

Youth messenger

Vol. XXXVII, No. 2



**EUROPEAN HANDBALL CHAMPIONSHIP:
SHOULD I WALK AWAY?**



TESTIMONY • pg. 4

European Handball
Championship: Should I Walk Away?



DISCIPLESHIP • pg. 7

Have You Talked
With God Today?



HEALTH • pg. 10

Who Are You Worshipping at the Gym?
Dangerous Forms of Exercise



CURRENTS • pg. 17

Your Redemption
Is Near



BIBLE STUDY • pg. 22

Restoring the
Shattered Picture



NATURE VOICES • pg. 25

Climate Change
in the Bible

Hello dear youth,

We all enjoy spending time with the people we love, don't we? Do you have a friend you love with all your heart? Each day you probably look forward to texting them, talking to them and spending time with them. We hope that you love just as much to talk to God in prayer and to hear Him speak to you by reading His Word as part of our **"1-year Bible challenge."** To David, reading God's word was a great joy. "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart" (Psalm 119:111).

Do you see how God gives you opportunities to test your new understanding of His word in all the circumstances of your life? God wants to transform us and make us more like Jesus (Romans 8:29), and He will use His Word to challenge, encourage, and teach us, and warn us because He loves us. We can increase our love for Bible reading by praying:

"Lord give me a hunger and thirst for your righteousness. Give me your wisdom and help me to find joy in your presence."

As you read this issue, you will find the wonderful experiences our youth have made with the Lord. We pray that you will be encouraged and will make your own experiences with God, and share them with us. Jesus is coming soon. Let us be ready to meet Him. The best way to prepare to meet Him is to study His Word daily, to surrender our life to Him, and to make Him our best Friend. Then we can share our love for Him with others. "Lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28).

"Signs of the times are everywhere
There's a brand new feeling in the air
Keep your eyes upon the eastern sky
Lift up your head redemption draweth nigh."

Liliane Balbach
Editor



EUROPEAN HANDBALL CHAMPIONSHIP: SHOULD I WALK AWAY?

BY ANNAMARIA TOTH

Have you ever had to make a difficult decision that involved choosing between two things you really enjoyed doing? While I was attending missionary school I had to make a difficult decision. I am an athletic person and like to participate in sports. I had been playing handball for three years when my team entered the European handball championship to be held in Croatia. I looked forward to the competition for several reasons. First, it was a privilege, an honor, and a challenge for me to take part in this event. Besides, I would have the opportunity to visit some beautiful beaches in Croatia. I had never been to the ocean before, and now I would have the opportunity to enjoy the beautiful atmosphere of the sea.

My friend and I were eagerly waiting for the competition and were counting the days until our departure. I had already paid my participation fee and filled out the paperwork. The only thing that was missing was my mom's signature. The turning point came when the date of the competition

was changed, and it coincided with the dates when we had missionary school.

TO PLAY OR NOT?

I didn't know what to do. I really wanted to go to the competition, but at the same time I didn't want to miss out on missionary school. As I was weighing the importance of each event in my mind, I suddenly realized that I disliked handball because I had to play aggressively to beat my opponents. Soon after I decided, "I will stop playing handball!" When I announced my decision at school no one supported me. My teammates and others told me I must go since I had paid my dues. I still had a difficult time standing for my decision. My coach told me, "You must go." He arranged for me not to have to play from Friday sunset until Saturday evening sunset and also provided vegetarian food during the competition.

I prayed to the Lord and asked Him, "Lord what is your will?" because I was still hesitating. Now that I look back, I see that God's

will was obvious. I kept on praying earnestly and asking Him to help me and to keep me strong. I am so thankful to the Lord because He inspired my brother and one of my cousins to pray for me to overcome this trial.

MY DECISION

Since I made my decision not to participate in the handball championship, I had to talk with three trainers and coaches who tried to convince me to go. They asked me, “Why did you make that decision? Why did you betray your team?” I told them my reasons, but they did not want to understand my viewpoint. They told me, “You are one of our best players on the team, and your behavior is unfair to the other team members.” My final answer to my coaches was, “I am not going to play, and I would like you to understand me. Please respect my choice!”

After my decision was made not to go to the competition, my handball team members were no longer my friends. All of them told me that I had made the wrong choice. They ostracized me and wouldn't talk to me anymore. I felt totally alone. Some of them felt sorry that I had lost my money, others felt bad for our team. Each team had to have a certain number of players. If they had one person missing, the team couldn't go to the competition. After looking for some time, they found a girl from another team to take my place, and they were able to go to Croatia.

I had to talk with three trainers and coaches who tried to convince me to go. They asked me, “Why did you make that decision? Why did you betray your team?”

So, April came, and I went to missionary school instead of to the handball competition. At first, I felt a little sad for not going to Croatia, but later on I was very happy, being convinced that I had made the right choice. I also knew that it was Satan's goal to make me unhappy and to make my circumstances very difficult. Looking back, I would have felt very sad if I had not gone to the missionary school and had gone to the competition instead.

I GOT SOMETHING BETTER

Shortly after, the Lord showed me how merciful He is. My cousins came to visit, and told me that our church violinists were invited to play for a mission program in Greece. One of my cousins couldn't go, and she asked me to go in her place. I gladly accepted. Our trip was wonderful, and was filled with many blessings. We had daily health lectures and evangelistic sermons. At the end of each program, we played for our visitors, praying that our music would bring their hearts closer to Jesus. My conclusion was that I got my missed trip to Croatia back from the Lord. I also had the opportunity to go to the sea and on a boat ride!

During this trip, I saw how much my heavenly Father loves me and how He gave me something better because I had obeyed His Word. I also got my money back which I had prepaid for the competition because my mom had not signed the authorization for me to go. I realized that this also was in my Savior's will.

When I decided to give my life to the Lord, the evil one came with many temptations and brought difficulties in every part of my life. But I learned that if we listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit, He will give us strength to overcome. If we are steadfast, we will get a great reward. I am very grateful to my mighty Redeemer for His grace and His rich blessings in my life.

I would like to encourage you, dear youth, not to skip your personal devotions because that is a straightest way God can talk to you and touch your heart. I would like to inspire you to stand for Jesus and He will give you much better things than you can imagine! "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).


I am thankful for the opportunity to share my experience with all of you! I hope you will have wonderful experiences with the Lord also!

WHY I WENT TO MISSIONARY SCHOOL?

