Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full" (John 15:11). Jesus said, "No one will take your joy away from you" (John 16:22). These statements are outstanding, but when you understand to whom He was speaking, they are unbelievable! Jesus was talking to His chosen ones, His closest ones, His best friends, His students—the disciples who would be the founders and Apostles of His church. These men would all, with one exception, die of horrible painful causes. They would be murdered—executed for His sake. Some would be hacked in two with the sword. Others would be burned, beheaded, crucified, even skinned alive. The one who would not die by murder would be sentenced, for a time, to solitary exile on a remote rock of an island in the middle of the sea, and history tells us would be nearly blind and unable to walk unassisted by the time of his death. How could Jesus possibly promise them that their "joy would be full" and that "NO ONE would take it away from them"? Can you remember the first time you stood at the foot of the cross and looked at that mangled, bloody Man? Can you remember when you looked at that face and saw that He was looking at YOU—and you looked down and saw the bloody hammer in YOUR hand, and realized that YOU had put Him there and that He had done all of this for YOU? Can you remember how you fell at the foot of that horrible, beautiful cross and wept and begged Him to forgive you? Can you remember how you understood what Easter meant, when you saw the empty tomb and knew that He was ALIVE? When you heard Him call your name for the first time and knew that He had done this for you, too? Remember the feeling? That is joy! Can you remember the first time you discovered the Gospel, the Good News about Jesus? How all at once it hit you just how simple and free His Grace really is? Remember how that load just seemed to roll from your back and you felt really, completely FREE, for the first time in your life? That is joy! Can you remember the first time you realized that you ARE saved? Now! FOREVER! Can you remember how you wanted to laugh and dance and cry—all at the same time? How you couldn't wait to tell all of your loved ones the good news of how Jesus had set you free? Can you remember that feeling? That is joy! And Jesus really did mean it when He said that No one can ever take your joy away! I also believe, based on my experience, that there is no more afraid or insecure believer in all the world than a sincere Seventh-day Adventist. Have you ever really thought about that? Would you have expected Jesus to say anything like this to a Seventh-day Adventist? Of course not! But, I believe, even though they have been raised with it and taught it, they have never really experienced it. They are afraid to leave because they have never experienced the joy of Jesus. I also believe, based on my experience, that there is no more afraid or insecure believer in all the world than a sincere Seventh-day Adventist.
He looked us in the eyes and declared, “Remember, when they persecute you—and they will persecute you—you are blessed.”

The sadness was overwhelming. I felt as if I were going through a divorce. I had discovered that the doctrines of the church I’d embraced as my identity were not based in the Bible. Adventism did not respect Scripture as the inerrant word of God. Not only was the Adventist church not the “remnant church of Bible prophecy”; there is no “remnant church”; there is only one true church that is the body of Christ. There is no “last day prophet.” Jesus Himself is God’s Final Word. I didn’t want to leave; I loved Adventism. But I couldn’t stay, either. To stay and pretend I was loyal would be a lie. Heavily, I sat at the piano and played idly.

Suddenly I became aware of the words of the song I was playing: “Th’ gift to be simple; th’ gift to be free/Th’ gift to come down where we ought to be/And when we find ourselves in that place just right/It will be in the valley of love and delight/When true simplicity is gained/To bow and to bend we are ashamed/To turn, turn, will be our delight/’Till by turning, turning, we come round right.”

With tears and sudden clarity I knew God was telling me that even though I couldn’t see where I was going, He was promising that my destination would be that valley of love and delight. This inexplicably painful path I was walking was His way of turning me from confusion and compromise and redirecting me onto the path of righteousness for His name’s sake.

A few months later our family sat in the principal’s office at Arrowhead Christian Academy where we were planning to enroll our sons. We felt a bit as if we were in a foreign country; we knew no one, and we feared no one would understand our experience, but we felt compelled to explain our journey.

“No, that’s not what I meant,” said Mr. Shoup. Never in our collective experiences had any church principal or teacher begun a personal conversation and to allow all that needed discussing to be said. Overwhelmed, I peered sideways at Richard and distinctly saw mist in his eyes, too.

Mr. Shoup listened intently with eyes full of kindness as we talked. When we finished he said, “I think I have some understanding of what you’re going through. I left the Catholic Church, and many of your experiences sound similar to mine.”

As our conversation concluded, Mr. Shoup prayed for us again, and when, fighting tears, we stood to leave, he said the most remarkable thing. He looked us in the eyes and declared, “Remember, when they persecute you—and they will persecute you—you are blessed.”

Three times he repeated that message in three slightly different sentences. I remember leaving his office clearly aware that God had spoken His promise to us through the words of that God-fearing man. I also had my first awareness that God had not only led us out of everything familiar but that He was leading us into a new community where He could heal and nourish us.

In the seven-and-a-half years since God spoke His promise to us through Mr. Shoup, He has been faithful to keep it. We have lost friends, clients, dreams, and career advancements. We have gained contentment, joy, the personal awareness of Jesus’ presence and love, His work to do, and His faithful provision of our needs. We are learning to trust His plans and His timing instead of our own, and we can say absolutely: there is no greater thing than knowing Jesus.

In this issue Bob Anderson and Greg Taylor share their experiences of leaving what they knew and discovering to us through the words of that God-fearing man. I also had my first awareness that God had not only led us out of everything familiar but that He was leading us into a new community where He could heal and nourish us.
mand. It was simply God’s “teasing.” Not “observing a day.” He was done. He was at rest. Adam and Eve were created and entered that rest with God.

The Levitical Sabbath was a reminder not of creation—God’s working—but of His rest. It was a reminder of the unbroken existence Adam and Eve enjoyed after His finished work. It was never about the six days, per se—it was always about God’s finished work—His “teasing” and rest.

The Levitical Sabbath also looked ahead to the again finished work of God after Jesus shed His blood of the eternal covenant. Again mankind would be able to enter His rest and live in unbroken communion with Him—a communion that had not been possible since Eve ate the forbidden fruit. The Sabbath looked back at God’s once finished work, and oneness with humanity, and it foreshadowed the again finished work of God and oneness with humanity after the cross.

God didn’t ask any human to do anything at the end of creation related to the Sabbath. He simply WAS. Just as Adam and Eve did nothing to enter God’s rest and live in complete rest with and in Him, and again, they would be able to enter that rest when the Messiah came.

The entire point of salvation is entering God’s rest through His finished work—by no work or observance of our own. That was a reminder of that salvation rest. Now that we have the reality in the finished work of Jesus and in our birth from above, we have no more need of the day of reminder. We now have Jesus Himself!

The shadow or reality—it’s an eternal choice.

Informative Articles

I am an evangelical Christian, but your articles are very informative and help me clarify what I believe about the Sabbath, tithe, etc. I appreciate your clear use of the Scriptures.

Support

You folks are so precious to us. You are our support group!...God bless you.

Word from a warrior

So, Colleen, you gave up Sabbath on Saturday and now you work on Saturday...it has been established (by people much smarter than you) that Sunday is the first day and Saturday is the seventh, so Jesus rested on Saturday...”...Your fearless leader...has proclaimed the Ten Commandments were ended at the cross. The Ten Commandments are God’s Law for how you can do what you want and not break the law...when we all get to heaven we will keep the Sabbath every Saturday. Colleen, are doing the devil’s work pulling people away from the truth.

In conclusion, I do not believe in what brother Ratzlaff is peddling. You had the truth and you gave it up.

When I get to heaven I will look for you. I know what you look like, and I will have plenty of time to talk to you.

One of God’s warriors.

Encouragement

Hang in there, Colleen!

Negative Tone

Please take me off your mailing list. I don’t believe serving as a conduit for complaint and bitterness is a valid purpose.

Your authorship is very narrow. Your tone is negative.

I hope someday you as an editorial board ask some hard questions of yourselves.

Magazine a blessing

I wanted to say that your magazine was a real blessing to our family and my daughter’s family. We have been Adventists for 23 years, and we have had some questions for some time. My daughter had been praying for God to show her some answers and had been impressed to go to the Internet. She typed in “Adventist” and found the OneFleshMinistries site. After reading Greg Taylor’s story, we...studied each subject in our Bibles, and it was like a veil was lifted. Now we want to study for some more answers.

Please continue to send us Proclamation! Also, please remember us in your prayers, that we may continue to find answers and the true light of the gospel. Also, we want to find a church we feel comfortable in, and it is very hard coming out of Adventism.

Thank you for the great magazine, and it’s wonderful to know we’re not alone.

God bless your ministry.

Looking forward to the next issue

I received my first issue in the mail and devoured it cover to cover. How timely was the article “What was nailed to the Cross” by McGregor Wright

My father went to his grave defending Adventism and never really forgave me for leaving the church. In a recent article in your magazine, you have been very critical with comments that I was deceived, brain washed, and hypnotized, is now reading her Bible. The Holy Spirit is opening her eyes to many things that the Adventists are in error about. She is falling in love with Christ and is learning that God is Alpha and Omega, not a condescending, judgmental God ready to strike her down if she does not do good works...

My mother, who has a 9th grade education, is devoured it cover to cover. How timely was the article “What was nailed to the Cross” by McGregor Wright

I was born to Adventist parents who demonstrated their devotion and sincerity by serving the heathen in the darkest of Africa. My father was a graduate of the College of Medical Evangelists (later Loma Linda University School of Medicine) and determined as a teenager, when God saved him from a nearly fatal injury in a sawmill accident, that he would be a doctor who saved others lives.

Over the years he recognized many signs of God’s leading.

His family converted to Adventism in Finland when missionaries from America showed pictures of the beasts of Daniel and explained how a remnant of true commandment-keeping believers would survive the frightening end-time prophecies. To my father, a poor boy from Finland, God seemed to lead in later making it possible for him to be accepted into the Adventist medical school.

My mother’s family experienced a similar conversion when she was a small girl. When she grew older she attended nursing school at the White Memorial Hospital in Los Angeles. She was dating a good but “worldly” man and was very much in love with him. Her conscience and her mother’s persuasion, however, put an end to the relationship. Soon afterward she met and subsequently married my father.

A couple of years later my dad graduated from medical school, and he and my mother answered a call to the Belgian Congo. The official language there was French, and the government required all doctors to take a tropical medicine course in Belgium before practicing in the Congo. Because of various circumstances, my dad started the class late and spoke no French. Further, one of his most important classes, including a lab, was on Sabbath. My dad, however, refused to take the Sabbath.

Dad spent evenings and Sundays studying, and even though he never attended Sabbath class or lab, he passed the final exam. After he wrote the final test, he met the professor who told him he was the first student who had passed that class without ever attending it.

This accomplishment was only one of the many “Sabbath” stories I heard growing up, and I knew that the key to the kingdom was the Sabbath. It was the Holy Grail. We Adventists were a small but special people; “many are called, but few are chosen.”

