

CHANGE OUR
WORLD



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ANDRÉS J. PERALTA

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Back cover photo by Luis Sanchez, LU Photography

Editors: Atlantic Union Communications Department
and Nashonie Chang

Printed by Createspace

Charleston, SC USA

Category: Motivational

ISBN-13: 978-1985234819

ISBN-10: 1985234815

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Dedicated to the youth directors of the
Atlantic Union Conference of Seventh-day
Adventists.

Angel Reyes - Ariel Manzueta - Chanel Bean
- Cyril Millett - Damion Hendrickson - Dan
Whitlow - Daniel Velez - David McKenzie -
Dwayne Hill - Javier Alcon - Jeremy Garlock
- Mark Tamaleaa - Milton Marquez - Teddy
Williamson

This book contains a compilation of articles
written for the Atlantic Union *Gleaner*.



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Introduction

We long for the Kingdom but, while we remain in this world, we can make it better and healthier. The world represents people. “For God so loved the *world* that He gave His only begotten *Son* [emphasis added]” (John 3:16, NKJV). God loves people (the world), and according to John 13:34, we need to love them, too. Jesus also said, “You are the light of the world” and “My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one” (Matthew 5:14; John 17:15, NIV). Gandhi once said, “Be the change that you wish to see in the world.” Ellen White states that “The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall” (*Education*, p. 57). Ray Goforth is quoted as saying, “There are two types

of people who will tell you that you cannot make a difference in this world: those who are afraid to try and those who are afraid you will succeed.” I agree with them all. Youth and young adults convicted of truth and filled with love are able to succeed at making a positive change in our world.

Youth and young adults need to get involved in the mission of God; not your mission or my mission, but God’s mission. Jesus says, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:19, 20, NIV). Author Richelle Goodrich rightly said, “You are here to make a difference, to either improve the world or worsen it. And whether or not you consciously choose to, you will accomplish one or the other.” Let’s be agents of change by consecrating ourselves, living a compassionate life, and collaborating as a community in one faith and one God. Ellen White makes a strong and credible point in stating, “The world will be convinced, not by what the pulpit teaches, but by what the church lives. The minister in the desk [pulpit] announces the theory of the gospel; the practical piety of the church demonstrates its power” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 16). It’s time for us to live lives that make a difference and improve the world.

Changing the world is not about us but it is about Who we share. We need to make a commitment to

have a better community, more collaboration, more compassion, and more consecrated people willing to be disciples and change our world. I love this very remarkable statement made by Ellen White, “All the varied capabilities that men possess—of mind and soul and body—are given them by God, to be so employed as to reach the highest possible degree of excellence. But this cannot be a selfish and exclusive culture; for the character of God, whose likeness we are to receive, is benevolence and love. Every faculty, every attribute, with which the Creator has endowed us, is to be employed for his glory and for the uplifting of our fellow-men. And in this employment is found its purest, noblest, and happiest exercise” (*Christian Education*, p. 64). As you read through these pages, I hope you will be inspired to invest your gifts and God-given talents to glorifying God and exemplifying His character in every aspect of your life.



Share Your GIFT

And do not forget to do good and to share with others,
for with such sacrifices God is pleased.
– Hebrews 13:16, NIV –

In this era of social media frenzy, it's all about sharing. According to Mridu Khuller Relph, founder of the International Freelancer, people participate in social sharing for five main reasons: to bring valuable and entertaining content to others, to define ourselves to others, to grow and nourish relationships, self-fulfillment, and to get the word out about a cause.

In Mary Meeker's 2014 "Internet Trends Report," she states that all Internet-connected users share over 1.8 billion photos each day. According to a report by Pew Research, nearly 70 percent of Americans use social media. The most active content sharing groups are teens and young adults ("Social Media Fact Sheet," January 12, 2017). As youth and young adults, you can decide to share but it's not only about sharing, it's also

about the content of the sharing. We can do more than just entertain. By being selective in what we share, we can make an eternal impact.

Notwithstanding the biblical and practical meaning, what comes to your mind when you hear: “Share your Gift, Change our World?” I have encountered dozens of people, young and old, who feel purposeless and meaningless. A young adult wrote on social media, “I feel that I do not have in me anything significant to share. I have nothing to share at all.” A young man approached me once and asked, “Why do I see so many people with talents and gifts, and I do not have any?” My question to them would be: Do we have something to share? Can we make a difference in this world? Is there something we can share aside from what seems obvious?