Have you ever wondered why young people go to missionary school? There can be many

reasons: to study and understand our beliefs for themselves, to learn how to be a better witness for Christ, and also to socialize with other young people from our church. To be honest with you, when I started missionary school, at first my only attraction was to be in the company of other young people. I thought the classes were boring. Often, we came late from our personal study times because we really didn't want to go back to class. However, there was a time when everything changed!

In one of our classes we had learned how to prepare Bible studies and then we were asked to prepare one and present it to the class. My topic was "The Plan of Salvation." While I was studying deeper about this subject, God's love for us touched my heart. Initially, I didn't understand why He loves us so much. Why did He make such an infinite sacrifice when we hurt Him daily by our disobedience? Christ's love impacted me so much that the more I studied about the plan of salvation, the more I loved Him. I didn't want to hurt Jesus anymore with my disobedience. I began to pray regularly, and I asked my Father to help me overcome temptations and be His faithful servant.

Now, I am very thankful to the Lord that I was able to go to missionary school. As a result of attending, I am studying God's word diligently and have come closer to Jesus. He has helped me to make many changes in my life. My classmates and I have had a change of heart, and we encourage each other to walk with the Lord! 

HAVE YOU TALKED WITH GOD TODAY?



BY HILBERT FERREIRA

Did you know that a newborn baby cries about two hours per day? Between birth and six weeks of age, the amount of crying increases to almost 3 hours per day. Why? This is one of the main ways that babies communicate with mom and dad.

Our first need as human beings is to communicate. We have been communicating since the beginning of our life when our cry at birth foretold our fear of leaving the safety of the only environment we had known until that moment. Throughout infancy we've used crying to express hunger, sleepiness, excess cold and heat,

fear, and all the other unpleasant feelings we experience.

The act of communication involves transmitting information and exchanging information between two people. In a world where we are socially and economically dependent, we have the need to connect with others and exchange our varied life experiences. Without the possibility of communication among groups of people, society would begin to weaken and collapse. The act of exchanging information is fundamental for conducting business transactions as well as for the continuity of life.

SPIRITUAL COMMUNICATION

Speaking in economic and social terms, we can see that communication is essential. But what about spiritual communication? Do we feel the same need to communicate with our God as we do with our friends, teachers, coworkers and bosses? The enemy of our souls uses many different methods to distract us so that we do not feel this need to communicate with our heavenly Father. Therefore, young people, let us guard the avenues of the soul—our senses of sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch. Often the things we see in the world or on the screen look seemingly not offensive, but over time they can bring us spiritual harm.

“Those who would not fall a prey to Satan’s devices, must guard well the avenues of the soul; they must **avoid reading, seeing, or hearing that which will suggest impure thoughts. The mind must not be left to dwell at random upon every subject that the enemy of souls may suggest. The heart must be faithfully sentineled, or evils without will awaken evils within, and the soul will wander in darkness. ‘Gird up the loins of your mind,’ Peter wrote, ‘be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.’**” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 518, 519. [Emphasis added.]

Having and maintaining a daily communion with God may require some personal effort because our

sinful nature is often unwilling to set aside a small distraction and devote time to reading the scriptures and praying to our heavenly Father. Many times, Satan will influence and use friends or even family members to prevent us from connecting with God. However, let us not be discouraged by situations which test our perseverance in connecting with God. This may be a daily struggle for new Christians as well as long-time believers—in fact for all those who are seeking God.

OUR GREATEST NEED

After we are converted, we must continue feeding upon the spiritual bread daily or we will become spiritually weak and our old defects of character will take control of our being. It is only God’s power that can change us, subdue our sinful passions, help us overcome self, and enable us to acquire a Christ-like character. We must pray to God daily, asking Him for a change of heart, a change of our likes and dislikes as well, to give us greater spiritual desires. For this reason, the apostle Paul tells us to “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

“There is need of constant, intimate communion with God. Only as we hold this communion with Him shall we be kept from making shipwreck of faith. . . . Temptations will come to every soul. Everyone will be tried and tested. Those who strive to hold fast to the faith will find that they must indeed

pray and watch unto prayer.” —*The Southern Watchman*, March 1, 1904.

MAKE AN EXPERIMENT

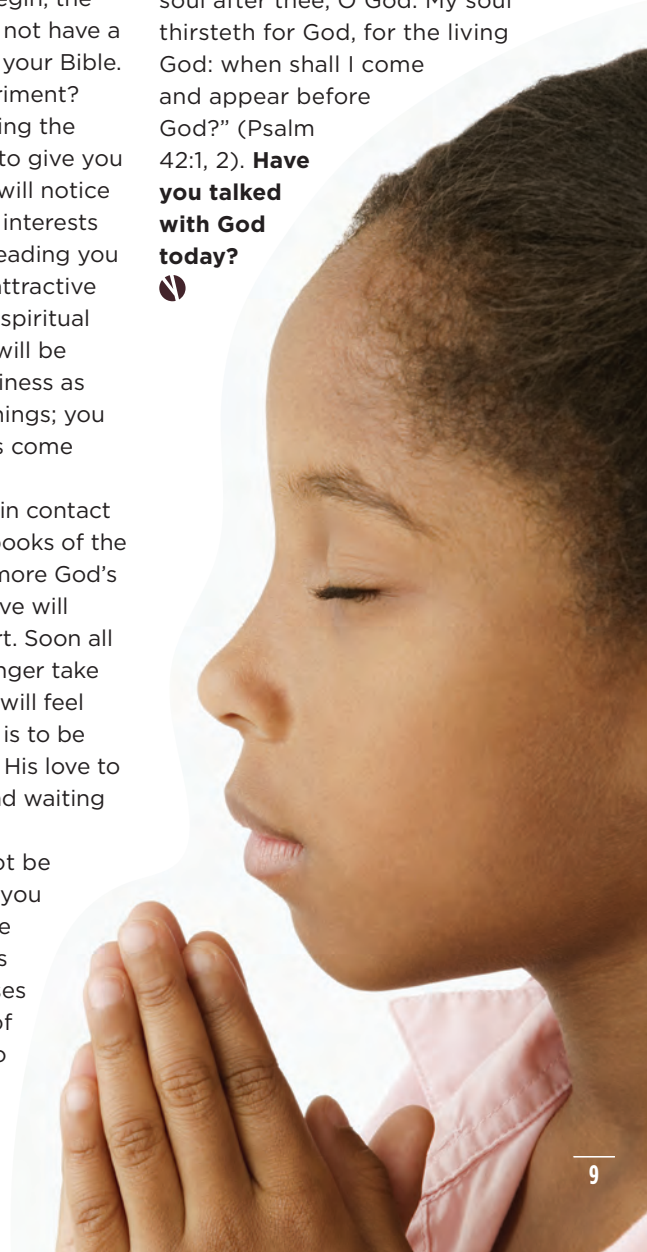
You can ask the Lord to motivate you to engage in daily prayer and reading of the scriptures. When you begin, the first few times you may not have a desire to pray and read your Bible. Why not make an experiment? Begin praying and reading the Bible while asking God to give you the desire to do it. You will notice that, little by little, your interests begin to change. The reading you once did not find very attractive turns into an incredible spiritual experience. Your heart will be filled with joy and happiness as you think of heavenly things; you will feel that heaven has come down to you.

