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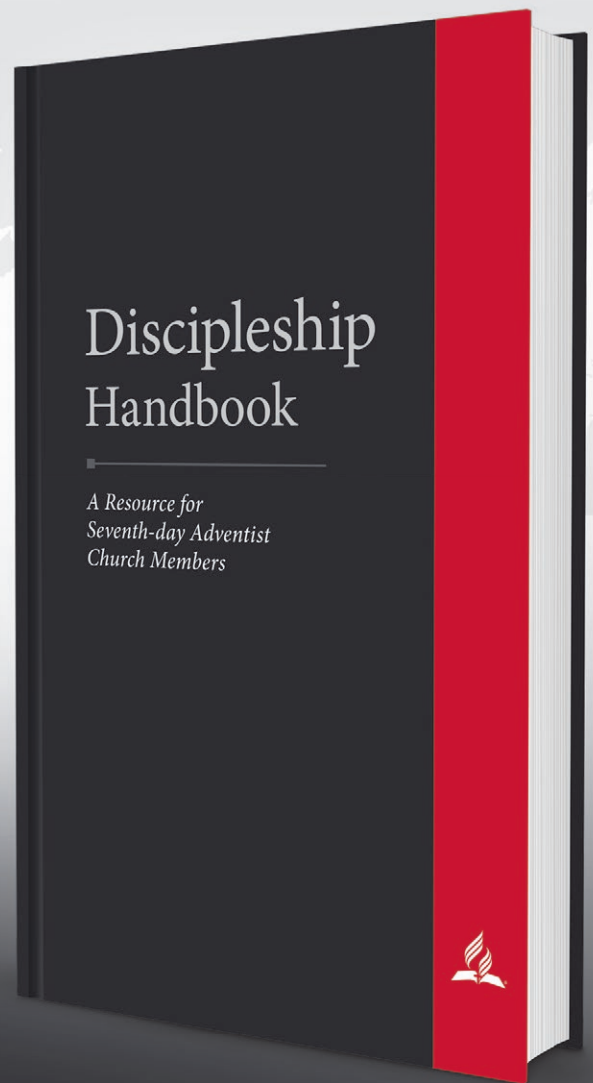
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Published by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Read by clergy of all faiths.

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MINISTRY®

International Journal for Pastors
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COVER

316 Creative

LAYOUT

316 Creative

SUBSCRIPTIONS

12 issues: United States US\$32.99; Canada and overseas US\$47.00. To order: send name, address, and payment to Ministry® Subscriptions, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600 USA. www.ministrymagazine.org/subscribe.

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Ministry® has been published monthly since 1928 by the Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®. Ministry is a peer-reviewed journal.

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PRINTER Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1350 N. Kings Rd., Nampa, ID 83687. Standard mail postage paid at Nampa, Idaho. (ISSN 0026-5314)

Member of Associated Church Press.

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Vol. 90, No. 12 © 2018

PRINTED IN THE USA.

www.ministrymagazine.org



"This continuation of a fine tradition of articulating balanced positions on diet and lifestyle on the scholarly (theological and scientific) level is contextually important in Seventh-day Adventism."

More prayer

Thank you for the excellent August 2018 issue of *Ministry*. I've taken the liberty of using part of your editorial (Pavel Goia, "People, programs—and prayer") in our Sabbath School. I also issued a challenge to those in attendance to invite people to come to our prayer meetings. By God's grace and power, we hope to see quite an increase. Our regular attendance to midweek prayer meeting is almost 20 percent of the attending membership of the church.

I was also very, very taken with the article by Elder Valley (Clinton Valley, "The making of a Christian leader"). I have copied this article in full to distribute to my elders, deacons, and deaconesses—they all need this counsel. Thanks again.

—Mervyn D. Jackson, senior elder, Stanthorpe
Seventh-day Adventist Church, Queensland,
Australia

More health

The lead article by Flavio Prestes III and Elmer Guzman, "Making the *Seventh-day Adventist International Bible Commentary*: An interview with Jacques B. Doukhan" (April 2018), is

an expertly done interview article with a profound, experienced Seventh-day Adventist professor-scholar. The winsome but weighty verbal exchanges between interviewers and interviewee enrich the reader intellectually and theologically and whet the appetite for the projected completion of the SDAIBC in 2020. It is to be hoped that the completed volumes of the SDAIBC will find their way into libraries of Seventh-day Adventist institutions of learning around the globe and that pastors and other church employees will have opportunity to acquire these nourishing volumes affordably, perhaps with book and equipment allowances.

It is refreshing to note the editorial intent to maintain the prioritizing of health in the SDAIBC that is evident in the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*. Witness the following statement by Doukhan: "That is why the Seventh-day Adventist faith . . . also concerns our lifestyle, the way we eat and drink and work, and the way we think and behave in this world." Responding to inquiry about his personal contribution of the first volume of the SDAIBC, commenting on Genesis,

Doukhan aptly makes mention of "the ideal of a plant-based diet (1:29, 30; 9:3), the distinction between clean and unclean meats (7:2, 3; 8:20)."

This continuation of a fine tradition of articulating balanced positions on diet and lifestyle on the scholarly (theological and scientific) level is contextually important in Seventh-day Adventism. There promises to be much to chew over pertaining to diet and wellness in a commentary endeavor spanning the entirety of Scripture, if the editorial perspectives will be tastefully followed through. Appropriate reference, properly corroborated by science, to matters affecting the personal well-being is one sure-footed approach to ensuring the relevance and practicality to all of a deep, scholarly work.

—John Tumpkin, district pastor, Cape Conference of
Seventh-day Adventists, Port Elizabeth, South Africa

Less Greek

In his article "It's all Greek to me" (Petronio Genebago, October 2018), the writer admirably extols the value of learning the original Biblical languages. However, as a former theology student who was ungifted in Greek, the only way I could possibly master them would be to almost drop all other studies including the more vital subjects such as the Word itself, the art of ministry and preaching. Alternatively, I could have sacrificed all family and free time. (God enabled me to become a pastor despite academic barriers imposed).

Let's get realistic and recognize that there are profound differences in spiritual gifts among ministers. To force Biblical languages upon students is like forcing all ministers to be expert writers or public evangelists.

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Jeffrey O. Brown, PhD, is associate secretary of the General Conference Ministerial Association and associate editor of *Ministry*.



No more whispers

On this 50th anniversary of Apollo 8, I am reminded of the story Dr. Dwight Nelson tells of Colonel Sanders, who said to his executive officer, “Tomorrow evening at approximately eight o’clock, Halley’s Comet will be visible in this area, an event which occurs only once every seventy-five years. Have the men fall out in the battalion area in fatigues, and I will explain this rare phenomenon to them. In case of rain, we shall not be able to see anything, so assemble the men in the theater, and I will show them films of it.” The officer sent a message to his company commander:

“By order of the colonel, tomorrow at eight o’clock Halley’s Comet will appear above the battalion area. If it rains, fall the men out in fatigues. Then march them to the theater, where the rare phenomenon will take place, an event which occurs only once every seventy-five years.” It then went to the lieutenant.

“By order of the Colonel in fatigues, at eight o’clock tomorrow evening the phenomenal Halley’s Comet will appear in the theater; in case of rain, in the battalion area. The colonel will give another order; something which occurs once every seventy-five years.” Then to the sergeant:

“Tomorrow, at eight o’clock, the colonel will appear in the theater with Halley’s Comet, something which happens every seventy-five years. If it rains, the colonel will order the comet into the battalion area.” The sergeant assembled his squad to give the final message:

“When it rains tomorrow at eight o’clock, the phenomenal seventy-five-year-old General Halley—accompanied by the colonel—will drive his comet through the battalion area in fatigues.”¹

They call it telephone whispers, but what happened to the original message?

Jesus desires that His children be united. Disunity will happen if we lose sight of the original message. The current *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* states, “Any attempt at understanding the nature of unity in the church must begin with God’s original plan at the Creation and then the need for restoration after the Fall.”²

The study guide continues, “Adam’s disobedience became the source of many events and consequences that over time affected all of God’s creation. The natural world itself began to suffer from the consequences of sin. Human relationships also were affected.”³ What happens when brokenness reaches the doorstep of the one called to bring the message of healing, yea, even the pastor? It is in our fallen state that whispers—distortions of the original message—proliferate.

So, what is the original message? “The central theme of the Bible, the theme about which every other in the whole book clusters, is the redemption plan, the restoration in the human soul of the image of God.”⁴ What is the original message? It is the everlasting gospel. And what is the everlasting gospel? “The very essence of the gospel is restoration.”⁵


We begin this issue with the marvel of Creation. We journey with pastors through the pain of the Fall. And we embrace with joy the grace of restoration.

The book of Malachi culminates the distortion of God’s original message; the book of Matthew commences the restoration of God’s original message. The old Elijah passes the message to the new Elijah.⁶ There is no more

Disunity will happen if we lose sight of the original message.

distortion. It is a heart-turning message. Indeed, “the restoration and uplifting of humanity begins in the home.”⁷

Malachi highlights the return of the curse, but Jesus highlights the reverse of the curse, the curse distorting labor and creating rulership.⁸ Men and women are restored to labor side by side in God’s kingdom, as He intended it. “No man or woman who is converted can be anything but a worker. There certainly is and ever will be employment in heaven. The redeemed will not live in a state of dreamy idleness. There remaineth a rest for the people of God—a rest which they will find in serving Him to whom they owe all they have and are.”⁹

Jesus prayed that this restoration, consummated in heaven, would begin on earth (Matt. 6:10). This is the original message. No more whispers. 

- 1 See “Communication Operation: Halley’s Comet,” last updated Sep. 5, 1999, courses.cs.vt.edu/cs3604/support/Speaking/Executive.Orders.html.
- 2 Denis Fortin, “Creation and Fall,” *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, study for September 29, 2018, absq.adventist.org/tml?code=ADLT4Q18WK01LESN.
- 3 Fortin, “Creation and Fall,” study for October 1, 2018.
- 4 Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1952), 125.
- 5 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), 824.
- 6 Luke 1:17; Mal. 4:5, 6.
- 7 Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1942), 349.
- 8 Gen. 3:16, 17; Matt. 20:1–16; Matt. 20:25–28.
- 9 Ellen G. White, *Our High Calling* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1961), 223.

Tell us what you think about this article. Email MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or visit www.facebook.com/MinistryMagazine.

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Our miraculous planet Earth

Fifty years ago, in December 1968, the Apollo 8 crew were the first human beings to orbit the Moon. As they flew over the Moon's desolate surface on Christmas Eve 1968, they were stunned to watch as a small ball of blue, white, and green rose up over the Moon's horizon. They were the first human beings to ever witness an earthrise! Excitedly scrambling for their cameras, they started clicking away. It was Bill Anders who took the famous *Earthrise* picture of our beautiful planet seen suspended in space beyond the surface of the Moon. It is one of the most famous space photos, described in *Life* magazine as "the most influential environmental photograph ever taken."¹

Years later, Anders told *The Guardian*, the Earth "is insignificant, but it's the only one we've got."² The Bible declares that the Earth is far from insignificant. Indeed, says the psalmist, "I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well" (Ps. 139:14).³ Science also affirms that planet Earth is rare because it provides a livable home for living organisms. Several characteristics make Earth special:

- *Location in the Milky Way galaxy:* Our solar system is located at a safe enough distance from the intense radiation that exists in both the Galactic Center and

the spiral arms of the Milky Way galaxy.

