Journey of Hope

2006 Week of Prayer Readings
I N T R O D U C T I O N

Journey of Hope

A message from the officers of the General Conference

BY MARK FINLEY

It has been said that you can live weeks without food, days without water, seconds without air, but no time at all without hope. The human heart craves for a hope that transcends human limitations. It longs to know that God is in control and that ultimately He will fulfill His eternal plan for us. Humans want to know there is a way out of the challenges, difficulties, and obstacles that we confront in life. We want to know whether there is something more and better than the pain, suffering, sorrow, and disappointments we experience in this world.

When there is hope, our hearts are gladdened and strengthened today, and we can face tomorrow. True hope is found only in God, a God of hope. From the depth of his being, David cried out, "And now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You" (Ps. 39:7). *Hope that is rooted in God is a hope that will never let us down. As Christians we can "rejoice in hope" (Rom. 5:2). We need not "sorrow as others who have no hope" (1 Thes. 4:13). We are "called in hope," "sustained in ... hope," and exhorted to "lay hold of ... hope" (Eph. 4:4; Rom. 8:24; Heb. 6:18). The Bible is a book filled with promises of hope. It points us from what is to what will be. It lifts our eyes from the temporal to the eternal. It leads us from what is around us to what is above us.

Seventh-day Adventists are a global people of hope. We believe that the loving God who created us cares for us. We believe that the Christ who came once to die was resurrected, and has ascended to God's heavenly dwelling, where He is now ministering before the Father for us. We believe that the Christ who dwells in us will soon come to take us home to enjoy His loving presence forever.

We are Adventists. We believe in "the blessed hope" (Titus 2:13), the hope of the soon return of Jesus. To us, this is no make-believe or illusionary dream. It is a reality. Jesus is coming—really, literally, audibly, visibly, dramatically in the skies, to end all evil and triumph gloriously.

We are Adventists. Our hearts beat with eager anticipation. Soon worry, want, and war will be over. Soon suffering, sorrow, and sickness will be no more. Soon disease, disaster, and death will be vanquished. Soon pollution, pestilence, and pain will be defeated. Soon He will come.

As you read these Week of Prayer readings, let your heart rejoice in hope. Each article is saturated with the hope-filled promises of God's Word. He loves you more than you can imagine. Rejoice in hope. He is concerned about your concerns. Rejoice in hope. He is coming again for you, so read on and rejoice in hope.

Your servant in the blessed hope,

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In Need of Saving Hope

The story suggests that Eve went on a walk alone (Gen. 3:1), implying that there is strength in unity. She went on a journey of knowledge, seeking to satisfy her God-given inquisitiveness. She became involved in a dialogue with the serpent, and reached a critical crossroad. We all reach such crossroads in our daily journeys. These are moments of profound significance that will have a deep impact on the quality and future of our lives.

The serpent insinuates that under the present circumstances she does not have a future that will allow her to develop her full potential. He presents her journey as circular, leading her nowhere. He suggests that her journey on this planet leads, by God’s design, into meaninglessness; that her life will become boring because God is restricting the development of her potential (verses 3-5). Her journey of self-development in union with God was, in the eyes of the enemy, a fantasy.

Eve argues intelligently about the integrity of God and the role He assigned to her and her husband (verses 2, 3). She is satisfied with the nature and goal of her journey. But she also seems to wonder about the nature of the new journey the serpent is placing before her. She is being tempted to initiate a journey by herself that will allow her to realize her potential without the intrusive and restrictive presence of the Creator. The destination of this new journey is mesmerizing; she will be like God (verse 5). She finally takes the first step in this journey by stretching out her hand and eating of the forbidden fruit (verse 6). It is a simple step with unimaginable consequences.

Eve's decision meant that she had taken charge of her own life in total independence of God. A radically new chapter of her life had begun—a sad one. Her husband joined her. They both went into the unknown by themselves, soon realizing that their new journey would end in death. They were traveling toward total extinction, separated from God (the source of life), love, and peace.

Then the voice of God is heard as He travels through the garden (verse 8). He speaks to them in order to help them understand the seriousness of their condition. He walks...
alone because their destinations are no longer the same. He walks alone along the path He had designed for Eve and Adam, but they had abandoned it, creating their own pathways. Eve’s new journey has become a journey of fear, social and spiritual brokenness, and death.

Hope Ignited

God’s last word for us is never condemnation. He searches for us in our lostness with judgment and salvation. The choice is ours. Out of God’s love and infinite grace, He offered to Eve and Adam hope (verse 15). This was what they needed. This is the most fundamental need of rebellious human beings. This hope is not wishful thinking or the formulation of a dream that we know will never become a reality. Oh, no! Hope is the configuration of a glorious future designed by God for us. It is not the result of our own doing but of God’s redemptive and creative power, guaranteed by the trustworthiness of God’s promises and power.

God planted hope in the desolated hearts of Eve and Adam. This was not a hope that simply expected God to do something for them in the future. Hope is rooted in God’s promises, and His promises always have an impact on the present of human existence. Hope as expectation makes its presence felt in our present condition. The hope God offered Eve and Adam had an immediate effect on both of them. It created enmity toward the deadly evil powers. This hope, through God’s power, brought with it into the present hopeless condition of the couple a profound hatred toward the enslaving power of sin. God decided to preserve human freedom and did not allow the enemy totally to enslave them. Hope presupposes human freedom, the ability to choose our journey and its destination. God was placing Eve and
Adam in a situation in which they would be able to choose once more their future, their ultimate destination. The hope of a future with God had already begun to free them from the controlling power of sin.

The nature of this hope is important in the narrative. Its content is not simply an abstract religious idea that they were expected to understand and preserve. The hope God offered to Eve and Adam was hope in a Person. In fact, the Person was the hope! God said to them, “He will crush the serpent, the source of death and meaninglessness” (verse 15). This hope is embodied in the “He,” the Descendant of the woman who is also the Son of God. Consequently, the realization of this hope was not to be the triumph of an idea over other ideas, but the triumph of a Person over that which threatens personhood as created by God.

The natural journey of humans inexorably leads to death. But God established a wonderful goal for Eve and Adam during their journey in a world of sin and death. It will lead to a most glorious encounter, to a new destination, to a reencounter. Instead of meaninglessness and death, each human being could, if they so wish, journey toward a reunion with the Son of God, our only hope. Eve and Adam embraced that hope and let God remove from them their own dress to dress them with one prepared by Him (verse 21).

