

The background of the cover is a photograph of the Forum of Augustus in Rome, Italy. The image shows several standing Corinthian columns supporting a partially ruined entablature. In the foreground, a dark, curved stone structure, possibly a fountain or part of a walkway, is visible. The sky is a clear, bright blue with a few wispy clouds. The title 'The Reformation Messenger' is written in a large, elegant, golden-yellow script font across the top. Below it, the volume and issue information is printed in a smaller, bold, yellow sans-serif font. A small white dove icon is positioned above the letter 'g' in 'Messenger'.

The Reformation
Messenger
VOLUME 25, NUMBER 1, JANUARY 2018

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WE BELIEVE: The all-wise loving God created all things in the universe by His Son, Jesus Christ. He is the Owner and Sustainer. He met the challenge to His loving leadership and authority by reconciling the world to Himself through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, the Word made flesh. The Holy Spirit, Jesus' representative on earth convicts of sin, guides into truth, and gives strength to overcome all unrighteousness. The Bible is the record of God's dealings with mankind and the standard of all doctrine, the Ten Commandments are the transcript of His character and the foundation of all enduring reform. His people, in harmony with God's word and under the direction of the Holy Spirit call all men everywhere to be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus. Bible prophecy reveals that earth's history will soon close with the visible return of Jesus Christ as King to claim all who have accepted Him as the world's only Redeemer and their Lord.

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In Ruins

“There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, as an error which proceedeth from the ruler: folly is set in great dignity. Ecclesiastes 10:5, 6.’

“In the days of King Josiah a strange appearance could be seen opposite the temple of God. Crowning the eminence of the Mount of Olives, peering above the groves of myrtle and olive trees, were unseemly, gigantic idols. Josiah gave commandment that these idols should be destroyed. This was done, and the broken fragments rolled down the channel of the Kidron. The shrines were left a mass of ruins.

“But the question was asked by many a devout worshiper, How came that architecture on the opposite side of the Jehoshaphat ravine, thus impiously confronting the temple of God? The truthful answer must be made: The builder was Solomon, the greatest king that ever wielded a sceptre. These idols bore testimony that he who had been honored and applauded as the wisest among kings, became a humiliating wreck. . . .

“His once noble character, bold and true for God and righteousness, became deteriorated. His profligate expenditure for selfish indulgence made him the instru-

ment of Satan's devices. His conscience became hardened. His conduct as a judge changed from equity and righteousness to tyranny and oppression. . . . Solomon tried to incorporate light with darkness, Christ with Belial, purity with impurity. But in the place of converting the heathen to the truth, pagan sentiments incorporated themselves with his religion. He became an apostate.

“The marks of Solomon's apostasy lived ages after him. In the days of Christ, the worshipers in the temple could look, just opposite them, upon the Mount of Offense, and be reminded that the builder of their rich and glorious temple, the most renowned of all kings, had separated himself from God, and reared altars to heathen idols; that the mightiest ruler on earth had failed in ruling his own spirit. Solomon went down to death a repentant man; but his repentance and tears could not efface from the Mount of Offense the signs of his miserable departure from God. Ruined walls and broken pillars bore silent witness for a thousand years to the apostasy of the greatest king that ever sat upon an earthly throne.” —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 200

“How can houses and lands compare in value with precious souls for whom Christ died? Through your instrumentality, dear brethren and sisters, these souls may be saved with you in the kingdom of glory; but you cannot take with you there the smallest portion of your earthly treasure. Acquire what you may, preserve it with all the jealous care you are capable of exercising, and yet the mandate may go forth from the Lord, and in a few hours a fire which no skill can quench, may destroy the accumulations of your entire life, and lay them a mass of smoldering ruins. You may devote all your talent and energy to laying up treasures on earth; but what will they advantage you when your life closes or Jesus makes His appearance?” —*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 212–213

“The time is near when the large cities will be visited by the judgments of God. In a little while these cities will be terribly shaken. No matter how large or how strong their buildings, no matter how many safeguards against fire may have been provided, let God touch these buildings, and in a few minutes or a few hours they are in ruins.

“The ungodly cities of our world are to be swept away by the besom of destruction. In the calamities that are now befalling immense buildings and large portions of cities, God is showing us what will come upon the whole earth.” —*Counsels on Health*, p. 268

Ellen G. White

The Year 2018's

Best Choice

In Cedartown, USA, on August 2014, The General Conference of the International Missionary Society, SDA Church Reform Movement commemorated the centennial of its origin. Recently, in DR Congo, the Church here commemorated the 25th anniversary of its registration. The church was officially registered on March 1992. But, Christ has not come yet! Why? What is hindering His promised return? Who and what is delaying Him?

The Lord, in His patience has granted us still another year (2018) to get ready for His coming. The believers in the Advent faith never thought that time would last this long. Many faithful members have been laid to rest and others have taken their places; but the 144,000 number is not yet full. According to the Spirit of Prophecy we are nearing the time when a mighty shaking will take place in the church. Some would not be ready for the Lord's coming, even if they were granted more time. Therefore, the Lord will suddenly cut His work short, and put an end to all sin and evil and reward His faithful servants. Satan is also very active, knowing that he has but little time left. He tries to lull all believers to sleep as he did the foolish virgins who were not prepared when the Bridegroom came. It is dangerous to continue with sinful indulgences and neglected duties. Therefore, choose today to stand firm more than ever before.

WELCOMING THE YEAR 2018



“Goodbye 2017, welcome 2018” is the motto in the mind of many people everywhere today. For many people, the New Year is often a time for new starts, new decisions, new beginnings, new

resolutions, etc. Some may decide to give up a habit like quitting smoking or drinking, or starting a new exercise regime. Maybe they will decide to become a nicer person by correcting the errors of the past, or spending less money and saving more. Perhaps they will decide to be more careful how they use their time, or be more organized with their work, less busy, less stressed out. . . etc. I have seen some people change everything in their homes. For example: new chairs, new dressers, new dishes, etc. What about you?

2018, as a new year, is now before us with more possibilities and opportunities. There are 12 months with 52 weeks, composed of 365 days, formed by 8,760 hours made up of 525,600 minutes or 31,536,000 seconds. What will you do with all that time? You may suddenly die at any time! Therefore, take the resolutions you make as Christians seriously regarding your spiritual growth and discipleship. We live in perilous times, in the last days, when the majority of the Christian world is seeking for pleasure rather than God. It is sad to say that, often, New Year's resolutions fail because people try to follow them using their own strength.

YOUR CHOICE, YOUR FUTURE, YOUR DESTINY

What is your priority? Choosing the best means setting priorities and watching for distractions. Every day our lives are made up from the different choices we make and the actions we perform! When we continually choose to repeat a certain action we begin to form it as a habit, and our characters will be made up according to the particular habits we form. We become exactly what we choose ourselves to be. Therefore, there is no predestination, but our will is the power or force in our natures. The power to perform the action in harmony with our choice is accomplished by the force of our will.

Thus the will plays a most vital and important part in our daily lives to determine what we are, or will be. As Christians, we would all agree that becoming more like Jesus, and knowing Him more, should have priority in our lives.

MAKING A CHOICE—LESSON FROM SOLEMN EXPERIENCE IN SHECHEM

The Israelites had a decision to make. Joshua longed to have them completely trust in God alone. “Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God.” Joshua 24:1. When Joshua had them altogether, he asked them what God would they choose to serve? He called them to choose today. He made three calls: A call to remember, a call to choose, and a call to decide and to make a covenant with the Lord, with a pure heart. It was very serious.

It was a critical time in the history of Israel. For the second time a great leader of Israel was about to pass from their midst. Years before, Moses, in his final days, had gathered the people of God together to encourage them before the Lord took him. In his place, Joshua was chosen by God to lead the nation and now he too is about to depart from this life. And, like Moses, Joshua called the people together for an appeal.

“Before the death of Joshua the heads and representatives of the tribes, obedient to his summons, again assembled at Shechem. . . . Here were the mountains Ebal and Gerizim, the silent witnesses of those vows which now, in the presence of their dying leader, they had assembled to renew. On every side were evidences of what God had wrought for them; how He had given them a land for which they did not labor, and cities which they built not, vineyards and oliveyards which they planted not. Joshua reviewed once more the history of Israel, recounting the wonderful works of God, that all might have a sense of His love and mercy and might serve Him ‘in sincerity and in truth.’” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 522

Joshua began his life as a slave in Egypt. He followed Moses out of bondage and, with the rest of the Israelites, received the Ten Commandments. He was one of the spies sent to scout out the Promised Land and re-

turned with a positive report and trust in God’s promises. He, along with Caleb and Moses, were the only adults who survived the 40 years of wilderness wandering. After Moses’ death, Joshua led the Israelites across the Jordan River, defeating the city of Jericho. He then led the army of Israel in their conquest of Canaan. Joshua was a man of courage because he chose to serve God.



“After presenting the goodness of God toward Israel, he called upon them, in the name of Jehovah, to choose whom they would serve. The worship of idols was still to some extent secretly practiced, and Joshua

endeavored now to bring them to a decision that should banish this sin from Israel. ‘If it seem evil unto you to serve Jehovah,’ he said, ‘choose you this day whom ye will serve.’ Joshua desired to lead them to serve God, not by compulsion, but willingly. Love to God is the very foundation of religion. To engage in His service merely from hope of reward or fear of punishment would avail nothing. Open apostasy would not be more offensive to God than hypocrisy and mere formal worship.

