

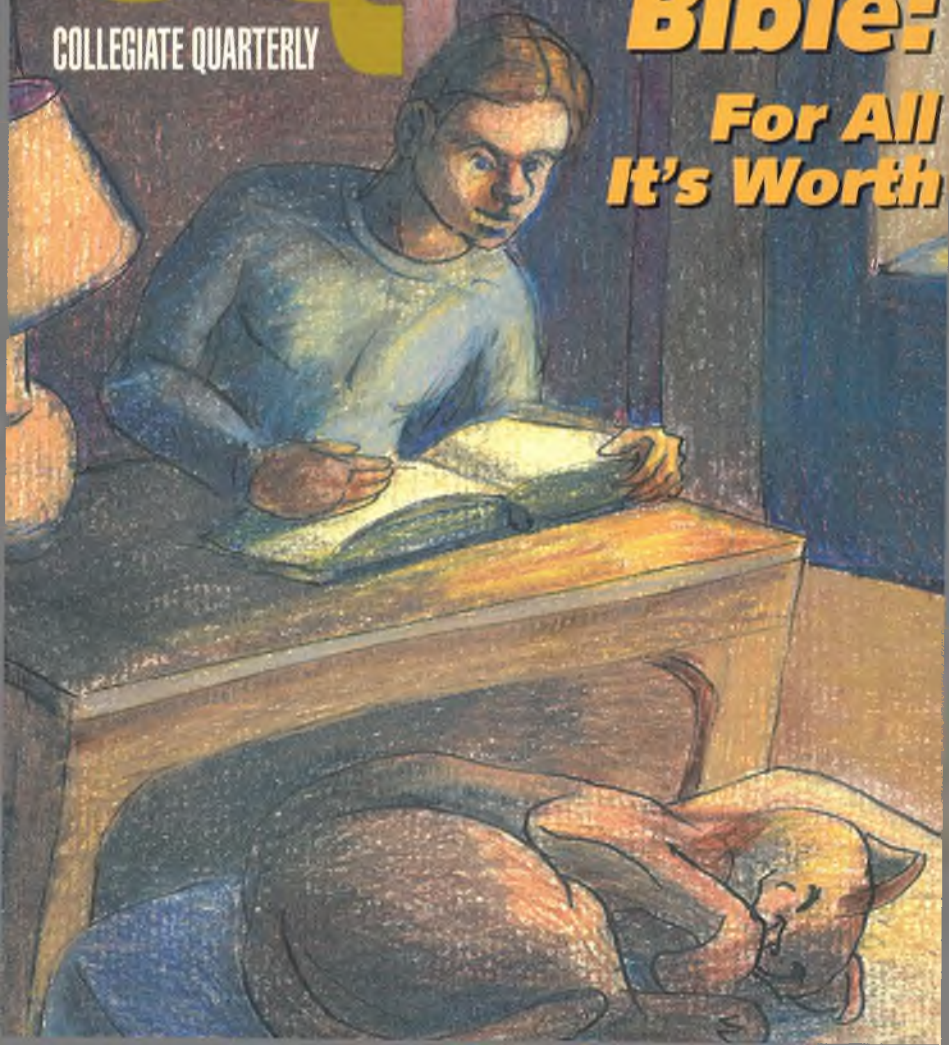
JANUARY-MARCH 1996

**CQ**

COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

**How to  
Study  
the  
Bible:**

**For All  
It's Worth**

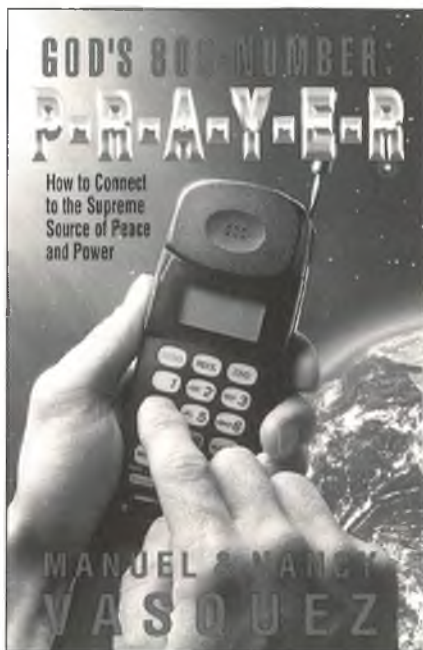


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# HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE FOR ALL IT'S WORTH

JANUARY - MARCH 1996

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## Welcome to *CQ*'s World!

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

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

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

# Have you wondered?

■ You've read a lesson that particularly intrigued you. Is there a way to give CQ some direct feedback? ■ You have a particularly fulfilling personal Bible study approach and wonder if others might benefit if it were applied to the CQ lessons. ■ Or maybe you're looking for a way to get your young adults' group more involved in Bible study.

There's a simple answer . . .

*. . . write for CQ.*

The very best way of sharing your ideas and reactions to our lessons is to tell us. In fact, we couldn't survive without reader input. But an even better way to get involved is to become a contributing writer for CQ. Tell us you're interested by writing to the

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**CQ**  
COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

## This Quarter's Artist



The featured illustrator in this quarter's issue of *CQ* is Roy C. Foo, who, at the age of 25, has lived in Malaysia (where he was born), Hong Kong, the Philippines, England, France, Vietnam, and the United States. He graduated from Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, in 1993 with a B.F.A. in painting and minors in French and music. He is presently an M.F.A. student in painting at Indiana University at Bloomington.



# Getting the Most Out of *CQ*

## Facts You Should Know

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

## Pointers for Study

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

2. The Bible passage on which each week's lesson is based appears in bold type in the "Logos" pages (Monday's portion of the lesson). Read this entire passage in conjunction with the quarterly introduction to give yourself an overview of the lesson.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

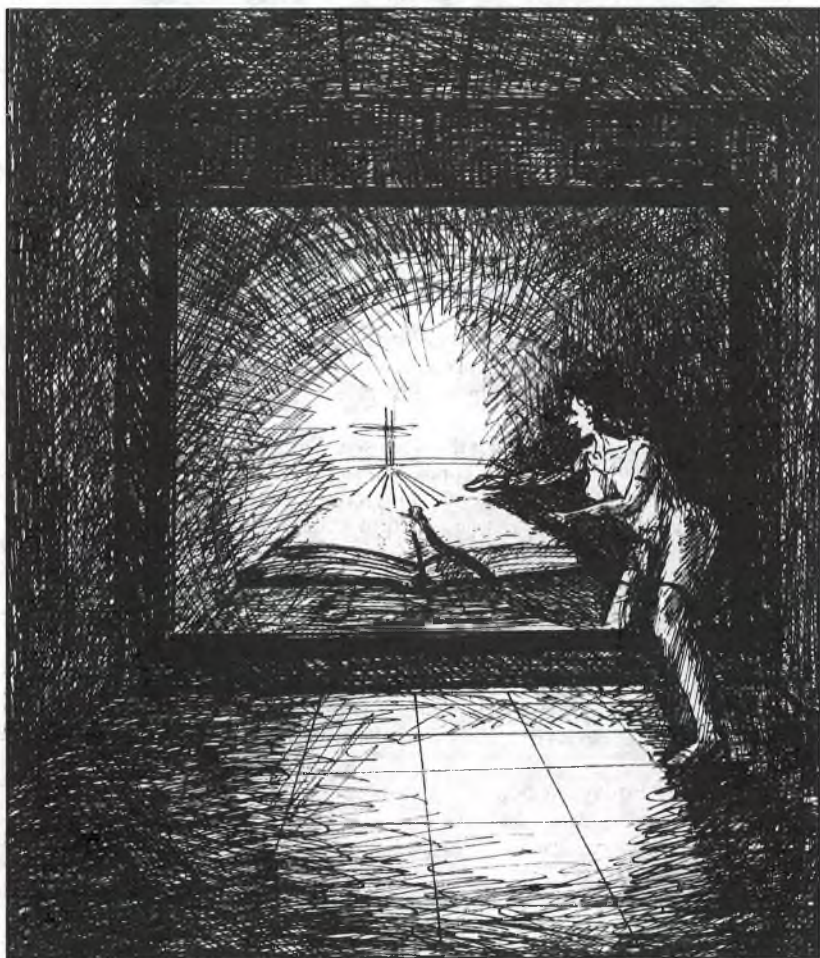
**"How-To"** (Thursday) discusses what the abstractions in the lesson mean for day-to-day living.

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

## *CQ* and the Church

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

# CENTERING ON SCRIPTURE



**“If you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God” (Prov. 2:4, 5, NIV).**

# A Book and a Voice

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Heb. 1:1, 2**

In the beginning the Bible did not exist. God spoke directly to Adam and Eve until the day they fled, tormented by their disobedience (Gen. 3:8). The voice of God filled them with fear.

At the foot of Mount Sinai, the people of Israel felt this same fear: "They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, 'Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die'" (Exod. 20:18, 19, NIV). From then on, God had to use mediators like Moses, living antennas to receive what He wants to say and to broadcast it to humanity (see Ezek. 3:17).

But prophets are fragile. When a radio or TV program annoys you, you can always switch to another channel. In the same way, prophets have been persecuted and even put to death because their messages were not pleasant to hear. Notice how Jesus spoke about Jerusalem: "You . . . kill the prophets and stone those sent to you" (Luke 13:34).

To prevent His messages from being lost, God told the prophet to write on stones that which He gave them to proclaim. Thus He declared to Isaiah: "Go now,

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## **The Bible becomes central when it ceases to be a book and becomes a voice.**

---

write it on a tablet for them, inscribe it on a scroll, that for the days to come it may be an everlasting witness" (Isa. 30:8). The communication that was broken in the beginning was in the process of being restored. The Bible was born, a collection, still partial, of the correspondence between God and humankind.

But can you imagine a couple in love who would be satisfied with only writing letters, without ever wanting to see each other? Unthinkable. The same applies to God.

Communicating in writing with those He loves is not enough for Him. What He wants is to meet them, to get back to the original state, when humanity wasn't afraid. God's will was accomplished in Jesus Christ. "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 (Heb. 1:1, 2).

"In the beginning was the Word" (John 1:1). Then came Scripture. But finally, Jesus, the Word made flesh, renewed the initial contact. Hence, to speak of the centrality of the Bible is to understand that it is the center of the revelation process—not as an end in itself, but as a means of listening to God speaking to us once again.

The Bible will be central only if, behind the words, we come into contact with God speaking to us in Jesus Christ. It becomes central—a supreme paradox—when it ceases to be a book and becomes a voice.

---

*By Jean-Claude Verrecchia, pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Mulhouse, France.*

---



# The Bible Is My Home

## LOGOS

**John 8:31, 32**

It is at the heart of a passionate argument over Christ's identity and His authority (read John 7 and 8) that "Jesus then said to the Jews who had believed in him, 'If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free'" (John 8:31, 32, RSV).

### My Word

We have chosen this phrase spoken by Jesus to justify the importance of the Bible. Though the transition is not immediate, it is nevertheless easy. Even though the Scriptures contain not only Christ's words spoken during His earthly life by way of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we can consider that the whole Bible is the word of the three-person God. When Paul declares that all Scripture is inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16), he is speaking about what was to become the Old Testament. In his writings and those of Peter (2 Pet. 1:20, 21), it is clear that Christianity recognized the Hebrew Scriptures as being the inspired word of God. Concerning what is to us the New Testament, the different books contain either the very words and acts of Jesus or those of the apostles whose ministry was committed to them by Jesus and directed by the Holy Spirit. Here again the transition is easy: the New Testament is the word of Jesus and the word of the Holy Spirit.

Now that we have established the relationship between the Bible and the word of Jesus, let us take another look at two verses in the Gospel of John. We should first of all notice that Christ is speaking to "those who believed in him" (John 7:39, NIV). The Bible can be the word of Christ only for those who recognize him as their Saviour and Lord.

### If You Dwell . . .

Jesus defines the true disciple—the one who follows Him faithfully—as the one who dwells or continues in His word. That does not mean simply admiring the way someone speaks or reading a book (albeit daily and with concentration). Jesus invites me to make His word my dwelling place, my home. Not a hotel in which I spend three nights of my life. Not a prison that holds me captive by its demands and constraints. Not a caravan moving from doctrine to credo. His word should be the dwelling place of truth, which is dependable and certain, welcoming and protective.

Jesus adds a promise: "The truth will make you free" (8:32, RSV). He explains that we are slaves to sin, simply because we commit sin (verse 34). "The servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (verses 35, 36, KJV). The slavery of sin prevents us from living permanently in the house of truth. But to those who believe in Him, Jesus gives the freedom to be able to live in His word.

### "The Truth Shall Make You Free"

This is a long way from the incomprehensible text that, all too often, the Bible is for us. By His Spirit of truth, Jesus liberates us from the two thousand years (at



least) that put a distance between us and the Scriptures. He liberates us from the obscurities or the contradictions, from the strange ideas of certain Bible writers. Not all these obstacles disappear, but they do not prevent us from finding pleasure and enrichment from carefully searching the text that is at the foundation of our faith. We are free to understand and to love, free to know the truth, free to meet Christ in the Bible, and free to stay with Him.

### **Meeting Jesus in the Whole Bible**

In practice, one of the challenges before us is just that of meeting Jesus in the Bible, in the *whole* Bible. It is easy in the New Testament. It is more difficult in the Old Testament. Nevertheless, with effort and real study, it is possible. Jesus Himself gave us an example. On the day of His resurrection, as He was walking incognito with two of His disciples on the road to Emmaus, He allowed them to express their sorrow, their inability to understand the death of the One whom they had taken for "a prophet mighty in deed and word" (Luke 24:19, RSV). When He finally spoke, He spoke severely: "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer

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## **One of the challenges before us is meeting Jesus in the Old Testament.**

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these things and enter into his glory?" (verses 25, 26, RSV).

According to Jesus, the Hebrew prophets had foretold the death and resurrection of the Messiah. He reproaches the disciples with their lack of understanding and lack of belief. In fact, the general lack of understanding seems to prove that it was not a simple matter to read the prophets in this way. Jesus Himself gave the interpretation: "Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (verse 27).

What an extraordinary Bible study given by the Master Himself! And we have no record of its content. Luke would have provided us with a document of capital importance had he only transcribed the words of Jesus. We do not know what He said, but we do know that it is possible to interpret all of the Old Testament with reference to the work of the Messiah. Not every sentence speaks about Him, but, throughout all the Hebrew Scriptures, we find passages that apply to Him. We can meet Jesus just as much in the Old Testament as we can in the New Testament.

### **REACT**

1. How can I experience the freedom that Jesus promises through contact with His Word?
2. How would you reconstruct the Bible study that Jesus gave His disciples on the road to Emmaus?
3. How does God's revelation through the Bible relate to those who are unable to read?

---

*By Corinne Egasse, editorial secretary, Life and Health Publishing House, Dammarie-les-Lys, France.*

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# The Word Made Scripture

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: 2 Tim. 3:14-17**

In our modern age of science and computers, are we still the people of the Book? Can we still believe the story of Creation, miracles, and the resurrection of Christ without fear of being labeled old-fashioned Puritans in a modern world?

“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.”<sup>1</sup>

“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, or on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God’s penmen, not His pen. Look at the different writers.

“It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man’s words or his expressions but on the man himself,

## In our modern age of science and computers, are we still the people of the Book?

who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God.”<sup>2</sup>

For those who discern the divine voice in human words, the Bible will be not only the great standard but also a very special blessing: “The Bible is the only rule of faith and doctrine. And there is nothing more calculated to energize the mind, and strengthen the intellect, than the study of the word of God. No other book is so potent to elevate the thoughts, to give vigor to the faculties, as the broad, ennobling truths of the Bible. If God’s word were studied as it should be, men would have a breadth of mind, a nobility of character, and a stability of purpose, that is rarely seen in these times.”<sup>3</sup>

## REACT

How can we have complete confidence in the Word of God, even though it was written by imperfect human beings?

1. *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 20.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

3. *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 17, 1888.

*By Bernard Denéchaud, editor-in-chief, Life and Health Publishing House, Dammarieles-Lys, France.*

# “Understandest Thou What Thou Readest?”

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Acts 8:26-40**

“How should I read my Bible in order to really learn something? I truly want to study the Bible, but it’s difficult: there are many passages that I don’t understand!”

This question comes up almost every time I speak about Bible study, in the classroom, as well as in my lectures elsewhere. My answer is probably neither simple nor right for everyone. But it includes at least these three points:

**1. Be realistic.** You must be aware that, although what is essential for our salvation is clear to everybody, the Bible contains the revelation of the unsearchable wisdom of God. It is therefore normal to find in it “some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures” (2 Pet. 3:16, NASB).

Whenever you are confronted with a difficult text, ask yourself: *Do I understand what I am reading?* Perhaps, like the Ethiopian diplomat, you may need some help (Acts 8:30). The veil that covers some parts of the Bible is removed

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## The Bible contains the revelation of the unsearchable wisdom of God.

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only by Christ (2 Cor. 3:14-16). He remains the best interpreter of Scripture (Luke 24:27, 32).

**2. Be honest.** You cannot satisfy yourself with a superficial reading. Scripture is a research field (John 5:39). Digging deep requires a certain technique. Your study will become more rewarding and exciting if you learn how to use some basic tools.

My personal Bible research has been extremely enriched by exploring biblical languages. To learn some basic Hebrew or Greek is fascinating and much easier than it seems. In any case, science provides excellent evidence for archaeological, historical, geographical, and cultural background information. Do not hesitate to consult a good dictionary or other reliable source. Try different Bible versions.

**3. Be wise.** There is no such thing as an infallible or magic tool! Nothing may replace your earnest, personal search for truth. Every effort of interpretation has to strike a balance between two poles: the quest for objectivity (the evidence of facts) and the fruitfulness of subjectivity (your personal encounter with the divine Word). For nothing will ever replace the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Only the Spirit of truth may “guide you into all the truth” (16:13, NASB).

## REACT

In what specific ways can I improve my study of the Bible?

---

*By Robert Badenas, New Testament professor and dean, Saleve Adventist Institute, Collonges-sous-Saleve, France.*

---

# Imperishable Treasure

## HOW TO

**Scripture: Prov. 2:1-9**

A rabbi who had many disciples was spending much of his time meditating on the Torah. His persistence and his concentration were well known. One day his students noticed that he had remained on the same page for a long time.

“Please, teacher,” one asked, “tell us why you’re always at the same page studying for so long? Are you experiencing difficulties?”

“Why should I go any farther,” the rabbi answered, “when I feel fine here?”

Proverbs 2:1-9 invites us to follow the teacher’s example: “then you will understand the fear of the Lord” (verse 5, NIV) and “you will understand what is right and just and fair” (verse 9). The first stanza (verses 1-4) stresses the necessary condition to discover this great treasure. Each verse begins with the word “if,” which emphasizes better the importance of this element. Notice also the ascending process of the story; the second aspect of each verse shows a parallel with the first part and at the same time an amplification of the idea.

The second stanza is an echo of the first: “If you seek” (verse 4, RSV), “the Lord gives” (verse 6). This stanza also must be compared to the wisdom speech

---

## “Why should I go any farther,” the rabbi answered, “when I feel fine here?”

---

for fools: “Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me” (Prov. 1:28).

This thought brings us to the conclusion that it’s important to:

**1. Remain permanently and deeply a searcher of the divine treasure.** People nowadays seek more and more money or other kinds of treasure. But God invites us to incline our hearts toward imperishable treasure.

**2. Recognize that seeking divine treasure means making choices.** Having an attentive ear to God’s word implies our not hearing any other sound but His voice. Inclining our ears to understanding means not having our hearts oriented in many different directions. “You will seek me and find me; when you seek me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:13, RSV).

**3. Start searching with the confidence that God gives.** God’s wisdom is beyond us. He gives more than we could expect. Jesus says, “For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened” (Matt 7:8, NIV).

## REACT

1. How valuable are the treasures of my life?
2. How much influence does the search for the divine treasures of wisdom have in my daily life?

---

*By Dragan Stojanovic, Sabbath School director, North France Conference, Paris, France.*

---



# What Is Central: My Idea or the Bible Text?

## OPINION

**Key Text: Mark 4:35-41**

I once met with a group of Bible instructors of different Christian denominations. We discussed the use of Mark 4:35-41 in teaching materials for children and teenagers. We examined 14 manuals, including our Sabbath School quarterlies. We discovered that nearly everywhere the aim of the lessons was to teach that Jesus will deliver His disciples from every danger—without and within. Is that treating the Bible as central?

There is no question that Jesus did deliver His disciples from the storm that night. But that was not a danger from within. The text says that the disciples were frightened (verse 40) and terribly afraid (verse 41). We must conclude that their problem from within was still there, maybe a little different. The power of Jesus over the wind and the sea was recognized, but that was not enough to get a clear understanding of His identity. The text ends with a question. Therefore, can we use it to present an absolute certainty?

Beware of allegorizing! Here we are tempted to see in the storm all the problems we meet. And we conclude that Jesus is willing to deliver us from them all.

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## **They needed to learn that His real power is in weakness.**

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Thus we run into two dangers: (1) revolt, because when we realize that Jesus does not deliver from every problem, we feel deceived; and (2) guilt, because when Jesus does not deliver us, we are tempted to think we are not good enough to be delivered. These two dangers are the main enemies for the good news of salvation by faith. Fortunately, the text gives us what is necessary to avoid them.

To believe in the centrality of the Bible demands a full respect for what the text says, even if it brings insecurity or questions, rather than comfort with absolutes. It also demands a constant use of the literary context from which the text being studied is taken.

Here we must read the text in the context of Mark's Gospel. And there we see that the disciples were still in the process of discovering the true identity and mission of Jesus. They were amazed at His power, but were in danger of thinking that power was His way of life. They needed to learn that His real power was in weakness, in accepting the lowest condition of the infamous punishment of the cross.

We, too, have to learn to trust a humble Lord whose power is love. We must accept the risk of not being delivered. We must accept our Lord by faith, not by sight.

## **REACT**

In what specific ways can I prevent myself from reading what I think or wish into the Bible?

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*By Bernard Sauvagnat, Sabbath School director, Franco-Belgian Union, Paris, France.*

# WHY BOTHER?



**“The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand” (Matt. 7:25, 26, NIV).**

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# The Purpose of Bible Study

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Matt. 7:25, 26**

On opening his eyes at 7:30 one Sunday morning, Pastor Johanson thought about Solomon, who had been admitted to the hospital. He had a strong feeling that he should visit the hospital. He tried to suppress this desire, but the urge was so strong that he finally decided to go.

When he reached Solomon's bed, Solomon's face was long. Pastor Johanson greeted him and waited for an answer, but received none. He asked Solomon what was troubling him.

"What is God like?" Solomon asked.

The pastor said that God is a wonderful person. But Solomon would not agree to this and claimed that it was a lie, because he was suffering from advanced stages of cancer, and his doctors had given him only a few weeks to live.

Pastor Johanson was shocked to hear this, but he remained calm. He looked into Solomon's eyes and started taking him down through the ages. He told him how God has cared for His people in trials and troubles, and how we can live a true life,

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## **Pastor Johanson was shocked to hear this, but he remained calm.**

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with the grace of God upon us. He assured Solomon that Jesus is coming the second time, to take us all home to live with Him. Then followed a series of Bible studies that helped Solomon to understand the love of God.

This shows the importance and the need of Bible study.



# The Word of God—Our Spiritual Food

## LOGOS

Ps. 119:1-18; Matt. 4:1-11; 7:24-27; 28:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 8

*“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 2:2).*

Peter is writing a pastoral epistle to the Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, scattered throughout Asia Minor. With great concern and love, he writes to strengthen and uplift them to holy living. The Christians then lived in trouble-filled times, facing fiery trials, constantly threatened with persecution, and living in the midst of unbelievers. Some were new converts, who were just beginning the Christian life; their faith was severely tested. Peter encourages them to strive for perfection in character and reach full maturity in the Christian life. He reminds them of the goal to be reached: “Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:16). He outlines for them the way they should live and includes certain things that are necessary for their growth to reach the state of holiness or perfection. He advises them, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (2:2). He shows them that the only way to grow into holiness is to *desire* the word of God as a newborn baby desires its mother’s milk.

The Christian life should be a life of continuous growth. It must never come to a standstill. As the newborn baby feeds on its mother’s milk, Christians ought to feed on spiritual milk, which is the Word of God. We need to be fed and nourished daily to grow in our Christian life. Therefore, realizing that the Word of God is our spiritual food, we should crave it. How much should we crave or desire the Word of God? “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God” (Ps. 42:1).

Like the hart panting after the water brooks and the baby craving for its mother’s milk, we should crave the Word of God. We cannot do without it, for we are completely dependent on it for our growth. The moment we cease to yearn for it, the moment we neglect to feed ourselves from it, we stop growing. As a result, we may never attain the state of holiness that is the goal of every Christian.

*“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4).*

In the book *Master Preachers*, author Harold L. Calkins describes the devotional and study habits of men who are not only great preachers, but spiritual giants, as well. One thing stands out in all of them—the importance and the enormous amount of time they give to studying the Bible. George Müller read his Bible through more than one hundred times. Billy Graham has worn out ten King James Versions and expects to memorize the Bible before he dies. John Nevins Andrews, when asked whether he could repeat the whole Bible from memory, replied, “So far as the New Testament is concerned, if it were obliterated, I could reproduce it word for word, but I could not say as much for the Old Testament.” What is the secret of their success in their ministry and Christian life? How could they be instrumental in bringing thousands to the foot of the cross? What makes it possible for them to be spiritual giants? The answer lies in the way they handle the Word of God. To them “the sincere milk of the word” is the true source of their



nourishment and growth. They study it, they meditate on it, they dwell on it, and they share it with their fellow beings. In turn, they are fed and nourished, gaining new spiritual heights.

*“Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life” (John 5:39).*

The Bible reveals God and His plan of redemption for the restoration of sinful humans to the image of God. The Bible gives us the hope and assurance that we can have everlasting life, and we need not die eternal death. The way of salvation is shown to us. It rests on us to discover what God wants us to do.

