

The background of the cover is a photograph of a winter landscape. The ground is covered in a layer of snow, and several trees and bushes are heavily laden with snow, their branches creating a white, intricate pattern. The sky is a clear, bright blue. The title 'The Reformation Messenger' is overlaid on the top half of the image. 'The Reformation' is in a smaller, italicized serif font, and 'Messenger' is in a large, bold, white serif font with a slight shadow. A small white dove icon is positioned above the letter 'e' in 'Messenger'. Below the title, the volume and issue information is printed in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

# *The Reformation* **Messenger**

VOLUME 20, NUMBER 2, FEBRUARY 2013

**“The God of heaven is constantly at work. It is by His power that vegetation is caused to flourish, that every leaf appears and every flower blooms. Every drop of rain or flake of snow, every spire of grass, every leaf and flower and shrub, testifies of God. These little things so common around us teach the lesson that nothing is beneath the notice of the infinite God, nothing is too small for His attention.” –*The Faith I Live By*, p. 28**



**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.

#### ABOUT THE COVER

**Front Cover Photo:**  
Helen Marttinen. Canada

**Back Cover Photo:**  
Helen Marttinen. Canada

**Inside Cover:**  
Helen Marttinen. Canada

### Volume 20, Number 2, February 2013

- 3 I Love You!**
- 6 The Time We Cannot Play With Sin**
- 9 Rescue Operation**
- 12 Time To Watch and Pray**
- 16 Mediums for Our Salvation**
- 18 Jerusalem**
- 20 Health Matters: Memory (Part 2), Habits . . .**
- 24 Children's Corner: Duty and Pleasure**

*The Reformation*  
**Messenger**

Official Publication of the International Missionary Society the Seventh-Day Adventist Church Reform Movement, Canadian Field.

- Tel: 905-876-2518
- E-mail: [ismessenger@yahoo.com](mailto:ismessenger@yahoo.com)
- Internet: [www.ismessenger.org](http://www.ismessenger.org)

**IMS**  
PUBLISHING

RR # 3  
7899 15 Sideroad  
Milton, ON  
L9T 2X7  
Canada

#### SUBSCRIBE TO THE REFORMATION MESSENGER

Order by Mail: Please Fill In

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

No. Of Annual Subscriptions:

\_\_\_\_\_ Black & White x \$22.00 each per year

\_\_\_\_\_ Colour x \$30.00 each per year

(Price includes 12 issues. Add \$5.00 North America and \$10.00 overseas shipping & handling)

\_\_\_ **Purchase all 19 years of the Messenger for \$200.00**  
**Bound in books by year.**

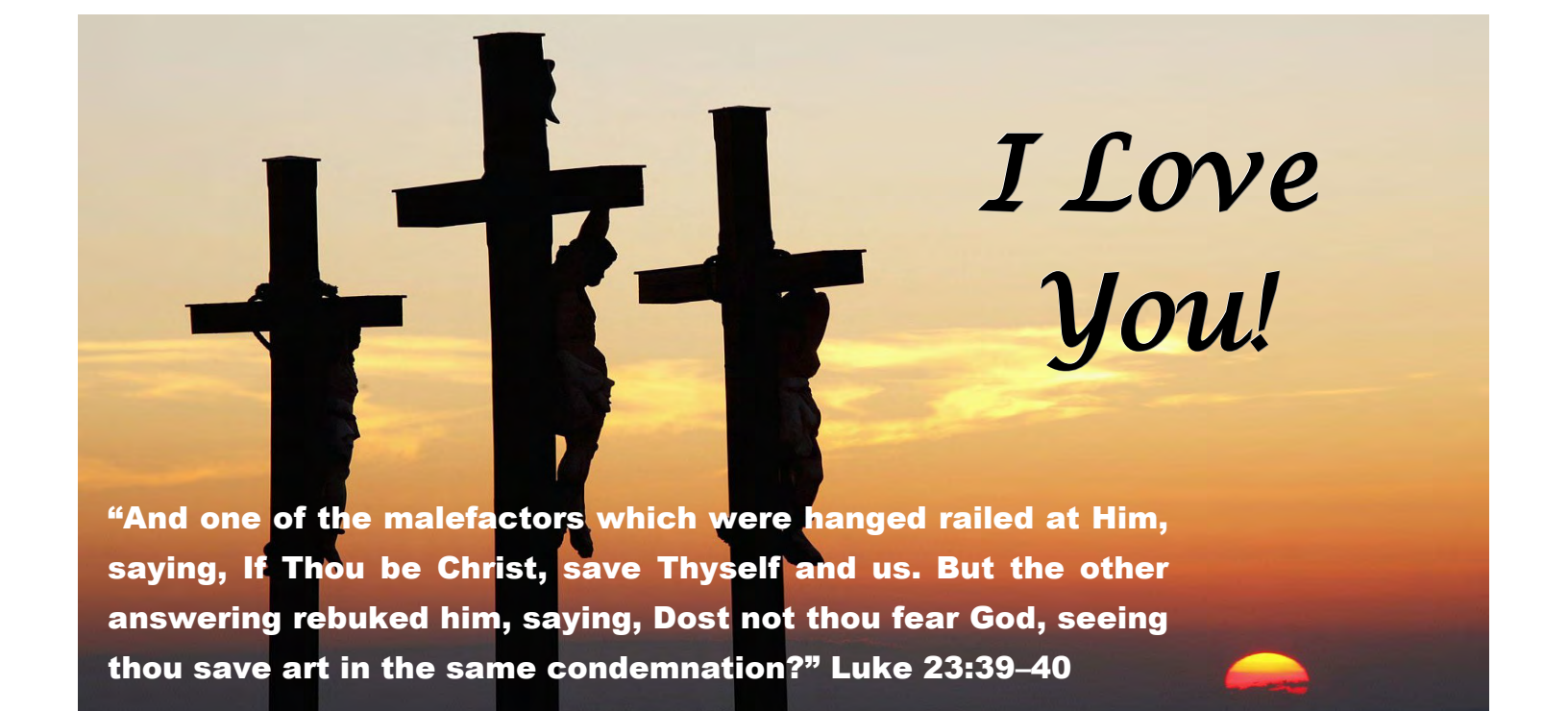
(Price includes over 202 issues, including shipping and handling)

\_\_\_ Catalogue for articles for all 18 years

Amount of cheque: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Payable to IMS Publishing

Or order online: [www.ismessenger.org](http://www.ismessenger.org)



The background of the top section is a sunset with three crosses silhouetted against the sky. The sun is a bright orange circle on the right side, partially obscured by the horizon. The crosses are dark and stand on a dark ground.

# *I Love You!*

**“And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed at Him, saying, If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou save art in the same condemnation?” Luke 23:39–40**

## **A HAUNTING QUESTION**

While driving one day I saw an ambitious sticker on a car reading as such: “Put Christ into Christianity.” A trite, but yet a noble thought! There was a billboard sign along the highway boldly proclaiming the assertion—“Jesus Is the Answer!” A translucent message! A late-night vandal, however, armed with a can of spray paint, had hurriedly added his commentary, “But What Is the Question?” This creaking message hits one broadside with the haunting question that shivers its way into the consciousness of every sufferer, and every suffering Christian! Where is God now? We have missed the mark with our awkward and muttered questions and that’s why we have missed the mark to “Where is God now?” Such it is—in a raging, degenerate world, seething with despicable turbulence, madness—sin-bound for demolition in a dysfunctional society!

## **BIBLICALLY SMUG**

In short, we give Jesus as our answer to questions about forgiveness of sin or cosmic justice. We become Biblically smug instead of being haunted by our jarring and pathogenic experiences. Our questions are often wrong! That’s why our answers remain complex doctrines and/or fleeting social attitudes, social ideas, and personal affirmations and agendas, instead of confirming our faith with “Thus saith the Lord.” Exodus 9:1

But, Jesus crucified can clearly reveal to us what the world is like by the manifestations of man’s shameless and rebellious conduct today and demonstrated by those reluctantly and satirically present then at the foot of the Cross:

- The congregated people stood beholding in stolid

and heavy indifference but with malicious intent (Matthew 27:25).

- The governing Rulers wanted religion but without the divine Christ; rather, they mocked (Matthew 27:41).
- The brutal and wicked scoffed and railed Jesus with vicious and scornful abuse (Matthew 27:39).
- The covetous sat glibly before the cross and played sordid games; four soldiers over a tunic (Matthew 27:35–36).
- The conscience sinner virtuously prayed (Luke 23:41–42).

Not only does the cross reveal so clearly what the world is like today, but the cross and the crucifixion is the judgment of this world as well: “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.” John 12:31

## **TWO RAW BONED THIEVES**

The Apostle Luke, “the beloved physician,” wrote the longest of the gospels; the Gospel of compassion, which was written principally for the Greeks, calls the crucifixion a “hanging” (GR: *kremosthenton*). When the two malefactors or criminals (Matthew calls them brigands or mountain bandits) were hanged beside the Lord Jesus, one was no better than the other; most likely partners in crime. They who were crucified with him railed at him (Luke 23:39). Matthew and Mark merely tells us “then were there two thieves crucified with Him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.” Matthew 27:38. (Mark 15:27). Ah! But, the Apostle Luke tells us what they said!

The better Greek text tells us what the first thief said,

“You are the Messiah, aren’t You? Well, then, save Yourself and us!” (Luke 23: 39). The first thief was really sneeringly sarcastic—in fact taunting Jesus! He was hardened to the last! Though he was now in pain and agony and in the valley of the shadow of death, yet this did not humble his proud spirit, nor teach him to give good language, no, not to his fellow-sufferer. No troubles will of themselves work a change in a wicked heart, but sometimes they irritate the corruption which one would think they should mortify! There are some that have the impudence to rail at Christ, and yet the confidence to expect to be saved by Him; and to conclude that, if He does not save them, He is not to be looked upon as the Saviour. Ahh. But we could still easily say that the first thief’s outburst as, “Where is your God?”

The other thief, however, softened at the last, rebuked him, saying, “Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss.” Luke 23:40–41. “Dost not thou fear God?” This implies that it was the fear of God which restrained him from following the multitude to do this evil. All that have their eyes open see this to be at the bottom of the wickedness of the wicked, that they have not the fear of God before their eyes.

This second thief, however, when just ready to fall into the hands of Satan, was snatched as a brand out of the burning fire, and made a monument of divine mercy and grace, and Satan was left to roar as a lion, disappointed of his prey. But, this gives no encouragement to any to put off their repentance to their death-bed. Or to hope that then they shall find mercy; for though it is certain that true repentance is never too late, it is certain that late repentance is seldom true.

