



JUNE 2025

# Ministry<sup>®</sup>

INTERNATIONAL  
JOURNAL FOR PASTORS



**From doubters  
to disciples:**  
Guiding Adventist children  
toward genuine faith

PAGE 6

10

AT HIS FEET

14

BAPTISM AND  
FOOTWASHING—MORE  
THAN SYMBOLS

18

“TO DESTROY THOSE WHO  
DESTROY THE EARTH”

# Digital evangelism happens over time, not overnight.

62% of all internet users watch YouTube every day.<sup>1</sup> Plus 40% of YouTube's viewers are between the ages 19 and 39, making it a prime platform for reaching younger generations.<sup>2</sup>

At SermonView, we'll create a **target audience within your community** so the right people see your message at the right time. By carefully managing your campaign and building your audience, you'll raise awareness of your local church and attract a larger, younger audience to your **evangelistic events**.



Get started now for a greater impact this fall.

**SermonView.com | 800-525-5791**



06

## From doubters to disciples: Guiding Adventist children toward genuine faith

PETR ČINČALA AND ALLISON SAUCEDA

Pastoral children and those within our flock are surrounded by Christian rhetoric and activities. That must make them impermeable to Satan's attacks, right?



GUEST EDITORIAL | 4  
ABNER DE LOS SANTOS



LETTERS | 21



RESOURCES | 24  
DAVID TASKER



REVIVAL & REFORMATION | 26  
GEM CASTOR



DATELINE | 28



PRACTICAL POINTERS | 30  
VICTOR JAEGER

10

## At His feet

NINA ATCHESON

While we guide others to Jesus' feet, as ministry leaders, can we sit at Jesus' feet ourselves, to adore Him and learn from Him?

14

## Baptism and footwashing—more than symbols

KIM PAPAIOANNOU

Baptism and footwashing are crucial symbols in the Adventist faith, but what is their background, and why are they important?

18

## “To destroy those who destroy the earth”: The meaning of Revelation 11:18

RANKO STEFANOVIC

Is John saying in Revelation 11:18 that God is out to strike down people who are not environmentalists? Or is there a more logical interpretation?

22

## Understanding the constants in Genesis 1: A framework for Bible study

DANIEL JEON

Delve into key phrases in Genesis 1 to see the beauty of God's consistent and everlasting love for His creation.

### Ministry

International Journal for Pastors  
12501 Old Columbia Pike,  
Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600 USA  
www.ministrymagazine.org  
ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org  
@minmag  
@ministrymagazine  
facebook.com/MinistryMagazine  
youtube.com/MinistryMagazine  
ministrymagazine.org/podcast

Vol. 97, No. 6 © 2025

### EDITOR

Pavel Goia

### ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Jeffrey O. Brown

### SENIOR EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Sheryl Beck

### FINANCE AND TECHNOLOGY MANAGER

John Feezer IV

### SUBSCRIPTION ASSISTANT

Gloria Massenburg

### CONSULTANTS TO EDITOR

Clifford Goldstein, Gerald Wheeler

### INTERNATIONAL EDITORS

Chinese—Robert Wong  
French—Bernard Sauvagnat  
Japanese—Masaki Shoji  
Kiswahili—Herbert Nziku  
Korean—Soon Ki Kang  
Portuguese—Wellington Barbosa  
Russian—Michael Kaminsky  
Spanish (Inter-America)—Saul Ortiz  
Spanish (South America)—Marcos Blanco

### INTERNATIONAL ADVISERS

Jonas Arrais, Lucas Alves Bezerra,  
Kwame Kwanin Boakye, Vara Prasad  
Deepati, Darius Jankiewicz, Patrick  
Johnson, Victor Kozakov, Passmore  
Mulambo, Herbert Nziku, Ventislav  
Panayoptov, Josney Rodriguez, Rudi  
Situmorang, Ted N. C. Wilson

### LEGAL ADVISER

Todd R. McFarland

### ADVERTISING

advertising@ministrymagazine.org

### SUBSCRIPTIONS/ RENEWALS/ADDRESS CHANGES

subscriptions@ministrymagazine.org  
+1 301-680-6511  
+1 301-680-6502 (fax)

### COVER

316 Creative/Adobe Stock

### LAYOUT

316 Creative

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

12 issues: United States US\$35.49;  
Canada and overseas US\$49.00.  
To order: send name, address, and

payment to Ministry® Subscriptions,  
12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver  
Spring, MD 20904-6600 USA.  
www.ministrymagazine.org/subscribe.

### DIGITAL DELIVERY

Print subscribers can sign  
up for digital delivery at  
www.ministrymagazine.org/digital.

### TO WRITERS

We welcome unsolicited manuscripts.  
Before submitting, review the writers'  
guidelines at www.ministrymagazine.org.  
Please send manuscripts via email to  
ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org.

Ministry® has been published  
monthly since 1928 by the Ministerial  
Association, General Conference of  
Seventh-day Adventists®. Ministry is a  
peer-reviewed journal.

### MINISTERIAL SECRETARY

Ramon J. Canals

### ASSOCIATE MINISTERIAL SECRETARIES

Jeffrey O. Brown, Aurora Canals, Robert  
Costa, Pavel Goia, Anthony Kent

Printed by Pacific Press®, 1350 N.  
Kings Rd., Nampa, ID 83687

Standard mail postage paid at Nampa,  
Idaho. (ISSN 0026-5314)

Member of Associated Church Press.

Adventist®, Seventh-day Adventist®, and  
Ministry® are the registered trademarks  
of the General Conference Corporation of  
Seventh-day Adventists®.

PRINTED IN THE USA

**BIBLE CREDITS:** Scripture quotations marked ESV are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked KJV are from the King James Version. Scripture quotations marked NASB are from the New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995, 2020 by The Lockman Foundation. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked NIV are from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. Scripture quotations marked NKJV are from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.



Published by the Seventh-day Adventist  
Church. Read by clergy of all faiths.



# Remember who you are

# Forget who you have become, remember who you are, and rediscover your true identity as a child of God and a member of His family

**S**ome time ago I had the opportunity to visit a friend whose wife had Alzheimer's disease and had forgotten who she was. During our conversation about the family's sad situation, my friend's wife suddenly looked at me and said, "Hey, Pastor, how nice to see you; thank you for visiting our home." This was an emotional moment for all of us. As we continued talking, she remembered several things about her identity. The situation reminded me how essential it is to understand identity—who we are and why we are here.

## Uphold your identity

There are those who maintain that the Seventh-day Adventist Church's "identity has been diluted by the impact of societal changes and cultural shifts."<sup>1</sup> But what is identity? The American Psychological Association states, "Your identity is a set of physical, mental, emotional, social, and interpersonal characteristics that are unique to you."<sup>2</sup> Psychiatrist Asfia Qadir maintains, "It encapsulates your core personal values and your beliefs about the world."<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, rediscovering our individual and collective identities is essential for fulfilling the gospel commission.

In 2024, the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists celebrated its 150th

anniversary as a missionary movement fulfilling the gospel commission. This milestone encouraged the church to renew its focus on its mission and prompted a reevaluation of its purpose, identity, and direction. When identity is altered, destiny is affected—it has always been so.

Nebuchadnezzar, king of ancient Babylon, sought to alter the identities of Daniel and his friends. He wanted the Jewish captives to adopt a Babylonian identity, so he changed their names and exposed them to Babylonian culture.<sup>4</sup> Daniel stood out in Babylon because he understood his God and knew he was a child of God and part of His people.

Daniel was determined to uphold this identity. He set himself apart through his actions, words, and, most importantly, character. Daniel appreciated the meaning of his name: "God is my judge." Prolific author Ellen G. White says, "The prophet Daniel was an illustrious character. He was a bright example of what men may become when united with the God of wisdom."<sup>5</sup> Daniel always remembered who he was.



**Abner De los Santos, DMin**, is a general vice president for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

As a Seventh-day Adventist, you are a part of God's people and part of a movement with a special mission at the end of time. But Satan wants you to believe you are an outcast of little value and that change is impossible. You might feel like a failed Christian or not-so-good pastor and think that God has grown tired of fighting for you. But don't believe the enemy. God has not forsaken you. He still believes in you and has a purpose for you.

### Reclaim your identity

When I was a young boy, after finishing elementary school, my parents believed it was best for me to attend an Adventist academy for secondary and high school. My father took me to Linda Vista Academy, now Linda Vista University. Before he returned home, he told me, "Son, never forget who you are; remember that you are different. Always remember that you are my son and that, above everything, you are a child of God."

It is time for Seventh-day Adventist pastors, leaders, and members to reclaim their identity. We must wake up from spiritual amnesia and remember who we are and why we are here. We must commit ourselves to the One we owe our lives to: Jesus Christ. We must live, as the apostle Paul says in Hebrews 12:2, "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the

joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (NKJV).

Dear pastor and church leader, if you are feeling tired and discouraged in your role, reflecting on your identity is essential. Forget who you have become, remember who you are, and rediscover your true identity as a child of God and a member of His family. God desires for you to share the eternal gospel and distinctive message of the three angels of Revelation 14, even in unfamiliar places.

