

DENDTIONAL January - December



Adventist Youth Ministries General Conference @Copyright 2021 by the General Conference Corporation of Seventh-day Adventists Youth Ministries Department.

The material in this book may be photocopied for local use in churches, youth groups, and other Christian education activities.

Special permission is not necessary. Otherwise, the contents of this book may not be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—without prior permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.

This e-book is licensed for your personal enjoyment only and may not be sold or exchanged for profit. Thank you for respecting our copyright.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New King James Version® (NKJV). Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Rights for publishing this book outside the U.S.A. or in non-English languages are administered by the Youth Ministries Department, General Conference Corporation of Seventh-day Adventist®.

For additional information, please visit our website, www.youth.adventist.org, email: Youth@gc.adventist.org, or write to Youth Ministries Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904 United States of America

gcyouth
@GCYouthMinistries
gcyouthmininistries.org

GCYouthMinistries
General Conference Youth Ministries









Index

Editor's Note Pako Mokgwane, Editor Associate Youth Director General Conference (GC)01 A Word from the President	Week 5: A Functioning VesselElias KasikaYouth Ministries DirectorNorthern Tanzania Union (ECD)Week 6: A House for Two
Ted Wilson	Yevhen Alokhin
President	Youth Ministries Director
General Conference (GC)02	Ukrainian Union Conference (ESD) 13
About this Devotional Maria Manderson Editorial Assistant Project Coordinator General Conference (GC)	Week 7: A Special TimeAlexander ShiginDivine Service BroadcasterCaucasus Union Mission
	Week 8: Healing Relationships
Week 1: Before You Go Pako Mokgwane, Editor Associate Youth Director	Roman Chisacov Youth Ministries Director Euro-Asia Division (ESD)
General Conference (GC)	Week 9: The Tension
Week 2: <u>Herd or Team?</u> Ignazio Barbuscia Italian Union (EUD)	Narcis Dragomir Young Adults EUD
Week 3: Make the Fruits Abide	Week 10: reDefining Church Jonatan Tejel
<i>Magulilo J. Mwakalonge</i> Youth Ministries Director East Central Africa Division (ECD) 10	Youth Ministries Director 17
	Week 11: What's My Value? Al Powell
Week 4: Lazer House Mwebesa Ivan MEDICAL STUDENT	Youth Ministries Director Inter-American Division
(MBChB, Gulu University) Uganda Union (ECD) 11	Week 12: Back Home Hiram Ruiz Lugo, Public Campus Ministries Director 19 Inter-American Division
	Week 13: Coin PeopleYuliberth A. GonzálezUniversity StudentInter-American Division





Editor's Note: Pako Mokgwane, PhD

Associate Youth Director General Conference

I want to personally thank you for taking the time to read this devotional. The idea behind this book is to encourage and challenge Seventh-day Adventist young adults and their leaders to be intentional in identifying, connecting, and establishing—or in some cases re-establishing—relationships with disconnecting and disengaged members of their youth group. The first thing to we must do in trying to reach missing members is to acknowledge that while this is a YOU PROBLEM (my problem), it is also an EVERYONE problem. It is a problem that is too big for you to fix alone. You need the Lord and others to help you.

Getting your young people back to Jesus is not going to be an overnight fix. It will take time. BUT remember that patience and consistency is the key. Know who they are and be attentive to their stories.

So, as you read the pages of this book, we hope you will be inspired, and that the challenges throughout the book will encourage you to recommit to reach those you are called to serve.

#IWillGo

CHECK OUT OUR TIP PAGE AT THE BACK OF THIS BOOK.







A Word from the President "What Will You Do for Christ?"

Ted Wilson, PhD President Seventh-day Adventist Church

"Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity." 1 Timothy 4:12, NKJV

Throughout biblical history, God has called young people to accomplish His purposes and plans. The youth have energy and creativity that the older generation simply does not have. We read of Daniel and his three friends, sent into Babylon to witness to a pagan king; David, who used his musical talent to soothe Saul's possessed mind; Esther, who saved her people through miraculous means; and Isaiah, who, when called to serve God, answered: "I will go!"

Dear friend, today God is looking for young people to play a vital part in His last day proclamation. He wants you to be an example—one who is completely committed to Jesus Christ and wholly allows the Holy Spirit to work in your life powerfully and wonderfully.

We read in a wonderful little volume by Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students,* that "your voice, your influence, your time—all these are gifts from God and are to be used in winning souls to Christ" (p. 529). Whether it be through social media ministry, book distribution, spending One Year in Mission, or outreach through your local church or youth group, the Lord is calling you to share with others the wonderful news of His soon return.

Will you say, "Yes, Lord, I will go! I will do everything I can to share with my neighbors, with my friends, with my loved ones, this precious, wonderful message." You see, God wants you to be involved. We are told in the Spirit of Prophecy that He could've tasked the angels with this responsibility, but what a privilege and blessing it is to be involved in the work of salvation!







About this Devotional

Maria Manderson, Project Coordinator

The purpose of this devotional is to awaken a passion in us to embrace the Church's mandate to restore, rebuild, and revive. Like Nehemiah, when he was

getting ready to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem that were torn down, he sought the Lord and then went out boldly. We can do the same; seek the Lord and get to work. Nehemiah was there to see God rebuild His people. People's lives were changed, the builders were built-up. And guess what? It took only 52 days to rebuild that wall. A miracle? Yes. But how did they do it? Everyone had their part of the wall to build....that's how they did it. 52 days.

This 52 weeks devotional is intended to help restore, rebuild, and revive us. The main goal is to inspire us to go out there and rebuild faith and hope in people who have walked away from their faith or have become disengaged in the church and its message. Do not feel overwhelmed, do it, one person, at a time. That is how you will reach the missing young people in your church....one person at a time. Stand at your block of the wall. We all have a portion of the "wall" that God has called us to build/rebuild.

In 52 days, the entire city wall was rebuilt. In 52 days, the walls were rebuilt, and lives were changed.

In 52 weeks, lives can be rebuilt; lives can be changed. With God and you, it can be done. Let's do it.

I Will Go!





DEVOTIONAL

Quarter Que



Before You Go...

Pako Mokgwane, PhD Associate Youth Director General Conference

Bible Text: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. (John 13:3)

Three very important points jumps out of this text. First, the command to love; secondly, that love is an action word; and thirdly, the example of Jesus, who has loved us. The command to love and the motivation to love strengthens the force of the action (to love).

Seeking former church members is a call that every disciple of Christ must answer. In most cases, we worry about former members, yet we do nothing to address the issues that caused them to leave in the first place. It's about time we look inward as young people to establish our own goals (OGs) so that we may be intentional about cleansing the chambers of every space in the physical sanctuary and put things in place to help retain and nurture those who join the church. Following that, self-examination is necessary. Change begins with self. We must not expect a miracle "to happen" ...the miracle is us. Every member bear personal responsibility. Be the change you want to see.

Just as the ground is tilled before the seed is planted, so should be the surrounding/relationships in the church. We cannot afford to continue sweeping issues under the carpet. Forgiveness and reconciliation must happen for joy, love, and laughter to be fully and liberally expressed. It is not the attractiveness of the building, the swag on Sabbath, or the ability to recite all the memory verses of the quarter, instead it is the open, honest relationships—the ones that increases authenticity among each other that is important. When these behaviors become commonplace the unity, love, and understanding among members is enhanced, and acceptance and a sense of belonging is the result. Cosmetic spirituality and relationships will always fail. So, before you go out to seek former members, love the current members. Become vulnerable with each other. Jesus, our example, did it. He loved us when we least deserved His love. The current members must be retained through love and caring. Only then will the church become attractive to former members. They must find a landing space that is warm and kind. (*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.* John 13:35, King James Version)

Challenge:

What are you doing to foster a welcoming and loving environment in your local church? Speak to three members about this and make a pact to bring about the necessary changes.

Extra Reading:

Stevens, L. (2019). Inter-America Division Embarks on Mission to Seek Former Church Members. See Here Link





Herd or Team?



Ignazio Barbuscia Youth Ministries Director Italian Union

Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. (John 15:13)

Do you know the difference between a pack and a team? Being part of a pack means "joining a group by conforming to dominant behaviors, passively following others." Being part of a team (or group) means "working side by side ready to sacrifice for the good of each other or the community." To be united and coordinated for a common function. Many animals organize in groups, but often it is not the good of the community that drives them to do so. For example, bison move in groups, but each bison tries to gain an inside position to shelter from predatory attacks. They stay in the herd for their own interest, not that of the community. On the other hand, bees and ants are true team players. Research has shown that they work together as one and are even willing to die for the good of the colony. In a hive, everyone helps the community, even if it means that they have to die. In beehives and anthills, the good of the community is more important than the good of the individual bee or ant. In fact, these communities do not behave as a union of many individual animals, but as a single individual. Jesus had formed a group. He called them one by one. A small group with which to share more intimately the experiences and joys of the Gospel. One of the strengths of a small group is that it is easier to develop an atmosphere of mutual understanding and acceptance. Jesus would say to that group he called friends and to all of us, "Greater love has no one than to lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). May each of us discover the importance of being part of a team made up of various elements that are strongly connected, of a happy and united group that does not think only of itself.

Challenge:

Write or call three of your friends, who were once part of your church group and now no longer attend. Ask them how they are doing.

Extra Reading:

Gillespie V.B., Gillespie T.J. *Hey! Love Them and They Will Come!* John Hancock Center for Youth and Family Ministry and AdventSource (2011).





Make the Fruits Abide



Magulilo J. Mwakalonge Youth Director East-Central Africa Division

"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you." John 15:16

I love avocado. Our family has three avocado trees in our garden. This year all three trees produced sumptuously; so many fruits that they started to ripen almost at the same time and were in danger of being rotten. But getting rotten is not the only danger that faces the fruits. They can also be stolen or eaten by animals, get diseases, or become spoiled by bad weather!

Jesus, in John 15, reminds His followers that the gospel privileges and advantages that we are enjoying are the results of His initiatives to choose and appoint us. Christ's followers will do well to seek to know the mission that is set before them, lest they disappoint the one who chose them. Jesus states the reason here – "that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain..."

As followers of Christ, love should prompt us to embrace our church's "I Will Go" initiative and see it as an opportunity to bear fruits of spirit, more specifically the fruit of success in saving souls for Christ.

The expectation to make the fruit remain is embedded in the one bearing them. The Master expects both missional results. Just as we are keen to bring new souls to Christ, we need to be equally interested to make them stay permanently for eternal life. We are called to bear quality fruits that will last. To jealously present to Christ pure virgins (2 Cor. 11:2), the souls of good quality, committed fully and permanently to one husband and Lord, Jesus Christ.

At the beginning of His earthly ministry, Jesus announced the will of His father that: "all He has given Me I should lose nothing but should raise it up at the last day" (John 6:39). Near the end of his earthly ministry, He exclaimed: "I kept them in Your name ... and none of them is lost ..." (John 17:12).

Pray that this mind of Christ Jesus will be in you. God is waiting for you to say today, "I will go bear the fruit, I will go make them abide forever, and I will go find the missing members." Get involved in establishing the missing members database, establishing connection teams, and make the best use of opportunities available during the *Home Coming Sabbath* and the *Youth Spiritual Commitment Celebration Sabbath* to celebrate their return.

Challenge:

All around us are members who get discouraged, offended, tired, overwhelmed with false doctrines, and backslide. This week start the efforts of looking for one of those and labor prayerfully to bring her or him back to Christ and His Church. Christ died for them and they belong to Him, and with God by our side we should go and seek them.





Lazar House



Mwebesa Ivan MEDICAL STUDENT (MBChB, Gulu University) Gulu University, PCM Ambassador Asst. Stewardship and Development minister; Gulu University, Northern Uganda Field. Gulu University Seventh-day Adventist Student Association. (GUSDASA)

I was naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came to Me." Matthew 25:36

Our message is a world-wide message. And while means is not to be absorbed in one line of work, so that the last gospel message cannot be carried into new fields, the medical missionary work is not in any wise to be disparaged; it is not to be represented as an inferior work. The world is a great lazar house; it is corrupted under the inhabitants thereof, and misery is universal. EGW: Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 8, p. 169.2

"The world is a great lazar house". This is a stark reality of our current world. Even when technologies advance, medical knowledge increases, drug production is skyrocketing, these are so decimal to curb the disease incidence and burden in the world. Instead, with determined rates, disease continues to firmly grasp the human race. Each day, hour, and minute someone is diagnosed with a disease; as a result, pain, sorrow, death, and grief, attacks the lives of many people. The majority have held a position that this is the Lord's providence, and that there is nothing they can do about it. Perhaps, only living to wait on their turn to meet what life is about to dish them out.

"Disease is an effort of nature to free the system from conditions that result from a violation of the laws of health" (EGW: Ministry of Healing, p. 127).

Disease is from the enemy. Through disobedience to the laws of health many have lost the most precious God-given treasure, health. Generation after generation, the race of Adam is deteriorating in the strength needed to resist these diseases. Disabilities, debilitation, and depression are lifelong companions of many in the world today. When He was on earth, and even now, Jesus' response to such a state is compassion. We read that He was moved with compassion and healed all their diseases; sometimes, in cases of death, He resurrected. Even in the last fleeting seconds of life, He saved. His mission was and is to bring complete restoration. People were filled with joy and praises. What an example to follow!

Our loving Jesus has given us a health message and the assurance that He will heal us, not only physically but also spiritually—for by His stripes we are healed! Complete and final healing will occur at His second coming, when Christ will transform our bodies, freeing them from sickness and death. This Christ will do because, "He took our infirmities and bore our sickness." When many are hopeless, we can lift up the Saviour who died for them and is willing to save. He is the great physician of all time and His presence brings life and comfort.

Will you follow his footsteps? Will you go to the beds of the sick and invalids? Will you teach the health message faithfully? Will you lift up the Saviour—the source of healing? In simple faith will you pray with the sick? Will you VISIT the sick?



Week 4

"I Will Go".



A Functioning Vessel



Elias Kasika Youth Ministries Director, Northern Tanzania Union Conference

"Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." (Philippians 2:1, 2)

Adventist Youth as well as other church members should not only know about the Adventist message—the message of salvation through faith in Christ that transforms our life. They must positively impress those they mingle with to imitate the biblical lifestyle, which is a result of Christ working in them and through them. The Adventist Youth Motto, which says, "The love of Christ compels me." as well as the Mission of Adventist Youth, which says, The salvation of youth through Jesus Christ. We understand youth ministry to be that work of the church that is conducted for, with, and by young people." has no effect if it cannot be applied in a manner that all claiming to believe it also demonstrate this belief practically in their life. Why this strong emphasis?