Stanley Rouhe was born and raised in an Adventist family and educated in Adventists schools including Loma Linda School of Medicine. He practiced neurosurgery for 30 years in Southern California until his recent retirement. He and his wife of 41 years, Anne Louise (who also grew up Adventist), have an adult daughter, Helena, who is a practicing clinical psychologist and family counselor. Today missions projects through Trinity Evangelical Free Church in Redlands, California, occupy much of Stanley’s time.
My father spent twenty-five years in the mission field. He operated on hundreds of cases, prayed and baptized, made bricks and built buildings, and cared for over 300 lepers. When he was 94 years old, I asked him if he was saved and if he wanted to go to church. I told him that I was busy in my career, and I gradually drifted away from the church. The leadership at the Adventist church I was attending had decided to keep the Sabbath because it is a memorial of creation. It “seems to me that you are blind- ed by your ideology, as you just have to read the fourth commandment to see that verse 11 starts with the word ‘For’ which gives us the requirement that we ‘remember to keep the Sabbath day’”(for in six days God created heaven and earth…”)

You also conveniently forgot that in Genesis 2, it says that “God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because (here we have the reason for the blessing and sanctification) in it, He rested from all his work which He had created and made.” …

I received your free copy of Proclamation! I am interested in your work and would like to thank you for sending it. I have received it and was for some time hardly able to put it down. One of the radiology technologists I worked with had an article in the church magazine. We go through every月份数学杂志. We go through every issue and growing friendship with them—and put us here (we prayed for our neighbors before our marriage). It seems like the old worn-out Proclamation is alive and well. We thank you for your efforts, Colleen and Richard. ELIZABETH ISKANDER, MD

I thank God that I somehow stumbled upon Ellen White’s commentary in Peter’s sermon. I found McGregor Wright’s article on the unity of the law excellent. I’m an evangelical Christian with SDA neighbors and have been discussing Adventism with their pastor after feeling the Lord would have us attend a Revelation seminar. We listened five weeks so qualified for the free Bible with H.M.S. Richards Bible Helps (using the term loosely). One day, however, I realized the Lord has put us here (we prayed for our neighbors before moving to the area) and has orchestrated our contact and growing friendship with them—and I feel He has put me in touch with you if my name comes to your mind would you pray, please, that the name of the中最 important part of living for the cross? Are you opening the door to a new twist on your theology?...

Thank you for your efforts, Colleen and Richard. You are a good “wordsmith” and create an artistic journal, but until you answer the above, I can only feel great sorrow for your chosen blind- ness. Satan is blessing your efforts. ELIZABETH ISKANDER, MD

The next day—Sabbath—I read the book, and for the first time in my life I understood the plan of salvation. I accepted the Lord as my Savior and entered true Sabbath rest.

Sabbath in Eden
With each issue or Proclamation I scan for any comments dealing with Sabbath in Eden. You are very silent on this topic. Neither Dale Ratzlaff nor Proclamation! has answered the fact that a Sabbath was a blessing and people were happy to obey it before any law or covenant. Genesis 2:26 says God rested from his work and made the seventh day holy to him and kept it as a Sabbath day for all time. What did He have to do—or would you make a statement about change or what was perfect? McGregor Wright wants to nail this perfect Sabbath to the cross???... Sabbath is not a law but a perfect and changeless INSTITUTION. Eden gave us two institutions, marriage and the Sabbath. God later surrounded these institutions with protective laws.... If the Sabbath was an Eden law and it was not considered a cross before the crucifixion in Eden a law that was also nailed to the cross? Are you opening the door to a new twist on your theology?...

Thank you for your efforts, Colleen and Richard. You are a good “wordsmith” and create an artistic journal, but until you answer the above, I can only feel great sorrow for your chosen blindness. Satan is blessing your efforts. ELIZABETH ISKANDER, MD

I avoided the “world,” spurning secular literature in favor of the Bible. One of the radiology technologists I worked with had an article in the Interlinear Greek and Hebrew Bible and a Strong’s concordance and began hanging out at the local Adventist stores. More and more questions about the church’s doctrines and practices began to surface. One of the most intriguing was Ellen White’s article “The Desires of My Heart,” which appeared in the October 1899 issue of The Review and Herald. The article was a response to a series of questions posed to her by the church leaders. The questions were about Ellen White’s role in the church and her influence on the church’s policies. White’s commentary in Peter’s sermon. I found McGregor Wright’s article on the unity of the law excellent. I’m an evangelical Christian with SDA neighbors and have been discussing Adventism with their pastor after feeling the Lord would have us attend a Revelation seminar. We listened five weeks so qualified for the free Bible with H.M.S. Richards Bible Helps (using the term loosely). One day, however, I realized the Lord has put us here (we prayed for our neighbors before moving to the area) and has orchestrated our contact and growing friendship with them—and I feel He has put me in touch with you if my name comes to your mind would you pray, please, that the name of the中最 important part of living for the cross? Are you opening the door to a new twist on your theology?...

Thank you for your efforts, Colleen and Richard. You are a good “wordsmith” and create an artistic journal, but until you answer the above, I can only feel great sorrow for your chosen blindness. Satan is blessing your efforts. ELIZABETH ISKANDER, MD

I avoided the “world,” spurning secular literature in favor of the Bible. One of the radiology technologists I worked with had an article in the Interlinear Greek and Hebrew Bible and a Strong’s concordance and began hanging out at the local Adventist stores. More and more questions about the church’s doctrines and practices began to surface. One of the most intriguing was Ellen White’s article “The Desires of My Heart,” which appeared in the October 1899 issue of The Review and Herald. The article was a response to a series of questions posed to her by the church leaders. The questions were about Ellen White’s role in the church and her influence on the church’s policies. White’s commentary in Peter’s sermon. I found McGregor Wright’s article on the unity of the law excellent. I’m an evangelical Christian with SDA neighbors and have been discussing Adventism with their pastor after feeling the Lord would have us attend a Revelation seminar. We listened five weeks so qualified for the free Bible with H.M.S. Richards Bible Helps (using the term loosely). One day, however, I realized the Lord has put us here (we prayed for our neighbors before moving to the area) and has orchestrated our contact and growing friendship with them—and I feel He has put me in touch with you if my name comes to your mind would you pray, please, that the name of the中最 important part of living for the cross? Are you opening the door to a new twist on your theology?...
persecution, I remember the hushed sounds of church mem-
bers talking in worried tones downstairs in our living room the
night that John Kennedy was elected president. I looked out of
my upstairs window down the country road, expecting to see
neighbors coming to the house bearing “torches” to carry us
away. (I know it’s silly, but it was REAL, and I remember.) Yet,
I remember learning that Catholic churches have torture cham-
bers in their basements in secret places that are all ready for
the Time of Trouble when we would have to flee for our lives
because we kept the Sabbath. “Sunday keepers,” I learned, will be
the ones who will spy on us and report us and turn us in for
life. That’s Joy! My heavenly Father has granted me the gift of
lots of time to tell those I love about the Gospel. Jesus
life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the
world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?” Luke 9:25 NIV
The cross did not bring up warm little thoughts of comfort
to the people of that time. The cross was an instrument of tor-
ture and death. But Jesus calls it the way of salvation! The cross
is not an easy road by any means. It may mean the loss of every-
thing we hold dear in this life, but it is the way that brings
us to the joy of knowing Jesus to such an extent that all other
desires pale into insignificance. Christianity is not a means
by which we can find fulfillment and joy. Christianity is not
a means by which we can avoid problems. Christianity is not
a means by which we can escape death. Christianity is not
a means by which we can justify our actions. Christianity is
not a means by which we can make the world a better place.
Christianity is not a means by which we can gain anything.
Christianity is not a means by which we can achieve
anything. Christianity is a means by which we can
be saved. Christianity is a means by which we can live
eternally. Christianity is a means by which we can
have a relationship with God. Christianity is a means by
which we can have assurance of our salvation. Christianity is
a means by which we can have peace in our hearts. Chris-
tianity is a means by which we can have joy in our lives.
Christianity is a means by which we can have hope in our
future. Christianity is a means by which we can have
strength in our trials. Christianity is a means by which
we can have mercy in our weakness. Christianity is a means
by which we can have grace in our failures. Christianity is
a means by which we can have love in our relationships.
Christianity is a means by which we can have forgiveness in
our sins. Christianity is a means by which we can have
salvation in our souls. Christianity is a means by which
we can have comfort in our sorrows. Christianity is a means
by which we can have peace in our minds. Christianity is
a means by which we can have joy in our hearts. Chris-
tianity is a means by which we can have hope in our lives.
Christianity is a means by which we can have strength in our
trials. Christianity is a means by which we can have mercy in
our weaknesses. Christianity is a means by which we can have
grace in our failures. Christianity is a means by which we can
have love in our relationships. Christianity is a means by
which we can have forgiveness in our sins. Christianity is a
means by which we can have salvation in our souls. Chris-
tianity is a means by which we can have comfort in our sorrows.
Christianity is a means by which we can have peace in our minds.
Christianity is a means by which we can have joy in our hearts.
Christianity is a means by which we can have hope in our lives.
Christianity is a means by which we can have strength in our
trials. Christianity is a means by which we can have mercy in
our weaknesses. Christianity is a means by which we can have
grace in our failures. Christianity is a means by which we can
have love in our relationships. Christianity is a means by
which we can have forgiveness in our sins. Christianity is a
means by which we can have salvation in our souls. Chris-
tianity is a means by which we can have comfort in our sorrows.
Christianity is a means by which we can have peace in our minds.
Christianity is a means by which we can have joy in our hearts.
Christianity is a means by which we can have hope in our lives.
Christianity is a means by which we can have strength in our
trials. Christianity is a means by which we can have mercy in
our weaknesses. Christianity is a means by which we can have
grace in our failures. Christianity is a means by which we can
have love in our relationships. Christianity is a means by
which we can have forgiveness in our sins. Christianity is a
means by which we can have salvation in our souls. Chris-
tianity is a means by which we can have comfort in our sorrows.
Christianity is a means by which we can have peace in our minds.
Christianity is a means by which we can have joy in our hearts.
Christianity is a means by which we can have hope in our lives.
Christianity is a means by which we can have strength in our
trials. Christianity is a means by which we can have mercy in
our weaknesses. Christianity is a means by which we can have
grace in our failures. Christianity is a means by which we can
have love in our relationships. Christianity is a means by
which we can have forgiveness in our sins. Christianity is a
means by which we can have salvation in our souls. Chris-
tianity is a means by which we can have comfort in our sorrows.
Christianity is a means by which we can have peace in our minds.
Christianity is a means by which we can have joy in our hearts.
Christianity is a means by which we can have hope in our lives.
Christianity is a means by which we can have strength in our
trials. Christianity is a means by which we can have mercy in
our weaknesses. Christianity is a means by which we can have
grace in our failures. Christianity is a means by which we can
have love in our relationships. Christianity is a means by
which we can have forgiveness in our sins. Christianity is a
means by which we can have salvation in our souls. Chris-
tianity is a means by which we can have comfort in our sorrows.
Christianity is a means by which we can have peace in our minds.
Christianity is a means by which we can have joy in our hearts.
Christianity is a means by which we can have hope in our lives.
Christianity is a means by which we can have strength in our
trials. Christianity is a means by which we can have mercy in
our weaknesses. Christianity is a means by which we can have
grace in our failures. Christianity is a means by which we can
have love in our relationships. Christianity is a means by
which we can have forgiveness in our sins. Christianity is a
means by which we can have salvation in our souls. Chris-
tianity is a means by which we can have comfort in our sorrows.
Christianity is a means by which we can have peace in our minds.
Christianity is a means by which we can have joy in our hearts.
Christianity is a means by which we can have hope in our lives.
Christianity is a means by which we can have strength in our
trials. Christianity is a means by which we can have mercy in
our weaknesses. Christianity is a means by which we can have
grace in our failures. Christianity is a means by which we can
have love in our relationships. Christianity is a means by
which we can have forgiveness in our sins. Christianity is a
means by which we can have salvation in our souls. Chris-
tianity is a means by which we can have comfort in our sorrows.
The cross is not an easy road by any means. It may mean the loss of everything we hold dear in this life, but it is the way that brings us to the joy of knowing Jesus to such an extent that all other desires pale in insignificance.

The path to God’s ultimate promises is often wrought with the wilderness of the cross. Israel left Egypt only to come to an apparent dead end at the Red Sea. The crisis provided the means by which the hand of God could be more clearly revealed. The wilderness wanderings of Israel could have been shortened by their own choices, but they were led by God to at least a year and a half of desert training before the promised land. There was a wilderness training program intended to increase their faith that was part of the promotion. Between Egypt and Canaan was a wilderness of testing and preparation. This is true for all of God’s faithful. There is a cross before the crown.

