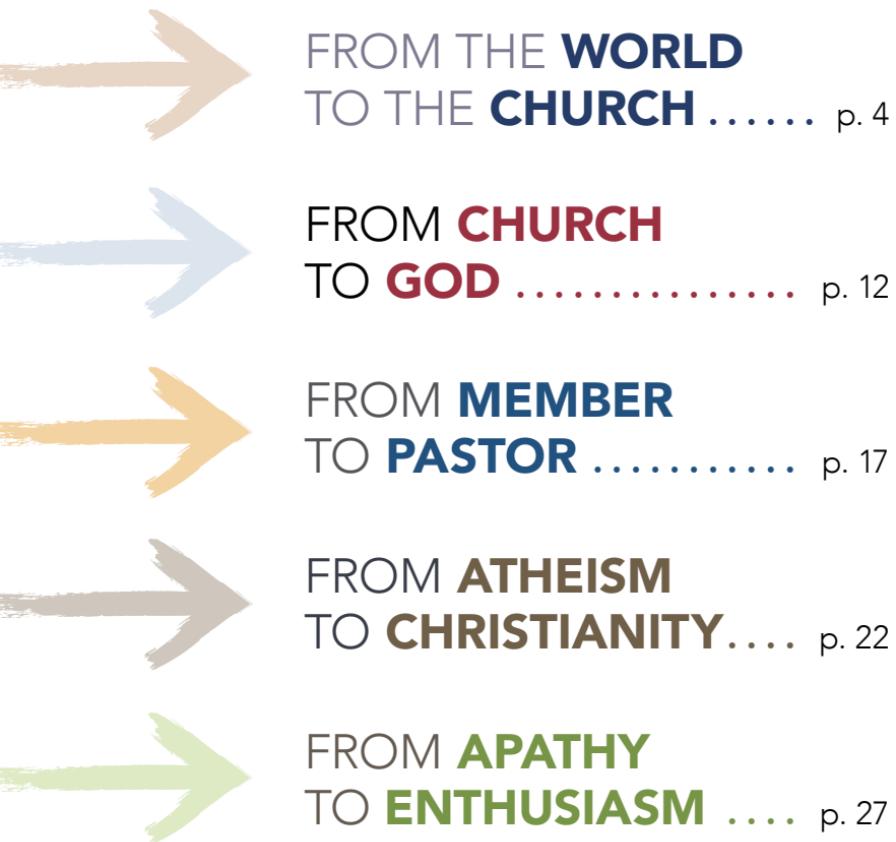


youth messenger

vol. XL, No. 1



TRANSFORMATION

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TRANSFORMATION



EXPERIENCING TRANSFORMATION

DEAR FRIENDS,

The ultimate goal, somehow justifiably selfish, of every Christian is to transition from earth, the symbol of chaos and degradation—to heaven, the symbol of harmony and perfection. We all would like it to happen as instantly as “fast food” in America, but a process of regeneration and re-adaptation to the heavenly atmosphere has to take place in order for us to grow into appreciating eternity as an undeserved gift of God to humanity. Not because God cannot work out instant miracles anymore—but because every one of us has gone astray in different directions and it takes different approaches for us to be brought back to the fold. Thus we all have distinct stories to share or books to write along the way. It was about this process that Jesus was speaking to Nicodemus, the renowned theology professor, when He explained: “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

In this series of articles, the authors are each sharing their experience of sincere and profound conversion from one stage to another in their Christian lives, because conversion is not a one-time miracle. It is rather a continual one, an everyday transformation from one level to another, higher and higher on the ladder to the uppermost rung of Christian perfection.

I hope and pray that you, beloved young reader, will be blessed through this material and that the experience of your conversion, no matter the background, will be an inspirational story to your fellow pilgrims here on this planet—and why not, for generations to come... if Earth's history will linger long enough!

Adrian Finaru



FROM THE World TO THE Church

BY GEORGE SCHIOPU

THE ILLUSION OF FREEDOM

We come into this world without being able to choose the time, place, family, church or community. Realizing our existence, we sail among games and colors, rocked by the mirage of childhood. . . .

Finally, one day, inevitably the moment of personal choice appears. From that moment on, consciously or unconsciously, we make choices day after day. Every choice is a brick laid in building your own construction. How will it be? That depends on you!

Throughout life, some choices seem difficult and others insignificant. Interestingly, they all generate some change in the course of life. But out of the great number of choices, is there one that will influence our eternity?

"And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19).



Not everyone sees sin as bondage. Many times, sin is hidden and merged under the saying of "Live your life!"

But our Creator, the Lord Jesus Christ, explains the reality: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever" (John 8:34, 35).

"Every soul that refuses to give himself to God is under the control of another power. He is not his own. He may talk of freedom, but he is in the most abject slavery. He is not allowed to see the beauty of truth, for his mind is under the control of Satan. While he flatters himself that he is following the dictates of his own judgment, he obeys the will of the prince of darkness. Christ came to break the shackles of sin-slavery from

the soul. ‘If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.’”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 466.

The golden things of Satan seem beautiful, but in reality they are eaten by rust. In their quest for freedom, humanity ends up passing deeper and deeper into nothingness, without even knowing it. Every day, influenced by friends, family, acquaintances, young or old, they let themselves be captivated by the bondage of sin, living the illusion of freedom.

SPIRITUAL ULTRASOUND

In today's society, the tendency to disrespect any kind of law is becoming more blatant. The spirit of rebellion fills the world with evildoing. But this is not something new. The fight against authority and law has gone on since ancient times. It began with Lucifer in heaven and enveloped all of humanity here on earth. We are part of it. It is important to become aware that this conflict has marked our philosophy of life. Through the Holy Spirit, Paul comes to our aid by pointing out the importance of the moral law of God, the Ten Commandments:

“What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet” (Romans 7:7).

“Without the law, men have no just conception of the purity and holiness of God or of their own guilt and uncleanness. They have

no true conviction of sin and feel no need of repentance. Not seeing their lost condition as violators of God’s law, they do not realize their need of the atoning blood of Christ.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 468.

“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24).

“God’s law is the mirror presenting a complete reflection of the man as he is, and holding up before him the correct likeness. Some will turn away and forget this picture, while others will employ abusive epithets against the law, as though this would cure their defects of character. Still others who are condemned by the law will repent of their transgressions and, through faith in Christ’s merits, will perfect Christian character.”—*Faith and Works*, p. 31. “Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Romans 7:12). But “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20).

AN IRRESISTIBLE ATTRACTION

Jesus declared, “If I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32). When the true Lamb of God was lifted high above the earth on the cross of Calvary, it made an impression on the world that cannot be effaced.

“It is true that men sometimes become ashamed of their sinful ways, and give up some of their evil

habits, before they are conscious that they are being drawn to Christ. But whenever they make an effort to reform, from a sincere desire to do right, it is the power of Christ that is drawing them. An influence of which they are unconscious works upon the soul, and the conscience is quickened, and the outward life is amended. And as Christ draws them to look upon His cross, to behold Him whom their sins have pierced, the commandment comes home to the conscience. The wickedness of their life, the deep-seated sin of the soul, is revealed to them. They begin to comprehend something of the righteousness of Christ, and exclaim, 'What is sin, that it should require such a sacrifice for the redemption of its victim? Was all this love, all this suffering, all this humiliation, demanded, that we might not perish, but have everlasting life?"—*Steps to Christ*, p. 27.

