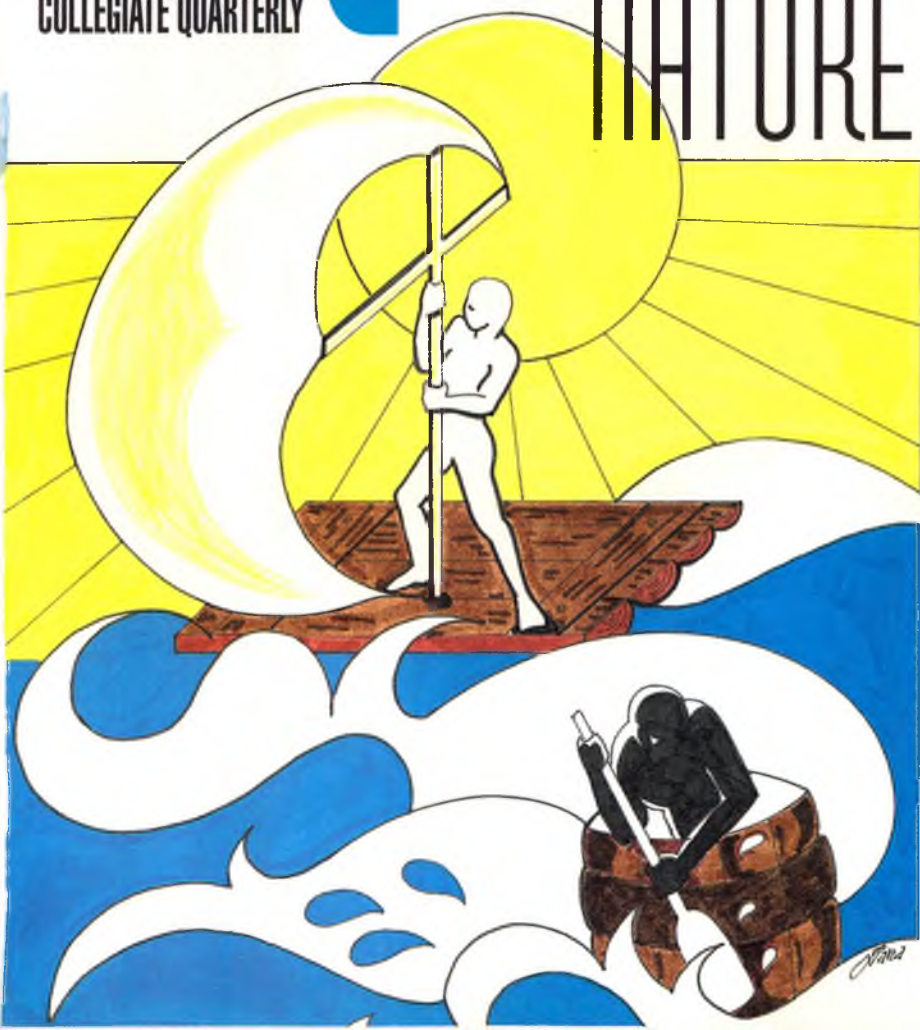


APRIL-JUNE 1999

**EQ**

COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

OUR  
HUMAN  
NATURE



*1999*



**Julie Z. Lee:** Senior English & psychology major and a writing intern for a public relations office

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# OUR HUMAN NATURE

APRIL - JUNE 1999

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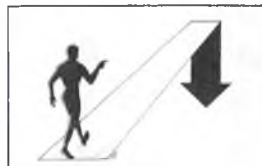
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Sabbath  
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# OUR HUMAN NATURE



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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 writers who have participated in *CQ*'s writing program for this quarter.

In producing this unique Sabbath School lesson quarterly, more than three hundred 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 fifty-nine thousand. It is published in the English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and Finnish languages.

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Why not! Each year 300 young adults from around the world participate in the *Collegiate Quarterly* writing program. CQ gives Seventh-day Adventist young people aged 18 to 35 a unique opportunity to grow spiritually, to share the benefits of their Bible study, to exchange ideas, and to contribute to the mission of the church.

You are the most important ingredient in our CQ formula because you can be the answer to our greatest need—the need for caring, committed, contributing authors. If you think you'd like to participate in the writing of a lesson—and get paid for it—write us today:

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**COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY**

## **This Quarter's Illustrator**



Twenty-seven-year-old Juana Battista, a pastor's daughter, is a nurse. She is presently developing her interest in drawing, however, by studying art at the International Comix School in Florence, Italy.



# 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.

Adventist young-adult groups work together in producing this quarterly. More than three hundred 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 creatively and individually to the subject.

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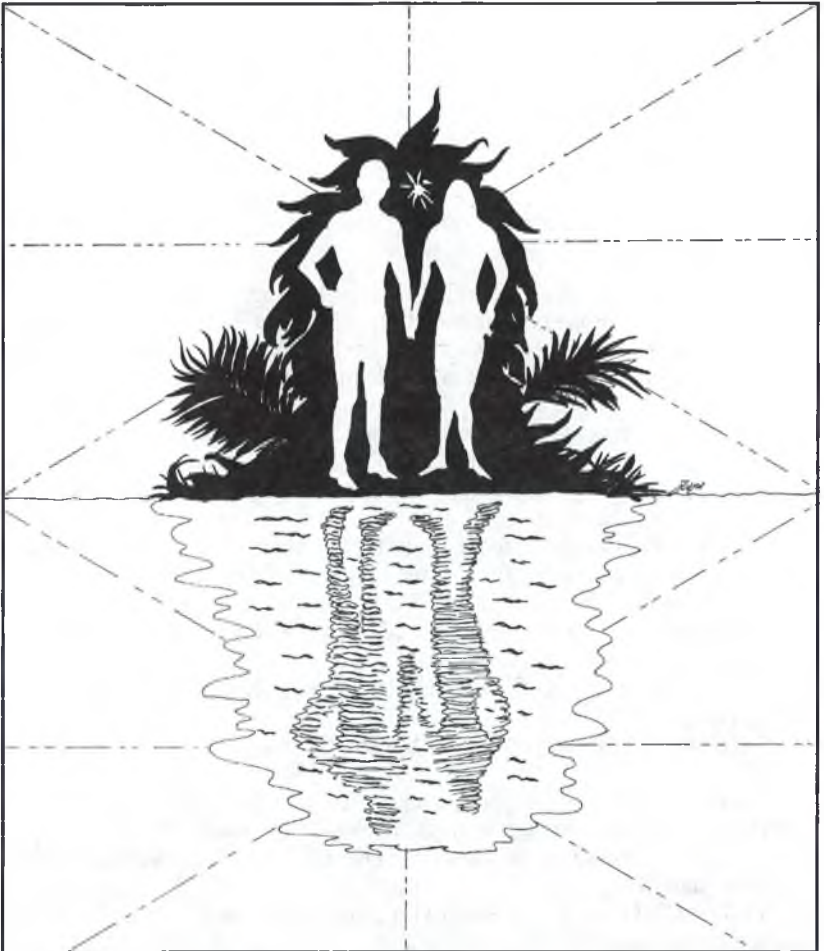
## Pointers for Study

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" (Monday's portion of the lesson). Read this entire passage in conjunction with the quarterly introduction to give you 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 the Bible passages indicated in bold headings before reading the comments beneath the heading.
4. Read the remainder of the 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.*

# WHAT WE'RE MADE OF



**“God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:27, NKJV).**

# The Soil Creature

## INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Gen. 5:1

- Betsy: Mmm, George, this green stuff on the ground really tastes great! I wonder what it is.
- George: I have to agree, Betsy. This green thing is hitting the spot. Hey, isn't that our Creator over there? Let's go and say Hello. Uh, what is He doing?
- Betsy: George! He just grabbed up a handful of . . . of . . . soil! Is He building a castle or something?
- George: Looks as though He's forming it into some kind of shape. Well, at least He looks really excited. He is definitely enjoying Himself. Look at the love in His eyes! Doesn't the air just seem to tingle?
- Betsy: I would almost say that the soil is beginning to . . . It's changing!
- George: The air is all tingly; don't you feel it?
- Betsy: George, would you listen? Look, the soil is turning into . . . into flesh!
- George: Ooh, the air is so light. I feel all happy inside! A minute ago nothing, but now I feel that something exciting is going to happen.

---

## He is definitely enjoying Himself. Look at the love in His eyes!

- Betsy: Something is happening! Our Creator just breathed into the soil-creature.
- George: Moo! Betsy, what are you talking about? Wait, I hear music? May I have this dance?
- Betsy: George, not now! You aren't watching! The soil-creature just sat up. And, George, look! It's coming this way! The soil-creature is heading this way!
- Soil Creature: Hello, you two look happy. My name is Adam. Hmm, what shall I call you two?
- George: Betsy, this creature, uh, it looks like . . .
- Soil-Creature: Hmm. Is this animal crazy or what? **Crazy Or What! C-O-W!** That's it! You are cows. I'll see you later; there's much to be done before Sabbath.
- George: Betsy, that creature looks just like our Creator. Where did it come from? When was it made?
- Betsy: I was trying to tell you—oh, never mind!

---

*By Paul Collymore, a second-year computer science student at the University of the West Indies, Barbados.*

# Let Us Make Man

## LOGOS

Gen. 1:26-31; 2:18-25

“God saw everything that He had made” (Gen. 1:31). This text and all that goes before it happens to be part of the most controversial topic in modern times, the origin of humankind. As the issue is discussed, young people worldwide face the decision over whether to accept the ideologies and teachings of the world or to remain faithful and trust the simple but powerful “thus saith the Lord” as it is recorded in Scripture.

As a result, young people are becoming more and more confused and are ultimately being deceived by these false theories. An example that is prevalent today is that God used evolution to create humanity. The shift away from evolution to God-directed-evolution is an effort to bridge the chasm that has existed between these two concepts. We are admonished by God’s Word, however, that we should not be fooled by “cunningly devised fables” (2 Pet. 1:16), that we need to determine for ourselves the truth as it relates to the nature and origin of humanity.

### How did humanity originate? (Gen. 1:26, 27; 2:7).

From the Genesis account of the origin of humankind, three facts can be deduced:

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## The text gives us a fabulous word-picture of our loving Creator actually kneeling on the ground.

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1. The decision to create humanity was made at the highest level that exists in the universe—the Godhead (verse 26).

2. Humanity was made in the image of God (verse 26).

3. Humankind was molded and fashioned by the hand of God rather than spoken into existence (2:7).

These three facts give us a clear picture of the deliberate actions taken by God as He wove the intricate network of nerves, cells, bones, and muscles into the most fabulous specimen in the known universe, the human body! Added to this, the text gives us a fabulous word-picture of our loving Creator actually kneeling on the ground, lovingly and accurately molding a structure—using Himself as the model—that would soon be filled with His breath of life.

### How could humanity be made in the image of God when God is a spirit?

This question is frequently asked by young people. It stems from the general belief that a spirit has no form, but this is not true with God. The Bible gives us evidence of the capabilities of God: voice (Matt. 3:17), hearing (Ps. 3:4), and sight (Prov. 15:3). To strengthen the concept that God has a form, Genesis 3:8 makes a reference to God walking in the Garden of Eden. The story found in Exodus 33:18-23 gives us further irrefutable proof. When Moses asked to see God’s glory (verse 18), God told him that no human being could see His face and live (verse 20). He did tell Moses that He would place him in the cleft of a rock and cover him

with His hand while He passed by (verse 22). This would allow Moses to see His back parts but not His face when His hand was removed (verse 3).

In addition, Ellen White writes, “Man was to bear God’s image, *both in outward resemblance* and in character. Christ alone is the ‘express image’ . . . of the Father; but *man was formed in the likeness of God*. His nature was in harmony with the will of God. His mind was capable of comprehending divine things. His affections were pure; his appetites and passions were under the control of reason. He was holy and happy in bearing the image of God and in perfect obedience to His will.”<sup>1</sup> A good analogy that further explains this concept of humanity bearing the image of God is that of identical twins. Though twins look alike, there are usually some personality and physical differences. Likewise, God has immortality; we do not. God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent; we do not have these qualities. God did share with us some of His own attributes: He gave us the ability to think and reason and to make choices; He designed us as social beings with desires for companionship and love.

As can be seen, humanity was perfect as they came from the hand of God. They were fully connected and as a result they could understand and communicate directly with God. God provided for every need: food (1:29), a home (2:8), employment (verse 15), and companionship (verses 18, 21, 22). Humanity was the object of the first five days of creation!

Added to His providence and care, God protected humanity from the constant badgering of the enemy. Ellen White writes, “Satan was not to follow them with continual temptations; he could have access to them only at the forbidden tree.”<sup>2</sup>

God intended for the human family to live eternally. Eternal life was, however, dependent on obedience to the expressed commands of God. In this sense, therefore, humanity enjoyed “conditional mortality,” that is, eternal life as long as they met the conditions God specified. God ensured that humanity would retain its perfect character by taking care of all human needs. This should have been adequate for humankind to retain God’s image, but was it?

## **REACT**

1. What should the uniqueness of being made in God’s image say about our self-worth?

2. Why did Jesus have to put on our likeness if we were already in His likeness? (Phil. 2:7).

3. Do we resemble one member of the Godhead or all three simultaneously?

4. What are some alternatives to the assumption that humans were created by God in His image?

5. What are some challenges in believing that humans came into existence in some way other than as described in Genesis 1 and 2?

6. What compelling reasons do you find for belief in the Genesis account of Creation?

7. How should being a creationist affect a person’s life? Be specific.

8. How should being an evolutionist affect a person’s life? Be specific.

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1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 45 (italics supplied).

2. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

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*By Patrick Bryan, assistant town planner for the government of Barbados, St. Michael, Barbados.*

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## “Very Good!”

### TESTIMONY

Key Text: Gen. 1:31

“In the beginning, man was created in the image of God. He was in perfect harmony with the nature and the law of God; the principles of righteousness were written upon his heart.”<sup>1</sup>

When God decided to create humanity, He had nothing but excellence—perfection—in His mind. God’s ideal for humankind was supernatural. As we read from the book of Genesis, God created everything, and behold, it was “very good” (Gen. 1:31)—not simply good, but *very* good. We were indeed made perfect in every aspect. What does it mean, however, for us to be created perfect?

Ellen White has described what this means: “Man was to bear God’s image, both in outward resemblance and in character.”<sup>2</sup>

“As man came forth from the hand of his Creator, he was of lofty stature and perfect symmetry. His countenance bore the ruddy tint of health and glowed with the light of life and joy. Adam’s height was much greater than that of men who now inhabit the earth. Eve was somewhat less in stature; yet her form was noble, and full of beauty.”<sup>3</sup>

“God made man upright; He gave him noble traits of character, with no bias

---

## Spiritually, physically, and emotionally we were created perfect.

---

toward evil.”<sup>4</sup> “His nature was in harmony with the will of God. His mind was capable of comprehending divine things. His affections were pure; his appetites and passions were under the control of reason. He was holy and happy in bearing the image of God and in perfect obedience to His will.”<sup>5</sup> “He endowed him with high intellectual powers, and presented before him the strongest possible inducements to be true to his allegiance.”<sup>6</sup>

God certainly made perfection when He created humankind. After all, He modeled us after Himself, and God was and is perfect. And so we came from the dust, a model of God’s handiwork. Spiritually, physically, and emotionally we were created perfect. Mrs. White does not hesitate to give us a clear testimony of our nature as regarding how God created us in the beginning. We have, therefore, no doubt after reading her testimony that we were indeed created “*very good!*”

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. 467.

2. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 45.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

# Homo Sapiens Sapiens

## EVIDENCE

**Key Texts: Gen. 5:3; Luke 3:38**

What is humankind? Are we *merely* a group of chromosomes XX-XY male, XX-XX female, as defined by geneticists? Well, chromosomes do contain the blueprint for our physical attributes and how we behave, but are they responsible for what makes us in God's image?

Scientists have classified human beings as part of the animal kingdom. In most zoology texts, our classification would be: *phylum*, Chordata; *subphylum*, Vertebrata; *class*, Mammalia (mammals); *subclass* eutheria, primates, humans.

These are attempts to identify a human being as just another entity of nature. In fact, biology courses claim that scientists have studied our evolution and discovered overwhelming evidence to prove that other species related to humankind did exist. To name a few humanoid directly supposedly in our lineage, we have the *Homo habilis* (handy man), *Homo erectus* (e.g. Peking man, one million years ago), *Homo sapiens* ("archaic" form), *Homo sapiens neanderthalensis* (Neanderthal man, evolved from the archaic human), and *Homo sapiens sapiens* (that's us!), with these forms all existing at least in one period from as far back as two million years ago to the present day.

It makes it extremely difficult for Christians to understand how we could

---

## Which form did He create in His likeness?

---

possibly be made in God's image when scientists claim that there have apparently been so many different human forms in the past! Which form did He create in His likeness?

To tackle this seemingly unsolvable problem, we need to look at our two main texts for today. The first one, Genesis 5:3, tells us exactly what we need to know; that is, no deviation of humanity occurred as it begat children, because Adam begat "a son in his own likeness, after his image," and his son in turn begat children in his likeness. This follows through to *all* present-day humans because God ordained the first couple to multiply and replenish the earth (Gen.1:28), which they did. We see this in Genesis 5 and Matthew 1.

So now we know for a fact that we have the likeness of the first couple on earth. But who did the first couple have the likeness of? None other than God Himself (Luke 3:38). So we, too, still have and always had the likeness and image of Adam—and of God! Yet right to the end of the earth, humankind will continue to try to prove that our existence here is just coincidence. Be on your guard against the wiles of the devil, and you will inherit that heavenly kingdom of God.

## REACT

Why is there no mention of various human species in the Bible?

---

*By Heather Armstrong, a fourth-year medical student, University of the West Indies, Barbados.*

---

# Perfecting My Image

## HOW-TO

**Key Texts:** Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 7:1

On the sixth day, God, the Master Artist, created a replica of His image, to whom the name *humankind* was given. Sad to say, some paintings are ruined by the elements such as water and sunlight; similarly, humankind was and is being ruined by the element of sin.

In fact, sin has damaged some of God's replicas so badly that it is, in some cases, very difficult for Him to recognize His own artwork! There is hope, however. Just as paintings can be restored, we can restore our image by using the original copy of God Himself as a guideline.

Now, what does the painting need, and how can it be restored? Here are a few steps:

**1. Use a clean canvas to get the job going.** Starting on a dirty one just makes a job impossible to perfect. Our bodies need to be in good shape. First Corinthians 3:16 reminds us that our bodies are the temple of God; we need to keep in good health by eating the right kinds of foods and exercising. We are to abstain from worldly pleasures like smoking, drinking, and illicit sex.

**2. Get the right types of brushes.** Here are two brand-name, high-quality

## Sin has damaged some of God's replicas so badly that it is difficult to recognize His artwork!

ones: the Bible and prayer (2 Tim. 2:15; James 5:16). These two keep you in connection with Jesus, which is very important to safeguard you against the devil.

**3. Find the right colors.** Jesus loves the bright color of love, so you need to get lots of that. While He was on earth, He used love wherever He went. Love is the sharing of a part of yourself with others; it evokes happiness in those around you and also in yourself (1 John 4:7).

**4. Always have a positive outlook.** Don't begin a painting with no intention of seeing it to its completion (Eph. 6:18).

**5. Don't give up.** With some time and energy and the help of Jesus, the Master Artist, your painting will begin its restoration with its completion being when Jesus comes again and makes all things new.

## REACT

1. If Adam was made perfect, how could he sin?
2. In what ways has humankind lost God's image?
3. Think of other ways that we can renew our images.
4. Is it possible to have a perfect image? Explain your answer.

*By Racquel Lewis, a second-year sociology and psychology student at the University of the West Indies at Barbados.*



# Hurry!

## OPINION

**Key Text: 1 Cor. 15:49**

Dear God,

Hi, it's me again, Paul. I am really depressed now, Father. I had another one of those disturbing classes today. First, the professor continued her lecture on the humanoids. She said, without batting an eyelid, that the earth was billions of years old and humanoid appeared on the earth. Would You believe it? Then she said humanoid developed into primitive man and apes.

Then is when I had to hold back my tears, God. How could she say such horrible things? Doesn't she know what she is doing to You? She worsened it by saying that apes and humans are very alike because of this common lineage.

I could barely stomach that one. I wanted to shout out, "How could you say that? Are you saying that not only did God *not* create me in the beauty of His image but that I am related to a monkey too?" I *did* want to say it, but I don't think she would understand. If she only knew how much it hurts You when people say things like that and deny You, God, and glorify evolution and not You! I don't want to be the one to tell You this, but, God, some of the people in my class believed it! They actually believed it!

---

## Some of the people in my class believed it! They actually believed it!

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I am ashamed, Father, for what they are doing to Your name. How long will they keep disappointing You? You loved us so much that You made us with Your own hands. *You* formed us in Your image even while we were yet unborn. God, You died on the cross so we could gain back our perfect image of You. And look what we do! We pretend to be self-made. Oh, I am sorry, too, for us Christians who don't understand that we are made in Your image. I pray that each of us Christians shows Your character in our lives. We still don't know that being in Your image leaves us no choice but to show others Your wisdom, Your thoughts, Your kindness, Your forgiving spirit, Your love. Help us—teach us—to reflect Your image in all that we do and say each day.

Father, I am tired of waking to my sinful self and this weary, sin-filled body, a beautiful body-temple that I have destroyed with sin. I love to be re-made with that immortal image You promised me in Your Word. I look heavenward each day for Your return. Hurry, Father, for this world You created constantly denies You. Hurry and restore me to Your image again. Hurry, Father, hurry—please hurry. Your faithful son, Paul

## REACT

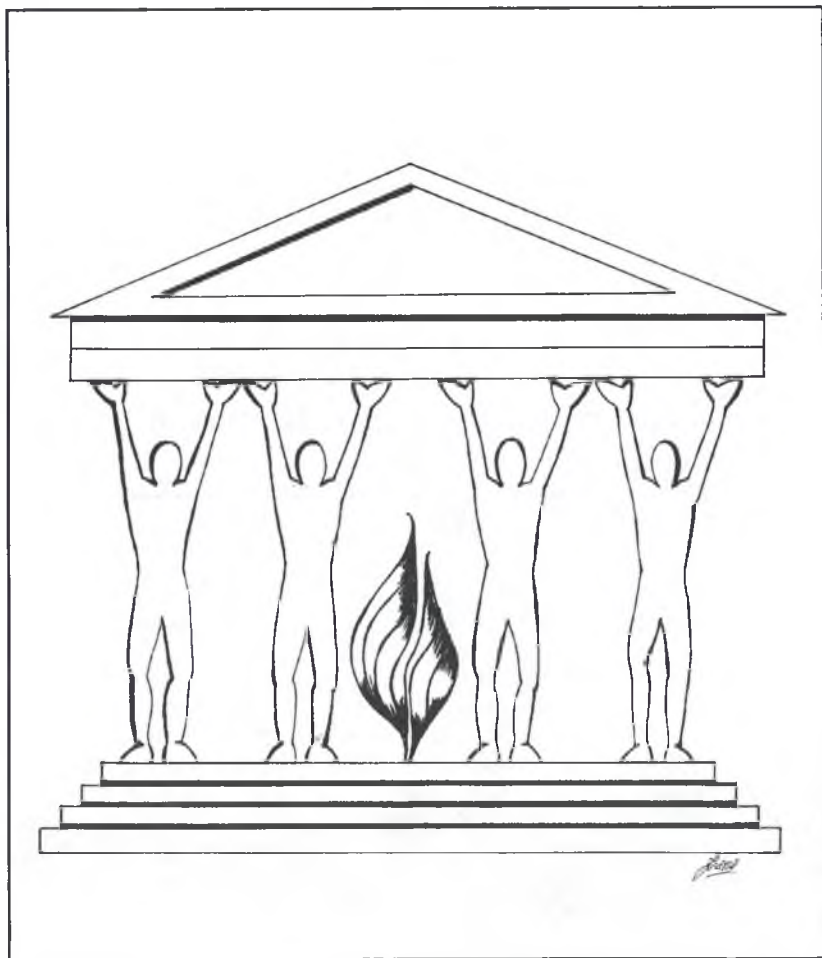
Why is it important to verify that present-day humankind reflects God's image?

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*By Paul Collymore, a second-year computer science student, University of the West Indies, Barbados.*

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# GETTING PHYSICAL



**“Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?*” (1 Cor. 6:19, NKJV).**

# By Accident or Design

## INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Eph. 2:10

Since Darwin introduced the theory of evolution 140 years ago, the conflict over whether humanity was created or evolved has raged back and forth. As we approach the end of this world's history, Satan will use many lies and deceptions, just as he did in the Garden of Eden at the beginning. Those who wish to believe in a blind process that cannot be proved and is the result of human imagination are being deceived. Evolution claims to be an onward and upward progression, from slime and ooze to the pinnacle of the process—humankind. Why should it stop here? As an ever continuing process, why are not all the stages evident today?

The Bible specifically says that each species has its own individual development. This means that cats produce kittens, lambs come from sheep, and so forth. In God's natural world, no animal produces a different species. A human being is a unique creature because of its power to think and reason and control its environment. Animals don't make fires when they're cold or put on coats!

Which makes more sense: that we are the product of chance or the work of an organized Creator who is in control of events, who has a reason for our existence and a hope for our future? The Bible asserts that we are God's workmanship

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## **The Bible tells us quite clearly what is good for us.**

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created a little lower than the angels and made in the image of God. First Corinthians 6:19 says that we are the temple of God and that He wishes to dwell in us. When a visitor comes to stay, we behave at our best, we clean and tidy things up, and we offer the best food and drink. We try to please our guest. If we invite God into our lives, we should be ready to please Him by offering only what is good, wholesome, and pure.

The Bible tells us quite clearly what is good for us. Our Maker knows best, and so by eating and drinking and looking after our bodies both physically and mentally, we shall keep ourselves as dwellings fit for a king.

Terry Waite, envoy for the Archbishop of Canterbury, went to Beirut to negotiate the release of hostages. He was taken hostage himself and spent some years in solitary confinement with nothing to do, very little to eat, no one to speak to, not even knowing where he was. To keep himself sane and his mind clear, he did mental arithmetic, continuing the same problem for days at a time.

He attributes his ability to keep himself alert and in control of himself to occupying his mind. Our minds play an important part in maintaining our body. We are what we think.

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*By Louise Willey, a student of multimedia at Cheltenham and Gloucester College, England.*

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# Made Like God

## LOGOS

### Ps. 8:1-9

*“What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor” (Ps. 8:4, 5, NRSV).*

What a miracle we are. What a marvelous, complex, chemical factory. What amazing electrochemical circuitry we have. What is it that set all this in motion, that keeps this body functioning? The Bible gives us a simple answer. We were created by God, in His image (Gen. 1:26, 27). When God created humankind, He began with the dust of the ground and made a perfect image. Into this form He breathed the breath of life, transforming it into “a living being” (2:7, NKJV).

To our first parents God gave the ability to create other humans in their image, but it is God who still gives life. In Eden Adam and Eve had the potential to live forever. They were perfect, and they had access to the fruit of the tree of life. But when they sinned, access to that tree was removed (3:22) and they began to die. We have been dying ever since! We are mortal, and when we die our bodies return to the ground, while our breath (the essential sign of life) returns to God who gave it (Eccles. 12:7).

