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YOU ARE WANTED! AND NEEDED!

By **Mario E. Ceballos, Commander (CHC) U. S. Navy, Retired**
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“The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall.”¹

God-fearing people have served God and country throughout the ages, as exemplified in the Bible by Daniel, Esther, and Joseph. Today faithful church members serve their countries in and out of uniform. Many serve God and country at different levels of government, providing civil service

and taking care of the needs of their fellow citizens. These individuals serve in positions as Armed/Defence forces officers of all levels, police, emergency medical personnel, in positions of power such as prime ministers, presidents, members of parliament, and legislators, and the list is not exhausted.

Have you considered why you have been entrusted to fulfill the duties of your positions? Could it be that the following quote applies to you? Because *“who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole,”* and because you will *“stand for the right though the heavens fall.”*

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You are ambassadors not only of your church but messengers of God during these last days of our earth.

Let's look at three examples recorded in the Bible, beginning with Joseph. This young man stood before Pharaoh and delivered a message from God. Joseph was a foreigner, a slave falsely imprisoned, accused of seducing a government official's wife.² Yet, his conduct even in prison was honorable and impeccable, acknowledging that he could not sin against God.

Daniel stood before King Nebuchadnezzar, the most powerful ruler in the known world of his time. More than once, Daniel told the king who was the true God, and pointed out to the king when he was wrong.³ Daniel had the highest wisdom and integrity because he was totally committed to God, and divine favor never left him. Daniel, like Joseph, gave God the glory and honor for all that was revealed to them.

Esther, also in a foreign land,

was blessed by God and became the queen of the most powerful empire of her time. Her demeanor, charm, and unparalleled beauty won over the hearts of King Xerxes⁴ and all the who she had contact within the court.

Today we have you! You are the Daniels, Josephs, and Esthers of our day. You are ambassadors not only of your church but messengers of God during these last days of our earth. You have a message to proclaim while serving governments of nations in the positions you hold. Follow the biblical examples and never forget as God was with them, He is also with you.

¹ White, Ellen G., *Education*, p. 57, Pacific Press Publishing Association. c 1903, 1952

² Genesis 39: 16-19.

³ Daniel 4:24-25.

⁴ Esther 2:17.

FAIR WINDS AND FOLLOWING SEAS

to WSO Director

Leadership change is inevitable. Until his retirement in June 2022 Dr. Mario E. Ceballos served as the director of the World Service Organization (WSO) and the director and endorser of Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries (ACM) at the General Conference. He'd held those positions since 2015. Prior to that he'd held the same positions as associate director at the General Conference.

As the WSO and ACM bid farewell to our leader the words of this Gaelic blessing resonate.

*Deep peace of the running wave to you.
Deep peace of the flowing air to you.
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you.
Deep peace of the shining stars to you.
Deep peace of the gentle night to you.
Moon and stars pour their healing
light on you.
Deep peace of Christ, of Christ the light
of the world to you.
Deep peace of Christ to you.*

ADVANCING THE MISSION OF WSO AND ACM

During his tenure Ceballos travelled worldwide to meet with military and law enforcement officials. Part of his work as WSO director was to open dialogues with leadership on the denomination's position on non-combatancy and to introduce Seventh-day Adventists as a world church.

Because of the need to connect with both Adventists who service in uniform and the Medical Cadets and their leaders a new worldwide database was developed and launched. Users can provide contact information, subscribe to the WSO magazine, *For God and Country*, and more.

Another thrust of Ceballos' efforts was to reignite interest in the Medical Cadets Corps (MCC). Along with this came a shift in the focus of the work of the Cadets with a new role emphasis on disaster response and service. A updated MCC manual was written and produced in both English and Spanish. Additionally, the MCC uniform guidelines were realigned.

In his role as ACM director/endorser, Ceballos oversaw policy development, administration, endorsement, and certification of chaplains, as well chaplaincy training in all 13 world divisions and the attached fields.

MILITARY AND CHURCH SERVICE

As a member of the United States Armed Forces active and reserves for 32 years, Mario achieved the rank of Commander. He also served as pastor in Puerto Rico, Texas, and Massachusetts, as youth director for the Texas Conference, and director of church ministries for the Southern New England Conference. He was

an associate director of spiritual care and adjunct professor to the medical residency program at Florida Hospital in Orlando, Florida. He also held the position of vice-president of Spiritual Services and Missions and adjunct professor of Spirituality and Healing for the Kettering Adventist Health Care and Kettering College of Medical Arts in Ohio.

Additionally, Ceballos also served as an adjunct professor at Andrews University and coordinated the Doctor of Ministry degrees in chaplaincy concentrations. He is an adjunct professor at Loma Linda University School of Religion and the

Inter-American Adventist Theological Seminary (IATS).

He holds a Master of Divinity degree from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Boston University. He is also a Board Certified Chaplain by the Association of Professional Chaplains and Adventist Chaplaincy Institute..

Dr. Ceballos is married to Dr. Gloria A. Ceballos. They have one married son, Dr. Mario A. Ceballos, a practicing attorney in Orlando, Florida and one grandson, Evan Alexander Ceballos.



Left to Right: Dr. Mario Ceballos (second from right) and former ACM/WSO director Gary Councill (right), interview Ghana Defence Force chaplains in 2010.

During a ceremony in Zambia, Ceballos met with the Zambian Defence Forces generals and other dignitaries.

A meeting with General Dolina of the Philippine Army opened conversations about chaplaincy and Adventists serving as soldiers in the Philippines.

MCC Major General Dionisio Olivo and Dr. Ceballos address Medical Cadet Corps during one of several onsite meetings and trainings.

During a ceremony in Zambia, Dr. Ceballos and other dignitaries received an escort into the arena where the activities were held.

Soldiers from the Malawi Defence Forces had the opportunity to share their experiences with Dr. Ceballos.

AFP Chief of Chaplains Brigadier General Dolina and AFP Adventist Chaplain Marlon Antonio met with Dr. Ceballos and Rodolfo Bautista, Jr., Director, Legal|Public Affairs and Religious Liberty (PARL), Central Luzon Conference.

An onsite training with MCC officers in Puerto Rico.

During a visit to the Philippines, Dr. Ceballos met with Adventists who serve in law enforcement in their communities and municipalities.

MCC leaders in Puerto Rico with Dr. Ceballos, far left, Inter-American Division ACM/WSO Director Hiram Ruiz (center), and Rear Admiral (CHC) Darold Bigger, U.S. Navy, Retired (far right).



