

# 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 shew them his covenant. Psalm 25:14

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**For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. (Isaiah 55:10-11)**



# The Importance of Knowing the Truth About God

By Allen Stump

When discussing Christianity, it is essential to start by grasping the concept of God and his identity. While some might assume that all Christians share a uniform understanding of God and his character, it is fascinating to note the diverse perspectives within Christianity itself. This study aims to underscore the significance of possessing an accurate understanding of God, delving into his nature and character.

One might pose the question: Why does the belief about God hold significance? It is a valid and insightful inquiry that deserves careful consideration. Let us take a few moments to delve into this matter in depth and to explore whether having a precise understanding of God is, indeed, important. The issue is about the love of God.

Satan acts as God's adversary, harboring intense hatred toward God and toward anyone cherished by him. His intention is to hinder you from experiencing the love of God and from saved in God's kingdom of love. The Bible plainly declares that God is love, and his love was made known in the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ, dying for the sins of humanity.

He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:8-10)

Understanding God's love is vital because our love to God and our willingness to serve him is in direct proportion to our understanding and experiencing the love of God. John also writes that "we love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

God and his Son undertook an immense risk when Christ came to earth. The deeper our awareness of the profound sacrifice involved and the more we grasp the act of God sending his Son to this world, the deeper our understanding and appreciation of his love for us becomes. Consider if the Bible proclaimed that God so loved the world that he gave a cow. In such a scenario, our acknowledgment of God's love would be present, but the extent of the sacrifice would be confined to a simple cow. Likewise, if the verse mentioned that God so loved the world that he gave an angel, our perception of God's love would surpass that of giving a cow but would remain limited. How thankful we should be for the truth that is the hallmark of Christianity:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have **everlasting** life. (John 3:16)

All Christians claim to believe the truth of John 3:16, at least on a superficial level, but as we shall see, there is more to this text than most believers understand, and our perception of God's love depends upon our understanding the value of the gift he gave for us.

## Overcoming sin

Vital to overcoming sin is understanding that Jesus Christ is truly the Son of God. John wrote:

Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John 5:5)

Having faith in Jesus as the Son of God gives us the strength to overcome the challenges of the world. The expression of God's love is evident in his sacrificial gift of his only begotten Son, the most profound offering one could ever make. Without a doubt, grasping and embracing this truth carries immense significance.

Now let us consider a question. Do you think Satan is aware of this need we have to understand the love of God for overcoming sin? He most certainly is! And just as certainly Satan does not want you to overcome the world.

Satan's goal is to keep you in sin, in rebellion against God, and the best way he can accomplish that is to hide from you God's love expressed in the giving of his only begotten Son for your sins. He wants you to believe that Jesus is not actually the Son of God. The gravity of this is realized when we understand that we cannot overcome the world unless we understand God's loving gift.

To overcome the world means to overcome sin:

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. (1 John 2:16-17)

Satan has succeeded in preventing a significant number of Christians from embracing the belief that Jesus is the Son of God. Let us delve deeper into this matter. The following statement of faith adopted at the Associations of Aberystwyth and Bala in the year 1823 serves as a reflection of the prevalent Christian:

Though there is but one God, and though there cannot be more than one true God, still it is the clear testimony of Holy Scripture that there are in the Godhead THREE Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; that these three are co-eternal and co-equal, not one before or after another, not greater or less than another, but one God. (*Confession of Faith of the Calvinistic Methodists*, #4, found at <https://www.apuritansmind.com/creeds-and-confessions/confession-of-faith-of-the-calvinistic-methodists-of-wales/>)

This quotation states that these three individuals are considered co-eternal. What does that imply? Put simply, it means they share the same age. Are the Father and Son of equal age? Have both of them existed independently of each other throughout eternity? The implication is that if the Father and his Son share the same age, the Father is not truly a father and his Son is not genuinely a son. Is Jesus, however, really the Son of God?

John emphasized the significance of having faith in Jesus as the Son of God:

Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. (1 John 2:22)

John boldly predicted that the antichrist would deny the Father and the Son.

In Revelation 13 there is a depiction of a beast, its mark, and of a significant global crisis. Adventists frequently discuss the mark of the beast, drawing connections to the concept of antichrist. However, it is noteworthy that the term *antichrist* is absent in the book of Revelation and the prophetic book of Daniel. The term is exclusively found in the first and second epistles of John, and each reference is linked to Christ in his Sonship.

Denying the Father and the Son occurs when individuals reject the truth that the Father is genuinely a father and the Son is truly a son. This simplicity aligns with the straightforward nature of the plan of salvation.

### **Becoming like God in character**

The following scripture plainly states the importance of knowing God as he is revealed in the Bible:

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

It is by beholding that humanity becomes changed, but what if we are beholding a wrong view of our Creator? Our characters will be distorted and not in the proper image. I have met people who have an almost vengeful view of hell. They want the wicked to burn and burn forever and seem glad that they would do so. Why would this be? Because the view of God they understand is that he wants the same thing. They are becoming like the god they love and serve. So it is vital that we properly understand the true nature and character of God.

The wise man, Solomon, wrote:

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding. (Proverbs 9:10)

Peter declared:

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: (2 Peter 1:3)

Here Peter says that all things concerning life and godliness come "through a knowledge of him." Certainly we must have a correct knowledge of him, if we want his life and godliness to be a part of our life.

Jesus plainly declared the need to know the Father and himself in his prayer to the Father, recorded in John 17:

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. (John 17:3)

Ellen White stated the importance of knowing God in this way:

Like our Saviour, we are in this world to do service for God. We are here to become like God in character, and by a life of service to reveal Him to the world. In order to be co-workers with God, in order to become like Him and to reveal His character, we must know Him aright. We must know Him as He reveals Himself.

A knowledge of God is the foundation of all true education and of all true service. It is the only real safeguard against temptation. It is this alone that can make us like God in character.

This is the knowledge needed by all who are working for the uplifting of their fellow men. Transformation of character, purity of life, efficiency in service, adherence to correct principles, all depend upon a right knowledge of God. This knowledge is the essential preparation both for this life and for the life to come. (Ellen White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 409.1–.3)

### **Jesus Christ is the Son of God.**

The ultimate demonstration of God's love is revealed in the singular act of giving his only begotten Son for our salvation. Either Jesus is truly the only begotten Son or he was not truthful when conveying that God sacrificed his only begotten Son (John 3:16). Indeed, the assurance of our salvation hinges on this crucial aspect.

Knowing, believing, and experiencing God's loving gift of his Son brings the assurance of salvation:

He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. (1 John 5:10–13)

God is an individual of truth (Deuteronomy 32:4), and he has declared Jesus to be his Son:

And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (Matthew 3:17)

Despite God's plainest of statements, people try to teach differently. They say that Jesus is not really the Son of God and the Father is not really the Father of Jesus Christ; instead, they teach a concept commonly known as the Trinity, or triune God. This concept says that the one true God

is actually three persons who are all co-equal, co-eternal. Thus, by its very defining characteristic, the trinitarian doctrine denies the ability of the Father and the Son to be a father and son. The classic definition of the Trinity is to proclaim:

There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal Persons. (<https://www.adventist.org/trinity/>)

Notice that the "one God" is the "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." This is a statement of man that carries no inspiration. Does this agree with the inspired word of God, the Bible? Notice this plain statement of Paul:

But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. (1 Corinthians 8:6)

This inspired statement says that the Father is God. In fact, there is no verse anywhere in Holy Writ that states God is three persons or that he is "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

The text in Corinthians also states that Jesus is our Lord and that all things are of, or from, the Father, through, or by, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul, writing to Timothy, noted:

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; (1 Timothy 2:5)

That one God is the Father, and Christ is the mediator between God and man. If Christ were a third part of the God of the Bible, he could not be a mediator between himself and humanity by the very definition of what a mediator is and does.

