

QUARTERLY RESOURCE FOR LOCAL CHURCH LEADERS • OCTOBER/DECEMBER 2023

# ELDER'S DIGEST

The Story of Timothy:  
Homeless Orphan to Scholar



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**EDITOR'S NOTES:** The articles in this publication have been 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 [garciamarenko@gc.adventist.org](mailto:garciamarenko@gc.adventist.org).

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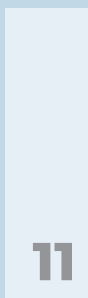
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SCAN FOR AUDIO



# What Are Your Passions?

**As** I was being interviewed before a public speaking event, I was asked, “What are your passions?” There was a directness and intensity to the question too.

In milliseconds, pictures and images—the important as well as the trivial—splashed across my mind. Things like my beautiful wife, Debora, our young-adult daughters and new son-in-law, my mother and father, siblings and extended family, parishioners, friends, colleagues, my Bible, favorite books, football team, and hobbies—they all appeared right before me.

But then, all those pictures seemed to merge into one, like a mosaic. One picture became the focus of my mind: Jesus. It was a moving picture, moving in many ways. I pictured Him returning—His Second Coming in power and great glory. With arms outstretched, He was brilliant, shining, and majestic, strong and masculine, yet gentle and huggable, with an enormous, loving smile on His face. In those few confronting seconds, I realized that the Second Coming is my ultimate passion.

The return of Jesus, our Saviour, our Lord, and Friend—it’s *the* event of all time. Since the fall, since Adam and Eve realized they were naked before the gaze of the universe, our planet has been yearning for this day. Everything that has been happening here since Genesis 3, when sin entered our world, has been moving toward this ultimate point—

the return of Jesus. And I have been longing for this day ever since I discovered the gospel. My life was dramatically changed when I realized that, as a disciple of Jesus, through the assurance of His atonement, I have every right to joyously anticipate His second advent.

We can see very clearly from the Bible, and from world conditions and events, that Jesus will return soon. Tragically, too many will be lost as a result of their choices and priorities. But those who have accepted and bathed in the grace of Jesus, who responded to the embrace of His compassion, will be transformed. Gone will be the perishable, the corruptible, and the mortal; welcomed will be the imperishable, incorruptible, and immortality. Those in Christ, waking from their sleep of death, will be raised, resurrected, and changed—with new bodies to live for eternity, never to experience disease, pain, or death again.

This day, the day of the Lord’s return, speaks to our purpose and mission. And it is this Lord, the Lord of lords and King of kings, Jesus Christ, who provides us with our purpose, mission, and identity.

We are Adventists. Jesus is our Saviour, *the* blessed hope because of what He did at the cross for us. Yes, this is why Jesus is my passion.

I was caught by surprise when asked this question, but I’m exceptionally thankful for it, because it has given me the opportunity to reflect upon what really is the passion of my life.

So, as I was asked, I ask you: What are your passions? And what do your passions reveal about you—your values, motives, purpose—your life?

ED



**ANTHONY R. KENT** | General Conference Associate Ministerial Secretary





SCAN FOR AUDIO

# The Story of Timothy: Homeless Orphan to Scholar

THE ORPHAN LAXMAN >PART 1

## EDITORIAL NOTE

In this two-part true story, an orphan boy begging in an Indian train station is rescued by a local church leader, who offers him a new name and a new life in Jesus.

I don't know exactly how old I am. I don't know where I was born or where my parents lived. I don't know whether I have brothers or sisters. I can't remember much except living on the train platforms and on the trains with some other boys who had no home.

Every day we waited on the train platform for a train to stop. Then we scrambled to help people with their luggage, so they would give us a few rupees to buy rice or tea. Sometimes we sneaked on board the trains and climbed up to the top sleeping bunk near the ceiling, where the train guard would not find us. We could sleep there, safe and warm. If the train started moving while we were sleeping, it did not matter. We would just get off the train when it stopped. We had no home, so home was wherever we were at the time.

### A NICE MAN

One night when I was about seven years old, an older boy on the platform offered me a cigarette.

"Here, try this," he said. I did not want to take the cigarette because it smelled bad. I knew that the smoke would make me cough, so I said no. The boy kept trying to make me take the cigarette. He kept telling me how good it tasted and how smoking would make me forget how hungry I was. While I was pushing the boy's cigarette away, a man came up to us and asked the older boy why he wanted me to smoke. The bigger boy said smoking was nice, but the man said it was bad for us.

Then the man asked my name. I told him my name was Laxman. He said his name was Mr. Raj.

"Where do you live?" Mr. Raj asked me. I told him I did not have a home. "Where are your parents?" he asked with a worried look on his face.

"I don't know," I said. "I have been living on train platforms for as long as I can remember."

### A NEW LIFE?

The man looked at me for a minute, and then he said, "Would you like to go home with me? I have two children about your age, and you can play with them and go to school."

I was not sure. I did not know this man, and I had heard stories about people taking children away and making them slaves. But the man had said he would send me to school. I knew that some children could read, but not one of the kids living on the train platform knew how to read. I thought for a little while, and then I decided to go with the man.

He brought me something to eat, and while I enjoyed some hot food, he bought me a ticket to his home. I told my friends goodbye and climbed onto the train. They

stared at me as we stepped onto the train. I did not look back at my friends as the train began to move.

I thought to myself, *This is great! I can ride in a seat on the train. I do not have to hide.* The countryside flew past as darkness settled across the rice paddies beside the railroad tracks. As nighttime came, my eyes grew heavy. I fell asleep.

### A NEW START

I woke up as the train slowed and stopped at a station.

"We are here," Mr. Raj said, and we got up and walked to the train door. I followed him out of the train and across the platform to a waiting bus. I saw some boys trying to earn rupees, but I did not stop. I followed my new friend onto the bus and sat down.

Soon the man said we were at his bus stop. We climbed down from the bus and crossed the road. We walked through a gate



**I was not sure. I did not know this man, and I had heard stories about people taking children away and making them slaves. But the man had said he would send me to school.**

into an area with many buildings. Some looked like houses, and as we started toward one of them, my new friend Mr. Raj told me he lived there.

He stopped outside the door and called to his wife. He told her he had a guest. She came outside and greeted me with a smile, though I think she was a little surprised. Mr. Raj told her that he had brought me home so I could attend the orphanage school.

### **AN UNWELCOME BATH**

Mrs. Raj told me to wait at the door, and she hurried inside. Soon she appeared with a large pan of hot water and a cloth. She took off my clothes and made me sit down in the water. Then she washed me from head to foot. I did not like that! My skin had sores all over, and though she tried to be gentle, it hurt when she washed them. She told me that I would feel better when I was clean, and she was right.

Then she gave me some of her son's clothes to wear and showed me her son's room, where I would sleep. I had never slept in a bed before, so that night I slept on the floor. I remember looking at the pictures on the wall and thinking this must be the nicest house in the world! I yawned and fell asleep, and before I realized, it was morning.

I looked around, confused. Then I remembered that Mr. Raj had brought me to his home the night before. I could smell something cooking, and it made my stomach growl. Soon Mrs. Raj called everyone to eat—Mr. Raj and their two children. She

offered many different foods, but all I wanted was rice and tea. My stomach was not ready for fruits and vegetables, so I ate a lot of rice.

### **A NEW HOME, A NEW NAME**

After breakfast Mr. Raj opened a big book and read some words I did not understand. Then he told me that he was going to pray. Everyone folded their hands and closed their eyes, and Mr. Raj talked to someone I could not see. I wondered where the family idol was; I could not see it.

After prayer, Mr. Raj told me that we were going to meet a woman who would take care of me and enroll me in school. I suddenly felt shy, but I followed him out the door and down the path toward a building surrounded by trees.

We walked into an office, and a kind woman greeted us. She bent down and asked my name. I felt shy again, but my friend encouraged me to tell her my name. I told her, "My name is Laxman."

The woman smiled and patted my shoulder. "From now on you will be called Timothy," she said.

I let the sound of the name bounce around in my head. I liked it. Timothy. I was Timothy.

The woman at Sweet Home orphanage said I should call her Mother. So I did. She looked like a mother, kind and smiling. She took me to a room where there was an empty bed. She gave me some toothpaste and a toothbrush, a little piece of soap, a towel, some fresh clothes, and a pair of slippers to wear, and showed me a metal box in which I could keep my

things. I had never had so much stuff before! I felt rich!

I liked Sweet Home orphanage, but I missed Mr. Raj and his family. One day after our play time, Mother came to find me in my room. I was not there. She searched the room, looked under my bed, behind the house. She called, "Timothy! Where are you?" but I did not answer. She asked the other children about me, but no one knew where I was.

I was not lost. I had gone to Mr. Raj's house to play with his children. But when Mr. Raj returned home and found me there, he told me that I had to go back to the orphanage. He told me that I must never leave without telling Mother where I was. I tried to obey, but it was hard; I wanted to spend time with my friends.

### **TIME FOR SCHOOL**

One day, Mother said that it was time to enroll in school. I was eager to go to school and learn to read, but I was afraid at the same time. Mother assured me that everyone was starting a new school year together. That made me feel better.

Mother gave me a pencil to take to school, and a boy showed me to my class. I felt shy, so I stood at the door and watched for several minutes. When the teacher saw me standing there, she came and put her hand on my shoulder.

"What is your name?" she asked.

"Timothy," I said as bravely as I could. She showed me an empty chair at a big table, and I sat down at my table. She started talking to me. Pretty soon I had forgotten I was new and different. School was fun!

A week later my teacher told me that she was promoting me to the next class.

"You know your alphabet already, and we think you will enjoy being in the advanced class," she



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I was Timothy.



said. I was glad that my teacher thought I was smart enough to go to the next class. I walked into the class and found an empty seat. This time I was not shy; I was ready for school to start!