God shared His IMAGE

God, our Creator, has shared many things with humanity such as love, compassion, mercy, and much more, but I would like to emphasize only four major things He shared. The first thing God shared was His own image. The Bible declares, “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27, NIV). This is mind-blowing! Can you believe that God shared His own “image?” He purposed that mankind (both man and woman) would resemble God in certain ways, and share this divine prerogative. God endowed man

with intellectual (Genesis 1:26, 28; 2:15, 19, 20), moral (Genesis 1: 26, 31) and social abilities (Genesis 3:8; 2:18) far superior to any other living creature. Also, God's image is reflected in our faculties to be mindful of Him, to have a relationship with Him, to be creative, communicative, relational, and spiritual—just like Him. God shared His image. That's awesome!

God shared His CREATION

The second thing God shared was His creation. In the very first chapter and verse of the book of Genesis, we find our Creator sharing

and giving to humanity. The Bible states that “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” In other words, God was the cause of creation. He was the One that initiated creation. Everything came to existence because of

God's image is reflected in our faculties to be mindful of Him, to have a relationship with Him, to be creative, communicative,

Him. He is the subject of His creation. He preceded everything and everyone else. The one thing that impressed me the most is that He created Adam and Eve on the sixth day after everything was complete and ready for them. Before you were born, God shared His creation and gave Adam and Eve the honor and opportunity to care for the Earth and be a blessing to others (Genesis 1:28; 2:15).

God shared His SON

The third thing God shared was His only begotten Son. When we were lost and desperate, God shared the most valuable thing in the entire universe, Jesus our Savior. The Bible says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16, NIV). In a society that is all about “me, myself, and I,” the Bible says, “[Jesus] was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake” (1 Peter 1:20, NIV). God chose to share His Son ahead of time so that we can be saved. He shared His Son because we are valuable to Him, and He will not abandon His creation. He loves the world (you) so much that He shared Jesus for you!

God shared His KINGDOM

Daniel wrote: “And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (Daniel 2:44, NKJV). This reminds us of those epic words of Jesus, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36, NIV). We are further assured that “our citizenship is in Heaven” (Philippians 3:20, NIV).

God has already shared the good news of His kingdom. His kingdom doesn't enrich its rulers at the

expense of its subjects. Instead, it will accomplish God's will, including the promise that those who love Him will live forever in Paradise (Matthew 6:10; Revelation 21:1-4). Jesus said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am," (John 14:1-3, NIV).

Share your GIFT

If God has shared His image, creation, Son and kingdom, He expects us to share our gifts. "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (John 13:15, NIV). God has given us many talents, gifts and blessings; and He wants us to share them. Do you feel purposeless? Do you feel that you do not have anything to offer? Do you sometimes think that everyone has something to offer except you? I've been there, and I have met dozens of people who have felt the same way. When I was a child, a teacher told me that I was stupid and incapable of accomplishing any good thing. I believed it for more than fifteen years until God changed my mentality. We are all important in God's body.

The Bible says that we are the body of Christ, "So in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others" (Romans 12:5, NIV).

If we are His body, we are a part of Him. Take a moment to think about it and process it. You are a part of Jesus' body!. Yes, you are so valuable that you are attached to Him, and each body part has a particular function. Therefore, you do have a purpose. In Jeremiah 29:11 and Psalm 139:13-16, God affirms that we were created for a purpose. If you are a part of the body, you were born to serve. The parts of the body help each other in the church and also have the ability to help others in the community. So, yes, you have something to offer. Peter says, "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another" (1 Peter 4:10, ESV).

Sharing your gifts goes beyond our natural talents and gifts; it involves sharing whatever blessings God has given you.

Paul says, "Do not neglect the gift you have," and "there are varieties of gifts" (1 Timothy 4:14; 1 Corinthians 12:4 ESV). James also reminds us, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above" (James 1:17, ESV).

Sharing your gifts goes beyond our natural talents and gifts; it involves sharing whatever blessings God has given you. Whether it's resources, time, love, words, or anything that will help make someone better and not bitter, use it for the glory of God. Holocaust victim, Anne Frank, once wrote, "Everyone has inside of him a piece of good news. The good news is that you don't know how great you can be! How much you can love! What you can accomplish. And what your potential

is.” I love how Ralph Waldo Emerson puts it, “The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well.” Begin by sharing love and compassion; it will make this a better world.

