



Messenger

Journal of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
in the United Kingdom and Ireland

8 May 2020 • Volume 125 • 10

The humility escalator

What God knows

What everybody in
the universe knows

What everybody on
earth could know

What everybody
on earth knows

‘When I look at the night sky and
see the work of your fingers –
the moon and the stars you set
in place –
what are mere mortals that you
should think about them,
human beings that you should
care for them?’

Psalm 8:3, 4, NLT

What
I know



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'God will take care of each of us'



by **Ted N. C. Wilson**,
General Conference President

I'm glad to make contact with you, our wonderful church members around the world. God has protected and cared for His church, and by God's grace you have been protected this week. Be of good courage in the Lord. We will get through this, and you'll have opportunities to interact with people, using appropriate social distancing.

Maybe a church member has a specific need and you could help them. You can at least phone them and share words of encouragement.

We will get through this by God's grace, and meanwhile you will be helping proclaim the three angels' messages when you point people to God's Word and the good news that Jesus is coming soon.

I want to share a beautiful portion of Psalm 34 (NKJV), beginning at verse 4. 'I sought the LORD, and He heard me.' You can believe that God will hear you – always. Sometimes He doesn't respond immediately, but He hears and will respond in an appropriate way. The psalmist continues, '... and delivered me from all my fears.' You and those around you may fear the future, but God can use you to help others be grounded in the One who can take away that fear – Jesus Christ.

'They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed.' You'd be surprised – when the Holy Spirit fills your heart, you will look radiant! 'This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard him,

and saved him out of all his troubles.' If we put our hands in the hands of the Lord, He will take us through all the challenges we face.

Verse 7: 'The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him,' – or have great respect and love for Him – 'and delivers them.' What an opportunity to be part of God's last-day movement as He protects and delivers us!

Here are some beautiful words from Ellen White's *Christian Service*, p. 110, before we pray:

'Often the Christian life is beset with dangers, and duty seems hard to perform. The imagination pictures impending ruin before, and bondage and death behind. Yet the voice of God speaks clearly, Go forward. Let us obey the command, even though our sight cannot penetrate the darkness. The obstacles that hinder our progress will never disappear before a halting, doubting spirit. Those who defer obedience till every uncertainty disappears, and there remains no risk of failure or defeat, will never obey. Faith looks beyond the difficulties, and lays hold of the unseen, even Omnipotence, therefore it cannot be baffled. Faith is the clasping of the hand of Christ in every emergency.'

May you clasp the hand of Christ today as you share God's last-day message through the Holy Spirit's power.

Let's pray.

Father in heaven, please help us as we place our hands in Yours, as we clasp Your hand by faith and understand that You will deliver us; You will be our strength, our refuge. Thank You for hearing us, and bless Your church worldwide as it reaches out to others during this pandemic and beyond. Thank You for the promise of Your soon coming. In Jesus' name, Amen.

This is an abridged version of Elder Wilson's 1 May message to church members around the world. To see his message in full, go to <https://www.adventistreview.org/church-news/story14798-god-will-take-care-of-each-of-us>. Used with permission.

Remember this?

Is a promise to put GOD FIRST for the good times only?

Faithful stewardship - more than a merely optional Christian grace.

Messenger
Journal of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
in the United Kingdom and Ireland
24 January 2020 • Volume 125 • 2

GOD FIRST

I PROMISE:

- To set apart the first moments of each day with God.
- To improve my relationships through love, forgiveness and reconciliation.
- To practise one new health principle for the potential of living life at its best, as Christ promised (John 10:10).
- To ask the Holy Spirit to guide me to those in my daily life who are open to hearing about my journey of faith in Christ, and His gift of grace for them.
- To prepare for, and enjoy, Sabbath.
- To faithfully return God's tithe: 10% of whatever income He first gives to me.
- To give a percentage (___%) of my income as a regular offering.

With God's help: _____ Date: _____

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David Neal, Editor

Letter to the church in Sardis

Wake up, church!
Revelation 3:1-6

Let's face a reality: the church is asleep!¹ 'That's such an unfair and serious charge,' comes the reply as quick as a flash. 'How can this be true when each edition of *MESSENGER* reports 'new life in Christ', story after story of love and compassion in the name of Christ, sacrificial faithfulness, and continual outreach and evangelism? Not only that, but how can you make such a judgement? You don't know what our church is like where we are! Before you start pointing the finger, don't you need to take a good look at yourself? 'So true,' is my reply. My previous editorial ended with the personal reflective question, as a result of reading Jesus' letter to the church in Sardis: 'I'm not a pretend Christian, am I?' The church with the great reputation was asleep!

The Sardis church had started out so well and with such vision. A growing church full of vitality, creativity and excellent worship services, and well connected with the neighbourhood – it was the place to be. In addition, it was a 'free-from' church: not least, free from theological argument! Members appeared to be Christ-followers, but Jesus (One who walks among the lampstands, representing the churches) saw right through their outward appearance. Spiritually, they were dead (Rev. 3:1)!

What to do? This is not the time or place to affirm, but if the Sardis church is listening to the Spirit it will respond to the five requests of the Spirit of Christ:

Wake up! (verse 2)

Is it true in your local church that 20 percent of members do 80 percent of the work? Such was the reality in Sardis. It was a good place to be, even the 'in' place to be – but ask members to put God first in their lives, get involved, and grow in Christ? Well, that just created discomfort. Ever heard something similar today? 'Don't push me too hard, Pastor; you know my challenges. . . .' And for the pastor to make a call to holy living, 'Well, that's what we pay him to do. I will take it seriously, but I wouldn't want to be seen as a fanatic.' *Of course not*, the pastor muses, *but mightn't a global health emergency disturb our comfort?*



The Greek gymnasium of the ancient city of Sardis

Strengthen what remains (verse 2 continued)

Jesus sees that not all will wake up, because the second action is for the church to gather together a remnant. Call together the committed ones: those who feel a calling to watch, a calling to pray, and a commitment to serve (Matthew 26:41). Is it not the case that remnant people are expectant people, with one ear finely tuned for the Holy Spirit to lead and direct? And with the other ear they are equally tuned in to serve their fellow humanity with the love of the Christ living and working through them. Whatever gifts and talents they have, they use to wake up a dying church – and build it up for His glory.

Remember (verse 3)

'We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.'² Those familiar words of Ellen White encourage us. When the church is timid and afraid – and asleep – it is because it has forgotten its roots. Remember the story? Christ came, Christ lived, Christ died, Christ has risen, and Christ will come again! This in-between time can at times be agony, for both Him and us: but we are not left alone, and it is the very Spirit of Christ who is able to wake up the church out of its sleep. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9). Christ is both Lord of the church and the Life-giver. Our community of faith at times seems far too risk-averse to allow the Holy Spirit to take control of our work. Sometimes we work and act as if there is no Spirit hovering over us – having gone ahead of our work, softening hearts and minds.

Obey (verse 3 continued)

In the very definition of the term 'obey', there is the call to listen. We live in an era of low trust. Until very recently, 'experts' were out of fashion and could not be trusted. Western society had had enough of them, and somehow had become incredibly distrustful of authority. Is it possible that we're not so confident as we once were about the authority of Scripture over our lives? Perhaps we need

to admit that there's a bit of the Frank Sinatra 'I'll do it my way' theology in all of us. How quickly times can change, for at this moment in time it is the experts who are saving our lives. It is only in following their advice that we keep safe.

Repent

It's a term that seems to have gone out of fashion, but I hear very little these days about the 'born again' experience as described by John in his gospel (John 3). Rabbi Nicodemus comes to Jesus seeking good conversation. He has heard about Jesus, and is

thrilled to meet Him at last. There is good conversation alright, but not in the direction Nicodemus expected it to go. *Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God*' (John 3:3, ESV). The experienced rabbi was used to being in control, but this new teacher stirred him to the core. *To be 'born of the Spirit' – what is that all about?* he pondered. We are not told what happened to Nicodemus, but the call to turn around from the direction of a life where it's all about me, to a life of new management under the Lordship of Christ, is what it means to be born again. For the church in Sardis to wake up, it needed the 'born again' experience.

'The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life' (Rev. 3:5, ESV). There is such beauty in those words. Do we create the white garments? Do we have to purchase them? Are they given to us reluctantly? Not at all: they're provided generously and freely as a gift through the death and sacrifice of Christ, whose 'righteousness' covers ours. What more could we wish for?

'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches' (Rev. 3:6, ESV).

Wake up, church!

¹R. T. Kendall, 'How the church fell asleep and why it needs to wake up' – <https://www.premierchristianity.com/Past-Issues/2017/April-2017/RT-Kendall-How-the-church-fell-asleep-and-why-it-needs-to-wake-up>

²Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White, p. 204

As the COVID-19 global health crisis continues, two nurses on the front line share their upfront and personal experience.