I made lots of friends at the orphanage. We played volleyball, cricket, and kabaddi, a favorite game among Indian children, especially boys. I had never had time to play games when I lived at the train station. I decided that school was a great place to be, and Sweet Home was a great place to live. I had twenty-eight brothers and sisters at Sweet Home. It took me a little while to learn all their names.

Children at Sweet Home had jobs to do after school every day. We washed our clothes and cleaned our rooms. I was the youngest of thirteen boys, but the bigger boys were kind to us younger boys. They did not make us do their work. They taught me how to wash my clothes, brush my teeth, and comb my hair. And sometimes they taught us how to behave in school. I learned to read and write, to color and recite. But my favorite subject was Bible. We listened to Bible stories and learned Bible verses. Each morning we had worship and sang songs about Jesus. Mother gave each of us a Bible, and I loved reading about God.

I was happy. I had a great home, attended school, and had a lot of friends. I never wanted to go back to live on the train platform. I even went to Mr. Raj's house less and less. Everything seemed right with the world. ED

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*In part 2 in our next edition, young Timothy decides he will run away from the only home he has ever known.*

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# MISSION: Seven Words to Transform Your Marriage



SCAN FOR AUDIO



**When** a couple stand before church leaders to get married, it is not two persons that we see, but six. There is the man he thinks he is, the man she thinks he is, and the man he really is. Then there is the woman she thinks she is, the woman he thinks she is, and the woman she really is. And the task of marriage is to try to figure out whom one has married.

Scripture says, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be” (1 John 3:2, KJV). In reality, you have married a mystery. And you promise to stay married, for better or worse, because it will take a lifetime to uncover those intricacies.

So, because the way elders conduct themselves at church should be a mirror image of the way they conduct themselves at home (see 1 Tim 3:5), here are seven critical words that Peter lays down with reference to the mission of marriage for elders:

## **M**ODEL

“Being examples (patterns and models of Christian living) to the flock” (1 Pet 5:3, AMPC). Somebody said character is who you are when no one is watching you. But as church leaders, people watch your every move. God has chosen you to be a model through which He can be a blessing to others—through your tragedies as well as your triumphs. Lucy and Denis Guernsey state, “Life in the sense of bonding and attachment, death in the sense of despair and hopelessness, burial in the sense of loss and grief, and resurrection in the sense of renewal and hope are normal in the course of a marriage. . . . There must be death and burial as well as life and resurrection. Real life demands it all.”<sup>1</sup>

## **I**NVEST

“Feed the flock of God which is among you, caring for her, not by force, but willingly; not for shameful lucre, but with willing desire” (1 Pet 5:2, JUB). As much as church is important, remember that your family is part of your flock. If you believe your marriage has value, invest in it. Dr. Willard Beecher tells how most people come to marriage believing it is a box full of goodies from which we extract all we need to make us happy. We can take from it as much as we want, and the box will somehow remain mysteriously full. Marriage is not a box full of goodies. Marriage, in reality, is an empty box. So put some smiles, compliments, love notes, restaurant dinners, and hotel reservations into the box. Do not expect to take out from the box what you did not put in.

## **S**UBMIT

“Be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility” (1 Pet 5:5, NKJV). When people look at a believer’s relationship, they have a right to expect something different. Not a husband or wife imposing their will on the other, nor a father or mother striving to be boss and exercising spiritual abuse, but rather a man and a woman, equally made in the image of God, exercising dominion over the earth, not over one another (see Gen 1:28). Paul says, “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Eph 5:21, NIV). Both spouses exercise submission toward one another,

leadership toward the children, and obedience toward God. Ellen G. White states, “Parents standing as heads of families, priests of the household, as teachers and as governors, must . . . obey the highest Authority, and then as obedient children of God they can give the sincere, earnest, all-important education to their children.”<sup>2</sup> Submission is not to our spouse’s wishes but to our spouse’s love.

## **S**ERVE

“Watch over them, though not because you have to. Instead, do it because you want to. . . . Do it because you really want to serve” (1 Pet 5:2, NIRV). Christian marriage is a union of loving service to others. “Outdo one another in showing honor” (Rom 12:10, ESV). Society spreads abroad the rumor that life owes us something. The truth is that life actually owes us nothing. We have no right to happiness; that’s a byproduct of love and service. Base your relationship not on what you can get but on what you can give. And when people say it doesn’t make sense for you to stay when love does not seem to



be reciprocated, maintain that you will give love anyway, regardless, nevertheless. Theologian Elizabeth Achtemeier says, “The Christian faith often operates with a lack of evidence that seems ridiculous to the rest of the world. It often seems to contradict the plain facts with a foolhardy ‘nevertheless.’”<sup>3</sup>

## I NTENT

“Control [Discipline] yourselves and be careful [alert]!” (1 Pet 5:8, EXB). Recognize the reality that all around us, marriages are breaking up that had the same glorious beginning as yours. But your marriage does not have to end in ruins. Even when faced with incredible obstacles, discipline yourself to be intentional. It’s not about emotion; it’s about devotion. It’s not about feelings; it’s about faith. It’s not about the heart; it’s about the head. It’s not about passion; it’s about principle. It’s not about contentment; it’s about commitment. It’s not about happiness; it’s about holiness. It’s not about Hollywood; it’s about the Holy Word. “The way to renew a marriage doesn’t begin with a change of emotions, but with an act of will.”<sup>4</sup>



## O PPOSE

“Fight against the devil. Be strong because you believe” (1 Pet 5:9, WE). Marriage is a battleground, but the players are not you and your spouse—they are you and temptation (Eph 6:12). The Ten Commandments basically cover the list. Fight off the temptation to lie, steal, cheat, or commit adultery. Then there are things in marriage that you have to fight for. Fight for each other’s happiness. Fight for each other’s reputation. Fight for those evenings together in your marriage. Your marriage is worth it. Your spouse is worth it. “Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes” (Neh 4:14, NIV).<sup>5</sup>

## N EGOTIATE

“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (1 Pet 5:5, NKJV). Scripture calls us to negotiate, not dominate. When conflict rears its head in the home, don’t be hysterical or historical. “Be angry but do not sin” (Eph 4:26, RSV). Stay on one problem until you solve it. The more problems you bring up at one time, the less likelihood of solving any of them. And avoid dragging up old points of dispute. Some spouses are archaeologists and love digging up the past. Agree that if it’s more than six months old, then it’s inadmissible evidence. So, the six most important words to say in your marriage are: “I admit I made a

mistake.” The five most important words: “You did a good job.” The four most important words: “What is your opinion?” The three most important words: “I forgive you.” The two most important words: “Thank you.” The most important word: “We.” The least important word: “I.”

A couple were celebrating their fiftieth wedding anniversary. When asked their secret, the wife said, “On my wedding day, I decided to make a list of ten of my husband’s faults which, for the sake of our marriage, I would always overlook. I figured I could live with at least ten!” When asked which faults she had written down, she replied, “I never did get around to listing them. Instead, every time he did something that made me mad, I’d simply say to myself, ‘Lucky for him, it’s one of the ten!’”

Elders, you are people of promise. A marriage is created by the promises of two people who care enough to share. Your home will be kept together not because being married is so much fun but because two people dared to make and keep their promises. Your goal, your assignment, your *mission*—should you choose to accept it—is to keep your promise. ED

<sup>1</sup> Lucy and Denis Guernsey, *Real Life Marriage* (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 190.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases* (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), 19:317.

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Achtemeier, *The Committed Marriage* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1976), 23.

<sup>4</sup> Bob and Cheryl Moeller, *For Better, for Worse, for Keeps* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 1994), 64.

<sup>5</sup> See also Howard J. Markman, Scott M. Stanley, and Susan L. Blumberg, *Fighting for Your Marriage* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010).

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SCAN FOR AUDIO

# God's Call for Revival and Reformation

**As** the world slowly turns on its axis day by day, something phenomenal happens every seventh day. All across the globe, millions of people gather to worship the Lord on His holy Sabbath day. They worship in various settings, comprising 97,811 Seventh-day Adventist churches and 73,886 companies around the world.<sup>1</sup>

Helping lead this flock of millions are not only the official ministers who often are responsible for multiple congregations, but you, dedicated elders of the local church. You, who give so generously of your time, energy, and finances, are an integral part of the Advent movement. You often carry many responsibilities, supporting the pastor in preaching, visiting, coordinating various aspects of church life, and most importantly being a spiritual leader in bringing people to Jesus and grounding them in the sure Word of God, leading them into a life of revival and reformation.

Recently I was in the city of Prague in central Europe, where the great Reformer Jan Hus (John Huss) stood faithfully for the Scriptures and was later burned at the stake for his fidelity to God's Word. I was impressed again by how God uses humble, simple, dedicated people to bring His church back to a clear and forthright understanding of biblical truth; people who allow God to bring about a reformation in their own lives and then share it with the world; people who are so dedicated that even more important than their personal safety is the truth contained in the Word of God.



### AN ESSENTIAL QUALITY

An essential quality for true reformation in our own lives and in the life of the church is humility. The early reformers were committed to lifting up Christ rather than self. Self and personal pride are some of the great challenges we face in our personal walk with God and in the church. We fight with it all the time. Self separates us from God and each other. It seems to strive for power and derails God's plans for us and His church. It brings confusion and distortion. It turns us away from God and our heaven-borne mission of proclaiming the Three Angels' Messages of Revelation 14.

Scripture is clear about how God views this subject. We read,

"Only by pride cometh contention" (Prov 13:10, KJV). "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way" (Prov 8:13, KJV). Proverbs 16:18 explains, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (KJV).

