

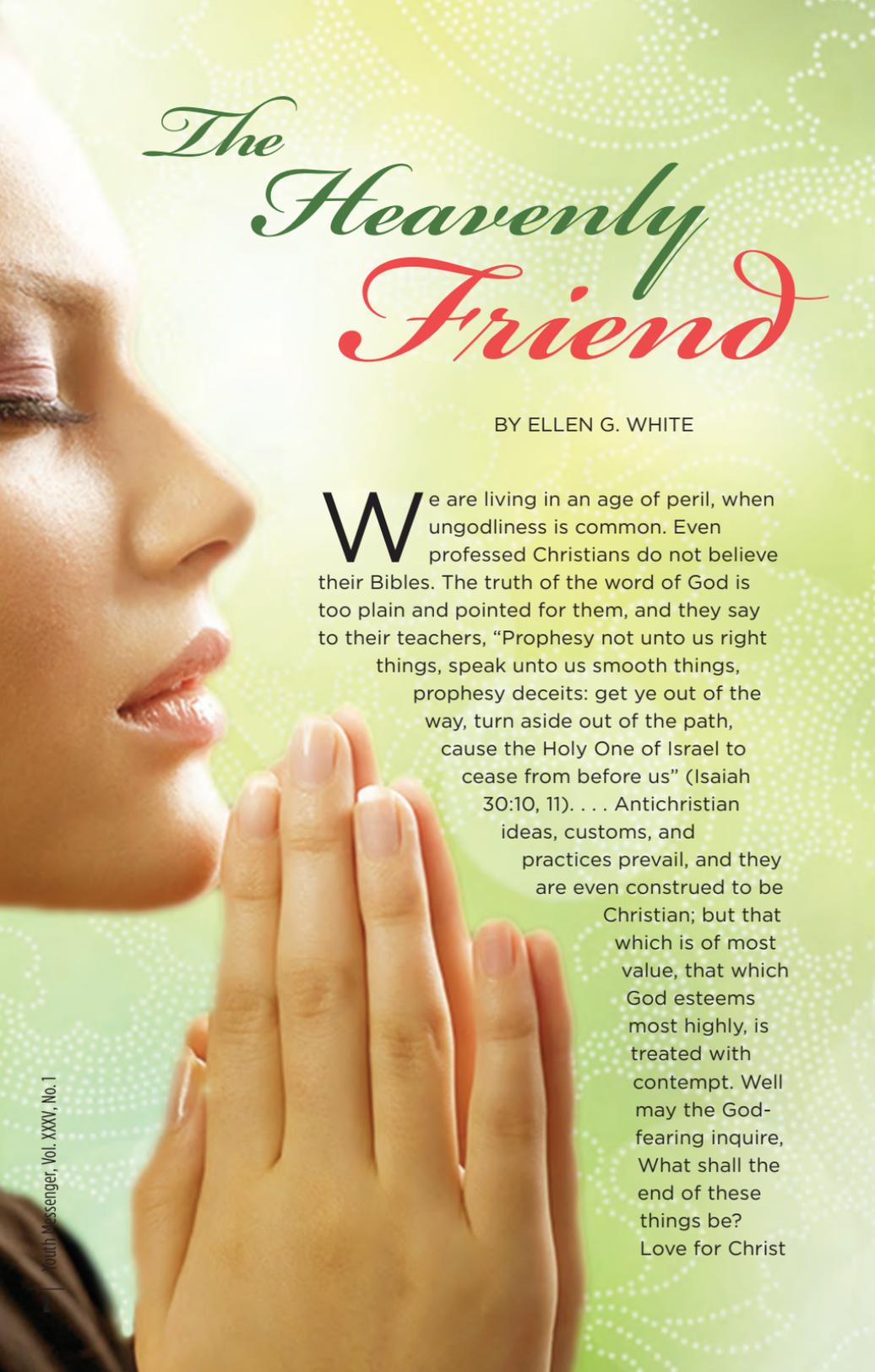
Youth messenger

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Should I Get Baptized?



The Heavenly Friend

BY ELLEN G. WHITE

We are living in an age of peril, when ungodliness is common. Even professed Christians do not believe their Bibles. The truth of the word of God is too plain and pointed for them, and they say to their teachers, "Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits: get ye out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us" (Isaiah 30:10, 11). . . . Antichristian ideas, customs, and practices prevail, and they are even construed to be Christian; but that which is of most value, that which God esteems most highly, is treated with contempt. Well may the God-fearing inquire, What shall the end of these things be?
Love for Christ

and love for one another is fast dying out of the hearts of men.

It is true that there are some steadfast souls like Abraham, David, and Daniel, who can say, "I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved" (Psalm 16:8). Amid the perplexities that will press upon the soul, there is only One who can help us out of all our difficulties and relieve all our disquietude. We are to cast all our care upon Jesus, and bear in mind that He is present and is directing us to commune with Him. . . .

We need to educate and train the mind so that we shall have an intelligent faith and have an understanding friendship with Jesus. Unless we continually cherish friendship between God and our souls, we shall separate from Him and walk apart from Him. We shall make friends of those around us and place our trust in humanity, and our affections will be diverted from the true object of worship. We must not allow coldness to chill our love for our Redeemer. If we have fellowship with Him, we must ever set the Lord before us and treat Him as an honored Friend, giving Him the first place in our affections. . . . But how often is the Lord neglected for the society of others and for things of no value! . . .

Never let amusements, or the companionship of others, come between you and Jesus, your best friend. Set the Lord

always before you. When natural inclination draws you in the direction of fulfilling some selfish desire, set the Lord before you as your counselor, and ask, Will this please Jesus? Will this increase my love for my best Friend? Will this course grieve my dear Saviour? Will it separate me from His company? Will Jesus accompany me to the pleasure party, where all will be lightness and gaiety, where there will be nothing of a religious nature, nothing serious, no thought of the things of God? If Jesus sends me there as a missionary to warn some soul of his danger, then I am sure Jesus will not separate from me; but if I go simply to please myself, I cannot be sure of my Saviour's presence. If I choose to go where Jesus cannot enter, where He cannot make His abode, where the hearts of those present are saying, "Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us," I choose another counselor than Jesus.

The great aim and purpose of this life is to form characters so that we shall be accounted worthy of eternal life. We shall act as rational beings and make religion a practical matter. We need to keep our Saviour ever before us and educate ourselves in such a way that our desires shall continually flow out toward Him, that we shall meditate upon His promises and address Him in confiding faith. . . . Each day be determined that you will keep nigh to God, looking

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unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith. Do not neglect and slight Jesus; for this you would not do to any of your cherished friends. Do not keep Jesus in the background and never mention His name, never call the attention of your friends to Him who is at your side to be your counselor. Would not your friends look upon you as disrespectful were they at your side, and you never spoke to them or of them? . . .

Many complain that Jesus seems a long way off. Who has placed Him a long way off? Has it not been your own course of action that has separated you from Jesus? He has not forsaken you, but you have forsaken Him for other lovers. But the Lord says, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God" (Jeremiah 3:22). . . .

