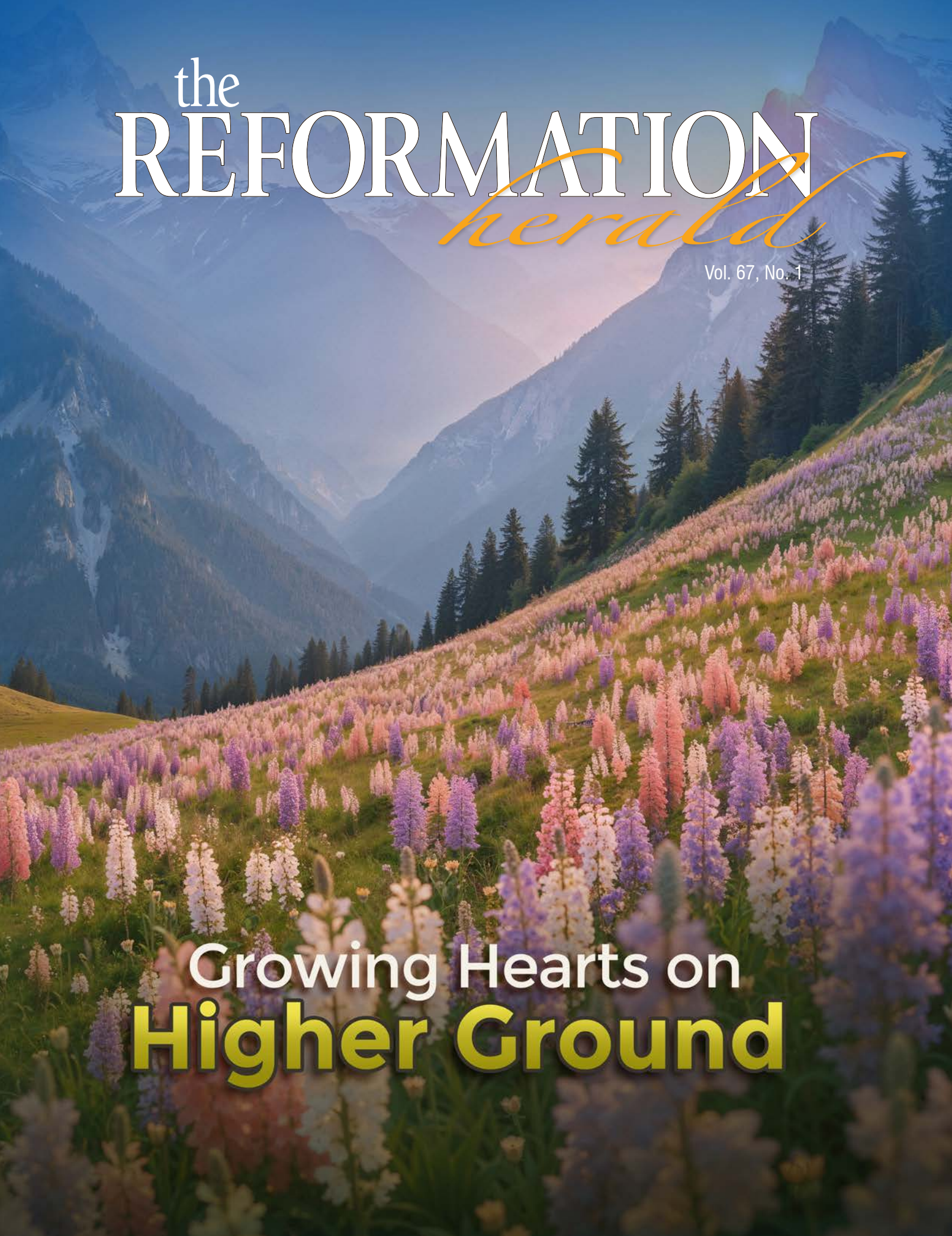

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Vol. 67, No. 1
Growing Hearts on
Higher Ground

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GROWING HEARTS ON HIGHER GROUND

One of Christ's famous teachings on salvation is found in the renowned Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). This is only made possible because "blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Verse 6). Indeed, only as we hunger and thirst after righteousness can we be filled.

"We must have a realization of our needs. We must hunger and thirst after life in Christ and through Christ. Then we shall come to Him in humility and sincerity, and He will give us the faith that works by love and purifies the soul."[1]

As we thus seek to purify our souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, we learn to "love one another with a pure heart fervently" (1 Peter 1:22). This is how we grow into the similitude of Christ—keeping "the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12) and preparing ourselves for the intense conflict rapidly approaching.

The reality ahead

"Just before us is 'the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.' Revelation 3:10. All whose faith is not firmly established upon the word of God will be deceived and overcome. Satan 'works with all deceivableness of unrighteousness' to gain control of the children of men, and his deceptions will continually increase. But he can gain his object only as men voluntarily yield to his temptations. Those who are earnestly seeking a knowledge of the truth and are striving to purify their souls through obedience, thus doing what they can to prepare for the conflict, will find, in the God of truth, a sure defense. 'Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee' (verse 10), is the Saviour's promise. **He would sooner send every angel out of heaven to protect His people than leave one soul that trusts in Him to be overcome by Satan**."[2]

So, we need stability of purpose—to shun double-mindedness, having an eye single to the glory of God. Those who receive the seal of God in their frontal lobe will have a firm, stable experience in Christ. Why is this needed?

"Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads—it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved—just as soon as God's people are sealed and prepared for the shaking, it will come. Indeed, it has begun already; the judgments of God are now upon the land, to give us warning, that we may know what is coming."[3]

In this issue of *The Reformation Herald*, we will be considering ways by which we grow into the consistent Christian experience the Lord requires.

"It is those who, with love for God and their fellowmen, are striving to help others that become established, strengthened, settled, in the truth. The true Christian works for God, not from impulse, but from principle; not for a day or a month, but during the entire period of life."[4]

So, may "the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 5:10, 11). ℟

References:

[1] *This Day With God*, p. 315.
[2] *The Great Controversy*, p. 560. [Emphasis added.]
[3] *Maranatha*, p. 200.
[4] *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 393.

By Dorival N. Dumitru

SALVATION THROUGH THE SAVIOUR

LEARNING FROM THE SANCTUARY

Revelations of God's Character

He had just turned 12 years old and was now going to attend the national Feast of Passover. Traveling from Nazareth to Jerusalem in the company of his parents and friends, Jesus, being a very attentive boy, observed every detail of the ritual centered on the sacrifice of that one-year-old, perfectly developed lamb.

Impressed by the Holy Spirit, the Son of man understood the spiritual implications of this sacrificial offering as it related to Himself, the Lamb of God that came to take away the sins of the whole world. Additionally, He found a way to inquire from the rabbinical teachers and doctors of the law about the coming Messiah and the fulfillment of prophecies and symbols related to Him.

Through the study of the Old Testament sanctuary service, we may also gain valuable insights into the plan of redemption and God's character as revealed in the Bible. At this time, we will only consider three aspects:

1. Instructions for building
2. Christ's relation to each object of furniture
3. The meaning of the daily and annual rituals.

By inspiration, the prophet David invites us to "give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. . . . In his temple doth every one speak of his glory" (Psalm 29:2, 9).

How to build

Let us consider how the tabernacle/temple was built. Moses and David received instructions straight from the Lord. Moses was directed, "Thou shalt rear up the tabernacle according to the fashion thereof which was shewed thee in the mount" (Exodus 26:30). (Read Chapters 25–31 for details.)



PASSOVER = CRUCIFIXION



UNLEAVENED BREAD = COMMUNION



WAVE SHEAF = RESURRECTION

Bezalel (from the tribe of Judah) and Aholiab (from the tribe of Dan) were called and gifted by God to lead and supervise the work. Regarding the tabernacle of the wilderness sojourn, it was to be built so that it was easy to transport as the children of Israel journeyed

Later, in reference to the more permanent structure referred to as the temple, the testimony of Solomon was: "Behold, I purpose to build a house unto the name of the Lord my God, as the Lord spake unto David my father, saying, Thy son, whom I will set upon thy throne in thy room, he shall build a house unto my name" (1 Kings 5:5).

In both cases, they built according to the specifics given through the instructions and inspiration of God. Read Exodus 39:32, 42, 43; 1 Chronicles 28:12, 19.

The temple built by Solomon was completed in seven and half years.

"So was ended all the work that king Solomon made for the house of the Lord. . . . And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord has filled the house of the Lord" (1 Kings 7:51; 8:10, 11).

Oh, how great is God's mercy toward His children—yet we cannot presume upon this mercy! After this impressive temple was later destroyed, it was eventually rebuilt more modestly: On that occasion, "all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were **ancient men, that had seen the first house**, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, **wept with a loud voice**; and many shouted aloud for joy: So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off" (Ezra 3:11–13). Nonetheless this temple was blessed in that the desire of all nations was to enter there in bodily form (Haggai 2:7–9). Yet, this earthly structure was likewise destroyed, this time in A.D. 70.

"Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things?" (Acts 7:48–50). So, where are we to look?

"Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty **in the heavens**; A minister of the sanctuary, and of **the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man**" (Hebrews 8:1, 2, emphasis added).

The sacrifices and worship practices which involved the shedding of blood and specific sacrifices—ordained in advance by God Himself—were figures or symbols referring to Christ and His ministry on our behalf.

Representing Christ

The objects of the tabernacle had direct relationships with Christ and His ministry for our redemption. Let us review them:

Beginning with the courtyard—its outer curtain, the gate, the altar, and the laver; entering the holy place and going into the most holy place. All these furnishings have something to teach us about the coming Messiah, His life and death, His resurrection and priestly intercession. All are essential for our reconciliation and fitness for the life to come:

Lessons on Christ's ministry

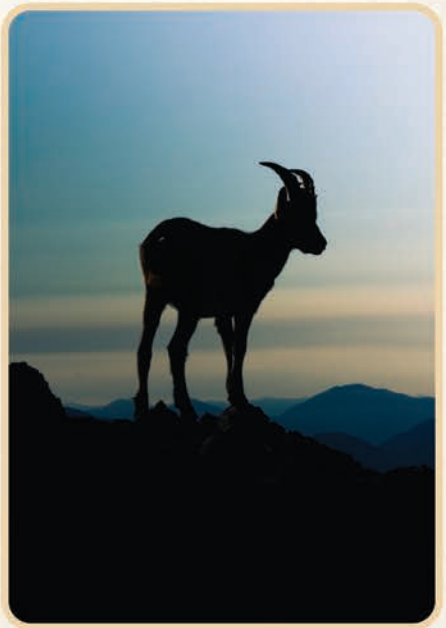
The book of Leviticus outlines many sacred observances, each with specific requirements:



PENTECOST = THE HOLY SPIRIT



TRUMPETS = 1ST ANGEL 1833



DAY OF ATONEMENT = 1844

1. Individual or general involvement with law-breaking.

2. Collective daily and annual services and feasts, including the exact time of a particular event. A parallel summary is found in the book of Hebrews 9:6, 7, which tells us about the various ordinances, which Leviticus 23 refers to as feasts.

Why are these instructions interesting for us, even today? "The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Hebrews 9:8–12).

Here we learn that the sacrifices and worship practices which involved the shedding of blood and specific sacrifices—ordained in advance by God Himself—were figures or symbols referring to Christ and His ministry on our behalf.

It is an exciting experience to discover the meaning of the prescribed sacrifices and established annual feasts of Israel, as we recognize the relationship between them and the ministry of our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary.

It has been observed that sin cannot be explained; it must be paid for. Its payment is made with blood, because it carries the vital stream of life (Leviticus 17)—and this is the only way to answer for the transgressions of God's holy Law. See Hebrews 9:22. From Adam's fall until the death of Jesus Christ at the cross of Calvary, the life of an innocent animal was required for every sin committed, or the guilty one could not be pardoned.

But through His blood shed on Calvary, Jesus paid it all. By the unique sacrifice of Himself, our Advocate, "is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

After the sacrifice had been performed, all that the priests were instructed to do with the blood has a direct relationship with what Jesus Christ went to perform in the heavenly sanctuary on our behalf. Read Hebrews 8:1–3; 9:11–15.

Never are we to lose sight of the important work being done on our behalf in the heavenly sanctuary. Thus, we are admonished:

"As a people, we should be earnest students of prophecy; we should not rest until we become intelligent in regard to the subject of the sanctuary, which is brought out in the visions of Daniel and John. This subject sheds great light on our present position and work, and gives us unmistakable proof that God has led us in our past experience. It explains our disappointment in 1844, showing us that the sanctuary to be cleansed was not the earth, as we had supposed, but that Christ then entered into the most holy apartment of the heavenly sanctuary, and is there performing the closing work of His priestly office, in fulfillment of the words of the angel to the prophet Daniel, 'Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.'

