

ADVENTIST REVIEW

**JANUARY 2019: PRAYING ON THE ROAD + TRUST THE
PATH + ALONE IN A CROWD + KAIROS MOMENTS
IN A CHRONOS WORLD + FRESH WIND IN YOUR
SAILS + ARE ADVENTISTS NICE?**

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FOUNDED 1849. PUBLISHED BY THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS®

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E-mail: revieweditor@gc.adventist.org.

Web site: www.adventistreview.org.

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The *Adventist Review* (ISSN 0161-1119) is the general paper of the Seventh-day Adventist® Church. It is published monthly by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904. Periodicals postage paid at Silver Spring, MD, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *Adventist Review*, P.O. Box 5353, Nampa, ID 83653-5353.

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SUBSCRIPTIONS: Twelve issues of the monthly *Adventist Review*, US\$19.95, plus additional postage outside North America. Single copy US\$2.00 plus shipping and handling.

To order, visit adventistreview.org/subscriptions or send your name, address, and payment to: *Adventist Review* subscription desk, P.O. Box 5353, Nampa, ID 83653-5353

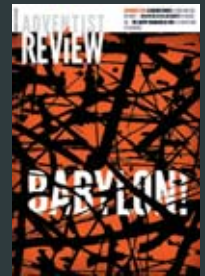
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TRENDING

THE MOST SHARED STORIES ON ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG LAST MONTH:



- 1 Work Together, and Be Not Deterred
- 2 After Discussion, Prayer, the 2018 NAD Year-End Meeting Writing Committee Presents NAD Response to Recent GC Voted Document
- 3 Fired on Fridays, Rehired on Sundays
- 4 North American Division Executive Committee Votes to Discuss Financial Parity with General Conference



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—John





BILL KNOTT

Our best work—in writing, reflecting, planning and praying—always emerges from some settled spot.

The Power of a Place

Whenever I teach seminars for aspiring writers at conferences and campuses, I invariably ask a question of the attendees that seems initially to stump them: “Where do you write?”

It’s clear from the puzzled looks that this wasn’t a question they were expecting. They are brimming with excitement to tell me “what” they want to write about—relationships; church history; insights from their devotional lives—but few seem to know what to do with my curious question about geography.

“Do you mean the actual physical location where we do our writing?” one will eventually ask as proxy for the rest. When I nod, the answers slowly begin to emerge.

“At Panera,” one will say, “just as the lunch crowd begins to arrive. I order a macaroni and cheese, and settle into a corner booth. That’s where I do my best writing.”

“On my laptop from the top bunk in my dorm room,” another will admit, “though it’s hard to concentrate when my roommate is playing Lady Gaga at 100 decibels.”

“Wherever I’ve got my smartphone,” a third will grin. “My best ideas always seem to come to me when I’m hurrying between appointments.”

Because one of my goals in teaching such seminars is to encourage those with passion

and talent to sharpen their skills, I invariably smile and avoid critiquing their responses. But I also note with sadness that those who gave these answers are almost always “unpublished authors”—by far the largest category of writers.

My “geographical question” aims to underscore an often-overlooked reality in the messy, complicated lives we live: our best work—in writing, reflecting, planning and praying—always emerges from some settled spot that we have designated as the place we go to do that task. One of the great illusions of twenty-first century living is that we are all accomplished multitaskers—that we’ve somehow risen above the constraints of time and place and need for quiet that centuries of ancestors have required to write well, think well, plan well, and pray well. We like to tell each other stories about how our “great thoughts” occur to us in the shower or while driving in traffic, as though we’re largely unaffected by the constraints of volume, light, temperature, and pace.

But it’s not for nothing that the great authors, the best architects, and the saints of God have for centuries required quiet, unmoving scenery in which to practice and hone their skills. Most of the authors we love to read, and most of those whose prayers move us toward holiness, have found a spot where,

day by day, they practice the rhythms of thoughtfulness or communion with God.

I’m grateful that my Saviour hears the prayers I murmur on the icy overpass as I drive to the General Conference, for there are January days on which I never would have arrived without His intervention. But I’m just as sure that He prefers to meet me, morning by morning, in the quiet of my family room—my back against the leftmost corner of the couch; Bible easily within reach; my overly affectionate cat pressing into the folds of my old bathrobe. There in the rhythm of each morning I speak to Him of things I never would address in mutters between committee meetings or while pushing a grocery cart. And I hear in the predawn quiet, before the first house wrens have arrived for breakfast on the patio, the promptings of the Spirit who has promised never to leave me to myself.

As you assess the gifts of Christmas now just past, give yourself one more at the start of 2019—a quiet, familiar place where you may meet your Lord, at whatever time of day seems best, to speak the language of your heart and know the certainty of His embrace.

Let me predict: from that spot will flow joy and comfort, peace and fullness in the year ahead. ▀

Bill Knott

In this unsafe world we must not live in fear, but in a state of alertness.

WILLIAM ZELEMAK, GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA



GOD AND GUNS?

Regarding "Does God Like My Gun?" (November 2019): I have never owned a gun, and I have no plans to buy one. I must die daily to God, love Him, and love my neighbors; and that includes my enemies.

In this unsafe world we must not live in fear, but in a state of alertness. Our homes, churches, hospitals, and schools must be alert and might welcome, if necessary, some form of armed protection.

To those who claim the right to own and use guns, the Bible tells us: "No one is good, only God is good" (Luke 18:19). In the military I did not carry a gun. I believed, as did Desmond Doss, to do good to others and to live in faith.

Will I die by someone's gun or other weapon? Maybe. Kevin Onongha was right. I recently attended a rally against hate and violence. Love was displayed. But the question that came to mind was whether anyone attending the rally would walk the talk if they are alive at Jesus' return.

William Zelemak

Greensboro, North Carolina

A SEVENTH-DAY STAMP

I read "God's Sabbath Stamp" (December 2018) several times. Each time I came away wondering, *What is the takeaway from this?* Am I supposed to believe that the number seven (as in

seven words, or seven verses) somehow validates God's clear command "Remember the Sabbath by keeping it holy"?

How is this information useful in talking to my friends about the Sabbath?

The seventh day is the Sabbath, period. We don't need an Old Testament scholar to tell us that. Anybody with a Bible will do.

Ruth Ellis

Albuquerque, New Mexico

THEMES

Thank for the *Adventist Review*. I have been reading it in its various formats for the past 50 years and usually have only positive comments. However, I must admit I am not happy with your thematic issues. For example, the November issue had five articles on Babylon. Five! It's hard to maintain interest in any subject when you're smothered with it. I much prefer the issues that had a nice variety of subjects.

Georgia Schellas

Via Web

ONE IN CHRIST

The recent 2018 Autumn Council in Battle Creek, Michigan, is now history. Sadly, the Sunday session and the issue of the compliance committee was painful to witness via the Internet. The final vote left no winners and no losers.

We are a family of different languages, cultures, and ethnicities. This is who we are, and we believe that under God's

I have often wondered to what extent is God involved in the trillions of incidents that happen on our planet and in our personal lives.

VINETTE HYLTON, GEORGIA

infinite grace, we are yet one in Christ. Our leaders must assume spiritual accountability at this critical time in our history. Conscience is sacred, and it must not be disregarded on the altar of a vote of “yea” or “nay.”

Dan C. Robles, Sr.

Simi Valley, California

FAITH AMONG THE RADISHES

Regarding “Faith Among the Radishes” (October 2018): I have often wondered to what extent is God involved in the trillions of incidents that happen on our planet and in our personal lives. It is so easy for us to say that He could have prevented this or that, or even to ask why He didn’t. We ask these questions not because we doubt His wisdom, or because we are seeking for an answer, but rather because of our knowledge and belief in His omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. So I heartily support Bill Knott’s thought that “there’s no need to make the Author of the universe responsible for every human incident or every flake of breakfast cereal.” God has the right to order each happening in our galaxy as He sees best.

Vinette Hylton

Georgia

IN A FEW WORDS...

ANDREWS UNIVERSITY COSPONSORS INTERFAITH PRAYER SERVICE

So true. We do not serve a partial God. Not at all. He did not die for one set of people; He died for the whole world, that whoever believes in Him might have everlasting life.

Catecha Francis, Via Web

GRACE BEYOND FEAR

GraceNotes is such an uplift in my day!

Betty Ponder, Via Web

MARK FINLEY RESPONSE TO AND REFLECTION ON DAVID GATES VIDEO

Very timely. Thank you for giving the trumpet a certain sound.

Stephen De Bruyn, Via Web

RED, WHITE—AND YOU

Jesus is our example. Stay with His example and the Holy Spirit, whom God has sent, will lead us into all truth. God has also spoken to His people through the inspired counsel of Ellen White. God speaks to His last-day generation through the prophet and teaches us how to best represent Him in these last days: Those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus.

Pam Trogdon, Via Web

YOUR TURN

We welcome your letters, noting, as always, that inclusion of a letter in this section does not imply that the ideas expressed are endorsed by either the editors of the *Adventist Review* or the General Conference. Short, specific, timely letters have the best chance at being published (please include your complete address and phone number—even with e-mail messages). Letters will be edited for space and clarity only. Send correspondence to Letters to the Editor, *Adventist Review*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600; Internet: letters@adventistreview.org.

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“If you want to reduce your risk of diabetes, the order of importance is (1) reduce obesity, and (2) reduce or eliminate meat.”

Joan Sabaté, p. 16

NEWS



The Camp Fire in California, United States, leaves the Paradise Seventh-day Adventist Church in smoldering ruins after it burned through the facility on November 8, 2018. PHOTOS: NANCY HAMILTON/GOLDEN EAGLE FILMS

COMMUNITY PULLS TOGETHER AFTER DEADLIEST FIRE IN CALIFORNIA'S HISTORY

NEARLY 1,300 ADVENTISTS AFFECTED BY THE CAMP FIRE

BY NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS—KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN

I first saw the pictures of the church Friday afternoon as I was having my lunch,” said Dan Martella, administrative pastor for the Paradise Seventh-day Adventist Church in California, during a November 12, 2018, Skype interview with Washington, D.C.’s, Fox 5 television station (WTTG/WDC). Martella has been a pastor—and a community member—there for three years. On Thursday evening, November 8, the church burned to the ground as the Camp Fire swept through Paradise.

“It was a sucker punch. Then a

day later we got the pictures of our house. So it’s a ride,” Martella said.

The Camp Fire, now considered the deadliest fire in California’s history, claimed the lives of more than 80. in the vicinity of Concow and Paradise. According to national news reports, more than 52,000 were evacuated from the area, while the Camp Fire Incident Update states that about 19,357 structures were damaged or destroyed.

Nearly 1,300 Adventist church members were affected, with many losing everything except their lives. At

the time of this writing, not all members were accounted for. And in addition to the loss of the church, the Paradise Adventist School lost its K-4 building and sustained damage to the gymnasium basement.

Adventist Health Feather River Hospital reported that some of its buildings were damaged. “The good news is that part of the upper level of the hospital is standing, as is OB, ED, Outpatient Surgery Center, Home Health, Cancer Center, and Sleep Medicine,” the report stated. “The lower level of the hospital, the chiller and



Adventist Health Feather River Hospital buildings sustained damage from the Camp Fire in northern California, United States.

utility area, and most of the other outbuildings did sustain damage. . . . We are still assessing the situation to determine the full extent of the damage of all buildings.”

On Thursday, November 15, the Pacific Union Conference approved a special appropriation of US\$100,000 to the Northern California Conference for use in immediate relief efforts for the church and school in the Paradise community.

Neighboring North Pacific Union Conference area churches held special offerings on Saturdays between November 17 and December 1, to aid the Northern California Conference in its relief efforts.

COMMUNITY HELPS COMMUNITY

According to a CNN report, 1,385 residents were living in shelters at the end of November. While many were struggling, a surge of support came from Paradise and the surrounding communities. Adventist church members joined with their neighbors in the community to help.

“Our members are working closely with local organizations and have pulled together to face this crisis,” a Pacific Union Conference spokesperson said in a November 10 news release. “Paradise church members who have lost their sanctuary will be worshipping with nearby congregations [including the Chico Sev-

enth-day Adventist Church], and our pastors and members have reached out to help meet the extraordinary needs created by this disaster.”

“Financial support for the fire recovery is the most important way our members can help right now,” said W. Derrick Lea, North American Division (NAD) Adventist Community Services Disaster Response (ACS DR) director. “People need the basics—clothes, shoes, food, water.” Lea, while on assignment in Saipan (part of the NAD’s Guam-Micronesia Mission), which was devastated by Typhoon Yutu in October, kept tabs on the ACS DR early response to both the northern and



Firefighters work as the Camp Fire burns through Paradise, California, United States, in early November 2018.

southern California fires.

On November 11 Lea reported that Ed Fergusson, assistant to the president of the Northern California Conference, continues to work with his

local community onsite, and the NAD offered support as appropriate. Charlene Sargent held meetings with local leadership within the disaster response community in southern California, providing support to the leadership there. Both conferences asked for financial support for ongoing fire recovery efforts.

Local Adventist members assisted in some immediately tangible ways. Nancy Hamilton, a Chico resident and videographer from Golden Eagle Films, used her press credentials to record video of homes, going street by street, to help those who could not go into the area to ascertain if their property had been damaged. Hamilton also shared earlier footage for the Fox 5 news report, including video of first responders and the smoldering Adventist church properties.

On Facebook, Katlyn Dordevic from Napa shared photos from her volunteer work in Chico. She said it was “such a blessing to volunteer as an RN in Chico with all the

other staff helping at a shelter, then going to Walmart to help at 'tent city.' Lots of dressing changes, blood pressure checks, and quick triage to [determine] medical needs."

Dordevic shared that the large group at Walmart expressed "so much gratitude that it melted my heart. Everyone had nothing but good things to say about the care they were receiving." She added, "Continue to pray for them. Personal items [are] needed, such as socks, [underclothes], and warm items such as blankets, hats, and gloves."

Martella lost his home in the fire. But in the Fox 5 Skype interview he said he was heartened by the support from the church community, friends, and family. "The outpouring of love—it is overwhelming," he said. "I cannot keep up with my Facebook friends. They are there expressing their encouragement and support. I can't keep up with that, and the people that don't even call ahead; they just say, 'We're on our way.'"

ABOUT THE CAMP FIRE

The fire was named after Camp Creek Road, the place it started in the morning on November 8. Shortly after the fire started, the Butte County sheriff's office ordered the evacuation of Paradise and surrounding locales. Within the first day the fire had destroyed up to 90 percent of the town of Paradise and the Concow community.

All together, the fire was responsible for 85 fatalities, covered an area of 153,336 acres, and either damaged or destroyed at least 19,357 structures, and injured three firefighters.

Strong winds approaching 50 miles (80 kilometers) per hour and dry conditions fueled the fire's quick movement through the area, trapping residents who had little or no time to flee, and making it impossible for firefighters to contain the blaze. ▀



Daniel R. Jackson, president of the North American Division, presents the President's Report during the 2018 North American Division Year-end Meetings. PHOTOS: NAD/MYLON MEDLEY

WORK TOGETHER, AND BE NOT DETERRED

NAD PRESIDENT, EMPHASIZES WORKING TOGETHER TO FULFILL THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH.

BY NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION—KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN

We are all coworkers together with God," remarked Daniel R. Jackson, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America, as he paraphrased 1 Corinthians 3:9 at the start of his annual report at the first business session of the 2018 North American Division (NAD) year-end meeting (YEM).

"I have a very strong belief. It's a belief that we haven't always emphasized what we ought to as Seventh-day Adventists," Jackson said. "It is this: At the very moment that you accept Jesus as your personal Savior, you become a minister of the gospel."

Before diving into the specifics of his report, Jackson continued by reciting the NAD's mission: "To reach everyone in the North American Division with the Christ-centered message of hope and wholeness." He then unpacked what that means in terms of sharing hope and wholeness.

"That is the mission statement for our territory. It gives us our marching orders," said Jackson. "It is about hope—hope *today*. Hope amid bad times, good times. Hope—that has to be our message. And by God's grace, it is and will continue to be our experience."

"Wholeness is the whole expression of the being that is [a person] of hope. When one person finds connection with God, then there is the opportunity to connect with humanity and be an agent of hope, wholeness, and healing to the whole world."

“The church is made of of all kinds of people. We need to join hands together, rise above our circumstances, and finish the work.”

—Daniel R. Jackson, NAD president

STRENGTHS

In his report Jackson also shared what he terms “our strengths” in the North American Division. Following recognition of “our great God,” the strengths include great human resources, excellent facilities, an active lay membership, able youth, and generous constituencies.

“We’re running 8 percent ahead [on tithe] this year,” said Jackson. “We have to praise God for those generous constituencies, the members in the pew who are committed and faithful. That really is something to say ‘Praise the Lord’ about.”

Jackson gave quick updates on a sampling of organizations and ministry initiatives, calling attention to both the education and health-care systems. He shared information about the division’s Compassion Movement, e-Huddle evangelistic leadership visioning gathering, and church planting, with more than 560 churches planted through the third year of a five-year plan to plant 1,000 churches; mentioned the Sabbath School lessons written by Stewardship Ministries Department director John Matthews and the increase in church giving; recognized the 2018 start of *Adventist Journey*, the NAD magazine; and highlighted the work of Adventist Community Services Disaster Response across the division, as communities recover from fires, floods, hurricane and typhoon damage, shootings, and the volcanic eruption in Hawaii. “Our Ad-

ventist Community Services team has been involved in every major disaster, and is acknowledged by FEMA as a qualified partner,” said Jackson.

Jackson also reported on mission work in the division’s metropolises, citing examples of growth in some of the largest cities in the NAD.

CHALLENGES

Jackson continued by sharing the challenges that face the NAD. These include a failure to place the mission as the top priority, the potential disenchantment of all age groups, financial ability to fuel the mission in the NAD, the potential of decreasing funds, and pluralism inside and outside the church.

Two specific experiences recently created awareness that disenchantment threatens the church in North America. Among them, Jackson told the YEM delegates that a few weeks ago, a grandfather approached Jackson with tears in his eyes. The man told Jackson that his teen granddaughter said she “is leaving this church.” He asked Jackson to write “Emma” a letter, which Jackson did.

Recounting, Jackson said, “I appealed to her to stay, ‘because we need you, and God needs you.’ And that is true of every person. We have to be honest with each other. We can’t gloss over everything. That’s not what the world is about. We don’t live in that kind of world.”

