

quarterly resource for local church leaders † january/march 2021

# ELDER'S DIGEST

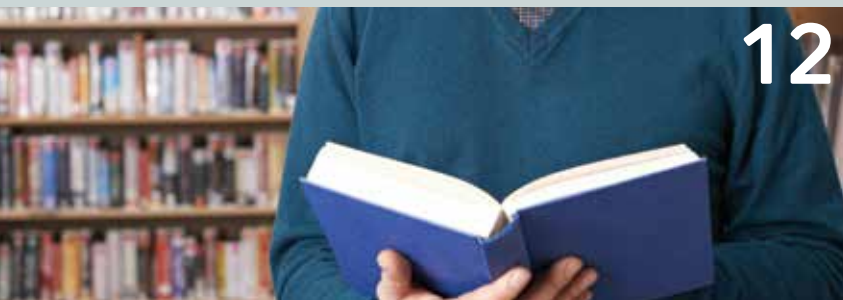
*“Religion that God  
our Father accepts  
as pure and fault-  
less is this: to look  
after orphans and  
widows in their  
distress and to keep  
oneself from  
being polluted by  
the world.”*

James 1:27



## FEATURES

- 4** MINISTERING TO WIDOWS
- 8** THE ELDER AS A DISCIPLER
- 10** THE THEOLOGY OF LIFE >PART 7
- 12** NEW SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST ENCYCLOPEDIA IS A VALUABLE ASSET TO MINISTRY LEADERS
- 19** BOOK REVIEW: LIVING FOR GOD
- 20** THE MINISTRY OF A DEACON/DEACONESS: ELLEN G. WHITE'S PERSPECTIVE >PART 2
- 22** DISCIPLES KEEPING DISCIPLES: INCLUDING THE EXCLUDED >PART 5
- 25** THE INSPIRATION AND AUTHORITY OF ELLEN G. WHITE'S WRITINGS
- 30** ARE MISSION OFFERINGS STILL A THING?



EDITORIAL **3**

SERMONS **15**

KIDDER'S COLUMN **27**

### EDITORIAL

EDITOR

Anthony Kent

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Alfredo Garcia-Marenko

MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION SECRETARY

Jerry N. Page

MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATE SECRETARIES

Jeffrey Brown, Robert Costa, Pavel Goia,  
Anthony Kent, Janet Page

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Erika Miike

### PUBLISHER

Ministerial Association - General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

### DIVISION CONSULTANTS

EAST-CENTRAL AFRICA

Musa Mitekaro

EURO-ASIA

Victor Kozakov

INTER-AMERICAN

Josney Rodriguez

INTER-EUROPEAN

Rainer Wanitschek

NORTH AMERICAN

Ivan Williams

NORTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC

Ron Clouzet

SOUTH AMERICAN

Lucas Alves

SOUTHERN AFRICA-INDIAN OCEAN

Passmore Mulambo

SOUTHERN ASIA

Johnson J. Thadi

SOUTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC

Wendell W. Mandolang

SOUTH PACIFIC

Darius Jankiewicz

TRANS-EUROPEAN

Patrick Johnson

WEST-CENTRAL AFRICA

Daniel Opoku-Boateng

TO WRITERS: Articles about the work of the local elder are welcome and may be submitted to [eldersdigest@gc.adventist.org](mailto:eldersdigest@gc.adventist.org) or *Elder's Digest*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, USA. *Elder's Digest* is published quarterly by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Ministerial Association © 2021, which retains full editorial control. It is printed by Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1350 N. Kings Road, Nampa, ID 83687-3193. PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

EDITOR'S NOTES: The articles in this publication have been re-revised slightly or updated to conform to the intended audience and nature of *Elder's Digest*.

SUBSCRIPTION AND ADDRESS CHANGES: One-year subscription, USD 18.00. Three-year subscription, USD 47.00. Please subscribe at [www.eldersdigest.org](http://www.eldersdigest.org) or send check to *Elder's Digest*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, USA. Please send address changes to [garciamarenkoa@gc.adventist.org](mailto:garciamarenkoa@gc.adventist.org).

BIBLE CREDITS: Texts credited to NIV are from the Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

OUR WEBSITE: [www.eldersdigest.org](http://www.eldersdigest.org)

FOLLOW US ON TWITTER AND LIKE US ON FACEBOOK

DESIGNER: Erika Miike - [erika@emiike.com.br](mailto:erika@emiike.com.br)

**E**lders, you matter! When you're anointed by the Holy Spirit, and you faithfully perform your ministry in your local congregation and community, it's difficult to exaggerate your importance and significance.

The vital nature of your role is demonstrated throughout the Bible in both the Old and New Testaments. There are almost two hundred references to "elders" in English translations of the Bible. The sheer number of references speaks to the relevance of elders and their role. Elders are often found at pivotal points of biblical history: at times they are leading the people toward salvation and, tragically, at other times toward destruction.

In the Bible, elders were far more than figureheads. They often bore testimony to important divine events and had a crucial role of influence among the people. Ideally, elders were the bastions of trust. Their actions and words were to be reliable. Biblically, elders have specific tasks of ministry such as nurturing and protecting the flock (Acts 20:28), praying—particularly for the sick (Jas 5:14), preaching, and teaching (1 Tim 5:17).

The importance of elders is also demonstrated in the apostle Paul's investment in elders. It was his habit to carefully and prayerfully appoint elders for each church (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). Paul also instructed and trained elders to equip them for ministry (Acts 20:17–38).

Believers, churches, and their communities in biblical times needed elders. Times haven't changed! This is still the case in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Communities around the world need leaders of maturity and wisdom, positive and wholesome influences who shine the love of Jesus Christ upon all.

Now more than ever, people of faith and courage are needed to graciously disciple others into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

Please meditate upon these words, inspired by the Holy Spirit and crafted by the apostle Peter:

"To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds

**"LET THEM GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD FOR HIS UNFAILING LOVE AND HIS WONDERFUL DEEDS FOR MEN. LET THEM EXALT HIM IN THE ASSEMBLY OF THE PEOPLE AND PRAISE HIM IN THE COUNCIL OF THE ELDERS"**

**(PSALM 107:31–32).**

of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away" (1 Pet 5:1–4).

As the new editor of *Elder's Digest*, I'm humbled and simultaneously inspired by the responsibility. But the story isn't about me; it's about each of you as elders. I want you to know how important you are as elders. You're important in so many ways: important to God, in the whole scheme of history and salvation, and important to your church

and the people around you—your family members, loved ones, and community. Your ministry as an elder has eternal significance.

Thank you for accepting the invitation to be an elder and for your dedicated and faithful service and ministry. I'm looking forward to this journey with you, as I too am an elder in my local Spencerville, Maryland (USA), congregation.

I'm also grateful for the very fine work of the former editors James H. Zachary (1994), Joel Sarli (1994–2005), and Jonas Arrais (2005–2020). They have left proverbially enormous shoes to fill and considerable legacies. I also want to linger a moment and recognize the exceptional work of my friend and colleague in the General Conference Ministerial Association for fifteen years, Jonas Arrais. He took a very good product and, employing his remarkable God-given acumen, grew the distribution from five thousand to 220,000 and from five to fourteen languages. Extraordinary!

What of the future?

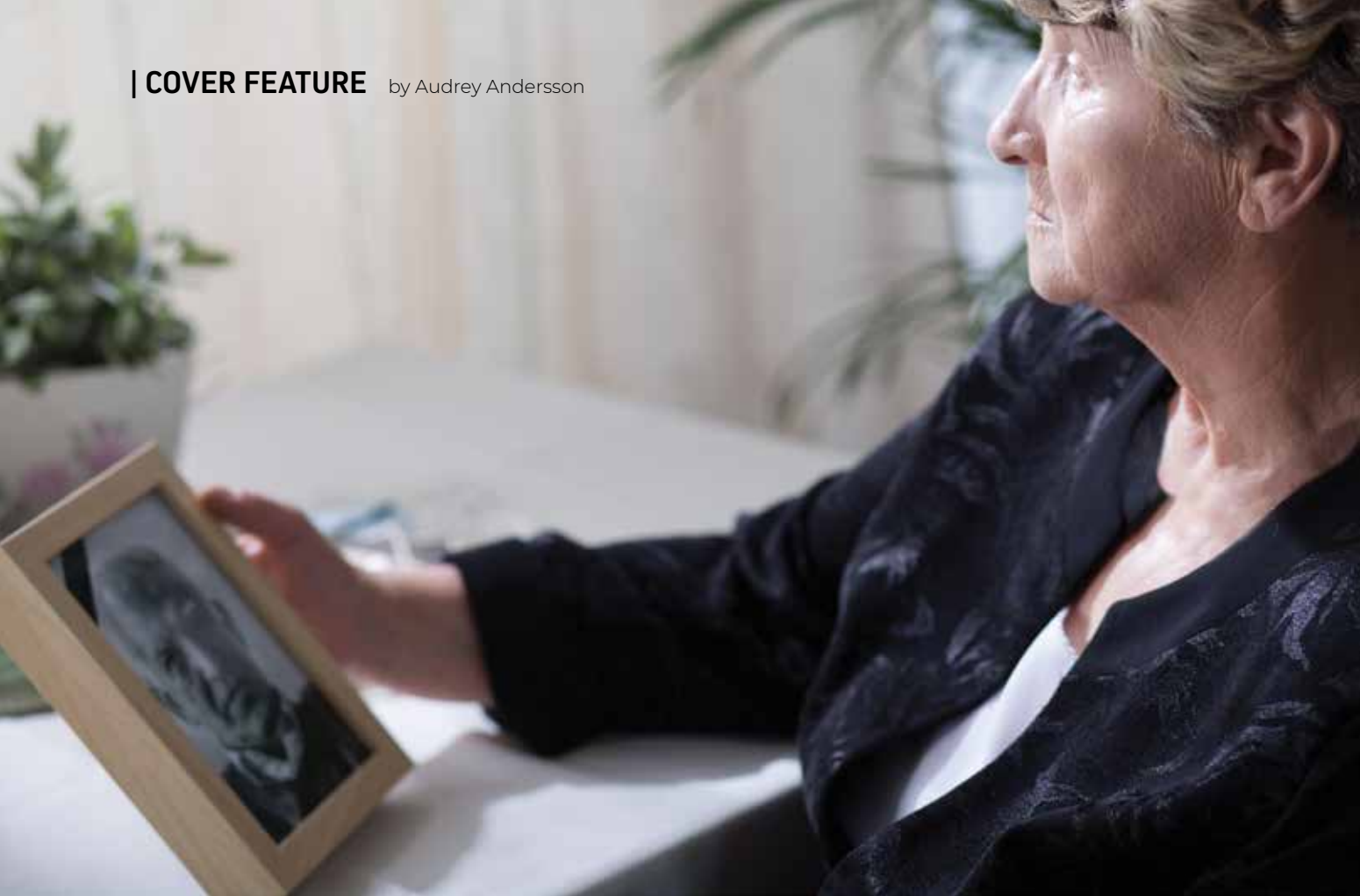
My vision for *Elder's Digest* is to do all that I can, through the grace of God, to:

- enhance each elder's relationship with Jesus Christ;
- uphold the Bible as the Word of God and its teaching as the ultimate revelation of Jesus Christ;
- grow, nourish, inform, and equip elders, through practical instruction, so that they can function and perform their important roles with excellence, competence, and confidence;
- promote the teachings and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church; and
- ultimately grow the community of believers who are eagerly awaiting the return of Jesus.

