

OCTOBER-DECEMBER 1998

# CQ

COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

# TOTALLY AWESOME





**Julie Z. Lee:** Senior English & psychology major and a writing intern for a public relations office

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OCTOBER - DECEMBER 1998

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Sabbath  
School

# TOTALLY AWESOME!



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## Welcome to *CQ*'s World!

The following pages represent the creative energy of a truly international group of Adventist young adults. The map above indicates the locations of the writers who have participated in *CQ*'s writing program for this quarter.

In producing this unique Sabbath School lesson quarterly, more than 300 individuals contribute to *CQ* each year. The wide variety—and occasional repetition—of the content reflects the great diversity of its contributors around the world as they respond individually to the subject under study.

Worldwide circulation of *CQ* is about 59,000. It is published in the English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and Finnish languages.

# Ever think about writing a Sabbath School Quarterly?

Why not! Each year 300 young adults from around the world participate in the *Collegiate Quarterly* writing program. CQ gives Seventh-day Adventist young people aged 18 to 35 a unique opportunity to grow spiritually, to share the benefits of their Bible study, to exchange ideas, and to contribute to the mission of the church.

You are the most important ingredient in our CQ formula because you can be the answer to our greatest need—the need for caring, committed, contributing authors. If you think you'd like to participate in the writing of a lesson—and get paid for it—write us today:

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**COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY**

## **This Quarter's Illustrator**



Linda Paulsen is a custom picture framer and freelance illustrator, graphic designer, and copywriter from DePere, Wisconsin. For seven years she was instructor of art and photography at Broadview Academy in LaFox, Illinois. She enjoys long walks in the woods, black-and-white photography, listening to music, and singing along loudly (when she's alone in the car).



# Getting the Most Out of *CQ*

## Facts You Should Know

*CQ* is based on the conviction that the Word of God offers transforming power and that group study is one important way to tap into that power. *CQ*'s purpose is to provide Seventh-day Adventist young adults with a resource for devotional study on mutual topics, which can then be discussed each week in Sabbath School. Many who use the adult quarterly find that because *CQ* deals with the same topics as the adult quarterly, it enriches lesson study and discussion as a supplemental aid.

Adventist young-adult groups work together in producing this quarterly. More than three hundred individuals contribute to *CQ* each year. The wide variety—and occasional repetition—of the content reflects the great diversity of its contributors around the world as they respond creatively and individually to the subject.

Circulation of *CQ* is about fifty-nine thousand.

## Pointers for Study

1. Through prayer, open your mind to the Holy Spirit's guidance as you study.
2. The Bible passage on which each week's lesson is based appears in bold type in the "Logos" (Monday's portion of the lesson). Read this entire passage in conjunction with the quarterly introduction to give you an overview of the lesson.

3. The Bible passage for the week is divided into sections on the "Logos" pages (Monday's portion of the lesson). When studying this section, carefully reread the Bible passages indicated in bold headings before reading the comments beneath the heading.

4. Read the remainder of the sections for the week with the perspective you have gained from your own study of the biblical passage.

5. Keep in mind the purposes of each section of the quarterly:

**"Introduction"** (Sunday) is designed to stimulate your interest and focus your thinking on the week's theme.

**"Logos"** (Monday), as described above, is a guide for direct study of the Bible passage for the week.

**"Testimony"** (Tuesday) presents Ellen White's perspective on the lesson theme.

**"Evidence"** (Wednesday) approaches issues raised by the lesson from a historical, scientific, philosophical, or theological perspective.

**"How-To"** (Thursday) discusses what the abstractions in the lesson mean for day-to-day living.

**"Opinion"** (Friday), a personal viewpoint on the lesson, is meant to encourage further thought and discussion.

## *CQ* and the Church

*CQ* is the General Conference-approved quarterly for the collegiate/young-adult age group. It upholds the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. *However, its contents should not be regarded as official pronouncements of the church.*

# THE LONG AND SHORT OF IT



**“Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other” (Isa. 45:22, NIV).**

# Reachable, yet Untouchable

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture:** Ps. 139:5, 7, 9, 10

From birth, I was taught that I could approach God anytime, anywhere. This was a comfort to me, although it wasn't until I began traveling that I truly discovered the reality of this God as described in Psalm 139: "You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. . . . Where can I go from your Spirit? . . . Your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast" (verses 5, 7, 10, NIV).

The promise of that protection kept my heart from thumping audibly during a border interrogation in East Berlin. It kept the scream in my throat instead of letting it escape when a sword swallower came after me in Beijing. It kept me firm in Cairo when a swarm of panhandlers accosted me. It kept me calm on a moonlit night by the Sea of Galilee. It kept me safe during a careening ride through Paris. And it brought me peace riding through Johannesburg amidst pre-election rioting.

The promise of that protection keeps me going still, although my everyday life as a school teacher seems boring and safe compared to the exotic excitement of

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## All this I find in the "farness" of God.

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my summertime escapades. Still, I revel in the knowledge that even at home the God of Psalm 139 is always with me. This God is easy to believe in, easy to trust, easy to be comfortable with.

Yet readers of the Old Testament know that there is a side of God that is not so reachable or comforting. This side of God becomes angry and destroys disobedience. This side of God requires that we fear Him and keep at a distance. At first glance, this side of God seems opposed to the more accessible view of God, but I am beginning to understand that we must become reconciled to it.

The "reachableness" of God is necessary for comfort, courage, and community. I need to *feel* the power of God in my life. I need to *feel* His warmth, *examine* His light, and *experience* His protection to survive the emotional elements of human nature. All this I find in the *nearness* of God. But the "untouchableness" of God is also necessary for revelation, respect, and reflection. I need to *know* the power of God in my life, but I need distance to give me perspective, space to give me cognizance, and room to give me thought. All this I find in the "farness" of God.

The paradox is that God must be both near and far if I am to feel Him and know Him in all His comfort and glory. The miracle is that He can be, and *is*. Paradox and synonym, different but the same.

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*By Rondi Aastrup, English/journalism teacher and recruiting coordinator at Greater Boston Academy, Stoneham, Massachusetts.*

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# Our God Is Awesome

## LOGOS

**1 Chron. 16:24, 25; Ps. 90:1, 2, 4; 139:7-10; Isa. 44:6-8; 14:26, 27; Jer. 10:10, 11**

Psalm 90:1, 2 exposes four facts about God that are plainly declared throughout the Scriptures: (1) our God is awesome; (2) our God is ancient; (3) our God is accessible; (4) our God alone is God.

### **1 Chronicles 16:24, 25**

What does the sight of a majestic mountain do for you? Does it fill you with wonder and awe? No other earthly spectacle evokes in me a greater sense of my own insignificance and brings a greater awareness that there is something much grander and more permanent than I could possibly be.

Yet God is greater, more wonderful, more majestic than any mountain. One has only to observe the “mountain of evidence” available to us to be able to declare, “For the Lord is great and greatly to be praised” (1 Chron. 16:25, NKJV). That mountain of evidence includes, of course, the wonders of nature and evidences of God’s creative power. How can one not proclaim that God is awesome after viewing a mountain vista or a spectacular sunset?

There is, however, even more than this awe-inspiring evidence from the physical world. There is the expression of love and redeeming power revealed at the Cross! By beholding Jesus Christ on the cross we are brought to understand the character of God and how much He has done for us. It is here that we stand in complete awe of our awesome God and, like the Bible writer, declare His wonders, greatness, and glory. In fact, this supreme act of love, which the Scriptures refer to as His deeds or His wonders, is the reason He is “to be feared [reverenced] above all gods” (verse 25).

### **Psalm 90:2**

Our God is also an ancient God. He transcends in time even these symbols of permanence. Is it possible to comprehend that our God has no beginning and no end? Can we fathom a Being who has always been and always will be? It is interesting that this text points back to a time before even the mountains or the earth existed, then states in the present tense, “You are God.”

The key to understanding this last phrase lies in verse 4, where we see that God does not relate to time as we do. To God a thousand years are as a day. This is difficult for any of us to relate to because it is much longer than any of us have ever experienced. God is referred to several times in the Scriptures as “the Ancient of Days.” This, however, does not mean that He lives in the ancient past. Our Ancient of Days is ever living in the present tense. We could say that He is “forever present.”

### **Psalm 137:7-10**

Our God is always available. The psalmist does not imply in verse 7 that he desired to flee from God’s spirit. He simply tells us that God is omnipresent. The psalmist is adding to the list of God’s wonderful attributes. In verses 1-6, the omniscience of God was portrayed. Here, in verses 7-12, the psalmist expounds on another of God’s awesome characteristics, His omnipresence. There is no sense



of shame or fear here. There is, rather, a sense of security and assurance. Our God is at hand. There may be times when you think you want to flee from God's presence, but when you come right down to it, isn't it wonderful to know that you cannot? What assurance there is in the fact that no matter what we have gotten ourselves into, no matter where we find ourselves, "even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me" (Ps. 139:10, NKJV). There is no place on this earth that God's presence cannot be felt. He is never very far away. Our God is an accessible God.

### **Isaiah 44:6-8**

The Scriptures put to rest the notion that God is simply one of many gods. He will not entertain any contenders. How can it be any clearer? "Besides me, there is no God" (verse 6, KJV). In verse 8 the point is reiterated: "Is there a God besides me? No, there is no other Rock; I know not one" (NIV).

I like the way Isaiah puts it: "You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth" (36:16, NKJV). I have always been bothered by the phrase "other gods." After all, there really are no "other gods." And that is exactly what He is trying to tell us here through the ancient prophet Isaiah. He presents a challenge: "Who then is like Me? Let him proclaim it" (Isa. 44:7, NIV). God has no equal because He is the Creator. God has no equal because He was around before anyone even claimed to be God, and He will be around when all the pretenders have perished. God sets Himself apart from any other gods. He sets Himself apart because He alone is the Almighty. There is no rival to His power.

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## **We see that God does not relate to time as we do.**

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He sets Himself apart in His glory. He sets Himself apart as Creator. And, most comforting of all, He sets Himself apart as Redeemer (verse 6). Only our God is a redeeming God who has atoned for our sins. Our God alone is God!

### **REACT**

1. What inspires in you a sense of awe toward God?
2. How does the concept of God as "Ancient of Days" fit with your need to have God be a present reality?
3. When have you most needed the assurance that God is always accessible?
4. Why is it important that we acknowledge that there is no other God?
5. How can we avoid letting our conception of God be tainted by things we don't understand or agree with?
6. How do our surroundings affect our concept of God (e.g., church vs. cathedral, Adventist schools vs. public schools, indoors vs. outdoors, etc.)?
7. Why is the so-called "Old Testament view" of God so often discomforting to Christians of the 1990s?

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*By Matthew L. Lombard, campus chaplain at Greater Boston Academy, Stoneham, Massachusetts.*

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# God: Small or Big?

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text:** Ps. 90:1, 2, 4

Is God big? Easy question. Can God and all His thoughts and actions be small also? God is both big and small.

How big is God? Ellen White says that skeptics cannot understand God's infinite power. Even the most intellectual cannot.<sup>1</sup> We can't fathom God's awesomeness, but it can be fun to try. Thanks to the Hubbell telescope, more of God's immense creation has been revealed. In one Hubbell photo session of the deep universe, a picture was taken focusing on a speck in space. In this one speck of space, scores of galaxies much like our own Milky Way were spotted.

To some, this may not be too astounding—until we try to comprehend the distance and size of these galaxies. Our Milky Way is about 100 million light years long. Put that distance into miles, and we get 588,000,000,000,000,000,000. In the photo where numerous galaxies are seen, the closest galaxy to our little earth is approximately 4 billion light years away. Doing the math once again, a distance of 23,520,000,000,000,000,000,000 miles is achieved.

Incredible by itself, but in addition to this, Ellen White mentions that beyond this is infinity. She goes on to say that even though God and His marvelous works

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## **The only way we can appreciate God's character is to embrace His acceptance of us.**

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have been revealed to some extent, there is much more to understand about God from what we haven't seen.<sup>2</sup> Yes, God is big.

How is God small? Ellen White explains that the only way we can appreciate God's character and know Him better is to embrace His acceptance of us. This was revealed in the plan of redemption.<sup>3</sup> Who was involved in this plan? The entire human race from the beginning to the end of time. That sounds pretty big. Yet the neat thing about this plan is that God delivered His Son to die just for you. Even if you were the only person on this earth, Christ would have died just for you. Considering the size of the universe, you are small.

Ellen White says that nothing is too small for God's attention.<sup>4</sup> Of course, neither God nor Ellen White consider us as small or insignificant people. Though physically small, we are important in God's eyes. That's why He allowed His Son's death. Praise the Lord. Thank You, God, for being both big and small.

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1. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 261.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 739.

4. *Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 260.

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*By Bryant Worth, Bible, health, and physical education teacher at Greater Boston Academy, Stoneham, Massachusetts.*

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# Regarding the Omnipresence of God

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Gen. 1:27**

The idea of God's omnipresence originates from the concept that He is a universal sovereign and is therefore everywhere. It follows that there is no place where God is prevented from entering and implies that it is impossible to be separated from Him: We are exposed before Him in action, thought, and word. Like Adam, we cannot hide from Him.

Many wonder whether God has a physical body. Genesis 1:27 implies that He does indeed have a body by the phrase "in the image of God." Genesis 3:8 indicates that He walked in the Garden of Eden. Moses saw the back of God as He passed by him on Mount Sinai (Exod. 33:23). God's hand and eyes are mentioned often.

Yet, if God does have a body, some reason, how could He be everywhere at one time? Would He not be limited and dependent upon some outside means of support and even existence? Surely God has no need for support from anything outside Himself. The Scripture insists that to be so, showing God actively involved in the world while being unlike—and surely superior to—anything created. Some consider the description of God's human characteristics as a literary device (anthropomorphism) and therefore not to be taken literally.

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## If God does have a body, how could He be everywhere at one time?

A. H. Strong suggests three essential qualities concerning God's omnipresence:

- "God's omnipresence is not potential, but essential."<sup>1</sup> Paul insists that we do not need to go up to heaven to call Him down or into the abyss to call Him up (Rom. 10:6, 7). Our very life depends upon Him.

- "God's omnipresence is not the presence of a part, but of the whole of God in every place."<sup>2</sup> God is present at the same moment in all. First Kings 8:27 claims that "the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee."

- "God's omnipresence is not necessary but free."<sup>3</sup> God is not compelled to remain in the universe. Rather, He occupies the universe according to His free will!

Psalm 139:7-10 tells us that even though God is eternal and obviously beyond the scope of our universe, He has a personal interest in, and intimate knowledge of, each of us. He has committed Himself to exceed all limits to safeguard our welfare. Perhaps this better explains being made "in His image." The symbolic image of God as our Father illustrates His wish for a relationship with us. He was willing to risk being misunderstood and rejected to develop that relationship.

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1. Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Westwood, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1907), p. 280.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 281.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 282.

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By Alfred Aastrup, a retired educator from Boston, Massachusetts.

# Know God, Know Life

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Isa. 44:6-8**

Why do we need to know God? Some would say for earthly contentment, others for purpose and direction, still others might opt for the hope factor. Perhaps most would suggest that a heavenly destination is contingent on knowing God, which results in contentment, purpose, direction, and hope. C. S. Lewis submits that human beings cannot find happiness in life without God because He created us to “run” on Him, and it is no use to try to operate on any other fuel.\*

How, then, do we know God? To formulate a concept of Him requires that we recognize our need for Him and that we have an open mind. Without a willingness to accept every facet of His character, we cannot fully understand Him. This means we must embrace not only the loving, gentle, merciful, nurturing God of the psalmist but also the overpowering, earth-shaking, bush-burning commandment-giving God of the Israelites.

We can get to know God in the following ways:

**1. Read and study about Him in Scripture.** The surest way to discover God’s character is to observe the behavior patterns He’s already established. Follow up by determining how that behavior relates to your life. Invoke the Holy Spirit’s presence for guidance.

## **We must embrace not only the loving, gentle, merciful, nurturing God of the psalmist.**

**2. Share and discuss with others your personal discoveries about God.** Going one on one with a spiritual mentor, meeting in small study groups, and participating in Sabbath School and church give encouragement and inspiration to delve deeper in your own studies and give added perspective to your growing knowledge of God.

**3. Engage in wordless (although not thoughtless) intake of God’s character.** This can be done by absorbing His presence in nature and relishing His inspiration in music and art.

**4. Commit yourself to continual communication with God.** Make a prayer list. Pray and study methodically and spontaneously. Pray publicly and privately, silently and audibly. Read others’ prayers. Keep a prayer journal.

**5. Be willing to adjust your preconceptions of God as you progress in your study.** Don’t confine Him to what you *want* Him to be. Accept and respect Him for what He *is*, the Supreme Ruler of the Universe.

God cannot be escaped. No matter where or when we turn to Him, He is wherever we are, waiting to reveal Himself.

\*C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan Pub. Co., Inc., 1977), pp. 51-54.

*By Rondi Aastrup, English/journalism teacher, and Kevin Worth, accounting/computer teacher, Greater Boston Academy, Stoneham, Massachusetts.*



# Feel the Awe

## OPINION

**Key Text: Ps. 89:7**

In our quest to know more of our Creator, we acknowledge that God and humankind cannot be compared. The psalmist tells us that He can't even be compared with the heavenly beings that surround Him (89:7). Those who are privileged enough to live with God in heaven are in awe of Him because of His greatness. Despite being close to God, they are fully aware that He is without equal. Without that physical closeness, where do we fit in that relationship? How do we relate to God when those already in heaven greatly fear Him? How great a gulf exists between God and His earthly dominion!

Yet we are also told that we were made in His image. To relate to God, we often speak of Him as if He were our next-door neighbor. After all, He walked through the Garden of Eden as though playing a game of hide-and-seek with His first children. He holds us in the palm of His hand. Such personifications help our finite minds understand Him and His inestimable love more fully.

Our desire, however, should also be to retain a childlike wonder, filled with mystery and awe. The unexplained nature of God increases the awe. God is awesome not only because the heavens and all His creation declare it but also for what we *don't* know about Him. This awe is certainly integral to our relationship with

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## **To relate to God, we often speak of Him as if He were our next-door neighbor.**

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God.

Without the mystery, the awe may suffer. The scientific search for a better understanding of the cosmic God is driven by the passion to learn more. A natural human characteristic is to avoid being kept in the dark. There is a need to know. Along with our changing knowledge of the universe, our concept of God may have been somewhat demystified. We feel smarter. We feel bigger.

In addition to diminishing the mystery, we may have also cheapened our understanding of the word *awesome*. In colloquial English it is used to refer to anything that is good (e.g., "Wow, that's an awesome car!"). The mere sight of a fantastic car may produce an immobilizing effect as we sit and stare with our mouths agape. But what about standing in the presence of God at our local church? Is it as though the family station wagon just passed by?

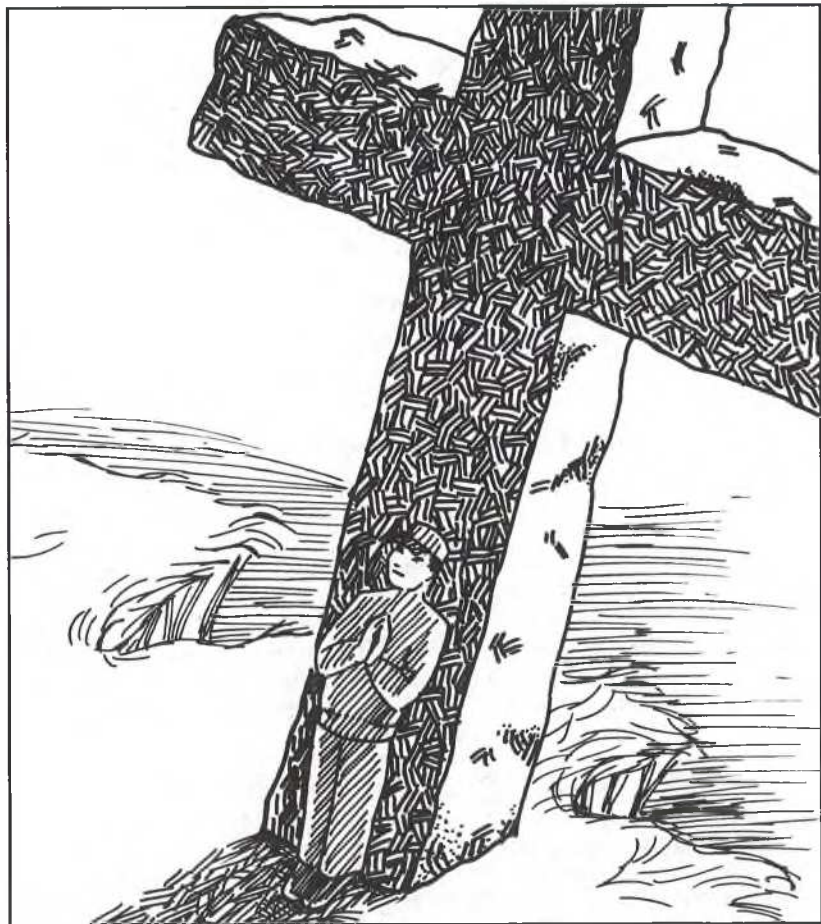
Beginning to see God from a new perspective requires assurance that God's love is like no other in its boundlessness. After taking that to heart, we can feel comfortable yet moved by dreadful awe over the God of Mount Sinai and the Most Holy Place, the God of Revelation and the heavenly Jerusalem.

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*By Kevin Worth, business manager and business education/computer teacher at Greater Boston Academy, Stoneham, Massachusetts.*

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# OUR COMMANDER IN CHIEF



**“He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust’ ” (Ps. 91:1, 2, NIV).**

# Serve the Strongest

## INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Ps. 91:1, 2

There is an old legend about a giant nicknamed Serve the Strongest. He was so named because one day he'd become frustrated with the world in which he lived and decided to serve the strongest man on earth. So he took up service of the governor of his city. There he stayed a long time serving, thinking that he was fulfilling his aim.

But things were not the same when he discovered that the governor received orders from the king. Disappointed, Serve the Strongest left the governor to go looking for the king. Soon, he arrived at the king's palace and was accepted into the service of the monarch. The days passed by, apparently the happiest of his life because he believed that he was serving the most powerful man.

After a time, however, Serve the Strongest experienced another disappointment. He discovered that the monarch was afraid when somebody mentioned the word *devil*. If the king was afraid of the devil, this would mean that the devil was more powerful than he. So leaving the royal palace, Serve the Strongest went to look for the devil in order to offer him his service. The days passed by, and the giant believed that he had finally found the being that had all the power on earth.

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## He discovered that the governor received orders from the king.

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He faced yet another terrible disappointment, however, when he discovered that the devil trembled when he heard the name *God*. This meant that God was even more powerful. "Then I must serve Him," Serve the Strongest declared. He left his old lord and surrendered to God. Truly God was the most powerful being he would ever find. He had dominion over all creation. He could change the hearts of people and fill their lives with unending happiness.

All human beings are conscious that we are in a world dominated by insecurity, injustice, crime, and violence. We feel helpless to solve our problems. We desire a change in all aspects of human activity. Our discouragement has no end. What to do?

We are like Serve the Strongest until we discover that God is the most powerful person over the earth (Ps. 91:1, 2). He is our Creator, and He is interested in us. He wants to give us security and happiness. He governs the whole universe justly. If we accept Him as a personal Saviour, He will give us eternal life.

This week we will enjoy learning of our powerful Lord. I invite you to learn to know Him better this week.

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*By Gonzalo Bravo, associate professor of New Testament, Universidad Peruana Union, Lima, Peru.*

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# Who?

## LOGOS

**Gen. 18:25; Ps. 147:5; Jer. 31:34; Rom. 11:33; Eph. 1:19-21; Col. 1:16, 17; Rev. 5:13**

The Scriptures show us the idea of God as Creator, Judge, and Benefactor. The book of Genesis emphasizes the idea of a personal and transcendent God who has been revealed through general and special revelation. So He is known through nature and Scripture as the two important sources to understand His sovereignty and design.

This personal and transcendent God was revealed to Moses as Creator and Sustainer of the world and the universe (Gen. 1:1, 2, 31, 32; 2:7). From these initial words, "In the beginning God," the Scriptures did not intend to prove His existence; rather they presuppose it. Thus, we do not have arguments of His existence, but a description of His acts in favor of humanity. Humanity can perceive God intuitively through created things. We can become conscious of His existence because "his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made" (Rom. 1:20, RSV).

The psalmist worshiped God for His wonderful work. "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches" (Ps. 104:24, KJV). As an expression of wonder over His work in the natural world,

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## **God's sovereignty does not mean manipulation of human decisions.**

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it is also presented with this exclamation: "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork" (19:1, RSV). All things deriving from Him through creation continue through preservation. "Whatever the Lord pleases he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps. He it is who makes the clouds rise at the end of the earth, who makes lightnings for the rain and brings forth the wind from his storehouses" (135:6, 7).

