

# Old Paths

Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.  
Jeremiah 6:16

The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant.  
Psalm 25:14

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**Go and make disciples of all nations. (Matthew 28:19, Greek)**



## Discipleship, Part 3

By Allen Stump

About forty-five years ago when I was a young colporteur, I was at a retreat for canvassers, and one of the older brothers said that he thought that the Lord would come about ten years from that time. I said, perhaps incredulously, “Ten years? How could you say ten years?” He replied that he thought it would take ten years for all the prophetic events that needed to happen to take place. My response was I could not see time lasting more than five years, and I would not be surprised if the Lord were to come by next year.

That was over four decades ago, but one thing we know is that we are closer to the coming of the Lord and that we have to be living in the last generation, according to the prophecies as we now understand them. We are living in the last generation, and we are seeing things happen with rapidity that are just astounding.

Paul, writing to Timothy, stated that in the last days we would see certain evils especially prevalent:

**Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, (2 Timothy 3:3)**

Paul is not depicting the sins of the world in this verse but the sins within the professed people of God (v. 5). People within the church are without natural affection. The rise in just the last four years of the LGBTQ movement and all the confusion in the so-called gay community demonstrate that we are seeing the fulfillment of Paul’s prophecy. Time cannot last much longer, friends, and we have a work to do!

As we noted in the first two parts of this series, being a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ means to:

1. Learn from him
2. Obey his words
3. Stay in fellowship with him

4. Make others disciples of him

In this final part of the series, we will consider #4 above, but in doing so, we have to think of the first three before it, for they help prepare us for the fourth. Certainly Jesus makes teaching, or discipling, others a part of our discipleship.

Discipleship is fundamentally the process of learning the teachings of Jesus and of following his example in obedience to the power of the Holy Spirit, and part of that example was to help others know about him.

Jesus was always going about helping others learn who he was and learn about our heavenly Father, and this process of becoming a disciple involves making others disciples through teaching and evangelism.

There are, of course, many evangelistic avenues, or means, by which we can reach people, such as medical missionary work, canvassing work, and door-to-door visiting.

In this article we are looking at principles of how to make disciples. If we follow the first three points of our study—learning from Christ, obeying him, and staying in fellowship with him—it will prepare us for the fourth, and we truly cannot do the fourth without the first three.

Jesus, speaking to Peter, Andrew, John, and James by the seaside, said: “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19).

Maybe you have been fishing before. To many there is something enjoyable about being out on the water and catching the fish, even if you throw them back in. There is, however, something infinitely more enjoyable about helping people to know Jesus Christ.

The greatest joy of my life has not been waterskiing or going to Disneyland but in helping people to know Jesus Christ. People like John and Mary, who were living in a bus

out in the middle of the woods with their two young children. They had a desire to learn of the Lord and after studying the Bible and attending evangelistic meetings, they gave their hearts to the Lord and were baptized.

Before his accession to heaven, Jesus gave what we call today the great commission:

Go ye therefore, and teach (μαθητεύω *mathēteuō*) all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28:19–20)

The Greek word for *teach* in verse 19 is from μαθητεύω (*mathēteuō*). It is the verb form of μαθητής (*mathētēs*), the word we translate *disciple*. Being in the verb form means to make disciples. Jesus is giving the command to make disciples.

In verse 20, Jesus tells the disciples to teach the new disciples to *observe all things* he had taught them. Observing is not only being taught something or gaining a certain amount of knowledge, but it is also putting that knowledge into practice. The original word for *observe* (τηρέω *tēreō*) does not mean to *see visually* but rather to keep, obey, and even to guard.

We have this commission to teach, or make disciples, of Jesus by teaching what Jesus taught—“all things whatsoever I have commanded you”—and we need to learn how to teach the way that Jesus taught.

To teach you must know the subject and know how to teach so that others understand the truth. A new person comes to church and before we learn their name, we are asking:

Do you know about veganism?

What do you think about the 2,520?

What shape do you think the earth is?

You do know that Jesus is the Son of God, don't you?

I have heard people say concerning someone who died, *I hope he learned about the Sabbath before he died*. Learning about the Sabbath is important, but learning about the Lord of the Sabbath is most vital.

We want to educate the mind, and that needs to be done, but too often we do it before we have concern for the heart! Why can we not at first say things like:

What is your name?

How did you hear about us?

I hope you love Jesus.

We are here for you.

It is like President Theodore Roosevelt said:

To educate a person in the mind but not in morals is to educate a menace to society.

Sometimes we educate menaces to the church! Why? Because we do not teach the most important thing first by precept and example. And what is that most important thing? Love! The love of God seen in our lives, in our service to God, and in caring for one another.

When I was canvassing I met a elderly lady one day. We will just call her Sister Anderson. She was rummaging through some trash bins looking for things until I stopped and asked if there was any way I could help her.

After talking, I found out she lived in the woods near the end of town. She did not have a working car, so I offered to take her home.

Her house was back in the woods. There was no driveway, but there was a path to the house. Cardboard and newspapers were used for coverings on the walls in her house. Her house was very sad looking; yet, she was a candidate for heaven.

Shortly after this, our local church was having evangelistic meetings, and we invited Sister Anderson to attend. I made arrangements to transport her to and from the meetings. She thoroughly enjoyed the presentations which were being given in a motel meeting room. After a couple of weeks, the meetings made the transition from the neutral site of the motel to the local church building.

Sister Anderson faithfully attended, but, as we were sitting in a pew waiting for the service to begin, some *good saint* behind her said loud enough for all of us to hear, “Who is that lady? What's she doing here? She's wearing earrings. She must not be an Adventist.” The meeting on cosmetics and jewelry was yet to be presented, so this truth, had not come home to Sister Anderson yet. She was simply trying to look nice from the best she had and knew. Her home was sad, her clothes, while modest, were not the best. She knew this, and she was trying to be as presentable as possible with what truth she knew.

I wish I could tell you of the glorious day of her baptism, but this meeting was the last time she came. Just one moment of unwise speaking. Sometimes we just do not use common sense or, as someone said, *common sense is not common anymore*.

God cares for every one of us, and the love of God has to be seen in our lives in the way we act and serve other people. Jesus declared this to be the true mark of his disciples:

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. (John 13:35)

Interestingly, Jesus did not say *by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples that you keep the seventh-day Sabbath*. The text does not say *by this should all men know that you are my disciples because you serve a good vegan dinner*.