The more you come in contact with the Bible and the books of the Spirit of Prophecy, the more God’s message of truth and love will find a place in your heart. Soon all earthly things will no longer take priority in your life. You will feel that what matters most is to be firm in Jesus, spreading His love to others, and watching and waiting for His soon return.

Young people, do not be discouraged if you feel you have no strength to face the difficulties and trials of your life. God promises to help you. The word of God says, “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you” (James

4:8). How do we draw nigh to Him? Through prayer and the reading of His holy Word.

May you, like the deer, be “thirsty” to talk to Jesus every day. “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?” (Psalm 42:1, 2). **Have you talked with God today?**



Who are you worshipping at the Gym?

BY EBERT FOUNTAIN

In the spring of 2017, in my ignorance, I enrolled in a Judo class at my university because I thought it would be nice to learn some type of martial arts while simultaneously getting a good workout. I never would have thought that I was willingly placing myself beyond the protection of God and His angels. The first class did not include any physical aspects, it was just an orientation. However, once the physical classes started, so did the spiritualistic aspects.

The first thing that we were asked to do was to take off our shoes and socks. This did not arouse my suspicion because I figured that was just how the class was structured even though the professor explained that it was a sign of submission to the sensei as well as a form of respect to the dojo (room where judo is practiced). When we had to stand upon the “holy ground” (the mat), we had to bow before we could set foot on the mat, as well as before stepping off it. Similarly, we were to bow at the start of class, before and after we did anything with a partner. This was done in

thankfulness to the partner for allowing us to “spar” with them. We had also to bow on our knees at the end of the class.

Was all this a little fishy to me? Yes, but I disregarded it as just a formality. Little did I know that I was one of the Israelites bowing down to King Nebuchadnezzar’s golden image instead of being like Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego. At the end of each class, there was also a time of self-reflection in which we were to analyze the past two hours with our eyes closed. I went about this process throughout the whole semester unknowingly, benumbed to the harsh reality of it all.

Only a few months after the semester had ended did I come to the realization of what I had been participating in for about five months. After watching a video on YouTube titled “The Dragon Revealed,” did I realize with horror the extent of the dangerous class of which I was a part. Now, I look back in astonishment that I was so blind and naive and didn’t realize how dangerous that class was.

One day after my Judo class, as I was walking to my car, a

pping
xm?

A random man noticed I was carrying my gi, the uniform we use in class. He was promoting this MMA (mixed martial arts) club to me. He walked with me all the way to my car telling me how prestigious this club was and how they have professional trainers who have trained some top MMA fighters. Thankfully, at the time, I had no money to enroll in such a club. He gave me a flyer and said that at the end of the semester I would love judo so much that I would want to enroll in the club.

At the end of the semester I wanted to enroll but I didn't right away and eventually lost interest. I am convinced that Satan had sent that man my way to further ensnare me but, God in His mercy, intervened and prevented me from being engulfed into that lifestyle. I am so thankful to Him for leading me even when I was ignorantly dishonoring Him. 🙏



DANGEROUS FORMS

Escape for your life from certain types of exercises! God’s call to us to stand apart from the world is very plain and of extreme importance. “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (Revelation 18:4). How exactly are we to come out and stand apart from the world when it comes to exercise? The Bible says, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). This verse teaches us that those who seek to do God’s will, will honor Him in all aspects of their lives, not just in certain parts. That means even in the way we exercise, we are to stand apart from the practices of the world.

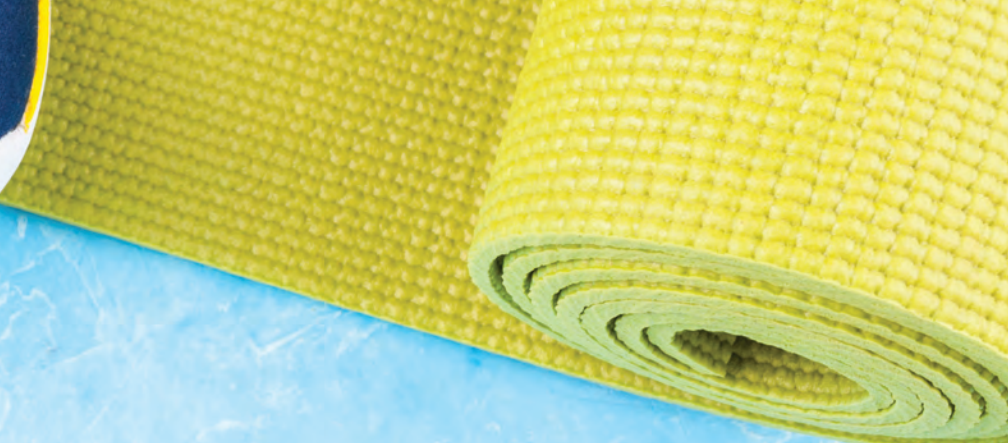
One principle of the Advent movement that sets us apart from the rest of the world is the health message. We eat a vegetarian diet because we do not want to defile

our body with flesh foods. “If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Corinthians 3:17). But the term “defile” does not only refer to what is put into our body, but it also refers to how we exercise.

HOW MUCH SHOULD WE EXERCISE?

The American College of Sports Medicine recommends that adults should do at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity per week, which is only 30 minutes five times per week. (See Table 1, p. 16) They also recommend that we should do muscle strengthening exercises on all 7 major muscle groups—the legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms. This type of comprehensive exercise program is too often neglected.

Why is exercise important? To live a long and healthy life, and to be able to minister to others, we



OF EXERCISE

BY EBERT FOUNTAIN

should exercise on a regular basis. In this way, we will be mobile even in our senior years.

