

**Page 10**

Finding hope in a hurting world

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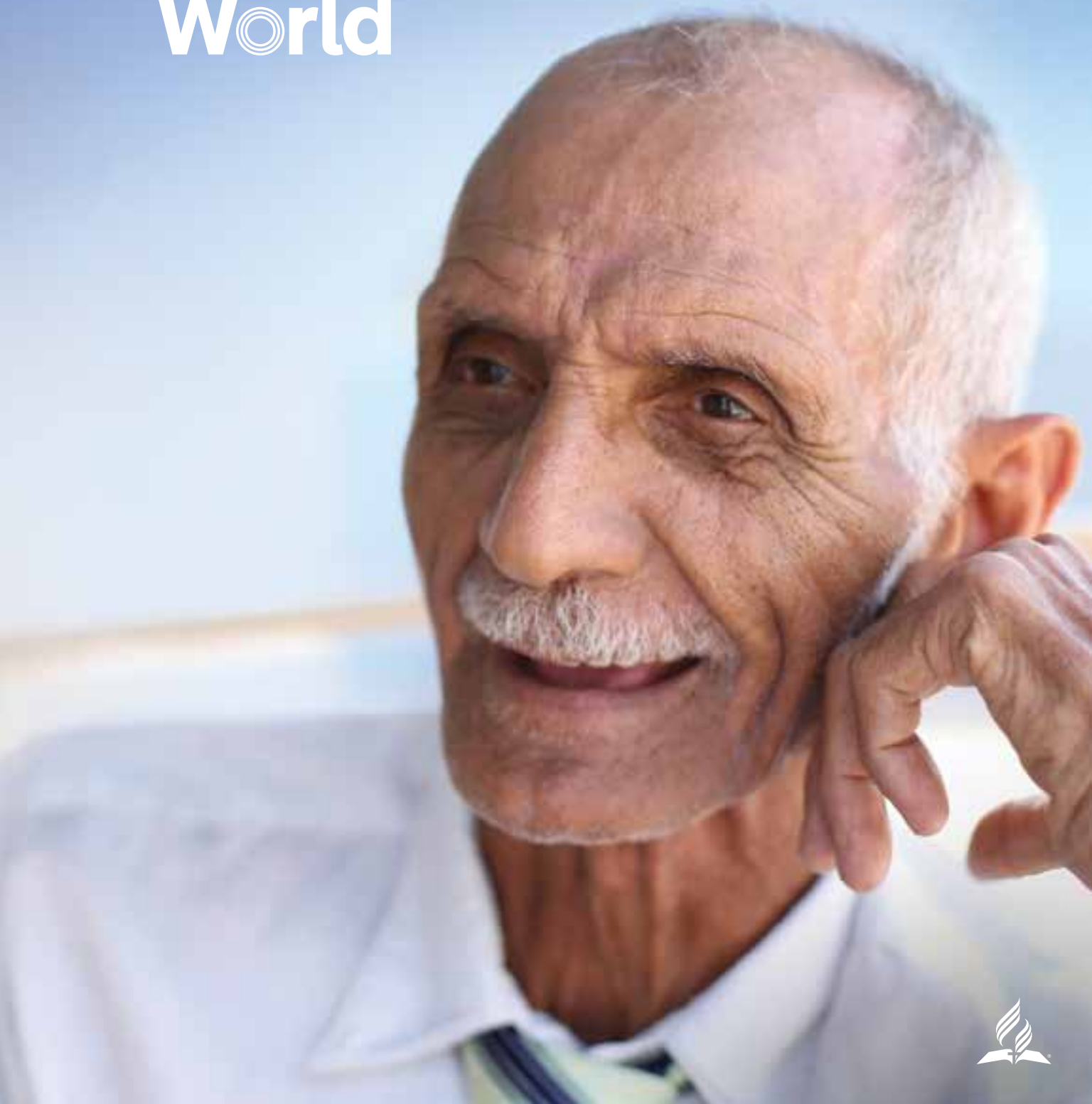
Paradise 2.0:  
Vision of a bright  
new world

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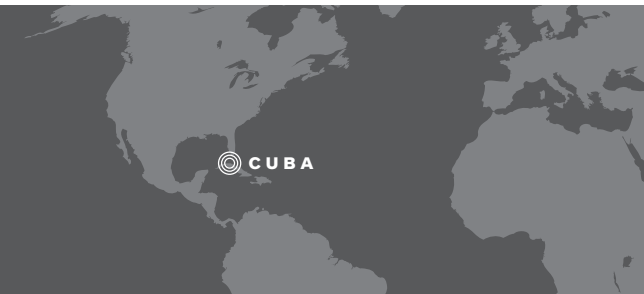
Big Randy's duel  
with the devil

**May 2018**

# Adventist World



# Adventist World



## About the Cover

Oristel Obregón Mayea is 72 years old, serves as a deacon in his local congregation, and loves to connect with people. He became a Seventh-day Adventist two years ago after a church elder studied the Bible with him. Oristel is a member of the Cárdenas Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cárdenas, Matanzas, Cuba.

Cover Photo: Gregorio Vázquez

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We apologize for two misspellings that crept into the March issue of *Adventist World*. The correct spellings of the names of the two division presidents are: Blasious Ruguri (ECD, p. 8) and Glenn Townsend (SPD, p. 9).

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## Just for You

### The journal in your hands didn't get there by accident.

Sometime, perhaps even before you were born, the Holy Spirit looked down the corridor of human time and imagined the day when you would be reading these words. And whether you are a regular reader of *Adventist World* or are seeing it for the first time from the hand of a friend, the Spirit's purpose was the same: to open your eyes; to warm your heart; to connect you with a living, praying, worshiping, witnessing group of Christians awaiting the soon coming of Jesus.

### The journal in your hands was created for a specific purpose.

The team of writers, editors, copyeditors, designers, printers, translators, freight managers, and truck drivers responsible for bringing it to you did so because we want you to experience the deep fulfillment of a personal relationship with Jesus. Jesus also said that He is uniquely available to us wherever "two or three" are gathered in His name. This edition of *Adventist World* connects you with millions of men and women, boys and girls, grandparents and singles all around the world—people who honor Jesus with their lives and draw strength and encouragement from their fellowship with each other.

### The journal in your hands wasn't intended for you alone.

As you read these faith-building stories, devotional articles, and news items about what the Spirit is doing in the world, you'll certainly think of someone else who needs hope and faith as much or more than you do. That's why this is our special "Friendship" edition: you can become part of that amazing process that began in the mind of the Spirit and worked through all those faithful team members by passing this journal on to someone you care about. Tell them what you value in these pages. Tell them what to read first—and what you think will make the greatest difference in their lives. You can play a crucial part in bringing good news and rich connectedness to many others the Holy Spirit has been drawing.

**Don't miss the joy of reading for yourself—or the joy of handing the gift along.**

**Church members from the Northeastern Conference in New York help in the rebuilding efforts in Dominica, an island nation devastated by Hurricane Maria in 2017.**

Photo: David Lopez, Maranatha Volunteers International



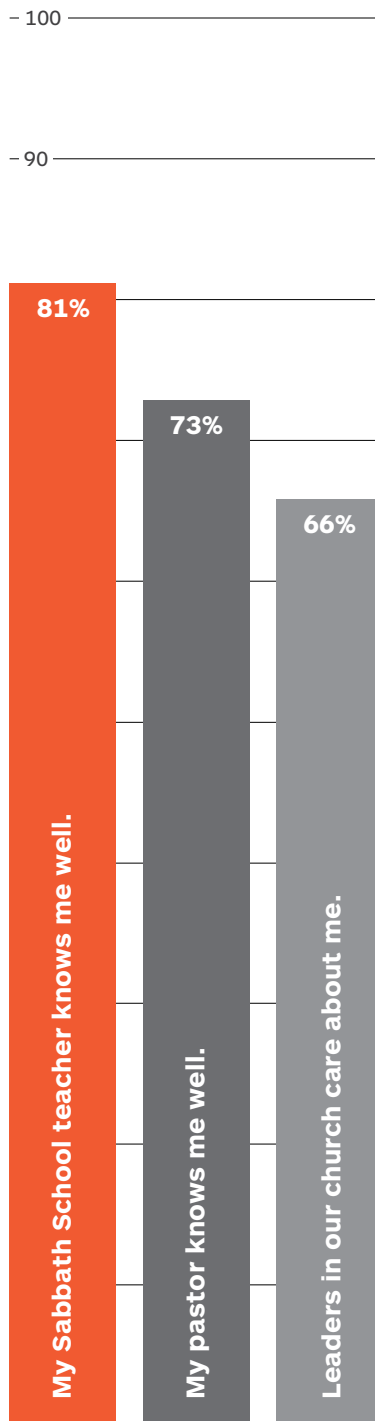
# 345,000

The estimated number of people who have left Puerto Rico in the wake of Hurricane Maria's devastation, including approximately 2,000 Adventist church members. In addition, 35 students did not return to the church's Antillean Adventist University and 108 students ceased enrollment across the 20 primary and secondary schools on the island. The Adventist Church continues its operations in the country, including the university and a hospital; however, it has suffered significant financial losses as a result of these realities.