Do you really love others, and do you show that love in an intelligent way? Paul, writing to the Romans, stated:

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. (Romans 13:8)

You may have heard this next quotation from various sources. The best I can trace it back is to Theodore Roosevelt, who said:

*People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.*

You can attempt to put all the information into people's minds, but they may not care. However, if they know that you care about them, oh, what a difference that makes. We have to live out the love that God has shed among us in a tactful, courteous, and kind manner.

When someone is sick, do you try to minister to their needs in a way that can help them, in a way that they can receive help? There is a lot of medical missionary knowledge among us, and sometime we think we know how to fix everybody. But sometimes people are not ready for the extreme fix that we may offer, and we have to start with people where they are at. Sometimes we have to help people one step at a time. We must help them in a way that they can receive help, if possible.

When another is weeping from a death in the family, are we *weeping with those who weep* (Romans 12:15)?

When someone has made a mistake, are we interested in publishing that mistake and casting so much darkness upon others that we begin to look bright and pure? What happened to the scriptural admonitions:

And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. (1 Peter 4:8)

Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a *multitude* of sins. (James 5:19, 20)"

The word translated *multitude* comes from the Greek word *πλήθος* (*plēthos*), from which we get our word *plethora* which means "a large or excessive amount of something" (*New Oxford American Dictionary*).

We must learn how to treat others, especially those in need and those who have fallen into sin, with love. One last quote from President Roosevelt:

Knowing what's right doesn't mean much unless you do what's right.

I think that is a pretty good motto for gospel workers today. We must live and love aright, if we expect to win souls. We can know so much, but if we do not do right ourselves, how can God bless us?

God is calling for workers today, just like he called Isaiah when he asked, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us" (Isaiah 6:8)? Notice the response of Isaiah: "Here am I; send me" (Ibid.).

Do you feel like that today? There are so many people out in the world who do not know Jesus Christ. People today are dying and going to Christless graves. Are we willing to respond as Isaiah did?

We are not all called to be prophets like Isaiah, but all are given a call to work for the Master, and that work is to be done in love. Some, but only a few, are called like Elijah to rebuke kings or nations. For most of us, we need to remember that we catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.

Remember that to make disciples of others, we must first be disciples of Christ, by learning of him, obeying him, and staying close to him through prayer and study which takes a certain degree of dedication. Paul writes:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. (Romans 12:1)

Our dedication is to take the form of a solemn covenant with God:

Gather my saints together unto me; Those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. (Psalm 50:5)

It has been said that anything that is not gained with a certain amount of effort and work probably is not worth having. God expects you to sacrifice, and he wants you to make a covenant with him through sacrifice.

In the book *Christ's Object Lessons*, we read:

Christ asks for an unreserved consecration, for undivided service. He demands the heart, the mind, the soul, the strength. Self is not to be cherished. He who lives to himself is not a Christian. (Ellen White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 48.4)

It is impossible to be consecrated to God without partaking of his word. You need to dedicate time to God each day and to spend time in prayer.

People of the world take time to regularly exercise or to do self-help work. While these may be good and even noble tasks, how much more important it is for spiritual growth to be dedicated to regular habits of study, prayer, and witnessing. There will be days when you get called out because of some emergency, and the next morning you may be tired and sluggish and may have an early appointment, but if we will make a covenant with God, even by sacrifice, he will help us to keep our appointments with him.

**But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 1:8)**

God has promised to give us power for witnessing, but we have to make ourselves available to receive this power. Sometimes we have to spend much time in prayer and effort to win a soul. I knew a sister who prayed for over fifty years for her son, seemingly without any progress. A couple of times she thought about giving up and to stop praying because her efforts had seemed to be fruitless, but she persevered and her son finally gave his heart to the Lord and was baptized a few years before his death.

God wills for you to have the wisdom needed for witnessing. You need wisdom and understanding of how to work with people.

**Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. (Proverbs 4:7)**

The source of all wisdom is God who is willing to share with you, if you ask him in faith (James 1:5). Friends may try to help you, but the real help is directly from the throne of grace. God has a vested interest in everyone to whom you are witnessing. Remember, he gave his Son for that person, and so he will help you.

If you have ever been to a series of evangelistic meetings or if you have ever had a series of studies by a Bible worker or a pastor, you will know that they usually share the truth in a progressive series of studies. Easy subjects are given first and are used as the basis for harder-to-receive truths later. If we begin with something like the mark of the beast, however, without properly preparing the people, they may think something like this: *This preacher is full of beans! He is crazy! Who believes something like that?*

Maybe you have heard a sales pitch for something and the presenter does not explain all of what they are trying to sell at the beginning because they know you will turn away and not want to listen. Therefore, they go through a process of leading you by steps to the place where you think, *Maybe I need this.*

The truth should be presented in the way it is worthy of being presented. We must present the truth in a clear logical order and thoroughly enough that people are more likely to accept it.

**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: (Proverbs 1:7)**

If we are going to share truth, we have to have a certain amount of knowledge. Do not go to someone's home to share the 2,300 day prophecy when you do not understand it yourself. You need to know what you are sharing and if you do not know it, one of your first duties is to learn it and to learn it well.

There used to be a program within the Adventist Church several years ago where studies could be presented using a film strip projector. (That was a pre-computer way of making something like a PowerPoint presentation.) The worker would take a film strip projector along with a series of film strips and go into homes and just show them one at a time. The worker would read the slides and give a whole Bible study. This was certainly a blessing to many and had a lot of positive aspects; however, problems arose when someone asked a question that was not covered in the slide presentation. If you did not know the subject yourself and if you were depending upon the prepared lesson only, you had no way to answer questions not covered in the material.

We have to understand and have a knowledge ourselves of the truth. No matter from what walk of life we come, we can know the truth and share it with others.

**Mechanics, lawyers, merchants, men of all trades and professions, educate themselves that they may become masters of their business. Should the followers of Christ be less intelligent, and while professedly engaged in His service be ignorant of the ways and means to be employed? The enterprise of gaining everlasting life is above every earthly consideration. In order to lead souls to Jesus there must be a knowledge of human nature and a study of the human mind. Much careful thought and fervent prayer are required to know how to approach men and women upon the great subject of truth. (Ellen-White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 67.2)**

I find it both interesting and invigorating to watch a well-skilled worker, such as a bricklayer who can lay the mortar down and place the bricks squared up quickly. Such a person does not learn this without practice and learning. Should the followers of Christ be less intelligent, less diligent?