None can be sure that they shall have time to repent at death, but every man may be sure that he cannot have the advantages that this penitent thief had, whose case was altogether extraordinary. To elaborate further, you see, the first criminal asks the age-old-question, “Why should God let an innocent man suffer?” To say it in another way, “How can God stand by idly and watch this happen?”

#### **WHO IS ON TRIAL?**

It is not so much Jesus who is on trial here, but God! The first thief in reality asked, “Where is He?” Isn’t that a historically searching question? A question that haunts all of mankind? But, God in fact, isn’t watching this innocent man hang on the cross. God is on the cross!!

It is Luke alone among the New Testament writers who calls Jesus “the chosen One” (Messiah), and he calls Him that on the cross. The Old Testament concept of the Suffering Servant and the Old Testament concepts of Messiah merge together on the cross.

It is God the Messiah, on the cross and it is the cross of suffering that God in Christ becomes the Messiah. Without that merger on the cross, faith wouldn’t have much to say to anybody. Now the cross of Christ is to some a savour of life unto life, to others of death unto death. To them that perish it is foolishness, but to them that are saved it is the wisdom of God and the power of God (2 Corinthians 2:16; 1 Corinthians 1:18).

#### **THE LAST GASP!**

The second thief that at first reviled Him said, “Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.” Luke 23:42. This is the prayer of a dying sinner to a dying Saviour—the last gasp! The tone of this request is utterly different from the cynical fling the other thief made. This man showed amazing confidence in Jesus for he saw Him dying on a cross, and yet believed that he would come into a Kingdom. It took him, however, three hours before he made this decision! It is only the grace of God in the cross of Christ that can instantly transform a reviling sinner into an attitude of saving faith and confession.

The repentant thief began to see:

- The justice of his own punishment (Luke 23:41).
- The sinless character of Christ (Luke 23:41).
- The Deity of Christ (Luke 23:42).
- A living Christ beyond the grave (Luke 23: 42).
- A Kingdom beyond the cross, with Jesus as its coming King (Luke 23:42).

#### **MY KIND OF GOD!**

As the Jews persecuted Jesus under the notion of a pretended Messiah, so did the Romans under the notion of a pretended King. The superscription over the head of Jesus setting forth His crime was, “This is the King of the Jews.” Luke 23:38

He is put to death for pretending to be the King of the Jews—so they meant it—but God intended it to be a declaration of what He really was, notwithstanding His present disgrace. He is the King of the Jews. He is the King of the Church. He is the King of mankind. He is the King of the Universe.

Jesus, “the Chosen One,” called by Luke as Jesus was on the cross. But, do you know why? Because those struggling people of faith need not so much a God that is

over you or above you or beyond you, as a God who is alongside you, a God who is accessible and vulnerable.

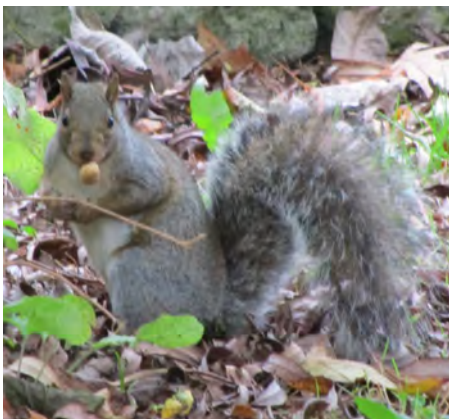
You need a God who is, yes, mortal, a God willing to go to the cross for you! Faith does not begin with joy. It begins on a cross with "suffering love."

## **TWO CROSSED BRANCHES**

A little girl whose parents died when she was quite young was bounced around from orphanage to foster home to orphanage. She really was a beautiful child, although all the moving and trauma of her young life had taken its toll, leaving her quite withdrawn. She finally came to settle in a boarding house which was run by an older couple who ran the home, not so much out of altruistic concern for the children as for the state welfare monies they received for each child.

Needless to say, they were not very kind to the little girl, and as one would suspect from an experience in such a hostile environment, the little girl became even more withdrawn and introverted. As a matter of fact, she stopped speaking altogether, at least to other people. Her only real friends became the animals that played in the yard with her. A particular favorite was a certain squirrel that frolicked in the tree just outside her window. She would often go to the window and talk to the squirrel as though the animal could actually understand her, and a great bond of friendship developed between them.

One day, the woman who ran the orphanage came up to the little girl's room and found her talking to the squirrel through the open window. The woman flew into a rage. She scolded the girl severely for encouraging silly animals to "hang around" like that and forbade her to do so again. With that she slammed the window shut and stormed out of the room. But she didn't go far. Rather, she waited and listened at the door to see if the girl would disobey her, and when she heard no sound she cracked the door and peered in. To her amazement, she



saw the little girl busy at her work table writing a note. The wife continued to watch her as she finished the note, put the pencil down, and then carefully folded the note in half.

Then she got up and left the room with the note in hand. The woman was curious by now and followed her to see what she was up to. The little girl ran out of the house, through the yard, and up to the tree where the squirrel usually stayed. She climbed up into the tree as far as she could, stretched out her hand, and placed the note between the fork of two branches in the tree. Then she climbed down and ran back into the house.

The woman called to her husband, told him what had just happened, and instructed him to retrieve the note. When he climbed down with the note he gave it to his wife who opened it and read it, and when she did, a strange thing happened. Instead of being outraged by the girl's disobedience, she looked startled and surprised by what she found in the note. Her husband said, "Well, what does it say?" So she gave it to him to read. When he looked at it, this is what it said, "To whoever finds this, I love you."

## **PLEASE...!**

Two thousand years ago, on a dirty little dung hill just outside a major city in Palestine, between two crossed branches, God hung a letter, and it says, "To whoever finds this, I love you!"

If you've found it, then you already know why in the church we have the courage and faith to call our wor-



ship service—holy. If you haven't, I pray you will. Please...!

One thief was saved, so that none need despair; but only one, so that none may presume.

Pray to be remembered by Christ now that He is safely in His Kingdom—may this be our desire and prayer.

Amen <><

**John Theodorou, U.S.A.**

If there ever was a time in which God calls His people to holiness, then the present time is that time. There is no evidence in the Bible that we can be saved while knowingly playing with sin. God and sin cannot coexist together. We were created in the image of God—holy—and it was His desire that we should never experience sin, and as a result of sin—death. Adam and Eve’s sin damaged their relationship with God and

stood in the way of that relationship. Now God, in His infinite mercy, found a way out in order to solve the sin problem. Jesus Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice in behalf of each repentant sinner who accepts Jesus as his or her personal Saviour. In this article we will talk about Jesus and His relationship with us; why He cannot save us because we hold onto sin.

Why does Jesus’ sacrifice atone only for those who, by God’s grace, and through the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives, attain holiness? All heaven beholds these people who are preparing for heaven. The question is, can we live a perfect life? Jesus said in Matthew 5:48, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” You see, my brother, my sister, dear reader, God calls us to attain the complete perfection in Christ, who is our perfect example. From Genesis to Revelation there is only one way that a sinful man can be saved and that is through faith in Christ. You see, faith in Christ makes things possible, which are impossible for man. Jesus said in Luke 18:27, “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.” Your Christian life is to be a continuous proof that God works impossibilities. Your Christian life is to be a series of impossibilities made possible and actual by God’s almighty power. That is what we need. Believe me, our lovely Father works the same miracle in your life just as He worked through the centuries down to our time, transforming men and women, boys and girls, remaking and preparing them for the heavenly kingdom. Don’t you long for that day when Jesus comes to take us home? Don’t you want to invite Jesus right now to change you completely? Oh, I long for that day, and by God’s help I believe you have the same desire, don’t you?

When we look around us, we see so many denominations which pretend that they have the truth. Each one tries to attract as many people as they can, telling people that



## *The Time We Cannot Play With Sin*

they have the truth, saying, “don’t you see how many people are in our Church”? From the pulpit people are told that they don’t need to keep God’s commandments; Jesus has done away with them. Is this so? Jesus said in John 14:15 “If ye love Me, keep My commandments.” People look at the expression “holiness” as something impossible to attain and not necessary for their salvation.

We should ask ourselves the following question—“Can I reach holiness?” Because

the Scripture is crystal clear on this point; God wants us to be holy. He calls us to holiness. I bring to you the evidence from the Scripture. Let us read some of them. We first find this call in Exodus, where God states that Israel is to be a “Holy Nation” Exodus 19:6: “And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.” Do you find such a call in the New Testament? Because people might say, well, but this was in the Old Testament, therefore this is no longer necessary. Well, the Bible gives us the answer in 1 Peter 2:9, “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people.”

According to the Scriptures we are called by God, we are set apart, we are His holy nation, a royal priesthood, called to reveal His holy character and proclaim the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. On the priestly garments, there was a plate of pure gold and engraved on it, as the Lord commanded, “Holiness to the Lord”. Once again we see the importance of Israel’s remembrance of a Holy God and the only way to approach Him.

The primary focus in the book of Leviticus is holiness. There we find the call to consecrate ourselves and to be holy, based on God’s holiness. Leviticus 20:7–8 “Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God. And ye shall keep My statutes, and do them: I am the Lord which sanctify you.” God connects the call to holiness with obedience, as we see in these texts. Furthermore, in verse 26, God declares that He sets us apart from the nations around us. “And ye shall be holy unto Me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be Mine.” The call to holiness becomes even more powerful in the book of Hebrews 12:14—make every effort to be holy, without which no one will see the Lord. Now, my friend, there is no question, no doubt, that holiness is necessary, but there still remains some ques-



tions that you and I must have an answer to. What does it mean? How do we attain holiness? How do we avoid the extremes of legalism or the tolerant acceptance of our sinfulness?

The very word “Holy” challenges us. Sometimes we infer that it means to be sinless, and we conclude that the task is to become sinless. That is not the case; no human being is holy by himself and the Bible makes it very clear when we read Romans 3. Only God is holy. Revelation 15:4: “Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for **Thou only art holy.**” We clearly see that we do not possess holiness in ourselves; holiness, according to the Bible, is imparted by Jesus to us when He lives in us through the power of the Holy Spirit. It can be attained when we collaborate with God in this process. I do my part and God is doing His part.