As Creator He is the supreme and unique cause of everything. "I am the Lord, who made all things, who stretched out the heavens alone, who spread out the earth—Who was with me?" (Isa. 44:24). He is the One who "formed all things" (Jer. 10:16). The prophet Isaiah asserts, "All these things my hand has made, and so all these things are mine, says the Lord" (66:2). Finally, God "spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood forth" (Ps. 33:9). He is our Creator.

God is also considered as Judge. Abraham asked the Lord, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25). In the higher sense, Yahweh as judge pronounces His acts of justice in history by humbling the oppressor and exalting the oppressed, as in the case of Egypt and Israel.

"For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our ruler, the Lord is our king; he will save us" (Isa. 33:22). He will judge not only collectively but also individually. "The Lord judges the peoples; judge me, O Lord" (Ps. 7:8). The Lord judges individuals, families, nations, His people, and the world. His essential elements to function as a Judge include: sovereignty, equitable decisions, and the ability to



perceive and interpret properly all the evidence (Ezek. 7:27; 24:14; 33:20; Ps. 9:4, 8; 67:4). Thus, the fundamental assumption is that God exists as both Lord and Judge.

As benefactor of humanity, He demonstrates affection toward His creatures. "The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made" (Ps. 145:9). A more magnificent expression of His benevolence is shown in the history of the preservation of His people; that is, the preservation of Israel as a nation. This was the claim of Joseph in an emotional manifestation of compassion to his brothers: "God sent me before you to preserve life" (Gen. 45:5).

The psalmist also emphasizes God's preserving work in nature. "These all look to thee, to give them their food in due season. When thou givest to them, they gather it up; when thou openest thy hand, they are filled with good things" (Ps. 104:27, 28). Emphasizing our personal needs, Jesus Christ declared, "Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" (Matt. 6:26).

This is our God who acts as Creator, Judge, and Benefactor, showing His sovereignty to the whole universe. He guides the events in the universe according to the "purpose of him who accomplishes all things" (Eph. 1:11). This is our God who acts in history and reveals truths to the prophets and apostles.

Finally, it is important to note that His will may or may not be revealed; it is a secret. "The secret things belong to the Lord our God; but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29). Therefore, when we approach the Scriptures we can find two important dimensions in His sovereignty.

In the first dimension, the Lord allows things to happen, allowing His rational creatures to follow their chosen course of action. For example, in the experience of Nebuchadnezzar's insanity, the Lord reminded the king through Daniel that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom He will (Dan. 4:17, 25, 32) because His "dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation" (verse 34). As the psalmist stated, "Our God is in the heavens; he does whatever he pleases" (Ps. 115:3).

Second, His truth has been revealed to us so we can obey His instructions to continue in the promises of His covenant (Dan. 10:12-15; Matt. 7:21; 12:50; John 4:34; Rom. 12:2). It is important to note that His sovereignty does not mean manipulation of human decisions, because in His love for us, God allows the free will and personal decisions of His creatures. This is a wonderful truth that Yahweh is a personal God who has created us and will still take care of us, acting to save us.

# Growing by Knowing

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: John 17:3**

“This is the way to have eternal life—by knowing you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth!” (John 17:3, TLB). Knowing God means growing in spiritual life, and spiritual growth gives access to eternal life. In the Bible, we find three ways that help us to grow spiritually and to know God better: (1) by having a relationship with Jesus, (2) by working for Jesus, and (3) by imitating Jesus in our life.

How should we cultivate a relationship with Jesus? “As the flower turns to the sun, that the bright beams may aid in perfecting its beauty and symmetry, so should we turn to the Sun of Righteousness, that heaven’s light may shine upon us, that our character may be developed into the likeness of Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

“Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, ‘Take me, O Lord, as wholly thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service. Abide with me, and let all my work be wrought in thee.’ . . . Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day.”<sup>2</sup>

How does our work for Jesus lead to spiritual growth? “The spirit of unselfish labor for others gives depth, stability, and Christlike loveliness to the character,

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## **“When Christ was the most fiercely beset by temptation, He ate nothing.”**

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and brings peace and happiness to its possessor.”<sup>3</sup>

“The only way to grow in grace is to be disinterestedly doing the very work which Christ has enjoined upon us—to engage, to the extent of our ability, in helping and blessing those who need the help we can give them. Strength comes by exercise; activity is the very condition of life. Those who endeavor to maintain Christian life by passively accepting the blessings that come through the means of grace, and doing nothing for Christ, are simply trying to live by eating without working.”<sup>4</sup>

“When Christ was the most fiercely beset by temptation, He ate nothing. He committed Himself to God and, through earnest prayer and perfect submission to the will of His Father, came off conqueror. Those who profess the truth for these last days, above every other class of professed Christians, should imitate the great Exemplar in prayer.”<sup>5</sup>

1. *Steps to Christ*, p. 68.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 80, 81.

5. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 202, 203.

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*By Victor Choroco, associate professor of religious education, Universidad Peruana Union, Lima, Peru.*

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# What's in a Name?

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Ps. 91:1, 2**

Why did the authors of the Old Testament include such a vast array of names for the one and only God? Just glancing at the key texts in Psalm 91:1, 2, I count four different names: “Most High,” “Almighty,” “LORD (or YAHWEH, the personal name of God),” and “God.”

Before our daughter was born a little while ago, my wife and I spent many enjoyable hours hunting for names. We would choose one and then my wife would say: “No, that does not sound nice in English/Spanish/German (which is the cultural mix of our home), let’s look for something else.” Finally we settled on a name that sounded good and had a nice meaning.

In Old Testament culture, a name was so much more than just a great sounding designation for an individual. It was a distinguishing mark describing a characteristic or an event associated with that person. Names told something about the person or a specific event in the life of a person. So Jacob becomes Israel (Gen. 32:28), and Simon becomes Peter (Matt. 16:17).

In Ps. 91:1, 2, what has been translated in English as “Most High” (*‘elyon*) is actually a superlative derived from the verb “to go up.” In Deuteronomy 32:8 the

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## Finally we settled on a name that sounded good and had a nice meaning.

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Most High is the one who divides the earth among the nations. He is sovereign. In Daniel 7 the people of God are called the people of the Most High when Daniel speaks about the final deliverance of His people (the same word, this time in the Aramaic section). “Most High” is a clear indication of God’s sovereignty.

We can find “Almighty” (*sadday*) for the first time in the Old Testament in Genesis 17:1. Here God appears as the “all-powerful.” It definitely has a poetic ring to it in the Hebrew language, since it appears predominately in poetic contexts. The following two designations are regular staple: “YHWH” is the covenant name of God—His personal signature, whereas “*elohim*” is the typical classification for a divine being—it can even refer to the imaginary gods of Canaan or other surrounding nations (John 1:5 and many more).

“Our Lord, Most High”—the same one, but with four names. The One who is in control, who is higher than the highest mountain of frustration, the personal God, the One who can and wants to be “my” God.

## REACT

1. Why do you think there are so many different names for God in the Bible?
  2. List your two favorite names for God and share with your class the reason for your choice.
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*By Gerald A. Klingbeil, associate professor of Old Testament and biblical languages, Universidad Peruana Union, Lima, Peru.*

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# God and Me

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Ps. 16:2**

Certainly God is our Lord Most High, wonderful, just, forgiving, infinite, benevolent, and sovereign. The psalmist expressed such in these words: "Thou art my Lord; I have no good apart from thee" (Ps. 16:2). But, how can we transmit this knowledge to those around us in such a way that they may become motivated to have the same experience as we? This is the reason that it is so relevant to be sincere sons and daughters of God. It can be shown in a variety of dimensions of life that He is wonderful and admirable. Thus, the Lord gives us the privilege that as humans we may manifest His virtues and express them in a variety of ways.

**1. In the home.** This is one of the most important places in which to demonstrate the Lord's wonderful deeds. It is widely recognized that parents are responsible for the transmission of values to their children and for an accurate depiction of the true character of God, not only through instruction but also through the modeling of belief and trust in God.

Sadly, such things as physical and mental abuse produce a distortion in the proper understanding of God. Thankfully, our Lord uses other means to produce recovery, good health, and new life. Besides the child abuse issue, however, other

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## The professional world has understood that the best professionals behave with values.

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problems can distort the idea of a wonderful God. TV programs, for example, bring about the worship of violence and diminishing of creative development. For this reason it is important that the life channels should be clean so that our children can perceive a clear picture of our Lord.

**2. In the church.** It is important that each family foster a genuine spirit of Christianity through such activities as worship, testimony, songs, and missionary tasks. This testimony is perceived not only through family fellowship but also through friendship with neighbors.

**3. In our place of work or study.** It seems that the professional world has understood that the best professionals are those who behave with a sense of values and principles. Unfortunately, not all share the same values in the workplace. Permanent spiritual growth should be characterized by those who are true followers of the Lord in their workplace.

What about a student? Can others see him or her as an example to imitate? Does he or she share an attitude of peace and a joy even though sometimes there are difficulties and problems in the academic environment?

We are humans redeemed by Christ. Although still imperfect, we need understanding, love, and respect. As our experience with the Lord grows, our lives will show a wonderful and majestic God.

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*By Alfonso Paredes, associate professor of biology at Universidad Peruana Union, Lima, Peru.*

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## Real-Life Situation

### OPINION

**Key Text: Rom. 8:28**

Two incidents completely changed the life of Eduardo Garcia, a respected, hard-working businessman in an oil company. He was accustomed to living a very comfortable life, with few needs. One day at his job he was fired because of personnel reduction. Later, his three-year-old son Daniel was playing in a pool without adult supervision, and he almost drowned. As a consequence, the child suffered cerebral damage.

This kind of story leads to the question: Why does God allow these things to happen? Simply, as human beings we observe only our present situation. On the other hand, the Lord can see the life of each person from the past, present, and future. Sometimes He acts in puzzling ways. We make our plans and suddenly something happens that mixes up our lives and frustrates us.

The acts of God lead us to think that although He respects the free will of humans and their personal decisions, at times He intervenes in our lives in concrete ways. This leads to disturbing questions: Is God a dictatorial being who wants nothing more than that our lives will be subject to His will? Is He a loving Father who is concerned about His children?

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### **Two incidents completely changed the life of Eduardo Garcia.**

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Let's look at the life of Jesus Christ. When His disciples were convinced that He would establish His kingdom on this earth, suddenly they were exposed to His suffering and death. Centuries later, a group of believers were convinced that Jesus would come on October 22, 1844. They found biblical evidence for their hope, but instead, they had to endure a sad mockery from their neighbors.

Knowing that the Lord acts in our lives should give us trust, assurance, and hope, especially when we are in a difficult situation. God knows our situation. He wants our salvation, and He knows our future. We can trust in Him because He loves us and wants the best for us. He would always change the failures into victories, frustration into happiness, and pain into comfort. His ways are incomprehensible.

Few people today meditate on the personal perfection of God. It is rare to see people stop and think of our God as the Most High, Protector, unique in His excellence. He is a God whose attributes may be as the essence of a personal God.

Thus, to know that our Lord at any moment can mediate to give a new orientation in our life—with or without difficulties—should lead us to the conviction that our lives would always be sure in His hands. His kindness, power, and love are nearby. He is out there—but also close to us.

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*By Danilo Cornejo, associate professor of practical theology at Universidad Peruana Union, Lima, Peru.*

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# THE POWER OF THREE



**“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! . . . ‘Who has been his counselor?’ ‘Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?’ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen” (Rom. 11:33-36, NIV).**

# Is Something Missing?

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: 2 Cor. 13:14**

Eric stared proudly at his new possession. It had the latest of everything: power windows, power steering, alarm system, air conditioning, leather trim throughout, ABS, spoiler, CD player with a huge sound system, and many other exclusive features. There was not a dent or scratch on the duco, and he could even see himself clearly in the paint work! It was hard to hide the proud look in his eyes. This marvelous machine was his.

Eric turned the key. The power of the V8 engine burst into action and throbbed rhythmically, which added to his feelings of pride and contentment. Seat belt on, he prepared for the rush of adrenalin he would experience as the car accelerated from the car dealership.

Eric leaned back in the seat to depress the clutch. *Nothing!* Bewildered, he began to feel around with his feet. Something was missing! He lifted the adjustable steering wheel column. He could not believe his eyes. Three essential parts of the car were missing! It was ludicrous, but true. The manufacturers had overlooked the need for a clutch, brake, and accelerator. The obvious emphasis for the car had been in the perfection of the body and accessories.

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## **Drive your spiritual vehicle with these three, and your journey will be forever meaningful!**

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Eric slumped in the seat and did the only reasonable thing he could think of. He hit the steering wheel and cried.

Many of us are like this car—polished and sophisticated on the outside but lacking on the inside. We've been Christians all our lives—or have we? Do we have the three important elements of a Christian life, or are we missing our spiritual brake, clutch, and accelerator? Are we empty, with polished exteriors, but nothing else? Do we have the *power* these three elements can bring into our lives?

We are all spiritual vehicles with different exteriors but all needing the three pedals to operate. We need a brake to stop us from sinning—the Holy Spirit. We need a clutch to change our old behavior patterns and move into a new gear with a new focus—Jesus Christ. We need an accelerator to move us ahead—the love of the Father. Drive your spiritual vehicle with these three, and your journey will be forever meaningful!

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*By Sue Cox, a primary school teacher in Chidlow, Western Australia.*

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# Was It Meant to Be That Way?

## LOGOS

**Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; 6:9; John 1:14, 18; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Tim. 3:16**

**Key Thought:** One of the mysteries of God's being and nature is that the Godhead consists of three divine Beings, unified in purpose and action but distinct in personality.

Take a moment to list your deepest longings or desires. Now look at them. What common bottom line do you find? Chances are, you will find that many, if not most, of your desires have to do with being in a relationship with someone: with God, with a spouse or special someone, with a parent, with a child, with friends, and so on.

Why is it that we as humans crave genuine relationship so much? What is it about being in the company of others—being part of a community of others—that is so important to us? Why is it that the greatest questions we ask and the greatest answers we seek in our lives revolve around the longing for belonging, for identity, and for sharing intimately within a safe and secure relationship? Could it be that finding genuine, authentic relational community is one of the most basic needs we have as humans?

Now that we've got to the bottom line, how about we ask the \$64,000-question: Why? Why were we designed to crave community?

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## Why were we designed to crave community?

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Let's return for a moment to Creation week. It's the sixth day—the day that God is going to unveil His ultimate act of Creation—man and woman. Genesis 1:27 is very specific about the way in which man and woman were created—"in His image" (NIV). It was impossible for the Creator to create a human as another God. The Creator simply cannot create the Creator! So God created the next best thing—man in the image of the Creator. So where do we get this longing for community? Given that it is a very significant part of our being and that our being is in the image of God, it follows that craving for community must also be a very significant part of God Himself.

Think about it for a moment—our Awesome God also craves community. Why? Could it be because God lives in community? Could it be that the Godhead *is* the perfect expression of community? Jesus' prayer recorded in John 17 certainly seems to emphasize God as community—a community characterized by oneness.

Let's pursue this line of thought. If the essence of God is community, what is the nature of that community?

Under divine inspiration, Moses declared, "The Lord our God is one Lord" (Deut. 6:4). Jesus echoes this fact in His prayer recorded, "So that they may be one, *as we are one*" (John 17:11). The nature of God as community is perfect oneness. This has often been referred to as the "Mystery of the Trinity." Yet, is it really as much of a mystery as it has seemed, or have we perhaps missed a key that God has given us for understanding Him, albeit in a very limited manner?

Many can relate to the concept of community—be they Christian or non-

Christian. Many books have been written on community, and, in fact, a branch of the social sciences is devoted to the study of community. If you were to ask people to describe their dream of the ideal or perfect community, they would probably say something about everyone living together in harmony. What would this involve? Everyone being the same as everyone else? Not likely! Rather, such community would be characterized by each member as a unique individual, using his or her unique talents and abilities in a way that advances the mutual purposes and goals of that community. In this way we as humans don't have much difficulty understanding the concept of a diversity of people drawn together by unity of purpose.

The Godhead, as a community, is in a large way similar to this concept and at the same time is in a large way different. God is three individual Beings, Each unique in personality, Each unique in terms of speciality (see 2 Cor. 13:14), yet Each unified in purpose. God is indeed a God of oneness. There is no hierarchy of distinction or importance. There is no disharmony or friction. There is no barrier to perfect and harmonious functioning. In essence, there is perfect community—the something that we ache deep inside to experience.

God as perfect community: Is it really such a mystery?

## **REACT**

1. In light of 2 Corinthians 13:14, how do the various roles of the Godhead complement community? In what way or ways do they do this?

2. Which Person or Persons of the Godhead is concerned with development of community between God and humanity? In what ways is this achieved?

3. How does the community setting in which we live affect our understanding of God as community?

4. On a scale from 1 to 10, how well am I experiencing community with God, with His church, and with the unchurched people around me?

5. Beginning today, what practical steps can I take to develop better community in these areas of my life?

6. What can I do to help my church better develop community with the unchurched?

7. Can the Godhead complete the work on earth without people like you and me? Why? Why not?

8. What is it that we need to do?

9. New Age believers, like the Egyptians, see God in everything. What does Romans 1:19-25 say about this?

10. Can the members of the Godhead ever be completely separated? See Mark 15:34 and Luke 23:46.

11. If God is a community, do we relate to Him as a whole or to each individual member?

12. Is there a difference in the type of communities God expects us to develop now and in a heavenly community?

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*By Phil van der Klift, associate pastor of the Riverside Community Seventh-day Adventist Church, Western Australia.*

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# A Three-Strand Rope

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Eccles. 4:12**

A rope with three strands is very strong. Each strand is individual, but the three are interwoven as one and serve a common purpose. Picking the same strand at opposite ends of a rope is almost impossible. Likewise, I see the Godhead as three individuals interwoven as one, serving a common purpose.

“The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are seeking and longing for channels through which to communicate to the world the divine principles of truth.”<sup>1</sup>

“‘Abide in Me, and I in you.’ Abiding in Christ means a constant receiving of His Spirit, a life of unreserved surrender to His service. The channel of communication must be open continually between man and his God. As the vine branch constantly draws the sap from the living vine, so are we to cling to Jesus, and receive from Him by faith the strength and perfection of His own character.”<sup>2</sup>

The Father is the gardener, Jesus is the Vine, the Holy Spirit is the producer of the fruit, and we are the branches.

“Christ, in His mediatorial capacity, gives to His servants the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is the efficiency of the Spirit that enables human agencies to be representatives of the Redeemer in the work of soul saving. That we may unite

## **Picking the same strand at opposite ends of a rope is almost impossible.**

with Christ in this work we should place ourselves under the molding influence of His Spirit. Through the power thus imparted we may co-operate with the Lord in the bonds of unity as laborers together with Him in the salvation of souls. To everyone who offers himself to the Lord for service, withholding *nothing*, is given power for the attainment of measureless results.”<sup>3</sup>

“There are many who believe and profess to claim the Lord’s promise; they talk *about* Christ and *about* the Holy Spirit, yet receive no benefit. They do not surrender the soul to be guided and controlled by the divine agencies. We cannot use the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is to use us.”<sup>4</sup>

To me the mystery of the Godhead will in some ways remain a mystery, but I plan not to let that stop me in playing my part in being an open channel for Them to use. What about you? Will you reach out with me and take hold of the “Rope” from which we can be used, guided, and controlled?

1. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 194.

2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 676.

3. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 30.

4. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 672.



# Gods or God?

## EVIDENCE

### Key Text: John 17:11

Ancient Egyptians worshiped more than two thousand deities. Everything—humans, birds, animals, reptiles, fishes, insects, flowers—all were manifestations of a divine essence that flowed in everything. The Greeks worshiped a family of gods said to live on Mount Olympus in northern Greece. Greek gods seem to be thought of as human, except for their immortality and great strength. Roman religion absorbed and adapted many pagan cults from the whole empire.

The prophet Mohammed began preaching at Mecca in A.D. 613. He spoke of the exclusive monotheism of Allah, now elevated to the rank of sole, universal, and absolute God, the beginning of Islam. The Jewish religion is a type of monotheism also. “The Lord our God is one Lord” (Deut. 6:4). Jesus Christ, and His revelation of the Holy Spirit, brought Christianity and the clearer understanding of God as the Trinity—a community.

Looking at some definitions can help us understand God’s community. Unity: an undivided whole, made up of two or more parts.<sup>1</sup> Community: common character, agreement identity; social intercourse; communion.<sup>2</sup>

“Whereas human personality stands outside and excludes every personality

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## Ancient Egyptians worshiped more than 2,000 deities.

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except its own, the Divine Persons of the Trinity mutually pervade, interpenetrate, include and contain one another.”<sup>3</sup>

“An ideally perfect life is a social life. A life lived in the exercise of friendship, social intercourse, and benevolence is a far higher life than that of a recluse, who seeks to attain perfection in solitude. If, therefore, the life of the Godhead is as perfect as can be conceived, it must be a social life.

“Just as a man cannot satisfy or realize his powers of love by loving the lower animals, so God cannot satisfy or realize His love by loving man or any creature. If God is truly Love in the full sense of that term, He must have always possessed some equal object of His love.”<sup>4</sup>

The God we love and serve is a community. He also desires community with man, and man is community with one another. “Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are one” (John 17:11, RSV).

1. *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 2421.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 379.

3. J. R. Dummelow, editor, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible* (Macmillan and Co., 1909), p. cxiii.

4. *Ibid.*, p. cxiv.

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By Sandi Maxwell, a physiotherapist from Kalamunda, Western Australia.

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# Three-Phase Power

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: John 17**

John 1:1 talks about a mind-blowing concept. Think about it—God wanted such a personal involvement with the people He created that He became the Word—a living representation of His love and acceptance for us. And as if that's not enough, God also calls and empowers us to be part of the Incarnation mystery and join in the family of God. John 17 talks about us being one just as the Trinity is one. So, how do we really do that?

Let's look at you and your associates. List the names of some people you know in each category. Do you currently experience community with each of these people?

| Unchurched Friends | Acquaintances | College/Work Associates | Fellow Church Members | Others |
|--------------------|---------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------|
|--------------------|---------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------|

Although there is much about the Trinity that we cannot completely understand, we can look at each member of the Godhead and how They relate to us. God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit personify community. The Trinity work together to develop a relationship with us, giving us access to the divine resources that we can use to develop community with each other. This not only provides our role model but also empowers us to develop community. Community is made up of three links. The first is between the Trinity members, the second between God and us, and the third between us and those around us.

Look back at your list of people. What will it take to create community with each group? List your ideas and your expected results. Compare the results for each category. How are they the same/different?

Developing community is a process. God chose to be intimately and actively involved with the people of this world. God expects us to do the same. Sometimes we wonder how far He expects us to go. Finding the balance between being "in the world" yet not "of the world" can be determined by looking at the life of Christ. Part of the mystery of the Trinity is the mystery of godliness. Jesus remained perfect while associating with a sinful world.

Take time to look at how Jesus developed community. Write down: His audience, His method, His result. Compare these to the groups of people in your list. Are there similarities in the people and situations? Ask God to guide you as you begin to develop community with your associates.

*By Julie van der Klift, an administration officer from Stratton, Western Australia.*

## *X-Files*

### OPINION

**Key Text:** Acts 2:17, 18, 38, 43

With all the mystery and intrigue surrounding the Trinity, and, in particular, the secretive Holy Spirit, one could almost be excused for thinking that this is the plot of another episode of the popular *X-Files*. I can just see FBI agents Scully and Mulder seeking proof for the causes of the mysterious happenings being attributed to an elusive “Holy Ghost.”

There are many questions to be answered concerning the nature of the Holy Spirit. When I was growing up, I often heard the name “Holy Ghost.” The term *ghost* conjured up various images. Is this how we should be conceptualizing the Holy Spirit, using our earthly, simple ideas to imagine the nature of the Holy Spirit? The nature of the Holy Spirit is limited to human levels of imagery.

No one has ever seen the Holy Spirit. This seems to be like the concept of electricity. It is something you can't see, but the effects are powerful. Even when people hear the word *electricity*, they imagine a multitude of images. To some it means light, to others heating or cooling, to some maybe danger. Similarly with the Holy Spirit, to an old person living alone, the Spirit might be a strong protector and comforter; to a young musician the Spirit may be an inspirational feeling.

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## **Maybe we should close the file and stop this investigation here and now!**

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The next line of questioning to follow concerns the relationship of the Holy Spirit with the other two members of the Trinity. Although it is easy to understand the Father-Son relationship of God and Jesus, it is far more difficult to fathom the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the other two. Should the Holy Spirit be viewed as part of the family structure or a totally independent body set up like a hired caretaker? Jesus did say that He was sending a Comforter. That Comforter may have been sent to take on the role of nurturing mother.

Though I consider intelligent questioning to be healthy and progressive, some say that we should not be asking questions about the Holy Spirit. Ellen White actually says that we should not be discussing the nature of the Holy Spirit and that “silence is golden.”\* This provides further mystery and intrigue. Is it a conspiracy? Why shouldn't we question, and who can tell us that we can't? Should we close the file and stop this investigation here and now?

### **REACT**

1. Should we try to understand the role/nature of the Holy Spirit if we know it will remain a mystery? Explain your answer.
2. How is the mystery any more a mystery than that of God?

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\* E. G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 52.