Care in a crisis

by Moira Surridge



Moira Surridge on a shift break: one of two in a 12.5-hour day.

Social distancing, or lockdown, started on Monday 23 March 2020, and for most of us that was the end of life as we knew it. At 7.30am on the following day I started my first 12.5-hour shift in Watford General ICU, and I was terrified!

Before I knew it, I was looking after three critically ill ventilated patients, with help from non-ICU-trained staff. Talk about a baptism of fire!

Under 'normal' circumstances, a nurse would only ever care for one ventilated patient at a time, but these were as far from normal times as I have ever experienced in my 40 years of nursing!

Wearing the precious PPEs that you all read about daily, I found day one to be really frightening. I knew beyond any doubt that I was going into the thick of a COVID-19 hotspot. If I got it wrong, I could die. Was I ready for that? How was I going to tell my family, my mum and dad,

that I had offered to work in the thick of this nightmare?

Be under no illusion: COVID-19 is a nightmare. It brings devastation to people's lives, it is not fussy who it nestles in, and it kills quickly and certainly. In all my years I have never witnessed anything like it. The culmination of all this for me was Friday 17 April, when one of the nurses from our own hospital peacefully passed away. The sadness for us all was raw, palpable, and will never be forgotten.

Over the weeks we have sadly lost many patients to COVID-19, but not one patient has died on their own, despite the fact that family members often could not be present. I held the hands of two patients as they gently breathed their last, speaking of memories of their loved ones and happier times. It was absolutely heart-wrenching and unforgettable, but important precious moments were shared.

So why am I now writing this article after weeks of exhaustion, tears, and nights when all I dream about are the patients I have been looking after all day and wish I could forget? Because I have never felt so uplifted by moments of pure kindness and love that others have shown me.

Every homecoming I have been greeted with newly baked goodies, fresh fruit salad, cups of tea, and acceptance that all I want to do is have a shower and go to bed! The kind words of encouragement on shift from my beautiful colleagues have meant so much – when it all seems too hard to do, someone somehow always offers a supportive word, smile, or gesture of understanding. My wonderful family, without whom I would never have got through shift after shift, have sent supportive texts, cards, flowers and goody-bags.

Writing this has brought back sad moments and terrifying feelings, but most of all I now know how precious kind words, family, and friends are, and how precious life is. Never forget the wonderful gift of life that God has given us, and the hope we all have in a future with Him.

My faith has been put to the test

Interview with Alex Cushney



David Neal:

Alex, you currently serve in the 'Red Zone', as it is called, at the

Accident and Emergency unit of a hospital in West Wales. *MESSENGER* readers have just read Moira Surridge's report from Watford General Hospital in Hertfordshire: what's it like to work at your hospital in West Wales?

Alex Cushney: The population demographics for this part of Wales are such that we tend to see many elderly people in their eighties and nineties. I often find myself talking with relatives about the best course of treatment we can provide for the patient, which has become more significant recently. Since social distancing became the norm, when the patient

enters our ward, it is as if a husband or wife, daughter or son, is handing their loved one over to you to provide close love and care for the patient in their place.

DN: Those must be extremely painful moments for the family. When you get up in a morning to face a new day on the ward, what are your feelings?

AC: I do find it a challenge sometimes. I try to keep a sense of perspective. I talk a lot with family and friends off duty, and I fall back on prayer. I tend not to be too concerned about my own safety, and the team I work with are very nice people.

DN: The moment you get to work, you put on the personal protective equipment (PPE). How do you find it?

AC: Wearing the masks for the amount of time I do causes blisters. At any one time we will have three to four patients in the Red Zone. For sure, it's not the same as working in a hospital in London or Manchester, but we still work with extreme caution: not just by what we wear, but also by how we practise. When members of the public heard we were short of PPE, young children made facial shields and sent them in to us.

DN: How are you coping spiritually?

AC: My faith has been put to the test. I try to remember the promises in Scripture, and the lines of hymns we sing. That song line, 'Because He lives, I can face tomorrow' – that's literally true in one sense. I do have a calm assurance that God is with me, but I do feel that life for all of us will never be the same again.

'The plans of the Lord stand firm forever'

Shortly after the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the New York Twin Towers, the then General Conference President, Dr Jan Paulsen, addressed a meeting of the General Conference Committee on 25 September. He described the events a fortnight before as being 'burned into your mind'. Although the world currently faces a different form of terror, his response then is of interest to us now: a teachable moment, perhaps. No matter what crisis, the church remains expectant! Below we share just a brief excerpt of his statement, as reported in the 27 September 2001 edition of the *Adventist Review*. Dr Paulsen began his address by reading from Psalm 33. (Ed.)

'As a prophetic movement, with a sense of mission and purpose, we cannot have come to this point in time and history without reflecting on what this all says to us. . . . Most of us are probably uneasy; wary about what we will meet tomorrow. Do we go back to yesterday or do we face another day of terror – or the Lord's return? We believe that while nations make plans, God will unmake them and replace them with His own. God is the One who owns the future and who decides finally how it shall

look. God will end it all, at His chosen hour; but until then we must attend to our personal readiness, and we must attend to the mission He has given us to accomplish.

'Surely (these events) are a wake-up call for us individually and for us as leaders of a church with plans for missions. Whatever is considered safe and secure – buildings or stocks on the market – are in reality fragile, and not the most important. I must be able to know for myself, personally, that knowing Christ is quite enough.

Yes, I will be responsible about all my material goods; I will be a responsible steward. But I can do without the goods I have collected. I cannot do without Christ. That is how I would like to face the end-time. . . .

'The diet which the news networks have served us these past two weeks has been of one kind. It is almost hypnotising to watch. What we have seen is very painful and very unsettling. Fear and questions about what will come next are constantly pressing in on us and our

communities. That is the way the world is, and we are part of the suffering world. But we are also Adventists, and we long for Him to come back and close this chapter on human suffering. And to that end we live our lives, and make our choices, and engage in His mission.'

Dr Paulsen concluded his address with the words of Jude 24 & 25.

To see the full report, go to: <https://www.adventistreview.org/archives/2001-1539/news.html>.



What phrase sums us up?

When I think of the Salvation Army, I know exactly what their mission is, as it is summed up in three words: 'Belief in Action'. And when I look at the work of Oxfam, I also know what their mission is, as you can see from the picture. If you could sum up the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, what three words, or three lines, would you use? Replies to editor@stanboroughpress.org.uk.

Returning tithes and giving offerings under lockdown

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'I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your faithfulness and generosity in supporting the church during this very difficult time. Please rest assured, the coronavirus will pass. May the Lord bless you and keep you safe.' Emmanuel Osei, President

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'In seeking to fulfil the commission of Matthew 28, it is my desire that each congregation within the North England Conference should be an integral part of its community. Our congregations should be the place that our communities look to in times of storm, in times of crisis, in times of happiness and in times of celebration. Our congregations should be the place where refuge can be found, because we have demonstrated to them that all it takes to bring calm to a situation is a word from the Master, who never sleeps. Thank you for your continued faithfulness.' Richard Jackson, President

Irish Mission

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'This crisis has taken us by surprise, but not God; He's still in control, and, at this time, may we all continue to entrust our lives and means into His care. Thank you all for your faithfulness and support in ensuring that the Church continues to fulfil her mission and carry out her ministry of care, nurture, and love. Blessings and good health to you all.' Dan Serb, President

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'Thank you to all our members for making God first a way of life for all times and in all circumstances. I think for all of us this is a non-negotiable and irreducible minimum of our Christian faith. He is faithful and remains our "Jehovah Jireh" – the Lord our Provider.' Paul Tompkins, President

Welsh Mission

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'Often, it is in times of great anguish that we are able to see more clearly the goodness of God. Let us continue to be faithful and true, for we are confident that even though we walk through the darkest valley, God is with us; He will never leave us and never forsake us.' Emanuel Bran, President

What we know – and what we don't know! The humility escalator

One of my first classes at Newbold was called 'Introduction to Theology'. The textbook was small and cost just 60 pence, and could be seen by some as a poor foundation book for such an eminent-sounding class. In reality, its purpose was to help the young and enthusiastic ministerial student learn to think. The title of the book, by Kenneth G. Howkins, was *The Challenge of Religious Studies*.¹ Here's the starting point: *'It is well to remember . . . that if the mind is open wide enough a great deal of rubbish will be tipped into it! The New Testament warns us of the danger of having a childish mind "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men" (Ephesians 4:14, RSV). The student needs an open mind towards those things which he does not know, and a readiness to grapple with problems. But he does not need to empty his mind of those matters about which he has a sure knowledge. He should not jettison previous knowledge but, with intellectual humility, be willing to consider other views' (page 5).*

Thirty-eight years later, I continue to hold to the values in this statement, often at times in incredible tension with each other. I find it amazing that some things I once believed as 'black and white', sorted, resolved and settled all those years ago have now become grey areas. And I'm not talking here just about life issues, but also about how I understand Scripture and apply it to my life. Some of

those things I wasn't so sure about, the grey areas, have now become firm, unshakable convictions from which I'd probably find it difficult to be moved. In one sense that's the reality of Christian growth and understanding, combined with life experience.