God has proclaimed that Jesus Christ is his beloved Son. This is the foundation and center of the gospel. This truth is so vital that Jesus said he would build his church upon it:

When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:13–18)

Jesus was not stating that he would build his church upon Peter but upon the wonderful truth that Peter expressed. This truth is that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

The pen of Inspiration has stated:

Peter had expressed the truth which is the foundation of the church’s faith. (Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 413)

We also read:

The truth which Peter had confessed is the foundation of the believer’s faith. (Ibid, p. 412)

The gift of God’s Son is the gift of all heaven. Paul wrote:

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? (Romans 8:32)

It is astonishing to consider the transformative impact that can occur when we pause to reflect on the incredible love shown by God who sacrificed his only begotten Son for sinners like you and me.

### **The gospel is at stake.**

False views of God and Christ cannot rightly present the true gospel; instead, many have accepted false views of God and Christ which brings a false gospel.

Paul warned the Galatian believers to be careful to not accept another gospel or another Jesus. That same warning is present truth for us today. Notice the forthright and boldness of Paul:

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another (Greek: ἕτερος–*heteros*) gospel: Which is not another (Greek: ἄλλος–*allos*) but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:6–9)

Two different Greek words are translated *another* in this text. *Heteros* means *another of a different kind*, while *allos* means *another of the same kind*. Paul is saying that the Galatian believers received a different gospel and not the same gospel that he delivered unto them.

Paul was aware of the presence of deceptive individuals disguising themselves as believers and attempting to promote a distorted version of Jesus and a counterfeit gospel. The same problem that existed in Paul’s day is very alive today. Let us adhere to the genuine gospel as disclosed in

God’s word, and reject all false teachings concerning God and his Son.

Remember, John wrote:

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. (1 John 4:9)

In order for God to send his only begotten Son into the world, it implies that he already had an only begotten Son to send before sending him.

*But*, some say, *Jesus was not God’s Son until he came into the world*. This idea says that Jesus became the Son of God at his incarnation, but does this idea stand the test of the Scriptures?

In the Old Testament book of Proverbs, the question was asked:

Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son’s name, if thou canst tell? (Proverbs 30:4)

Obviously the writer of Proverbs knew that God had a son. When Nebuchadnezzar cast three men into the fire, we read about the king’s startled response:

He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. (Daniel 3:25)

How did that heathen king know what the Son of God was like? Notice the answer from inspiration:

The Hebrew captives filling positions of trust in Babylon had in life and character represented before him the truth. When asked for a reason of their faith, they had given it without hesitation. Plainly and simply they had presented the principles of righteousness, thus teaching those around them of the God whom they worshiped. They had told of Christ, the Redeemer to come; and in the form of the fourth in the midst of the fire the king recognized the Son of God. (Ellen White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 509.2)

Please carefully read these verses:

For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I *came out* from God. I *came forth* from the Father, and am *come* into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. (John 16:27–28)

The Greek word which is translated *came out* can mean:

To come forth from physically, arise from, to be born of.” (Josph Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 223)

It is used this way in Hebrews 7:5: “. . . the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham.”

The Greek word which is translated *come* in John 16:28 means:

To come from one place to another. (Thayer, *Ibid.*, p. 250)

It is evident that Jesus was begotten by his Father before the world existed. Christ entered the world “when the fullness of time was come” (Galatians 4:4) to redeem humanity which had fallen.

Numerous devout Christians argue that the terms *Father* and *Son* as disclosed in Scripture do not inherently denote a literal familial relationship. Instead, they contend that these terms symbolize roles undertaken in the execution of the plan of salvation. An illustration of this perspective is found in the writings of Seventh-day Adventist author Frank Holbrook, who expressed the following viewpoint:

It may be inferred from the Scriptures that when the Godhead laid out the plan of salvation at some point in eternity past, They also took certain positions or roles to carry out the provisions of the plan. (Frank Holbrook, “What Is the Trinity?”, *These Times*, June 1, 1981, p. 26)

This is the same position published in an official publication of the Seventh-day Adventist Church:

In the New Testament, Jesus used *Father* to bring us into a close and personal relationship with God . . . (*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, . . ., p. 26, 3rd edition, 2018; emphasis in original).

Undoubtedly, it is evident how the aforementioned notion fundamentally rejects the concept of the Father and the Son. This denial does not stem from refuting the existence of the two entities referred to as Father and Son but, rather, from asserting that the Father is not genuinely a father and the Son is not truly a son.

Both God and his Son assumed an immense risk when Christ came to Earth. The deeper our awareness of the profound sacrifice made by God in sending his Son to this world, the greater our appreciation and understanding of his love for us will become.

## Did the Son of God die?

This might seem like an unusual question, but let us delve into it thoroughly. To begin, let us examine a few quotations from notable trinitarian authors.

“His [Christ’s] mediation between God and man is chiefly in his human nature, in which alone he was capable of suffering and dying.”—*Scott on 1 Timothy 2:5*. (quoted by J. H. Waggoner, *The Atonement*, p. 166.6)

“The sufferings of Christ were endured in his human nature. Though possessing a divine nature, yet in that he could not suffer and die. His sufferings were endured in his human nature.”—*Manual of Atonement*, p. 88. (quoted by J. H. Waggoner, *The Atonement*, p. 166.2)

“Trinitarians do not hold to the sufferings or death of divinity.”—*Mattison on the Trin.*, p. 39. (quoted by J. H. Waggoner, *The Atonement*, p. 166.5)

What is being expressed here is that Jesus Christ descended to Earth and inhabited a human body for thirty-three years. At the culmination of this period, the human body died, while the divine being, who descended from heaven, remained alive. This theory poses a challenge to the concept of atonement, as the Son of God needed to undergo death to redeem us to his Father. A mere human sacrifice would be insufficient, and this is precisely what occurs if the divine being who descended from heaven does not experience death. A human sacrifice, even if the individual had never committed a sin, would be incapable of saving anyone.

Without the death of the Son of God, however, we cannot be forgiven of our sins. Isaiah makes it very clear that it was not simply a human body that was given for humanity’s sins but, rather, the whole being of Christ.

Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt **make his soul an offering for sin**, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. (Isaiah 53:10)

Among all people, Seventh-day Adventists should be aware that the soul of a person encompasses more than just the body. It encompasses the entire being (see Genesis 2:7 and James 2:28). The Scripture indicates that Christ’s soul was the offering for sin, signifying the entirety of Jesus Christ as a person. In verse 12, Isaiah further writes:

Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath **poured out his soul unto death**: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:12)

Isaiah is unequivocally explicit here. The soul of Christ was presented as an offering unto death; therefore, Jesus Christ genuinely experienced death on Calvary for the forgiveness of our sins!

Please carefully reflect on these additional scriptures that explicitly address the death of Christ:

He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, *that his soul was not left in hell*, neither his flesh did see corruption. (Acts 2:31)

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that *Christ died for our sins* according to the scriptures; (1 Corinthians 15:3)

*And if Christ be not raised*, your faith is vain; *ye are yet in your sins*. (1 Corinthians 15:17)

Without the death of Christ there is no atonement!