Only through the power of the Holy Spirit can we be reborn in Christ and have a change in our selfish, self-seeking, proud hearts. The Holy Spirit brings us new life and connection with Christ and heaven. He refocuses our lives and lifts up truth and eternal values. He reduces our pride. "To live for self is to perish," writes Ellen G. White. "Covetousness, the desire of benefit for self's sake, cuts the soul off from life."<sup>2</sup>

### THE MIND OF CHRIST

Our only hope for the plague of "self" is to take on the mind of Christ, allowing Him to fully control us and reform our thinking so we think and act like Him. The greatest pattern for submission and humility is Jesus, our Lord. Nothing explains it better than Paul's marvelous recounting in Philippians 2 of our Lord's willingness to humble Himself to become one of His own creatures created by Him. In verse 3 we read, "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself."<sup>3</sup> What an example of humility. How can this happen? Paul explains in verse 5: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

**As an elder, you can absolutely make a difference  
in your local church and beyond. We need revival  
and reformation in our own lives and in the  
hearts of our church members.**



## Our only hope for the plague of “self” is to take on the mind of Christ, allowing Him to fully control us and reform our thinking so we think and act like Him.

We are to allow the Lord to so fully control us that we have His mind instead of our own selfish ambitions and thoughts. Verse 6 confirms that Jesus is God and equal with the Father. In verse 7 Paul begins to explain the incredible condescension that took place on the part of Jesus in becoming our salvation. Notice the various levels of humility; verse 7 shows Jesus as God coming down by three steps of humility:

First, He “made Himself of no reputation.” He was God but did not allow that to keep Him from coming to us. Second, He took “the form of a bondservant.” Third, He came as God “in the likeness of men.”

Verse 8 shows Jesus as a human being again taking three steps of humility to save us. First, He found Himself “in appearance as a man” and “humbled Himself.” Second, He “became obedient to the point of death.” Third, He died “the death of the cross.”

### A HORRIBLE WAY TO DIE

Christ condescended from being the King of the universe to dying on the cross, a most cruel instrument of torture and death, used by the Romans for the worst of criminals. It was a slow, painful death filled with public dishonor. Many times, the cross is portrayed as something lifted high up with beautiful gold and encrusted with jewels, but the reality was just the opposite—crucifixion was rough, stark, and terrible, a horrible way to die.

Often, the cross was erected at eye level with those who would pass by. During the dying hours

of the condemned person, people could curse, spit upon, and mock him. All this happened while the person felt the excruciating pain of crucifixion. And the ultimate humiliation was that the crucified died naked. What humility and love our Saviour exhibited for us by dying for our sins and providing eternal life through His grace.

No wonder Paul exclaims in Philippians 2:9–11, “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

### PERSONAL REFORMATION

Jesus is our standard. He submitted Himself to the Father, and the Holy Spirit amplified His work. How much more should we submit and humble ourselves before Him. “We must have a greater nearness to God. Much less of self and much more of Jesus Christ and His grace must be brought into our everyday life.”<sup>4</sup>

In anticipation of the latter rain promised in Joel 2:23 and the outpouring of God’s Spirit recorded in Acts 2:17–21, we must be prepared to die to self and allow Christ’s mind to be in us. This will truly be the personal reformation needed to allow God’s work

to progress in our local churches and throughout the world. It must start in our own lives. Through His strength, we are called to reflect Christ in purity of belief and lifestyle. His mind must pervade everything we are and do. His life must become ours so our lives are changed to reflect Jesus—lives that portray complete trust and belief in His Holy Word, lives committed in service to God and others.

We are standing at a great juncture in earth’s history. Jesus is coming soon. The prophecies of Matthew, Daniel, and Revelation are being fulfilled before our very eyes. God is calling His remnant church, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, to continue the reformation—to proclaim the pure truths of the Bible. We are to proclaim the simple gospel truth, Christ’s righteousness, and the Three Angels’ Messages. Much light has been given to Seventh-day Adventists about the final proclamation of this precious prophetic, Advent message. We are to proclaim the pure, simple truth that is not filled with man’s ideas and interpretations as to what the Bible is.



**We are to proclaim the simple gospel truth, Christ's righteousness, and the Three Angels' Messages. Much light has been given to Seventh-day Adventists about the final proclamation of this precious prophetic, Advent message.**

As an elder, you can absolutely make a difference in your local church and beyond. We need revival and reformation in our own lives and in the hearts of our church members.

### A RENEWED REFORMATION

God is calling for a renewed reformation—not one imposed by the General Conference, or by the division, union, or conference where you reside, but imposed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Are you willing to stand for biblical truth? Are you willing to be

filled with the power of the Holy Spirit? Are you and I willing to let self and pride die and accept God's plan for your life as a Seventh-day Adventist elder?

You may have complete faith in the precious Seventh-day Adventist biblical message and simply wish to commit yourself anew to its proclamation. You may have some doubts and wish to ask the Holy Spirit to fully convict you of truth and make you part of the continuation of the reformation. You may have some concerns which only the Lord can answer. I encourage

you to pour your heart out to the Lord just now as you read this. As church elders, let us pray for humility and for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and to be used by God, pointing people to Christ, His righteousness, His biblical truth, and His soon Second Coming.

ED

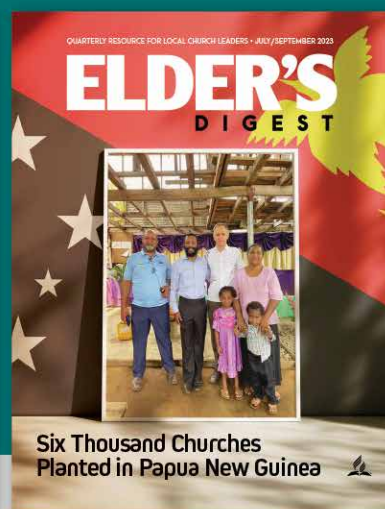
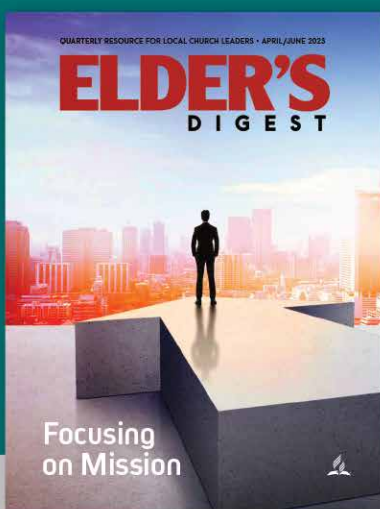
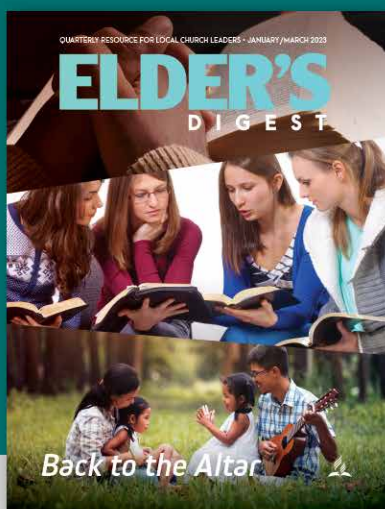
<sup>1</sup> 2023 *Annual Statistical Report*, new series, vol. 5, GC Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, <https://bit.ly/2023ASTReport>.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1900), 259.

<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all biblical quotations are from the New King James Version.

<sup>4</sup> Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 2:376.

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## Cosmic Encounter: The Return of Christ

### INTRODUCTION

It is July 24, 1969. The astronauts are returning from a long journey. They left on July 11, 1969, placed their feet on the moon, and now they are heading home. A Navy vessel, located about 1,200 miles from Hawaii, is waiting for them. On board are many scientists, engineers, reporters, and the President of the United States. Their eyes are fixed on the skies, trying to penetrate the clouds of the early morning. They are all looking up, anxiously waiting to see the return of Apollo 11 from the moon. At 5:41 a.m. a shout is heard: "There it is!" Apollo 11 has come back.

For centuries the Christian church has been looking up to the heavens, waiting for the fulfillment of Jesus' promise, "I will come back." The last time Jesus was seen on earth, He was ascending to heaven. Angels assured the disciples that "this Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11, NASB). This promise has enriched the life of believers by infusing it with hope. Today we will explore what that promise means to us.

### I. PERMANENT ACCESS TO GOD'S PRESENCE

At the Second Coming, Christ's presence will be unique and in a permanent form. God has always been on our planet through the Spirit. But He also appeared to Moses hidden in a bush (Exod 3:2-4), to the Israelites on Mount Sinai (19:16-20), and to a prophet who saw Him filling the temple with His glory (Isa 6:1-5). God also appeared to us in His Son, hidden in human flesh (John 1:1-3, 14), for a limited period of time, in the land of Israel. That is the nature of biblical divine epiphanies; they all have temporal and geographic limitations, and they are only witnessed by a few.

The mode of God's presence at the Second Coming is unlike anything else in human history. All other divine apparitions were a pale reflection of what this one will be like; in a sense they were a type of this one. The Second Coming will be the consummation of God's presence among human beings on this sinful planet.

When Christ's presence intrudes into our planet in the splendor of His divinity, the earth will be shaken to its very foundations; there will be fire, light, earthquakes, and the sound of trumpets. Creation is not large enough to encompass the fullness of His glorious presence; it recedes as if trying to make room for Him. Every human being will mysteriously see Him at once (1:7). The universal character of the Second Coming leaves no place for the wicked to hide;

they have no choice but to face the risen Christ.

At that glorious moment, the barrier of sin and death will crumble down and God's presence with us will be visible and permanent. Humans have anxiously desired to be in the very presence of God, to be able to see Him. John says that "when He appears . . . we will see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:2). Jesus expressed it well: "The pure in heart . . . shall see God" (Matt 5:8). What a wonderful promise! The Second Coming of Christ means to me that I will see my Creator and Redeemer! The human longing to see Him will be fully satisfied.