"Our faith in reference to the messages of the first, second, and third angels was correct. The great waymarks we have passed are immovable. Although the hosts of hell may try to tear them from their foundation, and triumph in the thought that they have succeeded, yet they do not succeed. These pillars of truth stand firm as the eternal hills, unmoved by all the efforts of men combined with those of Satan and his host. We can learn much, and should be constantly searching the Scriptures to see if these things are so. God's people are now to have their eyes fixed on the heavenly sanctuary, where the final ministration of our great High Priest in the work of the judgment is going forward—where He is interceding for His people."[1]

May the Lord impress us with the importance and urgency of the study of the Sanctuary service. May the Holy Spirit guide and enable us not only to follow Jesus' final work in Heaven, but also to call the attention of others to this precious subject. This experience is essential in the preparation to meet the Lord in peace, as it is written, "prepare to meet thy God, O Israel" (Amos 4:12). Amen! ℟



TABERNACLES = NEW EARTH

References:

[1] *Evangelism,* pp. 222, 223.



DISTINCTIVE DOCTRINES

By Peter D. Lausevic

[Emphasis added throughout.]

THE LATTER RAIN AND THE SHAKING OF ADVENTISM

Part 1 of 2

Power from on high

To what is the church of God often compared? "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" (Song of Songs 6:10).

What kind of battle was experienced in the early Christian church? John the Revelator describes: "And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth **conquering, and to conquer"** (Revelation 6:2).

Why did the church have such a victorious experience? What did the believers need before entering the battle? The Lord had directed them: "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: **but tarry** ye in the city of Jerusalem, **until ye be endued with power from on high"** (Luke 24:49).

Could they begin their work before receiving this power?

"Christ's ascension to heaven was the signal that His followers were to receive the promised blessing. For this they were to **wait before they entered upon their work."**[1]

How did the early church begin its ministry? "The Christian church began its existence by **praying for the Holy Spirit."**[2]

What about us? Do we sense our need? "Why do we not **hunger** and **thirst** for the gift of the **Spirit**, since this is the means by which we are to **receive power?** Why do we not **talk** of it, **pray** for it, **preach** concerning it? . . . For the baptism of the Spirit every worker should be **pleading with God.** Companies should be gathered together to ask for special help, for heavenly wisdom, that they may know how to plan and execute wisely. Especially should

men pray that God will baptize His missionaries with the Holy Spirit."[3]

Were there preconditions to receiving this power?

We read the history: "When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were **all with one accord in one place"** (Acts 2:1). Did this mean that they all had to be in one church? **"All who believe** are to be **gathered into one church."**[4]

Why one church? Jesus had prayed: "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" (John 17:21).

For this reason, what did Christ recognize? "The **Redeemer** of the world **does not sanction experience and exercise in religious matters independent of his organized and acknowledged church.** Many have an idea that they are responsible to Christ alone for their light and experience, independent of his recognized followers on earth. But in the history of the conversion of Saul, important principles are given us, which we should ever bear in mind. He was brought directly into the presence of Christ. He was one whom Christ intended for a most important work, one who was to be 'a chosen vessel' unto him; yet he did not personally impart to him the lessons of truth. He arrested his course and convicted him; but when asked by him, 'What wilt thou have me to do?' the Saviour **placed him in connection with His church,** and let them direct him what to do."[5]

What will happen when we truly united with Jesus? "**If we are united to Christ, we shall be united to one another**."[6]

What is the goal of the truly converted? "**Those who are truly converted will press together in Christian unity."**[7]

What was required before this was even truly possible? "Not until through faith and prayer the disciples had surrendered themselves fully for His working was the outpouring of the Spirit received."[8]

How is this done? "The heart must be emptied of every defilement and cleansed for the indwelling of the Spirit. It was by the **confession and forsaking of sin,** by earnest prayer and consecration of themselves to God, that the early disciples prepared for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost."[9]

Is today any different? "**The same work, only in greater degree, must be done now."**[10]

A past failure

What prevented the outpouring of the Latter Rain in Adventism in 1901? "**In every institution among us there needs to be a reformation. This is the message that at the last General Conference I bore as the word of the Lord**. At that meeting I carried a very heavy burden, and I have carried it ever since. We did not gain the victory that we might have gained at that meeting. Why?—Because there were so few who followed the course of Josiah. There were those at that meeting who did not see the work that needed to be done. If they had **confessed their sins,** if they had made a break, if they had taken their stand on vantage ground, the power of God would have gone through the meeting, and ***we should have had a Pentecostal season.***"[11]

How could it have been different? "**The Lord has shown me what might have been had the work been done that ought to have been done.** In the night season I was present in a meeting where **brother was confessing to brother.** Those present fell upon one another's necks, and made heart-broken confessions. The Spirit and power of God were revealed. No one seemed too proud to bow before God in humility and contrition. Those who led in this work were the ones who had **not before had the courage to confess their sins.**

"This might have been. All this the Lord was waiting to do for His people. All heaven was waiting to be gracious."[12]

Why? What is required to be ready for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit? "When those who profess to serve God follow Christ's example, **practicing the principles of the law in their daily life;** when **every act** bears witness that they love God supremely and their neighbor as themselves, ***then will the church have power to move the world."***[13]

Power to move the world

This is clearly describing the Latter Rain experience. To what extent must we experience this purification? "**Not one of us will ever receive the seal of God while our characters have one spot or stain upon them**. **It is left with us to remedy the defects in our characters**, to cleanse the soul temple of every defilement. **Then the latter rain will fall upon us** as the early rain fell upon the disciples on the Day of Pentecost."[14]

Can individuals in the church receive the Latter Rain if open sin is permitted in the church? "**[God] shows us that when His people are found in sin they should at once take decided measures to put that sin from them, that His frown may not rest upon them all. But if the sins of the people are passed over by those in responsible positions, His frown will be upon them, and** ***the people of God, as a body, will be held responsible for those sins.*** In His dealings with His people in the past the Lord shows the necessity of purifying the church from wrongs. **One sinner** may diffuse darkness that ***will exclude the light of God from the entire congregation."***[15]

How to remove hindrances

"The success of the meeting depends on the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. For the outpouring of the Spirit every lover of the cause of truth should pray. And as far as lies in our power, **we are to remove every hindrance to His working.** ***The Spirit can never be poured out while variance and bitterness toward one another are cherished by the members of the church.*** **Envy, jealousy, evil-surmising, and evil-speaking** are of Satan, and they **effectually bar the way against the Holy Spirit's working**."[16]

What percentage of the believers in the upper room had to be united to this extent? How about now?

"To us today, as verily as to the first disciples, the promise of the Spirit belongs. God will today endow men and women with power from above, as He endowed those who on the Day of Pentecost heard the word of salvation. At this very hour His Spirit and His grace are for **all** who need them and will take Him at His word.

"Notice that it was after the disciples had come into perfect unity, when they were no longer striving for the highest place, that the Spirit was poured out. They were of one accord. **All differences had been put away.** And the testimony borne of them after the Spirit had been given is the same. Mark the word: 'The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul' (Acts 4:32). The Spirit of Him who died that sinners might live **animated the entire congregation of believers."**[17]

What does this mean for us?

"***So it may be now.***"[18] There is no question that individual members must experience perfection of Christian character before the Latter Rain can be poured out:

1. Before they experience the Latter Rain they are sealed.[19]

What does sealing mean in their spiritual life?

"Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads—it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a **settling into the truth,** both intellectually and spiritually, **so they cannot be moved**—just as soon as God's people are sealed and prepared for the shaking, it will come. Indeed, it has begun already; the judgments of God are now upon the land, to give us warning, that we may know what is coming."[20]

It is when perfection cannot change that the Latter Rain falls. Once the people are sealed, the church is finally pure to withstand the final challenges to be faced: "Just as soon as God's people are sealed and prepared for the shaking, it will come."

2. When will the third angel's message be proclaimed in its fullness?

"Thus the message of the third angel will be proclaimed. As the time comes for it to be given with **greatest power**, the Lord will work through humble instruments, leading the minds of those who consecrate themselves to His service."[21]

This is clearly the Latter Rain.

3. What is the direct result of the Latter Rain experience?

"**As the controversy extends into new fields** and the minds of the people are called to God's downtrodden law, Satan is astir. The ***power attending the message*** will only **madden those who oppose it.** The clergy will put forth almost superhuman efforts to shut away the light lest it should shine upon their flocks. By every means at their command they will endeavor to suppress the discussion of these vital questions. **The church appeals to the strong arm of civil power, and, in this work, papists and Protestants unite. As the movement for Sunday enforcement becomes more bold and decided, *the law will be invoked* against commandment keepers."**[22]

Persecution comes as a result of proclaiming the message in this degree of power. "**In God's word we are shown the *consequences* of proclaiming the third angel's message**. 'The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.' Revelation 12:17."[23]

This message must be proclaimed prior to the final test. "The truth for this time, the third angel's message, is to be **proclaimed with a loud voice, meaning with increasing power,** ***as we approach the great final test.***"[24]

The premise of the worship of the beast has to do with intent. "And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and **think to change** times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time" (Daniel 7:25).

No one can accept the mark of the beast accidentally! "But not one is made to suffer the wrath of God until the **truth has been brought home to his mind and conscience,** and has been rejected. . . . The **decree is not to be urged upon the people blindly.** Everyone is to have sufficient light to make his decision **intelligently."**[25]

What will God do before the test can come upon the world? "And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, **holding the four winds** of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree . . . saying, **Hurt not** the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, **till we have sealed the servants** of our God in their foreheads" (Revelation 7:1–3).

Because God wants to save everyone, what will He do? "***He will restrain the forces of darkness until the warning is given to the world and all who will heed it are prepared for the conflict.***"[26]

When will the final test take place?

"***The great final test comes at the close of human probation*, when it will be too late for the soul's need to be supplied**."[27]

A pure body of believers

Is there a pure church when Jesus comes? "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, **not having spot, or wrinkle,** or any such thing; but that it should be **holy and without blemish"** (Ephesians 5:27). This is actually **a requirement** before Jesus can come again. "Christ is waiting with longing desire for the **manifestation of Himself in His church.** When the **character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people,** then He will come to claim them as His own."[28]

What comes as an integral part of the gift of the Spirit? "Now there are **diversities of gifts,** but the **same Spirit.** And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

Latter Rain and Sunday Decree



And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all" (1 Corinthians 12:4–6). What is the purpose of these gifts? "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to **profit withal"** (1 Corinthians 12:7).

Does anyone receive all the gifts? "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. 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.[20] But now are they **many members, yet but one body"** (1 Corinthians 12:11, 12, 20).

Does church organization have anything to do with these gifts? "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).

As we approach the end, will church organization be terminated or obsolete?

"Some have advanced the thought that, as we near the close of time, every child of God will act independently of any religious organization. But I have been instructed by the Lord that in this work there is **no such thing as every man's being independent.** The stars of heaven are all under law, each influencing the other to do the will of God, yielding their common obedience to the law that controls their action. And, in order that the Lord's work may advance healthfully and solidly, **His people must draw together."**[29]

What is one of the things that gives us the fitness for translation?

"Brother P's ideas of order and organization have been in direct opposition to God's plan of order. There is **order in heaven,** and it **is to be imitated** by those upon earth who are heirs of salvation. The nearer mortals attain to the order and arrangement of heaven, the nearer are they brought to that acceptable state before God which will make them subjects of the heavenly kingdom and give them that **fitness for translation** from earth to heaven which Enoch possessed preparatory to his translation."[30]

In heaven, are there officers leading others?

"It was the highest crime to rebel against the government of God. All Heaven seemed in commotion. The angels were marshaled in companies, **each division with a higher commanding angel at their head.** Satan was warring against the law of God, because ambitious to exalt himself, and unwilling to submit to the authority of Gods' Son, Heaven's great commander."[31]

For this reason we need to be a part of the visible church.

