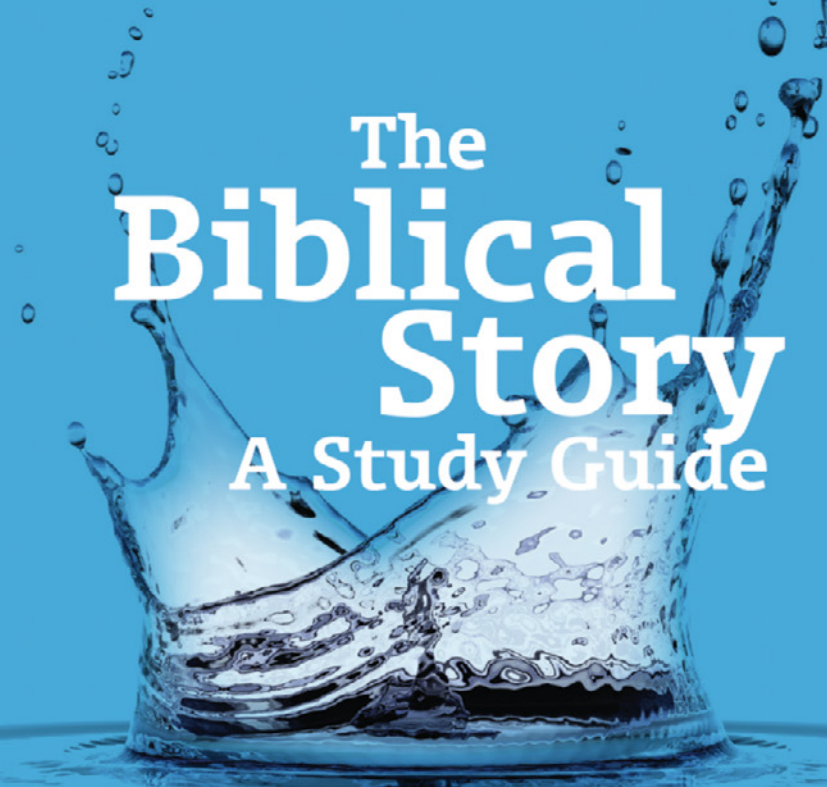




Messenger

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

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# The Biblical Story

A Study Guide

It is not enough  
to know 'what we  
believe'; rather, we  
must know 'who  
we believe in'.

*A new Bible study guide for today's generation*



Seventh-day  
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### 'I believe the time is right to share our stories, learn from one another and change this world we are living in for the benefit of us all.'

by Taonga Phiri

Just under four weeks ago on 25 May, a man named George Floyd lost his life. If you have seen the video, it truly beggars belief. There are so many other names that should not be forgotten, of people who have lost their lives in a similar vein, and this article could very easily be taken up by their names alone.

On Tuesday 2 June, many took part in #blackouttuesday. I did too, and shared some posts regarding action that could be taken.

As I write this, my heart feels like it is beating out of my chest. I am black. There is no denying that. But, in writing and sharing this article, I am exposing this fact in a way I have never done before. I've been asking myself why that is for days, and there is only one thing I keep coming back to: fear. Fear of being deemed too much, too vocal, too divisive, too black; fear of being vulnerable. But I also recognise that enough is enough, and it's not acceptable that I do not speak out. The reality is that it is time to speak my truth. Take what you will from what I have to share, and I am open to having honest conversation with anyone who is willing.

I think one of the earliest memories I have of being different was when I started school. I was the only black child in my class, but I was friends with everyone. I remember that my best friend at the time, a boy, licked me to see if I tasted like chocolate ice cream. I thought it only fair to lick him back and see if he tasted like vanilla. I think we were both disappointed; but at least we settled that issue, and discovered that while we looked different, we really weren't. And, although this story is innocent of itself, that was just the beginning of my journey. Maybe, on occasion, it would be good if we adults retained some of the inquisitive nature that children have.

I've been told that I don't 'sound' black; I look black, but I don't 'act' black. All of these things were said to me as if they were compliments. Please note now that they were not. Numerous times people have struggled with my name, only to ask if there is anything else they can call me: 'Tanya', maybe? I remember asking my parents why they didn't also give me an English name that I could use at school to make life easier. I may not remember what they said exactly, but that was *not* an option. It has taken me years to appreciate the beauty of my own name, but now I am proud I never gave up that part

of my identity. Interestingly enough, in some circles, I'm not 'black enough': but that's a whole other story . . . as is the fact that, even as I write this as a black woman, I come from a place of certain privilege. Again, that's a story for another day, and there is much more I could say about this. My life has never been directly threatened, and for that I am thankful.

A little over a year ago, I was fortunate to be asked to speak at an event at the House of Commons for International Women's Day. This came as a direct result of my participation in the Stepping Up programme, run by the NHS for BAME participants, around the same time. I wasn't very vocal about it when it happened, because I didn't want to draw attention to myself or the issues we were discussing, for many of the reasons I have highlighted above: but the truth of the matter is that, for far too long, a lot of things have been happening in our daily lives that we have come to accept as part of the course of being black.

As children, my siblings and I were repeatedly told by my parents that 'we had to work twice as hard for half as much' (as our white counterparts). The world would not be kind; we would be judged before we said anything, just because of the colour of our skin or our different-sounding names. There were no plasters when we were young that matched our darker skin tones. That's what I mean when I say that there are some things we have just come to accept.

The opportunity to speak in the House of Commons was the first time I ever shared what it meant to me to be black, and it highlighted my own mother's experiences working in the NHS. In the room were senior leaders from various NHS trusts to learn what they could do to foster a culture of inclusion: not just for people from a BAME background, but for women, people with a disability, transgender people – one and all.

If you've stayed with me this far, thank you. There is so much more left to say, but I will save it for now. I am sharing what I said that day in London with you now: better late than never. I believe the time is right to share our stories, learn from one another and change this world we are living in for the benefit of us all.

*Taonga Phiri serves as 'Partnership Manager' for Penny Brohn UK, helping well-being consultants to deliver a 'whole life' approach to cancer care. In addition, she also still works as a radiographer specialising in the area of oncology for the Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.*



Dear Editor

It is encouraging to note that the UK & Ireland presidents of the Seventh-day Adventist Church have each voiced their objections to the racial killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, USA. This flagrant taking of the life of another person touched us all deeply.

Our church leaders' powerful statements and appearances on social media, the NEC administration's letter to the Minneapolis Mayor, and the collective call for Christians to speak up about the social injustices faced by members of the black, Asian and minority ethnic community are stark reminders that, as a denomination, we are not to sit back, bury our heads in the sand and remain silent while these experiences are regular occurrences for a number of our fellow church members, relatives and friends in the communities where we live and worship.

As one who has worked for many years in the area of race relations, I am by no means astounded by the reactions around the world, proposed changes in US policies, vehement calls for artefacts of slavery to be removed from open display, and large

protest marches at the risk of personal and public safety. All these actions are responses to gut-wrenching experiences which have been silently endured for many years.

However, I am aware that some of our members are finding it challenging to observe, understand or acknowledge the deep-rooted and daily pain of racism, which is currently clouded by the violent outbursts from a minority group who join in various protest marches across the world with their own agenda in mind.

It is often said that the death of someone close draws us to reflect on our own mortality. In the same manner, those who have viewed the footage of the killing of George Floyd are not only recalling their own experiences, but are feeling a kinship to the man and the cause. Many of my ministerial colleagues have already shared the spiritual aspects of the hurt and memories of those looking on. I will, therefore, resist the urge to spiritualise what we are witnessing globally, and will instead close with the words of the British philosopher, John Stuart Mill (1806-1873):

*'Bad men need nothing more to compass their ends, than that good men should look on and do nothing.'*

Kind regards,

PASTOR MAUREEN ROCK, DIRECTOR, ADVENTIST DISCOVERY CENTRE, UK & IRELAND





David Neal, Editor

# 'Best not get involved' – and the Gospel



The Good Samaritan sculpture on the campus of Loma Linda

## Best not get involved

Lord, I read in the paper the other day – do You have a minute? – about a woman beaten senseless by two men across the road from a bus queue.

No one crossed the road to help. They avoided involvement, and, later, each other's eyes. . . .

Involvement, Lord – a person needs help on this one. A person doesn't like to get involved.

The screaming quarrel . . . a person doesn't like to get involved. 'Best not get involved.'

Lord, people get killed – yet it's very common, Lord, this feeling: very natural, very ordinary.

Often it's more to do with tact than cowardice; with distaste rather than disinterest. Early teachings linger. 'Don't interfere,' 'Keep out of it,' 'Don't take sides,' and the mighty 'Don't get involved.' And people get killed.

'What can one do?'

'One doesn't want to say anything. . . .'

'One hesitates to offer help. After all . . . it doesn't do to poke one's nose in.'

