



The Reformation
Messenger
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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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- Telephone: 905-876-2518
- E-mail: ismessenger@yahoo.com
- Internet: www.ismessenger.org
- Mail: RR #3, 7899 15 Side Road, Milton, ON L9T 2X7, Canada

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The Resurrection

end of heaven to the other.' Little children are borne by holy angels to their mothers' arms. Friends long separated by death are united, nevermore to part, and with songs of gladness ascend together to the city of God.

"We all entered the cloud together, and were seven days ascending to the sea of glass.

"And as the chariot rolled upward, the wheels cried, 'Holy,' and the wings, as they moved, cried, 'Holy,'

and the retinue of holy angels around the cloud cried, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!' And the saints in the cloud cried, 'Glory! Alleluia!'

"Oh, how glorious it will be to see Him and be welcomed as His redeemed ones! Long have we waited, but our hope is not to grow dim. If we can but see the King in His beauty we shall be forever blessed. I feel as if I must cry aloud, 'Homeward bound!'

"In that day the redeemed will shine forth in the glory of the Father and the Son. The angels, touching their golden harps, will welcome the King and His trophies of victory--those who have been washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. A song of triumph will peal forth, filling all heaven. Christ has conquered. He enters the heavenly courts, accompanied by His redeemed ones, the witnesses that His mission of suffering and sacrifice has not been in vain.

"With unutterable love, Jesus welcomes His faithful ones to the joy of their Lord. The Saviour's joy is in seeing in the kingdom of glory the souls that have been saved by His agony and humiliation.

"In the results of His work Christ will behold its recompense. In that great multitude which no man could number, presented 'faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,' He whose blood has redeemed and whose life has taught us 'shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.'"—*Last Day Events*, p. 276–277, 280–281

Ellen G. White

"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth." John 5:28, 29

"This voice is soon to resound through all the nations of the dead, and every saint who sleeps in Jesus shall awake and leave his prison house.

"The precious dead, from Adam down to the last saint who dies, will hear the voice of the Son of God and will come forth from the grave to immortal life.

"Amid the reeling of the earth, the flash of lightning, and the roar of thunder, the voice of the Son of God calls forth the sleeping saints. He looks upon the graves of the righteous, then, raising His hands to heaven, He cries: 'Awake, awake, awake, ye that sleep in the dust, and arise!' Throughout the length and breadth of the earth the dead shall hear that voice, and they that hear shall live. And the whole earth shall ring with the tread of the exceeding great army of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. From the prison house of death they come, clothed with immortal glory, crying: 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' (1 Corinthians 15:55).

"And the living righteous and the risen saints unite their voices in a long, glad shout of victory.

"The living righteous are changed 'in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.' At the voice of God they were glorified; now they are made immortal, and with the risen saints are caught up to meet their Lord in the air. Angels 'gather together His elect from the four winds, from one

The Father of the Canadian Field



*Tribute given on Sunday, February 26, 2023 at
Bloor Street SDA Church Reform Movement at the
funeral of Br. Timo Martin*

“For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me. For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.” 1 Corinthians 4:15-17

Condolences

In the name of the Holmstroem and Suarez family, the entire American Union, and the General Conference please accept our condolences and sympathies in the passing of our dear Brother Timo Martin from life to rest. There are three families which have been friends for generations: Marttinens, Derings, and Holmstroems. They all were ministered by the late Pastor August Holmstroem who visited Finland, Estonia, and Latvia, sharing the Reformation message.

Brother Timo Martin’s Talents

Jesus taught us not to call any man Father. Yet Paul explains that those who bring others through the gospel message to Christ should be respected as spiritual fathers. In God’s grace, this Reform Movement was blessed with a spiritual father—a modern day Timotheus. Paul wrote: “For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet [have ye] not many fathers: for

in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.”
1 Corinthians 4:15

As the sunset leaves sun rays on the horizon, so the life of God’s last day saints leave their influence and works for us to admire and glorify God for His handiwork.

Brother Timo, as he was called, was a powerful and influential layperson, local church leader, Canadian Field Committee Member poly-linguist, General Conference officer, American Union board member, world traveler, missionary, and a good preacher.

He was also a businessman. Besides having his own industrial pattern-making company, he built this church at Bloor Street (see picture of church on outside back cover). He invested his own funds, time, and expertise. He was also instrumental in acquiring the church building in Montreal. He believed in giving of his money, his time, and talent to Jesus, for the glory of God.

Brother Timo was gifted with languages. He was a translator. Finnish and Estonian are similar languages, and Brother Timo translated for Pastor Korpman here in Canada. Brother Timo learned much from Pastor Korpman who was one of the pioneers of this Reform Movement. Brother Timo also learned to speak Spanish fluently and gave Bible studies in Spanish. He was instrumental in bringing many Spanish believers and their descendants into the faith that we profess.

He was a team player who respected organization. I personally first met Brother Timo back in 1976. He, together with his wife, visited our home in San Jose, Costa

Rica. Through the years, we would meet and collaborate on an official church basis. We served together on the American Union Board while Pastor Branko Cholich was President and Canada was part of the American Union. Brother Timo always fought for Canada and thereafter also for Jamaica.

Brother Timo was also a Bible instructor. In 1984, I was blessed to attend the Missionary School held at the Hamilton Church in which several in this audience participated. Brother Timo was one of our instructors. He spoke on Reformation, the Sealing message, and Last Day Events. Those were some of his favorite themes. After work, Brother Timo would rush to visit many people's homes to share Bible studies and prepare people for baptism.

Our brother was a good preacher. I was impacted by a sermon which he gave at a Conference held in the East Coast. He titled it: "He must increase and I must decrease." He echoed the words of John the Baptist and made it the motto which every Christian should adopt. We need to give Jesus more and more room and priority in our lives, while decreasing in our selfishness, and personal ambitions.

Brother Timo was a true world missionary. He loved to travel, like Sister Leila. He had a heart for taking the Reformation message to the Caribbean. He went to many islands, but his greatest success was in Jamaica. Together we traveled to Jamaica. He was the spiritual father of the Reformation in Jamaica. Because of his efforts, we were able to visit Jamaica and also participate in the early days of the Crusades in the 1980's together with Joseph Smikle, Ian Grant, and Morris Lowe. Brother Timo also visited Finland many times, helping his biological family and spiritual family in the old country.

Years later, when I served as President of the General Conference, Brother Timo served on different committees and held various positions at the highest level of our organization. He served on the Peace Committee during the dialogue between this Reform Movement and the '51 Movement. He also served on the prestigious doctrinal committee of the denomination known as the Ministerial Board of the General Conference. And because of his business knowledge and success, he served as auditor of the General Conference. Every time he came to Cedartown, Georgia, he always stayed at our home. My family has wonderful memories of the sweetness he exuded and his gentle smile.

He was very hospitable. He invited many people to stay

at his home here in Toronto. People would spend months living at his home. I spent days at his home during Canadian conferences. He welcomed immigrants remembering that he too was an immigrant.

Brother Timo was resilient. He tempered opposition and loss. He lived a consistent life of service and hard work. He survived some of the hardest conflicts humans must endure. He lost his son. He had to bear the pain of losing a loved one. He had to persevere in building the church in spite of some leaders, who later left the church, who misrepresented his intent. He mustered strength in the midst of physical ailments which come with age and endured with God's grace.

Sister Tina McTavish shared with me one of the final conversations which Brother Timo had just before his death. Her son, James Bessec asked Brother Timo, "Are you ready to go?"—he was referring to be taken home from church. Brother Timo replied, "Yes, I am ready." He was ready to go home. God called him to rest. He finished his course. He endured the losses and triumphed over temptations by the grace of God.

He leaves a void in Canada. He leaves a church building, a Field Conference, descendants that love the Lord—children and grandchildren. He leaves friends and church members that respected and loved him.

The words of St. Paul to the Corinthians may be applied to Brother Timo Martin as we pay our last respects at the church which he so loved and worked for. He became the spiritual father of the Canadian Field. "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet [have ye] not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me." 1 Corinthians 4:15–16

If he could speak to us now, he would say, "Be ye followers of me," as I have been, of Christ. I have left you a pattern to follow. He actually had a business of patterns for industry. But he has left us a spiritual pattern to follow.

As Paul spoke of Timothy, we may speak of Brother Timo. "For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church." 1 Corinthians 4:17

Brother Timo Martin was faithful in the Lord and died in the Lord. The Psalmist says, "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints." Psalms 116:15

To this, John adds a blessing: "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." Revelation 14:13

His works do follow him. He now rests from his labours till the special resurrection at the beginning of the Seventh plague, when I expect to see Brother Timo Martin once more. I call on you all to be faithful stewards of the grace of God and to labour for and work to expedite the return of Jesus in glory.

A Final Story

There is a story of Golda Meir before she became the prime minister of Israel. It was during the six-day war in Israel. The Israeli soldiers had just reconquered the Jewish Quarter containing the Western or Wailing Wall. Golda went to the Western Wall and wrote a *kvitlach* which refers to a small piece of paper which is put into the crannies of the Western Wall. She wrote one word: *shalom* which means hi, goodbye, and peace. It was

1967, and an Israeli soldier came to Golda and cried on her shoulder. They had not met before. Why did he cry on her shoulder? She thought that it was because she might have brought memories of his mother, so he cried for joy in remembering his loved ones.

We do not need to go to the Wailing Wall to pray for peace or for God to hear us. As Christians, we come directly to God to request His grace and peace. As fellow believers, we come to dilute the pain of those mourning for our beloved brother, Timo Martin. *Shalom*—may God keep you in His peace.