LIVING YOUR BEST LIFE: SHARING HOPE AND WHOLENESS IN A BROKEN WORLD

By Angeline David Brauer, DrPH, MHS, RDN

Director, Department of Health Ministries, North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists

“When health is absent, wisdom cannot reveal itself, art cannot manifest, strength cannot fight, wealth becomes useless, and intelligence cannot be applied.”

This quote by the Greek physician Herophilus summarizes the remarkable impact of health on our well-being and ability to function optimally. He is stating that the lack of good health negatively impacts several major areas of our existence as humans—our cognition, creativity, physical stamina, economic fortitude, and mental capacity. In other words, our health impacts our resilience.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a long history of including a message of health in our missional goals. In fact, in 1863—the same year that the church became formally organized—one of our leading founders began to share the importance of living healthy. It was in that year, while in Otsego, Michigan, that Ellen White received a special message from God about the health work. It was only the beginning of a lifetime of earnest preaching, teaching, writing, and speaking on the importance of caring for the health of our mind and body, as well as for our spirit. It is said that “temperance” was Ellen White’s favorite topic to speak on, and she often presented about it before community and government officials, who listened with eagerness at her clear teachings on the topic.

IS THIS RELEVANT TODAY?

Do the words of these long-gone writers have relevance today? It doesn’t take much effort to look around us and see the devastation that we are experiencing in our health today. Despite incredible advances in technology, understanding of anatomy and

physiology, and growing recognition of the causes of diseases, we are still sicker than ever.

Consider the rates of obesity in the United States where we see a rise in adult obesity from 30.5 percent in 1999-2000 to 41.9 percent in the years 2017–2020.¹ And even in the face of a deadly pandemic, heart disease and stroke continue to be leading causes of death globally, with Alzheimer’s disease becoming an increasingly more common cause.² Mental health issues have grown in relevance as we see increasing rates of suicide and suicide attempts, addictions and addictive behaviors, abuse and trauma, and as already mentioned degenerative diseases such as Alzheimer’s.

Add to all this the utter sense of hopelessness that many people struggle with, a growing epidemic of loneliness despite technology that makes it easy to “connect,” and societal issues that are tearing apart families, communities, and nations. We may be tempted to think that all these issues are temporary and will pass sooner or later, but we also need to recognize the long-lasting impact they have on our health.

For instance, consider a report presented at a convention of the American Psychological Association. Looking at millions of individuals in North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia, researchers concluded that social isolation, loneliness, or living alone increased the risk of dying earlier at least as much as did obesity and other physical ailments.³ On the other hand, greater social connection was found to be linked to a 50 percent increased risk of living

longer. These demonstrate only one example of how societal issues can impact health and longevity.

So how should this impact our role in the world, specifically as Seventh-day Adventist Christians? Should the health of individuals and communities be of concern to us?

THE ROOTS OF OUR TEACHING

The root of the Adventist “health message” goes back to the very beginning of life on earth. We find some clues in the first chapters of Genesis of the importance of human health, which was given from God’s own hands. We are told that there are four parts of our existence that make us human, as follows:

1. In Genesis 2:7 we read, “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” On a very basic level, God created humans from dust and formed all that makes up our bodies from it. Our tissues, skeleton, nerves, hair, organs, etc. All were intricately formed and made to function in breathtaking beauty, order, and symmetry.⁴
2. The breath of God represents our connection to the Source of all life. I like to say that God made us to live in spiritual connection with Him. That is how we “live, and move, and have our being.”⁵ Without this breath, we return to dust and are no more.⁶

These two components are our basis for existence. Without either, we simply do not exist. Yet as we continue to read Genesis chapter 2, we see that God had much more to give us.

3. In verse 19 we see that God gives Adam a work to accomplish—that of naming the animals. What I find rather interesting is that God did not tell Adam what to call them, rather He provided a brain that was capable of creativity and imagination. It goes without saying that the brain must have been connected to the physical body, and therefore interdependent on it for healthy functioning.⁷
4. The fourth necessary component for a vibrant life, as recorded in Genesis 2:18, is identified in the one thing that God declares as being “not good.” As Adam went about his joyful occupation, he recognized that he was the only one of his kind. Unlike the other creatures that had companions, there was none equal to him. The Darby translation says, “but as for Adam, he found no helpmate, his like.” You can almost sense a tinge of loneliness in Adam’s emotions as he recognizes that, although he had the companionship of all creatures great and small, of angels, and even God Himself, yet there was someone missing. So, we see here that God created us with a desire to be with others who are like us. We were designed to live in community and in healthy relationships.

These four components of what makes us fully human—physical body, spiritual communion with God, mental capacity, and social relationships—are all necessary for a life to be truly whole. We see this manifested in the life of Christ, in that He grew in wisdom (mind), stature (physical), and favor with God (spiritual) and mankind (social/relational).

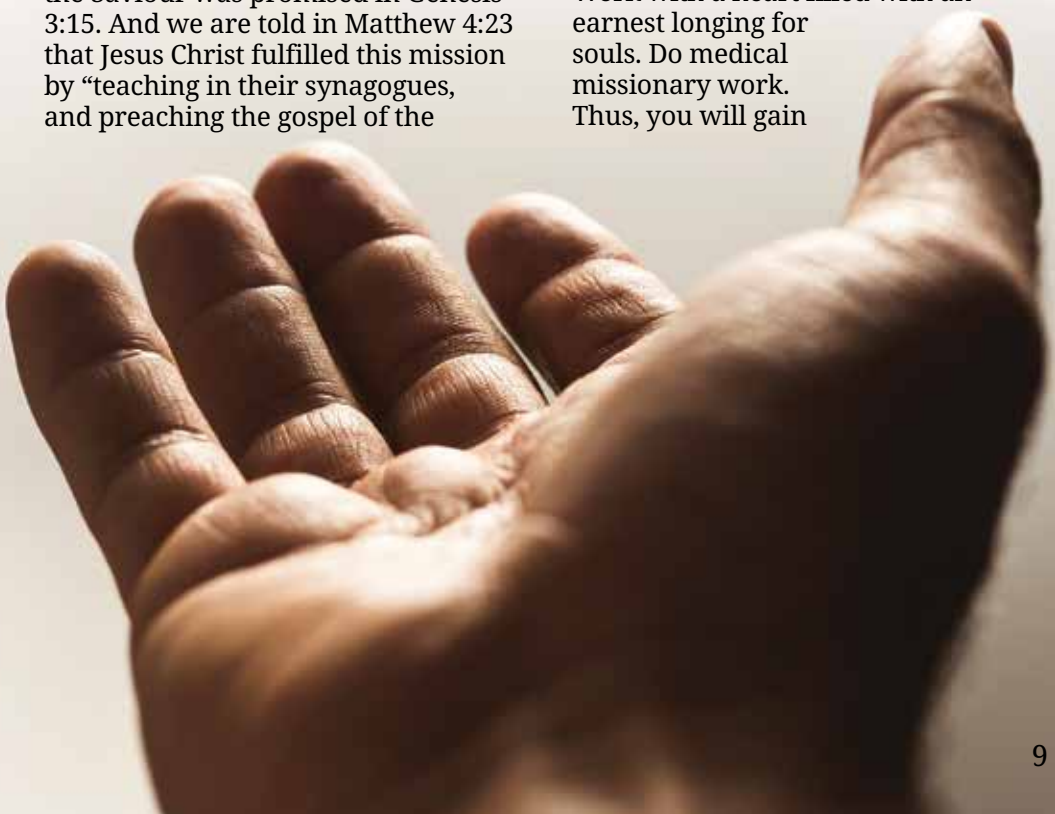
Why is this important to the Adventist Church? How does it lead