Journeying in Hope

It was there, before God, that Eve began a journey of hope. Her journey would take her through difficult terrain, characterized by strong feelings of guilt and loneliness, experiencing the pain of having one of her sons kill another, and witnessing death all around her. But hope sustained her! She knew that what she was witnessing and experiencing would not be the permanent condition of her existence. Something glorious was coming. Hope had impacted her present existence, and it gave her new courage in the midst of the conflict against evil.

One can only imagine the high level of expectation that this promise must have generated in her heart. When she was pregnant with her first child, she probably concluded that this might be the Promised One (cf. Gen. 4:1). But he was not. Hope transcends frustration and keeps us looking for something better. Expectation keeps hope vibrant by embracing the possibility that any moment is open to its realization. One of the most serious threats we confront is losing our sense of expectation. When that happens, we begin to lose the significance of our hope and we run the risk of slowly drifting into a journey of death. To hope is to live in expectation, to live with the firm conviction, with the assurance that God’s promises are reliable and that they could be fulfilled any moment He may choose.

In her journey of hope Eve was joined by her many descendants. She knew very little about a long wait. The divine plan required that the coming of God’s Son, the embodiment of hope, would occur at a particular moment within the cosmic conflict (Gal. 4:4). The Promised Child was born of a woman. In the place where sin had access to the human race, inside the very being of a woman, God Himself entered through the mystery of the Incarnation and planted there the reality of divine hope for the whole world. What a tremendous privilege God granted to Eve! Right where the Fall took place God initiated the mystery of redemption.

But the journey continues. Our hope is heading toward its fullest realization at the second coming of Christ. We, like Eve, are on a journey of hope. We have made her journey our journey. This is a common journey. Around the world a people of God are traveling in the same direction, with the same vision and joy. They are all on a journey of hope; they all expect the soon realization of that hope; they are all sharing that hope. They are all looking forward to their heavenly home: “To dwell forever in this home of the blest, to bear in soul, body, and spirit, not the dark traces of sin and the curse, but the perfect likeness of our Creator, and through ceaseless ages to advance in wisdom, in knowledge and holiness, ever exploring new fields of thought, ever finding new wonders and new glories, ever increasing in capacity to know and to enjoy and to love, and knowing that there is still beyond us joy and love and wisdom infinite—such is the object to which the Christian hope is pointing” (My Life Today, p. 361).

If you have not yet embraced that hope, I invite you today to come and join us in our journey of hope.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR SHARING

1. Why is hope so important in human experience?
2. What is meant by the statement “The Person was the hope”?
3. How does hope bring freedom to us?

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Moses: Hope Deferred

He learned to trust God in the silent years, in the difficult times.

BY R. BRUCE MANNERS

Moses. The name has come to embody strength as he became "one of the most influential and powerful leaders who ever lived." Moses took a group of rough slaves and turned them into a nation. He took Pharaoh’s brickmakers and helped them become a sophisticated and multifaceted community. He successfully led sons and daughters of Abraham through some of the harshest country on earth to the borders of a land flowing with milk and honey—the Promised Land.

Moses. He should never have had a name. Born an alien in Egypt, he should have probably been a sacrifice to the river god at birth, but his mother hid him for three months. Unable to hide him any longer, she placed him in a papyrus basket among reeds along the river’s edge where Pharaoh’s daughter came to bathe.

Moses. It was a foreign name, not one his parents would have chosen. Yet every time he heard his name—meaning “to draw out” (Ex. 2:10)—it was a reminder of the miracle that saved his life. The miracle of being taken from the river by Pharaoh’s daughter and adopted into the royal family.

Moses. Forty years later his name would barely be recognized among his own people, but that wasn’t important. He came to them in the name of another, the “I am,” the “Lord, the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Ex. 3:14, 15).

Moses had become God’s messenger of hope.

Messenger of Hope

Forty years earlier Moses would have led his people out of Egypt willingly if only they had supported him. He’d shown his loyalty to them through the killing of an Egyptian (Ex. 2:12). He was ready, but they weren’t. “Moses assumed his brothers would realize that God had sent him to rescue them, but they didn’t” (Acts 7:25). Moses understood God’s will for his life, but he had yet to learn God’s way. God certainly wasn’t ready for him to lead—not yet.

Born a slave, raised a prince, Moses needs 40 years in the desert and a personal encounter with God before he’s ready to lead God’s people. This time, standing on holy ground, Moses is the reluctant one. His reasoning is remarkably modern, remarkably like excuses we would use.

Who am I to do what You have asked? Besides, who are You? Why should they believe me? I won’t know what to say (see Ex. 3:11, 13; 4:1, 10). And finally, “Lord, please! Send someone else” (Ex. 3:13).

His sense of inadequacy signals that he’s ready to be God’s leader because he knows he can’t do it in his own power. Remember, Moses was a carefully prepared prince of Egypt. Well educated in the arts, science, strategy, and diplomacy, he could attempt to pull together a ragtag Israelite army to challenge the power of Egypt.

God’s plan is different. Moses will lead, but God is in charge of strategy. First, though, Moses is God’s messenger—a messenger of warning to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, and a messenger of hope to the Israelites.

We modern messengers of hope do well to note how dependent Moses was on God. Listen to the promise of God: “I am the Lord, and I will free you from your slavery in Egypt. I will redeem you with mighty power and great acts of judgment. I will make you my own special people, and I will be your God. . . . I will bring you into the land I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (Ex. 6:6-8).

Redemption and a Promised Land! Nothing has changed. These are the promises of God, whispered in the garden after the Fall, stated matter-of-factly and linked to earthly geography in Exodus, drawn in blood at Calvary, and shouted to the world by the three angels of Revelation 14.

This is our message.

Israelite redemption is assured. The plagues demonstrate God’s power over the gods of Egypt and strengthen the faith of the Israelites. Come Passover eve and they’re ready, packed, waiting in “the glad hope of freedom” for the journey to the Promised Land to begin. Their firstborn sons are
protected from death by the blood of the lamb on the doorposts of their homes.

The blood of the lamb gives life. In the blood of God’s Lamb we find our hope.

Journey of Hope
Free at last, the slaves of Israel march “like a victorious army” out of Egypt (Ex. 12:36). The journey of hope has begun; they’re marching to Zion, or at least in the general direction.

Protecting them from the possibility of a battle with the Philistines, God leads His people into the wilderness. The journey would have many detours and take much longer than they could ever have anticipated. But God is with them. They see Him in the pillar of cloud.