**“Organization is always a servant of mission. ...It’s always the means to a greater end.”**

—Mark Finley, evangelist and assistant to the world church president, commenting on the relationship between the role of organization and the nature of mission. Finley made his comments at the Global Leadership Summit in Lisbon, Portugal, at which Adventist leaders from around the world discussed topics surrounding the theme, “The Spiritual Necessity of Church Unity and Biblical Authority to Accomplish God’s Mission.”

## Personal relationship to pastors, Sabbath School teachers, and church leaders



Source: Office of Archives, Statistics and Research

**“We are posting content on social media every working day.”**

—Mario Šijan, publishing house manager of Znaci Vremena, the Adventist publishing house in Croatia. It is taking strides in making Adventist literature available and accessible in a rapidly changing world. Znaci Vremena provides books to city libraries across Croatia, has made all of its books available on Amazon, and is repurposing content specifically for social media, while strategically engaging 50 of the most followed people on Croatian social media, who then promote Adventist content to their followers.

**“We shall consider the church’s request about our education institutions not conducting examinations on Saturday.”**

Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni tweeting his reaction to a visit in his presidential residence with Adventist world church president Ted Wilson, along with other African Adventist leaders. During the visit Wilson expressed gratitude for the government’s support of religious freedom and made a personal appeal for Adventist students to be allowed to reschedule Saturday exams at public schools.

“We cannot be detached from the tragedies and experiences of the society in which we live.”

—Vyacheslav Demyan, general director of Adventist Hope Channel in Ukraine, commenting on the Holocaust and other recent tragedies and injustices. The Adventist Church in Ukraine commemorated the United Nations-instituted International Holocaust Remembrance Day 2018 by participating in a special day of remembrance at the Podol Spiritual Center in Kiev.

“Many young people don’t know how to begin and don’t know if they can even turn their love of film into a career.”

—Julio Muñoz, associate director of communication in North America and director of the Sonscreen Film Festival, an Adventist-organized film festival that mentors young Adventist filmmakers and showcases their work. Sonscreen recently partnered with Hawaiian Mission Academy and Southern Adventist University to offer a film production workshop on the academy’s campus.

## 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> (26,900 Square Feet)

The area of a specially constructed pontoon afloat on the Sepik River in the northern region of Papua New Guinea, which served as the site for what is believed to be the first Pathfinder Camporee in the world held entirely on water. The structure accommodated 350 Pathfinders and staff, including 47 tents. A powerful thunderstorm broke large bush ropes and bamboo posts holding the pontoon in position. The pontoon drifted about 300 meters (985 feet) before coming to rest in a bay. Two outboard canoes pushed the pontoon back to its original position.



Photo: Adventist Record

## Changing the Leadership Culture in Inter-America

By Libna Stevens, Inter-American Division News

Changing the leadership culture throughout the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Inter-American Division (IAD) territory is what top church administrators have been aggressively seeking to do with ongoing training geared toward its regional and local church administrators and department heads at every level of the church organization.

Hundreds of committee and board members across unions, conferences, missions, and educational and health institutions in Inter-America participated in an online training program themed “Transformed to Lead a Healthy Organization,” from the IAD headquarters in Miami, Florida, United States, on January 24, 2018.

“The Church is led, not by one person, but by a committee,” said IAD church region president Israel Leito, as the online event began. “We need to be servants of the Lord as we lead His church, because it is not about me, about us, but about God and His church.”

Leito urged board leaders and members to remain loyal to God, to His church and to His people. “Let every committee meeting be an experience of worship; let us make our meetings a way to glorify God and not a moment to control and take advantage of others,” he said.

The six-hour session sought to equip members of governing boards and committees to fulfill their responsibilities, said Balvin Braham, IAD assistant to the president, who is in charge of leadership development for the church in Inter-America. A committee is all about decision-making, and it is so important for its members to understand that process, said Braham.

“Many people who are members of boards do not fully understand their role, and many at times are silent members and may not understand what they vote,” he said. “Board members are the significant ones making the decisions, so they must know their function; this must not just be left to administrators and department leaders.”

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**Regional leaders train committee, board members across the territory.**

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Board members are the ones in charge of the organization; administrators only act on their behalf, added Braham. “We want board members to be able to support the administration in fulfilling the mission and understand their roles in the process of decision-making,” he said. “[We want] to assist them in understanding the principles of the governing policies of the organization.”

Braham emphasized the importance of the training provided by the regional church leaders. “I get so much feedback from individuals, enlightened by what their functions ought to be during committee meetings,” he said. “We recognize the greater effect leaders and members can have as they fill their functions and responsibilities they are called to do.”

The training is part of the IAD’s ongoing Segment Leadership Development (SeLD) conference series, which featured presentations on appeal processes and ad hoc committees, membership, agenda and communicating actions, accountability of members, understanding financial statements, and more.

Several question-and-answer segments were included in the online training, where participants submitted their questions by e-mail during the program.

According to Braham, regional leaders will also provide training to local church board members. Training sessions were scheduled to take place in April across the more than 20,000 churches and congregations in Inter-America. ©



Photo: Libna Stevens/Inter-American Division News

## Groundbreaking Family Conference Discusses Difficult Topics

By Costin Jordache, *Adventist World* news editor and director of communication, Adventist Review Ministries

The first-ever Adventist Pan-African Conference on Dynamic Family Relations was hosted on March 1-3, 2018, on the campus of Adventist University of Africa, an hour from Nairobi, Kenya. The event was organized by world church Family Ministries Department directors Willie and Elaine Oliver, together with family ministries departments from the East-Central Africa (ECD), West-Central Africa (WAD), and Southern Africa-Indian Ocean (SID) divisions.

The conference aimed primarily to discuss the relationship between deeply embedded cultures and traditions throughout Africa and the biblical worldview as related to families. “We are becoming more like the world instead of being salt and light,” Willie Oliver explained. “This is just an opportunity to slow down and take another look at the biblical message for families.”

“This conference is important because culture is so important to all of us, regardless of where we’re from,” added Elaine Oliver. “Our culture usually drives what we do, how we behave, how we make decisions, and how we live our lives.”

Most of the conference speakers were theologians native to Africa, an important and unique aspect of the conference. “It is significant to have almost all of the presenters as Bible scholars bred in Africa who know the culture of Africa,” said ECD president Blasious Ruguri. “They are addressing these things from a very unbiased perspective. Here we cannot accuse any outsider of coming and despising our culture. This is probably the best treatment of the problem we have ever had.”



Photo: Adventist Review

Topics ranged from biblical principles for strong families to more delicate subjects such as polygamy, a cultural tradition and norm in some parts of Africa.

Ron du Preez, a pastor and scholar, shared perspectives from Scripture that pointed to monogamy as the original and ideal design of God. Following the presentation, several attendees shared “the reality on the ground . . . where people are,” as an indication of how addressing deeply embedded culture in Africa is difficult. Challenges include men who have multiple wives and who wish to be baptized. Ethical questions arise as to the impact on wives who are “let go” and who may be cast off, marginalized in their society, and often never allowed to marry again.

Other subjects covered included the impact of urbanization on African family structures, the challenges and opportunities of dual-career marriages, leadership within African families, and divorce trends.

Another conversation centered on *lobola*—the African tradition

**Polygamy, bride price, and divorce among challenging subjects discussed**

that calls for a man to pay a price for his bride. Jongimpi Papu, ministerial secretary of the Cape Conference in South Africa, outlined both positive and negative perceptions about the practice, surveyed Scripture, and concluded that the practice is neither specifically forbidden nor promoted in the Bible. He said, “If *lobola* is to be practiced today, it should be practiced in a way that supports its original meaning and avoids the potential abuses.”

Participants left the conference grateful and hopeful. “These kinds of conferences are not frequent here in Africa,” explained Elie Weick-Dido, WAD president. “But if Africa, with its three divisions, comes together to think through family and marriage issues on the continent, we can learn a lot.” ©

**For the full stories detailing topics covered and further discussion at the Pan-African Conference, visit [AdventistWorld.org](http://AdventistWorld.org).**

**2,599,681**

SAD membership as of  
December 31, 2017

**“My dream is to see young people happy and reinserted in society.”**

—Jeconias Vieira Lopes Neto, an Adventist pastor in Brazil who engaged in crime and drug use for many years before turning to Christ. Neto is now active in the church’s prison ministries program, through which he and a group of friends are providing educational opportunities to young people serving time in prison for their crimes. Recently Neto was selected as one of Brazil’s United Nations (UN) youth ambassadors.

**Newest Mission Boat on the Amazon Builds on Decades of Service**

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in Brazil’s Amazon region inaugurated a new mission boat recently. The launch of *Luzeiro XXX* follows a decades-old tradition of mission vessels providing medical care across the vast Amazon basin. The vessel is 21 meters (69 feet) in length and comes complete with three suites for full-time missionaries to live in, a full kitchen, and a second floor where 15 to 20 hammocks can be hung.

**“More important than the seed being fruitful is the personal involvement of the sower. Statistics, ideas, and seminars are valuable only if every member gets directly involved in the mission of going out to scatter the seed of truth.”**

Erton Köhler, president of the South American Division (SAD), in a recent tweet

**500**

The number of children in the country of Chile who were trained to preach last year. They recently took over church services and Weeks of Prayer throughout the nation as part of a special month dedicated to them. Other children participated by singing and playing musical instruments.