"All Christians are called to be practical theologians, disciples whose obedience to God in Church and in world puts our truth calls into practical. Theology that goes unmanned and unnoticed is powerless to change lives or ministries. Practical Theology assumes that we live our conditions about who God is and how God works in the world, and that we practice, our Theology most faithfully when we do it on purpose," (GC Senior Youth Ministry Handbook – Copyright 2013)

In Philippians 2:1-4 the Apostle Paul outlines the basic behavior we should be engaged in as true disciple of Christ. The emphasis of these activities is to give encouragement to those who have lost hope and comfort those in sorrow through the love of Christ. Those who are connected using Christ's method, automatically feel the urge of fighting selfish ambitions, by surrendering themselves to God, to be used as He sees fit. Philippians 2:1-4 is a call to a personal commitment to show love for each other; operate in the unity that Christ expects of us; do nothing according to our own selfish ambition or vanity; and to not only think of ourselves, but to think of others. Yes, in other words, Christ is calling each youth and whoever wants to imitate His humility to live a Christian life that demonstrates His love.

Slowly but surely, every local church can apply this method and organize Youth Service Teams of men and women who, not only connect, but help to unite the whole church and make it active in serving and functioning as a vessel to draw others to Christ. Let us pray for the Spirit of Christ to revive the youth in churches to achieve this divine purpose.





A House for Two



Yevhen Alokhin Youth Ministries Director Ukrainian Union Conference

"He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust." (Psalm 91:1, 2)

While serving young people, I often travel and visit unfamiliar cities. Sometimes I must spend the nights on trains, sometimes on buses, and sometimes driving a car. And there are other times when I may find myself in a new place where I do not know anyone. But, on some occasions I spend the night with my good friends. It is an amazing time when we can communicate, support each other, remember many things, and pray for and with each other, even stay-up until late in the night. However, no matter what the conditions of the trips are—good or bad—there is one desire that never leaves me, I want to go home! Because it is always better at home.

God says there is one place where you will feel most comfortable, cozy, and protected. A place where you are always welcome, where you are always expected, regardless of what state you are in and what is happening to you. This place is His HOME. This is the place where you meet and communicate with Him. The place where you can ask questions, even the most inconvenient ones, where you can get answers. Where you can feel support and acceptance. Where you are always loved.

However, there is one "but". You will be comfortable there only on one condition - if you stay all the time.

«He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High» – he, who stays there always.

His home is not a hotel or a hostel where you can rent a room and stay for one night when you feel bad, sleep, and in the morning go on about your business, forgetting about this place in a few days, and never return.

Home is your permanent place of residence, where you always stay. A place where you want to return, where you want to be!

One more detail.

This house is only for two.

One place is already occupied by Christ. The second is free.

The decision is yours!

<u>Appeal:</u>

Live in God's presence constantly. Enjoy His love. Daily receive from Him relevant messages, through which He will touch your heart. In order to change you, He needs "full access" to your life. Do not let the Lord become a part of your life but make Him your whole life!





A Special Time



Alexander Shigin, Broadcaster, Caucasus Union Mission

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16).

To understand the relevance of the Sabbath School, it is best to break this term into two components: Sabbath and School.

Each of us, in the past, present, and future, somehow faced the concept of "learning" or "studying". The biggest difference between regular school or university classes and Sabbath school is that they are not focused on God.

Since the beginning of the creation of the world, God has separated the Seventh day, the Sabbath, for worship and rest. It is on the Sabbath day that God wants to communicate with us and reveal Himself. Opening only one book-the Bible, we have access to interesting historical facts, events, and stories of outstanding personalities, as well as very serious, deep truths that can radically change the way of our thinking, lifestyle, and give peace to our mind. But above all, we have access to a most loving God.

If for many, a secular school is a kind of place of balance between obtaining knowledge and implementing it in community, the Sabbath School is aimed at completely satiating us with a spiritual component revealing God and the diversity of His character. Sabbath School allows you to occupy hearts and minds with God and His presence. The presence of God in our lives makes us "the light of the world" (Mat 5: 14). We become able to fulfill the great commission of Jesus Christ: "Go and make disciples of all the nations" (Mat 28: 19). In our time, when people have access to a lot of information and you can learn almost everything with a click of a computer mouse, the world still does not know Christ and the true meaning of His life, and saving death and resurrection. Anyway, dear friend, each of us unconsciously becomes both a "student" and a "teacher." Two important questions are, What we can learn? and What can we teach the people around us? The Sabbath School helps us to gain valuable knowledge and become a conductor of this knowledge, changing the world, and revealing Christ to it.

The students and teachers of the Sabbath School are friends of Jesus, whom He recognizes when He returns to this earth for the second time. While many will hear the words of Jesus "I do not know you... go away," the disciples of the school of Christ will exclaim with joy "Here is our God!" Jesus will know them!

Appeal: Try to find some new young people this week and invite them to Sabbath school. Try to find out their impressions and inspire the students and teachers of the Sabbath School to be active in spreading the message about Jesus.





Healing Relationships



Roman Chisacov Youth Ministries Director, Euro-Asia Division

"So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend" (Exod. 33:11)

Why do we need friends?

It is comforting to know that you are surrounded by people ready to accept you as you are and help you in a difficult situation. It is especially pleasant to meet such friends at least once a week, on Sabbaths, and maintain friendship with them for many years.

Nevertheless, sometimes you do not even realize that such people are near you. This happened to me. I was 12 years old when I got into trouble. After a bad fall from my bike, I realized that blood was flowing down my leg. I managed to stop the bleeding but was afraid to tell anyone about it. The problem was that I took the bike without permission. That is what children do sometimes!

However, the consequences were more complicated than I could have imagined. Within a few days, my leg had doubled in size. I had a serious infection and needed urgent surgical intervention. Time passed and I had to go through four surgeries. I did not attend school for a whole year and had to learn how to walk again. It was a very difficult and dangerous period of my life. For more than a year, I was bedridden and had no way to communicate with my friends.

However, one Sabbath morning I saw a group of folks in our yard. These were my friends from the Sabbath School class who came to pray for me and support me. It was very nice to see them again. My friends visited me for a year. Each visit gave me energy and strengthened our relationships. At the same time, I was thanking God for the miracles He had performed for me and for the friends He had given me.

Twenty-five years have passed since these events, but I continue to remember these meetings with warmth. These memories help me to understand the importance of the presence of church family and friends in our lives.

As Christians, we have a special advantage. By reading the Holy Scriptures and attending church every Saturday, we find not only Christian friends, but also our main Friend – our Savior Jesus Christ.

Relationships are extremely important for a person, as they help us change. There are friends, God, and I. Only God does not change, because He is perfect! However, we need to change and grow to gain spiritual maturity. If we are not ready for change then we may not be able to build healthy relationships. Relationships are a special tool that God uses to influence a person and help us to improve our character. However, the greatest advantage of a person is to talk to God and build relationships with Him, just as Moses did.

Appeal:

Try to analyze your relationship with God and your friends today. Write down the changes that you need and include them in your prayer list. Thank God for the Sabbath school, your friends, and His constant desire to prepare you for meeting Him, and make Christ your best friend.





The **Tension**



Narcis Dragomir, Youth Pastor, Sagunto Church Chaplain, Adventist Campus in Sagunto, Spain. EUD

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me (John 15:4)

"Retention." We hear it in church very often. What can we do to prevent young people from leaving the church? The issue may be in the answer rather than the question. We should, perhaps, reflect on: *Why* do we want young people to stay in the church?

Retention implies *keeping, storing,* or *taking care of.* Instead of focusing on keeping those who we currently have, we could show the great things we have that will inspire and attract them to be part of the church. Then (spoiler alert) we got it! That's the gospel. The idea of *retention* requires balancing the permanent *tension* between what they want and what the leader wants them to know. If we dedicate all of our time to <u>this</u> task we will inevitably burn out.

The young people who are part of our church have the responsibility of sharing the gospel to the world. If we forget this, whatever we do will be pointless. When the church switches from making disciples who are focused on understanding, living, and proclaiming the gospel to mere consumers who only listen and live morally correct lives, we will definitely find ourselves in that tension —that leads to deterioration—between what the church biblically is and what we say the church is.

We were called to *proclaim* not to *entertain*. We will never be able to compete with the kind of entertainment the world has to offer. However, it will not become a problem if we offer the gospel instead in its pure form as an alternative: a life changing experience made possible through the saving power of Jesus Christ.

We were called to bear fruits, not to consume them. In John 15:4, Jesus tells us: "Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me". If our life does not bear fruits (Galatians 5:22-23) we shouldn't be afraid of changing it. If our actions don't help us love others and Jesus more, we will not be making disciples (John 13:35) but consumers.





reDefining Church



Jonatan Tejel, EUD Youth Director

"And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." Luke 15:20

I am a pastor's kid (PK). As a child I moved from city to city following the calls my father got as a pastor. Every time we moved, I felt the fear of going to church, wondering if I would be accepted, loved, and considered important. A church with no love loses its meaning and stops growing. One of the reasons for the 1st century church's growth was the way they loved each other and the world. Love should be a defining characteristic of the local church. I still remember the churches I have been a member of; in some, people were accepted rapidly, and in others, you had to be very strong in your beliefs to keep on attending.

Most of the time when you think about church, you think about hierarchical entity, or in a building in which people get together to listen to some music and enjoy (not always) a sermon based on the Bible. If we have this picture in mind when we talk about church, we'll be far away from what the primary purpose is... not a building but the people.

When I was a teenager, I struggled with the church's attitude towards me (and others), and for a while became somewhat rebellious. After two-three years of rebelliousness I felt like the prodigal son, recognizing that I had strayed far from Jesus and needed to go back to Him. I had a conversation with my mom about my fear about how the church would treat me, how they would look at me, and how they would talk to me. My mom suggested that I have a conversation with the leader of a recently formed singing group and ask if they would include me in the group. My mom's hope was that including me in the singing group would start the process of reconciliation. I approached the leader and his response surprised me: "You cannot be part of this singing group; this is only for an elite group of people, and you are not part of that elite group". I was crushed. What a gracious way to reconcile a young person who wanted to come back to church. I may not be the greatest singer in the world, but I could sing well.

Sometimes we forget what it means to be church. I suggest that we should rethink church. What really is church? One thing COVID-19 has taught us is that church is not just a place, it is a personal experience, that happens to happen most of the times in a building. Let's live out church. Let us be church—and I do not mean only when we get together as a community of believers. Let us also live out church in the wider community, with people who do not think, believe, or act like we do. People who do not know our God. People who once knew our God but have no chosen to walk away from the faith. Let us live out church and make its values change and shape our character into a reflection of Jesus. Let us create a church of welcoming people who are trying day by day to become a mirror of who Jesus is.

Let us work every day to build stronger relationships in our churches and in our communities. And remember, while we are redefining *Church*, we cannot forget our need to build a deeper and lasting relationship with God—we must find time to focus on our own spiritual growth, and development.

My prayer for you is that as you grow spiritually your heart will be opened to hear the Holy Spirit and accept God's call to go wherever he wants you to go. Immerse yourself in the mission of sharing the Good News of salvation and Jesus' love. Go wherever He wants you to go. Be ready to lead in any capacity that the Lord will call you to.





What's My Value?



Al Powell, IAD Youth Ministries Director

"And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.' " (Luke 15: 31, 32)

Have you ever wondered how much the elements in your body are worth? Recent research shows that 65% of your body is oxygen, 3% nitrogen, 0.35% potassium, among others. What is shocking, is that the value of the over fifteen elements that our bodies are made up of, is just over one dollar! As a young man or woman, you might ask yourself the question "What is my value?"

Let's look at your value based the biblical reference in Luke 15. Here we see three different elements that are lost - a sheep, a coin, and a boy.

Let's take a closer view. The sheep probably unintentionally wandered off, maybe searching for greener pastures, just observing, and then realized that it was lost. Perhaps recognizing this, it moaned and attempted to retrace its steps. Was the sheep found?

Then the coin. It did not lose itself; it was misplaced and we see that the owner placed much value on this coin. Did the owner search night and day until the coin was found? Get this! You could be lost right where you are, no one knows nor understands – not even you know the degree to which you are lost. Thirdly, the lost boy - well he decided to run away. He probably thought he had enough of church, the rigid principles, way too much advice. The good news is that he came to his senses; he recognized that he was lost and decided to come back home.

Both the sheep and the coin were found because of their master's passion and understanding of their value. Deliberate and intensified efforts brought the sheep home and found the coin.

We too, can get lost easily. We may have to pray for someone, so they can realize that they are lost and return home. The good news is that all three were found and there was joy and celebration like none before in heaven! This assures us of our value in life!

How much is your value? You are far more valuable than anyone could ever experience or say. Christ gave His life for you! If you are feeling lost – cry out to Jesus! He is willing and waiting to find you!





Back Home



Hiram Ruiz Lugo, IAD Youth Ministries Director

"And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." (Luke 15:20)

There are days when you say, "today was a busy one, hopefully, I can sleep well tonight." The day I felt like this, the phone rang at midnight. On the other side of the phone, was a sad voice that said, "I'm Freddy and I'm in Freedom Park. Can you come? I need to talk to you." A thousand thoughts ran through my mind. We had lost him from church for a while and I had not heard from him, now he was calling to talk to me.

Roger Dudley, in his report on why teenagers leave the church, mentions in one of his presentations "...Small things count. When our young people are suffering – as many are – just a little **compassion**, a little **importance**, a little understanding, can be like manna from heaven for them." *(Simposio de Ministerio Juvenil, Montemorelos Nuevo León 2002)*. In other words, we should give them what Christ gave us—love, compassion, and acceptance.

The night was cold and dark. The place where I was to meet him was not necessarily a safe place to meet someone at night. However, something told me that I had to go as soon as possible and give him some attention. "Just a little bit of importance." I was unaware of what was happening, but I felt that I had to go. I managed to put on a jacket over my pajamas with some sneakers and left home. I rode in my car in search of my mysterious date, an encounter with a young man who had a desperate cry in his heart, and now he was looking for his pastor.

My heart was racing with all kinds of questions running through my mind. Is he drunk? Is he on drugs? Has he committed a crime and is looking for an escape? With a thousand thoughts going through my mind, I arrived at the place. After looking around for some time, I saw him, sitting on a bench—waiting for his pastor. I walked to where he was and said, "Hello Freddy". What came next left me speechless. There he was—a young man crying. After many attempts, he said, through tears, "Things are not right with me, things are not right at home and things are not right in the church, so I don't go anymore". He further went on to say, "I have no place to go, and no one is interested in me. I am alone. Today, I don't know why I called you, but thank you for coming." I listened to him for almost two hours. When he was finished talking, he said, "Thank you for coming, I needed it very much. I don't know what I'm going to do with my life but thank you for coming. I'm going back home. Goodbye pastor, I don't know what will become of my life."

I saw him leave and got lost in the distance. I offered to take him home, but he did not want me to take him home. I returned to my car shivering, frustrated and sad for not being able to do more. I thought about how many individuals we have lost who are not in the church, those who did not return. Where have we failed? Why did they leave the church? Roger Dudley gives us insight into why young people are leaving the church, he says solitude, irrelevance, intolerance, convenience, personal conflicts, are some of the reasons. Doctrinal conflicts are not given as a reason by young people for them leaving the church. This is not the reason why they are leaving the church. My mind runs through all of this, and I wonder again where we have failed them.