- *Distance from the Sun:* Our planet Earth is located in a special zone at the right distance from the Sun, in a region in the solar system known as the Goldilocks Zone. It is neither too hot nor too cold—the temperature is just right!
- *Big protective neighbors:* In the solar system, the Earth is protected by two giant gas neighbors, Jupiter and Saturn, which draw dangerous asteroids toward themselves by their significantly larger gravity. This gives Earth a relatively safe and collision-free flight through space.
- *Large Moon:* The Earth is unique in the solar system because it is orbited by a single large, natural satellite, called the Moon. The Moon regulates the tides in the oceans, which refresh the water systems on Earth.

All of these scientific discoveries confirm that our planet is uniquely, even miraculously, situated to be able to support intelligent life, such as humans.

Divergence on the timing of the creation of planet Earth

While the discoveries of science are consistent with the biblical teaching that God intentionally designed our planet to support life, science has

arrived at significantly more divergent conclusions to historical Christian interpretations of Genesis with regard to the age of Earth. Over the last 250 years, science has rapidly increased its calculation of the age of Earth to arrive at 4.54 billion years. This is a substantial departure from, for example, Martin Luther's teaching that God created our planet at the commencement of a literal six-day Creation week about 6,000 years ago.

This article explores the Bible's teaching on God's wonderful creation and examines whether our miraculous planet Earth was created relatively recently or some time before the Creation week got underway. To do so, we will evaluate two key assumptions that are often made regarding Genesis 1.

Does "the heavens and the earth" refer to the entire universe?

Many evangelical Christians believe that Genesis 1:1 refers to the creation of the universe because the phrase "the heavens and the earth" is a merism.⁴ However, a merism does not refer to literally everything. Genesis 1 uses another merism, "And there was evening and there was morning" (v. 5), to refer to an entire day during the Creation week.⁵ This merism only refers to a finite period of time and not to eternity past all the way through to eternity future.

The same is true for the merism "the heavens and the earth." Many scholars

recognize that in Exodus 20:11 this merism is not referring to the entire created order. In Revelation 21, when John saw “a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away” (v. 1), it does not mean that God will destroy everything! Righteous angels and saved human

the foundation of the earth? . . . When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Job 38:4a, 7). Here God indicates there were created beings in existence at the point when planet Earth was created.⁶ So the Genesis text “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”

‘Let there be . . .’” and finishes with the phrase “And there was evening and there was morning, the *n*th day.” Thus, it is natural to expect that the pattern holds for day 1 as well, and day 1 commences in Genesis 1:3.

C. John Collins points out that there is a transition to *wayyiqtol* verb forms in



beings will make the transition into the new world. Thus, the phrase “the heavens and the earth” is not necessarily referring to the entire universe.

Also, the New Testament clarifies that “the heavens and the earth” is not referring to just the creation of Earth’s atmosphere and reshaping its land. Quoting Psalm 2, Hebrews sharpens the timing of the creation of planet Earth. The author writes, “You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands” (Heb. 1:10). Thus, Hebrews confirms that Genesis 1:1 is referring to the creation ex nihilo of planet Earth.

When God interrogated Job, He asked, “Where were you when I laid

(1:1) does not have to refer to the entire universe but may simply refer to our planet Earth and a subspace surrounding it, including at least planet Earth, the Sun and the Moon, and probably the Milky Way galaxy.⁷ This can be identified as our human cosmos.⁸ Importantly, the Bible does not specify where the exact cosmological boundaries for this subspace lie.

When does day 1 commence in Genesis 1?

The claim that day 1 commences in Genesis 1:3 when God says, “Let there be light” is based on the consistent pattern for days 2–5. Each of those days begins with the phrase “And God said,

Genesis 1:3.⁹ In Hebrew, this transition indicates the point at which the main story line starts. Collins concludes that day 1 begins at this point.

This conclusion is undermined by the second Creation account in chapter 2. In this second account, the transition to *wayyiqtol* verb forms occurs at Genesis 2:7 when it says “then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.” However, this transition point does not signify the commencement of day 6 of the Creation week. It is most likely that the Lord God created Adam sometime *during* day 6, not at the commencement of the day. Thus, the

commencement of the main story line in Genesis 1:3 should not be automatically aligned with the commencement of day 1 either.

A study of all of the divine creative commands in Genesis 1 reveals the following pattern:

Day number	Divine command frequency
Day 1	1: v. 3
Day 2	1: v. 6
Day 3	2: vv. 9, 11
Day 4	1: v. 14
Day 5	1: v. 20
Day 6	2: vv. 24, 26
Day 7	0

There are two divine creative commands on the third and sixth days of the Creation week, and there are none recorded during the inaugural

Sabbath. Importantly, each divine creative command does not usher in a new day, and there is at least one day that does not commence with a divine creative command. The pattern of divine creative commands actually points to the fact that these commands initiate a new phase of divine activity *during* a particular day of the Creation week rather than signaling the *commencement* of the actual day itself. The divine creative command “Let there be light” may therefore signify a new phase of divine creative work *during* the first day, and not necessarily the commencement of day 1 itself.

Significantly, there is an exegetical link between Genesis 1:2 and verses 3–5 based on the Hebrew words for “darkness” (*hōšek*) and “light” (*’ôr*), which forms an inverted double chiasm (see table 1).

This inverted double chiasm, a tightly coupled literary structure, strongly suggests that Genesis 1:2 is actually describing Earth during the evening period of day 1 and not the state of Earth prior to the Creation

week.¹⁰ Thus verse 3 inaugurates the commencement of the morning period of day 1.

Further significant exegetical evidence that the author includes in Genesis 1:1, 2 within the Creation week occurs when we arrive at the conclusion of the Creation week. It does not refer back to the point when God said “Let there be light” but rather to Genesis 1:1 using a chiasmic inclusio (table 2).

This exegetical connection between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 2:1 is confirmed in Exodus (table 3).

This leads me to believe that the passage gives exegetical evidence that the Creation week commences in Genesis 1:1 rather than in Genesis 1:3.

Exegetical conclusion

The conclusion that may be drawn from this exegetical evidence is that Genesis 1:1–31 describes the creation *ex nihilo* of our planet Earth and its subspace in six literal days. This means that our planet appears to have been created at the commencement of the

TABLE 1

	First night	First day
Biblical introduction	A: “The earth was without form and void, and darkness [<i>hōšek</i>] was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:2).	
		B: “And God said, ‘Let there be light [<i>’ôr</i>],’ and there was light. And God saw that the light was good” (vv. 3, 4a).
Divine separation		B’: “And God separated the light [<i>’ôr</i>]
	A’: “from the darkness [<i>hōšek</i>]” (v. 4b).	
Divine naming		B’’: “God called the light [<i>’ôr</i>] Day
	A’’: “and the darkness [<i>hōšek</i>] he called Night” (v. 5a).	
Chronological definition	A’’’: “And there was evening	
		B’’’: “and there was morning
Chronological unit	“the first day” (v. 5b).	

TABLE 2

Biblical reference	Temporal point	Creative space
Genesis 1:1a	A: "In the beginning, God created	
Genesis 1:1b		B: "the heavens and the earth."
Genesis 2:1a		B': "Thus the heavens and the earth
Genesis 2:1b	A': "were finished [being created by God]."	

Creation week. This would make it as young as biological life and the Sabbath itself.¹¹

Addressing common scientific claims

But what about common scientific claims that the universe is 13.8 billion years old and that planet Earth is 4.5 billion years old? These claims raise two concerns:

1. *Scientific underdetermination.* For all of the evidence that we have available, a number of models can be used to explain the evidence.¹² In particular, one viable explanation is that

God miraculously created our planet Earth and its subspace fairly recently, and scientific underdetermination means that the scientific evidence itself cannot be used to eliminate this possibility.

2. *Methodological naturalism.* Secular scientists rule out the possibility that God recently created planet Earth and its subspace, not necessarily because of scientific evidence but because often there is a commitment to methodological naturalism. This means they intentionally exclude supernatural, miraculous explanations within science.¹³ However, this has not proved that God did not miraculously

create our planet and its subspace recently. Stephen Dilley asserts that it is logically incoherent to believe that methodological naturalism, and therefore science itself, has proved that God has never performed supernatural miracles.¹⁴ It may also be logically incoherent to believe that science has proved that God did not recently create ex nihilo our planet Earth and its subspace.

Christians have objected that God would be deceptive if He created our planet Earth and its subspace recently, yet from scientific calculations, it appears to be old. However,

TABLE 3

Time period	Creation account Genesis 1:1–2:3 (ESV)	Decalogue summary Exodus 20:11 (NASB)	Reiteration of Sabbath covenant Exodus 31:17b (NET)
Six days	"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1).	"For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth,	"For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth,
	<i>Detailed account of Creation</i> (vv. 2–31).	"the sea and all that is in them,	
	"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them" (Gen. 2:1).		
Seventh day	"And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation" (vv. 2, 3).	"and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy."	"and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed."

it is important to note that this is a theological objection and not a scientific objection. God could have had a legitimate reason for creating planet Earth and its subspace recently, even if we are not aware of this reason. As the analytic philosopher Alvin Plantinga wrote regarding miraculous actions of God: "It's not as if, if he has a reason, we'd be the first to know. His options and possibilities are far beyond our ken; his ways are 'past finding out'; we can hardly expect to come up with a 'rock-solid criterion' underlying God's decisions to act."¹⁵


With regard to scientific dating, the models often employed assume that planet Earth and its subspace have been upheld according to the geological and astrophysical laws that we currently observe. The age of Earth is then calculated based on this assumption. In reality, current scientific conclusions regarding the age of Earth do not undermine the biblical

conclusion that, in the fairly recent past, Earth and our human cosmos were supernaturally and miraculously created.

Paradise lost and restored

While Bill Anders and his fellow Apollo 8 crew members may have been amazed to see our planet Earth rising above the horizon of the Moon, it would have been nothing compared to the primordial thrill that the angels experienced when they saw planet Earth coming forth, freshly and miraculously minted from the hand of God. It certainly would have been a dazzling sight—that small ball of blue, white, and green. The greater thrill, though, would have come from perceiving the finely balanced eco-harmony that God had crafted into this world so that this could be the exquisite home of the sons and daughters who were made in the image of God. Residing in the

midst of a palatial garden were Adam and Eve, the stately and intelligent coregents of this amazing world. Yet, it wouldn't take long before the long dark shadow of Satan started to creep over and eclipse the radiant beauty of Earth. Not only did he cast his diabolical shadow over the physical beauty of our planet but he also obscured our relationships with our Creator, one another, and nature itself. Thorns and thistles appeared, together with relationship pain and disparities.

However, in spite of the fact that it was our human choice to permit Satan's sinister shadow to shroud our world, God in His incredible love and foresight had already developed a vision to restore this beautiful world, a new heaven and a new earth where there is no more mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, in which the former things have passed away. Imagine seeing that world rise miraculously from the ashes! 

1 "Apollo Astronaut Shares Story of NASA's Earthrise Photo," NASA, Mar. 29, 2012, nasa.gov/centers/johnson/home/earthrise.html.

2 Juliette Jowit, "How Astronauts Went to the Moon and Ended Up Discovering Planet Earth," *Guardian*, Dec. 19, 2008, theguardian.com/science/2008/dec/20/space-exploration-usa-earth-moon.

3 Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version of the Bible.

4 A merism is a literary device that uses two words to refer to the entirety of that region. (Example, "We searched high and low.")

5 "The use of the words 'evening' and 'morning' is a merism that points to the extremities of the day to denote its totality." Jacques Doukhan, ed., *Genesis: Seventh-day Adventist International Bible Commentary* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2016), 54, 55.