Yet they’re fearful when Pharaoh’s army corners them by the Red Sea. Doubt fills the camp as they lose sight of God in the presence of the enemy. They long for what they had, not what God has promised. Better to be a slave in Egypt than to face death in the wilderness is their cry (Ex. 14:11, 12). They lose hope.

Moses responds with a command of inaction: “Just stand where you are and watch the Lord rescue you” (verse 13). There is no hope anywhere else. I’m sure you’ve been there. I know I have. That’s when there’s nothing you can do but let God work His will.

During the miracle of the crossing of the Red Sea they are baptized (1 Cor. 10:2) and then released from the enemy. They know they now have nothing to fear from the power of Egypt. So they rejoice. They rejoice and celebrate their freedom found in God. Hope is celebrated.

At Mount Sinai a nation is formed, a priesthood is developed, and the covenant of love is instated. Freshly saved, God leads them, through Moses, into ways of developing a wholistic relationship with Him and with one another. Moses pens the instructions so they will not be forgotten.

Now they’re ready for the Promised Land! Yet a spirit of fear delays their entry by 40 years. When they see the challenges of the journey, Egypt looks more attractive. We who’ve left the land of the enemy must realize that the way may not be easy, and that what we’ve left behind may at times appear attractive. Going back, though, takes us into slavery again. Ahead is the Promised Land, and God is with us.

Resting in Hope
Within sight of the Promised Land, Moses dies. Within sight of the Promised Land! God buries him on the barren slopes of Mount Pisgah. No monument marks his grave. No sphinx. No pyramid. He chose something better than what Egypt could offer.

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[“Moses willingly traded the earthly monuments and acclaim, the perks, the power, and the pleasure for a reward in an invisible realm. He cashed it all in—every shekel of it—for a relationship with the living God. It was the best trade anyone could have made. What he lost, he couldn’t have kept anyway, and what he gained, he could never lose.”]

He dies, but he dies in hope, listed among those who “placed their hope in the resurrection to a better life” (Heb. 11:35). And, it seems, he tasted the reality of the resurrection before any other (Jude 9; Matt. 17:3).

We must recognize that we may not see the hope fulfilled in our lifetime. However, that possibility doesn’t diminish the hope we have, for the sleep of death is only a night while we wait for the resurrection dawn.

In his final address to the Israelites, Moses gives them a song—a song of promise for the future (Deut. 32). Then, in Revelation 15, there’s the Song of Moses and the Lamb—a song of worship and victory. We long to sing this song, for that’s when our hope is fulfilled. And it makes no difference whether we rest in the grave or remain alive at the second coming of Jesus.

Until then we remain God’s messengers of hope on a journey to the Promised Land.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR SHARING
1. When God, powerful as He is, gets ready to deliver His people, why does He need a human being? What’s the lesson for us?
2. What do you find most attractive in the life and experience of Moses? With what aspects do you identify most closely?
3. What can we learn from the experience of Moses’ life as we face the challenges of today— corporately and personally?

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Rahab: Hope Adopted
How will you respond when hope knocks at your door?

BY GEOFFREY G. MBWANA

“Can anything good come from there?”

Jericho was a city of Canaanites who went soId to idolatry and wickedness. The inhabitants had abandoned themselves to the foulest and most detestable; [They] lived only to blaspheme Heaven and defile the earth (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 492). God had ordered Moses, saying, “In the cities of the nations the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes. Completely destroy them—the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites (Deut. 20:16, 17). Jericho was now Israel’s first major force to be conquered as they entered the Promised Land. Jericho and all of its inhabitants were doomed for total destruction.

Encounter of Hope: Seed of Hope
Inside the city lived Rahab, a harlot whose house stood attached to the massive protecting wall of Jericho. She probably was an innkeeper; hence she entertained guests. She also worked to manufacture dyed linen and, therefore, stockpiled stalks of flax that she perhaps spread on her roof to dry. Since she was a prostitute, one can rightly guess that she was looked down upon, rejected, unwanted, and abandoned by the community she lived in. It could be said that her life was nothing but hopeless, filled with despair. The stains on her life caused by her lifestyle remained, and followed her record to this day, as she is still referred to as Rahab the harlot. Like all the others in Jericho, she heard how the God of Israel led His people and granted them victories over the nations they went through on their journey from Egypt. They heard of the opening of the Red Sea about 40 years ago, and the dreadful judgments that befell Egyptians just prior to the Exodus. The story of their journey and the Lord’s miraculous acts were known to all in Jericho (Joshua 2:10). They feared for their lives now that the Israelites were but a few miles away.

The reports about the God of Israel raised great defensive fear among the people in Jericho; they refused to submit to the Lordship of the God of Israel. Rahab’s fear was apparently different. The accounts portrayed an image of a God she wanted to be associated with. Her fear was as to whether this God would accept her. Through these stories a seed of hope was planted in her life. As the accounts were reiterated, the yearning for God grew intense in her soul. Her growing passion to belong to the God of Israel can be seen at the time when spies entered the city. These unwanted strangers were a threat to the people in Jericho, but Rahab welcomed them into her house at the risk of scorn, anger, and hate of her fellow citizens. The spies’ choice of her house was perceived as her lifetime opportunity to quench that deep yearning of her soul: a craving for belonging, and salvation by the God of Israel. So when the fearful, defiant soldiers of Jericho entered her house in search of the spies, she evaded the naked truth. “Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come...
from. At dusk, the men left. I don’t know which way they went” (verses 4, 5). She had undertaken to hide these spies, even if this could amount to an act of betrayal of her country.

Hope came knocking at her door, and the hopeless one pursued it.

She could have refused these people entry into her house. Or she could have used this opportunity to gain favor of those who despised her by simply surrendering them to the soldiers. But they came as spies, and she volunteered to be an informer when she reported, “A great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you” (verse 9). Men and women in Jericho suffered the pains of fear of death, loss of courage and peace.

Hope, on the other hand, made Rahab bold, courageous, and peaceful.

Hope made her attempt what others in Jericho perceived as impossible. Hope freed her from fear.

Belief: A Tree of Hope

Rahab reached out and took hold of the opportunity that had come her way as she boldly declared her belief, “I know that the Lord has given this land to you” (verse 9). Rahab allowed that seed of hope in her to grow into a tree of faith in the God of Israel.

Hope came knocking at her door, and the hopeless one took hold of it.