My father taught me that friends and family play a critical role in the life of their loved one. With friends and family, we multiple our joy, but we divide and dilute our pain and loss. May God comfort and bless the Martin (Marttinen), McTavish, and Bescec families in their grief as well as Brother Timo's local church on Bloor Street, and the Canadian Field which benefited greatly from his guidance and wise counsel. Thank you, Amen.

Pastor Idel Suarez Jr., Ph.D., Pg.D

Asleep in Jesus

For many long years Brother Timo Martin has fought in the army of the Lord and now his battle came to a peaceful end on February 21, 2023.

Brother Timo was born in Finland, on September 28, 1931. His parents Aksel and Enna, were both in the SDA Reform church. His mother was a missionary, previously in the SDA church and at the time of Timo's birth, she was a missionary in the Reform church. His missionary spirit from his mother was passed on to Brother Timo at a young age. When he was but four years old, he went canvassing in the neighbourhood and sold his first paper. He was only six years old when his aunt explained the truth of the Reformation to him, he then decided to become a Christian. At the age of 15 he was baptized into the SDA Reform Church. He began preaching at the age of 16, and preached his last sermon just a few short weeks ago.

At the age of 19 he immigrated to Canada where he started his own business and raised a family and continued with missionary work. Many evenings he went to give Bible Studies after his work day and then Friday nights were spent in sermon preparation for Sabbath morning. His missionary spirit remained with him until his final breath.

After his retirement, he bought a home in the country and spent his retirement years gardening, making maple syrup, feeding the local birds and squirrels, cutting trees and chopping wood for the winter. He also spent many hours in the study of the word of God and in the books of the Spirit of Prophecy. His was a life of constant activity.

Brother Timo was healthy and remained in his home, taking care of himself until his last day. He was a spiritual father and friend to many people around the world. He encouraged and studied with many, inspiring them to give their hearts to the Lord and to join the army of God. I pray that we all can be faithful so that we can see our dear Brother Timo once again when we meet Jesus in heaven.

Since Brother Timo Martin, started *The Reformation Messenger* in 1994, he has had an article in every issue of the magazine. He was scheduled to preach on the Sabbath after he passed away. We found the beginning of his sermon notes, tucked into his Bible on his desk. After he preached, he would often make his sermon into a Messenger article. This is the beginning of what would have been this month's article. It is not complete... we all need to finish it for Br. Timo. How would you end it, dear reader?

What is a Perfect Christian?



Have you ever met a perfect Christian—one who keeps the commandments perfectly, who loves every person in the world, including his enemies? One who never speaks evil of anyone, is as patient as Job, and never angry or upset? Someone who is humble and meek as Moses or John the Baptist, never complaining and is missionary minded?

Does a perfect Christian exist? Is it even possible for us to be perfect, sinless, just as Jesus was? Or is perfection even required for heaven, for eternal life?

Will God save almost perfect people? Will He save someone who has only one little sin left, one sinful indulgence left—almost perfect?

“Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will He help the evil doers.” Job 8:20. God will not cast away a perfect man. Sinners, He will cast away when He divides the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31–46).

A perfect Christian will not take chances with sin, as there is a risk in doing so, in losing one's salvation. An almost perfect Christian will not be saved, he will be lost.

“Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.” Psalm 1:5. A sinner cannot stand among the righteous. He will not feel at ease or comfortable among God's people.

Jesus spoke the parable of the tares and the wheat. “Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but

gather the wheat into My barn.” Separating the tares from the wheat is the work of the third angel, and it is going on today.

“The mighty shaking has commenced and will go on, and all will be shaken out who are not willing to take a bold and unyielding stand for the truth, and to sacrifice for God and His cause.” —*Early Writings*, p. 50. The shaking will continue until all the chaff is separated, and only perfect, sinless people remain.

What is the measure of the perfection we must reach? “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” Matthew 5:48. Perfection is a heavenly standard, not an earthly one.

Professed Christians, who do not believe that perfection is required or that it is even possible to attain, will never reach it. They are not hungering after righteousness. They set themselves to a low standard, and even this low standard, they often fail to reach.

Yet, the Bible is clear. “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” Philippians 4:13. We can overcome sin through Christ. Jesus never said that perfection is impossible. He told people to be perfect, and He also told them how they can attain perfection—not in our own strength, but in His strength.

Once a rich young man came to Jesus, asking how he can obtain eternal life. Jesus said simply: If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments. “The young man saith unto Him, all these things I have kept from

my youth up: what lack I yet?" Matthew 19:20. What did Jesus answer? "Jesus saith unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow Me." Matthew 19:21. Jesus did not say, you cannot be perfect. No. He told the rich young man, if you want to be perfect, you must sell all that you have. He pointed out the young man's lack, his love for his riches made him imperfect in his keeping of the commandments.

Were the Jews perfect? Jesus said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." Matthew 23:23. In Luke 11:42, the same pronouncement by Jesus also speaks of their lack of love, that they "pass over judgment and the love of God." In tithing, yes, they were perfect. Jesus said that they paid their tithes faithfully. But Jesus pointed out that their faithful paying of tithes was not an excuse to neglect other things such as judgment, mercy, faith, and love. These weightier matters of the law were neglected; thus, Jesus pronounced a woe on them.

Did the Jews love the Romans? Did they love the Gentiles into whose houses they could not enter in for fear that they would contaminate themselves? Did they love the publicans, the sinners? Did they love their enemies? We know that the answer to all of these questions is "no". The Jews were not perfect.

"And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness." Luke 11:39. From the outside they looked clean, from the outside they looked good—fasting often, praying in the street corners, giving money to the poor. They washed their hands before eating. They felt that Jesus and the disciples were not so holy as they were. They looked perfect from the outside, but the inside was not clean, it was full of wickedness. Their heart was not

pure.

David, at the close of his reign, delivered a solemn message to the leaders of Israel, who were in charge of the work of God. And to Solomon, his son, who would lead the nation after his death, David gave special counsel. "And thou, O Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind." 1 Chronicles 28:9. A great responsibility rests on the leaders of God's church, to keep the people's minds focused on God and away from corrupting influences, and in order to do this, the leaders must be perfect and blameless before God.

Jeremiah tells us "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Jeremiah 17:9. Yet, it can be made clean and perfect. When the heart is perfect, everything else is perfect, including our thoughts, our words and our actions.

The natural way for a human to behave is with selfishness, pride, and envy:

It is human to seek for revenge, but divine to forgive.

It is human to hate, but divine to love.

It is human to care for oneself, but divine to care for others.

It is human to love praise and recognition, but it is divine to cast our own glory to the dust.

It is human to cast stones at others, but it is divine to let the stones fall on us.

It is human to criticize and condemn, but it is divine to be blind to the sins of others. . . .

Timo Martin

This was the end of his notes. What would you answer to the question, "Have you ever met a perfect Christian?"



On pages 4 and 5, for the last 29 years, an article has appeared written by Brother Timo Martin. Not one issue was missed. At this time, the Lord has chosen to lay His weary servant to rest. Although he is resting and awaiting the resurrection and his pen sits quietly on his desk, his voice will not be silent. In his office cupboards there were found boxes that contain hundreds of sermons he has preached over the past 60 years. These sermons will now appear on these pages and may his words live on to be a blessing for the children of God.



There Was No More Sea

Do you like the sea? If you do, this might be sad news for you. On the new earth, there will not be a sea anymore! “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.” Revelation 21:1

Please do not be worried, though. When we say, “I love the sea,” we usually refer to the beach or seashore, not the middle of the dark, deep, and boundless open sea. And God will not take away this beautiful piece of nature from us, as we will gather at the shore of a beautiful river in the new heaven and earth!

Also, though it is not exactly the sea as we know, there is still another sea in heaven. “And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal...” Revelation 4:6. “And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.” Revelation 15:2. This sea of glass is definitely not the sea we know, as it is not made of water. Therefore, the Bible verse that says that there is no sea on the new earth does not contradict the existence of the sea of glass.

Let us try to imagine this sea of crystal. Have you seen a piece of crystal or glass reflecting light? When the beam of light meets the crystal or glass, it reflects in such beautiful light with various colours. This beautiful description brings our attention to a reflection of God’s glory coming from His throne before this sea. It teaches us a spiritual lesson that the victory we won over the beast and his image does not come from us. Our victory is simply a reflection of His glory. Our character is merely a reflection of His throne. That is why the victorious 144,000 will gather around this sea of crystal to return honour and glory to God.

However, have you ever wondered why there is no more

sea? Of course, we will still have a beautiful shore. We will still have a sea of glass mingled with fire. But not the sea we have now. Why not? Why will God get rid of the sea? If God does so, and the Bible specifically tells us about it, there should be a reason. The hint to this question is found in the following Bible verses:

“And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest.” Revelation 15:2–4

In this article, we will discuss “the song of Moses” and “the song of the Lamb” to understand why there is no more sea in the new heaven and the new earth.

The Song of Moses

To understand the song of Moses, we have to return to the time when the Israelites had just reached the Red Sea. “Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baalzephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in.” Exodus 14:2–3

Archeologists discovered the exact location of the Red Sea crossing some years ago, where they could find Egyptian chariots at the bottom of the sea. And the geographical characteristic of this campsite is notable. To reach this location, they must come through a long, narrow valley between two high cliffs. When this path reaches the sea-

shore, the valley widens and becomes a space for the Israelites to camp, while cliffs continue until it reaches the shore. This perfectly matches the description by Sister White, who was inspired by the Spirit and never needed to visit this place: "Walled in right and left by ranges of impassable mountains, while directly in front was the Red Sea." —*The Signs of the Times*, March 10, 1881. Therefore, we can see that this place was a closed space, totally shut by the sea at the front, with cliffs on the side, and just one narrow path behind them, through which the Egyptian armies were chasing them.