To say I've been keenly interested in the current Sabbath School lesson studies – 'How to Interpret Scripture' – is an understatement. We cannot be studying a more critical issue for our community of faith. The reason is clear: how we understand Scripture determines how we understand our mission! But, taking a step back from who we are, from our identity, there's an even more basic question. It is one we are still trying to understand, one we are all compelled to ask of ourselves and each other: 'What is your God really like?'

And that brings me to the front cover and the humility escalator. I'm indebted to the ministry of the Pine Knoll Sabbath School class, led at this moment in time by John Paulien. A few weeks ago, at the end of a lesson, he credited our cover illustration to his former professor at the Adventist Seminary, Andrews University. It certainly got me thinking. What do I really know about God? From the perspective of Paul, in his letter to the church in Corinth, 'For now we see in a mirror dimly' – not as much as perhaps I once thought (1 Corinthians 13:12, ESV) . . . and yet in his letter to the Romans the same Paul uses a different tone: 'And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good' (Romans 8:28, ESV, emphasis

supplied). Here we have an early follower of Christ holding together the tension between conviction and humility, both under the umbrella of faith. It is no different for us.

As the church continues its mission in the twenty-first century, it does so with tremendous numerical growth, but at times without corresponding spiritual growth. To put it another way, is it possible that the 'the church has grown wide, but not deep'? How can we ever hope to experience deep growth in Christ if we have a superficial understanding of Scripture?

As we study together, let's pray for four specific outcomes:

- That we'll have open hearts and open minds to grow in our understanding of how the Lord has revealed Himself to us, both through general and special revelation.
- That we will truly listen to each other and try to understand each other's perspective.
- That studying together will bring unity in Christ, and strengthen our commitment to His mission.
- *'And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God' (Ephesians 3:17-19, NIV).*

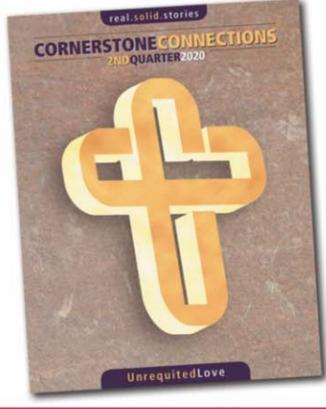
EDITOR

¹Kenneth G. Howkins, *The Challenge of Religious Studies* (London: Tyndale Press, 1992)



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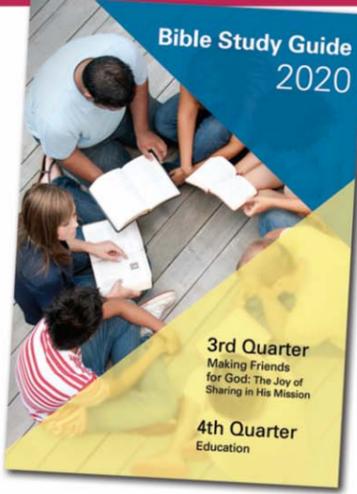
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God's character and the last generation

by Andrea Luxton

In 2018, Pacific Press invited Adventist theologians to review the relationship between the role of God's salvation work and the human response in the context of the reality of His Second Coming. Their collected essays are published in the book *God's Character and the Last Generation*, edited by Moskala Peckham. While this article was written as the preface to the book, the matters it raises, as Dr Luxton says, are critically important for us all.

In London's Trafalgar Square, a statue of the famous naval officer Horatio Nelson towers above visitors to the square and reminds them of the former power of the British Empire as ruler of the seas. Three of the four additional plinths in that same square honour kings and other military leaders; together they stand for all that is best in human power and abilities. For a while, however, one column was left out of this display of authority. This plinth was reserved instead for a variety of different sculptured figures and faces. In 1999, it housed a statue

that seemed out of place in this celebration of human might. And the size – only six feet tall, the height of a regular man – was dwarfed by the huge statues that surrounded it. The statue, *Ecce Homo* (Behold the Man), caused considerable debate; some arguing it was inappropriately placed. Others were delighted to see Jesus Christ represented this way in this place. The humble among the proud; the One who could bring salvation through humility among those who needed that salvation but didn't know it. The Servant among the self-proclaimed powerful. The true Saviour among the apparent saviours.

In the twenty-first century, the place of faith, of a life lived in the power of the Gospel, has become too often denigrated as a life of weakness or irrelevance. Luke 18 asks us the question, 'When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?' (Verse 8, NIV.) A faith that is persistent in its longing for the Second Coming of Christ, a faith that has power not because of the person who exercises it, but because of the One whose sacrifice validates that faith.

The collection of essays focuses on that very intersection: the reality of Christ's coming back to earth, and the role He plays in the lives of those of us who live in this generation. Appropriately, the essays are written by theologians of the Seventh-day Adventist Church who are passionate about the Gospel as expressed through the theology of the Church. It is also appropriate because these themes are so central to the theology and eschatology of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We are uniquely positioned to speak of these things.

We are uniquely positioned, first because as a church we do believe unequivocally in the saving power of Christ's sacrifice through faith alone. The five-hundredth-year celebration of the Reformation, 2017, was an appropriate time to remember how our history aligns with those ideals. Our faith is not in human power, but in the power of Christ: that is, the moral power of His love. Yet linked to this Adventist conviction of the centrality of the Gospel and our justification through the blood of Christ is also our unique commitment to the imminence of the Second Coming that will change the alignment of authority and power forever. That is

when we will finally understand unequivocally that true authority and power reside squarely in the character of God. So it is out of a commitment to the intersection of these two important beliefs (justification by faith and the reality of the Second Coming) that this book speaks to its readers, inviting a renewed commitment to faith through Christ alone and to an active belief in the Second Coming of Christ.

This intersection, of course, does not come without challenges and questions. Throughout the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, not unlike that of the wider Christian church, debates have emerged regarding how exactly our eschatology affects the balance between salvation through faith alone and the importance of how we live. How does Christ's role as Mediator deepen our understanding of the Saviour's role in salvation? Can we ever move beyond our life of sinfulness to live a pure life as Christ lived? Is that even a goal to seek?

As a church, we do have high standards for living a life of holiness. While justification by faith is the basis of salvation, that knowledge of salvation and a continually deepening relationship with our Saviour should change the way we live. Yet that never leaves behind our reliance on the sacrifice of Christ and the reality that our holiness is His holiness. To do otherwise not only leads to an over-emphasis on our right actions, with an ensuing discouragement at the reality of our humanness, but it also leads us too easily in the path of judging others, whom we might perceive as holding back the Second Coming due to not living more perfectly. Both are dangerous positions because they shift our

focus away from Christ and in effect repeat the danger of Trafalgar Square – reliance on the human rather than the divine.

As an educator, I have seen too often how a personal conviction of the need to live a pure life results in promises that are made with fervour but are not kept because of the human condition. As the reality of human frailty becomes clear, the joy of the Gospel and the anticipation of the Second Coming are replaced with personal discouragement and a fear of the judgement. In the meantime, the beauty of the Gospel is veiled. A commitment to the total efficacy of the Saviour does not mean, as is so well expressed in Romans 6, that we can do whatever we want, and expect at the same time to experience God's grace. It does mean that we can face the darkness of the human condition in the confidence that God is in ultimate control.

I was asked the other day whether the events we see around us at this point in history lead me to any particular conviction about the Second Coming of Christ. My answer was that I continue to believe that Jesus will come in His time, and that our responsibility is to continue to keep our eyes focused on Him, not on the power of this world, and to show His character to others as He shines through our lives. I see the future in the reality of God's moral power, not our human efforts; and that is where my confidence lies.

Are these issues important? Critically so. This book and its writers seek to remind us of the importance of keeping our focus on our

faith and our mission at this important time of history. It reminds us of the dangers of over-determining the future that is God's, or of focusing too much on the human rather than the divine. In doing so, this book firmly places salvation at the cross and sees our actions as a reflection of the character of God, which we are reminded of daily. These theologians are also individuals of faith. They speak from a range of perspectives, but all focus on the same message – the one reiterated at the beginning of Hebrews 12: 'And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart' (verses 1-3, NIV).

Dr Andrea Luxton is the president of Andrews University.

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If you would like to dig deeper about the role of our faith and mission in this time of earth's history, *God's Character and the Last Generation* is well worth the read, for personal use or in small study groups. Edited by Moskala Peckham, it is available for purchase at the following link:

<https://lifesourcebookshop.co.uk/product/gods-character-and-the-last-generation/>



Ready now

by Pastor Ron Edwards

‘Getting ready’, ‘getting ready’, forever ‘getting ready’: how frequently does one hear these words fall from the lips of devout and sincere Adventists, whether in exhortation or in prayer.