And thus, Lord, the world population of 'ones' increases all the time.

It seems to me that Your world is full of ones screaming silently for help, and ones hesitating to offer any.

After all, one doesn't want to get involved. That Samaritan story is not there by accident; You were making a point. I would be of their number, please.

Help me not to walk by, Lord.

Let me hear the silent cries.

Remove from me the fear of involvement.

Grant me the sort of unfussy compassion that can see clearly and understand.

Help me not to walk by, Lord.

A person can make a life's work of not

getting involved, of keeping himself to himself, and wake up one day, by himself.

He can make a lifelong habit of not hearing cries for help – until all he can hear are his own.

It's not clever, Lord; not clever. Can I go in the 'urgent' tray?

*You Have a Minute, Lord?* Copyright: David Kossoff, 1977 (abbreviated), published by Pan Books, London.

You have heard it said . . . 'This world is not my home; we're just a-passing through.'

'Trying to sort out the complex issues the world faces is a distraction of time and resources from our mission of preparing people for the kingdom of heaven.'

Jesus' listeners to His Sermon on the Mount believed God to be remote, distant and harsh. Jesus explained: first principle – His kingdom extends an immediate invitation to an accessible, ever-present, loving and gracious God who is 'our Father' (Matt. 6:9, NKJV). Second principle – every listener is of priceless value: 'Will He not much more clothe you?' (Matt. 6:30, NKJV.) Third principle – whatever the listener's circumstance, no amount of human suffering prevents us from being blessed (Matt. 5:2-12). This is His 'kingdom of grace', His kingdom of 'now'.

Coming soon is His 'kingdom of glory'. Until then, live in His grace, as a preview of the best yet to come. 'He has sent Me to . . . set at liberty those who are oppressed' (Luke 4:18, NKJV). 'We may claim to be followers of Christ, we may claim to believe every truth in the word of God; but this will do our neighbour no good unless our belief is carried into our daily life. . . . A right example will do more to benefit the world than all our profession' (Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 383).

You have heard it said . . . 'Black lives matter.' But you say, 'All lives matter,' not quite understanding that 'Black lives matter' doesn't mean 'Only black lives matter,' but rather that black lives matter too.<sup>1</sup>

The racial playing field is not level. As Sajid Javid said recently in *The Sunday Times*, 'We mustn't pretend that as a country we don't still have substantial obstacles to overcome, from integration to opportunity. There are still some parts of society that are more concerned about the status quo than justice and humanity.'<sup>2</sup>

Where society creates a wall, the Galatians 3:28 principle demolishes it. As Ellen White

explains, 'Our neighbour . . . has no reference to race, colour, or class distinction. Our neighbour is every person who needs our help. Our neighbour is every soul who is wounded and bruised by the adversary. Our neighbour is every one who is the property of God' (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 376).

You have heard it said . . . 'Whataboutery' – 'Before you criticise me, put your own house in order.' 'Have you seen the rioting, looting, setting cars and buildings on fire?'

Such action cannot be condoned, and in no way helps the cause. But it is not an excuse to pass by on the other side of the road.

You have heard it said . . . 'What do you mean our organisation has a problem?'

'Institutional racism', to use plain language, is about negative 'stereotypes' disproportionately affecting the BAME community. In its subtle form, it is difficult to see. Back-room talk in an organisation, society or church, innuendos, promotion and opportunity (or lack thereof) provide a cocktail of distress for BAME people. 'What do you mean you've been passed over for promotion because you are black – can you prove it?' For the Anglo, the experience is outside of their world; and, having never experienced such judgement, it doesn't make sense. And, as the prayer says, 'a person doesn't like to get involved.'

'His cause is the cause of the oppressed and the poor. In the hearts of His professed followers there is need of the tender sympathy of Christ – a deeper love for those whom He has so valued as to give His own life for their salvation' (ibid., pp. 383, 384).

You have heard it said . . . 'I wish sometimes that white folk would understand what it's like to walk in my shoes.' Actually, I don't think you have heard this said, because most of the people I know are the last to want to make a fuss. But is there not a hidden cry that people like me need to hear?

Imagine two people (one white and one black) walking alongside each other on a path towards a destination, both travelling at the same speed. The wind speed for the white person is light to moderate. To keep up, the black person faces a hurricane storm. Sounds pretty challenging if you are black. What hope is there?

Howard Thurman suggests that, wherever the spirit of Jesus appears, 'the oppressed gather fresh courage; for He announced the good news that fear, hypocrisy, and hatred, the three hounds of hell that track the trail of the disinherited, need have no dominion over them.'<sup>3</sup>

May each of us be, to each other, the spirit of Jesus.

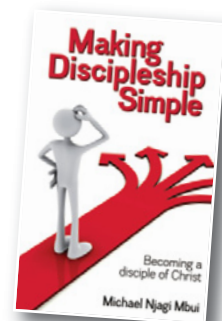
<sup>1</sup>Ken Burton, 'TED Words of Hope 12: Diatribe or dialogue?' – <https://youtu.be/k-Ydf-Cavls> 27 June, 'Affluent Britons don't really care about racism, warns Javid' <sup>2</sup>Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* – quoted by Christian Collins Winn, *Christianity Today* online, 11 June 2020



## Part 2:

## Chosen to be disciples

Dr Michael Mbui



Unless you become a disciple of Christ, you cannot know the vision of God for your life, your family and your church. This vision is that you experience the great commandments, 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart . . . love your neighbor as yourself' (Matthew 22:37-39, NKJV). Love for God is best expressed through worship, while love for others may be expressed through fellowship and witnessing. Discipleship is the process that brings about the fulfilment of this plan of God.

My life's journey has shown me how critical it is to know both the vision and the process, whether in matters of life or faith. Coming to study in the United Kingdom, then settling here, has been a life-changing experience. When I decided to leave Kenya to study at Newbold College (a theological seminary), my friends and family told me that it would be challenging. Initially I had planned to make the journey on my own, but I was encouraged to take my family with me, so that I would not be lonely and so that they too could share in my experiences.

There are so many changes involved in moving to a different continent. Growing up in Kenya, both my wife and I were accustomed to wide, open spaces, as well as perpetual heat and sunshine. We now had to acclimatise to the harsh and unpredictable weather in England, heating bills, and small, enclosed spaces.

As a self-sponsored student, I had to choose my degree programme, arrange my own finances and find suitable family accommodation. It was difficult enough moving continents, but I now had to navigate through the British education, housing and financial systems.

Three months before I left Kenya, my friend Jason travelled to the UK to study. His experience was radically different from mine. On his arrival at the airport there was a driver waiting to take him to the university. Once they arrived, a student liaison officer was available to assist him and show him to his accommodation. All his fees and living expenses had been paid, and there was even the offer of a part-time job: in addition to which, his classes were all pre-arranged, and after the completion of his studies there was a full-time job waiting for him back home.

Although we travelled to the same country, we had very different experiences. I chose to come and study in the United Kingdom; Jason was *chosen* to study in England as part of the British Council scholarship scheme for developing Commonwealth countries. When you are chosen, what you are to be and what you need are provided for in advance. Being chosen is a state that comes with certain privileges that may not be given to those who choose for themselves.

When Christ chooses you, you do not have to figure out what you ought to be or do. It is clearly set out for you, and all you need is already provided. You are like Jason. This is

because salvation, the gift that God has given to us by sending His Son Jesus Christ, is His initiative from beginning to end. It was not a belated response after the entrance of sin. God had it all pre-arranged before we chose it. Christ is referred to as 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world' (Revelation 13:8, KJV). It is true that my friend Jason did have to make a personal decision, but his choice was to accept or reject what was already fully prepared and provided. In John 15:16 (NKJV), Jesus declared to His disciples, '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.' The other places we meet Jesus sending His disciples are with regard to preaching the Gospel in Matthew 10:5, 6 and the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19 (NKJV): 'Go . . . and make disciples of all the nations.' They were appointed to make new disciples. Before they could go and make new disciples, they first had to become disciples themselves.

Choosing and appointing in this regard are two different acts. Choosing is about *being*, while appointment is about *doing*. Appointments are about service to others. Jesus *chose them* to be His friends, and through that friendship they became His disciples. He then *appointed them* to serve Him by making other disciples. Christ envisaged that their experience of His salvation would, in turn, make them successful fishers of men, as He had invited them to be.

