you ever wish that the menu was more like a cafeteria than a

one-course meal? "We remember the fish we ate in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic: but now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at" (verses 5, 6, RSV). Can't you provide more excitement, God? I mean people wonder what we do out here in the desert (or here in the church) for fun!

Once we have learned the spiritual lesson of Exodus 16, we have the reality of faltering faith facing us in Numbers 11. I start out feeding daily on His Word, partaking each morning of the Living Bread, receiving strength for that day. I even learn the beauty of celebrating the week's growth with my Saviour on His special Sabbath day. But day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, feeding on manna but living in a world of cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic. Soon I am asking myself the question, as Samson did, "What am I missing out in the world?" "The people went about and gathered it, and ground it in mills or beat it in mortars, and boiled it in pots, and made cakes of it" (verse 8). Manna for breakfast, manna for lunch, manna for supper! Manna mush, manna muffins, manna mostaccioli, manna manicotti. Manna-live, isn't there anything else to eat?

Israel had seen in Egypt the consequences of living in the world, and they wanted out. God agreed to take them out, but on His terms. He would lead day by day, moment by moment. Their job was to keep trusting and depending on Him, day by day, moment by moment. He would provide all their needs, but not all their wants. The children of Israel looked for their needs *and* their wants to be supplied.

Moses was getting tired by this time (verses 10-15), so God found help in the form of seventy elders (verse 16). Again He took care of the needs of His leader. And again He heard the murmuring of His people and apparently decided that the only way to teach His lesson clearly was to use reverse psychology. If the world was what they wanted, then the world was what they would get. But along with the wants of the world is the world's consequences. For thirty-six hours they gathered quail, and while the meat was still between their teeth God smote those who had the craving (verses 31-35).

God wanted to save His people in the Old Testament. He delivered them from the heathen world and desired to teach them the lessons necessary to build that firm faith which is the only means of salvation. Jesus wanted to save His people in the New Testament. He delivered them from the religious world that enslaved them with the epitome of legalism and gave them the Living Bread. Today the Lord desires to save us from the secular world and from the religious world that has established inaccurate requirements for salvation. They have the Living Manna and the lessons taught in Exodus 16. We have the world, and after accepting the promise of Exodus 16 we have the sinful reality of Numbers 11. We realize our need for manna, but still crave the quail of the world. And the patience of

Jesus maintains the availability of the Living Manna while we learn the lessons of daily relying, depending, trusting in Him. Yet after six thousand years we still find ourselves asking for leeks and onions and garlic.

Jesus says, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh." (John 6:51, RSV). The Manna has been provided. The lessons are taught. The warnings are given and consequences established. Yet we continue experimenting with how much of the world's quail we can partake of and still "enjoy" the Manna of heaven. We have been provided a variety of manna, quail, onions, and leeks. Our spirit knows Manna is the answer; our flesh demands the quail of the world. We are offered a smorgasbord of them all. And God patiently waits to take our order.

Manna, quail, onions or leeks? What will *your* order be?

Was it wrong for the Israelites to want variety in their diet and to remember with longing the favorite foods that they had enjoyed in Egypt? Manna is often called "angel food." If we get tired of angel food, is there something wrong with us or with the angel food?

Christ Our Manna

by Ralph Schnell

TESTIMONY

Key text:
John 6:35, 36

As we are surprised by the fresh covering of a new snow, the Israelites must have been surprised as they caught their first glimpse of manna. "In the morning there lay upon the surface of the ground 'a small round thing, as small as the hoarfrost.' 'It was like coriander seed, white.' . . . Moses said 'This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat.' The people gathered the manna, and found that there was an abundant supply for all. . . . They were directed to gather daily an omer for every person; and they were not to leave of it until the morning. Some attempted to keep a supply until the next day, but it was then found to be unfit for food. The provision for the day must be gathered in the morning; for all that remained upon the ground was melted by the sun."¹

God's care for the physical, as well as the spiritual, needs of His people is evidenced in the giving of manna. "For forty years they were daily reminded by this miraculous provision, of God's unfailing care and tender love. In the words of the psalmist, God gave them 'of the corn of heaven.' . . . They were daily taught that, having God's promise, they were as secure from want as if surrounded by fields of waving grain on the fertile plains of Canaan.

"The manna, falling from heaven for the sustenance of Israel, was a type of Him who came from God to give life to the world."² "And Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.'" (John 6:35, 36, NKJV). As the Israelites depended upon manna for their day to day existence, we as followers of Christ must be dependent upon Him. "Our life is to be bound up with the life of Christ; we are to draw constantly from Him, partaking of Him, the living Bread that came down from heaven, drawing from a fountain ever fresh, ever giving forth its abundant treasures. If we keep the Lord ever before us, allowing our hearts to go out in thanksgiving and praise to Him, we shall have a continual freshness in our religious life."³

REACT

1. Can we satisfy our spiritual hunger by gathering "food" once a week at church?
2. The Israelites were instructed to gather the manna in the morning. When should we seek to gather our daily supply of the "Bread of Life"?

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 295.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 297.

3. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 129.

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Manna: Myth or Miracle

by Blaine Fuits

When they saw the manna, the Israelites said, "What is it?" (Exodus 16:15, RSV). Many people today ask the same question when they read about God's providing food for His wandering people.

What is manna? Is it something found in nature today? Or was it a specific, miraculous food given to the Israelites? Many modern Bible scholars believe that the Biblical manna is actually the same as a substance found today.¹ Small insects that suck the sap of the Tamarisk shrub excrete their excess carbohydrates in the form of a sticky, dewlike substance that "has the flavor of honey"² (see also Josephus *Antiquities*, 3. 1.6).

The *SDA Bible Commentary* shows some contrasts between this view and the Biblical record:

1. The Biblical "manna" was provided year around for forty years, but the Tamarisk "manna" occurs only in June and July.
2. It would take a large quantity to feed a whole nation for forty years, but the Tamarisk "manna" is found only in small amounts.
3. The Scriptural manna could not be preserved until the next day, except on Sabbath, but could be baked. The "natural" manna can be kept for several days and although it can be cooked, it cannot be used for baking purposes.

The *SDA Commentary* concludes that "acceptance of the modern interpretation . . . means rejection of the Biblical record."³

The *Interpreter's Bible* quotes Samuel Johnson as saying, "It is but lately that the world were convinced of the mistake of manna being an aerial produce."⁴ Is it a "mistake?" Psalm 78:24 (NIV) says, "He rained down manna . . . he gave them the grain of heaven," and verse 25 calls manna, "the bread of angels." Nehemiah 9:15 calls manna "bread from heaven." Although Scribner's *Dictionary of the Bible* says the manna should "come under the category of 'special providences' not 'miracles,' they admit that "Allusions to it suggest the supernatural."⁵

The Bible says that Jesus fed a multitude with "five barley loaves, and two small fishes" (John 6:9). That is supernatural no matter how you slice it!

REACT

1. Do you really believe that God can do similar miracles in these last days? Have you ever seen what you would consider a miracle? How do you understand a miracle?

2. How was God's true church "nourished" during the persecution of the dark ages? (See Rev. 12:6,14). Was it mainly physical or spiritual?

3. There always seems to be a spiritual lesson behind every miracle God performs. Do you think God values the spiritual more than the physical? Or does He value both the same? (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 367).

EVIDENCE

Key text:
Deut. 8:3

1. *Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by James Hastings; revised by Grant and Rowley (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), p. 617.
2. *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press), vol. 1, p. 951.
3. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 578.
4. *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 1, p. 951.
5. *Hastings, op. cit.*, p. 617.

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Let Us Pray

by Rich Carlson

HOW TO
Key text:
Matthew 26:39

Scene 1: Baby Martha, age 4, cradle-roll Sabbath School—"Dear Jesus, please help me find my dolly."

Scene 2: Little Harry, age 10, third grade at church school—"Dear Jesus, I really want that new skate board."

Scene 3: Teen-age Terri, age 17, senior academy student—"Dear Lord, if I don't have a date for the banquet this weekend, I'll die."

Scene 4: Preppy Larry, age 21, college student—"God, I need an A in accounting if I'm going to get my CPA and a good job."

Scene 5: Yuppie Sherry, age 30, professional executive and mother—"Dear Lord, I'm on my way to see a business client. There is food in the freezer for the family, and the kids are at the day care. Please bless them and help me make the sale."

Scene 6: Uncle Barry, age 40, home owner, slightly overweight, golfing enthusiast, and family man—"Heavenly Father, help those young people straighten out their lives and quit trying to change the church. Help them leave well enough alone. Oh, yes, and help me win the golf tournament this weekend."

Scene 7: Grandma Perry, age 65, recently retired—"Dear God, give me health and happiness now so I can enjoy the easy life that I have worked so hard to get. Let the younger generation carry on with the responsibilities of the church. But don't let them destroy all the good we've done."

The theological philosophy behind prayer is for us to open channels of communication with God, so we can hear what God has to say. But the practical application of prayer is, too often, taken as an opportunity for us to tell God what we need, and when we need it.

Exodus 16:1-10 and Numbers 11:4-34 illustrate the point. As long as you give me what I want, God, I'll keep giving lip service to the idea of "open communication" with Heaven.

My head may even know that God is in control and admit that He knows what is best. I may even recall that if I could see the end from the beginning I would have things no other way. But my heart, saturated with personal sinfulness, and continually bombarded by the temptations of the world, attempts to manipulate God into giving me what I want. My earthly appetite is not satisfied with God's heavenly diet.

When I read the scriptural accounts of the prayers of Israel I am tempted to condemn them pharisaically for being so selfish. But when I listen closely, today's prayers may be cloaked in more religious jargon, but they are just as pharisaical. Holding on to worldly priorities I ask God to bless.

Contrast this with the prayers of Jesus, who could have had everything His heart desired, but asked only for God's will to be done (Matt. 26:39), in God's way (John 6:38), and in God's time (John 2:4). Notice also the direction He gives those whose earthly appetites controlled them (John 6:34, 35).

God does supply all our needs, but how often do I insist He supply my wants?

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Wants and Needs

by Randy Davis

"Thousands are dying, and your contribution can help. This starving girl is 16 years old and is beyond hope. Thousands can still be saved, but only with your help. A contribution of only . . ." Click! I switch channels on the TV while muttering under my breath, "All I ever hear about is the starving people over in Ethiopia. I have never gone a day without food, but then again, why should I? I live in America, the land of silk and money." Sitting back down in my Lazyboy, I watch a Mazda RX7 commercial. I envision myself shifting the wonder car into high gear. Now, this car is something I want. I wonder why I never seem to be able to get what I want. Well, it's not that I never get what I want, but . . .

Have you ever found yourself in this setting? I have. My selfish human nature is not concerned with the starving people in Ethiopia; I have never stopped to think about them. When I think of the people over in Ethiopia and the topic of this week's lesson (God supplies our needs, but not always our wants), a question comes to mind. Does God always provide for our needs? Look at the starving people over in Ethiopia. God isn't providing for all their needs! I am sure some starving people over there love God, so why doesn't He provide for their needs? Thousands here in the United States are homeless and starving. Yet I complain. "Lord, this manna You have provided me with is pretty boring. Can't You send some exciting food along—like a Mazda RX7?"

Wants and needs. Is there a balance? Matthew 7:7, 8 says, "Ask, and it shall be given you . . ." Am I to only ask for needs? Doesn't God also supply some of our wants? Surely God wants me to be happy, doesn't He? Then I read Philippians 4:11, 12 where Paul says that we should be content in whatever situation we find ourselves. Is that true? What if I am starving? Am I supposed to be content in that situation?

"Thousands are dying, and your contribution can help . . ."

REACT

1. Would you agree that people who are more concerned with their wants than their needs have a spiritual problem? Explain.

2. What is God's plan for providing food for those parts of the world where people are starving? Should God perform a miracle or does He include you and me in that plan?

3. What practical suggestions could you come up with to help the starving and homeless people of the world? How would you fit into those suggestions or are you waiting for God to perform a miracle?

OPINION

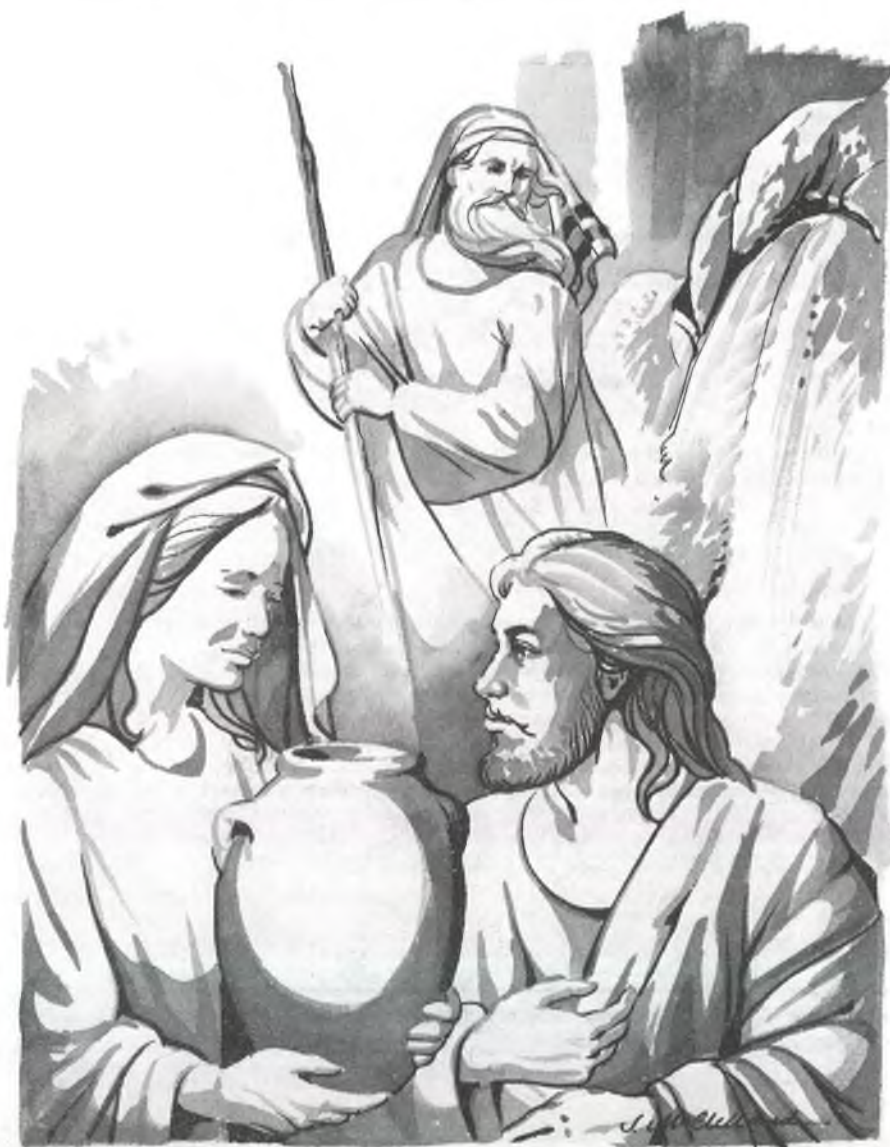
Key text:

Phil. 4:11, 12

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Keeping Your Cool

“Jesus answered, ‘Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life’ ” (John 4:13, 14, NIV).



“Water, Water Everywhere . . .”

by Lilya Wagner

On October 18, 1942, eight men sped eastward through the skies over the Pacific toward Hawaii, San Francisco, and home for a short leave. At that moment they were a carefree bunch, eager for a break from the war scene left behind. Hours later, with only enough fuel left for four more hours of flight, they realized they had missed their refueling stop—an island. The shock and pressure of the emergency ocean landing made heads spin and necks snap, but all eight managed to scramble through the escape hatch and into rubber rafts. Carefree moments were gone.

The group lacked food and water—these had been left behind during the frantic escape from the sinking plane. Waves engulfed them until they could hardly keep the rafts bailed out. Sharks, some as long as twelve feet, nudged the rafts. Storms blew with such violence the men were sure their rafts could no longer stay upright. Sleep was out of the question. The heat of the day sizzled through their skin, the salt water caused terrible sores, and the cold nights were spent shivering until teeth would chatter. They could almost forget their hunger, but their craving for water became more insistent.

By the third day, as the sun rode higher toward its zenith, their thirst became unbearable. Visions of everything from plain water to fruit drinks with plenty of ice filled their imaginations.

Finally their desperate need became such that they not only wanted water to drink but they wanted to wallow in it, to let their parched skins soak up the moisture. Often they thought of verses they had learned in high school—“Water, water, everywhere, nor any drop to drink.”¹

One of the men had a Bible, and he knew how to pray. His crewmates had joked about his religious leanings, but in the raft no one had as much as a chuckle. They joined in fervent prayer as they realized the gravity of their situation. A day later a bluish curtain rolled over the ocean. Rain! Water now brought them relief and hope.