‘Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow Creeps in this petty pace from day to day To the last syllable of recorded time, . . .’¹

‘Getting ready’: do we apprehend what we actually imply by the use of this expression? The implication, obviously, is that we are not yet ready, though ever striving to be so, to meet the Saviour when He returns in glory. When, then, can the individual using this expression expect to *be* ready? When, how, and by what extraordinary means not now available, does one anticipate achieving that desirable objective: when does one expect to be ready? For they apparently deem it possible; or they would not hope for it, strive after it, pray for it, or exhort others to it. What uncertainty, in place of assurance, does the use of this expression cultivate within the soul: what spiritual destitution! Does this not, entirely needlessly, discourage spiritually struggling souls? Is not this the cause that so many leave our ranks? They give up in despair.

‘Getting ready’: what hope have we, honestly, of achieving tomorrow what we have not attained today? When can we be sure, without a doubt, that we have achieved the level of sanctity required? This is no gospel! Our works never can be either adequate or complete. Salvation by works is impossible; we are not our own saviour. To attempt to save oneself is inevitably frustrating and disappointing, ending not in victory, but too often in defeat – a delusion, a fantasy, a phantom, a mirage, drawing us ever deeper into the parched and arid desert of despair.

Down that by-path we shall encounter no salvation: for our very best endeavours can never match up to the standard of holiness that God requires; none of us is all that we ought to be, all the time; even our best will not satisfy either God or ourselves. If we truly saw ourselves as God sees us, there never would come a moment when we could say, ‘I have done all that can be expected of me.’ Never will there come a time in our experience when there is not room for spiritual growth and improvement.

When Isaiah was granted that vision of the utter holiness and majesty of God, he cried out, ‘Woe is me! For I am undone . . .’ (Isaiah 6:5, KJV). Would any of us dare to presume to

claim to be more holy than the prophet Isaiah? That, surely, would be open to question! May God indeed give every one of us such a vision of Himself, so that we too, like the publican in Jesus’ parable, praying in the temple, shall be compelled to cry out, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner.’ For Jesus concluded, ‘I tell you, this man went down to his house justified’ (Luke 18:13, 14, KJV).

Let us come straight to the point: *getting ready* is salvation by works; *being ready* is salvation by grace. *Being ready* is the only salvation on offer by God. *Being ready* is the reliance of the penitent soul entirely and alone upon the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The work of atonement is accomplished and complete (John 19:30). Nothing can be added to it; nor can anything be revoked. Being ready is the acceptance, assurance and experience of the adequacy of Christ’s atoning sacrifice (2 Corinthians 5:17-21). Being ready, *ready now*, this very moment, is the only spiritual condition that will avail when Jesus returns. ‘They . . . have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb’ (Revelation 7:14, KJV).

‘Getting ready’? No! Being ready, *ready now*: nothing less is requisite; nothing more is possible; nothing else will suffice. *We can* be ready now; *we should* be ready now; *we must* be ready now. We can hope for no more; and God will be satisfied with no less: for our faith

is in the Saviour, not in ourselves.

Holiness is expected of me, and I can never relax my endeavours in that direction: but I know that God accepts me not because of my attainment, but because of Christ’s atoning sacrifice alone. For how do we qualify for God’s grace? By our need (Romans 3:23, 24): and we all stand in need of God’s grace incessantly (Romans 5:12), and shall do until ‘this corruptible’ puts on ‘incorruption’, and ‘this mortal’ puts on ‘immortality’ (1 Corinthians 15:53, KJV).

When you and I knock at the gates of pearl, may we not presume to present our own credentials – they shall be totally inadequate, and we would be instantly turned away. Presenting the credentials of the Saviour, we shall be instantly admitted.

Ready now shall be the only valid entry permit into God’s presence when Jesus comes – or we would be like the foolish virgins of Jesus’ parable, whose lamps were empty, and they did not know it, when the Bridegroom finally arrived; and they knocked and called in vain to be admitted into the wedding celebrations with empty lamps. Is our lamp filled with the light and life-giving oil of the Gospel (Romans 1:16, 17)? If not now, when? Shall we not this moment, in place of the ‘rags’ of our own righteousness (Isaiah 64:6), avail ourselves of the spotless ‘robe’ of Christ’s righteousness (Isaiah 61:10)?

‘Getting ready’ is a vain hope, unnecessary deprivation, uncalled-for delay! We must *be* ready, now, this very instant, *in Christ!*

The question simply is, ‘What is not *now* available for our salvation and acceptance by God?’ *That* rests upon Christ’s sacrifice alone; and our response comes *today* (Hebrews 3:15; 2 Corinthians 6:2). The ‘latter rain’ surely is to empower the *ministry* of the Gospel message; the fact that it hasn’t yet arrived is not a reason to defer our personal acceptance of the Gospel, and doesn’t diminish the present power of the Gospel to transform the individual.

¹William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (Act V, scene v)



Ever ready

‘As never before, Christians need a faith: a faith that keeps a steady gaze on the coming Christ beyond the crisis.

‘Christ, and not the crisis, should occupy their minds. For not so much **what** is coming as **who** is coming should occupy the mind.’

(Norman Gulley, *Christ Is Coming*, p. 24)

The positive effect of the Christian hope

‘If we say this truly, “Come, Lord Jesus”, undoubtedly it will have an influence on our lives. It will stir up graces in our souls; as faith, to lay hold upon it; hope to expect it; love to embrace it; patience to endure anything for it; heavenly mindedness, to fit and prepare for it. . . . Always live in expectation of the Lord Jesus “coming in the clouds”, with oil in [our] lamps, and “prepared for His coming”.’

Richard Sibbes, Puritan preacher, quoted in *The Advent Hope in Scripture and History*, p. 147

Three appearances, or comings, of Christ are set forth in Scripture:

- ‘His appearing in the flesh, when He lived a holy life on earth’
- ‘His appearing in . . . the lives of believers by the Gospel’
- ‘His appearing in glory at the last day’

Christopher Love, quoted in *The Advent Hope in Scripture and History*, p. 146

To discover more about the difference between ‘getting ready’ and ‘being ready’, watch the following sermon series, *EverReady*, by Pastor Randy Roberts, lead pastor of the Loma Linda University church. It was preached during their 2016 camp meeting weekend. What he shares will lead to greater confidence and trust in the Lord for these times.

EverReady 1

‘Eschatological Caffeine’
<https://subsplash.com/lluc/media/-mi/+dff34ae>

EverReady 2

‘Caught in the Act!’
<https://subsplash.com/lluc/media/-mi/+ecb7d6d>

EverReady 3

‘When the Bridegroom’s Late’
<https://subsplash.com/lluc/media/-mi/+55b4217>

EverReady 4

‘The Audit’
<https://subsplash.com/lluc/media/-mi/+3902f0e>

EverReady 5

‘When the Final Gavel Falls’
<https://subsplash.com/lluc/media/-mi/+0357037>

Series index

<https://subsplash.com/lluc/media/-ms/+ef3ac84>

Stay, spray, play, pray

Justice in a pandemic

by Catherine Anthony Boldeau

The onslaught of COVID-19 in the UK has highlighted the excessive inequality in the UK between those who lack access to the basics in life and those who have more than they can use. The 14 April *Independent* reported the story of Tom, a 54-year-old London construction worker who’d lost his job due to an injury: he’d been sleeping rough for five weeks prior to the lockdown.

At first, he managed by attending drop-in centres to shower, spending his days in cafes and pubs for shelter. At night, his refuge was a seat on a bus. But the lockdown changed all of that. Since the lockdown, he has been aimlessly walking the streets or finding himself tucked away in the corner of a park. Sometimes, if he is able, he finds a public toilet in a supermarket or train station that he can use. For food, his lifeline is the takeaway meal from several of the food kitchens that are open in London.

‘Tom is one of the hundreds of rough sleepers who have not yet been offered housing during the coronavirus pandemic,’ according to the charity Crisis, who say that there are an estimated 1,000 people across the country who are still sleeping rough. So many shops, offices, schools and places of worship remain closed – places of safety and warmth – yet there are still homeless people on our streets, which is heart-rending. But what are we, as Seventh-day Adventist Christians, doing to help these people? What are we doing to make their lives a little more bearable?

Our faith demands that we obey the laws of the land, providing they do not conflict with the laws of God; so we should **stay** home as much as possible: but are my bowels of compassion closed when I consider the needs of others?

As well as staying, I am encouraged to **spray** to ensure that surfaces are clean and hygienic on a regular basis. Recommendations in some quarters state that we should be disinfecting our work spaces every 20 minutes.

Someone recently likened the lockdown to ‘house arrest’. Just the thought of being inside all day, every day, is a toll, for many, on our mental well-being. We are encouraged to **play**; and ‘play’ can mean becoming an amateur baker, learning a new skill, or catching up on unread books.