Before making this declaration, Jesus had



## Bible Study Guides

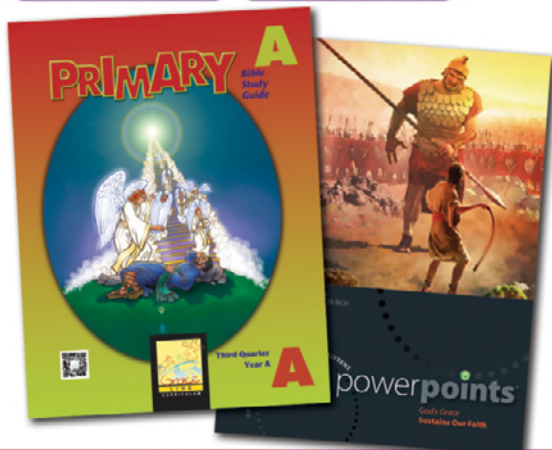
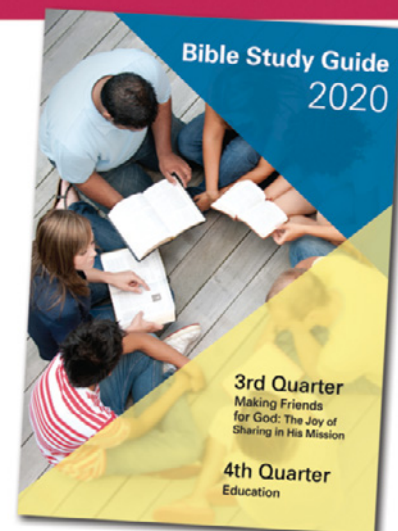
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given them very explicit indications about the relationship He hoped to have with them. *'I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.'* (John 15:15, NKJV.)

Unlike other existing master-disciple relationships, where the disciple was just a learner and a servant, Jesus chose them to be His friends. It was to be a friendship that would lead them to choose the life of Christ in place of their own, and become the disciples of Christ.

Discipleship *preceded* and *produced* their fruitfulness through Christ. Whether in bringing new people to faith in Christ or in bearing the fruits of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, and so on – only commitment to the life of Christ, as His disciples, was guaranteed to bring this vision of Christ to pass.

The centrality of discipleship is also underscored when the vision of Christ for His Church is considered from the perspective of the great commandments: *'Love the Lord your God with all your heart. . . . Love your neighbor as yourself'* (Matthew 22:37-39, NKJV). According to this and other passages of Scripture, the Church and its members exist (a) to love God supremely, and (b) to love each other. Loving God is best expressed *through worship*; hence the call for the Church to become a priesthood of believers (1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6) who worship God and lead others to worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:21-24). How the believers worship is determined by how they develop as disciples.

Loving others is best expressed *through fellowship*. The Church is therefore called to be

the family of God here on Earth (Ephesians 3:15; John 1:12), where the love of God is shared with one another (John 13:34) through fellowship (1 John 1:7). How we fellowship is dependent on what kind of disciples we are.

Loving others is also expressed *through witnessing or sharing Christ* so that others may come to be His disciples. The Church is called to be an army (Matthew 16:18; 2 Timothy 2:2-4), reclaiming souls from the slavery of Satan through the proclamation of the Gospel to all nations (Matthew 28:19, 20; Acts 1:8). Since one can only be a witness to what one has experienced, being a disciple will influence the ability to witness. A more detailed explanation follows that confirms the relationship of discipleship to worship, fellowship and witness.

If you can't wait to read the next excerpt of *Making Discipleship Simple*, the book is available for £5.95 + p & p. To order, just click on the link below.  
<https://lifesourcebookshop.co.uk/product/making-discipleship-simple/>

## NOTED

### Newbold College of Higher Education

## 'We are sorry, and we are listening'

by Dr John Baildam

Since the *'Black Lives Matter'* statement which I made recently in the light of the killing of George Floyd, we have been shocked and disappointed to hear from current students, staff and alumni of unacceptable incidents of racism and discrimination at Newbold College of Higher Education. I am grateful to those of you who have so courageously and bravely taken the time to communicate your feelings of pain and hurt with us. This has been no easy thing to do. We have let you down, and we will strive to put things right.

The current watershed has given us all pause for ongoing thought as we reflect on your distress and suffering, which we wish to recognise openly and properly. While we cannot re-write our college's history, together we can all help to shape its future. We acknowledge past and present wrongs perpetrated on racial grounds, while reiterating that racist or discriminatory behaviour is not in harmony with God's ideal. We are sorry for all failures in this regard on the part of the college, and we ask for forgiveness for every heartache or anguish caused or felt.

Elie Wiesel stresses that 'what hurts the victim the most is . . . the silence of the bystander.' We promise to ensure that black lives really do matter on our campus, and we ask you to help us to make this an everyday reality. We have already called a meeting of a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Audit and Strategy Panel. Chaired by our chaplain, Pastor Alastair Agbaje, this group will comprise a number of students and staff. Now is the time for us to listen, and so – difficult though this may be – we ask you to find the strength to voice your experiences so that together we can find the practical solutions needed for change. There is a lot of work ahead of us all, but we are ready to change things for the better. Do look out for further initiatives, which will include a virtual open dialogue session.

As an ethnically and culturally diverse senior leadership team ourselves, my colleagues, Mrs Abigail Wright (Chief Financial Officer) and Ms Serena Santona (Academic Registrar), and I, as Principal, are proud of the rich multi-ethnic and multinational heritage of our college students and staff. We wish to serve as examples of justice and equality. We concur with Ellen White, who reminds us that 'when the love of Christ is cherished in the heart . . . no difference will be made because of the colour of the skin.'<sup>1</sup> Racism, prejudice and intolerance of any kind have no place here, and we are committed to working intentionally to eradicate any traces of such.

Newbold's campus must be a safe and welcoming place for all, regardless of race, colour, culture, tribe, gender, religious beliefs, sexual

orientation, disability or ability. We know that whatever we say may never be enough, but we thank you for giving us the chance to right any wrongs.

- John Baildam (Principal),
- Abigail Wright (Chief Financial Officer),
- Serena Santona (Academic Registrar)

Senior Leadership Team, Newbold College of Higher Education  
 We are your Senior Leadership Team, and we are here to listen.

<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White in a letter to Brother Hyatt written from New South Wales, 15 February, 1900

## Ken Burton responds to George Floyd's death

Talking with *Songs of Praise* presenter, Sean Fletcher during the 7 June edition of the BBC's *Songs of Praise*, Ken shared his response to the murder of George Floyd.

'Personally, I have been quite emotional about it. As somebody who's grown up in this country – and I myself have been the subject of racist bullying – I look at that and think, *Here we are in the twenty-first century. We can send something to outer space, and a car can drive itself, but the basic thing about humans living together and giving dignity and value to other human beings is something we're still learning how to deal with.*'

Concerning an online concert, he said:

'The response to organising an online concert has been absolutely overwhelming. I've had people from the African continent, people from America, some friends of *Songs of Praise*, Wayne Ellington, Basil Mead, LCGC and John Fisher, so it's grown larger than I ever could have imagined. We're going to be contacting the family of George Floyd so that they will have this offering of our love.'

Asked about a particular gospel song that can help us through this period, Ken responded:

'There's a gospel song called, "Precious Lord, Take My Hand", which was written by Thomas Dorsey, who was known as the "father of gospel". He wrote this song following a tragic situation in his own life where he had the double loss of his wife and newborn, and he is asking God to hold our hands.

'I think, throughout this whole situation, it is a prayer we can ask: "Precious Lord, please take our hands and lead us."'

To see the interview, and the song 'Precious Lord' performed by Tessera, click on this link:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m000k67k/songs-of-praise-faith-and-music>. A few days after his 'Songs of Praise' interview, Ken was also interviewed by Victor Hulbert for Trans-European Division News. Click here to watch: <https://ted.adventist.org/news/1731-diatribes-or-dialogue-words-of-hope-12>

# The Biblical Story

## A Study Guide

It is not enough to know 'what we believe'; we must know 'who we believe in'

by Zlatko Musija,  
Youth Director,  
Trans-European Division



A new baptismal Bible study guide has been designed to help young people fall in love with the Bible and read it as one big story of God's love.

Now available in English, *The Biblical Story – A Study Guide* was developed a few years ago by the Youth Ministries Department in Denmark.

Pastor Thomas Rasmussen, the primary contributor of the guide, explained why he wrote it. 'When I returned to Denmark after my studies at Newbold College, I soon found myself studying with young people who wanted to be baptised. However, I was unable to find any material that presented the story of the Bible in the way that Gunnar Pedersen had taught us in Biblical Theology. It had to be developed.'

Rasmussen states that he was thrilled to see how excited baptismal candidates became after reading larger portions of Scripture and getting to know Jesus. More recently he has returned to Denmark after completing his MA at Andrews University, Michigan, USA. Since then he has been working with the Trans-European Division to make the material available in English.

The study guide introduces young people to the Bible, not simply by reading a few verses here and there, but by looking at the entire biblical story. It is based on the assumption that it is not enough to know 'what we believe'; in fact, that is irrelevant if it does not connect us to 'who we believe in'.