Observe that in the preceding verses, Paul was meticulous in using the divine name of the Son of God—Christ—rather than the name given at his birth in Bethlehem—Jesus. Paul aimed to emphasize that it was the divine Son of God who underwent death rather than just a human body.

### Antichrist

The subject of antichrist is a common topic in the study of eschatology. Interestingly, however, the term is never mentioned in the book of Revelation. It is only mentioned by John in his first two epistles, and each time it deals with an area of Christology. In First John, we read:

Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. (1 John 2:22)

Notice the denial is given not of God and Christ but of the father-and-son relationship which they have! Those who deny this are antichrist! This is a strong warning that we are not to accept false teachings concerning this issue.

Trinitarians feel compelled to assert that Christ did not experience death because the Bible states that God cannot die (1 Timothy 6:16). Consequently, if Jesus were identical to his Father in every aspect, he could not undergo death in any situation. This would result in nothing more than a human sacrifice.

The Trinity doctrine contains numerous seemingly insurmountable contradictions that perplex even the most discerning Trinitarians. Athanasius, a key proponent of this doctrine, openly acknowledged his confusion about the concepts he was attempting to convey. According to Gibbon, Athanasius:

... candidly confessed that whenever he forced his understanding to meditate upon the divinity of the Lo-

gos, his toilsome and unavailing efforts recoiled on themselves; that the more he thought, the less he comprehended; and the more he wrote, the less capable was he of expressing his thoughts. (Edward Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Chapter XXI, par. 8, as quoted by A. T. Jones, *The Great Empires of the Bible*, p. 497.3)

### Could Jesus have sinned?

Christ never sinned; however, the Bible explicitly states that he “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). If Jesus were, as Trinitarians assert, exactly like his Father in every respect, the possibility of Jesus sinning would not have existed, and consequently he could not have experienced temptation. This would positively be problematic to the atonement.

Speaking of the Father, the Bible says: “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man” (James 1:13). So, if Jesus was just like the Father, he could not be tempted and, therefore, had nothing to overcome and could not help his people in their time of need.

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“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Peter 1:3).

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However, as we noted from Hebrews 4:15, Jesus “*was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*” Jesus was tempted to sin more than any person who has ever lived. Was it possible, however, for Jesus to sin? Satan believed it was possible or he would not have wasted his time in his temptations of the Son of God. Especially in the wilderness, but throughout his life, Jesus was assailed by Satan with many temptations.

In assuming human flesh, Jesus Christ fully experienced all the risks inherent to our human condition. This was crucial, for without this we would not have an example to follow.

The Scriptures tell us that “the government shall be upon his [Christ’s] shoulder” (Isaiah 9:6). This cannot refer to any earthly government, for Jesus stayed aloof from them. This can only refer to the government of God. The entirety of God’s governance rested upon the shoulders of the infant born in Bethlehem. Had he failed, the entire divine government would have collapsed, and Satan would have triumphed. If Satan could have lead Jesus to commit even

one sin, victory would have been his. Gratefully, we praise God that Jesus did not yield in any way to the wicked adversary.

Have you considered the consequences if Christ had failed? The Bible teaches “. . . *the wages of sin is death* . . .” (Romans 6:23). If Jesus had sinned, he would have had to pay the penalty of sin which is death. Jesus would have died forever, and with his death our salvation and the stability of the universe would have been upset. There was, indeed, a genuine risk involved; yet, both the Father and the Son were willing to take that risk for you and me. Words fall short in expressing the profound depth of God’s wonderful love for us.

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A knowledge of God is the foundation  
of all true education and of all true  
service. It is the only real safeguard  
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can make us like God in character.

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If the trinity doctrine were valid, then none of the three *persons* could face death under any circumstance. In such a scenario, Jesus would have been certain that, regardless of what transpired, he would return to heaven to reunite with the other two *persons* he had left behind. In this setting, God would not have truly risked anything, and the entire plan would be a farce, a deception. Let us reject any such absurdities.

Beloved, God loves you so much that he gave his only begotten Son to die for you. He loves you so much that he risked the stability of the universe for you.

Comprehending God’s love for us generates a reciprocal love for God within us. “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). The deeper our understanding and appreciation of God’s love, the more profound our love for God becomes. True perfection in our love for God is achieved only through knowing and believing that God loved the world to the extent of him giving his only begotten Son. God desires to find individuals on this earth who wholeheartedly love him and with whom he can have close fellowship. You have the opportunity to be one of those individuals. This fellowship, however, is not possible when one has a distorted view of God’s nature and personality. We can only worship and serve God when we know him correctly.



“*Fundamental Principles . . .*” continued from page 15

two who view things in a similar light; but with several minds enlisted there is greater safety against his wiles. Every plan will be more liable to be viewed from all sides, every advance will be more carefully studied, so that no enterprise will be so likely to be entered upon which will bring confusion and perplexity and defeat to the work in which we are engaged. In union there is strength; in division there is weakness and defeat. (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 252.2)

“The division of the General Conference into District Union Conferences was God’s arrangement. In the work of the Lord for these last days there should be no Jerusalem centers, no kingly power. And the work in the different countries is not to be bound by contracts to the work centering in Battle Creek, for this is not God’s plan. Brethren are to counsel together, for we are just as much under the control of God in one part of His vineyard as in another. Brethren are to be one in heart and soul, even as Christ and the Father are one. Teach this, practice this, that we may be one with Christ in God, all working to build up one another.” (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 232.6)

**Note:** For a more in-depth look at the responsibilities of the conference president, see the entry “Conference president” in the *Comprehensive Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White*.

For a more in-depth look at the responsibilities of the union president, see the entry “Union conference president” in the *Comprehensive Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White*.

For a more in-depth look at the responsibilities of the general conference president, see the entry “General Conference president” in the *Comprehensive Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White*.

The next chapter will discuss the authority of the chairperson, who is in reality a mere presiding officer or moderator and, therefore, has no decision-making power, which is exercised by the members of the deliberative assembly.

All the duties of the administrators (moderator, secretary, treasurer, etc.) are recorded in the church’s statutes.





# Forgiving the Unrepentant

By Sheri Stump

How can you forgive the abuser who continues to abuse you? It is easy to think, *Isn't there a time when righteous indignation is acceptable? Bad people don't deserve to be forgiven, right? After all, he didn't ask me to forgive him. If I forgive him (or her), they get away with it. They just go on abusing people with no consequences.*

I find it very easy to forgive the person who comes to me and says, "I was wrong; would you please forgive me?" It is easy for me to say, "Of course, I forgive you." But what about the person who is arrogant, mean, and continues to abuse or persecute you? That is the great challenge for me.

There was a young girl who loved her dad so much! She loved talking with him, playing guitar, and singing. She didn't have a close relationship with her mom, but as long as her dad loved her, it was okay. She grew up in a humble, poor family, one of six children. Her family lived in a two-bedroom home on a busy street in a small town. The house had a full basement, where the five girls slept; her only brother slept in the second bedroom on the main level, and her parents in the master bedroom. It was a full house. The family was eligible for government assistance, so her mom brought home surplus food. The family's clothing was mostly purchased at rummage sales.

But at the age of twelve years, her beloved dad sexually abused her. He should have been her protector. He was the pastor of the small church they attended!

Her young world imploded. She went from feeling secure to being terrified that the person living inside her house, who was far bigger and stronger than she, would abuse her again. She tried to disappear. She hid in her basement bedroom. She lost herself in books. She was quiet and reserved when she was among the rest of the family.