Regarding the pluralism shift in

the NAD, Jackson said, “The problem is that pluralism is leaky. It leaks into the church, and we begin to have ideas that are perhaps unbiblical. I have a concern for that, and so should you. May God give us the wake-up call that we need to root our thinking in His Word.”

UNDETERRED

Despite the challenges, Jackson is excited about what is happening in the NAD. He reported on training initiatives for conference leaders.

Jackson also mentioned the Women in Ministry initiative, saying, “Let it be understood that we will not be deterred. We have a mandate from God. We will one day, hopefully, have 1,000 female pastors in the North American Division.”

Jackson concluded his YEM report with reciting 2 Peter 1:19.

“We are not alike; the church is made of all kinds of people,” said Jackson. “We need to join hands together, rise above our circumstances, and finish the task. . . . We will do well to pay attention to this [verse in 2 Peter]. . . . We have one true North Star in the North American Division. His name is Jesus. We serve Him, and He will lead us until He comes. We will not stop. We will not be deterred. And, read the end of the Book, because we know who wins.”

More stories on the 2018 NAD year-end meeting were published on AdventistReview.org, November 4-12, 2018. 🍀



Andrews University president Andrea Luxton (seated left) sits with Barfuor Adjei-Barwuah, Ghanaian ambassador to the United States. Standing with them are those from Andrews University and the Ghanaian government who were present at the signing and will be responsible for the partnership's implementation.

PHOTO: LIONEL KANYOWA, BLACK LIONS STUDIO

ANDREWS UNIVERSITY SIGNS AGREEMENT WITH GHANA AMBASSADOR

INITIATIVE AIMS TO SUPPORT THE AFRICAN COUNTRY'S EDUCATIONAL GOALS.

BY STEPHEN PAYNE, ANDREWS UNIVERSITY NEWS, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

On November 12, 2018, Andrews University president Andrea Luxton signed a formal partnership agreement with the government of Ghana at a meeting with His Excellency Barfuor Adjei-Barwuah, the nineteenth ambassador of the Republic of Ghana to the United States of America.

The agreement is part of the Ghanaian government's commitment to expanding educational opportunities, including a focus on assuring a free senior-high-school education for each of its citizens, and expanding opportunities within Ghana and throughout the world for university-level education.

WHAT IT ENTAILS

University leaders reported that under the terms of the Andrews University partnership agreement with the government of Ghana, students from Ghana are welcomed by Andrews University to complete

a degree in business, international development, or education. Participation in the agreement is open to undergraduate and graduate students for full-time regular study with financial support from the government program. Students will be able to attend Andrews for all four years at the undergraduate level, or to transfer in partway through their academic program.

At the graduate level it is expected that students will complete all or nearly all of their degree requirements at Andrews University or via the online programs from their own country. Initially five to 10 students are expected in the first semester, with numbers growing somewhat after that. The new agreement will begin with its first participants in the summer of 2019.

WHY ANDREWS

Luxton said that two elements make Andrews University an ideal

partner in this endeavor: the international nature of the school, and its commitment to training people to make positive changes in the world. "Andrews University is proud to be one of the most ethnically and internationally diverse national universities in the United States, and this agreement with the government of Ghana expands and deepens our commitment to be a place where world changes are made," Luxton said.

"In my professional experience I've had the opportunity to see the impact and possibilities that come with further education," said Adjei-Barwuah, who was educated in Ghana, England, and the United States, and who has taught at universities in England. "If we talk about socioeconomic development in our society, and of Ghana in particular, I believe that will best and truly come as we invest in our students and open the door to the possibilities of the future that come with further education."

ABOUT ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1874, Andrews University is the flagship institution of higher education for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and offers more than 200 areas of study, including advanced degrees. Its main campus is in Berrien Springs, Michigan, and the university also provides instruction at colleges and universities in 19 countries around the world. ▀



Ann Gibson, professor emerita of business at Andrews University, facilitates the discussion on integrity and transparency at the 2018 Annual Council meeting. PHOTO: BRENT HARDINGE/ANN

ADVENTIST LEADERS DISCUSS INTEGRITY AND TRANSPARENCY

DISCUSSION AT ANNUAL COUNCIL SHOWS NEED FOR AWARENESS OF BIBLICAL ETHICS WITHIN CHURCH GOVERNANCE.

BY MARCOS PASEGGI, *ADVENTIST REVIEW*

What would you do as a conference treasurer if you received a report that one of the accountants in your office had accepted a bribe? Would you confront the accountant? Would you look the other way? Would you transfer the individual? What if a treasurer who hails from a particular country is using church-paid trips to make stops in his or her home country for personal reasons? What would you do as a leader to stop it?

These and other questions, resulting from what was called “fictional but realistic scenarios,” prompted a lively discussion that many members of the Adventist Church Executive Committee described as “enriching” and “eye-opening” during the General Conference’s 2018 Annual Council

in Battle Creek, Michigan, United States.

“Trust is all we have,” said General Conference treasurer Juan Prestol-Puesán when introducing the segment on October 16, 2018. “The trust of our people who provide the resources is all we have. And trust is always the result of transparent integrity.”

TRANSPARENCY AND INTEGRITY—DEVELOPED SKILLS

Prestol-Puesán made clear that transparency, which he defined as “honesty and openness,” is not limited to finances. “It is a topic of continued relevance to the church in all areas,” he said. Integrity is, in his words, “adherence to moral and ethical principles.” “No one

has a monopoly on transparency and integrity,” he emphasized.

As Christians, Prestol-Puesán said, we adhere to a transcendent worldview; we are not amoral. Being Christians, however, does not necessarily bring us to the full realization of how we are faithful and moral. It is the reason, he emphasized, that we should never take these “two pillars of good corporate governance” for granted. “Besides the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we have to develop the ability to show transparency. It is a developed skill,” he said. “We want to be holy, but do we know how to be holy in the context of governance?”

DISCUSSION OF CASE STUDIES

Aside from revealing definitions, most of the extended session time was devoted to introducing plausible hypothetical scenarios and inviting committee members to discuss how to address each specific situation. Ann Gibson, professor emerita at Andrews University and assistant to the world church treasurer for treasurers’ training,

The trust of our people who provide the resources is all we have. And trust is always the result of transparent integrity. –Juan Prestol-Puesán

laid out the cases for discussion.

In a first fictional case, a conference treasurer receives a report that one of the accountants in the office has allegedly accepted a kick-back from a local entrepreneur with whom the conference does business on a regular basis. What makes this hypothetical case more complicated is that the accountant is from a prominent family in the community and the church, and confronting him may have serious implications.

In another hypothetical case, a church region treasurer hails from another country within the division (not the country where the regional headquarters is located). Since the treasurer has real estate investments (two houses) in his home country, in planning for his church business trips he usually routes those trips through his home country so that he can take care of his investments.

Executive Committee members were invited to discuss these cases in small groups and report back to the entire group.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

In presenting the first hypothetical case, Gibson suggested considering whether a solution to the dishonest accountant's behavior might be not to confront but transfer the person to another area or territory of the church. Most of the Executive Committee members who went to the microphones, however, seemed to oppose that idea.

"I do not resonate with the idea

of just moving the person," said Natasha Dysinger, a lay member of the committee. "It may be difficult [to confront the person], but that's part of the responsibilities of leadership."

British Union Conference president Ian Sweeney seconded Dysinger's comments, adding that looking for an easy way out of the problem also speaks about us. "Sometimes we show our lack of integrity by passing on people who lack integrity," he said.

In both cases leaders should view helping the person involved in a perceived unethical situation as paramount, in an effort to assist the individual in making correct choices, said General Conference associate secretary Gerson Santos. It is the reason the situation must not be ignored. "If we do not confront [the person]," he said, "we are not helping him or her to grow."

Trans-European Division executive secretary Audrey Andersson emphasized that leaders must think long-term, referring to unnamed real cases in which people were transferred 20 or 30 years ago, transfers that eventually made the problem worse. "If we do not solve issues at the lowest level, it will come back to bite us," she warned.

In wrapping up the discussion session, Gibson made clear that some of the questions presented do not have clear-cut answers, but they were nevertheless intended to make church leaders think. Meanwhile, she suggested, it is import-

ant for leaders to confront the individual with a definition of the ideal situation, assess the current state of affairs against that ideal, state clearly the consequences of continuing that behavior, and expect a positive answer.

THE LEADER'S ROLE

In his closing remarks, Prestol-Puesán emphasized that leaders' responsibility is "to make [church members] understand that things may go wrong, but if they go wrong, we will work to fix them. And more than that, we will work hard so things don't go wrong." He was adamant in his statement that "trust is all we have, and for Seventh-day Adventist leaders there is no other option; we have to do it right."

Prestol-Puesán went to the Bible to point out the example of Samuel, who, at the end of his life, told the people of Israel, "Here I am. Witness against me before the Lord . . . : Whose ox have I taken, or whose donkey have I taken, or whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed, or from whose hand have I received any bribe with which to blind my eyes? . . . And they said, 'You have not cheated us or oppressed us, nor have you taken anything from any man's hand'" (1 Sam. 12:3, 4, NKJV).*

"I would like for each one of us to be able to say the same as Samuel," Prestol-Puesán said. 🍌

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STUDY FINDS MEAT, NOT EGGS, IS LINKED TO TYPE 2 DIABETES

LLU SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH RESEARCH SEEMS TO CORRECT PREVIOUS CLAIMS.

BY JAMES PONDER, LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY HEALTH NEWS

A Loma Linda University (LLU) School of Public Health study has found that eating eggs is not associated with an increased risk of developing type 2 diabetes (T2D), but eating meat is.

In an article published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, LLU medicine and public health professor Joan Sabaté, who served as principal researcher, said the study was designed to determine if an oversight or design flaw in previous studies might have given eggs a bad rap.

Sabaté and his LLU colleagues tested to see if the reason earlier studies associated egg consumption with an increased risk of T2D might simply be that they failed to differentiate between eggs and meat. “Previous studies have suggested that egg consumption is a possible risk factor for type 2 diabetes,” Sabaté said. “However, those alleged associations may have been a result of concurrent consumption of eggs with meat, such as in the typical American breakfast.”

To find out if the culprit might be the meat, not the eggs, research-

ers from the Adventist Health Study-2 administered a questionnaire to more than 55,000 adults at the beginning of the study and followed them for an average of 5.3 years. None of the subjects had diabetes when the study began.

That was not true at the end, however. Using two follow-up questionnaires, researchers determined that some study subjects had contracted diabetes during the study period. The results not only validated Sabaté’s original hypothesis that high meat consumption is a risk factor for T2D, but also confirmed excessive body mass index as an even greater risk factor.

Among participants who ate both eggs and meat, obesity and meat consumption were the large risk factors the study identified. It didn’t matter if they ate one egg per week or one per day. What mattered was how much excess weight they carried and how much meat they ate.

Nevertheless, Sabaté and his team expressed surprise at one of the study’s lesser findings. Vegetarians who ate more than five eggs per week showed a slight increase

in diabetes risk. “Egg intake was not associated with the odds of type 2 diabetes except among vegetarians consuming five or more eggs a week,” he said.

Even so, Sabaté is quick to point out that vegetarian diets do not pose nearly as great a threat as obesity or meat consumption. He even speculated that since the total number of vegetarians consuming more than five eggs per week was very small, the increased risk might be a statistical fluke. “Further study is needed to see if this finding holds,” he said.

“If you want to reduce your risk of diabetes, the order of importance is (1) reduce obesity, and (2) reduce or eliminate meat,” he said. “A distant third factor might be to reduce the number of eggs consumed weekly. But diabetes prevention should focus on weight management and meat-intake restriction above all else.”

The National Cancer Institute provided funding for the original study. The American Egg Board funded the analysis of the egg-specific portions of the study. Sabaté said neither organization had any influence over the design, execution, data collection, or reporting of the study findings.

Loma Linda University is a Seventh-day Adventist school with a focus on the health sciences, located in Loma Linda, California, United States. The university comprises eight schools and offers more than 100 degrees, programs, and certificates. It also offers distance education. ▀



CENTER FOR DIGITAL EVANGELISM ESTABLISHED IN THE PHILIPPINES. The Southern Asia-Pacific headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church recently inaugurated the first-ever Adventist World Radio Center for Digital Evangelism in Silang, Cavite, Philippines. The Center for Digital Evangelism (CDE) purposes to connect to radio contacts, leading them through Bible studies and online evangelism, and eventually to baptism and discipleship.



ADRA OFFERS SERVICE SCHOLARSHIPS TO YOUNG ADULTS TO VOLUNTEER OVERSEAS. ADRA's global volunteer program, ADRA Connections, is launching a new service scholarship. The initiative will allow thousands of young people in the U.S. to be more active through volunteerism and become agents of change in communities abroad. An estimated 350 to 400 scholarships each year from 2019 to 2023 will help young adults cover some of the costs related to volunteer service overseas. Scholarships will range from US\$500 to \$1,200, depending on the type of project and the country in which the project takes place.



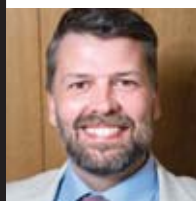
WHITE ESTATE REPORTS EXPONENTIAL GROWTH IN ONLINE SEARCHES. The number of online searches of Ellen White writings on its Web sites and apps has grown exponentially the past 18 months—from 30,000 unique visitors per month to 1,878,772 visitors in November 2018, resulting in 105,534,063 search requests. Helping to generate these milestone figures are two million pages of material on the Web sites, including Ellen White books in 131 languages. These searches have involved every country in the world except four. Ellen White writings can be searched at egwwritings.org.



ROCKET TO DELIVER CELL SAMPLES TO INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION. Muscle cells from research-study participants at Florida Hospital's Translational Research Institute for Metabolism and Diabetes (TRI) blasted off toward the International Space Station on November 17, 2018, as part of an experiment to examine the effects of a weightless environment on muscle health. The cell samples came from participants in a recent study on aging and muscle loss, which was supported by the U.S. government's National Institute on Aging.



ADVENTIST NAMED CHIEF JUSTICE OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA. A Seventh-day Adventist has been named chief justice of Papua New Guinea (PNG). Sir Gibbs Salika, a member of Hohola Adventist Church in Port Moresby, was appointed on November 13, 2018, for a 10-year term. Salika most recently served his first term as deputy chief justice. He had served as a judge of the National and Supreme Court for more than two consecutive terms since 1989. Salika is the longest-serving judge of the National and Supreme Courts, according to PNG prime minister Peter O'Neill.



APPOINTMENT HIGHLIGHTS EUROPEAN ADVENTISTS' COMMITMENT TO MENTAL HEALTH. Helgi Jónsson, an Adventist medical doctor and psychiatrist, was elected as the new Health Ministries director for the Adventist Church in the Trans-European (TED) region. His election took place during the TED regional 2018 year-end meetings held in Bečići, Montenegro. Jónsson, who is from Iceland, currently works as a consulting psychiatrist and has also served in the Danish health system. An active member of the Adventist Church, Jónsson is an elder of the Hafnarfjörður Adventist Church, and a Sabbath School teacher.



ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS RECEIVE EMMY AWARD. Three professors in the Department of Communication at Southwestern Adventist University have won a regional Emmy award—considered the highest honor in the United States television industry. Professors Kyle Portbury, Michael Agee, and Glen Robinson each received an Emmy for their work on *Truth*, a graphic novel-style animation that tells the story of women's rights activist and abolitionist Sojourner Truth and the speech she delivered at the Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, in 1851.

BE IT RESOLVED

*The new year is
a good time to
build on
foundations
already laid.*



STEPHEN CHAVEZ

A clean slate. A blank page. An empty highway stretching off to the horizon. There's something intriguing about new beginnings.

They're more common than one might imagine. Every game begins with the score 0-0. Every race begins with the clock set at 0:00:00. Every new day begins when the alarm clock goes off. When we look at it like that, January 1 is just one symbol of a new beginning, albeit one filled with unlimited promises, potential, and possibilities.

Yet why do we invest January 1 with more significance than any other new beginning? Countless Web sites, newspaper and magazine articles, and television programs talk about resolutions: how to make them, how to keep them, and how to make them a lasting part of our lives.

And not without reason. Most of us need to lose a few pounds; be more prudent and faithful stewards of our time and finances; nurture our relationships; and invest more time in studying, praying, and getting closer to God. The end of one year and the beginning of the next is as good a time as any to reflect on the past and plan for the future.

REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Resolutions would be a fine way to order our lives and end the year healthier, wealthier, more fulfilled, and better accomplished if life weren't so unpredictable.

Who would argue with setting the alarm 15 minutes earlier to have more time to read the Bible and pray? Who would say that a little discipline wouldn't be a good thing when it comes to eating healthfully and at proper times throughout the week?

The problems start when we miss a day. Feelings of failure are likely to make it harder to begin again. A few days of model behavior isn't going to turn a resolution into a habit. Popular research about habit development indicates that habits take anywhere from 21 to 66 days to become established. And the process is more likely to be marked by steady improvement rather than uninterrupted success.

Simply stated: If we want to make resolutions we can keep on January 1, we should begin around the middle of October. In general, that's how long it takes for habits to become part of our routine.

"As the twig is bent, so grows the tree." Ideally, we develop our characters in childhood. By the time we reach adulthood our characters are set, our

strengths and weaknesses part of our fiber. Our life experiences reveal the strength of our characters.

LIFE HAPPENS

Take Joseph, for example. As a child of privilege, he knew how to antagonize those around him (see Gen. 37:1-11). But something in his upbringing taught him the value of humble, willing service. (Perhaps it was because his father, Jacob, had to work 14 years for the woman he loved.)

Nevertheless, after his brothers sold him into slavery, and when faced with a lifetime of low-level servanthood, Joseph revealed an unusual strength of character to the point that "Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned" (Gen. 39:4).

This didn't happen because on December 31 Joseph decided to turn over a new leaf. His character had been formed by a lifetime of decisions, so that when he was faced with one of his life's great temptations he could respond: "How . . . could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" (verse 9).

Joseph's calculations may have included the fact that humanly speaking, he could probably get away with it. But he knew he was called to a higher standard, even though his decision to be faithful to God landed him in prison.

And while prison might be where most people go to wither and die, Joseph found it a place where he could serve God by serving his fellow prisoners. A series of mysterious, otherwise indecipherable dreams led Joseph to a seat next to the most powerful man in the kingdom; an unpredictable and improbable reunion with his brothers and eventually his father; and this statement to his brothers who had sold him into slavery: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good" (Gen. 50:20).