A woman approached a master pianist after hearing a beautiful piece of music expertly played and said, "Oh, sir, that I could have such a gift!" The master responded sim-

ply, “If you would practice eight hours a day for twenty years, you could have a gift too”!

Whether they are lawyers, doctors, plumbers, or any of various trades or professions, those who have become proficient have worked hard to obtain that proficiency. Should the Christian work any less intelligently or diligently? The enterprise of gaining everlasting life is above every earthly consideration. The above quotation also declares that we must have a “knowledge of human nature and a study of the human mind” (Ibid.). Much careful thought and fervent prayer are required to know how to approach men and women upon the great subject of truth.

It takes effort and understanding, and God wants us to be efficient workers. David wrote

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. (Psalms 19:12)

You have limited time left, and you do not know when it will end, so you should use your time as efficiently as possible because tomorrow may not happen for you.

Our minds should be so trained that if necessary we can present the truths of His word before the highest earthly authorities in such a way as to glorify His name. We should not let slip even one opportunity of qualifying ourselves intellectually to work for God. (White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 333.4)

First Peter 3:15 demands that you are to “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”

How can you do that? In part, it is by using your time well. If there is free time available, do not spend it doing things without eternal value. If you are in a train or on a plane, you can be reading and learning. It is said that Elder Stephen Haskell never went anywhere without a Bible in his hand. If he was going to the general store or to church, he had a Bible in his hand. Today we may have the Bible on our phones. If so, let's use it.

Faith is a necessary ingredient, if you are to share the word of God, but, according to Romans 10:17, “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” You develop faith through learning the word of God *and* through obeying the word of God. Why do I say this? Because the word *hearing* means more than just receiving an audio sound. It also means obeying.

Without faith, we will accomplish nothing, but with faith, according to Jesus, we can accomplish everything:

And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove

hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. (Matthew 17:20)

Jesus had been with Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration. While there, a man had brought his possessed son to the disciples to have the demon cast out, but they failed, and Jesus said their unbelief was the reason for their failure.

Now we want to look at four important character traits for witnessing.

## Perseverance

God can indeed supply our needs, and he wants us to work with perseverance. Paul, who knew a lot about perseverance, wrote:

And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. (Galatians 6:9)

There was a relatively young man who was only four hundred eighty years old when he received a commission from God to make a boat. He worked for one hundred twenty years building that boat, but there was a day in which that boat became the saving of Noah and all of his family. The ark was the instrument God used in saving humanity.

Noah persevered for one hundred twenty years. How many converts other than his family were saved on the ark? No one else went into the ark. Methuselah died the year of the flood, or I am sure he would have entered the ark. Noah's father had already died, but despite the seeming lack of fruit from his preaching, Noah persevered. You need to persevere, if you expect to win souls.

## Humility

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? (Micah 6:8)

There was a man we will call George who felt the burden to do evangelistic canvassing. The leaders of the publishing department questioned if George was qualified. You see, George did not speak as clearly as the leaders thought he should. George had a lisp or some kind of impairment, but he insisted God had called him and kept insisting that God wanted to use him as a canvasser. Finally, the brethren consented and said, “Okay, we'll take you out and try to train you.” In their minds they were thinking, *We will show you that you are a failure, and then you will give up this idea, and we can be rid of you.* So the day came, and the appointed instructor took George to the first house. The leader was going to show George how to sell books, but the people did not make a purchase. So they went to the next house, and the instructor was again going to show

George how to sell books. But the same thing resulted. The people did not buy a single book.

After this George asked if they could have prayer over by a nearby tree before going to the next house. George prayed fervently that God would somehow use him to help these people obtain truth-filled literature. When they went to the door, George asked, *Can I try? Just let me try, please.* I think you already know what happened. He sold a book. They went back to the tree and prayed again and went to the next house. More books were sold, and George became a successful worker. God was able to bless his humility.

Maybe you are like George in some ways. You may not have a lisp, but maybe you do not have a lot of skills the world is looking for, but take courage, for we have been told:

In choosing men and women for His service, God does not ask whether they possess learning or eloquence or worldly wealth. He asks: "Do they walk in such humility that I can teach them My way? Can I put My words into their lips? Will they represent Me?" (Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 144.2)

If you do not feel like you are very eloquent or if you do not have worldly wealth or something else, it is okay in the eyes of God. He does not need any of that. He just needs your willingness to let him use you as his vessel. That is all he needs.

## Courtesy

Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: (1 Peter 3:8)

I promise you that *courtesy* will go very far in helping you. Simple things like knowing if you go into someone's house in certain areas of the world that you first remove your shoes or that you wait until you are asked to be seated before you sit down. The courtesy of being on time is important. People value their time very much and do not wish to be robbed of it by those who are late for appointments.

The word *courtesy* comes from the concept of *court conduct*. How would you conduct yourself in court? Today, sadly, the standards in some courts have declined, but you are not to speak out of turn or be disorderly in court. Court shows on television do not necessarily represent what real court is like.

I was in the gallery of the United States Supreme Court one day for a particular church-state case I wanted to hear in person. I had to wait in line for hours to get in the big cue. I had arrived very early and waited for about four or five hours to get in. It was an experience. There were policemen and military men in uniform and white gloves,

and they walked up and down the aisles staring at people. Before you entered the chambers you were instructed to not talk. You were not to whisper or to breathe loudly. If a baby cried, it went out.

A certain solemnity was present. In court conduct, you learn courtesy.

Sometimes it is in the way that we share with people that truth makes progress. I knew a woman who was studying the truth, and this person wore jewelry and makeup, like Mrs Anderson we mentioned earlier. The pastor's wife was coming to give her Bible studies, and the pastor's wife was just as Puritan plain in her dress and deportment as you could imagine. But before they even had a study on jewelry or cosmetics, this sister began to remove all of these things. The kindness, courtesy, and humility of this pastor's wife had convinced her of the truth. By her example, this woman realized all the artificial stuff she was wearing was wrong.

## Tact

We need tact. Some synonyms for tact are sensitivity, understanding, thoughtfulness, consideration, delicacy, diplomacy, discretion, discernment, judgment, and prudence. We need to know how to work with people.

A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger. (Proverbs 15:1)

We all know what usually happens when someone gets mad at us. We get mad back. Things escalate. But instead of returning evil with evil, if we share back a soft answer, it makes a great deal of difference.