us to the Adventist health message? If we consider the account of what follows Creation—the Fall—as recorded in Genesis chapter 3, we will find that all four dimensions of our humanity were impacted. Verses 7-12 and 16-19 tell of the mental brokenness manifested in shame, fear, and distrust; the spiritual brokenness seen as our first parents hid from God and were afraid of Him; relational brokenness in the way Adam and Eve blamed each other for their sin; and humanity hears for the first time of the pain, wearying labor, sorrow they will experience and that their bodies will one day decompose and return to dust. As magnificent as humanity was created to be, the results of sin tore into every fiber of our existence and bore its baleful fruit of a lives touched with illness—physical, mental, relational, and spiritual.

But we were not left without hope, even in this dire situation. For it was because of this that the coming of the Saviour was promised in Genesis 3:15. And we are told in Matthew 4:23 that Jesus Christ fulfilled this mission by “teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the

kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.” Knowing the wholistic impact of sin, Christ had a wholistic ministry that included bringing healing to mind, body, and spirit, and of restoring the outcasts to their community. It is that very same method that the Adventist Church uses today to achieve the same goal—restoring the image of God in all of humanity. Ellen White shares the importance of the ministry of healing, which she often termed “medical missionary work,” in this way:

“Christ’s work in behalf of man is not finished. It continues today. In like manner His ambassadors are to preach the gospel and to reveal His pitying love for lost and perishing souls. By an unselfish interest in those who need help they are to give a practical demonstration of the truth of the gospel. They are to be co-laborers with Christ, revealing to those ready to perish His tender, pitying love... Work with a heart filled with an earnest longing for souls. Do medical missionary work. Thus, you will gain



access to the hearts of people, and the way will be prepared for a more decided proclamation of the truth.”¹⁰

LIVE LIKE AN ADVENTIST

When the early Adventist leaders recognized the need for an active medical missionary work, they founded the Western Health Reform Institute and began publication of the *Health Reformer* magazine. It was under the supervision of Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, and the continued guidance of Ellen White, that the work began to grow steadily, including establishment of a medical training school, additional health publications, and what became known as the Battle Creek Sanitarium. This health institute in particular attracted the attention of global leaders as they sought deliverance from their illnesses.

Throughout the next century of ministry,¹¹ numerous successful health programs were initiated by the Adventist Church, including the Five-Day Plan to Stop Smoking. The College of Medical Evangelists was opened in 1910 and continues today under the name Loma Linda University Health—a school and medical system with worldwide renown. Additional health centers have been established around the world, making the Seventh-day Adventist Church one of the largest parochial health care systems in the world. *Vibrant Life* magazine, previously titled *Life and Health*, continues to be the longest-running health publication. Added to all of this is the fervent work of local churches who are serving their communities through programming such as health fairs, cooking classes, addiction recovery programs, diabetes education programs, and so much more.¹²

The world continues to recognize the value of the Adventist principles and teachings on health and healthy living. In 2004, on behalf of National Geographic, a team set out to identify the longest-living people groups of the world. They identified five regions that had a high percentage of centenarians—those who live to be over 100 years old. Loma Linda, California was one of them. Attention was brought full force into the lifestyle of the roughly 9,000 Seventh-day Adventists residing in Loma Linda at the time.¹³ In fact, some are recommending that in order to live a long and healthy life, we should “live like an Adventist.”¹⁴ The Adventist Health Study, which is an on-going research study from Loma Linda University, continues to unearth the scientific evidence of how the balanced and well-planned health practices of Adventists are contributing to not only longevity, but also better quality of life. One of their recent findings is a lower rate of cancer and early death among Adventists.¹⁵

12 STEPS TO EXPERIENCE AND SHARE WHOLENESS

The story of the Adventist health message has certainly been a journey that continues today. This journey includes you, and me, and all who are willing to respond to the injunction, “We have come to a time when every member of the church should take hold of medical missionary work.”¹⁶ And as faithful stewards of God’s grace, we are to extend the hope of wholeness to those around us, even as we accept it within our own hearts and lives.

Good health is also a journey. It cannot be achieved by fad diets, temporary fixes, miraculous cures, etc. The principles are founded on a lifestyle that is first and foremost centered

around God's desire for our good health.¹⁷ When we see God as the One who heals us¹⁸ and wishes us to have life abundant¹⁹ we can more readily accept His plan for our wholeness.

Each one of us is on a different point on this journey. Some of us may be just getting started, while others have traveled the road for some time. Some have had to make U-turns when we learned that the trail we were following wasn't heading the right way. And yes, some of us aren't considering getting on this journey at all. It may be the last of our desires.

Wherever you may be, I invite you to ask where does God want you to be? He created you for magnificence. But as we've seen, the dreadful effects of sin shattered us in many pieces, and so we all struggle in one way or another, or on several aspects of our health—whether that is in eating healthy, or getting adequate sleep, or appropriate forms of entertainment. Or perhaps life has beaten us down and we feel shame or fear and are

unable to form healthy relationships. It may be that our spiritual life has been dead. Even though we follow forms and customs, our hearts may not sense the presence of God. Remember that all these are symptoms of our brokenness.