Dr Laurence Turner, Newbold's professor emeritus, is impressed. 'At last! This is a Bible study guide that studies the Bible as it was given,' he writes. 'Reading large sections of Scripture, rather than isolated proof texts, makes the Bible more understandable, attractive and relevant. It also

respects those studying by asking genuinely open-ended questions, rather than indicating the "correct" answer. It is an excellent tool for witnessing in our contemporary society.'

While designed in partnership with the Trans-European Division, the guide is already being used elsewhere. Dr Darius Jankiewicz is Field and Ministerial Secretary of the South Pacific Division of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. He recommends the guide as an excellent resource for pastors and church members, who can use it to introduce people to Jesus and the Bible. Jankiewicz states, 'I really like the fact that the studies begin with Jesus, rather than first focusing on other topics before introducing Jesus. I also appreciate the emphasis on discipleship. Finally, the perspective that the Bible outlines a grand narrative of salvation is a welcome innovation that is missing in many Bible studies.'

Dr Richard Davidson, a professor of Old Testament Interpretation at Andrews University, adds, 'What a beautiful Biblical Story Study Guide! Thomas Rasmussen and team have done a marvellous job of turning Gunnar Pedersen's Biblical Theology into a Bible Studies format and translating it into fluent English.'

*The Biblical Story – A Study Guide* is currently available in English, Danish and Norwegian. It will soon be available in some additional languages. Plans are also in place to develop video material for teachers and youth to accompany the lessons.

The study guide can be downloaded in all three languages from the Trans-European Division at Youth Resources Hub – <https://ted.adventist.org/youth-ministries/resources/faith-bible-basics/1698-the-biblical-story-a-study-guide>.

### PRESENTATION OF THE Seventh-day Adventist Church

**TRIVIA ABOUT US**  
Seventh-day Adventists are a world-wide family of Christian believers. Like other Protestant churches we base our beliefs on the Bible. Thus, we believe Jesus Christ is God and that He died for our sins. In Europe we number about 350,000 members. We meet every week to worship God and enjoy our fellowship. Globally, we have approximately 22 million members, but even more people come to our churches which are open to everyone, including you.

Even though there are not that many Adventists in Europe compared to the size of the population, it's not impossible that you may have met one of us, or seen one of our church buildings. Our impact on society has been made in varying ways. For instance, we run many private schools where many students, are not from an Adventist background.

Were you aware that Desmond Doss the WW2 conscientious objector who saved 75 lives at Hacksaw Ridge was an Adventist? John Harvey Kellogg, American physician and health-food pioneer, was also an Adventist for most of his life. We try to make an impact by caring for the basic needs of people world-wide (ADRA), by improving their health: with being (health ministry) and by supporting religious freedom around the world.

Of course, if you want to know more about us, the best way is to visit us. Everyone is welcome.

**WHO ARE WE?**  
What does it mean to be a "seventh-day Adventist"? Well, the name consists of two elements.

The Seventh day is a reference to the Sabbath. When God created the world, He made the seventh day holy. That's why we attend church on that day and worship God as a way of reminding ourselves that He is our creator.

### OVERVIEW A BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

The lessons are ordered both by topic, title and within which part of the Biblical account they belong.

**Lesson 1 – Creation, the Fall, the Promise (stage 1-2)**  
Bible Passages: Genesis 1-3  
Topic: Paradise – God's Original Plan and the World Today

**Lesson 2 – Abraham (stage 3 – part 1)**  
Bible Passages: Genesis 12-25, Romans 4, Hebrews 11  
Topic: Faith

**Lesson 3 – Israel (stage 3 – part 2)**  
Bible Passages: Exodus 1-3, 11-12, 14-20, 24:1-25:9, 31-34, Deuteronomy 30, 34, Joshua 1  
Topic: God's People and God's Law

**Lesson 4 – David (stage 3 – part 3)**  
Bible Passages: Ruth 1-4, 1 Samuel 8, 2 Samuel 1-24, 1 Kings 1-2, 11  
Topic: The Kingdom of Israel – A Man After God's Own Heart

**Lesson 5 – The Prophets (stage 3 – part 4)**  
Bible Passages: Micah 5, Psalm 55, Zachariah 11, Psalm 22, Isaiah 55  
Additional Bible Passages: Jeremiah 31:27-40, Daniel 1-12, Isaiah 1, 49, 43, 52-53, 58:12, 65-66, Malachi 1-3  
Topic: Prophecy and the Coming Messiah

### THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST



# Three miracles in my life

I grew up in an Adventist environment. My parents became Adventists in their teenage years, and my father was a pastor. I don't remember my dad as a pastor, because I was very young, just two years old: but, due to family problems, he lost his pastoral credentials. You can imagine how family problems affect children not just emotionally, but also spiritually, particularly if there is a lot of abuse in the family.

But I believe that, through that time, God was working to create a miracle in my life in ways different to how I might have expected. When I look back, I think I can clearly see how God created three miracles in my life to deepen my faith in Him.

## A love for the Bible

First, He gave me a love for the Bible. When I was eight years old, each child in my home church received a special gift. It was a small gift, nothing special in one sense, but it was a brand-new Bible. In our local village church in Croatia, I was part of a group of five boys aged between seven and twelve years old, and for us this gift was so special. I realise today how special it was to get a new Bible during those Communist times.

We started to read the Bible, and we became fascinated by it. Somehow, reading the Bible became our main occupation, our main game. We would spend hours and hours reading the Bible and then testing each other's knowledge. One day, my home Union ran a sort of Bible bowl competition, testing us on our knowledge of the Bible – and, would you believe it, the youth group from our small church was the best!

## Friendship

The second miracle God worked in my life was the experience of belonging to a youth group in my church. Our love for the Bible created a close and common bond with each other. We really enjoyed our time together. We played together, we talked together, we would go out in nature together – and we would read the Bible together. But, as for all of us growing up and going through our teen years, I have to admit that it was not easy to remain faithful to God in the village environment: and yet church life gave us some kind of sense of belonging and strengthened our friendship with each other. In many ways, that friendship helped me feel really supported by God.

## Not spectators – but participants

In my church, all of us kids were involved in its life and mission. I know that this was the third miracle in my life. When we were

about 10 years old, my group of friends and I were all allowed to preach! The church leaders and parents allowed us to preach in the Divine Service. During our Sabbath School time, we would sometimes participate in door-to-door evangelism, sharing our faith. At first it was quite a shaky experience. I remember the group returning from this activity and realising how little we knew about the Bible. So yes – you guessed it – we decided to read more about the Bible, determined to get to know the doctrines! Not only did we want answers, but we also wanted to learn how to answer the difficult questions we would face when meeting people on the doorstep.

But something was still missing.

And, as you might guess, I was still missing something. I was missing a close relationship with God. During my early teenage years, God and knowledge of the Bible were, for the most part, about having the

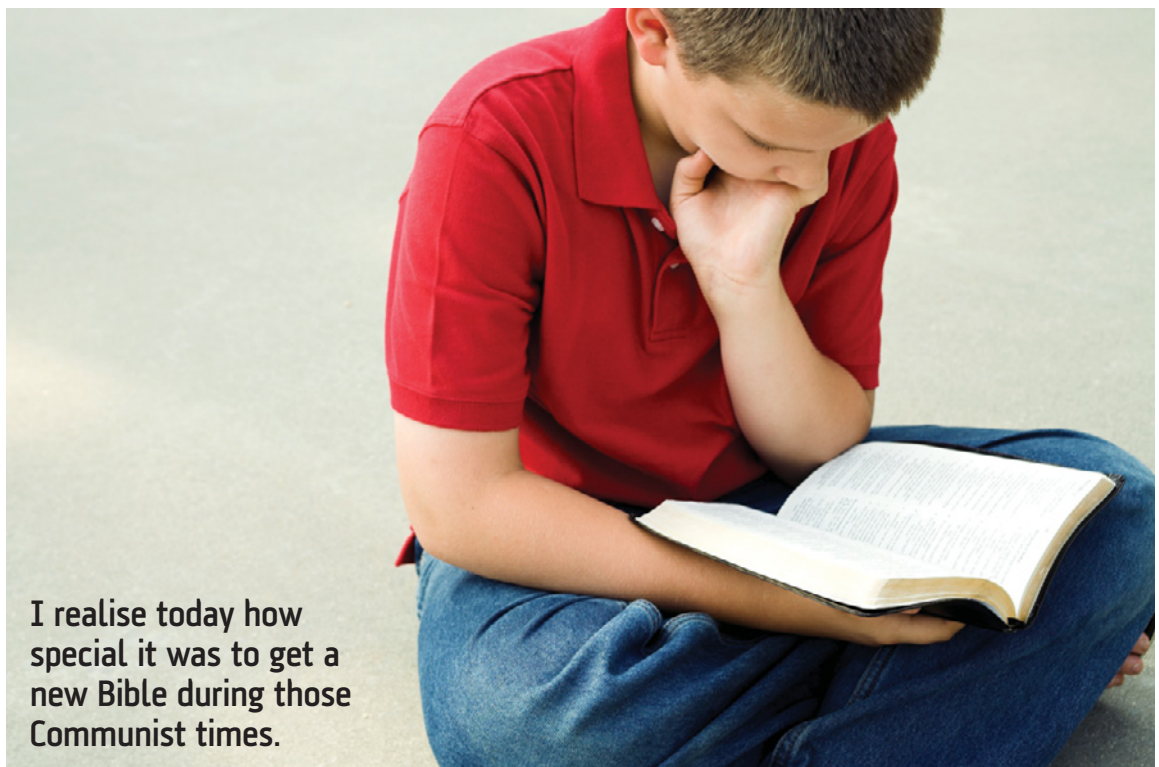
right doctrine. As a result, in a strange way – or perhaps not so strange, looking back – it caused me to become distant from the church.