But tougher days lay ahead. As Lieutenant James Whitaker, one of the eight men, put it, “Few people realize how much the human body can take and still come through.”² For thirteen miserable days they continued to drift. Prayer became a vital part of each day’s ritual, and they saw miracles they wouldn’t have believed before. Food came to them in various forms, such as a seagull that landed on one man’s head. Several more times rain fell. Whitaker later wrote, “There are some things that can’t be explained by natural law.” He described how a rain cloud that passed them suddenly turned and started back—against the wind!

By the twenty-first day several men were deathly ill, and others had almost given

**INTRO-
DUCTION**
Scriptures:
Ex. 17:1-7;
Num. 20:1-13

1. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.”
2. Lieutenant James C. Whittaker, *We Thought We Heard the Angels Sing* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1948), p. 77.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 139.

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up hope. Then they heard the deep roar of a plane, and saw one silhouetted against the dark clouds. It missed them, but at the same time gave them hope. They cut the rafts loose from each other, thinking they had a better chance of being seen. Scout planes continued to fly over, but still nothing happened. Finally Whittaker heard one of his companions say, "Jim, I think you'd better take a look. It may be a mirage, but I think I see something." Land! The group finally made it to shore and found the first little pool of unsalty water. They drank, wrigglers and all!

Eventually all the men were rescued—except one, whom they had buried at sea. Among the survivors was Eddie Rickenbacker, a World War I flying ace, a genius at business, a great authority on aviation.

During their ordeal, the greatest need these men had was for water—just plain, simple water. God provided it for them—all the survivors acknowledged the miracles they had experienced. More than that, however, they also found the "Water of Life" through this experience. Whittaker wrote, "During those blazing days out there I found my God. . . . It was the greatest adventure a man can have."

Sinful and Sinless Anger

by H. Ward Hill

LOGOS

Theme: Our physical need for water and the way God provides for that need illustrates our need for the Water of Life and how God provides that which alone can quench our spiritual thirst.

1. The Water and the Rock (read Ex. 17:1-7; Num. 20:1-13)

When Moses impetuously smote the rock at Kadesh (Numbers 20), he marred an illustration of the plan of salvation. Here he was only to speak to the rock and from it would flow the life-giving current. Instead, he lost control of the situation. The experience of Exodus 17 was a legitimate smiting of the rock. But now he demonstrated that exasperating events may inspire hot tempers in holy men. If one such as Moses can fall beneath the temptation to anger and thus thwart the operation of grace, then there must be a lesson here for us.

2. Sinful and Sinless Anger

With flushed face and flashing eyes, Moses shouted, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" (Num. 20:10). Water came just the same. God is very gracious. The wrong method may get good results in some ways. This should not cause us to slip into the pragmatic thesis that the true test of anything is whether or not it works. Moses' method worked. He had the results to show for it. But there was something terribly wrong in what he did.

The Lord forgave Moses. He was not lost eternally. But this was not his finest hour. For this moment of hotheadedness he paid a heavy price. "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them" (Num. 20:12).

This fell on the ears of Moses like a ton of bricks. Here was his life's ambition going up in smoke. When entrance to Canaan seemed like a phantom and a dream, Moses had inspired hope that one day they would enter the land. The realization of that hope was almost within his grasp—and now this!

If pride is the most difficult sin to overcome, anger is the most prevalent. "The largest share of the annoyances of life," wrote Ellen White, "is the result of a temper uncontrolled."¹ Those who have achieved the meek and quiet spirit find that in this way "ninety-nine out of a hundred of the troubles which so terribly embitter life might be saved."² Those who readily fly into a fit of rage may never make the "efforts sufficient to meet the mind of Christ."³ As Henry Fairlie has said, anger is "ready to burst out and as likely as not to spatter some innocent bystanders in our life."⁴

All of us sense that uncontrolled temper can sabotage our faith. What may perplex us is distinguishing legitimate expressions of anger from those that are essentially destructive. On the one hand "anger resteth in the bosom of fools" (Eccl. 7:9), yet the apostle Paul advised that we be "angry, and sin not" (Eph. 4:26), or as Barclay

1. *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 348.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 85.

4. Henry Fairlie, *The Seven Deadly Sins Today*, p. 108.

5. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 421.

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translates, "Sometimes it is your duty to be angry, but your anger must never be sinful anger."

Not all temper displays are nasty, snappish, ugly, vicious, or hostile. The era of the 1960s seemed to sense this. The expression of anger was seen as the healthy thing to do. As a release from tension, it might even be better than jogging. The salvific slogan of the day was "getting in touch with your feelings." The moral hero was the one who could rant against social injustice in its myriad forms. Showing patience and reason and sweetness when so much in society was upside down made one a wimp and a lap dog.

The truth hinted at in the distortions of the 60s was captured in Mark 3:5 where Jesus faced callous and inhumane actions in His day and "looked round about on them with anger." Moses demonstrated this when his "anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount" (Ex. 32:19). This was not simply a peevish reaction by someone whose ego had been deflated. He was not bent on annihilating the opposition because he was chafing under personal insult. From the depths of his soul he cried: "This people has committed a great sin. . . . But now, if Thou wilt, forgive their sin—and if not, please blot me out from Thy book which Thou hast written" (Ex. 32:31, 32, NASB). Here was anger at the sin accompanied by a right attitude toward the sinner. The one who has victory over his or her own spirit does not sit passively when injustice is done. The money changers in the Temple need to be challenged. The strong must not be allowed to run rough shod over the weak.

But the temper that waxes hot when the field goal misses by a foot, when the runner is called out at the plate, when the teacher asks the unexpected question, when the car in front fails to move when the light turns green, in short, when the world doesn't cater to our every wish, is a ticking time bomb. Before it explodes we need to be reminded of something we were told long ago—that "there is not an impulse of our nature, not a faculty of the mind or an inclination of the heart, but needs to be, moment by moment, under the control of the Spirit of God."⁵

Does the emotional experience of one who has the kind of anger that rests in the "bosom of fools" differ radically from that felt by one in the grips of righteous indignation? Can occasions when temper flies and we "strike the rock" keep the Water of Life from reaching those to whom we should be ministering?

Keeping Your Cool

by Reiner S. Roeske

God doesn't cross His fingers behind His back when He makes promises. But He knows some humans do, and that all humans have to live with those who do. So, along with His promises He provides evidence that His promises can be depended on.

He had promised to supply Israel's need for water, and He did. He has promised to supply our need for the spiritual water of life and He will.

"From the smitten rock in Horeb first flowed the living stream that refreshed Israel in the desert. During all their wanderings, wherever the need existed, they were supplied with water by a miracle of God's mercy. The water did not, however, continue to flow from Horeb. Wherever in their journeyings they wanted water, there from the clefts of the rock it gushed out beside their encampment.

"It was Christ, by the power of His word, that caused the refreshing stream to flow for Israel. 'They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.' 1 Corinthians 10:4. He was the source of all temporal as well as spiritual blessings. . . .

"The smitten rock was a figure of Christ, and through this symbol the most precious spiritual truths are taught. As the life-giving waters flowed from the smitten rock, so from Christ, 'smitten of God,' 'wounded for our transgressions,' 'bruised for our iniquities' (Isaiah 53:4, 5), the stream of salvation flows for a lost race."¹

Ellen White describes Jesus' activities at the Feast of Tabernacles: "Jesus lifted up His voice, in tones that rang through the courts of the temple: 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. . . .'

"The priest had that morning performed the ceremony which commemorated the smiting of the rock in the wilderness. That rock was a symbol of Him who by His death would cause living streams of salvation to flow to all who are athirst. Christ's words were the water of life. There in the presence of the assembled multitude He set Himself apart to be smitten, that the water of life might flow to the world."²

"He who seeks to quench his thirst at the fountains of this world will drink only to thirst again. Everywhere men are unsatisfied. They long for something to supply the need of the soul. Only One can meet that want. The need of the world, 'The Desire of all nations,' is Christ."³

"The cry of Christ to the thirsty soul is still going forth, and it appeals to us with even greater power than to those who heard it in the temple on that last day of the feast. The fountain is open for all. The weary and exhausted ones are offered the refreshing draught of eternal life. Jesus is still crying, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.' 'Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.' Rev. 22:17."⁴

TESTIMONY

Key text:

Revelation 22:17

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 411.
2. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 453, 454.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 187.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 454.

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Water, The Gift of God

by Siegfried Roeske

EVIDENCE

Key texts:
John 4:10;
1 Cor. 10:2, 4

According to the *Encyclopedia Americana* more than three fourths of the surface of the earth is covered by water, plus the ice that covers the poles, which consists of frozen water. Between 62 and 72 percent of the average person's body weight is made up of water. A large percentile of the vegetation in nature consists of water. Our atmosphere is largely water in vapor form.

"It has been estimated that the amount of water in the atmosphere above a square mile of land on a mild summer day is of the order of 50,000 tons."*

Water has some of the most unusual properties: It occurs and is in common use in all three states—solid, liquid, and vapor.

In Palestine water was called the "gift of God." This is not surprising since so much of Palestine's geography consists of dry, arid, rocky, and sandy deserts. Jesus called Himself the Water of Life, because He knew that there can be no life in any form without water. Water is an absolute necessity for all life. The physical functions of water are but an object lesson of the greater spiritual functions of Christ, the Living Water, to the sinner.

As "thirst" is only the body's cry for cleansing from impurities, so on the spiritual level, the sinner's longing for peace, joy, and happiness is only the spiritual body's cry for cleansing from the impurities and defilements of sin. This world is a dry and dreary desert, causing hunger and thirst for weary travelers. Human philosophies and inventions cannot long quench the soul's thirst. Only Christ can supply the satisfying water of life (John 4:14).

Paul refers to Christ as the spiritual Rock to God's people in the wilderness of the Old Testament. Whether it was the water of the Red Sea that saved them from the Egyptian army, or the water in the cloud that protected them from the scorching sun, or the water that came out of the rock that refreshed their weary bodies—in each case it was Christ who was represented by water as the Saviour, Lifegiver, and Eternal Preserver of His people.

It is through "water" that Israel of old and spiritual Israel today are cleansed from allegiance to sin and led into a covenant of faith and loyalty with the God of heaven (1 Cor. 10:3, 4).

* *The New Encyclopedia Americana* (Danbury, Connecticut: Grolier Incorporated, 1983), vol. 28, p. 432.

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Formula for Anger

by Melissa Sexson

HOW TO
Key text:
Proverbs 15:18

You're late for an appointment and every stop light is red?
 Your roommate spills punch on your favorite outfit?
 Your boy or girl friend is thirty minutes late?
 Your car stalls in the middle of a busy intersection?

Any of these situations can make a Christian angry. Brent Earl says, "Anger doesn't need an introduction. He can pop his head out at the most unexpected times" (*Proverbs for the Graduate*, p. 72). Even though becoming angry is a common occurrence, the Bible clearly instructs Christians to put away "all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking" (Eph. 4:31, NKJV). However, as growing Christians, we find that applying this advice to today's living can sometimes be frustrating. Is there some magic secret for controlling our temper? Fortunately, God has not left us to struggle with our tempers alone. He has given us some very practical advice:

1. Acknowledge your helplessness. To begin with, we must first decide that alone, we will never gain victory over anger. Gritting our teeth, clenching our fists, and counting to ten will never give us the victorious Christian life. Jesus tells us in John 15:5 that "apart from me you can do nothing" (NIV). The only way we can win the war over our tempers is to admit defeat. That's right—give up! But the good news is that when we quit trying to control our anger in our own strength, God steps in and takes hold of the situation. Then, and only then, will victory come.

2. Seek outside help. After admitting our weaknesses we must seek outside help. Just as a child brings his broken toy to his father to be fixed, so the Christian must bring his anger to the Lord and ask for His help to overcome. Jesus promises, "Ask and it will be given to you" (Luke 11:9, NIV). He doesn't expect us to overcome any temptation alone. However, if we don't ask for His help how can He give us the victory?

3. Abide in Christ. Finally, we must daily abide in Christ. Admitting defeat and asking for God's help to overcome our tempers is useless if we don't continually build our relationship with Christ. It's somewhat like a student who realizes that he or she can't do an assignment alone, and so asks the teacher for help; but then walks away before the teacher has a chance to say anything. God also needs time to mold our characters into His image. Controlling a temper doesn't happen overnight. Sometimes it takes a lifetime to learn. But by daily keeping in touch with God, we can watch our anger turn into patience and our lives become harmonious with God's ideal. Jesus says, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you" (John 15:7, NKJV).

God promises each of us that we can overcome our anger if we admit defeat to ourselves, ask for God's help, and abide daily in Christ. Victory may not come immediately, but through God's power it will be complete.

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To Be Like Moses

by Claudia Guillaume

OPINION

Key text:
Exodus 17:3, 4

What chaos! All around the moaning of the sick and dying increases. The sound of crying babies and children begging for water keeps growing louder. Old and young alike are weak from lack of water. Moses and the children of Israel are in the middle of the desert, not knowing from where the next day's supply of water will come. I would have been really scared to have been in charge of that kind of crisis.

It would be similar to running a disaster-relief program like ADRA. Men are busy organizing the digging of graves and making provision for the proper disposal of the dead. The smell of dead cattle pervades the air. The women care for the sick, keeping them as cool and comfortable as possible—out of the hot desert sun. Children are involved in the effort, bringing comfort to the ailing. Still others work rationing the limited water supply. So much work and so little opportunity for rest, contribute to short tempers and bad attitudes.

Finally, the people decide they won't continue to work under such substandard conditions. They organize themselves and confront Moses. "Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?" (Ex. 17:3). Moses, very tired and thirsty himself, does not respond to the crowd's direct and accusing manner. His first impulse is to run to God and pray, "What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me" (Ex.17:4).

Had I been in Moses' place I would have been scared. To find that my efforts to provide for the people were met with only a hostile and ungrateful attitude would have angered me. What could I possibly say to an angry mob ready to stone me? It's hard to say how I would react, but Moses certainly provided a good example. The Scripture says he did not react to the people's anger and accusations. He ran to God for direction. I might have responded defensively, and shouted back at them accusations concerning their ingratitude—all the while praying for the Lord's protection against their flying rocks. On the other hand, I might have cowered under their cold stares, clenched teeth, and angry yells. To be faced with an angry mob, rocks in hand ready to stone me, might have made me draw up in a corner and cry. I might have responded in a number of undesirable ways. I would like to develop such a relationship with God that when I'm treated unfairly, or unjustly accused of wrongdoing, my first impulse will be to run to God and say, "Lord, tell me what to do!" As I look at the story of Moses I think I would like for God to use me as He did Moses—but first—like Moses, I must be willing.

Claudia Guillaume is a senior nursing student at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Solving People Problems

Upbeat—positive—challenging! Just a few of the words that come to mind after reading through this latest “goodie” from author Len McMillan. Case in point, the author’s newly enunciated law, destined to be preserved for posterity along with those of Murphy and Parkinson, “If anything can go right, it probably will, so act accordingly.”

So what if your people-related problems seem to disprove this original adage! It’s time to change the rules of convention and follow some of the great advice given in this book.

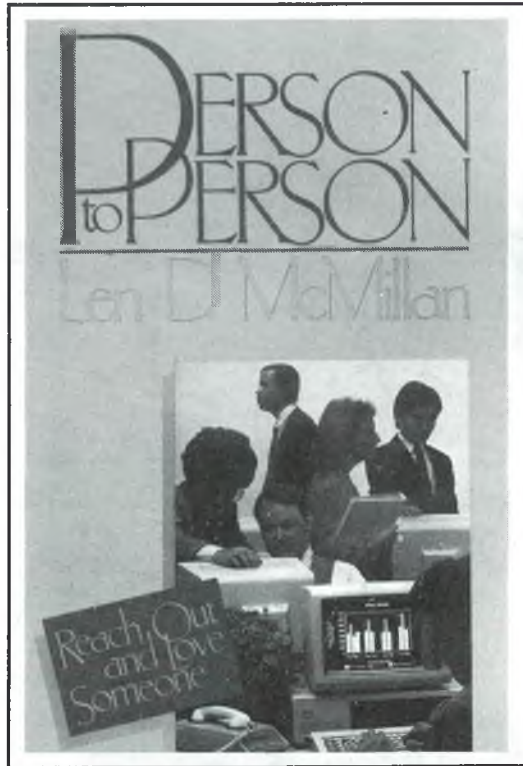
Upbeat? It may just change your people problems! As Len says, “Determine not to expect the negative, but instead claim the positive.”

Try reading these other great books by Len McMillan:

An Owner’s Guide to Male Midlife Crisis
Why Can’t My Mate Be More Like Me?