**“It is a commitment and a privilege to prepare ourselves to be missionaries.”**

—Antonio Pedroz, a student from Paraguay attending River Plate Adventist University (RPAU), a school in Entre Ríos, Argentina. The university recently organized an international event to cater to young people wishing to become missionaries and leaders of the Adventist Church. More than 1,400 young people from around the world attended. RPAU itself has more than 200 graduates serving as missionaries in 20 countries, half of them in the 10/40 window. 📍



Photo: River Plate Adventist University



# Perspective

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## Guarding the Center

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May 15 is important. It's the International Day of Families, the day the world community remembers families. Last year's theme was "Families, Education, and Well-being." People around the world have observed this important day since 1993. Yet, based on most research I have seen, divorce rates have not budged, single-parent households have increased, and abuse has not abated.

As a faith community we have repeatedly spoken out on behalf of those suffering domestic violence, human trafficking, female genital mutilation (FGM), rape, and many other unspeakable horrors we encounter daily in our news feed. EndItNow is not just a slogan or a program ([www.enditnow.org](http://www.enditnow.org))—it's an attitude of protest and engagement in the face of misery and pain. It's deeply rooted in God's prophetic voice that we can hear in the likes of Isaiah, Amos, and many other voices of Scripture speaking about orphans, widows, strangers, and those who are poor. I am proud of EndItNow, but I am worried about Adventist families.

Our divorce rates are not significantly different from those found in the cultures we live in. I know many single-parent Adventist homes struggling to make it. Absentee fathers are not just an issue affecting our neighbors.

Last year, the Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research of the General Conference published some of the results of a major 2013 survey covering nine world divisions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church focusing on family worship. Out of the 24,882 people responding to the survey, 17 percent reported that they never have family worship, while 12 percent indicated that they worship together as a family less than once a month. Another 14 percent shared this experience once a week in their families. A total of 43 percent of Adventist church members have little or no engagement with the living Word in the context of their families.

Could it be that the lack of family worship has a bearing on the health of Adventist families all around the globe? The numbers suggest that this is not a regional problem but a global issue.

I remember how the busyness of my life at times kept me from making it home before my three

young daughters would go to bed. I am grateful that my wife carried the torch in those moments. Twice a day we would gather around a table or sit in the living room to spend time with Jesus—together. I am not a statistician, and I don't know if there is a straight line from no or little family worship to losing the next generation of Adventists. As a pastor and educator, however, I do know that time spent with the living Word—individually and collectively—is always healing time that moves hearts closer to one another and brings us together at the foot of the cross.

Family worship requires commitment and creativity. It needs to be age-appropriate. It's not a replacement for honest conversations or the time to "win" an argument. It's the moment to invite the Spirit to make Himself at home: in our hearts, in our living rooms and bedrooms, in our relationships. May 15 would be a great time to restart together the practice of family worship and invite others to share in the blessing. ©

# Finding Hope in a Hurting World

Five personal journeys

**G**od's ways of working on the hearts and in the lives of people are more vast and unsearchable than the grains of sand on a beach or the drops of water in the ocean. The apostle Paul exclaims, "How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33).

Just when we think we know what to expect of God, He does something utterly surprising and totally outside the "box" in which we humans have placed Him. Above all, the love, compassion, and forbearance He shows for fallen humanity—and the lengths to which He goes to save us for eternity—leave us in awe of such a benevolent God.

Here are five vignettes about people in various world regions who have shared their personal journey, or search, for hope in a hurting world—which ultimately led them to Jesus. We pray these stories will reveal even more fully the immeasurable love of the God we serve.—*Editors.*





The journey to Natalia's baptism began with watching the movie *Hacksaw Ridge*.

## Finding Jesus Through a Movie

**N**atalia Tatarczuch, 24, studies sociology and psychology in Krakow, Poland. She loves to play squash, listen to music, and go to movies. The last passion, though, is special. Two years ago she had never heard of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. That changed when she watched Mel Gibson's movie *Hacksaw Ridge*.

Natalia is very candid: what she enjoyed most when watching *Hacksaw Ridge* were the special effects. The Desmond Doss story, however, inspired her too.

"I admire people who are different," she says. She identified with Doss to some extent because people find her to be a nonconformist as well, she says.

Before watching the Oscar-winning movie, Natalia, a member of another denomination, had not heard of Doss or Adventists.

"Actually, I heard the name 'Adventist' for the first time ever [in the movie]," Natalia says. "I was repeating it in my mind several times so I could check it out after the movie." And she did. She then sent an e-mail to a local Adventist pastor, who invited her to attend a meeting. The meeting turned out to be a Bible study.

Natalia found it difficult to change her beliefs and religious practices, and living the "Adventist lifestyle" seemed as if it would be a burden.

"After a while, though, I realized that something was missing in my life, and that I needed to put God as number one," Natalia says.

"I was gaining new knowledge from the Adventists, who welcomed me warmly," she adds.

"I remember the first time I went to the Adventist church. I felt awkward because I was sitting in the first row, not knowing when to bow down, when to stand up. However, some [of the members] hugged me and showed me so much love!"

Natalia was baptized on January 27, 2018.

Natalia deals with more challenges than most university students. "I have suffered with epilepsy for 18 years, but it has drawn me closer to God," she explains. "I don't understand this illness, and I still struggle with it, but it has made me a stronger person. Many times I've had to be strong for myself as well as for my parents, who have been very supportive of me. They've been with me in hospitals, hiding their tears. They are still very supportive, even of my life-changing decisions."

Polish Adventist youth actively promoted the Desmond Doss story, the movie *Hacksaw Ridge*, and the Adventist Church in many creative ways, including posting pictures of the Doss story on Facebook and printing slogans on T-shirts that read "Desmond Saved 75. Jesus Saved All."

Natalia finds herself as one of those who was saved. She now feels that the missing "puzzle piece" in her life has been found in Jesus.

To view a short documentary about Natalia's conversion, go to <https://youtu.be/GOQs2KegwKI>. ©

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**Marek Rakowski** is executive secretary of the Polish Union Conference, headquartered in **Warsaw**.

Ricardo McCalla; his wife, Nuvia; and their three children



## From Dancehall DJ to Promising Preacher

Getting a buss” is Jamaican slang for breaking into the dancehall music industry as an entertainer. Many young Jamaicans see this as a route out of poverty into wealth and fame. Underneath the glitter there is often a life of drugs, violence, and lewd living.

At age 20 Ricardo McCalla, who was known as “Bling,” was the rising dancehall star of Skibo, a rural community in Portland, Jamaica.

Fraught with illiteracy and unemployment, Skibo was unlikely to produce anyone noteworthy, so the community was proud of their budding entertainer. In 2002 he was poised to make a big career move—recording his first album. The Saturday night before the Monday recording he threw himself into his performance at a stage show.

There was another persistent influence in McCalla’s life, his Seventh-day Adventist mother, who warned him about his wild lifestyle and encouraged him to attend

church. He went occasionally with no intention of being baptized. His mother’s influence did, however, help him feel a need for Christ.

McCalla left the stage show that Saturday night drunk, and collapsed into bed. He woke up Sunday morning badly hung over and vomiting. He then overheard his mother praying, “God, You gave me this boy, but I cannot manage him. Take him, Jesus.”

Thinking she was praying for him to die, McCalla felt angry and deeply unsettled. He then remembers being startled as a bright light suddenly surrounded him. The light started to move away, and he felt terrified that he was witnessing the Spirit of God leaving him. He begged God not to abandon him.

“I knew at that moment I had to give my life to God. It felt like a life-or-death decision,” he says.

The Skibo Adventist Church was holding an evangelistic series, and a baptism was scheduled for that same Sunday morning at the river.

Without informing his mother, McCalla went to the church and said he wanted to be baptized. The pastor reviewed the beliefs of the church and prayed with him. He was baptized that morning!

The community crowded around the baptismal site to watch in disbelief as the man who did them proud at the stage show the previous night surrendered to Christ. No one was more surprised than his mother.

“She cried for a long time, but then rejoiced that God had answered her prayer,” McCalla says.

Things changed rapidly for McCalla after his baptism. In time he learned to read well, led out in the local church, and got married.

Today he and wife, Nuvia, have three children. He is studying theology at Northern Caribbean University and is set to graduate in 2020.

He says, “I can never be ashamed to share the gospel, not after what God has done to transform my life!” ©

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**Lawrie Henry** is a media writer, producer, and adjunct faculty member for the Department of Communication Studies at Northern Caribbean University in **Jamaica**.

# By Logic and Faith

I was supposed to be in the car with my parents that day. They were going to keep me home from school as a special reward and take me with them to test-drive a car. But when the time came, I suddenly felt panic. *You can't be in the car with them today.* I behaved in an unruly way, and I was dropped off at school.

It turned out to be a warning. A huge truck hit my parents' car, crushing the entire back seat and causing the car to roll down a 30-foot ravine. My parents survived and recovered from the crash, but I would have died.

I'd been raised in a religious household. A moral upbringing, but without religion, because of my parents' negative experiences. Religion had been a cause of pain and justification for abuses, not a source of love.