Notice a few examples of this wilderness promotion motif. David was anointed king and then spent seven plus years of his life running from a crazy despotic king. Ultimately he became king, but he went through a time of testing that was to bring him out the best in his heart. It was to make him a man of faith, trust, compassion and grace. Joseph was 13 years on a career of nearly 20 years in the SDA ministry. This was a brutally painful means by which we gain what really matters; a relationship with the Lord himself that can never be taken away. It is a path that brings true life and sat-isfies the deeper longings of our hearts.

The path to God’s ultimate promises is often brought to us through the wilderness of the cross. Israel left Egypt only to come to an apparent dead end at the Red Sea. The crisis provided the means by which the hand of God could be more clearly revealed. The wilderness wanderings of Israel could have been shortened by their own choices, but they were led by God to at least a year and a half of desert training before the promised land. There was a wilderness training program intended to increase their faith that was part of the promotion. Between Egypt and Canaan was a wilderness of testing and preparation. This is true for all of God’s faithful. There is a cross before the crown.

Notice a few examples of this wilderness promotion motif. David was anointed king and then spent seven plus years of his life running from a crazy despotic king. Ultimately he became king, but he went through a time of testing that was to bring him out the best in his heart. It was to make him a man of faith, trust, compassion and grace. Joseph was 13 years on a career of nearly 20 years in the SDA ministry. This was a brutally painful means by which we gain what really matters; a relationship with the Lord himself that can never be taken away. It is a path that brings true life and satisfies the deeper longings of our hearts.

The path to God’s ultimate promises is often brought to us through the wilderness of the cross. Israel left Egypt only to come to an apparent dead end at the Red Sea. The crisis provided the means by which the hand of God could be more clearly revealed. The wilderness wanderings of Israel could have been shortened by their own choices, but they were led by God to at least a year and a half of desert training before the promised land. There was a wilderness training program intended to increase their faith that was part of the promotion. Between Egypt and Canaan was a wilderness of testing and preparation. This is true for all of God’s faithful. There is a cross before the crown.

Notice a few examples of this wilderness promotion motif. David was anointed king and then spent seven plus years of his life running from a crazy despotic king. Ultimately he became king, but he went through a time of testing that was to bring him out the best in his heart. It was to make him a man of faith, trust, compassion and grace. Joseph was 13 years on a career of nearly 20 years in the SDA ministry. This was a brutally painful means by which we gain what really matters; a relationship with the Lord himself that can never be taken away. It is a path that brings true life and satisfies the deeper longings of our hearts.

The path to God’s ultimate promises is often brought to us through the wilderness of the cross. Israel left Egypt only to come to an apparent dead end at the Red Sea. The crisis provided the means by which the hand of God could be more clearly revealed. The wilderness wanderings of Israel could have been shortened by their own choices, but they were led by God to at least a year and a half of desert training before the promised land. There was a wilderness training program intended to increase their faith that was part of the promotion. Between Egypt and Canaan was a wilderness of testing and preparation. This is true for all of God’s faithful. There is a cross before the crown.

Notice a few examples of this wilderness promotion motif. David was anointed king and then spent seven plus years of his life running from a crazy despotic king. Ultimately he became king, but he went through a time of testing that was to bring him out the best in his heart. It was to make him a man of faith, trust, compassion and grace. Joseph was 13 years on a career of nearly 20 years in the SDA ministry. This was a brutally painful means by which we gain what really matters; a relationship with the Lord himself that can never be taken away. It is a path that brings true life and satisfies the deeper longings of our hearts.

The path to God’s ultimate promises is often brought to us through the wilderness of the cross. Israel left Egypt only to come to an apparent dead end at the Red Sea. The crisis provided the means by which the hand of God could be more clearly revealed. The wilderness wanderings of Israel could have been shortened by their own choices, but they were led by God to at least a year and a half of desert training before the promised land. There was a wilderness training program intended to increase their faith that was part of the promotion. Between Egypt and Canaan was a wilderness of testing and preparation. This is true for all of God’s faithful. There is a cross before the crown.

Notice a few examples of this wilderness promotion motif. David was anointed king and then spent seven plus years of his life running from a crazy despotic king. Ultimately he became king, but he went through a time of testing that was to bring him out the best in his heart. It was to make him a man of faith, trust, compassion and grace. Joseph was 13 years on a career of nearly 20 years in the SDA ministry. This was a brutally painful means by which we gain what really matters; a relationship with the Lord himself that can never be taken away. It is a path that brings true life and satisfies the deeper longings of our hearts.

The path to God’s ultimate promises is often brought to us through the wilderness of the cross. Israel left Egypt only to come to an apparent dead end at the Red Sea. The crisis provided the means by which the hand of God could be more clearly revealed. The wilderness wanderings of Israel could have been shortened by their own choices, but they were led by God to at least a year and a half of desert training before the promised land. There was a wilderness training program intended to increase their faith that was part of the promotion. Between Egypt and Canaan was a wilderness of testing and preparation. This is true for all of God’s faithful. There is a cross before the crown.

Notice a few examples of this wilderness promotion motif. David was anointed king and then spent seven plus years of his life running from a crazy despotic king. Ultimately he became king, but he went through a time of testing that was to bring him out the best in his heart. It was to make him a man of faith, trust, compassion and grace. Joseph was 13 years on a career of nearly 20 years in the SDA ministry. This was a brutally painful means by which we gain what really matters; a relationship with the Lord himself that can never be taken away. It is a path that brings true life and satisfies the deeper longings of our hearts.

The path to God’s ultimate promises is often brought to us through the wilderness of the cross. Israel left Egypt only to come to an apparent dead end at the Red Sea. The crisis provided the means by which the hand of God could be more clearly revealed. The wilderness wanderings of Israel could have been shortened by their own choices, but they were led by God to at least a year and a half of desert training before the promised land. There was a wilderness training program intended to increase their faith that was part of the promotion. Between Egypt and Canaan was a wilderness of testing and preparation. This is true for all of God’s faithful. There is a cross before the crown.

Notice a few examples of this wilderness promotion motif. David was anointed king and then spent seven plus years of his life running from a crazy despotic king. Ultimately he became king, but he went through a time of testing that was to bring him out the best in his heart. It was to make him a man of faith, trust, compassion and grace. Joseph was 13 years on a career of nearly 20 years in the SDA ministry. This was a brutally painful means by which we gain what really matters; a relationship with the Lord himself that can never be taken away. It is a path that brings true life and satisfies the deeper longings of our hearts.

The path to God’s ultimate promises is often brought to us through the wilderness of the cross. Israel left Egypt only to come to an apparent dead end at the Red Sea. The crisis provided the means by which the hand of God could be more clearly revealed. The wilderness wanderings of Israel could have been shortened by their own choices, but they were led by God to at least a year and a half of desert training before the promised land. There was a wilderness training program intended to increase their faith that was part of the promotion. Between Egypt and Canaan was a wilderness of testing and preparation. This is true for all of God’s faithful. There is a cross before the crown.

Notice a few examples of this wilderness promotion motif. David was anointed king and then spent seven plus years of his life running from a crazy despotic king. Ultimately he became king, but he went through a time of testing that was to bring him out the best in his heart. It was to make him a man of faith, trust, compassion and grace. Joseph was 13 years on a career of nearly 20 years in the SDA ministry. This was a brutally painful means by which we gain what really matters; a relationship with the Lord himself that can never be taken away. It is a path that brings true life and satisfies the deeper longings of our hearts.

The path to God’s ultimate promises is often brought to us through the wilderness of the cross. Israel left Egypt only to come to an apparent dead end at the Red Sea. The crisis provided the means by which the hand of God could be more clearly revealed. The wilderness wanderings of Israel could have been shortened by their own choices, but they were led by God to at least a year and a half of desert training before the promised land. There was a wilderness training program intended to increase their faith that was part of the promotion. Between Egypt and Canaan was a wilderness of testing and preparation. This is true for all of God’s faithful. There is a cross before the crown.

Notice a few examples of this wilderness promotion motif. David was anointed king and then spent seven plus years of his life running from a crazy despotic king. Ultimately he became king, but he went through a time of testing that was to bring him out the best in his heart. It was to make him a man of faith, trust, compassion and grace. Joseph was 13 years on a career of nearly 20 years in the SDA ministry. This was a brutally painful means by which we gain what really matters; a relationship with the Lord himself that can never be taken away. It is a path that brings true life and satisfies the deeper longings of our hearts.

The path to God’s ultimate promises is often brought to us through the wilderness of the cross. Israel left Egypt only to come to an apparent dead end at the Red Sea. The crisis provided the means by which the hand of God could be more clearly revealed. The wilderness wanderings of Israel could have been shortened by their own choices, but they were led by God to at least a year and a half of desert training before the promised land. There was a wilderness training program intended to increase their faith that was part of the promotion. Between Egypt and Canaan was a wilderness of testing and preparation. This is true for all of God’s faithful. There is a cross before the crown.

Notice a few examples of this wilderness promotion motif. David was anointed king and then spent seven plus years of his life running from a crazy despotic king. Ultimately he became king, but he went through a time of testing that was to bring him out the best in his heart. It was to make him a man of faith, trust, compassion and grace. Joseph was 13 years on a career of nearly 20 years in the SDA ministry. This was a brutally painful means by which we gain what really matters; a relationship with the Lord himself that can never be taken away. It is a path that brings true life and satisfies the deeper longings of our hearts.
loss of identity, agitation, despair and so on. Even the shout-
ing down of emotions for awhile can be a reaction in order to
to get some rest from the intensity of feelings.

It is so important not to expect a neat and tidy grief
package and to remember that anyone who cares deeply
may grieve deeply when there is loss. Grief reveals past
attachment and caring and will, most likely, wax and wane
and subside for awhile before coming forth with a new
vengeance. Some grief lasts a lifetime; however, time nor-

mally does bring relief. A person may experience some
losses long after leaving a destructive church. For example,
being part of a special group, the group identity, the appar-
en closeness of the group, the like-mindedness and so on—al-
though largely false perceptions—are powerful loss-
es.

The loss of family and friends can be traumatic; many cut
off suddenly and dramatically and cause a questioning of
trust and the validity of all relationships. It is important to
remember that those cutting themselves off are responding to
their own insecurities and inability to tolerate anything
that threatens their fragile belief structure. This self-induced
separation may be the most obvious illustration of the
bankruptcy of their religion at a deeper level. Truth is not so
easily shaken and disturbed. The unfortunate reality is that
many times there is nothing you can do to bring any clo-
separation may be the most obvious illustration of the
that threatens their fragile belief structure. This self-induced
separation may be the most obvious illustration of the
bankruptcy of their religion at a deeper level. Truth is not so

suffering and misunderstanding, lies about our character,
time of financial insecurity, and times of discouragement.
We have had to struggle with our identity. We cannot find
our sense of value in our career, in personal ministry accom-
plishments, or being part of an exclusive community. In
Adventism we knew someone almost every place we
went—or at least someone who knew someone. There is a


certain sense of “belonging” that is part of sectarian systems.
Now that is all gone.

Yet, the other side of the story is also true. We have grown
in faith in ways we could never have grown in the comforts of
our religious life. We saw the sufferings of Christ that “made
Himself of no reputation” (Phil 2) and experienced rejection at the hands of those He
loved so much. Our appreciation of the sacrifice of Christ has
grown in proportion to how much we have learned about the life
in process can be terribly unsettling and feel as if there is
nothing to grab for an anchor. The emotional uncertainly
can be intense enough in some to be considered trauma.

Positive Points for Surviving Transition Trauma
I have given some important considerations for those
exiting toxic religious systems and, while there is some
overlap, I will now underscore some positive points on how
to survive the emotional trauma.

Accept that ambiguity is much more a part of faith
than you have previously been taught. There is not a

clear-cut answer for every theological question we have.
Questions and honest doubt are parts of genuine faith.
Most toxic organizations have an “answer” to everything,
but you have to accept in order to believe them. I am not sure where it originated, but the
quote:“Why is it that the religious institutions that say they
have all the answers, never allow any questions?” holds
great insight. Ponder it.