### II. FILLS OUR LIFE WITH HOPE

The Second Coming of Christ is the blessed hope (Titus 2:13). We are creatures of hope, not of despair. Every moment of our life is lived in expectation and hope. We exist anticipating the realization of what we hope for. We have many hopes, and we expect many things, but we all need a hope that defines us and gives meaning to our lives. Without such a hope we would live in despair. The Christian hope is so intertwined with our very being that it cannot be removed from us without drastically altering the meaning and quality of our existence. In the absence of this hope, many live fainting "from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world" (Luke 21:26, NIV).

The Christian hope is grounded in Christ's death and resurrection. The significance of our lives is determined by what happened in the past—the cross—and by the future—the consummation of our salvation. We live waiting for "the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave himself for us" (Titus 2:13-14a, NIV). This hope does not anticipate destruction but announces salvation and our reunion with those who sleep in Christ.

This hope anticipates the removal of sin and death from the planet and from our fallen nature (1 Cor 15:51-53). What would it mean to exist free from sin and selfishness! The power of Christ's sacrifice will transform our nature into a glorious one, and this will happen "in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor 15:52, NIV)! The Second Coming of Christ means that my life has been filled with a glorious and wonderful hope and I am looking forward to its realization!

### III. DEFINES OUR PRESENT FUNCTION IN LIFE

The return of Christ speaks to us about the past (the cross), the future (the return of Christ), and about *the present*. The present is the time between the first and the second comings of Christ. God became human, and we saw His glory (John 1:14), but now

we also anticipate His future visible coming. We exist between these two epiphanies. The present is the time of waiting. The promise of Christ's return enriches the present by answering the question, what should we do during the waiting period?

Shortly before Jesus' ascension, the disciples asked Him, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6, NASB). They would have liked to move from the first coming to the second without having to wait. Jesus said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:6-8, NASB).

We should never worry about the timing of Christ's coming. We must wait because Christ filled the waiting period with meaning: "Go and fulfill the mission I am entrusting to you!" He gave us a mission. We should not stop the mission in order to speculate about things not revealed to us. It is in the fulfillment of our mission that we get ready for the return of Christ. Whenever the church arises and becomes active in the proclamation of the gospel, the church is revitalized.

The Second Coming of Christ means to me that I know why I am on this planet. I am here with a very specific mission—namely, to share with others the hope I cherish in Christ. We were born not simply to work, earn a salary, get married, get a house, retire, and then die. No! Our roles in society are to be used by God to point sinners to the cross of Christ as the only way of salvation and to its consummation at His return.

### CONCLUSION

On that day we will shout with joy, "There He is!" "Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us" (Isa 25:9, NASB). Meanwhile, I ask you and myself: Are you daily longing to see Jesus and to be forever in His presence and in the company of loved ones? Are you possessed by the hope of Christ's coming? How often do you think about it and pray for it? Are you grounded in the conviction that Christ died to save you and that He is coming to take you home? Have you placed your life in Christ's hands to be used in any possible way to share the hope of Christ's soon coming? As we pray now, ask the Lord to infuse you with the joy of Christ's soon return. ED

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## While We Wait

### INTRODUCTION

We have come together to celebrate the gift of life. Our ultimate destination is not the tomb but a new life in the presence of Christ and of our loved ones. In cases like this, believers often reflect on the story of Lazarus, recorded in John 11. It is a story of four friends (Martha, Mary, Lazarus, and Jesus) who together experienced the profound emotional pain that follows the incursion of death among the living. The narrative illustrates the way believers should face the disturbing presence of our last enemy (death) during our pilgrimage in a foreign land.

### I. WAITING FOR JESUS

The main character in the story is Jesus, who left on a journey leaving behind His three beloved friends (John 10:40). In the story, the departure of Jesus is a simple fact that was easily solved, but for us this detail describes what the Christian life is as we follow Him. He ascended to heaven and He is no longer physically and visibly present on earth, though He continues to be present among us through the Holy Spirit. While Jesus was on earth, He was fighting sicknesses and demonic powers, thus revealing God's immense love for us.

In the story of Lazarus, Jesus is far away. It is during His journey and absence that Lazarus, the one He loved, gets sick (John 11:3). Martha and Mary's prayers for healing are not answered as they expected. Their hope is that Jesus would return and heal their brother, but while they are waiting, Lazarus dies. We also wait for the return of Jesus, and we too get sick and die while waiting. Why do we die? There are many reasons for the presence of death on our planet. The most important is that there is a cosmic conflict going on and the intention of the enemy is to obliterate God's magnificent creation. This planet is the battlefield because most humans have taken the side of the enemy.

We, like Lazarus, are deeply loved by Jesus, but we also get sick and die. The redemption of our bodies has not yet been consummated (Rom 8:23). Our bodies get infested by microorganisms or viruses, we age, our bones ache, we get sick, and we finally die. While all of this is going on, we eagerly wait and look forward to the moment when our last enemy, death, will be permanently defeated (1 Cor 15:26). We, like Mary and Martha, wait for Jesus.

### II. JESUS AND DEATH

Yes, Jesus' beloved friend, Lazarus, died. Perhaps Martha and Mary wondered about the death of their brother and about the absence of Jesus. Could it be that Je-

sus did not love them any longer? We can certainly affirm that the death of the ones we love does not mean that Jesus no longer loves us. Paul wrote with great conviction, "For I am persuaded that . . . death . . . shall [not] be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:38–39; NKJV). Natural death is a common phenomenon; good and bad people die. But Jesus has a view of death that is worth considering.

First, natural death is inevitable; we all die. It is not a choice but a fate that brings life to an end, thus constituting death into our enemy. We can only choose eternal death or eternal life.

Second, according to Jesus, death is meaningless. There is no reason for it to be present in God's creation, for it only results in the disintegration of life. Note that Lazarus's body was in a state of decomposition (John 11:39). Jesus will demonstrate that there is no place for death in God's will for us.

Third, Jesus frees natural death from its terror by saying, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up" (John 11:11, NKJV). Death is not our final destination! A waking up is coming our way! The alarm will go off and we will hear the trumpet's sound! For those who believe in Him, the sleep of death will come to an end.

Fourth, Jesus will use death—that which is meaningless and absolutely unnecessary—to reveal His love, mercy, and glory when, through a display of His omnipotence, He will delete it from the universe. The resurrection of Lazarus illustrates the moment when Jesus' power and glory will be manifested in the eternal defeat of our last enemy (John 11:4).

### III. JESUS AND LIFE

Mary and Martha both say to Jesus, "If You had been here, my brother would not have died" (John 11:21, NKJV). This is a profound statement. It expresses a deep understanding of the power and nature of Jesus. Death is probably the most powerful thing we know on this planet. There is no natural life-form that can stop it or escape from its claws. Yet Martha and Mary, with their limited understanding of Christ's might, are able to confess that where Christ is, there is life: "Had You been here, our brother would be alive!" Ultimately, death cannot exercise its power in the presence of Jesus. Based on that conviction, He tells the two sisters to get ready for something even more majestic. Jesus asks them to place their faith in Him, for He has power to do the unimaginable. Death does not have the last word; Jesus does. While we

wait we are also exhorted to place our faith in Him.

Then the Lord says to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25–26, NKJV). The question is of major significance: Do you believe that I am the resurrection and the life? Do you, who have been touched by the power of death, believe the words of Jesus: "I am the resurrection and the life"? The statement makes a claim that changes everything we know. It is not just that Jesus has power to resurrect the dead; He does. But He is in Himself the resurrection because He is life in Himself. His resurrection assures us that all who are in Him will be resurrected. In other words, there is no resurrection without Jesus. He said to John, "I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death" (Rev 1:18, NKJV).

### CONCLUSION

The story of Lazarus was written for us, who are waiting for the return of Jesus and who, while waiting, experience death. The experience is painful because we are separated from loved ones, but we continue to wait for the ultimate defeat of death. Jesus reminds us that although natural death is inevitable, there is no reason for its presence among us. For us it is like falling asleep; the wake-up call of the trumpet is about to be sounded. Then death will be deleted from the universe, revealing the power, love, and mercy of God for His people. This most glorious experience is grounded in the fact that Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Jesus asked, "Do you believe this?" (John 11:26). Our answer should be, "Yes, we do."

"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory'" (1 Cor 15:51–54, NKJV). May this most glorious hope sustain you and transform your sadness into joy. ED

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## Preserving Our Identity in a Hostile Environment

### INTRODUCTION

The person we will study appears on the stage of history during a time of national apostasy in Israel. Under the influence of Jezebel, wife of King Ahab, the king begins to promote throughout his kingdom the worship of the Canaanite god Baal, a god of rain and fertility. Israel is losing its identity and becoming just another Canaanite nation. In an effort to halt the apostasy, God sends Elijah to proclaim judgment against the nation: a drought is coming that will last three and a half years (1 Kgs 17:1). The message is that the God of Israel controls nature, not Baal. At the end of the period, King Ahab goes out to look for food for his animals accompanied by his most trusted servant, the palace administrator. Who is this man? He has a name, he has a job, and he fears the Lord. He is a person of unbending will whose identity as a true Israelite is not negotiable.

### I. HE HAS A NAME

Names are important. In a sense, the mystery of our identity is contained in our name. Names define us and make us accessible to others. Through our names we are touched by others, forming a bridge for communication. When we meet someone, one of the first questions we ask is, “What is your name?” Then the dialogue begins. Something happens when someone pronounces your name: Everything stops, your senses go on the alert, and you search for the person who invoked your name. Your name pulls you out of the shapeless crowd, and you stand up as unique and singular among them.