Who knows if Joseph ever thought, *I resolve to reflect God's grace to the people around me*. He just did.

HEARING AND DOING

Wouldn't it be great if God just told us what to do? If only we could hear His voice when we had to decide when to get up, what to eat, whom to marry, and whether to take that vacation.

But hearing God's voice is an advantage only if we intend to do what He says. Consider Jonah.

"The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amitai: 'Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it'" (Jonah 1:1, 2). What good fortune! To not

Jonah had preached about grace, but he didn't understand grace. He knew God's voice, but he didn't know God.

only hear God's voice but to recognize it as God's voice. Jonah had obviously heard God's voice before.

"But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish" (verse 3). Jonah knew God's voice, but he didn't know God. If he had, Jonah wouldn't have tried to run away from God. The very idea is preposterous.

Ensuing events demonstrated without a doubt that God was not going to be left behind. First there was a storm. Then a great fish swallowed Jonah, and God preserved his life for three days. "Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: 'Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you'" (Jonah 3:1).

This time Jonah obeyed, at least in body. He did go to Nineveh; he did preach against it; he did see the people in the city—from the king to the beggar on the street—repent. But when God "relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened" (verse 10), Jonah went to a hill overlooking the city just in case God changed His mind.

Then God and Jonah had a conversation. It seems that while Jonah had preached about grace, he didn't understand grace. He knew God's voice, but he didn't know God. He was a prophet, but he resented God for being as generous with those heathen Ninevites as He had been with him.

Which leads us to ask: Why did Jonah pray? Was it so that he could write in his prayer journal "Prayed three times today: 15 minutes in the morning, 15 minutes at noon, 15 minutes after supper"? Why did Jonah help others? Was it because one of his New Year's resolutions was to help three people a week? Why did he give offerings? So he could write them off as charitable donations when he filed his income tax?

There are reasons we read the Bible, study, pray, and serve others. It's not so that at the end of the year we have bragging rights about how much of the Bible we've read, how many prayer journals we've filled, or how much money we've given away

to charitable causes. We do those things because we want to be more faithful in reflecting Christ to our families, friends, and communities. The numbers are just window dressing. Those we touch with God's grace are the reasons we resolve to spend more time lingering in God's presence throughout the year.

In our resolutions let's make sure that we do more than that which will feed our egos. Let's make sure those habits and behaviors bring us closer to God and make us better reflectors of His love and grace.

THIS ONE THING

I've been a runner for more than 40 years. Years ago I would ask myself when I woke up, *Should I go running today?* I'd often lie in bed for 15, 20, or 30 minutes wondering whether I should leave my warm bed for the chill and exertion of a morning run. Eventually my inertia made my decision for me: I didn't run.

But 40 years later running is part of who I am. I know that when I wake up I'm going to put on my running clothes and go for a run. I'm not a world-class runner. At my age I'm a plodder at best.

The difference between me and a world-class athlete is that running is something I do for part of my life; it's not my whole life. Compared to a professional athlete who spends hours in a batting cage, on a driving range, or on a basketball court, I have other talents and interests that keep me occupied. I'm a runner, but that's not all I am.

When I was growing up, a plaque on the wall of my grandparents' house had these words: "Only one life, 'twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last. To me to live is Christ. Philippians 1:21."

My relationship with Christ is my greatest priority. It colors everything I do, every decision I make. It affects my relationships with family, friends, neighbors, coworkers. I'm by no means a world-class Christian; I'm a plodder. But as with running, I know that "slow and steady wins the race."

I can say with the apostle Paul: "But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13, 14).

It's a decision I make every day, not only on January 1. 🍌

Stephen Chavez is an assistant editor of *Adventist Review*.

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SOUTHERN
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Power for Mind & Soul

A graphic design featuring a teal background with several white, curved lines that suggest the strings of a kite. In the top right corner, there is a yellow kite tail. A small blue kite is visible in the upper right area, with its string extending downwards. The main text is in large, white, bold, sans-serif font.

A KITE, A STRING, AND A BRIDGE

How do we make peace among us?

BILL KNOTT

I've been living with this story for 50 years now, ever since I first was caught by it on a gray January day in my fourth-grade classroom. Back then, and naturally enough, it was a story about the derring-do of a child only a bit older than me. That's why I found it in a classroom stocked with child-friendly stories.

Later on it became a story about cool-headed, tactical planning, perhaps because that was the quality I needed most as a young and middle-aged adult when unbridgeable chasms yawned at every turn, and professional and personal disruptions filled my days.

More recently, the story—which occurred at just about the time this journal was being founded 170 years ago—has become for me a potent metaphor for how we bridge the great divides that naturally enough grow up between individuals, in groups, in congregations, and even between large Christian organizations.

I suspect that I'm not done with it yet, even in this telling. Like the poet Robert Frost, "I shall be telling this with a sigh somewhere ages and ages hence,"¹ when another life moment shows me another facet I've been missing through the years. And that's as it should be: good stories—great stories—are never fully understood.

• • •

By the fall of 1847, three decades of thawing relations between the United States and Canada had largely obliterated memories of the shooting war that had erupted over the boundary Niagara River during the War of 1812. A booming economy south of the river and great economic potential north of it had convinced government and business leaders on

both sides. A bridge was needed to span the turbulent river that marked the border between the British Empire and the nation that had declared its independence from Great Britain just 70 years earlier.

An engineering firm was hired to design the first suspension bridge over what was deemed an unbridgeable and treacherous chasm—the Whirlpool Rapids, just above the famous Falls. At 800 feet across, and 225 feet above the water, it was the narrowest point between the two sides. Depending on which version of the story you prefer, supervisor of the building works Theodore Hulett either personally solved the architectural puzzle of how the bridge could be built, or else got his brainstorm from watching boys fly kites out over the Whirlpool Rapids.

Hulett organized a kite-flying contest for January, the coldest month of the winter, with the goal of landing a kite—and its string—on the other side of the chasm. Dozens of Canadian and American boys responded to the challenge, which included a prize of \$5, worth more than \$150 in both Canadian and U.S. currencies today. One talented kite-flyer, 16-year old Homan Walsh, crossed the river well above the rapids and successfully landed his kite on the American side early in the contest, only to have the string break. Marooned by bad weather on the Canadian side of the Niagara for more than a week, Walsh finally retrieved his kite and tried again two weeks later, letting out hundreds of feet of string as the prevailing westerly Canadian winds carried his kite—symbolically named "Union"—out over the swirling rapids. Toward nightfall, as the winds died down, "Union" settled in a tree on the U.S., and the string was secured by Hulett's associates.

Now a single string—a kite string—united the two territories.

And over that string, Hulett's engineers drew a slightly heavier string, riding on a silver ring. And over the slightly heavier string, an even heavier string. And over the heavier string, a rope. And over the rope, the first, thin metal wire—until strand by strand, one small step at a time, incrementally but irresistibly, the foundation for the first suspension bridge over the Niagara River was built.

And it all rested on a kite string.

• • •

This isn't the usual plotline for a story about how big divides get crossed. As we typically tell such tales, a great, even heroic, gesture is required to bridge the unbridgeable. Richard Nixon must go to China. Anwar Sadat must go to Jerusalem. Presidents and prime ministers must stand before the cameras in some distant, neutral territory to grasp hands and symbolize the thawing of a Cold War. What can be accomplished by something as unsubstantial—and yes, fragile—as a single kite string?

But behind the grand heroic gestures that capture our imaginations and the headlines, there are a hundred smaller moments on which all reconciliations ultimately depend. Someone picks up the phone—even the Red Phone—and calls a person long deemed an “enemy.” Two diplomats from warring sides go for an unobserved walk in some snowy Swiss forest. A private note passed from hand to hand around a tense negotiating table signals a new solution to an old and intractable quarrel.

Yes, let it be said: there's a string—a kite string—beneath all hopeful moments when our broken,

proud humanity makes peace with other broken, proud human beings. Someone swallows hard, and deliberately puts aside the memory of the latest injury to send an olive branch—or just a twig—to an opponent on the other side of the board room or the church business meeting. Someone prays for weeks about the apostle Paul's admonition—“Forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you” (Col 3:13)—and hesitatingly picks up a basin and a towel. Leaders—yes, even church leaders—deliberately put aside the clamoring of partisans and the assertions of correctness, and send the text that simply, elegantly says: “Let's talk.”

All reconciliations ultimately depend on things as fragile as kite strings.

• • •

Thirteen years and several “shooting wars” ago, I began an editorial in this journal with these lines: *“If I had an extra million dollars and the inclination to give it away, I'd probably create the Homan Walsh Possibilities Award, and annually bestow a healthy chunk of that money on some Adventist who goes about the difficult business of bridging the divides among us.”*²

It's a sadness to tell you today that I have yet to give away the first Homan Walsh Possibilities Award—not sad because I still don't have the extra million dollars, but sad because there seem to be so few candidates deserving of such a prize.

You don't need me to tell you that we live in fractious times. The toxic, intensely partisan political culture in all nations of the world, but particularly in the United States just now, has seeped into the company of those who say they “keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony



All reconciliations ultimately depend on things as fragile as kite strings.

of Jesus Christ" (Rev 12:17, KJV). From behind the barricades of blogs and lava-infused newsletters, we launch fusillades against the decisions and integrity of those who disagree with us. They aren't simply those who disagree: they are "wrong," or rather "WRONG!" No one so foolish, spineless, careless, or thoughtless has ever previously walked on the earth than the ones we quickly demonize.

Hiding behind pseudonyms and website addresses that publicly position us as positive affirmers of "whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable" (Phil 4:8, NRSV³), we tear into each other with all the ferocity of carnivores—a special irony in a movement where the fiercest battles are frequently between vegetarians and vegans. "Red meat"—hot, reckless rhetoric designed to win us friends and negatively influence our enemies—is the special of the day.

Any conflict, from the classic congregational battles over the color of the sanctuary carpet to the intense and prolonged controversy about whether to ordain qualified women to the gospel ministry, has fuel enough these days to both warm its advocates and still scorch those deemed "enemies" on the other side.

In His prophecy of the turmoil that would precede His Second Coming, Jesus unflinchingly described the end-times as an era when "the love of many will grow cold" (Matt 24:12, NRSV). It follows just as logically that the hatred of many, even for other "believers," will grow hot as well, for like the dragon who inspires such enmity, they sense that their time is short (Rev. 12:12).

Am I overdrawing the story, or do you also know this narrative as well?

Is there still a way to bridge what seems unbridgeable? Is there still a moment when we could imagine—even fleetingly—a kite string landing on the other side? Are there still thousands—no, millions—of honest-hearted Seventh-day Adventists who have heard and listened to the appeal of Paul?

"From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us" (2 Cor 5:16-19, NRSV).

I believe that there are, in fact, a nearly uncountable number of faithful members of this pilgrim movement who still yearn for reconciliation, even with those who have injured them. Some of them remember a song that used to drift among the campfires of soldiers during the American Civil War, at just the time this denomination was organized in the 1860s:

*"Many are the hearts that are weary tonight,
Wishing for the war to cease;
Many are the hearts looking for the right
To see the dawn of peace.
Tenting tonight, tenting tonight,
Tenting on the old camp ground."*

From behind the barricades of blogs and lava-infused newsletters, we launch fusillades against the decisions and integrity of those who disagree with us.

The future of this movement—“some say the world will end in fire, some say in ice”⁴—doesn’t, in fact depend preeminently on leaders in far-off conference or division offices who, we hope, will agree to talk, mend fences, and resume their trust in those with whom they disagree. Let it be clear: they have a helpful role to play, but they can only lead when others choose to follow. The decisive feature of the Adventist future won’t be determined chiefly at some future General Conference Session that finally decides on some elegant architecture to bridge our current unbridgeable chasms.

The future of this movement will be built on a hundred—no, a hundred thousand—small and fragile kite strings landed gracefully in places that haven’t seen enough of grace or kites in recent years. It will be built through reconciliations made across kitchen tables between spouses, and across board meeting tables among elders. It will occur when sharp-tongued Sabbath School combatants agree, at last, that “He is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us” (Eph 2:14, NRSV).

Here’s how it could happen.

1 Pray for a reconciling spirit. All great things begin with prayer, “and the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor 13:13). This means frequently praying “against the grain”—against the natural tendency of our hearts to assume our own correctness, especially in matters we deem “truth.” We all are cognizant that we at least occasionally get facts wrong: George H. W. Bush was the 41st, not 43rd president of the United States—a fact that copyeditors everywhere have been warned to check in recent weeks. We are much more reluctant to admit, however, that we could—even potentially—be in error on some long-held point of view like the perceived “imperative” of a plant-based diet, or the ultimate authority of the Holy Spirit in determining who receives which gifts to bless the church.

And we’ll never move an inch, never mind ascend the hill of the Lord, unless we begin praying with a sincerity heretofore unknown for an atti-

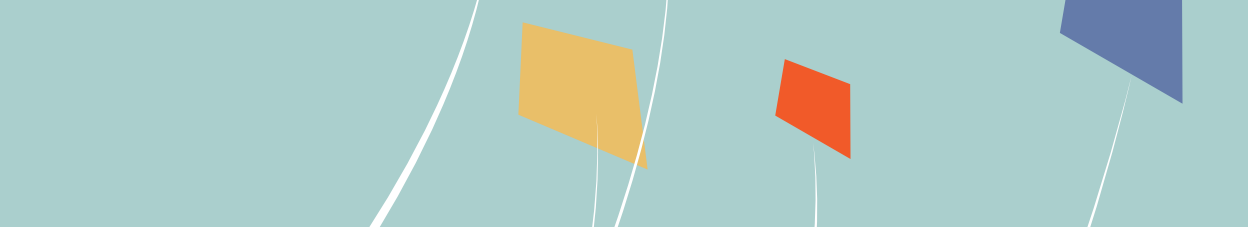
tude of reconciliation with those whom we are sure are “wrong.” Such inner change doesn’t spontaneously appear in a moment when the church business meeting sings “Side by Side” or “Kum Bah Ya.” The emotions of any given moment will disappear just as quickly as they came unless there’s a consistent, persistent commitment to pray for reconciliation, first in our own hearts, and then in the hearts of those with whom we disagree. “Pray without ceasing”—and pray for reconciliation.

2 Be alert for olive branches—and kite strings. The smallest, slenderest of strands became the base of a bridge that ultimately carried locomotives. An olive branch may first appear as insubstantial as a twig—just another combustible to toss upon the flame of our deep anger. But those who have, through grace, acquired a reconciling spirit see signs of life where others just see fuel.

In the early years of our marriage, Debby and I soon enough developed a signal whenever we wanted to end an argument that had arisen over whether the toilet seat was returned to level, or the silverware returned to the drawer. One or the other of us would say with seeming gruffness, “I love you!”—to which the other would respond with equal seeming gruffness, “I love you, too!” We learned, as all long-married couples do, to see the small but hopeful signs that conflict needn’t last much longer—that we could soon enough again be laughing at the foolishness from which our quarrel sprang.

In board rooms this may be as momentary as a sigh, an opening of the chairman’s hands, a brief acknowledgement that there’s at least a little legitimacy in other ways of seeing. In executive committee sessions, this may mean congratulating a philosophical opponent on the clarity and thoughtfulness with which she has shared her perspective. Practice spotting—and offering—olive twigs, which may yet grow into branches.

3 Avoid the demagogues. These are the ones who insist that talking with “the other side” is “traitorous,” a sign of “creeping compromise,” a first step into error. Such misinformed and mal-



adapted men and women haven't been reading their Bibles much, for Scripture calls us repeatedly to demonstrate the same deep respect for those who oppose our ideas as we usually reserve for those who are our greatest cheerleaders.

Ellen White similarly reminds us of the unmatched example of Jesus: "Jesus did not suppress one word of truth, but He uttered it always in love. He exercised the greatest tact and thoughtful, kind attention in His relationships with the people. He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, never gave needless pain to a sensitive soul. He did not censure human weakness. He spoke the truth, but always in love."⁵

Those who can both imagine and help to build bridges should expect that their motives will frequently be misunderstood by the partisans on both sides. Their loyalties and their motives will be the source of endless gossip to those who refuse to hear the gospel's clarion call to peace within the household of faith. "Talking with the enemy" is not, as some would claim, a sign of unfaith, but of faith. Only confident faith, which rests on the merits of Jesus and not on the cleverness of logic, is competent to negotiate with those of opposing views.

And negotiate we must, for it's only in clearly hearing what the other is saying when they are no longer ducking from our rhetorical Molotov cocktails that can lay the basis for determining what is really at issue, and how it might be resolved. Those who build bridges from fragile kite strings should expect to get "walked upon," for the test of a bridge is ultimately whether it can bear traffic and become the path of communication and connection.

4 Stay at the task of peace. We frequently remind each other that "Rome wasn't built in a day." But then again, neither was Jerusalem. And if Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us (John 14:2), He has chosen to make the new Jerusalem a hallmark of His craftsmanship, even as His Spirit shapes the men and women who will, by grace, inhabit it. The multiple references in the Book of Acts and in the epistles of Peter, John, and Paul to conflict in the church illustrate that the task of reconcili-

ation is as essential to the church of Jesus Christ as are the tasks of proclamation, evangelism, pastoral care, and compassion.

As long as there are humans in God's church, reconciliation will be necessary, for even the closest of friends will frequently have to choose to be reconciled to each other instead of letting a difference of opinion blossom into a new world war. This can't be accomplished by occasionally mumbling the prayer attributed to Francis of Assisi ("*Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace*") or humming John Lennon's "*Give Peace a Chance*." There will be hours—days, weeks, and months—of hard and often thankless effort for those who understand that unity is forged in fire, not dropped from the sky. Like every welding job, the welding of believer's lives together will show both some heat and some friction if the bond is going to last. We will prize our unity only when we have given—and given up—something to achieve it.

Lastly, I want to resurrect that proposal for a prize I floated 13 years ago—the *Homan Walsh Possibilities Award*.

No, I haven't found a million dollars for the winner, but I can promise you that all the resources of this journal—which Ellen White first envisioned in the year Homan flew his kite—will be available to celebrate and call righteous attention to that man or woman, teenager or child, who best exemplifies the spirit of kite flying—and peace-making—each year among us.

