

**RATZLAFF: WHO IS YOUR HUSBAND? UNDERSTANDING ROMANS 7 AND 8**

LifeAssuranceMinistries.org

# Proclamation!

FOR FORMER ADVENTISTS  
INQUIRING ADVENTISTS  
SABBATARIANS  
CONCERNED CHRISTIANS

JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER 2011  
VOLUME 12, ISSUE 3

**Delivered by  
spiritual c-section**

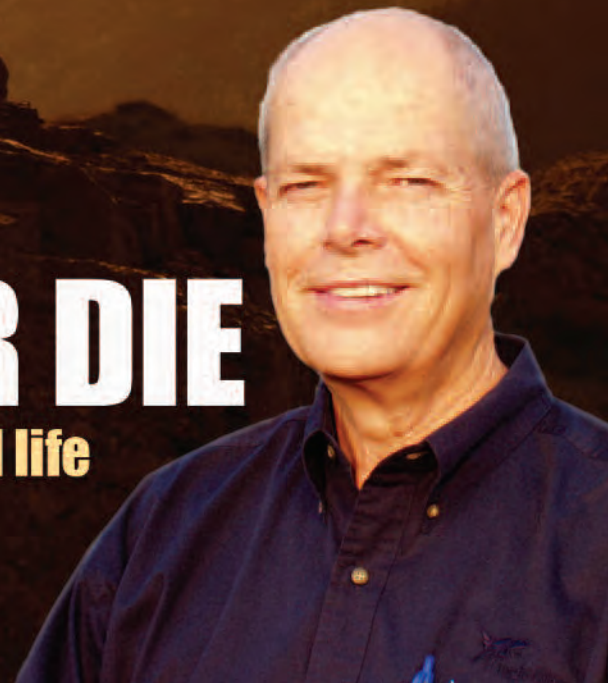
**Follow Jesus:  
He's worth the cost**

**Fear, fear, fear!**



# HE SHALL NEVER DIE

**Stanley Rouhe talks about his death and life**





COLLEEN TINKER

## On MRI's and trusting God

“Pray about it—just trust God,” used to sound like fingernails on an old-fashioned chalkboard to me. Within my Adventist framework, “trust God” implied “do your best, and God will do the rest.” In other words: study hard and trust God for good grades; get a marketable degree and trust God for a good job; enroll my kids in an Adventist school and trust God that they’d grow up “faithful”; save money and trust God that I’d have a comfortable retirement; eat vegetarian and trust God that I wouldn’t get cancer—and so on. My “trust” was directly proportional to my contribution to any given situation.

Moment by moment I rolled my uncertainty and fear onto Him, asking Him to keep my heart resting in Him—and He did.

Since embracing the Lord Jesus and His finished atonement and being born of the Spirit, however, trusting God has changed. Now I have to give up trying to control the unknown. I have to rest in the middle of problems too big for me and trust Him to shape the future, to be my true and perfect Father. This new way of trusting is possible because God is no longer “out there”. He lives in me because of my faith in the Lord Jesus, and whatever I go through, He goes through as well, because His Spirit will never leave me.

This year has tested my trust. In January I had two abnormal mammograms; in February I had an inconclusive ultrasound with a recommendation for an MRI. Praying that God would glorify Himself and keep me calm, I nervously positioned myself on the MRI table. The tech explained that the protective headphones would transmit music throughout the study. When she placed them on my head, the first thing I heard was Jeremy Camp singing the words, “I will trust in You, and I will not be afraid.”

I had to choke back my tears because I could not wipe my nose—but Jesus personally comforted me. I realized that even though I might have a bad diagnosis, I was commanded not to fear because He was in the future, and He would never leave me. Nothing could happen that He did not permit, and He would comfort, strengthen, provide, and carry me no matter what the outcome—and all for His glory.

The result was not good. My physician referred me to a cancer clinic and said the MRI results showed suspicious spots bilaterally, that the diagno-

sis might be a pre-cancerous condition that would best be treated by having a bilateral mastectomy.

Philippians 4:6-7 held my head and heart in reality over the next months. Be anxious for nothing. Pray with thanksgiving. The peace of God will guard my heart. I realized God commanded me not to be anxious because He keeps His promises. My worry is a lack of trust in His faithfulness. Even if I were to have a prolonged illness that might kill me, I had to trust that He was allowing my suffering for His glory and for my good. He would reveal Himself to me deeply.

Moment by moment I rolled my uncertainty and fear onto Him, asking Him to keep my heart resting in Him—and He did. I realized that if God’s promises depended upon my doing my best, I could not trust Him. In other words, if I had cancer, it would not be the result of my eating chicken—and if I thought it was, I would have no basis for trusting God in this consequence for my indulgence. Scripture says I am to trust God because He says He’s in control, not because I’ve “done my best” so that He’ll reward me.

The cancer clinic redid the MRI a few months after taking me off a medication. In July, nearly seven months after the first abnormal report, I learned that the follow-up MRI was “completely normal”.

I also learned that the indwelling Holy Spirit makes the presence of the Lord Jesus real. He is my peace. He makes it possible for me to rest in Him even when my life is threatened.

In this issue, in addition to our regular columnists, **Stanley Rouhe** shares his confidence and trust in the Lord Jesus just eleven days before he died. **Delina McPhaul** explains what Scripture says about the new birth, and **Dale Ratzlaff** challenges us to be loyal to our husband, the Lord Jesus. **Richard Peifer** calls us to worship God because He Is, not because of what He does, and **Nicole Stevenson** shares her story of being born again into Christ.

Trust God. When we have become alive in Jesus, those words mean something. The future is secure; we have nothing to fear. Our Father keeps His promises. †

## Proclamation!

Vol. 12, Issue 3 • July August September 2011

Founding Editor **Dale Ratzlaff**

Editor **Colleen Tinker**

Design Editor **Richard Tinker**

Copy Editor **Cristine Cole**

Contributing Editors **Chris Lee, Carolyn Macomber, Martin L. Carey**

Proofreader **Carolyn Ratzlaff**

**Life Assurance Ministries, Inc.**  
Board of Directors

Richard Tinker, President  
Cheryl Granger, Secretary  
Martin Carey  
John Mace, Sr.  
Dale Ratzlaff

*Proclamation!* is published quarterly by Life Assurance Ministries, Inc., 733 E. Black Diamond Dr., Casa Grande, AZ 85122. Copyright ©2011 Life Assurance Ministries, Inc. All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A. Editorial Office, phone: (909) 794-9804, toll free (877) 349-6984.

Web: [LifeAssuranceMinistries.org](http://LifeAssuranceMinistries.org)  
E-mail: [proclamation@gmail.com](mailto:proclamation@gmail.com)

LIFE ASSURANCE  
MINISTRIES

## For further S T U D Y

• Back issues of *Proclamation!* and additional studies  
**LifeAssuranceMinistries.org**

• Books and other materials by Dale Ratzlaff and the option to donate online with your credit card  
**LifeAssuranceMinistries.com**



## Facing DEATH

Pastor Ratzlaff, don't you ever worry about whether you are saved? You are not a young man anymore—don't you experience fear when you think about death?

**A**s I review my short journey of 75 years, I see death from many perspectives. My first encounter was when I was 10 years old. My father suddenly became ill, and my mother, with my sister and me squeezed into the front seat so Daddy could lie down in the back, drove most of the night in our old '42 Ford to the hospital. The next day after X-rays, we took him to the large Duke hospital in Durham, NC. There we learned that he had pancreatic cancer, and it had spread throughout his body. About six weeks later on a beautiful spring day I watched as my Dad was lowered into the dark, cold ground. Shock, questions, crying, uncertainty, and—now what? But life went on.

My next brush with death was when I thought I was dying. I knew I was not ready to meet the Lord even though I had followed many of the good rules of religion. This encounter with being close to death changed my life. In desperation, seeking some kind of assurance, I recalled 1 John 1:9—and suddenly, in my late twenties, for the first time in my life I realized that my responsibility was to confess myself as a sinner and accept the fact that God would freely forgive me. He would cleanse me from all unrighteousness.

In recent years there have been a few times that I thought I might be near death again, but no longer was there any fear of meeting my Savior.

Several years ago my 99 ¾ year old mother passed away. It was a sad time filled with many sweet memories of family and youth, but for her it was welcome relief from a tired and worn-out body.

These encounters with death on my short journey have taught me the lesson of readiness. We know not what the next moment may bring. “Today, if you hear His voice, harden not your heart,” is good, biblical teaching. So as you read the near-death-bed



Dale and Carolyn Ratzlaff have authored five books concerning Adventism: *Sabbath in Christ*—a volume that explains new covenant Sabbath rest, *Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventism*—explores the unique doctrine of a pre-advent judgment that decides eternal destinies, *Truth About Adventist “Truth”*—a little book that’s perfect to give to Christians that need to understand Adventism, *Truth Led Me Out*—in which Dale Ratzlaff tells his own story of following Jesus, no matter the cost, and *My Cup Overflows*—Carolyn’s autobiography. Each of these books is available at [www.Ratzlaff.com](http://www.Ratzlaff.com) or by phoning 800-355-7073, or 520-836-9790.



© ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/DAVIDHILLS

interview in this issue of *Proclamation!* place yourself in Stanley Rouhe’s position of knowing that there will be no tomorrow here “under the sun”. Ask yourself all the questions. What does your journey of life look like from this perspective? Do you know you are saved? What or who are you trusting for your righteousness? From this perspective, knowing that no moving van will follow you to the grave, what values are you pursuing today that will make “that day” a day when you receive rewards instead of seeing your work burned up (1 Cor. 3:10-15)?

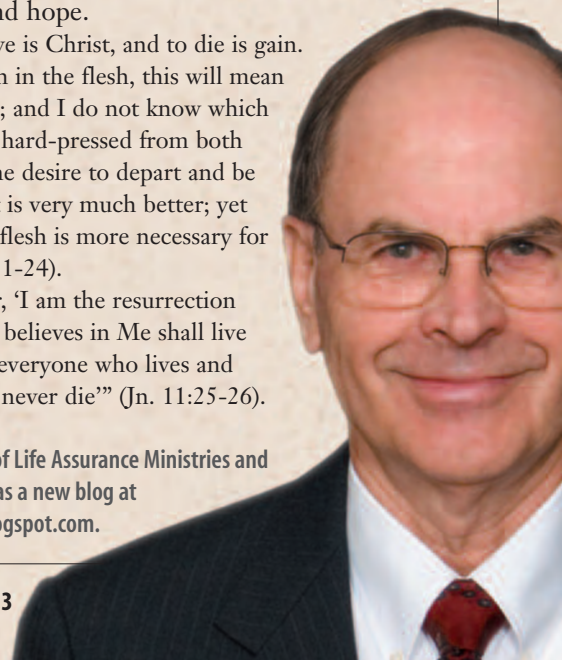
The promises of God’s word bring hope to those facing death. They are worth memorizing so in that hour they will bring you comfort and hope.

“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake” (Phil. 1:21-24).

“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die’” (Jn. 11:25-26).

Dale Ratzlaff, the founder of Life Assurance Ministries and *Proclamation!* magazine, has a new blog at [LifeAssuranceMinistries.blogspot.com](http://LifeAssuranceMinistries.blogspot.com).





NICOLE STEVENSON

# FOLLOW JESUS

## HE'S WORTH THE COST

If God offered you a glance into your future, would you take it? God offered me that glance into my future at the Former Adventist Fellowship weekend at Trinity Church in February, 2010, and I learned how my story will end. God, in His sovereignty, brought me to that moment at exactly the right time—the moment when He knew I would hear the word of truth, the gospel of my salvation—and believe (Eph. 1:13). He used faithful teachers to speak His word that summoned me out of spiritual death and into Life.

The process of God calling me to Himself did not happen all in one weekend, though. I was born into a fractured home, and my parents were divorced by the time I turned one. They were very different from each other and created two very different homes. My mother, who came from a well-known Adventist family, left that organization shortly after her divorce. With no understanding of the biblical truth about salvation and Jesus' finished work, she became agnostic. It would be another 30 years before she came to know Jesus. In the meantime, the path of addiction she chose caused great pain and instability for me.

My dad, on the other hand, soon married an Adventist woman, and together they created a mildly conservative Adventist home. I now understand that while it was only "mildly conservative" on the scale of Seventh-day Adventist observance, it was still rooted in a toxic religious system. I spent much of my early childhood living in this home with my five siblings, vainly trying to meet impossible expectations for good behavior, "family loyalty," and high performance. My failure to meet my parents' standards yielded a tense relationship between them and me. I was punished frequently and often alienated from my siblings. I learned early that I was inadequate, a burden, difficult to like, and possibly even difficult to love.

Finally, when I was nine, my dad and step-mom sent me back to my mother who was in no position to take care of me. She was an alcoholic, in and out of abusive relationships. We moved frequently, often twice a year, so I attended 14 different schools—some Adventist and some not—before I finally dropped out at the age of 16. By my early teens, my identity was shaped by everything I had learned to believe about myself, and I began to act out my brokenness.

Then I was caught shoplifting while attending an Adventist boarding academy about four hours south of my dad's home in California. The school was going to let me stay on the condition that I remain on academic and social probation for the rest of the year, but my dad and step-mom decided to send me back to the east coast to live with my mom—again. For almost two years I had no communication with my dad, step-mom, or most of my siblings.

My mom was so distracted with her depression, financial struggles, homelessness, and addiction that I spent most of my time living with friends—where I finally felt accepted. Like my mom, I turned to the world to find a place to belong. Acceptance did not come without a cost, but for a broken girl, the price was easy to afford. I lived a promiscuous life made bearable by my hiding behind drugs and alcohol, and my determination to avoid rejection only served to increase my deep-seated shame. During this time, I sensed God telling me that when I was done hiding, He had plans for me. Somehow, even in my hopelessness, I believed Him.

When I was 18 my dad and step-mom heard I was in real trouble. They soon contacted me and asked me to move in with them.

They expressed regret over the state of our relationship and said they wanted to get me out of my situation and help me get my life on track. I was hopeful about learning how to create what, compared with my mother's life, seemed to be a stable and healthy home like theirs. I was excited to find my unique place in my family. This time I would not mess things up. I saw this as God's promised plan for my life—a new start!

I would be 30 before I really knew what He had planned for me.

## Back in the Adventist culture

After moving into their home when I was 19, I obtained my GED (General Educational Development assessment—a high school equivalency certificate) and shortly afterward enrolled in La Sierra University. Suddenly I found myself immersed in Adventist culture for the first time in years. Learning the church service traditions as an adult was awkward. In addition, learning how to fit in socially was a culture shock. At first everything I did felt contrived. As Adventist life became easier, however—and as Sabbath became somewhat addictive—I viewed my progress as “spiritual growth.” Nevertheless, I learned quickly that even though I adapted my behavior, I could not relate to my peers—nor did they have any idea how to relate to me.