One has to ask if certainty in all areas is really valid or
necessary. It appears to me that living with paradox and not

knowing what is true in all areas is a freshness all the
deepths of our personal life. Being born again from above is a
mature functioning and growing. Initially, however, the
process can be terribly unsettling and feel as if there is
nothing to grab for an anchor. The emotional uncertainly

God went deep for me: Rescued!

Gift of Life
Now I realize that I can rest physically on the seventh day,
but that I cannot have God’s heart to enter My salvation
through Christ who did all the work and now rests at the right
hand of the Father means that I can enter His rest. The work
I do now is because of salvation, not for salvation.

The joy and the peace I have now are beyond expression.
Do I get upset with myself when I do something unpleasing to
the Lord? Yes, Do I worry about my salvation? No!
I had to be broken before I understood that salvation is all
about Jesus and nothing at all about me. None of my efforts to

do the right thing brought me one step closer to eternal secu-

rity. Conversely, since I met Jesus and was born from above,
I realize that my failings do not snatch me out of His hand. I am
certain for one reason: Jesus died for me and rose again. He
keeps me; His righteousness covers me. It’s not about me; it’s all
about Him.

“The being again of the Spirit is an unmistakable work of
God, as mysterious as the wind, as surprising as God Himself.
We do not know where it begins; it is hidden away in the
depths of our personal life. Being born again from above is a
new birth, a perpetual and eternal beginning: a freshness all the
time in thinking and in talking and in living, the continual sur-
prise of the life of God.” (My Utmost For His Highest, January 20,
Oswald Chambers)

It was really only after entering that rest—rest from our
works to be worthy—that I truly began to understand how
much I needed a Savior. A drowning man gasping and failing
against the deep, I finally quit struggling with my Rescuer
and allowed Him to bring me to shore.
An Appeal To Adventist Leaders

I know that there are many, possibly hundreds of Adventist pastors and church leaders who know the truth about Adventist teachings but who are trapped inside the system. These individuals have families to provide for, house payments to make, and retirement pensions to prepare for, all of which may be in jeopardy. Leaving the church would mean giving up years of dedication, and most importantly, a comfortable salary with benefits. They have fathers and mothers who, after years of sacrifice putting their children through the Adventist school system, would be terribly disappointed were they to leave the church of their family heritage. The tradeoff for not leaving the church is living a lie—through corporate dependency, and my God can do for you what he did for this former corporate dependent.

Timing may vary as to when is the most difficult part of grief. All powerful feelings and experiences can raise their heads and show their fangs in grief: anger, frustration, agony,yearning, depression, anxiety, loss of identity, agitation, despair and so on. Even the shutting down of emotions for awhile can be a reaction in order to get some rest from the intensity of feelings. Truce in matters of religion it may be that you are not the one that can discuss issues with them, and certainly you may benefit from a moratorium on abusive and degrading discussions they push upon you.

Allow grief and realize that persons grieve in various ways—there is no one correct manner in which to grieve. When there is loss, grief is normal, not abnormal. Our society has popularized certain stages of grief, thus promoting a belief that if you go through the various steps, grief will be completed. However, in real life grief is emotionally all over the place and is rarely a neat progression of steps. It is vitally important to realize that two persons in the same family may not grieve in the same manner or have the same reactions to loss. Timing may vary as to when is the most difficult part of grief. All powerful feelings and experiences can raise their heads and show their fangs in grief: anger, frustration, agony, yearning, depression, anxiety, loss of identity, agitation, despair and so on. Even the shutting down of emotions for awhile can be a reaction in order to get some rest from the intensity of feelings.
TABLE 1. Warning Signs of Rigidifying Religion

- When the system becomes more important than the members
- When self identity and individuality are amothered, stifled, or deduced
- When shame is used to control
- When emotional numbness occurs
- When there is coercion instead of invitation
- When questioning is not permitted or is ignored
- When spiritual growth is blocked or stopped
- When authority is used to manipulate
- When most energy is spent maintaining the status quo
- When members are isolated from society
- When the system, leaders, scriptures, other writings, rituals, and so on become more important than a relationship with God
- When leaders are not held accountable
- When the importance of healthy relationships is minimized

TABLE 2. Psychological Danger Zones When Leaving Toxic Religious Systems

- A temptation of going back to the old belief structure, not because it is any longer valid, but for a security and safety that actually is a false security that will not last.
- A temptation of being alone in the belief system to fit the old system to the extent that it compromises integrity.
- A temptation of treating those who do not grasp the newfound theological perspectives in a non-Christian-like manner.
- A temptation of getting so hung up on theological hair splitting that a relationship with Christ and the central teaching of the gospel are neglected.
- A temptation of sabotaging and rendering any new belief system to fit the old system to the extent that it compromises integrity.
- A temptation of going to extremes of living through motions of religious life that have no meaning.
- A temptation of going to extremes of living such as substance abuse or other addictive behaviors to numb out the pain or self-medicate.
- A temptation of going back to the old belief structure, not because it is any longer valid, but for a security and safety that actually is a false security that will not last.
- A temptation of being alone in the belief system to fit the old system to the extent that it compromises integrity.
- A temptation of treating those who do not grasp the newfound theological perspectives in a non-Christian-like manner.
- A temptation of getting so hung up on theological hair splitting that a relationship with Christ and the central teaching of the gospel are neglected.

My life is often compromised. Some destructive religions are the shattering of one’s assumptions and beliefs gains the concept of a “pile-up” of stressors, and I know of no decision of such magnitude should be attempted without much thought, reflection, and prayer.

First of all, do not minimize the stress. In stress theory there is the concept of a “pile-up” of stressors, and I know of few instances where the pile-up of stress is any higher than

Dear Adventist Leader,

This is an appeal to church leaders, especially those who hold paid positions within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. You have held a high esteem among colleagues and church members alike. Whether admitted or not, this brings a sense of pride and fulfillment. But it also creates an environment where there is a differentiation of status, power, or other addictive behaviors to numb out the pain or self-medicate.

I know this reality all too well. In the late 70s I went to work for Philip Morris, a multi-billion dollar cigarette and food products manufacturer. As an employee, Philip Morris is second to none, offering generous salaries and benefit packages. I thought my father died from smoking-related lung cancer. The irony was that one of his favorite brands of cigarettes was one that my father did not smoke.

As an employer, Philip Morris is second to none, offering generous salaries and benefit packages. I thought my father died from smoking-related lung cancer. The irony was that one of his favorite brands of cigarettes was one that my father did not smoke.

This is an appeal to church leaders, especially those who hold paid positions within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. You have held a high esteem among colleagues and church members alike. Whether admitted or not, this brings a sense of pride and fulfillment. But it also creates an environment where there is a differentiation of status, power, or other addictive behaviors to numb out the pain or self-medicate.

I know this reality all too well. In the late 70s I went to work for Philip Morris, a multi-billion dollar cigarette and food products manufacturer. As an employee, Philip Morris is second to none, offering generous salaries and benefit packages. I thought my father died from smoking-related lung cancer. The irony was that one of his favorite brands of cigarettes was one that my father did not smoke.

As an employer, Philip Morris is second to none, offering generous salaries and benefit packages. I thought my father died from smoking-related lung cancer. The irony was that one of his favorite brands of cigarettes was one that my father did not smoke.
HOW TO LEAVE A CHURCH AND SURVIVE THE WILDERNESS

J. LE BRONN MCBRIDE

We have had requests for Proclamation! to address the emotional and social issues people face as they leave the Seventh-day Adventist church. Once a person understands the problems with Adventist theology, the problems of disagreeing with and leaving the community become increasingly daunting as friends and loved ones pull away in order to protect their own identities and places in the denominational culture. LeBron McBride drew from his own experience of leaving the Adventist church after spending six years as an Adventist pastor and also from his clinical experience in family therapy as he wrote his new book, Living Faithfully with Disappointment in the Church, published by The Hawthorn Press. This article is drawn in part from this book.

Just as a dog is rarely found with only one flea and a diamond has more than one sparkle, so theological transitions have more than one dimension. Most people who come to new theological understandings do so by diligent study and reflection; they soak in their new discoveries like sponges absorbing water. Usually people come to intellectual insights that are freeing, resonating with their new spiritual convictions. However, in the whirlwind of the stimulation and excitement of their new discoveries, people often neglect a vital piece of the transition puzzle. Far too often, sincere persons are unprepared for the emotional impact of a theological awakening, especially when they have been intertwined in a toxic and controlling church. In fact, the emotional conflict may prove almost unbearable. People may get lost in a devastating transitional wilderness where life feels barren and desolate and the fierce monsters of loneliness, grief, anger, depression, anxiety, and other powerful emotions show their fangs and appear ready to devour them.

This article will address the intense emotional and psychological dimension that may accompany a transition in belief and church identity. Often toxic churches have, over time, built psychological walls beyond which are wasteland moats around their closed systems. In attempting to leave the system, one has to maneuver among emotional predators to find true freedom. For example, teachings stating that a certain church is the only true church, or “the last day church” are psychological barriers that can be difficult to overcome. Many toxic churches often develop very strong myths among the members that if they leave the organization, they will be eternally cursed or damned and will not survive spiritually. In addition, such churches usually have internal myths about the terrible things that happened to “brilliant lights” that went out of the organization and how they died in great despair. Certainly there can be no stories of persons deciding to leave and going into other ministries and having success for God. Of course, some churches shun those who do not follow the party line and prevent members from even having contact with excommunicated persons. Other toxic religions build in such social barriers to contact with former members that open discussion and honest dialogue is essentially impossible. People who leave are emotionally cut off in various manners.

When a church’s theology supports a closed system and limited or no interaction with “outsiders” who worship differently or who have the “mark of the beast” or some other apocalyptic “mark,” many fear the wilderness that lies outside that church is too threatening to risk experiencing. Anyone who once accepted such teachings or has been brainwashed by them should not minimize the powerful addiction to the church they ensure. These tactics make it very difficult for members to explore options intellectually and emotionally. Again, even when one does somehow break free enough to come to new intellectual and spiritual understanding, the psychological impact of abandoning those teachings may be what sneaks up and destabilizes the emotional structure. Those who do venture out of the church do best if they know of the psychological and emotional dangers ahead.

Human beings are social creatures with profound needs of attachment. When we break an attachment to another or even to a church, we usually suffer deep emotional agony. Many dynamics may influence the extent of this suffering: how long the relationship has been in place, how important it has been, what our support network is like post-attachment, what we believe about the attachment, how many areas of our lives the break in attachment impacts, and so on. Therefore, we cannot always judge for ourselves how profoundly the break-up may impact us; much less should we judge how others react to a similar severance. A foundational principle in our dealings with people who leave part of our lives is: “The people in our lives are our evaluation; the people we judge for ourselves.”

One model for understanding the severing of an attachment to a church is that of divorce....

think of a spouse that has an abusive partner, and compare this relationship to a member of an abusive church. It may, in such cases, be very clear intellectually that one needs to divorce in order to survive emotionally and physically, but emotionally the person may feel confused.

One model for understanding the severing of an attachment to a church is that of divorce. Often a spouse has used myths much like the ones already mentioned in relationship to abusive churches in an effort to convince the abused spouse that she cannot survive without him. The abuser may have told the victim such things as: “You will never survive without me” or “No one would have you but me.”