So, what can be done? I would like to recommend a pattern that has proven effective for decades in the context of 12-Step groups. When we look at achieving our goals from a step-wise fashion, with mini-goals along the way, we are more likely to make progress. We can also better recover from discouragements when we aren't meeting the larger goals. See the box on "Twelve Steps to Wholeness" for a spiritually focused process. You can find more resources for a Christian-based program available at NADhealth.org/recovery. Although this program is tailored for recovering from addictions and harmful habits, it can also be useful in addressing behaviors that seem overwhelming to change.



TWELVE STEPS TO WHOLENESS

*(Adapted from Journey to Wholeness,
Adventist Recovery Ministries, NADhealth.org/recovery)*

Step One	We admitted we were powerless over our compulsions, misconceptions, and unhealthy habits, and that our lives had become unmanageable.
Step Two	Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
Step Three	Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God.
Step Four	Made a fearless and searching moral inventory of ourselves.
Step Five	Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being, the exact nature of our harmful habits.
Step Six	Were entirely ready to have God remove all these challenging aspects of our character.
Step Seven	Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
Step Eight	Made a list of all persons we had harmed through self-neglect and became willing to make amends to them all.
Step Nine	Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
Step Ten	Continued to take personal inventory and when we made missteps promptly admitted it.
Step Eleven	Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
Step Twelve	Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Most importantly, look to Jesus.²⁰ He lived on this earth, too, and He knows how to encourage us on our journey. Remember also that we were created to thrive in community, so look for others who are moving forward in their own journey to better health. See the Resource List for additional ways to learn, connect with others, and become equipped to live your best life.

LIVE WHOLISTICALLY AND THRIVE

Space doesn't allow us to consider the many ways in which a healthy lifestyle, including appropriate medical care when needed, is effective against any myriad of ailments. Researchers continue to unravel the links between diet and brain function, trauma and addictions, spirituality, and physical well-being, and so much more. What is becoming all the clearer is that a holistic approach to health—including all four domains of our being (spiritual, mental, physical, and social)—leads to stronger individuals, families, and communities. Christ demonstrated this in His *ministry*, and now He empowers us to demonstrate it in ours.

¹ Center for Disease Control, "Adult Obesity Facts," Accessed at <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/adult.html>.

² World Health Organization, "The top 10 causes of death," Accessed at <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/adult.html>.

³ American Psychological Association. (2017, July 5). "So lonely I could die" [Press release]. <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2017/08/lonely-die>.

⁴ Psalm 139:14.

⁵ Acts 17:28.

⁶ Psalm 104:29.

⁷ Romans 12:1, 2.

⁸ Genesis 2:20.

⁹ Luke 2:52.

¹⁰ White, Ellen G., *Counsels to the Church*, page 308, paragraph 4.

¹¹ *Adventist Review* (2009). "Chronology of Major Developments in Adventist Health Promotion and Wellness." Read more at: <https://adventistreview.org/2009-1518/2009-1518-40/archive-2676/>

¹² For a wide assortment of health ministries resources, visit NADhealth.org in the North American Division or healthministries.com for global resources from the General Conference.

¹³ Read more about the Blue Zones at <https://www.bluezones.com/exploration/loma-linda-california/>

¹⁴ Turner, Lisa (updated 2011)., "Can We Live to Be 100?" Accessed at https://www.huffpost.com/entry/can-we-live-to-be-100_b_751946.

¹⁵ Adventist Health Study (2019). Study reveals lower rates of cancer and early death in Adventists. Accessed at <https://news.llu.edu/research/study-reveals-lower-rates-of-cancer-and-early-death-adventists>.

¹⁶ White, Ellen G. *Testimonies to the Church*, Volume 7, page 62, paragraph 1.

¹⁷ 3 John 1:2.

¹⁸ Psalm 103:3.

¹⁹ John 10:10.

²⁰ Hebrews 12:1, 2.

RESOURCES YOU CAN ACCESS

- Adventist Health Ministries, North American Division, NADhealth.org
- General Conference Health Ministries, healthministries.com
- *Adventist Health Study*, adventisthealthstudy.org
- *Every Step Counts* FREE online course, NADhealth.org/recovery/everystepcounts
- Joy of Eating resources including recipes, articles, and Facebook group, NADhealth.org/healthyyou/joyofeating
- Made to Move Challenge resources for fitness, NADhealth.org/healthyyou/madetomove
- Adventist Association of Health and Wellness Coaching, NADhealth.org/coaching
- Adventist Association of Faith Community Nursing, NADhealth.org/aafcn



From the Chaplain's Desk

SPECIAL OPERATIONS

Lesson From the Book of Daniel

By J. Michael Hakanson,
Captain (CHC) U. S. Navy (Retired)

The Naval Amphibious base in Coronado, California, is where Basic Underwater Demolition (BUDs) training turns “normal” Sailors into Navy SEALs. In 1992 as a young Lieutenant, I served in Unit 4, more commonly known to non-SPEC OPs folks as “SEAL TEAM 4.” At the end of my naval career, as a Navy Captain, I was back in Coronado and having lunch in the galley. However, I was not back with SPEC-Ops, but my last Command prior to retirement shared the same galley with BUDs.

I often looked across the room from the officers’ dining area to the young students sporting their shaved heads. Sometimes on winter days, they were fresh out of five hours in the Pacific Ocean, all sandy and still in their wet uniforms.

On one particular day, BUDs students were lined up at the salad bar. As I stood in the salad bar line, my eyes connected with those of a student who I’d been watching as he filled his plate.

I was curious to know why he

had a large bed of brown rice and just a very few tortilla chips on his plate. My suspicions were confirmed when he put a layer of black beans on top of the rice. You probably can guess the rest. Some finely shredded lettuce from the taco bar, tomatoes, and other fresh veggies on the bar, topping it off with cheese and salsa.

I watched the next BUDS student as he piled his plate with the same ingredients. For a moment, I thought I was at a church potluck in line for “haystacks.”

When we came to the end of the bar, where the two sides joined, he noticed me eyeing his plate with a smile. Maybe it was because he was face to face with a very senior—and old looking—officer, but he seemed compelled to defend his giant haystack.

“Sir, I am very careful what I put into my body,” he said.

“That looks good,” I replied. “You know what those are called, don’t you?”