My family did not know the details of my past, nor did they seem to want to know, and I was more than OK with their not knowing. I was full of shame, but I was a Jane Doe with a clean slate now. Some might think this situation was a wonderful opportunity, but it was actually a sentencing. I threw the broken me into a prison of shame and began to study the people around me diligently. I often wished the church offered support groups or programs where I could heal from my secret pain, but the lack of them only affirmed to me that I was unique. I just needed to “get over” my past.

Gradually I became known by name, by family affiliation, and by my contributions in my Adventist community, but no one really knew me. Actually, after a while I no longer knew myself. All I knew was that I was extremely insecure and over-analyzed nearly every interaction I had, fearing I had done something wrong.

## Life unravels

Eventually I married, but I did not find peace. The older I became, the more I realized my life was a house of cards. My husband and I were involved at church and lived a fast-paced existence filled with volunteering, finishing college, work, and finally kids. When we realized we were over-committed, we discovered how difficult it was to step out of the ministries in which we were involved.

For example, we asked to be removed from the board of elders at our local church. We were told, however, that we did not need to participate, but it would be valuable to the church to keep our names on the list. This response made us uncomfortable. We knew what the biblical requirements were for elders, and we knew we fell very short of them. Moreover, leaving our names on the list but agreeing we would not serve seemed deceptive. However, out of a need to please and be accepted, I agreed

to the compromise. I didn't see then how decisions such as these made my reputation an idol.

I began to realize I was depressed. I had become obsessive-compulsive about creating the life I thought we were supposed to have and hiding the things that went against church culture. I realized that my life was consumed with performing and hiding, and I was weary. I nagged my husband constantly about being more involved in spiritual and social things; I told him his apathy made me look bad, and I resented it. Anything my husband said or did, I interpreted through a filter of unresolved messages from my past. We both felt misunderstood and lonely in our marriage. My futile attempts to control my husband resulted in his withdrawing from me, and I would spiral into despair and often rage. My lack of respect for my husband deeply hurt him, and he retreated more and more to protect his heart from me—the one person he should have been able to trust.

Besides my vain attempts to manage my husband and my reputation, I became hyper-protective of my children. I obsessed about germs and possible injuries. Often I cried during the night, fearing that God would take my children or my husband from me to teach me a lesson. I believed He would accept me only as long as I met His standard. He would reject and punish me whenever I fell short. I lived in constant fear of loss, rejection, and exposure as the fraud I knew I was. Why, I wondered, did a normal life seem to come so easily to everyone except me?

## Cognitive dissonance and confusion

Throughout my life God was calling me to Himself. He assured me as a very young girl in my father's home that I belonged to Him, and I believed Him. As I became more religious as a young adult, I felt I was answering His call, yet I did not always feel connected to Him. There came a time in my 20s, after being baptized into Seventh-day Adventism, when I realized that I really enjoyed talking about God, but I did not talk to Him as much as I had as a child or even as a troubled teen. The more I saw myself struggling to belong, to be happy, and to be loved, the more I knew I needed God. I could not understand this dissonance. I had been living a “godly lifestyle.” I kept the Sabbath; I went to church; I volunteered my time, and I loved Christian music and craved those moments when I felt the Holy Spirit nearby. Many times when I would pick up my Bible and not know what to read, I would bump into Isaiah 55:6 “Seek the Lord while He can be found.”

These words confused me. Wasn't I living for Him? Yet I felt so far from Him most of the time. I needed to read my Bible and understand on my own what I believed. I would try hard to start the habit of reading it daily—but I never succeeded for long. I longed for God; I longed for healing from the storm that raged beneath the surface of my life—and I longed for close friends. I was lonely, and I was weary.

Often I spent long afternoons with my mother-in-law and the kids. She told me things she was learning about Ellen G. White and Adventist history. It sounded like conspiracy stuff, but after a couple years I began experiencing my own questions about EGW and Adventist doctrine. Where was Adam when Eve ate the apple



(Gen. 3:6)? How could the Sabbath be the seal of God when Ephesians 1:13-14 says it's the Holy Spirit?

Moreover, I began to realize that I did not know what was Scripture, and what came from Ellen G. White. Where was the story of Satan walking past a pool and seeing his reflection? Where was the story of his accusing God's law of being unfair? In addition, the more my husband and I attended interdenominational Christian events and experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit in worship, the more I became uncomfortable with the idea of the "remnant" and the teaching that evangelical Christians would one day hunt and persecute us for our Sabbath-keeping. My husband and I decided we needed to know exactly what we believed and why we believed it, and we became increasingly disturbed at how much Adventist doctrine we could not find in Scripture.

We weren't thinking of leaving Adventism; we just wanted to know what beliefs we would keep as our own and what we would let go so we could be clear with our children. After a while, however, it became impossible to feel good about raising our children in a denomination that not only contradicted the clear teaching of Scripture but also placed obstacles in the way of believing the simple truth of God's grace—His unmerited favor.

We knew our children would look toward mentors and away from us as they matured, and we needed to know that we had established them in a community where the adults would tell them biblical truth. We began to consider leaving Adventism. Where would we go? What would our friends and family say? What about the Sabbath?

We began to wonder what other Christians taught on the dividing issues. We had been told what "apostate Protestantism" believed, but we wanted to hear from the "apostates" ourselves. We never expected what came next.

We became aware of a large community of people who had left the Adventist church. We learned about publications that exposed not only the unethical behavior of denominational leaders but also the error of Adventist doctrine using only the Bible. As we investigated, we were deeply shaken. Like a child looks to its parents to see how they will respond, I looked to my denomination to see how it answered allegations such as Ellen White's plagiarism, full of hope that it had good answers. Instead, I only saw defensiveness, cover-ups that had been exposed and proven, and man-made arguments that could not be backed by Scripture. We found that the allegations were not just rumors; they were substantiated, and they were not denied by the organization. It broke my heart. Instead of dealing with the issues, my church retaliated by slandering the character of those who exposed them, or by kicking them out of the church.

One Saturday morning I awoke before my family and prayed that Jesus would show me something in Scripture to give me direction. I told Him how much I missed Him and opened my Bible "randomly" to Galatians. I was irritated. What was Galatians about? I read anyway, beginning to end. By the time I got to the explanation in chapter four of the two covenants, which were compared to Sarah and Hagar, I was in tears. The last obstacle to our fellowshiping with the rest of Christendom had fallen. I shared my reading with my husband when he woke up, and we decided to go to church the following morning—a Sunday.

### Going to church on Sunday

So much of my life had felt like a race to keep up and play a part. I knew that if we were going to start over, we had to be in an environment of acceptance where broken people can heal instead of hide. I did some internet research, and I found Trinity's webpage. It described the church and addressed the issue of how to dress for services: come as you are. We decided we would attend Trinity that Sunday morning, and we did so in blue jeans and high hopes.

As I looked through the worship folder that morning, I could not find any mention of the names of the people up front. Instead, I was overwhelmed with the number of support groups and opportunities to connect that were listed. There was something very right about this church. The music was fun, but it was more than that; it went up like a burnt offering to the Lord. Grown adults reached to heaven like my babies reached for me in their need. People did come as they were: wet hair, sweat pants, blue jeans and hoodies, dress clothes—I saw it all. The couple behind us smelled of cigarette smoke—as I had as a little girl in my mother's home. Tears and goose bumps marked that service for both my husband and me. We knew God wanted us there that morning, and we felt His hand on us powerfully in a way we had not before. It was impossible to miss His voice, and it has been impossible ever since.



Nicole holding her daughter Abigail with Carolyn Macomber and Richard and Colleen Tinker (left), moments after committing her life to the Lord Jesus and experiencing being born again.

Not long after that day, we connected with the Former Adventist group—in spite of its reputation. After seeing the habit of slander from the denomination and the group-think mentality that permeated the lay people, we decided to find out for ourselves what these Former Adventists were all about. After all, hadn't they also once been right where we were? We learned that these people loved in a way we had never known. They were anything but angry or disgruntled. The light in their eyes and their love for strangers was so bright, I wanted every drop of whatever they had. I saw their love for each other and the passion for Jesus that I had craved, and I was in tears by the end of my first afternoon with them.

My husband and I attended the annual Former Adventist Fellowship weekend convening the following weekend—and God broke into my life like the sun shining at midnight. It was as though my life were a stage that slowly disassembled in front of my eyes, and behind each backdrop was an entirely new reality that I could neither deny nor ignore.

At the end of the weekend Carolyn Macomber, the woman who had given her testimony on Friday night, asked me if I was saved. I wasn't sure how to answer. I had been aware of God's presence throughout my life, yet I did not have assurance. I began to fumble for an answer. Carolyn took my hand in the middle of my confusion and said, "Do you want to just seal the deal?"

We prayed together by the pool that afternoon, and I surrendered my life and will to God in the name of Jesus. I relinquished any role I thought I had in my obtaining and maintaining my salvation, repented of my sinning against Him, and finally bowed the knee to His sovereignty. I understood that nothing I could do would add to or take away from the finished work of Jesus Christ—Almighty God.

### I am now alive!

Believing in just Jesus without the overlay of Sabbath as the seal of God, the sanctuary doctrine, and law-keeping to remain saved, I knew I had embraced a new gospel and different facts about Jesus. I had no idea how profoundly my embracing this powerful Jesus would change my life! Neither did I have any idea how much more there was to learn.

Since that moment, God has confirmed to me that I am different. Chains have fallen from me that I did not know I was carrying. I feel as if I already exist in eternity somehow. I am alive for the first time. I have new eyes, new senses—I am motivated by something bigger than myself. I know I am no longer a child of the world, yet I no longer hide from the world behind a fortress of tradition and the subtle arrogance of having "Adventist Truth." Now I engage with the world as God's child and see the value of each person through the eyes of my Father—Almighty God.

God's spirit bears witness with my regenerated spirit (Ezk. 36:26) that I am His daughter (Rom. 8:16). Reading the Bible is no longer a habit to encourage, but a thirst to quench; it is as if I have discovered I have wings and all I want to do is fly. I am no longer a slave to my idols (Ezk. 36:25) not the least of which was my reputation. Nor am I a slave to my fears.

I see my husband through the eyes of Jesus, and because of Him, my marriage is healing. I love and respect Carel deeply. As he has submitted to the lordship of Jesus, he has become a man who honors God with his life and leads his family knowing he is loved and supported in his God-given role as the head of our home.

When Jesus confirmed to me as a young girl that I was His, it was because He knew I would be born from above and adopted according to His will. He continues to confirm my place in His family—knowing what is still ahead for me. God is not a liar, and that is my assurance! I now know an eternal rest in the finished work of Christ alone—for His glory alone! I am now a member of a family with Jesus as its head, and I no longer fear rejection.

Jesus continually shows me reality and the truth about Him, as well as the truth about myself and my life. He meets me in my places of pain and heals me as I submit my life to Him. Jesus is redeeming broken relationships and freeing me both to forgive and to give to Him the wrongs done to me. I love Him with a love I have not known before. My obedience to Him comes from this place of love.

I understand deeply that His blood has purchased me, and He owns the rights to my life and to my story. I share that story out of obedience to Him—not obedience to tablets of stone, but to Him—the One who lives in me and convicts me of the ways I need to trust Him as I find His will for me in His word.

My life and my salvation are actually not about me at all. As soon as I gave up hiding and controlling my life with drugs and religion, Jesus finally had the room in my life to do what He does.

Leaving the religion of my youth has not come without a cost. Relationships have changed; my leaving has hurt many who love me and whom I love deeply. I pray that these relationships will be healed in Jesus, but this I know: Jesus Christ is faithful, and He redeems everything we submit to Him. In fact, He has already begun answering my prayers for my family; my mother and my father have both accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior. My father, in fact, received Him this last February at the 2011 Former Adventist Fellowship weekend!

There is no cost too high for knowing Jesus Christ—Almighty God. He knew there would be a high price to pay when He said, "...If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me," (Mt. 16:24). He demands nothing less than your heart and life, but I promise you—He is worth it! †

**Nicole Stevenson** and her husband Carel live in Southern California. Nicole graduated from La Sierra University with a degree in social work and Carel attended Walla Walla College and graduated from Cal Poly Pomona. Carel is a structural engineer in a firm in Ontario, California, and Nicole stays home with their two children, Joshua (4) and Abigail (2). While Adventists, Carel and Nicole volunteered their time as mentors to youth, and they are now involved in helping design an outreach for Seventh-day Adventist youth who are processing out of Adventism or are questioning the religion they've inherited.





# HE SHALL NEVER DIE

**Stanley Rouhe talks about his death and life**



**“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”**

John 11:25–26 ESV



**T**uesday, June 14, 2011, was a day my husband Richard and I will never forget. We spent about two hours with our friend Stanley Rouhe in his home, visiting and reminiscing with him, eleven days before he died.

We had known Stanley over ten years. He walked into our lives one Friday evening when he entered our weekly Former Adventist Fellowship Bible study at Trinity Church in Redlands, California. As Richard opened the meeting that night, he asked this visitor to introduce himself. He sat, arms folded, and declared, “I’m Stanley Rouhe, and I’m a neurosurgeon. I came tonight to tell you that you don’t have to meet here; you’d be welcome to hold your meetings at the Riverside Community [Adventist] Church.”

“You have no idea what you just said,” I thought to myself, but outwardly we all kept our composure and welcomed him. Before he left that night, we gave him a copy of Dale Ratzlaff’s *Sabbath in Crisis*, the earlier edition of what is now *Sabbath in Christ*.

The following week he called us. He had just completed reading Dale’s book, and he was noticeably emotional. “I get it,” he kept saying. Stanley was forever changed.

So on this past June 14, it was Richard’s and my turn to be emotional. After ten years of friendship, of sharing burdens and supporting each other through crises and life changes, Stanley was preparing to go home to the Lord Jesus.

“I wish I could take my Blackberry with me,” he joked; “I’d like to be able to text you what it’s like there!”

Of course, there are no text messages from Stanley, but we know he is with Jesus, for not even death can separate him from His love. He did, however, agree to tell us his story of how knowing Jesus changed the way he faced death. This article is a record of our conversation that day. “Use it however you wish,” he told us.

We share here this gift of love—Stanley’s love of the Lord Jesus and his love for his family and friends, as well as the love of God for all of us who are bound in the domain of darkness and have no hope apart from His rescuing and transferring us to the kingdom of His beloved Son (Col. 1:13).

## The past

**Colleen:** Tell us about your relationship to Adventism. I know you were born in Africa into an Adventist missionary physician’s family. You always joked that you were a true African-American.