Pray in faith and trust your Saviour. Make every effort necessary to keep the channel of communication open between Christ and your soul. Seek every opportunity to be present where prayer is wont to be made, rather than to go to places where the tendency is of a character to make you forget God. We want Bible religion, practical godliness, free from all pretension and sophistry. Unless you maintain Bible religion, you will find yourself separated from Jesus Christ. By unbelief and carelessness, you break up your tender fellowship with Jesus. Why trifle so much with your heavenly Friend? Why feel at liberty to serve God at will and to neglect His worship at pleasure? It is when you wander from His side and are charmed with the voice of the seducer and fasten your affections upon some trifling thing, that you are in danger of losing your peace and trust and confidence in God. Then it is that you seem to have lost your wisdom as to how to find Jesus. Then it is that Satan presents to you the thought that Jesus has forsaken you; but is it not that you have forsaken Jesus? Satan will seek still more to alienate your mind from your best Friend by his lying devices; for he wants you to deny Christ.

You have forsaken the fountain of living waters and have hewed you out broken cisterns that can hold no water. We dare not let His name languish on our lips and His love and memory die

out of our hearts. "Well," says the cold, formal professor, "this is making Christ too much like a human being;" but the word of God warrants us to have these very ideas. It is the want of these practical, definite views of Christ, that hinders so many from having a genuine experience in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is the reason that many are fearing and doubting and mourning. Their ideas of Christ and the plan of salvation are vague, dreary, and confused. If they had, like David, set the Lord ever before them, keeping Him at their right hand that they should not be moved, their feet would be upon solid rock. Behold Jesus crucified for you. Behold Him grieved with your sins; and when you pray, repent, and earnestly desire to see Him as your sin-pardoning Redeemer, ready to bless you, and to hear your acknowledgment of Him. Keep close to His side; for you need His presence with you.

Wickedness prevails on every hand; for Satan has come down having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time. He is a persevering, diligent, untiring worker, and if ever there was a time when men needed the presence of Christ at their right hand, it is now, so that when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. We need the Captain of our salvation continually by our side. There is,

and will continue to be, agitation all around us; for the kingdoms of the world will not be at rest. Never was there a time when the temptation to deny Christ in spirit and in deportment was stronger, and this temptation will increase in power as we near the end. Strong and overpowering temptations will come upon men. False doctrines and fables will be presented as Bible truth, for men's acceptance; and if it were possible, they will deceive the very elect. But is it a time for our love to grow cold, when iniquity abounds? Is this a time to be at ease? Is this the time to separate from God, our Counselor? . . .

Only those who live by faith in this probationary life will be able to stand in the day of test, when everything that can be shaken will be shaken; but they shall dwell in safety and be unmoved. . . . In the days of Noah, the wickedness of men reached unto heaven, and God sent Noah with a warning that He would destroy the world with a flood of water; but they had so long given themselves up to selfish and demoralizing practices, glorifying themselves, that they had put God and His claims and His honor out of sight and mind. . . . [Then] the rain descended in floods and swept the earth clean of their moral pollution. "Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (Luke 17:30).
—*The Youth's Instructor*, July 19, 1894. 

"Are You a Christian?"

BY EUNICE BRAIDMAN

We may be asked many questions in life regarding various subjects, but I believe one of the most important questions we will ever be asked is, "Are you a Christian?" I remember, not long ago, I was shopping for a few things at a grocery store when an older gentleman approached me and asked, "Are you a Christian?" "Yes, how did you know?" I replied. "By the way you dress," he answered simply. This short encounter prompted me to ponder three things: what is our usual reaction to such a question and assumption? When we say "Yes, I'm a Christian," do we think of and remember everything that is entailed in being a true Christian? And lastly, are we constantly conscious of the fact that the world is always watching and observing us whether we are aware of it or not—and do we thus remember why it is so important that we act and live as true Christians in every way, including in the way we dress?



To touch on the first thought, when we are asked such a question, especially based on the way we dress, there will usually be only two reactions. We will either feel embarrassed to stand out and be different from the rest of the world, or we will feel happy to see that the world notices we are different because we live to please God. Needless to say, the first reaction is perhaps the more natural one, as most of the time it is not our tendency to enjoy “sticking out like a sore thumb.” However, the second reaction should and will be ours if we truly love God and strive to represent Him to the world. But a difference should not be evident only in our apparel; it should also be noticed in our speech and in every other aspect of our life. Truly, when someone asks us: “Are you a Christian?” our hearts should be happy to realize that the world, by simply observing us, can see that we strive to live like children of God. In reality, such a question should bring us joy and encouragement as it means that, by God’s grace, “we are doing something right,” because if we are true Christians, we will not have to tell others who we are. They will notice it on their own. When we see an apple tree and an orange tree, we can easily know which one is which by the fruit it is yielding—oranges or apples. In the same way, others should and will be able to see if we are Christians by our fruits, by the words we

Each day we are to be growing greater in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and striving each day to better represent His character.

say, the things we do, the lives we live. But how often do we find ourselves engaging in seemingly small compromises to make us just a little like the world in order to feel a little less different! Perhaps this is evident in the wearing of a slightly shorter skirt or in the utterance of a “semi-bad” word. But must we truly be different from the world, even in dress? In *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 171, we find the following: “The dress reform is treated by some with great indifference and by others with contempt, because there is a cross attached to it. For this cross I thank God. It is just what we need to distinguish and separate God’s commandment-keeping people from the world.” We are told in 1 Peter 2:9: “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” But what does peculiar mean? According to the Webster’s dictionary, it means

“of only one person, thing, Group, or country,” “distinctive,” “unique,” as well as “special.” Sometimes it seems that we forget we were placed in this world to be “a peculiar people,” to be different and special, and to be as little like the world as possible. If we call ourselves Christians and yet the world cannot see it, does not wonder and ask, or does not see a difference, we are not living up to our name of “Christian.” We are failing God and bringing dishonor to His name. What a frightening and sobering thought!

When we say we are Christians, regardless of whether or not someone has asked us, are we conscious of the seriousness of what we are saying? No doubt many of us, myself included, often say the words almost automatically without giving thought to their true meaning. Surely we all know that to be a Christian means to be “Christ-like,” but do we think of this every time we say we are Christians? While the way we speak, dress, the music we listen to, and other such factors are important in defining a Christian, true Christianity encompasses more than these external factors. It means that, in addition to the previous things, we are reflecting Christ’s character in all areas of our life. It means that we are like Christ, or at least that we’re striving to be so. The messenger of God sums up in one short sentence what it means to be a true Christian: “In all things

we are to be representatives of Him” (*Counsels to the Church*, p. 180). Not only is it a blessing and privilege to be able to say we are Christians; it also implies a great commitment and responsibility. If we say we are Christians, the world will expect us to look and act as such. Every time we think, say, or are asked if we are Christians, it should remind us that each day we are to be growing greater in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and striving each day to better represent His character. It should remind us that each day we are to dress, speak, eat, and live in a way that pleases God rather than ourselves or those around us. It should remind us that Christianity isn’t simply a religion; it is a lifestyle, and the purpose of saying we are Christians shouldn’t be to define who we are—but rather to define who Christ is in our life.