The eyes begin to open and sin uncovers its true face in all its hideous horror. This ugly monstrosity can no longer be covered in the light of the cross of Calvary, upon which the Saviour of the world was crucified for our

evildoing.

"Through the cross we learn that the heavenly Father loves us with a love that is infinite. Can we wonder that Paul exclaimed, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ'? Galatians 6:14."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 210.

With the eyes of the mind, people can see the Son of God dying for their sins. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the love manifested on the cross makes them value faith and penitence.

Faith is the key to all this. Through faith, we have repentance, confession, and the forsaking of sin. This faith turns our steps to Jesus Christ, since the heart feels that help is coming from Him.

From everything around us, we learn the love of God.

"'God is love' is written upon every opening bud, upon every spire of springing grass. The lovely birds making the air vocal with their happy songs, the delicately tinted flowers in their perfection perfuming the air, the lofty trees of the forest with their rich foliage of living green—all testify to the tender, fatherly care of our God and to His desire to make His children happy."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 10.

And, as if all this were not enough, the cross rises majestically to convince us that He wants to save us. And from the cry: "It is finished!" uttered from that cross, the divine offer appears: His purity in exchange for our sins. From



that moment on, sin, like Satan, is a defeated enemy, but it is still a dangerous one.

Satan promises you a life without rules, without commands, a life in which you can supposedly have fun and do whatever you like. Sounds promising, doesn't it? But its entire speech is a delusion, as no one can guarantee you a number of years. The fiendish archenemy of your soul makes the path of abandoning the commandments of God appear as happy, and even desirable. But the reality is that for all these deviations, there is a tremendously bitter price that will have to be paid.

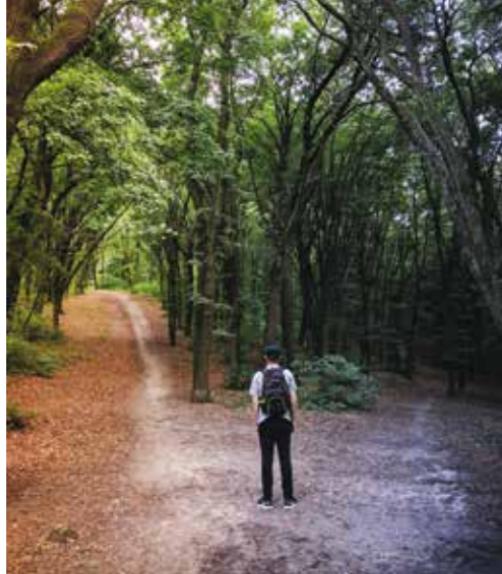
The wealthy and wise king Solomon revealed the true picture, "he that keepeth the law, happy is he" (Proverbs 29:18). This promise is fulfilled here on this earth. Just as you find happiness and protection in the path of God's commands, insecurity and sadness are found in the path of wrongdoing.

But thanks be to God that He provides us a path that generates happiness not just now, but for all eternity!

AT THE CROSSROADS

So, at a certain time, everyone will face a crossroads. There's a fork in the road. Which way shall I go?

"There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 16:25). Ignorance is no excuse for error or sin, when there



is every opportunity to know the will of God. A man is traveling and comes to a place where there are several roads and a guideboard indicating where each one leads. If he disregards the guideboard, and takes whichever road seems to him to be right, he may be ever so sincere, but will in all probability find himself on the wrong road."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 597.

As a matter of fact, there are really only two paths standing before anyone. A bright one, whose brilliance intensifies gradually, and a dark one, where the darkness just gets denser. These paths are life and death. And at the cross of these roads, you, as a person, are free to choose. God advises you: Choose Life! He is urging this to you through love, not as a command, and the decision is yours.

"Yet do not therefore conclude that the upward path is the hard and the downward road the

easy way. All along the road that leads to death there are pains and penalties, there are sorrows and disappointments, there are warnings not to go on. God's love has made it hard for the heedless and headstrong to destroy themselves. It is true that Satan's path is made to appear attractive, but it is all a deception; in the way of evil there are bitter remorse and cankering care."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 139.

A correct decision on this point makes all the others easier.

In the physical world, light and life go together; they are closely related. We could explain this connection simply, through a small experiment: Put a piece of cardboard over the lawn and leave it for a few weeks. What will happen? It's easy to see that the grass will dry out.

The relationship between light and darkness is even more apparent in the spiritual world. The light that makes eternal life possible is a blessing that must not only be realized but also accepted.

Thence, the most important decision in life is, undoubtedly, the decision for Christ.

SURRENDERING

Jesus explained the powerful attraction of His sacrifice on the cross in our behalf with His words: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32).

This works through the strong

influence of the Holy Spirit upon our hearts—a tender wooing which we should not resist. "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Romans 2:4).

"The first step in reconciliation to God is the conviction of sin. 'Sin is the transgression of the law.' 'By the law is the knowledge of sin.' 1 John 3:4; Romans 3:20. In order to see his guilt, the sinner must test his character by God's great standard of righteousness. It is a mirror which shows the perfection of a righteous character and enables him to discern the defects in his own.

"The law reveals to man his sins, but it provides no remedy. While it promises life to the obedient, it declares that death is the portion of the transgressor. The gospel of Christ alone can free him from the condemnation or the defilement of sin. He must exercise repentance toward God, whose law has been transgressed; and faith in Christ, his atoning sacrifice. Thus he obtains 'remission of sins that are past' and becomes a partaker of the divine nature. He is a child of God, having received the spirit of adoption, whereby he cries: 'Abba, Father!' "—*The Great Controversy*, p. 467.

Everyone has his/her own experience. No conversion is identical—and just as every human being is one of a kind, so is this transformation. Some experience

a dramatic conversion, such as Paul on the road to Damascus; others have been trained in a Christian home, as in the case of Timothy. But whatever the type of conversion, it is certain that the sinner, from that moment on, will hate sin and love righteousness. Many people seek for the wonders of former times, forgetting that the greatest miracle achieved by divine power is actually the conversion of the human soul. It is the work of conversion and sanctification to reconcile people to God by bringing them into accord with the principles of His law.

CONNECTING WITH GOD

There are several steps here:

- 1. Finding.** By studying the Bible personally, you begin to understand the requirements of Christ.
- 2. Accepting.** All other personal, material interests fade in view of the unmatched love of the Saviour.
- 3. Surrendering.** You want to do God's will, and new fruits begin to appear in your life—and “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Galatians 5:22, 23).
- 4. Daily consecration.** Day by day you will experience the joy of the connection with the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 5. The resemblance.** When two people stay together for a long time, the personality of the strongest begins to prevail. Like the beloved disciple John, the one who falls in love with the character of the Lord Jesus, will imitate Him.

But conversion is not a miracle simply occurring only at a certain time. It is a process that lasts the entire life and is perfected with each approach to God's word. Jesus explains, “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63).

This change is the new birth, without which, Jesus said, no one can see the kingdom of God. To be born again involves the mind—new desires, new pleasures, new reasons, new goals. For this transformation to take place, we must submit to the work of the Holy Spirit. Any delay is dangerous since, over time, the heart might harden.