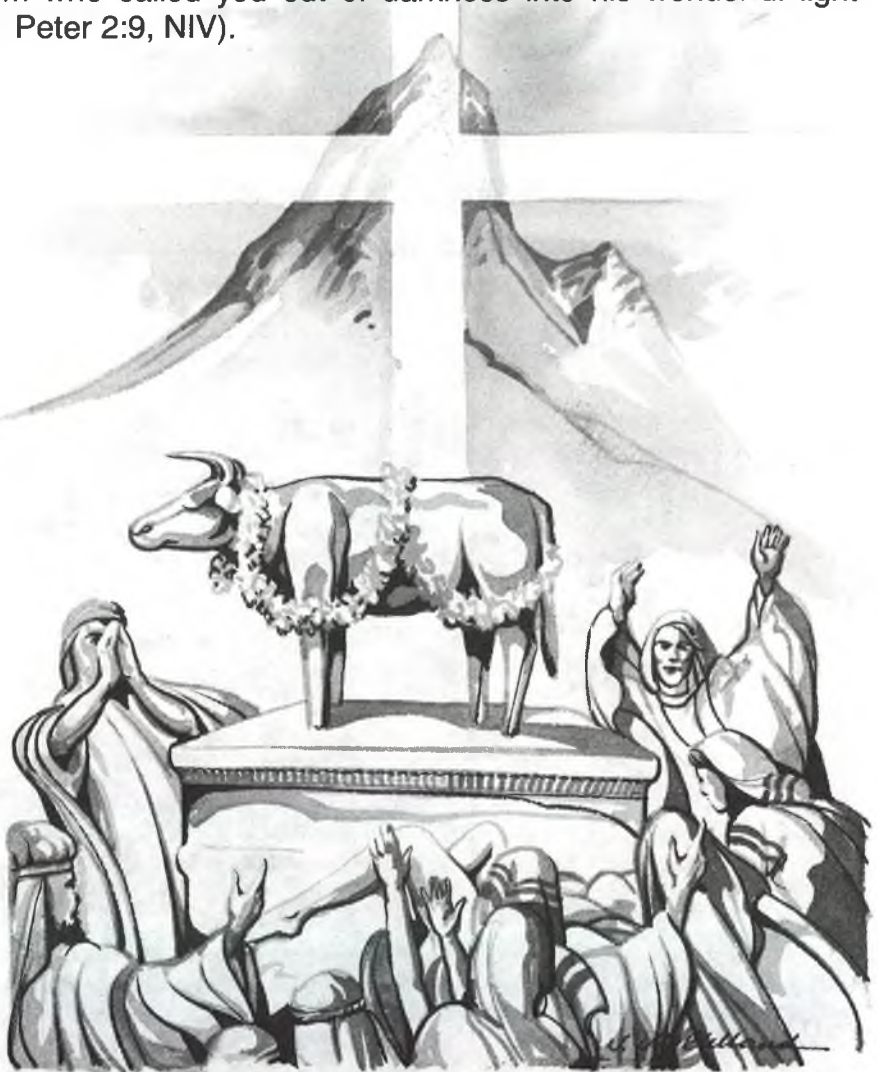
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Love, and Do What You Like!

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9, NIV).



Two Stories

by Joelle Fisher

There was once a garbage man who lived in an ancient royal city. He was a very ordinary garbage man. He wore the same gray overalls that all the other garbage men wore and talked of the same everyday, humdrum things.

Then one day it all changed. An immaculate royal courier dashed up on his fiery steed, stopped before the man, and presented him with a letter directly from Her Royal Highness, the queen. The garbage man took the snowy-white scroll and opened it tremblingly, for he could not imagine what the queen would want with him. As he read, he was filled with excitement and awe. The queen had chosen *him* from among all the garbage men in the city to be her court custodian! If he agreed to take the position all his needs would be met for life, he would be protected by royal guards, and most important of all, he would receive the treasured ten standards, protectors of happiness and peace, that were held only by the royal subjects.

He immediately agreed and took up his responsibilities that day. From then on he proudly wore a pair of pure white overalls with the royal insignia and was constantly telling people of the queen's kindness to him. He took the ten standards to heart and all was well with his soul.

There was once a certain group of people who lived in an ancient royal city. They were

very ordinary people. They wore the same drab brown clothes that everyone else wore and talked of the same everyday, humdrum things.

Then one day the immaculate royal couriers went dashing through the city to present each member of the group with a personal letter from His Royal Highness, the great king. The letter announced that each of these people had been chosen from all the peoples in the king's empire to become his *sons and daughters*. Those who accepted would never have to worry about food or money again, would be protected by specially assigned royal guards, and would receive the priceless ten standards that guard happiness and peace. As an extra benefit, they would one day inherit the king's immense wealth.

Quickly all of the group accepted. But there was something strange. These privileged ones seemed loath to wear the pure white robes with the royal insignia and chose to wear their old drab brown clothes whenever they could. When visiting the market they would never talk of their tremendous gift from the king, but instead quickly changed the subject if asked about it. Also, they discarded the precious ten standards. It was incredible! Why would they shun and disregard such a great privilege and incomparable offer? I don't know. Why do we?

INTRODUCTION

Scripture:
Exodus 19:5

Joelle Fisher is a pseudonym. She is a freshman music major at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Wrath and Forgiveness

by Ralph E. Neall

LOGOS

Theme: God has called each of us to be His "peculiar," or special, people. On His own initiative, unprompted by any merit of our own, He has chosen us and entered into a covenant with us—that He is to be our God and we are to be His obedient people. As wonderful as this is, it is only part of the picture. God also demonstrated that His love can teach us through His law of love and restore us to that special relationship when we fall.

1. The Covenant Made (read Exodus 19:1—20:21)

"You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession" (19:4, 5, NIV).

Having delivered Israel from bondage in Egypt, the Lord now invited them to accept His spiritual blessings. At the foot of Mount Sinai He proposed a unique covenant for them. Although the whole earth is His, He offered to bring them into a special love relationship with Himself.

The first item in God's covenant was His name, which we find in Exodus 20:2: "I am the LORD your God." The name *LORD* stands for the Hebrew name *Yahweh*, which is the covenant name of God, confided to Moses at the burning bush. It is the name of the promise-keeping God.

The second item in God's covenant was a recital of what He had done for His people. In the last part of Exodus 20:2 we read, ". . . who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery." This was the basis for the entire covenant. God took the initiative: He delivered Israel before He laid any commands upon them. Only after this reminder of God's provision do we come to the requirements of the covenant, the Ten Commandments. The proper reason for keeping the commandments is always gratitude. The children of Israel were to keep the commandments because they had been delivered from slavery. We are to keep them because of what God has done on our behalf—epitomized in Christ's sacrifice to deliver us from sin.

2. The Covenant Broken (read Exodus 32:1-35)

"He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt'" (32:4, NIV).

Israel's allegiance to the covenant lasted only six weeks. The obvious commandment Israel broke was the second. Feeling they needed something visible to worship, they remembered the cow- and bull-gods of Egypt. Their golden calf was supposed to stand for Yahweh—as though He who redeemed them from Egypt—could be represented by an idol of Egypt! But the God of the Exodus was too great to be known through any image made by man. He desires to be known by His deeds, not any outward appearance.

After pleading for the life of his people (see the following section),

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Moses took the tables of stone and came down to the camp. Astonished and angered by what he saw, he wondered how these people, who had promised to do everything the Lord commanded (19:8), could so soon turn against His commands. He threw down the stone tablets of the covenant, ground the image to powder, scattered it on the water, and made the people drink of it. Then he called for all who were on the Lord's side to execute the rebels throughout the camp. The tribe of Levi rallied to his side, and three thousand were slain that day.

The covenant had no provision for forgiveness (see the record in Ex. 19:3-8). It included blessings for compliance and curses for rebellion, but no forgiveness. While the people were molding their golden calf, the Lord had been giving Moses His instructions for the tabernacle (recorded in chapters 25-31), where forgiveness became abundant for unwitting sin, but not for idolatry. Was there any hope for this rebellious people?

3. The Covenant Restored (Ex. 32:30-35; 34:1-28)

"Moses went back to the Lord and said, 'Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold. But now, please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written'" (32:31-32, NIV).

Yahweh's love was greater than the covenant, and greater than the tabernacle itself. He provided forgiveness despite the broken covenant. Paradoxically, a gleam of His plan appears in the verse that speaks so sternly of His wrath, " 'Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation' " (32:10, NIV). Moses saw the love that could not be hidden: God was giving *him* the privilege of turning aside His wrath. He was inviting him to intercede for the people. If he would not leave God alone, God could not destroy the people.

Seeing the crack in the door, Moses pushed it wide open. Ignoring the chance to become father of a great nation himself, and making no excuses for the people, he cast them on God's mercy. What would become of His promises to their fathers, Moses argued, if the Lord destroyed the children of Israel (32:9-14). In words that must have delighted the Saviour, Moses offered to make an atonement himself for their sin. Willing to be blotted out of the book of life if his people could not be forgiven—Moses, like Christ, offered his own life in their place (see 32:30-32).

As he interceded for his people, Moses came closer and closer to the heart of God, more and more in tune with His plans. At last he dared to make the boldest request anyone had ever made. "Now," he prayed, "show me your glory" (33:18). And the Lord did not refuse. Hiding Moses in a cleft of the rock the next day, He passed before him and proclaimed His name.

Moses never described what he saw, but he repeated what he

heard. In words that echo through Scripture to our day (see Psalms 86:15; 103:8; Micah 7:18, 19), he proclaimed the Name of the Yahweh, which is His true glory: "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished" (Ex. 34:6, 7, NIV).

Thus the covenant was re-established with Israel, and their history continued until the break that led them back to bondage a millennium later. Even then, however, there was forgiveness for those who would accept it, and the promise of a restored covenant (see Jer. 31:31-34).

This covenant is available also for us (Heb. 10:15-17). The promise for all who call on the name of the Lord is that He will write His law in their hearts; He will be their God and they will be His people.

Was the covenant made at Sinai defective? What are the differences between it and the new covenant predicted in Jeremiah 31:31-34?

Did the Lord intend that His law should be written on the hearts of the people at Sinai? How does He now write it in our hearts?

The Tables of the Heart

by Ralph Schnell

TESTIMONY

Key text:
Exodus 19:5

"Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments" (Deut. 7:9, NKJV). "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine" (Ex. 19:5, NKJV).

"From a race of slaves the Israelites had been exalted above all peoples to be the peculiar treasure of the King of kings. God had separated them from the world, that He might commit to them a sacred trust. He had made them the depositaries of His law, and He purposed, through them, to preserve among men the knowledge of Himself."¹

"God honored them [Israel] by making them the guardians and keepers of His law, but it was to be held as a sacred trust for the whole world. The precepts of the Decalogue are adapted to all mankind, and they were given for the instruction and government of all. Ten precepts, brief, comprehensive, and authoritative, cover the duty of man to God and to his fellow man; and all based upon the great fundamental principle of love."²

"God has given us His holy precepts, because He loves mankind. To shield us from the results of transgression, He reveals the principles of righteousness. The law is an expression of the thought of God; when received in Christ, it becomes our thought. It lifts us above the power of natural desires and tendencies, above temptations that lead to sin. God desires us to be happy, and He gave us the precepts of the law that in obeying them we might have joy. . . .

"When the law was proclaimed from Sinai, God made known to men the holiness of His character, that by contrast they might see the sinfulness of their own. The law was given to convict them of sin, and reveal their need of a Saviour. It would do this as its principles were applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit. This work it is still to do. In the life of Christ the principles of the law are made plain; and as the Holy Spirit of God touches the heart, as the light of Christ reveals to men their need of His cleansing blood and His justifying righteousness, the law is still an agent in bringing us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith."³

"The same law that was engraved upon the tables of stone is written by the Holy Spirit upon the tables of the heart. Instead of going about to establish our own righteousness we accept the righteousness of Christ. His blood atones for our sins. His obedience is accepted for us. Then the heart renewed by the Holy Spirit will bring forth 'the fruits of the Spirit.' Through the grace of Christ we shall live in obedience to the law of God written upon our hearts."⁴

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 314.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 305.
3. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 308.
4. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 372.

Ralph Schnell is a senior religion/social science education major at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.

The Covenant's Chosenness

by Robert Bretsch

EVIDENCE

Key text:
1 Peter 2:9

Before there was a covenant given at Sinai, there was a God who pursued His beloved. This has been the situation since God found Adam and Eve hiding behind the bushes in the Garden of Eden. Possibly the extreme of God's pursuit and choosing activity was when He declared to a man and his barren wife that they would be the parents of a nation so great it would be uncountable. How could God begin with two people who could not even produce any offspring? God promised, Abraham and Sarah believed, and Israel, "God's chosen," came into existence. Now, in 1 Peter 2:9, the apostle redefines this *chosenness* in the light of the Christian church. He states we are the "peculium," meaning God's special treasured possession.

The covenant relationship is based upon two unchangeable realities: God's gift and God's claim. The first, God's gift, is expressed in the context of our *chosenness*. God so loved that He gave His Son to die for us. The cross is the crucial evidence of that gift He gives to us. But once we accept His gift, we cannot avoid His claims. We cannot have one without the other.

Peter describes this claim in the last half of the verse. He defines it in three ways. **PURPOSE:** His purpose is for us to proclaim His "excellencies" (1 Peter 2:9, NASB). All that God is and wants to do is the subject of our proclamation. Peter's claim for uniqueness in life-style and philosophy is centered on this reality. He is reaffirming the Old Testament calling of Israel, "ye are my witnesses" (Isa. 43:10). **MANNER:** The individual member is the mechanism of the proclamation. Through the church, through the characters of God's people, and through the words of our personal testimony, the Christian shares the reality of God's great gift to a dying world. **MOTIVE:** The great blessing we receive as God's children is described by Peter when he refers to God as calling us out of darkness into His marvelous light. The gratitude we feel for the gift of God, is our motivation in life to share the good news. Our own happiness and salvation is not all God intends when He extends His gift to us. He gives us the gift because He wants us to share it with those who have not yet accepted His gift. We have received Christ that we may impart Christ.

REACT

Is accepting the gift of Christ the sum and substance of our faith? What are the claims God has on our lives when we accept His gift?

Robert Bretsch is senior pastor of the College View Church, Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.

God's Special People

by Bob Alarcón

God chose the Israelites to be His special people if they obeyed His voice. Today we as Seventh-day Adventist Christians consider ourselves to be a special people called by God to deliver His special message to the world. Could it be that we, like the Israelites of the Old Testament, have corrupted ourselves by not obeying His voice, by worshiping the gods of materialism, and by flirting with the world? And if we are guilty of this, what can we do about it? After studying this week's lesson we may find ourselves facing the same problems that God's chosen people of the Old Testament had. I would like you to consider four ways we could get back on track.

HOW TO
Key texts:
Exodus 19:5, 6
and Rev. 12:17

1. We Need to Confess Our Sin to God

Even though we don't have Moses to intercede for us as Israel did (Ex. 32:11-13), we have someone greater in Jesus Christ, who intercedes for us (Rom. 8:34).

2. We Need to Repent of Our Sin

God gave our early pioneers a unique message to give to the world, known as the Three Angels' Messages (Rev. 14:6-12). Have we sinned in not doing all we can in giving these messages the prominence they deserve? God has strong counsel for us, the Laodicean church, which we urgently need to heed (Rev. 3:14-22).

3. We Need to Become Doers of the Word and Not Hearers Only

Only as we obey God's Word will we become more Christlike and be given power to proclaim God's message for this day.

4. Most of All We Need to Have the Love of Jesus in Our Hearts

In loving and caring for others we fulfill God's Law of Love—the Ten Commandments. The Bible tells us that when we love one another and believe in His Son, we keep His commandments and abide in Him (1 John 3:23).

REACT

1. What practical measures can the church take in dealing with the "flirting with the world" syndrome, prevalent among Adventists today?

2. Does the church have a responsibility to its members in dealing with this problem? Why? (Read 1 John 2:15.)

Bob Alarcón is a junior theology major at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.

A True Love Affair by Gary and Teresa Luitjens

OPINION

Key text:
Exodus 20:1-11

Love is a word that expresses emotion. Love also contains an element of jealousy. Not the immature, irrational jealousy that comes with infatuation, but the jealousy that desires a relationship with one special person, and God is a jealous God (Ex. 20:5; 34:14). Love is the divine expression of God's revealed character. "God is love" (1 John 4:8). And love needs to be expressed in our marriage with the Lord, our husband (Isa. 54:5).

It seems that the emotions of a newly married couple are at a dangerously low level among God's people. No longer are they drawn to the loving, tender, caring side of their faithful husband. As the children of Israel did when they were brought out of Egypt, so the children of today have made unto them gods of gold. Time after time the Lord offered the Israelites love as He delivered them from the hand of the evil destroyer; yet, as the children of today, they were unwilling to respond. We seem unable to respond to the alluring, emotional side of a love affair with the Lord. The Lord calls His people a chosen people, a peculiar treasure, His bride, but still they turn away.

The cries of the Hebrew people went up decade after decade, generation after generation, century after century, without any apparent hope. Finally, when they least expected it—He came. The greatest joy of the human life is to experience the seemingly impossible, to be set free, to find the long-sought-after treasure. Knowing that you are truly loved brings from the depths of your heart a reciprocating response. Just as the children of Israel were unwilling to continue in this blissful state, so we seem to be in a similar situation. Today the foundation of many relationships with God seem to be based on pure infatuation. It's like growing up extremely poor and then one day a millionaire comes to your house and you no longer lack for anything. When the newness, the warmth of sharing, wears off, it is replaced by a cold unemotional outburst of rejection.