I did not hear anything about Freddy for many years. The talk we had, ended as a farewell. From time to time, I tried to find information about him or his location. After a while, I left the city.

While in the state of Texas in the United States and preaching in a week of prayer, I saw Freddy entered the church. Though many years had passed, I could never forget his face. I was sure it was Freddy. He was well dressed and had a smile on his face. I could tell by the smile on his face that he was a changed person. I wanted to stop the sermon and run to meet him, but I couldn't. I smiled at him as he walked down the aisle and sat on the front bench. I couldn't wait to finish the sermon. Instead, I connect with Freddy during the sermon by saying, "right Freddy" while preaching.

Freddy told me that when he saw me, he said, "Pastor Hiram, I am back home." Now I see that he is well dressed and in the church with his Bible in his hand and I couldn't help but have a tear run down my cheek. What happened this time and why did Freddy come back?

As soon as I finished preaching, I went down from the rostrum and we hugged each other. "I am here", he told me, "I am a colporteur. God did not let me down, I ran away from my house, and I spent a long time struggling, but I am here close to God. I'm back pastor, I've come back home."

As a youth leader, I would like to hear many young people in our congregation say, "I'm back home in the church."

"The little things count. When our young people are suffering – as many are – just a little compassion, a little importance, a little understanding, can be like manna from heaven for them." (Youth Ministry Symposium, Montemorelos Nuevo León 2002).

Further Reading:

Dudley, R. (2000) Roger Dudley. *Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church*. Hagerstown, Md: Review and Herald.





Coin People



Yuliberth A. González, University student, Inter-American Division

"Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." Luke 15:10

One coin is missing, that is the problem. Even when the woman had another nine, that missing coin is going to teach us three things about church members that are missing, even when they are not separated from the church.

First, *the coin does not know what its place is*. Everyone has a place in the body of Christ. Yet, there are Christians who still don't know that they have a place here—in the body of Christ, the Church. They are unable to see their worth and are comfortably sitting in a corner, lost, collecting dust. They firmly believe that the place they are in must be where they belong since, after all, they are part of the church. A silver coin does not belong in a dusty corner and a child of God does not belong in the shadows.

A second thing is that *the coin is irreplaceable*. The woman had 9 more coins but the place of the missing one could not just be taken by any of the others. "Coin people" need to know that no one other than themselves will be able to take the place God has prepared for them.

Finally, the coin needs help to get out of the place where it is. The most important thing about these "coin people" at church is that they need help to get out from under the cabinet. The woman in the Bible story takes a broom and start sweeping the house. That is our part of the story. We are God's brooms in church. When we let God use us, we will go to the dusty corners of our churches, drawing out silver coins for God to polish and place them where they belong. It only takes a prayer to be used as God's instruments. It all ends with a celebration because someone very valuable and irreplaceable was missing in the home but was found. In searching for the coin, we imitate Christ who came to our dark planet searching for us.

Challenge:

What are the dusty corners of your church? Pray today for God to show you any missing coins there might be in your local church and reach out to them (text them, call them, snapchat them!) Offer them a short prayer and ask that God will place them where they belong.





DEVOTIONAL

Quarter Two





Index DEVOTIONALS FOR Q2, 2022

Week: 14 - David, Take Off Your Shoes! Author: Gary Blanchard Director, GC Youth Ministries	21	Week: 21 - Get the Youth Involved Author: HoYoung Choi Youth Director, Northern Asia-Pacific Division	28
Week: 15 - A Word of Life in Prison Author: Byard Parks	22	Week: 22 - No Escape Author: Yu Wen Hsiao Young Adult, Northern Asia-Pacific Division	29
Youth Director, MENA Week: 16 - Released from Prison Author: Ruth Boyd Youth, MENA	23	Week: 23 - A Matter of Honor Author: Carlos Humberto Campitelli Youth Director, South America Division (SAD)	30
Week: 17 - Prison and Pain Author: Anonymous	24	Week: 24 - The Pastor is Here Author: Udolcy Zukowski Adventurer and Pathfinder Director, South America Division (SAD)	31
Week: 18 - Don't Let Them Get Away! Author: Tracy Wood Youth Director, North American Division (NAD)	25	Week: 25 - Golden Rule for the Golden Agers Author: Gerson Guzmán Gómez Youth Director, Central Peru Conference	32
Week: 19 - A Place to Belong Author: Vandeon D. Griffin Associate Youth Director, NAD	26	Week: 26 - A decision of love Author: Erika Faustino Director, South America Division (SAD)	33
Week: 20 - Joy in Heaven Author: Armando Miranda, Jr. Associate Youth Director, NAD	27	Bonus Week: Pay Attention Author: Mwenya H. Mpundu Director, GC Youth Ministries	34



David, Take Off Your Shoes!



Gary Blanchard Youth Director, General Conference

He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give Him glory because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the springs of water." Revelation 14:7 NIV

I love playing practical jokes on people but one day I took things too far. At the Bible College, I attended many years ago, there was a secluded prayer garden beside the Religion Department. Many of my fellow theology students and I would often retreat there to ask God to deliver us from another Hebrew exam or to help us find a wife.

One day I saw a fellow student named David praying alone in the garden. I snuck up on him, hid behind a tree, and in my deepest voice said "David, take off your shoes you're on holy ground!" I then peeked around the tree to catch his response. I'll be honest, I expected him to say something like "Ha! Ha! Gary, I know it's you!" but he didn't. Instead, I watched him reverently taking off his shoes!

I was suddenly flooded with guilt, and quickly apologized to my friend and exited the garden. I've never forgotten that experience. The joke was on me that day because unlike me, David demonstrated true reverence for God.

According to the KJV Bible Dictionary, "reverence" means "to show respect or fear." In scripture, this taking off one's shoes was practiced by the priests, so as not to bring dust or dirt into God's presence. They also showed reverence by bathing, combing their hair, and putting on their best clothes before serving in His temple (Patriarchs and Prophets chapter 30, Leviticus 10:6, 16:4, 21:10 NLT).

You see, reverence is how one treats a king or dignitary! Many cultures and religions today embrace this same outward show of respect for those they hold in high esteem. Therefore, casually, or carelessly walking into the presence of the King of Kings would be out of the question for millions today. But reverence extends beyond the outward and into every aspect of our lives. When we respect and fear God, we obey His laws. The first angel's message of Revelation 14:7 KJV says, "Fear God and give Him glory for the hour of His judgment is come and worship him who made heaven and earth the seas and the fountains of water." Notice this last phrase speaks directly to the Ten Commandments, specifically the 4th commandment (Exodus 20:11).

In 1 John 1:7, the Bible says, "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin."

What we need now more than ever, is a deeper understanding of the holiness of God and the importance of "walking in the light" of His presence. Then we would see more clearly our great need for Jesus, His grace and gift of forgiveness, righteousness, and repentance from sin. Perhaps then, like my friend David, we would be quicker to take off our shoes in His presence.

Challenge:

In what area of your life do you desire to show greater reverence for God?





A Word of Life in Prison



Byard Parks Youth Director, MENA

God sets the solitary in families; He brings out those who are bound into prosperity; But the rebellious dwell in a dry land. (Psalm 68:6)

"The man who will be your cellmate has murdered two people by strangling them, good luck." The words from the prison guard's mouth left Pedro in terror. Pedro was in prison for carrying drugs for a gang. He had hurt some people but never killed anyone. Pedro's mind raced as he thought about spending the night alone with that man.

The door opened and the new man entered. Four walls, two beds, a toilet bowl, and a locked door. Pedro decided if he struck first—the guards may move him out. Pedro's heart was pounding as he thought of what he needed to do. He saw the murderer laying on the bed—reading a Bible! Pedro shouted at the stranger, then got up and hit him hard in the face. Pedro told me, "I was terrified." But the murderer said nothing.

Pedro hoped the man would call the guards. The man did not call the guards. Crazy with fear Pedro reasoned to himself and decided he would go over and punch the murderer again. This time blood began to come from the man's nose. The man was silent and held the Bible on his chest.

"I didn't sleep at all that night. I thought for sure that man would strangle me." Pedro told me.

A few days later they placed 23-year old Pedro in solitary confinement. They took all his clothes and left him there with nothing but a Bible! Pedro said, "You can't imagine how crazy you can go in prison by yourself with no one, just walls, and a toilet. The loneliness, the silence, it is too much. Though not even allowed clothes, that lonely prison cell did have a Bible! One book, two eyes, and a heart needing a friend." Pedro says, "That was where the miracle all started for me."

Pedro wasn't a good reader — but what he read changed his life. Within two years Pedro's sentence was shortened because of his good behavior, and he was released from prison.

Our modern prison systems don't often allow youth or strangers to just go and "visit" prisoners. As a pastor, I have visited prisoners on death row in New York's famous Sing Sing Correctional Facility. I have conducted Bible studies for prisoners in a locked room in Warsaw. I have preached sermons to prisoners in broken-down prisons in Africa and the Pacific Islands. Surprising to me in all these contexts was the readiness of the prisoners for a kind word from the Lord. Prison life can be scary, even for criminals. We must remember that "Prisoner" is a monochrome label that doesn't distinguish the nuance of the spiritual work God is doing in a life.

Pedro got out of prison and came searching for more of God. From a magazine in prison, he had learned of the Seventh-day Adventists. Within two weeks of getting out of prison, he got on a bus and came to an SDA college near him. He came on campus asking, "Could someone teach me more about Jesus?" That lovely question fell on my ears. Pedro found Jesus and is now helping others find the same freedom in Christ.

Challenge:

Think about who is the "loneliest" person around you. Likely you don't see them often. Arrange with a friend to go and visit that person. **You might not** have any idea how many prisons and prisoners there are in your country.

Click on this link and do some research: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_prisons

You will be surprised! Pray for those people.





Released from Prison



Ruth Boyd MENA

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, Because the Lord has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound..." Isaiah 61:1

Their one-room garage home was small, oppressive, and dark. Outside was persecution, unfriendliness, and distress. The home provided shelter, but hardly more. Yet, it was all they had for three awfully long years. Three years of not enough room to even walk about. Three years of inhumane living conditions. Some call it "refugee life." These Middle Eastern women called it a prison. But aren't refugees supposed to find refuge?

Could handouts from the UN create refuge? Or food baskets? Or food vouchers? Or random donations of clothes and various pieces of old, broken-down furniture equal refuge? Certainly, all these things helped. However, every human strives to move beyond bare survival.

A year ago, these ladies that lived in this "home" were brave enough to trust me to help them start a small business making greeting cards. At first, I think they just thought it was a fun craft, but when they began to understand that this could be a livelihood for them, their eagerness to sew matched their need. The cards are hand-stitched with thread in flowers and the shapes are gorgeous.

Unbelievably, 96 cards later, they were able to move from their confinement. They now have a full-size bathroom with a bathtub, a kitchen, a bedroom, a large living room, a vast window, a garden area, and a place to dry laundry. More importantly, they are much safer. No longer are men threatening them. No longer are they filled with fear to open that heavy metal door; that door that for them was a prison door. Now they can move beyond survival. Today they have a place of refuge in the Middle East.

"Released from prison", is what they declare. I cannot describe the joy and deep satisfaction of handing hope to refugee people. It warms my coldest moments. It motivates my lowest days. It inspires me to want to help more refugees, more people who need a release from whatever prison that holds them.

Sometimes the prisons that hold people are not literal bars, but circumstances that make us feel stuck. Those circumstances are real, but God is not limited by prison bars. Does He want to use you today to set somebody free?

Last week we added another woman refugee to our team, which we now call, The Threads of Hope. This time from Iraq. She is an exceptionally talented crafter and full of joy despite her trials and losses. I have a feeling that she will add elements to this project that are inspirational.

Threads of Hope is beginning to take shape. We now have a logo and are building our social media platform. We are growing and learning with it as we try to navigate taking a simple idea and turning it into small micro industries. I am a nurse, not a businesswoman. My neighbor who is helping me, is a physical therapist. Yet here we are, on a quest to lift people from the captivity of circumstance and set these women free.

It is liberating for me to help to liberate them! As liberating as opening a prison door.

Challenge:

Buy a gift for someone from this website! It will help these refugee ladies. https://threadsofhopelb.weeblysite.com/s/shop





Prison and Pain

Week 17

Anonymous

For John had not yet been thrown into prison. (John 3:24)

"The penalty for becoming a Christian in Iran is torture in prison, preceding execution.

Sahar was living in a small village in Iran.

Her family was devout Muslims, yet their active religious life did not change Sahar's sadness. Then one day, an Adventist youth, Brother A, introduced the Bible to her, and she started studying the Bible with a faithful believer online. During her online Bible study, Sahar would read the Bible in a very quiet voice. The online pastor did not know why she read God's word in a whisper.

For two months they studied this way, because of Sahar's family. But then they found out that she had become an Adventist. "Would they take her to jail?" No. On Christmas Day, December 25, 2020, her brothers took her to a secluded place outside the village, and there they nearly cut off both her hands by cutting her wrists. They left her in a ditch to bleed to death. In Islamic society, this is called honor murder.

Brother A heard this news from his friends, and he went all over the fields around the village looking for Sahar. When he found her she had bled out heavily and was unconscious. She was close to death. But miraculously she survived. With the help of Brother A and other believers, she was able to get surgery on her wrists. Now, even after 10 months, she does not feel any sensation in her hands. She doesn't have much strength in her right hand, but she can lift light things.

A few months later, Sahar, Brother A, and another Adventist from Iran were invited to a Bible seminar in a different country. At the seminar, they were able to worship together, study the Bible, and sing praises loudly—something they could not do in Iran.

During the seminar, we had a time of testimony. Sahar's testimony touched all of us there deeply.

Now she is unable to return home after an honor murder attempt. She cannot use her hands properly, so she cannot work. Can you imagine facing an unknown future at 29-years-old? Sahar has little or no prospect of employment because of the damage done to her hands, no place to stay, and is living with Brother A's family, who has evangelized her. Through this pain and trial she says, "I came to know Jesus more deeply" and testifies that her former sadness has turned into happiness with Jesus.

On the last day of the seminar, young Brother A came to me and asked:

I want to spread the gospel to people in Iran. Can I bring some gospel materials to Iran?

I was concerned about his safety because so many of our contacts have been tortured in prison. So, I asked, "Are you really sure you want to take that risk?"

But he said to me, "I really want to share Christ, no matter the cost."

So, Brother A went into Iran with many evangelism materials; as much as he could take with him in secret. Thankfully he was able to get home from the border without any problems.

Please pray for our brothers and sisters in countries of high persecution. Persecution and prison for faith are not just ancient problems, they are a modern reality.