There is a psychological term called cognitive dissonance that describes our internal tension and struggle when we simultaneously hold conflicting beliefs or attitudes, or when our beliefs contradict our behavior. For example, if a person believes that divorce is wrong and honors the marriage vows but simultaneously realizes that staying in an abusive marriage endangers one’s children or oneself, the resulting conflict is cognitive dissonance. The reality of the abuse may be clearly evident, but the intellectual belief about the permanence of marriage and the emotional attachment to the spouse may cause the person great internal struggle and confusion. Or to take another example, one may...
We have had requests for Proclamation! to address the emotional and social issues people face as they leave the Seventh-day Adventist church. Once a person understands the problems with Adventist theology, the problems of disagreeing with and leaving the community become increasingly daunting as friends and loved ones pull away in order to protect their own identities and places in the denominational culture. Lebron McBride drew from his own experience of leaving the Adventist church after spending six years as an Adventist pastor and also from his clinical experience in family therapy as he wrote his new book, Living Faithfully with Dissapointment in the Church, published by The Hawthor Press. This article is drawn in part from this book.

Just as a dog is rarely found with only one flea and a diamond has more than one sparkle, so theological transitions have more than one dimension. Most people who come to new theological understandings do so by diligent study and reflection; they soak in their new discoveries like sponges absorbing water. Usually people come to intellectual insights that are freeing, resonating with their new spiritual convictions. However, in the whirlwind of the stimulation and excitement of their new discoveries, people often neglect a vital piece of the transition puzzle. Far too often, sincere persons are unprepared for the emotional impact of a theological awakening, especially when they have been intertwined in a toxic and controlling church. In fact, the emotional conflict may prove almost unbearable. People may get lost in a devastating transitional wilderness where life feels barren and desolate and the fierce monsters of loneliness, grief, anger, depression, anxiety, and other powerful emotions show their fangs and appear ready to devour them.

This article will address the intense emotional and psychological dimension that may accompany a transition in beliefs and church identity. Often, toxic churches have, over time, built psychological walls beyond which are wastelands moats around their closed systems. In attempting to leave the system, one has to maneuver among emotional predators to find true freedom. For example, teachings stating that a certain church is the only true church, the "remnant," or "the last day church" are psychological barriers that can be difficult to destroy. Engaging with former members that open discussion and honest dialogue is essentially impossible. People who leave are emotionally cut off in various manners.

When a church’s theology supports a closed system and limited or no interaction with “outsiders” who worship differently or who have the “mark of the beast” or some other apocalyptic “mark,” many fear the wilderness that lies outside that church is too threatening to risk experiencing. Anyone who once accepted such teachings or has been brainwashed by them should not minimize the powerful addiction to the church they ensure. These tactics make it very difficult for members to explore options intellectually and emotionally. Again, even when one does somehow break free enough to come to new intellectual and spiritual understanding, the psychological impact of abandoning those teachings may be what sneaks up and destabilizes the emotional core of the church do best if they know of the psychological and emotional dangers ahead.

Human beings are social creatures with profound needs of attachment. When we break an attachment to another or even to a church, we usually suffer deep emotional agony. Many dynamics may influence the extent of this suffering: how long the relationship has been in place, how important it has been, what our support network is like post-attachment, what we believe about the attachment, how many areas of our lives the break in attachment impacts, and so on. Therefore, we cannot always judge for ourselves how profoundly the break-up may impact us; much less should we judge how others react to a similar severance. A foundational principle in our dealings with people who leave parts of our churches is that the severing of an attachment is not as black and white as many others make it. People may feel confused.

One model for understanding the severing of an attachment to a church is that of divorce.... think of a spouse that has an abusive partner, and compare this relationship to a member of an abusive church. It may, in such cases, be very clear intellectually that one needs to divorce in order to survive emotionally and physically, but emotionally the person may feel confused. One model for understanding the severing of an attachment to a church is that of divorce.... think of a spouse that has an abusive partner, and compare this relationship to a member of an abusive church. It may, in such cases, be very clear intellectually that one needs to divorce in order to survive emotionally and physically, but emotionally the person may feel confused. Often the abusive partner has used myths much like the ones already mentioned in relationship to abusive churches in an effort to convince the abused spouse that she cannot survive without him. The abuser may have told the victim such things as: “You will never survive without me.” or “No one would have you but me.”

There is a psychological term called cognitive dissonance that describes our internal tension and struggle when we simultaneously hold conflicting beliefs or attitudes, or when our beliefs contradict our behavior. For example, if a person believes that divorce is wrong and honors the marriage vows but simultaneously realizes that staying in an abusive marriage endangers one’s children or oneself, the resulting conflict is cognitive dissonance. The reality of the abuse may be clearly evident, but the intellectual belief about the permanence of marriage and the emotional attachment to the spouse may cause the person great internal struggle and confusion. Or to take another example, one may...
TABLE 1. Warning Signs of Rigidifying Religion

- When the system becomes more important than the members
- When self identity and individuality are smothered, stifled, or deserted
- When shame is used to control
- When emotional numbness occurs
- When there is coercion instead of invitation
- When questioning is not permitted or is ignored
- When spiritual growth is blocked or stopped
- When authority is used to manipulate
- When most energy is spent maintaining the status quo
- When members are isolated from society
- When the system, leaders, scriptures, other writings, rituals, and so on become more important than a relationship with God
- When leaders are not held accountable
- When the importance of healthy relationships is minimized

From Faithfully Living with Disappointment in the Church, page 26 by J. Lebron McBride, PhD. © 2005 The Haworth Press, Inc. Used by permission.

TABLE 2. Psychological Danger Zones When Leaving Toxic Religious Systems

- A temptation of going back to the old belief system, not because it is any longer valid, but for a security and safety that actually is a false security that will not last.
- A temptation of believing that everything spiritual or religious has to be thrown away—“throwing the baby out with the bath water.”
- A temptation of going to extremes of living such as substance abuse or other addictive behaviors to numb out the pain or self-medicate.
- A temptation of the denial of any new concepts and an attempt to shut out any thinking that brings inner conflict.
- A temptation of accommodating and reshaping any new belief system to fit the old system to the extent that it compromises integrity.
- A temptation of treating those who do not grasp the newfound theological perspectives in a non-Christian-like manner.
- A temptation of getting so hung up on theological hair splitting that a relationship with Christ and the central teaching of the gospel are neglected.

From Faithfully Living with Disappointment in the Church, page 31 by J. Lebron McBride, PhD. © 2005 The Haworth Press, Inc. Used by permission.

Considerations When Making a Theological Transition

I would like to suggest some important considerations for making religious transitions such as those we are discussing. No decision of such magnitude should be attempted without much thought, reflection, and prayer.

First of all, do not minimize the stress. In stress theory there is the concept of a “pile-up” of stressors, and I know of few instances where the pile-up of stress is any higher than this.

change a religious practice out of a new Biblical understanding, but the old familiar pattern may result in the new religious practice feeling awkward for awhile. Often when there is change in our beliefs we go through a wilderness experience of emotional ambivalence before our minds and hearts are integrated regarding the belief. All that has been stated thus far does not do justice to the intensity of the traumatic injuries that many experience on their religious journeys or upon exiting a toxic church. Such churches may incorporate many or all of the characteristics listed in TABLE 1. When people have been born into or have fully integrated into such a system, their normal emotional processes are stifled and their personal autonomy is often compromised. Some destructive religions are very good at pulling people into closely controlled and conformed networks that entangle most, if not all, areas of their lives. This enmeshment results in a profound “gut wrenching” if one discovers that the internalized belief system has no foundation or is based on the religion, the leader, the particular church, or the traditions and customs it practices.

Faithfully Living With Disappointment in the Church

Dear Adventist Leader,

This is an appeal to church leaders, especially those who hold pivotal positions within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. You have worked hard to get where you are today, in positions that you currently hold, and hold dear. Many of you have positions that are accomplishments to you. Not only that, it brings home a paycheck as well. All of these facts are quite normal and are true of almost every person of title and position, especially in corporate America. There is a difference, of course, between a corporation and a church, but allowance to both is as strong for those employed by them. Considering recent corporate scandals, our allegiance can be shaken.

I know this reality all too well. In the late 70s I went to work for Philip Morris, a multi-billion dollar cigarette and food products manufacturer. As an employee, Philip Morris is second to none, offering generous salaries and benefit packages. I thought my father died from smoking-related lung cancer. The irony was that one of his favorite brands of cigarettes was one that my company produced. My allegiance to the company was not shaken; it was shattered. I no longer believe in this entity called Philip Morris and despise Philip Morris. I abandoned a cause for which I could not see life beyond the benefit philosophies, which I now feel uncomfortable (benefits that I received from it would be all but lost if I walked away).

One year after my father’s death, my conscience won. I walked into the plant manager’s office and handed him my ID badge. On that day, I was liberated. On that day I did the right thing. On that day I turned and started walking in a different direction and a different path, but I survived it. Today, the Lord has blessed me with a career that I love, and I have a clear conscience.

A tempter of getting so hung up on theological hair splitting that a relationship with Christ and the central teachings of the gospel are neglected.

From Faithfully Living with Disappointment in the Church, page 26 by J. Lebron McBride, PhD. © 2005 The Haworth Press, Inc. Used by permission.

TABLE 1. Warning Signs of Rigidifying Religion

- When the system becomes more important than the members
- When self identity and individuality are smothered, stifled, or deserted
- When shame is used to control
- When emotional numbness occurs
- When there is coercion instead of invitation
- When questioning is not permitted or is ignored
- When spiritual growth is blocked or stopped
- When authority is used to manipulate
- When most energy is spent maintaining the status quo
- When members are isolated from society
- When the system, leaders, scriptures, other writings, rituals, and so on become more important than a relationship with God
- When leaders are not held accountable
- When the importance of healthy relationships is minimized

These are all of you have positions that are accomplishments to you. Not only that, it brings home a paycheck as well. All of these facts are quite normal and are true of almost every person of title and position, especially in corporate America. There is a difference, of course, between a corporation and a church, but allowance to both is as strong for those employed by them. Considering recent corporate scandals, our allegiance can be shaken.

I know this reality all too well. In the late 70s I went to work for Philip Morris, a multi-billion dollar cigarette and food products manufacturer. As an employee, Philip Morris is second to none, offering generous salaries and benefit packages. I thought my father died from smoking-related lung cancer. The irony was that one of his favorite brands of cigarettes was one that my company produced. My allegiance to the company was not shaken; it was shattered. I no longer believe in this entity called Philip Morris and despise Philip Morris. I abandoned a cause for which I could not see life beyond the benefit philosophies, which I now feel uncomfortable (benefits that I received from it would be all but lost if I walked away).

One year after my father’s death, my conscience won. I walked into the plant manager’s office and handed him my ID badge. On that day, I was liberated. On that day I did the right thing. On that day I turned and started walking in a different direction and a different path, but I survived it. Today, the Lord has blessed me with a career that I love, and I have a clear conscience.

A tempter of getting so hung up on theological hair splitting that a relationship with Christ and the central teachings of the gospel are neglected.

From Faithfully Living with Disappointment in the Church, page 26 by J. Lebron McBride, PhD. © 2005 The Haworth Press, Inc. Used by permission.

TABLE 2. Psychological Danger Zones When Leaving Toxic Religious Systems

- A temptation of going back to the old belief system, not because it is any longer valid, but for a security and safety that actually is a false security that will not last.
- A temptation of believing that everything spiritual or religious has to be thrown away—“throwing the baby out with the bath water.”
- A temptation of going to extremes of living such as substance abuse or other addictive behaviors to numb out the pain or self-medicate.
- A temptation of the denial of any new concepts and an attempt to shut out any thinking that brings inner conflict.
- A temptation of accommodating and reshaping any new belief system to fit the old system to the extent that it compromises integrity.
- A temptation of treating those who do not grasp the newfound theological perspectives in a non-Christian-like manner.
- A temptation of getting so hung up on theological hair splitting that a relationship with Christ and the central teaching of the gospel are neglected.

From Faithfully Living with Disappointment in the Church, page 31 by J. Lebron McBride, PhD. © 2005 The Haworth Press, Inc. Used by permission.