And, of course, to **pray** is essential. Our online services on Zoom, Skype and other platforms have increased, and are absolutely vital at this time. Especially during a pandemic, we need to ‘pray without ceasing’.

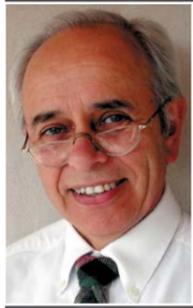
But how does my brother or sister receive food if all I do is **stay, spray, play and pray**? How do the elderly receive their medications if they are not delivered by the pharmacist? What kind of life does an unemployed single mother experience if I simply shut the door, increase my hygiene practices, entertain myself and thank God that I am well?

Administering justice means that there is less excess and therefore less deprivation. It means that, as a Christian, I make choices that are not only in the best interests of myself and my family, but also in the interests of my community, my country and humanity at large: not only for today, but also for the future.

Justice means that I sacrifice that luxury item so that I can contribute funds to those who are in need. It means being more frugal so that someone else can have a meal. It demands that I give consistently of my time, my talents and my resources so that the world can be a much better place. It’s as the prophet Micah states (Micah 6:8, NKJV): ‘What does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?’

While you **stay, spray, play and pray**, ask the Father to create in you a heart of justice, compassion and love for the needy, so that all may live as God intended.

Note: Through their ‘I am Urban’ initiative, ADRA-UK are supporting 72 community hubs around the UK. If you wish to donate to our COVID-19 Emergency Response Appeal, please go to our website at www.adra.org.uk



In this excerpt of *Values-led Lives*, Pastor Llew Edwards gives us a case study to consider. Fred goes to church . . . and what does he find? Where is Fred to find the Kingdom of God? The answer he gives challenges us again – not so much about what we do, but about who we are.



Part 9:

Where can you go to see the Kingdom of God?

Steve Logan, a scientist living in Scotland and a member of Crieff Church, once challenged me with a question that is the title of this chapter: where can people go to see the Kingdom of God? Steve continued to press his point by saying that we cannot send them down to the local supermarket to ask for a pack of it.

How would you answer the question?

This should be a straightforward rhetorical question, with an obvious answer – the local church, of course! But the answer does not easily trip off the tongue. Many that I have asked the question to shrug their shoulders and, with palms upturned, nod and whisper what they think is the right answer, thus acknowledging that there is a problem.

As I have thought about the matter, I see three issues.

Firstly – and I understand this to be Steve’s point – that, unlike supermarkets, we at church can and do place obstacles in the

path of the Kingdom-seeker. Here’s Steve’s case study:

‘If Fred hits hard times and starts looking around for a reason to exist, then, hopefully, he’ll think about maybe possibly popping in to that building he passes on the way to work – the one with the steeple and the big sign outside saying “Welcome”. So he plucks up the courage and wanders in on a Sabbath morning. What happens now? Does the man on the door look him up and down and tut-tut at the inappropriate attire? Does he “accidentally” sit in one of the chairs that “everyone” knows belong to the Smith family? Does Fred get identified by a man on the

platform and hailed, in an ever-so-friendly way, as a “guest”? None of these things would happen were Fred to go looking for any other product or service. Which is my point: if you’re a “seeker”, and we (the church) are hoping to attract “seekers”, then we have to be aware of those things we do that are, frankly, a bit nuts to an outsider. We, the church, are the purveyors of “the Meaning of Life”, and there is literally *nothing* we should insert between he who seeks and He who provides.’

Please compare what Steve shares to what I shared with *MESSENGER* readers a few weeks ago in my fourth chapter on

misplaced values (*MESSENGER* 4, 21 February).

The second issue is the anomaly that at times it is easier to see the values of the Kingdom of Heaven in the ‘supermarket’ than in the church. Two examples of the secular practice of Kingdom values come to mind.

A recent book by Joseph Michelli entitled *The New Gold Standard* outlines the Ritz-Carlton-embedded culture of non-judgemental and generous service (see chapter 20 of this book). The hotel chain makes the claim that it is the world’s ‘gold standard’ in serving people. Shouldn’t that be the church’s claim? Ritz-Carlton employees are proud of their organisation and its record of outstanding service that keeps its customers coming back for more. An example (and I choose this story because it is often in the small actions that a value is revealed) that Michelli relates is of a waitress who is asked by a girl in

a family she is serving if they have a particular type of ice cream that doesn’t appear on the menu. The waitress, instead of just giving a smiling apology (which surely would be fully acceptable), says, ‘Let me see what I can do.’ She then asks another waiter to cover her tables while she pops round to an ice cream shop she knows, buys the right type, rushes back to the hotel kitchen, and emerges with the other desserts plus the ice cream the girl asks for. That is gold-standard service. In answer to Steve’s question about where to see the Kingdom of Heaven, dare the answer be, ‘At a Ritz-Carlton hotel!’

The other example is the practices of people care that Nordstrom employees give to their customers. In reviewing the book, *The Nordstrom Way*, by Robert Spector and Patrick McCarthy, Tom Peters (a

leadership guru) states that ‘Nobody does it better than Nordstrom’. A church reply should be, ‘That’s nonsense – we practise people care better than anyone!’ After all, this is where the Kingdom values are to be seen.

One of Nordstrom’s tools of the trade is the personal customer book (see page 184 of the above book) that sales associates carry. In that small book the associate records all the details they can obtain about each person they serve – their names, phone numbers, purchases, likes and dislikes, etc. Eventually they build up a confidential dossier about each customer that enables them not only to remember their names the next time they visit the shop, but to relate with such personalised care that the customer seeks them out, knowing that they are cared for. What a lesson for our diaconate to learn. Sometimes we can’t even remember our members’ names, let alone those of any visitors and their children.

I decided to trial Nordstrom’s tool. At two churches that I visited, I recorded on my mobile phone the names and any identifying details of those I spoke to. At one church I recorded the names of 40 people I interacted with, and at the other I wrote down about 15. As I had opportunity I reviewed the names and faces and was amazed that at the end of the service I was able to speak to most of them again using their first names. While writing this chapter I went to my phone record and found that I could still remember, almost a month later, 37 of the 40 names I had recorded in the first case and 14 of the 15 in the other. This was stunning, because I am terrible at remembering names. I even momentarily forgot my wife’s name once! But the simple Nordstrom tool took me to a new level of Kingdom care – see Chapter 23 of this book, where I list some suggestions that may be helpful for deacons and others who are tasked with meeting and greeting at church. And again, the reply to Steve’s question might be that we would do well to point viewers of the Kingdom of Heaven to the ‘supermarket’ rather than to some of our churches.

There may be some readers

that may object to any comparison between the church and secular organisations on the grounds that they are the children of the world and not the children of light, and so cannot possibly represent the Kingdom of Heaven. My reply would be that Jesus Himself stated that ‘the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light’ (Luke 16:8, KJV). He also found no greater faith in all Israel than He found in an army soldier, a pagan Roman centurion. When Jesus heard this, He marvelled and said to those who followed Him, ‘Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith’ (Matt. 8:10, ESV).

It may be that I have created a wrong impression in implying that the Kingdom can only be seen in the church. The reality may be that, just as Jesus saw examples of the Kingdom everywhere they happened to appear, so we today may also find the Kingdom of Heaven wherever it erupts or invades our dark planet. Wherever we see the values of grace, mercy, humility, peace, purity, service, meekness, right actions, etc. manifested, we should rejoice to see examples of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The third issue is the failure, at times, of the local church to be the place where the Kingdom can be seen. Surely it is here where the Kingdom of Heaven should be most easily seen. The church does not always fail. There are magnificent stories and examples of churches and members being marvellous windows into the Kingdom, but there are serious failures too. I am not expecting perfect churches – and we should keep in mind that there must certainly be customers who have had bad experiences with organisations like Ritz-Carlton and Nordstrom – but the difference that concerns me is that, while these ‘supermarkets’ can purposely embed values like exceptional service and customer care into the fabric of their culture, many of our churches struggle to do the same, let alone better. Here are some questions we need to ask ourselves. Why can Ritz-Carlton boast at being the best in giving service while we are often too proud to trumpet our commitment to being servants? Maybe it is not pride on our part; maybe it is embarrassment at failing to

serve. And why can Nordstrom train its assistants to amazing levels of customer care while we struggle to make attendees feel amazingly welcome in our churches?