This brings me to my final point. When someone asks us a question like this, we are reminded of the fact that we truly are living epistles, known and read of all men (2 Corinthians 3:2). Even if we do not speak to someone, they are still observing and watching us, and whether or not we intend to, we are leaving an impression on their minds. Not only are we surrounded by a heavenly cloud of witnesses, we are also surrounded by witnesses here on earth. We must remember this every day before we leave our homes to go to our respective

jobs, to school, to the store, or wherever it may be. What kind of testimony will we be giving by our dress, our attitude, our deportment, our speech? Will the world be able to tell we are God's representatives, ambassadors of heaven? Or will we be lost in the worldly crowds and blend in with all those that mill about us? When we speak we should ask ourselves, are my words pleasing to God? Is my speech different from that of the world? Each morning upon choosing our attire for that day we should stop to ask, am I a Christian? Does my choice of clothing reflect this? "Dress is an index of the mind and heart. That which is hung upon the outside is the sign of what is within" (*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, p. 289). If we dress immodestly and inappropriately, what message does this relay about the kind of person we are and, more importantly, about our Christian experience? If we dress like the world, speak like the world, act like the world, how will the world be able to see and know that we are Christ's followers? If apples and oranges look the same and smell the same, how will we know which ones are apples and which are oranges? According to 2 Corinthians 6:17, the Lord says we are to come out from among them and be separate! True separation does not imply simply assisting the SDARM church rather than the fallen churches of the world. It means not imitating

We should ask ourselves, are my words pleasing to God? Is my speech different from that of the world? Am I a Christian? Does my choice of clothing reflect this?

the practices of the world so that others are not led to confuse us with those who are of the world. The pen of Inspiration tells us, "It is impossible for any of us to live in such a way that we shall not cast an influence in the world" (*The Adventist Home*, p. 33). Each day we will be giving a testimony to the world; we will be having an influence on those with whom we come in contact. What kind of influence are we exerting? The servant of the Lord asks us many important questions: "What fruit have we borne. . . ? What has been our influence upon others? . . . The eyes of the world are upon us. Are we living epistles **of Christ**, known and read of all men? . . . Will the world be compelled to acknowledge us to be servants of Christ?" (*Lift Him Up*, p. 15). [Emphasis added.] May God help us so that each day we may live a life that glorifies Him and points others to Christ, so that we may be able to truly say with our lips as well as with our lives: "Yes, by God's grace, I am a Christian." 🍎

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE LOST GEM?



In my childhood a faithful teacher taught me this memory quote: “Lost, yesterday, somewhere between sunrise and sunset, two golden hours, each set with sixty diamond minutes. No reward is offered for they are gone forever.” Many, many times since, I have repeated that quote with deep regret because of the consciousness that I had lost forever much valuable time that I might have saved. Our lives are made up of little things. . . .

“One little grain in the sandy bars;
One little flower in the field of flowers;
One little star in a heaven of stars;
One little hour in a year of hours—
What if it makes, or what if it mars?

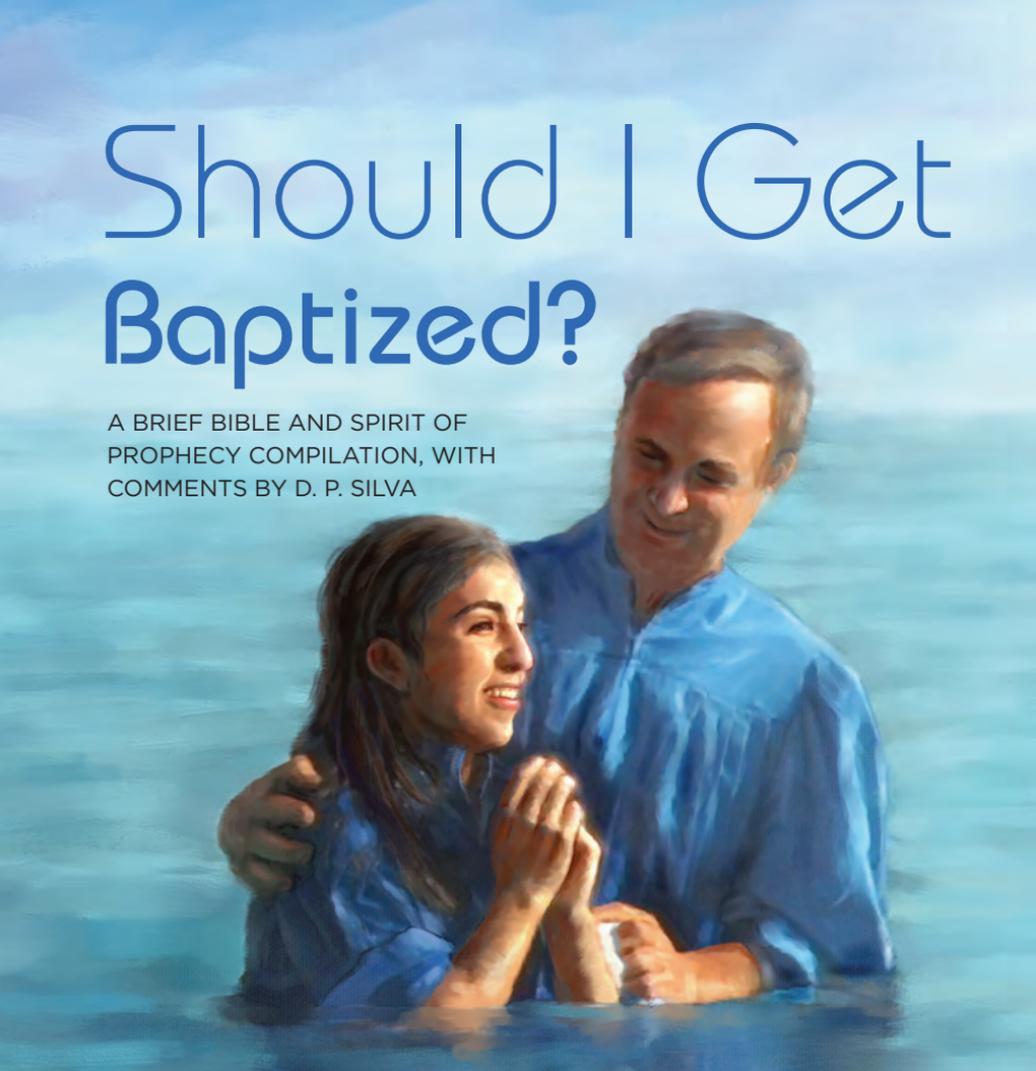
“But the bar is built of the little grains;
And the little flowers make the meadows gay;
And the little stars light the heavenly plains,
And the little hours of each little day
Give to us all that life contains.”