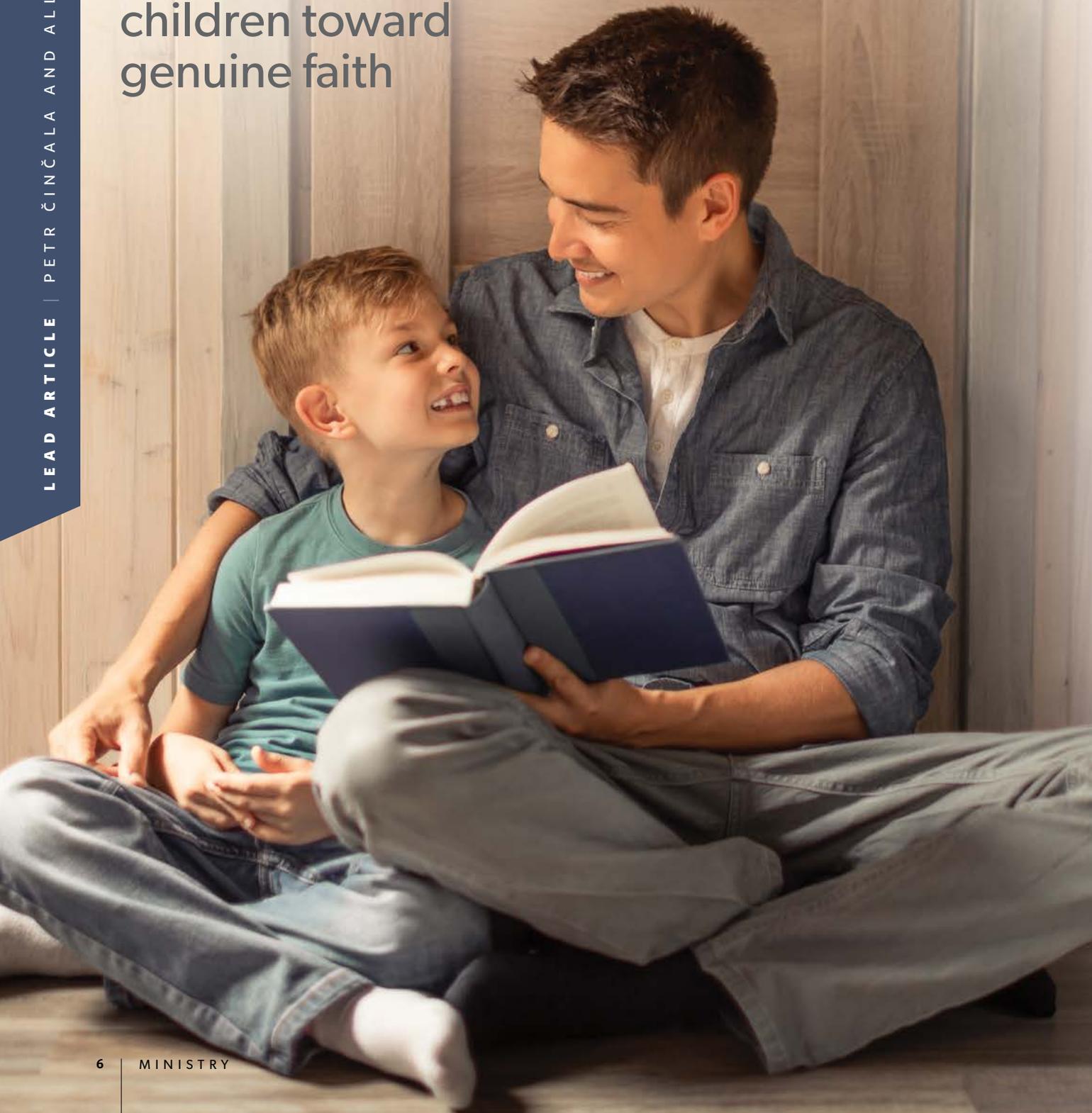
You may feel weary and broken, but know that God loves you and you have a mission to fulfill. Always remember who you are!



- 1 Dan-Adrian Petre, Joel Iparraguirre, and J. Vladimir Polanco, eds., *Affirming Our Identity: Current Theological Issues Challenging the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (Madrid, Spain: Safeliz, 2023), xi.
- 2 Sanjana Gupta, "Why Identity Matters and How It Shapes Us," *Verywell Mind*, May 30, 2023, <https://www.verywellmind.com/why-identity-matters-and-how-it-shapes-us-7504546>.
- 3 Sanjana Gupta.
- 4 See Daniel 1:3–8.
- 5 Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1923), 77.

# From doubters to disciples:

Guiding Adventist children toward genuine faith



**Petr Činčala, PhD**, is an associate professor and serves as director of the Institute of Church Ministry and the Doctor of Missiology program in the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.

**Allison Saucedo** is an assistant editor for the *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership*, residing in Dublin, Ohio, United States.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

**R**aising children in the faith is one of the greatest joys—and challenges—for Adventist parents, especially pastoral parents. Surrounded by teachings, rituals, and traditions, many Adventist children grow up immersed in Christianity but never develop a personal connection with God. It leaves them vulnerable to spiritual drift—especially when crises arise.

How can pastors help parents support children in cultivating a relationship with God rather than simply instilling religious behaviors? What role does emotional support play in fostering true discipleship? This article offers practical responses to these questions through biblical insights, informed research, and the powerful story of a modern young woman named Hadassah, whose journey highlights the transformative work of God through life's crises.

### An unexpected catalyst for faith

Scripture teaches us that spiritual growth often arises from hardship. Research confirms that transformation can happen through crisis.<sup>1</sup> The story of the prodigal son (Luke 15) illustrates this possibility. The father allowed his son to leave, knowing the journey would be difficult. It was not until the son faced failure and despair that he recognized his need for his father's love and guidance. Often, children must encounter trials to discover their need for God.

Hadassah's story mirrors this process. Raised in a loving Christian family, she grew up surrounded by faith but felt disconnected from God. After surviving a devastating car accident that left her body broken, she spiraled into depression, addiction, and despair. It was not until she hit rock bottom that she opened her heart to God and began the journey of discipleship.

### Motifs for conversion

Researchers have identified six motifs that lead to spiritual transformation.<sup>2</sup> Let's briefly

touch on each and see how they were reflected in Hadassah's life.

The *intellectual motif*—the ability to sort life intellectually—was not Hadassah's fuel to becoming a disciple. While she had access to biblical teaching through her family, as well as religious education both in the church and church school she attended, she did not connect with her faith through those channels.

The *mystical motif*—a supernatural encounter leading a person to be “born again”—was, in a way, a custom-made motif for Hadassah because God had saved her from death. Yet that crisis and supernatural intervention caught her unprepared, because her heart was not yet open to Christ.

The *experimental motif*—a gradual, longer process—often works among children growing up in churches. When the COVID-19 pandemic closed local churches, Hadassah was encouraged to bring her church engagement to the next level to see if it would help her connect with God. When she agreed, she and her boyfriend started organizing home worship services for their peers each weekend. They also met regularly in the middle of the week to plan and pray. Young adults ran the whole worship service, including the preaching. It produced powerful moments of experiencing God, but it did not bring the desired outcome for Hadassah. Beneath the surface, she harbored unhealthy addictions and behaviors that were preventing true heart transformation.

The *affectional motif*—a relational conversion style—is an incredibly powerful way of helping people change the direction of their life through relationships. Hadassah, however, had grown up in a loving Christian family and experienced caring relationships. That motif did not bring the desired outcome either.

The typical *revivalist motif* involves people experiencing change as part of a crowd listening to a powerful sermon, often presented by a charismatic speaker. It may cause some to experience fear, guilt, and joy of such intensity



that it leads them to spiritual rebirth. Yet again, this was not an effective method for Hadassah. On the contrary, such sermons discouraged her and even turned her off from going to church.

Researchers report one more motif, which they call the *coercive motif*. Although often looked down upon because some view it as “brainwashing,” God can use it to transform even a doubter into a newborn disciple. After Hadassah finished college, she moved away from her religious community to a big city, where she got a job and started her adult life. The hope was that, with the distance, she would recover from the unhealthy, addictive relationship she had with her boyfriend—but the opposite took place. The relational addiction that had become an escape from pain found other means. Using marijuana and alcohol led her even more deeply into depression, and eventually, suicidal thoughts emerged. Hadassah knew that her life was about to end if something drastic did not happen.

It was then that, based on her mom’s kind encouragement, she heard a sermon about Jonah experiencing depression. Such a message caused a tiny spark of hope to ignite in her heart. A few weeks later, she enrolled in a recovery program in California. As she entered it, her mindset was that she was finished with God and the church. She knew she desperately needed help, but the desire to follow Jesus was gone. Her hope was in the cognitive behavioral therapy offered by the program.

However, devotional readings from the Bible and the book *The Ministry of Healing* were required, and the facilitators were lovingly firm about it. At first, it made her hate the program. However, within a few days she realized she needed to follow the process or she would likely kill herself. The following week, she listened to the teachings but tried to ignore the “God stuff.” Surprisingly, the readings started to make sense to her. It was not “religious crap” anymore, as she would put it. For the first time in her life, her heart was open to drink in God’s Word. Her doubts started to diminish, and faith began to take root and sprout.

Her rebirth culminated in rebaptism, a moment she described as leaving behind “all the nasties of the past” and becoming “a whole, refreshed human.” Today, Hadassah is a living testimony to what happens when God works through crises to transform a heart. Her story reminds us that no one is beyond God’s reach and that He never gives up on His children.

## The pitfall of protective parenting

Parents often shield their children from hardship out of love, hoping to spare them pain. While such an instinct is natural, it can inadvertently hinder spiritual growth. Overly protected children may never experience the kind of crises that can prompt reliance on God.

The Bible offers numerous examples of God working through trials to bring transformation. Moses fled to the wilderness after his life fell apart. Paul was blinded on the road to Damascus. Even Jesus faced profound suffering as a human that deepened His reliance on the Father.

Parents can take comfort in knowing that crises do not mean God has abandoned their children. On the contrary, such moments are often when He is preparing the soil of their hearts for growth. Encouraging parents to pray and trust God to work through their child’s struggles is vital, even when it’s difficult not to intervene.

## Emotional support above religious drills

One common misconception is that raising children in faith is primarily about teaching doctrines, enforcing behaviors, and/or memorizing Scripture. While such practices are important, they do not guarantee a personal relationship with God and sometimes result in resentment in young people. On the other hand, emotional support and relational experiences prepare the heart for experiencing God’s transformative power. Hadassah’s experience in the recovery center was nurtured by a community demonstrating unconditional love, empathy, and authenticity, thus softening her heart.

Pastors can encourage parents to focus on nurturing their children’s emotional and spiritual needs rather than merely ensuring adherence to religious practices. This includes three practices:

- *Listening.* Provide a safe space for children to express doubts, fears, and struggles without judgment.
- *Modeling.* Demonstrate authentic faith in everyday life, showing children what it means to rely on God through trials and triumphs and how faith impacts daily life, from decision-making to handling adversity.
- *Mentoring.* Surround children with trusted, godly mentors who can guide and support them on their spiritual journey.

## The role of mentorship

Mentorship played a pivotal role in Hadassah’s transformation. Initially resistant to religious

involvement, she was drawn to mentors who exhibited love, patience, and authenticity. Their willingness to share their struggles and faith journeys inspired her to reconsider her views about God.

Pastors and church members can serve as mentors by investing time in relationships with young people. Involving more than teaching, it requires empathy, vulnerability, and a commitment to walking alongside them through their doubts and questions. Mentorship helps create the relational trust necessary for God's work to take root.

### The growth process

Discipleship is not an event—it is a process. In Mark 4:27–29, Jesus describes the mystery of spiritual growth: “The seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear” (ESV). Growth happens outside of human control. Our role is to plant seeds, nurture the soil, and trust God to bring the increase.

Parents and pastors alike must resist the urge to control or force spiritual growth in children. Faith cannot be manufactured or imposed. It must arise from a personal encounter with God. Instead, we are called to create environments where children feel loved, valued, and open to God's leading.

### Practical steps for supporting children spiritually

To foster genuine discipleship in children, pastors can encourage parents to adopt the following practices:

1. *Create safe spaces.* Encourage open conversations about faith, doubts, and struggles without fear of judgment or rejection.
2. *Allow space for growth.* Avoid pressuring children to conform to religious expectations. Instead, nurture their unique journey with patience and grace.
3. *Equip for resilience.* Teach children to turn to God during crises, emphasizing His faithfulness and provision, and relying on the powerful work of the Holy Spirit from within.
4. *Celebrate progress.* Acknowledge and affirm small steps toward spiritual maturity, reinforcing the child's connection with God.