“Happy are those to whom the LORD imputes no iniquity, and in whose spirit

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## **To our first parents God gave the ability to create other humans in their image.**

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there is no deceit. While I kept silence [about my sin], my body wasted away through my groaning all day long” (Ps. 32:2, 3, NRSV).

David’s words illustrate for us the effect our minds can have on our bodies. He had done wrong and knew it, but he tried to fool himself that everything was all right because no one knew. But the longer he tried to push the guilt away, the worse he felt physically.

Today we know that there is a link between suppressed stress and diseases like arthritis. So how happy we can be when we know the Lord has forgiven us. The wise man said, “A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones”: (Prov. 17:22, NKJV). A content mind has a positive effect on the physical well-being, and a mind at peace with God is better than any medicine. God created us to live in a harmonious relationship with Him.

When, by our actions, we are out of harmony with Him, our whole being is affected. David knew this, and that is why he cried out to the Lord, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Ps. 51:10). David knew the only way he could be physically right was to be spiritually right with God! “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).

Modern medical science is stressing the importance of rest, exercise, and proper diet for physical well-being. We should not be surprised; God created us and provided all we need. God designed the earth and caused it to rotate so there

are times of light and dark. We are designed for rest during the dark hours. God provided an abundance of different foods—fruits, grains, nuts, and later, vegetables—that we might receive all the nutrients required for life. And just as 70 percent of our bodies is water, so God provided a world in which two-thirds of the surface is covered with water. As we drink regularly of this pure liquid, our bodies are cleansed internally and enabled to function at the right temperature. As we shower, bathe, or just wash with clean water, we are externally cleansed, thus helping to prevent infection and disease.

God also designed that we should work (be physically active) in order to promote and maintain physical health. Just as the health of the body is affected by the mind, so is the mind affected by the body. If we eat and drink and rest and work as God designed, we will be physically much better off, and our minds will function better too. What we do affects the way we feel, and the way we feel affects what we can do. That's the way God made us.

“Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's” (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). Paul is here reminding us that not only did God create us, He also bought us back from sin by the death of Jesus on Calvary.

We therefore have a choice about how we live. The choice is, Do we live for ourselves, or Do we live for God? God communicates with us through our minds. It is with our minds that we read the Bible, listen to studies from the Word, reason about where we came from and where we are going. It is through our minds that God prompts us to know right and wrong. So if we want to be open to God and His leading in our lives, we need to be sure our minds are functioning at their best. And our minds can function at their best only if we are physically at our best.

## **REACT**

1. Why do you think acknowledging that we are created by God gives us a better outlook than thinking we are the product of chance evolution?
2. How does your physical health affect your spiritual outlook?
3. What are some ways your body is like a temple for the Holy Spirit?
4. What kinds of things should never happen in a temple?
5. Why do you think the Adventist Church places such an emphasis on health?

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*By Paul S. Lockham, pastor of a two-church district and youth sponsor in Newport, South Wales, United Kingdom.*

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# Healthy Body, Healthy Mind

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: 1 Cor. 6:19, 20**

“Right physical habits promote mental superiority. Intellectual power, physical stamina, and length of life depend upon immutable laws. . . . Daniel’s clearness of mind and firmness of purpose, his power in acquiring knowledge and in resisting temptation, were due in a great degree to the plainness of his diet in connection with his life of prayer.”<sup>1</sup>

“Daniel’s parents had trained him in his childhood to habits of strict temperance. They had taught him that he must conform to nature’s laws in all his habits; that his eating and drinking had a direct influence upon his physical, mental, and moral nature, and that he was accountable to God for his capabilities; for he held them all as a gift from God and must not, by any course of action, dwarf or cripple them. As the result of this teaching, the law of God was exalted in his mind and revered in his heart.”<sup>2</sup>

“Since the mind and the soul find expression through the body, both mental and spiritual vigor are in great degree dependent upon physical strength and activity; whatever promotes physical health promotes the development of a strong mind and a well-balanced character. Without health, no one can as distinctly understand

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## Intellectual power, physical stamina, and length of life depend upon immutable laws.

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or as completely fulfill his obligations to himself, to his fellow beings, or to his Creator. Therefore the health should be as faithfully guarded as the character.”<sup>3</sup>

“The misuse of our physical powers shortens the period of time in which our lives can be used for the glory of God. And it unfits us to accomplish the work God has given us to do. By allowing ourselves to form wrong habits, by keeping late hours, by gratifying appetite at the expense of health, we lay the foundation for feebleness. By neglecting physical exercise, by overworking mind or body, we unbalance the nervous system. Those who thus shorten their lives and unfit themselves for service by disregarding nature’s laws, are guilty of robbery toward God. And they are robbing their fellow men also. The opportunity of blessing others, the very work for which God sent them into the world, has by their own course of action been cut short. And they have unfitted themselves to do even that which in a briefer period of time they might have accomplished. The Lord holds us guilty when by our injurious habits we thus deprive the world of good.”<sup>4</sup>

1. *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 568.

2. *Child Guidance*, p.166.

3. *Reflecting Christ*, p.137.

4. *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 346, 347.

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*By Garth Williams, a software engineering student at Bournemouth University, England.*

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# A Living Temple

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: 1 Cor. 6:19**

Let's get 1 Corinthians 6:19 into context. It was written to a bunch of sexually screwed up Corinthians, and as such, at face value, deals with this issue. Sexual norms and morality were, and still are, a difficult area to negotiate. Paul attempts to give a reasonable account of what he, as God's apostle, requires of the Corinthians. In the following verses the twists and turns are complex, but the same point is returned to time and again: "that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord" (1 Cor. 7:35, NIV). This message is powerful: Don't allow anything to come between you and God.

What does it mean for us that we are God's temple? A temple is a temple only if God can dwell there. We are a being created for God to dwell in, just like a temple. This is what sets us apart from the world around us. This is the very essence of humankind. Without God we lose our place in the natural order of things and are not far from the slabs of meat that Bacon depicts in his paintings. But because "God created man in his own image" (Gen. 1:27, NIV) and dwells in us, we are important and inhabit our own place in the order of the universe: God, humankind, animals, etc.

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## **First Corinthians 6:19 was written to a bunch of sexually screwed up Corinthians.**

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When we try to live without God, this natural order collapses and everything becomes uncertain. God seems irrelevant and implausible, and we lose sight of any purpose in our petty, insignificant lives.

The plays of Samuel Beckett most brilliantly—and honestly—depict life without God. They reveal life to be cold, shallow, amounting to little more than an absurd joke. The final phrase of 1 Corinthians 6:19 becomes starkly apparent: "and you are not your own." We cannot live on our own. Without God dwelling in us, we are worthless.

Victorian ideas suggested that we are captains of our own ships, that our destiny lies within our own hands. But this is the oldest lie, stemming from the Garden of Eden: "you will be like God" (Gen.3:4). This lie led to the Fall and ultimately ignominious death for all humankind.

How did Jesus view the temple (Mark 11:12-19)? Here Jesus kicks out the money lenders and people selling sacrificial doves for extortionate prices. Clearly the temple is not a place for profiteering and crass commercial gain. Why? Because this practice is based on selfishness. The love of self is contrary to the love and worship of God (which is the purpose of a temple). We then, as temples of the Holy Spirit, should love God first, others second, and ourselves last. Again we fit into a natural order, and our lives have meaning. After all, we are like sounding gongs without love.

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*By Richard M. Down, a student of English at Cardiff University, Wales.*

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# Is It Really That Hard?

## HOW-TO

**Key Text:** Dan. 1:5, 8-16

Most people say being healthy is hard work because you can't eat this and you can't drink that. So if they were to try to keep their physical well-being both healthy and spiritually contented, then life would become one long chore. But it's not that hard at all! Two steps toward achieving health and spiritual contentment are:

1. Study and prayer
2. If it comes to the crunch, just say No!

Studying doesn't necessarily mean the Bible, though it is a good book with all the guidelines in it needed for any person. It doesn't even mean Ellen White's books, though they are also very good and tend to go into more depth to give a better understanding of what the Bible says.

You can take your pick of the books you choose. Many health-oriented books are available in most bookstores, but any information that you find in them can be found in the Bible or in Ellen White's books. Many health books are centered on the New Age and meditation, so be aware of that when choosing your book.

When someone says pray, Adventists often think "Pray! Yeah, tried that. Doesn't work for me!" I've felt that way myself, but do try it. It really does work.

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## Everyone usually has some faith, even if it is only a small spark.

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Daniel was close to God and must have spent a lot of time in prayer. Before he went to see the prince of the eunuchs, he must have said a prayer, maybe only a short sentence, but whatever he said, God was able to work things out for him. Prayer takes only faith to work, and that's not too difficult to come by. Everyone usually has some faith, even if it is only a small spark. Sparks can soon become a roaring fire with a little care and attention.

In the English language—and I guess in any language—the easiest answer in the world is No. It has no ifs or buts that can be added on at the end and is very much to the point. Having just begun university, I have found myself suddenly in a society of alcohol and other drugs. People ask me if I want to go out for a drink; some have even offered me drugs. A straight reply of No is not as likely to be countered by comments like "Just one won't hurt" as can an excuse. Though some people are persistent, a second straight No will definitely get the point over.

## REACT

1. Why do you think God can work through you only if you treat your body like His temple?
2. Why are health and spiritual contentment linked so closely in the Christian life?

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*By Sara Lockham, a first-year chemistry student at Swansea University, Wales.*

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# A Case of Mistaken Identity?

## OPINION

**Key Texts: Ps. 139:1-6, 13-16; Col. 1:15, 16**

So where did I come from?

When I was studying biology at A level (university entrance), my teacher went into great detail to cover human biology. She patiently explained to us how many different and intricate functions our bodies are performing each second of every day. So many interrelated chemical reactions are continually taking place, yet we just take breathing, eating, and everything else for granted.

All these essential operations are controlled by our computer-like brains. Yet, unlike computers, we are all unique individuals with the power to think and choose. Our uniqueness is found within the cell structure in our DNA. Each of us has a particular DNA fingerprint that can now be used in forensic science. Through painstaking research, on behalf of the human race, scientists have been able to explain how the human body operates—right down to how the mitosis and meiosis of the DNA produces distinct, unique individuals.

Researchers are now able to invent new plants, and even clone animals, through genetic engineering. Scientists, however, have yet to develop a living organism that can reproduce itself. What were God's words in the Garden of Eden? (See

## Scientists have yet to develop a living organism that can reproduce itself.

Gen. 1:26-28.) We were created as individuals with the ability to procreate.

We have so much going in our favor. We can think, choose, enjoy, experience, and *live* life to the full! How are you going to choose to live your life from today on?

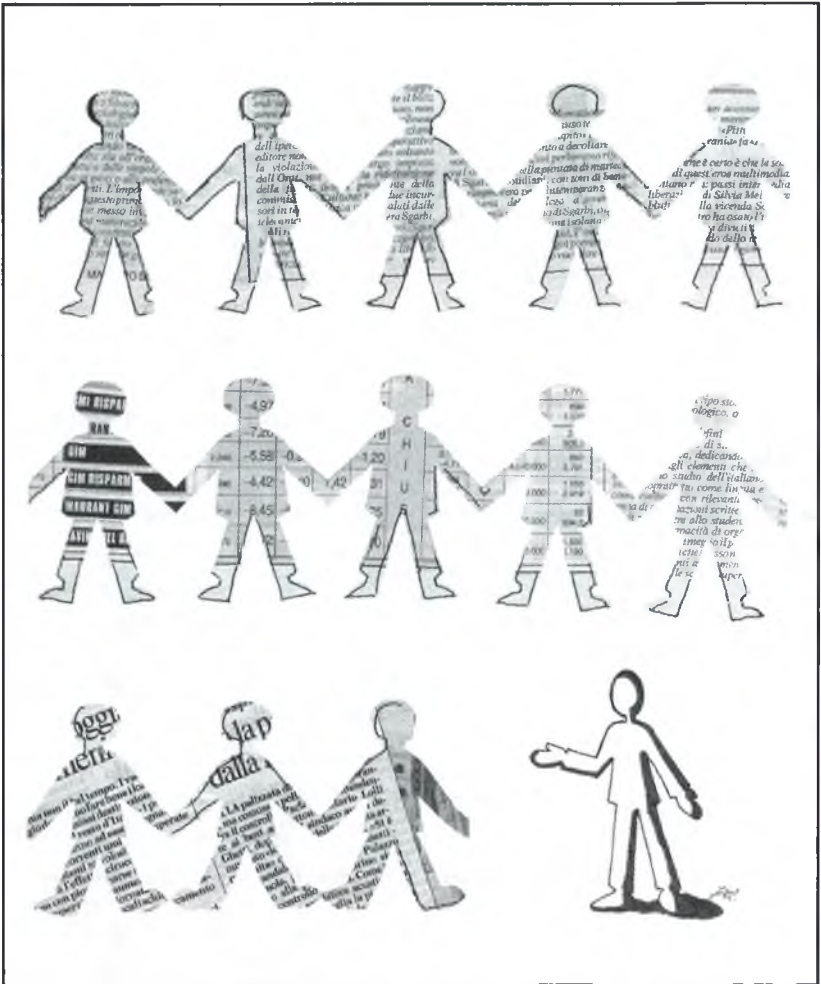
Why, for the majority in our world, does it seem to take more faith to believe that you were created by divine intervention than it does to believe in a succession of accidental mutations that eventually led to the appearance of humankind on earth?

## REACT

1. If we are created in God's image, then how should we treat our bodies?
2. How does the knowledge that you were created in the image of God affect your daily life?
3. How should the concept that one is created in the image of God affect his or her everyday life? Be specific.

*By Helen Lockham, an elementary teacher from Newport, South Wales, United Kingdom.*

# OUR SOCIAL NATURE



**“A man who has friends must himself be friendly”  
(Prov. 18:24, NKJV).**

# Water for the Soul

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Ps. 91:1-16**

Those were dark and lonely days for the young shepherd from Bethlehem. As he hid from a jealous king who wanted to take his life, David probably wondered if he would ever see his family and friends again. There was no place for him to go; no one would have him. The place where he had eventually chosen to hide was a cave that sheltered others like him fleeing from some form of persecution.

How he longed to be home—to taste again the sweet water from the well in Bethlehem. But he could not risk leaving the protection of the cave. Enemies were everywhere. Tired and miserable, David probably thought he was the loneliest person in the world. Then something extraordinary happened in that dark, depressing place, something that David would never forget for the rest of his life.

During this moment of utter despair, three men in the cave, spurred by their sympathies for David, did something outrageously risky. They crossed enemy lines in the middle of the night, drew water from the well near David's hometown, and somehow carried it back to him. When they brought that precious water to David, tears surely welled up in his eyes as he beheld their love offering for him, a gift that they had secured at risk to their own lives.

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## **Something extraordinary happened in that dark, depressing place.**

Overwhelmed with gratitude, David could not drink—he could not speak. It was a holy moment, a moment of revelation. His mere sentimental desire for a cup of water had been met and transcended by something far more beautiful.

God knows our deepest desires and fulfills them even before we can fully understand what they are. Just as He knew that David needed the comfort of friendship in that far-off forbidding place, He knows what you and I need today. Some of us may be suffering from pangs of loneliness right now. We long to see familiar faces, taste home cooking again, or recognize the friendly outlines of home from afar off. It may not be possible for us to have things presently. But take heart; God knows our needs. He can still provide for us in a strange place.

The warmth of human touch and companionship is a gift that God Himself first gave, and it is continually being given through fellow human beings touched by His Spirit. The gift fulfills our collective need as children of God to comfort one another. What a privilege to receive such fellowship from others, to receive it through something as meaningful as a simple drink of water.

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*By James Park, a second-year medical student at Loma Linda (California) University.*

# Imago Dei

## LOGOS

Gen. 1:26, 27; 2:23, 24; 5:1; 9:6; John 17:22, 23, 26; Eph. 2:19

What comes to mind when you think of the phrase “image of God”? Traditional Adventism views the image of God as pertaining more to His inner image than outward. This undoubtedly refers to His character. Being made in the image of God means that God shaped humans after His moral character. But sin marred this image, and we are to cooperate with God to restore it.

Many of us have grown up hearing countless sermons emphasizing the urgent need to work on character building before Jesus comes. Understanding the image of God solely this way without placing it in proper context can lead to preoccupation with self-improvement at the expense of balanced relationships. Understanding the image of God in its context, however, will shed insight on the nature of God and the nature of human beings. This kind of contextual understanding will further provide valid reasons for character building in the Christian life and will motivate us to live out the image of God in a deeper sense.

### Communal Image (Gen. 1:26)

First, we notice that the image of God here is plural: “Let us make man in our image.” The Hebrew word for God in this creation account is Elohim, which

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## My sense of uniqueness or individuality finds its roots in God.

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denotes the plurality of God. God is in a community within the realm of Godhead. God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit together became the co-originators of the first community. God is not a single arbitrary being who dictates people’s lives.

Instead, working and sharing, being together within the Divine community, is the essence of His image. This accurate picture of God should cause us to trust Him even more and to find an ultimate security in Him. God’s image reveals His social and communal nature. Since humans reflect His image, this clearly explains why we are social and communal.

### Relational Image (Gen. 1:27)

Second, God, who is in community, created relational beings—male and female. He designed a social, emotional, spiritual context for humanity. Theologians such as Barth, Berkouwer, and Jewett have concluded that the image of God was revealed in man as male and female living in an I-thou relationship. This does not mean that the image of God is reflected only in marital relationships. Rather, in a much broader sense, any human relationship, if it is authentically lived out, can shed a glimpse of the Divine image in a real way. Therefore, the image of God lies fully in our relatedness with other human beings because His is a relational image.

### Differentiated Yet Equal Image (Gen. 1:27)

Third, it is interesting to discover that God created differentiated beings: Adam and Eve. Biblical anthropologist Anderson insightfully suggests that differences

between men and women here should not be limited to the biological. He believes that it should also involve such differences as personality, talents, and interests. Furthermore, he points out that in order for a relationship to be intimate and mature, people involved must acknowledge their own otherness toward each other.

My sense of uniqueness or individuality finds its roots in God. The Trinity is composed of three different beings. God the Father is not Jesus the Son, Jesus the Son is not the Holy Spirit, and so forth. They exist as totally differentiated beings having unique roles and personhoods to share. Therefore, acknowledging my own or someone else's otherness, respecting and empowering others to be fully "thou" in a relationship is a vital part of actualizing the image of God. In order to be faithful in fulfilling this, one must also realize that men and women were both created in His image. Accepting a healthy sense of differentiation about oneself and others, and learning to respect those differences in the light of equality toward everyone, is the positive integration of the image of God.

### **Complementary Image (Gen. 2:23, 24)**

Fourth, the image of God reached its pinnacle when Adam and Eve utilized their otherness as a source of complementarity. In the Garden of Eden, God's image fully blossomed when Adam and Eve became united as one flesh. Of course, unity involves not only physical but spiritual and emotional union as well. It was indeed a wholistic bonding. But what God designed for complementarity, sin made to bring conflict and disunity. Even more so in this brokenness of sin, each person requires interdependence for quality and for completion of life. Each of us is like a piece of a puzzle. When we find our places as vital parts of the whole in a family, church, and community, the image of God becomes complete.

When our strength makes up for the weakness of others, and vice versa, we bring about the complementary image of God in a most harmonious and dynamic manner. But we painfully realize that our individualistic lifestyle, short-sighted ignorance, and self-sufficiency are illusionary, pulling us apart and leaving brokenness, incompleteness, and alienation.

The image of God is reflected and exercised in the context of community where differentiated beings weave a cord of complementarity and interdependence, creating unity and oneness.

### **REACT**

1. How does your family or church community reflect the image of God?
2. How may the image of God be distorted by one's relationships?
3. What are some of the principles that can be drawn from the concept of the image of God as it relates to family, friends, courtship, and marriage?
4. What are some of the stumbling blocks your church might face in terms of building a community of unity and oneness?
5. What are some biblical ways to deal with conflicts in friendships, family relationships, and church community?

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*By Sunghyung and Jewel Um, co-pastors of the Upper Room Young Adult Seventh-day Adventist Church, in Temple City, California.*

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## On Being Social—An Integrative Approach

### TESTIMONY

**Key Texts: Rom. 8:14; 1 Cor. 10:31; 2 Cor. 3:17**

“Your success will not depend so much upon your knowledge and accomplishments, as upon your ability to find your way to the heart. By being social and coming close to the people, you may turn the current of their thoughts more readily than by the most able discourse.”<sup>1</sup>

“The character of the one who thus beholds Christ is so like His, that one looking at him sees Christ’s own character shining out as from a mirror. Imperceptibly to ourselves we are changed day by day from our own ways and will into the ways and will of Christ, into the loveliness of His character. Thus we grow up into Christ, and unconsciously reflect His image.”<sup>2</sup>

Our social nature, as well as our other attributes, is an endowment from our heavenly Father as part of His nature. When we take on His character as Christians, we are also donning the social nature of Christ. If we study the life of Christ on this earth, we find that He was very sociable but His social nature was a direct extension of His spiritual nature.

God did not create us to be social creatures and to stop at that. This aspect of our lives must have a higher purpose as does every facet of a Christian’s life. The

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### **God did not create us to be social creatures and to stop at that.**

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purpose to know Him, believe in Him, and follow and exemplify Him should permeate our social character as well. No longer can we separate the social; to be spiritual in God’s plan is to be social. We must integrate and apply our relationship with our Saviour and Lord into every part of our lives.

### **REACT**

1. How closely related are social and spiritual aspects of your life?
2. How can we transform our Christianity into something practical and applicable to our everyday lives?
3. What are some ways we can integrate the social and spiritual dimensions of our lives?

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1. *Evangelism*, p. 483.

2. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1097.

# Cosmic Deprivation

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Gen. 1:26**

During World War II, John Bowlby studied infants who experienced separation from their natural mothers for the first six months of their lives. The care givers usually ignored the attachment behaviors of the young children, such as smiling, clinging, following, and crying.

After these behaviors went unrewarded for three months, dramatic changes occurred in these children. They lost interest in the surrounding environment; they refused to smile. They lost weight, suffered from insomnia and depression, and were more prone to infections. Eventually, death overtook many of these children.

The lesson is obvious: Without a loving figure who takes the time to nurture and care for a child, severe psychosocial and physical consequences are inevitable. We are social beings. I believe this is so, because God is a social being, and we are created in His image. Speaking of Creation, the first week of earth's history is an excellent example of God's social nature.

When my brother and I were growing up, we decided to get an aquarium. After purchasing a fish tank, we decorated it by adding some beautifully colored pebbles, green plants, interesting ornaments, and a water filter. Then we finally went to the

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## **They lost interest in the surrounding environment; they refused to smile.**

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pet store and purchased some guppies. We came home very excited and carefully released the fish into their new home. Guess what we did at that point? Do you think we ran outside to play ball? No! We sat there for an entire hour watching our new friends swim around in the aquarium.

After creating the sun, moon, trees, lakes, birds, and all the beautiful things of this earth, God created Adam and Eve in His image. After He released them into the Garden of Eden, what do you think He did? Did He run off to another universe to create other things? No! He took an entire day to spend with His newly created friends. It was a bonding moment.

What if God had run off to another universe and hadn't spent those first moments with humans? Who knows? Perhaps without His loving care and nurture, we, too, might have become victims of a cosmic developmental deprivation.

God is a social being. God treasures the Sabbath because He desires companionship with us. Many of us grew up with the Sabbath as a rule-oriented day, when actually it should have been enjoyed as a relationship-oriented day. In fact, all our doctrines will begin to make much more sense when we view them in a Christ-centered and relationship-oriented manner.

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\* J. M. Bowlby, *Maternal Care and Mental Health* (New York: Schocken, 1966).

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*By David Nam-Young Kim, a student at the School of Medicine at Loma Linda (California) University.*

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# The Struggle Against Loneliness

## HOW-TO

### Key Text: John 14

Our society struggles with loneliness. Too often we settle for physical proximity, which brings an illusion of intimacy. We mistake being around people for actually being *with* them. The popularity of online chat rooms suggests that even physical proximity is no longer necessary. Under such sterile conditions, we feel more free to express our true (or imagined) selves.

Unfortunately, for many, fellowship in the church is not much better than in the secular world. We come together, but lost in formality and ritual, we remain superficially connected. There is no place for pain, no time for intimacy, and no room for failures. Church is a place where we go to show how perfect we are.

In contrast to the alienation that haunts us, the Trinity models the kind of union that Jesus hopes for His followers. In John 14 Jesus prepares for His departure and entrusts His disciples to the Father and the Spirit. We see the love and mutuality that sustains Their fellowship expressed through Their care for the ones who bear Their image.

How can we, who are created in this image, share with each other the richness of such a fellowship? Here are some practical suggestions:

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## The popularity of online chat rooms suggests that even physical proximity is no longer necessary.

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**1. Invest time.** We need to be intentional about carving out time to come together. The most effective way of doing this is to join or begin a small group of people who make a commitment to nurture each other in faith.

**2. Break bread together (literally and figuratively).** There is nothing like food to bring people together. Regular fellowship with good food would be just another social club, however, unless we also partake of the Word of God.

**3. Share authentically.** We need a haven where we can share our struggles openly and honestly. In an environment of trust and safety, we can move beyond the need for impression management and the culture of perfection that pervades our churches to a more authentic engagement with each other.

**4. Pray for each other.** A natural outcome of this kind of fellowship is sharing of each other's burdens and a continual reminder of our interconnectedness.

**5. Have an outward focus.** Nurturing each other in faith involves an outward focus. A fellowship that is too internally focused will eventually stagnate and wither because our mission is to love our neighbor and to share the gospel.

May the words of Jesus be fulfilled among us: "That they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:22, 23, NIV).

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*By Ruth H. Chung, assistant professor of counseling psychology, University of Southern California at Claremont.*

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# The Loneliness of Rush Hour

## OPINION

**Key Text:** John 1:26

In Los Angeles our freeways are famous for smog and for the traffic jams that daily convert these sprawling structures into the world's largest parking lots. Although I am spared a commute, I occasionally enter the fray. What strikes me about rush hour is how loneliness exists in the crowd. Most drivers sit in a sea of cars alone, insulated in their own world, despite being surrounded by hundreds of people only a few feet away. Meanwhile, the car-pool lane sits relatively empty as people find many reasons not to share a ride.

Despite the countless ways that our society idolizes individualism, a deep hunger remains for authentic forms of community. The violence that crashes into our lives, as well as the frantic chase after the latest fad, are simply two symptoms of the lack so many people experience. It would be wonderful if Christians were exempt from such processes, but the corrosive elements of individualism that plague the general population also affect the church. The perennial question is how we can be in the world (as salt and light) but not of it.

There are, of course, no easy answers, but as Christians, we know where to look. Jesus' example in becoming flesh and dwelling among us is the key, since true

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## **A deep hunger remains for authentic forms of community.**

community can never exist in a sinful world without sacrificial love. Only as we move beyond ourselves and step out in faith can we begin to experience the power of God at work within us. Perhaps this is what Jesus meant when He claimed that in losing our lives for the gospel, we would find life itself. I am also mindful that our God, in whose image we are created, is a communal God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

By God's grace, we do catch glimpses of Christian community in a number of places, including the love shared within a family, friendship tested over time, and the fellowship of believers. Those glimpses serve as reminders of how things can and will be. Accordingly, the Lord calls us, as the body of Christ, to bear witness to a reality different from the one we so often see in the media. Our identity as children of God, loved and forgiven, can give us the courage and strength to move away from the false safety of the masks that we hide behind. As we begin to step out in faith—with each other and in the world—we will gain a taste of the things that are to come when Jesus returns. Until that day, may we strive together to be builders of the kingdom of God.

