youth messenger

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Friendship

THAT LASTS



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Greetings dear young Readers,

In this edition of the Youth Messenger we are excited to cover the topic of "Friendship That Lasts." What is friendship, and why is it important to us as young Christians?

In my youth, I had many thoughts and questions on this subject:

- With whom is it most important to have a friendship? Those who are:
  - ◊ most popular?
  - ◊ best looking?
  - ◊ most intelligent?
  - ◊ most powerful?
  - ◊ best off financially?
- Are there good and bad friendships?
- Can friendships be used for good and bad?
- If I'm having trouble making or keeping friendships, what can I change to make them lasting?

The Bible says, "A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24).

What two things do we learn from this verse?

1. In order to have friends, we ourselves need to be friendly! "If we would . . . be kind and courteous and tenderhearted and pitiful, there would be one hundred conversions to the truth where now there is only one."—*Testimonies for the Church,* vol. 9, p. 189. Wow, that is powerful! By displaying the attributes of true friendship there would be 100 times more positive results in missionary work! Can God use you and me to do that? Yes, He can!
2. In the second half of Proverbs 18:24, we see a reference to a wonderful, special friend, even closer than a brother. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). The friend mentioned here must be the same one referred to in Proverbs. Do you have a friend who is willing to give his or her life so that you can live? I have been blessed to have a Friend like that since I was born. Because of our friendship He was able to get me out of a very difficult time in life—and if it weren't for Him giving up His life for mine, I would probably be dead or spending the rest of my life in prison today. His name is JESUS!

I pray that as you read these articles you realize that He wants to be YOUR best Friend too. He already is! Through Him, you'll be able to cultivate lasting friendships in your daily life as well.

God bless!
Pastor Daniel Balbach



MORE THAN I COULD EVER ASK FOR

Have you ever wondered what the greatest goal of your life could be? What is the highest level you could reach? What is the deepest desire of your heart—that one thing which would make you truly happy?

We all long for purpose. We all want to know that our lives mean something, that we are becoming who we were meant to be. Yet often, in trying to figure out what that "something" is, we overthink, overanalyze, and end up doing nothing. But there is one decision that surpasses every other choice we will ever make, one that shapes not only our future but our eternity: the decision to follow God completely.

The truth is, obedience isn't optional. Whether we realize it or not, every one of us is listening to someone. The question is: who are we listening to? There are two voices in this world, one that draws us closer to God and one that pulls us away. Every small decision either strengthens our relationship with Him or weakens it. Our destiny depends on which voice we choose to follow.

WHAT ARE YOU AIMING FOR?

Dear young people, what is the goal you're chasing? Is it success? Education? Influence? Maybe you dream of a respected name, a stable career, or a position where you can make a difference. None



of these are wrong—in fact, they can be wonderful. But they were never meant to be the ultimate purpose of your life. As followers of Jesus, we're called to aim high, to develop our minds, our talents, and our potential, yet to keep our hearts anchored in Him. True greatness doesn't come from climbing higher than others; it comes from growing deeper in faith, integrity, and service.

When your dreams are shaped by godly principles, there's no limit to how far God can take you. He loves to see young men and women rise up with courage, creativity, and conviction, using every gift they've been given to reflect His character in the world. You were not made for mediocrity. You were made to live a life of excellence that glorifies God. But here's the key: Never sacrifice your principles for success. The moment you trade integrity for achievement, you lose both.

When you stay faithful, when you let God shape your goals, He will take you further than you ever imagined. You'll find yourself standing in places you never dreamed you'd reach—not because you forced your way there, but because His hand carried you.

WHEN GOD SURPRISES YOU

If I could sum up my walk with God in one thought, it would be this: He's always given me more than I could have imagined. In the past years, He has surprised me, sometimes in quiet, hidden ways, sometimes in breathtaking moments I never saw coming. I've faced seasons of disappointment, failure, and confusion. I've made plans that fell apart and prayed for things that never happened. Yet, looking back, I can see that in every detour, delay, and closed door, God was writing a better story. He wasn't withholding something good; He was preparing something greater.

And in one of those quiet seasons, when I stopped searching and simply chose to trust Him, He surprised me in the most unexpected way, through a person who became one of His greatest blessings in my life. A gentle reminder that when we delight in

Him, He truly gives us the deepest desires of our heart.

Even now, when the future feels uncertain, the faithfulness I've seen in the past gives me confidence to keep trusting Him for what's ahead.

THE SECRET OF PHILIPPIANS 4:6

"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Philippians 4:6).

This verse has become a compass for me. It doesn't say, "Don't worry because nothing bad will ever happen." It says, "When you're tempted to worry, pray." Bring everything to God every fear, every uncertainty—and thank Him, even before the answer comes. That's what faith looks like: peace before understanding.

It's easy to believe that God can perform miracles for others—for missionaries, pastors, or people with powerful testimonies—but sometimes it's hardest to believe He can do a miracle in your own life. Yet that's exactly what He wants to do. God isn't just the God of stories in the Bible; He's the God of your story.

WHEN CHRIST IS BORN IN YOU

Over two thousand years ago, shepherds in the hills of Bethlehem heard the most beautiful announcement ever made: "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11).

But here's a question worth asking: Has that same Saviour been born in your heart? It's one thing to know the story of Jesus' birth. It's another to experience His life inside you. You may believe in His miracles, His cross, His love for humanity, but do you believe He can work powerfully in your personal story?

If you've confessed your sins and chosen to follow Him, you don't have to wait for proof that He's accepted you. You can believe His promise now. He offers you a new heart, not someday, not after you've improved yourself, but right now. You see, God doesn't need your perfection. He wants your surrender.

Every morning, choose to consecrate yourself to Him again. Say, "Lord, here are my plans, do with them whatever You know is best." That simple act of surrender, repeated day after day, molds your life into something beautiful.

THE BATTLE WITHIN

Each of us is in a daily battle, not against the world outside, but against the selfishness within. And it's not a battle we can win by willpower alone. Education, discipline, and good habits are valuable, but they can't change the heart.

Real transformation comes only through Jesus. His grace is not just forgiveness for the past; it's power for the present. It awakens the soul, giving life where there was once only emptiness.

So, no matter how weak

you feel or how many times you've failed, don't give up. Your brokenness doesn't disqualify you; it's the very place where His grace can shine the brightest.