You and I are asked to do what the children of Israel were asked to do. We are asked to give up our irresponsible lack of concern and build a lasting relationship with the Lord. Here are some suggestions: First, He asks that we remember that it was He who delivered us from a terrible bondage (Ex. 20:2). He has been to us a knight in shining armor. Second, He begs us not to return to the beguiling love of the world, and not to bow down to the whims of some tempting lover who will allure us from Him, our faithful husband (Ex. 20:3-5). Third, don't go around claiming to be married to the Lord if you are bent upon having an adulterous affair with another lover (Ex. 20:7). Finally, be patient, the Lord will come and consummate this relationship with His precious bride (Rev. 21:2, 3).

Gary and Teresa Luitjens are senior religion and nursing students at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.

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Symbols From the Sanctuary

“The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14, NIV).



Symbols That Save: by James Arkusinski The Meaning of the Sanctuary

"Silence! Will you bring the wrath of God on us all?"

Startled, I positioned my long knife so that it would not clang against the rock lying by my side. Knife? Why did I have a knife with me? Who was this man telling me to watch my movements? Rubbing the fog away from my blurry eyes, I slowly surveyed my situation. Nervously I looked behind me.

People.

Hundreds—thousands of people. And all were sitting in hushed solitude, like statues out of the past, gazing ahead, transfixed by the scene.

The scene? I spun around and stood motionless. Before me, not more than forty feet away, was a swirling, smoking cloud, winding its way down toward a large tent. The tent had curtains made of finely woven linen, with blue, purple, and scarlet yarn embroidered with cherubim. Gold clasps were used to pull them together, and the whole building sparkled with a heavenly brilliance. It was hazy inside, but I could see through the parted drapes clearly enough to distinguish the furnishings inside.

Stretching out like seven shooting stars was a golden lampstand glistening in the light. Budding almonds blossomed into cups of beauty where light reverently flickered from each candle. On the opposite wall was a table with bread laid neatly on its smooth surface. Powerful

perfume streamed up from an altar directly in the middle of the tent, sending a smoky aroma over a wall of curtains. This partition, made of the same fine cloth used for making the rest of the tent, could hardly contain the majestic rays of fiery light bursting from within. Intense! Blinding! But filled with a sense of peace, as if to say Mercy lived only steps away.

Dazed by the glory, I slowly turned my body to the left. My attention was suddenly riveted toward a large bronze altar in the courtyard surrounding the tent. Lying on a pile of twisted sticks was a small lamb—limp and lifeless. Brilliant red, dripped in a heart-wrenching beat, splattering in slow motion onto the ground. As I snapped my head away from the gruesome scene, my hand brushed across the cool blade I had pushed aside earlier. Something sticky stopped me cold. Chills crawled up my spine, leaving me frigid as I stared at the crimson fluid smeared on my hands—the same crimson fluid I had seen gushing from the lamb. I closed my eyes, hoping to make the scene vanish.

A thundering voice broke the silence . . .

Thundering! My eyes opened and darted around. A gush of relief swept over me as I realized that it was thunder. I had been dreaming.

**INTRO-
DUCTION**
Scripture:
Exodus 25-31;
35-40

Symbols From the Sanctuary

by Siegfried Roeske

LOGOS **Theme:** The Old Testament sanctuary along with its furniture, services, sacrifices, priesthood, and rituals find their primary focus and application in Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. God gave the sanctuary service to Israel to demonstrate in object lesson form the work Jesus would perform as the world's Redeemer in dealing with the sin problem.

1. The Purpose of the Sanctuary (read Exodus 25:8)

God's beautiful dream for this world, the dream of everlasting joy and fellowship with beings created in His own image, was temporarily interrupted by the sin problem. In their sinful state, humanity cannot be exposed to the holy presence of God (Heb. 12:29). So, through the sanctuary services, God has illustrated what is involved, in the removal of sin, and the restoration of fellowship between God and humanity. Also illustrated is God's love, so great that He was willing to send His Son to die—that the closeness that existed in Eden might be restored.

Understanding the teachings of the sanctuary did not perish with the wilderness tent. In Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple (1Kings 8:27-30), we see how highly he valued the joy that God's people experience when God is among them. Solomon understood sin as the cause of God's displeasure, and saw in the sanctuary (Temple) services an illustration of the way sins are confessed, forgiven, and cleansed. He saw the Temple as a sign of God's presence and blessing.

John, in the book of Revelation, pictures the climax of salvation, with the restoration of fellowship between God and humanity. In the Holy City there is "no temple . . . for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it" (Rev. 21:22). And God "will dwell with them, and they shall be his people" (21:3). Sin is at last removed, and love again reigns supreme.

2. The Sanctuary Built According to the Pattern (read Exodus 35-39)

"Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary" (Ps. 77:13).

Why does the author of Hebrews state that God instructed Moses to build the tabernacle according to the pattern that was shown? (see Heb. 8:1-5; 9:24).

Everything in the sanctuary services was originated by God. He knew what the original was like. The earthly sanctuary services and furniture were designed to serve as windows, symbols, and object lessons, of the great spiritual realities of Christ's work of atonement and His mediatorial work in the heavenly sanctuary.

A. The Altar of Burnt Offering (read Ex. 29:38-43; Lev. 17:11).

The primary function of the various sacrifices made at the altar of burnt offering was to point the sinner to Jesus as the great Sin-bearer and Sin-remover. "Now he [Christ] has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself"

1. SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 787.
2. The Great Controversy, p. 465.

Siegfried Roeske is associate professor of religion at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.

(Heb. 9:26, NIV). The altar of burnt offering illustrated several lessons:

(1) *The destructive nature of sin.* Sin, when given a free hand, will cause the disintegration of life. What caused the death of thousands of animals offered in sacrifice? Was it really the knife of the priest? Or was it the sins of the worshipers? The dying lamb on the altar was a picture of Christ bearing the sins of the transgressor, or of the sinner in the final judgment who has not accepted Christ as substitute.

(2) *God's desire to separate sin from the sinner.* No one but the "Lamb of God" could solve the sin problem. It is His life, His blood, that cleanses from sin. "For it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Lev. 17:11). Since death is caused by sin, and blood cleanses sin, then the blood of Christ, covering the sinner, restores the life that sin would certainly destroy. "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9:22).

(3) *The availability of salvation.* The morning and evening sacrifice was always on the altar (Ex. 29:38-42). This sacrifice represented to the Israelites the constant availability of the merits of Christ's sacrifice. At any time of the day or night a repentant Israelite might look in faith to the sacrifice being offered at that moment for him or her. "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25).

(4) *The personal application.* The apostle Paul draws a personal application from the daily burnt offering: "I beseech you . . . present your bodies a living sacrifice. . . . Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed. . ." (Rom. 12:1, 2). As the offering on the altar of burnt offering was a daily and continual sacrifice, so Paul admonishes the Christian to surrender daily to the service of Christ.

B. *The Laver (Ex. 30:17-21).* The washings were symbolic of the concept that God requires absolute cleanness of heart and life on the part of those who approach Him in worship. What was true for Aaron and his sons is true for all who minister in holy things—they should not presume to lead others in worship until they themselves are clean.

In the New Testament we see the laver being replaced by the basin of water, which Jesus used to wash His disciples' feet. "If I wash thee not," Jesus said, "thou hast no part with me" (John 13:8).

C. *The Golden Candlestick (Ex. 25:31-40; Lev. 24:2-4).* The candlestick symbolized Jesus, the true Light of the world. Speaking of Jesus, John describes Him as "the true light that gives light to every man" (John 1:9, NIV). In mercy, the Lord allows His light to shine into the hearts of every sinner. If it is received with joy, it will increase; if it is rejected and abused, it will fade (see John 3:19).

D. *The Table of Shewbread (Ex. 25:23-30; Lev. 24:5-9).* The bread on the table symbolizes Christ, the true Bread of Life, and also

Israel's constant dependence on God. (See SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 808.) Jesus said, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger" (John 6:35). The parallel to the Old Testament shewbread is the bread of the New Testament communion service. The communion bread symbolizes the body of Christ, which, when absorbed by faith, strengthens the sin-weakened soul.

E. *The Altar of Incense* (Ex. 30:1-10; Rev. 8:3, 4).

The significance of the altar of incense is portrayed in the book of Revelation. "The picture is that of the angel adding incense to the prayers of the saints as these prayers ascend to the throne of God."¹ Prayer plays an important part in the plan of salvation. As the priests ministered daily before the altar, so God's people ought daily to send their petitions up to God.

F. *The Ark of the Covenant* (Ex. 25:10-22; 37:1-9).

The ark of the covenant, placed in the Most Holy Place, symbolized God's throne, where "mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psalm 85:10). Christians who reject the sanctuary services will find it difficult to see the balance between law and grace in the plan of salvation. Law and grace do not oppose each other, as though originating from two different sources. Both are part of the character of God. ". . . for the law, as well as the gospel, is a mirror reflecting the true character of God."²

The Offering

by Caroline Van Ornam

TESTIMONY

Key text:

Romans 12:1

"Every morning and evening a lamb of a year old was burned upon the altar, with its appropriate meat offering, thus symbolizing the daily consecration of the nation to Jehovah, and their constant dependence upon the atoning blood of Christ. God expressly directed that every offering presented for the service of the sanctuary should be 'without blemish.' Exodus 12:5. The priests were to examine all animals brought as a sacrifice, and were to reject every one in which a defect was discovered. Only an offering 'without blemish' could be a symbol of His perfect purity who was to offer Himself as 'a lamb without blemish and without spot.' 1 Peter 1:19. The apostle Paul points to these sacrifices as an illustration of what the followers of Christ are to become. He says, 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.' Romans 12:1. We are to give ourselves to the service of God, and we should seek to make the offering as nearly perfect as possible. God will not be pleased with anything less than the best we can offer. Those who love Him with all the heart, will desire to give Him the best service of the life, and they will be constantly seeking to bring every power of their being into harmony with the laws that will promote their ability to do His will.

"In the offering of incense the priest was brought more directly into the presence of God than in any other act of the daily ministrations. As the inner veil of the sanctuary did not extend to the top of the building, the glory of God, which was manifested above the mercy seat, was partially visible from the first apartment. When the priest offered incense before the Lord, he looked toward the ark; and as the cloud of incense arose, the divine glory descended upon the mercy seat and filled the most holy place, and often so filled both apartments that the priest was obliged to retire to the door of the tabernacle. As in that typical service the priest looked by faith to the mercy seat which he could not see, so the people of God are now to direct their prayers to Christ, their great High Priest, who, unseen by human vision, is pleading in their behalf in the sanctuary above.

"The incense, ascending with the prayers of Israel, represents the merits and intercession of Christ, His perfect righteousness, which through faith is imputed to His people, and which can alone make the worship of sinful beings acceptable to God. Before the veil of the most holy place was an altar of perpetual intercession, before the holy, an altar of continual atonement. By blood and by incense God was to be approached—symbols pointing to the great Mediator, through whom sinners may approach Jehovah, and through whom alone mercy and salvation can be granted to the repentant, believing soul."*

REACT

How do I present my body as a "living sacrifice?"

* *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 352, 353.

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Is Darkness Harmful to Christians?

by C. Edward Rusk

EVIDENCE

Key text:

John 8:12

Christ placed the golden candlestick in the sanctuary to remind us that He is the true Light, the source of direction, and that without Him we are like a plant placed in a closet, with the doors closed. The plant will die. Not immediately, but, in time, it will wither and die.

Jesus gave us many promises in the Bible. One of the most comforting is found in John 8:12. Jesus claims to be the "light of the world," and that whoever follows Him will not walk in darkness. Does that mean that there will never be darkness, that we will always walk in light when we are following Christ?

We have all experienced times of darkness. We have all had times when we didn't know what to do about a new job offer, about marriage, or even about getting money for next year's tuition. We were confused, mixed up, scared, "in the dark" about what the future held. Are these times of uncertainty unhealthy for us as Christians?

Photosynthesis is a vital element for the growth and survival of a plant. The plant needs the "light" in order to stay alive. But even though the plant needs the light, there are times when the light is replaced with darkness or semidarkness. Does this hurt the plant? No! And why does a plant reach toward the light when it is in darkness? A plant grows and stretches toward the light because it needs the energy of light to form carbohydrates in order for it to grow.

As Christians, we all encounter times of darkness and uncertainty that in some way affect our lives. Jesus is our source of light, and if we are to grow in our relationship with Him we need to reach toward Him. Just as the plant needs light to grow, we need to keep our thoughts on Christ if we are to grow. And when those dark times do come, don't be discouraged. Don't think that this means that your relationship with Christ is in jeopardy. The presence of dark times should help us as Christians to grow stronger in Christ. They provide an opportunity to become more Christlike.

REACT

1. When times of darkness and uncertainty come, do we as Christians, tend to lean toward Christ as the plant leans toward the light, or do we close ourselves in a closet of despair?

2. What difference do you see between spiritual darkness and the darkness of hard times in a fallen world?

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Beyond Mere Symbolism

by Steve Johnson

HOW TO

Key text:
John 5:39

I am a senior accounting student at Union College. At the conclusion of each course I receive a grade based on my performance, as well as the objective opinion of a particular teacher. It is a record representing the work that I have completed during the year. When looking for jobs, however, I have found that something interesting happens. For example, I am presently being interviewed by various firms for next year. These prospective employers generally do not examine each grade individually, but examine my combined scholastic record. In this context, a grade is only a symbol pointing toward a larger, more comprehensive point—the cumulative GPA.

In a similar way, the individual items of the sanctuary, such as the laver, the altar, and the candlestick, are symbols; but they were not the main point. The laver taken by itself doesn't directly point to Jesus' dying on the cross any more than an "A" in pottery exemplifies overall academic excellence. Just as the GPA represents a broader picture of our scholastic endeavors, so the combination of symbols in the sanctuary helps focus our attention on the broader application of the sanctuary—Jesus Christ dying for our sins.

What significance do symbols have for our lives? The Communion service is a prime example. I personally find it easy to partake mechanically in the ceremony without seriously thinking about its true meaning. When I eat the bread and drink the grape juice I should be contemplating what significance these elements have for me as an individual. There is a powerful meaning behind the Communion service.

Baptism is another example. Being buried under the water is a symbol of new birth and cleansing. But for any of these symbols to be of value, you need to make sure you don't get so caught up in the ceremony or occasion that you lose sight of why you are observing them.

REACT

God gave Moses specific instructions regarding the construction of the tabernacle. Could these detailed instructions be a symbol? If so, what for, and how do they affect our everyday lives?

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Pointing to Christ

by Michael Foraker

OPINION
Key text:
Hebrews 7:25

The dictionary says, "A sanctuary is a sacred place of refuge and protection." From the first moment of their creation, the presence of God had been just that to Adam and Eve. The Garden of Eden was the setting in which the holy pair "were visited by angels, and were granted communion with their Maker, with no obscuring veil between."¹

The perfect bond between God and humanity was broken when sin entered the picture. Immediately God sets in operation a plan whereby the rift between Himself and His creation might be healed. The promise of Christ in Genesis 3:15 was the beginning of humanity's hope for restoration and redemption.

God gave the sanctuary services to Israel to reveal in object lessons the work Jesus would perform as our Redeemer. In the words of Exodus 25:8 we see the desire of a heavenly Father to be reunited with His family. Jesus was and is the medium through which God purposed to bring about this reconciliation.

The different pieces of furniture found in the earthly sanctuary, and the services connected with them, were uniquely designed to symbolize the redemptive work of Christ. "Christ was the foundation of the Jewish economy. The whole system of types and symbols was a compacted prophecy of the gospel, a presentation in which were bound up the promises of redemption."² "In every sacrifice Christ's death was shown. In every cloud of incense His righteousness ascended. . . . In the awful mystery of the holy of holies His glory dwelt."³

As we study the significance of the sanctuary it becomes clear that each article in it represents some phase of Christ's work for fallen humanity.

The earthly sanctuary and its contents were patterned after a heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 8:1-5; 9:24). God admonished Moses to make everything according to the pattern shown to him in the mount. The main sacrifice offered on the altar of burnt offering involved two lambs of the first year. They were sacrificed every morning and evening (Ex. 29:38-42). This offering was to be a continual burnt offering placed at the door of the tabernacle in sight of the entire congregation.

The accessibility of this sacrifice to the Israelites has deep significance for us today. We too may view the sacrifice of Christ and come boldly to the throne of grace obtaining mercy and grace (Heb. 4:16). We may be assured that the blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse us from all our sins (1 John 1:7).

The laver was to be used by the priests in washing their hands and feet before ministering in any way in the sanctuary. The penalty for failing to make proper use of it was death (Ex. 30:17-21). The symbolism of cleansing or justification is immediately made evident by the ceremony performed at the laver. Later the act was instituted by Jesus in a new setting when He washed His disciple's feet (John 13:5), and also Peter on the day of Pentecost called for

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repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus. These are beautiful imageries of the washing away of sins by water.

The golden candlestick, made of a talent of pure gold, weighed about 120 pounds. It represented Christ, the Light of the world (John 1:9). We, as followers, are to bring light to the world (Matt. 5:14). As a refiner of gold works the precious metal until his own image is reflected in the molten mass, so Christ is waiting to see His image reflected in our lives.

