

REFLECTIONS ON ANNUAL FORMER ADVENTIST FELLOWSHIP CONFERENCE

ProclamationMagazine.com

Proclamation!

FOR FORMER ADVENTISTS
INQUIRING ADVENTISTS
SABBATARIANS
CONCERNED CHRISTIANS

SPRING 2012
VOLUME 13, ISSUE 1

MY TWO WORLDS
COLLIDED

RAISED SO YOU
WILL NEVER DIE

WHAT'S IN GOD'S **BIG YELLOW** TRUCK?



COLLEEN TINKER

Stick people tell the Gospel

I don't remember exactly when or how it started. I just know that several years ago as we began our six-year journey through Romans in our Friday night Former Adventist Fellowship Bible study, I realized that some of our group were having trouble understanding what really happens when we are born again.

The problem was that many were struggling with the concept of having a spirit and with grasping what it means that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin, not just the sins of the past. In our shared "great controversy worldview", Jesus' blood paid for our past sins and those in the

In the context of Romans, however, it is clear that our salvation is not connected to law-keeping, not even Jesus's.

future which we would remember to confess, but we had to be converted and commit to "the Truth" of Adventism once we knew it if we were to expect to be saved. Moreover, because we did not believe we had immaterial spirits that could either be dead in sin or alive in Christ, we lacked any awareness of Jesus' blood paying for our foundational depravity, our natural state of "deadness".

Thus were born the Stick People. I am no artist, but I realized that if I could visually demonstrate the concepts of depravity, of trusting Jesus and His sacrifice, and of receiving Life and the Holy Spirit, these mysteries might make more sense.

The Stick People did their jobs, and as months passed, they demonstrated more and more nuances of salvation that the chapters of Romans revealed. My drawing has not improved with the passing years, but the concepts of death, of Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection, and of our own gift of eternal life have deepened and amazed us all. People look forward to the Stick People drawings, and one young mom even took sidewalk chalk and drew on her driveway the picture of accepting Jesus and coming to life so her four-year-old son could grasp God's gracious gift.

I have prevailed upon my husband Richard, who has the tools to create recognizable pictures, to help me demonstrate the truth that Jesus justifies us with His blood and gives us life because of His resurrection. Romans 5:10 says, "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

As Adventists we thought that Paul was referring here to Jesus' perfect law-keeping before His death. In the context of Romans, however, it is clear that our salvation is not connected to law-keeping, not even Jesus's. Rather, our salvation hangs entirely on our sinless Savior's death, burial, and resurrection. It is Jesus' explosion of death from the inside-out that saves us. He has broken the curse into which we are born! When we believe in Jesus and His sacrifice, we pass from death to life at that moment, and we do not come into judgment (Jn. 5:24).

In this issue, we share with you the visuals that illustrate the reality of our true nature and the amazing gift of Jesus' life that transfers us from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of God's beloved Son. Also in this issue Dale Ratzlaff expounds from Romans 3 on what is ours when we are justified in Christ, and Nicole Stevenson shares her experience in learning to submit her brokenness to Jesus instead of fighting for perfection. Regular columnists Carolyn Macomber and Chris Lee share their reflections on coming to spiritual life and becoming disciples.

We also introduce two new writers. Cherie Skrivan, one of the bloggers on our newly-launched *Proclamation!* Blogs site, shares her faith story. Rick Barker, a co-leader of a weekly Bible study for former Adventists in the Dayton, Ohio, area, and also a *Proclamation!* blogger, launches his new column examining the 28 Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists.

We pray that as you read this issue of *Proclamation!*, God will glorify Himself and make Jesus' death and life profoundly real to you. †

Proclamation!

Vol. 13, Issue 1 • Spring 2012

Founding Editor **Dale Ratzlaff**

Editor **Colleen Tinker**

Design Editor **Richard Tinker**

Copy Editor **Cristine Cole**

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

Proofreader **Carolyn Ratzlaff**

Life Assurance Ministries, Inc. Board of Directors

Richard Tinker, President
Cheryl Granger, Secretary
Martin Carey
Dale Ratzlaff
Carel Stevenson

Proclamation! is published quarterly by Life Assurance Ministries, Inc., 733 E. Black Diamond Dr., Casa Grande, AZ 85122. Copyright ©2012 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
E-mail: proclamation@gmail.com

LIFE ASSURANCE
MINISTRIES

For further **S T U D Y**

• Back issues of *Proclamation!* and the new blog site **ProclamationMagazine.com**

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

• Day by day commentary on the Sabbath School lessons **BibleStudiesForAdventists.com**

• Testimonies, Bible studies, and the forum **FormerAdventist.com**

Adventists and Easter

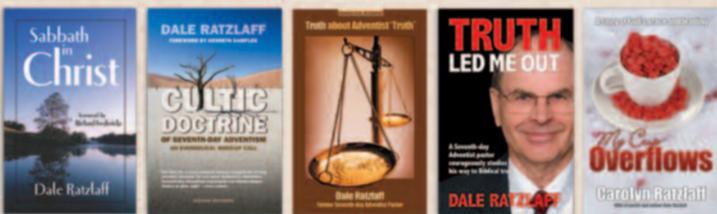
Why don't Adventists celebrate the resurrection? I have noticed that their churches are closed on Easter.

I have heard that there are now a few who do. However, because Adventists have historically taught that Sunday worship is associated with the mark of the beast, it is difficult for them to hold Sunday services. Rather than focus on why Adventists seldom celebrate Resurrection Sunday, let's look together at some of the reasons why we do celebrate Christ's resurrection on Sunday morning.

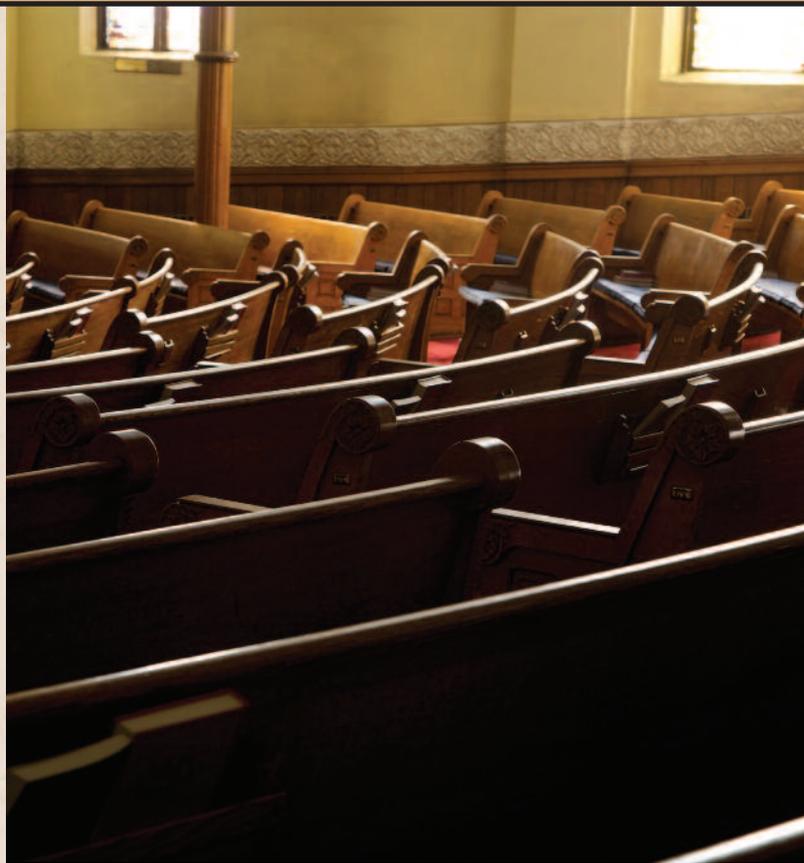
Historically

We know that Christ met with His disciples over a period 40 days after the resurrection.¹ Yet there is no record that the risen Christ ever met with His disciples on Sabbath. Every meeting when a day is mentioned was on the first day of the week with the event and theme of the resurrection being front and center. There is abundant evidence that the early gentile Christian churches met on the first day of the week.² There are numerous accounts—beyond the scope of this page—in the history of the early church where the Christians met on the first day of the week to celebrate the resurrection.^{3,4,5}

Theologically, the resurrection encompasses a host of profound meanings for us. I have listed the key parts of several texts. Note the blessings in the emphasized words. "...as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so *we too might walk in newness of life*. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly *we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection*,...Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that *we shall also live with Him*, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. *Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus*" (Rom. 6:4-11).



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 Ratzlaff.com or by phoning 800-355-7073, or 520-836-9790.



"[The Father] *made us alive together with Christ... and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,*" (Eph. 2:5-6).

"...knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus *will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you*" (2 Cor. 4:14).

In summary, here are a few of the many blessings that accrue to us because of Christ's resurrection:

- We can walk in newness of life.
- Someday we will have a body resembling that of the resurrected Christ—never to die again!
- We know that we will live with Christ.
- We are alive in Christ Jesus—forever alive, eternally!
- We are declared to be seated with Christ in heaven.
- The fact of Christ's resurrection guarantees that we will be raised from the dead to see our Christian friends and relatives again.

Let us celebrate this new life in Christ this Resurrection Sunday. †

Endnotes

¹ Act. 1:3.

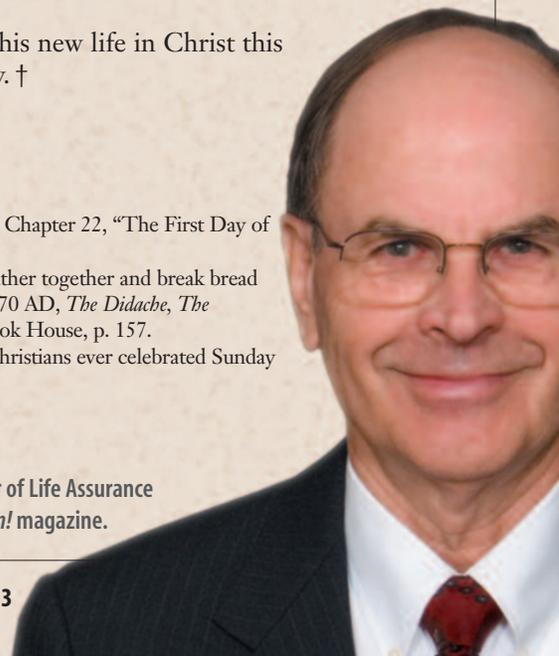
² Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1,2.

³ Ratzlaff, *Sabbath in Christ*, Chapter 22, "The First Day of the Week".

⁴ On the Lord's own day gather together and break bread and give thanks..." Circa 70 AD, *The Didache, The Apostolic Fathers*, Baker Book House, p. 157.

⁵ There is no record that Christians ever celebrated Sunday in honor of the sun.

Dale Ratzlaff is the founder of Life Assurance Ministries and *Proclamation!* magazine.



My two worlds

[Adventism and the Cross]

I loved being an Adventist. I loved the culture, the people, the Sabbath. I didn't imagine, that day in the fall of 1992 when I first saw Jim sitting across the room in German 201, that my Adventist bubble was on a collision course with the "outside" world.

I had just moved back to Lincoln, Nebraska, to start a new job and to finish my degree at the University of Nebraska. I wasn't looking for a relationship—that is, until I saw Jim. He was intriguing—confident, smart, and creative—just my type!

He was also raised Catholic.

Our relationship quickly grew, but I would be lying if I said I didn't have a nagging fear of our differences—particularly those pertaining to Sabbath/Sunday worship. But I prayed a lot—especially that, if Jim was the man for me, God would mold Him into the spiritual leader of our future home. I deeply desired spiritual congruity.

Jim quickly won over my family and me. Despite everything I had been programmed to believe about Catholicism, I found Jim quite open to my beliefs, and he was drawn to my devotion and discipline.

Nearly three years after meeting, we were married in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. While some people openly labeled

us “unequally yoked”, my pastor, friends, and family graciously accepted Jim. Our future was bright.

Glimpses outside the bubble

I was working for a Seventh-day Adventist subsidiary in communications and marketing, and Jim was working full-time while finishing grad school. Upon his graduation we moved to Omaha, Nebraska. I continued to do work for the church, frequently traveling to Silver Spring, Maryland, working on various print, video, and satellite uplink projects for the North American Division (NAD) and General Conference (GC).

During that time I became aware that I lived in two different worlds. One world was the bubble of Adventism. It was warm, comfortable, and familiar, and when I stayed “inside”, I felt protected from the world's ideas. I knew how to be Adventist, and I loved everything about my Adventist life.

At the same time there was the world outside my bubble. Interestingly, there seemed to be pockets of Christians outside of Adventism who were more on fire for Jesus than most of the Adventists I knew. The contrast was undeniable, and I was confused. Their joy, peace, and passion for Jesus burned far brighter than my own. How could they live such righteous and godly lives apart from the 10 Commandments?

I had always considered myself a progressive Adventist. I thought my beliefs aligned wholly with Scripture but without the legalism many Adventists practiced. For example, I grew up in a meat-eating home but was a vegetarian because I didn't like meat's taste and texture, not because of an old covenant or Ellen G. White food law. I freely drank caffeine, but I didn't drink alcohol

Worlds collided

CHERIE SKRIVAN

© ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/BRAINMASTER

because I was irritated by friends who occasionally drank too much, not because Ellen G. White told me not to. And don't get me started on jewelry! I had no notion of hiding my bling while attending meetings at the NAD or GC. Sometimes I noticed the looks I got, but I really didn't care. I dismissed them as evidence of legalism.

I despised hypocrisy and desired to be authentically me. In fact, I exercised enormous religious freedoms. I justified my actions by using the "legalism" card, yet I didn't feel free. I began to feel a weight that I would eventually recognize as my chains of bondage to law, flesh, sin, and worst of all, idolatry.

Sabbath Guilt

Because I traveled quite a bit during the month, I began to cherish my weekends at home—particularly Friday nights—and I began to long for the Sabbaths I loved as a child. In our home Sabbath had been a respite. Friday nights had meant a clean house and yummy smells of Sabbath foods while the family gathered after a week of being scattered.