Challenge: Set yourself a goal of praying for the leadership of Iran every day for 14 days. Prayers, like drops of rain, bring life, and renew the world.

Research: Read stories and learn about the persecuted church at: https://www.persecution.com/





Tracy Wood, DMin Director, North American Division Youth Ministries

Don't Let Them Get Away!

Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13).

It is not uncommon for young people to go through a time when they deliberate if they want to continue following and practicing the spiritual beliefs of their parents or family. There is an innate internal need to decide, "What I believe" rather than to declare, "What my parents believe." It is part of the growing-up process for everyone. Each young person has their unique perspectives and insights as to what makes sense to them spiritually. Their individualized journey to personal faith is a life-long experience.

How we, as family, friends, and church leaders, respond to each young person in their quest for spiritual life, is crucial. Their decision if they will stay in a relationship with us and stick around, or if they will walk away is—to a large extent—in our hands. Their beliefs and the practices they develop can take them away or can keep them closer to us. If they stay connected, then we are thankful and enriched; if they drift away or outright rebel, then we are sorrowful and broken-hearted. However, as friends and leaders, we can still stay connected with them even if they walk away. We do not have to let them go. We can continue reaching out in love and care, showing them interest. We can continue giving them time and attention in ways that are meaningful and relevant to them. We will NOT let our friends go. We will GO after them and continue to nurture friendships with them!

Solomon said, "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." (Proverbs 17:17 NKJV). Proverbs goes on to say, "A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." (Proverbs 18:24 (NKJV). Jesus modeled friendship and staying close to those whom others thought He should not be around. "Then all the tax collectors and sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured saying, 'This man receives sinners and eats with them.'" (Luke 15:1-2 NKJV). Notice that Jesus did not expect this group of people to come to the synagogue to hear him teach or preach. Rather He met them in their places and spaces and their timeframes to share His love and care for them. We can do this too if we are intentional about loving our friends who may not think or act like us.

Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." (John 15:13 NKJV). And then He showed us what he meant by this when He literally laid down his life for His friends – meaning – for us. We too can share love with others as Jesus did. We may not be called to give up our life for another, but we may be called to give up our time and attention for others. We may be called to devote our lives to lovingly pursue those who may not be following Jesus. We can GO! We will GO!







A Place to Belong

Vandeon D. Griffin, DMin Associate Director, North American Division Youth Ministries

And Jesus, moved with pity, touched him and said, "I want to! Be healed!" Mark 1:41(TLB)

Stricken with certain illnesses at times prevents you from having community with friends and sometimes even family. The recent global pandemic, Covid-19, is an example of this isolation problem, this not connecting with people. Current Covid-19 protocols require a six-foot distance from each other, frequent handwashing with warm water, use of hand sanitizer, and wearing face coverings. Ultimately it has in so many ways prevented family members from getting together to celebrate, connect, and create cherished memories.

Covid-19 has caused many of us to live isolated from each other, and for those who contract the disease, the constant threat of unacceptance looms over their heads. This has been hard on so many. Multiple surveys and studies confirm what we have known for years, that God created us to live in community, and the lack of community, a touch, a feel, results in all kinds of emotional challenges. In short, we all want a place to belong. When that place of belonging is snatched away from us, anxiety and depression are the results.

Covid-19 is the modern-day leprosy. We see in the Bible where leprosy prevented you from being accepted by society, family, and friends, and relegated you to be around only those with the same disease, leprosy. Think about it for a moment, wanting to be accepted by family or friends but you are not able to have a place of belonging, all because of your condition. Many young people in our church might feel unaccepted because of their appearance, or perhaps because their family dynamic is not like others at church. In the church, we have young people who feel unaccepted because they do not have the things that others may have, i.e., Jordan brand kicks, iPhone, or even their own car at 18 years of age. This causes a level of depression and anxiety that should not be. Even if your economic status or portfolio doesn't mirror that of an NBA athlete, PGA star, Soccer star, one should never be made to feel inferior to another human. This leper faced many challenges as the community of faith and society that once cared and even tolerated him turned their backs on him. His community would rather see his suffering than salute him and resolve his issue.

Finally, he does the unthinkable and breaks all protocols and laws instituted by the church and makes his way to Jesus. He wanted community so desperately that he is found "begging" for healing. Jesus, breaking all protocols touched him and declared "be thou clean." This is powerful because this leper is afforded the precious moment to be reunited with family and friends. Jesus accepts this man, but He also gives this man a place to belong. My earnest plea is that we never turn anyone away no matter what they may be facing, but that we always give them the blessed assurance that they are accepted by Jesus Himself!

Challenge:

What are you doing to make sure that all are accepted in the body of Christ? Connect with likeminded believers and create opportunities for those who feel rejected by Christ and the Church to experience HIS love either for the first time or again and pass it on to others.





Joy in Heaven



Armando Miranda, Jr. Associate Youth Director, North American Division Youth Ministries

In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven't strayed away! Luke 15:7 NLT

The parable of the lost sheep is the first of three stories found in Luke chapter 15 about people who are not where they should be. It is interesting to see that Jesus placed such an emphasis on people who were lost. You get the feeling that Jesus wants to make sure that people who feel rejected and lost hear and see what His mission is.

To help the people better understand God's love, Jesus told a story of a single sheep who gets lost. There is no explanation about how it got lost, when it got lost, or why it got lost, it simply states that the sheep was lost. Sometimes we are tempted to start looking for reasons why someone is no longer attending church, why they are no longer part of the community of faith or try to figure out what exactly drove them away. But finding all this does not matter much, because the bottom line is, if they are not walking with God, if they are lost out there, without the support of the community of faith, they are in danger. The reason they left is secondary.

Jesus continues with the story and specifically says in verse 4, "If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won't he leave the ninety-nine others in the wilderness and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it?" (NLT)

The example of Jesus in Luke 15:4 is clear, He calls His people (you and I) to search for those who are lost, who are not connected to the community of faith that serves Him. He calls on us to search for them until they are found, just as He, the Divine Shepherd did.

What can we learn from the good Shepherd in this parable? We can learn that we have no excuses. Yes, we should pray for those who have left the faith, but we must do more than that. We must LOOK for them and rejoice when we have found them. They may be hurt, angry, discouraged, and unhappy. But we still need to look for them, we still need to find them and share the good news of God's love and forgiveness with them, and trust that the Holy Spirit will do the work of winning their heart.

In verses six and seven, Jesus finishes the story with the following words, "When he arrives, he will call together his friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.' In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven't strayed away!" (NLT)

Challenge: Jesus is our example. His words are true and are a challenge. Will you go and find those who have left the faith? Will you go and treat them with respect, understanding their pain, not judging their actions, but loving them and showing them grace? Will you rejoice with heaven as you help your church/community of faith embrace with arms open wide those who have left the church?





Get the Youth Involved



HoYoung Choi Youth Director, Northern Asia-Pacific Division

Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord." (James 5:14, NIV).

At the core of the Youth Ministries', "I Will Go" focus is the desire to have all youth and young adults actively participate in ministry (TYI-Total Youth Involvement). It means that our youth should be a part of all the church services such as worship service, mission activities, and community service. They should visit church members who are sick as well as those who cannot attend church services. These activities in particular, help ease young people into a life of service to the church body.

Ellen White says "Let different branches of missionary effort be systematically laid out, in which they (young people) may take part, and let them be given instruction and help. Thus they will learn to work for God." (Gospel Workers, 210).

Twenty-seven years ago, I was a 25-year-old young collegian and joined the 1000 Missionary Movement and served for a year in the Philippines. I saw that many people were suffering from skin diseases and fever without any proper treatment in my mission field. My Filipino partner and I went from house to house finding patients. We helped them with very simple natural treatments, such as charcoal therapy, hydrotherapy, and oil massage therapy. I witnessed many infants and children return to normal after a very high fever. Above all, I think it was the most correct choice giving a year to serve the Lord.

However, I don't think our young people need to go abroad to participate in the Total Youth Involvement initiative. The sick church members are waiting for the young people in loneliness. They are convalescing at hospitals, sanitariums, or in their home, close by to us. Let us visit our sick church members and pray for and with them. Encourage them and offer them assistance and kindness through your visitation. Through these practical actions you are taking your first step into Total Youth Involvement and being "the pleasing aroma of Christ" (2Corinthians 2:15) in the world.

Challenge:

Create a list of those who are physically and mentally suffering in your local church. Setup a texting/phone calling group and divide the names among the group.

Be an encourager. God is calling you to be a part of this work. How will you respond to God's call and people's needs?





No Escape



Yu Wen Hsiao Social Worker (Youth), (Taiwan Youth Camp President) Taiwan Family Hope Association

But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. (Jonah 1:3 NKJV)

'There is no need to look out for me, save it for other people. I will let you know when I need you.' These were the words told to me by my teenager. At that time, I was working as a social worker. Disappointed, I sat there trying to make sense of what I was just told. I remember that I kept wondering if I had done or said something wrong which was why he was refusing my help. Then, my mind went to my family, and I started to think of how I am in my family. I have had a similar reaction towards my parents when they are showing their love and care for me. It must be that I am missing something. Why don't I understand their way of loving me? So, because I do not understand their way of loving me, irritated and frustrated, I shut them out.

Sometimes, our relationship with God is also like this!

At times we do not feel the love from God and it feels like His way of guiding us and His will are not aligned with our own will. When this happens, we tend to just shut Him out and run away from Him, as Jonah did. When God sent Jonah on a specific mission he ran away and did not go where God sent him. He thought he did not need God's guidance. At first, Jonah was afraid of going to a pagan country because he did not understand why God was sending him to a sinful, heathen city. Jonah thought that his missionary work was not about going to a country with no repentance, so he ran away from it to another place. However, our God is an amazing God with means and ways of doing things that we cannot even begin to imagine. In the end, God got His way and Jonah turned back and obeyed Him. Jonah willingly sacrificed himself to save other people on the boat by being thrown into the sea.

Although sometimes we think we should use our way to escape from God's way, we need to know that He can do all things, and He can bring us back just to let us know how much He loves us. He is able to use ways beyond our imagination or understanding to have us turn back to Him. God helped Jonah understand that he needed to adjust his thinking on how God felt about people who repent from their bad ways.

What lessons can we learn from Jonah and Nineveh? We learn that we should always obey God. When we disobey God we should accept His punishment. God's grace is unfathomable. With God, there is always a bigger picture, ask God to show you the bigger picture of caring for those He cares for. True repentance can only happen when we acknowledge what we have done wrong. None of us deserve God's mercy, this is why it is called Grace. Grace, grace.... God's grace.

Challenge:

Starting from today, we can learn to accept love through family, friends, or church. Ultimately, we learn to accept God's love. It can be done in many ways, for example, learning to take advice, accept help, and offer support.







A Matter of Honor

Carlos Humberto Campitelli Youth Director, South American Division

Children's children are a crown to the aged. (Proverbs 17:6, NIV)

While studying the meaning of honor, I found a definition that helped me understand it better, "To honor is to put a crown of recognition on someone's head." That definition draws a very powerful image in my mind.

Honoring parents and grandparents is not just about obeying them, respecting them, or caring for them when they need it. It is also about crowning their heads with recognition that everyone else can see.

As I pondered on this definition, I was reminded of Proverbs 17:6: "Children's children are a crown to the aged," which states that the fruit we bear as children and grandchildren is like a crown upon the heads of our loved ones. The way we live, the way we work, and our testimony will place a crown on our loved ones, which may be of thorns (for evil) or glory (for good). That crown will exalt them or shame them.

Honor is a public matter, and our lives are not disconnected from our family members. The greatest honor we can give them is to act in such a way that they can be commended for our cause. Think about it, what can make your parents and grandparents prouder? Why is it so important for God to honor elders? I understand that there are several possible answers, but one answer I believe is that the Lord identifies Himself as Father.

Sigmund Freud, the atheistic psychoanalyst, stated: "A person's attitude toward his biological father determines that person's attitude toward God." This means that the child who is unable to honor a visible authority will hardly be able to honor an invisible authority. If we dishonor our parents, grandparents, or the elders with whom we relate, we will end up dishonoring God too.

Honoring elders is a matter of great importance to the Lord. Choose today to honor God and the elders with your own life, acting with justice and living a life of goodness and full trust in Jesus.

Challenge:

Honor your parents and grandparents today. Tell them you love them and thank them for something they have done for you recently or some time ago; remember that time is not ours and tomorrow may be too late.

Extra Reading:

WHITE, Ellen G. Messages to Young People, chapter 111.





The Pastor is Here

Udolcy Zukowski Pathfinder and Adventurer Director, South American Division

The glory of young men is their strength, gray hair the splendor of the old (Proverbs 20:29).

I was young and full of energy. She was 76 years old and had way more energy than me! Maria de Souza Guerra lived alone on a mountain far from the city. She accepted Jesus through the influence of a literature evangelist. When she finished the Bible Studies, she went to a river to be baptized, but her brother was completely against her decision and followed her, threatening to beat up the pastor if she was baptized. But she didn't give up. Her brother was so impressed that he grabbed her by the arm and asked, "Maria, are you really going to be baptized?" She immediately said yes, and heard from him: "Then, I am going to be baptized with you!"

They lived faithfully, isolated in the mountain for many years. After his passing, Maria continued alone, witnessing about Jesus whom she met. She wrote Bible texts on the walls of her cabin so "those who pass through this path will know that I am a servant of God."

I traveled 2 hours on a bus, 1 hour on a train, and almost 1 hour walking to arrive at that place. Maria was always active, climbing the mountains with teenage energy. She only had three teeth, but when I visited her, with a spontaneous smile, she said: "The pastor is here!"

Maria Guerra read her Bible three times a year, studied the Sabbath School Lesson daily, carried out her devotion alone, and sang hymns with melodies that she invented. Besides, she put aside tithe and offerings and waited 3 months until I visited her.

Three times a year I visited her to strengthen her faith and minister the Lord's Supper, but it was me who was strengthened!

Twenty years later, I had the opportunity of going back to that cabin. Would she recognize me? What a surprise when I saw her, now 96 years old, and she smiled spontaneously saying: "The pastor is here!"

The most benefited in caring for the elderly are ourselves. There is much wisdom and experience under gray hair. Learn the best way with those who already walked it.

Challenge:

Visit an elderly person who is not able to go to church and hear his/her faith stories.

Help your pastor or elder to minister the Lord's Supper.

Extra Reading: https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/137.332





Golden Rule for the Golden Agers

Gerson Guzmán Gómez

Youth Director, Central Peru Conference

Even to your old age, I am He, and even to gray hairs I will carry you! I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you. (Isaiah 46:4).

This Bible text is very reassuring to those of advanced age! Jehovah does not abandon those who are loyal to Him. Rather, He promises to sustain, support, and guide them throughout their lives, even into old age.

However, how does God reach these white-haired people?