"We should all feel our individual responsibility as **members of the visible church** and workers in the vineyard of the Lord."[32]

Why? What is the result of perfecting Christian character? "**Unity is the sure result of Christian perfection.**"[33]

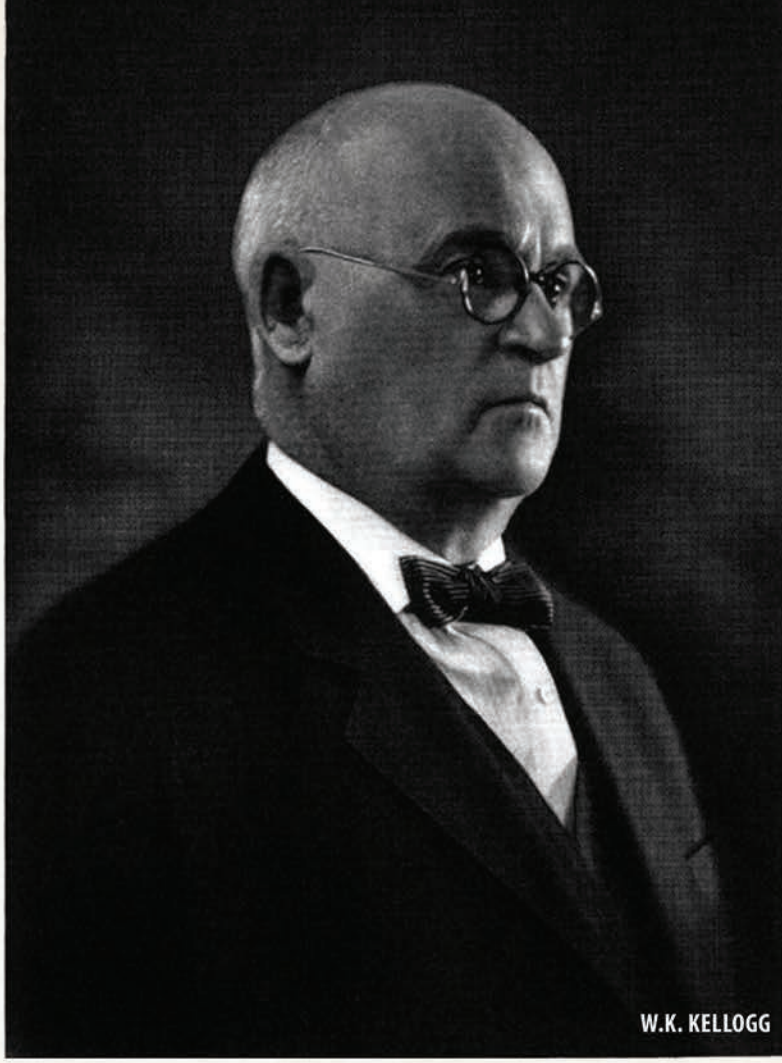
Conclusion of Part 1

We know there is personal work and a collective work as a church. This means that the church must be purified before the end comes. The organized church must be purified. This happens before the Latter Rain. How does the church become purified in time for the Latter Rain before the Sunday Decree? The Spirit of Prophecy actually shows that there are two separations in Adventism in this process of purification.—*To be continued in next issue.* ✠

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By Marco Alonso

The Silent Killer in the Church – AND HOW JESUS HEALS IT

I. When the room changes . . .

Perhaps you've felt it—that unspoken, awkwardly growing distance that spreads between you and those who were once close to you. Not because of some tangled dispute, but through the slow erosion caused by self-serving ambition, misunderstanding, and unmet expectations. Does that sound familiar?

II. The Kellogg Brothers: Innovation, pride, and division Battle Creek and the Adventist health vision

Back in the late 19th-century, Battle Creek, Michigan was more than a quiet Midwestern town. It had become the epicenter of a faith-fueled health movement and even the birthplace of a revolutionary breakfast. And at the center of it all stood John Harvey Kellogg—no ordinary small-town doctor. As a Seventh-day Adventist, he led the world-famous Battle Creek Sanitarium, where he pioneered vegetarian diets, hydrotherapy, and a holistic vision of health that embraced



both body and spirit. His success brought him to meet with not only some of the most challenging diseases in North America, but also U.S Presidents, celebrities and businessmen such as members of the Roosevelt family, Calvin Coolidge, Henry Ford, Thomas Edison and J.C Penney, among many others.

Will Keith Kellogg: the overshadowed brother

Will Keith Kellogg was the more subdued, introverted brother—innovative, patient, and quietly intuitive. Yet in the shadow of John's towering ambition and public acclaim, he often felt unseen, even diminished. Historians note that John sometimes treated Will like what they called a "lackey"—the equivalent of a modern-day assistant or junior assistant with no real say, kept around simply to carry out orders. Accounts describe Will constantly scribbling down his brother's ideas at all hours. He had a quiet ingenuity—managing the Sanitarium's daily operations, experimenting tirelessly with cereal recipes, and identifying a gap in the market. The reality was that far more people wanted a healthy breakfast than could ever afford to seek treatment at the Sanitarium. Recognizing that unmet demand, he struck out on his own and launched what became the Kellogg Company.

The golden flakes

Then came the night that would forever change Will's fate: a batch of dough left too long in the rollers emerged as crisp, golden flakes. And being the quietly ingenious man he was, Will saw in them not just a new texture or a recipe gone wrong, but an amazing opportunity to reach thousands of Americans with the same wholesome breakfast served at the sanitarium.

Then came the rupture that set their paths apart. Will believed in growth and outreach; John was resolved to keep the cereal strictly therapeutic—served only within the sanitarium's walls, part of its controlled, healing environment. In fact, John expressly **forbade Will from distributing the cereal beyond patient use**, insisting it remain part of the sanitarium's mission alone.

This was not a clash over innovation—it was a clash over value. Pride and jealousy began to root themselves bitterly in the brothers' hearts.

But Will refused to back down. He hired marketers, adjusted the recipe with salt and sugar to make it appealing, and **in 1906 launched the Battle Creek Toasted Corn Flake Company.** His fledgling venture would evolve into the iconic Kellogg's Company we know today.

John was furious—and he didn't just simmer quietly. He **sued his brother**, disputing Will's right to use the Kellogg name. The courts ultimately sided with Will. His brand soared, filling pantries around the world while the fraternal bond beneath . . . was shattered.

Despite his sweeping success, **Will remained embittered** and never reconciled with John. Two of his sons even cut ties completely with that other branch of the family. John, too, sought healing—writing a heartfelt letter late in life to bridge the divide—but **the note never reached Will**, being intercepted by a secretary who felt it made John appear weak.

"By this shall all men know"

Jesus didn't say, "By your innovation they will know you are my disciples," or "By your success. . . ." On the contrary, He said:

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

The Kellogg brothers missed that unity. And it cost them dearly—more than they realized.

Ellen White mourned over what envy can do:

"One of the terrible fruits of sin is that it separates very [close] friends, puts brother at variance against brother."[1]

Jealousy erodes trust, joy, and shared purpose. It hinders our mission. And yet God's desire for His people isn't merely to avoid brokenness—He calls us to thrive together.

We see this tension not only in government or family businesses, but in Scripture itself. The same undercurrents that fractured the Kellogg brothers' bond—ambition colliding with pride, closeness unraveling into toxic competition—flow through the stories of God's people. Left unchecked, they shrink our vision and turns partners into rivals and the mission field into territory that must be controlled. But Jesus instead points us to the heavenly way: a community where gifts aren't hoarded but given, where someone else's win feels like a team win, where love outruns ego. That's the culture Jesus envisioned for His church—one so radically different that the observing world would recognize us as His, by the way we love each other.

Ellen White saw this danger clearly. She appealed:

"There is not the least need, my brethren, of disunion and variance among us. No such thing should exist among Christians. When you speak let your words savor of unity and love. We are Christians; how

can we be in the least perplexed in regard to the course we should pursue toward each other?"[2]

She pleaded for love, for respect, for recognition of calling—even when paths diverge: "You must not think that the Lord has placed you in the position that you now occupy as the only men who are to decide as to whether any more light and truth shall come to God's people."[3]

The Kellogg brothers remind us that jealousy doesn't always announce itself with shouting and slammed doors. Sometimes it's quiet—with polite smiles masking wounded pride, unfinished conversations that never quite heal. And while the cereal brand soared, something far more important was lost: the bond of brotherhood, the shared mission, the witness of love that Jesus said would mark His disciples.

That's the real cost of jealousy. It doesn't just wound you—it slows the mission of God! It shifts your energy away from building and toward battling. And that pattern is not new.

III. Jealousy in the Bible: A Pattern of Sabotage

Cain and Abel: the first murder

Jealousy is not a minor flaw that the Bible brushes aside. It is one of the most corrosive traits of the human heart, and Scripture never shies away from exposing it as such. In fact, the very first human death recorded in the Bible was not from war or accident—it was a murder born out of jealousy and envy.

In Genesis 4, Moses tells the story of two brothers, Cain and Abel. Both had been taught the instructions God gave after the Fall—to bring a lamb as a sacrifice, a living symbol pointing to the day when God Himself would offer His own life to redeem a world enslaved by sin. Abel obeyed. He brought what God had asked for, not as a mere ritual, but in hope and faith that the promised Deliverer would come. Cain, however, chose a different path. He brought the finest produce from his garden—the work

Jealousy does not just wound you—it slows the mission of God! It shifts your energy away from building and toward battling. And that pattern is not new.

of his own hands. It was beautiful, but it lacked the one thing God desired most: a trust that looked beyond human effort to the saving sacrifice God had promised.

When God looked with favor on Abel's offering and not on Cain's, something in Cain's heart twisted. Jealousy took root. And when jealousy takes root, it never stays put—it grows, it festers, it demands more. Cain lured his brother into the field, and in cold blood, killed him.

Cain didn't wake up that morning planning to kill his brother. This wasn't an elaborate murder plan. God had even spoken to him: "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door" (Genesis 4:7). Cain still had a choice. But instead of humbling himself and bringing the sacrifice God had asked for, he let jealousy take root, hardening into resentment, and resentment into rage. The first murder in human history wasn't about land, wealth, or survival — it was about jealousy, envy and bitterness toward those who loved God.

Joseph's brothers: Jealousy turns family into slave traders

Joseph's story in Genesis 37 doesn't begin with slavery; it begins with family dynamics that many Christian psychologists would call a breeding ground for resentment. Jacob, their father, openly favored Joseph, giving him the famous coat of many colors. This favoritism created what Dr. Gary Chapman calls our "basic emotional need . . . to be genuinely loved by another, to know a love that grows out of reason and choice, not instinct."[4] When it feels as if love is being distributed unequally, siblings do not share affection—they compete for it. Joseph's brothers didn't just see a coat—they saw a symbol that Joseph was more valued than they were. That wound began to fester.

The tension escalated when Joseph shared dreams that God had given him, visions that placed him in a position of leadership over his family. In a spiritually healthy environment, such dreams might have sparked curiosity, prayer, or even pride in seeing God's call on a brother's life. But in this family system, already fractured by favoritism and emotional scarcity, Joseph's revelation became fuel for resentment. Their "love tanks," as Gary Chapman might say, were already empty; every blessing Joseph received felt like a withdrawal from their own. Christian counselor June Hunt defines envy as "feeling resentful about the advantages . . . of others," noting that, left unchecked, it "can escalate to harboring ill will or acting out against the one envied."[5]

For Joseph's brothers, his God-given future was not a reason for gratitude, but a threat to their worth.

Joseph's brothers: Family betrayal

Jealousy hardened into action when the opportunity arose. As Genesis records, the brothers saw Joseph coming from a distance and conspired to kill him. Only Reuben's intervention kept them from murder, but they still stripped Joseph of his coat, threw him into a pit, and sold him to Midianite traders. This is where jealousy in the family shows its most destructive form—when the bond of blood is overpowered by the perceived need to remove a rival. Family loyalty gave way to self-protection, and love was swallowed by envy.

John Townsend explains that envy and resentment arise from "the perception that all of the good is outside of oneself," leaving a person "desiring to

Joseph's brothers didn't just see a coat—they saw a symbol that Joseph was more valued than they were. That wound began to fester.



destroy the good of others."[6] That's what resentment does when left unchecked—it gradually dehumanizes the one we resent, turning people made in God's image into rivals to be diminished rather than souls to be loved.

The lesson here is sobering: Jealousy reframes relationships through the lens of threat, not trust. When that happens in a family, even shared history and deep connection can be rewritten as competition. The brothers could not see Joseph as a fellow son of Jacob or as a young man God was shaping—they could only see him as someone standing in the way of their own significance, worth and purpose. And once you see someone only as a threat, it becomes dangerously easy to push them away, even at great moral cost.

In *Effective Biblical Counseling,* Larry Crabb writes that when we "cut God off . . . [we] cut off the only source of true significance and security."[7] In other words, whenever we look to ourselves—or to others' approval or success—for worth, we step out of the only love that cannot be earned or threatened. Our insecurity grows in proportion to our distance from Him.

In reality, Joseph's brothers didn't need to tear him down to have a sense of worth—and neither do we. Jealousy thrives when we forget that the same God who blesses others has an unshakeable, personal plan for us, too.