The same situation happens to us many times in our lives. Sometimes, we meet obstacles that seem impossible to pass. We look to our side, saying there should be some way out. But we can only find a high cliff that shuts us in. We then try to return; but unfortunately, our enemies are right after us. When we meet this situation, we often repeat words that the Israelites cried out: "And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." Exodus 14:11–12

When we follow Jesus Christ, we face obstacles in our lives. In those times, many people complain. Some even regret leaving their old lives in Egypt behind and following Jesus. They say, "If I were not a Christian, I wouldn't have needed to face this." However, Moses encourages us to believe. "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." Exodus 14:13–14

Yes, in human eyes, it is hopeless. There is no way out. We can only see the deadly sea waiting to swallow up our lives. However, God can see a way that is hidden from human eyes. "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known." Psalm 77:19. We do not need to see this path. All we need to know is that God is with us. He is almighty. He has a way under the sea. And if He is with us, we do not need to fear.

"The great lesson here taught is for all time. Often the Christian life is beset by dangers, and duty seems hard to perform. The imagination pictures impending ruin before and bondage or death behind. Yet the voice of God speaks clearly, 'Go forward.' We should obey this command, even though our eyes cannot penetrate the darkness, and we feel the cold waves about our feet. The obstacles that hinder our progress will never disappear before a halting, doubting spirit. Those who defer obedience till every shadow of uncertainty disappears and there remains no risk of failure or defeat, will never obey at all. Unbelief whispers, 'Let us wait till the obstruc-

tions are removed, and we can see our way clearly;' but faith courageously urges an advance, hoping all things, believing all things." — *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 290

God fought for the Israelites that day. He divided the sea and opened a way for them. He even swallowed up the Egyptian armies, the strongest in the world at that time, under the sea.

Moses wrote a song praising God's power to celebrate this great victory. And that is how "the song of Moses" was written. "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation: He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt Him. The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is His name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath He cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea. The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone. Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy." Exodus 15:1–6. I strongly recommend you meditate on the whole song written in Exodus 15:1–19. This song is characterized by returning all merit and glory of victory to God without giving any to people. How will this song be the song of the 144,000 in heaven?

Every song is an experience or a testimony. In other words, the experience of Moses at the Red Sea would be ours as well. It is prophesied that the remnant church will face the Red Sea. Spiritual Egyptians (Babylon) will block all our escape routes and come after our lives as we refuse to receive the mark of the beast and worship his image. However, when the Red Sea—the obstacles, death, and danger—blocks our way, let us not forget that God can always divide the sea for us. God will manifest His power and win a victory over the Egyptians. And let us remember that when we reach heaven, there will be no more sea! There will be no more danger, no more obstacles, and no more death for us. There will be only the sea of crystal, the reflection of His glory, where we will give all merits of victory to Him. So, my dear brothers and sisters, we have good news: There shall be no more sea.

The Origin of Sea

As we can see, the sea is the symbol of obstacles, danger, and death. Indeed, the sea did not exist as we know it until sin got involved. Though the sea was created in the beginning, we can easily imagine that it was quite different from the one we know now.

In the beginning, when God created the sea, He moved much water above the firmament. "And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so."

Genesis 1:6-7. Also, much water was stored in deep places. All this water burst toward the surface of the earth at the flood. "In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened." Genesis 7:11. Therefore, we can see from these that the sea before the flood did not contain as much water as it does now.

Also, we can see from the description in the Spirit of Prophecy that there were no high mountains before the flood, meaning that there was more soil and rocks in the sea and thus, it was not as deep as post-flood.

"The entire surface of the earth changed at the Flood. A third dreadful curse rested upon it in consequence of sin. As the water began to subside, the hills and mountains were surrounded by a vast, turbid sea. Everywhere were strewn the dead bodies of men and beasts. The Lord would not permit these to remain to decompose and pollute the air, therefore He made of the earth a vast burial ground. A violent wind which was caused to blow for the purpose of drying up the waters, moved them with great force, in some instances even carrying away the tops of the mountains and heaping up trees, rocks, and earth above the bodies of the dead. By the same means the silver and gold, the choice wood and precious stones, which had enriched and adorned the world before the Flood, and which the inhabitants had idolized, were concealed from the sight and search of men, the violent action of the waters piling earth and rocks upon these treasures, and in some cases even forming mountains above them. God saw that the more He enriched and prospered sinful men, the more they would corrupt their ways before Him. The treasures that should have led them to glorify the bountiful Giver had been worshiped, while God had been dishonored and despised.

"The earth presented an appearance of confusion and desolation impossible to describe. The mountains, once so beautiful in their perfect symmetry, had become broken and irregular. Stones, ledges, and ragged rocks were now scattered upon the surface of the earth. In many places hills and mountains had disappeared, leaving no trace where they once stood; and plains had given place to mountain ranges. These changes were more marked in some places than in others. Where once had been earth's richest treasures of gold, silver, and precious stones, were seen the heaviest marks of the curse. And upon countries that were not inhabited, and those where there had been the least crime, the curse rested more lightly" – *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 107-108

Therefore, the sea existing now was formed at the flood due to enormous sins that required God to destroy the whole earth. The deep dark sea we have now is the result and the reminder of our sins. Indeed, the sea has been dividing humanity. On top of the division of language at the tower of Babel, the differences between cultures, nations, and languages have deepened as they were separated for a long

time due to the sea dividing them. This division and differences led to so many sad histories being repeated, including racism, wars, etc. Up to this date, the sea is still dividing families and friends. They can see each other only when they can afford time and money for a trip. Before the airplane was invented, separation was even worse.

"The sea divides friends. It is a barrier between us and those whom we love. Our associations are broken up by the broad, fathomless ocean. In the New Earth there will be no more sea, and there shall pass there 'no galley with oars.' In the past many who have loved and served God have been bound by chains to their seats in galleys, compelled to serve the purpose of cruel, hardhearted men. The Lord has looked upon their suffering in sympathy and compassion. Thank God, in the earth made new there will be no fierce torrents, no engulfing ocean, no restless, murmuring waves." – *Maranatha*, p. 351

Therefore, God has promised us that there shall be no more sea on the new earth. There will not be a reminder of our sins. There will not be any more separation. There will be only the union between God and us. Only the union among families and friends will be there in the new earth and new heaven.

Song of the Lamb: A Storm at the Sea of Galilee

Now, let us think about the song of the Lamb. The Bible does not talk about any specific song that Jesus wrote on this earth, like Moses. However, as we mentioned earlier, a song is a testimony and an experience. So we can meditate on an experience of Jesus related to the sea.



"And the same day, when the even was come, He saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took Him even as He was in the ship. And there were also with Him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake Him, and say unto him, Master, carest Thou not that we perish? And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And He said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" Mark 4:35-41

We can learn the same lesson here as the song of Moses. The disciples sailed the sea as Jesus told them to do. They met the strongest storm in their life there. The same thing happens to us. When we follow the guidance and instruction of Jesus, we often meet the storm of our lives. Then we often rely on our own strength, just as the disciples tried to escape the storm, relying on their experiences as fishermen. But we find

ourselves powerless. The disciples even forgot that Jesus was with them—so do we. How often do we forget that there is nothing Jesus cannot do when we face difficult situations?

In times of trouble, let us remember that Jesus is with us. He is waiting for us to come to Him and ask for help. Also, Jesus' presence is not only the promise to calm that sea but also the promise of our comfort. Jesus was sleeping in the boat—very uncomfortably. When the boat was tossed to the right, His body was tossed too. When the water came in, He got soaked too. It would have been such an uncomfortable sleep. Maybe He could have levitated Himself in the air and slept more comfortably. But He went through the storm just as His disciples did, except the fact that He did not fear as He trusted His father. The fact that Jesus was on the same boat as the disciples is His promise of compassion and empathy. When we suffer, He will suffer with us. When we cry, He cries with us. When we rejoice, He rejoices with us.

Let us think about when Jesus was on the cross. It is written that the Father was with Jesus, suffering together, even though Jesus could not feel His presence.

"In that thick darkness God's presence was hidden. He makes darkness His pavilion, and conceals His glory from human eyes. God and His holy angels were beside the cross. The Father was with His Son. Yet His presence was not revealed. Had His glory flashed forth from the cloud, every human beholder would have been destroyed. And in that dreadful hour Christ was not to be comforted with the Father's presence. He trod the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with Him.

"But God suffered with His Son. Angels beheld the Saviour's agony. They saw their Lord enclosed by legions of satanic forces, His nature weighed down with a shuddering, mysterious dread. There was silence in heaven. No harp was touched. Could mortals have viewed the amazement of the angelic host as in silent grief they watched the Father separating His beams of light, love, and glory from His beloved Son, they would better understand how offensive in His sight is sin." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 753, 693

God knows the beginning from the end (Isaiah 46:10). He knows the future and knew that Jesus would win the victory. He knew His beloved Son would be resurrected and come back to Him. Still, just because God knew the future does not mean He was not compassionate for what Jesus felt in the moment. And so also, since He knows the future, He knows what we go through and the same compassion and empathy is promised to us. When the boat tosses to the left, He will be tossed to the left with us. When the wave breaks into the boat, and we get wet, Jesus will get soaked with us. Jesus knows how it feels to face the tempest. And though He knows that He prepared the future of a calm sea for us, He still comforts us by understanding what we are going through now.