## Relationship, relationship, relationship!

It was when I was eighteen years old that someone introduced to me a new way of reading the Bible, which they called a 'relational reading of the Bible', to find God in the Bible as a loving, caring Father. Almost immediately, I began to discover that the beauty of God's character made my spiritual life completely different. It was like a light going on. I had discovered that, for Him, relationships are the most important.

And I can say that this is a miracle, a mighty way in which God worked gradually in my life: first, to give me a love for the Bible – and, through it, to give me a love for Himself as a Person. I also think that this extraordinary friendship we had in the church, and the extraordinary opportunity to be fully involved in church life, helped us come closer to God and strengthened our faith and trust in Him. Little by little, I realised how God wanted me to come closer into a relationship with Him . . . and, for me, that is the biggest miracle in my life.

ZLATKO MUSIJA



**I realise today how special it was to get a new Bible during those Communist times.**



# Don't be afraid of the dark

## God can be found in both the light and the dark

by Pastor Don McFarlane

**M**y mother had various ways of punishing me when I was a child. The form of

punishment that caused me greatest distress was locking me out of the house at night. This might seem extremely harsh in North America, but in Ginger House, Jamaica, where I grew up, that was par for the course. I usually would be allowed back into the house after an hour or two.

When I was locked out of the house by my mother, I had to sit on the veranda in the dark. Our home was about 200 yards from a cemetery, and each sound I heard while confined to the veranda caused blood to rush to my head as my heart palpitated wildly. In my village, stories abounded about beings that lived in the cemetery and made their appearance in the dark.

Darkness was all around me as a child. I dreaded it, apart from those times when I was tucked up in bed. But now I have the opposite problem. There's so much light around that I often crave the dark and sometimes wish that I were sitting on my Ginger House veranda in the dark. I have learned to appreciate the dark, and I'm no longer afraid of it.

### Light and dark

The Bible tells us that God is light, and that in Him there is no darkness (1 John 1:5). This truth is so central to the Christian faith that many hymns and poems have been written about it. We sing songs such as 'The Lord Is My Light', 'Light Shining Out of Darkness', and 'Shine in My Heart, Lord Jesus'.

Many of our favourite Bible verses are full of light: 'The LORD is my light and my salvation' (Ps. 27:1); 'Your word is a lamp to my feet' (Ps. 119:105); 'The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light' (Isa. 9:2); 'In Him was life, and the life was the light of men' (John 1:4).

Many today depend on the truth that God is light. They often find themselves in the darkness of depression, chronic sickness, or some other seemingly negative experience. Their only comfort is that God will bring them to light again. But, as one of my favourite authors, Barbara Brown Taylor, says, 'If they turn around and look in the opposite direction, away from "God is light", they will find another truth, a truth of equal importance, a truth that is compelling: that God dwells in deep darkness (Psalms 18:11; 97:2).'

God comes to us in dark clouds, dark nights, dark moments, and dark experiences. History tells us that God does some of His best work in the dark. Did He not come to Abraham in the dark when He decided to make a covenant with him regarding being the father of His chosen people (Gen. 15)? God also visited Jacob in the dark as he slept alone in the desert with a stone as his pillow and said to him, 'I am with you and will keep you wherever you go' (Gen. 28:15).

Shortly after the children of Israel left Egypt, they were camped at the foot of Mount Sinai, and God was about to make a covenant with them. He told Moses that He would come down to him in a dense cloud, and that the people would hear when He spoke to Moses. From the obscurity of fire, lightning, and thick smoke, God thundered, 'I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me' (Ex. 20:2, 3).

The greatest work of God on earth was done in darkness: 'Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" . . . And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.' (Matt. 27:45-50).

### Safe in the arms of Jesus

God often uses dark experiences to do something special for us that could not otherwise be done in the light. Since this is true, it's best that we don't try to run from the dark. Instead, trust God in the dark. He is in the darkness as much as He is in the light. He walks with us in sickness, in bereavement, in our pain, and in our sorrows, in joblessness and economic meltdown.

He is with us in

our discouragement and in our depression. He is with us in darkness as well as in light.

Barbara Brown Taylor says we often misunderstand the place of darkness in our lives, seeing it as undesirable and bad. We seek to dispel the darkness with the use of artificial light – alcohol, gambling, drugs, cheap and meaningless sex. She emphasises that no one who has tried this artificial light to dispel darkness has a success story to tell. It never works! All that works is placing our faith in God and believing that He is with us in the darkness, whatever betides.

Those of us who like God to deal with us always in the light may fail to see Him when He comes to us in a dense cloud, through dark strangers, or in dark experiences. We might make the mistake of thinking that we are lost in the darkness, instead of recognising that we are safe in the arms of Jesus. Based on the witness of those who have gone before, the dark cloud is often where God takes His people, that He might do for them what He cannot do in the light. It is where He takes His people apart and puts them back together again.

What cloud has enveloped you of late? In what darkness are you immersed? Do you find yourself in a dark place as a result of COVID-19? Have you lost your job, or even loved ones in this pandemic? If so, my heart goes out to you. Keep trusting the One who is with us in both light and darkness; they are both alike to Him (Psalm 139:12).

'To be human is to live by sunlight and moonlight, with anxiety and delight, admitting limits and transcending them, falling down and rising up. To want a life of only half of these things is to want half a life, shutting the other half away where it will not interfere with one's bright fantasies of the way things ought to be.'

Don't be afraid of the dark!

**Don McFarlane**, a former British Union Conference president, is the pastor for administration and adult ministries at Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church in Takoma Park, Maryland.

This article was first published in the online edition of the *Adventist Review*. Used with permission of both the author and the publisher. All Scripture references in this article have been taken from the New King James Version.

<sup>1</sup>Barbara Brown Taylor, *Learning to Walk in the Dark*



# Uncertainty video series

by Pastor Victor Hulbert, Trans-European Division Communication Director

When 'uncertainty' was chosen as the theme for a GA/N network project back in February 2019, leaders were somewhat nervous as to whether this was the right decision. Little did they know what the future held – and how appropriate the series would become as countries slowly work to come out of COVID-19 lockdown into an uncertain new world.

As COVID-19 very slowly retreats, people's attention is moving to the future – and that future is very uncertain! 'What is our new future going to look like: physically, emotionally, spiritually? We have many questions, but not so many answers. By telling real-life stories, this series helps provide answers and share hope.'

Five documentaries will share the stories of ten individuals from across the world who have had to deal with challenging life situations – whether facing a life sentence for murder, confronting the challenges of employment, seeking what the future holds as a refugee, hoping desperately to be able to start a family, or facing the future with a debilitating illness. The stories are real, but so is the hope that they bring into an uncertain world.

Additionally, two feature films, a series of twenty short video clips, and a book will accompany the series. The release of the first of these commenced on Saturday evening, 30 May at a GA/N Europe online meet-up.

Here is a taster of one of the films.