In the work of soul-winning, great tact and wisdom are needed. The Saviour never suppressed the truth, but He uttered it always in love. In His intercourse with others, He exercised the greatest tact, and He was always kind and thoughtful. He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, never gave unnecessary pain to a sensitive soul. He did not censure human weakness. (Ellen White, *Gospel Workers*, p. 117.1a)

At times, Christ spoke words that seemed severe. When he drove out the money changers from the Temple courts using a scourge, he probably brought pain to some of the money changers.

And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; (John 2:15)

However he did not ever *unnecessarily* do that, but there were times that he had to speak hard things, but even in so doing, there were tears in his eyes. Continuing in *Gospel Workers*:

He fearlessly denounced hypocrisy, unbelief, and iniquity, but tears were in His voice as He uttered His scathing rebukes. He never made truth cruel, but ever manifested a deep tenderness for humanity. Every soul was precious in His sight. He bore Himself with divine dignity; yet He bowed with the tenderest compassion and regard to every member of the family of God. He saw in all, souls whom it was His mission to save. (White, *Gospel Workers*, p. 117.1b)

Do we see in every person a candidate for heaven? There were tears in the eyes of Jesus as he cleansed the temple and denounced the scribes and Pharisees as hypocrites. In cleansing the temple, Jesus was driving those money changers out, but even in this he was being merciful. As he drove them out, he was making room for the poor people who were not considered fit enough to come in. John says that he drove out the money changers and the ox and the sheep. He did not drive out those who had the doves. Why? Those were the offerings that only the poorest could bring. Jesus knew that the poor people needed to be able to still come. Jesus thought of them, and he was making room for these sick and poor people.

We all need to work as Jesus did. Isaiah wrote of him:

A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. (Isaiah 42:3)

Think about what this text is saying. There are souls all around us who are bruised and hurt, and it would take just a little bit, just a small amount, to break them and to turn them away from Jesus. The smoking flax Jesus would not quench. Jesus will not put out that last little ember of fire or light in the life of someone who is struggling. Yet, Christ would bring forth judgment into truth. That is also our work.

## How Jesus treated people

Think about how Jesus treated people. There are scores of examples in the Scripture, but we will only be able to look at a few here. We need to learn how to treat people by studying Christ's example.

How did he treat the **publicans**? Remember, they were even more hated in his day than in ours. Jesus invited one of them, Matthew-Levi, to be one of his closest followers. Jesus ate with publicans and sinners.

How did Jesus treat the **harlots or prostitutes**? Did he look upon them with an holier than thou attitude? He certainly could have; instead, he treated them with dignity and respect and showed them true love. When the woman of John 8 was caught in adultery and was brought before Jesus, he did not try to embarrass or degrade her. He even called her *woman* (John 8:10) which might seem like a very

distant way to refer to someone. However, in that culture, it was used as a sign of respect. It was the same expression he used when on the cross to refer to his own mother (John 19:26).

How did Jesus treat **those seeking fellowship** with him? When Zacchaeus sought him, Jesus made time for him and even went to his house for fellowship.

If you will take time to study and learn from the Master, you will know much more about how you can disciple other people.

In this three-part series we have only scratched the surface on discipleship. It is a subject as big as the Bible because it is really what the Bible is all about—learning about God, learning to stay close to him, and helping others to become like him and serve him.

Two missionaries were working in an area of Africa where there was a civil war with revolutionaries fighting against the established government. There was a lot of what is termed *guerrilla warfare* going on.

One day these two missionaries met up with some of the revolutionaries in the jungle. The revolutionaries were not Christians, and they told these missionary workers that they had to stop what they were doing. They had to stop preaching and teaching the gospel of Christ. The older missionary leader took his Bible and held it up with his steady right hand and said, “as long as the Lord gives me breath, I will preach this.” Before he could say more, the leader took his machete and with one swift blow, the preacher's hand and the Bible fell to the ground. The leader of the guerrillas then told his followers to fall upon the older missionary. They swiftly took their machetes and brutally hacked him to death.

The young missionary saw all this. It was terrible, and the leader of the guerrillas said, “Now you! You throw down your Bible and swear that you'll never teach from it again.” The young missionary began to take off his coat and he neatly folded it and handed it towards the leader. He told the rebel, “This is a good coat. It will fit you well. You will get good service from it. There's no sense in spoiling it with my blood.” And the guerrilla leader's face began to look strange, and he said, “Come on, men. We can't fight this.”

You could not do that without being consecrated, dedicated, and willing to die for your cause. Let us pray for wisdom, tact, efficiency, faith, and all the other things we have considered. Some of Jesus' parting words were:

Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. (John 20:21)



God is sending each one of us, friends, to be a laborer in his vineyard and to make disciples of other men and women.

Missionary opportunities are everywhere. They could be in medical missionary work or in sharing literature. You can have a Bible study with your neighbor. Even a simple act of opening the door for someone as they are going into a building and saying “God bless you” will touch a heart.

People should not have to question whether we are Christians or not. People see us all the time, and we may not realize how much they are watching us. Recently I rode my motorcycle from Beckley to Pineville in unfriendly weather. It was cold and rainy, but I had reasonable gear that made it doable. I stopped at the our local gym to do a workout. Before I started my workout, I took of my helmet and riding jacket and went to a store beside the gym to get a few things. As I was there, the lady at the counter looked at me and said, “Boy I hope you’re not on that bike today.” I did not remember seeing this woman before in my life. I did not know who she was, but she had seen me on my motorcycle. She had been watching me. She said, “It’s too cold, too wet, and now it’s too dark to be out on a motorcycle.”

I assured her I would be okay, but beyond knowing that I ride a motorcycle occasionally, I want her and others to know that I am a Christian and maybe even a preacher because I have spoken to them about the Lord and his goodness. I hope they have seen my witness and that it has been a good witness. I want to tell others what Jesus has done for me, and that may be the most important thing that Jesus ever asks us to do. Do you remember what Jesus told the former demoniacs after they were healed? Go tell others what the Lord had done for them.

If you are a beginner and have not yet learned everything about the Bible, that is okay. It is important to have an understanding of the great principles of truth but until you do, you can always tell people what Jesus has done for you. People may challenge you on prophecy. They may disagree with you on the Sabbath. They may not agree on the need of health reform, but they cannot disagree with what Jesus has done for you.

We will never have time to learn all about God in this earth. Even in eternity, we will never exhaust the theme of his love, so do not wait until you think you have learned everything. Just consecrate yourself to God’s work, study his word, and start sharing little by little and then more and more, and God will bless you.

