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Meet the Principal Contributors to This Quarter's Lessons

The lessons this quarter were written by members of the staff of Florida Hospital and its parent organization, Adventist Health System Sunbelt Healthcare Corporation, in Orlando, Florida. Each of the authors is a person to whom the healing touch of Jesus Christ is a daily experience; each is a professional who counts it a privilege to be part of the great tradition of the Master's healing ministry.

Because most of these people work at Florida Hospital, the largest in the worldwide network of Adventist hospitals, this institution is occasionally mentioned by name. Experiences within the walls and towers of Florida Hospital are those with which the writers are most familiar. Naturally, similar sentiments would be heard at other church-operated clinics and hospitals.

These lessons are a gift from Florida Hospital to the world church. None of the authors received any remuneration for their work.

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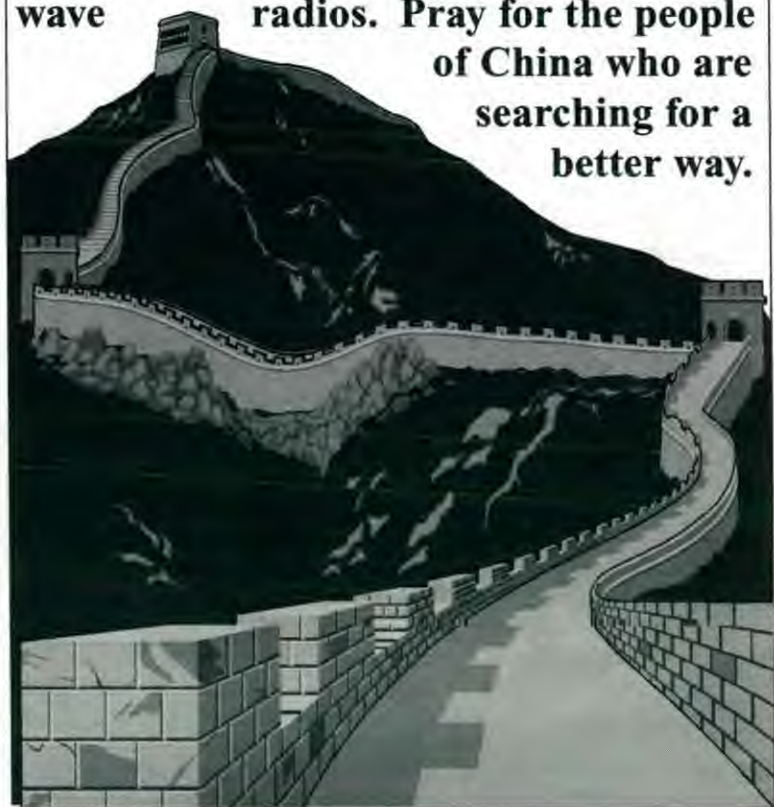
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Healing and Restoration

The Master's Touch

This quarter's Sabbath School lessons focus on Jesus' healing ministry while He was here on earth. From the manner in which Jesus worked, we can deduce principles that will guide our efforts to minister to others. Always uppermost in Jesus' mind was the goal of saving souls for eternity. To do this it was necessary for Him to reach into the hidden recesses of people's minds, transform their thinking, deliver them from the unholy forces that controlled them, and inspire them with new hope for the future.

Jesus functioned on the basis of the principle that one of the best ways to reach a heart is to minister to the individual's physical needs. His ministry to sick bodies was especially designed to save souls for His kingdom. The first paragraph of Ellen G. White's *The Ministry of Healing*, one of the best commentaries on this quarter's lessons, introduces us to the saving ministry of Jesus:

"Our Lord Jesus Christ came to this world as the unwearied servant of man's necessity. He 'took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses,' that He might minister to every need of humanity. Matthew 8:17. The burden of disease and wretchedness and sin He came to remove. It was His mission to bring to men complete restoration; He came to give them health and peace and perfection of character."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 17.

Jesus was concerned for the restoration of the whole person—spiritually, psychologically, and physically. Significantly, the Greek verb *to save* is used a number of times in the New Testament in the sense of "to heal." For example, the woman who had suffered for 12 years approached Jesus in the crowd, saying to herself: "If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well" (Matt. 9:21, NRSV). But the last phrase translates literally from the Greek, "I shall be saved." All three synoptic Gospels use the verb *to save* in Jesus' final statement to the woman: "He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well'" (Mark 5:34, NRSV). But all three Gospel accounts read in Greek, "Your faith has saved you." There are a number of other New Testament passages that use the Greek verb *to save* in contexts that speak of Christ's healing work. (See Mark 5:23; 6:56; 10:52; Luke 8:36; 17:19; Acts 4:9; 14:9, 10; James 5:15.)

Physical as well as spiritual suffering are identified as the work of Satan, from whose power Jesus released the subjects of His healing mercy.

Christ's healing ministry is a soul-saving ministry. It was so long ago, and it remains so today. We can only fulfill the gospel commission as witnesses for Jesus as we seek to save the whole personality of each individual to whom we minister.

Creator and Healer



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Mark 2:1-12; Luke 10:1-9.

MEMORY TEXT: “And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed them all” (Luke 6:19, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHT: The One who has the power to create has the power and the desire to re-create, and thereby to heal.

TWO OBJECTIVES Jesus had on earth were to reveal the true character of God and to dispel the misunderstandings about Him that had developed over generations. The view of God had become so distorted that He was seen primarily as a God who punishes sin. Jesus wanted humanity to understand that God is also loving, compassionate, and infinitely concerned about His creation—His children.

Christ's work was to restore the relationship that was broken in Eden when Adam and Eve sinned by placing their desires above God's instructions. The healing aspect of Christ's ministry was one of the most effective means for this restoration to take place. The physical healing Christ brought to the sick demonstrated His love for them and His power to save them from the power of sin. Then, as now, often the only way to reach a heart was by means of physical healing.

“LET US MAKE MAN IN OUR IMAGE” (Gen. 1:26).

It is humbling to contemplate that the God who created the entire universe and spoke incredibly complex organisms into existence wanted to create us so that He might enjoy our fellowship.

We cannot begin to comprehend God's creative power. The most advanced scientific studies just begin to scratch the surface. We consider ourselves fortunate when we build new telescopes that reveal more of the universe, but we cannot adequately explain how it got there and what keeps it in balance. The study of medicine has produced some understanding of how the body functions, but we cannot fully comprehend where the spark of life comes from or what makes a cut heal.

God understands all this; He designed human life and spoke it into existence. Of all His creation, He considers us the most special.

God spoke the earth, the plants, and the animals into existence, but He stooped down and with His hands molded clay into the form of man and then breathed life into the clay. In addition to His personal touch, God chose to make us in His image, both in appearance and in character. He gave our first parents the ability to reason and love.

What pattern did God follow in creating humanity? What method did He employ? Gen. 1:26; 2:7.

“After the earth with its teeming animal and vegetable life had been called into existence, man, the crowning work of the Creator, and the one for whom the beautiful earth had been fitted up, was brought upon the stage of action.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 44.

God could create anything He desired, yet He chose to create us and to make us like Him. He gave us the ability to think and reason and to make choices. He designed us as social beings, with a desire for companionship and love. He shared with us some of His own attributes. One way we may come to understand this love is to enter into God's creative activity by having our own children. As we enjoy the interaction and love of our families, we can begin to understand why God created us and why He wants us to be with Him throughout eternity.

What did Ellen White mean when she wrote that human nature was originally in harmony with the will of God? See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 45.

Since God made the original couple perfect, what went wrong? How did they come to act so imperfectly? Compare Genesis 3 with Romans 5:12.

RESTORATION BEGINS (Gen. 3:9-15).

What action did God take after Adam and Eve sinned? Gen. 3:9. What was the basis of Adam's fear? Verse 10.

Recognizing their sin, the parents of the human race were frightened, and they hid from God. Their carefree joy was replaced by a sense of guilt and foreboding, and through sin they were changed. Thankfully, the loving Creator had not changed. He did not love them less. He did not stop caring for their welfare. Although He was deeply saddened by their actions, He sought to bring them comfort and the reassurance of His love. He gave them hope as He revealed a plan whereby their relationship could be restored (Gen. 3:15).

When was this plan developed? Eph. 1:4; Titus 1:2; 1 Peter 1:20 (compare Rev. 13:8; 17:8).

How difficult was it for God to implement salvation's plan? "Before the Father He pleaded in the sinner's behalf, while the host of heaven awaited the result with an intensity of interest that words cannot express. Long continued was that mysterious communing—'the counsel of peace' (Zechariah 6:13) for the fallen sons of men. The plan of salvation had been laid before the creation of the earth; for Christ is 'the lamb slain from the foundation of the world' (Revelation 13:18); yet it was a struggle, even with the King of the universe, to yield up His Son to die for the guilty race."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 63.

Why did God make the ultimate sacrifice? John 3:16. What did God plan to accomplish? 2 Cor. 5:19; 1 Peter 2:24.

"Oh, the mystery of redemption! the love of God for a world that did not love Him! Who can know the depths of that love which 'passeth knowledge'? Through endless ages immortal minds, seeking to comprehend the mystery of that incomprehensible love, will wonder and adore."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 64.

If God was hurt by the sin of Adam and Eve, imagine how He must hurt when we fail to respond to His invitation of salvation.

Is there anything more God might do to give salvation to a nonbelieving friend of yours? Is there anything you can do?

THE RESULTS OF THE BROKEN RELATIONSHIP (Gen. 3:8, 19).

By placing their own desires and priorities ahead of God's instructions, Adam and Eve broke the perfect relationship with God that had been theirs. They became sinners. They quickly learned that when the relationship with God is damaged, there are other profound consequences.

What happened to their relationship with God? Gen. 3:8. What happened to their relationship with each other? Gen. 3:12, 16. How did their lives begin to change? Gen. 3:16-19.

"As they witnessed in drooping flower and falling leaf, the first signs of decay, Adam and his companion mourned more deeply than men now mourn over their dead."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 62.

"The fall of man filled all heaven with sorrow. The world that God had made was blighted with the curse of sin and inhabited by beings doomed to misery and death. There appeared no escape for those who had transgressed the law. Angels ceased their songs of praise. Throughout the heavenly courts there was mourning for the ruin that sin had wrought."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 63.

Imagine the utter despair and hopelessness of being condemned to death, combined with the anguish of knowing that you had caused the ruin of a perfect world. Even though Adam and Eve were devastated, God grieved even more deeply. He could foresee the hurts and sorrows His children would bear, and He was moved with infinite compassion.

Did God cause Adam and Eve to feel sorrow, or was it the natural consequence of disobedience? Explain.

Why do some of our actions cause God such sorrow? Why could God not overlook that first sin?

"In His great mercy, He appointed Adam no severe test. And the very lightness of the prohibition made the sin exceedingly great. If Adam could not bear the smallest of tests, he could not have endured a greater trial had he been entrusted with higher responsibilities."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 60.

What greater responsibilities do you think God had in mind for Adam and Eve?

THE CREATOR JOINS HIS CREATION (John 1:14).

“And the Word became flesh and lived among us” (John 1:14, NRSV). A young boy was afraid to sleep in his own room apart from his father and mother. In an effort to give him courage and comfort, his parents bought him a teddy bear to keep him company. They named the bear Paddington and told their son that Paddington was a special bear who would be with him in the dark. Shortly after the boy was tucked in one night, a frightened voice called to his father. The father reminded his son that Paddington was there to keep him company. With understanding beyond his years, the son responded, “But Dad, Paddington doesn’t have skin.”

Why was it necessary for God to take on humanity? Heb. 2: 17, 18.

“Since Jesus came to dwell with us, we know that God is acquainted with our trials and sympathizes with our griefs. Every son and daughter of Adam may understand that our Creator is the friend of sinners. For in every doctrine of grace, every promise of joy, every deed of love, every divine attraction presented in the Saviour’s life on earth, we see ‘God with us.’”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 24.

What a comfort to know that we have a God who not only *told* us how to live, but became one of us and *showed* us how!

Why is it important to understand that Christ personally experienced each of our temptations and struggles? What are the implications of this belief for you? Heb. 4:14-16.

Is Christ’s commitment to the human condition temporary or permanent? How long will Christ be a human being like us? Phil. 3:20, 21 (compare Luke 24:39; John 20:20, 27).

“By His life and His death, Christ has achieved even more than recovery from the ruin wrought through sin. It was Satan’s purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the Savior has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken. . . . To assure us of His immutable counsel of peace, God gave His only-begotten Son to become one of the human family, forever to retain His human nature.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 25.

CHRIST RESTORES BOTH BODY AND SPIRIT (Mark 2: 1-12).**How is Christ's work of restoration described in Matthew 8:17?**

"Our Lord Jesus Christ came to this world as the unwearied servant of man's necessity. He 'took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses,' that He might minister to every need of humanity. Matthew 8:17. The burden of disease and wretchedness and sin He came to remove. It was His mission to bring to men complete restoration."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 17.

Why did Christ's ministry involve both healing and teaching? Mark 2:1-12.

We might follow that question with this question: Which is most important on an airplane, the right wing or the left? Or, which is more important, inhaling or exhaling?

Christ understood that both physical and spiritual healing were essential parts of His ministry. His healing of the body illustrated His power to save from sin. Which occurred first in the experiences recorded in the following texts?

Matt. 9:2-7 _____

Matt. 15:30, 31 _____

Mark 5:25-34 _____

Luke 5:12, 13 _____

The genius of Christ's work was His love-motivated attention to the needs of others.

"The Saviour's work was not restricted to any time or place. His compassion knew no limit. . . . On the green hill slopes of Galilee, in the thoroughfares of travel, by the seashore, in the synagogues, and in every other place where the sick could be brought to Him, was to be found His hospital. In every city, every town, every village, through which He passed, He laid His hands upon the afflicted ones and healed them."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 17.

Did Christ heal only those whom He knew would respond spiritually, or were His healings acts of "disinterested benevolence"? (See *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 17-50.)

FURTHER STUDY: Read Luke 10:1, 2, 8, 9 to discover the work Christ has given His followers.

“Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’

“There is need of coming close to the people by personal effort. . . . The poor are to be relieved, the sick cared for, the sorrowing and the bereaved comforted, the ignorant instructed, the inexperienced counseled. We are to weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice. Accompanied by the power of persuasion, the power of prayer, the power of the love of God, this work will not, cannot, be without fruit.

“We should ever remember that the object of the medical missionary work is to point sin-sick men and women to the Man of Calvary, who taketh away the sin of the world.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 143, 144.

In response to Christ’s example and His instructions to carry on His work, the Seventh-day Adventist Church began an organized health work a century ago. That work exists today in many countries of the world and continues to help bring about physical and spiritual healing.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1. Why does Christ call us to help in the restoration process? Why does He call us to be involved in a healing ministry?**
- 2. What should be the relationship between the spiritual gift of healing and the work of doctors, nurses, and medical technologists?**
- 3. Has our medical ministry failed if baptisms do not result? Explain.**

SUMMARY: Our Creator prepared a perfect world in which He placed physically and spiritually perfect human beings. Since the fall of these beings into sin, humans have been afflicted by physical and spiritual imperfection and disease. Only through Christ can the image of God be restored in humankind. Our work is to cooperate with God’s great work of restoration.



Going Hungry for Missions

Kwon JohngHaeng

I wiped the perspiration from my brow as I waited in my car for the six young missionaries who were working in the small city of Indang in the northern Philippines. Because there was no telephone to call ahead, the missionaries did not know I was here. At midday they returned home and welcomed me to their cottage. Inside, a poster on the wall announced, "Happy Birthday, Lee." The young people sang "Happy Birthday" to their friend, but there was no cake, and no gifts.

We talked about their work as members of the 1000 Missionary Movement, a volunteer mission program that encourages young people to give one year for the Lord in mission service. As I prepared to leave, one of the missionaries, Hahn Ae-Jong, pulled my shirt sleeve and called me aside. She asked to borrow 200 pesos (\$7) to help the missionaries buy food until they received their next \$70 stipend in two weeks. Even though the missionaries received small stipends, I was surprised that they had not stretched their money to last until their next paycheck. I asked her why she did not have enough money to last until her next check.

"Pastor," she said, "once there were Adventists in this town, but they scattered because they had no church. I do not want that to happen again, so I pledged to help build a church. I have no money for food because I have spent my stipend to buy materials to help build the church here in Indang."

As I slipped some money into her hand, I was struck by the realization that these young missionaries were going hungry so that new believers would have a church.

A church in Korea sent 16 young people to help the 1000 Missionary Movement workers conduct an evangelistic crusade in Indang. The Lord blessed the young people's efforts and added 32 soldiers to His army. The youth returned home so excited, they convinced their elders to help them make the dream of a permanent church in Indang a reality.

Pray for the work of the 1000 Missionary Movement, which is growing rapidly toward its goal of training 1,000 youth a year to serve as missionary volunteers in the Philippines and elsewhere in the world.

Kwon Johng Haeng is associate director of the 1000 Missionary Movement in the Philippines.



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Moved Through Compassion



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Luke 5:12-16; 9:12-17; Matt. 8:1-17; 9:4-6, 36-38.

MEMORY TEXT: "Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness" (Lam. 3:22, 23, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHT: Christ's great love constrained Him to heal. His heart went out to the sick, the brokenhearted, and the bereaved. His love compelled Him to reach out, often healing entire villages.

JESUS REVEALED GOD'S MERCIFUL CHARACTER in His compassion and healing. When people are hungry, cold, and without friends, they have a hard time understanding God's tender mercies. The poor struggle to survive in a world of selfish people and are often treated as if they are less worthy. They are looked down upon, pitied. But Christ says, "It was I who was hungry and thirsty. It was I who was a stranger. It was I who was sick." (See Matthew 25:35-40.) Although Jesus focused on eternity, He was concerned about the present and responded to the people who needed Him most—the poor, the ill, the grieving, and those entangled in webs of sin. He responded with infinite compassion.

Jesus revealed more than pity. Compassion implies pity accompanied by an urge to help or spare. Sympathy sees and says, "I'm sorry." Compassion feels and whispers, "I'll help."

This week we consider how Jesus' compassion was manifested in healing ministry.

**“BE MERCIFUL, EVEN AS YOUR FATHER IS MERCIFUL”
(Luke 6:36, RSV).**

As we exercise compassion, our humanity grows into its fullness.

**How can Christians know whether they are truly compassionate?
Luke 10:29-37.**

Why do some unbelievers appear to be more compassionate than some believers? Rev. 3:1, 2; James 2:14-17. If one does not spontaneously feel compassionate, how can Jesus’ instruction recorded in Luke 6:36 be implemented?

The call to compassion goes against our natural tendency. It requires genuine conversion of heart and mind. The word *compassion* generally evokes positive feelings. We like to think of ourselves as compassionate people who are basically good, gentle, and understanding. We tend to assume that compassion is a natural response to human suffering. We feel offended when someone accuses us of lacking compassion. We identify being compassionate with being truly human.

Since this is true, why is humanity torn by conflict, hatred, and oppression? Why do differences in race, gender, and religion prevent us from relating to one another? Why is our world in such chaos?

We need to take a critical look at our understanding of compassion. The word *compassion* is derived from Latin words meaning, “to suffer with.” Compassion asks us to go where it hurts, to enter places of pain, to share brokenness, fear, and anguish. Compassion challenges us to cry with those in misery, to mourn with those who are lonely, to weep with those in tears. Compassion requires us to identify with the weak, the vulnerable, and the powerless.

Compassion means complete immersion in the effort to relieve human need. It means taking action. When we look at compassion this way, it is clear that something more than mere kindness is involved. It is not surprising that compassion is something that often evokes in us deep resistance, even protest. Compassion is not among our most spontaneous responses, but it is God’s response that may become our response in our submission to Him.

Describe how God’s compassion is expressed in Psalm 78:38. Compare Paul’s compassion (1 Cor. 9:19-23).

HE LIVED AMONG US (Isa. 7:14).

By what title, taken from the prophet Isaiah, does Matthew refer to Jesus? Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:22, 23.

The title means literally "God with us." It introduces us to Matthew's strong conviction regarding the identity and mission of Jesus. God saves us by literally becoming one of us in the person of Jesus. In Jesus we encounter God as the companion of our lives, the fulfillment of our human yearnings. He is God's presence become flesh. He is divine compassion in human form and feeling, the ultimate revelation of God as companion to humanity. Jesus reveals a God who loves generously, compassionately, and calls us to a new way of living so that we can find true fulfillment.

Study the apostle John's description of God with us. John 1:1-5, 9-18.

We will never really know God as a compassionate God if we do not understand with our hearts and minds that "He lived among us." He committed Himself to identify with us, to suffer all of life with us, to share in our joys and pains. In Jesus, God's compassion became visible. Jesus not only said, "Be merciful as your Father is merciful"; He was the living embodiment of this divine mercy in our world. Jesus' response to the ignorant, the hungry, the blind, the lepers, the widows, and all those who came to Him with their suffering, flowed from His divine compassion.

We need to pay close attention to Jesus' words and actions if we are to gain true insight into this divine compassion. We would misunderstand the miracles in the Gospels if we were to be impressed only by the fact that sick and tormented people were healed. If this were the fact of central importance, a cynic might rightly remark that many people in Jesus' day were not cured. What is important is not merely the cure of the sick, but the divine compassion that moved Jesus to effect these cures.

"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Luke 6:36-38, NIV).

When you have extended compassion to someone, what did the experience do for you spiritually?

JESUS' COMPASSION—HEALING STORIES (Matt. 14:14).

“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matt. 9:36, NIV).

Consider Jesus' intervention in the lives of three suffering women:

Luke 7:11-17 _____

Luke 13:10-17 _____

Luke 8:1, 2; 10:38-42 _____

When Jesus saw the crowds harassed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd, His heart was deeply moved by their miserable condition. When he saw the blind, the paralyzed, and the deaf, He entered into their sufferings (Matt. 14:14). When He became aware that the people who had followed Him for days were tired and hungry, He said, “I have compassion for these people” (Mark 8:2, NIV). He mercifully healed the leper who fell to his knees before Him (Mark 1:41), and He ministered to the sorrowing widow of Nain, who was burying her only son (Luke 7:13). Jesus entered into people's heartaches and relieved their pain. He reached out and touched the lost, hungry, and the sick. He was intensely sensitive to the suffering of others.