6 See also Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), 35–42.

7 Niels-Erik Andreasen suggests that Genesis 1:1 is referring to at least our solar system. See Niels-Erik Andreasen, "The Word 'Earth' in Genesis 1:1," *Origins* 8, no. 1 (1981), 13–19, grisa.org/origins-08013.

8 Jacques Doukhan, "The Genesis Creation Story: Text, Issues, and Truth," *Origins* 55 (2004), 12–33, grisa.org/origins-55012.pdf. This is also the conclusion of

Ferdinand Regalado. "The Creation Account in Genesis 1: Our World Only or the Universe?" *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 13, no. 2 (Autumn 2002): 108–120, atsjats.org/publication/view/54.

9 C. John Collins, *Genesis 1–4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub., 2005), 42, 43.

10 Jacques Doukhan remarks that this "theory has been called 'gap theory.' It suggests that Genesis 1:1 refers to this pre-creation, then v. 2 describes the world empty and void for billions of years (gap), and then v. 3 starts the new creation, formation, furnishing of this empty space for one week. From my perspective, this whole idea of 'gap theory' raises serious philosophical/theological problems and more importantly cannot seriously be defended exegetically." He goes on to conclude, "It is clear to me then that the biblical text does not imply any kind of gap theory." Doukhan, "The Genesis Creation Story," 29, 31.

11 There is inference that planet Earth and the Sabbath were created at the same time. See also Ellen White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1950), 454.

12 For deeper discussions of the issue of underdetermination with respect to cosmological models, refer to Jeremy Butterfield, "On Under-Determination in Cosmology," *Studies in*

History and Philosophy of Modern Physics 46 (2014): 57–69, arxiv.org/abs/1406.4747. For underdetermination in paleontology, refer to Patrick Forber and Eric Griffith, "Historical Reconstruction: Gaining Epistemic Access to the Deep Past," *Philosophy, Theory, and Practice in Biology* 3, (August 2011), philsci-archive.pitt.edu/10743/1/historical-reconstruction-gaining-epistemic-access.pdf.

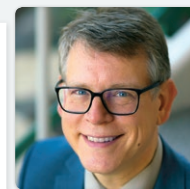
13 For logical issues regarding methodological naturalism, refer to Alvin Plantinga, "Methodological Naturalism?," in *Intelligent Design Creationism and Its Critics: Philosophical, Theological, and Scientific Perspectives*, ed. Robert T. Pennock (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 339–361, and Stephen C. Meyer and Paul A. Nelson, "Should Theistic Evolution Depend on Methodological Naturalism?," in *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique*, ed. J. P. Moreland et al. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 562–592.

14 Stephen C. Dille, "Philosophical Naturalism and Methodological Naturalism: Strange Bedfellows?," *Philosophia Christi* 12, no. 1. (2010): 128, academia.edu/8660069/Philosophical_Naturalism_and_Methodological_Naturalism_Strange_Bedfellows.

15 Alvin Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 102.

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Dealing with suffering and loss

How can one explain what, indeed, cannot be explained? How do you describe love to someone who has never fallen in love? It seems that the most beautiful and the most painful experiences in life cannot adequately be described with words. Every significant suffering and loss is unique. And every person experiences them differently.

I cannot provide an answer to every case of suffering. But I can share a small part of my own life story, hoping that it might be an encouragement to others who face their own challenges and help them find their own way in dealing with suffering and death.

The loss of Ulrike

I was blessed with a happy childhood and parents who believed in God and authentically practiced their faith. Though facing my own questions about God and faith, for many years I was never confronted with severe suffering or the death of someone near me even though I knew that this unattractive side of life existed. Yes, it is possible to talk about death and suffering in an abstract and theoretical manner. But when you are personally affected by it, your perspective changes drastically.

In 2009, my wife died. Ulrike was only 43 years old when diagnosed with an aggressive form of breast cancer. She had such a bright future and was, still, very much needed. After fulfilling

years as mother to our three sons and a homemaker, she had just begun to work again as an elementary teacher, a profession she loved. As a teacher, she was not only successful but also appreciated by the children and respected by her peers.

We tried everything to bring healing. My wife was exemplarily consistent in her healthy lifestyle. She was positive and hopeful in her spiritual walk with God. We supported her as well as we could. We prayed. Ulrike asked for a special anointing twice, once at the beginning of her sickness and, again, toward the end.

But less than a year after the diagnosis, she died. Those who knew her can testify that she was an amazing example of faithfulness and had unwavering trust in the Lord. When she died, she was at peace with herself and with God. For her, death was a release from suffering; for us, the suffering had just begun.

The loss of Ulrike robbed my children and myself of experiences that cannot be shared with her, such as our oldest son's recent marriage. She will never have the joy of holding a grandchild in her arms. We miss her counsel and support. This loss is extremely painful, and it cannot be compensated for—with anything.

Time, supposedly, heals all wounds. Time does not heal all wounds. Time itself can be the wound. Even though the initial pain of her loss has grown

less intense with time, time also causes more and more memories of her to fade away, and so her absence remains a sore spot in our lives.

The “why” questions

The issue of pain and suffering raises difficult questions about God and faith. The doubt that suffering initiates even has the potential to destroy faith. After losing Ulrike, platitudes and traditional answers no longer made sense to us.

Meanwhile, we were confronted with those pertinacious “why” questions. Not only the question “Why did this happen to us?” but also “Why should this happen only to others and not to us?” Or, “Why should sickness, suffering, and death only affect others and not us?” After all, we live in a sinful and imperfect world, and, therefore, even Christians are not exempt.

If people follow God only to be spared from suffering and death, they will be sorely disappointed. Even when facing adversity and suffering, we have to learn to live our lives in such a way that others will not doubt the love of God. Instead, they will see the hope that we, despite our suffering, possess—and perhaps they, too, might develop the desire to trust for themselves this God whom we confess.

Some questions cannot be explained theoretically but need to be *lived* in such a way that our faith in God's goodness and grace becomes

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visible. God certainly has no pleasure in our sickness and death. Only the devil enjoys it when we are sick and suffer or even face a shipwreck of faith when confronted with severe hardship. But our family firmly decided not to grant the devil this pleasure.

The hard choices

To suffer is difficult enough. But to suffer without meaning is unbearable. And yet we often experience painful things that, yes, seem meaningless. The strong temptation is, then, to find some meaning in what, otherwise, appears meaningless. But we have to learn to live with such open questions. That is, we need to trust in God and His goodness despite the unanswered questions and the apparent meaninglessness that can make our suffering even worse. Although I do not see any meaning in my wife's death, I want to learn to live so that it is evident that I trust God anyway.

In difficult times, one often hopes that circumstances will change. We desperately wait for those changes. But in doing so, we focus only on our difficulties and obstacles. We start to compare ourselves with others and envy those who seemingly suffer less or fare better than we do. But, in so doing, we actually focus only on ourselves rather than on God, who alone is the foundation and surety of our hope.

After my wife's death, I had a decision to make: Do I allow my impatience and doubts to invade my life and thus question God's goodness? Or, can I start seeing in the challenges of life unique opportunities that can help me become the person who God wants me to be, and who I would not be otherwise?

Am I really willing to accept the loss of my wife as part of my existence? This was something I had not wished for myself. This was not how I had envisioned the second half of my life. This was not planned, this was not my fault, and this surely is not what I had wanted. And, yet—it is now part of my life. It has become part of my biography, my very identity.

More important than what is happening to me is how I respond to what is happening to me. It was tempting to remain in an illusory state of mind, a make-believe world, in which I would not allow the reality of her loss to really be part of my life. It seemed far easier to repress that painful reality. Only when I had the courage to confront the mechanisms of my denial and honestly face the painful reality of her absence—with all its ugly implications—was I able to cautiously order my everyday life anew. When I gave up my inner resistance against accepting the new reality, I had to cry, and yet, at the same time, it was as if a heavy load was lifted off my shoulders. It was as if God gave me wings to help me soar like the eagles once more.

Longing for God

My acceptance of Ulrike's death, of course, still left many questions unanswered. It was, rather, a step in a learning process that I assume will last the rest of my life. Some of the practical things that have tremendously helped me cope with this loss and stay spiritually sane and joyful I have expressed in a book, *Longing for God*.^{*} Especially helpful to me is the simple exercise of developing an attitude of gratitude. Also, learning to meaningfully pray for others has opened up new horizons in my own personal walk with God.

Of course, as a single parent and a man, I have needs and longings that cannot be easily stilled. The temptation is great to pursue a path that might bring quick pleasure but no lasting satisfaction and happiness. But this is not God's will, I know. Instead, I have learned—and I am still learning—what it means to trust God day by day and to live by faith.

I might say I live by faith, but that will not be true if I fabricate the solution to my problems on my own terms. I need to learn to trust God and His truly amazing grace in every area of my life, even if I do not see how He will ever be able to meet my needs, at least humanly speaking. But then God has a thousand ways to help of which I know nothing (cf. Jer. 33:3).

I have learned that to trust God and His grace and goodness, to be connected with Him—this is what really counts. What resonates with this experience is an inner longing of the soul. *Longing*, to me, is a remarkably delightful word. Never are humans more human, it seems, than when we are longing for someone or something. Full of expectation. A sparkle in our eyes. *Longing* is a word that leads us out of a narrow mind-set and a dry spirit of ritual performance. Things that happen out of a deep longing are happening with the authority of the heart. In our longing, the whole human being is involved.

Longing is something you cannot command to happen. Rather, it grows and blossoms in the soil of love: it is free and never forced. The person who longs is not satisfied with things as they are but tries to change things for the better and, in the meantime, lives a life of faith by God's grace alone, even amid pain and suffering.

As such, I long to see the day when Jesus comes again, when God's great love will ultimately prove stronger than even death and He will resurrect those who have trusted in Him—including my dear wife, Ulrike. 🙏

^{*} Frank M. Hasel, *Longing for God: A Bible-Prayer Journal* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2017).

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Vigilance and freedom:

An interview with Bernie Anderson regarding pornography¹

Wellington Barbosa (WB): Welcome, Pastor Anderson. How did you come into contact with pornography?

Bernie Anderson² (BA): I stumbled across pornography at the age of nine while visiting the home of a family member. It was pretty captivating in that first encounter, and I remember thinking that I wanted to return to that closet where I found it another time. I wasn't really sure what it was; but it was powerful, and I lingered even though I felt like I probably shouldn't be looking at it.

WB: What were your thoughts when going into the ministry about being addicted to pornography?

BA: There had been an ongoing spiritual conflict since I had been exposed at nine. This sense of conflict and internal spiritual inconsistency always lingered in my soul. So even as I entered pastoral ministry, I had a deep sense that I was unworthy and constantly sought God for forgiveness of my secret sin and failure. I also felt that if I could work hard, it might, in some ways, make up

for my secret sin. I constantly begged God for forgiveness and for Him to "take it away!" I especially felt terrible when preparing for a Sabbath morning message, so I was very intentional about pleading with God for cleansing and forgiveness before preaching.

WB: At what point did you decide to tell your family about the problem you were facing? How did it come about?

BA: Well, I never told my wife. I was caught. In fact, I really never wanted my wife or anyone else to ever know about my dark secret. That was one of my major fears because I was concerned about what people would think. And it was embarrassing and shameful. I thought for sure I was the only pastor who had this struggle. Not to mention that my name was pretty well known since I had appeared on Net '98 with Dwight Nelson. But my wife discovered porn on the computer after I forgot to erase my internet history. Then, unfortunately, things only got worse. After she confronted me I was sorry—but only sorry I got caught, not sorry enough to pursue real change.

WB: How did your family and church help you overcome your addiction?