“How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow Him.” 1 Kings 18:21

“When you have to make a choice and don’t make it, that is in itself a choice.” (William James)

“The aged leader urged the people to consider, in all its bearings, what he had set before them, and to decide if they really desired to live as did the degraded idolatrous nations around them. If it seemed evil to them to serve Jehovah, the source of power, the fountain of blessing, let them that day choose whom they would serve—‘the gods which your fathers served,’ from whom Abraham was called out, ‘or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell.’ These last words were a keen rebuke to Israel. The gods of the Amorites had not been able to protect their worshipers. Because of their abominable and debasing sins, that wicked nation had been destroyed, and the good land which they once possessed had been given to God’s people. What folly for Israel to choose the deities for whose worship the Amorites had been destroyed!” —*Ibid.*, p. 523

Joshua, who was nearing the end of his life, gathered

the leaders of Israel together one last time. In his farewell speech, he reminded the Israelites of their history and how God brought them from Egypt to the Promised Land. Now, he encouraged them to be faithful to the one true God, even though they would be tempted to follow the gods of their pagan neighbours. He warned them that destruction would come upon them if they failed to live by God's commandments.

Some of Joshua's final words to the people were: "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." Joshua 24:15. The people responded by saying, "God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods." Joshua 24:16

A man named Stephen Covey, once wrote that "until a person can say deeply and honestly, 'I am what I am today because of the choices I made yesterday,' that person cannot say, 'I choose otherwise.'" In the same manner Joshua did not want the people to take that commitment lightly. "'Ye cannot serve the Lord,' said Joshua: 'for He is a holy God; . . . He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.' Before there could be any permanent reformation the people must be led to feel their utter inability in themselves to render obedience to God. They had broken His law, it condemned them as transgressors, and it provided no way of escape. While they trusted in their own strength and righteousness, it was impossible for them to secure the pardon of their sins; they could not meet the claims of God's perfect law, and it was in vain that they pledged themselves to serve God. It was only by faith in Christ that they could secure pardon from sin and receive strength to obey God's law. They must cease to rely upon their own efforts for salvation, they must trust wholly in the merits of the promised Saviour, if they would be accepted of God.

"Joshua endeavored to lead his hearers to weigh well their words, and refrain from vows which they would be unprepared to fulfill. With deep earnestness they repeated the declaration: 'Nay; but we will serve the Lord.' Solemnly consenting to the witness against themselves that they had chosen Jehovah, they once more reiterated their pledge of loyalty: 'The Lord our God will we serve, and His voice will we obey.'"—*Ibid.*, p. 524

"So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day,

and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem." Joshua 24:25

To remind the people of this new covenant they were making with God, Joshua had a huge stone set up. With that very visible reminder of their promise, surely they could not easily forget their choice to serve God alone.

"Having written an account of this solemn transaction, he placed it, with the book of the law, in the side of the ark. And he set up a pillar as a memorial, saying, 'Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which He spake unto us; it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God. So Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance.'

"Joshua's work for Israel was done. He had 'wholly followed the Lord;' and in the book of God he is written, 'The servant of Jehovah.' The noblest testimony to his character as a public leader is the history of the generation that had enjoyed his labors: 'Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua.'" —*Ibid.*, p. 524

CHOOSE TODAY

Now is the time of year when many people make New Year's resolutions. One good resolution would be to make a list of some major changes you wish to make in your life. Make your own solemn covenant with God, as did His people at Shechem. Encourage your family to decide and make a vow as well, as if you were in front of Joshua at Shechem. Remember, he did not call all the people. He called only elders, heads, and leaders of each tribe. Why? If the leaders would be faithful, they could encourage and teach the people to be faithful.

Let this year that is coming be a year of new beginnings, new challenges, new opportunities, new potentials, new friendships and new goals in your life. The changes you have been wanting to make, decide that now is the time to make them. Decide on new accomplishments you wish to make that will contribute to a



more meaningful life so you can better serve your Master. As they say, resolutions are easy to make but harder to keep. You need to make a daily commitment to adhere to them. We cannot change our future choices until we understand our the consequences of our past choices. Every day is a chance to begin again. Once we have made a choice, we need to do something about it.

Make a list of your priorities, and pray for your ability to follow through. Below are some thoughts of what you may add to your list:

- 1) Identify your errors of the past (Isaiah 1:16–27)
- 2) Give your heart to God and have living faith (Hebrews 11:6)
- 3) Forgive and love others more than ever before (Colossians 3:13–14; Mathew 6:14–15; Mark 11:25–26; James 5:16)
- 4) Repent, confess, and make right the wrongs you have done. (Psalm 25 :18; Psalm 19:12; Matthew 3:8; Isaiah 55:6–7)
- 5) Read and meditate on the sacred Scriptures daily. Attend meetings (Acts 17:11; Hebrews 10:25)
- 6) Pray daily in the family and in private (Luke 18:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Daniel 6:10)
- 7) Help and show love in the family circle (1Timothy 5:8; 1 Corinthians 16:14)
- 8) Be concerned for the well-being of others, Be a peacemaker (Matthew 5:9, 16)
- 9) Fulfill faithfully all religious, family and work duties.
- 10) Be steadfast and trust in the Lord (Psalm 13:5; Psalm 37:5)
- 11) Resist temptation and fight against sin (Hebrews 12:4; James 4:7; Isaiah 1:16–17)
- 12) Follow Jesus' example in all. Do not play on dangerous or forbidden ground. Learn to do good always (Matthew 3:8)
- 13) Control daily your failures and successes (2 Corinthians 13:5)
- 14) Do not follow the crowd; they can mislead you. (Exodus 23:2; Matthew 20:31; Mark 10:37)
- 15) Remember daily your citizenship is in heaven, that "There is a heaven to win and a hell to shun." Speak of Jesus to others whenever possible (Philippians 3:20; 1 Peter 2:11)

Dear brothers and sisters throughout the world, it is

time for the people of God to wake up; every year and every month we are nearer the to great day of the Lord. More than ever before, now is the time to stand up and be prepared for the fulfillment of the great work which has been entrusted to us. "Christians should be preparing for what is soon to break upon the world as an overwhelming surprise, and this preparation they should make by diligently studying the word of God and striving to conform their lives to its precepts. The tremendous issues of eternity demand of us something besides an imaginary religion, a religion of words and forms, where truth is kept in the outer court." –*Conflict and Courage*, p. 260

"To lose a little of this world seems to you a terrible calamity which would cost your life. But the thought of losing heaven does not cause half the fears to be manifested. Through your careful efforts to save this life, you are in danger of losing eternal life. . . . You need a fresh conversion every day. Die daily to self, keep your tongue as with a bridle, control your words, cease your murmurings and complaints, let not one word of censure escape your lips. If this requires a great effort, make it; you will be repaid in so doing." –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 698

Another year is before you; how do you plan to use the opportunities the Lord will grant you in the coming year? Choose today, decide today. Your day is today. Let us learn from the past. May the Lord help us to imitate the examples of our patriarchs and pioneers and to "follow their faith". Amen.

Victor Shumbusho, DR Congo





Justification is the third angel's message, which needs to be proclaimed to all the world. "[Justification] is the third angel's message in verity." – *Evangelism*, p. 190. It is "the sweetest melodies that come from God through human lips—

There are many professing Christians who are not justified. Justification means forgiveness, then all our sins are forgiven, and Jesus gives us the power to overcome every sin. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9

"But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." John 1:12

Justification is a gift from God: we cannot earn it; we can only ask for it. It is our title or passport to heaven. When we are born again, and converted, then we are also justified, and the Holy Spirit enters into our heart. William Miller was born into a Christian family, but he was 33 years old when he said that, now he was finally converted. This kind of experience many Christians have; they are not always converted at the time when they join the church. Justification is righteousness imputed, and now begins the righteousness imparted, which is sanctification. This time we also receive the divine nature which enables us to escape the corruption of the world.

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." 2 Peter 1:4

Jesus had a Divine nature and also human nature. When we are justified we can be partakers of the Divine nature. We can overcome as He overcame. Justifi-

fication by faith, and the righteousness of Christ." – *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 426

When a sinner, who is condemned to death, hears these precious messages, and accepts and believes them, he is filled with fullness of joy, and the peace of heaven fills his heart. He is now more valuable in the sight of God than all the treasures and riches of the world. But if we do not proclaim these messages of mercy, we are great sinners.

"God has given His ministers the message of truth to proclaim. This the churches are to receive and in every possible way to communicate, catching the first rays of light and diffusing them. Here is our great sin. We are years behind. The ministers have been seeking the hidden treasure and have been opening up the casket and letting the jewels of truth shine forth, but the members of the church have not done a hundredth part of that which God requires of them. What can we expect but deterioration in religious life when the people listen to sermon after sermon and do not put the instruction into practice? The ability God has given, if not exercised, degenerates. More than this, when the churches are left to inactivity Satan sees to it that they are employed. He occupies the field and engages the members in lines of work that absorb their energies, destroy spirituality, and cause them to fall as dead weights upon the church." – *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 425

"We are not to feel that the work of the gospel depends principally upon the minister. To every man God

has given a work to do in connection with His kingdom. Everyone who professes the name of Christ is to be an earnest, disinterested worker, ready to defend the principles of righteousness. Every soul should take an active part in advancing the cause of God. Whatever our calling, as Christians we have a work to do in making Christ known to the world. We are to be missionaries, having for our chief aim the winning of souls to Christ." *-Ibid.*, p. 427

This was the condition of the church 150 years ago; how careful we must be that we do not fall into this condition today. When we consider all that God has done for us for our salvation, should we not feel gratitude towards Him, and sacrifice our time and means for Him? There are conditions that we must fulfil before we can receive the free gift of justification. "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." Romans 2:13

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." Galatians 3:24. The law is important, it will bring us to Christ, but then we need faith to be justified. The law cannot do it.