Saul and David: From king to would-be murderer

Perhaps one of the clearest portraits of jealousy is in the story of Saul and David. Saul began his reign with humility. Chosen by God as Israel's first king. The book of Samuel describes Saul's attitude as being "little in [his] own sight" (1 Samuel 15:17). But somewhere along the way, something shifted.

The Spirit of Prophecy describes it plainly:

"Saul presumed upon his exaltation, and dishonored God by unbelief and disobedience. Though when first called to the throne he was humble and self-distrustful, success made him self-confident. . . . He lost sight of his dependence upon God, and in heart departed from the Lord."[8]

By the time the Philistines marched against Israel at the Valley of Elah, Saul's relationship with God was already fractured. He had disobeyed God's loving commands (1 Samuel 13 and 15) and refused to heed the prophet's warnings. After blatantly disregarding God's leadership in his life, his spiritual authority was hollowed out.

When Goliath taunted Israel, Saul—head and shoulders taller than his people—lacked the courage to stand. Fear had taken over.

"And the Lord no more communicated with Saul, or instructed him through Samuel. He had chosen to follow his own will, and had rejected the word of the Lord. God left him to be guided by his own judgment, which he had chosen to follow rather than to obey God. Saul had no true repentance. He had been exalted because he was made king. He manifested greater anxiety to be honored by Samuel before the people than to obtain forgiveness and the favor of God."[9]

Jealousy and envy will do this to men and women. It's a lonely path. Then David arrived. Young, unknown, but full of God's presence. In 1 Samuel 17:26, David reveals his intentions: "For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" The whole reason David faced the giant was not to make a name for himself, but rather to protect the name of God. This mindset should drive our personal projects and church mission. It's not about us; it's about God.

He faced the giant armed not with armor, but with faith—and he won. The victory was God's, but the song that echoed through Israel made it personal:

"Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Samuel 18:7).

In that moment, Saul's insecurity crystallized into envy.

"Instead of manifesting humble gratitude to God that Israel had been saved out of the hand of their enemies by the hand of David, a cruel spirit of jealousy comes upon [Saul], and, as in times past, he yields himself to its control. . . . His fears were aroused, that this was indeed the man who would take his place as ruler."[10]

From that day onward, Saul watched David with suspicion. The relationship spiraled. At meals, Saul's rage boiled over—more than once he hurled a spear at David in a fit of uncontrollable anger (1 Samuel 18:10, 11; 19:9, 10).

This wasn't just temper. It was the logical end of jealousy left unchecked. We are warned: "**Envy is the offspring of pride, and if it**

is entertained in the heart, it will lead to hatred, and eventually to revenge and murder."[11]

David fled, joined by loyal men, while Saul devoted years to hunting him down—years that could have been spent leading Israel in righteousness and preparing the nation for its future.

The tragedy is this: Saul didn't lose his throne the day David was anointed king. It began the day he could no longer bear to hear another man praised. Jealousy blinds us until God's victories feel like our defeats, and His blessings upon someone else feel like grand theft. That is the misery of jealousy—it builds a kingdom so small that even heaven's music is heard as a "tinkling cymbal" if it is not sung to us.

The anatomy of jealousy: Colleagues into conspirators

Jealousy is never just about the other person. It's about the story we tell ourselves. That's what makes the story in Daniel chapter 6 so piercing. The governors and presidents in Babylon had power, wealth, and influence, yet the moment Daniel was favored above them, their sense of self collapsed. Suddenly, his excellence was not a blessing to the kingdom but a threat to their identity. That false story took root in Medo-Persia's court, and it poisoned everything.

"The elephant in the room"

Psychologists remind us that jealousy doesn't just wound the soul—it narrows the mind. When feelings of threat take over, the body often floods with cortisol and adrenaline, pushing us into survival mode. That survival instinct is classically described in three responses: fight, flight, and freeze (some even add a fourth, fawn).

The fight response is the most obvious—and the one we often associate with jealousy. Think of Joseph's brothers in Genesis 37, or even the stepsisters in Cinderella: jealousy often seeks to belittle, undermine, or attack the one it perceives as a rival.

But the silent responses of flight and freeze can be just as dangerous. Flight withdraws from community, often shifting into a new circle to escape the painful comparisons. Freeze is more subtle—and perhaps more destructive. It is staying put while bottling up feelings of inadequacy, letting comparison paralyze growth and mission.

"[Jeremiah 17:5, 6 quoted.] This is precisely the condition of those who have not a vital connection with Christ. They seem to be ever working at cross-purposes with God, and are so full of jealousy, evil surmising, discord, and strife—Satanic attributes—that they are constantly lying against the truth; they are not doers of the words of Christ. Yet many church members are in this very position. They dwell, as it were, in the salt land, in a parched wilderness."[12]

Yet Scripture shows us another way. When Cain was consumed by jealousy, God warned him, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" (Genesis 4:7). The hope here is simple but profound: God always provides a way back. Jealousy does not need to define us. Instead of narrowing our vision, grace expands it—shifting our focus from competing with others to rejoicing in God's work, wherever it appears. The antidote to jealousy is not self-mastery but surrender: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

Back to Daniel . . .

That's why, instead of joining Daniel in faithful governance, his peers wasted their energy scheming against him. Gary Collins notes that jealousy is psychologically exhausting—it drains resources that could be spent on growth, love, and mission.[13,14,15]

In other words, the hours those men spent plotting were hours stolen from the good they might have accomplished. Jealousy didn't just make them bitter—it made them useless.

"Envy and jealousy are like two sisters who blend together. . . . Everything that can be made use of will be employed to place the envied man in an unfavorable light before the people."[16] Daniel's very integrity became intolerable because their hearts were not anchored in God. They needed the applause of men, and when it shifted to Daniel, they could not bear it.

Notice Daniel's contrast. While jealousy shrank the world of the presidents and princes to one obsession—destroy him—Daniel's heart remained wide open to God. He prayed with his windows open, as he always had, giving thanks. No scheming, no retaliation, no fear. Where jealousy isolates, faith connects. Where jealousy consumes energy in suspicion, faith channels energy in worship. Daniel embodied that truth in the lion's den, and it is why he emerged whole when his enemies perished.

The tragedy of Daniel chapter 6 is not only what happened to the conspirators—it's what could have been. Imagine if they had joined Daniel in governing with integrity. Imagine what wisdom and justice they might have accomplished together. Instead, jealousy devoured their legacy: The presidents and princes chose the opposite. In the end, their jealousy left them nameless in history, while Daniel's faithfulness still preaches today.

IV. The psychology of jealousy

The story of Daniel in the lions' den is not just about politics—it's about the human heart under pressure. Psychologists remind us that jealousy is not simply envy in disguise. Envy says, "I want what you have." Jealousy says, "I might lose what's mine." That subtle shift makes jealousy more defensive, more anxious, and often more destructive. The administrators in Babylon didn't envy Daniel's gifts—they feared his promotion would eclipse their own positions.

If your worth depends on being praised, promoted, or preferred, then anyone else's success feels like an existential threat. This is why jealousy is so exhausting. Recent research shows that it triggers the brain's threat-detection system, releasing

stress hormones and narrowing focus to self-protection rather than collaboration. In other words, when jealousy takes hold, you stop leading, you stop loving, and you start to merely survive. The presidents and princes in Daniel 6 weren't thinking about the empire's good. They were in "survival mode," plotting only to protect their fragile sense of worth.

The spiritual cost is even greater. Jealousy takes our eyes off God's given mission and turns them inward. Instead of asking, "How can we glorify Him together?" we ask, "How can I keep from being overshadowed?" That shift is deadly. Gospel mission priorities are replaced with personal preservation. The inspired warning is piercing:

"Jealousy leads a man to suspect another of seeking to deprive him of advantages and position."[17]

When leaders operate out of that suspicion, the church's credibility before the world is weakened, and the Spirit's presence is grieved.

What does this tell us?

Jealousy fractures relationship, but love strengthens and multiplies relationships. Jesus gave us the unmistakable mark of His people:

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

What would it look like if that love defined us? Imagine a culture where leaders rejoice when others succeed, where every promotion sparks gratitude rather than suspicion, where members defend one another's reputations as fiercely as their own. That is not wishful thinking—it is the heavenly culture Jesus died to create.

Simon Sinek has said, "A culture is strong when people work with each other, for each other. A culture is weak when people work against each other, for themselves."[18] Translate that to the church: What if our elders and pastors were known for working for each other and showing (rather than hoping for) honor (Romans 12:10)? What if our committees were marked by encouragement rather than comparison? The world would not be able to ignore a community like that. Our witness would be undeniable, because love—genuine, Spirit-filled, other-centered love—always preaches louder than words.

This is more than just avoiding jealousy's pitfalls. God's vision is not simply that we hold the church together, but that we thrive together. When jealousy dies, unity is born. And when unity is born, mission flourishes. What could God accomplish if every ounce of energy spent on suspicion was poured into prayer, discipleship, and evangelism?

V. Ellen White's diagnosis of jealousy

Ellen White does not soften her words when diagnosing jealousy. She identifies its destructive presence at the very beginning of human history: "Jealousy caused the first death in our world."[19] From Cain and Abel forward, jealousy has always proven itself more than a private struggle of the heart; it is a force that fractures relationships, fuels violence, and distorts spiritual life.

Tracing its nature, she writes, "Envy is the offspring of pride."[20] Pride is the soil where jealousy grows — the refusal to let God define our worth, and the restless need to measure ourselves against others. Christian counselors often describe this as identity insecurity: when self is propped up by comparison rather than rooted in God's unchanging love. From that insecure root comes a poisonous tree.

Ellen White maps out the symptoms with piercing clarity: suspicion, unfavorable hints, and slander.[21] These are the quiet whispers of jealousy before it becomes apparent. Left unchecked, those whispers intensify, leading to what she warns is the outcome—hatred, revenge, and unholy ambition.[22] In other words, jealousy not only destroys trust between people; it severs our connection with God. Yet within her diagnosis is also hope:

If pride feeds jealousy, then humility before Christ uproots it. Healing begins where we surrender our need to compete and allow grace to define our value.



Moving from jealousy to gospel mission-mindedness

- Shift identity.
  Jealousy thrives when we define ourselves by titles, roles, or recognition. Freedom comes when we root our worth in Christ alone. John the Baptist modeled this humility: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).
- Celebrate another's elevation.
  The surest way to kill jealousy is to rejoice in someone else's success. Publicly affirm those whom God promotes, for their gain is your gain in Christ's body. Ellen White counsels: "**Work for their interest, instead of seeking to tear them down that you may build yourself upon their ruins."**[23]
- Guard your speech.
  Words can either heal or poison. Resist the urge to drop subtle criticisms or "unfavorable hints." We are warned: "Speak well of them. Throw out no unfavorable hints, no suggestions that will awaken distrust in the minds of others."[24]
- Pray for the one you envy.
  Prayer turns rivals into brothers and sisters. Asking God to bless the very person you're tempted to resent changes your heart first. Jesus said, . . . "Love your enemies . . . and pray for them which . . . persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).
- Practice transparent generosity.
  Jealousy hoards credit; love gives it away. Make it your habit to share opportunities, open doors, and spread honor. Paul's counsel remains timeless: "In honor preferring one another" (Romans 12:10).

- Confess quickly, reconcile eagerly. Don't let jealousy fester in silence. If you feel its pull, confess it before God and, if needed, before your brother or sister. Ellen White urges: "If you have enmity, suspicion, envy, and jealousy in your hearts, you have a work to do to make these things right. Confess your sins; come into harmony with your brethren."[25]

VI. Vision for a different culture

The Bible does not leave us only with stories of jealousy's destruction; it also gives us pictures of what happens when God's people choose encouragement over suspicion, generosity over self-protection. Take Barnabas, for example.

When Saul of Tarsus first tried to join the disciples in Jerusalem, no one trusted him—and rightly so. This was the man who had dragged believers out of their homes. "They were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple" (Acts 9:26). But Barnabas stepped forward. He brought Saul to the apostles and put his own reputation on the line: "Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him" (Acts 9:27). Think about that—Barnabas risked credibility to defend someone who could just as easily have overshadowed him. While jealousy hoards influence, Barnabas instead spent his freely.

We see it again in Antioch. Luke tells us the church there had a wealth of leaders—Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, and Saul (Acts 13:1). If there was ever a reason to hold tightly to talent, Antioch had it. Yet when the Holy Spirit said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (Acts 13:2), the church did not cling. They fasted, prayed, laid hands on their two best teachers, and sent them away (Acts 13:3). In other words, they rejoiced to release what jealousy would have tried to keep.