**ED**



ANTHONY KENT | General Conference Associate Ministerial Secretary



# MINISTERING TO WIDOWS

## IS THERE A CONGREGATION OR COMMUNITY WITHOUT A WIDOW?

It is a pandemic no one talks about. Impacting more women than men, its effects are equally devastating to both: the death of a spouse. There are an estimated 258 million widows<sup>1</sup> and about ninety-two million widowers<sup>2</sup> in the world today. While many associate widows and widowers with old people, there are many who lose their spouse at an early age, through war, violent conflicts, famine, a terminal illness, an unexpected accident, or suicide.

Significant loss has existed since sin entered the world. In the Old Testament, God makes specific promises to widows and provides protection from exploitation, commanding compassion and care for the vulnerable (Deut 27:19; Ps 146:9; 147:3; Isa 54:4–5). Prior to His death, Jesus provided for His widowed mother (John 19:26–27). The early church grappled with the needs of widows and the responsibility to look after them. The apostle James, writing to believers,

specifically states that they should look after the widows and orphans (Jas 1:27). The widowed are very dear to God’s heart and should be close to our hearts as well.

Widows around the world face varying challenges, but one in ten lives in extreme poverty.<sup>3</sup> Death is expensive, and funerals can be costly. This article looks at general principles that may be adapted to fit cultural and local situations. Although the biblical mandate specifically mentions widows, in the twenty-first century there is a need to minister to widowers as well. Many of their needs are similar, but some are quite distinct.

### IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF A SPOUSE

The loss of a spouse is a life-shattering event. Regardless of age, the length of the marriage, or the cause of death, the death of a spouse changes us, bringing with it a bewil-

dering spectrum of emotions. C. S. Lewis said of grief, “No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear.”<sup>4</sup> Whether expected or not, when confronted by the reality of death, a person will not be their usual self.

### Presence Ministry

There are countless practical details that need to be decided following the death of a spouse. Church members can provide practical support through “presence ministry.” What this looks like will vary depending on circumstances and culture. Traditionally, widows and widowers would be supported by their families. But due to the pressures of modern life and the breakdown of the extended family, that type of support is not always available. The church family can fill this gap by offering gender-appropriate support: we can ease the initial trauma of loss by sitting with the widowed person, helping them make funeral arrangements, assisting with filling out necessary forms, and cooking meals. Creatively finding out what practical help the person needs and providing it without being asked, or providing little gestures of kindness will show the bereaved that there is someone who cares. This ministry should continue for as long as is necessary, supporting and evolving as the widowed person begins to integrate their loss into daily life. It is

## GRIEF IS LIKE WAVES. SOMETIMES IT COMES WITHOUT WARNING.

important to know there is someone on whom they can call.

### Apples of Gold in Settings of Silver

Solomon writes, “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver” (Prov 25:11, NKJV). Words can heal or hurt, particularly at times of loss. Death is uncomfortable, awkward, and embarrassing. Few know what to say and cover their discomfort

by mumbling platitudes or ignoring the subject completely. You should *not* say, “Could be worse.” Things could be better, too! The current status of a person’s feelings is not up for debate. While it is true that as believers, we have the hope of seeing each other again on the resurrection morning, the loss of a spouse’s presence, love, help, and wisdom is keenly felt now.

Visit the bereaved as soon as possible and keep visiting them or arrange for others to visit. Remember, the deceased person has a name; use it. Share your favorite memories or something you admired in the dead person. It shows they are not forgotten, and for the surviving spouse this is like a healing balm for a wounded heart. Ask them to tell you about their spouse. Actively listen as they tell their stories. Sharing the story of their spouse is one way of processing what has happened. Asking questions can aid in that process.



Share texts of comfort for the widowed, like Psalms 23, 28, 34, 46, and Hebrews 4:14–16. Offer promises that God will provide daily strength, such as Lamentations 3:21–22. Remind them of the reality and hope of the resurrection in John 10:27–30, Philippians 1:21–23, and Revelation 21–22.

### **MID- TO LONG-TERM SUPPORT**

Friends usually contact the widowed upon first hearing of their loss, but after the funeral, life moves on for others while the widowed is left grappling with the

new reality of being alone. It is often several weeks or even months after the death that a person fully realizes the permanence and full dimension of spousal loss. When the first wave of support and condolences has vanished one often experiences great loneliness. This is when a visit, phone call, or handwritten letter can express tangibly that the widowed is not forgotten.

### **Practical Help**

An extension of “presence ministry” is providing practical help, particularly with jobs that the deceased spouse may have done. This may be anything from cutting the grass to technical support with computers or cooking.

### **Support Versus Control**

There are no right or wrong ways to grieve. Each person is unique and experiences loss differently. It is easy to get impatient, feeling that if only the widowed would do this or that, things would be so much better. Your ideas may be good, but not for the person concerned. Suggest and point out alternatives, but make sure the widowed has the time and space they need to make their own decisions.

Often the pain of losing a spouse is so overwhelming that the widowed may be tempted to numb the emptiness and grief by distracting their mind through alcohol, gambling, or other addictions. Don't be judgmental. Rather, offer professional help and let the person know that they are still needed and loved.

### **Reintegration**

Following bereavement, going to church alone is often difficult. Planning in advance for someone to sit with them, or alerting the deacons and deaconesses so they can sensitive-



### **Practical Help**

An extension of “presence ministry” is providing practical help, particularly with jobs that the deceased spouse may have done. This may be anything from cutting the grass to technical support with computers or cooking.



**THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG WAYS TO GRIEVE. EACH PERSON IS UNIQUE AND EXPERIENCES LOSS DIFFERENTLY.**

ly help them, can make it easier. In larger churches it is easy to miss someone. A creative idea, developed by the Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church, is giving a pin to bereaved people to wear to church. This is a discreet way of letting the deacons and deaconesses know that this person may require some extra care.<sup>5</sup>


**Moving On**

After a while, people express the hope that the widowed will “get over it” or “move on.” Significant loss is not something one gets over or moves on from. Rather, it is a journey of learning to “move forward” and finding ways to integrate the loss into the new reality of life. Love does not end with death, but rather takes on a different form. No longer is it possible to talk and interact with their spouse. The widowed will remember the person with whom they shared their life and will be grateful for them. This is partly an internal journey, but encouraging them to share stories of their life, writing, or creative projects as they move forward, may be a blessing to many.<sup>6</sup>

**Remembrance**

Grief is like waves. Sometimes it comes without warning, but there are also flash points: anniversaries, birthdays, and the holidays. Remembering the widowed at these times can ease their pain and help them integrate their loss into their new reality.

**PREPARATION FOR THE DEATH OF A SPOUSE**

Death is both certain and often untimely. Helping families in the church to support the widowed creates opportunities to facilitate discussions between spouses regarding their wishes when one dies. Having these conversations in advance can provide much comfort and help in times of great pressure. 

<sup>1</sup> See “International Widows’ Day,” United Nations, accessed October 8, 2020, <https://www.un.org/en/observances/widows-day>.

<sup>2</sup> See Joseph Chamie, “Widowhood: Stressful and Unprepared,” IPS News, February 3, 2020, <http://www.ipsnews.net/2020/02/widowhood-stressful-unprepared>.

<sup>3</sup> “International Widows’ Day.”

<sup>4</sup> C. S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed* (London: Faber and Faber, 2013), 5.

<sup>5</sup> Heart Lifters, <https://heartlifters.org>, is a ministry developed by the Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church for those who have lost a spouse through death, divorce, or dementia.

<sup>6</sup> Although not the result of spousal loss, a good example of a creative project is the Golden Shoes Project, a series of street art installations consisting of shoes painted gold by a community. Each pair represents a life lost to violence; each installation is a visual symbol of the total lives lost throughout one year in a specific city. See “About,” Golden Shoes Project, accessed October 8, 2020, <http://www.goldenshoesproject.com/about.html>.

Audrey Andersson is the Executive Secretary of the Trans-European Division. Audrey’s husband Lars was killed in an accident on October 23, 2016.



# THE ELDER AS A DISCIPLER

EVERY ELDER CAN BE A DISCIPLE MAKER WITH JESUS.

I had just completed a two-year internship with a senior pastor and was pastoring my first church on my own. I was excited for the opportunity to shepherd and lead God's people. The church district was on the edge of the great Australian Outback and covered many thousands of kilometers. It had one larger regional town with a church and many smaller towns with small groups or individual members. I had many ideas to share the gospel and Adventist truths with the community. Immediately and enthusiastically I shared my ideas with the church leaders in a board meeting. There was little discussion on my concepts and what was said did not encourage me at all. What could I do?

One of the elders noticed my disheartened response. He asked me to visit him while he was at work. Owen worked with leather, crafting and repairing saddles for horses. I talked while Owen molded and stitched the leather. He listened and I talked some more. He finally said, "I love your enthusiasm for spreading God's Word, but it may take a little time to understand how it is best shared in this area." That made sense to me. So, for the three years that I pastored in that district I would often go over and talk with Owen about the challenges in ministry. He listened as I did most of the talking, but he guided my thinking in a way that connected with the people in that community. We played our guitars together as an outreach; in church we ran community



seminars and cared for people. As an older elder, Owen discipled me. He made me a better follower of Jesus.

In Matthew's record of Jesus' commission to His disciples, the focus is on making disciples (Matt 28:18–20). "Disciple" in Greek is *mathetes*, from a verb that means "to learn." As we go, as we teach, and as we baptize, the goal is to make disciples. A disciple is a follower—someone who learns from being with another person. In the Christian context a disciple is a follower of Jesus (Matt 10:24–25). To fulfill Jesus' commission the church is to make more and better disciple makers. Every ministry of the church—whether Pathfinders, Sabbath School, Women's Ministries, or Health Ministries—should be about making disciple makers for Jesus. Thus, every church member should be a disciple who is making more and better adept disciples. This is especially true of the elders, who are the leaders of the church.

From the time I was a teenager, I have been blessed to have different people in my life to coach, mentor, and support me. They discipled me into becoming a better, more mature and productive disciple of Jesus. These people believed in me, listened, encouraged, challenged, and even allowed me to fail. But their intent was to help me—just like Jesus. Most of these

**EVERY CHURCH MEMBER SHOULD BE A DISCIPLE WHO IS MAKING MORE AND BETTER ADEPT DISCIPLES. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE OF THE ELDERS, WHO ARE THE LEADERS OF THE CHURCH.**

people were elders. I always wanted to be the kind of pastor and elder who supported people like that.

Jesus was the best discipler. First, He invited people to come and see (John 1:39) and follow Him (Matt 4:19). As they interacted with Jesus, they saw His vision, His care for people, His time of prayer, His healing, and His teaching. They learned or were discipled. However, often it is not until you have tried something

yourself that you really know whether you have grown and can do it yourself. Jesus trusted the disciples with challenging activities. Jesus told them to do what He had been doing, but in new places (Luke 9:1–6; 10:1–16). When they came back from their own ministries Jesus provided, feedback (Luke 9:10–11; 10:17–23)—encouragement, and challenge. Eventually Jesus left the disciples on earth and returned to heaven. With Jesus' teachings and the Holy Spirit's power, they became the Christian movement that changed the world (Acts 1:8; 17:6).

Jesus trusted people despite their weaknesses. He knew that James and John had a bad temper but still used them (Mark 3:17; Luke 9:52–56). He knew that Peter rarely thought before He spoke and was even used by Satan (Mark 8:33; Luke 8:45; 9:33). Jesus knew that Thomas could be depressive and doubtful (John 14:5; 20:24–25). But Jesus called and trusted all of them with the task of creating the church and sharing the everlasting gospel. Jesus' call is the same today. He wants every elder to disciple others for His kingdom.