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*By David Krieg, a primary school teacher from Perth, Western Australia.*

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# HE'S ONE OF US!



**“Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (Matt. 1:23).**

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# Blood Transfusion

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: 1 Pet. 2:24, 25**

During my personal devotions one day, I came across this story. It seems that there was a young boy who lived in the 1950s who had contracted a deadly kidney disease. His parents had taken him to many doctors, but everything had failed. The situation seemed hopeless; there was nothing left to try.

Then, one doctor came up with a way that might purify the boy's system. The idea was to find someone with the same blood type as the boy and hook them up in such a way that the boy's blood could be run through the healthy person and vice versa. The healthy person's system could cleanse the boy's diseased blood. It was a very big risk, but the parents decided to take it. Furthermore, the father had the same blood type as the boy and volunteered for the procedure. The operation was hailed a big success, and the boy and his father were released from the hospital seven days later. Two days after, however, the father's temperature skyrocketed, and he died. The boy lived, but it cost his father's life.\*

That is exactly what Jesus did for us. He took our sin-tainted blood and exchanged it for His life-giving blood. We cost Him His life. But, just like the father in the story, it was His choice. He knew the risks. He volunteered before we were born, before this world was formed. The Godhead formed the plan of salvation. Because of His death we have been given eternal life.

“In his own person he carried our sins to the gallows, so that we might cease to live for sin and begin to live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed” (1 Pet. 2:24, 25, NEB).

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\*Kim Boyce, *In Process* (Elgin, Ill.: Chariot Family Pub., 1994).



# Emmanuel—God With Us

## LOGOS

**John 1:1-3, 10, 11; 3:16, 17; Phil. 2:9-11; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 2:14, 15; Rev. 5:9**

The theological debate goes on . . . and on . . . and on . . .

1. Human nature . . . divine nature. Which did Jesus really have? Did He overcome with a human nature like ours, or was it a divine nature and therefore He overcame like Adam could have, but not like us? Which was it? How will we know for sure?

2. Christ, the only begotten of the Father, as a Jehovah's Witness sees it with Jesus being born and therefore having a beginning or as a Seventh-day Adventist sees it with Jesus being eternally everlasting, no beginning or end, just changing forms at the Incarnation. Where will it all end? When will we know for sure?

Have you ever been confronted with these issues? Or confused by these issues? Or conjectured about the implications of these issues? Or perhaps confirmed a personal concrete conviction on the matter and condescendingly condemned others holding a contradictory or conflicting opinion? Must you conquer opposing views, convincingly converting the one with a contrite heart in order to maintain a clear conscience? Or are you just content to live, not concerned at all about concealing your conceptual confusion on your concise conclusions? Is this your

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## **I do not know exactly what Jesus was before He became a fetus in the uterus of Mary.**

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condition? Then let me console you! Trust me, I'm not a "con" artist!

Because I believe that the above-mentioned debates will go on until the Lord comes (and then some may still not be convinced!), it is my conviction (sorry for the one more "con") that we must concentrate (oh no, I did it again) on what we DO know until we have established such an abiding faith in the God who was with us that we cannot be shaken by debate or distracted by controversy (OK, that's the last one!).

I do not know exactly what Jesus was before He became a fetus in the uterus of Mary. I am sure He was God and that He was eternal. How the Incarnation took place I cannot explain in detail. I do, however, believe that the child was God. I don't know what combination of man was mixed with God, but I do believe that the boy was God. From the beginning it was confirmed, "They shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt. 1:23).

John also confirms this fact in chapter 1 with the combination of "Flesh" descriptions linking him as God and becoming man (verses 1-3, 14). And Paul accurately defines it in his first letter to Timothy as a "mystery" in describing Jesus' godliness (verse 16). We are not dealing with something that is easily understood or that we can conclusively define in a dogmatic way that will forever stand the test of time. We are talking about God, who is so far above us conceptually and in reality that we border on presumption when we think that we can understand all that is involved in "the mystery of the Godhead."

Our safest conclusions must, I believe, be based solidly on what the Bible says. Beyond that we tread on dangerous turf. The blessing with this approach is that what the Bible says keeps us focused on the most important reason for Jesus to “save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). Let’s consider the facts, for example, as outlined in Philippians 2:5-11:

1. He was in the form or nature of God (verse 6).
2. He must have been equal with God because He did not consider it something necessary to hold on to. He couldn’t have held on to it if He didn’t possess it (verse 6).
3. He took on the nature or form (same Greek word as in verse 6) of a servant (verse 7).
4. He returned to a state of “godness” sufficient to warrant our bowing before Him and acknowledging Him as “Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (verse 11).

From God to man to God. With enough prior godness to warrant His being more than man on earth, and human enough afterward to warrant His being more than God, if that’s possible, when He returned to the throne in heaven. How can this be? I don’t know.

Two names were assigned to this human part of God by the Holy Spirit Himself and by the Lord through the prophet Isaiah (7:14) as reported by Matthew (1:22, 23). Both were given for a specific purpose and with the goal of explaining the unexplainable:

1. “Jesus” (Matt. 1:22), the same name as Joshua in the Old Testament, a very common name in that part of the world in those days, similar to John or Jim today. Perhaps the attempt was to link Him closely with humanity.
2. “Immanuel,” “God with us” (Matt. 1:23). After all He could have said about this man, we were just reminded that He was in fact God and He was with us, linking Him closely with deity.

How He combined all this and made Jesus both God and man, I don’t know. All I know for sure is that He was God enough to provide me with forgiveness, salvation, eternal life, peace on this earth, a reason to live in this sinful world, hope of heaven, and victory over the devil. That’s enough for me—conclusively and convincingly!

## **REACT**

1. What are other reasons that a relationship with Immanuel brings peace and joy?
2. In what ways have I revealed Immanuel’s joy in my life? Why might I have not experienced this joy more in the past?
3. Why does it make a difference whether we see God as loving and ready to save us or vengeful and eager to destroy us?

# Immanuel—Purpose and Relationship

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Matt. 1:23**

“Christ has made every provision that His church shall be . . . illumined with the Light of the world, possessing the glory of Immanuel. It is His purpose that every Christian shall be surrounded with a spiritual atmosphere of light and peace. He desires that we shall reveal His own joy in our lives.”<sup>1</sup>

The shelf space devoted to self-help and psychology books in any given bookstore reveals the magnitude of the human search for greater happiness and inner peace. This is Christ’s goal for us as well. But whereas myriads offer as many panaceas, God reveals in His simplicity that it is Immanuel who provides soul peace.

Mrs. White’s use of the name *Immanuel* for Christ is significant in this context. Mere theological hypotheses, a deistic/distant view of God, or a reliance on someone else’s religion cannot bring the joy and peace that Immanuel has made provision for. The experience of Immanuel, of God with me personally, is the only way to be surrounded by spiritual peace. A relationship with Immanuel gives us a purpose. “To Him nothing was without purpose. The sports of the child, the toils of the man, life’s pleasures and cares and pains, all were means to the end—the

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## **The shelf space devoted to self-help in any bookstore reveals the magnitude of the human search for happiness.**

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revelation of God for the uplifting of humanity.”<sup>2</sup> Jesus lived with purpose—to improve the human experience through the revelation of God. Purpose produces spiritual peace. We will experience peace in our lives to the extent that we live with this same purpose.

A second reason that a relationship with Immanuel brings peace is the mere fact of His companionship. “In all the facts and experiences of life were revealed a divine lesson and the possibility of divine companionship. . . . Heaven came down to men. . . . ‘Immanuel, God with us.’”<sup>3</sup>

We were created for relationships, and we find our greatest joy when we are experiencing them with both Immanuel and our earthly friends. Recently I was staying at some friends’ house while they were gone. I realized how meaningless the furniture and view were without the friends to share them with. Life is more enjoyable when friends are around. Similarly, learning to live with the realization that God is always personally present makes life more satisfying.

1. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 720.

2. *Education*, p. 82.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

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*By Jeff Boyd, a senior psychology/religion major at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.*

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# Disappointment With God?

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: John 1:1-3**

When I was a young man struggling to understand what it meant to be a Christian, I would wonder why God didn't reveal Himself to me in some blinding flash or miraculous rescue from the jaws of death. I felt that if God would convince me that He truly is a God who is there, then I would be a totally committed Christian.

When God started leading His people toward the Promised Land, He began doing for them what I had always hoped for: He gave them the visible reality of His invisible presence. He fixed breakfast for them every morning, cooled them by day and gave them radiant heat by night. The question is: Did it help develop a loving relationship with Israel? In fact, it seemed to have the opposite effect. Instead of learning to love God, they grew impatient, bored, or just plain rebellious with the God who was there. In a word: disappointed.

Then God sent His Son. If God showed up in person, surely this would convince the most doubting and skeptical person. But instead of grasping the reality that Jesus was God, they longed for the old days. They wanted the God of the smoking mountain and thunder. They wanted a God who would feed them breakfast and give them everything else their worldly little hearts might desire. The Jews were decidedly disappointed with Jesus. He hailed from the jerkwater town of Naza-

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## He fixed breakfast for them every morning.

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areth. He seemed so common, made wild statements about Himself, arbitrarily healed some and not others, talked about a kingdom but seemed to do virtually nothing to set one up. His first coming produced disappointment for most people.

At Pentecost God will send His Spirit to live within the heart of humanity. The Cross of Christ purchased our salvation, but for most it brought disappointment. The Spirit of Christ now comes to commence the New Testament church. Through the power of the Spirit, God will produce in our hearts the salvation that was purchased at the Cross. The question remains for us: Will this gift, too, produce disappointment?

I still deal with disappointment in my Christian experience, but it has little to do with God. Most of my disappointment is with myself. I am beginning to see that the problem with the world isn't God or other people. The problem with the world is me. If I am disappointed with my relationship to God, then I am like the Israelite who failed to go out in the morning to gather manna for the day. You can't blame God for that. Sin is what brings disappointment. Jesus brings joy.

## REACT

1. In what ways are you disappointed with God?
2. In what ways are we like the Jewish nation as we wait for the Second Coming?

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*By Stan Hardt, associate chaplain of Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.*

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# The God of Your Religion

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: John 3:16, 17**

“So, you’re an Adventist?” my co-worker asked.

“Yes . . . I am.” I wasn’t sure where he was going with his question.

“You’re the ones who don’t believe in God, right?”

You can imagine my surprise at that comment. I began to explain Adventist beliefs. My co-worker was Catholic and wondered why I didn’t work on Saturdays.

I used to dread religious questions. It meant I had to explain Sabbath—sundown to sundown. No, Adventists don’t work on Sabbath; yes, some doctors and nurses do, but their circumstances are different; no, not all Adventists are vegetarians. . . . By the time I finished, I felt I’d portrayed Adventists as a group of religious freaks. Someone once asked me, “So where does God fit into your religion?” They’d heard the Adventist rules but nothing about who we served.

I don’t feel restricted by my religion. I don’t feel I’m not allowed to do something because of my religion. Maybe I view my religion differently from other Adventists.

Our key text for today is well known, probably one of the first verses we learned. But what does it really mean? We know that Jesus died for our sins because of His incredible love for us. But what part do we miss? Salvation. Because

## “You’re the ones who don’t believe in God, right?”

of the Cross we are saved. Not because we’re Adventists. Not because we don’t eat pork. Not because we avoid dancing—if we do. If we believe that God, in His wondrous love, gave His Son as payment for our sins, we are saved. This mentions none of the issues that we as Adventists become so concerned over. Why? Aren’t they important?

We must remember three things that will keep us focused on Christ rather than on the “rules” of religion.

**1. Jesus is our Saviour.** We are not saved by our deeds or our system of beliefs. Hebrews 2:14, 15 reminds us of this. Only Christ can free us from sin and death.

**2. Everyone can be part of God’s family.** Our Adventist connection does not save us. Revelation 5:9 reminds us that many different people will be saved. We mustn’t place our denomination above our walk with Christ.

**3. Christ’s role is deliverer, not scorekeeper.** John 3:17 states this plainly. Jesus doesn’t tally up our rights and wrongs.

Please don’t misunderstand me. Our church organization is extremely valuable. It helps foster our friendship with God and fellow believers. We should encourage our non-Adventist friends to visit our church. We need to be cautious, however, not to overlook the basic truths of John 3:16, 17.

*By Tonja Rizis, a religion and English education major at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.*



# The Day God Cried

## OPINION

**Key Text: John 3:17**

“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” (John 3:17, NIV).

The sea of glass billowed outward in all directions, flowing like liquid from the throne of God. Thousands of shattered rays of light shot in all directions, creating an umbrella of rainbows over the heavens. Continual songs of praise echoed off the sea from the countless companies of angels streaming in and out of the throne room. The entire atmosphere breathed love and joy. Yet the Being sitting on the throne was crying. Earth had fallen.

God’s love and justice were about to be tested. Would He allow part of Himself, His Son, to be changed permanently in order to save the human race? Every fiber of God’s being cried out to save those lost on the earth, yet it would require a tremendous sacrifice. While redemption would save those on earth, it would injure God. The decision was enormous. “It was a struggle, even with the King of the universe, to yield up His Son to die for the guilty race.”<sup>1</sup>

As I contemplated this fact, it occurred to me that God’s reluctance to send His Son to die made the value of that gift even greater. Even though God had perfect

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### **God’s love and justice were about to be tested.**

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love for His Son, His love for us was equally strong. You can also be sure that Christ was not thrilled to leave His Father. However, He, too, was willing to “reach to the depths of misery to rescue the ruined race.”<sup>2</sup>

If we could just realize this fact, I believe it would radically alter the way we understand God. Jesus pled with the Father not to convince Him to love us but to allow Their relationship to be temporarily altered in our behalf. Likewise, today Jesus stands between sinners and sin’s penalty, not between sinners and a blood-thirsty God. Had God wanted an excuse to destroy us, He would never have sent His Son in the first place.

Yes, I believe God cried the day He sent His Son to rescue us. But all those tears were not just for Jesus. He was also crying for us. He was crying that through His gift we would realize who He really is. He was crying that we would see how much He loves us. “[Christ’s] death answered the question whether the Father and the Son had sufficient love for man to exercise self-denial and a spirit of sacrifice.”<sup>3</sup> Thank God—today—that They did!

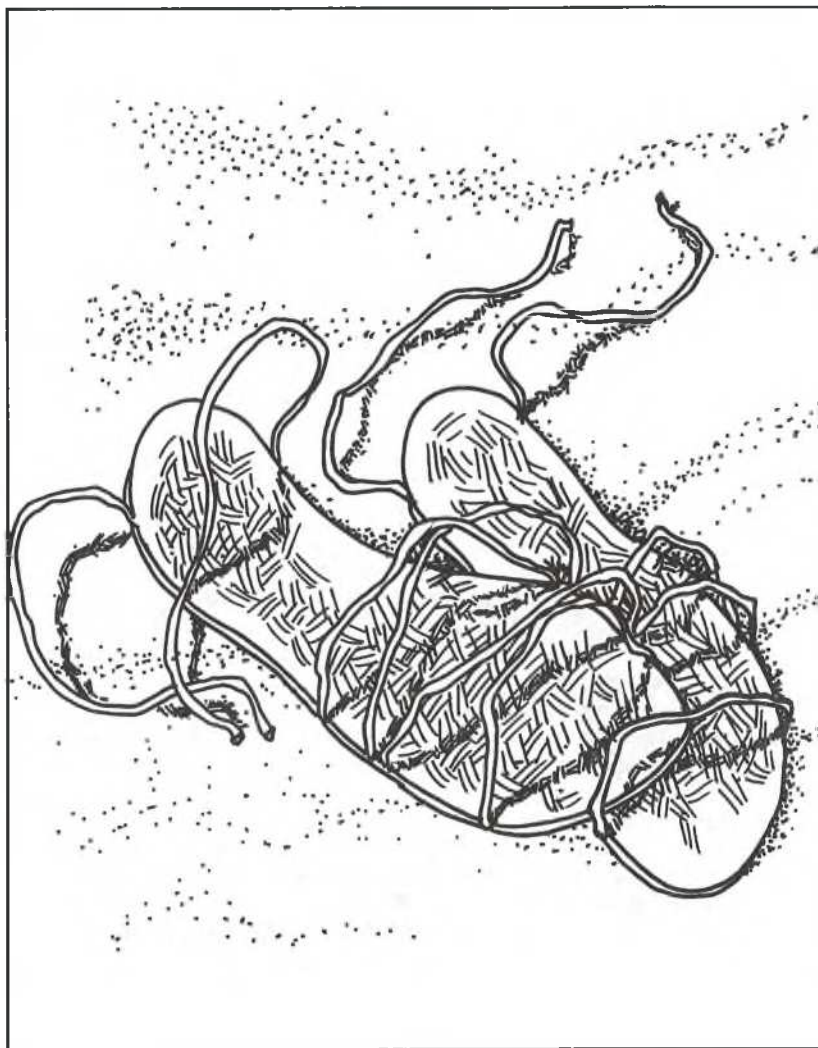
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1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 63.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

# THE HOLY ONE



**“One cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isa. 6:3).**

# Take Off Your Shoes

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Exod. 3:5, 6**

Have you ever seen a burning bush? I have. Let me tell you my story.

I was minding my own business taking care of the sheep. I had a job to do, and that's exactly what I was doing. As always, I had to make sure the sheep had water and shelter. We wandered quite a bit that day, the sheep and I. We ended up at Mt. Sinai.

As I was caring for one of the lambs that had hurt its leg, I saw a strange sight. I knew I shouldn't get distracted, but this was really unusual. A burning bush! Now don't get me wrong, it's hot in the desert, so things burn all the time. But this was different. A bush was burning, but it was not burning up. It was like a flame was just coming out of it without affecting it.

I got closer; you would have too. I had to see what was happening.

All of a sudden I heard my name being called: "Moses, Moses."

I know it's hot out here, but the sheep can't talk! The voice was coming from the bush. A little scared, I responded, "Here I am."

"Don't come any closer. Take off your sandals, because you are standing on holy ground. I am the God of your ancestors."

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## **It's hot in the desert, so things burn all the time.**

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Not only did I see a burning bush, I heard God's voice as well. What a day I was having! God went on to give me a job to do, and I'm sure most of you know what happened next.

My favorite part of the story is that God—my God—this incredibly holy Being—allowed me to come near His presence. He didn't tell me to turn around and take five steps back. He just told me I was on holy ground so I should take off my sandals. That's the best part about Him. He won't turn us away from Him. We shouldn't be afraid to approach Him, just take off our sandals, and show some respect where it's due.

God calls out your name all the time. Don't back away. Just take off your sandals and listen to the plan He has for you. Are you willing to do that today?

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*By Karina Janetzko Savelio, a Spanish teacher at La Cañada (California) High School.*

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# How Godly Is God?

## LOGOS

Gen. 2:3; Exod. 15:11; 3:5; John 17:19; Rom. 7:12; 2 Tim. 1:8, 9

If I asked you to help me appreciate a song by describing the elements that make it up, which ones would you mention? Maybe rhythm, notes, lyrics, melody, etc. It would be better if I were to ask you simply to sing the song rather than trying to describe it for me.

Something similar to this happens with descriptions of God. Learning to know and understand Him involves something far more than mere description.

Trying to describe the indescribable is like trying to understand God. We try to define Him, to describe Him, to know what He's like. We give Him human characteristics that we don't like because it erases the image of who God is. We end up frustrated, disillusioned, and even discouraged from trying to start a relationship with a God who is so strong and powerful that there's nothing He cannot do! But He's very far from us. God is too Godly for me.

Throughout the history of humankind, God has let Himself be known. I believe that there is nothing more important to God than His relationship with His children. This means you! So not only has He taken the time, but He has also used all the resources imaginable so that we may have an idea of who this indescribable God is.

## John says that the best way to describe God is with light.

**1. God is indescribably holy (Isa. 6:1-5).** Isaiah runs out of words when he tries to describe God's throne. He begins with what he thought was important and customary in his culture to describe the greatness and royalty of God's golden lions, the height, and how he was dressed in splendor and majesty. But finally he gives up and begins to say: Holy, Holy, Holy.

The Hebrew structure that Isaiah uses to describe Him is in a tone of voice that grows in volume. He begins to whisper "Holy," then he raises the volume of "Holy," and he ends it shouting at the top of his lungs, "Holy." This is because God is indescribably Holy.

**2. God is indescribably great (Isa. 40:12, 18-25).** I have never read such a significant description of what God is and what He can do in this, His universe. In verse 12, Isaiah says that God measures the waters with the hollow of His hand. Don't ask me how much that is because it's a lot, and I have no clue. What I can tell you is that God can put it all in the hollow of His hand. Is that great or what?

Isaiah also says that God measures the heavens with the palm of his hand. OK, think about this: Light travels at 106,000 km per second. This means that it goes around the planet eight times in one second. That is *fast*. At that speed, you could go to the moon in 1.3 seconds, to the sun in 8 minutes, to Alpha Centauri (the nearest star that we know of) in 4.3 years, and to the farthest reaches of our galaxy in 100,000 years. In the Big Dipper there are 1 million galaxies like ours. If you want to cross them, you have to multiply 1 million by 100,000 years, and that's how

long it would take you to cross them. But God—our God—measures this with His palm; He is great; don't you think so?

**3. God is indescribably powerful.** John says that the best way to describe God is with light (1 John 1:5). David says that God *is* light (Ps. 104:2). In his letter to Timothy, Paul tells us that “that light is inaccessible” (1 Tim. 6:15, 16).

Some people think they will be able to go to heaven and walk up to God and say, “Give me five, Dude!” No. Think about the atomic bomb for a minute. It wipes you out in a matter of seconds. But the most amazing thing is that Habakkuk says that that light hides God's true power (3:4). That is power!

Read Isaiah 6:1 again. There is a secret, a way to get near to the Holy, Great, and Powerful God. Isaiah tells us that when the king died, then he saw the Lord. The only way for us to know, experience, and see God is for the king who controls our life to die. Then God's light completely consumes that king who wants to get in the way of our communication with a God who is anxiously waiting to have an intimate relationship with us.

## **REACT**

1. What king in your life is separating you from God?
2. In a single sentence, how would you describe God to someone who doesn't believe in Him?

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*By Gustavo Squarzon, senior pastor of The Lighthouse of the Valley Seventh-day Adventist Bilingual Young Adult Church, Burbank, California.*

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# All Sinners Need God

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: 1 Pet. 1:14-16**

A young man born in an Adventist home found himself faced with a difficult problem. He felt that following the church doctrines was not easy, and sometimes it seemed to be boring and very challenging. He felt empty. *How is it that other church people seem to enjoy participating and testifying for God?* he wondered. *What motivates them to do so many things for the church? Why can't I have that experience?*

These were his questions. It was definitely not the “do this, do that, don't do this, and don't do that” part of Adventism that made him feel good about church. During an evangelistic meeting, he won a book called *Steps to Christ*. He read the book from cover to cover. At the end of the chapter “The Sinner's Need of Christ,” he learned for the first time of God's purpose for his life, to become holy like Him (Lev. 11:44). God's people are to be a holy people (1 Pet. 1:15, 16). Holiness is what God is seeking for us, so He can take us into His kingdom (Heb. 12:14).

After understanding that God wants us to be holy, the next step is to know how to become holy. I personally thank God for all the help and guidance that He has left for us. God has given us His commandments to keep in our hearts. If we are

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## Why is it difficult for people to understand God's purpose for their lives?

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faithful in keeping His law and have a relationship with Him, it will help us to understand Him and to be able to love Him and our neighbor (Heb. 8:10).

God has given us the gift of His Son and the salvation we can obtain through Him (John 3:16). Because we have a personal relationship with Christ, it transforms us from egocentric humans into faithful servants. The more I get to know Jesus and the stronger my friendship is with Him, the closer I am drawn to His Father (John 15:1-8). My friendship with Jesus is not different from a friendship here on earth. It needs time, communication, and commitment. If we are committed to a real Christian life, there is no doubt that holiness will happen in our lives.

## REACT

1. Why is it difficult for people to understand God's purpose for their lives?
2. What do you think the church can do to help others obtain this knowledge?

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*By Benjamin D. Escudero, a computer science teacher at Glendale (California) Adventist Academy.*

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# Created and Bought in His Holiness

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Ps. 145:17**

Once upon a time there was a lonely little girl who loved to bake. She felt so alone and would dream of a friend to play with. One morning she decided to bake gingerbread. As she formed the gingerbread man, she worked her hands through the dough to make the most perfect and wonderful gingerbread man that could ever exist.

When she had finished forming the gingerbread man, she placed it in the oven on a cookie sheet to bake. When she began to smell the aroma of the gingerbread, she knew it was ready. As she began to take the gingerbread off the cookie sheet, she noticed it was moving; it could walk, talk, and was like a real person. She was so happy to have a friend to play with and talk to.

One day the little girl left the door open. The gingerbread man ran out of the house, and she could not catch up to him. She was *so* sad, but an idea occurred to her. She went to the town bakery and looked for her gingerbread cookie. The man behind the counter asked if he could help her. She cried with joy and said, "Yes, that is my gingerbread friend."

"Yes," said the baker, "it could be yours for 25 cents."