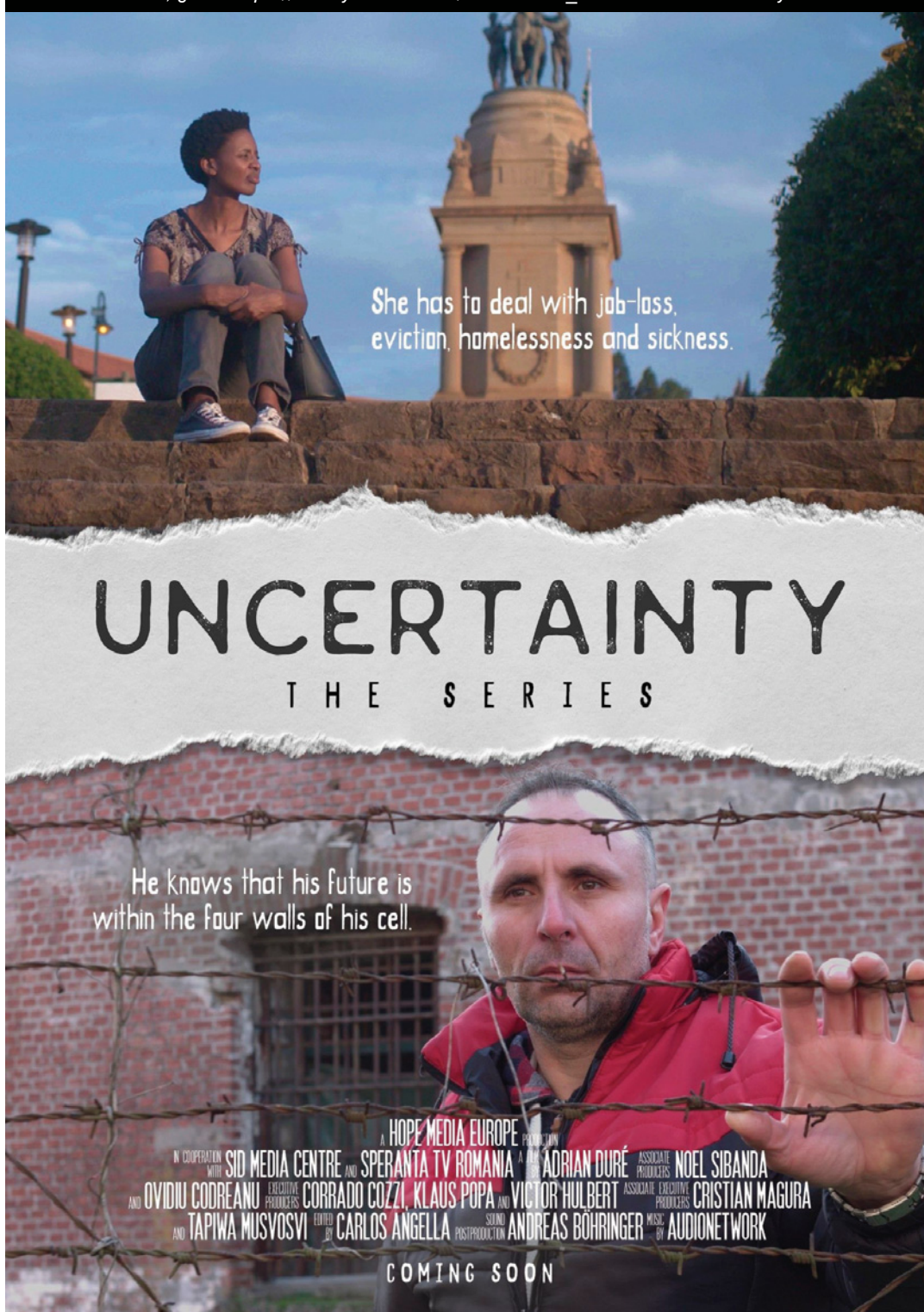
*Uncertainty – the Movie* is a short film about fears, life decisions, doubts and faith. It tells the story of a young woman who, faced with an important decision that must be made, works through a series of fears and traumas that have accompanied her throughout her life.

A project of the South American Division, the film symbolically portrays the way in which we, as humans, relate to our internal fears, and how uncertainty about the future

creates the perfect setting for fears to appear and, in too many cases, dominate us.

Can uncertainty be the best school to help us learn to live with our fears?

To watch this film, go to: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k\\_XeMx3Mv98&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_XeMx3Mv98&feature=youtu.be)





## More than Adventism

Firstly, Aston Newtown Community Church (ANCC) Soup Kitchen staff would like to express gratitude to volunteers/cooks/drivers/donors and applaud the collaborative initiatives that have addressed inequalities faced within our society across the UK.

Our ANCC hub of activity believes that heights of greatness start with service; and before the lockdown, every Tuesday from 6 to 8pm, people came from varying vulnerable backgrounds of homelessness, addictions, poor health, and being mostly housebound elderly folk. They received a three-course hot meal and food distribution in a grocery bag to take home every week. What we have found over time is that ANCC is more than food – for some we are their family, a listening ear, a source of conversation, encouragement and advice, a place to take a break from their everyday routines. Here are some comments noted that reflect this:

‘I love the soup kitchen as it keeps away the loneliness’; ‘My confidence has increased because of the environment’; ‘You guys are truly amazingly caring’; ‘Your soup should be bottled and sold.’

A local school connection enables children to be in receipt of toys/stationery/clothes donations, and for Christmas 2019 a local hostel housing low-income families received a bounty.

With lockdown in place, food distribution has not stopped, thanks to GOOD (Generosity Opens Other Doors) donations. We estimate that in 2019 568 three-course meals were served, and in 2020 before the lockdown 126 servings were given. Every individual who attends also leaves with a food bag and can take for others too, so we estimate a



minimum of 700-1,000 food bags have been distributed to date.

We have reached seven to ten years of active service with our soup kitchen and luncheon club. Like every similar venture, its survival depends on donations – acts of giving, whether the gift be money, food or your time. Wherever you are, let's continue to be 'more than'.

ASTON NEWTOWN COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT



## ‘Hardship Fund’ launched by London Ghana Church

In a bid to tackle some of the dreadful circumstances into which people have been thrust as a result of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, in April the London Ghana Seventh-day Adventist church launched a ‘Hardship Fund’ to support immediate neighbours within its local community, as well as its vulnerable members.

The church, which already had the Welfare and Community Ministries Department delivering a series of charitable activities over many years, found itself confronted with another, unprecedented level of demand since the pandemic hit the UK.

Church treasurer, Isaac Asare, is overwhelmed by the positive response since the launch.

‘Financial contributions have come from unexpected sources as well as the general church members, and we have been overwhelmed by the kind and thoughtful gestures from well-wishers since the initiative launched. Just imagine people losing their jobs and being threatened

by homelessness, and others thrown into real hardship, to the point where even buying basic groceries has become a struggle – here in the UK, of all places! We already have an existing food bank, which we have been working for in partnership with the Trussell Trust organisation since June 2016, but the number of people needing help from the church since COVID-19 struck has really increased, and the pastoral team have been working tirelessly to offer their support to the beneficiaries of the initiative.’

£50,000 is the total figure which London Ghana intends to raise over the coming months to cover the cost of supporting the diverse group of beneficiaries, which have included widows, elderly folk, the clinically vulnerable and others. With just over £16,250 raised so far through Facebook, YouTube and a contribution from the church budget, the operation is underway. ‘Goodwill packages’, consisting of a 10kg bag of rice, 6 packs of sardines, washing detergent, a pack of nine toilet rolls, 5 litres of cooking oil, 46 bottles of water and a pack of 12 large-sized tins of tomatoes, were delivered by the pastors to each of the identified persons.

Pastor Ebenezer Jones-Lartey, the lead pastor of London Ghana, commented that he is in high spirits.

‘I’m in high spirits because I know that there is hope beyond 2020! It gives me great pleasure to serve my parishioners, as well as members of the community, who are suffering due to one reason or another. Some of the beneficiaries were genuinely surprised to see me, as they believed they should rather offer some support to me at this time, being a minister. But then I’m always quick to remind them that Christ came to serve, and not to be served, and it is in order that I, as His servant, emulate what He did.’

The London Ghana Church ‘Hardship Fund’ is still open for contributions; and, in a time when almost every sector of society has been affected by COVID-19, it is encouraging to see all forms of community organisations undertaking various initiatives to support those who have been profoundly affected by the 2020 coronavirus crisis.

RUBINA FOSUA ARTHUR





## Safeguarding mental well-being during times of crisis

### part 3

#### Sleep impact

In this issue, we look at the importance of sleep, particularly during times of significant stress.

Candice Alfano, director of the University of Houston's Sleep and Anxiety Centre, reports: 'During times of increased stress, sleep is often the first biological system to malfunction.' A pandemic is stressful. 'Sleep loss elevates next-day anxiety, potentially creating a vicious cycle.'<sup>1</sup>

Alfano and her team report patients currently experiencing 'severe to very severe problems', citing pandemic-related stress as the key factor.

In the UK, a report published on 28 April, 2020, carried the caption: 'Survey reveals COVID-19 having severe impact on sleep'.<sup>2</sup> The Sleep Council, together with The Sleep Charity and Sleepstation, surveyed over 2,700 people to ascertain the current state of the nation's sleep during the COVID-19 outbreak. Their National Sleep Survey findings revealed the following:

- Almost half of the respondents (43%) currently find it harder to fall asleep.
- Unease around the pandemic affected sleep for three quarters of the population (75%).
- Over one in 10 people (12%) are experiencing severe symptoms of depression.
- Women are much more likely to report depressive symptoms in the moderate-severe range than men.
- Over three quarters (77%) say lack of sleep interferes with their ability to function in the day, causing daytime fatigue, concentration and mood changes.
- Women suffered more than men with anxiety about the coronavirus, and were twice as likely to report feeling stressed compared to men.
- Women also reported having more vivid dreams.