In her young, immature mind, she didn't fully understand what had happened, but she knew it was wrong. After suffering alone for a while, she told her older sister, who was married and lived near the high school she attended. She learned a valuable lesson that day—telling such things opens Pandora's box. Her sister shared with her husband, whose brother was married to their cousin. A few days later, two uncles showed up at their house to confront her dad. Surely, they were doing what they thought was best for her. The kind uncles were intervening on behalf of their niece, but they didn't live in her house. After they left, trouble and horrible anger filled the house. The father denied everything and accused his daughter of trying to ruin his reputation. Her mom came to the basement where she

was hiding as usual, asking her if it was true. Her mom said, "If it's true, I'll divorce your dad!" All she could think to say through her tears was, "Mom, I didn't lie!"

What a heavy load to put on a young girl's shoulders! She had become responsible for destroying her dad's reputation. She would be responsible for her parents' divorce! She wanted to die!

The next day, life silently went back to normal. Her mom returned to work during the night in the Proof Department at a bank, leaving the abused girl alone night after night. She became the liar, the enemy living among people who disdained her, the outcast who supposedly made up stories to destroy her family. She felt despicable and unloved.

Her mother began giving her orders before leaving for work, instructing her to "clean out the refrigerator and make cookies for the kids" (her two younger siblings). She was no longer treated as a family member but was punished daily. Her dad became distant and angry. She lived in constant fear and exile.

She introverted so well that the lady who lived next door thought she was mentally challenged, perhaps retarded. The neighbor exclaimed one day a few years later, when the girl was about sixteen years old and had forgotten to be silent for a few minutes, "Oh, you're not retarded at all!" At the same time, this young girl was working part-time at a nursing home, feeding bedridden people. The elderly people at the nursing home nicknamed her "Smiley." Away from the oppressive atmosphere of her home, she was a different person—she could be happy.

But she knew in her heart she had to forgive. She just couldn't figure out how to do it. A different and more hideous kind of abuse continued day after day. It was the kind of abuse that others don't recognize. Only the victim is damaged. It looks close to normal, but is actually the result of anger and wounds its prey. Not only does it wound, it prevents those wounds from healing. Perhaps you know what it's like to be in a family setting where remarks are skillfully made that have significant meaning to only one person—the victim. Little snide remarks that stab and wound. You see, her older sisters believed their dad. They believed that their younger sister had made up a horrible story to get attention and destroy the family's reputation.

As she endured day after day she counted the months before she could leave that house, and she marked a calendar. She also prayed that someday she would find love from a

man who would rescue her from her situation, like the heroes in the books she read. She also prayed that she would not marry the first man who paid her attention. She did not want to make a lifelong mistake.

When she was 18 years old, she thought she had met him. The man who loved her! He really loved her. They were married within a few months, and shortly after the wedding the dream of her *knight-in-shining-armor* vanished, and she realized she had married another abuser.

She now struggled in her new home. How could she survive this? She was still struggling with forgiving her family. Now she must daily forgive her husband.

After her two children were born, she was confronted by her sisters. It was a Mother's Day, and she had attended the family church. You see, as an adult, she and her husband began attending a different church of the same belief as her dad's church. But for Mother's Day, she would be a good daughter and endure the expected abuse at a family get-together with all the little verbal knives. This day was particularly difficult.

Her sisters asked her to stay after church. Just a sisters' meeting they said. She had never been invited to join a sisters' meeting. She was so happy! She felt like a part of the family. But, that illusion was burst when her sisters made clear that the reason for the meeting was to set her straight. They rehashed the horrible way she had damaged the family's reputation, told her she needed to be a better daughter, she needed to stop the abuse, and quit talking about her fabricated sexual abuse. The truth was she had not told anyone else about the incident. She had learned her lesson about how Pandora's box is opened, but they assumed she was spreading "the lie" far and wide.

How could she correct their false beliefs? She couldn't. She sat there with her sisters, tears running down her face, and was silent. There was nothing to say. Words would not change what was happening. A picture came to her mind as her sisters angrily accused her of horrible things. It was a picture of wolves, teeth bared, saliva dripping from their mouths, attacking and biting, ripping and tearing.

When her sisters finally ran out of steam, they told her to shut her mouth. She was not to tell her parents what had happened there. She was to go to the family Mother's Day dinner and not cry! "No crying! Stop it!"

She went to the dinner. Somehow she had dried her tears. She smiled at her mother and asked what she could do to help prepare dinner. She was assigned chopping vegetables for a salad. She chose the corner of the kitchen, hid her face, and chopped vegetables. She couldn't wait to leave her mother's home that day. Her sisters were so happy. It seemed they had gotten the anger off their chests and all

was now well in their worlds while she was emotionally destroyed.

Upon returning home she noticed a book one of her beauty salon clients had given her. The title was: *Irregular People*. After getting her children down for their naps, she started reading the book. Within a few chapters she was convinced that God had arranged for that book to be in her hands for this exact moment. God had not left her. He was guiding her through the forgiveness process. The book was about family members who take out their frustrations and anger on one of the family. Every family problem is blamed on a scapegoat. They perfect the little significant remarks that continue to wound the scapegoat. The remarks sound innocent to others. They are often made with laughter and jesting, but to the intended victim the remarks hit home. After the family event the victim is emotionally bleeding from the verbal wounds so stealthily inflicted.

She prayed fervently for divine help; she needed it desperately. As she prayed and read scripture, she came upon some verses that troubled her greatly.

In Matthew we read the parable about the unforgiving servant:

Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his

lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. (Matthew 18:21–35)

This young lady was sincere in her desire to go to heaven. She wanted to please God and be right with Him. But this forgiveness thing was so hard. If she didn't forgive, God would not forgive her sins. She knew she had sinned and had memorized the verse in Romans 3:23, which says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Also, in Romans 6:23, it gives the consequence of sin: "For the wages of sin is death..."

She prayed for God to give her wisdom and strength to forgive. Forgiveness was vital to her salvation and peace. First John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." She confessed her sins, but that was not all. She must also forgive others so she could be forgiven. This was a matter of Heaven or Hell, and she wanted Heaven to be her future.

Then one day while studying her Bible, she came across these verses:

Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. (Matthew 5:23–24)

So, it was her responsibility to go to those who had ought against her. How do you do that without magnifying the problem and making it worse? She knew that if she went to her father, mother, or sisters and said she forgave them, they would take it all wrong. The entire hideous mess would blow up. She took it to prayer, praying and praying, and seemed to find no solution. The verse says to forgive. Could she forgive them in her own heart? Perhaps she did not need to say a word to them about it.

At this time she was attending a mega-church and was Director of Women's Ministries. She had a Women's Ministry board of twelve ladies who helped her plan spiritual events to minister to the ladies in the church. She always began each board meeting with a devotional. As she was trying to work through the forgiveness process, she decided to share her struggle with her friends on the board. She presented a devotional on forgiveness and shared a bit of her background of abuse. She asked how many ladies would be willing to say if they had ever experienced sexual abuse. To her shock eleven of the twelve ladies raised their hands! This was epidemic! She was not alone in her struggle. It became even more important for her to find the so-

lution to forgiving the unrepentant so she could help others.

Some of the ladies shared that they also had problems going to family events and felt much the same as she did. She asked them if it was hard for them to purchase cards for their parents or abusers. Typically greeting cards for Mother's Day or Father's Day glorify the position of the parent and praise the parent for being wonderful. She felt like a liar when she praised her parents and told them she loved them. This only indicated that she had not forgiven. She still harbored bad feelings toward them.

We will now leave our young lady's story and look at what the Scriptures teach about forgiveness.