BA: My wife especially has been very straight with me. She confronted me and was a constant source of truth for me. She was a reality check! She literally screamed through her tears at me one time, "Do you want to lose this?" Much was at stake, and I didn't even realize what I could lose. My churches at the time were incredibly gracious toward me! They were patient with me even as the local and national media picked up the story. I am forever grateful to those churches as they demonstrated true forgiveness and love toward me.

WB: How did your recovery and healing take place?

BA: Once I confessed to a dear friend, things really began to open up for me. I began reading as many books as I could get my hands on regarding the issue. Then I attended an "Every Man's Battle" intensive in Dallas, Texas. It was truly a life-changing event for me. I felt empowered, educated, and equipped to begin the recovery journey. Then

it was simply a matter of continuing to “work the program,” and that is essentially what I continue to do today. Part of what I consider my program is engaging in a small recovery group, guarding what I watch on TV as well as in movies. I also limit just how much

where there can be an openness and transparency in order to seek healing and wholeness.

WB: Did your book influence other ministers to seek help and fight pornography?

media (especially social media) are important, along with truly practicing Sabbath rest. Nurturing intimacy (both physical and emotional) within your marriage is absolutely essential as well. And, on a practical level, you should install accountability software on all of your devices, along with making sure your wife and/or accountability partner has all of your passwords and credentials to email accounts, as well as social media accounts. I like to tell pastors you should never be completely anonymous when online. You should make sure that someone is always aware of what you’re doing and where you’re going online.

WB: What advice would you give to our readers who are experiencing this problem?

BA: God’s grace is available to you too! Just know that you’re not alone and that getting free will require some level of disclosure. This will be very difficult, but it is truly part of the journey to healing and wholeness. This is such a huge problem; but the good news is there are so many resources available for you to use. The most significant thing you can do is to prayerfully and humbly seek God and pray for the courage to pursue help and find freedom and restoration. 🙏

Bernie Anderson

time I spend online in general. But really the healing has come over time with my understanding of God’s incredible grace and my (and I believe everyone’s) absolute need for legitimate intimacy through my relationship with my wife and friends.

WB: What inspired you to write a book telling your story? Were you afraid?

BA: I came to realize what I had kind of suspected all along, and that was that many others struggled in the same way, including other pastors and church members. I wanted to write and break the ice, so to speak, on a taboo subject. I wanted to share my story and be transparent about my personal struggle in hopes of encouraging others to seek help and break free. I imagined that if an Adventist pastor could open up about it, then surely it would provide a way for members to address their own issues. I believe the church should be the type of place

BA: From what I understand, yes. I have had so many reach out to me over the years, and it’s been powerful and encouraging to me. In fact, there doesn’t seem to be a week that goes by that I don’t hear from someone seeking help and support to break free.

WB: Given the many enticements in the virtual world, what tips can you offer ministers to not fall into the trap of pornography?

BA: It’s so important for us as pastors to be aware of our own vulnerabilities. And, to a certain extent, the temptation to act out sexually online is particularly enticing to pastors. We should always have another pastor or friend we can be completely honest with and who will hold us accountable. Be in a group if possible. Also, remember the acronym *HALT*, which means to be aware of when you are Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired. All of these are inherent to the nature of our work as pastors. Regular fasts from

- 1 A version of this interview was first published in the January/February 2018 issue of *Ministério*, a sister publication to *Ministry* published by the South American Division.
- 2 Bernie Anderson is the teaching pastor for a young adult gathering called The Bridge at the Forest Lake Church near Orlando, Florida. He is author of the book *Breaking the Silence: A Pastor Goes Public About His Battle With Pornography* (Hagerstown, MD: Autumn House, 2007). God brought about a powerful transformation in his life by breaking a longtime secret addiction to pornography while he served in full-time pastoral ministry. Prompted by a desire to help others and call attention to porn’s devastating impact, Pastor Anderson continues to openly share his story. He is a known speaker on the problem of pornography and travels regularly to speak to groups in the United States and abroad. He has appeared on Fox News and World News Tonight and has been interviewed by the Associated Press, *Newsweek* magazine, and Focus on the Family. He is married, and he and his wife are raising three daughters.

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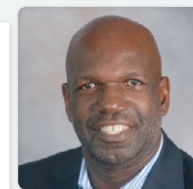
“And this is eternal life,
that they may know
You, the only true God,
and Jesus Christ whom
You have sent.”

JOHN 17:3, NKJV

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Managing ministry's main menace—ego

A patient whined to his doctor of excruciating pain all over his body. He immediately winced when he did what the doctor asked and patted his head, grimaced when touching his ankle, and finally cried, “Ouch!” when tapping his shoulder. “Your pain problem is neither in your head, your ankle, nor your shoulder,” the doctor revealed. “You have a dislocated finger, and everything that dislocated finger touches causes pain.”

Too often, you and I become that well-intentioned but dislocated finger, inflicting pain on everything that we touch—our families, churches, ministries, and even our new members. Our egos represent that finger, originally created by God but dislocated by sin.

God's masterful creation

Like alcoholism, ego-holism is the addiction—an addiction to self, defined as “thinking too highly of ourselves, and/or thinking too little of our God, and then acting excessively upon those impulses.”¹ The mother of all addictions, ego-holism preceded planet Earth and humankind, actually having its beginning, of all places, in heaven.

All addictions arise from one's reaction to one's sense of self, which dictionaries define as “ego.” Lucifer became the first being who reacted unfavorably to his sense of self, and his boast was met with an unfavorable

end: “ ‘I'll climb to the top of the clouds. I'll take over as King of the Universe!’ But you didn't make it, did you? Instead of climbing up, you came down” (Isa. 14:14–17, *The Message*).

Unemployed and homeless, Lucifer-turned-Satan then polluted Adam and Eve; and now, you and I always feel incomplete. And, indeed, this is the way that God would have it. Ellen White states, “The same divine mind that is working upon the things of nature is speaking to the hearts of men and creating an inexpressible craving for something they have not. The things of the world cannot satisfy their longing. The Spirit of God is pleading with them to seek for those things that alone can give peace and rest—the grace of Christ, the joy of holiness. . . .

“You who in heart long for something better than this world can give, recognize this longing as the voice of God to your soul.”² Tim LaHaye affirms, “Most miserable or depressed people are not conscious of the fact that their misery emanates from the God-vacuum within them.”³

God created our first parents perfect and then equipped them with a natural inclination for partnering with Him, the Source of perfection. After the Fall, He made them sense their incompleteness without Him.

As a recovering ego-holic, I have experienced repeatedly that God never fills our voids of incompleteness

without first gaining our permission or cooperation to do so. He then partners with us to fill the voids in our lives—but only in direct proportion to our faith in Him. Sometimes we supply too much of ourselves (big ego-holism). Pro Football Hall of Fame coach Bill Walsh declared, “Self-confidence becomes arrogance, assertiveness becomes obstinacy, and self-assurance becomes reckless abandon.”⁴ At other times, we dispense too little of ourselves (little ego-holism).

Ego-holism surfaces when we attempt to fill our voids without God. Most unkind, self-destructive, unwise, or sinful behavior arises from a desperate desire to make ourselves feel better about ourselves. To some degree, we are all broken people trying to make ourselves whole, to bolster our self-esteem, not hate ourselves—even when the ways that we try are deleterious to ourselves.

Once we own our incompleteness or inadequacy, we should team with God for completeness. Ellen White affirms, “The Lord can do nothing toward the recovery of man until, convinced of his own weakness, and stripped of all self-sufficiency, he yields himself to the control of God. Then he can receive the gift that God is waiting to bestow. From the soul that feels his need, nothing is withheld. He has unrestricted access to Him in whom all fullness dwells.”⁵

My dramatic fall

Like the prodigal son, I, a 14-year-old prodigy in public speaking and writing, begged my parents to let me “take my God-gifts to a larger, more appreciative arena.” Reluctantly, they allowed me to pursue public school my sophomore year in high school; later, I accepted a scholarship to Virginia’s Hampton Institute—even as my family relocated to Oakwood College—eventually breaking the first and second of a threefold cord (Christian home, Christian school, and church. See Eccl. 4:12).

Self-estranged, my big and little egos went through many stages in college. I became the newspaper managing editor, president of the English Club and, ultimately, the president of the student body. I pledged myself to the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity and later twice became its highest-ranking collegiate officer on the East Coast. I parlayed God’s gifts into coveted trophies unavailable through Adventist schools: a 1975 *Essence* magazine modeling debut, two Massachusetts state oratorical championships, and entry-level account executive employment at one of the world’s largest public relations agencies (twice).

Meanwhile, a lack of discipline caused my academic grades to take a dramatic nosedive. My grades were not the only things that fell. I pinpointed my near-fatal flaw: my non-faith-based education and employment were all egocentric. Instead of seeking Christ first and all other things being added, I centered primarily on developing, improving, and esteeming self. Prematurely leaving the godly environment of both home and faith-based schools affected my intellectual growth and stunted my spiritual growth. It started me on an almost-imperceptible descent into ego-holism—my addiction to self. It might have been different for me if I had paid attention to the following:

1. *Own your problem.* Second Samuel 12 chronicles Nathan’s object lesson of a rich man besting a poor one, a story that angered King David. Nathan’s

confronting the king on his Bathsheba affair/pregnancy and the subsequent murder of her husband Uriah illustrates what I have termed the TOP strategy: Nathan targeted David’s problem, declaring, “You are the man!” (verse 7, NKJV). David owned his problem, confessing, “I have sinned against the Lord” (verse 13, NKJV). God pardoned David, canceling David’s self-mandated execution yet pronouncing death to David and Bathsheba’s unborn son. The first step toward restoration from ego-holism is to own it as your problem.

2. *Manage your problem.* Our inclinations and tendencies may be altered by God; but if not, your preference does not have to become your practice. When God explained to Paul His refusal to remove the thorn in his flesh, the apostle then understood and even endorsed the pain, declaring, “I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:7–10, NKJV).

Big or little ego-holisms may not be cured or eliminated; but they can be managed through our partnership with God. Like mowing your lawn or cutting your hair, a once-and-for-all effort will not address recurring growth. Only the regular maintenance through teaming with God can be effective. When we give our will to Christ to manage our God-permitted thorns, we graduate from pursuing our careers to fulfilling God’s calling.

3. *Own your calling.* As when God commanded the Israelites, “You have traveled around these mountains long enough. Turn north” (Deut. 2:3, ERV), God waited for me to cease my career wanderings to now own my calling. Michael Novak’s *Business as a Calling* cites four characteristics of a calling:

a. “A calling is *unique to each individual*”—I was only now beginning to realize what God was calling me to.

b. “A calling requires *certain preconditions*,” including *desire and talent*—I realized that early nurturing (speaking

in public since the age of three (thank you Cradle Roll, Kindergarten, and Primary Sabbath School teachers!) and later training (over three decades as a marketer and publicist) had unwittingly paved the way for my call.

c. “A true calling reveals its presence by the enjoyment and sense of renewed energies its practice yields.” Daredevil legend Karl Wallenda’s mantra, “Being on a tightrope is living; everything else is waiting,” captures and capsulizes what has now guided my ministry through presentations, sermons, keynotes, and writing.

d. Callings “are not easy to discover. Frequently, many false paths are taken before the satisfying path is at last discovered. Experiments, painful setbacks, false hopes, discernment, prayer, and much patience are often required before the light turns on.”¹⁶

My setbacks were a setup for a comeback.