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## **She went to the town bakery and looked for her gingerbread cookie.**

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The little girl placed 25 cents in pennies on the counter, and the baker gave her the gingerbread man. "Now you belong to me twice," the little girl said to the gingerbread man, "first because I created you and second because I bought you. I love you."

We were created (Gen. 1:26-28) by our Lord, and we have also been bought (1 Cor. 6:2; 7:23). This is why He loves us even more. Every work that comes from the hands of the Lord is holy. God created us with perfection because our Creator has an everlasting love for His creations. The Lord is holy, and because we are created in His image, we, too, shall become holy to serve Him better.

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*By Carmen Perez, an interior designer from Fontana, California.*

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# How Will I Ever Change?

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: John 8:32**

Humankind was created perfectly holy and happy; their thoughts were pure and in harmony with God. Through disobedience, the human heart was hardened, and selfishness took the place of love. Humanity was to be forever separated from the holy One.

“Education, culture, the exercise of the will, human effort, all have their proper sphere, but here they are powerless. They may produce an outward correctness of behavior, but they cannot change the heart; they cannot purify the springs of life. There must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before men can be changed from sin to holiness. That power is Christ. His grace alone can quicken the lifeless faculties of the soul, and attract it to God, to holiness.”\*

We have assurance in Deuteronomy 7:6 that we can attain that which was lost: holiness through Jesus Christ. But how do we strive to reach holiness? We can use the means that God has provided us to be transformed into having a Christlike spirit. The problem arises when we don't have a practical approach to apply these means that have been given to us or when we do not see the relevance for us in today's society.

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## Don't think that God is too big or too busy to help with issues your are facing.

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How can we become closer to our God and strive to live a life closer to that which God intended?

**1. Behold.** “We, who with unveiled faces reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18, NIV). By beholding or taking a closer look at Jesus, we become changed by the Spirit. The life of Jesus opens our eyes. It will show us God's holiness in the flesh. We will begin to understand to what lengths He is willing to go in order to reach our hearts.

**2. Honesty.** “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32). Don't be afraid to show Him your real self; open up no matter how insignificant it might seem to you. Don't think that God is too big or too busy to help with issues your are facing. Maybe it doesn't feel right to pray about things that aren't considered religious, but God wants to be a part of your entire life, not just the religious part. Tell Him exactly how you feel. God has come down a long way to show Himself to you and didn't leave anything out. Now show yourself to Him. Be honest. This is essential if you are to take any more steps toward the God who wants to have a relationship with you.

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\*Steps to Christ, p. 18.

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By George Bustos, Southern California Conference MIS director, Glendale.

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# A Holy Heart

## OPINION

**Key Text: Eph. 3:17**

What does *holy* mean? Really stumped on this word, I looked it up in Webster's. *Holy* is defined as "characterized by perfection and transcendence."

"Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendor, doing wonders?" (Exod. 15:11, NRSV).

This could describe only one thing—only one person: God! No one or no thing I know is perfect—except for GOD! This would mean that anything or anywhere He dwells in automatically becomes holy also. The sanctuary built by the people of Israel was holy because God came down to dwell in it among the Israelites (Exod. 29:45).

Have you ever heard the words of the following song:

"Into my heart, into my heart,  
Come into my heart Lord Jesus;  
Come in today, come in to stay,  
Come into my heart, Lord Jesus."

This song invites Him into our hearts, not just for one day or two, but to stay—forever. Whatever He dwells in becomes holy, including the human heart.

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## **Whatever He dwells in becomes holy, including the human heart.**

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There is nothing that He wants more than the opportunity to dwell in our hearts. By His dwelling in our hearts, we also become holy. He will cleanse our blackened hearts. He will cure our hurting hearts. He will even mend our broken hearts. And He will never, ever break our hearts.

Don't wait too long! Give Him your heart today!

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*\*Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Seventh Edition (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 1969).*

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*By Alma Patricia Luna, a communication assistant for Southern California Conference, Glendale.*

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# “EVERYTHING I DO ...”



**“Love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love” (1 John 4:7, 8, NKJV).**



# The Atheist and the Theology Student

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: 1 John 3:1**

No, this is not one of those stories about a budding theologian who gets involved in a long and drawn-out argument with an atheist and then cleverly sets the infidel straight. It's a girl-meets-boy story. The two fall in love. One plans to become an anthropologist; the other, a missionary. "There'd be plenty of room for common ground," says the atheist. "There are people who have grown up being afraid of such lovely things as the moon, and I'd like to be able to free them of those fears," says the theology student.

*That's cool,* thinks the atheist.

So I married the theologian and we went together to Buchanian, Liberia, in West Africa, as volunteer teachers at a Seventh-day Adventist school. Teaching Bible like an ancient history class did not require getting involved. Even an atheist could do it. Enjoying the sun-drenched beaches after school was easy. Even a theology student could do it. The children at the school were beautiful—eager to learn even under difficult circumstances. They were crammed into dimly lighted, tight classrooms with no desks, no books, and no pens or pencils.

One of the most beautiful concerts I have ever heard took place in my bedroom one day when I was sick and couldn't teach. The kids came over and sang, accom-

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## **Teaching Bible like an ancient history class did not require getting involved.**

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panied by a drummer with my mixing bowl and two wooden spoons. We got to know many other missionaries and mercenaries. About halfway through the year, we met Wilma. She worked for the Liberia Inland Mission. She had been there for years and planned to be there for many more to come. She was a gentle woman who radiated her beliefs. She gave me a book to read, *The Hiding Place*, by Corrie ten Boom.

When I got to the part about Corrie finding the ability to forgive her Nazi tormenters, I cried. I felt an amazing sense of relief to believe in this kind of God. This kind of love goes beyond the capacity of humans. The kind of hate portrayed in that war exceeded what humans can think up on their own. In order to arrive at this kind of hatred and to display this spectacular love toward those who carry it out, there has to be a supernatural love. This week take a closer look at this kind of love, at this kind of God.

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*By Debbie Eisele, a homemaker in Suva, Fiji.*

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# God Must Be Crazy

## LOGOS

**Ps. 103:2-4; Hosea 11:8; Matt. 22:36-40; John 3:16; Rom. 5:7, 8; 1 John 4:16**

Recently I met Jeffrey (not his real name), a friend I had not seen for more than two years. A few weeks before we met, Jeffrey's grown-up son had physically assaulted him. Apparently Jeffrey had had a very heated argument with his wife, who then instructed their son to punch his father. The son not only carried out his mother's wish, but he also ordered his father to leave their home and go back to his village.

Ironically, Jeffrey's wife was suffering from a wasting disease that was stripping her to almost bare bones. By the time we met, Jeffrey was back at home with his dying wife. He had forgiven his wife and son for what they had done to him. When I asked him why he spoke slowly and softly, trying hard to control his emotion, he said, "How can I abandon my family of 30 years? How can I leave my dying wife when she needs me the most?"

You see, Jeffrey's love for his wife was too much to let her waste away, alone. I must admit that for a moment I thought he was crazy. Why stay when you are not wanted anymore, let alone unloved? It was only later that day, as I reflected on my friend's unfortunate experience, that I began to catch a glimpse of the kind of

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## **That is why I sometimes think God must be crazy.**

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love God had for the selfish, stubborn Israelites.

### **I Love You Too Much**

In Hosea 11, God complains of Israel's ungrateful and rebellious attitude against Him. He had looked after Israel from childhood and had "led them with cords of compassion, with the bands of love" (verse 4, RSV). Yet Israel had continued in blatant disobedience and defiance. The passage then shows how God's changeless compassion triumphs over Israel's inconsistency. "How can I give you up, O Ephraim! How can I hand you over, O Israel!" (verse 8). In other words, God is saying, "My love for you, Israel, is greater than your sin."

How could anyone in his right mind do something totally irrational like that? God answers, "I am God and not man" (verse 9). Therein lies the key to understanding that kind of love. Free from human limitation, God's love abides despite rebellion and hostility. No amount of disobedience could quench such love. Can you understand that? I struggle to. That is why I sometimes think God must be crazy. Let us explore some aspects of His love.

### **Dimensions of God's Love<sup>1</sup>**

"God's benevolence" conveys His concern for the welfare of those whom He loves. He unselfishly seeks our ultimate welfare, whether we are good or not, regardless of the cost to Himself. This self-giving quality of the divine love is evident in His sending His Son Jesus Christ to die for us, though it was not

motivated by our prior love for Him. “This is the love I mean: not our love for God but God’s love for us when He sent His Son to be the sacrifice that takes our sins away” (1 John 4:10, Jerusalem Bible). It is *agapē*, God loving us for what He can give to us, or what He can make of us, for our own sake (John 3:16). In the words of Bryan Adams, “Everything I do, I do it for you.”

Grace describes God dealing with us, not as we deserve but according to our need. It is based on His goodness and generosity and requires nothing from us. “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness” (Exod. 34:6, NIV). “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us” (Eph. 1:7, 8).

God’s mercy is His warm, loving compassion for us, His tenderness of heart toward the miserable and needy. Jesus felt this kind of compassion when people came to Him for physical healing (Mark 1:4) and spiritual restoration (Matt. 9:36). On a human level Mother Teresa, a woman I highly admired, had this kind of compassion for the “poorest of the poor” in Calcutta. No wonder thousands of paupers attended her funeral in order to see their “mother” for the last time.

God’s persistence, a fourth dimension of His love, is sometimes referred to as His long-suffering, slowness to anger, patience (Exod. 34:6; Rom. 2:4; 9:22; 1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 3:15). In these verses God is pictured as withholding judgment and continuing to offer salvation and grace over long periods, hoping that “all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9, KJV).

In all these dimensions God takes the initiative to reach out to us. He demonstrates His own love for us in this: “While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

When we behold this incomprehensible kind of love, it will soften our hearts, impress our minds, and inspire contrition in our souls.<sup>2</sup> We will be drawn to the Saviour Himself. And His “holy influence [in us] will be felt by all with whom we come in contact.”<sup>3</sup>

## **REACT**

1. How would you describe God’s kind of love to a child? to the outcast in society? to the poor in your community?

2. Is it possible for Christians to be wealthy materially and be loving and generous at the same time? Explain.

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1. Adapted from Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1985), pp. 292-297.

2. *Steps to Christ*, p. 27.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

# God's Love for All

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Ps. 103:2-4**

Although nature and Revelation give us a lot of evidence of God's love, it was made complete only in Jesus, the Son of God, who came from heaven to make manifest the full measure of the Father's love for all.

How often we look for life, for love, for wisdom, and for joy, yet we fail to recognize the source of all these. "Our Father in heaven is the source. . . . It is God who supplies the daily needs of all His creatures."<sup>1</sup> The psalmist puts it in a very beautiful way: "The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing" (Ps. 145:15, 16, NIV).

Humanity's failure to recognize this source ultimately led to its fall. "It is transgression of God's law—the law of love—that has brought woe and death. Yet even amid the suffering that results from sin, God's love is revealed."<sup>2</sup> Jesus, the Son of God, came to reveal the infinite love of the Father.

"His work gave evidence of His divine anointing. Love, mercy, and compassion were revealed in every act of His life."<sup>3</sup> "Such is the character of Christ as revealed in His life. This is the character of God. It is from the Father's heart that the streams of divine compassion . . . flow out to the children of men."<sup>4</sup>

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## Jesus lived and suffered and died to redeem us.

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Jesus lived and suffered and died to redeem us. "None but the Son of God could accomplish our redemption; for only He who was in the bosom of the Father could declare Him. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it manifest. Nothing less than the infinite sacrifice made by Christ in behalf of fallen man could express the Father's love to lost humanity."<sup>5</sup>

Thus, God's love for all is truly manifest in His Son Jesus yet could only be realized by lost humanity, through faith, in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Reciprocal love is supposed to be the ideal relationship between God and humankind. But who can parallel the love of God? Humanity's part, perhaps, is to revert to a knowledge and recognition of God as the source of all things—of life, of redemption, of salvation, of peace and joy. "The more we study the divine character in the light of the cross, the more we see mercy, . . . and the more clearly we discern innumerable evidences of a love that is infinite."<sup>6</sup>

1. *Steps to Christ*, p. 9.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 12.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

# Dying for Love

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Matt. 22:36-40**

When love left the fairytale romance of Charles and Diana, Prince and Princess of Wales, Diana lost her right to become the Queen of England. In a much-publicized interview, she declared that her desire was to become the “Queen of Hearts.”

Mother Teresa of Calcutta formed the Missionaries of Charity. Each member of this congregation took the “basic vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience,” and a fourth vow that requires a pledge of “service to the poor,” which Mother Teresa described as the embodiment of Christ.<sup>1</sup> Mother Teresa had no time for anything that distracted her from helping those in need.

When both of these women died, they had achieved their aim. The death of the Princess of Wales evoked an amazing worldwide support of the humanitarian work she had been conducting. Hundreds of millions of dollars were raised to continue the work she loved so much. The life of Mother Teresa demonstrated the true work of love. Both women asked nothing in return, except that the work of loving others continue.

All biblical commands are based on love. “ ‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest

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## God did the unnecessary to save the unworthy.

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commandment. A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’ ” (Matt. 22:37-39).

Love is the beginning, the middle, and the end of the Bible story. This started with God creating the earth as an image of Him (i.e., love). Humankind then sinned, and despite not being deserving of it, God sent His Son to rescue humanity. Finally, the ultimate show of His love was the promise to return and take us all to heaven. Not only did God say that love was the greatest commandment, He demonstrated it.

Irrational, unwarranted, and uncalled for though it was, God did the unnecessary to save the unworthy. This goes beyond human thinking. It is not human to give up all to love another. We can “never fully comprehend the length and the breadth, the depth and the height, of the love of God in giving His Son to die for the world. Eternity itself can never fully reveal it.”<sup>2</sup> When Christ died on the cross, He had achieved His aim. He had demonstrated that love lives beyond death. Love is life. Christ asks for nothing in return, except that we continue loving others.

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1. “Mother Teresa of Calcutta,” Microsoft Encarta 97 Encyclopedia, ©1993-1996 Microsoft Corporation.

2. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 740.



# Madly in Love

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: 1 John 4:8**

I was in love. Madly in love. I couldn't keep it a secret. I had to tell everybody I knew. We spent every spare moment we had together. I gave up anything that didn't involve her. I just knew that this was the girl for me. It felt so great just to be with her. I would do anything for her. We became married.

A few years later we both discovered the love of God. I could see it happening again. Those same romantic feelings were coming back. The more we learned about our God, the more we wanted to learn. This time we both had the opportunity to realize that God was really a God of love. Think of what He did—giving up His Son to go to earth and die, not to help Himself, but to help His hopeless children. What a risk. What a lesson to us.

Why did He do it? What could He get out of it? The answer is beyond logic—He did not do it to gain anything for Himself. He did it solely to save humans from the predicament they had put themselves into. It was a totally unselfish act, inspired only by love. What an amazing love.

Understanding why God would choose to love us unconditionally is not easy, but if you choose to experience God's love, it is there waiting for you.

**1. Remember that God is love (1 John 4:8).** If this is so, then we have no

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## Why did He do it? What could He get out of it?

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reason to be afraid. Nothing can be more assuring about God than this.

**2. Don't expect anything in return.** Love will not grow unless it is given away. The more love you give, the more you can appreciate the love God has given you.

**3. In order for others to love you, you have to show them what love is like.** We must reflect God's love so others can see Him. We are the image of God (Gen. 1:26).

## REACT

1. Why is it easier to love those who are like us rather than those who are different?

2. How should you show thanks to God for His unconditional love?

3. Why is it that it sometimes takes the death of a person for his or her love to be acknowledged?

4. Is it necessary for you to be poor in order for you to show love?

# Is God Love?

## OPINION

**Key Texts: 1 John 4:16; Ps. 104:4**

God is love (1 John 4:16). He forgives sin—heals people of their diseases—redeems life from the pits (Ps. 103:3, 4).

It's easy to say. Yet how can you—how dare you—say this to Jean, a struggling, middle-aged woman with five children, whose husband has just remarried, claiming that if there were a God, their second child would never have been born with spina bifida. Who am I to tell her that God has a loving care for her when *she* has all the struggles and hurts of divorce, the struggles to provide adequately for the needs of the rest of the family, all as a single parent. Where is this God of love in all the messes of everyday living, where nothing seems to be as it should be?

Where is this God of love for Grant, an 8-year-old lying on the hospital bed—a young boy emaciated, who has lost his hair to chemotherapy? Where is God's love for his parents who have brought their son to a foreign country for treatment? They will see him die in a few days and see him buried in a country that is not their home.

I have no answers.

I stand in silence.

Jean tells me that God is great. He is a loving God. She tells me that God is her

## How can you—how dare you—say this to Jean?

support, and amid all the very present struggles and problems in her life, He is there—caring and loving.

Grant struggles to sit up. He tells me that he is looking forward to seeing God. He is looking forward to having a chat with Him. He is expecting a big cuddle because God *is* love.

I know that there is a God of love. I look around me, and I see what He has done. His creation is full of examples of how loving, caring, and thoughtful He is. I see enormous love in the gift He gave us in the form of His Son. I know He is love because even at times when I have my reasons to doubt, others “show and tell” me they know.

If we do not show love, do we know God (1 John 4:8)? God is love and others will know that He is love through the way we proclaim it.

## REACT

1. How does someone genuinely “show and tell” the God of love?
2. From your life experience, who and in what ways have people shown you that God *is* love?

*By Bev Norman, director of the primary education department at Fulton College, Suva, Fiji.*

# AN OVERTURE OF PEACE



**“The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places” (Isa. 32:17, 18).**

# The Fisherman

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Mark 4:35-41**

I tell you, if there were a man who could have told you that it would rain, it would have been me. I was born to understand the waters. The smell of the air, the caress of the breeze, the way the clouds swirled—each one spoke to me. The waters were my livelihood. I would have guaranteed that there was no storm in the forecast. I was wrong.

This stretch of water is famous for its storms. I've braved many of them but none like the one that rolled in that night. The moon was shining, the stars were out, and the water was a beautiful quilt of even ripples. I checked the sail one more time then sat down to rest with my back against a barrel. It was just then that the night turned very dark.

I looked up. Backlit by the moon, I could see the flat-headed masses of giant, glowering thunderheads. The light breeze flapping the sail changed into a gusting frenzy that tore at our hair and clothing. The sky and sea grew darker and darker.

We could barely see our hands in front of our faces when the rain started. Huge marbles of cold water pelted us, and the darkness was ripped apart by the greedy hands of blue-white lightning.

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## **I checked the sail one more time then sat down to rest with my back against a barrel.**

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The sail was hanging in shreds, huge waves leapt from the sea into our boats, and we were barely able to keep from being washed ashore.

In the midst of this terror was the most dumbfounding thing of all. The one Man on our boat who better than any of us knew what do was asleep. It was inconceivable. Only He could sleep through the worst storm in memory. We shook Him awake and shouted, "Master, how can You sleep at a time like this? We are all going to drown!"

Jesus stood up and said, "Peace, be still." And just like that the moon shone brightly over the calm waters of the Sea of Galilee.

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*By Karl Bailey, a biology/psychology major at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.*

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## Peace Fighters and Other Oxymorons

### LOGOS

**Ps. 119:165; Matt. 10:34; Gal. 5:22, 23; Phil. 4:6, 7; Col. 1:19-22; Heb. 12:14**

Let's talk oxymorons. You know, a set of two words with opposite meanings—like “ill health,” “jumbo shrimp,” or “pretty ugly.” How about this one: “peace weapons”? Does a peacemaker—the one who is blessed in the Beatitudes—need armaments? Can you imagine our God of peace literally pulling out the big guns or Jesus actually wielding a sword? But here He is, tossing a bombshell right into the middle of our urbane discussion of peace.

“Don't imagine,” Jesus says, “that I came to bring peace on earth—I came to bring a sword!” (Matt. 10:34; Luke 12:51).<sup>1</sup> It almost makes us wonder if He really is a God of peace, until we realize what kind of peace His listeners thought He meant—earthly peace from earthly problems and earthly enemies. “Peace I give to you,” Jesus responds, “[but] not as the world gives” (John 14:27, NKJV).

Peace requires risk, sacrifice, division, and destruction. Only someone like Paul—or Jesus—would have the audacity to assign paradoxical characteristics like “peace” and “crushing” to God. But this oxymoron explains the whole question: “The God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly” (Rom. 16:20, NKJV).

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### **Remember that the beatitudes end not with peace but with persecution.**

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The fact is, peace cannot be a reality until the lies and accusations of the great peace breaker—lies which we believed and accusations that separated us from God—are forever squelched. But, thank God, they already have been. He “delivered us from the dominion of darkness and reestablished us in the kingdom of His beloved Son . . . who made peace through the blood of His cross” (Col. 1:13, 20).

Jesus not only “came and preached peace,” but “He *is* our peace” (Eph. 2:14, 17). The dream of some formerly ferocious lion cuddling up to a soft woolly lamb or of some celestial hand brushing tears from my face is not incorrect, but it's also not the whole picture. The good news of Jesus is that we can have peace, not only in the new earth after the physical destruction of Satan but right now!

And, since Jesus canceled the war between us and God, the Holy Spirit moves in, growing the fruit of peace in our lives (Gal. 5:22). It is this peace with God that enables us to live peacefully with others. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God,” Jesus tells us (Matt. 5:9, NKJV), with a Greek word which implies overflowing happiness. Paul also reminds us to “strive for peace with all men” and “live peaceably with all” (Heb. 12:14; Rom. 12:18, RSV). This injunction is, however, prefaced with the phrase “if possible, so far as it depends on you.” And the Hebrews text tells us not only to strive for peace but also “for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.” Paul has his priorities straight. Of course we live peaceably with others, but it is more important



to be at peace with God. Remember that the Beatitudes end not with peace but with persecution.

When we live at peace with God, we are also at peace with ourselves. How freeing! In fact, Paul makes it sound completely *carefree*: “Don’t worry over anything whatever; tell God every detail of your needs in earnest and thankful prayer, and the peace of God, which transcends human understanding, will keep constant guard over your hearts and minds as they rest in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6, 7, Phillips).

What we have is the opposite of a vicious cycle—a circle of peace! It works like this: When we were at peace with God, He gave us a law. We believed the lies of Satan and sinned, breaking God’s law. Jesus, the ultimate peacemaker, reconciled us to God and His law by His perfect life and substitutionary death. God’s grace-colored glasses paint us sinless, and the Holy Spirit helps us to truly live that way. Theologians call these simple processes “justification” and “sanctification,” but a psalmist summarizes them by saying, “Lord, I hope for your salvation, and I do Your commandments,” prefaced by the sentiment, “great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble” (Ps. 119:165, 166). That brings us around full circle.

And speaking of completing a circle, what about those so-called “peace weapons”? Does a peacemaker really need them? Well, God seems to consider them essential equipment for spiritual assault, retreat, or just plain guard duty. “Put on the complete armor of God,” Paul writes (Eph. 6:11-18), including not only a sword and shield but also shoes that are both rugged and comfortable—the gospel of *peace*!

## **REACT**

1. Jesus explains His statements about division and a sword by quoting Micah 7:6. How does this fit the context of what He’s saying, and what does it say about His role as the Messiah?

2. How can I be a peacemaker?

3. What does it mean to “live peaceably with all”?

4. When is peace not possible?

5. What does it mean to be at peace with God? With myself?

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*\*If not otherwise noted, Scriptures are my paraphrase.*

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*By Chris Small, a senior ministerial student at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.*

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# Peace Through Works?

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Ps. 119:165**

Lately it seems popular to do away with the law and God's requirements. Some theologians and psychologists tell us that ultimately what matters is if we love God. They claim keeping God's law is not important as long as we love Him. They tell us that worrying about the law and sin can lead to guilt, which is damaging to one's self-esteem. Feelings of guilt, however, are not always a bad thing, as they can lead us to repentance and ultimately to happiness. "The impressions left on minds have been that religion is injurious to health. This is erroneous and should not be entertained. Pure religion brings peace, happiness, contentment."<sup>1</sup>

Another fallacy of modern times is that happiness is obtained by making ourselves feel good. Many try to find peace, happiness, and rest by serving themselves. In regard to true peace and rest, Ellen White says, "This rest is not found in inattention and idleness, but in yielding the will to the will of Jesus; for, says Christ, 'My yoke is easy, and My burden is light' (Matt. 11:30). Therefore your will must become God's will. Your peace, your rest, comes in wearing Christ's yoke; you have the peace of Christ, and your conscience is not continually scourging you because you have not committed yourself to do the will of God. When you

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## They tell us that worrying about the law and sin can lead to guilt.

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love to do the requirements of God, there is sweet enjoyment, not in idleness, but enjoyment identified with, and realized through, the exercise of all your powers on the Lord's side. Christ's service means work. 'You can be a dutiful, obedient child of God. A soldier of Jesus Christ does not mean pleasure but hard work.'"<sup>2</sup>

It is clear that to obtain the peace that Christ longs to give, we must adhere to His laws and be willing to serve Him. It is not always easy to serve Christ. It is awkward to tell your friends you won't participate in an activity that you feel is wrong. At times it is hard to go out and work for Christ, especially when the work takes us outside our comfort zone. With God's help, however, you can do it and experience the peace that goes along with doing God's will.