After taking a break from the Sabbath routine for many years, I longed to re-create my 24-hours of Sabbath bliss. Now, though, I was in a different home, and my husband and I had already set up a pattern of different traditions—secular movies on Friday nights, sometimes church on Sabbath morning, always lunch out that afternoon, and maybe some shopping. Moreover, if it was fall, football was always on our TV, particularly the Nebraska Cornhusker games. I couldn't blame my non-Adventist husband for these secular practices, either. These were things I started doing with Adventist friends while attending an Adventist College, years before I met Jim.

It wasn't until we had our first child that the guilt really hit. Now I was responsible for another life. Jim had given me full authority to practice and to raise our children in Adventism. He kept himself at arm's length from my church, however, because he had discerned the same issues of faith plus works and of doctrine vs. dogma in Adventism that he had found in his own Catholic upbringing. Privately, however, I longed for him to embrace Adventism, especially since we now had one child with another on the way.

While the Adventist Church was our family's "home", our attendance was sporadic. We felt neither spiritual connection nor growth there. We were searching for a sense of belonging, but we didn't know that what we needed was Jesus.

My sister and the Sabbath

During these years, my sister started questioning the doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I dismissed her with my pat answers, but the intensity of her questions burned during the fall of 2004 as she started studying her Bible more. "What do you think about our prophetess, Ellen G. White? Do you think she was really inspired by God if her prophecies failed or her teachings contradict His word?"

"I don't know," I would reply. "I haven't read her books. She's not a source of inspiration for me. In fact I disagree with much of what she writes." I felt liberal in thought and word as I spoke.

"Did you know that we're saved by faith alone, through grace alone, in Christ alone?", she asked.

"What do you mean? Of course we're saved by grace!" I thought I spoke with authority and intelligence. After all, how

I was clueless that when I looked to the law as a means to live righteously, instead the only purpose the law served was to condemn me of sin and charge me with endless guilt whether I felt guilty or not.

many books on grace had I helped the Adventist church publish and put in the hands of Adventist pastors? Nevertheless, my cognitive dissonance was growing, and unbeknownst to me, Jim was seeing red flags.

One memorable day my sister and I were talking with her family about the Sabbath. I had already declared that I did not have any issues of salvation attached to Sabbath-keeping. I just couldn't imagine that God would keep my non-Adventist Christian friends out of heaven for not keeping the Sabbath. Moreover, I thought that because I blatantly "broke" Sabbath "laws", seemingly guilt-free, that I had been freed from any kind of bondage.

The truth was I wasn't even aware that anyone could be in bondage to the law. I was clueless that when I looked to the law as a means to live righteously, instead the only purpose the law served was to condemn me of sin (Rom. 3:20) and charge me with endless guilt (Jn. 2:10) whether I felt guilty or not.

"Do you know about our daily rest in Christ? Our *sabbatismos* rest that we have in the New Covenant?"

I braced myself for the onslaught of anti-Adventist—or at least anti-Sabbath—information I knew my sister would spew. Surprisingly, though, this time I deeply desired to know more. She was always able to back up her statements with Scripture—something I was keenly aware I could not do. I seemed always to confuse some sort of Ellen White-ism with Scripture and could never find what I was looking for when I tried to back up my responses with the Bible.

"No", I responded. "What are you talking about? I think the fourth commandment is pretty clear; the Sabbath is an every seventh-day rest, remember?"

And then she showed me Hebrews 4, pointing out that our Sabbath rest is "Today", meaning every day.

"Well, how do you know 'Today' means every day?" I asked. Little did I know my sister owned a Greek dictionary. To my chagrin, she pulled it out. When I saw the definition of *sabbatismos*—a "Sabbath-like" rest, contrasted with the literal seventh-day Sabbath rest (*sabbaton* in the Greek) that is used in passages like Colossians 2:16 and Matthew 12:8, I was speechless. The two words for Sabbath were not the same words at all, and they had entirely different meanings.

Glorious reality

It wasn't rocket science. Colossians 2:17 was telling me that observance of a seventh-day Sabbath (*sabbaton*) was a shadow and that now, in the new covenant, the reality of a seventh-day Sabbath rest is Christ. Sabbath rest was no longer a day, but a Person, Christ.

I needed another perspective to confirm this discovery. My mind was racing. If the Bible teaches that Jesus fulfilled the law for me (Mat. 5:17-19; Rom. 8:3-4; Eph. 2:15-16; Col. 2:13-17; Heb. 10:5-10), then how does the law apply now—or does it? If Jesus set aside His glory to become my perfect Substitute, if He gave His life for me, becoming my Sin Bearer so that I could no longer be condemned for sin, then what were the implications when I kept going back to the very thing that condemned me (law) instead of to the Person who freed me from condemnation (Christ)? What was I saying about His sacrifice, about Him, when I clung to the law?

My fuzzy view of Sabbath was starting to come into focus. If Hebrews 4 tells me that in the new covenant our Sabbath rest (*sabbatismos*) is "Today", every day, then there is no dispute about the Christian's relationship to the Sabbath. The rest Jesus offers (salvation) is a much more glorious reality than the 24-hour picture, or "shadow" of rest Israel was offered through the law or fourth commandment. The new covenant "Sabbath" is resting in Jesus!

This information was huge. I had never been taught this, had never been aware of these passages in their proper context. Certainly this information contradicted everything I had been taught my entire life about the Sabbath and salvation. If I wasn't saved by faith and works (obedience to God's Laws—specifically Sabbath-keeping), then what did it mean to be saved by faith alone? I knew I was at a crossroads in my belief system, and I had to choose either to move forward in this new scriptural discovery—or backwards to my old understanding of Sabbath.

That conversation served to intensify the doubt I was starting to feel about my Adventist beliefs, but for the next several months all I could find courage to do was pray. I felt inadequate to understand Scripture. If Adventist pastors couldn't get this right, how could I?

Paralyzed

By the spring of 2005 I was finding it harder to live in my Adventist bubble. I knew enough that I couldn't go back to my old understandings of the Sabbath's being a 24-hour period of rest or of the new covenant's being just a continuation of the old. What happened at the cross seemed way more pivotal than I had ever been taught. And by the way, who was this new Jesus I was discovering? He did more than make a down payment for my sin and salvation. He paid my entire debt. He covered all my sins at the cross—past, present and future. There was nothing left to investigate. If I believed in Him, I was saved. These truths were unbelievable—almost too good to be true. Yet there they were in black and white, printed in God's letter to me.

Nevertheless, I found myself paralyzed. Doubts and fears of leaving plagued me. What if Ellen G. White was right? What if I was one of "those people" leaving the Sabbath truth for Babylon? Furthermore, Jesus loved the Sabbath and kept it Himself. I loved my Sabbath. Even though I didn't "keep" it to the letter of the law,

it was rich in warmth and comfort, and I gladly embraced it in ways that were meaningful to me.

My conflict reached a crisis one day in May when my husband and I were talking about it. “You can continue to go to the Adventist church, and you can take the children”, my husband said, “but I’m done. I can’t go anymore. This was my last week there. I want to find a church where I can pursue a relationship with Christ and grow spiritually.”

“WHAT?” Alarm disoriented me, and I was having trouble focusing. I honestly didn’t know how to respond. Nothing made sense to me. I had what seemed like a million thoughts and questions in my head. My husband had never taken such a strong stand about anything spiritual. All those years I had prayed for him to be the spiritual leader of our home, and now he steps up to the plate and this is what He has to offer? “What now, God?” I silently pleaded.

Relationship with Christ

“A relationship with Christ?” Jim’s words echoed in my ears. What did he mean by that? I had thought Jim and I were growing spiritually closer the past few months, but now were we drifting apart?

Suddenly my mind went to the heart of the matter. “Well, I want a relationship with Christ too,” I blurted out. And I meant it. In those seconds of deep contemplation I suddenly saw that I had always had religion with Jesus in it, but I didn’t have a relationship with Jesus. In those moments I realized those were two vastly different understandings, and only one counted for eternity. I had to know Jesus. If I didn’t, on that important day He wouldn’t know me (Matt. 7:21-23).

During that conversation, Jim and I began to develop a plan. My sister had shown me enough to plant a lot of questions in my mind, but now it was up to me to start digging into Scripture for the answers. I was highly motivated now. I wanted to know, really know this Jesus. If so much of what I had been taught was wrong, then maybe I didn’t really know the Jesus of the Bible. What really did happen at the cross? Colossians 2 certainly painted a different picture than anything I had previously known.

I recognized that I could no longer live with my feet in different worlds, and I prayed for guidance. By the next day, after God reminded me that He was answering my more than 13 years of prayer for Jim to become the spiritual leader of our home, I told Jim that I would respect his decision to stop attending the Adventist church. In solidarity with his spiritual leadership, I, too, would stop attending while I searched the Scriptures for answers to my questions. If I wanted to study the Bible without the filters of Adventism, including the culture, I needed to separate totally from everything I knew. I told Jim I wanted to learn from God’s Word alone, and I would follow Him wherever He would lead me. Of course, I fully expected that He would lead me back to the Adventist church, but I would return with the full understanding of God’s grace and the reassurance of a restored relationship with Christ. I would have it all, or so I thought—Jesus and a day of Sabbath rest. I had no idea I would discover that to dabble in both Jesus and the law was to commit spiritual adultery (Rom. 7:1-6).

I voraciously dug into the Bible, starting with Galatians, and was immediately blown away. Galatians 2:21 became my anthem, “if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.” Ugh. I had lived my entire life with a totally opposite understanding. I thought obedience to the law was my means to righteousness. Indeed, the law saved me, at least in large part. The truth was, the farther away I got away from Sabbath-keeping, the more evident it became how deeply and powerfully the ties of Sabbath and salvation were intertwined in me. This realization of the depth of my bondage came as an absolute shock.

Rescued!

Up until this point, I had had the best of both worlds. I had the “truth” and “rest” of Sabbath-keeping without the bondage or guilt of any laws tying me down. What I had concocted in my mind was beautiful, but it was not reality. It was my justification for doing whatever I wanted to do, but it wasn’t what I really believed. Deep down in the depths of my soul, the Sabbath meant much more to me than a relaxing day of rest or a day spent with family and friends—a mini-taste of heaven. In truth, it was the core of my salvation, and the thought of leaving it behind evoked enormous fear and frustration. I feared I was being deceived, yet I was frustrated because I could see in Scripture that what I had believed about the Sabbath was a lie. Even so, it had a death-grip on me. While it contradicted everything I was learning in Scripture, I could not let go of the Sabbath day.

Then one hot day in July, 2005, God came on a rescue mission for me. It was a particularly difficult day. I had finished my study of Galatians and had moved to the book of Hebrews where I was learning about the sufficiency of Christ. Again I was reminded that the law was a shadow of Christ (Heb. 8:4-5; 10:1) and that the “tables of the Covenant” were obsolete, growing old and ready to disappear (Heb. 8-9), that when the second (the new covenant, Christ) was established, the first covenant (law) was taken away (Heb. 10:9).

I was doing laundry that day in total turmoil—silently sobbing while truths and lies were colliding in my head. I felt confused, yet reality was setting in. The gravity of the theological lies woven

**I would have it all, or so I thought—
Jesus and a day of Sabbath rest. I had no
idea I would discover that to dabble in
both Jesus and the law was to commit
spiritual adultery.**

into Adventism was devastating. I was buried in grief for myself, for my church, and for the people that I loved so much.

I was walking through my hallway carrying a basket of clothes and crying out, “God, I don’t know how to walk away from Sabbath-keeping! This day, this church, these people mean everything to me. I can see that I’m clinging to a shadow, but this shadow feels more real to me than You. I really thought you would lead me back to the Sabbath ‘truth’; but it seems that you are leading me farther from it. If that is what you really want me to do, to walk away from keeping the seventh-day Sabbath, to walk away from the Adventist church, then you’re going to have to make that really obvious and clear to me. I promised you when I started studying your word that I would trust you and follow you wherever you led me on this journey, but I can’t leave this church I love by my own doing. You have to do it for me if that’s what you want me to do.”

At that moment it was as if He reached down and put His hand on my right shoulder, steadying me while simultaneously

giving me enormous comfort and peace. And then these words flooded my head, “Cherie, I am going to put this in terms that you will understand. You are breaking the first commandment to keep the fourth.”

“Ohhhh,” I gasped. I had complete clarity, and I was deeply convicted. I sank to the floor, setting my basket aside, and burst into tears. “Lord,” I cried out, “I totally get it now. The Sabbath was my idol, my god, my savior. It was my source of salvation instead of You alone!”

In that moment on my hallway floor I experienced my new birth in Christ (Jn. 3). I also experienced a freedom I had never felt before. In that moment my two worlds collided, and my Adventist bubble burst—but now I could see I had never lived in two separate worlds. There had only been one world—the world of law, flesh, and sin. I had lived my entire life up to that point under condemnation of the law which only served to energize more sin (Rom. 5:20; 7:14-25). Although the law was given to point us to Christ, by my conscious choice to live under the law—a fading glory of righteousness, a ministry of death—I wasn’t able to “see” the greater glory of Christ (2 Cor. 3). Looking back from that moment I could see how empty and unfulfilled I had been apart from a life-giving relationship with God. I slowly drew in my first breath of new life in Christ, thanking God for His faithfulness and rejoicing in the moment. I was stunned by God’s miraculous delivery.

Amazingly, in a few seconds, everything changed. An enormous weight was lifted as God broke my heavy chains of bondage to law and sin, shattering all the lies I had grown to believe about the relevance and purpose of the law. I had put the law first, the Sabbath first, the Adventist church and culture and all my family and friends first. I cared more about what they thought than what God I thought. They were all more important to me than Jesus alone. The shadows had meant more to me than reality—Christ. Everything was changed, and I would never be the same again. I had no choice but to follow Him, and I couldn’t wait!