Let's look now at some solutions suggested by The Sleep Foundation:<sup>3</sup>

- Maintain a sleep schedule of the same bedtime and wake-up time, even on weekends. This regulates your circadian rhythm (body clock).
- Establish a relaxing bedtime routine, away from bright lights.
- If you have trouble sleeping, avoid naps, especially in the afternoon.
- Exercise daily, but not too close to bedtime.
- Assess your sleep environment to enhance optimal sleep. Your bedroom should be cool (between 60 and 67 degrees Fahrenheit), dark, and free of noise that may disturb your sleep.
- Sleep on a comfortable mattress and pillows.
- Avoid bright light in the evening and expose yourself to sunlight in the morning. This helps regulate your circadian rhythm.
- Avoid spicy and heavy meals in the evening. Alcohol also disturbs sleep.
- Wind down with calming activities and eliminate use of electronic gadgets. These screen lights activate the brain, keeping you awake.
- If sleep difficulties persist, speak with your doctor or a sleep specialist.

#### Good health!

<sup>1</sup><https://www.wired.com/story/how-to-sleep-anxiety/>

<sup>2</sup><https://sleepcouncil.org.uk/survey-reveals-covid-19-having-severe-impact-on-sleep/>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.sleepfoundation.org/articles/healthy-sleep-tips>

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# ... So the prophecies are true?

by Andrew Puckering

You've probably noticed, but there's been a plethora of 'fake news' items circulating on social media for the past few weeks and months. Some of these 'conspiracy theories' speak of a secret cabal behind the scenes, pulling the strings of the world's governments to create a crisis in order to extend their control over us. Personally, I have grave reservations about such theories, but I do recognise at least some truth in them. There really are evil forces working at high levels to influence world events (Daniel 10:13; Ephesians 6:12). However, it's my personal belief that there is no grand conspiracy among human agencies; rather, when the devil uses national and religious leaders as his instruments, they are merely his unwitting pawns. Whatever the case, the battle is real, and the great controversy is acted out all

around us – but *thank God* that Jesus Christ is far stronger than the devil, and has defeated him! *Praise God* that He will ultimately be victorious, and all will glorify Him as Lord!

One of the conspiracy theories that we know to be false is that the 'mark of the beast' will take the form of an electronic chip or tag inserted into people through a vaccine or some other means. We know this to be false because the mark of the beast is not merely a crude physical indicator, but transgression of God's commands through wilful neglect of His holy Sabbath and rejection of His authority by worship on a different day of the week. True Sabbath observance glorifies God as Creator (Genesis 2:1-3), and worship of God as our Creator is the crucial issue the three angels proclaim (Revelation 14:6-12). As a church, we understand that Revelation 13 speaks of

the persecution of God's people for refusing to accept the mark of the beast. Furthermore, we interpret this as persecution for keeping the Sabbath according to God's commandment rather than Sunday worship. It has nothing to do with vaccines.

Now, I'm willing to admit that this might seem a little far-fetched to many people. *What? The papacy and the United States will join hands to enforce Sunday worship across the globe? How can that ever happen?* Many of us have sometimes sympathised with the doubters. It all seemed highly unlikely to happen in the near future, and we thought that maybe it could happen in another hundred years or so, after we had all died, but *not now – surely, not now!*

Then the coronavirus came along. Is it too early in the pandemic to speak





of 'lessons learned'?

If you'd told me at the start of this year that in just a few months the British government and many others across the globe would be closing all churches, suspending weddings and banning baptisms, *I would have called that a conspiracy theory*. And yet not only has it happened, but in our pandemic-induced panic we have urged it to happen. We closed our churches even before the Government ordered them closed; we begged the Government to take our liberties away from us. And it was *completely sensible and completely right to do so*, because of the virus. *We had to protect the elderly and the vulnerable.*

What does this mean for our belief about the prospect of a globally enforced Sunday law, backed by financial restrictions, having the potential to become a life-and-death issue, as worship of God was for the first-century readers of Revelation?

Well, to my mind it suddenly seems a lot more credible than it did before.



Then the coronavirus came along.

Our reaction to the pandemic has shown me that our rights and liberties are not sacrosanct. They exist on sufferance. They can be removed by national governments, and they can be removed quickly, if it's deemed to be in the public interest to do so. Furthermore, many countries, even every country at once,

could do this, if sufficiently motivated; and, far from being imposed by a crafty cabal, this can be driven by public demand, even by church leaders. It may seem wholly rational, even praiseworthy. Penalties can easily follow for non-compliance. *We may expect to see all of this, in fulfilment of biblical prophecy, in future times.*

So, is this it? Are we now at 'the end'? Not necessarily. This might be a wake-up call. And I want to reiterate that there is nothing wrong with our current response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It's a *good thing* that we're in lockdown; our church leaders were completely right to protect the vulnerable by suspending services; and many lives have been saved as a result. But – and there is a but . . .

During the lockdown the air quality has improved. Pollution has diminished. People have been able to rest more and spend more time with their families. All these are good things, and have been touted by Pope Francis as benefits of a weekly day of rest. Is it so far-fetched to suggest that he will campaign among world leaders for a 'lockdown' every Sunday, for the sake of the environment and the family? And what if such a lockdown were to be enforced vigorously across the globe? The events of the past few months have made me wonder whether our traditional understanding of the Bible prophecies of Daniel and Revelation aren't so far-fetched after all. . . .

If we're not at the end yet, we're closer now than we've ever been. I believe that the prophecies of the Bible will be fulfilled – and maybe in my lifetime.



## Stanborough Secondary School, open for September 2020 enrolment



Stanborough Secondary School, a Seventh-day Adventist secondary school, is situated on the serene Stanborough Park in Watford. From inception in 1919, school administration has held firm to the principle that education is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental and the spiritual powers. Stanborough still seeks to prepare its pupils for the joy of service in this world, and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come.

COVID-19 has undoubtedly impacted Stanborough School, and the school is currently closed. However, God is the Master of this school and guides its operations. The teachers were prepared to move all the teaching onto online platforms when the Government declared a lockdown in March. A robust teaching programme has continued throughout this turbulent time.

In 2019, the school celebrated its centenary and looks set for another 100 years (unless Jesus comes before then). We will continue to run our school by biblical principles.

This is to advise all prospective parents and guardians that we are accepting pupils for September 2020 enrolment. Please visit our website, [www.spsch.org](http://www.spsch.org), for a virtual guided tour of the school. For further information, or to discuss our admissions procedures further, please contact the school on [info@spsch.org](mailto:info@spsch.org).

May God bless you, and keep safe!



## COVID-19 Church: from congregation to community

by Pastor John Surridge,  
BUC Executive Secretary

Let's face it: in the middle of a viral pandemic, the last thing you need is a congregation. Banned by the Government, dispersed by the police, and frowned upon by society, congregations of any kind are bad. Social distancing is good.

In the pre-coronavirus era most good and upright church attenders equated 'church' with 'congregation'. Church was what happened every Sabbath when members congregated together. Those with a creative mindset may have conceded that church didn't necessarily have to happen in a traditional church building, but very few would have imagined a church where people didn't physically meet up at all.

COVID-19 changed all that. Fortuitously, the pandemic coincided with the emergence of several multi-user technologies which allowed people to 'meet' in a virtual space. Yes, these had been around for a few years, but better broadband – faster speeds, greater capacity, and wider availability – meant that such communication

tools could now be used by the masses.

Some interesting things have happened. We've seen an explosion of creativity, with pastors narrowcasting church services to their former congregations from the comfort of their own homes. This is a major shift away from what went before, and it has generated a corresponding shift in mindset. The church family, just like the socially distanced biological family, is still a family, whether its members meet physically or not.

Church services which are hosted on a video platform are obviously quite different. For example, group singing doesn't work well on a multi-user programme like Zoom. But the differences have led to some unexpected benefits. There is often more individual participation. Families can perform a song or a skit for the benefit of other church members. Children can tell stories or show what they have made. Others can do readings and share their lockdown poetry and anecdotes. The fact that everyone is looking at each other's faces, rather than the backs of their heads, changes

the dynamic. Rather than being dominated by a single celebrant with a handful of assistants, church is now democratised.

Of course, there have been a few disasters – hardware and software crashes, interruptions by hackers, families appearing in their pyjamas (forgetting that their cameras are switched on!) – but, generally, all of this has been taken in good humour and quickly dismissed as part of the learning curve.