CHOOSING PURPOSE OVER PRESSURE

Every generation faces its own kind of pressure. For ours, it's the pressure to *be someone,* to prove our worth through what we achieve, post, or own. We measure success by numbers, likes, and titles. But deep down, we all know that none of those things last.

What truly matters is not how high you climb, but who you become on the way up.

Living for God doesn't mean you can't have big dreams; it means you trust Him to shape those dreams. You can aim high, but your highest goal should always be to reflect His character. When you let Him be the author of your story, He writes a far greater ending than you ever could.

DAY BY DAY, STEP BY STEP

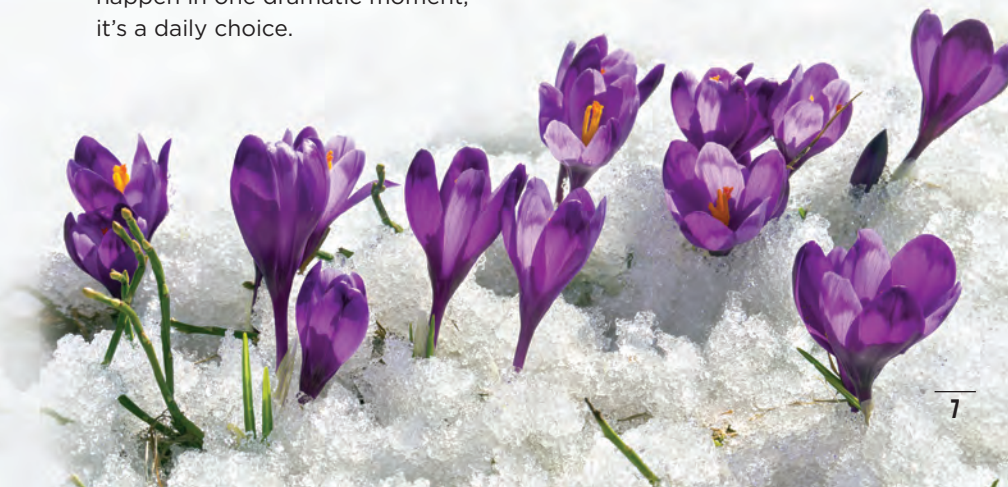
Spiritual growth doesn't happen in one dramatic moment; it's a daily choice. Each morning, surrender your life again, your thoughts, your plans, your expectations. Give God permission to lead, even if His route looks different from yours. That's what it means to live in faith. Faith is not the absence of uncertainty; it's the decision to trust even when you can't see the outcome.

As you walk with Him, little by little, you'll notice change: your priorities shift, your peace grows deeper, your purpose becomes clearer. And year after year, you'll look back and realize, you've become stronger, freer, and more grounded in Christ than you ever imagined possible.

The truth is, we all have a battle to fight against doubt, pride, and the temptation to give up. But we are not fighting alone. The same Jesus who conquered death now gives us the power to overcome the struggles within us.

TRANSFORMED FROM WITHIN

Education, discipline, and effort have their place, but they can't reach the heart. True



Here's the key: Never sacrifice your principles for success. The moment you trade integrity for achievement, you will lose both.

transformation begins when Christ's Spirit lives inside you. He doesn't just reform your behavior; He renews your nature. Without Him, we can polish the outside, but the inside remains unchanged. With Him, even the deepest parts of who we are begin to heal.

Maybe you've tried to change before and failed. Maybe you've promised God you'd do better, only to fall again. You start to wonder if you'll ever be strong enough. But the key isn't in trying harder; it's in choosing to surrender.

God has given you something powerful, your will. It's the ability to choose whom you'll trust, whom you'll serve, what you'll believe. You may not be able to change your heart by yourself, but you can decide to give your heart to God, and He will do what you cannot.

A LIFE POINTING TO HEAVEN

If there's one thing I hope people remember about me, and about you, it's this:
that we lived for something bigger than ourselves. The heroes of faith in Hebrews 11 were ordinary people with extraordinary focus. They weren't perfect, but they were persistent. Scripture says, "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (Hebrews 11:16).

Their hearts were set on heaven, and that made all the difference. Let that same truth shape your life. Study hard, work with excellence, dream courageously, but never forget where your true home is. Every achievement here is temporary, but every act of faith echoes into eternity. Live so that people around you can see a glimpse of that "better country" through the way you love, the way you forgive, and the way you trust God when things don't make sense.

FINAL THOUGHT

So don't settle for a small life—a life driven by fear, comfort, or comparison.
Live for the God who does "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20) Every morning, choose to walk with Him. Every evening, thank Him for what He's doing, even if you can't see it yet.

Just as His coming divided the course of world history, so He longs to divide and transform the story of every individual life, turning the past into forgiveness, the present into purpose, and the future into the hope of eternal life.



How Sabbathkeeping Transformed My Life

BY TIM NGUYEN

I come from a secular family and was raised on secular values. Growing up, I would be like all the other young boys my age—go to school Monday through Friday, and play video games or sports for 8+ hours a day on Saturday and Sunday. I have some good memories of those times, but it is obvious to me now that extensive gaming was rotting my brain. It's not something that productive adults should be spending all their weekends on, even as a way to relax.

I started working at the age of 15, and before I learned about the Sabbath, I would work any day of the week—weekends included, even though that meant getting less sleep. This meant I had little free time. As you might imagine, there were some stressful periods during college due to this lack of rest.

I'm grateful to have hard-working parents to look up to. Born in Saigon, Vietnam shortly before the Vietnam War, they understood all too well what it was like to be in poverty. When they came to the USA, they had to work incredibly hard in order to make ends meet.

While this is admirable, I always felt as if my mom, especially, worked TOO hard. She is obsessed with making money and with being able to provide for herself and her family—and has worked 7 days a week for as long as I can remember. While she is financially stable, it's easy to see how the stress of working constantly with no breaks or time to relax has affected her personality and her general countenance. Obsession for money destroyed the relationship between my mother and father, leading to their divorce, and it didn't help the relationship very much with my brother or me, either. There was little to no time to sit down together and talk about life. Even when there was time, we weren't connected as a family, so there were really

no genuine conversations to be had. Other than at restaurants, my mother only sat at the table to have a meal with me, my brother and/or my father perhaps once a month (at the most.)