The greatest challenge to holiness today is our failure to accept the reality of who we are in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Holiness is the result of God’s act in setting us apart. We read in 1 Corinthians 6:11, “But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” When are we washed? When we acknowledge our sin and confess it to the Lord and forsake it. Then after a sincere confession God justifies us through the merits of Jesus on the cross; in the Bible this is called justification by faith. Now, when are we sanctified or set apart, consecrated or dedicated to God? The very moment I accepted Jesus as my personal Saviour and was justified, that very moment sanctification starts for me. It is true because if you are not justified, then the Lord cannot sanctify you, and here is why. Let me illustrate this point to you. You have a girlfriend and you say you love her very much, but you do not want to marry her because of the responsibilities or the commitment which derive from such a relationship. You may say to her, “Honey, I love you but please do not ask about marriage.” Is that right? Can a person really love without commitment? No, that is not love. If you truly love, then you are very happy to say these words, “yes, honey, I want to live with you all my life, I want to marry you.” The same is love Jesus in- will be too diffi- give up for Jesus’ from my person- and if I experi- can also. Let it be minds—no sanc- justification. It is your life, my life,



How long is the process of sanctification? We have seen that it starts when you receive

Jesus as your personal Saviour, but is it a process of a few years only, or what? No, my brother, sister or friend, this is a long, long process—it is for our entire life. The Bible says that in order to forgive us Jesus needs only a second, but to make us holy, or prepared for the heavenly mansions He needs all your life, all my life, from the moment that we receive Him as our Saviour until we die. In the Bible this is called sanctification—without it no one will see God and live, because God is a combustible fire where sin persists, therefore many people will be destroyed at Jesus’ second coming just because they cling to sin.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” Do you ever wish you could have a fresh and new start with Jesus? People who are weighed down by problems—guilt, sickness, debt, addictions and so many other problems they face—there is a new beginning for you, my friend. Jesus offers you the gift of salvation. He offers you His Holy Spirit, to live a holy life, holy in the context of what we have learned in this article, namely, that we do not possess any holiness without Jesus. Holiness not of being, but of doing, because when we accept Christ as our Lord and Saviour, He sanctifies us—He makes us holy. We are holy because of what Christ has done by setting us apart for His divine purpose.

The sacred commission given to the disciples in Matthew 28:18–20 is the same one given to us, and the promise given to them is also given to us. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever, says the Bible, in Hebrews 13:8. He never changes.

How do we attain holiness? Jesus is the heart of holiness and in order to understand what He meant I must go to His example while He was on earth because He demonstrated to us how to follow Him. There are some important factors in the life of Jesus that we must follow. First of all, Jesus said, “I have come down from heaven not to do My own will, but the will of My Father who sent Me.” You see, the submission, the complete submission of Christ to the will of His Father. Obedience and humility. Come with me to that place in the Scriptures where you and I can learn from the One who was obedient to the point of death. Philippians 2:8: “And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” From this we see how Jesus had a heart for God; Jesus had a heart for holiness because He lived dedicated to the principles of godliness. During all His life on this earth He sought to maintain an intimate union with His Father. Jesus also had a heart for others. He gave His life for sinners and He served them throughout His life. We must understand that there is no holiness for us today without Christ, and only through a daily walk and intimate connection with

Christ do we find holiness.

We should ask the question—what would Jesus do in this or that situation that I face? Then do it; step out in faith and just do it. Holiness is not imitation but rather is participation in the very life and character of Jesus. Jesus gave us something that will make us able to live the life He wants us to live. Here it is: Ezekiel 36:26–27 states, “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes.” We find the same promise in the book of Hebrews 8:10, “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people.”

What does it mean when Jesus said, “I will put My laws into their mind?” It simply means that God’s people have a perfect understanding of the present truth. There is no confusion about the doctrine; they know what they believe and in whom they believe. They step out in faith and do the work God entrusted them with. They are happy when they do missionary work, going from place to place, accompanied by the holy angels, carrying with them the good news of salvation everywhere they go. They are not ashamed when God opens opportunities for them to share their testimony with others. They live a perfect and holy life here on earth and have the faith of Jesus—keeping all God’s commandments.

But, what about the expression, “I will write them (the statutes) in their hearts?” Well, this simply means that God’s remnant people will walk according to the principles of the truth. They are guided by God’s principles and not by their feelings. The controlling power of sin has been broken. Evil may harass us. The devil may deceive us, but he no longer has control. There is a new Master, a new Lord in our lives. We may not feel it, but as long as we are in Christ this is our new reality.

So, how do I live holiness? We have to focus on Jesus first, and each day, as we begin that day let our thoughts be on Him and say, “Here I am Lord, take me completely. I want to do Your will, show me Your plans with me today and help me to fulfil that plan.” Claim the reality of your salvation and eternal life in Christ. Do not allow Satan to steal from you the hope of salvation. He comes when we sin, leaving us empty and disappointed; this is his work. But there is Jesus still reaching His hands to you, to help you, to embrace you with an amazing love. Jesus says in Matthew 11:28–30 “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart:

and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” What a beautiful promise made by Jesus Himself to you and to me today.

Do you have some burdens to give to Jesus, my friend? Did you come to Jesus? Maybe you have come many times to Him but you still fall apart because of some bad habits in your life, some sins still keep you away from God’s blessings; and you decide to come again to Jesus, but this time with all your heart, with all your life, with a contrite spirit, like David when he sinned against God. And you wish to be washed and cleansed by Jesus blood—claiming the power from on high to live a righteous life. Do you want to know the answer to this sincere petition? 1 John 2:1, “My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” Isn’t that amazing, “my little children?” If you have sinned you have an Advocate, a High Priest, a Saviour. Do you need a Saviour? Do you trust Jesus enough that He can give you power to overcome in this life, just as He overcame? Confess your sin and forsake it because the word of God stands forever and it is powerful enough to set us free from the bondage of sin.

The Bible says in Psalm 12:6, “The words of the LORD are pure words,” and Isaiah 40:8, “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.” Do you believe in the word of God? The Bible is not a simple book; the gospel or the good news is power for the one who believes, power unto salvation. Paul said in the book of Romans that he was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. What about us? Surrender your life to God as Master and Lord. Romans 6:13–14 “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” Furthermore in the book of Titus 2:11–13, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

My dear brothers and sisters, God requires from us an intimate walk with Him and perfect union with Christ. “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it.” 1 Thessalonians 5:23–24

*Nicholas Anca*





# Rescue Operation

Fellow traveler, you may have heard of or witnessed a rescue operation. Perhaps you may have yourself conducted a rescue operation in the past. Disasters and numerous accidents are happening daily—floods, landslides, earthquakes, road accidents, etc.—and always call for rescue operations. We often hear about stories of people being abducted for a ransom, all around the world, and the rescue efforts to deliver these kidnapped persons. Usually, if not all the time, these victims have no hope to save themselves; if they do not call or cry for help, they will perish.

Our archenemy in this world is Satan. He holds most of the whole world captive and prepares it for the final destruction. The arch foe is leaving nothing undone to win all to his side, but only a few are standing against him. If he cannot do it through deception, then he will resort to violence to rid the world of this special sect of God's.

James 1:14, 15 tells us of the process of how one enters onto the enemy's ground and the final result. "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Also 1 John 2:16 shows that the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life are the sources of all sin.

We need to understand that temptations are ignited from our own lusts of the flesh and when consented to, sin results. Satan knows our weak points and tries to direct his attacks on them. He works to arouse these lusts and unholy passions to lead us to transgress, and

fall from the high standard of Christ's righteousness—His law. It is therefore of crucial importance to put all these lusts and passions under the control of reason. The God of love has left none unguarded. Let us not serve the lusts of the flesh as before we had knowledge (1 Peter 1:14; Titus 3:3).

"He that ruleth his spirit [is greater] than he that taketh a city." "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls." Proverbs 16:32; 25:28

"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7) is His precious instruction. This is possible as we submit ourselves therefore to Him.

Yet men choose to enter the forbidden ground and thereby get tied up and remain in sin. Satan can only attract and entice, but can never force anyone into his snares. But when he succeeds in capturing his prey, he can never easily release that victim.

"The pleasures of sin are the cords with which Satan binds men in his snares." —*Maranatha*, p. 82

Remember the prodigal son of Luke 15:11–32, how he "wasted his substance with riotous living" (v.13). Christ in that parable does not give the full details of the exact pleasures the young man engaged in. We all know what it is like. The single statement is enough to describe a life without God.

Some still console themselves by saying that they are as not great sinners as the prodigal son who journeyed into a far country. Such need to always remember the fall of Adam and Eve. They only ate the fruit which

many consider as not such a big sin. But the results of it proved otherwise. By the eating of the fruit they opened the flood gates of sin which has grievously ruined our planet and caused the misery that terrorizes the world!

“To Eve it seemed a small thing to disobey God by tasting the fruit of the forbidden tree, and to tempt her husband also to transgress; but their sin opened the floodgates of woe upon the world. Who can know, in the moment of temptation, the terrible consequences that will result from one wrong step?” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 61

Regardless of its magnitude, sin must be called by its right name. A sin presumed small may have baleful results on one’s spiritual life. Through that sin, Satan can make inroads into the life; the soul is led to great lengths into sin, until it is total darkness in the soul.

“Even one wrong trait of character, one sinful desire, persistently cherished, will eventually neutralize all the power of the gospel. Every sinful indulgence strengthens the soul’s aversion to God.” –*Steps to Christ*, p. 34

“The prevalence of a sinful desire shows the delusion of the soul. Every indulgence of that desire strengthens the soul’s aversion to God. In following the path of Satan’s choosing, we are encompassed by the shadows of evil, and every step leads into deeper darkness and increases the blindness of the heart.

“The same law obtains in the spiritual as in the natural world. He who abides in darkness will at last lose the power of vision. He is shut in by a deeper than midnight blackness; and to him the brightest noontide can bring no light. He ‘walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.’ 1 John 2:11. Through persistently cherishing evil, willfully disregarding the pleadings of divine love, the sinner loses the love for good, the desire for God, the very capacity to receive the light of heaven. The invitation of mercy is still full of love, the light is shining as brightly as when it first dawned upon his soul; but

the voice falls on deaf ears, the light on blinded eyes.” – *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 92

We need to keep on guard that we serve not and make no “provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.” Romans 13:14. We need not yield even in one step to the devil. Fellow traveler, now in whatever condition

Satan may have drawn you to, perhaps deeper into the abyss of sin, you need to come back. It is no longer time to play with sin! You have eaten enough of the husks! The appeal is, please sincerely call and cry for a rescue operation. Be set free and enjoy the joy of being with the Father.

Peter cried for a rescue operation when he was drowning in the sea, and it was immediately conducted by the loving Lord. “But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save

me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him.” Matthew 14:30–31

“I was shown that Satan can not control minds unless they are yielded to his control. Those who depart from the right are in serious danger now. They separate themselves from God and from the watch-care of the angels of God, and Satan, ever upon the watch to destroy souls begins to present to such his deceptions and they are in the utmost peril. If they see and try to resist the powers of darkness and free themselves from Satan’s snare, it is not an easy matter. They have ventured on Satan’s ground and he claims them. . . .

