

IN ADAM OR IN CHRIST? COLLEEN TINKER 11

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For I am **Convinced!** CRISTINE COLE

That Bible study has stayed with me and I think back to it whenever doubts start to creep into my mind about my security in Christ because, unfortunately for me, as I grew up in the Adventist church, the words “secure in Christ” were not a natural part of my vocabulary.

On a Friday night in early 1998, I found myself sitting with a group of about 10 people who had gathered together because we had one thing in common: all of us had been raised in the Adventist denomination. Some of us had already left the denomination and gone on to fellowship in non-Adventist churches, while the rest of us had just started a journey that would eventually lead us out of the Adventist church. I was in that latter group, and we were beginning to grapple with the fact

that Ellen White wasn't a true prophet. We were also starting to question whether many of the defining doctrines of the Adventist church were Biblical. Out of the need for support and fellowship with others who understood our situation, we had started to meet together about once a month, eagerly sharing with each other the truths we were discovering daily through our personal Bible studies. This group became the precursor to the Former Adventist Fellowship in Redlands, California.

On this particular night, we had invited a pastor from a local Bible church to lead us in a study he thought would be appropriate for us at this point in our journey. The topic he chose was “The Security of the Believer in Christ,” using as his text the first half of John chapter 3. This passage talks about the Pharisee, Nicodemus, who came to see Jesus at night. Jesus proceeds to give him a Bible study, telling him, “No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” When Nicodemus asks, “How can a man be born when he is old?” Jesus answers, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.” The pastor pointed out that Jesus intentionally used this illustration because it showed so clearly what happens to a person who comes to Christ and believes in Him. Once a

person is physically born, he/she cannot be unborn. One cannot go back into the womb. He/she forever becomes a child of the parents, thus becoming a part of the family he/she is born into. Likewise, spiritually, once a person is born again in the Spirit of God, he/she becomes a child of God and a part of God's family—a family where one is welcomed and loved. Loved so much, in fact, that the Father gave his Son to die for that child so “that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” One cannot feel more secure, knowing one belongs to such a loving family. Unlike earthly parents, God the Father will never take away His love from us. The apostle Paul says in Romans 8:38, 39: “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (NIV) How secure we are!

That Bible study has stayed with me, and I think back to it whenever doubts start to creep into my mind about my security in Christ because, unfortunately for me, as I grew up in the Adventist church, the words “secure in Christ” were not a natural part of my vocabulary. Instead, “Investigative Judgment,” “probation,” “unconfessed sins,” and “lost” were more familiar, and would hauntingly follow me throughout the day. Now I need only to remind myself that I am God's beloved child and He will never leave me.

In this issue Lari Mobley shares a paper she wrote during her Master's program at Biola University. She contrasts what she learned as an Adventist about the process of “sanctification” with what she now understands from her perspective of knowing Jesus and grounding her beliefs in the Bible. Dale Ratzlaff shows that “grace” and “gratitude” are the basic fundamentals of the Christian life, and Colleen Tinker explains what it means to be first “in Adam” and finally “in Christ.” Betty McMinimy shares how she found the truth of the gospel at the age of 75, and Richard Tinker shares the recent events of his termination of employment at Loma Linda University and his plans for the future.

What freedom it is to know that as believers we are secure in Christ! Praise God!

Proclamation!

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From deception to the *Gospel of Grace*

BETTY McMINIMY

Eighty years ago I was born into an Adventist heritage. I lived just outside of Washington, D.C., in Maryland. My father's large family of nine children was Adventist, although he didn't join the church with two of his brothers until sometime later. Two other brothers were singing evangelists and ministers. My grandmother was a great singer and passed her talent on to all her children. It was passed down to most of her 20 grandchildren as well, and my sister and I were constantly singing duets. I believe if the entire clan hadn't been Adventist, we would all be in show business.

My Italian stepmother was converted to Adventism when I was about thirteen years old. I never knew love in my family. There was much harshness and abuse, including physical beatings. After my stepmother joined the church, everything seemed to get worse. One summer my sister and I found jobs in D.C. Wanting us to keep our jobs, as he and my stepmother took most of our small salaries, my father wouldn't allow us to return to school. One day the two of us met after work and ran away from home. We went to our maternal grandmother in Washington, D.C., and lived with her.

Not too long after our flight to our grandmother, our uncle, my father's younger brother, and his wife needed a babysitter to live with them. He was a student at Southern Missionary College in Tennessee (an Adventist institution now called Southern Adventist University). My father informed him he would have to take both of us girls. While there we went to school at the academy, learning the Adventist doctrines in class. A year later we

moved to Massachusetts so my uncle could attend Atlantic Union College. After I graduated from the academy, I returned to my grandmother's and found a job. College was out of the question, and I wasn't interested in Adventism.

Saved from show business

In 1949 I entered the Miss Washington, D.C. pageant, a venture which led to the Miss America pageant in Atlantic City. I progressed as far as the semi-finals. I was disappointed that I didn't make it to the finals, but I was relieved also, because I couldn't afford the long gown that was required for the finals competition. That same year I entered a talent contest at one of the large nightclubs in D.C. I won the contest and was awarded a one-week gig with pay at the club. A visiting talent scout asked me to go to New York and start my singing career, but having a boyfriend (my soon-to-be-husband) and without any sophisticated nerve, I said no. I honestly believe God saved me from show business.

Betty Fowler McMinimy was born in 1926 in Washington, D.C. She was raised just over the border in Maryland. In 1974 she, her husband and children moved to Hawaii and, while there, she took the licensed vocational nursing program offered at the Adventist hospital there. After she became a widow in 1981, she learned of the New Covenant gospel through Life Assurance Ministries and left the Adventist church. She resides in Orange County, California, and has three grown children.



I married in 1950. Up to this point I had no interest in things regarding the church or God. But it was during my first year of marriage that two Hollywood movies caused me to consider seriously the end of the world and the coming of Jesus. One movie was *War of the Worlds*, the other was *Quo Vadis*. I began to ponder my childhood teachings, and soon I was baptized into the Adventist church.

Such a change occurred in me that I was sure my husband would leave me, but he stuck with me. I became legalistic and almost fanatical. Through the years I attended every meeting or class or “evangelistic effort,” as they were called. There were times when I would become discouraged and depressed because I couldn’t live as Ellen G. White dictated. My husband was not a Christian, a fact which made everything more difficult.

Five years after our wedding my first daughter was born. Two years later, my son was born. In 1963 I had my second

daughter. All three are blessed with beautiful singing voices. Shortly after the birth of my last child, I left the Adventist church for close to two years, but I finally went back to it more grounded in that faith than ever.

Discovering a God of love

My husband worked for the Navy Department in Washington, D.C. In 1967 the Department sent a flyer throughout the United States announcing a job opening in Hawaii. My husband applied for the job, and six months later, the Navy moved us to Oahu. The Hawaiian public school did not seem like a fit environment for my Adventist children; however, my husband would not pay for

private schooling. Because of this resistance and because of a life-long dream I cherished, I entered the Licensed Vocational Nurse program at the Adventist hospital there. After I graduated, I worked at the same hospital and was able to send all three children to Adventist schools. We lived on Oahu for seven years, and it was there that the legalism that once had such a hold on me began to relax. I began to feel better about my relationship with a God who is love. Still, the idea that our lifestyle was what gained us entrance into heaven was deeply entrenched in me.

Unfortunately, President Nixon eventually closed my husband’s base, and I had to leave my paradise home. We refused to return to the bitter winters of Maryland, however, and the Navy moved us to Southern California in 1974.

In March, 1981, my wonderful husband of thirty-one years died suddenly of a massive heart attack. My family

and I were grief-stricken, but my faith in my Lord remained strong. My children were all connected to the church in some way. By that time my oldest daughter was preparing her wedding to her second husband. Although she had not been attending the Adventist church at the time and was marrying a non-Adventist, she returned strongly to the church after her father’s death. My son had married his Adventist high school sweetheart the year before, and my youngest was a senior at Orangewood Adventist Academy. My grandson was in Orangewood Adventist Elementary School as well.

Eventually I stopped reading Ellen White’s *Testimonies*; they seemed obsolete for our time. However, I was still riddled with guilt and frustration and never felt that I was saved. In the late 1990’s a thought came to me. To this day, I cannot find a cause for it, but it was this: what if all of my beliefs about Seventh-day Adventist doctrines are wrong and false?

This thought had faded into the background by the time my youngest daughter tried to relate to me, in 1999, what she had found about Adventist doctrines and Ellen White on the website www.ellenwhite.org. Frequently she would try to tell me what she had learned, but I would have none of it. I said I didn’t want to hear it. Often I would say to her, “We are the remnant church.”

Her response would be, “Mother, you know I don’t believe that anymore.”

An argument would often ensue. My daughter told me later that she struggled with whether or not she should pursue convincing me of the truth. After all, she knew it would devastate me, and at my advanced age, was it really worth it? “Why not just leave her alone?” she would ask herself. Then, however, a determination would come over her that she would not allow her mother to die thinking that she might be lost because she ate cheese!

The challenge

I was convinced at the time that my poor daughter had been deceived just as our prophet had warned. I prayed constantly for her, even contacting one of her evangelist friends about her. What I didn’t know was she was praying for me and asking God for a miracle of His grace.