You learn what to do from your parents. You can also learn what NOT to do from your parents, if you happen to observe destructive habits. I knew the value of rest from work. But what really highlighted it for me was coming to the Christian faith and learning about the beauty of the Sabbath day. At 25 years old, I was introduced to the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement church. I never knew there were people who went to church on Saturday instead of Sunday! Why was the Sabbath day of rest—rest from all the toils of life—basically unknown by most of the world? It was like discovering one of the world's greatest secrets.

What do Sabbathkeepers do on the Sabbath day? We study or teach (see Luke 4:16, which shows Jesus reading in the synagogue on the Sabbath); we give praises to the Lord with voice and music (see Psam 92:1, 3); and of course, we rest. The fourth commandment of the Bible explicitly commands, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:8–11).

If you are a Christian, you ought to follow God's will, and you ought to constantly seek for truth, right? There is no controversy that Friday evening to Saturday evening is considered the true Sabbath day. Jesus tells us in Mark



The Sabbath is a delight to me personally because it brings me closer to God. It's my chance to reflect on God's love for me.

2:27, 28, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath."

God gave us the Sabbath day for a reason. It is for us to rest, and it is a memorial of God's creation. It's my chance to reflect on God's love for me. On this day, I can take the time to walk outside with no obligation from work or other commitments. I can smell the flowers, feel the gentle breeze and the sunshine on my face, fellowship with church brethren, and learn more about the God who created the entire universe. I spend time in prayer. It's a perfect opportunity to minister to the needy or visit the sick. (Sometimes we visit other people's homes or nursing homes as a church and play music to revitalize our souls.)

In short, the Sabbath is a delight to me personally because it brings me closer to God, the Living Water. The Bible telss us in Isaiah 58:13, 14, "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

God knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows that we need a day to rest, and to reflect on His mercy and love. I know without a doubt that my life is better than it used to be, because I have one day—the holy Sabbath day—where I can lay aside the worries of the week and my life stresses. When I come back to work on Sunday, I'm always refreshed physically and spiritually, and am prepared to work in the service of God for others. I'm able to reflect on the beauty of the earth and appreciate my life far more than I used to.

Spending time with Christ on the Sabbath has improved my overall mental health, and I truly believe it would do the same for everyone else. In my experience and understanding, most societies are overworked, on edge, and totally stressed out. It is my wish and prayer that more people will take the Sabbath day seriously, for their own sakes! I thank God for the blessing of the Sabbath day, and I cannot emphasize enough to you, dear reader, what a difference it could make in your life if you just gave it a try.



Am I Addicted to Social Media?

BY CSONGOR MATYAS

Do you find yourself reaching for your phone the moment you wake up? Are you constantly checking for new notifications, even during meals or conversations? Have you ever felt the anxiety of missing out on the latest posts? Welcome to the world of social media addiction—a silent epidemic gripping millions with its digital chains.

Imagine this: It's midnight, and you should be asleep. Instead, you're mindlessly scrolling through your feed, eyes glued to the screen, heart racing with each new like and comment. Your responsibilities are piling up, but you can't seem to tear yourself away. You're not alone. Across the globe, countless individuals are trapped in this relentless cycle, their lives consumed by the pursuit of virtual validation.

But what exactly is social media addiction, and how is it affecting our lives? From the constant need for social approval to the fear of missing out, the symptoms are all around us, often going unnoticed. The freedom to connect has transformed into a modern-day yoke, binding us to our screens and stealing precious moments from our lives.

The apostle Paul suggests a way out in Galatians 5:1, stating, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." We were created to stand in liberty. Although modern life has entangled us in all sorts of developing addictions that chain us into slavery, there is hope. Addiction to social media may feel like an unbreakable bond, but Christ has made us free. There is a way out.

IDENTIFYING SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION

First, we need to recognize and acknowledge that we have

an issue: an addiction to social media. Like with any addiction, the first step is realizing how deeply it affects our lives and having the desire to break free. Do you want to know if you're addicted to social media? Here are some striking examples that will help you identify if you are:

Constant Checking: Picture someone who wakes up and the first thing they do is check their social media. Throughout the day, they can't resist opening their apps to see if they've missed any updates, even during important meetings, meals, or conversations with loved ones.

FOMO (Fear of Missing Out): Imagine feeling anxious if you're not constantly connected. The compulsion to stay updated on what everyone else is doing drives a person to remain glued to their screens, fearing they'll miss out on something significant or fun.

Social Media Validation: Consider the overwhelming need to post frequently and check for likes and comments. For some, their mood hinges on the number of interactions their posts receive, with low engagement leading to feelings of worthlessness.

Neglecting Responsibilities: Envision hours slipping away in endless scrolling, to the point where work, studies, Bible study, prayer, communion with God, or household chores are neglected. Important tasks are procrastinated because social media has become the priority.

Social Isolation: Ironically, while social media is meant to connect, it can lead to social isolation. People may choose virtual interaction over real-life connections, leading to a decline in face-to-face relationships and increasing loneliness.

Sleep Disruption: Picture staying up late into the night, endlessly scrolling through feeds. This habit disrupts sleep patterns, leading to fatigue and other health issues that affect overall well-being.

Physical Symptoms: The excessive use of social media can lead to physical problems such as eye strain, headaches, and poor posture. Long hours hunched over a phone or computer can cause discomfort and long-term health problems.

JUSTIFYING ADDICTION

Some may say they are engaged in missionary work on these social platforms, sharing Bible passages and posting thought-provoking ideas to justify their addiction to social media. However, how can you discern if your activity has crossed into addiction? How do you know that what is meant to be a service to others has become an addiction? When these online activities consume your time and attention at the expense of real-

life responsibilities and spiritual growth, it's a clear sign that an addiction has taken hold.

For instance, you might find yourself spending hours crafting the perfect post or responding to comments, neglecting your personal Bible study or prayer time. Or perhaps you justify staying up late to engage with followers, but then struggle with fatigue and poor concentration the next day. Maybe you skip important family moments because you feel compelled to keep your online presence active. When these online activities consume your time and attention at the expense of real-life responsibilities and spiritual growth, it's a clear sign that an addiction has taken hold.

THE WAY OUT

Just as with any other addiction, when one realizes that addiction is present in their life and has a genuine desire to overcome it, the first step they need to take is to seek outside help from someone who understands their struggle and has the expertise to assist them every step of the way.



As Christians, we have such a person available to us 24/7. The apostle Paul writes to the Hebrews: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:15, 16).

Turning to God with a genuine desire to be freed from addiction is the best step one can take. God is able and willing to help. "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18).