## REACT

1. Is there anything in my life that is keeping me from experiencing the full peace that Christ has to offer?
2. We receive inner peace by leading others to Christ. What activity could I partake in to share Christ with others, and do I have the courage actually to do it?

1. *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 782.

2. *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 4, p. 164.

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*By Joe Mucha, III, a senior chemistry major at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.*

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# Peace in the Storm

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Ps. 46:1, 2**

Peace is one of those concepts we often discuss but rarely define. Most often we talk about peace as a freedom from conflict: A sleeping child is peaceful; the end of a war brings peace. God says that the righteous will receive peace (Isa. 32:17, 18). Does this mean that choosing Christ will give us a life completely free from turmoil?

Of course not. In fact, Jesus told His disciples that they would be persecuted for His sake (Matt. 10:22). So what kind of peace does God offer?

The psalmist describes the kind of peace God extends to His children (Ps. 23:4). God's peace is security and assurance in the midst of trouble. No matter what situation we are in or what problems we face, we can be assured that He is there to comfort and protect us. Although we may not be able to see a solution to our problems, He is always working on our behalf. "God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea" (46:1, 2, NIV).

When I was a child of five or six, our family took a trip across the United States. As we crossed the prairies, we were caught in a terrible storm. Not only were bolts

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## **It was raining so hard that we were forced to stop at the crest of a small rise.**

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of lightning crashing all around us, but it was raining so hard that we were forced to stop at the crest of a small rise while a flash flood engulfed the land around us. For a child, it was too much. I was deathly afraid that we would never get home alive.

My mother and father held me, dried my tears, and assured me that the storm would pass. They comforted me until I stopped crying. Even though the storm was still raging, I knew that we would be safe because I trusted my parents.

I felt at peace because of the trusting relationship I had built with my parents. God's peace that brings security and assurance comes when we can trust Him because we have a relationship with Him. God never changes and never lets us down. He gives us the courage to keep going despite the problems we face. With God we have the confidence that the storm will pass and that we will get home safely.

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*By Rosemary Bauer, an elementary education major, and Karl Bailey, a biology/psychology major, at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.*

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# Keeping the Peace

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: John 16:33**

God has promised to give peace to the righteous. But how can we claim that promise? Fortunately, God has given us instructions to help those who love Him to find perfect peace in Him.

**1. Trust.** The little girl stood tentatively at the edge of the pool. Her father called to her, "Jump! I'll catch you!" We cannot trust someone we do not know. The same is true of our heavenly Father. We need to begin to develop a relationship with Him. As our relationship with God grows, we learn to trust and depend on Him, knowing that "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee" (Isa. 26:3). As our relationship with our Saviour deepens, we learn to depend more and more on God's power and to trust His plan for our lives.

**2. Communication.** Relationships depend on communication. Without communication trust cannot develop. Through prayer we can have direct communication with our Saviour. We can tell Him our needs and have the assurance that our prayers will be answered in a way that is best for us. We can have peace, knowing that our problems and requests are now in God's hands. "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests

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## We cannot trust someone we do not know.

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be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:6, 7).

**3. Obedience.** "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Ps. 119:165). This is the very essence of God's peace. In the natural world, objects obey laws such as gravity which God placed upon them at Creation. Humans have been given laws of behavior. Jesus summarized God's law when He told the people, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind . . . [and] thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. 22:37, 39).

Unlike the pencil that falls off the edge of your desk, always obeying the law of gravity, we have the power to choose whether or not we will obey God's commandments. When we do not obey, we place ourselves at odds against all creation, just as the pencil that decides it will fall up from the desk opposes the laws of nature. When we are at odds with God, we no longer can be at peace. When we follow God's law, we unite ourselves with God and then claim the peace He promised.

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

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*By Tiffany Karr, a math/physics major, and Rosemary Bauer, an elementary education major, at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.*

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# When Is God a God of Peace?

## OPINION

**Key Texts:** Isa. 32:17, 18; Matt. 10:34

When you talk about a God of peace, you must ask yourself some important questions. Has God ever gone to war? Has God ever demanded a physical war with the annihilation of part of His created people as the goal? What is God's peace—a warm fuzzy that makes us all get along, or is it more than that?

The answer to the first two questions is an undeniable Yes. "And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought" (Rev. 12:7, NKJV). Then 1 Samuel 15:3 says, "Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys." If God is a God of peace, He has demanded war, then His peace must be more than a warm fuzzy that makes us all get along.

God's peace is not a peace of this world. It is a divine and spiritual peace, a tangible gift that goes far deeper than an emotional reaction. Why else would He say, "My peace I give unto you; not as the world gives do I give to you" (John 14:27). The peace that God gives is the peace that passes understanding. It will not be fully realized until we get to heaven. Here on earth it is a peace that brings a

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## **Peace, it would seem, is a direct result of keeping the law of God.**

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sword.

Peace, it would seem, is a direct result of keeping the law of God. Since when has Satan left those who keep God's law in peace? It is his ever-enduring goal to see us fall. There has been a lot of talk in our church about not being under the law but being under grace. The words used most often when someone feels justified in what they are doing is, "What I do is between me and God." Is that one edge of the sword of peace? If that is our excuse for doing what we will, can we have true peace, can we honestly worship and commune with God and have that attitude?

We can't—that's the bottom line. "Those who take Christ at His word, and surrender their souls to His keeping, their lives to His ordering, will find peace and quietude. Nothing of the world can make them sad when Jesus makes them glad by His presence. In perfect acquiescence there is perfect rest."\* God's peace is going to bring war and persecution to humanity because God's peace is the result of our thoughts and character being in harmony with Him.

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\**The Desire of Ages*, p. 331.

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*By Spencer Farr, a construction student at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.*

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# NO APPOINTMENT NECESSARY



**“His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6).**

# Decisions, Decisions

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Isa. 9:6**

“His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6).

Oh, what should we do? The doctor had said the procedure on my then-infant son would be routine, but the more I questioned, the more unsure I became. Why was it to take place in a special surgical unit and not simply in her office if it were so routine? Could it wait until he was older? Should we seek a second opinion?

Decisions, Decisions. Every minute of every day we make them. Many minor ones involve consequences that make little difference. Really, we make these without recognizing them as decisions at all. Should we make lunch or eat out today? Should we fill the gas tank on the way to the store or on the way back? Can we really live without that last piece of cake?

Others, more significant and more difficult, can inevitably affect the entire direction our lives take. Should we accept this marriage proposal now or wait a year or two more? Should we marry at all? What profession should we pursue? Is it time for a career change? Should we relocate with our job? When should we begin a family? Should we have another child? The list goes on and on, for life presents each of us with a never-ending assortment with which to contend. And

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## **Why was it to take place in a special surgical unit and not simply in her office?**

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with each major decision the course of life is determined. Is it any wonder that we often seek advice and counsel?

People make decisions in many ways. Some would like to be told what to do, but that would belittle the wonderful gift of reason and choice that God has given to each of us. Some will weigh the pros and cons and diligently analyze things as they see them and then decide. Others seem literally to flip a coin and hope for the best. Sources of advice are as varied as the decisions themselves. They range from trusted family and friends who have been down the road before us to our acquaintances who are considered experts in a particular area.

In His infinite wisdom, God knew we'd need direction and advice. In Isaiah 9:6 He is called “Wonderful, Counsellor.” After we are awed by His majesty and declare Him simply “Wonderful,” we appreciate Him as our ultimate counselor and mighty God. He has promised guidance (Isa. 30:21; Matt. 28:20) and has given us the gift of His Spirit and His Word (Ps. 119:105).

This week rediscover anew our True Counselor.

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*By Maxine Williams Allen, a computer systems analyst consultant, Reuters America, Inc., Orlando, Florida.*

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# No Competition

## LOGOS

Prov. 3:1, 2; Eccl. 12:13; Isa. 40:13, 14; Jer. 31:3; 2 Tim. 1:2; 2:7; Rev. 3:18.

Why would God pose such questions to His people? Is He challenging us to an intellectual contest? If you were in God's position, how would you go about telling a friend to trust you for help?

Beginning with verse 12 of Isaiah 40, we see God asking several rhetorical questions designed to convince His people to trust in Him, their Shepherd and their Lord, for He is able.

- "Who has measured the water in the hollow of His hand?" (verse 12, NIV)
- "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord?" (verse 13, KJV)
- "Who can update Him on the latest knowledge?" (verse 13, Clear Word)
- "Who can advise the Spirit of the Lord or be his teacher?" (verse 13, TLB)
- "Who gave Him suggestions, and made clear to Him the right way?" (verse 14, Basic English)
- "Whoever taught Him how to act?" (verse 14, Moffatt)
- "Who showed Him the path of understanding?" (verse 14, NIV)

Obviously, no human being has done this. So, the implication is: why would we initially ask advice of any human being (spouse, friends, relatives, teachers,

## Is God challenging us to an intellectual contest?

etc.) when we can bring all our questions to God for the *best* counsel and advice? The concept that God is omniscient is sometimes hard to understand, especially if things are not going too well in our lives. Faith has to play a pivotal function.

The Hebrew word for "counselor" *ya'ats* (*yaw-ats*) also has the added shade of meaning of "to determine, to devise, to purpose" along with the more obvious meaning of "to advise, to deliberate, to guide." This suggests a special guidance for future events. The future is something we'd all like to be privy to, but this is precisely where our faith has the most opportunity to grow. God actually plans for and devises circumstances to provide the best results for each of us! Think of it as the ultimate "insider trading," for He not only knows everything but controls all too! And we are not talking of just financial investments, but spiritual, social, mental, physical, and emotional investments: the *total you and me!*

Ellen White put it well: "Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God's ideal for His children." This is why God asks us to "lift up your eyes to the heavens" (Isa. 40:26), and if we do, our strength and hopes shall definitely be renewed (verse 31).

In many instances, God has advised and reaffirmed His people through other human beings. The biblical prophets were prime examples. King Solomon's wisdom and sometimes unfortunate experiences are preserved for our counsel. We should not close our eyes and ears to sources around us but be sure to "test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1 John 4:1, NIV). The Bible also contains examples of poor counselors, such as Job's three friends, the king's advisers

to Rehoboam (1 Kings 12) and Jehoshaphat (1 Kings 22), even Peter (Mark 8:32, 33).

Jeremiah 31:3 reminds us that God loves us with an “everlasting love,” and He tries to draw us “with lovingkindness.” This is the most important aspect of God. God is *love*. That makes His counsel the best for each of us. That makes His plan for you and me the ultimate we could ever imagine or execute. Do you really believe God loves you? It is hard at times, but that’s what the Christian walk is all about: learning to trust that God does love you and that you can step out into His plan continually, even if it doesn’t seem prudent at the time. God asks you today to come to Him, to accept His plan for your day. He says, “Buy of me gold tried in the fire [the things that really matter] so you will be rich; accept My white linen clothes [the merits of Jesus’ sinless life and death]; allow Me to heal your eyes with My magic salve [the Spirit’s power and insight] so you can see beyond the current hottest television show, beyond that career move and those wedding plans, beyond children and in-laws and retirement, to the Great Destiny of eternal companionship with Me” (Rev. 3:18, paraphrased).

When all is taken into consideration, the bottom line is: “Respect your heavenly Father and do what He says. God knows what’s best for you” (Eccl. 12:13, Clear Word). In turn, He promises to be our personal Counselor in everything and in every way, every day. “Just because, My sons and daughters,” says God, “I am your God and I love you.”

## **REACT**

1. Think about the last time someone said to you, “I need your advice.” What ran through your mind prior to hearing the situation?

2. From what secular means do we seek advice? How are these selected?

3. In what specific ways can we seek the aid of the Divine Counselor before giving advice?

4. How would you respond to someone of a different faith (e.g., Buddhist, Muslim, atheist, etc.) when they say that every principle and guideline they need for living is already contained in their set of beliefs?

5. Does God guide by means other than Scripture? Explain your answer.

6. How do you respond to a person who believes that “going with the flow” is how we allow God to lead?

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\**Messages to Young People*, p. 40.

# When We “Just Don’t Know”

## TESTIMONY

**Key Texts:** Jer. 31:3; 1 John 4:16

What do we do when we need advice? Where do we turn when we need help? Like Saul of old, some may call one of the dozens of available psychic hotlines; others may write to a friendly columnist of a local newspaper or magazine; many choose to phone in their troubles to radio or television talk show hosts. Most people, however, usually seek counsel from close family or friends. It has happened to all of us at one time or another. We are faced with a critical decision, but we are unsure what to do. Our souls struggle under the stress of our dilemma. But why are we heavy laden when there is One who can lift our load and make the burden light?

A seven-year-old girl was helping her father clean out the tool shed. Wanting to please her dad, she eagerly straightened up counters, swept the floor, moved cartons, and cleaned shelves as best she could. Upon finishing, she surveyed her work only to realize that she had missed one box. Not realizing its weight or contents, the little girl tried to lift the box, which turned out to be heavier than she had thought. “*Crash!*” Both the girl and the box came toppling over. “Why didn’t you ask for my help?” her father asked.

“I wanted to do it by myself, Daddy. I thought I was big enough to handle it.”

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## **We are faced with a critical decision, but we are unsure what to do.**

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“Well,” said Father, rubbing the child’s scraped arm, “I think we learned something important here today. We shouldn’t struggle by ourselves when someone nearby is willing and able to help.” I can picture Jesus saying the same thing to us.

“Those who take Christ at His word, and surrender their souls to His keeping . . . will find peace and quietude.”<sup>1</sup> Our lives may seem hectic. There may seem to be no immediate solution in sight to a particular problem. It may actually seem to be looming instead of shrinking. This is because we want to bear the load ourselves. We want to be our own counselor instead of turning to the One who can provide the proper guidance we need. “As we commit ourselves to [Christ], He will bring out the pattern of life and character that will be to His own glory.”<sup>2</sup> When we try on our own, the results can be devastating (Prov. 14:12).

Isn’t it wonderful that we have such a loving God who is always available to give us the counsel we need, whenever we need it—no appointment necessary. How much more could we ask to be loved?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 331.

2. *Ibid.*

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*By Tanya Haughton, associate professor of English, Long Island University, Brooklyn, New York.*

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# When the Shoe Is on the Other Foot

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Prov. 25:11, 12**

In his great wisdom, Solomon writes, “The right word at the right time is like a custom-made piece of jewelry, and a wise friend’s timely reprimand is like a gold ring slipped on your finger” (Prov. 15:11, 12, *The Message*). Solomon wrote this from personal experience, no doubt. Let’s consider the history involved in his assent to the throne as reported in 1 Kings 1.

King David was old, and plans for succession were definitely in the air. One interested individual was his son Adonijah, born of Haggith. Adonijah had decided that he would be king. He had a great reception, sacrificing sheep, cattle, etc. He had a small following (some will follow anyone). Things seemed to be going well. He invited the “who’s who” of the area minus a few notables, like Benaiah, Nathan the prophet (who would not go along with his plans for succession), and his own brother Solomon.

Then Nathan asked Bathsheba if she had heard what was going on and proceeded to give some unsolicited advice to save her life and that of her son Solomon. “Go to the king,” Nathan said, “explain what is going on and remind the king that Solomon is to be the next king as you had been promised. Then I’ll come in after you and back up what you’ve said before this thing gets out of hand.” So said,

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**“Explain what is going on and remind the king that Solomon is to be the next king.”**

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so done. They went through the anointing ceremony, and Solomon is now a part of royal history.

In today’s evolving, complex society we often require advice on the different choices that we are confronted with. It was recently reported in a financial magazine that a fortune 500 company in 1996 alone spent close to one billion dollars on consulting fees. Why? Hoping to receive new light or direction on how to get the company back on the right track and on the road to profitability.

The advice we give is far less costly, or is it? Ellen White writes, “We should consider the influence our words have upon those with whom we come into association. . . . Do we realize the eternal consequences and responsibility we have as advisors?”\* The advice we attempt to give to others will carry the weight of influence for good only as we are living out that advice in our own lives.

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\**The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1159.

## Steps to Take

### HOW-TO

**Key Text: James 1:5**

The Bible contains principles that touch every aspect of life, but we read it differently from a finance journal, textbook, encyclopedia, newspaper, or any other source of information. The difference is twofold. The first may be imperfectly compared to a computer encryption password or “key,” which scrambles a message, then is required by the receiver to unscramble it at the other end. The Holy Spirit is “The Key” to unlocking the Bible’s riches, since He Himself inspired human beings to write it in the first place. Only through His guidance can we properly unscramble God’s message for today’s living.

The second difference is that, unlike the computer password, we do not use the Holy Spirit. He uses us. The Holy Spirit begins by stirring our deepest longing for God. If we are truly looking for guidance from God, we then respond by:

**1. Asking Jesus to show us His will.** “Go to God who gives [wisdom] to all who ask Him for it” (James 1:5, Clear Word). In other words, we pray for guidance.

**2. Studying the Bible, as the Holy Spirit guides us.** “The Holy Spirit will help you understand these things and help you remember what [Jesus] said” (John 14:26, Clear Word). God’s will is in His Word; the Holy Spirit will unlock it for us as we read and study it.

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## We must put forth daily effort to understand God’s direction.

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**3. Confirming our decisions with others.** “In the multitude of counsellors there is safety” (Prov. 11:14; 24:6, KJV). We need to associate and communicate with others. Their experiences provide checkpoints against the dangers of extremism on either side. Of course, there is always the problem of choosing the wrong set of advisers (1 Kings 12:8), so continually repeating steps 1 and 2 is essential.

**4. Asking God to give us the strength to follow His leading.** “[God] will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless” (1 Cor. 1:8, NIV). Remember, God provides everything for the execution of His will in our lives.

We must put forth daily effort to understand God’s direction because our lives literally depend on it! “Look for [wisdom] as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand . . . the Lord and find the knowledge of God” (Prov. 2:4, 5, NIV).

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*By Riel Sarno, an emergency medicine physician, Mercy Hospital Medical Center, Des Moines, Iowa.*

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# The Way I See It

## OPINION

**Key Text: James 1:2, 5**

Paradox seemed to be a fact of biblical life. Christ says some seemingly un-Christlike words to a poor woman, presumably comparing her and her nationality to dogs that beg for crumbs under the Israelite table. But she persisted and got what she needed.

God spoke to Abram: "Offer up your only son, Isaac, as a sacrifice to Me on Mount Moriah."

*Is God suggesting pagan human sacrifices? Abram wondered. Is it really God speaking to me, or am I just hearing things?* Yet Abram obeyed, risking the possibility of crushing his promised seed, and he became Abraham, Father of Many Nations.

It could be argued that they knew all along what God's will was! The woman caught a slight wink from Jesus, letting her in on the joke. Abraham knew that God could resurrect Isaac if necessary. That's the way the Bible story goes! Everything tidies up and ends well. But how about my own story?

I sometimes forget that these people could not see beyond their present obstacle. The three Hebrews didn't know that only their ropes would burn off; John the Baptist could not know whether he would survive his execution. In His humanity, Jesus could not see beyond the suffering of Gethsemane and the horror

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## Paradox seemed to be a fact of biblical life.

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of the cross. But He knew it was God's will for Him to go through the sacrifice. When I am in the pothole of life, it becomes very important to me to know that that situation is really what God intended for me—was really part of His plan all along. It helps a great deal to know that I am actually doing what He wants me to.

But here's the catch. Can I be absolutely certain of God's will and plan for my life? Or is my situation just a result of my stubborn decision to engage in this business venture? Or use too many credit cards? Or marry this person? Or go through an abortion? Or eat in this restaurant? How detailed is His plan for me? Should I expect a broadly brushed generalization of my life's plans?

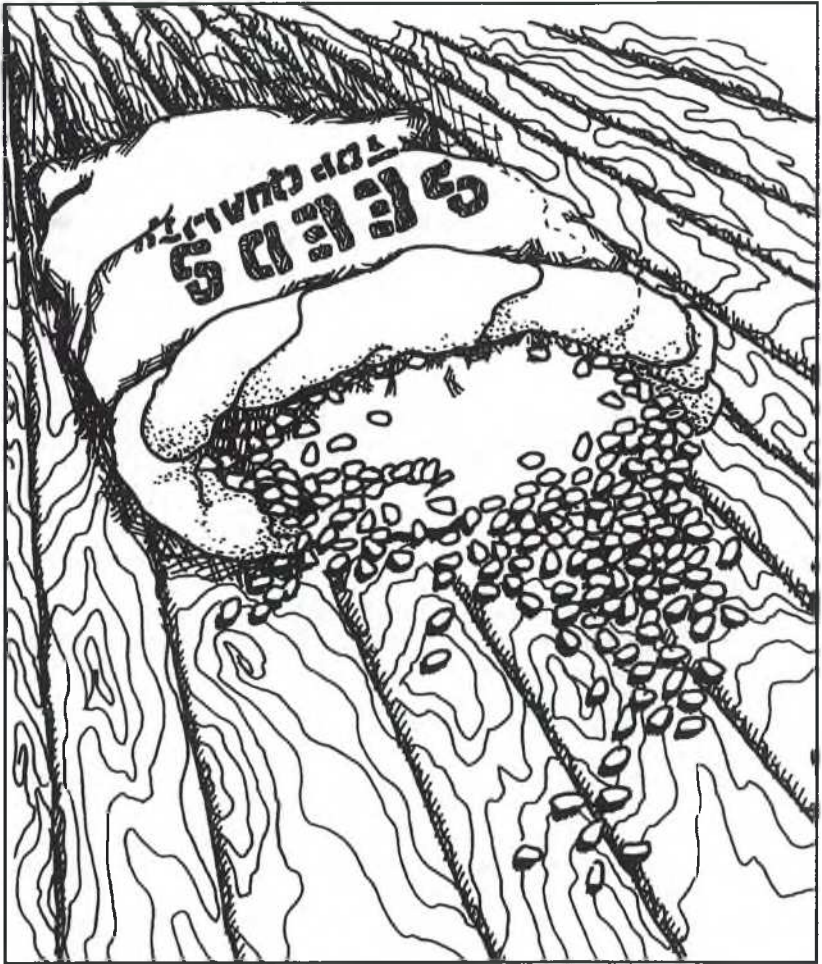
Too many questions? The answer remains. Jesus asks that I look away from my genetics, away from my environment, away from my multitude of poor choices—to Him as He is depicted in His Word the Bible. Wisdom and guidance are abundantly promised through daily prayer (James 1:5). As long as I have that ongoing connection each day with Jesus, no matter what circumstance I am in—dark or bright—I can truly count it all joy (not always feel all joy) and know that God is guiding me. And knowing God's will? Maybe it's not so much a knowledge of God's will that I need but simply knowing God Himself (John 17:3).

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*By Macy Sarno, a family-practice resident physician at Broadlawns Medical Center, Des Moines, Iowa.*

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# INNOCENT AS A LAMB



“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, ‘Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’ ” (John 1:29, NIV).

# God Touch

## INTRODUCTION

Scripture: **Exod. 34:5-7**

I touched God the other day.  
It was like brushing an electric bolt  
You didn't expect,  
And jumping back, cringing,  
Staring at it, hoping you could get by  
Without attracting it again.

It was terrifying,  
That moment,  
When God was God  
And not man,  
And I knew what it would be like  
To stare into the sky,  
To see Him, to know he was not man,  
Could not be reasoned with or used  
Like man,  
And to run screaming to the nearest cave.

And I said,  
"Oh God, if you are this,  
This which is so not man  
As to be incomprehensible,  
This which is truly alien,  
How can I serve you  
But in fear and ignorance?  
How can I not scream,  
'God is unmoved by our lives;  
He is not as we are!'"

And He said,  
"For this cause, I became Man.  
For this cause, I suffered  
And lived, breathed and died,  
As Man,  
For this cause,  
So that there could be  
No Doubt of My Love,  
I became a Man."

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*By Melody Snow, a freelance writer, leathercraft artist, and small business owner in Alvarado, Texas.*

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# Substitution and the Lamb

## LOGOS

Exod. 34:5-7; Isa. 53:5, 6; Rom. 3:28; 5:1; Phil. 2:5-8; 1 Thess. 5:23

### Precursor

“Now the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin’” (Exod. 34:5-7, NKJV).

After God had miraculously delivered the children of Israel from Egypt, they had journeyed to Mount Sinai, where Moses climbed the mountain alone to speak with God. In his absence, the Israelites rapidly forgot what God had done for them and made and worshiped a golden calf. When God threatened to destroy His people, Moses interceded for them to the point of willingness to suffer eternal death (“blot me out of Your book”) in their place. God would not permit Moses to do this because He would do so Himself.

### Prophecy

“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.

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## The Israelites rapidly forgot what God had done for them.

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All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:5, 6).

When Isaiah saw the vision of God—as a man—suffering the death of the sinner in our place, he was astounded (“Who has believed our report?”). This substitution is still intellectually and emotionally overwhelming today, long after the fact. The substitutionary death of a lamb in the place of a sinner, as ordained by God in the sacrificial system of Old Testament Israel, hints at the full reality of the incarnation and death of God. Isaiah himself made use of the sacrificial imagery in the verse following the above: “He was led as a lamb to the slaughter.”