It does not matter if you are a mechanic, a lawyer, or a merchant. God can use you, if you will turn your life over to him and allow your life to be a tool in his hand.



## 1889 HSDA–USA Camp Meeting

The first 1889 HSDA–USA camp meeting will be May 16–20, 2023, at a great location—Fall Creek Falls State Park near Spencer, Tennessee. Please mark these dates on your calendar soon!

Specifically, we have rented the Cane Creek camping area at the park. The facilities are older and rustic but should work well for us. Twenty cabins in three loops and centered around a large meeting building are available. The cabins hold six to eight people. There are not enough cabins for smaller families to each have a dedicated cabin, so the facilities will have to be shared; however, tent sites are available nearby in the park, if you wish. All RV sites have been reserved, but there are cancellations at times. If you are interested, let us know, and we will do all we can to try to catch a cancellation for you. At Cane Creek some single brothers may wish to use a few of the cabins, and the same may work for the sisters. There are small bath houses in each loop, and two loops have smaller meeting buildings.

The main meeting building has a large kitchen with a large room that will be used for dining and for the main meetings. No Wi-Fi is available, but cellular service with AT&T is available. There is enough cellular service that we will be able to broadcast meetings using hotspots, and the meetings will be recorded and posted afterwards.

There will be no cost for staying at the camp, but we would appreciate knowing how many plan to attend, so we can make our plans better. We will provide two meals a day on a donation basis. The food will be healthy, simple, and filling, and we will be glad to accept any volunteers who would like to help with the kitchen duties and/or with cleanup afterwards.

The speakers for the main meetings are Pastor Martin Barlow, Todd Brown, Rob Chisum, Ralph Fisher, Gilbert Hernandez, Onycha Holt, Robert Motsinger, Pastor Daniel Mesa, Pastor Allen Stump, and Fay Ulett. We are also planning meetings for the youth.

Fall Creek Falls State Park is a beautiful place with several waterfalls, a large lake for boating, and many hiking trails. There is also a golf course which is very near the Cane Creek camp ground and is a helpful landmark to be able to locate the camp. The temperatures in mid-May usually range from between 65° and 75° throughout the day. There are usually about ten days of rain at the park during the month of May, so please bring an umbrella in case we catch a few of those ten days. We have a link to register at <https://smyrna.org/2023-camp-meeting-attendance-survey/>.



# Why Be a Member of a Church?

## Why Is Church Membership Important? Part 1

By Raquel Akens

*(This is the first of a two-part series on church membership. In this first part, Raquel Akens writes about why being a member of a local church is important. We acknowledge that for some who are physically isolated from other believers, a virtual church fulfills the role of a local church. Part 2 will feature Pastor Allen Stump looking beyond the local church to show that the individual local or virtual church should be a part of a larger body, a worldwide body, and why that is important ..... Editor)*

### Why be a member of a local church?

#### Why is church membership important?

This short study seeks to answer these questions and greatly borrows from a message that Pastor David Barcelo gave regarding the need for church membership. It will cover three main reasons for membership:

1. It is biblical.
2. It is good for us.
3. It is basic.

#### It is biblical

Firstly, church membership is biblical. The word *membership* may not be in the Scriptures, but the word *member* in the context of belonging to a group is certainly present in the Bible. We will examine several of these instances to better understand the meaning of a *church member*.

*For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. (Romans 12:4, 5)*

The apostle Paul is here using the human body as an analogy to explain how the church member is supposed to relate to the body of believers. A more perfect example could have not been given. Just as our different body parts have different functions yet work in harmony to keep us alive and healthy, each believer is a member of the body of Christ and must work in the same way. Notice that it says, “and every one members one of another.” Meditate on this phrase. What is meant by this? The apostle Paul uses a similar phrase another time in his epistle to the Ephesians:

*Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. (Ephesians 4:25)*

What does *putting away lying* and *speaking truth* have to do with being members one of another? It is the fact that our actions directly affect our brothers and sisters. Let’s go back to the analogy of the human body. How closely affected is the body when the stomach is upset, when a tooth is chipped, or when the liver is failing? We would all agree that the whole body greatly sympathizes with its suffering member. But not only this, do we not also seek to bring healing to that member so that harmony can be restored? In the same way, our actions affect the other members of the church and vice versa. Here we find the principle of accountability tied with church membership. Our membership isn’t just between us and the Lord. We have a relationship which also affects our brothers and sisters in the faith.

Expanding on the analogy of the human body, the apostle Paul impressed upon the Corinthians the meaning of being a member of the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12:12–31. We will go over some of these verses, but I encourage you to read this whole section on your own. He says:

*For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:12, 13)*

We are told here that to be a member of the body of Christ means to have been baptized as a result of the working of the Spirit which convicts the heart to repentance from sin and points to the Savior. It is one Spirit that makes us one body and that brings about unity among believers. It is in this way that the prayer of Christ is fulfilled among his people:

*That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. (John 17:21–23)*

It is in receiving the Spirit of Christ, in the abiding of Christ in the heart, that we are made one with Christ and the Father and thus with other believers. Here is the key to

success in the Christian's life and to the church's existence. It is the presence of the Spirit of Christ that is the uniting force which no human or devilish power can break. Church membership, therefore, is the outward working of that sweet unity which has already taken place inwardly among believers. It is the same way as baptism is the outward token of the believer's consecration to Christ which has already taken place inwardly.

There are some who may say that when they were baptized they became part of the worldwide body of Christ, and that this is good enough for them, and they do not need to find a local church. They are happy to visit one church here or another there or even to simply listen to YouTube sermons Sabbath after Sabbath. But how can they, in their independent and isolated condition, follow the Bible's instruction to minister to other members which requires such closeness? And with which brethren are they bound? The local church is the answer to these questions.

Continuing in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, we also learn that God is the one who sets each member in the body.

But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.”(1Corinthians 12:18)

That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. (1Corinthians 12:25–27)

It is God's will that each church member take care of each other with the same love and that there be no neglect of the lesser members. God is the one who gives us the gifts of the Spirit and sets us where we need to be in the body so we can minister with that which he has given us. As the apostle says:

And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. (1 Corinthians 12:28)

Just as the human body is not only composed of eyeballs or a nose, the church of Christ is not only made up of pastors or evangelists but of every variety of talent as God sees fit to provide. When we remain separated from a local church, there is a good chance that the talents God has given us are lying dormant, but there is much more that we miss out on. The second point in this study regarding church membership is that it is good for us as believers.