These online services bear at least some resemblance to the pre-coronavirus physical meetings, but there are other changes which are perhaps more profound. Many online services are now 'broadcast' to a wider audience using channels like YouTube and Facebook, and in so doing they are picking up viewers from an entirely different demographic. While not yet ready to be participants, these new, mainly young, people browse at times that suit them, watch a few minutes here and there, and linger on the things that may catch their attention. With attention spans untrained by the rigours of church attendance, but with an ability to assimilate information at speeds unknown outside of the gaming fraternity, this may be the generation which will shape our understanding of church in the twenty-first century.

We will still have congregations after COVID-19, but an exciting future could lie in a new understanding of church as community – real, virtual, physical, electronic, live or time-shifted, but all still, in some way, church.



Fortuitously, the pandemic coincided with the emergence of several multi-user technologies which allowed people to 'meet' in a virtual space.





### Message and mission

Dear Editor

Thirty years ago, I struggled with the same question as you outlined in the latest issue of *Messenger*. I was intent on succinctly crystallising our message and mission in one short sentence that would get 'the world's' attention. I decided to

do a DMin on the topic, which I abandoned after my advisor suggested I choose another topic. He had consulted with his academic peers and they all agreed that it was an impossible task. I had already conducted my own worldwide survey of Adventist leaders, and each one came up with something different and rather lengthy.

Times have changed and we have more communication-savvy people in our midst; hence I wish you success in your challenging project.

Here is my humble contribution that encapsulates my version of Seventh-day Adventism and its holistic biblical, applied theology, for which I could quote an abundance of Scripture. It is catchy, universally relatable, non-threatening, and 100% God-centred without mentioning 'God'; and it may be seen as the key to the three angels' messages. It arouses interest.

'Adventists: love – heal – live.'

DR CLAUDE LOMBART

Dear Editor

Others have tried to come up with a summary to define us in the past and have not done too well. I'm sure you will agree that it's not a snappy marketing slogan that defines the Salvation Army. Is it not their presence everywhere, which is clear from the uniform they wear, whether performing as a band or giving aid? And, with 'belief in action', it is helping the homeless and tracing lost relatives. Strangely enough, it doesn't anywhere mention their religious beliefs. What are they? There are a couple of traditional hymns we are occasionally privileged to sing at Stanborough Park Church that always have me visualising a Sally Army band marching along.

Similarly, it's not just Oxfam's aims that are communicated well. Its full title is 'The Oxford Committee for Famine Relief', which the organisation shortened to something short and snappy. Today, they are identified with supporting work for the disadvantaged. Wasn't it Oxfam that was associated with sexual abuse by senior management in Haiti, which damaged its reputation? However, it is still defined by its video reports, and the work it does. Its short, snappy name indicates that it provides 'famine relief'. What better definition of its work could there be?

To try to combine religious beliefs with humanitarian aid into something short and snappy is a very difficult challenge. ADRA seems to have managed best with 'Justice – compassion – love'.

JUNE COOMBS

## Scottish Youth Sponsor, ready to help!

The current pandemic took the entire world by surprise, not least our own churches. Overnight, we had to change our way of life as we knew it and adapt to the 'new normal': staying home, and, where possible, working from home as well; protecting the NHS; saving lives; social distancing; and starting a new social and church life via social media.

But that was not entirely possible for everyone. The elderly have had to avoid leaving their houses to stop the spread of the virus, and have been especially hard-hit with the new measures.

The Government's appeal for volunteers to step up and help the national effort to keep the most vulnerable safe struck me in a special way. I knew it was an



opportunity for each one of us to be part of the solution. I started to apply with different volunteering organisations, but all of them said they had no vacancies. One day I called my local council via [www.readyscotland.org/coronavirus](http://www.readyscotland.org/coronavirus) and asked if I could help, and the answer came promptly: 'Yes!' So, for three days each week over the past nine weeks, I have been tremendously blessed to be able to provide 14 households in my neighbourhood with their food and medication. I can't wait for the time when I will be able to honour the invitation I received from each of them to join them for a celebration.

This time has proved to be a difficult time for many members. As Richard Daly mentioned some weeks ago in the *BUC News*, the amount of spiritual, eschatological fake news on the internet has been overwhelming. Calls to leave the cities and run to the hills have unsettled many.

Yet this period of lockdown has taught me two important things:

1. God is in control, and, wherever you live right now, He can use you to bless others – not with alarmist leaflets and compilations, but with genuine acts of kindness.
2. The only worthwhile preparation for the end time is being a thoughtful disciple of Jesus – the kind of person He described in His picture of the last judgement in Matthew 25 – one who would treat any person in need as one would treat Jesus Himself.

PASTOR CLAUDIU POPESCU, SCOTTISH MISSION YOUTH SPONSOR

## Messenger

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### Sunset

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

	London	Card	Notf	Edin	Bell
Jun 19	9.21	9.33	9.34	10.03	10.03
26	9.22	9.34	9.34	10.03	10.04
Jul 3	9.20	9.32	9.32	10.00	10.01
10	9.16	9.28	9.27	9.54	9.56

# More Youth and Pathfinder directors talk about the Bible

If there is any group of people called to help Pathfinders, teens and youth enjoy digging deep into the Bible, it is their leaders. But what does the Bible mean to them? What's their favourite text and Bible character? And why read the Bible? This is what they had to say . . .

## Njabulo Ndlovu

(Pathfinder Director, Scottish Mission)

### Life text:

*'That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death'* (Philippians 3:10, ESV).



### Why?

To know Jesus and His Dad is the essence of life eternal and serving God in tough times. *'And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent'* (John 17:3, ESV); *'For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified'* (1 Corinthians 2:2, ESV).

### Bible character:

Joshua, the brand plucked from the fire (Zechariah 3)

### Why?

Because I mess up so many times, and God's grace continues to clean me up and help me learn stuff about God's love and unlearn stuff that's harmful.

### Regular reading important?

Studying the Bible helps me to explore more about myself and understand how messed up I am because of the sin problem: but, more exciting for me, it also helps me to know about ALL that God has done for me to develop a character like that of Jesus, His Son. Now that's actually amazing, fun and yet very humbling.

## Aaron O'Brien

(Irish Mission Youth Outpost Leader)

### Life text:

*'So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest*



*of blessing if we don't give up'* (Galatians 6:9, NLT).

### Why?

In life it is so easy to give up, especially when you are so close to achieving your goal. This verse gives me hope and teaches me patience – things can take time. You will never fully know how long, but it will happen. Know that and believe that. When it comes down to it, patience is key, so this is one of my favourite texts.

### Bible character:

Moses. He made a mistake and fled from the consequences, but at a burning bush God told him to return to Egypt and free God's people from slavery. In my life, I feel like I've run from issues due to a mistake I've made, because it seems the easier way out. But it never helps to flee: the only way to learn is to fix those mistakes. *'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me'* (Philippians 4:13, NKJV). Believe this, and trust in it. God is with us, no matter what happens.

### Regular reading important?

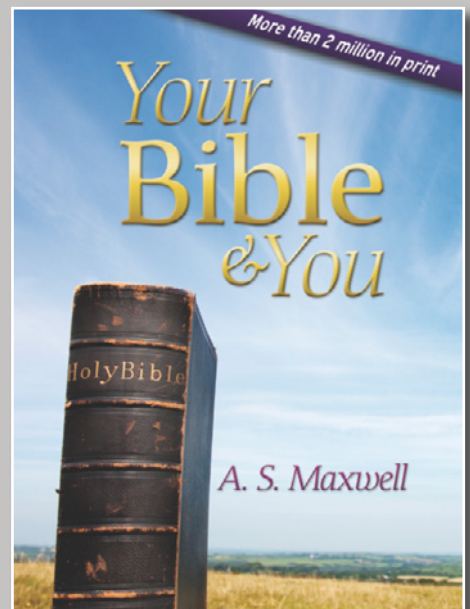
The more time you spend doing something, the better you become. With faith it's the same. More time spent reading the Bible is more time spent with God, and the closer to Him you become. It's important because 'practice makes perfect'. I keep practising my beliefs, including prayer and witness, which in turn strengthens my faith.

## Anthony Fuller

(Youth Director, South England Conference)

### Life text:

*'But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am*



*strong'* (2 Corinthians 12:9, 10, NIV).

### Why?

My weaknesses, my flaws, at times prevent me from going through doors of opportunity because of thoughts of failure, fear or what others would think. This special promise reminds me that the best version of me is when I embrace myself in the sufficiency of God's grace. Knowing that God knows me and that He really loves me enough to rest on me is reason to rejoice in the Lord always.

### Bible character:

David. He really knew God. He lived his faith in every area of his life, even those parts that we would look down on. His experiences, recorded in the Bible, are a reflection of his union with God to the point where he can't help but show off His goodness. A massive David quote: *'O taste and see that the LORD is good; happy are those who take refuge in him'* (Psalm 34:8, NSRV)!

### Regular reading important?

To love and know God.  
To be my best self.  
To be able to stand against the evil one.  
To grow in my love for others.  
To not be deceived.