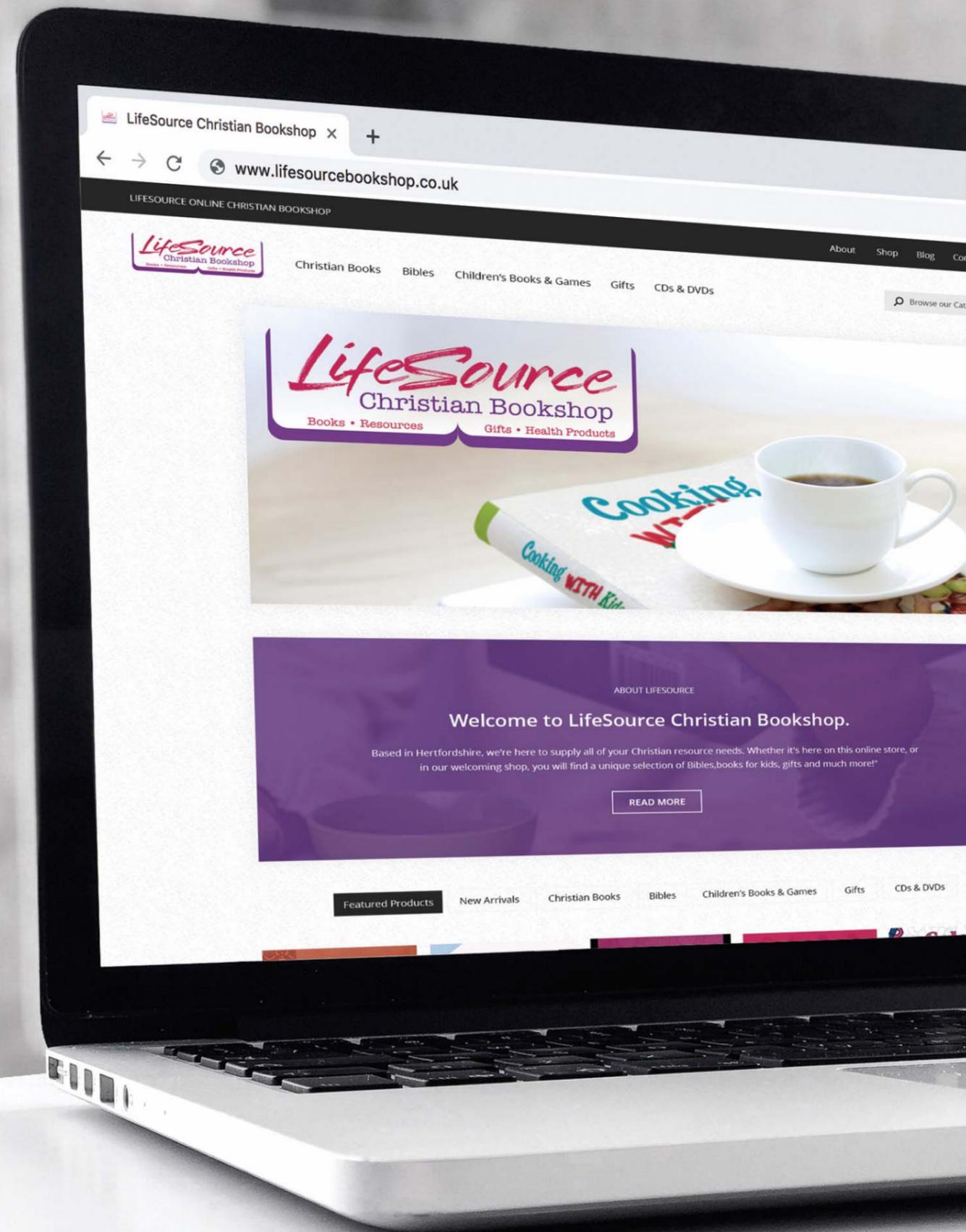
On exploring this issue with some churches, the reply has come back that the secular organisations do it well because they are paid and motivated by a profit incentive. It would be a very sad commentary on our understanding of the Gospel if we were to conclude that if we paid our deacons and deaconesses they would serve better. Maybe the world serves for profit, but who are we to judge? At least they give clear examples of doing it well. Assuming they serve well for an earthly crown, is not the ‘unfading crown of glory’ (1 Peter 5:4, ESV) that we aspire to worth much more? And is not the kingdom they aspire to a temporal and fading one, while ours is an eternal and glorious Kingdom?

It is not the local supermarket that aspires to represent the Kingdom of Heaven. That is the claim and privilege of the church. Even though supermarkets may provide glimpses into the values that belong to a better world, it is the church, worldwide and local, that has to be the window in the world to the values of the Kingdom. And so, too, shouldn’t the local church be the place that intentionally aspires to be the place to see the Kingdom of Heaven at its best?

I am arguing that the church, worldwide and locally, has the divine responsibility of working out what the core and exceeding values of the Kingdom of Heaven are, stating and embedding them into its life and practice, then holding itself accountable to those values.

When the question is asked, ‘Where can they see the Kingdom of Heaven on earth?’ the answer should naturally come back, ‘Let me invite you to my local church; we are not perfect, but we are a community totally committed to doing everything we can to evidence the values of the Kingdom of Heaven. Come and see for yourself!’

Values-led Lives is available for £5.95 from the Stanborough Press’s new retail outlet, LifeSource Christian Bookshop: <https://lifesourcebookshop.co.uk/product/values-led-lives/>



www.LifeSourceBookshop.co.uk

Giving more flexibility and choice for Christian books & resources.



Aberdaron work retreat for NEC youth

In February this year a group of ten volunteers spent the week at the Aberdaron Advent Camp to assist with work development. Youth came from all over the North England Conference (NEC) and were overseen in their work by Steve Bull and Akbar Davamony, site manager and assistant manager. During the week, volunteer youth stripped two of the chalets of their current outer layer of wood before commencing the meticulous task of putting on the new outer layer. While few of the volunteers were expert labourers, each one learned new skills and how to use the various tools that were essential that week. While it may have taken longer than a professional work crew, because the work was done on a voluntary basis it allowed for a huge saving of vital funds for the NEC, and it also gave the youth a sense of ownership of the site.

Throughout the week there was a 'mixed bag' of weather, with most of the days being decent with some rain mixed in. Meals were cooked on a rotational basis and everyone helped. Evenings were spent having worship together, followed by socialising, which included playing games. Although it was not intentionally planned as a 'spiritual' retreat, the remote location, the fact of being away from normal daily routine and city life, the camaraderie, and the spiritual encouragement of others all meant that the week became a wonderful spiritual blessing for those who attended.

Though the site is closed at the moment during the COVID-19 crisis, we look forward to when it will reopen and we can enjoy the beauty of the Aberdaron area once again.

PASTOR ADAM RAMDIN (NEC YOUTH DIRECTOR)

Special Needs Camp, Aberdaron 2020

Please note that our mission to the church and many Adventist friends has had to be cancelled this year because of the coronavirus. We are keen to ensure that we can reassure disappointed campers and their carers that next year's camp, 11-18 July, will run. In order to do that we will need to have a list of volunteers who have agreed that they will give their time to support this mission next year. It is a long way ahead, but please could you look forward with us to continuing this work? We have various roles, but basically our volunteers support our campers for the week, helping them to have a good holiday while learning more about a relationship with Jesus. If you would like to spend the week on the Aberdaron camp site, supporting our campers, please contact us via our website: specialneeds-camp.org.uk.

JOY BUSSEY

Former Stanborough School pupil appointed a deputy lieutenant for West Midlands

Congratulations to Christine Arthur, who has recently been appointed as a deputy lieutenant for the West Midlands. Christine was raised in Watford, attending Stanborough School and nearby Parmiters School. After a gap year at Newbold College, she studied at the University of Birmingham, reading English and Communication, leading to a very successful career in public relations.

Christine has always appreciated the role of teachers at Stanborough School and Newbold College for establishing a good launch pad for her career. Currently she serves as Managing Director for the McCann Central group in Solihull.

The role of a deputy lieutenant includes arranging visits by members of the royal family and escorting royal visitors, representing the Queen as requested and assessing nominations for honour.

Married to Nicholas Davis of Fieldings Auctioneers, Stourbridge (who frequently appears on the BBC's *Flog It* programme), they are blessed with two sons, Owen and Rhys. Her parents, John and Ruth Arthur, live in Scotland. Her father, John, once served as President of the British Union Conference, and continues to champion



Christine, with her parents, John and Ruth Arthur

the work of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, after serving as ADRA-Trans Europe Director from 1989 to 2001.



Enoch Kanagaraj with Councillor Rabi Martins, Mental Health Champion for Watford

BUC 'Restoration' convalescence project launch

'For I will restore health to you and heal you of your wounds,' says the LORD (Jeremiah 30:17, NKJV). This beautiful text is certainly comforting and empowering in times of challenge and need.

COVID-19 has caused immense suffering, and we need to be restored; yet there is much that we can do on a practical level to bring relief to the suffering. Therefore, our BUC Health Ministries Department is launching a convalescence project called 'Restoration', which seeks to meet the needs of individuals recovering from COVID-19.

The challenge

An increasing number of those discharged from hospital after being treated for COVID-19 are encountering various challenges when they return home. For example, several individuals have reported that they continue to experience breathing difficulties and significant fatigue. Some are reporting that they are feeling very flat and low in mood, and even depressed. Others have reported that their ongoing fatigue is preventing them from adequately caring for themselves. This has been a huge burden, especially for those living alone.