One day she challenged me by saying, “Mother, the Bible says that we are to test the prophets. If you don’t test Ellen White by reading the opposing point of view, then you’re not following the Bible.” After a half an hour to chew on that, I returned to her and agreed to read a book I had ordered from LAM Publishing: D.M. Carright’s book, *The Life of Mrs. E. G. White, Seventh-day Adventist Prophet: Her False Claims Refuted*.

One Saturday morning I was dressed for church, but it was too early to leave. I sat down and opened Carright’s

After reading Carright’s book I was devastated and filled with anguish, and as my daughter saw my face, she felt such compassion for me. I told her that I felt that my entire foundation had been taken away from me.

SANCTIFICATION

It's who you know

LARI MOBLEY

Being raised Seventh-day Adventist, I was taught a great deal about the process of sanctification, particularly by my grandmother but also by my 18 years of Adventist education, and believed that I had a thorough knowledge of it. My grandmother was a devoted Adventist who studied the writings of Ellen G. White on a daily basis, so it was mostly from these writings that I gained my first understanding of the doctrine. Basically, I believed that sanctification was the process by which we as Christians (and more importantly as good Adventists) become more and more like Christ, sinning less and less, until finally we are “safe to save” and ready for heaven. I was also taught about justification through faith in Christ and the grace of God, but what that meant in practice was that God’s grace is what helps us to become sanctified (and thus ready for heaven). Our faith, therefore, is manifest through our works, because “faith without works is dead” (James 2:17). Thus, the emphasis in Adventism was placed on our works rather than on our faith. The

way I was taught to show my faith was through my behavior, most importantly by obeying the Ten Commandments—especially the fourth commandment, by keeping the seventh-day Sabbath.

To illustrate the basis for these beliefs, it’s important to explain the role of Ellen G. White in the development of my theology as an Adventist. In White’s *Selected Messages*, a book written for members of the SDA church in 1893, she explains that “through the work of the Holy Spirit, the sanctification of the truth, the believer becomes fitted for the courts of heaven; for Christ works within us, and His righteousness is upon us. Without this no soul will be entitled to heaven. We would not enjoy heaven

Lari Mobley grew up in Southern California as a fourth-generation Adventist. She received her Master’s degree in English from Loma Linda University (La Sierra) in 1987, and a Master’s of Business Administration from Biola University in 2005. This article was originally written as a final paper for Theology III at Biola taught by Dr. Steve Porter. Professionally, she has worked as a college-level English teacher and as a marketing strategist for several advertising agencies. Currently, she and her husband, Doug Lainson, own inGrace Management Group. They recently moved to Big Bear City, California, with their three children where they attend Community Church by the Lake.



I believed that sanctification was the process by which we as Christians (and more importantly as good Adventists) become more and more like Christ, sinning less and less, until finally we are “safe to save” and ready for heaven.

unless qualified for its holy atmosphere by the influence of the Spirit and the righteousness of Christ” (396). Even though White does mention that “Christ works within us,” the primary emphasis throughout this passage is not on a deepening relationship with God through the process of sanctification, but rather upon our becoming “fitted for the courts heaven,” essentially becoming good enough to spend eternity with God. I was repeatedly taught that without sanctification we are not “entitled to heaven.” By focusing on our outward behaviors through sanctification rather than a restored relationship with God, the SDA doctrine implies that our justification—and hence our salvation—is not complete until we are also sanctified.

Another relevant quote from Ellen G. White is from a little book called *Christ’s Object Lessons*, where she writes, “...through the right use of our talents, we may link ourselves by a golden chain to the higher world. This is true sanctification; for sanctification consists in the cheerful performance of daily duties in perfect obedience to the will of God” (360). Again, the way I was taught to understand the sanctification process focused on reaching a point where everything that I did throughout the day was in perfect obedience to God’s will. While I struggled for years to reach this point of perfect obedience, I was also growing up; my sins seemed to increase rather than decrease. The big sins that I worked on eradicating went from stealing cookies behind Grandma’s back when I was six-years-old to much more grown-up sins when I was in college. Finally, I became convinced that I must be moving backward and not forward in the sanctification process. Obviously, I would not be fit for heaven, so in the end it was easier to give up on God entirely rather than continue to fail.

What is Sanctification?

Being able to look back upon this process twenty years later, I can now see clearly how important it is to have a correct understanding of sanctification. Understanding that the goal of sanctification is restoring our relationship with Christ rather than improving our outward behavior allows us, as Christians, to participate fully in the sanctification process by opening up to the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives instead of fighting the Holy Spirit by trying to take over and “fix” ourselves.

So what exactly is a proper understanding of sanctification? Essentially, the process of sanctification is what occurs in a Christian’s life between his or her justification and glorification, and for most people this process spans many years. In *Christian Theology* Millard J. Erickson concludes his chapter on the doctrine of sanctification by calling it a “process of growth and progress, lived not in the Christian’s own strength, but in the power and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit” (995).

In the lives of Christians there is a “sanctification gap” between the reality of where we actually are in our relationship with God and the ideal of spiritual maturity. We are saved by justification through faith, but we are not yet glorified. So how do we live a life of obedience and actually grow in Christ? The whole of sanctification deals with the reality of our spiritual transformation and maturation. As a process, it begins with a goal, and it also has an object, an agent, means and an overall dynamic that we must seek to understand. We can do so through Scripture as well as through our experiences in order to gain a more full knowledge.

Some key Scriptures relating to sanctification, and in particular that emphasize it is a continuing work of God in our lives, are found in Philippians. In Philippians 1:6, Paul writes: “And I am sure that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on that day when Christ Jesus comes back again.” The emphasis in this passage is on God’s continuing work within us, indicating that sanctification is a process and does not occur all at once. Continuing in Philippians 2:13, Paul adds: “For God is working in you, giving you the desire to obey him and the power to do what pleases him.” While this verse does indicate that sanctification results in obedience to God and pleasing Him, again the emphasis is on God’s working within us rather than on our working on ourselves.

The Goal and Object of Sanctification

The goal of sanctification is much more than just learning correct beliefs about God or changing our behavior. It focuses on transforming our relationships with God. We see a glimpse of this transformation in Matthew where Jesus teaches that the most important commandment is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind” (Matthew 22:37). The process of

sanctification develops in us this kind of love for God that encompasses our entire being. It allows us to experience His fullness and to live the kinds of lives that we were created to live. There are three mutually dependent dimensions to this relationship: (1) an external dimension or knowledge of God, (2) an internal dimension, and (3) a personal dimension or conscious relationship with God. This multi-faceted communion with God works to transform us from the inside out.

In *Renovation of the Heart*, Dallas Willard describes this kind of relationship with God as a “spiritual formation... focused entirely on Jesus.” He states that the goal of this relationship is “an obedience or conformity to Christ that arises out of an inner transformation accomplished through purposive interaction with the grace of God in Christ” (22). Ultimately, obedience is an outcome of this relationship, but Willard emphasizes that this obedience occurs only through inner transformation—not by the effort of Christians to try and become obedient to God on their own. A.W. Tozer echoes this theme of inner transformation in *Pursuit of God*, where he writes that “it is not mere words that nourish the soul, but God himself, and unless and until the hearers find God in personal experience they are not the better for having heard the truth” (10). It is this personal experience with God that transforms us, and not just an intellectual knowledge of Him or of Scripture.

Thus, the goal of sanctification is a transforming relationship with God, and the object is our entire being, not just our outward behavior. This relationship starts from the inside of our souls and moves outward, not the other way around. In 1 Thessalonians Paul writes: “Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until that day when our Lord Jesus Christ comes again” (1 Thess. 5:23). This verse emphasizes that our entire being (spirit, soul and body) is involved in the process, and it is the God of peace Who is making us holy, and not us making ourselves holy.

The Agent of Sanctification

Since it is God himself who makes us holy, then the agent or the power that brings about sanctification is the Holy Spirit working in our lives. In John 15:4 Christ instructs his disciples to “remain in me, and I will remain in you,” and then goes on in verse 5 to say that “those who remain in me will produce much fruit, [but] apart from me you can do nothing.” Many people, however, are unclear how, exactly, they are to “remain in Christ.” What part does God play, and what part do we play in the sanctification process?

One extreme, and the one that I experienced in Adventism, is the “do it all” approach where we boldly try to change ourselves through our own power and believe that “God helps those who help themselves.” Another extreme is to completely “let go and let God,” believing that we have absolutely no role in the process. It is clear according to

Christ’s words in John that we are to remain in Him, but it is also clear that apart from Him we can’t do anything for ourselves. So, we are involved in the sanctification process along with God, but the power and transformation of our lives is accomplished by the Holy Spirit alone, and not by us. Our role is to cooperate and open ourselves to God’s transforming power in our lives. It is the Holy Spirit, however, that is the true agent of sanctification, the one that brings about our transformation.

In order to understand that the Holy Spirit is the agent in the sanctification process, we must have a correct understanding of the doctrine of justification. If we don’t truly believe that we are justified by our faith and secure in Christ through grace, then we are tempted to “earn” our salvation or to convince God that we’re still worthy of forgiveness through our good works. If we feel that we have to produce fruit through our works in order to prove that we have a saving faith in God, then the emphasis is on the works and not the faith.