Throughout life, I have met many people with the “postponement philosophy,” especially in this spiritual area. “Repentance” is a term often associated with the last decade of life. Personally, I was often told just to put off connecting my life to God until after I would be old. The idea was to busy myself with school, career, family, etc., as if these were bigger priorities. How foolish! Sadly, people advising such a course of action could not realize the enormous losses caused by postponing a

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commitment to Christ. But God, by various means, works by drawing us to Him with cords of love.

MY STORY

I can still remember the crucial moment of my conversion. Often I used to listen to my sister talk about God. She had discovered something new, something I had never heard of before, and she wanted to share with me the "Bread of Life." It took me some time to decide which side of the barricade to be on.

The high school I attended was away from home and for a while I was alone, without family. Due to circumstances, my sister moved to the city where I lived. Every evening, together we sought the answers to many questions that arose after reading the Holy Word. In a mysterious way, God was working. The time had come for a personal decision, and I want to say that no human power influenced me. I understood the eternal validity of God's law, and therefore I decided to keep the Sabbath.

But there was a problem that worried me: A problem for me,

but not for God. I was in my last year of high school and I had to take the 5 final exams. **I began to fear that one of the exams might end up being on a Saturday. I tried to fight this fear, but it was always on my mind**, making a dent in the peace that had rested over my soul—**until one day when I realized that God had everything under control.** During that time, we began to look for a church that would meet our new views. I felt the need for fellowship, for membership. I asked the neighbors but didn't get a satisfactory answer, so I postponed the search.

One day, someone knocked on our door. It was a kind gentleman and lady, who, smiling, asked us if we were interested in going with them to church the next Sabbath (they had heard about our search through the neighbors). They seemed trustworthy, so I invited them inside. We had a very interesting discussion, which I will never forget. Word for word, I found out they were husband and wife, and that **he was an official on the School Board. Without my mentioning anything about my**

fear, this kind gentleman assured me that if an exam would be scheduled for Saturday, he could reschedule it for me!

Suddenly I felt then that all of heaven cared for my well-being. A confidence which I had never experienced before arose in my soul. I was under the eye of the Heavenly Father! I decided to make a covenant with Him.

THE SIGN OF ENTRANCE TO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

"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."—*Evangelism*, p. 307.

This is not just to say, "I believe," but actually to demonstrate in real life that you belong to God through your everyday words, behavior, and actions. The believer must always remember that he made a solemn covenant and that, through this covenant, he died to the world and lives wholly for the Saviour. All the abilities with which he has been gifted will be poured into the interest of the heavenly kingdom to which he is dutiful. Only from this time forward will life truly make

sense and the purpose for which we live on this earth be clarified: Restoring the divine image in fallen humanity.

The rehabilitation program consists in giving love to those around you and telling others about the goodness of God, so that they, too, may be saved.

CONCLUSION

"The Scriptures plainly show that the work of sanctification is progressive. When in conversion the sinner finds peace with God through the blood of the atonement, the Christian life has but just begun. Now he is to 'go on unto perfection; to grow up 'unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.' Says the apostle Paul: 'This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' Philippians 3:13, 14. And Peter sets before us the steps by which Bible sanctification is to be attained: 'Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. . . . If ye do these things, ye shall never fall.' 2 Peter 1:5-10."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 470. 



FROM Church TO God

BY JEREMIAH BRAIDMAN

Being raised in an environment where I was surrounded by an amazing church family that was so kind and loving is a blessing for which I am very grateful. This is something that I never took for granted because I knew what a privilege it was to be raised in this special family that shared God's truth—a type of family that many aren't so fortunate to have.

Ever since I can remember, I grew up attending church faithfully. I loved spending quality time with my church friends and I thoroughly enjoyed playing my violin for and during all the services. But despite all of this, for most of my younger years, I never really stopped to think about the most important part of church fellowship—the spiritual aspect. Sure, it was great that I had friends in the church I could always hang out with. It was also a positive thing that I enjoyed being involved in playing music for church services and events. But there was something missing.

As I was beginning to enter my teenage years, I started to think about where I stood spiritually. It also so happened that around this same time in my life, I experienced a panic attack—something that I had never experienced before. The feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, and fear that one goes through during the awful experience of a panic attack is something one cannot truly explain unless personally experienced. This was the first time I had experienced all three of these emotions at once and I felt confused and fearful about what had just happened to me. I did not understand where it came from or what had triggered it. It seemed to have happened out of the blue. Perplexed and not seeming to understand what had happened, I turned to the Bible for comfort. This was one of the first experiences I had that really made me look to God for comfort and help. As it says in Psalm 50:15, “Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.” After that terrible night, I began to read Hebrews chapter 11, and I would meditate on the verses from this chapter every night before going to sleep, which was something I found comfort in doing. Ultimately, my spiritual life was getting on track. I even expressed interest in taking baptismal studies. It seemed like I was on the right path, but Satan was about to try to take me off this path.

Not long after this period of time, someone cunningly found his way into our family and succeeded in winning our friendship and trust. Once managing to become integrated into our family, before we knew what was happening, he was dramatically veering me off the narrow road I had just started on. The friendship with this individual would gradually but greatly affect my spirituality in every possible way. I would go from being the young innocent teenager who was on the way to finding his way to God to someone who was totally disinterested in anything to do with God, church, or spiritual things. At this point in my life I was unrecognizable. Seeing me in this seemingly lost state, my family and friends were desperate to save me from complete moral and spiritual destruction. During this period of my life, I found a happiness that was very superficial and shallow. This friend I had was wealthy; I had a great job with him, and he promised to teach me how to be successful in life so that all my dreams could be realized. But even with all this, I still experienced anxiety, even more so than I had before. As time progressed, I began to see that this friend was someone who had ulterior motives and intentions far from noble. The once kind, pleasant, and generous spirit became controlling, obsessive, and narcissistic. All these things only fueled my anxiety to the point

THE BELIEF CRISIS ONLY SEEMED TO FUEL THE ANXIOUS THOUGHTS. IT WAS A VICIOUS CYCLE.

that I started to become extremely depressed. Even though I had all the signs that this friendship was ruining me mentally and spiritually, I couldn't seem to wake up. It was as if I was under a spell. This person had used material things as a means to entrap me, while making me feel that I couldn't afford to lose his friendship. I was being brainwashed, manipulated, influenced, and mentally controlled by him, yet I didn't notice it at all. More than this, I failed to realize that Jesus is the only true source of happiness and that no material things can give the happiness or mental healing that only He can offer.

It was very hard for my family during this time. I had pushed God away, as well as them. I had deaf ears for everything they would try to tell me. But the prayers my friends and family were offering up for me were not in vain. Ever so slowly, I began to realize and accept that my mental condition was being affected by this toxic and unhealthy friendship. But even so, I struggled with giving up this life. I felt I had so much to lose; my job, money, and opportunities. But our wonderful God is a God of miracles. He intervened in my life just before it was too late, before everything could have potentially been lost forever and there could have been no turning back. My family decided to visit our relatives in Chile. They bought my ticket without me knowing in a desperate attempt to pull me away from this "friend." I was not entirely happy when I came to know about my ticket being bought, as I didn't want to leave everything for several months—but I begrudgingly accepted and decided to travel with them. This would be the trip that would decide it all, the trip that would give me a chance, the time, and the space to sit back and reflect. During my time there in Chile, by a miracle from God I finally, slowly, eventually came to my senses. I saw how my spirituality and relationship with God had nearly become nonexistent. I saw how I had changed for the worst. I saw the terrible impact this person had

had on my mental health. I saw what a negative influence he had been in all areas of my life.