**Stanley:** Yes; there were five of us kids. The youngest one, Lyndon, had Down’s syndrome. I was the middle. My parents didn’t know what to do with the shame of having a Down’s syndrome child. Lyndon used to get very angry. My mother was impatient with him; my dad couldn’t stand to deal with him. He would discipline him, but Lyndon couldn’t understand what was going on. My mother felt guilty for having borne a Down’s child, and she just couldn’t deal with it. She finally said, “It’s too much for me,” and she made a choice to take care of the rest of the family.

When Lyndon was very young—perhaps about eight years old or so—my parents began placing him in foster homes. Actually, I believe that decision drew us apart rather than closer as a family. Lyndon finally went to Cave Springs school in Tennessee, and I went to Southern Missionary [Adventist] College (SMC) to be near his boarding school. I visited him a few times during the school year.

At the end of my first year at SMC, Lyndon, Anne-Louise (who I later married), Pert Gray, a friend who was at SMC as well, and I piled into my Karmen Ghia and drove out to California from Tennessee. We were crowded in there; we didn’t know any better in those days! That was an experience!

For some reason Lyndon was always somewhat attached to me.

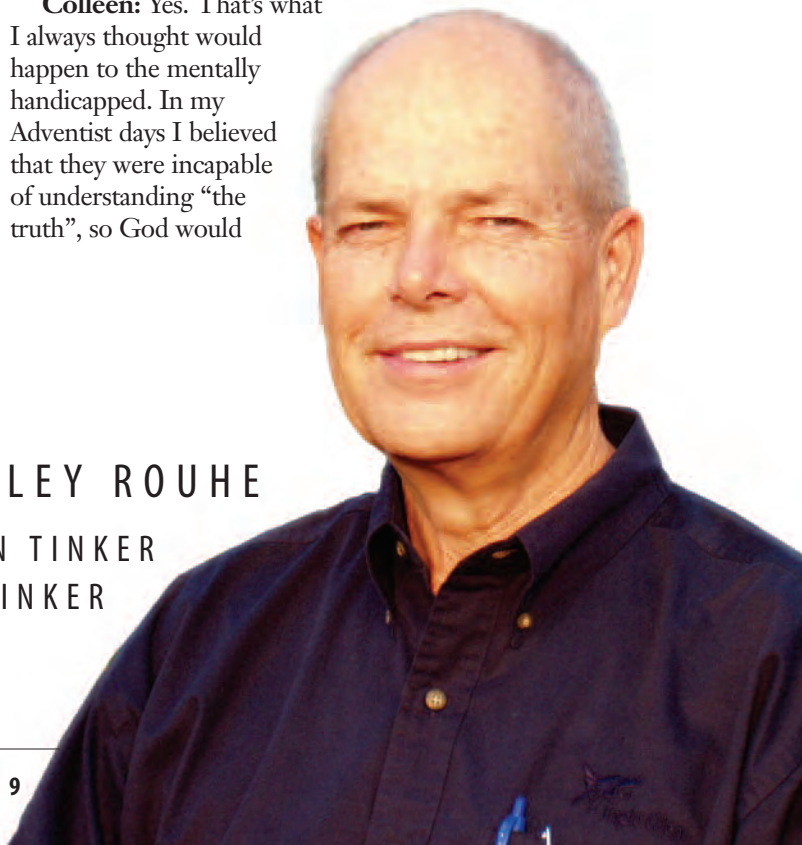
**Colleen:** Well, you loved him.

**Stanley:** Yes—when he was at home, I spent some summer evenings trying to teach him to read. He just couldn’t do it, and I didn’t have the right skills—it was very frustrating for both him and me. We finally abandoned that plan, and it was OK. But we worked on that whereas my dad dismissed him as—well—you know, I don’t actually know what he thought would happen to Lyndon. I think he probably thought that, in the end, Lyndon would be “zeroed out”.

**Colleen:** Yes. That’s what I always thought would happen to the mentally handicapped. In my Adventist days I believed that they were incapable of understanding “the truth”, so God would

## STANLEY ROUHE

INTERVIEWED BY COLLEEN TINKER  
WITH RICHARD TINKER



annihilate them without suffering; it would be as if they had never existed. I'm sure your dad shared that Adventist understanding.

**Stanley:** Yes. Right. So Lyndon would be zeroed out, and thus my dad's conscience would be cleared.

### Cultural Adventist but unbelieving

**Colleen:** We met you not long after you had dealt with stage four prostate cancer. We'd like to have you talk to us about facing death as a non-practicing Adventist compared with now as you are facing death from pancreatic cancer as a born-again believer.

**Stanley:** Well—before I had the prostate cancer, I was in the Adventist culture, sort-of, but I was not Adventist. For example, you and Richard both struggled with this “Adventist thing” until you were converted. You never really left your basic principles and ethics, and you lived sort-of consistently with what you believed. I did not. I left—not officially—but I left the Adventist church and began drinking. Anne-Louise always smoked, so we both smoked. We had no pretensions about being observant. We didn't consider ourselves non-Christians, but we were just like most people; we didn't believe in the Adventist church.

**Colleen:** You took theology in college but reached a crisis after preaching a sermon in a local church that you believed had been terrible.

**Stanley:** Yes. Anne-Louise was from Sweden, and her father was an Adventist pastor. She decided to marry me because we had similar backgrounds and that sort of thing, but I don't believe she would ever have wanted to be a pastor's wife. She went with me when I preached that sermon, and after it was over and I knew it had been a terrible sermon, I said I thought I should change my career goal. Anne-Louise agreed.

I decided to become a doctor, and Anne-Louise liked that choice. In Sweden she had endured her best friend's wealthy Adventist family driving expensive cars while her pastor dad drove a Saab, and that sting had never left.

**Colleen:** Her reaction was typical of the unspoken but powerful “class system” within Adventism. Physicians receive the most respect—probably for several reasons. One of the biggest reasons is that they typically have some of the largest incomes. Also, the “health message” is considered to be the “right arm of the gospel”. So physicians have the advantage of carrying that “right arm” of truth into the world. Only pastors have more spiritual prestige than the physicians. So I imagine that Anne-Louise was still influenced by these cultural pressures.

But what about you?

**Stanley:** For me it came down to the fact that I couldn't help people as a pastor because I didn't have pastoring in my heart. So I decided—I wanted—to do something that was a service kind of thing. So I went into medicine for my own reasons of wanting to help people, and this decision worked for Anne-Louise for her rea-

sons as well. You heard what was said at her funeral—it was even in the biographical sketch everyone received—everyone who knew her agreed: Anne-Louise had style.

[Anne-Louise had died the week before, and two days prior to our interview we had attended her memorial service on this very patio where we were now talking with Stanley.]

### Fatal diagnosis

**Colleen:** I understand. So talk about what happened when you abandoned religiosity and how that affected you when you received your first cancer diagnosis.

**Stanley:** I fell into many traps. Life presented many distractions, and I felt obligated to make more and more money to maintain the lifestyle Anne-Louise, Helena our daughter, and I were used to living. I made many compromises that could have destroyed me. I was trapped—and it was my own fault.

At the same time, I'd always gotten along pretty well with people, and I could put up with people who had trouble getting along with others, so I had both personal and professional relationships where I tried to keep things smooth and avoid conflict. I managed by always keeping busy.

**Colleen:** So, when you received your first diagnosis, you were practicing neurosurgery, you were active and busy, and you were not “doing” Adventism anymore. How did you feel, in 1996, when you heard that you had stage four prostate cancer?

**Stanley:** I thought, “Well, that's interesting.”

**Colleen:** Did they give you a certain amount of time to live?

**Stanley:** They told Anne-Louise that I had six months. I thought, “That doesn't make sense.” This was just one more unresolved issue in my life, and my method of dealing with things was to keep busy. I thought, “I'll just keep working.” My object was to keep myself so busy I wouldn't have to think of other things and deal with the issues I faced every day.

**Colleen:** Work was a way of escape.

**Stanley:** Exactly. I was diagnosed in 1996, began the lupron injections, and had surgery, even though my doctor recommended against it, in May, 1997. Afterward, I kept practicing while I administered the chemotherapy drugs to myself.

**Colleen:** So even though they told you that you were going to die, you basically ignored reality and just kept working so you wouldn't have to think about what might happen to you.

**Stanley:** Right. I thought, “Well, everybody dies.” I wasn't going to worry about it. I thought about my whole life and all the stuff I'd done that was wrong. I knew that I'd also done a lot of things I thought were right—I'd helped a lot of people—so I thought, “It's OK if I get taken, because God will see the stuff I've



done right, and I know all the stuff I've done that was sinful and wrong. He'll see that, too, so whatever happens is OK. Justice will be done, whatever that means." I didn't feel that I needed any special treatment because I knew all the stuff I'd done that had been wrong. I deserved whatever punishment I might get—I just wouldn't think about it.

**Colleen:** That rationale makes sense from an Adventist perspective.

### Lyndon and return to church

**Stanley:** So nothing changed in my life. I kept working. The years went by, and I was symptom free. And then, about three or four years later, my mother died, and before too long Lyndon was more or less abandoned. He was still living in Tennessee, and my dad was getting older. He told me he couldn't take care of Lyndon anymore and asked me to take over.

Lyndon came for a visit. His teeth needed care; his hair wasn't clipped, and he developed some medical issues on his visit, and I said, "We can't send him back." So I moved Lyndon into our home.

I took him with me on errands, and on Saturdays I'd golf, and he'd go with me. He had a huge collection of sermon tapes that people gave him, and he had a Bible with every single word underlined—so I knew he had "read" the whole Bible! I know he didn't understand it, but he read the Bible, and he listened to tapes. He

was clearly Adventist, but he knew things I didn't know.

I'd ask him if he was going to heaven, and he said he was. I asked, "What about Anne-Louise and Helena?" Lyndon replied, "I'm going to take my whole 'family' with me!" He was convinced of that.

Lyndon wanted to go to church. He didn't have very good clothes, and I hadn't bought a suit for quite a while, so we went down to a men's store, and we got ourselves outfitted. We got a couple of suits each as well as some other clothes so we would be presentable in church, and we marched into Riverside Community Church and sat down near the front.

I went to an Adventist church because Lyndon wanted to go to one, but even before Lyndon came I had thought, "If I ever do go to church again, it's going to be a Seventh Day Baptist or a Seventh-day Adventist church. It's got to be a church that keeps Sabbath because I know from Bible history that Sabbath is not Sunday!"

### There is a God

Just about this same time, Helena had given me a book by Hugh Ross. She had gone to Westmont College and had heard him speak, and she thought I would like the book. When I read that book, I knew for the first time that there really is a God. Clearly there is a God. I no longer had to rationalize or explain him, as friends of mine talk about him today: "God can change time," or "He can change gravity". The more science I read, the



more I realized that many assumptions about how God works don't make any sense to me.

Hugh Ross's explanations caused everything to click. Everything made sense! God is outside of time; He's a spirit, not a material body. Suddenly, without any doubt, I knew God's existence was a fact. I didn't have to question it any longer. I know the complexities of DNA; I know the timeline it would require—if it were even conceivable—for life and nature to develop randomly.

When I read Ross's book, my uncertain "faith" that there might be a God became an absolute "fact". I no longer had to concern myself with my questions of whether or not He existed. I now had no doubt there is a God; I knew for certain that He exists. I put that question to bed; it was answered absolutely.

**Colleen:** So your realizing that God is real coincided with your recovery from cancer and with Lyndon coming to live with you?

**Stanley:** Yes. This discovery happened after I became well, but even though I had been consciously dismissing my physical condition, I probably was, in the back of my mind, wondering what was going on when I was diagnosed with cancer. But when I realized there really is a God, I got a little more serious about my thought processes, and I decided I really had to figure out how man fits into a relationship with God. What's going on with that?

Now I knew for a fact that God created the universe a long time ago—I didn't care how long ago it was—but I knew He did it.

Sometime after I started going to church with Lyndon I began reading books, trying to figure out what was true. I determined, "This time I'm going to get it right!" My cognitive dissonance was growing; there I was, sitting in church watching the pastor's family and seeing her husband escape the building as soon as possible and wait for her in the car. There were Easter egg hunts on the Sabbath, and the pastor's sermon illustrations were odd and confusing. There was something weird here that I couldn't define.

I finally said to myself, "I don't think Adventists really believe what they're teaching in this church." I still wasn't going to leave the Sabbath, though. Sabbath was not even an issue; the Sabbath was certain. That's why I decided to come and fix you guys [the Former Adventist Fellowship at Trinity Church]; you guys were wrong about the Sabbath!

**Colleen:** (Chuckling) So you thought that at the bottom line, Adventists were still probably right, but the pastor you were hearing had it wrong?

**Stanley:** No. I knew the Sabbath was right. The rest of the Adventist doctrines didn't really make sense to me. They didn't make sense like the other conclusions I'd reached about God being the Creator made sense.

**Colleen:** I understand.

**Stanley:** People talk about "faith", but Gary (Inrig, senior pastor at Trinity Church) has cleared up that subject for me. The question is not how much faith one has; the issue is the object of

one's faith. So, once the object of my faith is God, I no longer call it "faith"; to me, it is a fact. Now, I'm out of the faith business with regard to God. As a matter of fact, I'm out of the faith business with regard to everything! It's not a matter of, "Do you have enough faith?" It's all about God; it's not even about me—whether I have faith or not. I don't know if I've made that clear.

**Colleen:** I understand what you're saying. "Faith" isn't an ephemeral thing that has intrinsic power in itself, that can be either strong or weak. Rather, "faith" is simply trust in God. The issue is God, not the person's faith. When one trusts God, he no longer has to waver in his own doubt. God is outside of time and above all, and He is trustworthy no matter the details.

**Stanley:** There was another thing I knew for a fact. Because I knew God existed and that He would save the righteous, I knew—even before I got to other issues—that I was sitting next to Lyndon, and he knew something I didn't. He was trying to sing; he was worshipping; he was "reading" his Bible—and I knew that he was going to be saved. That was a fact.

I thought about that. There I was, sitting next to him, and I didn't even know about myself. I didn't know about my family, either. Wouldn't it be kind-of funny, I thought, if, of all the people in our family, Lyndon is the only one who is saved? Here we all are doctors, dentists, and other professionals, and Lyndon can't even read!

Sometimes I had the odd thought that Lyndon was pulling the wool over our eyes. Sometimes it seemed that he was "somebody" in there, that he was pulling a joke on me that I didn't understand. So, when he'd say things like, "I'm going to heaven, and I'm going to take my whole 'flamily' with me," it would seem to me that he knew something that is so profound—and neither I nor the rest of us understood it.

How did this person with Down's syndrome, whose neurons didn't even work right, get it when I can't get it?