### Trusting the Gardener

As pastors, we have the privilege of guiding parents and children in the journey of faith. It involves planting seeds, nurturing the soil, and

**Parents and pastors alike must resist the urge to control or force spiritual growth in children. Faith cannot be manufactured or imposed. It must arise from a personal encounter with God.**

trusting the Gardener to bring the growth. It also means encouraging parents to let go of control, trust God in times of crisis, and prioritize emotional and spiritual support over religious drills.

Ultimately, discipleship is about heart transformation, not merely behavior modification. Believing in God does not necessarily mean being born again. Thus, discipleship is about creating an environment where children can experience God's love in a way that draws them into a lasting relationship with Him. And when that happens, as Hadassah's story shows, the results are nothing short of miraculous.

May we, as pastors and mentors, continue to inspire and support the next generation of disciples, trusting that the God who began a good work in them will be faithful to complete it (Phil. 1:6).



1 Lewis R. Rambo and Steven C. Bauman, “Psychology of Conversion and Spiritual Transformation,” *Pastoral Psychology* 61 (2012): 879–894, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-011-0364-5>.

2 Timothy A. Sisemore, *The Psychology of Religion and Spirituality: From the Inside Out* (New York, NY: Wiley, 2016), 176.

Share your thoughts on this article by writing to [ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org](mailto:ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org).

# At His feet

**T**he salesman glances up as a young woman steps into his store. As he looks her up and down, she says, “I’d like to buy some perfume.”

Bringing down a cheap bottle from the shelf, he shows her the sale price.

“I want something nicer,” she states.

He reaches up for two more bottles, opening one so she can smell the strong scent.

“No, I want something more expensive.”

Now, the man starts to wonder about her, but her voice interrupts his thoughts. “Show me your most expensive perfume.”

After a pause, he leaves to return holding a small stone box. She immediately sees that it’s very valuable.

“It’s twenty thousand dollars. This perfume is fit only for a king,” he says proudly.

“I’ll take it.”

## The story continues

Although we do not know how she came by it, we know that Mary Magdalene gave much to own an alabaster flask of spikenard perfume. Spikenard is a small plant that grows in the cold, rocky ground high in the eastern Himalayas. Its roots produce the most potent perfume, extracted through a time-consuming process that makes it rare and extremely expensive. Even today, spikenard costs around \$100 for just about a teaspoon (5 milliliters), and the Bible tells us that Mary had a pound, or more than 320 grams. Scholars suggest its cost was equivalent to a year’s wages.

So, what compelled her to spend such an extravagant amount of money on such a perfume?

We meet Mary several times in the New Testament, learning that Jesus healed her of seven demons and that she and other women provided for Him (Luke 8:2). Later, we meet

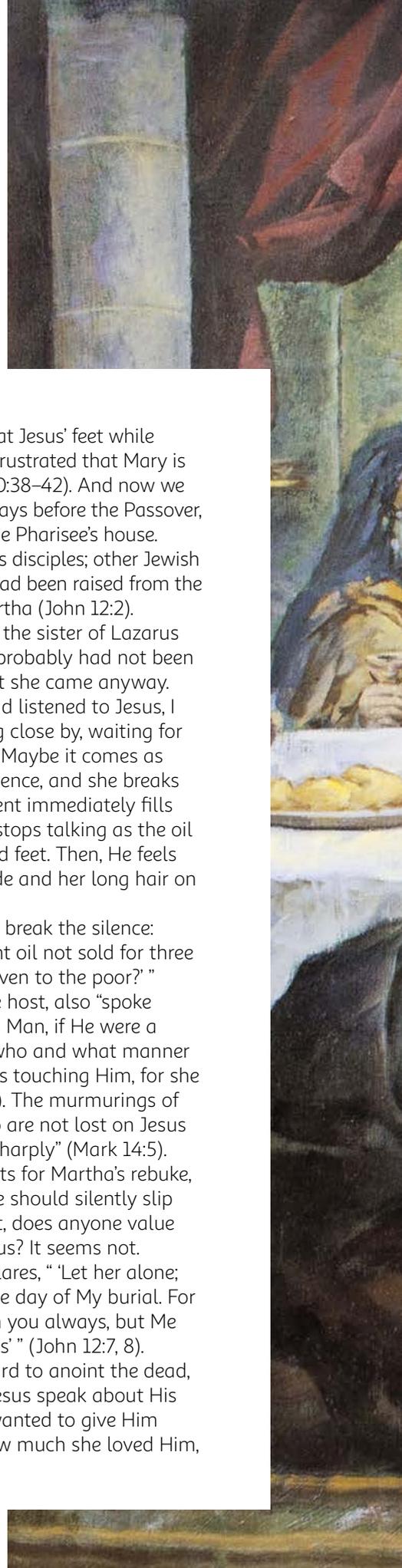
Mary again as she sits at Jesus’ feet while Martha prepares food, frustrated that Mary is not helping her (Luke 10:38–42). And now we encounter her just six days before the Passover, in Bethany, at Simon the Pharisee’s house. Jesus is present with His disciples; other Jewish leaders; Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead; and his sister Martha (John 12:2).

Mary, who was also the sister of Lazarus and Martha (John 11), probably had not been invited to the party, but she came anyway. As the men reclined and listened to Jesus, I imagine Mary, standing close by, waiting for just the right moment. Maybe it comes as Jesus pauses, mid-sentence, and she breaks the stone flask. The scent immediately fills the room. Perhaps He stops talking as the oil spills over His head and feet. Then, He feels Mary’s tears of gratitude and her long hair on His bare feet.

Judas’s sharp words break the silence: “‘Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?’” (John 12:5).<sup>1</sup> Simon, the host, also “spoke to himself, saying, ‘This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner’” (Luke 7:39). The murmurings of the other disciples also are not lost on Jesus as “they criticized her sharply” (Mark 14:5). Perhaps Mary also waits for Martha’s rebuke, wondering whether she should silently slip away.<sup>2</sup> At that moment, does anyone value her gift, other than Jesus? It seems not.

Suddenly, Jesus declares, “‘Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always’” (John 12:7, 8).

People used spikenard to anoint the dead, and Mary had heard Jesus speak about His imminent death. She wanted to give Him something to show how much she loved Him,





**Nina Atcheson, master of religious education,** is curriculum manager and senior editor in the Sabbath School and Personal Ministries department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

for He had transformed her life. Other than the wise men's gifts, here was the most extravagant display of honor shown to Jesus while He was alive on earth. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus brought costly spices to Jesus' cold, dead body in the tomb. The women also had spices on Sunday morning, only to find that He had risen. But Mary's gift was different because she gave it to Him while He was alive.

A great sacrifice and strong proof of her faith in Jesus, it expressed her love, gratitude, and devotion. Not only that, but little did she realize that her caring act would encourage Him as He faced the lonely, bitter journey to the cross. "As He went down into the darkness of His great trial, He carried with Him the memory of that deed, an earnest of the love that would be His from His redeemed ones forever."<sup>3</sup> Mary's act represents the heartfelt love that we will one day be able to express when we see Jesus face-to-face.

Although Mary's actions seemed out of place and strange, she is the one who shows us true love, devotion, and honor for Jesus. Her act would echo down throughout time, as Jesus stated in Mark 14:9: "Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her." The very fact that we are reflecting on this now is fulfillment of His prophecy. It also tells us that as we preach the gospel, we should take notice of the kind of love that Mary had for Jesus.

"It was Mary who *sat* at His feet and *learned* of Him. It was Mary who *poured* upon His head the precious anointing oil and *bathed* His feet with her tears. Mary *stood* beside the cross and *followed* Him to the sepulchre. Mary arrived first *at the tomb* after His resurrection. It was Mary who first *proclaimed* a risen Savior."<sup>4</sup> Mary expressed her love for her Savior at each of those moments because she *knew* Jesus personally, and nothing could hold back her adoration for her Lord.

### Do I love Jesus like this?

As I studied this story, an overwhelming thought struck me: *I want to love Jesus as Mary did! I want to give Him something extravagant to show that He means everything to me! But what could I possibly give to Him?* Then, I understood. The greatest gift I can ever offer Jesus is my love and my life in service to Him. He gave His life for me, and I can give mine for Him.

As a leader in ministry, perhaps you might reflect on whether the gift of your life, your love, and your service to God is as fresh as it once was.

It is easy to assume that we love Jesus, but at times we tend to get so busy in the things we do that everything can become routine. Our past commitment or love can grow dim even as we serve Him. There is no better time than today to kneel at His feet in adoration once again!

How much are you willing to sacrifice? How deep is your relationship with God? How much time do you spend in prayer and study, in service, in visiting? How many Bible studies do you have going on right now? Are you praying for and visiting your neighbors? Are you training your church for service and mission?

### Behold Him

To adore Jesus, we must behold Him. We might know the truth and have led others to God, yet perhaps it's been a while since we took time for ourselves to *really* behold Him. We cannot physically sit by Jesus' feet nor see His face, so the best way to behold Him is by meeting Him in His living Word, the Bible, as we ask for the Holy Spirit to help us to abide in Jesus. "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weakness. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8:26). We can behold Jesus today, and every day, if we make time for Him.

### Adore Him

When we behold Jesus and know of His love and forgiveness in our lives, adoration is our natural response. Here are some ways we can express our adoration to Him:

1. *Come close.* Jesus came close to Mary when He healed her of the seven demons, transforming her life forever. As a spiritual leader in your community, your life has been changed by Jesus, but are you close to Him right now? It is very easy to be like Simon—inviting Jesus to an event while forgetting to honor Him or show our deep love for Him. Your ministry will have so much more impact when you "come" to Jesus' feet before you "go" to reach others. "He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).
2. *Stay close.* Notice that Mary remained close to Jesus regardless of what others said about her. Is there someone who is making your ministry difficult right now? Remember that as you stay close to Jesus, your burdens will be lighter, and God will guide your steps. Like Mary, you can be

steadfast in your love for Jesus. “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love” (John 15:9).

3. *Give to Jesus.* Mary sacrificed so much to express her love for Jesus. As we work for Jesus, are we willing to give more for Him? Do we need to open our hands and stop holding on to something we have been keeping for ourselves, and give it all to Him?
4. *Be faithful.* Jesus is your first love. Whether you face hardship, persecution, or other difficulties in your role, do not lose heart and hide your faith or love for Jesus. Mary was the only one in that room who truly expressed her love for Jesus, and He defended her. He will also defend you as you face challenges. Pray that one day you will hear the words, “Well done, My good and faithful servant. . . . Enter into the joy of your lord” (Matt. 25:21). Be faithful, for He is always faithful to you.