I was 10 when the car crash occurred. At that point I felt strongly that there was something or Someone looking out for me, guiding and protecting me. My grandmother gave me an old King James Version of the Bible, and I tried to read it like a regular book, got frustrated, and hid it in a bottom drawer of my dresser. But I felt compelled to keep it, to protect it. Somehow I knew it was sacred.

The tipping point came when I went to college and the Internet was available. Suddenly I could learn about different religions. I was a straight-A student studying microbiology and music, but I struggled with the holes I saw in the scientific theories taught. To make extra money, I played the oboe for church performances.

When you play for a church, you go in, perform, they hand you a check, and you leave. Treated as hired help, few realize the potential to witness to musicians.

I was eventually asked to play for an Adventist church. I appreciated the sermon about not trusting people (they're fallible), but testing everything against the true light of God's Word. Plus, the members were friendly. I was invited to a potluck for the first time.

I made friends with a pastor's son, and we had long conversations about the Bible, religion, and truth. I asked hard questions and got answers that were based on logic and reason. I moved to Maryland for graduate studies and eventually got baptized by the pastor of the Spencerville Seventh-day Adventist Church in Silver Spring.

I had come from a place that associated religion with pain and fairy tales. I needed more than platitudes; I needed a rock-solid foundation that held up against critical analysis, one that matched the science and could explain the love of my Guide and lifelong Protector. ☺

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Jamie Jean Schneider Domm writes from Virginia, United States.

At that point  
I felt strongly  
that there was  
something  
or Someone  
looking out for  
me, guiding and  
protecting me.



Jamie Jean  
Schneider Domm

# From Buddhism to Jesus

I grew up in a home where we followed the beliefs and rituals of Confucianism and Buddhism. When I enrolled in a Christian university, however, I noticed the differences in church cultures. I also met MyeongAe there, the woman who would one day be my wife. She was a faithful Seventh-day Adventist.

I began attending church with MyeongAe on Saturdays, the biblical Sabbath, and felt I was experiencing true worship.

MyeongAe and I were married in 1981, but my parents strongly opposed our religion. The conflict was so great that I persuaded my wife not to attend church. In time, we moved away from where my parents lived, and even though MyeongAe began attending church again, I continued to follow the religion of my parents.

When giving birth to our second son, MyeongAe became seriously ill and had to have surgery. While at the hospital I noticed the Adventist pastor and his wife sitting nearby and praying for my wife. I will never forget their sincere prayers, as well as their love and concern.

Because of the power of prayer, MyeongAe recovered and my son was born healthy and well. I now had a positive attitude toward the Adventist Church, but my faith was still weak.

After 10 years of marriage everyone in my family was going to church except me. My older daughter was

attending elementary school, but the teachers and students were making life very difficult for her because she kept the Saturday Sabbath. The stress affected her grades.

MyeongAe suggested that we enroll our daughter at the Adventist school, so we did. It was a long daily commute, but the difference in my daughter was immediate. Her grades improved and she was happy in school. I began to look at the church and school with increasing favor.

Life became more challenging, however. Because of crises and conflicts at work, I ended up resigning from my job. It was a difficult time, and at my wife's suggestion I began studying the Bible with the pastor. I learned more about God, and the Holy Spirit filled my heart with love and peace. I was soon baptized—together with my daughter—into the Adventist Church. God led me in my journey to Him and used a desperate situation to provide me with a greater opportunity to come to know Him.

Life has continued to provide many challenges. But as I look back on my journey I can truly say that God is good. God continuously led me closer and closer to Him, little by little every day. He is with me still. ☺

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**ByungGwan Choi** serves as an elder in the Gyomunri Adventist Church in **Guri City, Seoul, Korea.**

ByungGwan  
Choi and  
his wife,  
MyeongAe





Sakhile Nxumalo stands in front of the theology building at Helderberg College in Cape Town, South Africa, where he is preparing for ministry.

## “I Should Have Been Dead— But God Saved Me!”

I grew up believing in my ancestors; in other words, worshipping the dead. With that worldview I moved from the mountainous province of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa to a town near Johannesburg, where I lived and worked in a more Christian-centric community.

There I found people who professed to live as Christians but were very rude, showing no sympathy or love. They told those of us who followed traditional African religions that we were sinners, that we were useless because their God hated sin.

I developed a hatred for Christianity. I started reading books on Bible criticism, intending to get rid of these Christians' attitudes. I would ask my Christian colleagues questions that were tricky to answer, questions that would undermine what they believed. Some of them yielded their faith, but one man strongly stood up for his faith. He shared Isaiah 8:19, 20 with me. It showed that God was against what I believed in. This verse troubled me, but in my mind I still fought against Christians.

I am a qualified electrician and work with heavy current electricity. One day at work I was shocked by a strong bolt of electricity. I fell to the floor, and while lying there I heard a “small” voice ask, “Who saved your life?”

I knew I should not have survived a shock from such a high voltage, but somehow I had. *I should be dead*, I thought. I decided that since God had miraculously saved my life, even while I was trying to destroy His people, I would give my life to Him. That moment I accepted Christ with all my heart.

My life changed completely. The very next day my cravings for cigarettes and alcohol were completely

gone. I began to realize how powerful God is. I bought a Bible and started reading it. I started praying. I no longer associated with my old friends.

I became interested in the book of Daniel, but I couldn't find anyone to explain it to me. Then I asked two brothers in Christ to fast with me for three days for answers to the book of Daniel. A month later one of them told me about a study on Daniel on TV. The speaker went through the book of Daniel, and I understood it! I also learned about end-time events. I went to many libraries to check the references, and confirmed that the information presented in the study was correct. The Bible started to make sense and my faith increased.

I didn't know that these studies were sponsored by Seventh-day Adventists, so I continued to attend my same church. My church leaders couldn't explain the book of Daniel, or answer other Bible questions about such subjects as the Sabbath or speaking in tongues, so I started praying for direction. I asked God for a sign: that two people would come to my house and tell me where their church is, a church that followed the Bible.

Mr. Mahlangu and Mrs. Xaba, Seventh-day Adventists, came exactly as I had asked the Lord. It was then—because of prayer and God's leading—that I joined the Adventist movement. ©

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Global View

# Church Unity and Biblical Authority, Part 2

Working together to fulfill Christ's mission

*This is abridged from a presentation given at the Global Leadership Summit in Lisbon, Portugal, on February 6, 2018.—Editors.*

**W**hat is real unity? It comes from a heartfelt submission to God and to our fellow church members as we work together, being instructed by the Holy Word, the Spirit of Prophecy, and the Holy Spirit. The resulting unity far supersedes any privately held convictions after items have been carefully reviewed by the world church and decisions have been taken. It far supersedes any legal “rights” that might be exercised. Moral and spiritual obligations to God, to His church, and to His united mission far outweigh any legal or independent opinions of a member or an organization within the general church body.

Some may contend that a church organization duly registered as a legal entity is beyond the purview of general worldwide church decisions, the General Conference (GC), or division working policies or model constitutions. The GC Executive Committee, however, with worldwide representation voted: “The General Conference *Working Policy* shall be strictly adhered to by all organizations in every part of the world field. The work in every organization shall be administered in full harmony with the policies of the General Conference and of the divisions respectively.”<sup>1</sup>

## **ETERNAL TRUTHS**

Some may argue that the world church has no legal standing to force compliance. Let's be very clear: the church as a whole, including its individual units, operates on eternal truths, biblical principles, spiritual values, and heavenly ethics far beyond any earthly legal aspects. The Church is governed by the leading of the Holy Spirit and the biblical beliefs and mission we accept from God's hand.

As a result of the power of the Holy Spirit's leading, the Church, its leaders, institutions, organizations, and members, are motivated by heaven-blessed collegial goodwill engendered by the mission for the Advent movement outlined in God's Holy Word and the Spirit of Prophecy. Regardless of opinions, there is a submissiveness to God's leading as expressed in His worldwide church and its deliberations as a representative body from all parts of the earth.



## Real unity comes from a heartfelt submission to God and to our fellow church members as we work together.

When any organization as part of the body of Christ, His church, demands its own way contrary to the will of the entire body, that willful and independent organization is working against God's wishes for a church united in mission.

As Jesus said: "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one" (John 17:20-22).

What an amazing request of Christ for us in His last-day Advent movement, a globally diverse group united in Christ and His mission for the Church.

The supposition that there can be unity in diversity can be misused to mask true intentions to embark on a path of disunity in the name of diversity. Passages such as John 17; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 2:1-4; and Acts 2:46 do not advocate a "mock" unity, allowing various parts of the body to do as they wish under a pretense of professed unity.

In a section entitled "Unity in Diversity" Ellen White wrote: "In loving sympathy and confidence God's workers are to unite with one another. He who says or does anything that tends to separate the members of Christ's church is counterworking the Lord's purpose. Wrangling and dissent in the church, the encouragement of suspicion and unbelief, are dishonoring to Christ. . . . True religion unites hearts not only with Christ, but with one another in a most tender union."<sup>2</sup>

This self-sacrificing spirit and genuine humility born from connection with Christ is what we each need to diminish the tendency in all of us to champion our own opinions and convictions in the face of the Church's voted actions by God's remnant church on earth.