On 15 April 2020, a *New Scientist* article titled 'Could the coronavirus trigger post-viral fatigue syndromes?' stated, 'Conditions like chronic fatigue syndrome have been linked to viral infections, so it's possible that the COVID-19 virus may go on to trigger similar conditions. . . . There are hints from the related SARS virus that this may happen. After the SARS outbreak of 2002 to 2003, some people in Toronto, Canada, who were infected were recorded as experiencing fatigue, muscle weakness and sleep problems up to three years later.'¹

The launch of the 'Restoration' convalescence initiative is designed to assist such individuals. The BUC Health Ministries Department is partnering with the One Vision Project in the implementation and roll-out of this initiative. We are also working with Councillor Rabi Martins, who is a Mental Health Champion for Watford and supports individuals in need of counselling. Additionally, the Stanborough Press is supporting this initiative with relevant publications for the community.

The project will provide daily meals, weekly shopping, relevant publications on physical, emotional and spiritual well-being, and counselling support, and is being launched in three phases. The first

A 'locked-down' pastor, yet not 'locked out' of ministry

Whew! I wiped my hands on my jeans and glanced at the time. *Is that the time already?* I was headed to Spar to collect the grocery parcels ready for delivery to isolated customers. On my way I wanted to deliver a load of firewood to a needy family who I know will struggle to make ends meet this month. As I drove down the road I mused to myself, *Who would ever have thought I would enjoy volunteering as a delivery service, or that this van of ours would become such an important means for ministry?* I have had numerous opportunities to use the van to help people and then minister to them at their doorstep with a prayer and an encouraging word.

COVID-19 has definitely challenged me in my ministry; yet, as I

will involve delivery of meals, groceries and care packages to homes in the Watford area, along with counselling (call Enoch Kanagaraj on 07702 566667 for meals, household items, and care packages; if living outside Watford, call Councillor Rabi Martins on 07494 450325 for counselling support). Phase 2 will extend provision of many of these services across London using local hubs to store needed items; and phase 3 will involve a health retreat once the lockdown has been eased. Limited funding is being secured to assist individuals who may require some financial support. If this is an area of need for you or someone you know, please email Sharon Platt-McDonald at splattmcdonald@adventist.uk.

If your church would like to get involved in the BUC 'Restoration' convalescence project or become a hub for supporting local residents with shopping and household essentials, please make contact with Sharon Platt-McDonald on the email identified above.

Please keep this initiative in your prayers as we seek to support those in need during these challenging times.

¹www.newscientist.com/article/mg24632783-400-could-the-coronavirus-trigger-post-viral-fatigue-syndromes/

SHARON PLATT-MCDONALD



reflected over the past few weeks, there have been numerous blessings. At the start of the lockdown I realised that without a bit of resourcefulness I would be confined to my office. I have been exploring how to help in practical ways. Having the van has opened doors for me to connect with people. Technology is another means to minister. Zoom is proving very beneficial in having Bible studies, Sabbath services and children's programmes for my three churches. Interestingly, I have noticed that people are joining us who are not members of our congregations. My wife, Betty, sends out a mid-week Bible study

New Addington Pathfinders and Adventurers God-led and person-centred

On Sabbath 7 March the New Addington Seventh-day Adventist church held its induction service for the Adventurer and Pathfinder clubs. During the programme, led by the club's director, Brenda Nurse, members of both clubs were led to recite their club's pledge and law and sang both the Pathfinder and Adventurer club songs to begin proceedings. The Scripture reading was from Psalm 23:1, 2. Brenda Nurse and a Master Guide, Patience Chandiwana, led the induction service of new members to both clubs, during which parents and guardians affirmed their children. Elder Michael Marriott gave a word of encouragement to the children, counsellors and parents, emphasising that the movement of both clubs is God-led and person-centred. As the programme ended, prayers were offered to God for the plans and activities planned for the remainder of the year to be successful and productive. On behalf of the club's director, counsellors, parents and children, I invite you to pray that New Addington people will come to know the true and living God through the life and witness of our Pathfinders and Adventurers.

EDWY CHANDLER

Cheltenham teens and tweens worship on Zoom

When plans were put in place for Cheltenham Teens and Tweens Day many months ago, no one could have imagined that being together in person would not be possible: yet there was a determination that, despite the coronavirus, this event would go ahead. With the discovery of Zoom technology, we realised that worship and socialising together would be possible, and we planned to have as normal a celebration as possible.

However, the devil was to try and thwart our plans. With 10 days to go, we realised that our chosen speaker for the morning was furloughed, so whom to call? Thankfully, Viv and Jonathan Barratt-Peacock of Loughborough Church immediately agreed to fill the gap. But that was not the end. Two days before, Viv and Jon's neighbour decided to use a weed burner, which resulted in a freak fire that killed their landline and internet connection (and shrank their wheelie bin). However, Viv's mother came to the rescue, and her garden became the 'pulpit' on the morning.

The theme for the morning was 'What Would Jesus Do?' During the all-age worship, on-screen polling was used to find out:

- Where people were joining from – and they joined from as far away

lesson to her group, and also a weekly Sabbath School lesson summary and life application to the three churches' WhatsApp group. She also phones ladies living alone, some of whom are not church members but all of whom are in need of encouragement and comfort.

I might be a 'locked-down' pastor, but I am not 'locked out' of ministry. All around me I am finding new and innovative ways to help my community practically and be a blessing to those I meet. People, isolated by the pandemic, are struggling with fear and are grateful for spiritual dialogue and prayer.

My prayer is that, as Christians, we may be used by God to share His love in these uncertain times.

TONY O'ROURKE



- as France, Portugal and even Australia;
- How people's lives were affected by the coronavirus;
- How they were personally feeling about it. Thankfully this last question revealed that a lot were confident of God's leading and care, even if they were a bit worried about how it might impact them and their families.

In their PowerPoint message, Viv and Jon summarised the question, 'What Would Jesus Do?' with the following points:

- Jesus would worship at home.
- Jesus would remember God's promises and use them to encourage others.
- Jesus would heal people.
- Jesus would reach out and help people in practical ways.
- Jesus would make good use of His time.

The chat screen on Zoom was used to encourage people to share how they had been helping out in the community, listing Bible texts that mean a lot to them at this time, and sharing thanks and prayer requests.

Following the worship, there was breakout time for a chat. For the afternoon, Robin Beamish hosted a live YouTube worship stream in which he featured pre-recorded music from some people on the Teens and Tweens network, as well as his own selections.

An estimated 120 people were blessed by this opportunity, and grateful thanks go to our group discussion leaders, technical team and musical planning team. Most of all, we thank God for giving us this opportunity to meet together like this, which for some is a spiritual and social lifeline.

The concert can be viewed on the following link:
<https://youtu.be/DQEVidL5R7E>.

MIKE BEAMISH



Almost home

by Harry Wilby

It was about one year before the end of the War. For younger readers, 'The War' was World War 2. I was thirteen years old and still at Southend High School. Once a week, after school, I would cycle a mile or so over to my grandparents at Southchurch to chop some kindling firewood and do other chores.

On this occasion I had just left for home and was cycling along Eastern Avenue near the cemetery when I heard the rumble of many aircraft engines. Several huge box formations of B17 Flying Fortresses were returning from a daylight bombing raid on Germany, homing in on the Thames estuary to lead them over London and back to their bases in Oxfordshire. They were flying parallel to my route, about three miles distant at about 10,000 feet; so I stopped and sat on the crossbar of my bike to watch them. Each 'box' contained scores of aircraft, flying several lines wide and about seven or eight layers deep.

As the second box passed, there came the sound of over-revving engines, as happens when propeller blades can't get a grip on the air. One of the planes in the top layer was diving out of control. It smashed into one below, snapping off a wing. Now the two were tumbling and spinning, as the aircraft beside and behind swerved to avoid them; but below were many more still unaware of the danger above. Five bombers fell out of that formation, with 50 aircrew, who, having been in

battle, were almost home. Most were trapped by the G-forces of the spinning planes. I counted only five parachutes and seem to remember that the *Southend Standard* that week reported that the lifeboat had rescued just three from the Thames.

I don't know what caused the first mishap. The bombers would get terribly mauled by German defences, so perhaps it was failure of the airframe or controls from damage, or a wounded pilot succumbing to his wounds.

War started in Heaven and has been ever present in human history. Satan has developed countless ways to keep us from the homes Jesus has gone to prepare for us, and for all who are willing to accept them.

Another desperate war is progressing just now against the coronavirus, and it too is taking many others to their deaths before their time: people we could have had the opportunity to witness to, of God's love for them, if we had heeded Jesus' instruction to spread the Gospel message.