## It is good for us

I believe it is important to mention that some of us may have suffered from a misuse of church organization. We could have been disfellowshipped for the truth's sake or

have been part of a church that did not have the right spirit. Such things are certainly discouraging and unfortunate for the Christian to experience, but just because something that is good can be misused, it doesn't mean there is not a proper place for it. As a matter of fact, we have just seen how the Lord intended church membership to work—each member supporting one another to the edification of the body of Christ.

Let us consider how being part of a local church is good for us. Not only are we blessed with the fellowship of other believers, but we are given opportunities to grow in the grace of Christ. We need these opportunities in order to mature from babes in Christ unto a perfect man. As a matter of fact, this is the means that God has established to accomplish our perfection. Consider the following Scripture:

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: (Ephesians 4:11–13)

Using similar language as 1 Corinthians 12, the apostle Paul brings out that the different members of the church work together for the perfecting of the saints, each having been set by God to fulfill his calling. It is only as we are connected with a local church that we can partake of these blessings. Then are we able to serve and be served and to obey the injunctions of the word:

Be kindly *affectioned* one to another with brotherly love; in honour *preferring* one another; (Romans 12:10)

*Distributing* to the necessity of saints; given to *hospitality*. (Romans 12:13)

*Rejoice* with them that do rejoice, and *weep* with them that weep. Be of the *same mind* one toward another. Mind not high things, but *condescend* to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. (Romans 12:15, 16)

*Confess* your faults one to another, and *pray* one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. (James 5:16)

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; *teaching* and *admonishing* one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, *singing* with grace in your hearts to the Lord. (Colossians 3:16)

Use *hospitality* one to another without grudging. (1 Peter 4:9)

And above all things have *fervent charity* among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. (1 Peter 4:8)

We are our brother's keeper. Not only do we need to be held accountable to our profession of faith, but we also need to hold our brethren accountable. As members of a local church, we earn the right to be missed if we stop attending church, and we should expect the support and encouragement of our brethren in our Christian walk.

The Bible says that "iron sharpeneth iron; So a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend" (Proverbs 27:17). Even when we have brothers or sisters who try our patience or cause us to pray more, these situations will help develop our characters where our characters cannot be perfected when we are isolated.

## Church membership is basic

Church membership is a basic means to distinguish between those who are committed to the local church and those who are committed somewhere else. The Scriptures consistently present local churches located in different cities.

Unto the *church of God which is at Corinth*, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: (1 Corinthians 1:2)

I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of *the church which is at Cenchrea*: (Romans 16:1)

There is even a church mentioned to be in Philemon's home.

And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to *the church in thy house*: (Philemon 1:2)

How did Paul know whom he was writing to if there was no church membership? How would any shepherd know which flock to oversee without membership?

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, *over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers*, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. (Act 20:28)

Further, we must consider what the Bible says about church discipline as described in 1 Corinthians 5:13. How was that accomplished without church membership?

But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore *put away from among yourselves that wicked person*. (1 Corinthians 5:13)

How is the privacy of church members maintained, if there isn't a clear distinction between friends and guests of the church and actual members?

And how do you follow the Lord's command in Matthew 18:17, if you are not sure who is the church?

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**For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.**

**(1 Corinthians 12:12)**

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And if he shall neglect to hear them, *tell it unto the church*: but if he neglect to hear the *church*, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. (Matthew 18:17)

Should regular attendance be the unspoken indication that someone is a member of a church without a conscious decision made on their part to be considered a member? Should all be given the same level of responsibility and trust and be held to the same standard regardless of their profession simply because they attend church regularly? Church membership is the answer to clarify all these questions.

While there is no Bible text that teaches us to have a church registry, the language certainly points to the fact that the early Christian church had a way to know which individuals had forsaken all to follow Christ. Even before Pentecost, the apostles must have kept track of those who were disciples because Luke had a knowledge of the record of the names of those in the upper room.

And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (*the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty*), (Act 1:15)

Notice an important detail. The verse says *the number of names*, not the number of people, but the number of names. This could certainly indicate a record of names. To this number of the church were added about three thousand more souls after Pentecost. There was clearly a reckoning of the number of believers.

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. (Act 2:41)

After this were added around another two thousand (Acts 4:4). The keeping track of the believers through church membership was not for the purpose to boast but for the more effective ministration of the word to all saints as God had called each disciple to do.

The Lord desires you to be part of a local or virtual fellowship, where possible. I pray that this study has proven to be helpful to you as you consider the importance of local church membership.

Next Month: Part 2, *The Larger Body*



# Youth's Corner – Kidnapped in Ecuador!

## A Story of Faith, Surrender, Forgiveness, and Trust in God, Part 5

By Sheri Yohe

*(The first four parts of Sheri's story tell of how she and her husband, Don, were led of the Lord to go to Ecuador to work as missionaries. After arriving in Ecuador, they met a friendly man by the name of Allen who befriended them and seemed to greatly assist them. Sheri and Don were later accosted in their home, with Sheri being kidnapped and kept in a locked room, blindfolded and tied up. God miraculously made provision for her to be rescued and taken to a police station. She later learned that her husband was also safe. .... Editor)*

As I walked into the second station, I saw Karol sitting on the couch in the waiting room. I walked over and sat next to her. I felt for her. Allen was still missing. She must be terrified for her, um, "husband." She asked me what was going on. The police had told her that anything she said could be used against her in a court of law. I answered that I didn't know what was happening. Right then one of the detectives motioned for me to come into another office, and I knew he wasn't happy that I had been talking with Karol. He closed the door behind me. An officer leaned over close to my face and told me that Allen had confessed to planning the entire kidnapping. "Allen is not your friend," he said. I couldn't believe what I was hearing.

### Betrayal

The police officer was speaking about our friend, Allen, who had helped us with so many of our needs, who had eaten at our home with us, and who had been at the hospital with me when I had pneumonia on New Year's Day. Allen had been right there when Don had a heart attack in February and had consulted with the hospital cardiologist. The cardiologist had talked with Allen as with a colleague.

This was Allen who had gone to Quito with us in March to help us with our visa extension and then had driven Don and me the nine hours back to Cuenca into the wee hours of the morning.

This was Allen who in early July had driven my grandchildren and me to Tena, Ecuador, in our car. He had taken us to a small village called Misahualli where we saw monkeys climbing freely in the central park on the buildings and in the nearby trees. We had taken a tour together and had even held a boa constrictor.