“Those who have tempted the devil to tempt them will have to make desperate efforts to free themselves from his power. When they begin to work for themselves, then angels of God whom they have grieved will come to their rescue. Satan and his angels are unwilling to lose their prey. They contend and battle with the holy angels, and the conflict is severe. And if those who have erred continue to plead, and in deep humility confess their wrongs, angels who excel in strength will prevail and wrench them from the power of the evil an-





gels.” —*Messages to Young People*, p. 60

“Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? ‘But thus saith the LORD, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.” Isaiah 49:25

“No soul is ever finally deserted of God, given up to his own ways, so long as there is any hope of his salvation. ‘Man turns from God, not God from him.’ Our heavenly Father follows us with appeals and warnings and assurances of compassion, until further opportunities and privileges would be wholly in vain. The responsibility rests with the sinner. By resisting the Spirit of God today, he prepares the way for a second resistance of light when it comes with mightier power. Thus he passes on from one stage of resistance to another, until at last the light will fail to impress, and he will cease to respond in any measure to the Spirit of God. Then even ‘the light that is in thee’ has become darkness. The very truth we do know has become so perverted as to increase the blindness of the soul.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 93

“Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong.” Joel 3:9–10

“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.” Psalms 40:1-3

About two years ago I conducted a rescue operation. A man had tied a net between two trees in a small forest close to our house to trap any bird that passed that spot. I was sitting on the veranda of our house when I heard the flapping of a bird’s wings—it was caught and struggled for its life. It was a really beautiful and big bird. Immediately, I rose on my feet and rushed to the scene, setting the poor bird free. I released it into the air, and it swiftly flew and disappeared in happiness, as I left the spot for my house. It was a wonderful act that left me satisfied, but more importantly, how was it to the bird upon being freed like that?

Dear fellow traveler, our Father in heaven loves us so

much. He desires that every one of us be saved. (1 Timothy 2:4) He gave up His Son to an ignominious death for our sake. Today, He is ready to conduct a



rescue operation and free us from the power of sin, if only we call upon Him. Soon Jesus will present them faultless before the presence of His glory—those that have been washed by His blood and sanctified by His truth. May the Lord grant that we be part of that group and sing the song of victory. Amen.

*Joel Msiska*

## LOOKING FOR YOU...

If you are interested in submitting an item for publication in the Reformation Messenger, please submit to:

**By E-mail to:**

imsmessenger@yahoo.com

**By Mail to:**

IMS Publishing  
RR#3, 7899 15 Sideroad  
Milton, ON L9T 2X7  
Canada

**Submit:**

ARTICLES  
POEMS  
PHOTOS  
DRAWINGS  
ANNOUNCEMENTS



# Time to Watch and Pray

The great clock of God with its minute hand is rapidly approaching the Midnight hour. With overwhelming speed the inhabitants of the earth are arriving at their final destination. The prophetic timetable is announcing the end of the world with amazing accuracy. This means that soon Jesus Christ will return the second time to save His children and destroy the wicked.

However, before His second coming, God in His great love sends warnings so that people may prepare for this—the greatest event yet to come. One of these warnings is found in 1 Peter. 4:7: “But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.”

A lone man traveling all night on a rocky mountainside became exhausted and came face to face with death. The road behind him was too dangerous to retrace in the darkness and before him was a large boulder which he did not dare attempt to scale.

The only thing left for him to do was to wait until morning. His place of retirement was a steep, dangerous slope. Just one careless move might prove his destruction. He knew that he would have to be vigilant or else he would slip and be hurled to his death in the valley below.

In this night of sin, the Christian finds himself in a situation similar to that of the lone traveler. He cannot go backwards but must patiently wait and be alert until daybreak. Awareness of his precarious position motivates him to WATCH so that the enemy may not destroy him in his sleep. The danger of being deceived should be very real to us. The devil has many ways and methods whereby he attempts to lead us astray.

Before me is a religious newspaper printed by one of the many Adventist splinter groups. It is filled with

some incredible teachings. The paper uses the Spirit of Prophecy to invite the reader to accept “new light.” For instance, the exact day, month, and year are given when the judgment of the living is supposedly to begin, as well as the time of Jesus’ return. Doesn’t this deception contradict the explicit teaching of the Bible? Remember Christ’s prophecy: “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. . . . Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.” Matthew 24:36, 42. Because we do not know the exact time, God gives us the solemn warning to watch.

## EXCUSES FOR NOT WATCHING

There is a class of people of whom Christ spoke thus: “If that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth His coming; And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for Hm.” Matthew 24:48–50

“The evil servant says in his heart, ‘My Lord delayeth His coming.’ He does not say that Christ will not come. He does not *scoff* at the idea of His second coming. But in his heart and by his actions and words he declares that the Lord’s coming is delayed. He banishes from the minds of others the conviction that the Lord is coming quickly. His influence leads men to presumptuous, careless delay. They are confirmed in their worldliness and stupor. Earthly passions, corrupt thoughts, take possession of the mind.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 635

There are many Christians who have an intellectual knowledge of the Scriptures, and even profess to believe in the second coming of Christ, but do not know God intimately. Therefore, they love the world, and not Jesus as the Saviour. Perhaps they are even members of God’s church and are actively participating in the Sab-



bath School and other missionary endeavors. Despite the superficial involvement in church activities, this worshipper may be saying, "Don't come back too soon, Jesus. I'm enjoying this world. I still want to finish my education, get married and have some fun yet before I retire. Please, Lord, don't interrupt my plans for the future. I don't have the time to fully surrender to you. I have more important things to do right now than watch and pray." This is the attitude of the self-centered, sin-loving person.

Consider these all-important words for our day: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." 1 John 2:15-17. ". . . Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." James 4:4. "Upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth, upon all who make this world their home, the day of God will come as a snare." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 635

#### **WHAT NOT TO WATCH**

One of the easiest things for us to do is to watch others and to forget to watch self. As we look at others' faults, weaknesses and their many character imperfections, we tend to compare ourselves with them and are very likely to lift ourselves up and become critical and judgmental. Here is an inspired statement on that subject: "Thus those who condemn or criticize others, proclaim themselves guilty, for they do the same things. In condemning others, they are passing sentence upon themselves, and God declares that this sentence is just. He accepts their own verdict against themselves." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 124

#### **WHAT TO WATCH**

Since we are living on the borders of the heavenly Canaan, our responsibility today is to critically watch ourselves rather than our fellow believers in the church. We just cannot afford to be critical. Let us resolve to be more critical of ourselves and more tolerant of others. In the *New International Version* of the Bible we read, "Watch your life." 1 Timothy 4:16. This means that our spiritual lives need to be examined in the light of the Ten Commandments. I'm sure you have already heard that we can take only our characters to heaven. If that is so, then we need to put special emphasis on character development or Christ likeness. In the book *Early Writings*, p. 71, we are pointed to a high goal: "I saw

that none could share the 'refreshing' unless they obtain the victory over every besetment, over pride, selfishness, love of the world, and over every wrong word and action."

This solemn thought prompts us to consider every aspect of our lives. Without a doubt, we need to watch our words that we speak so freely. If this were done, family and church squabbles would end, heartaches, sadness and misunderstandings would be things of the past. Let us watch, because "death and life are in the power of the tongue." Proverbs 18:21

Another area where attention should be focused is our health. Man is eating and drinking to his own glory, thereby making his belly a god. His unsanctified appetite is idolized and worshipped every day. Frequently the worshippers go to such extents as to become gluttons. Gluttony is a perversion of a natural, God-given appetite or drive. When a normal hunger is extended greedily into abnormality so that it harms the body and dulls the mind, it becomes sin.

Have you ever lost control of your appetite, overeating even nutritious food and then finding it hard to keep awake during the Sabbath service? Of course, gluttony is not only the sin of overeating. It can be the sin of drinking, of staying up too late, losing needed sleep in order to satisfy ambition or greed. Gluttony can also be indulged by married couples who have not used self-restraint and temperance in their relations with each other.

Christians, especially Adventists who have a concern for their health but have a problem living up to the light, should watch and also pray for Divine help.

There are others, on the other hand, who can master their craving for food, but fail to watch their personal appearance. They are following the foolish, vain, and ridiculous fashions of the world. Perhaps their showy, self-centered attire is a "cover-up" for their emptiness and lack of peace.

Have you ever looked at yourself in the mirror, and asked yourself: "Would Jesus approve of my clothes, as I walk into church, go to the lake, go to work?" Remember, Jesus is watching us as the investigative judgment is in session. Besides this fact, He will soon appear in the clouds of heaven to clothe us in immortality. And before this spectacular event takes place, we are being warned by the signs of the times to get ready.

Every calamity, earthquake, war, misfortune, and crime committed knocks on the door of this doomed planet

to tell us something.

During the first century, the Italian city of Pompeii was a thriving resort of the Roman Empire. It was located approximately six miles south of Mount Vesuvius and covered an area of some one hundred and sixty acres. This city of wealth, pleasure and immorality had a population of 20,000 people. On August 24, A.D. 79, life was going on as usual. Housewives pre-*pared* breakfast for their families—the bread was in the oven, eggs were on the stove, men were going to work, children played in the streets and the shops were open for business. On that day, no one noticed anything out of the ordinary about the 4000 foot high mountain.

At one o'clock in the afternoon the city was shaken by a violent earth-quake and then Mount Vesuvius erupted with the sound of a thunderclap. The first explosion spewed out of its crater lethal gas, ash and smoke that rose high into the sky. The people were terrified and thousands fled at once to the sea and kept going until they were out of danger. Unfortunately, there were some who disregarded the explosion and remained behind. Many delayed in leaving the doomed city. Some stayed to bury their valuables while others loaded their possessions onto small carts. As they wheeled their overloaded carts, the people merged toward the narrow city gates which created a terrible traffic jam. At that moment the angry mountain sent forth its deadly gases and volcanic ash over the city and the terrified people perished. They were mostly the wealthy who refused to abandon their precious homes and possessions, hoping that the danger would pass after the first explosion. Of the 20,000 inhabitants of Pompeii, 16,000—four fifths of the entire population—perished under 30 feet of volcanic debris. Thus this thriving city of pleasure and commerce became a huge burial ground.

What lessons can we learn from this terrible tragedy? For one thing, our possessions should not hinder us as we travel to our place of refuge, the heavenly kingdom.

We are not to hold on to overloaded carts at the expense of eternal salvation.

The story is told of a woman who would not separate herself from a piece of luggage while on board the sinking Titanic. As the luxury liner was about to go down, several appeals were made to her to jump into the remaining lifeboat, but she would have to leave her luggage behind. She refused the last invitation and perished in the icy waters of the Atlantic. She would rather die than give up her precious suitcase that contained money, gems, and other valuables. How tragic it is that to many people material things are more important than life itself, even eternal life. "He [Satan] will so arrange affairs as to hedge up their way, entangle them with earthly treasure, cause them to carry a heavy, wearisome burden, that their hearts may be overcharged with the cares of this life, and the day of trial come upon them as a thief." —*The Great Controversy*, p.625–626



Another lesson we can draw from the history of Pompeii is that after the first explosion of Vesuvius, there were people who delayed leaving the city. It was this delay that cost them their lives. They were victims of the paralysis of procrastination—a spiritual disease that affects a person's attitude and better judgment.