Considerations When Making a Theological Transition

I would like to suggest some important considerations for making religious transitions such as those we are discussing. No decision of such magnitude should be attempted without much thought, reflection, and prayer.

First of all, do not minimize the stress. In stress theory there is the concept of a “pile-up” of stressors, and I know of few instances where the pile-up of stress is any higher than this.
An Appeal To Adventist Leaders

Bob Anderson and his wife Ingrid are former Adventists. They left the church two years ago and now enjoy fellowship at Blue Ridge Church of Christ. Bob is a private home inspector. He and his wife live in Staunton, Virginia. They have two grown sons and adopted their three-year-old daughter Libby two years ago from China.

Timing may vary as to when is the most difficult part of grief. All powerful feelings and experiences can raise their heads and show their fangs in grief: anger, frustration, agony, yearning, depression, anxiety, loss of identity, agitation, despair and so on. Even the shutting down of emotions for awhile can be a reaction in order to get some rest from the intensity of feelings.

we will be. The more defensive we make persons by our own reactivity, the more determined they become to dig in and argue for their own points and the less they can hear opposing points, no matter how valid. With some it is best to avoid all theological discussion because it will be useless and totally unproductive. This is a difficult lesson to learn, but we must sometimes wait for a more fruitful time. Such a time may be years in coming, or it may never come. Closed minds have closed hearts, and we must leave this to the Spirit of God and know what our limitations are. At times I think it is even useful to attempt to speak to family members or others with whom we continue to interact about a

I know that there are many, possibly hundreds of Adventist pastors and church leaders who know the truth about Adventist teachings but who are trapped inside the system. These individuals have families to provide for, house payments to make, and retirement pensions to consider. They also may be seeking a better financial future. These individuals have families to provide for. They have fathers and mothers who, after years of dedication, and most importantly, a comfortable salary with benefits. They have fathers and mothers who, after years of sacrifice putting their children through the Adventist school system, would be terribly disappointed were they to leave the church of their family heritage. The tradeoff for not leaving the church is living a lie—going through the motions and repeating rehearsed lines in a career that is stagnant and unfulfilling. Worse, as pastors, they are leading God’s people astray into a system of legalism, self-doubt and bondage. Surely they are not following in the footsteps of Moses. Further, one must also consider the effect on oneself of staying in such a situation. Being in this situation is much like an adulterous husband still living with his wife who has no knowledge of the affair. Please don’t misunderstand this analogy, but there are similar feelings of guilt, betrayal and loss of self worth that are associated with living in denial. This reality not only makes life miserable, but harboring these feelings is not healthy for the soul. If you are one of these leaders in the church, then this letter is to be your first of many steps out of bondage. After reading this letter, you should pray. Tell God of your dilemma, and ask him for a way out. Read the book A Theologian’s Journey by Jerry Gladson, PhD, available through LAM Publishing LLC, to see that you are not alone in this struggle. I am not a theologian, but from my letter you will see that our paths parallel, and my God can do for you what he did for this former corporal dependent.

"One that can discuss issues with them, and certainly you may benefit from a moratorium on abusive and degrading discussions they push upon you. Allow grief and realize that persons grieve in various ways—there is no one correct manner in which to grieve. When there is loss, grief is normal, not abnormal. Our society has popularized certain stages of grief, thus promoting a belief that if you go through the various steps, grief will be completed. However, in real life grief is emotionally all over the place and is rarely a neat progression of steps. It is vitally important to realize that two persons in the same family may not grieve in the same manner or have the same reactions to loss. Timing may vary as to when is the most difficult part of grief. All powerful feelings and experiences can raise their heads and show their fangs in grief: anger, frustration, agony, yearning, depression, anxiety, loss of identity, agitation, despair and so on. Even the shutting down of emotions for awhile can be a reaction in order to get some rest from the intensity of feelings.

with exiting some churches. The stress is not just in one area of life but is pervasive across most domains of living. There can be horrific stress because of the breakdown of a person's support system, social network, family life, mental theological framework, emotional securities, personal history, worldview, in some cases financial and career investment, and so on. For a time a comfort zone is nowhere to be found. Even persons who are very stable can only take so much, and when stress is so intrusive to so many areas of life, there is much at risk. When you survey the wasteland you must cross to get to a better spiritual and emotional land, prepare as best you can and beware of these dangers and risks. Otherwise, you will certainly be blindsided by the wilderness temptations and confrontations. For many, it will not be a short or simple journey. I have known some who continued to feel guilty for years even though they knew for certain they were at a different point theologically and their former way was empty for them. Guilt can be true guilt or false guilt. In cases such as this, one is not dealing with true guilt for a wrong done but with the residual effects of a conscience that has been carefully indoctrinated and is, therefore, overly active with a guilt that is false. I think this is especially true for those who were indoctrinated as children, so beware.

Make sure you have some support in place. The journey may lead to unexpected developments. Friends may not understand and may distance from you or even totally condemn you. Even the unthinkable may occur, and family members may sever ties with you. Therefore, it is best to consider whom you may be able to trust and lean on when everything else is unavailable. Such support is vital, for out in the wasteland of transition it can become very lonely for awhile. You can always know that God is with you, but it also helps to have some human touch and support along the way.

Support from others who have walked before or are walking with you on this wilderness journey can be tremendously helpful. Such support normalizes your experiences, and you will not feel so lonely and as if you have lost your mind.

Don’t waste too much time with rigid minds. It is natural want to share the excitement of new and fresh understandings, but it takes a lot of wisdom to do so effectively. No matter how much logical knowledge and insight one has to share, if the recipient is not open to dialogue and is threatened by the material, it can be useless. Here we need to be “as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves,” and we need to apply the principles of seed sowing. Attempting to sow on hard stony ground will not be fruitful, and it is true that the minds of religiously rigid persons cannot be penetrated. Certainly we want to be available to share the good news as persons are open to it, but the quicker we learn to discern those who are eager to dialogue versus those who simply want to argue, the better off
loss of identity, agitation, despair and so on. Even the shuf ling down of emotions for awhile can be a reaction in order to get some rest from the intensity of feelings.

It is so important not to expect a neat and tidy grief package and to remember that anyone who cares deeply may grieve deeply when there is loss. Grief reveals past attachment and caring and will, most likely, wax and wane and subside for awhile before coming forth with a new vengeance. Some grief lasts a lifetime; however, time normally does bring relief. A person may experience some losses long after leaving a destructive church. For example, being part of a special group, the group identity, the apparent closeness of the group, the like-mindedness and so on—although largely false perceptions—are powerful losses.

The loss of family and friends can be traumatic; many cut off suddenly and dramatically and cause a questioning of trust and the validity of all relationships. It is important to remember that those cutting themselves off are responding to their own insecurities and inability to tolerate anything that threatens their fragile belief structure. This self-induced separation may be the most obvious illustration of the bankruptcy of their religion at a deeper level. Truth is not so easily shaken and disturbed. The unfortunate reality is that many times there is nothing you can do to bring any closure to such relationships, and persons who do cut off in this manner often have to demonize you to give them something to cling to any longer. They cannot find rest or peace. Their faith is broken. There is profound loss of innocence.

Those who are exiting a rigid church have been in a structure of tight false security that allows little room for questioning and exploring. And when they are at last allowed to explore and question, their initial feelings often feel blasphemous. It is, though, part and parcel of healthy and mature functioning and growing. Initially, however, the thought process can be terribly unsettling and feel as if there is nothing to grab for an anchor. The emotional uncertainty can be intense enough in some to be considered trauma.

Accept that ambiguity is much more a part of faith than you have previously been taught. There is not a clear-cut answer for every theological question we have. Questions and honest doubt are parts of genuine faith. Many toxic organizations have an “answer” to everything, but you have to accept in order to believe them. I am not sure where it originated, but the quote: “Why is it that the religious institutions that say they have all the answers, never allow any questions?” holds great weight. Ponder it.

One has to ask if certainty in all areas is really valid or necessary. It appears to me that living with paradox and not being anxious about it is a hallmark of psychological health.

Positive Points for Surviving Transition Trauma
I have given some important considerations for those exiting toxic religious systems and, while there is some overlap, I will now underscore some positive points on how to survive the emotional trauma.

Accept that ambiguity is much more a part of faith than you have previously been taught. There is not a clear-cut answer for every theological question we have. Questions and honest doubt are parts of genuine faith. Many toxic organizations have an “answer” to everything, but you have to accept in order to believe them. I am not sure where it originated, but the quote: “Why is it that the religious institutions that say they have all the answers, never allow any questions?” holds great weight. Ponder it.

One has to ask if certainty in all areas is really valid or necessary. It appears to me that living with paradox and not being anxious about it is a hallmark of psychological health.

Put your focus on Christ and his acceptance of you contract ended, so did our ministry in that community. While We made many lifelong friends in that church, we again found ourselves in a time of limbo.

The enemy has attacked us from the beginning with his harassing lies. We were told early on by people in the SDA system that we would never amount to anything outside of the SDA church. The enemy would remind us of these statements often in time of rejection or frustration. “You were a fool to leave your old church ministry! You should have just kept your thoughts to yourself! You will never be the pastor you felt called to be!” You just threw away a career for the sake of some silly thing called integrity! The New Covenant really all that important? You should never have rocked the boat and put your family through all of this.”

The truth is, the journey has not been easy. We have suffered rejection, misunderstanding, lies about our character, times of financial insecurity, and times of discouragement. We have had to struggle with our identity. We cannot find our value in our career, in personal ministry accomplishments, or being part of an exclusive community. In Adventism we knew someone almost every place we went—or at least someone who knew someone. There is a certain sense of “belonging” that is part of sectarian systems. Now that is all gone.

Yet, the other side of the story is also true. We have grown in faith in ways we could never have grown in the comforts of the “secure life”. We have learned to listen for the Still Small Voice in some of the worst times. We have learned to find a new “secure life”. We have learned to live with questions, to be open to new horizons, to be open to new relationships.

Gift of Life
Now I realize that I can rest physically on the seventh day, but that does not give me rest spiritually. I have realized that rest is not in large bank accounts, great reputations, large ministries, or prominence of any kind. Success is following Jesus faithfully and faithfully making a way. Praise His name!

Now that it is all gone.

I had to be broken before I understood that salvation is all about Jesus and nothing at all about me. None of my efforts to do the right thing brought me one step closer to eternal security. Consequently, since I met Jesus and was born from above, I realize that my failings do not snatch me out of His hand. I am secure for one reason: Jesus died for me and rose again. He keeps me: His righteousness covers me. It’s not about me; it’s all about Him. The blood again of the Spirit is an unmistakable work of God, as mysterious as the wind, as surprising as God Himself. We do not know where it begins; it is hidden away in the depths of our personal life. Being born again from above is a continual, perpetual and eternal beginning: a freshness all the time in thinking and in talking and in living, the continual surprise of the life of God.” (My Utmost For His Highest, January 20, Oswald Chambers)

It was really only after entering that rest—rest from my works to be worthy—that I truly began to understand how much I needed a Saviour. A drowning man gasping and failing against the deep, I finally quit struggling with my Rescuer and allowed Him to bring me to shore.
The cross is not an easy road by any means. It may mean the loss of the very thing we hold dear in this life, but it is the way that brings us to the joy of knowing Jesus to such an extent that all other desires pale in insignificance.

Many theological disagreements arise over issues that are not central to the gospel and are not definitively explained in the Bible. One of the things taught in toxic organizations is that you cannot debate and disagree.

Conclusion
It is truly a myth that you cannot survive an exodus from a toxic church. There may indeed be emotional trauma as you make the break and in the wilderness once you leave, but even Christ himself spent some time in the wilderness. The temptations of the wilderness are great. The fierceness of the emotional predators that attack you can be devastating. However, once you have made it beyond the wilderness, you will recognize how Christ sustained you even during your weakest moments. You will wonder how you previously got so caught up in all the theological briers and thickets of the old system. You will begin to relish the newfound freedom to commune with Christ without all the distractions of a toxic belief system sticking and jabbing its sharp thorns into your psyche. Best of all, you will find that Christ is the Promised Land beyond the wilderness that brings rest to your soul!