The great mystery is that Jesus, the sinless Son of God, chose to suffer our pains and thus enables us to see God in His true nature. In Christ, we see our great human need and God's infinite power to heal us. He who is divine took our broken humanity.

What do you see as the underlying purpose in Jesus' coming to earth in human form? 2 Cor. 5:21.

Jesus' healing ministry reveals what He wants to do for us. His divine compassion enables us to face our sinful selves; it transforms our broken human condition and lifts us from despair to hope. Through Jesus Christ we know that God experienced our brokenness when He became sin for us. He has embraced everything human with the infinite tenderness of divine compassion.

How can brokenness become a source of hope rather than a cause of despair?

JESUS' COMPASSION —THE GOOD NEWS FOR TODAY
(Matt. 9:4-6).

Jesus' compassion has not diminished, and He asks us to carry on His work. In the Beatitudes found in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1-12), Jesus identified the ideal attitudes that God expects of His children. Encouragingly, He does not expect us to develop these qualities in our own strength, any more than He expected the blind, the lepers, or the paralyzed to cure themselves. He wants to release His power and heal our spiritual needs today as He did in His day.

Why did Jesus not only forgive the paralytic's sin, but also heal Him physically? Matt. 9:4-6.

The account of this healing is among the most touching and compassionate encounters recorded in the Gospels. It exemplifies the comprehensive kind of healing with which Jesus approached those in need.

This compassionate cure illustrates several dimensions of healing, including:

- The gift of friends who lead others to Jesus
- The importance of faith
- Courage to confront rigid attitudes
- Spiritual gifts for a healed, forgiven soul
- The gift of a restored body

Which of these dimensions of healing seems most essential? Which do you think was the most important to Jesus? to the paralyzed man? Do you think it is possible to exhibit some of these dimensions without the others?

It was out of compassion that Jesus' healing emerged. He did not cure to impress; His cures were the natural expression of His divinity. The mystery of God's love is not only that He takes our pains away, but that He shares them. The great mystery is not merely the cures, but the infinite compassion that is their source.

Jesus' many cures recorded in the Gospels resulted from Jesus' being with us. The truly good news is that God is not a distant God, a God to be feared and avoided, but a God moved by our pains, who participates in the fullness of the human struggle. His acts of healing and compassion are joy-filled reminders of this good news, which is to us true consolation and comfort.

What is the relationship between love and compassion?

JESUS' COMPASSION—LOVING CHOICES (Matt. 4:23-25).

Describe how Jesus demonstrated compassion as He walked among the people. Matt. 4:23-25.

In the Gospel stories of Jesus' healings, we sense how close God wants to be to those who suffer. Here we see what compassion means. It is not merely bending toward the underprivileged from a privileged position; it is not reaching down from on high to those who are less fortunate below; it is not a gesture of sympathy or pity for those who fail to measure up. On the contrary, compassion means going directly to people and places where suffering is most acute and serving as a member of the community. God's compassion demonstrated by Jesus is total, unconditional.

In Jesus Christ we see the fullness of God's compassion. We cry from the depth of our brokenness for a hand that will touch us, an arm that can embrace us, lips that will kiss us, a word that speaks to us, and a heart that is not afraid of our fears and trembling. He feels our pain as no other human being feels it, and in response He assures us, "I am with you." Jesus Christ, who is "God with us," came and experienced our human condition.

Study further specific examples of Jesus' healing ministry. Matt. 8:1-17; Luke 6:17-19.

Sometimes the compassionate care we receive when we are sick can heal as much as the medicine we take. For children, mother is usually the one who makes sure they get enough rest by having them stay in bed. By bringing them juice, water, and soup, she helps to keep them nourished. She lifts their spirits when she tells them cheerful stories. Mother's tender loving care is healing ministry. Without this ministry children are spiritually and emotionally starved.

Based on your own life and relationships, what are some special and caring things that you could do the next time a loved one is sick?

In a research project, hospital patients were asked to rate their nurses. The results were quite unexpected. Patient satisfaction results seemed to ignore technical and medical training, or perhaps assumed it, and rated good nurses as those who were kind, cheerful, considerate, and willing to listen. The highest rated nurses acted with compassion.

FURTHER STUDY: Consider the compassionate ministry God has committed to every believer: 2 Cor. 5:20; Luke 10:1-24; Matt. 19:10-14.

As Christians, we are called to be Christ's ambassadors through whom the reality of God's infinite compassion becomes tangible. In fellowship with Jesus, we are called to be compassionate as our Father is compassionate. In Him it becomes possible to be effective witnesses to God's loving mercy.

Our actions must be a manifestation of Jesus' loving presence in our world. Merciful actions are those through which the healing, comforting, and reconciling love of God can touch the heart of humanity.

"The tender sympathies of our Saviour were aroused for fallen and suffering humanity. If you would be His followers, you must cultivate compassion and sympathy. Indifference to human woes must give place to lively interest in the sufferings of others. The widow, the orphan, the sick and the dying, will always need help. Here is an opportunity to proclaim the gospel—to hold up Jesus, the hope and consolation of all men. When the suffering body has been relieved, and you have shown a lively interest in the afflicted, the heart is opened, and you can pour in the heavenly balm. If you are looking to Jesus, and drawing from Him knowledge and strength and grace, you can impart His consolation to others, because the Comforter is with you."—*My Life Today*, p. 230.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1. What if by nature you are not compassionate? Can you learn to be? If so, how?**
- 2. Why is compassion an essential characteristic for those involved in the medical profession?**
- 3. What is the relationship between compassion and the ability to lead souls to Christ?**
- 4. In what ways can you demonstrate compassion this week, in the home, the church, and the workplace?**

SUMMARY: Healing ministry depends, to a great extent, on compassion for the suffering, compassion demonstrated by merciful words and acts, compassion that emulates the loving ministry of Jesus.



Baker Breaks Bread of Life

J. H. Zachary

Fredoy Wondal owns a bakery in Manado, East Indonesia. But he prefers to let his wife, Marie, manage the bakery so that he can work full-time as a lay evangelist, seeking souls for God's kingdom. His local church recognized his talents for spiritual leadership and successful soul winning and offered Fredoy a stipend to support his work for God.

Fredoy's goal is to visit every home in his community as he asks God to lead him to people interested in studying the Bible. Soon after he began this work, he was giving Bible studies full time. When he learned that a large evangelistic series was being planned for Manado, he began holding group Bible studies. He invited people to open their homes for small-group meetings and encouraged the hosts to ask their neighbors and friends to attend. Fredoy conducted five such groups. As the group studied the Bible together, they began sharing their needs and joys and supporting one another during times of personal difficulties. In a short time the members developed a close spiritual fellowship. And nearly every week the Lord has blessed Fredoy with decisions for Christ through his ministry.

Lay workers like Fredoy conducted 100 such small-group meetings in and around the city of Manado in preparation for evangelist meetings sponsored by the Quiet Hour. When the evangelistic meetings began, Fredoy arranged transportation so his Bible-study members could attend the meetings. The speaker's messages reinforced what the listeners had been taught in the Bible-study groups, and many of the Bible-study contacts have accepted Christ as their Saviour and are preparing for baptism.

What is Fredoy's secret of success? He goes door to door, offering everyone a chance to study the Bible, either in a small group or one-on-one with the immediate family. He shares his enthusiasm and love for God with everyone he meets. He fills every hour doing what he loves most—studying the Bible with searching souls and trusting God for the results.



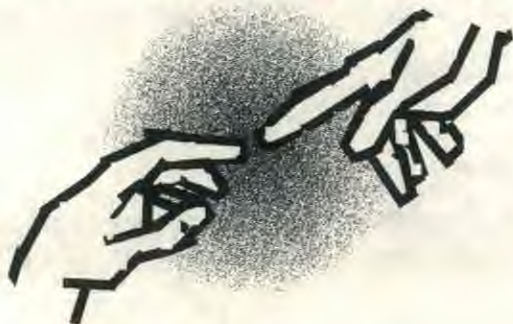
Fredoy Wondal (left). J. H. Zachary is the international evangelism coordinator for *The Quiet Hour*. Manado is a large city on the northernmost tip of the island of Sulawesi (Celebes) in East Indonesia.

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His Healing Touch



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matt. 6:12-15; 9:27-31; 14:35, 36; Mark 10:13-16; Isa. 53:4, 5.

MEMORY TEXT: "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people" (Matthew 9:35).

KEY THOUGHT: Just as Jesus used His hands to form Adam from the clay of the ground, He often healed by laying His hands on the suffering. He understood our need to be touched. Even when He did not physically touch those He healed, He always touched the spirit. He invites us to extend that healing touch.

WHAT CAN WE EXPECT FROM HIS HEALING TOUCH? God's pardon (1 John 1:9), provision (Matt. 6:33), and presence (Heb. 13:5).

Jesus was the ultimate realist. Although He spoke of the abundant life and blessings of obedience, He never minimized the opposition, affliction, and suffering each believer would encounter. Shortly before His death, Jesus reminded His disciples of the rough road ahead. He knew the obstacles they would face. "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33, NIV; compare 2 Cor. 4:17, 18).

Jesus' words of warning were based on the promise that He would send the Holy Spirit to be an ever-present source of assurance and strength.

HIS HEALING TOUCH FOR BODY AND SOUL (Matt. 14: 35, 36).

Numerous times the Gospels reveal that Jesus physically touched people as part of the healing process. His healing touch became a well-established phenomenon. But how many would have been healed if they had waited passively for Him to come to them and touch them? Desperate for healing, crowds of people took the initiative to make the healing contact. "People brought all their sick to him and begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed" (Matt. 14:35, 36, NIV).

Under what circumstances does the Lord promise miraculous healings today? James 5:14, 15.

Brad was in his early twenties and working as a registered nurse in the emergency department at a hospital. In October 1986, Brad noticed that a mole on the back of his left calf was raised and itching. He immediately went to his doctor and had it removed. Brad's physician said, "It looks like a melanoma (cancer)." The pathology report disagreed. Everything seemed all right.

A year later Brad noticed two tiny dark spots on the scar of his first surgery. He returned to his physician, who immediately scheduled him for surgery. This time the pathology report stated, "A recurrent malignant melanoma with lymph-node metastasis"—a very serious diagnosis. Brad's doctor told him that he could expect to live only a few months.

After Brad was released from the hospital, he was anointed. The Lord intervened, and Brad has done well. Ten years later, he has no further recurrence of the melanoma. Most important of all, he is closer to God than ever before and speaks of his healing to the glory of God.

Brad grew up in an Adventist home and attended Adventist schools. He recalls, "I knew all about our religion in theory, but I did not know Christ as my personal Saviour. The day of the surgery, I claimed His promises and surrendered my heart and my life to Him." Jesus answered this prayer and also gave Brad peace. He healed Brad physically, but more important, spiritually. Praise the Lord! Brad now has an exciting new fellowship with Christ and continues his commitment of caring for others in his work as a nurse.

Does God heal because we are good, obedient, and therefore deserving of healing? Explain.

Can God bless the work of physicians and nurses who are atheists?

HIS HEALING TOUCH THROUGH FORGIVENESS (Matt. 6:12-15).

What does Matthew 6:12-15 teach us about forgiveness? Is forgiveness essential to spiritual healing?

Recently, Kathy shared her personal testimony in response to an ongoing tragedy. One night as Kathy and her family were driving home along a busy street, a car traveling at high speed ran a stop sign and hit the van in which they were riding. Kathy's beautiful teenage daughter was thrown from the van and killed instantly. In the blink of an eye, a lovely girl so full of life, so talented, with so many dreams for the future, was gone.

This tragedy left the family brokenhearted. Kathy was grief-stricken and asked God, "Why would You take our daughter from us? We live good moral lives and try to serve You. Why do others living in sin and wickedness go happily on?" She was angry with God and cried, "Lord, I have no hope. How can I go on?" Kathy became paralyzed with grief and was unable to work; with stooped shoulders, she cried continuously.

After several weeks, a call came from the state attorney's office. An attorney told her that, in Florida, the victim's family had a right to help decide the punishment of the accused. Kathy asked questions and discovered the driver was a young man. This accident happened because he was preoccupied and in a hurry to get to work. He was so grief-stricken over the girl's death he wouldn't eat and couldn't sleep. He, too, was paralyzed with grief over the tragedy he had caused.

The mother remembered Christ's words from the cross: "Father, forgive them," as she discovered the young man was also grief-stricken. She asked the attorney to "please tell him I forgive him, and I want to see him." Kathy recalls, "Immediately God lifted the biggest weight from my heart. Although I still felt great sadness, He gave me peace and assurance. I knew He would be with us and one day we would meet Him and Melissa in heaven."

Kathy is now assisting the young man to return to school and to get his life in order. She continues to look forward to heaven and a grand reunion with Melissa.

God often provides human hands to provide His healing touch. Have you made it possible for Him to use your hands?

Remember Jesus' cry from the cross, "Father, forgive them" (Luke 23:34). There is no wound too great, too deep, too damaging that it cannot be healed through the Spirit of God. Healing is for those who "trust and obey." (See Isaiah 40:29-31.)

HIS HEALING TOUCH IN SUFFERING AND TRIALS (Isa. 53:4, 5).

Because Jesus' personal suffering was so extreme, we can be sure He empathizes with us in our suffering, no matter how heart-wrenching it may be.

Review the sufferings of Jesus that made our healing possible. Matt. 27:26-50; Isa. 53:4, 5.

The healing power of a compassionate touch that we studied last week is perfectly exemplified in Jesus' experience with, of all people, a leper. "Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man" (Mark 1:41, NIV). Then He spoke the words, "Be clean!" and instantly the leprosy became only a vivid memory of a past life of rejection and isolation.

How important are words when we seek to minister to those who are sick? Why is our presence as important as our words?

When Holland was occupied by Nazi Germany, Corrie Ten Boom, Holland's first woman watchmaker, turned their home above the watch shop into a way station for Jews fleeing the Holocaust.

In February 1944, the Gestapo caught up with them. Corrie, her sister Betsie, and their godly 84-year-old father were taken to the Scheveningen prison. Corrie was placed in solitary confinement. Since childhood, her most tormenting fear had been fear of being alone, cut off from people. Now she was alone, sick, and forbidden to speak to others. She prayed to God and asked, Why is this happening?

Many years later, *Guidepost* magazine reported Corrie's summation of her father's faith: "Whatever the current hardship, whatever the outward appearance, father knew God was in charge, bringing His kingdom to pass. The best is yet to be," was the promise her father gave them every birthday. Betsie's reminder to Corrie was "No pit is so deep that God's love is not deeper still." In prison, in her broken-hearted despair, the memory of her family's faith and the strong conviction that "if we believe in Jesus we can share in the goodness of the resurrection" kept her going. Corrie forgave her persecutors and knew that God was in charge of her life.

Corrie died at the age of 91. She received both mental and spiritual healing in her life and gave an inspiring example of how through Christ a person can overcome despair.

**HIS HEALING TOUCH WHATEVER THE CIRCUMSTANCES
(Matt. 9:27-31).**

What lessons can we learn from the experience of the two blind men? Matt. 9:27-31.

The two men described in Matthew 9 could hear the commotion of the crowds that flocked to be close to Jesus, and although they could not see Him or the miracles taking place, they felt the electrically-charged atmosphere. After they groped their way inside the house where Jesus had entered, their faith was rewarded when they experienced a once-in-a-lifetime touch that changed blindness into sight.

The world is filled with sorrow, pain, and disappointment; stormy nights without stars, long days without sunshine. As you look for a ray of hope, another crisis knocks you to the ground. What do you do? Where do you turn? How do you climb out of the swamp of hurts? Are there "wounds" so great they can never be healed? Is there healing for all hurts? Matt. 11:28-30.

"For suffering people today, as always, whether physical, mental or spiritual, the pain is real! The problem of pain is not a theoretical problem, a theology game. It is a problem of relationship. Many people want to love God but can't see past their tears. They feel hurt and betrayed."—Philip Yancey, *"Where Is God When It Hurts?"* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: 1977), p. 112.

As we have studied and observed suffering humanity, sometimes it seems God is silent. Christianity contains paradoxes that would make little sense apart from Jesus' life and death. Although poverty and suffering are evils that I could spend my life fighting, at the same time they can be blessings. This pattern of the bad transformed into good finds its fullest expression in Jesus. We are not exempt from the tragedies of this world, just as Christ Himself was not exempt. We think of pain and suffering as an outrage; Jesus did, too, which is why He performed miracles of healing.

"In Gethsemane, he pleaded desperately for an escape. Yet, he was willing to undergo suffering in service to a higher goal."—Yancey, p. 230. (See also 1 Peter 5:6, 7.)

The surgery of life hurts, so it helps to know the wounded Surgeon who understands.

**HIS HEALING TOUCH IS NOT ALWAYS PHYSICAL HEALING
(Mark 10:13-16).**

Parents experience a heavy burden when their children and young people suffer. The poignant scene of mothers thrusting their children into Jesus' arms, described in Mark 10, climaxes with Jesus' extending to each of them the blessing of His personal touch. He still offers that touch.

If you have prayed for physical healing and have not been healed, how have you (or could you) come to terms with those circumstances? Matt. 26:39, 42, 44; Rom. 8:28.

Joni Erickson-Tada is a quadriplegic (her body paralyzed from the neck down). Though in a wheelchair, she speaks and sings of God's goodness. "He'll Bear Me Up on Angels' Wings" is a song of hope she composed.

In the summer of 1967, Joni and her sister rode their horses to the Chesapeake Bay to swim. She spotted a floating raft, swam to it, and dove off. The water was shallow, and her head crashed into a rock. The doctor told her she would never walk again. Joni was devastated. She sobbed, "God, how can You do this to me? Just let me die!"

Millions of people have become acquainted with Joni since the accident. She appears on television programs, records a daily radio broadcast, has played herself in a movie, and has written the story of her life: *Joni*. Her artwork (done by holding a brush in her teeth) graces a line of cards, posters, and stationery. She uses every opportunity to praise God.

At first Joni found it impossible to reconcile her condition with her belief in a loving God. But one night Joni became convinced God *did* understand. A close Christian friend said to her, "Joni, Jesus knows how you feel. He was paralyzed. He couldn't move or change position on the cross. He was paralyzed by the nails." The realization was profoundly comforting. "God became incredibly close to me and eventually I understood that He loves me. I had no other identity but God, and gradually He became enough," stated Joni. "I prayed for healing and truly believed it would come. The Bible speaks of our bodies' being 'glorified.' Now I realize I will be healed; I'm just going through a forty- or fifty-year delay, and God stays with me even through that."

How can we help suffering people understand that God loves them?

FURTHER STUDY: Study the story of the sick woman in the crowd who touched the fringe of Jesus' garment: Luke 8:43-48; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 342-348.

The writer of this lesson testifies: "When life is going great, we seem to know God has a will for our lives and that we are living in His will. Then tragedy strikes, and we are puzzled. We are disappointed and feel betrayed by God. I've been there, have you?"

"Our precious son, Robbie, was born after a very long and difficult delivery. He weighed almost 10 pounds and was a perfect baby, but he did not breathe immediately. In that short time span, he suffered permanent brain damage.

"We were heartbroken. Over the years, we've seen dozens of specialists. Some physicians told us he would never walk or talk. Along with family and friends, we spent years praying for his healing. We believed, had faith, claimed His promises, and trusted, yet God did not heal Robbie. However, he has blessed us all so richly.

"Robbie is now 34 years old with a mental age of 6. He is happy, somewhat independent, and loves the Lord. Everyone, including physicians, staff, and the families in his developmental school, asks Robbie to pray for them because 'Robbie's prayers are answered.' Robbie says, 'Yes, that's true, but sometimes Jesus says, Wait a while.' He has just won first place in a Special Olympics race. His optimistic outlook and loving ways inspire us all. God has blessed, even though He has not healed Robbie's affliction.

"The answer is never found in bartering with God. The answer isn't found in completing a checklist. The answer is found in making a choice. We can choose to concentrate on the hurt, or we can choose to concentrate on the Healer. Jesus says, 'Come unto me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest' (Matt. 11:28, NIV). He offers us His healing touch, many times through the peace He gives in the midst of tears. If anyone understands suffering, He does!

"Our family and our friends, and countless others in similar situations, look forward to heaven, when we will see our dear ones healed completely by the Master Healer! I am sustained by my faith in that hope. 'And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes' (Rev. 21:4)."

SUMMARY: Jesus' healing touch can make sick people well. Even when, for reasons that He alone understands, He does not choose to heal physically, He gives spiritual strength, the grace to endure, the patience to wait for His ultimate healing when He comes again.



The Miracle Twins

Thony Escotto

Roidel and Roberto are 18-year-old twin brothers who live in Havana, Cuba. Muscular dystrophy has left them almost completely paralyzed since the age of 7. For most of their youth they have been prisoners in their wheelchairs.

Their mother exposed her sons to the world of the occult as she practiced witchcraft and spiritism at home. Without hope for a cure, the brothers grew bitter and began to show aggression toward their friends.

One day Melinda Hernandez, an instructor for *Tu Historia Preferida*, the Spanish version of *Your Story Hour*, a popular Seventh-day Adventist radio program, met the brothers. She gave them a cassette tape of "Little Bad Legs," the story of Glenn Cunningham, whose legs were badly burned in an explosion that killed his brother. But Cunningham was determined to walk. He claimed the promise of Isaiah 40:31: "But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. . . . They will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint" (NIV). Answering pain with prayer, he learned to walk, then run. He began running races and eventually became a champion runner, and an Olympian.

Roberto and Roidel found hope in the story of Glenn Cunningham. They listened to the cassette over and over. They wondered whether the God who helped Glenn Cunningham could help them to walk again as well. The brothers memorized the Bible promise and searched for other words of hope in the Bible. Finally they had found something they could believe in.

A complete transformation began to take place in the brothers' lives. They began studying the Bible lessons that came with the tape; they attended "Your Story Hour" club meetings. And in time they began to go to church. In January of 1996, they surrendered their hearts to Christ and were baptized. Those present witnessed not only a spiritual transformation but also a physical one. After spending 11 years in their wheelchairs, Roberto and Roidel took their first steps. Although they cannot run, their trust in God has revitalized them physically as well as spiritually.

The brothers' lives are no longer filled with hatred and anger. They now greet their friends with words about the love of Jesus.

Thony Escotto is the speaker for the Spanish *Your Story Hour*, a popular radio program produced by Seventh-day Adventists in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

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Healing the Spirit



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Mark 2:1-12; Ps.147:3; Isa. 35:3-6.