As a division president I disciple my neighbors, younger pastors, and local church leaders. I would challenge you to do the same. If you are good at chairing meetings and setting out agendas, take some new disciples of Jesus and show them how you do it. If you are gifted in hospitality, invite others to do it with you and tell them the tips you have learned to make it an effective ministry. Whatever it is—prayer, evangelism, visitation—disciple someone else in the ministry. As you do so, they will learn to be a better disciple of Jesus and you also will learn. Every elder can be a disciple maker with Jesus. **ED**



---

Glenn Townend is the President of the South Pacific Division.

# THE THEOLOGY OF LIFE >PART 7

## A BIBLICAL THOUGHT – 1

*“Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. But **now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.**”*—Galatians 4:8–11 (emphasis added)

In the last biblical thought we discussed the transition that takes place through the sacrifice of Jesus: we are no longer slaves; we are free, and we are sons and daughters, heirs of the promise. Because of Jesus we do not have to attempt to please God, or do many works of penitence, or performances, or external acts of obedience. Because of Jesus we know God loves us, is pleased with us, and walks with us. And because of this, we serve, we are obedient, and we perform many acts of goodness! And we live like this not to earn any favor from God, but *because we already have His favor!* It is His favor toward us that casts us into a responsive life of love for God and others.

In this text we find Paul once again lamenting over the spiritual situation of the believers in the church of Galatia. He writes, “I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you” (Gal 4:11). His question to the Galatians should provoke us today as well: how is it that after you have come to a knowledge of God, a knowledge that includes being known by Him, that you desire to go back to a life of bondage, to a life before freedom? The Galatians’ temptation is the same many of us go through in our Christian journey: the temptation to find our comfort zone within our own tradition, neglecting the full impact of what Christ has done. It is the temptation of developing and living within a religion that is all about me and what I offer God, instead of all about others through what God does for and through me. The Galatians were letting go of their freedom in Christ to return to the old system of religion! Why was this? Because freedom brings change, and change is scary.

With this movement—from the freedom in Christ to the old ways—comes an immediate problem: the old system was exclusivist. The Galatians were trying to find a place within the Christian community by something else other than the unity Christ fostered!



They tried to find their place by going back to the many stipulations of the law. Paul already wrote to them that in Jesus there is no man, woman, Jew, Greek, slave, master—everybody is one in Him! But in moving back to the old system, the old divisions also come back and the unity Christ conquered is dissolved. In the old system, in fact, unity is something to be avoided. In the old system the “believer” prefers to remain in the comfort zone of living, worshipping, and interacting exclusively with those who share their common intellectual doctrines and practices. It is a system of distance and not approximation. And what Paul is trying to argue here is that in the true Christian community, in the true community of Israel, there is simply no space for anything like that! Reverting to the old system implies undoing what Jesus gave us: freedom to love and fellowship with those who were made equal in Jesus, regardless of what they look like, regardless of what they did in the past, and regardless of what society thinks.

My dear reader, may we open our eyes to our own idolatry. May we be careful not to go back to the old ways of thinking that we need to please God by how well we perform for Him (during days, months, and seasons) and by how well we distance ourselves from those who are not like us! I leave you with a quote from the reformer Martin Luther: “The Kingdom [of Christ] is to be in the midst of your enemies. And he who will not suffer this does not want to be of the Kingdom of Christ; he wants to be among friends, to sit among roses and lilies, not with the bad people but the devout people. O you blasphemers and betrayers of Christ! If Christ had done what you are doing, who would ever have been spared?”

## A BIBLICAL THOUGHT – 2

*“My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!”—Galatians 4:19–20 (emphasis added)*

In the previous biblical thought, we explored how the “old system” of the law created the risk of exclusivism. Paul, as a father, writes to his children in the church of Galatia with the hope that they will understand the danger of going back to the old ways and the implications for the church in doing so. If they trust the flesh, if they trust the law, then they will again believe themselves to be better than others, and will neglect the gift of community that Jesus gives to all who believe, whether Gentile, Greek, or Jew.

In this text Paul continues his appeal to the Galatians. He opens his heart and reminds them of the first time he preached to them, about how the beautiful things they saw happening in their midst had not come from their works, but from their trust in God’s work through Jesus and the Spirit.

So what is Paul’s hope? That Christ might be formed in them. Think about this image. It is probably one of the most transformational images in the Bible. It is perhaps the most beautiful aspect of what it means to be born again of the Spirit. When we allow the Spirit to do the work of grace in us, the Spirit plants in us—in our heart and mind—the reality of who Jesus is. We become impregnated with Jesus. This way, Jesus begins growing in us, like a child. And in time, and by grace, Christ matures in us. Little by little, Jesus takes hold of our thoughts, our actions, our perceptions, our words, our touch. The journey with Jesus in the Spirit is a journey in which Jesus grows in us, taking over everything. This does not mean we cease to be sinners; we will always need forgiveness, light, and grace. But it is this willingness to be in Jesus, through the Spirit, that allows Jesus to grow in us.

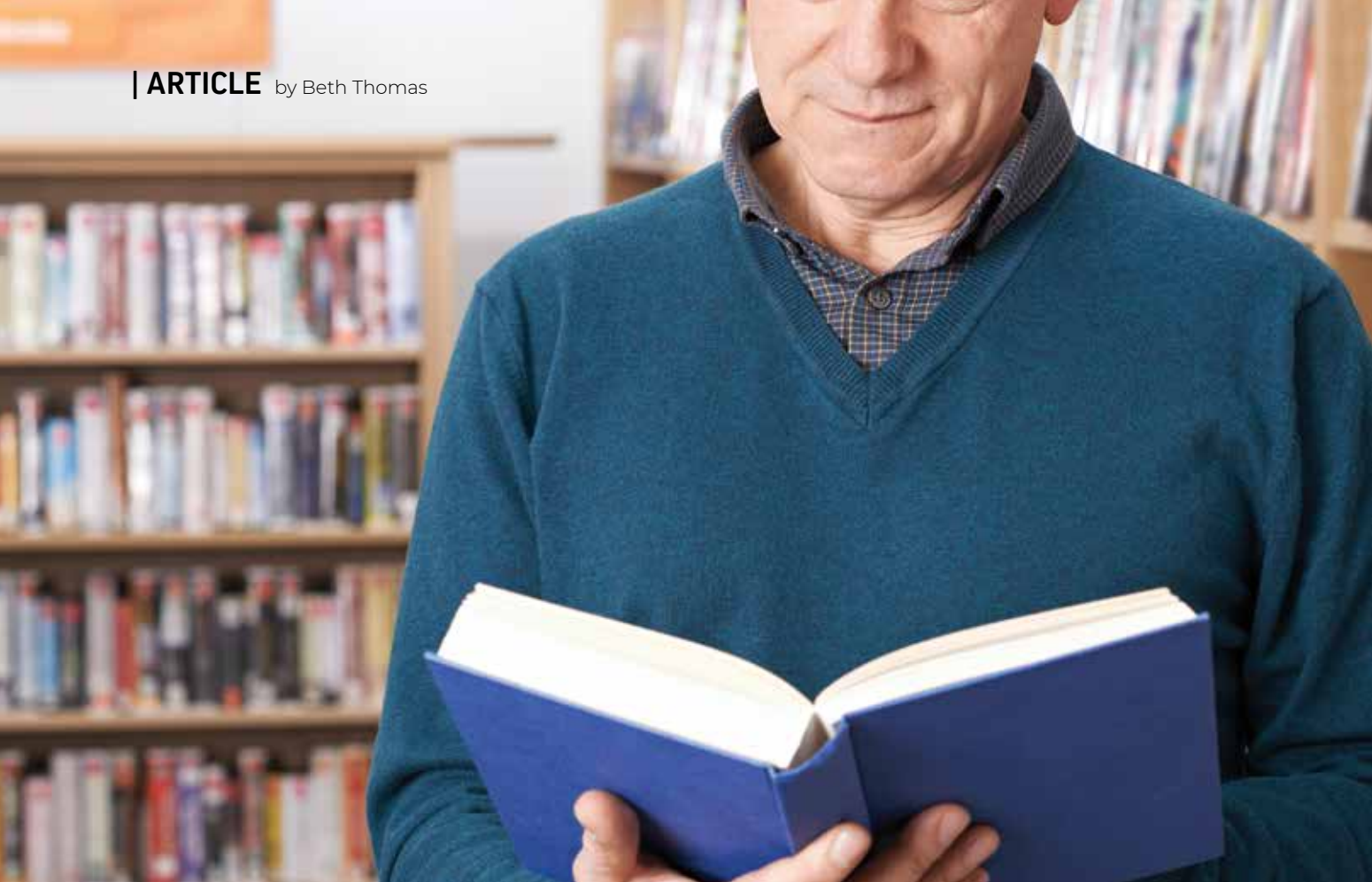
This is the hope of Paul for Galatia. This is my hope for all of us.

Paul is perplexed that the believers in Galatia are turning away from this beautiful experience into a religious reality where trust is placed in the human ability to perform for God. My dear readers, as you read this, pray for God to begin a work in your hearts and lives, and to continue that work until your last day on this earth, allowing Jesus to grow in you, transforming you into true living reminders of Jesus.

I am writing you today as a light spring rain falls upon the trees outside. It reminds me of a song I sang years ago in the Andrews University choir. The song was written by Bob Chilcott and it repeated a beautiful line at the end: “Here in my heart, Jesus is springing.” My dear friends, may you face the rest of this week, this month, this year, with the assurance that this is the most beautiful work of God for humanity! Here in my heart Jesus is springing. There in your heart Jesus is springing. You may not feel it, you may not see it, but in time, fruits will come from the work of God in the field of the heart of those who trust and believe. And everyone around you will be blessed by the fruit that will grow. Here in my heart, there in your heart, Jesus is springing. **ED**

---

Tiago Arrais, PhD, is a district pastor in Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA.



# NEW SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST ENCYCLOPEDIA IS A VALUABLE ASSET TO MINISTRY LEADERS

It was late in the evening when a young girl sat down to do some research on her computer. She was working on a school project, documenting specific aspects of her faith and the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. As she began to type keywords into search engines, it became clear that it would be a struggle to find the information she needed from an authoritative Adventist source. There was a lot of *misinformation*, to be sure. But where was the website that could answer her questions with clarity and authority?

## THE SOLUTION

On July 1, 2020, the Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research at the General Conference launched an initiative to solve this problem. A product of over five

years of planning and processing, the *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists* (ESDA) is the best attempt to date of establishing a central, authoritative source of Adventist history, current events, church initiatives, and theological topics from every corner of the world.

With over two thousand articles and counting, contributed by a diverse team of writers and editors from every division of the Adventist Church, this database will eventually grow to over eight thousand articles tracing Adventist history, missions, theological issues, projects, programs, and biographies. Input given by pastors, administrators, evangelists, and scholars makes this a shared work of global importance, valuable for every Adventist and for those with questions and interests outside of our faith community.

## PURPOSE AND NEED

As an Adventist elder or ministry leader, you may already have on your bookshelf a well-worn copy of the *Adventist Encyclopedia*, which is volume 11 of the Adventist Bible Commentary Series (or volumes 11 and 12 of the 1996 revision of the commentary series).

While that initial encyclopedia served a specific purpose, the reality is that the world in which it was written, and the framework from which it was written, simply do not exist anymore. “Also, even though the authors of the earlier editions really tried to present an international worldwide perspective, many feel that it was written mostly from a North American perspective.”<sup>1</sup>

In the last fifty years, the church has experienced dramatic changes. Missionaries sent to far-flung parts of the world established congregations, hospitals, and educational institutions that have taken root and fostered explosive growth. Their stories deserve to be told in a way that traces the development of institutions, sacrifices of church leaders and volunteers, and the development of our distinctive Adventist identity, through the eyes of these emerging fields and from storytellers and historians who know the stories best.