Send your nominees from 2018 to:

Bill Knott
Editor and Lover of Kites
Adventist Review
12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, MD 20904

¹ Robert Frost, "The Road Not Taken," *The Poetry of Robert Frost* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc; 1969), p. 105.

² Bill Knott, "One Strand at a Time," *Adventist Review* (Oct. 13, 2005).

³ Bible texts credited to NRSV are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission.

⁴ Robert Frost, "Fire and Ice," *The Poetry of Robert Frost* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc; 1969), p. 220.

⁵ Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1892), p. 12.

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FASCINATING, THRILLING, HOPEFUL, YET FEARFUL

In 1979 I had experiences that, besides showing me how narrow and inadequate the atheist materialism of my youth was, opened me up to spiritual realities. That is, if being open to “spiritual realities” meant talking a lot about God, or at least the idea of God.

During one of these conversations in Utrecht, Holland, I told a friend, Siger, that if I thought God existed, my life would radically change.

“Really?” he answered. “If God exists, I’ll meet Him in the end or whatever. But until then, who cares?”

“Who cares?” I said. “Are you kidding? If I thought God existed, nothing—nothing—could be the same again!”

“Why?”

Why? Because if God existed, then He (She, It, They, whatever) would be the foundation and the ground of all reality. This meant everything that ever had been, or is now, or would ever be would have originated in Him—including me and my life, which would make me obligated to Him. If God existed, then nothing mattered to me more than knowing who He was. What was He like? Why did He create the world? What was the purpose of life? Did He care about me?

I knew next to nothing about the Bible, and the little I thought I knew turned out wrong. But common sense told me that if a Creator existed, and that my life originated in Him, then I should seek to know who this God was and what He wanted from me. Because this attitude seemed so reasonable, I found Siger’s insouciance stunning.

Having imbibed from birth the premise

that we are just “blobs of organized mud,” I found the thought of God’s existence fascinating, thrilling, hopeful, yet fearful. Fascinating and thrilling because it meant that reality was so much deeper, grander, and richer than what any textbook ever dared teach me. Hopeful because perhaps there was a meaning and purpose, after all, to the painful madness that suffused the human condition. Yet fearful, too, because, well, if God existed, then I would probably have to answer to Him, an idea that I intuited might not necessarily work in my favor.

Anyway, before long I came not only to know that God existed, but to know Him personally, all thanks to Jesus Christ, in whom “we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace” (Eph. 1:7).

Yes, God’s existence was fascinating and thrilling because it made the universe much deeper and richer than I had ever imagined. Even amid the painful madness of the human condition, yes, God’s existence offered meaning and purpose to our lives. And God’s existence meant that yes, I would have to answer to Him for my deeds, but thanks to the gospel it’s no longer such a fearful prospect.

Even in my ignorance in Utrecht, I was right about one thing: if I knew that God existed, nothing could ever be the same.

Nothing was. ▀

Clifford Goldstein is editor of the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*. His latest book, *Baptizing the Devil: Evolution and the Seduction of Christianity*, is available from Pacific Press.

CLIFF'S
EDGE
CLIFFORD
GOLDSTEIN



IF GOD EXISTED,
THEN NOTHING
MATTERED MORE
THAN KNOWING
WHO HE WAS.



ADVENTISTS ARE NICE?

Adventists are nice? Says who? And how about God: Is He nice? What would He have to do for you to think of Him as nice? And back to the Adventists: How would they answer the question about their being nice?

DEFINITIONS FIRST

We haven't yet even agreed on what's "nice." So let's make it simple by consulting a good dictionary. Except that dictionary answers this time around seem a mind-boggling complication, exposing dramatically contrasting meanings of this four-letter word through the centuries: stupid and refined, simpleminded and delicately discriminating, wanton and modest, dissolute and scrupulous—all meanings of "nice."¹ Who wants to be "nice" if what that means is "stupid" or "wanton" or "dissolute"?

Despite the broad scope of its meaning through the years, a recent survey on Adventist social media (November 13-18, 2018) suggests that there is strong consensus currently on a positive understanding of the term. *Merriam-Webster* offers "kind"

as a synonym for "nice," and 100 percent of survey respondents agreed that "kindness should play a greater part in our day-to-day lives." More precisely, 6 percent agreed and 94 percent strongly agreed with the statement.

So how do Adventists stack up against something so thoroughly desirable as being kind, i.e., nice? Are Adventists as committed to being kind as they are to believing in kindness? Given that two of the many senses of "nice" are "diffident" and "reticent," we may say that Adventists in the survey were nice about their response to how nice they are. Whether it was their caution, conscientiousness, or conviction, only 41 percent

of respondents agreed that we are consistently nice or kind. Consistent with that doubt about consistent kindness, 85 percent believe—including 54 percent who strongly do—that we need to spend more time learning to be kind.

BUT HOW?

How would we learn to be nice and kind? In his book *Where Are We Going?* Jan Paulsen, a retired General Conference president, has mustered the courage to tell an awkward story of his own. His story is awkward because it illustrates how much of the road toward spiritual maturity in Jesus Christ still lay before him even as a church leader. At the time of the episode he relates, Paulsen was president of the Adventist school in Bekwai, Ghana, and pastor of the campus church.² Informed that one of his teachers had taken a second wife, Paulsen writes, "I went to him and laid down the law." The teacher would have to put away his second wife. Paulsen explains the mind-set that impelled his administrative action: "To the pure mind of a young missionary polygamy was absolutely intolerable." But his concluding remarks on the episode offer us strong indication on the contrast between being what we may call "a principled Christian" and being a nice Adventist. Paulsen lays it out as a "lesson for a well-intentioned missionary" "Christian values can be communicated ever so harshly if compassion for the human element is missing. Being kind is every bit as important as being right." He adds, "I have found that sometimes my church is much better at being right."

Reflecting on Paulsen's narrative brings to mind my own experience as a ministerial intern learning from one of Adventism's giants in leadership—though you would not know it if you looked at him the way the prophet Sam-

What do
you mean,
"nice"?

Jesus' message disrupted the spiritual, social, and political status quo without Him ever becoming political.

uel first looked at Jesse's sons. Samuel's deficient spiritual vision invited God's rebuke, "Do not consider his appearance or his height" (1 Sam. 16:7). My teacher-trainer-pastor was no Eliab: Hilton Garnett stood small where Eliab stood tall. But Garnett was God's giant, because, among other things, he knew, as said of Jesus, "what was in each person" (John 2:25). Garnett was compassionate toward humanity because he understood human nature.

We would meet at 8:00 a.m. in the vestry of the largest church in his district to plan the day's activities. Member visitation featured prominently in those plans. With just the two of us in the room, Garnett would fume and rage about the unforgivable behavior of a Sister Ex or Brother Why. More than once during my time with him, his denunciations primed me to expect a mighty confrontation when we got to someone's door. Even as we approached that door I would be ready to see how he would "fix" the sinning member. Then when the door opened, Garnett would dissolve into pure meekness and mush, solicitous greetings and caring conversations.

With board meetings and nominating committees it was different. Garnett didn't fume, but committee members did. He would listen as the rants raged on. Righteous indignation would flare from the lips and eyes of Christian committee members intolerant of sin, so intolerant that guilty Brother Why would never, emphatically never, be allowed to serve the church in whatever capacity again. Then Garnett would meekly deliver the punchline, simple and fundamental, compelling and almost comprehensive,³ that he had internalized through the years, and that he lived out in our pastoral visits: "Brethren, you have to remember that we are dealing with people."

DEALING WITH PEOPLE

I would venture with Paulsen's support that as Adventists, we are more willing than many—if not most—Christian groups and denominations to dedicate good, worthwhile time to dealing with issues of doctrine, to splitting hairs on prophecy, and earnestly contending for the fate of some given policy. Finding counsel from Jesus on our preoccupations with the lighter elements of the law—the non-people matters—instead of what mostly counts for God, "justice, mercy and faithfulness" (Matt. 23:23), can be profoundly distressing. But because Jesus "was

never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, never gave unnecessary pain to a sensitive soul,” and because “He did not censure human weakness,”⁴ our distress may not come principally from the words He speaks. What may most embarrass us is our memory of when and to whom He first spoke them.

For example, He may repeat to us words previously spoken to religionists we fervently despise: “The Sabbath came into existence for human beings’ sake, not the other way around” (see Mark 2:23-28). “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil?” (Luke 6:9).

Overall, the language does not drip with insult. Except perhaps for an occasional occurrence of a word like “hypocrite.” For example: “You hypocrites! Doesn’t each of you on the Sabbath untie your ox or donkey . . . ?” (Luke 13:15). Even so, we may be able to handle them except that they remind us so pointedly of Jesus’ first audience. Confusing enough for good Christians, Adventists included, Jesus first spoke these words to His stalkers, the Pharisees, who were always “on to Him” (Matt. 9:3, 4, 11, 34; 12:2, etc.) and whose thoughts went straight to murder once they had heard His lines. Once He had rebuked them and undone sin’s physical victimization for the sufferer before Him, “the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus” (Matt. 12:14).

Here’s the problem: I doubt that any of us dreams of growing up to be Pharisees. We are much more likely to fantasize about how nice people think we are. And regardless of its apparently confounding meanings through time, we know for a surety the difference between being called “nice” and being called “Pharisee.”

Admittedly, avoiding or perhaps escaping the “Pharisee” label in our pursuit of the “nice” one can be a challenge. If today’s Pharisees are anything like their originals from Jesus’ time, they are still people of epic holiness, and laypeople at that: people who aren’t Pharisees because they get a salary for it. Conforming to the first-century model, a Pharisee’s God-commitment is the stuff of public prayer celebration. The rank and file esteem their spirituality a thousand times—or some other grand multiple—more than that of the official church administration. Jesus’ Pharisees were as pure and conscientious as the priesthood was slack and corrupt: their regimen of fasting was impressive; their faithfulness in tithe paying was a religious showpiece; their largesse on behalf of “the work”

was conspicuous; their dedication to the study of the Word commanded the awe of the God-fearing citizenry, and exposed the apostate farce of Jerusalem’s theological and administrative officialdom. The faith and exegesis of those officials aligned altogether more with Greco-Roman books and thinking than with any of Moses’ compositions or argumentation. The Jew in the street knew this; and the Pharisees themselves knew it too. It was the stuff of their public conversations with God: “praying with themselves” is what Jesus called it (Luke 18:11, 12). Would Jesus want to say to us today what He long ago had to say to Pharisees?

NICE BY CHECKLIST

Luke 18 does a good job of laying out the “Pharisee-problem.” In Luke’s prayer story, “the Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You. . . .’” (verse 11, NKJV).⁵ His enumeration of actions calculated to establish his “creds” may be only illustrative. He may have omitted other equally consequential proofs of his goodness—helping elderly women across the street four times per month; volunteering at the Y; annual mission trips to dangerous if also exotic destinations; serving on some regular schedule, whether weekly or monthly, at the local soup kitchen; and who knows what more!

But in the grand scheme of things, in the ultimate determination of life or death, exhaustive documentation would help no more than the Pharisee’s short-list of examples does. For either of them, short or longer, exposes the mentality that drives his goodness: his virtue is measurable by visibility, mathematically calculable, scientifically verifiable. It is his life by appearances that will be his death and eternal disappearance. It is goodness by numbers, by pluses and minuses: fasting twice a week; avoiding the behaviors of robbers, evildoers, adulterers, and tax collectors (again, verse 11).

Goodness by numbers, by pluses and minuses, aligns the spiritually misguided with the physically dead, to the extent that neither of these is involved in robbery, evildoing, or tax collecting. Goodness by numbers works on the face of things instead of down in the hold, extolling particular furniture arrangements on the deck of the doomed and sinking *Titanic*. Its ledgers of debts and accounts receivable foster decent relationships, pleasant neighborhoods, even exceptional service and philanthropy, and funerals that are celebrations of arrival at oblivion.

Optimism and humaneness are not the same

Compassion is a significant element of being nice, and Jesus had it in abundance.

as salvation. They save no one from sin and eternal loss. They have no answer to Jesus' momentous question: "What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?" (Mark 8:36, 37). Even being nice has its limits. For esteemed as an end in itself, it may provide a cover for the deadly menace that is the suave social elegance of an unconverted heart: "The love of influence and the desire for the esteem of others may produce a well-ordered life. Self-respect may lead us to avoid the appearance of evil. A selfish heart may perform generous actions."⁶

THE DIFFERENCE THAT MATTERS

Paulsen would no doubt insist that while we should never abandon our commitment to doing what is right, we do ourselves, our neighbors, and the cause of God no good by a lack of compassion in our living. Compassion is a significant element of being nice, and Jesus had it in abundance: "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt. 9:36).

His concern was not limited to surface matters; His inner thought was not *I really hope the people like My new sandals*. He did not live for appearances and He did not judge by appearances. Hear Him again, engaged with the crowd, including His ubiquitous companions, the Pharisees: "because Moses gave you circumcision (. . . actually . . . the patriarchs), you circumcise . . . a boy on the Sabbath. Now if a boy can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with me for healing a man's whole body on the Sabbath? Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly" (John 7:22-24).

He knew where He was from, why

He was there, where He was going, and how to judge. His person, His manner, His message disrupted the spiritual, social, and political status quo without Him ever becoming political ("Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's," [Matt. 22:21]), because the ways of God will inevitably confound the ways and style and order of fallen humanity. And when the corrupt religious administration united with the laity of dedicated Pharisees to put a stop to Him, the guards they sent to arrest Him returned empty-handed. Their commissioners asked, "Why didn't you bring him in?" "No one ever spoke the way this man does," the guards replied" (John 7:45, 46). Which Ellen White explains: no one ever spoke like Him because no one ever lived like Him: "His words bore with them a convincing power, because they came from a heart pure and holy, full of love and sympathy, benevolence and truth."⁷

It may be that being nice is the wrong goal after all, the wrong focus for Adventists, the superficial one. Maybe the goal should be deeper and higher. How about being like Jesus? For as one respondent to our recent survey opined (see p. 35): "The closer we get to Jesus, the kinder we will be." And reading with *Merriam-Webster*, we may say, "The closer we get to Jesus, the nicer we will be." ♣

¹ *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, s.v. "nice."

² Find the full account at Jan Paulsen, *Where Are We Going?* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2011), p. 21.

³ "Almost" because "love covers over a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8), but does not excuse the presumptuous or impenitent.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Christian Service* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1925), p. 231.

⁵ Bible texts credited to NKJV are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

⁶ Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 58.

⁷ Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 469.

Lael Caesar has no objection to "nice-ness," but mostly he longs to be like Jesus. He is an associate editor of *Adventist Review*.

A CULTURE OF KINDNESS

Twenty-one centuries ago the apostle Paul's letter to the believers in Colossae reminded them: "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience" (Col. 3:12). He also listed kindness as part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22).

Kindness is still at a premium, especially in a society in which unkindness seems to be more the rule rather than the exception. Those who responded to this unscientific survey indicate that kindness is generally part of our Adventist ethos.

The real challenge is extending kindness—in the form of love and grace—to those who seem to least deserve it. Only by experiencing God's kindness in our own lives will we be able to reflect it to others.—Editors.

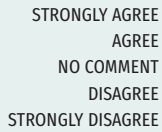
"Words of kindness are as welcome as the smile of angels."

—Ellen White,
Christian Service p. 189

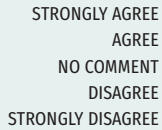
Kindness should play a greater part in our day to day lives



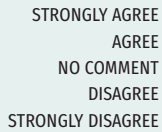
Adventists are consistently kind



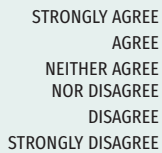
Adventists are agreeable people to be around



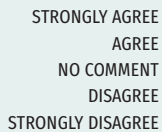
Adventists are usually kind to strangers



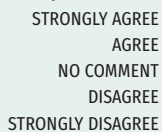
Adventists need to spend more time learning to be kind



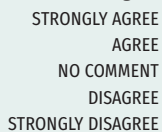
Adventists are good at handling a crisis



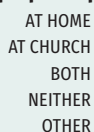
Visitors to your local Adventist church usually remark that it is a welcoming place



Kindness can change the world



The most appropriate place for kindness to be taught is:



0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

FRESH WIND IN YOUR SAILS





What do you expect when you go to church?

TIM LALE

What do you expect when you go to church on Sabbath? Consciously or not, we all anticipate something.

I crave coming to church to connect with God. This is what I want—fresh wind in my sails. God intended for us to be in fellowship, to gather and interact and worship together; but first we come to have fellowship with God Himself.

We sometimes talk about what we get from church. In a self-centered way, it could mean thinking as a consumer of church. If I came here to get something and I didn't get it, I'm not a happy consumer.

When it comes to worship and fellowship, however, consumer thinking is a path to dissatisfaction. Why? Because if we're always looking for what we can get, sooner or later we'll be disappointed.

A few years ago a friend of mine went to work for an Adventist Church organization overseas. Eventually he returned to the U.S. and got another job within the church organization. Soon after his return, we were talking on the phone about a local church where he might attend. I was taken aback when he said he had visited a couple churches and didn't get anything from them. He added that if he didn't get what he wanted at a church, he wouldn't go back.

I gently questioned this idea to see if he really meant that for him church was about getting what you want. It turned out that that was indeed what he meant. We talked about it some more, and I suggested that maybe it wasn't biblical or spiritually advisable to judge the experience as if he was a consumer of church. I wasn't able to convince him. He was sure that you go to church to get something, and if the church doesn't "do it" for you, you move on. I was disappointed by this conversation, to say the least.

I don't hear people talk this way very often, and I'm glad for that. I think it serves us well to stay away from self-focused thinking, because it is a dead end. So what better expectations are we to have? What are good "habits of thinking" about what we get from the church experience? I call them habits of thinking because over time we have expectations that become a kind of groove in our minds. So what are some good thinking habits, some healthy grooves, for our thinking? Let's look at six of them.

Do you ever ask yourself as you go to church, “What can I give today?”

THINK AS A LISTENER

Sure, we listen to the sermon—those of us who can stay awake. But here’s another way to think of it. We can come into church with our listening already started, and we can listen for God all morning, all day! What might we gain, what blessing might we not miss, if we are in a state of listening the whole time?

THINK AS A RECEIVER

Instead of being a consumer, we can operate from a state of faith. In faith, we expect that we will receive from God. This is not our primary reason for being at church, but God always gives rejuvenation and power and blessing and wisdom and encouragement anyway—if we are open to receive these from Him.