### A WALL OF EVIDENCE

It would appear that opposition to compliance with the general body's actions such as the General Conference in session or the General Conference Executive Committee functioning as God's remnant church, on the grounds of "conscience" would face a wall of evidence from Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy indicating that independent thinking must be submitted to the larger body's decisions.

Ellen White wrote: "There have ever been in the church those who are constantly inclined toward individual independence. They seem unable to realize that independence of spirit is liable to lead the human agent to have too much confidence in himself and to trust in his own judgment rather than to respect the counsel and highly esteem the judgment of his brethren, especially of those in the offices that God has appointed for the leadership of His people. God has invested His church with special authority and power which no one can be justified in disregarding and despising, for he who does this despises the voice of God."<sup>3</sup>

Ellen White also offered profound instructions for all: "When, in a General Conference, the judgment of the brethren assembled from all parts of the field is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be stubbornly maintained, but surrendered. Never should a laborer regard as a virtue the persistent maintenance of his position of independence, contrary to the decision of the general body. . . . God has ordained that the representatives of His church from all parts of the earth, when assembled in a General Conference, shall have authority . . . . God has vested in His church in the judgment and voice of the General Conference assembled to plan for the prosperity and advancement of His work."<sup>4</sup>

Let's never forget the true mission of the Church as we reach the world through revival and reformation, mission to the cities, comprehensive health ministry, total member involvement, and more, to finish God's work through His power. Ellen

White wrote: "The church of Christ is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. Its mission is to carry the gospel to the world."<sup>5</sup> We are to be united in this mission.

Let's always remember God's objective of unity in His church as we lift up Christ and His three angels' messages: "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3).

Christ's power over each of us and His church, and our submission to that power, is of utmost importance in realizing the spiritual necessity of church unity and biblical authority to accomplish God's mission of proclaiming Jesus' soon second coming when complete unity takes place. ©

<sup>1</sup> *General Conference Working Policy* (2016-2017), B 15 10, p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 9, p. 145.

<sup>3</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), pp. 163, 164.

<sup>4</sup> E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 260, 261.

<sup>5</sup> Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 81.

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# The Fifth Door



**“I’m so glad you have a Bible! That book saved my life.”**

I remember my prayer that morning: “God, please help me find the people who need You the most, and show me someone I can study the Bible with.” I had decided to canvass during the summer. I was assigned an isolated city in southern Argentina, famous for its petroleum fields, roaring winds, and desert-like countryside. It also boasted the highest suicide rate in the country.

At noon I had just knocked on house number four and still had not talked to anybody. I knocked on the door of house number five and waited impatiently. Finally a man opened the door. He was interested in the books about health, but he hesitated when I asked him if we could pray together. He said that his wife was the religious one, but that she was not there at the moment. He also told me that they had experienced financial difficulties. They had no money for books.

I gave him a small booklet about key biblical truths with my name and phone number on the front page. As I headed toward the door, I saw an open Bible. With an optimistic smile I said: “I’m so glad you have a Bible! That book saved my life.” He closed the door and I started to walk the gravel road again.

An hour later I got a phone call from an agitated woman who asked me to please send a pastor to her house. Apparently, a girl had left a book with a phone number on it, and she was desperate to find someone who would answer her questions about the Bible. I had been the girl; and I was more than happy to help her. Then I remembered my prayer that morning.

We both cried as she told me her life story. But her tears turned to joy as she shared the peace she felt knowing that God was in control. We arranged to meet every Sabbath afternoon to study the Bible. Before leaving that first day, she told me: “My husband was startled when you

said the Bible had saved your life. He kept wondering what had happened to you.” God uses our most “innocent” comments to touch skeptical hearts.

Summer went by and the day before I left for home I went to visit the couple, who had become my friends. I wanted to give them two of my favorite books, *The Desire of Ages* and *The Great Controversy*. They invited me for supper and gave me a present. The woman had made a little cardboard Bible. She had decorated it and written: “Thank you for introducing us to the Bible.” As I was getting ready to leave, the man grabbed *The Great Controversy* and told me he was going to read it, then he asked me to pray! Surely, God’s Word is still “alive and active” and “not chained” (Heb. 4:12, NIV; 2 Tim. 2:9).

Every day hundreds of people, young and old, work in this ministry. Thousands of stories are yet to be told, many of which we will hear only in heaven. They all start with Jesus knocking on the doors of our hearts.

Have you answered His call? Have you knocked on any doors today? ☺

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# Lost but Now Found

A refugee's story

BY KIMI-ROUX JAMES, AS TOLD TO IGOR MITROVIC



**T**wo years. That's the time it took for Massih Nazari, 18, to reach Serbia, after fleeing his hometown in Kabul, Afghanistan.

"I loved my home," Nazari said. "I lived with my parents and siblings, finished school, and wrote stories, novels, and poems. I also practiced sewing." Nazari aspires to become a writer.

His dream was shattered when his beloved town in Kabul was rocked by instability. What was once a place filled with peace and harmony became infested with violence and economic hardship. The sudden turn of events halted Nazari's future plans. He had to leave.

"I am not a quitter, but living conditions got worse, and work was hard to find," Nazari said. He decided to leave the home he knew; his family remained. Traveling through harsh and hindering conditions, Nazari eventually got to Serbia.

More than 4,000 Afghani, including men, women, and children, also found refuge in Serbia. Fear of the Taliban, low income status, and lack of security were reasons they reportedly left Afghanistan.

"Being a refugee, you lose everything," Nazari said. "I simply wanted a better way." Nazari hoped to travel farther west to Europe, but the border along Serbia was closed until further notice from the government.

Meanwhile, on the outskirts of Belgrade, Serbia's capital city, Nazari found lodging at an asylum center, where he remained for months. Without a job, Nazari felt hopeless.

"Could this be the end of my life pursuits?" he pondered.

## FINDING HOPE

All was not lost when Nazari learned through a friend about a community center in Borca, a few miles from Belgrade. It was run by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) network office in Serbia.

"I met ADRA's workers Yasin and Karim, who explained what ADRA is and the projects it offered," Nazari said. "I liked what I heard and started visiting ADRA's center."

His ADRA instructors noticed how quiet and shy he was. When he recited poems, it was in his native language, Farsi. "He knew no other language, and we felt that to progress he should learn other languages and subjects," they recalled. With translation assistance, Yasin and Karim worked with Nazari, determined to help him receive a higher education.

Nazari also got involved in sports and took a sewing class. "I enjoy sewing and knew it would help me advance my skills as a tailor," Nazari said. Upon completion of vocational training, he earned a sewing certificate.

"ADRA's staff were there for me when no one else was," said Nazari. "I have lifelong friends at ADRA."

## ONE YEAR LATER

One year has passed and Nazari currently serves as a volunteer on ADRA's staff, teaching other refugees how to sew. Nazari is also working on a book of poetry that will be published in local bookstores and online.

"Massih is like every other human being with hopes and dreams," said Igor Mitrovic, ADRA Serbia's country director. "Like him, we are helping refugees meet their needs. At our center, they can rest assured, we are here to help them."

*The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) is the global humanitarian organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It works in more than 130 countries to bring long-term development programs and immediate emergency response to communities through a network of global offices. To learn more, go to [www.adra.org](http://www.adra.org). ©*

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**Kimi-Roux James** is ADRA's communications specialist for marketing and development. **Igor Mitrovic** is ADRA Serbia's country director.

Devotional

# Divine Immunotherapy

God's antidote to sin

**F**or years I have suffered from an addiction: the indiscriminate and persistent watching of television. If the set was on, I was glued to it. I wasted many hours of idleness and little good ever came out of it.

Years ago, when I saw two of our young children back from school, plopped on the couch with their eyes peeled to the TV (a basic set, with no frills or extra channels—I never dared get cable!), I realized they would turn out just like me unless I did something about it. After consulting with my wife, I got rid of the TV that night. The aftermath was that our children were fine with it, they became more disciplined about doing their homework after school, and our family finally had consistent evening worships together.

When I began traveling extensively, the temptation became more subtle. In just about every hotel room there was a television set that was bigger, with a myriad of channel options. Then HD TV came along. The enemy knew that was my weakness: Why invent new temptations when old ones work? The temptation still exists after all these years, like drinking for most former alcoholics.

Today TV has lost a lot of ground to much more sophisticated technologies. Wasting time on social



media has become an art form, even if a tinge of guilt surfaces in the soul for watching so many YouTube clips or reading tweets each hour of the day. We rationalize that this is how it is now with an air of inevitability.

This has been my struggle. Yours may look different. You may wonder what my challenge with TV has to do with Sabbath rest? More than you may think.

One bulwark throughout all those years of TV watching was the Sabbath. Having grown up with parents who faithfully kept the seventh day holy, even in my most desperate times of lostness, I looked forward to the Sabbath. On Friday night, and for the next 24 hours, I would *not* turn on the TV. The Sabbath was my antidote to darkness.

And what a joyous difference that made! I had more time to read the Bible and meditate on it. Forgiveness for misusing God's great gift of time was still available. The steady diet of secularism, fantasy, and meaninglessness caught by watching TV subsided, and it just seemed like my soul finally rested on what really mattered: a God who loved me and was interested even in wayward me.