The Song of the Lamb: The Third Angel's Message

However, this is not the end of the song of the Lamb: "There is another spiritual lesson in this miracle of the stilling of the tempest. Every man's experience testifies to the truth of the words of Scripture, 'The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest.... There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.' Isaiah 57:20–21. Sin has destroyed our peace. While self is unsubdued, we can find no rest. The masterful passions of the heart no human power can control. We are as helpless here as were the disciples to quiet the raging storm. But He who spoke peace to the billows of Galilee has spoken the word of peace for every soul. However fierce the tempest, those who turn to Jesus with the cry, 'Lord, save us,' will find deliverance. His grace, that reconciles the soul to God, quiets the strife of human passion, and in His love the heart is at rest. 'He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so He bringeth them unto their desired haven.' Psalm 107:29, 30. 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.' 'The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever.' Romans 5:1; Isaiah 32:17." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 336

The tempest does not come only from outside. Our fight is not only about external trials and persecution. Babylon does not approach us only by the threat of death. Babylon will try to take us down with spiritual temptation. The tempest arises in our hearts as well. It is called our sinful nature. Our sins destroy the peace in our hearts. And often, we try to calm it down with our own strength. But again, we are totally powerless. We can never defeat the storm with our work. Only when we come to Jesus and ask for help by faith we will overcome the tempest.

This is also the same lesson we can find in the song of Moses. When the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, they left the Egyptians behind and started a new journey. We are called to repent and be separated from our sins and sinful life, just as the first and second angel is calling us: "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." Revelation 14:6–8

Indeed, this would be the last battle between Babylon and the remnant people. In other words, this would be the last sea and tempest we would face as the remnant church. Satan's argument in the Great Controversy always has been, "It is impossible for humans to be perfect." And the true fight behind the test on the Sabbath and Sunday law is, "Can humans really keep the law of God and thus be perfect?" We

are powerless in this matter. If we try to overcome our sinful nature and be like the Father in our own strength (Matthew 5:48), we will fail just as the disciples started sinking into the sea. Only by faith in Jesus' power, can we be perfect and thus have peace.

This is the Third Angel's message: the centre of the present truth. "And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their



torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14:9-12

The Third Angel presents the last battle between Babylon and the faithful remnant. Babylon will cause a big storm and try to make us commit sin. She will preach the doctrine of salvation by works so that we will try to fight the storm with our own strength. However, the third angel is telling us to have "the faith of Jesus." How did Jesus calm the sea? How was Jesus so peaceful amid the storm? It was not because He was the Son of God. As reflected in the words of the disciples (Mark 4:41), Jesus was as peaceful and powerful as the son of man. His secret was His faith and trust in His Father. Jesus never used His divine power against temptation so that He could be our perfect example. "And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of Man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" Mark 4:41 (Hebrews 4:15)

By faith, Jesus was at peace with God. By faith, Jesus overcame the sea. By faith, Jesus fought against temptation. By faith, Jesus calmed the sea. By faith, Jesus remained perfect as the Father. "When Jesus was awakened to meet the storm, He was in perfect peace. There was no trace of fear in word or look, for no fear was in His heart. But He rested not in the possession of almighty power. It was not as the 'Master of earth and sea and sky' that He reposed in quiet. That power He had laid down, and He says, 'I can of Mine own self do nothing.' John 5:30. He trusted in the Father's might. It was in faith—faith in God's love and care—that Jesus rested, and the power of that word which stilled the storm was the power of God." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 336

This is the faith of Jesus. And this is the testimony of Jesus Christ (Revelation 12:17). The Third Angel calls us to have the same faith so that we can overcome the tempest, "keep the commandments of God" and thus be perfect. Yes, the

fight will not be an easy one. The storm is powerful. But let us never forget, Jesus is with us.

This is why people who accept the Third Angel's message will sing the song of the Lamb beside the sea of crystal. We will have the testimony of Jesus—in other words, the experience or the song of Jesus. But we have no merit for the victory. It was God who gave us the power. So we will stand by the sea of the reflection of His glory and share our experiences, giving the honour to God.

New Song

My dear brothers and sisters, my dear readers, we will face the sea on this earth. We will face the Red Sea. We will face the storm of Galilee. We will be chased by Babylon. We will be tossed by the tempest. We will be tested both externally and internally. It will not be an easy experience. But, let us remember. Our Emmanuel—God with us—will make us stand on the rock. He will lead our way. And He will give us a new song, experience, and testimony that only the 144,000 will know.

"I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord." Psalm 40:1-3

My dear friends, we have good news. There shall be no more sea. There shall be no more suffering, no more curse, no more sins, no more night, no more death, no more separation, and no more tears. Instead, we will stand at the beautiful river and on the sea of crystal, which reflects the power and glory of our God who saves us from all the seas in our lives.

"And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him: And they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever. And He said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to shew unto His servants the things which must shortly be done. Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." Revelation 22:1-7

May God strengthen you and bless you until we shall meet again at the shore of this beautiful river, Amen.

Makoto Matsumoto

2023 New Year, New Goals?

How Can I Set and Achieve New Goals!

A goal is an aim, a purpose, a sense of direction towards which a person focuses all their energies, desires, and efforts. Goals are the “targets” towards which we point our lives, often straining all our energies to achieve that goal. If you have already achieved something, it is no longer a goal—it is an accomplishment. A goal is a statement of intention, aimed at the future.

When does the New Year begin? January or February? In the Leap Year, we have an additional day added to February, not to December. January may not have been the beginning of the year throughout history. The prefix ‘Oct’ means 8, Non/Nano means 9 and Deca means 10. December would then be the tenth month, not the twelfth. Yet, most of the world acknowledges January 1st as the beginning of the New Year and it is customary for many to meet up with family and friends the night before to greet the new year. There is often feasting and partying at that time. This time for celebration is not Biblical. It is not a Christian feast. We understand it to be the New Year, but do not partake of the worldly pleasures of that day.

Many hope to start the New Year by making resolutions to help them have a successful year.

Some years are better than others. We remember these years and the special things that happened. However, our life does not consist of a year, but of a moment. We should thank the Lord for His mercy—not yearly, or daily, but every moment. What do you remember from last year? Think carefully over the events of the year. Was it a bad or good year for you?

Have you backslidden or gone forward in knowledge, faith, good works, heeding the prophecy, helping others to draw close to God, and so on?

From every event, bad or good, the Lord has lessons for us to learn. “To God we owe all we have and are. In Him we live and move and have our being. We have not been

forgotten by Him. In His book each human being has a page, on which is recorded his whole history. Constantly and untiringly God is working for our happiness. The treasures which He has placed within our reach are numberless. ‘The Lord is good to all; and His tender mercies are over all His works. Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.’ He is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. The earth is full of His goodness. Creation proclaims, with myriad voice, the forbearance, love, and compassion of the Almighty.”—*The Signs of the Times*, January 2, 1901

How can I set and achieve new goals this year?

Should Christians set goals for the future? Some say no, but let us read what Sister White wrote to J. H. Kellogg and his wife on the 1st January 1886. “I wish you a happy new year. The old year with its burden of record has passed into eternity. Now let every thought, every feeling be that of remembrance of God’s love. Let us gather up one token after another.” —*The Upward Look*, p. 15

One of the most important questions you can ever ask is, “What goals does the Lord desire for me to set and to achieve for Him in this New Year? Remember that setting spiritual goals for your life is an important step towards being a success in the Lord’s eyes.

We can learn much from the Apostle Paul’s life. He was one of the most goal-oriented people in the Bible. To the Philippians he wrote, “But what things were gain to me, these I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I also count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know Him, and the power of

His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; If by any means I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:7-14

Paul was not a man who wasted his time or energy. He was extremely focused in his life, and he had an overwhelming sense of purpose and direction. He stated in the above verses that his life goals were:

- To know Christ Jesus as intimately as possible;
- To experience the righteousness of Christ in his own life;
- To be conformed to Christ in every way;
- To press towards perfection.

The Apostle Paul made no claim that he had achieved his life goals. Rather, he stated that he was continuing to press toward the goal of the prize of the "high calling of God in Christ Jesus." To press, in this case, means "to diligently follow after." He was zealous in following Christ.

What is the main goal you have in your life. Is it your desire to have a closer relationship with Jesus this year?

"The old year, with its burden of record, is fast passing away. The new year, with all its possibilities, will soon be ushered in. What advancement have we made in the knowledge of Christ during the past year? Are we prepared to show, more decidedly than ever before, that we are on the Lord's side? At this time, when the nations of the world are wavering between infidelity and idolatry, are we prepared to stand as faithful ambassadors for Christ? Shall we not, at the beginning of this new year, give ourselves and all we have to God? Shall we not listen to His voice, which calls us to a renewed contest, to a more thorough consecration of ourselves and our intrusted capabilities to His service?

"God speaks to each human being, saying: 'I have a claim on you. Give me your zeal, your capabilities, your energy, your means.' He has a right to ask this; for we are His, redeemed by His boundless love and by the agony of the cross of Calvary from the service of sin. On no account are we to devote our powers to self-serving. Day by day we are to return to the Lord that which He has intrusted to us. And we are to ask Him, not only for temporal blessings, but for spiritual gifts. He who asks in faith, believing that God will fulfil His word, and who acts in accordance

with His prayer, doing God's will in all things, will receive rich blessings from on high. And as he receives, he is to impart to those who need help." *-The Signs of the Times*, January 2, 1901

Hindrances to Achieving your Spiritual Goals

In order to achieve our spiritual goals, we may need to change and improve our behaviour. It may not be easy, but achieving this is possible through Christ. He will help you, one step at a time.

In Isaiah we read, "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well." Isaiah 1:16-17. We need to keep our eyes on the goal and remove excuses.

Procrastination is one big reason many do not reach their goals. Thus, now is the best time to begin. The only cure for procrastination is to start doing something immediately. This gives little time to think and come up with excuses. "Cease to do evil; Learn to do well." Isaiah 1:16-17. "To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Hebrews 3:15

What are Spiritual Goal

To add to our original definition of a goal, we can say it is a statement of how you desire to grow, develop, mature, or change in a positive, specific, and achievable way. "

God requires perfection of His children." *-Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 315. This should be our ultimate goal.