One day very soon, we will see a small cloud in the eastern sky, and we will know that it's

Him—our Savior, Jesus—the very One whom we have lived for, loved, and honored. Can you picture that moment? It's simply too wonderful to imagine, but it's certain and true!

“And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17). Come now and adore Him. Let's also call others to come because, surely, He is coming quickly.



- 1 Scripture is from the New King James Version.
- 2 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), 560.
- 3 White, 560.
- 4 White, 568; emphasis added.

Share your thoughts on this article by writing to [ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org](mailto:ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org).

# COMING JULY 2025

## THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL DICTIONARY

A premier resource for pastors, teachers,  
and church members, covering biblical and theological  
topics from a Seventh-day Adventist perspective.



Visit our website

[www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org](http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org)

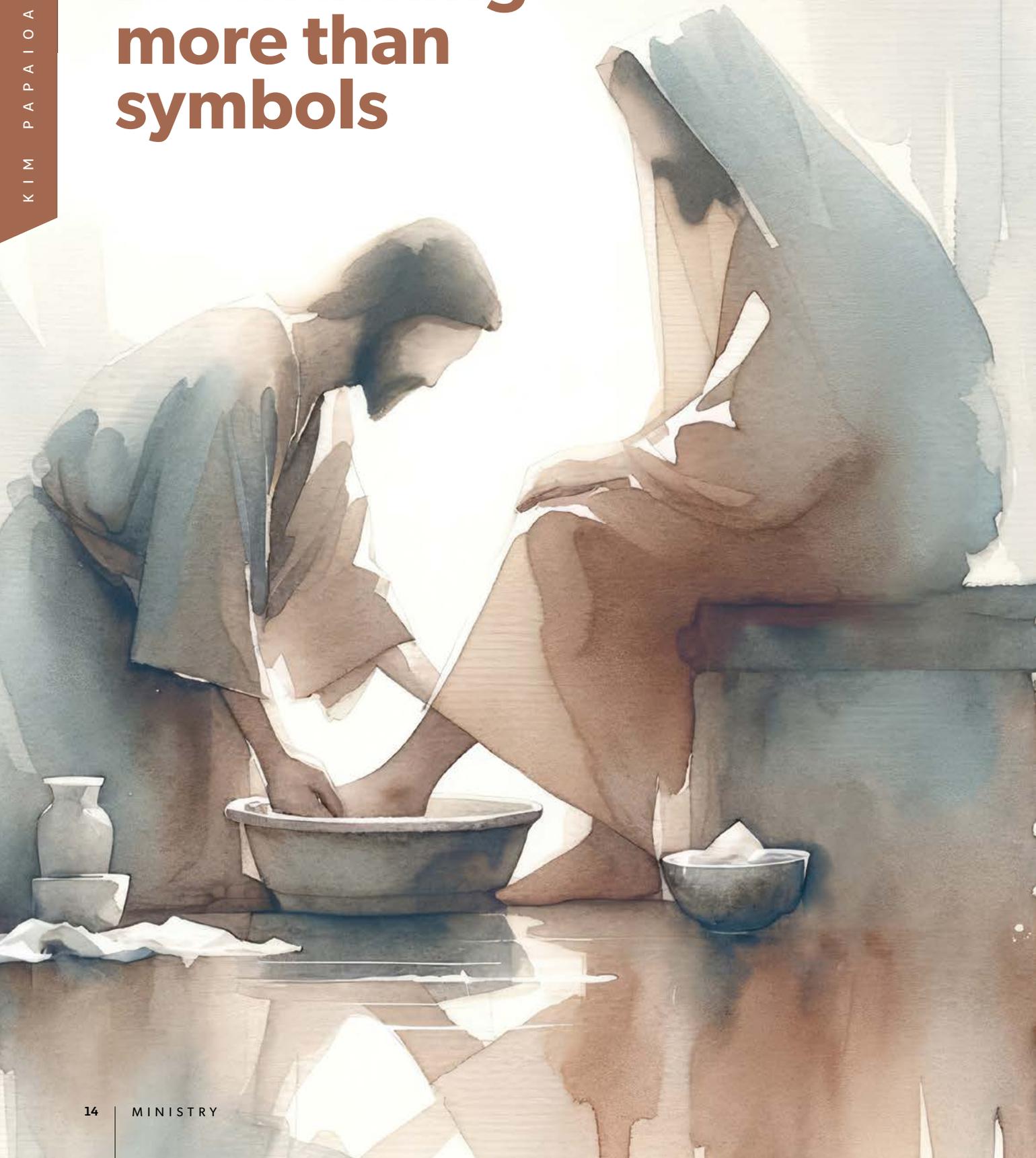
# Baptism and footwashing— more than symbols

Kim Papaioannou,  
PhD, pastors in  
Cyprus.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

KIM PAPAIOANNOU



**S**eventh-day Adventist theology defines both baptism and footwashing (“the ordinance of humility”) as symbols.<sup>1</sup> With symbols, the real essence is found not so much in the symbols themselves but in the realities they represent.

Symbolism is, without question, integral to both baptism and footwashing. But do they involve more than just symbolism? In the New Testament both ordinances signified cleansing from sin. They rendered a person clean. That dimension, acknowledged in the Adventist statement of faith, was much more pronounced than Christians today realize.

To gain a better understanding of the original context of both practices, we will (a) explore Jewish attitudes toward ritual purity in the first century, (b) examine certain New Testament incidents in the life of Jesus as well as (c) incidents in the early church in which ritual purity forms an important background, (d) and see how the New Testament language of baptism and footwashing highlight the cleansing function of both ordinances. We will close our study with some observations for our modern setting.

### Jewish attitudes toward purity

To twenty-first-century Christians, the idea of ritual purity sounds strange, though less so to those who have lived in Muslim countries. But to first-century Jews, it was paramount.

They attained ritual purity through three practices (a purity pyramid) that ensured a person was always clean. By far the most important was circumcision. Rabbis considered it the greatest sacrifice, one made in the flesh.<sup>2</sup> Thus, it rendered a person clean, while the uncircumcised were unclean.

#### The purity pyramid



Paul makes a veiled reference to this when he states: “We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners” (Gal. 2:15).<sup>3</sup> The phrase “by birth” in this verse is a translation from the Greek *phusei*,

which describes a person’s natural status (cf. KJV’s “by nature”) received through circumcision. Paul, therefore, contrasts Gentiles who are “sinners” (uncircumcised/unclean) and circumcised Jews, who no longer are. The apostle does not condone this perspective but simply acknowledges it. He then proceeds to offer an alternative, which we will explore below.

Next in importance were sacrifices. They were difficult to perform, especially for Jews living in the diaspora. They were usually offered during the designated pilgrimages because they required travel to Jerusalem.

The third level of the pyramid was ritual washings. The most important was the *mikveh*, immersing oneself in a pool of water. Baptism most likely developed from the *mikveh*.<sup>4</sup> Required of proselytes joining the Jewish faith, it was also available to Jews who wanted purification.

Smaller *mikvaoth* were enough for one person. Larger pools could accommodate more and often had two sets of steps, one leading down and one for going back up, to keep the purified ascending individuals from touching those descending who were still impure. The most famous *mikveh* was the Pool of Siloam, situated downhill from the temple, where pilgrims could purify themselves before ascending to the temple.<sup>5</sup>

The ritual washing of hands (*niptō* or *baptizō* in the Greek text) was common (Mark 7:1–4) because a ritually pure person might accidentally touch a defiled person or thing and thus incur defilement. Mark adds: “And there are many other traditions that they [Jews] observe, such as the washing [*baptismos*] of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches” (v. 4).

Circumcision provided statutory purity, while sacrifices and washings restored purity once compromised. Although the concept had a biblical foundation, Jewish tradition had greatly embellished it.

### Jewish purity laws and the ministry of Jesus

When Jesus offers to visit a centurion’s home to heal a servant, the official objects because he is “‘not worthy’ ” (Luke 7:6). Being a Roman, he was uncircumcised and therefore perceived as unclean. Aware of Jewish sensitivities (vv. 3–5), he seeks to prevent Jesus from entering his home.

In Luke 15:2 the Pharisees complain that Jesus “eats” (*sunesthiō*) with sinners. They were not concerned with moral defilement, however, but ritual. “Sinners” were the ones who did not follow

purity laws, and one therefore became defiled through such close social interaction.

When a sinful woman anoints Jesus' feet, Simon the Pharisee reasons: "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner" (Luke 7:39). Simon was not worried about immorality, because it cannot be transferred through touch. But ritual defilement could, or so the rabbis taught. Hence Simon's syllogism.

During Jesus' trial, Jews did not want to enter Pilate's Hall because doing so would result in ritual defilement and make them unable to partake of the Passover meal (John 18:28).

Showing little regard for such traditions, Jesus compared Pharisees to tombs—clean on the outside but full of defilement on the inside (Matt 23:27). Thus, He made it clear that inner, moral purity is much more important than outer, ritual purity.

### Jewish purity laws and the early church

The early church did not have the same theological clarity as Jesus did. When invited to Cornelius's house, Peter hesitates: "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation" (Acts 10:28). To convince him otherwise, God shows him a vision of a sheet with "all kinds of animals" (v. 12; emphasis added)—that is, both clean and unclean.

When told to eat, Peter replies: "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean" (v. 14). The word *unclean* refers to animals forbidden by God (Lev. 11:1–47). *Common* applies to animals that were clean according to Leviticus 11 but considered defiled or common by rabbinic thinking because of their proximity to something unclean.

"What God has made clean, do not call common" (v. 15), the angel explains. The being never tells Peter to eat unclean animals but only those that were clean, but which rabbinic tradition declared defiled, or common. The vision convinces Peter to visit Cornelius, realizing he will not be defiled by it.

After the incident, Jewish Christians confront Peter: "You went to uncircumcised men and ate [*sunesthiō*] with them" (Acts 11:3). It is the same accusation directed at Jesus when He ate with sinners.

Peter later explains: "[God] made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed [*katharizō*] their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9).

*Cleansed* is a ritual term. The Jewish Christians had complained that Peter had eaten with uncircumcised (i.e., unclean) persons. But Peter replies that God had "cleansed" the uncircumcised through faith.

The cleansing God provides is far greater than that of circumcision. It leads Peter to utter a most profound (for a Jew) statement: "We shall be saved in the same manner as they" (v. 11, NKJV). While Gentiles do not require the cleansing that circumcision was thought to offer, Jews did need the cleansing God provides through faith.

Paul and Peter face a similar accusation in Antioch. Despite Peter's noble response in the Cornelius incident, here he falters: "[Peter] was eating [*sunesthiō*] with the Gentiles; but when they [men from James] came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party" (Gal. 2:12). The "circumcision party" were Jewish Christians who still thought circumcision conferred ritual purity. The issue at Antioch was not *what* Peter and Paul were eating, as some mistakenly assume, but that the circumcised were eating with the uncircumcised. While Peter caved in under pressure, Paul stood firm.