Harboring an unforgiving spirit allows a *root of bitterness* to grow. In Hebrews 12:15, it says: "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;"

Ellen White explains the verse this way:

As the seed sown produces a harvest, and this in turn is sown, the harvest is multiplied. In our relation to others, this law holds true. Every act, every word, is a seed that will bear fruit. Every deed of thoughtful kindness, of obedience, or of self-denial, will reproduce itself in others, and through them in still others. So every act of envy, malice, or dissension is a seed that will spring up in a "root of bitterness" (Hebrews 12:15), whereby many shall be defiled. And how much larger number will the "many" poison. Thus the sowing of good and evil goes on for time and for eternity. (Ellen White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 85.1)

Paul writing in Ephesians, says:

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:31–32)

Concerning allowing the root of bitterness to live in us, we have this counsel:

God says to every soul, "Take heed." The leaven of influence is a powerful thing. Whether good or evil, it gathers all to itself. If the leaven of selfishness, covetousness, and hardheartedness is allowed to enter, it will subdue all the properties of the body to corrupting force. There will be no bowels of mercy, no tender consideration, no fighting against objectionable traits of character, which so quickly develop into giants of evil. Unless this root of bitterness is cast out of the soul, it

will continually spring up, and by it many will be defiled. (Ellen White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 15, p. 110.2)

Clearly the sincere Christian cannot maintain an unforgiving spirit. Once a neighbor was having trouble forgiving someone. He said he would never forgive the man for what he had done. Another neighbor told him that carrying an unforgiving spirit was like carrying a bucket filled with concrete. It was weighing down his life and damaging only one person, the one who does not forgive. Far better to set the bucket down and find peace in Jesus. After a long conversation the neighbor asked forgiveness of God and set the heavy load down.

Another similar example I have heard is refusing to forgive is like the victim drinking poison and hoping the abuser dies.

Forgiveness is not based on feelings. If we wait to forgive until we *feel* forgiving, we are prolonging our suffering. Forgiveness is a decision. It is making a decision to forgive based on principle. Forgiveness is not an option to the believer. It is a duty. We have already read that forgiveness is required of the believer. If we don't forgive others we will not be forgiven our sins. This means we will not be in heaven.

Luke 6:37 says; "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven."

In a letter to fellow brothers and sisters in Norwich, Massachusetts, in 1890, Ellen White emphasized the importance of letting go of bitterness:

While you so readily think and speak evil of one another, while you allow the root of bitterness to spring up and be cherished, your influence scatters from Christ and hardens hearts in resistance to the sweet spirit of unity and peace. Put it all away without a moment's delay. "Love one another," Christ says, "as I have loved you" [John 15:12]. (Ellen White, *Letters and Manuscripts*, vol. 6, Lt 33, 1890, par. 11)

Also, in the fourth chapter of Ephesians, Paul further writes:

But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. . . . Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may

minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. (Ephesians 4:20–24, 29–30)

Jesus in Matthew 18:25 says; "And when ye stand praying, forgive if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."

Scripture teaches that forgiveness is a mutual responsibility. If we are aware that someone holds something against us, it is our duty to seek reconciliation with them. Similarly, if we harbor grievances against someone, it is also our responsibility to approach the person and work towards restoring harmony in our relationship.

In the book *Steps to Christ*, we read:

When we come to ask mercy and blessing from God we should have a spirit of love and forgiveness in our own hearts. How can we pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," and yet indulge an unforgiving spirit? Matthew 6:12. If we expect our own prayers to be heard we must forgive others in the same manner and to the same extent as we hope to be forgiven. (Ellen White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 97.1)

Even modern science indicates that an unforgiving spirit causes negative consequences on physical health.

Patricia Holbrook, writing in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* of October 8, 2020, under the article, "How anger and bitterness affect our health," states:

The first trigger of anger activates an organ inside the brain called the amygdala, activating the hypothalamus, which signals the pituitary gland, releasing a hormone that affects the adrenal gland's stress hormones: cortisol, adrenaline and noradrenaline.

High cortisol levels cause a loss of neurons in the prefrontal cortex of one's brain, which affects the proper function of that part of the cortex, known to help us make sound judgments and good decisions. Likewise, elevated cortisol levels kill neurons in the hippocampus, thus weakening short-term memory. High cortisol levels also decrease serotonin – the "happiness" hormone. The effect on serotonin levels generates an increase of anger, emotional pain, anxiety, and depression.

The long-term effects of these triggers are known to many of us. Stress hormones increase our heart rate, blood pressure, arterial tension, blood glucose levels and thyroid function. It increases the likelihood of the incidence of cancer, digestive, and metabolism problems.

And from Hopkinsmedicine.org, we read:

There is an enormous physical burden to being hurt and disappointed, says Karen Swartz, M.D., director of the Mood Disorders Adult Consultation Clinic at The Johns Hopkins Hospital. Chronic anger puts you into a fight-or-flight mode, which results in numerous changes in heart rate, blood pressure and immune response. Those changes, then, increase the risk of depression, heart disease and diabetes, among other conditions. Forgiveness, however, calms stress levels, leading to improved health. (<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/forgiveness-your-health-depends-on-it>.)

I read a story of the amazing benefits of forgiving the unrepentant. At the conclusion of World War II, as the Allies endeavored to liberate and relocate prisoners from the German concentration camps, they encountered emotionally devastated and emaciated individuals. Unfortunately, for many, it was too late to save them, as they were so starved that mere food was insufficient to restore their vitality. Even after being set free, many succumbed to their dire conditions. These individuals had been forcibly taken from their cities, towns, and countries, separated from their families. The Allies worked tirelessly to reunite these despairing people with any surviving family members and assist them in returning to their home towns.

The prisoners speaking a variety of languages challenged the soldiers and necessitated the enlistment of some of the healthier prisoners who spoke several languages to translate. Wild Bill was one of those translators. The Allies could not pronounce Wild Bill's real name and since he had a handlebar mustache, they nicknamed him Wild Bill. After a particularly angry prisoner had vented his anguish over losing his family and the horrible abuse he had suffered, the Allies excused his bad behavior and told Wild Bill, (as if he didn't know far better than they did), that many of the prisoners had lost their entire family to this war. Some of whom were killed right before their eyes.

To their surprise, Wild Bill shared that when the war began, the Germans had lined up his family in front of him and shot his wife and three children. Then he was taken to the prison camp. The Allied soldiers concluded, "Obviously, you haven't been here long; you're not as thin and emaciated as the others." In response, Wild Bill revealed he had been there for four years. "How is it that you are healthier than the others?" they questioned.

Wild Bill explained that before the war, he was a divorce attorney. Witnessing so much anger, pain, and bitterness in handling divorces, he saw the horrible consequences that resulted. He made a decision to forgive others, no matter what they did. When the Germans shot his family, he looked those soldiers in the eyes and said, "I forgive you!"

Not because he *felt* forgiveness in his heart, but because he had made that decision long before. Believing in God and knowing forgiveness was the biblical way, he determined not to allow anger and bitterness to destroy him.

Wild Bill continued to practice forgiveness throughout the never-ending abusive behavior in the prison camp, looking each cruel prison guard in the eye and repeatedly saying, "I forgive you." What a difference that had made for Wild Bill. He was healthier than the others, having not allowed anger and bitterness to destroy him as it had others.