"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Galatians 2:16

"Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked." Exodus 23:7

"Then hear thou in heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his head; and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness." 1 Kings 8:32

Jesus explained further the condition that we must fulfil in order to be justified. "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Matthew 12:37

How careful we must be in speaking, because by the words that we speak we can lose our salvation. If we

tell to others the sins that someone has done, this sin will not be forgiven unless there is a public confession. "Have they sowed discord among the brethren and sisters of the church? If these things have been committed they should be confessed before God and the church." *-Counsels on Health*, p. 374.

We are justified by faith, but it must be living faith with works. "Genuine faith will be manifested in good works; for good works are the fruits of faith." *-Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 397

"Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." James 2:24

"No one can believe with the heart unto righteousness, and obtain justification by faith, while continuing the practice of those things which the Word of God forbids, or while neglecting any known duty." *-Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 396

"Was not Abraham over our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?" James 2:21-22

When we are justified we are saved; and we must retain justification or we will lose it.

"God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place; and in order for man to retain justification, there must be continual obedience, through active, living faith that works by love and purifies the soul." *-Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 366

If we fall into sin after we have been justified, then we must repeat the confession of our sin, and plead for mercy. In order to retain our justification we need to pray without ceasing. "No man is safe for a day or an hour without prayer." *-The Great Controversy*, p. 530

We need to read the Bible. "We should study the Bible with humility of heart, never losing sight of our dependence upon God. While we must constantly guard against the devices of Satan, we should pray in faith continually: 'Lead us not into temptation.'" *-Ibid.*, p. 530

Satan is attacking most those who are justified and being sanctified, to make sure that they will lose their justification. He was successful with Adam and Eve; they lost their justification. One third of the angels in heaven lost their justification, and now after deceiving people for 6000 years, Satan has become very skillful in his deceiving work; therefore without God's help we cannot save ourselves from his deceptions. But the won-

derful promise has been given that it is possible to overcome every sin.

“He who lays hold upon the righteousness of Christ maybe become a perfect man in Christ Jesus.” – *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 150

“Clad in the armour of Christ righteousness, the church is to enter upon her final conflict. . . . When we submit ourselves to Christ . . . we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Then, as the Lord looks upon us, He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah.” – *My Life Today*, p. 311

“Exceeding great is our salvation, for ample provision has been made through the righteousness of Christ, that we may be pure, entire, wanting nothing.” – *The Review and Herald*, February 4, 1890

While a perfect sinless life is possible in Christ, there are many who neglect to take hold of His promises. With a full knowledge of justification, they continue life in a lost condition, because they neglected the opportunities to secure their salvation by good works.

“They had had opportunity, but would not do the work that they could and should have done.

“The names of all who profess the truth were mentioned. Some were reproved for their unbelief, others for having been slothful servants. They had allowed others to do the work in the Master’s vineyard, and to bear the heaviest responsibilities, while they were selfishly serving their own temporal interests. Had they cultivated the abilities God had given them, they could have been reliable burden bearers, working for the interest of the Master. Said the Judge: ‘All will be justified by their faith and judged by their works.’ How vividly then appeared their neglect, and how wise the arrange-

ment of God in giving to every man a work to do to promote the cause and save his fellow men. Each was to demonstrate a living faith in his family and in his neighborhood, by showing kindness to the poor, sympathizing with the afflicted, engaging in missionary labor, and by aiding the cause of God with his means. But, like Mer-oz, the curse of God rested upon them for what they had not done. They had loved that work which would bring the greatest profit in this life; and opposite their names in the ledger devoted to good works there was a mournful blank.



“The words spoken to these were most solemn: ‘You are weighed in the balances, and found wanting. You have neglected spiritual responsibilities because of busy activity in temporal matters.’

“This class had made *self* supreme, laboring only for selfish interests. They were not rich toward God, not having responded to His claims upon them. Although professing to be servants of Christ, they brought no souls to Him. Had the cause of God been dependent on their efforts, it would have languished; for they not only withheld the means lent them of God, but they withheld themselves.” – *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 386

May all the members of the church of God wake up to realize the need of justification and add to their faith good works, and we will meet each other in heaven. Amen.

Timo Martin

LOOKING FOR YOU . . .

If you are interested in submitting an item for publication in *The Reformation Messenger*, please submit by email or mail.

Submit: Drawings, Announcements , Reports, Articles, Poems, Photos, Personal Testimonies and Experiences.

Beyond Deeds

and

Words



“Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to His disciples, Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.” Matthew 23:1–7

At Jesus’ time, there were two important groups among the Jews—Pharisees and Sadducees. The word Pharisee is derived from the Hebrew word, “*Persahim*” —(to separate) set apart. Just the meaning of the word Pharisee tells it all. They had a holier-than-thou attitude towards anyone who did not live according to their understanding of what it is to be righteous. They were the most conservative and the most superficial. Their principal theological centre was the Law of God. They were multiplying and encouraging any form of exterior worship and were claiming the execution of justice.

The Sadducees, followers of Sadoc, or Zadok, were the most liberal group, and the most influential at the political level. Their theological opinion incited them to live in the present moment without any worry about tomorrow and the hereafter. Diplomacy of compromises characterised this group.

There were a lot of points of conflict between the Pharisees and Sadducees such as class, (between the wealthy and the poor) as the Sadducees included main-

ly the priestly and aristocratic families. The most divisive conflict was specifically religious, involving different interpretations of the Torah and how to apply it to current Jewish life. The Sadducees recognized only the Written Torah and rejected doctrines such as the Oral Torah and the Resurrection of the Dead.

Although they were fighting one another, and were looking to influence the people for themselves, they had some things in common: SELFISHNESS and POWER HUNGER. These two religious groups represent the two extremes in human nature that are still present today.

They all worked for the conversion of souls but only to make them as twice children of hell than themselves. Christ said to them: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.” Matthew 23:15. What is the use of bringing souls into the church and making them as twice the children of hell as ourselves? Souls that we bring into the church are like children we beget to this world. They inherit our genes. They become like us because they tend to imitate us. God is not a grandfather. He is our Father. But likes attract likes. In the work of saving souls, we need to have the same spirit as the apostle Paul, who could boldly say: “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.” 1 Corinthians 11:1

In this strange circumstance of “unity in division”, the Lord Jesus appeared with another spirit and motive totally different from these two groups: He did not seek to influence anyone to Him nor for what He could try to obtain from them, but He touched the hearts and people were coming freely to Him, for they knew that His



words were truth. Jesus did not over-emphasize either justice or mercy, but He revealed a perfect harmony between the two. Sometime, He forgave those that men condemned, and rebuked those that men had justified.

According to the Pharisees, Jesus was a liberal and anarchic. According to the Sadducees, He was too conservative for them to get any compromise from Him. In reality, He was the perfect illustration of harmony—the personified character of God. That is what drew people to Him. It was the harmony between righteousness and mercy, the covenant between grace and truth, the unity between the Law and grace that gave Him this influence. In Him “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” Psalm 85:10. “As He passed through the towns and cities He was like a vital current, diffusing life and joy wherever He went.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 350. This enraged the Pharisees and Sadducees. They opposed Him and put traps along His way, to find something to destroy Him.

Now that they had a common enemy, “a deputation of Pharisees had been joined by representatives from the rich and lordly Sadducees, the party of the priests, the skeptics and aristocracy of the nation. The two sects had been at bitter enmity. The Sadducees courted the favor of the ruling power in order to maintain their own position and authority. The Pharisees, on the other hand, fostered the popular hatred against the Romans, longing for the time when they could throw off the yoke of the conqueror. But Pharisee and Sadducee now united against Christ. Like seeks like; and evil, wherever it exists, leagues with evil for the destruction of the good.” —*Ibid.*, p. 405

The revelation of God’s character shows us truly which

spirit animates both the conservatives and the liberals, both of whom are not led by the Spirit of Christ. So, we see that if we are righteous in our own eyes, zealous to defend our rights and impose our views, while being absent of true love, of which Christ is the model, we serve the same master, though apparently we may be different. When Christ shows Himself to all, the deep motives of each human heart become evident. Christ says by their fruits we shall know them (Matthew 7:20).

It is said that everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but no one is entitled to their own set of facts. Therefore, there are three sides to the truth: yours, mine, and the Truth. A child of God will side with the truth for the Word of God is Truth.

“We believe it wrong to differ from others unless it be necessary to differ in order to be right.” —*The Review and Herald*, April 14, 1868. Everyone has the right to have an opinion or do things in a certain way; and everyone must respect that everyone is entitled to his own opinion. Conflicts should not be created because one is holding to his opinion, but when a clear “thus saith the Lord” is revealed to all, all must submit and give up their opinions. Many times what we call truth is nothing but our own opinion based on feelings rather than on principles. We are not to impose our rights or views to others even if we strongly believe them to be truth. The truth cannot be forced, otherwise it will cease to be unpopular. No one has the right to impose his opinion on anyone, but to speak the truth as it is in Jesus Christ. The truth always seeks to reach the heart and not break it. We must not seek to differ from others just for the sake of differing but we must differ when it is necessary in order to be right. “The way to dispel darkness is to admit light. The best way to deal with error is to present truth. It is the revelation of God’s love that makes manifest the deformity and sin of the heart centered in self.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 498

The Spirit of Prophecy prophesized that there will be two groups that will finally develop in the church in these last days:

“But divisions will come in the church. Two parties will be developed. The wheat and tares grow up together for the harvest.