After fighting with the decision for many days, I finally decided that the best thing would be to end the friendship once and for all. That was one of the best decisions I made in my entire life. I was finally free to start rebuilding my life with God and my family. This seemed to be the happy ending to an unsettling story, but my story does not end here. God knew He had a lot of work to do in my life after I had been so negatively influenced and changed.

After the ordeal with this ex-friend of mine was over, I seemed to have peace. My anxiety levels diminished, I was not depressed anymore, and it all seemed it would be uphill from there. I decided to relocate from the west coast where I was living to the east coast to have a fresh page to start on. As I seemed to start getting my life back together by beginning baptismal studies—something that I had planned to do before the toxic friendship had destroyed those plans—the anxiety slowly crept back in. It came back stronger than ever before. Concentrating when doing homework, when listening to sermons, and even when playing the violin—which was something I loved to do—seemed to be terribly clouded and difficult to do. It was around this time when I had an epiphany. Who was I? what did I believe in? who was God to me?

Why does God allow me to suffer as a result of this anxiety? Does He actually love me? Did He even notice the anguish I would feel whenever my mind was cloudy, when I could not think straight because of the waves of anxiety? All I could ask was why God, why me? I felt so lost. I did not know who I was or who I was meant to be. This belief crisis seemed to only fuel the anxious thoughts. It was a vicious cycle, as everything in my life seemed to be at that moment. I began to feel desperate. These mental battles started to affect how I acted with loved ones and with friends. I began to resent God, to distrust Him and His love for me. I could not see Him caring for me while allowing me to suffer this way.

I hit rock bottom. With no one who could make it go away, feeling no hope in sight, with no one truly being able to understand what I was going through, and with no words to fully describe my suffering, depression turned to thoughts of hurting myself and ultimately to thoughts of suicide. At this lowest point in my life where all seemed so hopeless and lost, God saved me once again. He saved me from doing anything that would have made me lose, not just this life, but more importantly, eternal life forever. After many sleepless nights of crying in anguish to Jesus, I had no more tears left to cry, no more energy left to spend. I cried out to the Lord one final time. I said:

"Lord, I don't know what I have been doing wrong, or what I have done to deserve this, but deep inside I know You love me. I know everything happens for a reason and I know You are trying to show me something. If I have not been giving everything to You, if I have been idolizing things in my life and putting them above You, please forgive me and help me to put You first." As I finished this prayer, it all became clear to me. All this time for so many years I had been cherishing certain things in my life. These were things that I was putting between me and God, without even realizing it. Things that I had allowed to absorb all my attention. There were so many things God needed to teach me and show me and the only way that I would finally recognize the things I was idolizing, fix my shallow spiritual life, and give my life to Him, was if something drastic happened in my life so that I could recognize my need for Him in everything. And this is exactly what happened.

I learned another important lesson. I realized that sometimes the very things we may consider to be a burden or an agonizing struggle can actually be a blessing in disguise. I learned that sometimes God allows certain things to happen in our lives to help us keep our focus on the true happiness we will have later, when one day we will be in heaven

with Jesus face to face. We all have our crosses to carry and those crosses are to help mold us, prepare us, and keep our focus on Jesus who once bore His cross for us in order that we would have the opportunity to be able to live eternally with Him. I have learned that the fight with anxiety is a cross I've had to carry because maybe if I never experienced it, I wouldn't have sought God for help and wouldn't be where I am today, writing this article.

Dear reader, if you are reading this and have not given your life completely to God, it is not too late! If you are going through struggles, heartaches—whatever it may be—give them to Jesus, and give Him your heart too. He loves you and will help you. Many times He uses the greatest trials to get our attention and save us. It does not matter whether or not you were born and raised in the church; you can have a beautiful experience with Him this very moment. We all can have an amazing experience with Him—it's just up to us to let it happen.

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (2 Corinthians 1:3, 4). 



FROM Member TO Pastor

BY ETIENNE LOMBARD

HOPES AND DREAMS

If you ask my mom, she can confirm that as early as I can remember, when people asked me what I wanted to do as a grown-up, I always answered that I wanted to be a pastor-violinist. I had never seen a pastor playing the violin. But somehow, in my mind, the two went really well together.

From a very early age, I remember when pastors would come to our family home to spend a night at the end of their missionary tour. You see, I didn't grow up in a classic setting. We had no church nearby; it was only my family—one grandmother, two aunts, my parents and my three brothers. Our church was in our living room. We lived a simple, isolated country life. I didn't have friends that I could take to church with me. Since we were homeschooled for the earlier part of my life, my brothers were my best and only friends.

I grew up in France, about an hour away from the city of Lyon, close to Switzerland and Italy. When I was a kid, our only pastors were traveling from Germany and would come once or twice a year to France on mission tours. They would visit all the places where there were church members and finish off their tour at our home. We were the last ones to be visited on their way back to Germany. I always felt so blessed to receive these important visitors to our home. We would make sure that the best food was cooked, that their beds were ready when they arrived and we would even gaze outside the window waiting for them to drive up the long uphill road that would lead to our home. What excitement! Somebody was coming to our home!

My hopes of being a violinist were crushed one day. My parents had purchased as a birthday gift a violin from a good family friend. You should have seen the smile on my face! I was probably 10 years old. This was my dream! I started to play that day and was trying

to learn on my own. My parents could not afford to pay for violin classes; I was only able to take some music theory classes. I loved it! I attended these classes for three years and was getting good at the theory. But one day, my dad came to me and told me that due to him having lost his job a few months back, we had no money. We were going to sell all of our valuables in order not to lose the house. Among these valuables was my dear violin. I remember walking away from the store with a sobbing heart. I would never become pastor-violinist.

Twice a year, we would travel to attend conferences that were held in Saint-Vert, a former flour mill that had been transformed successively into a bar/restaurant, then into a meeting hall. Isolated in the country, this place still holds lots of great childhood memories for me. On these occasions, the German ministers would often give lengthy sermons, doubled with a translation. Instead of being bored, I would try to understand as many German words as I could and convince myself that I understood everything they said—until the translation came and I would realize that I was completely off.

We were taught respect for the elderly and the holy things. I remember one day wandering behind the church pulpit and



being rebuked for that. It taught me the difference between things that are sacred and things that are common.

I was always a “good” boy growing up, reserved and shy. I don’t think that my parents were worried about me. I always knew that one day I would be baptized, but had not actually made my decision. At age 16, after starting to work during summer holiday, I had purchased the *Conflict of the Ages* series with my first salary. I was attracted to knowledge and loved to read, but had not yet invited God into my life.

As a teenager, my desires changed completely. I liked helping people and dreamed of becoming an osteopath. It is similar to a chiropractor but with a higher medical training and more holistic skills. The best schools in Europe were very expensive and required 6 years of university level studies—plus they tended to be very elitist. Only a select few could hope to enter one of those schools, and only after very difficult selection tests. The school I was considering received 500 applications and only 20 would be selected. Coming from a poor family, with only slightly above-average school grades, I had low chances of being among the chosen few. But I decided to take the test anyway.