Dragoslava Santrac, ESDA managing editor, says, “One of the greatest assets of the new encyclopedia project is the strong support and involvement of the worldwide Church. The advantage of worldwide involvement is that ESDA authors can collect materials from local church libraries and archives. They can also collect materials from church members, such as letters, photos

## “IT WILL LEAD NON-ADVENTISTS AND SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS INTO A GREATER UNDERSTANDING THAT THIS IS GOD’S CHURCH, THAT GOD IS BLESSING IT, AND IS LEADING IT.”

and diaries and conduct interviews with people who know about specific historical events. It would be almost impossible to conduct this style of research without local involvement and presence.”

In fact, church members with expertise on specific subjects are encouraged to give peer reviews or write articles on issues they are passionate about. Because the encyclopedia is considered a scholarly publication,

published articles count toward professional development, too. It’s a wonderful opportunity to “remember, record, and rehearse God’s leading.”<sup>2</sup>

## GOALS

The ESDA is designed to accomplish several goals, including strengthening Adventist identity and heightening awareness of our distinctive doctrinal and prophetic beliefs, providing an authoritative reference work for new Adventists or non-members to learn about all aspects of our denomination, and even highlighting challenges the church still faces in order to reach the world for Christ.

David Trim, editor of the ESDA and director of the Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, believes the ESDA can be a useful tool for church members to use for evangelism. “As people hear about Seventh-day Adventists and say, ‘What are they? Who are they? What do these people believe? Where do they come from?’ the encyclopedia will show them. It will give them a scholarly and authoritative account—one that tells the truth and isn’t just sugar-coated but ultimately is faith



affirming. It will lead non-Adventists and Seventh-day Adventists into a greater understanding that this is God's church, that God is blessing it, and is leading it."


### PERSONAL ENHANCEMENT

As a ministry leader, you will want to take advantage of this expanding resource for your own personal use. Not only will it provide a basis for your own understanding of Adventist history and other issues, but you will also find inspiring stories to use as sermon illustrations, and important up-to-date information on issues. New articles, photos, videos, and podcasts are added on a regular basis.

Mario Brito, president of the Inter-European Division of the Adventist Church, has seen the value of the encyclopedia in his territory. "Members, leaders, and pastors benefit from these stories because we find experiences of commitment [and] dedication to the work. They help us to understand that nothing can be accomplished without sacrifice, involvement, and love for the cause. This is a motivation for the younger generations to do the same."<sup>3</sup>

This is exactly what the ESDA hopes to accomplish. Trim says, "As you surf through the ESDA Online, reading some articles, scanning others, at times you

may feel chastened or challenged by the struggles and missteps, at times thrilled by the victories and achievements, and at other times humbled or inspired by commitment and sacrifice. But throughout, you will be encouraged by the providences of God—and we hope and believe that you will gain a new enthusiasm for the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church."<sup>4</sup>

For more information, visit the official ESDA website at [encyclopedia.adventist.org](https://encyclopedia.adventist.org). 

<sup>1</sup> "About ESDA," *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*, accessed October 8, 2020, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/about-esda>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> "A Brand New Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists Released July 1," Adventist News Network, July 6, 2020, <https://adventistnews/en/news/a-brand-new-encyclopedia-of-seventh-day-adventists-released-july-1>.

<sup>4</sup> "From the Editor," *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*, accessed October 8, 2020, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/a-word-from-the-editor>.

Beth Thomas is a freelance writer living in Detroit, Michigan, USA, with her pastor husband and two children.



**WORLD CHURCH  
DAYS OF PRAYER  
AND FASTING**

January 2, 2021  
April 3, 2021  
July 3, 2021  
October 2, 2021

Download the materials at  
[revivalandreformation.org/prayerdays](https://revivalandreformation.org/prayerdays)

**Revival  
& REFORMATION**

# THE MYSTERY OF DEATH RESOLVED

## INTRODUCTION

“Philip, remember that you must die!” Thus said a slave of the ruler of Macedon daily to his royal master. And the poet Lowell wrote,

Life is a sheet of paper white  
Whereon each one of us may write  
His line or two, and then comes night.

Many false concepts of death and the hereafter have created widespread doubt and despair. The insecurity of life is matched by the insecurity of death. In this sermon we will resolve the “mystery” of death by examining its reality, its nature, and the promise of life after death.

## I. THE REALITY OF DEATH

In his book *A View from the Hearse*, Joseph Bayly writes about the personal tragedies he has suffered. His boy died of leukemia just before his fifth birthday. There were nine nightmarish months between his son’s diagnosis and death. He laments, “Everything changes, death is changeless. . . The door of the hearse is never closed. Dairy farmer and sales executive live in death’s shadow with Nobel Prize winner and prostitute, infant, teen, old man. The hearse stands waiting for the surgeon who transplants a heart, as well as the hopeful recipient, for the funeral director as well as the corpse. . . Death spares none.”

Death does not consent to let itself be forgotten, even though one of Tolstoy’s characters declared that “the essential thing, when we are speaking of death, consists in not thinking about it.” Notwithstanding, death walks at our side, and with the complicity of uniformity sculpts its mark on the faces of those dearest to us.

The biblical word confirms its reality. Paul writes, “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned” (Rom 5:12). Earlier Solomon declared, “The living know that they will die” (Eccl 9:5), and the prophet Ezekiel declared, “For everyone belongs to me, the parent as well as the child—both alike belong to me. The one who sins is the one who will die” (Ezek 18:4). Later, Paul declares that “people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment” (Heb 9:27).

If no one can escape the certainty of death, what happens when we die?

## II. THE NATURE OF DEATH

The Genesis account of the creation of man is that “the Lord God formed a man from the

dust of the ground” (Gen 2:7), and at death “the dust returns to the ground it came from” (Eccl 12:7; cf. Gen 3:19).

According to chemical scientists, this “dust,” besides other constituents, falls into a chemical form. For instance, there is sufficient carbon to provide lead for nine thousand pencils, enough phosphorus to make 2,200 match heads, about a bucket full of lime, a quarter pound of sulphur, about a spoonful of magnesium, and enough iron to make a two-inch nail.

Life reduced to dust! What shocking chemical reductionism! Death is the opposite to life. By it and from it comes no good thing. No consciousness, no intelligence, no communication either with or between God and man. This sad reality is validated by four explicit biblical facts related to the state of man in the realm of the dead:

1. In death the thought process perishes. “His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish” (Ps 146:4, KJV).

2. In death, the dead have no part in anything that is done on earth. Read Ecclesiastes 9:5–6.

3. In death, there is no participation in any activity. There is “neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom” (Eccl 9:10).

4. In death, the capacity of the dead to fellowship with God is absent. “It is not the dead who praise the Lord” (Ps 115:17).

Unmistakably then, death is the antithesis of life. Everything that is present in life is absent. Everything that makes a person human—personality, thought process, social life, free will, moral obligations—ceases at the moment of death.

But there is an encouraging metaphor for death used by Bible writers. The psalmist writes, “Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death” (Ps 13:3). Says Job, “So he lies down and does not rise; till the heavens are no more, people will not awake or be roused from their sleep” (Job 14:12). Even Jesus describes the death of His friend Lazarus as a “sleep” (John 11:11–14).

From this metaphor then, we can conclude three realities:

1. Like sleep, death is a state of unconsciousness.
2. Like sleep, death is temporary.
3. Like sleep, death implies an awakening.

And that glorious “awakening” is the promise of life after death.

## III. THE PROMISE OF LIFE AFTER DEATH

Following Sir Walter Raleigh’s execution, among his papers was found a poem showing his belief that death was but the close of a chapter, that in a day to come, it, too, would be successfully conquered:

But from this earth, this grave, this dust  
My God shall raise me up I trust.

Centuries earlier the apostle Paul asked the question, “Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?” (Acts 26:8). Christ answers the question with the assurance, “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned” (John 5:28–29). Centuries before Job expressed his confidence in life after death when he declared, “I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another” (Job 19:25–27). Referring to the interval between death and resurrection Job said, “All the days of my hard service I will wait for my renewal to come” (Job 14:14). Even more, he tells us where he would be waiting: “If I wait, the grave is mine house; I have made my bed in the darkness” (Job 17:13, KJV). Later, Daniel wrote, “Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan 12:2). What a promise for life after death!

## CONCLUSION

The reality of death is an unwelcome disturber of life, and yet a summons to number our days, maintain our faith in God, live responsibly, and serve sacrificially. The nature of death is a disruptive disintegration of life and yet, in that dislocation of dust, we are remembered by God and angels guard the place where we rest until the trumpet sounds the call to awaken.

The promise of life after death is a reminder that God is faithful and that He fulfills His promise “to seek and to save that which was lost,” soon to be realized in a restored creation, a glorious reunion with loved ones in a place where no one will ever say goodbye. We have this hope. Amen. **ED**

Rex D. Edwards is a former vice president for religious studies at Griggs University.

# THE MYSTERY OF IMMORTALITY UNVEILED

## INTRODUCTION

When a seventy-three-year-old California psychologist died of lung cancer several years ago, the unusual manner of disposing of his body included packing it in dry ice, draining the blood, and replacing it with an antifreeze solution. Then his frozen body was shipped to Phoenix to be kept in cold storage inside a thirteen-foot, thermos-shaped coffin. This strange process promotes the cause of cryonics—freezing the dead for future reanimation. This bizarre strategy expresses a universal wish for immortality.

There is a common belief that man, by nature, possesses an undefinable, invisible, and immortal soul capable of surviving physical death. The traditional understanding and biblical meaning of immortality will be carefully examined, in this sermon.

## I. THE TRADITIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF IMMORTALITY

The belief in man's natural immortality goes back to antiquity. The words "You will not certainly die" (Gen 3:4) are the earliest utterance of this false doctrine. This idea has been echoed through the centuries, from the Egyptian writers to the present. They said, as the sun set in the western horizon and was gloriously reborn every new day, so man left this world, only to be reborn in eternal happiness in the great beyond. To the Egyptians then, death was looked upon as a continuation of this life in a land where all was joy and peace.

The theory of immortality became popular through the speculations of the Greeks, which in later years infiltrated the Christian church. From 600 BC the Orphic and Pythagorean schools taught that the human soul was immortal and deathless—that every soul exists in happiness or misery through endless ages. This philosophy was further elaborated by Plato and Aristotle. Their ideas were accepted in the first century by Philo Judaeus, who sought to harmonize Jewish religious thought with Greek philosophy. To Philo the body was the source of all evil. It was the coffin that for a time imprisoned the soul. At death the soul was free to return to the heavens and enjoy the blessings of the ethereal realms or to descend in misery to the nethermost parts of Hades. So, for them death was not an end to punishment; the punishment was to be endured eternally.

Tertullian, the father of Latin theology, taught the eternal punishment of the wicked. He claimed that the torments of those who are lost will be coexistent with the happiness of the saved. Then down in Alexandria, Origen—a teacher in the Neoplatonic school—taught the preexistence and transmigration of souls and the purifying fires of purgatory. And we see the influence of the false teaching that "every soul" is immortal in the writings of fifth-century Au-

gustine and Calvin's teaching in Reformation times by advocating that in creating man, God not only designed to animate a vessel of clay, but made it the habitation of an immortal spirit. It was while John Knox was in Geneva as a refugee, that he met John Calvin and accepted his eschatological teachings and systematized these into Presbyterian doctrine.