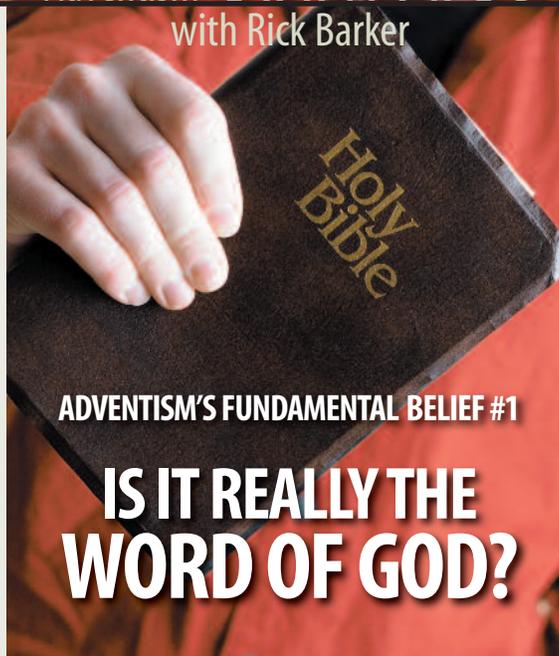
On that day, I died to self and rose to my new life in Christ! In that moment, God transferred me from the kingdom of darkness, a world of sin and condemnation, into the Kingdom of His beloved Son (Col. 1:13). He exchanged the external law with His Spirit, the Law-keeper, Who now lives inside me, transforming me from the inside out and guaranteeing my salvation (Rom. 8:9-16; Eph. 1:13-14). In this act, He credited me with His righteousness, never again to be confused with my own self-righteous attempts of law-keeping and obedience.

He gave me a new birth certificate and it reads, “Cherie Skrivan, Child of God, Heir to the King. Welcome to My Eternal Kingdom”.

My Adventist bubble is gone, and I have a new identity. I now live in the reality of being hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3). †



Cherie Skrivan was born and raised in the Seventh-day Adventist church and school system. She, Jim, and their three children live in Omaha, Nebraska, where they are members of Christ Community Church. Cherie is passionate about encouraging people to grow their faith in Christ and enjoys helping teach a discipleship class at their church.



ADVENTISM'S FUNDAMENTAL BELIEF #1

IS IT REALLY THE WORD OF GOD?

© ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/ARTISTICCAPTURES

Fundamental Belief #1. The Holy Scriptures:

The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history. (2 Pet. 1:20, 21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; Jn. 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 4:12.)¹

A close examination of how Adventists actually use the words describing this belief in their other writings reveals that this carefully crafted statement actually obscures the true Adventist belief.

The phrase “given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” suggests that Adventists believe the writing and speaking (the words) of these holy men came from God. But that is not the case.

Seventh-day Adventists Believe describes inspiration as “Divine revelation...given by inspiration of God to ‘holy men of God’ who were ‘moved by the Holy Spirit’ (2 Pet. 1:21). These revelations were embodied in human language with all its limitations and imperfections, yet they remained God’s testimony. God inspired men—not words.”²

The commentary continues with several Ellen White (EGW) quotes to define what inspiration is:

The Bible “is not God’s mode of thought and expression. Men will often say such an expression is not like God. But God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God’s penmen, not His pen.” “Inspiration acts not on the man’s words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God.”³

The next obfuscation is the statement that Scripture is the “infallible revelation of His will.” A close scrutiny reveals that this infallibility is limited only to the revelation of God’s will and does not mean Scripture is inerrant. In fact, Adventism teaches that God’s word contains errors. See, for instance, this description of inspiration from the *Adventist Review*:

The Adventist view is that God inspired Bible writers’ thoughts but did not directly inspire their words.

God gives the prophet freedom to select the kind of language he or she wants to use. That accounts for the different styles of the Biblical writers and explains why Ellen White describes the language used by inspired writers as “imperfect” and “human.”

Because “everything that is human is imperfect,” we must accept the idea of imperfections and mistakes in both the Bible and Ellen White’s writings. This means at least two things: 1. The prophet uses his or her common, everyday language learned from childhood and improved through study, reading, and travel; there is nothing supernatural or divine in the language used...⁴

The statement “nothing...divine in the language” of Scripture cannot be reconciled with teaching that Scripture is God-breathed. Moreover, this Fundamental Belief does not state that Scripture is the only authoritative source for doctrine. The pre-1980 statement of belief said Scriptures are “all sufficient” and are the “only” unerring rule of faith and practice.⁵ The 1980 and (current) statement leaves out “all sufficient” and “only” but added, in Fundamental Belief #18, that Ellen White is “...a continuing and authoritative source of truth...”⁶

The Adventist view is that God inspired Bible writers’ thoughts but did not directly inspire their words. This belief appears to have been influenced heavily by EGW, in both her descriptions of Biblical inspiration and of her own inspiration.

The Adventists’ first Fundamental Belief is carefully crafted to imply an orthodox-sounding doctrine that is almost completely the opposite of what Adventism actually teaches. †

Endnotes

- ¹ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 2005 ed., Pacific Press, p. 11.
- ² *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- ⁴ “The Dynamics of Inspiration,” *Adventist Review*, May 30, 1996, pp. 22-28.
- ⁵ *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 1976, p. 32.
- ⁶ Ellen White is called “...a continuing and authoritative source of truth...” Fundamental Belief #18, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 247.

Rick Barker is a native of Southwestern Ohio and facilitates a weekly Bible study for former and transitioning Adventists in the Dayton, Ohio, area. Rick graduated from Andrews University in 1987 and received a Masters degree from the University of Dayton. Rick and his wife Sheryl formally left the Adventist church in 2004. Prior to this they had been active in the Miamisburg and Wilmington, Ohio, churches. They currently attend Living Waters Lutheran Church in Springboro.



COLLEEN TINKER

He was raised so you will **NEVER DIE**



For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. Romans 5:10, 11

From the time I was a young girl, I privately sneered at Easter. I was so fortunate to know better than those Sunday-keepers; Easter was a non-event. Of course Jesus rose from the grave and showed us how we would also rise one day. But to make a holiday out of Easter Sunday was just a nod to the papacy. If we wanted to honor Jesus' death, we would keep the Sabbath, as He did when He rested in the tomb and honored His day. He did the hard work on Sunday! Those poor Christians who celebrated the day of non-rest with new dresses and ham dinners—the whole situation was too ironic for words!

Saved by His life?

When I finally understood that Jesus had actually completed the atonement on the cross and that we pass from death to life when we place our trust in Him, Easter became the most joyous day of the year—even better than Christmas! Even though I felt a sense of deep joy and worship at Easter, however, I continued to have a sense that there was more to this event than I was comprehending.

Romans 5:10 caught my attention and demanded that I ponder it: “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”

What did that mean, “we shall be saved by His life”?

And then there was Romans 8:10-11:

“If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”

What did that mean, “give life to your mortal bodies”? Did that mean resurrection—or did that mean something here and now—or both?

In order to understand what it means for us to be saved by Jesus' life, we have to go back—all the way back to Adam, Eve, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. What really happened that day our parents ate the fatal fruit?

Did they die—or didn't they?

God had just created Adam and had placed him in the garden that He had planted in Eden. He commissioned Adam to work and keep the garden, and then He gave him a command: “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:16-17).

We don't know how much time passed between that day and the day that Eve succumbed to the serpent and drew Adam into disobeying God's command with her, but we do know that the serpent promised Eve that eating the fruit would not yield death (Gen. 3:4). Instead, she would “be like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5).

Indeed, they were still living, breathing, talking, and eating after they broke God's command. So, was the serpent telling the truth?

Many of us with Adventist upbringings learned that “they began to die” that day. Because Adventism believes humans are

physical bodies that cease to exist after death, it does not have a good way to explain what happened. Thus “they began to die” is the only way Adventism can explain that Adam and Eve didn't cease to breathe the day they ate the fruit. In fact, Adventism's explanation actually sounds a bit like Satan's deception: they didn't actually die that day—but they began to die.

If Adam and Eve merely “began to die”, however, God didn't really tell Adam the truth but figuratively overstated the facts in order to ensure Adam's compliance. Scripture, however, is very clear that God cannot and does not lie. Numbers 23:19 states, “God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?”

The truth is that Adam and Eve did die the day they ate that fruit. They died spiritually, and that spiritual death was not simply a metaphor. It was literal, and that spiritual death is Adam's legacy to every human since that day.

We know they died for two reasons: God said they would, and they demonstrated the effects of spiritual death. As soon as they ate the fruit, they knew they were naked; they hid their nakedness from each other; they hid from the presence of God, and they refused to own their own guilt. Eve blamed the serpent, and Adam blamed Eve. Neither was willing to admit his/her guilt for refusing to trust God's word to them, and their spirits were disconnected from the life of God. Disconnected from God, their spirits were dead. They did not cease to exist, but they were dead because they were separated from the Source of life.

Adam and Eve's living spirits died after they ate the fruit. In the following diagrams, their original living spirits connected to God are demonstrated by red hearts; their spirits lost their life after eating the tree and are represented as black hearts (see diagram A, next page).

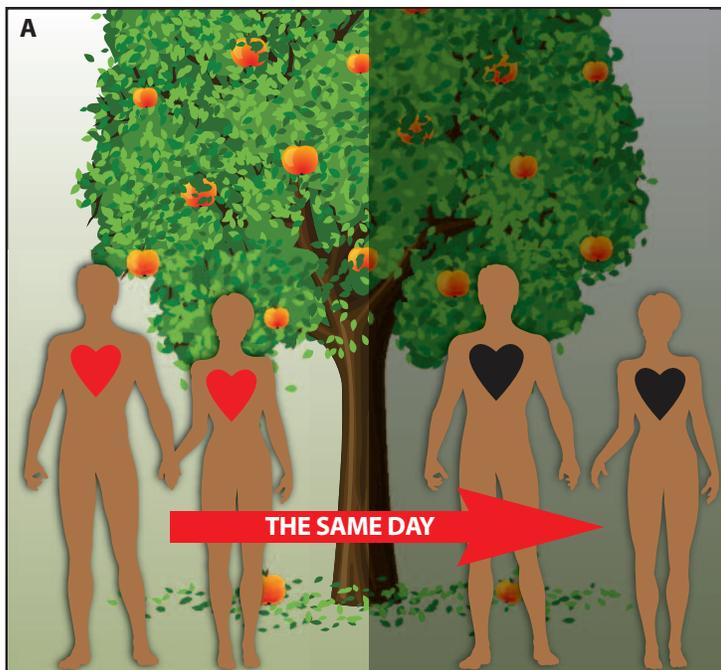
What about us?

Scripture tells us that, ever since that day, we all have been born with dead spirits, a condition that renders us unable to seek God, to fear God, to understand, to do good, or to know peace. We have all become worthless; we deceive, curse, and spew bitterness. We walk in ruin and misery (Rom. 3:10-18). We are born spiritually dead with mortal bodies also doomed to death. Paul explains it like this:

For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive (1 Cor. 15:21-22).

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come (Rom. 5:12-14).

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind (Eph. 2:1-3).



A. Adam and Eve, alive with God's life, eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Immediately their spirits die: disconnected from God and estranged from each other, they are filled with shame, blame, and guilt.

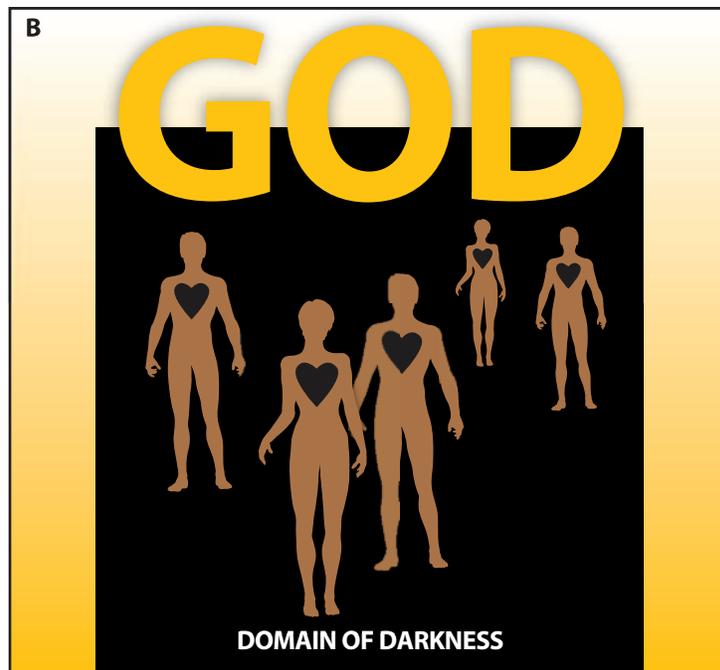
Even David says that he was “brought forth in iniquity” and that his mother conceived him “in sin” (Ps. 51:5). Furthermore, Paul says in Colossians 1:13 that we start out in the “domain of darkness” but that God transfers us into the “kingdom of His beloved Son” when we place our faith in Him. Finally, Jesus Himself emphasized our natural state of doom when He said, “He who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the only begotten Son of God” (Jn. 3:18).

In short, we begin our lives doomed to destruction because of our own fatal flaw bequeathed to us by Adam. We are born into a “communal grave”* we'll call the Domain of Darkness. God can reveal Himself and give us evidence of His power; He can awaken our desire to have life instead of the despair that is our legacy, but there is no natural exit from this crypt of doom (see diagram B).

Rescue!

Here's where the story turns. Our hopeless condition did not come as a surprise to God. Contrary to what many of us learned—that after Adam and Eve sinned Jesus asked the Father if He could come and die for us—the Trinity planned our redemption in advance. God knew Adam would sin, and the Lord Jesus was committed to be the “lamb without blemish or spot” who would be “made manifest in the last times for the sake of you”; He was raised “from the dead” and was glorified by God so we would have faith and hope in God (1 Pet. 1:19-21).

Moreover, God chose believers in Christ “before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him” (Eph. 1:4). In fact, our names, if we are His, have been written in the Lamb's Book of Life since before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8; 17:8).



B. We inherit spiritual death from Adam. We are by nature children of wrath, condemned and cursed in the domain of darkness. We are walking dead people, but God reveals Himself while we are dead.