A VISIT FROM THE PASTORS

Just around that time, three ministers from Germany came to our home. I was 17, going on 18. After dinner, my brothers went to their bedrooms but I remained with my parents around the table. The ministers were telling about their recent visits and the experiences they had made while travelling. I was always fascinated by their stories about how they were able to bring the gospel to struggling families and clear away all their doubts. At one point in the conversation, the ministers noticed me. They asked how old I was and if I had ever considered giving my life to Christ. I will always remember that night. Each of the three of them gave me two verses as an encouragement:

- **Ecclesiastes 9:10** “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.”
- **Proverbs 22:28** “Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.”
- **Ecclesiastes 11:9** “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.”
- **Amos 3:7** “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.”
- **Philippians 4:4, 5** “Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.”
- **Matthew 9:13** “But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

Two of these ministers have now passed away. They probably never realized how much impact they had on my life.

You probably wonder how I remember these verses over 18 years later. They are written in golden letters in my heart. You see, what nobody knew or even suspected is that, just as they were talking, I had a pack of cigarettes in my pocket. I had struggled for a month with the desire to be just like everybody else in school (by that time I was in the secular school system). I was trying to erase the education my parents had given me in an effort to be accepted by my peers in the crowd at school. But my conscience was not allowing me to have peace. When the ministers came to the last verse, I had silently crushed the pack of cigarettes and inwardly begged God to forgive me. There were no

external signs of that struggle, but that night I gave my heart to the Lord. I felt miserable for who I had become but also realized that Christ had come to call me to repentance. That night, I spent the longest time I had ever spent on my knees beside my bed.

The next morning, unbeknownst to them, I was a new man. They asked me if I ever had considered going to missionary school. The only missionary school I knew of at the time was in Brazil and I decided to consider the idea. (Years later, the ministers told me that the purpose of their trip on this particular occasion had actually been to find potential students for a prospective missionary school in Germany.)

TIME TO CHOOSE MY CAREER

This was my last year of high school and it was time to choose my future career. I decided to put God to the test, as Gideon had done many years ago.

I told God: "If you want me to be a missionary, make me fail my entrance exam to the osteopathic school." I had only a 4% chance to be selected, so I was pretty sure that God would not enable me to go. I took the entrance exams, which included general knowledge, science and

anatomy tests as well as psychology and motivation interviews. Waiting for the results and knowing that I had

only a very slim chance to be selected, I decided to make plans to attend the missionary school in Brazil. As days turned into weeks, my expectations of making it among the 4% grew weaker and weaker. My determination to make plans to go to Brazil grew stronger. I was almost certain that God wanted me to be a missionary. My old memories of wanting to be a pastor-violinist came back. . . .

That's when I received a phone call: I was accepted into the osteopathic school! Suddenly, all my certainty disappeared. I had been so sure that God wanted me to be a missionary! Now, here I was back to square one. Did God really want me to be an osteopath? Had He answered my prayer or was it a test I had just set on my own, by myself?

So many questions were flying through my head. Both futures were possible. I knelt down and asked God to bring me a deep



conviction. He showed me the verses in Isaiah 6:6–8, “Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.”

You see, there was no question for me after this point. I would go to missionary school, not just to learn more about God and our church beliefs, but to work for Him! The call became crystal clear.

While I waited for the school in Brazil to accept my application, I started to work in a factory in order to save money for the trip. I waited a year and a half. Eventually, in the meantime, a missionary school opened in Germany. I was the first applicant. I have never looked back.

An observation has been made:

- Do you like being in charge? Start your own business.
- Do you like talking while others listen? Become a college professor.
- Do you like arguing theology? Start a blog.
- Do you like church buildings? Become an architect.
- Do you like church history? Become an archeologist.
- Do you like visiting the sick? Become a chaplain.
- Do you like marrying people? Become a county clerk.
- Do you like burying people? Become a funeral director.
- Do you want to be in a position of authority? Run for public office.
- Do you like making money? Get a higher-paying job. Like a public school teacher. (Seriously. As poorly as they get paid, they have a higher average than pastors. With summers off.)

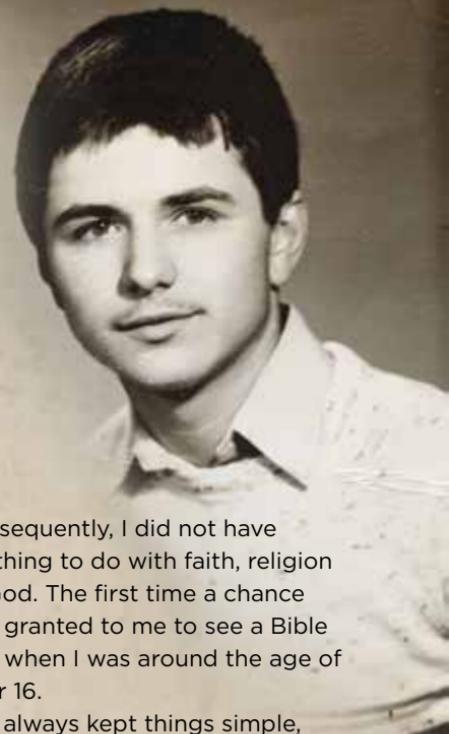
Accepting God's call to be a missionary is one of the best decisions I have ever made. It was not what I had anticipated. But working with God is, in my view, the most rewarding position one can have. I've had a front-row seat to see lives changed, marriages healed and prodigal sons return.

You have to love Jesus. You have to love people. You have to be willing to sacrifice an otherwise prosperous career. If you are looking for something other than that, you need to look elsewhere. You will suffer. It won't be easy, but it will be worth it. It is the hardest job you will ever love. ☺



FROM Atheism TO Christianity

BY LIVIU TUDOROIU



My dear friends, I thank the Lord Jesus Christ, my personal Saviour, for the undeserved privilege to share my personal testimony in regard to my conversion.

Far away, in a land called Romania, God in His mercy granted me the breath of life in June 1969. It has now been more than 34 years since I was first impressed by the Lord.

Being a city boy, I always was in love with nature. Romania is a beautiful country with spectacular views, so I felt it a privilege to be born in that part of the world.

Yet throughout eastern Europe, communism was mandated as the only acceptable way of thinking. Freedom of conscience was a risky luxury. Atheism was the only religion for most of the youth, and the result of such indoctrination generated pride.

By education, my parents did not believe in God—and in accordance with the prevailing system, they were communists.

Consequently, I did not have anything to do with faith, religion or God. The first time a chance was granted to me to see a Bible was when I was around the age of 15 or 16.

I always kept things simple, and the afterthought questions that became prevalent in my mind were straight to the point: If life is so beautiful, why must it ultimately come to an end? If life is an accident, what created the accident? Where did we get the values we all respect and appreciate today? Why do we walk on the tightrope of life, trying to balance laughing and crying, sadness and happiness, beauty and ugliness, stupidity and wisdom, success and failure—and ultimately, love and hatred? Why do we try to attain reconciliation with our conscience?

Why do such values define life if it is just a purposeless event?