### **Forgiveness is freedom. Forgiveness is a choice.**

And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. (Mark 11:25)

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:12-15)

Let us now revisit the story of the young lady. She made the choice to forgive, no matter what. As she repeatedly read the words, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10), she fervently asked God to grant her a new heart, just as expressed in Ezekiel 36:26: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh."

As she prayed, God dealt with her heart, and little by little, her attitude toward her mother, sisters, and even her father changed. God granted her compassion and some understanding of their past, and she began to see them in a new light—the light of God's compassion. True forgiveness gave her the peace she longed for.

She discovered that forgiveness was a daily exercise. One day, she heard a song about a person who had suffered a horrible divorce. The woman was struggling to forgive her husband, who had left her and taken her children. The song said, "Each memory that she lives is the one she forgives." This made perfect sense to her. As memories or new abuses arose, she purposed to forgive each one immediately. She did not allow them to fester but practiced forgiveness day by day and sometimes moment by moment

One day, a bigger test came. She found herself in the back seat of her own car with her head duct-taped. Evil men had kidnapped her. At first, she pleaded with God to save her. She asked God to give the three kidnappers heart attacks, to flatten all the tires on the car, or to arrange a po-

# Fundamental Principles of the Church Organization

By Jean-Christophe Bolotte

*(Pastor Jean-Christophe Bolotte has prepared a book on gospel order and church organization, comprised of quotations from the Bible and from the writings of Ellen White. The following is Chapter 4. Editor)*

## Chapter 4: The Church Organization Chart

### Minimum quota for a church

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. (Matthew 18:20)

### The home church

Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ. (Romans 16:3–5; see also 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 1:2)

### The local church

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; see also 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 1 Corinthians 16:1)

### The church worldwide

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:18)

### The home churches are the families of baptized believers

Fathers and mothers, take time to read to your children from the health books, as well as from the books treating more particularly on religious subjects. Teach your children the importance of taking care of the body,—the house they live in. Form a home reading circle, in which every member of the family lays aside the busy cares of the day, and gathers for study. Fathers, mothers, broth-

lice roadblock. She was in a foreign country, and only three wicked men in this world knew where she was. Then she recalled an Ellen White quotation she had memorized. “Above the distractions of the earth He sits enthroned. All things are open to His divine survey, and from His great and calm eternity He orders that which His providence sees best” (Ellen White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 417).

She understood that God was not surprised by the kidnapping. He had allowed it to happen. Her next thought brought her to tears. As evil men were threatening to kill her, she asked, “God, is this your will? Do you want me to be kidnapped? Is this my last day on earth?”

After an intense emotional struggle she surrendered to what must be God’s plan. She surrendered to God’s plan for her and determined that if this was her last day on earth she would be ready to die. She prayed that God would forgive her of all her sins, that God would be with her children and grandchildren and lead them spiritually so they would be ready for heaven.

She recalled what Jesus said on his way to the cross: “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). She prayed that for her kidnappers, praying for their souls. Then, as she prayed, she heard that sweet voice—God’s voice in her heart—saying, “Love them.” Love them? How could she love them? Forgiveness was one thing, but love? Finally, she admitted to God that she had no love to give them, but if God would give her love for them, she would love them.

Then, the most precious experience of her life happened. God’s love filled her. It was as though she were floating on a cloud—so warm and totally satisfying. So hard to describe, but so real. She felt the love overflow and spill into the car. It seemed to fill the car. The angry men became silent. All the angry voices ceased. Peace—such perfect peace—filled her and the car.

God brought her through that experience and rescued her in the end.

Friends, forgiveness is vital to salvation. As we near the return of our Lord and Savior, we are told of a horrible persecution for the saints of God. A time of trouble such as never was. Will we be called upon to forgive our persecutors and even love our enemies? Like Wild Bill, do we need to practice forgiveness each time we are treated badly? Yes, forgiveness is required if we wish to be qualified to spend eternity in heaven with our Savior. Friends, it will be worth it! I encourage you to make that decision today. Make the decision to forgive everyone who hurts you or abuses you, and do it unconditionally, whether they are repentant or not.

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ers, sisters, take up this work unitedly, and see if the home-church will not be greatly improved. (Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 6, p. 276.3)

### **The church is the (physical) assembly of baptized believers.**

There must be the trimming of the lamp by everyone. The charge of Paul to Timothy is to be understood to be addressed to every member of the household and every church member. “Take heed to thyself, and to the doctrine”—“thyself” first, then there will be a sanctified influence in every house. [1 Timothy 4:16.] There must be the trimming of the inner lamp. A readiness will be in the home church and the same will be borne to the church assembled. At your daily toil, you need that lamp burning to keep a sweet disposition and to be prepared to do the labor essential in your weekday toil. God cannot accept the service of any soul who is bound up in self. Unless the root be holy, there can be no sound fruit. There must first be a giving of your own self to the Lord without reserve. (Ellen G. White, *Letters and Manuscripts*, vol. 10, Manuscript 60a 1895.4)

### **Churches (physical assemblies) are not independent of each other.**

The order that was maintained in the early Christian church made it possible for them to move forward solidly as a well-disciplined army clad with the armor of God. The companies of believers, though scattered over a large territory, were all members of one body; all moved in concert and in harmony with one another. When dissension arose in a local church, as later it did arise in Antioch and elsewhere, and the believers were unable to come to an agreement among themselves, such matters were not permitted to create a division in the church, but were referred to a general council of the entire body of believers, made up of appointed delegates from the various local churches, with the apostles and elders in positions of leading responsibility. Thus the efforts of Satan to attack the church in isolated places were met by concerted action on the part of all, and the plans of the enemy to disrupt and destroy were thwarted.

“God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.” 1 Corinthians 14:33. He requires that order and system be observed in the conduct of church affairs today no less than in the days of old. He desires His work to be carried forward with thoroughness and exactness so that He may place upon it the seal of His approval. Christian is to be united with Christian,

church with church, the human instrumentality co-operating with the divine, every agency subordinate to the Holy Spirit, and all combined in giving to the world the good tidings of the grace of God. (Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 95.3–96.1)

### **The Organizational Chart: Local Churches, Conferences, Unions, General Conference**

God has not set any kingly power in the Seventh-day Adventist Church to control the whole body or to control any branch of the work. He has not provided that the burden of leadership shall rest upon a few men. Responsibilities are distributed among a large number of competent men.

Every member of the church has a voice in choosing officers of the church. The church chooses the officers of the state conferences. Delegates chosen by the state conferences choose the officers of the union conferences, and delegates chosen by the union conferences choose the officers of the General Conference. By this arrangement every conference, every institution, every church, and every individual, either directly or through representatives, has a voice in the election of the men who bear the chief responsibilities in the General Conference. (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p 236.3–.4)

### **Mission: Church waiting to be organized**

Our missions must be sustained; new missions must be opened. (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 464.3)

### **The church should not be governed by one man.**

Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established. (Proverbs 15:22; see also Proverbs 11:14; 24:6)

It is not wise to choose one man as president of the General Conference. (Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies*, Series A, no. 8, p. 28.4)

God never designed that one man’s mind and judgment should be a controlling power. He never designed that one man should rule and plan and devise without the careful and prayerful consideration of the whole body, in order that all may move in a sound, thorough, harmonious manner. (Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, bk. 3, p.16.3)

Satan may move through one man’s mind to warp things out of their proper channel; he may succeed with

*Continued on page 8, column 2*

# Youth's Corner—On the Trail of the Colporteur Evangelist—A Story of Miracles and Providences

(On the Trail of the Colporteur Evangelist was compiled by the General Conference Publishing Department of Seventh-day Adventists. We share experiences from Chapter 4, "The Voice of the Neglected Book.")