“Taco salad, without meat, I guess, sir.”

“That’s called a haystack.”

With a smile, the young Sailor replied, “Thanks, I’ll remember that.”

I bet he passed that one on to his other “Teams” buddies. So today, if you go to the Coronado galley and ask what a plate piled with those various food items is called, some utterly unrelated student will probably tell you he made himself a haystack.

DO THE DANIEL THING—SEALS DO

That day’s events reinforced in my mind that Navy SEALs have embraced a lesson that, for over 100 years, Adventists have known

but often undervalued. If you want to be stronger, faster, fitter, dare to be a Daniel!

You may remember that in Daniel 1:8-18, when Daniel and his friends gave up the king’s rich food for a vegetarian diet, they ended up performing like SEALs when compared to the other Babylonian captives.

In 1992, I didn’t know very much about Navy SEALs. So, when I began my time with Special Operations Command-South, I was shocked to learn many of my SEAL compatriots were vegetarians. Maybe it was a lack of faith in how far the health message I had grown up with could take a person who needed near super-human abilities.

One thing I learned though, was that it was not all just about diet for these guys. They got plenty of fresh air and tons of exercise. In 1992 most people did not carry around water bottles. These guys carried around water bottles. Hydration was significant for them. They were serious about protecting their eyes from the sun and their ears from loud noises. None of them smoked.

THE NOT-SO DANIEL-LIKE LIFESTYLE EFFECTS

This was quite a contrast to the ship that I had recently been stationed on. I remember a galley line of overweight Sailors. After a two sausage, pancake, sweet roll, and egg breakfast, many of them also needed to visit the “Smoke Deck” to enjoy one more smoke before “morning quarters” with the Chief. Unlike the SEALs, these guys just

*If you want to be stronger, faster, fitter,
dare to be a Daniel!*

about collapsed every time they were tested for physical fitness. Some did collapse. Same Navy. Different lifestyles, different results.

IT'S TIME TO TAKE IT SERIOUSLY

My time ended on the ship where many of the Sailors made poor lifestyle choices, and I next checked into Special Operations Command. I enquired about the chance to go to Airborne school. The SEAL Deputy Commander explained that no one from this Command fails at the Army's Jump school.

The Command would not send me if I passed the fitness Navy test for my age (at the time, I was 36 years old). But instead, I must be able to pass the Army fitness test (much farther run and higher scores) and at the level of an 18-year-old.

I think I disappointed the Petty Officer who was assigned to test me. He told me he would help me get rid of my excess 'relaxed muscle' and asked if I needed help regarding diet.

I told him I knew how I should eat; I just needed to do it.

You see, even though I was a vegetarian, I liked too much of the "rich food." So, it took me an extra four months, the push back of my school date, and living a much healthier lifestyle than I had known for decades and preached as a pastor for almost 10 years.

Unbeknownst to me, the instructors watched me closely while at the Army jump school. Since they could not seem to break me physically, and because of a glitch in my record, they surmised I might not really be a Navy chaplain. They thought I was an NCIS undercover plant trying to catch one of the instructors doing something wrong.

I was just trying to show them even a chaplain sent by the SEALs to jump school was going to make it right alongside the 18-20-year-old Army and Marine recruits. After being invited to do the prayer before our fifth and final parachute jump, they eventually figured I must be a real Navy Chaplain.



In hindsight, when I think of that time in my life, I had a real opportunity to give those Jump school instructors a Bible study on Daniel. So, it is not just the Navy SEALs who are health nuts, but we Seventh-day Adventists have been privileged with this unique advanced insight into health.

ARE YOU TEMPTED TO NOT SPEAK UP?

Have you been tempted to be quiet about our health message and just go along with the group? Maybe you don't want to stand out as being from a strange religion that others are unfamiliar with. I am sure Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah may have been tempted to do that.

I think we are unaware of how much living our message of health really affects us and what God can do with a healthy witness.

When I went onto Active Duty, I elected to go Navy partly because I struggled with my weight and physical fitness. The Navy test was physically easier than the Army test. I struggled with the Army fitness test for the previous nine years as an Army National Guard Chaplain while also serving as a church pastor in the Northern California Conference. Little did I know what God had planned for me on Active Duty in the Navy.

When I was ready to leave Puerto Rico, where I had been serving with the SEALs. I elected to do my

last physical fitness test with base Chapel personnel (Chaplains from about five different denominations and six of our enlisted persons support personnel).

I will never forget the final run. It was a loop of 1.5 miles through the base. Our group of eleven runners started out together, but when I got to the finish line and looked back....I could not see anyone. Rumor had it that one of the other chaplains said it was not a fair race because I was an Adventist.

TRAINING TODAY PREPARES YOU FOR TOMORROW

Who knew it would be the Navy SEALs that would convince me to be a better Adventist shortly before I would need all my personal, physical, spiritual, and emotional strength to survive?

Less than two years after my time with SEAL Team 4, I found myself in Iraq at war and wearing about 15 pounds of extra protective gear. I had to enlist every ounce of my faith to get through that entire experience. If I struggled physically, on top of spiritually and emotionally, I might not have come through as well as I did and succeeded with the ministry that God sent me there to do. Dare to be a Daniel. It probably made more of a difference for Daniel and his compatriots than he expected. I am sure he had no idea at the time he would need everything his lifestyle would do for him.

I think we are unaware of how much living our message of health really affects us and what God can do with a healthy witness.

THE CHAPLAIN WHO HELD NO RANK

By Pierre Steenberg, Ph.D., D. Min.,

Veteran, South African Air Force, with Deena Bartel-Wagner, Editor, Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries

Growing up on the Sedhaven High School campus in Heidelberg, South Africa, was an idyllic experience for Pierre Steenberg. “My father was a pastor, as well as an educator, and he served as the academy principal,” says Pierre. “We were rock solid in our beliefs on salvation, our Adventist doctrines, and so forth.”

As the youngest of four brothers, he enjoyed exploring the land that surrounded the school. “The campus was huge, and the mountains were my playground where I explored,” says Pierre.

It was here that Pierre began feeling the first stirring of what became his life’s calling.

Following high school, he entered university to study theology, knowing he’d have to complete a year of compulsory service in the South African military upon graduation. At that time, all white males in South Africa were required to serve one year in a branch of the armed forces. If you refused to serve, the other option was a two-year prison term. “You could enter the service directly out of high school or after university studies,” says Pierre. “One

of the advantages of doing your service after university was that you received a higher rank and better pay. I was very clear on my calling to ministry, so I went and studied first. Then, immediately following graduation, I reported for duty.”