Rahab demonstrated her faith and hope by the following:

• She urged the spies to swear to her by the Lord God of Israel, and not by the gods she had served all her life. Like Jacob, she did not let them go unless they blessed her. Hope made her boldly claim an impossible promise, “I saved your lives; you save me too.”

Hope made Rahab’s obedience voluntary and a delight; waiting was but patient and a delight; waiting was but patiently but happily for God’s promise. I saved your lives; you save me too.”

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• Her insistence for a “sure sign” indicated her belief that the Lord God of Israel could be trusted to do what He has promised.

Fulfillment: Fruits of Hope

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So with great hope Rahab lowers the spies with a rope through the back wall of her house, directs them to the way of safety, ties the scarlet band on the window, invites other members of the family into her house, and waits patiently but happily for God’s promises. I saved your lives; you save me too.”

Fulfillment: Fruits of Hope

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Rahab was completely adopted into the family of Israel with the right to marry an Israelite. This placed her in the genealogical line that led not only to the birth of King David but also to the birth of Jesus—Rahab’s Messiah. Rahab is among the three women recorded in the genealogy of Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:5, 6).

What a journey! Hope led her spiritually from Jericho to Canaan, from a harlot to an ancestor of the Messiah, from an enemy of the kingdom to the true daughter of the kingdom. For this harlot without hope, a journey began with stories of hope. A seed of hope was planted in her heart, it grew into a great tree of faith, and the hope she embraced was greatly rewarded.

Are you still faithfully holding on to this hope?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR SHARING

1. Who in your life could use a story of hope right now?

2. What kinds of stories can we share about God that could offer hope?

3. How should we live so that others can see the hope that we embrace?

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September 2, 2006
Daniel: Hope Vindicated

Battles may be lost, but the book of Daniel says the war can be won.

BY BREMPONG OWUSU-ANTWI

In 2005 Ghana's national soccer team, the Black Stars, qualified to compete in the World Cup soccer competition to be held in Germany. They practiced hard, but they lost their first match. They didn't give up hope, however. They believed that even though the battle was lost, with determination and hard work they could still qualify and thus win the war.

As well as working hard, the team also made some changes, such as finding a new coach and reshuffling team members' positions. The combination worked, and by the end of the competition they had qualified. The Black Stars had lost the battle at the beginning, but motivated by hope, they were able to win the war.

The biblical account of Daniel's journey of hope also demonstrates that a battle may be lost, yet the war can be won. We will look at how hope functioned in Daniel's journey from three perspectives: life during captivity, day-to-day life in Babylon, and Daniel's aspirations while in Babylon.

Jerusalem: Hope for Lost Battles

In the year 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and his armies besieged and conquered Jerusalem (see Dan. 1:2). After the city's defeat, Nebuchadnezzar carried Judean captives as well as articles from the Temple of God to Babylon. As they were prodded along at the tip of insensitive spears under strict military watch, the captives were in a situation that seemed to indicate all was lost—the heathen had overcome the people of God.

Moses had warned the Israelites repeatedly that if they disobeyed the commandments of God, they would be taken into captivity (see Deut. 28:36, 64; Dan. 9:5, 6), and He eventually gave them into the hands of the heathen. They felt defeated, hopeless, helpless, and discouraged. Yet Daniel, who was one of the captives, believed that although the battle was lost, the war could still be won—there was still hope for forgiveness, deliverance, and restoration. Thus Daniel begins his book with that theme: God is in control.

Present Hope—for the Challenges of Daily Living

After Daniel first arrived in Babylon, two incidents took place that show how hope played out in the challenges he faced daily as a slave in a foreign land. The first was the temptation to eat the king's food.

Daniel and other chosen young captives who were to be trained for the king's service were assigned "a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table" (Dan. 1:5). Most of the young captives in that position must have been happy about...
was thrown into the lions’ den. Again and to the dismay of the king, Daniel as was his custom. The same evidence of hope as before by having a strong personal connection with and knowledge of the source of hope. Daniel had these, and so he overcame. We also can overcome only by having a strong personal connection with our source of hope. Hope for a Better Tomorrow Daniel had been saved from the lions’ den. His enemies had been destroyed. He had been promoted and was prospering in Babylon. Yet Babylon was not his home. The Lord revealed to him in visions His plans for His people, instilling hope in the heart of Daniel and the readers of his book. Daniel was pointed to a glorious future when God’s intention for the human race will be consummated. He saw the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, and His sacrificial death for the human race (see Dan. 9:23-27). His mediation in the heavenly sanctuary (see Dan. 8:9-14), and the moment when the final resolution of the cosmic conflict will occur through a process of cleansing and judgment. In the visions Daniel is informed that the time of the end had not yet arrived. But God’s people are encouraged to hold on to the hope of God’s final victory over His enemies. There will be times when the forces of evil will appear to have the upper hand, oppressing and persecuting the saints, but their deliverance is certain. Daniel is a book about hope in the midst of conflict and persecution. History may indicate that world events are out of control, and the kingdoms of the world may appear to succeed one another without any particular final goal for the future. But Daniel tells us that God is indeed in charge, leading events on earth to their ultimate goal, namely, the establishment of God’s kingdom on earth. This hope is centered on the coming of the promised Messiah, to whom God will hand the eternal kingdom.

The world in which we live may appear to be out of control and in a state of chaos, but our hope affirms that this is not the case. God is indeed working in the midst of that chaos, bringing into realization our hope. Let us keep on nurturing our hope through the study of Daniel’s hope, which is, in fact, the Adventist hope.

He was aware his actions could result in death, yet he trusted God. He was aware that this action could result in his death, yet he trusted that God was able to protect him from harm. God indeed honored Daniel’s trust. Within 10 days of refusing to eat the king’s food, Daniel and his three friends looked much better than those who had eaten it. Furthermore, at their final examination held at the end of three years of education, Daniel and his friends were judged 10 times better than those who failed to stand for God. In the second situation, Daniel was a top-level administrator slated to be the prime minister. His colleagues, driven by envy and jealousy, convinced the king to “issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions’ den” (Dan. 6:7). Would Daniel now depend on his political position and diplomacy to get out of this? Daniel still showed the same evidence of hope as before by praying to his God three times a day, as was his custom.

At the instigation of his colleagues and to the dismay of the king, Daniel was thrown into the lions’ den. Again his hope was fulfilled; the Lord delivered Daniel from the lions.

God is able to protect and sustain those who hope in Him. The prophet Isaiah emphasizes this in Isaiah 49:23:

“Those who hope in me will not be disappointed.”