Paul declares that believers are justified by faith (v. 16). The word *justified* has the same force as the word *cleansed*, the difference being that *justified* is a legal term, whereas *cleansed* is a ritual one. Like Peter in Acts 15:9–11, Paul emphasizes that true purity stems from faith in Jesus, not from circumcision, sacrifices, and ritual washings.

### Baptism and footwashing as purity ordinances

It is against this backdrop that the New Testament presents baptism and footwashing. When Ananias visits Paul immediately after his Damascus Road experience, he tells him: "Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name" (Acts 22:16). To the Ephesians Paul declares: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word" (Eph. 5:25, 26). Paul calls baptism "the washing of regeneration" (Titus 3:5). And Hebrews 10:22 summons us to approach God with "hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and . . . bodies washed with pure water."

The words *wash/washing*, *clean/cleansed*, and *pure* carry ritual connotations. The apostles used ritual language to develop the theology of baptism. Indeed, the Greek words *baptizō/*

*baptismos* are also used of ritual washings (e.g., Mark 7:3, 4). The apostles understood baptism as a ritual of purity.

More important are Jesus' words at the Last Supper. When He endeavors to wash Peter's feet, the disciple initially refuses. "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me," Jesus replies (John 13:8). It is extremely unlikely that He would exclude Peter for refusing an ordinance of humility. Much more is at stake here. The issue is purity. If Peter does not have his feet washed, he remains in defilement. It is such defilement that can bar him from Jesus' presence. Peter immediately agrees to the footwashing.

Jesus then makes the following amazing statement: "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean" (v. 10). Jesus here uses purity language. A person who has bathed—that is, has been baptized—has statutory purity, is clean—as clean as Jews thought a circumcised person was, and even cleaner. What is now needed is footwashing to restore purity in case it has been compromised. Sacrifices and ritual washings are no longer necessary because baptism and footwashing will render a person clean on an ongoing basis.

Jesus then adds: "And you are clean, but not every one of you" (v. 10). Though Judas was probably baptized (John 3:22; 4:1, 2) and had his feet washed, he was still not clean because his heart remained defiled. Purity ordinances are effective only in a person who believes, who has been purified in the heart.

## Cleansing

We saw that first-century Judaism was obsessed with ritual purity. It attained it by a series of rituals: circumcision, which provided statutory purity, and sacrifices and ritual washings that restored purity when circumstantial defilement occurred.

The early church struggled with this topic. On the one hand, Judaizing Christians wanted to continue with the rituals of purity. On the other hand, the apostles realized that true purity comes through the cleansing sacrifice of Jesus.

Both Jesus and the apostles understood baptism and footwashing as purity ordinances, external manifestations of an inner faith, to the point that Jesus warned Peter that he could be excluded from His presence if he refused footwashing. It is the inner faith together with the outward ordinances that declare a person clean before God (John 3:3, 5).

What are the implications for Christians today? Some Protestant churches do not practice baptism or see it as of secondary importance, as merely an external rite of little weight. What matters is faith. Most Christians do not practice footwashing. By contrast, the Adventist Church is correct in seeing both ordinances as integral to the life of a believer.

What we may need to do is rethink our terminology. Though both symbolize inner realities, they are more than symbols. They are ordinances of cleansing. A believing person who is baptized attains not only membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church but is formally declared clean in God's presence. And while we can ask for forgiveness every day in our prayers, and it is granted, footwashing functions as a formal event that declares us cleansed once again from any circumstantial defilement, again in the presence of God.

The two ordinances, external manifestations of an inner faith understood within their New Testament context, ensure our ongoing status as clean before God.



- 1 "Baptism is a symbol of our union with Christ." "What Adventists Believe About Baptism," Seventh-day Adventist Church, accessed April 28, 2025, <https://www.adventist.org/baptism/>. "[Footwashing is] symbolic of . . . the humble, servant-like example He set." "What Adventists Believe About the Belief and Practice of the Lord's Supper," Seventh-day Adventist Church, accessed April 28, 2025, <https://www.adventist.org/the-lords-supper/>.
- 2 E.g., *m. Ned.* 31; *t. Ber.* 6:18; *b. Sabb.* 135a; *b. Yebam* 71a; *Midrash Tanhuma Vayera* 2.5; Pirque R. El. 10.10; 29.2, 29.11, 12. Cf. Elias J. Bickerman, *Studies in Jewish and Christian History: A New Edition in English Including the God of the Maccabees* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2007), 1:4, 5.
- 3 Unless otherwise noted, Scripture is from the English Standard Version.
- 4 See, for example, Barry Fike, *Mikveh: The Relationship of Jewish Ritual Immersion and Christian Baptism* (Santa Ana, CA: Trilogy Christian Publishing, 2023).
- 5 There are two contenders for the Pool of Siloam in Jerusalem. Since discovered in the nineteenth century, the Pool of Silwan has been believed by many to be the Pool of Siloam. More recently, Birkat El-Hamra, being excavated since 2004, has been considered to be the true location. See Nathan Steinmeyer, "Rethinking the Pool of Siloam," *Biblical Archaeological Society*, January 15, 2024, <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/ancient-cultures/ancient-israel/rethinking-the-pool-of-siloam/>; and Lora Gilb, "Significant Progress in the Biblical Pool of Siloam Excavation," *Patterns of Evidence*, September 22, 2023, <https://www.patternsofevidence.com/2023/09/22/significant-progress-in-the-biblical-pool-of-siloam-excavation/>.

Share your thoughts on this article by writing to [ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org](mailto:ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org).

# “To destroy those who destroy the earth”:

## The meaning of Revelation 11:18

**T**he expression “to destroy those who destroy the earth”<sup>1</sup> in Revelation 11:18 has been popularly interpreted by Christian environmentalists in connection with ecological concerns and climate change. The assumption is that the text teaches that those who have abused and ruined the natural environment through exploitation are the object of God’s wrath and will thus be held accountable on Judgment Day. Does Revelation 11:18 actually address such ecological concerns?

While the environment is not the topic of this article, we must keep in mind that God Himself issued the mandate to care for the natural environment (Gen. 2:15). As humans are still under that divine directive, Christians in particular must set an example in environmental responsibilities. But, were environmental abuse and exploitation of the earth’s resources primarily on the mind of John, the

inspired author, when he wrote Revelation 11:18? This article seeks to answer that question.

### Resist the norm

As the French commentator Pierre Prigent observed, it is hard for Bible readers to resist imposing contemporary concerns on the biblical text instead of letting it speak for itself.<sup>2</sup> In endeavoring to establish the meaning intended by the passage, we must remember three things: First, any understanding must not be defined by current concerns and events but rather by biblical evidence. The Bible is its best interpreter.

Second, a responsible interpretation arises from the text (exegesis) rather than from our imposing the meaning upon the text (eisegesis).

Finally, it has been generally recognized that most of Revelation’s language derives from the Old Testament. It is the Old Testament background texts



that will give us insight into the meaning of the statement “to destroy those who destroy the earth.”

## The literary context of Revelation 11:18

Revelation 11:18 serves as the bridge between the historical (Rev. 1:9–11:17) and eschatological (Rev. 11:19–22:5) halves of the book. As such, it functions as what is known as the springboard text. A characteristic of this literary feature of Revelation is that the springboard text concludes the previous section, while at the same time it introduces the following section. Almost every major section of Revelation is organized in this way.

Thus, Revelation 11:18 is such a springboard text. A closer look at verse 18 shows that it outlines the events elaborated upon in the second half of the book:

- “The nations were enraged.” Such rage is the manifestation of the anger of Satan (Rev. 12:17) and his two allies, the sea beast and the earth beast, as they gather the world’s nations for the eschatological battle of Armageddon.
- “Your wrath came” points to God’s response to the rage of the nations with His own wrath in terms of the seven last plagues (cf. Rev. 15:1; 16:1).
- “The time for the dead to be judged” (ESV) points to Revelation 20:11–15, where the resurrected dead stand before God’s throne and

**Ranko Stefanovic, PhD**, is professor of New Testament at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

are being judged. This judgment includes both positive and negative aspects:

- The positive aspect of the judgment is stated as “rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great” (Rev. 11:18, ESV). Chapters 21 and 22 describe the actual reward.
- The author portrays the negative aspect as “to destroy those who destroy the earth” (Rev. 11:18). The annihilation of Satan and his associates is the final act in the great controversy between good and evil (Rev. 19:11–20:15).

It will be observed that the negative side of God’s judgment, the destruction of the destroyers of the earth as a pouring out of His eschatological wrath, is set in contrast to the rewarding of God’s servants portrayed in the final two chapters of the book.

## The meaning of “destroying the earth”

In announcing the eschatological judgment, John the Revelator uses a play on words: those who



destroy the earth will themselves be destroyed (Rev. 11:18). It reflects the principle of *lex talionis*, in which the punishment matches the crime committed (Rev. 18:6, 7).<sup>3</sup> The concept is rooted in the “an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth” pattern of the ancient Near Eastern judicial system (cf. Exod. 21:24). Revelation 11:18 mirrors this ancient norm.

The words translated as *destroy* both in Hebrew and Greek mean basically “to destroy,” although they are frequently translated in the sense of “to ruin” or “to corrupt” either physically or morally.<sup>4</sup> Thus, for instance, Psalm 14:1 speaks of a foolish man “destroying” (*shakhath*) himself by saying that there is no God. While the New Testament primarily uses the word for physical destruction (Luke 12:33; Rev. 8:9; 11:18), Paul employs it in 1 Timothy 6 with reference to the corruption of the mind (v. 5). In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul states that the destroyers of the temple of God will themselves be destroyed (v. 17). However, the Greek word in Revelation 11:18 (*diaphtheirō*) has an intensive force meaning “to destroy utterly/completely.”<sup>5</sup>

At this point, the question arises as to what sense the earth is being destroyed in Revelation 11:18. For one thing, it appears that the phrase “to destroy those who destroy the earth” derives from two Old Testament texts. It appears that John the revelator patterned the expression after the Flood account in Genesis 6:11–13 as they appear both in the Hebrew (vv. 11–13) and Septuagint (vv. 12–14, LXX) texts. Thus, both the Hebrew and Greek (Septuagint) of Genesis 6 employ the same play on words:

Now the earth was corrupt [destroyed] in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt [destroyed]; for humanity had corrupted [destroyed] its way upon the earth.

Then God said to Noah: “The end of all humanity has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of people; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth” (vv. 11–13).

The parallels in the wording between Genesis 6 and Revelation 11 are obvious. Genesis 6 specifies that the antediluvians were destroying/corrupting the earth by filling it with “violence” (in the Hebrew) or “iniquity” (in the Septuagint). Their iniquity is further explicated in terms that “the wickedness of mankind was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually” so that the Lord

“was sorry that He had made mankind on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart” (vv. 5, 6).