Sharing is not about me, it’s about others. I shared some encouraging words with a young man who was about to commit suicide. He had given up on life, faith, and hope. But a simple word with God’s power can change someone’s life immensely. Share your gift. Like the Dalai Lama said, “Our prime purpose in this life is to help others. And if you can’t help them, at least don’t hurt them.” We all have something we should consider *gifting*, or sharing, with the world. God has blessed each of us with talents and skills—not just for ourselves and our own benefit. Make it a priority to focus on giving, and not merely getting, because “it is more blessed to give than to receive,” (Acts 20:35, ASV). Share your gift!



Be an Eagle

Yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength;
they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run
and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.

– Isaiah 40:31, NASB –

The imagery of the eagle is one of my favorite Bible illustrations because of the characteristics they portray such as a graceful soar, strength, keen eyesight, and the ability to empower its offspring with great care in the art of flying. In Exodus 19:4 and Deuteronomy 32:11 the eagle is used figuratively to depict God's protection and care. In these passages, God is pictured as a loving parent who redeems and protects His people, even as the parent eagle cares for its young. God also empowers the persecuted church with "eagle's wings" to protect it from the serpent and from adverse circumstances and difficulties.

Dare to soar like the eagle

The eagle, the epitome of swiftness, is often known

to fly at a rate of 40 to 50 miles per hour. It can fly three to four miles in 10 minutes and sometimes flies to heights of more than 10,000 feet.

The eagle needs to work hard to take off. If it is on a rock, it takes small leaps to the air, opens its wings, and begins to fly. If it is on land, it jumps, beats its wings, and rises. Eagles can soar day after day by riding on the thermal air currents, stopping only to rest at night.

God has also given us the ability to soar. The key to overcoming spiritual weariness is to extend our arms and allow our life to be lifted high above the burdens of this world, by the sweet breeze of the Holy Spirit; lifting us above the stress, the past, criticism, and daily difficulties.

When all other birds try to flee from the storm and hide from the fierceness of it, eagles fly into it and use the wind of the storm to rise higher. It uses the pressure of the storm to glide higher without using its own energy. It is able to do this because God has created it with the unique ability to lock its wings in a fixed position in the midst of the fierce winds. We all face storms, but do not be afraid. Simply allow God to lift you above the storms.

Dare to have the strength of an eagle

The strength and youthful vigor of the eagle is proverbial. Some eagles can carry geese, lambs, or other animals between 80-90 pounds. The power of an eagle's grip comes from its leg muscles, tendons, and bones. Its wings are also very strong; one of the largest

wing-spans on record is that of an eagle with a wing span of 7.9 feet.

Our strength comes from God. The Bible suggests that we pray continually. Ellen White said, “In order that we may be kept by the power of God through faith, the desires of the mind should be continually ascending in silent prayer” (*Prayer*, p. 83). If we want to have the strength of a spiritual eagle, we need to constantly be in prayer mode!

Dare to see like the eagle

From a great distance away, the eagle uses its sharp vision to spot its prey. Rebecca L. Grambo, award-winning author of more than 20 nature books, suggests that the eagle’s vision is among the strongest in the animal kingdom, with an eye-sight estimated at four to eight times stronger than that of the average human (*Eagles*, p. 11). The eagle has telescopic vision and can see a rabbit from two miles away.

Visionaries do not look at problems, they see the solutions, and they see opportunity.

As leaders, we need to be visionary. Visionaries do not look at problems, they see the solutions, and they see opportunity. Most visionaries fail many times because of opposition and a lot of resistance. Visionaries are sometimes misunderstood and criticized.

Your vision needs to be greater than your obstacles. The eagle-believers are like Joshua and Caleb, who

see beyond present circumstances and are willing to conquer.

Dare to empower like the eagle

In teaching its young to fly, the eagle is said to push them out of the nest high in the rocks, and then hover under them to catch them with its wings as they fall through the air. They empower them to fly and teach them how to survive. Our leadership is growing older and we need to empower our children, youth, and young adults for service. We need to give them the tools to live a life of service with a consecrated mind.