## **REACT**

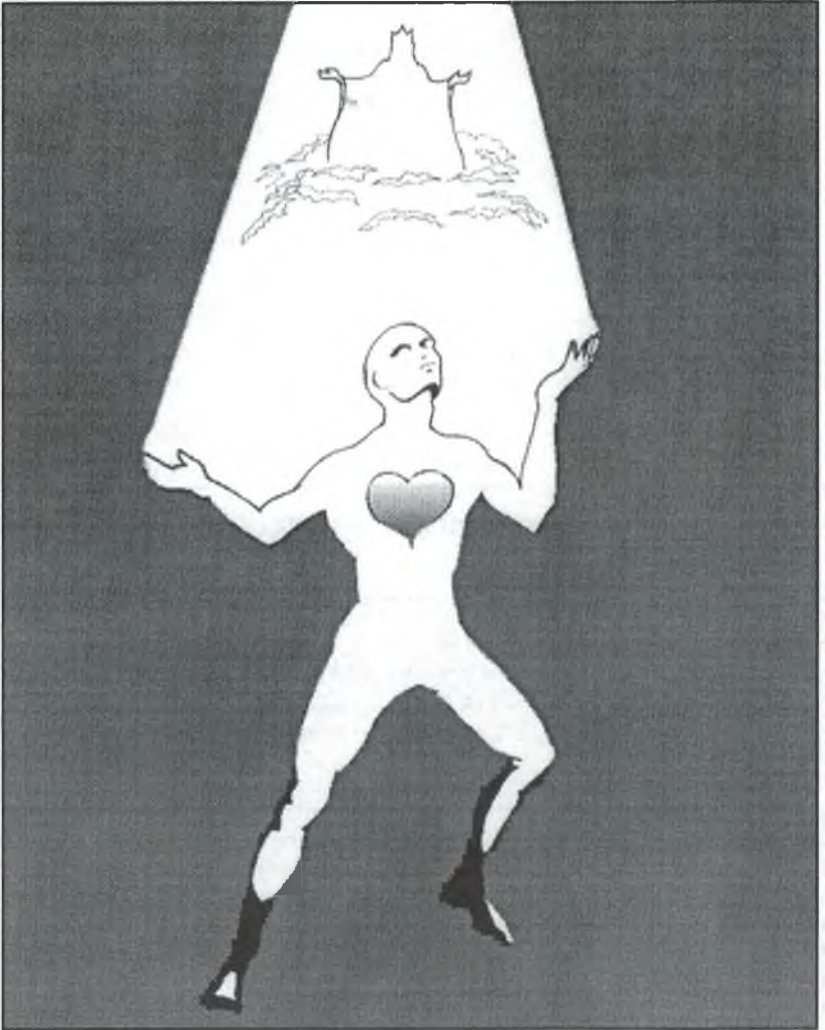
How would you describe the ideal community?

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*By David K. Yoo, assistant professor of history at McKenna College, Claremont, California.*

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# TRUE WHOLENESS



**“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:23, NIV).**

# Victory or Defeat

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: 2 Tim. 4:7**

That evening's basketball practice was approaching the pitiful stage. No one could hold onto the ball, and movement on the court had been reduced to a standstill. Fifteen young men seemed intent on spending the rest of their natural lives running lines for their errors. Spirits crashed to rock bottom. How had we achieved such a low?

The night before we played a school that we had previously beaten, in the locker room I challenged the guys to execute our game plan and stay focused on our goals. At the start, we were flying. Things couldn't have been going better—fast-break lay-ups, good pressure defense, and a backdoor lob for a dunk. Then came the collapse.

We tried to get too fancy, go too fast. The execution that had come so easily was forgotten. Our opponent cut into our lead and our spirits wilted. Instead of high fives, I heard criticism. Instead of running up and down the court, we began to walk. Our focus had been lost. What had begun with a team fragmented into individuals trying to do everything on their own. Needless to say, we lost.

To be successful, our team has learned it takes three components. First, we must

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## **We tried to get too fancy, go too fast.**

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have 100-percent effort at all times. Second, we must be prepared, so no thought is needed. We have knowledge within us on how to win the game. Third, there must be a supportive environment regardless of how the game is going.

It is the same in our spiritual lives. Every day we are fighting a battle that comes down to life or death. We need to prepare by planting the knowledge of Christ in our souls. We need to have our bodies giving 100-percent effort in Christ's work. And we need to create a supportive environment that will help old and new believers keep spirits high. All three components—our soul, body, and spirit—must work together, must be in unity. Success in these areas will lead to a victory, a meeting with our Saviour in the sky. "I've run hard right to the finish, believed all the way" (2 Tim. 4:7, MSG).

This week, as we study the parts that make a human whole, we will also look at the different Christian views. Most Christians believe that the soul and body are separate and stand-alone entities. How much do our preconceived opinions play a role in our understanding of Scripture? Try to look at this week's study with a fresh perspective.

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*By Brent Baldwin, men's basketball coach/athletic director at Southwestern Adventist University, Keene, Texas.*

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# The Whole Is the Sum of Its Parts

## LOGOS

Gen. 2:7; Matt. 10:28; 1 Thess. 5:23

### “The Lord God formed the man” (Gen. 2:7, NIV)

From Genesis 1:26 we realize that the Trinity collaborated on humanity’s creation. The word *formed* suggests that Adam was fashioned or sculpted.

### “From the dust of the ground”

The material God used was from the earth. This fact leads many to conclude that humankind evolved from the earth. The problem is that evolutionists can’t explain *how* all the elements that make up the physical part of a human being came together. They are left to try to form a chain that stretches from humanity back to a single cell organism and then try to explain how the elements came together to form even that single cell! Needless to say, the chain has many missing links.

### “And breathed into his nostrils the breath of life”

I’m writing this article the day after I preached the funeral service for my wife’s grandfather. I have a vivid picture in my mind of what a body without the breath of life is like. When God breathed into Adam and Eve, they became animated. They had brain waves, a pulse, and oxygen flowing into their lungs. When these things are absent from a human being, you can begin to understand the truth of Ecclesiastes 3:20—we came from dust (elements) and to dust we shall return.

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## Maybe God is more like a chef than a sculptor!

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### “And the man became a living being”

Some translations say “soul” instead of “being.” Many Christians think of the soul as a separate and independent part of a human being. This passage of Scripture is very significant to any discussion of the soul because it so clearly defines what a soul is. The Hebrew word used in this passage for soul is *nephesh*, which refers to a living (mortal) being. Most modern translations translate *nephesh* as “living being” or “person.”

Try to think of the creation science described in Genesis 2:7 literally. Is the Godhead more like a sculptor of stone or sand? Maybe God is more like a chef than a sculptor! Describe Genesis 2:7 in terms of a recipe. Do a little research and be as detailed as possible. (What was in that dust?) The text says that God breathed into man. What exactly was it that God breathed into man?

### “Those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul” (Matt. 10:28, NIV)

At first glance this verse appears to suggest that a human being has at least two parts and these two parts are independent of each other. It is especially easy to conclude this when one has the preconceived belief that an immortal soul lives on after death, apart from the body.

The first thing to determine is the context of this passage. Verses 17-36 speak of having courage in the face of persecution. The next thing to do is look at the words in the verse. It is significant that the last part of the verse says the body and soul can die. In light of this, the part of a human being that is referred to as “soul”

is not immortal. A deeper study also reveals the Greek word translated here as soul (*Psuche*) never refers to a part of humanity that can live separately or be immortal.

After looking at the context and the verse itself, the following might be a good paraphrase: "Don't be afraid of those who can just end your earthly life but not take away your eternal life. You should fear or respect God, who holds power over both this life and eternal life."

### **"May your whole spirit, soul and body" (1 Thess. 5:23, NIV)**

*Spirit:* Compare Romans 8:10-17. In this passage Paul contrasts the spirit and the body. From this passage the spirit is that part of a human being that represents intelligence and the ability to communicate with God.

*Soul:* This is the same word as is found in Matthew 10. It is difficult to make a clear distinction between spirit and soul. *The SDA Bible Commentary* suggests that "soul" in this verse might refer to desires, emotions, and instincts."

*Body:* This part of a human being is the most obvious. It refers to physical nature, that which God formed from the ground (Gen. 2:7).

Just as in Matthew 10, one could conclude that a human being has different independent parts. Look at this verse in the context of Paul's parting comments or instructions at the end of his letter. Paul hopes that every part of our being (emotions, intelligence, and body) will be committed to God.

There is no place in the Scriptures that the human spirit or soul are stand-alone entities. Once again, it depends on the preconceptions you bring to this text. It is easy to see how one could misinterpret what Paul is trying to say.

## **REACT**

1. What is the difference between spirit and soul?
2. The majority of the Christian world believes a human being has an immortal soul. What do you believe are some of the reasons for this?
3. Since our view on the nature of humanity is a minority one in the Christian world, how should this affect how we approach our Christian friends who hold the majority view?
4. Why is the issue of the nature of humankind so critical? What other related doctrines does it impact?
5. In some respects, it is true that a human being has many different parts. How do these parts relate to the whole being?
6. What does it mean to commit your whole spirit, soul, and body? Is the order significant? Explain your answer.

\*Vol. 7, p. 257.

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*By Victor F. Brown, enrollment vice president of Southwestern Adventist University, Keene, Texas.*

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# The Entire Me

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: 1 Cor. 9:25**

*“Everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown” (1 Cor. 9:25, NKJV).*

Has it ever happened to you, right after final exams, that your body is ready to go but your brain is too tired to think of where to go? Or have you ever arrived at work with a clear mind, but your muscles are too sore to move you? Sometimes different parts of us get tired. In fact, any time we set ourselves on an endeavor, we risk losing stamina in different areas of our being. This is only natural, for we as humans have bodies and minds that get tired.

According to Ellen White, Paul knew that the Thessalonians needed to incorporate each area of their being when it came to living a Christian life. When he prayed, as we all should pray for each other, he included each part of their being: spirit, soul, and body. Paul was actually giving the doctrine of sanctification a practical approach.<sup>1</sup>

Ellen White writes in *Counsels on Health*, “The life of Daniel is an inspired illustration of what constitutes a sanctified character. Bible sanctification has to

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## “Bible sanctification has to do with the whole man.”

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do with the whole man.”<sup>2</sup> She quotes 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and then adds, “Paul did not exhort his brethren to aim at a standard which it was impossible for them to reach. He did not pray that they might have blessings which it was not the will of God to give. He knew that all who would be fitted to meet Christ in peace must possess a pure and holy character.”<sup>3</sup>

God wants to sanctify us in every area of our lives. Our minds and our physical bodies might get tired, but the Spirit of God cannot get tired. “As we work in connection with the Great Teacher, the mental faculties are developed. The conscience is under divine guidance. Christ takes the entire being under His control. . . . New, rich thoughts come to him. Light is given to the intellect, determination to the will, sensitiveness to the conscience, purity to the imagination. . . . In the life there is seen that which no words can express—true, faithful, loving devotion of heart, mind, soul, and strength to the work of the Master.”<sup>4</sup>

1. *Modern Revivals*, p. 298.

2. *Counsels on Health*, p. 66.

3. “Sanctification, the Life of Daniel,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, January 25, 1881.

4. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 476, 477.

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*By Alma Pena, a senior biostatistics major at Southwestern Adventist University, Keene, Texas.*

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# The Everest Letdown

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: 1 Cor. 2:12**

Standing on top of the world is not as exciting as Van Halen, popular rock star, portrays it to be. Called Sagarmatha, or “goddess of the sky,” by the Nepalese, Mt. Everest rises 29,028 feet (8848 m) above sea level. It has claimed over 140 lives and left countless others scarred for life.

At more than five vertical miles above sea level, Mt. Everest presents plenty of challenges. The level of oxygen in the air at the 17,600-foot (5300 m) elevation of base camp is about half that available at sea level, and the summit has significantly less oxygen. The fatigue felt by most climbers at the summit is a combination of the lack of oxygen and weeks of almost continuous climbing. This fatigue and any number of other ailments suffered from the climb cause many summit experiences to be something less than anticipated.

Even so, a growing number of amateurs flock to the Mt. Everest base camp every year. Most climbers sign up with a commercial expedition, some because it is cheaper (although some commercial outfits charge up to \$65,000 per person) but most because they couldn't get to the roof of the world by themselves.

A commercial outfit will hire Sherpas (natives) to do everything from carrying

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## **A growing number of amateurs flock to the Mt. Everest base camp every year.**

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loads and cooking meals to setting up camps and fixing ropes on the high mountain. They hire doctors and support staff to stay at base camp, and they provide guides who have plenty of experience with Mt. Everest. These people do everything they can to help climbers reach the summit.

So what can Mt. Everest teach us about Christianity? In my life I am always heading off for the mountain climb of life without signing up with the eternal climbing outfit. I think I can carry all my burdens and do all the work myself to make it to the top. I trust in my experience to find the way, and if there are complications, I'll fix them myself. But, just like the ill-fated 1996 expedition on Mt. Everest, I have a spiritual disaster.

Christianity should not be viewed any more lightly than a trip to the summit of Mt. Everest. Christianity requires both body and soul to be focused on Christ. If our body sins, our soul suffers. Both must be in unity with Christ's will in order to obtain the eternal summit of heaven. The only way to keep both pointed in the right direction is to follow the example of our Head Guide. He climbed Golgotha, a much harder climb than Sagarmatha any day.

## **REACT**

In what ways are the soul and body interrelated?

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*By Chris LeBrun, a junior broadcasting major at Southwestern Adventist University, Keene, Texas.*

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# Putting It All Together

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: 1 Thess. 5:23**

It is a big challenge to commit our whole spirit, soul, and body. How do the three relate to each other? Satan attacked Adam's and Eve's physical nature through taste. He played on their power to choose good and evil by questioning God's instructions to the pair. Finally, he questioned their attitude in regard to God's relationship to them. Satan is still doing the same thing today. It is very important, especially with Christ's second coming so near, that we understand Satan's ways and how the different parts of our nature relate to each other.

We can work on three areas to ensure success in commitment to God:

**1. Physical fitness.** The condition of my body affects the way I think, what I choose, and how I feel about myself. This is why diet, rest, and exercise become spiritual issues. Everything that contributes to a strong body is critical for my whole person.

**2. Power of choice.** Most habits, good or bad, are just a string of choices. A bad habit can become a physical addiction such as a dependency on drugs. There are also mental addictions such as gambling and pornography. These habits weaken our power to choose and cause a downward spiral in all areas of our life. Our power

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## Diet, rest, and exercise become spiritual issues.

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of choice can also produce good habits such as daily serving others and daily having prayer and Bible study. Good habits provide a setting for success in life.

**3. Attitude.** Is the glass half empty or half full? Do you see life generally in negative or positive terms? It is common knowledge how much a difference attitude makes in the life of an athlete. Before a big competition, everything depends on having the right attitude. There are many David and Goliath stories in sports. Many times a superior attitude can defeat superior physical ability. The same is true in our spiritual lives. When Christ is in my life, my attitude can be positive. The power of positive thinking can grow into the power of positive knowing!

## REACT

1. In what ways have you observed a superior attitude overcoming superior ability?

2. What role does our power of choice play in committing our whole being to God?

3. How does one's physical body and habits of choice relate to each other?

4. Would you agree or disagree that physical fitness is a major factor in spiritual success? Illustrate your answer from your own experience and from what you see in our culture today.

5. Do you agree that habits and addictions are primarily a "string of choices"? Why, or why not?

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*By Victor F. Brown, enrollment vice president, and Chelsea Harris, a freshman physician's assistant major, Southwestern Adventist University, Keene, Texas.*

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# A Cricket Lesson

## OPINION

**Key Text: 1 Thess. 5:23**

It's so easy to miss the point about obedience to God. So many times I find myself attempting to bring my body into obedience to God's commands when my spirit is not willing. As a result, my soul cannot grow. For the soul to grow, first things must come first. Obedience in the body can only follow obedience in the spirit.

My friend Cary has a dog named Cricket. He found this chubby, little black dog dumped beside the road when she was just a puppy. I know Cricket now, and she is one of the most loving and affectionate dogs I have ever seen—especially toward Cary. But Cary told me the dog hasn't always been that way. She used to be hyper and very difficult to control. There would have been no use trying to persuade Cricket to be obedient outwardly, in her body, while her spirit was still independent and disobedient. So Cary was patient with the dog, until something happened to break her spirit.

Cricket got heart worms. By the time Cary took Cricket to the vet, she was near death. He took her home, gave her the prescribed medicine, and then did all that was left to do—held her. Cricket lay in his arms for more than a day, just whimp-

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## When Cricket recovered, she was a different dog!

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ering and whining in pain.

When Cricket recovered, she was a different dog! The spirit of disobedience and independence had been broken, and she had caught a vision. She had been touched by the love of her master, healed by the medicine he gave her, and comforted while in pain. She had been loved back to health. From then on the dog was completely obedient in spirit. That spirit of obedience couldn't help but carry over into her outward actions in the body.

It would have been difficult for Cricket to learn obedience to her master without experiencing his love and care for her. It is futile for us to attempt obedience in our body when we have yet to let our spirit be touched by our master's love.

When obedience is difficult for us, there is only one thing to do: Let the Master come near to love and hold us until we are healed. Then after our spirit has come into contact with that kind of love, a grateful obedience of spirit and body will follow.

## REACT

1. How do we let Jesus come to us and comfort our spirit?
2. Why is it necessary to have a broken spirit before we begin working toward obedience?

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*By Adam Andreassen, a junior theology major at Southwestern Adventist University, Keene, Texas.*

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# UNFLATTERING SELF-PORTRAIT



**“They overcame [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony” (Rev. 12:11, NIV).**

# Demanding Answers

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Rev. 12:11**

Sunday, April 28, 1996. The crispness and peacefulness of an autumn afternoon in Port Arthur, Tasmania, is shattered by the sound of repeated gunshot. Innocent tourists are being massacred by a young man, Martin Bryant, wielding a semi-automatic rifle.

Systematically, he hunts down his victims, wounding them critically or fatally. Many have no time to react and are shot while sitting at tables in the cafe. Others are killed in the buses outside. Those who try to hide under the buses are also shot. A 6-year-old girl watches in horror as her mother and 3-year-old sister are shot dead. She runs screaming, terrified, away from this evil stranger. But Bryant follows her. She is later found dead, just a few meters from the bodies of her mother and sister.

A whole nation is in shock and mourning. Such atrocities take time to sink in. Tragedies such as this one had been, up to this point, depicted only by a few seconds of screen time on the evening news and from distant worlds. They had their place in the pages of history books. For Australians, their "lucky country"

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## **A 6-year-old girl watches in horror as her mother and 3-year-old sister are shot dead.**

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has lost its innocence. Evil has touched the life of a family member, a next-door neighbor, a friend.

We ask: Why?

Weeks later, during trial and sentencing, Bryant remains unbelievably unrepentant and unemotional.

We ask: How can this be?

The answer to these questions has haunted humanity for thousands of years. The origin of sin and evil remains one of the great mysteries of the Bible, yet its effects are an unquestionable reality. Such questions will continue to be repeated each time we watch yet another atrocity, yet another calamity; each time we witness injustice and inhumanity and abuse; when the pain of losing loved ones, of seeing them in pain, tears our soul—we need to know . . . we demand to know: Who is responsible?

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Friday, April A.D. 31. The crispness and peacefulness of a spring afternoon in Jerusalem is shattered by the sound of repeated hammering, and the agonizing cry of God's own Son. And we ask: Why? How can this be? We need to know . . . we demand to know: Who is responsible?

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*By Liliana Muñoz, an accredited interpreter who works for the Department of Immigration, Brisbane, Australia.*

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# Before the Beginning

## LOGOS

**Isa. 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:12-19; Rev. 12:7-9**

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1, NIV). Have you ever wondered what happened before “the beginning”? Unfortunately, the Bible does not give us a lot of insight into this truly fascinating topic. One thing we do know about pre-Creation history is that a war erupted in heaven between God and Satan and that the devil and his forces were overpowered and banished from heaven forever (Rev. 12:7-9).

But what could possibly cause war in Paradise? The apostle John wrote that “the devil has been sinning from the beginning” (1 John 3:8, NIV). Ellen White also makes it clear that the responsibility lay solely at the feet of Satan: “Nothing is more plainly taught in Scripture than that God was in no wise responsible for the entrance of sin.”<sup>1</sup>

Mrs. White then goes on to describe how Satan (then known as Lucifer), the greatest of all the angels, allowed pride and jealousy to corrupt his character degree by degree, until he found himself in direct and unavoidable conflict with God. Ezekiel and Isaiah also allude to the reasons behind Lucifer’s downfall through their metaphoric descriptions of the Kings of Tyre and Babylon, respectively. “Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted

## Have you ever wondered what happened before “the beginning”?

your wisdom because of your splendor” (Ezek. 28:17, NIV). “You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High’ ” (Isa. 14:13, 14, NIV).

We are told that God did everything in His power to show Lucifer the error of his ways, even to the point of being willing to reinstate Lucifer to his former position as covering cherub, on the condition that he acknowledge that the laws of God were fair and just. But despite the fact that “Lucifer *was* convinced that he was in the wrong,” still “pride forbade him to submit.”<sup>2</sup>

As Lucifer’s discontent festered into open revolt, God had little option other than to banish him from heaven, along with the host of angels that Lucifer had managed to deceive. A seemingly simpler solution would have been to destroy completely those who had rebelled. At this point, however, the remaining inhabitants of the universe were still unable to comprehend the nature or consequences of sin. If God had eliminated Lucifer at the first signs of uprising, the rest of the created beings would have been left wondering about the fairness of this action. Their love for God would have turned into fear. It was only through the act of sacrificing His own Son that the love and mercy of God became unquestionable, while at the same time the evil malice of Satan was fully unveiled for all to see. “The security of the entire universe depended upon this demonstration and its final outcome.”<sup>3</sup>

This still leaves us with the questions: "How and why did sin originate?"

It seems inconceivable that sin could rear its hideous head in a perfect society. Where did the seeds of pride that infiltrated Lucifer's heart come from? Despite thousands of years of theological and philosophical debate, no one really knows the answer to these questions. "Sin is an intruder, for whose presence no reason can be given. It is mysterious, unaccountable; to excuse it is to defend it."<sup>4</sup> "No other answer is possible than that in the creation of a finite personality endowed with freedom of will, there is necessarily involved the possibility of making a wrong [sinful] choice."<sup>5</sup>

It remains enough for us to know who was responsible for the introduction of sin and the manner in which God dealt with the problem. What is more important on a personal level is that I acknowledge the reality and existence of sin in my own life, as well as the potential consequences of that sin. We live in an age in which it is not fashionable to call sin by its rightful name, in which an excuse can always be found for doing the wrong thing.

With God's help, we must not allow ourselves to become complacent. The devil's ability to deceive has only improved with practice. He is still using the subtle argument of liberty through transgression of God's law, the same deception that he employed so successfully to snare a vast number of angels before this world began.

Don't be fooled. There is only one possible outcome for unrepented sin, and that is eternal death (Rom. 6:23). The battle that started in heaven all those millennia ago is still raging here on earth. Though the origin of sin remains shrouded in some mystery for now, one thing is clear: We can win our part of the war only "by the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 12:11).

## **REACT**

1. How can an understanding of the reality and seriousness of sin help you in your relationship with God?

2. What steps can you take to stop pride from taking control of your heart?

3. How can the Seventh-day Adventist Church become more actively involved in calling sin by its rightful name?

4. Is it ever possible to be too hard on calling sin by its rightful name? Explain your answer.

5. If God knows the beginning from the end, and He knows what my next temptation will be, why does He allow this to happen?

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1. *The Great Controversy*, pp. 492, 493.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 496.

3. Jack Kendall, *The Origin of Sin*, 1995, p. 3. From the "Present Truth" World Wide Web site (<http://www.present-truth.org/index.html>).

4. *The Great Controversy*, p. 493.

5. Emery H. Bancroft, *Christian Theology: Systematic and Biblical* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, second revised edition, 1976), p. 212.

# Corrupting Power

## TESTIMONY

Key Text: John 12:31

In Philip Yancey's book *The Jesus I Never Knew*, a senior angel is guiding a young colleague through an intergalactic tour: "As the two of them drew near to the star which we call our sun and to its circling planets, the senior angel pointed to a small and rather insignificant sphere turning very slowly on its axis. It looked as dull as a dirty tennis ball to the little angel, whose mind was filled with the size and glory of what he had seen.

"I want you to watch that one particularly," said the senior angel, pointing with his finger. "Well, it looks very small and rather dirty to me," said the little angel. "What's special about that one?"<sup>1</sup>

To answer this question, we need to back up to a time before the creation of our world, when Satan attempted to take control of God's government in heaven. His failure led to his expulsion with one-third of heaven's angels (Rev. 12:4), and the battle was shifted to the "fifth rate little ball."<sup>2</sup>

In the Garden of Eden Satan asserted his power and proclaimed himself "prince of this world" (John 12:31). Who would have challenged his claim when he could rightly claim that he commanded the majority of earth's inhabitants? The

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## "It looked as dull as a dirty tennis ball to the little angel."

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dominion given to Adam and Eve by Christ at Creation was extorted from them by Satan. The mother and father of our race held this dominion in Christ's stead and even though the deceiver styled himself as ruler of this world, Jesus "still remained the rightful King."<sup>3</sup>

Sometimes we are tempted to believe the poet who wrote: "God gave us a wondrous beginning, / But man spoiled it all by his sinning. / We know that the story will end in God's glory, / But at present the other side's winning."

That last line only appears to be true! In the very place where Satan planted his throne, Christ said, "There shall stand My cross."<sup>4</sup> At the cross Christ deposed the pretender to the throne of this world. What was wrested by force was regained by love. The righteous King is now preparing to establish His kingdom when He returns to earth, where the only power will be the principle of self-sacrificing love.

1. Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1995), pp. 43, 44.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

3. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 129.

4. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 237.

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By Steve Cinzio, a high school teacher working with disadvantaged students in Logan Village, Queensland, Australia.

## Bare Rock

### EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Ezek. 28:1-19**

The ancient city of Tyre would have made an ideal Club Med location. Situated on the northern coast of Palestine, on the bank of the Mediterranean Sea, ancient Tyre had it all—coastal location for a port, lots of greenery, and an appealing landscape. It was a booming place of trade, inhabited by the Phoenicians, a strong maritime people, greatly feared by their enemies. These sound like ideal conditions for a city, but it no longer exists.

Ethbaal was the king of Tyre at the time Ezekiel prophesied the downfall of the city (590 B.C.). In 586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, laid siege to the city for 13 years. When he finally took it, he found that the Phoenicians had moved everything of value to an island half a mile off the coast. Though he had taken the city, Nebuchadnezzar profited nothing—he couldn't pursue the Phoenicians to their island position, so he returned to Babylon. In 322 B.C. Alexander the Great built a causeway between the mainland and the island, using the rubble and debris scattered about the site of old Tyre. He conquered Tyre and fulfilled the prophecy given to Ezekiel: "I will make you a bare rock. . . . You will never be rebuilt, for I the Lord have spoken" (Ezek. 26:14, NIV).