I recall times I’ve visited small churches in various places. I used to travel more than I do now, and when I did, I would find an Adventist church. I usually didn’t know anyone there, although, praise the Lord, I have gone to some faraway places and found people I did know.

So I’m the stranger in that church, if we can call it that. But here’s the thing: Every place I happen to be on a Sabbath—whether it’s rural Oregon or a small town in England or wherever—I’m going into God’s house, I go with the joyful expectation that God will be there, that we will fellowship together, and that He will bless me and everyone in that church. This is my expectation.

I have never been disappointed. It has happened every time. I don’t know if all those churches would rank well on the friendliness or welcoming scale, and they may not have expert musicians or eloquent preachers. But everywhere I have attended church, I received an abundant blessing from God just by being in His presence. I can think like a receiver.

THINK AS A GIVER

Do you ever ask yourself as you go to church, “What can I give today?” I don’t mean returning

title and giving offering, although that’s always right to do. The question “What can I give today?” is open-ended. If we are ready and willing, God will direct us in how to bless someone on any given Sabbath. Receiving from God is always a blessing. Giving is even better (Acts 20:35).

This is not an obligation. It is rather an intentional opening of our minds to think that if God wants us to give in some way that day—in whatever way—He will show us, and we’ll be ready and glad to do it. He loves cheerful givers (see 2 Cor. 9:7).

At my church we have teams of people who greet worshippers as they come in. Each of these greeters gives us a warm smile and a welcome. This is intentional giving, but you don’t have to be on a team to give at church.

THINK AS A PRAISER

Being a praiser is a conscious state of mind, a way we choose to think. The Sabbath day, and worship service in particular, can be a time we choose to praise God. Do we think about singing the hymn to God while we’re singing? Do we hear the messages of the day and respond with praise to God in our minds? Sometimes we can even let our guard down and say “Amen” out loud.

THINK AS A REJOICER

Joy in Jesus is strength (see Neh. 8:10). I come to church knowing that God will be with us, and I come with faith and intention that we will be blessed. That makes me happy. That’s what I rejoice in every week.

THINK AS A MISSIONARY ON A RETREAT

As we step into church on Sabbath, we can let go of the roles and obligations we have carried during the week. On the Sabbath day, think of going on a retreat, and let it all go.

To sum up all these grooves, these expectations of our fellowship with God in worship, we could say that they amount to turning our attention to God Himself. If we turn our conscious thinking toward God when we are in church, as well as to each other and to the events in the service, we will have a soul-refreshing experience—fresh wind in our sails. ♣

Tim Lale is a freelance editor and writer living in Maryland.



PETER N. LANDLESS ZENO L. CHARLES-MARCEL

Help Others—and Heal Yourself!

Q: This year I want to be healthier in body, mind, and spirit. I don't want to be so selfish and stressed-out about my plans. My dad says that helping others could solve my problems. Is that true?

A: We encourage you in your desire to be healthier in every way this year (body, mind, and spirit), and we commend your father for his advice. The attitude and act of helping others *does* promote total health (see table).

Helping others without religious, moral, or social obligation, and without expectation of reward, is called a *prosocial* action. It involves the giving of yourself through volunteering, sharing, donating, and even cooperating. A key element of these behaviors is the nonobligatory, unselfish motivation for them. So if you're going to be more helpful with the purpose of becoming healthier, you may get less benefit than if you simply had unselfish concern and acted without considering the benefits to yourself.

So powerful is selfless helping that a 1999 study showed that volunteering had a greater positive influence on lowering death rates than did physical activity, exercising four times a week, and even attendance at religious services. It had only slightly less influence than not smoking.¹ As a matter of fact, a review of 40 international studies in 2013 suggests that helping others may add years to your life—with some evidence pointing to a 22 percent reduction in death rates among volunteers compared with nonhelpers. Consider the conclusions reached by researchers in 2009, that helping voluntarily, giving, and otherwise benefitting others were

associated with reduced depression and enhanced psychological well-being.²

*The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Pediatrics*³ published a study that showed that high school students who helped with younger kids once a week for two months experienced a drop in their cholesterol levels. On the other side of the age spectrum, older adults who helped grandchildren or infants in nursery school had lower stress hormone levels and reduced symptoms in

those diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

If you were to read to an elderly individual, walk a 5K for breast cancer, or give a dollar to a homeless person, your brain's reward center would produce more dopamine, a mood-elevating chemical that increases your sense of well-being. Helping a friend, visiting a relative, or writing thank-you notes once a week for six weeks is associated with a significant boost in well-being, and the effects may be cumulative. The more nice things you do, the better off you become after a minimum threshold. So follow the advice of your dad and

Isaiah 58 and give of yourself. After all, God loves a cheerful giver! 

Health Benefits of Helping Others

- Improved well-being
- Greater longevity
- Reduced depression
- Improved mental health
- Slowed cellular aging
- Enhanced Immune function
- Greater life satisfaction
- Greater self-esteem
- Improved physical activity
- Increased Oxytocin
- Lower stress-hormone levels
- Lower risk of hypertension
- Reduced anxiety
- Reduced burnout
- Improved morale
- Protection against malignancies
- Protection against chronic stress

¹ www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15901215

² Adam M. Grant, Sabine Sonnentag, "Doing Good Buffers Against Feeling Bad," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 111 (2010): 13-22.

³ Hannah M. C. Schreier, Kimberly A. Schonert-Reichl, Edith Chen, "Effect of Volunteering on Risk Factors for Cardiovascular Disease in Adolescents: A Randomized Controlled Trial," *JAMA Pediatrics* 167, no. 4, 2013: 327-332, doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2013.1100.

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Staying connected as we embrace a new year

GOD'S RESOLUTIONS

KIMBERLY COTTON



I've spent numerous New Year's Eves at church, or watching the infamous ball drop in Times Square, each time telling myself that this year would be different. Losing weight, getting a better job, and meeting new people were just a few of my New Year's resolutions. Unfortunately, I broke most of them by February 1.

So I decided to approach things differently. I asked myself, *What would happen if God created His own resolution list for me?* While I'm not an expert, I think it would look something like this:

BE AVAILABLE

Too busy for God? Who ever heard of such a thing? If this were an actual class, I would have to raise my hand reluctantly and admit that I, too, have been guilty. For me, it was work, serving, or relationships. Other distractions, whether positive or negative, may be children, friends, and yes, even ministry. That may be a hard truth to digest, so let me help soften the blow. God desires time with us. While we are busy with our everyday lives, let's not forget to spend time with the One who allows us to see each day.

I was so disappointed with myself when I realized that I had

been neglecting my time with God. Did I need to pray more? Yes. Did I need to fast more? Yes. Did I simply need to sit still and listen? Absolutely!

As the year begins I know that God wants me to do just that. He is not interested in all the things we do for Him if we neglect Him in the process. God desires to spend time with us. There's so much He wants to say. No matter what happened last year, let's stop moving and just be still. We can't ignore the voice of God, no matter how hard we try. So instead of just serving Him, let's focus more on spending time with Him.

BE PREPARED

A couple years ago I was invited to speak to a church group of young women. I was excited and began preparing weeks in advance. I prayed and relied on God to help me prepare.

But when I arrived at the site, I was informed that there had been a change of plans. Instead of a classroom, I would teach the class in the choir loft. Instead of talking to females, I was told that males would be in the class as well. Instead of 25 minutes, I would have only 15 minutes.

I was disappointed, but I was able to make the best of it. Sulking on the way to my car, feeling like a failure, I decided to call a friend. As she encouraged me, the voice and correction from God brought true perspective to the matter.

During the three-hour drive home I began whining to God. He quickly put me in my place with the words "This is not about you, nor about how you feel."

What? No sympathy from God? As tears began to fall I redirected my focus to what truly mattered.

It was never about the changes I encountered. Life will always throw some inconvenience at us. But being prepared decreases the level of panic. It was never about the assignment; it was always about God and the people I encountered.

As we walk through life's unexpected changes, let's be prepared with prayer, knowing that God is still in control. As the year begins, prepare to be more prayerful, prepare to become more organized, prepare to accept (enjoyable or not) any divine assignment(s). Prepare to spend more time in the Word; it is the most important meal of the day.

BE HEALTHY

I'm not referring just to physical health, but to emotional health as well. Millions of people across the country join gyms each year, trying to shed the pounds gained over Thanksgiving and Christmas. However, we rarely hear about those who try to shed emotional weight in prayer. Since we know that God wants to spend time with us, He will prepare and equip us to embrace healthy relationships.

Being healthy requires work and discipline. I've lost weight only to gain it back a month later. I lacked discipline. Work without discipline yields unsatisfactory results. Becoming healthy spiritually, socially, emotionally, physically, and financially requires discipline.

Yes, it takes time to do the work. Let's spend time with God and His Word so that we can face life's joys and challenges, knowing that we don't face them alone. Attend more Bible studies, more worship services. Let's allow God to lead us to ministries in which we can serve others. For those who don't currently attend church, pray that God will direct you to His choice for you.

As we discipline ourselves spiritually, it's also important to discipline ourselves socially. We've all encountered Debbie Downer, Negative Nigel, or the Gossiping Group, to name just a few. While they may still be growing in their walk with God, it's important for us to reduce our contact with toxic individuals. It may be painful, but it can also help us strengthen our relationships with them if they are willing to change.

Toxic individuals are just that, toxic. They don't mean to be (at least we hope they don't). They're often just misguided, or may have been hurt themselves. They can become a drain on our spirits or just become a source of unhelpful conversation. God will give us strength to rid ourselves of toxic or

unhealthy relationships. Remember, God wants to usher in the new: so let's clean out the old.

BE DISCIPLINED

Emotional discipline. Yes, we have to go there. There are great people in the world. As we remove the toxic people in our lives, let's be prepared to accept new friends that God has designed specifically for us. They may not be what we expect, but let's remain open. Relationships may not endure the challenges imposed on them, but those challenges needn't alter the friendships developed. We have to remain open and show ourselves friendly.

Yes, people have taken advantage of us. Yes, people have neglected us. Yes, people have hurt us. But it's time to close the door on that pity party. Let's allow God to heal our emotions so that we can develop healthy relationships with others.

Physical discipline is a challenge because it's often a reflection of where we are in other areas of our lives. Have at least one healthy meal a day—head toward the ideal. I hate drinking water, so I discipline myself to drink at least three cups of water a day—yes, I'm headed toward the ideal. Be disciplined enough to complete at least two workouts a week—keep heading toward . . . you get the point. It won't feel good initially, but it is necessary. Begin with just a walk. Do what works.

Financial discipline is another challenge. Billions of dollars are spent on gifts and entertainment during the holidays, and those expenses create even larger issues as the year begins. That issue becomes debt. Make smart choices. Avoid fancy restaurants that you can't afford. Avoid using credit cards unless you can pay off the balance each month. Cut them up, if necessary. Leave one in case of emergency.

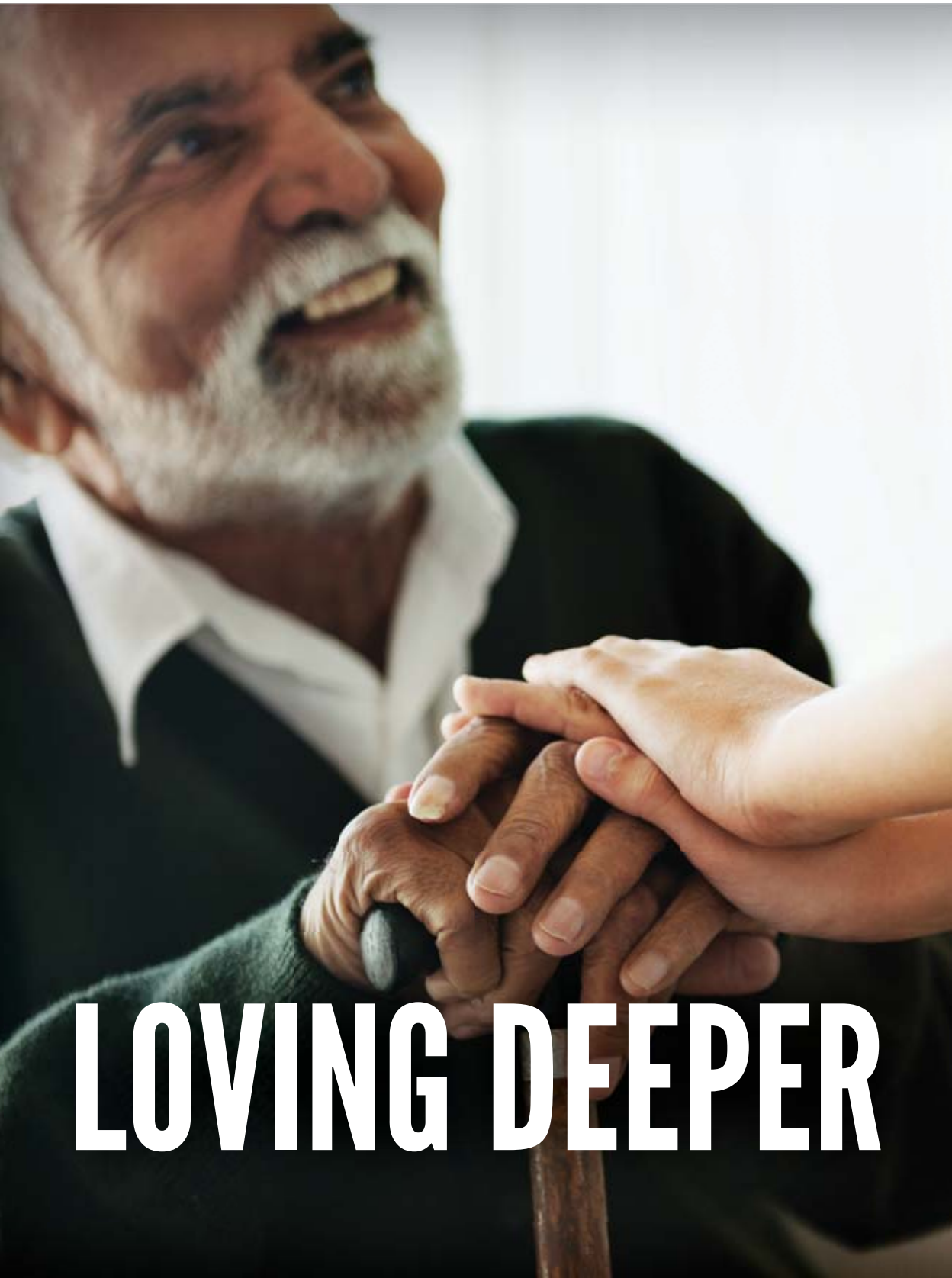
"Keeping up with the Joneses"? Well, I'd rather be really happy than superficially happy—and in debt.

BE A BLESSING

As we look ahead to the new year, let's not forget the larger picture. God wants us to have the best, and He offers His best. Let's not neglect His voice, His time, or His will. As we begin a new year, focus on His most important resolution: to be a blessing instead of looking for one. 🍀

Happy New Year!

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LOVING DEEPER

Is it possible that love doesn't go far enough?

MERLE POIRIER

In my house is a large steamer trunk on which is written the faded name of my grandmother. Inside, from side to side and top to bottom, is memorabilia she collected—much related to family history. For the most part, the trunk has sat undisturbed for the past 20 years.

Recently needing some information, I opened the trunk. But the contents were so disorganized and scattered that I decided that emptying the trunk might be the best strategy. Of course, that turned out not to be the quickest of jobs. I became distracted by looking through and reading its contents, and much to my husband's dismay, things lay scattered on his study floor for more than a little time.

It was somewhat cathartic. Not that I felt any need for such an experience, but to be confronted with so many images from the past, one could not help reflecting on how many of these people, some I knew and many I didn't, were now resting in their graves.

I was reminded of my great-aunt who lived alone for a number of years, the last of her siblings, on the family homestead in central Wisconsin. Letters tell her experiences of mostly long and lonely days, often spent with only pets for company. Other correspondence reveals stories of family members, both young and old, spending their days alone reading, writing letters, or occasionally watching TV.

In addition to the photos and letters were poems, lots of them. My grandmother fancied herself a poet. Not the kind who would ever be published, but she put almost all her thoughts into verse covering many a scrap of paper. She lived alone in an apartment just a couple streets away from ours. I remember visiting her after school. My mom, an only child, carried the weight of assisting, buying groceries, and visiting. I remember her actively engaged in my grandmother's care in addition to working two jobs and taking care of our family. But my

memories of these generous gifts of time collapsed when I read a "poem" my grandmother probably never meant to share. Here are a few stanzas:

Sometimes my hopes are brightened for a
Sabbath visit,
I read my Sabbath literature and rest for hours—
She didn't come!
Then there is hope for some Sundays,
I write letters, read my paper, gaze out the
window
My eyes grow weary—she didn't come!
Then comes a day of surprises—
Groceries left, mail picked up, *Guides*, letters
and clippings brought over
She did come!
Like a child who is ever seeking,
Can you blame me if I feel this way?
Can you understand my satisfaction and
happiness
When I can say: "She really did come today"?

Reading this only helped increase the guilt I was beginning to feel as I looked through these things from the past. I found myself asking, *Did I do enough?*

ONLY THE LONELY

My grandmother is not alone in her complaint. A retired couple is close to their family—enough to babysit grandchildren (sometimes overnight and weekends) and help on a regular basis. But now the grandchildren have grown and are more independent. Now the couple find themselves sitting and waiting for the phone that doesn't ring. "They don't need us anymore," they say. It's certainly not true, but it's possibly how it feels when adult children have active and busy lives.

A recent newspaper advice column echoed similar sentiments: "How do I get my adult children to spend more time with me? Yes, they call twice a week. Sometimes they even stop by. But what I really want is quality time. I just want them to sit down and talk with me."

A study released by the health insurer Cigna in

Three times the Savior longs for human closeness in the form of words and physical presence, and three times He finds the disciples asleep.



May 2018 reveals that nearly half of all Americans feel lonely. Of the 20,000 adults surveyed, 54 percent of respondents said they feel as if no one actually knows them well. Approximately 40 percent said they lacked companionship, that their relationships aren't meaningful, and that they feel isolated from others even in the midst of a crowd.

In addition, those hit hardest by loneliness, according to the survey, are younger Americans. Those born between the mid-1990s and early 2000s scored highest on the UCLA Loneliness Scale, followed immediately by Millennials. These two groups scored higher than the average of all Americans.¹

WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?