He reaches them through us! You and I are the hands of God taking care of the weakest, worn down by the passing of the years. We do not have to wait for a special holiday/festive date, or for them to be in delicate health to get close to them. We should always be caring for them. Our concern should be like Joseph's at the time when he revealed to his brothers his true identity and asked them, "Is my father still alive?"

When we examine the story of Joseph and Jacob's reunion in Genesis 46:28-34, we see that a famine was raging in the land of Canaan, and Joseph sent word to his father to, "Come down to me; don't delay. You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me [...]. I will provide for you there [...]. "As we can see, honoring elderly parents includes protecting and supporting them when they are unable to care for themselves. Joseph gladly assumed this responsibility. Later, upon learning that Jacob was approaching, "Joseph had his chariot made ready and went to Goshen to meet his father, Israel. As soon as Joseph appeared before him, he threw his arms around his father and wept for a long time." This welcome was much more than a formal show of respect. Joseph loved his old father with all his soul and was not ashamed to show it to him. If we have grandparents, elderly parents, elderly in-laws, elderly church brothers and sisters, we should continually extend affection to them as well. I invite you to fulfill the Golden rule, love your neighbor as yourself, and the Christian duty of caring for the elderly.

Challenge:

Try to do to an elderly person what you would like people to do for you when you are that age.

Suggestion:

Identify an elderly person ahead of time and ask them (or someone close to them) what you can do for them that they have not been able to do for themselves in a while. Try and do this task/responsibility for them.

Extra Reading: Genesis 45-47.




A decision of love



Erika Faustino

Youth Director, East Sao Paulo Conference, Central Brazil Union Conference

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy think about such things. (Philippians 4:8)

This Bible text is very reassuring to those of advanced age! Jehovah does not abandon those who are loyal to Him. Rather, He promises to sustain, support, and guide them throughout their lives, even into old age.

However, how does God reach these white-haired people?

He reaches them through us! You and I are the hands of God taking care of the weakest, worn down by the passing of the years. We do not have to wait for a special holiday/festive date, or for them to be in delicate health to get close to them. We should always be caring for them. Our concern should be like Joseph's at the time when he revealed to his brothers his true identity and asked them, "Is my father still alive?"

When we examine the story of Joseph and Jacob's reunion in Genesis 46:28-34, we see that a famine was raging in the land of Canaan, and Joseph sent word to his father to, "Come down to me; don't delay. You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me [...]. I will provide for you there [...]. "As we can see, honoring elderly parents includes protecting and supporting them when they are unable to care for themselves. Joseph gladly assumed this responsibility. Later, upon learning that Jacob was approaching, "Joseph had his chariot made ready and went to Goshen to meet his father, Israel. As soon as Joseph appeared before him, he threw his arms around his father and wept for a long time." This welcome was much more than a formal show of respect. Joseph loved his old father with all his soul and was not ashamed to show it to him. If we have grandparents, elderly parents, elderly in-laws, elderly church brothers and sisters, we should continually extend affection to them as well. I invite you to fulfill the Golden rule, love your neighbor as yourself, and the Christian duty of caring for the elderly.

Challenge:

Try to do to an elderly person what you would like people to do for you when you are that age.

Suggestion:

Identify an elderly person ahead of time and ask them (or someone close to them) what you can do for them that they have not been able to do for themselves in a while. Try and do this task/responsibility for them.

Extra Reading: Genesis 45-47.



Week 26

Back to Index

BON<u>US WEEK</u>



Pay Attention

Mwenya H. Mpundu

Administrative Assistant, General Conference

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. Acts 20:28

This verse shines a light on what I believe are two major aspects: "Pay attention to yourselves and to all the flock." I think it is no coincidence that paying attention to yourself comes first. Making sure that you are filled before you go out and fill others. Even Jesus did this. He would often "withdraw to desolate places and pray." (Luke 5:16) Jesus would regularly retreat from large gatherings to reenergize Himself by communing with the Father. He made sure to pay careful attention to His own wellbeing and spirituality as He fulfilled the work placed upon His shoulders.

But how do you do this practically? Many leaders I have spoken with have mentioned how they must be at church every week, or their ministry won't function. As a leader we cannot be okay with being the only who knows how to make our ministry work. In Proverbs 11:14, King Solomon counsels us that "where there is no guidance, a people fall, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety." What does this safety look like? It looks like having enough leaders to give you a break so that no one gets burnt out. It looks like having people with different spiritual gifts to work together, you won't have to be a teacher, secretary, treasurer alone. No one should shoulder the burden of developing, maintaining, and propelling a ministry alone. This is how you will be able to take time and refill.

The second part of the verse reminds us to pay careful attention to the flock. The Holy Spirit has given us the duty of caring for the church of God. Not just to care for them in teaching the Word, but I believe that the Holy Spirit, our comforter, has given us this duty so we can comfort others, like He does. We need to be aware of those who are in our flock. As Church leaders we often think of just caring for the flock spiritually, but we must remember to care for their mental and spiritual health as well.

Remember this verse and its lessons and allow it to guide you as fulfill the whole will of God.

Challenge:

Try to schedule a Sabbath per month or at least every quarter to have actual rest in the lord. Have someone else on the staff take over, plan so that everyone knows that you will be away that sabbath. Take care of your soul and let the Lord fill your cup.





DEVOTIONAL

Quarter

three - four



Index 01 - DEVOTIONALS FOR Q3 - Q4

Week 27 - I'm going out Author: Dr Nick Kross Youth Liaison South Pacific Division	38	Week 36 - Walking the talk Author: Jennifer Rizpah Ashish Young Adult Southern Asia Division	47
Week 28 - Go Serve! Author: Pr. Misikaram Guguna Youth Director Papua New Guinea Union Mission (PNGUM)	39	Week 37 - They will still Author: Jeba Andrews Office Secretary - Southern Asia Division	48
(PNGOM)		Week 38 - Making a Difference	49
Week 29 - Helping the Sick	40	Author: Elena Gold Prakash	
Author: Amy Grinsted		Office Secretary - Southern Asia	
Pathfinder,		Division	
South Pacific Division			
		Week 39 - Youth in the Church	50
Week 30 - You Have The Power	41	are important	
Author: Busi Khumalo		Author: Srikanth Shendikay D.	
Youth Director		Coordinator, Youth Department,	
Southern Africa-Indian Ocean		Southern Asia Division	
Division		Week 40 - Loud Silence	51
Week 31 - Inmates are Family Too!	42	Author: Dr. Andrés J. Peralta	
Author: Bongani Ndlovu,		Associate Youth Director,	
Youth Director,		General Conference	
Zimbabwe West Union Conference			
		Week 41 - Caring for the elderly	52
Week 32 - He Is My Refuge	43	Author: Taryll Viviers	
Author: Charity H. Moonga		Head of Student Ministries	
Master Guide		South England Conference (TED)	
Southern Africa-Indian Ocean			FD
Division		Week 42 - I Will Go with Enthusiasm	53
Week 33 - Ministry of God's Grace	11	Author: Yunuen Carrillo	
Author: Francis Amer		Information Technology Director	
Youth, Chaplaincy & PARL Director		British Union Conference (BUC)	
Southeast Asia Union Mission		Division: Trans-European Division	
(SAUM)		(TED)	
Week 34 - I was in prison and	45	Week 43 - Loyal love	54
You came to me		Author: Zlatko Musija	
Author: Petronio M. Genebago		Pastor and Youth/ Children	
Youth Director		Ministries Director,	
Southern Asia-Pacific Division		Adriatic Union Conference	
Week 35 - Remember	46	Week 44 - A Caring Adventurer	55
Author: Jamie Eloise M. Bicua		Author: Ugochukwu Elems	
Southeast Asia Pacific Division		Youth Director	Asit
		West-Central Africa Division	

DEVOTIÓNAL

Index 02 - DEVOTIONALS FOR Q3 - Q4

Week 45 - Say the Word Author: Precious Osinachi Young Adult West-Central Africa Division	56
Week 46 - The Least of These Author: Alfred Kwasi Asiem Youth Director Southern Ghana Union Conference	57
Week 47 - A Lifestyle of Mentorship Author: Kenia Reyes-de León Senior Editorial Assistant GC Youth Ministries	58
Week 48 - A Faith to Live Author: Maria Manderson Editorial Assistant GC Youth Ministries	59
Week 49 - Forgiveness: a tricky proposition? Author: John Pack, Assistant Purchasing Manager General Conference	60
Week 50 - Not an Option Author: Maria Manderson Editorial Assistant GC Youth Ministries	61
Week 51 - A Reminder from The Cross Author: Prakash Jacob Young Adult Southern Asia Division	62





I'm going out...

Dr Nick Kross Youth Liaison South Pacific Division

I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' Mt 25:36.

Jesus was a man of action. He did more than just talk, he walked with all people. For Jesus, every day was an opportunity to bless, heal, add value and offer dignity to others who had lost hope. There are so many people today who are also with no hope. Single moms, lonely students, and the elderly who are isolated and need help. What can we do right where we live, to actively offer the love of Christ to our family and friends? Even during lockdowns, we can pray for and contact those around us who need support and encouragement.

We all know those who for various reasons are lonely and need help. Visiting people in the hospital, in prison, and in the elderly care centers is something we can all do to make a difference and offer hope and healing to the needy in our society.

Our lives can so easily become full of meeting our needs, our desires, and our wants. Planning and achieving our dreams isn't a bad thing, if those plans don't obscure the Kingdom vision God has planned for us. Jesus calls us to follow Him, and He promised in Mark 1:17, that He would make us fishers of men. His call to follow implies that He has work for us to do. It is in the act of going out to meet the needs of others that we begin to see people through the eyes of our heavenly Father. In His wisdom, God gives us the honor of partnering with Him to achieve His goal of salvation for His lost sons and daughters. This is our true calling and no matter where we live or work, the vision is the same. Go out and meet the needs of those around us. So, I'm going out.

Challenge: Ask God to provide opportunities for you to meet and help those who are lonely, sick, and need help. Pray for them and connect with them wherever you can. You will be blessed if you do.

Extra reading: *Desire of Ages,* Chapter 33: "Who Are My Brethren". Link: https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/130.1538







Go Serve!

Pr. Misikaram Guguna Youth Director Papua New Guinea Union Mission (PNGUM)

"Now He arose from the synagogue and entered Simon's house. But Simon's wife's mother was sick with a high fever, and they made request of Him concerning her. So He stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. And immediately she arose and served them." Luke 4:38-39

We are not the first ones to be sent out to those who desperately need our help. Jesus was the first one commissioned by God to go. He declared, "... as the Father sent me, I am sending you" John 20:21. No need was too far from our Lord and Savior. He walked with the people. He acknowledged their longing for help. He embraced and liberated them from all kinds of bondage — whether physical, mental, social, or spiritual. He also prioritized the needs of His disciple-making team.

In Luke chapter 4 we find that Jesus returned to Galilee after healing a demon-possessed man. Now, He is asked to heal Peter's mother-in-law—Jesus rebuked the fever, and she was healed. Here we see Jesus paused and dealt with an internal need of one of the key members of His "Go Team". The kindness Jesus showed to Peter and his family was very important in Peter's own involvement and participation in the calling Jesus had for him.

Every recognized human need is an invitational opportunity to go, help and make disciples. Let us pay attention to this phrase- "Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon" Luke 4:38. Young people, we are serious about serving others, we should be willing to leave the synagogue (church) and go to where the people are. Let us be counted as world-changers as we go. Leave the Synagogue, Go and Serve.

Challenge:

Step out of your comfort zone and visit those you know who are in need. By doing this, you will be serving the same way Jesus did.

Prayer Impact:

Dear God, help me by the power of the Holy Spirit to leave the synagogue and serve in the homes of others. Amen!

Extra reading: *Steps to Christ,* "The Work and The Life" p,77-84. Link: https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/108.296







Helping the Sick

Amy Grinsted Pathfinder, South Pacific Division

"Is anyone among you sick? Let them call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick and the Lord will raise him up" (James 5:14-15, NKJV) Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. (1 Timothy 4:12, NKJV)

With a global pandemic (Covid-19) occurring right now, the message of helping the sick has never been more relevant. Not only does sickness destroy physical health, but it can also cause spiritual health to weaken, and in some cases can destroy it. Sickness can sometimes trap people in a cycle of negative thoughts, and even make people believe that if God was real, He wouldn't do such a thing to them. We as Christian disciples need to assist the sick and reassure them of God's unlimited love. We need to encourage them in keeping their spiritual health strong.

Sometimes as youth, Pathfinders, or members of the Seventh-day Adventist church, we become so busy and self-oriented that we forget about the sick and how they need us. James 5:14-15 reminds us of what we as Christians need to do when someone is sick. It says to bring them to the Elders and let them pray over them. The prayer will lift them up to the Lord and they will be saved. Though bringing them to the Elders is a great idea, any Christian of any age can make a difference.

Yes, we the youth, can make a difference, we too can pray for the sick amongst us. Age does not define one's ability to spread the Word of God or be an example of His Word. 1 Timothy 4:12 reads, "Let no one despise your youth, be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity". We may think that because of our age we don't have the experience or ability to make a difference in someone's life. But, when the Holy Spirit calls us to do something, our age does not matter. God gave you a purpose, and if He is telling you to fulfill it NOW then you should not wait until you think you are educated or experienced enough to do so.

Use the gifts God has given to you to help the sick and bring them to the Lord. Whether that be through singing, praying, or just talking to them. Taking the time out of your day could mean a lot to them and could change their mood and faith. Your fifteen minutes could change the course of the next ten years in their life—maybe even the rest of their life. So go out and help the sick, fulfill the purpose that God has called you to use the gifts He has blessed you with, and change the faith of a person in need.

Challenge: Take 5 - 10 minutes out of your day to talk to someone sick. Use your talents (e.g.: singing, reading, writing letters) to remind them that God is there for them in this time of struggle.



Back to Index



You Have The Power

Busi Khumalo Youth Director Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division

"Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do so. (Proverbs 3:27)

There are many things that we take for granted, and one of those is freedom. Unfortunately, some people forfeit this basic human right due to committing criminal acts. Among other things, prisons were designed to rehabilitate and prepare people who commit crimes to re-enter society. However, such people, like all humanity, deserve to be treated with kindness and love. This is the part that you and I should play as we "Go" to visit inmates.

Solomon is very direct and purposeful when he admonishes us not to "withhold good" to those who deserve to receive it. Many detention centers around the world are full of young people who have committed crimes. God expects Adventist youth to reach out to such young people and others who are in prison. If they fail to do that, they are withholding good that could benefit those who are in dire need of it. While there are many disadvantages of being in prison, perhaps loneliness is one of the worst emotions one can feel while imprisoned. This was expressed to me by a close family relative who was in prison many years ago. Imprisonment brings separation between the inmates and their families; therefore, the families of the inmates also suffer. We must reach out to these families with the gospel of hope and love.

The biblical mandate to extend goodness to those who need it comes with an enabling and challenging thought: "When it is in your power to act". You were created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) therefore, you have the power to act. Jesus declared that when we care for others, we extend the care to Him (Matthew 25:40).