There is a reason God told us to keep the Sabbath holy (Ex. 20:8): The Sabbath means freedom from the tyranny of self (Deut. 5:12-15). God made the Sabbath for His creation (Mark 2:27). This planet was made for us. Our bodies were designed just so for our benefit. The Sabbath was made for our sakes. We depend on it just as we depend on our hearts beating and our lungs breathing every few seconds.

### THE GENESIS OF THE SABBATH

How did God come up with this idea of the Sabbath? Well, according

to Genesis, on Friday, the sixth day, He finished Creation (Gen. 1:31-2:1). God's last creations were Adam and Eve (Gen. 1:26, 27), having already made for them everything else that week. He made them in His image, capable of being spiritual beings with the full ability to choose. Logically, the first full day of their existence was spent entirely with God, getting to know their Creator.

Think about it: Adam, Eve, and God. What a wonderful way to start! I can just imagine Adam and Eve being giddy with joy visiting, communing, and learning firsthand from Jesus—their Creator (Col. 2:13-17). As sunset Saturday approached, the Son of God had one more surprise for them: What about spending this day together next week? And it's been like that ever since: God inviting, and us rejoicing.

That's how it began. The Sabbath was never a Jewish invention, nor was it the invention of busy post-moderns who became enlightened about the need to take one day off during the week. The Sabbath was a divine creation for a human need (Gen. 2:1-3) that was so foundational that God edged it forever as the fourth commandment (Ex. 20:8-11).

We all have a great need to commune with God, to rest in Him, to lay aside the burdens of our daily routines. The Hebrew word in the Old Testament is *shabbat*. It means not only to "rest" but also to "cease." Even if we were not tired, even if all we did was useful and good from Sunday on, we must cease our routine come Friday sunset (Lev. 23:32) for a weekly and major spiritual tune-up. Keeping the Sabbath holy is the music that lifts our souls to listen to that which we cannot otherwise hear living in this world.

When my wife and I first moved to northern Asia from North

## Keeping the Sabbath holy is the music that lifts our souls to listen to what we cannot otherwise hear living in this world.


America, we felt overwhelmed at the sheer numbers of people everywhere in the subways, trains, and sidewalks of such cities as Tokyo, Seoul, and Hong Kong. It highlighted for me our desperate human need for inner peace. Eye contact is avoided. Almost everyone is fixed on their smartphones. Life happens; it is not lived. And to think that a minuscule percentage of all these millions even have a concept of the loving God of the universe made my heart sad and my spirit resolute to do something about it.

The Sabbath of the Bible is part of the solution. It's the antidote to our hectic lives. "Be still [literally, "let go, cease"], and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10) cried the psalmist. "When You said, 'Seek My face,'" wrote another, "my heart said to You, 'Your face, Lord, I will seek'" (Ps. 27:8).

Why do we entertain ourselves to death when true peace is available? Why do we spend all our days focused on living on our terms when we instinctively know that it will not work? Rest for you and me is available, and ceasing to strive, treating the Sabbath as the holy time it is, will make tangible that rest (Heb. 4:4-9). ☺

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The original of this colorized photo of Ellen White is on display at the Ellen G. White Visitor Center, in Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.

Discovering the Spirit of Prophecy

# Support From Unexpected Places

## Ellen White's writings published by other Christians

**E**llen White's writings have been a blessing to me. Millions of people around the world can probably say the same. Nevertheless, both her claim to divine inspiration and her refusal to have her writings added to the biblical canon have sometimes created in me a certain uneasiness to share her writings with other Christians.

Consequently, I was surprised to find stories of Christians of different faith backgrounds who appreciated her writings and shared them with the wider Christian community, and society at large.

### **EVANGELICAL PUBLISHES STEPS TO CHRIST**

When Ellen White's manuscript of a small book on the Christian experience was presented to leading Adventist ministers in July 1891, they immediately exchanged ideas about how the book could receive

the widest possible circulation. George B. Starr, who had worked alongside the famous Christian evangelist Dwight L. Moody in Chicago in 1875, suggested offering the manuscript to Fleming H. Revell, brother-in-law of Moody and a Christian publisher in Chicago.<sup>1</sup>

Revell established an independent publishing company in 1870 after seeing the need for books that help transfer Christian faith into practical everyday life. Starr's suggestion was interesting for at least two reasons. First, Revell had become "the most significant publisher of evangelical books in North America."<sup>2</sup> Second, he had previously published *Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced* (1889) by the former Adventist minister Dudley M. Canright, a blatant critique of Ellen White and Adventist beliefs.

Ellen White was pleased with the idea and offered the manuscript to Revell, who accepted it and published the

## Ellen White's works have benefited many people in their personal relationship with Jesus.

book. Revell considered it a practical spiritual work that was “unique in its helpfulness” and apt “to guide the inquirer, to inspire the young Christian, and to comfort and encourage the mature believer.”<sup>3</sup>

*Steps to Christ* became an instant bestseller, running through seven editions in the first year (1892).<sup>4</sup> Revell appreciated his interaction with White and wanted to publish more of her books. Through his influence *Steps to Christ*, this masterpiece on learning how to walk with Jesus, benefitted many people who otherwise may not have known about it.

### STEPS TO CHRIST PUBLISHED IN HUNGARIAN

One year after *Steps to Christ* was published in the United States, Ludwig R. Conradi, president of the European field, sent a copy of the book to the prominent Reformed minister and journal editor József Szalay in Austria-Hungary. Szalay felt that as most people in Hungary were not really converted, he would have to make changes to the text and add explanations. Conradi requested to see one chapter with Szalay's changes and explanations marked for his approval.

After Szalay had finished translating the first chapter, he replied, “I cannot change it, it is so good, so accurate, one line flows from another so that men cannot change it, not a word. . . . The Lord can use this work very much to the edification of the saints.”<sup>5</sup>

After it was published, Szalay advertised the book in his journal: “I never read any piece of writing which is better; one which discusses spiritual life, practical Christianity, more thoroughly and clearly, than this. I recommend it to everybody, really, to everybody. My fellow Christian believers, if you cannot afford to buy it any other way, sell your coats in order to buy this book; it is worthy of such sacrifice. If anyone does not even have a coat, but has a strong desire to own this book, for him I will send it free, paying for it out of the missionary fund.”<sup>6</sup>

### EDUCATION IN SERBIAN

Another interesting episode is the translation and publication of White's book *Education* into the Serbian language in 1912. Originally published nine years earlier by Pacific Press, the book somehow caught the attention of Paja Pavle Radosavljević (1879-1958), a native of Serbia and a close friend of Nikola Tesla (1856-1943).

At the time, Radosavljević was assistant professor of experimental pedagogy and director of the pedagogical laboratory at New York University. Later he emerged as a prominent reformer of American education and leader in the field of experimental psychology and pedagogy.<sup>7</sup>

Radosavljević was fascinated by the ideas and principles laid out in the book *Education*, and he provided

a literal Serbian translation of the entire book. He added three short chapters of his own, in which he applied the principles to the context in his native country and the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Surprisingly, Radosavljević claimed authorship of the book and made no mention of White.<sup>8</sup> His readers may have been interested in other works of Ellen White had they known her name. Although his conduct was unethical, the book's teachings reached people who otherwise might never have encountered it.

### OF BENEFIT TO MANY MORE PEOPLE

We Seventh-day Adventists believe that Ellen White's visions and dreams were true manifestations of the modern-day gift of prophecy (Rev. 12:17; 19:10). We appreciate the spiritual insights given through her writings. Although Ellen White wrote many of her books for members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, she also wrote others with a wider audience in mind. Her Conflict of the Ages series, *Christ's Object Lessons*, and particularly *Steps to Christ* are concrete examples.

People who do not belong to our faith community may not share our position on the divine inspiration of Ellen White, yet these three examples show that some may appreciate the deep, personal spirituality promoted through her writings, even to the point of becoming instruments in spreading her writings.

Through their influence Ellen White's works have benefited many people in their personal relationship with Jesus. It is an encouragement for us to share those publications with all those who yearn for a closer walk with Christ. ©

<sup>1</sup> Tim Poirier, “A Century of Steps,” *Adventist Review*, May 14, 1992, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *About Revell*, (Baker Publishing Group), <http://bakerpublishinggroup.com/revell/about-revell> (accessed Jan. 28, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in A. L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Australian Years, 1891-1900* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1983), vol. 4, p. 36.

<sup>4</sup> Poirier, “A Century of Steps,” p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> L. R. Conradi, “The Truth in Foreign Tongues,” *Review and Herald*, Jan. 9, 1894, p. 21.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Jenő Szigeti, “Steps to Christ Has Interesting History in Hungary,” *Adventist Review*, Feb. 3, 1983, p. 19.

<sup>7</sup> Wikipedia contributors, “Paja Radosavljević,” *Wikipedia*, The Free Encyclopedia, [https://sr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paja\\_Radosavljević](https://sr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paja_Radosavljević) (accessed Jan. 28, 2018).

<sup>8</sup> Paja P. Radosavljević, *Biblijska Pedagogija: Monografija iz Istorijske Nauke o Vaspitanju* (Karlovc: M. Janković, 1912).