“The work will grow deeper and become more earnest to the very close of time. And all who are laborers together with God will contend most earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. They will not be turned from the present message, which is already lightening the earth with its glory. Nothing is worth contending for but the glory of God.” –*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 113–114. What are you contending for? Your opinion and views to be accepted by others, or the truth and the glory of God?

Only two kinds of spirit (in men as well as in women), will be manifested in these last days. But “As we near the judgment, all will manifest their true character, and it will be made plain to what company they belong.” – *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 100. Time, trials, and circumstances will finally reveal the two kinds of people: those who love God more than self and their neighbour as themselves, and those who love only themselves, looking for a certain position among men. Those who have the Spirit of Christ will unite on the side of truth; while, on the other hand those who, from the bottom of their hearts, strongly oppose Righteousness will unite against Christ by opposing His faithful people.

“As trials thicken around us, both separation and unity will be seen in our ranks. . . . Those who have had great light and precious privileges, but have not improved them, will, under one pretext or another, go out from us. Not having received the love of the truth, they will be taken in the delusions of the enemy; they will give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, and will depart from the faith. But, on the other hand, when the storm of persecution really breaks upon us, the true sheep will hear the true Shepherd’s voice. Self-denying efforts will be put forth to save the lost, and many who have strayed from the fold will come back to follow the great Shepherd. The people of God will draw together and present to the enemy a united front. In view of the common peril, strife for supremacy will cease; there will be no disputing as to who shall be accounted greatest. No one of the true believers will say: ‘I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas.’ The testimony of one and all will be: ‘I cleave unto Christ; I rejoice in Him as my personal Saviour.’

“Thus will the truth be brought into practical life, and thus will be answered the prayer of Christ, uttered just before His humiliation and death: ‘That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.’ John 17:21. The love of Christ, the

love of our brethren, will testify to the world that we have been with Jesus and learned of Him. Then will the message of the third angel swell to a loud cry, and the whole earth will be lightened with the glory of the Lord.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 400–401

Though the conservatives and liberals seem to be actually fighting one another, eventually the similarities among them will result in them uniting against the truth of God and His faithful people whose sincere hearts will draw them together presenting a united front to the enemy.

Which side are you on? Will you join Christ’s believers? Are you standing with the lost or are you uniting your efforts with those that are going forth to seek and save the lost bringing them to the feet of Jesus? Do you argue, wanting to know who is right and who is wrong, or are you putting forth an earnest effort to present a united front to the enemy?

We should ask ourselves these questions, because it is only when the love of Christ will overcome any negative sentiments that we may feel in our hearts towards our neighbours, that the world will be convinced that we love one another as Christ loved us. Then the whole earth will be enlightened by the glory of the Lord.

History and experience have shown us that conservatives and liberals have the same thing in common—self-righteousness and selfishness. We should not lose hope because there are those, though few, who live the life of Christ and bring light into the lives of all with whom they come into contact. Let us avoid all extremes. “Better come one step short of the mark than to go one step beyond it.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 20

Pharisees and Sadducees, or Jesus? Who shall we follow? My wish and prayer is that we follow Jesus, for in Him is life in abundance. It is only by His righteousness alone that we are accepted by God. More about Jesus we would know, more of His grace to others show; more of His saving fullness see, more of His love who died for us. Amen! May God bless you!



*Judicael M. Luboya,
Senegal*

Pure Mark of the Truth, Part 2



“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”

Dear believers in Christ. We will continue the study on the “Pure Mark of Truth” that we began in the previous issue (December 2017).

“Every day the probation of some is closing. Every hour some are passing beyond the reach of mercy. And where are the voices of warning and entreaty to bid the sinner flee from this fearful doom? Where are the hands stretched out to draw him back from death? Where are those who with humility and persevering faith are pleading with God for him?” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 140

REMEMBER THE FIRST LOVE!

Brethren and sisters, let us remember back to the time when we first received the message. Remember how eager we were. If you would critically analyze your life, do you see advancement in your life towards the light of heaven, or have you have backslidden? Or are you simply maintaining your current condition as it is?

John the Revelator warned us, “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come to thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” Revelation 2:4–5

“It is our work to know our special failings and sins, which cause darkness and spiritual feebleness, and quenched our first love.” —*The Review and Herald*, June 7, 1887

“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works’ The believers did not sense their spiritual fall. They knew not that a change had taken place in their hearts, and that they would have to repent because of the noncontinuance of their first works. But God in His mercy called for repent-

ance, for a return to their first love and to the works that are always the result of true, Christlike love.”—*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 957

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.” Acts 3:19

Christ admonishes, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.” Revelation 3:19–20

REMEDY THE CHARACTER

Brethren, now is the right time to remedy our character.

Says the psalmist, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Psalms 139:22–23

“The sealing time is very short, and will soon be over. Now is the time, while the four angels are holding the four winds, to make our calling and election sure.” —*Early Writings*, p. 58

“Not one of us will ever receive the seal of God while our characters have one spot or stain upon them. It is left with us to remedy the defects in our characters, to cleanse the soul temple of every defilement. Then the latter rain will fall upon us as the early rain fell upon the disciples on the Day of Pentecost.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 214

“The Seal and the Commandments.—Many will not receive the seal of God because they do not keep His commandments or bear the fruits of righteousness.” —*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 970

“Like Christ in Character.—The seal of the living God will

be placed upon those only who bear a likeness to Christ in character.” –*Ibid*, p. 970

“Especially in the closing work for the church, in the sealing time of the one hundred and forty-four thousand who are to stand without fault before the throne of God, will they feel most deeply the wrongs of God’s professed people. This is forcibly set forth by the prophet’s illustration of the last work under the figure of the men each having a slaughter weapon in his hand. One man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer’s inkhorn by his side. ‘And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.’” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 266

“Seek a thorough preparation to meet Jesus, that when He appears you may exclaim with joy, ‘Lo this is our God, we have waited for Him, and He will save us.’ Eternal life will then be yours, and you will be a partaker with Christ of His glory, ever to hear His glorious approving voice, and behold His lovely person.” –*The Youth’s Instructor*, April 1, 1854

FAULTLESS BEFORE THE THRONE.

“These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.” Revelation 14:4–5

“What are you doing, brethren, in the great work of preparation? Those who are uniting with the world are receiving the worldly mold and preparing for the mark of the beast. . . . Now is the time to prepare. The seal of God will never be placed upon the forehead of an impure man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of the ambitious, world-loving man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of men or women of false tongues or deceitful hearts. All who receive the seal must be without spot before God—candidates for heaven.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 216

“And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The LORD will not do good, neither will He do evil.” Zephaniah 1:12

“Lukewarm and halfhearted, they dishonor God far more than the avowed unbeliever. They grope in darkness, when they might be walking in the noonday light of the Word, under the guidance of One who never errs.” –*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 970

“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth.” Revelation 3:15–16

“We are to copy no human being. There is no human being wise enough to be our criterion. We are to look to the man Christ Jesus, who is complete in the perfection of righteousness and holiness. He is the author and finisher of our faith. He is the pattern man. His experience is the measure of the experience that we are to gain. His character is our model. Let us, then, take our minds off the perplexities and the difficulties of this life, and fix them on Him, that by beholding we may be changed into His likeness. We may behold Christ to good purpose.” –*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 970

“How many will mourn for lost opportunities when it is eternally too late! Today we have talent and opportunity, but we know not how long these may be ours. Then let us work while it is day; for the night cometh, in which no man can work. ‘Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing.’” –*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 167

“In a little while every one who is a child of God will have His seal placed upon him. O that it may be placed upon our foreheads! Who can endure the thought of being passed by when the angel goes forth to seal the servants of God in their foreheads?” –*The Review and Herald*, May 28, 1889

Finally brethren may God help us, “Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” Acts 20:21

Grace unto you all.
Jenifer Akello, Uganda





You are a very unique person—a one-of-a-kind. There is no person on the face of this earth just like you. No one speaks like you, no one looks like you, no one thinks or acts just like you.

As an adjective, the word *unique* means: existing as the only one or as the sole example; single; solitary in type or characteristics; having no like or equal; unparalleled; incomparable; one-of-a-kind.

Yes, that is you—unique. Of the billions of people living today, and billions who have lived in the past—there has not been one person who is anything like you.

All this comes from the hand of God. This was no accident. There is no science that can replicate what God has done. This was not a random act in the natural realm that just happened to evolve into human beings as diverse as they are today. The genes that combined from your father and your mother, to make your unique genetic make-up, was not by chance. It was by the careful hand of God, deciding which genes to put together. He decided which genes to take from your father and which ones from your mother to make you. And for your siblings, from the same parents, He chose a different set of genes to make them up. He could have made you identical to your siblings, but He chose to make each of you different. And He did it in a very careful manner. Even identical twins have slight variations in their looks and character.

The Lord decided carefully what you would look like. Your looks are not only unique, but also your character, and your mannerisms, as well as your thought patterns are your very own. There is no one like you.