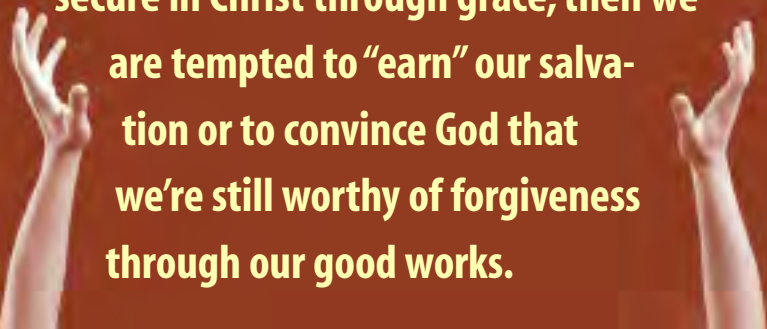
As an Adventist, I memorized James 2:17, that “faith without works is dead,” and also Philippians 2:12, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (KJV). My original understanding of sanctification was based upon these verses, so I truly believed that my faith was dead (and thus unable to count as righteousness) without works. I learned that the emphasis in sanctification was primarily on “fear and trembling.” I heard little or no emphasis on God’s continuing work within us. Ultimately, the goal for us Adventists was to prove to God that we had faith by keeping the Ten Commandments perfectly, especially the 4th commandment admonishing keeping Saturday Sabbath, or we would receive the mark of the beast (Sunday keeping) and be thrown into the Lake of Fire. This “do it yourself” approach is in direct contrast to Christ’s statement that “apart from me you can do nothing,” and Paul’s that God “will continue his work” within us.

The Means of Sanctification

If, therefore, the Holy Spirit provides the power throughout the sanctification process and our role is to cooperate so that we can be transformed and renew our relationship to God, exactly how are we to cooperate? There are a number of means at our disposal to facilitate this process. Externally, we can turn to Scripture, to the witness of other believers, and to the lessons from life experiences to help us open our hearts to God. The written word of God illuminated by the Holy Spirit will especially open our hearts to God’s truth when we submit our lives to what it tells us. Additionally, there are internal means, or spiritual disciplines, that can help us open ourselves to the life-changing work of the Holy Spirit. Some of these include prayer, meditation, fasting, solitude, confession and worship.

It is clear, however, that focusing on the disciplines themselves as a spiritual “to do” list can easily lead us back to the

In order to understand that the Holy Spirit is the agent in the sanctification process, we must have a correct understanding of the doctrine of justification. If we don't truly believe that we are justified by our faith and secure in Christ through grace, then we are tempted to "earn" our salvation or to convince God that we're still worthy of forgiveness through our good works.



legalism trap. We may start to pat ourselves on the back when we see changes in our behavior and begin to believe that we are earning God's favor. We may begin to congratulate ourselves that we're stronger Christians, but actually the disciplines are exercises in weakness, not in strength. Their purpose is to lead us to a dependency on Christ, not self-sufficiency in our own righteousness.

The Dynamics and Implications of Sanctification

We have established that the goal of sanctification is a transformed relationship with God. Its object is our entire being, and its agent is the Holy Spirit. The means we have for submitting to this process include studying Scripture and engaging in spiritual disciplines to open ourselves to God's transforming power. How, then, does the actual process of sanctification work in a practical way? How does growth in holiness occur?

First, it is essential to understand this as an "inside-out" process. The Holy Spirit regenerates our hearts, and then we gradually open up the various dimensions of our lives to God. God transforms us during this process, and we increasingly experience deepening love for Him. As we deepen, we begin to show our hope and love for Christ through the fruit of the Spirit—often without our being conscious of the outward changes. Without a clear picture of these dynamics, it is easy to misunderstand the doctrine of sanctification. Each type of misunderstanding comes with its own consequences. For example, I would describe my previous misunderstanding of sanctification as an Adventist as "Look at me!" spirituality. I learned what outward behaviors mattered most and then focused on appearing to be doing those things. The desired list from an Adventist perspective

would include Sabbath keeping, not wearing jewelry, not eating meat, not going to movies, and being able to quote lots of passages from Ellen G. White's writings. Other denominations likely have their own lists, but the danger here is focusing on appearing to be better and better at obeying God, rather than actually developing a transformation relationship with Him.

Another misunderstanding (which also occurs frequently among Adventists) can be referred to as "Nike spirituality": we "just do it" by obeying God and trying harder to be the right kind of Christian. This approach is similar to "Look at me!" but focuses more on changing ourselves than on impressing others. Folgers "instant coffee" spirituality, on the other hand, waits for instant transformation rather than undergoing the long, hard process of spiritual growth. "Instant coffee" Christians just wait for the Holy Spirit to "zap" them and produce an instant transformation. Still other misunderstandings include "event spirituality," in which we move from the emotional high found in one religious event to another without undergoing any real and lasting growth; "Lone Ranger" spirituality, characterized by a decision that we are better on our own and don't need others or the Body of Christ to grow; and "Apple Pie" spirituality, where we give just a "slice" of our lives to God, but not the whole pie. In this last example we split our sacred and our secular lives, keeping part of our inner heart away from God and not allowing any transformation to take place, essentially keeping parts of our life as dead. This tendency to split our lives in this way, keeping God reserved just for church and religious pursuits but not allowing Him into our everyday lives, is something especially prevalent in the business world, even among Christians.

There are several reasons why the sanctification process can be so confusing in our culture. Perhaps the biggest reason is that when the Protestant Reformation occurred, it emphasized justification by faith in reaction to over 1,500 years of the church's emphasis on spiritual growth which had warped into legalism, corruption, and false doctrines. Many of the traditions that dealt with the process of sanctification have received little emphasis in American Protestant churches today, which instead focus more on the "being saved" aspect of justification rather than on the "being transformed" aspect of sanctification. Additionally, in America we are primarily a pragmatic society, focused on solutions with an "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" philosophy of life. Add these things to the typical evangelical approach of activism and an emphasis on doing (i.e. reading the Word, worshiping, learning the "right" beliefs) rather than on being, and it is easy to see why the sanctification process is misunderstood and underemphasized in many churches today.

When we don't have a clear understanding of theological doctrines, we fall easily into shallow approaches to sanctification, such as picking a school of thought and ending

up with nothing but a “parrot” theology, emphasizing solutions that work for us and ending up thinking that they will work for everyone else, or focusing only on specific problems like prayer or finding God’s will and ending up without a holistic understanding of the process. Instead, Dr. Steve Porter (Biola University) uses the metaphor of a funnel to describe arriving at a Biblical understanding, starting first with the doctrine of human nature, then sin, salvation, the role of the church, the Holy Spirit and Christ in order to fully grasp the sanctification process. We cannot truly understand sanctification unless we have funneled our beliefs through a broad base of correct theology.

Practical Application of Sanctification

Given a holistic understanding of the sanctification process, how then should we live our lives? A practical approach focuses on remaining open to the Holy Spirit and allowing transformation to occur, continuing to develop an ever-deepening relationship with God, practicing spiritual disciplines, and most of all giving God credit for the fruit of the spirit manifest in our lives rather than taking credit ourselves. I know from personal experience what it is like to live with an incorrect, twisted understanding of sanctification that inevitably leads instead to an impractical approach that prevents real transformation of our hearts. Without an understanding of the relational aspects of the process and grounding in salvation through grace and not by works, sanctification can become focused almost entirely on our outward appearance, while our hearts remain untransformed, sealed off from the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Adventists are very much “perfectionists” who, as discussed by Erickson, “hold that it is possible to come to a state where a believer does not sin, but that indeed some Christians do arrive at this point” (1984). Even though I’m not sure if anyone has ever personally known someone who has reached this sinless state, I was certainly taught to believe that it was possible and, in fact, ultimately necessary in order to gain entrance to Heaven. My personal “loss of faith” experience illustrates the real danger posed by a warped understanding of sanctification. To illustrate, I went back through a number of journal and diary entries that I made many years ago to fully understand the impact of my previous beliefs on sanctification on my life at the time.

In my senior year of college as a 19-year-old English major, I was required to keep a “religious diary” as part of a class called “Religion and Literature.” At this point I had already lost faith in Adventism as the only true, remnant church, and in particular I was questioning the validity of the Adventist “prophet” Ellen G. White after she had been exposed as a plagiarist. I was trying to navigate my beliefs about Christianity in general, apart from Adventism, and really struggling because I still thought that being a Christian was all about being good, about “remaining saved” or as I was often told, about being “safe to save.”

Instead of going to church one “Sabbath” morning, I wrote this diary entry:

I read the Bible voluntarily last night for the first time in a long time. Somehow I ended up at Psalm 69, which seemed to describe exactly some of the trauma I’ve been feeling: “I am worn out calling for help; my throat is parched. My eyes fail, looking for God” (v. 3). That’s how it feels when you just can’t believe anymore and wonder if anything is true. I feel as if all my prayers have been ignored or unheard. Depression is like a quicksand—the deeper you sink into it the more difficult it is to escape. I wish God could rebuild my faith in something. I know I’m making it impossible because I rarely talk to him, but I’m afraid to try again, because it’s never worked for me before. I’ve never experienced a lasting happiness from religion. The Psalm goes on: “I am in pain and distress; may your salvation, O God, protect me” (v. 29). I hope salvation is not beyond my grasp. I don’t want to die.