Daniel overcame the challenges of daily living because he trusted in the God whom he had known personally through daily communion. He wouldn’t allow anything, not even death in the lions’ den, to disrupt that.

How much time do you give to communication with God and His Word? One thing about hope is that there must be a meaningful relationship with and knowledge of the source of hope. Daniel had these, and so he

Questions for Reflection or Sharing
1. Have there been times when you have felt hopeless or helpless? In what ways did you deal with those feelings? Did God ultimately reveal control over the situations? 2. When you lose a battle, do you tend to give up, or do you keep trying until you win the war? Has this devotional helped to change your perspective on dealing with challenges and apparent defeat? If so, in what ways?

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Mary: Hope Challenged

The honor of being the Messiah’s mother couldn’t prepare her for the pain of losing Him.

BY TERESA REEVE

She was just another young woman—no one important from no place interesting. Scripture introduces Mary without fanfare, noting only her approaching marriage to Joseph the carpenter. Of course, she had little reason or opportunity to hope for much else. The constant struggle to survive in the rugged hill country around Nazareth kept her ever busy carrying water, tending crops, preparing food, spinning and weaving.

Yet as she sat in the synagogue each Sabbath, Mary heard words that followed her throughout the week. Readings from the Law recalled God’s redemption of His people, while readings from the Prophets stirred her with the promise of a future redemption and judgment. Some even argued that this redemption was coming soon with the arrival of a Messiah (Anointed One) sent from God.

Could it be, she must have wondered, that I will see that day?

Announcement and Arrival of Hope

Nothing could have prepared Mary for the appearance, out of the blue, of an angel bearing an unimaginable message from God. Her first response was complete puzzlement as he solemnly assured her of God’s favor. His next words made no sense at all to an unmarried virgin. He promised: “You will conceive in your womb and bear a son.” He went on, uttering words that sent her mind reeling. “He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:30-33).

A tumble of emotions must have flooded Mary’s mind: awe, fear, joy, and a current of bright hope for a suddenly reachable future she had hardly dared dream before. “How,” she managed, “can this be?” (verse 34). But the angel assured her it was so.

Mary’s moments with the angel are unique among the high points of human history. Yet most of us too, among the routine of our own ordinary lives, hold memories of when God’s loving plan became undeniably personal. Moments when God rolled back the fog of day-to-day concerns to break into our lives with unmistakable calls we dared not deny, shining promises of His presence we would have been fools to resist. And like Mary, we answered gratefully, fearfully, trustingly, “Yes,” often without any earthly idea of what we were getting ourselves into.

As her body swelled, Mary gradually came to terms with the unaccountable experience that had happened to her. On a visit to her also-blessed cousin, Elizabeth, she marveled at God’s shocking regard for her and other downtrodden ones among His people. She exulted in praise that He was coming to the aid of His people, just as He had promised. Through the agonizing days of Joseph’s doubt she survived by this hope, clinging tenaciously to the vivid memory of the angel and his earthshaking words.

The birth of the Promised One, her own little Son Jesus, carried her triumphantly through the pain and shame of birthing in a stable. The experience of holding Jesus in her arms and looking down into His perfect little face dwarfed even the wonder of the stories told by the shepherds, the Magi, and righteous ones with whom God chose to celebrate His birth. Often Mary had to pause and sift through her...
thoughts and experiences, seeking to comprehend both His sweet babyhood and the reality of His role as Son of God and eternal King (see Luke 2:19).

Other discomforting thoughts must have entered her ponderings as well. Where was the welcome God’s Savior-King deserved? Why did God bring shepherds and nobodies instead of the leaders of His people? The questions didn’t go away as Jesus grew older. Though His growing wisdom and winsomeness brought her joy, Mary struggled with the bittersweet experience of watching His first allegiance shift from her and Joseph to His heavenly Father (Luke 2:46-50). She steeled herself for the inevitable, when He would leave home without warning.

still, when the hope of Jesus’ promised salvation seemed impossible or far away, Mary clung to the promise of the angel and to the faithfulness of the God who had sent Him.

walked away from the village. She saw Him occasionally, of course, for He made His home base near the lake in Capernaum. Her heart often swelled with pride as travelers told of His amazing miracles and fine teachings. Mary rejoiced in the work He was doing. Yet, though He was unfailingly kind when He saw her, she had to miss their old times together. Truly, she never dreamed of the ways she would be called to let go. A call and a promise from God, she was discovering, did not always guarantee a pain-free pathway constructed in accordance with one’s own desires and expectations.

Though He remained with her 30 wonderful years, it was not easy when her beloved Son said goodbye and walked away from the village. She saw Him occasionally, of course, for He made His home base near the lake in Capernaum. Her heart often swelled with pride as travelers told of His amazing miracles and fine teachings. Mary rejoiced in the work He was doing. Yet, though He was unfailingly kind when He saw her, she had to miss their old times together. Truly, she never dreamed of the ways she would be called to let go. A call and a promise from God, she was discovering, did not always guarantee a pain-free pathway constructed in accordance with one’s own desires and expectations.

Still, when the hope of Jesus’ promised salvation seemed impossible or far away, Mary clung to the promise of the angel and to the faithfulness of the God who had sent Him.

Hope Crucified

Word of increasingly disturbing statements made by Jesus came to Mary, along with news of growing conflicts with the religious leaders. Jesus’ visit to Nazareth was a disaster, with the people—some of them Mary’s own friends and relatives—ready to throw Him over a cliff. How could He possibly accomplish His mission when rumors swirled that some sought to kill Him? She fought to control her panic when she learned that He was making His
way toward Jerusalem.

Mary was in Jerusalem for Passover when word came that Jesus had been arrested. A powerless woman, she could only pray and rush to His side. While still at a distance, she knew her prayers would do no good. Rising up against the sky outside Jerusalem were three terrifying crosses. On the central one she recognized the precious form of her Love, her little One. Cascades of darkness overcame her as she crouched near His torn and bloodied feet. For a moment the horror fell aside when, turning His loving gaze to hers, He called, “Woman, here is your son.” And to a familiar figure nearby, “Here is your mother” (John 19:26, 27). She was flooded with gratefulness for this last kindness, but again the stifling weight of horror closed in as He died.