Thus, Genesis 6:11–13 gives us the clue to the meaning of the destruction of the earth referred to in Revelation 11:18. It appears that by drawing the phrasing from the Genesis pre-Flood account, John wanted to show that the end-time destroyers will be destroying the earth in the manner of the antediluvians who were filling the earth with iniquity and violence. Just as the antediluvian destroyers had to be destroyed with the earth, so will be the fate of the earth’s end-time destroyers.

## The end-time destroyers of the earth

Who are the end-time destroyers of the earth referred to in Revelation 11:18? Revelation 19:2 shows that this refers to the end-time Babylon—“the great prostitute who was corrupting [destroying] the earth with her sexual immorality”—in alliance with those who have sided with the end-time apostate religious system (Rev. 17:2). Here the reference to the end-time Babylon as the destroyer of the earth is patterned after Jeremiah’s announcement of the judgment of ancient Babylon: “Behold, I am against you, the destroying mountain that destroys the whole earth” (Jer. 51:25 [28:25, LXX]; author’s translation). Thus, it is evident that Jeremiah’s prophecy about ancient Babylon as the destroyer of the whole earth is an obvious source from which the author of Revelation has drawn the image of the end-time Babylon as the destroyer of the earth in Revelation 19:2.<sup>6</sup>

Babylon in Revelation is the end-time ungodly system comprising the dragon (Rev. 12:17), the sea beast (Rev. 13:1–8), and the land beast (vv. 12–17), the latter entity later referred to as the false prophet (Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10). This Satanic triumvirate displays the arrogance and oppression of the historical Babylon portrayed in the Old Testament prophetic books. The end-time Babylon is said to have filled the earth with sins that have “piled up as high as heaven” and that “God has remembered her offenses” (Rev. 18:5), which mirrors the activities of the antediluvians in Genesis 6:11–13.

Like the historical Babylon (Jer. 51:25), this end-time ungodly system is described in Revelation as the destroyers of the earth (cf. Rev. 19:2), where the author uses the “earth” as a metonymy for “the people of the earth.”<sup>7</sup> In alliance with the world’s governing secular and political leaders (Rev. 17:2; 18:3, 9, 23), this end-time ungodly system is presented as the aggressor that unjustly exploits people on the earth for personal benefit and gain,<sup>8</sup> thus destroying the lives of many (cf.

Rev. 18:3, 9–19). Just as God held ancient Babylon responsible for the crimes against His people, so the end-time Babylon is portrayed as the adversary of God’s people and is guilty of shedding the blood of Christ’s witnesses (Rev. 17:6; 18:24).

This end-time ungodly system will be judged as much as ancient Babylon was to be judged (Jer. 51:25). The book of Revelation shows that the judgment of the end-time Babylon and rebellious humanity is to take place at the end of history (Rev. 19:19–21) and will conclude after the millennium (Rev. 20:10).

## Great controversy ends

A careful analysis of Revelation 11:18 shows that the phrase “to destroy those who destroy the earth” does not refer to environmental degradation and exploitation by modern technology, a frequent contemporary view. Rather, it points to the activities of the end-time Babylon, which, in the manner of the antediluvians described in Genesis 6, fills the earth with sins that will have “accumulated unto heaven” so that “God has remembered her unrighteous acts” (Rev. 18:5, author’s translation). This end-time system bears all the characteristics of its ancient counterpart Babylon that Jeremiah labeled as the destroyer of the earth (Jer. 51:25).

The destroyers of the earth—the end-time Babylon and those who associated themselves with it—have led people away from God (Rev. 19:2).

Revelation presents them as powerful ungodly forces (Rev. 17:2) that contribute to widespread corruption, violence, and oppression (as well as environmental devastation by their wicked actions) rather than a literal physical annihilation of the earth, *earth* here serving as a metonymy. They are the object of God’s wrath and, as such, are themselves to be destroyed with the earth. Thus, the punishment they receive fits the crimes they committed. The judgment on this end-time Satanic system will mark the conclusion of the great controversy between the forces of good and evil.



- 1 Unless otherwise noted, Scripture is from the New American Standard Version.
- 2 Pierre Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009), 364.
- 3 David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 52B (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 646.
- 4 Walter Bauer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 239.
- 5 Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 646.
- 6 Craig S. Keener, *Revelation*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 306.
- 7 Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 645.
- 8 Keener, *Revelation*, 309.

Share your thoughts on this article by writing to [ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org](mailto:ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org).



## LETTERS

Excellent article on pastoral visitations (Marty Thurber, “The Visiting Pastor,” February 2025). I resonated with it so well. I, too, have benefited immensely from visiting my church members. Even though balancing family and visitations can be a challenge, it was well worth the effort to see church members grow because of my pastoral visitations. Thank you for the article.

—David Beaudoin, retired pastor, Alberta, Canada

I write to appreciate the insights brought out by Igor Lorencin (“The Three Angels’ Messages For Our Time”) in the August 2023 issue. How I wish each of us as ministers of the gospel took time to internalize every statement in this article! Personally, I picked out two gems from among many:

- 1 “Today’s economy will reach its end, and many will be caught by surprise.”
- 2 “People today, including

Christians, are in danger of worshiping their own materialistic and consumeristic lifestyle, thus becoming part of the Babylonian mentality.”

These ideas were enough for me to keep vigilance as we minister for the Lord, as we check our intents and purposes, and as we prepare ourselves for our Master to come back.

—Wanzalabana Misaki Maate, Kiruli District, Rwenzori Field, Uganda

# Understanding the constants in Genesis 1:

A framework for Bible study



**Daniel Jeon, MDiv**, is an associate pastor of the Collegedale Korean Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ooltewah, Tennessee, United States.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

**A**s children in church, we were taught to memorize the days of Creation and what God created on each day. Though this approach helps us recall facts, it often falls short in helping us grasp the deeper essence of Genesis 1. The problem is not with the details of Creation but with how we approach the story. We tend to focus on the variables—what changes happened on each day of Creation—but this accumulation of more information does not help us to understand the Bible as a whole.

In every discipline, understanding starts with constants—what does not change—because constants provide the foundation and framework for interpreting variables. This principle holds true for the Bible as well. The constants in Scripture are found in its repetitions. The first and best example is Genesis 1, where repeated phrases form the framework for understanding the Creation narrative. These repetitions reveal deeper truths about God's character and His relationship with creation.

In Genesis 1, four key phrases are repeated:

- “And God said”
- “And it was so”
- “God saw that it was good”
- “And there was evening and there was morning”

These repeated phrases create a rhythm that reflects the order and intentionality of God's creative process. They provide insight into the structure of the story and teach us about the constants of God's word, His character, and His purpose.

### **The power of God's word**

The phrase “And God said” introduces every act of creation. This repetition highlights that God creates through the power of His word. Unlike human words, which often fail to bring about change, God's words are creative and authoritative. When God speaks, things happen. Each element of creation was brought into existence with purpose and intention, underscoring the certainty and power of God's word.

The repetition of “And God said” also establishes God's word as the foundation of reality. Everything created was spoken into being by God. His commands define reality, and His word is trustworthy and dependable. This repeated phrase reminds us that God's word is the ultimate constant in a world of variables.

### **The certainty of God's word**

Following each command in Genesis 1, the phrase “And it was so” confirms that, without exception, what God spoke came to pass. This repetition assures us of the reliability of God's word. Unlike human promises, which are often broken due to unforeseen circumstances, God's word is always fulfilled.

This repetition teaches us to trust that when God speaks, what He says will happen the way He says it. His words are not subject to the limitations of human experience. The consistency of “And it was so” highlights that God's actions perfectly align with His words. His promises are not hopeful suggestions but unshakable guarantees.

### **The goodness of God's creation**

At each stage of Creation, the phrase “God saw that it was good” is repeated. This repetition signifies that everything God created was perfect and complete, lacking nothing. It also reflects God's satisfaction with His creation, where every element was in perfect harmony, free of flaws or imperfections.

This phrase emphasizes the goodness not only of creation but also of God's nature. He is a God of excellence who does all things well. The repetition underscores that everything God creates aligns perfectly with His will and purpose.

### **The intended eternity**

The final repeated phrase, “And there was evening and there was morning,” marks the end of each day of Creation. This repetition signifies the rhythm and order of creation as God intended it. The cycle of evenings and mornings was

meant to continue forever, reflecting God's eternal purpose.

### The attack on the constants in Genesis 3

The repetitions in Genesis 1 establish God's word as trustworthy, powerful, and good. However, in Genesis 3, the serpent's temptation of Eve directly undermines these constants.

The serpent begins by questioning, " 'Did God really say . . . ?' " (Gen. 3:1, NIV). This attack on "And God said" plants doubt on the trustworthiness of God's commands. By introducing uncertainty, the serpent disrupts the established pattern of trusting in God's word.

Next, the serpent contradicts God's command, saying, " 'You will not surely die' " (Gen. 3:4, NKJV). This statement challenges the certainty of "And it was so." Adam and Eve, who had always trusted that God's word would come to pass, begin to question that now.

Finally, the serpent challenges the goodness of God's creation, suggesting that God is withholding something better. He convinces Eve that the world God declared "good" is not truly perfect, and that eating the forbidden fruit will bring greater knowledge and fulfillment. This undermines the repetition of "God saw that it was good."

Through this interaction, the serpent causes Adam and Eve to doubt God's word, trust in themselves, and believe that God's creation is somehow insufficient. Sin enters the world, and death brings an end to the rhythm of creation that was meant to go on forever.

### John 3:16 and the restoration of trust

The consequences of Adam and Eve's distrust in Genesis 3 are profound, bringing death and destruction into the world. However, the solution is found in God's ultimate promise in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one



## RESOURCES

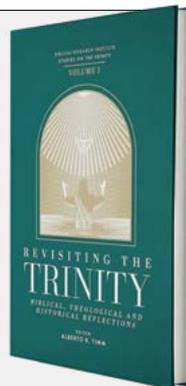
# Revisiting the Trinity: Biblical, Theological and Historical Reflections

vol. 1 of the Biblical Research Institute Studies on the Trinity, Alberto R. Timm, ed., Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2025.

**T**he topic of the Trinity continues to exercise the minds of pastors, theologians, administrators, and church members. Trinitarian discussions often include a carefully constructed argument, fixed ideas, and deep-seated emotions. Since no single human is sufficient to fully understand and explain God, this 527-page volume of 14 chapters from 10 scholars makes a great resource for those seeking to untangle contradictory claims.