*“Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Ps. 119:105).*

For those who make it their constant study and meditation, the Bible serves as a lamp. It helps them discern truth from error, right from wrong. It shows the path

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## **Billy Graham expects to memorize the Bible before he dies.**

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Christians must follow to reach the final destination. So long as we build our foundation on the Word of God, we will not be swayed or diverted by the false teachings and doctrines of humankind.

### **REACT**

1. The psalmist compared God’s Word to a lamp (Ps. 119:105). Based on my own personal experience, with what metaphor would I characterize God’s Word?
2. What are some of the things that prevent us from feeding on the Word of God?
3. How can we always be in the state of desiring “the sincere milk of the word”?

# A Standard You Can Trust

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Eph. 6:11**

“When the testing time shall come, those who have made God’s word their rule of life will be revealed. . . . Let persecution be kindled, and the halfhearted and hypocritical will waver and yield the faith; but the true Christian will stand firm as a rock, his faith stronger, his hope brighter, than in days of prosperity.”<sup>1</sup>

In the Old Testament characters Daniel, his friends, and Joseph, their virtue was severely tested, but its triumph was complete. They stood the test of time. At every point they endured the test. The Lord was with them, and the Word was law.

“Satan is now more earnestly engaged in playing the game of life for souls than at any previous time; and unless we are constantly on our guard, he will establish in our hearts, pride, love of self, love of the world, and many other evil traits. He will also use every possible device to unsettle our faith in God and in the truths of His Word. If we have not a deep experience in the things of God, if we have not a thorough knowledge of His Word, we shall be beguiled to our ruin by the errors and sophistries of the enemy. . . . Our only safeguard against the wiles of Satan

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**“It is the first and highest duty of every rational being to learn from the Scriptures what is truth.”**

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is to study the Scriptures diligently.”<sup>2</sup>

“It is the first and highest duty of every rational being to learn from the Scriptures what is truth.”<sup>3</sup>

## REACT

1. How should we study the Bible so that our interest will never wane?
2. Among Seventh-day Adventists, what is the reason for the lack of interest in the study of the Bible?
3. In what way, if any, is personal accountability to God’s Word affected by misunderstanding of its meaning?

1. *Maranatha—The Lord Is Coming*, p. 94.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 95.

3. *The Great Controversy*, p. 598.

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By Anbudurai Albert, third-year religious-philosophy student at Spicer Memorial College, Poona, India.

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# Dead Sea Scrolls

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Matt. 13:49**

What does the term *Holy Bible* really mean? The word *holy* comes from the Hebrew word, *qadosh*.<sup>1</sup> Its root meaning is: “separate” or “different.” So here we can see that our Bible is a reliable book that is different from the best of the books in the world.

As Christians, we need a reliable instruction manual. If we are going to repair a car, computer, or such, we need an instruction manual. Our Holy Bible is the medium of our instruction, which will lead us to the heavenly Canaan. Do we read our Bibles enough? Do we let them collect dust? Non-Christians feel that the Bible is just a good storybook. They question its authenticity.

Praise God, there is archaeological evidence of such.<sup>2</sup> It all began in 1947 in the region of the Dead Sea when a young Bedouin boy was looking for a lost goat near Jerusalem. Above the Dead Sea is a multitude of caves, called The Qumran Caves. Here the little boy threw a stone into cave number 4, causing a curious echoing sound, as though the stone had hit something made of dried clay. Upon investigation, the boy made history! The Dead Sea Scrolls are a collection of the Old Testament Scriptures, which were used 2,000 years ago. Their age has been

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## **It all began in the region of the Dead Sea when a young Bedouin boy was looking for a lost goat.**

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verified by carbon-14 dating. Therefore, we can concur that at the time of Jesus, part of the Bible (Scripture) existed.

The Sabbath is separate from other days; and the Holy Bible is separate from other books. We as Seventh-day Adventist Christians should be separate from the world. In what sense separate? Should we mingle with the world? We (the church) should be like a snake on the wall. A snake leaves behind him a trail that all of us can see. What sort of trail are we leaving for others to see?

Through the Holy Bible, God gave us a clear vision of where the world is headed. Are we ready to give the greatest testimony to the world—that Jesus lives and that the Bible is the only working manual to take us to heaven. The Bible has stood the test of 2,000 years. Let us each choose the way of Jesus. When the angels come and separate the wicked and the just, let us not be found wanting on that day!

1. William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible*, vol. 10 (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1992), pp. 76, 77.
2. Pearlman Morshe, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in the Shrine of the Book* (Jerusalem: Hamakor Press Ltd., 1988), pp. 1-14.

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*By Rudolph Sinclair, student missionary from the United Kingdom to Spicer Memorial College, Poona, India.*

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# The Bible, You, and Ben Hur

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: 2 Tim. 3:16**

Reading the Bible and discovering its valuable truths and facts often comes in last on our “Things to do” list. It seems so dull and drab compared to shopping, meeting friends, social gatherings, traveling—the list is endless. What we do not realize is that in our hands we hold the greatest book, containing the greatest love story. The rock group Meatloaf promises to do “anything for love,” and we wish that someone would promise the same for us, forgetting that there was One who didn’t leave it at a promise but died in the worst possible way to show the magnitude of His love.

Bible study must be made more meaningful to us as individuals. Here are a few points to keep in mind:

**1. Feel the need.** Studying the Bible without realizing the need for it in one’s life is like packing to go on a long journey without knowing where you’re headed or what the purpose of your trip is. The need to know more about God, His saving grace, and His love is essential to Bible study.

**2. Go slow.** The Bible should not be read just so you can say, “Hey, I read the whole Bible.” You aren’t doing a speed-reading test here. You might read the

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## The Bible should not be read just so you can say, “Hey, I read the whole Bible.”

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whole of Psalm 119 and be aware of having read only the first word, “Blessed.” Even reading a verse a day would be a great blessing if you wholly concentrate on it with prayerful meditation. We must try to comprehend fully the whole purpose of what we are reading and what we can gain from it.

**3. Be creative.** Don’t make the Bible boring. Use illustrations that interest you. A friend of mine who is interested in art said that he likes to imagine scenes of the Bible in his own way, Ben Hur and all. Choose illustrations that would get your interest, and then let your imagination go. But make sure it doesn’t run so wild that it goes out of context!

As you study more of the Bible and of God, may you be able to “shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed” (2 Tim. 2:15).

## REACT

1. Discuss other means and methods you could adapt in making Bible study more interesting and meaningful personally.

2. How would you present the Bible to one who doesn’t know about Christ but who really needs to know the truth?

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*By Ashim Pheirim, a sophomore office-administration student at Spicer Memorial College, Poona, India.*

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# Offense and Defense

## OPINION

**Key Text: Prov. 30:5**

In a war, sometimes defense is better and more effective than offense. We cannot underestimate well-prepared defense as a means to secure a decisive victory. The Word of God is one of the most important and effective weapons in the warfare of Christian life for both defense and offense. It is a part of the "armour of God" (Eph. 6:13, 17). It may be questionable whether Jesus' victories over the devil in the wilderness (Matthew 4) were victories over plain and simple temptations; nevertheless, the power in the Word of God is always the same two thousand years ago and today.

Our parents, pastors, teachers, and friends might have introduced us to and informed us of Jesus and the future glory that He will give when He comes a second time, but it is the individual's responsibility to develop the truthful principles of life that will guard, guide, and enhance him or her in the crossroad.

In the Bible, God has given to humankind information necessary for salvation. So many Christians fail, however, and take very lightly the search for precious truths in the Scriptures. Going to church every week may not be sufficient to lay

## **Going to church every week may not be sufficient to lay a firm foundation on the Word of God.**

a firm foundation on the Word of God and to overcome stormy trials and temptations in these last days.

The Bible is the greatest of literature. It can give divine light to the sin-stricken, fallen human race. No other single book or volume of books can compare with it. Yet many Christians willfully ignore or neglect the true knowledge and keep themselves voyaging in the same boat as the ancient Israelites: "You have seen many things, but have paid no attention; your ears are open, but you hear nothing" (Isa. 42:20, NIV).

In light of the Scriptures alone we can best perceive the light of Jesus Christ, and then we can reflect that true light to others. Without that true light, Christians fail to represent true Christianity, and the world dishonors the name of God. We are in defense of our faith and belief and at the same time in the offense of the furtherance of the Lord's work.

## **REACT**

1. How can you season your words and actions so those who are dealing with you can be built up?
2. What are the strongest and weakest arguments for Christianity?
3. What leads to the greatest success in Christian mission?

*By Connally Hla, a graduate religion student, Spicer Memorial College, Poona, India.*

# INCREASING YOUR WORD POWER



**“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15, NIV).**

# Point of View

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: 2 Tim. 2:15**

Several years ago I had the following encounter: “Your father’s not in heaven,” I confidently told my best friend, whose father had died three years before. My friend became red in the face and nearly slugged me.

Having just recently come to believe that the Bible teaches that the dead stay in the grave until the second coming, I was sure my non-Adventist friend would want to know this. Well, what I didn’t consider was that to him, if his father wasn’t in heaven, then the only other option was hell! I learned early in my Adventist life that what is clear to me is not clear to many of my sincere friends who did not share my point of view.

As an academy Bible teacher, I had the opportunity to teach Bible doctrines for several years. In these classes we spent some time talking about doctrines unique to Adventists. Part of my approach was to expose the class to what other Christians believed concerning these doctrines. This involved sharing with the class how others disagreed with us and why. It also involved demonstrating the way other Christians divided the truth. It was interesting for me to watch my

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## **To him, if his father wasn’t in heaven, then the only other option was hell!**

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students struggle to defend their faith. Often they were surprised to learn that an opposing view appeared to have good biblical support. There were times when they felt hard pressed to defend a view that they had just taken for granted (“Oh, everybody knows that Saturday is the true Sabbath—don’t they?”). It was amazing and a little scary when a few students were ready to abandon a traditional Adventist doctrine because an alternative thought appeared better supported.

So much depends on your point of view. It strongly influences how you understand or interpret the Bible. The better we understand this, the easier it is to avoid pitfalls like the one I fell into early in my Adventist experience—or the ones into which my students were often trapped. Although we can’t escape our point of view, the better we understand our own and try to appreciate others, the better we will “rightly divide the word of truth.” Our point of view is affected by our age, culture, family history, education, and many other life experiences.

In this week’s lesson we will consider how to study the Bible:

- What tools can we use?
- How do we decide what a text is really saying?
- Is there such a thing as objective truth, or is it all subjective?
- What factors other than my point of view play a role in how a text should be interpreted?
- How much does history, culture, and humanity affect inspiration?

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*By Victor F. Brown, enrollment vice-president and chaplain at Southwestern Adventist College, Keene, Texas.*

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# Word Power

## LOGOS

2 Tim. 2:14, 15; Luke 18:18-27; 1 Sam. 8:1-9

Paul called on Timothy to be a Christian leader who would treat God's Word with great care. Bandyng words or needlessly arguing about words is a waste of time. Paul indicates that, even more, it may be destructive! When he speaks about "disputing" (2 Tim. 2:14, RSV) or "quarrelling" (NIV), he actually uses a verb that means "to fight with words." He also goes on to say that such activity "ruins those who listen," as he uses a verb from which is derived our noun "catastrophe." The same word is used when Jesus "overturned" the money changers' tables (Matt. 21:12) or in the Greek translation for the overthrowing of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:25). So Paul is telling Timothy to be careful with words and not to create "catastrophes" with them.

Words have power! They can be gentle, soothing, and reassuring, as with the psychologist trying to pacify a kidnapper or psychotic; they can be passionate, moving, and motivating, as with the ardent lover or the earnest preacher. They can be used almost hypnotically for evil as shown by Adolph Hitler. They can also be viciously destructive or soul-destroying—biting words from one who is disillusioned or embittered (compare James 3, especially verses 5-8, where it speaks of the power and influence of the tongue, instrument of words and speech).

If human words have such vital power and potential for good or evil, what about the Word of God? And what of the responsibility of the person with opportunity to "open up," "explain," or "exegete" the words of Scripture?

*"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).*

Treat words and ideas with special care as you draw meaning from Scripture. Words and concepts of Scripture have the authority of divine inspiration (2 Tim. 3:15; 2 Pet. 1:19-21). However, they need to be interpreted and explained correctly. Paul speaks of the necessity of "rightly dividing the word of truth." The original meaning of the term here is to "cut straight" and was used for indicating the careful shaping of stones by a mason so they would exactly fit into the building where they were needed. In other words, those who are explaining Scripture need to recognize that they are working with building blocks for clarifying truth. Lines of truth need to be made clear-cut so they stand out. This work is not "dividing" so much as cutting through verbiage to the correct, original meaning and then applying this meaning to our own situations and setting.

The one who would explain the Bible needs to be responsible, making it plain, understandable, and accurate, not misleading hearers, but teaching truth in its broad principles and in its finer details where these are revealed. Scholars have devised principles whereby passages of Scripture can be accurately explained and applied. They sometimes refer to these as "steps of exegesis." Briefly stated, they are as follows:

**1. The Textual Step.** Insofar as possible, determine what the original text said. On a nontechnical level, this can be done by comparing several good Bible translations—especially NIV, RSV, NEB, NASB, or TEV.



**2. The Contextual Step.** Determine the sense unit. Is it a paragraph or larger piece of the text, and then how does this passage relate to the rest of the material in the overall plan or argument of the book?

**3. The Dictionary Step.** What are the key words in the passage, and what do they mean? A Bible dictionary is helpful here.

**4. The Grammatical Step.** Study the grammar, and notice how this may clarify, or sometimes leave ambiguous, a variety of possible meanings.

**5. The Geographic Step.** Study to determine where this book, chapter, or passage was written and where its details took place. This is a part of the knowledge that will help you to visualize the story, experience, or message.

**6. The Historical Step.** Study the historical, chronological, sociological, and spiritual conditions and relationships of the world at the time and place of writing.

**7. The Comparative Step.** Through margins, footnotes, and concordance, find what other passages in the Bible indicate about the same or related subjects. Also consult commentaries to compare what different writers have thought about the passage.

**8. The Application Step.** Steps 1 through 7 have helped you determine what the passage *meant* in its original context. Step 8 shows how we today can apply these principles or truths to our circumstances in the 1990s. That is, step 8 tells us what the passage means *today*.

We need to sense that we are dealing with God's message to us. He has spoken through the prophets because He loves us. Christ and the Spirit have been active

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## God has spoken through the prophets because He loves us.

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in the giving of the message and in its miraculous preservation over many centuries. Now we are to uncover, explain, and share this message, showing God's love and concerns for human salvation.

The eighth chapter of 1 Samuel contains a description of Samuel the prophet (also a priest and judge) meeting a challenge from representatives of the Hebrew tribes. They want to have a king like that of other tribes and nations. Samuel is the go-between as he passes on and explains God's response. He is personally involved, but it is God's message. On a lower level (we are not prophets), Samuel shows what we are to do. We are to discover God's message (through diligent, systematic, and prayerful study), and then we are to explain and pass on God's message. This is a sacred trust! It will require effort and dedication to the Lord, but it will provide personal enrichment and great satisfaction in sharing. Thus Paul says, "*Do your best* to present yourself to God as one . . . who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15, NIV).

### REACT

1. In your own words, explain what is meant by "rightly dividing" (2 Tim. 2:15, KJV) or "correctly handles" (NIV) God's word.

2. What would be an appropriate response or reaction to a brother or sister in the church who is apparently not "rightly dividing" God's word in some way?

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*By Lloyd Willis, chairman of the religion department at Southwestern Adventist College, Keene, Texas.*

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# Multiplying by Division

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: 2 Tim. 2:15**

What is your highest goal in life? To be the best teacher you can be? To be the best friend in the world? To be a good father or mother? Maybe you want a certain job or title.

We are told that “The highest aim of our youth should not be to strain after something novel. There was none of this in the mind and work of Timothy. They should bear in mind that, in the hands of the enemy of all good, knowledge alone may be a power to destroy them. It was a very intellectual being, one who occupied a high position among the angelic throng, that finally became a rebel; and many a mind of superior intellectual attainments is now being led captive by his power.”<sup>1</sup>

We are told that we were made a little lower than the angels (Heb. 2:7). How, then, can we not be deceived by one who was created higher than us? “We are to resist . . . with the same weapon our Master used when assailed by the prince of darkness—‘It is written.’ We should learn to use the Word of God skillfully. The exhortation is, ‘Study to show thyself approved.’”<sup>2</sup>

Many “do not tax the mind, they do not dig for the hidden treasure. Because they

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**“The highest aim of our youth should not be to strain after something novel.”**

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only skim the surface, they gain only that knowledge which is to be found upon the surface.”<sup>3</sup> We should “learn to take the truths that have been revealed, and to handle them in such a way that they will be food for the flock of God. . . . God has spoken in the plainest language upon every subject that affects the salvation of the soul.”<sup>4</sup>

So, what is your highest goal in life? Spiritually speaking, it should not just be to get to heaven, but to take as many people there with you as you can. By “rightly dividing the word of truth,” we can lead others to search the Scriptures for themselves, thus multiplying the knowledge that has been given to us.

“Of some truths the people already have a knowledge. There are some in which they are interested, of which they are ready to learn more. Show them the significance of these truths and their relation to others which they do not understand. Thus you will arouse a desire for greater light. This is ‘rightly dividing the word of truth.’ 2 Timothy 2:15.”<sup>5</sup>

1. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 915.

2. *Evangelism*, p. 625.

3. *Gospel Workers*, p. 93.

4. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 917.

5. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 55.

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*By Dennis Haslam, campus-ministries director and junior biology major, Southwestern Adventist College, Keene, Texas.*

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# Higher-Tech Biotech

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Luke 18:18-27**

The concept of messenger RNA (Ribo Nucleic Acid) was first formulated by Francis Jacob and Jacques Monod in a paper published in 1961.\* It came about because proteins are synthesized in the cytoplasm, rather than in the nucleus of eukaryotic cells. This indicated a chemical intermediate, a messenger, that carries the specifics for protein synthesis from the area of its origin to the site of implementation and protein production. Jacob and Monod termed the intermediate the structural messenger (mRNA). As I think about mRNA, I see a good comparison with the role, requirements, and specifics of *higher messengers*.

### Messenger RNA

(1) It is required to carry information from the nucleus to the site of protein synthesis. (2) It reflects the composition of the DNA that specified it. (3) It is heterogeneous in size because the genes or groups of genes vary in length, size, and function. (4) Its message is clear and exact. (5) Its message is powerful. (6) Its message has the ability to transform. (7) It is faithful, dependable, nonself-serving, and loyal to the code it receives. It can do no other. (8) When its job is completed, it is removed from the system.

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## The Word is just as important today as it was in Paul's time.

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### Higher Messenger

(1) It is useful to conduct messages from the Ultimate Director to those bound by sin. (2) It reflects the traits and characteristics of Him who gives the message to be carried. (3) Christ in each of us is *hope* of glory—we have different needs, we hear via different means, and we understand at different levels. (4) Its message is clear, exact, and unmodified. (5) Its message changes lives. (6) God's message is transforming. (7) Although we have a choice, we must be faithful, dependable, and selfless so that we can carry the message to the entire world. (8) When our job is completed, when we have obtained the character of Christ, He will come to take us home. He will remove us from this present system.

The Word is just as important today as it was in Paul's time. Paul wanted Timothy to obtain the proper armor for warfare, and we should have this too. The Bible is the armory where we may be equipped for the struggle. How can we reprove, unless we know the standard? How can we exhort, unless we know the truth? How can we fulfill our mission, unless we are fit for the duty? We must resist evil with the same weapon our Master used: "It is written." The message will enable us to resist the forces against us!

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\* Jacob, F., et al., *Journal of Molecular Biology*, 3:318-356.

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By Barbara Jones, professor of chemistry at Southwestern Adventist College, Keene, Texas.

# It's All a Matter of Interpretation

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Ps. 90:12**

Any musician can tell you that without interpretation, music sounds lifeless. Mechanics stay in business interpreting the meaning of little “clicking” noises in automobiles. And almost everyone depends on a lawyer to interpret the law for them. Sometimes our very lives depend on a doctor’s making the correct interpretation of the symptoms that are making us sick.

Just as these professionals put time, effort, and study into learning how to interpret things, so we as Christians need a time for study and meditation in order to interpret God’s message to us. This is not always easy, though, especially for students whose full-time occupation is studying. This is why we need to make God’s Word a personal thing. Here are a few ideas that may help you to incorporate the Word into your life:

**1. As you read, try to find specific messages that apply to you personally.** Claim the promises that God gives you, and test Him out.

**2. Find a friend to study with.** You’ll find it strengthens the bond between you and your friend while anchoring you both to the solid Rock. Remember,

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## God isn’t searching only for geniuses or philosophical thinkers.

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“Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Matt. 18:20, NIV).

**3. Put yourself in the action.** While you read, try to imagine your own thoughts or responses if you had been the one directly addressed in the passage.

Remember, God isn’t searching only for geniuses or philosophical thinkers. All He needs is people with open minds and surrendered hearts in order for His plans and desires for us to be understood (correctly interpreted) through study and prayer. Let’s prepare ourselves to make the right interpretation.

## REACT

1. How much, if at all, should we depend on others to help us interpret God’s Word?

2. How can we trust that we are making the right interpretation?

3. How would you respond to someone claiming that the Good News is “old news” and doesn’t mean anything today?

4. Can there be different but correct interpretations of God’s Word?

5. In practical terms, how can a student of the Bible know the difference between humanly inspired and divinely inspired knowledge?

6. How should such knowledge affect one’s relationships with others?

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*By Josh Samaniego, a sophomore elementary-education major at Southwestern Adventist College, Keene, Texas.*

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# Interpretation Skills

## OPINION

**Key Text: 2 Tim. 2:15**

The theme of the lesson this week is pretty straightforward. To be an effective Christian witness for the Lord, you need to know Him and to understand His Word. To know and understand someone, especially your Saviour, you have to spend time with Him. You “hang out” and talk with that person regularly, and, of course, you read every note or letter He sends you. The Bible is a collection of “letters” that God has given to us as a guide to lead us through the diversified learning experience we call life. Understanding God’s messages in His “letters” to us requires thoughtful study.

Some people say that the words of the Bible are outdated and have no relevance to today’s situations. I beg to differ. If we study the meaning behind the words, we will find that the Bible’s messages are very applicable to our everyday situations. The key to understanding what God is saying is to be able to interpret correctly words of long ago to determine the relevance of their message today.

We need to consider several things in order to interpret the words of the Bible correctly. The specific person or people to whom a message was first sent greatly

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## **You would write an account of an event for a 10-year-old boy differently from what you would write for a college professor.**

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impacts the way it was written. Age, background, geographical location, and education of both the writer and the recipient of the message shape the words. You would write an account of an event for a 10-year-old boy differently from what you would write for a college professor.

The time period a message was given also has an effect on how God’s Word was originally presented. The things of importance then, like political situations, would be foremost in the thinking of the people and would be reflected in their letters. Also take into consideration the varied styles in which God’s words are written. Practically the whole book of Psalms was written in poetry or song. That is because the people of that location and time period were deeply influenced by musicians and song writers. To understand the will of God through His Scriptures, readers have to take into consideration the cultural and personal circumstances that influenced the way God’s message came forth.

When we use a contextual and analytical approach to interpreting the words of the Bible, we will come to a clearer understanding of the meaning behind the words. And when we understand God’s plan for us, we can witness more effectively and draw others to Him.

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*By Jameson Francis, a sophomore medical-technology student at Southwestern Adventist College, Keene, Texas.*

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# WHERE'S THE STONE?



**“Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law” (Ps. 119:18, NIV).**

# Is It in the Bag?

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Ps. 1:1, 2**

Please go with me in your mind to an old familiar story. Picture young David on his way to fight his battle with the giant. He steps from King Saul's tent with one purpose in mind, to do the will of the Lord by defeating Goliath. One by one the Israelite soldiers move aside as he makes his way down the hill that separates him from Goliath and the Philistines. He boldly walks toward his enemy, stopping only long enough to check his sling one last time to reassure himself it is in good working order and to make sure his shepherd's bag is fastened securely at his waist.

What a tremendous testimony of confidence and faith he is as he confronts the giant and promises to hand Goliath's head as a trophy to the king of Israel. Suddenly, the enraged giant pushes his helmet back and rushes toward David, growling and vowing to tear him to pieces. David rushes toward Goliath with his eye steadily on his target, the exposed forehead of the giant. With one hand on his sling, David slips his other hand into his shepherd's bag. Suddenly he turns pale. He falters and then stops running to look into his bag. What could be wrong? He

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## David rushes toward Goliath with his eye steadily on his target.

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had the plan. He had the weapon. He had the faith to succeed. Yet he was missing one item in his preparation. He failed to put a rock in his bag!

We know this isn't what really happened to David. He was prepared. But notice that his willingness to do a work for God and even his faith in God was not enough. He had to have something "in his bag!" Many of us are ill-prepared because we fail to spend time in study, prayer, and meditation with God before we step out to meet the day's challenges. It seems so easy to overlook this. After all, we have a plan of action for the day. We have a testimony to give to anyone with whom we may come in contact. We even have faith that God will see us through. But unless we take time to be with God, we will be as unprepared for the day as hapless David was in the story. How many times must I be caught unprepared for Satan's daily assault on my life before I see the need to fill my bag with stones carefully chipped from the Rock of Ages?

This week we examine God's gifts of study, prayer, and meditation. Let's be sure to fill our "shepherd's bag" with the tools we need for our daily struggle.

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*By Keith L. Gray, associate chaplain and senior theology major at Southwestern Adventist College, Keene, Texas.*

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# Who Me, Meditate?

## LOGOS

**Psalm 1; 86; 119; 2 Tim. 2:7**

“Who me, meditate? I’ve got appointments to keep, household chores to do, church responsibilities, a family, not to mention an exercise program to maintain. I can make time for devotions, but meditation—that takes time I can’t find.”