Somehow Mary allowed herself to be guided away from the cross and through the streets of Jerusalem to a humble dwelling where kind people did all they could to make her comfortable. But there was no comfort; her Son was gone. In those moments when reality forced its way in, the ache in her heart threatened to engulf her. A lifetime of love, dreams, and hope had been destroyed. What about the everlasting throne of David? What about the salvation God promised? Had she failed? Had God failed? Following God’s way had apparently brought Mary to the nightmare death of all her dreams. At the cross, like so many others through the centuries, Mary was called upon to give up every last human expectation for God’s action in her life and wait in desolation before His head, and died.

Rejoiced that He could take His place at His true Father’s side, making available this never-ending life to every person who came to Him in faith, Mary did not know what the future held, but Jesus had promised to be with them always, and the triumph of His death and the hope of His Spirit left them confident that His will would prevail. He had promised it. The struggle Mary went through in those dark days when her hope seemed first challenged, then completely shuttered, is one that every believer must endure. But there will be moments in our lives when the places He leads make absolutely no earthly sense.

In those moments we have no solution but to surrender our vain attempts at running our lives and let go of every earthly possession we feel a right to claim. Only in this emptiness of surrender to our dead and risen Lord can we find true peace and freedom. Only in Him can we find the totally forgiving and unfathomable love for which our hearts long.

Let’s hold on to our hope in Christ’s living presence when our commitment to Him seems to get us only poverty or pain. Let’s hold on to our hope in His presence when the service we began for Him is mired in failure and despair. His love enfolds us. His arm strengthens us. And in the morning, when we see Him face-to-face, it will have been worth it.

The death of Mary’s dreams had not been the death of God’s promise.

How can we imagine the overwhelming joy, the thrill of awe Mary must have felt when she came to the certainty that Jesus truly lived again? The death of her dreams had not been the death of God’s promise. In our mind’s eye we can see her as she catches herself skipping and dancing like a little girl. All the questions and recriminations in her heart melted away. In their place she recognized a profound peace, deeper and quieter than any she had known.

Meeting regularly with the apostles and other believers, Mary listened to their stories, searched the Scriptures Jesus had pointed them to, and prayed for His wisdom and guidance. A dawning realisation flooded her heart that her Son’s death, far from signaling the failure of God’s promises, had actually accomplished the ultimate victory, salvation from death itself. Even news of His disappearance into the clouds of heavens did not dismay her. She rejoiced that He could take His place at His true Father’s side, making available this never-ending life to every person who came to Him in faith. Mary did not know what the future held, but Jesus had promised to be with them always, and the triumph of His death and the hope of His Spirit left them confident that His will would prevail. He had promised it.

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**Questions for Reflection**

1. Jesus’ first advent had been foretold for generations. Yet when it happened, most of God’s people were caught unaware. List five reasons why. List five prescriptions that will prevent it from happening to those who await Jesus’ second advent.

2. In what ways is Mary a role model for us? How does her experience reflect ours?

3. God’s people are often required to endure various degrees of heartbreak. What lesson(s) from Mary’s life will help us endure them?

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IN YOUR HANDS

Have you received your SIGNs OF THE TIMES?

Renew or subscribe online at www.signsofthetimes.org.au
Hope can be both a word and a reality.

**BY GABRIELE STANGL**

Just after arriving home at the end of a long day at work I received the news that Susan was dead. She was so young. And the news was so unexpected. The nurse on the ward told me that everything had happened before they could reach me. “You should’ve seen how happy she looked! We’ve never seen someone dying who smiled so much!”

Memories of the past six weeks passed by in seconds. Susan was strong. Even so, in a short time cancer had spread throughout her body. A registered nurse, she knew the prognosis was bad. Yet she consciously placed her trust in God, willing to accept whatever plans He had for her. An anointing, many pastoral conversations, and telephone discussions filled out the last few weeks. It was, thankfully, clear that she would not allow her illness to get her down—quite the opposite. Susan grew unshakable in her hope of the resurrection; nothing comforted her more. In her hopeless state she became a beacon of hope. Her death showed how God’s grace and love strengthen us. She had a peace with God available to all who immerse themselves in God’s grace, which makes us righteous before God through Christ. For Susan, God’s promises were an absolute certainty.

**Hope: A Case Study**

The apostle Paul expressed well that which Christians experience in this world of sin and death: “Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us” (Rom. 5:3-5).

On the road to Damascus Saul was changed into Paul; transformed into a new creature. The good news he discovered was that Christ had already provided for him what he needed, that he could face his future with confidence as a beloved and redeemed child of God. When Jesus meets us, when He touches our heart, every-
thing changes. Suddenly we understand by faith that God became one of us in Jesus Christ. He paid for our sins on the cross. And He is risen! Jesus lives!

This knowledge was not hidden from Paul. He gave his life wholeheartedly to his Lord and joined the believers who helped and supported him in his new life. The early Christians strengthened Paul’s faith, told him about Christ and His love, and helped him in many ways to get on his feet.

Hope and the Church

Hope needs a good foundation if it’s not going to fade or fail. In my work with women who wish to give up their babies after giving birth, I have repeatedly been confronted by this important fact. It is not enough that they have found a place where they can talk about their problems, or that they have found someone they can trust. They need a firm foundation, a capable partner who will support them by word and deed. Someone who will help them to find the help they need and give them a place of safety and care in uncertain times.

We were able to help a woman who had given birth, but then returned to take her baby. A year later she told me, “Now I have courage and confidence for my life. I have hope.” People who stand at the beginning of their new faith need other Christians who, through their own experiences in faith, can encourage and strengthen them. Hope looks to the future, but its roots are in the past and present.

Hope must be experienced, and most of us grow mature through experience. Because we know God and His love, and helped him in many ways to get on his feet.

Blinded Paul knew what great things

He had in mind for him (Acts 22:12-16). Through Ananias, God gave Paul a new perspective for his life, filled him with the Holy Spirit, and equipped him for His service. Paul’s goal, to be with Jesus, was the divine force of his work. This longing gave him the strength to carry him through his most difficult experiences. Jesus, and no one or nothing else, was the basis of Paul’s well-grounded hope. As Jesus revealed to Paul that he would suffer much for Christ’s name (Acts 9:16), Paul did not reject the calling. Rather, it caused him to immerse himself even more in God’s Word. He wrote: “But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal” (Phil. 3:13).

This is the Paul we know: joyful, patient, full of the power of the Holy Spirit. A man who had committed himself completely and wholeheartedly to God and who today can still comfort us and give us confidence through his words: “Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer” (Rom. 12:12). Paul calls out to us through the words of great Adventist hymn that should be the statement of every living Adventist: “We have this hope!”