Those who learn in youth to estimate rightly the value of the moments, and to be intensely resolute in doing little things well, will save themselves many defeats in the warfare of life. The world worships heroes; but true heroism is not found alone in those whom the world calls great. The truest and grandest heroes are unknown to fame. Those who are the truest to duty, whatever it may be, display the greatest heroism. It is our privilege to be heroic. Many of us can never do the great things of which we dream, but we can all be faithful in doing with our might whatsoever our hands find to do.

Our lives take on the color and tone of the little things scattered through them. The little things which we say, and the little things which we do, are the warp and the woof, which when woven and interwoven in the great loom of life, come out the finished fabric—character. The little things we say and do each day should be right, painstakingly right. Then watch the little things. The care of the pennies, that they may multiply into dollars; the watchfulness of the moments, that they may combine into useful hours; the proper attention to trifles, that they may contribute to the success of the whole—this is what is required of us. —L. *Flora Plummer* 🍷

Should I Get Baptized?

A BRIEF BIBLE AND SPIRIT OF PROPHECY COMPILATION, WITH COMMENTS BY D. P. SILVA



Before ascending to Heaven, Jesus Christ gave a special message for Christian believers till the close of time: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:15, 16).

First comes belief, then baptism.

Believing what? “We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved” (Acts 15:11).

Saved from what? Jesus came to this earth specifically to “save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

But what actually is sin? The Bible definition says, that “sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4)—that law of Ten Commandments which explains morality (Exodus 20:3-17). Whenever

we break that law, we are sinning. Everyone has sinned in some way or another, so everyone has things for which to repent. (Romans 3:23.) The Bible tells us about the filthiness and degradation of sin—not to leave us stuck in it, but to pull us out of it!

TURNING AWAY FROM WRONG

Conversion—or turning away from the natural, human tendency to sin—comes before baptism. In other words, baptism is for repentant, converted believers. On the day of Pentecost, when people asked: “Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized” (Act 2:37, 38).

So, it all starts with repentance. But what does repentance really mean? “Repentance includes sorrow for sin and a turning away from it. We shall not renounce sin unless we see its sinfulness; until we turn away from it in heart, there will be no real change in the life” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 23).

How does this happen?

“As the sinner is convicted of sin, he is also attracted by the love and holiness of Christ; for Jesus is drawing him unto Himself. . . . Repentance is born in the heart by beholding the love of Christ, who gave His life to save the sinner. It is the love of God that softens the hardest hearts.”—*The Review and Herald*, September 3, 1901.

So, according to these clear principles, there is no place for baptizing little children who are

too young to understand what this all means. Neither is baptism for any unconverted persons who might be able to grasp the theory, but in daily life they refuse to submit to Jesus. Baptism is only for those who admit their specific sins, repent of them, and believe in Jesus to forgive, cleanse, and provide power to overcome. Only such people should be baptized.

A FRESH, CLEAN START

In His conversation with Nicodemus, Christ was very clear: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . . Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:3, 5, 6). Here He mentions:

1. Birth of the flesh (when you were born as a baby).
2. Birth of the Spirit (when you first decided to follow Jesus by an intelligent, conscious choice).
3. Birth of the water (baptism).
“As many as received [Jesus], to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12, 13). Those who receive Jesus develop new aims—being drawn by His tremendous love, they now want to serve God instead of



themselves. They desire to please Him above all else and they decide to trust Him with their future.

A DELIBERATE CHOICE

Many churches claiming to follow Christ do not accurately teach what the Bible says about baptism. For example, Catholicism teaches that when a child comes into this world, the baby is a pagan; however, when he (or she) is baptized as an infant, by the very act of baptism, somehow that child automatically becomes a Christian. They believe that the baptism itself had sudden power to transform a pagan into a Christian. This false teaching has affected millions of people around the globe.

In reality, however, baptism in itself has no power to change

anyone. We change when we accept Christ as our Saviour and Lord, and we submit ourselves to the control of the Holy Spirit who transforms repentant sinners. Then we are born again, born of the Spirit. Now we are ready to be baptized—and not the other way around!

“Baptism does not make children Christians; neither does it convert them; it is but an **outward** sign, showing that they are sensible that they should be children of God by acknowledging that they believe in Jesus Christ as their Saviour and will henceforth live for Christ.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 499. [Emphasis added.]

So, this outward sign symbolizes the inner experience of those who have consciously chosen to believe in Jesus Christ

as their Saviour, repented of their sins, and fully intend to continue living for His glory.

BEARING FRUIT IN YOUR LIFE

“Christ has made baptism **the sign of entrance** to His spiritual kingdom. He has made this a positive condition with which all must comply who wish to be acknowledged as under the authority of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Before man can find a home in the church, before passing the threshold of God’s spiritual kingdom, he is to receive the impress of the divine name, ‘*The Lord Our Righteousness*’ (Jeremiah 23:6).”—*Counsels to the Church*, p. 295. [Emphasis added.] This means one already has an attitude that loves the Lord and is happily obeying Him.

To parents, the encouragement is given: “After faithful labor, if you are satisfied that your children understand the meaning of conversion and baptism, **and are truly converted**, let them be baptized” (Ibid., p. 297). [Emphasis supplied.] Conversion means turning away from wrong things and turning to the right way.

Ever since John the Baptist first began baptizing in the Jordan River, this rite has been for all kinds of people who willingly dedicate their lives to God: “Princes and rabbis, soldiers, publicans, and peasants came to hear the prophet [John, the Baptist]. For a time the solemn warning from God alarmed them.

Many were brought to repentance, and received baptism” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 105). The invitation is for everyone who thus surrenders to the Lord.

So, the actual formula for conversion is:

REPENTANCE

To be softened, by Christ’s love, to turn away from sin.

FAITH

To believe in His power to forgive, purify, and strengthen.

BAPTISM

“Repentance, faith, and baptism are the requisite steps in conversion.”—*Evangelism*, p. 306.

PREPARATION FOR BAPTISM

I want to be baptized—am I ready?

“The preparation for baptism is a matter that needs to be carefully considered. The new converts to the truth should be faithfully instructed in the plain ‘Thus saith the Lord.’ The Word of the Lord is to be read and explained to them point by point.

“All who enter upon the new life should understand, prior to their baptism, that the Lord requires the undivided affections. . . . The practicing of the truth is essential. The bearing of fruit testifies to the character of the tree. A good tree cannot



bring forth evil fruit. The line of demarcation will be plain and distinct between those who love God and keep His commandments and those who love Him not and disregard His precepts. There is need of a thorough conversion to the truth.”—Ibid., p. 308.

“The test of discipleship is not brought to bear as closely as it should be upon those who present themselves for baptism. It should be understood whether they are simply taking the name of Seventh-day Adventists, or whether they are taking their stand on the Lord’s side, to come out from the world and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing. Before baptism, there should be a thorough inquiry as to the experience of the candidates. . . .