How many today do not appreciate the handiwork of God? They try to alter and change who and what they are. There are those who simply do not like their looks, so they try to alter their image by colouring their hair, wearing make-up (to hide who they really are), or do cosmetic surgery to change and enhance some of their features. Some dislike their gender and think that there was a mistake

when they were born, so they must change this. Others do not care about this special unique body the Lord gave them and set out to alter it in a negative way. They destroy it by using drugs, alcohol, poor diet and other health-destroying habits. They are slowly altering and killing themselves and do not care.

Since God took such special care to make you what you are, should you not appreciate who and what you are?

God took such special care in forming you for those nine months in your mother’s womb, would you not want to take the best care possible of this body, soul and spirit that He has given to you? It should be an honour and a privilege to take care of this precious treasure that He carefully put together and entrusted you with. A healthy, living, breathing, thinking, unique individual.

YOUR MISSION IS UNIQUE

Since you are so special and unique, God has a unique purpose for your life—for you—not for any other. He has a unique path for you to walk. He has a unique set of trials for you to face. A unique mission for you, which is for you alone. Before you were born, He knew what talents He would give you and what your mission and purpose in life would be.

It is said of Jeremiah, “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.” Jeremiah 1:5. Before Jeremiah was born the Lord decided that he should be given the character traits to fill the prophetic office. Jeremiah might have refused to comply with the divine call but he did not. He loved the Lord enough that he was willing to go and to do whatever the Lord asked of him.

At birth, each person is endowed with certain possibilities, but it is their responsibility to develop these possibilities to the fullest. God has a specific plan for every life. “The specific place appointed us in life is determined by our

capabilities.” —*Education*, p. 267. There are others in the Bible of whom their appointed task was mentioned before their birth. There is John the Baptist (Luke 1:15), and Samson (Judges 13:5).

The Lord could have chosen anyone to go to Nineveh, but He chose Jonah. That was the special unique mission for Jonah. Although Jonah tried to run away, the Lord knew he was the best one for the mission.

He could have chosen any of the disciples to go to the Gentiles, but He chose the Apostle Paul. Paul had been gifted by the Lord with the special unique character traits that were best suited for the trials and difficulties that he would face on his missionary journeys.

We should discover what His unique plan is for our lives and seek to carry it out to the fullest of our potential. We must pray and seek the Lord. To every individual God has assigned a place of duty and responsibility in His great plan. “Each has his place in the eternal plan of heaven. Each is to work in co-operation with Christ for the salvation of souls. Not more surely is the place prepared for us in the heavenly mansions than is the special place designated on earth where we are to work for God.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 326–327

Some do not care and prefer to drift along in life, but we must care. Ask and pray, What is the unique purpose that God has given me for my life? What is the unique road I should be travelling?

“God desires Christians to respect the liberty that He has in so marvelous a manner given them. In Christ is vested the ownership of every man.” —*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1106–1107. Although God gave this treasure to you, you are only a steward of His gifts. You belong to Him.

YOUR METHODS OF WORKING ARE UNIQUE

Since God has a specific mission for each person’s life it is wrong to dictate to others the course of action they must follow, how they must think or act. “And John answered Him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbid him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: . . . For he that is not against us is on our part.” Mark 9:38
—40

“The disciples must not indulge a narrow, exclusive spirit, but must manifest the same far-reaching sympathy which they had seen in their Master.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 543

“The fact that one does not in all things conform to our personal ideas or opinions will not justify us in forbidding him to labor for God. Christ is the Great Teacher; we are

not to judge or to command, but in humility each is to sit at the feet of Jesus, and learn of Him. Every soul whom God has made willing is a channel through which Christ will reveal His pardoning love. How careful we should be lest we discourage one of God’s light bearers, and thus intercept the rays that He would have shine to the world!” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 438

“What we need is less dependence upon mere form and ceremony, and far more of the power of true godliness. If their life and character are exemplary, let all work who will, in any capacity. Although they may not conform exactly to your methods, not a word should be spoken to condemn or discourage them.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 461–462

Therefore, since we are all so different and each have a unique mission and method of working, as long as we, and they, are following Christ, we are told to “Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned.” Luke 6:37. We may see others making different experiences than we are, or doing the work in a different manner than we are, but we should not disagree and try to bring them into line into our way of thinking and acting. They may be following the leading of the Lord and making their own unique experiences. We are to encourage them and work with them. We are not to judge or try to stop someone doing a good work. It is wrong to expect others to make the same experiences we are making, or do their duties in exactly the same way we are doing them, or even think the same thoughts. This is definitely not God’s plan.

No one should outline for another the unique pathway they are to walk—or the thoughts they are to think. We can guide and encourage, but we all need to make our unique experience with God. “I have seen that it was not the design of the message to lead brother to sit in judgment over his brother, to tell him what to do, and just how far to go, but for each individual to search his own heart, and attend to his own individual work.” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 962

“There is no man who can be a criterion for all other men. Our varied trusts are proportioned to our varied capabilities. I have been distinctly instructed that God endows men with different degrees of capability and then places them where they can do the work for which they are fitted. Each worker is to give his fellow workers the respect that he wishes to have shown to himself.” —*Mind, Character and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 423

“Man should not be another man’s property. God has bought mankind. One man’s mind, one man’s power, should not rule and control another’s conscience. In the sight of God wealth and position do not exalt one man

above another. Men are free to choose the service of God, to love the Lord, and to keep all His commandments.” – *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1107

THE PROMISES ARE FOR YOU

Since you are unique, all the promises of God are for *you*. The promises of the Lord in His word were not just for the Ancient men of old, the Israelites, the Jewish nation, the disciples or the apostles. These promises were for you. They were not written only to guide our ancestors in the way of truth, they were written for you. “The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.” Deuteronomy 5:3. Read the Bible, not only as an excellent and accurate historical book, but as a book of promises written for you *today*. When the Lord said to Jacob, “I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest” (Genesis 28:15), He spoke to you also.



The Lord brings you the verses you need for the day; for your situation. Just pray, open the book, take time to sit, read and listen. “Attend to number one, and you have got all that you have got to do.” –*Manuscript Releases*, vol 5, p. 215. Then as you are blessed, you share the words of comfort and encouragement with others, and also words of counsel with our brethren and sisters. “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.” 2 Corinthians 1:3–4

THE LOVE OF GOD IS FOR YOU

How much does He love you? Are you just one out of the billions that He loves? “Every soul is as fully known to Jesus as if he were the only one for whom the Saviour died. The distress of every one touches His heart. The cry for aid reaches His ear. He came to draw all men unto Himself. He bids them, ‘Follow Me,’ and His Spirit moves upon their hearts to draw them to come to Him. Many refuse to be drawn. Jesus knows who they are. He also knows who gladly hear His call, and are ready to come under His pastoral care. He says, ‘My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.’ He cares for each one as if there were not another on the face of the earth.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 480



Jesus spoke through Isaiah saying, “I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine.” Isaiah 43:1. “Jesus knows us individually, and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He knows us all by name. He knows the very house in which we live, the name of each occupant. He has at times

given directions to His servants to go to a certain street in a certain city, to such a house, to find one of His sheep.” – *The Desire of Ages*, p. 479

“I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands.” Isaiah 49:16. How has He graven us on His palms? If you are tempted and ever fear that the Lord has forgotten you, remember that He has inscribed you in the palm of His hand. The nail prints in His hands will be a perpetual reminder to us of the love of Jesus, all throughout eternity.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Although you were given specific character traits at birth, these character traits need to be developed. When people choose to walk in their own way, away from the Lord, they develop poor characters. Then when it comes to creating a new life, some of these character traits are passed on to the children. When Adam and Eve sinned, their nature became sinful. Ever since, the natural bent of man has been for evil, unless developed, by the help of the Lord, into a perfect character—fit for heaven. This is the purpose of life—to develop a character for heaven, and each person has unique experiences that they must go through in order to develop such a character. The Lord directs and guides, but He does not force.

The unique experiences you are making for your character development no one else is making. These experiences are your own.

“Character is not transferable. It is not to be bought or sold; it is to be acquired. The Lord has given to every individual an opportunity to obtain a righteous character. . . but He has not provided a way by which one human agent may impart to another the character which he has developed. . . . But no human being can give to another, heart devotion and noble qualities of mind, and supply his deficiencies with moral power.” –*That I May Know Him*, p. 350

In the Catholic religion, they tell you that you can purchase salvation for your dead loved ones if you give a large sum of money to the church. So sad that many believe this. Salvation is an individual experience. No one can give it to you or purchase it for you.

Some excuse their current lifestyle, stating that these are the characteristics inherited from their parents and they cannot change them as they are genetic. Or then their parents made many mistakes raising them, so therefore they are what they are today, not by any fault of their own. It’s their parent’s fault. They say it is too difficult to change, and God would not expect them to do the impossible. However, the Lord says “The converting power of God can transform inherited and cultivated tendencies; for the religion of Jesus is uplifting. ‘Born again’ means a transformation, a new birth in Christ Jesus.” –*The Adventist Home*, p. 206

“The inherited and cultivated tendencies to wrong must be crucified.” –*Messages to Young People*, p. 68. “Whatever may be our inherited or cultivated tendencies to wrong, we can overcome through the power that He is ready to impart.” –*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 175. “With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.” Matthew 19:26

“The secret of life’s success is in a careful, conscientious attention to the little things. God makes the simple leaf, the tiny flower, the blade of grass, with as much care as He creates a world. The symmetrical structure of a strong, beautiful character is built up by individual acts of duty. All should learn to be faithful in the least as well as in the greatest duty. Their work cannot bear the inspection of God unless it is found to include a faithful, diligent, economical care for the little things.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 572. Day by day your character is being developed for habitation in heaven. You just have to make a conscious decision to follow the leading of the Lord.