When Jesus arrived, He turned the world upside down. Things that seemed one way were suddenly different. This is revealed through countless Scripture passages. People were treated differently. His contact with them was meaningful. It seemed that Jesus didn't just do something; He took it to another level.

Are we missing that today? Is it possible that in our busyness and distraction, however filled with good intentions, we aren't really ministering

to people as much as we think we are? Is it possible that love needs to go deeper?

We like to quote a few favorite Bible passages, not only because they offer direction, but also because they seem to fill us with deep satisfaction.

"Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke 6:31). Seems simple enough to follow. If I am hungry, I'd want someone to bring me food. If I sleep outside in the cold, I'd want someone to bring me a blanket.

Then there is Matthew 25:34-36: "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me'"

Clearly this is the "love" checklist we long for. Check the boxes, and we're done! We can gain great gratification because we help at a soup kitchen, visit a nursing home resident, or share

our gently used clothing with the neighborhood clothes closet. And we should! People need food, visits, and clothing. But should there be more? Doing for people is fine, but maybe what people need is quality time—loving deeper. It isn't all about providing; it's about giving.

Ellen White tells us that as Jesus, together with His disciples, walked toward Gethsemane, His footsteps got slower, His silence grew deeper. By the time they reached the entrance to the garden, the disciples were supporting Him lest He fall—the burden He carried was so great.

Taking His three closest disciples with Him, Jesus moves a bit away and collapses in deep, agonizing prayer. The disciples are close enough to Him to hear His troubled words and see His deep despair, yet they do not go to Him. Instead, their sleepiness gets the best of them, and they slump down in slumber. Ellen White wrote: “The human heart longs for sympathy in suffering. This longing Christ felt to the very depths of His being. In the supreme agony of His soul He came to His disciples with a yearning desire to hear some words of comfort from those whom He had so often blessed and comforted, and shielded in sorrow and distress.”² Three times the Savior longs for human closeness in the form of words and physical presence, and three times He finds the disciples asleep.

It is easy to criticize the disciples. It is easy to believe had I (we) been there, it would have been different. But I don't think so. The disciples had been busy prior to this moment. The hour was late and the garden was quiet. Their love for Jesus was no less than what they had expressed just hours earlier. Like us, their busyness caused them to do what they could, but stop short of doing more. They loved Jesus, but in that moment their love didn't quite stretch to the depths of His need.

I have a coworker who has a natural giftedness for reaching out to people. He can go to a restaurant and by the end of the meal know the name of the server, where they are going to school, all

about their family, and what is important to them. Good tips are great, but showing a server they are more than someone carrying a tray is priceless. It's about loving deeper.

Douglas Maurer, 15, was diagnosed with leukemia. The doctors explained the disease and told him that he would need to undergo three years of chemotherapy. They said he would go bald, his body would bloat, but there was a good chance the disease could go into remission. Douglas knew the unspoken truth. It could also be fatal. Upon learning this, Douglas went into a deep depression.

His aunt called a floral shop to send Douglas an arrangement of flowers to cheer him up. She told the clerk that the flowers were for her teenage nephew who'd just been diagnosed with leukemia and to make them bright and cheerful. When the flowers arrived, they were beautiful. Douglas took the envelope that came with the flowers and read the card from his aunt. Then he noticed a second card. Pulling it out, it said: “Douglas, I took your order. I work at Brix Florist. I had leukemia when I was 7 years old. I'm 22 years old now. Good luck. My heart goes out to you. Sincerely, Laura Bradley.”

Douglas' face lit up for the first time since the diagnosis. For the first time since being in the hospital he had gotten inspiration. He'd talked to all kinds of specialists, but it was a salesclerk in a flower shop who took the time to write the note that made all the difference for him.³

Going through my grandmother's trunk made me purpose in my heart to love deeper. It isn't easy. I'm still busy. Still distracted. Still tired. Still stretched by work, family, church, and more. But committing to help others, show extra care, listen better, sit longer, and spend more time is where Jesus wants me to be. 🍀

¹ www.cigna.com/newsroom/news-releases/2018/new-cigna-study-reveals-loneliness-at-epic-levels-in-america

² Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 687.

³ Bobby Green, “A Moment's Effort Means the World,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 6, 1987.

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31 DAYS OF KINDNESS

WILONA KARIMABADI

The flurry of the holiday season is over at last. While it may have been an exciting, fun-filled time for some, and something altogether forgettable for others, it's time to start the new year in a place that's as good for your soul as it is for the people around you. You've heard of the term "random acts of kindness." You may have wondered about ways to incorporate that concept into your everyday life. We think we have a great solution for the month of January to get you started. And quite honestly, you don't have to limit these ideas to this month. Feel free to use them as often as you like in the months to come. You never know how something so simple can change a life.

JANUARY 2019

Start the new year on the right foot by making it about helping others.

1 To close out the holiday season, send encouraging e-mails to five people whom you haven't seen or heard from in a while.

6 Make an easy casserole or salad and deliver it to a neighbor, or anyone you know who might be sick or struggling.

7 Write an encouraging note on a post-it and stick it up on the bathroom mirror at work or any public restroom.

8 Apologize to someone with whom you may need to make amends.



13 Take a friend out to lunch—as inexpensive as you wish. It's the thought that counts!

14 Create a care package for a member of the military currently deployed. Go to anysoldier.com to get connected.

15 If you read blogs and enjoy something in particular that day, take a moment to comment: send a positive, uplifting message to the writer.

20 This is totally dependent on what works for your individual budget, but if you are dining out, leave a hefty tip (up to 100 percent if you can), with a kind note to your server.

21 Compliment a stranger—tactfully. Are they wearing something you admire? Do they have a great haircut? Is their baby absolutely adorable? Let them know!

22 If your kids are school-age, stop by to tell their teacher you appreciate them in person. If you can't, send an e-mail. And if your kids are past school age, write a hand-written note to a teacher you know to encourage them.

27 Offer to "Uber" someone to wherever they need to go today—drive them free of charge, or make the Uber/Lyft call and pick up the tab.

28 Hold the door for someone where ever you may be today.

29 Leave a small treat/gift in your mailbox for your mail carrier.

2 If you are picking up fast-food or a hot drink from a drive-thru, pay for the customer behind you.

3 Pick up some trash and dispose of it yourself when you are walking outside.

4 With permission, give a hug to someone who could use it.



5 Sabbath Choice: Choose anything you like to convey some love to someone in church or away from it.

9 Pick up something that has fallen down—a chair, a sign, something off the shelf at the grocery store, etc.

10 Leave a \$5 bill some place stuck to a post-it asking whomever finds it to enjoy a little treat today.



11 If you read a particularly positive article online, share it with someone—but do it through a private e-mail or direct message with a personal note to go with it. Don't just hit "share" on Facebook!

12 Encourage a frazzled parent of a small child at church. Hint: You'll likely find them in the hallway or an empty classroom during the sermon.

16 Bring snacks to work to share—homemade or store-bought.

17 Donate used books to your local library.

18 If there is a company doing great things in the world or whose products you really love, visit their Web site to find their "contact us" information and let them know how much you appreciate what they are doing.

19 Write a thank you card for your pastor and slip it to him/her after church. Let them know you appreciate what they do.

23 Donate whatever you can to a new organization that you have not given to previously

24 Support a local business in your area and get to know the owner/proprietor.

25 Pick a random friend on your social media and direct message them to ask if you can pray for them for any specific need they may have.

26 Make it a point to welcome any new faces you may see in church.



30 Take some pretty pictures of a nature scene on your phone and send them to as many people as you wish, letting them know you are thinking of them.

31 Make or buy a yummy special occasion treat for your family, or for a family who would love it.



By now you're ready to write your February list, and live it too. Congratulations; and keep going!



THE VIOLENCE OF SILENCE

The lives of King and Christ still speak

DEDRICK BLUE

African American civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., is well known for his doctrine of direct action, nonviolent resistance.¹ King remarked, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." Using this principle, King and his followers advocated for racial desegregation, and voting and civil rights for African Americans in the United States.

Non-violent resistance was just one strategy. Fewer are familiar with the King doctrine of the violence of silence. King, realizing that African Americans alone could not achieve desegregation, invited others of goodwill to join the cause while also condemning those, who through their silence, helped to perpetuate the system of racial discrimination. Thus was born the King doctrine of the violence of silence.

While imprisoned for protesting segregation, King from his cell chided his White ministerial colleagues. In his "Letter From a Birmingham Jail" King wrote, "We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence of the good people."² This violence of silence can be found both in the Bible and in Seventh-day Adventist history. But the antidote is found in Christ.

THE SILENCE OF PETER

It was a night that would forever live in infamy. As Jesus prayed for the sins of His enemies, they came to arrest Him. The growing crowds had gathered around Jesus in the Temple court for the past few days. Fear of losing political power and disagreement about religious doctrine spawned a hatred that would lead to death. Caiaphas used hate speech to rally

his threatened base to commit the unspeakable crime of crucifying our Lord. It was an act of religious and political terror. The contrast between love and hate could not have been more stark. The Bible records the trial transcript:



"If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation. Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, 'You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish'" (John 11:48-50).

Words matter. The words of Christ always inspired toward life. But the words of Caiaphas incited violence and death. So in a darkened garden, armed agents of death came to arrest Jesus, the Prince of Life. Words matter.

Even speech is easier to see than silence. But violent hate speech may not trump the subtleties of violent silence. The violence of silence occurs when one should speak but does not. When one is silent in the face of evil and injustice, or when one



“The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”

hides out of convenience or expediency, then the subtle passivity of silence can be as deadly as the commission of a violent act.

On the night of Christ’s arrest there was not only the violent hate speech of Caiaphas but also the violent silence of Peter’s refusal to speak up for his Lord. When he should have stood with Christ, Peter denied Him. Peter could have given testimony about the One who had healed his mother-in-law and taught him to walk on water, who had raised the dead and opened the eyes of the blind. But no voice of support could be heard..

During the greatest moral crisis of the universe, Peter’s support failed as he convinced himself that if he was not the one slapping Christ he was absolved from guilt. As King remarked, “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”³

THE SILENCE OF THE CHURCH

After the enemy attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, U.S. president Franklin Roosevelt declared that persons of Japanese descent posed a security threat. Between 100,000 to 120,000 persons, including hundreds of Seventh-day Adventists, were placed in internment camps throughout the United States. An Adventist internee, Richard Iwata, appealed to General Conference president J. L. McElhany, to make a statement about the injustice done to Japanese Americans. Iwata wrote, “One principle stands out boldly midst the turmoil of evacuation. . . . The rightful privileges as American citizens [were] suppressed by racial discrimination.”⁴

The officers’ meeting minutes from six weeks later record this lamentable response: “Agreed,

That the chairman be asked to inform Richard Iwata that we do not feel that as a religious organization we can interfere in the matter referred to in his correspondence, since it is essentially of a political or government nature.”⁵

King’s doctrine critiques such silence. “History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people.”⁶

During the rise of the National Socialist Party in Germany prior to World War II, many in the church supported Hitler’s regime as ordained by God. Because of “his personal dedication and his abstinence from tea, coffee, alcohol and meat, practices shared by the Adventists, . . . he was welcomed as a savior.”⁷ The president of the East German Conference argued that it was bad for the image of the church when some members refused to salute the swastika flag or use the Hitler salute. Eventually the Adventist Church in Germany would lead the German welfare program, support forced sterilization, and exclude persons of Jewish background from its fellowship.⁸ While there was some resistance to the Nazi regime within the church, many were silent.

Whether the position was born out of expediency, cowardice, or politics, the silence spoke loudly. King’s words offer a stinging rebuke: “He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it. He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it.”⁹

BREAKING THE SILENCE

In the United States speaking has led to acts of unspeakable violence. During a Sabbath service on October 27, 2018, a man armed with an assault rifle and three handguns shouted anti-Semitic slurs and opened fire inside the city of Pittsburgh’s Tree of Life synagogue. He killed 11 congregants and wounded four police officers and two others.¹⁰ Three days earlier, an armed assailant had attempted to gain access to the predominantly African American, First Baptist Church in Jeffersontown, Kentucky. After not gaining access, the White man made his way to a local grocery store, where he targeted and killed two African-American patrons.¹¹

During the same week a series of pipe bombs were sent in the mail to the homes of former presidents Barack Obama and Bill Clinton, as well as sitting U.S. legislators, activists, and political and

intelligence leaders.¹² On October 2, 2018, ricin particles were detected in mail sent to the Pentagon addressed to Secretary of Defense James Mattis and Chief of Naval Operations John M. Richardson.¹³

It is possible to argue that these events were merely the brainchild of demented lone wolves. Yet, it is reasonable to recognize each of these incidents as representations of hate. Victims of the threats and attacks were targeted because of their religion, ethnicity, or political affiliation. The awful specter of open bigotry now wanders abroad, fueled and guided, among other things, by vitriolic public discourse. And although the stories rehearsed here arise out of an American context, religious, ethnic, and political bigotry and hostility are not limited to any one country.

For Christians, this is a pivotal moment. It challenges us to speak in the name of the Prince of Peace, to vociferously repudiate the demons of violence and hatred. We must not be silent. We cannot run for cover and pretend that if we choose to ignore it, it does not exist. Nor can we argue that working for love against hate is beyond the purview of Jesus and His church. Nor can we retreat into apocalyptic passivism positing that all these things are just signs of the end and Jesus will fix it all when He returns. The rise of hatred is a sign of the times. Our streets are stained with blood, our children cower in fear, and evil parades with torches of terror in our parks. Real people are dying. If we choose to be silent, our silence is consent to evil.

To call upon our God to act yet refuse to act when God calls upon us is spiritual schizophrenia. Not only is God moved by injustice, but God moves against injustice. We learn from Scripture that in the time of moral and spiritual crisis, God not only moves into action, but also moves people into action.

God called upon Moses to demand of the most powerful ruler in the world the release of the Hebrew captives. God called upon Esther to foil the genocide plot to destroy the Jews perpetrated by racist Haman. These people each came to a moral moment when they had to accept the call of God to speak. Silence would have been violence.

CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE

When sin entered the world, God could have remained silent and allowed it to run its deathly course until humanity was self-obliterated. Instead, God intervened and God the Son declared, “Here I

am, I have come—it is written about me in the scroll. I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart. I proclaim your saving acts in the great assembly; I do not seal my lips” (Ps. 40:7-9). Into the crisis came the Christ, declaring love in a world of hate, peace in a world of war, hope in a world of despair, life in the face of death. And 2,000 years after His ascension, Christ still speaks above the vitriol of small minded people, and the language of His love looms larger than that of bigotry and hatred.

Every person, every generation must face their moral moment. King faced the moral moment on a balcony in Memphis, Tennessee; Rosa Parks faced the moral moment on a bus in Birmingham, Alabama. Heather Heyer faced the moral moment on a back street in Charlottesville, Virginia.

This is our moral moment. We must heed the call and choose a response. The call may come to each of us in a different way. I dare not be so bold as to limit how God speaks or declare how He must speak to you. But I will be so bold as to say that God does speak and that He always looks for a response. Closing with King’s words: “*There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe nor politic nor popular, but he must take it because conscience tells him it is right.*”¹⁴

¹ Martin Luther King, Jr., in *Strength to Love* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1981).

² Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter From the Birmingham Jail,” Apr. 16, 1963. Retrieved from kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/letter-birmingham-jail.

³ Martin Luther King Jr., *On Being a Good Neighbor*, The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. (Stanford, Calif.: King Institute, 2007), Volume VI.

⁴ Richard Iwata to J. L. McElhany, May 1, 1943, General Conference Archives.

⁵ Bill Knott, “Prisoners of Hope: They Were Deprived of Their Liberty in the Land of the Free,” *Adventist Review*, Sept. 28, 2000, pp. 8-13 (1584-1589). Retrieved from archives.adventistreview.org/200-1544/story1.html.

⁶ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Address at the Fourth Annual Institute on Nonviolence and Social Change at Bethel Baptist Church*, Dec. 3, 1959. Retrieved from kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/document/address-fourth-annual-institute.

⁷ Christine E. King, *The Nazi State and the New Religions: Five Case Studies in Non-Conformity*, (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1982), p. 92.

⁸ Zdravko Plantak, *The Silent Church: Human Rights and Adventist Social Ethics* (New York: Macmillan Press and St. Martins Press Scholarly Division, 1998), pp. 17, 18.

⁹ Martin Luther King, Jr., “Beyond Vietnam” speech delivered Apr. 4, 1967.

¹⁰ Campbell Robertson, Christopher Mele, and Sabrina Tavernise, “11 Killed in Synagogue Massacre,” *New York Times*, Oct. 27, 2018.

¹¹ Didi Martinez, Ron Mott, and Jereen Imam, NBC News, Oct. 25, 2018, www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/alleged-kroger-gunman-uttered-whites-don-t-kill-whites-witness-n924641.

¹² abcnews.go.com/US/explosive-device-maxine-waters-la-similar-obama-clinton/story?id=58737042

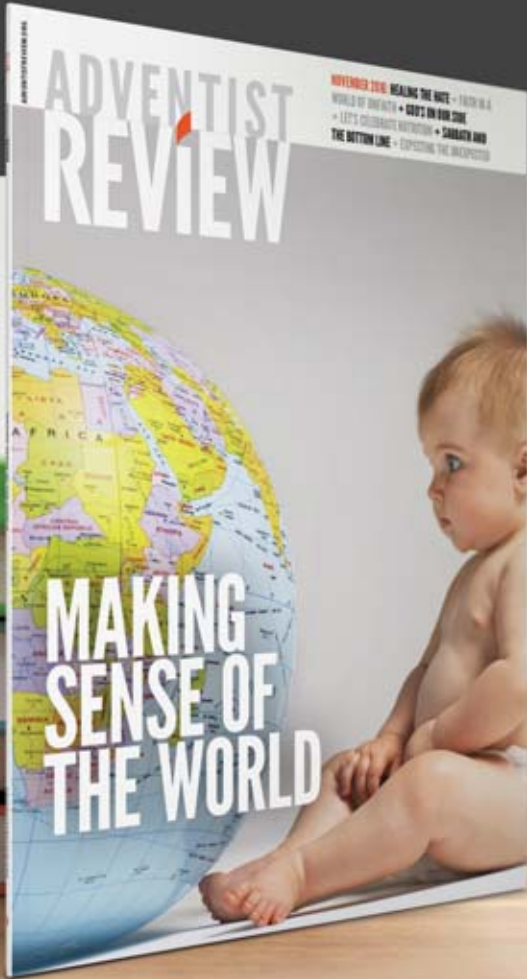
¹³ “Ricin detected in mail sent to Pentagon,” CNN, Oct. 2, 2018.