The Bible cites several instances of people who procrastinated too long. For example, Paul's witness to the Roman governor Felix: "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." Acts 24:25. Though deeply impressed, Felix abruptly ended the interview with those fateful words, "When I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

Another similar case of the paralysis of procrastination is found in Acts chapter 26. Paul there appealed to a Roman official named Agrippa about the truth, whose reply was, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Chris-



tian.” But “almost” means to be lost. He also procrastinated, and there is no record that Felix or Agrippa ever turned to the Lord. Though convicted, they ended up rejecting the offer of salvation.

The city of Pompeii is an example and a startling object lesson for those living in the last generation of earth’s history. Mount Vesuvius erupted when the people were totally unprepared for the catastrophe. The sudden and violent explosions came at a time when the people did not foresee any threat of danger from the volcano. For 16 years before the explosions, the inhabitants of the city witnessed Vesuvius puffing out its smoke and vapors. It was a constant sign and warning of danger. This is very similar to what will happen just before Jesus returns. The wicked will see the smoke warning through the signs of the times, but will ignore them. They will continue to transgress the Ten Commandments until the final explosion that will terminate all of civilization.

Jesus says to all the members of His church: “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.” “Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.” Mark 13:32–33; Mathew 24:44

The sudden and unexpected destruction that came to Pompeii gives us an idea of what it will be like at the end of the world. People will be carrying on life and business as usual. “Men are still eating and drinking, planting and building, marrying, and giving in marriage. Merchants are still buying and selling. Men are jostling

one against another, contending for the highest place. Pleasure lovers are still crowding to theaters, horse races, gambling halls.” “When the scorner, the rejecter of truth, has become presumptuous; when the routine of work in the various money-making lines is carried on without regard to principle; when the student is eagerly seeking knowledge of every-thing but his Bible, Christ comes as a thief.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 636, 635

Before Jesus comes, the liquor shops, gambling casinos, theaters and night clubs will be very busy. In millions of homes, the radio and television sets will be tuned in to the usual programs of violence, immorality and foolishness. It is at the end of the time of trouble that the wicked will be interrupted in their selfish plans. There will appear from outer space a small black cloud, about half the size of a man’s hand. It will come from the direction of the constellation Orion. At that moment, the terrified people will be praying to the unstable mountains and rocks to “fall on us and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.” Revelation 6:16. They will see a cloud of angels accompanying the conquering Jesus. They will seek shelter but it will be too late. In that hour there will be no opportunity to repent. It is the day of the Lord when just reward will be given to everyone.

Therefore, Jesus says to us, “Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.” Luke 21:36

*Henry Dering*

## *The U in Jesus*

Before you were thought of, or time had begun, God stuck U in the name of His Son.  
And each time U pray, you’ll see it’s true, You can’t spell out JesUs and not include U,  
You’re a pretty big part of His wonderful name, For U He was born; that’s why He came,  
And His great love for U is the reason He died. It even takes U to spell crucified.  
Isn’t it thrilling and splendidly grand, He rose from the dead, with U in His plan?  
The stones split away, the gold trumpet blew, And this word resurrection is spelled with a U.  
When JesUs left earth at His Upward ascension, He felt there was one thing He just had to mention.  
“Go into the world and tell them it’s true That I love them all—Just like I love U.”  
So many great people are spelled with a U, Don’t they have a right to know JesUs too?  
It all depends now on what U will do, He’d like them to know, But it all starts with U.  
Will U pass it on? **When Jesus died on the cross He was thinking of you!**

Submitted by Franziska Pedersen



# Mediums For Our Salvation

God, in His great love and mercy towards us weak human beings has given us mediums which help us to be saved. If we use these mediums we all will be saved to eternal life. One very important medium for our salvation is the church and church meetings. If we neglect the benefit of this medium, we certainly will be lost.

Sister White writes, "We sustain a loss when we neglect the privilege of associating together to strengthen and encourage one another in the service of God. The truths of His word lose their vividness and importance in our minds. Our hearts cease to be enlightened and aroused by the sanctifying influence, and we decline in spirituality." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 541

"It is a serious mistake to neglect the public worship of God. The privilege of divine service should not be lightly regarded." —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 511

If we neglect to attend religious services because we need to visit our parents, or children, then we do not love God. Jesus said, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." Matthew 10:37

In a dream at night, I saw Jesus coming in person to our prayer meeting. I told Him that we are only four people here; if others would have known that You would be here, certainly more people would have come to see You and talk to You. In reality, Jesus, with the angels and the Holy Spirit are present in our prayer meetings.

Another important medium is the Bible. We read, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Sister White writes, "None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 593

#### Further she writes:

- Bible study gives strength to your mind (*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 394).
- Bible study disciplines your mind (*Counsels to Teachers*, p. 448).

- Bible study enlarges your mind (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 228).
- Bible study elevates your mind (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 446).
- Bible study expands your mind (*Counsels to Teachers*, p. 452).
- Bible study ennobles your mind (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 323).
- Bible study gives new vigor to your mind (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 524).
- Bible study improves your mind (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 499).
- Bible study lifts your mind from earthliness and debasement (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 319).
- Bible study quickens your mind (*Education*, p. 126).

Our minister in Bulgaria, Brother Botchev, read the Bible through more than sixty times. Our sister Teresa in Venezuela read the Bible at least 56 times. Then we find professed Christians who have not read the Bible through even once.

Also God has given us the Spirit of Prophecy writings. Sister White wrote more than 100,000 pages. Many books have been printed from these hand-written pages. All her writings are stored in the Seventh-Day Adventist headquarters and no one is permitted to see and read them. They always tell visitors to read the existing printed books first, and one person told them that he has read them all.

The angel, Gabriel came from heaven two thousand times to give her visions and dreams, and also the Holy Spirit inspired her to write messages that are so important to us. The nine volumes of the *Testimonies for the Church* are especially important for all of us, to read them all and to underline the most important passages.

"With regard to those who have turned from the light sent them, He said: 'In slighting and rejecting the testi-



mony that I have given you to bear, it is not you, but Me, your Lord, that they have slighted.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 688

“Will you please read this in your churches? And will you make earnest effort to draw nigh to God that God may draw nigh to you? Will you urge upon the churches the searching of the Scriptures and the careful reading of the Testimonies? The warnings that have been given to arouse the churches to activity have not been regarded, and God holds the church guilty because of this neglect. You need the revival of the Spirit of God. You need in the several churches to greatly humble your souls before God, lest Jesus pass by and leave you no blessing. Now while mercy lingers, be in earnest. Make no delay, lest it shall be forever too late. The slumber of the world-loving men and women is deep. It will require a powerful effort to break up this frozen state of things and thaw out souls. May God help you to help yourselves.” –*An Important Testimony to our Brethren and Sisters in New York (1887)*, pamphlet, PH 039

We may say that we believe the Testimonies of Ellen G. White, but if we do not read them and put them into practice, it is equal to rejecting them. “The Testimonies of the Spirit of God are given to direct men to His Word, which has been neglected. Now if their messages are not heeded, the Holy Spirit is shut away from the soul. What further means has God in reserve to reach the erring ones, and show them their true condition?” –*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 46

Another important medium that God has given us is the privilege of prayer. The Apostle Paul writes, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” Ephesians 6:18

“Pray without ceasing.” 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Sister White writes, “No man is safe for a day or an hour without prayer. Especially should we entreat the Lord for wisdom to understand His Word. Here are revealed the wiles of the tempter and the means by which he may be successfully resisted.” –*The Great Controversy*, p. 530

Jesus spent the whole night in prayer. “And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.” Luke 6:12. If Jesus needed to spend the whole night in prayer, then we need it even more.

Also a great medium for us to develop perfect characters is health reform. Sister White writes, “The light God has given on health reform is for our salvation and the

salvation of the world.” –*Counsels on Health*, p. 446

“It was in love that our heavenly Father sent the light of health reform to guard against the evils that result from unrestrained indulgence of appetite.” –*Child Guidance*, p. 461

“The controlling power of appetite will prove the ruin of thousands, when, if they had conquered on this point, they would have had moral power to gain the victory over every other temptation of Satan. But those who are slaves to appetite will fail in perfecting Christian character.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 492

One medium that we cannot ignore is missionary work. We are saved by saving others. We are to love our neighbour as ourselves. Because of this love we cannot let them perish, being ignorant of this great salvation. “When entered upon with this spirit, the missionary work becomes elevating and uplifting both to the laborer and to the person helped.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 189

“There are many who would work if urged into service, and who would save their souls by thus working.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 390

“They should arrange matters so that every member of the church shall have a part to act, that none may lead an aimless life, but that all may accomplish what they can according to their several ability.” –*Christian Service*, p. 62

We sing in our gospel hymn, “Work for the night is coming, when man works no more.”

Also the holy Sabbath day is a medium for our salvation. We need to spend this day in spiritual study and meditation. Especially the Sabbath commandment reminds us to remember it. The whole week we are to remember the Sabbath day so that when it comes, we may keep it holy.

There are other mediums also that God has given us for our salvation. If we ignore even one of them, we are in danger of being lost. If our salvation is important to us, then we cannot neglect even one of His mediums. The standard of God is high that we must reach, and no one can reach it without God-given mediums. The wisdom of God is so much greater than our wisdom that we need to put our reasoning aside, and follow the direction of God and His mediums; then we all will be saved. Amen.

**Timo Martin**



# Jerusalem



Jerusalem is one of the oldest cities on this earth. The first settlement occurred in the year 2500 B.C. and then it was just a few houses. The first city wall was built in 1800 B.C. so we can see that Jerusalem already existed before the time of David. He conquered Jerusalem some time around 1000 B.C. David and his army had to dispossess some of the Canaanites who lived on the mountains of Zion and Moriah. This fortified city was called Jebus, and its inhabitants were known as Jebusites.

Sister White writes the following: “For centuries Jebus had been looked upon as impregnable; but it was besieged and taken by the Hebrews under the command of Joab, who, as the reward of his valor, was made commander-in-chief of the armies of Israel. Jebus now became the national capital, and its heathen name was changed to Jerusalem.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 703

By conquering Jerusalem, David opened the way for his son, Solomon, to build the first temple. And as the Bible tells us, it was the most beautiful building of its time. It was garnished with precious stones, lined with carved cedar, and burnished with gold. But as we know, in later years, Jerusalem was conquered by the Babylonians and destroyed. Then, Cyrus the Great conquered the Babylonian empire and allowed the Jews to rebuild Jerusalem and build a second temple.