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### The ancient city of Tyre would have made an ideal Club Med location.

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Ethbaal was excessively proud, and he claimed divine honors. "The haughty prince of Tyre thought he was able to protect his people by his own power, and considered himself as equal to the inhabitants of heaven."<sup>1</sup> "It seems that as Ezekiel beheld the character and activities of the literal king of Tyre in vision, Inspiration lifted the veil between the seen and the unseen and the prophet was permitted to see the invisible yet powerful being whom the king of Tyre served. . . . So understood, this passage provides us with a history of the origin, initial position, and downfall of the angel who later became known as the devil and Satan."<sup>2</sup>

Everybody is afflicted by sin and its guilt, of pride rather than faith. Pride is regarded as the root of sin because it excludes other people and God. This condition is irreversible by human effort (Romans 7), and those who indulge in it must expect to perish. In the same way that God completely destroyed the ancient city of Tyre, He will also finally destroy Satan and his kingdom. God is also the only one through whom change is possible, however, and He is the one who opens His arms to us, ready to forgive our sins and heal us (2 Chron. 7:14).

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1. Matthew Henry's *Commentary on Ezekiel*—<http://www.antioch.com.sg/bible/mhc/eze/eze28.htm>

2. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 675.

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*By Carina Cotaru, a pharmacy student at the University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia.*

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# Holy Living

## HOW-TO

**Key Text:** Col. 3:1, 2

In the foyer of the hospital where I have been a nurse for five years hangs a plaque by one of the founding members—it reads: “Above all be kind, treat the patients with warmth, treasure their uniqueness, guard their dignity, and know well the great worth of each one.”

Most days this is all part of the service, but there are some patients who make this an enormous challenge. There’s nothing like a period of intense illness to bring out the worst in human nature. This reminds us that we are frail, weak, and needy, a far cry from the perfect beings God created in Adam and Eve (prior to the apple-on-the-tree saga).

Yet we are told that we were created in God’s image (Gen.1:27) and that as Christians our job is to mirror that image to the world. So how do we overcome our humanness so that we can reflect God’s greatness?

**1. Acknowledge sin.** You have sinned and so have I. None of us is without sin. That’s the first step. Identify it and own it. But don’t stop there; put it in its place—right at the foot of the cross (Col. 3:5-14).

For every distasteful human characteristic there is an antivenene for pride and

## There’s nothing like a period of intense illness to bring out the worst in human nature.

stubbornness: humility. It’s not the person who washes the feet during Communion who makes the greatest journey toward humility but the one who accepts that his or her feet need washing.

**2. Stay authentic.** Much has been written of late about the benefits of prayer partnership and its role in helping us remain authentic in our prayer life. When we invite another human to be a part of our prayer life, we are saying “Help me remain true to my spiritual goals.”

**3. Embrace it all.** Don’t become one of the “cafeteria Christians,” those who take only what they think they can stomach and leave the rest. Real spiritual growth occurs when we embrace God’s entire message, even that which we don’t fully understand and especially what we think is outdated.

**4. Go to church.** Sadly a movement away from religious activities like attending church has gained momentum. Church isn’t just about ritual, nostalgia, and childhood memories; it’s about a sense of community, a value system that includes caring for others. It is all too easy to become seduced by materialism, to lose direction, to let our lifestyle get the better of us; but today’s Christian needs church more than ever.

*By Kerri Phillips, a registered nurse working at the Holy Spirit Hospital, Brisbane, Australia.*



## Why Sin?

### OPINION

**Key Text: Gen. 2:4, 5**

Is God all-knowing and all-powerful, or isn't He? You only get one choice here. It's either yes or no. Most Adventists tend to believe that God does know the beginning from the end, that He is everywhere at once, and that He is all-powerful.

So if we accept that God is all-knowing, then we also must accept that God knew that Adam and Eve would sin long before He created them. He also knew that Lucifer would rebel and that there would be war in heaven. If we accept that God knew what would happen, we are saying that God knowingly allowed sin to enter the universe. But, why would He do this? Why would a God of love allow such pain?

I remember as a child visiting Sydney's Taronga Park Zoo. While I was there, I saw a majestic lion pacing a cage no bigger than my bedroom. I said it was cruel to keep such an animal locked in a cage like that. I was told, however, that the lion had been born in that cage and had never known anything else. So how could it be cruel?

I'm wondering if we are a little bit like that lion. How can we know freedom if we have never experienced captivity? How can athletes understand the thrill

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## Was sin inevitable? I'd have to answer Yes and No.

of finishing a race if they have never entered? How can you fully appreciate love without ever having experienced loneliness?

Maybe for the universe really to know God, to understand the love and freedom He offers, it first had to experience the pain of sin. Satan said to Eve in the garden, "God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5, NIV). What he said is partly true. We all know firsthand the difference between good and evil. We have experienced hate, pain, heartache, and captivity. We can also know love, acceptance, and freedom.

So was sin inevitable? I'd have to answer Yes and No. I believe God could have prevented it from happening, but I also believe that to do so would have compromised the very thing He created. Sin and our world are simply growing pains for the whole universe. A stage in its development that must be gone through before perfection can be realized.

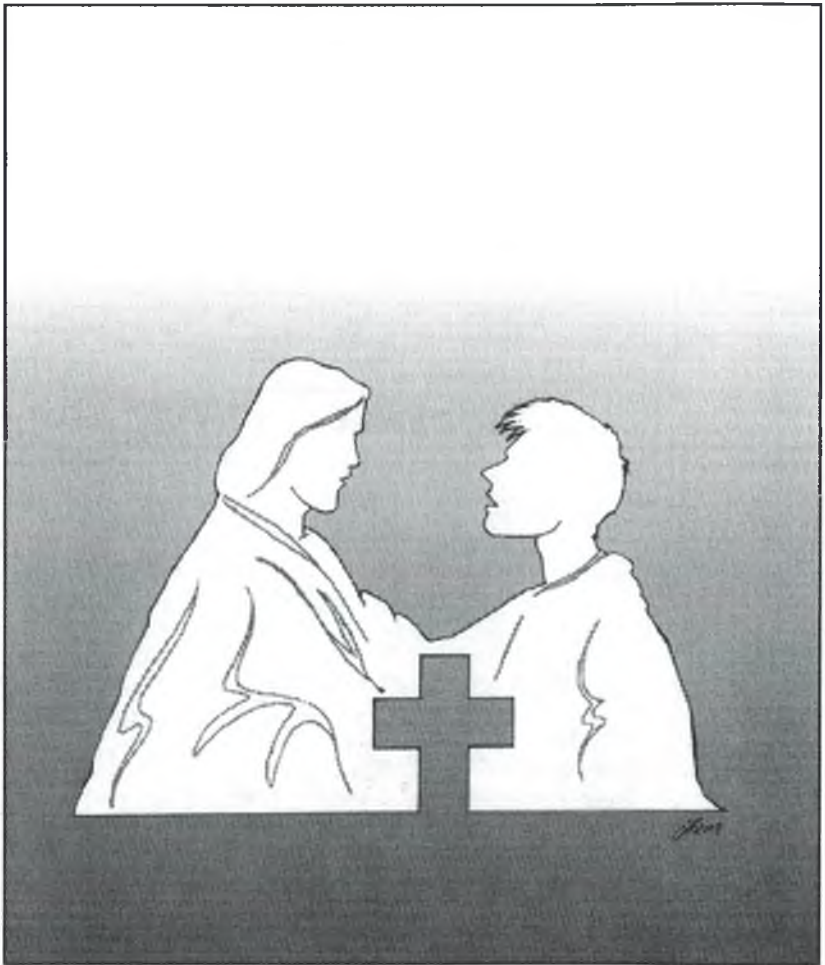
### REACT

1. How are we supposed to feel about being caught up in the great controversy?
2. Does your church live up to your expectation in providing a safe haven, a place to feel unconditional care and support? Explain your answer.

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*By Darren Leeson, a structural engineer who works for Brisbane City Council, Queensland, Australia.*

# THE FALL AND RISE . . .



**“To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12, NIV).**

# Under the Power of Sin

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Rom. 3:5**

It was during the morning devotion when a cry came out, and as time went by, it increased to a mighty cry heading to the pulpit where a pastor was offering the closing prayer. Then it slowly died away after the pastor's prayer.

Everyone in the auditorium was puzzled, *Are we in a Pentecostal church today? Or is he a Pentecostal?* But no! He was an Adventist young man, a university student aged twenty-five to thirty years, physically and mentally strong. But what was wrong with him?

His realization of the wonderful plan of salvation from the fall of humanity to the assurance of salvation through Jesus Christ opened his eyes to the truth about his position before God. He also discovered deep and fathomless love of God in redeeming humanity. Tears came to his eyes; emotionally he was out of control. He could not avoid crying. His heart was won to Jesus like that of Mary Magdalene, who washed Jesus' feet with tears and anointed Him with precious ointment. Later on he said, "I had never thought or taught God's plans for my salvation the way I have come to realize now in this meeting. I know now I have a burden to speak it all to my people back home."

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## **It is important to understand the truth about our fall.**

It is important to understand the truth about our fall. Many have a superficial understanding of our fall and the truth of our position. In this way they miss the point when it comes to understanding God's love in the wonderful plan of salvation. They don't see how much it has cost to redeem a person.

But of more concern is the way people (both Adventists and non-Adventists) do not realize the truth of the fall of Adam (which passed to us his nature) and redemption through the second Adam—Jesus Christ (to whom we receive the adoption of being sons and daughters of God). The main point is that these two people have our destiny in its fulness and that we are saved the same way we have been lost. In His mercy God made it possible! Just believe and it becomes yours!

As we go through our lesson this week, let us digest it in depth, and we shall come out not only fallen but also triumphant.

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*By G. Mbeyale, an economics student at Sokoine University of Agriculture, Morogoro, Tanzania.*

# The Source of the World's Trouble

## LOGOS

Gen. 1:26, 27; 3:1-8; Isa. 1:1-6; John 1:11-13

### God's Plan (Gen. 1:26, 27; Ps. 33:69)

I always pose a question to my friends: "What are you planning to do after you have finished your studies?"

"I don't know!" This is the answer I always get. But to God His plans were set before the foundation of the earth, and His plans are effective and beneficial to us. Whatever He plans is perfect. God created men and women in His own image and character. The affections of Adam and Eve were pure, appetites and passions were under the control of reason, and they were holy and happy.

### The Fall of Human Beings (Gen. 3:1-8)

After Satan was thrown from heaven because of sin he had committed, he accused God of being a dictator who forces people to serve Him. But God is love. This is why he included a tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden. This tree was to be a test of obedience and love to God. "The angels had cautioned Eve to beware of separating herself from her husband while occupied in their daily labor in the garden; with him she would be in less danger from temptation than if she were alone."<sup>1</sup>

When Satan saw Eve alone, he approached her in the form of a serpent and posed a question: " 'Did God really say,' 'You must not eat from any tree in the

## They were trying to have a roof without a foundation!

garden'?" (Gen 3:1, NIV). "'We may eat the fruit of any tree in the garden,' Eve answered, 'except the tree in the middle of it. If we do that we will die'."

But Satan deceived her that "'you will not surely die'" (verse 4). Eventually Eve took of the fruit, and then she gave some to her husband, and he also ate. They were already lost. God's nature faded away from them, and He declared a fallen state.

How many today trust themselves that they can do the best in maintaining a relationship with God without establishing a mutual relationship with Him through the Holy Spirit? We ought to be totally dependent on God in everything we do. If we don't, Satan will trap us in the same way he trapped Eve.

### Sin's Effect on Human Nature (Gal. 5:16-26)

God did not plan for humankind to suffer from diseases, drought, and whatever else that makes life miserable. All of these troubles resulted from disobedience. This is why from the time humankind fell into Satan's trap, diseases came into existence, the life span was shortened, and humanity began to show immoral, filthy, and indecent actions—idol worship, jealousy, anger, etc.

All these troubles came into existence because God's warnings—given to Adam and Eve—were not accepted in their hearts to make a good foundation of depending on and being obedient to God's instructions. They were trying to have a roof without a foundation!

## Regaining the Relationship (John 1:11-13)

In Pathfinder class, we heard a story aimed at teaching us to depend on God in everything: Once upon a time, there were two birds. Both were hungry but strong enough to fly to a nearby field to get something to eat. One bird said, "God has to provide for me," and it stayed in the nest. The other bird knew that God would provide, but it flew out of the nest to look for something to eat. The first bird actually died of hunger.

The same applies to us. We are born in the nest of sin, so we ought to acknowledge that we are sinners. But if we think there is no need to ask forgiveness from above, we will perish like the bird that stayed in the nest. Jesus came and died for our sins, and still His voice is heard: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28, NIV).

If we ask forgiveness from God, He will forgive our sins and the Holy Spirit will direct our lives and strengthen us by receiving Christ in our hearts. When we receive Him and believe in Him, He will give us the right to become God's peculiar people. When He comes again, He will give us His glorious body, and in that way we will regain His complete image. "Those who come up to every point, and stand every test, and overcome, be the price what it may, have heeded the counsel of the True Witness, and they will receive the latter rain, and thus be fitted for translation."<sup>2</sup>

## REACT

1. Why did God curse both Adam and Eve even though Eve was the first to disobey the Lord by eating the forbidden fruit?

2. Adam clearly knew that his companion was facing the consequence of disobedience. Why did he also sin?

3. If Adam had not done so, what would have resulted?

4. This article suggests that a saving relationship with God can be maintained only through a deep relationship with the Holy Spirit. How would you describe such a relationship?

5. Is the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:15, 16) necessary? Explain your answer.

6. What is involved in "flying out of the nest of sin" that we are born in? What will God do and not do for us?

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1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 53.

2. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 187.

## “We May Eat . . .”

### TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Gen. 3:2-5**

“God made man perfectly holy and happy; and the fair earth, as it came from the Creator’s hand, bore no blight of decay or shadow of the curse. It is transgression of God’s law . . . that has brought woe and death.”<sup>1</sup>

“No longer free to stir up rebellion in heaven, Satan’s enmity against God found a new field in plotting the ruin of the human race. . . . Moved by envy, he determined to incite them to disobedience, and bring upon them the guilt and penalty of sin.”<sup>2</sup>

“The serpent plucked the fruit of the forbidden tree and placed it in the hands of the half-reluctant Eve. . . . Without a fear she plucked and ate. . . . She became the agent of Satan in working the ruin of her husband. . . . After his transgression Adam at first imagined himself entering upon a higher state of existence. But soon the thought of his sin filled him with terror. The air, which had hitherto been of a mild and uniform temperature, seemed to chill the guilty pair. . . . They felt a sense of sin, a dread of the future, a nakedness of soul.”<sup>3</sup>

“Sorrow filled heaven as it was realized that man was lost and that the world which God had created was to be filled with mortals doomed to misery, sickness,

## “Throughout the heavenly courts there was mourning for the ruin that sin had wrought.”

and death.”<sup>4</sup> “The fall of man filled all heaven with sorrow. The world that God had made was blighted with the curse of sin and inhabited by beings doomed to misery and death. There appeared no escape for those who had transgressed the law. Angels ceased their songs of praise. Throughout the heavenly courts there was mourning for the ruin that sin had wrought.”<sup>5</sup>

The core points for the fall of the human race were: (1) wandering away from safety; (2) lingering around temptation; (3) believing the voice of the tempter; (4) doubting what God had said.

### REACT

Among the four core points listed above that led to the fall of the human race, which causes you the greatest personal difficulty?

1. *Steps to Christ*, p. 9.

2. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 52.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 55-57.

4. *Early Writings*, p. 126.

5. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 63.

*By Musso Kilion, a student in general agriculture at Sokoine University of Agriculture, Morogoro, Tanzania.*

# Who Will Know?

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Isa. 29:15**

Too often you hear people saying, "I did that because . . ." or "Had it not been for . . ." when they are found involved in any wrong act.

What happened to our first parents after sinning informs us of the source of such excuses. In an interview with God, each of them had an excuse for the Fall. Adam blamed Eve for giving him the forbidden fruit, hence he indirectly blamed God who gave him a wife. Eve blamed Satan, implying that had God not created the serpent, she would not have fallen.

King David had a very close connection with God, and God manifested great favor toward him. It is written of him that he "administered judgment and justice to all his people" (2 Sam. 8:15, NKJV).

One spring, however, David sent his army to war while he remained in Jerusalem (11:1-15). One day, he saw a woman bathing, and her beauty tempted him. He ultimately slept with her, and she became pregnant. The woman whose fatal beauty proved a snare to David was the wife of Uriah the Hittite. Uriah was one of David's bravest and most faithful officers. David knew that God's law pronounced a death penalty for adultery. Fearing the outcome, David sought to cover his sin by killing Uriah, so he added another sin.

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## Uriah was one of David's bravest and most faithful officers.

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Nevertheless, David's sin became known, and the Lord was dishonored. Through Nathan the prophet, God sent a message of reproof to David (12:1-12). With trembling lips, David confessed his sin (Ps. 51:1-12), and God forgave him.

God's promise is sure: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9, NIV). But how many are ready to acknowledge their sins? How many will give excuse for their fall? How does God then consider excuses? Read Isaiah 29:15 and Proverbs 28:13.

The guilty people may attempt, as David did, to conceal their sins from others. They may seek to cover their evil deeds forever from human sight, but "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight" (Heb. 4:13). "There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known" (Matt. 10:26).

## REACT

1. Why did God spare David and not Saul?
2. How would you feel if a pastor or a church elder were to reprove your conduct?

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*By Charles Mayenga, a student of veterinary medicine at Sokoine University of Agriculture, Morogoro, Tanzania.*

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# The Believers Shall Be Saved

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Mark 16:16**

The fall of our first parents remains as a lesson to us that God has tremendous respect for the power of choice. He gave this choice to the intelligent beings He created. This is why we are free to obey Him or rebel against Him. He does not force us to remain loyal to Him. Our loyalty to Him should be our own decision.

The fall of Adam is also a lesson to us that God is loving and merciful. This is why He gave His Son Jesus Christ to die for our sins that we may be saved from eternal death, misery, sorrow, and degradation, which resulted from transgression of God's law.

The death of Christ on Calvary brought about a hope to live forever to all those who believe in Christ and abide in Him. For those who want to live forever, God does not require very tough assignments; neither does He demand large sums of money. All we have to do is believe in Jesus Christ and give to Him our lives and hearts.

Belief in Christ will allow Him to receive us as sinners and cleanse us by His blood shed on Calvary. We should offer our repentance of sins, which means sorrow for our sins and a turning away from them. We shouldn't repent simply to

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## **We shouldn't repent simply to escape judgment but to seek purity of heart.**

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escape judgment but to seek purity of heart and justification before God.

In seeking salvation in our daily life, confession—acknowledging our faults—is important. It should be directed to God as well as to our neighbors when we wrong them. “Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed” (James 5:16, NIV).

After repenting and confessing, then we should always be praying, consecrating our minds, souls, and lives to be owned by God so that we should be able to walk in righteousness. No one can have complete change to a new creature through self-effort, because we have a weak, sinful nature. When we are humble and seek assistance from the Holy Spirit, we shall have power to overcome the evil one and become God's children. Then we will live forever.

## **REACT**

1. How does the sinner become a new creature in Christ?
  2. Is the desire to live forever the most important motivation for following God's will? Why, or why not?
  3. Can you think of at least two other major reasons for following God's principles? (See John 14:15; Mark 10:30).
  4. Do you agree or disagree that we should “seek salvation on a daily basis”? Explain your answer.
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*By Philbert K. James, a former student of Songea (Tanzania) Boys' High School.*

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# Recognizing Your Fallen Nature

## OPINION

**Key Text: 1 Tim. 2:14, 15**

Jesus brought salvation unto my sinful nature that I may be established in Him after recognizing my sinfulness and surrendering my life to Him as my Redeemer. “The apostle Paul says that God ‘hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.’ Colossians 1:13. And everyone who has passed from death unto life is able to ‘set to his seal that God is true.’ John 3:33. He can testify, ‘I needed help, and I found it in Jesus. . . .’ Do you ask why I believe in Jesus? Because He is to me a divine Saviour.”\*

God’s promise is to transform us from inside so that our desires will conform to His will (Ezek. 11:19). But this doesn’t happen overnight. After three years of working with Jesus, the 12 disciples were still self-centered, arrogant, and cowardly. But He loved them, stayed with them, and eventually made mighty spiritual warriors of 11 of them.

Though transformation is performed by God, you have a part to play by doing the following:

- Spend time with Jesus every day.
- Personalize what you read in your Bible study.

## He eventually made mighty spiritual warriors of 11 of them.

- Do not play with fire. Move away from temptation.
- Develop association with godly friends.
- Take stock of the priorities in your life and adjust them toward God.
- Explore the proper use of your will.

In doing God’s will it is better to understand legalism and cheap grace.

**Legalism:** To emphasize the law without the grace. The “try-harder” concept has its basis in legalism, which says that a person can keep God’s law. By personal effort, discipline, and self-denial, a person can keep the law.

**Cheap grace:** To emphasize faith without works, which leads to “cheap grace.” This concept suggests that grace has relieved humankind of the responsibility to live according to God’s will and that only belief is needed to be granted eternal life.

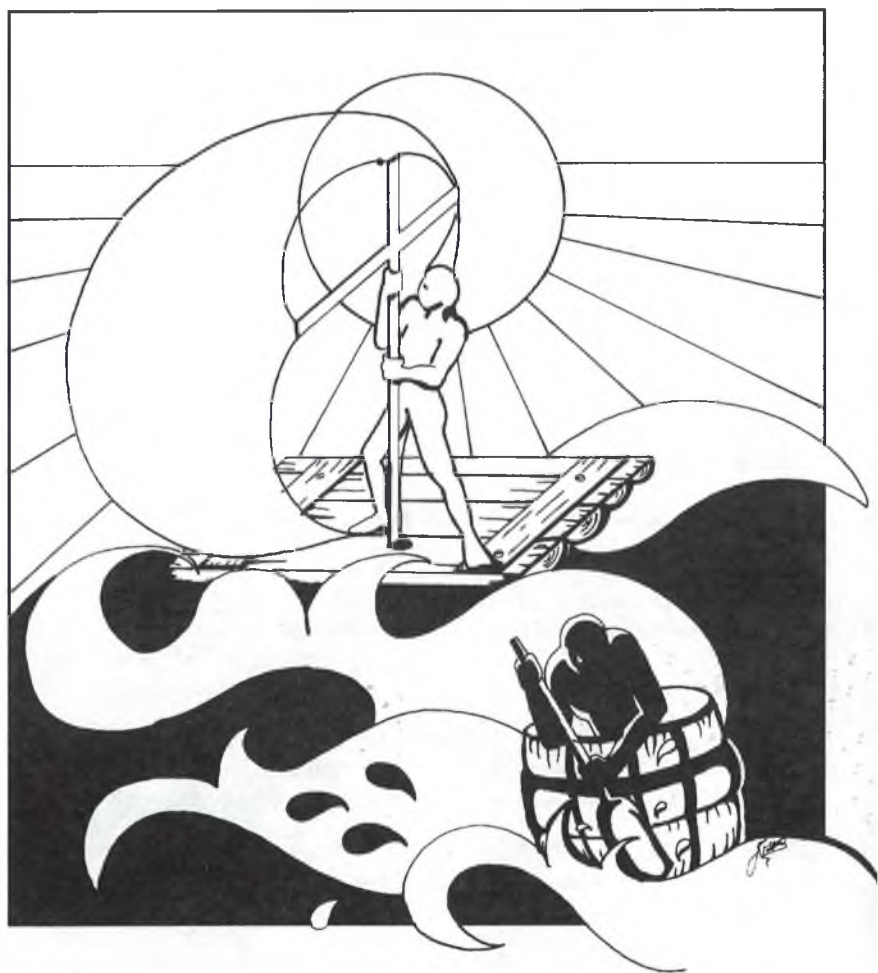
## REACT

1. How does our appreciation of the Cross affect our sense of estrangement from God?
2. How are legalism and cheap grace similar?
3. What does it mean to “personalize” what we read in Scriptures?

\*Steps to Christ, p. 112.

*By Gideon Muganda, a student of food science and technology at Sokoine University of Agriculture, Morogoro, Tanzania.*

# THE RETURN HOME



**“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” (Eph. 2:8, 9, NIV).**

# Like a Candle in the Wind

## INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Eph. 2:8, 9

I will always remember—almost to the minute—where I was when I heard the news. It was breakfast time on a sunny Sunday morning in Friedensau, on the concluding day of G'97, an annual youth missions conference in East Germany. The British mime and puppet team, myself included, who had been privileged to attend were enjoying the enthusiasm radiating from the hundreds of people present. Everyone was fired up by the Holy Spirit to create innovative evangelism projects as a result of their time there.

The Brits were preparing to leave, and we were approached by one of the conference presidents. "Thank you for coming," he said. "Please drive very carefully. This morning we have just heard that your princess is dead."

*Princess? I thought. What princess?*

"Princess Diana died in a motor vehicle accident this morning in France."

I was stunned. I looked at his face for a smile. It didn't come.

Back home the nation took it badly. All radio and television broadcasts were canceled to show programs that included hours and hours of footage of the good works of "The Queen of Hearts." Millions of pounds of flowers were offered in

## **"Princess Diana died in a motor vehicle accident this morning in France."**

memory of Diana. People queued for hours to sign her remembrance books. Churches were filled to overflowing with young and old mourners, tears streaming down their faces at memorial services held on her behalf. London came to a standstill on the day of her funeral.

Within a few days of the princess' death, another great figure who will always be remembered for the contribution she made to humankind, Mother Teresa, departed this life.

Journalists and commentators around the world asked how the work involving the thousands of people whose lives were touched by the humanitarian work of these two women—AIDS victims, chronically ill children, those affected by land mines, the poor of Calcutta—could survive now that their champions were gone.

But Someone else had already taken care of the problem. In fact, He has taken care of the whole sin problem. God sent His only Son to die for us, and when He returns, sin and all its consequences will be destroyed.

The princess was surely blessed as a result of her works, but more importantly, did she have a knowledge of the Saviour? Did anyone think to tell her?

None of us can save ourselves, no matter how many food baskets we give out or Bible studies we give. We all need a Saviour. Satan is trying to deceive many into overlooking their need for a Messiah. We need to tell the world loud and clear that John 3:16 is relevant to their lives. God's waiting on us.

*By Desaline Joseph, a fourth-year medical student at Leicester University, England.*

# Chaos to Control

## LOGOS

### 1 Pet. 1:13-21

My mother hired a young man to bring his pickup truck to help move some furniture.

Moving is never fun, but Mike was cheerful and willing. I asked what made him so cheerful, and he shared his story with me.

“My sister was murdered,” Mike explained. “For nearly a year after the murder the desire for revenge possessed me. They locked up the murderer, however, and I could not reach him. My thirst for revenge was ruining my health, my hope, my whole life. Then Jesus came into my life and taught me how to forgive. When I forgave my sister’s murderer, I found peace and could appreciate life again.”