"In His providence [God] places His servants in close connection with His church in order that they may have less confidence in themselves and greater confidence in others whom He is leading out to advance His work."[26]

Now imagine if that same culture shaped us today. Imagine leaders who rejoice when others rise, instead of feeling diminished. "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

VII. Closing appeal

The Spirit of Prophecy paints a scene so vividly that you can almost hear it and see it—the redeemed standing before the throne of God, their faces lighted up with joy. The redeemed stand together before the throne, clothed in robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb. In their hands are crowns—tokens of victory. But the moment their eyes meet Jesus, they take off those crowns and lay them at His feet. Not because they are worthless, but because they know. They know that every breath, every victory, every step that brought them home was His doing, not theirs.

In the last chapter of *The Great Controversy,* the Spirit of Prophecy depicts a harmony that will fill heaven when sin and sinners are no more. Not one trace of jealousy. Not a whisper of envy. No subtle comparisons or guarded glances—only one pure, steady rhythm of love beating through eternity. Not a single discordant note. And every voice will join in unbroken praise: "Worthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain."

But that song . . . it's not just for "someday." The music of heaven must be learned here. She puts it this way: "Heaven is to begin on this earth."[27] Every time you lay down your pride, every time you celebrate another's blessing as if it were your own, every time you give Jesus the glory instead of clutching it for yourself—you are tuning your heart for that eternal choir.

So, I invite you today: take whatever crown you feel you've earned—your recognition, your reputation, your achievements, perhaps your unnoticed contributions—and place it at the



feet of Jesus. Let Him be your joy, your honor, your peace.

I'll never forget the words of a brother who spoke to me while facing the final stages of prostate cancer, "You know. . . . I don't care if my spot in Heaven is sweeping the floors in some little corner no one notices. If Jesus is there, then that little corner will feel like the center of the universe. And that's home—my home. I'll finally be home. I'm almost there."

May you find the peace that comes from knowing that Jesus has chosen you and loves you more than anything in this world! R

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[17] Ibid.
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[20] *Patriarchs and Prophets,* p. 651.
[21] *The Review and Herald,* April 29, 1884.
[22] *The Signs of the Times,* November 2, 1888.
[23] *The Review and Herald,* April 29, 1884. [Emphasis added.]
[24] Ibid.; Ephesians 4:29.
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[26] *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 163.
[27] *Heaven,* p. 170.



THE FAMILY A FORTRESS

The Family Blueprint

By Tanya Estes

An early morning scene unfolds in a typical American home: Mom and Dad are hustling about in an expansive open kitchen. This space is filled with all the shining décor of a modern home, but is devoid of the little evidences of family time happening there. They each grab their travel mug of coffee, and perhaps a briefcase, before offering a quick peck on the cheek and rushing out to the garage and into their vehicles. This day that is just beginning will likely stretch 12 hours before finding Mom and Dad back home again, possibly sharing a little time together.

The children have now filtered downstairs from their respective bedrooms, oblivious to one another, as they remain captivated by the enchantments coming from their earbuds. Snatching up their backpacks and tucking their phones into their back pockets, they each follow suit and head out to the driveway. The teenager drives herself to the high school, in the sporty vehicle that is the envy of all her friends, while the younger ones await the giant "golden carriages" filled with their peers, that will whisk them all away to the packed daily schedule at the elementary and middle schools.

There is no room left on this agenda for a time of daily worship together as a family. There is no morning prayer before the sharing of a meal to start the day. Mom and Dad know little about the daily activities of their children, and the children know equally little about what occupies their parents' day. Each member of this family is consumed with their own pursuits, and in the eyes of the world, this is called success.

Mom and Dad are deemed ambitious and career-minded. They are working hard to provide the comforts and conveniences that this world tells them are so important: the big fancy house in an upscale neighborhood, the late-model cars with all the bells and whistles, the hottest brand name clothing that their children wish to wear, the latest technology that popular culture dictates. They possess all the material things on which others have placed so much value. These parents are "successful."

From all outside appearances, the children seem to be well-liked at school and are living a perfect American childhood. They are invited to all the parties hosted by the popular kids and are praised by their teachers for appropriate and obedient behavior. The boys excel in all the right team sports at school, and the girls are captains of their cheerleading squads. They achieve high marks in all their classes. These are the "good kids."

As the day nears its end, they each arrive back at the house at the end of their schedules, whatever time that may be. The children grab a soda, a bag of chips or a poptart, and settle into their respective bedrooms. Rather than connecting with their siblings, they choose to connect with their classmates on social media while knocking out a homework assignment or two, isolated in their own space. Mom settles in on the couch, texting with her best girlfriends while watching a favorite primetime drama. Dad is the last to return home, exhausted after a late business dinner with a client, and unwinds in his office, watching highlights from the big game. Night falls. Wearied heads hit their pillows.

Not a moment is leftover for evening worship and praying with, and for, one another; no time set aside for meaningful conversations and sharing the events of that day. After a few fleeting hours of rest, the sun rises, and they do it all over again. Is this all that is left of family? Do they even know what they are missing? But most importantly, we must ask, is this what God desires for our families?

God's design

In His tender mercy and love for His children, the Lord offers us so much more than the typical scenario described above! The wisdom and guidance that He reveals in his Word can serve as our blueprint for a small taste of heaven here on earth, if only we will humble ourselves and submit to His leading. The first building block of a strong, Godly family is a Christ-centered marriage. Speaking of the original marriage at creation, Genesis 2:22–24 tells us, "And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." When Christ is kept at the center of the marriage, husband and wife become one flesh. Because our human hearts are "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9), we know that the husband and wife can only achieve this unity through the power of Christ and with the help of the Holy Spirit.

"The cause of division and discord in families and in the church is separation from Christ. To come near to Christ is to come near to one another. The secret of true unity in the church and in the family is not diplomacy, not management, not a superhuman effort to overcome difficulties—though there will be much of this to do—but union with Christ.

"Picture a large circle, from the edge of which are many lines all running to the center. The nearer these lines approach the center, the nearer they are to one another.

Thus it is in the Christian life. The closer we come to Christ, the nearer we shall be to one another. God is glorified as His people unite in harmonious action."[1]

In Psalm 127:1, 3–5 (first part), we are also reminded that "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. . . . Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them." Again, God's Word reminds us that we cannot do this on our own. The Lord must build our house, He must be kept at the center of our home, and our children are given to us as a blessing from Him! What a gift!

"Children derive life and being from their parents, and yet it is through the creative power of God that your children have life, for God is the Lifegiver. Let it be remembered that children are not to be treated as though they were our own personal property. Children are the heritage of the Lord, and the plan of redemption includes their salvation as well as ours. They have been entrusted to parents in order that they might be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, that they might be qualified to do their work in time and eternity.

"Mothers, deal gently with your little ones. Christ was once a little child. For His sake honor the children. Look upon them as a sacred charge, not to be indulged, petted, and idolized, but to be taught to live pure, noble lives. They are God's property; He loves them, and calls upon you to co-operate with Him in helping them to form perfect characters."[2]

Train them up

With grateful hearts for the precious gifts with which He has entrusted us, we have only to look to His Word for guidance in raising up our family to be an army for the Lord. We may all be familiar with the promise found in Proverbs 22:6, where it reads, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." But many times, it is easy to struggle with knowing exactly how to do that; just what is "the way he should go?" We find even more practical divine instruction in Deuteronomy 11:18–23, as the Lord instructs us,

"Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way,

when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates: That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth. For if ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him; Then will the Lord drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall possess greater nations and mightier than yourselves."

What a promise we have in these verses! We are to keep the Lord always at the center of our home, hiding His words in our heart, keeping His commandments, walking in His ways so that He is intertwined in every part of our day. In so doing, we show our children by example how to walk daily with the Lord and lean on Him at each step of our way. Our words alone would be empty in this effort, if our children would not see our faith in action.

"In their important work parents must ask and receive divine aid. . . . The converting power of God can transform inherited and cultivated tendencies; for the religion of Jesus is uplifting. " 'Born again' means a transformation, a new birth in Christ Jesus.

"Let us instruct our children in the teachings of the word. If you will call, the Lord will answer you. He will say, Here I am; what would you have Me do for you? Heaven is linked with earth that every soul may be enabled to fulfill his mission. The Lord loves these children. He wants them brought up with an understanding of their high calling."[3]

There is no more priceless treasure that we can offer to our children than to share with them the promises God has given us in His Word; no more valuable instinct that we can instill in them than to take every hope, every burden, every question, every need, first and foremost to the Lord.

Our adversary

When parents bring their family to the foot of the cross and devote themselves and their children to the Lord, we can be sure that the devil does not stand idly by. The Lord warns us in 1 Peter 5:8 that we must "be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:" Satan seeks to lead our children away from Christ, away from His saving grace, and away from our influence as parents. There will be trials and struggles that we must face, and our only hope is to remember that we do not have to face these alone; our loving Saviour is waiting to carry us through each one if we will turn to Him and seek His face.

"Parents, gather the rays of divine light which are shining upon your pathway. Walk in the light as Christ is in the light. As you take up the work of saving your children and maintaining your position on the highway of holiness, the most provoking trials will come. But do not lose your hold. Cling to Jesus. He says, 'Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me.' Difficulties will arise. You will meet with obstacles. Look constantly to Jesus. When an emergency arises, ask, Lord, what shall I do now?

"The harder the battle, the greater their [parents] need of help from their heavenly Father, and the more marked will be the victory gained."[4]

Each trial we go through strengthens our faith for the next, like a muscle that grows stronger with exercise. The Lord reminds us in 2 Corinthians 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Furthermore, we are promised in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Equipped with these promises, we can rest assured that the Lord will not only give us His grace in sufficient measure, and His perfect strength to cover our weakness, but He will also not allow the enemy to overtake us with more than we are able to bear. The depth and breadth of God's love for His children is truly beyond comprehension.

A new scene unfolds

With Christ at the center of our marriages, at the center of our homes and the center of our families, we have the hope of His power to unify and to save. As we draw closer to Him, we are drawn closer to one another. Home becomes a place where love, kindness, security, and tenderness are abundant. The focus is not placed on the material goods that this world has deemed valuable, but rather on the spiritual treasures that the Lord has in store for those who seek Him with the whole heart. Psalm 119:1, 2 reads, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart."

"There is a sacred circle around every family which should be preserved. No other one has any right in that sacred circle. The husband and wife should be all to each other…. I have been shown that there should be a sacred shield around every family.

"The home circle should be regarded as a sacred place, a symbol of heaven, a mirror in which to reflect ourselves. Friends and acquaintances we may have, but in the home life they are not to meddle. A strong sense of proprietorship should be felt, giving a sense of ease, restfulness, trust."[5]

Relationships within the family are now cherished and guarded as the treasures that they are. Each family member is a gift to the other, given by God and to be valued above outside friendships. The care and love for one another within the family unit will shine forth as a witness and a testimony of God's



The enemy is relentless in his attacks of God's original design. But as followers of Christ who seek to live according to His blueprint, we have the honor and privilege of preserving and safeguarding that divine plan of a godly family.

presence, unmistakable to all those outside of the family, and pleasing in the sight of the One who has given that love.

"Parents, upon you rests the responsibility of being light-bearers and light-givers. Shine as lights in the home, brightening the path that your children must travel. As you do this, your light will shine to those without.

"From every Christian home a holy light should shine forth. Love should be revealed in action. It should flow out in all home intercourse, showing itself in thoughtful kindness, in gentle, unselfish courtesy. There are homes where this principle is carried out—homes where God is worshiped and truest love reigns. From these homes morning and evening prayer ascends to God as sweet incense, and His mercies and blessings descend upon the suppliants like the morning dew."[6]

In conclusion

The family unit is a vital element of God's perfect creation: and as such, it has borne the brunt of constant attacks from the adversary and has suffered deepening wounds under the effects of sin. Satan's tactics are ever the same: he seeks to lure our hearts away from our Savior by introducing a false version, a counterfeit, for every good and perfect gift that God has given to us. We see this clearly exemplified in today's changing cultural perception of the family. According to the *American Heritage Dictionary* (Second College Edition, dated 1991), ***family*** was defined as "a fundamental social group in society consisting especially of a man and woman and their offspring." Yet within less than 30 years' time, the accepted definition of the family had changed considerably. In *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (Eleventh Edition, dated 2019), ***family*** is now defined as "a group of individuals living under one roof and usually under one head." The enemy is relentless in his attacks on God's original design. But as followers of Christ who seek to live according to His blueprint, we have the honor and privilege of preserving and safeguarding that divine plan for a Godly family. And by His grace, we will seek to share that light with others around us, that they may see His love among the members of our families.