From this point in 1984, I eventually left Christianity altogether because no matter how hard I tried, I wasn’t able to live up to the standards I believed were required in order to be saved. I could put on an excellent front at church and in school, but I knew inside that it was nothing more than that. I had pursued a relationship with God from the perspective that it was supposed to help me to be good and to keep the Ten Commandments perfectly, but when I failed over and over again, I eventually gave up. I had been taught that God’s grace was provided in order to help me be good, not to justify me. I had also been taught that salvation was through faith, but that faith was real only when accompanied by “good works,” and mine were never enough. I finally concluded that I just wasn’t good enough to stay saved, and it was easier to quit instead and just try to be as happy as I could be apart from any type of religion. I did not understand as an Adventist that sanctification is a growth process of spiritual maturation in which I could develop an ever deepening relationship with God through the power of the Holy Spirit—but only after being saved eternally and justified by God’s grace.

Nearly 15 years after I wrote the diary entry above, my husband and I started attending a Christian, non-denominational church. I had decided to council with our pastor regarding my disdain for religion and lack of faith. He asked me to write down some of my objections so we could discuss them, and I wrote the following:

I may have forgotten all the reasons I left religion behind me because I have chosen to forget them, but I have felt for many years that I made the best decision, the only decision I could have and still have survived. I sarcastically give the analogy that I’m not an atheist, I’m not an agnostic, but rather I’m an apathist. I truly don’t care about the whole religion thing. Of course, that’s not true. I do care, have always cared, but finally just gave up. Am I bitter? @#\$% yes. These last ten years without religion have been so much more comfortable, happy, rewarding, normal-feeling than the 20 or so years before when I was always working toward a bet-

The entire sanctification process is really a process of opening up our innermost hearts and emotions to the Holy Spirit so that God can transform us through a relationship with Him. It is utterly clear that I did not understand this vulnerable necessity but instead thought that as a Christian it was my responsibility to live up to God's standards in order to merit his grace.

ter relationship with God, all in vain. Sure, I've missed the absolute certainty Adventists have of being "right," but I haven't missed all the guilt, failings, etc. Even giving up on Adventism and trying to live under "grace," giving my life to God still didn't work... If I'm the kind of person that God would burn eternally and torture just because I sincerely tried for 20 years to have a relationship with him to no avail, then I guess I'm really not interested in him at all. Not my kind of God, so to speak.

The key fact in the above diary entry is that I truly felt that the ten years I spent "religion-free" were much happier and more normal than the 20 or so preceding years when I pursued a relationship with God but ultimately failed and gave up. I now see that I did not understand what it meant to have a relationship with God. I did not understand the true goal of sanctification, and I had no idea what it meant to be justified. I have come to see how critical it is to understand these two facts of our salvation in order to live as Christians. Later in the same entry I wrote about the kind of relationship I had experienced with God in the past:

I'm extremely hesitant to come back on board with the whole religion thing. I remember the whole experience, the loss of faith over several years, as intensely painful, emotionally wrenching, and devastating. I don't want to ever go through that again. I am extremely reluctant to trust God with my emotions, love, and life again. I feel like I'm not perfect, but at least I'm in control and doing the best job I know how. I've been much happier in the last few years.

What's significant to me about the entry above was my reluctance to "trust God with my emotions." The entire sanctification process is really a process of opening up our innermost hearts and emotions to the Holy Spirit so that God can transform us through a relationship with Him. It is

utterly clear that I did not understand this vulnerable necessity but instead thought that as a Christian it was my responsibility to live up to God's standards in order to merit his grace. I thought that if I just had the right kind of faith, I would be good enough to continue being justified. As an Adventist, and even later as a "recovering Adventist," I was scared by the entire process of sanctification because I still believed I was ultimately supposed to be perfect in order to go to Heaven. Without achieving perfection, I wouldn't be happy there, according to Ellen G. White, but I wasn't sure I could ever accomplish perfection.

Further complicating my eternal future was the fact that I was taught God would hold us accountable for obeying only what we actually knew. Those who never knew about the seventh-day Sabbath, for example, could still be saved. I, however, had been taught that I had to keep the Sabbath (and not wear jewelry, eat meat, or go to movies), so I would be sinning if I did not adhere to those standards. I used to wish and even pray sometimes that God wouldn't teach me anymore because I was struggling enough as it was to live up to the truth I already knew!

Ultimately, our understanding of key theological issues filters down to our understanding of sanctification. Adventism contains many significant theological errors, from its belief that Saturday Sabbath-keeping is necessary for salvation to its belief that Christ is also Michael the Archangel and not eternally co-equal with God but rather "made equal." False theology, including the sometimes subtle ways traditions are implemented within a church even in contrast to what may be officially taught, acts like a poison to our relationship with God. For example, Adventists do publicly state that we are saved by faith and receive forgiveness by God's grace and not works, but within the church this Biblical doctrine is altered and distorted with additional requirements.

God, however, does prove to be faithful, and in my own experience He ultimately answered my prayers from over 30 years ago and brought me back to faith in Him. Through the process of sanctification, the Holy Spirit is teaching me—too slowly sometimes for my liking—what it really means to develop a transformational relationship with God and to grow in Him. This deep transformation, though, only began to occur after I finally understood the amazing, completely unmerited grace of God that saves me. Only after I knew I was saved securely could I begin to develop a relationship with Him that allows the Holy Spirit to truly change me. **!**

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In Adam or in Christ: Where are you?

COLLEEN TINKER

I sat in my eighth grade Bible class watching my teacher draw a diagram on the chalkboard. Beginning at a point on the left side of the board, he drew a gradually ascending line punctuated by sharp drops of varying depths. While the direction remained ultimately upward, the progression of the line was seriously slowed by the peaks and valleys which impeded its progress.

That line, he told us, represented our lives. Once we accepted Jesus—an event represented by the line's point of origin—we would gradually become more and more obedient. Our goal, of course, was to attain perfection like Christ's. We would likely die before we finished our goal, he explained. We would repeatedly sin and fall away, but as long as the direction of our lives continued toward that perfection until the time of our death, God would make up the difference. My teacher explained that at the beginning of our Christian lives, we had almost no goodness, and we needed Christ to make up the entire gap between our sin and His righteousness. Gradually, however, as we became more and more perfect in our obedience to His law, we needed Christ to make up less and less dif-

ference between us and perfect righteousness.

Ultimately, if we should live long enough and continue to devote ourselves to perfection, our characters would perfectly reflect the character of Christ. We would no longer need Him to stand in the gap, because we ourselves would have attained the righteousness of Christ. This ultimate character perfection was necessary because, we were told, in the last generation, God's people would have to stand during the time of trouble without a mediator or intercessor (Ellen G. White [EGW], *The Great Controversy*, pages 425, 614, and 648). Perfection, we were taught, was the goal of every Christian. Christ's death was necessary for legal purposes, but once we accepted His payment for our sins, we had to dedicate ourselves to becoming like Him in order to be ready for salvation.

Better sounding words

In recent years many Adventists have begun teaching a more orthodox-sounding gospel. We are saved by grace through faith, they affirm. For example, in the teacher's edition of the Sabbath School quarterly for July–August, 2006, *The Gospel, 1844, and Judgment*, Clifford Goldstein, the principal contributor and editor says, "The good news of the judgment is that Jesus, in His righteousness, gets us through the judgment because He stands there in our place... Otherwise, all of us would be lost because none of us, no matter our works, has enough righteousness to stand before a Holy God. Unless we are clothed in a perfect righteousness that none of us possess or could ever earn, we would have to stand in our own works, our own righteousness; and because we are all sinners, we would all be condemned" (p. 150).

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While these and other statements say that our own efforts do not qualify us for heaven, still, upon closer investigation, we see that Adventism is still teaching that our works play a role in validating Jesus' "right" to save us. No matter how they adjust their vocabulary, Adventists still remain tied to EGW and her permeating, foundational doctrine of the Investigative Judgment.

"In the end, what the judgment tells us is that, in a special way, our works are coming under scrutiny before the onlooking universe. If we love God, if we are rejoicing in the salvation He has given us, we will want to send a message to the world and to the universe that, indeed, we love and serve the Lord who has done so much for us. Good works testify to the reality of the faith that we have in Christ; and though they don't save us in the judgment, good works reveal that, though we are sinners, Christ has done the right thing in bringing us into "his kingdom that ... shall not be destroyed" (Dan 7:14)" (Goldstein, p. 170).

Following this paragraph of the quarterly are these thought questions, "What kind of message do your works send to anyone who might be watching them? What changes do you need to make in order to send a better message?"

John Fowler, editor of the lesson commentary, also includes this comment: "Those who claimed to have accepted Jesus will have their fitness for heaven examined [in the investigative judgment] on the basis of their loyalty and discipleship to Christ. This examination also will demonstrate to the universe that Christ's atoning death vindicates God's position in the great controversy and His judgment on sin and Satan" (p. 153).

In other words, many Adventists today are teaching a Biblical-sounding gospel of justification by faith, but they confuse the message by retaining the need for good works in order to remain saved and to be "safe to save". Additionally, these good works are necessary to help vindicate God's right to destroy sin and Satan.