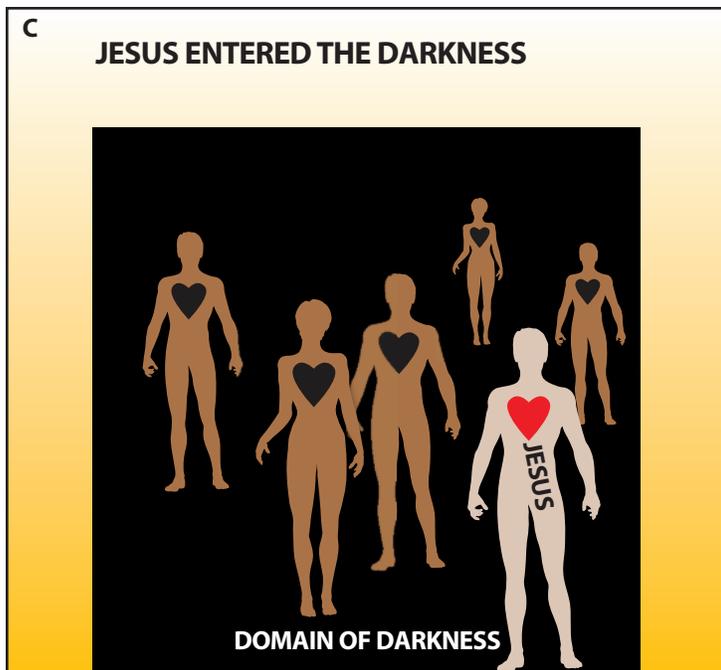
God knew there would be only one way we could escape from our communal tomb. He Himself would have to redeem us. It was He who said that if we sinned, we would die. Because we are Adam's descendants, we are sinners, and our spirits are disconnected from God, and only our Creator can restore life to us. Our Creator, therefore, became the Mediator between us and God and “gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time” (2 Tim. 2:8-9).

Jesus, the Son of God, came to the earth to bring life back to the human race. He came in a real human body, and as the Son of Man he lived the perfect life none of us could live. This incarnation is a mystery which God has not explained, but Scripture tells us what we need to know.

Jesus was the son of Mary and the Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit (Lk. 1:30-33). He gave up His glory in heaven to take the body of a human, a servant of God (Phil. 2:6-7). Yet He took on humanity without giving up even a fraction of His divine nature, not even His omnipresence (Col. 1:19; 2:9). We cannot understand this hypostatic union of God and man in the Man Christ Jesus, but Scripture further tells us that, although He was a man, He was without sin (Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 1 Jn. 3:5).

Jesus' sinlessness was not only defined by the fact that He never committed a sin. Rather, Jesus never sinned because He was sinless. He had no sin nature. As Adventists we learned that sin is passed down to us from our parents, that it is somehow encoded into our gene pool, and that we therefore live with inherited tendencies to evil. Because they understand sin to be essentially genetic, Adventists cannot come to a firm conclusion about whether or not Jesus inherited sinful flesh from Mary.

Then how are we to understand that there was no sin in Him? The fact is that Jesus was born spiritually alive, unlike the rest of us



C. God sent His Son, spiritually alive from conception. With no sin nature, Jesus qualified as our Substitute and Sacrifice and restored spiritual life to humanity. "Life" entered the domain of darkness and broke its power.

humans. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and His spirit was alive from that moment. He was the only human who never had to be born again. God has not explained the mystery of Jesus' having sinless flesh, but His identity as the Son of God guaranteed that Jesus was without sin.

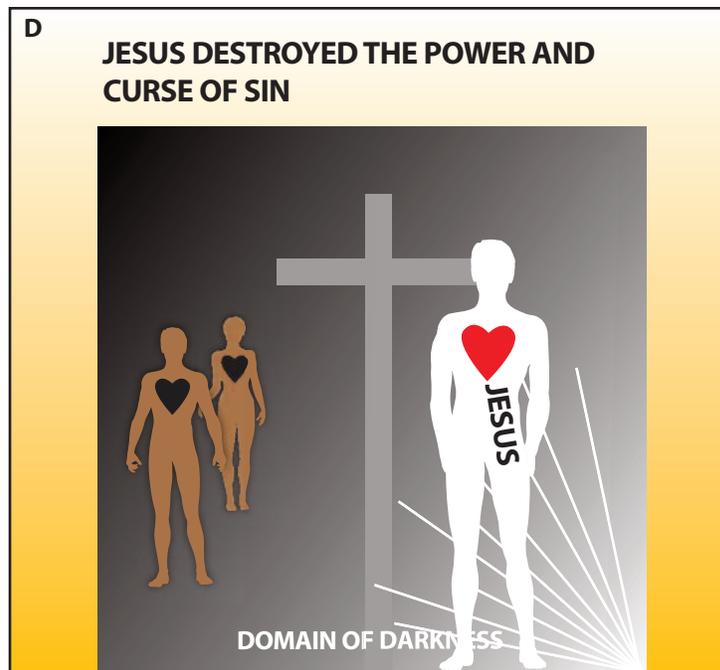
Jesus came in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3), a mortal body housing a living spirit, yet He was God the Son, the Creator of those whose flesh He now shared. Because He was the Son of God, He carried life into the doomed race; He was the only One who could make us live again (Jn. 5:25). Moreover, because He was the Son of Man who lived and died in our fallen world yet without sin, He is the only one qualified to be our Judge and Substitute (Jn. 5:27; Heb. 2:14-18).

The turning point in history was when God the Son took on human flesh and was born with an eternally living, sinless spirit into a race that was otherwise condemned to suffer God's wrath (Eph. 2:3) (see diagram C).

Death swallowed up by life

In order to pay for the sin of all humanity, Jesus had to be an infinite Sacrifice. He had to become sin (2 Cor. 5:21) and become a curse (Gal. 3:13) for the human race. Only our Creator could bear the sin of the entire human race in His own body. He had to be God in order to suffer infinitely on our behalf, and He had to be a sinless human in order to be an acceptable Sacrifice.

When Jesus died, the Father displayed Him publicly "as a propitiation in His blood through faith" (Rom. 3:25) and demonstrated that God was just as well as the justifier of those who have faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:26). In the person of Jesus, God fulfilled the demands of His own law. God took on the doomed flesh of fallen



D. The Living One became our sin and a curse. He shed sinless human blood and paid for our sin. He exploded death from inside-out and broke its curse, spiritual and physical. His life swallowed up death.

creatures in the person of the Son. He perfectly lived the life His creatures could not live, paid the price God required for sin, and broke the power of death.

Yes—He broke the power of death! Jesus died just as we do: His spirit left His body and went to God (Lk. 23:46), and his friends buried His body in the tomb. Jesus, however, was also God the Son, and this death was the reason He became human. He had to die as we do in order to destroy the law of sin and death.

Because Jesus was God, the Source of our life, His spirit was not dead. He never stopped being God the Son in whom all things hold together (Col. 1:17)—and the miracle happened on the third day. Jesus rose from the dead in a glorified, eternal body!

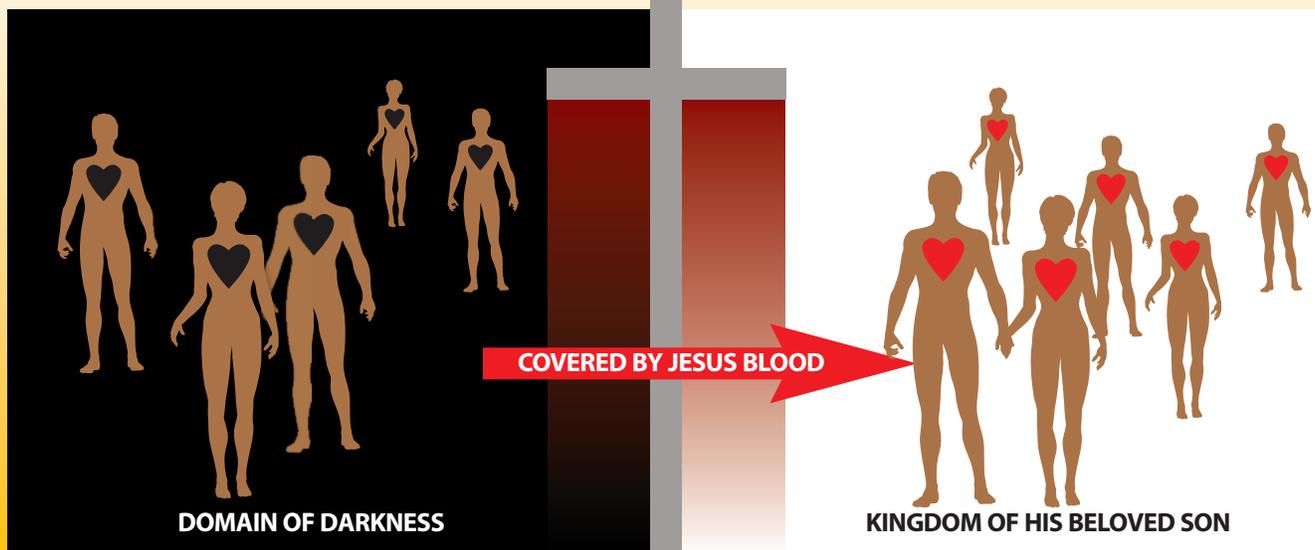
We often miss the significance of what happened at this point. A man who lived a perfect, sinless life in a mortal body died—but because He was also God the Son, He had eternal life in Himself. By the life in the Trinity Jesus rose from death—His spirit and His body reunited, and death could never touch Him again!

A man had died, and a man came back from death with an eternal body and spirit. Nothing like this had ever happened before! Death had always been the great maw that swallowed life, but Jesus exploded death from the inside-out. Because He had been the perfect sacrifice, God accepted His death as payment for human sin and raised Him from death. At the moment Jesus rose to life, death's power was broken. What is mortal may now be "swallowed up by life" (2 Cor. 5:4). "Death is swallowed up in victory"! (1 Cor. 15:54) (see diagram D).

Saved by His life

Because Jesus was our Representative and Substitute, His resurrection means we can now come to life eternally. We are the

E **HOW WE ARE RESCUED BY THE BLOOD AND THE LIFE OF JESUS**



E. When we admit we are doomed and dead, believe Jesus died for us and accept His sacrifice on our behalf, we are washed by His blood and given His resurrection life. We are sealed by His Spirit indwelling us. God transfers us out of the domain of darkness into the kingdom of His beloved Son, and, even though our bodies die, we will never die. We are saved by His life! Nothing can snatch us out of His and our Father's hands. Jesus is the only door out of darkness.

doomed mortals that may now be swallowed up by life! Our natural state of death can be swallowed up in victory!

This is the mystery and miracle of the new covenant. Jesus' perfect sacrifice has paid for all my sin. Jesus has done everything God required to atone for human sin, and because of His obedience unto death, He has undone the curse into which we all are born. I am no longer doomed to eternal destruction; I can receive the blood of Jesus as payment for my sin!

This is the truth which was never clearly taught within Adventism. We do not contribute to our salvation, nor do we maintain our salvation. When we confess our hopeless sinfulness and believe in the Lord Jesus, in His death as our perfect Substitute and in His resurrection as our hope for eternity, we are transferred by our Father from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of His beloved Son (Col. 1:13). At that moment, having believed in the Lord Jesus and His incredible gift, we pass from death to life (Jn. 5:24) and are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise Who guarantees our eternal, glorified future (Eph. 1:13-14).

The blood of Jesus is what justifies us: completely, thoroughly, eternally. When we submit to Him and believe that He has done everything necessary for our eternal life, we are born of the Spirit, and we—our spirits—will never die, even though we pass through the valley of death (Jn 11:26).

The resurrection of Jesus is what gives us life. Because Jesus swallowed up death by His resurrection, He has earned the right to give us His Spirit and His life when we receive His gift of blood as the payment for our sin (Rom. 5:10). We become alive in Him, and in Him we receive reconciliation with God (Rom. 5:11).

Jesus' blood and His resurrection swallow up our spiritual death and give us eternal life. Our spirits are connected with God, and His Spirit now dwells in us (see diagram E).

This miracle is the reason Easter has become so meaningful. Jesus didn't just rise from death as an example of what we can expect in the future. On the contrary, Jesus rose from death so I can have eternal life the minute I believe in Him. When I realize that He has done all that God requires to atone for sin, I can submit to Him and admit my sin. I can give up my desperation to be the best and to make my life successful. I can just give it up—and I can rest in Jesus.

In Jesus I have a new identity and a new Father (Rom. 8:15-17). In Him I have eternal security (Jn. 4:25). In Jesus I have no more condemnation (Rom. 8:1). I know that I can never be separated from God's love when I am in Jesus (Rom. 8:38-39).

Do you know you are born again? If you are not sure, why not seal the deal right now?

This is Jesus' word to you:

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Mt. 11:28-30). †

*Thanks to my friend Steve Pitcher.

Colleen Tinker is editor of *Proclamation!* magazine. She and her husband Richard have co-led Former Adventist Fellowship Bible study at Trinity Church in Redlands, California, since 1999. 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.



And Can It Be?

Charles Wesley, 1738

And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain—
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be,
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

He left His Father's throne above
So free, so infinite His grace—
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race:
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For O my God, it found out me!

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray—
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine;
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach th'eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.



What's in God's

big yellow t



© ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/MORROWDAD

Truck?

If we are going to be free from the bondage of sin and legalism, we must have a clear understanding of the gospel. The gospel has been the centerpiece of Life Assurance Ministries from its inception, and my hope is that every person who reads *Proclamation!* will not only experience the simplicity of the gospel—"he who believes has eternal life"—but see its compelling beauty as its deeper nuances are discovered. It is here, at the gospel, that we need major realignment. It is here where we find the joy of Christianity. It is here that sinful me and sinful you will gain not only hope in a future salvation, but firm, unwavering assurance that we are right with God today and will be forever. Following is the first in a two-part study of Romans 3:21-26.

Leon Morris, renowned New Testament scholar and author of over 50 books, said Romans 3:21-26: "...is possibly the most important single paragraph ever written."¹

"But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

It only takes about 37 seconds to read these six verses, but when we finish, do we really understand what we have read? These verses carry a truck load of truth which has changed the history of Christianity, sparked revivals of faith, and have been instrumental in the salvation of thousands, if not millions, of people. Let's unpack their meaning.

Three metaphors are used here, but they are more than just metaphors; they expand our understanding of the gospel. *Justification* comes from the legal court system. *Redemption* comes from the world of slavery, and *propitiation* comes from the practice of sacrifice. These three are the *what*, *how*, and *why* of the gospel.