"Patiently, lovingly, as faithful stewards of the manifold grace of Christ, parents are to do their appointed work. It is expected of them that they will be found faithful. Everything is to be done in faith. Constantly they must pray that God will impart His grace to their children. Never must they become weary, impatient, or fretful in their work. They must cling closely to their children and to God. If parents work in patience and love, earnestly endeavoring to help their children to reach the highest standard of purity and modesty, they will succeed."[7]

It is my wish and prayer that the Lord will give to each of us His strength, His wisdom, and His grace for every day as we raise our children, both individually and corporately as a church body. May God help us as we cling tightly to Him, lifting our families up in prayer, and trusting in faith that He will fulfill the promise found in Isaiah 49:25 (last part), "for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children." Praise the Lord for His faithfulness! ℟

References:

[1] *The Adventist Home*, p. 179.
[2] Ibid., p. 280.
[3] Ibid., p. 206.
[4] Ibid., pp. 207, 208.
[5] Ibid., p. 177.
[6] Ibid., p. 37.
[7] Ibid., p. 208.



By Timmy Nguyen

K(no)w Hope

Part 1

Warning: *This article will be addressing sensitive subjects today (suicide, depression, and anxiety), which may be a trigger for some people.*

Disclaimer: *The info here is for informational and educational (and hopefully, inspirational) purposes only, and is not meant to be a substitute for professional medical or mental health advice.*

Anxiety and depression

We all know people in our lives who have experienced or are currently experiencing anxiety and depression. They might be people we see in passing, our coworkers, friends, or family. It could be your own brothers or sisters in Christ. And of course, even we ourselves may have gone through it at some point in our life—or maybe we are experiencing this type of problem ourselves at this very moment.

Anxiety and depression are complex medical conditions that I want to briefly define so we can understand and recognize the symptoms in ourselves or others. There are different types of anxiety and depression, and of course, the severity of each condition can vary.

But before we dive into these mental health conditions, I'd like to share a bit about my past.

It's the summer of 2014, and I had just graduated high school. I had met a girl in my statistics class, came to like her, and asked her out. I still remember how giddy, happy, and excited I felt when she said yes. The smile would not leave my face, and all my friends knew something good had just happened to me. We were so young then, with so much to learn and experience.

Back then, I was so sure of myself. I believed myself to be righteous—that I always tried to do the right thing, and that I always tried to be a good person. I believed she was one of the sweetest people I ever knew. I felt so fortunate. Even at this young age, I was not one to date "just to date"—I intended to marry her.

We had several happy years together, but then things weren't the same after a few years. Four, then five years passed, but we were stagnant in our relationship. I made the difficult decision to end the relationship with her in the spring of 2020.

I was made very aware of all the troubling things done while in this relationship with her and I realized how young, stupid, and foolish I had been. In reality, I was incapable of loving her properly because I hardly even loved myself. I had no self-esteem. I didn't

deserve love. I hated myself. I don't think I ever hated myself more than during that summer.

Right after this, the world went into lockdown for COVID. As an extrovert, that time was especially hard for me. A very special person for the past quarter of my life was no longer there with me. For years I held onto guilt and feelings of unworthiness. Time, therapy, friends, family—they helped, but I felt like I could never really be happy with myself anymore. I was isolated, alone, and in despair.

I always wanted to be a good person. I really did. But I was always letting people (and myself) down because I was just a sinful, useless person.

Do you think this experience is describing some form of anxiety or depression? What do you think helped me? If you knew this version of me back then, would you have said or done something?

Anxiety

The American Psychological Association defines anxiety as "an emotion characterized by apprehension and somatic symptoms of **tension** in which an individual anticipates impending danger, catastrophe, or misfortune. The body often mobilizes itself to meet the perceived threat: Muscles become tense, breathing is faster, and the heart beats more rapidly. Anxiety may be distinguished from fear both conceptually and physiologically, although the two terms are often used interchangeably. Anxiety is considered a future-oriented, long-acting response broadly focused on a diffuse threat, whereas fear is an appropriate, present-oriented, and short-lived response to a clearly identifiable and specific threat."[1]

Why is it a problem? It interferes with daily activities—our schoolwork, our jobs, even our relationship with God. It is not a small, occasional worry or fear that simply "goes away." According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIH), **about 31% of US adults experience an anxiety disorder at some time in their lives.**[2]

Listed below are different types of anxieties that people may suffer from from most common to least common:[3]

1. A specific phobia, which is an **intense** fear of (or aversion to) a **specific object or situation.** Examples might include spiders, snakes, needles, heights, or blood. Risk factors include exposure to traumatic events involving the specific object or situation, or a history of anxiety or mental disorder in biological relatives.

2. Social anxiety disorder, which is an intense, disproportionate, and **persistent** fear of being watched and judged by others leading one to **avoid social situations whenever possible**.

3. Panic disorder – **frequent**, unexpected attacks characterized by sudden waves of fear or discomfort or a sense of losing control even when there is no clear danger or trigger. It involves physical symptoms that feel like a heart attack (trembling, tingling, rapid heart rate; trouble breathing), and should have 1+ months of persistent concern of panic attacks or significant behavioral changes to avoid such attacks.

4. Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) is defined by the DSM-V (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition) as meeting all the following criteria:[4]

- Excessive anxiety/worry most days of the week for > 6 months
- Difficulty controlling worry
- Presence of 3 or more of the following (1 in children)
  - Restlessness
  - Fatigue
  - Difficulty concentrating
  - Irritability
  - Muscle tension
  - Sleep disturbance
- Not attributed to another anxiety or somatic symptom disorder
- Significant distress/impairment
- Symptoms not induced by a substance or other medical condition

Certain over-the-counter medications or herbal medications, especially if used improperly, can contribute to anxiety. Examples include pseudoephedrine (produces stimulating effects due to constriction of blood vessels) and St. John's Wort (a plant used to treat anxiety/depression, but can also **cause** anxiety or restlessness due to its effect on brain neurotransmitters). Caffeine and alcohol are known to contribute as well.

Treatments for anxiety

What are some suggested treatments for anxiety? Getting adequate sleep and exercise can help. Less commonly considered is having a healthier diet, with a plant-based diet being the ideal diet. Why is this? Being the original diet that God intended for us, it has superior tryptophan uptake compared to an omnivore diet. Tryptophan is an amino acid required for conversion to 5-HTP, serotonin, and melatonin in the brain. Animal protein introduces more amino acids which will compete with tryptophan's entry into the brain, thereby reducing its uptake. Support groups or psychotherapy (counseling) are also highly encouraged. And if nothing else, it is vital to find one good friend or family member whom you trust to lean on. Be brave enough to admit you need help and ask for it. There is no shame in it.

Although not ideal due to risks of side effects and addiction, in some cases anxiety may require medication. In such situations, we strongly recommend consulting qualified Christian healthcare professionals who can guide you toward the most appropriate treatment while giving priority to natural remedies and lifestyle changes (such as regular physical activity, a balanced diet, sufficient sleep, sunlight exposure, and trust in God). These professionals

can help weigh options carefully, always favoring non-pharmacological approaches first to avoid potential complications like gastrointestinal distress, nausea, weight changes, headache, worsening anxiety or depression, thoughts of suicide, rebound symptoms upon withdrawal, or high addiction risk.

Depression

The DSM-V defines Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) in the following way:

≥ 5 of the following most days for at least 2 weeks, **1 of which must be the first 2 criteria in bold**.

- **Depressed mood**
- **Loss of interest or pleasure**
- Weight changes
- Sleep changes
- Psychomotor agitation or retardation
- Fatigue or reduction in energy
- Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- Decreased concentration or indecisiveness
- Suicidal ideation or attempt

Depression causes significant distress and interferes with functioning.

Traditionally, MDD is treated by a combination of pharmacologic therapies (various classes of antidepressants) as well as non-pharmacologic therapies. We're going to dive a bit more into the non-pharmacologic therapies, as they're more natural and practical gifts from God.

The great outdoors

The first secret to treating MDD is simply to enjoy the great outdoors as much as you can! There are numerous health benefits. Fresh air purifies the blood, invigorates the brain, clears the mind, benefits our gut (improves digestion), purifies the liver, improves the innate immune system, and much more.[5]

Being around "green spaces" increases serotonin levels in the brain and reduces stress. Gardening is a highly encouraged activity—not only do you get exercise, but research shows it improves mood and self-esteem while reducing anxiety and depression. The sunshine also has numerous health benefits, such as better sleep, weight loss, improved immunity, and emotional well-being. It is recommended to get 15–30 minutes at least 3 times a week.[5]

Have you ever gone outside after a nice rainstorm or been to a waterfall and breathed the air in deeply? If so, you're benefiting from negative ions in the air, which are known to improve learning and concentration by providing more oxygen to the brain. They also reduce anxiety and improve mood.[5]

To get the full benefits of breathing, we want to avoid *apical breathing*. This is shallow breathing which uses only the upper part of the chest, and not the diaphragm (the major muscle of respiration below the lungs). Unfortunately, more people work indoors these days, sitting with poor posture and breathing shallow breaths.

We want to focus on **deep**, diaphragmatic breathing. You can either lie down or sit up, with good posture. Place one hand above your belly button and the other on your chest. Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose, for about 3–5 seconds, hold it for a few seconds, then exhale slowly through your mouth, for about 3–5 seconds, feeling your stomach contract without your chest moving. You should be taking about 4–6 breaths/minute. Feel free to try it now!

Do this for 5 minutes 3 times a day, and do this at least 3 times a week, but preferably daily.

This kind of breathing allows enough time for gas exchange, for air to fill the entirety of our lungs, and for sufficient oxygen to enter our blood. It activates the parasympathetic nervous system (responsible for "rest and digest"). As blood vessels dilate and relax the heart, the heart rate is slowed, blood pressure is decreased, and cortisol levels (a stress hormone) are decreased, allowing you to manage stress better. This, in turn, boosts your immunity. (The stress response being lowered "deactivates" the sympathetic nervous system.) You are able to focus better. With more oxygen in the brain, cognitive function and mental clarity are enhanced. Other benefits include



management of chronic pain, digestion, irritable bowel syndrome, depression, anxiety, and sleep disorders.[6]

Exercise

For general health, the recommendations from the American College of Sports Medicine are *at least* 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity a week, and an additional 2 days of muscle-strengthening activity working all major muscle groups. Exercise has a plethora of health benefits, including mental health. Scientific studies show improved remission rates from depression (that is, people no longer meeting MDD criteria) with exercise. It lowers stress and anxiety and improves mood.[7] How does it do all this?

Exercise causes the release of the following neurotransmitters (chemical messengers that carry messages between nerve cells in your brain and throughout your body. Firstly, serotonin is released, which regulates mood, digestion, sleep, wound healing, and more. A lack of serotonin plays a role in various mental health conditions. Ironically, a lack of serotonin means the brain cannot make as much melatonin, leading to worse sleep. Sleep disturbances accompany most cases of major depression. Then there's dopamine, which regulates memory, movement, mood, and attention. Another neurotransmitter released is endorphins, which relieve pain and stress.[8, 9]

Warning signs of suicide

Suicide is not a mental health disorder, but is often a result of mental illness. The Cleveland Clinic lists the following as some warning signs of suicide: talking openly about suicide; sleeping pattern changes; feeling trapped; mood changes; social withdrawal; reckless behavior; not finding joy; sudden calmness; writing a note. If you notice these signs in yourself, or someone else, reach out for help **without hesitation!** You can also contact a local suicide prevention hotline. In the United States, dial 988. For numbers in other countries, visit https://www.iasp.info/visitors/ or search for "suicide hotline [your country]". You could save someone's life, or your own.

It is true that God wants us to fully trust Him and His promises. It's true that He is the great Comforter. But it is also not wrong to get help from a Christlike brother or sister, especially at our lowest moments when we are unable to think clearly. Anxiety, depression, and thoughts of suicide can be all-consuming.

Why would someone contemplate suicide? Often, they lack acceptance by friends, family, or themselves. They may have been exposed to another's death by suicide. They have access to lethal means (with guns being the leading method of suicide). They may have a psychiatric disorder, substance use disorder, or other serious health condition.[10]

Suicide intervention

If you suspect someone is contemplating ending their life, ask, "Are you contemplating suicide?" This will not typically increase the individual's likelihood to commit suicide. Rather, you're tackling the problem head-on and identifying if immediate supportive care is needed. Listen to them, without judgment. Stay in touch with them after the crisis, showing you truly care for their wellbeing.[11]

Finally, remind them that there is **somebody** who cares about them—a partner, friend, or family member. The most powerful thing that you can do for them is to remind them that God cares about them. Whether they are Christian or not may influence which verses or topics you want to share, but regardless of their religion, these verses could change their life.