Further, Goldstein says "we are saved... only through the righteousness of Jesus, which is credited to us by faith, a faith that is always manifested by works." Yet he qualifies this claim of being saved through Jesus' righteousness by saying, "This righteousness covers us the moment we, through a complete surrender of ourselves to Christ, claim it for ourselves, and it stays with us (though not unconditionally) right through the judgment" (p. 156).

This conditional righteousness is linked to a person's maintaining adequate works of faith.

Jay Gallimore, president of the Michigan Conference in the North American Division, spoke at the Ten Commandments Weekend sponsored by 3 Angels' Broadcasting Network held in Washington, DC, on the first Friday and Saturday of May this year. In his sermon addressing the first commandment, Gallimore said, "Redemption gives birth to trust; trust gives birth to obedience [to the law], and obedience gives birth to victory over sin."

While Adventists are beginning to speak on the one hand of being saved as a gift of grace through faith in Jesus, they betray their unchanged belief that salvation is conditional—that it depends upon each individual demonstrating faith by increas-

ing obedience to the Decalogue, thus "passing" the investigative judgment and justifying God's decision to save us.

In Adam, in Christ

Perhaps the underlying reason Adventists cannot grasp the true gospel of grace and the security of salvation is that they do not truly understand what it means to be born "in Adam"—nor do they understand what it means to be "in Christ."

When Adam and Eve sinned (Genesis 3:1-7), they experienced the spiritual death that caused them to know shame and guilt. They hid from God; Adam blamed Eve; Eve blamed the snake, and they even blamed God. Their fall brought sin to the human race, and from then on, every human comes into existence in a condition and position called "in Adam". Further, this condition means we are born doomed to death: "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22). In Romans 5:12-14 Paul also tells us that "sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned." He is even more graphic in Ephesians 2:1-3 where he explains that we were all dead in our trespasses and sins; in fact, we are "by nature objects of wrath" (Ephesians 2:1-3).

The basic truth that all humans are born spiritually dead, doomed to physical death, and objects of God's wrath is repugnant to most people. Without understanding this fact, however, people are not likely to see that they are completely unworthy of redemption. They can't be good or do good on their own because they are fatally flawed. Their most stellar personal achievements and self-discipline are all tainted with corruption and count for nothing in God's eyes.

The transfer to being "in Christ"

The question is, how does one transfer from being "in Adam" to being "in Christ"? This is the process which Adventists typically do not understand from a Biblical perspective. It has nothing to do with a conditional acceptance either of Jesus or by Jesus. Further, being "in Christ" is not secured nor confirmed by perfectly reflecting Christ's character nor by producing works that "prove" we have faith. On the contrary, our transfer to the position of "in Christ" is entirely God's work.

Paul says in Colossians 1:13 that the Father "has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and has brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves." God the Father Himself facilitates our transfer to being "in Christ". Further, Ephesians 2:4 & 8 tells us that because of His great love for us, God in his mercy made us alive with Christ. "It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not of yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works so that no one can boast." In addition, Romans 5:17 clarifies that all who receive God's provision of grace and the gift of righteousness "will reign in life".

God Himself rescues us and transfers us to being in Christ. He provided for this miraculous change of position by Jesus' death and resurrection—a sacrifice He made for each of us when we were still dead in our sins. Romans 3:21-26 describes

this mystery; a righteousness apart from law has been made known in Jesus. This righteousness comes through faith in Jesus “for all who believe.” God presented Jesus as a “sacrifice of atonement” through faith in his blood. God took the initiative to restore humanity to himself. He offered himself as an atoning sacrifice to satisfy his own justice.

Not only did God take the initiative to reconcile us to himself—he doesn’t wait for us to clean up our act before declaring us righteous. As Colossians 2:13-14 tells us, when we were dead in our sin, Christ made us alive with Christ by forgiving our sin, canceling the written code that was against us—nailing it to the cross—and disarming the rulers and authorities, making a public display of them.

Furthermore, God not only forgives our sin and reconciles everything in heaven and on earth to Himself in His body through death (Col. 1:20-21), but he raised us up with Christ and “seated us with him in the heavenly realm” (Ephesians 2:6-7).

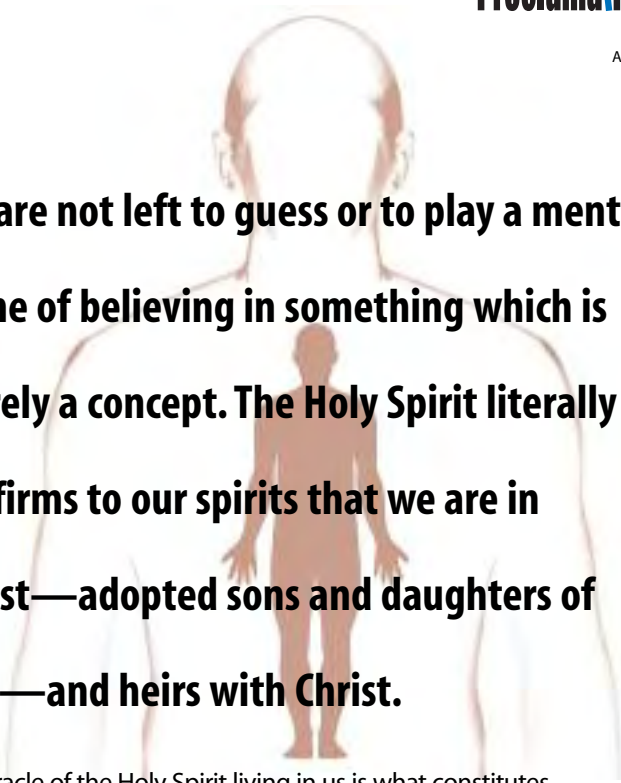
In the past I always thought of these positional statements—“in Adam,” “in Christ,” “Seated us with him in the heavenly realm”—as metaphors explaining some nebulous spiritual concept which we couldn’t really grasp. I am now seeing that these are real. When we receive the sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf, we literally move to a new position: in Christ. Our lives are now hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3). But what does it mean to be brought to life spiritually? What does it mean that we are “hidden with Christ in God”? Further, how do we know these things are real at all?

The “proof”

For decades I struggled to understand what it meant to have a relationship with Jesus. I wanted to have one—I prayed to have one—but I couldn’t figure out what people (usually non-Adventists) meant when I heard them talk about “knowing Jesus” or “loving Jesus.” In fact, when I heard people talk about being “born again” or “knowing the Lord” I felt downright annoyed.

The song “Jesus Loves Me, This I Know” always suggested to me that I was missing something—I had no idea how to experience love for Jesus or His love for me—but I finally decided that the idea of loving Him was also simply a figure of speech for some legal, rational transaction that I made with God. Of course, I was never sure I had actually completed such a transaction—or if I had, I was never sure it continued to be valid. The whole business of “knowing Jesus” was elusive and troubling.

I finally began to realize that the Bible clearly explains this miracle, and the Holy Spirit confirms it in us when we submit ourselves to Jesus and invite Him to reveal Himself to us. In Ephesians 1:13-14 Paul tells us that when we believe in Jesus, we are “marked with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession.” 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 further confirms this divine seal of protection. In this passage Paul tells us that God anoints us, sets His seal of ownership on us, and puts His Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee of what is to come.



We are not left to guess or to play a mental game of believing in something which is merely a concept. The Holy Spirit literally confirms to our spirits that we are in Christ—adopted sons and daughters of God—and heirs with Christ.

This miracle of the Holy Spirit living in us is what constitutes our new birth. When we accept Jesus and the Holy Spirit indwells us, our spirits which have been dead in sin come alive, and we become new creatures. “Flesh gives birth to flesh, but Spirit gives birth to spirit,” is the way Jesus explained this phenomenon to Nicodemus (John 3:6).

Further, this birth by the Spirit is how we KNOW we have passed from death to life (John 11:25-26). Romans 8: 15-17 explains that the indwelling Holy Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. “For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.”

God gives us this Spirit from Himself so we “may understand what God has freely given us” (1 Cor. 1:12).

We are not left to guess or to play a mental game of believing in something which is merely a concept. The Holy Spirit literally confirms to our spirits that we are in Christ—adopted sons and daughters of God—and heirs with Christ. This knowledge is real—but it is not generated by our rationalizing or by cognitive skills. It is spiritual knowledge which only comes when, through surrendering to belief in Christ’s sacrifice for us, we receive the Holy Spirit and with Him, the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:14-16).

The security

When we have accepted Jesus and become born of the Spirit, we can know we are eternally secure in Him. This new birth marks our transition from being “in Adam” to being “in Christ.” Our lives are hidden with Christ in God, and when He is revealed, we also will be revealed with Him in glory (Col 3:3-4). Nothing can remove us from Jesus’ or the Father’s hands; we are held in an eternally secure double grip (John 10:27-31). We will not be condemned, but we have already passed over from death to life (John 5:24). Even if we die, we will live—and if we believe in Him, we will never die (John 11:25-26).

When we are sealed and guaranteed our eternal inheritance, we then learn to live by the Spirit. Adventism often explains living by the Spirit as having the power to keep the law and do good works. This, they explain, is necessary for proving we are worthy of salvation—and indeed, necessary to stay saved.