Can you identify with this? In our hectic world, meditation and extended prayer time are arts not practiced much. Some are even suspicious of meditating, believing it is dangerous to open your mind in such a way. The people I know, myself included, are more comfortable with study. Give me something to read and discuss. Meditation is a discipline for which I need more practice. The following scriptures highlight this important aspect of the spiritual life.

### Psalm 1

This psalm serves as an introduction to all the psalms and describes the kind of person who will get the most out of what will follow.<sup>1</sup> This psalm also introduces a method used throughout the psalms, comparing the ways of the righteous with the ways of the wicked. The psalmist also makes it clear what will be the end of the wicked (verses 4, 6).

The distinguishing mark of the righteous is that “his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night” (verse 2, RSV).

*The psalmist says that because the righteous meditates on God’s law, he is fruitful and healthy. Do you think this is literally true? Does it have a spiritual application? How does it relate to witnessing?*

### Psalm 86

This psalm is a prayer of petition. The psalmist is petitioning the Lord for help on two levels. First, he asks for mercy and for forgiveness (verses 5, 6); second, he is asking for protection and deliverance from his enemies (verses 14-17).

Running throughout the psalm is the pattern of request, followed by an acknowledgment of “God’s power, mercy, and forgiveness. The Psalmist further implies that because God delivered him from his personal distress that God will also be able to protect him from his enemies.”<sup>2</sup>

*How is your self-image impacted by this psalm? What does this psalm do for your confidence level as you relate to your social, school, or work scene?*

The psalmist further asks for protection from a “band of ruthless men” (verse 14, NIV). It’s interesting that he doesn’t ask the Lord to smite them, but rather to give him a sign of God’s goodness so his enemies will be shamed (verse 17).

*In everyday terms, how does the principle of shaming God’s enemies play itself out? What does this psalm teach about making supplication to the Lord?*

### Psalm 119

Psalm 119 is not only the longest psalm (176 verses), but it also most clearly lays out the relationship between the law of God and the believer. Every verse mentions the law.

The many references to the law appear to be concerned with the idea of law in



general, that is to say, law as the truth from God.<sup>3</sup> He never talks about the ritual or moral laws specifically. Psalm 119 demonstrates the psalmist's devotion to the law of God. He finds encouragement (verse 28), counsel for life (verse 24), advice for growing up (verse 9), comfort (verse 50), and salvation (verse 166).

Psalms also contain many oft-quoted verses. Read through Psalm 119 and count how many you recognize. Notice the context of these verses.

*How does the context enrich the verse? Are any of the well-known verses from Psalm 119 favorites of yours? If so, why? Identify one or two that relate to a special time in your life.*

## **2 Timothy 2:7**

In this verse Paul admonishes Timothy to reflect what he has just said, but it would be fair to say that this can be taken as a general principle of Bible study.

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## **Psalm 119 lays out the relationship between the law of God and the believer.**

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It is easy merely to read words and not slow down to let the meaning sink in. Even in this study I was tempted not to read all 176 verses of Psalm 119. Have you read them? It is interesting to note what Paul says right after 2 Timothy 2:7. He tells us to remember Jesus. This must be the center and focus of all our reflection.

*Why is it dangerous to meditate without Jesus at the center?*

## **REACT**

1. How can we love the law without turning to legalism?
2. How critical is the length of time spent on good meditation?
3. What dangers may there be in meditation?
4. What role can memorization play in terms of meditation?
5. How will an understanding of the Bible help you in your daily Christian life?
6. When the Bible seems to contradict itself, what should you do?

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1. George Arthur Bottrick, ed., *The Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingden, 1955), vol.

4, pp. 17, 18.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 466.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 623.

# All About the Cross

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Gal. 6:14**

“Let the youth make the word of God the food of mind and soul. Let the cross of Christ be made the science of all education, the center of all teaching and all study. Let it be brought into the daily experience in practical life. So will the Saviour become to the youth a daily companion and friend. Every thought will be brought into captivity with the obedience of Christ. With the apostle Paul they will be able to say: ‘God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world’ ”\*

We don’t think about the cross much today, much less consciously study or dwell on it. Yet we are counseled that we should make the cross the center of our education, and if we do so, it will positively influence the way we think and live. It will put everything into perspective, the perspective our God wants us to have. By focusing on the cross, we can be assured that our minds will be receptive to the things to which God wants us to be open. And we won’t be so easily attracted to the things our enemy uses to distract us.

When we think about something often, when we study it and meditate on it,

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## **We should make the cross the center of our education.**

we can become immersed in it. Our day-to-day lives will show where our thoughts and interests are. We begin to see people in the perspective of how they relate to us and our interests. If Christ’s love and sacrifice, His caring for us, is what we are focusing on, we will be able to reflect that to others. We won’t want to spend our time on trivial matters. We’ll want to tell others about the exciting things we are learning and experiencing, and that is because, most important, we’ll know Christ as a real person and friend, a true personal Saviour. There can’t be anything more exciting than that!

## **REACT**

1. In practical terms, how can one focus on the cross?
2. What does it mean to “boast” (Gal. 6:14, NIV) in the cross?
3. How can a Christian interest a non-Christian in the gospel of such a negative symbol as the cross?
4. What does it mean to make the cross “the center of all teaching and all study”?

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\* *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 460.

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*By Jerry Richard, senior broadcasting-communication major at Southwestern Adventist College, Keene, Texas.*

# Rules, Guidelines, Promises

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Ps. 119:18**

Many of us think of Psalm 119 only as the longest chapter in the Bible. However, it “sets forth the joy and happiness that comes to the man who takes the law of the Lord as his counsel and guide.”<sup>1</sup>

“It is an acrostic psalm, an alphabet of prayers and reflections on the Word of God, giving each Hebrew letter its turn to introduce eight successive verses on the subject. While different thoughts tend to predominate in different stanzas, partly from the stimulus of the alphabetic scheme, they are mingled with others that constantly occur. The mood is meditative, the poet’s preoccupations and circumstances come to light in prayers and exclamations, not marshalled in sequence but dispersed throughout the psalm.”<sup>2</sup>

David uses the word *law* 24 times in this chapter, referring to the Word of God. In all but three verses, the theme is the law, and God is mentioned in every verse. The psalmist exudes happiness in three ways: (1) following God’s way, (2) exhibiting integrity and obedience to God, and (3) letting God capture his will. In saying this, David shows that he is experiencing the ultimate freedom, the freedom

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## David shows that he is experiencing the ultimate freedom.

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that rests in the person who hates and abhors sin and finds peace and pleasure in keeping God’s law. He uses the following descriptions of his relationship with God’s law: I “love” it (verse 163, NIV), “will keep” it (verse 34), “will not forget” it (verse 61), consider it “true” (verse 142), and “delight” in it (verse 70).

Our key text states, “Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law” (Ps. 119:18). In today’s world, so many people look at God’s law with blinded eyes and interpret it as only a set of rules. These people are chained to sin, and sin limits their options drastically because they have very few things they want to do, and many things they don’t want to do. As our thoughts and desires move in the Lord’s direction, these rules become guidelines. And when, as the psalmist says in verse 18, we see the wondrous things in His law, His law becomes promises and gives us the unlimited freedom to experience and express His will.

## REACT

1. What does it take to open one’s eyes to the law?
2. How can one perceive the law as promises in one’s life?
3. How would you describe David’s “walk with God”?

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1. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 896.

2. Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150, A Commentary* (London: InterVarsity Press, 1975), p. 417.

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*By Thomas G. Bunch, vice-president for academic affairs, dean of students, Southwestern Adventist College, Keene, Texas.*

# What's Missing?

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: John 10:27**

I have often thought how much easier it must have been for the children of Israel to keep their relationship with God active because He was with them continuously, in the cloud and the pillar of fire. As I once sat in one of our college's weekly assemblies, however, I realized I was missing the key element in my devotional life. The speaker said that we need to take time to listen to the voice in our head, for it is the Holy Spirit speaking to us. The more we take time to listen, the more in tune we'll become to God's leading. I realized that devotional time consisted of more than just reading a favorite Bible verse, saying a short prayer, and then continuing on with the day. Here are some suggestions:

**1. Listen to God speaking to you.** God still speaks to us individually in the same way He did to the children of Israel. He sends the Holy Spirit to speak to us in our minds, and the more we become in tune with Him, the more we will recognize His voice. So many times we ask for God's will, yet refuse to listen to His

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## God still speaks to us individually in the same way He did to the children of Israel.

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answers. When we take the time truly to listen, we can feel truly fulfilled.

**2. Take time to pray and meditate.** How can we expect to hear God's voice unless we spend quiet time with Him? It is difficult to carry on a conversation with a friend when constant noise or activity is going on around you. It is also difficult to talk to a friend who isn't listening; prayer needs to be a two-way conversation. We live in a world that operates 24 hours a day, and quiet time is difficult to find. Search for a time in your day when you can meditate, like driving in your car, getting ready in the morning, or turning off the music or TV. Look forward to meditation time with God as an uncompromised and personal time to spend with a friend.

**3. Learn how to study the Bible and not just read it.** We can still gain biblical answers for today's problems through Bible study. A college friend told me he had difficulty knowing how to study the Bible in such a way that he would discover new knowledge and gain a blessing. We really need to learn how to study the Bible by finding out about the author of the book, who he was writing to or about, what his message is, and how we can draw parallels from it and apply it to our lives.

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*By Kerri Bowen, a junior social-science/religion/secondary-education major at Southwestern Adventist College, Keene, Texas.*

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# Pass or Fail

## OPINION

**Key Text: Ps. 18:28**

Have you ever come to the day of a big exam, realizing you had forgotten to study? So you prayed really hard: “Lord, please help me to do well on this test that I know nothing about!”

Chances are, you probably didn’t do so well. And how often have you crammed as much information into your head as you could the night before a test so that in the morning you could regurgitate it as quickly as possible before you forgot everything, and you “aced” it? But how long were you able to remember the material and apply it to your life? A week? Maybe two?

In the same way that you can’t expect to pass a difficult subject without studying, neither can you expect to know God without spending time with Him. It is important to realize that in order to develop a close relationship with Christ, prayer is indeed important, but it is not everything. The Bible is one of the key ways God communicates with us. Although prayer strengthens our relationship with God, it cannot possibly give us full insight into His character.

A teacher once asked my class whether we thought the Bible was the most

**You could become a biblical scholar, but if you don’t apply it to your life, you will have gained nothing.**

important book we possessed. We immediately answered yes.

“Then why don’t more of us read it?” he responded. All the typical excuses came to my mind: too difficult, too boring, not enough time . . .

When we try to read the Bible using only our own reason, we oftentimes fall short, and we find it difficult to understand. That is why it is so important to pray first that our eyes will be opened to the truth. Psalm 18:28 tells us that the Lord our God will enlighten our darkness. He will cast a light on what we are not able to understand on our own. But He can’t do this unless we open the Word with a willingness and desire to learn.

You could become a biblical scholar, but if you do not meditate and reflect on what you have learned in order to take it to heart and apply it to your life, you will have gained nothing. To receive the maximum blessings the Bible has to offer, diligent study must also be accompanied by prayer and meditation.

Don’t you think the most important book in the world deserves to be read and understood? The information it contains will surely help you pass the tests of this world with flying colors.

*By Meredith Church, a senior biology major, Southwestern Adventist College, Keene, Texas.*

# OF POETRY AND PARABLES



**“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph. 4:22-24, NIV).**

# Essays, Midterms, and Homework

## INTRODUCTION

Scripture: 1 Cor. 12:4-7

I sat at the desk with my eyes half glazed over, staring at the page, motionless. How long had I been there? Why in all that time hadn't I flipped the page? Why was a spider web running from the tip of my nose to the spine of the book in front of me? It was one o'clock. I knew that much because a clock had chimed somewhere in the dark room. The glow from the desk light chained me to the chair, not unlike a deer caught in the headlights of an oncoming car. Tomorrow was the big midterm test; that was about the only thing I could remember. By two o'clock the words on the page seemed to take on a life of their own. They weaved and bobbed and intertwined themselves until they formed one mass globule. My mind focused on it as if it were an ink blot, like those used in psychological testing. What was that? An "F"? I shuddered. Perhaps it was time to close the book and seek the solace of a warm comforter.

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God gives us many gifts. Our methods of learning can be equally diverse. Some learn best when lectured to, others when reading a book, while others still

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## Why was a spider web running from the tip of my nose to the spine of the book?

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may need a more hands-on approach. Unfortunately, in many cases we are forced to learn in a certain method because of circumstances—300 people in one class, for instance! And so we stumble along, perhaps only partially learning, forced into more sleepless study sessions.

If anyone understands, it is God. After all, He made us with different learning styles, and He did declare his creation "good." Therefore, when we pick up the Bible, the Lord presents truths to us through many different forms: parables, poetry, prophecy, and history among them.

Why was the life of Christ written in the Bible by four authors? Did Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John approach the subject in the same way? Could it be that this time in history was so important that God wanted everyone to understand the life of Christ and His ultimate sacrifice?

Let us remember that Jesus spoke in parables and prophecy so that His listeners might understand Him. He did not instruct in only one way, expecting all to relate. As Christians, how can we apply this lesson in our daily lives when relating to the people around us?

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*By David Jakovac, a third-year health-and-fitness student at the University of British Columbia at Vancouver.*

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# The Six-Million-Dollar Man

## LOGOS

**Mark 4:10-12; Matthew 24**

When I was a “12-ager,” “The Six-Million-Dollar Man” was a TV show in which, after an accident, Steve Austin had been rebuilt with bionic arms, an eye, legs, etc. This bionic man could lift cars, see like an eagle, and run up to 60 miles an hour. The show was so interesting that kids would run around mimicking this TV hero. We even tried to copy the sound of his bionics. It was as if we were taking into ourselves the thoughts, feelings, actions, and identity of this six-million-dollar man. His life became ours.

In a more real way the life of Christ is ours by the fact that God put us into Him (1 Cor. 1:30). He rebuilt our life not just with new arms, eyes, and legs, but with a completely new life (2 Cor. 5:14-17). Christ’s history is ours; His birth, life, death, resurrection, and ministry are ours (Eph. 1:3-12). This is the greatest thing that could happen to us! The life of faith, then, is not simply having our body rebuilt like Steve Austin’s, but embracing the fact that Christ’s rebuilding means that He has replaced your life with His (Eph. 2:4-10).

Just as I tried to mimic Steve Austin, the more I fill my thoughts with the Bible, the more I relive the life of Christ. The *parables* of Christ capture our imagination and allow God to appeal to us subconsciously. The *poetry* of Christ teaches us how to pray, meditate, and sing, allowing us to express human emotions in a godly way. The *prophecy* of Christ confirms our faith in advance, showing God’s “omniness.” The *history* of Christ shows the folly of unbelief and the foolishness of the gospel that makes the heart glad. All four types of literature in God’s Word show us the hell of believing Satan and the bliss of being rebuilt in Christ. All that is Christ’s captures our hearts, giving us the thrill of reliving His agape love.

### Parables

All of us like parables (stories with a point). Uncle Arthur, Sam Campbell, June Strong, *The Bible Stories*. Christ knew that spiritual truth is best applied to life when it is linked to a story. One Bible writer even went as far as to say that Christ didn’t even teach without telling stories with a point (Mark 4:34). Parables capture the imagination.

Christ’s story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37) grips us as we relive it each day. Am I the priest, Levite, Samaritan, or victim? Is the need of someone crying out to me? If I don’t have the compassion to stop and care, where do I receive that divine quality? Looking to Christ as He comes from heaven for every person unlocks the door to this profound parable. It captures our hearts.

### Poetry

No, poetry is not only for sentimental ladies, dating couples, or other right-brained people who write steamy lines beginning, “Roses are red; violets are blue.” Christ didn’t create us as mere computers to store, recall, and print. Christ has deep, personal feelings. He asked tough questions and lived all of life.

Poetry is not a “thus saith the Lord,” as Jeremiah or Ezekiel might pronounce. It is the cry of Lamentations and the sorrow of Job. It is the obedience encapsulated in Solomon’s wisdom. It is the passionate cry of David for help against



his enemies. And Christ's poetry in the Song of Solomon teaches us how to love intimately. Christ desired the whole spectrum of human emotions to be expressed in numerous forms. Therefore, He inspired and lived poetry.

Think of Christ's life—He cried, He sang, He wept, He rejoiced, He rebuked, He comforted, He prayed, He commanded, He embodied the whole of human experience. With nothing or no one to comfort you or give you hope, can't you hear yourself in Him crying out in poetic echoes, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Ps. 22:1, NIV; Matt. 27:46). To live truly is to relive the spectrum of Christ's emotions through poetry.

### **Prophecy**

For good reason, Adventists have specialized in the prophetic category of Scripture. Not unlike the parables, poetry, and history, prophecy calls us to relive Christ's life. How will you treat the police officer who cites you for leaf-raking on Sunday? Will Christ's treatment of the mob in the garden be reflected in your behavior? What kind of force will you use when you plead with your unbelieving relatives to follow Christ and His rest—the Sabbath (Matt. 11:28; Hebrews 4) and not Satan's false rest (Dan. 7:25)? By telling us in advance, Christ enables us

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## **The prophecy of Christ confirms our faith in advance, showing God's "omni-ness."**

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to implant His Word firmly in our hearts so we will not fall for Satan's garbage.

### **History**

Some like history; some can't stand the facts, figures, dates, years, and names. What do you learn from history? Have you discovered Christ in history 101? Unfortunately, Satan's character is seen too much in history! Unlike many other books, the Bible gives the true, objective account of what happened. History might be told from varying perspectives, but Scripture shows clearly how God does not manipulate but redeems history.

Do you have skeletons in your history closets? I do. What are we supposed to do about the nonsense of our lives? What did people like Adam, Moses, David, Mary, Paul, and Ellen White do with their past histories?

God has redeemed and rebuilt human history in His Son—Jesus Christ. Any good we can ever think, perform, or dream has been realized in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This historical Word is so good that Paul calls us "holy and unblameable and unproveable in his [God's] sight" (Col. 1:22). God looks at us as if we "had not sinned." That is almost beyond belief, yet by faith Christ's life history is ours! That thought can make us dance and sing! We might feel like a million dollars, maybe even six!

Parables, Poetry, Prophecy, and History are waiting to be rebuilt in you. Begin to experience them and record them in a journal so they can comfort you when faith becomes thin!

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\* *Steps to Christ*, p. 62.

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*By Don Anderson, young-adult pastor in the Vancouver (British Columbia) Central Church.*

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# Not Exactly an Owner's Manual

## TESTIMONY

**Key Texts:** Ps. 113:2, 3; 116:1-8

God's most consistent tool for our introduction to His character and a lifestyle of love is the Bible. The purpose of the Bible has never been analogous to that of an automobile owner's guide; that could have been done more effectively in a more concise and simplified document. The purpose of the Bible is to provide us with a way to know God personally. "Man, created for fellowship with God, can only in such fellowship find his real life and development. Created to find in God his highest joy, he can find in nothing else that which can quiet the cravings of the heart, can satisfy the hunger and thirst of the soul. He who with sincere and teachable spirit studies God's word, seeking to comprehend its truths, will be brought in touch with its Author; and, except by his own choice, there is no limit to the possibilities of his development."<sup>1</sup> We must be careful in defining our concept of Bible study not to over-simplify our goals and then miss the substance of our study. We may find all the things in the Bible that lead to a better lifestyle, thus exhausting the owner's-guide analogy, and still Satan keeps us from knowing God and gaining love and eternal life.

Out of pure love and knowledge that the path to understanding His character

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## **God has placed in His Book poetry and song to lift our spirits and give us strength.**

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would be filled with adversity, God has placed in His Book poetry and song to lift our spirits and give us strength. "With a song, Jesus in His earthly life met temptation. Often when sharp, stinging words were spoken, often when the atmosphere about Him was heavy with gloom, with dissatisfaction, distrust, or oppressive fear, was heard His song of faith and holy cheer."<sup>2</sup> Mrs. White then goes on to state that it was with His voice lifted in the psalm (113:2, 3; 116:1-8) that He went out to meet His betrayal and death.

In the parables Jesus revealed the nature of God more than anywhere else. "That we might become acquainted with His divine character and life, Christ took our nature and dwelt among us. Divinity was revealed in humanity; the invisible glory in the visible human form. Men could learn of the unknown through the known; heavenly things were revealed through the earthly; God was made manifest in the likeness of men. So it was in Christ's teaching: the unknown was illustrated by the known."<sup>3</sup> With great patience and understanding, Christ taught us of His Word through the lessons of our own.

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1. *Education*, pp. 124, 125.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 166.

3. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 17.

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*By Tim Pratt, math and computer teacher, Deer Lake Junior Academy, Burnaby, British Columbia.*

# The Attitudes of Your Mind

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Eph. 4:22-24**

Ephesians 4:22-24 is preceded by an attempt by Paul to demonstrate how worldly life is naturally incompatible with Christianity. He paints a picture of two aspects of life. There is the “former [corrupted] way of life” (verse 22, NIV) before the encounter with the encompassing love of Jesus Christ. We realize Paul’s concern and admonition. He refers to “the old man” (verse 22, KJV; see also Rom. 6:6) and emphatically points out that it must die for true conversion to occur. This argument of Paul goes on in Romans 7:5, in which the equivalent of the old self is referred to as the “flesh,” and he says the fruits of the flesh are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, envy, murder, and many more (Gal. 5:19-21). Therefore, “the old man” and “the flesh” are used as equivalents of a person who is not born again, a person still under the rulership of Satan. To be thus minded and lust for things of the flesh leads to eternal death (Rom. 8:5-8).

Paul shows that there is yet hope for “the old man.” By the work of the Holy Spirit in the new birth, “the old man” may be made new again.\* This is possible only in the saving power of our Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:12, 13) because, as Paul writes, if you are in Christ, you are a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). Your mind is no

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## When we are born again, we receive the attitude of Christ.

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longer under Satan’s rulership but is free to choose to do right. Jesus says everyone who sins is a slave to sin (John 8:34). Therefore, sin is a hard master whom the unconverted serve. They need to be set free because they are captives. Reading His first text in the Nazareth synagogue, Jesus said, “The spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind” (Luke 4:18, NIV).

In short, when we are born again, we receive a new heart, a new mind, which can have the attitude of Christ. This change must not be superficial or pretentious. “The old man,” trained and used by Satan, becomes a carnal mind, and it has to die, never to return to the old sinful life. Returning to the old and sinful life is folly, in much the same way that a dog returns to its vomit (Ps. 26:11; 2 Pet. 2:22).

## REACT

1. In the context of the many social problems of today, how can we be made new in the attitudes of our minds?
2. If old tendencies do not end at baptism, what is wrong in the life?

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\* *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1027.

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*By Pharaoh Collins Sianangrana, a doctoral student from the University of British Columbia at Vancouver.*

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# A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words

## HOW-TO

**Key Text:** Heb. 12:1

Almost everything in the Bible has a deeper meaning. Old Testament Israel's escapades in the wilderness are a typology of end times; even the sacrificial system is one complex symbol of salvation through Christ. The New Testament contains the parables of Jesus, symbolism in Revelation, and a challenge to run the metaphorical heavenward race (Heb. 12:1). Even Jesus' miracles had an underlying message, e.g., we often think of Jesus' calming the raging storm as hope that He will calm the storms in our life (Matt. 8:23-27). Jesus realized the power of parables. He knows how a parable can roll around in your mind until the meaning buds and insight gradually blossoms to yield a fruit for Him. He knows that "often His lessons seemed to be almost forgotten. But under the influence of the Holy Spirit these truths were afterward revived with distinctness." Here are some steps toward understanding and applying Jesus' parables in our Christian walk.

**1. Picture the scenario.** Think of what is happening on a superficial level; e.g., in the parable of the sower (Mark 4:1-20), imagine what it would be like to

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## Almost everything in the Bible has a deeper meaning.

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scatter seed. Ultimately, the farmer's goal in sowing seed is to reap a harvest. As the parable describes how the seed grows, ask yourself what is needed for seed to develop into a fruitful crop, e.g., water, sunlight, good soil, enough room, maybe occasional fertilizer. How would the farmer feel about his harvest?

**2. Put on your spiritual 3-D spectacles.** When studying poetry, we are taught to read between the lines to pick up any symbolism. Similarly, with parables you need spiritual 3-D glasses from the Holy Spirit to see past the obvious into another dimension, i.e., to uncover the spiritual meaning. In the parable of the sower, the gospel is preached everywhere to produce a harvest of righteous souls (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43). Compare what is needed for seed to develop into a fruitful crop with what is needed for a person to progress from hearing the gospel to developing into a sanctified Christian. What can hinder spiritual growth?

**3. Relate.** After understanding the message, ask yourself, "What does this mean to my life? Is this parable aimed at someone like me?" For instance, what kind of soil are you? How should you respond? Apply the new insight in your daily life to bear fruit for the Lord (2 Pet. 1:8; John 15:2).

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\* *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 368, 369.



# A Share of the Blame

## OPINION

**Key Text: John 8:31, 32, 47**

The Bible is generally ignored by people my age because youthfulness allows us to postpone contemplation of our own mortality or meaning. Recently we have arrived at a point at which the trivialization and secularization of religion and the Holy Scripture has reached a certain critical mass.

Most of those exposed to Western thought have experienced the suggestion that religion is no longer the playground of the educated but the war zone of the zealot or fundamentalist. The Bible is no longer a preferred source of history, literature, poetry, instruction, or even morality.

Has the loss of appeal in Holy Scripture occurred because of the incessant attacks of atheists, the unfailing criticisms of the liberal humanists, the unrelenting progression of apathy that has crept over the Western world, the creation of a secular society, or . . . ?

Is it possible that Judeo-Christians must share in the blame for the trend? Perhaps it is ignored if not feared because interpretation of the Bible is responsible

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## Is it possible that Judeo-Christians must share in the blame for the trend?