Hope looks to the future, but its roots are in the past and present.

Forgoing what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal” (Phil. 3:13).

This is the Paul we know: joyful, hopeful, able to bear suffering, strong, patient, full of the power of the Holy Spirit. A man who had committed himself completely and wholeheartedly to God and who today can still comfort us and give us confidence through his words: “Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer” (Rom. 12:12). Paul calls out to us through the hope of eternal life? What forms should that hope take? Mention at least five.

Questions for Reflection or Sharing

1. Who, in your life, has been a model of hope in Christ? How was that person’s hope demonstrated?

2. Describe briefly the process by which you came to understand that your standing with God depends on your faith in Christ’s righteousness and not in your own.

3. How can Christians in the here and now demonstrate their hope of eternal life? What forms should that hope take? Mention at least five.

Gabriele Stangl is the head chaplain of the Wildfriede Adventist Hospital in Berlin, where she is founder of the first Abandoned Babies Program. She lives with her husband, Hans-Joachim, in Berlin-Zehlendorf.
In the midst of exile and loneliness, the apostle discovers hope for us all.

BY JAMES CRESS

The old man was the last one—and he was all alone. He was nearly 100 years of age, and all his colleagues had vanished. His brother James had been martyred; the first of the 12 to die for the faith. Paul had been beheaded. Peter had been crucified upside down. And Thomas had disappeared, perhaps as far off to the East as India. Who knew where all the others had gone?

Now, nearly 70 years after the Resurrection, John, the only apostle to remain alive, was exiled on the penal island of Patmos, a nasty outcropping of volcanic rocks situated a few miles offshore Asia Minor in the Aegean Sea.

Too old for a labor camp, he was simply there—even the harsh Romans didn't expect much work from such an old man. They simply abandoned him to his memories and yearnings.

With keen recollection, John could remember well how he and Andrew had first listened to John the Baptist preach about the coming Redeemer; how he had initially aligned himself with Jesus' ministry, and, subsequently, along with his brother James, Peter, and Andrew, accepted the invitation to full-time discipleship when the Savior called them to leave their nets and fish for souls.

With remorse, John could easily recall his early impatience at the tortoise-like advancement of the kingdom that he was so certain Jesus should speedily establish. He had been ready and eager to tear down any obstacle or vanquish any foe that stood in the way of the Lord's rapid rise to power. John had displayed his impetuous disposition on more than one occasion, such as the time when he rebuked an individual who labored in Christ's name without formally embracing discipleship (Luke 9:49). Or when he recommended calling fire down from heaven to destroy a town that had rejected Christ's offer to stay in their presence (verses 52-56). And John did not hesitate to advance his own favorable position when he and his brother prompted their mother's petition that Jesus earmark them for the highest rankings and most substantial honors in the kingdom they believed was so near.

But the kingdom had not arrived. Even the Lord's own prayer, "Thy kingdom come," remained perpetually unanswered. And no one need look any farther than across the desolate sea to recognize that God's will on earth was also being thwarted. Otherwise, John wouldn't be isolated to eke out his existence in exile when he could be preaching and teaching among the mainland churches where he had faithfully served.

John's character had been softened, subdued, transformed. The ready warrior had become the willing pastor who loved Jesus supremely, and loved Jesus' people thoroughly. In fact, that was what made exile on Patmos so galling—separation from the people of God. How he longed to preach, to teach, to encourage, to visit, to baptize, and to build up and strengthen the churches. But it was not to be. They were there, and he was here. He was all alone . . . and he was lonely.

Although his confidence never wavered, it was easy for John to sink toward questioning whether Jesus had forgotten His promises to return. John remembered strong, comforting assurances such as "I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:3), * and "You now have sorrow; but I will see you again" (John 16:22).
The cry of John’s lonely heart had been heard and answered. Jesus was there.

Reality remained, however. Jesus had not returned. Day after lonely day John remained alone. No one came, no one wrote; no one visited.

Then one day it happened. Jesus came. It was a Sabbath day, and John was communing deeply with the Holy Spirit, reflecting on the promised day of the Lord and the blessed hope when all good things would be restored. “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying, ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,’ and, ‘What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches’” (Rev. 1:10, 11).

Jesus had kept His promise! He had returned! The cry of John’s lonely heart had been heard and answered. Jesus was there. The barren island prison was instantly transformed into a cathedral of paradise because of Jesus’ presence. The trials and tribulations that bound John’s body and bowed his spirit were forgotten in the presence of His Lord. The long, difficult years of toil were forgotten in the overwhelming joy of seeing Jesus once again! And Jesus brought good news; not just for John but for all God’s people everywhere. Jesus showed John marvelous truths and commissioned him to write and send it out to the churches. Good news. News of His coming.

We do not know how long Jesus stayed with John that Sabbath on Patmos. We do not know whether the message came all in one vision or whether it was communicated over several occasions and several visits. We do know that John once again picked up his pen and began to transcribe God’s word for God’s people.

Writing from the vantage of having experienced some of the great controversy’s most dramatic history, John could easily recount how Satan had been thwarted and the demons vanquished by Jesus’ power. But writing of future dark ages, and of even darker deeds, may well have overwhelmed the old man as he contemplated the near triumph of evil over good, and of hatred over love. Beasts and demons would conspire with powers and principalities to place evil on the throne, and rip righteousness from the hearts of humanity. Yet through it all, God’s people, depending upon God’s Word and empowered by God’s Spirit, would be prepared for the return of God’s Son. Jesus would come again! Glorious kings! Lord of lords! Creator, Redeemer, Restorer, Friend!

Then one day, the vision ended. There was nothing more to write. Promises, predictions, prophecies, preparations. All that John had been commanded to communicate was completed, and ready to warn the churches of the Lord and the blessed hope when all good things would be restored. “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last. . . . I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star” (verses 12-16).

Then the message ends. He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming quickly.” Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” (verse 20).

But notice carefully, there is one more verse. The book doesn’t end with the cry of the lonely heart—“even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus!” The book ends with the vision that others beyond the present time—people in other ages and in other places—will also hear and embrace. And to those individuals in all subsequent years and in every location, the lonely apostle John—now encouraged and renewed by Jesus’ personal visit to his lonely exile—offers hope for the journey:

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen” (verse 21).