When he received his assignment, Pierre learned it was with the South African Air Force. “Most Adventists were assigned to the medics. I believe I was the first Seventh-day Adventist to go to the chaplaincy side of the Air Force,” says Pierre. “I completed both my basic and officer’s training with pastors of other denominations. I was the only Adventist among them, and we had many theological discussions about our beliefs.”

NO RANK, BUT HEADQUARTERS DUTY

Pierre received unsettling news the weekend before graduation, with his training almost completed. “I was called in and told that because I am an Adventist, I couldn’t be an officer,” says Pierre. “I’d completed 99.9 percent of my training. A government policy required every officer have a certain amount of under officers.



While training for his service in the South Africa Air Force, Pierre Steenberg developed his listening skills and answering questions of faith.

Since there weren't many Adventists in the services, there couldn't be an Adventist chaplain holding rank. The irony was that as chaplains, we were expected to minister to everyone, not just those of our denomination, and I carried out that duty."

His fellow chaplains who had received their ranks were assigned to various locations. Then Pierre learned his assignment was at the main Air Force headquarters. "On Monday morning, I reported to the

commanding officer and presented my paperwork," says Pierre. "He looked at it and then looked at me. Then he looked at the paperwork again and said, 'Okay, I know what's going on here.' From that moment on, he treated me the same as an officer. I was an officer of parade with him, inspecting the parade grounds and filled many other duties."

Because of his assignment, Pierre interacted daily with the top generals of the Air Force as he held worships,

"Most Adventists were assigned to the medics. I believe I was the first Seventh-day Adventist to go to the chaplaincy side of the Air Force."



provided counsel, and more. “I became close friends with some of them, and they invited me to preach in their churches,” says Pierre. “About two months into my time at headquarters, the commanding officer called me to his office. He asked me to sign a paper, and after reading it, I did. It was an order that assigned the rank of one-line corporal to me, which is technically a chaplain’s assistant rank.”

Upon his arrival at Air Force headquarters, Pierre was the only chaplain. Eventually, others came and then would move on to assignments elsewhere. However, Pierre completed his entire time of service working among the headquarters generals and staff.

SERVING ALL ADVENTISTS

Although attached to the Air Force, Pierre’s chaplaincy duties took him to all service branches. Since he was the only Adventist chaplain, in

the nation, he visited all Adventist service members, regardless of their military branch. In addition, he would assist them with any Sabbath issues and any other problems that needed resolution.

At that time, a chaplain’s rank was assigned as equal to whoever was permanently there and held the highest rank on the base. “So, in the Air Force headquarters, your rank is equal to that of a general, but you don’t have executive powers and can’t give orders as a chaplain,” says Pierre.

This became useful when Pierre interacted with other officers about problems that Adventist service members experienced.

“I was asked to visit a group of Adventists participating in the equivalent of a hell week. When I arrived, I learned they hadn’t been fed for three or four days,” says Pierre. “My visit was on Sabbath, and I’d worn my suit rather than my uniform, so no one knew my rank. I

approached the commanding officers, introduced myself, and told them I was from the chaplaincy office at the Air Force headquarters. I asked why my people didn't have food when everyone else was receiving rations."

Rations with pork had been distributed to those who weren't Adventists or Jews. The other rations were supposed to be divided between those who required non-pork alternatives. "The officers were quite upset that this hadn't happened, and things were quickly resolved," says Pierre. "In other situations, I simply had to place a phone call stating that I was the chaplain calling from Air Force headquarters and could resolve issues that way. This was a valuable ministry for my fellow Adventists serving at that time."

WEAPONS, DEATH, AND SECRET MISSIONS

There were moments when Pierre's beliefs were challenged. For example, although chaplains do not carry weapons, during basic and officers' training, they were certified on how to use various firearms.

"I did face that choice. I met with the highest possible people regarding the training. My stance was I believe in my biblical right of self-defense," says Pierre. "If somebody attacks me or somebody where I can make a difference, I'll do so. However, I would not intentionally place myself in a position where that becomes likely. They agreed that they would train and certify me, but I would not be required to be in any position where using a weapon would be an issue."

The week following his training and certification, Pierre was ordered to stand guard. He replied that he'd stand guard but would do so without a weapon. His officers thought he was crazy and said he would be useless without a weapon.

"I reminded them that they'd agreed that I would not be placed in a position where I'd have to use a weapon," says Pierre. "I reiterated that I would stand guard but without a weapon. So, they took me off guard duty, and I never faced that again."

The death of a service member within a unit is never easy. But it is even more complicated when it is

"In the Air Force headquarters, your rank is equal to that of a general, but you don't have executive powers and can't give orders as a chaplain."

death by suicide. “We had a suicide on our base that we had to deal with. Suddenly, you’re dealing with those who suffer from grief because they know this person well. It’s the friend they’ve gone through deep waters together,” says Pierre. “And on the other hand, you’re dealing with those who have theological questions. I was thankful for a class in crisis counseling as a part of my undergraduate studies. It was very beneficial to help navigate that situation.”

Chaplains can fill a role in top secret missions, too. “A high-ranking government official from another country fell ill in South Africa. During a secret mission, this person was extracted and brought to the military hospital in Pretoria,” says Pierre. “He was an Adventist, so I was dispatched to go and do chaplaincy visits in the hospital with this person. That was quite an interesting experience going to this highly protected, highly secretive situation, ministering to this person who was balanced between life and death.”

The nature exploration he learned as a child continued into adulthood through nature photography. “I’ve been involved in photography since high school,” says Pierre. “Occasionally, the military used me as an aerial photographer. We would commission two planes, and a photographer would be in each one. So, you have total control telling the pilot where to fly and what position they should be in as you capture the needed photos.”

Today, Pierre is a semi-professional photographer specializing in landscapes. He holds certification to teach photography at the high school

level and writes a blog teaching the reader about photography. His work can be viewed at PierreSteenbergPhotography.com

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

Halfway through his year of military service, Pierre enrolled at the University of Pretoria to begin his seminary coursework. During the first semester of his coursework, there was no conflict with exams being scheduled on Sabbath. But that trend didn’t remain in the second semester. When one of his courses had a scheduled Sabbath exam, Pierre approached the professor and asked if he could take the exam on another day. “I saw he was not in the mood to change the exam date,” says Pierre. “He said, ‘Let’s discuss this in class,’ which I hoped to avoid. During the next class, the professor asked if anyone had a problem with moving the exam from Saturday to Monday. Of course, nobody objected because who wants to come in on the weekend. Then he announced, ‘From now on, all the exams will be on Monday.’ And that was the end of it. I didn’t have to ask again in that class to have the exam moved.”