This means earnestly seeking time in meditation, prayer, and reading His word—not on a device that might further tempt us with notifications and social media, but from a physical book with pages made of paper—the Bible.

As we spend time in God's presence, away from the cheap glitter of social media, the soul finds peace and satisfaction. It finds rest and fulfillment. It realizes its value, far above the evaluation standards of today's society. It realizes that God has paid an incredibly high price for us. Our worth is indescribable by earthly

standards. There, in His presence, we find comfort and peace.



CONCLUSION: A CALL TO FREEDOM

Dear reader, if you find yourself ensnared by the relentless grip of social media, know that there is hope and a path to freedom. Recognize the signs, acknowledge the addiction, and take the courageous step to break free. Social media addiction, like any other, can be overcome with determination and the right support.

Remember the words of the apostle Paul in Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Christ has already paved the way for our freedom. Though modern life entangles us in various addictions, Christ offers us liberty and the power to achieve it. There is a way out.

Today, take the first step by turning to God with a sincere desire to be free. He is able and willing to help. As it is written in 2 Timothy 1:7, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." Seek time in meditation, prayer, and reading His word—not on a device that tempts you further, but from a physical Bible.

In God's presence, away from the distractions of social media, your soul will find peace and satisfaction. You will find rest and fulfilment, realizing your true value beyond the shallow validation of social media. God has paid an incredibly high price for you, and your worth is indescribable by earthly standards. In His presence, you will find comfort and peace.

I leave you with one of my favorite passages that gives me strength in difficult times:

"Without the cross, man could have no union with the Father. On it depends our every hope. From it shines the light of the Saviour's love, and when at the foot of the cross the sinner looks up to the One who died to save him, he may rejoice with fullness of joy, for his sins are pardoned. Kneeling in faith at the cross, he has reached the highest place to which man can attain."—*The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 209.

Break free from the chains of social media addiction. Seek God's help and embrace the liberty that Christ can only offer you. Your journey to freedom begins now.

May God bless you with this experience!

Which Road is My Path?

BY TÍMEA ESZTER VARGA







"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." —Psalm 32:8

Have you ever thought your life was over because the future that you imagined for yourself failed? Your dreams, wishes, and plans maybe did not work out according to your will. You didn't get your dream job, you got fired, the boy or girl you liked chose someone else instead of you or you got rejected by a university. Maybe you were angry, disappointed and sad. You felt like you didn't know what to do, that there was no way out of this case. Yes, there are indeed cases that seem impossible to solve. They are impossible to solve by yourself. But I can recommend you the greatest counselor ever, One who can help you anytime in any situation. You don't have to make an appointment, you don't have to wait for days, weeks or months to get help. I know this counselor and I would like to share my experience with this special advisor. I hope these words will encourage you to visit this counselor, God. He has infinite solutions to your problem, far greater than you have ever imagined.

In 2022 I applied to a university. My plans were to teach history, but at that time we had COVID in Hungary. I would not be able to work as a teacher unless I would get the COVID vaccination. I decided not to get the vaccination. I prayed, fasted and God pointed my way towards pedagogy. In Hungary we have a day care nursery system (infants

0–3 years of age) for those families and mothers who are not able to stay at home with their children. By God's grace I finished the bachelor's degree in infant and early childhood education in July 2025.

POSITIVE PLANS, LOGICAL GOALS

During those years, I had assurance from God that I was at HIS APPOINTED place. I had an opportunity to participate in a research program. I did some research in history of education for 2 years. During this research program I got more assurance that I would like to teach adults about pedagogy. My supervisor was a Christian teacher who supported me professionally and spiritually as well. God blessed me with many experiences that pointed my way towards a master's degree program. My plan was to get a master's degree and then a PhD to be able to teach adults in universities. In February 2025, I applied for the master's program to study the science of education.

Then, in April and June of that year, I was invited to missionary school. I told the person who invited me that I was thankful for the invitation, but had already applied to the university for the master's degree—and hopefully would start in September. As the date of results drew closer, I was very excited to receive the news. On the 23rd of July the result came. I had been rejected, because they didn't have enough applicants to start the program. I was so sad and disappointed! I did not understand this situation. . . .

CLOSED DOOR, OPEN OPPORTUNITY

A few days later, God reminded me that I had received an invitation to a different kind of Master's program. He had invited me to His school! I took the opportunity and applied for missionary school in Austria. I didn't regret it! It was one of the best choices that I have ever made. I'm still in the process of getting to know God's will about my future. Through His people I received much encouragement that helped me to be trustful and joyful. I'm sure He has the best plan of all that includes my dream.

God reminded me of one of the greatest characters in the Bible. There is a very unique man who got big dreams from God. When he thought his dreams had become nothing He was actually on the right path leading to his dreams. Maybe you have already figured out who this character is. It's Joseph. His life was full of challenges, difficulties and temptations. There was a changing point in his life. His brothers sold him as a slave to the Ishmaelites. During the journey towards Egypt he made a covenant with the Lord.

LESSONS FROM A LEADER

"Joseph believed that the God of his fathers would be his God. He then and there gave himself fully to the Lord, and he prayed that

> "Joseph's soul thrilled with the high resolve to prove himself true to God—under all circumstances to act as became a subject of the King of heaven. He would serve the Lord with undivided heart; he would meet the trials of his lot with fortitude and perform every duty with fidelity."

the Keeper of Israel would be with him in the land of his exile.

"His soul thrilled with the high resolve to prove himself true to God—under all circumstances to act as became a subject of the King of heaven. He would serve the Lord with undivided heart; he would meet the trials of his lot with fortitude and perform every duty with fidelity. One day's experience had been the turning point in Joseph's life."—*Patriarchs and Prophets,* pp. 213, 214.

In Egypt, Joseph had to serve as a slave, stand the test against his master's wife and endure the unjust judgment of his case. He had to learn to trust in God in any circumstance. Throughout the Bible we find examples where God's people had to endure tremendous difficulties. But that did not mean they were alone in their struggles. Moreover, in these situations God was beside them and guided them with wisdom. God guided them because they chose Him over everything else. They made a covenant with God to serve Him no matter what. If we want the Lord's presence in our life we have to make the decisions to serve Him with our whole heart and be obedient to Him. We can establish that only if we invite His presence into our life and listen to His words are we able to enjoy the chance to be on His pathway, the right pathway.