As Adventist Christians we believe we're almost home, but Jesus cannot come for us until the work is completed. As individuals, let's get to know Jesus and love Him so that we want to take others 'home' with us. Then we can all 'go home'.

Gloria Bernice (Bernie) Harlin (née Carter) (1924-2020) d. 23 March.

Born in Barry, South Wales to Alfred Edward (Fred) Carter and Agnes Freeman Carter, and sister to Peggy (Smith) and Bert Carter, Bernie was baptised at 16 years old by Pastor George Hyde, and then worked at Peerless Food machine manufacturers in Cardiff for 9 years, where her boss covered for her absence on



Sabbaths for the duration of her employment there.

Bernie married Thomas (Tommy) Harlin in August 1948 at Barry Church, with Pastor John Howard officiating. Tom and Bernie moved to their new home in Manchester and attended the Parkfield Street church, and then founded what is now the Manchester South church. Together they started a business until their retirement in 1980.

They had three children: Carole (m. Stephen Barratt-Peacock), Sandra (m. Roger Clarke), and

Graham (m. Elaine Burgess).

In 1980 Bernie and Tom retired early from their business and emigrated to Coromandel Valley, South Australia, to live near Sandra and Roger. Here they enjoyed 23 years of happy and peaceful retirement. She loved gardening, as well as cross-stitch embroidery (for which she won several awards), and attended the Brighton church, where she played the organ for many years and led out in Sabbath School. Tom passed away in March 2003, and in 2005 Bernie returned to the

UK to Crieff, Scotland to be nearer to her eldest daughter, Carole. She died peacefully at Carole's home just a couple of months short of her 96th birthday. She was a lovely mum who had a profound influence for good on her family; she will be sorely missed.

She was laid to rest in Crieff cemetery with the ashes of her beloved Tommy. She leaves six grandchildren: Claire, Jonathan, Joanne, Alison, David and Emily; and eight great-grandchildren: Benjamin, Eliana, Caleb, Lillie, Alex, Jenny, Tobias and Hazel.

Good night, Mum; we'll see you in the morning.

CAROLE BARRATT-PEACOCK

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

'The stamps of minds are different. All do not understand expressions and statements alike. Some understand the statements of the Scriptures to suit their own particular minds and cases. Prepossessions, prejudices, and passions have a strong influence to darken the understanding and confuse the mind even in reading the words of Holy Writ.'

(Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 20)

'The Bible is but yet dimly understood. A life-long prayerful study of its sacred revealings will leave still much unexplained. It is the deep movings of the Spirit of God that is needed to operate upon the heart to mould character, to open the communication between God and the soul, before the deep truths will be unravelled. Man has to learn himself before God can do great things for him. The little knowledge imparted might be a hundredfold greater if the mind and character were balanced by the holy enlightenment of the Spirit of God. Altogether too little meekness and humility are brought into the work of searching for the truth as for hidden treasures, and if the truth were taught as it is in Jesus, there would be a hundredfold greater power, and it would be a converting power upon human hearts, but everything is so mingled with self that the wisdom from above cannot be imparted.'

(Ellen G. White, *Letter 37, 1887* - quoted in *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 15, p. 28)

'It is essential to give up the illusion that we come to the biblical text as innocent, objective, impartial, culture-free investigators, for we are nothing of the kind. No, the spectacles through which we look at the Bible have cultural lenses. And the mind with which we think about the Bible, however open we keep it, is not empty. On the contrary, it is filled with cultural prejudices. So, though we cannot altogether rid ourselves of our cultural inheritance, we should be aware of our cultural bias.'

(John Stott, *The Contemporary Christian*, 1992)

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Sunset

Sunset times are reproduced with permission from data supplied by HM Nautical Almanac Office.

| | Lond | Card | Nott | Edin | Bell |
|-------|------|------|------|------|------|
| May 8 | 8.36 | 8.48 | 8.46 | 9.07 | 9.11 |
| 15 | 8.47 | 8.59 | 8.57 | 9.20 | 9.24 |
| 22 | 8.57 | 9.09 | 9.08 | 9.32 | 9.35 |
| 29 | 9.06 | 9.18 | 9.17 | 9.43 | 9.46 |



'Binge Jesus'? Those are strange words on that bloke's polo shirt, I thought to myself. I've heard of 'Try Jesus', 'Take Jesus', and 'Love Jesus'. But 'Binge Jesus' – what does that mean?

It seems that some folks will spend 24 hours, 36 hours, or a whole weekend watching multiple episodes of a television series: for example, via Netflix. 'Not sure that's the healthiest activity,' I mutter to my sanctimonious self! Yet, come to think of it, I have watched three episodes in a row of my favourite series. But after three I can safely say I'm done in; the eyes glaze over and I'm out like a light. I don't know how these young folks do it!

You probably noticed long before I did that there's a series on the go at the moment called *The Chosen*. Claiming to be the first ever multi-season series based on the true stories of the gospels, over the last few weeks, I've been taking a look at it. I like what I see.

For a start, it is different from the classic portrayals of Jesus in such films as *Jesus of Nazareth* or *The Passion of the Christ*. Those centre on the character and personality of Christ, and tell His story. *The Chosen*, from what I see so far, tells the Gospel story through the eyes of those Jesus connected with: Simon Peter, James, Matthew, Nicodemus and Mary Magdalene, for example. The series creator, Dallas Jenkins, intentionally ensures that all the disciples are portrayed effectively. To do this he has to give a picture of the social, economic, religious and political world they lived in, which he does well.

Hands up! As with any film on the life of Christ, there's always going to have to be some 'sanctified imagination'. There is with *The Chosen*. But it's good and honest imagination, which punches through the beauty and power of the Gospel.

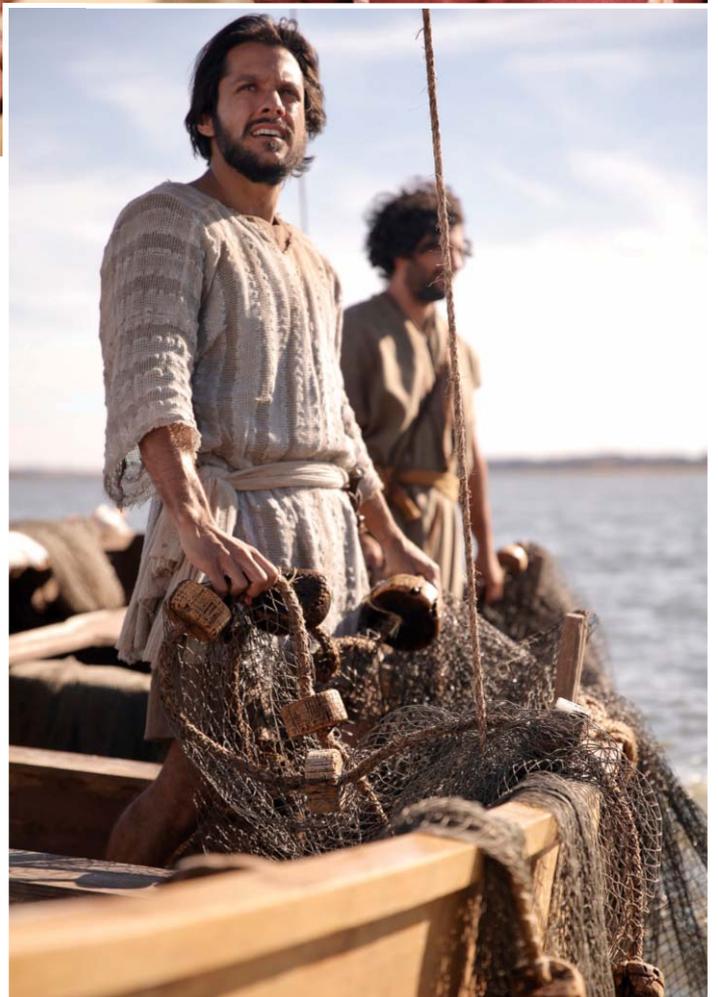
In one scene, Nicodemus, in his role as a rabbi, is called on to help Mary Magdalene, who is portrayed as crippledly possessed by a demon. Reluctantly, Nicodemus agrees to help – as a last resort. We see him timidly approaching Mary's house, entering it, and trying in vain to heal her. He is not successful, and leaves full of self-doubt, with Mary still desperately ill.

A few days later Nicodemus meets Mary in the marketplace, and is surprised to find her fit and well – healed! As his self-doubt disappears, his face lights up, and Mary notices. She smiles graciously at him, but with words that make no sense to him at all.

'It was someone else, Nicodemus.'

Mary had met Jesus . . .

I'm gripped, and I want to watch more.



'Binge Jesus' – a strange title for an evangelism effort, but that's what this series is: nothing less. It seems like the folks behind this series are pushing it right now, and for good reason, I say. In the lockdown, binge Jesus?

Like!

To find out more about *The Chosen*, go to:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBXOFnNTULFaAnj24PAeblg>
 EDITOR