Avoid extremes. Eat well and find outlets and hobbies that take you away from the intensity of the religious struggles you have been exposed to in your transition. An obsession with theological issues without balance becomes an insane approach to living.

Take a long and meditative look at the foundational Christian concepts such as grace, forgiveness, accept- ance, and God’s infinite love. If you continue to study only minute details of obscure theology, your relationship with God will not develop. If you constantly feed on negatives your faith will be starved. You need, most of all, to develop your relationship with Christ and find solace and healing in his care. You will find great reflection on the grand perspectives and concepts of Christianity will pay great psychological and emotional dividends.

The cross is not an easy road by any means. It may mean the loss of the very thing we hold dear in this life, but it is the way that brings us to the joy of knowing Jesus to such an extent that all other desires pale in insignificance.

Many theological disagreements arise over issues that are not central to the gospel and are not definitively explained in the Bible. One of the things taught in toxic organizations is that you cannot debate and disagree.

Conclusion
It is truly a myth that you cannot survive an exodus from a toxic church. There may indeed be emotional trauma as you make the break and in the wilderness once you leave, but even Christ himself spent some time in the wilderness. The temptations of the wilderness are great. The fierceness of the emotional predators that attack you can be devastating. However, once you have made it beyond the wilderness, you will recognize how Christ sustained you even during your weakest moments. You will wonder how you previously got so caught up in all the theological briers and thickets of the old system. You will begin to relish the newfound freedom to commune with Christ without all the distractions of a toxic belief system sticking and jabbing its sharp thorns into your psyche. Best of all, you will find that Christ is the Promised Land beyond the wilderness that brings rest to your soul!

Avoid extremes. Eat well and find outlets and hobbies that take you away from the intensity of the religious struggles you have been exposed to in your transition. An obsession with theological issues without balance becomes an insane approach to living.

Take a long and meditative look at the foundational Christian concepts such as grace, forgiveness, accept-
ance, and God’s infinite love. If you continue to study only minute details of obscure theology, your relationship with God will not develop. If you constantly feed on negatives your faith will be starved. You need, most of all, to develop your relationship with Christ and find solace and healing in his care. You will find great reflection on the grand perspectives and concepts of Christianity will pay great psychological and emotional dividends.

The cross is not an easy road by any means. It may mean the loss of the very thing we hold dear in this life, but it is the way that brings us to the joy of knowing Jesus to such an extent that all other desires pale in insignificance.

Many theological disagreements arise over issues that are not central to the gospel and are not definitively explained in the Bible. One of the things taught in toxic organizations is that you cannot debate and disagree.

Conclusion
It is truly a myth that you cannot survive an exodus from a toxic church. There may indeed be emotional trauma as you make the break and in the wilderness once you leave, but even Christ himself spent some time in the wilderness. The temptations of the wilderness are great. The fierceness of the emotional predators that attack you can be devastating. However, once you have made it beyond the wilderness, you will recognize how Christ sustained you even during your weakest moments. You will wonder how you previously got so caught up in all the theological briers and thickets of the old system. You will begin to relish the newfound freedom to commune with Christ without all the distractions of a toxic belief system sticking and jabbing its sharp thorns into your psyche. Best of all, you will find that Christ is the Promised Land beyond the wilderness that brings rest to your soul!

Avoid extremes. Eat well and find outlets and hobbies that take you away from the intensity of the religious struggles you have been exposed to in your transition. An obsession with theological issues without balance becomes an insane approach to living.

Take a long and meditative look at the foundational Christian concepts such as grace, forgiveness, accept-
ance, and God’s infinite love. If you continue to study only minute details of obscure theology, your relationship with God will not develop. If you constantly feed on negatives your faith will be starved. You need, most of all, to develop your relationship with Christ and find solace and healing in his care. You will find great reflection on the grand perspectives and concepts of Christianity will pay great psychological and emotional dividends.
Come experience the joy of Jesus

I can remember being taught that in the “last days” we would be hunted, arrested, persecuted, and maybe killed. I remember learning that Catholic churches have torture chambers in their basements in secret places that are all ready for the Time of Trouble when we would have to flee for our lives because we kept the Sabbath. “Sunday keeper,” I learned, will be the ones who will spy on us and report us and turn us in for persecution. I remember hearing the hushed sounds of church members talking in worried tones downstairs in our living room through my upstairs window down the country road, expecting to see neighbors coming to the house bearing “torches” to carry us out the most is fear.

I can remember being taught that in the “last days” we would be hunted, arrested, persecuted, and maybe killed. I remember learning that Catholic churches have torture chambers in their basements in secret places that are all ready for the Time of Trouble when we would have to flee for our lives because we kept the Sabbath. “Sunday keeper,” I learned, will be the ones who will spy on us and report us and turn us in for persecution. I remember hearing the hushed sounds of church members talking in worried tones downstairs in our living room through my upstairs window down the country road, expecting to see neighbors coming to the house bearing “torches” to carry us out the most is fear.

I can remember being taught that in the “last days” we would be hunted, arrested, persecuted, and maybe killed. I remember learning that Catholic churches have torture chambers in their basements in secret places that are all ready for the Time of Trouble when we would have to flee for our lives because we kept the Sabbath. “Sunday keeper,” I learned, will be the ones who will spy on us and report us and turn us in for persecution. I remember hearing the hushed sounds of church members talking in worried tones downstairs in our living room through my upstairs window down the country road, expecting to see neighbors coming to the house bearing “torches” to carry us out the most is fear.

I can remember being taught that in the “last days” we would be hunted, arrested, persecuted, and maybe killed. I remember learning that Catholic churches have torture chambers in their basements in secret places that are all ready for the Time of Trouble when we would have to flee for our lives because we kept the Sabbath. “Sunday keeper,” I learned, will be the ones who will spy on us and report us and turn us in for persecution. I remember hearing the hushed sounds of church members talking in worried tones downstairs in our living room through my upstairs window down the country road, expecting to see neighbors coming to the house bearing “torches” to carry us out the most is fear.

I can remember being taught that in the “last days” we would be hunted, arrested, persecuted, and maybe killed. I remember learning that Catholic churches have torture chambers in their basements in secret places that are all ready for the Time of Trouble when we would have to flee for our lives because we kept the Sabbath. “Sunday keeper,” I learned, will be the ones who will spy on us and report us and turn us in for persecution. I remember hearing the hushed sounds of church members talking in worried tones downstairs in our living room through my upstairs window down the country road, expecting to see neighbors coming to the house bearing “torches” to carry us out the most is fear.

I can remember being taught that in the “last days” we would be hunted, arrested, persecuted, and maybe killed. I remember learning that Catholic churches have torture chambers in their basements in secret places that are all ready for the Time of Trouble when we would have to flee for our lives because we kept the Sabbath. “Sunday keeper,” I learned, will be the ones who will spy on us and report us and turn us in for persecution. I remember hearing the hushed sounds of church members talking in worried tones downstairs in our living room through my upstairs window down the country road, expecting to see neighbors coming to the house bearing “torches” to carry us out the most is fear.

I can remember being taught that in the “last days” we would be hunted, arrested, persecuted, and maybe killed. I remember learning that Catholic churches have torture chambers in their basements in secret places that are all ready for the Time of Trouble when we would have to flee for our lives because we kept the Sabbath. “Sunday keeper,” I learned, will be the ones who will spy on us and report us and turn us in for persecution. I remember hearing the hushed sounds of church members talking in worried tones downstairs in our living room through my upstairs window down the country road, expecting to see neighbors coming to the house bearing “torches” to carry us out the most is fear.

I can remember being taught that in the “last days” we would be hunted, arrested, persecuted, and maybe killed. I remember learning that Catholic churches have torture chambers in their basements in secret places that are all ready for the Time of Trouble when we would have to flee for our lives because we kept the Sabbath. “Sunday keeper,” I learned, will be the ones who will spy on us and report us and turn us in for persecution. I remember hearing the hushed sounds of church members talking in worried tones downstairs in our living room through my upstairs window down the country road, expecting to see neighbors coming to the house bearing “torches” to carry us out the most is fear.

I can remember being taught that in the “last days” we would be hunted, arrested, persecuted, and maybe killed. I remember learning that Catholic churches have torture chambers in their basements in secret places that are all ready for the Time of Trouble when we would have to flee for our lives because we kept the Sabbath. “Sunday keeper,” I learned, will be the ones who will spy on us and report us and turn us in for persecution. I remember hearing the hushed sounds of church members talking in worried tones downstairs in our living room through my upstairs window down the country road, expecting to see neighbors coming to the house bearing “torches” to carry us out the most is fear.

I can remember being taught that in the “last days” we would be hunted, arrested, persecuted, and maybe killed. I remember learning that Catholic churches have torture chambers in their basements in secret places that are all ready for the Time of Trouble when we would have to flee for our lives because we kept the Sabbath. “Sunday keeper,” I learned, will be the ones who will spy on us and report us and turn us in for persecution. I remember hearing the hushed sounds of church members talking in worried tones downstairs in our living room through my upstairs window down the country road, expecting to see neighbors coming to the house bearing “torches” to carry us out the most is fear.

I can remember being taught that in the “last days” we would be hunted, arrested, persecuted, and maybe killed. I remember learning that Catholic churches have torture chambers in their basements in secret places that are all ready for the Time of Trouble when we would have to flee for our lives because we kept the Sabbath. “Sunday keeper,” I learned, will be the ones who will spy on us and report us and turn us in for persecution. I remember hearing the hushed sounds of church members talking in worried tones downstairs in our living room through my upstairs window down the country road, expecting to see neighbors coming to the house bearing “torches” to carry us out the most is fear.

I can remember being taught that in the “last days” we would be hunted, arrested, persecuted, and maybe killed. I remember learning that Catholic churches have torture chambers in their basements in secret places that are all ready for the Time of Trouble when we would have to flee for our lives because we kept the Sabbath. “Sunday keeper,” I learned, will be the ones who will spy on us and report us and turn us in for persecution. I remember hearing the hushed sounds of church members talking in worried tones downstairs in our living room through my upstairs window down the country road, expecting to see neighbors coming to the house bearing “torches” to carry us out the most is fear.

I can remember being taught that in the “last days” we would be hunted, arrested, persecuted, and maybe killed. I remember learning that Catholic churches have torture chambers in their basements in secret places that are all ready for the Time of Trouble when we would have to flee for our lives because we kept the Sabbath. “Sunday keeper,” I learned, will be the ones who will spy on us and report us and turn us in for persecution. I remember hearing the hushed sounds of church members talking in worried tones downstairs in our living room through my upstairs window down the country road, expecting to see neighbors coming to the house bearing “torches” to carry us out the most is fear.

I can remember being taught that in the “last days” we would be hunted, arrested, persecuted, and maybe killed. I remember learning that Catholic churches have torture chambers in their basements in secret places that are all ready for the Time of Trouble when we would have to flee for our lives because we kept the Sabbath. “Sunday keeper,” I learned, will be the ones who will spy on us and report us and turn us in for persecution. I remember hearing the hushed sounds of church members talking in worried tones downstairs in our living room through my upstairs window down the country road, expecting to see neighbors coming to the house bearing “torches” to carry us out the most is fear.

I can remember being taught that in the “last days” we would be hunted, arrested, persecuted, and maybe killed. I remember learning that Catholic churches have torture chambers in their basements in secret places that are all ready for the Time of Trouble when we would have to flee for our lives because we kept the Sabbath. “Sunday keeper,” I learned, will be the ones who will spy on us and report us and turn us in for persecution. I remember hearing the hushed sounds of church members talking in worried tones downstairs in our living room through my upstairs window down the country road, expecting to see neighbors coming to the house bearing “torches” to carry us out the most is fear.