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for so much conflict and disunity. Its instruction and prophecy have been so confused by its interpreters that the average person parallels its study to dancing in a mine field, and its alleged suggestion that Christians have a monopoly on salvation does nothing to promote the acceptance of religious and cultural plurality that modern society demands.

In an effort to respond to biblical apathy and appear more in sync with pluralistic trends, will we admit that much of it is only culturally relevant, erode the divinity of Jesus, and suggest that Old Testament miracles are more likely explainable by natural phenomena? Or will we attempt to maintain the allegedly conservative, Western, male interpretation of the Bible in an attempt to preserve the Holy Scriptures from the decay of modern thought? Are the crises facing the Holy Scriptures today a reflection that: (1) the Bible is going extinct; (2) our interpretation of it is out-of-touch; or (3) the degeneration of modern society has simply put God out of its reach?

Biblical literature is full of paradox and variety. Contrast the example of God's patience with David with the apparent intolerance shown Uzzah; the religions of Esther with that of Paul. Should this indicate to us that the Bible, its interpretations, and its God, are ever fluid? The Bible was written in accessible language by accessible people inspired by what we believe to be a perpetually accessible God. What have we done today?

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*By R. Lee Buckler, a third-year law student at the University of British Columbia at Vancouver.*

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# WHEN GOD PULLS YOU OVER



“They are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24, NRSV).

# What Grace Means to Brian

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Rom. 3:24**

Blue lights flashed and forced us over, the bus I was driving and the one following us. The police officer got out of his cruiser and for a few moments boarded the bus behind us, then followed Susan, its driver, to my door.

“Where is Mike!” Susan demanded, her eyes flashing. “He just mooned me through your back window!”

“Someone mooned you?” I repeated in astonishment.

“Where is he?” She shouted even louder and walked down the aisle of my bus. “I’ve got a cop out here to haul him off!” The officer waited at the bottom step of my bus.

I looked up into my large student mirror. Nobody named Mike rode my bus, but Brian did. And as much as I liked him, he always made trouble. The first time I had driven this route, Brian slashed my back seat, called me foul names, and scribbled profanity on the windows. Then, when I pulled the bus over to confront him, he escaped through the emergency exit.

I’d tried to develop a friendship with him after that. I didn’t want trouble, and I always spoke kindly to him, though I always noted exactly where he sat. Today

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## **“Where is Mike!” Susan demanded, her eyes flashing.**

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he had chosen the very back seat as usual, but had apparently moved to a place in the middle of the bus.

We barely made eye contact. He looked scared. I needed only to point him out, and the police officer would haul him away. Brian’s face was white as chalk. He knew his fate rested in my hands.

“Susan,” I said slowly, “nobody named Mike rides this bus.”

“Well, I’ve got ten kids on my bus who say Mike did it!” Susan screamed. “When I find him, he will pay!”

With that, Susan stomped off. I closed the doors and drove away from the curb. Down the road, I looked at Brian again through the mirror. He stared back blankly. He’d never experienced grace before, and he could not fathom it now.

Grace stuns me sometimes too. I’m astounded to know that Jesus protects me when Satan would damn me. I deserve death, but Jesus gives me life.

Amazingly, after his day of mercy, Brian never abused my bus rules again. Grace did that to him. It showed him that his grace-giver cared for him and would protect him. He accepted and respected me after that. We became like family.

The apostle Paul frequently refers to grace as God’s eternal gift. He explains that the crucifixion epitomizes that gift, and without it, we would be pulled off that bus ride to heaven and be hauled off to hell.

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*By Tami Jackson Latsha, who is a freelance writer in the Auburn, Washington, area.*

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# Death or Life?

## LOGOS

**John 1:14-16; Rom. 3:24; Gal. 3:18; Eph. 2:8-10**

It began like any other traffic jam—cars backing up, a few cars pulled over, a policeman directing traffic. I commented to my son about the extra time this would take; we were already running late. As we approached the officer, we noticed a bundle of something lying in the middle of the road, perhaps fallen off a pickup truck. Then we saw it—shoes on the road, clothing, and lots of blood. The bundle in the road was a person, and the person was dead, obviously run over.

Death is not pretty. Even the word has a permanent ring that strikes terror in many hearts. A dead person has no strength, no ability to do anything. A dead person cannot help anyone, especially himself. A dead person has no energy, no wisdom, no feelings—no life!

“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world. . . . All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath” (Eph. 2:1-3, NIV).

### The Bad News . . .

“There is no one righteous, not even one” (Rom. 3:10). “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6). Even the best we have to offer—our righteous acts—are filthy, worthless! Why?

Jesus stated: “Apart from me, *you can do nothing*” (John 15:5, emphasis supplied). The bad news is we are all hopeless sinners. We do not have within ourselves the power to do anything good or to change ourselves. We are dead spiritually, which, if it is left uncorrected, will lead to permanent physical death (sometimes referred to as the second death).

### The Good News . . .

“Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions. . . . For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Eph. 2:4, 5, 8-10).

Let’s examine this passage, phrase by phrase, to see what we can learn about life.

1. “*God . . . made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgression.*”

- We all begin at the same point, dead in transgression. As dead people, we have *nothing* except a corpse to offer for God to transform.

- Death is no problem for God. Using God’s power, Jesus cured death several times. He voluntarily died and rose again, giving death a resounding and permanent defeat. Death no longer is an incurable condition!

- Making someone alive is God’s act, not ours.



● God makes us alive with Christ. Only as we abide in Christ, focus on Him, and continually draw life from Him (by spending time with Him), will we stay alive.

2. *“Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy . . .”*

● Because God loves us, He acts on our behalf, giving us life!

● God is rich in mercy! “[The Lord] is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9).

● God gives us life, not because we deserve it or because we are good enough (how good can a dead person be?), but because we need it.

3. *“For it is by grace you have been saved”*

● The grace of God is our only hope of salvation.

● Grace is defined in the first part of this passage: God gave us life because of His love, His mercy, and our need!

4. *“Through faith—and this not from yourselves”*

● We receive grace through faith (trust) in Jesus. Faith is admitting our need, believing God’s Word, and accepting His power to give us life.

● Even faith is not from within ourselves; it is given to us as part of this gift of life.

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## **We noticed a bundle of something lying in the middle of the road.**

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● Faith (trust) grows as we become better acquainted with Jesus (the object of our trust) through spending time with Him daily.

5. *“It is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast”*

● A gift is not earned, but received. The gift is given because we need it and because God loves us. It comes complete; we cannot change it or improve on it!

● The gift cannot be gained through human works. A dead person cannot do any good works; there are no possibilities! *After* we have received life the possibilities are endless.

● A gift implies coming into the presence of the gift-giver to receive it. It implies making a choice—to come regularly into His presence saying yes or no.

Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; *he has crossed over from death to life*” (John 5:24, italics supplied).

Grace is a life-and-death matter. Grace is the gift of life that Jesus offers us, not because we deserve it, but because He loves us and we need it. God’s grace is our only hope!

### **REACT**

1. How has death shown itself in your life? How has Jesus’ grace dealt with that death?

2. What can you do to be sure you will stay alive spiritually?

3. In your own words explain what is meant by the expression “objects of wrath” (Eph. 2:3)?

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*By Thure Martinsen, associate pastor, Auburn (Washington) Adventist Academy Church, and chaplain, Auburn Adventist Academy.*

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# When God Pulls You Over

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Rom. 3:20-24**

A young man, pulled over for speeding, says he didn't mean to drive too fast. The police officer explains that she must cite him anyway because the law has been broken.

"Those who flatter themselves that He is too merciful to execute justice upon the sinner, have only to look to the cross of Calvary. The death of the spotless Son of God testifies that 'the wages of sin is death,' that every violation of God's law must receive its just retribution. Christ the sinless became sin for man. He bore the guilt of transgression, and the hiding of His Father's face, until His heart was broken and His life crushed out. All this sacrifice was made that sinners might be redeemed. In no other way could man be freed from the penalty of sin. And every soul that refuses to become a partaker of the atonement provided at such a cost must bear in his own person the guilt and punishment of transgression."<sup>1</sup>

"You cannot atone for your past sins; you cannot change your heart, and make yourself holy. But God promises to do all this for you through Christ. You *believe*

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## The officer asks the judge to enter the citation on her record instead of the driver's.

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that promise. You confess your sins, and give yourself to God. You *will* to serve Him. Just as surely as you do this, God will fulfill His word to you."<sup>2</sup>

The officer asks the judge to enter the citation on her record instead of the driver's. She requests any future tickets be transferred too (a tremendous gesture, considering the driver's record). The driver receives an insurance rebate for apparently being such a good driver. The officer even lands him a job at driver's training school, where she is a supervisor!

"None are so sinful that they cannot find strength, purity, and righteousness in Jesus, who died for them. He is waiting to strip them of their garments stained and polluted with sin, and to put upon them the white robes of righteousness."<sup>3</sup>

*Grace . . . it's amazing!*

## REACT

1. Does being sorry play a part in redemption? If so, how?
2. What is the difference, if any, between grace and forgiveness?

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1. *The Great Controversy*, pp. 539, 540.

2. *Steps to Christ*, p. 51.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

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By John R. Pendley, director of Washington Youth in Action, Auburn (Washington) Adventist Academy.

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# Grace and Melted Ice Cream

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Rom. 6:1, 2**

Nobody really likes classes at 8:00 a.m. I guess that is why I don't remember as much as I should from my college physical-chemistry course. Most of it got lost in that early-morning brain fog. One of the few things I remember is the second law of thermodynamics.

In case you've forgotten, thermodynamics is the study of how heat moves. One law of thermodynamics states: "It is impossible for any device to operate in such a manner that it produces no effect other than the transfer of heat from one body to another body at a higher temperature," or in English, "You can't heat the kitchen with ice cream."

This is a law you can't disobey. You can try until the cows have come home, cooked supper, and gone to bed, but you won't be able to build a machine that pumps heat out of a quart of "rocky road" to warm your breakfast nook.

And now for something completely different. Well, maybe not. Try this: "Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?" (Rom. 6:1, 2, NIV).

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## "You can't heat the kitchen with ice cream."

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Don't recognize it? That's a statement of the first law of grace. "Now, just hold on," you say. "Grace means that we don't have to slave away, keeping any law to be saved."

You're right, of course. But so am I. The first law of grace, just like the law of thermodynamics, is a fact with inescapable consequences. You can't disobey it. Just as the second law prevents you from warming yourself with sherbet, the law of grace prevents you from being the same old person you were before you accepted God's gift of grace. If you've accepted that gift, you've died to sin, and it won't be possible for you to live that way anymore. That's the consequence of the law of grace, and it's better than melted ice cream.

It's good news because the law of grace is not about what you do to get grace but about what you do when you have it. Ironically enough, the law of grace is not about law at all, but about freedom from sin.

Grace. It's not just a good idea. It's the law.

## REACT

1. How does the concept of grace as a law affect your thinking of it?
2. How does Romans 3:25, 26 relate to the subject of grace as a sort of natural law?
3. Why is it such a battle for some people to accept God's free gift of grace?

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*By Byron Kneller, a graduate chemistry student at the University of Washington at Seattle.*

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# Birthdays and Grace

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Rom. 3:24**

Ever stopped and thought about what Romans 3:24 means to you personally? No matter what your background, God promises that His grace proves sufficient to save you (2 Cor. 12:9). Still, if it's that simple, why do some of us struggle with our spiritual life? "By grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8, NIV).

When your birthday arrives each year, do you ask, "What did I do to deserve these gifts?" Salvation is like a birthday! The moment Jesus died on the cross, He paid for your salvation. Likewise, at your birth, and each year thereafter on your birthday, you receive gifts. Your only birthday obligation is to accept the presents graciously. You might stumble along throughout the year, but when your birthday comes, those gifts will still come.

God gives you something infinitely better than any physical gift. He offers eternity with Him in heaven. The best thing about grace is that it has been paid

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## **The best thing about grace is that it has been paid for already!**

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for already! All you must do is accept it and let God do the rest. Just like your birthday presents, God's grace remains free. No matter how hard you try, you'll never be good enough to deserve grace.

After calling Matthew into discipleship, Jesus was eating at his house with many sinners. "When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and "sinners"?' On hearing this, Jesus said, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.'" (Matt. 9:11, 12). Then in verse 13 He says, "For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

We were all born sinners, completely helpless on our own. But Christ paid for every sin we committed or will commit. It remains our job to ask His forgiveness, invite Him into our lives, and accept His grace. Jesus says, "I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in" (Rev. 3:20, NKJV).

Is God's grace sufficient for you? Go answer the door and find out.



# God the Quarterback

## OPINION

**Key Text: Phil. 4:13**

Grace is odd. It's free, yet it's costly. It's given to everyone, yet it must be accepted personally. It's a straightforward gift from God, yet we humans cannot seem to accept it at face value.

No wonder I (and maybe you too?) often have a difficult time getting a grasp on living in grace. I think my difficulties in living the grace-filled life arise because I am not used to accepting something so undeserved. I am just not an accomplished grace receiver—yet.

In American football, it's well established that being a good receiver takes practice. Just ask Jerry Rice or the legendary Steve Largent. I am sure it took commitment and practice before carrying the football became second nature to them. Maybe the same is true with grace.

Picture God as the benevolent quarterback. Grace is the football. It does not matter whether you run the pattern right or get off the line slowly. God's grace is ready to be caught wherever you are. Sometimes you catch it and run straight into a linebacker. Occasionally you fumble and don't recover immediately. Often you don't catch it at all.

The wonderful part is that God promises each of us an infinite number of

## **It's not surprising that we humans have difficulty with such a divine concept.**

catchable balls. All we must do is continue receiving—keep trying to wrap our hands around the ball and hold on. By our willingness to continue receiving grace, even when we falter or fail, we allow God to be victorious through us. Yes, it takes a little practice and a little patience—with ourselves, that is. But with God as our quarterback, we are guaranteed victory in living the grace-filled life.

So do not give up on grace or on the new life that it promises. It's not surprising that we humans have difficulty with such a divine concept. Remember the promise "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). That includes taking hold and accepting the gift of grace. It's there for the taking. All we have to do is to keep on receiving and hold on to the ball.

## **REACT**

1. What is the manifestation of God's grace in my life?
2. How well am I doing at living a grace-filled life?
3. In what specific ways can we evaluate how we have received grace in our lives?
4. As a receiver of God's grace, how should I endeavor to treat others—even those who frustrate or irritate me?

*By Amy Worrell Kneller, director of development, Auburn (Washington) Adventist Academy.*

# THE TREE OF GRACE



**“Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved” (Eph. 2:4, 5, NKJV).**

# Sacrificed

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Eph. 2:4-8**

A beautiful orchard once grew near a small village. It was the pride and joy of the whole neighborhood. Visitors made pilgrimages to admire it. Its fruits won untold prizes at the fairs. It was the best orchard for hundreds of miles around, but this orchard was not always like that.

Many years earlier, it had had no beauty. Every day the sun beat mercilessly down on the small valley in which it grew and almost parched it. The soil was so infertile that most of the trees wilted and died. The ones that survived were stunted and yellow from lack of water, and there was no stream nearby.

One day a villager noticed an outstandingly healthy fruit tree standing on a small slope. Its fruits were the best he had ever seen or tasted. Before long, the little community, too, began to notice the distinct qualities of its fruits. They wondered why this tree was different. Then someone suggested that if they could dis-

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## **Its fruits were the best he had ever seen or tasted.**

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cover the tree's secret to its success, perhaps they could make the other trees become like it too.

The people of the village began to study the tree and carried out surveys of the area around it. They soon discovered the presence of water in the soil where the tree grew. If only they could get more of this water! The only way to do this, of course, was to dig a well in the exact spot where their favorite tree stood, and this meant digging up the tree. An underground stream supplied the water through a small fissure in the rock directly under the tree. This saddened them very much, but in the end, they decided it was the only way.

As the much-favored tree lay bleaching in the sun, the life-giving water coursed through the irrigation channels, seeping through the soil and giving life to the other trees. As time went on, the land took new form. Lush vegetation sprang up everywhere, and the trees began to grow, resembling the tree that had given its life.

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*By Kevin Sese, an education student at Pacific Adventist College, Boroko, Papua New Guinea.*

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# The Ultimate Peace Child

## LOGOS

### Eph. 2:1-22

Tribal war and bloodshed were a way of life in my society. From a very early age, the best warriors of the clan taught each young boy the deadly skills of tribal warfare, packing generations of hatred into his growing mind. In such a society, restoring peace was a painful and costly exercise. In the western part of New Guinea, the exchange of a baby purchased peace between the warring tribes. These tribes called the exchanged baby “peace child.” “Peace child” reconciled the warring clans to each other.<sup>1</sup>

Christ was God’s “Peace Child.” Through Him, God removed hostility and reconciled humanity to Himself. We are no longer aliens and strangers but citizens, members of God’s universal family.

### Objects of God’s Wrath (Eph. 2:1-3)

To help the Ephesians better appreciate God’s gift, Paul reminds them of their former sinful condition. The Ephesians were famous for their worship of the Roman goddess Diana (Artemis). The rituals observed in this worship were morally disgusting. Lustful desires enslaved the participants. They were helpless, for their culture programmed them to obey “the spiritual powers” (verse 2, TEV) that were in control of their lives.

Paul identifies himself with the Ephesians in their former condition (verse 3), not because he once engaged in their lustful practices, but because all men are born sinners. Black or white, rich or poor, educated or ignorant, Jew or Gentile, all are sinners. Irrespective of appearance, we are still sinners to the very core of our being. How true were David’s words, “in sin did my mother conceive me” (Ps. 51:5, KJV). In this condition we were “destined to suffer God’s anger” (verse 3, TEV).

### The Gift (Eph. 2:4-10)

*“By grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (verses 8, 9, NKJV).*

Having stated their former condition, Paul tells the Ephesians that God in His abundant mercy, granted us salvation. He strongly asserts that salvation is purely a divine gift. Undeserved, unmerited, it is a free gift. He did not have to, but at great cost to Himself, God purchased our salvation. We did nothing at all to deserve it.

Paul says that even faith, the hand that receives salvation, is a gift from God. He goes on to say that even the good deeds that we do are attributable to God (verse 10). Therefore, if anything in us is good, we owe it all to God. In everything, we are indebted to God. What do we bring to God? Nothing! Thank God for His amazing love, a love that our finite minds can never fully comprehend.

### Reconciliation (verses 11-18)

*“In Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility (verses 13, 14, NIV).*

Jesus was truly God’s “Peace Child.” Through Him God reconciled us—to



Himself and to our fellowmen. We who were once “destined to suffer God’s anger” (verse 3, TEV) have been brought near by the gift of God’s Son. Once distanced by our hostility and hatred, we are now His friends; once strangers, we now are His sons and daughters.

Christ was not only our Saviour; He was also our peace. Through His death, He demolished the great wall of hostility between Jew and Gentile. Therefore, in Christ is neither rich nor poor, neither black nor white, neither bond nor free: in Him there is no distinction; all are one.

In Him we, who once thirsted for each other’s blood, are now closer than brothers. In Him we, who were once the greatest of enemies, have now become bosom friends. Surely and truly, Jesus is our peace.

### **Citizenship (verses 19-22)**

*“You Gentiles are not foreigners or strangers any longer; you are now fellow citizens with God’s people and members of the family of God” (verse 19, TEV).*

Strangers, “were aliens, but the foreigners . . . were half-aliens, residents having no rights of citizenship.”<sup>2</sup> In the days of Paul, it was not an easy thing for a foreigner to acquire Roman citizenship. You had to prove yourself worthy through some great deeds before the Romans granted you citizenship.

Citizenship was a magic word; it was like a charm. If you were a citizen, you

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## **Tribal war and bloodshed were a way of life in my society.**

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had free access to the many services provided by the government, including protection, social and economic benefits, political rights, and many more. An alien who may have lived in the land for a hundred years was still a loser.

As far as the Jews were concerned, the Gentiles were strangers and foreigners in the church of God. But Paul here assures the Ephesians that in Christ they are no longer foreigners, but citizens; no longer strangers, but sons and daughters, members of the family of God. As citizens “they have the privileges of protection, sustenance, and fellowship. . . . God is at once King of the citizens and Father of the family. They are no longer sojourners or guests; they are now permanent residents.”<sup>3</sup>

### **REACT**

In what ways is membership in a family a more fitting description of Christians than citizens of a country?

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1. Don Richardson, *Peace Child* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal, 1974).

2. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1011.

3. *Ibid.*

# Citizens of the New Commonwealth

## TESTIMONY

**Key Texts:** Eph. 2:1-6; 4:10

The context of the whole Epistle to the Ephesians reveals that God has created a new social order. The basis of the constitution for this new commonwealth is the power of love and unity.

Ellen White says, "We must learn of Christ. We must know what He is to those He has ransomed. We must realize that through belief in Him it is our privilege to be partakers of the divine nature, and so escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. Then we are cleansed from all sin, all defects of character."<sup>1</sup>

Membership in the new commonwealth depends on individual conversion of the heart and is illustrated by Nicodemus' encounters with Jesus Christ. "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."<sup>2</sup> Of this assurance, she said, "Such are the words in which 'Paul the aged,' 'a prisoner of Jesus Christ,' writing from his prison house at Rome, endeavored to set

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## Upon the foundation that Christ Himself had laid, the apostles built the church of God.

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before his brethren that which he found language inadequate to express in its fullness—"the unsearchable riches of Christ,' the treasure of grace freely offered to the fallen sons of men."<sup>3</sup>

"Upon the foundation that Christ Himself had laid, the apostles built the church of God. In the Scriptures the figure of the erection of a temple is frequently used to illustrate the building of the church. Zechariah refers to Christ as the Branch that should build the temple of the Lord. He speaks of the Gentiles as helping in the work: 'They that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord;' and Isaiah declares, 'The sons of strangers shall build up thy walls.' Zechariah 6:12, 15; Isaiah 60:10."<sup>4</sup>

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1. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 943.

2. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 98.

3. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 730.

4. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 595.

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*By John Kembu, a theology student at Pacific Adventist College, Boroko, Papua New Guinea.*

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# The New You

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Eph. 2:14-16**

After describing Christ's work of bringing life to the dead, Paul explains God's gift of peace, emphasizing Christ: "He Himself is our peace; He is the Author, He did not only make peace, but He is . . . Peace."<sup>1</sup> "The bond of peace is not a doctrine or a philosophy or any kind of abstraction, but a Person."<sup>2</sup> This Person has brought Jew and Gentile together.

In Jerusalem a wall separated the inner court, which was inaccessible to Gentiles. Inscriptions on this wall warned foreigners that their lives would be at risk if they entered the inner court (Acts 21:28).<sup>3</sup> Spiritually, this wall symbolized the Jews' "exclusiveness in their religion, their national peculiarity" as defined by the Mosaic law as a whole. This exclusiveness imposed a barrier to fellowship between Jew and Gentile.<sup>4</sup>

Christ has nullified this segregation through His sacrifice, thus the offer of salvation upon repentance and faith. His purpose was "to create in Himself one new man." Not only does Christ reconcile two entities, but a new entity evolves—the

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## **This wall symbolized the Jews' "exclusiveness in their religion, their national peculiarity."**

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Christian. The Jew and Gentile remain who they are, technically speaking, but they become a new person in Christ. Note that Paul uses the Greek word *kainon* to denote something that has not existed before. God reconciles the new you and me to be with Him. Only through the renewing power of God's grace in Christ does God make us, helpless and hopeless sinners, one with Him.

## REACT

1. What relationships in my life still have walls to be knocked down? How will that happen?

2. What social barriers should God's grace be challenging in your community? Your church? What is your role in that process?

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1. Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1953), vol. 1, p. 75.

2. George Arthur Buttrick, ed., *The Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1953), vol. 10, p. 655.

3. Francis Foulkes, *The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, rev. ed., Leon Morris, ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1989), vol. 10, p. 90.

4. Ralph Earle, *Word Meanings in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1979), vol. 4, p. 277.

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*By Wame Rokodinono, a theology student at Pacific Adventist College, Boroko, Papua New Guinea.*

# Be a Radical

## HOW-TO

### Key Text: Eph. 2:8

Have you entertained the idea of radicals living and working in a unified heaven? Something about radicals makes that question sound dangerous. It depends on what *radical* means. It can conjure pictures of extremists, fanatics, militants, or something quite different, something positive, like a part of a plant embryo that develops into the main root.

While Christ was here on earth, He was a sterling example of a radical. His mission of kindness to those despised by society made Him unpopular and eventually cost Him His life. "Doesn't a level-headed Person like Him know any better than to keep company with sinners?" "Doesn't He care about the escalating criticisms on His unconventional behavior?" Today we do the same. We judge people by their masks. We think it impossible for them to become radicals like Christ: to keep Bible teachings; to be keen in spiritual matters; to surrender their lives to Christ and become like new. Let's remember that the battle belongs to the Lord (2 Chron. 20:15). We have a wonderful God, whose heart is bursting with a passion for things we think are impossible.

Furthermore, Ephesians 2:7, 8 tells us that only His kindness has saved us from

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## We could be the only Jesus somebody ever meets!

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humiliation. Christ took the initiative and risk to look foolish, to meet criticism and failure and even humiliation because He associated Himself with failures. Yet, He lifted us from the slum to sit with Him in heavenly realms. All of us used to be just as they were. Our lives express the evil within us, doing every wicked thing that our passions or evil thoughts might lead us into. But Christ is so rich in mercy, that only by His undeserved interest are we saved from eternal rejection. Why then do we build barriers and seem unapproachable to outsiders?

How often we deprive ourselves of meaningful spiritual and emotional growth when we are passive about God's love. We could be the only Jesus somebody ever meets! We have yet to learn that the mark of a genuine Christian is not his wardrobe or vocabulary, not even his diet or church, but the degree of his kindness to those who merit it least. "Inasmuch as ye have done unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Isn't God good when He asks us to "love one another as I have loved you"?