Upon the table of shewbread (Ex. 25:23-30) were placed twelve cakes which were to be eaten by the priests. The bread symbolized Jesus, the Bread of Life (John 6:35). He is the Bread that came down from heaven, the Word of God (John 6:32-35). Only by daily partaking of this Bread, which Heaven has so graciously provided, will we be strengthened and invigorated to face the trials to which we are all subjected.

The altar of incense (Ex. 30:1-10) represented the prayers of God's people ascending to heaven. If our prayers are made fragrant by the application of Christ's righteousness to our lives we can be certain that Christ will plead on our behalf before His Father in heaven (see Rev. 8:3, 4).

In the ark of the covenant (Ex. 25:10-22) were contained the law of God written on tables of stone, the pot of manna, and Aaron's rod. Although the letter of the law declared that the sinner must die, Christ more than met the requirements of God's justice by His perfect life, death, and resurrection. At Calvary "mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Ps. 85:10).

The mercy seat was a representation of God's throne. This seat reveals God's character because He is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy" (Psalm 103:8).

Jesus is still the same loving, compassionate friend of sinners today as He was two thousand years ago. He is still able to save to the uttermost. He is still the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. The question is, not what He is able to do, but what will you do with Jesus?

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 50.
2. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 14.
3. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 212.

Lesson 10, February 28—March 5

Impossibility Thinking

“Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience” (Heb. 4:11, NIV).



It's How You Look at It

by Scott Christiansen

Allen and Karen—friends of my wife and me—asked us to take care of their 4-year-old daughter, Krista, for a weekend. We obliged, planning events that we hoped would provide an outlet for her seemingly boundless energy. It was Sunday afternoon, and we were strolling along a Southern California beach, enjoying the relaxation and calm. Krista was marveling at the world through 4-year-old eyes, fascinated by the waves, the sand, the sea gulls, and the dogs roaming the beach. But most of all she was enthralled by the shells.

We collected the few we could find, and I explained everything I could think of about sea shells. I told her how they were made, why they had different shapes, how God had provided them as a home for the variety of sea creatures that lived in them—everything I could think of. When I was done, though, the thing Krista knew most about shells was that she wanted more.

I made the mistake of telling her that the sea was full of them, that they gradually washed ashore, and that we would just have to wait for more to come. At first Krista looked disappointed, then those 4-year-old eyes lit up as she surveyed the vast expanse of ocean before her. She remained silent for a moment, then turned to me and whispered, "Let's move the

water and get them!"

All my explanations concerning the operation of the laws of physics, all my demonstrations of the futility of trying to move the ocean, would not deter Krista. She just wouldn't accept waiting passively for what she wanted, and didn't see why impossibility should stand in the way. When we left the beach that day, she was determined to return as soon as she could and get more shells.

Krista had determination, vision, and a childlike faith. Seventh-day Adventism was built on those qualities. Our early church leaders faced what seemed like impossible tasks. Yet the church grew, despite the scarce resources and difficult conditions, because God was leading. All God required of our forebearers was a childlike faith and a willingness to be used in His service.

The ancient Israelites let huge tasks get in their way. They failed to rely upon God to accomplish the impossible. They judged God by their own weaknesses and limitations, and this tragedy kept a whole generation out of the Promised Land.

As we near the end, the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan will become more intense. We cannot afford to let the size of our task deter us from our Promised Land. God can move mountains—and oceans.

**INTRO-
DUCTION**
Scripture:
Numbers 13, 14

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Which Way Did You Vote?

by D. Leigh Aveling

LOGOS **Theme:** Israel's lack of faith when confronted with possession of the Promised Land caused an entire generation to fail to enter into rest. Today God offers us rest—spiritual rest now and eternal rest in heaven. We face the same choice that Israel faced—faith or unbelief.

1. God's Rest (read Hebrews 4:1-11)

"Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, that no one fall by the same sort of disobedience" (Heb. 4:11, RSV).

We usually rest when we feel tired. This tiredness may be the result of physical or mental exhaustion. However, God's idea of rest expressed in Hebrews 4:11 refers to "rest from the works of sin and attempts to earn salvation by his own merits."¹

The rest God offers is a spiritual rest (see Matt. 11:28) and is different from human rest, to which people look forward and leave only with great reluctance. Think about the last day of your most recent holiday! The Scriptures say we can fail to enter God's rest through disobedience.

Many people feel uncomfortable with the word *obedience* because it sounds too much like legalism. However, in Hebrew 4:11 obedience means believing God. The majority of Israelites, during the time of the Exodus, did not enter into the rest of the Promised Land, because of their disobedience and disbelief.

How do we find God's rest? What is the importance of obedience in obtaining this rest? How is the Sabbath tied in with this rest? What is the difference between obedience and legalism?

2. Investigating the Land (read Numbers 13:1-20)

The twelve "spies" sent out to explore the Promised Land were commanded by Moses to, "Go up through the Negev and on into the hill country. See what the land is like and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many. What kind of land do they live in? Is it good or bad? What kind of towns do they live in? Are they unwalled or fortified? How is the soil? Is it fertile or poor? Are there trees on it or not? Do your best to bring back some of the fruit of the land" (Num. 13:17-20, NIV). God could have performed a miracle, and made the Promised Land available without any effort on the part of the Israelites. But He wanted them to learn more about the necessity of depending upon Him. This dependence could only be learned through obedience to His words.

3. The Majority Report (read Numbers 13:21-33)

Picture the spies surveying the key parts of the land and checking the defenses of the occupying peoples. The fortified cities must have looked formidable because ten of the spies lost heart. Even though they had all the evidences of God's leading, the picture of the occupying forces was too much for them to handle. Ten of the twelve spies returned with mixed feelings. Their souvenirs from Canaan

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created great excitement throughout the nation, but this excitement turned to dismay and anger when the ten spies "spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored" (13:32, NIV).

What similar situation does modern Israel face in these last days prior to the return of Jesus? (See 2 Peter 3:3, 4.)

4. The Minority Report (read Numbers 14:5-9)

Caleb and Joshua knew what it meant to depend on God. They trusted God to open the way for the Israelites to enter the Promised Land even though they did not know how He would do it! This was because they both knew from personal experience what it means to depend on God. They knew they could trust Him even before He answered their prayers (Num. 14:8, 9). The other spies did not know what it was like to have a personal relationship with God. They had seen evidences of His work but had not learned to depend on Him. They felt they could trust God only after they had seen the evidences of His power. Joshua and Caleb trusted God before they saw Him act, and they could speak with courage and optimism.

Some centuries later the prophet Isaiah spoke on the same themes, "Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you'" (Isa. 35:3, 4, RSV).

On what did Caleb and Joshua base their optimistic report? (See Num. 14:7-9). How did Isaiah, in a different age and context, express our responsibility to talk courage? Is it sinful to be pessimistic? Is it Christian to be optimistic? What role does a person's temperament play?

5. The Fatal Decision (read Numbers 14:1-5, 10-45)

The lack of trust in God by the ten spies spread to the congregation and nearly caused a revolt. God did not take kindly to this rebellion, and pronounced a judgment that caused dismay throughout the camp. The ten spies, who were responsible for spreading a bad report about the land, were struck down by a plague. The many who participated in the rebellion were killed by the Amalekites and Canaanites. And those surviving were banished to desert wandering for forty years. Only Caleb, Joshua, and Israelites under the age of 20 would be privileged to enter the Promised Land.

In what ways was the assigned penalty particularly appropriate to their sin? (see Num. 14:2, 3, 28-38).

What warnings, based on Israel's failure, are given to us as Christians today? (see Heb. 4:1).

Impossible /s Possible

by Randy Roberts

TESTIMONY

Key text:
Luke 18:27

"Natural impossibilities cannot prevent the work of the Omnipotent One."¹

"Every teacher of the truth, every laborer together with God, will pass through searching, trying hours, when faith and patience will be severely tested. You are to be prepared by the grace of Christ to go forward, although apparent impossibilities obstruct the way. You have a present help in every time of emergency. The Lord allows you to meet obstacles, that you may seek unto Him who is your strength and sufficiency. Pray most earnestly for the wisdom that comes from God; He will open the way before you, and give you precious victories if you will walk humbly before Him."²

"In every emergency we are to feel that the battle is His. His resources are limitless, and apparent impossibilities will make the victory all the greater."³

"These things I have spoken unto you,' He said, 'that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.' . . . Christ did not fail, neither was He discouraged; and the disciples were to show a faith of the same enduring nature. They were to work as He had worked, depending on Him for strength. Though their way would be obstructed by apparent impossibilities, yet by His grace they were to go forward, despairing of nothing and hoping for everything."⁴

"The omnipotent power of the Holy Spirit is the defense of every contrite soul. Not one that in penitence and faith has claimed His protection will Christ permit to pass under the enemy's power. The Saviour is by the side of His tempted and tried ones. With Him there can be no such thing as failure, loss, impossibility, or defeat; we can do all things through Him who strengthens us."⁵

"Christ rejoiced that He could do more for His followers than they could ask or think. He spoke with assurance, knowing that an almighty decree had been given before the world was made. He knew that truth, armed with the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit, would conquer in the contest with evil; and that the bloodstained banner would wave triumphantly over His followers. He knew that the life of His trusting disciples would be like His, a series of uninterrupted victories, not seen to be such here, but recognized as such in the great hereafter."⁶

"It is not faith to talk of impossibilities. Nothing is impossible with God."⁷

"As the will of man co-operates with the will of God, it becomes omnipotent. Whatever is to be done at His command may be accomplished in His strength. All His biddings are enablings."⁸

"In every human being He [Christ] discerned infinite possibilities. He saw men as they might be, transfigured by His grace. . . . Looking upon them with hope, He inspired hope. Meeting them with confidence, He inspired trust. . . . To many a despairing one there opened the possibility of a new life."⁹

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 535.

2. *Evangelism*, p. 306.

3. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 202.

4. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 23.

5. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 490.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 679.

7. *Life Sketches*, p. 209.

8. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 333.

9. *Education*, p. 80.

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A Crisis of Trust

by Steven Herber

EVIDENCE

Key text:
Hebrews 4:2

What we see in the story of the children of Israel, poised at the edge of Canaan, is a crisis of trust. As they approached the goal toward which they were heading, an unfavorable report by ten men, out of a twelve-man reconnaissance team, led them to decide that occupying the land was not a feasible option. What happened? The Israelites failed to trust God.

It is not as if the people had no basis for trust in God. He had been a daily presence in their lives. Providing manna for their physical needs, leading them in the pillar of cloud by day, and providing them with the assurance of His presence, in the pillar of fire by night.

A modern thinker and scholar, Dr. Harold Lindsell, who prepared the annotations to the Harper study Bible, explains it like this: "They walked by sight rather than faith. Hence the report which magnified the difficulties in the way of conquest plunged them into despair and disbelief in the promises of God. Outward circumstances rather than a trust in God's faithfulness resulted in their shameful failure to enter the land by faith."

The intelligence report by the twelve spies seemed to present evidence of insurmountable difficulties in conquering the Promised Land. Caleb advocated that faith in God would enable the Israelites to do the impossible. He said, "Let us go up at once and occupy it; for we are well able to overcome it" (Num. 13:30, RSV).

Graham Maxwell explores this area in his book *Can God Be Trusted?* "God has much to offer us . . . but He never asks His intelligent creatures to believe anything for which He does not provide adequate evidence, and it is evidence that appeals to the reason. God does not expect us to have faith in a stranger. Instead, He first reveals Himself. Through His Son, through the Scriptures, through the world of nature around us, in so many ways, He seeks to make Himself well known. If in the light of this revelation, this ample evidence about God, we should choose to trust Him, to love Him, to accept His gifts and direction, then we have entered into the transaction which the New Testament calls faith."

Surely the children of Israel had ample evidence of God's love and faithfulness. What was required was a decision to act on this evidence and go forward in faith. This they refused to do. Rather, they chose to head back to Egypt—the land of their bondage.

Today, we find ourselves on the border of the Promised Land. Will we hesitate or go forward in faith?

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The Way to Rest

by Allan Darnell

HOW TO Key text: Jeremiah 6:16

The author of Hebrews states, "For anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest" (4:10, 11, NIV). We are told that this rest is not ours because of our own work, but that we should make every effort to enter that rest. The question arises: What effort, which is not our work, must we put forth to enter this "Sabbath rest"?

"It is for you to yield up your will to the will of Jesus Christ; and as you do this, God will immediately take possession, and work in you to will and to do of His good pleasure."* This is what the Israelites did not do; they did not surrender their will to God, and they did not enter the Promised Land with faith in His promises.

Hebrews 4:11 entreats me not to make the same mistake. Today I have an opportunity to enter God's rest. How do I do this?

1. Have an Open Attitude to God's Will. God knows what is best for me at every point in my life. By following God's will for my life I can find the peace of "rest." My surrender makes it possible for God's work in me truly to start.

2. Search for God's will. I will not grow in God's rest if I do not consciously open myself to God's Word. By surrendering to God's Word I acknowledge that I need to know His will for my life. I must ask Him to make His will known to me. And I must make every effort to learn God's will by studying the Bible daily.

I know that learning God's will is the occupation of a lifetime. I also know that God will never be finished working with me. But it is not being a finished product that gives rest. "This is what the Lord says, 'Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.'" (Jer. 6:16, NIV).

3. Practice God's will. As God makes His will known to me, I need to step out in faith and follow it. The key is that I never attempt this on my own. God promises to provide the grace and strength I need to follow His will. When I fail, His love and forgiveness enables me to start again.

"Lord, take my will and give me Yours. Show me the ancient paths and the good way. Give me the will and the strength always to walk in these paths. Thank You for Your promise of rest as I continue to follow You. In the name of Jesus, who makes this possible, Amen."

REACT

1. Is God making His will known to you? If not, why not?
2. God reveals His will to us in the Bible. Can you think of any other methods and ways through which God reveals His will for us?

* Messages
to Young People,
p. 152.

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Possibility Thinking

by Tiffany Harris

OPINION

Key text:

Jeremiah 32:27

Impossibility thinking and rest. Here I am fidgeting in a psychology class and fretting about such things as finishing my research on time, meeting graduate-school deadlines, arranging finances, passing the Graduate Entrance Exam, future job prospects . . . Sigh!

Picture the scenario: Me, a college senior, six weeks from graduation, and facing those DECISIONS AND OBSTACLES—exams, school, employment prospects along with real life (whatever that is). And how am I feeling? Overwhelmed, burdened, worried, and, I admit, sometimes discouraged. Get the picture? I am expert on impossibility thinking. How perceptive of them to ask me to write on this subject!

Well, it just hit me—the connection between impossibility thinking and rest. Impossibility thinking breeds worry, discouragement, frustration, and anger. Yes, I do get annoyed at God when it seems He's not helping me. Is my self-pity turned up so high I can't hear Him knock at the door?

Rest. God's rest is permanent. It is more than taking an aspirin and putting my feet up. It's peace of mind and security because in Him all will work out. When I make my life God's agenda, the pressures of performance, success, and failure are His, not mine.

On Sabbaths I try to put all the deadlines, pressures, need-to-dos, and cannots outside. They knock, clamor, and wave from the windows, but I ignore them because I like to enjoy the Sabbath rest. What if I never let them back in?

Possibility thinking. What does that mean, exactly? If the Israelites would have remembered that God could do anything, and believed in Him, they would have been on the beaches of the Mediterranean forty years earlier. Possibility is God's specialty. The Bible abounds with verses like "The things impossible with men are possible with God" (Luke 18:27, NASB), and "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me?" (Jer. 32:27, NASB). English translations do not do justice to "Nothing is too difficult for Thee" (Jer. 32:17, NASB). In the Hebrew, the text starts out with the strongest negative there is in that language. Re-read with "*absolutely* nothing at all" instead of "nothing."¹

When God asks us to think possibilities He does not mean us to sit in a dark room and visualize our past, present, or future happening the way we want. Power comes from God. We are not to look to ourselves. In fact, how can God work if I am in the way screaming, "can't happen, can't do it, it's impossible!" ". . . when you face an impossibility, leave it in the hands of the Specialist . . . refuse to doubt. Refuse to work it out by yourself . . . persevering though the pressures of impossibility calls for that kind of confidence."²

The Israelites said it was impossible to conquer the huge men and well-fortified cities. Maybe for them. It wasn't for God! Nothing is. Whatever is impossible in your life, leave it up to Him, and do not doubt. He's an expert in these things.

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Three Steps Forward, Two Steps Back* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1980), p. 62.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 70

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Politics and Religion

“ ‘With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?’ ” (Num. 12:8, NIV).



The Seed of Rebellion by Lyndon McDowell

**INTRO-
DUCTION**
Scripture:
Numbers 16
and 17

Rebellion. No one really knows how it all started. Or what happened in realms beyond our understanding and among beings whose numbers, and worlds, and powers, and intelligence, transcend the limits of our comprehension and calculation of time and space.

Tantalizing pictures are given that tease our imagination. The words are familiar, but the deeper meaning of the words are beyond our ken. Lucifer had said: "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God. . . . I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High" (Isa. 14:13, 14, NIV).