Dare to be like Jesus

Jesus is like an eagle. He came to this earth and He dared to fly. He dared to keep His eyes focused on God. His relationship was with His Father on high. He received His strength through constant prayer. He saw what no one else saw. He saw beyond and envisioned His purpose of helping the needy and the sinner. He empowered His disciples to reach the world. Last, but not least, like an eagle, He died with open arms on the cross to save us and protect us. Dare to be like the eagle!



Dare to Dream

Don't let anyone despise your youth, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity.

– 1 Timothy 4:12, CSB –

Whoever has stopped dreaming has started to die. No matter how old or young you are, never stop dreaming. Les Brown, motivational speaker and author, puts it this way, “You are never too old to set another goal or dream a new dream.” Dreams keep you energized, hopeful, and give you a reason to move forward and fight.

Martin Luther is quoted as saying, “Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree.” We all have dreams. It may be for a better relationship with God, a better relationship with a family member, getting a better job, getting a better education, or maybe increasing our income. Walt Disney once said, “First, think. Second, believe. Third, dream. And finally, dare.” The dreamers that

have dared are the ones that have made a significant change in the world.

Ellen White said, “Many who are qualified to do excellent work accomplish little because they attempt little. Thousands pass through life as if they had no great object for which to live, no high standard to reach. One reason for this is the low estimate which they place upon themselves” (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 498).

Why is it that so many of us never fulfill our dreams? What are your dreams? How can you achieve your dreams? I would like to share three steps to making your dreams become a reality.

Step 1: Make sure your dream comes from God

A dreamer needs to learn that prayer is the main key to discovering their dream. The Bible says, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you” (Matthew 7:7, NIV). If you have a dream, ask God if that is the dream He has for you. Your dream must sync with God’s dream for you. If you miss this, you might still acquire what you call your dream, however, you will never have the satisfaction and the peace that comes only when you live under God’s dream for your life. So, make sure your dream comes from God.

Step 2: Begin now

Time waits for no man and each minute counts. Do something every day that brings you closer to your

dream. Be intentional. Do not give up on your dream just because it will take too much time to accomplish it. The time will pass anyway, and you will regret it. Begin now!

Step 3: Be willing to pay the price

I concur with the retired general Colin Powell, who said, “A dream doesn’t become reality through magic; it takes sweat, determination, and hard work.” Most people with a dream give up before they even start, because of the fear of failure. Remember that you obstruct your dreams when you allow your fear to grow bigger than your faith. The best example of someone who was willing to pay the price for His dream was Christ. Jesus, in His daily living, relied on God’s guidance. He did not waste time and was willing to pay the price to save us.

If you have a dream, ask God if that is the dream He has for you.

Sometimes life is about risking it all for a dream no one can see but you. Jesus did!

Dreams give people an incentive to live. Have you stopped dreaming? Can you dare to dream? Remember, make sure your dream comes from God; begin now and be willing to pay the price. I hope that your main dream will be to be with God for eternity.



Care for Young Adults

Do not merely look out for your own personal interests,
but also for the interests of others.

– Philippians 2:4, AMP –

I love young adults; they are spiritual, intelligent, and caring people. They love the church wholeheartedly, and they are looking to serve the church earnestly. However, many are leaving the pews, while others are disengaged. What can we do to alleviate this problem? I've learned three key components to young adult retention through my interactions with them.

Key #1

Young adults are looking for a spiritual church. Christ offers the best example of a spiritual church. In the New Testament church Jesus did four critical things: He prayed, lived a genuine godly life, helped the needy, and empowered His disciples.

By Christ's example, He demonstrated that prayer was not an option, but the most needed activity in life. Throughout scripture, we find Jesus praying at

every critical juncture. Jesus, at times, prayed all night (Luke 6:12). Every critical decision and activity was preceded by prayer—His baptism with the Holy Spirit and entrance into public ministry, commencing His evangelistic journey, selecting disciples, during His ministry, and before announcing to the twelve disciples His approaching death.

Jesus was genuine; He walked the talk. His life demonstrated His teachings. People wanted to be with Him because of His devoted life. Sinners and religious leaders alike were drawn to Him because of the life He lived. Jesus took time to help the needy and those suffering (Matthew 4:24). There was no town that Jesus' presence did not bring peace and healing. While His primary task was to save us from sin, He spent a great amount of time ministering to those in need, showing compassion.