Mike’s conversion was a tremendous experience resulting in a changed life. Not every person who loves God will have to forgive a murderer, but each of us meets with hate, manipulation, fear, depression, and more. Dealing with any of these issues involves a complete change from the pattern of our weak natures. In 1 Peter 1:13 we are called to be “perfectly self-controlled” (NEB) in contrast to “the empty folly of your traditional ways” (verse 18). Paul says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Cor. 5:17, NIV).

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## **“When I forgave my sister’s murderer, I found peace and could appreciate life again.”**

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Of course, when a person accepts the desirability of a total change in outlook, the next questions are: How can it be done? How can we personally experience becoming a “new creation”?

The Scriptures in 1 Peter 1:13-21 suggest a developing relationship. First, “set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed” (verse 13). “The grace to be given you” reminds me of a lover wooing a beloved. Wooing is gentle, extravagant, indulgent, and time-consuming. God woos us to the change He knows that we so desperately need.

Second, “just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do” (verse 15). The more we know a person, the closer our relationship becomes and the more that person influences us.

Third, God has great power to change people if they will allow Him to bring them forgiveness and peace. He, therefore, has the right to judge people as no other. “If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear” (verse 17, NRSV).

Fourth is the step for which we long: Love becomes a controlling, consuming passion for doing God’s will. God has loved us passionately, to the point of death. “For you know that . . . you were redeemed . . . with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect” (verse 18, 19, NIV). So we respect Him, trust Him, love Him. “Through him you have come to trust in God” (verse 21, NRSV).

It helps our understanding to ask when God began this work. Sin did not take Him by surprise. Before He created the worlds, He already had considered all the

possible cures. Because God is love, He favored the solution of love. Love would cost Him dearly. Love was not only the desirable solution, but it was the best solution—the permanent solution. So before the world was created, Christ was willing to die for us. Yet was it only Christ who died? “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ” (2 Cor. 5:19, NIV). Christ was on the cross, but the whole Godhead was experiencing death. Another factor exists. Because of God’s prodigious ability to reason and to experience the future, as soon as Christ chose to die, all the Godhead experienced that death and pain. He feels forever the depth of pain and sorrow. In all the universe, God pays the highest price.

A final issue arrests our attention: Why? What is so valuable about changed human beings? It will take eternity for us to understand God’s love, but let us consider some reasons.

First, God’s love works for others. Love does not flinch from doing the right thing, the enormously generous thing. Second, God enriches the entire universe by demonstrating His power to change and save refugees from our sad little world. Third, God takes human beings and re-creates them into something better than He has ever created. Hebrews 2:7, 8 quotes Psalm 8 on this theme: “You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor and put everything under his feet.”

The troubles that we face here pay off in heightened insight, awareness, and compassion. This leads to a fourth element: This relationship builds the exalted destiny of humans. We build nothing that is worthwhile without time, effort, pain, and sacrifice. Relationships built on those elements, however, have a tremendous return in joy and satisfaction. God has done all the work necessary to change us, and now He generously offers us a part in His great master plan. What respect! What love! What a God we serve!

## **REACT**

1. In your life, what sin has been most difficult for you to forgive? How did forgiving affect you?

2. Have you ever regretted forgiving someone for something? If so, why?

3. Today’s author describes a “love that becomes a controlling, consuming passion for doing God’s will.” What are the most significant barriers that interfere with such all-consuming passions in your life?

4. Why did God not wait for humanity to seek His forgiveness before He saved them?

# Saved by Grace

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Eph. 2:8, 9**

When God completed His creation of humankind, He looked at His creation and pronounced it “very good.” Then came the Fall, through the deception of Satan, and God’s most precious creature was doomed to eternal death. Ellen White says that “the Son of God, looking upon the world, beheld suffering and misery. . . . He looked with compassion upon those who were being corrupted, murdered, and lost. . . . Bewildered and deceived, they were moving on in gloomy procession toward eternal ruin,—to death in which is no hope of life, toward night to which comes no morning.”<sup>1</sup>

Humanity was lost by its own choice. “But instead of destroying the world, God sent His Son to save it. . . . And when the fullness of the time had come, the Deity was glorified by pouring upon the world a flood of healing grace that was never to be obstructed or withdrawn till the plan of salvation should be fulfilled.”<sup>2</sup> Humanity’s lostness did not catch God by surprise. He saw it coming and made provision for saving humankind.

He made the first step to reclaim humanity by His grace. Paul confirms this by saying that “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8, NKJV).

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## **Humankind did not—and will never—do anything to deserve salvation.**

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Also, “By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Eph. 2:8, 9, NKJV).

Humankind did not—and will never—do anything to deserve salvation. It is God’s gift. That is why it is called *grace*, *undeserved mercy*. This grace can be realized in our lives only if we accept the sacrifice God made on our behalf by faith. Faith in Jesus is the only way to experience God’s saving grace toward all humankind. Only when we realize that grace is a gift will we stop trying to win God’s approval by our good works. Instead, our good works will naturally flow from grateful hearts to our Father and God. We will also exercise the same grace and kindness to fellow humans. We have been saved by the grace of God alone, and faith is the means to claim this grace.

## **REACT**

1. How has God shown His grace to you?
2. How can you ensure that you grow into this grace every day?
3. How can you express the same grace toward others?

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1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 36.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

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*By Tom Owiti, an accountant in a hotel chain, Nairobi, Kenya.*

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# Humanity Doomed From the Beginning

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Rom. 3:23**

It is interesting to note that many Christians develop an ideology that perpetuates complacency. This complacency has forged derivation of many theories regarding the state of humanity. These theories have often been deviations from the truth. However, they provoke thought and enable us to test our faith.

The theory of creation fosters questions. Darwin certainly disagreed with it and formulated the theory of evolution. Fundamentally, evolution may create hope in a life that is constantly evolving to a higher state closely in line with some form of perfection. We know by faith, however, that Darwin's theory has no merit and is absolutely false. Empirically we may attempt to discredit many theories, but the ultimate source of our questions is faith.

It has been said that from the moment a human is born he or she is destined to die. As we read John 3:16, we realize that God has made a provision for us to escape this doomsday message.

Should we even contemplate theories that are divergent from our beliefs? Ellen White clearly states in her book *Education* that we are to be thinkers and not mere reflectors of other's thoughts. God expects us to analyze and come to a realization

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## **Fundamentally, evolution may create hope in a life that is constantly evolving to a higher state.**

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of our state of need. We ought to challenge traditional viewpoints and search the Scriptures for ourselves. Only after doing this will we comprehend God's magnificent love for us in His divinely ordained plan of restoration for all humankind.

We have all sinned and were born fallen. Yet, we are all saved by faith through the grace of God if we accept Him into our lives. There is a tremendous difference when we have Jesus in our hearts. As Seventh-day Adventist Christians, we have the opportunity to share the love of Christ and the message of hope. Despite our human tendencies, we can overcome and be lifted up from this curse of damnation and death.

## **REACT**

1. What similarities exist, if any, between the viewpoints of evolutionists and creationists?
2. What relationship, if any, should there be between our walk by faith and proving our faith?
3. How do the assurances of John 14:1-3 help us defend our belief of Christ's second coming?

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*By John G. F. Carey, departmental director and district pastor of the Bahamas Conference, Nassau.*

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# The Not-So-Secret Flavoring in Christianity

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Col. 4:6**

As Christians, we hope to show others through our lifestyle what it means to be happy. Can you imagine a great chef cooking a delicious meal without adding any seasonings? He or she would not think of doing such a thing. It is because of the seasonings that the chef achieves the fantastic results we taste. Christianity is flavored as well.

If we as Christians really want to share our Christianity with others, we must add the seasonings that bring the results we want. The salt God gives to us is to be used for His glory, not for ours. Once people digest this salt, they shall be preserved in His glorious kingdom.

“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone” (Col. 4:6, NIV) In this verse, Paul is giving instructions to the Colossians on how to live a productive Christian life through friendship ministries. If we look at Colossians 4:2-5, we read other instructions that enhance and season the understanding of our key text.

1. Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

## Our conversations should be seasoned with God's grace.

2. Pray for ministers of the gospel, that they may carry out God's message to all who hear.

3. Be wise in the way you act toward those who aren't in the church and make the most of every opportunity.

4. Let your conversations be full of grace and seasoned with salt so that God's love can be heard in all you say and do.

In Matthew 5:13, we read about what happens to salt that has lost its flavor, lost its effectiveness. It is thrown away! God doesn't keep things around that aren't a part of fulfilling the gospel and revealing His saving grace. This is not to say Christians who stop being effective should be thrown out of the church. This is not what this verse is saying at all. That's what we have God's grace for. Only by His grace are our sins forgiven and we are accepted as His saints.

Our conversations should be seasoned with God's grace. This fact should be revealed in all our daily interactions. “Salt must be mingled with the substance to which it is added; it must penetrate and infuse in order to preserve. So it is through personal contact and association that men are reached by the saving power of the gospel.”\*

\*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, p. 36.

By Stephanie Yamniuk, a Master of English student at the University of Manitoba, at Winnipeg.



# The Human Heart

## OPINION

**Key Text: 1 Pet. 1:14, 15**

As I cradle my newborn son in my arms, it's impossible to imagine that this beautiful little creature can be anything but wholly and perfectly good. Yet Christianity teaches that human nature is fallen, that even my flawless infant has the capacity—in fact, the tendency—to do evil.

What kind of nature do we human beings really have? On the one hand, we are created “a little lower than the angels” (Ps. 8:5). On the other, we know that our hearts are “desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9). Which is the true picture of human nature, and where does salvation fit into that picture?

Some would say that the image of God in us was completely destroyed at the Fall, that there is no good in humanity unless we are saved. Yet to accept that, we would have to say that unsaved people are incapable of doing kind deeds or creating beautiful works of art. We all know from experience that this isn't true. God did create something fine and beautiful when He made us in His image, and despite Adam's fall, something of that image remains in even the worst of us.

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## Some non-Christians seem to be better than some Christians.

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But we can't accept the other extreme either: the humanist belief that we are all essentially good and don't need salvation. To believe that means shutting our eyes to the terrible cruelty that all human beings, including ourselves, are capable of.

C. S. Lewis discussed the fact that some non-Christians seem to be better than some Christians. He concluded that the question of our natures is irrelevant to God's plan of salvation. “Mere improvement is not redemption, though redemption always improves people. . . . God became man . . . not simply to produce better men of the old kind but to produce a new kind of man.”\*

Each of us is capable of great good and great evil. Human nature is a hopeless and often confusing mixture of the beautiful and the horrible, the divine image of our Creator buried under generations of sinful acts and thoughts. The point of salvation is to bring us back to a right relationship with God our Creator so that His image can be fully restored in us. Restoring that image takes time and effort on His part—and on ours. Like good children, we grow into His holiness, into the image of what we were meant to be when He created us.

## REACT

As you look at people, do you focus more on the positive or negative aspects of human nature? Why?

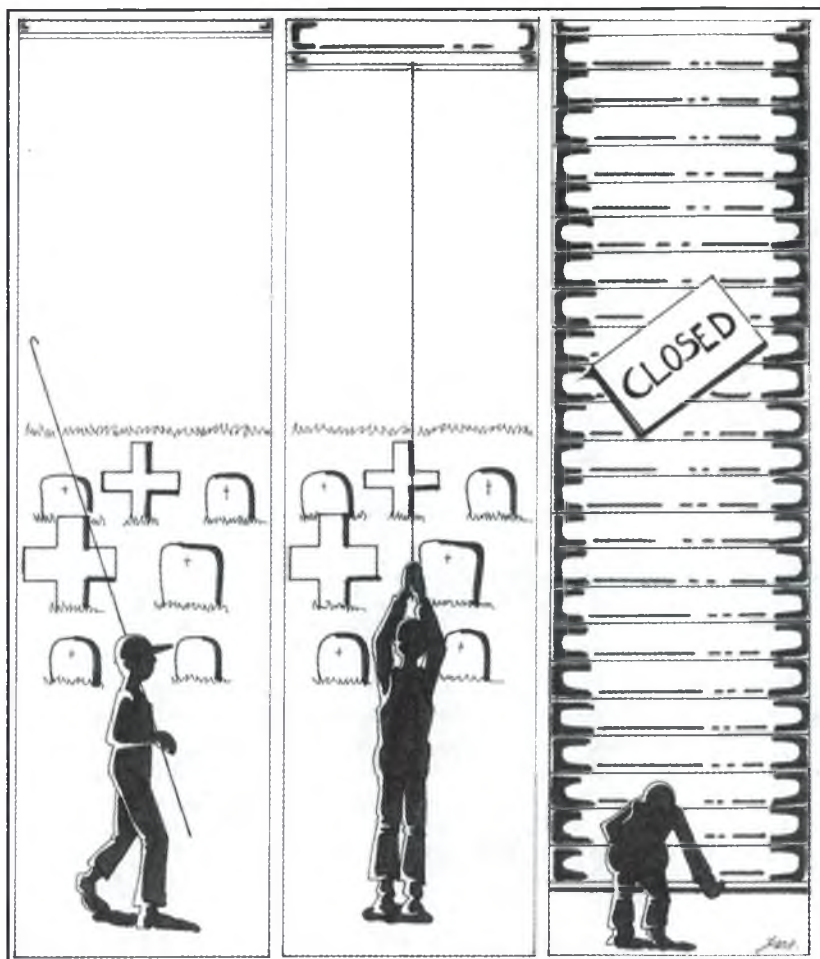
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\*C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, (Fount Paperbacks, 1977), p. 180.

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*By Trudy J. Morgan-Cole, a freelance writer from St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada.*

# THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR



**“The living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even the memory of them is forgotten” (Eccles. 9:5, NIV).**

# Beyond Death's Grip

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Eccles. 9:5**

Tammy was dead. Only a few days earlier I had had lunch with her and another friend, and Tammy was her typical bubbly self, telling us about the latest antics of her 10-month-old son. That morning a careless driver ran a red light and slammed into Tammy's car, killing her instantly.

I sat at my desk in shock. I'd never see her cheering, enthusiastic smile again. Nor would I hear her carefree laugh at one of my pitiful puns. I knew I would miss her.

About the time I realized how much I'd miss Tammy's happy personality, I began to think about how much her co-workers—and more so—her husband would miss her.

Later that morning I ran into Judy, a close mutual friend of Tammy's and mine. Judy's face registered between shock and sadness. Judy and Tammy had been close, and all I could do was shake my head as tears trickled down my cheeks.

The funeral service was a few days later in Tammy's Catholic church. All I remember from the ceremony was the music and watching her husband carry their son down the center aisle after the ceremony was over. I knew I was going through

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## **Others simply stated, "Now she's in heaven, in a happier place."**

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the grieving process and trying to grasp what life would be like without my cheery friend.

Afterward, at a reception, I mingled with co-workers attending the funeral. Some commented on how much they would miss her and then choked back a tear. Others simply stated, "Now she's in heaven, in a happier place."

My traditional Adventist backbone shivered at this comment, but I didn't think it was an appropriate time to give a Bible study on the state of the dead.

Jesus said death is a sleep (John 11:11). Solomon states that the dead don't know anything and even the thought processes of the dead are nonexistent (Eccles. 9:5).

If Tammy had gone directly to heaven when she died, would she really be happy watching her friends and family mourn? It would be torture for her to watch the people whom she cared about as they mourned the loss of the 29-year-old mother. How could a loving God permit such a helpless situation in a perfect place as heaven?

And what about Jesus' raising Lazarus from the dead? Would Jesus bring Lazarus back from heaven after Lazarus had seen the splendor of heaven? Would this be a loving thing to do, teasing someone with a view of heaven and then bringing him back to earth?

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*By Jerry Davis, market development manager for Cisco Systems, Portland, Oregon.*

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# When the Lines Go Flat

## LOGOS

**Eccles. 9:5, 6; John 11:11-14; 1 Thess. 4:13-18**

A man lies in intensive care at the hospital. He's dying, his body ravaged by cancer. The blips and beeps of the various monitors register his feeble respiration and brainwave activity. In a nearby lounge family members wait uncomfortably, taking turns staying awake.

Late one night his monitors sound their alarms. The nurses rush in, followed minutes later by the on-call physician. Despite their heroics, the lines on the screens go flat; and as the night becomes still once again, the doctor tells the family "He's gone."

Gone where? The body remains, yet we speak of his departure. What happens to a person when the lines on the screen go flat? Does his soul go straight to a place called heaven? Does it go to hell? There is needless confusion in Christendom on this topic; God, perhaps anticipating the questions, has provided ample confirmation in the Bible to restore clarity.

### Heaven Is a Happy Place

Hell, though often lampooned, is generally regarded as a place of terrifying misery and ceaseless torment. Heaven, on the other hand, is universally attractive as an eternal destination. New Testament authors wrote eagerly of heaven (Luke

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## What happens to a person when the lines on the screen go flat?

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10:20; Heb. 11:10; Rev. 22:14). Paul yearned to be "away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8, NIV).

In her book *Early Writings*, Ellen White describes a glorious vision of heaven. At its conclusion, she says, "After I came out of vision, everything looked changed; a gloom was spread over all that I beheld. Oh, how dark this world looked to me. I wept when I found myself here, and felt homesick. I had seen a better world, and it had spoiled this for me." After heaven, this dreary earth was nearly more than she could bear.

If that's how our world looks from heaven's perspective, how much joy would there be to go straight there at death and spend day after day observing the horrors of this world? Would it feel like paradise if those horrors were happening to friends or loved ones left behind?

Let's imagine: I die and go to heaven, leaving a wife and two children. The period of grieving over, my wife remarries, but time proves her new husband to be violently abusive. His abuse spreads to my children as well. He rages against my teenage son and molests my fourth-grade daughter. As if that weren't enough, he can't keep a job or provide for their basic needs—too much of his money goes for alcohol. I watch in agony, helpless to intervene.

Wait a minute! Where am I again? Is this heaven or hell?

Could all the joy and beauty of heaven negate the pain of watching this happen to my family? Maybe this going-to-heaven stuff isn't all it's supposed to be. (May-

be worse yet, what if she married someone much nicer than me?)

The Bible says, when the lines go flat, that we simply rest in the grave (Job 17:1; 21:32; Ps. 31:17; 49:14; 88:5). After a life of frustration and pain here on earth, God does not subject us to more of the same in heaven. Solomon, the wise one, reminds us that in death we are simply unconscious (Eccles. 9:5, 6, 10). Later on, Jesus called death a sleep (John 11:11-14).

God wants to bring an end to sin with all its pain and perplexity. He desires to remove us from sin's attack, not just shift us to the balcony where, still helpless and hurting, we see the attack continue. The crowning moment will come when the Redeemer's pronouncement "It is done!" signals the end of the battle (Rev. 16:17).

For believers who die before Christ's second advent, their battle with sin is done when the sleep of death begins. They rest, peacefully unconscious, waiting for the voice of their Creator. When, at the resurrection, life resumes, it will be only to experience joy, happiness, and ecstasy—exactly what God intended for us from the beginning. No wonder Paul invites us to "encourage each other" with the way in which he describes death (See 1 Thess. 4:13-18).

It's also no wonder the angel choirs sing hallelujahs and hosannas at Christ's second advent. They've had to watch these atrocities for thousands of years, and now it's finally finished. When Jesus returns, all heaven will be ready. We've slept in our graves; now our Saviour calls us and says, "It's time to rise!" We all rise together and enter our heavenly home, where we will "dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of [our] life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and . . . seek him in his temple" (Ps. 27:4).

## **REACT**

1. Is the truth that death is an "unconscious sleep" more disappointing or reassuring to you personally?
2. Why do you think God has us all wait to enter heaven together?
3. Do you think heaven is pure joy for Moses and Elijah right now, or is there some sorrow mixed in?
4. What is the loving way to communicate God's truth regarding death to those who believe their loved ones are in heaven?
5. What other strategies does Satan use to misrepresent God or distract from the need for God?
6. Do you worry about going to heaven? If so, what troubles you?
7. After reading about heaven in Scripture, how would you describe it in your own words?

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\**Early Writings*, p. 20.

# Condition in Death

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Acts 24:15**

“In consequence of Adam’s sin, death passed upon the whole human race. All alike go down into the grave. And through the provisions of the plan of salvation, all are to be brought forth from their graves. ‘There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust;’ ‘for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.’ Acts 24:15; 1 Corinthians 15:22.”<sup>1</sup>

“‘The grave cannot praise Thee, death cannot celebrate Thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise Thee, as I do this day.’ Isaiah 38:18, 19. Popular theology represents the righteous dead as in heaven, entered into bliss and praising God with an immortal tongue; but Hezekiah could see no such glorious prospect in death. With his words agrees the testimony of the psalmist: ‘In death there is no remembrance of Thee: in the grave who shall give Thee thanks?’ ‘The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence.’ Psalms 6:5; 115:17.”<sup>2</sup>

“The Bible clearly teaches that the dead do not go immediately to heaven. They are represented as sleeping until the resurrection. 1 Thessalonians 4:14; Job 14:10-12. In the very day when the silver cord is loosed and the golden bowl broken

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## **“The Bible clearly teaches that the dead do not go immediately to heaven.”**

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(Ecclesiastes 12:6), man’s thoughts perish. They that go down to the grave are in silence. They know no more of anything that is done under the sun. Job 14:21. Blessed rest for the weary righteous! Time, be it long or short, is but a moment to them. They sleep; they are awakened by the trump of God to a glorious immortality.”<sup>3</sup>

## **REACT**

1. What comfort do you feel in knowing your body rests until Jesus decides to come back to earth?

2. How would you view a death in your own family according to the Bible and Ellen White?

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. 544.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 546.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 550.

# Why Should I Care?

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: John 10:27, 28**

“Why should I worry about my condition after death? If I’m asleep in my grave, fine! If I go straight to heaven, fine! My beliefs aren’t going to change God’s plans.” These were the words of a friend during a recent discussion over whether doctrines are really important. Is worrying about what happens after death distracting us from the important issues?

Satan claimed that God lied to Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:5). He also contended that God’s requirement for obedience was unfair. With this challenge he set the playing field for the “great controversy.” God claimed that Adam and Eve’s immortality was conditional, based on obedience to Him; Satan countered, “You will not surely die” (verse 4, NIV). Satan implied that humankind was immortal, regardless of transgression, and focused the controversy on how God would deal with humanity in life and in death. Would we all die? Would there be life after death, and with what conditions? The vindication of God’s character depends on the answers to these questions.

God answered in part by offering a plan to restore our immortality. Through

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## “Why should I worry about my condition after death?”

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Jesus Christ’s death, immortality was offered as a free gift (verse 15; John 3:36). Satan countered by extending his deception to include rewards in an afterlife based on earned merit.

This deception occurs in an almost-universal belief in immortality. Virtually all Christians believe in the immortality of the soul. The major eastern religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism) believe in some form of transmigration (the passing of the soul at death into a new body or new form of being). Other major regional religions commonly engage in ancestor and spirit worship. All these religions teach that rewards in an afterlife depend on merit earned in this life.

Satan further misrepresented God’s character by introducing the concept of a transgressor’s eternal punishment. He “represents God as a revengeful tyrant, declaring that He plunges into hell all those who do not please Him, and causes them ever to feel His wrath; and that while they suffer unutterable anguish and writhe in the eternal flames, their Creator looks down upon them with satisfaction.” Thus, Satan attributes to God the cruel characteristics that are his own.\*

Let’s go back to the original question: Is worrying about what happens after death distracting us from the important issues? No. What happens to us after death is the important issue!

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\**The Great Controversy*, p. 534.

# Comfort for Grief

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Eccles. 3:20**

It is depressing to think about death. Particularly if we have recently lost someone close to us. What does happen when we die? Although many in the world find this question troubling at best, those who turn to the Bible find words of reassurance and comfort. We learn that God will never set before us something that He is not willing to help us through. He has promised to walk with us always, not excluding when we grieve.

There are three important steps to learn from this lesson:

**1. Understand.** Think of life as a wooden box. It all starts as a pile of wood and some nails; the pieces of little use by themselves, but in the hands of a craftsman, it can become more useful than the sum of its parts. When it is pried apart, it becomes once again just wood and nails. Likewise, when God built us, He took the dust of the earth (the wood) and combined it with His breath of life (some nails) to hold the body together. The two as a pair form a living soul. When we die, the box is taken apart; the dust returns to the earth and the breath to God who gave it. Neither of these parts continues to live as the character of the deceased; the soul ceases to exist—it will remain dormant until the two vital ingredients are again united at the time of resurrection.

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## Now that's one alarm I look forward to waking up to!

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**2. Believe.** Once we have found an explanation that we can accept and understand, it is easy to believe—perhaps even easier than some of the things that others believe. Can you imagine a father dying, going to heaven, and observing as his wife remarries a man who is abusive to his children? That doesn't seem like paradise. Also, I take comfort that we believe in a merciful God. He would never allow even wholly evil people to be subjected to eternal torture but will, out of His infinite justice and mercy, simply end their existence.

**3. Anticipate.** The Bible states in numerous places that the dead can be thought of as sleeping—resting after a long task—awaiting a new day when we will awake refreshed. Think of how lucky they are to sleep through some of the bad things that are happening in the world these days. Think of how it will be to wake on the morning of the resurrection with all of them! Now that's one alarm I look forward to waking up to!

## REACT

1. Do you fear death? If so, why?
  2. How can you give reassurance to someone who is grieving over the loss of a loved one?
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*By Christopher M. Cianci, a senior at Portland (Oregon) Adventist Academy.*

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# Spiritual Life or Death

## OPINION

**Key Text: Gen. 2:17**

God said, “You must not eat from the tree . . . for when you eat of it you will surely die” (Gen. 2:17, NIV). How often have we overlooked the “when”? We seem willing to discuss and form beliefs about our mortal bodies and death, but what about our spiritual life and death? Was there an *immediate* consequence to this rebellion? Another death?

I believe we overlook the “when” because it affects us now, just as it affected Adam and Eve. The serpent said “you will not surely die” (3:4), but a part of them did die. As soon as they ate of the fruit, “they realized they were naked . . . and made coverings for themselves” (verse 7).

This “first death” was also apparent in Adam’s response to God’s question, “Where are you?” (verse 9). He answered, “I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid” (verse 10). The first thing to die because of sin was intimacy: between husband and wife (they saw that they were naked and were ashamed) and between humankind and God (they hid themselves). The response of our first parents was automatic: They covered up. Then, when confronted with wrongdoing, they used the first defense mechanism: blame. Adam’s response to God, “The woman you put here with me” (verse 12) and Eve’s, “The serpent deceived me” (verse 13)

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## The first thing to die because of sin was intimacy.

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reveal how quickly humanity could shift from perfection to survival instinct.

Some defense mechanisms are learned from our role models; others seem to be part of our inherited sinful nature. How many of these do I display: blame, anger, criticism, defensiveness, pride, denial, resentment, playing martyr? How do these kill the very intimacy I yearn for?

Paul understood this conflict: “What I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do” (Rom. 7:15); “It is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me” (verse 20); “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” (verse 24).