Have you made a covenant with the Lord? Have you promised that you will serve Him and keep Him first in your life? God is waiting for you, TODAY. TODAY to make a covenant with Him, TODAY to accept Him as your GOD, SAVIOUR, FRIEND and COUNSELOR. If you want to be on the right path, the first step is to accept Him as your God. Then repent of your sins and mistakes, and surrender yourself to His will.

Don't you think Joseph was sad and disappointed? Don't you think he didn't understand all the events that were happening around him? Don't you think he thought he was miles away from his dreams? Let me tell you, in our human eyes we don't see the whole picture. We don't know our future. God knows our hearts, wishes, desires and needs. He knows what is the best for us. If He knows something is not meant for us, He will not give it to us. Not because He doesn't care about us,

but because He loves us. We are not wise enough to know what will happen next. This is God's grace! Guess what would happen if we all knew what would happen to us in our future? We would be anxious all the time. We wouldn't be happy and trustful. It's because of God's protection that we don't know our future.

"A life in Christ is a life of restfulness. There may be no ecstasy of feeling, but there should be an abiding, peaceful trust. Your hope is not in yourself; it is in Christ. Your weakness is united to His strength, your ignorance to His wisdom, your frailty to His enduring might. So you are not to look to yourself, not to let the mind dwell upon self, but look to Christ."—*Steps to Christ,* p. 70. Joseph had a life in Christ. He united with God. This is why he was trustful and patient. He waited for God to solve his situation. You can have the same mindset. You can have the power through God to put all your difficulties, sadness, disappointments, and anger before his feet.

Why is it important to put our trust in our God? Is there any effect on our mental or physical health if we don't trust in God? If we don't put our trust in God we can have stress, anxiety, depression or other physical problems. The Bible says, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones" (Proverbs 17:22). According to this Bible verse, our mental health is connected to the condition of our physical health. God wants to see us happy and healthy. But if we are distrustful of the Lord, we tend to start ruminating on our problems. We constantly dwell on negative things that have happened to us. This mindset can lead to stress, anxiety, depression or physical health issues. But there is good news! We have the best doctor in God, who has the power to heal us.

My wish and prayer is that you may experience God's presence in your life to have a clear picture about your path. God is waiting for you to accept Him and make a covenant with Him. If you do that, you will have the opportunity to choose His path, which is always the best. I hope TODAY is your day to make this decision. God guarantees the best life that you could ever imagine.

Ideas to get to know God's will about your life:

- Pray
  "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass" (Psalm 37: 5).
- Fast
  "So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us" (Ezra 8:23).
- Read
  "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

May God bless you greatly!

Youth . . .
and the Mission to Take the Gospel to the World

BY QUIM CASSICATO





During the preparations for the commemoration of the 100 years of the Reform Movement, the youth of the Angolan Union responded effectively to the call to *Arise and Shine.* We realized that we have in our hands a unique opportunity in history: the ability to reach thousands of people with the message of the Gospel, using something that is already part of our daily life: digital media. Never before has a generation had so much access to such powerful tools to fulfill the great Mission of Christ.

As young Reformers committed to present truth, we understand that Jesus' call to "go . . . and teach all nations" (Matthew 28:19) takes on new meaning in a digital world, where boundaries are crossed with a simple click.

Based on this premise, it is worth highlighting here an experience lived during the preparation for the commemoration of the anniversary. At the level of the Angolan Union, it took place between the 15th and 20th of July with the VI Assembly of the Angolan Union and the Spiritual Revival Congress that brought together, in the city of Huambo, municipality of Cáala, close to 4,000 souls from different parts of Angola.

To better mobilize the brothers and people who do not profess our faith, strategies were created to use digital tools with communication to direct the faithful to be present at the place of the event. In this way, we used a young man (Moisés Tchicale) with strong engagement on social networks to use his influence and answer Christ's call to spread the gospel. Materials were produced which explained the identity of the church with the motto, *Arise and Shine.* The young man did a great job and the result was very satisfying.

The first step for a youth committed to mission is to understand that their voice

matters and is a means that God uses to reach out to other young people. Many young people underestimate their influence, thinking that only experienced pastors, theologians, or leaders can speak of Christ with authority. But the Bible is full of examples of God using ordinary people—often young people—to accomplish great things.

David was a teenager when he faced Goliath. Jeremiah considered himself too young to be a prophet, but God used him anyway. Timothy was directed by Paul not to let anyone underestimate him because of his age. The truth is that God is not looking for perfect or experienced people, but available hearts.

And where are the hearts that need to hear about Jesus today? On social networks. They are digital squares where millions of young people spend hours every day consuming content. Many of them are lost, looking for meaning, affection, and answers in places that can never satisfy them. This is where the role of the Reform Youth comes in as guardians of the present truth: to be light in these spaces. It is not about preaching artificially or forcefully, but about living and sharing the faith in an authentic way. A story with a well-timed verse, a post about how God has transformed your life, a lighthearted video that talks about hope—all of these can be used by the Holy Spirit to touch hearts.

The Gospel never changes, but the way of communicating it needs to adapt. Jesus used everyday parables to teach eternal truths. Similarly, young Christians can use challenges and popular formats to convey Christ's message in a way that resonates with their generation. It is not a matter of diluting the truth, but of making it accessible. A young woman who loves fashion can share how her faith influences her choices. A student could share a discussion about how the Bible answers life's big questions. The possibilities are endless when we understand that everything can be used to glorify God.

Responding to messages, praying for those who comment, creating Bible discussion groups—all of these make digital evangelism personal and impactful. Many young people are thirsty for deep conversations, for someone who will listen to them and point them to Christ. And when a person decides to follow Jesus through that contact, the journey has only just begun.

The challenge, then, is clear: Youth need to occupy digital spaces wisely. This does not mean being on all social networks at the same time, but rather using well those where God has already placed you. It's not about numbers of followers, but about fidelity to the call. And most of all, it's about depending on the Holy Spirit, because only He can convert hearts.



SHARING YOUR FAITH, THE RIGHT WAY

BY JACOB HANUSKA

Just recently, I was at a restaurant with the bridal party of my best friend who was about to get married. It was more of a sports bar—loud music, flashing screens, and plenty of alcohol. But the food was really good.

We all waited patiently until everyone's meals had arrived, and then together we bowed our heads to pray. The groom-to-be started praying, and it went on for a little while. Suddenly, over the prayer, we heard the waitress asking if we needed something. The prayer stopped right away. She quickly realized she had interrupted and felt terrible. The whole situation was awkward.