Do you see, my friend, why such questions are very uncomfortable for the majority

of people in today's society? If we come from nowhere, we go nowhere. If life is meaningless, why have I been born from among the millions of variations? Why me, why you, and not someone else?

I would say that I was an unbeliever—or an atheist by default, not by personal choice.

We walk in this world as a lonely wolf without purpose, a person that is always thirsty for the water of life without even realizing that the water of life is available.

Oftentimes a wolf will bite you to deliver a message, to make you feel the way he feels. A true, authentic sheep can survive among the wolves, and that is why the Lord Jesus Christ tells us in Matthew 10:16, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." Jesus knew that we have to decide if we are an authentic sheep or still a wolf dressed in sheepskin.

A BREAKTHROUGH

Amid the anguish of all these questions, God in His mercy created the exact circumstances for me to receive a Bible—a book that would change my life forever, a book that would answer all my unanswered questions. But not yet! For months this extraordinary book was to rest on the shelf, covered in dust.

It was in 1984 when the Holy Spirit of God spoke to my conscience again. But this time the impression was deep and

powerful. I was haunted by a heavy sense of responsibility. The same questions again and again would resound in my mind: "What will you do on the last day of your life? Are you ready to face death?" At first, I tried to ignore it or change the train of my thoughts—but instead of going away, I still felt the solemn voice appealing to my heart.

In those days we did not have Internet, cell phones, Facebook or any other media platforms with which to "kill time" (a typical expression among those in the new generation). The only thing available in those days were the two hours of television full of indoctrination with the communist propaganda.

Communism was like a wall that was tall and impenetrable—and beyond this wall you could not see any future. In those days, societies that were shaped by the communist propaganda were forbidden to read any western literature. But the effect was actually the reverse, and in the world of higher education and universities was a thirst for knowledge and truth that could not be quenched. The hearts of many students were impressed to study further to find the true meaning of life, even though God is not far away from any one of us (Acts 17:27).

We were devouring books that had a science fiction flavor that served as a kind of a drug for the mind. The purpose of reading

such books was to highjack ourselves from that sad, cruel, iron communist reality and translate us into another supposedly better world.

I was one of those young people absorbed and captivated by the mysteries of the universe—and in the absence of the Scriptures, I would read anything that would elevate my mood. Such is the case when one day, I came across a book belonging to a classmate friend of mine entitled *Memories About the Future*. My friend promised that he would be willing to share the book with me the next day, under the condition that I would return it in less than two weeks.

I was so excited over the thought of getting to read this book! Not having brothers and sisters at home (I don't have siblings), I gladly agreed that I would plan to finish reading it in a couple of days.

But that was the very day I was disappointed in order to open the door of my heart to the Lord Jesus Christ. Very early that morning, I arrived as one of the first in the classroom, anxiously waiting for my friend and with the frenzy of joy to get my book.

When my friend arrived, he told me that, unfortunately, due to some other priorities, he had simply forgotten the book at home. I said, "Well, maybe you can visit with me in the afternoon, and we can have some fried potatoes,

ALL OF A SUDDEN, THE LORD JESUS CALLED MY ATTENTION TO THE BIBLE.

play some chess, and then you can go." He replied, "I am so sorry, but my mom scheduled me to work with her in the garden (it was springtime—and culturally, every family would work their garden).

So, I went home and said to myself, "What shall I do this afternoon?"

Suddenly, the Lord Jesus called my attention to the Bible—the little green pocket Bible forgotten on the shelf for a few months now.

I sat on the couch and said to myself, "Hmmm, let me see what this Bible is all about."

Every book has a story and a hero. Some books have a sad ending; others have a happy ending, but whichever way the ending is, the character of the hero will stay with you for a while and naturally form a behavioral pattern to match the character of that specific hero. That is what we understand today as the power of influence by exposure. By beholding we are changed.

EXPLORING THIS BOOK

When I started reading the New Testament, obviously the

name "Jesus" called my attention. I have to mention that this Jesus of the Scripture was very, very different compared to the rest of the heroes invented by the smart writers for fame and entertainment.

This Jesus was another kind of hero with an extraordinary character, unique and outstanding compared to the rest of the heroes that fade out into nothingness.

I was saying to myself, "Wow, this Jesus is so different, He prays to God, and He calls Him His Father?! I would love to talk to God as this Jesus of the Bible did!" The more I was reading, the more I was interested in the word of God, not understanding much of what I was reading, yet being very attracted to this divine character of Jesus. I was turning verses into chapters, going with great speed soon to chapter 5 of Matthew. It was then that the best moment touched my heart as I read:

"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).

Amazing! What I was reading was way beyond what I could "digest" as an atheist.

AN EXPERIMENT

A thought came to my mind. I should pray to see "IF" there is God. It was an absolutely insane idea for a nonbeliever. I had never prayed in my life. I had never knelt

down before anyone or anybody under any circumstance. And all of a sudden, I was more and more persuaded by this thought.

The Holy Spirit of God was whispering, "Try it, talk to God and see if He will respond." But pride and self would say: "Are you crazy? Look around you, where is God, where is God? Don't you see that with your own eyes?"

I said to myself, "I will try." I went in my bedroom, opened my window and started to pray, "God if you do exist, please make me to be like this Jesus, to have His character and to be capable of loving my enemies, to have His gentleness, His honesty, His kindness—and if You do so, I want to serve You forever. But first, You have to prove to me that You do exist, by my asking You an impossible thing. Because you are God, I am going to ask you to bring my classmate to my home this afternoon to bring the book, *Memories About the Future*—not because this book is so important to me but because I want to know if you really do exist."

A THOUGHT CAME
TO MY MIND.
I SHOULD PRAY
TO SEE "IF"
THERE IS A GOD.

I did not finish the prayer, when all of a sudden, I heard the doorbell ring. Immediately, I jumped from my knees, and trembling as I was walking to the door, I said to myself, "This is not possible; it is not possible!" As I opened the door, there stood my classmate with the book in his hand.

Incapable of somehow addressing a proper question, I barely managed to engage in mumbling a few words: "Why did you come?"

"I just came to bring the book," he responded. Then he turned and left without any further answer.

I closed the door and went back to the same place of prayer. I was saying to myself, "There is a God, there is a God! What am I going to say. . .?"

One of the key factors was that my classmate needed around 20 to 25 minutes to arrive at my home, but I had begun praying only a few minutes before his arrival.

"Hmm," I told myself, "so the only way to reconcile these two aspects of the problem is to acknowledge that God knew before I started praying what my request would be and God had impressed the young man to leave his house 20 minutes before I even started to pray. That means that God knows our thoughts prior to our expressing them in words. Wow!"

The deeper I went into this subject, the more I was to be

amazed by the Infinite Power I was dealing with—the Almighty God!