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What We Believe

*The Second Coming of Christ*

# Paradise

# 2.0

Visions of a  
bright new world

In the beginning God created heaven and earth, humans, and Eden—Paradise. A fantastic garden, a place without unmet needs, in perfect harmony. Sin caused this place to become tragically inaccessible. It slowly fell into oblivion and finally disappeared from this earth. But the longing for it never died. Since then, every generation has dreamed its own dreams about paradise. People of all ages have been looking for this place where a better life is possible.

## **IDEAL WORLD: SOUTH PACIFIC ISLAND UTOPIA**

More than 500 years ago English statesman and humanist Thomas More wrote the book *Utopia*, Greek for “non-place” or “nowhere.” Its content is quickly summarized: A sailor, Raphael Hythlodius, raves about the perfect state on the distant island of Utopia. The island is more than 200 miles long. Its cities are magnificent. All residents speak the same language. There is neither money nor power. Cooperation is based on the principle of shared common good.

More had his own motives in writing this book. As an island state, Utopia was not least a counter model to his contemporary England. He outlined an alternative to the inequalities of his time, to abusive capitalism, and to the poverty of the peasant population. The book gave its name to an entire genre of literature, art, and music.

## **FARAWAY WORLD: STAR WARS**

Until the nineteenth century, authors projected their ideal location onto distant islands or other hard-to-reach locations. But after the last white spots on the map had disappeared and the discovery of our planet had been completed, the perfect place was moved into the



future or into space, ideally overlapping. This new genre of literature and art is known as science fiction.

Frenchman Jules Verne, born in 1828, is generally regarded as the father of science fiction. Verne put scientific and technical processes at the center of literature for the first time. Many of us are familiar with some of the heroes he created. Remember Captain Nemo and his *Nautilus*? the world traveler Phileas Fogg or Professor Lidenbrock?

### **RED WORLD: SOCIALISM AND COMMUNISM**

A very different way to rediscover paradise was taken by Karl Marx, a contemporary of Jules Verne. Born in Trier, Germany, in 1818, Marx became a world-famous philosopher and social theorist. The fundamental ideas of socialism and Communism are based on his work. With his more egalitarian theories of society, he promised humanity paradise on earth during their lifetime.

History shows that this attempt to improve living conditions ended in disaster too. Instead of paradise, the dream of equality led to dictatorship. In 1989 despair broke its course and the wall that divided Germany into two parts crumbled and took with it all ideals of a forced equality.

### **TECHNO WORLD: MEGACITY “NEOM”**

One of the latest ideas to create paradise on earth is called Neom. Neom is a high-tech megacity that will span parts of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt. Some 26,500 square kilometers (10,230 square miles) big at a cost of a half a trillion dollars, Saudi-Arabian Crown prince Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud wants to raise this city from the desert sands in the next few years. Neom is an artificial word from “neo” and “mos-taqbal” and means something like “new future.” The first construction phase is expected to be completed by 2025.

Neom will be innovative and ultramodern, a center of science, business, and prosperity, with new laws and taxes. The digital megaindustrial zone is to be equipped with autonomous road traffic, passenger drones, and self-learning traffic systems. The energy needed to run the city will be produced by wind and sun. Everyone and everything will be digitally connected. It’s another attempt to create a new society.

One wonders about the feasibility of this project. Will it really do justice to our longing for a better world? So far, all intents to establish a technological utopia haven’t worked out.

### **BROKEN WORLD: FASCINATION ABOUT DYSTOPIA**

The fall of Communism and socialism introduced the downfall of the great sociopolitical utopias. Utopian writers have also retired. There was a lack of imagination for good or fortune in the twentieth century. Instead of a utopia, dystopia was established. The increasing fear of technology and surveillance resulted in such bestsellers as *1984*, by George Orwell, and *Brave New World*, by Aldous Huxley. In the twenty-first century dystopian films are booming in Hollywood. The world is disillusioned and broken. Postmodernism seems to do without the grand narrative that holds the world together. Today paradise is not found in the here and now, even less in the future.

### **NEW WORLD: HEAVENLY JERUSALEM**

One thing is certain though. Paradise remains lost forever, despite all human efforts to find it again. Ultimately, we humans have to admit that the bright new world is not available here on earth. But there is hope. The Bible tells us of a better world to come. In the first century A.D. John, the disciple, had a vision about the future. Serving a prison sentence on the island of Patmos, he saw a new society and the future of humanity. “Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. . . . Then He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new’” (Rev. 21:2-5).

God will create the only real bright new world. Paradise is not about a holiday idyll on a faraway island; not about space travel, absurd fantasies of equality or high technology; it’s about the absence of sin. “But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie” (verse 27). Instead, God’s presence guarantees supreme happiness. Meeting God face to face will be enough, as it was in Eden. “But the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face” (Rev. 22:3, 4).

Whoever longs for this better place is invited to believe and come along: “And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come” (Rev. 22:17).

So, come! ☺

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Read more about *What We Believe* at  
[www.adventist.org/en/beliefs/](http://www.adventist.org/en/beliefs/)

# The Mystery of Godliness

Q

## What is “the mystery of godliness” (1 Tim. 3:16)?

A

The passage you are quoting from is commonly considered to be a brief Christian hymn about Christ: His incarnation, ascension, proclamation of Him, and the reaction to Him on earth and in heaven. It is within this emphasis on the nearness of God in Christ that the phrase you mention should be understood. We will comment on the main statements found in the text.

### 1. GODLINESS AND MYSTERY:

In the New Testament the word “mystery” designates something hidden that has been revealed to believers. We now understand it, although not necessarily in its fullness (Col. 1:25, 26). The word “godliness” designates the Christian life lived in a response of gratitude to what Christ has done. Therefore, the phrase “mystery of godliness” does not mean “the mystery that is, or consists, of godliness,” but the mystery that makes godliness possible, that provides the very foundation to a Christian life. This mystery, the hymn will clarify, is Christ.

### 2. LIFE OF JESUS:

The hymn itself begins with the masculine, singular pronoun “He,” referring to Jesus and His work of salvation; the mystery is Jesus (Col. 2:2). This glorious mystery, hidden in God, “appeared in a body” (literally, “in flesh”). The mystery is the amazing work of God in becoming human in order to bring us closer to Him. The mystery also includes the resurrection of Christ. Implicit in the hymn is the cruelty of the death of the Son that appeared to deny what Jesus claimed to be. But the Resurrection, realized through the power of the Spirit (see Rom. 1:3, 4), vindicated Christ and His claim

to be the Redeemer of the world. After the Resurrection came Christ’s ascension to the very presence of the angels. They saw the victorious Prince return to the Father (see Rev. 5:12).

### 3. PROCLAMATION AND RESPONSE:

There is a double response to the Incarnation, one on earth and the other in heaven. On earth the saving power of Christ is proclaimed to the nations. The unveiled mystery is now made known to all people in the fulfillment of the mission of the church to which the mystery had been entrusted. The mystery revealed by God belongs to the human race and must reach all, because all are lonely and in need of acceptance by others, and above all by God. All are sinners in search of forgiveness. The hymn emphasizes the positive response to Jesus: He was “believed on in the world.” This is the response to the Incarnation on earth, but the response to the Incarnation in heaven took place at the ascension of Christ. Because Christ became human, died, and was resurrected, the heavenly response was to welcome Him there in the fullness of His glory, the glory He had before the creation of the world (John 17:1).

The hymn is introduced by the statement “Beyond all question [what is being ascertained is unquestionable], the mystery of godliness is great.” Theology is placed at the service of the Christian life. The hymn appeals to us to respond to what God has done for us with gratitude, and to align our lives to the Redeemer as our closest friend in whom we find repose. He is the spring from which godliness is possible. ©

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## Health & Wellness

# Living Healthfully

## Does it also affect emotions?

*I am 35 years of age and grateful for the emphasis the Seventh-day Adventist Church places on healthful nutrition. I understand that eating well can help control weight and diabetes as well as decrease heart disease and even influence longevity; but can an overall healthful lifestyle influence my mood, emotions, and well-being?*

Since its inception the Seventh-day Adventist Church has placed significant emphasis on health and well-being. In 1863 Adventist Church cofounder Ellen White<sup>1</sup> received a major health vision, which emphasized wholistic health of body, mind, and spirit (an earlier vision in 1848 revealed mainly the dangers of tobacco). This message was given because our “work was not yet done.” A healthful lifestyle may prolong life and prevent and modify disease, but the main purpose is to fit us for service—sharing wholeness despite our brokenness, and serving all. Selfless service itself enhances our physical and emotional well-being.

A healthful diet improves our physical health. A balanced vegetarian (plant-based) diet can also improve our mood. A recent analysis<sup>2</sup> of older people on the DASH (dietary approaches to stop hypertension) low-sodium diet showed that those who adhered most closely to the diet were less likely to suffer from depression. These results are significant as depression becomes more common as individuals age. The DASH diet emphasizes vegetables and fruit, low-fat dairy, whole grains, nuts, and unsaturated fats, allowing very little red meat. Robust scientific literature shows a strong connection between a balanced vegetarian diet, a positive mood, enhanced happiness, and less depression. This includes large studies on Seventh-day Adventist vegetarians.