The detective told me that Allen was not a doctor! NO! How could that be? He was so knowledgeable about

medicines and was teaching doctors. I had pictures of him giving seminars to other cardiologists in Ecuador!

I was reeling from the knowledge of such a horrible betrayal of love and trust.

The police and detectives asked me to tell my story over and over. I was taken to a third police station where I had to help prepare a written statement about what had happened to me. They explained the protection program that we would be in for the next year. I gave my statement with the help of a translator. When it got late, the translator left, and I managed to get through the rest with my limited Spanish.

By this time, special agents were all around me. UNASE is the division of special detectives who are especially trained to handle extortion and kidnapping. They took very good care of me and made me feel safe. It became clear that I would not be going home that day, as it was already dark, and Vilcabamba was a four-hour drive away.

The detectives offered to let me talk with Don on the phone, but it was late. I knew that Don had not slept the night before, so I told them I would talk with him in the morning, that he needed his sleep, and that he knew I was all right.

### A night in a hotel in Cuenca

They finally took me to a secure hotel close to the main police station, and told me to let the front desk know if I needed anything, like food or water, or if I was frightened. They were in contact close by and could return to the hotel in a matter of minutes.

The detective and I walked slowly up the stairs to my room. He said goodnight and left me alone. I locked the door and looked at myself in the bathroom mirror for the first time since I'd been taken from my home. I was surprised to see bruises and scrapes on my face. I didn't remember being hurt. It must have happened when I fought against the two men as they were dragging me into the car the night before.

I was afraid to be alone. The hotel door had a bedroom door lock — not at all secure! I had trouble thinking clear thoughts. I was still trembling. I assumed it was due to frayed nerves. I was relieved to be out of the storage but was not in any way comfortable with my surroundings. I chose to trust the detectives — whom else could I trust? But, they were gone. Did I trust the hotel worker? The de-

tectives trusted him, so I reasoned I would choose to trust him too.

Duct tape had done strange things to my hair. It was frayed from being pulled off by the dear construction workers. I was shedding hair that had been pulled out and longed to brush the loose strands out with a brush. I wet my hair a little and finger-brushed it. I brushed my teeth with the toothbrush and toothpaste the hotel provided and lay down in bed fully clothed. I took deep breaths to calm myself and worked to focus on the realization that the bad men did not know my location. I was safe. I was safe. I was safe. Just relax and sleep.

I thought how wonderful it was to hear the sounds of children playing on the hotel stairway and to have a bed to lie down in. To be alive! I praised the Lord. I left my safety in his hands and let myself drift off to sleep.

## Suspects identified

I was startled awake by someone knocking hard and urgently on the hotel room door. I sat up and asked who it was. He identified himself as a detective. He said he had to talk with me and asked me to open the door. I limped to the door and let him in, just then realizing that my foot hurt.

He showed me a picture of a man on his cell phone. He asked me if he was one of the men who had entered our home. I responded with a terrified “Yes!” It was the one who had been so rough with Don, the tall thin man who had said over and over “kill them!” The detective seemed satisfied and left. My heart was pounding in my chest as I lay down to try to go back to sleep. Calming myself again with deep slow breaths and reminding myself I was safe, I did finally fall asleep again for a little while.

I woke up about 4:00 am with an aching foot, and realized there was probably something wrong. I should have it x-rayed. I did not want to leave the safety of my hotel room. Could I walk down the three flights of stairs and find the night shift hotel worker? I needed to notify the police and that was the only way to do it. I was still so frightened and weary. Two terrible sleepless nights added to the fogginess in my mind. I felt weak and vulnerable. If only I had a friend to be with me right now. At the first police station, I had emailed two friends and asked them to come, but right after that email the police took me to another police station, as though they were making me hard to find while they worked to catch the kidnappers. Again I fought down the fear and determined to go downstairs, telling myself if the police detectives trusted this hotel, I could too.

I slowly made my way down the stairs to the front desk and told the person on duty that I needed to talk with the police. Three detectives arrived within minutes. I told them

I needed an x-ray of my foot. After a quick stop at the police station for what I figured was permission, we went to the hospital emergency room.

The hospital was very small. The doctor looked at my foot and took a few notes. She gave the detective a piece of paper and we went to another hospital, where my foot was x-rayed and bandaged. The kidnappers had fractured a bone in my left foot when they’d slammed the car door on it.

The detectives told me I had to testify before the judge. Six detectives took me to a small restaurant for breakfast, which was my second meal since being taken from my bed 36 hours before. I was not hungry. Then they took me to the courthouse parking lot. Another carload of detectives was already gathered there. All but one of them went into the building, telling me they’d come back for me when it was my turn.

A detective named Leo stayed with me in the front seat of an undercover police four-door-pickup truck. Leo encouraged me to lean my seat back and sleep, but, after trying for a few minutes, I couldn’t relax. Leo, on the other hand, had no problem falling asleep. He had probably been up most of the night. I was safe, the truck doors were locked, and there were security guards at the courthouse entrance. Still I could not relax. I could not think coherent thoughts at times and wondered how I would tell the judge the entire story in Spanish. My foggy, tired brain could not process that nor did I have the energy to worry about it. Oh well, I would face that when the time came. Leo was a light sleeper and a few times opened his eyes to encourage me to rest. He was very nice, but my body would not relax.

I began thinking about Allen and our friendship. Why had we not seen this coming? How could we have been so blind? How could we have trusted this man who had arranged to have me kidnapped? What if he had kidnapped my grandchildren and me while they were here? Had he kidnapped others? Is that his ultimate goal in being so friendly with expats?

I tried to quote Bible verses and sing to myself again to get back into a state of acceptance and faith. God had intervened and not allowed the situation to get any worse. I could praise him for that! My scrambled thoughts flittered from one thing to another, but nothing made sense! I felt numb. What was wrong with me? Would I recover from this confusion?

## Distractions

I had kept myself so busy fighting to stay in faith during the twelve hours of my captivity that I had not cried or allowed myself to be weak. I took deep breaths and worked on re-

maining surrendered to God and in faith that he would do what was right.

From the time the construction workers found me, I had been distracted with giving my story, moving from place to place, medical exams, x-rays of my foot, and waiting in the courthouse parking lot. I was surrounded by police detectives who were taking care of business, using cell phones, asking questions, keeping me informed each time another one of the kidnappers was taken into custody that I had not been able to focus on quoting scripture and singing songs. It was much harder to stay in faith with all the necessary distractions.