Jesus ignored people's opinions about Him. He became a radical in the eyes of the public. Let's be radicals in kindness toward the lost and lonely of this world, but simultaneously preserve truth and purity!

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*By Helen Delailomaloma, an education student at Pacific Adventist College, Boroko, Papua New Guinea.*

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# Aliens but Citizens

## OPINION

**Key Texts: Eph. 2:19; Heb. 11:8-10**

Aliens but citizens! Oh yeah? Where? Who? It's definitely not me.

As a Christian, I would like to think that God created no aliens. But if He didn't, what does Paul mean when he says, "You are no longer foreigners and aliens"? (Eph. 2:19, NIV). If you are told that you are no longer something now, it surely means one thing: you were that something before.

Paul knew what it was like to be an alien. He had everything a Pharisee could want. Yet he was now an alien to all the things that he once held dear to his heart. He even sacrificed his own beliefs in the process. Did God deliberately allow Paul to go through those alienation processes in order for him to discover where he ought to belong? It must have been a shock to Paul himself.

Many of us may never encounter extreme situations in life where we might be forced to sacrifice the things we value most. However, life can so engross us that we forget the most important things that matter most in our Christian walk with God. It could be a career that promises wealth, a position that guarantees prestige, or an accomplishment that leads to fame.

Abraham's experience mentioned in Hebrews 11:8-10 provides another good

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## Since God calls us to become citizens and members of His household, what are we doing about it?

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example of someone who knew what it was like to be a foreigner in a foreign land. It did not bother him as much as his desire to dwell in the land where God Himself is the founder. This was such strong faith, with such profound expectations.

Since God calls us to become citizens and members of His household, what are we doing about it? Are we so preoccupied with the things of this world that it is just another hypothetical issue without any practical application?

God calls everyone, but only you can make that response. The assurance is that aliens in this sinful world are truly eternal citizens.

## REACT

1. What makes someone an alien if God did not create any in the first place?
2. How sincere can one become in securing an eternal citizenship with God?
3. How can a Christian be practical about being a member of God's household?

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*By Tepora Ta'Ala, an education student at Pacific Adventist College, Boroko, Papua New Guinea.*

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# NEVER A DULL MOMENT



“ ‘My food,’ said Jesus, ‘is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work’ ” (John 4:34, NIV).

# Died in the Service

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: John 4:24**

Worship. Everyone is talking about it these days, but it's doubtful whether everyone really knows what it means. It's like a little boy who was sitting through a long, hot, and boring worship service at church. His eyes wandered, and he saw a plaque with several names on it placed on a prominent place in the church. He asked his mother what the plaque was.

"It's for the people who died in the service," she replied, meaning military service.

"Which one?" asked the little boy, looking around the church and seeing half the people asleep and the other half looking at their watches. "In the morning service or the afternoon?"

Humorous, perhaps, but, although this represents the picture some may have of worship, it is not what true worship is. This week we will study what true worship is. But before we dive headfirst into the lesson, let me suggest what true worship is not:

- It is not confined to a place, time, day, or style.

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## **The little boy looked around the church and saw half the people asleep and the other half looking at their watches.**

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- It is not something we do.
- It is never boring.

You can use many adjectives to describe true worship, but *boring* is not one of them. There is never a dull moment when God is present. The reason we have lost the power in some of our worship services, as well as in our lives, is that we have concentrated more on the performance and less on the person of Jesus. We have analyzed worship; we have written books about it. Seminars have been given on its meaning, but I think the reason we don't have a more powerful, worshipful Christian life is that we have forgotten the reason we worship: Jesus.

The other day we had a going-away party for Dielson, a friend who is moving to Brazil. We had all the guests, the food was ready, the lines of goodbye were rehearsed, but there was only one problem: Dielson wasn't showing up. Everyone was wondering what had happened. Then the obvious question was asked. Did anyone invite Dielson? Everyone looked at one another and realized that nobody had! Here we had a great party planned, and everyone forgot about the guest of honor! True worship starts, continues, and ends by making the guest of honor, Jesus, the central point, not only of Sabbath worship, but of our lives.

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*By Kathy Maldonado, a teacher at the Seabrook (Maryland) Adventist Child-Care Center.*

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# When Worship Is Hard to Do

## LOGOS

**Exod. 4:29-31; 5; Isaiah 6; John 4:1-38**

Have you ever been promised something and later found out that it was a lie? Have you waited for something to happen, just to realize that exactly the opposite takes place? Did you ever have days when you doubted whether the promises of God are true? Did it ever become difficult to worship God on “one of those days”? It has happened to me. And it happened to the children of Israel.

The story started pretty well. Moses had delivered the message to them that their days of slavery were numbered. Imagine your being told the best news you could possibly receive. What would it be? Multiply that by a million, and you may begin to know how the children of Israel felt. Hundreds of years of slavery would finally end. Hope was alive again! After Moses spoke, “the people believed . . . and worshipped” (Exod. 4:31).

But what immediately happened was not what was promised. The Pharaoh increased the work load and appointed people to beat them (5:9, 19). The situation became so bad that the children of Israel asked Moses why he had lied to them. Moses immediately went to God and asked the same question. God told Him that His people would, in fact, be delivered. Moses went back to the people, but this time they did not believe him (6:9). If we fast-forward, we see the people of God finally delivered (13:18). But they didn’t have fast-forward. And neither do we. We cannot see the future, but God can. As we study this passage, we can learn two valuable lessons for our spiritual lives:

**1. We worship God because His promises are true (13:18).** Even in times when we don’t see how, He will come through for us. We may not know what the future holds, but if we know who holds the future, we are guaranteed a deliverance. I have a friend who as a boy loved to read comic books about his favorite superheroes. In every one of them there seemed to be a time when it appeared that the hero was going to succumb to the powers of the “bad guys.” My friend would become so scared that he would turn to the last page of the comic book to find out how it ended. Of course, the hero always found a way to escape and came out on top. My friend would then turn back to the page he was reading before and not be afraid anymore. He knew how the story ended.

We know how the story ends. We win! In those trying times, remember that.

**2. It could get worse before it gets better (chapter 5).** God works in strange ways sometimes. What He wants from you is not always to understand, but to trust. In our Christian walk, things we pray for may not seem to happen instantaneously. Just because things don’t immediately go your way doesn’t mean He is not at work. So worship Him anyway.

**3. Deliverance always causes worship (4:29-31).** When the people of Israel knew about the deliverance for the first time, they worshiped immediately and without rehearsal. When we understand from where God has brought us, it is impossible not to worship.

I hope that the next time you don’t feel all is well or that it is hard to worship, you will think of this:



“Don’t go to God to tell him you have a big problem. Go to your problem and tell him you have a big God!”

## **REACT**

1. In what practical ways can someone worship even when he or she doesn’t feel like it?

2. What do I experience in my church that prompts me to worship?

3. What does God’s positive response to worship tell us about Him?

4. To what extent, if any, should cultural considerations impact on worship?

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## **The situation became so bad that the children of Israel asked Moses why he had lied to them.**

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5. What can I do personally to open myself up to more demonstrative forms of worship?

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*By Pascual Hernandez, pastor of the Avon Park (Florida) Seventh-day Adventist Church.*

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# Reality Versus Feelings

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Rom. 5:8**

Many times we think of worship in terms of emotions. Although it is true that worship will involve feelings, it is not based on them. “Do not wait to *feel* that you are made whole, but say, ‘I believe it; it *is* so, not because I feel it, but because God has promised.’ ”\*

I am married to Kathy. She is a wonderful and beautiful woman, and our marriage is the best thing that could have happened to me (so she says). Our marriage is based on the reality of love. That is its foundation, the rock that holds us steady. I know for a fact that she loves me and that I love her. The other day, I came home about 10:00 p.m. tired and very, very hungry. She asked me whether I wanted something to eat, to which I replied: “Yes, and thanks for being the best wife in the whole wide world.” I felt at that time a good, warm feeling all over me.

Twenty minutes later, she came with a plate: fried plantains with beans and rice. My mouth watered, and my heart melted. After a quick prayer, I took a mouthful of the beans. It was salty; the Dead Sea was sweet compared to this. Kathy saw the look on my face and asked what was wrong. I said, “Well, I don’t think we have

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## The reality of love is the rock that holds us steady.

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any salt left after this” and took the food back to the kitchen. Maybe it was because of the great expectations or my fatigue or the persistent hunger, but at that particular time, I did not feel inclined to tell Kathy how much I loved her. In fact, I didn’t feel anything but hungry.

After a quick sandwich, I apologized to her many times over. Surprisingly, she just looked at me and smiled and said, “Even though we may have disagreements, I am glad we know we always love each other, regardless of how we feel at the time.”

Our feelings change. Our emotions are like the temperature, sometimes high, sometimes low. But thanks be to God, we can know for a fact that even in the days when we don’t feel saved or feel good enough, Jesus is still love, and we are still His children.

Our worship is based on the solid ground of realities. This simple song says it all: “Jesus loves me this I *know*, for the Bible tells me so.”

## REACT

1. What Bible texts can you think of that remind us of the reality of our salvation?
2. When was the last time I didn’t feel good enough?
3. What got me through that particular circumstance?

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\* *Steps to Christ*, p. 51.

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By Roger Hernandez, pastor of the Silver Spring (Maryland) Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Church.

# Sharing Our Treasure

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: John 4:29**

There is evidence of our treasure everywhere in the Bible. True worship leads to sharing. Worship is to be with God and to experience His power. People can't say they have been with God and keep quiet about it. The way it is shared may not be organized, rehearsed, or even studied. But that it occurs is certain.

Consider the man blind since birth (John 9:25). When he gave his testimony, he said in so many words: "I don't know much, but what I know is that I was blind and now I see." Consider the woman at the well (4:29). She said simply: "Come and see." Observe Mary's joy as she saw Christ *outside His tomb* (20:18) and ran back to tell the disciples. The people in these stories have three things in common:

- They shared something that happened to them. If we are to share Him, we must experience Him for ourselves.
- They shared something that was important to them. Christ had entered their lives, and that was news.
- They shared with little or no training. To share Jesus we must "*just do it!*" No amount of training will substitute for an encounter with Jesus.

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## She never talked about me but tried always to avoid me.

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I had a girlfriend once who was very pretty. Though I was in the fourth grade at the time, I can still remember her beautiful red hair and blue eyes. Everyone I met knew she was my girlfriend and how deeply I cared for her. But there was only one problem. She didn't know anything about our romance. It was all in my mind. When asked about the truthfulness in my story, she replied, "No way!" I vaguely remember her saying something about my ears being so big I looked like a Volkswagen with its doors open. She never talked about me but tried always to avoid me.

There is a lesson to be learned here. We share what we love. As we learn to worship in our lives, let us remember: Love shares.

## REACT

1. With whom can I share Jesus this week?
2. When is a good time to share Jesus?
3. What are some new and fresh ideas of witnessing?

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By Roger Hernandez, pastor of the Silver Spring (Maryland) Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Church.

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# God's Manual for Worship

## HOW-TO

### Key Text: Isa. 6:3

If you feel today that you don't understand worship, if you want to improve worship in your life and church, or if you are a true worshiper and just want to deepen your worship experience, here are four practical ideas from God's instruction book:

**1. See God (Isa. 6:1-4).** To see God is to be aware of His presence, of His greatness, of His love and mercy. Those are the characteristics that make God who He is. They elevate our minds above this corrupt and often painful world and translate us to the presence of pure and never-failing God. If we see others, we will find fault; if we see God, we will find love.

**2. Realize who we are (verses 5, 6).** When we see God, we realize who we are. Every thought of self-righteousness and superiority is replaced by the sobering acknowledgment of our faults and failures, of our sin. In that instant, we stop trusting in our goodness, and God can begin to work in our lives.

**3. Experience His forgiveness (verse 7).** We experience forgiveness by having the peace that surpasses understanding. Sin is destabilizing; it causes things to go

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## You have a story only you can tell.

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out of their natural order. It is like a great weight on our shoulders that makes our steps unstable. But when the forgiveness comes, it brings peace. Our steps are firm and determined; our world is in peace.

**4. Share what we have experienced (verse 8).** This should not be difficult to do. It comes naturally to the person who has been with Jesus. No seminars, courses, or sermons needed. No quotations to scare us into it. Sharing will be almost impossible to contain. People want to hear good news. Share Jesus with someone this week; just tell them what He means to you. You have a story only you can tell.

## REACT

1. How can these four suggestions be incorporated into a Sabbath worship service?

2. How can I worship God even when not at church?

3. How am I worshipping when I share Christ with others?



# It's All Semantics

## OPINION

**Key Text: John 4:23**

Worship is . . . The word means . . . We would do well as a church to understand the true meaning of worship. Obviously, it is important to God. John 4:23 says He seeks worshippers.

Although worship is to be experienced daily, some times and places make it easier to worship. One of those is Sabbath morning at my church. After a long, hard week, it is refreshing to come to church and worship. After I leave, I feel happy and motivated. We use several instruments and make Sabbath a delight. For me, church worship should not have to follow an established format that we have been using since the Victorian Age. We each are different in our characters and come from different backgrounds, so it should be no cause for alarm or concern that worship services can vary. After all, God's call is for unity, not uniformity. We do not have to all think, act, sing, or, for that matter, worship in the same way.

What we should all strive for is to have the same end result: the uplifting of Jesus and the growing peace, love, and faith of humanity. If you accomplish that, you have worshiped.

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## **For me, church worship should not have to follow an established format.**

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Here's a wish list about worship.

- That worship on Sabbath is so vibrant and full of joy, as it uplifts Jesus, that it becomes an encouragement to worship everyday.
- That we could understand our differences and stop labeling one another.
- That we would use the best that we have for Jesus.
- That we work as hard in our planning of our worship experience as we do in our regular jobs (imagine that!).
- That we stop debating minute points of worship and start sharing with others the object of our worship: Jesus.

Worship: it's more than an event. It's a lifestyle.

## **REACT**

1. How can I voice my opinions and still respect the opinions of others?
2. What feelings do I have after I leave church on Sabbath?

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*By Iris Martinez, who works in the Swiss embassy, Washington, D.C.*

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# WORSHIP IN MOTION



**“He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds. Declare these things”  
(Titus 2:14, 15, NRSV).**

# The Miracle in My Lane

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Titus 2:14, 15**

As I turned onto Interstate 285, I accelerated to arrive at my job with Atlanta Youth Ministries. I was extremely late! Speeding through the morning traffic, I listened to my pastor's sermon that I had missed the previous week. It revealed how God will provide for everyone, regardless of our trials. Somehow that reminded me of something my family had studied and discussed that morning.

My hope for the moment, however, was that God would provide me with a clear highway; the only trials I wanted were the kids I was teaching at Vacation Bible School. Suddenly, a red Corvette sped past me on my left and merged into my lane ahead of me at the same time an 18-wheel truck was doing so from the right. The result was a series of air acrobatics performed by the Corvette and an extremely disfigured automobile.

I pulled to a stop, sprang from my car, helped the frightened woman from the car, and brought her to a safe distance from the Corvette, which was now in flames. The first words I heard from her mouth were, "Thank you, Jesus!" It was the identical thought that had entered my mind when I unexpectedly discovered a live human being in the demolished vehicle. The next two hours were filled with people

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## **A red Corvette merged into my lane ahead of me at the same time an 18-wheel truck was doing so from the right.**

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examining the victims of the accident and questioning me in regard to the events that had taken place. Everyone that day agreed that only a miracle had spared the Corvette driver's life, and God had intervened in her protection.

God's intervention often leads to forms of worship, a concept that is complex in theory, but simple in nature. It can be expressed in an infinite number of ways, depending on the ideology, background, family, or race of the person engaging in it. Some of these forms of worship occur in the story I expressed above.

It had begun by touching on two traditional forms of worship: family morning worship and a Sabbath sermon. There were, however, other forms, as well. My thoughts as I found a live woman in the car, the thoughts of the Corvette driver after the accident, even the thankfulness of others involved in the accident—all worshiped God by praising His name for the preservation of this woman.

Often I'm oblivious to the worship of God that occurs around me. There are scores of ways to worship our Creator. Thus, through observation of others, through study of the Scriptures and meditation on them, we can provide ourselves with the realization that worship of God can occur anywhere, anyplace, and anytime.

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*By Christopher French, a marriage-and-family-therapy student at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.*

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# Too Early to Get Drunk

## LOGOS

Acts 2:1-21; 9:1-18; Titus 2

### Missing the Point (Acts 2:1-21)

The point of the Pentecost experience is not just that God was culture-sensitive enough to provide a multilingual sermon (chances are that the majority of the people present would have understood Greek anyway), but that in a very real way, God had returned. After 40 days of sharing, 40 days of honesty and openness, God connects with a group of people now bonded by love, united by their vision, and joined by the commonality of their experience. And when the Holy Spirit strikes, He does so in force, somewhat different from how we would expect. For He does not come dressed in a three-piece suit and necktie. Instead, He manifests Himself as a rough-looking person, dressed in ragged T-shirt and jeans and making such a commotion that He's accused of being drunk. When we worship, we could never be accused of being drunk. Dead, maybe; drunk, no.

Surely, the point of this story is that God does what He does best—the unexpected. As is normally the case, it works. Formal worship practices are set aside, tradition ignored, ritual disregarded, and, instead, people act as though they were drunk. But lives are touched, hearts are moved, and 3,000 people follow the Galilean Carpenter. You may not approve of the way God does things, but you can't deny that it works.

### A Good Whack on the Side of the Head (9:1-19)

Saul wasn't stupid. There is no way he could *not* have known. Jesus had been around for three years. His story was public knowledge, and so was the lifestyle of the Pharisees. Saul knew about that; he *was* one. He also must have known that Jesus had a point. He must have known that much of what He said not only lined up with the writings of the prophets, but also made a lot of sense.

But Saul was set in concrete, the tassels of his robe well cared for, his phylacteries obvious to all, and his prayer shawl well worn and always public. His worship should have been rich with the meaning of more than 2,000 years of tradition. A rich heritage that could have welcomed the Messiah with joy had hardened into rules that dealt with trivia, customs, and conventions. All would have been fine, except that it left no room for the Spirit. He didn't have a chance.

The only way to get Saul's attention was to wake him up. A real bright light in the eyes when you're on a long trip is as effective as a good whack on the side of the head. It certainly worked for Saul. It made Him think about the God he wanted to believe he was serving.

I wonder what it will take us as a church to take Him as seriously as Paul did? How do we get a communal whack on the side of the head that makes us realize that much of our worship has lost its meaning, become buried in forms, and is devoid of the Spirit?

### What Doesn't Happen at 11:00 a.m. (Titus 2)

Worship, that's what doesn't happen at 11:00 a.m.! If this chapter tells us anything at all, it tells us that this religion thing has to do with lifestyle rather than



attendance at a meeting. So Paul talks about everything from self-control to the second coming, ending with where we all need to begin: "Who gave himself for us" (verse 14, NIV).

What then does the eleven-o'clock service have to do with anything? I must admit there are times when I wonder. But I don't believe I should have to. The eleven-o'clock worship service should be like a recharge, an opportunity to get on track again, a chance to experience His claim on all of my life. We ought to be able to leave at noon, knowing *and* feeling that we've been touched by His grace, renewed by His Spirit, enlivened by His power, and forgiven by His love. And maybe if that were the case, people would accuse us of what they accused the apostles

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## **The only way to get Saul's attention was to wake him up.**

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on the day of Pentecost; imbibing a little too much of the Spirit. Of course, they would be right.

### **REACT**

1. How would you feel if you went to a religious meeting and the speakers all acted as if they were drunk?

2. What do you think causes so many of us to be less than excited about our weekly worship services?

3. If I were the Holy Spirit, what would I do to try to improve the quality of the worship service in my church?

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*By Paul E. Bogacs, a graduate student in marriage and family therapy at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.*

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# Preparing for Worship in Heaven

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Matt. 7:1**

What is our true purpose in going to worship in church? Our purpose should be focused on what we are putting into the service and preparing us for the heavenly church. Let us all put our effort into our relationship with Christ.

The early church suffered many controversies over the way the worship service was conducted. As we have progressed as a church, some of these issues rise to the surface again and again. Each of us has a different idea of the type of worship service that meets our own personal need; therefore, is it necessary to judge others for the style of worship they choose? "Do not judge, or you too will be judged" (Matt. 7:1, NIV).

"The house of God on earth is the gate of heaven. The song of praise, the prayer, the words spoken by Christ's representatives, are God's appointed agencies to prepare a people for the church above, for that loftier worship into which there can enter nothing that defileth."<sup>1</sup> This does not say that a certain type of worship style is wrong. What we should be doing is preparing ourselves for the kingdom of heaven.

Each of us has a personality different from that of our brother or sister. Each

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## **"The house of God on earth is the gate of heaven."**

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of us has an idea as to a meaningful worship service. Find a church that worships in the same way you do. This will bring you into a closer union with Christ, because the church service is a time to congregate in worship as one with Christ. It should not matter to your neighbors, then, if you receive a blessing from a worship service that is different from the one they have chosen.

Let us unite as one in the spreading of the gospel to hasten our reunion with our Saviour. "In order to serve Him aright, we must be born of the divine Spirit. This will purify the heart and renew the mind, giving us a new capacity for knowing and loving God. . . . This is true worship."<sup>2</sup>

## **REACT**

1. Describe the kind of worship service from which you receive the most blessing.
2. What does it mean to be born of the divine Spirit?

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1. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 491.

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

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*By Jennifer Connell, a senior occupational-therapy student at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.*

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# Some Inclusive Thoughts About Worship

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text:** 1 Cor. 14:26

Christian worship is an umbrella under which different styles and theologies coexist. As Adventists, we are accustomed to a style of worship that is largely cognitive, not overly expressive, has been frequently uncomfortable with too much display, and yet which is biblically centered. The topic of worship draws us rather easily into “either-or” thinking. Many are not tolerant enough to allow for interdenominational differences in worship styles, much less for intradenominational differences. But considered from a biblical perspective, could it be that there is actually room for diversity in worship styles?

Barry Liesch identifies five basic models of worship in the Bible: pre-Sinai worship, which was family worship modeled by the patriarchs; tabernacle-temple worship; synagogue worship; Pauline worship; and worship in the book of Revelation. He further posits that styles of worship arise because Christian groups emphasize different elements of biblical worship.

Ancient, traditional, and contemporary forms of worship all relate to Scripture. Roman Catholics heavily emphasize liturgy and symbolism, drawing on the

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## The topic of worship draws us rather easily into “either-or” thinking.

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tabernacle-temple model; Charismatics emphasize body life and gifts of the Spirit, drawing from Pauline worship; Seventh-day Adventists emphasize the cognitive—preaching and hearing the Word—drawing mostly from the synagogue model.<sup>1</sup> Liesch classifies these five worship models according to size. In this sense, family worship comes from the pre-Sinai model; small-group worship, both the Pauline and synagogue model; and large-group worship, both the tabernacle-temple model and the Revelation model of worship in heaven.<sup>2</sup>

Could it be that as Seventh-day Adventists we should not only seek to be more biblical and broad in our worship styles, but also that we should be more accepting of the differing styles of worship of others? And could it also be that we might gain a great deal from the unique emphases that Pauline-Acts-early-church worship has to offer?

## REACT

How do Liesch’s concepts affect my view of the worship styles of other churches?

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1. Barry Liesch, *People in the Presence of God* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), p. 11.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

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*By Randall L. Roberts, assistant professor of religion, Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.*

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# Four Kinds of Prayer

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: 1 Chron. 16:29**

The “how-to” of worship involves an age-old journey that takes us back to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3, 4). It is also a continuous journey that honors our ongoing, living relationship with God. Worshiping God causes tensions when we look at where we are and where God is. How do sinful humans approach a perfect God? We cannot. That is why Jesus came to earth (John 3:16). God approaches us and asks us to worship Him in spirit and in truth (4:23). He provides the way, because He is the way, the truth, and the life (14:6).

Although we inform our interactive relationship with God by our religious beliefs, worship does not rely solely on religious belief, because it includes a depth of intimacy with God that comes through a relationship. Prayer presumes and builds on this relationship. As a central ingredient in worship, prayer involves talking to and listening to God. Just as there are many ways of talking and listening in our conversations with each other, there are many ways of listening and praying to our heavenly Father.

Using a popular form of prayer known as *colloquial prayer*, people ask for guidance, blessings, and forgiveness from sin. In *petitionary prayer*, people ask for

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## **Worship includes a depth of intimacy with God that comes through a relationship.**

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concrete personal and spiritual needs. *Ritual prayer* focuses on scripts and memorization. *Meditative prayer* is different from our common “one-way conversation with God.” It involves being an active listener (Ps. 46:10).

Even though prayer involves a mixture of these types of interacting with God, meditative prayer brings a closeness to God because it provides intimacy with Him. Meditative prayer brings a partnership with Him by listening to Him and following His Word (Ps. 48:9; 77:12; 119). Meditative prayer is relational. It gives meaning and leads to commitment to God, which in turn leads to community with one another.

Ethicist and theologian, Richard Niebuhr sums up our worship of God as a part of the thesis of his book *Radical Monotheism*. Worshiping God has to do with sustaining our song while listening to others as they worship God. This leads to a form of relational intimacy that expands our religious experience with God, which in turn stretches our understanding of Him. This in turn lifts up our imagination and perception while clarifying our picture of the everlasting hope that grounds us in God (Hab. 1:12; Revelation 14). Let us continue to conduct our worship together in community.

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*By D. Leigh Aveling, staff chaplain, Loma Linda University Medical Center, Loma Linda, California.*

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# Amaze Me! Please!

## OPINION

### Key Text: Acts 2:12

Doesn't it seem a bit strange that the upshot of the most spectacular display of the Holy Spirit's power in postresurrection times was that the worshipers and believers reflectively stood there "amazed and perplexed," saying to each other, "What does this mean" (Acts 2:12, NIV)?