I'm sure we've all faced moments like these—times when our faith suddenly becomes visible in an uncomfortable or public way. Maybe someone puts us on the spot about what we believe, or we feel out of place for standing up for our convictions.

Yet deep down, we know that sharing our faith is something we are called to do.

THE GREAT COMMISSION

Before returning to heaven, Jesus gave His followers a mission—known today as the Great Commission:

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

Making disciples is not easy, but the good news is that we are not alone in this work. Paul reminds us; "I have planted,

Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:6, 7).

In these verses, Paul describes two parts of the disciple-making process: sowing and watering. We could expand that idea into five stages, much like the growth of a plant:

- Preparing the soil of the heart
- Planting the seed of truth
- Nurturing and protecting the plant as it grows
- Harvesting through baptism
- Preserving the plant and reproducing it

In this article, we'll focus on the first two—preparing the soil and planting the seed—because these are things all of us can start doing right now. We don't need to wait for special training, an official position, or perfect knowledge. We can begin with what we already know, where we already are.

PREPARING THE SOIL

The first step is to prepare the soil—the hearts of those we hope to reach.

You might know people who, upon just meeting someone new, will immediately share all our doctrines—the Sabbath, the state of the dead, the investigative judgment—and feel like they've done their duty, leaving the listener overwhelmed. But that's not what Jesus modeled.

In the parable of the Sower, the greatest factor that determined whether the seed grew or not was the soil on which it fell.

"And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred" (Mark 4:8).

Good soil doesn't happen by accident—it's prepared through love, care, and connection.

Preparing hearts begins with simple, authentic interactions. We don't have to be pushy or force our beliefs on others, but neither should we hide our faith. We can naturally share how God has answered a prayer, helped us through a struggle, or blessed us through a church event. At this stage, it's often more effective to share personal experiences rather than abstract truths.

Thankfully, Jesus gave us the perfect example of how to reach people:

"Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.' "—*The Ministry of Healing,* p. 143.

Let's break that down:

MINGLING WITH PEOPLE

Jesus didn't isolate Himself in solitude, even though He valued prayer and quiet time with God.

He actively sought out people—Jews and non-Jews, Pharisees and outcasts. He attended social events, visited homes, and met people where they were.

In our church, it's easy to stay inside an "Adventist bubble," safe from worldly influences but also separated from the very people we're called to reach. To follow Christ's example, we must step outside that bubble.

We can mingle through everyday activities: playing sports or music, attending weddings, joining social events, volunteering, or working on projects with others. However, mingling must be intentional. We're not there just for entertainment—we're there to be lights for Christ.

We also need balance. If our spiritual life is weak, worldly influences can easily pull us down. Like Enoch, we should regularly spend time with God to stay spiritually strong:

"After remaining for a time among the people, laboring to benefit them by instruction and example, he would withdraw, to spend a season in solitude, hungering and thirsting for that divine knowledge which God alone can impart."—*Gospel Workers,* p. 52.

SHOWING SYMPATHY

Once we build relationships, we need to genuinely care about people. One of the simplest yet most powerful ways to do this is by listening—really listening. Not half-listening while we think of what to say next, but giving our full attention.

Ask thoughtful questions, rephrase what you've heard to show understanding, and give space for them to share more. When people feel heard, they feel valued.

MINISTERING TO NEEDS

After understanding people's lives and struggles, we can look for ways to help. Jesus did this constantly:

"During His ministry, Jesus devoted more time to healing the sick than to preaching."—*The Ministry of Healing,* p. 19.

We can minister to others in countless practical ways:

- Helping a classmate understand a difficult concept
- Buying someone a meal
- Babysitting for a friend
- Cooking or baking for someone who's struggling
- Helping fix a car or move furniture

The possibilities are endless when we pay attention to people's needs.

As we consistently show love, listen, and serve, trust begins to grow. That's when the soil is ready. Hearts that might have once been hard start to soften.

At this point, it can be helpful to gently test where someone stands spiritually—perhaps by mentioning something from

your faith or asking a thoughtful question. If you sense interest, you can move on to the next phase. If not, keep nurturing the soil through friendship and care.

PLANTING THE SEED

Once the soil of the heart is ready, it's time to plant seeds of truth.

Seeds can take many forms. We can share our personal testimony—how God has changed our lives or answered prayer. If we don't have such experiences, that's a sign we need to deepen our relationship with Him first. Our witness must flow naturally from personal experience.

We can also plant seeds by sharing a book, podcast, or video that's helped us spiritually. We can offer to pray for someone or even pray with them in the moment. Asking spiritual questions—simple but deep—can also open hearts. And when the time feels right, we can invite them to church, small group, or Bible study.

When planting seeds, it's wise to begin with common ground. Focus on beliefs and values you share in order to build trust. Avoid diving too quickly into difficult or controversial topics that might scare people off before they understand your heart. As the relationship strengthens, the conversation can naturally go deeper.

Even as we plant, we must continue nurturing the soil—keeping up the relationship, showing care, and letting our actions speak as loudly as our words.

There's no strict order or formula for this process. Every person is different, and God works in unique ways. Our part is to be faithful; God's part is to bring the growth.

We must surround our efforts with prayer—asking God to guide our words, prepare hearts, and open doors.

Some people may respond quickly to God's call, while others may take years—or even a lifetime. It can be discouraging when progress seems slow. But our job isn't to force results; it's to plant and water faithfully. God is the one who gives the increase.

CONCLUSION

Whether you're at a restaurant, in class, at work, or hanging out with friends, opportunities to prepare hearts and plant seeds are all around. You don't need a stage or a microphone—you just need a heart that's willing and a faith that's alive.

So start where you are. Be friendly. Listen. Serve. Pray. Share what God has done in your life.

You may never see the full impact of your efforts, but one day, in heaven, you might meet someone who says, "It was your kindness, your prayer, your conversation that planted the seed."

And that will make it all worth it.



A PEARL IS OFFERED . . .

BY ELLEN G. WHITE

Jesus, our Redeemer, walked the earth with the dignity of a king; yet He was meek and lowly of heart. He was a light and blessing in every home because He carried cheerfulness, hope, and courage with Him. Oh, that we could be satisfied with less heart longings, less striving for things difficult to obtain wherewith to beautify our homes, while that which God values above jewels, the meek and quiet spirit, is not cherished. The grace of simplicity, meekness, and true affection would make a paradise of the humblest home. It is better to endure cheerfully every inconvenience than to part with peace and contentment. . . .