The person in our story has a name. His name is Obadiah. He knew who he was. In Hebrew his name is Obad-yahu. It is a composite name formed by the combination of two nouns: *Obed*, meaning “servant,” and *Yahu*, a shortened form of the name *Yahweh*. His full name is “Servant of Yahweh”! His name identifies his mission, which is to serve, and the person he serves—Yahweh. He belongs to God, and his mission in life is to serve Him. We come to know who we are after realizing that we belong to the Lord. We need a center that will orient us and determine who we are. Many people lack that specific center, and they live disoriented, asking themselves, *Who am I, and what am I doing here?* Our identity is deeply connected to our mission in life.

It is a wonderful thing to know who we are. We have a name, and the question for you is: What is your name? Perhaps today your name should be Obadiah (Obad-yahu), “Servant of the Lord.” That is who you really are. This identity comes to us from above. The name Obad-yahu points to the Messi-

anic Servant mentioned in Isaiah 52:13 and 53:11. He is the Servant of the Lord who gave His life for us (53:12). There is no one like Him! Our identity, our uniqueness is derived from His identity and comes to us as a gift. We are “Servants of the Lord” because He is the “Servant of the Lord.”

### II. HE HAS A JOB

There is something perhaps unexpected about the person of Obadiah. Although he is a servant of the Lord, he is at the same time a servant of the apostate King Ahab (1 Kgs 18:3). We too need a job in the corrupt world in which we live. The truth is that we live in two worlds. Occasionally our social duties and responsibilities are in conflict with our true identity as servants of the Lord. At that moment we are challenged to take sides.

I imagine that it was quite difficult for Obadiah to preserve his identity in the midst of national apostasy, particularly when his job was to serve in the palace. The king and the queen were promoting the worship of Baal to make all the Israelites servants of Baal. I can only imagine that the king and the queen, out of consternation, may have had some private conversations with Obadiah, trying to persuade him to support their religious agenda. Perhaps he was asked to change his name—a small compromise—and instead of Obadiah (Obad-Yahu) to become Obad-Baal. He could retain his first name but change his last name. A very simple thing! He did not change his name. You have to wonder, why was he not deposed from his office? The most probable reason is that he excelled in the performance of his job, and it would have been difficult to find a more trustworthy person to replace him. The servants of the Lord do their best for others! Right in the palace, this person became a silent witness for the Lord. Every time he went to the palace, people would greet him, “Good morning, Servant of Yahweh”! Everyone knew that in the midst of apostasy there was in the palace a servant of the Lord.

The early Christians bore a name that was directly connected to the shame of the cross and many, under the pressure of society, were tempted to change their name. We too are tempted to change our name in order to retain our job or to achieve certain personal goals in life. The pressures of society may tempt us to change our identity, to set aside our true identity. To you I say today, “Do not change your name!” Be yourself!

### III. HE FEARS THE LORD

In order to preserve our identity as servants of the Lord living in a society that promotes the values of the kingdom of dark-

ness, we are expected to be courageous and faithful. The source of such courage is located, paradoxically, in the fear of the Lord. To fear the Lord is to respect and honor Him as Saviour and Lord. In our story, Obadiah is described as a person who greatly fears the Lord, not Baal or the king (1 Kgs 18:3). This aspect of his identity is manifested through courageous actions.

Many in the world are weak and cowards while claiming to be brave and powerful. They are in fact unwilling to stand alone for what is right and good and are willing to surrender all they have to the transient. They are dragged along by a “nameless” crowd of rebellious people; they lack a true identity. Those who fear God become His instruments even under difficult circumstances. Obadiah feared the Lord, and God used him to preserve the life of one hundred prophets (1 Kgs 18:4). He risked his life by providing for the enemies of the apostate state shelter, food, and water at a time when food, and particularly water, were scarce.

Obadiah feared the Lord more than the king. God also used him to do something that no one else had been able to do: find the prophet Elijah. The king had sent messengers throughout the kingdom to find and arrest the prophet (1 Kgs 18:10). It was to Obadiah that the prophet “surrendered.” If at first the servant was unwilling to comply with the request of the prophet (1 Kgs 18:12), it was not because he was afraid of the king, but because he loved life and was not willing to unnecessarily risk it. It is only through the Spirit of Christ that we are empowered to preserve our Christlike identity in courageous service to others.

### CONCLUSION

Those who have been redeemed through the sacrifice of Christ have a new name, a new identity. This identity has been shaped by the values and teachings of the One who died for us—the magnificent Servant of the Lord. We are unique because we derive our identity from Him. The character that we develop is not synchronized with a sinful world, but rather is in conflict with it. Hence, we need to rely on Christ to protect our holy way of life and to be gracious to us in moments of weakness. Can you answer our question today: What is your name? What is your job? Do you fear the Lord? Would you like to re-consecrate your life to the Lord today, relying always on His forgiveness and grace? ED

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## God Is Great, I Am Small, and I Am Great

### INTRODUCTION

It has been said that of the mysteries of the universe, the greatest of them all is the human being. We perceive ourselves as a wonder, as an enigma, as strange creatures that, as far as is known, are unique in the universe. The psalmist was very much interested in understanding this strange being. In his search for meaning, the biblical writer began with God. Confronted by God, he was left speechless. In Psalm 8, the biblical writer realizes the greatness of God and the smallness and yet the greatness of humans.

### I. THE GREATNESS OF GOD

Psalm 8:1 begins by affirming that God's glory is visible to us in the mystery of cosmic space—the heavens. Creation, in spite of sin, still reveals the power, majesty, and wisdom of God (cf. Rom 1:20). The James Webb telescope has provided for us pictures of a vast and mysterious universe that is a witness to the greatness of God. According to the Scriptures, there is a God who cannot be circumscribed by space (1 Kgs 8:27) and who is beyond our full comprehension (Isa 55:9). He is the Holy One and there is no one like Him in the universe. The Lord asked the Israelites, "To whom will you compare me or count me equal? To whom will you liken me that we may be compared? . . . I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me" (Isa 46:5, 9, NIV). God is indeed the greatest mystery in the universe!

Clearly, only God is great and incomparable. The psalmist says that God set or placed His glory, His greatness, above the heavens, and children are able to see it (Ps 8:1–2). Children are able to realize that God is indeed the greatest person in the universe—to them belongs the kingdom of God (Matt 19:14). Many people are not yet childlike, and when they look at the heavens they do not see the glory of God. He has often been ignored, denied, or downsized to the level of another human being. We need to affirm, together with the psalmist, that God is indeed the greatest Being in the universe. This would be a tremendous discovery! Children have seen it and have become God's instruments in overcoming evil powers (Ps 8:2) by silencing their arrogance.

### II. THE SMALLNESS OF HUMANS

Observing the glory of God leads the psalmist to ask a most fundamental question: "What is man that you are mindful of him, . . . ?" (Ps 8:4, NIV). It is only after we have been confronted with the wonder, majesty, and loving power of God that we are able to answer the existential questions: *Who am I? What is a human being?* We cannot answer those questions unless we

know who God is. The Psalm says that He is my Creator (Ps 8:6) and the One who loves me (Ps 8:4). Perhaps surprisingly, it is when we stand in the very presence of God that we realize how small we are.

Yes, we are small creatures living on a small planet that is hardly perceptible from our nearest star. This small planet is populated by a very small, strange, and self-conscious life, but still very small. We are, in fact, physically small. If you have doubts about our smallness, look from the window of an airplane flying at an altitude of thirty-five thousand feet. From that distance you would not be able to see a human being on the surface of the earth. We are too small, and yet we are probably the most proud species in the universe!

But we are also spiritually small. We are so small that it is difficult for us to understand the works of God. We cannot grasp the fullness of the cosmos and consequently it remains a mystery to us. Yet, we exist, grasping for understanding, searching for meaning. That is the way our smallness behaves. In 1969, American astronauts went to the moon. That was a tremendous accomplishment for the small creature. For the first time, human eyes saw our planet from the surface of another celestial body. A beautiful picture of our planet was taken from the moon that changed forever our perception of the planet. We realized that this planet was not inhabited by different nations, different cultures speaking different languages, or by people with different skin pigmentation, but by one type of intelligent life: the human race. Yes, acknowledging our smallness helps us understand ourselves and others. It is only when we recognize and accept that God is great that we realize our smallness; we become humble, and humility makes us great.

### III. HUMAN GREATNESS

Psalm 8 encourages us to look not only at our smallness but also at our greatness. We are at the same time both small and great. Paradoxically, we are great when we acknowledge our smallness. This is true humility made possible through Christ who makes us great. What amazes the psalmist is that the majestic and glorious God is concerned about me, that He thinks about "me" (v. 4; "visit" or "pay attention" to us); He cares for this small creature. This glorious God is willing to come to my level to interact with me. He visited us in a most glorious way in Christ. It is because He associates Himself with us through Christ that we participate in His greatness.

Originally, the Creator gave us dominion, some of His authority, to rule as His representatives over creation (Ps 8:6–8).

This vision of the human being is that of humanity living in harmony with God in Eden. That is no longer the case. Humans have misused the dominion entrusted to them, abused nature, and created social disruption and abuse. We have lost most of the glory and honor entrusted by God to us at Creation (Rom 3:23). The good news is that God, through Christ, is restoring to us glory and honor. Christ was crowned with glory and power as our representative. The description of a human being found in Psalm 8:6–8 is already a reality in Christ (Heb 2:8–9). God's ideal for the human race has been fulfilled and expressed in the person of Christ. He became small for a short period of time in order for us to become great in Him. He has been exalted to the throne of God. The majestic God, whose glory is displayed in the heavens, revealed His greatness by becoming small. When in our smallness, in true humility, we accept the gift of His grace, we participate in His greatness.