MEMORY TEXT: The Lord "forgives all your iniquity, . . . [and] heals all your diseases" (Psalm 103:3, RSV).

KEY THOUGHT: Human beings are created in the image of God with intimately related physical, mental, social, and spiritual characteristics. The Healer of Israel has the authority to forgive sin, and the power to heal.

THE HEALING POWER OF THE GOSPEL. "This world is a vast lazarus house, but Christ came to heal the sick, to proclaim deliverance to the captives of Satan. He was, in Himself, health and strength. He imparted His life to the sick, the afflicted, those possessed of demons. He turned away none who came to receive His healing power. He knew that those who petitioned Him for help had brought disease upon themselves; yet He did not refuse to heal them. And when virtue from Christ entered into these poor souls, they were convicted of sin, and many were healed of their spiritual disease, as well as of their physical maladies. The gospel still possesses the same power, and why should we not today witness the same results?"

"Christ feels the woes of every sufferer. When evil spirits rend a human frame, Christ feels the curse. When fever is burning up the life current, He feels the agony. And He is just as willing to heal the sick now as when He was personally on earth. Christ's servants are His representatives, the channels for His working. He desires through them to exercise His healing power."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 823, 824.

THE PARALYTIC (Mark 2:1-12).

What was the physical condition of the person brought to Jesus? Mark 2:3.

Scripture does not provide a definitive diagnosis, other than to refer to this person as a "paralytic." We may speculate that he suffered from a muscle-wasting disease, such as muscular dystrophy, or a neurological disorder, such as multiple sclerosis or polio. Whatever the cause, apparently he was bedridden and unable to move independently. Ellen White suggests that his condition had been deteriorating for some time and that he was experiencing the final stages of his disease.

What do we understand regarding his mental state? "This paralytic had lost all hope of recovery. . . . He had long before appealed to the . . . doctors, hoping for relief from mental suffering and physical pain. But they coldly pronounced him incurable. . . . The palsied man was entirely helpless, and, seeing no prospect of aid from any quarter, he had sunk into despair."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 267.

In what way did this man's religious beliefs affect his illness? "The Pharisees regarded affliction as an evidence of divine displeasure, and they held themselves aloof from the sick and the needy."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 267.

The paralytic was convinced that his disease was the result of a life of sin; the burden of guilt and remorse was superimposed upon the physical pain that accompanied his every waking moment. He was rejected by his church and felt cut off from God, unforgiven, unloved, hopeless.

How did news about the Healer affect him? What was his primary motive in seeking out the Healer?

"It was not physical restoration he desired so much as relief from the burden of sin. If he could see Jesus, and receive the assurance of forgiveness and peace with Heaven, he would be content to live or die, according to God's will. The cry of the dying man was, Oh that I might come into His presence!"—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 267.

Are you comfortable visiting someone who is dying? What do you say? What do you think the dying person might feel when you speak to him or her?

THE FRIENDS (Mark 2:3-5).

In what ways did the friends of the paralytic contribute to his healing? Mark 2:3-5.

Personal presence:

“When we honestly ask ourselves which persons in our lives mean the most to us, we often find that it is [they are] those who, instead of giving much advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a gentle and tender hand. The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not-knowing, not-curing, not-healing and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is the friend who cares.”—Henri Nouwen, *Out of Solitude* (Notre Dame Campus, Ind: Ave Maria, 1974).

Burden-bearing:

His friends became arms and hands and legs and feet for the paralytic. They provided strength for his weakness and mobility for his confinement. In a very practical way, they met his immediate physical need.

Brought him to Jesus:

Ellen White indicates that it was his friends who told the paralytic about Jesus and encouraged him to believe that he might be healed. When he asked to be carried to the Healer, they gladly responded.

Removal of Barriers:

“Again and again the bearers of the paralytic tried to push their way through the crowd, but in vain. The sick man looked about him in utter anguish. . . . At his suggestion his friends bore him to the top of the house and, breaking up the roof, let him down at the feet of Jesus.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 268.

Faithfulness:

Scripture records that when Jesus saw “their faith,” he responded with words of forgiveness and healing. By their presence in his life, their willingness to carry his load, their initiative in bringing him to Jesus, their persistence in breaking down barriers, and their expression of faith, the friends of the paralytic contributed to his healing.

Do you have a friend in need of healing? If you do, how can you become a source of healing for your friend?

THE HEALER (Mark 2:5).

What were the first words of Jesus to the paralytic? Mark 2:5. How was this statement received by the “teachers of the law”? Mark 2:6, 7, NIV.

“The first thing Jesus does for everyone of us is to say, ‘Child, God is not angry with you. Come home, and don’t be afraid.’”—William Barclay, *The Gospel of Mark* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Westminster Press, 1975), p. 48.

“The Pharisees caught at these words as blasphemy, and conceived that they could present this as a sin worthy of death.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 269.

Why were Jesus’ words so offensive to the teachers?

“The pronouncement was startling because it seemed inappropriate and even irrelevant to the immediate situation. It is intelligible, however, against the background provided by the OT where sin and disease, forgiveness and healing are frequently interrelated concepts. Healing is conditioned by the forgiveness of God and is often the demonstration of that forgiveness . . . Healing is a gracious movement of God into the sphere of withering and decay which are the tokens of death at work in man’s life. It was not God’s intention that man should live with the pressure of death upon him. Sickness, disease and death are the consequence of the sinful condition of all men. Consequently every healing is a driving back of death and an invasion of the province of sin . . . Jesus’ pronouncement of pardon is the recognition that man can be genuinely whole only when the breach occasioned by sin has been healed through God’s forgiveness of sins.”—William L. Lane, “The Gospel of Mark,” *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 94.

In what way did Jesus magnify the dilemma of belief for the teachers? Mark 2:9.

“Apparently the scribes were thinking, ‘It is easy to say that a man’s sins are forgiven, for no one can really tell whether they are.’ Jesus immediately took up their unspoken challenge and, in substance, inquired: ‘Which would *you* find easier, to forgive a man’s sins or to heal him of paralysis?’ The answer was obvious.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 581.

THE HEALING (Mark 2:10-12).

What is the theological significance of the words chosen by Jesus to speak healing to the paralytic? Mark 2:10, 11.

“The usual Greek word for “power,” in the sense of “might” or “strength,” is *dunamis*. To work a miracle required *power*, but the forgiveness of sin was a matter of *authority*. In the present passage, *exousia* [authority] stands at the beginning of the clause, and so emphasizes Christ’s authority to forgive sin.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 581.

What was the response of the paralytic to Jesus’ words? Mark 2:12.

“Then he who had been borne on a litter to Jesus rises to his feet with the elasticity and strength of youth. The life-giving blood bounds through his veins. Every organ of his body springs into sudden activity. The glow of health succeeds the pallor of approaching death.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 269.

What is the inescapable conclusion of these events?

“It required nothing less than creative power to restore health to that decaying body. The same voice that spoke life to man created from the dust of the earth had spoken life to the dying paralytic. And the same power that gave life to the body had renewed the heart. . . .

“The paralytic found in Christ healing for both the soul and the body. The spiritual healing was followed by physical restoration. This lesson should not be overlooked. There are today thousands suffering from physical disease, who, like the paralytic, are longing for the message, ‘Thy sins are forgiven.’ The burden of sin, with its unrest and unsatisfied desires, is the foundation of their maladies. They can find no relief until they come to the Healer of the soul.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 269, 270.

What was the main purpose of this miracle? Discuss how this miracle sheds light on the relationship between healing and forgiveness. What does this relationship suggest regarding the relevance of Christian faith for the sick? Which is more important, healing or forgiveness? Why?

HEALERS TODAY.

Every day around the world, people come to Adventist hospitals and clinics seeking healing. They have a myriad of illnesses, injuries, and hurts, including heart disease, cancer, mental illness, AIDS, liver failure, and broken bones.

What is the ultimate cause of all illness? Rom. 5:12.

The truth of the human condition is that all have sinned and all are subject to disease and death. Unwise lifestyle choices increase the risk of experiencing a variety of diseases; it is also true that healthful choices provide no guarantee against the assault of disease.

How should Christian healers relate to people whose disease appears to be the result of an unwise or sinful lifestyle? Rom. 5:17.

Every person suffering from illness, regardless of its apparent or supposed cause, is beloved of God. Every sick or dying one offers an opportunity for Christian healers to communicate hope, grace, and peace.

“This hope can take many forms. One can offer the patient the hope that his disease will not follow the usual course . . . [or] the hope that people are concerned for the patient’s comfort and enough resources are available to minimize pain and suffering. . . . Spiritual hope can sustain the dying when no reasonable physical hope remains . . . a strong sense of life’s purpose and ultimate reward can carry one through the worst stages of an illness.”—Kenneth H. Fishbeck, M.D., *Journal of Christian Healing*, vol. 7, no. 1, p. 9.

The Healer’s Gift. “I needed a friend. . . . Someone who was willing to be stretched to the limit of love, of trust, of yielding to God’s promptings. Someone willing to stretch out his arms like Jesus on the Cross to embrace the whole of me: my hurts, fears, ‘ugliness,’ sinfulness . . . to see the blossom in the yet-uncracked seed, to see the wholeness where only brokenness showed, to see Jesus’ hand reaching out from me for a companion to walk with. . . . I needed a friend, and Jesus gave me YOU.”—Maryanne Marx, *Journal of Christian Healing*, vol. 7, no. 1, p. 10.

FURTHER STUDY: Read *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 267-271.

There are at least five distinct individuals or groups represented in the account we have considered: the paralytic, his friends, the crowd, the Healer, and the critics.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Where do you see yourself in this picture? If the story were made into a motion picture, what role would best fit you?
2. It took several friends to carry the paralytic's pallet. Are you comfortable working with others in loving people and in helping them come to Christ? Why, or why not?
3. What is your area of giftedness in healing?
4. Would you characterize your church as a healing community? Why, or why not?

There are positive physiological consequences to love, hope, joy, and mental peace. Negative physical consequences result from depression and despair.

"The paralytic found in Christ healing for both the soul and the body. He needed health of soul before he could appreciate health of body. Before the physical malady could be healed, Christ must bring relief to the mind, and cleanse the soul from sin. This lesson should not be overlooked. There are today thousands suffering from physical disease who, like the paralytic, are longing for the message, 'Thy sins are forgiven.' The burden of sin, with its unrest and unsatisfied desires, is the foundation of their maladies. They can find no relief until they come to the Healer of the soul. The peace which He alone can impart would restore vigor to the mind and health to the body."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 77.

SUMMARY: Jesus healed the paralytic as a demonstration of His power to heal physically, as well as His authority to forgive sins. Because he was forgiven, the sick man was enabled to accept the blessing of healing. Our role is to cooperate with Jesus in bringing spiritual healing to those who may or may not be restored to physical health.



Unexpected Gift

David Ferraro

Recently four precious people were baptized in the little Adventist church in Niamey, Niger. Following the baptism, Ali, a church member, shared this story:

He and his family had fled the country of Mali as refugees. They had traveled to several countries looking for work and a safe place to live. Then Ali heard of an organization called ADRA, in Niger. He contacted ADRA, hoping that someone could help him. He met the local pastor, who listened to Ali's story and offered him hope. When Ali revealed that he was searching for answers to spiritual questions, the pastor gave him some material to read. Ali accepted the material and later began studying a Bible correspondence course. As he studied, he found answers to many of his questions.

Ali wanted to tell his wife, Adama, about his new discoveries, but was not sure how. She was a faithful Muslim. Finally he decided to invite her to church on Sabbath morning. When they arrived at church, Adama was shocked. "How could you do this?" she demanded. "This is terrible! You have brought me to a Christian church!" Adama went home, packed her belongings, and returned to her village.

Ali was confused. What had he done? A few days later Ali was summoned to appear before the marabouts (Koran teachers) to answer his wife's charges. They tried to convince him to give up his interest in Christianity. "What you did was very serious," they told him. "With Christians we do not even eat!"

Ali told them simply, "One day the Lord will judge me and my choices. And my wife alone must decide whether to return to me and our children or to give up the family forever."

Adama returned home to her family, but was not interested in Christianity. Ali was becoming discouraged. His problem seemed too big to handle; he was ready to give up Christianity.

On Christmas morning Adama asked her husband, "What gift do you have for me?" Noting the look of surprise on his face, she continued, "I know that Christians give gifts on Christmas." But Ali had no gifts to give that day. "Never mind," Adama answered. "I have a gift for you. I will come to church with you."

Ali was thrilled when his wife joined him for church. Later she began Bible studies. And on that Sabbath day Adama was baptized. For Ali it was the best gift!

David Ferraro is president of the Niger Mission in the Sahel Union of West Africa.

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The Act of Faith



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Mark 5:21-43; 9:14-29; Matt. 8:5-13; John 5:1-8, 14.

MEMORY TEXT: Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. . . . And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him (Hebrews 11:1, 6, NIV).

KEY THOUGHT: Faith is practiced, it acts, and results follow.

FAITH DEFINED. Faith has been defined as unquestioning belief, complete trust, confidence, loyalty, expectation. Faith is being certain of our hopes even when we cannot visualize their fulfillment.

This week we will investigate faith and the act of faith with regard to healing. On several occasions, Jesus made statements to this effect, "Your faith has made you well." It seems to imply that the intensity of belief or certainty made it so. Is that what Jesus meant?

How much faith must I have to be healed? If my faith is lacking, can God still heal me? How much is our part, and how much is God's? Would a loving God not heal me just because I wasn't certain enough?

Let us see how Jesus' ministry supplies some answers for us as we investigate the act of faith this week.

THE ACT OF FAITH FROM A DISTANCE (Matt. 8:5-13).

“The Centurion was the backbone of the Roman military. This officer was responsible for leadership, discipline, and the morale of 100 soldiers. But this was a soldier who cared. The gentleness of the man is evidenced by his request. His concern, appeal, and the expression of faith isn’t for himself but for a slave who is ‘paralyzed and in terrible suffering.’ While this may seem a normal humane act, it wasn’t common in Roman society. Masters had absolute control, life and death, over their slaves who were considered no different from a useful tool. This centurion was a man who cared for other men.”
—William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Westminster, 1975), p. 302.

How did the centurion demonstrate his faith? Matt. 8:8, 9; Luke 7:7, 8.

Jesus was willing to break the cultural taboos and enter the home of a Gentile, but the centurion’s faith made that unnecessary. In Matthew 8:10-12, Jesus taught that the only passport into His kingdom is faith. While the Jewish leaders would have been appalled to see Jesus enter a Gentile home, here was a Gentile whose act of faith was greater than all that Jesus had witnessed in Israel.

What Bible truth does the centurion’s attitude teach us about faith, privilege, and prejudice? Acts 10:34, 35; Luke 12:48.

“The centurion said of himself, ‘I am not worthy.’ His heart had been touched by the grace of Christ. He saw his own unworthiness; yet he feared not to ask help. He trusted not to his own goodness; his argument was his great need. His faith took hold upon Christ in His true character. He did not believe in Him merely as a worker of miracles, but as the friend and Saviour of mankind. . . . We have nothing to recommend us to God; but the plea that we may urge now and ever is our utterly helpless condition that makes His redeeming power a necessity. Renouncing all self-dependence, we may look to the cross of Calvary and say—

‘In my hand no price I bring;
Simply to Thy cross I cling.’ ”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 317.

When you extend your faith and ask for God to heal, what do you expect Him to do?

THE ACT OF FAITH INTERRUPTED (Mark 5:21-36).

Jairus was a synagogue ruler; today we might call him the “head elder.” He was over the administration of the local synagogue—both the physical plant and the schedule of services—and probably one of the most respected leaders in his town. His faith reached out to Jesus for help; nothing else held any hope; his 12-year-old daughter was dying. It must have been a humbling act of faith. Normally Jairus would not put faith in an unrecognized itinerant like Jesus.

What emotions do you think Jairus experienced

1. when he left his daughter to look for Jesus,
2. when he fell at Jesus’ feet, and
3. when Jesus agreed to go with him?

When our expectations are blocked, it is often a source of anger, frustration, and disappointment. We expect God to protect us from life’s major calamities. When that expectation is not realized, our faith often sags, and we question the mercy of God.

Jairus anxiously tried to move Jesus and the accompanying crowd to his home. He was acting on his faith, but then his expectations were blocked. Jesus stopped, the whole crowd stopped with him, and Jesus asked the unusual question, “Who touched me?”

How do you think Jairus felt about Jesus’ question? What was the response of the disciples? Mark 5:30, 31; Luke 8:45-47.

The woman got her miracle, but Jairus’s hopes were dashed. A messenger arrived with the news that his daughter was dead. When the dream is dead, when you have extended your faith and your world still crashes down, why bother the Teacher any further? The girl was dead. Jesus sought to reinspire hope by saying, “Don’t be afraid; just believe” (Mark 5:36, NIV). The joy of his life, his little girl, was dead. But Jesus’ words offered a ray of hope.

How do you have hope, and practice faith, when it seems all hope is gone? What problems are you facing right now that seem bigger than life? Is your God bigger than your problem? (See Matthew 19:26.)

THE ACT OF FAITH—JESUS' CONFIDENCE (Mark 5:35-43; Matt. 9:23-26; Luke 8:50-56).

How are we to ask God for what we need? James 1:5-8.

Jesus' instruction to Jairus "Don't be afraid; just believe" was a statement of His own confidence in His Father. It was an encouragement for Jairus not to give up hope, a call to endure even in this moment, and to cling to belief. Sensitive to the family's needs, Jesus dismissed the crowd and nine of His disciples. Only Peter, James, and John traveled with Him to Jairus' home.

What scene did they encounter at this home? Mark 5:38.

Professional mourners were wailing. The soulful sounds of the mourner's flute were being played. Neighbors had gathered. "The mourners hung over the dead body, begging for a response from the silent lips. They beat their breasts; they tore their hair; and they rent their garments. . . . This made a Jewish house a poignant and pathetic place on the day of mourning."—Barclay, *The Gospel of Mark*, p. 134. And Jesus said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep" (Mark 5:39, NIV). They laughed. They knew she was dead.

Why do you think Jesus refers to death as sleep? Matt. 9:24; John 11:11, 25, 26.

Jesus sent everyone out of the house except the girl's parents and His three disciples. Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we don't yet see, and Jesus acted in faith. No prayer is recorded. Jesus' union with His Father was so close that He had complete assurance that He could raise the dead girl to life. As the source of all life, He could call one back from the jaws of death.

What was Jesus' command and the little girl's response? Mark 5:41, 42. What keeps us from exercising that kind of faith? Ps. 66:18; John 12:26; 14:13, 14 (compare 1 John 5:14).

Why did Jesus want the story kept secret? Can public relations sometimes hinder God's work? Can it block God's continued efforts on our behalf? Matt. 6:3-6.

THE ACT OF FAITH IN A TOUCH (Mark 5:24-34; Luke 8:43-48).

For twelve years the sick woman had motivation to pray. Sickness had plagued her. She had fluctuated between despair and hope. She would go to a doctor or herbalist or healer and find herself no better off.

She had no insurance plan or government assistance program, and now she was bankrupt. Not just financially bankrupt, but her emotions, her body, her relationships were bankrupt. Her disease not only debilitated her physically, but her condition made her "unclean" according to the law in Leviticus 15:25-27. This isolated her from her church, social circles, her husband, and children.

What do you do when you've prayed and acted in faith for twelve years and nothing is better? Rom. 8:26-28, 35-39; Luke 22:42. What are the risks of being more infatuated with being healed than in love with the Healer?

Her cycle of hope and failure may have initially discouraged her from seeking Jesus, but finally she determined to cross paths with Him. She believed that if she just touched His clothes she would be healed. And when she touched His coat, she was immediately healed. Undoubtedly, she would have liked to slip away anonymously to enjoy her newfound health, but faith's results aren't only for the recipient. When she came forward, Jesus declared, "Your faith has healed you" (Mark 5:34, NIV).

Why were the little girl's parents asked to keep the miracle secret (Mark 5:43), while Jesus insisted on making public the sick woman's healing? (verses 30-34).

"After healing the woman, Jesus desired her to acknowledge the blessing she had received. The gifts which the gospel offers are not to be secured by stealth or enjoyed in secret. So the Lord calls upon us for confession of His goodness. 'Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God.' Isa. 43:12."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 347.

On other occasions Jesus asked persons he had healed not to make the miracle known (Mark 1:43, 44; Matt. 9:30). Too much publicity could have hindered His ministry by awakening a popular movement in His favor and by arousing the deep enmity of the nation's religious leaders.

What benefits for yourself and for others is your testimony to the healing power of Christ, both spiritually and physically?

THE ACT OF FAITH (Mark 9:14-29; Matt. 17:14-21).

While Jesus, Peter, James, and John were witnessing Jesus' transfiguration, a man brought his boy to be healed by Jesus' disciples. His journey there and presentation of his son for healing were acts of faith. The disciples had been given power to "drive out all demons and to cure diseases" (Luke 9:1, NIV), but now they appeared helpless. The father's faith had been shaken. After explaining his predicament to Jesus, he begged, "But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us" (Mark 9:22, NIV).

Why did the healing of the son depend on the faith of the father? Mark 9:23, 24. How may our self-reliance and lack of belief block what God wants to do for us?

When the father recognized his own weakness, he could extend his faith and ask for help toward greater faith. Jesus knew that there is an incredible link between the mind and body. In this story, there is a link between one person's faith and someone else's body. While we don't fully understand it, the link is undeniable.

In a clinical trial of a new form of chemotherapy for cancer patients, some patients were given sterile salt water. Even though salt water does not cause hair loss, 30 percent of this group lost their hair! They expected chemotherapy to produce hair loss, and their bodies responded to the expectation.

While belief is important and the mind can significantly influence the body, acts of faith aren't simply self-help, a "conjure-up-enough-belief-and-be-well" technique. It is faith in a God who can heal.

Right now, do you need to practice faith? What is keeping you from your act of faith?

**The only problem too big for God is one we won't give Him!
Here are some steps to help you act in faith:**

- 1. Accept that God is able. "With God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26).**
- 2. Accept God's wisdom to face your problem (James 1:5).**
- 3. Accept counsel from Christian friends (Prov. 11:14).**
- 4. Act. Believing God is able, accepting His wisdom, and good counsel, choose a course of action and ACT in faith (Heb. 11:8).**

FURTHER STUDY: What does Jesus' healing the man at the pool of Bethesda teach us about faith in relation to spiritual healing? John 5: 1-8, 14.