Jesus deliberately empowered His disciples. For three-and-a-half, years He demonstrated how to live a life connected to God. Then He prayed for their unity (John 17), and sent them to preach the gospel (Luke 9: 1-27). He gave them authority and the Great Commission (Matthew 28). He sent the Holy Spirit to empower them to preach the Word until the end (Acts 1:8; Acts 2).

Key #2

Young adults are looking for a church that really cares about them. In the study “Lost and Found: The

Younger Unchurched and the Churches that Reach Them” by Ed Stetzer, Richie Stanley, and Jason Hayes, it is noted that 58 percent of 20-somethings would be more likely to attend church if people “cared for them as a person.” Young adults thrive when the people in church demonstrate they really care about each other. When we care, we are devoted to each other, accountable to each other, call each other, and do things together. A church that cares demonstrates love in action; they reach out, and also provide a place for fellowship and hospitality. People who are lonely, discouraged, or afraid, can come to church and find help in their time of need.

Key #3

Young adults are looking for a church that lives as a community. They love the idea of joining a small group in order to

A church that cares demonstrates love in action; they reach out, and also provide a place for fellowship and hospitality.

learn more about the Bible and Jesus. LifeWay research affirms that young adults are longing for community and fellowship with peers, looking for ways to reach people in need, and are circling the church but not always finding a home in it. Young adults are looking for connection. Community with other young adults is extremely important in their lives. LifeWay research says young adults seek authentic answers in the Bible and Christian tradition that are best learned through participation in small groups. Making a difference is

essential, and is accomplished by providing opportunities to meet the needs of others on a regular basis. Social action is cited as the major reason uninvolved young adults would consider becoming part of a church.

Jesus was a young adult with young adult disciples. They fulfilled God's mission because Jesus' church was a reflection of His life. Jesus' ministry, as well as contemporary research, confirms and validates the fact that young adults will be drawn to a church that is connected to God, caring, compassionate, and lives as a community. We can easily retain and attract young adults by using the small group model in our churches, demonstrating genuine love and interest toward those inside and outside the churches, and living a life that mimics that of Jesus. Prayer is the first and most critical step in implementing this model. Throughout His earthly ministry Jesus demonstrated the power of prayer. A focused effort to be like Jesus and care for young adults in our churches can lead to a revival. Nothing short of a revival will lead to retention of young adults. Ellen White said it best, "A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work," (*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 121).



Learn to Forgive

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

– Ephesians 4:32, NASB –

Throughout my ministry, I have seen many youth, young adults, and adults struggling with various battles in their lives. One of the most difficult battles is to be unforgiving. Once a young girl came up to me and said, “Pastor Peralta, I cannot forgive my mother; she hates me and she abandoned me.” Another youth from Michigan told me, “I hate my father for being unfaithful to my mother.” I remember on another occasion after I finished preaching to thousands at a youth retreat, a church elder told me that he can’t forgive his son for the horrible things he has done to his family. At one time or another we have all been wronged or hurt by someone. The question is, “How can we forgive when it hurts so much?” The Bible says, “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

(Ephesians 4:32 NIV) The Bible is clear when it states that we need to “forgive one another,” but how and where do we begin?

What is forgiveness?

Forgiveness means dismissing a debt. Forgiveness is the act of pardoning an offender. In the New Testament, forgiveness denotes a dismissal or release of penalty when someone has wronged you. In other words, when you grant forgiveness, you dismiss the debt owed to you. June Hunt, author of *How to Forgive When You Don't Feel Like It*, suggested that forgiveness is dismissing the demand that others owe you something, especially when they fail to meet your expectations, fail to keep a promise, or fail to treat you justly. Additionally, I say that forgiveness is to extend love and mercy; to give a gift of grace and compassion. Forgiveness is a decision to let go of resentment, bitterness, and thoughts of retribution. You might think that forgiveness is excusing the wrongdoer, but instead it is acknowledging that unjust behavior is without excuse, while still pardoning the offender.

How can we forgive when it hurts so much?