A few weeks later, the university contacted Pierre and asked if he would proctor all the Sabbath exams for other Adventists (and sometimes for Jewish students) on Friday afternoons. This meant the students would come to Pierre’s home, take the exam, and stay overnight. They were free to go the following day at 10:00 a.m. when the other students had entered their test time. This continued for seven years while he completed his three degrees.

“Being faithful to your beliefs doesn’t impact only you. There are others you may never meet who will be affected by your decisions and actions.”

MY GREATEST MILITARY CHALLENGE

Although there were challenges with Sabbath, standing guard with a weapon, deaths, and more, Pierre discovered the most significant challenge came from other Adventists.

“The biggest hurdle I faced as a chaplain was half-hearted Adventists who wouldn’t stand up for their principles,” says Pierre. “Later, when another Adventist followed them and wanted to stand up for his or her principles, it caused problems. The military said this wasn’t a problem for another Adventist last week or month. That created massive issues for all sorts of people. I had to explain how that first Adventist perhaps was not true to their beliefs. Being faithful to your beliefs doesn’t impact only you. There are others you may never meet who will be affected by your decisions and actions.”

FORGING AHEAD TO CIVILIAN LIFE

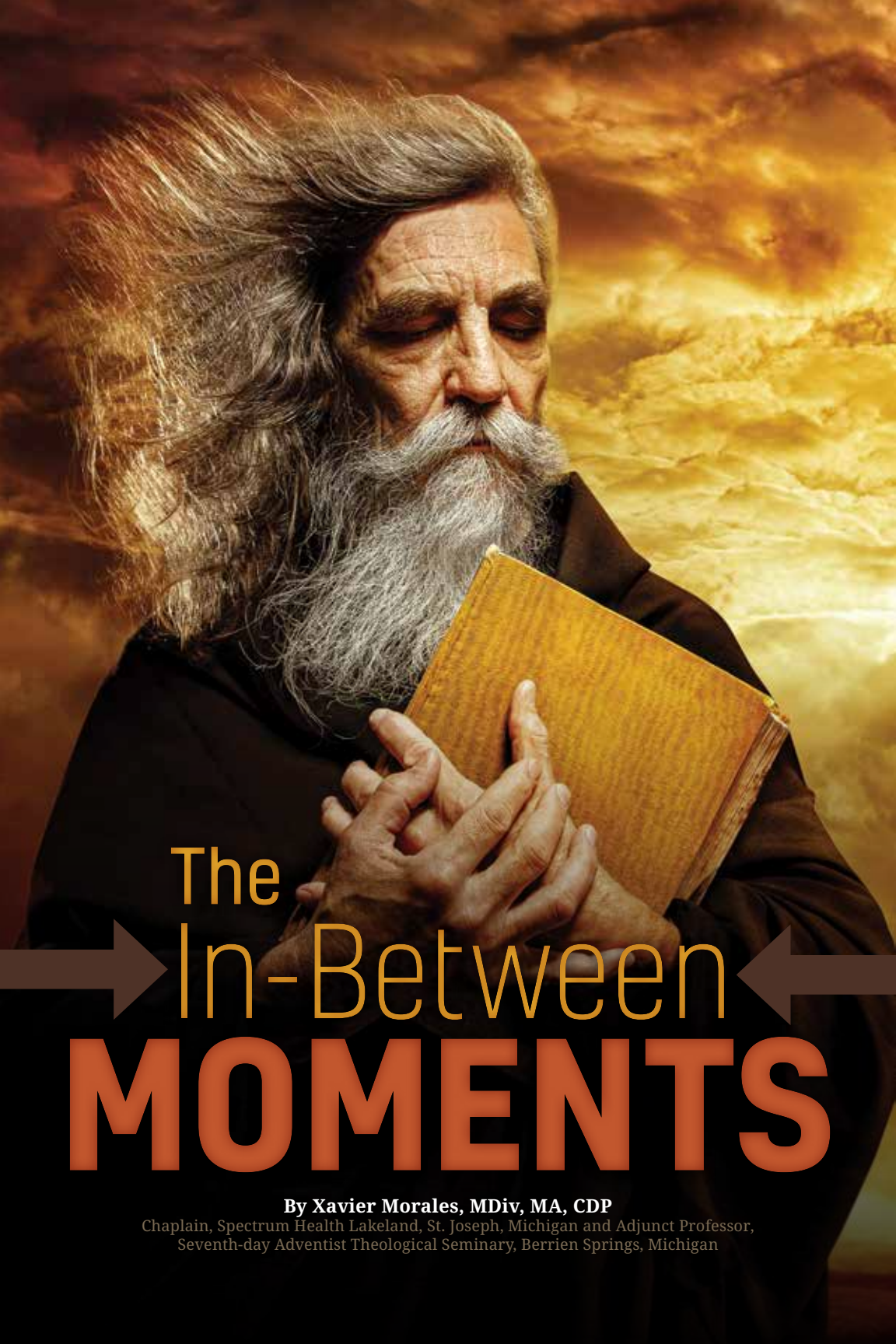
Upon completing his military service, Pierre served a three-year pastoral internship while completing his graduate studies. Other church districts followed along with church administrative positions in South Africa and the United States. Today, he is at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska, where he is an assistant

professor of religion. He and his wife, Karilen, are the parents of two sons.

As he reflects on his military service, Pierre recalls his encounters there helped prepare him for future situations. “The military has a way of maturing you. I graduated from college when I was 21, so I was a kid when I began in the Air Force,” says Pierre. “I think it was a great experience to be with pastors from other denominations. When we discussed doctrinal beliefs, it helped me understand how their members would think. They almost gave me free education about their members’ objections when I gave Bible studies in the future.”

Pierre also developed his personal code on how to treat others. “The African military taught me very quickly how not to treat people. We were ill-treated badly, both physically and psychologically. This is all to break you down so they can build you back up,” says Pierre. “I learned to value people and not to see them as a piece of dirt that you can do with whatever you want.” Throughout his military service, Pierre tried to see those he worked with through the eyes of Jesus and how they were valued by Him.