### A general picture

Chapters include perspectives from the Old and New Testaments, textual criticism, historical



**David Tasker, PhD**, is a retired dean and professor residing in Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia.



theology, philosophical tradition, Adventist and Catholic views, early Adventist doctrinal statements, a comparison of early Adventist and modern anti-Trinitarians, biblical coherency, and how this all affects personal salvation. The volume is comprehensive, covering biblical studies, exegesis, historical roots of the controversies with their philosophical underpinnings, a careful study of the foundation for Adventism's early anti-Trinity sentiments, and Ellen White's developing contribution to the discussion. Arguments that question the veracity of her documents are evaluated, with relevant original extracts exhibited and discussed.

### Non-Trinitarian ideas

Anti-Trinitarians assert that the Seventh-day Adventist position on the Trinity mirrors the early Christian position that distanced itself from the Old Testament. Instead, the early Christians relied on the Greek philosophers who developed the

and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (NIV).

John 3:16 is the culmination of God's plan to restore the trust broken in Genesis 3. The verse echoes the repetitions in Genesis 1. Just as God declared creation "good," John 3:16 affirms that God's love for the world remains unchanged. Despite sin, God's intention is still for our good.

Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, is the ultimate proof that God's words are reliable. The repetition of "And God said" is fulfilled in Jesus, who demonstrates that God's actions perfectly align with His promises. Believing in Jesus restores the trust broken in Genesis 3, reconnecting humanity with the unchanging rhythm of God's word.

### The structure of the Old Testament

The repetitions in Genesis 1 connect directly to the structure of the Old Testament, which reflects the constants of God's words and actions:

1. *The Torah.* The Torah reveals what God promised, serving as the foundation of the Old Testament (Ps. 119:11, 105; Deut. 4:2; 30:14; Josh. 1:8; Exod. 24:7; Neh. 8:8; Ps. 19:7; Isa. 40:8; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17).
2. *The historical books.* The historical books show how God's words were fulfilled through His actions. These books reveal God's faithfulness, demonstrating that everything He said in the Torah came to pass (Josh. 21:45; 1 Kings 8:56; 2 Kings 17:13; 2 Chron. 6:10; Ezra 1:1; Neh. 9:8; Judg. 2:1; Ruth 4:14; 1 Sam. 12:22; 2 Sam. 7:28).
3. *The wisdom books.* The wisdom books capture humanity's realization that God's word is reliable. Often, this realization comes as a surprise because people initially doubted His faithfulness (Job 23:12; Pss. 1:2; 19:8; 33:4; 119:89, 90, 97, 160; Prov. 3:1, 2; 30:5; Eccl. 12:13).
4. *The prophets.* The prophets point back to the Torah and historical books, reminding God's

idea of the Father "generating" the Son, and the Holy Spirit (an influence) "proceeding" from the Godhead in an eternal process to maintain God's timelessness. This construct leaves no room for the divine Son to begin life on earth as a baby; become a boy, a teenager, and then a man; suffer and die; and rise again. In stark contrast, careful Scriptural analysis clearly demonstrates Jesus is fully divine and worthy to be our Savior.

Patristic ideas of the Trinity developed into the theology of "strict classical theism," which many early Adventist pioneers espoused. Joseph Bates and James White were from the Christian Connection, a non-Trinitarian theistic movement. J. N. Loughborough, R. F. Cottrell, J. N. Andrews, and Uriah Smith also had non-Trinitarian ideas. Both early Adventists and modern anti-Trinitarians rely on patristic ideas to justify their rejection of the Trinity.

### The triune God

By contrast, Seventh-day Adventists use only the Bible to describe the nature of the triune God. For example, the Angel of the Lord that appears to Hagar, Abraham, Jacob, Moses (to lead the people in the Exodus), Balaam, Joshua, Samson's father, and Manoah is recognized as God. He is described in terms of divinity, calls Himself God, is worshiped, and speaks with divine authority.

Furthermore, a survey of the biblical references in the New Testament reveals that there are 75 passages where Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are mentioned within a range of one to five verses.

Additionally, the personhood of the Holy Spirit is revealed in Scripture as having personality, intelligence, emotions, and power. He instructs, guides, moves a person to speak or act, and can be grieved, and in His name we are baptized. None of these attributes can be applied to a mere vapor, passing cloud, or "influence."

### Below the surface

I have been both enriched and gratified by the opportunity to read this book. I am enriched because I now have an alternative to the shallow answers I gave to the complex questions of previous parishioners and former students. I am gratified that at last there is a resource that digs below the surface of where most debates on the Trinity take place. The 60 pages of annotated bibliography in the appendixes provide additional resources covering the past 100 years, both within and beyond the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Who would benefit from this book? Pastors, Bible teachers, scholars, and well-read lay people will benefit from it greatly. For those afraid of the more technical parts, there is plenty of scope throughout the book to answer your questions. 

people of His promises and showing how He has fulfilled them (Isa. 40:8; 55:11; Jer. 1:12; 31:33; Ezek. 12:28; Amos 3:7; Mic. 6:8; Zech. 1:6; Mal. 3:6).

Together, these sections form a consistent narrative: God's words and actions, and humanity's responses. The Old Testament demonstrates that God always does what He says and that His word is trustworthy.

### The New Testament in light of the Old

The New Testament continues the narrative of God's faithfulness. Through Jesus, we see the ultimate fulfillment of God's promises from the Old Testament. His life, death, and resurrection prove that God's word is reliable and His love for humanity is unwavering.

### Refocusing on the constants

By focusing on the repetitions in Genesis 1, we can unlock the entire message of the Bible. This approach shifts Bible study from a search for novelty to an acknowledgment of God's character and trustworthiness. The Bible is not about God waiting to see how well we perform but about Him showing us over and over that He is faithful, He loves us, and His word is reliable.

As pastors, we must guide our members to refocus their attention from the endless search for variables to building on the solid foundation of constants. When we ground their study in unchanging truths—such as the repetitions in Genesis 1—they can approach Scripture with clarity and confidence, navigating its complexities with a secure understanding of God's character.

This shift in focus will transform how we and our members read the Bible and how we live our faith. By emphasizing the constants, we enable our communities to rediscover the beauty, depth, and reliability of God's word, firmly rooted in His unchanging love and faithfulness. 📖

Share your thoughts on this article by writing to [ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org](mailto:ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org).



## Learn of Me

As a missionary, I have been walking with the Lord by faith for the past 14 years, fully depending on Him for everything: provision, direction, and inspiration. These past years have been such a blessing to learn God's simple and yet amazing ways and see His powerful hand every step of the way.

God spoke to me through a verse that I have read so many times before but recently got a clearer glimpse of its significance. Matthew 11:29 says, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

The words *learn of me* spoke to me as I had never encountered before. Here, I see that Jesus is trying to teach us something about Himself and how He does things. He says, "For I am meek and lowly."

### In their shoes

One of my favorite classes in my college years was Financial Management. We did not have facts to memorize. Instead, we evaluated case studies of businesses that had gone bankrupt. Our assignment was to identify the main reasons why these businesses failed and come up with our best solution for how each enterprise could have been saved.

It would not have worked to offer a solution based on our own personality, characteristics, culture, or tradition. Our solution had to be based on the personality, characteristics, culture, and tradition of the CEO. Our teacher told us that we were just acting as consultants, not the owners of the business. Not following the instructions, most students found solutions based on their preferences rather than the CEO's, so they failed the class.

### The underdogs

This kind of thinking is also true when it comes to God's work. We try to do God's work based on our preferences

**Gem Castor** is a lay evangelist and prayer coordinator for ASAP Ministries, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.



rather than the CEO's. Many examples in the Bible show that God's way of doing things is through His meek and lowly nature. List your favorite Bible characters, and ask why or how God used them in such a powerful way; the answer will always be by meekness and lowliness.

As I have observed, God always used the underdogs. Take, for example, David, Joseph, Gideon, Paul, the 12 disciples, and Mary Magdalene. He uses top dogs as well, but He must convert them to underdogs first—like Moses. Moses was top in everything. He was the best Egypt could offer, yet God retrained him until he became the man that Numbers 12:3 describes as “very meek.”

Also consider God's awesome miracles in the Bible, such as the deliverance from Egypt, the Red Sea crossing, and the feeding of the five thousand. The manner and instruments God used were of a meek, humble, and lowly nature.

Second Chronicles 7:14 is where we see God's heart cry, “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves.” Even before we pray, He desires that we humble our hearts before Him.

### **Participation multiplied**

As I speak in different churches almost every week, I see a huge difference in the churches when they take God at His word and seek Him in humility of heart, being meek and lowly before Him. Let me share a recent story from a church in California, United States.

Amid very challenging surroundings, this church experienced how powerful it is to lean on God in prayer. When I was invited to speak there, they started praying intentionally right away for their heart preparation. The pastor told me that he was praying for just one person to join the prayer session every day besides his wife. To his surprise 8 to 10 individuals were faithfully present at 5:00 A.M. for 24 days before I came to speak.

One of the burdens of the pastor for his church was attendance at their Sabbath vespers program. It had been running for a year and a half but was attended by only 6 to 8 members. Before they started praying as a church, he told

his wife that he planned to cancel vespers and relaunch it at the beginning of the year. But he noticed something amazing the first weekend in their 24 days of prayer. That Sabbath vespers was attended by 26 people. The following week, 32 attended, and 36 the next! The pastor told me, “We didn't do anything new during vespers; we just started praying as a church, and God brought people in.”

Each person who faithfully showed up for the 24 days of prayer had a testimony to share of how God sustained and empowered them and

**List your favorite Bible characters, and ask why or how God used them in such a powerful way; the answer will always be by meekness and lowliness.**

gave them peace. One was a mother who prayed that God would give her the wisdom to study the Bible with her eight-year-old daughter. God answered that prayer! The eight-year-old loved the Bible so much, and when she misbehaved, her mom would tell her to straighten up or else there would be no Bible study that night. Her daughter responded right away because she did not want to miss studying the Bible with Mom!

### **His work done His way**

God's ways are of a meek and lowly nature. It might not seem grand, sophisticated, or innovative, but His ways are the ways that work. This is His mission, and His work must be done His way. Let us continue to learn of Him. 🙏



## 16,000 new believers across Inter-American Division

HUIMANGUILLO, TABASCO, MEXICO

More than 16,000 new converts joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church during baptismal ceremonies across the Inter-American Division (IAD) territory, thanks to intense united evangelistic efforts conducted by local pastors, elders, laypeople, and small groups. This special event marked the second time ordained local church elders were authorized across the 25 major church regions, or unions, within the IAD to officiate baptisms.

**Josney Rodríguez**, IAD Ministerial secretary and the main organizer of the event, explained that the territory-wide event aimed to strengthen missionary work across the region and recognize the vital role church elders play in assisting pastors to shepherd more than 24,000 local congregations in the IAD.

Rodríguez emphasized that in the IAD the ministry of church elders is crucial because pastors often oversee multiple churches—sometimes up to 30 congregations—making the work of church elders indispensable.

Local field administrators worked diligently to authorize hundreds of church elders in preparation for this grand baptismal event. Rodríguez, who oversees the ongoing training and certification of more than 40,000 church elders across



A young church elder smiles after baptizing a young Pathfinder.