"But now" a radical change

The first point we need to remember comes from the first two words, "*But now...*" These two words are used by New





The early Hebrew Christians fought the simple gospel Paul proclaimed—just as the transitioning Adventist tends to fight the major realignment needed to understand that the righteousness of God is manifested apart from law!

Testament writers to announce that a radical change has taken place with profound implications. If you are just starting on your transitional journey, you have no idea of the radical changes—good changes—that lie ahead. I have gathered together a few texts that use this term so we can comprehend the major realignment Paul is expressing. These verses will help us see that things are different in the new covenant.

Jesus said, “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, *but now* they have no excuse for their sin” (Jn. 15:22).

“Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. *But now* having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life” (Rom. 6:21-23).

“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).

“For just as you once were disobedient to God, *but now* have been shown mercy...” (Rom. 11:30).

“If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. *But now* Christ has been raised from the dead” (1 Cor. 15:19, 20).

“Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. *But now* that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor” (Gal. 3:24, 25).

This is a major realignment for many of us!

“...you were formerly darkness, *but now* you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light” (Eph. 5:8).

But now gets our attention; it tells us that the new covenant changes everything, radically. What are the profound, radical truths to which Paul refers here in our text? They come in quick succession, like race cars in the Daytona 500.

Apart from the law

“But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets” (Rom. 3:21).

The Jews believed there was a day of judgment coming when God would condemn and punish all who had broken His laws. That day would terminate the present world and usher in the wonderful age to come for all those whom God judged to be wor-

thy. They held that the way to gain righteousness with God was to give alms, fast, pray, and strictly keep the law. They saw God as a just God who would justify the righteous and condemn the wicked. To get the verdict of righteousness, they had to be righteous. They had to have many righteous deeds to tip the balance in their favor in the judgment. Jewish life was centered in the law. As we read through the gospels this fact pops up time and time again. They were zealous law keepers.

Paul, however, makes it clear that this radical “righteousness of God” is revealed apart from the law. The Greek has no definite article, so we should read this phrase “apart from law”, all law, any law. This righteousness has nothing to do with law keeping. In fact, these three words, “Apart from law”, exclude all human activity.

This righteousness divorced from human activity created a major problem for the Jews of Paul’s day. They were so married to the law that to conceive of the righteousness of the gospel as being apart from law was a stumbling block. The early Hebrew Christians fought the simple gospel Paul proclaimed—just as the transitioning Adventist tends to fight the major realignment needed to understand that the righteousness of God is manifested apart from law!

“But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,” (Rom. 3:21).

We former Adventists grew up on law. The law was the central focus in Adventist’s great controversy between Christ and Satan. Obedience to the Sabbath of the fourth commandment was the “testing truth”, the issue which would decide our eternal destiny. The Fundamental Beliefs #18 of Seventh-day Adventists states that the writings of Ellen White are “...a continuing and authoritative source of truth...”² Ellen White references the word “law” over 14,000 times in her writings, and about 500 of these deal with biblical history before the time of Moses. Compare that emphasis with the Bible. The Bible uses the word “Law” about 375 times, and the very first time it appears is in Exodus 12 in connection with the Passover. For the Jews of Paul’s day as well as for transitioning Adventists, the concept that the righteousness of God is apart from law is a stumbling block.

Below are a few short quotes from Ellen G. White on the topic of law and righteousness. I recognize that one can find other statements that contradict the ones listed. And this is the problem with all of her writings. When I used to read her writings, one minute I

We former Adventists grew up on law. The law was the central focus in Adventist's great controversy between Christ and Satan.

Obedience to the Sabbath of the fourth commandment was the "testing truth," the issue which would decide our eternal destiny.

was rejoicing in the gospel, but as I kept reading I found I was condemned by her other statements and left with no hope of salvation. I found myself wanting just to read her good statements and to ignore the bad ones. However, she said:

"I have the most precious matter to reproduce and place before the people in testimony form. While I am able to do this work, the people must have things to revive past history, that they may see that there is one straight chain of truth, without one heretical sentence, in that which I have written."³

If I were to accept all of her statements, then I was left with her many self-contradictory, confusing statements trying to make them all fit into some kind of a rational paradigm of "truth". I found it impossible. Paul states that God's righteousness is apart from law. What does the Adventist messenger of God, Ellen White say?

"Righteousness is obedience to the law."⁴

"God requires them to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. *After man has done all in his power* to ensure health, by the denying of appetite and gross passions, that he may possess a healthy mind, and a sanctified imagination, that he may render to God an offering in righteousness, *then he is saved alone by a miracle of God's mercy.*"⁵

Paul's statement, "Apart from law" not only excludes all works of the law, but also all human activity. For the Jews as well as the Greeks of Paul's day, the role of human activity played a large role in winning God's favor. Yes, and for Adventists human activity plays a huge role.

"We can overcome. Yes; entirely. Jesus died to make a way of escape for us, that we might overcome evil temper, every sin. Every temptation..."⁶

"In order to let Jesus into our hearts, we must stop sinning."⁷

The first five words of Romans 3:21 carry a truckload of truth. "But now apart from law the righteousness of God is revealed..." Romans 10:4 states this truth clearly, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." Commenting on this text, Leon Morris states,

"Romans 10:4, makes it clear that there can be no way of law for the believer. For Paul it was absolutely basic that no righteousness of human origin could avail in the sight of God."⁸

We see, therefore, that the second big idea in Romans 3:21-26 is that God's righteousness is revealed apart from law.

Romans 3:21 "But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets."

God's righteousness disclosed

In past articles I have emphasized the importance of using a reliable, literal translation when doing serious Bible study, and here is an excellent case in point. Compare Romans 3:21 as quoted above from the NAU (Updated New American Standard Bible) to this text in the NLT (New Living Translation) below.

Romans 3:21 NLT "But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago."

Notice that the NAU describes the "manifestation", or disclosure, of God's righteousness, while the NLT describes the method of achieving God's righteousness. This is a major difference.

D.A. Carson, who in my opinion is one of the best New Testament scholars alive, makes this comment about the text of the NLT:

"It is quite correct to observe that God's righteousness is attained without any contribution from the "works of the law". But to say that it is now obtained without any contribution from the "works of the law" would be to imply that it was once obtained with at least some contribution from the works of the law—and that is precisely what Paul has ruled out in the previous verses".⁹

Romans 3:20 states forthrightly, "because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin."

We at Life Assurance Ministries are often accused of doing away with the law, but nothing could be further from the truth. We seek to use the law, lawfully. God gave the Law to Israel for three main reasons: (1) It was to regulate the conduct of His people; (2) It revealed their sin, "for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin." (3) And the law had a prophetic function. The sacrifices pointed forward to the coming of Christ. The writer of Hebrews called the law a "shadow",¹⁰ and right in Romans 3:21 we read that this righteousness of God was "being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets."

D.A. Carson continues:

It is not simply that the national identity markers of Sabbath, clean and unclean, etc. are now obsolete, but in a sense the entire law-covenant is 'obsolete' as mentioned in Hebrews 8 and 9. All the rituals and many of the events in the old Covenant point forward to the new era which has now dawned. This is reinforced by Paul's use of 'But Now,' stating that there is a dramatic shift in salvation history.¹¹



It is important that we understand the difference between “the righteousness of God” and “the righteousness of the law.” I point this out because Adventists often equate them.

God’s righteousness received

Rom. 3:22 “even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction.”

Verse 21 deals with the manifestation or the disclosure of God’s righteousness.

Verse 22 deals with the reception of God’s righteousness.

We learn here that the method of receiving God’s righteousness is through our faith in Jesus Christ, and its scope of effectiveness is for all those who exercise their faith. No one is excluded. The gospel is available to whomever trusts Christ.

It is important that we understand the difference between “the righteousness of God” and “the righteousness of the law.” I point this out because Adventists often equate them. Probably the best reference to show this distinction is Philippians 3:8, 9.

...as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.

Without question this verse shows that these two types of “righteousness” can never be equated.

Justified sinners

Rom.3:23: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

“Have sinned” is in the aorist tense and communicates a sin of finality. There is no changing the fact that we are sinners through and through. “Fall short” is in the present tense, indicating durative, continuing action. We all continue to fall short of God’s glory. What Paul means here by “God’s glory” is intriguing. It cannot be the future glory of heaven, and it probably does not mean the glory that Adam and Eve had before sin. Paul uses the word “glory” about 65 times in his letters. And I think what he means here by “glory” is similar to his use of this word in 2 Corinthians 3:18:

But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

Here “glory” seems to be the perfection of God. If this is his

meaning, then Romans 2:23 could read like this: “For all have sinned and we continue to fall short of God’s perfection or ideal.” Transitioning Adventists need realignment here. Consider again some statements by Ellen White.

In order to let Jesus into our hearts, we must stop sinning.¹²

... Conversion is not complete until he attains to *perfection* of Christian character.¹³

Human beings may in this life attain to *perfection* of character.¹⁴

Perfection of character is attainable by everyone who strives for it.¹⁵

Over and over again Ellen White takes the assurance of salvation away from anyone who is still falling short. However, Romans 3:23 is clear: “We ALL continue to fall short of God’s glory.” That does not mean that we are not progressing in the area of personal sanctification. The method of sanctification, however, is not through law, but through gazing at the glory of God, understanding who we are in Christ and in union with the Holy Spirit.

1 John 1:8 says, “If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” Rom. 3:24: “...being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.”

What does justification mean? It is a legal word from the metaphor of court proceedings and means two things:

1. Not guilty, or acquittal of the charges.
2. Declared or pronounced righteous.

Justification does *not* mean “to make righteous”. It is necessary to be able to prove this from Scripture as there are some who teach it means both. Here is a statement from Ellen White:

In order to be prepared for the judgment, it is necessary that men should keep the law of God. That law will be the standard of character in the judgment. The apostle Paul declares: “As many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law, . . . in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.” And he says that the *doers of the law shall be justified.*” Romans 2:12-16. Faith is essential in order to the keeping of the law of God; for “without faith it is impossible to please Him.” And “whatsoever is not of faith is sin. Hebrews 11:6; Romans 14:23.¹⁶

I have received dozens if not hundreds of emails from people using Romans 2:13 to prove that only those who keep the law will be justified.

On the contrary, what Paul is stating here is that if one relies on law, then one must keep all the law perfectly, and not one Jew or anyone else has done that.

The good news of the new covenant gospel is that if we have placed our faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ we are acquitted of all sin... The Supreme Court of the universe has acquitted us of all sin and has declared that we are righteous with the very righteousness of God.

By quoting portions of Romans 2:12-16, Ellen White is saying that we are justified by keeping law, but then she quickly states that we cannot keep the law without faith. This assertion is a perversion of gospel for two reasons. First, in the scheme of Romans, which is a very tightly outlined book, Romans 2 is not designed to show how one is right with God; rather, Paul is carefully laying out the evidence showing why all mankind is under sin, and there is no one who is righteous. There is no one who keeps the law, and if there were, that law-keeping is not the way to achieve the righteousness of God. Just a few verses later Paul writes, "...because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). Ellen White as well as many who send me emails take Paul's statement out of context to support their law theology.

A second error in Ellen White's statement above is that she makes the righteousness of justification internal righteousness. However, in the writings of Paul, there is no question that "justification" means being declared righteous by the righteousness that is "in Christ."¹⁷

For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? 'ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.' Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness (Rom. 4:2-5).

As the previous texts have stated, true righteousness is our being credited with the perfect righteousness of Jesus. It is not personal goodness or law-keeping. Now, in the next few verses, Paul demonstrates that righteousness also means being acquitted, declared "not guilty" of sin.

... "just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: 'BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED' (Rom. 4:6-7).

Lest there be any misunderstanding, Paul expands the scope of those who qualify for justification to include helpless, ungodly sinners who are enemies of God.¹⁸

I happened to be watching TV when the verdict of the court was read to Casey Anthony. Tears came to my eyes when I realized the parallel of that verdict to the declaration of justification. To be sure, that court verdict was not exactly the same as God's justification, because the court's ruling failed to credit Casey with right-

eousness. In fact, many of us believed Casey was guilty of killing her daughter Caylee. But when the jury found her not guilty, the judge said, "The court finds you not guilty." It did not matter whether or not she was guilty, the declaration of the court stands!

The good news of the new covenant gospel is that if we have placed our faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ we are acquitted of all sin—our personal sin and the sin we inherited from Adam. The Supreme Court of the universe has acquitted us of all sin and has declared that we are righteous with the very righteousness of God. Don't let anyone try to take that verdict away from you! Later in Chapter 8 Paul will write, "Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies" (Rom. 8:33).

Justification by faith is the centerpiece of the gospel. In human terms, being justified before God is like winning the spiritual lottery. Things which we have always wanted, strived for, prayed for and wished for but could never achieve are now ours for the taking.

The big yellow truck

As I thought about what it means to be justified, I found myself putting two experiences together in my mind to form a "justification metaphor".

The first experience occurred one day after church when we decided to go for a ride to the foothills east of Casa Grande. We drove up to the Ray Copper Mine, a huge open pit mine currently in operation. We could look down into the mammoth pit with sloping, terraced sides. It looked as if they had removed a whole mountain. The bottom was so far away from the lookout where we were standing that the trucks hauling the copper ore looked like little yellow Tonka Toys. However, as we were reading all the information posted on several signs, we found out that those "little trucks" were actually huge trucks with tires 11 ft. high. One truck could carry 320 tons of ore!

The second experience is one many of you likely share with me: stumbling onto an infomercial on TV. Invariably it promotes some new gadget that really looks like something that would be useful. The presentation makes you want it: "This is a \$79.00 value for only 19.95." Then the announcer will say, "But wait, if you purchase today we will include—" and then he throws in several other things. All this, he says, for only \$19.95. "But wait, order today and we will double your order for no additional cost!"

Well, justification by faith is better than that infomercial! Picture that big, yellow, ore-carrying truck able to haul 320 tons loaded not with ore but with the benefits of justification by faith. Then hear God offering you something that sounds too good to be true—except this offer is not an infomercial. This offer is reality!