### CONCLUSION

Nature has been damaged by sin, but it still reflects some of the glory of God. It is good to spend time looking at nature for several reasons. First, we can see there sparks of the glory and power of God that would lead us to praise Him as our great God. Second, by looking at His glory and greatness we will discover our smallness in the universe. There is no place in our lives for pride of any type or for any sense of superiority based on ethnic, social, or racial distinctions. Third, by observing and meditating on the glory of God, we will find our true greatness. The fact that our glorious God cares for us makes us great. The depth of His care was manifested in Christ, who on the cross became small in order to restore to us the honor and glory we had lost. This is indeed greatness in smallness—that is to say, in humility. In His presence we discover our smallness (we are all sinners) and our greatness (Christ died for us). I invite you today to find in the greatness and love of God your smallness and greatness, both expressions of humility.

ED

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### SERMON NOTES



## >PART 2

(1 Cor 14:2, RSV)

## PAUL AND THE MISUSE OF THE GIFT IN CORINTH

On the one hand, Paul wants to encourage the church members to use their spiritual gifts; on the other hand, he tries to correct the abuse of the gift of tongues. Instead of using this gift for what it was intended—to evangelize people who speak foreign languages—the Corinthians were using it in church to edify themselves or to gain status. Therefore, Paul says, “For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him” (1 Cor 14:2, RSV). God, of course, understands all languages, but the other church members do not.

## ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

While many sincere Christians believe that Paul in 1 Corinthians is speaking about ecstatic speech, the weight of scriptural evidence favors the view that tongues in 1 Corinthians refers to real languages.



**SCAN FOR AUDIO**

**1. The context refers to languages.** First Corinthians 13:1 uses the unique phrase “tongues of men” (NKJV). This phrase clearly refers to human languages. Paul states a hypothetical case. He says, Even if I spoke foreign languages and were able to communicate the way angels do, without love it would be worthless.

**2. Throughout the New Testament, the same word is used for the gift of tongues.** Because in Acts tongues are foreign languages, the tongues in 1 Corinthians should also be understood as foreign languages. Difficult texts should be explained by clear texts. First Corinthians 14 should be interpreted by Acts 2, in which the word *tongues* clearly means foreign languages.

**3. God works through human intelligence.** The Lord, who warned against babbling on like the heathen (Matt 6:7), would surely not inspire ecstatic speech that no one could understand. “The New Testament use does not support the idea that *glossa* ever refers to ecstatic speech. The only specific example or description of tongues in the entire Bible is Acts 2:4 to 11 where they are definitely described as normal human languages. . . . Abundant evidence demonstrates that the gift of tongues is the miraculous ability to speak languages previously unknown to the speaker.”<sup>1</sup>

**4. First Corinthians 14:21 provides something like a definition of the gift of tongues.** In this verse, Paul quotes Isaiah 28:11, which says that God will speak to His people in a foreign language, literally “another tongue.” The context of Isaiah 28 reveals that the persons speaking the foreign language are the Assyrians. The Septuagint (LXX) renders the term translated as “foreign tongue.” Paul contracts the two words. “This comparison is revealing, because it seems to

imply that what is happening in Corinth is the same. ‘Foreign languages’ are brought in by means of the tongues-speakers, but they do not bring about the desired results since they cannot be understood by the hearers.”<sup>2</sup>

Because foreign languages clearly are in view in 1 Corinthians 14:21, verse 2 must also refer to a real human language. Furthermore, in verse 22, tongues are for a sign to unbelievers as at Pentecost, in which real languages were a positive sign for unbelievers, calling them to repentance (Acts 2:38).

**5. The gifts were given for the common good** (1 Cor 12:7), which rules out using a gift purely for personal gratification.

**6. The divine gift of tongues appeared for the first time at Pentecost** as described in Acts 2, where it is clearly presented as foreign languages and was a fulfillment of the prediction made in Mark 16:17. Although the events depicted in Acts 2 occurred earlier than the events presented in 1 Corinthians, the letter to the Corinthians was most likely written earlier than Acts. There are a number of connections between 1 Corinthians 14 and Acts 2, as well as other texts in Acts, dealing with the gift of tongues:

a. There is a similar reaction to the gift of tongues in 1 Corinthians 14:22–23 and Acts 2:13. People think Christians are mad or drunk.

b. Speaking in tongues is to serve the mission of the church (1 Cor 14:22; Acts 2:14–41). Tongues are a sign to unbelievers, calling them to repentance. Many are saved; others refuse to follow Jesus. Ecstatic speech would hardly be a sign and could hardly achieve the reported results.

c. The phrase translated as “speak in other tongues” in Acts 2:4 sounds like the language used to describe those with a foreign language in 1 Corinthians 14:21.

d. In Acts 2, Luke uses the same terminology employed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12–14 to describe the spiritual gift of speaking in tongues, referring to foreign languages. In Acts 19:6, Luke associates Paul with a situation in which some disciples received this gift. When Paul laid hands on these believers, they received the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues and to prophesy. It is hardly conceivable that Luke would understand or use the same phrase differently than Paul did and vice versa.

Clearly, the gift of tongues may best be understood as the gift of speaking foreign languages without having studied them.

## CONCLUSION

First Corinthians 14:2 refers to a situation in which someone who speaks a foreign language in a context in which the language is not understood speaks to God only because God can understand all languages. The gift of tongues in Corinth was a genuine gift of the Holy Spirit, but it was misused. Consequently, the church was instructed by Paul to return to the right use of spiritual gifts so that they could become a blessing and not a hindrance for believers and unbelievers. ED

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas R. Edgar, *Satisfied by the Promise of the Spirit: Affirming the Fullness of God's Provisions for Spiritual Living* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1996), 153.

<sup>2</sup> Gerhard F. Hasel, *Speaking in Tongues: Biblical Speaking in Tongues and Contemporary Glossolalia* (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1991), 140.

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SCAN FOR AUDIO

# Living with The Past

It was a startling news story. A man was perched on the edge of the roof of a forty-story building in New York City. He was poised, ready to jump. He was in his mid-forties and had behind him a successful career in business. A few months earlier, his business had fallen on troubled times. He had been embezzling funds entrusted to his care.

A passing priest was called to the scene. The priest managed to crawl within a few feet of the desperate man but was unable to reach him. The only alternative left to the priest was to talk with the man and try to persuade him to surrender. The newscaster reporting the story asked an interesting question: "What do you say to a person who has decided that the past makes the future impossible and believes that suicide is the only way out?"

Few of us will ever confront the circumstances faced by the priest, but all of us, at times, talk with people who live on the edge of desperation. Sometimes we feel that way about our own lives. The events of the past are such that we believe there is no hope for tomorrow. How do you deal with such feelings? How do we live with a past that seems impossible? There are at least three things we could well remember.

**First, the past for all of us is a mixture of good and bad.** More than twenty centuries ago there lived a man we call a saint. Paul's name is synonymous with everything good and decent. The impact St. Paul had on the world is for the lasting benefit of all humankind. We forget that his early life was far from the life of a saint. He participated in at least one murder and was likely involved in the execution of other innocent people. The life of St. Paul is a constant reminder that few, if any, of us have a perfect past. All of us leave behind a trail mixed with good and bad. It's a rare person indeed who can look back and be proud of everything.

Who bears in mind misfortunes gone,  
Will live in fear each hour,  
The joyous person whose heart's right  
Gives no such shadows power.  
He bears in mind no haunting past  
To vex his life on Sunday  
He has no graves within his mind  
To visit every Saturday.

**Second, preoccupation with the past is useless except as it is used to guide us in the present and the future.** George Santayana is credited with saying that those who cannot remember the past are doomed to repeat it. There is nothing unhealthy about looking back as long as our purpose is to learn from it. But living with the past can destroy us if we spend our time simply lamenting our mistakes and dwelling on our failures.

The reason is obvious. The past is unalterable. The past reminds us that the “moving finger” writes and moves on, and neither worry nor fear can erase its lines. The record stands as it is written. Squandering time lamenting mistakes is a foolish way to live. It robs life of its potential and wastes precious opportunities.

The question is not how can we change the past but rather how can we profit from it. We learn not only from the good but also from the bad. The brutal experimentation during the early years of modern medicine was terrible, but out of those horrible days many lifesaving techniques were discovered. The

way to handle the past is to learn from it and then ask what can be done under the circumstances as they now exist.

**Third, it is possible to redeem the past by living responsibly in the present.** There is a timeless proverb that everyone should remember: “God never allows one door to close on us without opening another.” The point of that proverb is that life is so arranged that no circumstance is completely impossible and we are never boxed into a totally closed door. There is an open door somewhere, and we can find it if we have the will to look for it. St. Paul outlived his past. There are always open doors if we have the will to look for them.

In the days that lie ahead, if you find someone living in desperation over a troubled past, or if you feel that way yourself, try recalling these things: not one of us can look at the yesterdays of life completely unashamed, but what is done is done and nothing can change that. Above everything, however, is this clear fact of history. Life is so arranged that the most hopeless problem has its opportunity. But

there is more for the future: “Look away from yourselves to Jesus. The merits of the blood of a crucified and risen Savior still can cleanse from the least and greatest sin. In trusting faith commit the keeping of your souls to God as unto a faithful Creator. Be not in continual fear and apprehension that God will leave you. He never will unless you depart from Him. Christ will come in and dwell with you if you will open the door of your heart to Him.”<sup>1</sup> The mantle of God’s mercy is available to hide away so much that is unlovely. “Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity . . . because He delighteth in mercy. . . . He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea” (Mic 7:18, 19, KJV). ED

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<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1872), 3:543.

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**EDITORIAL NOTE**

In every society, significant numbers of people are introverts. This is the third of a four-part series to facilitate a greater understanding of people who are introverts and how to effectively minister to and with introverts.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

# Ministering to and Ministering with People Who Are Introverts

>PART 3

"God must love the introverts,  
because he made so many of us."

—John J. Pitney Jr.