*"In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."*  
Eccl. 11:6.

The colporteur is the gospel seed sower in the largest sense. He operates largely on virgin soil; his is the task of breaking up the fallow ground, and scattering broadcast the written message of divine truth, ever pressing onward, not knowing "whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." Many times the seed lies dormant for days and months and years, then suddenly springs into life and brings forth a glorious harvest.

"It is true that some who buy books will lay them on the shelf or place them on the parlor table, and seldom look at them. Still God has a care for His truth, and the time will come when these books will be sought for and read. Sickness or misfortune may enter the home, and through the truth contained in the books, God sends to troubled hearts peace and hope and rest. His love is revealed to them, and they understand the preciousness of the forgiveness of their sins. Thus the Lord co-operates with His self-denying workers."—*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. VI, pp. 313, 314

As evidence of the demonstrated truth of the above statements, a few of many, many experiences are related:

## **THE GREAT CONTROVERSY SPEAKS TO THE BLACKSMITH**

In a small Western town lived a notorious blacksmith,— a powerful man, a hard drinker, a fighter, very profane, and wicked in every sense of the word. He wanted nothing whatever to do with preachers or Christian colporteurs, and if by chance any such people called on him, he would politely invite them to proceed on their way and leave him alone, and, if necessary, did not hesitate to send them away by force.

One day this blacksmith received a physical injury which caused him to be confined to the house for some time. As the days passed by, he became restless, and looked about for something to read. Glancing through the bookcase, his eye fell upon a good-sized book, and the title attracted his attention, "The Great Controversy." Curious to know what the "great controversy" was about, he picked up

the book and scanned its pages. In a few minutes he threw the book down in disgust, and went outside the house, where he sat and smoked his pipe for a time. On returning to the room, he again picked up the book from the spot where he had thrown it. But soon he threw it down again, and this time with an oath. Strange to say, it was not long before he had the book in hand for the third time.

Then he said to himself, "I believe I'll read this book, and see what kind of a set these crazy people are who write such things!" But there was something about the book that gripped and held his attention. One chapter lured him on to another. The Spirit of God gave silent witness through its pages, and his hard heart began to soften. He was obliged to acknowledge to himself that there was something strange about that book, and that its teaching was convincing. The fact which made the greatest impression on his mind was that there is a judgment day. Then the query forced itself upon his mind, "Where am I standing? How shall I meet that judgment day?" The enemy, who ever seeks to sow tares among the wheat, suggested, "There is no use for you to try to be ready to meet the judgment!" So he threw the book aside once more.

But again he picked up the book, and read on. Now he read of the wonderful love of Jesus, and a new vision opened before him. The Spirit of God melted his hard, wicked heart, and tears came to his eyes. He recognized the drawing of an irresistible force from the pit of sin and unbelief to the foot of the cross, and dropping on his knees, he surrendered to the Saviour and Redeemer of sinful men. From that day this notoriously wicked blacksmith was a transformed man—a living miracle of redeeming grace wrought through the printed page.

Like Paul, this blacksmith was led to inquire, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" and not long afterward he left the anvil and the hammer in the blacksmith shop, and went forth with the hammer of God's word, "that breaketh the rock in pieces." All up and down the coast he traveled, placing many copies of the book which had done so much for him, and also a companion volume, "Thoughts on Daniel and the Revelation."

## **SILENT FOR TWENTY-FIVE YEARS**

A colporteur sold a copy of "The Great Controversy" to a minister in England, who later moved to the United States. For twenty-five years the book remained unnoticed. Then one day the minister's son discovered the book in the library, became interested in its contents, was led into full



acceptance of God's message for this time, and became a worker in the cause of God.

### **APPRECIATED DURING CONVALESCENCE**

"The Great Controversy" entered a home through the medium of the colporteur evangelist, but remained unread for several months. The lady who purchased it was taken sick, and during convalescence she became interested in reading the book, and soon began to keep the Sabbath. She lent the book to her neighbors and as a result a number of them began to keep the Sabbath. The book was kept going on its mission in the neighborhood, and soon a church was raised up, and today stands as a monument to the silent voice of that one blessed volume.

From a colporteur institute held in that church, ten workers went forth into the colporteur field. But this is not all that was accomplished through the placing of that one book. The woman who bought it, later sent the book to her mother living in Germany. The mother read the book, accepted the truth, and then lent the book to her neighbors, and before long a church was raised up there.

Surely this is a good record for one "silent preacher," dependent upon human hands and feet for reaching the homes, though not the hearts, of the people.

### **A WOMAN'S CURIOSITY SERVES A GOOD PURPOSE**

"Yes, you have a good book, and I am interested in all you have told me; but I cannot give you an order until you have explained the book to my husband," said the wife of a college professor to the colporteur. The explanation was duly made to the husband, the order secured, and the book delivered. The family consisted of father, mother, a daughter fifteen years of age, and a son thirteen, and all manifested pleasure in receiving the book.

The father was the first to begin reading the book, but he did not proceed very far until he came to the conclusion that it taught error, and was not fit to read. Then he placed it on a shelf, out of sight, "where the children would not be likely to find it," and told his wife that the book contained heresy.

Now the proverbial "woman's curiosity" was not lacking in the case of the wife, and she determined that she would see for herself what the book contained. But interest born of curiosity developed into interest based on conviction; and soon this wife had enlisted the renewed interest of her husband, and together they began a careful reading of the book. The more they read, the more decided was the conviction that truth was therein taught, and the result was that the entire family accepted the message. Soon they availed themselves of the opportunity to attend a camp meeting, with the expectation of being baptized and unit-

ing with the church; and it was on the camp ground that the colporteur who sold the book to the college professor, received one of the happy surprises of his life. He relates the experience as follows:

"When I went to the camp meeting several months later, about the first person I met was the young daughter of the professor. She came up and spoke to me, calling me by name, saying as she did so, 'I guess you don't remember me.' I told her I did not know her, but it seemed to me that I had met her while I was canvassing. She then explained to me who she was, and said that her parents were on the camp ground. I could not believe that they had accepted the truth and were attending the meeting, so asked the young lady if her parents were visiting in the city. She replied by saying that they had come to attend the camp meeting, and then explained how it had all come about as the result of reading the book which I had sold them."

### **SPEAKS TO A DISCOURAGED MAN**

A young lady endeavoring to earn a scholarship was engaged in selling "Heralds of the Morning." A man who had been an infidel all his life, listened to her canvass for the book, and while he said he did not care for the book and would never read it, he gave his order for a copy simply to help her in securing an education. In due time the book was delivered, and was assigned its place on the library table. A few weeks after the arrival of the book, this infidel became very much discouraged. One rainy day he was sitting alone in his home, sad, despondent, without a ray of hope, and contemplated ending his miserable existence. By chance (?) his eye rested on the book lying on the table — crisp, and new, and inviting. The title, "Heralds of the Morning," seemed to beckon him to follow on toward light from some source, and he picked up the book and began to read. The Spirit of the Lord then took charge of the situation, and a genuine revival was produced in that lone room.

As the man read on through the fifth and sixth chapters of the book which had so strangely been placed at his hand at such an opportune moment, he began to see life in a different light, and he recognized the influence of a living God speaking to his sad and hitherto unbelieving heart. Down on his knees he bowed, in the attitude of prayer, yet not knowing how to pray. But the Spirit who "helpeth our infirmities," when "we know not what we should pray for as we ought," and "maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God," conveyed the unspoken petition of this discouraged soul to the throne of God, and angels came down to earth to minister in behalf of a repentant sinner. From that moment the infidel was a changed man, and became a diligent student of the Bible. Later he entered a Seventh-day Adventist school for the necessary preparation to engage in the colporteur work.