"Through the same faith we may receive spiritual healing. . . . Of ourselves we are no more capable of living a holy life than was the impotent man capable of walking. There are many who realize their helplessness, and who long for that spiritual life which will bring them into harmony with God; they are vainly striving to obtain it. In despair they cry, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?' Rom. 7:24, margin. Let these desponding, struggling ones look up. The Saviour is bending over the purchase of His blood, saying with inexpressible tenderness and pity, 'Wilt thou be made whole?' He bids you arise in health and peace. Do not wait to feel that you are made whole. Believe His word, and it will be fulfilled. Put your will on the side of Christ. Will to serve Him, and in acting upon His word you will receive strength. Whatever may be the evil practice, the master passion which through long indulgence binds both soul and body, Christ is able and longs to deliver. He will impart life to the soul that is 'dead in trespasses.' Eph. 2:1. He will set free the captive that is held by weakness and misfortune and the chains of sin."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 203.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is your responsibility to the sick and suffering in your community? In what ways is a separation of body healing and spiritual healing an unreal separation?
2. How do we fulfill the "act of faith" in a healing ministry today? What is the proper relation between faith and health science? Is there any act of faith in using modern medicine? (See *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 230-233.)
3. How can you act in faith for the benefit of your world? For whom will you act in faith, be it physically, socially, or spiritually?

SUMMARY: Faith is God's gift to those who seek it. Faith is also our choice to act according to Christ's will. We must exercise the gift that God bestows. Spiritual healing always results; physical healing results for us or others when God sees that it is for our or their best good.



The Hidden Book, Part 1

Charlotte Ishkanian

Konde Sered [Seh-RED] grew up during wartime in Uganda. He lived in a large family near the shore of Lake Victoria. When he was 13 years old, his father left and married another woman. His mother could not afford to keep all the children, so Konde went to live with his older sister while he attended school. But at age 15 he fell sick and had to leave school. Sadly, Konde returned to his home village.

Because of the war, soldiers often raided villages looking for able-bodied men to fight. When word came that the soldiers were on their way, Konde's uncle fled into the bush to avoid being taken. Konde helped hide his uncle's possessions in the bush, where they would be safe from the soldiers.

Among his uncle's things, Konde found a book titled *The Great Controversy*. The title intrigued him, and he took the book home to read. As he read, he found a chapter on the Sabbath. Konde showed the chapter to his older brother, who became interested too. The brothers were surprised that so many verses in the Bible mentioned the Sabbath, yet they had never heard of it. They decided to ask their father about it, for he was an important leader in his church. But their father was not interested in the book or its teaching on the Sabbath. The boys were disappointed, but they continued reading *The Great Controversy* and comparing it with texts in their Bible.

Konde's brother heard about some Christians who worshiped on Saturday. He went to town to ask whether they knew the book the boys were reading. He returned with an excited "They are the ones!"

The brothers attended the Adventist church and found it different from their family's church. In their church, the priests read printed prayers and did not give detailed sermons. But the Adventist pastor preached carefully prepared sermons and prayed spontaneous prayers!



Konde and his brother were convinced that the Adventist Church was God's true church. They decided to be baptized. But when their father learned of their plans, he was angry and threatened to disown them.

(Continued next week)

Konde Sered (left) attends Bugema Secondary School near Kampala, Uganda. Charlotte Ishkanian is editor of *Mission*.

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Modern Demons



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matt. 4:24, 25; 17:14-21; Mark 5:1-17; Luke 4:33-37.

MEMORY TEXT: "Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:7, 8, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHT: Whether we damage ourselves, are abused by others, or are attacked by Satan, we must learn how our thoughts and attitudes affect us spiritually and mentally.

SATAN IS A SUBTLE DECEIVER (1 Peter 5:8). He adapts his methods in order to be most effective in the intellectual, philosophical, and political climates of the times. To guard against him, we must avoid three errors.

The first is to spiritualize all our problems, thus neglecting the physical, emotional, and mental causes that may disrupt our ability to think and act clearly. The belief here is that prayer and faith will solve every problem, no matter what its cause.

The second is captured in the phrase "The devil made me do it." This attitude creates a mind-set of victimization and powerlessness to overcome, rather than our accepting responsibility and making the effort to change.

The third is to define reality only by scientifically proven facts, ignoring or denying the spiritual realm. Thus we limit our mental health interventions to biological or psychological causes, forgetting the larger picture of the great controversy and Satan's desire to control our minds.

CASTING OUT DEMONS (Luke 4:33-37).

Often Jesus cast out demons from possessed individuals. He was clearly at war with the powers of darkness. His ministry focused on beating back the evil forces in order that we might gain victory over sin.

Take time to read each account listed below, taking note of both the distinctive features of demon possession and Jesus' interventions.

Luke 4:33-37 _____

Mark 5:1-17 _____

Luke 11:14-26 _____

Mark 7:25-30 _____

Matt. 17:14-21 _____

While specific signs of demonic possession vary from story to story, there are several telltale signs that point toward demonic influence. These signs are:

- supernatural knowledge
- supernatural strength
- use of altered voices
- bizarre, often violent behavior
- presence of a different personality

The Bible does not give specific instructions for how to exorcize demons. What scripture teaches us is how to stop our sinful ways and be filled with Christ's Spirit. This is the sure way to have demons cast out of our lives. When God's Spirit is in charge of a human mind, demons are excluded (Romans 8). Jesus wanted His followers to accept the indwelling Spirit as the source of spiritual power (John 14-16).

What circumstances could make it more than likely for demon possession to take place?

On what basis do some Christians avoid studying this topic, for fear it might open the door to the devil's influence?

DEMON POSSESSION (Matt. 17:20).

When the disciples were unable to cast out the demons possessing a young boy, what was lacking? Matt. 17:20.

“It is faith that connects us with heaven, and brings us strength for coping with the powers of darkness. In Christ, God has provided means for subduing every sinful trait, and resisting every temptation, however strong.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 429.

Does demon possession occur through personal choice, as a natural consequence of sinful behavior, or because of a curse or influence of another person?

“Giving way willfully to practice sins of the flesh gives occasion for Satan to have his way in a believer’s life. Although the legal claim of Satan against us was canceled at the cross, a believer’s willful indulgence in fleshly sins gives the enemy a place or a claim against us which he will be quick to exploit.”—Mark I. Bubeck, *The Adversary* (Chicago, Ill.: Moody, 1975), p. 34.

Is it possible for Satan to “possess” us in a less dramatic fashion? Luke 22:31-34.

The lesson author testifies: “I was called to assist an individual by ‘casting out’ the demons from her life. A psychiatrist believed his patient was possessed, or overly influenced by her belief in the devil. She had been abused as a child and had spent her adult life participating in witchcraft. She heard voices and practiced self-mutilation. While these are clear psychiatric symptoms, the overwhelming sense of defeat and control she experienced at the hands of the devil resulted in continued emotional and behavioral disturbances. This, despite the application of appropriate medical treatment.

“When I first met with this young woman, I listened to her story and heard her deep fears of possession. My heart went out to her. I inquired about her desire to be healed. As she began to cry uncontrollably, I asked whether she would like me to pray for her so she could begin to find release from her turmoil. I continued to pray with her over the next two weeks of hospitalization. During that time, she began to experience hope and deliverance from the forces gripping her.”

Was this “casting out demons” or “supportive care”?

IS MENTAL ILLNESS THE SAME AS DEMON POSSESSION?

There is a huge painting in the front of the chapel at the old Worcester, Massachusetts, State Mental Hospital. It was painted by one of their former mental-health patients. In it, the demoniac is released from the chains that have bound him for so long. Was the painter depicting release from mental illness or from demon possession?

There are those today who would say there is no such thing as demon possession. They insist that what was described in the Bible as demon possession is better understood as mental illness.

It is easy to understand this confusion, because many of the characteristics appear to be the same for both: bizarre behavior, confused thoughts, and lack of control.

The following list of differences may prove helpful in distinguishing mental illness from demon possession:

- **Demons want nothing to do with Jesus. Mentally ill patients are often very religious.**
- **Demons are portrayed with distinctive personalities that inhabit the body. Mental illness does not manifest such differentiated personalities.**
- **Demons speak in a rational manner and with insights that would not be possible for the possessed individual to know. Mentally ill patients usually do not speak in rational, logical ways.**
- **The cure from demon possession is instantaneous. Mental illness takes much longer to cure or control.**

While scientific discoveries have made major advances in the understanding and treatment of mental illness, they have not provided all the answers.

“The true principles of psychology are found in the Holy Scriptures. . . . He who comes to Jesus, he who believes on Him and makes Him his Example, realizes the meaning of the words ‘To them gave He power to become the sons of God.’”

“The advantage he [Satan] takes of the sciences, sciences which pertain to the human mind, is tremendous. Here, serpentlike, he imperceptibly creeps in to corrupt the work of God.”—*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, pp. 10,19.

Why does demon possession seem to be common only in some primitive cultures? Do you think a diagnosis of mental illness or a diagnosis of demon possession is a better explanation of disturbed people today? Why? Are good Christians immune to mental illness?

INSTRUCTIONS FOR IMPROVED MENTAL HEALTH (John 8:32).

“You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (John 8:32, RSV).

Satan is the author of lies. It is his deceptions that are at the heart of our emotional disturbances. When we believe his lies, our understanding of reality is distorted.

“Some of the lies we tell ourselves we know to be lies. But . . . some we believe have actually become the ‘truth’ because we have practiced them for so long. These are the most dangerous lies of all because we rarely, if ever, dispute them. We don’t dispute what we believe to be true.”—Chris Thurman, *The Truths We Must Believe* (Nashville, Tenn.: Nelson Comm., 1992), p. 24.

What are some of the more destructive lies we come to believe?

- I must have everyone’s approval all the time.
- My unhappiness is somebody else’s fault.
- I am only as good as what I do.
- If our marriage takes such hard work, we must not be right for each other.
- Depression, anger, and anxiety are indicators of weak faith.

What is the source of the lies we choose to believe? John 8:44.

“Nothing is so easy as to deceive one’s self; for what we wish, we readily believe.”—Demosthenes.

Satan’s deceptions create profound mental disturbances. To be effective in our interventions, we must not only address the symptoms, but understand the root causes.

“The emotional complaints of our time, complaints we therapists hear every day in our practice, include emptiness, meaninglessness, vague depression, disillusionment about marriage, family, and relationship, loss of values, yearning for personal fulfillment, a hunger for spirituality.”—Thomas Moore, *Care of the Soul* (New York, N.Y.: Harper Collins, 1992), p. xvi.

If medications and insight alone cannot effectively resolve these issues, what is an effective remedy? John 8:32, 34-36; Phil. 4:8.

**When you feel discouraged or overwhelmed, what should you do?
What can you do to help a discouraged church member or neighbor?**

**MENTAL HEALTH AND IMPROVED PHYSICAL HEALTH
(Prov. 17:22).**

What indications do we have in God's Word regarding the relationship between mental health and physical health? Prov. 3:5-8.

This truth is also demonstrated by modern science.

"The relation that exists between the mind and the body is very intimate. When one is affected, the other sympathizes. The condition of the mind affects the health to a far greater degree than many realize. Many of the diseases from which men suffer are the result of mental depression. Grief, anxiety, discontent, remorse, guilt, distrust, all tend to break down the life forces and to invite decay and death."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 241.

Jesus did not make a sharp distinction between mental health and physical health. He used the same healing principles in both cases (Matt. 4:23, 24).

"The mechanisms by which personal beliefs, psychosocial factors, and stress affect the development of disease are not as well understood. What we do know, however, is that the mind and body communicate constantly with each other. What the mind thinks, perceives, and experiences is transmitted from our brain to the rest of our bodies. . . . It is possible for thoughts (I can't stand this! How dare that car cut me off!) and emotions (anger, frustration) to be associated with physical changes (increased blood pressure, increased muscle tension) that can be potentially harmful."—Herbert Benson, *The Wellness Book*, p. 13.

There is a growing body of evidence demonstrating the positive relationship between religion and health. Those who attend church regularly live longer, have fewer diseases, and are less likely to have mental-health problems. A study completed by Loma Linda University indicates that Seventh-day Adventist men live 6.2 years longer, and Adventist women live 3.7 years longer than the American norm. The cancer rate for American Adventists is only 60 percent of the national norm and coronary heart disease is 66 percent. This evidence is consistent with the benefits of the lifestyle described in the Bible.

Church attendance is associated with lower blood pressure, less substance abuse, and, in senior citizens, with an increased desire to live, according to Elisabeth McSherry in a conference on "Spirituality and Health Care Outcomes" (National Institutes of Health, March 21, 22, 1995), p. 3.

FURTHER STUDY: Note how Jesus instructed us to help others: Matthew 10:7, 8.

Helping those in trouble is our witness for Christ. Satan is constantly seeking to defeat us. We need to be armed with the armor of God and through supportive concern for each other to defeat him and his desire to control our lives.

“Those wretched beings [the demoniacs of Gergesa], dwelling in the place of graves, possessed by demons, in bondage to uncontrolled passions and loathsome lusts, represent what humanity would become if given up to satanic jurisdiction. Satan’s influence is constantly exerted upon men to distract the senses, control the mind for evil, and incite to violence and crime. He weakens the body, darkens the intellect, and debases the soul. Whenever men reject the Saviour’s invitation, they are yielding themselves to Satan.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 341.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1. When others come to you with their troubles, what is the best way to help? From the following list of answers, discuss what approaches are most likely to achieve success and why. Identify the strengths and limitations of each response. Make this as practical as you can in your ministry to others:**
 - a. Listen to their concerns; then help define more clearly what you heard.**
 - b. Give answers that you have found to be helpful.**
 - c. Refer to someone else for help.**
 - d. Offer a prayer and read a supportive text of Scripture.**
- 2. What practical approaches can you take to defeat Satan’s attacks on your minds?**
- 3. What can you do to make people feel more comfortable coming to you with their problems? Some people are sought-after counselors. Why?**

SUMMARY: Jesus’ ministry involved healing mental illness as well as physical and spiritual illness. Often He released possessed people of the demons who were harassing them. He enabled the spiritually and mentally ill to detect the lies of the evil one and, by God’s grace, to accept forgiveness and to live in accordance with divine principles.



The Hidden Book, Part 2

Charlotte Ishkanian

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Konde Sered was helping his family hide his uncle's belongings from soldiers during the war in Uganda. He discovered a book hidden among his uncle's belongings. The title intrigued him: *The Great Controversy*. He took the book home and began reading about Bible truths and the world's last days. Konde told his brother about the book, and the two began reading it together. They compared it with the Bible and found it to be true. They learned that the Sabbath of the Bible was Saturday. They found the Adventist church and eventually were baptized. Although their father was angry with them, they were now young men, and he could not punish them.

Konde shared his new faith with his sister, and she, too, accepted the Adventist message and was baptized. Then two of their father's younger children came to live with Konde's sister while they attended school in town. Konde and his sister took them to Sabbath School and church. When they returned to their father's home, they were Adventists.

Now their father was really angry! But the children stood firm and told their father that if they could not serve God at home, then they would go away and live elsewhere. Their father forbade them to attend church on Sabbath and gave them extra work to keep them too busy to attend church. The next school year he sent the two children to separate schools and arranged for the boy to live with other family members. He hoped that this would cause the two young people to forget their faith in the Sabbath. The boy quit attending church, but his sister, who lives with Konde, has remained firm in her beliefs and continues attending church.

One day a friend stopped Konde in town and said, "I heard that your father is going to become an Adventist!" Konde was shocked!



He went to his father and asked him about it. Imagine his joy when he learned that both his father and his father's wife would soon be baptized. What rejoicing Konde has seen in his family, all because he found a book called *The Great Controversy* while hiding his uncle's possessions!

Konde Sered attends school at Bugema Secondary School. Charlotte Ishkanian is editor of *Mission*.

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The Sabbath and Health



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matt. 12:8-14; Mark 1:21-27; Luke 13:10-17; 14:1-6.

MEMORY TEXT: "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers" (3 John 2, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHT: The Sabbath contributes to our spiritual and physical health and enriches our family and church relationships.

THE SABBATH MEMORIALIZES DIVINE HEALING. In 1995, Florida Hospital was selected by the Disney Development Corporation to provide health-care services in their new city, Celebration, adjacent to Disney World in Orlando. The city is to be a model healthy community. During a planning session on the health facility, one of the architects asked, "Do Adventists have a biblical philosophy of health we could use in planning this facility?" We concluded that our health principles are embedded in the environment of Eden.

The result was a report titled, "A Theme for Celebration Health," in which Dr. Ted Hamilton wrote: "Created in the image of their Maker, men and women were designed for work and rest, fellowship and worship. Adventists believe that optimum health is achieved today through celebration of these same fundamental life principles." The new Florida Hospital at Celebration City has as its theme: "The God who has the power to create all things also has the power and the desire to re-create, to heal, and to keep us well so that we may have abundant life."

The purpose of the Sabbath is to honor our Creator-Redeemer God, who provides spiritual and physical healing.

CEASING FROM WORK (Gen. 2:1-3).

In the biblical account of the institution of the Sabbath, three elements are included in the description. What is the first element? Gen. 2:1, 2 (first part).

At the end of Creation week, God gave us a perfect example to follow. And throughout history, the Sabbath has been God's gift for our spiritual enrichment. But there are blessings beyond the spiritual that come to those who cease work as the sun sets on Friday afternoon. Ceasing from work is an essential ingredient of good health.

Richard Exley suggests a reason: "In our culture, work has become a god. It is the pre-eminent factor in organizing human life and establishing personal identities. It so dominates people's lives that there is little time for themselves or their families. The Sabbath is God's answer. It serves as a counterbalance, establishing the inalienable human right to rest. It is designed to protect us from the dangers of physical exhaustion, psychological stress and the interpersonal alienation which result from idolization and over-identification with work."—Richard Exley, *The Rhythm of Life* (Tulsa, Okla.: Honor Books, 1987), p. 73.

The desire for more material comforts forces people to work excessively, which often results in sleep deficit, and too many people "are getting between 60 and 90 minutes less per night than they should for optimum health and performance."—Exley, p. 11. While not all cultures have yet gone this far in pursuit of material goods, the trend on all continents is clear.

The lack of rest especially impacts working mothers as they live lives of perpetual motion. According to one author, sleep-deprived mothers talk about sleep the way a hungry person talks about food! A Boston, Massachusetts study found that employed mothers average more than eighty hours of housework, child care, and employment per week.

For those in school, those at work, those rearing children, those in the military, those in retirement, those who are sick, and those who are well, our humanity links us all with a common need—the weekly Sabbath of rest to enrich our lives in every dimension.

If you live in a community that emphasizes the work ethic above the rest ethic, what principles does David offer? Ps. 127:1, 2.

Ask yourself: To what degree is my life driven by the desire for material comforts? What steps can I take to prevent my family and myself from becoming victims of a cycle of "work and spend"?

ELUSIVE REST (Josh. 1:13; Ps. 46:10).

What is the second element that describes the first Sabbath? Gen. 2:2 (second part).

The first two elements noted in Genesis 2 should be two sides of one coin. But that is not necessarily the way we experience it. You can go home from work but take the workplace with you and fail to enter into rest. The Sabbath is God's invitation both to quit work and to enter into rest.

Note how Hebrews 4:1-9 details the tragedy of Old Testament people who knew the gift of the Sabbath and the God of the Sabbath, but missed the goal of the Sabbath by failing to enter into His rest.

Without rest there can be fear. The first result of sin in the hearts of Adam and Eve was fear. They hid from God. And fear continues to affect health negatively.

Stress is another recognized factor associated with physical and mental disorders. In 1993, in a symposium of health futurists from around the world, participants predicted the diseases of the next decade. They asserted that there would be a great increase in diseases of the immune system and behavioral-related diseases because of increased fear and the fracturing of families. How reminiscent of the Bible's description of the end times!

Describe the effect on health of living in a fear-filled world. What was Jesus' counsel to believers? Luke 21:25, 26, 34.

Read Matthew 11:28, 29, and describe the ways in which your Sabbath keeping has involved Jesus' gift of rest.

How can we use the gift of the Sabbath to resolve the three major fears of life?

- **Fear of the past (that your mistakes will prevent you from experiencing happiness in the future).**
- **Fear of the future (the challenges and circumstances of living will be too great for you to handle).**
- **Fear and anxiety in the present (that robs you of the confidence to live a positive life).**

How may the Sabbath bring relief from stress problems?

**THE SABBATH, MARRIAGE, AND PERSONAL HEALTH
(Gen. 2:18-24).**

What other institution dates back to Creation week? Gen. 2: 18-24.

The creation of the Sabbath and the creation of the institution of marriage were events closely linked in time. On Friday of Creation Week, God formed Adam from clay and later Eve from Adam's side. After a few fleeting hours filled with an escorted tour by Jesus of the garden home He had made for them, the sun set. Thus, their first *full* day together was a Sabbath of rest, fellowship, and worship.

God later reiterated His desire to see the Sabbath and the family closely linked. When it was the right time for Jesus to engrave in granite the great principles of life and righteousness and hand them to Moses at Sinai, our duty in our relationship with God and our duty in our relationship with human beings were placed together as commandments four and five. But what about the health connection?

"Marriage, at least a good one, is good for health. By the same token a troubled marriage or divorce may be physically harmful. Married people live longer on an average than do those who are single. . . . In a study of more than 7,500 adults, epidemiologists, at Marade Davis . . . found that single men between 45 and 54 are twice as likely to die in a period of ten years as were married men of the same age."—David Spiegel, M.D., *Mind Body Medicine*, p. 334.

How can Sabbath serve to strengthen our marriages and our families? What answer to the question is implied in the Sabbath commandment? Exod. 20:8-11.

One couple has found an interesting way to unite Sabbath and family life for the enrichment of their lives. On Friday evening, they find a promise and commit it to memory as a source of strength for the coming week. They choose the promise based on the challenges they expect to face during the week. Throughout the Sabbath, they draw energy from the promise. Then during the week, they write it each day at the top of their "To Do" lists. Whenever the list is consulted, the verse continues to exert its power on their minds. The most rewarding part of this helpful habit is that they daily discover that God can fulfill for them the promises of His Word.