Jesus was crucified outside this very city, and years after His crucifixion, Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. It was later rebuilt as a Roman city. But this was not the end of Jerusalem. In its history we see that it has been invaded several times by different empires. It has not been a peaceful existence for this city. Even today, Jerusalem is not entirely at peace.

But what will be of Jerusalem in the future? The Bible speaks of a New Jerusalem, not one that has been made new by man, by rebuilding or reconstruction.

“And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee. And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and His name one.” Zechariah 14:4–5, 9

This New Jerusalem in its splendour, comes down out of heaven and it rests upon the place made ready to receive it. This is the very place where Jesus, after His resurrection, ascended, and where the angels repeated the promise of His return. The verses speak of an earthquake and if the splitting of the mountain will be caused by such an earthquake, it is interesting, because I found some information while researching that a recent geological survey done in the area has verified the presence of a prominent fault. It runs east to west through the southern section of the mount of Olives.

Let us see what the Bible says about this New Jerusalem. “And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.” Revelation 21:12, 21.

In *The Signs of the Times*, January 30, 1901, it says that “the streets of the New Jerusalem are paved with gold” and “its walls are of jasper and precious stones.” It sounds so beautiful, so unimaginable! Solomon’s temple was nothing compared to this new city. What else does it say about this city in Revelation 22:5? “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." In the city of God "there shall be no night, they need no candle, neither light of the sun." Why? "Because the Lord giveth them light."

"The light of the sun will be superceded by a radiance which is not painfully dazzling, yet which immeasurably surpasses the brightness of our noontide. The glory of God and the Lamb floods the Holy City with unfading light. The redeemed walk in the sinless glory of perpetual day." And something else is more wonderful than anything else. Like it says in 1 Corinthians 13:12, "Now we see through a glass darkly." But then we shall see Him face to face without a dimming veil. We shall stand in His presence and gaze upon the glory of His countenance.

But who will enter this city? What must we do to be allowed in? "And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in his temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Revelation 7:14-17

God's chosen will come from dungeons, mountains, and from the caves of this earth. These are they who have suffered persecution, ridicule, and torment for Jesus' sake. They have been partakers of His glory. No more feeble, afflicted, and oppressed, they stand before the throne of God, clothed in richer robes than the kings and queens of this earth. In Isaiah 61:3, He has promised "to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He might be glorified."

"Before entering the City of God, the Saviour bestows upon His followers the emblems of victory and invests them with the insignia of their royal state. Upon the heads of the overcomers, Jesus with His own right hand places the crown of glory. For each there is a crown, bearing his own new name, and the inscription, 'Holiness to the Lord.' In every hand are placed the victor's palm and the shining harp. Before the ransomed throng is the Holy City. Jesus opens wide the pearly gates, and the nations that have kept the truth enter in." —*Darkness Before Dawn*, p. 51

It is my wish and prayer that we may bravely face whatever trials the enemy throws at us so that we may one day enter the Holy City of God and dwell with Him for eternity. Amen.

**Sesciah Newby**

**"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isaiah 1:18**

"God is clothed with power; He is able to take those who are dead in trespasses and sins, and by the operation of the Spirit which raised Jesus from the dead, transform the human character, bringing back to the soul the lost image of God. Those who believe in Jesus Christ are changed from being rebels against the law of God into obedient servants and subjects of His kingdom. They are born again, regenerated, sanctified through the truth.

The world is to see God in His followers. Life and immortality are brought to light through those who are one with God in Christ. It is our privilege to have the spirit of light and knowledge that is the wisdom of heaven. All who have this spirit, in whatever position they may be placed, the highest or the lowest place of service, will reveal in their work the power of this light and knowledge.

Constantly we behold Him who lived among men a life of perfect obedience. The more closely we behold Him, the more nearly we shall resemble Him in character, and the greater will be our efficiency in working for others. We shall be lifted far above the trials and perplexities of this life. . . . Self is to be hidden. Christ alone is to appear, full of grace and truth. . . . He who receives Christ by living faith has a living connection with God. . . . He carries with him the atmosphere of heaven, which is the grace of God, a treasure that the world cannot buy.

If you would be a saint in heaven, you must first be a saint on earth." —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 112



### **PART 2: Habits – A Life-Long Curse or A Life-Long Blessing?**

Last month we learned about memory, how memories are created, and the role of the hippocampus and the amygdala in memory creation. We also learned how important the memories are that we create, as our memories can draw us away from God or bring us to a closer relationship with Him.

This month, we will learn about a very specific type of memory, and that is habit memory. Habit memories are very different than all other memories. Habits are not created via the hippocampus, as is the case with other long term memories. They are developed in a very specific part of the brain called the basal ganglia. We develop the memory for a habit by repeating a certain action or set of actions over and over, until we can finally perform the same action or set of actions without attention or conscious thought. This type of memory is very useful when we use it for things like taking the same route home from school or work every day. How many of you have arrived at work without any memory of how you got there? You started your trip, and you thought about the first few turns, but then somewhere your brain moved on to more interesting topics, and the next thing you know, you arrive at work and you cannot recall the actual trip. This is what habit memory does. Once you start on a familiar series of actions, you stop thinking about them, and you are able to complete them without conscious thought. Habit memory frees the brain up from having to focus on dull, uninteresting repetitive tasks so that we can use our brain power for more meaningful thoughts. Habits allow us to perform the mundane day-to-day tasks of our life, while being able to focus on what is more important. They allow us to walk around the block and talk to a companion at the same time, to eat while we are reading, to find our way home while thinking about the exam we just took, in our mind. However, the nature of habit formation also makes it difficult to stop a habit once it starts because habit memory happens automatically without deliberate effort on our part, and we perform the actions of a habit unconsciously.

Remember from last month, we learned that the more we

repeat something, the better our learning and memorization. Our brain makes connections between cells when we learn. When you initially learn something the pathway or connection is weak. The more frequently you think a particular thought, or do a particular action, the stronger the connections between brain cells become. Doing something once does not create a habit. Habits are learned by repetition. Doing the same action over and over will eventually lead to the action becoming a habit. Habit memory is very organized and rigid. Very similar circumstances need to be re-created in order for someone to access the information that is stored in habit memory. Think about when you first learned to ride a bicycle. At first, you had to pay attention to staying balanced, keeping your eyes on the road, holding on to the handlebars and steering in the direction you wanted to go. The more you practiced, the stronger the pathways for bicycle riding were developed in your brain. Eventually, you were able to get on your bike and ride without thinking. You were operating on automatic. This is how habits are formed.

Once we have the memory for the set of actions that are involved in a habit, we don't consciously need to think about what we are doing, we act automatically. And, if the habit involves a set of actions, our brain groups all the actions of a habit together, in a process called "chunking", so that when we put ourselves in the same situation that triggers the habit, the whole sequence of actions that are part of the habit continues without us having to think about it. This process of chunking all the behaviours of a habit into one memory is what makes a habit so powerful and difficult to change once it has been established. We only need to perform the initial behaviour of a habit for our memory to then complete all the steps involved in the habit. For example, if you have the habit of brushing your teeth every morning when you get up, you will go into the bathroom, which is the first step. Then grabbing your toothbrush, putting toothpaste on it, brushing your teeth, then rinsing your teeth and finally cleaning your toothbrush all happens without you having to think of all the steps; it becomes automatic. With a habit like brushing your teeth, this



chunking is helpful. At the same time as you are brushing your teeth, you can think about what you plan to do that day, you may have a prayer, you may be thinking about what you are going to wear. Habits allow us to focus our minds on other, more important issues.

### **WHY ARE HABITS SO HARD TO BREAK?**

Important connections in our brain are established during habit formation. These connections create patterns of brain cell activity in a specific region of the brain called the basal ganglia. When habits are broken, these patterns reverse. However, these patterns recur easily when something triggers an old, supposedly extinguished habit to begin again. The brain is retaining a memory of the patterns that were established when a habit was learned, which is why it is so difficult to change a habit. What this implies is that, even if we overcome a bad habit, our brain will always remember those connections that were created, and we are never completely free from the possibility of starting the habit again, for the rest of our lives. So, for someone who is trying to lose weight or to control a well-engrained habit of indulging in appetite, just the sight of a piece of cake can reset all those good intentions because the brain once again establishes the old patterns that were created during habit-formation. This is the reason why it is so dangerous to indulge in bad habits. Once learned, never forgotten. We will never be completely free from the pull of a bad habit. On the other hand, if we develop good habits, the same principle applies. Once learned, they will always remain with us forever.

Another reason that a habit becomes so ingrained in us is that our brain contains a chemical called dopamine. Dopamine is one of the chemicals that is necessary for us to feel pleasure. People who are depressed lack adequate levels of dopamine in their brains. Once a pleasurable habit is stored in our brain, when we take the first action that is involved in the habit, dopamine is released. Then dopamine is again released at the end of the series of actions involved in a habit. This is another reason why a habit is so difficult to break. We like the feeling of pleasure that is released by the dopamine when we start the habit. But, we get a second rush of pleasure when dopamine gets released at the end of the habit behaviour, which gives us incentive to continue with the habit once we start.

Often there is something that triggers the habit to begin, being in a certain place, the smell of something familiar, the sight of something that is craved. For example, let us look at someone who indulges in appetite. Eventually, that person only needs the smell of food to trigger the dopamine release, and the habitual behaviour begins without conscious thought. If conscious thought was present, that person would be able to reason that perhaps eating a chocolate-filled donut is not healthy, and they would stop themselves from eating. But, because the action is uncon-

scious, it is beyond their control to stop.

The release of dopamine and the chunking of all the steps in a habit makes it especially difficult to break a habit once it has been formed.

We can apply the same principle of habit creation to good habits also. If we create a good habit, the actions involved in a good habit also release dopamine. And we will then want to do the good habit also. If we develop the habit of being kind, and people respond favourably to our kindness, and we derive enjoyment from their kindness, this develops a good habit.

“What we venture to do once, we are more apt to do again. Habits of sobriety, of self-control, of economy, of close application, of sound, sensible conversation, of patience and true courtesy, are not gained without diligent, close watching over self. It is much easier to become demoralized and depraved than to conquer defects, keeping self in control and cherishing true virtues. Persevering efforts will be required if the Christian graces are ever perfected in our lives.” —*Child Guidance*, p. 200

### **HABITS FORMED IN CHILDHOOD**

It doesn't matter what age we are in habit development; we develop habits even as young children. Therefore, even children need to be careful as to what habits they develop. Parents need to be mindful to guide their children into good habits, as the influence of either good or bad habits will continue for the rest of their lives. Many parents indulge their children, giving them whatever they ask for, thinking that they are being loving in providing the child with all its wants and needs. What child wouldn't quickly learn that if they are insistent, their parents will give in? But, if a parent gives into a child, especially if what they are asking for is not good for them, this teaches the child that if they demand enough, they will get what they want. But, think of what this does for a child's character; they never learn the lesson of sacrifice, or of the blessing that comes from working to provide for one's needs.