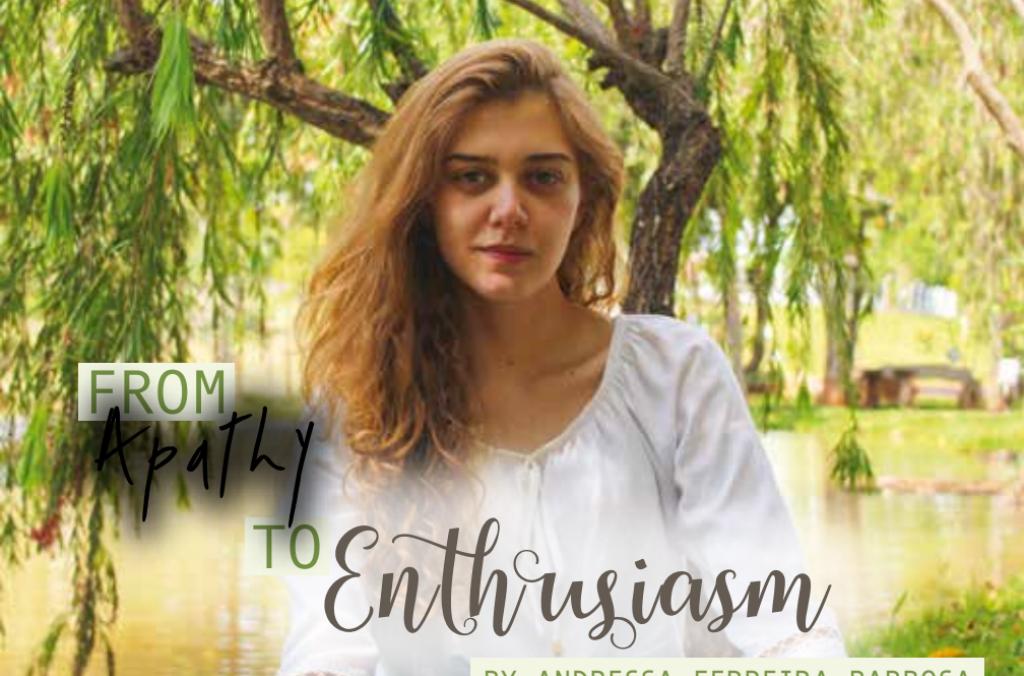
The mental pressure was so powerful that I could only burst into tears. A profound sense of unworthiness on my part mingled with the overwhelming sense of gratitude towards God. That made my second prayer flow out of me so naturally that I did not realize that a couple of hours had passed.

Then I heard the door opening and I realized that it was my mom coming home from work. I jumped off my knees, I wiped my tears as quickly as I could, and I put on a face as if nothing had happened.

What I told God in those two hours of volcanic prayer would change me as a person, would change my life, would change my circumstances and would change the direction of my life completely and irreversibly. All these years being alone and then discovering that I had a heavenly Father that cares for me was beyond any form of human expression. God is my Father!

In the incommensurable universe, the Lord Jesus Christ remembered an insignificant particle of dust like me and came into my life, answering all those questions I had.

This was the starting point of my Christian walk, my beginning and my first love. May God bless you, dear reader, with all the joyful things I have received since that first day of my Christian experience. God loves you no matter what! 



FROM Apathy TO Enthusiasm

BY ANDRESSA FERREIRA BARBOSA

According to the Michaelis dictionary definition, the word “apathy” is a condition characterized by indifference; it can also refer to a lack of courage and energy. In other words, someone who is suffering from apathy is someone who is standing still, lacking action.

In physics, Galileo formulated a principle that was later confirmed by Isaac Newton and identified as Newton’s first law, also known as the *principle of inertia*.

Inertia is the natural tendency for any object to resist changes to its original state of rest or movement. In other words, a stationary object always tends to remain stationary, and a moving body tends to keep moving. It is a natural tendency for each

body to maintain its initial state, which can only be changed by the application of an external force.

Notice, then, that a stationary object tends to remain stationary unless an external force is applied that propels it into action.

Applying this principle to spiritual life, how can we be converted from apathy to enthusiasm if our natural tendency is to be apathetic? Only through the application of an external force.

OUR EXTERNAL STRENGTH

John Stott, a pastor known as one of the great names of the evangelical world, wrote a book called *Why I Am a Christian*. In this book he mentions some reasons that convinced him to become a Christian.

ALL MUST OBTAIN A LIVING EXPERIENCE FOR THEMSELVES; THEY MUST HAVE CHRIST ENSHRINED IN THE HEART, HIS SPIRIT CONTROLLING THE AFFECTIONS, OR THEIR PROFESSION OF FAITH IS OF NO VALUE...

The first reason that John Stott talks about is found in 1 John 4:19, “We love [God], because he first loved us.” Therefore, as the author says, if we are Christians, the reason does not come from having decided for Christ, but rather because He decided for us. It is Jesus who is represented in the parables as the woman sweeping the house looking for the lost coin; the shepherd taking a risk in the dangerous desert in search of the lost sheep; the father who, even though he misses his prodigal son, allows him to experience the disappointments of his decision, but is always ready to come running to meet him and welcome him back home.

This is the external force—Christ. It is He who comes looking for us, who loves us first and gives us the hope of being freed from a world of disappointment and discouragement, leading us to a realm of hope, motivation and enthusiasm.

A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Have you ever felt the power of this external force? The truth is that we cannot obtain the

motivation to act or even have the desire to become a disciple of Christ without obtaining individual contact with it. Trying to convey eternal truth without personally experiencing the power of Christ is a great inconsistency—and the testimony or experience of another human being is not capable of being a true source of power.

“All must obtain a living experience for themselves; they must have Christ enshrined in the heart, his Spirit controlling the affections, or their profession of faith is of no value, and their condition will be even worse than if they had never heard the truth.”
—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 619.

YOU ARE WHAT YOU LOVE

You Are What You Love is the title of a book written by philosopher and professor James K. A. Smith. The author criticizes the approach to discipleship that considers the human being only as a thinking being, as declared by the philosopher Descartes in his well-known phrase, “I think, therefore I am.”

The observation this and other authors observe is that simply filling the mind with Bible verses is not enough to change us. Too often there is a gap between what we know and what we do; new knowledge and information do not always seem to produce a new way of life. We might receive enlightening clarification on something, become firmly convinced and determine to put that light into practice—only to fail a few days later. Hunger and thirst for biblical concepts and an interest in being Christlike are not enough to produce a new way of life.

What, then, produces a new life? Reading the Bible and seeking knowledge of Christ is important, of course, but something else is needed.

The apostle Paul stated in his letter to the Christians at Philippi: “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment” (Philippians 1:9). In this prayer Paul first prays for **love** to increase. Love is capable of transforming life and freeing us from lukewarmness. And who is love and its source? God. In other words, it is from love itself that our motivation comes to transform life from apathy to enthusiasm.