One thing to remember is that to not forgive will add more pain to your wounds. When you refuse to forgive you become stagnant and you are drained emotionally. A pattern of not forgiving will dominate and harden your spirit. It's important to note that forgiveness is a journey: the deeper the wound, the longer the journey,

but the deeper your relationship with God, the quicker this journey can take place. So, begin your journey with God. Ask God to do in you what you cannot do for yourself. Ask for the healing power of the Holy Spirit. Allow the Spirit to start a healing process in you, and recognize the benefits of forgiving. Louis B. Smedes once said that “When we forgive, we set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner we set free is us.”

Forgiveness is not something we do for others; we do it for ourselves. Mary Karen’s last words in her journal entry before her death in the Virginia Tech shooting was, “When deep injury is done to us, we never recover until we forgive; forgiveness does not change the past, but it does enlarge the future.”

Almost everyone has been hurt in life by the actions, words, and attitudes of others. Perhaps your father mistreated you, your parents’ divorce hurt you, your classmate offended you, a teacher dispraised you, a relative violated your trust, your mother criticized you, or you’ve experienced other offenses. These wounds can leave you with long-lasting feelings of anger, bitterness, or even revenge, but if you don’t forgive, you might be the one who pays the most. Pray for a heart of forgiveness toward those who

It’s important to note that forgiveness is a journey: the deeper the wound, the longer the journey, but the deeper your relationship with God, the quicker this journey can take place.

have hurt you. Forgiveness is a supernatural response empowered by God. It takes time, that's why it's a journey; but when you let go, you become free. You can purpose in your heart from today onward to embrace forgiveness, hope, and love.



Be Compassionate

Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.

– 1 Peter 3:8, NIV –

Jesus lived a compassionate life. Compassion was an integral part of His ministry. He was compassion in the flesh. Everywhere He went He demonstrated a compassionate attitude toward others. One of the most famous stories in the Bible is the parable of the Good Samaritan. This parable portrays not only how compassionate we need to be, but how compassionate He has been with us. Jesus is the Good Samaritan.

The word compassion is a very profound word that means to suffer with and empathize with the one who suffers. Compassion is caring for the less fortunate who need a solution to their desperate situation. It is paying close attention to a person who has been disgraced and doing something to bring grace back to their life. Compassion is the response to the suffering of others with a sincere desire to help. Compassion motivates

people to go out of their way to help those who hurt physically, spiritually, or emotionally. Compassion is being in direct contact with individuals in need in their environment. Compassion is preaching the Word through our actions. But some of us have lost sympathy and compassion. The Scripture says that at the end of time we would lack love in our lives (Matthew 24:12). Not because it's necessary, but because this world has withdrawn from God. God is love. The closer you are to Him, the more love is injected into your DNA. In

Compassion motivates people to go out of their way to help those who hurt physically, spiritually, or emotionally.

order to continue having compassion, we need God in our lives.

We have become distanced from God. This world is full of hate and therefore lacks compassion. The devil wants

to take away your sense of belonging. He wants to take away your principles and anything that God has given you. He wants to put you in a position of shame with your family and church. He wants to take away your dignity, self-esteem, and spiritual life. His goal is to destroy all of us. He wants to keep us distanced from God to numb our sense of compassion.

The Bible calls us to show compassion for one another. "And the word of the Lord came again to Zechariah: 'This is what the Lord Almighty said: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion

to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other” (Zechariah 7:8-10, NIV).

Jesus tells us in the Bible that there is a need to show compassion. “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest’ ” (Matthew 9:36-38, ESV). “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience” (Colossians 3:12, NIV).

Just as Jesus was known for living a compassionate life, we should be known by everyone around us for our acts of compassion. It’s God’s will for us to show compassion to one another. Decide today to draw near to God so you can be filled with love and compassion.



Dusty Disciples

He appointed twelve that they might be with Him and
that He might send them out to preach
– Mark 3:14, NIV –

Who likes dust? Most of us don't, and some people are even allergic to dust. However, I believe God wants us to become dusty. You may ask, "Are you sure?" Yes, God selected twelve young adults to become His dusty disciples and change the world. In the New Testament, those who follow Jesus are called disciples 269 times. So, the New Testament is about discipleship; I would even say, "dusty discipleship." What is a dusty disciple? There are two main characteristics of a dusty disciple.

What is a dusty disciple?

1. Someone who wants to be with Him

Jesus called His disciples to be with Him and then He sent them to preach (Mark 3:14). This is very important in discipleship. The first thing we ought to remember is to be with Him. A call to discipleship is

first a personal call to follow Christ. There is no other option; we must spend time with Jesus. His calling is for us to be with Him not just occasionally, or when we need Him, but consistently and permanently.