JUDGED ALONE

Since you are unique, one-of-a-kind, remember, while the Lord loves you, you still have to face the judgment. This is a serious thought. Your character is being developed daily in preparation for the heavenly kingdom, but you must pass through the judgment first. And here you must stand alone. “Though all nations are to pass in judgment before Him, yet He will examine the case of each individual with as close and searching scrutiny as if there were not another being on earth.” –*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 987

“In the books of heaven our lives are as accurately traced as in the picture on the plate of the photographer.” –*Ibid.*, p. 986

“Not only are we held accountable for what we have done, but for what we have left undone. We are held to account for our undeveloped characters, our unimproved opportunities.” –*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 987

“By a close scrutiny of their daily life under all circumstances, they would know their own motives, the principles which actuate them. This daily review of our acts, to see whether conscience approves or condemns, is necessary for all who wish to arrive at the perfection of Christian character. Many acts which pass for good works, even deeds of benevolence, will, when closely investigated, be found to be prompted by wrong motives. Many receive applause for virtues which they do not possess. The Searcher of hearts inspects motives, and often the deeds which are highly applauded by men are recorded by Him as springing from selfish motives and base hypocrisy. Every act of our lives, whether excellent and praiseworthy or deserving of censure, is judged by the Searcher of hearts according to the

motives which prompted it.” –*Gospel Workers*, p. 110

“In the life of the true Christian there are no nonessentials; in the sight of Omnipotence every duty is important. The Lord measures with exactness every possibility for service. The unused capabilities are just as much brought into account as those that are used. We shall be judged by what we ought to have done, but did not accomplish because we did not use our powers to glorify God.” –*Prophets and Kings*, p. 488

In Christ, we can be prepared for the judgment. We can “come boldly unto the throne of grace,” (Hebrews 4:16) because, “we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” 1 John 2:1

GOD’S CHURCH IS UNIQUE

“There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number. My dove, my undefiled is but one.” Song of Solomon 6:8–9. We know that a woman in Bible prophecy refers to a church (Jeremiah 6:2). A pure woman is God’s church. He has one church and it is unique.

And the message that the church is to proclaim is unique. “In every age God has committed to His people some special truth . . . and it has been the duty of His ministers to proclaim this truth.” –*Pastoral Ministry*, p. 27. For Noah it was about the flood. For Moses it was delivering the law to

the nation of Israel; for John the Baptist it was the coming Messiah. For William Miller it was the beginning of the judgment hour. Today our unique message is the Three Angel’s messages and the addition of the Loud Cry to the Third Angel.

Therefore, we each have a unique responsibility today. We are called to preach the final message to the world. The end of the world is hastening on. Soon there will be a time of trouble as never before and who will be able to stand? “He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart.” Psalm 24:4

“The subject of man’s personal responsibility is understood by but few; and yet it is a matter of the greatest importance.” –*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 216–217. “Yet God does not compel him to obey; he is left a free moral agent.” –*Ibid.*, p. 216

May God help us to appreciate our uniqueness and respect the uniqueness of others, and work together in unity. “It is the Lord’s plan that there shall be unity in diversity.” –*Mind, Character and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 423. Amen.

Wendy Eaton



Health Effects of Obesity



“And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite.” Proverbs 23:2

“The benefit derived from food does not depend so much on the quantity eaten as on its thorough digestion.” – *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 107

“The Lord has instructed me that as a general rule, we place too much food in the stomach. Many make themselves uncomfortable by overeating, and sickness is often the result. The Lord did not bring this punishment on them. They brought it on themselves; and God desires them to realize that pain is the result of transgression.” – *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 136

Last month we learned that almost 2 billion people, or 38% of the population of the world is overweight, and of those, 650 million, or 32% of overweight people are obese. Overall, this amounts to 12% of the world’s population. The range of obese individuals in specific countries varies, but the numbers in every country is on the rise. The percentages of overweight and obese people are growing year by year, and the impact that obesity has on the health of the world’s population is also increasing.

Evidence clearly shows that people who are obese have more health problems than normal weight people. Therefore, it would be logical to assume that prevention of obesity can reduce the risk of health problems, and that if a person is obese, if weight can be reduced, this will have a positive impact on the health of the individual. This month, we will explore the effects of obesity on one’s health, and how significant this impact is. Not only is there an impact on one’s physical health, but obesity also has consequences related to a person’s social, economic, and psychological wellbeing. As more children are being diagnosed as being obese, the health effects of obesity are starting at a much younger age, and disability and sickness, as well as other aspects of obesity become a lifelong problem.

Because of the health impacts of obesity, prevention of overweight and obesity is as important as treatment. Pre-

vention includes primary prevention of overweight or obesity itself. Secondary prevention includes the avoidance of regaining weight following weight loss, and the avoidance of further weight increases in obese individuals unable to lose weight. Both environmental and lifestyle factors contribute to individuals being obese in childhood or to gaining weight progressively during adulthood. These factors are further influenced by the genetic makeup of individuals, which are unavoidable. There has been little research done on how governments and health systems can influence these factors to prevent obesity; however, with the increase in numbers of obese children and adults, efforts to understand the genetic, behavioural and environmental factors that contribute to obesity and strategies to prevent obesity is being recognized as critical.

OVERALL MORTALITY RATES

Last month, we learned that BMI numbers are an effective guide in determining if an individual falls within the range of underweight, normal weight, overweight, or obese. In the majority of studies looking at the health effects of weight, the mortality (death) rates begin to increase with BMIs over 25 (considered overweight). This increase is modest until a BMI of 30 is reached (considered obese), and then mortality rates from all causes increase 50-100% above those with BMIs in the normal range (21–25). These numbers reflect the severe consequences of obesity on one’s overall risk of death from any illness.

Besides the general increase in death from all causes, certain health conditions are more significantly prevalent with increases in weight. Many of these health conditions are also contributing factors for other health conditions, and the interplay between them compound the severity of the effects on health. For example, if someone has diabetes, they are at a higher risk of heart disease. If someone has heart disease, they are at a higher risk of strokes, and if someone has high blood pressure, they are at a higher

risk of both heart disease and strokes. However, all these health conditions also have their own complications and effects on one's health. Let us look at the main health conditions that are caused by or worsened by obesity and the challenges they present.

"The quantity of food eaten does not determine the benefit received. Many, even among Seventh-day Adventists, eat too freely. Their health would be much better if they ate less. When too much food is eaten, the stomach is overburdened, and is unable to perform its proper functions. The result is that the digestive organs are disordered. If those who have brought themselves to this condition would eat proper food, and only about half as much as they have been in the habit of eating, their digestive organs would recover." —*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 3, p. 326

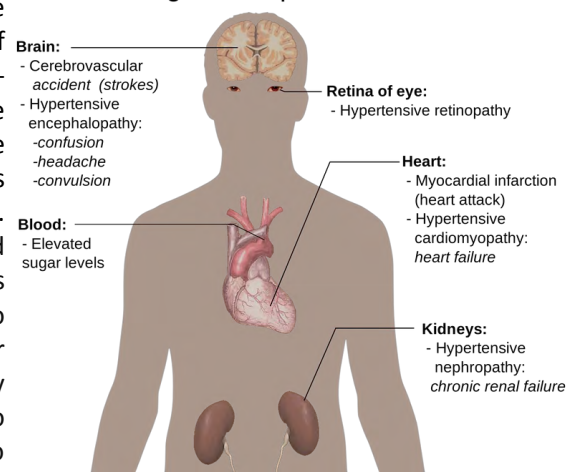
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

Blood pressure measurements are calculated as the pressure in the heart when it is pumping blood to the body (systolic blood pressure), and the pressure in the heart when it is at rest in between pumps or beats (diastolic blood pressure). Therefore, blood pressure values have two numbers, separated by a forward slash, e.g. 120/80. The pressure in the heart when it is pumping is higher than when it is at rest, and is the higher number of the two. High blood pressure is defined as having systolic blood pressure ≥ 140 mm Hg, or diastolic blood pressure ≥ 90 .

Prevalence of high blood pressure increases progressively with higher BMI levels in both men and women. In individuals with a BMI greater than 30, 38% of men and 32% of women have high blood pressure. This is an increase from 18% of men and 16% of women who have high blood pressure with a normal BMI. The rates of having high blood pressure double once someone is obese. Individuals who are obese tend to retain sodium (salt) and this puts increased pressure on the blood vessels in every part of the body. When high blood pressure weakens the blood vessels of the heart and brain, it increases the risk of heart attacks and strokes; the risk increases by approximately 13% with increased blood pressure. Dementia risk also increases because the damaged blood vessels cannot carry proper nutrients to brain cells. High blood pressure also can damage the blood vessels in the kidneys, and is the leading cause of kidney failure.

Tiny, delicate blood vessels supply blood to your eyes. Like other vessels, they, too, can be damaged by high blood pressure. Damage to the eye blood vessels is called retinopathy. This condition can lead to bleeding in the eye, blurred vision, and eventually, complete loss of vision. The optic nerve can be damaged, which leads to vision loss. If you have diabetes, the risk is even higher.