“One of the points upon which those newly come to the faith will need instruction is the subject of dress. Let the new converts be faithfully dealt with. Are they vain in dress? Do they cherish pride

of heart? The idolatry of dress is a moral disease. It must not be taken over into the new life. In most cases, submission to the gospel requirements will demand a decided change in the dress.”—Ibid., pp. 311, 312. This is just one example of visible fruit.

“We are buried with [Christ] by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). “He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again” (2 Corinthians 5:15).

Are we really new creatures? If we are new creatures, we will live for Christ and not for ourselves. If not, let us go today to Christ, repent, receive from Him a new life, and be baptized (or rebaptized).

May the Lord give grace to be His children, born of the Spirit and of the water! 

Ebenezer

BY PHENA WALTER (ADAPTED)

I wonder how many of us who sing that good old hymn, “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing,” understand what the author means when he says, “Here I raise my Ebenezer?” We are told in the scriptures to sing with the spirit and with the understanding also. Now, we cannot do this unless we understand the meaning of the words we sing.

Ebenezer is a Hebrew word and means “stone of help.”

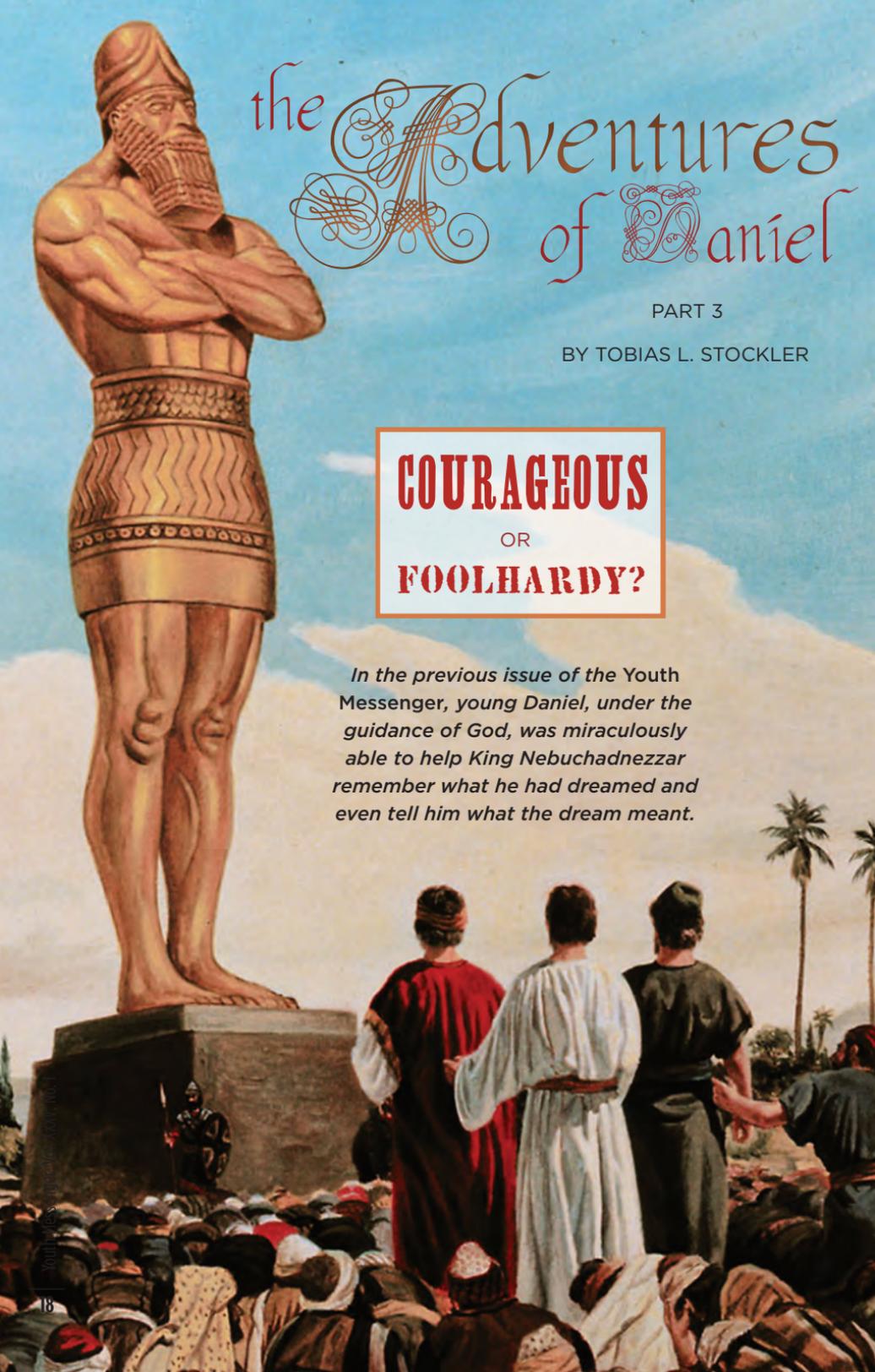
A great many years ago, when God’s people were called Israel and lived in Canaan, they were greatly disturbed, from time to time, by different tribes of heathen who lived near them.

At one time when Israel was making a burnt offering and seeking the Lord for deliverance from their enemies, the Philistines came near to engage in battle with them; but the Lord thundered with a great thunder, and discomfited the Philistines before Israel. Then

Samuel, who was judge over Israel at that time, took a stone, and set it up between Israel and the Philistines, and named it Ebenezer, and said, “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us” (1 Samuel 7:12). That is, Samuel set up a stone as witness between Israel and the Philistines, and in naming it Ebenezer he was actually saying, “The Lord is the **stone** who has helped us.”

In the scriptures Jesus is called a “stone of stumbling,” and a “rock of offense” to those who do not obey Him; but to those who love Him and keep His commandments, Jesus is the “chief cornerstone” and a “rock” to guide His people to the promised home.

So we see, dear youth, that Jesus is an Ebenezer, or the strong, secure stone who will help us to gain victories. Therefore when we are in trial or temptation, let us not forget to raise our “Ebenezer,” and in Him we shall conquer! 🌟



the Adventures of Daniel

PART 3

BY TOBIAS L. STOCKLER

COURAGEOUS OR FOOLHARDY?

In the previous issue of the Youth Messenger, young Daniel, under the guidance of God, was miraculously able to help King Nebuchadnezzar remember what he had dreamed and even tell him what the dream meant.

Daniel's explanation satisfied Nebuchadnezzar's curiosity and cooled his anger. That was his dream! Each body part and metal was exactly as he had seen it. This captive and his God did know something. And he, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, was the head of gold! This impressed the monarch. He wouldn't destroy all his counselors. Instead, he would worship this new God of gods and Lord of kings who could reveal secrets.

Hasty promises are rarely kept, and Nebuchadnezzar's promise was no exception. Soon he was back to his idol worship even more zealously than before. But his wise men had a suggestion: Why not set up a statue similar to the one in his dream? Then everyone could worship this head of gold!