**Colleen:** There was clearly another way of "knowing" that isn't governed by cognitive ability.

**Stanley:** I decided to work really hard to get it. I took their classes and read their literature, but as I read, I was kind-of doubting it. I still felt the Sabbath was right, though, and my purpose in coming over to the FAF group was not to change your minds about anything but to bring you within the Adventist group to fix them. I thought the church needed to be fixed. I didn't want to make you into Adventists again; I just wanted you to come and help fix the church because they were dysfunctional.

**Colleen:** I see; you'd get us back to the Sabbath and bring whatever we had to help fix the church.

**Stanley:** You were already having meetings on Friday night, but at a non-Adventist church. I'd just get you back into the proper environment. Sabbath was not the issue; I already knew the Sabbath was a fact!



**Colleen:** (laughter) Got it!

**Stanley:** So once I read Dale's book and you guys told me what you did about the new covenant, I realized what the fact really was: I had been misguided about the Sabbath! The Sabbath is still a fact; it's just not a day. It's a relationship with a Person.

**Colleen:** Talk about what happened when you read that book. I remember your phone call to us that next week.

**Stanley:** Oh, I read it the next night. I was up in Arrowhead, and I forget exactly which part of the book I was in, but I suddenly realized the truth about being holy. See, my struggle was trying to be holy. I wanted to be holy, so when I went back to church, holiness was my goal. I knew Lyndon was declared holy; he knew he was going to heaven. I knew I wasn't holy. I had to work to become holy, but Lyndon was declared holy. I kind-of resented him, because he got a better deal than I did.

**Colleen:** And why did you think Lyndon was declared holy? Because he somehow knew God?

**Stanley:** Well, yes, he knew God somehow, but also he was declared holy because of Christ's death. I thought He died for the innocents who couldn't help themselves. I was kind-of upset with Lyndon. He was going to heaven, and he didn't have to do anything for it. It wasn't fair! I worked all this time; I became a neurosurgeon and helped all these people that needed help, and Lyndon didn't do a blankety-blank thing to get to heaven!

**Colleen:** Oh, how funny. He got a pass because he was basically unable to do anything!

**Stanley:** Yes. He was accepted as he was—plus, even though he didn't understand, he had "read" all the books, had listened to all the tapes, and had underlined his Bible and everything. I said, if there's anybody in this world that deserves to be saved, it's him! I know that he'll be saved, and he'll be restored. That knowledge became a fact for me. It did kind-of irritate me, because it meant that I had to work harder to accomplish what he did without any effort.

**Colleen:** I get that! Because Lyndon couldn't read and didn't mentally understand, his going through all the motions was considered "good enough". But you did understand, so more was required of you. Are you OK, Stanley?

**Stanley:** Yeah, I'll go get a pill in a minute.

### The intellectual disadvantage

**Colleen:** So you were reading through the book, and at some point you realized...what?

**Stanley:** If I accepted Christ, then I entered into the rest, and I didn't have to work anymore.

**Richard** (who had been monitoring the recording and taking photos): You were like Lyndon.

**Stanley:** Exactly right. God accepted him in his condition, and he entered into God's rest. I entered because of Christ, with all my knowledge, and I accepted Him as my Savior that night—and then I realized Lyndon and I would both be in heaven.

**Richard:** Lyndon's advantage was that he didn't have anything to bring, so he never fell into that trap.

**Stanley:** Exactly right. And that's why so many of us with our Adventist background, who pride ourselves on being intellectuals, have so much difficulty. We just can't imagine presenting ourselves empty-handed. We have to impress somebody, and we consider God to be "somebody"—to us as Adventists He's not a spirit.

**Colleen:** After reading the book and discovering that if you accepted Jesus you were saved, what changed?

**Stanley:** Now I realized that I had obtained my goal: I was saved. I was set free and no longer had anything to do. I knew Lyndon and I would both be in heaven, no matter what. I realized I didn't save myself; Christ saved me. It's done—I don't have to work anymore. I'm retired!

Not only am I retired, but I used to say to Anne-Louise, "I'm now living in eternity!"

**Colleen:** Well, you are, actually.

**Stanley:** I now am in eternity, and the rest of what happened in my life might be amusing or interesting or terrible, but none of it



would change the outcome. I've known that fact since that instant. So then I thought that all my friends and family would be thrilled to hear this news. This was important information! (Laughter)

I used to sit between cases and talk to the doctors and whoever would listen, and they had to drag me back into surgery because I would have been late. One of my golfing buddies began to call our Saturdays on the green “gospel golf”! They couldn't stop my talking about it.

After awhile, though, I did quit. Oh, I talk about it when the issues arise, but I've sort-of adopted Lyndon's position: I've tried to bring my “family” with me. It's not that they're uninterested; they want the same things I do. They just don't yet understand what I'm trying to say.

I still talk about it, but not incessantly as I used to. Most of the people I meet have already heard it more than once (chuckle)!

**Colleen:** Have your interests changed in the last ten years?

**Stanley:** Oh, completely. I still have an interest in “things”, but I don't have an obsession with anything. Before, if I wanted something, I went and got it: a new car, or whatever. I could afford it, so I just went and bought it. That's changed. Knowing I'm saved took the focus off of me. I've been through some really hard financial times in the past ten years, but in spite of that, I've been able to think of others rather than myself because I didn't need to worry about myself anymore. I was done.

**Colleen:** So now, this diagnosis is so recent, it's a sudden jolt—

**Stanley:** Yes.

**Colleen:** How is your reaction to having a fatal condition different from the first time it happened?

**Stanley:** Before, I refused to think about it because I wasn't saved. I just decided that I would try to get along the best I could with whatever time I had. I didn't know what the future was. I wasn't afraid of God—and actually, the comforting thought was annihilation. Even if I had to suffer for a while, it would be over at some point. I wouldn't suffer forever.

**Colleen:** I used to feel the same way. How do you see it now?

**Stanley:** When I realized I had a fatal disease that would likely kill me within six months, my first thought was, “This is going to be really hard on Anne-Louise.” She had become ill over the past years and was bed-ridden. When I told her, she looked at me and said, “This is too much to deal with.” And she died in this room [we had moved into the study from the patio] last week. I believe she is saved because she believed in Christ and in His righteousness and that there was no more work for her to do.

**Colleen:** So, as you think about dying, which you must do when you get a diagnosis like this, what do you think now?

**Stanley:** It's an interesting thought. I can no longer eat or

drink. I can probably have fluids and nutrition provided, but I need to have a purpose for that. Helena needs me to help finish some paperwork; that is a purpose. Living longer for its own sake is not a purpose now. And then, if I'm on nutritional feeding such as a G-tube, there would be the need to decide when to remove it. I think I'd rather have a natural kind of thing—maybe just fluids, because all I need is a few more days.

**Colleen:** I once heard you say that you have watched many Adventists die terrified.

**Stanley:** Right. I've watched them become very distraught, wanting medication, crying, terrified because they didn't know what was going to happen to them. Their families were distraught as well. After all, if one believes in soul sleep, when is that going to end? One wonders if they'll ever be awakened? It requires Christ's second coming and the resurrection to be released from soul sleep.

But when we realize Christ's resurrection—not just his eventual coming—is all that matters, death is completely different. He already broke the power of death. We do not go into oblivion. Christians know Jesus was raised from the dead. It's no longer a question of “Am I good enough?” or “Will I be raised to eternal life?” Now it's certain: Christ was raised! It's all about Him; our future is guaranteed; everything is done!

**Colleen:** Our spirits go to Him, and we are guaranteed that our bodies will be raised and glorified.

**Stanley:** I know that I'm saved for a fact, and I know Lyndon is in heaven for a fact. I think about things I wish I had done and projects that I can't finish. Because it's so late, I just have to say, “I can't do it.” I feel abandoned to God. He'll take care of whatever needs to be cared for. So my mission projects, my this or my that—I just leave them to Him and they will continue or not.

**Colleen:** So before, you believed that somehow God would make up the difference in your sanctification so you'd be worthy of salvation, and now—your salvation is done.

**Stanley:** Yes—because He's done 100% of it. As far as the material things I was doing...if He wanted me to complete them, He wouldn't take me out. I can turn all of that over to Him, too.

I bequeath all my problems to You, Lord! Bills unpaid, projects started, even my family. Last Sunday at Anne-Louise's memorial service, I felt like it was my funeral, too. I'm done with all the things that I can do on earth, and long before this, anything that needed to be accomplished in my life—God did that. I have nothing else to do!

## Unity of the Spirit

You know what I've learned, though? Your support, the church's support, the Christian family—that's been huge. This has been an experience that my biological family—certainly that I—had never experienced. This spiritual connection is something that I cherish. It's been an ecstatic experience, really. I mean, it's been wonderful.





**Colleen:** If there were something that you wanted to be sure was said in this article that your friends and family might read, what would you say?

**Stanley:** A lot of what Ellen White said was partial truth which ends up teaching no truth. So if you would say, “I believe in soul sleep,” I would say, “My spirit’s going to heaven.” The real issue is that we have to have our spirits incorporated into Christ. We have spirits, and that’s where we relate to God.

God is a spirit. He’s 100% spirit, so we can’t relate to Him in a physical way. He related to us by becoming man, but, in fact, the rebirth experience is a spiritual experience. Nicodemus actually asked a really good question: How can a man be born again? All he knew was the physical part of man.

The New Testament explains the spirit. Without the New Testament, you’re stuck as a Jew—or an Adventist. Adventists sort-of halfway accept the New Testament; they’ll accept the idea of being spiritual but they veer away from what Scripture says and say they have to obey to stay saved. It’s very difficult to know how to talk about this subject with them because they’ll all agree with me.

So I say all these things to them about the spirit, about being born again, and they’ll say, “Yeah, you’re right; pass the beans.” It’s like—wait a second! Is it me? This is a big deal!

**Colleen:** They have to see that you’re different.

**Stanley:** They all know that I’m different. By being born again I entered into a spiritual kingdom with God because of what He did in Jesus—entirely. Because of Jesus, I remain in that spiritual kingdom with Him. When He says that He will be with me forever, it’s because He will not let me leave that spiritual relationship. I don’t want to leave it—it’s not like I’m struggling to get out! He engulfed my life, and I want to remain incorporated in that situation. Being born again through faith in the blood of the Lord Jesus did give me eternal life.

When I talk to people about being saved and this event of being born again, it’s like they say, “OK, we get it; yeah, we’re all going to be there; we believe in Christ—and oh, by the way, how’s your boat doing out on the river this year?” So I don’t know; Christ has to deal with them—I don’t. I know I can’t take that person to the next step. He can come to a place where he can recognize somebody has a passion for something, but he can’t go to the next step without an impact from Christ. That comes from Him. But they can resist—I think that is the worrisome thing about it.

**Colleen:** I agree.

**Stanley:** They are so close—but what happens to those people who are so close but can’t give it up? Oswald Chambers writes a lot about giving up your right to yourself, something he called the “white funeral”. You have to attend your own “white funeral”. It’s



“white” because it’s not negative at all. It’s wonderful; it’s a bright funeral, not at all depressing. It was wonderful to die to myself and let Christ save me.

I think I have had an influence in people’s lives. They’ve heard most of what you’ve heard me say. I don’t know how to get them over the next hurdle; I know I can’t do it.

**Colleen:** No, but God knows; He got you over that hurdle.

**Stanley:** Yes, something will happen.

**Richard:** It’s a miracle each one of us is here.

**Stanley:** Absolutely. And I wouldn’t change a bit of it, because in spite of what I went through, He rescued me. I was the prodigal son. He relates to us spiritually in the spiritual world even after our bodies die; there has to be some kind of spiritual communication until there are new bodies.

**Colleen:** If there weren’t something real that God keeps when we die, we wouldn’t have a resurrection but a re-creation.

**Stanley:** Right. We’ll recognize our friends, so there’s got to be some part of us that’s recognizable, retained, but purified.

his recliner next to the open window where he could watch the hummingbirds vie for spots at the feeder that hung outside.)

**Richard:** Stanley, we really appreciate this. It’s a gift to be able to spend some time with you.

**Stanley:** Thank you. You guys are largely responsible for my exit from Adventism—

**Colleen:** Well, God did that.

**Stanley:** I understand, but still I appreciate it.

(The phone rings...)

**Stanley:** Whatever it is can wait. It doesn’t matter...

Richard turned off the microphone and computer, and we sat with our friend for another half hour, talking softly and sharing his reminiscences. The sun was shining, and birds were singing. Richard and I both felt tears fill our eyes—but the gift God gave us that afternoon was that instead of distress, awkwardness, or an agony of grief, the three of us knew that we were united to each other in Jesus. Richard and I would miss Stanley, but we knew the unity of the Spirit that knit our hearts together was eternal. We were one in Christ Jesus, and nothing—not even death—could ever remove us from Him. So we sat quietly with our dying yet very-much-alive friend and shared the profound presence of Jesus.

Eleven days later, Stanley Allen Rouhe entered into his rest in the presence of his Lord Jesus—one day after completing the last of the paperwork his daughter needed him to put in order before he left. We can’t see him now, but his testimony continues to call us to trust Jesus and to retire as Stanley did from our struggle to be worthy.

And I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Blessed indeed,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!” (Rev. 14:13)

So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him (2 Cor. 5:6-9).

Stanley abandoned himself to God, and he committed his loved ones into His care. He finished well. †



(Stanley was growing weary. We had moved indoors, and he was sitting in

**Richard Tinker** is president and CFO of Life Assurance Ministries. He and his wife Colleen have co-led Former Adventist Fellowship Bible study at Trinity Church in Redlands, California, since 1999.

**Colleen Tinker** is editor of *Proclamation!* magazine. Formerly a high-school English teacher, she has worked with Life Assurance Ministries since 2004. Colleen and Richard have two adult sons and a granddaughter.





**F**ear: racing heart, sweaty palms, acute anxiety—what is happening?!

As an Adventist I lived in fear. Would I be able to stand up for the Sabbath Day when the Sunday laws came? Would I make it through the investigative judgment, or would Jesus find that I hadn't reproduced His character? Would He find an unconfessed sin on my record that would keep me from eternal life? Fear was pervasive, all-encompassing, and constant. Every news event might signal the beginning of the end of time and the enforcement of Sunday laws.

Recently, I asked several former Adventists what their fears were, and here are some of their answers:

"I was terrified of probation closing. What happened if my name had already been examined? What if I sinned after the door had closed and it was too late to confess it?"

"I was afraid of death, end times, and judgment—you name it, I was afraid. From my youngest years this was the continuing theme of my childhood: FEAR."

"I had a huge fear of the end time events, of being hunted down by all my non-Adventist friends and family."

"Most of all I feared being in and out of salvation depending on my day's behavior."