SABBATH AND SANCTIFICATION (Exod. 31:13).

What is the relationship between the Sabbath and holiness? Exod. 31:13.

True Sabbath observance fosters personal and communal holiness. The Sabbath is a day for fellowship with God and with other believers. As such, the Sabbath strengthens family life and church life.

This thought takes us back to the story of the Fall. A symptom of sin was the erosion of the interpersonal relationship between Adam and Eve. Blaming drove a wedge into the intimacy that they had once enjoyed. Blaming God and blaming each other brought alienation and dissension.

At the close of the Last Supper, Jesus gave a new commandment. According to that commandment, what is the greatest identifying sign of the remnant? John 13:34, 35.

Sanctification (holiness) was the point of greatest contrast between Jesus' teaching and that of the Pharisees. The Pharisees called themselves the "set-apart ones." In their view, the farther you are from the sinful world, the closer you are to achieving holiness. That is why they criticized Jesus for eating with sinners and accused Him of Sabbath breaking. The Pharisees thought of themselves as the guardians of sanctity. Sabbath was the day upon which they reigned supreme; their rules governed its observance.

In what practical ways can Sabbath serve to strengthen holiness in marriages, families, and the church?

"God has given such signs and symbols as the rainbow, circumcision, the Passover lamb, the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, and baptism to help us conceptualize our relationship with Him. Among these God-given symbols, the Sabbath occupies a unique place. It is unique in its *origin*, as it is the first symbol of divine-human fellowship given to mankind. It is unique in its *survival* because it has survived throughout history in spite of attempts to outlaw it. It is unique in its *function*, because it serves as the symbol par excellence of the divine election and mission of God's people."—Samuele Bacchiocchi, *These Times*, June 1978, p. 10.

REMOVING THE THORNS FROM THE SABBATH (Mark 3:1-6).

The benefits to be gained from entering into our Creator's rest are extolled by all those who prepare for and then experience genuine Sabbath observance. Thus it is no surprise that after sin entered the world, one of Satan's most concerted attacks focused on the Sabbath. If he could take this day of love and undermine it, he would be able to achieve in the spiritual realm what he had already achieved in the physical realm. Just as a perfume-laden rose now carries thorns on its stem, Satan sought to place thorns on the stem of the Sabbath rose. These "thorns" placed on the Sabbath came from well-meaning people who said they were acting to protect the sanctity of Sabbath. But Jesus chose to challenge their approach to Sabbath keeping through healing miracles.

Before one Sabbath miracle, Jesus gave the reasons for His reformation of Sabbath keeping as practiced by the Pharisees. Identify His two reasons. Mark 2:27, 28.

The rules the Pharisees devised for Sabbath healing seemed to have the clearest logic. They determined that if a person was in a life-threatening situation, it was appropriate to do the work of healing and save the life. While they believed you could seek to prevent the loss of life, they opposed the promotion of healing. In other words, if your hand or wrist were cut and bleeding, you could stop the bleeding, because it was a threat to life. But you could not put salve on the wound to promote healing!

What is wrong with that logic, and why did Jesus choose to heal on the Sabbath? Why did Jesus look on the Pharisees "with anger"? (Mark 3:5, RSV).

Is healing "a necessary evil" in a world of sin? Should we seek to limit Sabbath healing as far as possible, or is it consistent with good Sabbath observance? Matt. 12:11, 12.

Jesus knew this was no small matter for the Pharisees and that it would be one of the primary reasons they would seek to kill Him. Why did He choose to make Sabbath healings such a confrontational issue?

FURTHER STUDY: What was involved in God's third act as He instituted the Sabbath? Gen. 2:3.

"After resting upon the seventh day, God sanctified it, or set it apart, as a day of rest for man. Following the example of the Creator, man was to rest upon this sacred day, that as he should look upon the heavens and the earth, he might reflect upon God's great work of creation; and that as he should behold the evidences of God's wisdom and goodness, his heart might be filled with love and reverence for his Maker."
—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 47.

God's original plan was that Sabbath observance should bring us together with Him and one another so that we might experience personal and community transformation.

We can think of the church as God's divinely appointed support group. In recent years, the health benefits of social integration and support groups have been quantified. In the *Journal of Science* a few years ago, James House observed that the relationship between social isolation and early death is as strong statistically as the relationship between dying and smoking or high levels of cholesterol. From a statistical standpoint, the data suggests that it may be as important for your health to be socially integrated as it is to stop smoking or to reduce a high cholesterol level.

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

What is the purpose of Friday, the preparation day?

"The day before the Sabbath should be made a day of preparation, that everything may be in readiness for its sacred hours. In no case should our own business be allowed to encroach upon holy time. God has directed that the sick and suffering be cared for; the labor required to make them comfortable is a work of mercy, and no violation of the Sabbath; but all unnecessary work should be avoided. Many carelessly put off till the beginning of the Sabbath little things that might have been done on the day of preparation. This should not be. Work that is neglected until the beginning of the Sabbath should remain undone until it is past."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 296.

SUMMARY: God instituted the Sabbath by ceasing His work of Creation, resting, and setting this day apart for holy use. As we follow His example, our spiritual, physical, and mental health are enhanced. Our families and churches are enriched as unitedly we honor our Sovereign Creator.



A Soul-winning Team

Jeane Zachary

Ellen and John Lanes are a couple with a mission. They use their individual skills and the gifts of hospitality to win others for Christ in the large city of Manado, on the East Indonesian island of Sulawesi (Celebes).

John is a bus driver in Manado. As he guides his bus along his appointed route, he looks for ways to give his passengers more than just a safe ride to their destination. He tries to guide them to a better life. He serves many of the same customers several times a week, and John strikes up conversations, seeking to develop a friendship with them.

When a smoker boards his bus, John looks for ways to help the person see the danger of the habit. He shares with his clients the latest scientific information regarding the health hazards of tobacco or alcohol. As he tries to help those who have a problem with a harmful habit, he often can share his faith. And if a person expresses an interest in spiritual things, John invites him or her to attend one of his Bible classes.

Ellen Lanes is a seamstress. When a woman comes to her with sewing jobs, she sees more than a customer; she sees a friend. Through repeated contacts with them, Ellen nurtures their friendship and invites them to attend one of her Bible-study groups.

The Lord has given John and Ellen Lanes the gifts of hospitality and teaching. Every month they bring converts to the Lord. Since John and Ellen began their outreach four years ago, the Lord has given them 75 souls.

During *The Quiet Hour's* recent evangelistic thrust, 100 lay evangelists helped prepare interests for the evangelistic meetings, and more than 300 persons were brought to the Lord through this joint evangelistic effort. Because persons brought to the Lord through group Bible studies are carefully nurtured, the dropout rate following baptism is very low. This is the spirit of the work in East Indonesia. It is little wonder that Manado has one of the highest per-capita Adventist memberships of any city in the world.



Ellen and John Lanes (left); Jeane Zachary is a retired secretary. She often accompanies and assists her husband, J. H. Zachary, international evangelism coordinator for *The Quiet Hour*, on major evangelistic efforts around the world.

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Unconditional Healing



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Mark 7:24-30; Matt. 4:23, 24; Luke 7:1-10, 36-50; 8:40-56.

MEMORY TEXT: "Now Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people" (Matt. 4:23, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHT: Because He loves unconditionally, Christ healed unconditionally. He healed Jews, Romans, and Samaritans alike. He did not exact a fee or ask for a commitment to future action or behavior.

NEED WAS SUFFICIENT MOTIVATION. Although fully concerned for people's eternal well-being, their physical needs compelled Him to heal. Jesus asks us to continue His work of disinterested benevolence.

Jesus was accused of being possessed. He was condemned as a glutton, a drunkard, and a friend of sinners. The Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the prince of demons" (Matt. 9:34, RSV). Note Jesus' response, recorded in Luke 7:33-35.

"Jesus spent a disproportionate amount of time with people described in the Gospels as the poor, the blind, the lame, the lepers, the hungry, sinners, prostitutes, tax collectors, the persecuted, the downtrodden, the captives, those possessed by unclean spirits, all who labor and are heavy burdened, the rabble who know nothing of the law, the crowds, the little ones, the least, the last, and the lost sheep of the house of Israel. In short, Jesus associated with ragamuffins."—Brennan Manning, *Ragamuffin Gospel* (Sisters, Ore.: Questar Pubs., 1990), p. 49.

HEALING RELIGIOUS LEADERS (Luke 7:36-50).

What religious leader did Jesus heal? With what result? Luke 7:36-50; Matt. 26:6-13; John 12:1-9.

Often our focus at the feast in Simon's house is on Mary (John 12:3). But Simon, the Pharisee, was a former leper whom Jesus had healed (Matt. 26:6; Luke 7:36). In the New Testament, Pharisees are viewed as Christ's antagonists, concerned with outward form and behavior, rather than issues of the heart. Christ strongly rebuked them, calling them children of hell (Matt. 23:15). Understanding the Pharisees is essential to understanding Simon, why Jesus healed him, and the lessons Jesus sought to teach him.

The Hebrew term translated "Pharisees" means literally "the separated ones." They separated themselves for study and the interpretation of the law. Numbering about 6,000 during this period, they had preserved strict adherence to Judaism in the late intertestamental period.

They "controlled the synagogues and exercised great control over the general population."—Holman, *Bible Dictionary*, p. 791.

The Pharisees separated themselves from the "world" and its defilement. Their teaching formed the basis of the Mishnah, a compilation of oral tradition created to interpret scriptural law in order to protect a person from becoming impure by committing sin.

How did leprosy impact those infected? How did it affect Simon? Lev. 13:45, 46.

As a leper, Simon could not practice Pharisaism. He could not live at home, go to synagogue worship, or sacrifice at the temple. In the Jewish mind, he was considered unclean, unholy, and cut off from God. "Biblical purity lays out conditions under which people may approach what is holy, most particularly the divine presence."—*Bible Review*, June 1995, p. 25.

Simon's mistake was believing that obedience to the law would bring salvation rather than accepting Jesus' saving grace. Until healed, Simon was cut off from society. Knowing he had no hope, he came to Jesus, who healed him physically and restored him to society and worship.

How should we work today for those with illnesses such as leprosy, tuberculosis, and AIDS? How should the local church be involved in caring for these people?

HEALING COMMON BELIEVERS (Luke 8:40-42, 49-56).

Why are the healing of Jairus's daughter and the widow's son important to our understanding of Jesus? Luke 8:40-42, 49-56; 7:11-16.

Today we revisit a story introduced earlier in the quarter, but seeking a different perspective. Jairus held the post of "ruler" of Capernaum's largest synagogue. He had been appointed to this position by Jewish community elders. Each Sabbath, he selected readers or teachers, examined speakers' discourses, and saw that services were orderly and in accordance with tradition. He was also responsible for the synagogue's physical maintenance.

He was with an unclean spirit healed in his synagogue (Luke 4:31-37) and was aware of the paralytic's being restored (Mark 2:1-12). He may also have been one of the elders who asked Jesus to heal the centurion's servant (Luke 7:1-10). Jairus was probably wealthy, involved in his community, and respected for his lay leadership.

What impact do you think Jairus's act of falling before Jesus had on the crowd, the Pharisees, and Jairus's future as a synagogue official? Mark 5:22; Luke 8:41.

In Mark 5:22, the Greek word for "falling" implies falling from an erect to a prostrate position. Jairus wasn't kneeling and asking with dignity; he was on his face begging. Jesus was his last hope. Jesus responded immediately to Jairus's request and recognition that He was the only solution to the problem. At the moment when his daughter's death was bluntly announced, Jesus confirmed that faith was Jairus's motivation. Jesus simply said, "Don't be afraid; just believe" (Luke 8:50, NIV).

How was Jesus' action at Nain different from His reaction to Jairus? Luke 7:13, 14.

Jesus doesn't ask for faith from the mother, He just acts. The widow's need and His great compassion for her loss causes an immediate out-flowing of His resurrecting power. The result? "They were all filled with awe and praised God" (Luke 7:16, NIV).

Why did Jesus act at times without any expression of faith on the part of the healed person?

HEALING OUTCASTS (Luke 8:43-48).

What were the restrictions and responsibilities for the woman with the issue of blood? Lev. 15:19-30.

For twelve years, the woman who touched Jesus had lived in a perpetual state of ritual impurity. Her alienation was surpassed only by that of a leper or someone touching the dead. Her condition caused impurity of her bed, her clothes, and the places she sat. It kept her from engaging in marital relations. Her uncleanness involved continuous ritual cleansing responsibilities for those who touched her.

According to the Mishnah, the codified Jewish oral tradition, "The Temple Mount is still more holy, for no man or woman that has a flux, no menstruant and no woman after childbirth may enter therein."—Mishnah, Kelim 1.8. The purification law was given "lest they die in their uncleanness by their defiling My tabernacle that is among them" (Lev. 15:31, NASB). This woman was excluded from worship in the temple, from the presence of God (in the Jewish mind), and from the synagogue worship experience with family and friends.

Why did the woman want to be healed secretly? Why did Jesus call attention to her? Because of her "unclean" state, being in the crowd was improper. The woman hoped for secret healing to avoid embarrassment caused by the public announcement of her "uncleanness." But her healing, if allowed to remain secret, would have prevented the public proclamation of her faith and her public recognition of Jesus as the sole source of restoration.

"Imperfect though her faith was, the Lord rewarded it. The recovery, moreover, was instant. In one moment the hemorrhage stopped completely. Health and vigor began to surge through every part of her body."—William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Bk., 1978), p. 457.

Jesus' healing brought physical, spiritual, and social restoration. The woman was restored to full fellowship with her community and with God.

"The Lord has a work to be done for the outcasts. . . . This will have its place in connection with the proclamation of the third angel's message and the reception of Bible truth."—*Medical Ministry*, p. 311.

Are there any people in your local church who might feel like "outcasts"? What kind of healing do they need to experience? What role could you play in bringing such "outcasts" into full participation in church life?

HEALING FOREIGNERS (Luke 7:1-10).

Why did the Jews consider the centurion worthy of Jesus' attention? Luke 7:4, 5.

Capernaum was a large town in the first century. Owing to its location on the road between Sepphoris, Herod Antipas's royal city, and Damascus, it was normal for it to be garrisoned by Roman troops. It was not uncommon for such troops to remain in the same city for many years. The centurion had broken down prejudice toward "Gentiles" and had become an admirer of Judaism.

The centurion had contributed to the construction of the synagogue where Jesus preached and healed. This synagogue was large enough to seat 500 people for Sabbath services. Its foundation still can be seen under the ruins of a later synagogue. More important, the centurion was said to be worthy "for he loves our people" (Luke 7:5, NRSV). To the Jewish elders, this was meaningful because it measured the Roman centurion's attitude towards Jews, an unrespected ethnic group.

Why did the centurion think of himself as unworthy? Luke 7:6-8.

"Though a believer in the true God, the centurion was not yet a full proselyte and therefore not eligible to participate in religious services."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, p. 754.

The centurion had possibly witnessed some of Jesus' miracles. He knew His authority and power. He could see it in the lives of many whom Jesus touched and healed in Capernaum. He felt unworthy of Jesus' presence in his home and wanted to honor Him as a Jew. Thus his request, "Say the word, and my servant will be healed" (Luke 7:7, NIV).

"The centurion, born in heathenism, educated in the idolatry of imperial Rome, trained as a soldier, seemingly cut off from spiritual life by his education and surroundings, and still further shut out by the bigotry of the Jews, and by the contempt of his own countrymen for the people of Israel—this man perceived the truth to which the children of Abraham were blinded."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 317.

Who are the "Gentiles" in your community? How have you reached out to make them part of your personal life and your church life? Would they feel comfortable in your church and in your home? Would you be comfortable in their homes?

HEALING UNBELIEVERS (Mark 7:24-30; Matt. 15:21-28).

Why did Jesus first reject the woman's pleas to heal her daughter? Matt. 15:23.

Jesus initially responded to the woman as a Jew normally would. She was a Canaanite (Matt. 5:22). This woman worshiped the same pagan deities, Baal, Asherah, Anat, that had led to Israel's destruction. To a faithful Jew, she was seen as lost, condemned to hell, and unworthy of salvation. Because of their ancestry, Jews called themselves the "children of God" and called the heathen "dogs." This is why Jesus used these metaphors in His response to the Canaanite's plea (Mark 7:27).

"Christ did not immediately reply to the woman's request. He received this representative of a despised race as the Jews would have done. In this He designed that His disciples should be impressed with the cold and heartless manner in which the Jews would treat such a case."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 400.

A woman addressing a man in public was culturally unacceptable. Only women of ill-repute would persistently approach men and try to engage them in conversation.

This woman had never been to a synagogue, she didn't understand Judaism, she hadn't kept the Sabbath or heard Jesus preach, and she didn't worship the true God. She didn't care about reputation or status in her community or in the eyes of the disciples. She recognized her daughter's great need for release from demon possession and trusted that Jesus held the answer to her healing.

Jesus didn't ask her to change her lifestyle, become a Jew, listen to a sermon, or become a disciple before He acted. Falling prostrate before Him she cried, "Lord, help me" (Matt. 15:25, RSV). This demonstration of need and faith, Jesus honored. "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows riches upon all who call upon him. For, 'everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved'" (Rom. 10:12, 13, RSV).

Jesus' visit to Tyre and Sidon ended this mother's struggle to save her daughter from Satan's grip. It is our challenge to interact with society, to learn its heartfelt needs, and in fulfilling them, to help others see Jesus as the solution to life's problems and as the source of hope.

Who are the "unbelievers" in your community? How can you help bring them into a faith relationship with Jesus?

If someone does not know about Christianity, how can you help them understand God's love for them?

FURTHER STUDY: To strengthen your understanding of Christ's work with unbelievers, study the accounts of the demon-possessed Gerasene (Mark 5:1-19) and the deaf man (Mark 7:31-37). How do these stories influence your witnessing and healing efforts?

Read "Our Example" in *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 17-28, and "Barriers Broken Down" in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 399-403. From these sources, develop principles that might be applied in our work for others.

"Christ recognized no distinction of nationality or rank or creed. The scribes and Pharisees desired to make a local and national benefit of the gifts of heaven and to exclude the rest of God's family in the world. But Christ came to break down every wall of partition. He came to show that His gift of mercy and love is as unconfined as the air, the light, or the showers of rain that refresh the earth. . . . He passed by no human being as worthless, but sought to apply the healing remedy to every soul."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 25.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Share one way Jesus has given you unconditional healing.
2. In your church, are there barriers to welcoming people of religious backgrounds and social and economic standing different from those of the existing members? How can these barriers be removed?

SUMMARY: Religious leaders, lay persons, outcasts of culture and society, foreigners and unbelievers—all experienced Christ's unconditional healing power. We are called to bring mental, physical, social, and spiritual healing and restoration to those we contact in our daily activities. Our kindness and concern for others stands as a living example of God's unconditional healing in the world.



Suffering With Christ

As told by Januario de Pena

Januario Pena often wondered why his childhood had been so difficult. When his Adventist parents died when he was 8 years old, he was sent to live with an unbelieving uncle. There he lived in virtual slavery, forbidden to attend school and forced to work hard all day. Often he was beaten for the other children's misdeeds.

When Pena was 16, he left his uncle's home and joined the guerrilla army fighting for Mozambique's freedom. Pena served in the army for several years before he was wounded in combat and discharged.

Pena returned to his hometown where he met an Adventist pastor who reintroduced him to Jesus Christ and the faith of his parents. It was then that Pena realized God had repeatedly saved his life during his troubled youth. Pena accepted God's love and Jesus' sacrifice and was baptized. Then he set out to work for God.

Living off the military retirement pay he received, Pena traveled from district to district, telling people about God's grace. Because the war created a deep suspicion of strangers, Pena introduced himself as an evangelist to the traditional authority or district leader. The area leader was compelled to introduce Pena to the people and provide him a place to hold meetings. This made Pena's work somewhat easier because the people knew who he was before he started witnessing. He studied with anyone who showed interest and prepared many for baptism. When a group was ready for baptism, Pena would summon a minister to baptize them. Then he moved to another area and began again. In eight years Pena planted 15 new churches, all of which continue to grow and multiply.

But Pena has suffered for his faith. Once he was accused of being a spy. He was tied up and spent the night in prison, under threat of death. After praying well into the night, he received assurance from God that his life would be spared. Three of the churches Pena planted were in Muslim areas, where he met with intense persecution. And after one young man accepted the Adventist message, his family tried to kill Pena.

The civil war in Mozambique is over, but the war for the human soul continues, and Pena continues to seek recruits to enlist in God's army. And God continues to reward his efforts with baptisms and new churches.

Januario Alssone de Pena is a lay evangelist living and working in Mozambique, East Africa.

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The Mantle of Healing



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matt. 10:1-8; 25:34-40; Luke 4:16-19; John 4:7-29; Rom. 12:15; James 5:14, 15.

MEMORY TEXT: "As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' Heal the sick . . . Freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:7, 8, NIV).

KEY THOUGHT: Jesus' definition of gospel preaching included the work of healing. Gospel work means more than presenting theological truth. Jesus commissioned His disciples, and us, to share His love in a world that seriously needs physical and emotional healing.

PREACHING AND HEALING ARE INSEPARABLE MINISTRIES. "Jesus as the Messiah was the bringer of 'health and salvation.' The Christian picture of Jesus as the good Physician, the Saviour of both the body and the soul, is well grounded upon the stories of the Gospels. That Jesus himself perceived the connection between his healing ministry and his redemptive mission is obvious from such a saying as: 'They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous but sinners' (Mark 2:17). Or again, he speaks the same word to the Sinner-Woman (Luke 7:50) and to the woman with an issue (Mark 5:34): 'Thy faith hath saved thee.'"—Alan Richardson, *A Theological Wordbook of the Bible* (New York, N.Y.: McMillan, 1962), p. 103.

Doors that are closed to him who merely preaches the gospel will often open to the dedicated medical missionary. The ministry of healing is one of God's chosen ways to reach hearts.

AUTHORIZED MINISTRY (Matt. 10:1-8).

The form and content of the mission the Christian church embraces must always be those that Jesus Christ has authorized. There are many kinds of godly works done in the world, but true Christians, from the time of the apostles until now, have sought to reflect the works that Christ instructed and patterned. Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12, NIV).

What were the primary components of the ministry that Christ authorized His disciples to conduct? Why were these components primary? Matt. 10:7, 8.