What happens when we don't exercise? Ellen White writes, "Inactivity is a fruitful cause of disease. Exercise quickens and equalizes the circulation of the blood, but in idleness the blood does not circulate freely, and the changes in it, so necessary to life and health, do not take place. The skin, too, becomes inactive. Impurities are not expelled as they would be if the circulation had been quickened by vigorous exercise, the skin kept in a healthy condition, and the lungs fed with plenty of pure, fresh air. This state of the system throws a double burden on the excretory organs, and disease is the result."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 238.

Exercise is especially important for those who work at sedentary jobs in the office. "God designed that the living machinery should be in daily activity; for in this

activity or motion is its preserving power."—*Healthful Living*, p. 131. God designed our body for movement, and therefore exercise is crucial to maintaining health and preventing disease.

EXERCISES NOT APPROPRIATE FOR CHRISTIANS

Have you ever wondered, are all forms of exercise safe for Christians to engage in? The answer is a definite no. There have always been certain types of exercises in which Christians should not participate. There are certain forms of exercise that are very popular in today's culture, but which are very contrary to God's law. There are obvious types of exercises such as those which excite the emotions and encourage a wrong spirit. Even more dangerous, however, are the martial arts classes. God's people should never participate in them or place their children in a martial arts class.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH MARTIAL ARTS?

Martial arts is a very popular form of exercise which originates from the East. It involves all the muscles of the body and includes flexibility allowing the person to get into good physical shape. But the underlying principles of these activities cannot be overlooked.

- 1. Self is the focus** in these activities and elevating oneself above the rest of the class or one's peers is their ultimate goal. But the Bible says, "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself" (Galatians 6:3). How many people in the world deceive themselves into thinking that they are something or that they are important because they have mastered their training? Only through Christ can we be something other than imperfect sinners, but this principle is not encouraged or even thought about in these types of classes.
- 2. It encourages people to use violence to protect/defend themselves** instead of trusting in the Lord who said, "And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20). But we as sinful and untrusting humans like to rely on ourselves or on others for protection and so people take these classes

as a means of self-defense. Someone might say, "I only attend martial arts classes for physical benefits, but I do not actually practice what is taught anywhere else." But there is a darker and even more dangerous aspect of martial arts that often eludes people.

- 3. Submission to the sensei.** In every true martial arts class, it is required that the students take off their shoes and socks. Why? It is a sign of submission to the sensei—teacher or master. Then why does the sensei also take off his shoes and socks? Very simple, he is submitting to his sensei—master or teacher. And who is their sensei? It certainly is not God. Satan, in his attempt to imitate God, has a counterfeit for everything God does.

Remember when God told Moses: "Draw not nigh, hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5). The Lord also repeated the same command to Joshua: "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy" (Joshua 5:15). Satan imitates God in every way that he can, so we must never place ourselves where our mind is under the enemy's control!

WHAT ABOUT YOGA?

Yoga is another extremely popular form of exercise, especially among women, that also originated in the East. This is a type of exercise that is beneficial for the body, but let us analyze its underlying principles. The truth lies in the very definition of the word yoga. Although yoga has many different meanings and goals, one of its definitions in Sanskrit, an ancient Hindu language, is **union, connection, or to yoke.**

1. Union, connection, yoke

So, when you are doing yoga, who or what are you yoking up with or uniting with? Certainly, you are not connecting with God since its very purpose is the worship of a heathen deity. The modern definition of yoga is that it is a school of Hindu philosophy advocating and prescribing a course of **physical and mental disciplines for attaining liberation from the material world and union of the self with the supreme being or ultimate principle.**

2. Self-realization and enlightenment

Yoga has a very long history in the Hindu religion and is believed to date back to the inception of Hinduism. To focus on the modern form of yoga, we look at hatha yoga which is the physical activity version of yoga.

Hatha yoga is used to arrive at a point of self-realization and enlightenment (Moksha) which is the ultimate goal of Hinduism. This form of yoga is highly encouraged by Hindu sages because it is such **an effective form of meditation.**

3. Emptying the mind and reaching spiritual enlightenment

In yoga classes, relaxation of the body and mind through various contortions of the body is the key to success; emptying the mind of everything and reaching spiritual enlightenment. A person might say, "I focus only on the physical aspects of the practice and ignore all the spiritual aspects." This is impossible since this is a heathen form of worship, and all who attempt to achieve this will surely fail. God is our only source of strength, and neither He nor His angels can protect us when we willingly place ourselves on Satan's ground.

It would be like attending a satanic meeting because of the delicious and nutritious food that was being served afterwards. We must not be ignorant and willingly place ourselves on Satan's ground.

As Seventh-day Adventists, we are a peculiar people with a unique message and we must accept all the aspects of this message not just the ones we like. God wants His people to have vigorous and abundant health, but how can they do this if they don't exercise regularly? Proper physical exercise, done 5-7 times per week, is essential to our mental, physical, and spiritual health, and therefore can't be neglected. However, as stated, there are dangerous forms of exercise that place us beyond the protection of God and His holy angels, and we dare not venture on the enchanted ground of martial arts and yoga.

In Table 1 is a list of many different types of exercises which promote physical, mental, and spiritual health. Besides these, there are also many types of exercises that work all the different muscle groups—push-ups, pull-ups, and simple lifts with moderate weights that can be performed in the home or open air.

There are many traps which Satan uses to ensnare people, especially the youth, therefore, divine wisdom is necessary to avoid nets which are laid all around us. Let us seek to honor God in all that we do and to stand apart from the world as He commanded us. Exercise, done in the right way, can be a means to honor God and to glorify His name. On the other hand, it can be used by Satan to lure people away from God. May the wisdom of our divine Father be upon us that we may use our bodies to honor and glorify His name. 🌱

Table 1: Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults and Children¹⁻³

Aerobic exercise – 150 + minutes of moderate intensity aerobic exercise per week.	Walking briskly 3-4 mph Biking 10 mph Swimming, moderate level Conditioning exercises Canoeing/rowing 2-3 mph Mowing lawn Raking leaves Hoeing garden
Or 115+ minutes of vigorous aerobic exercise per week. Or a combination of moderate and vigorous exercise.	Running
To prevent weight gain and for optimal health, do 60+ minutes of moderate physical exercise per week	Walking briskly uphill Climbing stairs Jogging, running Biking 10-12 mph Swimming, fast crawl Active gardening, digging Pushing lawn mower
Muscle strengthening activity for the legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms 2 days per week.	Free weights Or weight machines
Children need 60+ minutes of daily activity	

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American College of Sports Medicine. Med Sci Sports Exer. 39(8):1423-1434.
2. Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. www.cdc.gov/cancer/dcpcc/prevention/policies_practices/physical_activity_guidelines.htm
3. National Academy of Sciences, IOM. Amer J Clin Nutr 2004 May; 79(5):921S-930S



YOUR REDEMPTION IS NEAR

BY JORAI CRUZ

The last four months of 2017 have left its mark in history, especially in North America. Harvey, Irma, Maria, and Nate are the four most recent hurricanes that made landfall in the United States. These events brought much suffering, sorrow and anguish to thousands who lost their loved ones and their material possessions by these natural disasters.