¹⁴ Martin Luther King, Jr., “Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution,” sermon delivered Mar. 31, 1968.

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TRUST THE PATH

It is rare to receive an emergency code page at 10:00 p.m. with no room number. At the hospital I am directed to the Cardiology Unit. I stand at the doorway of the room. Lights are dim; a gentleman sits in bed reading a Bible. The patient's closet is open; a priest's outfit is neatly hung. Next to the man is a container with ice water for drinking. No flowers in the room. *What am I missing?*

The nurse tells me that earlier the patient had coded. Since then the patient has been quiet, crying, reading the Bible. His name is Peter.

I walk into the room, closing the sliding-glass door a bit for privacy. I introduce myself. He offers me a seat in a chair next to him. Closing his Bible, he tells me he *finally* got to Proverbs. *Finally got to Proverbs? I glance at the closet. Is he not a priest?* He notices my gaze: "Yes, as a priest I could have read the Bible, but other books were placed in front of me: books of policy, traditional rituals—well, I just got to Proverbs.

"I was so consumed with terms such as *infinity* and *eternity*. I told my parishioners: 'This is God's will'; 'Trust the path'; 'Things happen for a reason'; and 'Your family member is in a better place.' I had it wrong."

Peter talks about his failing heart, a boulder of illness blocking his path forward. After much prayer it doesn't seem God will move the boulder. He is trusting a new path. Peter asks: "What would you do if God decided to not remove a boulder from your path? Are you disappointed? Do you use the time to commune with Him?"

I had never thought of that! I walk to the end of the room, collect a blanket from the warmer. *God, how do I answer this question?*

Before I can speak, Peter arrives at an obvious conclusion: "Paths are individual. If I trust God, I will wait on Him. I will confess my sins, lie at His feet; His will be done." I wrap the blanket around him and simply say: "Pray. Earnestly. He is with you at this very moment." I sit holding his hand, praying quietly, until he falls asleep.

I slip away, find the head nurse, and ask about Peter's prognosis. "Chaplain, morning won't find him here." I return to the room to softly read Proverbs to Peter. He wakes for a moment as the nurse switches IVs and hears me reading. He says: "I have found peace. Please keep my Bible." He dozes off. I continue reading; tears blur my vision.

Before the sun peeks through the night sky, a code blue alarm sounds in the room. Physicians arrive, and the code blue runs its course. After 45 minutes everyone leaves the room. I stay, remembering the many boulders God moved out of my path. On the horizon God's work awaits, so I will keep walking. I open Peter's Bible. Annotations and marginalia fill its pages. A folded page on Psalm 23. Being part of Peter's journey, I realize it's not just about "*trusting the path*" but about "*trusting God's path for us.*"

The thought lingers as I fall asleep and the sun rises. ♣

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SEARCHING
THE OBVIOUS
DIXIE
RODRIGUEZ



"I HAVE FOUND
PEACE. PLEASE KEEP
MY BIBLE," HE SAYS.



KAIROS MOMENTS IN A CHRONOS WORLD

*Being careful not to miss
the opportune moments*

Paul wrote to the believers in Ephesus, “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:15, 16).¹ Ancient Greek had two contrasting words for time: *chronos* and *kairos*. Chronos gives us the word “chronology,” which implies minutes and seconds (i.e., the clock) and refers to sequential time.

CHRONOS TIME

A practical example pertaining to chronos time is an office worker who hates their job and can’t wait for 5:00 p.m. so they can get out of the office, or a church member who has made after-church plans but the service is long-winded. Such situations refer to chronos time; a person

engaged in trivial activity because their next significant appointment is coming soon is said to be “killing” time. The person is basically counting down “clock time” until the next appointment.

Today much of our thinking about time is about a chronos mind-set. We have 24 hours each day—that is, 1,440 minutes, or 86,400 seconds—yet we always seem to want more time. Our workweek is determined by the number of hours worked; certain employees are reminded weekly to check the office chronos (name brand Kronos in my office) time clock and make sure our clocked times are correct. Moses prayed, “So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (Ps. 90:12). Numbering our days means evaluating the quality of our time spent. We consider not only where our time goes but also how we spend it and why. Our time on earth is brief (Ps. 39:4-6), and as God’s stewards we must use every second to glorify Him, putting Him first in every area of our lives. Tombstones often display the dates of an individual’s birth and death, separated by a dash. That dash represents the person’s chronos time on earth and how it was spent.

KAIROS TIME

Kairos time, on the other hand, points to the right, or opportune, moment (the supreme moment), a moment of indeterminate time in which events happen.³ Kairos is vital time, God’s time. While chronos is “tick-tock” time, kairos is a powerful moment when time stands still. Kairos time is when God interrupts our routine and

touches us so deeply that we are forever changed. It's a key word used to describe Jesus' ministry. He went into Galilee saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15).

Jesus' ministry was filled with kairos moments. Consider these few examples: Jesus called Zacchaeus down from the sycamore tree, and this resulted in Zacchaeus making a percentage-based "promise"⁴ to give half of all he had to the poor, and return four times as much to those he defrauded (Luke 19:8). No one was paying attention to blind Bartimaeus, but Jesus heard his cries, and that was the blind man's kairos moment (Mark 10:46-52). The woman with the issue of blood crept up to Jesus and touched His robe, and it became her opportune moment (Luke 8:43-48).

As zealous, good stewards of chronos time, we often miss obvious kairos opportunities. A moment lost is an opportunity gone forever. Jesus explained this to the lawyer in the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Two religious leaders saw a wounded man—beaten, bleeding, left to die—but failed to help. These men were so preoccupied with their positions that they missed the opportunity to minister to the injured man. We forget that time and opportunity, chronos and kairos, are both gifts from God to be used for His glory, and that we have to give an account for how they are used.

GOD-GRANTED FAVOR

Kairos moments surround us. I've had several. God saw my need and rescued me.

One that is printed in my memory is the day I received a call to come in for a job interview with the treasurer of the Africa-Indian Ocean Division, now known as the West-Central Africa Division. I had never before applied for a job with the division. One of my friends thought I was wasting my chronos time by working for a Christian-owned investment firm, working with investment projects and foreign donors, flying all around the world, and enjoying what I thought was the time of my life. He suggested that I update my resumé and even offered to do the updating. Without my knowledge—apparently moved by the Holy Spirit—he submitted my resumé for the job. I'll never forget my former boss's response when I told him about my interview. He said, "Child, God

Time and opportunity, chronos and kairos, are both gifts from God to be used for His glory.

wants you to work for Him. Who am I to stop it?"

I interviewed, got the job, and my life was totally changed. I've since enjoyed working for the church. God saw my need and worked through a friend to bring me into this particular field of His work.

To appreciate kairos moments, we need to be more open about how we view time. Life is not only about working vigorously; it's also about being alert to opportune kairos moments to glorify God. Instead of thinking of time only as grains of sand slipping through an hourglass, we ought to also view our time as opportunities to allow God to work in and through us. We ought not to be like the young lawyer, glorifying self instead of God. Or in such a hurry as the priest and Levite that life passes us by because we passed by our kairos. It is true that we live in a chronos world, but there are many kairos moments to be experienced. Let's not be so focused on meeting deadlines that we miss opportunities for ministry.

Zacchaeus, blind Bartimaeus, and the woman with the issue of blood were all seeking Christ. They recognized their need to experience a kairos moment. We, too, must be willing to seek God (Matt. 6:33) and learn of Him through our daily devotionals, our Sabbath School lessons, and the Spirit of Prophecy.

Jesus sought God first, early in the morning (Mark 1:35), and He encourages us to do the same. It is my prayer that we endeavor to use our time wisely, thereby experiencing many kairos moments. ▀

¹ All Bible texts are taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

² en.wikiquote.org/wiki/kairos

³ stewardship.adventist.org/promise

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MAKING CONNECTIONS



It's not that hard.

I used to say to God,
“Lord, You know I’m
a failure as an evangelist.”

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

OLGA VALDIVIA

I still remember when I first encountered Gladys on my jogging route early one morning.

I was sure I was seeing an apparition: an all-white figure against the blue morning sky; small and frail, her body so bent by kyphosis that from a distance it was difficult to pinpoint her small white head that was bent so close to her chest.

I started getting used to Gladys’ uniqueness on my runs through the neighborhood. Neither the curvature of her spine nor her advanced age seemed to detain her. She walked long distances at what I thought was an impressive pace, considering my own small and stark trot.

As our paths coincided Gladys became a familiar, almost necessary figure. I was always happy to see her. Although our eyes never met, I greeted her, waved at her, and wished her a happy day on my quest to reach out. I wanted to believe that Gladys’ apparent unfriendliness had more to do with her hunched-over posture than anything else. How difficult it must have been to lift her head to return a smile or a greeting from a stranger.

SOMETHING TO SHARE

One morning as I passed Gladys I felt this tremendous outpouring of God’s love for her. I reckoned how lonely and distressed she must have felt under the weight of her disability. I couldn’t let the prospect of sharing God’s love pass and keep to myself the glorious news of a sympathetic God who loved the world so much that He gave His only Son so that whoever believes in Him has eternal life.

Time was running out for Gladys, as it was for me, and for the entire world. So one day, instead of just waving or greeting her as I usually did, I stopped, and for the first time met the “real” Gladys.

Gladys was the name I gave this woman for whom I hadn’t take the time to genuinely care. Her real name was Betty, and as with all of us, she, at times, felt lonely and frightened.

Her small blue eyes gleamed as I talked to her about Jesus and how much He loved her.

After that, Betty seemed a different person. Whenever she saw me approach from a distance, she would lift her head (as much as she could) just to greet me.

GRACE TO SHARE

We are called to bless others. We are called to strike a chord in the heart of those who feel as if love has abandoned them. Christians are called to share God’s love by words, but also by deeds. It takes telling, and showing, to share the love of God as expressed in Jesus Christ.

“God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). This is the purest form of love—love by grace. In the same way, our love for others ought to be gracious, sacrificial, and truthful, because that is how God loves us. God asks that we love others graciously, because His love for us is gracious.

I used to say to God, “Lord, You know I’m a failure as an evangelist. I don’t know how to give Bible studies. How can I reach this indifferent, sometimes antagonistic society?”

“Just follow My example,” said Christ. “I’m not simply seeking converts; I’m engaging hearts.”

How easy! How fantastic! “Go and make disciples,” said Jesus (Matt. 28:19). But He was really calling us to make disciples, as we live our busy lives, through a kind word, a listening ear, a hug, a smile, a good deed, a prayer, and a sincere interest in helping others.

All too often our evangelism reduces people to projects. As destitute and deprived as they are—as we all are—the good news we have to share is that God’s love as demonstrated in Christ is more than enough to find us and win us for His kingdom.

“How priceless is your unfailing love, O God! (Ps. 36:7).

Olga Valdivia is a freelance writer and legal assistant. She and her husband, Miguel, have three adult children and three granddaughters.



LOVING OTHERS

What love really means

To love as Christ loved means to manifest unselfishness at all times and in all places, by kind words and pleasant looks. These cost those who give them nothing, but they leave behind a fragrance that surrounds the soul. Their effect can never be estimated. Not only are they a blessing to the receiver, but to the giver; for they react upon him. Genuine love is a precious attribute of heavenly origin, which increases in fragrance in proportion as it is dispensed to others. . . .

Christ's love is deep and earnest, flowing like an irrepres- sible stream to all who will accept

it. There is no selfishness in His love. If this heaven-born love is an abiding principle in the heart, it will make itself known, not only to those we hold most dear in sacred relationship, but to all with whom we come in contact. It will lead us to bestow little acts of attention, to make concessions, to perform deeds of kindness, to speak tender, true, encouraging words. It will lead us to sympathize with those whose hearts hunger for sympathy (MS 17, 1899).

HUMAN LOVE

Selfishness and pride hinder the pure love that unites us in spirit with Jesus Christ. If this love is truly cultivated, finite will blend with finite, and all will center in the Infinite. Humanity will unite with humanity, and all will be bound up with the heart of Infinite Love.

Sanctified love for one another is sacred. In this great work Christian love for one another—far higher, more constant, more courteous, more unselfish, than has been seen—preserves Christian tenderness, Christian benevolence, and politeness, and enfold the human brotherhood in the embrace of God, acknowledging the dignity with which God has invested the rights of [humanity]. This dignity Christians must ever cultivate for the honor and glory of God. . . .

The only begotten Son of God recognized the nobility of humanity by taking humanity upon Himself, and dying in behalf of humanity, testifying throughout all ages that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (letter 10, 1897).

A FATAL DECEPTION

True sanctification unites believers to Christ and to one another in the bonds of tender sympathy. This union causes to flow continually into the heart rich currents of Christlike love, which flows forth again in love for one another.

The qualities which it is essential for all to possess are those which marked the completeness of Christ’s character—His love, His patience, His unselfishness, and His goodness. These attributes are gained by doing kindly actions with a kindly heart. . . .

It is the greatest and most fatal deception to suppose that [men and women] can have faith unto life eternal, without possessing Christlike love for [their fellow believers]. [Those] who love God and [their neighbors are] filled with light and love. God is in [them] and all around [them]. Christians love those around them as precious souls for whom Christ has died.

There is no such thing as a loveless Christian; for “God is love,” and “hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” . . . “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.” This is the fruit that is to be given back to God (MS 133, 1899).

STANDING TOGETHER

The powers of darkness stand a poor chance against believers who love one another as Christ has loved them, who refuse to create alienation

The love of Christ is a golden chain that binds finite, human beings who believe in Jesus Christ to the Infinite God.

and strife, who stand together, who are kind, courteous, and tender-hearted, cherishing the faith that works by love and purifies the soul. We must have the Spirit of Christ, or we are none of His (MS 103, 1902).

The love of Christ is a golden chain that binds finite, human beings who believe in Jesus Christ to the Infinite God. The love that the Lord has for His children passeth knowledge. No science can define or explain it. No human wisdom can fathom it. The more we feel the influence of this love, the more meek and humble shall we be (letter 43, 1896).

THE DISCIPLES’ CREDENTIALS

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” John 13:34, 35. How broad, how full is this love. The new part of that commandment the disciples did not understand. They were to love one another as Christ had loved them. These were their credentials that Christ was formed within, the hope of glory.

After the sufferings of Christ, after His crucifixion and resurrection and proclamation over the rent sepulcher of Joseph, “I am the resurrection and the life,” after His words to the five hundred who assembled to see Him in Galilee, and after His ascension to heaven, the disciples had some idea of what the love of God comprehended, and of the love they were to exercise one toward another.

When the Holy Spirit rested on them on the day of Pentecost, that love was revealed (MS 82, 1898). ♣

These excerpts are taken from *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1956), **Ellen G. White Comments**, vol. 5, pp. 1140, 1141. Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry.

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MONGOLIA, February

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HOW TO WALK, RUN, AND FLY THROUGH SCRIPTURE

Most people read the Bible in one of three ways:

We touch it. Perhaps we receive a daily Bible verse on our mobile phones, or we randomly open our Bible and see where our eyes fall.

We hop around in it. We bounce-bounce-bounce all over our Bibles, searching for truth (or trying to prove that we're right).

We crawl through it. In January we resolve to read through the Bible in a year. Sometimes we make it; often we don't.

Each of these Bible reading methods has its place and can be used by God to richly bless us from His Word. If you'd like to go even deeper in your study of Scripture, here are three ways to read Scripture verse by verse—the way it was written.

1. Walk Through Scripture. God's Word is meant to be savored, step by step. To begin (or renew) your walk in Scripture, here's a pathway:

Select a book of Scripture: a short book, such as Ephesians, Titus, or Jonah; or a longer book, such as the Gospel of John.

Select one or two good biblical commentaries on the book.

Study one chapter at a time: Ephesians 1, Ephesians 2, etc. Freely underline and write notes in your Bible, interacting with God's Word. Even better, have a "Meet at the Text" weekly small-group study; you'll be refreshed by each other's insights.

When you've finished one book, move on to another, then another. You'll begin noticing beautiful connections within God's Word.

2. Run Through Scripture. The prophet

Daniel wrote that end-time believers "shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase" (Dan. 12:4, NKJV).^{*} This beautiful imagery depicts believers running back and forth through the books of Scripture.

When we've learned how to walk in Scripture, we're ready to run. For example, when you've carefully studied the book of Daniel verse by verse, you'll be ready to study the book of Revelation verse by verse. Studying Kings and Chronicles verse by verse prepares you to study the prophets from this same time period: Isaiah and Jeremiah, Hosea and Micah.

3. Fly Through Scripture. Along with walking and running through Scripture, there's also a time to take flight. Instead of reading through your Bible in a year, how about reading through it in a month?

Reading through the Bible in a month will jump-start your soul. The key is to read without stopping; approach the Bible as one grand story. As you fly over the wind-swept peaks of the Old Testament you'll feel yourself longing for a Messiah. You'll never forget the day you reach Matthew.

Reading through the Bible in a month isn't as hard as it sounds: about 40 pages a day (the total pages divided by 30).

When you wake up and go to bed with Scripture, when you eat it for breakfast, lunch, and supper, God's Word will become your daily bread. You'll never be the same. 📖

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THE LIFE OF FAITH
ANDY NASH



READING THROUGH THE BIBLE IN A MONTH WILL JUMP-START YOUR SOUL.



STRANDED WITHOUT A PHONE

I was having a midafternoon lunch alone in a restaurant. Because of my own incompetence my cell phone was dead, so I couldn't pan through Facebook cat photos. I could do nothing but abide peacefully with the humanity that surrounded me.

To my left sat a middle-aged guy nursing a beer and, presumably, panning through cat photos on his phone. Ahead of me a woman was doing the same: a beer, a phone, and cat photos. To my left was an old codger with a bottle of Coke. He was drinking out of a wine glass. But no phone. The remarkable thing about all three was that for the half hour I sat there none of the three drank anything. They would sip at their glass, but there was no noticeable change in the level of the liquid in their glasses during that time. All three felt that it was better to sit alone in public than to sit alone at home. Were they lonely?