For those paralyzed in fear: **Isaiah 41:10** – "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

For those doubting God's plan for them: **Jeremiah 29:11** – "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end."

For those lacking peace: **Isaiah 26:3, 4** – "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for





in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

For those feeling weary: **Isaiah 40:31** – "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

For those who cannot understand why they're suffering: **Proverbs 3:5, 6** – "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

For the brokenhearted and afflicted: **Psalms 34:17–20** – "The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all. He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken."

The book of Psalms is useful for anyone suffering from anxiety, particularly Psalms 23, 61, and 91.

We must realize that our life is God's, not our own. It is <u>not</u> in God's plan for us to take our life. Remember that we are God's temple. 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17 says, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." It continues in 1 Corinthians 6:19, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" We must also consider the sixth commandment. Exodus 20:13 says, "Thou shalt not kill."

Suicide is never acceptable. However, only God knows the heart and the full circumstances of each person. We cannot make a final judgment about anyone's eternal destiny. Our loving Saviour is full of mercy and compassion, and we can trust Him completely with the souls of those who have suffered greatly. The important question for us today is this: if we are struggling, will we reach out for help now while there is still hope?

Is suicide really even that common?

To put things in perspective, I investigated the statistics on suicides in the US. What I found was shocking. In 2022, it was the 11th leading cause of death overall in the US (nearly 50,000 deaths). *That's about 137 deaths a day, or 1 death every 10.5 minutes*. It was the 2nd leading cause of death among individuals 10–14 and 25–34, indicating that **the young are especially vulnerable**. There were **nearly twice as many suicides (49,476) as homicides (24,849)** in the US, with the prevalence being 4x higher in males than females (22.9 per 100,000 vs 5.9 per 100,000).

In 2023, 2% of adults 18–25 attempted suicide. *That's 1 in 50 people that you see!!*

Truly, we live in a sin-sick world.

Loneliness is not from God

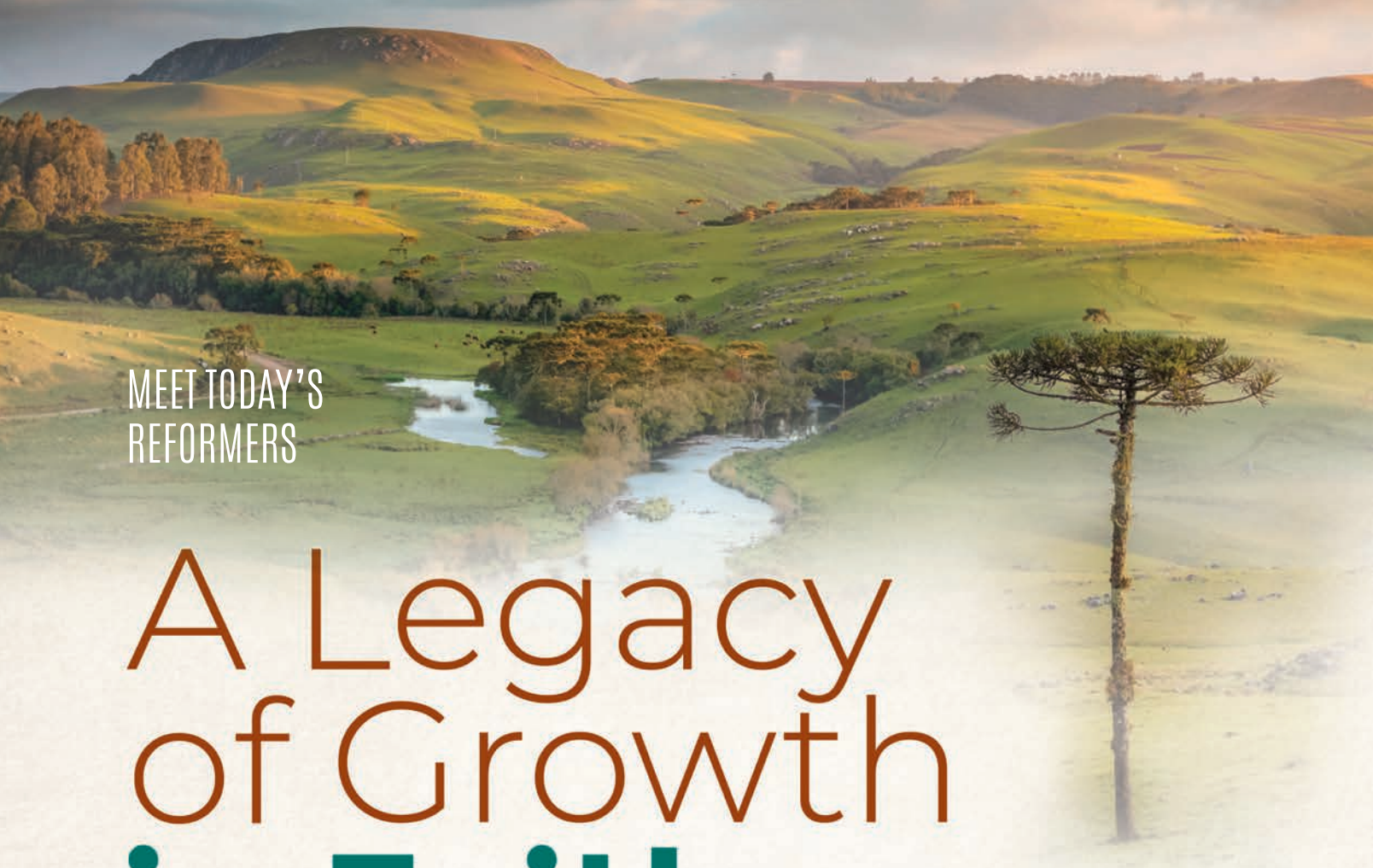
It's easy to FEEL alone, like God's presence is withdrawn. This is a deception from the enemy of our souls. We know from the prophet Jeremiah that "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). This is why religion based on **feeling** is incredibly dangerous. It must be based on faith, and faith alone. It takes constant connection and communion with Christ. We have to place our trust in Him, even when things appear bleak for us here on earth.

Hebrews 13:5 says to, "be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." So we can confidently say, "**The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me**" (Hebrews 13:6).

No matter our socioeconomic or religious background, we have to look out for each other. And most importantly, people must come to know the love, peace, and comfort that Christ brings. **That means we need to pour out the love of the Lord upon others**. This is our God-given duty. I pray that we may be able to fulfill it.—*To be continued.* ℟

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MEET TODAY'S REFORMERS

A Legacy of Growth in Faith

By Dorval Fagundes Junior

Back in the 1970s—before I was ever born—my father began to feel something unusual, as if his body were slowly turning to stone. After an extensive series of tests, the diagnosis came: scleroderma, an autoimmune disease that stiffens the body, imprisoning it in an invisible armor.

The news hit the family like a bomb. My father and uncle traveled 217 miles back to the family farm, burdened by the weight of an uncertain future. That night, under the starry sky of the gaucho plains, my uncle spoke with my mother about the grim prognosis. The disease was progressing rapidly, and the shadow of death hovered like a dark cloud over everyone.

The longings of a fighter

It was in the rural setting 62 miles from the city of Bagé, surrounded by endless fields and expansive skies, that my parents had first met and eventually married.

Although veiled racism and class prejudice weighed heavily upon my hard-working mother as a descendant of the Charruas, an indigenous ethnic group known for their dark skin, straight black hair, and almond-shaped eyes, she had pressed on with dignity and resilience. She knew her worth was not defined by others' opinions, but by the love she shared with my father and her tireless dedication to her family.

A covenant with God

It was after my father returned for treatment in the capital that my mother began to notice strange symptoms in her own body. From her life experience, her intuition told her exactly what it was. She was pregnant again. For her, at that time, pregnancy was a relatively frequent companion. However, she also had a troubled history when it came to childbirth. Over the years, she had suffered several miscarriages. The babies had been born at six, seven, or eight months—already lifeless. Now, on top of the tragic news about my father's health, came the prospect of yet another pregnancy likely ending in sorrow.

Amid the anguish of uncertainty, she found an old Bible in the small library at the farmhouse. She was starving for spiritual comfort—for an encounter with God. Among its timeworn pages, in the book of 1 Samuel, she came across the story of Hannah and

her son—a woman who, immersed in the pain of infertility, cried out to God with all her heart and received a miracle: the baby Samuel, who became a great prophet of the Lord. Those words seemed to leap off the page, echoing directly in her heart. Inspired by the narrative, my mother felt the flame of faith ignite in her chest, even while surrounded by the darkness of uncertainty.

In the solitude of that remote region, where the silence of the nights was broken only by the distant chirping of crickets and the hooting of owls, she made a solemn covenant with God. With her face bathed in tears and her trembling hands clutching the Bible, she promised to dedicate the next child—should he come into the world—to the hands of the Divine. But this covenant came with conditions: the pregnancy would have to go well, the child would have to be a healthy boy, and—above all—my father would have to overcome the incurable disease that threatened his life. It was a bold vow, forged in the furnace of despair, but also a cry of hope cast into the abyss of fear.

To her, that covenant was far more than a bargain; it was a declaration of absolute faith, even without full understanding—a desperate attempt to find meaning amid the chaos. She knew she was offering something precious—a piece of herself—but she also believed that if God answered her prayer, it would not be by chance. Every word spoken in that moment carried the weight of her memories, struggles, and dreams. And so, in the stillness of that starry night, she sealed her promise, anxiously waiting to see whether the merciful Father would hear her cry.



Dorval's mother pregnant, 1976

A miracle boy

My family was not deeply religious. My parents were non-practicing Catholics and, up until that point, had never shown any particular spiritual fervor. Yet, in those critical months, my mother devoted herself to prayer like never before. It was as if each prayer were an invisible thread she wove between despair and hope, pleading for miracles amid uncertainty. And against all odds, the pregnancy progressed without major complications—at least none that could have endangered my life. Still, I was born prematurely, at eight months, on June 16, 1976, at the Santa Casa de Misericórdia Hospital in Bagé. I came into the world below the minimum required weight, but healthy enough to survive. To my mother, that alone was a great victory.

When my father heard the news that I was a boy, something seemed to ignite within him. It was my mother's idea to give me his name, adding the suffix "Junior" to mark the bond of fatherhood. It was more than a practical decision; it was a statement of continuity, as if the family legacy was being sealed at that moment.

At the time, my father was already bedridden, his movements limited by the relentless progression of scleroderma. But something extraordinary happened. Two days after my birth, he managed to get up from his hospital bed to walk on his own. It was the first step in a recovery no one had anticipated. Although the aftereffects remained—his fingers would never fully open again—he regained nearly all of his former independence. When I was born, he was 57 years old—an advanced age to become a father again—yet his determination was unshakeable.

In 1980, when I was just four years old, Cilene was born—the youngest in our family. My father, now 61, and my mother, 42, still found strength to expand the household. In all, we are six siblings. I have five sisters—four of them much older than I by several years.

Intriguing discoveries

Around 1985 or 1986, while exploring the dusty corners of the small library at the farm, I found something that would change my perception of the world: children's books with comic-style illustrations about the life of Jesus. The pages, printed in black and white, featured simple drawings, yet they were filled with depth. I was captivated. Right there before me was the complete story of Christ—from His humble birth in Bethlehem to His sacrificial death and triumphant resurrection. I absorbed every frame, every word, and within a few hours, I had devoured all the content. It was as if I had discovered a hidden treasure.

The impression it left on me was so overwhelming that, that very morning, I felt an irresistible urge to connect with what I had read. I went into the bedroom, closed the door behind me, and knelt beside the bed. There, alone, with the silence of the fields as my witness, I said a sincere prayer to God. I don't remember the exact words that came from my young lips, but I've never forgotten the intention behind them. I asked Jesus to guide my life, to help me be good, and that one day, He might look at me with pride. It was a naive prayer, perhaps even a little Pharisaical, reflecting the human tendency to try to earn divine favor through personal effort. Today, I see that plea as typical of a child trying to grasp their relationship with the Infinite.

What stayed with me was a compelling tendency to always seek out religious materials or subjects related to spirituality. A few months later, divine providence brought me into contact with a devout woman named Josefa. With deep roots in the Baptist Church, she introduced me to Protestant worship services, where I learned the basic principles of the Christian life: who our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was; the



Dorval's sisters with him as a baby.

Holy Spirit; the Second Coming of Jesus; the privilege of prayer, and so on. It was while attending services at the Baptist Church that I received my first New Testament—with Psalms and Proverbs included.