Yet, even though the immortal soul theory seemed to be the prevailing view of the Christian era, many leading theologians throughout the centuries held to the biblical concept of immortality being conditional and a gift to be bestowed at the resurrection of the righteous. These voices include the learned monk Saphronius of Damascus, who became patriarch of Jerusalem in the seventh century; John Wycliffe, the morning star of the Reformation; and William Tyndale, who in the fourteenth century denounced the doctrine of purgatory. Many Anabaptists were burned at the stake but held to their view of non-immortality to the end. The poet John Milton and William Temple, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and many others of that era, join with John R. W. Stott, Oscar Cullman, and many contemporary theologians in the Bible teaching of the non-immortality of the soul.

## II. THE BIBLICAL TEACHING ON IMMORTALITY

In 1702, William Coward dared to publish a treatise entitled *Second Thoughts Concerning Human Soul*. In this manuscript he stated the belief in the soul being "a spiritual Immortal Substance, united to a Human Body, to be a plain Heathenish Invention, and not consonant to the Principles of Philosophy, Reason or Religion; but the ground only of many absurd and Superstitious Opinions, abominable to the Reformed Church and Derogatory in General to True Christianity." The book stirred up all England on the subject of immortality. When the second edition was published, the British government in 1704 ordered every copy to be burned by the common hangman.

Belief in the immortality of the soul was not a part of Hebrew teaching, nor even implied in the Old Testament, nor is it taught in the New Testament. The word "immortality" in 1 Corinthians 15:53–54, refers *not* to the soul but to the body, which though mortal now will be given immortality at the resurrection. In 1 Timothy 1:17 "immortality" is spoken of as an attribute of God alone.

Contrary to Plato, who taught that the soul of man is immortal and imperishable, Christ asserts that the human soul can be destroyed (Matt 10:28; 16:26). Further, the words "soul" and "spirit," so often in modern parlance joined with the words "immortal," "deathless," and "never-dying," come from two Hebrew words, *nephesh* and *ruach*, and

the two corresponding words in the Greek, *psuche* and *pneuma*. These words are used in the aggregate in the Old and New Testaments 1,700 times, and yet not once are the terms "immortal," "deathless," or "ever-dying" applied to them or to any other terms that would convey the idea of an imperishable nature or continued existence in either the soul or spirit.

The biblical view of man is that he is a unitary being. When Paul sets forth *pneuma*, or "spirit," in opposition to *sarx*, or "flesh," he is speaking *not* of the opposition between two parts of man's being, but of the two directions in which man may travel. The spiritual man is facing toward God and living a life of faith in His salvation. The life lived in the flesh is that which is apart from God and is headed downward for destruction. The endless permanence of all human souls has no place in the Bible.

The evidence of scriptural research leads us to the following conclusions:

The word "mortal" occurs six times in the Bible and in every instance is applied to man (Job 4:17; Rom 6:12; 8:11; 1 Cor 15:53–54; 2 Cor 4:11). The word "immortal" occurs only once in the Bible and is applied to God (1 Tim 1:17). The word "immortality" occurs many times in the Bible and is applied to God or the future state of man beyond the resurrection (Rom 2:7; 1 Cor 15:53–54; 1 Tim 6:16; 2 Tim 1:10). Man can obtain immortality only through Christ (Rom 2:7; 1 Cor 15:51–54; 2 Tim 1:10; 1 John 5:12).

## CONCLUSION

In the gorgeous gardens of the royal Sandringham House, there is a grave. A younger brother of King George VI slipped into the silence of death, his head pillowed in a dreamless sleep. This young prince was only fourteen and had spent much of his short life in pain. On his modest tombstone is engraved the epitaph "In Thy kingdom he shall have rest." His earthly father, with all the resources of the empire, availed nothing to cure or give him peace. By contrast, we have a Savior who has brought ultimate healing, for He has "destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim 1:10). The life that we lost in the beginning is recoverable as a gift from God, and that gift is available to all. What peace comes with the assurance that the ransomed will on the day of Jesus' coming be removed "from the power of the grave" (Hos 13:14), and will awake to life and immortality, and "never see death" (John 8:51). We have this hope. Amen. ED

Rex D. Edwards is a former vice president for religious studies at Griggs University.



# THE MYSTERY OF HELL EXTINGUISHED

## INTRODUCTION

In Michelangelo's painting *The Last Judgment* there's little doubt about who's going where. On the left, a swirl of saints and martyrs ascend heavenward, their faces a mixture of rapture and shock. They soar triumphantly, flanking the figure of a risen Christ. On the right, it's a decidedly downward trend, a slightly more populated mix of victims being dragged, pushed, and hurled into the abyss. Behind the altar are nearly hidden figures of three apelike creatures, seemingly the gatekeepers of a fiery furnace that is glimpsed just beyond.

Alan F. Segal, author of *Life after Death: A History of After-Life in Western Religion* says, "Most Americans believe they will be saved no matter what they are." An exclusive survey conducted by AARP about life after death reveals that 40% believe heaven is a "place," and 47% say it is a "state of being." As to the alternate destination, of those who think hell exists, 43% say it's a "state of being"; 42% say it's a "place."

The doctrine of an eternally burning hell is based on the assumption of the immortality of the soul. The immediate question arises: how can such a belief be reconciled with a loving God? To resolve this matter I propose to ask three major questions and answer them from the Bible.

## I. WILL THOSE WHO REJECT THE SALVATION PROVIDED BY JESUS BE PUNISHED, OR, AS UNIVERSALISTS TEACH, WILL GOD'S MERCY OVERCOME HIS JUSTICE AS HE SAVES EVERYONE?

The biblical answer is very explicit. "The one who sins is the one who will die" (Ezek 18:4)—not live in eternal torment. Sinners have been described with startling specificity as "the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars" (Rev 21:8; cf. Rom 1:18–32). They will perish, having no second chance and no provision for salvation after death. Their punishment is a result of their own choices, and therefore a self-judgment, not something God has vengefully imposed. God is pictured as "not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Pet 3:9). "God is love" (1 John 4:8) and takes "no pleasure" in destroying the wicked, but rather joyfully offers eternal life to those who will repent (Ezek 33:11; John 3:16).

## II. SINCE THE WICKED WILL BE PUNISHED, WILL THAT TAKE PLACE IN "HELL"?

Several years ago a vivid description of "hell" appeared in *Tracts for Spiritual Reading*, one of which read, "Look into this

little prison . . . there is a boy. He is silent; despair is on him. . . . His eyes are burning like two burning coals. Two long flames come out of his ears. . . . Sometimes he opens his mouth and a breath of blazing fire rolls out of it. But listen! . . . The blood is boiling in the scolded veins of that boy. The brain is boiling and bubbling in his head. The marrow is boiling in his bones!" Robert Ingersoll, after hearing a similar description in a sermon, trudged out of the church, muttering to himself, "If that is what God is like, hate Him!"

Is such a horribly graphic description of "hell" as an unending torment a biblical teaching? No! Interestingly, the word "hell" in the Bible has three meanings:

1. *Hell sometimes means the "grave."* The Hebrew word widely used for "grave" is *Sheol*. In Psalm 16:10 we have it rendered "hell," referring to the "grave": "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (KJV). In Acts 2:27, KJV, this text is quoted by Peter, where the Greek word for "hell" is *hades*. Further, in Acts 2:31, KJV, it is a reference to Christ's resurrection. Christ was not left in "hell"—that is, in the grave—but was raised from the dead. In 1 Corinthians 15:55 *hades* is translated "grave."

2. *Hell also signifies a place of burning.* In the New Testament the word is *Gehenna*, or the "Valley of Hinnom." This is where the bodies of dead animals and the refuse of the city of Jerusalem were cast. Fires burned continuously, and worms infested the carcasses of animals. What the fire did not destroy, the worms consumed. Thus *Gehenna* was a type of complete annihilation.

3. *Hell sometimes represents darkness.* This meaning of "hell" is found in 2 Peter 2:4: "For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment." The Greek word here is *Tartarus*, not *Gehenna* or *hades*. In this text hell represents the darkness that enshrouded Satan and his angels when they were separated from God (cf. Isa 60:2).

The biblical meaning of "hell" is plain: it is the grave, a dark abyss, and a place of final destruction, not eternal torment. It is clear, though surprising, that all men go to "hell" (or the grave) when they die (see Job 17:13; 30:23; Eccl 12:7). But the grave is an impartial place (Ps 89:18). Into the grave have gone both the vilest characters and the sweetest mortals whose gentle footsteps ever graced the earth. However, their eternal destinations are different (Rev 20:1–15).

## III. WHAT IS THE DURATION OF THE SINNER'S PUNISHMENT? WILL IT BE UNENDING?

It is written, "Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment" (Heb 9:27). For some this judgment will mean a fiery end. That "fire" is referred to in the Bible as "forever," "everlasting," and "unquenchable."

1. *"For ever and ever"*: There are fifty-six passages in which the word "forever" is used to speak of things that have already come to an end. Further, the length of time is determined by the object to which it is applied. For instance: In 1 Samuel 1:22, KJV, Hannah loans Samuel to the Lord "for ever," yet in verse 28, the duration of this service is limited to "as long as he liveth." In Jonah 1:17, the prophet is in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, yet in Jonah 2:6, KJV, the duration is referred to as "for ever."

2. *"Everlasting punishment"*: In Matthew 25:46 Jesus says the wicked "will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." It is not everlasting punishing, but the punishment of death will be everlasting. In Jude 7, KJV, the licentious people of Sodom and Gomorrah are punished with "the vengeance of *eternal fire*," and yet they are not burning today. In fact, 2 Peter 2:6 says that these two cities are an example to "the ungodly." Again, the effects of the fire are everlasting, but the victims do not burn continually.

3. *"Unquenchable fire"*: In Mark 9:43–44 Jesus suggests the amputation of offending limbs if they stand in the way of salvation, then adds that their end will be a place "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is *not quenched*" (KJV). So, the worms will consume what the fire does not destroy. Jerusalem was destroyed by such a fire and is not still burning. The Lord warned Israel, "I will kindle a fire in the gates . . . , and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and *it shall not be quenched*" (Jer 17:27, KJV, emphasis added; cf. 52:12–13). In other words, the fire will not go out until it has consumed everything. So it will be with the wicked.

## CONCLUSION

So we come to the final question: when will the wicked receive their punishment? Let Daniel and Jesus answer that question. Read Daniel 12:2 and John 5:28–29. The reality is that no one is in heaven or hell now. Whether saved or unsaved, *all* remain in the grave (*hades*) until the resurrection. Jesus longs to welcome all who believe. We have this hope. Amen. ED

Rev D. Edwards is a former vice president for religious studies at Griggs University.

# THE MYSTERY OF TWO RESURRECTIONS RESOLVED

## INTRODUCTION

A few years ago there was great excitement in the little community of Mount Clinton, Virginia, USA, the morning of April 30. On that day Paul F. Frye, a Pentecostal minister who had died on November 23 of the previous year, was to be resurrected! On hand to witness the miracle in the country cemetery, were nearly a thousand curious spectators, some of whom had spent the night in their cars to be sure of a graveside location.

Interest in the event started when Leon A. Frye, thirty-seven-year-old son of the minister, spread the word that the family had received “spiritual notification” that the father would emerge from his grave at daybreak, April 30. In full faith that the resurrection would take place, Leon quit his job as a truck driver in order to assist his father in his ministry.

Before daybreak Leon, his mother, and the large crowd of curious onlookers were at the graveside. A few songs were sung and prayers were offered. Darkness gave way to dawn. The sun rose behind a bank of dark clouds. But nothing happened. Disappointed, the crowd began to disperse. By eight o’clock everyone had gone—everyone except Paul Frye, that is. He remained in his grave.