God’s incredible restoration

On the outside, I appeared to be successful in my career, yet I was never totally fulfilled, and things were rapidly falling apart. When a business client fired me after only six weeks, I knew that I had hit rock bottom. “Tim, you needed help, and you knew it. And yet, you wouldn’t ask for our help,” explained this client during our exit meeting. “Firing you is one of the best things that can happen to you as a new entrepreneur. Talent is not your problem.” Talent was not my problem in that I had talent; but talent, indeed, was my problem—and is a problem that can creep up even on pastors.

Satan relentlessly targets those who profess God. In *Carlyle B. Haynes Speaks to Young Ministers*, Haynes declared, “It is easy for men to believe that being in this holy profession and giving themselves and their time to the things of God will somehow immunize them against temptation and sin. You are not, I hope, among those who so believe. No man in any station or profession is in greater peril of moral ruin than the Christian minister. Pitfalls

and snares are prepared for him at all times and on every side, even while he is engaged in the holy duties of his high calling. Principalities of evil pursue him as they pursue no other.”⁷

Ministers and ministry leaders are wired and trained to solve problems. We are institutionally empowered, educationally equipped, and spiritually anointed; but we are not divinely appointed to tackle problems as solo ventures. The lone ranger approach is common for many, yet it is the root cause of our ego problems. We are drained and damaged equally by big and little egos. Only God knows how to combine the exact calibrations of Himself and ourselves for every situation. This is needed because Satan attacks God’s unwitting servants. I should have learned from the rise and fall of Canright.

Dudley M. Canright was one of the most eloquent preachers the Seventh-day Adventist Church has ever produced. His friend, Drury W. Reavis, says, “He had more invitations than he could possibly accept; so he selected the largest and most popular churches.

“One Sunday night, in the largest church of the West Side, he spoke on ‘The Saint’s Inheritance’ to more than 3,000 people, and I took a seat in the gallery directly in front of him, to see every gesture and to hear every tone, form of voice, emphasis, stress, and pitch, and all the rest. But that was as far as I got in my part of the service, for he so quickly and eloquently launched into this, his favorite theme, that I, with the entire congregation, became entirely absorbed in the Biblical facts he was so convincingly presenting. I never thought of anything else until he had finished.

“After the benediction I could not get to him for more than half an hour, because of the many people crowding around him, complimenting and thanking him for his masterly discourse. On all sides I could hear people saying it was the most wonderful sermon they had ever heard.”⁸

When they were alone, Canright declared to Reavis, “I believe I could become a great man were it not for our unpopular message.”

Reavis retorted, “D. M., the message made you all you are, and the day you leave it, you will retrace your steps back to where it found you.”⁹

Ellen White also weighed in. “You have wanted to be too much, and make a show and noise in the work, and as the result your sun will surely set in obscurity.”¹⁰ What she said came true. Canright wept uncontrollably at her funeral casket.¹¹

Reavis states that Canright “frankly admitted that what I predicted had come to pass, and that he wished the past could be blotted out and that he was back in our work just as he was at the beginning, before any ruinous thoughts of himself had entered his heart.”¹² Ego-holism.

Similar to Moses’ 40 years of wilderness preparation to mature him into his calling, God allowed my hard-headed ego 41 wilderness-wandering years in order to mature me and allow me to embrace my true calling. More important now than finding my career, I needed to fulfill my calling. Broke, but now broken, I fasted and prayed, and God began answering me. In His love, He forced me to chronicle my then 33-year ego addiction nosedive. It led to numerous articles, some TV and radio appearances, and a self-published ebook—but most importantly, it led me to an epiphany.

One Friday evening, while praying in my “war room,” God directed me to a dust-collecting book that my dad gave me in 1990: Carlyle B. Haynes’s *The Divine Art of Preaching*. I read and reread its definition of preaching: “the divinely ordained power of personal testimony.”¹³ It became clear that no human being could devise the call to preach, and no human being could deny it. “But if I say, ‘I will not mention his word or speak anymore in his name,’ his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary

of holding it in; indeed, I cannot” (Jer. 20:9, NIV).

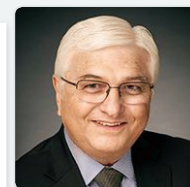
Highlighting ego-holism was my divinely ordained personal testimony; and, based on Haynes’s definition, I am compelled to preach. Almost immediately, a 63-year millstone dissolved, and my heretofore-misdirected gifts came home. May we all not only manage the menace of ego-holism but, through our successes and failures, fulfill God’s calling in our lives.

“I know that all God’s commands are spiritual, but I’m not. Isn’t this also your experience?” Yes, I’m full of myself—after all, I’ve spent a long time in sin’s prison. What I don’t understand about myself is that I decide one way, but then I act another, doing things I absolutely despise. So if I can’t be trusted to figure out what is best for myself and then do it, it becomes obvious that God’s command is necessary” (Rom. 7:14–16, *The Message*). 📖

- 1 tim allston, *7 Steps to Manage Ego Problems: The How-to Guide for “Somebody Else”* (Huntsville, AL: tim allston, 2016), 20. For a free download, go to GetEgoHelpNow.org. Author writes his name in lower case to illustrate that he is “still recovering.”
- 2 Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), 28.
- 3 Tim LaHaye, “God’s Special Remedy,” in *Men’s Devotional Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993), 1144.
- 4 Ryan Holiday, *Ego Is the Enemy* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2016), 2.
- 5 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), 300.
- 6 Michael Novak, *Business as a Calling: Work and the Examined Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 34, 35.
- 7 Carlyle B. Haynes, *Carlyle B. Haynes Speaks to Young Ministers* (Nashville, TN: Southern Pub. Assn., 1968), 38, 39.
- 8 Carrie Johnson, *I Was Canright’s Secretary*, 57, sdanet.org/atissue/books/canright/05.htm.
- 9 Johnson, *I Was Canright’s Secretary*, 58, sdanet.org/atissue/books/canright/05.htm.
- 10 Johnson, *I Was Canright’s Secretary*, 59, sdanet.org/atissue/books/canright/05.htm.
- 11 Johnson, *I Was Canright’s Secretary*, 106 sdanet.org/atissue/books/canright/10.htm.
- 12 Johnson, *I Was Canright’s Secretary*, 101, sdanet.org/atissue/books/canright/10.htm.
- 13 Carlyle B. Haynes, *The Divine Art of Preaching* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1939), 19.

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Taken or left?

As Bible students, we know that there are rules for reading and analyzing Scripture. One is that we go through a process of interpretation if the text requires it. If we are reading a letter from a family member, this rule is generally unnecessary because we know each other. We know the writer. We know the meaning, even with misspelled words. A relationship makes the process of interpretation much easier. However, when there is a distance in meaning, culture, context, and language between the reader and writer, a process of interpretation is needed.

Another criterion that we also need to take into account is that of what is obvious and what is not. The literal meaning, or what the text directly says to us, is something that we need to always apply first in reading. For example, Jesus passed by, called Matthew, and said to him, “Follow me” (see Matt. 9:9). There were probably many complex theological explanations of this verse; but the context is telling us something simple: Matthew was to leave everything and follow Jesus. So, beyond the complexity of the explanation, there is a simple reading reflected in the “answer” to the call, and the text says that he left everything and “followed him.” This is the literal and obvious meaning of the words.

A misunderstood text

With this in mind, we come to two well-known but often misunderstood verses: “Then shall two be in the field;

the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left” (Matt. 24:40, 41, KJV). Many varied and complex interpretations are applied to these two verses today. But what, really, is Jesus saying here?

The context is the introductory question of the disciples. “Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (v. 4, KJV). Matthew 24 contains the answer. They were His students, Jesus was their teacher, and His words were part of Christ’s answer to their question.

The text itself is clear, with no real complexities. The complexities were added through interpretations never implied by Jesus, specifically the “secret rapture” interpretation—which, though popular today, did not exist in the time of Jesus. But when the doctrine of the secret rapture was introduced, many started believing in it, even some Seventh-day Adventists. Then, in the attempt to avoid this “secret rapture” interpretation, others have argued that the “taken” in that passage means those taken for judgment and eternal condemnation. That view, however, does not work either.

What, then, is Jesus saying here?

Textual analysis

The text is clear. At His coming, Jesus is going to take some people with Him. “The one shall be taken” (v. 41)—which means taken to Him. This is the plain reading of the text, which

fits nicely with John 14: “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, *and receive you unto myself*; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:2, 3, KJV, emphasis added).

So first, the principle of Scripture as its own interpreter may be applied here. What this means is that we can find help in understanding difficult texts by using other texts on the same topic that are clear.² Thus this text may be clearly correlated with the promise of Jesus in verse 3 that “I will come again, *and receive you unto myself*” (emphasis added).

Wrote Gerhard Hasel: “A difficult or obscure passage must not be interpreted by the *indiscriminate* application of another biblical passage or text—a procedure that only leads to confusion and contradiction. In the process of using the principle of self-interpretation, comparing and interpreting passage with passage or text with text, one must be guided to study only those passages or texts which deal with the *same* subject.”³

Another element in the textual analysis is how others have translated the text. Different versions in John 14:3 read: “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and *take you* to be with me that you also may be where I am” (NIV, emphasis added). “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and *will take you to myself*, that where I am you may be also” (ESV,

emphasis added). The vast majority of Bible versions translate *paralambano* (παραλαμβάνω) as “receiving.”

A third element is the original wording. In both cases (Matt. 24:40, 41 and John 14:3), the same original Greek word, *paralambano* (παραλαμβάνω), is used. The definition of *paralambano* (παραλαμβάνω) is “to take to, to take with one’s self, to join to one’s self.” *Paralambano* (παραλαμβάνω), when used by Jesus, means acceptance or receiving, not judgment or condemnation.

The *Theological Dictionary of The New Testament* says of *paralambano*: “1. With a personal object (only Gospels and Ac.), ‘to take to (or with) oneself’ (e.g., in close fellowship). In theologically significant statements this is used of the reception of Christ by the world, Jn 1:11, of acceptance into the kingdom of Christ, 14:3; Mt 24:40 f., cf. also Lk 17:34 f.”⁴ The meaning of receiving as in a close fellowship is also shared by J. P. Louw and Eugene Nida, Joseph H. Thayer, and William D. Mounce in their Greek dictionaries.

It is clear that the context is of a division between the two words translated as “taken” and “left.”

παραλαμβάνεται (<i>paralambanetai</i>)	ἀφίημι (<i>aphiemi</i>)
“to take to oneself” “to receive”	“to be left”

Meanwhile, the early Latin Vulgate translates *paralambano* as *adsumetur*, meaning “help,” “assistance,” and “means to aid.” In contrast, it translated *afietai* as *relinquetur*, or “abandon.”