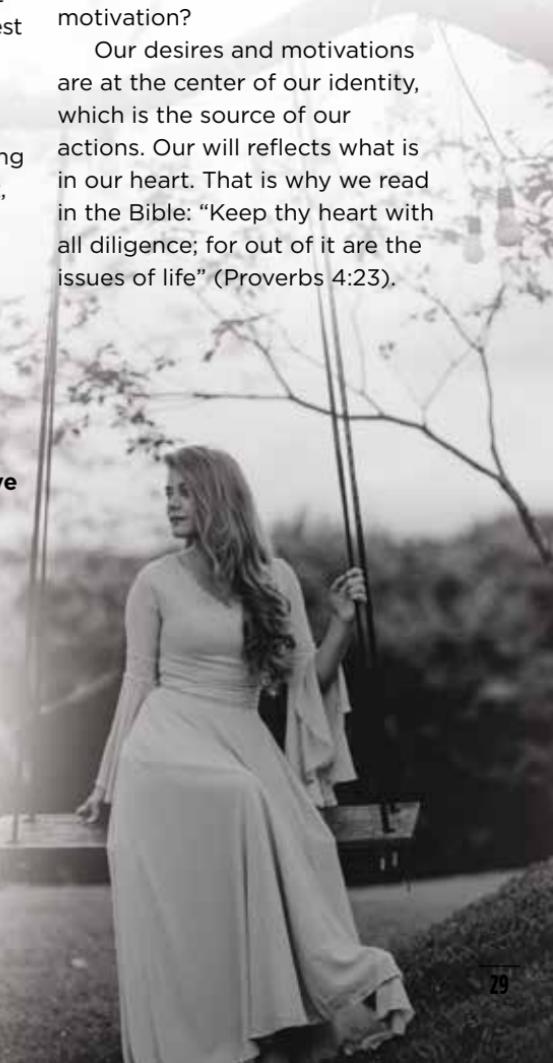
SEEKING STRENGTH

If you have ever experienced this encounter with God and made your decision to be a Christian, then you probably felt

an inexplicable joy invading your entire being. This decision made you feel like being more like Christ in terms of words and behavior. It also made you feel a desire to share with others the reason why you had changed.

Perhaps for a while, this passion for new knowledge made you enthusiastic about church activities and missionary work. But why, after the initial period is over, is it too often the case that we no longer continue with the same motivation?

Our desires and motivations are at the center of our identity, which is the source of our actions. Our will reflects what is in our heart. That is why we read in the Bible: “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23).



How have you been spending your time lately? With what has your mind been busy? A famous saying observes that thoughts generate words, words generate attitudes and attitudes generate habits. Confirming this idea in Luke 6:45, it is written that “of the abundance of the heart [our] mouth speaketh.” Therefore, we must constantly feed our mind with spiritual food and discard that which diverts us from Christ.

Another problem is the word “feel.” Unfortunately, “the heart is deceitful above all things” (Jeremiah 17:9). We should not seek our source of strength only when we feel like it, when a message at a conference touches our hearts, or when we are surrounded by energy in a youth meeting.

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Ephesians 6:18). “Watch ye therefore, and pray always” (Luke 21:36). If we are not in constant contact with Christ, other forces will slow us down or change our direction.

ACTION GENERATES MOTIVATION

Have you ever had the opportunity to learn to ride a bicycle? Or have you ever seen someone riding one? Just getting yourself on a bicycle will not cause it go by itself; you need to use your legs and pedal to make it move.

So it is in missionary work. “The Lord does not propose to perform for us either the willing or the doing. His grace is given to work in us to will and to do, but never as a substitute for our effort.”—*Messages to Young People*, p. 147.

Actually learning how to ride a bicycle requires some effort, but once the motion is started, cycling becomes easier and easier, as if it were a natural action.

“If set to work, the despondent will soon forget their despondency; the weak will become strong, the ignorant intelligent, and all will be prepared to present the truth as it is in Jesus.”—*My Life Today*, p. 38.

WHAT CAN I DO?

The Lord has given “apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers” (Ephesians 4:11). These are just a few examples—this verse reveals to us that there are many talents and activities that can be utilized in missionary work. What if we were to translate this concept into our world today? We could say the Lord designated some for music, others for digital influences, others for cooking demos, others for graphic design, others for sound design, others for photographers, and so forth. Do you realize that there are countless talents that we can use for the honor and glory of God?

In the year 2020 we saw a great growth in the use of digital

media and social networks. We can easily share a verse, an inspired thought, a hymn, a healthy recipe or an illustration on social networks, thus reaching people who have not yet had contact with the Source of strength and love.

"Your talents will increase as you use them for the Master, and they will be esteemed precious by Him who has bought them with an infinite price. Do not sit down and neglect to do anything, simply because you cannot do some great thing, but do whatever your hands find to do, with thoroughness and energy."—*Messages to Young Peoples*, p. 24.

CONCLUSION

So, when will it start? Why not now? Jesus gave the example to us when He said: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4).

Think about it! There are many who live an entire lifetime without showing some loved one how special they really are to them—and when

that loved one passes away, they often profess the deepest, touching and most gentle words of love possible, but to no avail, as the time when such words could have warmed this person's heart has irretrievably passed. In like manner, we may profess to love Christ without ever showing it by caring for the souls made in His image.

Show your love today while the door of grace is still ajar. Preach the gospel of hope while many can still enjoy it and open the word of deliverance to a world that is perishing in the bondage of sin. Engage in the only worthwhile job whose results and satisfaction are eternal!

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

"Will not our young men respond to the invitation of Christ, and answer, 'Here am I; send me'? Young men, press to the front, and identify yourselves as laborers together with Christ, taking up the work where He left it, to carry it on to its completion."—*Ibid.*, p. 25. 

Editor Adrian Finaru, **Layout** Bethany Muresan.

Youth Messenger ® (USPS 765-030) is published quarterly by the Young People's Department of the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement General Conference as an educational service for our youth worldwide. **Web:** <http://www.sdarm.org>. **e-mail:** info@sdarm.org. The *Youth Messenger* is printed and distributed by Reformation Herald Publishing Association, 5240 Hollins Road, Roanoke, VA 24019-5048. Periodical postage paid at Roanoke, Virginia 24022.

Postmaster: Send address changes to, *Youth Messenger*, P.O. Box 7240, ROANOKE, VA 24019-0240. Manuscripts, inquiries, address changes, subscription requests, and donations should be mailed to the address above. Vol. XL, No. 1. Copyright © 2021 January–March issue. **Illustrations:** Adobe Stock on front cover and pp. 2, 3, 14, 15, 22–26, 31, 32; George Schiopu on p. 4; freepik.com on p. 6; Unsplash on p. 7; Jeremiah Braidman on p. 12; Etienne Lombard on pp. 17, 18, 21, 22; Liviu Tudoroiu on p. 22; Andressa Ferreira Barbosa on pp. 27, 29. **Subscription:** United States U.S. \$9.00; single issue U.S. \$2.95; foreign (air mail) U.S. \$8.00 plus shipping.

A Conversion Prayer

by Eunice Braidman

Oh Lord, one thing of Thee I ask,
That Thou might place within my breast

A heart in harmony with Thine
That of a life renewed attests.

To Thee I give all that I am;
Fulfill thy saving work in me
That Thy dear character of love
The world in me may clearly see.

May I, oh Lord, always remain
Far from evil, far from sin,
Far from all that may revive
The old and carnal man within.

Though in this world I must abide
Let not the world abide in me
The cost I counted and I know
I want it not; no gains I see.

And self—alas! My greatest woe,
By Thy grace and power alone
May it forever know defeat,
Forever vanquished and dethroned.

Help me win against the wrong
To which my nature is inclined.
Put within me, Lord, I pray
A new heart and a new mind.

May my words, my thoughts, and deeds
My dreams and all for which I yearn
Be fitting for a child of Thine,
And Thy approving smile earn.

May I surrender every day
That I may ever grow in Thee,
And that through me all men may know
Of Him who from sin's bonds sets free!