### Fulfillment

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:5-8).

In admonishing the Philippians to put others ahead of themselves, Paul gives the supreme example of the man Christ Jesus, who is also, paradoxically, God the Son. He came down from eternity into time and space to become a man, not a ruler who proclaimed His divinity, but a servant “who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil” (Acts 10:38), proclaiming God’s mercy and grace in His life as well as in His death. He died—as our Substitute—the death

of a sinner, the death of a hardened criminal abhorred by humanity and forsaken by God.

### **Justification**

“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. . . . Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 3:28; 5:1).

Christ substituted His death for ours. Accepting this grace by faith (Eph. 2:8), we, wayward sheep though we are, need no longer suffer the penalty of sin—eternal death. Instead, the spotless Lamb of God gives us His sinless life. We “have peace with God,” as He in His infinite love has desired and made possible.

### **Sanctification**

“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:23).

God desires also to sanctify us, to make our lives into, as it were, an extension of the sinless life of Christ. This is, as is often said, the work of a lifetime. We find that the substitution of Christ’s life for ours, like the life itself, is rooted in eternity but grows up in time, flowering into good works.

Paul writes, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13, 14). Is it we who do the work, or is it God? Both! How is this possible? God works in us. Christ lives in us. “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). We find that we must die after all, but we die to sin, not for sin. In sanctification, we give up ourselves to Him, He lives and works through us, and, to complete the paradox, we become truly individual sons and daughters in His kingdom thereby. Blessed be He!

### **REACT**

1. How does the working out of salvation manifest itself in my life and in the lives of my fellow Christians?
2. How are they the same? How are they different?
3. Which elements of my natural temperament does the Holy Spirit transform as He sanctifies me? Which does He kill outright?

# Christ's Sacrifice and Sanctification

## TESTIMONY

**Key Texts:** John 10:17, 18; 17:19-25

Ellen White paraphrases John 10:17 by saying, “‘My Father has so loved you that He even loves Me more for giving My life to redeem you. In becoming your Substitute and Surety, by surrendering My life, by taking your liabilities, your transgressions, I am endeared to My Father; for by My sacrifice, God can be just, and yet the Justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.’”<sup>1</sup> God the Father loves us so much that Christ’s sacrificial act for humanity brought Him into a closer relationship with God the Father. The fact that Christ’s sacrifice increased the Father’s love for Him gives me a new appreciation for how much the Father loves me.

Christ’s sacrifice did not cause the Father to love humankind even more, but Christ’s sacrifice did reconcile humanity with the law, thus justifying the Father’s great desire to forgive humanity. Christ’s sacrificial act not only justified humanity but proved the Father to be perfectly just and merciful.

“I give myself entirely to you so they also might be entirely yours” (John 17:19, NLT). Ellen White says that Christ “devoted Himself wholly to God in an infinite sacrifice to redeem the world. What a wholeness in His life, His character! The plan of salvation, devised prior to the beginning of time, expresses the love of Christ

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## Christ’s sacrifice increased the Father’s love for Him.

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to man, the devotion of the Son to the Father’s glory.”<sup>2</sup> Christ desired that we (1) become sanctified and (2) become one with Him and the Father. As we daily give ourselves entirely to God, we become more and more devoted to the Father’s glorification as Christ was devoted to the Father’s glorification. Through this process, we become one with Christ and the Father and thus become sanctified.

Through the process of daily surrender, we overcome sin. Ellen White comments further, “‘You may say, ‘I was born with a natural tendency toward this evil, and I cannot overcome.’ But every provision has been made by our heavenly Father whereby you may be able to overcome every unholy tendency. You are to overcome even as Christ overcame in your behalf. And before man was created the provision was made that if man failed to bear the test, Jesus would become his sacrifice and surety, that through faith in him, man might be reconciled to God, for Christ was the lamb ‘slain from the foundation of the world.’ Christ died on Calvary that man might have power to overcome his natural tendencies to sin.”<sup>3</sup> Without Christ’s sacrifice we would not have the ability to become one with God, overcome sin, and thus be sanctified.

1. *Steps to Christ*, p. 14.

2. *The Signs of the Times*, Nov. 21, 1892, p. 8.

3. *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Feb. 23, 1892, p. 9.

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*By David Spells, a software engineer for Macromedia, Inc., Richardson, Texas.*

# Agnus Dei

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: John 1:29**

“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, ‘Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world’” (John 1:29).

A few weeks ago, I stood in a 200-voice chorus and sang the *Missa Solemnis*, composed by Ludwig van Beethoven. Beethoven’s setting of the traditional Latin church liturgy is profound and moving. Nowhere is this more evident than in the final movement of the work: *Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem* (“Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, grant us peace”). These words are first sung quietly by four soloists; later, they are pronounced forcefully by the full chorus, accompanied by orchestra. But each musical statement of the words *Agnus Dei*, whether loud or soft, has a dark and somber tone. Beethoven’s music helps us feel the profound thought that the weight of the world has been placed upon a single, innocent sacrifice.

Many great composers have set these words of John to music, and most have chosen to use minor keys—somber-sounding chords that vividly depict this weight of sorrow. Yet at least one—the great Franz Joseph Haydn—discovered the joy that is also present in the text. While composing music for the *Agnus Dei* text,

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## The great Franz Joseph Haydn discovered the joy that is also present in the text.

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he was once overcome with “uncontrollable gladness.” As Patrick Kavanaugh relates in his *Spiritual Lives of the Great Composers*, Haydn apologized to his royal patron, “explaining that the certainty of God’s grace had made him so happy that he wrote a joyful melody to accompany the sober words.”\*

“Behold the Lamb of God!” John’s annunciation of the coming of the Messiah into His ministry is also the annunciation of hope. Christ has come, John tells us, not to conceal sin, but to *take it away*. He has come to end the blood sacrifices by becoming the sacrifice for each individual who chooses to believe in Him. Like the ram that took Isaac’s place on Abraham’s altar, Christ has taken our place, suffering the death of separation from God.

*Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi*. I pray that each time I hear or sing the words, I will comprehend both their sorrow and their joy. Only then can I praise the God who is my joy, my salvation, and my song.

## REACT

If you were to express the complex concept of the “Lamb of God” in a work of art, what medium would you choose? Describe the result.

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\* Patrick Kavanaugh, *Spiritual Lives of the Great Composers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), p. 40.

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By Carol Slider, operations secretary for the Fort Worth (Texas) Symphony Orchestra.

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# Steps to Sanctification

## HOW-TO

**Key Texts:** 1 Thess. 5:23; Rom. 5:1-5

The salvation provided by Christ's death consists of two parts: justification and sanctification. Justification seems easy. It means accepting pardon for our sins.

Sanctification, on the other hand, seems impossible because it involves living a sin-free life. This is an illusion. Victory over sin comes through God's power, not our own. Yet, this doesn't mean sanctification is easy. Quite the opposite. It can be a very painful process, one marked by growth and small victories.

Paul gives a step-by-step guide to sanctification in Romans 5:1-5. It goes from tribulation to patience to experience to hope. Let's look at these elements.

**1. Tribulation.** Tribulation seems an odd place to begin. After all, most tests are given after the material has been studied, not before. During a recent period of stress in my life, I came to realize why Paul would think of it first. The sheer monstrosity of the situation forced me to face my own inadequacy and several cherished sins. It also reminded me of the true sinful, nastiness of the world we live in and that the only successful response is to turn to God for strength and help.

**2. Patience.** Patience also seems a little out of place. Tribulations turn into experiences, and experiences teach us what we can endure. Thus, patience is de-

## Most tests are given after the material has been studied, not before.

veloped from experience and is then available for the next time.

But there's another aspect to patience, one that Paul was probably thinking of. This is the calm acceptance of the trial, the appeal to God for strength, and the God-guided response to the situation. If we have this kind of patience, tribulation can open our minds to the lessons God wants us to learn right now.

**3. Experience.** When patience is viewed as a prerequisite for growth, experience falls right in place. The tribulation is the test. Patience is learning the lesson. Experience is gaining the confidence to continue our walk with God, based on how He has helped in the past.

**4. Fulfilled Hope.** With a wealth of personal experience in God, we come to know Him as our best Friend. This is the most precious, the most fantastic, part of the Christian life, that God could take rebellious humanity and restore it into His family. We see only part of that here on this earth. The rest awaits His coming, when all our hopes in Him will be fulfilled.

## REACT

In 2 Peter 1:4-8, Peter gives a different guideline for Christian growth. Compare and contrast 2 Peter 1:4-8 with Romans 5:1-5. What additional insights can be gained from Peter's list?

*By Melody Snow, a freelance writer, leathercraft artist, and small business owner from Alvarado, Texas.*



# Nietzsche Is Dead

## OPINION

**Key Text: Phil. 2:5-8**

Jesus died for me. Not for the world, not for some great and noble cause, and not even to “prove his point” to Satan. He died for me.

When the nineteenth-century philosopher, Nietzsche, proclaimed, “God is dead,” he was attempting to undermine the Christian faith. After all, once people understood that the Christian God died, they would lose interest in Him and pay attention only to Nietzsche’s Superman. Wouldn’t they?

But Nietzsche’s attack failed because, though our God did die, He rose again. This is the basis of our faith. As Christians we not only acknowledge our God’s Death, we celebrate the fact with a special ritual. When we partake of Communion, we are reminded that Jesus died for our sins. We hear it all the time, but how often do we stop and try to analyze what this actually means? As Christians we believe an absurdity: that God, the Creator who spoke the universe into existence, the Eternal Word, whose will keeps every galaxy, planet, and electron spinning within its proper orbit, the Great I AM, who loves our very soul into being—this Omnipotent, Immortal One died. And He died for me.

It’s strange. Right here at the center—at the very heart of Christianity—we

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## Nietzsche’s attack failed because, though our God did die, He rose again.

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find an idea so preposterous that the church’s enemies have used it as the basis for much of their warfare against us. “But we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles” (1 Cor. 1:23, NIV).

How could God die? And if He could, and did, then why? C. S. Lewis came up with one possible (and, by his own admission, quite speculative) answer. As members of a fallen race born with a sinful nature, our only path to salvation is through surrendering our wills to God. But as sinners, we do not have the strength to surrender without help. And how could God help us to surrender if He Himself had never surrendered?

But He has surrendered, on the cross, where He died for me, and in dying, conquered death. He died for you as well and for every other person who ever has, or ever will, live. He would have died if only one person had needed it. That makes it a very personal issue. Each of us can sincerely say, “God died for *me*.”

How can we refuse such a sacrifice?

## REACT

1. How should it affect your relationships with another person if you realize that God would have died for just him or her?

2. Why can’t we accept the forgiveness that Christ’s death offers to us (justification) without accepting the indwelling change (sanctification)?

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*By Donald Hines, a data-control specialist for Sprint, Las Colinas, Texas.*

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# MY FATHER AND MY GOD



“ ‘You are my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation’ ” (Ps. 89:26, NKJV).

# An Invitation

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Ps. 29:11; Matt. 11:28-30; John 4:14; 14:1-4; 15:1-5, 13**

My Dearest Child,

I just want to spend today with you. You are a dear friend to Me, and it's been a while since we just chatted together or walked in each other's company. I've missed the times, as I am sure you have too.

I invite you to My house. I'll serve you food I've made just for you (your favorites) and water from My deepest spring. I want to know what you now plan to do with your future—do you still have plans for your mansion?

Remember the thing we used to do just for fun, as friends? Let's choose this day to do a few of these things, for old times and the new times.

My garden is full of flowers and fruit. Bouquets of roses fill My house. And My vineyard has produced huge clusters of fruit. I'll give you some if you just come and ask. I have more than enough to share.

I know you have struggled with that thing I asked you not to do, but you did it anyway. Yes, you did hurt Me. But you are My friend, and I love you. Please accept My forgiveness—I hold no grudges.

I know I have crossed your mind many times and you meant to answer My calls and My letters. In fact, last time I visited I saw some letters lying unopened on

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## **Please accept My forgiveness—I hold no grudges.**

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your tabletop. I just wanted to share My life with you. You know what I've done and what My plans are. I do hope you understand how much I wanted to give these few moments to you.

I invite you again to come to My place, to share, to listen, and just to be in each other's company. Won't you come and stay awhile? I'll be looking forward to that time.

Forever your loving Friend,  
Jesus

P.S.: Please answer quickly, for I am anxious to see and be with you again.

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*By Jodi Ferguson, an artist and teacher's assistant at Athens (Tennessee) SDA Elementary School.*

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## Friends With the Father?

### LOGOS

**Deut. 7:6-8; Ps. 34:8-10; 91:2; 145:18; Mal. 3:16, 17; Rom. 8:38, 39**

When someone mentions God the Father, what picture comes to your mind? Do you see a stern, unapproachable judge handing down strict—often silly—rules, waiting to punish harshly the slightest disobedience? Far too many people see God in such a way. They have never learned that more than anything else God desires to be a Father and a Friend.

We were created for friendship with God. Sin severed this relationship and made necessary God's role as a lawgiver and judge (1 Tim. 1:9; Eccles. 12:14). No longer could the Father communicate face to face with humanity. But this state of affairs is only temporary (Rev. 22:4). The plan of salvation offers humankind a return to the friendship that disobedience interrupted. Everything God does is motivated by His desire to bring an end to the problem of sin (1 John 3:8), which has had such devastating effects on the entire creation (Rom. 8:19-23). The Father is willing to do whatever it takes (Rom. 8:32) to restore us to fellowship.

### The Gospel According to Moses (Deut. 7:6-8)

In this passage we see the two central facts of the plan of salvation. Speaking to the children of Israel (including believers today, Rom. 2:28, 29), Moses said, "The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself" (Deut.

## We were created for friendship with God.

7:6). The gospel begins with God, not simply inviting us to come to Him, but actively seeking us (Luke 19:10; Gen. 3:9). But before pride sets in, Moses reminds us that our worthiness has played no part in our being chosen for the awesome privilege of becoming God's friends (Eph. 2:8, 9; Rom. 9:11).

The second great truth revealed in these verses is found in the words, "The Lord . . . redeemed you out of the house of bondmen" (Deut. 7:8). It was not enough for God merely to choose us. Adam's disobedience brought all humankind under the rule of sin (Rom. 5:12, 19), and as slaves to sin (John 8:34) we were powerless to break its hold on us and respond to God's mercy. Jesus' death made it possible for us to become God's friends (Rom. 5:10).

In Moses' gospel we see the basis for this unique relationship with our Creator. The cliché says that where there's a will, there's a way. Here we have both. God's will is seen in His choice of us as His people. His way is seen in the atoning death of His Son, Jesus Christ.

### Tasting and Seeing (Ps. 34:8-10)

Although an intellectual knowledge of the plan of salvation is good, it is not enough to save us. We must believe that God is worth knowing personally (Heb. 11:6). The refusal of the Father's offer of fellowship begins with a misunderstanding of God's character. The psalmist says, "Taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps. 34:8). The love of God requires more than intellectual assent; we must experience it personally—here and now.

The psalms offer wonderful insight into God's character and attributes. In

Psalm 145:18, David emphasizes the nearness of God to all who call on Him, and in Psalm 91:2, calls God “my refuge . . . in him will I trust.” In God we have a friend who is not only completely trustworthy but one who offers us a security that we cannot provide for ourselves.

### **Something Even Better (Mal. 3:16, 17)**

In this text Malachi, as well as reminding us that God will not forget His people, gives us a glimpse of another aspect of our relationship with God in the phrase “as a man spareth his own son.” Jesus told us that we are His friends (John 15:15), but God has something even better planned for us. Paul tells us Christ died “that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Gal. 4:4-7).

### **What Manner of Love (Rom. 8:38, 39)**

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (1 John 3:1). What more could the Father possibly offer us? We can only stand in awe of the character of a God who has promised to make us joint heirs with His only Son (Rom. 8:17). The love of God is a nearly incomprehensible mystery and will be our study throughout eternity. But even though we “see through a glass, darkly” (1 Cor. 13:12), we can say with Paul, “I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38, 39).

### **REACT**

1. What are some common misunderstandings of God’s character?
2. How can you be sure you understand God’s true character?
3. How is God’s vengeance (Rom. 12:19) compatible with His love?



# Separated

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Rom. 8:38, 39**

A few years ago my dad fulfilled a life-long dream of learning to fly by taking lessons and getting his private pilot's license. After he got his license, we had flown on many different occasions to many different places without incident, so only my mother, who doesn't really like to fly, was still apprehensive.

It was a beautiful weekend, and my great aunt from California was visiting my grandfather in North Carolina. We decided to fly over the mountains to see them for the day on Sunday.

We got to the airport and checked the weather and got a good report that the storms that were supposed to arrive that afternoon would be late and would be arriving long after we would. So we all piled in and took off for the one hour and fifteen-minute flight across the mountain. We landed, enjoyed a good visit with loved ones, and shared a delicious lunch. On the return trip to the airport, my mother looked out the window and spotted the clouds. My father said that the ceiling was still plenty high and that we should be able to return easily because the weather report said the storm wasn't supposed to arrive until late that evening. So we took off for home.

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## We got to the airport and checked the weather.

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As we flew, however, the clouds kept getting lower and lower. Because Dad didn't yet have his instrument flight rating, we had to fly around the clouds rather than through them. Twice we had to turn around, but finally found a break in the clouds that allowed us over the edge of the mountain into the Tennessee Valley. Finally landing at the airport in the rain, we were so happy to be on the ground!

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38, 39). Have you ever felt separated from God, friends, family—maybe even the ground? God promises us that nothing can separate us from His love. What an encouragement!

## REACT

1. Describe a time when you felt separated from God's love.
2. What is separation from God and what causes it?
3. What can we do to avoid becoming separated from God?

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*By Jeremy Kennedy, a freshman college student from Athens, Tennessee.*

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# The Friend of God

## EVIDENCE

**Key Texts: Gen. 17:1-8; James 2:21-24**

*“Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God” (James 2:23).*

The Lord made a promise to Abraham because of his loyalty to Him: “I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly” (Gen. 17:1, 2). Through Abraham’s son, Israel, God established His people spoken of through Isaiah the prophet, “But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend” (Isa. 41:8). God the Father bestowed upon the children of Israel many blessings and carried them through many tribulations because Abraham walked with God.

Israel’s son Jacob had 12 sons, establishing the 12 tribes of Israel. One of the tribes was Judah. The fourth king of Judah was Jehoshaphat, who prayed to the Father before the children of Judah, “Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?” (2 Chron. 20:7).

God the Father sent a prophet to Jehoshaphat to tell him that he did not need

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## **This Moabite stone was discovered in 1868, in what was then called Dibon, the capital of Moab.**

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to fight against the Moabites who were coming to attack him. So Jehoshaphat sent singers out before the enemies, pronouncing, “Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth for ever” (2 Chron. 20:21). In the midst of the singing, the enemies of the children of Judah began to destroy each other. The only surviving Moabites were the ones who did not fight against God’s people that day.

Mesha was king of the Moabites during the reign of Jehoshaphat of Judah (2 Kings 3:4-7). A monument to King Mesha that recorded many of his battles with the children of Israel and Judah was erected in 850 B.C. This Moabite stone was discovered in 1868, in what was then called Dibon, the capital of Moab.\*

Abraham, the friend of God, believed God and received His blessings. Through Abraham’s seed, the heavenly Father established His children. God revealed Himself through the children of Israel so that we, too, might learn to walk with God and listen carefully as He leads us away from our own journey toward death to the path of life forever with Him.

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\* William C. Martin, *The Layman’s Bible Encyclopedia* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southwestern Company, 1964), p. 535.

# My Father, My Friend

## HOW-TO

**Key Texts:** Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6, 7

What a privilege to be called children of God, to be heirs with Jesus Christ. The question is: How do we become a child of God or a friend to Him? On earth our male parent is called “father” or “daddy.” Both are terms of endearment fostered by trust (faith), love, and friendship. Our heavenly Father wishes for the same personal, loving relationship. He wants to be included in our lives. He bids us to call on Him: “Ask, and ye shall receive” (John 16:24). He can bestow many gifts, as well as open up doors that we know nothing about: “Ask, and it shall be given you . . . knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Matt. 7:7).

How do we get started on the blessed relationship? Abraham communed with God on a regular basis and was called “the Friend of God” (James 2:23). This scripture tells us one of the ways: Abraham believed God. Faith is the main ingredient in this relationship, for “without faith it is impossible to please him” (Heb. 11:6). As we call upon Him, we exercise our faith and learn to trust in the Lord.

Christ gives us another way to show our affection to Him: “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). As faith and love for our Creator grows, we find joy in keeping His holy law, and we no longer consider it work.

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## “Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend.”

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How do we communicate with our Father above? “Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend.”<sup>1</sup> Satan will try to impress us that we are unworthy to call upon God. “How can I pray to the Lord after . . . ?”

The exact opposite is true! “It is Satan’s work to fill men’s hearts with doubt. . . . He tempts them to sin, and then to regard themselves as too vile to approach their heavenly Father or to excite His pity. The Lord understands all this.”<sup>2</sup> This is when we need to pray. “Jesus assures His disciples of God’s sympathy.”<sup>3</sup> When things are going well, we tend not to pray as much. We reason, after all, if things are well with us, we don’t need to. That’s when Satan can jump in. Most of us have a best friend who will share our deepest thoughts. This is the same kind of intimacy that our Father in heaven wants to share with us.

## REACT

1. In my daily life, what are some of the ways that I can show myself a friend of God?
2. What characteristics have I seen in others that tell me they are friends of God?

1. *Steps to Christ*, p. 93.

2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 356.

3. *Ibid.*

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*By Carl Person, a herpetologist from Athens, Tennessee.*

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# The Most Perfect Friend

## OPINION

**Key Texts: Ps. 34:8, 9; 91:2; Deut. 7:6-8; Rom. 8:38, 39**

Dave Isaac. There are simply not enough words to describe Dave. Beautiful to look at; as magnificently structured as a Greek statue. He is intelligent, witty, oh so charming, extremely down to earth, and still friendly. During the summer between college semesters, Dave and I worked together in a restaurant and became acquainted. We had many similar thoughts, opinions, likes, and dislikes. Yet, as well as I knew Dave, it never ceased to amaze me how open and real he was; never did his physical perfection puff up his attitude. He was friendly with everyone, even to those who looked down on him because of his beauty.

You may be wondering how this has anything to do with this week's lesson, "My Father and My God." The answer is simple. Dave was as perfect a person as I would ever hope to meet, yet he desired a friendship with me. My Father God is perfect beyond my understanding, yet He, too, craves a friendship and companionship with imperfect me.

No human can offer perfect security. On the other hand, God told us thousands of years ago that He had chosen us to be His people above all others on the earth (Deut. 7:6-8). Talk about a steady commitment! This promise is multifaceted.

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## He, too, craves a friendship and companionship with imperfect me.

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Wedding vows always scare me. They cover much, possibly harsh, gray area in sweet-sounding little phrases. Our God gives specifics in Psalm 34:8-18.

People's failure to accomplish what they committed to was a burr under Dave's saddle. I remember one specific instance when Dave agreed to help his brother; yet when he arrived his brother was gone, no note, nothing. Dave could not understand why his brother asked for help then became a no-show. We tend to do the same thing to God: ask for help and then reject it when it does not fit into our plans. Dave now hesitates to help his brother, but God leaves an open line (Ps. 145:18). I hope you will join me in proclaiming, "The Lord . . . is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust" (Ps. 91:2).

Dave and I did not have a happily-ever-after ending. It did not end badly. Our relationship came to a halt when Dave left college, and I have not heard from him since. I have, however, found the most perfect Friend I could imagine. He is *my Father and my God*, and I know our relationship will never end.

## REACT

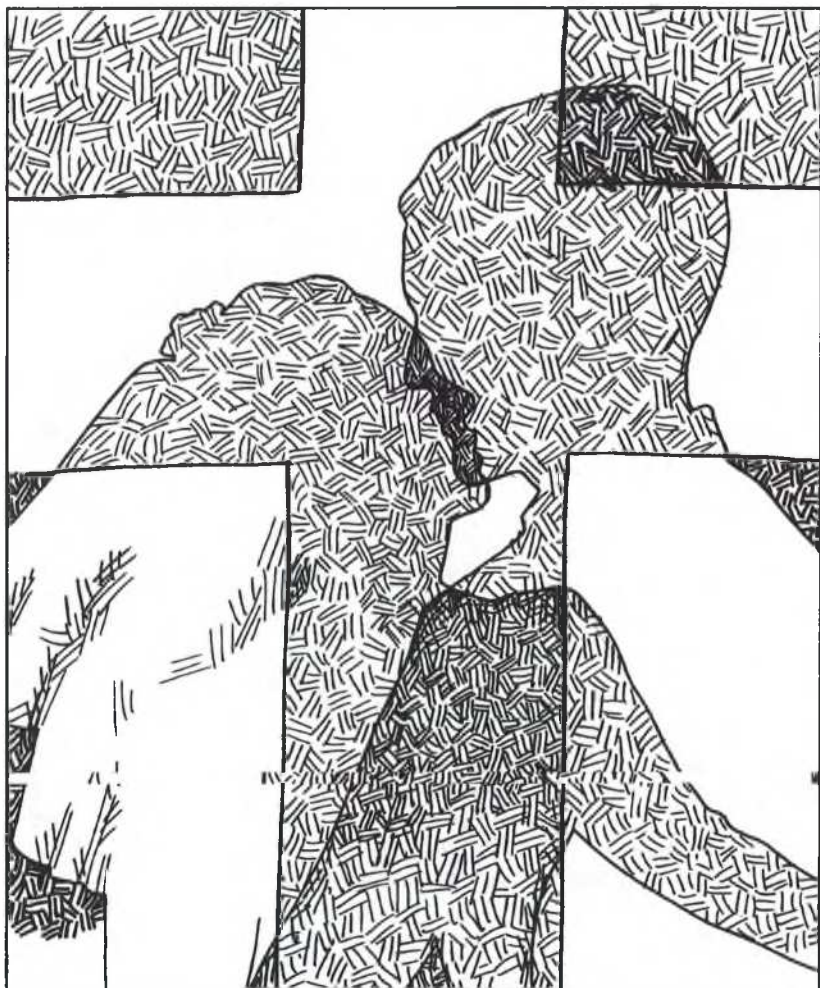
1. How has God shown His friendship to me lately?
2. How can I become more committed to my friend Jesus?
3. How can I make it clear to others that Jesus is my friend?