With covetous ambition came formal accusation against the government of God. The court of appeal was the heavenly council where sat the representatives of myriads of worlds, and when the court condemned him, Lucifer chose open revolt.

Rebellion is persuasive. Thirty percent of the heavenly host risked everything to follow Lucifer (see Rev. 12:4). They doubted the goodness and justice of God and questioned the conduct of His government throughout the far-flung reaches of space. Who can possibly comprehend the trauma that shuddered through the universe!

"There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, and old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Rev. 12:7-9).

Rebellion. The character of Satan. The mark of the dragon-beast.

Somewhere toward the outer reaches of the Milky Way galaxy was a whirling, formless world swathed in water. There the Spirit of God "moved upon the face of the waters," and a habitable world was formed. "And the Lord God planted a garden . . . and there he put the man whom he had formed" (Gen. 2:8). It was a paradise.

A paradise of God's own making. Then tragedy struck.

"Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman . . ." (Gen. 3:1). What Satan said insinuated that God was unjust and that what he, Satan, had to suggest was really for her good. Rebellion is always persuasive.

It sounded so reasonable. "Exert your independence. Be like God. Rebel."

Eve listened. Eve was persuaded. Eve rebelled, and the seeds of rebellion were etched deeply into the character of man. The mark of the beast had been sown in the heart of humanity.

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Eleutherdactylus Coqui

by Lyndon McDowell

LOGOS

Theme: Pride and unsanctified ambition can be cleverly disguised as reforming zeal. As is true of spiritual leaders today, Moses and Aaron were not perfect. They made mistakes, at times erring in judgment. Their sins caused damage to the work of God. But, because they were divinely appointed, rebellion against them was rebellion against God.

Eleutherdactylus coqui is a small brown frog native to Puerto Rico. The natives call it *El coqui*. It has two notes to its call: *co-co qui-qui-qui*. The call is for courtship and marriage.

Like *el coqui*, rebellion also has two notes to its call: criticism of leadership and "what I am doing and saying is really for the good of the church."

The message is persuasive. In the beginning even angels believed it. In the end some of the "very elect" will be deceived by it and will follow the call, not into a rain forest of lush growth and brilliant color, but into the desert of doctrinal aberration. It has happened again and again. What will your position be?

1. Men of Renown Lead the Rebellion (read Num. 16:1-3, 12-14)

Like their modern counterparts, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram had no lack of ammunition in their criticism of Moses. He had brought them out of Egypt where, while they might have been slaves, at least they had a varied diet. In the desert they had only manna to eat. He had not brought them into a land flowing with milk and honey as he had promised. He had not given them an inheritance of fields and vineyards.

Put yourself in that "waste and howling wilderness." Imagine how you would feel. Manna in the morning. Manna at noon. Manna at night. The tiresome, profitless journeying in a barren, burning desert.

There is a modern parallel. The "General Conference"—whatever that term may mean—has not led to a finished work. The "latter rain" has not fallen as expected. Jesus has not come. Church standards are being flouted with apparent impunity. This is grist enough for anyone's mill who has a bent for criticism and a longing for leadership. And waiting in the wings are the disgruntled, and the pious who vainly expect perfection through some program of the church, and others who offer their own brand of reforming light. After all, who is not tired of the desert!

Like the cacophony of *el coqui* calls in the Puerto Rican rain forest there is today a chorus of voices each proclaiming a particular brand of criticism and manifesting an arrogant independence. The words may be different, but the theme is familiar. The Lord is in our midst and the congregation is holy—why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?

Reason is rejected, counsels are scorned, and another band of dissidents is led out into a spiritual desert and wasteland of doc-

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 404.
2. *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 56.

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trinal independence. So few come back.

In what other forms do pride and unsanctified ambition manifest themselves in the church today? Was Korah justified in his assertion that all the people were qualified to be spiritual leaders and serve as priests? Why or why not? (see Exodus 19:5, 6).

2. Rebellion Is Obdurate (read Numbers 16:41-50)

What greater deception can come upon people than the feeling that they are doing God's will, when in reality they are working against God and His people. We see this in its extreme form in the Middle East and other countries where religion and nationalism are combined. The most notorious deeds can then be countenanced as being "in the will of God." This deception is not limited to non-Christian religions. It is even found within the Adventist Church from time to time. "While endeavoring to destroy the confidence of the people in the men of God's appointment, they really believe that they are engaged in a good work, verily doing God's service."¹

Israel fled in alarm when the ground swallowed up the rebels, but even this manifestation of divine power did not cool their hot heads. By the next morning they were ready to lay violent hands on Moses saying, "Ye have killed the people of the Lord."

How often the church is held at fault when people have risen up against established authority. The church may spend time and money in seeking to give a hearing, but when obdurate independence prevails the church is held at fault.

There were many doctrinal differences in the early history of the church. James White and Uriah Smith did not always agree, but the great burden of Ellen White was unity.

"Men are to be condemned who start out with a proclamation of wonderful light, and yet draw away from the agents whom God is leading. This was the way in which Korah, Dathan, and Abiram did, and their action is recorded as a warning to all others. . . . Why is it that they did not present that which for years has been the burden of my message—the unity of the church? Why did they not quote the words of the angel, 'Press together, press together, press together'?"²

Perhaps there was never a time in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church when this admonition needed more to be heeded than today.

The complaints of Korah and his fellow rebels had elements of truth. But what had they failed to consider? Is there a parallel today?

Rebellion and Apostasy in the Air We Breathe

by Lyndon McDowell

TESTIMONY

Key text:
1 Cor.10:5, 6

"Rebellion and apostasy are in the very air we breathe. We shall be affected by it unless we by faith hang our helpless souls upon Christ. If men are so easily misled, how will they stand when Satan shall personate Christ, and work miracles?"¹

"No stronger evidence can be given of Satan's delusive power than that many who are thus led by him deceive themselves with the belief that they are in the service of God. When Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rebelled against the authority of Moses, they thought they were opposing only a human leader, a man like themselves; and they came to believe that they were verily doing God service."²

"The arch deceiver is at work to introduce elements of confusion and rebellion, and men are being fired with zeal that is not according to knowledge."³

"Again and again was ancient Israel afflicted with rebellious murmurers. These were not always persons of feeble influence. In many cases, men of renown, rulers in Israel, turned against the providential leading of God and fiercely set to work to tear down that which they had once zealously built up. We have seen something of this repeated many times in our experience. It is unsafe for any church to lean upon some favorite minister, to trust in an arm of flesh. God's arm alone is able to uphold all who lean upon it."⁴

"A sullen submission to the will of the Father will develop the character of a rebel. The service is looked upon by such a one in the light of drudgery. It is not rendered cheerfully and in the love of God. It is a mere mechanical performance. If he dared, such a one would disobey. His rebellion is smothered, ready to break out at any time in bitter murmurings and complaints. Such service brings no peace or quietude to the soul."⁵

1. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1114.

2. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 635.

3. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 219.

4. *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 594.

5. *The Signs of the Times Articles*, vol. 3, p. 400.

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The Mark of the Beast

by Lyndon McDowell

EVIDENCE

Key text:
Revelation
14:9, 10

It was as early as 1847 that Joseph Bates identified Sunday observance as the "mark of the beast." James White was more cautious. He felt that only in the future could the mark be placed upon men and women, when Sunday observance was made obligatory by law. Uriah Smith, editor of the *Review* and author of the book *Daniel and Revelation*, saw that prophecy looked to a time when all the world would be divided into two classes—Sundaykeepers and Sabbathkeepers. Then the "mark" would become evident.

But have we been so busy pointing to the sin of Sunday observance that we have failed to see a deeper meaning in the "mark of the beast?" Is it possible for a Sabbathkeeping, tithe-paying Seventh-day Adventist to receive that mark? We need to know, for, as we have so often preached, there is no other warning so emphatic and severe in all the Bible as the warning against receiving the mark of the beast.

The unique contribution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to theology is a clear perception of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. This is at the heart of our doctrine. Satan rebelled. He brought that rebellion to this earth. He tempted Eve to become independent of God and thus "become like God." He infected her with his spirit, and she fell, and her descendants fell with her.

In Satan's plan Sunday observance was an act of defiance against the laws of the God of heaven. It was a sign of his revolt against God. It will become, before the end, the evidence of loyalty to the arch rebel and disloyalty to God. The Sabbath, on the other hand, is a sign of loyalty to "the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12). But there has been many a rebel who has lived under a loyalist's flag. Outward observance, however strict, can never make up for a disloyal heart. Rebellion in any sphere of thought or action is rebellion still.

Christ came to restore humankind's loyalty. He came to make people citizens of heaven once again (see *Eze.* 36:26, 27).

This is the essence of the new covenant. It turns rebels into loyal citizens of the kingdom of God. But Christ will not coerce. Total willing surrender is essential. Nothing can be kept back. No part of our lives can be kept from His control. Our physical, mental, and spiritual beings must be given up to Him. We may grow up in the church. We may, by training and by desire, keep the Sabbath, pay our tithe, and eat only vegetable, but if there remains deep within us an unsundered spirit of rebellion against any revealed truth, we have in that area, the character of the arch rebel—the mark of the beast. Salvation does not mean immediate total perfection, it means total surrender to the control of Christ, who restores in us the image of God. Then, in heart, we will become lawkeepers once again, and have the right to enter in through the gates into the city, as loyal subjects of the kingdom of God.

Korah and his fellow rebels died because they manifested in their lives the mark of the beast—the character of the arch rebel.

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A Genuine or False Reformer?

by Lyndon McDowell

HOW TO

Key text:
Isaiah 8:20

How can one know whether criticism of the church is genuine and constructive or rebellious and destructive?

The Adventist Church is a very closely knit body of people. Travel where you will among Adventists around the world and you will find someone who knows someone you know. Even with the increase in numbers we are still a family. And in families the members' faults and failings are well known. Thus it is easy to find place for criticism and question. It is also easy to become disenchanted by the very humanity of the church. It is run by imperfect people, and its weaknesses are so many that were it not under divine care it would have folded long since. How then can we voice our opposition to wrong within the church and still remain loyal?

Criticism is necessary within the church. People need to be brought to account. If you find yourself critical and concerned test your motives and your loyalty with the following questions.

1. Are you motivated by a deep love for your church or do you find within a simmering discontent and anger? Remember, Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it.

2. Is your criticism based upon full knowledge of the circumstances or is it just a general unsubstantiated grumbling criticism—a reflection of an unsatisfactory Christian experience?

3. Is your criticism directed to the proper people who are capable of doing something about it or does it simply disseminate distrust? There are people in responsible positions who are deeply involved in efforts to bring about reformation and revival and who are ready to listen to constructive criticism.

4. Is your criticism a sneering kind of criticism that finds pleasure in sarcasm, and fuels mockery and discontent?

5. Is your criticism tinged with a feeling that you would be prepared to move out if things did not improve? That was the way Judas felt. "He determined not to unite himself so closely to Christ but that he could draw away."^{*}

How to Test a Rebel

1. Are the criticisms and assertions done in the spirit of humility or is there an arrogant assertion that he or she alone is right and everyone else is wrong?

2. Is the criticism phrased to capitalize on unhappiness and smoldering resentment among the dissatisfied? Or is it expressed only among those who are loyal and who have the good of the church at heart?

3. Does the criticism protect the church body or does it publicize its faults for the world to see? There appears to be a tendency today to call in the media and blazon the mistakes of the church across the headlines for all to see. When human error causes embarrassment, should we not close ranks and protect the church from her enemies who love nothing so much as to have her errors publicized.

REACT

How should church leaders be made accountable for their mistakes?

^{*} *The Desire of Ages*,
p. 719.

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Choose Your God

by Harvey A. Elder, M. D.

OPINION

Key text:
Numbers 16
and 17

I may choose either Yahweh or self as my god. Depending upon this choice, my life has a different value and a different purpose. When I choose Yahweh my central value is His love. I want and receive the love Yahweh manifested as He ran into the midst of Israel, even while they were intent upon murder. When I choose Yahweh I know that He is in the midst of my plague, that He wants to heal me, and that He wants to save me from death. Sin is my problem, and Yahweh is my answer. When I, a sinner, choose Yahweh as my God, I am changing. I know that I am loved, accepted, forgiven, and being healed.

When I choose self as my god, my central value is survival. Self is obsessed with self. It struggles to be immortal. Self seeks to achieve immortality through memorials to its greatness. The memorials can be children, great accomplishments, or membership in some organization that will survive the death of self. Every event in life includes the possibility of failure, failure that will shatter the dream of immortality. To protect immortality, self denies its failures and blames others. Self sees Yahweh as the cause of most problems. Sins would be ways to cope, but Yahweh is the vengeful judge who looks for sins to punish. Self must have a "self-image" that is admired and remembered. When I choose self as my god, I am obsessed with my "self-image." I strive to be admired and remembered. I deny my failures or blame them on others.

We choose our god. When Israel served self, their life was a disaster. The service of self caused the death of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, as well as the 250 leaders, and caused the onset of the plague. Self caused Israel to flee from the tent of meeting in panic. Self denied its failures and blamed Yahweh for the disasters. In spite of the instructions given by Moses, and the object lessons of the sanctuary, Israel was unable to recognize Yahweh's love. They chose self, and their god failed them.

REACT

1. What weight should an individual's judgment have in making decisions about church matters?
2. What role should the church as a body have in making spiritual decisions?
3. Where should the line be drawn between the authority of the church and the independence of the individual?

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Tough Love

“ ‘My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you.’ ” “No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it” (Heb. 12:5, 11, NIV).



Has God Got Your Attention?

by Graham Bingham

Remember the story of the farmer who was trying to get his mule into the barn? He was tugging on the rope, pulling with all his might, but the mule would not move. He went behind the mule and pushed, but the mule still would not budge. It just stood there stiff-legged and stubborn. No matter how hard the farmer tried he could not get his mule into the barn.

A stranger happened to walk by and amusedly watched the farmer's feeble attempts to get his mule into the barn. After a while he said, "Mister, I'll get your mule into the barn for you if you want me to."

The farmer looked at him in astonishment and said, "Do you think you can do it?"

"Of course I can, it's easy," replied the stranger. He walked into the barn, picked up a piece of two-by-four, came over to the mule and whacked it on top of the head—right between the eyes. The mule went cross-eyed. The stranger then gave the mule a whack behind the ears. And before

the mule could straighten out he was given another whack under the chin. The stranger then took hold of the rope and with two fingers led the mule into the barn.

The farmer was bewildered. When the stranger came out of the barn he said, "You see, mister, that mule is really a very cooperative critter. You just got to get his attention."

This story is not as funny as we would think. And I would like to ask all the mules among us, "Where did you get it last?" Was it in the teeth? Across the back? Over the head? Or under the chin? "Where did you get it last?"

Some people seem to have an affinity for two-by-fours. How else is God going to get their attention? It is not that our heavenly Father wishes to be heavy-handed. But in the Christian life, as in the wilderness, backsliding results in chastisement. And if two-by-fours won't work there are always four-by-eights and eight-by-twelves.

INTRODUCTION

Scriptures:
Lev. 10:1-11;
24:10-16;
Num. 11:4-35;
15:32-36;
21:4-9

Is “Tough Love” Wholly Biblical?

by David R. Larson

LOGOS Theme: In the Christian life, as in the wilderness, backsliding results in chastisement. We bring upon ourselves difficulties that we might avoid through faith and dependence on God. But if, through these difficulties, we learn the lessons of repentance and restoration of faith, the final results will be worth all that we have had to endure.

Our lesson on “tough love” for this week may not have its desired effect. The intent of encouraging us in order to lead us to seek and do God’s will with a joyous heart is honorable. But by stringing together a number of passages that may, especially when read apart from their historical, literary, and theological contexts, yield the impression that God is a short-tempered tyrant, our lesson may tempt thoughtful Christians to look elsewhere for spiritual solace and wisdom. But to yield to this temptation, however strong, would be a mistake. The trouble is neither with God nor with the Bible, but with the way we read our Bibles. Hence the following suggestions:

1. Read the Bible Comprehensively.

Whether we are contemplating “tough love” or anything else, we dare not base our conclusions upon anything less than the whole counsel of the entire Bible. We cannot always cite and discuss every relevant passage, but any single part of the Bible must always be interpreted in the light of the clearer passages. Furthermore, the relationship between the part and the whole must be pondered until it is properly understood. It is entirely possible for a theme to be “biblical” in that it can be supported by a number of verses in the Old and New Testaments and still misrepresent the tenor of Scripture as a whole. One advantage of reading the entire Bible continuously is that such familiarity with the entire library we call the Old and New Testaments can enable one more easily to relate particular parts to the whole with genuine insight.

2. Read the Bible Contextually.

Some portions of the Bible cannot be understood properly apart from their literary, historical, and theological contexts. This is especially true of the passages we are invited to contemplate this week: Leviticus 10:1-11; 24:10-16; Numbers 11:4-35; 15:32-36; 21:4-9; and Hebrews 12:5, 11. As you read these verses and you become tempted to conclude that it may be very risky to do business with God, think of the differences between your world and the world from which, thanks to divine inspiration, these stories come.