Many of us lived with constant fear as Adventists—although we learned to hide it well. When I was leaving Adventism I remembered a passage from Ellen White (the prophetess of the Seventh-day Adventist Church): "Then I was shown a company who were howling in agony. On their garments was written in large characters—thou art weighed in the balance, and found wanting. I asked who this company were. The angel said 'these are they who have once kept the Sabbath and have given it up.'" (*Early Writings*, p. 37.2)

Would I be one of those "howling in agony?" I wondered as I made steps to leave Adventism.

A few months ago I came across a picture of a group of men, some in masks, pointing guns at the heads of two children. The picture was taken at a Seventh-day Adventist Summer Camp in Michigan during a live enactment of supposed end-time events. The gunmen were role-playing those who would hunt and kill Sabbath-keepers (the kneeling youth in the picture) during the coming "time of trouble", and the audience was composed of the children attending camp this summer.\*

Many non-Seventh-day Adventist Christians send their children to Adventist summer camps believing that their children are going to a Christian camp. What Christian parents would want their children to view this terrifying role-playing? Many



© ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/KNAPÉ

Would I be one of those  
"howling in agony?" I  
wondered as I made steps to  
leave Adventism.

Christian parents monitor what their children see in the media. How might this grisly role-playing affect the children forced to watch it? Additionally, how might those watching children be imprinted by the message that those who worship on Sunday will hunt and shoot Sabbath-keepers? What kinds of nightmares might they have?

Fear... Fear... Fear...

I remember sitting in the kitchen of a friend's home discussing the economic state of the U.S.A. and what would happen if the country's debt were to be called into account. When I was an Adventist, that conversation would have triggered acute fear, but I distinctly remember not being afraid. Instead, with awe I realized I felt deep peace. It was such a new experience for me that I commented on it to my never-been-Adventist friends. Christ has not given me a spirit of fear, but of power, love, joy, and a sound mind.

I no longer live with the pervasive fear I had as an Adventist. I no longer am afraid that I will die and cease to exist, never knowing if I am saved or

not. Praise God that the fear-inducing doctrines of Adventism are healing!

Now I know that Jesus has disarmed Satan and has set me free from the fear of death (Heb. 2:15). I don't have to worry about the time of trouble because Jesus has already given me eternal life.

"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?'" (Jn. 11:25-26).

I believe, Lord Jesus. In you there is no fear. †

\*See <http://arthurandteresabeem.blogspot.com/2011/07/sda-pre-enactment-of-last-day-events.html>.

**Carolyn Macomber** was a doctoral student at Andrews University when she discovered inconsistencies between Adventism and the Bible. She withdrew her membership from the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 2009. She is a member of The Chapel Evangelical Free Church in St. Joseph, Michigan, where she is the leader of a Former Adventist Fellowship. She teaches at an inner-city private school in Benton Harbor, Michigan, and she is a small group leader for Bible Study Fellowship in Granger, Indiana.



# Delivered by spiritual c-section

DELINA PRYCE MCPHAULL



**T**here are some people that are born into Christian homes and regularly attend Bible-teaching churches whose spiritual rebirth seems to come naturally. Some of us, though, had a rockier spiritual gestational period. My husband and I describe the born-again experience that we each had as a spiritual cesarean section. I am certain many former Adventists can relate.

In ignorant bliss, we swam in the toxic amniotic fluid of false doctrines. A steady dose of great controversy worldview entered our blood stream through an umbilical cord attached to a false prophet. Our peculiar spiritual deformities were considered special and superior.

Then God Himself did the miraculous. He cut through and pulled us out. We were spiritually born again. It was real, but it wasn't something we did. We didn't induce labor, break the bag of water, or push. We didn't deliver ourselves. The Holy Spirit gave birth to our spiritual life (Jn 3:6).

But what exactly is the rebirth? What does the term "born again" really mean? And how does it happen?

Anyone who claims they can describe the intricacies of how one is born again is naive. John 3:8 says plainly, "The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit." Nevertheless, we can rely on Scripture to define what rebirth means as well as what it doesn't mean.

**Being born again is not physical. It is 100% spiritual and literal.**

I had just attended the quiet, still, and somber funeral wake of a dear family friend, but the minute I got home and opened

the door, I was greeted by my three children (ages 4 and under) shouting, "Mommy! Mommy! Mommy!" Right then it struck me—the stark contrast of going from death to life. It's unmistakable.

Although we usually think about life and death in that order—life then death—the Bible talks about our spiritual lives in the reverse: death, then life.

Ephesians 2:1-3 describes our condition before being born again: "Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else."

We are born with dead spirits and are objects of God's wrath. Those who are not born again are, quiet literally, the walking dead and living in obedience to the enemy.

In Colossians 2:13, Paul describes it this way: "You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins."

"But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth



**Then God Himself did the miraculous. He cut through and pulled us out. We were spiritually born again. It was real, but it wasn't something we did. We didn't induce labor, break the bag of water, or push. We didn't deliver ourselves. The Holy Spirit gave birth to our spiritual life.**

of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus.” (Eph. 2:4-7).

This rebirth was prophesied in Ezekiel 36:26 where God gathers a scattered Israel, redeems and promises them, “I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you.” Not only that, God promises the infusion of the Holy Spirit. “I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations” (Ez. 36:27).

These same promises of a new spirit (ours) and an indwelling Spirit (Holy) are granted to gentile believers. “When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior,” (Tit. 3:4-6).

Being born again is real. It's not just a figure of speech or an analogy. It is an actual something that happens to our spirits. Theologians call it *regeneration*.

#### **Being born again is not belief in the right doctrines.**

Perhaps the most direct passage with which to understand the phenomenon of rebirth is through Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus recorded in John 3.

Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader, comes to Jesus under the cover of darkness to interview and evaluate Him up close. “Rabbi,” he said, “we all know that God has sent you to teach us. Your miraculous signs are evidence that God is with you.” Nicodemus had an intellectual understanding that Jesus was

legitimate. He acknowledged that His teachings were from God, and cognitively He processed the evidence. But Jesus conveyed to him that right understanding would not get Nicodemus into the Kingdom.

A person can intellectually know the right things and not be born again. Conversely, one can be unclear about the details of the truth and be born again. The act of rebirth does not depend on one's comprehension of it, nor is rebirth defined as the comprehension of a concept or set of beliefs.

Furthermore, it is not enough to believe intellectually that Jesus is who He says He is, the Son of God—Messiah. Right thinking and sound doctrines aren't the keys to the Kingdom. “I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God,” Jesus tells Nicodemus (v.3).

We must be born again.

Nicodemus responds to Jesus in a way that shows that he is thinking in the physical realm. “How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?” But as we've discussed already, the rebirth is wholly spiritual.

#### **Being born again is not “right living.”**

Having grown up Adventist, my understanding of being born again was fuzzy at best. “Born again” was a term that I heard mostly used by “non-Adventist Christians”, and the precise meaning eluded me. I understood it to mean repentance, a change in behavior, a change in motivation for “right living,” something akin to conversion or a turning point in one's actions and habits. Ellen White writes, “Their (the Pharisees) great need was that very change which Christ had been explaining to

# When one understands the relationship between spirit and body, one can also understand why Jesus was sinless and why He could not have sinned.

Nicodemus,—a new moral birth, a cleansing from sin, and a renewing of knowledge and holiness.”<sup>1</sup> The idea that new birth and repentance are synonymous gives the impression that you can be born again, again and again and again, repeatedly.

“New birth represents a turning. It’s a repentance,” preached Doug Batchelor in a sermon.<sup>2</sup> “God is calling us to be new creations.” But that is not how the Bible describes the new birth. We are new creations when we are born again. It’s not something we accomplish through diligent and disciplined effort.

There’s no doubt that being born again will result in new behavior, but being born again is not defined by that behavior.

“He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them.

“So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!” (2 Cor. 5:15-17).

There’s no such thing as a born-again spirit that is stillborn.

But Adventists are convinced those who are born-again will be open to keeping the Sabbath and incorporate all of the other Adventist lifestyle standards (abandoning jewelry, meat, alcohol, and so on). Ellen White writes in the *Testimonies*:<sup>3</sup> rebirth “will give us willing obedience to all His requirements. This is true worship.” At another time she writes, “‘Marvel not,’ said Christ to Nicodemus, ‘that I said unto you, Ye must be born again’ John 3:7. God must create in man a clean heart before he will walk in His statutes and keep His commandments to do

them. A new moral taste has to be created before man will love to obey the law of God.”<sup>4</sup> By framing rebirth as a desire to meet “His requirements” (code words for “God’s law” which are code words for the “10 commandments,” which are code words for “the Sabbath”), they deny the New Testament passages that say believers don’t live in relation to the law at all, but instead live by the Spirit.

## Being born again is not repentance or conversion.

The lines between born again, conversion, conviction (trust), repentance, and baptism are blurry in Adventism. A paragraph explaining the ritual of baptism on the denominational website<sup>5</sup> states, “Through baptism we are truly born again in Jesus.”

In a recent article in *Ministry Magazine* (an Adventist magazine for ministers) rebirth is defined in this way, “A spiritual rebirth: trust in divine forgiveness through Jesus Christ, which leads to a life of loving obedience to God, proper self-understanding, inner peace, and harmonious relationships.”<sup>6</sup>

The Revelation Seminar materials used by many local Adventist congregations to teach members and to recruit new ones described being born again as the “conversion experience.” It is called “‘being born again’ because when born again we have no past. At conversion, a person is cleansed from sin and starts all over as a newborn baby, in a changed relationship with God.”<sup>7</sup>

But being born again is a distinct something outside of forgiveness of sin. It’s not our old self wiped clean (that presumably can be sullied again), it is a new spirit that is birthed—one that is united with the Holy Spirit.

In fact, it is because of the spiritual awakening of rebirth that we are even able to respond to the voice of our Shepherd and to live by His Spirit.

## Being born again cannot be induced by us.

In Adventism, there was also a notion that rebirth is something that a person can initiate. But how can a person with a dead spirit even desire to request rebirth from God?

Well-known Seventh-day Adventist evangelist HMS Richards encapsulates the new birth like this: “The sinner’s part is to believe, exercise faith, to repent, to confess Christ, to step forward in obedience, to accept baptism, and to live in obedience to all of God’s Word. God’s part is to give him a new nature. This is called new birth. (Read John 3:3-8).”<sup>8</sup>

New birth, however, is not a partnership between God and us. It is not something we do together. It is something that He does. He is the Creator of this new life. The Spirit must give us life.

Similarly, Nicodemus was looking for direction on what he could do, but Jesus explained that being born again is something that happens to a person, not something that one initiates. You can’t induce the birth of your spirit.

“Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life,” John 3:6.

## Barriers to understanding

If I’d read this article 10 years ago, all of this “spirit talk” would have sounded like the unintelligible adults in the Charlie Brown cartoons, “wa wa wa wa wa wa wa wa.”



I used to believe the Adventist teaching: “body + breath = living soul.” The breath in that equation—also called “spirit”—the “thing” that returns to God at death (Ecc. 12:7) was, in my Adventist understanding, mere air. I didn’t know the Bible teaches that we possess a spirit that can (and does, at death) exist independently of the body. I didn’t know that this spirit can be dead when the body is alive, and alive when the body is dead. In my Adventist worldview, even an intellectual understanding of true rebirth was impossible.

When a person believes that his spirit is more than air, he can also believe John 5:24 which emphatically states that those who have received eternal life “have already passed from death to life.” (Notice the tense. It is not future; it’s present.) For this reason, Jesus declares in John 8:51, “I tell you the truth, anyone who obeys my teaching will never die!” And in John 11:25-26, Jesus explains to Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die.”

1 Peter 1:23 says, “For you have been born again, but not to a life that will quickly end. Your new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living word of God.”

The regenerated spirit is immortal, beginning its everlasting life at the point of rebirth, not at a future resurrection. Ephesians 2:6 says believers “are seated” (not will be seated) with Christ in the heavenly realms because we are united with Him. I’ve yet to find a text that even suggests that this spiritual life is something other than immediate and permanent.

The Adventist “state of the dead” and “nature of man” doctrines aren’t the only barriers blocking the truth about rebirth. Many of the distinctive Adventist doctrines depend on the belief that humans do not possess an immaterial spirit.

If we indeed have an immaterial spirit that receives eternal life when we believe, then the investigative judgement loses its teeth. If one stops believing that one’s works and law-keeping are judged in an investigative judgement, then it no longer makes sense that Sabbath-keeping is what seals a person for salvation. And if one ceases to believe three of the four Adventist pillar doctrines, the fourth (Spirit of Prophecy) falls by default. For how can Ellen White be a true prophet if she disagrees with the Bible and actively developed and promoted these erroneous beliefs?

When one understands the relationship between spirit and body, one can also understand why Jesus was sinless and why He could not have sinned. He is God and was not born with a spirit that needed to be born again. Understanding this concept in biblical terms also helps us to see how God was truthful when He told Adam that he would be sure to die if he ate from

the forbidden tree. Adam and Eve died a spiritual death (their spirits were alive when God breathed the breath of life into them) when they disobeyed.

## Deliverance

God in His Sovereignty was unimpeded by any spurious beliefs that I was born believing. He gave me a new birth. Indeed, He regenerates and births a new creation in us. He gives us the spiritual eyes to see truth and the motivation and desire to choose Him.

The new birth is what makes us a part of God’s family. It’s the only way to legitimately call God, “Father”.

There are people who have spectacular stories of when they were born-again. They know precisely the moment, day, and time when they were reborn and had saving faith. They experienced the violent windstorm of Pentecost (Acts 2:2). The wind gales of grace blew and swept them off their feet.

Others experience a cooling breeze and can only tell you in retrospect what happened.

Sometimes rebirth happens when a friend or a stranger shares the gospel; sometimes it happens when a person is reading the Bible; sometimes a song or a book or a movie provide the moment when a person comes to spiritual life. The “how” is God’s prerogative and is as unexplainable and unpredictable as the wind.

Truly, it doesn’t matter if one is born in a hospital, birth center, house or car, naturally or by c-section. When God is the Deliverer, the birth is a miracle of eternal life. †

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> White, E. G., *The Desire of Ages*, Pacific Press, p. 173, par. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Rassi, Humberto M. “Why do different scientists interpret reality differently?” *Ministry Magazine*, September 2011: 16-20. This statement was found in a chart (p. 19) accompanying this article. It compared how key concepts were understood in biblical Christianity and secular humanism.

<sup>4</sup> White, E.G., *Testimonies for the Church* vol. 9:153-156, 1909.

<sup>5</sup> White, E.G., *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 4, p. 183, par. 1.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/>

<sup>7</sup> *Revelation Seminars*, Lesson 4

<sup>8</sup> *KJV Bible with HMS Richards Helps*, “Special Bible Subject Helps: A Guide to Bible Truth and Exposition of Bible Prophecy”, World Bible Publishers, 1999, p. 71.