"We have no time to lose. We know not how soon our probation may close. At the longest, we have but a brief lifetime here, and we know not how soon the arrow of death may strike our hearts. We know not how soon we may be called to give up the world and all its interests. Eternity stretches before us. The curtain is about to be lifted. But a few short years, and for everyone now numbered with the living the mandate will go forth: 'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: ... and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.' Revelation 22:11." *-The Ministry of Healing*, p. 454

Goals for the Christian are not based upon how they desire to live for their own pleasure and satisfaction. They should have as a goal, of knowing and serving Christ.

Dear reader, have you identified what is the "priority goal" in your life? Are all your goals in line with God's Word? The Lord will not lead you to pursue a goal that is contrary to the principles established in the Bible.

"We are to grow daily in spiritual loveliness. We shall fail often in our efforts to copy the divine pattern. We shall

often have to bow down to weep at the feet of Jesus, because of our shortcomings and mistakes; but we are not to be discouraged; we are to pray more fervently, believe more fully, and try again with more steadfastness to grow into the likeness of our Lord. As we distrust our own power, we shall trust the power of our Redeemer, and render praise to God, who is the health of our countenance, and our God." –*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 337

Reasons why many fail to achieve their goals

Allowing your bad habits to hold you back. "Motivation is what gets you started. Habit is what keeps you going." Said *Jim Ryun*. Your life, and habits you have had for years, can hinder your achievement. Since habits are at the core of who we are, and they are hard to make or break; many struggle to achieve their goals. Instead of doing what is supposed to be done, they do what is comfortable and easy. This is the first major roadblock to achieving goals. A common saying states, "If you do what you always did, you will get what you always got."

Breaking or building habits is not always easy. But, in Christ, it is very possible. "Wrongs cannot be righted, nor can reformations in conduct be made by a few feeble, intermittent efforts. Character building is the work, not of a day, nor of a year, but of a lifetime. The struggle for conquest over self, for holiness and heaven, is a lifelong struggle. Without continual effort and constant activity, there can be no advancement in the divine life, no attainment of the victor's crown." –*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 452

"We should learn wherein we fail, and then guard ourselves upon that point. We must have perfect control over our own spirit. 'If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.'" –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 307

Setting good goals in the mind only. Many people set goals in their mind only, and it stays in their mind. When setting new spiritual goals, you need to act on them. Merely desiring change without taking any positive steps for this change will result in failure.

"The formation of a right character is the work of a lifetime, and is the outgrowth of prayerful meditation united with a grand purpose. The excellence of character that you possess must be the result of your own effort. Friends may encourage you, but they cannot do the work for you. Wishing, sighing, dreaming, will never make you great or good. You must climb.

"The conversation we have by the fireside, the books we read, the business we transact, are all agents in forming our characters, and day by day decide our eternal destiny.

"Mental ability and genius are not character, for these are often possessed by those who have the very opposite of a

good character. Reputation is not character. True character is a quality of the soul, revealing itself in the conduct." –*My Life Today*, p. 267

It helps to sometimes write down your goals and then think and pray about possible ways that you can work to make them become a reality. That way you can see them in front of you and they will not remain in your mind. By seeing them, you can begin to organize them and make a plan on how you will carry them out.

Negative mindset—Not believing that you can do it. "Trust because you are willing to accept the risk, not because it's safe or certain." –*Anonymous*

Do you really believe you can achieve the spiritual goals you set? When you do not believe you are capable of doing something, you will not take actions towards making it a reality and eventually it is not achieved. It is a failure.

"The impossibility lies in your own will. If you will not, then you cannot overcome. The real difficulty arises from the corruption of an unsanctified heart, and an unwillingness to submit to the control of God." –*Messages to Young People*, p. 99

Believe in what Christ can do through you. A peaceful mind generates power. Who decides whether you will be happy or unhappy? You do.

From some historians we read:

Successful people do what unsuccessful people are not willing to do. Don't wish it were easier, wish you were better." –*Jim Rohn*

"The number one reason people fail in life is because they listen to their friends, family, and neighbours." –*Napoleon Hill*

"The reason most people never reach their goals is that they don't define them, or ever seriously consider them as believable or achievable. Winners can tell you where they are going, what they plan to do along the way, and who will be sharing the adventure with them." –*Denis Waitley*

Poor time management. If you cannot manage time wisely and effectively then you will have difficulty managing anything. Time is a blessing. We are children of God who are given this golden gift of time in which to grow into the likeness of Him who made us. Shall we not then cherish every moment of our precious time for our personal spiritual development?

Remember that time is not on your side. You only have 24 hours in a day. We all have the same amount of it. We only differ on how we manage it. The biggest difference between those who achieve their goals and those who do not is effective time management. True Christians are stewards of their time. They do not waste a single moment of it.

"The value of time is beyond computation. Christ regarded every moment as precious, and it is thus that we should regard it." –*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 342

Losing patience: Giving up too soon is another hindrance. Do you persist? Or do you give up easily? It is easier to give up when facing challenges than to keep going.

"Let no one say, I cannot remedy my defects of character. If you come to this decision, you will certainly fail of obtaining everlasting life. The impossibility lies in your own will. If you will not, then you cannot overcome. The real difficulty arises from the corruption of an unsanctified heart, and an unwillingness to submit to the control of God." –*Messages to Young People*, p. 99

Lack of Discipline: If you lack discipline, it is important to work at improving it. It is a vital part of the process.

"Are you ready to make the surrender now? You are to put away your sin right now when you see it.... Do not make leeway [that] you are going to overcome by degrees; you are going to try little by little to give up sin. Now, while it is called today, heed the invitation and harden not your hearts.

"Oh, my soul, why not leave the cursed thing today? Sin crucified my Lord. Why not turn from it with loathing? Why not love the things that Christ loved, and hate the things that Christ hated? He has made provision ample enough for you that you can, through Him, be more, yea, more than overcomers." –*The Upward Look*, p. 283

Good Resolutions to Make:

Courage: When the Israelites faced the flowing Jordan, walled fortresses, and mighty giants in the land whither they were to go, the Lord said, "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." Joshua 1:9

Zeal: There is so little time in which to do all that must be done. Along the way there will be difficulties, but a warm and glorious welcome awaits us at the end of the road. Therefore, let us work with zeal. We may soon have it completed if there is zealous, united, and consecrated action. Imagine what the church could do to hasten the coming of the Lord if they went forth filled with the Holy Spirit with holy zeal to prepare men and women for the glorious appearing of our Saviour! Let us take our responsibilities seriously and search our hearts earnestly

Love: Let us rid ourselves of every root of bitterness, every remnant of animosity or hatred. Let us enter the year with love filling our hearts, ready to overflow in thoughts and deeds of sympathy and tenderness. May we always be ready to feel sympathy with another in sorrow or to express appreciation of good work done by another.

Keep your friendships in good repair. Be more understanding, more tolerant, more forgiving, and slower to take offense. Let us determine to make our minds a graveyard for any gossip that may drift our way. And let us pray that our heavenly Father will enable us to have such control over our lips that never a word will pass through them which will hurt another.

Humility and meekness is to be silent about our own personal difficulties. "Meekness is a precious grace, willing to suffer silently, willing to endure trials. Meekness is patient and labors to be happy under all circumstances. Meekness is always thankful and makes its own songs of happiness... Meekness will suffer disappointment and wrong, and will not retaliate.... A meek and quiet spirit will not be ever looking out for happiness for itself, but will seek for self-forgetfulness and find sweet content and true satisfaction in making others happy." –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 335, 536

Some people have likened the new year to a new page, a new chapter, or a new book. How true this is with our lives. When we are fully committed to the Master on these pages He will write events that are full of interest, full of meaning, and rich in service. Our lives are an epistle. May all who read this epistle be blessed at what our heavenly Father is doing day by day to redeem, and restore in us the beauty of His original creation when man was created in His image.

Be Health Conscious. To enjoy success we must be healthy. Health, happiness, and success are closely related.

Let us pray that the Lord keeps our faith from growing cold. May the signs of the times we see around us, help us to grow stronger. It is my prayer that each one of you make the decision today to set new spiritual goals for the year and then pray that Christ will help you achieve them as you continue to grown int His likeness. Amen.

**Victor Shumbusho,
DR Congo Union**





Ruth – the Moabites

Part II

Based on: “The Book of Ruth”

*Discreet and humbly she would gather, well aware not to bother
Anybody, but only took what in the Law of Moses,
God had provided for the poor and stranger,
of the fallen grain leftover.*

*Boaz riding, owner of the field, came greeting
There his reapers with a blessing, overlooking the progressing
Of the harvest and its yield.*

*Then as his eyes glanced over all his hired maidens,
He noticed a young woman, he never saw before,
And inquired of his reapers’ foreman who she were.*

*“This is the Moabites damsel, coming back with Naomi,
Helping, serving her. She asked if she could glean, of the grain,
after the reapers leave, among the sheaves.”*

Then Boaz nearing, saw as Ruth was bending, gathering the fallen grain.

*He said to her she may not leave the field, to get her yield,
But abide there by his maidens, where she may gather,
And drink also from his servant’s drawn up water.*

*Then Ruth bowed to the ground, falling on her face,
Saying: “Why have I found with thee such grace,
Taking note of me, who am a stranger in this place?”*

*Then she arose, laying her arms upon her chest,
Shyly, slowly lifting up her head, into Boaz’s face to gaze.
A shiver went through her as their eyes did meet,*

*Then most discreetly lowered down her eyes,
Standing there in sheer humility,*

She was the image of modesty and purity

Boaz highly did regard, it was forever imprinted in his heart.

Then he said: “It has been shown to me and I was told, how loving

*You have been to your mother-in-law, after the death
Of your husband, have left your own mother and father
Even your homeland, to come with Naomi;*

To a people and a place altogether new to face.