Anyone want to be assured of eternal life? “He who believes has eternal life” (Jn. 6:47). Eternal life is included with justification! It is in the truck!

Does anyone want peace with God? “Therefore, having been justified we have peace with God” (Rom. 5:1) at no additional cost! It’s in the truck!

Anyone reading who would like to be dead to sin? “Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6:11). Death to sin is also in the yellow truck!

Do you want to be released from the arm of the law? “But now we have been released from the law” (Rom. 7:6). The offer is good today! It’s in the truck!

Are you living under continual condemnation, trying to be good enough but always coming up short? “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1) Just get into the big yellow truck of justification today!

Anyone waiting for the sealing of the Holy Spirit, looking to some indefinite time in the future when, after we have cleansed ourselves to become ready, we hope to receive the “latter rain” to help us reach the perfection required to live in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor? “...having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise” (Eph. 1:13). If you are in the big yellow truck, you are sealed, it is a done deal!

Are you tired of trying hard to live a holy life? “It is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). Just think of the muscle in the big yellow truck with its over 2,000 horsepower! Accept the fact that God is at work in your life to will and do His good pleasure. He is the driver of the big yellow truck. Your job is to believe Him and get in!

Do you ever feel low on resources and wish someone would leave you a large inheritance? “Giving thanks to the Father,

who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light” (Col. 1:12). If you are in the truck, you are qualified. Please note that “has qualified” has already happened. We don’t work for our inheritance; we claim it as our right as justified believers.

Do you ever feel weak? “The Spirit also helps our weakness” (Rom. 8:26). Believe me, if this promise were not true, I would not still be actively proclaiming the gospel. If you are in the big yellow truck, you can feel the rumble of the massive power carrying you up the hill!

More questions

How is your prayer life? Do you know how to pray? Do you know when you have prayed enough? Do you know how best to pray for others? “We do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us” (Rom. 8:26). Wow, what a promise! You can claim it if you are in the big yellow truck.

Do you have trouble getting your head around the concept of predestination? “He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself” (Eph.1:5). If you are in the big yellow truck, you are in!

There may be readers who are in the valley of decision regarding their spiritual journey. I invite you—no, I implore you, be reconciled to God. What we have studied in these verses is the pure, new covenant gospel. Will you accept its simplicity? Will you come to the foot of the cross, admit you are a sinner, and accept the free gift of God’s grace in Christ Jesus?

If you do, you will be justified by faith. You will be acquitted of all sin; you will be declared righteous with the very righteousness of God. Then your name will be in all the promises. You can then rely on the promise that says the Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth. You will hear a voice behind you saying, this is the way, walk in it.

Believe Him and receive Him now! You will be the recipient of a big truck load of blessings that come all wrapped in justification by faith! †

Endnotes

¹ Leon Morris, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 173.

² *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 2005 ed., Pacific Press Pub. Assn., p. 247.

³ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Book 3, p. 52.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Faith and Works*, p. 101.

⁵ Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4, p. 148.

⁶ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 144.

⁷ Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, Mar. 3, 1898.

⁸ Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, p. 276.

⁹ D.A. Carson, *Atonement in Romans 3:21-26*, p. 119-139.

¹⁰ Hebrews 10:1.

¹¹ Carson, p. 119-139.

¹² Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, Mar. 3, 1898.

¹³ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 505.

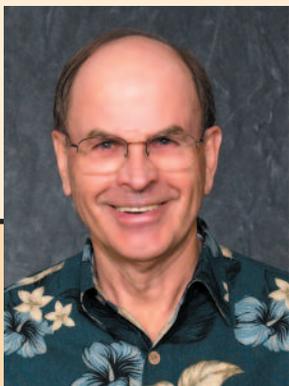
¹⁴ Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 531.

¹⁵ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 212.

¹⁶ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 435.

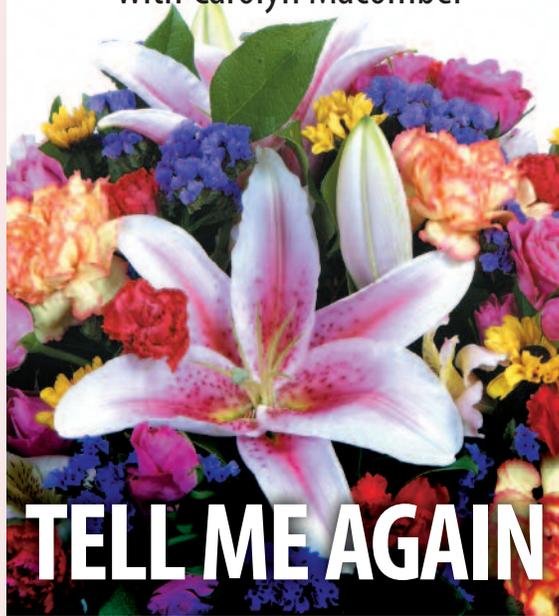
¹⁷ Paul uses “in Christ” 85 times in his epistles.

¹⁸ Rom. 5:6,8,10.



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.

The life EXAMINED with Carolyn Macomber



“**C**ould you repeat that?” I said. My pastor was explaining why the resurrection was important, and feeling a little foolish I asked again, “Would you say that one more time? It is the first time I’ve ever heard it.”

Finally, abandoning my embarrassment I asked again, “Please tell me again, this is amazing! I never knew this—I just need to hear it one more time.”

I was sitting in my pastor’s living room with some former Adventists discussing the differences between Adventism and Christianity. We migrated in our conversation to the upcoming Easter celebration at our church. I offhandedly said, “Easter is one of those things that we didn’t really celebrate in the Adventist Church ... In fact, celebrating Easter was frowned upon. We were taught that Christianity had gone astray from God’s law, beginning to worship on Sunday instead of Saturday, because of Christ’s resurrection. In this way the early church was deceived by Satan and began worshipping on Sunday instead of God’s true Sabbath—Saturday. Therefore, we were frowned at if we mentioned the resurrection as anything special.”

Calmly and carefully, my pastor went over the Scripture that details the importance of the resurrection to our faith as Christians. Then he asked me an insightful question, “What did you think last year when you celebrated Easter?” I explained that I had gone along with the celebration—not fully understanding the big deal—yet wanting to fit in with others. I was amazed at the event people had made it to be, with big, special meals (bigger and fancier than Thanksgiving). I had been invited to 5 different homes—more than at Thanksgiving, and everyone was talking about their Easter celebrations and who would be coming. I really hadn’t understood the excitement, but I liked the invitations. I shared how I had sat around a large family room table at a friend’s daughter-in-law’s home, reading the passion of Christ from the Bible, and then watching the children opening eggs with Scripture references and little emblems of the crucifixion and resurrection. It was wonderful. Yet, I still internally didn’t understand the “big” celebration.

No other religion

Now, the significance of the resurrection was dawning on me. It was a “big” deal. As one former Adventist put it, “No other religion has a leader that has been resurrected from the dead and was seen again by eye witnesses—No other religion!” My pastor read from 1 Corinthians 15 the following passage: “And if Christ has

I felt I had been robbed of the most important kingpin of my faith. Seventh-day Adventism had taught me to minimize the resurrection.

not been raised, your faith is futile; you are STILL IN YOUR SINS. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.”

If the resurrection of Christ didn’t happen, then my faith should be abandoned as a cruel deception. If the resurrection didn’t happen, why would I even worship in a Christian church? If the resurrection wasn’t true—I was lost, dead in my sin, with no hope of rescue and no thought of eternal life. The resurrection was a “BIG DEAL”!

I felt I had been robbed of the most important kingpin of my faith. Seventh-day Adventism had taught me to minimize the resurrection. Its meaning had been deceptively twisted into something far from Scripture’s revelation. Adventism teaches that Christendom dishonored God’s law by beginning to worship on Sunday to honor Christ’s resurrection. I had been taught as an Adventist that God’s law has not changed, so there is no reason to worship on Sunday. The meaning of the resurrection had been twisted into a deceptive ploy by Satan to destroy God’s law and lead Christ’s followers astray. I had been duped into believing a lie that stripped Christ of

His resurrection glory and power.

When we went to prayer that evening after hearing the significance of the resurrection of Christ, I broke down in tears. I, too, had life in Christ, and one day I, too, would be resurrected. I had the assurance of life eternal with the One Who called Himself the Resurrection. Words could not express my joy at the foundation of my faith—only tears would do.

I look forward with anticipation to this coming Easter, and its meaning is clear to me. Christ is alive, and because He lives, I have the assurance of resurrection! †

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.





Clean up

The *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for January-March, 2012, contains a week of lessons examining prayer. How does it “work”? How are we involved in having our prayers answered—or are we? The lesson for March 8 begins with an illustration of an over-eater maintaining his habit of indulgence while praying for weight loss. We should not pray for something and then do nothing in our power to see to it that the prayer is answered, the lesson asserts. Moreover, the lesson continues, sin in our hearts keeps God from hearing the prayers of believers, and this point is emphasized with a quote from Ellen G. White. The lesson then sends the reader to five passages of Scripture and asks what the texts have to do with “complying with the conditions” for prayer. Finally, the lesson concludes by stating that what keeps our prayer life the most effective is our own sense of helplessness, sinfulness, and need.

God expects us to do our part

The illustration of the over-eater praying for weight loss without changing his habits is a wonderful example of the Adventist straw-man argument used to obfuscate the biblical teaching of a changed life. By establishing an extreme and unrealistic scenario, the Adventist can dismiss the over-eater’s “prayer of presumption” as ridiculous because “everyone knows” that asking God for help is not enough; we must do “all we can in our power to see (our prayers) answered” (p. 118) and let God do the rest.

To understand the real problem underlying this train of thought, we must know that Adventism in general does not understand the biblical teaching that believers are born again and have literal regenerated spirits that we are permanently in-dwelt by the Holy Spirit. To the Adventist, the act of being “born again” happens when a person chooses to follow God’s “ways” (law), is baptized, and is committed to behavior modification (with God’s help, of course) as a means of showing his or her love and respect for God and His will. After being baptized into Adventism, the new convert then begins to learn all of the Adventist “family rules”, and with determined commitment begins to change his lifestyle to accommodate them. When Adventists become discouraged or lose their resolve, they are advised through Adventist literature and leadership to live a life of spiritual discipline (study their Sabbath School lessons, attend Sabbath School, get involved, read a devo-

tional, pray for more strength, and so on). The implicit understanding is this: the harder one tries, the more likely one will be to live a godly life.

To remain in the chains of addictions such as pornography, drinking, binge eating, prescription drugs, anorexia, or other compulsions is seen as weakness or a lack of loyalty to God. The person who suffers with these vices either hides them or experiences relational alienation and is viewed as a hypocrite. (This marginalizing is especially true of those in positions of preaching or teaching because they pose a threat to the organization’s reputation). The fact that members must live an acceptable lifestyle without understanding the reality of the new birth is the reason there are far more self-help programs than support or recovery groups in the Adventist organization.

For example, classes teaching healthy eating and vegetarian cooking (classes which double as evangelistic efforts for the organization) are common. The hope is that if the members focussed on “healthy habits”, they would be able to avoid or replace their unhealthy obsessions because they would be honoring God by living right. The fact that “eating healthy” and scanning labels for animal products can become an obsession in itself is generally not acknowledged.

The truth about sanctification

Born-again Christians have a very different spiritual understanding of personal sanctification. No, they would not deny personal responsibility for believers, but the life-changing power of the Holy Spirit is profoundly different from the decision to live “right” and then to ask God to help it happen! When the Lord Jesus brings us to life, He is Lord even over our desires if we submit them to Him. I will try to illustrate with an example from my own life.

Before I was born again, I struggled with an explosive temper toward my husband. I knew it was wrong, and I prayed and asked God to help me stop. On rare occasions I would choose to walk away from an argument and try to cool off in my room. On those rare occasions, I often felt worse than ever. I did not spend the time cooling off, but rather in dark, lonely, indescribable despair. The emotional scars that were driving me to respond to my husband as I was would surface, and I did not know how to handle them. Those were such dark moments. As I would sit in my room

weeping, I deeply resented myself for not being stronger. I didn't understand where the comfort of the Lord was even though I was praying and begging Him to help me. I knew I just wasn't trying hard enough. I was devastated because I knew I wasn't strong enough to try any harder, and my continual failure meant that I probably would not be saved. While I may not have blown up at my husband at those times (the sinful behavior) the underlying heart issue was raging inside and growing in intensity while I sat, lonely and despairing, in my room. I thought I was being punished for a lack of faith.

After becoming a born-again Christian, Jesus knew what I needed more than I did. He began showing me the root causes of my acting out, and He met me in those places of brokenness. I submitted those wounds to Him by admitting that I could do nothing to heal them, but I knew He could. Jesus freed me not just from my addiction to bursts of rage that kept me from feeling all the other "stuff", but from the lies and despair that drove me to act out to begin with! Again, this new freedom was not the result of my doing everything I could do in my power and then waiting for Jesus to pick up the slack after seeing I was trying hard enough. Neither was it because I invoked the power of the Holy Spirit

Christ. Rather, it is a symptom of a heart condition in need of the healing power of a Holy God working intimately in His beloved child!

No list of Scriptures taken out of context for the purpose of imposing behavior modification to facilitate personal righteousness will ever give us what we need: the perfection required in order to stand before the Father of Spirits (Heb. 12:9). Instead, we must be spiritually brought to life in Christ and counted as righteous on His merit. Once we believe and receive Jesus as our Savior and Substitute, we must trust what Scripture says about how our being in Christ changes who we are in God's eyes. We cannot obtain or maintain our standing before God—we must repent of such personal pride if we think we can.

If your heart convicts you of your need for God, of your helplessness, and of your sinfulness, there is wonderful hope for you! His name is Jesus, and He is enough! Give up trying to follow a yellow brick road to a made up god who will consider hearing your case if you first do x, y, and z. Trust the word of God! When Jesus said on the cross, "It is finished," He wasn't lying. Accept His free gift of salvation to all who believe and call on His name. Please stop looking back for prescriptive proof texts about your

your sin

NICOLE STEVENSON

Adapted from the commentary written by Nicole Stevenson for the Sabbath School lesson for March 8, 2012. This commentary appears on the website BibleStudiesforAdventists.com.

through enough effective prayer. In fact, I had no idea what to pray for! I didn't even know what was happening inside me! This new freedom and submission to Him were all because Jesus came to live in me, and He did this healing in my heart.