Challenge: What are you doing with the talents and the spiritual gifts God has given you? You have got the power to act! Challenge your peers to do likewise.

Extra Reading

The Editor, Ministry Magazine, (2015). *The Least of These: Revisiting our Ministry Mandate to Forgotten Groups*. https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2015/03/the-least-of-these







Inmates are Family Too!

Bongani Ndlovu, Youth Director, Zimbabwe West Union Conference

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32—NIV).

Alexander Pope in "An Essay on Criticism" points out that, "to forgive [is] divine". Prisons have inmates, some of whom are church members needing kindness, compassion, and forgiveness, especially from their family members. The key text emphasizes this point.

Families are communities where members find comfort and love that is unconditional. The person in prison needs love and visits from their family. Matthew 25:31-40 narrates that Jesus will ask you how you related to those in prison while you were on earth. The enemy of God has planted in humans a hatred that estranges us from each other. When a family member errs and is imprisoned, it remains your Christian responsibility to visit them and show them love. It is of paramount importance that members support each other, especially when someone is in a difficult situation. Yes, that is the time they most need connection with a loving family. What kind of help does a family member who is confined to a prison need? You may feel that they do not deserve any sympathy and help from other family members. You may feel justified to shun the family member who is an inmate. You, however, need to realize that in this situation your family member need to experience the love of Jesus. You must freely share the love of God with them. This could be an opportunity for them to learn of Christ and have the privilege of accepting Him or reviving their relationship with Him. Freely share the word of God with inmates.

Challenge

You have a responsibility to love, be kind, be compassionate, and to forgive family members who have been imprisoned for whatever wrongs they have committed.

They need visits and affirmation that God still loves them, despite what they may have done.

References

1. Taylor, Charles L. (1951) The Marked Bible. Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association

2. Pope, Alexander. (1709) "An Essay on Criticism".







He Is My Refuge

Charity H. Moonga Master Guide Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most-High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. "Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my

name." Psalms 91:1,4,5 and 14 NIV

This biblical poem reminds us of the importance of dwelling in the shelter of the Lord. On our journey to heaven, we will experience many painful things – but we should stand firm. To muster this strength, this scripture provides us with three lessons.

- 1. The first lesson is that those who trust God sincerely can rest securely in His care and protection. We will dwell in the shelter of the Lord and will rest in His shadow unconditionally.
- 2. The second lesson is that with God, there is deliverance, there is a way out to those who put their trust in Him. If harm or disaster comes near to us our God will deliver and preserve us. When we face challenges, we blame ourselves, each other or even God but the Lord is encouraging us that with Him, we should not be afraid because there is nothing that He cannot deliver us from. God will always be there to lead us through the problems and challenges.
- 3. The third lesson is that when you sincerely love the Lord, even if you are in situations of hopelessness and despair, the Lord assures us that He will rescue and protect you.

There is great blessing as we seek after God and choose to walk in His Way. He will cover us with His feathers, and under His wings, we will find refuge.

Here is where Paul and Silas drew the courage to sing and praise God all night long as recorded in Acts 16:20. These were Jesus' apostles—in jail—but regardless of their situation, they continued to glorify their God, and behold there was an earthquake and the doors of the prison opened. However, instead of escaping, they stayed in the jail and continued singing praises to the Lord, to the shock of the prison guard in the morning.

God always makes a way for us and no matter how dark the night may seem it is usually followed by bright sunshine.

Challenge: What are you doing to care for imprisoned church members and their families? What are you doing to care for persons in prison who do not know the Lord?

**If your church does not yet have a prison ministry coordinator, speak to your pastor or youth leader about beginning a ministry to reach out to those in prison and share the gospel with them.





Ministry of God's Grace



Francis Amer Youth, Chaplaincy & PARL Director Southeast Asia Union Mission (SAUM)

"For I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me." Matthew 25:35-36

Those who are called to Prison Ministries need to be creative and understanding in how they demonstrate God's grace and love when ministering to people in a very restrictive setting. As a people of God, we need to listen to the angry, the frightened, the lonely, the poor, and all those who are hurting in one way or another. No matter the crime they have committed, we still need to recognize and respect each person because they are valued by God.

The call for us to minister in this unique setting is considered a call from God to minister God's love to the "least of these."

The scripture in Matthew 25:35-36 reminds us that God wants our lives to overflow with mercy, love, and compassion. By showing kindness to the poor, the needy, and the sick, we show that we possess His Spirit, for He did it when on earth; we show attachment to him, for He was poor and needy, visited Him when He was in prison; and we reveal that we have the proper spirit to prepare us for heaven.

Imagine being in prison and no one ever visited you. Many inmates have that experience. They may have brought the consequences of a prison sentence upon themselves because of their choices, but as Christians, we are to show grace.

Yes, indeed, people often make poor choices that lead them down harmful roads, but even with those poor choices, we are still called to lead people to God and His love. Please always remember that people in prison are still people created in the image of God. They are wounded and need a Savior to give them hope. Their image may be tarnished or fractured, but there is always hope that the pieces can be put back together and polished. Some may say that these people don't deserve a second chance, but that is where Christian grace enters. Where would any of us be without God's grace and mercy?

Through our ministry in the prisons, God's love reaches the lonely, the rejected, and the broken. This is an example of grace, which cannot be earned or deserved. It is a gift, just like the gift of eternal salvation promised to each of us with Christ in our hearts!

As highlighted in the scripture in Genesis 1:27 "God created man in the image of Himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female He created them." Here we can see the relevance in our attempt to accept our individual and communal responsibilities to those who are embraced in the net of "the least of these brothers of mine" (Matthew 25:40). God's love and hope stretch to men and women in prison.

We are called to get involved in prison ministry. Let us show empathy to those who are considered silent victims knowing that we are caring for a child of God. Let us see with the eyes of another, listen with the ears of another, and feel with the heart of another. As stated in the scripture in Matthew 5:15, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Challenge

Find out who is in charge of the Prison Ministry in your local church and volunteer to get involved. You do not have to visit the prisons, you can write letters, provide care packages, etc.

Extra Reading

Tony Rykers (2016). "Prison Ministry Evangelism"

Adventist Review Online | Silent Victims; https://www.adventistreview.org>silentvictims

Adventist Review Online | Prison Outreach Offers Hope to... www.adventistreview.org > church-news > story5623-prison-outreachoffe...







I was in prison and you came to me

Petronio M. Genebago Youth Director Southern Asia-Pacific Division

"I was in prison, and you came to Me." Matthew 25:36

This text reveals precious truths about Jesus. First, Jesus identifies Himself with those who are behind bars. Although they are in prison because of disobeying the law of the land or maybe like Joseph they are wrongly accused, Jesus shows that He cares for them and loves them through this text: "I was in prison." Sometimes there is a tendency for us human beings to be hard on ourselves. We lose hope when we did badly in the past and think that God does not love us anymore. But this text reminds us that Jesus does not stop loving us. This text also reminds us of Romans 5:8, which says, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." He loves us not because we are righteous. He loves us just as we are. Thus, those who are in prison, while they are yet sinners, Christ died for them. He loves them, He cares for them, and He identified Himself with them. Why? Because He suffered as a criminal at the hands of people He created and loved. He knows our pain and the sufferings of those in prisons.

Second, Jesus appreciates those who pay a visit to those who are in prison. He said, "I was in prison, and you came to Me." This is another evidence of Jesus' love for those who are incarcerated. He applauds those who are visiting people who are in prison. In a sense Jesus is saying to the people living in the last days (the context of Matthew 25) when you visit the prisoners, you are visiting me. Jesus, in Matthew 25:36, appeals indirectly to His followers, to His church, to make prison ministry a regular service the church should offer. He did emphasize that this is one of the righteous deeds of His people living in the last days. Jesus further highlights His point by saying, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me." Thus, in Matthew 25:26, Jesus connects the prisoners and His followers in loving service, with Him at the center.

Challenge

If your church has a prison ministry please contact the coordinator and plan on how the youth can become involved in ministering to the prisoners. If there is none, pray that Jesus will inspire the youth and your church to start one. I'll assure you that you'll make the prisoners and Jesus happy.

Extra Reading :

Esmond, D. (2015). "You Visited Me" Doing time with United Prison Ministries International https://www.adventistreview.org/1503-24





Remember

Jamie Eloise M. Bicua Southeast Asia Pacific Division

"Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering." Hebrews 13:3

People tend to forget about things that are not in their scope or concern. They are, most of the time, occupied with earthly matters, earthly duties, and earthly responsibilities that sometimes, the simple deed of remembering their fellow people is disregarded. I am not an exception to this.

The text in Hebrews 13:3 has two messages. First, we get practical instructions on how to demonstrate brotherly love. We are reminded to REMEMBER the prisoners in prison, those who are mistreated, or in pain. The message is clear—it is self-explanatory. Remembering not only means to remember them as in to think of them like a passing thought that will soon be forgotten after a few weeks, but it also means that you should visit them. Although the simple thought of remembering and praying for them might suffice, there is also additional comfort, not only mentally but also spiritually, as you visit them and deliver the message and comfort that you want them to hear.

Second, this text says to put yourselves in their position (as if you were also there). Think about what THEY feel in prison, about what THEY feel while in pain, and about what THEY feel while they are suffering. Be selfless and cast aside yourselves. Doing this will mean that there will be a spiritual brother or sister for the people who are suffering and less thought of. Remember them more, sympathize with them more, listen to them more, and visit them more. We have heard the phrase "caring is sharing" but here: "caring is also remembering."

A brother or sister to show you love while you are suffering will be comforting to you, the same way it will be comforting to a prisoner who is suffering and/or in pain. As you meditate upon this, may you also remember the verse in Psalm 136:23: "It is He who remembered us in our low estate, for His steadfast love endures forever."

Challenge

The major theme in the book of Hebrews is that believers should "hold fast" through suffering, while keeping in mind the sufferings of those around them, all for the sake of Christ. Remember the prisoners in prison: pray for them and give them assurance that you remember and care for them. Assurance may mean numerous things such as a simple letter, a bookmark with a comforting memory verse, visitation, etc.... It's up to you, anything will do, if it is from the heart. As they say: "it is the thought that counts".

Extra Reading

Matthew 25 (read verses 31-46 for emphasis) Valdés, J. (2020). "What Does Hebrew 13:3 Means to Me" Narco Mindset https://www.jorgevaldesphd.com/blogs/blog/380404-what-does-hebrew-13-3-means-to-me#.YMRiqgzZPY







Walking the talk

Jennifer Rizpah Ashish Young Adult Southern Asia Division

But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Hebrews 13:16

An important lesson to be learned here is – One of the ways you can demonstrate your love for the Lord is to be compassionate and caring towards those you encounter here on earth. God's command is this: "Love each other as I have loved you."

The pandemic has brought about unprecedented fear and uncertainty, especially among older adults. The elderly rely on social connection more than most and they need it now more than ever. The elderly and retired sometimes need a helping hand and often need to have people around them.

Getting old can bring aches and pains, but the scriptures suggest that it should bring a specific perk: respect. Leviticus 19:32 states, "You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I *am* the LORD." For seniors who may be feeling lonely, uncertain, or depressed by the things that they are no longer able to do or because of this pandemic, it is a reminder that they are intended to be valued in our church community.

As the pandemic rapidly sweeps across the world, it is leaving a considerable degree of fear, worry, and concern and has taken a toll on the mental health of many people. For the elderly this affects them in many ways. They would be missing their walks, chat sessions, and much more. We as the youth could always lend a hand in taking care of them or just by staying in touch with them. We can teach them to engage socially via technology. We can talk to them and connect with them to see if they are doing okay; their mental wellness is what will keep them going during this time. These could be some ways to remain connected with the elderly, to make them feel that they are a valuable part of our lives and our society. We should never allow the cares of this world to overshadow the things that are most important – serving God through serving people.

From cover to cover, throughout God's Word, we are reminded to love our neighbors as ourselves. If we are truly to be like Jesus, we must do what Jesus did and convert our affections into action. If we are truly saved and truly following God's Word, we must do more than just say we care for others. We should do things not because of how good they will make us look or the attention we can get from others, but because what we are doing is right. If we are obedient to His command, then we will receive our glory from Above, not from man, and reap our blessings.







They will still...

Jeba Andrews Office Secretary - Southern Asia Division

They shall still bear fruit in old age; They shall be fresh and flourishing. (Psalms 92 : 14)

As followers of Christ, caring for one another must take on an ever greater imperative and meaning if we are truly being authentic in the witness of our faith and beliefs.

The pandemic has prompted a renewed discussion about important changes needed in order to address both the present and future challenges facing our elderly who are already frail and compromised by the conditions in which they are forced to live. This is a cause for great alarm and concern for us as Adventists.

The elderly in our church have an important role to play and they are called to share in God's plan with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This intergenerational sharing obliges us to consider older people differently, to learn to look to the future together with them.

There is not only the past for the elderly, as if there is only a life behind them with little value. The Lord can and wants to write with them also new pages; pages of holiness, of service, of prayer. The elderly are also the present and the future of the Church. Yes, they are also the future of a Church that, together with the young, prophesies and dreams! This is why it is so important that those advanced in years and the young speak to each other and share their gifts.

The pandemic has, in many ways and for many people, served as an important reminder of the inherent dignity of human life, its meaning, and what should be most important in life. No matter the degree of isolation and privation each of us may have experienced so far in this crisis, there are lessons to be learned about the need for courage, determination, hope, and steadfastness.

We must let ourselves be challenged by the Lord's calling and the present needs of our brothers and sisters. As we slowly return to a more normal way of life, let us not forget the elderly among us who still have so much wisdom to impart, faith to share, stories to tell, and joys to offer. Let us create space in our hearts, homes, families, and communities to honor them and truly care for them in their weaknesses and their many needs. We shall give them social support through regular phone calls, and messages, leave a note, cook something, buy groceries, and medicine, remind them of intake medication and help them understand the need for social distancing and be connected.

Challenge: Let us welcome their unique giftedness in building a world that is more human, loving, generous, forgiving, and radiant with God's grace. He continues to look after his own and to be faithful to his beloved children: *"Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you."*

May we be graced with a new awareness and appreciation of the gift

which the elderly are to us all.







Making a Difference

Elena Gold Prakash Office Secretary - Southern Asia Division

"You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the LORD." Leviticus 19:32

Have you ever wondered why God commands us to stand up and respect the aged? This text reminds us to honor and care for the elderly person in all stages of life.

Globally, the elderly face various issues, many of which have escalated because of the pandemic. For example, isolation can be a major cause of emotional distress for older people, and unfortunately, because of our busyness many family members often do not visit their elderly relatives regularly, and they are left in social isolation. Sadly, to some, it seems normal to disconnect and leave them alone. However, as Christians, it is our duty and responsibility to take care of our aging parents and family members, and members of our church family. Caring for the elderly is not an option, it is a command from God, with a blessing attached to it. It's rewarding to spend time with the elderly. It is time to connect with the elderly and bear their burdens.