God bless you and reward you richly,

Under whose wings you have come to trust Him faithfully.”

.....

*So, Ruth sat then beside the reapers, Boaz handing her parched corn,
And she did eat. Then she went again to glean.*

*Boaz charged his young men not to touch, nor to rebuke her,
But to let fall some handfuls of the grain
For her there to remain.*

*When even came Ruth was beating out what she had gleaned,
And it was of barley about an ephah that she gained.*

*Happily she showed Naomi what she brought,
Then Naomi asked her where she wrought*



this bounty, from which field bringing such good yield.
 "Boaz was his name, from whose field I came,
 He said that I may continue gleaning till the end of harvesting."
 "He is near of kin to us, one of our next kinsmen.
 God bless him for his goodness, showing us such kindness."
 And Ruth kept on gleaning, gathering her portions,
 In her meek and humble fashion,
 Till the harvesting of barley and of wheat was ended,
 Never leaving emptyhanded, but brought a good measure
 Of the grain, that highly valued treasure.

.....
 Naomi in her heart rejoiced, how Boaz welcomed Ruth so fair,
 Granting extra fallen grain to her,
 For her meekness and discreetness did impress his mind,
 For he never knew a woman of this kind.
 Naomi did perceive that Ruth was favoured by her kinsman,
 Then with trusting faith and prayer she endeavoured,
 For her beloved, adopted daughter,
 That God may Ruth and Boaz bring together,
 Unite them by His grace, in true love and godliness
 Unto holy matrimony, and their happiness.

.....
 So she said that in the coming night,
 Boaz would be working in the threshing floor
 To winnow barley there,
 That Ruth may bathe, anoint herself and put on raiment,
 But make herself not known, until Boaz will lie down,
 To rest and sleep, and she shall keep
 In mind the counsel Naomi here unfolds,
 That she may speak and act as she is told.
 And Ruth did answer her that she will do,
 Accordingly to go and do.



.....
 That night Divinity sealed Ruth's and Boaz's destiny.
 Being chosen as the pair, not only to produce an heir
 To Elimelech's tribe, but through this line
 Kings were to come forth, and finally,
 The birth of the Messiah, the long-awaited Saviour.
 God had shown His favour,
 To bless, adopt a former Gentile as His own,
 To make to all the world it known,
 That by His grace He no distinction makes,
 Between any people, culture, race,

But looks upon the heart, its love, the virtues of the soul,
 That who by faith believes, obeys and lives His word -
 This is to God most precious - and of greatest worth. Amen.



Edda Tedford, Canada



Children of Faith



In Luke 18 we read of a story about a widow who kept going to see a judge in a city. This judge just simply gets tired of her because every day she comes in and asks, "please get rid of my enemy, please do something about my enemy, please do something about him." Every day she comes back with the same question, "please take care of my enemy." This judge, who is not particularly religious or kind, gets worn down by her persistence. Eventually, he grants her request. He takes care of her enemy and she is happy and he has peace.

This is a parable, but it refers to us as well, because we are like that unfortunate widow and we are pressing our request to God. In the end, Jesus said, "And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bare long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" Luke 18:7-8

Let us tie this in now with the raising of our children, because as members of the church, as Christians, we want our children to also have faith. God is looking for faith on this earth. He will look not only at us, but he will also look for it in our children. Let us explore two sets of parents and the work that they did. These parents are mentioned by Sister White as two of the most faithful parents.

"But through no other woman (Jochebed), save Mary of Nazareth has the world received greater blessing." – *Education*, p. 61

We have Jochebed and Amram and we have Joseph and Mary. Both are very powerful examples of godly parenting and preparing children of faith and raising children to be servants of God. Let us take a look first at Amram and Jochebed. What do we know about them? Well, we know that they are both the descendants of Levi. Levi was the tribe that became the religious leaders of Israel. Interestingly enough, Jochebed is the aunt

of her husband Amram. She is the daughter of Levi, obviously of his old age and Amram is the grandson of Levi. His father and his wife were siblings but Jochebed and Amram were both slaves. They were slaves in one of the most powerful countries or empires of that time, Egypt. They were under a very strict government law, which is that anyone who has a son, that son was under a death decree. "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment." Hebrews 11:23. We are given an example of the faith of Amram and Jochebed. They feared God more than they feared the king of Egypt, the pharaoh, who is a very powerful man. It was Pharaoh who had put these very strict laws upon the Israelite people. The king's command is found in Exodus 1:15-16, "And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah: And he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools; if it be a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it be a daughter, then she shall live."

God had a greater answer to their prayers. Jochebed continued to hide Moses for three months until it was impossible to hide him any longer. God continues to lead step-by-step on this path of faith that they have to follow. Jochebed has a plan, and I am sure this was not her own plan. God impressed her with the idea to build a little boat of bulrushes and cover it with tar and to place her precious baby into the river. This river goes past the house of the princess, Jochebed is praying for a miracle and now is when her miracle happens. We see that God is never too late, He is never too early, He is right on time and so her miracle comes.

When the princess comes out and lifts up the lid of this little basket, she sees a little Hebrew baby. She hears his cry. It is hard to be angry or to have hatred in your heart for an innocent little baby and so God uses the tender-

ness of this young princess's heart and the cry of a baby, to fulfill His plan. Miriam, who has been hiding nearby, comes and asks the princess if she would like to have a nurse for the baby. The princess of course agrees and Jochebed is given permission by the government to raise her son, the very child that the king had commanded to be killed. She is now given support and freedom to raise this child. Now she understands that this is not an accident, this is not something that has just happened by chance. God had a plan and so she does not waste time as she does not know how much time she has. She does not waste a minute but puts as much into her son as she possibly can. Jochebed instructs him, she teaches him, she spends with him every moment that she has. She is dedicated to instructing her son to love and follow the Lord.

"The instructions he received from his parents were such as to fortify his mind and shield him from being lifted up and corrupted with sin and becoming proud amid the splendor and extravagance of court life." –*The Story of Redemption*, p. 108

Jochebed knew that at some point she was going to have to let her son go. Her son was given to her on loan and she was going to have to release him, not to another believer's home, but into a very pagan environment; and so, she instilled in his mind as much as she could to safeguard him from the temptations that he would be faced with. "Those principles of truth that were the burden of his mother's teaching and the lesson of her life, no after influence could induce Moses to renounce." –*Education*, p. 61. What was the result? We read in Acts 7: 22, "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds."

Jochebed had taught him well, and he was able to adapt to the school of the Egyptians. Moses transferred schools, he transferred from a homeschool to now this government school, and he did very well. Nevertheless, we read in *Conflict and Courage*, page 86 that "Moses had been learning much that he must unlearn." He came to the palace very young, and he did not have all his filters in place. At the age of 40 he kills an Egyptian. He believes that the way Israel is going to be set free is by force, and he knows he is the one to do it, but he does not rely on God. He does it himself, with his own power and he makes a terrible mistake. Now at 40 years of age he is gone from the palace into the wilderness and he is running for his life, afraid that Pharaoh is going to kill him. Again, this is all part of God's plan. God says "OK now we're going to take some intense courses in how to lead and we're going to practice by leading sheep," be-

cause, as we know, people are very much like sheep.

He learned lessons in patience, leadership, and protection, all the things that he would need to lead a group of people. "Although he was 'learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians,' while in the service of Pharaoh the character of Moses received a mold that disqualified him for the wonderful work he was to do, making him weak where he should have been strong." –*The Youth's Instructor*, January 29, 1903. At this time he must unlearn many things and remember that foundation that his mother and father had given him while he was a young child. God had been preparing him since conception and Moses does a mighty work and he goes on to write at least the first five books of The Bible. He is the first author of The Bible and leaves behind the legacy of law, of order, justice and of faithfulness. He does much for the children of Israel.

We will now switch and focus on the childhood of Jesus. We are going to compare the two. Jesus was placed into a family of humans. Jesus, we have to remember, comes from heaven. He came from perfection, from purity, from a place of wealth, and beauty. He is placed on this planet with simple people. Which of those simple people does God choose to raise His child, to raise His son, to be responsible for the Son of God? What an awesome task were Joseph and Mary called to do! I cannot even imagine, so let us look at Joseph and Mary.

We know that they are descendants of the tribe of Judah. Both of them are poor. Joseph was not wealthy, he was a carpenter. Mary, we do not know exactly at what age, becomes a single parent to Jesus because Joseph, at some point, dies. Again they are under another powerful Empire. They are under the control of Rome and under their yoke. Jesus is raised in a town that is not where we would choose as parents. It is a place of crime, a place where you would not expect to find the Son of God being raised. What we find, is that while Mary had been presented with this plan of being the mother to the Son of God, when Joseph finds out, he is not exactly on board. He does not understand that this is the Son of God. He is under the assumption, and understandably so, that Mary has been unfaithful to him. He decides that he is going to just divorce her quietly, not make a big deal about it. He would just part ways from her, but God intervenes.

In Matthew 1:20 we see that God sends an angel to go to Joseph and explain things to him to show him the plan. Mary was not unfaithful, but that the Son of God has been implanted in her womb. God needs Joseph to be the

adoptive father, the stepfather of Jesus. He was to help raise the Son of God and because he is also a faithful man he agrees. He goes against, probably, the advice of most of his family and decides to marry a woman that is pregnant with a child that is not his.

Together they raised Jesus. What was the education of Jesus? There were schools at that time that He could have attended—religious schools. They were not the government schools like Moses had to attend but they were religious schools. Yet He did not go. “The child Jesus did not receive instruction in the synagogue schools. His mother was His first human teacher. From her lips and from the scrolls of the prophets, He learned of heavenly things.”—*The Desire of Ages* p. 70. Even though they had religious schools, Mary takes control of the education of Jesus. She teaches Him to read. He learns about God and the history of Israel. He learns about His people and also about the prophecies of the Messiah.