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*By Tracy North, a college student in Etowah, Tennessee.*

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# TOUCHED BY AN ANGEL



**“The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them” (Ps. 34:7, NIV).**



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# The Song of the Hosts

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Ps. 91:11**

*I heard an angel sing today.* It was the first thing I heard this morning. I remember it lifting me from my sleep with a hushed whisper. As I slowly woke, the notes became clearer, the tones sharper. And as I listened, I heard the angel speak of God's love for His children. It reminded me, as it always does, to begin my day praising the Lord, as the angel does each morning.

*I heard an angel sing today.* At first it was subtle. The breeze picked up as I walked. As the leaves around me rustled, I heard the undertones of the symphony. Then the clouds rolled in. Suddenly, the tune was crashing with the percussion of thunder and rainfall. As my shirt became soaked, I listened to the angel, proclaiming God's great power, guarding and caring for nature. It roared all about me, and I stood awestruck by its intensity. It reminded me, as it always does, to praise the Lord for His power, as the angel does with each storm.

*I heard an angel sing today.* It was a short, urgent tune. I was driving when it struck my ears—sounding mysteriously like the squeal of tires, the slamming of brakes. In that moment before I saw the other vehicle, I heard the angel shout, piercing every distraction. Then, just as I heard it speak, other angels joined in.

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## **I saw her on the street corner, huddled close to her mother.**

More tires, horns blaring, and the sway of bodies in motion. Moments later the song was done, as I looked in my rearview mirror to try to see a trace of it. But the sounds of the traffic-filled street resumed. It reminded me, as it always does, to praise the Lord for His attention and protection on my life, as the angel does each waking moment.

*I heard an angel sing today.* At first I didn't recognize it. It sounded almost like a little girl. I saw her on the street corner, huddled close to her mother. They had the tired, worn look that comes from need. I thought surely it was a mistake, and I tried to rush quickly past the pair. But then I heard the song again, and I stopped. A brief moment was all it took. I knew just what they needed. I began to convince myself that I had neither the money nor the time, but the song rose up again to fill my ears. It wasn't any terrible thing—a half-hour in a grocery store and bus fare for two—but their faces were transformed before they left. I heard the angel-girl say, "God bless you," and it rang in my ears forever. It reminded me, as it always does, to praise the Lord for placing angels for me to bless, and thus be blessed in return.

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*By David Paul Guzmán, a Christian musician and writer in Miami, Florida.*

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## In Terms of the Kingdom

### LOGOS

**Gen. 19:1, 12, 13; Matt. 16:27; Luke 2:8-11; Heb. 1:14; Rev. 5:11; 7:1**

There is much uncertainty today surrounding the question of angels, their function, and eventual purpose. Others ask, "How do we know that this is an angel from God? Did not Lucifer entice one-third of the heavenly host to join his cohort? Are they not under his power—power which is used to deceive?" Each is a good question, deserving a good answer.

First, let us look at the function of angels. Hebrews 1:14 says, "Are not all angels . . . sent to serve?" Revelation 19:9, 10 states, "Then the angel said to me, 'Write' . . . At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, 'Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God!' " (NIV). Here we see that angels function as servants and do not accept the praise that God rightly deserves. Any being who attempts otherwise is not from the God of heaven. As Isaiah 8:20 says, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (KJV).

Today's "spirit guides" who communicate with the dead are not angels of God's kingdom. "New Age religionists frequently refer to 'angels' as their

### **Today's "spirit guides" who communicate with the dead are not angels of God's kingdom.**

guides, although these false angels were previously known as "spiritual guides or demons."<sup>1</sup> Talking with dead persons is unscriptural. "For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing," and "there is no . . . knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Eccl. 9:5, 9). What appears to be the form of a human is actually an impersonating angel under Satan's power.

Like subjects and messengers on earth, angels belong to a kingdom and represent a king. No angel except Lucifer, who rebelled against the government of heaven, acts of his own accord. They go but they must first be sent. Angels are spiritual beings who are created by God with immortality. They are attendant upon God and can be described as heavenly guardians, warriors, ministering spirits, or messengers. Fallen angels, on the other hand, often are described as devils or demons, serving Lucifer, a former archangel known in the Hebrew as Abaddon or in Greek as Appolyon, which means "destroyer."<sup>2</sup>

#### **As Messengers**

Genesis 19:1, 12, 13 tells of the angels who appeared to Lot to warn him of the impending destruction of Sodom. In Luke 1, Zechariah was visited by the archangel Gabriel, who declared that his barren wife would soon bear a son. An angel visited Philip in Acts 8:26-29, instructing him, "Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza" (RSV) so that he might minister to the Ethiopian.

## **As Warriors**

The Bible tells “of warring angels who fight spiritual battles for us and who overcome the efforts of Satan’s demons to keep God’s blessings from us.”<sup>3</sup> Jesus spoke of them when He rebuked Peter for cutting off the ear of the Roman official during His arrest in the garden. “Put your sword back into its place,” Jesus said. “Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father and he will at once send me more than 12 legions of angels?”

## **As Protectors**

Angels are also sent to help in time of need as ministering spirits to those who “will inherit salvation” (Heb 1:14, NIV). The psalmist declares, “For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone” (Ps. 91:11, 12, KJV). Similarly, when the apostles were placed in prison to be tried, an angel opened the prison doors (Acts 5:19, 20).

Throughout the Bible we see that angels are sent to aid in the lives of individuals after others have interceded on their behalf. Abraham pleaded with God for the lives his nephew Lot and the righteous in Sodom (Gen. 19:15). God did not find the conditional 10 righteous persons within the city, but two angels were sent to “bring Lot and his family out . . . before its sudden and total destruction in a holocaust of fire and brimstone.”<sup>4</sup> In Acts 12:5-8, the early church remained in constant prayer for Peter, who was imprisoned and was to be brought before Herod. Their prayers were answered: In the night an angel awakened Peter, released his chains, and led him out of prison.

Although many of the roles that angels occupy are of service to humankind, at the judgment day they will perform a duty for God that will be fearful for many. Jesus states, “The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 13:41, 42).

Let us not be in that number.

## **REACT**

How are you preparing yourself to discern between the works of Satan and of God?

1. [http://www.virtualchurch.org/jk\\_angel.htm](http://www.virtualchurch.org/jk_angel.htm).
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

## Personal Attention

### TESTIMONY

**Key Texts:** Matt. 18:10; Ps. 34:7

God's angels have access to His presence at all times, and they *actively* work for our salvation. In order to assure this personal attention for each of us, the Father includes the following areas in the angels' ministry:

**1. Guarding us.** "Never should we begin the day without committing our ways to our heavenly Father. His angels are appointed to watch over us, and if we put ourselves under their guardianship, then in every time of danger they will be at our right hand."<sup>1</sup>

**2. Strengthening our faith.** "Again and again have angels talked with men as a man speaketh with a friend, and led them to places of security. Again and again have the encouraging words of angels renewed the drooping spirits of the faithful."<sup>2</sup>

**3. Enlightening our minds.** "If you make God your strength, you may, under the most discouraging circumstances, attain a height and breadth of Christian perfection which you hardly think it possible to reach. Your thoughts may be elevated, you may have noble aspirations, [and] clear perceptions of truth."<sup>3</sup>

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### **"You are not alone in the warfare against wrong."**

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**4. Helping us to do right.** "You are not alone in the warfare against wrong. Could the curtain be rolled back, you would see heavenly angels fighting with you. This they must do; it is their work to guard the youth. . . . Ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of angels minister to the youth."<sup>4</sup>

**5. Aiding our efforts for the lost.** "When heavenly intelligences see those who claim to be sons and daughters of God putting forth Christlike efforts to help the erring, manifesting a tender, sympathetic spirit for the repentant and the fallen, angels press close to them, and bring to their remembrance the very words that will soothe and uplift the soul. . . . Jesus has given his precious life, his personal attention, to the least of God's little ones; and the angels that excel in strength encamp round about them that fear God."<sup>5</sup>

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1. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 341.

2. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 153.

3. *Counsels on Health*, p. 384.

4. *The Youth's Instructor*, Jan. 1, 1903.

5. *Healthful Living*, p. 277.

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*By Angela Maria Fals, a fourth-year medical student at Loma Linda (California) University School of Medicine.*

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# Jesus, an Angel

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Gen. 32:30**

Angel: [Heb. *mal'ak*; Gk. *angelos*—"messenger"] The word *angel* is applied in Scripture to an order of supernatural beings whose function is to act as God's messengers to humankind and as agents who carry out His will.

Jesus believed in good and bad angels. He speaks of the "angels in heaven" (Matt. 22:30) and of "the devil and his angels" (25:41). According to our Lord, the angels of God are holy (Mark 8:38); they have no sex or sensuous desires (Matt. 22:30); they could have been sent to the aid of our Lord had He so desired (26:53). To doubt whether angels exist is to doubt the Scriptures—and even the words of Jesus Himself.

Scripture describes different kinds of angels. An angel with six wings was called a Seraph (Isa. 6:2). Cherubim are said to have four wings (Ezek. 1:5, 6). The Scripture also speaks of a certain angel that has become the study of many biblical scholars. Called "The Angel of the Lord," he is mentioned in Genesis 16:7—the angel and Hagar. In Genesis 22:11, the angel interposes to prevent the sacrifice of Isaac. In Exodus 3:2, the angel of the Lord appeared in the burning bush. Who

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## Jesus believed in good and bad angels.

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is this angel? We can begin to find this answer in Exodus 3:4, "God called unto him out of the midst of the bush."

In Genesis 32:30 after Jacob wrestles with the "angel of the Lord," he says the following: "I have seen God face to face." Exodus 13:21 says: "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire." Later on, "And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face" (14:19).

These verses and many more show that the angel of the Lord in the Old Testament refers to Jesus, the second person of the Trinity who has always been in contact with human beings. Although He is fully God, in the Old Testament He showed Himself to humans as "the Angel of the Lord."

How great it is to know that Jesus has always been looking for ways to be with us in person, and now He can't wait to have us in heaven with Him.

## REACT

1. What do angels do for God and for humanity?
2. Why would Jesus ever show Himself as an angel?



## “You’ll Never Walk Alone”

### HOW-TO

**Key Text:** Ps. 34:7

Some years back I was reunited with a friend I had lost touch with for several years. The topic of conversation moved to spiritual things, and somehow the concept of guardian angels came up. My friend whimsically suggested that our guardian angels were likely sitting over in the corner of the room getting “caught up” on the happenings since their last meeting. We wondered if they were happy to see each other again and if they might be shaking their heads and rolling their eyes, like two nursemaids fretting about the antics of their mischievous charges.

To my knowledge, I’ve never had a conversation with my guardian angel as the characters do in the TV series *Touched by an Angel*. I don’t really have a mental picture of what my angel looks like or even the sense of his presence on an everyday basis. Still, I believe in angels because of Scripture, because I have felt protected in situations that should have turned out disastrous, and because it is so like a loving God to provide us with heavenly bodyguards.

Angels are more than just nick-of-time superheroes protecting us from imminent bodily harm. They are assistants to the Holy Spirit, fortifying us during moments of temptation, lifting us up when we’re discouraged, helping us understand

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### Angels are more than just nick-of-time superheroes.

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the Word of God, urging us toward building a Christlike character, and guarding us from deceptions. They are an important part of the communication chain between us and heaven.

How should the knowledge that there are angels at large in the universe impact our lives? Here are some suggestions:

**1. Learn to trust in God.** When facing temptation or difficulties, we can freely go to the One who will send His angels to encamp around us and deliver us (Ps. 34:7).

**2. Be thankful.** Knowing that angels guide us through unseen dangers every day should awaken our gratitude.

**3. Be on guard.** While keeping a healthy awareness of the evil intentions of the other angels from the enemy camp, we can rest assured that God’s angels are able to provide a protective shield, impenetrable to enemy attack.

**4. Reach out to the lost.** Be confident that angels are our heavenly partners in building the kingdom and are constantly at work for the salvation of souls.

**5. Meditate on the plan of redemption.** It is a story into which “angels long to look” (1 Pet. 1:12). One day we will understand the role the angels played in our own redemption, and we will feel at home with these eternal companions in heaven at last.

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*By Lori Sawyer, a speech-language pathologist in Miami, Florida.*

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## Get the Message

### OPINION

#### Key Text: Luke 2:8-11

March 10, 1989, I sat outside on the porch waiting for the mailman to come to our building. He came but did not deliver what I was waiting for. I was driving my parents crazy waiting for word from Phillips Academy Andover. Did they accept me? Why haven't I gotten word from them yet? I didn't know my parents had asked the school to forward any correspondence to our post office box, where my dad went to pick up the mail daily, and not to our street address. My parents seemed so aloof to my worry. I was becoming very bitter. Only nine days later, on my birthday, did I learn that my parents had received the letter of admission exactly on March 10, but they were saving the good news for my birthday.

In a way, this is how God's angels operate. They have a message from God, and they deliver it. But sometimes they have to assuage fears and make us comfortable before we are willing to hear what they have to say and obey the word of God. When the angels appeared to the shepherds in Luke 2:8-11, for example, the shepherds were terrified. The angels had to comfort them before they could deliver the good news of the birth of our Messiah. The shepherds eventually went to the manger where Jesus was born in order to worship Him.

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## Are angels God's AT&T, reaching out and touching us?

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God uses His angels not only to deliver good news but also to warn about forthcoming disaster, as He did in Genesis 19:12. The angels that visited Lot warned him about escaping Sodom and Gomorrah; otherwise, he and his family would have to face destruction. Because of the angels' visit, Lot was able to save his family.

But is this all that angels do, deliver messages from God? Are they God's AT&T, reaching out and touching us? No, angels perform a higher function. Angels are "ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation" (Heb. 1:14). What does this mean? Angels will deliver good news and bad news. They will steady our fears and keep tabs on the world (Rev. 7:1) to make sure we don't harm ourselves. If we are God's children, then God's angels are His day-care workers, ensuring that we remember our Father and that we keep our actions and thoughts according to His will.

### REACT

1. When does God use His angels to communicate with us?
2. Have there been instances in your own life where you could see God's angels involved in your well-being?
3. In what ways are angels similar to us?

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*By Monikah Drayton, a homemaker in Miami, Florida.*

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# WHEN YOU SEND AN S.O.S.



**“So we can say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?’ ” (Heb. 13:6, NRSV).**

# Problems—Who Does Not Have Them?

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Gen. 16:7-14**

Do you sometimes feel so bogged down by problems so insurmountable that nothing else matters? I have often faced those situations, but the story of Hagar has given me much encouragement.

The story of Hagar is one of an undesirable character in the Bible. Her name means “runaway.” She was a slave, so this makes her a runaway slave. Her very name denotes that she has been branded for life. It might have been something that she did that earned her that name.

Then Abram comes into the picture. Somebody might have offered Hagar to him as a gift, or he could have seen her pitiful face and bought her in the slave market. But as the story goes, she became part of Abram’s household—a handmaid to Sara. Here she found her niche. Abram was a godly man. Her mistress did not abuse her. In fact, she was loved by her mistress so much that when Sara was impatient about the promised son, she suggested that Abram take Hagar.

All the dreams of a young girl falling in love fell apart for Hagar. Here she was—to be married to an 80-year-old man—just to fulfill a promise. Did she feel used? Was she disgusted? No, she felt important. She was somebody now. She was finally accepted.

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## **All the dreams of a young girl falling in love fell apart for Hagar.**

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But things did not work out well. Most of our problems begin within us. Circumstances and situations may change, but we often magnify them, thus blinding ourselves to the point that we run away.

Like Hagar, we are in a wilderness of our own. We are so often wrapped up with so many problems that they are like a wilderness to us. But it was in the wilderness that God found Hagar and gave her a promise to help her. He did not promise her a problem-free life from there. He told her to return to face her problem, *but* He would help her.

To all your problems, keep looking up—God hears, and help is near!

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*By Lucy Ho, administrative secretary of Southeast Asia Union Mission, Singapore.*

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# Help We Can Trust

## LOGOS

Ps. 27:1-3; 48:14; Isa. 41:10; 59:18-20; Nah. 1:7; Eph. 3:20

Every pilgrim experiences the intractable nature of sin and the frailty of human existence and discovers that God is the only help to escape these tentacles. The psalmist begins his song with a thought: "I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from?" (Ps 121:1, NIV). As a struggling pilgrim, he wants to know where he can turn in times of need. The right source of help could mean the difference between success and failure.

"My help comes from the Lord" (verse 2). God, says the psalmist, is that source of help. He is the most complete help that any believer could possibly want. He helps the poor (72:12) and the orphans (10:14). God helps in times of oppression (54:4), illness (28:70), and great personal distress (86:17). He is a refuge in times of trouble (Nah. 1:7) and He grasps His people securely in His hand (Isa. 41:10). With such a God at one's side, the pilgrim can say, "The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. 27:1). God is the most reliable help because, as creator of heaven and earth, all the powers at His disposal are harnessed to assist His struggling pilgrims.

It is one thing to be told that God is our help. It is quite a different matter to believe that God is help we can trust. Can the believer safely turn to God for help?

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## There is never a time when He is not on watch.

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To understand the answer to this question, it is necessary to discover what type of help God is. The nature of God's help determines whether or not we can trust Him and whether or not He can be relied upon when the going gets really tough.

The first thing to note about this helping God is that He is tireless (121:3, 4). There is never a time when He is not on watch. "He who watches over Israel" (verse 4) will not sleep. Unlike human help, which eventually gives way to fatigue, or mechanical help, which wears out from constant use, God's help never wanes. He is an eternal help (48:14), and His power is always at work in the lives of His people (Eph. 3:20).

God does not permit the feet of His people to slip. Time of day does not affect His ability to help. Circumstances of life do not inhibit His capabilities. The un-tiring nature of His help means that He cannot fail. This is help that the pilgrim can trust.

This God of help also promises vigilant protection to the pilgrims, His people (Ps 121:5, 6). He is always watching over them. He exercises great care over those who call upon his help. "The blazing sun and the sinister moon feature as polar examples of the many vicissitudes which fill the mind with fears both rational and irrational and stop life fulfilling its positive potential." Life may be full of dangers, the pilgrimage may be filled with trials, yet the Lord watches over His people.

The protective help of God works irrespective of time or season. It provides security from the natural elements and from human dangers. It ensures that God's



people cannot be overcome, and they can safely rest in the knowledge that God is watching over them as are His angels (91:11-13). Such protection also guarantees that God's pilgrims can pass through the most trying circumstances of life and come out unscathed (Isa. 43:2, 3).

Furthermore, God is a helper who preserves (Ps. 121:7, 8). He promises to keep His people from "all evil." Scripture tells us that Satan is the evil cosmic prosecutor (Zech. 3:1) seeking to undermine the testimony that God's people bear. Satan is also presented as a dangerous predator (1 Pet. 5:8) who prowls the badlands of life in order to devour God's pilgrims. The prophecies of Revelation depict Satan as a dragon enraged with God's church and attempting to annihilate it (Rev. 12:1-17).

God not only preserves His people from the wiles of the evil one, He also sustains their lives. Jesus Himself spoke of how God's providence sustains His people throughout their lives and meets all their needs (Matt. 6:25-34). Such is the help that God provides. Such is the help that the pilgrims of the Lord Most High can trust in.

Pilgrims on the road to Zion learn that God is by their side to help whenever He is needed. The pilgrim comes face to face with promises such as this: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified . . . for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you" (Deut. 31:6). The pilgrim can also sing: "The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? The Lord is with me; he is my helper" (Ps. 118:6, 7).

On the odyssey of faith, one can know this God who is described as "the one who is there" (Exod. 3:14) or Yahweh Yireh (Gen. 22:14) or simply Immanuel (Matt. 1:23). This God is the eminent helper of His people, the heroic aide de camp of all pilgrims.

The psalmist asks, "Where does my help come from?" He then replies, "My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth!"

## **REACT**

1. What differentiates the help God provides from other sources of help?
2. Why is God the best kind of help that the believer can have?
3. What evidence does the Bible provide to enable us to trust this help of God?
4. Why are people so reluctant to ask God for help?
5. How do we know when to trust the help of modern science and when to trust God?
6. Are you generally disappointed or satisfied with God's providence in your life? Explain your answer.
7. Have you ever prayed to God to help you? What were you expecting Him to do?
8. Is it easier for God to protect His children from physical harm or from Satan's attempts to pluck them out of His hands? Explain your answer.

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\* Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, WBC 21 (Waco, Texas: Word Publishing, 1983), p. 154.

# The God of Help

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Isa. 41:10**

Have you thought about doing something that requires more than what you have? Money, intellectual faculties, physical strength, influential friends, good connections, and so forth. Now if one of your friends approaches you and says, "Don't worry, I'll let you have the money you need, or I'll spend three hours every week to help you study that problem . . ." Wouldn't it be wonderful to have such a friend? Your friend would still want your best effort, and what he offers is just a help, a little push or nudge to help you along.

In the task of seeking God's "approval, man becomes elevated, ennobled, and sanctified. The work of elevation is one that man must perform for himself through Jesus Christ. Heaven may give him every advantage so far as temporal and spiritual things are concerned, but it is all in vain unless he is willing to appropriate these blessings and to help himself. His own powers must be put to use, or he will finally be weighed in the balances and pronounced wanting."<sup>1</sup>

"The precious Saviour will send help just when we need it."<sup>2</sup>

"When you rise in the morning, do you feel your helplessness, and your need of strength from God? And do you humbly, heartily make known your wants to

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**"The precious Saviour will send help just when we need it."**

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your heavenly Father? If so, angels mark your prayers, and if these prayers have not gone forth out of feigned lips, when you are in danger of unconsciously doing wrong, and exerting an influence which will lead others to do wrong, your guardian angel will be by your side, prompting you to a better course, choosing your words for you, and influencing your actions."<sup>3</sup>

"The Christian always has a strong helper in the Lord. The way of the Lord's helping we may not know; but this we do know: He will never fail those who put their trust in Him. Could Christians realize how many times the Lord has ordered their way, that the purposes of the enemy concerning them might not be accomplished, they would not stumble along complainingly. Their faith would be stayed on God, and no trial would have power to move them."<sup>4</sup>

1. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 339.

2. *The Great Controversy*, p. 633.

3. *Messages to Young People*, p. 90.

4. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 576.

# A Pilgrim's Help

## EVIDENCE

### Key Text: Psalm 121

Psalm 121 belongs to a special group of psalms identified by a common superscript: "*A Song of Ascent.*" This appears in all the Psalms from 120 to 134. Though the precise reason for this distinction is uncertain, the most likely explanation is that they served as pilgrim psalms. They were sung by Israelites on annual pilgrimages to Mount Zion.<sup>1</sup>

This psalm reflects the pilgrims' desire and conviction. On the one hand, Psalm 121 embodies the desire for God's help to make the pilgrimage successful. This desire may have been born from the constant struggle of the pilgrims on their journey (see Psalm 120). Pilgrims sense their helplessness in a sometimes hostile world. They know that God makes a difference.

On the other hand, the psalm is a conviction that the pilgrimage is already a victory and that the pilgrim must then return to the real world with strength derived from such conviction. The festival may be over, but the struggle continues. On the sacred mountain the pilgrims have come to worship God and, in doing so, have acquired strength to face their lives. The pilgrims leave Mount Zion assured of God's abiding presence and unfaltering assistance.

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## This period of David's life was, perhaps, his most tumultuous.

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Ellen White suggests that Psalms 120 and 121 were written by David shortly after Samuel's death.<sup>2</sup> This period of David's life was, perhaps, his most tumultuous. Without the counsel and protection of his mentor, David was left alone to face the insane rage of King Saul. The young king designate found himself a fugitive. As he looked forward to what he knew would be a time of great distress, David realized several important things.