**Delina and Ben McPhaull** met in 1999 and married in 2004. Delina is a writer and stay-at-home mom of their three children, Maxton (age 3), and twin girls Maxwelle and Maxine (age 1). In March, 2010, Ben resigned from pastoral ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist church and is founder of Quarterlife Ministries, which promotes biblical literacy among young adults. The McPhaull family worships at First Baptist Church of Burleson in Burleson, Texas. You can find links to their blogs at [McPhaull.com](http://McPhaull.com).



# Who is you

## Understanding Romans 7 and 8

I believe that Romans 7:1-6, when fully understood within the context of Romans 7 and 8, will be a powerful incentive for many of us to enjoy a more dynamic, guilt-free life in Christ Jesus. This is one of Paul's most insightful illustrations, and it deserves our most careful attention. Romans 7 has been interpreted different ways by sincere, believing Christians. Some contend that Paul is speaking about his current Christian experience; others say he refers to his former life before he met Christ. I believe we can see Romans 7 from three perspectives.

Doctrinal study should always be done from a literal translation—especially when studying a controversial passage such as Romans 7. I mention this because in my study for this article I read several paraphrases which I felt completely missed Paul's point. For this study I will use the updated New American Standard Bible.

**Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives? (Rom. 7:1)**

As we have pointed out in previous studies, the church in Rome was composed of both Jewish and gentile Christians. Throughout this book, Paul addresses one group, then the other, with application for both. I believe the truths of this section are most relevant to the Jewish Christians.

**For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. So then if, while her husband is living, she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress, though she is joined to another man (Rom. 7:2-3).**

I envision all the members nodding their heads in complete agreement as this portion of the letter was read to the Roman church. In these first three verses Paul has laid the foundation in clear logic. In the next three verses, however, he will present in capsule form a truth that has profound implications.

**Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be**

**joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God (Rom. 7:4).**

In context here, Paul used the word “law” in a way that referred to general law. In verse 4, Paul used the definite article with “law”, thus pointing us to the Torah. What does it mean to “die to the law”?

“To die” is aorist passive in Greek, meaning they—and we—had nothing to do with this “death”, but it was done by another, in this case by Jesus Christ. Here we get a glimpse of Christ's dual work. He died for us as our Substitute, and WE died IN HIM as our Representative. We also note that the law did not die. We did.

Our dying “in Christ” does two things. First, it allows us to be released from our marriage to the law. While we were married to the law, we were under condemnation and could not achieve the “righteousness of God.” Our death in Christ also means we are were raised from the dead in Him as well, giving us new life and a new Husband, Jesus Christ.

Second, dying to the law and being married to the Risen Christ allows us to live without condemnation.<sup>1</sup> Free from the law we can truly “bear fruit to God.” “Bearing fruit” means evangelism,<sup>2</sup> doing good deeds to others<sup>3</sup> character development,<sup>4</sup> and even worship.<sup>5</sup> Free from all condemnation, in the power of the Spirit we can now take the good news to those still under the condemnation of the law. We can proclaim that they, too, have died to the law in Christ, are married to Christ and are now partakers in the very “righteousness of God”<sup>6</sup>—if they respond to the gracious call of God and place their faith in Christ alone.

**For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter (Rom. 7:5, 6).**

It is my settled conviction that these two verses are the hermeneutical key to understating Romans 7 and 8. Often Paul



will make a brief, succinct statement so heavy with theological insight that it takes a chapter or two to unpack its meaning.<sup>7</sup> Verse 5 is the seed thought that Paul will work out in Romans 7:7-25. The meaning of verse 6 will be unfolded in Chapter 8. In these verses Paul lays out in the most lucid terms the contrast between being married to the law and being married to Christ. Being married to the law means: (1) the law tells you what is right and what is wrong, and (2) it condemns you if you do what is wrong. Because we all have sinned in the past and we all continue to fall short in the present, our relationship with the law is one of continual condemnation.<sup>8</sup> It is clear from the whole teaching of Scripture that the law is powerless to save and only condemns the sinner.<sup>9</sup> And while the law points out right and wrong, it actually arouses the innate sinful passions present in all children of Adam. Have you ever walked by a sign that said, “Wet paint, do not touch,” and had an almost irresistible urge to just put the tip of your pinky on the “wet paint” just to see if it really is still wet? Yes, Scripture teaches us that the law is against us. It was hard for me to accept this. But this is one of its main functions.

its resulting condemnation. Thus, we are free from our previous relationship to the law.<sup>11</sup>

People have looked at Romans 7:7-25 in several ways. Historically, the law came in with Moses and lasted until Christ.<sup>12</sup> From this perspective, therefore, Romans 7:7-25 speaks of the old covenant era leading to the cross. Romans 8 would be the new covenant era after the cross.

A second perspective is that Romans 7:7-25 refers to our lives before we were born again by the Spirit and Romans 8 describes our lives after we were born again. In Galatians 3:23 Paul puts it like this: “But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.”

I believe, however, that there is yet a third perspective from which to view Romans 7:7-25 which is illustrated by the error that the Galatian church had fallen into. Christians can commit spiritual adultery, which is legalism. While married to Christ they can also have an illicit love affair with the old law. This may happen when we take the focus of our attention off our standing in Christ<sup>13</sup> and flirt with the law. Then our old condemning husband will sneak in to have an immoral, dishonest

# Husband?

**Take this book of the law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may remain there as a witness *against* you** (Deut. 31:26). (My emphasis)

In context “the book of the law” includes the book of Deuteronomy which includes the Ten Commandments. That the law is against us is the clear teaching of Scripture.<sup>10</sup> The result of being married to the law is that it arouses our sinful passions and we “bear fruit for death”.

## Married to the Law

It is my conviction that in Romans 7:7-26 Paul is showing what life is like when we have a relationship with the law. Paul uses “law” 21 times in Romans 7 and only 5 times in Romans 8. Interestingly, Paul uses “Spirit” only once in Romans 7 but 21 times in Romans 8. It is beyond the scope of this short study to do an in-depth study of either chapter, but here is a summary of my conclusions.

Being “made to die” to the law, as pointed out above, is aorist passive plural in Greek. Dying to the law leads one inescapably to the cross as the center of finished activity. It was Christ’s death, then, that broke up our marriage to the law and

relationship with us by (1) critically pointing out our sin;<sup>14</sup> (2) arousing our sinful passions;<sup>15</sup> (3) expanding the scope of our sin;<sup>16</sup> and (4) deceiving us by saying that if we can just keep the law well enough, then we will be worthy of heaven. This adulterous relationship always promises life, but in actuality it produces sin and death.<sup>17</sup> When we turn back to the law, we face danger.

**I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; (Gal.1:6)...How is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain** (Gal. 1:6; 4:9-11).

At this point we might be ready to say that the problem was with the law. But that is not what Paul says. He affirms that “the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good” (Rom. 7:12). The problem is with our sin. The function of the law was to make sin exceedingly sinful.<sup>18</sup>

The underlying issue to which Paul speaks in these two chapters is this: How do we deal with our sinful nature? He offers and illustrates two ways. (1) Married to the Law—a sin

arousing, deceiving, frustrating experience with deadly consequences which leads only to compromise with sin while bearing “fruit for death”.<sup>19</sup> I do not believe that Romans 7:7-25 is a description of Paul’s experience as a Christian living by the Spirit. Rather, it is an illustration of what his Christian experience was or would be like if or when he used the law as a means of dealing with the sinful nature rather than the Spirit.<sup>20</sup> Many have pointed out that the verbs in this section are present tense and thus could signify his present experience. However, when we compare his statements in this section to other statements in Romans it leads me to believe Romans 7:7-25 is designed to show the uselessness of trying to subdue the sinful nature using the law. Consider the following statements paired to show that they are almost contradictions:

- A. **For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin** (Rom 7:14).
- B. **...for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die** (Rom 8:13).
  
- A. **So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me** (Rom 7:17).
- B. **Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus** (Rom 6:11).

To build on Paul’s illustration of marriage: if we are walking hand in hand with the law, the law will do nothing but condemn us to death. But when Christ enters the picture major things happen. Before we examine the second way for us to deal with sin, it would be good for us to review the key verses again.

**Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God. For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. *But now* we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter** (Rom.7:4-6). (My emphasis)

This is the good news to which Paul has been building. “But now” as used by Paul and often by Jesus as well, indicates a radical contrast of phenomenal proportions, often introducing the realities of the multitude of blessings associated with the new covenant and our new standing in Christ<sup>21</sup> “But now” usually contrasts how things were before the cross of Christ with the way things are after the cross. Here I believe it contrasts the way we did battle with the flesh when we were married to the law, with the way we now deal

## **Christians can commit spiritual adultery, which is legalism. While married to Christ they can also have an illicit love affair with the old law. This may happen when we take the focus of our attention off our standing in Christ and flirt with the law.**

- A. **But I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members** (Rom 7:23-24).
- B. **But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life** (Rom 6:22).
  
- A. **And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin,**
- B. **yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness** (Rom 8:10).

Therefore, I believe the heading of Romans 7:7-25 should be “Dealing with our sinful nature, or flesh, using the law”. Likewise, the heading for Romans 8 should be, “Dealing with our sinful flesh by the Spirit. Paul is not as concerned with the historical time of our battle with the flesh as he is with the method used to subdue it.

with the flesh married to Christ. I encourage you to look up each “but now” reference in the above footnote. As I read all these references in my study, my heart rejoiced in the new position I have being released from the law and “married to Christ”. I believe you will be blessed also. The “but now” moves us from Romans 7 to Romans 8. Now, rather than bearing “fruit for death” as we did when married to the law,<sup>22</sup> we now can “bear fruit to God.”<sup>23</sup>

### **Married to Christ**

**There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according**



to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit (Rom. 8:1-5).

The function of the law changed when Christ entered the picture. The condemning function of the law found its true target in Christ. He took the condemnation for us. He was put to death for us. We were condemned in Him, our representative, and we died in Him. But now Christ is raised from the dead! Now, married to our new husband, we walk hand in hand with Christ; the law can't touch us! Like a roaring lion on the other side of the fence, it has no way to get to us. Still in our human, sinful flesh, we will fall short in many ways.<sup>24</sup> But now there is NO condemnation.

Earlier we listed the results of being married to the law; now let us focus on the results of being married to our new Husband, Jesus Christ.

- But now there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ. It is hard for us who have come from a law-centered religion to fully understand this weighty truth in this simple statement. What if I fall? What if I ... (you fill in the blanks). Yes, if we are “in Christ,” there is now no condemnation!
- But now the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. We are free from the law which only condemns and has no power to make anyone holy. All its demands have been met in Christ.
- But now God provided what the law could not do: Forgiveness—the offering for sin has been given in Christ for all who believe. Righteousness—to all who walk according to the Spirit.
- But now the Spirit who raised Christ from the dead dwells in us.<sup>25</sup>

- But now the Spirit gives life to our mortal bodies.<sup>26</sup>
- But now we can put to death the deeds of the body.<sup>27</sup>
- But now we are the children of God.<sup>28</sup>
- But now we are joint heirs with Christ.<sup>29</sup>
- But now God works all things together for good.<sup>30</sup>

In summary I believe that Romans 7 and 8 are dedicated to showing us how to deal with our sinful nature. Paul suggests two ways: (1) being married to the law which is a condemning husband leading only to discouragement, frustration and defeat. The only way to get rid of this condemning husband is to die “in Christ”. The law’s jurisdiction ends with this death. (2) Then we can be married to Christ. Our relationship with our new Husband gives us a multitude of blessings including: (a) it removes all condemnation because the law no longer has any claim against us; (b) it allows us to live in complete acceptance knowing that we are accounted as having the very “righteousness of God”; (c) it provides a better way of dealing with our sinful nature “so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us” [obedience to the moral principles of Scripture]<sup>31</sup> who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”<sup>32</sup>

So let us ask ourselves, “Who is my spiritual husband?” Is my husband the law? Have I died to the law in Christ? Am I now married to Christ? Or, am I like the Galatians, having an immoral relationship flirting with the law while claiming Christ as my only Husband?

**Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter (Rom. 7:4, 6). †**

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Rom. 8:1.

<sup>2</sup> Mk. 4:20; Jn. 4:36; 12:24; 15:2,5,8; Rom. 1:13.

<sup>3</sup> Mt. 3:8, 10; Rom. 15:28.

<sup>4</sup> Gal. 5:22; Eph. 5:9; Phil. 1:11; Col. 1:6; 1:10; Heb. 12:11; Jam. 3:8.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. 13:15.

<sup>6</sup> See Ratzlaff, *Sabbath in Christ*, chapter, “Righteousness Beyond the Law”.

<sup>7</sup> For example, Romans 1:16, 17 capsulizes the theme of the whole book or Romans. The statement in Rom. 1:31 is explained in Romans 4.

<sup>8</sup> Rom. 3:23.

<sup>9</sup> Rom. 3:20; 5:20; 7:9, 23; 8:2; 1 Cor. 15:6; Jam. 2:9.

<sup>10</sup> Rom. 7:23; See also, Neh. 9:6, 29; Isa. 42:24; Jer. 2:8; Jer. 44:23; Dan 9:11-16; Hos. 8:1.

<sup>11</sup> Rom. 8:2.

<sup>12</sup> Gal. 3:17-19.

<sup>13</sup> See *Proclamation!*, Vol. 12, Issue 2, Ratzlaff, “Progressive Sanctification,” Part 2.

<sup>14</sup> Rom. 3:23; 7:5.

<sup>15</sup> Rom. 7:2.

<sup>16</sup> Rom. 7:8.

<sup>17</sup> Rom. 7:10,11.

<sup>18</sup> Rom. 7:13.

<sup>19</sup> Rom. 7:5; 7-25.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Jesus: Lk. 16:25; 19:42; Jn. 15:22; 15:24; 16:25; 17:13; Paul: Rom. 3:21; 6:22; 11:30; 16:26; 1 Cor. 7:14; 12:18-20; 13:13; 15:20; Gal. 3:25; 4:9; Eph. 2:13; 5:8; Col. 3:7; 2 Tim. 1:10; Others: Heb. 8:6; 9:26; 12:26; 1 Pet. 2:10, 25.

<sup>22</sup> Rom. 7:5.

<sup>23</sup> Rom. 7:4.

<sup>24</sup> Rom. 3:23; 1 Jn. 1:10; Jam. 3:2.

<sup>25</sup> Rom. 8:11.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Rom. 8:13.

<sup>28</sup> Rom. 8:16.

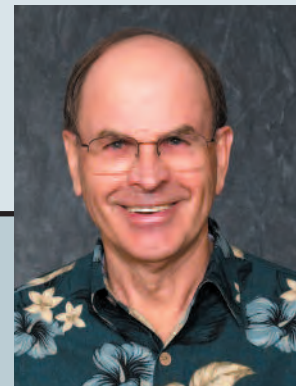
<sup>29</sup> Rom. 8:17.