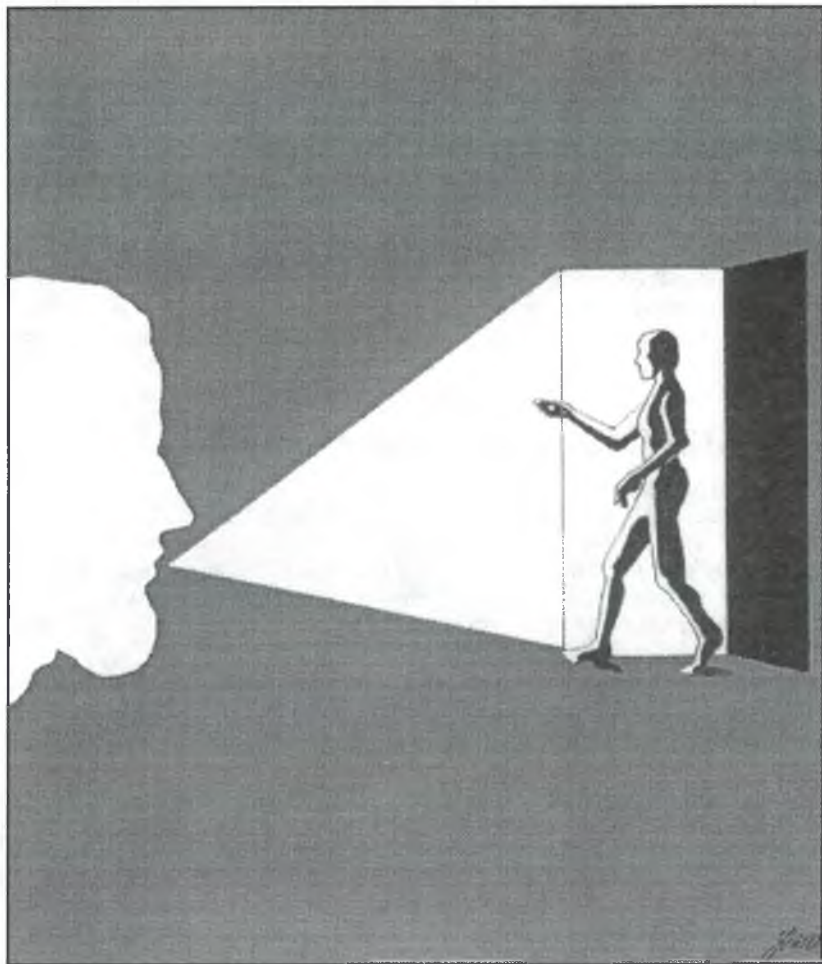
Paul was not talking about the obvious: stealing, cheating, murder, or adultery. He was struggling with the reactive behavior so alive in his life—and in ours today. This is the “old man” (6:6, KJV) that must be crucified and put to death daily with Christ, so that we can grow and become fully alive here on earth. As with seed, only when the kernel dies (the old man) can the plant (the new man in Christ) stretch forth and flourish. “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Cor. 5:17, NIV). Let us choose spiritual life, not death.

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*By Terry Jay Dondino, a lay pastor at Beaverton (Oregon) Seventh-day Adventist Church and general contractor for Interlocking Enterprises, Inc.*

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# THE DEVIL'S OWN INVENTION



**“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, NIV).**

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# The Truth Will Set Us Free

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: John 8:32**

As a child, the very first concept or idea instilled in my mind in regard to God and my relationship with Him was that any disobedience and misbehavior would definitely land me in hellfire, where I'd suffer eternal torment. On the contrary, obedience and good behavior would be rewarded by eternal life and unlimited joy. This concept resulted in a relationship with God based on fear rather than love. Most of my deeds were driven by fear of eternal punishment, denying me the privilege of enjoying a sweet, loving, and blessed communion with God. God was pictured to me as a being whose wrath couldn't be appeased.

Growing up and observing individuals from various regions brought me the realization that many others saw God in the same way. The belief of eternal torment is based on the doctrine of immortality of the soul. This is a concept derived by the great deceiver to hinder us from perceiving God as a Being of love and justice. It fills one with fear that dominates our everyday life. Because of these erroneous ideas, many have gone to great effort to please God to ensure escape from eternal torment. Erroneous beliefs and practices have sprung up as a result of the doctrine

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## **We become bound by fear of eternal torment.**

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of the immortality of the soul and belief in eternal torment. Spiritism, transmigration of the soul, and purgatory are some of these erroneous beliefs.

The fear instilled in us mars our picture of God. It limits our perception of His love, hence hindering us from experiencing God's love fully. We become bound by fear of eternal torment. Millions die without a true knowledge of God and of His justice. After a long struggle and growth in the knowledge of God, I was set free from this fear, bringing a meaningful, fruitful, loving relationship with God. The truth set me free.

Through the unscriptural doctrine of eternal torment and the state of the dead, the devil has managed to deceive many through the ages with these erroneous beliefs. Our only defense and deliverance from this belief is the true knowledge of God and His work. The truth will set us free!

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*By Caroline Mora Machoka, a fourth-year major in religious philosophy at Spicer Memorial College, Pune, India.*

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# The Devil's First Lie

## LOGOS

**Eccles. 12:14; Matt. 12:33-37; Acts 17:30, 31; Rev. 20:11–21:5**

The devil told his first lie to humankind in the Garden of Eden. He assured Eve that even if she disobeyed God and ate from the tree, she would “not surely die” (Gen. 3:4). Since then the devil has been repeating that lie in different ways. Beliefs such as reincarnation, the immortality of the soul, and eternal punishment in hell are examples of the devil's deceptions.

Millions of people, including Christians, misinterpret the Scripture, thinking that the dead will live on after death. Only by a true understanding of the Bible, which teaches that death is an unconscious sleep until the resurrection, and by trusting in Christ, who alone offers eternal life (John 3:16), can anyone be safe from the deceptions of Satan.

### The Origin of the Belief

The idea of an abode of the dead occurs in folklore and mythology of many lands and people throughout history. Judaism in the Old Testament (prior to the second century B.C.) had a simple concept about life after death. In every use of sheol (grave or hell) in the Old Testament (65 times), the word means simply the place where the dead sleep (Job 17:13).

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## The idea of an abode of the dead occurs in folklore and mythology of many lands.

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But between the period of Old and New Testaments, the Jews came in contact with the Persians and Greeks, who believed in the world of the dead. The Jews had adopted the idea of the immortality of the soul by the time of Christ. Jesus tried to correct His disciples' belief about the condition of the dead when He claimed that death was nothing more than a person sleeping in the grave (John 11:11-14). From the reaction of the disciples, it is obvious that Jesus' description (verse 13) conflicted with their own Jewish thinking.

### Eternal Fire and Eternal Life

It would be an interesting search looking for the terms “eternal spirit” or “immortal soul” in the Bible. Never can we find these words used in the Bible referring to a human soul. Only God is described as One who is eternal. Does this mean that the hope of eternal life is an illusion? No.

On the one hand, Scripture is silent on such subjects as an eternal spirit and immortal soul; on the other hand, it does say a great deal about eternal life. It is spoken of as a gift from Jesus. “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23, NIV).

The Bible does not support the existence of a fire that burns eternally. But Jesus used the expression “everlasting fire” on two occasions (Matt. 18:8; 25:41). In both instances the word that appears in the original text is *aionios*. This refers to the kind of fire that destroys the wicked. Hellfire is eternal in its nature, not in its duration. God's fire to destroy the wicked is a process whose *results* are eternal.

Similarly, another phrase that may indicate eternally burning hell is “for ever and ever” occurring twice in Revelation (14:11; 20:10). The primary source of this phrase is Isaiah 34:10. Bible scholars have pointed out that the fire that causes smoke to ascend “for ever and ever” does not burn forever. To the Hebrew mind that expression meant complete destruction as long as life lasts, not endless burning.

### **The Day of Judgment**

One of the popular beliefs that many hold is that when one dies he goes directly to heaven or hell. Then what about the day of judgment as described in Revelation 20:11-15? If rewards are given out as soon as one dies, how can one’s destiny be decided on the day of judgment, which is in the future? The wicked in hell would have to come out, be judged, and then go right back! The Bible does not say that God will punish them both before and after the day of judgment but *at* the day of judgment.

### **Why Reject Eternal Hell?**

Here are four of the scriptural reasons for rejecting Satan’s invention, the idea of eternal torment:

1. It claims that the lost will live forever, which is contrary to Scripture: “The soul who sins shall die” (Ezek. 18:20, NKJV).

2. It misrepresents our God of love. God is “not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9, NIV).

3. It would cast a shadow over the happiness of those saved. If the redeemed realized that their loved ones were being tormented eternally, eternal life would be an anguish for them. But in heaven no such reason for anguish is expected as “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (Rev. 7:17).

4. This teaching has brought many sad results. Thousands have turned away from God because of the fear and confusion it has caused in them.

### **REACT**

1. Why is it important to have a clear idea about the concept of death and eternal life?

2. What can I do to undo Satan’s deceptions discussed in this week’s lesson?

3. Why should God bring the wicked back to life and punish them? Is God cruel and merciless?

4. Why do you think reincarnation is reassuring for those who believe in it?

5. What does the phrase “eternal fire” mean to you?

# The Mastermind Exposed

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Ezek. 33:11**

Do you like being fooled? I don't. If you don't either, then equip yourself with these inspired quotations:

Regarding the teachings of the burning hellfire, Ellen White says, "Where, in the pages of God's word, is such teaching to be found? . . . No, no; such is not the teaching of the Book of God."<sup>1</sup> In fact, it's the opposite. God wants His people to live (Ezek. 33:11).

"Satan told his angels to make a special effort to spread the lie first repeated to Eve in Eden, 'Ye shall not surely die.' And as the error was received by the people, and they were led to believe that man was immortal, Satan led them on to believe that the sinner would live in eternal misery. Then the way was prepared for Satan to work through his representatives and hold up God before the people as a revengeful tyrant—one who plunges all those into hell who do not please Him, and causes them ever to feel His wrath."<sup>2</sup>

"The theory of eternal torment is one of the false doctrines that constitute the wine of the abomination of Babylon, of which she makes all nations drink. Revelation 14:8; 17:2. That ministers of Christ should have accepted this heresy and

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## **"Satan told his angels to make a special effort to spread the lie first repeated to Eve in Eden."**

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proclaimed it from the sacred desk is indeed a mystery. They received it from Rome, as they received the false sabbath."<sup>3</sup>

"It was Satan who originated the doctrine of eternal torment [or hellfire] as a punishment for sin, because in this way he could lead men into infidelity [unfaithfulness] and rebellion, distract souls, and dethrone human reason."<sup>4</sup>

"I learned that the wicked shall be consumed as stubble, and that they shall be as ashes under our feet in the new earth; they shall be as if they had not been. There is no eternally burning hell; there are no living bodies suffering eternal torment."<sup>5</sup>

"Upon the fundamental error of natural immortality rests the doctrine of consciousness in death, a doctrine, like eternal torment, opposed to the teachings of the Scriptures, to the dictates of reason, and to our feelings of humanity."<sup>6</sup>

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1. *The Great Controversy*, p. 535.

2. *Early Writings*, pp. 218, 219.

3. *The Great Controversy*, p. 536.

4. *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, pp. 27, 28.

5. *Sermons and Talks*, vol. 2, p. 232.

6. *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, pp. 364, 365.

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By John Eager, a fourth-year elementary-education major at Spicer Memorial College, Pune, India.

# Destiny of the Wicked

## EVIDENCE

### Key Text: Rev. 20:15

Bible passages that describe the destiny of the wicked raise serious and critical questions. It forces us to picture vividly what hell will be like. But we must allow the Bible to speak about what will happen to the wicked. There are five important questions: (1) When will the wicked be punished [time]? (2) How long will they suffer [length]? (3) Where will they suffer [place]? (4) How will they suffer [nature]? (5) Why will they suffer [purpose]? Though all these questions are important, the first three are directly connected to this week's study.

**Time:** According to many non-Adventist theologians, the wicked enter hell as soon as they die and suffer there throughout eternity. Scholars quote the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). The Bible says, however, that the punishment of the wicked does not begin until the final judgment (Eccles. 12:14). It clearly states that the dead are not conscious (9:5), so they are incapable of suffering. They are brought back to life to meet the judgment. Christ brings His reward with Him when He comes the second time (Rev. 20:12, 13).

**Length:** The Bible speaks of "everlasting punishment" (Matt. 25:46) for the wicked and of everlasting fire (verse 41), in which they will burn, and be tor-

## Bible passages that describe the destiny of the wicked raise critical questions.

mented (Rev. 20:10). The words that are translated for "everlasting" and "forever" do not necessarily mean never ending. These terms, in the Greek noun *aion* means an age which has an end. So when the Bible indicates that wicked people's suffering comes to an end (Mal. 4:1-3), it means that the wicked will be burned up and reduced to ashes. It is also necessary to remember that the word *everlasting* or *forever* has an implication that the *consequences* are permanent.

**Place:** The Bible portrays the torment of the wicked in hell, a lake of fire. In the Old Testament the word *hell* is always derived from the Hebrew word *sheol*, which simply means "the unseen state." The idea of fire is not found in the word. Sheol is frequently translated as "grave" (Job 17:13; Ps. 9:17). Both good and bad go there.

In the New Testament the word *hell* is translated from three Greek words: once from *tartarus*, which means "a dark abyss"; ten times from *hades*, which means grave or death; 12 times from the equivalent of the Hebrew word *Hinnom*, the name of a valley near Jerusalem where carcasses of animals were consumed by a fire that was kept constantly burning. In not one of these 12 instances does the text tell when the wicked will be cast into hell. The fiery judgment is simply described as a future event.

*By Jaypaul S. Daniel Ebenezer, a master's degree student in secondary education at Spicer Memorial College, Pune, India.*

# A Smooth Drive

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Rom. 6:23**

In a world of athletic shoes, fast cars, and dirt bikes, youngsters of today are caught up in a web of desires. Life in the fast lane seems more exciting than a life centered on God's will. Every individual act is based on one's priorities. When desires are unquenchable, the maker and keeper of all things is eventually forgotten.

I love driving. But it isn't always possible to go as fast as you can. I am much aware of police officers and the laws of driving on the highways. There is a natural fear that evolves in each of our hearts when we're driving at 100 miles per hour.

This relates to some degree to our concept of heaven and hell. God has given each of us a car called "Christian" with specific rules. At times we drive our cars to places where we should not go, and at times we use cheap gas that spoils the engine. Tires are worn out by driving through the rocky ground. And we even modify our car with stuff that makes our cars heavy and sometimes shabby.

By this we can portray wickedness and even sin. It is said in Romans 6:23, "The wages of sin is death." It is true that when we burden our cars with such dirt and break the rules of God, we end up in an accident, and that is "death."

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## God has given each of us a car called "Christian."

When people encounter the concept of hell and sin, they sometimes comfort themselves with a statement of frustration like "I've booked my ticket to hell, so let me enjoy life to the utmost." A fear grips them when they talk about hell and heaven. When they act wrongly or tell a lie, they feel as though hell has become their place.

How should we overcome this fear? Try the following:

1. Wash your car and keep it clean every day—living a prayerful life.
2. Maintenance is essential. Every car needs to regenerate to regain its initial capacity. Likewise, our faith and hope should be regenerated.
3. Avoid breaking rules and visiting places that are not accepted as Christian.
4. Avoid modification with material of this world, but modify your life with the righteousness of God.

"The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23, NIV). While creating this earth, God knew the beginning and the end. He knew my name before I was born. He knows my future too, but He gave me the power to choose what is right and wrong.

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*By Praveen John Edward, a fourth-year management major at Spicer Memorial College, Pune, India.*



# God's Character and His Plans

## OPINION

**Key Text: Rom. 6:23**

God's character and the doctrine of immortality of the soul contradict one another. God did not create human beings to suffer and die. When God created Adam and Eve in His image, His desire was that humanity should live for eternity under the condition of obedience.

Satan wants to give a false picture of God. In your everyday life, Satan may suggest the following: "God takes your talent, your time, your energy—even to the extent that you sacrifice all you have. At the end you suffer and then He takes your life."

But Jesus said, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10, NIV).

God's character never goes against His plans even though the wicked choose death. God knows the value of life because He is the Creator and the source of life. Death of a sinner is a painful experience for a loving God. How could he then allow the wicked to suffer for eternity? Satan presents God as a person who takes revenge, but God takes no pleasure in the suffering of the wicked (Ezek. 33:11). Satan is the author of suffering, not God.

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## Satan is the author of suffering, not God.

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In the medieval period, sermons charged that if you don't repent from your sins, you will burn in hell forever. People used to listen and repent with fear. But this affects a person's belief system, and he also develops a wrong concept about God.

If the idea of immortality of the soul is true and if a person goes to heaven or hell immediately after death, what is the purpose of Christ's coming and of the resurrection?

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul is an aspect of spiritualism. Satan uses this as an effective means of deception. Fallen angels appear in the form of loved ones.

When Christ was here on earth, Jewish scholars knew Scripture thoroughly, but Satan deceived them, and they denied and rejected the Messiah. Before the Second Coming, people will know the Scripture well, but Satan knows our weakness and all our theology, technology, and methodology.

We will be deceived by Satan if we are not led by the Holy Spirit to understand the Scripture and follow it. Also, if we don't have a genuine relationship with the Lord, we will be deceived.

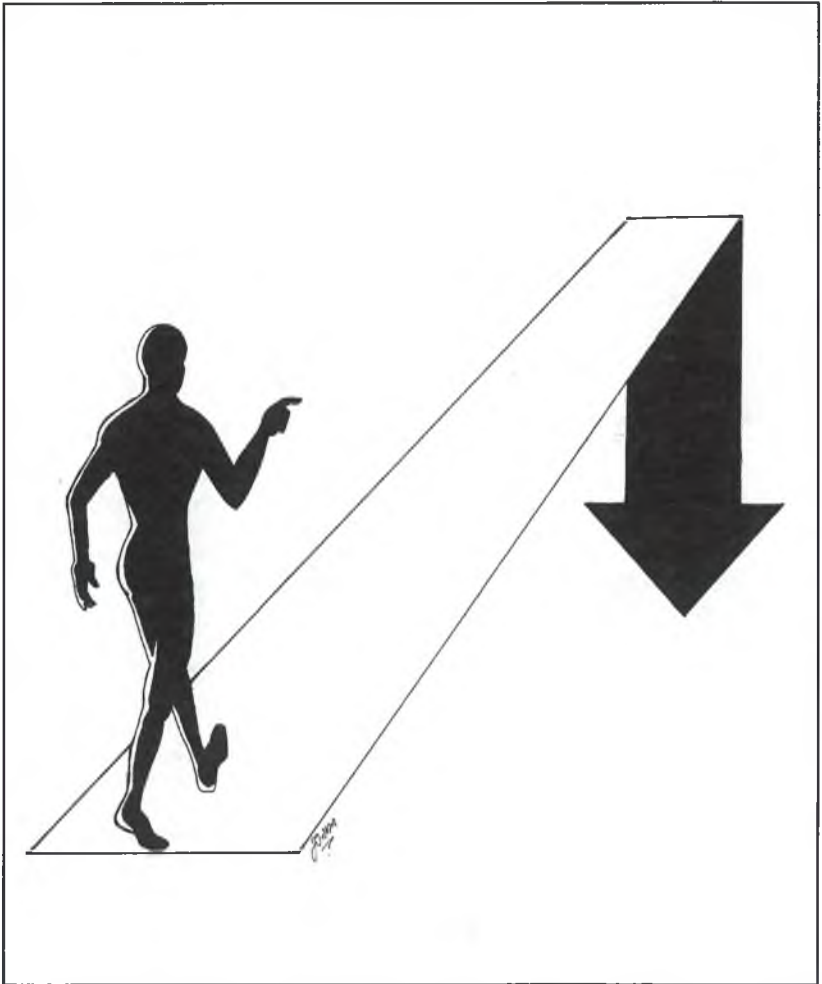
"False Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible" (Matt. 24:24).

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*By Maxwell Benjamin Balraj, a master's degree student in secondary education at Spicer Memorial College, Pune, India.*

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# DISCERNING THE DIFFERENCE



**“There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death” (Prov. 14:12, NIV).**

# “Who Are You?”

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Prov. 14:12; 1 Cor. 10:20; Rev. 16:13, 14; Matt. 24:24**

Being a father of identical twins, I know how difficult it can be to tell the difference between them. Many are the times I have called them by the wrong name or thought that I have been discussing an important issue of discipline when, after a while, I realize I've been talking to the wrong girl. Sometimes, in stressful situations, I even have to ask them, “Who are you?”

In the spiritual realm we sometimes meet the same problem. We have a hard time seeing the difference between good and evil. This is not made easier by the fact that Satan has camouflaged the false spiritual world to look as much like the true experience as he can.

According to Revelation 16, evil spirits, who seemed to emerge from a false kind of trinity, were able to perform miracles and wonders that were the recognition mark of the works of Jesus and the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:22).<sup>\*</sup> These miracles and wonders were performed by the false spiritual movement solely to mislead even God's chosen ones (Matt. 24:24).

Satan is smart, and he has chosen not to approach us with that which is easy for us to unmask. In subtle ways he tries to convince us that his way of presenting things is the right one. He knows to whom you and I have pledged our allegiance.

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## **We have a hard time seeing the difference between good and evil.**

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He knows that we have a divinely given urge to please God. This is where he is using our vulnerability. In our effort to follow the right way, Satan will try, with the force of a roaring lion (1 Pet. 5:8) to have us walk his dead-end road. As a masterful director, he will let us see a mixture between that which is of God and that which goes in his deceitful direction.

Only through filling our vulnerable minds completely with Jesus will we be able to discern between the genuine and the counterfeit. Sometimes, in stressful situations, we possibly even have to stop and ask, “Who are you?” If we involve ourselves with Jesus, if we make it our priority to get to know Him better, the answer to the question above will be given to us by God, He who better than anyone else knows our vulnerability (Heb. 4:15, 16).

And if we let God answer, we know that we are on the right way.

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<sup>\*</sup>Jon Paulien, *What the Bible Says About the End Time* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 1994), chap. 10.

# More or Less?

## LOGOS

**Lev. 19:31; Ps. 106:28; 1 Cor. 10:20; Rev. 16:14**

A pastor once asked a small boy to come up on the platform during the sermon to help illustrate a point. He asked him to choose between a \$10 bill right then and there or a \$5 bill each week for the rest of the year, beginning the following weekend.

The boy quickly chose the 10 dollars and sat down in his seat again. All the adults in the audience, including me, smiled and thought to ourselves: "Too bad, he didn't understand that the other choice in the long run would have given him so much more."

Unfortunately, I make the same bad choice myself many times. You and I live in a society where immediate gratification is the rule and where everything worth having has to be had right now. Even as Christians we have been affected by this way of life, not only in our everyday life but in our journey of faith as well.

This is a major advantage for the devil. He loves the fact that we are looking for shortcuts to save time and effort in our search for peace and happiness. But whenever we stray from the path in which God is trying to lead us, the shortcut always ends up a dead end. In our Bible texts for this week, we find some of the ways that the devil is trying to get us to take shortcuts in our lives and in our faith.

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## At first glance a shortcut always looks appealing.

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### Looking for Answers (Lev. 19:31)

If we have troubling questions that we struggle with and it seems as though God is not answering our prayers, we might be tempted to take a shortcut to get an answer. Not knowing is one of the hardest dilemmas that we as humans find ourselves in. We want to know, and we want to know as soon as possible.

Today's image of mediums and spiritists is not so dark as it was at the time this text was written. But behind a new, less sinister façade stands the same devil, waiting to get hold of us and defile us.

### Satisfying Physical Desires (Ps. 106:28)

All around us is the lure of a shortcut to immediate gratification of our physical desires. To be "yoked to Baal of Peor" refers to the story in Numbers 25:1-9, in which some of the Israelites engaged in sexual immorality with the Moabites and their worship of Baal. This was done in an open and God-defying way, but many times we are tempted in a more subtle way that might be even more effective and just as devastating in the long run.

### Compromising Our Faith (1 Cor. 10:20)

Satan also tries to make us believe that the end justifies the means. As long as our goals and purposes are right and noble, we can compromise our faith and our principles and take a minor shortcut. But in 1 Corinthians 10:20 and in the following verses, God tells us that we can't mix good and evil. However good and true our intentions are, we have to be careful not to "participate with demons."

## **Spectacular but Shallow (Rev. 16:14)**

This is a shortcut in which we are tempted to look solely on the apparent power of a spectacular miracle. If we do this and neglect to study the teachings of God in His Word, we can easily become dazzled by the action. Our text in Revelation clearly teaches that demonic powers are capable of performing miraculous signs and wonders in order to deceive, especially in the time of the end. Our faith needs to be built on a deeper knowledge of God's teachings, rather than a shallow acceptance of something that convinces our senses of a higher power.

Satan is a master of deception, a craft that he has worked on from the time of Adam and Eve. He was deadly then, but he has refined his methods even more through the years. It would be foolish of us not to assume that during this time, when time is short, this "roaring lion" (1 Pet. 5:8) will employ every possible tactic in order to deceive you and me.

At first glance a shortcut always looks appealing and would seemingly enrich our lives or our faith. We want more but end up with less. Temporary answers, fulfillment, compromises, or shallow action sooner or later show their true colors. That deeper peace and joy and faith and love that we are looking for is found in a long-lasting relationship with Jesus Himself. A personal relationship like that comes from time spent together in prayer and study and service with Him. If we want more of Him in our lives, we can't afford to take any shortcuts and end up with less.

## **REACT**

1. What examples can you give that we live in a society that is preaching immediate gratification?

2. How has the face of occultism and spiritism changed? Is it more accepted today? Explain your answer.

3. How are we tempted to compromise our faith in order to reach our goals on our jobs and in our relationships?

4. How can you and I stand up against the devil's schemes to deceive us? Read Ephesians 6:10-18.

5. What is meant by the phrase "patient endurance"? (Rev. 14:12).

6. Treasury agents are taught to recognize the difference between genuine and counterfeit currency by learning to recognize the genuine. How could this principle apply to discerning between God's or Satan's promptings?

7. When in doubt, we can always ask, "What would Jesus do?" What provisions has God made for us to know what Jesus would do?

8. Most of us would probably prefer to have our airline pilot fly through difficult weather by using instruments rather than by physical perception. What spiritual analogies does this have to knowing the difference between right and wrong?

## “By Beholding We Become Changed”

### TESTIMONY

**Key Text: 1 Sam. 28:5-8**

“There are many who become restless when they cannot know the definite outcome of affairs. They cannot endure uncertainty, and in their impatience they refuse to wait to see the salvation of God. Apprehended evils drive them nearly distracted. They give way to their rebellious feelings, and run hither and thither in passionate grief, seeking intelligence concerning that which has not been revealed. If they would but trust in God, and watch unto prayer, they would find divine consolation. Their spirit would be calmed by communion with God. The weary and the heavy-laden would find rest unto their souls if they would only go to Jesus; but when they neglect the means that God has ordained for their comfort, and resort to other sources, hoping to learn what God has withheld, they commit the error of Saul, and thereby gain only a knowledge of evil.”<sup>1</sup>

“There are few who have any just conception of the deceptive power of spiritualism and the danger of coming under its influence. Many tamper with it merely to gratify their curiosity. They have no real faith in it and would be filled with horror at the thought of yielding themselves to the spirits’ control. But they venture upon the forbidden ground, and the mighty destroyer exercises his power upon

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### **“There are few who have any just conception of the deceptive power of spiritualism.”**

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them against their will. Let them once be induced to submit their minds to his direction, and he holds them captive. It is impossible, in their own strength, to break away from the bewitching, alluring spell. Nothing but the power of God, granted in answer to the earnest prayer of faith, can deliver these ensnared souls.”<sup>2</sup>

“Thus, in place of righteousness and perfection of the infinite God, the true object of adoration; in place of the perfect righteousness of His law, the true standard of human attainment, Satan has substituted the sinful, erring nature of man himself as the only object of adoration, the only rule of judgment, or standard of character. This is progress, not upward, but downward.