In reality, living by the Spirit means learning to yield to Jesus instead of giving in to our self-protective, self-indulgent temptations. Paul explained the predicament of a person “in Christ” in Romans 6 and 7. “In my inner being I delight in God’s law,” he says, “but another law is at work in the members of my body” (Romans 7:21-25).

In Christ, our sinful mind no longer controls us. Our natural sinful mind cannot hope to submit to God’s law, but if the Spirit of Christ is living in us, we are no longer controlled by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, because now we are alive (Romans 8:7-10). When our spirits come alive in Christ, they are eternally connected to God through the Holy Spirit—but this spiritual life inhabits, for now, a body still dead in sin (Romans 8:10). Because of this condition, we still struggle with our sinful flesh. Our sinful flesh has no hope of becoming perfect—only at the resurrection will we have sinless bodies. Yet even in this condition, our sinful flesh is no longer in charge of us when we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

With our future secure and our position having been transferred from “in Adam” to “in Christ,” there is no condemnation when our sinful flesh fails. Further, when we are “in Christ Jesus” the “law of the spirit of life has set me free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:1-2). Now we have a new position and new power to enable us choose to submit to God and to surrender our temptations and habitual responses.

The difference between living by the Spirit when we are “in Christ” and trying to produce good works by the power of the Spirit is one of position. If we try to produce good works, praying for the Holy Spirit to help us, we are operating from the flesh, as if we were still “in Adam.” This perspective depends on some external standard of morality and service by which we measure our spiritual progress. Adventists generally use the 10 Commandments and the traditional lifestyle teachings derived from Ellen White’s counsels as their standard of behavior.

Paul was forceful, however, in stating that if a person studies Moses (the law), a veil covers his heart, and his mind is made dull. Only in Christ is the veil removed and is freedom possible (2 Corinthians 3:14-18). Further, he told people who were in Christ that if they turned back to the law and used it to determine their justification, they had fallen from grace (Galatians 5:4-5).

Instead of depending on the law, a person in Christ depends completely upon Christ for his good deeds and his spiritual growth. Jesus is faithful to complete what He begins in us, Paul wrote in Philippians 1:3-6. Living by the Spirit means we offer ourselves as living sacrifices to Him (Romans 12:1), willing to surrender our lusts, dreams, anxieties, desires for gossip, revenge, and self-indulgence to Him.

When we are in Christ, we no longer struggle with sin. Instead, we deal with Jesus, and when sin tempts us or even

overtakes us, our response is to submit and surrender to Jesus instead of to fight with sin. The challenge of being in Christ is that we give up our control to Him instead of owning it ourselves. As we respond to our Father’s discipline, we begin to realize that God asks us to surrender whatever identity we have that is other than Him. He asks us to trust Him for our provision, our contentment, our authority, our fulfillment—even for our work and our good deeds. We have to allow Him to teach us what He wants us to do, submitting ourselves to Him as we also submit ourselves to His teaching through His Word.

Judgment complete

When we are in Christ, we no longer have to prepare ourselves to pass the judgment. We have been judged in Christ, and we will not be condemned (John 5:24). Jesus cancelled the written code that was against us, nailing it to the cross in his body and defeating the spiritual powers and authorities who had claimed the right to “own” us (Eph 2:14; Col. 2: 14-15).

In Adam we are all spiritually dead, by nature objects of wrath. But God in mercy and love took into Himself the curse of the law and became sin for us. Instead of allowing us to die our deserved death, He took responsibility for us. Jesus, our Creator, took on a human body in order to represent us. He, the fullness of deity, contained Himself in a physical body, and as our representative—as the second Adam—lived the life we could not live, died the death we should have died, and broke the power of death by rising from the grave by the power that was within Him. God Himself took into Himself the separation and suffering that belonged to us.

We can never look at God and the singularity of the cross and accuse God of being capricious or vengeful. He Himself bore our sin, became the curse, and died the death of separation within Himself that belonged to us.

When we are in Christ we are in the most secure place in the universe. We are alive, we are forgiven, we are free, and we begin to bear the imprint of Christ as we surrender ourselves to the Holy Spirit Who is in us. When we are in Christ we are literally hidden in God, and we no longer have to prove that we are worthy of salvation.

Jesus covered us with His blood and righteousness, and when God looks at us, He sees Jesus first. He looks at us through Christ, and He sees His perfection.

When we are in Christ that slowly ascending line measuring our stumbling increase in perfection is irrelevant. Our eternal security is not judged by our good deeds or by perfectly reflecting the character of Christ. When we are in Christ we will never stand without a mediator because we are hidden with Him in God. We are both saved and established by God through the gospel (Romans 16:25); we never have to keep ourselves saved.

In Christ we are seated at the right hand of God. In Christ we are children of God, and in Christ we finally know love.

“For you have died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3).

Christ follower, you are

RIGHTEOUS

DALE RATZLAFF

We at Life Assurance Ministries often refer to the simple gospel of God's grace in Christ in our communication with others. Some read this as "cheap grace," lawless behavior and disregard for holy living. Nothing could be further from the truth. Sometimes it is helpful to reduce complex numbers to their prime numbers. Or, to change the metaphor, find the lowest common denominator. Like numbers, other realities can also be reduced to their common denominators. One theologian said that theology can be reduced to "grace" and ethics to "gratitude." I believe he is right.

Grace:

Salvation is God's gift received by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Carolyn and I read a chapter of the Bible together each morning. We just finished Galatians and are now in Ephesians. Wow, what powerful books when read in context. I would like to share with you just a few texts on God's grace.

"But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph. 2:4-9).

A dead person cannot do much on his own behalf. Thus Paul uses this figure to show that God's Grace is sovereign. Salvation is a "gift" of God. A dead person does not work—much less do any "good work"!

We could describe the same work of salvation as justification by faith. We are declared righteous, not on the basis of any

work of ours—even saving faith is a gift. The righteousness that abides in the person of Christ is our only claim to righteousness. Yes, and it is this perfect righteousness that is imputed to us freely by God's grace.

Grace, however, is never given as an isolated entity. Included with grace is the Holy Spirit that is in Christ—but not in Christ only—it is also freely given to us who believe.

Gratitude:

"In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory." Eph. 1:13-14

Grace was given to us when we were "dead" in sin. Then God made us alive and "raised us up with Him" and sealed us with the Holy Spirit. There is no other "seal" mentioned in the teachings sections of the New Testament other than the Holy Spirit. Note that the Holy Spirit is given as a pledge, guarantee, or down payment of our eternal inheritance in Christ. The presence of the Holy Spirit is the evidence to us that God has given us His sovereign, saving grace.

Paul always follows the same order in His presentation of the simple gospel of God's grace: First, he shows that we are saved solely by God's grace in Christ by faith alone without any works from us. Then he always follows up with an encouragement to live like the kind of people God has ALREADY declared us to be. Here, now, there are three major players—yet all spring from God's grace and gift of the Holy Spirit.

First, the Holy Spirit is given to us to empower us to live the Christ-like life.

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RIGHTEOUS

Note the power and scope of the following texts:

“Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,” Eph. 3:20

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” Gal. 5:22-23

Second, the Holy Spirit is given to motivate us to live the Christ-like life. When we realize that the Holy Spirit is the guarantee or seal of our inheritance in Christ, it motivates us to live in an attitude of gratitude. No longer are we seeking to live the Christ-like life in order to be saved. Rather, we are motivated to live the Christ-like life because we have already been saved by God’s grace. It is the realization of what we have ALREADY been given that motivates us to be what God wants us to be!

Picture yourself winning a \$300,000,000 jackpot. You receive twenty thousand dollars as the first installment as proof that you are indeed the winner. Now you know that the full amount is yours waiting to be given at the specified time. Similarly, gratitude is the result of God’s sovereign grace ALREADY received as it is interpreted to us by the Holy Spirit.

Third, there is human choice involved in how we live “in God’s grace.” Thus we find the many admonitions of Paul in the latter part of his epistles:

“For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Gal. 5:13

“If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.” Gal. 5:25

“Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.” Gal. 6:2

“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” Eph. 4:30-32

The divine order in salvation is so important. If one tries to live the Christ-like life in order to be saved there is no assurance. One never knows when he is good enough! Have I kept the Sabbath well enough? (I know of no Christian who has even tried to keep all the Biblical Sabbath laws.) Have I given enough to the church? Have I been loving enough? Have I read my Bible enough? Have I left enough time between meals (assuming that one accepts the instruction that “it is a sin to eat between meals”)? Have I spent enough time in prayer? You see the list never stops, and real assurance never comes. Any gratitude is always mixed with anxiety and is at best “iffy.”

Rather, the simple gospel is just this: We are saved by God’s sovereign grace in Christ. We were declared perfectly righteous in Christ when we placed our faith in Him. When we believe we receive the Holy Spirit who empowers us with gratitude to live the Christ-like life because we have already been saved and sealed and given the guarantee of our eternal inheritance. Let us live like the kind of people God has ALREADY declared us to be. **!**

From deception to the gospel of grace CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

book, skeptical of finding anything but falsehood. Shortly after noon I was still sitting reading when my youngest daughter and her husband came in from their church in Norwalk. After reading Canright’s book I was devastated and filled with anguish, and as my daughter saw my face, she felt such compassion for me. I told her that I felt that my entire foundation had been taken away from me.