Theological analysis

In his commentary on Matthew, William Hendriksen writes: “The Lord arrives. Of two men engaged in the same kind of work, probably even toiling next to each other in the field, one is taken. By the angels he [is] gathered to be forever with the Lord. The other is left behind, assigned to everlasting perdition.”⁵

George A. Buttrick, in *The Interpreter’s Bible*, says: “Thus two men working in the same furrow are divided,

or two women working at the same hand mill: one is taken and the other is left. Taken and left are words with vast though untraced horizons—the one of joy and the other of doom.”⁶

The Word Biblical Commentary reads: “Those who are taken are among the elect who the angels of the Son of Man are to gather at his coming (v. 31), while those who are left await the prospect of judgment.”⁷

W. D. Davies and Dale Allison, in *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, state: “The first illustration concerns two men doing the same thing, the second two women doing the same thing. The divergent fates show that God’s sudden judgment annuls external similarities. . . . Why one is taken (note the vivid present) and one left is unstated but the surrounding verses supply the answer: one was prepared, the other not. . . . One is taken and one is left. But are the righteous taken to meet the Lord in the air? Or are the wicked removed by angels and cast into fire? The former is more likely. (1) Often in Matthew *afiemai* means abandon or forsake. (2) *Paralambano* means ‘take (to safety)’ in [Matthew] 2:13, 14, 20, 21. (3) The picture of angels taking the saints to meet the Son of man was probably common in early Christianity. (4) In vv. 37–39 [of Matthew 24] those taken (into the ark) are saved while those left behind perish.”⁸

Ulrich Luz says in his commentary on Matthew 24: “With ‘taken’ (Παραλαμβάνεται) the readers think of the taking away to the Lord of which they have just read (v. 31) and with which they are familiar from their knowledge of Jewish and Christian tradition. With being left behind they think of the consideration of being lost that comes from the final separation from God. According to v. 41 the same is true for two women presumably again from the same family, who are doing their housework together. One is taken away from the mill to Christ, the other stays behind and that means death and destruction.”⁹

Meanwhile, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* says:

“**Shall be taken.** Gr. *paralambano* [παραλαμβάνω], meaning literally, ‘to take to oneself,’ used in the papyri of receiving to oneself articles that belong to him. *Paralambano* [παραλαμβάνω] is used in [Matt.] 17:1 of Jesus taking to Himself Peter, James, and John, and with them ascending the mount of transfiguration. In Col. 4:17 it is used of a Christian minister’s receiving the gospel commission. In John 14:3 *paralambano* [παραλαμβάνω] is used of Jesus receiving to Himself the waiting disciples. By contrast, ‘took’ in Matt. 24:39 is from *airo*, ‘to carry off,’ ‘to remove.’ The ‘one’ of v. 40 is ‘taken’ by the angels as they ‘gather’ the ‘elect’ (see on v. 31). . . .

“What Jesus meant by being ‘taken’ and being ‘left’ is made clear by the context. Those who are left are the evil servants, who instead of continuing in their normal pursuit after a supposed secret rapture, are cut asunder and assigned their portion with the hypocrites (vs. 48-51). . . .

“**Left.** Gr. *Aphiemi* ‘to send away,’ ‘to dismiss.’ The Greek precludes the idea that it is the righteous who are ‘left.’ The righteous are literally ‘received’ and wicked ‘sent away.’ ”¹⁰

Ellen White writes: “Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left.’ ‘Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left.’ (Luke 17:36, 35.) The righteous and the wicked are to be associated together in the work of life. But the Lord reads the character, He discerns who are obedient children, who respect and love His commandments.

“The onlookers may discern no difference, but there is One who said that the tares were not to be plucked up by human hands, lest the wheat be rooted up also. Let both grow together until the harvest. Then the Lord sends forth His reapers to gather out the tares, and binds them in bundles to burn, while the wheat is gathered into the heavenly garner.

“The time of the judgment is a most solemn period, when the Lord gathers His own from among the tares.

Those who have been members of the same family are separated. A mark is placed upon the righteous. ‘They shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels: and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him’ (Malachi 3:17). Those who have been obedient to God’s commandments will unite with the company of the saints in light; they shall enter in through the gates into the city, and have right to the tree of life. *The one shall be taken.* His name shall

stand in the book of life, while those with whom he associated shall have the mark of eternal separation from God.

“The tares and wheat are now comingled, but then the one Hand that alone can separate them will give to everyone his true position.”¹¹

Synthesis

The evidence from Matthew 24:40 demonstrates that the “taken” are those that Jesus is going to take with Him as He promised in John

14:3. The Greek use of *paralambano* [παράλαμβάνω] indicates that those “taken” or “received” by Jesus are the saved (see also 1 Thess. 4:17).

Despite the popularity of the “secret rapture” interpretation of Matthew 24:40, 41, a biblical and contextual reading of the texts expresses the great truth that, while the lost (those “left”) will, ultimately, face another fate (Matthew 24:28), the saved (those “taken”) will, when Jesus comes, go home to live eternally with Him. ☞

1 Its central teaching is that the fulfillment of the seventieth week of Daniel’s 70-week prophecy is still future. It also teaches that the church will not go through the great tribulation. See Gerhard Pfandl, “The Rapture: Why it cannot occur before the Second Coming,” www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/Rapture.pdf

2 Gerhard F. Hasel, *Understanding the Living Word of God* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1980), 76.

3 Hasel, *Understanding the Living Word of God*, 76.

4 Gerhard Kittel, ed., “C. παραλαμβάνω in the NT,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI, Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1967), 13.

5 William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Matthew* (London, UK: Banner of Truth Trust, 1973), 870.

6 George Arthur Buttrick, ed., *The Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1979), 7:553.

7 Donald A. Hagner et al., *Word Biblical Commentary Matt 14–28* (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1995), 783.

8 W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (Edinburgh, UK: T & T Clark, 1997), 383.

9 Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 214.

10 Francis E. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Commentary*, vol. 5 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1956), 504.

11 Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 9 (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate), 137, emphasis added.

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RESTORERS— That He Might Be Glorified

ROBERT H. PIERSON

President, General Conference

ISAIAH 58:12 is a well-known Seventh-day Adventist text. For years we have included it as one of our strong texts in presenting the Sabbath truth. “They that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.”

The word “restorer” is derived from a Hebrew root meaning “to turn (back),” “to bring back home,” “to recover,” “to rescue,” “to cause to return.” It is the same original from which the verb in Psalm 23:3 comes: “He *restoreth* my soul.”

The Advent message is a message of restoration—restoration of obscured, forgotten, or ignored truth. The Advent message calls men and women back to “the old paths.” “Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls” (Jer. 6:16).

Seventh-day Adventists are more restorers, as was Elijah, than we are initiators, as was Moses. “Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things” (Matt. 17:11). The work of the Elijah message in a sense is a message that calls men and women to restore truths that have long been neglected, ignored, or forgotten.

Christ’s Work as a Restorer Foretold

Jesus Christ was a restorer. He was more than a restorer of truth that had been obscured beneath ceremonialism, truth that

had been forgotten, truth that had been ignored. Note these words of the gospel prophet foretelling the work of our Master. “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified” (Isa. 61:1-3).

The Master Restorer

The Master fulfilled all the gospel prophet foretold. His, indeed, was a ministry of restoration. See Jesus on the Sabbath day confronted with a needy man and an accusing band of Pharisees. When challenged to heal a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath day, Jesus said to the man, “Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was *restored* whole, like as the other” (Matt. 12:13).

How the “oil of joy” must have flowed in that man’s being, how the act must have clothed him with “the garment of praise.” His poor, lame hand was restored; it was whole, full of life and strength. He could use it again because he had come in contact with the Great Restorer.

Pause by the Master's side as a crowd brings to Him a blind man in Bethsaida. The sightless one's friends "besought him to touch him" (Mark 8:22). "And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly" (verses 24, 25).

"He was *restored*." Who could know the joy this act of love kindled in the healed man's heart. No wonder he must have loved the Saviour—the first face he had ever seen was the lovely countenance of his great Benefactor, his great *Restorer*. So it was everywhere the Saviour went He restored peace to troubled hearts; He restored hope to lost souls. He restored confidence to the discouraged. He even restored life to the dead. Such was His ministry of restoration.

Jesus is our example. We are to follow in His steps. (See 1 Peter 2:21.)

Workers and Leaders Are Restorers

The Rotherham translation of Isaiah 58:12 is, "Restorer of paths leading home." Seventh-day Adventist ministers and leaders are to be restorers—restorers of paths leading home. "The work of beneficence enjoined in this chapter [Isaiah 58] is the work that God requires His people to do at this time. It is a work of His own appointment."—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 265. Our lay activities leaders remind us of the relationship of this statement to the welfare work that needs to be done today. This is true. Might it not also refer to a needed work of *restoration* that Seventh-day Adventist workers and leaders are called to do?

How much repairing and restoring is needed in the world! There are many forgotten or ignored truths of God's Word that need restoring. But *there is more!* It is this "more" that is the burden of my heart in this message.

The world is filled with broken lives, broken homes, broken careers, broken promises, broken confidence, broken faith, broken hearts. How much restoring these lonely, bitter, faithless lives need.

There are needs within our own church! In too many troubled hearts there is frustration, sorrow, disappointment, discouragement, hopelessness, and perhaps even bitterness and hatred. How much these

poor hearts need faith and hope, joy, courage and confidence, and love. In such moments God calls each worker, each leader, regardless of the post he fills, to be a restorer. We are the ones "to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness . . . , that he might be glorified." This is *your* work; this is *my* work. We are to be restorers. We may be administrators or department leaders or institutional workers, but if the hands of ordination have been laid upon us we are first shepherds of the flock, shepherds with hearts. And the shepherd's first work is to *restore!*

The Spiritually Fallen Need Restoring

How many wanderers need to be shown the "paths leading home." Someone told me recently there were more than a thousand former Seventh-day Adventists in the vicinity of one of our colleges. The conference president urged me to come and hold a decision effort in the city. I hope I can someday. I can think of other areas with a large concentration of Adventists where, no doubt, this number of backslidden members could be equaled or surpassed. In too many places our apostasies have been high. How much these places need restorers, shepherds with hearts filled with love who will go in search of the lost and bring them back to the safety of the fold! God is looking for all of us to be *restorers*.

I can still see the appealing eyes looking into mine. They were the eyes of the first baptismal candidate I had personally laid beneath the waters many years ago. His experience had been up and down—sometimes spiritually abounding and in the church, sometimes discouraged and out on the fringes. He was a brilliant man of talent but highly emotional. Here he was, sitting beside me—thirty years since I had last seen him.

"Elder," he said sadly, "the church members want to give me Bible studies. They want to explain the 2300 days and the state of the dead." He faltered, then continued, "I know those doctrines as well, perhaps better, than they do. It is not doctrine that I need; it is love and understanding."

"Love and understanding"—here are two important tools of the restorers. Usually when persons leave this message it is not because they have changed their mind about the doctrine. Many times they leave

because they are lonely, discouraged, or just plain bored. They need help. They need a friendly visit. They need encouragement. They need a Calvary more than they need a Sinai. They need a restorer. They need you. They need me.

Those Who Have Made Mistakes Need Restoring

I was attending one of our large meetings not long ago. As I made my way through that great mass of people following the service I was conscious of a hand on my arm. Turning, I saw a familiar face. It was the face of a worker I had had part in saving many years before. The man had made a mistake. We could have dismissed him from the work, but the committee gave him another chance.

"Elder," he said, his face lightened with joy. "I drove 150 miles to this meeting today to tell you I haven't let you down. I've made good."

We are here to save men, not to crush them. Wherever we can do so, as leaders, we should *save* men—restore them—and let them make good. Sometimes the conduct of an individual is such that we cannot save him to the church or to the work, but where we can let us do so. Let us *restore* him. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1).

The New English Bible translates the apostle's word: "You who are endowed with the Spirit must set him right again *very gently*."* (Italics supplied.) We as workers, as leaders, should be known for our gentleness. Christianity makes a man a gentleman!

"Workers may make mistakes, but you should give them a chance to correct their errors, give them an opportunity to learn caution, by leaving the work in their hands."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 300. Sometimes conditions make it imperative to move men. Sometimes it is best to leave them right where they are giving them opportunity to demonstrate their ability to make good on the spot where they failed. As leaders we may restore their determination to succeed as workers and Christians. We are to do this "very gently."

Restorers of comfort. Restorers of faith. Restorers of confidence. Restorers of truth.