<sup>30</sup> Rom. 8:28.

<sup>31</sup> We must always remember that our acceptance with God is always based upon Christ’s death and resurrection and not in our obedience. However, as pointed out in the last *Proclamation!* when we live “in Christ” we can grow in active sanctification.

<sup>32</sup> Rom. 8:4.

**Dale Ratzlaff** is the founder of Life Assurance Ministries, Inc., and owns LAM Publications, LLC. He served as an Adventist pastor for 13 years, seven at Monterey Bay Academy where he taught Bible. He and his wife Carolyn left the Adventist church in 1981 when he realized he could no longer teach the investigative judgment in clear conscience. He has authored *Sabbath in Christ*, *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists*, *The Truth About Adventist “Truth”*, and *Truth Led Me Out*. These are available through his website, LifeAssuranceMinistries.com. The Ratzlaffs reside in Casa Grande, Arizona.





RICHARD PEIFER

# Worship Jesus because He is

About two years ago Life Assurance Ministries launched a website called [BibleStudiesforAdventists.com](http://BibleStudiesforAdventists.com). This website features daily commentary for the lessons published in the *Sabbath School Bible Study Guides*, formerly known as “The Quarterly”. During the third quarter of this year, the Seventh-day Adventist Church published its *Sabbath School Bible Study Guides* on the subject of “Worship”. The title of the lesson for the thirteenth week was “Worship in the Book of Revelation”.

Richard Peifer, co-host of the radio program produced by People to People Ministries, is a former Adventist and has been a regular contributor to these commentaries. He agreed to write the commentary for that thirteenth week of the third quarter. Instead of doing an essay for each day of the week, as he usually does, he wrote an article calling the readers to true worship of the Lord Jesus alone.

We are printing his article here so our readers may also benefit from Peifer’s insights and come to trust Jesus alone, with no add-ons, for salvation.

I had agreed to write commentary on the thirteenth Sabbath School lesson of the third quarter of 2011 from a Christian perspective. As I read the study guides I realized the week’s essence could be summarized by a couple of quotations from Wednesday and Thursday’s lessons which I share below followed by the commentary which I wrote for the week:

As Seventh-day Adventists, we understand how central to this whole issue the seventh-day Sabbath is, which is so tied in with Creation and with worship. We worship the Lord because He is the Creator, and the Sabbath has been, and still remains, the foundational mark, or sign, of His role as Creator.

Though we still do not know when, and how, these issues will be brought to the forefront, we can be sure that they will. How crucial it is, then, that we be ready, not only to stand firm for the truth but also to be able “to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Pet. 3:15) (*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide, July-Aug-Sep 2011*, Page 156).

Again, think about Creation, think about the God who created the creation. Then think about the Cross, about the Creator dying for the sins of those whom He had created, bearing in Himself the punishment that they deserved in order that these undeserving beings could have the chance of being re-created in a new heaven and a new earth (*Ibid.*, Page 158).

As an Adventist one is expected and required to keep the Sabbath in order to be saved. Period. One can get away with almost anything—except breaking the Sabbath. We were expected to give up our jobs for the Sabbath if necessary. We were expected to die for the Sabbath.

Adventists learn that God is worthy of worship because He is the Creator, thus linking Him to the establishment of the Sabbath. Yet the Bible does not teach us to worship



God because He is the Creator. In fact, I do not worship the Lord because He is the Creator. I worship God because He is God. Creating is one of His major activities, but I do not worship His activities or power or majesty. He simply IS, and I worship the I AM because there is none else.

The Sabbath truly was the sign of God's sovereignty over Israel. However, because we are no longer under Law, we are marked by a different sign—the indwelling Holy Spirit (see Eph. 1:13-14). Therefore, I do not worship the Sabbath, nor do I honor the Sabbath as the sign of my loyalty or as the seal of God. Adventism worships the Sabbath so much that they have made an idol of it and therefore have negated their own attempts to keep the Law.

Because Adventists believe only that “undeserving beings could *have the chance* of being re-created in a new heaven and a new earth,” they focus only on the cross. They miss entirely the reality of Jesus' resurrection and the eternal life that belongs to everyone who believes in Him. In short, they teach only a half-gospel, which is no gospel at all.

As those of us who write these comments have attempted to explain in every lesson, the Adventist focus on behavior and law-keeping as the means of proving one's right to salvation is a completely bankrupt approach to God. It calls Him a liar in regard to sin and salvation, death and life, Satan and Jesus, and every other major Biblical theme.

Certainly, this behavioral approach runs roughshod over Revelation's message, completely missing the point. Revelation is about Jesus. It actually is the revelation of Jesus—the already ultimately victorious King.

Revelation is not about the great controversy. There is no controversy, great or otherwise! Jesus is God—always has been and always will be. Satan, a created being, is a liar, coward, and murderer—always has been and always will be until he is thrown into the lake of fire (see Jn. 8:44). Notice that Jesus Himself doesn't even bother with Satan at the judgment. Satan's being thrown into the lake of fire is done, in my reading of Revelation 20, by the same angel who binds Satan for the thousand years. Satan is not worth one second of Jesus' time. Satan is less than an afterthought in the context of Jesus' inherent majesty and power.

If we want to understand worship as it is demonstrated in Revelation, then we must see the entire book in the context of Jesus. It is not about churches; it is about Jesus. It is not about persecution; it is about Jesus. Revelation is not about law-keeping; it is about Jesus. It is not about seals, trumpets and bowls, but it is about Jesus. It is not

# Revelation is not about the great controversy. There is no controversy, great or otherwise! Jesus is God—always has been and always will be.

about time periods, but it is about Jesus. It is Jesus, always and only Jesus, that we find in Revelation!

This realization will drive us to our knees and then onto our faces in awed, joyful, humble adoration and praise. If the twenty-four elders spend most of the time on their faces in Revelation, who are we to point arrogantly to our law-keeping as some kind of badge of honor!

It is way past time we got over ourselves. Stop giving Satan so much credit. Stop giving Jesus so little credit.

## Here's what I suggest for you this week

Lay aside your Adventist quarterly. Put down your copy of *The Great Controversy*. Instead, ask the Spirit to reveal the true meaning of the words given to John, and pick up your Bible and read through Revelation at least twice this week. Spend no time at all trying to figure out the meaning of the various symbols, no time stealing yourself for the coming persecution. Focus entirely on Jesus—how He is revealed in the book, what He does throughout the book, and how the various groups respond to Him.

You will be amazed, and you just might meet the real Jesus for the first time in your life! If so, don't feel guilty about missing Him in the past. Today is the day of salvation; not yesterday, not tomorrow. Jesus is sufficient. Jesus is victorious. Jesus is everything. Let Him hold you in His hands, because, once He does, no one and nothing will be able to snatch you away from Him (Jn. 10:27-30).

There is no better place to discover the real meaning of worship than in Revelation. Let His words change your life. I guarantee you'll never be the same. †



**Richard Peifer** serves as associate pastor, music director, co-host of the radio program, and technology director at People to People Ministries in Carrollton, TX, a suburb of Dallas. He and his wife, Lois, attend Metro Bible Fellowship, the local church outreach of People to People. You can learn more about both ministries at [www.realanswers.net](http://www.realanswers.net) and [www.metrobiblefellowship.org](http://www.metrobiblefellowship.org). You may send e-mail to [richard.peifer@realanswers.net](mailto:richard.peifer@realanswers.net).



### Reactions to the great controversy article, April/June, 2011

#### Let's be fair

I would like to believe that as an editor and journalist you want to be accurate and fair. But you have often denied that Ellen White believed in the full and eternal deity of Jesus Christ.

I am commenting on your statement that "Before time began God exalted Jesus to be equal to himself," thus implying that EGW denied His eternal equality to the Father.

If you had read *Patriarchs and Prophets* carefully, you would have found a lengthy statement of Jesus' eternal Godhead on page 34. (Please read it again.)

You seem to have overlooked the following statement: "There had been no change in the position or authority of Christ. Lucifer's envy and misrepresentation and his claims to equality with Christ had made necessary a statement of the true position of the Son of God; but this had been the same from the beginning" (PP 38)....

Your second statement is also misleading: "When Adam and Eve sinned, the Father took Jesus into His inner council and allowed Him to become the sac-

#### Proclamation! News

Send your email address to receive our soon coming weekly email of news and new content on the web at [LifeAssuranceMinistries.org](http://LifeAssuranceMinistries.org).

rifice for sin." You are overlooking the following:

"The Son of God shared the Father's throne, and the glory of the eternal self-existent One encircled both. . . . Before the assembled inhabitants of heaven the King declared that none but Christ, the Only begotten of God, could fully enter into His purposes and to Him it was committed to execute the mighty counsels of His will" (PP 36).

Jesus had always been in the inner council of the Father!...

Colleen, I write this out of deep concern for you and what you are doing. I have prayed for you many times. By your subtle insinuations you are undermining faith in God's prophet, God's church, God's law, and God's Sabbath. Please listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit to your OWN SOUL. (EDITED FOR LENGTH)

RETIRED RELIGION PROFESSOR  
OOLTEWAH, TN

#### Numerous falsehoods and distortions

Your article on the Great Controversy was filled with numerous falsehoods and distor-

tions. I will recount one here. You cite a quotation from Ellen White from *Patriarchs and Prophets* page 35 which states,

"The exaltation of the Son of God as equal with the Father was represented as an injustice to Lucifer, who, it was claimed, was also entitled to reverence and honor."

Then you make the following assertion,

"In the great controversy paradigm, Jesus was not the eternal almighty God, God exalted him to be His equal at some time in the distant past."

Your conclusion demonstrates either a lack of understanding of

the subject matter you are critiquing, or a purposeful agenda to distort facts in order to support your agenda. An objective evaluation of the subject would have included the following from page 38 of the same chapter:

"There had been no change in the position or authority of Christ. Lucifer's envy and misrepresentation and his claims to equality with Christ had made necessary a statement of the true position of the Son of God; but this had been the same from the beginning. Many of the angels were, however, blinded by Lucifer's deceptions." PP 38

She states elsewhere regarding the divinity of Christ:

"In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived. 'He that hath the Son hath life.' 1 John 5:12. The divinity of Christ is the believer's assurance of eternal life. 'He that believeth in Me,' said Jesus, 'though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believeest thou this?'" (DA 530).

Thus it becomes apparent that both the Great Controversy view and Ellen White promote the full

of Christ. Lucifer's envy and misrepresentation and his claims to equality with Christ had made necessary a statement of the true position of the Son of God; but this had been the same from the beginning."

This statement, however, only confirms that fact that in EGW's understanding, Jesus was not truly equal to the Father. First, her claims that Lucifer misrepresented Jesus to the angels is completely invented. No such notion ever occurs in the Bible. Second, the Lord Jesus was Satan's and all the angels' Creator (Jn. 1:1-15). They were never in any doubt as to Jesus' identity and authority. Satan made no claims of equality to Christ which the Father had to rectify by "exalting" Jesus publicly. Jesus always was part of the Trinity, the One God. Satan, a mere angel, was not able to pose as a person of the Trinity; he could not masquerade as his own Creator. EGW's claim that Jesus was always equal to the Father yet capable of being misrepresented by Lucifer is completely unbiblical and opposed to the revelation of Scripture.

There was never any doubt as to Jesus' identity, and Lucifer was not posing as God. These statements demonstrate that EGW really did see Jesus as substantively different from the Father, and they further demonstrate that she did not know Scripture.

The second point I address is the quote in the first letter above from *Patriarchs and Prophets* page 36: "The Son of God shared the Father's throne, and the glory of the eternal self-existent One encircled both. . . . Before the assembled inhabitants of heaven the King declared that none but Christ, the Only begotten of God, could fully enter into His purposes and to Him it was committed to execute the mighty counsels of His will."

EGW's statement that the glory of the "eternal self-existent One encircled both" reveals her understanding that the Father was separate from Jesus. In reality, the Trinity is One, and the glory of God belongs to all three equally. Jesus and the Father and the Spirit

**Your conclusion demonstrates either a lack of understanding of the subject matter you are critiquing, or a purposeful agenda to distort facts in order to support your agenda.**

divinity of Christ with equality with the Father, yet your article creates a falsehood that does not exist in the Great Controversy theme and argues against that falsehood in an attempt to undermine the legitimacy of the Great Controversy and the message of the Adventist Church.

COLLEGEDALE, TN

**Editor's note:** First, I will address the statement both letters above use to counter the effects of EGW's assertion that God exalted Jesus in the distant past. The above writers cite *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 38: "There had been no change in the position or authority



have eternally shared all the glory and all the attributes of God. Moreover, according to EGW, the Father had to decide who could “enter into His purposes,” and He chose to admit only the Son.

This scenario is nonsense; God didn’t have to “choose” whom to admit into His “inner council”. No matter how we look at her words, EGW’s supposed declarations of Jesus’ eternal deity and authority fail to proclaim Him to be almighty God the Son who eternally shares all the attributes and the glory of God equally with the Father and the Spirit. Moreover, EGW teaches ideas that have no foundation whatsoever in Scripture. Her “insights” are strictly extra-biblical and opposed to the biblical declarations of our trinitarian One God who is the only true God, the Creator not only of us but also of the angels.

One last point: EGW’s statement that Jesus’ divinity “is the believer’s assurance of eternal life” is also an unbiblical conclusion. First, this statement assumes that there was a question about His divinity—and to be sure, most of the founders of Adventism were Arian or semi-Arian, disbelieving in the eternal existence of God the Son and disbelieving the Trinity.

Second, this foundational heresy regarding the identity of the Lord Jesus was never renounced, and it continues to shape Adventists’ perception of Him. Finally, Scripture reveals Jesus to be eternal almighty God the Son, but it is not His deity that guarantees our eternal life. Rather, His resurrection from the dead is our guarantee of eternal life. He broke the curse into which all of us are born, and when we repent and receive His sacrifice and accept Him as Savior and Lord, we are

brought to spiritual life at that moment, are sealed with the Holy Spirit, and pass from death to life (Jn. 5:24, Eph. 1:13-14; 2:1-9).

The Adventists’ need to defend EGW’s statements about Jesus reveals that Adventism’s worldview depends upon an extra-biblical “revelation” of who He is. The Jesus of the great controversy paradigm could have failed in His mission, had no advantage we fallen

humans do not have, and came to show us how to live. Moreover, the Jesus of Adventism was not of the same substance as the Father and does not share the same eternal power and glory.

The great controversy paradigm needs a Jesus who did not complete the atonement at the cross. The great controversy depends on a Jesus who needs to prove His superiority to Satan.