Discipleship is about dedicating our thoughts and energy into being with Christ. Prayer and Scripture are two ingredients that help us to stay close to Him. Through prayer we speak to God, and through His Word He speaks to us. The Bible says, “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17, NKJV). In the book *The Kneeling Christian*, it states, “We may be assured of this: the secret of all failure is our failure in secret prayer” (p. 14). Ellen White wrote that [Jesus’] “humanity made prayer a necessity and a privilege. He found comfort and joy in communion with His Father. And if the Savior of men, the Son of God, felt the need of prayer, how much more should feeble, sinful mortals feel the necessity of fervent, constant prayer” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 93). Amazing! Prayer and the study of God’s Word are critical for every true dusty disciple of Christ.

2. Someone who wants to become like Him

I have learned a lot from my wife Martha. She is an inspiration and a blessing to our ministry. We try our best to travel together, and one thing I have noticed is that the more I am with her, the more I know about her and learn from her. As disciples, the more we are with Jesus the more we will become like Him. Jesus said, “A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:40, ESV). A disciple needs to be like his master. What you

behold you become. The closer we are to Jesus the more we will look, act, think, and talk like Him. When Jesus said to the disciples, “Follow me,” it was because He saw that they could become like Him.

Disciples emulated the overall lifestyle of the Master; focusing more on conduct than knowledge. There is phrase in the Mishna that is interpreted as saying, “May you be covered in the dust of your rabbi.” The ancient disciple had to be so close

to his master, that the dust rising as he walked would cover them. Greg Ogden says, “The disciple is focused on imitation rather than information, seeking to emulate his

The closer we are to Jesus the more we will look, act, think, and talk like Him.

or her master and incorporating the master’s life into his or her heart and life” (*Transforming Discipleship*, p. 86). Becoming a disciple of Jesus does not happen automatically. It’s a training process. Discipleship is a journey, a process of a holistic growth toward maturity. Therefore, disciple-ship means following Christ, becoming like Him to the point where we resemble Him. We need to get so close to Him that we become dusty disciples.

Dusty discipleship is more about becoming and being, than doing. Discipleship goes beyond what I can do for God, it’s what can God do in me and through me. I like to put it this way: a disciple is someone who wants to be and become like Jesus. If we want to change the world, we need to become dusty disciples.



Let the Spirit Cover You

The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God.”

– Luke 1:35, NIV –

God Called the Girl, Mary

Mary’s calling is a direct message of hope and encouragement for the young people. In New Testament times, women got married at an early age. Mary was probably fourteen years old when God called her. She was engaged to Joseph; engagements were very serious contracts between two families. Any infidelity or sexual misconduct could result in death by stoning and dishonor to the family (Deuteronomy 22:23, 24).

Mary was likely a poor young orphan from Nazareth whose only close relative was her cousin Elizabeth. The name Mary, or Miriam, is derived from an Egyptian word that means “cherished” or “beloved;

but in Hebrew, one of the meanings of the root *mar* means “bitter.” Nazareth was a small village of approximately two thousand people. The inhabitants of Nazareth were proverbially a rude and less civilized class largely influenced by the Gentiles. In the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Jerry Batson points out that they had “an unpolished dialect, a lack of culture, and quite possibly a measure of irreligion and moral laxity” (see John 1:46). No wonder Gabriel said to Mary, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you” (Luke 1:28, NIV). In the Greek, the word for *greetings* is a present active imperative, meaning “be full of joy” or “continue to rejoice.” Mary should rejoice because of God’s grace. She now joins the list of those in the Bible who found favor before God (Genesis 6:8; 19:16, 19; Exodus 33:13). This phrase was used in contexts where God’s people are told to rejoice because God is about to deliver them (Joel 2:21–27, Zechariah 9:9).