Respect, love, and care are required. Especially when one realizes they are getting older. During this time, they long for their children, relatives, and loved ones. We can love and respect our elders in many ways. Singing their favorite songs, paying a surprise visit, listening to their repetitive stories without becoming annoyed, or praying for them are different ways to show care for the elderly. We can also strengthen their spiritual, mental, social, and emotional health by connecting and praying with them.

If you know someone who needs encouragement or help, humbly reach out and offer help (John 13:34, 35). To make a difference in the lives of the elderly we should follow the model of Christ. In John 19:26 and 27 we find Jesus, the son, caring for His mother. He recognized that His mother's life was filled with sadness, especially now as she stood at the foot of the cross with the other women, watching her son die. Even in that pain, He was focused on her care. "When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own *home." (New King James version)* Please note here that Jesus showed responsibility in making sure that His mother would be cared for.

Yes, even in his death Jesus was concerned about the care of His mother. Taking care of the elderly is important to Jesus, and it should be important to us, also.

How are you going to step forward and say "I will go" to care for the elderly person in my family and in my church for such a time as this?

Challenge: Invite your friends and make a move to reach in and out to help the elderly person in your church and community.







Youth in the Church are important

Srikanth Shendikay D. Coordinator, Youth Department, Southern Asia Division

"That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; That our daughters may be as pillars, Sculptured in palace style." Psalm 144:12

Seventh-day Adventist Church stands on earth with a divine purpose.

In Ellen White's book, Testimonies to the Church, p. 19, chapter 2, she says: "In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light-bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the word of God. They have been given a work of the most solemn import—the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels' messages. There is no other work of so great importance. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention."

With this divine purpose, the blessings to the Church are its Youth. The youth in our churches are very important; to them also, have been entrusted the solemn responsibility of God's plan of sharing the everlasting gospel with the world. The youth will replace current church leaders, evangelists, pastors, elders, and deacons in the future. This means that we must give special attention to the youth, caring for and assisting them in making them strong pillars for the Lord to fulfill the Church's mission. There is great difficulty in retaining the youth in the church. At times, we've seen a few young people quit the church. One of the most typical causes for young people leaving the church is the lack of close friendships outside of their youth group. While their church friends leave for college or take employment in various places, they have no excellent friendships or strong bonds with the elderly and prominent ministers in the local church.

As a church, the church may play a significant role in establishing a welcoming atmosphere for youth and assisting them in accomplishing God's Divine Purposes. Good relationships have a powerful influence on youth at church that can encourage them to continue the work in their churches and communities.

Challenge:

What would you do as a leader, pastor, evangelist, elder, or deacon to help the youth in your local church feel important?



Back to Index



Loud Silence

Dr. Andrés J. Peralta Associate Youth Director, General Conference

"Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?" (Psalms 139: 7)

"Be silent, we are in the presence of God." Those were the words of the person speaking in the pulpit, as he looked where we were, a group of children whispering. They echoed the banner in gold letters that captured the attention in the background of our platform: "REVERENCE".

We can define "reverence" as the *proper attitude in the presence of God*. For the elder of our church who reproached us, the presence of God was something that he restricted to the "temple", and the attitude of reverence that he expected was "silence". Many of us are familiar with those concepts because I'm afraid that the Elder's ideas are very popular with us.

But I want to suggest to you that the presence of God is something that goes beyond the walls of a temple. "I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence!" (Psalms 139: 7, NLT). God is everywhere. "For in him we live and move and exist" (Acts 17: 28, NLT). I don't know where you are now. You might find yourself in bed, in a park, at school, even, who knows, in the bathroom. I must tell you that God is there, with you. "He watches everyone closely, examining every person on earth" (Psalms 11: 4. NLT). God's presence is no greater in the temple than in the darkness of your room.

Jacob was fleeing from the wrath of his brother into an unknown land. He stopped at a place to sleep. It was not a special place. It was as common a place as your home kitchen. However, God made himself visible to him and made him feel His presence. Jacob then realized that every place was sacred when God is present. He said "what an awesome place this is! It is none other than the house of God, the very gateway to heaven!" (Genesis 28: 17, NLT)

Whenever you are tempted, think that God is there with you and that it is "irreverent" to sin in his presence. But God is with you, not to condemn you for what you do but to give you strength to endure the temptation and live a full life.

What is the proper attitude in the presence of God? Many associate the presence of God only with silence. But I must tell you that the *beings* that are in the presence of God are not always silent, they are in adoration. "Day after day and night after night they keep on saying, holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty" (Revelation 4: 8. NLT). The correct attitude in the presence of God is adoration. Therefore, everything we do that does not give glory to God is irreverence. "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31, NLT).

If reverence is the proper attitude in the presence of God, then reverence is not something we do or don't do in a specific place. Reverence is living every moment of our lives, everywhere for the glory of Him. Therefore, in the name of God, I ask you, please, be reverent in His presence.

Challenge:

This week, practice being reverent in your daily life.







Caring for the elderly

Taryll Viviers Head of Student Ministries South England Conference (TED)

Now of course over this last year or so, everyone is well accustomed to the effects Coronavirus has had all over the world. There was no international travel, and everyone's best life was seemingly canceled for the summer. It became second nature to have a mask always attached to our faces, in a concerted effort to protect one another and stop the spread. Lastly, it divided people for and against a vaccine.

However, amongst all this chaos, one group of people that suffered more so than most was our elderly population. Now, as students, we find ourselves in uncharted territory. We must adapt to the changes this virus brings and broaden our scope of outreach.

Allow me to dispel the first myth. You do not need to have any medical knowledge or training to befriend the elderly in your community or church. Before healing took place Christ was always sure to develop the relationships with the people He came to save. He may even have danced at the wedding feast in Cana. He traveled with the twelve disciples; He even attended a feast at a tax collector's house. Relationships mattered to Jesus, and relationships should matter to us also. I encourage you to follow Jesus' example and develop relationships that matter. Relationships that you can use to build bridges to reach those who seem to be forgotten in your community—the elderly who have no family, those who cannot pick up their shopping, etc. Speak to your neighbor, talk to the old man walking his dog, sit next to the elderly sister in the back of the church and listen to her story. You never know, a relationship may just be all the care they need.

Secondly, identify specific needs. Sometimes, when looking at the word *care*, we tend to lose sight of just how big this word is. *Care* can involve many things. It could mean that you are making someone laugh, feeding them, or maybe even cooking a hot meal for them. If we fail to recognize what help and care people need specifically, then our help can become a fruitless endeavor. No point fixing a light that isn't broken right? Take time to listen to what people need.

However, let me also say this, caring for our elderly is not just helping them with things they may not be able to do, it involves helping them beyond their needs. Don't forget to see the person....take the time to really see them, and not only identify them by their needs.

In Matthew 25:39-40, Jesus was very clear that what we do "to the least", we do it to Him. Now, this is the final piece of the puzzle. Remember that what you do for those in your communities, churches, or campuses you are doing for Christ. For better or for worse, our actions may even influence others to do the same; make sure it's for the better. Countless times the Bible encourages us to look after the neglected in society. As the winter seasons draw closer, homes get colder and people get lonelier, let us make sure that as students, our lights are shining brightly for the rest of our communities to follow in tow. Build relationships, identify needs, and give the glory to God.







I Will Go with Enthusiasm

Yunuen Carrillo

Information Technology Director British Union Conference (BUC) Division: Trans-European Division (TED)

This is how we know that we live in Him and He in us: He has given us of His Spirit. (1 John 4:13 NIV)

The word enthusiasm has its roots in the Latin, *enthusiasmus, which means "divine inspiration"* and the Greek, *theos*, which means 'god'. The translation of this word is *inspired by god* or *full of god*. In fact, in the 16th century, it was used in a religious context to indicate that someone was full of the spirit or joy of God. God's Spirit cannot be contained, and you would burst with enthusiasm and energy to go and share His joy and love. There are many places and people you can share this enthusiasm with, but I would like to draw your attention to a group of people at the end of their journey in this world who need our care and attention. I am referring to all our elderly people living in care homes, who were once full of vitality and enthusiasm but now their health has deteriorated, and they cannot do many of the things they were used to doing. For some, they spend many long, lonely days hoping to have a visitor.

On one occasion we visited a care home with a group of Pathfinders. We sang traditional hymns and gradually some of the elderly people started singing, displaying broad smiles and twinkling eyes. Soon the place was full of enthusiasm. The young Pathfinders and elderly residents joined together in repeating Psalm 23 and doing some action songs. The most enjoyable part was when the young people chatted directly with the seniors; we heard many stories of when they were young, and we shared our favorite animals, and colors, and even talked about activities that they enjoyed.

At the end of our visit, I asked the young people how they felt. Everyone was happy and excited that they had come, they felt filled with the Spirit and glad to have brightened up the life of the residents. This was a new experience for many.

We have visited care homes many times since that visit and always our enthusiasm is renewed and overflows to bless others. God's Spirit is peace and love. God refills you with His Spirit the more you share with others.

Challenge:

Call your nearest care home and arrange a date and time to visit them with your friends or church group. Discuss ways that you can maintain the relationship with the care home and get to know the residents so next time you visit them you can give them personalized cards or gifts.





Loyal love



Zlatko Musija Pastor and Youth/ Children Ministries Director, Adriatic Union Conference

"Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, If anything but death parts you and me." (Ruth 1:16-17)

These wonderful words of commitment are not voiced by young, passionate lovers who are soon to get married. These words of loyal love are spoken in an intergenerational context, by a young widow, Ruth, who is willing to spend the rest of her life close to Naomi, her mother-in-law, away from her friends and family, and as an outsider in a foreign land.

The book of Ruth describes a peaceful community amidst a violent world. Nobody in the book is a villain, all characters (including Orpah and close relatives) are fine; doing what is normal and expected, nothing more and nothing less. But Ruth and Boaz are heroes of the book—standing out with something *extraordinary*, Ruth in her loyalty to Naomi, and Boaz in his love for Ruth, a stranger. The Hebrew word for such extraordinary unselfishness is "*hesed*" (used in Ruth 1:8; 2:20; 3:10) and is usually translated as *mercy*, *love*, or *loyalty*. This powerful word is one of the most important expressions in the Old Testament for God's loyal love (e.g., Exodus 34:6-7). *Hesed* surpasses ordinary kindness and friendship; it assumes an extraordinary interest in the wellbeing of a person, often demonstrated in an amazing act of delivering someone from a desperate situation.

As a person of *hesed* (loyal love), Ruth is not thinking about what is best for her, but rather what is best for her old and depressed mother-in-law, Naomi, who has lost everything, even the faith in her God (read Ruth 1:20-21). Ruth is ready to subordinate her happiness to an older woman rather than to seek her personal gain in her homeland. This commitment goes beyond what might be expected of a normal relationship.

In this amazing inter-generational relationship, they both show love and care for each other. It is not only Ruth caring for Naomi, but Naomi is also thinking about what is best for Ruth (read Ruth 1:8-9; 3:1). This extraordinary love between people of a different age will amaze the people around them and make them bless the Lord (read Ruth 4:14-15).

CHALLENGE:

Could you decide to show not only sporadic, ordinary acts of kindness, but long-term, extraordinary commitment to an older person in need, something that goes beyond what might be expected or normal?

1 For more about hesed see:

https://bibleproject.com/blog/how-do-we-describe-gods-love/ https://www.gotquestions.org/meaning-of-hesed.html; https://ourrabbijesus.com/articles/hesed_love_long_term/







A Caring Adventurer

Ugochukwu Elems Youth Director West-Central Africa Division

Then she said to her mistress, "If only my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! For he would heal him of his leprosy." 2 Kings 5:3

Her name is not mentioned or known. She quietly but purposefully performed her duties in the home of General Naaman of the Syrian army. But she had a living connection with God. She had experienced the power of God in her life and in her family and the society of the Jewish people to which she belonged. And not even the pervading influence of being a slave in a foreign land could erase the conviction of the power of God in her life.

She finds herself in the home of this powerful general of the Syrian army as a maid. Joyfully and patiently, she serves with all her heart. Although the Syrian army had inflicted pain and suffering on her and her people, she desired their good, especially for her direct master, Naaman, and his family.

When she noticed that Naaman was suffering from the deadly disease of leprosy, she neither ignored him nor did she disdain him—on the contrary, she sought a solution to his problem. She could justify his plight as God's judgment on him and the Syrians for the evils done to Israel. Instead, she focused on his need for healing, "Would my lord go to a prophet of God in Samaria and he will be healed." Perhaps due to her love and dedication to the family of Naaman, it was easy for Naaman to accept the proposal of this little girl which eventually led to his healing and total restoration.

At last, Naaman went to the prophet Elisha in Israel and was healed, as told by this unnamed Adventurer. We have been called to care for the sick and in doing so, we should look beyond the faults of the sick and minister to their needs, before calling their attention to health reforms and Bible doctrines. Jesus put it right, "I desire mercy but not sacrifice." Caring can bring about healing in many ways – physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. Let's go caring for the sick!

Challenge: "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" Matthew 5:44.

Extra Reading: 2 Kings 5 and White, E. G. *Prophets and Kings*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1917 (chapter 20–pp245-253).







Say the Word

Precious Osinachi Young Adult West-Central Africa Division

"Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed." Luke 7:7

God is the Great Physician, and He is ever near and ready to answer when we come to Him in humility, through prayer and faith. Yes, God is all-powerful and will grant our request for even the things that seem impossible in life.

In Luke 7:7 we read that because the centurion loved his sick servant so much and did not want him to die from the sickness, he humbled himself and went to Jesus. Believing that Jesus could restore his sick servant, he devised a plan on how to get his request to Jesus—he sent a message through the Jewish elders. This Roman Centurion understood what authority was and believed that Jesus carried the authority of God. He also considered himself not worthy for Jesus to enter his house, he knew that Jesus had the authority to JUST SAY THE WORD and his servant would be healed.

Our connection with Jesus as His servants who are ready to pray and intercede for the healing of the sick and suffering is critical. The Great Commission of the gospel isn't only to preach to people but also to heal; God desires total restoration – physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual healing for everyone. Our church's mission statement reads: "Guided by the Bible and the Holy Spirit, Seventh-day Adventists pursue this mission [Great Commission] through Christ-like living, communicating, discipling, teaching, healing, and serving." However, we must connect or encounter Jesus for any true healing to be affected in our lives or in the lives of those to whom we minister – without Him, we cannot do anything useful (John 15:4-7). When we are connected to the Great Physician, He will supply us with everything necessary for the healing of the soul.

For our words to be effectual for comfort, encouragement, and healing, we must be connected with the Great Physician; we must be humble and submit ourselves to the Holy Spirit for direction and empowerment. By this connection with Christ, we can stand in the gap and speak words of hope and comfort to the sick and/or those whose loved ones are sick, believing that God will do the healing according to His promises. Let us go in faith and speak words of life by faith and God will glorify Himself in and through us.