## I. THE CERTAINTY OF A GENERAL RESURRECTION

The Bible promises no resurrection of the dead before the second advent of Jesus. All the dead, both good and evil, will arise, but *not* at the same time. Jesus says, “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when *all* who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned” (John 5:28–29, emphasis added). These two resurrections are also referred to by Paul, who writes, “I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked” (Acts 24:15). Notice that the *order* of these two resurrections are the same. Both Jesus and Paul place the “just” first, and the “unjust” afterward.

How long will it be between these two resurrections—the resurrection of the righteous, or the first resurrection, and the resurrection of the wicked, which is the second resurrection? We find the answer in Revelation, where John clearly identifies the time when these two resurrections take place. He writes, “Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years” (Rev 20:6). Thus, the thousand-year period begins with the resur-

rection of the righteous dead at the coming of Jesus. Paul agrees with John when he affirms, “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever” (1 Thess 4:16–17). Glorious reunion!

Now what about the resurrection of sinners? “The rest of the dead,” John writes, “did not come to life until the thousand years were ended” (Rev 20:5). So we have two resurrections, separated by a thousand years. This brings us to the rest of the story: a dramatic account describing the final events of earth’s history described in Revelation 20, known as the millennium.

## II. THE EVENT THAT FINALLY RESOLVES THE RESURRECTION MYSTERY

But first, let us briefly identify and describe the three major views on the subject. This will be followed by a summary of the biblical teaching.

1. *Post-millennialists* believe that the millennium is at present being established in the world, that before the Lord returns there will be marked improvement in mankind, that equitable social institutions and the increase of knowledge will achieve a utopian dream to make humanity better, and that Satan’s binding will permit the gospel to reach the whole world, after which Christ will return.

2. *Pre-millennialists* believe that Christ’s second coming *precedes* the millennium, that the reign of God will not come by human efforts, that prior to the end the antichrist will gain control of human affairs, and only the return of our Lord can inaugurate the golden age on earth.

3. *Amillennialists*, unlike the previous views, teach that the Bible does not predict a millennium in a literal sense. They believe that there exist twin conditions of good and evil. God’s kingdom and Satan’s dominion coexist until Christ returns. At that time the resurrection and the judgment will take place, which will be followed by God’s eternal reign of peace and never-ending happiness.

How do we determine which of these positions has biblical endorsement? Let this summary of the biblical teaching on the millennium assist us in fully understanding its meanings and implications.

## III. SUMMARY

### 1. *Events at the beginning of the millennium*

a. Second coming of Jesus accompanied

by the armies of heaven (Rev 19:11–21).

b. First resurrection of the righteous (Rev 20:4–6).

c. The righteous living translated, reunited with the righteous dead to receive the gift of immortality (1 Cor 15:51–54; 1 Thess 4:16–17).

d. Christ leads the saved to the place prepared for them (John 14:1–3).

e. Binding of Satan by earth’s depopulation (Rev 20:1–3).

f. Destruction of the wicked (Rev 19:20–21).

### 2. *Events during the millennium*

a. The redeemed live in heaven with Jesus for a thousand years (Rev 20:4).

b. Judgment is “given unto them” (Rev 20:4, KJV; see also 1 Cor 6:2–4).

c. They attend the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:9).

### 3. *Events at the end of the millennium*

a. Resurrection of the wicked (John 5:28–29; Rev 20:5, 7–8).

b. Descent of the Holy City (Rev 21:2).

c. A repopulated earth leads to the loosening of Satan, who leads the final rebellion (Rev 20:7–9).

d. Final destruction of the wicked (Rev 20:9).

e. Purification and regeneration of the earth by fire (2 Pet 3:12–13; Rev 21:1).

f. Establishment of the reign of God on an earth restored, which will be the eternal home of the redeemed (Isa 65:17, 21–23; John 17:10).

## CONCLUSION

Jesus’ resurrection makes eternal life a certainty for all believers in Him. The night of human pain and suffering—even death—can be endured by Christians because they look forward to the resurrection morning. What happened in an old garden near old Jerusalem will happen in all the world someday. And, because of what took place there, it is always morning in our hearts. In the words of Helmut Thielicke: “Above the ruins of our lives strides the One who today advances the claim that He can authoritatively close the gap between God and man, that He can restore the world deranged by pain, unrighteousness and enmity against God, that He is more than a match for the awful majesty of death.” That One is Jesus.

That’s why I believe the millennium is not a theological fantasy. It is a simple fact taught in Scripture and a fundamental event necessarily related to the return of Jesus, to whom we address the fervent supplication “Lord Jesus, come quickly.” ED

Rex D. Edwards is a former vice president for religious studies at Griggs University.

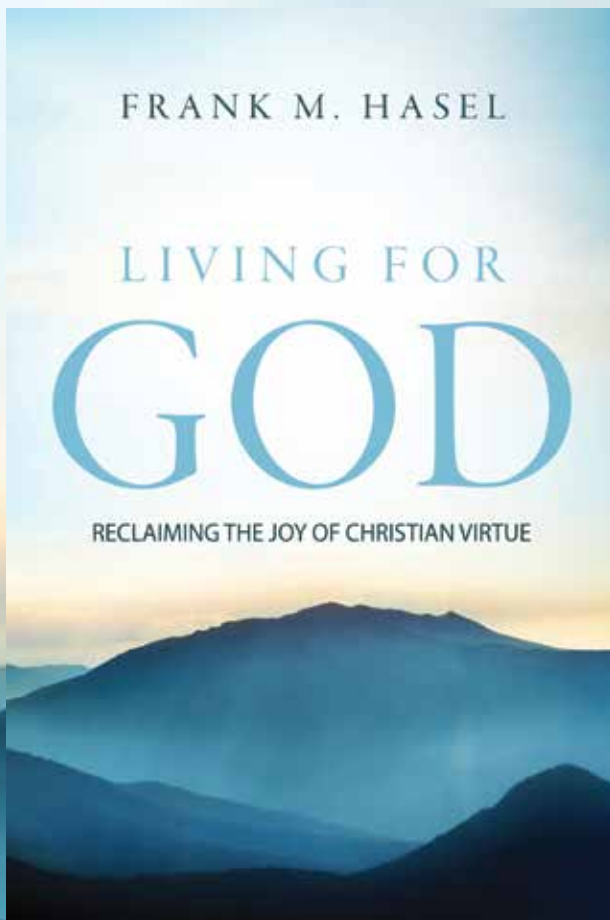
## | BOOK REVIEW

In his book *Living for God*, Dr. Frank Hasel presents Jesus “in the beauty of His holiness,” the One altogether worthy of our praise. Jesus’ life here on earth was a manifestation of the love of our Father in heaven toward fallen human beings; it was a life in which love and virtue were exemplified in everything He did. Defining virtue as a quality of moral excellence or goodness, Dr. Hasel believes that to be virtuous is to be like Jesus. In his book, he encourages the practice of virtue in all aspects of our lives: in how we think, in how we feel, and in how we behave. He examines various aspects of how to think, feel, and behave in ways that truly allow us to love God with all of our hearts, minds, and souls. He proposes that living virtuously not only honors our Creator but allows us to become all we can become.

Drawing freely from his own personal experience and his deep understanding of God’s word, Dr. Hasel inspires us to virtue and enables each of us to tap into the longing for holiness and virtue that lies deep within each of our hearts. He believes that whether or not we recognize it, we all crave virtue because we are created in the image of God, created to live lives of holiness

and virtue. The virtues that we long for, and that satisfy our souls as nothing else can, are expressions of God’s character. Dr. Hasel describes practical ways to experience God’s love through engaging with Scripture and through prayer. Although Jesus has invited us to bring our needs and wants to Him, Dr. Hasel shares that in his experience what God does in us is more important than what He does for us or through us.

Although we can and should find things to be grateful for each and every day of our lives, life in our fallen world is nonetheless difficult. It is often filled with loss and suffering. Having lost his wife to cancer, leaving him to raise three sons alone, Dr. Hasel points out that seasons of grief provide unique opportunities to practice virtue. Rather than focusing on one’s losses or hoping that our circumstances will change, Dr. Hasel points out that the pain of loss provides an opportunity for us to fix our focus on Jesus. By beholding Him, we become changed. In reading his book, one feels the transforming power of beholding Jesus and abiding in Him. He positions us to be transformed into the image of Jesus and to experience the joy of fellowship with Him.



### **LIVING FOR GOD: RECLAIMING THE JOY OF CHRISTIAN VIRTUE**

Frank M. Hasel, *Living for God: Reclaiming the Joy of Christian Virtue* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2020), 128 pp., USD 14.99.

Reviewed by L. Ann Hamel, PhD, DMin  
Psychologist, International Service Employee  
Support Team of the General Conference



# THE MINISTRY OF A DEACON/DEACONESSE:

ELLEN G. WHITE'S PERSPECTIVE > PART 2

The ministry of deacons and deaconesses had its beginning in apostolic times and was related to various kinds of service among the early believers. It is a commonly accepted belief that the work of the deacons began with the apostles' selection of seven men, including Stephen and Philip, to care for the charitable work of the Jerusalem church (Acts 6:5–7). Later, the New Testament also mentions the service of female deaconesses, such as Phoebe (Rom 16:1). Thus the ministry of deacons and deaconesses is biblical in origin. The leadership of Moses teaches us timeless principles for today's diaconate. A totally converted life of godliness, moral, and spiritual uprightness, identity with God's people and His cause, and wisdom and discernment are some of the essential qualities of those called to church leadership. The following is an invaluable perspective on the ministry of deacons and deaconesses for the service of the church. This selection is from *Acts of the Apostles* by Ellen G. White.<sup>1</sup>

## A MODEL FOR CHURCH ORGANIZATION

The organization of the church at Jerusalem was to serve as a model for the organization of churches in every other place where messengers of truth should win converts to the gospel. Those to whom was given the responsibility of the general oversight of the church were not to lord it over God's heritage, but, as wise shepherds, were to "feed the flock of God . . . being ensamples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:2, 3); and the deacons were to be "men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom." These men were to take their position unitedly on the side of right and to maintain it with firmness and decision. Thus they would have a uniting influence upon the entire flock.

Later in the history of the early church, when in various parts of the world many groups of believers had been formed into churches, the organization of the church was further perfected, so that order and harmonious action might be maintained. Every member was exhorted to act well his part. Each was to make a wise use of the talents entrusted to him. Some were endowed by the Holy Spirit with special gifts—"first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues" (1 Cor. 12:28). But all these classes of workers were to labor in harmony.

"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ" (1 Cor. 12:4-12).

## MOSES' LEADERSHIP: A TIMELESS MODEL FOR DIACONATE

Solemn are the responsibilities resting upon those who are called to act as leaders in the church of God on earth. In the days of the theocracy, when Moses was endeavoring to carry alone burdens so heavy that he would soon have worn away under them, he was counseled by Jethro to plan

## THERE ARE DIVERSITIES OF GIFTS, BUT THE SAME SPIRIT. AND THERE ARE DIFFERENCES OF ADMINISTRATIONS, BUT THE SAME LORD.

for a wise distribution of responsibilities. "Be thou for the people to Godward," Jethro advised, "that thou mayest bring the causes unto God: and thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt show them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do." Jethro further advised that men be appointed to act as "rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens." These were to be "able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness." They were to "judge the people at all seasons," thus relieving Moses of the wearing responsibility of giving consideration to many minor matters that could be dealt with wisely by consecrated helpers.

The time and strength of those who in the providence of God have been placed in leading positions of responsibility in the church, should be spent in dealing with the weightier matters demanding special wisdom and largeness of heart. It is not in the order of God that such men should be appealed to for the adjustment of minor matters that others are well qualified to handle. "Every great matter they shall bring unto thee," Jethro proposed to Moses, "but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee. If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace."