There are youth among you whose service God will accept if they will yield their hearts to Him and connect with Him, as did Daniel and his fellows. But few have a true idea of the peril surrounding the youth of today. It requires a great amount of moral courage, and a constant resistance of temptation, to reach a noble manhood. A character unsullied before God is rare. Many who have not the fear of God before them, and whose feet are in the broad road to death, are waiting to be the companions of your children. I wish I could make the youth see and feel their danger, especially the danger of making unhappy marriages.

A little time spent in sowing your wild oats, dear young friends, will produce a crop that will embitter your whole life; an hour of thoughtlessness, once yielding to temptation, may turn the whole current of your life in the wrong direction. You can have but one youth; make that useful. When once you have passed over the ground you can never return to rectify your mistakes. He who refuses to connect with God, and puts himself in the way of temptation, will surely fall. God is testing every youth. Many have excused their carelessness and irreverence because of the wrong example given them by more experienced professors. But this should not deter any from rightdoing. In the day of final

accounts you will plead no such excuses as you plead now. You will be justly condemned because you knew the way but did not choose to walk in it.

Satan, that archdeceiver, transforms himself into an angel of light and comes to the youth with his specious temptations and succeeds in winning them, step by step, from the path of duty. He is described as an accuser, a deceiver, a liar, a tormentor, and a murderer. "He that committeth sin is of the devil." Every transgression brings the soul into condemnation and provokes the divine displeasure. The thoughts of the heart are discerned of God. When impure thoughts are cherished, they need not be expressed by word or act to consummate the sin and bring the soul into condemnation. Its purity is defiled, and the tempter has triumphed.

Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts and enticed. He is turned away from the course of virtue and real good by following his own inclinations. If the youth possessed moral integrity, the strongest temptations might be presented in vain. It is Satan's act to tempt you, but your own act to yield. It is not in the power of all the host of Satan to force the tempted to transgress. There is no excuse for sin.

While some of the youth are wasting their powers in vanity and folly, others are disciplining their minds, storing up knowledge, girding on the armor to engage in life's warfare, determined to make it a success. But they cannot make life a success, however high they may attempt to climb, unless they center their affections upon God. If they will turn to the Lord with all the heart, rejecting the flatteries of those who would in the slightest degree weaken their purpose to do right, they will have strength and confidence in God.

Those who love society frequently indulge this trait until it becomes an overruling passion. To dress, to visit places of amusement, to laugh and chat upon subjects altogether lighter than vanity—this is the object of their lives. They cannot endure to read the Bible and contemplate heavenly things. They are miserable unless there is something to excite. They have not within them the power to be happy, but they depend for happiness upon the company of other youth as thoughtless and reckless as themselves. The powers which might be turned to noble purposes they give to folly and mental dissipation.

The youth who finds joy and happiness in reading the word of God and in the hour of prayer is constantly refreshed by drafts from the Fountain of life. He will attain a height of moral excellence and a breadth of thought of which others cannot conceive. Communion with God encourages good thoughts, noble aspirations, clear perceptions of truth, and lofty purposes of action. Those who thus connect their souls with God are acknowledged by Him as

While some of the youth are wasting their powers in vanity and folly, others are disciplining their minds, storing up knowledge, girding on the armor to engage in life's warfare, determined to make it a success.

His sons and daughters. They are constantly reaching higher and still higher, obtaining clearer views of God and of eternity, until the Lord makes them channels of light and wisdom to the world.

Some of the youth in ----- are in a hardened state of sin; they are coarse, uncourteous, rough, and rebellious. They have had great light, and have rejected it. If they now choose the way of peace, they must do so from principle rather than from feeling. Sin and holiness can make no compromise. The Bible contains no sanction of ungodliness, no sweet words of forbearance and charity for the persistently impenitent. Jesus came to draw all men unto Himself, and His followers must walk in the light of His glorious example, at whatever sacrifice of ease or reputation, at whatever peril of property or life. In this way only can they fight the good fight of faith.

A pearl of great price is offered to the youth. They may sell all and buy this pearl, or they may refuse it to their own infinite loss. Heaven may be attained by all who will comply with the conditions laid down in the word of God. Our Redeemer was obedient unto death; He gave Himself an offering for sin. Ye are redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish." "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Young friends, you may form earnest purposes in your own strength, you may flatter yourselves that you can pursue a straightforward course without yielding the heart to the controlling influence of the Spirit of God; but you are not thus made happy. Your restless spirit needs change and thirsts for pleasure in amusement and hilarity and the society of your young associates. You are hewing out to yourselves broken cisterns which contain no water. A deceptive power controls your mind and actions. Happiness is to be found only in repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ; for your heart is filled with rebellion; it breathes forth in your words. Your selfish prayers and religious forms may soothe the conscience, but they only increase your peril. Your nature is unrenewed.

The precious blood of Jesus is the fountain prepared to cleanse the soul from the defilement of sin. When you determine to take Him as your friend, a new and enduring light will shine from the

cross of Christ. A true sense of the sacrifice and intercession of the dear Saviour will break the heart that has become hardened in sin; and love, thankfulness, and humility will come into the soul. The surrender of the heart to Jesus subdues the rebel into a penitent, and then the language of the obedient soul is: "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." This is the true religion of the Bible. Everything short of this is a deception.

The youth have not realized that freedom and light can be retained only through self-denial and constant watchfulness and prayer, with a continual reliance upon the merits of the blood of Christ. When the Holy Spirit is breathing upon the soul, the will and the powers of the man must respond to Its influence. Those who abide in Jesus will be happy, cheerful, and joyful in God. A subdued gentleness will mark the voice, reverence for spiritual and eternal things will be expressed

The youth who finds joy in reading God's word and in prayer is constantly refreshed by drafts from the Fountain of life.

in the actions, and music, joyful music, will echo from the lips; for it is wafted from the throne of God. This is the mystery of godliness, not easily explained, but nonetheless felt and enjoyed. A stubborn and rebellious heart can close its doors to all the sweet influences of the grace of God and all the joy in the Holy Ghost; but the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. The more closely we are connected with Christ, the more will our words and actions show the subduing, transforming power of His grace.—*Testimonies for the Church,* vol. 4, pp. 622–626.