The simultaneous formation of three hurricanes in the Atlantic basin, which occurred with Irma, José, and Katia, is a rarity. José and Irma were both classified as category 4 hurricanes at the same time. This simultaneity of hurricanes, with such intensity, had only occurred twice before in the year 1935 and 2010.

Hurricane Harvey, the eighth storm in 2017, caused about 71

deaths—one in Guyana and 70 in the United States. William Brock Long, Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), called it the “worst disaster in the history of Texas,” and he estimates the recovery will take years. Preliminary estimates of economic losses range from \$70 to \$190 billion.

Even before hurricane Harvey dissipated, Irma was already under way in the Caribbean. On September 5, it became a category 5 hurricane reaching winds of 185 mph (298 km/h). This made it the second largest hurricane in the Atlantic Ocean in terms of wind speed, only surpassed by hurricane Allen in 1980. Hurricane Irma caused over 90 deaths in the Caribbean and Florida. The damages attributed to it are estimated to be over \$10 billion.



On September 20, Maria hit Puerto Rico leaving nearly all the state without electricity. Maria became a category 5 hurricane and killed 64 people, while the actual death toll may be 1,052. It was the worst storm to hit the land in almost 90 years, turning streets into rivers full of debris, damaging buildings, cutting off electricity and killing at least 33 people in the Caribbean.

CALIFORNIA FIRES

While some states in the southern United States were flooded from the hurricanes, northern California was on fire. On October 2, a fire of alarming proportions began in the wine region of Napa Valley. Entire neighborhoods in Santa Rosa, a city 56 miles north of San Francisco, were reduced to ashes. In Sonoma alone, more than 25,000 people had to evacuate. About 5,000 took refuge in temporary shelters. More than 5,000 homes and businesses had been destroyed, including vineyards in Sonoma and Napa—the heartland of the state’s wine industry. More than 40 people had lost their lives, and property damage is estimated at billions of dollars.

As of December 2017, completely past the fire season,

fires are destroying hundreds of homes, mansions, and businesses in Ventura County, Southern California. Thousands of firefighters worked tirelessly to try to contain the flames from advancing. Witnesses describe how “fireballs” seemed to be falling from the heavens above the mansions. Thousands of people are being evacuated, leaving behind their homes, cars, and belongings.

MASS SHOOTING

The same week that fires began in Northern California, on Sunday night, October 2, there was a mass shooting in Las Vegas. Stephen Paddock, a 64-year-old millionaire, fired his guns from the windows of the 32nd floor of the Mandalay Bay Casino at a crowd of thousands attending the Country Music concert in front of the casino. Fifty-eight people were killed in this tragedy, which is considered the greatest shooting in our country’s history. The authorities and the people in general questioned: what motivated that millionaire to take the lives of men and women? No matter how hard they tried to find out his motives, they found more questions than answers.

Other bloody shootings also occurred within that same period, such as the attack on the First Baptist Church in Texas

leaving 27 dead. But the largest gunfire occurred in November in a mosque in Arish in the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt, killing over 300 people.

EARTHQUAKES

In September, Mexico was struck twice by two major earthquakes killing more than 300 people. The first one occurred on September 7 in the southern part of the country, and a second one hit central Mexico with a magnitude of 7.1. The earthquake occurred on the 32nd anniversary of the country's worst earthquake that left 10,000 dead in 1985.

WHAT DO THESE CALAMITIES MEAN?

How can we explain so many natural disasters and violent shootings happening with such intensity in such a short time? This is the question thousands of people, who don't know the prophecies ask. But we thank God for the light He has sent to us through the gift of prophecy. All these events are described as accurately as if the writers were present when they occurred. We are so grateful that God, in His infinite mercy, reveals to us where we are in our journey to our heavenly home. He guides us in our preparation, not only to face these

final events, but also to be prepared to meet Him at His soon coming.

“And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; **and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;** men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory” [Emphasis added.] (Luke 21:25-27).

“We are living in the time of the end. The fast-fulfilling signs of the times declare that the coming of Christ is near at hand. The days in which we live are solemn and important. **The Spirit of God is gradually but surely being withdrawn from the earth.** Plagues and judgments are already falling upon the despisers of the grace of God. The calamities by land and sea, the unsettled state of society, the alarms of war, are portentous. They forecast approaching events of the greatest magnitude. . . .

“The condition of things in the world shows that troublous times are right upon us. The daily papers are full of indications of a terrible conflict in the near future. Bold robberies are of frequent occurrence. Strikes are common.





Thefts and murders are committed on every hand. Men possessed of demons are taking the lives of men, women, and little children.

Men have become infatuated with vice, and every species of evil prevails.” [Emphasis added.]—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 11.

Here we have the answer sought by the authorities concerning the motivation that led the shooters to take hundreds of human lives: “Men possessed of demons are taking the lives of men, women, and little children.”

“The time is at hand when there will be sorrow in the world that no human balm can heal. The Spirit of God is being withdrawn.

Disasters by sea and by land follow one another in quick succession. How frequently we hear of earthquakes and tornadoes, of destruction by fire and flood, with great loss of life and property!

Apparently, **these calamities** are capricious outbreaks of disorganized, unregulated forces of nature, wholly beyond the control of man; but in them all, God’s purpose may be read. **They are among the agencies by which He seeks to arouse men and women to a sense of their danger.**” [Emphasis added.]—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 277.

From these words of inspiration, it is evident that all

these natural catastrophes are not unpredictable and disorganized forces of nature, but they are instruments by which the Lord seeks to awaken all, but especially His people that His coming is at the door.

GREAT BALLS OF FIRE

“Not long ago a very impressive scene passed before me. I saw an immense ball of fire falling among some beautiful mansions, causing their instant destruction. I heard someone say, ‘We knew that the judgments of God were coming upon the earth, but we did not know that they would come so soon.’ Others said, ‘You knew? Why then did you not tell us? We did not know.’ On every side I heard such words spoken.”—*The Review and Herald*, November 24, 1904.