I remember trembling the entire time and being unable to stop. The detectives asked me if I was cold. I told them it was just my emotions.

I felt strangely numb inside until, after six hours sitting in the court parking lot, Allen, Karol and two other men walked across the lot in front of our vehicle. Military men dressed in camouflage and carrying big guns surrounded them.

I recognized the one who had been with Don. The tall thin man with the scary voice. I hit Leo's leg and told him excitedly, "There's Allen! And the other kidnappers!" Then I burst into tears and covered my eyes with my hands. I sobbed and sobbed. Leo was alarmed. "No, Sheri, you are the strong one. Don't cry," he said, "You are strong!"

After a few moments I made myself stop. Then several very happy detectives and police officers exited the courthouse giving each other high fives in celebration. They came to my side of the car and told me that Allen had just confessed everything to the judge.

I would not have to go before the judge to tell my story.

Leo told the detectives that I had cried when I saw Allen. One detective asked me, "Don't you want to kick him or hit him?" "No," I said. "I'm just so sad." He ruined his life for nothing, I thought. I was sad that he would hurt us and try to steal our retirement money.

## Heading home

After leaving the courthouse, the police took me to the airport where a large police helicopter sat on the tarmac. Several pictures were taken in front of the helicopter with detectives, police officers and officials, the pilots, and soldiers in camouflage. Then they told me they would fly me to Loja in the same helicopter, if I agreed. Oh yes, I did agree! What a fast way to get back to Vilcabamba. I would really enjoy a helicopter ride.

It normally takes three-hours to drive to Loja from Cuenca, but it took less than an hour in the helicopter. It was a clear day, and we floated over the mountains as

though we were riding on a cloud. The Andes are the most beautiful mountains I have ever seen. This was a wonderful distraction, and I really enjoyed the ride. I felt totally safe! I was sitting in the back of the helicopter with three detectives. They were trustworthy men. I was high above the earth. No one could hurt me there! I kept that image in my mind and replayed it many times in the coming months. I would have to face those kidnappers in court and needed some tangible safety picture to cling to.

We landed in a school soccer field in Loja. The three detectives and I got out and ducked our heads to hurry away from the still-spinning blades. The detectives were happy and asked me if I had liked the ride.

I said, "Yes," but my Spanish was not adequate to tell them they had given me a very special gift and made me smile.



**Sheri with detectives in helicopter**

They took me to the home of one of the UNASE special police officers in Loja. After giving me dinner and letting me take a shower, they showed me to a bedroom, and I went right to sleep.

In the morning after breakfast, they took me to the command center.

On Friday, August 15, at 10:30 a.m., two days after my release from the storage room, Don and I were finally together again. After more photos with the chief of police of the Loja Province, along with some other detectives who had been involved in the investigation and arrest of the kidnappers, we were allowed to go home. The Chief of Police took us home. He gave me his personal contact information and let me know I could call him anytime. He promised to increase the police force in Vilcabamba and pay close attention to making it a safe community.

*Next Month: Don's Story*



# Thoughts on Cleanness

by Ellen G. White

... there is a class who are continually harping upon pride and dress, who are careless of their own apparel, and who think it a virtue to be dirty, and dress without order and taste; and their clothing often looks as if it flew, and lit upon their persons. Their garments are filthy, and yet such ones will ever be talking against pride. They class decency and neatness with pride. Had they been among that number who gathered around the mount to hear the law spoken from Sinai, they would have been chased from the congregation of Israel, because they had not obeyed the command of God—"And let them wash their clothes,"—preparatory to listening to his law given in awful grandeur.

The ten commandments spoken by Jehovah from Sinai can not live in the hearts of persons of disorderly, filthy habits. If ancient Israel could not so much as listen to the proclamation of that holy law, unless they had obeyed the injunction of Jehovah, and cleansed their clothing, how can that sacred law be written upon the hearts of persons who are not cleanly in person, in clothing, or in their houses? —It is impossible. Their profession may be as high as heaven, yet it is not worth a straw. Their influence disgusts unbelievers. Better if they had ever remained outside the ranks of God's loyal people. The house of God is dishonored by such professors.

All who meet upon the Sabbath to worship God should, if possible, have a neat, well-fitting, comely suit to wear in the house of worship. It is a dishonor to the Sabbath, and to God and his house, for those who profess that the Sabbath is the holy of the Lord, and honorable, to wear the same clothing upon the Sabbath that they have worn through the week while laboring upon their farms, when they can obtain other. If there are worthy persons who, with their whole heart, would honor the Lord of the Sabbath, and the worship of God, and who can not obtain a change of clothing, let those who are able give to such a Sabbath suit, that they may appear in the house of God with cleanly, fitting apparel.

A greater uniformity in dress would be pleasing to God. Those who expend money on costly apparel and extra fixings can, by a little self-denial, exemplify pure religion by simplicity of clothing, and then use the money that they have usually expended needlessly, in aiding some poor

brother or sister, whom God loves, to obtain neat and modest apparel. (*The Review and Herald*, January 23, 1900, Art. B, par. 5–8)

I saw that God would not acknowledge an untidy, unclean person as a Christian. His frown was upon such. Our souls, bodies, and spirits are to be presented blameless by Jesus to His Father, and unless we are clean in person, and pure, we cannot be presented blameless to God.

I saw that the houses of the saints should be kept tidy and neat, free from dirt and filth and all uncleanness. I saw that the house of God had been desecrated by the carelessness of parents with their children and by the untidiness and uncleanness there. I saw that these things should meet with an open rebuke, and if there was not an immediate change in some that profess the truth in these things they should be put out of the camp. (*Selected Messages*, bk. 3, p. 273.3–274.1)

When the Sabbath comes to you, draw them [your children] about you and tell them of the undying love of Jesus. Point them to the necessity of

entering upon the Sabbath without crowding its holy hours; the necessity of having the houses and faces clean and tidy for the Sabbath, for if the corners of your house are untidy there will be some dirty corners in the heart. If your children are thus trained they will not be found in saloons and around card tables when they are older. (*Letters and Manuscripts*, vol. 6, Ms 33, May 14, 1889, par. 16; from the 1889 Ottawa, Kansas, Camp Meeting)

On Friday let the preparation for the Sabbath be completed. See that all the clothing is in readiness and that all the cooking is done. Let the boots be blacked and the baths be taken. It is possible to do this. If you make it a rule you can do it. (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 355.3)



Ellen G. White circa 1864



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