We Adventists don't like to stand amazed too often anymore, if ever. Amazement, I guess, is not all that becoming of a people who can feel that they have everything figured out biblically. Adventists don't like to be perplexed, either. Perplexity is seen by many as direct evidence of no faith or a shamefully shaky doctrinal understanding. And only the truly newborn convert would dare to ponder aloud, "What does this mean?"

Why is that? Why don't we Adventist Christians like to try or experience the unusual, untouchable, or even the unexplainable when it comes to our worship? What about us is so reticent to put confidence in the Holy Ghost, who guides us, and also relinquish some of the by-the-*Church-Manual* control, which can stifle

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## We Adventists don't like to stand amazed too often anymore.

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the Spirit in our midst?

Our Adventist focus on and in worship is quite "me-ocentric" instead of theocentric. There is too little room in our tightly structured Sabbath services for God's free interpretation or intervention. These carefully shaped (solidified) ceremonies are further cemented when families weekly sit passively while only the skilled sing and speak for them. With each passing service, the emphasis is placed more on perfected performance and the *status quo* satisfaction of safe-and-sanitary worship, to the detriment of Spirit-initiated worship, which actually operates more in step with sensitivity to the present, local, spiritual need, rather than with the sanitized worship templates supplied by the superstructure.

Been spiritually amazed or perplexed lately? Let's actively search the Acts movement example and maybe minimize lemminglike acquiescence to time-honored order of services that Adventist orthodoxo worships. Could it hurt?

By putting ourselves in closer proximity to the presence of Christ and His Spirit through continued seeking for progressive truth that we allegedly purport to believe in, we will then be found regularly looking up, amazed and perplexed, and actively seeking the Spirit for help and hope like the disciples (Acts 1) and the first-century church (Acts 2).

## REACT

1. Why do you think the first-century believers were so shocked at Pentecost?
2. Why did Spirit-filling focus attention on Christ's miracles?

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By Tim Evans, Children's Hospital chaplain, Loma Linda, California.

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# THE FAMOUS SIMON PETER CASE



**“ ‘Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ’ ” (Acts 2:36, NIV).**

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# Remember to Listen

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Prov. 1:5**

I held the steering wheel tightly and watched the water in front of me. I smiled. No longer was I a mere camper in my father's water-ski program. Now I was part of the teaching staff. My dad had taught skiing at summer camp for years. This was my first year as part of the crew and my first summer at camp without him out on the lake with me.

It wasn't long, however, before I realized that there was much to learn and much that I could learn from Ryan. This was his second year on the waterfront; he'd worked with my dad the year before. It seemed that Ryan could solve any problem, fix any engine. He knew those boats inside out. I marveled at his knowledge.

"What's up with this? Where did you learn all this stuff?" I asked one day.

"Oh, your dad taught me a lot about boats last summer," he said.

*Well, why did he teach Ryan and not me?* I asked myself. And then I remembered the times the boats had broken in the past. Bored with helping my dad with repair work, I'd play in the water or go with my friends and find something more fun to

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## **"Where did you learn all this stuff?" I asked one day.**

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do. I didn't recognize the value of my father's experience or how useful I would find that knowledge later on.

As people live, they learn. They learn through trial and error. They learn from experience. They carry that knowledge with them, and very often others fail (as I did) to realize how much is to be gained from stopping for a few moments and listening.

This week focuses on Peter's life—his trials, his errors, his enthusiasm, his relentless pursuit of a relationship with Jesus. Peter learned a great deal from his personal walk with Christ, and these insights have been passed on for our benefit. We can learn from his experience. We would do well to stop and listen.

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*By Brian Klokeid, a sophomore at Loma Linda University School of Medicine, Loma Linda, California.*

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# The Witness

## LOGOS

**Matt. 14:22-36; 16:13-28; 26:33-58, 69-75; Acts 2:14-47**

Peter witnessed Jesus' miraculous feeding of a multitude from a little boy's lunch (Matt. 15:29-39). With a dynamic leader who could miraculously create unlimited amounts of free food on demand, the crowd and the disciples were bent on crowning Jesus as their king. Jesus put a quick end to this by dispatching the disciples to the other side of the lake in a boat.

After rowing for about eight hours in a storm and making only a few miles, they were struggling for their very lives. Fighting to keep the boat afloat, they saw what appeared to be Jesus, walking across the stormy waters. They called out, and Jesus replied, "It is I; do not be afraid" (14:27, NKJV).

Excitedly, Peter asked whether he could walk on the water to meet Jesus. Jesus said, "Come," and Peter stepped over the side of the boat and began to walk across the waves. Turning to look at his companions in the boat, he lost sight of Jesus. His faith gave way, and he began to sink into the angry lake. He cried out for help, and Jesus took him by the hand and said, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" (verse 31). Peter learned another valuable lesson as Jesus escorted him back to the boat: his best strength and confidence was worthless unless he kept his eyes on Jesus.

On another occasion Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" (16:13-28). Peter immediately took the lead and replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (verse 16). He did not need to wait for Jesus to be crowned King of kings and Lord of lords. Even though he did not fully understand Christ's mission, the big fisherman was inspired by the Holy Spirit to express clearly and unequivocally his simple faith. Through the human form of Jesus, he unmistakably saw the glory of the Son of God. And through Peter, Jesus honored all who confess Him as Lord and live a life of witness to Him.

At the Last Supper, Peter was shamed when Christ demonstrated true servant leadership by taking the part of a servant and washing the disciples' feet. Peter could not bear to see his Lord, the Son of God, wash dirty, dusty feet. Can't you picture him lifting up his legs and saying, "No way! I am not going to have You wash my feet!" But Peter did not understand that this act that was an example of humility was also symbolic of Jesus' cleansing him from sin. When Jesus explained that his refusal was actually a rejection of salvation, Peter begged, "Not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!" (John 13:9).

On the night of His betrayal, Jesus explained that shortly all of the disciples would stumble because of Him (Matt. 26:31-35). Peter sincerely and intensely protested, "I will never be made to stumble" (verse 33). But Christ again warned that in a short while on that same night Peter would claim that he had no knowledge of Him. Deeply offended, Peter became even more exercised and impassioned and with every ounce of sincerity he could muster said, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" (verse 35).

Only a few hours later, after he had tried with a sword to prevent Jesus' arrest, Peter watched as Jesus allowed Himself to be arrested, tied up, and taken away. His world had come to an end.



Every hope looked dashed. In anger and fear he suggested that all the disciples run for their lives, and they did—just as Jesus had said. Then three times within a short period of time as he followed Jesus from a discreet distance, Peter blatantly denied any knowledge of or involvement with Him. The rooster crowed and Peter caught a full but gentle glance from Jesus. His heart felt as if it had exploded as he remembered his earlier statements. As the mob continued to torture Jesus, Peter could stand it no longer and rushed from the hall. He realized too late what he had done and plunged to the lowest point of his life. Filled with terrible remorse, he wished he could die (26:33-75).

After Jesus was crucified and the empty tomb discovered, He showed His great love for Peter when He specifically had the angel say to Mary, “Tell the disciples and Peter.” Christ knew that Peter had suffered more than the other disciples, because of his blatant denial of his Lord. He wanted Peter to have the assurance that he was already fully forgiven. No sin, no denial however emphatic, was too much for Jesus to forgive. Peter personally received the full extent of Christ’s forgiveness, and this experience led him to the deepest understanding of the gospel and made him one of the most effective apostles of the early Christian church.

The book of Acts records one of the most exciting events of the Bible—Pentecost. Peter, who had personally felt the terrible sting of condemnation and

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## **In anger and fear, Peter suggested that all the disciples run for their lives.**

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the heavenly relief of full forgiveness, delivered one of the most powerful gospel sermons ever presented. The Holy Spirit used him so greatly that when Peter called for repentance and baptism, 3,000 people committed their lives to Jesus on that one day.

Peter, once Simon the big fisherman, was now Peter, the witness. Jesus had known all along what a blessing Peter would be to the early Christian church. Peter became one of the strongest pillars of the church, working along with Paul and the other apostles to nurture a movement with an eternal future at home with Peter’s Lord and our Lord, Jesus (Acts 2:14-47).

### **REACT**

1. How could Peter be so emphatic in stating that he would die rather than deny Jesus and just a few hours later deny Him three times?
2. What do you think Jesus’ motives were when He had the angel tell Mary specifically, “Tell the disciples and Peter”?
3. When was the last time I denied Christ?
4. What is the difference, if any, between denying Christ and any other kind of sin?
5. In what ways do you demonstrate to others your loyalty to Christ in your daily life?
6. Describe a situation in your life where it was most difficult to admit your friendship with Jesus.

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*By Marc Judd, a second-year medical student at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.*

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# What to Do When You're Not Perfect

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Mark 16:7**

Discouragement is a common experience to many Christians who discover that Christianity does not provide for immediate perfection. Each wrong act provides a confusing paradigm for failed faith. We should remember that others have traveled this road before. "Those who accept Christ, and in their first confidence say, I am saved, are in danger of trusting to themselves. They lose sight of their own weakness and their constant heed of divine strength. They are unprepared for Satan's devices, and under temptation many, like Peter, fall into the very depths of sin. We are admonished, 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.' 1 Cor. 10:12. Our only safety is in constant distrust of self, and dependence on Christ.

"It was necessary for Peter to learn his own defects of character, and his need of the power and grace of Christ. The Lord could not save him from trial, but He could have saved him from defeat. Had Peter been willing to receive Christ's warning, he would have been watching unto prayer. He would have walked with fear and trembling lest his feet should stumble. And he would have received divine help so that Satan could not have gained the victory.

"It was through self-sufficiency that Peter fell; and it was through repentance

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**"Those who accept Christ, and in their first confidence say, I am saved, are in danger of trusting to themselves."**

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and humiliation that his feet were again established. In the record of his experience, every repenting sinner may find encouragement. Though Peter had grievously sinned, he was not forsaken. The words of Christ were written upon his soul, 'I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.' Luke 22:32. In his bitter agony of remorse, this prayer, and the memory of Christ's look of love and pity, gave him hope. Christ after His resurrection remembered Peter, and gave the angel the message for the women, 'Go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him.' Mark 16:7. Peter's repentance was accepted by the sin-pardoning Saviour.

"And the same compassion that reached out to rescue Peter is extended to every soul who has fallen under temptation. It is Satan's special device to lead man into sin, and then leave him, helpless and trembling, fearing to seek for pardon. But why should we fear, when God has said, 'Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with Me'? Isa. 27:5. Every provision has been made for our infirmities, every encouragement offered us to come to Christ."

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\* *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 155, 156.

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*By Randall Skoretz, chaplain of Loma Linda University and associate pastor of the Loma Linda University Church, Loma Linda, California.*

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# Not Chicken

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Matt. 26:69-75**

Every city has them, regardless of size—a section of “nice homes.” Jerusalem did too. One could tell not only by the size of the home but by the architecture. The elite had homes that surrounded an open courtyard with various rooms opening into this private area. Peter was in the courtyard. Most of the other disciples had run for their lives, but Peter was right there in the courtyard of the high priest, where his Master was on trial. Brave!

Perhaps word had filtered among the servants that a follower of the Man on trial had attacked a fellow servant. A girl accused Peter of being with Jesus. He denied it, but he did not leave the courtyard. Maybe anxiety, maybe curiosity motivated a second inquiry as to Peter’s association with Jesus. Again he denied it, but his Galilean accent was detected. Their accent was so ugly that they were not permitted to pronounce the benediction at a synagogue service. Peter must have realized the recognition but did not leave the courtyard.

A third time Peter was confronted with his friendship with Jesus. Peter swore. Anyone who had been around Jesus and His followers knew that they did not swear or take oaths. In fact, Jesus had specifically taught against it (Matt. 5:33-37). Peter

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## **It was not a rooster that accused Peter of being “chicken.”**

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hoped that swearing would convince them. And then he heard it.

It was not a rooster that accused Peter of being “chicken.” In fact, there was a regulation in the Jewish law that made it illegal to keep cocks and hens in the holy city, because they defiled the holy things. Rather, the hour of 3:00 a.m. and the sign of the changing of the guard was a trumpet call. *Gallicinium*, the Latin word for the trumpet call, meant “cock crow.” It is most likely that this is what Peter heard. Then Peter left the courtyard.

What an embarrassing story to be included in the Gospels: a leader of the early church, conducting himself in such a way and then being reduced to a pretender—cowering in the emptiness of the night. On the other hand, what a poignant depiction of the power of Jesus’ gospel. For this reason, Matthew’s story closely follows Mark’s detailed account. Mark’s material, as suggested by Papias, a second-century writer, came largely from Peter’s sermons. Thus Peter tells this story about himself. Quite a revelation—not only about the frailty of human intention, but mostly about the *pardon* and *power* possible in Jesus.

Peter was not chicken; he was human. And he was forgiven. And he was empowered.

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*By Fred Kasischke, associate pastor, Loma Linda University Church, Loma Linda, California.*

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# A Necessary Diversity

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Acts 2:36**

Peter was on fire. He was racing all over Israel telling the Jews about his friend Jesus. And a lot of them that heard Peter believed and became Christians. But Peter forgot what a lot of us also forget—that when Jesus said to take the message of His love to *all* the world, He meant *all* the world.

It made sense that Peter wouldn't realize this. His whole life had been tied up in being Jewish. He had traveled with Jesus and seen Him minister to the Jews. But Jesus also ministered to the Gentiles. Because associating with Gentiles was a big taboo for the Jews, when Jesus chose to minister to them, it unnerved the disciples a bit, and they chose to forget it.

It's easy for us to forget that people may not agree with all our doctrines but may still know Jesus. The challenge for us, then, lies in finding a way to incorporate a community of religious people. So, how do we do this?

**1. Make friends outside your faith.** We often assume that, because we are the "remnant church," we know Jesus better than anyone else. This is simply not true.

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## Peter's whole life had been tied up in being Jewish.

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Get to know others—their views of God may surprise you and will certainly broaden your image of God.

**2. Get to know Jesus personally.** No one showed an open mind and love for others more than Jesus. The Jews weren't even supposed to speak with a Samaritan. But Jesus not only did that, He drank from their well and changed a woman's life because He *knew* her and *loved* her.

It is not always an easy thing to incorporate a diversity of expressions of faith into our lives, but the enrichment it offers makes it worthwhile, not only because of the friends you'll make, but also because when you're doing God's will, your life will be blessed.

## REACT

1. How can I incorporate a diversity of faith in my life?
2. In what ways can greater diversity really make a difference for me?

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*By April L. Shabo, a sophomore dental student, Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.*

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# A Faulty Pillar

## OPINION

**Key Texts:** Matt. 17:18; Gal. 2:11-21

I am mystified by Peter. He is stubborn, hypocritical, inconsistent, full of hot air, and sometimes just plain wrong. Being lazy when he should be active and violent when he should be listening, he has no sense of timing and cannot carry an idea through to its logical conclusion. Yet as some people believe him to be, he is the rock on which Jesus built His church.

Of course, Peter is not all bad. He turns out to be a dynamic preacher and a strong, energetic leader. But for each of his accomplishments, there is at least one devastating mistake. Of course, we see this in the Gospels when he walks on water and when he betrays Jesus, but even after Jesus' ascension, Peter continues to stumble. For example, he pioneers the missionary effort among the Gentiles, but later we hear from Paul that Peter has been avoiding—even discriminating against—the Gentiles (Gal. 2:11-21). Paul rebukes Peter, to his face, calling him a hypocrite. It is frustrating to read about. Peter will charge ahead with some new-found truth, only to sheepishly back off at critical moments.

This is not something we expect in our friends or fellow church members, let

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## **He has no sense of timing and cannot carry an idea to its logical conclusion.**

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alone a leader of the church. Peter is horribly unstable. He shines at times and waivers at others—hardly the behavior of a rock. He is far from perfect, even after his own conversion. Yet Jesus does not give up on Peter, not even after Peter would fail. And it mystifies me. Christ was willing to put up with an awful lot from this pillar of His church. And if He could put up with this, what is He willing to put up with from the rest of us? I think He has put up with an awful lot.

This is interesting because we often seem to prioritize sins, forgetting that they are just all the same in God's eyes. The teenager who lies about where she was last night has not sinned nearly as much as the man who spent last night in bed with his homosexual lover. The unrepentant shoplifter can easily be forgiven, while the man who just murdered his wife is beyond hope. We often forget that we all are just as lost as everyone else until we are saved.

Paul says that we cannot be separated from the love of God (Rom. 8:38, 39). He may not have had Peter in mind, but I think Peter is a good illustration. And we should remember this when interacting with fellow sinners.

## **REACT**

1. Why do we often ascribe great value to some sins and lesser value to others?
2. How would you describe Peter?
3. In what ways am I like Peter? In what ways unlike him?

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*By Doug Kasischke, a history-and-English major at Pacific Union College, Angwin, California.*

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# WORD SEARCH



**“The King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me’ ” (Matt. 25:40, NKJV).**

# What Does the Bible Say?

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Isa. 28:10**

The story is told of a visitor who came to the home of William Miller when the Adventist pioneer was away. The visitor hoped to see Miller's study and learn the secret of his Bible scholarship. What great tools did the farmer-turned-preacher use?

Mrs. Miller showed the traveler into her husband's study to look around. There stood a plain table and chair. Beside the candlestick and inkwell on the desk were only two books: a Bible and a concordance. The great preacher's tools were three: God's Word, a guide to help him find key verses, and prayer.

Technology has given us the entire Bible in a slim, electronic package you can slide into your pocket. Or, you can load it onto the hard drive of your personal computer and search with keystrokes instead of turning pages. But, however you do your searching, the mechanics remain the same: seeking His guidance in how to apply what you have learned.

One of my greatest discoveries in Bible study came when the teacher of my college Revelation class told us to select seven symbols from John's Epistle and define

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## **Mrs. Miller showed the traveler into her husband's study to look around.**

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what they meant, based on how they were used in the rest of the Bible. My reaction was to skip the assignment because I already knew how our church applies the symbols to prophetic interpretation. But it wasn't until I did the assignment that I learned *why* we Adventists apply them the way we do.

Now take *service*, our key word for this week. Pick up your concordance, start up your Bible-search software, or whatever. Look up the past and present tenses of variants like *serve*, *minister*, etc. Then, after searching for a while, write down your definition of what it means to serve God, and think about how you should be ministering to others.

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*By William F. Noel, a graduate student in public administration at the University of Alabama at Huntsville.*

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## Service: It Keeps Going and Going . . .

### LOGOS

**Lev. 19:11-16; Psalm 12; Prov. 30:5, 6; Matt. 20:27; 25: 31-46; Luke 4:39; 10:29-42; John 12:2; Rom. 15:30-33; 1 Cor. 11:17-34; 2 Cor. 8:3, 4; Phil. 2:5-11; Rev. 2:19**

The life of Christ demonstrates that service is a central pillar upon which the government of heaven is built. From the lowest to the highest, from Baalam's donkey to Christ's service of salvation for us, all citizens of God's government play a role in service.

This idea is exemplified in the analogy of the body given by Paul as being made up of many parts (1 Corinthians 12). Each part has a different function, or, in this paradigm, each performs a different service for the body. Even in the hereafter, one of the highest honors that can be given to the righteous is one of service. "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple" (Rev. 7:14, 15, NIV).

Thus as the body of Christ will continue into the next life, so will the service we each perform to maintain and build up the body. No doubt, the functions, i.e., services, that each individual performs will be different then. In the hereafter, however, service will continue to play a part in our deepening relationship with Christ. This gives new meaning to the text in Matthew 19:30, "Many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first." Service in this life is not used simply to determine one's heavenly rank. Rather, service in this life will be rewarded with even greater service in the next life. And since we will be serving God forever and ever, if we don't like it here, we would be miserable there.

### **The Sheep, the Goats, and the Goats in Sheep's Clothes (Matt 7:21-23; 25:31-46)**

The sheep of Matthew 25:31-46 demonstrate the type of service that Christ desires of us. However, this is apparently not enough. There is another group who will come in that last day saying, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?" (7:22). To which Christ will reply, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!" (verse 23).

True service is even more than the good things we do. True service involves actions borne out of the right motivation. The danger facing most of us, however, is that we become so inwardly focused on the important trivialities of our own lives that we fail to notice the greater needs of others. So when we are reminded by pastors and lay-activities leaders that we should be serving our neighbors, the elderly, the sick, or shut-ins, and our response is to feel guilty about our inactivity, we don't really *know* God. Such misguided motivations for service can cause us to view service as a means of relieving our own guilt and fulfilling our own sense of righteousness. Service so motivated becomes self-serving.

So what is the right motivation for service? It can be found only in a living relationship with Jesus Christ. If we find our motivation for service to be based on guilt or any other misguided emotion, we should be driven back to our knees to beg that Christ will put in our hearts a love for the service He desires us to give.



## **Service and Righteousness by Faith**

The story of the sheep and the goats demonstrates the real point of righteousness by faith. The subject of sanctification has too often become mired in a debate over perfection, in which the focus has been on sins not committed, acts not done. But notice that it is the acts of service performed by the sheep that differentiates them from the goats, and not the sins that the sheep did not commit.

The process of righteousness by faith is the means God uses to motivate us for service. Righteousness by faith means right doing by faith, not the absence of wrongdoing—as desirable as that may be. And in God's government, right doing consists in loving service for God and others.

## **Disinterested Benevolence (Luke 17:11-19)**

Too often we view the love we have been given as a scarce resource to be guarded carefully and spent judiciously. We feel that our service has to result in some desired outcome, i.e., conversion to our faith. Otherwise our efforts are squandered. According to human criteria, when Jesus healed the 10 lepers, 90 percent of His effort was wasted.

But Jesus did not restrict His benevolence to that based on outcome. Rather, He provided His service based on opportunity. We forget that God's love is infinite, so that the more we give, the more we receive. And in this giving of service, both

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## **According to human criteria, when Jesus healed the 10 lepers, 90 percent of His effort was wasted.**

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parties have the opportunity to encounter Christ. When we serve others for Christ's sake, we act as His arms and legs, lifting others' burdens, thereby revealing Christ. At the same time, the individual who is reaching out in service to help another is reaching out "to the least of these my brethren," and in so doing, is reaching out to Christ.

## **REACT**

1. How can we keep up with the mundane responsibilities of life without becoming distracted from our mission to serve?
2. Among my acquaintances, have I known anyone who exemplifies the biblical model of compassion? Describe that person.
3. How independent am I for my interpretation of Scripture?
4. What specific opportunities do I have to put God's Word into action?

# Relational Geography

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Matt. 25:37-40**

I, like many, would love to visit the Holy Land, to see the places mentioned in the Bible, to be able to walk in the footsteps of the patriarchs, the disciples, and Jesus. For some reason, the physical geography is important to me, but I think the geography of my heart and the outward mapping of that geography—the quality of my relationships—is what is important to God.

“Many feel that it would be a great privilege to visit scenes of Christ’s life on earth, to walk where He trod, to look upon the lake beside which He loved to teach, and the hills and valleys on which His eyes so often rested. But we need not go to Nazareth, to Capernaum, or to Bethany in order to walk in the steps of Jesus. We shall find His footprints beside the sickbed, in the hovels of poverty, in the crowded alleys of the great city, and in every place where there are human hearts in need of consolation. In doing as Jesus did when on earth, we shall walk in His steps.”<sup>1</sup>

Service then becomes an invitation into God’s country and a pointer to God, much like north on a compass. “Christ Himself was a worker, and to all His followers He gives the law of service—service to God and to their fellow men. . . .

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## The geography of my heart is what is important to God.

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The law of service becomes the connecting link which binds us to God and to our fellow men.”<sup>2</sup> Not only may we be pointed to God, but those we serve may be pointed to God through us. “If we follow Christ’s example in doing good, hearts will open to us as they did to Him.”<sup>3</sup>

This is the geography of the kingdom of God, a geography of love in our heart and a relational geography expressed through our service to others. I believe this is what Jesus meant when He said, “The kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21, NIV). And the kingdom becomes manifest when we make it visible through and in our service. In this way we grow into citizens of the kingdom of God—God’s country.

“Love to man is the earthward manifestation of the love of God. It was to implant this love, to make us children of one family, that the King of glory became one with us. And when His parting words are fulfilled, ‘Love one another, as I have loved you’ (John 15:12); when we love the world as He has loved it, then for us His mission is accomplished. We are fitted for heaven; for we have heaven in our hearts.”<sup>4</sup>

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 640.

2. *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 326.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 339.

4. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 641.

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*By Keith McMahan, a systems analyst for Systems Engineering Solutions, Inc., Huntsville, Alabama.*

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# The Man Who Fell Among Robbers\*

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Luke 10:25-37**

A man was going down the road and, falling among robbers, was stripped and beaten. They then departed, leaving him half dead. Thus Jesus raises for us the problem of an opportunistic evil that we would label senseless, in short, an evil we seem to be surrounded by more and more. Is this the end of the story; does evil win? No. The story continues, and with it, perhaps the example of the ultimate Christian response.

Three men come by. The first two go to the other side of the road to avoid the problem. Notice that no motivation or explanation is given for the two men's actions. It might have been religious, personal, or even selfish. A whole range of motivations are possible here, and we can probably identify them all. Perhaps you've rushed by problems on your way to church, avoided being of help in areas because of your concern for personal safety, been reluctant to involve yourself, or felt distaste for the situation. Whatever the reason for these two men's avoidance, their inaction implicitly assigns finality to the force imposed upon the beaten man. Death becomes an absolute.

The third man goes to the aid of the beaten man, countering what has been imposed on him, regardless of personal safety, cost, or even outcome. Notice that

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## How many of us would help someone if we knew it would make him a better Catholic?

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we are not told whether the man recovers, and the Samaritan also goes on with his life! Perhaps, if the man recovered, he became a better Jew because of it. How many of us would help someone if we knew it would make him a better Catholic? His actions are the opposite of those concerned with self-preservation or of those whose only acts are measured in goals and achievements. He gives of his richness, from being filled with the vitality of life that God gives us.

Jesus' parable shows us that ultimate reality is not evil, but rather it is that superabundant power out of which the third man lives. It is out of this power that the Samaritan acts without counting the danger, cost, or probability of success.