Although we do not see people miraculously raised from the dead today, Christ still empowers us to minister both spiritually and through medicine.

How can Christians be involved today in the two ministries that He originally authorized?

"The Bible constantly implies that there is such a connection [between the physical and the spiritual]; the frequent metaphorical use of bodily diseases as a symbol of spiritual malaise (e.g., Isaiah 1:5) points to a deep and mysterious relation. The crude but widespread view that all sickness is a punishment for sin is rejected by Job and by Jesus himself (Luke 13:1-5; John 9:1-3); but this must not be taken as a denial of any relationship between sickness and sin."—Alan Richardson, *A Theological Word Book of the Bible*, p. 103.

This dual ministry was the way Jesus helped and healed the paralytic. He showed that He met both spiritual and physical health needs in one work.

What healing ministries named in 1 Corinthians 12:27-30 would it be appropriate to expect in the church today? Can modern "healers" be included in the list of God's ordained ministries, or did the apostle Paul write only for his time in this regard?

How can church members pursue a combination of spiritual and physical healing for themselves and for others?

MINISTRY OF HEALING THROUGH OPENNESS (John 4: 7-29).

Modern medical science recognizes that physical healing is hastened when the patient is enjoying emotional and spiritual health.

Have you ever observed or experienced the positive impact of spiritual well-being on physical health? Explain.

In a presentation for the National Institutes of Health at Dartmouth Medical School in March 1995, Elisabeth McSherry, M.D., M.P.H., said: "For many years, up until the present, most patients have kept their religious faith, its content and practice, or their strongest ultimate values, quite private from their Internist, Orthopod or Psychiatrist to prevent the dissonance they expected would occur between their primary values and those constructed by medical scientists. Thus in a sense, because patients could not be affirmed in their most important personal resource, their values, motivation, purpose in life, religious coping skills, religiously-based health optimism, the patients at the hands of many health-care providers suffered a kind of 'deprivation abuse,' deprived of affirmation, appreciation and utilization of their strongest inner strength to fight for their health and healthier outcomes."

Review Jesus' interview with the woman at the well (John 4: 7-29). By teaching and example, what was Jesus saying about the dynamics of honesty and openness.

"Because the view which Jesus took contemplated the individual as an integer [a complete person], he was able to envisage more clearly than his predecessors the influence of body and mind upon each other. While he was always concerned to heal the sick in body, he invariably paid close attention to the mind and spirit of the sufferer. Insofar as they are recorded in any detail, his interviews with sick people seem to have had as one of their aims the uncovering of evidence pointing to a deficient relationship between the sufferer and his environment. His encounter with the Samaritan woman (John 4) transformed what might have been a casual conversation into a powerful therapeutic analysis which . . . confronted her with the person of the living Christ as the answer to her deepest needs. This interview is a superb example of nondirective counseling."—*The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 2, p. 546.

MINISTRY OF HEALING THROUGH PRESENCE (Matt. 25:34-40).

Many "smiling" people are desperately lonely. Sin divides people, alienates families and friends, and leaves them to suffer alone. Illness in many cases can be traced to loneliness.

How can Christians relate to the tragedy of loneliness? Matt. 25: 34-40.

"The beginning and the end of all Christian leadership is to give your life for others. Thinking about martyrdom can be an escape unless we realize that real martyrdom means a witness that starts with the willingness to cry with those who cry, laugh with those who laugh, and to make one's own painful and joyful experiences available as sources of clarification and understanding."—Henri J. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer* (New York, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1979), p. 72.

Jesus taught that when we are sick we need "visits" to be healed. Usually the "sheep and goats" illustration of Matthew 25 is interpreted in a way that emphasizes that Christians need to be involved in caring ministries. There is truth in that perspective. But Jesus personalized His teaching by saying, "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Matt. 25:40, RSV). Visiting others should be largely focused on the benefit we bring to them and not on the benefit we receive.

The presence of a friend or acquaintance can have a significant impact on the physical, mental, and spiritual health of the one who is visited. Recent research has shown that hospital patients recover from their illnesses significantly more rapidly when they have meaningful spiritual visits. An experimental study at an affiliate of Harvard Medical Center showed that 331 open-heart surgery patients who were randomly assigned to receive daily special chaplain care, had shorter postoperative lengths of stay by two days when compared with patients who did not have chaplaincy visits. Translated into economic factors, the cost difference was an average \$4,200 per patient.

How can church members be a spiritual presence for those who are lonely?

"In almost every community there are large numbers who do not listen to the preaching of God's word or attend any religious service. If they are reached by the gospel, it must be carried to their homes. Often the relief of their physical needs is the only avenue by which they can be approached."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 144.

MINISTRY OF HEALING THROUGH LISTENING (Rom. 12:15).

When people need help, we usually tell them what they need. But what we think they need may not be what they really need; we could be merely satisfying our own personal needs.

What does Romans 12:15 teach us about effectively entering into the experiences of others?

Just as we can listen intently to the story of one who is rejoicing, so we can listen intently when someone is weeping—or, suffering from physical, emotional, or spiritual pain. A significant inhibitor of the healing process is denial of the reality of our condition. When someone we trust prompts us to share our feelings and then listens to what we say, we gradually accept what we tell about ourselves as reality. Then physical, emotional, and spiritual healing follows.

“What the active listener really does is to make it easy for the patient to be herself, openly to talk about her real feelings and, in many instances, honestly to face her situation. To put it another way, the purpose of active listening is to enable a person to make use of you, the listener, to help her deal with her own needs and grow as a person. The idea then is not for you to solve her problem, or even to give advice. You act somewhat like a talking mirror, reflecting back to her what you hear, see, or sense. To this you may add the occasional brief comment. Through this exchange the patient very often will come to her own conclusions or find her own solutions.”—J. Daryl Furlong, *The Ministry of Listening* (Chicago, Ill.: ACTA Pubns., 1987), p. 35.

In what ways does the Bible support the concept that suffering people need empathetic listeners? Matt. 26:36-46.

During His terrible night in Gethsemane, Jesus was in great need of the disciples' sympathy and prayers; He longed for companionship. If only the disciples had stayed awake to be with Him, to listen and give spiritual support, how helpful they could have been to Him! The record suggests that Jesus needed to talk; but no one was listening.

Read “Gethsemane” in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 685-697. In the light of Jesus' words, “as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (Matt. 25:40, RSV), consider how to be a better listener when others are experiencing their “Gethsemanes.”

MINISTRY OF HEALING THROUGH PRAYER AND THE WORD (James 5:14, 15).

“Some were sick through their sinful ways. . . . Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them . . . he sent forth his word, and healed them, and delivered them from destruction” (Ps. 107:17-20, RSV).

What are the means, according to the Bible, by which we can seek healing? James 5:14, 15; John 14:13, 14.

Referring to Psalm 107, Ellen White wrote: “God is just as willing to restore the sick to health now as when the Holy Spirit spoke these words through the psalmist. And Christ is the same compassionate physician now that He was during His earthly ministry. . . . His disciples in this time are to pray for the sick as verily as the disciples of old prayed.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 226.

Are there other conditions for healing beyond asking through prayer? Ps. 66:18; 1 John 1:9.

Clearly, obtaining the object we desire is contingent on a meaningful spiritual relationship with Him. “There must be purity of heart, purity of motive, purity of desire, if our prayers are to be in His name. God is greater than His promises, and often gives more than either we desire or deserve but He does not always do so. So, then, if any specific petition is not granted, we may feel sure that God is calling us to examine our hearts.”—Unknown Christian, *The Kneeling Christian* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1986), p. 96.

“Many persons bring disease upon themselves by their self-indulgence. They have not lived in accordance with natural law or the principles of strict purity. Others have disregarded the laws of health in their habits of eating and drinking, dressing, or working. Often some form of vice is the cause of feebleness of mind or body. Should these persons gain the blessing of health, many of them would continue to pursue the same course of heedless transgression of God’s natural and spiritual laws, reasoning that if God heals them in answer to prayer, they are at liberty to continue their unhealthful practices and to indulge perverted appetite without restraint.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 227, 228.

In what ways is this passage disturbing or affirming to your thoughts and beliefs?

FURTHER STUDY: Consider the elements involved in Jesus' ministry as a guide to the kind of ministry we are called to conduct (Luke 4: 16-19). How well do you think the Seventh-day Adventist Church has followed the teaching and healing example of Jesus?

Read "Teaching and Healing" in *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 139-160. Note the statements that call for a "new" way of doing the work of the church.

"Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.' . . .

"We should ever remember that the object of the medical missionary work is to point sin-sick men and women to the Man of Calvary, who taketh away the sin of the world. By beholding Him, they will be changed into His likeness. We are to encourage the sick and suffering to look to Jesus and live. Let the workers keep Christ, the Great Physician, constantly before those to whom disease of body and soul has brought discouragement. Point them to the One who can heal both physical and spiritual disease. Tell them of the One who is touched with the feeling of their infirmities. Encourage them to place themselves in the care of Him who gave His life to make it possible for them to have life eternal. Talk of His love; tell of His power to save.

"This is the high duty and precious privilege of the medical missionary. And personal ministry often prepares the way for this. God often reaches hearts through our efforts to relieve physical suffering."—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 143, 144.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. "In the work of the gospel, teaching and healing are never to be separated."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 141. How might your local congregation respond to this statement?
2. Is ministry to the sick an activity that Christians should leave to health professionals, or is it a ministry in which anyone can be involved? Explain.

SUMMARY: Physical, mental, and spiritual healing accompany the work of Christ's followers as they empathetically enter into the lives of those who suffer and as they minister through prayer and the Word of God.



Finding Jesus

J. H. Zachary

While some people come to Christ in one giant step, others are guided by many faithful witnesses. The journey of Jesus Hagad [Hay-SOOS Ha-GOD] of the Philippines started with one small voice.

"For 17 years I served God as a priest," Jesus said. "Then one day a voice told me, 'Jesus Christ is not in the Eucharist [consecrated communion elements].'" This revelation began a chain of questions in the priest's mind. If Christ was not in the Eucharist, what other treasured church rituals were not based on God's Word? As Jesus began to question his religious experience, he laid aside his prayer book and opened his heart to God in soul-searching prayer.

Feelings of guilt flooded over him as he realized that man-made rituals could not remove sin. He had no peace because he was not sure that God forgave and accepted him. But, like Jacob, he continued to wrestle with God in prayer. He was thrilled to see God respond to his pleas. As he accepted Christ's promise of forgiveness, God became real to him. He found peace.

Jesus left the priesthood and joined a Protestant church. The Lord blessed him with a wife and four children, but he kept searching for God's truth. In early 1996 he attended Adventist evangelistic meetings, where he learned that Sunday was not God's holy day. This revelation stunned him, but as he and his wife read the Bible texts upholding the Sabbath, they asked themselves how they could have kept Sunday for so many years when the Bible is so clear that the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord.

As Jesus learned more about the Adventist church, he remembered Adventist children with whom he had attended school as a boy. He wanted his own children to live as those children did. He and his family prayed together, asking for God's forgiveness and direction. They decided to follow God's leading to keep the Sabbath, and were baptized, along with their eldest daughter. Jesus testifies simply, "I did not find Jesus in religious ceremonies; I found Him in the Bible—and the Adventist Church."



Jesus Hagad (left); J. H. Zachary is the international evangelism coordinator for *The Quiet Hour*.

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Healers in Need of Healing



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Isa. 53:4-6.

MEMORY TEXT: "But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us" (2 Corinthians 4:7, NIV).

KEY THOUGHT: Ultimate healing, from God's perspective, involves the whole integrated person and will never be achieved until the sin that separates us from God is addressed. Even when restoring physical health and function, Christ always had as His first priority reconciliation with God.

HEALERS NEED HEALING. Because the ultimate source of death, decay, and disease is sin, those involved in healing ministry are sinners trying to help other sinners to overcome and to achieve reconciliation with God. Healers also have the need for healing. This fact makes the successful healer empathetic and willing to give all the glory to God, who is the only source of life and health. If the "treasure" were not in "jars of clay," we might be tempted to take the credit, which would shut God's channel and preclude our ability to assist others to experience true spiritual, physical, and emotional health. Peter and Paul had to experience personal healing in order to become healers of others.

"The continuity of Christian influence is the secret of its power, and this depends on the steadfastness of your manifestation of the character of Christ. Help those who have erred, by telling them of your experiences. Show how, when you made grave mistakes, patience, kindness, and helpfulness on the part of your fellow workers gave you courage and hope."—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 494, 495.

PETER FALLS SHORT (Luke 22:20-34).

How did Peter behave in the final hours of Christ's life? What did his actions reveal about his character? Luke 22:20-34, 54-62; John 18:10, 11.

Peter apparently was a "natural" leader exhibiting attractive attributes that caused others to follow him. Obviously, there were elements in Peter's character that led Jesus to choose him as an apostle. Yet the passages above tell the story of Peter's bitter and abject failure.

Before one criticizes Peter for failing the Lord after His arrest, it might be wise to consider the question of the absence of the other apostles, who had apparently gone into hiding.

What was the true nature of Peter's deficiency? Was it lack of courage, of good intentions, of a desire to be loyal to his Lord and Friend? Was Peter a hypocrite? Ponder these questions in order to probe Peter's deficiencies and the healing that this future healer would need.

What was the root cause of Peter's vulnerability to temptation and failure? Do you believe Peter was sincere in his statements of determination to support and follow the Lord? Why do you think as you do? Did Peter lack courage?

What message do you believe was conveyed in the Lord's look at Peter after the final denial? Luke 22:60-62.

"Peter had not designed that his real character should be known. In assuming an air of indifference he had placed himself on the enemy's ground, and he became an easy prey to temptation. If he had been called to fight for his Master, he would have been a courageous soldier; but when the finger of scorn was pointed at him, he proved himself a coward. Many who do not shrink from active warfare for their Lord are driven by ridicule to deny their faith. By associating with those whom they should avoid, they place themselves in the way of temptation. They invite the enemy to tempt them, and are led to say and do that of which under other circumstances they would never have been guilty. The disciple of Christ who in our day disguises his faith through dread of suffering or reproach denies his Lord as really as did Peter in the judgment hall. . . .

"In that gentle countenance he read deep pity and sorrow, but there was no anger there. The sight of that pale, suffering face, those quivering lips, that look of compassion and forgiveness, pierced his heart like an arrow."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 712, 713.

PETER EXPERIENCES HEALING (John 21:1-19).

We can only begin to imagine the pain and agony that Peter felt after his denial and the subsequent events of Jesus' mock trial and agonizing death. Even after the reality of the resurrection, it would be normal for Peter to carry the scars of this experience in his mind and heart.

Attempt to put yourself in Peter's place and imagine what some of these scars might include; for example, crushed self-respect, unworthiness, and guilt. Base your list on how you might have felt.

Describe Jesus' healing ministry for Peter (John 21:1-19). Why do you think Jesus would have picked this place and occasion to confront and heal Peter?

What was the reason for Jesus' insistent questions regarding Peter's love for Him? If you were Peter, what would the words of the Lord "Feed my lambs" have meant to you?

"Peter was naturally forward and impulsive, and Satan had taken advantage of those characteristics to overthrow him. Just before the fall of Peter, Jesus had said to him, 'Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.' Luke 22:31, 32. That time had now come, and the transformation in Peter was evident. The close, testing questions of the Lord had not called out one forward, self-sufficient reply; and because of his humiliation and repentance, Peter was better prepared than ever before to act as shepherd to the flock.

"The first work that Christ entrusted to Peter on restoring him to the ministry was to feed the lambs. This was a work in which Peter had little experience. It would require great care and tenderness, much patience and perseverance. It called him to minister to those who were young in the faith, to teach the ignorant, to open the Scriptures to them, and to educate them for usefulness in Christ's service. Heretofore Peter had not been fitted to do this, or even to understand its importance. But this was the work which Jesus now called upon him to do. For this work his own experience of suffering and repentance had prepared him."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 812.

PETER AS HEALER (Acts 3:1-16).

Study Acts 3:1-16 as a dramatic example of Peter's being used to feed the lambs.

There are probably scores of other examples that were not recorded. As you read and ponder this account, it is important to consider how Peter is different from his precrucifixion *persona*. The natural endowments of candor, courage, and transparency have been transformed by his failure and by what he learned from that experience. But equally important is what he learned and incorporated from his experience of restoration and healing.

How would Peter's past experience have made him a more effective healer? List the ways Peter is different in this account from the man portrayed in Luke 22.

"Of the first apostolic miracle much could be written. Peter told the lame man to attempt the seemingly impossible, namely, to rise up and walk. But assured of Christ's ability, the lame man took the step of faith. Divinely healed, he crystallized his faith by his clear testimony. There are cripples among us still cripples in morals, in will-power also, alas, cripples through their own sins or through sins of others. How full the world is of poor, disabled souls, so spiritually impotent! They lie at the doors of the Church, but are not cured. As Peter became the medium of healing, so only as the love of God flows through us can the dying spiritual cripples of our times be blessed."—Herbert Lockyer, *All the Books and Chapters of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan), p. 247.

"The man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple is the illustration of a constant fact: approximation to God is a habit of humanity in need. Mendicants are not often found at the doors where an infidel lecture has been delivered. In speaking to the man, Peter revealed the essential meaning of Christianity. He was not able to minister to the man in material things so far as silver and gold were concerned. He was, however, able to communicate to him something which would make him master of his disability. . . .

"Faith in His [Jesus'] name was the avenue through which God had wrought the wonder. No glory accrued to man from what had happened; nor to the man who was healed, for his faith was not brought into play at all; none to the apostles, as they clearly declared."—G. Campbell Morgan, *An Exposition of the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book, 1959), p. 451.

SAUL OF TARSUS OFF THE MARK (Acts 7:57, 58).

What kind of man was Saul of Tarsus before He met Christ? Acts 7:57, 58; 8:3.

In this brief passage, we encounter another man with very substantial human endowments whom God in His all-knowing wisdom ordained to carry out a great work for His kingdom. Saul of Tarsus was a Hebrew of great training and advantage. He had studied with the eminent teacher Gamaliel. He was a Roman citizen. As a young man, he had attributes of leadership that moved him to the forefront of the effort to wipe out the "heretical" Christian group. He apparently thought he was serving God's cause in his zealous efforts to destroy Christians.

Do you believe that Saul of Tarsus would have sensed any need of healing or change? What would you list as the admirable, natural character traits of Saul of Tarsus before conversion? How was Saul of Tarsus missing God's mark for him at this time?

"This is the first mention of St. Paul in the Holy Scriptures [Acts 7:57]. His agency in the martyrdom of St. Stephen is mentioned with peculiar emphasis here . . . with the design probably of showing the power of Divine Grace in the change wrought thereby from Saul, the Persecutor of the Church, to Paul, the Preacher of the Gospel. . . .

"Here also, it seems, we may be permitted to recognize one main reason why the History of the Acts is principally occupied in narrating the actions and sufferings of two apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, the one having shown his weakness in denying Christ, the other his fury in persecuting Him.

"These two names are noble trophies of the victories of the Holy Ghost.

"St. Paul would doubtless have been anxious to make public reparation as far as he was able, for the wrong done by himself to the blessed Martyr. This desire manifested itself afterwards in his public declaration at Jerusalem, recorded in Acts 22:20. "When the blood of Thy Martyr, Stephen, was being shed, I myself also was standing there, and consenting to the deed, and holding the raiment of those who were killing him." He could not make better amends, than by confessing his own share in the martyrdom, as is done here (7:58; 8:1)."—Christopher Wordsworth, *The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, 1874, vol. 2, p. 73.

**PAUL EXPERIENCES HELPLESSNESS AND HEALING
(Acts 9:1-19).**

What do you think was the significance of Saul's being made blind, speechless, and helpless? What do you think was the significance of his receiving restoration of his physical sight through another human being? What do you think Paul might have learned from the obedience of Ananias, who had serious reservations about him? Acts 9:1-19.

Like Peter, the Lord saw, in the imperfect clay of Saul, attributes that, once transformed, once healed, would make him a mighty servant in the cause of the kingdom.

Alexander Solshenitsyn's terror-filled days in the Gulag Archipelago have some intriguing parallels to Paul's experience. He wrote: "It was granted me to carry from my prison years on my bent back, which nearly broke beneath its load, the essential experience: *how* a human being becomes *evil* and now *good*. In the intoxication of my youthful successes I had felt myself to be infallible, and I was therefore cruel. In the surfeit of power I was a murderer, and an oppressor. In my most evil moments I was convinced that I was doing good, and I was well supplied with systematic arguments. And it was only when, in the Gulag Archipelago, on rotting prison straw that I sensed within myself the first stirrings of good. Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes, not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either but right through every human heart and through all human hearts. . . . And that is why I turn back to the years of the imprisonment and say, sometimes to the astonishment of those about me: 'Bless you prison!'" (Quoted by Malcolm Muggeridge in *Conversion*, pp. 116, 117).

Speaking of his own spiritual journey that climaxed in conversion late in life, the late BBC commentator Malcolm Muggeridge wrote: "Suddenly, accountability, joy, peace, illumination, total submersion in God's universal love, come to the Undergraduate and he sits or moves about in ecstasy. If he looks out of the window, it is to see Paradise; if he is with other human beings, they are angels; if he closes his eyes and meditates, he floats away from his physical existence and desires, from his very prayers, and devotions, and finds himself near to some ineffable, ultimate truth, breathing the very perfume of God's love and loitering in the very precincts of Heaven."—Muggeridge, p. 39.

Have you ever wished for a Damascus experience like Paul's? Do you ever fear God may allow some calamity in your life so you could recognize need for healing?

FURTHER STUDY: What do the following passages reveal regarding Paul as a restorer and healer? Acts 9:26-30; 11:22-26; 16:16-40; 2 Tim. 3:9-11.

Paul appears to have been an intense and energetic man. After his encounter with Christ, he demonstrated the same zeal for spreading the gospel as he had in persecuting the church. However, his past and his reputation were barriers, and without the endorsement and support of Barnabas, his acceptance by the original apostles might have been difficult. Barnabas spoke up for Paul in Jerusalem and brought him into the work for the Gentiles in Antioch. Paul experienced healing and baptism from Ananias and invaluable support from Barnabas.