“Last Friday morning, just before I awoke, a very impressive scene was presented before me. I seemed to awake from sleep but was not in my home. From the windows I could behold a terrible conflagration. Great balls of fire were falling upon houses, and from these balls fiery arrows were flying in every direction. It was impossible to check the fires that were kindled, and many places were being destroyed. The terror of the people was indescribable. After

a time, I awoke and found myself at home.”—*Welfare Ministry*, pp. 136, 137.

PREPARING FOR JESUS’ COMING

The evidence is clear that the angels of God are loosening their grasp on the four winds of strife (Revelation 7:1). What should we as Seventh Day Adventists do in such times? Today, God is looking for a people who “keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12). He wants to affix on them His seal. The Lord isn’t waiting for more calamities or more destruction. He is waiting for a people who will **accept wholeheartedly, live genuinely, and preach passionately** the Three Angels’ Messages of Revelation 14:6-12.

1. **Believe in Christ as your personal Saviour**

Develop a relationship with Jesus by daily studying His Word, praying, obeying and gaining new victories daily.

“The **very best preparation** you can have for Christ’s second appearing is to **rest with firm faith in the great salvation** brought to us at His first coming. You must believe in Christ as your personal Saviour.” [Emphasis added.] —*Our High Calling*, p. 368.

2. **Ask, “What do you want me to do?”**


“Are they [those waiting for Christ’s return] daily inquiring, ‘Lord, what wilt thou have

me to do?’ (Acts 9:6). Are they practicing self-denial, as did Jesus? Are they deeply stirred, their hearts drawn out in prayer to God that they may be receiving of His grace, the Holy Spirit of God . . . to save souls that are perishing out of Christ?”—*The Review and Herald*, May 16, 1893.

3. **Be a witness for Jesus and His coming.** (Matthew 24:14.)

“Let us persuade men and women everywhere to repent and flee from the wrath to come. Let us arouse them to immediate preparation.”—*My Life Today*, p. 343.

“We must not rest until we see many souls converted to the blessed hope of the Lord’s return.” [Emphasis added.] —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 353.

As a people acquainted with the prophecies, we have the sacred duty to bring to the world the last message of mercy to prepare them for the glorious coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Seeing the fulfillment of all these signs, we are saddened by the loss of so many human lives, but on the other hand, we are certain that very soon Jesus will come, and if we are faithful, He will take us to our heavenly home. In His prophetic sermon Jesus invites us: “And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21:28). 



BY JARED CHAPMAN WITH JENNY TUDOROIU

Imagine walking through a large hall where paintings of various sizes hang, expressing many different thoughts and feelings. One painting may speak of sadness and another of bliss. But nothing catches your sight like the largest picture in the room. It is suspended from the ceiling in the center, around ten feet in length and eight feet in width. The massive canvas is stained with bright, obnoxious colors of all sorts. The artist's brush formed an abstract expressionist piece. There is nothing recognizable in the picture, nothing that makes sense.

Our picture of God can be the same way. For years my eyes only caught fleeting glimpses of who God was. These glimpses shaped a somewhat distorted view. The pieces of the puzzle were all over the place, but not in their right place. It wasn't until the pieces aligned that I began experiencing

"the peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7), a freedom that correlated with knowing the truth. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

David recognized the direct relationship between knowing who God is and the ability to conform to His character, so he prayed, "Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart" (Psalm 119:34). David realized that looking at the full picture would empower him to serve God from love rather than out of fear. This brings us to acknowledge the question, what has God been trying to reveal about Himself to you and me all along?

We are led to the story of Abraham. Just like my own view of God, Abraham's view of His Creator was somewhat distorted. In the country of Ur of the

Chaldees where Abraham was raised, the heathen gods required sacrifices in order to supposedly please them. Often humans were sacrificed as the people acted out their belief in a distorted picture of God. Before Abraham could begin to comprehend the truth about who God really was, a change of scenery had to take place. So, God told him, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee” (Genesis 12:1). At the beginning of Abraham’s walk with God we still see that he took actions out of fear. He relied heavily on his own works to fulfill God’s promise, “in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 26:4).

Finally, when it became physically impossible for Abraham and Sarah to bear children, God performed the impossible. Isaac, the son of promise, was born. Throughout his life, Abraham was being led to understand the meaning of faith in a God who makes a sacrifice instead of requiring it. God was leading him to the point of perfect trust and reliance upon His word. All along He had been preparing Abraham to face the ultimate test. A test that would shift around the pieces of the false picture he had believed for so long. Now God showed him the gospel—the genuine, full picture!

He asked Abraham to do the unthinkable, “Abraham . . . Take now thy son, thine only son

Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering” (Genesis 22:1, 2). I can’t imagine the thoughts going on in Abraham’s mind. Here was his son whom he loved so dearly—and now he had to sacrifice him. Nevertheless, the patriarch obeyed by faith, believing that God could raise Isaac from the dead. Notice the difference that now Abraham is relying solely on the word of God to fulfill the promise.

Picture the scene! As Abraham prepares to slay his son . . . he slowly binds Isaac to the altar. Each passing second feels like an eternity. Finally, he reaches for the knife. His quivering hand lifts it into the air. Just as he is about to drive the knife down and pierce through Isaac’s chest . . . a voice stops him saying, “Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me” (Genesis 22:11, 12).

Abraham lifts his eyes away from the altar to see a ram provided to take the place of his son. The pieces of the puzzle are drawn together like magnets, the full picture is now in plain view . . . from a God who requires a sacrifice to a God who makes sacrifice. A God who at the depth of His core is love—pure, perfect, selfless, other-centered love!

Now Abraham begins to unbind Isaac from off the altar and

instead offers the ram in his place. His heart tastes relief and a minute fraction of the pain and heartbreak God would experience when He would give His only Son to save the world. Isaac walks free . . . representing you and me, while the ram is sacrificed in his place. Abraham believes! He now knows the truth that makes him free. “Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God” (James 2:23).


Now God calls Abraham His friend! The reality is that an all-powerful, all-mighty God wants to call human beings as **His friends**. The idea of a relational God who at His core desires friendship and communion with the ones He created in His very own image . . . seems too beautiful to be true, but it is true!

Our God is longing to hold the number one place in your heart, to be your best friend. Above all He desires to have a loving relationship with you. He wishes you to know Him. For He says, “this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

The gospel is not founded upon what we can do for God, rather what God has done for us, and that . . . is everything. But it's so hard to understand that it's

not we but God who took the extra step, who made the ultimate sacrifice! It's time for us to see the full picture, to have our own “Abraham experience,” to simply accept the provision God made for us. Accepting the gift means receiving Jesus.