Before long, Nebuchadnezzar and his counselors decided that Babylon was the nation that had broken in pieces and destroyed all other nations and would last forever. Why not show this by making the whole image of gold rather than just its head? Then everyone could see how the dream revealed that their nation of Babylon would be eternal! This statue would be the symbol of glorious Babylon forever!

Goldsmiths were hired, the ground was prepared, everything was done rapidly. Soon ninety feet into the air towered tons of gold. (If the statue was made of solid 24 karat gold, it would weigh approximately 2,500 tons. That

amount of gold alone costs close to 25 billion U.S. dollars. Then there is the cost of labor, equipment, and so on. More likely the image was hollow and made of an alloy of gold. In any case this was not a cheap project.)

Now that the nation's largest and most majestic idol was complete, it should be properly dedicated. Since this is the symbol of Babylon, it should be used for the worship of this "immortal" nation. Appropriately, all the officers of the kingdom were invited to be present at the opening ceremonies. Band music was provided for the signal of when to start. At that signal the worship of the nation of Babylon as represented in the golden statue would officially commence.

The music began. A tremendous crowd of the whole army, and of governors, judges, sheriffs, and sundry other governmental employees, awestruck at the grandeur of the new idol, fell to the ground in worshipful adoration. Their attention was engrossed in the statue, the music, the experience. They applauded Nebuchadnezzar for having the wisdom and power of a god. This was a grand event, the moment of a lifetime.

But absorbing as all of this was, it was not exciting enough to divert jealousy. Deep within the hearts of some of the country's most trusted advisors was resentment so strong it distracted their attention. Among the crowds were three young men,

top governmental leaders from the local province. They had been promoted in the wake of the king's strange dream and might have replaced some of the very men bowing before this statue. In any case, they were in that position because God through, their friend, Daniel had revealed a dream these other men could not tell. And it was easier to forget that these men had selflessly spared the lives of these jealous men, than it was to forgive captives for explaining a dream that the king's advisors could not.

And so the men looked around. Ahh, there were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego standing! Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego knew very well the original dream. God carefully explained through its symbols that, although Babylon is important, there is a higher kingdom which will eventually replace all other nations. To worship Babylon now as the immortal nation would be to rebel against the higher King. And this higher King is the only one who knew Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the only one who saved all of the king's advisors. Could they be so careless and untrustworthy as to forget the God that repeatedly saved their lives, gave them their current positions, and in fact made them the very men they were? Would they be so irresponsible as to declare destruction and hatred to His kingdom just to fit into this little kingdom and the celebration of its power, accomplishments, and

immortality? No! Death is better than betrayal. We would rather die than betray our God and His kingdom. We can attend, but we cannot bow down. And therefore we will not bow down!

"This act of bowing the knees to the great image was understood to be an act of worship. But such an act was homage to be rendered to God alone--the Sovereign of the world, the Ruler of the universe; and these three Hebrews refused to give such honor to any idol even though composed of pure gold."—*Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 21, p. 59.

Now jealous distraction turns into tattletaling. The Chaldeans came to accuse the Jews before the king, saying, "O king, live for ever. Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, shall fall down and worship the golden image: and whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, that he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (Daniel 3:9-12).

Angry, Nebuchadnezzar orders these rebels to be escorted to him. Pointing in the direction of the big oven, he threatens them with death in the smelting furnace.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego reply that they worship the true God only. Nebuchadnezzar realizes these men have something to them that other men do not have. He softens. "Now, if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace." Then, stretching his hand upward in defiance, he demandingly added, "and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" (verse 15).

"In vain were the king's threats. He could not turn these noble men from their allegiance to the great Ruler of nations. From the history of their fathers, they had learned that disobedience to God results in dishonor, disaster, and death; that the fear of the Lord is not only the beginning of wisdom, but the foundation of all true prosperity. They knew that they owed to God every faculty they possessed; and while their hearts were full of generous sympathy toward all men, they had a lofty aspiration to prove themselves loyal to God.

"When the king was troubled in regard to his dream, these men, with Daniel, had fasted and prayed, that they might understand the dream. The Lord had heard their cries, and He had given to Daniel wisdom to interpret the dream to the king. Thus their own lives

and the lives of the astrologers and soothsayers had been saved. Now the very men who had escaped death through the mercy of God to His servants had been the prime movers in securing the decree in regard to the worship of the golden image. But the three Hebrews made no mention of these things; they knew that a controversy with the king would only increase his fury.

"Standing before the angry monarch, with the image in sight, and the sound of the entrancing music in their ears, these young men thought of the promise made to the prophet Isaiah more than one hundred years before: 'Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.'

"The answer of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego was respectful but decided. Looking with calmness upon the fiery furnace and the idolatrous throng, they said: 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. if it be so, our God whom we serve . . . will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.'"—*The Youth's Instructor*, March 8, 1904.

Nebuchadnezzar's anger turned to fury, distorting his

face and his judgment. "Heat the furnace seven times hotter than usual," he ordered. (The melting temperature of pure gold is 1,981°F. If this were one of the smelting furnaces used to make the image, then seven times hotter would be extremely hot! More than hot enough to melt any of the common metals.) Next he commanded some of the strongest men in his army to tie up these three "rebels" and throw them into the fire, clothes and all.

The fire was very hot. A flaming tongue of fire leapt out of the furnace, as though the big oven was licking its burning mouth in anticipation of certain destruction, much as a cat plays with and intimidates its prey before eating it. The furnace would teach all who watched what was the results of disobeying this king!

The orders were urgent and the military men were loyal. They grabbed up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in their strong arms and running forward lunged them into the furnace. But the heat was too intense, and the flaming tongue too long for safety. The soldiers were burned to death.

The king sat in triumph on his throne. There, the job was done. Now the people could see what it was like to disobey King Nebuchadnezzar's orders. This was a good lesson in obedience for the whole nation. Or was it? Nebuchadnezzar was shocked by something that caught his eye, turning his triumphant glee into

terror and alarm. His face turned pale and he stared into the roaring flames. "Didn't we cast three men bound into the middle of the fire?"

"Certainly, your majesty," was the reply.

"I see four men walking about in the fire free and unharmed; and the fourth person appears like the Son of God!" (See Daniel 3:24, 25.)

Strange that "when Christ manifests Himself to the children of men, an unseen power speaks to their souls. They realize that they are in the presence of the Infinite One. Before His majesty, kings and nobles tremble and acknowledge the living God as above every earthly power" (Ibid., April 26, 1904). Have you experienced this?

But, "how did that heathen king know what the Son of God was like? The Hebrew captives filling positions of trust in Babylon had in life and character represented before him the truth. When asked for a reason of their faith, they had given it without hesitation. Plainly and simply they had presented the principles of righteousness, thus teaching those around them of the God whom they worshiped. They had told of Christ, the Redeemer to come; and in the form of the fourth in the midst of the fire the king recognized the Son of God" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 509). Now there is successful missionary work!

Forgetting his own greatness and dignity, Nebuchadnezzar stepped down from his throne and walked up close to the mouth of

the furnace. “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God. Come out. Come here.” And they did.