Although she was a godly woman, it was by God’s grace that Mary was chosen. The phrase “highly favored” is used for all of God’s people and is an idiom for God’s special activity in someone’s life (Exodus 33:12, 17; Acts 7:46). Mary is blessed among women but not above women. Mary is the recipient of God’s grace, not the giver of grace (1 Timothy 2:5). “God chooses to use imperfect, but available, humans who choose to trust Him to accomplish His purposes in this world” (bible.org/book/export/html/21296). This is Mary’s greatness—

she is totally willing to allow God to use her, despite physical pain or social embarrassment. God knew the challenges Mary would face, but even in Nazareth, “the Lord is with you.” No matter where you are there is no challenge too great for God to accomplish His purpose in those whom He favors.

The Holy Spirit Came Upon the Girl, Mary

The Spirit is the Creator and Life-giver (Genesis 1:2; Ps. 33:6). The same Spirit who brought power and life to the church at Pentecost

(Acts 1:8), and was the source of resurrection to the dry bones in Ezekiel 37:5-14, also brought life into Mary’s womb. The first time we find God’s Spirit mentioned in the

Mary is blessed among women but not above women. Mary is the recipient of God’s grace, not the giver of grace.

Bible is in Genesis (Genesis 1:2). The earth was empty and in chaos but the Spirit was hovering like an eagle over its brood’s nest, protecting its creation. When God decided to organize and bring life, joy, and purpose on this earth, the Spirit was there. When something great is about to happen, the Spirit is there. God is saying to Mary that this world is empty; and this world is in chaos, but something great is about to happen. When the Spirit comes, it imparts power, protection, and purpose.

The Power of God Overshadowed the Girl, Mary

As Mary questioned the process, Gabriel told Mary that the power of the Most High will “overshadow” her. This is a very powerful and profound statement. In the Greek, “overshadow” is the word *episkiazo*, which means “to cast a shade upon,” “to envelop in a haze of brilliancy.” This word is used in the book of Acts describing how Peter’s shadow healed the sick (Acts 5:15). *Episkiazo* is also used in the account on the Mount of Transfiguration when Peter, James, and John were enveloped in the presence of the Spirit as a bright cloud (Matthew 17:5; Mark 9:7). The shadow, or cloud, is similar to the Shekinah glory that came to the tabernacle to represent the presence and power of God (Exodus 40:34-38). The cloud indicated God’s presence leading the people through the wilderness (Exodus 13:22; 33:9-10).

The Girl, Mary, Will Carry “The Holy One, the Son of God”

Gabriel was cautious to point out that the baby would be the “Holy One.” His body was prepared for Him by the Spirit of God (Hebrew 10:5) who “overshadowed” Mary. That word is applied to the presence of God in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle (Exodus 40:35). In other words, as Warren Wiersbe states, “Mary’s womb became a holy of holies for the Son of God,” (*The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 172). Jesus knew no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21); He committed no sin (1 Peter

1:22); and He had no sin (1 John 3:5). Paul wrote “Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifested in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16, NKJV).

The Bible says that God was pleased to have all His “fullness dwell in Him” (Colossians 1:19, NIV). Paul expands, “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (Colossians 2:9, NIV). In other words, “the fullness of God” was in Christ; He was human and divine (John 1:1, 14; Philippians 2:5-11). Paul is referring to Christ’s divinity in the flesh. The good news is that we can also “be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:19, NIV).

God wants to overshadow you, even if you come from a poor or dysfunctional family like Mary. Maybe you have been criticized, accused, and made bitter. Nevertheless, God has chosen you because of His “grace.” He has chosen you to overshadow you, to protect and assure you. Do you want to be overshadowed by God? Do you want to have the fullness of God? Can something good come out of _____? Yes, indeed. I will let Gabriel answer you: “The Holy Spirit will come on **you**, and the power of the Most High will overshadow **you**. So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God (emphasis applied)” (Luke 1:35, NIV). Paul reminds us, “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity,” (1 Timothy 4:12, NIV). As God’s Spirit comes upon you, He will cause good to come from you and change our world.

Conclusion

This world is full of hurt, sadness, and death. However, God loves this world, and He has placed you here to make it a better place. Though we long for Christ's second coming and our new mansions, while we are still in this world, we need to make it a place where everyone sees God in us. God has given us many gifts and He challenges us to share our gifts, to be like the eagle, to dare to dream, care for others, learn to forgive, live a compassionate life, become like Him, and be filled with His spirit. Only by doing this, can we change the world. Ellen White says, "We are all woven together in the great web of humanity, and whatever we can do to benefit and uplift others will reflect in blessing upon ourselves" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 534, 535).