In harmony with this plan, "Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves" (Ex. 18:19-26).

Later, when choosing seventy elders to share with him the responsibilities of leadership, Moses was careful to select, as his helpers, men possessing dignity, sound judgment, and experience. In his charge to these elders at the time of their ordination, he outlined some of the qualifications that fit a man to be a wise ruler in the church. "Hear the causes between your brethren," said Moses, "and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him. Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's" (Deut. 1:16, 17). ED

---

1. Except for the subheadings, the entire portion that follows is from Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 87-96, and is based on Acts 6:1-7. Scriptural references are placed in parentheses, instead of footnotes as in original.

# DISCIPLES KEEPING DISCIPLES: INCLUDING THE EXCLUDED >PART 5

Churches are thought of as places of love and acceptance. But in recent field research conducted among members of various churches, interviewees were quick to mention that it is a place where people judge, gossip, and marginalize others. Such negative energy created by judging, gossiping, and marginalizing is prevalent in churches. Churches are not generally thought of as places of ostracization, stigmatization, or marginalization. But the disengaged often feel excluded or unaccepted because of their color, marital status, or economic status. The disengaged express that such exclusion comes not only from the members, but also from the clergy who sometimes tend to respect some while disrespecting others. Such excluded individuals do not feel a sense

of belonging; as a result, they disengage psychologically and physically.

When people in the church do not feel welcomed or accepted, or when members do not feel included amidst diversity, two major reactions happen: First, they physically withdraw from their relationships in the church. Second, the excluded seek alternative bases of inclusion such as by affiliating with other people or groups who are similarly excluded. At church, both physical and psychological withdrawal occurs. When physical withdrawal is not possible, people withdraw psychologically by disengaging from their relationships. When they feel exclusion is unjust and undeserved, they disengage psychologically. Thus it is imperative that the sense of inclusion is built into



the fabric of church life in order to foster strong member engagement.

### NEED FOR INCLUSIVITY

Studies in social psychology suggest that a sense of belonging is a basic human need. Societal life is conducted within a framework of relationships where people seek inclusion and belongingness.<sup>1</sup> After the primary needs such as food and shelter are satisfied, the need to belong is among the strongest of human motivations.<sup>2</sup> People strongly desire social attachments, exert considerable energy to develop and sustain them, and are adversely affected by their dissolution or absence.<sup>3</sup>

Mark Leary's research suggests human beings who lived in groups and sought and sustained supportive relationships with others may have been more likely to survive and reproduce than those who lived alone.<sup>4</sup> He claims the experience of inclusion in a group is frequently accompanied by positive emotions, but the experience of being excluded typically leads to negative emotions, including sadness, loneliness, jealousy, anger, shame, and anxiety.<sup>5</sup>

### GOD IS INCLUSIVE

God is an inclusive God. The Bible is an inclusive book. Several passages in the Bible confirm this. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that *whoever* believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16, emphasis added) is the prime example. This salvific good news message goes to "every *nation* tribe, language and people" (Rev 14:6, emphasis added). God includes everyone in His plan of salvation. The Holy Spirit convinces people of every nation, tribe, tongue, and people to accept the free offer of salvation through Jesus Christ. This is evidenced by the multiplicity of people gathering around the throne of God at the end of times. Scripture states,

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb" (Rev 7:9–10).

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH ENDEAVORS CAN BE A GOOD BEGINNING TOWARD GETTING THE DISENGAGED INTERESTED AND PLUGGED INTO CHURCH ACTIVITIES.

The usage of the plurality of "nations," "tribes," "peoples," and "languages" strongly indicates how God includes *all*.

In the Gospels there are memorable examples of Jesus associating with sinners and tax collectors. The grace of God is extended to "everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile" (Rom 1:16). Since grace is extended to all, God is the God of Jews and Greeks alike. A frequent image of the believers in Acts is being "together" (1:14; 2:1, 44, 46; 4:24; see also 4:32, 34, 35). We long to have such a sense of inclusivity in our churches.

### INCLUSION

When members feel excluded, it is imperative that a sense of acceptance be built into the fabric of church life in order to foster strong member engagement. To help produce an atmosphere of acceptance, as discussed in earlier articles, create a sense of oneness, identity, and sharing, aimed at strengthening member engagement.

Men's and women's groups are one of the ways to encourage inclusion. The church can start either a men's or women's group that meets over a weekday breakfast or dinner. It can be tailored to the interests of a few or several fully disengaged individuals. The group can find a common venue where these disengaged individuals can be comfortable. The best person or persons to connect them to these groups are their own friends. The group can gather to study the Bible, pray, or engage in a useful community service. Community outreach endeavors can be a good beginning toward getting the disengaged interested and plugged into church activities.

There are several things that go on in the church besides Sabbath service. The disengaged members can be invited to engage in various groups through which the church can bring them from neutral ground to being fully engaged. The following are some examples:

- Inspirational Friday evening vespers services.
- Community fair: Disengaged persons can be asked to assist in accordance with his or her interest. For example, a doctor can help with a health fair, an electrician can be requested to help connect lines for the fair, an athlete can be brought in to help with a 5K run/walk, and a journalist can be asked to help prepare a newscast.
- Church picnic

- Church camp
- Church mission trip
- Mission clubs (e.g., Adventurers and Pathfinders)
- Social nights
- Celebration programs and banquets (e.g., Thanksgiving and anniversaries)
- Weekly games in the gym

To turn the phrase upside down: if Muhammad does not go to the mountain, then the mountain should go to Muhammad—meaning that if a member’s priority is not to come to church, then the church should go to him! Church members might hold a “cottage meeting” in a disengaged person’s home. This may be a tough call to make, but if the spouse or parents of the disengaged person agree to the plan, it is possible. If the church succeeds in this endeavor, there is a chance for the disengaged person to become engaged again.

Besides these ideas, churches can have regular small group meetings. The group members will be motivated to invite disinterested, non-prioritizing individuals in the community to join during weekdays, whenever and wherever the group may be meeting. Nelson Searcy says small groups are definitely the best platform to bring in disinterested and non-committing members to the church.<sup>6</sup>

Ellen G. White writes, “Among the followers of Christ, there is to be blending of diverse elements, one adapted to another.”<sup>7</sup> Let us include the excluded and receive the disengaged into our fellowship again! **ED**

<sup>1</sup> Dominic Abrams, Michael A. Hogg, and José M. Marques, *Social Psychology of Inclusion and Exclusion* (London: Psychology Press, 2005), 1.

<sup>2</sup> R. F. Baumeister and M. R. Leary, “The Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments as a Fundamental Human Motivation,” *Psychological Bulletin* 117 (1995): 497–529.

<sup>3</sup> Abrams, Hogg, and Marques, *Social Psychology*, 64.

<sup>4</sup> Mark R. Leary, “Responses to Social Exclusion: Social Anxiety, Jealousy, Loneliness, Depression, and Low Self-Esteem,” *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* (2001a): 3–21.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 221–9.

<sup>6</sup> Nelson Searcy, *Connect: How to Double Your Number of Volunteers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 134.

<sup>7</sup> Ellen G. White, *Our High Calling* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1961), 169.

Paulasir Abraham, PhD, is an associate pastor at the Southern Asia Seventh-day Adventist Church in Silver Spring, MD, USA.

# AdventSource

## Create a Guest Services Program with Beyond Greeting

**“A visitor is a temporary outsider, while a guest is an expected person to be delighted in and served. How do we want people to feel when they come to church—like a visitor or a guest?”**

While shaking hands and handing out bulletins are important parts of welcoming people to your church, the Beyond Greeting kit covers much more! It is a complete plan for moving beyond saying “Happy Sabbath” to creating a guest services system that will connect person to person. This kit includes a media resource USB, teacher’s guide, leader’s guide, and five participant guides.

Complete Kit	#419451	\$29.95
Participant Guides	#419455	\$1.00



**Available from AdventSource at [AdventSource.org](http://AdventSource.org) and 402.486.8800**



# THE INSPIRATION AND AUTHORITY

## of Ellen G. White's Writings

In 1982 the July 15 issue of *Adventist Review* and the August issue of *Ministry* published a statement on the relationship of Ellen G. White's writings to the Bible. This statement, drafted by an ad hoc committee of the General Conference, invited readers to respond with suggestions. Following responses from readers, the statement was refined and published again in the *Adventist Review* on December 23, 1982, and in *Ministry* in February 1983. The statement included the pertinent Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists—specifically “The Holy Scriptures” and “The Gift of Prophecy.” Since 1983, the Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists have been revised at General Conference Sessions, as the preamble indicates:

Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. These beliefs, as set forth here, constitute the church's understanding and expression of the teaching of Scripture. Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference Session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better lan-

guage in which to express the teachings of God's Holy Word.<sup>1</sup>

The updated statement below reflects the revised Fundamental Beliefs but retains the affirmations and denials as published by the *Adventist Review* on December 23, 1982, and *Ministry* in February 1983.

Frequently Seventh-day Adventists, particularly congregational leaders, receive questions regarding Ellen White's ministry, and the readers of *Elder's Digest* are encouraged to keep these ten affirmations and denials as a concise and helpful guide for future reference.

In the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs voted by the General Conference Session of Seventh-day Adventists at Dallas in April, 1980, the Preamble states: “Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures.” Paragraph one reflects the church's understanding of the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, while paragraph eighteen reflects the church's understanding of the inspiration and authority of the writings of Ellen White in relation to the Scriptures. These paragraphs read as follows:

### 1. *The Holy Scriptures*

The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration. The inspired authors spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to humanity the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the supreme, authoritative, and the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the definitive revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history. (Ps. 119:105; Prov 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20, 21.)<sup>2</sup>

### 18. *The Gift of Prophecy*

The Scriptures testify that one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and we believe it was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. Her writings speak with prophetic authority and provide comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction to the church. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. (Num. 12:6; 2 Chron. 20:20; Amos 3:7; Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:14–21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 1:1–3; Rev. 12:17; 19:10; 22:8, 9.)<sup>3</sup>



## AFFIRMATIONS

1. We believe that Scripture is the divinely revealed Word of God and is inspired by the Holy Spirit.
2. We believe that the canon of Scripture is composed only of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments.
3. We believe that Scripture is the foundation of faith and the final authority in all matters of doctrine and practice.
4. We believe that Scripture is the Word of God in human language.
5. We believe that Scripture teaches that the gift of prophecy will be manifest in the Christian church after New Testament times.
6. We believe that the ministry and writings of Ellen White were a manifestation of the gift of prophecy.
7. We believe that Ellen White was inspired by the Holy Spirit and that her writings, the product of that inspiration, are applicable and authoritative, especially to Seventh-day Adventists.
8. We believe that the purposes of the Ellen White writings include guidance in understanding the teaching of Scripture and application of these teachings, with prophetic urgency, to the spiritual and moral life.
9. We believe that the acceptance of the prophetic gift of Ellen White is important to the nurture and unity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
10. We believe that Ellen White's use of literary sources and assistants finds parallels in some of the writings of the Bible.



## DENIALS

1. We do not believe that the quality or degree of inspiration in the writings of Ellen White is different from that of Scripture.
2. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White are an addition to the canon of Sacred Scripture.
3. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White function as the foundation and final authority of Christian faith as does Scripture.
4. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White may be used as the basis of doctrine.
5. We do not believe that the study of the writings of Ellen White may be used to replace the study of Scripture.
6. We do not believe that Scripture can be understood only through the writings of Ellen White.
7. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White exhaust the meaning of Scripture.
8. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White are essential for the proclamation of the truths of Scripture to society at large.
9. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White are the product of mere Christian piety.
10. We do not believe that Ellen White's use of literary sources and assistants negates the inspiration of her writings.