Challenge:

- 1. What can you learn from the faith of the Roman Centurion, a gentile?
- 2. List three lessons that you learned from the healing of the Roman Centurion's servant.
- 3. Share #SayTheWord with at least 10 friends on social media today.

Extra Reading: Explore the power of words when we are connected with the Great Physician – 1 Kings 17:17-24 (Elijah heals the Widows son) 2 Chronicles 7:14 (Solomon), John 11:1-44 (Lazarus).







The Least of These

Alfred Kwasi Asiem Youth Director Southern Ghana Union Conference

'For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me. Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.' Matthew 25:35-40

In Matthew 25, Jesus tells a series of parable pointing the listener towards His death, resurrection, and second coming. In verses 35 - 45, He calls on Christians to follow Him by attending to the needs of the least in society through practical steps like feeding, clothing, visiting, and sheltering them. Jesus declares that His followers must be willing to love and care for the least in society.

Albert Barns' *New Testament Commentary* defines "One of the least of these" in Matthew 25:40 as "one of the obscurest, least known, poorest, and afflicted in society." People's *New Testament Commentary* classify them as "the distressed, especially those of the household of faith." Therefore, Jesus' concern of not caring for the least which includes the sick was directed not only to the world, but also to the church—the household of faith.

Jesus equates caring for the sick and the less privileged to caring for Himself. We please Him by the way we treat others in the Church and in the wider society. As young people ready to go on God's errands, let us remember the least among us.

Jesus admonishes us to love one another, just as He loved us (John 13:34). Loving is the proof of our discipleship (vs 35). A constant visit and the sharing of messages of hope with the least will not only bring them solace but hope too. "The great final test is concern with extent to which the principles of true religion (James 1:27), have been applied to daily living, particularly in relationship to the interests and needs of others, (SDAC p. 512). When the spirit and application of selfless service become so much a custom with the chosen of God, they will respond repeatedly to the needs of the sick among them.

The early church grew in number because of the attitude of care and brotherly love (Acts 2:46, 47). Caring for one another, manifesting love, mercy and compassion is evidence of a faith that transforms people. When we reflect the character of Jesus perfectly in caring for the least, we will feel as He does towards those afflicted, and through us He will be able to comfort and bring relief to others. The best mark of love for God is love that leads us to bear "one another's burden, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2, 1 John 3:14-19).

Challenge

What are you doing to make the house of God and your community more caring for the least known, the sick and most despised, and just not be in passive agreement to creeds and teachings?

Extra Reading

White, Ellen G. The Ministry of Healing (Our Example). Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1942.

Bibliography

Barns, Albert. Notes on the New Testament. Kregel Classics. June 30, 1962.
Nichol, Francis. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary Vol. 5*. Hagerstown, MD: Herald, 1978.
B. W. Johnson, *The People's New Testament Commentary*. Gospel Light Publishing Company. January 1. 1959.





A Lifestyle of Mentorship

Kenia Reyes-de León Senior Editorial Assistant GC Youth Ministries

"Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.". (Hebrews 13:7)

In the Bible, we find countless examples of mentors and mentees. One of those relationships we admire the most is that of Paul and Timothy. Timothy was a young man of great potential and with a great passion for the gospel and the church of God which was blossoming across the land. Paul took Timothy under his wing and treated him as a son saying, "to Timothy my true son in the faith." (1 Timothy 1:2 NIV)

As a true mentor, Paul spoke words of encouragement and gave continuous counsel to Timothy telling him to *"fight the battle well, holding on to faith and a good conscience." (1 Timothy 1:19 NIV)*

As leaders, it is our responsibility to prepare others who are to continue forward as leaders to the upcoming generations. I am sure many of us advise and uplift the young people around us but Hebrews 13:7 tells us that we as leaders are to be remembered for:

- 1. Sharing God's Word to those we mentor
- 2. The outcome of our life
- 3. Our steadfast faith

Mentorship is more than providing resources and manuals. It is more than just words of advice and involving our mentee in special youth programs. Paul taught Timothy everything he knew; everything he had learned about God and the mission that had been entrusted to them. Even in his darkest times, Paul trusted in the Lord and demonstrated this through his actions and his legacy has lasted up until this day and serves as a great testament to the way Jesus can change a life. Timothy was able to grow not just from what he was entrusted to do, but from what he saw in the life of his mentor. Let us all be like Paul; speak words of encouragement, empower and equip others, speak God's word, and live a life worthy to be imitated because we imitate the greatest mentor of all, Jesus Christ.

Challenge: Do you have a young person you are mentoring? If yes, write down the goals you wish to achieve as a mentor. If not, pray intentionally for God to guide you to a young person who needs you to guide them and help them learn and grow. Remember "the LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.

Extra Reading: Sabbath School Personal Ministries (2014). How to Tend Your Flock: Mentoring is Evangelism.

https://www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org/page-438





A Faith to Live

Maria Manderson Editorial Assistant GC Youth Ministries

And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear to him, was sick and ready to die. So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him, pleading with Him to come and heal his servant. Luke 7:2-3

The biblical narrative of Matthew 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10 tell us that Jesus marveled at the faith He found in this man—and this is the only instance we see the gospels recording Jesus as saying anything like this. But who was this man and who was he pleading with Jesus on behalf of?

Here we have Jesus being approached by a small delegation of Jewish elders, with an urgent request from this Roman Centurion to see if Jesus would be willing to heal his servant, who was sick and expected to die shortly. At this time in their history, the Romans were the enemy. So unusual was this request, that one of the elders, sensing the uneasiness of the moment, quickly told Jesus that the Roman Centurion was worthy of His help because he loves their nation and even built them their synagogue. Why is this important? Because the Romans were not in the habit of being fond of the Jews. Or maybe it was because Jesus had just finished preaching about loving our enemies, and this was the perfect example, I don't know. But today I want to take a moment to look at Luke 7:1-9, through the eyes of the Roman Centurion.

Here is a man who valued his servant (the caregiver) enough to do everything in his power to care for and get the help needed for the servant. He recognized Jesus for who he was, God with all authority under him. On His way to see the servant, Jesus was met by yet another group of friends who told him that the master (Centurion) had sent them to let him know that his house is not worthy enough for Jesus to even enter into. In verses 6 and 7 we read, "Then Jesus went with them. And when He was already not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. Therefore, I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed." Here we have it, understanding the power of God's authority this centurion knew that Jesus only had to say the word and his servant would be healed. What a faith. Things change when we see God through eyes of love. Even for the unbeliever, things can change when they see Jesus for who He is.... the ultimate authority.

Ask God to open your eyes to see those around you who are needing to hear about Jesus. Just like the Roman Centurion in this story, there are many who are outside the fold of God, but God has placed in them a desire to know Him. Just like the servant in this story, some are too discouraged, sick, hopeless, and depressed to come to God for help. They need us. They are waiting on you, they are waiting on me, and they are waiting on us to share the message of God's love with them.

Challenge:

Pray and ask God to direct you where He wants you to go to share His love so that others can believe in His love. Will you stand in the gap?







Forgiveness: a tricky proposition?

John Pack, Assistant Purchasing Manager General Conference

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." Luke 4:18-19

Forgiveness can be a tricky proposition especially when there is great loss involved. I have a friend who is serving a life sentence in Cumberland Maryland who wronged several individuals including his wife and children. You see, once he was convicted his wife divorced him and would not let his children visit. His children were young at the time and my wife, and I would try to help during certain times of the year. Several other folks from work also wanted to help the family financially and they sponsored the children in church school. My friend has tried repeatedly to talk with his ex-wife about everything that she heard in court. He probably wanted to ask for forgiveness too.

We as human beings tend to take a while to get over wrongs. Even then, we do not forget them. Jesus speaking to his disciples told them to forgive "seventy times seven"! Of course, he was not speaking of a literal number. We are to forgive as many times as it takes.

My former neighbor shared with me a wonderful story of Christian love. Back in the late seventies, her husband was killed in a botched robbery. The man responsible was caught and sentenced to life in prison. After several years, she wrote a letter to him and let him know that she had forgiven him. He responded and let her know how sorry he was for taking the life of her husband. This began a friendship that has lasted to this day. Not only did she forgive him, but she also sent Bible studies to him. He studied and found Jesus. Today he is a member of the SDA church.

In the Lord's Prayer, it states: Forgive us of our sins as we forgive those who sinned against us. The Bible is clear that for us to be forgiven, we must forgive. I am sure most of you know a family member or friend that continues to hold a grudge against someone due to some wrong. Many times, the person that wronged them has asked God to forgive them and has moved on with life. The wronged individual continues to dwell on the pain and never heals. Jesus wants us to be joyful Christians. How can we serve him with bitterness and hatred in our hearts?

Please remember the example of our Savior. After he was beaten, humiliated, abused, and hung on a cross, Jesus asked His Father to forgive all of them. Should not we follow our Master?

Challenge: Pray and ask God to give you the spirit of forgiveness. If you have any family member or friend in prison, ask God to give you the grace to pray for and encourage them. Help to lead them to the love and grace of God.







Not an Option

Maria Manderson Editorial Assistant GC Youth Ministries

But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God. 1 Timothy 5:4

Ask anyone who has had to care for an aged parent or loved one and they will tell you that they too experience painful challenges in their own heart. The patience needed, the constant worry about their welfare, the frustrations that sometimes come with the realization that the roles are reversed, and you are now the caregiver.

But what does the scripture say about caring for our elderly?

Paul gives us a glimpse in 1 Timothy 5:4, and in verse 8, he has an especially harsh indictment against the person (child) who is a believer but does not care for his or her aging parent, "…he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." Yes, Paul says that the burden of caring for our relatives who are elderly is primarily the responsibility of the family members, not the church or the government.

Caring for our elderly parents/relatives is not an option. It is our God-given responsibility. It is our calling.

1 Timothy 5:16 says, "If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows." In other words, we should take care of them.... we are their first line of defense. Yes, the family is primarily responsible for supporting and caring for the elderly.

Let us put our faith into practice and care for those who can no longer care for themselves.







A Reminder from The Cross

Prakash Jacob Young Adult Southern Asia Division

"When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home. - John 19:26, 27 (NIV)

Who better than Jesus to serve as a role model? Even during his last hours at the cross, Jesus cared for his elderly mother. He continued to care despite the excruciating pain on the cross.

Isolation can be harmful to an individual's physical, mental, and spiritual health. When Jesus considered the days ahead, he recognized how isolating they might be for his elderly mother, Mary. As He hung on the cross, knowing that He was not going to be around to take care of her Himself, He entrusted John with her care. Today, our churches and our communities have elderly members who require our care. As stewards, God has entrusted us with their care.

The early church was zealous in its commitment to the poor, widows, and orphans. As with the early church, young people need to be involved in the ministry of care, particularly for the elderly. While the busyness of life and the global pandemic is still preventing some of us from connecting, there are things that we can do to help fill the gap the loneliness has caused some of the elderly in our communities. For instance, a simple phone call, text message, email, video chat, or a personal visit can make a big difference in the lives of the elderly. God cares for the elderly even though they are weak and fragile. He says,

"Even to your old age, I am He, And even to gray hairs I will carry you! I have made, and I will bear; Even I will carry, and will deliver you" (Isaiah 46: 4)

Jesus demonstrated compassion toward the people to whom he ministered during the earthly ministry. He came to this world to serve, not to be served (Matthew 20: 28). He was thus carrying out his father's will. We are here to model the ultimate example he has laid for us. Our light cannot be hidden when we live for Him, the Father will be glorified (Matthew 5:16) through our lives.

What are you doing to care for the elderly members in your church or community?

Challenge: With the help of your local pastor discuss three strategies for caring for elderly people in your local church.



Back to Index

DIVISIONS

- ECD: East-Central Africa
- ESD: Euro-Asia
- EUD: Inter-European
- IAD: Inter-American
- NAD: North American
- NSD: Northern Asia-Pacific
- SAD: South American
- SID: Southern Africa Indian Ocean
- SPD: South Pacific
- SSD: Southern Asia-Pacific
- SUD: Southern Asia
- TED: Trans-European
- WAD: West-Central Africa

ATTACHED FIELDS

- 1. Chinese Union Mission
- 2. Israel Field
- 3. Middle East Northern Africa





TIPS ON RECONNECTING WITH THOSE WHO HAVE LEFT THE CHURCH

While some people in your youth group may slip through the cracks, a healthy communication system can help youth leaders minimize this problem. Below are some tips that we hope you will find useful in your ministry.

CREATE AN OUTREACH MINISTRY.

- A. Form a group to go through the church records and get the addresses of all the missing members.
- B. Send them cards inviting them to church. You may not get an immediate response, but still send them the card, at least once monthly. There is no limit to how many times you do this. Once the person responds then you will remove them from the list.
- C. Have another group that will be responsible for connecting them with the ministries in the church that they may need.
- D. Find out if there are young adults in the household and find out if it is okay to visit them. If they say okay, then two persons should visit them to reacquaint yourself with them. This visit is to create a comfortable bond, break the ice.
- E. Ascertain their needs and follow-up with them.

REACTIVATE: There are many ways to get others involved. You can ask members to call, text, or contact missing members via social media (Facebook, messenger, Instagram, Whatsapp, etc.) If you call, write, text, or email missing members and you get no response do not give up. Keep trying. However, please be respectful of each person's time. Be tactful. Do not drive them crazy with messages.

Even if you are aware of why someone is not coming to church, please approach each person with dignity and respect. Be careful not to make them feel like they are only a number, just a body in the pew. Focus your effort on value. **TIP: PLEASE ADDRESS EACH PERSON BY THEIR NAME**.

CAPITILIZE ON YOUR EVENTS. Some of your missing members may not be in a place where they are mentally and emotionally ready to return to church. *A Barna Research study reports that 22 percent of young people who disconnect from the local church say that the church is "ignoring the problems of the real world.*" However, we think that you can still find ways to communicate with them and get them involved. Invite them to your Global Youth Day community program, your Week of Prayer, and your Homecoming events. These are wonderful opportunities to engage young people without them feeling pressured into returning to church.

TIP: NEVER GUILT ANYONE INTO RETURNING TO CHURCH.

KEEP THE BACK DOOR CLOSED!

As we seek to reconnect with our missing members, let us remember to do all we can to keep those who are actively staying in church, stay in the church. Here are some ideas below:

- 1. Celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, etc.
- 2. Try to know the names of all the young people in your church. Create relationships.
- 3. Create an outlet for members to send in prayer requests. Create a prayer request form.
- 4. Develop a buddy system...each person will be accountable for at least two other persons.
- 5. Avoid guilting/forcing people into loving the Lord.
- 6. Offer different ways to get actively involved.







gcyouth
 @GCYouthMinistries
 gcyouthmininistries.org
 GCYouthMinistries
 General Conference Youth Ministries