The years passed, and now it was 1990. That decade opened an ocean of new possibilities for my life, in which Providence was fully invested, intervening so that God's purpose might finally begin to unfold. One of my older sisters began receiving visits at her home from a woman who was a member of the Jehovah's Witnesses organization. As she studied with this woman, she was also given copies of the famous Watchtower magazine *Awake!*® That publication immediately caught my attention for its easy and engaging reading style, and it featured numerous biblical applications. After reading a few issues and gaining access to some of the books they published, I gradually distanced myself philosophically from the Baptist worldview and began drawing closer to Russellism (the teachings of the Jehovah's Witnesses).

In the early months of 1991, I received another issue of the Russellite magazine, and on the back cover, I came across an advertisement that immediately caught my attention: it was promoting a book that promised to unveil the main secrets of the book of Revelation. For years, I had felt a strange fascination with the last book of the Bible, and now it seemed that my thirst for knowledge was about to be quenched—that I would finally find answers to all my doubts and curiosities.

So, I went to my father and asked him for that book as a gift. I was eager to read it and assumed he would gladly get it for me. He had always bought any kind of reading material I had asked for.

Seeking Revelation

When asking my father for the Jehovah's Witnesses' book on Revelation, the answer I expected was: "Alright, son. Find out the price of the book and I'll buy it for you." But, much to my surprise, that's not what happened! My father instead gave quite an unexpected response:

"No, son. I'm not going to buy that book for you."

I was practically speechless, because until then, I couldn't recall a single instance when my father had denied me any reading material. He loved to see me reading. How could he deny me something that would add to my education and knowledge? I decided to try again—maybe he had misunderstood my request. But the second response was the same:

"I'm not going to buy that book for you."

That was one of the saddest afternoons of my life. My curiosity had reached epic proportions, and I simply could not satisfy it! All I remember from that afternoon is pacing back and forth, impatient and irritable. Little did I know that God had prepared a surprising twist in my life that very day—and had I known this verse, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28), I might have been more patient.

I don't know exactly why, but I went over to look at the bookshelf in our house. Right there, all that time, sat a very special book, waiting for me to read and explore it. It was called *A New World*, written by an unknown author named Alfons Balbach. It was a humble book, printed in black and white, without the visual appeal of the Jehovah's Witnesses' publications. Yet as I flipped through the table of contents, I came across some incredibly intriguing section titles:

"THE SEVEN CANDLESTICKS"
"THE SEVEN SEALS"
"THE SEVEN TRUMPETS"

And many more...

"Wait—what?" I thought. "These titles cover the very same topics that the Jehovah's Witnesses' book was supposed to explain. And why has this book been sitting here on the shelf in my house all this time, and I never even opened it?"

Immediately, I asked my mother if she knew where the book had come from, and her answer surprised me:

"My son, about two years ago a young man visited us offering health-related materials. That's when I bought the collection of five green books on natural remedies—and this book came as a free gift."

Well, once I knew the origin of the book, I took it off the shelf and dove into its pages. The reading was fascinating. The book provided practically all the answers I had been seeking about Revelation. For years—since I can remember, around 1986, when I received my first New Testament from the Baptist Church—the book of Revelation had gripped my attention.

The result of encountering that book was fascinating. Within about a week, I had devoured the material and uncovered some eye-opening truths. Since the structure and writing style were very similar to those of the Jehovah's Witnesses, I assumed the book had been published by the same organization. Yet in reality, my mother had been visited by a colporteur from the Reform Movement—though at the time, I didn't even know the word *colporteur*, nor the name of the church that would one day totally transform my life.



Dorval and his youngest sister, Cilene, 1986

My father had a very kind foster brother whom we called Dindo. One day when talking with him about religion, he introduced me to the truth about the holy Sabbath—the missing piece that would help me better understand God's will for my life. After just a few hours of conversation, I learned the true identity of the organization that had published Pastor Balbach's book—they were the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement.

Seeing the Sabbath

I came home quite upset that day. Why should the Sabbath still be observed, when I had always thought it was simply a cultural custom of the Jewish people? Why had the Baptist Church never told me about this? Finally I got a chance to set aside more time for reflection and to reread certain parts of *A New World*. I spent several hours throughout the week diligently studying the book, piece by piece, until Friday finally arrived. It would be the first Sabbath of my life observed as a religious experience, and I would have the opportunity to keep it "according to the commandment" within the understanding of a 14-year-old teenager.

By that point, I had already learned that the holy Sabbath should be kept "from sunset to sunset," not from midnight to midnight. So, as the evening approached, I went out to the southern side of the farm. Right next to the house stood a boxwood tree, a leafy one, under which I had spent many joyful childhood moments swinging on a wooden swing. There, as the late afternoon drew near, my anticipation only grew. "How can I keep the Sabbath in a way that will please God? How will He accept my devotion?"

Absorbed in these thoughts, I watched the sun touch the horizon and slowly descend to shine upon other parts of the globe. When the last trace of sunlight disappeared behind the trees, my breath nearly stopped:

"The sacred hours have now begun. What should I do? What should I think about? What must I avoid meditating on?"

A flood of questions filled my mind. Then, with all the solemnity I could muster, I stepped out from beneath the tree and walked toward the room where I usually slept. There, in the solitude of the southern Brazilian plains, I knelt before God and prayed for heaven's blessing over this new chapter of my life.

The encounter with the Saviour

The months of 1991 passed by until the moment finally came for me to personally visit the Reform Movement church. On a Wednesday evening at 7:30 p.m., together with my neighbor, I arrived at the place of worship. It was a very modest church, nothing like the Baptist Church. Among the Baptists, more than a thousand people would attend the services, but in the Reform Movement, only about fifteen people were present that night. The preacher was a man around 37 years old. He didn't have great diction and wasn't a polished speaker like those accustomed to addressing large crowds, but the message he delivered that night touched my heart deeply. It was based on Romans chapter 7 and dealt with the apostle Paul's struggle between the spirit and the flesh. That depiction of the apostle's inner battle echoed in my mind—it was the exact same struggle I had been experiencing for quite some time. Right there, in the midst of that sermon, surrounded by humble but loving people, I made my decision to stand for the Lord.



Dorval's mother on her last birthday in 1998

Challenges ahead

That decision had an unimaginable impact on my life. By that time, I had already learned about dietary principles and had to make one of the most difficult choices of my life. For me, eating meat was an essential part of my lifestyle. Having been raised in one of the most traditional regions of the country—Rio Grande do Sul—the act of eating meat is one of the non-negotiable cultural identities of the *gaúcho* people.

When my mother heard of my decision, she was deeply scandalized. She couldn't see in my choice the unfolding of a divine plan that had begun even before I was born. Those were hard days . . . but the Lord Jesus was by my side, giving me strength to stand firm.

Sabbath became a delight. I spent much time with the brethren and with Spirit of Prophecy books, and finally, on Sunday, March 15, 1992, the day came for the Holy Spirit to seal the patient work He had been developing in my life for years. That day, I surrendered myself to God through holy baptism, just before the age of 16.

So, think about it: What were the real chances of me finding the Reform Movement on my own, without the help of the Spirit of the Lord? A church with only

about 25 to 30 members in a city of nearly 100,000 inhabitants? There are so many variables in life that statistically, it would be almost impossible for something like that to happen due to the extremely low probability. Truly, it was a miracle of God—a miracle as great as the one He worked in my father, healing him from a terminal illness, and in my mother's heart, leading her to surrender her only son into God's hands, even though the outcome of that vow turned out to be very different from what her imagination had envisioned.

Epilogue

Sadly, in 1998, my mother passed away from lung cancer caused by smoking. But before her death, she said to me:

"My son, I ask you to forgive me for all the pain I caused you. I'm very sorry, but I couldn't overcome the resentment I felt toward the Reform Church, though I have accepted Jesus in the Adventist Church. I know I've fought against God. I had made a vow to Him, but I didn't like the outcome. It was hard for me, but I've had to acknowledge that I cannot fight against Him. Pray for me, my son."

Not long afterwards, as my father and I visited the Baptist lady who had introduced me to the gospel, he said, "I don't know how to explain it, but I've always had this feeling that there is some mission or greater purpose for me here on this earth. Why is that? Could there be a reason for it?"

She boldly answered: "Mr. Dorval, that's nothing less than the Spirit of God working in your heart. Why do you think you're still alive at 91 years old, when more than 90% of people die long before reaching that age? It's God who sustains life. He's been waiting for your surrender; He's been working in your life for decades. And this extra time He's given you—it's because He loves you and wants your heart. How much time do you think you have left on this earth? How long will you keep Him waiting? Accept Jesus today."

About 30 or 40 days after that conversation, I received a phone call from my father. He told me that he had given his heart to Jesus and was now attending the very same church where I had come into the faith, in our hometown of Bagé. What wonderful news! Unbelievable! I wept with joy for hours when I heard it. His baptism was scheduled for October 2011.

In mid-August, I received another call from him, telling me about a dream he had had the night before. In the dream, he was suffering greatly, struggling to climb a steep hill but lacking the strength to reach the top. At the summit, he could see a magnificent pasture, swaying in the breeze, with a calm, cool wind and a deep blue sky. Halfway up, the heat became unbearable, and he began to sweat profusely. He was ready to give up when a hand touched his shoulder. When he turned to see who it was, he said the person beside him was me. And in the dream, I told him:

"Don't give up, Father. With God's help, you and I will reach the other side together."

According to his account, when we reached the summit, a wonderful peace filled his heart. He fell to his knees in ecstasy, and together we praised the Lord and enjoyed the most beautiful scene and the most refreshing breeze. Then he woke up. The next day, he was hospitalized due to a bladder infection and passed away peacefully on September 7, 2011—about a month before his baptism was to take place.



Dorval and his father in 2008

It's a memory I will carry with me forever—until we meet again on the other side of eternity, after the special resurrection.

But God's blessings did not end there. God also touched the heart of my youngest sister, Cilene, and her daughter, my niece Natália, and both were baptized in our church. I can now say I am no longer alone on this earth—and this legacy of faith has been shared by members of my blood family as they embraced the same faith that has brought me so much joy.

I've shared this testimony here in this wonderful magazine to encourage you, wherever you may be, never to feel alone. Every person has a story, and God has a personalized plan for each one of us. There are many things in this world that may seem dark and confusing, but everything is part of the Lord's plan for you. Don't be afraid, don't be discouraged—for one day you, too, may pause, look back, and tell of the great blessings the Lord has done for you! Amen.

So, think about it: What were the real chances of me finding the Reform Movement on my own, without the help of the Spirit of the Lord? A church with only about 25 to 30 members in a city of nearly 100,000 inhabitants? There are so many variables in life that statistically, it would be almost impossible for something like that to happen.

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GROWING IN GRACE

Sometimes when we're children, we are visited by some older relatives or family friends who don't see us very often. They say to us, "Look at you! It's amazing how you've grown so much!" You probably did not notice anything different since they had seen you last. You felt the same all along. You're still you and everything seems the same. But every single day, God's plan is to help you get bigger and stronger until finally you are full grown.

Have you ever heard the song, ***I'm Pressing on the Upward Way?*** It's a beautiful hymn that talks about how we can grow—not in our body, but in our mind and spirit. The writer of the hymn was happy to notice how God works in us so that we can build a character and attitude like that of Jesus.

As we study and learn about Jesus, we think about how He did things and how He treated others. He was hardworking, kind, and patient, even when He was only a little child.

When He came to earth as the Son of man, Jesus did not choose to dwell in a fancy palace or even a rich neighborhood. He came to live among the poor in Nazareth. This shows how much He understands and cares about poor people just as much as rich ones. He can sympathize with every one of us and help us in whatever we need.

We read in the Bible, "The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him. . . . And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:40, 52).

Jesus had a bright, active mind, yet He was not proud. His ways were simple and childlike, and He grew up just as all children grow. But He was always sweet-tempered and unselfish, and He loved to serve others. He always spoke the truth and was pleasant and cheerful.

Whenever the children around Him were doing something wrong or mischievous, Jesus did not join in their deeds.

If He saw someone without food, Jesus would quietly place His own meal in their hands. Or if He saw a little bird that was hurt, He would tenderly care for it. Every living creature was happier when Jesus was around!

The mother of Jesus taught Him from the Holy Scriptures, and He learned to read and study them for Himself. He also learned science by studying the plants, trees, and animals and observing the sun, moon, and stars in the sky. He thoughtfully watched all these things to try to learn lessons from creation and understand the things of nature. He later used this



knowledge when telling stories to teach people about how the kingdom of God works. His goal was always to help them know more about how to be saved for eternity.

The Bible says, "Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right" (Proverbs 20:11). So, even when you are a child, you can already be learning from God about how to grow happily by having Jesus as your Guide and strength in life. That way you can grow to be like Him—the very best way to be!—*Barbara Montrose.* R