“It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature that by beholding we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence. Man will never rise higher than his standard of purity or goodness or truth. If self is his loftiest ideal, he will never attain to anything more exalted. Rather, he will constantly sink lower and lower. The grace of God alone has power to exalt man. Left to himself, his course must inevitably be downward.”<sup>3</sup>

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1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 687.

2. *The Great Controversy*, p. 558.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 554, 555.

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*By Pontus Alm, a Bible student at Ekebyholmsskolen, Rimbo, Sweden.*

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# What Is Spiritualism Today?

## EVIDENCE

### Key Text: Prov. 14:12

She had just lost her father some weeks before. Only 51 years old, he had died of a heart attack. Still, her eyes radiated peace and confidence because she had the Christian hope of seeing him again. She asked me and a friend if we thought that the dead could have any contact with this world. She herself was not sure.

In the Fall, humankind lost the ability to communicate directly with God through the Spirit. The ability to contact the spiritual world is something many people miss today and are searching for. We were created “a little lower than the angels” (Ps. 8:5), with mental and spiritual gifts, but Satan is immensely more powerful. This makes us vulnerable. Spiritualists say that they have contact with the dead.

There are three possible explanations for spiritualism: (1) talking with the dead, (2) human fraud, and (3) talking with evil spirits. As Adventists, we know that it is impossible to contact the dead (Job 14:10-12). Is it a fraud? In many cases, yes. “Every honest person will admit that at least some of these phenomena are fraudulent; but others cannot be explained as such. There obviously is some supernatural power connected with spiritualism.”<sup>1</sup> The Bible says it is evil spirits (Lev. 19:31;

## There are three possible explanations for spiritualism.

Rev. 16:14). Satan lies that we are immortal gods (Gen. 3:4, 5), that we do not need Christ (Rom. 6:23).

God clearly forbids trying to contact evil spirits (Lev. 19:31). It is very dangerous! Saul took his own life after the seance with the witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28, 31). Satan wants to take your life too. He wants to control your mind.

Modern spiritualism has many faces: New Age, mediums, meditation, hypnosis, biofeedback, Yoga, astrology, fortune tellers, palm readers, occult role-playing fantasy games—you name it. All want us to reach a higher level of consciousness. But remember: “If you try to reach beyond the human mind to gain information supernaturally, the only force you will contact is the devil. God cannot be reached through this type of manifestation. The mind is a very precious commodity. Be careful not to loan it to a stranger. Give it only to Jesus.”<sup>2</sup>

To protect ourselves, we need to follow our Bible, pray, and put on God’s armor (Eph. 6:12).

1. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1988), p. 354.

2. Dr. Lester Sumrall. *The Gifts and Ministries of the Holy Spirit* (Springdale: Whitaker House, 1993), p. 182.

# Do All Idols Have Faces?

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Isa. 40:19**

*“As for an idol, a craftsman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and fashions silver chains for it” (Isa. 40:19, NIV).*

During my year as a missionary in Taiwan, I saw hundreds of idols. Most of them were made of rock or concrete, which was covered with gold, yet others were made of wood. They had hair and clothes and looked like dolls sitting on a throne. Millions of people worship these gods. Most of these people are far more dedicated to their gods than we are to our God. Almost every family in Taiwan has a small private altar in their home, no matter how small the house is.

Why is it that we Christians, who have a living God, are less dedicated? Why is it that we find it so hard to find a place for our God in our lives? Could it be that we’ve filled those places with idols of our own? Is there anything in our lives that we could classify as idols?

Could, for example, our hobbies possibly become idols? Anything that separates us from God is sin. Sometimes our hobbies fill such a big part in our lives that there is no space left for God. We use so much time and energy on our hobbies that when it’s time for God, we’re so exhausted that we fall asleep. But what kind

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## **Sometimes our hobbies fill such a big part in our lives that there is no space left for God.**

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of hobbies are we talking about? I believe it could be anything: basketball, books, computers, knitting, friends, TV, food, etc.

Stop and think for awhile: Is there anything in your life that keeps you away from spending time with God? Do you dare call these things idols?

## **REACT**

1. If we discover something in our lives that we could classify as an idol, how do we handle this problem?
2. In what way are these idols more dangerous than idols in other religions?
3. Why is it possible to have idols without knowing it?
4. Explain how the face you see in the mirror can be the face of an idol.
5. Do you agree or disagree that all idol worship begins with self. Explain your answer.
6. How do the three points in Micah 4:8 help us overcome placing self before God?

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*By Linda Alm, a Bible student at Ekebyholmsskolen, Rimbo, Sweden.*

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# What's Your Goal?

## OPINION

### Key Text: Eph. 6:10-18

Have you ever experienced the conflict between exercising your free will and resisting the efforts of others to make you follow their will? We all indeed have a free will, and if not earlier, we begin our fight for it as three-year-olds lying on the floor telling Mom: I want it my way!

Our environment keeps telling us which way is the best, and finally most of us give up in one way or another. Have you really thought about why you stepped into the line and quit arguing? You may have on some major topics, but what about the less important ones, the grey zones in your life?

Every decision we make pushes us in one direction or another. God wants to help us to follow the road to heaven, but the pressure can be quite strong from family or friends. In Ephesians 6:10-18 God has listed what we might need and what He can support us with when we fight for our lives. He doesn't ask us to fight naked as the poor human beings we are but gives us all the tools we need in our battle.

For a long time I thought this armor of God was meant for the future when the "days of evil" (Ps. 49:5) would come, only to get hit by the fact it was already here.

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## Every decision we make pushes us in one direction or another.

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My faith curve had for awhile been falling, and as a result of that I had a hard time trusting my family, friends, and more or less everyone around me. The reason I was afraid to trust in people was because I was losing my confidence in the fact that God would be able to carry me through the disappointments I would face. Instead, I began to do as much as I could myself. I stayed inside my shell, and Satan won the battle for this time. He wanted me to follow his road to destruction, and my only salvation was God's imputed faith.

Two powers are fighting here on earth, no more and no less. They are fighting about you and me. Each of them is ready to do anything to get our attention and provide us with whatever we ask for. There's only one rule: Neither is allowed to violate the concept of the free will. It's up to you and me to choose whose power we would like to use to get through life and in the long run also where we want to end.

## REACT

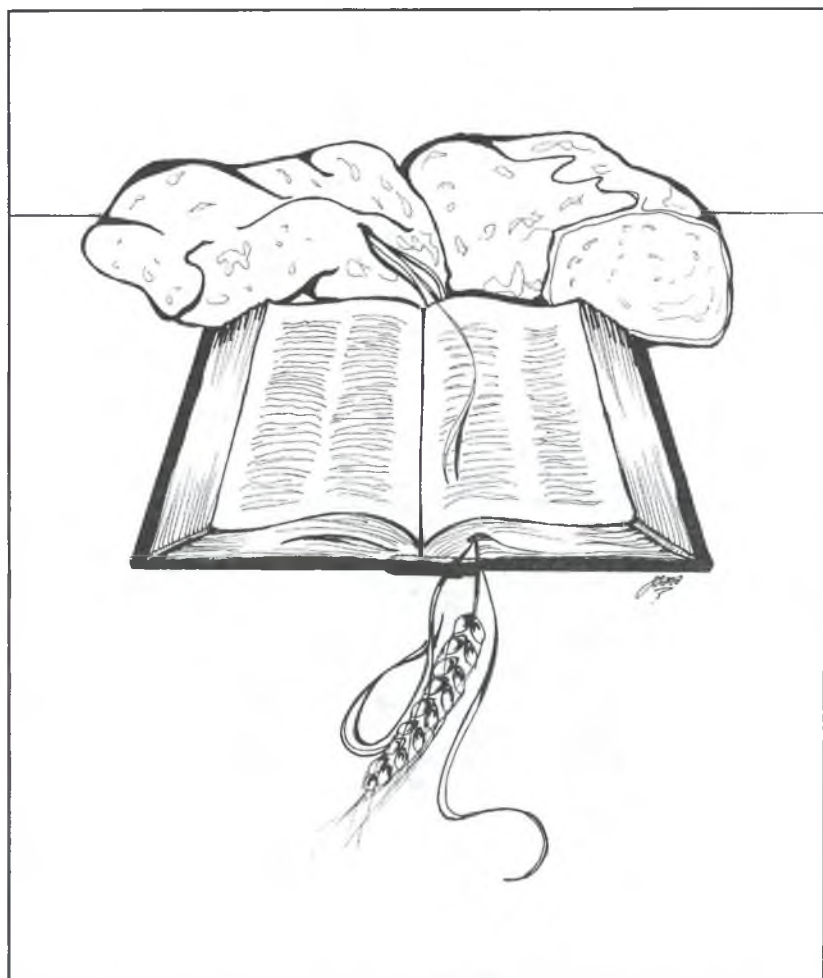
1. What significance, if any, is there that in Ephesians 6:10-18 we are covered all over except our backs?
2. How does one put on this armor of God?
3. How could you use each piece of armor in daily living?

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*By Ingela M. Eriksson, a technology student in Norrköping, Sweden.*

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# FACING THE TEST



**“Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4, NIV).**

# The Victory

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: John 16:33**

When I am tempted, how often it is  
I remember my Jesus, how His life He did give.

“Never does one leave the ranks of evil for the service of God without encountering the assaults of Satan. . . . With the terrible weight of the sins of the world upon Him, Christ withstood the test upon appetite, upon the love of the world, and upon that love of display which leads to presumption. These were the temptations that overcame Adam and Eve, and that so readily overcome us.”\*

It began in a manger, a wee tiny babe  
Gave up His glory, my life to save.

“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16, NIV).

He grew to man, no sin to commit.  
Even in thought, He did not forget.

“I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (Ps. 119:11).

For me He gave money, house, and home.  
In the end He was all alone.

“You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:9).

Hung on a cross, my sin to bear,  
Dear loving Jesus, He continued to care.

“Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing’ ” (Luke 23:34).

No place of His own, a borrowed tomb,  
again He did rise to become my Bridegroom.

“God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him” (Acts 2:24).

What hope is there for a wretch like me?  
My Jesus, My Saviour gave me Victory.

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

\**The Desire of Ages*, pp. 116, 117.

## Yield

## LOGOS

**Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 22:31; 1 Pet. 5:6-11**

“Yield not to temptation, / For yielding is sin,  
Each victory will help you / Some other to win;  
Fight manfully onward, / Dark passions subdue,  
Look ever to Jesus, / He’ll carry you through.

“Ask the Saviour to help you, / Comfort, strengthen, and keep you;  
He is willing to aid you, / He will carry you through.”

—Horatio R. Palmer, 1868

The dynamics of temptation have not changed since the Garden of Eden. Even in Paradise we see the old “bait and switch.” It was successful then in a perfect and sinless world. The success of this tactic has only multiplied as humanity’s will has weakened through generations of sin. Why was Satan successful in tempting Adam and Eve? He was successful only to the degree that he was able to lower the level of Adam’s and Eve’s trust in God.

Our parents had lived only in a perfect world where all their needs were generously supplied and where they had the opportunity to enjoy the constant companionship of their Creator. Such an environment obviously was conducive to building trust and acceptance. Yet, even here the matter of trust was a choice.

## **The dynamics of temptation have not changed since the Garden of Eden.**

With every reason to have confidence in God, our original parents chose to trust someone else.

This is the essence of sin: trusting anyone more than we trust God. Temptation is any enticement to trust someone more than we trust God. Our actions become sinful only to the extent that they demonstrate a lack of supreme trust in our heavenly Father. Subsequently, our first parents suffered the consequences of their actions, which were rooted in their distrustful motives. Sadly, they were not the only ones affected. Payment for sin is required, but when the devil mails out the bills, he not only sends them to the sinner—he also sends them to parents, to children, to society, and to anyone who has a relationship with the sinner. Consequences are certain, although these may not show up for a long time. “Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned? Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched?” (Prov. 6:27, 28, NIV). The prevalent temptation of modern society is little different from that revealed in the Garden: trusting ourselves as though we were God.

Generations later, One who was God and had every right to trust in Himself showed us another way to live. He did not enjoy life in an idyllic world but rather was born at a time in human history when life was not valued highly. It was a world governed by unrestrained passion and wickedness. The Garden had degenerated into a slum where human power had in itself become the measure of righteousness.

In this imperfect setting, Jesus met the slum lord of the universe head to head. The central issue was the same, but the environment was different.

This head-to-head confrontation took place at a time when Jesus' physical needs were not being generously supplied. He was literally starving. It was not an environment we would consider to be naturally conducive to building trust in God. This was a wilderness, not only in a geographical sense but also in an emotional sense. Jesus demonstrated that humans can trust in God even when circumstances are dark and foreboding. He showed that we may have a relationship with our Father in heaven that builds trust as long as we will consistently listen to His voice.

Jesus heard this voice through a medium by which we still have access to God today: Scripture. He trusted the voice of God in Scripture more than he trusted Satan, His own physical cravings, or His own personal aspirations. Subsequently, He enjoyed the benefits of this trust in God. The wages of righteousness are life. Satan surely sends out the bills for sin to the loved ones who fall into temptation. Just as surely, God sends out the benefits to the family members of One who resisted temptation. The greatest benefit we enjoy is that those who learn to trust God also learn to trust each other. What can be better than trusting God, having Him trust you, trusting others, and having them trust you too?

Through Scripture God has shared a way of life that brings happiness. Though we may live in the wilderness, we may choose the life of the Garden by trusting Him completely. Remember, anything short of complete and unreserved trust allows the possibility that temptation may be successful in our lives. But it does not have to be this way. There is no justification for the philosophy that "the devil made me do it." What we do is simply the result of choices we make to trust or not trust God. "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" (1 Cor. 10:13).

## **REACT**

1. Bob Dylan, rock star of the 60s and 70s sang, "You've got to serve somebody. It may be the devil or it be the Lord, but you've got to serve somebody." What are the key factors in your life that help determine whom you are serving?

2. What impact did Christ's reliance on Scripture have on His eventual victory?

3. How can debates over theological viewpoints tempt us to sin?

4. Someone has said, "You may not be able to stop a bird from landing on your head, but you can keep it from building a nest." How does this apply to how we deal with temptation?

5. Why did Christ not try to debate philosophy with Satan? What lesson is there in this for us?

6. What role does knowing the Word and its Author play in dealing with temptation?

# Mind Over Matter

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Rom. 5:1-21**

“From the beginning it has been Satan’s studied plan to cause men to forget God, that he might secure them to himself”<sup>1</sup> and his will. By falsifying the character of God, Satan moved humankind to distrust God and to suffer in sin. Over time humanity has become “bolder in sin,” while “knowledge and the love of God”<sup>2</sup> has faded from their minds and hearts. Discouraged by the degrading powers of sin and the captivity of Satan’s will, humanity’s governing powers become weakened. The governing power is the will.

The will “is the deciding power which works in the children of men unto obedience to God or unto disobedience.”<sup>3</sup> Without Christ “no man can overcome”<sup>4</sup> and therefore they are disobedient to God.

But thank Jesus Christ, the King of kings, who “took upon Himself man’s nature, that he might leave a pattern for humanity, complete, perfect. . . . The man who cherishes the most of Christ’s love in the soul, who reflects the Saviour’s image most perfectly, is in the sight of God the truest, most noble, most honorable man upon the earth.”<sup>5</sup>

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## Satan moved humankind to distrust God and to suffer in sin.

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## REACT

1. How is it possible—practically speaking—to have your will totally submitted to God?
2. What are some things in this world that get between God and ourselves?
3. How may we make every effort to rid those things that may weaken our will power?
4. How should we relate to our own weakness?
5. How do our thoughts impact on our spirituality and our ability to overcome temptation?
6. What are the spiritual implications of the quotation, “The brain is no stronger than its weakest think”?<sup>6</sup>

1. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 738.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*, p. 513.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 230.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 235.

6. *The Speaker’s Sourcebook* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1960), p. 161.

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*By Ryan S. Bowman, a student physician assistant at Kettering (Ohio) College of Medical Arts.*

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# The Blame Game

## EVIDENCE

**Key Texts:** Gen. 3:12; James 1:13-15

*The devil made me do it.*

One of the recurring weaknesses of human nature is reticence to accept responsibility. We do not seem to have much trouble accepting credit for something that goes well, but responsibility is another story. The result is a curious kind of denial that places blame on someone else. Curiously, in organizations where those with the greatest organizational power seem preoccupied with constant assessment and the assignment of blame, the entire organization tends to be occupied with blame or deflecting blame to others. This develops an unhealthy work environment that is anything but conducive to trust building and relationship development. All are too busy shining their own shoes while they try to scatter dust on everyone else's. Adam is the classic example of how to do this.

"Lord," Adam in effect offers, "I'm not the one to blame for this mess. If it were not for this woman that *You* gave me, none of this would have happened." Adam conveniently forgets to mention his responsibility for his own actions. "Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed" (James

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## The devil made me do it.

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1:14, NIV). Adam overlooks this axiomatic truth and indirectly assigns the blame to God for bringing this woman into his life. The root of all excuses is desire for self-justification. The answer is to replace self-justification with God-justification.

God-justification requires that I recognize that I, like everyone else, am limited. I cannot see the end from the beginning as He can. I am not all-knowing as He is. I am not all-powerful, but I am rather subject to all kinds of turbulent human forces that are unjust and unfair. Even in the best of situations, I am unable to earn righteousness and justify myself. Therefore my only hope is that God will make me righteous. When I can accept His gift of righteousness, I no longer need to justify myself, because I am not threatened by my human weaknesses. I then realize that God accepts me just as I am.

The security I find in trusting a God who accepts the real me eliminates the reflex that would otherwise spur me toward self-justification. I do not need to take refuge in the philosophy that the devil made me do it. I sin whenever I fail to trust God completely. Yet, God does *not* disown me because I have yielded to temptation. As I acknowledge my sin and request His forgiveness, I am restored to companionship with Him. This companionship and the security I know because of the relationship eliminates the need for self-justification. It also destroys the need to blame others.

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By Dan Solis, chaplain at Kettering (Ohio) College of Medical Arts.

## Three in One

### HOW-TO

**Key Text: 1 Thess. 5:23**

Compared to our life, living in a two-dimensional world would be restrictive. Freedom would exist to move only back and forth or side to side. Fortunately for us, this is not reality; not only in the physical world but also in a bigger picture. In the beginning God created humankind with physical, mental, and spiritual faculties. (Mental here includes intellectual and emotional.) The apostle Paul reminds us of this. Our happiness was dependent on harmonious development of these faculties. With the entrance of sin, this balance was lost. For this reason, the plan of salvation includes total restoration of the capacities.

Assuming that each area of our life needs continual nurture, will the lack of such result in a less-than-optimal experience? Are we to play an active role in this restorative process? Let's examine our part a little more.

**Physical maintenance.** Preserving the integrity of our physical powers is valueless. "The body is the only medium through which the mind and the soul are developed for the upbuilding of character. Hence it is that the adversary of souls directs his temptations to the enfeebling and degrading of the physical powers. His success here means the surrender to evil of the whole being."<sup>1</sup>

### **“The adversary of souls directs his temptations to the enfeebling . . . of physical powers.”**

So, make time for rest, relaxation, and recreation. Establish a regular routine for physical activity, exercise, or manual labor. Even a brisk walk is excellent.

**Mental cultivation.** Not many desire a mind lacking intellectual aptitude and emotional stability, yet mental stability and growth cannot be experienced without Divine ingredients. It is the peace of God that passes all understanding (see Phil. 4:7). "Let the student take the Bible as his guide and stand firm for principle, and he may aspire to any height of attainment."<sup>2</sup>

**Spiritual growth.** In our fallen state God yearns to be just as close and to mean just as much as He can to each of us. Make it a point to start each day with Him. Take daily quality time in His Word. Share His goodness with others. Thus your relationship will grow. The restoration of face-to-face communion will be the culmination of an intimate relationship already established.

Let the prayer of your life be, "Take me, O Lord, as wholly thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service. Abide with me, and let all my work be wrought in Thee."<sup>3</sup>

1. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 130.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 465.

3. *Steps to Christ*, p. 70.



# Four Temptations

## OPINION

**Key Text: Prov. 16:18**

In *Murder in the Cathedral*, T. S. Eliot examines the nature of temptation through the death of Thomas a' Becket, the archbishop of Canterbury who was murdered in 1170. Becket has returned to England after years of exile. The country is facing political turmoil. The archbishop is at the center of it. While in the cathedral at Canterbury, he is visited by four tempters who each attempt to persuade him into sin. The first offers worldly pleasures, the second political position, and the third an opportunity to increase the power of the church. Becket easily rejects all of them. He is confident in his faith and principles until the fourth tempter enters with an offer more difficult to refuse.

Think of pilgrims, standing in line  
 Before the glittering jeweled shrine,  
 From generation to generation  
 Bending the knee in supplication.  
 Think of the miracles, by God's grace,  
 And think of your enemies in another place.

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## Choosing between good and not-so-good presents some difficulties.

This temptation Becket finds hard to resist. Serve God with renewed strength, resist evil, and work inexorably toward that martyrdom that will bring you eternal glory. The tempter reminds Becket of the fleeting importance of kings and archbishops, but the power of martyrs is timeless. This is the ultimate challenge. To do, as he says, "the right deed for the wrong reason."

Do we as committed Christians face similar questions? Yes. Somewhere between the choruses of "Be Careful Little Hands What You Do" and "Yield Not to Temptation," many have developed the impression that the real challenges to a Christian life lie in the big black and white areas of right and wrong. They do not. Resisting obvious evil is simple. Choosing between good and bad isn't difficult, but choosing between good and not-so-good presents some difficulties.

Becket's greatest temptation was his desire to be remembered. Not many aspire to martyrdom, but we can still share Becket's temptation. What is the sin of pride except the belief that we are spiritually superior? Who is more godly, more committed, more theologically pure? Whose method or style of worship is more pleasing to God? Whose lifestyle is more morally correct? These questions have the potential to lead us into areas of temptation that we might not often consider; but they are questions that we must examine. What do we do with beliefs that are grounded in an attitude of spiritual superiority? And, as Becket might ask, for what reason?

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*By Jill Doster Evans, professor of English at Kettering (Ohio) College of Medical Arts.*

# SCRIPTURE TWISTING



**“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16, NIV).**

# Pure Motivation

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Ps. 119:9**

Ever noticed that the most effective lies are 99 percent true? Everything matches up except one tiny part that makes everything else very wrong.

Not long ago I sat with a group of church pillars—long-term Adventists—who have supported their church for years. These were the kind of people who study their Sabbath School lesson daily, listen to the sermon, go to Wednesday night prayer meeting. . . .

But something was wrong.

We had assembled to pray about our youth camp that seemed to be on the verge of being closed because of financial problems. These people loved the camp. They had invested much time and energy in developing it for our young people, and they did not want to see it go!

I didn't want to see it go either, so here we were, ready to bend our knees to our Creator, but I sensed bitterness and contempt. Why the unhappiness? As I began to ask questions, answers came tumbling out. These people believed in God all right, but at the same time they felt that they could not trust the conference leadership.

## **We had assembled to pray about our youth camp.**

Immediately my mind began to spin: *Wait! Isn't our God in charge of everything? Working everything out for good? How can we believe that God is the ultimate power yet be distrustful of His choice of leadership?* Despite the dedication of these long-term Adventists, their distrust made their whole religion wrong and their God weak.

I am reminded of Psalm 119:9 that asks the question, "How can a young man keep his way pure?" The immediate answer follows: "By living according to your word" (NIV). The only way we are going to survive the trials and bad decisions that shake our church today is if we live according to the Word of God. The Word of God draws us up to want what God wants, not just what we want.

After sharing some of these thoughts in the group, we knelt, and our time of prayer was filled with voices asking for forgiveness. As much as they wanted to see the camp remain, they began asking God to forgive their sins and the sins of anyone in leadership—they began asking that His will be done and that they would be faithful servants of God, not humankind.

Today I challenge myself to be faithful to God as Daniel was faithful. My loyalty is first to Him then to my human friends.

P.S. God's will was done; hearts were changed—and we have an awesome camp today.

*By Celina Worley, associate youth director for the Pennsylvania Conference, Reading.*

## Word to Live By

### LOGOS

2 Tim. 1:3-5; 3:13-17; 4:1-4

An old man sits in a dank cell writing his last Will and Testament. Too busy to spend much time contemplating his impending execution, Paul writes with urgency to his closest friend, a young church administrator, counseling him to predicate the operation of the church on Scripture. The apostle Paul was aware that Satan was doing all he could to destroy the young church by undermining confidence in God's Word. Paul probably died without ever realizing that his letters would also become part of Holy Writ.

One of the features of Paul's writings was that even though he was addressing specific problems in a number of locations, his inspired words of wisdom would have a universal application through time. This particular letter to Timothy betrays an overwhelming desire to warn the church of impending danger. In that sense, Paul's words are still entirely relevant. "Mark this," he writes, "there will be terrible times in the last days" (2 Tim. 3:1, NIV), followed by an entreaty: "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it" (verse 14).

He returns to his parchment and completes the earliest manual of church organization. The import of his words have lost nothing since then. The last urgent appeal Paul was to make to the young church was a series of admonitions. In giving

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### There was only one recipe book for the church.

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them he was most anxious for the church to realize that there was only one recipe book for the church. It was not to be found in learned secular writings; it was not to be found in the logical arguments of clever philosophers, and it was not to be found in cloning the practices of other religions. Rather, it was to be found in Scripture. In fact, Paul coined the word *God-breathed*, the source word for "inspiration."

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (verse 16). In urging that the church should operate on a strong foundation, Paul lists four uses for Scripture:

**1. Teaching.** The Bible is of little use as a rebuking or correcting mechanism if there is no knowledge in the first place. It is an extraordinary sourcebook of teaching. Moses had no doubts: "Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up" (Deut. 11:19). David added, "Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name" (Ps. 86:11).

**2. Rebuking.** No one enjoys a rebuke. The Bible is very good at it; in fact, for a Christian the Bible can deliver the ultimate rebuke with unanswerable authority. "At your rebuke, O God of Jacob, both horse and chariot lie still" (76:6).

We may receive a biblical rebuke in two ways. The first way is the indirect method when we read an account of someone else being rebuked. Few of us can read the account of Nathan's rebuke of David without having a shudder of hope

that we might never be caught in a similar trap (2 Sam. 12:7).

The second form of rebuke is quite direct when we read words that seem to have been specifically written for us. "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent" (Rev. 3:19).

The best thing about a God-sent rebuke is the offer of a clean start. "He who listens to a life-giving rebuke will be at home among the wise" (Prov. 15:31).