The young shepherd-turned-warrior had learned to be alone, but now he would be alone as never before. Most difficult of all, David now knew that he had only God to rely on. At this very low point of his life, David realized that only God could help him live, succeed, and fulfill his God-given mission. Thus his song in Psalm 121.

As pilgrims in this world, perhaps confronted by immense obstacles, God's pilgrims today must likewise learn the lessons that David and the Israelite pilgrims learned. God is the only true source of help. Without His help, the pilgrimage will fail. With God to help and to watch over them, the pilgrimage will succeed. God is truly the pilgrim's help.

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1. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 907.

2. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 664.

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*By Wann M. Fanwar, chairperson of the theology department at Southeast Asia Union College, Singapore.*

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# Why Me, Lord?

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Heb. 13:6**

Cedric was only seven days from his fifteenth birthday when he died. On the Sabbath morning just before that fateful Sunday on the Pathfinders' hike around a lake, he was baptized in the church he grew up in as a child. He had put it off for a couple of years after his twelfth birthday, when the pastor invited him to join the baptismal class. Now he was ready. But his church friends and classmates were not. For 17 days, he lay in a coma in the hospital while his friends and classmates came to visit him. They prayed for him. The pastors anointed him. His parents hovered over him day and night. They bargained with the Lord. They blamed themselves and the church. Why didn't God perform a miracle and help him recover?

On the sixteenth day, when his kidneys failed and the doctors had given up hope, his parents finally prayed, "God, if it is Your will, heal him and make him completely whole. If not, let him rest in peace." The next morning they received news that his heart had stopped beating. They knew that their only son was ready and will meet the Lord on the resurrection morning.

Like Job of old, when he lost his children, Cedric's parents may have been tempted to cry, "God, it's not fair! You just came and took him away!" But like Job,

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## The next morning they received news that his heart had stopped beating.

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they must be able to say, "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

In times like these, faith will say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper. I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?" (Heb. 13:6, NRSV). Indeed, when you have lost a loved one, what more can you lose? We can only look forward to the day when we will see God face to face and ask the questions, and He will give the reason. Until then, we must trust and live day by day, one day at a time. As someone has said, "Plan your future as if the world will never end, but live each day as if Christ will come tomorrow."

## REACT

1. How can we as a church help someone who has lost a loved one to an accident, disease, or natural disaster?
2. What can you do in your own life to recover from your own grief or loss to help someone else who has recently lost a loved one?
3. When I feel as though I've been abandoned by God, and by the church, what can I do to keep my faith?
4. What are the specific things I can do to overcome depression and grief when I lose a loved one?

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*By Low Lye Cheng, a teacher at San Yu Adventist School, Singapore.*

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# The Expectation

## OPINION

**Key Text: Rom. 8:31, 38, 39**

Even as we affirm our belief that God is ever ready to help His people in times of need, we are confronted with the reality that appears quite contrary. God's faithful children are sometimes not spared the experience of pain, suffering, affliction, defeat, and tragic death. And when some of these dark experiences occur to us or someone dear to us, we can become disappointed or even disillusioned. Some lose their faith in God after they experience tragedies. How do we resolve this apparent contradiction?

The answer may lie in the word *expectation*. Expectation plays a very important role in life. Just retrace your last argument with someone, and you will probably discover that it was sparked by a difference in expectations. It is only human to be disappointed when things do not turn out the way we think they should.

What is our expectation when we say that our God is the God of help? Do we expect God to prevent tragedy and ensure success in our lives? If this is the right expectation, how can we explain numerous biblical examples of the righteous being persecuted and murdered, starting from Abel (Heb. 11:4; Gen. 4:8) to the "great multitude" who "came out of great tribulation" in Revelation 7:14?

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## What is our expectation when we say that our God is the God of help?

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From the lives of biblical characters like Job (see Job 13:15) and the young Jewish captives at the Babylonian court (see Daniel 3:17, 18), we catch a glimpse of what constitutes a correct expectation of God's help in His children's lives. The expectation is that God is able to save us from dark experiences, but He may choose not to. In Romans 8:38, 39, Paul enumerates various dark experiences that may befall God's children and concludes that the only thing he expects is not to be separated "from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." This is what the Bible teaches us to expect from our God of help.

God's children should not expect that the dark experiences of life will be held at bay but rather that we should be protected from losing our relationship with God. This calls for a perspective that is not self-centered but other-worldly, a world view that has eternity as its time frame and a discipleship that values nothing, including our lives, above our Master. Yet this is the only expectation that is true to the Word of God; all others are less than genuine.

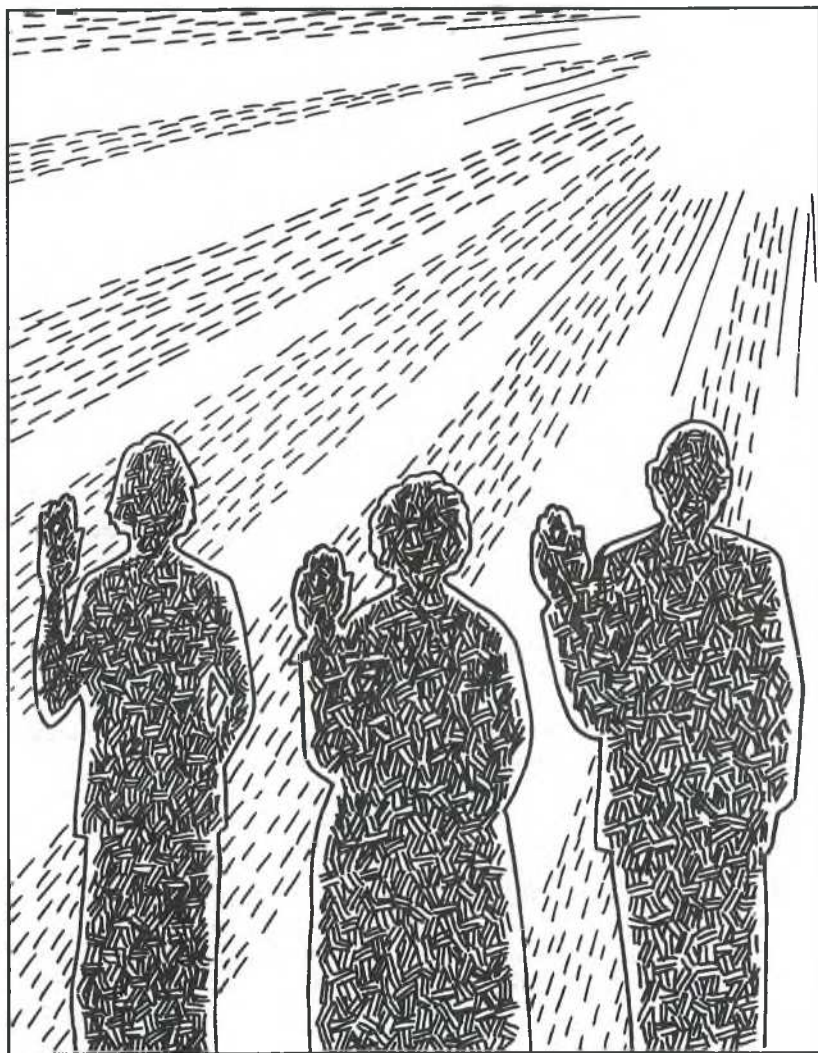
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*By Toh See Wei, executive secretary of the Singapore Mission.*

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# KING OF KINGS



**“The Lord is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King. When he is angry, the earth trembles; the nations cannot endure his wrath” (Jer. 10:10, NIV).**

# Who Is This King of Glory?

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Ps. 24:7-10**

While meditating on this week's theme, I asked myself how I picture God. At Christmas I love picturing Baby Jesus in a manger with His mother and father there. There is something very special, very sweet, about that holy night in Bethlehem.

I also like thinking about Jesus as my Friend to whom I can go any time. I like to picture Him as a Great Healer, especially when one of my loved ones is sick. Yet my favorite picture of Him is that of a king.

My Lord is the King of kings. How do I know that? Simple as it is, I learned it from the Bible. But I have something more to share: I have known people whose confidence that they would meet the King of glory could never be shaken by anybody or anything. My grandmother was one of them. I can hardly think of another person who suffered as much as she yet at the same time had such a strong faith. She died a couple of years ago, but I will never forget my last conversation with her on the phone. She said, "You know, the King is coming soon."

Now, if I am discouraged, I know that the King is inviting me to enter into His joy. Somebody did something unfair to me? Christ is the King of righteousness;

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## **I will never forget my last conversation with her on the phone.**

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He will reveal the truth. Am I sick? In His kingdom there will be no suffering. Am I mourning? The King of kings, Jesus my Lord, will send the Holy Spirit to comfort me. Did I hurt my brother or sister? His law is perfect; I will see my wrongdoing; I will repent; and He will forgive me, as will my brother or sister.

Soon, very soon, the gates will open, and our Lord Jesus Christ will usher us into His kingdom. He will sit on the throne of glory to establish eternal love, joy, happiness, and reunion with our King and our loved ones.

I am looking forward to that day. Are you?

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*By Alla Pavlischye, administrative secretary of the Euro-Asia Division of Seventh-day Adventists, Moscow, Russia.*

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# A King We Can Trust

## LOGOS

Ps. 24:7, 8; Isa. 32:1; 33:22; Dan. 2:44; 1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 5:12, 13.

### Mighty and Righteous King (Ps. 24:7, 8; Isa. 32:1; 1 Tim. 6:15, 16)

In Holy Scripture and in nature, we see God as an absolute monarch of this world. This revelation of God may naturally fill our hearts with fear, for in the long history of human civilization we can easily see that unlimited power inevitably leads to arbitrary and unjust rule. But there is good news. We need not live in fear, for Christ has revealed to us the true nature of God's kingly power (John 10:30). God's rule is a blessing to the world. He is like a hiding place for the poor and defenseless.

His anger is fearful and "nations cannot endure his wrath," warns the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 10:10, NIV). Indeed, He hates evil and will destroy sin forever, for it causes pain and suffering to His children. He cannot keep His wrath when He sees that because of sin thousands of children are dying daily of hunger and fatal diseases, as mothers are losing their children in war conflicts, as young people are killing themselves with drugs. His wrath is against the root of all evil: Satan.

The prophet Isaiah assures us that our King is righteous (Isa. 32:1). All who, like Isaiah or David, have come to know His righteous rule welcome Him (Ps. 24:7, NKJV). "When the greatest evils befall us, not only the wind, but the tempest,

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## It is a joy to see that God does not deal with humanity arbitrarily.

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when storms of guilt and wrath beset us and beat upon us, they drive us to Christ, and in Him we are not only safe, but satisfied that we are so; in Him we find rivers of water for those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, all the refreshment and comfort that a needy soul can desire, and the shadow, not of a tree, which sun or rain may beat through, but of a rock, of a great rock, which reaches a great way for the shelter of the traveler."

### A Suffering King (Matt. 27:11)

It is almost impossible for the limited human mind to comprehend what Jesus gave up in coming to earth. He occupied the exalted kingly position of "equality with God" (Phil. 2:6, 7, RSV). He was surrounded with the continuous praise of the angels, and *still* He came to earth, where He had none of these. He voluntarily gave up His kingly position to take the form of a servant. He who became a pauper was in the fullest sense a prince.

In the judgment hall when Christ was brought to trial, the governor asked Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" and "Jesus said to him, 'It is as you say'" (NKJV). Truly, however, Christ's kingship was of a different nature if He willingly gave up His heavenly glory to suffer on the cross for the sins of those who rejected Him and were leading Him to Calvary.

### Christ, the King Today (1 Tim. 1:17; Col. 1:17, 18)

We are often tempted to think of Christ's kingly rule in terms of future events. Looking around us today we may not see some great evidence of His kingly power

in current events. Don't we hear every day about increasing crime, social unrest, and growing unemployment? News reports may lead us to conclude that the powers of evil prevail in our world.

Yet we need to note that, on the contrary, we have sufficient evidence that Christ is the King today. He is actively involved in every sphere of our daily living. The natural universe is under His unceasing control. He created all the worlds (John 1:3), and today by His power, He sustains all the elements of the vast universe, for "in him all things hold together" (Col. 1:17, NIV), and "the heavens declare the glory of God" (Ps. 19:1, NKJV). Christ reigns in His church (Col. 1:18). During His earthly ministry, He was ruling in the hearts of His followers, His disciples. If we follow our Saviour today, He becomes the King of our hearts. He has not withheld His kingly authority from the daily affairs of our present world either. By His loving power He keeps this world from its fatal self-destruction (Rev. 7:1).

### **The Ultimate King (Rev. 5:12, 13; Phil. 2:9, 10)**

Though Christ is exercising His kingly rule today, still it will be complete only after His final and glorious exaltation at His second coming. As an eyewitness of this glorious event, John shares with us the universal joy and thanksgiving that filled heaven and earth at this exciting event: "I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders . . . saying with a loud voice: 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and . . . honor and glory'" (Rev. 5:11, 12, NKJV),

Indeed, it is a joy to see that God does not deal with humanity arbitrarily but with grace and mercy through the Redeemer. He governs the world not just as a Creator and Lawgiver but as our loving and caring Saviour. His second coming will testify to His final victory over any other power or authority that was the cause of tears, broken hearts, ruined families, and unspeakable sufferings of innocent souls.

### **REACT**

1. If God is love, why does the prophet Jeremiah (10:10) warn about His wrath and anger?
2. What makes our heavenly King different from all earthly monarchs?
3. How can we be sure that the King of kings continues to exercise His kingly power even today, among the hardships and pain of this sinful world?
4. When you think of Jesus as your King of kings, what are your expectations: (a) for your relationship with Him; (b) of His kingdom?

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*\*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1991), p. 1138.

# Our Lawgiver, Judge, Saviour, King

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Isa. 33:22**

“God has given us His holy precepts, because He loves mankind. To shield us from the results of transgression, He reveals the principles of righteousness. . . . God desires us to be happy, and He gave us the precepts of the law that in obeying them we might have joy.”<sup>1</sup>

“Christ came to give moral power to man; to elevate, ennoble, and strengthen him. He came to prove the falsity of Satan’s charge that God had made a law which man could not keep. While possessing man’s nature, Christ kept the Ten Commandments. Thus He proved to the inhabitants of the unfallen worlds and to human beings that it is possible for man perfectly to obey the law. He vindicated God’s justice in demanding obedience to His law.”<sup>2</sup>

“But Christ’s mission was not for judgment, but for salvation. ‘God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.’ John 3:17.”<sup>3</sup>

“He in whom ‘dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,’ descended to our world, humiliated himself by clothing his divinity with humanity, that through humanity he might reach the human family. While he embraces the human race

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## While possessing man’s nature, Christ kept the Ten Commandments.

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with his human arm, he grasps the throne of God with his divine arm, thus uniting humanity to divinity. The Majesty of heaven, the King of glory, descended the path of humiliation step by step until he reached the lowest point possible for humanity to experience; and why? That he might be able to reach even the lowest of mankind, sunken in the very depths of degradation though they be, that he might be able to elevate them to the heights of heaven. He has promised, ‘To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.’ Wonder of wonders! Man, a creature of the earth; dust, elevated to the throne of the King of the universe! Marvelous love! inexpressible, incomprehensible love!”<sup>4</sup>

## REACT

1. What difference does it make to us that God Whom we worship is Lawgiver, Judge, Saviour, King?
2. Why would He not get tired of doing His work?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 308.

2. *Signs of the Times*, May 14, 1902.

3. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 210.

4. *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 9, 1895.

---

By Irina P. Bolotnikova, assistant director of the E. G. White Research Center, Zaokski, Russia.



## Royal Disappointment or Kingly Glory?

### EVIDENCE

**Key Texts: John 12:12-19; Rev. 5:12, 13**

As we turned the corner, the usual pedestrian traffic unexpectedly formed an irresistible human tide that pooled on either side of a narrow path.

“What’s going on?” we asked.

“You really don’t know? The king is in town! He’ll come this way any minute now—you’d better get out your camera.”

Bodies packed closer, hoping to get a better view. Ever-watchful guards scanned the faces of the crowd. Two eager teens held a hand-painted banner reading, “You can heal the world!”

At last he appeared. The crowd cheered as outstretched hands grasped at the air. The indifferent entertainer seemed not to notice. Without so much as a wave, he climbed into the waiting limousine and the motorcade sped away. The crowd heaved a collective groan. The fans had hoped for something more.

Our modern experience with those we admire boils down to disappointed hopes. Yet, like the Israelites long ago, we long for a king. Some of us turn to the Hollywood entertainers with their questionable standards and glitzy lifestyles. Others bow to the cult of materialism.

### **The crowds who celebrated Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem were there for all the wrong reasons.**

Even the crowds who celebrated Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem were there for all the wrong reasons. They wanted political and personal freedom from Roman oppression. Forgiveness of sins hadn’t even crossed their minds. Just days after they hailed the King of Israel with palm branches, they watched Him hang on a cross, their hopes dashed, their dreams disappointed.

Contrast this with Ellen White’s account of the disciple’s behavior in *The Desire of Ages*: “After the trial and crucifixion of Christ, it had been thought that they would appear downcast and ashamed. . . . Instead of this there was only gladness and triumph. Their faces were aglow with a happiness not born of earth. They did not mourn over disappointed hopes, but were full of praise and thanksgiving to God. With rejoicing they told the wonderful story of Christ’s resurrection and His ascension to heaven, and their testimony was received by many.”\*

What made the difference? Following their personal encounter with the *risen* Jesus, they finally understood the message He had preached and lived and died to illustrate. We, too, must have an encounter with the risen Jesus before we are ready to join the chorus singing, “Blessing and honor and glory and power to the Lamb!” Only His stripes can heal our desperate condition.

\* *The Desire of Ages*, p. 832.

# Virtual Reality

## HOW-TO

**Key Text:** Ps. 24:7

Is it really true that we will be able to see Jesus coming? Is His coming real? How will we be able to maintain faith in the face of counterfeits?

Modern technology becomes more and more sophisticated. The predictions of science-fiction writers are coming true. In the 1960s a Polish author wrote a story of a kidnapped millionaire. Terrorists hid him in the sewer in a device that created a virtual reality. This device showed scenes from the palace of an Assyrian king. It was so vivid that the poor man began to think that he was this Assyrian king and did not feel anything except what was shown to him. When the police found him and released him from this virtual reality device, he became very angry because he did not want to leave his Assyrian world.

Today in computer stores anyone can purchase a virtual reality helmet. By wearing this device on the head, one becomes fully immersed in the world of the computer game. It is interesting to watch young people with joysticks in their hands making funny motions while experiencing their virtual world.

People in this world live in the virtual reality of the present. They either enjoy their sinful beauty of life not thinking of the future, or they are depressed by their problems and unable to lift up their heads to heaven.

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## People in this world live in the virtual reality of the present.

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The Bible also warns Christians against life in the world of illusions: "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing: and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:17). The Bible leaves us not reproof, but it also gives us some practical examples in the next verse:

**1. "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich."** God Himself offers us the means to live that the riches of this world will not attract us. Only in Him can we really be wealthy.

**2. "And white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed."** We all need this white robe of Christ's righteousness. It is the only thing that will enable us to be ready for real joy.

**3. "And anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see."** Only Jesus can open our eyes so we might see the spiritual reality, believe, and wait for His coming with full assurance looking at this event as a reality.

Which reality are we going to choose today: the virtual reality of the world's present or the spiritual reality of the Bible, which gives us hope for God's redemption?

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*By Alexander Bolotnikov, teacher of biblical studies at Zaokski Theological Seminary, Russia.*

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# The Silence of the King

## OPINION

**Key Text: Rom. 8:38, 39**

A pastor stayed with some people in Berlin. The housewife happened to comment that she had been in Berlin in 1945. When the pastor asked what Berlin was like when the war came, she was silent for a while. At first she spoke in generalities. Then she was quiet for a while, and then she described being in a basement with seven other young women 14 to 20 years of age.

When occupying soldiers found them there, for five days they took turns abusing these young women physically.

When I hear such stories, only one thought comes to my mind. Where was God, the King and the Ruler of the whole universe? Why did He stay indifferent and not interfere in the situation? Why is it that sometimes God seems to rule everything but my life? Why don't I sometimes feel God's presence and control in my life—here and now, *right now*?

How can we be sure that God is always—*always*—by our side, even when something terrible happens and we don't feel His presence? How can our faith be strong in such moments?

People need God's voice. When they do not hear it, they begin to tremble. But are there situations when we must listen to God's silence? When this happens,

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## Why don't I sometimes feel God's presence and control in my life?

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should we do something by our own strength? How to learn patience?

When we face it, we must always remember these Bible words: "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38, 39).

Everything that God does in our lives is good for us, whether we understand it or not. Sometimes it is better for us to listen than to talk. Sometimes it is useful to realize that we must make an effort to be saved—even in prayer.

If God would always make us feel that He is by our side, could we learn responsibility for our decisions? The silence of the King makes His servants think for themselves. If God doesn't answer us, it doesn't necessarily mean that He has left us. He is probably just waiting for us to be ready to accept His answer, to give up on our own resources. Silence is an answer too. When again we must listen to God's silence, let's ask ourselves: Why should I listen to it again? What is wrong in my life? What does God want to tell me? What should I understand? What should I learn?

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*By Michael G. Yakovlev, an editor at Source of Life Publishing House, Zaokski, Russia.*

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## Next Quarter's Lessons

# GOD SHOWS AND TELLS

## Studies on Revelation and Inspiration

If you have not received a copy of *CQ* for first quarter 1999, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

### Lesson 1: God Is Good

*Scriptures:* Ps. 107:1-8; Ps. 77:1-13; Jer. 31:3; 1 Chron. 16:8-12

*Theme:* God's revelation focuses primarily on the fact that He is good. God uses various means of revelation to help us understand His goodness. He wants us to trust Him in order that we might get the most out of life and, in turn, reveal His goodness to others.

### Lesson 2: That We May Know Him

*Scriptures:* 2 Kings 22; Ps. 107:31-43; John 14:8-11; 16:8-14; 17:1-5; Rom. 1:17-23; Col. 1:12-20

*Theme:* If eternal life comes through knowing God, then He has to make it possible for us to know as much about Him as He deems necessary. In this lesson we will study the various means God uses to reveal Himself to us.

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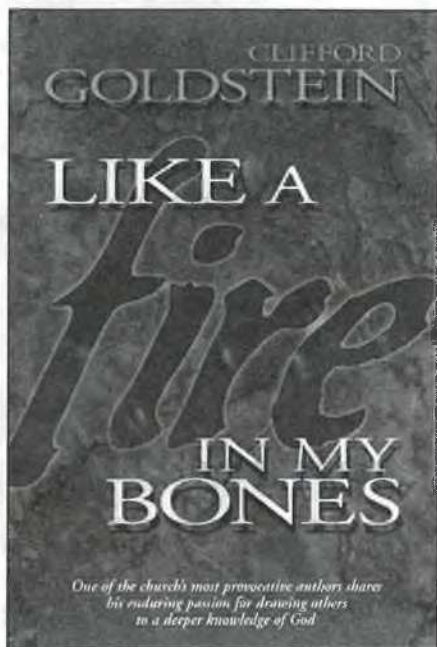


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**Ellen White**

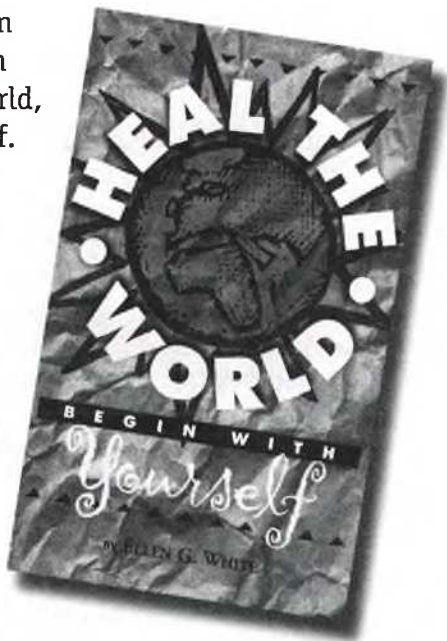
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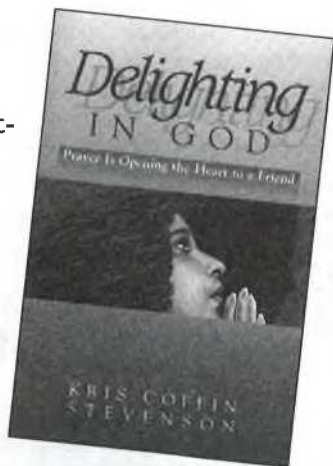
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Edward Lara, age 23,  
with his bride, both from Chicago

## **FALSELY ACCUSED:**

Three days before Edward was to be married, he was arrested, charged with armed robbery and first-degree murder, and imprisoned for a crime which had occurred three months earlier. An eyewitness to the crime identified him as the killer. Providentially, Edward had been leading a youth discussion group at the Cicero Hispanic Church at the time of the murder, and there were more than thirty people who could vouch for him. During his 29 days in prison, God protected him and enabled him to minister to several fellow inmates. "I will not forget these friends now that I am out," Edward says. He is now seeking the necessary credentials to minister inside the prison.



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