Ezekiel 36:25-27 says that God will give us a heart of flesh. He truly changes us! 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." It is absolutely true. A "new creation" is not a metaphor for a reformed lifestyle governed by the keeping of God's law through personal resolve and reliance of the here-today-gone-tomorrow presence of the Holy Spirit.

Trust God and His word

It was in the Christian community that I was first exposed to ministries of support and care for those in battles with habitual sin or self destruction. What a shock to see support groups for people who suffered with substance abuse, divorce, porn addiction, sex addiction/abuse, and even the guilt and regret of abortions—to name a few. These groups were designed by leadership teams that understand our war with the flesh sometimes requires the help of the body of Christ. Struggling with sin is not an indication of an inferior lifestyle or poor commitment to

obligation and standing before God. All Scripture is useful for training, but it must be used in its context. It is because of the eternal sacrifice of Jesus Christ—Almighty God, that we can go before our Father boldly. He loves us far more than we will ever be able to comprehend.

It is true that we must live lives of repentance to sustain honest fellowship with our Father, but He will not turn His face from His child. He will simply persist in showing us truth. †

Nicole Stevenson has a degree in social work from La Sierra University.

She is married to Carel, a structural engineer, and they have two children: Abigail (3) and Joshua (5). Nicole and Carel volunteered their time as mentors to youth while they were Adventists, and now they are 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. They attend Trinity Church in Redlands, California. You can check out their Facebook group for Former Adventist Teens here: [Facebook.com/groups/FAT4theGospel/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/FAT4theGospel/).



PHOTO #2 BY DELINA MACPHAULL; OTHERS BY SHARON CAREY



1. Phil Bubar was the keynote speaker for the conference; 2. Sharon Strum led attendees in worship; 3. Doris Vincent, Beverly Brunner, and Delina MacPhaull enjoy personal "face time"; 4. Paul Carden spoke on Adventist evangelism; 5. Martin Carey led a breakout session, and his wife Sharon was the conference photographer; 6. Colleen Tinker addressed the Adventist worldview; 7. Steve Springsted, one of the pastors at Trinity Church, welcomed the attendees.

Former Adventist conference reflections

The seventh annual Former Adventist Fellowship (FAF) conference, held at Trinity Church in Redlands, California from February 17-19, 2012, both inspired and moved the roughly 100 people who were involved both as attendees and presenters.

New this year were breakout sessions for teens coordinated by Carel and Nicole Stevenson. Young people from Kentucky and California attended this first session and went home inspired. After the weekend Nicole launched a Facebook page for FAF Teens with a private discussion group where young people can ask questions and have conversations.

This was the second year that featured a full day of teaching sessions on Friday. Phil Bubar, senior pastor from The Chapel in St. Joseph, Michigan, just minutes away from Andrews University and the Seventh-day Adventist seminary, was our guest. He taught sessions on the Trinity, the necessity of Jesus' blood, the new birth, and he also gave the keynote address at the Friday evening public meeting in addition to leading the communion service on Saturday evening and conducting what turned out to be a question/answer session on Sunday morning.

Phil Bubar shares his reactions to the weekend with us. We think you'll enjoy his perspective as he summarizes his reflections on participating in his first FAF conference.

The weekend at the Former Adventist Fellowship (FAF) Conference was amazing. There were 75 registered attendees, people from all over the country, though most were from California. People came from Virginia,

Tennessee, Texas, Manitoba (Canada), Kentucky, and Wyoming, to name a few. In addition, about 20 others including the presenters, the worship band, the hospitality team who prepared food, and the audio-visual team were there. It was a privilege to be part of this long weekend.

My six sessions went very well and were well received. As stated in my last blog, my question originally was, "Why do you want me, a non-former Adventist, to speak?" But they wanted one who was outside Adventism to speak truth. So I taught on the various doctrines from God's Word that are at variance with Seventh-day Adventist teaching.

My first session covered the most materials, all in 50 minutes. I covered the doctrine of God, especially the doctrine of His sovereignty. Then it was on to the doctrine of the Trinity, as Ellen White held that Jesus was elevated into a position equal to the Father. She wrote that Lucifer became jealous because the Father admitted Jesus, and not him, into His divine council—as if there could have been a misperception that Jesus was eternally God and Lucifer's Creator. That of course is heresy. Then the third point was the doctrine of Man, that we are dead in our sins, that the only way to salvation is by what God has done for us through Jesus Christ, that we do not progressively get better.

Doctrine of salvation taught

Two other sessions focused on the doctrine of salvation, specifically the doctrine of redemption: that we are held captive by sin and must be redeemed by Christ's shed blood, that Jesus



1. Dale Ratzlaff preached on Romans 3:21-27; 2. Elizabeth Church gave her faith story ; 3. Michael and Janice Hicks managed registration; 4. Carolyn Ratzlaff oversaw the Ratzlaff's book table; 5. Carel Stevenson shared his faith story; 6. Dale Ratzlaff leads his breakout session on Sabbath rest; 7. Colleen Tinker, Phil Bubar, Dale Ratzlaff, and Paul Carden, moderated by Richard Tinker, addressed questions from the audience on Friday evening.

is the ransom price and He also paid the ransom, and that there is no way out of our captivity by our actions. Obeying the Law, keeping the Sabbath, any of our actions cannot bring about our freedom from this captivity. It must come from someone who is “one of us” yet without sin, one who is outside of the captivity of sin. That is what Jesus Christ, God in flesh, did for us. The other key session was on the blood of Jesus Christ, why His sacrifice had to be a blood offering.

Enjoyed other speakers

It was great to hear other speakers like Dale Ratzlaff, as he addressed redemption and propitiation. Also Jon Rittenhouse, adjunct professor at Biola University and serving with Campus Crusade for Christ, spoke on the inerrancy of Scripture, another doctrine that is not held by Adventists. Their reasoning is that since Ellen White’s writings are not without error, neither are the Scriptures. Therefore, Ellen White’s writings are on the same par with Scripture. Truly, Adventism is a cult! Colleen Tinker, editor of *Proclamation!* magazine, addressed the Adventist great controversy paradigm and contrasted it with a biblical worldview, and Gary Inrig, senior pastor at Trinity Church in Redlands, California, taught through the parable of the prodigal son.

Another speaker was Paul Carden, executive director of The Center for Apologetics Research. What he shared was amazing. He spoke about the SDA missionary effort going on right now to get copies of Ellen White’s book, *The Great Controversy*, into the hands of millions around this world. That book is heretical! He also talked about John Nevins Andrews, the name sake for Andrews University. He was a missionary and scholar for the Adventists at the beginning and he held to the Arian (fourth century) view of the Trinity, that

God the Son and the Spirit were lesser beings than God the Father. I sure didn’t know that! If Adventists want to be seen as evangelical, how can they not change the name of their university? But they aren’t evangelical. The other big idea that Paul brought out was that John Andrews believed in Jesus, but his Jesus is a different Jesus than we hold to from the Word of God. Wow! So while Adventists may use the same words as we do, their words mean something different than how we would define them.

My last message on Sunday morning was to be on legalism, but those dear people just needed to talk, ask questions, and debrief. All who have transitioned out of Adventism, who have come to place their faith in Jesus Christ alone for their salvation, have so many layers to work through, to peel off. So dialogue, questions, and reactions are all part of it. Our Sunday morning time was very special.

Hearing the stories

Twice on Saturday I had “breakout sessions,” time for discussion and interaction. Those too were very important to me. During the breaks between sessions and through our meal times together, I got to talk with many who were there. I got to hear their hearts and to learn about their scares, their hurt and pain. These people are amazing to me, as most of them still have family who are steeped in Adventism. A number of them, women and men, who have left Adventism, have been divorced by their spouses because now they would be “unequally yoked” to a non-believer. By leaving Adventism, they are viewed as leaving the truth, leaving (the Adventist view of) salvation. They are told that they will burn in hell. Now while Adventists believe in annihilation, they also believe that non-Adventists will go out of existence at death after



1. Gary Inrig, senior pastor of Trinity Church, taught the parable of the prodigal son; 2. Caryl and Nicole Stevenson led breakout sessions for teens; 3. Grace Brunelle and her mom Rosalie Lynn enjoyed time together; 4. Jon Rittenhouse spoke on the reliability of Scripture; 5. Jim Valentine led a breakout session on *The Great Controversy*; 6. Eunice Sellers gave her faith story Saturday evening; 7. Phil Bubar led breakout sessions.

burning a little while in hell. So while I will burn some in hell, a relatively short time, those who have known the truth and walked away (these former Adventists), will burn longer! That view is so wrong! Adventists don't try to win you to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, they just want to win you to Adventism!

Tears and prayer

I talked to a number of people who were in tears over the wrong teaching that they had received and how they still can lapse back into those Adventist thoughts. A number of times I would hold their hand and pray with them. It has been so drilled into their thinking that you cannot know if you are saved. They used to dread thinking of the end, when their name would be reviewed by Christ and they might be found unworthy of heaven. So they are continually living in fear and dread, "Have I done enough? What if I sin when Jesus comes? I must do more." Their hope of heaven is that "have they done enough," not what Jesus has done for them! But, having come to place their faith in Jesus Christ alone for their salvation, they have been set free from condemnation. They now possess God's gift of salvation, and they can know it. But they need to be reminded of the truth over and over because it is too easy to slip back into their "old way of thinking."

The Great Controversy talk

On Friday night I spoke on the conflicting world views in comparison to our evangelical world view. Of the world religions, Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism are in conflict with our evangelical worldview. Then we talked about Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses and Adventism as they too are in conflict with our evangelical worldview. Then I focused on Adventism. We went to

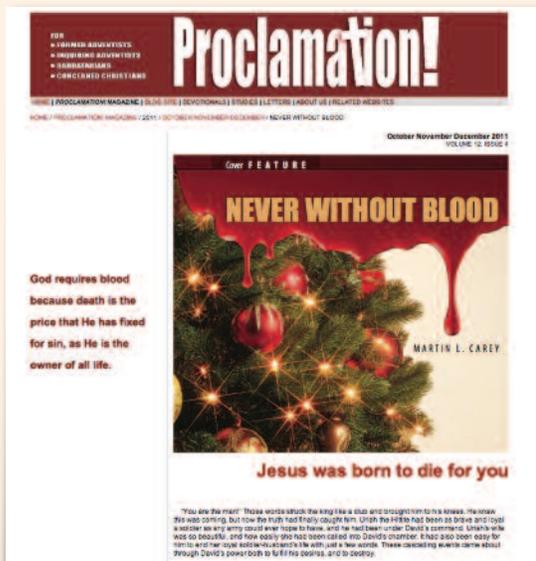
Paul's letter to the Galatians and saw how Paul viewed those who taught a "different Gospel" than the one he presented. And that is what Adventism is, it is a different Gospel. It is faith in Christ plus obedience to the Law.

As the Friday night service was opened to those not registered for the conference and as local pastors were invited, I challenged all of us who were there, including myself, that we need to address these issues if Adventism is dominant in our areas. And it is dominant in Redlands, California, as well as in our area in Michigan with Andrews University being the theological center for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

A new dimension to the conference this year was that it was broadcast live through the Former Adventist Fellowship website. All of the sessions will be available for you to watch by going to their website at FormerAdventist.com. It will take a couple of weeks for all the sessions to be uploaded, but the first ones should be up next week. When we celebrated the Lord's Supper on Saturday night, many joined us through the internet and had their own elements of the Supper to partake with us. Isn't that amazing? We even had a former Adventist sharing with us in this time of communion from Romania—all to the glory of God!

As I reflect back on this time now and as I shared with these dear people during the conference, my heart goes out to them even with tears for all they have gone through. They have suffered for righteousness' sake as they have come to the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. My prayer for them is Paul's prayer for the church in Ephesus:

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. (Eph. 3:14-17). †



Two articles I loved

I have never seen your website before this evening when I stumbled upon it. I love the article "Never Without Blood..." by Martin L. Carey. It gives a fantastic description of why the moral influence theory is inadequate and gives me more to ponder about the death of Christ, why it was necessary, and who God is and who we are in relationship to his death. Very well done!

Then I read the article by Cheryl Barker about the Sabbath. I am still pondering that one and have not come to a conclusion about it yet and plan to give it more study and thought. The description she gives of the "today" rest seems to fit my experience and relationship with God of the past few years although I have not felt entirely sure of my footing in it. There is possibility that the excellent study done by this author may be helping me find more Biblical grounds for how the Holy Spirit has seemed to be leading me and fitting me into my growing understanding of Romans and my relationship with the law.

Proclamation! News

Send your email address to receive our soon coming weekly email of news and new content on the web at LifeAssuranceMinistries.org.

I believe to be God's intervention and leading, I again became a Christian but have not returned to the SDA church because I no longer see God in the way I was taught there. I came to realize, as I was leaving the church, that so much of my life was centered around the fear and rules I had learned there, and very little was motivated by love. I found a new form of Christianity the second time around where I now see and worship a God of love, not of a bunch of rules. I have prayed that if God wants me to return to that church that He will lead me there and put the desire to do so in my heart. He has not done so yet, and I am thinking that probably He never will.

It is very heartening to me to see these two thoughtful articles, and I will be continuing to look into your website for further information. Thank you so much for what you are doing.

VIA EMAIL

Sunday church to avoid looking Adventist?

I believe that God has revealed Himself and His will to us in His word and through His Son. We do not need any other source of truth besides the Bible.

I came out from the Catholic church with "the Sabbath light" of the Adventist church, but as I started reading the Bible on my own,

I left the Adventist church about 20 years ago after being a staunch and legalistic Adventist all my life, although I did not realize I was a legalist at the time. I spent some years in agnosticism, but eventually realized I could not find a way to disprove the validity of the Scriptures. A few years after that, through what I

certain things I found were different from their teachings...I stopped reading EGW books, and I no longer believe there is an investigative judgment going on, nor that Satan is the scapegoat, or that we have to add our works to the complete atonement of Christ for our salvation...I believe the Sabbath is a matter of conscience. Jesus is our Sabbath, and we have His rest when we believe in Him.