Forgetting all the impressive gold towering above them, princes, governors, captains, and the king’s counselors quickly gathered around to see these men whose bodies the fire could not harm, nor was one hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor had the smell of fire passed on them. Then Nebuchadnezzar spoke, and said, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort” (Daniel 3:28, 29).

Were these young men brave or cowards? Are you and I truly brave, or not? Let us be honest with ourselves. Could you, the way you are right now, be that calm in front of someone you respect who was that angry? You will face very similar circumstances, as certainly as it is certain that you are alive. Soon every human

will be ordered to bow down to an image: an image to the beast. This image will have grandeur, music, and the experience of a lifetime—connected with it just as Nebuchadnezzar’s image. Any human who refuses to worship will be threatened with death, just as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. It will look like the best thing to do is bow down but refuse to worship in your heart. But God says that whether you worship this image in your heart or in practice, you would be a traitor and a rebel against Him and His kingdom. Are you ready for this? You can be. God wants to answer your prayers as much as He did for those Hebrews. Maybe you need a dream interpreted? Maybe you need the dreams of your future explained to you? God is waiting to interpret your dreams too. Maybe you need to be saved out of the fires of conflict and controversy or the fires of passion? God is there for you whatever the moment, whatever the need. He says: “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find.” “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things [food, shelter, clothing, an education, a job, a family, good life] shall be added unto you.” But maybe you have already tried this and it didn’t seem to work. “Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (Matthew 7:7; 6:33; Jeremiah 29:13). 

MISSIONARY WORK — IN — ROMANIA

PART 1 OF 4
BY GABRIEL SERBAN

A young missionary agreed to share with our readers his journal of experiences. This is the 1st in a series of 4 journal entries. Enjoy!

PREPARING FOR SERVICE

I was born in a Christian family—and while still a child, I decided to be a missionary for Christ. Day by day when I was watching some ministers I loved, this desire grew fast. My mom used to tell me: “You have to be very sure what you want to be. If you choose to be a missionary, you will not have time for yourself; you’ll be away from your home, you won’t have much money. Do you still want to be a missionary?”

She was trying to see what I was thinking, and then she would come afterwards with words of encouragement: “If you’ll be a missionary you’ll have a lot of time for others, and others will be happy for your presence there.

You’ll be away from your home, but everywhere you’re going is your home; you’ll be rich even if you do not have a lot of money. God will bless you.”

When she died, I became discouraged. I couldn’t accept it. Why—and why so soon? . . . (in December 2010, when I was only 15 years old).

Then, in February 2011 my dad had a car accident, and he had to stay in bed for few months. For one whole year he couldn’t work. Then I became more discouraged—and when the time came to start the missionary school, I decided that I would not be going. At that time they asked a fee for every session. I was studying my high school and my little brother was studying, too, plus my dad wasn’t working. So, I thought, there is no money for another school. Already there wasn’t really enough to go around.

When my brother sensed that I was feeling sad, he asked me what had happened. So I explained to him, "I am not going to the missionary school."

"Why not?" he asked. "For a long time, it has been your desire to go—and now when the time has come, you are not going?" Then he went to our grandmother and told her what I had said.

Our grandmother came to me, and said, "If you don't go to the missionary school now, you won't end up going later. You'll start to do other things and you'll think you don't have time for the school. You have to go now. We'll pray, and God will take care of everything, because He knows everything."

So, I decided to go just because of her . . . but without money. I got to the missionary school, they accepted me, and now, when the school was almost finished and we had to pay, a sister from that area came to me and told me: "You know, I wanted to help somebody with some money, but that person told me that everything is all right. So, I was thinking to pay your school here. Will you agree?"

I had never spoken to that sister before. I just was thankful to God that He provided everything for me. I had never told anybody that I did not have money, but she came and paid that session for me.

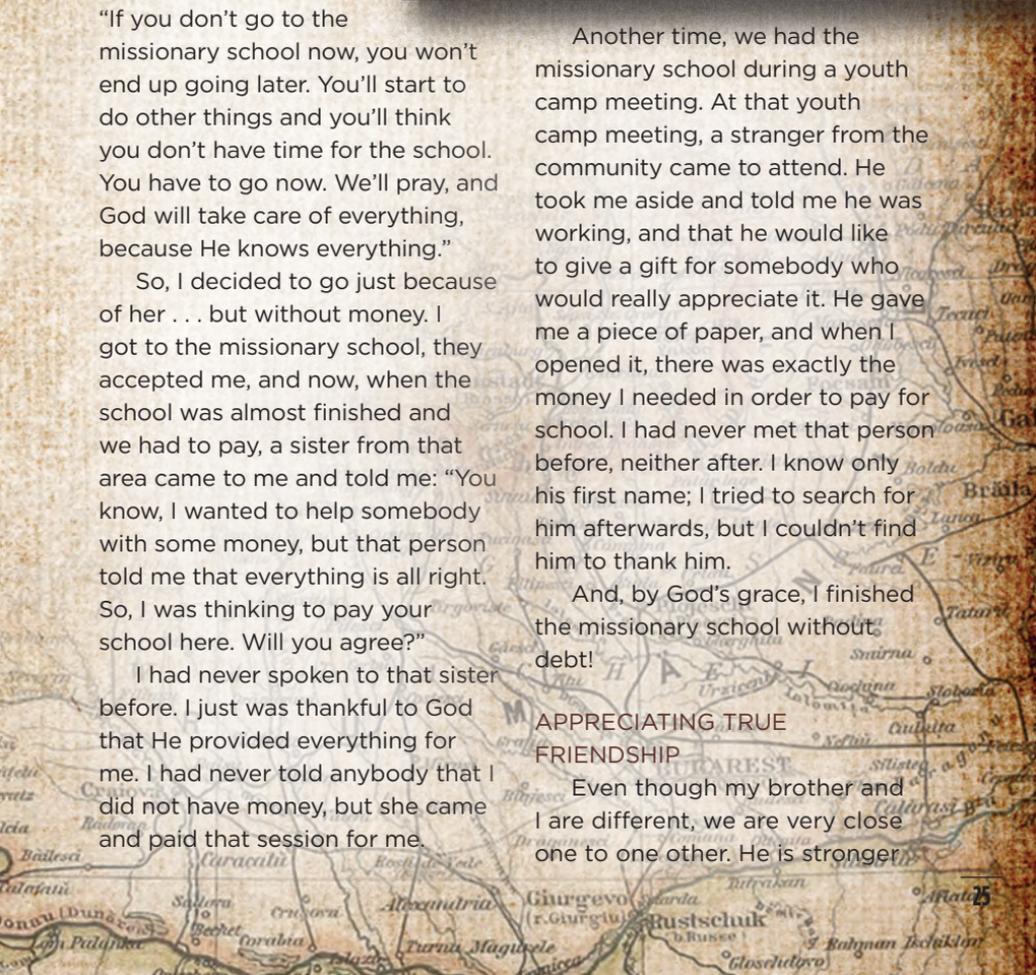


Another time, we had the missionary school during a youth camp meeting. At that youth camp meeting, a stranger from the community came to attend. He took me aside and told me he was working, and that he would like to give a gift for somebody who would really appreciate it. He gave me a piece of paper, and when I opened it, there was exactly the money I needed in order to pay for school. I had never met that person before, neither after. I know only his first name; I tried to search for him afterwards, but I couldn't find him to thank him.