I can remember being taught that in the “last days” we would be hunted, arrested, persecuted, and maybe killed. I remember learning that Catholic churches have torture chambers in their basements in secret places that are all ready for the Time of Trouble when we would have to flee for our lives because we kept the Sabbath. “Sunday keeper,” I learned, will be the ones who will spy on us and report us and turn us in for persecution. I remember hearing the hushed sounds of church members talking in worried tones downstairs in our living room through my upstairs window down the country road, expecting to see neighbors coming to the house bearing “torches” to carry us out the most is fear.

I can remember being taught that in the “last days” we would be hunted, arrested, persecuted, and maybe killed. I remember learning that Catholic churches have torture chambers in their basements in secret places that are all ready for the Time of Trouble when we would have to flee for our lives because we kept the Sabbath. “Sunday keeper,” I learned, will be the ones who will spy on us and report us and turn us in for persecution. I remember hearing the hushed sounds of church members talking in worried tones downstairs in our living room through my upstairs window down the country road, expecting to see neighbors coming to the house bearing “torches” to carry us out the most is fear.

I can remember being taught that in the “last days” we would be hunted, arrested, persecuted, and maybe killed. I remember learning that Catholic churches have torture chambers in their basements in secret places that are all ready for the Time of Trouble when we would have to flee for our lives because we kept the Sabbath. “Sunday keeper,” I learned, will be the ones who will spy on us and report us and turn us in for persecution. I remember hearing the hushed sounds of church members talking in worried tones downstairs in our living room through my upstairs window down the country road, expecting to see neighbors coming to the house bearing “torches” to carry us out the most is fear.
My father spent twenty-five years in the mission field. He operated on hundreds of cases, preached and baptized, made bricks and built buildings, and cared for over 300 lepers. When he was 94 years old, I asked him if he was saved and if he was confident in his relationship with Jesus. He said, “I know there is an afterlife; I certainly hope so; after all, I have been a good Adventist and have spent my whole life in missions."

I believed that salvation is not about what you have done; it’s all about what God has done for you. Jesus does the Bible command to keep the Sabbath because it is a memorial of creation. “It seems to me that you are blind-ed by your ideology...”

The truth is that the Sabbath was given to mankind, regardless of race or nationality. “Thank you again for your message which helps me see in a very direct way your errors, as I contrast them with the beauty of the Bible and the truths of the Seventh-day Adventist church.”

Please, keep them coming.

I hope that when you publish this letter, you also print my name. I am not ashamed of my name or my beliefs.

ANTONIO REMERO

Editor’s note: Genesis 2:3 states that God blessed the seventh day because on that day He “...created...” His world. His work was completely done, and just as Christ completed His work on the cross, so on the seventh day God ceased His work of creation. He might just as well have said, as did Didache, “It is finished.”

He and Adam and Eve were in complete oneness. His blessing the seventh day was (1) without evening and morning, unlike the previous six days, and (2) was not a com-
mand. It was simply God “ceasing,” not “observing” (Genesis 2:16-17).

The entire point of salvation is entering God’s rest through His finished work—by no work or observation of our own. The Sabbath was a reminder of that salvation rest. Now that we have the reality in the finished work of Jesus and in our birth from above, we have no more need of the day of reminder. We now have Jesus Himself!

The shadow or reality—it’s an eternal choice.

Informative Articles
I am an evangelical Christian, but your articles believe about the Sabbath, Lifething, etc. I appreciate your clear use of the Scriptures.

Support
You folks are so precious to us. You are our support group!...God bless you.

Word from a warrior
So, Colleen, you gave up Sabbath on Saturday and now you work on Saturday... It was established (by people much smarter than you) that Sunday is the first day and Saturday is the seventh day. So I surrender on Saturday. “...Your fearless leader...has proclaimed the Ten Commandments were ended at the cross. The Ten Commandments are God’s law...” If you can do what you want and not break the law...”...We all get to heaven we will keep the Sabbath every Saturday. Colleen, are doing the devil’s work pulling people away from the truth.

In conclusion, do we believe in what brother Ratzlaff is peddling. You had the truth and you gave it up.

When I get to heaven I will look for you. I know what you look like, and I will have plenty of time to look for you.

One of God’s warriors.

Encouragement
Hang in there, Colleen!

Negative Tone
Please take me off your mailing list. I don’t believe there’s a villain in the story and if I am critical, with comments that I was deceived, brain washed, and hypnotized, is now reading the Bible. The Holy Spirit is opening her eyes to many things that the Adventists are in error about. She is falling in love with him. Her conscience and her mother’s persuasion, and determined as a teenager, when God saved him from a nearly fatal injury in a sawmill accident, that he would be a doctor who saved others.

Over the years he recognized many signs of God’s leading. His family converted to Adventism in Finland when missionaries from America showed pictures of the beasts of Daniel and explained how a remnant of true commandment-keeping believers would survive the frightening end-time prophecies. His first student who had passed that class was a small but special people; his was a small girl. When she grew older she attended nursing school at the White Memorial Hospital in Los Angeles. She was dating a good but “worldly” man and was very much in love with him. Her conscience and her mother’s persuasion, however, put an end to the relationship. Soon afterward she met and subsequently married my father. A couple of years later my dad graduated from medical school, he and my mother answered a call to the Belgian Congo. The official language there was French, and the government required all doctors to take a topical medicine course in Belgium before practicing in the Congo. Because of various circumstances, my dad started the class late and spoke no French, further, one of his most important classes, including a lab, was on Sabbath. My dad, however, refused to break the Sabbath.

During evenings and Sundays studying, and even though he never attended that Sabbath class or lab, he passed the final exam. After he wrote the final test, he met the professor who told him he was the first student who had passed that class and passed without even attending it.

This accomplishment was only one of the many “Sabbath” stories I heard growing up, and I knew that the key to the kingdom was the Sabbath. It was the Holy. We Adventists were a small but special people; “many are called, but few are chosen.”

STANLEY ROUHE

This is a story about salvation—a deep-water rescue. For years I believed that salvation and the judgment were to be determined by behavior. First God made salvation possible; then, by our attitudes and actions, we proved our worthiness or unworthiness. In effect, salvation was somewhat like a balancing of His “good” and my “bad”. I knew God was perfect and that He would not allow imperfection to be in His presence. I understood that after God considered my best effort, Christ’s righteousness “made up the difference” between my attempts at perfection and God’s standard for me.

I was born to Adventist parents who demonstrated their devotion and sincerity by serving the heathen in the darkest of Africa. My father was a graduate of the College of Medical Evangelists (later Loma Linda University School of Medicine) and demonstrated as a teenager, when God saved him from a nearly fatal injury in a sawmill accident, that he would be a doctor who saved others.

For years I honored many signs of God’s leading. His family converted to Adventism in Finland when missionaries from America showed pictures of the beasts of Daniel and explained how a remnant of true commandment-keeping believers would survive the frightening end-time prophecies. To my father, a poor boy from Finland, God seemed to lead in later making it possible for him to be accepted into the Adventist medical school.

My mother’s family experienced a similar conversion when she was a small girl. When she grew older she attended nursing school at the White Memorial Hospital in Los Angeles. She was dating a good but “worldly” man and was very much in love with him. Her conscience and her mother’s persuasion, however, put an end to the relationship. Soon afterward she met and subsequently married my father. A couple of years later my dad graduated from medical school, he and my mother answered a call to the Belgian Congo. The official language there was French, and the government required all doctors to take a topical medicine course in Belgium before practicing in the Congo. Because of various circumstances, my dad started the class late and spoke no French, further, one of his most important classes, including a lab, was on Sabbath. My dad, however, refused to break the Sabbath.

During evenings and Sundays studying, and even though he never attended that Sabbath class or lab, he passed the final exam. After he wrote the final test, he met the professor who told him he was the first student who had passed that class and passed without even attending it.

This accomplishment was only one of the many “Sabbath” stories I heard growing up, and I knew that the key to the kingdom was the Sabbath. It was the Holy. We Adventists were a small but special people; “many are called, but few are chosen.”

Stanley Rouhe was born and raised in an Adventist family and educated in Adventists schools including LUL School of Medicine. He practiced neurosurgery for 30 years in Southern California until his recent retirement. He and his wife of 41 years, Anne Louise (who also grew up Adventist), have an adult daughter, Helen, who is a practicing clinical psychologist and family counselor. Today missions projects through Trinity Evangelical Free church in Redlands, California, occupy much of Stanley’s time.
The valley of love and delight

COLLEEN TINKER

The sadness was overwhelming. I felt as if I were going through a divorce. I had discovered that the doctrines of the church I'd embraced as my identity were not based in the Bible. Adventism did not respect Scripture as the inerrant word of God. Not only was the Adventist church not the “remnant church of Bible prophecy,” there is no “remnant church”; there is only one true Church that is the body of Christ. There is no “last day prophet.” Jesus Himself is God’s Final Word.

I didn’t want to leave; I loved Adventism. But I couldn’t stay. Either to stay and pretend I was loyal would be a lie. Heavily, I sat at the piano and played idly.

He looked us in the eyes and declared, “Remember, when they persecute you—and they will persecute you—you are blessed.”

As our conversation concluded, Mr. Shoup prayed for us again, and when, fighting tears, we stood to leave, he said the most remarkable thing. He looked us in the eyes and declared, “Remember, when they persecute you—and they will persecute you—you are blessed.”

Three times he repeated that message in three slightly different sentences. I remember leaving his office clearly aware that God had spoken His promise to us through the words of that God-fearing man. I also had my first awareness that God had not only led us out of everything familiar but that He was leading us into a new community where He could heal and nourish us.

In the seven-and-a-half years since God spoke His promise to us through Mr. Shoup, He has been faithful to keep it. We have lost friends, clients, dreams, and career advancements. We have gained contentment, joy, the personal awareness of Jesus’ presence and love, His work to do, and His faithful provision of our needs. We are learning to trust His plans and His timing instead of trying to trust His plans and His timing instead of our own, and we can say absolutely: there is no greater thing than knowing Jesus.

In this issue Bob Anderson and Greg Taylor share their experiences of leaving what they knew and finding greater things. Their stories of leaving what they knew and finding greater things are compelling and unique. But they tell of both God’s discipline and His surprising provision. Lebron McBride, a former Adventist pastor and the director of behavioral medicine at a family medicine residency in Georgia, gives his professional insight into the emotional and psychological effects of leaving a toxic church. Stanley Rouhe shares his story of discovering the gospel, and Thomas Francis calls each of us to live in the joy of Jesus.

As you read and reflect, we invite you to embrace Paul’s experiences. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ (Philippians 3:7-9).
Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full" (John 15:11). Jesus said, "No one will take your joy away from you" (John 16:22). These statements are outstanding, but when you understand to whom He was speaking, they are unbelievable! Jesus was talking to His chosen ones, His closest ones, His best friends, His students—the disciples who would be the founders and Apostles of His church. These men would all, with one exception, die of horrible painful causes. They would be murdered—executed for His sake. Some would be hacked in two with the sword. Others would be burned, beheaded, crucified, even skinned alive. The one who would not die by murder would be sentenced, for a time, to solitary exile on a remote rock of an island in the middle of the sea, and history tells us would be nearly blind and unable to walk unassisted by the time of his death. How could Jesus possibly promise them that their "joy would be full" and that "no one would take it away from them"?

Can you remember the first time you stood at the foot of the cross and looked at that mangled, bloody Man? Can you remember when you looked at that face and saw that He was looking at YOU—and you looked down and saw the bloody hammer in YOUR hand, and realized that YOU had put Him there and that He had done all of this for YOU? Can you remember how you fell at the foot of that horrible, beautiful cross and wept...