Test Your Reading!

ACROSS

2. BOOK
3. ISOLATE
7. OVERCOME
8. MEMORIAL
9. MISSIONARY
12. REFRESHED
13. KNEELING
14. FOURTH
15. STEALING
17. SELFISHNESS
18. ACCESSIBLE
21. FIDELITY

DOWN

1. SOWING
4. EMBITTER
5. GOOD
6. DECISIONS
10. RESTFULNESS
11. REPENTANCE
16. MEDIOCRITY

youth messenger

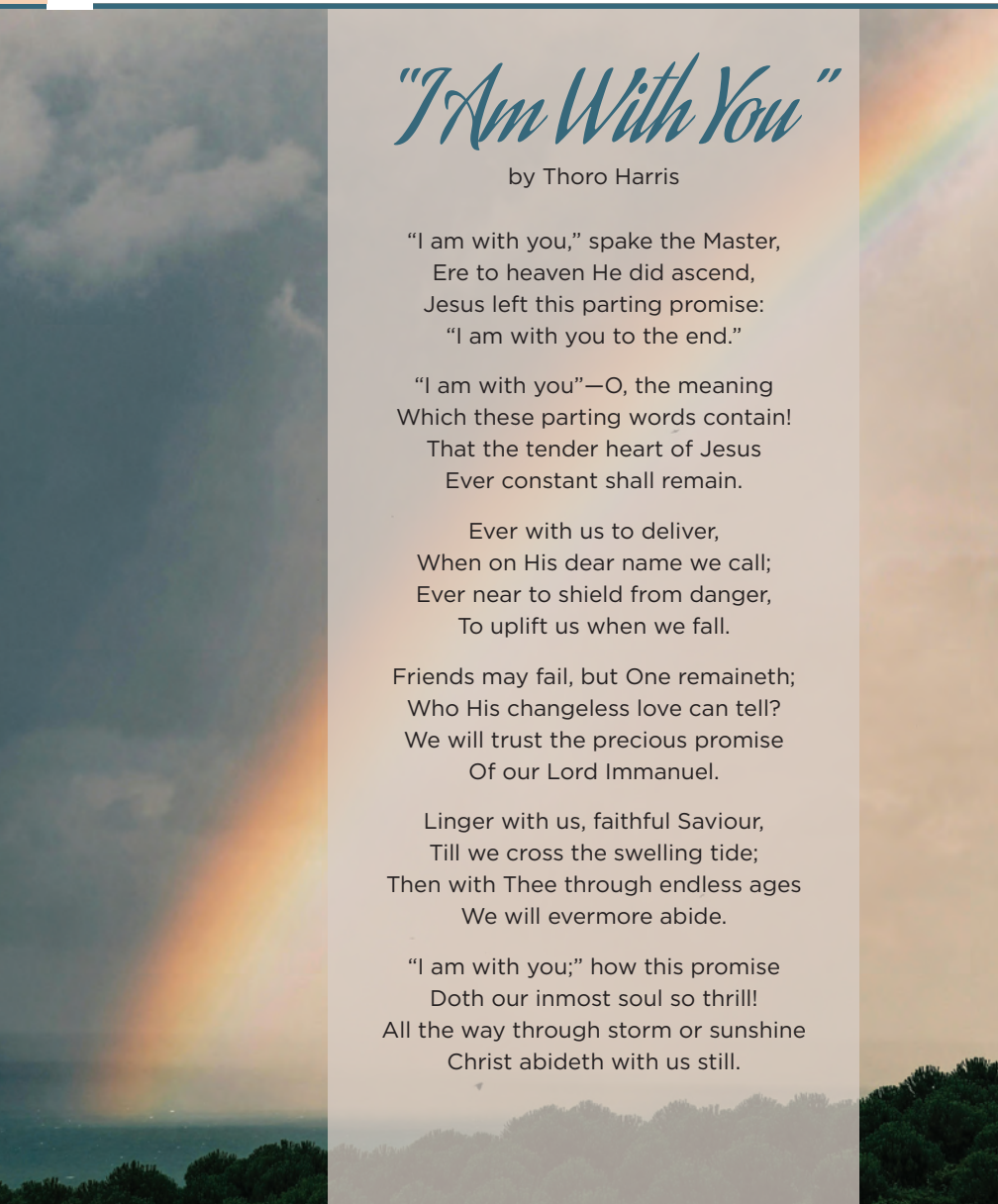
ACROSS

2. It is highly recommended that we read our Bible from a physical _____.
3. Jesus did not _____ Himself in solitude.
7. The same Jesus who conquered death gives us power to _____ the struggles within us.
8. The Sabbath is a_____ of God's creation.
9. Sometimes God has to close doors to motivate us to go to _____ school.
12. When we go back to work after the Sabbath, we are _____.
13. _____ in faith at the cross, we reach the highest place to which man can attain.
14. The _____ commandment in the law of God tells us to keep the Sabbath.
15. The freedom to connect is binding us to our screens and _____ precious moments from our lives.
17. Each of us has a daily battle against the _____ within.
18. We are not to dilute the truth, but make it _____.
19. It's not about numbers of followers, but about _____ to the call.

DOWN

1. Paul describes two parts of the disciple-making process: _____ and watering.
4. A little time spent in sowing wild oats will produce a crop that will _____ your whole life.
5. The Saviour first mingled with men as one who desired their_____.
6. If we want the Lord's presence in our life, we have to make _____ to serve Him with our whole heart and be obedient to Him.
10. A life in Christ is a life of _____.
11. Happiness is found only in _____ toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.
16. You were not made for _____.

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"I Am With You"

by Thoro Harris

"I am with you," spake the Master,
Ere to heaven He did ascend,
Jesus left this parting promise:
"I am with you to the end."

"I am with you"—O, the meaning
Which these parting words contain!
That the tender heart of Jesus
Ever constant shall remain.

Ever with us to deliver,
When on His dear name we call;
Ever near to shield from danger,
To uplift us when we fall.

Friends may fail, but One remaineth;
Who His changeless love can tell?
We will trust the precious promise
Of our Lord Immanuel.

Linger with us, faithful Saviour,
Till we cross the swelling tide;
Then with Thee through endless ages
We will evermore abide.

"I am with you;" how this promise
Doth our inmost soul so thrill!
All the way through storm or sunshine
Christ abideth with us still.