Restorers of peace. Restorers of joy. This is "the work that God requires His people to do at this time." It is "a work of His own appointment." This is true revival and reformation. This is *your* work and *my* work as leaders in God's church. May God help us to be faithful to our calling and may the world be a happier, holier place in which to live because of our ministry of restoration!

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God's Character and the Last Generation

edited by Jiří Moskala and John Peckham, Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2018.

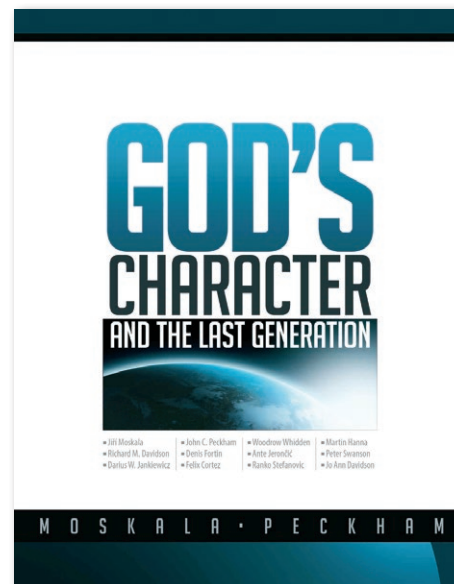
Last generation theology (LGT) teaches that the final generation of Christians will vindicate the character of God by overcoming all sin and perfectly reproducing the character of Christ. Since M. L. Andreasen articulated its theological framework in the mid-twentieth century, scores of Seventh-day Adventists have embraced the challenge to be a part of the final company that will defeat Satan and stand in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor.

In response, editors Jiří Moskala, dean of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, and John Peckham, associate professor of Christian philosophy, have put together a collection of essays from twelve contributors from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University that address the major arguments of LGT proponents in a scholarly, yet pastoral way. The fourteen chapters of the book engage the major issues with pastoral wisdom and careful analysis of the biblical text and the corpus of the Ellen White writings. At the outset, the issues are set forth in the framework of the great controversy motif. Then the authors analyze the following topics, among others: a historical overview of LGT ideas and figures who have set forth its theology; the nature of sin; the meaning of justification, sanctification, assurance, and perfection; the lifestyle of end-time saints; the struggle to live a sinless life; what it means to perfectly reproduce the character of Christ; the accomplishments of Christ on the cross; the significance, meaning, and role of Christ's atonement; what it means to live in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor; the role of Ellen White; the concept of sinless living; Adventist myths on the end-time issues; the delay of Christ's coming; and the ultimate triumph of God's love.

In my view, the authors have provided a solid biblical alternative to

LGT that is not only intellectually satisfying but also spiritually uplifting. Through responsible biblical exegesis, they have clarified biblical teaching on the end of time and the close of human probation. One message that resonated throughout the book was that human behavior does not vindicate the character of God. As Jiří Moskala straightforwardly put it in his chapter on Christ's atonement: "The focus of LGT is on *our* characters and *our* actions instead of being God-centered" (206, 207; his emphasis). Rather, it is *Christ* and His efficacious and all-sufficient atoning work that has vindicated the character of God and defeated Satan. This God-centered, Christ-honoring truth will be refreshing to anyone who has struggled existentially with LGT.

Several important features of this book stand out. First, the authors focus on the arguments of LGT rather than its historical and contemporary personalities. They are gracious and kind in their critique and are more interested in setting forth biblical truth than in making a polemical case. Second, while the authors reject the major tenets of LGT perfectionism, they clearly and unmistakably embrace biblical perfection of Christian character. One will thus find throughout the book a repeated emphasis on the importance of victory over sins through the experience of sanctification. Third, this book has a pastoral concern for those who have struggled to become sinless but failed. One chapter even deals with the psychology of striving for perfection. Fourth, because Ellen White is heavily quoted in LGT, her writings receive significant attention throughout the chapters and extensive endnotes. Several of the writers provide insightful analysis of her carefully nuanced understanding of the state of the righteous at the end of time. It would have rounded



off the subject matter, however, if an entire chapter were devoted to the Wesleyan roots of White's view on the perfection of Christian character. Space limitations are always a factor in these kinds of books, and several authors noted this in trying to condense their extensive research into one chapter. Nevertheless, the book as a whole is a major contribution to Christian thought on the end of time and an important corrective to misunderstandings about the vindication of God's character.

In short, I highly recommend this book to any believer who has struggled with end-time issues in his or her own life or who ministers to those who do. Preachers will find plenty of ideas for biblical sermon series, and the book will provoke one to probe deeper into Scripture. *God's Character and the Last Generation* is a landmark work that will inspire a new generation of Seventh-day Adventists to give glory to God alone and proclaim the soon return of Jesus with hope and assurance. 🙏

—Reviewed by Jud Lake, ThD, DMin, professor of preaching and Adventist studies, School of Religion, Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee, United States.



CREATION

Creation Sabbath celebrates the wonder of God's handiwork

Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States—The Village Church in Berrien Springs hosted Creation Sabbath, a celebration of God's work in Creation as described in the book of Genesis and affirmed throughout Scripture.

Timothy Standish, a senior scientist from The Geoscience Research Institute of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Loma Linda, California, partnered with the church in organizing a weekend, which had an attendance of more than 700. Many came to see Creation paintings recently completed by world-renowned artist Nathan

Greene. Over the weekend six Creation paintings were displayed from a series of seven; the seventh is currently in progress.

The afternoon attendance included more than 150 children who came for a kids' program that featured science experiments hosted by the chemistry students of **Ryan Hayes**, a chemistry professor at Andrews University. Presenters included scientists, theologians, educators, and designers.

Creation Sabbath is an annual event for the Seventh-day Adventist world church, where participants celebrate

the beauty and wonder of God's creation and affirm the biblical narrative.

All presentations were recorded by the North American Division's Adventist Learning Community (ALC) and can be accessed on ALC's website (adventistlearningcommunity.com) or on the Berrien Springs Village Church website (villagesda.org).

Your church can prepare to participate in Creation Sabbath on October 26, 2019, with resources at the Creation Sabbath website, creationsabbath.net. [Debbie Michel, Lake Union Conference]



THE FALL

Adventist pastor loses family in tragic fire

Dansoman, Accra, Ghana—A tragic fire claimed the lives of an Adventist pastor's family during the early morning hours of Sunday, August 19. **Ebenezer Ato Kessie** was away at camp meeting when fire engulfed his house, killing his wife, **Linda**; their four-year-old son; their infant son; Linda's mother; and Linda's niece.

Linda, a teacher at the Valley View University Basic School in Accra, had recently given birth to their second child, and her mother had come to help

take care of the baby. Ebenezer rushed home upon hearing the heartbreaking news. Church leaders immediately visited Ebenezer, offering their support and condolences.

"This is a most tragic incident, and we can only pray that God will be their source of comfort," said a shaken **Thomas Techie Ocran**, president of the Southern Ghana Union Conference.

Ebenezer is the assistant communication director of the Accra City Conference and son of Anthony Kessie,

former president of the then South Ghana Conference. [Solace Asafo, Southern Ghana Union Conference Communication director]

Photo: West Africa Division



RESTORATION

Andrews University Church celebrates the NET '98 20th anniversary

Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States—Pioneer Memorial Church (PMC), the Seventh-day Adventist congregation on the campus of Andrews University, recently celebrated the 20th anniversary of the historic global

satellite evangelistic event dubbed NET '98 at a special remembrance and worship service on October 6, 2018.

During the service, PMC pastor **Dwight K. Nelson** recalled the moment when the uplink went live from the

campus church for the five-week preaching series. "Twenty years ago, October ninth, seven fifteen in the evening, somebody in that mezzanine level hit a switch, and at the speed of light, a beam from two satellite trucks shot up to a bevy of



Skip McCarty (*right*), formerly a pastor of PMC, conducts an interview for the 20th anniversary of NET '98, the Adventist Church's largest satellite evangelism program. Senior PMC pastor Dwight Nelson (*left*) looks on.

satellites belting the planet. One signal from here, six continents, more than a hundred nations, forty languages, and seven thousand, six hundred downlink sites, all watching simultaneously.”

An estimated two million people worldwide tuned in to the live satellite event. Nelson stood each evening and preached, while 39 pastors stationed in soundproof cubicles translated his message into several languages.

Nelson said that his NeXt Millennium Seminars series approached the books of Daniel and Revelation from a fresh, relational aspect in the hope of helping people discover a forever friendship with the Savior.

One major objective of NET '98, according to leaders who developed the NET programs, was to target those born between 1965 and 1980, known as Generation X or Gen X.

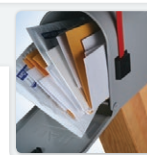
During the 20th-anniversary celebration, Nelson shared several stories of conversion that emerged from the evangelistic series, including that of **Jason Canfield**, who belonged to another faith. Canfield was invited to

attend the satellite event at a local church and shared that while listening, he became convicted of the Sabbath. “NET '98 challenged me,” he said via video conference. “Initially, I did not like it. I actually tried to disprove the Adventist teaching of the Sabbath by looking for evidence but couldn't find anything.” Shortly after the meetings, Canfield was baptized, and he currently serves as pastor of the Lacey Seventh-day Adventist Church in Washington, United States.

Retired pastor **Skip McCarty** shared that before NET '98, a group of Andrews University students, as part of the relational component of the evangelistic series, went door-to-door to pray with people in Benton Harbor, Michigan. McCarty said, “At that time, we didn't have a downlink capability, so every morning after each meeting, the university students would receive a VHS tape and bicycle it up to Benton Harbor, where they would share it each evening with a packed room of people from the community. It resulted in several baptisms.” After NET '98, the church planted the Harbor of Hope Church, which is still in existence.

According to NET leaders, more than 1,500 volunteers and 50 ministries worked through the month of the evangelistic meetings to keep the effort afloat. **Llona Chapman** managed a separate program for 11- and 12-year-olds, for which she planned on 35 to 40 children but ended up with 75 each night. A curriculum specially designed for NET '98, called “Come Meet Jesus,” took the children on a journey of Bible stories from Creation to Jesus' second coming.

“That last Friday night we were concentrating on Jesus' crucifixion,” Chapman said. “I prayed and asked God to give me one child. As I talked with the children about Jesus being crucified, I saw a twelve-year-old boy with his head in his hands, sobbing, and it happened to be a boy who had given us problems. Towards the end of the meetings, we gave the kids a baptismal card, and this same twelve-year-old boy was the first one to return it. I was fortunate enough to watch him get baptized and cried afterward.” [Felicia Tonga, *Lake Union Herald*, and North American Division]



To mandate Hebrew and Greek upon theology students poorly gifted in this area is to guarantee the dubious value of a shallow learning in order to get a pass.

While Ellen White extolled the value of education for ministers, she also got it right in writing, "There are times when Greek and Latin scholars are needed. Some must study these languages. This is well. But not all, and not many should study them." In the preceding paragraph she wrote, "If Jesus Christ had deemed this kind of education essential, would He not have given it to His disciples?" (*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 468).

Without being qualified in Biblical languages, ministers can deeply study difficult texts with the help of Strong's concordance, Greek-English interlinears, and authors like Kenneth Wuest, all of which are language experts. Yes, various reputable Bible translations do often give different meanings to texts, but the article suggests that Greek-deprived ministers like me have no better alternative. Not so! We can get in-depth info from these aids just as those with Biblical language skills need to do occasionally. All theology students should be shown how English translations can significantly differ in difficult texts and should be taught

how to use these aids to ascertain the original meaning of the Bible authors. This may not be as good as being expert in Biblical languages, but it could be the most sensible alternative for those who may have weak language skills yet are blessed with giftedness in other areas of ministry.