She put her arm around me and said, “No, Jesus is your foundation, Mom, not Ellen White!”

For a while my world was upside down, and I didn’t know where to turn, but I knew that my precious Lord and Savior was with me through it all. I never returned to an Adventist church. I didn’t trust myself to stay silent. I continued to read and study, so shocked at what I found. Soon I became very angry at the General Conference for helping to keep many people in spiritual bondage. When I calmed down I felt wonderful peace and freedom! I was 75 years old.

I made so many wonderful discoveries in the Bible that I never knew existed. I had thought, throughout my whole life, that I knew so much more than people of other denominations (churches that I used to refer to as “Satan’s churches”)! I was fasci-

nated with and became so well-versed in the subject of the Old and New Covenant that my youngest daughter would call me to ask me questions about it. Things that had once been a mystery to me in the Scriptures now became plain as day, and I realized that I had been brainwashed by the Adventist church all those long years.

Of course the day came when someone of my former Adventist church noticed that I was no longer coming and decided to pay me a visit. A genuine honest soul, he expressed concern for me and was taken aback that I no longer believed in Ellen White nor the Adventist church. I offered him a book to read that I had obtained from LAM Publishing. After reading the book he was convinced of the truth about the Adventist church and is now out of the church himself! Often he has made visits with my youngest and me, and we all discuss the freeing truth of the gospel.

I am so thankful for what the Holy Spirit has done in my life; how He led me from deception through, first my youngest, and then through the books of LAM Publishing. Now I belong to what I call the New Covenant Gospel of Grace Church (my own made up church).

Praise God’s glorious and holy name. **!**

Thank you, Verle Streifling

Your article, "The Bible: Inerrant?" has to be one of the best I have ever read in your magazine or anywhere on the subject. I have been emailing a man who is assisting the Ellen G. White Estate in purchasing old Adventist books. I sold most of mine to him, and because of my comments he decided to help me see the light of the real Ellen White and her "truth" and of how I was misled. When he could not agree with my definition of inspiration, he stopped his emails. He was unable to answer my questions to him, either; he kept requesting time to study them before answering.

Your explanation of the issue of inspiration and reliability is 100% better than mine, but we believe the same. I wish I could send this man this article and see what his answer would be!

Thanks and God bless!

Be gone

Through the generosity of an anonymous benefactor, I have for some time been receiving your publication *Proclamation!* And I take the time to read it through. You folks are a sad bunch. You have never really, in fact, left Adventism. Apparently you are so consumed by an obsessive desire to gripe and criticize that you cannot rest. It must be the result of a truly overpowering guilt-trip.

I was raised a Methodist. When, in 1979, I was baptized into the Adventist faith, I simply cut all ties and left Methodism behind. I didn't dwell on the faults, failures, shortcomings, or doctrinal differences of that denomination. Never gave it another thought. My experience with it was past. It was history. Nor have I ever heard of any association of, or publication for, ex-Methodists in which to wring their hands in criticisms and complaints.

Nor so with you people. You make a career out of fault-finding, nit-picking, and recrimination. If you are truly former Adventists, then why haven't you just put your past behind you and moved on? Why this need to hang on, rationalizing, in a desperate attempt to justify your leaving the Adventist fold?

I think maybe what happened is that you discovered like complainers wallowing around in self-pity, and you realized there's a definite need for fellow shoulders to cry on. Then a light dawned, and one or more of you said, hey, there might be money to be made in this! Let's establish an association of former Adventists to get together for group-therapy, and we can start up a publication where we can share testimonials of our troubles and worries, and we'll sprinkle in a few articles by our own puffed up, self-proclaimed experts to reinforce our new-found beliefs, and *Voila!* A new cottage industry to prey upon the

self-pity and guilt of a whole fertile field of former Adventists! Wow!

Surely the sufferers will be eager to pay for such mutual misery-loves-company back-patting therapy. What better way to be encouraged in our wayward journey than to nip at the heels of our former flock, and bash the former belief system that we once loved and held so dear?

Why can't you all be true ex-Adventists? Get over it. Cut your ties and move on in your new hope. Those of us you've cast aside and left behind don't need to be slapped around in your pages, ridiculed and scorned for the beliefs and faith we still hold dear. Just say Bye-Bye. Adios, Auf Wiedersehen. Au Revoir. See ya later, alligator. And be gone.

Honored or stigmatized?

I am not sure whether I should feel honored or stigmatized as the only one among my friends and associates to receive your publication. However, I have been interested or perhaps, mostly irritated and distressed, by reading the editorial comments and articles of your publication, which seems to have the exclusive purpose and goal of attacking or undermining the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church or aiding and comforting those who have chosen to abandon that fellowship....

BOOK REVIEW:***Adventist to Christian* by Dale Ratzlaff**

COLLEEN TINKER

Dale Ratzlaff's latest book, *Adventist to Christian*, is an account of his life. This audio book is especially effective because Dale reads it himself. Hearing his story in his own voice with his own emotional inflections is a moving experience. Dale recounts his family's Mennonite roots and conversion to Adventism, and he tells of meeting Carolyn Mundall in grade school—the same Carolyn who is now his wife.

His near-death experience when he yielded his life to Jesus and experienced a new certainty that he was right with God marked the turning point of his life. Dale tells of his college and seminary experiences during which he began to have doctrinal questions which his professors could not answer. He tells of discovering the gospel of grace in the book of Romans and the subsequent changes that understanding made in his experience.

Especially interesting are the conversations Dale recounts with various church educators and leaders as his doctrinal questions affected what he could and couldn't preach in good conscience. Dale names many of the people to whom he talked and shares their surprising responses to him. He tells of his own involvement in what he calls "the Adventist underground" as he made copies of

Desmond Ford's Glacier View defense available after receiving a copy from someone else.

He tells of his eventual firing from the Central California Conference and of his subsequent continuing Bible study with the congregation of an independent church which he pastored. He shares how he and Carolyn began to understand the New Covenant along with their church members, and he talks about the Holy Spirit giving him direct spiritual knowledge of particular problems in one of the churches he pastored.

The effect of this book on me was two-fold. First, I was deeply moved and convicted that God directs our lives and teaches us exactly what He wants us to know. My obligation is to be willing to go where the Holy Spirit leads and to allow truth to be more important than what I might love or believe. God is faithful, and He asks us to surrender our own control to Him.

Second, I was overwhelmed with gratitude to God for uniquely preparing and equipping Dale to become a trailblazer of truth for the sake of millions of us who have been bound in the deception of false doctrine and the influence of an unbiblical prophetess. God prepared this work for Dale in advance (Ephesians 2:10), and He guided him to study and write what God taught him when the time was right. God specifically raised up Dale to write his books and to found Life Assurance Ministries for the sake of helping countless other searching Adventists whom God is awakening.

Dale's book is available at www.LifeAssuranceMinistries.com.

It is a wonder to me that the leaders of LAM can focus so much energy on their former spiritual home to attack and undermine the purposes and influence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church based on their perception of its erroneous use or misuse of the Scriptures when the human landscape is so full of deceptive, faith-destroying influences such as the electronic media, pornographic publications, destructive lifestyle practices. Wouldn't it be better to stay within the fold of the church and seek to correct and control worldly influences seeking to undermine the Holy Spirit's power in the hearts and minds of believers than to attack the law and Sabbath from without? Will you be identified with the accuser of the brethren, the dragon who was wrath with the woman and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ?...

I think all our efforts as Christians should be redemptive rather than destructive.

Editor's note: First, *Proclamation!* is not aimed at contented Adventists. It is intended for former and questioning Adventists and concerned Christians. Second, although we have left Adventism, we feel no scorn or ridicule for those still in the church; indeed, we love our Adventist friends and family and pray that they, too, will come to recognize the sufficiency of Jesus alone and the Bible as His revealed Word—without the addition of an extra-Biblical prophetess whose words continue to be considered “a continuing and authoritative source of truth...”

In comparing Adventism's distinctive teachings with those of the Bible, we are not seeking to shame our Adventist loved ones. Rather, we are committed to revealing the true gospel of God's grace.

Life Assurance Ministries, Inc

MISSION

To proclaim the good news of the New Covenant gospel of grace in Christ and to combat the errors of legalism and false religion.

MOTTO

Truth needs no other foundation than honest investigation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and a willingness to follow truth when it is revealed.

MESSAGE

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God; not of works, that no one should boast.” Ephesians 2:8,9

Social ills are rampant, to be sure, but without a Biblical understanding of Jesus and his finished work, salvation, judgment, security, and without personally knowing him, we have no power over “fleshly indulgence”.

As Paul said, “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!” (Galatians 1:8) Truth can bear the test of investigation.

Tell it like it is

We are a couple in our 80's. I don't know exactly how to characterize ourselves, but I like to think that we are generic Christians.

We had attended the Adventist church for many—too many, that is—years. But after we heard the gospel, we no longer cared to depend on Ellen White and her distorted views.

We have discovered that the Holy Spirit, not the Sabbath, is the seal of God. That fact is so obvious that it's incredible that we were never taught it in Adventism. I guess nobody wanted to cross Ellen [White] and Uriah Smith.