We conclude, therefore, that a correct understanding of the inspiration and authority of the writings of Ellen White will avoid two extremes: (1) regarding these writings as functioning on a canonical level identical with Scripture, or (2) considering them as ordinary Christian literature. **ED**

<sup>1</sup> *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 19th ed. (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2016), 162.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

A hand reaching towards a glowing planet in space. The hand is on the right, with fingers extended towards the left. The planet is on the left, glowing with a bright light and surrounded by a blue and white aura. The background is a dark space filled with stars and a nebula.

# CREATION: REVEALING WHO GOD IS AND WHO WE ARE

"THEN GOD SAW EVERYTHING THAT HE HAD MADE, AND INDEED IT WAS VERY GOOD."

GENESIS 1:31A

## THE WONDER OF CREATION

Revelation and nature both testify that the universe is an incredible place. As scientists discover fact after fact about the natural world, this truth becomes even clearer. For example, DNA, the sequences of genes found within every living thing, giving it its characteristic make-up, is quite small. And yet, if all the DNA in your body were unraveled and laid end to end, it would measure thirty-four billion miles long—six times the distance from here to Pluto! Speaking of our solar system, scientists have determined that our sun accounts for 99.86% of the total mass of our solar system; in fact, 1.3 million earths could fit inside the sun! Scientists have also estimated that there may be as many as three sextillion stars in the universe (300,000,000,000,000,000,000,000), which is more than the total grains of sand found on earth.<sup>1</sup> Nature is truly amazing!

But, where did it come from? Where do we come from? These are some of the most basic questions worldviews seek to answer. The psalmist writes, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands" (Ps 19:1). The natural world

is intricate and beautiful, reflecting the wisdom, might, and love of its Creator. This is where our stories begin: in the hands of the Creator.

## WHO IS GOD?

While this first act is entitled "Creation," before we even talk about the creation of the world, we need to discuss who God is. A very basic question of worldview is: does God or some other superior being exist? As should be expected, within a biblical worldview, the answer is yes. In the very first act of the story of the great controversy—creation—the Bible tells of the beginning of life on earth through the work of God. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1). There is something very interesting to note about this verse: at the very beginning, before the heavens and the earth existed, God was. Before any other entity could be identified, God existed (see Job 36:26; Ps 90:1–2; 1 Tim 1:17; Rev 10:6).

So, who is this eternal God? This is another key question that worldviews seek to answer. Scripture describes for us many aspects of who God is.

**God Is Love.** 1 John 4:8 says simply that “God is love.”<sup>2</sup> He is compassionate, gracious, and caring. This is who God is—the essence of His character. “The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love” (Ps 145:8). Before the world began, He was full of love, and as He began His work of creation, His character of love was clearly demonstrated.

**God Is Powerful.** The prophet Jeremiah is in awe of His power when he writes, “Ah, Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you” (Jer 32:17; see also Rom 11:36). There is no one more powerful and no one above Him. “For you, Lord, are the Most High over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods” (Ps 97:9). In a world full of different worldviews and religions, Scripture tells us that God is the greatest above all others.

**God Is Good.** “Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever” (1 Chr 16:34; see also Ezra 3:11). His goodness gives us hope and strength. “I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living” (Ps 27:13). It is God’s desire to show His goodness to all people, that we all may celebrate what He has done for us.

**God Is Righteous.** “You are righteous, Lord, and your laws are right” (Ps 119:137). Creation itself declares the righteousness of God (Ps 19:1). His judgements are right, causing the very earth to rejoice. Deuteronomy tells us that we can count on His justice and righteousness. “He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he” (Deut 32:4).

**God Is Holy.** The prophet Isaiah writes, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his

glory” (Isa 6:3; see also Isa 57:15; Rev 4:8). God’s holiness is incomparable to anyone else. “There is no one holy like the Lord; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God” (1 Sam 2:2). Our spirits are lifted because of who He is. “In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name” (Ps 33:21).

All these aspects and more comprise God’s character. This is who God has been from the beginning of everything, and as He spoke and began to form the heavens and the earth, these qualities of His character quickly became evident. “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse” (Rom 1:20). Creation reveals who the Creator is.

## **GOD’S CREATIVE POWER**

### **The Creation of the World**

Now that we have discovered the character of God, let’s look at His work of bringing everything we know into existence. “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. . . . For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm” (Ps 33:6, 9). “He set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved” (Ps 104:5). These verses from Scripture answer our question of origin: through God, all else came into existence. “Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:3). Throughout Genesis 1, God speaks each day and the world flourishes more and more. Over and over, God comes to the end of His day of creating, looks over the world, and sees that it is good (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25).



Ellen G. White describes the pristine world in this way:

As the earth came forth from the hand of its Maker, it was exceedingly beautiful. Its surface was diversified with mountains, hills, and plains, interspersed with noble rivers and lovely lakes. . . . Graceful shrubs and delicate flowers greeted the eye at every turn. The heights were crowned with trees more majestic than any that now exist. The air, untainted by foul miasma, was clear and healthful. The entire landscape outvied in beauty the decorated grounds of the proudest palace. The angelic host viewed the scene with delight and rejoiced at the wonderful works of God.<sup>3</sup>

### The Creation of Adam and Eve

God's final touch in creation was Adam and Eve, man and woman. "Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.' So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Gen 1:26–27). As humans, therefore, we were created in the image of our Creator. In His hands is where your story began and where your story continues. "For in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28a).

But why did God choose to create humans? Why are we even here? In John 17:3, Christ is praying to His Father in heaven, saying, "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." Jesus prayed that we would know God. This was part of the original plan of why we were created—that we would know our God.

We were also created to love God. Deuteronomy 6:5 states, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." God created us so that we may love Him, but He didn't decide this selfishly. God also created us so that He could love us, and we could enjoy Him. "Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart" (Ps 37:4). "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!" (1 John 3:1). We were meant to be recipients of love and delight through the hand of God. Ellen White notes that God lovingly blessed Adam and Eve in such a way that they could truly enjoy their world: "The Lord blessed Adam and Eve with intelligence such as He had not given to any other creature. He made Adam the rightful sovereign over all the works of His hands. Man, made in the divine image, could contemplate and appreciate the glorious works of God in nature."<sup>4</sup>

Finally, we were created to bring God glory. "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being" (Rev 4:11). God deserves praise and honor. Our voices were meant to be raised to Him in awe and appreciation. For these reasons God intended our existence: that we might know God, love Him, be loved by Him, and give Him praise.

### CONCLUSION

The biblical account of creation answers many of the basic questions of worldview. In this story is found the explanation for why and how humanity came to be. It explains the existence of a supreme Creator and tells of who He is. In fact, all of nature testifies to His character. Ellen White writes of this beautiful phenomenon, saying, "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."<sup>5</sup>

This is the beautiful work of God's nature in our lives: it tells us of His love and draws us to Him. The God of creation is a God of love, deserving our worship and praise. His heart of love and His vast omnipotence mean that we can trust Him to take care of us. Because He created us, we can know that the meaning of life is found in Him. In fact, all the answers to every one of our questions can be found in God. He has been our answer from the very beginning. In the next article, we will see how God has continued to be our answer even after the perfection of creation was disrupted by the entrance of sin. **ED**

---

<sup>1</sup> Facts found from Ali Sundermier, "You Could Fit the Entire Human Race into a Sugar Cube—and 13 Other Facts to Put the Universe into Perspective," *Business Insider*, August 23, 2016, accessed November 17, 2020, <https://www.businessinsider.com/14-facts-about-the-universe-2016-8>.

<sup>2</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>3</sup> Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1890), 44.

<sup>4</sup> Ellen G. White, "Redemption—No. 1," *Review and Herald*, February 24, 1874.

<sup>5</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 678.

---

S. Joseph Kidder, DMin, is a professor of pastoral theology and discipleship at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, MI, USA.

---

Katelyn Campbell is an MDiv and MSW student at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, MI, USA

# Are Mission Offerings Still a Thing?

**H**ave you ever felt as if you're putting your money into a "black hole" when you give your weekly mission offerings? Maybe you should think about it more as pouring your offerings into the river. Not to get rid of them, but to help mission flourish around the world.

Mission offerings don't seem to get as much attention anymore. Yet they're still vitally important to supporting work around the world. Think of your mission offerings as a river flowing through the entire world, providing life-giving water to help sustain the mission fields.

You probably know countries and projects that are supported by part of your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering. But what about the regular mission offerings you give each week? Where do they go? What do they support? And what do they achieve?

You may be surprised to learn that your weekly mission offerings help support the work of some 400 missionary families\* around the world. In fact, 70 percent of the weekly mission offerings each quarter help support overseas missionaries and the international work of the church.

Appropriations from the General Conference to world divisions, the Middle East North Africa Union Mission, and the Israel Field help these regions build and sustain mission activities in their territories like water to irrigate fields when there's not enough rain.

The remaining money helps various institutions and agencies that serve the world church. For example, it helps the compassionate medical mission work of Loma Linda University, the outreach of Adventist World Radio, and the humanitarian ministry of ADRA, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency.

In recent years, millions of people from challenging areas of the world have found salvation in Jesus and have joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church. On average in 2018, every 22 seconds, someone became an Adventist, and every 4 hours, a new church was organized.

Thanks to your offerings and the Global Mission focus, thousands of new congregations have been established in unreached areas and among new people groups. But after these new believers have been baptized, how are they nurtured? How do we make sure that their new faith is strengthened and they grow as disciples?

Your river of mission offerings helps grow and sustain new work throughout the world.

Please keep this life-giving river flowing.

Thank you for your faithful weekly mission offerings and your continuing prayers for Adventist mission.

\* Accurate at time of submission

---

Gary Krause is an Associate Secretary of the General Conference and Director of Adventist Mission.



Your river of  
mission offerings  
helps grow and  
sustain new work  
throughout  
the world.

**Please keep  
this life-giving  
river flowing.**



Want to share the video version of Are Mission Offerings Still a Thing? Visit [m360.tv/s2014](http://m360.tv/s2014).

# A POWER STRONGER THAN WITCHCRAFT

**AWR  
ANNUAL  
OFFERING  
MARCH 13, 2021**



**Commander Liam's reputation is that of a hard man who has complete control over his country's military.**

In fact, to ensure his continued success and protection from his enemies, a few months ago he hired a modern-day "witch."

Recently, he received an unexpected text message. It had a link to the **Unlocking Bible Prophecies** series from **Adventist World Radio**. He wasn't sure who'd sent it, but he enjoyed the powerful presentation and the speaker's soothing voice that seemed to calm his soul. New messages began arriving daily, and as he listened, something changed in his heart.

Soon his resident "witch" began to notice the change in him and demanded to know who was sending the messages. She said, "That woman you're listening to has a magic more powerful than mine—I want some of that power! It gives me a strange sense of peace I haven't felt before. How can I receive these messages too?"

That's the power of Adventist World Radio and cell phone evangelism—you never know who's listening and how the Lord is working on their hearts. To read the rest of this story and see how your support is reaching millions around the world, **visit [awr.org/offering](http://awr.org/offering)**.





## TWO WAYS TO SUPPORT AWR:


On **Sabbath, March 13**, mark the offering line on your tithe envelope.


Or give now by visiting **[awr.org/offering](http://awr.org/offering)**

1-800-337-4297

 [awr.org](http://awr.org)

 [/awr360](https://www.facebook.com/awr360)

 [@awr.360](https://www.instagram.com/awr.360)

 [@awr360](https://twitter.com/awr360)

 [youtube.com/awrweb](https://www.youtube.com/awrweb)

12501 OLD COLUMBIA PIKE  
SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND 20904 USA