Jesus also loved studying the wonderful things which God had made in the earth and in the sky. Day-by-day He watched them and tried to learn lessons from them and to understand. Jesus uses the Bible and nature in His schooling. Jesus helped His father and mother with chores, in taking care of the house. He was also granted time to explore in nature. He is running through the field, He is climbing trees, He is doing what little boys loved to do, and He is everywhere. Jesus is running and looking at nature, the animals, the little fish, insects, the clouds in the sky and He is learning.

Through the book of nature we are given valuable lessons about God. We look at what was the result of this instruction that Jesus received at home with His mother and father, away from the church schools of that day. “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.” Luke 2:52. Jesus was a responsible young man; God was pleased with His development and the people who knew Him. They knew He was kind, gentle, He was polite, responsible, hard working and He was a diligent student.

Margie Seely Education Department Leader & Director of Orion Christian Academy

Homeschoolers are often asked, “are you doing as well as you would if you went to a public school or government school?” *The Desire of Ages*, page 80 reads, “The rabbis knew that Jesus had not been instructed in their schools; yet His understanding of the prophecies far exceeded theirs. In this thoughtful Galilean boy they discerned great promise. They desired to gain Him as a student, that He might become a teacher in Israel. They wanted to have

charge of His education, feeling that a mind so original must be brought under their molding.” This quote really strikes me. There are a few phrases here, but I want to look specifically at that part that says, “a mind so original”. In schools today, they have cookie cutter methods of teaching, they want to have cookie cutter students that graduate and know A, B, C, and D, yet there is much more to education than that. We may say “well, it's good that He knew the prophecies”, but it was not just the prophecies. Jesus could read extremely well. He could reason extremely well, He knew science extremely well. He knew math well because He was working in the workshop of his father so He learned measurements, He knew how to build furniture. He had all these practical skills, academic skills, \he was a well-rounded young man. So much so that the rabbis wanted Him in their school. We know that \he did not attend the school of the rabbis because they would have ruined what God was trying to do. What they were teaching was custom and tradition, and that is not what God wanted Jesus to be learning. He wanted Jesus to learn the truth and Jesus did.

**“Train up a child in the way he should go:
and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”
Proverbs 22:6**

Now. what can we learn from these two childhoods, these two ways of educating and raising children? When we look at the childhoods of Moses and Jesus, we can see very many similarities.

They are the products of faithful parents. We see Jochebed and Amram, and Joseph and Mary, their willingness to go against what is being promoted and to do what God calls them to do, to raise their children. They are willing to risk everything, they are willing to go the extra mile to invest in their children and God blesses their efforts. We also find that the foundation of both Moses and Jesus is laid at home. The parents are the first teachers. They are at home for a good chunk of their childhood. Jesus much longer than Moses. We also see that The Bible is an integral part of their education, it is the cornerstone of what they are learning. Everything that they are learning is tied into what The Bible says. The Bible is their main textbook and the other things that they learn are supplementary to what the Bible says.

We also know that these parents prayed greatly for their children. They did not stop praying. Especially after Moses left home. I am not sure if Jochebed and Amram were able to see him and visit him, but we know, because we know who they are, that they prayed daily for their son Moses. They prayed that the angels of God would protect him, that what they had taught him would not be forgotten. There are some differences too. One is the age at which Moses leaves home education and goes into the government school. He was young, he was not an adult

when he left home. He was a young child, around the age of 12. We can see that it did have an influence on him, that God had to take him away so that he could unlearn what he had learned. The time that he spent unlearning was 40 years, 40 years to outgrow and overcome the influences that the Egyptian schools had implanted in him.

God did not take any risks with Jesus, we see that Jesus stays home until He is 30 years of age. Until He is ready to go into His ministry, He stays home. There is not much in the Bible that talks about that time but the snippets that we do get is that it was a time of preparation, a time of His learning. Everything that He learned was brought into play in that brief ministry that He had. That time before His ministry was vital to those few years of ministry that He served here on earth.

Now, let us bring it to today. What about your children? What about my children? From those who are reading, I know your children are different ages and at different levels and different abilities. Some of you have home-schooled, some of you have not home-schooled. Some of you maybe have been able to send your child to a Christian school, some have not been able to do that. But what do we do at this point? Where do we go? Acts 2:17 tells us, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams." In the end days, God is going to call on young people. God is pointing to the future, the last days. Who is He going to call upon? He is going to call upon young people, He is going to call upon our children. but there is a caveat here: God could not use Moses without the instruction of Amram and Jochebed. Jesus would not have been able to have the ministry that He had without the instruction of Joseph and Mary.

"Children who are properly instructed will be witnesses of the truth. . . . Let us in our educational work embrace far more of the children and youth than we have done, and there will be a whole army of missionaries raised up to work for God. In the last days children's voices will be heard proclaiming the message." *—Home and Church School Manual*, p. 40. The last days are here and we are raising an army of workers, we are raising young missionaries who will go out and share the gospel to a dying world. These are your children; these are my children. But what comes before the mission work? What came before Christ's mission? It was the instruction He received from the Bible. His own Bible study, of course, but before that from His parent's instruction. What preceded the work of Moses? It was the instruction at home, the instruction within the family.

Do we have faith? Do we have faith to do what God is asking us to do? To raise our children to follow Him? Do we have faith to go against the norms of society, to go against what our family is advising maybe, and do what God is asking us to do? Back in 1873 Sister White was given a message and this was only 11 years after the Adventist church was formed. The message that God gave was that it is no longer safe to send our children to the public schools. That was in 1873. What about now? What about today? I went to public school when I was a child and I can tell you that they were not horrible, we had some things that happened, people were a little more godly. What are the examples that our children are learning today? What are they hearing from their schools? When I went to school we had two genders, you were either male or female, no questions asked. It was simple, everybody knew. Now nobody knows. The things that are being taught about what the family is, one of God's two institutions that He started in the garden of Eden, the family and Sabbath. Now the family is under attack, Sabbath is under attack. All these things are under attack and they are being included as part of a child's education. Do we have faith to raise our children so that they will have faith? The children that we spoke about, Moses and Jesus, impacted the world. Our children also need to impact the world. They have something that they are being called to do. Jesus says to His disciples, "Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." Luke 18:16. How do we forbid children from coming to God? For one, it is our lack of faith. When we have faith, we can move mountains, because with faith all things are possible. With God all things are possible. If we trust in Him, He will lead us to where we need to go, He will show us how we can raise our children for Him. He will give them a work that they can do that will impact the world for Him. Amen.

This article is based on the Family Program "Children of Faith" aired on the 4Truth.ca YouTube channel. We pray this has been a blessing.

Canadian Field Family Department.



What a Friend We Have In Jesus

Youth Conference in Toronto, Canada December 30, 2022-January 1, 2023

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another.” John 15:13–17. This verse was the theme of the recent Canadian Field youth winter conference.

Brother Makoto Matsumoto opened the conference by reading and discussing the last parts of *The Desire of Ages*, chapter 78 with the congregation. Under the title “Calvary,” Sister White describes the trials Jesus had to go through. Jesus had a very hard life, being rejected by His nation and not understood by His disciples. Even His own family gave Him challenging times. However, He could bear everything as He knew God was there for Him. Jesus could not see beyond the tomb. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that He would be separated from God forever. It was such severe pain and stress that He died of a broken heart.

This is how much Jesus loves us even when we do not deserve it. “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” He did all this to be our friend. The question was then asked, “Would you like to be His friend?”

Several youth came forward and shared regarding different friendships in the Bible. Sister Edna Climaco talked about “Job and His Friends.” Job’s friends showed both the positive and negative things friends

can do. She introduced Job 2:13, “So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great.” Job’s friends mourned with him for seven days, which is what we need to do when our friends face difficulty. Often, we do not listen to the stories of our friends and jump to giving advice when our friend just needs someone to cry with.

However, what Job’s friends did afterwards was unfortunate, as they blamed Job for what happened to him. They eventually repented at the end of the story, but we can learn about the importance of compassion. We do not know what great controversy is going on between Satan and God. Therefore, we should not judge our friends as easily as Job’s friends did.

Sister Mami Matsumoto spoke about “Samuel and Eli.” Their friendship was an interesting one when we consider the difference in their age. Eli was an old man, while Samuel was a little boy when they formed such a strong friendship. And the secret of this can be found in the story when Samuel first received the message from God. Even though Samuel thought Eli woke him up three times in the night, he never got frustrated. Eli also was not annoyed by his sleep being disturbed three times. From here, we can see the importance of patience and kindness in our friendships.

Sister Ylenia Gallo shared the topic, “Luther and Melanchthon.” Though Luther was such an incredible reformer, his character also had flaws. While he was strong and bold, he could also easily get in danger. Therefore, God sent him a partner that had a totally opposite character. Melanchthon was a very calm and careful man. When Luther was in haste, Melanchthon would calm him down and reason with him. Mean-

while, when Melancthon was scared, Luther gave him courage. Their friendship was a life-long one as they both dedicated their lives to the reformation until they were buried next to each other. From their stories, we can learn about the importance of our friends, whom we sometimes find hard to understand when they have different perspectives. God might have sent them to us to compensate for our weaknesses.