And, by God's grace, I finished the missionary school without debt!

APPRECIATING TRUE FRIENDSHIP

Even though my brother and I are different, we are very close one to one other. He is stronger



"Everywhere will seem like home; you'll be rich even if you do not have a lot of money."

than I am, but I try to encourage him as much as possible. Now he is a student of the missionary school, too! I am very pleased and happy to have a brother and a best friend at the same time. Even our dad is like our friend. If he wants to do something, he talks with us to see if we can give him advice, and when we are doing something we talk to him, even if we are away from him most of the time. We are happy to have this opportunity to keep in touch day by day.

After I finished the missionary school studies in Romania, the brethren of the Romanian Union sent me to the northeast area to work there as a missionary, together with another friend of mine, Adrian.

Adrian and I had first become friends when we were both 13, when his dad was assigned to be our local minister. Because we were the same age, we became well acquainted in a short time. We spent a lot of time together—and every time his dad would be visiting us, Adrian tried to come along with him in order to visit me.

We decided to get baptized on the same day, so we got baptized when we were 15, and from that time on we have called ourselves twin brothers.

I remember that summer. It was very hot, but my mom was so happy that I had decided to make peace with God, so she worked very hard, preparing for the event. On the baptism day I remember her crying with happiness because, like her first son had done, her second son had also decided to follow Christ. From that moment onward, my friend Adrian and I started our journey as missionaries. We continued our school studies, but whenever we knew there would be a missionary project, we would take a little vacation to attend that project.

A short time afterwards we had decided: Now is the time to go to the missionary school. We registered, and only through the mercy of God were we able to attend the school for those 3 years.

TIME TO START WORKING!

When we graduated, I remember leaders from the various Fields coming to ask us to go to work for them. But because I had already been away from home during high school, I decided to go back to my Field, the Moldova Conference (in the region known as Moldova in the eastern part of Romania, bordering the nation of Moldova). My friend, of course, would not go to another place

Bible ABC's

O

A governor in Ahab's reign who secretly helped the persecuted prophets (1 Kings 18:3, 4).

The son of Ruth who became the grandfather of David (Ruth 4:13-22).

A man blessed by sheltering the ark of God in an emergency (2 Samuel 6:2-12).

A giant defeated (Deut. 3:1-4, 11).

A wicked king, father of Ahab (1 Kings 16:23-28).

Fine, abundant gold came from this place (1 Chronicles 29:3, 4; Isaiah 13:12).

Caleb's younger brother who delivered Israel (Judges 3:9-11).

The name Hosea as translated from Greek (Romans 9:25, 26; Hosea 1:1, 2).

A runaway slave who was converted (Philemon 10-19).

A loyal, compassionate friend of Paul (2 Timothy 1:16-18).

The following quiz will test your knowledge of certain Bible names and places which begin with the letters O and P. Some answers are easy, others are more challenging. After you go through them all, pick out the ones you could not answer. Look up the verse prayerfully and read the entire context, asking God to give you greater spiritual understanding from what you find.

Try to discover more about that subject and about God's love shining through it by using a Bible concordance or the Spirit of Prophecy index. It may take a bit more time, but this is what turns what might have seemed as only trivia into richer spiritual treasure. Enjoy!

P

The place where Jacob was to be blessed in starting his family (Genesis 28:2-7).

A missionary to whom God gave visions (Acts 16:9).

Elkanah's second wife who had children, while Hannah could not (1 Samuel 1:2).

The nation of Cyrus the king (Ezra 1:1, 2).

A helpful sister in the early Christian church (Romans 16:1, 2).

Aaron's grandson who saved Israel by arresting adulterous idolatry (Numbers 25:6-8).

The third disciple whom Jesus called (John 1:40-44).

Pharaoh's officer who bought Joseph (Genesis 39:1).

The hall where Jesus was crowned with thorns (Mark 15:16).

She was hostess to a home church and risked her life for Paul (Romans 16:3-5).

making
vows
that
stick

Editor Barbara Montrose, **Layout** Bethany Montrose, Daniel Lee.

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A new year is a fresh start. At the beginning of a new year, many practice the tradition of making new year's resolutions—vows to carry out some act(s) of self-improvement. These pledges might vary from physical promises such as losing excess weight, exercising more, eating more healthfully, or quitting smoking to personal or social promises such as studying more, avoiding moodiness, helping the needy, or donating to charity.

Cynics say that new year's resolutions are meant to be broken. But actually, that need not be the case. Pollsters have found that those who make resolutions such as these are over 10 times more likely to have a successful outcome in their plans compared to others who make no such attempt.

A study at the University of Bristol showed that males had better success when they made small, measurable goals, while females succeeded more when they made their goals public and were supported by friends.

As Christians, we can enjoy great success in this regard since temperance (self-control) is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. So, how can we make lasting resolutions that will endure?

“You desire to make your life such as will fit you for heaven at

last. You are often discouraged at finding yourself weak in moral power, in slavery to doubt, and controlled by the habits and customs of your old life in sin. . . . Your promises are like ropes of sand. . . .

“But you need not despair. . . . Yield up your will to the will of Jesus Christ; and as you do this, God will immediately take possession and work in you to will and to do of His good pleasure. Your whole nature will then be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ, and even your thoughts will be subject to Him. You cannot control your impulses, your emotions, as you may desire; but you can control the will, and you can make an entire change in your life. By yielding up your will to Christ, your life will be hid with Christ in God and allied to the power which is above all principalities and powers. You will have strength from God that will hold you fast to His strength; and a new light, even the light of living faith, will be possible to you. But your will must cooperate with God's will. . . .

“Will you not say, ‘I will give my will to Jesus, and I will do it now,’ and from this moment be wholly on the Lord's side?”—*Our High Calling*, p. 103. 

Don't

Don't always be wishing for what you can't get;
For vain are those wishes that cannot be met.

Don't always be moping because you feel blue;
'Twill make you unhappy, and other folks, too.

Don't always be fretting if something goes wrong
And not to your liking—it won't be for long;

For though the sky cloudy today may appear,
Tomorrow it may be all sunny and clear.

Don't always be grumbling because you have not
All that you would like—be content with your lot.

Don't envy a person because he has wealth;
You may not have riches—be thankful for health.

Don't mock any person because he is poor;
His heart may be truer than one who has more,

And he be more willing to succor his friends
Than those on whom wealth or good fortune attends.

Don't miss any chances to do a good deed,
The naked to clothe and the hungry to feed;

For you'll never be the sad loser thereby,
You may be rewarded—who knows?—by and by.

—*Author Unknown*