**3. Correcting.** Correcting is a softer version of rebuking in that it offers solutions when most needed. The Bible has many examples. Very often the correction is prefixed by the word *if*. Although an *if* correction is generally conditional, the Bible always offers a better alternative. "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land" (2 Chron. 7:14).

**4. Training.** The New Testament has more to say about the conduct and organization of the church than does the Old Testament. If not, the early church would have attempted to model its worship on a synagogue model full of repetitive symbolism.

Paul had visited and established churches all over Asia Minor and was well aware of the value of training. The eyewitness generation who actually had seen Christ was aging. There was need to place the church on a sound theological and administrative footing. Thus the Pauline writings became a training manual for the church.

But that's not all. We do the Bible a gross disservice if we conclude that its primary function is to be a handbook for the church. It is much more. It is the breath of God (2 Tim. 3:16), overflowing with an unfathomable love that has provided our incredible and undeserved salvation. In that sense, no other document or body of thought can match the Bible.

## **REACT**

1. How does today's church relate to the relationship between the Scriptures and Ellen White's writings?
2. How can we be sure that our leaders are not leading us astray?
3. What can we learn from God's Word that will prevent deception?
4. How can we be sure we are following God's truth and not traditions of the world?
5. How should a person go about rebuking a fellow Christian?
6. How can Adventism become more Bible-based as a denomination? Be specific.
7. How would you convince a specific non-Christian whom you know, that God is so good that we cannot really understand Him or His messages completely? (Contrast 1 Timothy 3:16 with John 3:16.)
8. Should we follow reason alone in Bible study, should we listen to other Christians, or should we let only the Holy Spirit (who inspired the Scriptures) guide our understanding of the nature of humans, its consequences, and of God's powerful love? (Isa. 1:18).

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*By John Hammond, Trans-Tasman Union Conference education director, Gordon, New South Wales, Australia.*

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# Right or Wrong?

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: John 14:5, 6**

Are we doing the right things or the wrong things?

“‘Search the Scriptures,’ was the injunction of the Master. Many have lost much because they have neglected this duty. When we search the word of God, angels are by our side, reflecting bright beams of light upon its sacred pages. The Scriptures appeal to man as having power to choose between right and wrong; they speak to him in warning, in reproof, in entreaty, in encouragement. The mind must be exercised on the solemn truths of God’s word, or it will grow weak.”<sup>1</sup>

Reading the Scriptures for ourselves and allowing the Holy Spirit to reveal God’s Word to us is the only way we can understand the truth. We must constantly study and review God’s Word—building that solid foundation of truth in our hearts and minds. This basis of truth is the benchmark we must use to discern truth from Satan’s attempts to deceive and lead us astray.

“We are so thankful that we have a sure word of prophecy, so that none of us need be deceived. We know that there are heresies and fables in our world at the present time, and we want to know what is truth. It becomes us to search carefully for ourselves that we may gain this knowledge. We cannot do this with a mere

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### **This basis of truth is the benchmark we must use to discern truth.**

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reading of the Scriptures, but we must compare scripture with scripture. We must search the Scriptures for ourselves, so that we shall not be led astray; and while many may be led astray because there are all kinds of doctrines in our world, there is one truth. Many may come to you and tell you that they have the truth, but it is your privilege to search the Scriptures for yourself. ‘To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.’ We must be acquainted with the Scriptures ourselves, that we may understand the true reason of the hope that is within us.”<sup>2</sup>

“We must search the Scriptures carefully with a heart open to the reception of light and the evidences of truth. We cannot trust the salvation of our souls to ministers, to idle traditions, to human authorities, or to pretensions. We must know for ourselves what God has said.”<sup>3</sup>

1. *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, pp. 22, 23.

2. *Lift Him Up*, p. 114.

3. *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*. Mar. 8, 1887.

# The Evidence

## EVIDENCE

### Key Text: Acts 17:11

Awhile ago, in talking to Christian friends on a Sunday morning, I asked if they knew what day it had been the day before. I got a variety of answers: Saturday, the eleventh of October, the first day of the weekend, the sixth day of the week, and the seventh day of the week. One was sure it was the sixth day, because her pastor had told them so; after all, everyone knows that Sunday is the Sabbath, don't they?

Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden when they didn't question what they were told by the serpent. If only they had carefully looked at the evidence and gone back and talked it through with God. They would have found that they were already like God, created in His image.

Consider the temptations of Jesus (Matt. 4:1-11). Satan actually quoted the Scriptures to tempt Jesus, but every time Jesus replied with the words of Scripture. That experience shows us that we need to look at all the Scriptures, not just take a bit here and there.

How do we know what the "holy scriptures" are? Second Timothy 3:16 can be translated: "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful" (TEV). One large denomination actually has some extra books in the Old Testament and some extra

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## The 66 books that we accept as the Bible have a consistent theme.

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chapters in Esther and Daniel. We refer to these as the Apocrypha.

Only by reading the books and comparing their message can we be sure which books to trust. "There is one great central truth to be kept ever before the mind in the searching of the Scriptures—Christ and Him crucified." The 66 books that we accept as the Bible have a consistent theme. Don't take my word for it, read them for yourself!

Paul says, "Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind" (Rom. 14:5, NIV). Remember the Bereans, who listened to Paul's preaching? "They received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11, NASB). They questioned their teacher to be sure they were accepting the truth.

The Bible is a lamp for our feet and a light for our path; it teaches us the truth, shows us error, trains us for life, and fits us to live for God. It can help us in this way only if we choose to open its pages and read its words.

How long do I spend with my Bible each week? How long do I spend watching TV, exercising, eating, recreation? Am I serious about preparing for eternity, or am I just going with the flow?

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\*SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 6, p.1084.

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By Paul S. Lockham, pastor of a two-church district and youth sponsor in Newport, South Wales, United Kingdom.

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# Indulgence or Prescription?

## HOW-TO

**Key Text:** 2 Thess. 2:7

Because our cat Kipper has complicated diabetes, he has to follow a particular regimen or suffer distressing symptoms, some of them life-threatening. All this has been painstakingly worked out by several vets and dinned into me so that I get it right.

Kipper has to take three pills daily or experience a nasty reaction and drastic weight loss. Twice daily he gets an insulin injection of exactly seven units. Omitting the injections might cause collapse and death. He is allowed two meals a day, each only 60 grams of prescription pellets. He is keenly aware that our other cat, Minon, gets to eat wet, scrumptious food. Whenever possible, he lunges toward Minon's dish to gulp down a luscious lump of her food.

When I sat down to write this piece, Kipper jumped up onto my desk to lobby for food, despite the fact that he knows he is fed exactly at 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. (by prescription).

I do talk to Kipper. I've explained to him simply and clearly that he can't have what he lusts after. I've told him, using simple words. But he doesn't understand my message, much less his condition or why I won't let him have everything his

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## **I've explained to him simply and clearly that he can't have what he lusts after.**

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heart (stomach) desires. I've told him it is only because I love him. He is not at all impressed with this line of reasoning.

Having created us, God has a deep understanding of our composition and of what is wrong with us. God has tried to communicate to us what our nature and sickness are, how bad—even life-threatening—our condition is. He has also arranged an easily understood description of the things inside us and outside us that might kill us—forever. His method for controlling the condition has been spelled out for us and for those appointed to help us understand it.

Some false notions about our nature and condition are comfortingly or intriguingly attractive. But teachings that distort our understanding of the truth about our nature and condition distort our ability to understand, accept, and follow His treatment.



# Preach the Word!

## OPINION

**Key Text: 2 Tim. 4:2**

At a country church in my conference, a church member posed the question, “Why don’t our ministers preach the Word anymore?” It seems that a significant segment of our membership have the perception that sermons today are missing the mystical and undefinable quality that exists when preaching “the Word.” The following are representative of the reasons put forward to me as to why people seem to feel this way:

- The increasing popularity of “win-win” thinking, along with a growing tendency to avoid confrontation, leads preachers to tend to stay on safe ground.
- Open disagreement among Adventist scholars and academics on issues causes the less educated rank-and-file minister to feel intimidated and unworthy of addressing such topics from the pulpit.
- Some members have the perception that preachers today spend too little time studying and searching the Scriptures.
- With society disintegrating, more time needs to be spent preaching about relationship issues.

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## “Why don’t our ministers preach the Word anymore?”

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The above may be true. And they may not. What is true is that Seventh-day Adventists were once proudly known as “People of the Word.” Our church papers were once forums for the interchange and development of ideas that would go on to form our doctrinal foundations. These doctrines were hammered out in the public forum, using Scripture as the source.

Itinerant preachers and our young church leaders would travel the world, meeting with believers and bursting with enthusiasm, incapable of holding back the new light that was burning inside them. These men and women would look for any opportunity to share the results of their searching, often ending up in public debates with leaders of other churches.

Members, many of whom were poor and uneducated, traveled long distances in adverse conditions to hear the latest on these new truths. Furthermore, they would return home and search the Scriptures for themselves to be sure of these truths.

Through a variety of avenues, the adversary has diverted our minds from such searching of Scripture. He has ensured that Scripture is being contorted and distorted; consequently many have stopped searching for themselves.

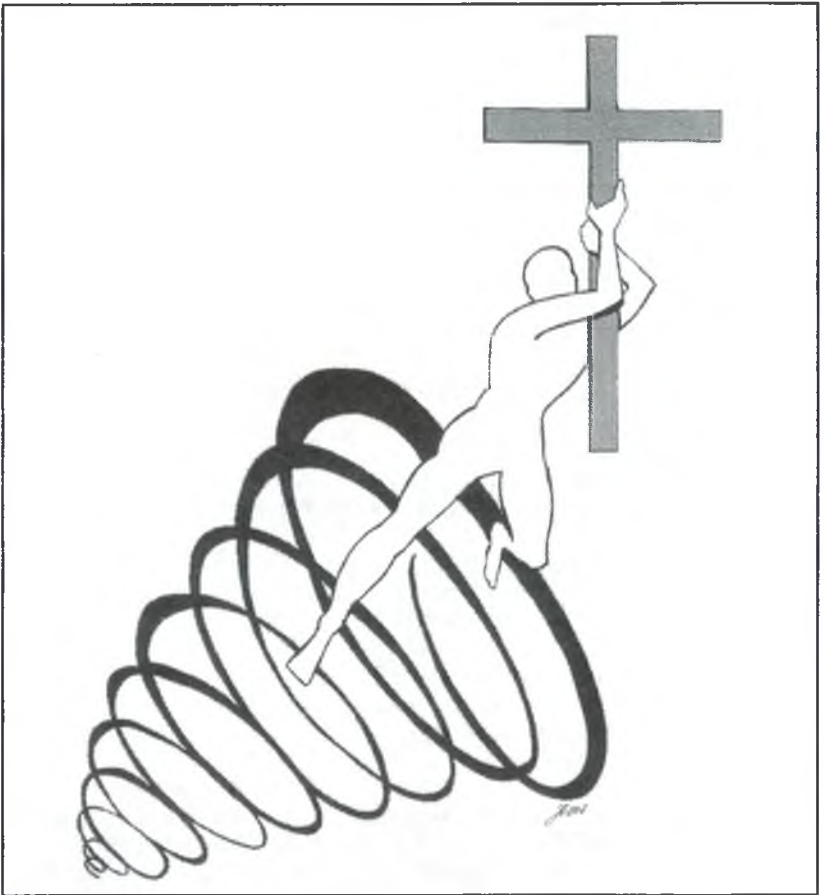
Each of us needs to ensure that we are creating an environment whereby our preachers are encouraged and affirmed in preaching the Word. It is imperative that we do this, for if we as a church become lazy or afraid to preach the Word, the adversary has already won.

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*By Warrick Long, secretary-treasurer of the North New Zealand Conference, Auckland, New Zealand.*

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# LAST FIGHT FOR FREEDOM



**“Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38, 39, NIV).**

# Get Ready to Rumble

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Rom. 8:38, 39**

I braced myself and pushed open the glass door. “Let’s get ready to rumble!” boomed in a surround-sound voice from behind me. Twenty TV sets were all tuned to a wrestling channel. The cold winter wind that I was bracing myself for slapped me in the face, catching me off guard. Once on the sidewalk I missed the warmth of the electronic store.

“Ready or not, here I come!” shouted the little girl. I watched her run down the street as she chased after her friends in a game of “Hide and Seek.”

These two isolated incidents kept playing in my mind. I thought about how we human beings prepare for anticipated predicaments. In the Bible we are told the parable of the 10 virgins waiting for the bridegroom. When I was leaving the electronic store, I knew it was cold outside. I was ready for it. A last-minute distraction put me off guard. Have you ever had a bucket of ice water poured on you by surprise? I think you get the picture.

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## **Twenty TV sets were all tuned to a wrestling channel.**

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In these last days, the devil knows that his time is up. We as Adventists also know that the devil will try to distract us from our heavenly goal. The devil will use direct force (burning of churches, persecution of God’s children, and more), and he will also use more subtle tactics (important exams and interviews scheduled for the Sabbath, TV’s glorification of everything from sex to calling the Lord’s name in vain and more). It is these subtle demons that we should be aware of. These are the dragons of Revelation 12 silently fighting with the church, and many churches are not even aware of this.

“Ready or not, here they come!” This is a very scary feeling, but we need not fear! Our God and Creator has promised that nothing will separate us from His love. To be loved by One so great makes my heart sing! So, fellow Christians, let’s face these last days with faith and confidence, and let’s get ready to rumble!

# Last Fight for Human Freedom

## LOGOS

2 Cor. 11:14, 15; Rev. 12:17; 13:11-15; 22:12-14

*“The dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus” (Rev. 12:17, NIV).*

### Turmoil in the Last Days

*“I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. . . . No one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name” (13:11, 17).*

Have you ever wondered what it means to be in the last days? If you ask 20 people to describe what they think the last days will be like, you’ll probably get 20 different descriptions. Whenever I read Revelation 13, I wonder what it means to have “the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name” (verse 17). My interpretation of this as a child was that maybe Satan’s people would have the number 666 inscribed on their foreheads and when the true Christians tried to go grocery shopping, they wouldn’t be allowed through the door because they lacked the “right combination.” As I grew older and became a little more sophisticated in my thinking, I realized that this mark of the beast does not necessarily

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## One replied, “Better now than later; he has AIDS too.”

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have to be branded into people’s integument; rather, it has to do with the way we live our lives. For instance, when is the great 50-percent-off-everything clearance sale going to be held—you know, you’ve been saving up for that Bose sound system or that new set of golf clubs endorsed by Tiger Woods or that matching Coach bag ’n belt. If you said Saturday, then you are up to date on your “mall-ratting.” What other ways is the prince of darkness using to lure more people to his camp? Well, let’s critically evaluate what our advancement in science/technology has achieved so far. We have broadened our mass communicating skills to the Internet—it’s quick, it’s cheap, and you don’t even have to know who you’re communicating with.

This is definitely a free forum for whoever desires to utilize it, be it for good or bad. It appears as though the bad is more computer literate than the good because it seems easier to find bad online without too much effort. Sex, violence, prejudice, and fanatics of varying orders have the ability to reach millions of young impressionable individuals in need of some guidance who turn to this medium for help.

*“Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve” (2 Cor. 11:14, 15, NIV).*

The world seems to be too busy, and children are growing up at such an alarming pace, learning more from emulation and exposed to such horrors that by the

time they are young adults, they are already desensitized to the evils around them. Speaking to a bunch of teens in the ER where their friend who had been shot was brought in for treatment, I asked them if they were scared that their friend was going to die. One replied, "Better now than later; he has AIDS too."

### **How Can We Be Saved?**

The declaration in John 3:16 is reassuring in that, if we can only believe in Him, the Father who sent Him, the Son, who paid the greatest price for our salvation by dying for our sins, then we need not worry further. It is impossible to think we can be immune to the turmoil facing the world today, because we do not have the resources within ourselves to stand up to all the pressures that will be brought to bear on us. We will need to tightly grasp our Saviour's hand, which He readily offers us.

### **What Will Be Our Prize?**

Hebrews 11:14-16 gives us a beautiful description of our inheritance. Maybe at some time in your life, when you get fed up of your daily routine, you sit in a quiet place where you can't be found by anyone else, searching for some peace and solitude. This new paradise created for the saved will be just that—the epitome of peace, with nothing but beauty to stimulate your senses and your soul.

### **REACT**

1. What turmoil of the last days is most frightening to you?
2. What are you doing specifically to prepare for these difficult times to come?
3. When we discuss such topics as the last days, the remnant, or the time of persecution, how do we guard against sectarianism and exclusivism?
4. If our security and safety are in Jesus, why are the last days so frightening?

# Committed, No Matter the Cost

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text:** Isa. 43:2

If we as Christians are to survive the time of tribulation that is to befall the world and its inhabitants at the close of earth's history, we need to look outward and upward unto God for strength and definitely not to depend on ourselves. Today's text assures us that no matter what our lot may be—whether we pass through flowing rivers or burning fire—God promises that He will be there.

“The season of distress before God's people will call for a faith that will not falter. His children must make it manifest that He is the only object of their worship, and that no consideration, not even that of life itself, can induce them to make the least concession to false worship. To the loyal heart the commands of sinful, finite men will sink into insignificance beside the word of the eternal God. Truth will be obeyed though the result be imprisonment or exile or death.”<sup>1</sup>

If we are to take part in the last fight for human freedom, we must be determined as children of the heavenly King to stay committed no matter the price. Our only true weapon of warfare is the truth. “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32, NIV).

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## We must be determined as children of the heavenly King to stay committed no matter the price.

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“The aim of the great rebel [Satan] has ever been to justify himself and to prove the divine government responsible for the rebellion. To this end he has bent all the power of his giant intellect. . . . For thousands of years this chief of conspiracy has palmed off falsehood for truth.”<sup>2</sup> But what is this truth that we so dearly need to uphold? It is the sovereignty of God and the fact that He is just, righteous, loving, and true, and only He deserves our praise, adoration, and worship. Even if we are faced with the ultimate choice of life or death that we may say like the three Hebrew men in Babylon that “if we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up” (Dan. 3:17, 18).

## REACT

When we talk of being willing to die, how is this different from that of the Heaven's Gate people or the followers of David Koresh?

1. *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 512, 513.
2. *The Great Controversy*, p. 670.

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*By Isaac Kilanko, a graduate student in the school of public health, Columbia University, New York.*

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# Masquerading as an Angel of Light

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: 2 Cor. 11:13-15**

How do we know when someone is leading us in a dangerous direction, masquerading as an angel of light? It isn't always easy to know immediately, and the question should be: Can we know it all?

On April 19, 1993, a final assault by the FBI in Mount Carmel Center led to a fire that killed 74 Branch Davidians, including 21 children. This affair turned out to be one of the most tragic affairs in the history of the United States. David Koresh was the leader of the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas. Koresh talked incessantly about the seven seals of the book of Revelation.

Misinterpretations of Scripture and false messages misled many intelligent, beautiful, young, and innocent people to their wrongful death. Could it have been that these people were more vulnerable, weak, or foolish? These may not have been the reasons, and it could have happened to anyone. This is a battle between good and evil, and today's key text states, "Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light" (verse 14, NIV). Satan will use anything and everything to mislead us. He will use people we love. He will even use the Scriptures. So how do we discern the truth behind the masked appearance? Can we do this by ourselves?

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## Could it have been that these people were more vulnerable, weak, or foolish?

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To be able to discern the truth behind the masked appearance requires a regular, consistent, conscious contact with God through prayer and meditation. We can't do it by ourselves, and that's why we need to ask God each day to guide our steps.

## REACT

1. Your friend invites you to a small gathering where, you notice, the preaching is against the Scriptures. What will you do?
2. List and discuss practical ways to unmask Satan and his apostles.
3. Many times differences or innovations in our church have been hastily labeled as satanic. What principles can keep us from making mistakes in judgment regarding such issues?
4. Adventists have distinctive beliefs, yet we believe that other Christian groups are legitimate Christians. How do we avoid treating them as lesser Christians?

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*By Morike Okunoye, a medical student at Staten Island University, New York.*

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# Salvation, the Ultimate Challenge

## HOW-TO

**Key Texts:** Rom. 8:38, 39; Rev. 22:12, 14

Like victory in team sports, salvation can be achieved only by one's support and sacrifice of self for others. Only by team effort can the ultimate challenge of salvation be resolved. "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2, NIV).

In basketball, the National Basketball Association (NBA) championship is the sport's premier challenge. Each member of a team must have the same goal and mind to accomplish it. Coaches give their teams ideas and strategies on how to help their teams win.

In terms of salvation, Christ is our coach. By following His commandments and guidelines, we put ourselves in an excellent position to obtain salvation. Concern and support for others are important ingredients in accomplishing this goal. In basketball, if a team expects to win, they must be aware of and concerned for their teammates. Former two-time NBA champion Isiah Thomas said, "In order to be a successful team, you must have the frame of mind to do anything for your team—even die." Now although in actuality no team member dies for another member, they occasionally fight for their teammates, lift them up when an opposing team knocks them down, and encourage them when they're in a slump. As Christians, we, too, must reach out to others and find a way to support and encourage them.

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## The road to salvation is bumpy.

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The road to salvation is bumpy. Satan will try to lure us into traps and obstacles along the way, to prevent us from achieving it.

Relating it to the NBA, the road to a championship starts from the regular season and then to the playoffs. In the playoff period, which spans three months, 16 teams compete for one goal. They must not only battle relentless opponents but also nagging injuries lingering from the regular season. In the playoffs each teammate sets his ego aside, becomes unselfish, and sacrifices everything for the goal. Similarly, salvation is a goal all Christians want to accomplish. Unfortunately, not everyone follows the guidelines to obtain this goal. In order to obtain salvation, we must sacrifice time and have patience with each other. Like a basketball team, we must have one mind and face together all obstacles that lie in our way. If we do this, the Lord promises He will never turn His back on us: "Neither death nor life . . . will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38, 39). Finally when these trials are over and we follow the Lord's guidelines, we can claim the ultimate challenge of salvation.

## REACT

How can you as an individual help the church accomplish this goal of salvation?

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*By Olajide Dada, a computer consultant from Brooklyn, New York.*

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# Help From God

## OPINION

**Key Texts: Phil. 4:13; Isa. 40:29**

Is God the only person who can help us in life? Is there someone else who can do as complete and fulfilling a job as He? Could there be someone else who can strengthen us and protect us from false prophets?

Survival in this world requires a lot of effort, hope, and courage to make us keep pushing on. Staying alive and staying healthy are parts of our physical needs. Avoiding temptation and sin and following God's holy commands are parts of our spiritual needs. God makes us understand that as evil and as tempting false prophets can be and as tiring as life can be, He is willing to help us pull through.

Nowadays, there are two to three churches on every street. Some churches out there fool people, and they do nothing to help their members. Some have false prophets who have turned the church and God into a routine and have taken the significance out of worship. There are prophets who claim that they can see visions. They make their testimonies so realistic that the very chosen could be misled. God's Word says in 2 Corinthians 11:14, 15 that the end of Satan and his ministers would be according to their works. False prophets would try to mislead the very righteous, but our God has promised to strengthen and uphold us in the time to come (Phil. 4:13).

## Nowadays, there are two to three churches on every street.

As God Almighty cares for us, He makes promises that He keeps. God knows what is to come, and He knows our weaknesses. He goes to the very end to protect us. It is encouraging to know that we cannot be separated from God's love (Rom. 8:38, 39).

God is the only person proven to be able to help us in life. To make this possible, He has promised in Isaiah 40:29 to give enormous power to each of His true followers. False prophets will be rewarded for their evil work; true prophets will be rewarded for their truthful work.

## REACT

1. Are there limits to the promise of Philippians 4:13? Explain your answer.
2. The promise says, "I can do all things . . ." Why don't we see more healing miracles and other such dramatic signs of God's power?
3. Adventists in developed countries typically reject what many others believe to be dramatic evidences of the power of the Holy Spirit. What keeps them from rejecting legitimate experiences of the latter rain of the Holy Spirit?

*By Femi Ariyo, a computer major at York College, City University of New York.*

## Next Quarter's Lessons

### CREATIONISM

If you have not received a copy of *CQ* for third quarter 1999, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

#### **Lesson 1: God the Creator**

*Scriptures:* Genesis 1, 2; John 1:1-18; 14:16-28; 16:5-16.

*Theme:* The divine unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are reflected in creation. God's acts in the past, present, and future help us understand where we come from, who we are, and where we are going.

#### **Lesson 2: God's Two Books: Scripture and Nature**

*Scriptures:* 2 Tim. 3:16; Rom. 1:20; 2:14, 15; 2 Pet. 1:19-21; Ps. 19; 33:4-9.

*Theme:* God communicates with fallen humanity through His words in Scripture and His works in nature. Scripture illuminates nature, and nature testifies about God.

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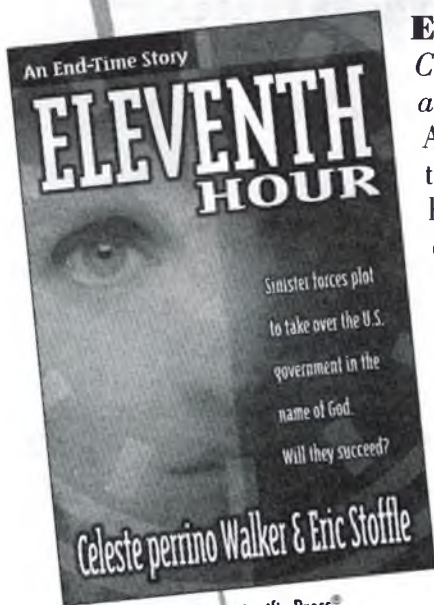
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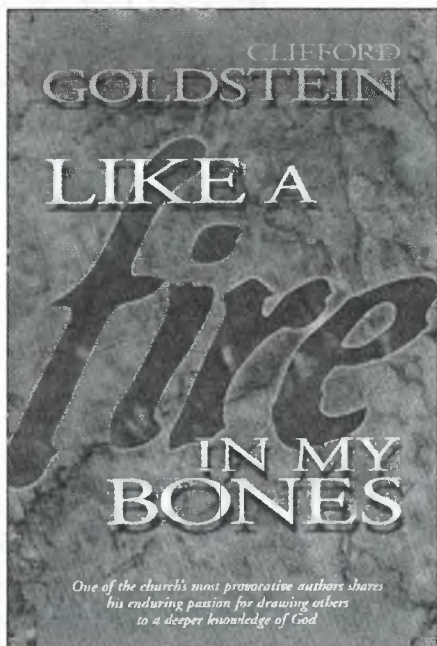
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# MISSION PROFILE

**NAME:**

Leodegario Fernando, age 22, Negros Occidental

**BACKGROUND:**

When Leo's father was put in prison for killing a man, 12-year-old Leo

went to work cutting sugar cane to support his family. Discouraged and wanting to do something meaningful with his life, he soon joined a rebel army which hid out in the nearby mountains. He finally became disillusioned with the rebel cause however and turned himself in to the police. The police allowed him to go home if he would go to school. But Leo's life really began to change when Dindo, a classmate who was an Adventist, invited Leo to come to church with him. Now Leo attends Central Philippine Adventist College and is studying to become a minister. For the first time in his life Leo has found something to live and work for.

**THE THIRTEENTH SABBATH OFFERING:**

The Southern Asia-Pacific Division will use part of the special mission offering it receives to increase dormitory space at Central Philippine Union College.



Southern Asia-Pacific Division