“Some parents have suffered their children to form wrong habits, the marks of which may be seen all through life. Upon the parents lies this sin. These children may profess to be Christians; yet without a special work of grace upon the heart and a thorough reform in life, their past habits will be seen in all their experience, and they will exhibit just the character which their parents allowed them to form.

“The young should not be suffered to learn good and evil indiscriminately, with the idea that at some future time the good will predominate and the evil lose its influence. The evil will increase faster than the good. It is possible that after many years the evil they have learned may be eradicated; but who will venture this? Time is short. It is easier and much safer to sow clean, good seed in the hearts of your children than to pluck up the weeds afterward. Im-

pressions made upon the minds of the young are hard to efface. How important, then, that these impressions be of the right sort, that the elastic faculties of youth be bent in the right direction." —*The Adventist Home*, p. 201

We have many examples in the Bible of men and women who strayed from God, whose lives were destroyed because of bad habits learned in their youth. "The history of Israel's first king presents a sad example of the power of early wrong habits. In his youth, Saul did not love and fear God; and that impetuous spirit, not early trained to submission, was ever ready to rebel against divine authority. . . . A child may receive sound religious instruction; but if parents, teachers, or guardians permit his character to be biased by a wrong habit, that habit, if not overcome, will become a predominant power, and the child is lost." —*Child Guidance*, p. 201

Even from a very early age we can destroy our lives with wrong habits. Sister White gives us an example of this. "When Voltaire was five years old, he committed to memory an infidel poem, and the pernicious influence was never effaced from his mind. He became one of Satan's most successful agents to lead men away from God." —*Child Guidance*, p. 196. How many parents actually realize that already at the age of five, habits are formed that will influence a child for the rest of his life, and decide his or her eternal fate?

Regardless of the intellect we were born with, the talents that God gave us, the education we obtained, all this is not as significant in determining our destiny as the habits that we develop. "More than any natural endowment, the habits established in early years decide whether a man will be victorious or vanquished in the battle of life." —*Child Guidance*, p. 202

"Once formed, habits become more and more firmly impressed upon the character. The intellect is continually receiving its mold from opportunities and advantages, ill or well improved. Day by day, we form characters which place the students as well-disciplined soldiers under the banner of Prince Emmanuel, or rebels under the banner of the prince of darkness. Which shall it be?" —*Child Guidance*, p. 200

"The lessons learned, the habits formed, during the years of infancy and childhood have more to do with the formation of the character and the direction of the life than have all the instruction and training of after years." —*Child Guidance*, p. 184

The example that the parents provide for their children is also of utmost importance. Our children look to us for guidance, and they will mirror our behaviours and actions. If we ourselves indulge in harmful habits, is it little wonder that our children grow up with those same vices? "What the child sees and hears is drawing deep lines upon the tender

mind, which no after circumstances in life can entirely efface. The intellect is now taking shape, and the affections receiving direction and strength. Repeated acts in a given course become habits. These may be modified by severe training, in afterlife, but are seldom changed." —*The Health Reformer*, January 1, 1880

What can parents do to establish good habits in their children? "One of the surest safeguards of the young is useful occupation. Children who are trained to industrious habits, so that all their hours are usefully and pleasantly employed, have no inclination to repine at their lot and no time for idle daydreaming. They are in little danger of forming vicious habits or associations." —*Child Guidance*, p. 122

#### CHRIST AS OUR PERFECT EXAMPLE

We have the example of Christ while He was on this earth. Even as a child, He spent His days working with His father in his carpentry shop. He developed the habit of useful occupation. He did not spend His days in idleness, which leads many a child to turn away from things of God, and indulge in seemingly innocent play which can be detrimental to their character development. "At a very early age, Jesus had begun to act for Himself in the formation of His character, and not even respect and love for His parents could turn Him from obedience to God's word. . . . His brothers. . . sided with the rabbis. They insisted that the traditions must be heeded. . . . Young companions urged Him to do as they did. He was bright and cheerful; they enjoyed His presence. . . . but they were impatient at His scruples, and pronounced Him narrow and strait-laced. . . . His hours of happiness were found when alone with nature and with God. . . . Mary often remonstrated with Jesus, and urged Him to conform to the usages of the rabbis. But He could not be persuaded to change His habits of contemplating the works of God and seeking to alleviate the suffering of men or even of dumb animals." —*A Call to Stand Apart*, p. 9

**"The earlier in life one contracts hurtful habits, the more firmly will they hold their victim in slavery,** and the more certainly will they lower his standard of spirituality. On the other hand, if correct and virtuous habits are formed in youth, they will generally mark the course of the possessor through life. In most cases, it will be found that those who in later life reverence God and honor the right, learned that lesson before there was time for the world to stamp its images of sin upon the soul. Those of mature age are generally as insensible to new impressions as is the hardened rock, but youth is impressible." —*Child Guidance*, p. 199 [Emphasis mine]

#### HOW DO WE BREAK A BAD HABIT?

Because a bad habit takes place without conscious thought, it is easy for Satan to control us through our bad habits. By creating a bad habit in our character, our free will is taken away from us. We no longer are rational beings, able to decide between good and bad actions. And Satan knows

that once we take that first step in a bad habit, we are allowing him to take over.

So how do we get rid of a bad habit? Since a habit is a series of behaviours, bound together, and initiated by a single factor, avoiding the initial step of the habit is one way to break it. In order to do this, we need to identify the factors which trigger our habits, and avoid those triggers. For example, a smoker, on waking up in the morning, will automatically reach for his cigarettes on his night table, will light the cigarette and have his first smoke of the day. To break that habit, the circumstances of the habit must be changed. If the cigarettes were no longer on the night table, the full sequence of the habit could not take place. Now we have changed the scenario enough that the brain no longer continues the sequence of actions to continue the habit. If we have the habit to eat a certain type of unhealthy food, first of all we have to make sure that we don't have that particular food in the house. Then we need to avoid even walking past places that may sell that type of food. This will stop the habit before it starts.

Because the chunking of tasks allows for the automatic nature of habits, another way to break a habit is to pay attention to the tasks involved in a habit; in this way we can actually disrupt the sequence of actions that take place. If we are aware of the trigger that initiates a habit, if we consciously think of the next steps that we take, now we have control because our conscious mind is aware of what is happening. If you are aware of a bad habit that you want to get rid of, focus your mind on every step of the habit, and you will be able to stop yourself from performing the next action that continues the habit.

Because the nerve connections in our brain that store the behaviours in a habit are so easily triggered once the habit begins, often the breaking of a bad habit involves starting a good habit in its place. In this way we prevent activating the patterns that have been created in our brains by the bad habit, and develop new patterns in our brains. Like a bad habit, a new habit has to be learned by repetition. If we have the habit of coming home after a long day at work and turning on the television, we need to place a Bible in the same spot where the television remote once sat, and then our hands will pick the Bible up instead of the television remote, creating a new, good habit. Certain habits, we know, can only be overcome through prayer and fasting. Many people go through their lives, wishing that they could rid themselves of bad habits, and they fail at every attempt.



The lifelong smoker often tries to quit his habit many times, only to start up again. The person who indulges in appetite will always be drawn back to the foods he likes. But, we have a power stronger than our own will, and that is to place our will in God's hands.

"He who determines to enter the spiritual kingdom will find that all the powers and passions of an unregenerate nature, backed by the forces of the kingdom of darkness, are arrayed against him. Selfishness and pride will make a stand against anything that would show them to be sinful. We can not, of ourselves, conquer the evil desires and habits that struggle for the mastery. We can not overcome the mighty foe who holds us in his thrall. God alone can give us the victory. He desires us to have the mastery over ourselves, our own will and ways. But He can not work in us without our consent and co-operation. The divine Spirit works through the faculties and powers given to man. Our energies are required to co-operate with God. . . .

"The victory is not won without much earnest prayer, without the humbling of self at every step. Our will is not to be

forced into co-operation with divine agencies, but it must be voluntarily submitted. Were it possible to force upon you with a hundredfold greater intensity the influence of the Spirit of God, it would not make you a Christian, a fit subject for heaven. The stronghold of Satan-would not be broken. The will must be placed on the side of God's will. You are not able, of yourself, to bring your purposes and desires and inclinations into submission to the will of God; but if you are 'willing to be made willing,' God will accomplish the work for you, even 'casting down imaginations, and every high

thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.' Then you will 'work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.'"—*Signs of the Times*, May 18, 1904

Bad habits are easily established if we don't have our will placed in the will of God. Our sinful nature craves those things that satisfy the flesh. And, once established, it is a life-long battle to overcome them. These habits, formed by indulging our carnal appetites can destroy our chance of eternal life. It is only through the creation of good habits, starting from our earliest childhood, that will determine our success in this life, and our fitness for heaven and eternal life. Amen.





## CHILDREN'S CORNER

# Duty and Pleasure

"Duty first, and pleasure afterward," wrote Amy Leslie in her copy-book one fine morning.

Line after line she penned, making many a mistake, for her thoughts were far away. At last her mother, who was sitting near her, said, "Amy, this is the third time you have spelled pleasure without a "p" and left out the "f" in afterward. Put down your pen and tell me what you are thinking about; for I am sure it is not of your copy."

"I was only thinking," replied Amy, "how glad I should be if my copy said, 'Pleasure first—duty afterward.' It is very hard always to have the disagreeable part first. I wish I could have one whole week with no duties at all! How I should enjoy myself!"

Mrs. Leslie remained silent for a moment; then she said, while a quiet smile played round her lips, "Well, Amy, for once you shall have what you want. For a whole week you may amuse yourself; no duties, mind, my child—none at all."

"There is no chance of my wanting any, I assure you, mama," said Amy, joyfully; "I shall be so happy, you'll see!"

"Very well, then," said Mrs. Leslie; "you may begin tomorrow. Today I shall expect you to do as usual."

Amy said no more; she finished her copy, learned her lessons, then went to the nursery to take charge of her little brother while the nurse was busy with other work. Afterward there were socks to mend, and an errand to run, and buttons to sew on to baby's shoes, and a letter to write. And so the day passed, and the next morning

dawned on our pleasure-loving little friend.

"No duties" she said to herself, as she woke at seven, which was her usual time for rising; "so I can lie in bed as long as I please." She turned over, and as she could not sleep, began making plans for the day, and thinking what a delightful time she would have. About half past nine she came down stairs, to find her breakfast on the table; milk, toast, and egg, all as cold as possible. "What a wretched breakfast!" she said, as she took her seat.