Regular, moderate exercise improves health and fitness. It also improves our mood and feelings of well-being, and can be protective against depression. These effects are more obvious during activity. The body produces endorphins, chemicals that elevate our mood and reduce pain. Our ability to plan, think, and problem-solve is enhanced by exercise; curiosity is also increased. Regular exercise may decrease the progression of dementia, and may even delay its onset. So let’s move!

Adequate sleep and rest make us more efficient and allow us to think more clearly. We are more pleasant, less grumpy, and less anxious. Healthy sleep patterns are associated with less obesity, type 2 diabetes, and depression. *Time* magazine<sup>3</sup> attributes the weekly Sabbath day of rest, reflection, and recharging as being a significant factor in the increased longevity of Adventists living in Loma Linda, California, United States.

A healthful lifestyle improves our mood, emotions, longevity, spirituality, and well-being. God has given guidance on how we can be healthy, happy, and holy. Our health and wellness are to be channeled into His service as conduits of His grace to a suffering world—with no strings attached. It is exciting to live in a time when science accurately confirms the instructions given by our Creator, His Word, and prophecy! ©

<sup>1</sup> To learn about Ellen G. White, go to [www.whiteestate.org/about/egwbio.asp](http://www.whiteestate.org/about/egwbio.asp).

<sup>2</sup> 2018 American Academy of Neurology Annual Meeting. Abstract 3569 (P2.179). To be presented April 23, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, J. Kluger and A. Sifferlin, “The Surprising Secrets to Living Longer—and Better,” *Time*, Feb. 26, 2018, p. 53.

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# Big Randy's Duel With the Devil



“May I Tell  
You a Story?”

BY DICK DUERKSEN

It was a normal worship service. Until Big Randy walked in.

Everything was moving as expected. No surprises.

The musicians were skillfully playing the right rhythms so the congregation would be able to follow the worship singing. The children were eagerly awaiting their special story time. A couple older folks were watching the children, remembering what it was like to care for three kids under 7 years of age during worship. Peace filled the room.

Then Big Randy stormed into the church like a Cape buffalo on a warpath. His shouts announced his arrival long before he hit the doors. When he roared in, everything stopped.

Children were terrified, shrinking into the safety of their parents' laps. Most of the congregation tried to keep singing, but it was difficult to sing above Big Randy's voice.

The musicians? They did not change their beat. Their duty was far more important than Big Randy's arrival.

The pastor, knowing Big Randy well, sat still, prayed silently, and waited to see how the Holy Spirit would lead.

Big Randy, so drunk that you could get drunk yourself just by smelling his breath, was praising God. Loudly. Very loudly.

“Jesus is our King, our Redeemer, our Saviour, our Brother,” Big Randy blubbered through his beer. “I am a sinner, but Jesus loves me anyway,” Big Randy continued, his words slurred by the alcohol that was now his only friend.

A couple deacons moved to Big Randy's side, guiding him like pilot boats bringing a huge ship through a difficult channel of the bay. The deacons had been confronted by Big Randy before, several times. Demon rum seemed to bring the worst out of him. Though his words uplifted God, his life was fueled by drugs and alcohol rather than by love for God.

Big Randy followed their guidance, still proclaiming God's goodness with drunken roars as they moved him toward one of the back rows. The men began asking him questions about his life and soon the worship service was proceeding again.

\*\*\*

For a few uninterrupted minutes.

Then Armaund arrived.

Armaund lived under a bridge near the church. He had no real home, and his only friends were a gang of murderous drug dealers. He was scarred, angry, strong, and dangerous, a man to be avoided at all costs.

“Church” had never been on his list of places to visit.

Until today.

Armaund crashed through the doors shouting blasphemies against everything divine.

“I am the devil!” Armaund proclaimed.

From there it got worse, terrifying the congregation and transforming the worship service into a palace for demons.

The pastor, who had heard Armaund berate others in the village beneath the bridge, bowed his head and prayed silently with the fervency of the apostle Paul.

"Now is Your time, Lord. The enemy is here, challenging us to rise and fight him. Or to run and hide. I call for Your Holy Spirit to come with full divine power into our service right now, Lord. The enemy declares war. Please show us Your peace."

\*\*\*

The pastor waited, eager to see what the Spirit would do.

It didn't take long. Almost immediately there was a stir on the back pew where Big Randy was sitting with the deacons. Big Randy, still breathing drunken fumes, rose unsteadily, found his legs, and marched silently toward Armaund. Like a snake toward a mouse.

Like a Christian toward the devil.

Big Randy is called "Big" for a reason. He towers above everyone, is shaped like a large truck, and moves as if on a mission to "clear the road." Everyone moved aside to give him space as he stalked toward Armaund.

Armaund felt him coming and turned as Big Randy walked directly into his face.

"You will not blaspheme my Jesus in this house of worship," Big Randy proclaimed.

That brought out the worst in Armaund, who continued his hate-filled words, now directing each one into Big Randy's face. None of that deterred Big Randy. Now standing only inches from "the devil," Big Randy grabbed Armaund's shoulders and commanded the devil to "leave this man right now!"

Armaund, nearly blown away by Big Randy's drunken breath, shouted even more loudly. So Big Randy released his hold on Armaund's shoulders and shifted his giant hands to the jowls of the enemy.

"Come out of this man right now!" he shouted nose to nose with Armaund and the demons who had taken over the man's life.

The battle, loud, powerful, demonic, and divine, captivated the church for nearly 20 minutes. Armaund's demons tried to shout Big Randy's commands, but Big Randy's connection to his Jesus grew stronger with each of the demons' screams.

## "Come out of this man right now!" he shouted nose to nose with Armaund and the demons who had taken over the man's life.

Suddenly, like that long-ago day on the stony shore of Galilee, the demons fled. Armaund, so weak that it seemed the demons had taken his bones with them, collapsed into Big Randy's welcoming arms. Big Randy, fully sober, as if he had been drinking only the "Water of Life," hugged Armaund like a newborn baby.

"He's ours now," Big Randy shouted loudly as the pastor, the deacons, the old folk, the parents, the children, and several strangers rushed to join the celebration.

\*\*\*

The musicians began a brighter rhythm and struck higher notes. Everyone joined in singing a new song, "The Song of the Redeemed."

\*\*\*

*When I heard this story I was amazed and filled with questions.*

"Did this really happen?"

"Are Armaund and Big Randy real people, or just made up by the storyteller?"

I quickly learned that the story was true and that these were real people.

*Then I had more questions:*

"Why did the pastor sit quietly and pray, rather than jump up and solve the problems?"

"What church members are so in tune with the Holy Spirit that both Big Randy and Armaund feel comfortable attending?"

And the most important question of all: "How can I help my church be like this congregation?" ©

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# Adventist World

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Seventh-day  
Adventist Church



## Going Nowhere Fast

### IT'S JESUS' GOODNESS, NOT YOURS

Are you good enough to get to heaven? Bad news: you'll never be good enough. Good news: Jesus died for you! The wounds in His hands and feet prove that the price for your entrance into heaven has been paid! It's *His* goodness, not yours, that makes your trip to heaven possible.

### IMPOSSIBLE ENERGY

Wouldn't it be great if you never again had to plug in a computer or charge a battery? For centuries people have been trying to create a machine that could produce endless energy. But certain laws of physics make a "perpetual motion" machine impossible. On Planet Earth *everything* eventually slows down and stops.

Trying to be a good-enough person to make it to heaven is kind of like perpetual motion. No matter how hard you try to be good enough to get to heaven, it's impossible. In fact, Isaiah 64:6 compares our best efforts to "filthy rags."

So should we all just give up? Yes and no. We should give up any hope that *our* goodness will get us to heaven. Instead, we should give up our hearts to Jesus and follow Him. As we do, we'll *want* to be good as a way of saying thank you that our Saviour did what was impossible for us to do. That's called "grace," one of God's very *good* ideas.

### STORY

"Master," Chang Young said quietly, "one month I go back to China. I train new servant for master before I go."

Chang Young had served his wealthy employer for many years. Why this sudden announcement?

"Ah, I suppose you want to get married," his master said. "I'll be happy to pay for her to come here," the man offered.

"No," Chang Young responded. "I go China to stay."

"But Chang Young," the surprised master responded, "why do you want to go back to China?"

"Master, I go China to die."

Shocked, the man asked, "Are you sick? I will pay for the best doctor!"

"No. But I die one month, four days from today."

The master couldn't believe what he was hearing. "What are you talking about?"

"Master, in my country I have a brother," Chang Young



**Bible Treasure**

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God”

(Eph. 2:8).

explained. “He have wife and children. I have no family. My brother now in prison. He sentenced to die one month, four days. In my country brother can die for brother. I go China, die for brother.”

Now another servant fills the master’s cup of tea.

“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life” (John 15:13).

Jesus laid down His life for you. Serve Him now and thank Him in heaven.

Story adapted from “One Month, Four Days to Live” by Elva B. Gardner in *Guide’s Greatest Grace Stories* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2008).

**Activity:**

**What Happened Here?**



**Clues:**

It happened on Friday of the Crucifixion weekend.

It involved someone from out of town.

It took place in Jerusalem.

**Desperation clue:** see Mark 15:21

**Answer:** Simon of Cyrene was told to carry Jesus’ cross.

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