Main complications of persistent High blood pressure



Not only are the blood vessels of the heart affected, but the function of the heart muscle is also affected. High blood pressure forces your heart to work harder than necessary in order to pump blood to the rest of your body. This causes the left ventricle of the heart to enlarge and become stiff. These changes limit the ventricle's ability to pump blood to your body. Over time, the strain on your heart caused by high blood pressure can cause your heart muscle to weaken and work less efficiently. Eventually, your heart becomes overwhelmed and begins to wear out and fail.

TYPE 2 DIABETES

According to the Canadian Journal of Diabetes, "it is now widely accepted that the obesity epidemic continues to be the principal driver for the rising global prevalence of type 2 diabetes." Diabetes is one disease that even normal weight individuals have a higher risk of contracting, starting when BMIs rise within the normal range between 22–25. With every point above 22, the risk of diabetes increases by 25%. Obesity is believed to account for 80–85% of the risk of developing type 2 diabetes, while recent research suggests that obese people are up to 80 times more likely to develop type 2 diabetes than those with a BMI of less than 22.

In high risk populations, Type 2 diabetes has been found in individuals as young as 18 years old with weight increases, even if within the normal range. A recent study from the United States indicates that 27% of new cases of diabetes were attributed to a weight gain of 5 kg (11 pounds) or more during adulthood. At least a third of people in the U.S. will develop Type 2 diabetes in their lifetime. Type 2 diabetes differs from Type 1 in several important ways. Type 1 diabetes is often hereditary and unpreventable. It is a disease that is caused by the immune system attacking and destroying the cells in the pancreas that produce insulin. The body then does not produce insulin, so the person needs supplemental insulin from the time they are diagnosed with the disease.

Type 2 diabetes is much more common than Type 1. For every person with type 1 diabetes, 20 people will have Type 2 diabetes. Type 2 can be hereditary, but excess

weight, a lack of exercise and an unhealthy diet increase the risk. Abdominal obesity, or a waist size of over 40 for men, and over 35 for women, is a major risk factor for Type 2 diabetes. Studies suggest that abdominal fat causes fat cells to release “pro-inflammatory” chemicals, which can make the body less sensitive to the insulin it produces. Cells become resistant to the effects of insulin. This is called insulin resistance. If blood glucose (sugar) is always high, the cells will be overexposed to insulin. They become less responsive or unresponsive to insulin. In time, the body stops producing enough insulin, and the body can no longer use glucose effectively. This means the cells cannot absorb glucose, and glucose builds up in the blood. The high sugar levels in the blood vessels causes a majority of the damage from diabetes. Damage from diabetes can be extensive and affect many body systems.

One-third of people who have diabetes will have a skin disorder caused or affected by diabetes at some time in their lives. In fact, sometimes skin problems are the first sign that a person has diabetes. Some of these problems are skin conditions anyone can have, but people with diabetes get more easily. These include bacterial infections, fungal infections and itching.

Because the small blood vessels are impacted significantly by high blood sugar, any area with small blood vessels are at risk for damage. These include the small blood vessels of the kidneys, eyes, and nerves, affecting the blood supply to these areas. In the eyes, this damage can lead to cataracts and retinopathy; both can cause loss of vision. Kidneys are vital in cleaning the blood. Kidney disease can result from damaged blood vessels, leading to impaired kidney function or complete failure, necessitating dialysis or a kidney transplant. Damage to the nerve cells from diabetes is called diabetic neuropathy. It mostly affects the nerves going to the hands and feet. People may lose sensation in their extremities; they can also experience pain, weakness, or tingling. One serious complication of diabetic neuropathy in the feet is that people may not realize when they have a wound on their foot. The wound can become infected, the infection can spread, and left untreated, the foot may need to be amputated to keep the infection from spreading further. Hearing loss and imbalance can also occur if the small blood vessels of the ear are affected.

People with diabetes are more susceptible to developing infections, as high blood sugar levels can weaken an individual’s immune system. In addition, some diabetes-related health issues, such as nerve damage and reduced blood flow to the extremities, increase the risk of infections. Yeast infections especially are more prevalent in diabetes.

High blood sugar can also affect the large blood vessels of the body, causing plaque to build up in the arteries, potentially leading to a heart attack, stroke, blockage in the legs, and erectile dysfunction. Another complication of diabetes is the development of dementia and Alzheimer’s, due to reduced blood flow to the brain. In regards to cholesterol levels, diabetes tends to lower “good” cholesterol levels and raise triglyceride and “bad” cholesterol levels, which increases the risk for heart disease and stroke.

Complications from diabetes are compounded if someone also has high blood pressure, as they both affect the health of the blood vessels. These complications can be avoided if good blood sugar control is maintained. According to studies, a 5% reduction in body weight followed up by regular moderate intensity exercise could reduce Type 2 diabetes risk by more than 50%.

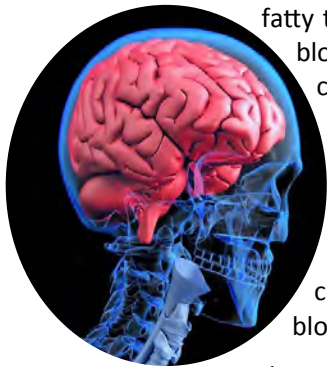
CORONARY HEART DISEASE



Coronary heart disease is when the waxy substance known as plaque builds up in the arteries of the heart, which supply blood to the heart muscle. Until recently, the relationship between obesity and heart disease was considered indirect, in that the risk of heart disease associated with obesity was usually caused by another condition such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or diabetes. Studies now prove that obesity is an independent predictor of plaque buildup in the arteries of the heart, and especially fat in the abdominal area. Abnormalities in the function of the left ventricular of the heart also occur in obesity, in the absence of high blood pressure. Changes in the right side of the heart also occur in obesity, related to sleep apnea and the pressure this puts on the pulmonary (lung) artery, subsequently enlarging the right ventricle. Sudden death from heart attacks is thought to be related to these abnormalities. Even though plaque buildup in arteries of the heart can occur with normal cholesterol levels, obesity can also raise total cholesterol levels, LDL (bad) cholesterol, and triglycerides which, in turn, increases the risk of plaque buildup.

STROKES

Strokes are ranked as the fifth leading cause of death in the United States, with nearly 800,000 people dying every year. Similar to diabetes, obesity increases the risk of stroke due to inflammatory chemicals released by excess



fatty tissue. This can lead to reductions in blood flow to the brain and an increased risk of blockage of blood vessels by clots, both of which can cause strokes. Risk levels rose with increases in the BMI value, waist circumference, or waist-to-hip ratio. The risk factor was greater for ischemic stroke (stroke due to lack of blood flow, rather than due to clotting).

Stroke risk increases also if an individual has other health conditions. High blood pressure is the leading cause of strokes. Diabetes, heart disease, and sleep breathing disorders also increase the risk of strokes.

GALLBLADDER DISEASE

Findings show that for every point increase in BMI, the risk of gallbladder disease increases by seven percent, therefore obese individuals are more likely to develop gallstones. For women, obesity is an even stronger risk factor for developing gallstones. Studies show that if you are obese, your body produces higher levels of cholesterol. Bile, which is stored in the gallbladder then contains more cholesterol than your body can dissolve. When this happens, gallstones can form from the undissolved cholesterol. Also, gallbladders of obese individuals may not empty normally or completely, increasing the chance of developing gallstones. Especially if you have excess fat around your stomach you may be at greater risk for developing



gallstones than people who carry excess fat mainly around their hip and thigh areas. Recent studies show that obese children also have gallstones, which is a surprise finding, as gallstone disease is typically regarded as an adult disorder. However, the epidemic of obese children is recent. Doctors need to be aware to

be alert for gallstone symptoms in their pediatric patients.

CONCLUSION

As this article has shown, there are many health conditions that obese people are at a higher risk of contracting, and the impact on one's overall health is severe, with many of these conditions affecting multiple body systems. Most of the aforementioned health conditions also increase an individual's risk of dying at a younger age than a normal weight person, with quality of life also being affected. Obesity is a leading risk factor for the increase in an individual's "years of sickness" during one's lifetime. Unfortunately this is not the end of the list of the health conditions that individuals with obesity are at a higher risk of developing. We will continue to explore and discuss

other health risks next month. With the increases in death and sickness caused by obesity, preventing people from becoming overweight and obese is of critical importance, if we are to improve the overall health of the world's population.

GLUTTONY IS SIN

"It is sin to be intemperate in the quantity of food eaten, even if the quality is unobjectionable. Many feel that if they do not eat meat and the grosser articles of food, they may eat of simple food until they cannot well eat more. This is a mistake. Many professed health reformers are nothing less than gluttons. They lay upon the digestive organs so great a burden that the vitality of the system is exhausted in the effort to dispose of it. It also has a depressing influence upon the intellect, for the brain nerve power is called upon to assist the stomach in its work. Overeating, even of the simplest food, benumbs the sensitive nerves of the brain and weakens its vitality. Overeating has a worse effect upon the system than overworking; the energies of the soul are more effectually prostrated by intemperate eating than by intemperate working.

"The digestive organs should never be burdened with a quantity or quality of food which it will tax the system to appropriate. All that is taken into the stomach, above what the system can use to convert into good blood, clogs the machinery, for it cannot be made into either flesh or blood, and its presence burdens the liver and produces a morbid condition of the system. The stomach is overworked in its efforts to dispose of it, and then there is a sense of languor which is interpreted to mean hunger, and without allowing the digestive organs time to rest from their severe labor, to recruit their energies, another immoderate amount is taken into the stomach, to set the weary machinery again in motion. The system receives less nourishment from too great a quantity of food, even of the right quality, than from a moderate quantity taken at regular periods. . . .