## ON THE SHELF FOR TWENTY-THREE YEARS

A man purchased a copy of “Daniel and the Revelation,” and after giving the book a casual reading, placed it upon the shelf, where it remained undisturbed for about twenty-three years. But the impression made by the book when it first came into his possession could not be shaken off, and “after many days” it was brought out of its prison house and re-read. It gave the same clear, convincing message as when it first arrived, and this time it led the reader to definite action. The man and his family took their decided stand for the truth, and began the observance of the Sabbath, before they came in contact with any other Seventh-day Adventists.

## THE BOOK TRANSFERRED TO A NEW HOME

A copy of “The Great Controversy” entered the home of a young man and his wife, and was assigned a place in the library, where it remained, unread, for a number of years. When the wife died, the husband broke up housekeeping, and in disposing of the household effects, told his mother she might take any books from the library which she chose. In sorting over the collection, “The Great Controversy” attracted her attention.

The woman was a Christian Scientist and did not believe in a personal devil. The fact that a book of nearly eight hundred pages could be devoted to the subject of “The Conflict Between Christ and Satan” aroused her curiosity, and led to investigation. Here is where “The Great Controversy” comes down off the shelf and enters a new home. Faithful to its mission, it brought conviction of truth to its new owner; and this conviction was shared by the woman’s daughter. These two women began the observance of the Sabbath, and were later joined by the daughter’s husband.

Rejoicing in the message of truth, these people kept the book circulating among friends and neighbors until it became so worn out that it could not travel longer, and silently retired in favor of its successor—a new volume, fresh from the publishers. Accompanying this new volume were announcements of other literature, which was purchased, and not long afterward a living representative of the truth called at the home. For six years this trio had been keeping the Sabbath, and great was their joy in meeting another of kindred belief and practice. In due time church connections were established, and this woman, her daughter and son-in-law, and a number of others interested and won to the truth through their efforts, became most earnest and devoted believers in the third angel’s message—the fruit of seed-sowing by some unknown colporteur of previous years.

## THE COLPORTEUR FINDS MANY BOOKS IN HIDING PLACES

“Recently I have been working territory covered by our colporteurs in previous years,” says a colporteur, “and it does

my heart good to see the people pull down those books from the shelves, bring them from trunks, dressers, attics, and from almost every nook and corner. Every time I see one of our books brought from its hiding place in a home, I am reminded of the statement made by the Spirit of Prophecy that ‘the time will come when these books will be sought for and read,’ and will accomplish their appointed work. Even though I do not sell another book to these people, my canvass brings to their minds the book which they have laid away, and causes them to bring it forth to the light, where it will again speak forth its message.”

## A MOTHER’S LEGACY

A colporteur found a man who highly prized a copy of “Bible Readings,” and this is the history of the book as he told it:

“My mother bought this book twenty years ago, and gave it to me. But I did not care for it, and laid it aside without reading it. Mother died, and some time later I unexpectedly ran across the book which she had given me so many years before. In love and reverence for the memory of my dear mother, I casually glanced through the book, and was almost startled to find on the back page of the book, written in mother’s handwriting, a prayer for me,—that I might become a Christian and read my Bible. This prayer has been answered, as I was brought under conviction and yielded my heart to the Saviour. The book which mother gave me, ‘Bible Readings for the Home Circle,’ has helped me greatly in my Bible study, and God’s word has become a new book to me.”

## FOUND WHILE SNOWBOUND

Thirty-six years ago a colporteur sold a copy of “Daniel and the Revelation” to a woman, and in the course of time the book passed into the possession of her son. In the winter-time, the son and his family became snowed in, and as he searched among his books to find something to read during this enforced isolation, he spied the title, “Daniel and the Revelation.” He related his experience as follows:

“I read a little in this book, and became interested—so interested that I continued to read to the end. As I read, I became convinced of the truth taught, and I resolved that I would never keep another Sunday as the Sabbath. I began at once to observe the true Sabbath, and my wife joined with me. We are isolated from others of like belief, and of course it means much to us to stand alone. We are but babes in the faith, and I ask you to pray that I may lay hold on eternal life, and that the Lord will forgive me for not living in accordance with His word before the message in the book reached me.”

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# Tofuna

*This is one of Pastor Stump's new favorites*

**By Sheri Stump**



1 tub of water-packed tofu (use firm or extra firm, frozen and thawed to room temperature)

¼ cup diced celery

¼ cup diced purple onion

½ container fresh dill minced finely or to taste

¼ cup Vegemise

2 tablespoons non-fermented soy sauce

Squeeze the water out of the tofu, one handful at a time. Crumble the tofu into a large mixing bowl. Mix all the ingredients together.



This is great to eat alone, to use as a spread, to fill a celery stalk, or on top of a salad.

# Camp Meeting Notice

In an effort to help you plan to be able to come to camp meeting this year, a location and date have already been set. The location is the **Piney Creek campground** in Fall Creek Falls State Park near Spencer, Tennessee. The dates for the camp are **August 6–10** this year.

Last year we had camp meeting in the Cane Creek camp, and it was a blessing, but the camp had some restrictions, such as a combined meeting and eating area which needed to be bigger. Additionally, the cabins were in three different loops. The Piney Creek camp, on the other hand, has a large building just for the kitchen and eating area and a separate building with a large meeting room. Additionally the cabins are all in one large loop. This should make our stay much better! There is no cost to attend, though donations are helpful. So, plan now to attend!

The Meeting Room



Cabins

Swimming area nearby



There are also plans for a short family camp in Cane Creek campground for the long weekend of May 30 – June 1. So, please also consider this chance to be blessed. 卐

# Sabbath School Lessons Available

The 1889 HSDA Church in the United States is making available a Sabbath School lesson in print form for those who would like to follow along with the church in Sabbath School.

We will be using a reprint of a pioneer quarterly from 1895 on the sanctuary this first quarter of 2024.

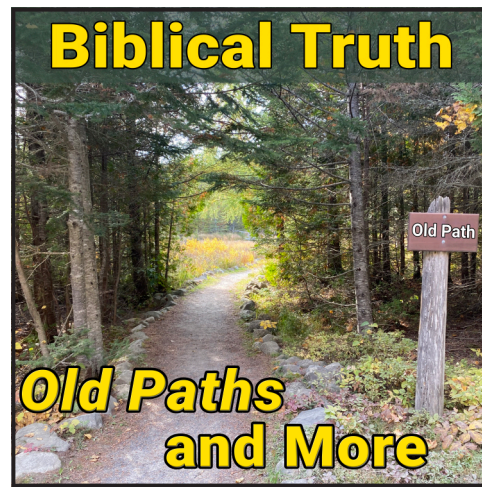
The link where you can download a PDF is here: <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/SSQ/SS18950101-01.pdf>.

If you would like a printed version, please contact the office, and we will do all we can to help you and/or your church have the lessons needed.

## Podcast Now Available

A new podcast has recently been started on the Internet to make the *Old Paths* magazine and other information available in audio format. The name of the podcast is *Biblical Truth—Old Paths and More*.

The podcast is up on several servers, such as Spotify, and should be available on Apple and Google podcasts by the



time this issue reaches you.

Please keep this program in your prayers that it can reach a segment of people who can be blessed by this format.

Editor



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