Paul seems to have needed further growth in grace to become a great restorer and healer. He refused to give John Mark the second chance that Barnabas was determined to give. Interestingly, even though the conflict was sharp and both Paul and Barnabas believed they were correct, they continued to be used of God, and the work was multiplied. Evidently, over time, Paul came to feel differently about John Mark and changed his earlier judgment. We can all look forward to this kind of growth in our experience with Christ.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. List some of the factors that might have led, over time, to Paul's changed view of John Mark.
2. Are disagreements between Christians troublesome to God? How might disagreements produce understanding and healing? How should Christians conduct themselves when disagreements occur?

"Since the earlier years of his profession of faith, Mark's Christian experience had deepened. As he had studied more closely the life and death of Christ he had obtained clearer views of the Saviour's mission, its toils and conflicts. Reading in the scars in Christ's hands and feet the marks of His service for humanity, and the length to which self-abnegation leads to save the lost and perishing, Mark had become willing to follow the Master in the path of self-sacrifice. . . . In the face of severe trial and adversity, Mark continued steadfast, a wise and beloved helper of the apostle."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 455.

SUMMARY: Before the apostles were qualified to be Christ's instruments for healing, they themselves needed spiritual healing. Those who would bring physical and spiritual healing to others must experience Christ's healing touch.



By Faith, Not by Sight, Part 1

Velaphi Gumbo

Velaphi [Vel-AHP-he] Gumbo was born in a village in Zimbabwe where the people worship the spirits of their ancestors. When he was 5 years old, his uncle visited the family and noticed that Velaphi was blind. Uncle told his parents to send the boy to Solusi Elementary School, where blind children are taught.

Velaphi and his father boarded a bus for the three-hour trip to Solusi. His father helped him move into his dormitory room then said goodbye and left. Velaphi felt lonely, but his dorm mates introduced him to other children and helped him learn his way around school. On Saturday the children went to church. Velaphi had never been to church, but he loved Sabbath School and soon was joining the other children as they sang songs about Jesus.

Velaphi's days took on a comfortable routine of classes, playtime, homework, and worship. He especially enjoyed worship. The songs seemed so much happier than those that people sang in his village. He learned that his body is the temple of God, and he should keep it clean and pure and not eat unclean foods or smoke or drink beer. And he learned that God loves him and forgives his sins when he asks.

When Velaphi went home for vacation, his family crowded around to greet him. At dinnertime, everyone started to eat—except Velaphi. He had learned to pray before meals. When his father allowed him to give thanks for the food, Velaphi was glad. After dinner Velaphi told his family what he had learned at school. He told them some Bible stories he had heard and talked about going to church. He told them about the difference between clean and unclean foods and about keeping the Sabbath. But his parents did not like some of Velaphi's new ideas; they did not want to change their ways. And when Velaphi told them he wanted to be a pastor someday, they laughed. "How can a blind boy from a little village become a pastor?" But Velaphi's sister, Dezzy, did not laugh. That night Velaphi told God that he wanted to serve Him no matter what his family said.

(Continued next week)



Velaphi Gumbo is 18 and a second-year student at Solusi Secondary School.

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Jesus the Champion of Choice and Liberation



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Mark 1:40-45; John 3:16, 17; 5:2-9; Luke 15:11-24; Matt. 15:21-28.

MEMORY TEXT: "If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:17, RSV).

KEY THOUGHT: Christ's greatest desire is that all human beings will experience the joy of full restoration to the family of God. All are His creation, all are loved unconditionally, but only those are given eternal life who accept the gift provided for them on Calvary's cross.

OUR GREAT HEALER ASKS US TO CHOOSE HIM. A significant part of Christ's healing ministry was to liberate people from the misconceptions cultivated by their religious leaders. He dispelled the notion that illness is always God's expression of anger or disapproval in response to an individual's sinful conduct.

Christ died to give us an option, a choice. The cross provided expiation for the sins of every human being (1 John 2:2). But our sins were not forgiven at the cross. The death of Christ *provided* for the forgiveness of all our sins, because "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24, NIV). We are invited today to "receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness" (Rom. 5:17). The condition of forgiveness, cleansing, and healing still stands: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

SIN AND SUFFERING (Mark 1:40-45).

What popular misconception did Jesus dispel when He healed the leper? Mark 1:40-45.

In the story recorded in Mark, chapter 1, Jesus healed a man suffering with leprosy. It was commonly believed that leprosy was God's punishment for sin. The leper became an outcast from society and was pronounced unclean by the church.

Christ was constantly seeking to dispel the common misunderstandings about God. God was pictured by religious leaders as harsh, exacting, and judgmental. But Jesus, "God with us," touched, healed, and restored people, indicating that illness is very often not a judgment by God, but the natural, inevitable result of humanity's fallen condition, resulting from the wrong choice of our first parents. It was His purpose to restore our relationship with God and to make us whole.

"The souls who came to Jesus felt in His presence that even for them there was escape from the pit of sin. The Pharisees had only scorn and condemnation for them; but Christ greeted them as children of God, estranged indeed from the Father's house, but not forgotten by the Father's heart. And their very misery and sin made them only the more the objects of His compassion. The farther they had wandered from Him, the more earnest the longing and the greater the sacrifice for their rescue."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 186.

How does our understanding of God's character influence the way we view suffering and sickness?

What can we do to help suffering people understand that God loves them infinitely, and that He wants them to be part of His family on earth and in heaven?

"Mark wrote for the Romans, whose watchword was power. . . . Mark is eloquent with, and exhibits the omnipotence of the mighty miracle-worker, and likewise the omnipotence of love as the crowning passion and resurrection of God's Servant. Miracles are prominent rather than parables or discourses. At least 20 of Christ's astonishing miracles are given in detail, and in ten instances Mark adds general statements without going into particulars (1:34). Almost half the book is taken up with some comprehensive summing up of Christ's ministry of power."—Lockyer, p. 226.

THE CHOSEN (John 3:16, 17).

How extensive is God's love? For how many did Christ die? John 3:16, 17; 1 John 2:2.

Scripture makes it clear that God is seeking after every person because He claims this world and its inhabitants as His rightful possession.

The problem of sin must be seen in the setting of the great controversy. Human beings are saved by an act of God totally outside of their own actions or capabilities. Christ came, He died, was raised to life, and on this basis offers to all humanity the gift of eternal life. God has provided for all humanity to be saved. Some choose to accept the gift, while others choose to reject it (Rom. 5:17).

In John 3:15, 16, "the added elements are the love of God and the consequent giving of his Son, who is described as the **only begotten**. This means unique, one of a kind. Sons by adoption do not become members of the Godhead. The breadth of the divine love is emphasized in that its object is the (whole) **world**. Though the coming of Christ involved judgment, as the rest of this section attests, the direct purpose of that coming, resting on the divine love, was not condemnation but salvation (3:17)."—*Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 1079.

"He gave Him not only to live among men, to bear their sins, and die their sacrifice. He gave Him to the fallen race. Christ was to identify Himself with the interests and needs of humanity. He who was one with God has linked Himself with the children of men by ties that are never to be broken. Jesus is 'not ashamed to call them brethren' (Hebrews 2:11); He is our Sacrifice, our Advocate, our Brother, bearing our human form before the Father's throne, and through eternal ages one with the race He has redeemed—the Son of man. And all this that man might be uplifted from the ruin and degradation of sin that he might reflect the love of God and share the joy of holiness."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 14.

Why is it that Jesus loves each of us as "family" members but that we, the family, sometimes don't demonstrate love for one another? Why was Jesus so helpful to people? In what areas could you be a volunteer to help others?

Being "the hand of God" to fallen, sinful human beings often forces us outside our comfortable environment and ways of being. It challenges us to seek effective ways to minister to those who do not know Him.

TOTAL FREEDOM (John 5:2-9).

Christ frequented the places where the suffering were to be found. In the story of the healing by the pool, Jesus healed a man who had been ill for 38 years. The context suggests that the man's sins may have caused his illness. Yet, on the Sabbath day, Jesus touched him and made him whole.

What does the story of Jesus' healing the sick man by the pool of Bethesda reveal about God's love for sinful human beings? What does it say about acts of charity and healing and the true meaning of Sabbath keeping? John 5:2-9.

"Let us turn to the story of the paralytic at Bethesda. The poor sufferer was helpless; he had not used his limbs for thirty-eight years. Yet, Jesus bade him, 'Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.' The sick man might have said, 'Lord, if thou wilt make me whole, I will obey Thy word.' But, no, he believed Christ's word, believed that he was made whole, and he made the effort at once; he *willed* to walk and he did walk. He acted on the word of Christ, and God gave the power. He was made whole.

"In like manner you are a sinner. You cannot atone for your past sins; you cannot change your heart and make yourself holy. But God promises to do all this for you through Christ. You *believe* that promise. You confess your sins and give yourself to God. You *will* to serve Him. Just as surely as you do this, God will fulfill His word to you. If you believe the promise—believe that you are forgiven and cleansed—God supplies the fact; you are made whole, just as Christ gave the paralytic power to walk when the man believed that he was healed. It is so if you believe it."—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 50, 51.

God obviously desires to open to each of us the wonderful blessings of being His child. In the midst of a chaotic world, God can set us free; free from the fears that life brings, and free from the fear of meaninglessness. He can make us whole.

Acceptance of God's gift of life and His healing touch sets us free to live to the fullest extent both now and in the future.

In what ways do you experience a sense of freedom and liberty? How do those feelings relate to your sense of being saved?

What kind of responsibility to our friends and acquaintances comes with the freedom we experience?

WHY MUST I CHOOSE? (Luke 15:11-24).

In the trilogy of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son in Luke 15, Jesus teaches that each person is infinitely valuable to Him. He constantly seeks and desires us to choose Him and His kingdom. But we still have the authority to say No to God and be lost.

What choices did the prodigal son make that enabled his father to restore him to the family? Luke 15:17-20.

“In this renowned chapter—‘a masterpiece of writing and an inspired revelation of the heart of God’—the combined work of the Trinity in redemption is beautifully illustrated in three incomparable stories. In that of the *Lost Sheep*, we have the love of the Son, who gave His life for the sheep. In the *Lost Coin*, ‘the silver piece, part of the woman’s dowry which every married woman wore as a chain across her forehead,’ we can discern the love of the Spirit for sinners. In the *Lost Son*, we have a glimpse into the Father-heart of God. Joy is associated over the recovery of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son. Do we share the joy of angels over the return of lost souls to God?”—Lockyer, pp. 237, 238.

Why would God leave such an important decision up to each person? John 7:37; Rom. 10:12; Rev. 22:17.

“All are by their own choice deciding their destiny.”—*Education*, p. 178.

“Every man is free to choose what power he will have to rule over him. None have fallen so low, none are so vile, but that they can find deliverance in Christ. The demoniac, in place of prayer, could utter only the words of Satan; yet the heart’s unspoken appeal was heard. No cry from a soul in need, though it fail of utterance in words, will be unheeded.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 258, 259.

Freedom of choice has always been intrinsic in God’s creation. His character will not allow Him to force anyone, even if salvation is at stake. Satan has raised questions about God’s character. He has accused God of arbitrary control and harshness. But Jesus constantly demonstrated the opposite characteristics.

To what extent do people of differing personalities and life situations have the ability to make choices? How can we prevent circumstances from making our choices for us?

OUTSIDER/INSIDER (Matt. 15:21-28).

Why did the religious leaders of Christ's day make so many people feel like outsiders, and how did Jesus make individuals feel like insiders? Review the story recorded in Matthew 15:21-28.

A woman who is considered an outsider by the Jews comes seeking help from Jesus—a Canaanite wanting help for her daughter. Jesus tells her that He has not come to help her, but the Israelites. But then Jesus declares that she is a woman of great faith and heals her daughter.

Why did Jesus at first treat this woman in the way that seems so rebuffing and alienating?

The people of Israel were convinced that they alone were God's chosen; all others were outside God's grace. Jesus taught that faith is the key to being an insider.

"In proportion as the woman's supplication became more intense, so our Lord's remonstrance became more strong. He at first was silent; then He calls the Jews His sheep, and says that He was sent only to them; then He calls them His children and the Gentiles dogs. And on this rebuke the woman frames her reply; she shows a patience and faith, although she might seem to be treated with scorn. Let them be children and me a dog; yet as such, I am not forbidden to eat of the crumbs which they let fall. Our Lord had foreknown that she would answer thus; and therefore He at first refused, and rebuked her, in order that He might bring out her faith and humility as an example."—Wordsworth, p. 251.

Why do we tend to treat others as outsiders if they do not believe, think, or act as we do?

This woman made a choice. She believed that Jesus could heal her daughter, and she would not allow national prejudice to keep her from her heart's desire.

"Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. He who numbers the hairs of your head is not indifferent to the wants of His children. . . . The relations between God and each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not another soul upon the earth to share His watchcare, not another soul for whom He gave His beloved Son."—Steps to Christ, p. 100.

FURTHER STUDY: Compare Job 11:1-6 with Luke 4:16-20. Job's friends were convinced that the illness he experienced was caused by his lack of commitment to God, and because of his sins. Sins and punishment were believed to go hand in hand. Is illness or tragedy ever a judgment from God? If so, when?

"The gospel of Jesus means relief for the poor, light for the ignorant, alleviation of distress for the suffering, and emancipation for the slaves of sin. Any person who took an interest in relieving the poor was thought to be particularly righteous, and almsgiving became synonymous with righteousness It was often the case that almsgiving was practiced, not out of sympathetic interest in helping the poor, but from a desire to earn righteousness However, genuine, sympathetic concern for the feelings and needs of our fellow men is one of the best evidences of 'pure religion' (see James 1:27), of sincere conversion (1 John 3:10, 14), of love for God (see 1 John 3:17-19; 4:21), and of readiness for entrance into the kingdom of heaven (see Matt. 25:34-46)."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 728.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. There are instances recorded in the Bible in which God brought illness upon people as a rebuke for their sins. (See 2 Chron. 26:16-21; Num. 12:9, 10.) Even though your personal sins may have resulted in physical illness, how can you have the assurance of acceptance by God?
2. Can the results of sin described in Romans 1:26, 27 be overcome? What is the means of spiritual healing for all presented in the book of Romans?
3. Because your neighbor was born physically handicapped, she is bitter against God and won't have anything to do with religion. At an opportune time, what message of comfort could you bring her?

SUMMARY: Physical suffering is inevitable in a fallen world in which all humanity inherits the inevitable results of our first parents' sin. Therefore, very often illness is not the result of personal sin, but of hereditary weakness or of some calamity not of our causing. Even when illness is the direct result of our personal sins and indiscretions, through Christ we can have forgiveness, spiritual cleansing, and acceptance by God.



By Faith, Not by Sight, Part 2

Velaphi Gumbo

When Velaphi returned home following his first year at Solusi Elementary School, he eagerly told his parents that he wanted to be a pastor someday. Because they were not Christians, they laughed. "How can a blind boy from a little village become a pastor?" they asked.

But Velaphi's sister, Dezzy, did not laugh. She asked him to tell her about God. Whenever they had a chance, Velaphi and Dezzy sat under a thorn tree while Velaphi taught her the songs he had learned in school and told her stories of God. She was eager to learn.

Soon vacation ended, and Velaphi returned to Solusi. For several years the familiar rhythms of school filled his days. When he visited home, his parents did not force him to eat unclean foods, and they no longer laughed at his Bible stories, but they still did not want to know about God. But Dezzy was always eager to listen. And when Velaphi was 12 years old, he helped Dezzy give her life to Jesus.

The children's parents were angry that Velaphi had taught Dezzy about God. Dezzy was sent to her own room, and Velaphi was told not to talk to her about Jesus.

Velaphi also told his cousin about God. The two would go into the bush to search for wild fruits, and there Velaphi told him stories from the Bible and taught him songs he had learned. The boy wanted to become a Christian, but his parents refused to let him. Velaphi promised to pray that one day his cousin could decide for himself.

Velaphi's parents never gave up hope of finding a cure for Velaphi's blindness. During one school vacation they arranged for a traditional healer to anoint his eyes to cure his blindness, but when Velaphi learned that the healer was a witch doctor, he would not let her touch him. "I am a Christian," he told her. "I believe in Jesus Christ, not in traditional medicines. Let me remain blind now. When Jesus comes, I will be able to see."

His parents were so angry, they refused to continue paying for Velaphi's school tuition. But the blind boy returned to Solusi on faith. He still wants to become a pastor and often gives Bible studies and encourages other young people at Solusi to witness for Jesus as well. He testifies, "God has supplied everything that I have; He has made me everything that I am. I thank Him and want to give my life back to Him."

Velaphi Gumbo is 18, and a second-year student at Solusi Secondary School.

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Christ the Great Connector



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matt. 4:18-20; 11:19; Luke 10:29-37; Acts 16:23-34; Phil. 2:1-8.

MEMORY TEXT: Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men" (Matthew 5:13).

KEY THOUGHT: What picture do you have of God? Is He a police-officer, a judge, a disciplinarian? Jesus gave us another picture: our Father. The throbbing heart of the creation is the love of God for His world, the love made known in Jesus Christ.

CHRIST DEMONSTRATED HOW TO BE IN THE WORLD YET NOT OF THE WORLD. He associated with the social outcasts, as well as the highly respected and accepted. He was clear about his mission to save all human beings.

Jesus did not separate Himself from those He came to save. Through His healing ministry, He was able to meet the needs of the powerful and the powerless. When sickness and death threaten, there is no distinction between rich and poor.

Christ desires His children to be the salt of the earth, a leavening influence for good in human society. Opportunities abound for that mixing to take place in activities and acts that promote healthful living.

This lesson deals with Christ the great Connector, the One who unites people to Himself and to one another.

A DISPOSITION OF MIND (Phil. 2:1-8).

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. . . . But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:5, 7).

Read Philippians 2:1-8. What dispositions of mind or ways of thinking are evident in this passage? Verses 3 and 4 hint at disconnectedness. Verses 5-8 describe connectedness.

Through the incarnation, God took our human flesh. Jesus was the great Connector of people through the incarnation. By the disposition of His mind and His character qualities, including His behavior, Jesus Christ is the great Connector between God and humanity.

What insights can we draw from Christ's incarnation? John 1:1-5, 9-18.

God has not rejected this world. This is our Father's world, and although it is marred by sin, we can still find evidences of His character. Christians have an obligation to discover and understand the principles of nature that govern physical life, as well as the principles that govern moral and spiritual life.

The Eternal God is our Father. Through the incarnation, Christ has assured us that He enjoys our company and wants our friendship.

“Our sufficiency is found only in the incarnation and death of the Son of God. . . . All who are one with Christ through faith in Him gain an experience which is life unto eternal life. . . . Christ became one with humanity, that humanity might become one in spirit and life with Him. By virtue of this union in obedience to the Word of God, His life becomes their life.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 302.

The apostle Paul made two contrasting statements. Romans 7:24 states, “O wretched man that I am.” Philippians 4:13 says, “I can do all things through Christ.” Which statement describes the tone of your life? If the Romans 7:24 problem persists, how can it be overcome? Compare Romans 8:1-17.

What is meant by the statement “I can do all things through Christ”? Does this mean all things in the absolute or all things that God asks of us?

CONNECTED WITH OUR NEIGHBORS (Luke 10:29-37).

By both His life and His preaching, Christ demonstrated that we are all connected with one another. "No man is an island." Life as God would have us live it is community existence, in which neighbors serve one another without the cramping restrictions of religious, social, political, or ethnic prejudice.

What did Jesus intend for us to understand by the term *neighbor*? Luke 10:29-37.

How we regard ourselves determines whom we will regard as our neighbor. "The priest and the Levite thought of themselves, esteemed themselves, primarily as priest and Levite; and the wounded man was neither. The Samaritan, however, thought of himself not primarily as a Samaritan of a certain class, or even as a Samaritan at all, but as a human being, and therefore to him the important thing was not that a Jew was in need of help, but that a man was."—*Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 8, p. 194.

Would you describe yourself as a Seventh-day Adventist, a Christian, or simply as a human being concerned about others? Does how you frame the question make a difference?

On seeing the wounded Jew, the priest and the Levite seemed to ask, What will happen to me if I stop and help? The Samaritan, on the other hand, seemed to ask, What will happen to him if I don't stop and help? The difference was one of personal orientation—to self or to others.

"One ship drives east, and another drives west
With the selfsame winds that flow
'Tis the set of the sails and not the gales
Which tells us the way to go."

—Ella Wheeler Wilcox, "Winds of Fate"

What examples can you find that illustrate the negative and positive outcomes of different, personal orientations? Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 18:9-14.

Considering where you live and the people you often meet, what insights can be gained from the story of the good Samaritan? Are the acts of "pouring oil" and "binding up the wounds" adequate and acceptable Christian witness? Can God use those who are not "in the fold"?

THE CONNECTION (Matt. 11:19).

“There is so much good in the worst of us
 And so much bad in the best of us
 That it hardly behooves any of us
 To talk about the rest of us.”

—Author unknown

Through friendship Jesus was the great Connector of people throughout a wide cross-section of society (Matt. 11:19).

Research has shown that the longer people are members of the Adventist faith, the fewer the friends they maintain who have different or no religious affiliations. Why? Is this tendency something to resist or to accept as inevitable?

Whenever individuals with different values, beliefs, and assumptions interact with each other, there is a potential for conflict. A commitment to Christ's value system and lifestyle can create a set of personal habits and tastes that can be at odds with other sets of habits and tastes. But Christ's example challenges every Christian to cultivate the talent of friendship in spite of the tension that may exist between individuals with different lifestyles and values. Someone has observed, “It is not by driving away our brother that we can be alone with God.” There are occasions when the obligation to be courteous in a social setting brings us in conflict with some facet of our belief system. “Driving away our brother” is one way to solve this problem of conflicting obligations—obligation to friendship versus obligation to uphold a religious belief.

Develop some guidelines to resolve conflicting obligations. Are some of these obligations more important than others? Why? Matt. 12:1-13; 28:19, 20; Micah 6:8.

“Are there no modern parallels to this disproportion in Pharisaic religion? What of the woman deeply concerned for temperance in the matter of strong drink, but most intemperate in her prejudices and condemnations? What of the businessman who is meticulously polite and most regular in church attendance, yet champions glaring inequalities in the social structure and drives a hard bargain in trade? The chief priests would not put Judas' blood money in the treasury because it was unclean (Matthew 27:6), but they paid it that Christ might be betrayed!”—*Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 7, p. 536.

LINKED BY A COMMON MOTIVE (Matt. 4:18-20).