"Well, dear," replied Mrs. Leslie, "your breakfast was ready at the usual time, and of course is cold now."

Amy said no more. She ate with only half her usual appetite, and, finishing in about five minutes put away her chair, and left the room. As she went up stairs to fetch her hat, baby in the nursery stretched his arms for her to take him; but she hurried past, and left the little fellow crying with disappointment.



Soon she came down again, with a story book in one hand, and a box of cookies in the other. The cookies had been a present, but hitherto her mother had allowed her to have only one or two daily; now, however, she might do as she liked, and at present her idea of perfect bliss was the combined charms of her cookies and her story book.

For about two hours she sat in the garden; then she grew tired, and a little sick from eating too many cookies, and was returning to the house, when her pet kitten ran out to meet her. For a short time she amused herself by playing with it, dressing it up like a baby; but

Miss Kitty wearied of this, and at last jumped out of her new dress and her mistress' arms, leaving a scratch as a keepsake behind her.

Altogether, the morning was hardly a successful one, nor was the afternoon much better. After dinner, one of Amy's little sisters tore her dress, and was running to Amy to ask her to mend it; but Mrs. Leslie said:—

“Don't go to your sister, my child, come to me;” and little Jessie, wondering, let her mother darn the rent. Amy felt very uncomfortable, for she knew that Mrs. Leslie's eyes were not strong, and were probably aching with the effort of such fine work; but she shrank from offering her services, and made her escape from the room as soon as she could.

In the evening she was about to draw her chair to the fire and read the newspaper to Mr. Leslie, a duty of which she had always felt rather proud; but her father gravely took the paper out of her hand, saying quickly, “No, Amy, this is a duty; remember you are to amuse yourself and do nothing else.”

Amy's eyes filled with tears, and she ran up stairs to her own room. She had no heart to read the story book, or to make clothes for her doll, or to play with the kitten, or even to eat the rest of her cookies.

“I shall never be able to bear another day of this,” she said to herself; “I thought it would be so delightful to have no duties, but somehow my play does not seem half so good as it did before.”

The next day brought no real pleasure and comfort. Listlessly Amy wandered about, having no zest for any of her former amusements, and feeling thoroughly un-

happy. She began to long for the very duties which had seemed so irksome to her; she could hardly keep from tears when she saw others busy over lessons, or her mother doing work which had formerly been hers.

At last her misery ended in a fit of crying, and shutting herself up in her own room, she gave way to it. Sob followed sob so quickly that she did not hear her door open, until her mother's arms were round her, and her hot, aching head was pillowed on her mother's shoulder. Not a word passed between them for a few minutes; then Amy sobbed out, “O mother! mother! the copy was quite right, ‘Duty first, and pleasure afterward;’ for without duty there is no pleasure at all.”

There was a godly man in the Bible who learned this lesson from his childhood. His name was Timothy. He was a missionary and worked with the Apostle Paul. He led a very useful and happy life. It is important that all children are taught this principle so that they may become useful members in society and in the church.

“From a child, Timothy knew the Scriptures; and this knowledge was a safeguard to him against the evil influences surrounding him and the temptation to choose pleasure and selfish gratification before duty. Such a safeguard all our children need, and it should be a part of the work of parents and of Christ's ambassadors to see that the children are properly instructed in the Word of God.” —*Child Guidance*, p. 508. No child is ever too young to read the Bible and if they begin at the very earliest ages, it will be a blessing for them for the rest of their lives. “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Proverbs 22:6

## *New Year's Resolutions from Believers in Canada*

**Pasita** – I will read the Bible more than before

**Abel** – I will do more missionary work

**Joaquin** – I will work for the unity of the church

**Rosario** – I will work more in the house of God

**Ricardo** – I will help others more

**Ricardito** – I will do more service to God

**Rafael** – I will change my attitude

**Isabel** – I will come to church earlier

**Nicholas** – I will try to save more souls

**Alina** – I will do more work for God

**Amalia** – I want to be always a missionary

**Ines** – I want to be baptized this year

**Esther** – I want to leave all bad habits and serve God

**Nelly** – I want to learn more memory verses

**Anjeli** – I will sing more songs to God.

**(See Picture on Inside of Back Cover)**

# American Union

## Children's Music Camp and Southeast Field Conference



**PASTOR IDEL SUAREZ**



**ABOVE: L TO R. SISTERS  
ELSA ARGUETA,  
WENDY EATON,  
RACHEL AUSTRIA**



From December 26—30, 2012, the Southeast Field of the American Union gathered together for a spiritual feast. A children's music conference was held for 2 days, followed by the Field Conference at a peaceful campground outside Bradenton, Florida.

At their music conference, the children played music together and attended workshops. Workshops were also provided for the adults. The social time was also a very important part of this conference for the children to make friendships with those of like faith and assist in avoiding the pitfalls of peer pressure from worldly friends.

Many people attended the public conference. The theme was, "For the Day of the Lord is Near." Joel 1:15

For the Divine Service on Sabbath, Brother Suarez explained how the Lord's coming must be very near due to the amount of violence and disasters on this earth. There are three watch-words in the Christian life that must be followed in order that Satan does not steal a march on God's people. They are, Watch (the signs of the times), Pray (to our lover, Jesus), and Work (to tell everyone that Jesus is coming soon).

Brother Hunger ended the Sabbath with an appeal from Jesus, "How can I give thee up?" Just as a mother loves her child, the Lord loves each one of us and, although we may have backslidden, He calls us back. He loves us with an everlasting love. May God help us to break the cords of sin that we can be nourished by our eternal Father. Amen.





**BAPTISM IN NIGERIA**

**NEW YEAR'S CELEBRATION IN CANADA**

On the evening of the last day of the year, 2012, we came together to close the year with thanks and praise to God, and to make plans for the New Year. If we follow our own plans we go astray, but if we follow the plans that God has made for us we all will be in heaven. Also, Satan has made plans for us in order to destroy our opportunity for salvation. Brother Timo Martin made an appeal to the members to follow God's plan. We will face terrible things in this New Year according to prophecy. The most fearful thing is our judgement, which may take place at any time. Even one unconfessed sin left in our lives will destroy our future.

Following this initial address we ate dinner together, which included delicious tamales. After dinner, Brother Nicholas Anca related experiences from his missionary work. Brother Able Conde followed by speaking about Jeremiah 10:23. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

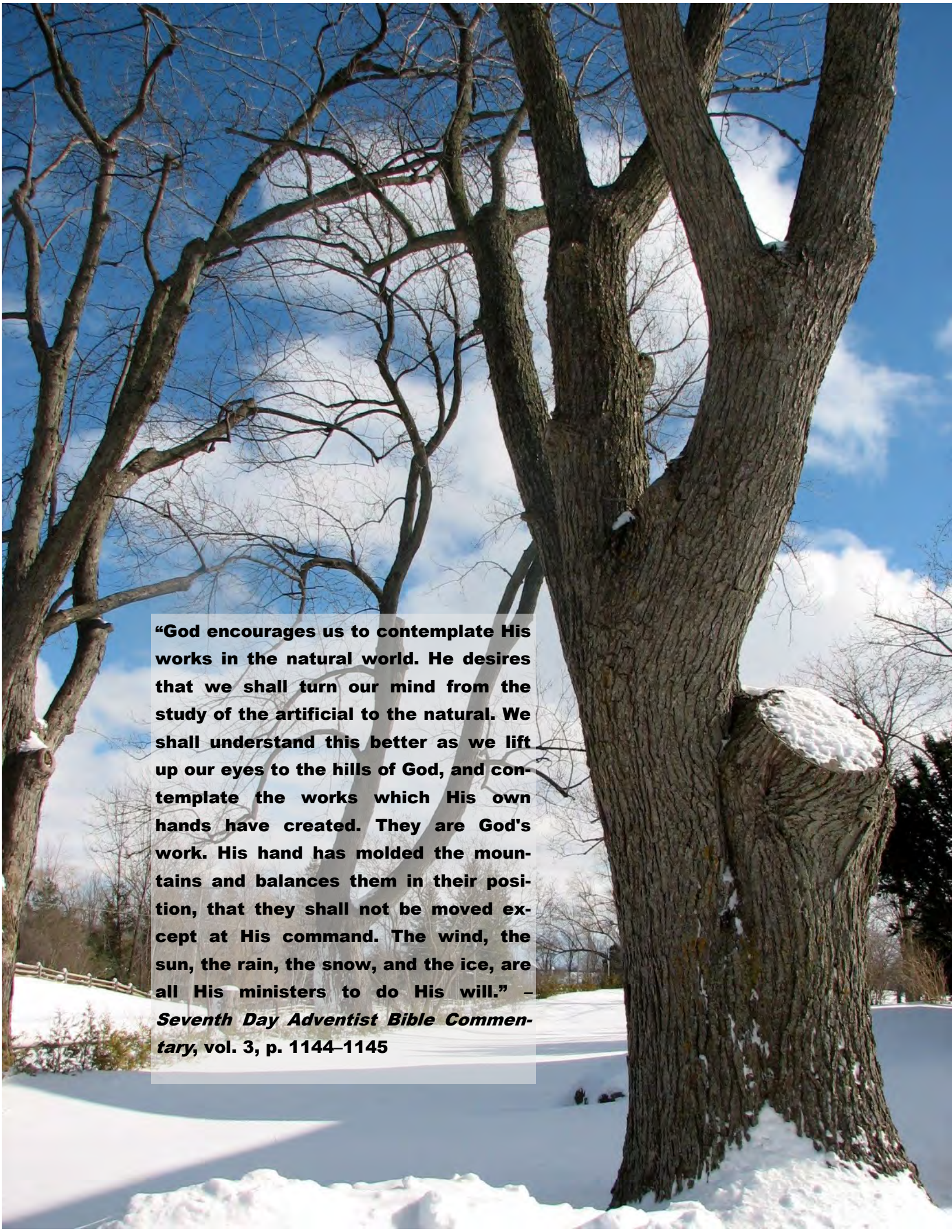
We need the guidance of God or we would go in the wrong direction.

Throughout the evening children and adults delighted us with their songs and music.

May the Lord bless this New Year for everyone. Amen.







**“God encourages us to contemplate His works in the natural world. He desires that we shall turn our mind from the study of the artificial to the natural. We shall understand this better as we lift up our eyes to the hills of God, and contemplate the works which His own hands have created. They are God's work. His hand has molded the mountains and balances them in their position, that they shall not be moved except at His command. The wind, the sun, the rain, the snow, and the ice, are all His ministers to do His will.” – *Seventh Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1144–1145**