Loneliness is a social epidemic. Epidemic is a strong descriptor, but not my own. Vivek Murthy, former surgeon general of the United States, calls loneliness an epidemic and likens its impact on health to obesity or smoking 15 cigarettes a day.¹

In May and June 2018 the *Economist* and the Henry Kaiser Foundation did a study on the epidemic of loneliness in the United States and the United Kingdom.² Their conclusions were similar for both countries: More than one fifth said that they often or always feel lonely. About 5 percent of people said loneliness is their major life problem. In the U.K. Tracey Crouch, official minister for loneliness, says this is a "gener-

ALONE IN A CROWD

*Is loneliness a disease?
Or just a symptom?*

Do you believe in divine appointments? Do world events and social dynamics arise to open doors of opportunity? More specifically, are things divinely managed in such a way that world events and God's work coincide?

Consider the area of public health. The 1918 flu epidemic, the outbreak of mad cow disease in the early 1990s, the late 1980s and 1990s AIDS epidemic, and the Ebola outbreak in the 2010s were heartbreaking and special opportunities for the church. Some we met, some we missed. In these epidemics there was something about the denomination that could make us uniquely useful and helpful.

MACK TENNYSON

ational challenge” affecting about 9 million people in the U.K., young and old.³

Other conclusions were interesting. Loneliness is stereotypically identified as a problem for old people. When the New York *Times* reported on this study, it accompanied the article with a photo showing a great-grandmother sitting alone on a bed. Research does not support the stereotype. Figures for lonely people younger than the age of 50 are higher than those who are older than 50, even if not by much.

Also, if pressed, many people would say that loneliness is more of a female problem than a male one. Nope. Women report being lonely at a 10 percent higher rate than men when the question is “Are you lonely?” But when asked if they were “not lonely,” both men and women describe themselves as not lonely at the same rate. This suggests that men are slow to admit being lonely.

Incidence of loneliness reflects only minor differences in income level, education level, and marital status. It is an epidemic that cuts a broad swath across all aspects of society.

In keeping with the times, researchers included questions about social media. Does Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram make people more or less lonely? Do people who see the exciting lives of others feel left out and lonely? Or do they connect with friends and feel part of a group and less lonely? The split is equally divided. One half of people who use social media reported that it helped; the other half said it hurt. One half said that social media helped strengthen their connections to people, so it helped them counter loneliness. One half felt that social media intensified their loneliness. In general, social media doesn’t cause loneliness any more than it helps solve it.

WHAT OF THE CHURCH?

Does this epidemic of loneliness present an opportunity, a divine appointment, for the Adventist Church? Have we been brought here for such a time as this (see Gen. 50:20; Esther 4:12-14)? We have the people, the facilities, and the aptitude to help.

A few words are in order. Loneliness is likely to occur in the church at approximately the same proportions as outside the church. That is true of many societal problems. Our efforts to address the problem should include embracing our own.

Our efforts should be altruistic. I support church growth, but rather than a crass attempt to get more

Vivek Murthy, surgeon general of the United States, calls loneliness an epidemic.

members, love and compassion should drive our response. We should embrace everyone, including those that we may feel tempted to exclude.

Our attempts to provide a cure to loneliness should be tactful. Marketing campaigns overtly directed to graying populations have backfired. While companies should use easy-to-open jar tops and large print, their campaigns fail when they present them as products for old people. I’m afraid the same would apply to church programs targeted at lonely people. Even the lonely may not necessarily want to go to a program billed for lonely people.

Cross-generational programs are very useful in addressing the loneliness epidemic. Young adult Sabbath School, senior clubs, and singing at nursing homes have their place. But we shouldn’t neglect activities that treat all ages with equal respect and value. This would include such events as church work bees, fellowship dinners, or church interest groups (photography, vegetable gardens, music, worship teams, or drama).

Consider tasking a multigenerational work group with developing your church’s response to the epidemic of loneliness in our communities. We might even study investing the people resources of our churches to help support the many community activities already in place, such as community food pantries, recreational athletics, arts and craft classes. We don’t have to reinvent the wheel; we can add to that which is already in place and build rewarding relationships in the process.

COMPANY TIME

At the restaurant I decided to drop by the table of the old codger drinking a Coke. “Hi,” I said. “Do you feel like having some company?” We have become great friends.

Next time I see that middle-aged guy with the phone I’m going to chat with him. 📞

¹ Washington Post, May 15, 2018.

² “Loneliness Is a Serious Public-Health Problem, *Economist*, Sept. 1, 2018.

³ www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-42708507

Mack Tennyson is an associate treasurer of the Trans-European Division and a professor-in-residence for the General Conference Auditing Service.



AN UNUSUAL FRIENDSHIP

Getting a grip on grace

His big voice matched the big man he is. As he often did when he sang solos in church, Allen¹ asked the congregation to join him in singing. That day he chose a medley of old hymns that weren't in the hymnal. Some of us knew the words, especially the choruses of these songs, while younger members of the congregation had never heard them before.

Allen switched melodies and his resonant baritone voice began singing the words, "I would love to tell you what I think of Jesus, since I found in Him a Friend so strong and true. I would tell you how He changed my life completely. . ."²

Allan's voice caught and he couldn't go on. Instead of the rest of the song, a story from an experience he'd had six years before tumbled out.

A MOMENT OF FRUSTRATION

At the time, Allen was managing day laborers and transient workers at a warehouse. One particular man rode his bicycle about 10 miles to the job each day. "He was always on time; sometimes he arrived early," Allen said.

"We need to hire him," Allen told his boss. "he's a good worker." So Lorenzo worked as a regular employee at the warehouse for several months. During that time Allen helped the man open a savings account and found him a place to stay. Allen said he was happy he could help get the man off the streets into a more stable situation.

But Allen's work situation was not pleasant. He worked hard and didn't make much money. His hours were horrendous; sometimes he worked without a day off for 10 days straight.

One day when Allen was driving he saw Lorenzo and stopped his car to speak with him. But instead of a pleasant exchange between two friends, Allen got out of his car and challenged Lorenzo because of some trivial matter.

With a violence born of months of overwork and frustration, Allen hit Lorenzo "with incredible force." He punched him twice, then with the force of his entire body he drove his elbow into the subdued man.

Lorenzo landed on the hot pavement; his eyes rolled back, his nose and mouth bleeding. He was unconscious.

The men who saw the altercation shouted, "Don't move him. Don't move him!" But Allen's sense of compassion aroused, and he moved Lorenzo to a cooler place in the shade, where Lorenzo began to come to.

A MOMENT OF GRACE

When the police arrived, the men in the huddle sang out, "Arrest him. Arrest him."

The police interrogated both Allen and Lorenzo and asked if Lorenzo wanted to press charges. The bystanders changed their chant to "Press charges. Press charges."

Lorenzo had every right to press charges. Allen had severely injured him, and eager witnesses were willing to testify to the fact. "No," Lorenzo said, "he's my friend. He helped me when I needed help."

The police left with everyone wondering, *What kind of friend would do that to a person? What kind of friend would forgive so freely?*

"That incident reshaped my life," remembered Allen. "I was working hard, but I wasn't getting ahead. I was angry and short-tempered because of fatigue. On a very personal level, I learned how important a Sabbath rest is. Before this experience Sabbath rest was

What kind of friend would do that to a person? What kind of friend would forgive so freely?

just something I learned as a kid. Lorenzo was becoming a better person and here I came and knocked him out!"

Allen and the congregation (those who could still sing after hearing the story) finished the song, and he left the platform. The pastor came to the pulpit and presented his sermon. However, many in the congregation were still ruminating about the sermon they had already heard. ♣

¹ Not his real name.

² Charles F. Weigle, "No One Ever Cared for Me Like Jesus," Singspiration Music, ©1932.

Barbara Huff lives in Punta Gorda, Florida.

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CARTER REPORT
**ADVENTIST
HEROES**

Pastor Bj Christensen joined The Carter Report team for a seven day train trip across Russia. But this was not a tourist excursion. It was an evangelistic outreach into the frozen

Siberian wilderness. The year was 1997. Bj was there to make sure we were ready at any hour of the day or night. We had no idea what to expect at the next stop...

Bjarne Christensen was the president of the Southern California Conference. He had a heart for God and people. He joined our team to help bring hope to the thousands of believers who lived along the Trans-Siberian Railway line. Australian, American, and Russian team members traveled for seven days and nights in the last railway car that was painted in the red, white, and blue of Russia. We had packed it with 6,000 Russian Bibles, 6,000 bottles of Tylenol, and 10,000 audio tapes that contained 200,000 Gospel messages.



It was mid-winter, and the mercury often registered minus 40 degrees. Word had preceded us, and in villages, towns, and cities, thousands waited. Sometimes for 24 hours. Siberia is far bigger than the United States. As the great train rolled into each station, Dr. Boris Belko leaned out the window, and on his silver trumpet played, "Lift Up the Trumpet." On many occasions the trumpet would freeze to his lips. The people anxiously awaited our arrival. Pastor Bj went into action. A score of hands responded to his commands. Out came Bibles, big bottles of Tylenol, and audio tapes. As soon as the train stopped, Bj and his assistants set up the PA system and lights on the platform. Pastor Christensen then passed me the microphone, the lights flooded the area in front of our car, the people surged

forwards, and the evangelistic meeting commenced. Our message was Christ and Him crucified. Bibles, plus medicines for body and soul were given to every person in the audience.

On we went ...1 AM...3 AM...5 AM... around the clock, day and night on the longest railway line in the world, for seven days and seven nights. All the way from Moscow to Vladivostok. Pastor Christensen was our manager and time keeper. I would feel his hand on my foot as I tried to catch some sleep... "Time to go John." I would pull on my coat and hat and stumble out onto the freezing platform, Bible open, ready to go.

We met thousands of Russians who had never met a foreigner. We were immersed in love and goodwill, and inundated with gifts of food. We too passed out gifts: Bibles for their souls, Tylenol for their body aches, and audio tapes for their edification.

Pastor Bj Christensen helped make it all happen. He was the human glue that held the program together. He was our friend, our brother, and our partner in the greatest work in all the world — the proclamation of the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ. ♦

We are honored to proclaim Elder Bj Christensen an outstanding Carter Report Hero.

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PRAYING ON THE ROAD

ANDREW HANSON

There are times, Lord,
When the road before us is shadowy and strange,
And seems to lead away in a curving, uncertain direction.
Frightened of uncertainty and shadows, we can pray for courage.

There are times, Lord,
When the road divides itself,
And we must choose the desert or the mountains.
Fearful of the consequences of choosing, we can pray for wisdom.

There are times, Lord,
When it's smooth sailing,
And the road is straight and wide and easy.
Unsettled by the swiftness of our progress, we can pray for discernment.

There are times, Lord,
When the road is endless,
And we trudge along, half blind, numb, exhausted.
Almost losing the will to go on, we can pray for perseverance.

There are times, Lord,
When our companions complain,
And the road is choked with the dust of selfishness and self-pity.
Angry and resentful and hurt, we can pray for patience.

There are times, Lord,
When the road ends in a miserable track,
When even the ruts disappear and it's all uphill and overgrown.
Terrified that we have lost our way, we can pray for faith.

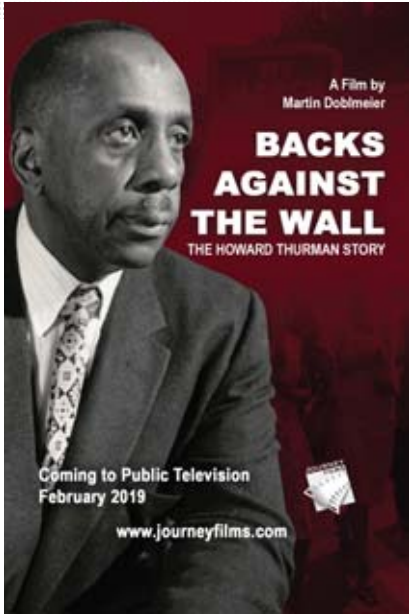
There are times, Lord,
When "to be or not to be" is the question,
When failure and disappointment dog our steps.
Overwhelmed and almost defeated, we can pray for hope.

There are times, Lord,
When no one knows and no one cares,
And we stumble, blinded by our tears.
Wavering on the brink of despair, we can pray for love.

There are times, Lord,
When we forget
To thank You for prayer,
To thank You for the road.

Andrew Hanson lives in Chico, California.

CLOSER LOOK



Backs Against the Wall

Backs Against the Wall: The Howard Thurman Story, a film by Martin Doblmeier, Journey Films, 56 minutes, 2019. Reviewed by Stephen Chavez, *Adventist Review*.

Howard Thurman may be the most famous preacher you've never heard of. That's about to change, thanks to a new documentary film by Martin Doblmeier and Journey Films. The film, due to be released on PBS in February, is a comprehensive treatment of a figure who loomed large in society in general, but mostly because of his influence on those who made headlines, notably Martin Luther King, Jr.

Howard Thurman (1899-1981) grew up in the southern United States during a time of institutional segregation and racism. His grandmother, a former slave, told him many times as he was growing up about a slave from a neighboring plantation who was permitted to preach to the

slaves on her plantation once a year. He would always say to those assembled, "You are not slaves, . . . you are God's children."

That statement planted a seed in Thurman's mind that "the Creator of existence also created me. With that kind of backing I could absorb all the violence of life."

Another seminal moment in his life was in 1935, when he, his wife, and another missionary couple traveled to Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and India. While in India, whose population was chafing under colonial rule, Thurman met Mahatma Gandhi, the principal proponent of nonviolence as a weapon to combat oppression.

After Thurman returned to the United States, his life intersected with Martin Luther King, Jr., and other leaders of the growing civil rights movement. The title of the film is taken from Thurman's question: "What was the word that the religion of Jesus had to say to the man with his back against the wall?"

In the 1960s both *Life* and *Ebony* magazines named Thurman one of the great preachers in the United States. A measure of his stature is reflected by those whose interviews punctuate the film: John Lewis, Vernon E. Jordan, Jr., Barbara Brown Taylor, Lerita Coleman Brown, and others who have studied Thurman's influence in society.

Filmmaker Doblmeier, a friend of Adventists, has made it his mission to profile individuals who have created conversations in the United States regarding the intersection of faith and action. The subjects of his documentaries are noteworthy because they transcend racial, cultural, and denominational boundaries to influence society in general.

The Howard Thurman Story, although based on persons and events grounded in history more than 50 years old, is as contemporary as today's newsfeeds, particularly for Christians who often forget that Jesus deserves and requires more than admiration: He deserves to be followed. ▀

Reviews of books, films, or other subjects do not constitute endorsements by *Adventist Review*, its editors, staff, or leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.



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NOW HEAR THIS

Late last year we asked our readers to respond to this question: *What's the best advice you've received from a friend, a parent, a teacher, a pastor, a verse of the Bible, or a book? What was the advice, and how did it influence you?*

These are some of the responses we received.—Editors.

From a Catholic priest who cares about the pain of others: "This is not a burden you have to carry on your own shoulders. He who gave His Son will bear these and all other troubles that concern you." This reminds me where to place my concerns.

BARBARA, CALIFORNIA.

Edward Heppenstall used to tell our class at seminary: "Being saved is not like charging your battery once a week. It's like a trolley car being constantly connected to power from above."

GARY, CALIFORNIA.

From a Baptist pastor in one of his sermons in the 1980s while I served as church organist: "Worry is paid on trouble before it's due." A deep understanding of that sentence has relieved me of unnecessary stress over the years.

JIGGS, CALIFORNIA.

From the book of Ecclesiastes: "Do not be over-righteous . . . why destroy yourself?" (Eccl. 7:16) and "God is in heaven . . . , so let your words be few" (Eccl. 5:2). Gotta love that book!

KEN, NEW YORK.

Keept learning." That sentiment (if different words) was the motto of my college, and it has never failed me.

KEISHA, NEW YORK.

When in doubt, pray the Serenity Prayer." I received that advice from a 12-step sponsor.

DANIEL, MICHIGAN.

Just do it!" They made me not want to give up.

DEB, NEVADA.

From a friend who is a runner: "The only good hill is a downhill." His words remind me of the promise that comes from reaching the top.

ROBERT, MARYLAND.

Jesus' words "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21) are a warning and a reminder that actions speak louder than words.

SHARON, TEXAS.



The Sounds of Silence

People seem to be roughly divided into two groups: those who speak too little, and those who speak too much. Beyond our natural inclinations, however, every one of us journeys through life ping-ponging between sound and silence. It is the dynamic tension between what is said and what's left unsaid, between words expressed and words held back.

Silence can often keep us out of trouble. "Silence is health," a common catchphrase goes. Or as a World War II poster put it: "Loose lips sink ships!"

Words that do not build often destroy.

Ancient Job found out the hard way about the limits of words uttered. After rhetorically contending with his wise guy friends and an unspeaking God, the time was ripe for him to listen. "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer you?" Job told God. "I lay my hand over my mouth." And he doubles down: "Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; yes, twice, but I will proceed no further" (Job 40:4, 5).*

More than once even Jesus at climactic moments chose silence over words to make a point. "While He was being accused by the chiefs and elders, He answered nothing," wrote Matthew in describing Jesus' judgment before the Crucifixion (Matt. 27:12). What Jesus knew—and we'd all do well to remember—is that sometimes there's nothing like silence to cry out our message. As investigative journalist Bob Woodward recently put it: "Sometimes you have just to wait and let the silence suck out the truth."

The coin, however, has two sides. It's no coincidence that totalitarian governments often resort to the "silence is

health" dictum to advance their agenda. Be it in our family or our social or spiritual relationships, silence will not always do.

God seems to agree. "Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know," He inspired a prophet to write (Jer. 33:3). And through Isaiah God commands, "Cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet" (Isa. 58:1).

Indeed, sometimes silence might even lead to death. When Mordecai entreated an undecided Esther to intervene on behalf of her people, he told her: "If you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish" (Esther 4:14).

We own our words, and also our silences. Martin Luther reportedly said, "You are not only responsible for what you say, but also for what you do not say."

Devotion to a cause often demands tough love, the harsh words of reproach. "For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet," wrote the prophet (Isa. 62:1, NIV).

Our careful navigating along the silence-sound continuum implies enlightenment not often found inside ourselves. Only heavenly insight can show us—as a person or as a group—when to choose silence over speaking; and which should be our "breaking point"; that instant when Martin the obscure monk becomes Martin Luther the Reformer, even against his wishes, and goes boldly out to change the world. ♣

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Marcos Paseggi is senior news correspondent of *Adventist Review*.

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