# Picture

this: a highly sociable person—gregarious, expressive, transparent, enthusiastic, with a broad smile, sharing faith easily, has no difficulty in meeting new people, and participates in any number of activities. Does this sound like the perfect Christian to you, the only one who is truly a follower of Jesus?

Western culture values extroversion over introversion, to an extent that most people, even introverts, consider Jesus to be an extrovert. That assumption makes it difficult for introverts to accept and confirm their own behavioral preference as legitimate and valuable. They may tend to see it not as something to be appreciated but as something to overcome. And it may lead extroverts to overlook the strengths and values introverts can offer. If Jesus is

considered an extrovert and placed as the epitome of the perfect Christian, a vast number of people will fall short without any prospect of ever being called a Christian. Given that, in Western culture, introverts already struggle in society—school, workplace, and so on—this picture of a perfect Christian extends their struggle to the church. If asked, many introverted Christians will express at least some degree of frustration and sense of exclusion from their church.

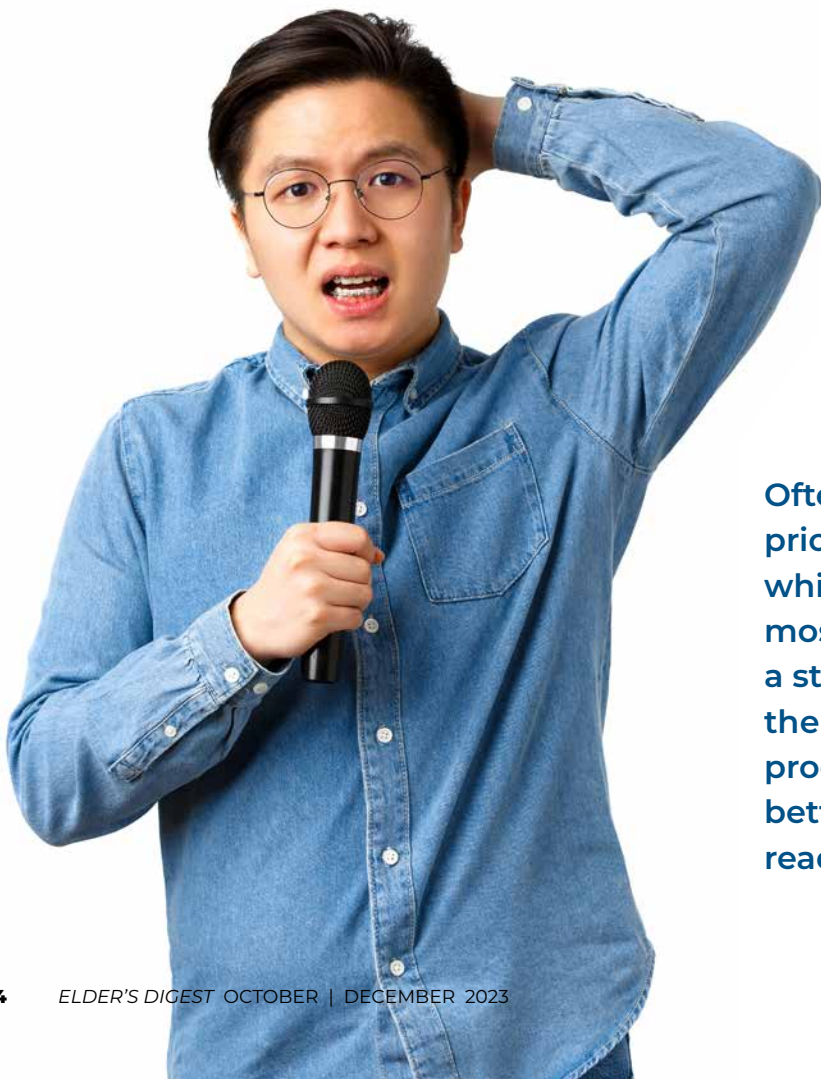
Some churches may implicitly expect their members to be constantly together; it is assumed that the more activities and social interaction a person engages in, the closer he or she is to God. The introversion-derived preference to be by oneself is considered antisocial and equaled to lacking in faith. Not conforming to the expectation

to share every detail of their life is seen as having a heart resistant to God.

Most churches have structures outside the main worship service, like small groups, prayer meetings, or social events. Participation in them is encouraged, and sometimes it may even be required (even if not openly expressed as such). It gets dangerous as soon as the value for this community life is substituted for the personal relationship with God. Some churches, maybe without noticing, equate spirituality with sociability. The more people you know and socialize with, the more advanced your faith. Introverts, who by nature prefer one-on-one relationships and long to connect on a deep level with only a few people, are easily discouraged by that viewpoint and can easily feel spiritually inadequate.

Many churches put emphasis on the Word, which is perfectly fine. However, it may be that this emphasis on the Word and words in general is narrowing the possibility to reach the congregation. For example, quiet contemplation, which is something necessary for introverts, is hardly ever considered to be important in a worship service.

**Often, churches place a high priority on personal evangelism, which, for many people, looks mostly like selling something to a stranger. You have to convince the other with words of your product (the gospel), and the better your talk, the more readily the person “buys” it.**



Though exploring the nature of introversion and embracing the gifts one has is important, true healing comes “in probing the depths of God’s nature and discovering the identity and purpose he gives us.”

Often, churches place a high priority on personal evangelism, which, for many people, looks mostly like selling something to a stranger. You have to convince the other with words of your product (the gospel), and the better your talk, the more readily the person “buys” it. This is very difficult to do for introverts, and yet it makes introverts feel a “spiritual guilt” because of their apparent neglect of the Great Commission.

There’s nothing wrong with the points mentioned; they are valued in every church. They are, however, mostly cut out for extroverts, and if nothing else is considered and valued, you run the risk of excluding and repelling many people who have tremendous gifts to offer but don’t find the necessary setting.

#### HOW INTROVERTS CAN HEAL

Many introverts carry the weight of painful experiences since

childhood, aggravated through difficult years in adolescence and adulthood. Often the church did nothing to alleviate but rather contributed to the burden. Healing is necessary—not *from* introversion, as it’s sometimes assumed, but from the internal wounds, the feeling of being inadequate, and the rejection some have experienced in the past.

Introverted wounds bleed *in* our minds and hearts and bleed *out* in our behaviors, actions, and relationships. Our healing program, therefore, must also move in two directions: in and out, deeper and wider. As we seek to embrace our God-given identity as introverts, we journey inward. We seek the freedom and peace of self-acceptance, and we learn to identify and appreciate the gifts we have. But we must also move in an outward direction, into the realms of action and relationships, which will further, and confirm, our healing.<sup>1</sup>

The inward part may be easier for most introverts, because it is more natural. Recognizing the introversion and accepting it is a big step, and it takes effort. Though exploring the nature of introversion and embracing the gifts one has is important, true healing comes “in probing the depths of God’s nature and discovering the identity and purpose He gives us. Our heavenly Father knows us even more intimately than we know ourselves. He sees us with perfect clarity and is able to speak into those parts of ourselves that no one else can reach.”<sup>2</sup>

Healing to the outward is necessary as well, but it is important to take not-too-big steps, just at the right pace. Though sometimes others may try to rush introverts on the way, they should not heed the rush. Introverts must feel at home within themselves before they can truly be faithful and go out to meet and care for others. This healing process requires courage, as it means introverts stretch, take risks, and leave their comfort zones. Relating to others (still in a different way than extroverts!) sets them free from misconceptions about others and themselves. They take responsibility for their atti-



EXTROVERTED

INTROVERTED



tudes and actions. It doesn't mean at all that introverts are meant to strive to become extroverts. Rather, they are allowed to engage in fellowship in their own ways. It is about stretching their personality preferences without distorting them, looking on the outward but without losing the center.

### WHAT CAN THE CHURCH DO?

What can you as a church do to help introverts? Celebrate differences. Help your congregation understand there are different personalities, and allow them to live faith in their own authentic ways.

Try different worship experiences. Maybe you could include quiet moments in the worship service, allowing introverts silent contemplation. Allow introverts to use their talents, their creativity. You may want to approach introverts in your congregation and ask them what they would want to see or even do in their church (but don't make them feel they *have* to do something).

When churches reach out to introverts, they not only offer healing to introverts but they heal themselves. Introverts have profound gifts to offer, and Christian communities benefit greatly from

harnessing the power of introverts among their ranks. Our thoughtfulness, spiritual depth, compassion, and slower pace of life can be elixirs to our churches, antidotes to the superficiality, pragmatism, and frenzied activity that mark our surrounding culture.<sup>3</sup>

Coming back to the beginning: do you think Jesus was an extrovert or introvert? Actually, the biblical evidence is not very clear on that. As much emphasis is put on words, we are tempted to see more what Jesus said rather than what He did. If you focus on Jesus' actions, you may find that He often retreated to solitude, especially at critical times. For example, He prayed in solitude before naming His disciples. Though He spoke to thousands of persons at a time, much of His teaching was done in the rather small group of His disciples. And even within this group, He seems to have had closer relationships with only three of them: Peter, James, and John, who witnessed Jesus' transformation and who were the ones Jesus took with Him when He prayed in Gethsemane just before His arrest.

It seems Jesus was an ambivert, being able to socialize with people but also in need of solitude. This may be good news for all: Jesus, our example, knows and understands both personalities, and He calls and works with both alike. And the church needs both in order to be complete, healthy, and thriving. ED

**Celebrate differences. Help your congregation understand there are different personalities, and allow them to live faith in their own authentic ways. Try different worship experiences. Maybe you could include quiet moments in the worship service, allowing introverts silent contemplation. Allow introverts to use their talents, their creativity.**



<sup>1</sup> Adam S. McHugh, *Introverts in the Church: Finding Our Place in an Extroverted Culture*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2017), 60.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

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# The Ministry of Deacons and Deaconesses

## >PART 1

### EDITORIAL NOTE

The ministry of deacons and deaconesses had its beginning in early apostolic times. It is a commonly accepted belief that the work of the deacons began with the selection of seven men, including Stephen and Philip, by the apostles 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. A godly, converted life of 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, taken from *The Acts of the Apostles* by Ellen G. White, 87–96, with subtitles added and Bible references placed in parentheses.