Service is not something you do but something you are. It is to be so filled with the superabundance of life given by God that you serve regardless of the cost or outcome. The good news is not that we have some kind of life that is diminished by evil, that all we can do is try to hold and survive. No, the good news is that we can have life and have it more abundantly. This is the ultimate reality. This is good news! This is worth sharing!

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\* I am indebted in this article to James Breech's treatment of this parable in his book *The Silence of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

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*By Keith McMahan, a systems analyst for Systems Engineering Solutions, Inc., Huntsville, Alabama.*

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# Don't Just Sit There; Do Something!

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Gal. 6:9, 10**

The challenge for today's Christian is to go beyond theology and ideology and find expression for faith through service. The concept of service and actually serving others, however, often remain two separate things. For years I struggled with a compelling need to do more for Christ and my fellow humanity, yet remained paralyzed and immobile in the area of service. The timing of certain church-outreach programs was inconvenient, the existence of others unstable, and still others not suited to my talents. I was frozen in a state of outward complacency and internal turmoil.

In frustration, I took my trouble to the Lord in prayer. Following are several "answers" that I have since discovered and now share with you as practical suggestions for service.

**1. Do something special for a single person every day.** Cultivate this habit, and allow it to grow and infiltrate your entire life. It can be as simple as bringing donuts to your secretary; holding a door open for an elderly stranger at the bank or service station; sending a card to someone who needs to hear from you. As you reap rewards of joy through this process, increase the number to two people, then three people, and so on. Pray *every day* that the Lord will continue to bless you in your

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## For years I struggled with a compelling need to do more for Christ.

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efforts until they no longer seem like effort at all.

**2. Join an organization in the church** such as Sunshine Bands, women's ministry—even the choir. Start small, and pray for commitment to this project. Pray about the organization you should join, and continue to pray throughout your involvement for Christian joy, growth, and outreach.

**3. Undertake a special project with your Sabbath School class.** Soliciting assistance for your service project does not make it any less valuable. Soliciting for ideas can also open doors for service that you may not have known about before, possibly in areas in which you are more comfortable in involving yourself.

**4. Tap into the resources of your community to discover ways to serve.** Call volunteer centers, senior centers, hotlines, local schools, and the Red Cross for ways you could serve and effectively minister as best suited to your talents.

**5. Pray that the Lord will send a service opportunity to you.** Sometimes, despite all our good intentions, it can be difficult to put our hearts into action. Pray daily that the Lord will allow you to serve and send opportunities to you to assist and serve others.

Service is the Christian's calling card to the secular world, our way of wooing selfish, stony hearts to open up to the beautiful gospel message of salvation. It is an expression of love for both God and humankind.

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*By Ramona Thompson, who works for MCI Telecommunications, Huntsville, Alabama.*

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## Cheering or Playing ?

### OPINION

**Key Texts: James 1:27; Matt. 25:31-40**

Christian service is often like having the score tied and only two minutes left to play in the Super Bowl. You've got 60,000 fans in the stands cheering their lungs out and 22 players on the field desperately needing some relief. How many fans do you think would risk getting into the game?

One of the cardinal rules of journalism is that you don't become involved in your stories. But I was a Christian a long time before I became a journalist. So when I saw the town where I grew up developing a serious drug-abuse problem, I had no reservations about becoming involved. We started out small, just a few professional acquaintances and I putting together ideas to help the kids attending a few local schools learn how to live without drugs. The need was great, and the Lord's blessings were even greater.

Just two years later, our "little" project had turned into a quarter-million-dollar-a-year effort, reaching more than 16,000 students in all grades of an entire school system. Furthermore, our program had become a model for other school systems around the state and the nation.

Sure, it feels good to have people give me a pat on the back for my work. But

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### **I'm no longer shooting a Bible bullet at someone and hoping it hits their heart.**

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I get the greatest satisfaction from seeing thousands of kids, most of whom have no idea of my role, declaring their determination to live drug-free lives. Knowing I helped influence their decisions is worth more to me than all the money in the world.

My antidrug work has opened many doors for sharing from God's Word with my fellow volunteers. The difference is that I'm no longer shooting a Bible bullet at someone and hoping it hits their heart. Now I'm sharing from my heart with friends joined together by a common bond of service. The exchange lifts us both heavenward.

Notice in today's key text from Matthew that God did not credit the righteous for how many pieces of literature they passed out or how many Bible studies they gave. Jesus rewarded them for meeting the physical needs of the people around them. They were honored for deeds of service they didn't think were worthy of notice. Too often Christians choose to cheer from their padded pews in the stadium of life instead of getting into the game. Let me tell you, I'd rather be in the game!

### **REACT**

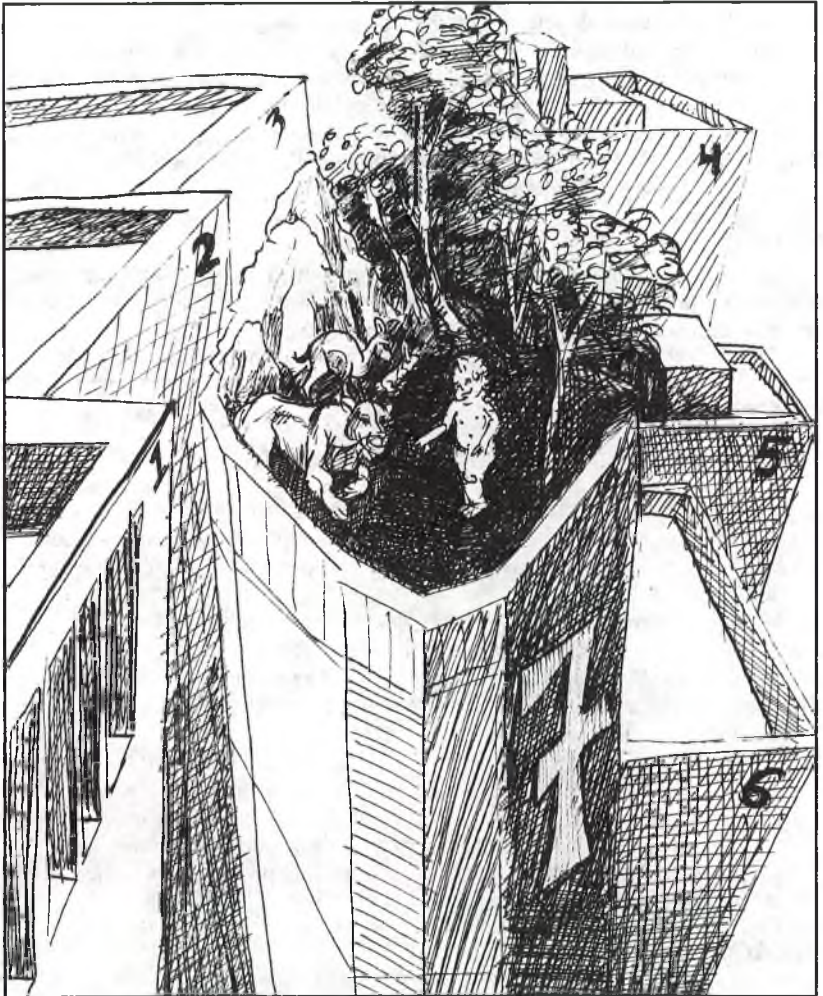
What needs do I see around me where I can minister God's love?

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*By William F. Noel, a graduate student in public administration at the University of Alabama at Huntsville.*

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# WHAT DO YOU DO WITH SATURDAYS?



**“Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a sabbath” (Matt. 24:20, RSV).**

# He Was No Jew After All!

## INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Heb. 4:4, 9

When I was a boy, the five-day school week had not yet been introduced in Danish schools. So I thought Willi was a strange kid! On Saturdays his desk in our classroom would always be empty. I noticed that every week during the first five years of my time in school. We were 31 students in our class—and the 30 of us finally agreed that Willi was a Jew. We didn't know much about Jewish beliefs, but we had heard about the Jewish Sabbath, and in those days, during World War II, we also learned that Jews were persecuted all over Europe. So, in a way, I expected that suddenly one day Willi would be gone forever.

It never happened, yet somehow I forgot about Willi, for after five years our ways separated. He continued in the same school while I went on to grammar school.

I met Willi again when for the first time I worshiped on Sabbath. He sat with his parents in the local Adventist church, where I with my mother had decided to attend church for the future. I was now 17 and finally realized that Willi was no Jew after all.

It had been no easy decision to begin worshiping on another day. I used to go

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## **I thought Willi was a strange kid! On Saturdays his desk in our classroom would always be empty.**

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to church on Sunday, but now my conviction—growing out of thorough Bible studies—forced me to join the group of believers whom I had thought to be Jews, and I have enjoyed the fellowship of these Adventist Christians ever since.

Today, after more than 2,250 Sabbaths, I may have slightly adjusted my understanding of God's day of rest, but I enjoy it even more, and I am convinced with Jack Sequeira that "the only way we can acceptably keep the fourth commandment, the Sabbath commandment, is by faith—entering by faith into God's rest. The Sabbath becomes, in this context, the seal of righteousness by faith. . . . Many sincere Sunday-keeping Christians today are fully resting in Christ for salvation. They are keeping the wrong day but for the right reason. Likewise, many sincere Sabbath-keeping Christians do so because their Sabbath keeping will save them. They are keeping the right day for the wrong reason. Both need to be corrected, and if we let Him, the Holy Spirit will do this as He guides us into all truth."<sup>\*</sup>

Why do you keep the Sabbath day holy?

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<sup>\*</sup> Jack Sequeira, *Beyond Belief* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1993), p. 184.

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*By Walder Hartmann, editor and director of communications, Danish Union of Churches, Nærum, Denmark.*

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## Sabbath: Dead or Alive

### LOGOS

**Gen. 2:1-3; Exod. 20:8-11; Mark 2:28; Matt. 24:20; Isa. 58:13, 14; Rom. 15:4**

*“By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing: so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done” (Gen. 2:2, 3, NIV).*

The other day I was interviewed by a journalist from a local newspaper about my job as a youth pastor. After having talked for 45 minutes, he dared ask the question about the Sabbath. He said: “What is a Sabbath?” And I came with all the stuff about Saturday, the Creation, and the Ten Commandments. But I have continued to wonder: “What is a Sabbath?”

As we read in Genesis 2:2, 3, the Sabbath is a day when God rested. He tells us in Exodus 20:8-11 that the Sabbath is a day when we also should rest. Now, rest can be understood in many different ways, but let us look at God’s example first. When God had finished creating, He did not need to rest because of fatigue. He rested because He wanted to spend the whole day with His creation. He did not rest in the sense of sleeping but in the sense that He ceased from creating. He stopped doing what He had done all week and set this day aside for something special.

Our Sabbaths should not be spent in sleeping or on the couch with a good book—that is not what is meant. We need not be lazy in order to rest. We should rest from our daily activities and stress and should relax by having the time to spend with God. On a normal day, we are usually so busy that to take time for God can be difficult. But the Sabbath gives us 24 hours in which any work is forbidden. That means we can worship God and communicate with Him without feeling the stress of the things we could have done in those precious minutes. The Sabbath is a day of rest.

I once heard the Sabbath called a day of dating. On the Sabbath God has a date with His people, not because we cannot be together on other days, but because this day is special. God has promised to meet with His people on that special day. As we read in Genesis 2, God blessed the Sabbath and made it holy. *Holy* is often interpreted as “set aside.” God has set this day aside for fellowship with us.

The Sabbath is also a day of celebration and worship. In Exodus 31:16, we read that the Israelites should celebrate the Sabbath, and in Leviticus 23:3, it is called a day of “sacred assembly.” So, putting these things together, we get a comprehensive picture of what the Sabbath is—a day of rest, a day set aside for fellowship, celebration, and worship.

Our key text for today tells us which day is the Sabbath. It says: “By the seventh day,” and “God blessed the seventh day and made it holy.” The Sabbath, then, is the seventh day, and now we need to find out which day the seventh is. You have probably heard these texts before, but we will quickly repeat some of them. The seventh day in the Bible was Saturday. We can learn that from the Easter story. Jesus was crucified on a Friday, which was called the “Preparation Day” (Luke 23:54, NIV), he rested on the Sabbath, and rose on the first day of the week, Sunday (24:1; John 20:1).



The key text has now shown us what a Sabbath is and which day it is. Another important point about the Sabbath involves the blessings that God promises us if we keep the Sabbath. The Sabbath should not be seen as a burden but as a blessing. God pronounces a blessing on those who keep the Sabbath “without desecrating it” (Isa. 56:2). And Jeremiah prophesied that if Judah would keep the Sabbath and not work on it, there would again be a king on David’s throne. Furthermore, their neighboring countries would come and celebrate in the temple (Jer. 17:24-26). We can believe that the promises of blessing and restoration will be fulfilled for us if we keep the Sabbath.

To finish off the key text, we see in verse 3 that God blessed the Sabbath. If God blessed the Sabbath, I am sure He will also bless those who keep the Sabbath. God is great! He gave us a day of rest and a blessed day with lots of opportunities. It is

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## **I once heard the Sabbath called a day of dating.**

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now your responsibility to use it in a way that gives God the glory. And *you* are the one who decides whether the Sabbath is dead or alive.

### **REACT**

1. How can a day be blessed? What does it mean in practical terms?
2. Give some examples of different ways of appropriate “resting” on Sabbath.
3. What does God’s example by resting on the seventh day signify to me?
4. What elements of true Christian joy find expression in my typical Sabbath?
5. Is there space for refocusing the Sabbath values at my church? If not, what do I do about it?

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*By Anne-May Müller, youth pastor of the Copenhagen (Denmark) Seventh-day Adventist Church.*

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# Designed for Human Delight!

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Mark 2:27, 28**

All false religions “originate in man’s desire to exalt himself above God,” Ellen White declares, “but they result in degrading man below the brute. . . . [Accordingly] every false religion teaches its adherents to be careless of human needs, sufferings, and rights. [Whereas] the gospel places a high value upon humanity as the purchase of the blood of Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

In this context Sabbath observance becomes pivotal, as it perpetually:

**1. Signifies the biblical view of human existence.** Man is a creature, not a potential God. All things were created by the Son of God (John 1:1-3). And since the Sabbath is a memorial of the work of Creation, it is a token of the love and power of Christ.

“The Sabbath calls our thoughts to nature, and brings us into a communion with the Creator. In the song of the bird, the sighing of the trees, and the music of the sea, we still may hear His voice who talked with Adam in Eden in the cool of the day. And as we behold His power in nature we find comfort, for the word that

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## All false religions “originate in man’s desire to exalt himself above God.”

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created all things is that which speaks life to the soul.”<sup>2</sup>

**2. Represents God’s positive attitude toward His creatures.** “It is the service of love that God values. When this is lacking, the mere round of ceremony is an offense to Him. So with the Sabbath. It was designed to bring men into communion with God; but when the mind was absorbed with wearisome rites, the object of the Sabbath was thwarted. Its mere outward observance was a mockery.”<sup>3</sup>

“He [Jesus] had come to free the Sabbath from those burdensome requirements that had made it a curse instead of a blessing. For this reason He had chosen the Sabbath upon which to perform the act of healing at Bethesda. He could have healed the sick man as well on any other day. . . . But this would not have given Him the opportunity he desired. . . . God’s holy rest day was made for man, and acts of mercy are in perfect harmony with its intent.”<sup>4</sup>

## REACT

What is, in your opinion, the primary intent of the Sabbath?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 286, 287.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 281, 282.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 286.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 206, 207.

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*By Morten H. Thomsen, student of religion and music at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark.*

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# Worship in a Loving Relationship

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text:** Rev. 14:6, 7

Time is running out. The end is near. Two powers struggle for sovereignty. One is a hideous and frightening monster (Revelation 13) that, in a mysterious way, has recovered from a mortal wound. The other is a Lamb still bleeding from its sacrificial death (Rev. 14:1; 5:6). Who is going to win the battle and claim the field?

The struggle is for the everlasting reign. All human beings face the choice between two kingdoms and their fundamental laws. The decisions they make determine their final citizenship. The laws are concerned with worship. Worship the monster (13:4), and you worship the dragon as the hidden force behind! Or worship God the Creator and the Lamb who is sitting with Him as King at His throne (5:13).

The law of worship centers on the Sabbath. This fourth commandment of God's fundamental principles for human existence is directly referred to in the appeal to universal worship in Revelation 14:7; worship Him who made "the heavens and the earth, the sea" (Exod. 20:11, NIV).

There is no financial gain in losing your job for resting on Saturday. It is com-

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## **It is completely impractical to prepare in advance for a midafternoon sunset in wintertime.**

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pletely impractical to prepare in advance for a midafternoon sunset in wintertime, such as occurs in Denmark. No astronomical observances give any sense to a seven-day cycle. There is no reason whatsoever to keep the Sabbath—except for this very simple and personal one: He has asked me to do this, and I love Him. I want to share that precious time with Him. Because I love Him, I want to do what He wants me to do.

Knowing and loving another person implies that you at times act simply out of love, doing without question what the loved one asks you to. It takes a deep personal relationship to reach this point, but this is the very heart of keeping the Sabbath holy.

Here you also find the kernel of the end-time struggle, worshipping the Creator by honoring the Sabbath—not on the basis of universally accepted evidence, but in faith and trust; not out of fear, but in joy (Isa. 58:13, 14); not through cunning and manipulating deception (Rev. 13:3), but in freedom; not by force, but by choice; not for merit and personal gain, but in loyalty; not by law, but by love.

## **REACT**

Are we at times bored with the Sabbath, simply because we are bored with Christ? Explain your answer.

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*By Paul Birch Petersen, pastor of Vejlebjerg Junior College, Daugaard, Denmark.*

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# Freedom to Rest

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Exod. 31:17**

The world spins around faster than we can follow at times, leaving us frazzled, in a frantic pace that is hard to break. Our daily programs are filled with activities from the time our alarms buzz in the morning until we go exhausted to bed at night. The day is centered on the clock, and we have become accustomed to being slaves of time.

When God created the heavens and the earth, He took one day out to rest, not because it was necessary, but because He wanted to set an example for us to follow as a reminder of His Creation, from sunset to sunset, 24 hours set apart to be free from our everyday lives and free to spend some time with God and one another.

How, then, do we spend these hours that God has set apart?

**1. Fellowship With God.** The Sabbath is a day in which God wants us to remember Him especially for what He has done for us. We do not have any other pressing work to do, and our time is set free. It is a valuable opportunity given us to spend special time with Him, focusing on His Word and through prayer getting to know Him better.

**2. Fellowship With Others.** The seventh day is a time for fellowship with other

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## **We do not have any other pressing work to do, and our time is set free.**

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people, as well. We go to church to hear God's Word, to gather strength from others' experience with God, and to worship with them.

Fellowship also means extra time to share and minister to our family, the lonely in the church, a stranger, the sick, and the old. Have your eyes and ears open for the needs around you. Jesus made an example for us in healing, ministering, and setting people free from bondage on the Sabbath.

**3. Enjoying God's Creation.** The six days of the week hardly leave any time for us truly to enjoy nature without worrying about what we need to have done. Sabbath provides us time to go outside and spend time in His creation, whether it is out in the wilderness or in a park. Look at the vibrant colors in the fall, the white cover of winter, the radiant green of spring and the blossom of summer, and know that our God, who created beauty, also intended for us to enjoy it.

## **REACT**

1. What kinds of activity would I find most meaningful on a Sabbath?
2. How can we more successfully consider Sabbath a symbol of freedom?

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*By Marianne Dyrud, dean of girls at Vejlebjerg Junior College, Daugaard, Denmark.*

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# Sabbath Addiction

## OPINION

**Key Text: Mark 2:27**

Ask a foreigner how they keep Sabbath, and you will soon discover the variety of tradition; what you thought to be biblical in keeping the Sabbath might often actually be culturally determined tradition. Scandinavian Adventists consider it unacceptable to eat out at a restaurant on Sabbath. In the USA—where this is often practiced—to go to the beach on Sabbath would be equally unacceptable, yet it is approved by us Scandies.

In our worldwide church, we cannot develop a set of rules as to the proper keeping of Sabbath. It is culturally impossible. But when we think of Sabbath, is it not often these rules that come to mind? To become wrapped up in the rules is a true test of the Sabbath, and perhaps *that* is the Sabbath-keeping test we will encounter in the last days. Not that this is new stuff. Jesus reminded the Pharisees that the Sabbath is made for us, not the other way around.

What is it then? It's a celebration of the Creation, of God in us, and the salvation we have in God. In other words, it's party time with God and the people we love. To keep us from the blessing that comes with that, Satan tries to keep our focus

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## In our worldwide church, we cannot develop rules for proper Sabbath keeping.

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on the rules, not the joy.

Basically, what you *do* is between you and God and involves your responsibility to want to do something that sets the day aside. It is all a matter of attitude. Every day should be a walk with God.

It is so much easier to become addicted to the Sabbath rules than to think deeply about it and find out for yourself what Sabbath is for you. Addiction has no positive qualities about it. For one culture, how Sabbath is kept is different from that of another—not any better, only different. Addiction to rules stands in the way of spiritual growth and a closer walk with our Saviour. What if we called it Sabbath celebration instead of Sabbath observance? We all need the fellowship of believers. But what if the local Seventh-day Adventist church doesn't feed you spiritually, and you are spiritually starved because of the regulations? Then try to hold the church accountable for its lack of food for you (John 21:17). Christ made it clear that He came to save us all, not through regulations (in that case the Jews of His time were right up there), but through a personal relationship and acceptance of salvation, not corporate, but personal.

Beware of addiction to the rules. Relax, and let God surprise you.

## REACT

How can I balance the rules and still celebrate the Sabbath as I experience it?

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*By Kirsten R. Øster, communication-media consultant for the Danish Union of Churches, Nærum, Denmark.*

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# PROPHETS AND PSYCHICS



**“Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:20, 21, NIV).**

# Psychic Network

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Heb. 11:1**

Across the television screen flashes the words “Psychic Network.” Many searching minds tune in as the music swells to a crescendo. A well-known celebrity, attractively dressed, articulate, and compassionate appears in our living room. She assures us that everyone has problems and fears, questions about life and our place in it. She offers us a way to help with life’s myriad decisions, such as finding a new job or whether to dump a fiancé or spouse. Our astrological identities are scientifically tied into the psychic system for analysis, as we sit, inquisitive, almost hopeful for our future. Eyewitnesses give testimonials as to how their lives have been enhanced with the aid of their “psychic mentor.”

There has always been a fascination with knowing and controlling our destiny. Yet, when thinking of the relevance of Bible prophecy to our everyday and future living, it is a hard-to-grasp concept. Although the Bible does not have the loud appeal of the media or the spectacular special effects of what may be deemed supernatural feats, it does possess significant power and testimony.

The symbols that were used to help in the interpretation of Bible prophecy were

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## **Our astrological identities are scientifically tied into the psychic system for analysis.**

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not only meaningful, but applicable to life on earth. The evidence of the Holy Spirit in one’s life is the true testament to the power that is God’s and the hope that is ours—if only we believe.

How can we accept the superficial nuances and coincidences of astrological and psychic power? How can we *not* see the majesty and evidence of faith in the Lamb of God? As we are assured by the enthusiastic psychic network believers as to the blessings in their lives, the Christian must share the goodness of God. The Christian should declare through thought, action, word, and deed that the prophecies of God are infallible. They are real. We, too, can bear witness to the intervention of *God’s* power. The world has seen biblical prophecy fulfilled, yet, they refuse to acknowledge and credit the true source.

The good news is that God’s blueprint for the future is the plan of salvation. The psychic proof is knowing that “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1).

The world still searches for the spectacular, attractive, and sensational. We, who hold dear to the Word, know that the greatest show on earth and in heaven is yet to come!

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*By Lynna Scott Carnegie, child-welfare administrator/parent trainer in New York City, New York.*

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# Worship as a Daily Dynamic

## LOGOS

Rev. 3:14-22

Several months ago, Elaine and I, along with our two children, Jessica and Julian—almost seven and four years of age at the time—traveled by car from Massachusetts to Huntsville, Alabama, for a family function. We arrived on Friday afternoon and, needing some things for Sabbath, we dropped off Elaine at the mall, with the promise to pick her up within 30 minutes, and headed for the nearest car wash.

The car wash was the kind at which passengers are asked to get out and pick up their car on the other side of the automated contraption. As soon as I approached our car, after its being washed, I panicked. We had been experiencing problems with our starter, especially when it was hot, and the attendant had turned it off.

Now it refused to start. I turned the key in the ignition switch for the umpteenth time to no avail. Thirty minutes came and went, and my concern level was beginning to rise when Jessica spoke from the back seat: “Daddy, can we pray?” “Of course,” I said. “Would you like to do it?” “Yep!” she responded, and she did. “Dear Jesus, help my daddy start the car so we can go get Mommy, and she won’t be afraid. Amen.” Once again I turned the key in the ignition, and the engine roared to life: saved by a child’s attitude of worship as a daily dynamic.

### Worship Defined

“The English word ‘worship’ is derived from the Anglo-Saxon ‘weorthscipe’—‘worth’ and ‘ship’—meaning one worthy of reverence and honor.”<sup>1</sup>

Worship is especially poignant when it becomes a meaningful part of our daily lives. God is worthy to be praised, not only because He is our Creator but because He is giving and daily supplies our needs. “Worship is an active response to God whereby we declare His worth.”<sup>2</sup>

### Worship: A Daily Necessity (Psalm 63)

In Psalm 63 the psalmist David compares his longing for Yahweh with one who thirsts for water after days in the middle of a desert. “The search for God arises from the psalmist’s past experience of fellowship and enjoyment of God’s goodness. The God he worships is the Great King who promised to be present among his people in ‘the sanctuary.’”<sup>3</sup> In fact, David’s vision of God stimulates his desire for the Divine and fills him with the conviction that God will never forsake him.<sup>4</sup>

### Worship: A Daily Dialogue (Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:1-13)

A year ago I was at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, commonly known as the *Wailing Wall*, where people go to pray—to share their burdens with God—or so it seems by the bodily movements the worshipers make at the Wall. Wanting to be a part of this experience, I donned my *yarmulke* and joined the worshipers at the Wall. I wrote my prayer, with several requests, on a small piece of paper (my business card) and stuck it in the Wall—what an awesome experience!