For one thing, the people of Israel, especially in their earliest years, did not always distinguish *correlation* from *causation*, to say nothing of the various forms and degrees causation can assume. This, together with their admirable desire to attribute all things to God so as not to share Yahweh’s Lordship with any or all of the lesser deities their heathen neighbors worshiped, permitted them to

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attribute things to God's direct and immediate determination that most Seventh-day Adventists today would rightly describe in different ways. This by no means implies that we are smarter than they were. But it does mean that we have had several thousand more years to observe and experience the way God relates to human beings. We would be derelict as friends of God if we failed to report what we too have seen and heard and felt. What an event meant then and what it means now may not always be identical, because God has continued to speak and to act right down to the present moment.

3. Read the Bible Christ-centeredly.

The most important thing that has occurred since the Exodus is that God genuinely became incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth. The portrait of God that Jesus embodied in His life, words, deeds, death, and resurrection is for all Christians in all times and places, the final criterion by which every other picture of God, both within and without the Bible, must be measured. To modify this standard is to distort the rule by which everything else is kept true. The letter to the first Hebrew Christians says as much when it declares: "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. *The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being*, sustaining all things by His powerful word." (Heb. 1:1, 2, NIV). If we want to know whether God's love is "tough," and if we seek deeper and wider understandings of what it means for love to be "tough," our primary point of reference must be the One who lived and died and rose that we might finally understand what God is truly like.

Many of the people of Jesus' time wanted a God who would be genuinely "tough" on evil people. They wanted someone who could feed and clothe them, as well as rain fire down from heaven upon those who disagreed. But Jesus indicated that God's love is "tough" in a different way: It possesses the inner strength found nowhere else to forgive and to restore those of us who are brokenhearted and burdened with disappointment or even disgrace.

Does this contradict the Old Testament view of God? Not really! Even though they aren't as frequent or as vivid as they are in the New Testament, there are passages in the Old Testament that portray the "toughness" of God's forgiving and empowering love. Find them for yourself! Furthermore, the contradictions between what Jesus said and what the ancients before Him had said are more apparent than real. Just as we can distinguish *correlations* from *cautions* we can differentiate *contradictions* from *elaborations*. In the days when "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" were first spoken, these words limited revenge to a precise *quid pro quo*. In its time this was a very significant step in the direction of nonviolence.

Jesus' invitation to turn the other cheek and to love even one's enemy did not *introduce* the theme of nonviolence so much as it took several additional steps in the same direction the ancients were already headed. Jesus went *beyond* the Old Testament, but not *against* it.

Those who read the Scriptures comprehensively, contextually, and Christ-centeredly will discern that God's love is truly very "tough," but that it is so in surprising, delightful, and encouraging ways. This love prompts us to serve God out of our own responsive love rather than from fear. One of the last books of the Bible says it well: "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment" (1 John 4:18, NIV).

What is the biblical perspective on love? Does it confuse kindness and firmness? Is it loving to be one and not the other? How do kindness and firmness come together in God?

How to Make Sense Out of the Bible

by David R. Larson

TESTIMONY

Key text:
John 5:39

"It is not enough to know what others have thought or learned about the Bible. Every one must in the judgment give account of himself to God, and each should now learn for himself what is truth."¹

"The student of the Bible should be taught to approach it in the spirit of a learner. We are to search its pages, not for proof to sustain our opinions, but in order to know what God says.

"A true knowledge of the Bible can be gained only through the aid of that Spirit by whom the word was given. And in order to gain this knowledge we must live by it. All that God's word commands, we are to obey. All that it promises, we may claim. . . .

"In daily study the verse-by-verse method is often most helpful. Let the student take one verse, and concentrate the mind on ascertaining the thought that God has put into that verse for him, and then dwell upon the thought until it becomes his own. One passage thus studied until its significance is clear is of more value than the perusal of many chapters with no definite purpose in view and no positive instruction gained."²

"The Bible is its own expositor. Scripture is to be compared with scripture. *The student should learn to view the word as a whole, and to see the relation of its parts.* He should gain a knowledge of its grand central theme, of God's original purpose for the world, of the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption. He should understand the nature of the two principles that are contending for supremacy, and should learn to trace their working through the records of history and prophecy, to the great consummation. He should see how this controversy enters into every phase of human experience; how in every act of life he himself reveals the one or the other of the two antagonistic motives; and how, whether he will or not, he is even now deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be found."³

"The Bible is not given to us in grand superhuman language. Jesus, in order to reach man where he is, took humanity. The Bible must be given in the language of men. Everything that is human is imperfect. Different meanings are expressed by the same word; there is not one word for each distinct idea. The Bible was given for practical purposes."⁴

"The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God's mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. Men will often say such an expression is not like God. But God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen."⁵

"But as real spiritual life declines, it has ever been the tendency to cease to advance in the knowledge of the truth. Men rest satisfied with the light already received from God's word, and discourage any further investigation of the Scriptures. They become conservative, and seek to avoid discussion."⁶

1. *Education*, p. 188.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 189.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 190.
4. *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 20.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
6. *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 39.

David R. Larson is associate professor of Christian ethics at the Loma Linda University Ethics Center.

Love Revisited

by Ron Flowers

EVIDENCE

Key text:
Jeremiah 9:24

"Tough love"—for many this recent conjunction of words presents a paradox. We do not normally associate "tough" with "love." Those who have coined the term are attempting to swing the pendulum back from a view of love that has been in the ascendancy for the past quarter century. Love is kind, compassionate, merciful, permissive, and nonrestrictive, the popular psychological literature has said. That view has showered society with fallout that has been felt in parenting, in education, in government, in the justice system, and even in theology.

Such a definition of love is incomplete as far as Scripture is concerned. To come to the Old Testament incidents we are studying this week (or to a New Testament story such as that involving Ananias and Sapphira) with our thinking about a God of love (1 John 4:8) based on this popular notion is to court confusion and invite doubts about God's character and His constancy. Our ideas about Him must be retooled if we are rightly to understand and appreciate His dealings with humankind (including His chosen people) throughout history.

God is merciful, but He is also just. In a way that defies our human sinful understanding and ability fully to replicate ("tough love" advocates notwithstanding), mercy and justice are fused in Him. Of this Jeremiah writes, "Let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, exercising loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth" (Jer. 9:24, NKJV). Of Him, as of His law, it may be said that He is "holy, and just, and good" (Rom. 7:12). Merciful acts by God then are loving, and so are His acts of justice and judgment. Love is both kind and firm.

Each case in our study (Lev. 10:1-11; Num. 11:4-35; Num. 15:32-36; Lev. 24:10-16; Num. 21:4-9) involved the willful scorn by individuals of God's holiness, of His messengers, of His gracious provision for His people's salvation and the symbols that represented His holiness. Sin can never dwell in the presence of holiness. Whether it be in the Sinai desert, or in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10), the willful, unrepentant sinner will meet his end. It will be at the last as it was in the desert—by God's direct intervention in an act that is in harmony with His plan of restoration.

But the God who mightily delivered His people from bondage and so abundantly cared for them, despite their faltering faith, would not have willed the death of people either then or in the lake of fire to come. The lamb sacrificed daily on the tabernacle altar, the brazen snake lifted high to stem the poison of fiery serpents, foreshadowed a cross where Jesus, God's true Lamb, endured the second death for us that we might be spared. Sin is revealed for what it is, and we are called to repentance. Atonement for our blasphemy against God's holiness has been provided. The response expected of us can be no less than that outlined by Moses, to regard Him as holy and to glorify Him before all people (Lev. 10:3).

Ron Flowers is an associate director in the Department of Church Ministries at the General Conference.

God's Tough Love

by Carla Gober

HOW TO

Key text:
Proverbs
3:11, 12

With college behind me, I launched into a job that took me hundreds of miles from home. Feeling very much alone, I bought a German Shepherd puppy, and in time we became inseparable. However, he was not easily trained. To him, the road was the place to be and a car was the item to chase. On one particular occasion I determined that he must learn never to do it again. The moment he began chasing the car I quickly grabbed a rolled-up newspaper and spanked him harder than he had ever been spanked in his short life. Stunned by the sudden change in my behavior and fearful of what might come next, he ran and sat several feet away from me. He refused to come closer, even when called. My own dog was afraid of me! Exhausted, both physically and emotionally, I sat on the ground and faced him as tears filled my eyes. Through my tears I saw him timidly walking closer. He leaned over and licked my face as I wrapped my arms around his furry neck. "Being a parent is not easy," I whispered. "Being disciplined is not easy either, is it?"

Is this so unlike ages past? Two men offer strange fire and are consumed (Lev. 10:1-11). A group of complaining people ask God for meat and are destroyed in the process of eating it (Num. 11:4-35). A Sabbath breaker and blasphemer are stoned (Num. 15:32-35; Lev. 24:10-16). We stand back, fearful of getting closer and hesitant in trying to understand a God who desires obedience. But why? If we could but catch a glimpse into the heart of the God who disciplines, how much deeper would be our appreciation of the discipline itself. The relationship between God and His children is characterized by abundant love—a love unparalleled in tenderness and mercy. It is this same love that leads Him to guide, correct, and seemingly cause pain to His children when it is necessary for their eventual good.

There are several concepts that can help us better understand God's discipline:

1. We often bring difficulties upon ourselves. In many cases it is our own disobedience that creates the difficulty, yet we will often blame God for the pain it causes us.
2. Discipline is a component of love, not separate from or antagonistic to it.
3. Discipline is not easy, not for the one who administers it or the one who receives it, but it is for the best when it comes from the hand of One who loves.
4. God's picture is bigger than ours. What is important to Him is that we learn to trust Him even though we may not understand all that is involved. His request for obedience is often made to protect us from, rather than to cause us, pain.

REACT

How do you react to God's chastening? Do you respond with further rebellion or do you appreciate and understand the lessons He is trying to teach? How can we come to appreciate more fully God's discipline as a necessary component of His role as loving parent?

Carla Gober is a spiritual care nurse at Loma Linda University Medical Center.

Choice and Consequences: Counting the Cost of Eternal Life

by Dick H. Koobs

OPINION
Key text:
Luke 14:25-33

Open contempt for God and His people was manifested by two priests failing in their basic task to discriminate between the sacred and the profane, by a young man blaspheming, by another desecrating the Sabbath, and by many others because of the monotonous menu. Whether or not we believe God ordered the death sentences for all of these does not alter the question of injustice. Given another chance, would these offenders have chosen differently?

God judged Satan in the beginning as unrepentant (Eze. 28), but his fellows were not convinced of this until several millennia later, after the cross (Rev. 12). God apparently knew primordially Satan's ultimate moral choice. However, some believe that God cannot know our moral choices. If this is the case, He is at risk of error in judging who should be excluded from His presence. An unjust exclusion or denial of one's choice would be an unloving act on God's part. Limiting God's knowledge with regard to our moral choices would seem to limit His capacity for love. God would also be at risk of including those who, during eternity, may, like those Israelites, decide the life-style is a bore and the diet insufferable.

To the multitude following Him, Jesus describes the venture toward God's kingdom in terms of deciding to build a tower. One should count the *total* cost before starting, lest he be unable to finish, wasting time, money, effort, and, in the end, look unwise for having failed (see Luke 14:25-33). Those showing contempt for God during the Exodus apparently were indicating that the cost of family membership was more than they were willing to pay. Breaking relations seemed the only acceptable alternative. How did their families and friends feel about this decision? The major concern, however, is whether that was their *ultimate* choice. The second resurrection should remove that concern by providing another chance for all these individuals to demonstrate their final choice.

Will God succeed in selecting individuals for the new-earth society who will never repeat this scenario of contempt? Would such contempt again be treated as a capital offense? Do you want life in the new earth to include the anxiety that someone close to you might reject the life-style and want out? Freedom cannot be optimal if the potential for broken relationships is unending. It follows, then, that our choice cannot be merely for eternal life. Rather, it is to live in a manner that will maintain the kingdom forever free of the sorrow arising from broken relationships. Does God know what our ultimate moral choice will be after a few eons in the new earth? Consider His judgment of Enoch, Moses, Elijah, and those taken to heaven at Christ's resurrection. Have there been any dropouts?

Our ultimate choice is actually being shaped by our daily concerns, which also reveal our assessment of the cost of eternal life.

Dick H. Koobs is associate professor of pathology at Loma Linda University.

THIRTEENTH SABBATH SPECIAL PROJECTS OFFERING

AFRICA-INDIAN OCEAN DIVISION



PROJECTS:

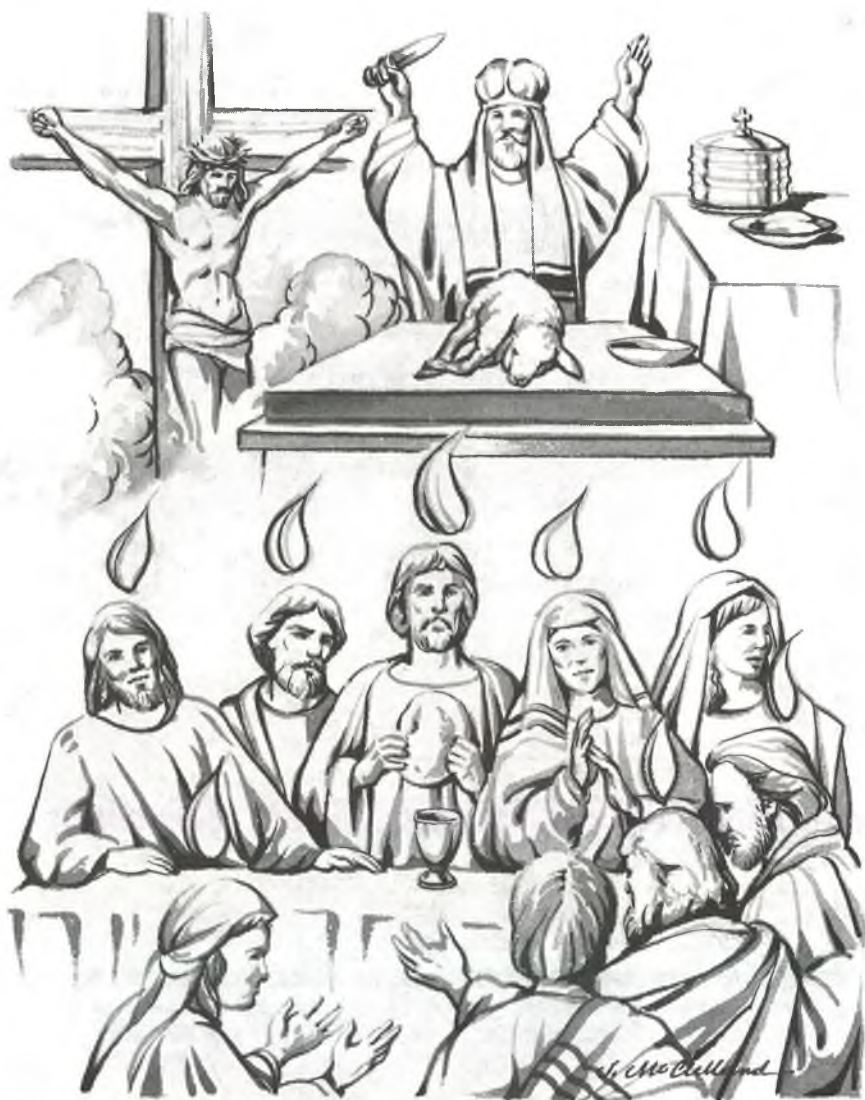
1. Chapels and lamb shelters, Rwanda Union Mission
2. Chapels and lamb shelters, Indian Ocean Union Mission

| Unions | Population | Churches | Church Members | Sabbath School Members |
|------------------------|--------------------|--------------|----------------|------------------------|
| Central African | 20,966,000 | 364 | 33,890 | 88,441 |
| Indian Ocean | 12,848,096 | 154 | 21,991 | 15,546 |
| Nigerian | 99,100,000 | 391 | 67,145 | 117,605 |
| Rwanda | 6,444,895 | 614 | 158,942 | 230,330 |
| Sahel | 35,700,000 | 32 | 4,289 | 4,575 |
| West African | 22,135,000 | 327 | 110,461 | 138,386 |
| Zaire | 32,984,950 | 711 | 152,199 | 175,764 |
| Burundi | 5,120,000 | 81 | 20,621 | 37,046 |
| Division Totals | 235,298,941 | 2,674 | 569,538 | 807,693 |

Statistics as of June 30, 1986

Filling Moses' Shoes

“These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come” (1 Cor. 10:11, NIV).



“Free at Last; We Are Free at Last!”

by Harold S. Camacho

“If a man has not found something he will die for he is not fit to live . . . I do not know what will happen to me now, and it really does not matter. . . .