SCAN FOR AUDIO



In those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

### **THE CHALLENGE OF A GROWING CHURCH**

The early church was made up of many classes of people, of various nationalities. At the time of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, “there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5). Among those of the Hebrew faith who were gathered at Jerusalem were some commonly known as Grecians, between whom and the Jews of Palestine there had long existed distrust and even antagonism.

The hearts of those who had been converted under the labors of the apostles were softened and united by Christian love. Despite former prejudices, all were in harmony with one another. Satan knew that so long as this union continued to exist, he would be powerless to check the progress of gospel truth; and he sought to take advantage of former habits of thought, in the hope that thereby he might be able to introduce into the church elements of disunion.

Thus it came to pass that as disciples were multiplied, the enemy succeeded in arousing the suspicions of some who had formerly been in the habit of looking with jealousy on their brethren in the faith and of finding fault with their spiritual leaders, and so “there arose a murmuring of the Grecians

against the Hebrews.” The cause of complaint was an alleged neglect of the Greek widows in the daily distribution of assistance. Any inequality would have been contrary to the spirit of the gospel, yet Satan had succeeded in arousing suspicion. Prompt measures must now be taken to remove all occasion for dissatisfaction, lest the enemy triumph in his effort to bring about a division among the believers.

### **ORGANIZING FOR EFFICIENT SERVICE**

The disciples of Jesus had reached a crisis in their experience. Under the wise leadership of the apostles, who labored unitedly in the power of the Holy Spirit, the work committed to the gospel messengers was developing rapidly. The church was continually enlarging, and this growth in membership brought increasingly heavy burdens upon those in charge. No one man, or even one set of men, could continue to bear these burdens alone, without imperiling the future prosperity of the church. There was necessity for a further distribution of the responsibilities which had been borne so faithfully by a few during the earlier days of the church. The apostles must now take an important step in the perfecting of gospel order in the church by laying upon others some of the burdens thus far borne by themselves.

Summoning a meeting of the believers, the apostles were led by the Holy Spirit to outline a plan for the better organization of all the working forces of the church. The time had come, the apostles

stated, when the spiritual leaders having the oversight of the church should be relieved from the task of distributing to the poor and from similar burdens, so that they might be free to carry forward the work of preaching the gospel. “Wherefore, brethren,” they said, “look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.” This advice was followed, and by prayer and the laying on of hands, seven chosen men were solemnly set apart for their duties as deacons.

### **THE RESULT OF SHARED LEADERSHIP**

The appointment of the seven to take the oversight of special lines of work, proved a great blessing to the church. These officers gave careful consideration to individual needs as well as to the general financial interests of the church, and by their prudent management and their godly example they were an important aid to their fellow officers in binding together the various interests of the church into a united whole.

That this step was in the order of God is revealed in the immediate results for good that were seen. “The word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.” This ingathering of souls was due both to the greater freedom secured by the apostles and to the zeal and power shown by the seven deacons. The fact that these brethren had been ordained for the special work of looking after the needs of the poor, did not exclude them from teaching the faith. On the contrary, they were fully qualified to instruct others in the truth, and they engaged

**The apostles must now take an important step in the perfecting of gospel order in the church by laying upon others some of the burdens thus far borne by themselves.**

**The proclamation of the gospel was to be worldwide in its extent, and the messengers of the cross could not hope to fulfill their important mission unless they should remain united in the bonds of Christian unity, and thus reveal to the world that they were one with Christ in God.**

in the work with great earnestness and success.

To the early church had been entrusted a constantly enlarging work—that of establishing centers of light and blessing wherever there were honest souls willing to give themselves to the service of Christ. The proclamation of the gospel was to be worldwide in its extent, and the messengers of the cross could not hope to fulfill their important mission unless they should remain united in the bonds of Christian unity, and thus reveal to the world that they were one with Christ in God. Had not

their divine Leader prayed to the Father, “Keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We are”? And had He not declared of His disciples, “The world hath hated them, because they are not of the world”? Had He not pleaded with the Father that they might be “made perfect in one,” “that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me”? (John 17:11, 14, 23, 21). Their spiritual life and power was dependent on a close connection with the One by whom they had been commissioned to preach the gospel.

Only as they were united with Christ could the disciples hope to have the accompanying power of the Holy Spirit and the co-operation of angels of heaven. With the help of these divine agencies they would present before the world a united front and would be victorious in the conflict they were compelled to wage unceasingly against the powers of darkness. As they should continue to labor unitedly, heavenly messengers would go before them, opening the way; hearts would be prepared for the reception of truth, and many would be won to Christ. So long as they remained united, the church would go forth “fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners” (Song 6:10). Nothing could withstand her onward progress. The church would advance from victory to victory, gloriously fulfilling her divine mission of proclaiming the gospel to the world. ED

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# Mentoring as a Way of Life for the Local Church

EVERYONE CAN BE A MENTOR >PART 2

In Part 1, we covered the definition of mentoring, biblical examples of mentoring, and the benefits of mentoring. In this article, we will discuss how everyone can be a mentor, tips on mentoring, and how to create a culture of mentorship.

I (Joseph) was conducting a seminar in a church when something caught my attention. When the pastor and I arrived at the church at about 8:45 a.m. to get ready for the Sabbath morning activities, we saw one of the deacons with his grandson taking care of all the logistics of getting the facility ready. When I inquired about what was going on, the grandfather told me that on Sabbath morning he goes to his son's house to pick up his grandson and mentor him on how to become an effective deacon. He said that they both loved doing ministry together.

Then I asked the grandson how he felt about this. He told me that every Sabbath he looks forward to being with his grandfather and going around the church to see what needs to be done. They would keep their eyes open to see if there were any other needs during Sabbath School and worship. They then would stay after potluck to close the building.

The grandfather was also intentional in explaining to his grandson the importance of what they were doing and how this made a difference in the life of the church. He also shared with his grandson his faith, his love for Jesus, and the importance of always walking with Jesus in love and obedience.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

**Mentoring is about taking the time, the effort, and the interest to be involved in the life of someone else. It is not reserved for the mature and seasoned believer; anyone can do it.**

As we reflect on this story, this is a prime example of what mentoring is all about: in this case a grandfather mentoring his grandson—or, in other words, a grandfather and grandson doing ministry and life together. When we look at Scripture, this is what Jesus did with His disciples and what Paul did with Timothy, Titus, and John Mark. In fact, Paul admonished the church to create a culture of mentorship in every community of faith (2 Tim 2:2). He also specifically told Titus to have the older women mentor the younger women and the older men mentor the younger men (Titus 2:1–8).

### **TIPS ON CREATING A CULTURE OF MENTORSHIP IN THE LOCAL CHURCH**

Everyone can be a mentor. So often we think of mentors as people who are advanced in age and who have years of wisdom. However, that doesn't need to be the case. You can be a mentor at any age. For example, a teenager could teach a children's Sabbath School class and become a mentor to the children. A newly married couple could mentor an engaged couple on how to have a healthy marriage. A more seasoned member of the church could mentor a new believer in the faith by showing them how to worship, how to study the Bible, and how to pray. A Sabbath School teacher could mentor another member to teach. Elders and deacons could mentor the next generation of leaders. In fact, every ministry leader should be mentoring a successor because the real effectiveness of any leader is having a successor.

### **WHAT A MENTOR DOES**

Here are six ways a mentor can benefit the life of a mentee:

**1. Be able to communicate your faith, values, and the importance of your ministry.** This communication is not only verbal, but also by example. Model positive behavior. Modeling your faith is just as significant as sharing your faith.

**2. Listen without judgment.** Just as important as sharing with the mentee is listening to them. In doing this you can understand their struggles, hopes, dreams, and questions. They need to see that you are a "safe" person to share with.

**3. Be honest, gracious, candid, and straightforward.** Help facilitate an open, lively dialogue and give constructive feedback to your mentee. Say what the mentee needs to hear from you, not what he or she wants to hear from you. Whatever you share must be shared with an attitude of love and grace.

**4. Show love, compassion, and genuineness.** Convey your interest and desire to provide one-on-one help and guidance. Be selfless about sharing what you know, recognizing the level of faith your mentee is at. Do not expect a new Christian to be the same as a mature Christian.

**5. Motivate and inspire.** Support, validate, and encourage your mentee. There will be times when the mentee doesn't feel like they are making much progress, but this is where your words of en-

couragement are important to help them see they are making improvements on their journey. When you help link your mentee's own goals, values, and emotions to the kingdom of God and the mission of the church, the mentee becomes more engaged in ministry.

**6. Pray for your mentee.** Realize that as you mentor you are working in conjunction with the Holy Spirit. Jesus prayed for His disciples and for us (John 17), and Paul prayed for Titus, Timothy, and his other mentees. We need to do the same.

### **LEADERS MUST TEACH AND MODEL MENTORING**

Church leaders need to be the ones who teach, preach, and talk about mentoring every chance they get. To create a culture of mentoring, it must be in the forefront of every church member's mind. Leaders also need to model mentoring and share their experiences with the whole church family.

### **THE BOTTOM LINE OF MENTORING**

Mentoring is about taking the time, the effort, and the interest to be involved in the life of someone else. It is not reserved for the mature and seasoned believer; anyone can do it. Mentoring is not complicated, and it can happen naturally as people spend time together. The investment of time and energy in mentoring could very well have eternal consequences. ED

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