Abraham saw the painting of the gospel that day, at the foot of the altar where his son was to be sacrificed. He then understood that God is a God of relational faithfulness—a Covenant Keeper. He is just, merciful, selfless, humble, trustworthy, and forgiving.

Those are the colors which reflect the full and true beauty of God's character. Though the world shatters this picture into a thousand shreds, permitting us only to see glimpses sometimes . . . truth will always draw them back together in their place, re-creating the image John paints in three words, “God is love” (1 John 4:16). Have you seen the true picture of God's character? If you have, are you ready to share it with others? 



Climate Change in the Bible

BY RENATA CHAPMAN

Climate change is an increasingly controversial subject, as many people debate its severity and how it affects them personally. The very existence of climate change poses a threat to the survival of earth's ecosystems as well as to society. The current world population is at 7.3 billion people and it's only predicted to keep growing. As the world's population increases at an exponential rate, scientists have made profound predictions marking the end of the world. As the global population increases, so climate change becomes more pronounced. Rising seas, extreme weather events, the rise of global temperatures, and political unrest can all be traced back to climate change. Approximately 95% of all scientists believe that climate change is taking place, but how do Christians relate to this issue? Does the Bible have anything to say about climate change?

WHAT DOES CHRIST SAY?

One of the most common fears relating to climate change is that it will eventually bring about a doomsday situation, where life on earth will be wiped out in an irreversible catastrophe. The Bible does not specifically state that climate change will **cause** the end of the world, but it does describe natural disasters and changes in climate which are **signs** of the end of the world. According to the Bible, the end of the world, as we know it, will take place when Christ returns to this earth to take His people home. He will then cleanse this earth by fire (2 Peter 3:10). Many people wonder when this type of apocalypse will take place. The followers of Jesus had this same question when they asked, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matthew 24:3). Christ then went on to describe the

condition of the world just before His glorious return. We find Him predicting “wars and rumors of wars . . . nation shall rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom . . . famines, pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places” (Matthew 24:6, 7).

A CHAIN REACTION

The first part of this prediction relating to political conflict is very interesting when we consider the impact of climate change on current world events. Studies have shown that climate change can be linked to political unrest and even violent conflict.¹ As natural resources become depleted or less available and the global population increases, the demand for these resources becomes higher. These resources include nutrient-rich soil, fresh water, and quality air, which are all essential for sustaining human life. High demand for these resources leads to a rise in the cost of food, water, and other products which are derived from nature. This means that many people already suffering from poverty are left struggling to survive. This insecurity often leads to violent conflict as these people resort to any measure to obtain the resources they need for survival.¹ This chain reaction is not restricted to local areas affected by poverty. The political unrest caused by climate change can be seen on a global level. As countries look to establish their dominance and national security and their

own resources become depleted, they often look outside their own territory. What begins as a rumor of war often ends in an invasion and outright warfare.² This biblical prediction of political unrest and natural disasters in various places can be linked to climate change.

WHO IS TO BLAME?

One of the biggest misunderstandings about climate change lies in the belief that it is not human-induced. Today, this idea is largely unaccepted due to the amount of changes in the environment that have been clearly observed and linked back to being influenced by humans. While the Bible does not tell us that humans **cause** climate change, it does show us that critical issues such as climate change are **related** to human actions. In the book of Proverbs, we find many practical words of wisdom that King Solomon wrote to illustrate certain biblical lessons. Despite the idea that humans **do not cause** climate change, the Bible teaches that “the curse causeless shall not come” (Proverbs 26:2).

God has created planet Earth with the perfect environment, swaddling our globe with a thin blanket of atmospheric gases that allow this planet to be habitable. This thin layer of atmospheric gas is what protects the earth from UV radiation, extreme exposure to the sun’s heat energy, and keeps us cool at night. Because of the increase in population

and an increase in the pollution created by cars, the composition of the atmosphere has begun to change. The change to these atmospheric gases is what has led to the increase in exposure of the sun's UV radiation as well as heat energy, causing the global temperatures on earth to rise.³ Science confirms that the curse, in this case climate change, does not come without a cause; it's caused by man-made pollution.

THE EARTH IS GROANING FROM PAIN

Today, the effects of climate change are due to the destruction of earth's atmosphere, but the earth has constantly been degraded since Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden. God told Adam, "cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life" (Genesis 3:17). The curse on the earth was brought about because of sin. As soon as Eve ate of the fruit the plants began to die outside the garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were now to die, and as Paul writes, "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain [childbirth pain] together until now" (Romans 8:22). Sadly, sin causes a separation from God and this separation results in ultimate death.

God predicted that there would be people who would recklessly destroy the earth. He even warned us what the result of their actions would be. John the Revelator describes the scene on judgement

day, "the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth" (Revelation 11:18). Here we see a clear picture of what is to come to those who are separated from God and who consciously destroy the earth. Why would God bring destroyers of nature into a new heaven and a new earth if they cannot take care of the planet in which they already live?

Our God wants us to have an intimate relationship with Him, so that one day we can enjoy the bounties of His marvelous love and care. Through the prophet Isaiah, He says, "I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind" (Isaiah 65:17). Let us seek to preserve nature and all that God has created so that we may draw ever closer to Him and be able to enjoy bounties of the New Earth He is preparing for us! 🌍

REFERENCES

1. Barnett, J. and Adger, W. N. "Climate change, human security and violent conflict." *Political Geography* 26. August 2007.
2. Gleick, Peter H. "Climate Change and International Politics: Problems Facing Developing Countries." *Ambio* Vol. 18 No. 6. 1989.
3. Karl, T. R. and Trenberth, K. E. "Modern Global Climate Change." *Science* Vol. 302. December 5, 2003.

HOW CAN I

of God's Creation

CONSUME LESS. DO NOT BE WASTEFUL.



"Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost" (See John 6:12).

"There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up" (Proverbs 21:20).

CONSUME A PLANT-BASED DIET. ELIMINATE DAIRY PRODUCTS AND EGGS FROM YOUR DIET.



"And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat" (Genesis 1:29).

Plants lessen the effects of global climate change and many studies show that eating plant-based foods takes up less space than growing cattle and other animals for food. To get animal products from agricultural lands to the shops, releases a lot more greenhouse gas emissions than plants do.¹



REDUCE YOUR ENERGY CONSUMPTION.

Where do you think energy for electricity comes from? A large portion of it comes from power plants that are powered by fossil fuels.