There has been much argument among biblical scholars as to whose account of the Lord’s prayer is the original—Matthew’s or Luke’s. Despite the fact that



these details might be essential for scholarship, they are not for relationship. More than liturgy, it is a paradigm or model of how we should pray. Contrary to the ostentatious Pharisees, Jesus teaches His disciples to pray simple, meaningful, and dynamic prayers. Ellen White says that “prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. . . . Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Worship: An Exercise in Daily Reverence (Mark 11:15-17; Luke 19:45-48)**

The story found in Mark 11 and Luke 19 is a good example of what happens when worship becomes mundane and trivial instead of meaningful and dynamic. Just as reprehensible is attempting to exclude individuals who belong to a different race, social class, or gender.

The moneychangers and those who sold animals for sacrifices were set up in the Court of the Gentiles. Pilgrims had to change their Roman money into the Tyrian currency (a temple shekel) since the temple tax had to be paid in that coin. The Jewish religious leaders had allowed this area of the temple, the only place Gentiles were allowed to worship God, to become a foul-smelling and noisy public market, hindering the Gentiles from having access to worship God as they had been promised.<sup>6</sup>

For us today, this is a reminder of the need to worship God in reverence, as a sign of respect for Him. A significant aspect of that reverence, to be sure, is the

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## **Jessica spoke from the back seat: “Daddy, can we pray?”**

---

notion of a user-friendly atmosphere of worship in our churches, where anyone and everyone is made to feel welcome as we worship God “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23).

### **REACT**

1. What is my personal understanding of worship?
2. What responsibility do I have to help foster an inclusive environment of worship in my church?

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1. Franklin M. Segler, *Christian Worship—Its Theology and Practice* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1967), p. 5.

2. Ronald Allen and Gordon Borrer, *Worship—Rediscovering the Missing Jewel* (Portland, Ore.: Multnomah Press, 1983), p. 16.

3. Frank E. Gaebelein, gen. ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), vol. 5, p. 426.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Steps to Christ*, p. 93.

6. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8, pp. 727, 728.

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*By Willie Oliver, youth- and family-ministries director, Atlantic Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, South Lancaster, Massachusetts.*

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# Beware of Con Artists!

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: 2 Pet. 1:20, 21**

In this complex and uncertain world, people are troubled by past mistakes, intimidated by the present, and insecure about the future. Many turn to fortune tellers and psychics, who claim to be able to look into the future.

Bible-believing Christians know where they came from, where they are, and where they are going. This is the result of God-inspired prophecy. Carefully interpreted, prophecy leaves no fear of being conned but inspires confidence and gives direction and hope. Ellen G. White expresses her confidence in these prophecies. She states that “no man has a right to add to, or subtract from, any other book written by inspiration of God.”<sup>1</sup>

The specific prophecies of Daniel and Revelation given to the remnant church have all been endorsed by Ellen White. “If Daniel’s visions had been understood, the people could better have understood the visions of John. But at the right time, God moved upon His chosen servant, who, with clearness and in the power of the Holy Spirit, opened the prophecies, and showed the harmony of the visions of Daniel and John and other portions of the Bible, and pressed home upon the hearts

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## Bible-believing Christians know where they are going.

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of the people the sacred . . . warnings of the Word to prepare for the coming of the Son of man.”<sup>2</sup>

For the Laodicean church to heed the warning, prophecy must be declared. In the above quotation, Ellen White, referring to William Miller’s role in the remnant church, shows that there are holy men and women in every age who, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, will indicate that prophecy or Scripture is not of his or her own finding, speculation, or interpretation; but that true prophecies are written by those used by the Holy Spirit.

Because of this, we see the prophecies to be true, constant, as unchanging as is God’s character. Those seeking to understand or reaffirm the role of prophecy need to remember that constancy. For God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. His Word, His prophecies, are sure.

## REACT

1. How would you help a classmate or colleague who believes in psychics to understand the role of God’s prophecies in his or her life?

2. If all prophetic writers were inspired, why are there so many different interpretations of the Scriptures?

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1. *Early Writings*, p. 137.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 231.

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*By Maureen O. Burke, a counselor at St. Mary’s Hospital of Brooklyn, New York.*

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# Unerring Standard

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: 2 Pet. 1:20, 21**

The conclusions that scholars have reached as a result of their scientific investigations are carefully taught and fully explained; while the impression is distinctly given that if these scholars are correct, the Bible cannot be.

Cold philosophical speculations and scientific research, in which God is not acknowledged, are a positive injury. Science opens new wonders to our view; she soars high and explores new depths; but she brings nothing from her research that conflicts with divine revelation. In human ignorance a person may try to support false views of God by appeals to science, but God's words, rightly understood, make us more acquainted with His character and honor.

"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation" (2 Pet. 1:20), reminds us that God is directly involved in the revelation of His character through His Word. If He reveals himself to humanity at all, it is by veiling himself in mystery. His ways are past finding out. Could men fully understand the purposes, wisdom, love, and character of God, they would not believe in Him as an Infinite Being.

A long-time acquaintance of mine recently became a skeptic. The bloom and

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## **A long-time acquaintance of mine recently became a skeptic.**

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verdure of science and philosophy were attractive to his mind. He saw independence in skepticism, and it captivated his imagination. He was deceived, and Satan triumphed. Those who have no vital union with God are swayed one way and another; they put men's opinions in front of God's Word.

We should not ignore God's inspired revelation through Bible prophecy. We should not grasp human assertions and thereby think that judgment against sin is contrary to God's benevolent character. It could be that as we dwell upon and rationalize infinite benevolence, we might forget that there is such a thing as infinite justice. The Bible, the sure word of prophecy, should not be tested by human ideas of science and philosophy, but science and philosophy are to be brought to the test of God's unerring standard—His Word.

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*By Lincoln Blackwood, a physician's assistant at Harlem Hospital, Manhattan, New York.*

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# A Promise to Overcomers

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Rev. 3:21**

Many Seventh-day Adventists hold conversations filled with phrases like “gaining the victory,” “overcoming by the blood of the Lamb,” and many others that are similar in intent. Obviously, many of us are concerned about what we need to do to overcome sin. Here are four points that I have found useful based on steps found in Revelation 3:14-21:

**1. Recognize that our true condition is not what we mistakenly try to project.** God says, “You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked” (verse 17, NIV). We spend most of our time attempting to create pictures of ourselves that are not really us. We attempt to make others think that we have everything under control. If we want to begin the process of overcoming, we must give up the charade. We are truly wretched.

**2. Submit to God’s discipline.** “Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline” (verse 19). The ruling ethic in today’s world is, “Do what feels good as long as you keep it to yourself.” Submission is alien when everything around us screams for assertive action. As difficult as it may seem, we must submit to God’s discipline. He says, “Buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your

## Many of us choose to be mediocre.

eyes, so you can see” (verse 18).

**3. Be earnest in submission.** Many of us choose to be mediocre. “Just do what it takes to get by,” we say. God is never pleased with anything halfhearted and is certainly unable to work with halfhearted submission. Trying to straddle the fence (sort of God’s will, sort of our will) will never work. We cannot serve two masters.

**4. Repent.** Having to turn in the opposite direction is one of the hardest tasks that we have to face. We don’t like to admit when we are lost. We keep going in the same direction, looking for familiar landmarks that never turn up.

If we are to overcome, we must learn to attack the future like Paul. We must turn around and “forgetting those things which are behind, . . . press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:13, KJV).

I look forward to accepting the reward that is promised in Revelation 3:21. My prayer is that you do too.

## REACT

1. How important is the process of overcoming in the Christian life? What makes it so important?

2. Is overcoming a one-time action? Explain.

*By Allan A. Chase, principal of the Hanson Place SDA Elementary School, Brooklyn, New York.*



# Where Are All the Prophets?

## OPINION

**Key Text: 2 Pet. 1:20, 21**

*“And by a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved” (Hos. 12:13).*

Here we are, living on the brink of the twenty-first century, with the return of Christ an even more palpable reality, with life more confusing, complex, and chaotic, and with our tendency to blur the margins between right and wrong in this era of human reason, and I wonder, *Why are we not prophesying?* If ever spiritual Israel needed prophets to edify, exhort, and comfort (see 1 Cor. 14:5), it is now.

Of course one hears of the occasional modern-day spiritual forecaster, but prophesying appears to be more of a spectator sport than an activity pursued by *all* of God’s people, which leads me to the question: Where are we spiritually?

Prophesying is evidence of the church’s faith and spiritual well-being. It is a sign that God is dwelling with His people and that His people are willing recipients of His grace (see verses 24, 25). As our faith grows, I believe we will gain the ability

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## **Here we are living on the brink of the twenty-first century.**

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to both prophesy and separate the false prophet from the true prophet. This leads me to another question: Where is our faith?

Living in a world that validates the material and elevates human rationale (i.e., logic), it is sometimes difficult to realize that there are other ways to arrive at the truth. The one tried and true way God has communicated to His people is by direct revelation to the human intellect. This may seem magical to those who do not believe, but believers must know that “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet. 1:21). Great faith is needed to believe and to be undecieved.

Let us all become involved in this powerful method of encouraging our faith. As Paul says, let us “be eager to prophesy” (1 Cor. 14:39, NIV), as it is one of the spiritual gifts that we must actively pursue.

“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy” (Acts 2:17, 18, NIV).

Again I ask: Where are we spiritually?

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*By Esmee J. Bovell, superintendent of schools, Northeastern Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, St. Albans, New York.*

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## Next Quarter's Lessons

### The Book of Judges

If you have not yet received a copy of *CQ* for second quarter 1996, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

#### Lesson 1: Unfinished Business

*Scripture:* Judg. 1:1–2:15.

*Theme:* Since God was always faithful in keeping His covenant promises to His people, the Israelites continued to be successful in occupying the Promised Land as long as they relied on Him. But as they neglected their covenant with God and disobeyed Him, they failed to make headway against their enemies.

#### Lesson 2: Ups and Downs

*Scripture:* Judg. 2:6–3:6.

*Theme:* During the period of the judges, God's people fell into a repeated pattern of apostasy, suffering at the hands of their enemies, deliverance through a judge sent by their merciful Lord, followed by apostasy.

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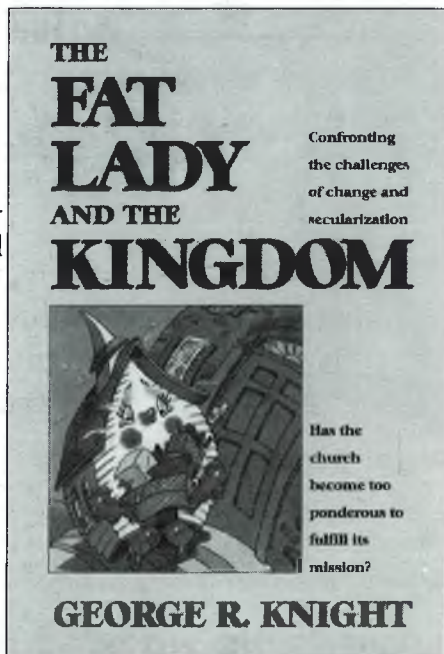
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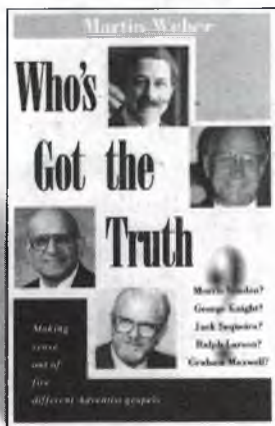
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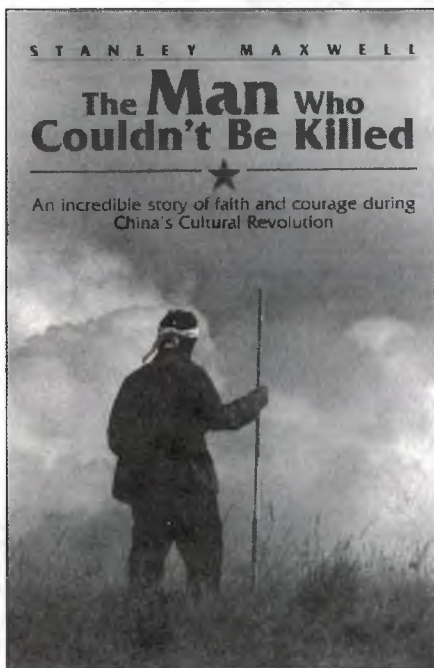
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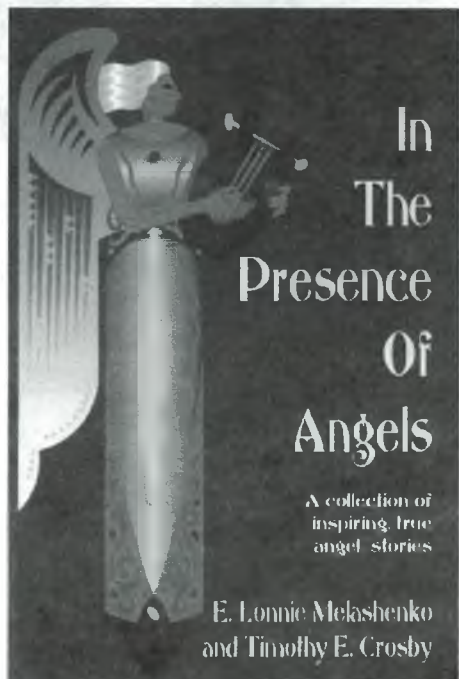
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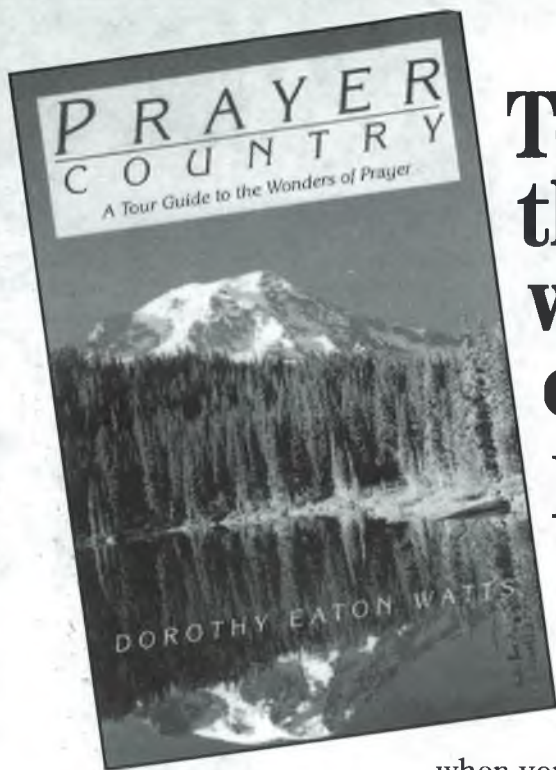
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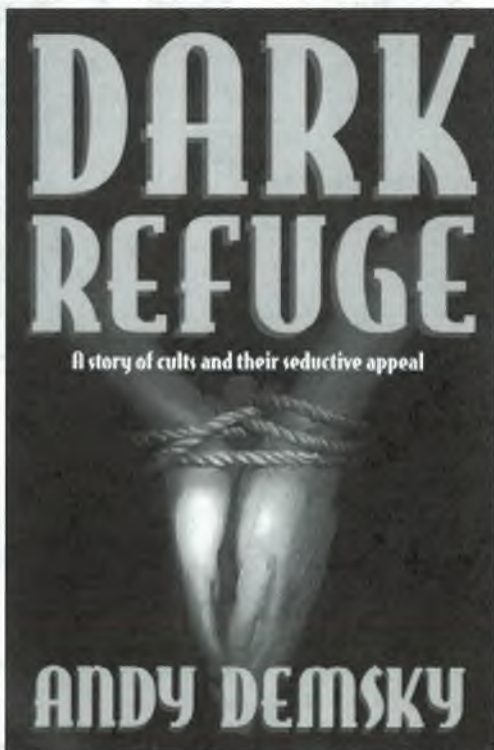
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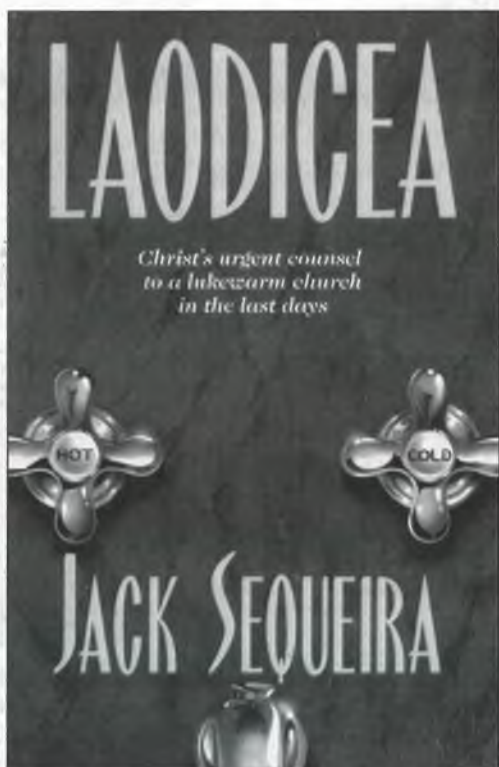
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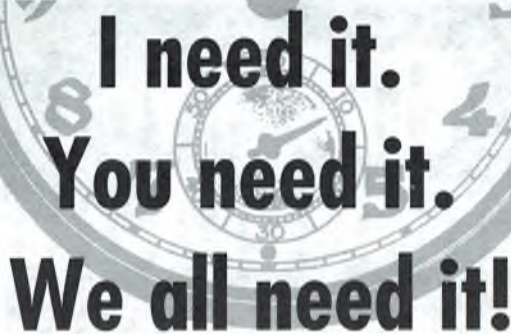
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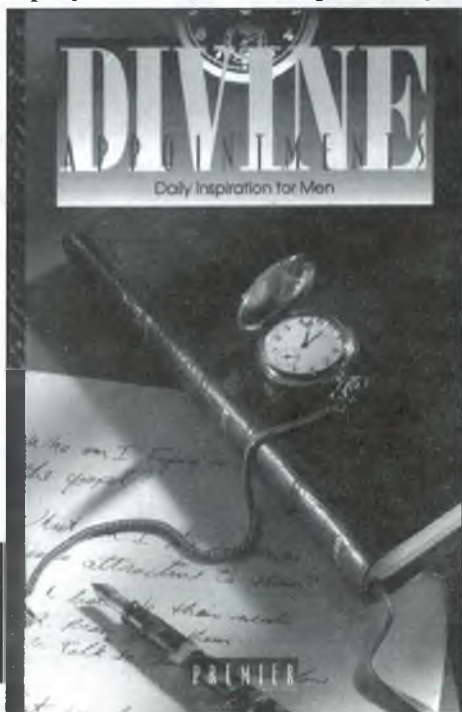
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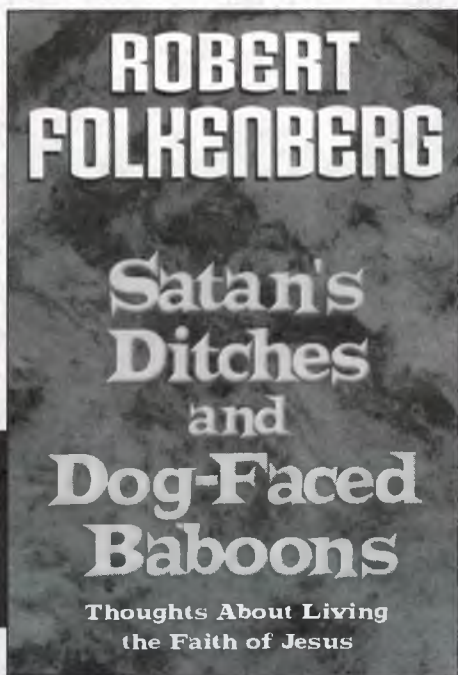
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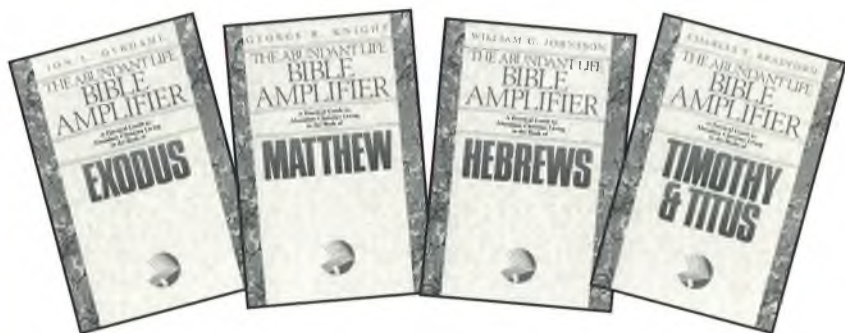
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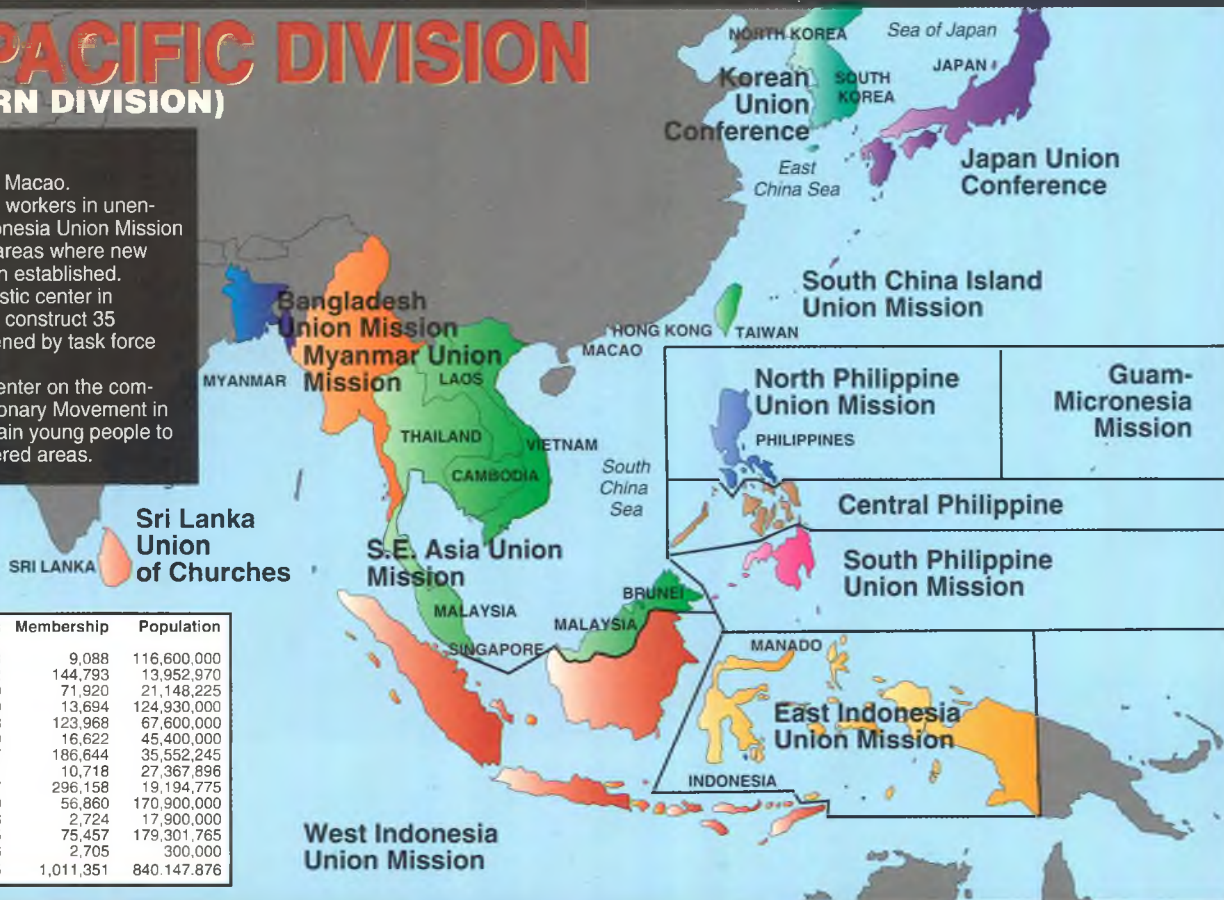




# ASIA PACIFIC DIVISION (FAR EASTERN DIVISION)

## Mission Projects:

1. Evangelistic Center in Macao.
2. Sponsor 50 task force workers in unentered areas of West Indonesia Union Mission and build 20 chapels in areas where new congregations have been established.
3. Construct an evangelistic center in Manado City, Indonesia; construct 35 chapels in territories opened by task force workers.
4. Construct a training center on the compound of the 1000 Missionary Movement in Manila, Philippines, to train young people to plant churches in unentered areas.



Unions	Churches	Membership	Population
Bangladesh	68	9,088	116,600,000
Central Philippine	752	144,793	13,952,970
East Indonesia	490	71,920	21,148,225
Japan	109	13,694	124,930,000
Korea	583	123,968	67,600,000
Myanmar	159	16,622	45,400,000
North Philippine	1,177	186,644	35,552,245
South China Island	61	10,718	27,367,896
South Philippine	1,307	296,158	19,194,775
Southeast Asia	270	56,860	170,900,000
Sri Lanka	28	2,724	17,900,000
West Indonesia	495	75,457	179,301,765
Guam-Micronesia	16	2,705	300,000
<b>Totals June 30, 1994</b>	<b>5,515</b>	<b>1,011,351</b>	<b>840,147,876</b>