Sister Emily Skibicki welcomed the Sabbath with the meditation from *The Desire of Ages*, chapter 73, "Let not your heart be troubled." From here, we can find the promise of Jesus, as our best friend. "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." John 14:18. "At all times and in all places, in all sorrows and in all afflictions, when the outlook seems dark and the future perplexing, and we feel helpless and alone, the Comforter will be sent in answer to the prayer of faith. Circumstances may separate us from every earthly friend; but no circumstance, no distance, can separate us from the heavenly Comforter. Wherever we are, wherever we may go, He is always at our right hand to support, sustain, uphold, and cheer." -*The Desire of Ages*, p. 669

The evening program was led by Brother Jason Climaco with the title "You are my friends, if..." From the story of a young rich man, we can see that it is not enough to keep the letter of the law. We need to understand the core principle of the Ten Commandments in order to be friends with Jesus. Throughout the discussion, the one core principle which was pointed out repeatedly was "love." Without love, we can never keep the Ten Commandments fully. If we do not have true friendship (love) toward Jesus and our neighbours, we will refuse the invitation to be Jesus' friend and leave Him with a sad face.

On Sabbath, December 31st, 2022, the last day of the year, approximately 100 young people and members from around the province of Ontario came together to worship God.

For the divine service Brother Morris Lowe, (the guest minister of the conference), spoke on the subject, "I have called you friends." We need a few good friends in our lives as they will make our joy double and sadness half. What is the criteria of a good friend? We should first see if they will encourage our spiritual lives. It is important to choose friends wisely as they will lead to either heaven or Satan. It is unwise and dangerous to have ungodly friends as it is written in James 4:4, "know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy

of God." Also, as Christians, it is important for us to invite our friends to join the church group, just as Nathaniel was introduced to Jesus by Philip.

Another important thing to consider is whether they love you genuinely and demonstrate their love. Love is the underlying condition of a friendship. Though it is possible to love someone who is not our friend (Matthew 5:43-44; Luke 6:35-36), it is impossible to be a friend without love. And, we should note that true love is unconditional. If someone is truly in love, one can never unlove the other. Knowing each other's flaws or weaknesses will not stop their love.

There is one Man who meets all these criteria—His name is Jesus. A little boy once defined a friend as "someone who knows everything about you and loves you still." That is who Jesus is for us. He knows everything about us—our flaws, sins, and weaknesses. However, He still loves us and died for us. He is now inviting us, to come closer to heaven. We are privileged to answer this invitation and have Jesus as our friend.

Following a musical program in the afternoon, another set of youth presented the following topics:

The friendship of "David and Jonathan," was shared by Sister Abigail Handiya. Although Johnathan was next in line to the throne, he never cared about the succession and truly loved David who had been anointed by Samuel to be the next king. He even risked his life to protect David. They saw a reflection of themselves in each others' eyes, loved one another, and grew together. They became friends who brought each other closer to God. Their friendship continued even after Jonathan was killed in battle. David took good care of Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, as his own son, even when Mephibosheth could be a threat to his throne. This is the true love and friendship God expects to see from us.

Sister Venecia Quicuca spoke about, "Daniel and His Friends." Unfortunately, friends in the world easily neglect and stop talking to us. Many times, it is because of their pride. However, Daniel was different. He never forgot about his friends and always humbly relied on them. When Daniel was called to interpret a dream that Nebuchadnezzar had, he went to his friends and asked for them to pray with him. We should have the same attitude toward our friends. Whether on good or bad days, we should always stay humble and recognize our need for support and help from our friends. God will manifest His power through humble people like Daniel.

The last topic was titled "Paul and Timothy," presented

by sister Jasmine Avila. She analyzed the verses from 2 Timothy 1:3–5 and introduced three recipes for a healthy friendship: “I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.”

The first step is “focusing on God.” As Paul started his message by saying, “I thank God,” it is important to keep God as our priority in our friendships. Without God, our friendship cannot exist, as He is the source of love. Especially when there is a problem with a friend, we should talk to God before approaching our friends. The second step is “focusing on your friend.” In this Bible verse, Paul does not talk about himself or the tribulation that he is going through. He rather talks about Timothy, showing that is all he cares about. In our friendships, we should place our attention and care on our friends, not on ourselves (Philippians 2:3). The last step is “Focusing on Faith and Family.” The Bible verse closes as Paul talks about Timothy’s faith and family. If we care about our friends, we care about their family and spiritual condition, being a keeper of our friends.

In the late afternoon, Sister Esther Handiya shared a message for the Sabbath closing, bringing the congregation’s attention back to our theme Bible verse in John 15:13–17. Jesus loved us and called us friends first. He proved His friendship on the cross by dying for us. Unlike many false friends we meet on this earth, Jesus will always be with us in any circumstance. Though friends on this earth might spread bad rumours about us, Jesus will always keep our secrets. Though friends on this earth will not understand our pain, He will listen and comfort our hearts. He is our redeemer and friend, the only comforter.

As the New Year began with the sunset, brother Makoto greeted the congregation, especially the youth, with a New Year’s message. He represented youth as a snow crystal. Unlike other crystals, snow crystals melt and disappear. And these characteristics show what youth is like. The time of youth is very short. It eventually fades away. However, that is what makes youth

more special. Also, no two snow crystals have identical shapes. It shows how each youth is unique from all others. Though these snow crystals look fragile and exist for a very short time, they are a critical part of our water supply in Canada. 36% of the annual precipitation in Canada is in the form of snow. As this snow melts in the spring, it becomes the source of new life. If youth—snow crystals—yield themselves to their sunshine, Jesus Christ, and let Him melt their hearts, they will participate in the water of life, to bring new life to many others.

In the evening, a testimony hour was held, and many individuals, from a little child to the experienced elders, shared their experiences and appreciation toward God throughout the year. The message shared through different testimonies was that God is close to us in our daily life and leads us with His hands. The congregation left the church believing that God who said, “For I am the Lord, I change not” (Malachi 3:6) will continue to bless and guide them in the New Year, as He did in the previous year.

On Sunday morning, Brother Richard Eaton led the closing service. He shared his experience with “friends” from high school. There were some classmates who had often tried to give him difficult times. But when Brother Richard got his first car, they drastically changed their attitude and became kind to him. As we can see from his story, “friends” in the world often change their attitude toward us based on benefit. However, a true friend is with us in both good and bad times. Jesus said “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” John 13:34. This commandment has existed since the old time. It was also in the laws written by Moses (Leviticus 19:18). However, as men forgot this principle, this commandment became something new for them. How about us? Have we forgotten the principle of true friendship? Have we forgotten to love each other and be united? With these questions, the conference came to an end.

The conference was prepared and led by the youth. It led to many blessings, including the privilege for our spiritual family to open the New Year all together. May these youth continue to grow and be a blessing for others in this New Year.

Makoto Matsumoto



For Good Health

Green Smoothie



Ingredients:

1 ¼ cup water

¼ cup lemon juice

3 Tbsp. ground flax seed (heaping)

1 small avocado or ½ large

Kale (green or purple)

Spinach

Romaine Lettuce

Swiss Chard

1 Stalk Celery

3 to 4 inch piece of English Cucumber, sliced

If you do not have all of these, then use what you have. Or you may want to substitute or add others. When in season, dandelion is also a great option to add to this smoothie.

Wash all your greens and tear or cut into smaller pieces. You should have a total of 4 cups of greens. Pour the water into your blender. Then add all of the ingredients and blend until smooth. You will end up with about 4 cups of smoothie.

In practically all of the greens in this smoothie we find Vitamins A, B, C, D and K, as well as many minerals, such as, Potassium, Magnesium, Phosphorus, Iron, Calcium, Manganese and much more. When we use most of these greens or all, we end up receiving much help to keep our bodies healthy.

Here are some of the benefits we receive from this smoothie:

Support for a strong healthy immune system, bone health, eye health, anti-cancer aid, this stimulates the intestinal functions and improves our digestion, it contributes to our cardiovascular system, it has benefits for the urinary tract, is a laxative help, and fights inflammation. It supports the liver as a detoxifier, helps in cleansing our blood.

The cucumber, celery, avocado, and flax seed contain dietary fiber and the avocado is high in Omega-3 fats.

Note from the author:

Before my husband and I began eating a green smoothie every other day for breakfast, for about 4 to 5 years, I had problems with regularity (constipation). But since we are having this, I have no more problems. It has really helped me a lot. We also sometimes eat a few raw sunflower seeds, almonds, and pumpkin seeds. This is a light and very nutritious, very healthy meal and it keeps us well until lunch between 12 noon and 1 pm. Regarding the greens used in this smoothie, both the green and purple kale are among the healthiest and most nutritious plant foods. Of all the super healthy greens, KALE is the KING!

Recipe by Franziska Pedersen

“God loveth a cheerful giver,’ and those who love Him will give freely and cheerfully when by so doing they can advance His cause and promote His glory. . . All that you have and are belongs to God. . . . Liberality is not so natural to us that we gain this virtue by accident. It must be cultivated. We must deliberately resolve that we will honor God with our substance; and then we must let nothing tempt us to rob Him of the tithes and offerings that are His due. We must be intelligent, systematic, and continuous in our acts of charity to men, and in our expressions of gratitude to God for His bounties to us.

“We should regularly reserve something for God’s cause, that He may not be robbed of the portion which He claims. This is too sacred a duty to be left to chance, or to be controlled by impulse or feeling. When we rob God, we rob ourselves also; we give up the heavenly treasure for the sake of having more of this earth. This is a loss that we cannot afford to sustain.

“Presented in a spirit of reverence and gratitude, our gifts are recognized in heaven above. It is the humility, the thankfulness, the reverence with which the gifts are offered, that make them a sweet-smelling savor, acceptable to God. We should ever remember that He is not indebted to us for that which we return to Him. He is the One to whom we owe our all.” –*The Southern Watchman*, February 28, 1905



**FIFTEENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
CHURCH
REFORM MOVEMENT**
EVERY SATURDAY
SABBATH SCHOOL 9:45 A.M.
SERVICE 11:00 A.M.
PRAYER MEETING WED. 7:30 PM
ALL WELCOME
239 3700