What common attraction and common cause united Jesus' disciples in ministry? Matt. 4:18-20.

"Jesus satisfied their longings. . . . His eagerness caught their youth, his certitude their loyalty, his tenderness their love; and some divine solitude in him called to the deeps of their soul."—*Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 7, pp. 276, 277. He, the great Connector, linked their longing to a great cause.

What insights can we gain about the commitment involved following Jesus from these New Testament passages? Matt. 10:34-37; John 6:1, 2, 25-30, 60-71.

Following Christ begins with personal choice, but it is maintained only by the right motive. One does not truly follow Christ if motivated by personal gain. We are not really linked to each other except as we find purpose and meaning outside of ourselves in His cause.

How would you describe Christ's cause? Luke 10:25-28. What kind of people did Jesus summon to His cause? Mark 3:17-19; Luke 22:24; Matt. 26:56, 73, 74.

The great cause that links us together does not instantly rid us of our human frailty. Individuals who have been blessed with outstanding strengths may also suffer with obvious weaknesses. It is our duty to understand not only the nature of discipleship, but the nature of the disciple. God's cause gains nothing by maligning His disciples because of their imperfections. Our mission, like His, should be to open wide the gates of acceptance.

How can we best relate to our children who do not conform to the beliefs and practices of the church as we taught them? What approaches are most likely to lead them to further rejection and alienation? Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21.

"Every one of us should weed out of our conversation everything that is harsh and severe. We should not indulge in condemning others, and we will not do so if we are one with Christ. We are to represent Christ in our dealings with our fellowmen."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 225.

INTERPERSONAL CONNECTIONS (Acts 16:23-34).

Jesus “brought the consciousness of the presence of God not only on the heights but in the valleys also, . . . not only in those moments when life soars up on wings but in those other moments when it walks with lame and weary feet upon a heavy road. . . . Whenever sad people think of him, something happens to their sadness. They may not understand it any better; but there is newness in the way they feel. Their iciness is melted; all that was hard and frozen turns into a stream of gentle emotion which waters in their souls a garden where flowers of a fragrant peace begin to grow. They are not afraid of sadness now, for the love of God is walking by their side.”—*Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 8, p. 91.

Jesus is the great Connector through His healing power. That healing may be a dramatic restoration of physical health, or it may be a healing attitudinal change. He connects us intrapersonally so that we are at peace with our inner selves. We experience the peace that passes all understanding through His healing power.

Think of examples from the Bible and life that demonstrate Christ's healing. Acts 16:23-34; John 14:27.

Through the ministry of healing, Christ also connects us interpersonally. Through our ministry of healing, we build bonds of friendship, love, and trust. Typical of this bonding is the letter written by the spouse of a cancer patient at an Adventist hospital:

I could write you all a long and ongoing letter in an attempt to give my thanks to you for your love and caring of my wife, Donna. But in turn I will only say you all are a part of me now. I love all of you as Donna loved you all. The first time Donna was able to leave the hospital, she cried while leaving, and I asked, “Honey, what is it?” Donna stated, “I hate to leave, I love them all so much.” I told her you all would always be a part of our lives. I love you, I love you all for being who you are and for loving Donna the way she deserved to be loved. Enclosed is a poem Donna wrote at age 15 years. I hope and pray you all will make a copy and keep it always in your hearts as she deserves so much more than she got, and yet now is free from her pain. Donna was a champion and always will be. God Bless.

Share a story that illustrates how Christ brought “integrated healing” to someone you know.

FURTHER STUDY: By reviewing the story in John 8:3-11, meditate on Jesus as the great Connector through compassion and understanding.

Jesus' life and ministry challenged the popular thinking of the day and encouraged men and women to be more connected with one another by being more compassionate and forgiving. Compassion and understanding must not be limited to offering forgiveness when we are wronged. For the Christian, it must include building relationships.

"All who receive the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow men. For this work the church was established, and all who take upon themselves its sacred vows are thereby pledged to be co-workers with Christ. . . .

"Ministry does not consist alone in preaching. Those minister who relieve the sick and suffering, helping the needy, speaking words of comfort to the despondent and those of little faith. Nigh and afar off are souls weighed down by a sense of guilt. It is not hardship, toil or poverty that degrades humanity. It is guilt, wrong-doing. This brings unrest and dissatisfaction. Christ would have His servants minister to sin-sick souls."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 822.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What examples of compassion and understanding do we find in Christ's ministry? (See Luke 7:36-39; Mark 10:13, 14; John 3:1-5.)
2. As you reflect on your own life, identify some experiences in which compassion and understanding helped to build lasting relationships.
3. Are there some realistic limits to compassion, understanding, and forgiveness? What guidelines can you formulate from Christ's teachings? (See Matt. 25:34, 41; John 2:13-16.)

SUMMARY: During the course of this week, we have studied the life of Christ as the Great Connector. He is the Great Connector:

through incarnation—what He became,
through precept—what He teaches,
through friendship—how He relates,
through invitation—what He says,
through healing—what He does,
through compassion—what He is.



Healing the Wounds of Hate

Charlotte Ishkanian

It seemed to Daniel Vitkovic that everyone in the former republics of Yugoslavia hated anyone who was not of the same nationality or religion. He was tired of the hating, especially over religion. He wasn't even sure there was a God.

Then Daniel heard a radio report about ADRA, an organization that was helping people on all sides of the war in the former Yugoslavia: the Serbs, the Croats, and the Muslims, without taking sides. Daniel was impressed that anyone could love everyone the same. At the end of the story, the announcer said that ADRA was sponsored by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Daniel was impressed. Here was true Christianity.

One regular radio program featured interviews with leaders of various churches. Most leaders attacked one another and accused others of following false doctrines. But one pastor refused to attack other denominations. Instead he answered the questions given him with verses from the Bible. Daniel recognized the church's name: Seventh-day Adventist.

Daniel was not inherently religious; he wasn't even convinced that there was a God. But if there was, he felt that Adventists must really know Him. After hearing an Adventist scientist defend creationism, Daniel decided he wanted to know more about this church.

Daniel telephoned the local Adventist church and asked about two books that had been offered on the radio. When the pastor delivered the books, Daniel signed up for the Bible correspondence course. The pastor invited him to attend church the next Sabbath, and Daniel agreed. He found that the people loved one another regardless of their race. He was baptized in April 1996.

Daniel was not looking for God, but God found him. He did not know that the emptiness in his life was a hunger for God. Before he met Adventists, he had not seen anything in religion that interested him. So what attracted him to the Adventist Church?

"When everyone else was hating," Daniel said, "ADRA and the Adventists showed love." Daniel wants to show that love to others. Perhaps this way he can help heal the wounds that hatred has caused.



Daniel Vitkovic is studying business and accounting in Podorica, Montenegro.

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Eternal Restoration



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Isa. 65:8, 9, 17, 21-25; 66:22, 23; 1 John 5:11-13; Rev. 21:1-5; 22:17.

MEMORY TEXT: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

KEY THOUGHT: Both Old and New Testament scriptures give us great comfort in their description of the restoration of this earth to its original perfection. Immortality and freedom from disease will give joy to all who inhabit the new earth. What hope to all who suffer in this present life!

THROUGH CHRIST'S PROMISES WE HAVE UNENDING HOPE. It was the promise of Christ's return that sustained the disciples in the first century. It was the promise of Christ's return that sustained the Advent believers in the 1840s. They misunderstood the event that was to take place in 1844, but they loved Jesus and continued to believe His promises.

On William Miller's farm in New York state, a chapel still stands, and over the pulpit are the words from the book of Daniel, "At the time appointed the end shall be." While we do not know the day of Jesus' return, we have absolute confidence that He will return "at the time appointed," and then He will restore the perfection of the Garden of Eden in our re-created world.

THE PROMISE OF ETERNAL RESTORATION (Isa. 25:8, 9).

Promises of the restoration of righteousness and perfection to the earth are found in Old and New Testament alike. This chain of promises runs through the Bible like a golden thread. But the promise of a time when there will be no more pain or death has been a special comfort to all because in this world of sin there is no "permanent" family circle; inevitably it is a broken circle.

What hope did Jesus give Martha at the grave of her brother Lazarus? How did Martha respond? John 11:24-27.

"Had Christ been in the sickroom, Lazarus would not have died; for Satan would have had no power over him. Death could not have aimed his dart at Lazarus in the presence of the Life-giver. Therefore Christ remained away. He suffered the enemy to exercise his power, that He might drive him back, a conquered foe."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 528.

Why cannot humanity in its present condition inherit God's kingdom of glory? By what change will Jesus make possible that inheritance? 1 Cor. 15:50-57.

Peter Marshall, an immigrant to America from Scotland, knew that God had called him to the ministry. His keen insights into life and spirituality made him a sought-after speaker, and the pews of his Washington, D.C., church were always filled. A selection of some of his memorable sermons was published under the title *Mr. Jones Meet the Master*, and the story of his life became a popular film. He became the chaplain to the U.S. Senate, and his poignant prayers were published in the Washington press.

Soon after this appointment to the Senate, Peter suffered a heart attack and later a second heart attack that ended his life. As he left his home by ambulance after the second attack, he whispered to his wife, Catherine, "I'll see you, darling, I'll see you *in the morning*."

Goodbyes are never easy, and the goodbyes at death are the most crushing of all. But when you know your Jesus has passed through the dark valley, and the resurrection on that soon-to-dawn morning is as certain as tomorrow's sunrise, even the pain of death can lose a little of its sting.

In what ways can the hope of the resurrection influence daily life at home and at work?

THE SOURCE OF RESTORATION (1 John 5:11-13).

Jesus is the source of all life on our planet because He was the active agent in Creation. The New Testament identifies Jesus as the One who spoke the words that brought all creation into existence. The Psalms record that "He spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm" (Ps. 33:9, NIV), and the New Testament writers expanded on these words to identify Jesus as the One who spoke. For example, John wrote: "He was in the world, and though *the world was made through him*, the world did not recognize him" (John 1:10, NIV, italics supplied).

And the One who created will re-create and restore this shattered world into a condition that we, in our sinful condition, cannot even imagine. Quoting from Isaiah 64:4, Paul exclaimed, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. 2:9, KJV).

When does eternal life begin for the believer? 1 John 5:11, 12; John 1:12; 3:36; 5:24.

While the gift of immortality is given at the second coming of Christ (1 Cor. 15:53), eternal life begins when we accept Christ into our hearts. When we are born again, the mind is renewed, and we become new creatures. We receive the gift the moment we receive Him, for He is eternal life. Thus, to have Jesus as Saviour is to have eternal life.

What did Jesus mean when He declared Himself to be the Bread of Life? John 6:48-51.

The Creator is also the Sustainer. John 6 has Jesus three times repeat the truth that He is the Bread of Life. These statements occurred in a sermon preached the day after Jesus fed 5,000 of His hungry listeners. The story of the previous day spotlights the lad whose mother probably had the forethought to provide for her son and the young man's readiness to give his nourishing lunch to Jesus (John 6:8, 9). That lunch became a banquet for a large crowd. But baskets of food remained after the crowd was filled and satisfied. "Filled and satisfied" are words that accurately describe our condition when we find Jesus as our Bread of Life.

What are the practical means by which we can experience Jesus as the One who fills and satisfies? How can we help others to partake of the Bread of Life?

THE RESTORATION OF HUMANITY (Rev. 21:1-4).

It is the descent of the city that sets the stage for the climax of God's plan to restore earth to Edenic perfection. "As the ransomed ones are welcomed to the City of God, there rings out upon the air an exultant cry of adoration. The two Adams are about to meet. The Son of God is standing with outstretched arms to receive the father of our race—the being whom He created, who sinned against his Maker, and for whose sin the marks of the crucifixion are borne upon the Saviour's form. As Adam discerns the prints of the cruel nails, he does not fall upon the bosom of the Lord, but in humiliation casts himself at His feet, crying: 'Worthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain!' Tenderly the Saviour lifts him up and bids him look once more upon the Eden home from which he has so long been exiled. . . . Transported with joy, he beholds the trees that were once his delight—the very trees whose fruit he himself had gathered in the days of his innocence and joy. He sees the vines that his own hands have trained, the very flowers that he once loved to care for. . . . The Saviour leads him to the tree of life and plucks the glorious fruit and bids him eat."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 647, 648.

In the picture of the New Jerusalem returning to earth after 1000 years in heaven, the followers of Christ are likened to a bride (Rev. 21:2). What is the most important feature of the bride? Rev. 19: 7, 8.

Christ's justified, sanctified people, at the conclusion of the pre-Advent judgment (Rev. 19:2), are depicted as clothed in "fine linen, bright and clean" (Rev. 19:8, NIV). As spiritual overcomers through the power of Jesus Christ, they are clothed for eternity with His righteousness; their works demonstrate Christ's mastery of their lives, and their names are retained in the book of life (Rev. 3:5). The robe of righteousness they wear represents "the righteous deeds of the saints" (Rev. 19:8, RSV). Righteous deeds are performed only by those who have received the gift of Christ's righteousness (1 John 2:29). Righteous deeds demonstrate that Christ's righteousness rules in their lives (1 John 3:7).

Our ministry to others involves "the righteous acts of saints," but never to merit salvation, only as evidence of its accomplished fact. The Olivet sermon climaxes with Jesus' dividing the sheep and the goats on the evidence of a ministry of service to others or the lack of it (Matt. 25:31-46).

THE RESTORATION OF THE EARTH (Isa. 65:17).

Our earth is in desperate need of renewal. The apostle Paul observed, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Rom. 8:22, KJV). Remarkably, there are still numberless areas of exquisite beauty in nature, despite the desolation of the earth by past natural disasters, including Noah's flood and contemporary desolation caused by such upheavals as earthquakes.

What should be the attitude of Christians toward the preservation of nature? Does the fact of its promised restoration have an influence on our relationship to its protection and preservation now? Why?

How complete will be the renewal of the earth? Isa. 65:17; 2 Peter 3:11-13.

Of what realities can we be certain in the new earth? Isa. 65:17, 21, 22; 66:22, 23; Rev. 21:4.

It is almost impossible to visualize a world in which there is no disease or death, no sorrow or crying, no pain or suffering. It is also difficult to comprehend a real earth with real people who will recognize one another, but with no suffering or handicapped person. The bloom of health will be seen on every cheek. The joy of living will be evident on every face. There will be real work, real homes, and real beauty to gladden all those who are there.

How can we best focus on a new earth and be good stewards of this earth?

"Human language is inadequate to describe the reward of the righteous. It will be known only to those who behold it. No finite mind can comprehend the glory of the Paradise of God. In the Bible the inheritance of the saved is called 'a country.' There the heavenly Shepherd leads His flock to fountains of living waters. The tree of life yields its fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree are for the service of the nations. There are ever-flowing streams, clear as crystal, and beside them waving trees cast their shadows upon the paths prepared for the ransomed of the Lord. . . . God's people, so long pilgrims and wanderers, shall find a home."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 675.

THE ASSURANCE OF RESTORATION (Rev. 22:17).

The invitation to be part of God's eternal kingdom is extended to everyone. "Whosoever will" may come. Jesus invites everyone born into this world to come to Him and be saved and thus be prepared to enter the New Jerusalem and the New Earth.

How did Jesus express to Nicodemus the conditions for eternal restoration? John 3:5.

Experiencing the new birth comes when an individual kneels at the foot of the cross in repentance and receives forgiveness. This was what Peter referred to when he said to the people at the temple, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19). This experience is sometimes described by the metaphor of washing our clothes in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7:14; 12:11; 19:7, 8). The "blood of the Lamb" refers to Christ's death on the cross, where He took our sins and died as our substitute.

"As the sinner, drawn by the power of Christ, approaches the uplifted cross, and prostrates himself before it, there is a new creation. A new heart is given him. He becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. Holiness finds that it has nothing more to require. God Himself is 'the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.' Rom. 3:26. And 'whom He justified, them he also glorified.' Rom. 8:30."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 163.

What word of blessing is given to those who enter the New Jerusalem as their final home? Rev. 21:6, 7.

It is Christ who gives life and offers the power to help us choose not to sin. In relationship with Him, we maintain the assurance of eternal life. Each day we can grow closer to Jesus and become more and more like Him. The pearly gates of the New Jerusalem will open wide to those who walk daily with Jesus in such repentance and obedience.

How can we maintain this assurance on a daily basis? John 15:3-11. What part do prayer, Bible study, and witnessing have to play? Why? Try to be very specific.

"There, immortal minds will contemplate with never-failing delight the wonders of creative power, the mysteries of redeeming love."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 677.

FURTHER STUDY: Read Isaiah, chapters 65 and 66; Revelation, chapters 19-22; "The Controversy Ended," *The Great Controversy*, chapter 42.

"This earth is the place of preparation for heaven. The time spent here is the Christian's winter. Here the chilly winds of affliction blow upon us, and the waves of trouble roll against us. But in the near future, when Christ comes, sorrow and sighing will be forever ended. Then will be the Christian's summer. All trials will be over, and there will be no more sickness or death."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 988.

"The controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 678.

As the delegates at the 1995 General Conference session in Holland sang so enthusiastically:

"We have this hope that burns within our hearts,
 Hope in the coming of the Lord.
 We have this faith that Christ alone imparts,
 Faith in the promise of His Word.
 We believe the time is here,
 When the nations far and near
 Shall awake, and shout, and sing
 Hallelujah! Christ is king!
 We have this hope that burns within our hearts,
 Hope in the coming of the Lord."
 —Wayne Hooper

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How can we make the reality of Jesus' coming, of heaven, and of the new earth a part of daily living?
2. What can we do to help our families, particularly our children and youth, to want to be in the New Earth?
3. What does eternal restoration mean to you personally?

SUMMARY: The followers of Christ will show compassion and love for the afflicted, sorrowing, and ill whom they meet from day to day. They are ever motivated by "the blessed hope" of His soon return.



20-Something Youth Ministry Wins Teen

Beverly Herbrandson Koester

Priscilla O'Dala is a bright, outgoing 19-year-old from Blantyre, Malawi. Her love of people drew her into an Adventist youth ministry that has changed her life.

"I knew a little about Adventists because one person out of every 60 in Malawi is a baptized Seventh-day Adventist. But I was never really interested in what they believe. My family studies the Bible together, and when we found the Sabbath commandment, we agreed that the seventh day was the Sabbath. But our family worshiped on Sunday. I asked God to lead me into the right religion.

"One day an Adventist friend invited me to a 20-Something Youth-Club meeting. The club is not just social; it has all-day meetings one Sabbath a month. We worship, study the Bible, enjoy fellowship, and share outreach. It is a great chance for young people to make new friends in a comfortable, safe, Christian environment. We usually have around 50 young people at the gatherings, and always we have visitors.

"The 20-Something members made me feel so welcome, I was eager to go back. The youth sang as though they really meant what they were singing, and they prayed before doing nearly anything. That really impressed me. Now I pray about everything I do.

"The 20-Something Club drew me into regular church attendance. Then I began staying after church to watch a video Bible study. I took notes then studied the texts later. The presentation on the Sabbath really impressed me, since it reinforced everything I had been reading. The Bible-class teacher answered my questions and invited me to be baptized. I knew it was God's call to me. I was baptized on 20-Something Sabbath when all my new friends could be present.

"I'm thrilled that now my father and sister have joined the baptismal class. I thank God through His Son, Jesus Christ, for giving me this wonderful life."



Priscilla O'Dala (left); Beverly Herbrandson Koester is sponsorship coordinator for the Malawi Union.

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Lessons for First Quarter, 1998

The first quarter Sabbath School lessons, entitled "1 Corinthians," focus on what the gospel of Jesus Christ means in today's world.

Lesson 1: The Gospel Invades Corinth.

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Acts 18:1-18; 1 Cor. 1:1-9; 16:1-24.

MEMORY TEXT: 1 Corinthians 1:8, 9

KEY THOUGHT: The success of Paul's mission to Corinth convincingly demonstrates the power of God's grace.

OUTLINE:

Paul—Tentmaker and Proclaimer (Acts 18:1-8)

Discouragement From Below; Encouragement From Above (Acts 18:9-11)

Saints . . . in Corinth? (1 Cor. 1:1-9)

"Our Lord, Come!" (1 Cor. 1:1-9; 16:21-24)

The Collection for the Saints (1 Cor. 16:1-20)

Lesson 2: Divided Loyalties.

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 1 Cor. 1:10-17; 3:1-23.

MEMORY TEXT: 1 Corinthians 3:21-23

KEY THOUGHT: Christ's great love constrained Him to heal. His heart went out to the sick, the broken hearted, and the bereaved.

OUTLINE:

Cliques in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:10-17; 3:1-4)

Separate or Together (1 Cor. 1:10-17; 3:1-4)

The Church as God's Garden (1 Cor. 3:5-9)

The Believers as God's Temple (1 Cor. 3:9-23)

Builders of God's Temple (1 Cor. 3:9-17)

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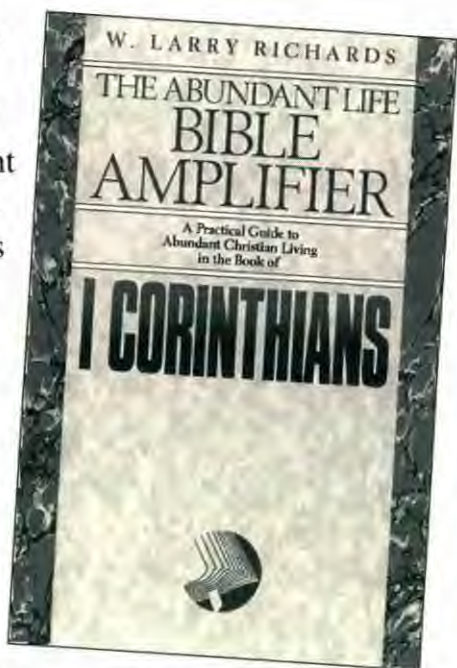
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Project

- ① Establish a small theological seminary in Khartoum, Sudan.

Territory	Churches	Membership	Population
South Sudan Section	7	1,511	7,202,000
Sudan Field	21	4,095	898,000

Project

- ② Fund medium-wave radio broadcast programs in the Chinese language for East Asia.

Territory	Churches	Membership	Population
Mainland China	500*	200,000**	1,250,000,000
Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan	61	10,844	28,150,000

* Figures do not include 200 or more companies or house churches.

** Estimated.

Indian Ocean