Although politics kept Pierre from holding the rank he deserved, he knew his true rank is bestowed on him by the King of the Universe.



The In-Between **MOMENTS**

By Xavier Morales, MDiv, MA, CDP

Chaplain, Spectrum Health Lakeland, St. Joseph, Michigan and Adjunct Professor,
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Berrien Springs, Michigan

Have you heard the story of Moses? I am sure you have. As with many of the biblical narratives, we have listened to the story of Moses time and time again. As a baby, he was put in a basket and sent down the Nile River. He became an Egyptian, then killed an Egyptian and fled to Midian. He came back, delivered God's people through some monumental miracles, and the story goes on. Yet, have you stopped to reflect and consider God's transformative process in Moses? That in-between moment?

I say this because, like Moses, I too have struggled with my temper and losing my patience, especially in dealing with God's people. I, too, am like Moses in many ways. If I had seen what Moses saw in the Egyptian kingdom, I probably would have killed that Egyptian, too, with the way I used to be. I would have run away not to be killed myself. Then after leading God's people out of Egypt, listening to their incessant whining for 40 years in the wilderness, I would have lost my temper and struck that rock too. Yet, Moses found forgiveness from Christ from that incident. He was raised from the dead and taken directly to Heaven as the only human to have seen God's glory and not be consumed.

I say all this because I have not heard someone speak about the 40 years Moses spent in Midian

herding sheep after spending his first 40 years in Egypt. Do you mean he was 80 years old when God used him to deliver His people? We see memes about this celebrity and that celebrity being successful, etc., later in life. Moses was 80 years old when he delivered an entire nation out of oppression through God's power and might! What about the 40-year conversion process, if I may use the terminology loosely? We baptize people, make people pastors, chaplains, elders, church members, etc., expecting them to be a pseudo-type of a level of holiness that will not exist until Christ returns. Do we fall into the trap of believing baptism and a calling to ministry somehow make the person magically holy without defect, much like we see crime shows and expect the law to solve crimes in an hour as well?

Conversion does not work like that. We know about Mosaic laws, covenantal principles/regulations that came through Moses, the handwritten Ten Commandments of God, etc.

Have we ever thought about the Mount Everest-size broken mess that Moses was before all of that? Here you have someone who is Hebrew. He grows up as an Egyptian. He knows some about YHWH, but his cognitive abilities are shaped by Egyptian language, culture, etc. Suddenly Moses becomes a stranger



Moses was 80 years old when he delivered an entire nation out of oppression through God's power and might! What about the 40-year conversion process, if I may use the terminology loosely?

in a foreign land, far away from his adoptive home, and entering an identity crisis like no other, only for him to end up talking to a burning bush? Can you imagine? How do you even begin to formulate the amount of mental chaos going on inside Moses' head?

I have been there. I grew up in the Seventh-day Adventist church. Unlike Moses, who involuntarily drifted down the Nile River, I voluntarily drifted down my own path simply because I did not know God. I knew laws and ordinances, but I did not have the beautiful, deep, passion-filled relationship I have with God now. I did not kill anyone. I did do a lot of damage in my life, most of all, to myself. I tried to die by suicide with a gun more than once. I drank, smoked, partied, womanized, etc. I served the gods doing what I felt was good and right for me, or as they say now, I was living my truth. It was not until I ended up in jail that I had my burning bush moment. I was bruised and battered. It was in that cold single-person cell, with a concrete bed, where I heard God's voice. I had to pause for a minute because I thought I was losing it. It was like the correctional officers walking past or near my door disappeared. I was there, but my mind was wholly engaged in a voice I had heard people

talk about when I was a kid, but I never heard it for myself. This was my burning bush moment.

I was set free from jail, but only after a debate with God, like that of Moses, inside my jail cell. *God, how can I go back to that place? Was not that state my source of anguish where I began this process of self-destruction? Ok, fine, but this time do not send me to church. If you want me to follow You, You must tell me Yourself about who You really are.*

It was here where my "40" year conversion process began. God did lead me to church, back to His spiritual hospital, but to focus on Him. He provided key people in my life to disciple me. It turned into a calling to go to the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, which I went kicking and screaming because I was not one of *those* holy people. I was a horrible human being who hurt many. You know what God said to me? *That makes you the perfect candidate for My mission.* I was blessed with a new life, new friends, and new everything, and yet I continued to struggle internally. The same issues that made me walk away from the church were still present. *God, why did You bring me back to this!?* I was ready to strike a rock, but this was my Midian, and the flock I needed to tend to were His people.



It was not until I ended up in jail that I had my burning bush moment. I was bruised and battered. It was in that cold single-person cell, with a concrete bed, where I heard God's voice. I had to pause for a minute because I thought I was losing it.

He gave me a wonderful wife, much like Moses was given Zipporah. He gave me children just like Moses. The conversion was still ongoing. *God, why? Why am I not changed? Why are these character traits from my past still haunting me? I thought following You it would just go, 'poof', and I am new.* I held onto jobs that resembled my past career, and I refused to let go even though I had been working as a chaplain, you know, 'doing the Lord's work.'

God has been patient and used this last steppingstone of a secondary role I held on to. He closed a chapter that had continued to be open long after I had left that career path. Even though I am nowhere near 80 years old physically, I feel like it mentally at times.

I finally let go of that chapter in my life, and now YHWH has shown me through my study of Moses that His greatest miracle was not parting the Red Sea. His greatest miracle was using a murderous, angry, hot-tempered, poorly

educated, idol worshiping, impatient, argumentative descendant of a slave to complete His mission for His glory. This is me, not just Moses.

Do not beat yourself up if you are not where you feel like you should be or where others expect you to be? If you are struggling with addictions, character, mental health, reach out to someone close to you. It will take time. My conversion is far from over. It will not always be a smooth ride, and you may not always be the most eloquent or patient. You may also end up striking the rock of your own life that keeps you from Canaan, but like Moses, Canaan was Israel's promised land. Moses lost his temper, repented, but made it to *The Promised Land*. He saw death for a moment, was resurrected, and walked into Heaven alive, well, and made new. Likewise, I found my identity in my slavery heritage, my Afro-Caribbean roots. Still, it was not until all of it merged with my identity in Christ where I found my place in this foreign land.



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Ephesians 2:10, New Living Translation



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Ellen G. White



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