Photo: Daniel Galindo

the IAD, clarified that according to the *Church Manual*, ordained elders can officiate certain duties, including baby dedications, anointing the sick, and baptisms, when authorized or when a minister is unavailable.

During the morning Sabbath message, **Abner De los Santos**, a vice president of the General Conference, reassured the thousands gathered that God has entrusted each of them—and the new believers—with the task of sharing the gospel and making disciples.

IAD president **Elie Henry** encouraged listeners and viewers online to stay focused on purpose and mission, committing to educate, preach, and serve in the communities where they live. [Libna Stevens, Nigel Coke, Bernardo Medina, Stevens' Rosado, *Inter-American Division News*]

## Renewing the call in Albania

TIRANA, ALBANIA

February was a time of encouragement and spiritual renewal for Albanian Mission pastors and their families. An online event with the theme Our Stubbornness and God's Faithfulness was led by **Radenko and Ana Džuver**, academic deans at Adriatic Union College in Croatia. The program focused on challenges faced by those in

ministry—and met by the support and unwavering grace of God.

Pastoral work often requires continuous giving, making this initiative a valuable opportunity for pastors and their families to be spiritually refreshed. Aware of this challenge, **Delmar Reis**, president of the Albanian Mission, reflected, "This week of spiritual emphasis was designed to provide a special time for prayer and Bible study, strengthening relationships within our pastoral team to serve with excellence."

For the **Thomollari** pastoral family, the most meaningful aspect of the week was the opportunity to pray together and for one another. “Participating in the Week of Prayer for pastoral families was a deeply enriching experience. . . . The most meaningful part for us was the opportunity to pray for one another, fostering a sense of unity, support, and spiritual connection.”

The program also strengthened the bonds among Albania’s pastoral families. “As we shared, we found meaningful insights for our own lives and ministry,” Radenko reflected.

In a ministry that demands deep commitment, this event allowed participants to pause, reflect, and experience the very message of grace and faithfulness they share with others. [Sarah Henke, Tirana, Albania, TED News]

## Pastoral marriages and ministry strengthened in Laos seminar

VANG VIENG, LAOS

**F**or the first time the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Laos hosted a marriage enrichment seminar for pastors and their spouses, an important step in strengthening family life and church leadership in a region where Christianity remains a minority faith.

growth. The seminar was led by **Phouangmala Kongsengphengphet**, Family Ministries director for the Southeastern Asia Union Mission.

Interactive sessions emphasized emotional connection, spiritual intimacy, and practical tools for maintaining strong relationships amid the demands of ministry.

“This initiative not only supports our leaders but also equips them to better serve the growing needs of families in our churches and communities,” said **Keophetsamon Somphou**, president of the Laos Region. Somphou also led a vow renewal ceremony during the event, allowing couples to recommit to their marriage and ministry journey.

The day concluded with a group outing, which gave couples space to reflect, connect, and enjoy the natural beauty of the surrounding landscape. This was an intentional reminder of the importance of rest and togetherness in a busy life of service, leaders said.

With a membership of just under 3,400 in a nation of over 7 million, the Adventist Church in Laos continues to grow through a holistic mission approach. Located within the 10/40 Window, a region home to the majority of the world’s unreached people, the church emphasizes leadership development, family support, and practical discipleship as keys to long-term impact. By caring for those who care for

others, the church is laying a stronger foundation for spiritual growth and community transformation. [Phouangmala Kongsengphengphet, Laos Adventist Mission, and ANN] 



A pastoral couple participates in a prayer and bonding activity.

The one-day event, themed Love Takes Time, was held in Vang Vieng. Sixteen pastoral couples gathered following their annual ministry training to invest in their marriages and spiritual

Photo: Phouangmala Kongsengphengphet



## A pastor's path to success: Visitation

**F**requently, young ministers ask, “What is needed to be a successful pastor?” Success is an attractive word; in every field, the pursuit of success is real, at least for those who want to make an impact in their careers. In the realm of ministry, alongside the basics for this calling, the old saying that “the home-going pastor makes a church-going people”<sup>1</sup> has been passed down to pastors for many years. But is this advice still relevant, true, or practical? Should pastors conduct regular personal visits with their members?

A 2016 Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary survey reported that 81 percent of pastors think that pastoral visits are best conducted in their members' homes.<sup>2</sup> Yet still some ministers, recognizing that people are overly busy in our world today, assert, “My church members don't want to be visited.”

### Divine example

I started visiting early in my ministry, and it has been a real blessing for me. During the worship service, I count the people and notice who is missing. Then, I call, text, and visit people. I served at a church in South Carolina and dedicated two days weekly for visitation—Tuesdays and Thursdays. If you want to know everything about your church and determine the best sermon topic that your congregation needs to hear, visit them. I know it sounds very simple, but believe me, it works.

I am inspired by Scripture: “Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, ‘Where are you?’” (Gen. 3:9, NASB). God initiated the visit! I am also inspired by what Ellen White wrote: “When a minister has presented the gospel message from the pulpit, his work is only begun. There is personal work for him to do. He should visit the people in their homes, talking and praying with them in earnestness and humility. Some families will never be reached by the truths of God's word unless the stewards of His grace enter their homes and point them to the higher way.”<sup>3</sup>

### Relational strength

In many churches, members think pastors visit only when something is wrong. So, during the church service, announce that you would like to start visitation in your church in order to get to know them.

**Victor Jaeger, PhD**, is director of Hispanic ministries and church planting and an associate director of the Ministerial Department for the Carolina Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Charlotte, North Carolina, United States.



There are goals to consider when doing visitation:

1. Cement relationships between pastor and congregant.
2. Achieve a spiritual moment by asking, “How is your walk with Jesus?”
3. Humble yourself. Ask, “How can I, as a pastor, improve and be more helpful in your spiritual journey?”
4. End your visit with a meaningful moment in prayer. Pray for them and their personal needs.

When visiting, pay attention to the length of the visit. Do not make it longer than is needed.

### Church growth

Amazingly, church health and attendance growth will happen. Soon members will say, “This pastor visits because he cares for us.” When asked, “What does the pastor do?” several members at my church would speak up and say, “Our pastor visits.”

Clergyman Owen Sweeney states, “In the area of pastoral visitation, there are at least three types of priests: those who do it, those who say they do it, and those who don't.”<sup>4</sup> The results and benefits of visitation are that you get to know your members better and that you can tailor the sermons to the needs of the local church. You do not have to guess; visitation supplies you with real and relevant information for effective ministry.

If you want to see your church thriving and moving forward, implement visitation. Church members may not remember what you preached during the few years of your tenure, but they will remember that you visited them and made them feel special and part of God's family.



- 1 Armin W. Schuetze and Irwin J. Habeck, *The Shepherd Under Christ* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 1989), 142.
- 2 Marques J. Nelson, “Overcoming Obstacles to Member Visitation in the 21st Century” (MDiv thesis, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, March 2016), <http://essays.wisluthsem.org:8080/handle/123456789/4235>.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1915), 187.
- 4 Owen Sweeney, “Pastoral Visitation Today,” *The Furrow* 23, no. 1 (January 1972): 7–14.

JESUS101.TV

# STORMS *and* DESERTS

HOW GOD REVEALS HIMSELF TO US  
IN THE MIDST OF OUR CRISIS

## FREE BOOK OFFER

- TITLE: "STORMS AND DESERTS"
- DOWNLOAD THE JESUS 101 APP
- NAVIGATE TO "BOOK OFFERS"
- ENTER THE CODE: HOPE2025
- YOU'LL RECEIVE THIS FREE BOOK
- OFFER VALID IN USA & CANADA



WE ALL STRUGGLE WITH MAJOR QUESTIONS AND PAIN. YET GOD SHOWS UP IN THE MIDST OF OUR CONFUSION AS OUR SAVIOR AND ALSO AS THE VERY-PRESENT HELP IN TROUBLE. "STORMS AND DESERTS" IS A NEW BOOK BY DR. TALBOT THAT REVISITS BIBLICAL STORIES OF TEMPESTS AND WILDERNESSES, THAT CREATED SPIRITUAL TURMOIL FOR THOSE WHO WENT THROUGH THEM. AND YET IN THE MIDST OF THOSE CRISES, GOD REVEALED HIMSELF IN UNPRECEDENTED WAYS.

# Jesus 101

IN 2026, JESUS 101 WILL BE RELEASING A NEW VIDEO SERIES THAT ACCOMPANIES EACH CHAPTER OF THIS BOOK. PASTOR ARTEAGA WILL JOIN DR. TALBOT AS THEY ANALYZE HOW GOD REVEALS HIMSELF AMID LIFE'S MOST CHALLENGING TIMES.



# Ministry®

1350 N. KINGS ROAD  
NAMPA, ID 83687-3193

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

## CALLING ADVENTIST PASTORS FROM NORTH AMERICA

# INSPIRE THE NEXT GENERATION.

BRING YOUR YOUNG ADULTS ON A SHAREHIM TRIP.

N° 036428

PASTORS & SPOUSES: **FREE**  
OTHERS: **\$499** plus \$499 from church  
INCLUDES: **Flights, Hotels, & Meals**

Space is limited. Sign up at [sharehim.org](http://sharehim.org)



shareHim

- Build long-term friendships with your young adults
- Awaken a passion for sharing the gospel
- Develop tomorrow's ministry leaders

Open to NAD pastors bringing two or more young adults (age 18-35) from their districts

**"I'm thrilled to see the young adults I brought taking active leadership roles in our church."**

—Pr. Ramon Verduzco, Nevada-Utah Conf.

**"Sharing the gospel in Peru inspired one of my young adults to commit to full-time ministry."**

—Pr. James Kwon, Manitoba-Saskatchewan Conf.

### Upcoming Trips

#### 2025

**June 4-16** Georgetown, Guyana

**June 11-23** Liberia, Costa Rica

**Jul 23-Aug 4** Chitré, Panama

**Jul 23-Aug 4** Jinotepe, Nicaragua

**Jul 30-Aug 11** Danlí, Honduras

**Jul 30-Aug 11** Santa Ana, El Salvador

**Jul 30-Aug 11** Tonicapán, Guatemala

**Aug 6-18** Bogotá, Colombia

**Aug 6-18** La Vega, Dominican Republic

**Aug 13-25** Cancún, Mexico

**Aug 13-25** Nağua, Dominican Republic

**Aug 20-Sep 1** Belize City, Belize

**Sep 10-22** Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

**Sep 17-29** São Paulo, Brazil

**Sep 24-Oct 6** Santa Cruz, Bolivia

**Oct 8-20** Pucallpa, Peru

**Oct 15-27** Viña del Mar, Chile

**Oct 22-Nov 3** Quito, Ecuador

**Oct 29-Nov 10** Holguín, Cuba