“I am not old. Like any man I would like a long life but I’m not concerned about that now. I just want to do God’s will. . . . And He has allowed me to go up to the mountaintop. . . . And I have looked over and I have seen the Promised Land. . . . I may not be able to lead you, all the way, but mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord. . . .¹

These words spoken nearly twenty years ago, April 3, 1968, by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the night before he was brutally cut down by an assassin’s bullet, are reminiscent of Moses’ leadership experience. Both Moses and King fearlessly faced impossible odds in the liberation of human dignity from the oppression of slavery, indignity, and degradation. Both Moses and King had a vision and a dream of freedom for their people. They saw that God’s will for all humanity is eternal freedom as brothers and sisters in God’s kingdom.

“When we allow freedom to ring—when we let it ring

from every city, from every hamlet, from every state, we will be able to speed up that day when all God’s children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual ‘Free at Last, Free at Last, Great God Almighty, We Are Free at Last.’ ”²

The freedom process for both Moses and King was very simple: To march, one step after another, arm in arm. Surrounded by enemies on all sides, seen and unseen, they marched on down freedom’s road, empowered in their marching by a vision of God’s justice and the promise of His presence.

In our study this week we are again challenged to be God’s freedom marchers. We will deal with such questions as: How can we receive personal freedom from sin and guilt? How can we celebrate and continue to assert our freedom as Christians? How can we gain freedom for ourselves and others? What unique resources are available within Adventism that empower us in our march towards eternal freedom?

INTRO- DUCTION

Scripture:
Deut. 34:1-4

1. J. Matthews, ed., *Five Dark Days in History* (Los Angeles: Creative Advertising Media, 1968), p. ii. Also quoted in L. G. Davis, *I Have a Dream . . . The Life and Times of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Westport: Negro Universities Press, 1969), p. 282.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

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Story and Counter Story,

by Bob Villanueva

LOGOS **Theme:** Today we live at a historical point where our world, as we know it, is ending. The vision of a universe centered on God, unified by brotherhood and sisterhood, occupied only with goodness, moves toward reality. Preserved in the old stories of Israel entering Canaan are eternal truths that anticipate the pain and the joy we shall experience as we journey through the final conflict of human history to live in our eternal home.

1. Leadership Qualities (read Numbers 26:63-65 and 27:1-23)

"Moses prayed, 'Lord God, source of all life, appoint, I pray, a man who can lead the people and can command them in battle, so that your community will not be like sheep without a shepherd'" (27:15-17, TEV).

At the conclusion of Israel's forty-year march to freedom in Canaan, only two of the 603,550 men registered for military service at the beginning of the march remained—Caleb and Joshua! These survivors were sustained in joy and strength through the desert wanderings by faith in God's Word (Heb. 3:16—4:2). Unbelief resulted in 603,548 casualties who lost their freedom and their reward in the Promised Land.

The daughters of Zelophehad present a striking contrast to the depression and gloom of the majority of God's people (Num. 27:1-11). Although their father had died on the freedom march leaving no male heirs, these noble women tenaciously held onto the divinely promised inheritance, and they received their fair portion as immediate family rather than a small share as distant relatives.

The leadership of Moses in answering the claims of these daughters highlights the fact that leaders have limitations along with resourcefulness. The lack of any precedent limited the knowledge and experience available to Moses in dealing with a new situation. Nevertheless, he left an excellent example of true leadership—he sought and followed advice from outside himself. Other qualities that marked the usefulness of Moses as God's premier leader were dedication, courage, conviction, fortitude, vision, persuasive power, humility, and character. With the glory of God in the midst of His people, and the responsibility to leadership given to Joshua, the record of Moses closes with a mountaintop experience (Num. 27:12-23; Deut. 34). From Mount Pisgah, Moses saw a vision of the march of freedom from the present conquest of Canaan, through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, on to the final glorification of human beings in a perfectly restored universe. After his death Moses was raised to enjoy "an inheritance infinitely more glorious than the earthly Canaan."^{*}

How does a leader differentiate between mere requests and presumptuous demands? Considering the life of Moses, how do you think failure and disappointment contribute to the development of Christian maturity?

* *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 479.

Bob Villanueva is associate pastor for program development and lay staffing at the Loma Linda Campus Hill Church, Loma Linda, California.

2. Celebrating Freedom (read Numbers 28-29)

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, My offering, and my bread for my sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savour unto me, shall ye observe to offer unto me in their due season" (28:1,2).

Worship is a response to God for His gift of life. In worship, symbols represent concrete realities. The sin offering models how we are made right with God and set free from the present power and the future consequences of our sins. The focus in thirteen verses of Numbers 28-29 is on what Jesus means to us. But the sweet savor offerings (meat, drink, and burnt offerings) dealt with by fifty-eight verses portray what God thinks about Jesus, who is to God, food and drink and a pleasant aroma.

If God is the most important Being in the universe, then the worship of God is the supreme activity of mankind. Worship must not be so occupied with the creature—our desires, our weaknesses, our troubles—that it deprives God of what He has called "My bread." Jesus is not only "our Saviour," He is also God's Son, in whom He is well pleased.

If divine worship is a play, then who are the actors and the directors? Who is the audience and what is the script?

3. Living in No-man's Land (read Numbers 32:1-42; 35:1-34)

"We will not return to our homes until every Israelite has received his inheritance'" (32:18, NIV).

As Israel entered the land of Canaan the tribes of Gad and Reuben and the half-tribe of Manasseh requested to settle in the territory east of the Jordan River. Moses consented in spite of anxious forebodings. Later, because of the separation of the two-and-one-half tribes from the rest of Israel, a serious misunderstanding with the other tribes almost led to civil war (Joshua 22:12-19).

God directed the establishment of cities of refuge in the Promised Land in which a person committing involuntary manslaughter could enjoy safe exile until the time when he could be set free (see Joshua 20:1-6). These cities were named, well known, and easily reached from any point in the nation. Outside the gates the slayer was in no-man's land, exposed to the avenger.

In spite of our guilt, which took the life of Jesus at Calvary, our Saviour opened His loving arms to us like a city of refuge when He pleaded, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). A place of shelter and blessing is graciously provided us in the heart of Jesus, who says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

What freedoms are gained and what limitations are imposed when we enter Christ—our City of Refuge?

Success and Positive Believing

by Bob Villanueva

TESTIMONY

Key text:
Hebrews 12:25

"The Lord gave to Israel evidences of His presence, that they might fear His name and obey His voice, and that they might know that He was leading them to the promised land. The power of God, which was revealed in so remarkable a manner in their deliverance from Egypt, was seen from time to time through all their journeyings.

"And in these manifestations and revelations God was uplifting Israel from a demoralized condition. Great changes were to be wrought in this disorganized people; for oppression and servitude and idolatrous association had molded their habits, their appetites, and their characters.

"The Lord had promised Israel that if they would obey His commandments, He would supply their necessities by His miraculous power. But the Hebrews were not willing to submit to the directions and restrictions of the Lord. They wanted their own way. They desired to follow the leadings of their own minds and be controlled by their own judgment. . . .

"The history of the Israelites is portrayed for our warning. They had great light and exalted privileges; yet they did not live up to that light nor appreciate their advantages, and their light became darkness. They walked in the light of their own eyes, instead of following the leadings of God. Their history is given for the benefit of those who live in these last days, that we may avoid following the same example of unbelief. The apostle Paul says: 'We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and obedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him?' . . .

"The voice of God bidding His faithful ones go forward, frequently tries their faith to the uttermost; but we must not seek for some object upon which to hang our doubts and unbelief. If we wait until every shadow of uncertainty is removed, we shall never plant our feet upon the platform of eternal truth. Those who will not follow the light because some things are not entirely clear to their understanding, will never believe the truth. Faith is not certainty; it is 'the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen.'

"God will do marvelous things for those who trust in Him. It is because His professed people trust so much to their own wisdom, and do not give the Lord an opportunity to reveal His power in their behalf, that they have not more strength. He will help His believing children in every emergency, if they will place their entire confidence in Him. He will work mightily for a faithful people who obey His word without questioning or doubt."*

REACT

To what extent is belief a condition for receiving the blessings God gives us in life?

* Ellen G. White in
Signs of the Times,
19 July 1899.

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Fellowship Through Sacrifice

by Larry Christoffel

As Israel moved from the wilderness to the Promised Land, Moses gave specific details concerning their sacred calendar, with all its animal sacrifices, grain offerings, and drink offerings (see Numbers 28, 29). What did these pre-Christian rituals mean to Israel? What do they mean today?

Every *morning and evening*, a lamb was sacrificed as a burnt offering (Num. 28:3, 4)—a token of God's "continual" love. According to Leviticus 1:4 and 9, the burnt offerings made atonement and provided "an aroma pleasing to the Lord." Each *weekly* sabbath celebrated, not only Creation (Ex. 20:11) but also Israel's deliverance from Egypt (Deut. 5:15). God's mighty acts of the *past* were kept fresh in Israel's memory by "Spring" festivals such as the Passover (Num. 28:16-31). "Fall" festivals (see Num. 29), especially the Day of Atonement, pointed to the *future* removal of sin and to the complete restoration of Israel. The "grain" and "drink" offerings were tokens "of a repentant people to God as evidence of sorrow for sin and an earnest desire for forgiveness."¹

Animal sacrifices were of two types, the "burnt" offering and the "sin" offering (Num. 28:3, 19; Lev. 1:4). As the "burnt" offering was laid on the altar "nothing was held back. All was given to God. It denotes complete consecration."² When a "sin" offering was made for the whole congregation (Lev. 4:13ff), sins of ignorance were confessed, blood was sprinkled before the outer veil, applied upon the horns of the altar, and poured out at the bottom of the altar at the door of the tabernacle. As the priest made this atonement for the people, their sins were forgiven.

The prophet Isaiah applied the sacrifice of the innocent lamb to the coming Messiah (Isaiah 53), and the New Testament points to Jesus as the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29, NIV). According to Paul, our salvation depends upon the shedding of the blood of Jesus. "Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!" (Rom. 5:9, NIV).

On the basis of Christ's death, as foreshadowed by the ceremonial sacrificial system, Israelites found forgiveness and peace with God, as well as fellowship with one another. Christians, looking back to Calvary, find in Christ's atoning death the basis for their assurance of eternal life, and the foundation for fellowship with one another (see 1 John 1:7).

REACT

What impact do you think the offering of a sacrifice would have had on you personally if you had confessed your sins on the head of an innocent animal, and then slain it with your own hands? What is the Christian application?

EVIDENCE

Key text:
Numbers
28:1, 2

1. SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 924.
2. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 712.

Larry Christoffel is associate pastor for campus ministries at the Loma Linda Campus Hill Church, Loma Linda, California.

What Are We Waiting For?

by Larry Christoffel

HOW TO
Key text:
Hebrews 4:1, 2

Parallels abound between Israel's experience as they journeyed from Egypt to the Promised Land, and the experience of God's remnant people, preparing to enter the heavenly Canaan. What practical lessons can the church learn from Israel's wilderness wanderings? Two significant lessons stand out:

1. We may prepare for Christ's return by placing our trust in the promises of God. "So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief." "For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith" (Heb. 3:19; 4:2, NIV). Israel through Moses, had the assurance that they would be given the Promised Land. Following their marvelous deliverance through the Red Sea, however, Israel rushed headlong into doubt, apostasy, and idolatry (Ex. 33:1-3). What should have been a short trip stretched out to forty long years! (Num. 14:20-24). Similarly, Seventh-day Adventists, who expected the Second Coming in 1844, have wandered in the worldly wilderness for more than 140 years! How strong is our faith, and can we hasten Christ's return? Are we resting in Christ's finished work on Calvary for us or are we trusting in our own works? After declaring, "For anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his," the author of Hebrews makes this application, "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Heb. 4:10, 16, NIV).

2. We may help prepare others for Christ's return by giving a positive testimony concerning God's ability to fulfill His promises. Only Joshua and Caleb brought back a favorable projection that Israel could possess the land. And only they, of that entire generation of men, were able to possess the Promised Land! Declared Caleb, "We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it" (Num. 13:30, NIV). The other ten spies gave a bad report and spoke of the great size of the enemy (Num. 13:32). What if all twelve had been positive about conquering Canaan? If Seventh-day Adventist Christians really believed God is leading our movement, they would be willing to sacrifice of their means, time, and energy to ensure that the "three angels' messages" of Revelation 14 are proclaimed worldwide. Through personal witness and public evangelism we would support the swift proclamation of the "everlasting gospel" (Rev. 14:6), which must reach the ends of the earth before the return of Jesus. The alternative, is that by sheer neglect and negative testimony, we delay indefinitely the return of our Lord.

REACT

What is the reason, in your opinion, that Jesus Christ has not yet returned? Is there anything that we can do to hasten His coming?

Larry Christoffel is associate pastor for campus ministries at the Loma Linda Campus Hill Church, Loma Linda, California.

On Sabbath and Second Advent Freedom

by Harold S. Camacho

OPINION

Key text:
Luke 4:18,19

The Sabbath was given to Israel as a weekly celebration of their God-given freedom in the Promised Land. The Sabbath has the same function within contemporary Adventism. Jesus is present each Sabbath, as the powerful Liberator, breaking the bonds of human oppression and sin.

During the Sabbath, Jesus grants rest from the compulsive urge to make money, as we experience the freedom of sacrificial giving. During the Sabbath we experience rest from competition with others as we fellowship with equals in worship. During the Sabbath we experience rest from sexist biases as we acknowledge that in Christ there is "neither male nor female" (Gal. 3:28). During the Sabbath we rest from destroying the earth through careless management of our ecology as we recall that God made the world and everything in it.

During the Sabbath we may rest from oppressing the poor as we work for the liberation of both oppressed and oppressors. During the Sabbath we experience rest from feelings of "nothingness" and "nobodiness," as we remember that God values us so much that He gave His own Son. During the Sabbath we experience rest from loneliness as we fellowship with other Christians. During the Sabbath we rest from destroying our bodies and minds through overwork, as we experience the healing and restoration that peaceful rest brings. During the Sabbath we experience rest from relationships that exploit others, as we experience the freedom of loving others disinterestedly. During the Sabbath we experience rest from the anxious threat of nuclear war, as we listen to the voice of Him who said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. . . . I am going . . . to prepare a place for you. . . . And if I go . . . I will come back" (John 14:1-3, NIV).

The Sabbath, with its emphasis on the sacredness of the earth as God's creation, calls upon Christians everywhere to become guardians of its sacred soil. The soil of our earth is desecrated when used as an arsenal for nuclear weapons, and a dumping ground for toxic wastes. The Sabbath calls us to be guardians of the earth and human life, both given by the Creator. The Sabbath calls us to make the earth a place of peace—a place of "green pastures and still waters"—where our souls can be restored, by peaceful fellowship with Libyans, Iranians, Soviets, Nicaraguans, Syrians, Israelis, and the other peoples of the world.

The Sabbath rest, and the Second Advent hope, are unique and powerful spiritual resources for Adventists today. The Sabbath motivates us to hasten God's eternal day of rest as we work for peace, love, freedom, and justice in the earth. The Second Advent inspires us to keep "looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness" (2 Peter 3:13, NIV).

Harold S. Camacho is associate pastor for family ministries at the Loma Linda Campus Hill Church, Loma Linda, California.

Coming Next Quarter:

PASSION PLAY

Studies in Hosea and Philemon

For readers who have not yet received a copy of COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY for second quarter, 1988, here is a summary of the first three lessons.

Lesson 1: Scandal in the Parsonage

Scripture: Hosea 1:1—2:23

Theme: God uses His servants the prophets to point out sin in the ranks of His people and to appeal to the people to repent and to return to Him. Hosea's experience with Gomer demonstrates how crucial the choice of a life companion can be.

Lesson 2: Me First!

Scripture: Hosea 2:1-6

Theme: There are many hazards to happy homes. Two of the more common and the most destructive in their effects upon marital peace and prosperity are selfishness and incompatibility.

Lesson 3: Love Says It All

Scripture: Hosea 3

Theme: "The dominant theme of the book of Hosea is the love of God for His erring children."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 886.

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Adventist hospitals reach the world by touching lives. And every year, Florida Hospital gives one-to-one compassion to the 174,000* lives that come to us for help.

Compassion is more than caring for patients and charting their progress. It's knowing their fears and feeling their pain. Even in the world's largest Adventist hospital.



FLORIDA HOSPITAL

ORLANDO, FLORIDA

* Based on inpatient, outpatient and Emergency Department figures.



Brenda and Elmer come from two different backgrounds. WWC provides personal financial packages for each of them.

It isn't their bank accounts that got them here.

Coming from a middle-income family meant that Brenda's parents earned too much for her to qualify for the government's PELL grant, but not enough to make financing her education a breeze. "Without my personal financial aid package," she says, "it would have been really tough on my parents — especially since my brother is in college, too."

Elmer came to WWC from Cost Rica. "The college's work-study program matches my earnings dollar for dollar — up to \$1,000," he says. "I've also been able to work full-time in the summer while taking classes, and the college's

Smart Start program gave me a free room to live in for the summer."

Brenda and Elmer are where they want to be. Getting the Christian education they want. And the financing packages to make it possible.

Want to know more? Call or write today to find out how you can get in on WWC's nearly \$5 million dollars in financial aid.

Spirit of Excellence
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Use our toll-free hotline:

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