TAKE CARE

REDUCE, REUSE, AND RECYCLE

PLANT MORE TREES.

Trees act as a carbon sink and absorb carbon dioxide while releasing oxygen and providing fresher and cleaner air.

“The trees of the Lord are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted” (Psalm 104:16).



GROW YOUR OWN FOOD OR BUY LOCAL FOOD.



“And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it” (Genesis 2:15).

By consuming the food you grow in your garden and buying locally, you are reducing the effects of greenhouse gas emissions which are released when transporting these goods to distribution centers.

RESPECT AND PRESERVE NATURE.

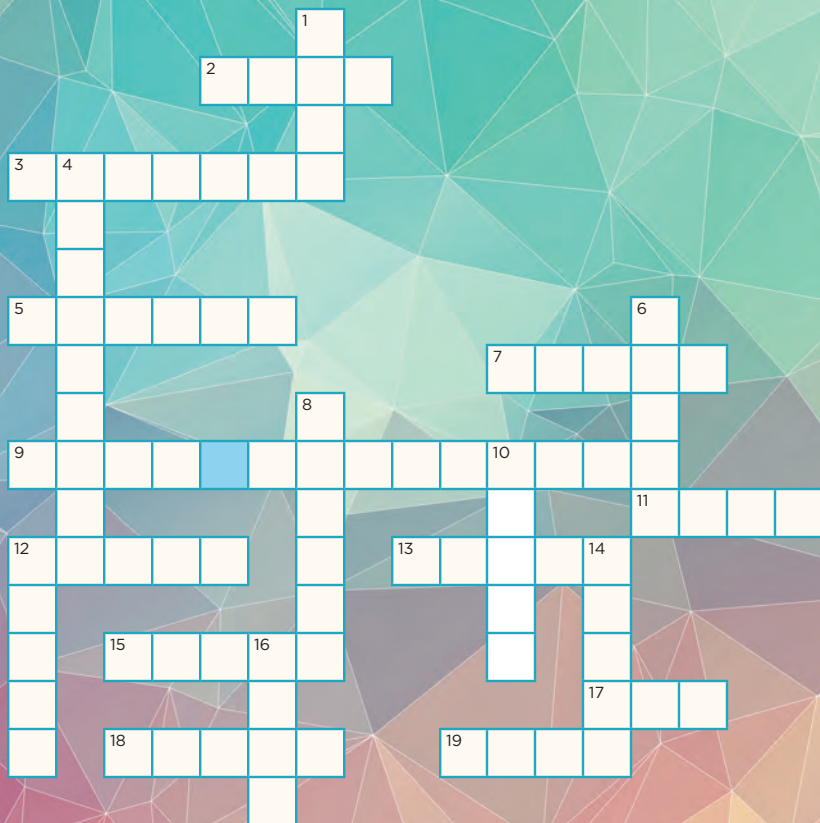
Nature is our means of better understanding our Creator by revealing to us His wisdom, His love, and His power.

“The things of nature are the Lord’s silent ministers, given to us to teach us spiritual truths. They speak to us of the love of God and declare the wisdom of the great Master Artist.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 147.



1. Gephart, A. J. et. al. (2016). The environmental cost of subsistence: Optimizing diets to minimize footprints. *The Science of the Total Environment*. 553, 120-127.

BIBLE FIRSTS



Editor Liliane Balbach, **Layout** Bethany Montrose.

Youth Messenger® (USPS 765-030) is published quarterly by the Young People's Department of the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement General Conference as an educational service for our youth worldwide. **Web:** <http://www.sdarm.org>, **e-mail:** info@sdarm.org. The *Youth Messenger* is printed and distributed by Reformation Herald Publishing Association, 5240 Hollins Road, Roanoke, VA 24019-5048. Periodical postage paid at Roanoke, Virginia 24022.

Postmaster: Send address changes to, *Youth Messenger*, P.O. Box 7240, ROANOKE, VA 24019-0240. Manuscripts, inquiries, address changes, subscription requests, and donations should be mailed to the address above. Vol. XXXVII, No. 2. Copyright © 2018 April-June issue. **Illustrations:** Adobe Stock on front cover and pp. 2-4, 7, 10-20, 22-32; Annamaria Toth on p. 2.

Subscription: United States U.S. \$8.95; foreign (air mail) U.S. \$17.00; single issue U.S. \$2.95.

ACROSS

2. First man to die a natural death – Genesis 5:5
3. First Christian martyr – Acts 7:59, 60
5. First man recorded to have two wives – Genesis 4:19
7. First high priest – Exodus 28:1
9. First woman to see Christ after His resurrection – Mark 16:9
11. First king of Israel
12. First city built – Genesis 4:17
13. First woman mentioned to have wept- Genesis 21:14, 16
15. First musician – Genesis 4:21
17. First woman
18. First man who lived in tents – Genesis 4:20
19. First murderer

DOWN

1. First baby born
4. First metalworker -Genesis 4:22
6. First judge mentioned – Exodus 18:13
8. First woman to be called beautiful – Genesis 29:17
10. First thing created – Genesis 1:3
12. First person to be translated – Genesis 5:24
14. First son of Jacob
16. First man

ANSWERS

1. Cain
4. Tubalcaim
6. Moses
8. Rachel
10. Light
12. Enoch
14. Ruben
16. Adam

DOWN

1. Saul
3. Stephen
5. Lamech
7. Aaron
9. Mary-Magdalene
11. Eve
13. Jubal
15. Jubal
17. Eve
18. Jabel
19. Cain

ACROSS

YOUR OPINION COUNTS!

YOUTH
messenger

- * Write to us and tell us which articles you like in this issue and why.
- * Tell us which article topics you would like to have us publish in the future.
- * Send us your articles, experiences, stories, and poems.
- * Ask us for our "Writer's Guidelines."

Contact info: youthmessenger@sdarm.org
Liliane Balbach, Editor. Phone: (540) 362-1800

REDEMPTION DRAWETH NIGH

Years of time have come and gone
Since I first heard it told,
How Jesus would come again someday,
If back then it seemed so real,
Then I just can't help but feel
How much closer His coming is today.

Chorus:

Signs of the times are everywhere.
There's a brand new feeling in the air.
Keep your eyes upon the eastern sky,
Lift up your head redemption draweth nigh!

Wars and strife on every hand
And violence fills the land,
Still some people doubt He'll ever come again.
But the Word of God is true,
He'll redeem His chosen few.
Don't lose hope, soon Christ Jesus will descend.

—Gordon Jensen