In making Biblical languages optional, are we lowering educational standards for ministerial graduates? A thousand times, No! We are freeing students to pursue the best education in all-round ministry and the vital subjects in which they can realistically excel. 🙏

—Jack Lange, retired pastor, Queensland, Australia

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I watched with some amusement as my student, Maria, tried to make a fire for cooking. She hurriedly crumpled paper in a pile, placed a large log on top of it, and proceeded to light her fire. Although Maria was an experienced cook, her urban childhood had not afforded her the basic skills of fire craft.

My mumbled suggestions, if they were received at all, were ignored. Predictably, the fire brightly flared at first, and Maria beheld the glowing flames engulfing the log with satisfaction. As quickly as they appeared, however, the flames disappeared to reveal the log untouched. The fire, tinder, and fuel were all good, but with no kindling, the fire, predictably, went out. In the same way, we must not neglect kindling for spiritual revival.

Twigs and sticks are humble materials and laborious to gather and arrange, but Jesus teaches that “he that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much” (Luke 16:10). The amazing promise of the power of small beginnings is found in the Master’s promise, “If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:19, 20). Revival that burns hot with a small number will ignite many and extend around the globe.

Jesus wants to baptize us “with the Holy Ghost and with fire” (Luke 3:16). Like fire, revival must start small and be sustained with added fuel to grow large. The components necessary for revival fire that are within reach of all are, according to God’s Word, (1) humble prayer (2) seeking God’s face, and (3) repentance of sin (2 Chron. 7:14). When these critical success factors are met faithfully and consistently by even a small group of two or three, the blessing of God’s Spirit is promised! Do we believe and practice this?

We may have to resist inclinations to want revival fast and bright, to draw a crowd, hoping to do a great work and hasten Christ’s coming. This is a noble aspiration. But without the prerequisite work of gathering the necessary kindling, be it even two or three, we will fail of passing on the flame of God’s Spirit to a church, city, or a nation and find ourselves disappointed. When we comply with the reasonable conditions for revival, however—small groups claiming Christ’s extravagant promise honoring the requests of two and three—then small, sustainable fires will ignite larger fuel, combine, and surround the globe.

we remarked that the neighbors might think we had added a Sunday service because of the many cars in the parking lot! No one wanted to leave after we finished praying at seven o’clock in the morning, so we extended the Sunday morning service a half hour longer to allow testimonies of answered prayer and witnessing. God blessed those humble beginnings of prayer and Bible memorization. The blessings included

*The need for revival is urgent,
but we must not overlook the
kindling of small groups to
ignite widespread revival.*

In 2011, I invited members of a country church in Colfax, California, to pray for the Holy Spirit. I told them that I would be at the church for one hour every Sunday at six o’clock in the morning. Seven or eight members sometimes came, but there were days during that first year when only one person joined me. Our fellowship was richly blessed by the Holy Spirit, and we always left joyful.

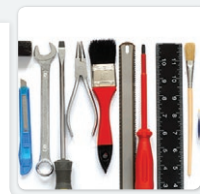
Then more people began to come, so we prayed that God would bring revival. We began a Scripture memorization program in the midweek service that next year, and attendance began to blossom. The Sunday morning meeting also continued to grow, and one Sunday

financial blessings for ministry needs, a revived medical program, and the successful launch of an online resource for ministers and Bible workers.

The need for revival is urgent, but we must not overlook the kindling of small groups to ignite widespread revival. “Who hath despised the day of small beginnings?” (Zech. 4:10). It is “not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the LORD” (v. 6). If we resist the quick and flashy route and sustain the fire of revival at a small and consistent level, it will surely spread across the globe. 🌍

—Richard Constantienescu, MDiv, pastors the Ardmore, Oklahoma Seventh-day Adventist church, Ardmore, Oklahoma, United States.

Conrad Vine, DMin, is president of Adventist Frontier Missions, Inc., Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.



Nobody cared about her

There once was an unseen woman who crept up behind Jesus to touch the hem of His robe, whose faith brought full healing. Nobody saw her. Nobody cared about her. She was in the group of disciples but not with the group of disciples.

Today, after a powerful sermon, and as the crowds disperse, an unseen woman could timidly approach you and barely whisper with tears in her eyes, “Pastor, I have a problem, a shadow in my life, and I don’t know how to get rid of it. I can’t speak about it publicly, for people will say I am crazy, but I am desperate. I can’t go on. Please help me.” How do we respond?

Or the terrified seminary student, who played with a Ouija board as a teenager and all of the “predictions” of the fallen spirit have come true, calls and begs for help. How do we respond?

Or the mother who discovers that her estranged husband’s family were all involved in Freemasonry and channeling spirits, and whose teenage daughter is now filled with rage and is cutting herself. Her family is falling apart. Her faith is fading. Her fear is paralyzing. How do we respond?

To chart a Seventh-day Adventist path for deliverance ministry¹ is fraught with difficulty, avoiding both the aggressive strategic level spiritual warfare found among many Evangelicals on the one hand but also the skeptical Western secular worldview on the other. Yet, given the late hour in the earth’s history, as ministers of the gospel, we must wrestle with how we as Adventists may apply our unique theological insights into the great controversy that rages between our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the evil one at a cosmic level to practical principles of ministry for the victims of Satan’s attacks on an individual level.

And so in February 2018, Adventist men and women from around the world gathered in Berrien Springs, Michigan for two days of prayer and reflection. The group was diverse, drawn from a broad range of ministry callings, including missiologists, frontline missionaries, theologians, and administrators. The group was also united by the fact that all were actively involved in deliverance ministry. The goals of the conference were as follows:

1. To agree upon and define biblical and Spirit of Prophecy foundations for deliverance ministry (DM)
2. To agree upon and define ethical guidelines for DM practitioners
3. To agree on the need for a field manual for Adventist DM practitioners
4. To agree upon and define a mentoring program for key unions and universities so that they can mentor local pastors and/or elders in biblical DM practices
5. To establish an association or institute that can continue this work, developing regional chapters, conducting annual conferences, coordinating new training material development, and raising the understanding and awareness of this kind of ministry among Adventists

The preparations for this conference were difficult. Satan pushed back with personal harassment of the participants. Many of those involved suffered personal injury and much pain. Yet, God protected with His angels and led through His Spirit, and the outcome was a renewed commitment to minister with biblical fidelity, unyielding love, and a holy boldness for God.

At the end of the conference, the website setfreeinchrist.org was



established, which contains an ebook, titled *Finding Freedom in Jesus: A Deliverance Ministry Manual*, prepared from the conference attendees’ papers.² The papers were subject to intense review, discussion, and debate. The book is not the end of our journey, nor is it the final word on this difficult topic. Rather, it is merely a step in a journey of faith as we humbly partner with God in the great controversy and seek to help Satan’s captives experience the deliverance only Jesus Christ can bring.

This practical, Adventist approach to deliverance ministry was written out of love, for love, and with love. It was not written exclusively for theologians or missiologists. It is rooted in the good news that Jesus Christ has never lost a battle with Satan, and in His name, the captives may still be set free. To God be the glory! 🙏

1 Deliverance ministry may best be understood as delivering an individual from the influence of personal, malevolent fallen angels.

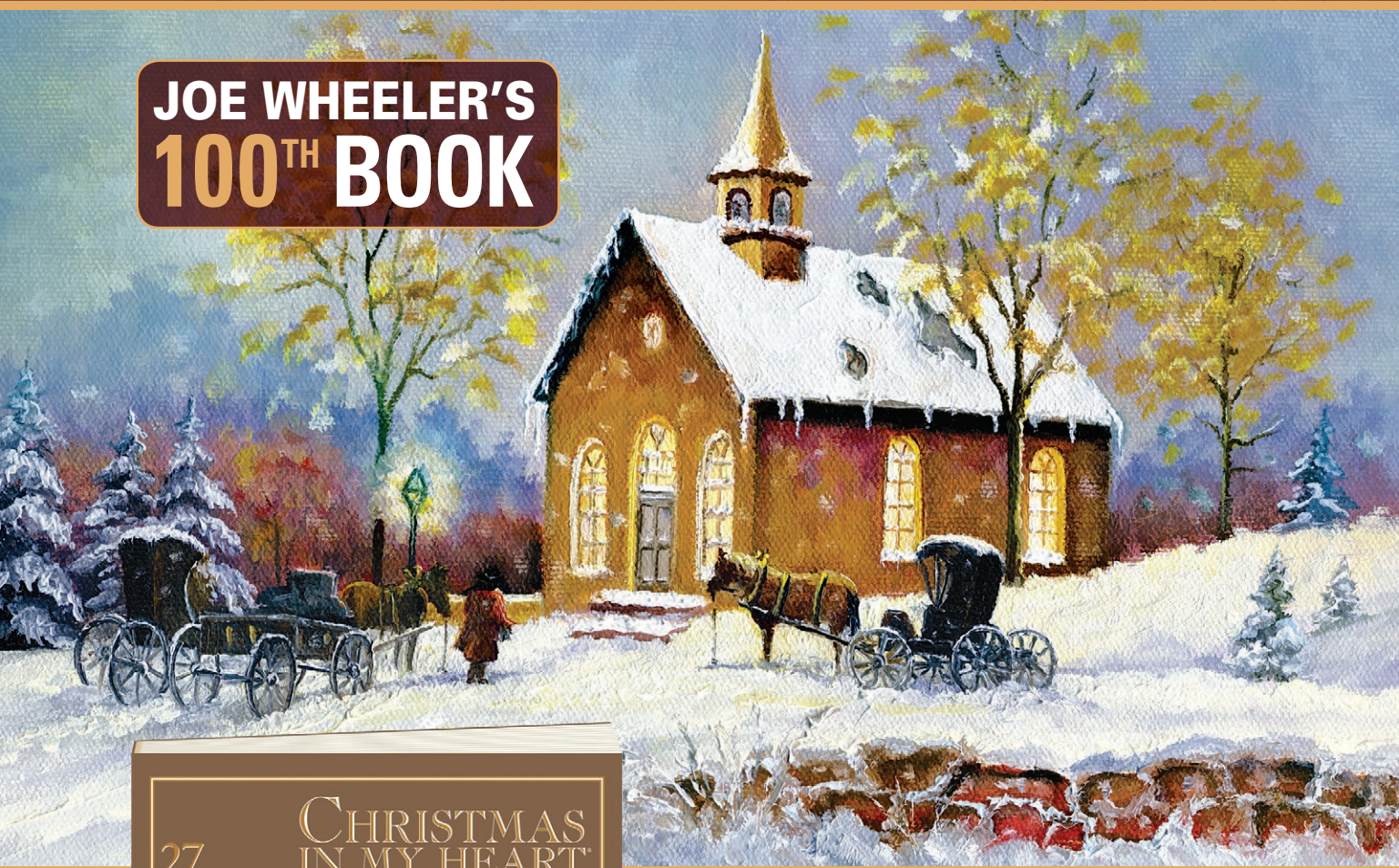
2 For a hard copy of the book or to schedule a training event in your region, contact Dr. Bruce Bauer at bbauer@andrews.edu. See also Conrad Vine, “Practical Deliverance Ministry Manual Coming Soon,” *Set Free in Christ* Institute, Nov. 17, 2017, <http://www.setfreeinchrist.org/news--events/category/all> and Conrad Vine, “Set Free in Christ,” *Adventist Frontier Missions*, Oct. 2, 2018, <http://afmonline.org/home-office-blog/detail/set-free-in-christ>.

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