"It is impossible to have clear conceptions of eternal things unless the mind is trained to dwell upon elevated themes. All the passions must be brought under perfect subjection to the moral powers. When men and women profess strong faith and earnest spirituality, I know that their profession is false if they have not brought all their passions under control. God requires this. The reason why such spiritual darkness prevails is that the mind is content to take a low level and is not directed upward in a pure, holy, and heavenly channel." —*Counsels on Health*, p. 160–161

NEXT MONTH: HEALTH EFFECTS OF OBESITY, PART 2



A Fair and Just Salary



Winter had come, though it seemed to be more like fall. It hadn't snowed much and there were beautiful sunny days to do outdoor activities, although it was a bit chilly. Grandpa had come to stay for the weekend, which was always exciting for Annie and Max. Grandpa had invited

some children from church to go down to the beach to clean up the shore by picking up litter and placing them in garbage bags. Three o'clock in the afternoon had come, and Grandpa, Annie and Max headed down to the beach where they would meet up with the others. Grandpa had promised to pay ten dollars to each child who came out to help. When they got there, no one was there.

"Grandpa, I don't see anyone else" said Max as he looked everywhere, hoping to see some of the others.

"Maybe they will show up later, for now, let us begin ourselves," responded Grandpa with a sweet smile.

So, Annie and Max put on their gloves, and each went hopping about with a black garbage bag in hand ready to pick up any litter they found.

About fifteen minutes went by when some other children began to appear. Then thirty minutes, even an hour later some others showed up. Five minutes before the activity was finished, another child named Jordan came to help. Annie secretly laughed. There was no way Jordan would get the ten dollars. He had only helped for five minutes! When the time was up, all children surrounded Grandpa with their bags full of litter. Only Jordan had an almost empty bag. After they threw the bags into the garbage bins, Annie thought to herself how her and Max would get ten dollars, but the others

would get less because they had not been there from the start; and Jordan, well he wouldn't even get a dollar. Maybe fifty cents just so he wouldn't feel bad.

The children surrounded Grandpa as he took out his wallet. To Annie's surprise, everyone got ten dollars, even Jordan! This made Annie very uneasy, and even a bit angry. On their way back home, Grandpa noticed there was something wrong.

"Annie, is everything okay?" Grandpa asked as he put his hand on Annie's shoulder. Annie didn't want to say anything, but without being able to contain herself she responded, "Grandpa, all the other children did not deserve the ten dollars. They didn't work as much as Max and I. You even gave Jordan ten dollars, and he was only there for five minutes! Why did you do this?"

Grandpa smiled. When they got home, mother had prepared some tea. As they drank their tea, Grandpa opened his Bible and began to read from Matthew 20:1–16 (*please read if desired*)—a parable Jesus once told about a vineyard owner who had done something similar. The vineyard owner had promised to pay all his workers fairly. Some of the workers had worked from an early hour and others had worked much less; however he still paid them all what he had promised.

"But what does this mean, Grandpa?" Asked Annie confused. She thought it was quite unfair.

"The vineyard owner represent Jesus. The workers are all those who follow and serve Him. What this means, dear, is that Jesus will always give a fair and just reward to each one who serves Him. He is our Lord and we should not murmur nor feel discontent with the blessings He gives us. We may think we deserve more than others, but only God knows why He gives to each that what He gives. But one thing you can be sure of, and that is that He will always be just and fair. We must learn to appreciate that which He gives to each one.



Just like what happened today, you should be happy that I gave you the ten dollars I promised I would give you. How much I give to the other children shouldn't bother you because I am the one giving and I chose how I will repay each one. Just be happy with what you have."

"Grandpa, I think I understand. It definitely doesn't feel nice to compare what others receive with what I receive. I truly am happy with the ten dollars you paid me. And I don't ever want to murmur about God's blessings towards me because I know He gives me what is just and fair."

Annie gave Grandpa a big hug, and they finished their tea.

Challenge Eleven

Find the hidden words

BEACH
BLESSINGS
CONTENT
FAIR
HUG
JUST
LITTER
LORD
MONEY
MURMUR
OWNER
PARABLE
SALARY
VINEYARD

V	B	E	A	C	H	M	Y	W	M	V	C	L	M	S
Y	I	Q	B	F	B	B	O	R	J	U	S	T	O	S
B	X	N	A	Q	W	K	T	N	A	R	Y	G	W	K
X	R	I	E	U	O	W	T	R	E	L	U	U	N	Z
W	R	N	L	Y	O	D	U	E	K	Y	A	H	E	P
P	D	Q	H	R	A	M	P	X	I	R	L	S	R	A
T	R	R	K	P	R	R	G	U	L	E	U	M	V	R
H	S	E	O	U	O	H	D	E	M	T	X	K	R	A
R	R	T	M	L	A	R	M	F	J	T	S	K	M	B
S	K	G	E	K	B	L	E	S	S	I	N	G	S	L
F	I	Q	E	S	N	E	L	P	A	L	H	M	Q	E
T	N	E	T	N	O	C	T	S	A	J	V	A	L	I

Complete all 15 Challenges

Don't miss Grandpa's next visit to Annie and Max's home!!

Email your challenges here:
veronicanogarcia@gmail.com





God's Signet Ring

In 1941, the North Carolina native, David C. Cox, left college and joined the US Army Air Corps. Before his departure his parents gave him a gold signet ring that featured a propeller and wings with an inscription on the inside reading, "Mother and Father to David C. Cox Greensboro". In July 1943, Cox's plane was shot down over Kassel, Germany. He parachuted to the ground and was taken prisoner by German forces that shipped him to a Nazi prison camp near Munich. Rations provided by the Red Cross dwindled down to nothing, so Cox and the other prisoners were forced to survive on meager portions of soup and bread. When an Italian prisoner managed to get his hands on two chocolate bars, the starving Cox traded his precious ring for the sweet treat. A few months later he was liberated and made his way back home to North Carolina. Cox had a replica of the lost ring made soon after his return. When he died in 1994, he passed the ring to his son, David Jr. Meanwhile, the original ring had made its way into the hands of Martin Kiss, a member of a Hungarian family from the northern part of present-day Serbia, who had lived in Germany since 1971. With the help of an American couple Kiss was able to locate its owner. David Cox Jr. confirmed that the ring in Kiss's possession was his father's and so the long-lost ring made its way back in a package to the USA.

The Bible also mentions the signet ring in different contexts. In the book of Daniel, we read that the king used his signet ring to seal the mouth of the lion's den so that Daniel's situation might not be changed (Daniel 6:16-18). In the book of Esther, we see the king giving his signet ring to Esther so that she could sign the de-

cree which was written in favour of the Jews (Esther 8:8). In ancient times, a signet ring was worn on the right hand or suspended by a cord around the neck. Always when on the hand, it was ever in sight and treasured by the wearer. As God's signet ring you are like an object that He is constantly regarding; you are always before His eye. "Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy." Psalm 33:18. The signet ring was sometimes carried also by a string on the breast, and would therefore be near to the heart. This means that God wants you to be close to His heart so He can comfort you, encourage you, restore your hope and build you up again. Like Solomon beautifully expressed, let it also be your inner most desire: "Wear me as a signet ring on Your heart, as a ring on Your hand." Song of Solomon 8:6 GWT

Furthermore, the signet ring was something precious and unique, often made out of gold, silver, or iron. This possession was carefully guarded from being stolen or copied. In the same way you are precious and very dear to God. When you express doubt about your value to another human being or even to yourself, remember that the Creator of this universe wears you as His signet ring. "Since thou wast precious in My sight,



thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee." Isaiah 43:4. The ring itself had markings on it that identified the specific person or the family wearing it. Sometimes this was a family crest or a coat of arms, but other times it was a monogram, a simple symbol or a distinct pattern. The ring was made in a mirrored image to ensure it came out properly when leaving

its mark or impression. By dipping it into hot wax or soft clay, the ring left a distinct seal that was considered to be more official than that of a signature. You have your own unique stamp that reveals how you were created in God's image and expresses your particular mix of gifts and talents. You are chosen for a noble purpose: God wants you to represent Him in this world and to impress His glory in the heart of your neighbour. As God's signet ring you can make a mark on the people surrounding you as you spread the good message. God is granting you a great privilege: "I will make you like My signet ring, for I have chosen you." Haggai 2:23 NIV

Manuela Di Franca

World Division Leaders



North American/Caribbean Division

Left to Right:

Secretary – Teofilo Palcios
Vice President – Idel Suarez, Jr.
President – Pablo Hunger
Treasurer – Morris Lowe
Member – George Gowie



European Division

Left to Right:

Secretary – Vladimir Marinov
President – Francesco Caputo
Vice President – Jose Vicente Giner Hernandez
Member – Adalicio Fontes Souza,
Treasurer – Stefano La Corte (Absent)

African Delegates at General Conference in Italy





“There are those who would think it lowering to their dignity to minister to suffering humanity. Many look with indifference and contempt upon those who have laid the temple of the soul in ruins. Others neglect the poor from a different motive. They are working, as they believe, in the cause of Christ, seeking to build up some worthy enterprise. They feel that they are doing a great work, and they cannot stop to notice the wants of the needy and distressed. In advancing their supposedly great work they may even oppress the poor. They may place them in hard and trying circumstances, deprive them of their rights, or neglect their needs. Yet they feel that all this is justifiable because they are, as they think, advancing the cause of Christ.” – *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 382