I keep the physical Sabbath (Saturday) rest so I can fellowship with my family and friends, not as an obligation...I like to think that Jesus told His chosen people, the Jewish nation, that He wanted them to keep the Sabbath (seventh day) not for salvation but for holiness and remembrance of His creation. Is that not a good reason?

I think that you all at Life Assurance Ministries are opting to go to church on Sundays, not as a matter of conscience, but as a matter of not wanting to be, still, in some way, doing what the

on Sundays". First, God's commands to the Jewish nation were just for them. That was a good reason for them to keep Sabbath; for us in the new covenant, however, that command has been superseded by the Lord Jesus who fulfilled the shadow of Sabbath and of the whole law (Col. 2:16-17; Heb. 10:1). Moreover, the Sabbath for Israel was not just a memorial of creation. In Deuteronomy 5, when Moses was renewing the covenant with the wilderness generation just before they entered the Promised Land, he reiterated the Ten Commandments. When he delivered the fourth, he made no mention of creation. Instead, he says in verse 15, that in remembrance of God's great rescue of them from slavery in Egypt, they were to observe the Sabbath. It's vital that we understand the difference between the old covenant and the new covenant. The old demanded law-keeping in exchange for blessings. The new

I think that you all at Life Assurance Ministries are opting to go to church on Sundays, not as a matter of conscience, but as a matter of not wanting to be, still, in some way, doing what the Adventists do....

Adventists do or giving the appearance that you still are honoring the seventh day of the law. Well, it is your choice, even if it's out of this fear, but I do not judge you or criticize you for it. We are all free in Christ's love.

I appreciate your magazine, the well-written articles which are quite inspirational—they make me study and dig deeper into the Bible.

Trusting in Him alone, I send my thanks and God's blessings upon all of you, my brothers and sisters in Christ.

FORT WORTH, TX

Editor's response: I want to respond to your comments regarding those of us at Life Assurance Ministries "opting to go to church

gives us Jesus' blood as our covenant; we are blessed when we are in Him. The shadows of Sabbaths and rituals are obsolete when we have the Lord Jesus as our Savior.

Second, our worship on Sunday has no shade of desire to avoid the appearance of honoring the law or to avoid looking Adventist. Instead, we worship on Sunday because that's when Christian churches generally meet, and the early church worshiped on the first day as well. If we were to worship on Saturday, our worship would be largely limited to Seventh-day Adventist churches. If we attended Adventist churches, we would not hear Scripture taught in a clear, literal way. We would hear Adventist

teaching, and that would not be the biblical gospel.

Furthermore, Hebrews 10:25 admonishes us to meet together in order to strengthen each other. This command is for the church, those who are born again of the Spirit. We cannot be admonished and strengthened in biblical reality if we are not meeting with brothers

and sisters who embrace Scripture alone. die for it if necessary. We have to give up hedging our bets just in case Sabbath is important. Now that we know Jesus is all we need, we have to give up the day which formerly claimed our loyalty and give all our loyalty to Christ alone.

Thank you for your letter and for your willingness to share your thoughts with us.

things you have identified. No question! And it is true that worldliness, infidelity, fanaticism, works, and a whole lot of other things are present in the Church. And it is true that there are many ways of interpreting the Scriptures and Writings among both the laity and the clergy and theologians. But in spite of all of these variations, I have found in the Adventist Church a path and encouragement for becoming true and loving followers of Jesus. By my own studies, I have come to conclude that there is no merit in any teaching or doctrine, but that these are only the means by which we grow, whether closer to God or away from Him, depending upon their truth or error. And this is one of the strengths of Adventism as I see it. There is room within the church to see and express truth in various ways.

So, I am sorry your experience has not been rewarding. I sense your love for God and for His cause. I wish you could look past the disappointment of the past and see the church as a movement within the greater family of God with a special message for these end times which, in spite of its weaknesses, provides a community of faith through which the entire world can be prepared to meet Jesus upon His soon return.

WILLIAMS BAY, WI

Dale Ratzlaff's response: You mention that you wish we could look past the disappointment of the past and see the Adventist church as part of God's family with a special message for the end times. I, too once felt the same way. However, I had no idea of the misinterpretation of Scriptures present in Adventism until years after I left it. Studying the Bible without Ellen White helped me see the errors of the Adventist message....The Adventist message not only undermines the Pauline gospel but it is certainly not the apostolic gospel that was once for all delivered to the saints...May God bless us each as we seek to be true to His word.

Don't be discouraged

I appreciate your magazines' exploring truth in an easy to understand way. Don't be discouraged; it is self-righteous pride, religious pride—that even some Christians fall into when embracing some non-essential doctrine which makes them the “special ones of God”—in which your critics are enslaved.

So few today will stand for just the basic truths of the Bible, and the results are clearly seen in the increasing amount of sin in the world. God bless you.

JOHN ADCOCK
JESUS PEOPLE INFORMATION
CENTER, SACRAMENTO, CA

Enemy of truth

Former Adventists (are the) worst enemy of truth. Satan was in heaven, remember. So why are you, Dale Ratzlaff and Richard and Colleen Tinker, false teachers? Have mercy on you all!

BOWIE, MD

Thank you

Thank you, each and every-one, for your ministry. May God continue His bountiful blessings to you as you serve Him.

CORNVILLE, AZ

I am not a...

...former Adventist, inquiring Adventist, Sabbatarian, or concerned Christian. Please stop sending me your publication. It is irritating.

P.S. Do you not have a more productive ministry that you might engage in??

EAST BRUNSWICK, NJ

Love it

I love your magazine, especially the testimonies.

BAPTIST PASTOR
RIVERSIDE, CA

Don't be discouraged; it is self-righteous pride, religious pride—that even some Christians fall into when embracing some non-essential doctrine which makes them the “special ones of God”—in which your critics are enslaved.

Good, deep stuff

Wow, you have really done it with this issue! Very appropriately at Christmas, you have given all Christians, not just former Adventists or JWs, a collection of editorials discussing basic elements of Christianity and only secondarily Adventist deviations. Some Christian friends in our Lutheran community have found these articles very meaningful, especially the ones by Martin Carey and Dale Ratzlaff. There is a lot of good deep stuff here, very thought provoking and worth a second, even third read. Congratulations and thank you.

VIA EMAIL

Adventism a path of encouragement

We have been receiving *Proclamation!* for several years. Thanks for your thoughtfulness and sacrifice in sharing that which is most valuable to you. The truth is that I have not read the magazine except perhaps scanning the first issue or two. That is, until this last issue for the fall of 2011. It is well written. But I have been saddened to read of the disillusionment expressed about the Adventist Church, for I have not seen it the way you have described. Yes, there is within the Adventist Church all of the

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



First Michigan former Adventist conference coming this summer

The Chapel in St. Joseph, Michigan, will host a summer conference for former Adventists July 27-29, 2012. Presenters will include Phil Bubar, senior pastor and keynote speaker of the February FAF conference in Redlands, California, this year, as well as associate pastor Corey Kugel. Also presenting will be Carolyn Macomber, former Adventist pastor and columnist for *Proclamation!*, Richard Tinker, president of Life Assurance Ministries, and Colleen Tinker, editor of *Proclamation!* magazine.

Meetings will convene Friday at 6:30 PM. Saturday sessions will begin at 9:00 AM and will conclude at 9:00 PM after a communion service led by Phil Bubar. The conference will include worship with The Chapel on Sunday morning and a no-host dinner at a local restaurant following church. The cost for the conference is \$40 and will include seminar handouts as well as lunch and dinner on July 28. Drinks and snacks will also be available throughout the conference.

Dove-tailing with the Former Adventist Conference will be two presentations for The Chapel members and the larger Christian community—and for any of the former Adventists who wish to attend. On the evenings of Sunday, July 29, and Monday, July 30, from 6:30-8:30 PM, Phil Bubar, Carolyn

Macomber, and Richard and Colleen Tinker will present “Seventh-day Adventism and Christianity Compared”. These meetings are free.

To register for the Conference, send your check to The Chapel, 4250 Washington Ave., St. Joseph, Michigan, 49085, and mark it Former Adventist Summer Conference 2012. For more information, call (269) 429-1041. More Conference information is available online at FormerAdventist.com.



Introducing new Proclamation! blog site

We are excited to announce that the new *Proclamation!* blog web site is now online! This new online outreach of *Proclamation!* magazine is edited by Chris Lee, and Delina MacPhaul has done the technical design of the blog site.

There are several people who are regular bloggers, many of whose names you already know, including Rick Barker, Nicole Stevenson, Colleen Tinker, Cherie Skrivan, and Delina MacPhaul. You may read and respond to the blogs and also read news stories as they are written at this web address: ProclamationMagazine.com

We invite you to check it out and respond. As the blogs become better-known, conversation will increase. It has already proven to be a place where some significant exchanges between former Adventists and current Adventists have occurred.

So join the conversation! We look forward to “seeing” you there!

Update on God’s cattle and our finances

As spring progresses toward the middle of the year, we want to give you an update on Life Assurance Ministries’ finances. We are praising God that we ended the year with all bills paid, and as of this writing we have enough money to print and mail this current issue.

Ever since we let you know last year that our income was down and that one of our Trinity Church elders had prayed that God would sell one or two of His cattle on the thousand hills for us, He has prompted you to be His “hands” and has provided what we have needed.

Once again we are facing a mid-year slump, and we wanted to do two things. First, we thank you for how you have helped to keep *Proclamation!* in print over the past several months. Second, we ask that you join us in ongoing prayer for God’s guidance and provision and that you also contribute as God

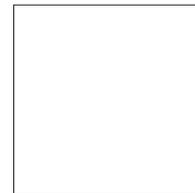


leads toward the future issues of this magazine.

Over the past year requests for the magazine have been increasing. God is revealing truth to people, and we praise Him for what He is doing through

Proclamation! to provide sound biblical teaching for people who have been caught in the despair of the great controversy worldview. In addition, we receive letters from Christians and pastors who have never been Adventist thanking us for the magazine and its clear gospel teaching.

Thank you for being part of this ministry. We pray always that God will speak through this publication and plant seeds of the gospel deeply into hearts that are ready to receive them.



ProclamationMagazine.com

The life A F T E R with Chris Lee

I sat on my front porch enjoying a beautiful spring day with a couple near and dear to me. As fine as the weather was, their story was even better. Matt and Jill are in the midst of transitioning out of Adventism and into an evangelical congregation. I listened as they talked in glowing terms about their excitement, their desire to know more, the changes in themselves, and their hopes for their children.

Matt related how his new pastor's habit of preaching through a section of the Bible was so different from the topical preaching he was used to, but little by little he got hooked on being fed straight from the Word and wanted more. Jill told me about staying up late nights to listen to just one more sermon online. She said she had never experienced a hunger like that before, not just for the Word, but for more of Jesus.

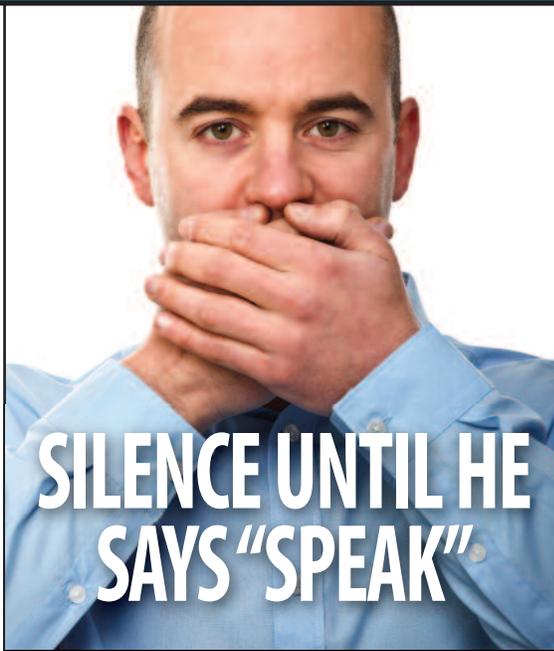
I was astounded by what God had done. It all seemed so sudden and unexpected. Although I knew Matt and Jill had a few issues with aspects of Adventism, I assumed they would remain cultural Adventists for life. It's hard to escape a tradition, even one you don't totally believe or live. What happened? You might think that since Matt and Jill are friends with me, a contributing editor of *Proclamation!* magazine, their transition has been aided by a lot of deep theological discussions and helpful articles, but sadly, you'd be wrong.

What happened?

In my early zeal after leaving Adventism, I desperately wanted all my friends and family to know what I had discovered, to understand the true biblical Gospel, and to share my joy. That's a good thing, but the way I went about "sharing" was often wrong. I'm a debater by nature and have a bent towards trying to argue



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 ambulator@gmail.com.



© IStockPhoto.com/TIERO

It's not my job to argue others into truth. It's my job to be a surrendered tool.

people into truth. It doesn't work and usually ends up building walls.

I remember an early heated conversation with Matt that I'd like to take back. I've felt bad about it ever since. What I love about Matt is that he continued to love me and was the most accepting of all my friends, despite the fact that we disagreed. Still, the damage was done. We never talked about spiritual things again. That's on me.

So what happened with Matt and Jill? Simply put, God happened. In His grace, God may choose to involve us in His work, but God didn't need my help to lead Matt and Jill where He wanted them. If anything, I was a hindrance because of my failings.

In honesty, I still don't always know where the balance is. The New Testament calls us to expose false teachers, and the real gospel is always going to be

offensive to those steeped in a counterfeit. We can't completely avoid offense; certainly Jesus and the apostles didn't. I think the answer is being fully surrendered to the Spirit. I need to rest in Him and only speak when He says speak. I need to trust that He doesn't need me. He may work through me, but it will be in His way and in His time. Knowing that, I can relax. It's not my job to argue others into truth. It's my job to be a surrendered tool.

I think Matt and Jill are going about this right. They're talking with family and friends, but they're talking in order to allow their loved ones to ask questions. They're not trying to convince anyone through the power of well-reasoned arguments. They're striving to maintain relationships while being open and honest. That's a witness that God can use. Matt and Jill, you have my apologies. I'll be watching and learning from you. Now go start living the life after! †