We attend a Calvary Chapel. These people are simply wonderful Christians. We're very happy with our decision. We appreciate *Proclamation!* You tell it like it is.

Thank you for *Proclamation!*

Thank you very much for sending me *Proclamation!* magazine and for your ministry. Although I never officially joined the Adventist church, my parents enrolled me in Adventist schools early in life as they didn't like the local public schools. I went to Adventist schools from seventh grade to my sophomore year in college and for many years was very confused about Adventist beliefs. I accepted part of it (the Sabbath and [abstinence from] unclean meats), but not others (Ellen White's writings).

Eventually God brought me totally out of it, and I now attend a local nondenominational church on Sundays that I'm very happy with and where I am involved in several ministries.... Enclosed is a small donation to help with your ministry expenses. God bless.

Out of step

Thank you very much for your great magazine. I joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1984. To make a long story short, I left a few months later...because of several false teachings: soul sleep, 1844 doctrine, Ellen White's plagiarism. I also believe the Seventh-day Adventist Church is out of step with mainstream Christianity. You may feel free to publish this email in your monthly magazine. Keep up the good work!

Paul of limited value

I was reading Dale Ratzlaff's article on Paul, and it made me remember an encounter I had with our local Adventist pastor. We were discussing Ellen White, and I was using some of Paul's writings to try to make a point. It's been some time back and, for the life of me, I can't remember what verses I was using or even what I was arguing, but his answer so struck me, I'll never forget it. He said we don't know what circumstances caused Paul to write these letters, and therefore we don't know the context in which they were written. So, they are of limited value, and we must take care in how we use them.

My jaw must have hit the floor! Why Paul wrote is fairly clear, at least to me. Trying to reason with someone who is willing to almost do away with approximately 25% of the New Testament is a difficult thing indeed! Also, this is the local church that removed a very large copy of the Bible from the foyer and replaced it with a copy of *The Desire of Ages!*

Keep up the wonderful work! You are in my prayers.

Dynamite

This issue [May/June, 2006] was Dyn-o-mite! Doctrine must defeat the enemy with God's word and a proper understanding of such.

Please Remove

Please remove us from your mailing list. Thank you. We should pray for each other rather than [have] so much hate.

Easter edition

We really appreciated the beautiful Easter edition! Thanks for all the work you invest and the faith you share with all of us. You and your ministry are ever in my prayers.

He is risen

Thank you for sending *Proclamation!* The past nine months have been a blur since my husband passed away. He lost the battle but not the war. Last May's issue is still on the table with my husband's underlining [in] some articles. I started reading the March/April, 2006, issue—“He Is Risen”—which I needed. I will be looking forward to reading [future editions of] your magazine.

Mail letters and donations to:

Life Assurance Ministries
P.O. Box 905
Redlands, CA 92373

Fired from Loma Linda University CONTINUED FROM BACK PAGE

friends. I discovered that Christians really pray for each other. Their prayers seemed to lift me above the fear of losing my income, and I floated through those days with a security that I had never experienced before. When I returned to work, the threat had evaporated. God still had more work for me to do at Loma Linda University.

Time passed. Then, earlier this year, the dean stopped by my office and asked me to go for a walk with him. The desire of the administration for me to stop my involvement with *Proclamation!* and Former Adventist Fellowship had returned, and this time it wasn't God's will that the demands go away. After a written demand and my response, I knew that my days were numbered.

Now it was Wednesday, June 7, 2006, and my job at the dental school was ending. I decided to take my last walk through the dental school. As I passed my soon-to-be ex-coworkers, I prayed that they would have the courage to follow Jesus out of the Adventist church, too. I prayed that the work that God had started would be completed, as He has promised in the Bible.

All too soon, the time for my previously scheduled meeting with my supervisor came. As I walked across campus to the meeting, however, something so special happened that it's hard to explain. I was aware of two unseen angels joining me, one on each side. I felt like I was walking three-wide! Another gift from God on that walk to be fired was a chance meeting with my physician. She greeted me and asked me how I was. When I told her that I was on my way to be terminated from my job, she gave me a big hug. It felt like God had reached down from heaven and had given me His love through that embrace.

I was invited into the room where the dean and my supervisor told me my employment was ending. The dean gave me a letter stating in part:

"Loma Linda University is a Seventh-day Adventist institution. Its statement of 'Vision and Faith' in the Staff Handbook is unequivocal in its affirmation of Adventist doctrine. A listed conduct that violates the University's expectations for its employees is 'Overt disharmony, subversion, or demonstrated disrespect of the philosophy, objectives, and policies of the University and the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.'

"You have performed some excellent work as an employee of the School of Dentistry. However, your activities with regard to Adventist teachings and the philosophy, objectives and policies of the University are incompatible with and overtly hostile to the mission of the University.

"You have stated that you are 'unable to provide... a written response as to how I can end my public involvement with Life Assurance Ministries and *Proclamation!* magazine.' You cannot continue to serve as an employee of the University. You are terminated for cause effective immediately. A check for two weeks of pay is enclosed."

I agreed with the reasons given for my termination. I was thankful that a made-up excuse had not been used.

For several years I had prayed about leaving Loma Linda, but it always seemed God's answer was, "Wait." I had frequently said to Colleen, "I'll be at Loma Linda as long as God wants me there. The minute He is done with me there, I'll be gone that day."

That day had finally come, and I knew that God was confirming that my termination and its timing were His plan.

I learned a few weeks later, in a conversation with a university administrator, that the pressure for my firing did not come from the school, but it came from the Adventist Church's General Conference in Silver Spring, Maryland.

As I walked across campus to the meeting... I was aware of two unseen angels joining me, one on each side. I felt like I was walking three-wide!

What does God have for me to do now? That's been my prayer ever since the day I was released from my assignment at Loma Linda University.

Great opportunities and challenges exist in Life Assurance Ministries, and I am convinced that God has put me here to help the ministry meet them. My loss of full-time employment has given me the ability to devote all my time to this work. Projects that are getting attention include Spanish *Proclamation!*, websites, online *Proclamation!* archive, a new podcast, and others.

I praise God for His faithfulness in moving me to areas of labor in His kingdom. And I praise Him for giving me the past 17 years to work at Loma Linda University.

"But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:21-23, ESV).

SECOND ANNUAL

FORMER ADVENTIST

Fellowship

WEEKEND

FEBRUARY 16-18, 2007
TRINITY CHURCH
REDLANDS, CALIFORNIA

Watch for more details in the next issue!

Fired from Loma Linda University

RICHARD TINKER

It seemed like any other Wednesday. I arrived at my office at seven in the morning as I almost always did. I turned on my computer and logged in to the time clock to punch in. I entered my employee number and my password. But something was wrong. The message on my screen flashed coldly, "Employee ID not Found!" I called the phone number listed for help, and the woman that answered confirmed my suspicions. I was terminated.

My job at Loma Linda University, School of Dentistry, began on a bright January day over 17 years before. The director of the school's graphics department was trying to move some of the hand design work to a computer. A year before I had successfully transitioned the design area at the Quiet Hour, so I was happy to help him. A friendship between us grew, and when his designer left a few months later, I was hired.

But now I was being terminated. I turned on some Christian praise music and began to praise God that He was once again on the move in my life. As I packed up my personal belongings, I remembered how God had called me out of Adventism while I was working for an Adventist organization.

God's call to follow Him out of Adventism began in the mid 1990's. I was involved in a Bible study with our neighbors hoping that they would become Adventists. But as I studied whole books of the Bible in context, I was often amazed at the texts that I discovered that I had never noticed before. As the Holy Spirit opened my eyes to the Word, I became more and more excited with each new revelation. About this time the internet became available to me, and I began to search it to see if there were other Adventists who were finding new and excit-

Richard Tinker is president of Life Assurance Ministries and co-leads a Bible study with his wife Colleen for former Adventists at his home church: Trinity Evangelical Free Church of Redlands. Richard and Colleen have two sons.

ing truths in the Bible. There were, and I also found that many of my cherished ideas about the Adventist "messenger," Ellen G. White, were false.

When my supervisor retired I became the director of the department and enjoyed new challenges. But my Bible and online studies continued. By 1998 my wife Colleen and I decided that we could no longer remain members of the Adventist Church. I made what seemed to be a very long walk to visit with my direct superior and

As I packed up my personal belongings, I remembered how God had called me out of Adventism while I was working for an Adventist organization.

also with the dean of the school. I had been hired as an Adventist, and I knew that the school's goal was to have only Adventists as department directors. But my fears of being fired because of my leaving Adventism were unfounded. Both my supervisor and the dean assured me that my leaving would not affect my employment.

Some of my family and friends told me that I should quit Loma Linda since I no longer believed in the church's doctrines. But I had a strong sense of God's calling to stay and to let Him use me. And He did use me! Countless times faculty, staff, administrators, and students would confront me with questions concerning my leaving the Adventist church. And God was faithful to give me answers.

One Christmas near the beginning of this decade, as I was preparing to leave for a two-week vacation, an administrator who is a friend of mine stuck his head into my office for a chat. His mood was different, and he looked me straight into my eyes and stated, "You must either end your relationship with Life Assurance Ministries or resign from your job." I was shocked. I wondered if God was telling me to leave.

What a Christmas that was. By then I was attending a wonderful Bible-teaching church and had begun to make Christian

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