Ellen White’s Jesus is not the Jesus of Scripture. God will judge

find answers to questions I didn’t even know I should be examining. Coming out of Adventism is really a worldview shift. Although I now belong to a great Bible-believing church, people of other denominations do not understand the internal struggle it is to leave the Adventist church or the ongoing strain with family members who think you have made a serious mistake. Here is a donation that I hope will at least help with your expenses. You feel like friends. Keep up the good work. Thanks!

TORRINGTON, WY

### The great controversy depends on a Jesus who needs to prove His superiority to Satan. Ellen White’s Jesus is not the Jesus of Scripture.

#### Thanks to *Proclamation!*

It is always with great anticipation that my wife and I read each quarterly issue of *Proclamation!* Being a former Adventist, my wife always gets first dibs on reading the magazine cover to cover. I agree with a recent letter writer; I too am not a former Adventist, but I find the articles are written to fulfill what Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 1:18-19 is all about...

*Proclamation!* magazine is unique in that the articles are not merely 700-word essays but rather are lengthy, in-depth studies of the foundations of Christian faith and doctrine. My faith is deepened by your mission, motto, and message

us by the word He has spoken (Jn. 12:48). The Lord Jesus is all we need, and His glory fills eternity.

#### Internal struggle

I love your magazine. I am a former Adventist from Wyoming. There aren’t many Adventists here, so [there are] even fewer former Adventists. It is so encouraging to be able to read about people who have had similar struggles and to

## Do not be anxious

God has confirmed Himself once again as our faithful Father, our Provider who accomplishes His will and blesses us, His children, when we trust Him and keep taking the next step He shows us we need to take.

After the last issue of *Proclamation!* was mailed, readers responded with surprising emotion and generosity. At our board meeting in October, the financial records show that at this time, our shortfall has been reduced to only \$9,511. When he heard the report, one of our board members said, with great emotion, “Since last year at this time, I have prayed for Life Assurance Ministries twice a day, and God is answering my prayer!” And the help keeps coming.

God has indeed sold some cows from His hills, and we praise Him and thank each of you who has responded to our financial crisis with such love and generosity.



We still need the funds to cover the printing and mailing of the fourth issue of the year (which we must have mailed before the end of December, so we are moving directly into its production without the usual weeks for financial “recovery”), so we ask you to pray with us that God will prompt those whom He knows need to give.

We thank you for your generosity and for your affirmations of prayer support and appreciation for *Proclamation!* We pray that God will bless you abundantly above all that you can ask or imagine, and we thank Him for providing for this ministry through you.

Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you (Matt. 6:31-33 ESV).

statements reflected in the writings of each article. They have helped my wife unravel the untruths of Adventist doctrine. I have witnessed her moving away from the crippling effects that Adventism had on her to the freeing power of the biblical gospel, as expounded upon in your magazine. It also goes without saying that *Proclamation!* does expose the cultic belief system of the Adventist church. I'm preaching to the choir, but coming out of Adventist cultic doctrine takes quite a bit of healing time; *Proclamation!* has been a big part of my wife's healing process. My many thanks to *Proclamation!*  
READING, PA

#### Loved Brinsmead article

I really loved the latest articles on the great controversy and Robert Brinsmead. Regarding the Brinsmead article: I learned a lot about the Brinsmead experience and found it fascinating....My first actual exposure to him was his article "1844 Reexamined", and his article convinced me. Then when my wife and I were stunned and disillusioned by our exposure to Walter Rea's Ellen White research, it was Brinsmead's book *Judged by the Gospel* that actually kept us within Adventism as evan-

gelical Adventists for the next three years. We continued to study, using Brinsmead's writings, gradually working our way out of Adventism into evangelical Christianity; all this culminated in our resignation from Adventism in 1984...

### ...coming out of Adventist cultic doctrine takes quite a bit of healing time; *Proclamation!* has been a big part of my wife's healing process.

I remember that Brinsmead visited eastern Pennsylvania, where we lived, in 1984, and my wife attended his meeting to hear some "exciting new religious learning." She came home very disillusioned—Brinsmead was now proposing that God was in all living objects! We could not follow that, nor could we follow his pilgrimage into agnosticism...I remain an evangelical Christian to this day...

God bless your ministry; it is much appreciated.

WALLACE D. SLATTERY  
SPEARFISH, SD

#### You're going to hell

It is too bad that your magazine staff and followers will be going to hell. That's really too bad. You should be ashamed of yourselves.

VIA EMAIL

#### Alot to face in the judgment

I have read your magazines and am appalled at Adventists in good and regular standing leaving the Adventist church. So you think your church is better? I do not think so.

For one thing, you criticize Ellen G. White and her teachings. She has been a blessing, I want you to know.

You seem to have no basis for leaving. Mr. Dale Ratzlaff and you will have a lot to face in the judgment, I believe, for misleading former Adventists. I do not want any more of your magazines.

SEATTLE, WA

#### Always enjoy Macomber and Lee

I hope you receive more funds for your magazine. Times are rough. I so appreciated your great controversy article. Also, I always enjoy Carolyn Macomber's and Chris Lee's columns! I am so grateful to be out of Seventh-day

#### Moved to tears

I left the Adventist church almost 35 years ago, filled with rage and disgust that I had been deceived for many years by a false prophet, false gospel, and a false worldview. I am eternally thankful the Lord graciously opened my eyes through various means. He surely had His hand on me and called me out of error into His glorious light.

I have been so blessed and learned so much about the many errors of the Adventist church through the many excellent articles in *Proclamation!* The April/June, 2011, issue is particularly good. I was moved to tears when I read Carolyn Macomber's "Filtered By My Worldview" article. Praise God—He is sovereign and does not have to explain or justify Himself to me, the angels, or to His chief adversary. Amen! The Adventist teaching that mankind must prove that God's judgments are fair has demeaned our Lord and is the height of heresy...

My best wishes to all the writers who have, through the years, contributed articles to *Proclamation!*, and may the Lord continue to provide everything you need to share the Good News—Jesus alone saves!  
SPARKS, NV

#### So-called Christian world

You call Sunday believers/workshippers "Christians". The Bible tells us that those who do not keep God's commands are "liars"; the truth is not in them (1 Jn. 2:4). Pretty strong language!...

We pray that you might have a renewed vision of God's will for your life, that you would live by and proclaim God's Word rather than to teach known falsehoods as you and others do in your journal. God does not look kindly upon those who would bear false witness to the truth.

YAKIMA, WA

## LIFE ASSURANCE MINISTRIES

### 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

MAIL LETTERS TO THE EDITOR TO:

**Editor, *Proclamation!* Magazine**  
P.O. Box 905  
Redlands, CA 92373  
OR EMAIL EDITOR:  
[proclamation@gmail.com](mailto:proclamation@gmail.com)



# SEVENTH ANNUAL FORMER ADVENTIST FELLOWSHIP CONFERENCE

**YES, I WANT TO REGISTER** for the Former Adventist Fellowship Conference at Trinity Church in Redlands, California, February 17-19, 2012. Does not include transportation or lodging.

• Number adults \_\_\_\_\_ X \$85 (each person) = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

• Number teens \_\_\_\_\_ X \$65 (each person) = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(junior-high, high school ages)

**Total enclosed = \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

• Vegetarian?  YES (number) \_\_\_\_\_  NO (number) \_\_\_\_\_

NAME #1 \_\_\_\_\_

NAME #2 \_\_\_\_\_

NAME #3 \_\_\_\_\_

NAME #4 \_\_\_\_\_

NAME #5 \_\_\_\_\_

NAME #6 \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return with check or money order in included envelope (space limited).**

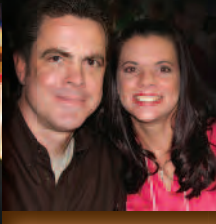
## WORLDVIEW ALIGNMENT NEEDED!

February 17-19, 2012

**NEW!  
SPECIAL  
FEATURES  
FOR TEENS!**



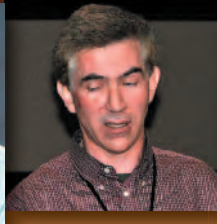
PHIL BUBAR



CAREL AND NICOLE STEVENSON



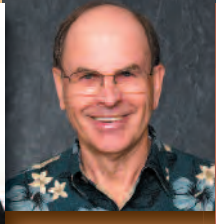
GARY INRIG



JON RITTENHOUSE



COLLEEN TINKER



DALE RATZLAFF



SHARON STRUM

### NEVER-BEEN ADVENTIST TEACHING EMPHASIZED

The Seventh-day Adventist organization has declared 2011 "The Year of the Great Controversy" and has designated 2012 as the year its members are to send copies of Ellen White's *The Great Controversy* to non-Adventists. Those who are transitioning out of Adventism have had their worldview shaped by the great controversy motif, not only doctrinally but in the way they understand reality. The Adventist organization's emphasis on spreading this paradigm underscores the need for us intentionally to learn what is biblical and what is not. For this reason our 2012 FAF conference will especially feature never-been-Adventist teachers who will address central doctrinal issues from a biblical perspective, allowing us to ask questions and equipping us both to understand Scripture and to explain to Christians how the Adventist worldview differs from evangelical Christianity.

### NEW! SPECIAL FEATURES FOR STUDENTS

Carel and Nicole Stevenson will lead breakout sessions, question and answer sessions, and activities for junior high and high school students. A discounted registration fee is offered—so bring your students along!

### SCHEDULE (New this year...features for teens!)

• Friday, February 17, 9:00am – Sunday, February 19, 2012, 4:00pm

### FEATURES

- Breakout sessions and activities for junior high / high school students
- Food and fellowship time, and sales area, including free stuff
- Communion, prayer, and testimonies Saturday evening
- Sunday lunch with the afternoon open for fellowship

### TO REGISTER (SPACE LIMITED)

- \$85 per person (junior high / high school students: \$65 per person), must register before February 1, 2012. Sign up online or use coupon above.
- Fee includes meetings, handouts, lunch on Friday, three meals on Saturday, lunch on Sunday, and snacks. Scholarships are available!
- You must make your own lodging/transportation arrangements. A limited number of local church member's homes are available.

**TO SIGN-UP ONLINE** Go to [FormerAdventist.com](http://FormerAdventist.com) and follow the links.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION** Phone (877)-349-6984

**CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED**

**LifeAssuranceMinistries.org**

The life **A F T E R** with Chris Lee

I wormed my way into the cylindrical concrete culvert under the driveway to our grade school. Jon was close on my heels, eager to share our favorite hiding spot while playing “Sheep In My Pen” at recess. Something was different this time. The concrete seemed to grab at my shoulders, slowing my forward progress until it seemed I could go no further. With Jon wedged tightly behind me, I couldn’t go back, and I seemingly couldn’t go forward either. I could see the sunlight at the end of the culvert opening ahead of me, but I couldn’t reach it. I had changed. I had grown, and now I was stuck. The panic began to set in.

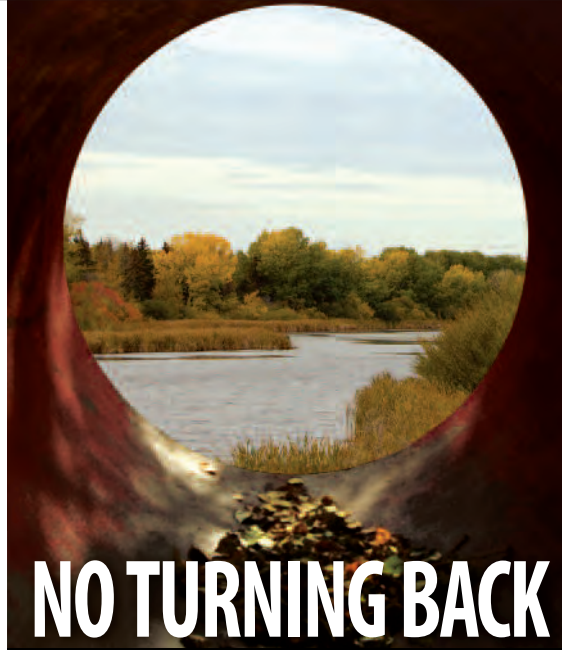
If you’re reading *Proclamation!* you’ve almost certainly experienced this feeling. Once you’ve had a glimpse at the Jesus revealed in Scripture and have begun to grasp why He’s really Good News, you just can’t un-see it. The appeal of Adventism begins to crumble next to the appeal of the biblical gospel. So you come to a place where you know you will never be the same, but you can’t imagine how you could ever extricate yourself from the web of Adventism. It feels hopeless, frustrating, and scary.

I’ve seen it with family, friends, and myself. I knew there was something wrong with what I’d been taught, quietly ignored much of it in my private life, allowed my kids liberty I didn’t have, and admitted there were many things I didn’t believe anymore. But social pressures, family pressures, and a life of fear-based conditioning kept me from taking the next step towards a more healthy and biblical spiritual life. I was fearful of family, friends, and of God because of the old “tapes” that seemed to constantly

play in my head. I think there was more than just fear at work, though. Let’s face it; there’s a cost when you decide to follow Jesus whole-heartedly. You have to be ready to leave behind pride, status, identity, that



**Chris Lee** lives in Lincoln, Nebraska with his wife, Carmen, and daughters, Ashlyn and Alyssa. They attend the Lincoln Berean Church. Chris is a self-described “theology junkie” whose mission is to proclaim the unfathomable grace of Christ in a clear, understandable, and Biblical way. He leads a Life Group Bible study for former Adventists at Lincoln Berean. You may contact Chris by email at [ambulater@gmail.com](mailto:ambulater@gmail.com).



© ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/WWING

which is comfortable, and the approval of others.

The combination of fear and the dawning awareness of what it means to take up the cross and follow Jesus can be paralyzing, but feeling trapped is an indicator that you may be involved in a cultic belief system. Any group that divides itself from the Body of Christ by teaching that it, or adherence to its peculiar belief system, constitutes the remnant people of God is exercising a manipulative form of control. The Body is not defined by an organization, and “The Church” is not a denomination.

Biblically, the church is every born again believer. We are bound together by the Spirit in us, have unity in the essentials of the faith, and liberty in the non-essentials. If you’ve been taught something else, it’s a strong sign that you are living in an unhealthy environment, and it’s time to move forward, however uncomfortable and scary that might seem.

There is no going back, only stagnation or forward progress. Moving forward requires an eternal perspective. To paraphrase Paul, “Whatever things were dear to us as Adventists, we’ve counted as loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Jesus. It all seems like trash in comparison to gaining Him.” We can live for today, or we can step out in faith and experience the fullness of Jesus with whom we’ll spend eternity. Start living the life after—now!

Back in that culvert, I said a short prayer in my panic, and my breathing began to slow. I was still fearful as I began to wriggle forward through the constricted culvert, but I finally emerged from the far end into the afternoon sunshine. I expanded my chest to its fullest as I gulped in the air. I was free. The game had lost its significance in comparison to being free, alive, and in the light. †