Questions for Reflection or Sharing

1. How has Jesus revealed hope to you in lonely or discouraging situations?
2. What can we share from John’s revelation to encourage each other when evil seems to be victorious?
3. Who in your life needs to hear the hope that was revealed through John in the book of Revelation?
Our Living Hope

Whatever the setbacks, we may look beyond ourselves to Him.

BY ELLEN G. WHITE

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:14-16).

When the children of Israel were passing through the wilderness toward Canaan, they brought upon themselves the judgments of God by murmuring and complaining. They were bitten by fiery, poisonous serpents of the wilderness, and were smitten with death. A messenger came through the camp, with the news that a remedy had been provided. By the direction of Christ a brazen serpent had been lifted up, and those who would but look upon it would be healed.

When this message was announced, some of the sick and dying did not accept it. Here and there throughout the camp were heard the words, "It is impossible for me to be healed, because I am in such a dreadful condition. Those who are not in so bad a state as I am, may, perhaps, look and live." Others thought they had a remedy of their own that could cure the poisonous bite of the serpent; but only those who accepted the message and looked to the brazen serpent were healed. This serpent represented Christ. . . .

Man is poisoned by sin, but a remedy has been provided for the fallen race in the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Every hope that we have of salvation out of Christ is a vain hope. We cannot dishonor our Savior more than by doubting that He will save us. Whatever may have been our life of transgression, however deep may be the stain of our sin, there is One who is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.

Jesus is the remedy for sin. We may have intellect, but human intelligence can devise no way of salvation; we may have earthly possessions, but that will not provide a ransom for the sin of our soul. Salvation is the gift of God through Christ, and the promise is, "Whosoever believeth on him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

Nominal Faith Not Enough

It is not enough to have a nominal faith. We must have faith that will appropriate the life-giving power to our souls. We suffer great loss because we do not exercise simple, living faith in Christ. We should be able to say, "He is my Savior; He died for me; I look to Him as my complete Savior and live." We are to look to Christ day by day. We are to regard Him as our example in all things. This is faith. . . .

We honor our Lord and Master when we place implicit confidence in Him. If we distrust the message that He has sent us, we shall be in a position similar to that of the Israelites who were bitten by the fiery serpents, but who would not look and live. If we accept the message of love that has come to us in invitations, exhortation, and reproof, it will prove life and healing to our souls.

We should not be satisfied with anything less than a close connection with Christ. Freedom and salvation are offered to us, and we should grasp the precious promises of God by living faith. But if we only partially believe, if we do not show in our experience the power of living faith that works by love and purifies the soul, we shall fail to meet the expectation of our Lord and Master. Jesus says, "Without me, ye can do nothing," but if He abides in us and we in Him, we can do all things through the power of His might. We should trust Him as a child trusts his earthly parents. We should feel such love toward Him that we cannot betray His confidence in us, or distrust Him under any circumstances.
We should have a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. We should be like the afflicted woman who pressed her way through the throng to touch the hem of Christ's garment. She gave no casual touch; it was the touch of faith; for virtue went out from Christ and healed her. Although the throng were pressing and crowding about the Savior, He recognized the touch of faith. He turned and asked, "Who touched me?" ... And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. And he said unto her, "Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace." (Luke 8:45-48).1

Jesus Brought Hope to the Hopeless

There are times when Christ would say to those in His service whose energies had been overtaxed, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while" (Mark 6:31). We have the record on one occasion, after a day of ceaseless toil, that our Redeemer lay, a coil of rope for His pillow, fast asleep in a fisherman's boat. His exhausted human nature cried for rest and sleep. ... Behold the Savior! How pressing were the necessities which sought Him for relief! Teaching in the Temple, healing in the Temple, explaining the Scriptures in the streets, by the wayside, in His retired walks—the subjects so urgent left Him no time for repose. His sympathies were drawn out for the oppressed. He comforted the mourner, made a way for our escape. We must every one of us lay hold of the hope that is set before us in the gospel, if we would have everlasting life. You should ask yourself, "How much am I willing to sacrifice for the truth's sake?" Before you answer this question, I would direct you to the life and sacrifice of Jesus for you. As you see Him whom your sins have pierced lifted upon the cross of Calvary, you will in contrition of soul lay all at His feet. When we remember how much our salvation has cost, we may be sure that eternal life is worth everything. ... Satan will come in many ways to tempt the soul away from Christ. He will first tell you that you are good enough of yourself; that you do not need a work of reformation wrought for you. He will suggest to you that you have made but few mistakes in your life, and that these will be overbalanced by the good you have done. If you have lived such a life as he would make you believe you have, it would be like a chain with unsound links in it, wholly worthless. One sin unrepented of is enough to close the gates of heaven against you. It was because man could not be saved with one stain of sin upon him, that Jesus came to die on Calvary's cross. Your only hope is to look to Christ and live. He came to save to the uttermost all who came unto Him; and He is fully able to do all that He has undertakers to do for you. He will lift us up from the degradation into which we have fallen because of sin.2

Jesus, Our Mediator

As you near the cross of Calvary, there is seen love that is without a par-
allel. As you by faith grasp the meaning of the sacrifice, you see yourself a sinner, condemned by a broken law. This is repentance. As you come with humble heart, you find pardon, for Christ Jesus is represented as continuously standing at the altar, momentary offering up the sacrifice for the sins of the world. He is a minister of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man.

The typical shadows of the Jewish tabernacle no longer possess any virtue. A daily and yearly typical atonement is no longer to be made, but the atoning sacrifice through a mediator is essential because of the constant commission of sin. Jesus is efficaciously in the presence of God, offering up His shed blood, as it had been a lamb slain. Jesus presents the oblation offered for every offense and every shortcoming of the sinner.

Christ, our Mediator, and the Holy Spirit are constantly interceding in man’s behalf, but the Spirit pleads not for us as does Christ, who presents His blood, shed from the foundation of the world, the Spirit works upon our hearts, drawing out prayers and penitence, praise and thanksgiving. The gratitude which flows from our lips is the result of the Spirit’s striking the cords of the soul in holy memories, awakening the music of the heart.

The religious services, the prayers, the praise, the penitent confession of sin ascend not in spotless purity, and without delay. Shall we not show that we are not afraid to trust our Savior in the darkness as well as in the light? . . .

It is not enough to have a nominal faith. We must have faith that will appropriate the life-giving power to our souls.

Hope in Christ’s Soon Coming
Jesus loves you, and when trials come upon your soul, as they surely will, you must be often found with God in prayer. The enemy may tell you that God will not hear you; but you must rest in His promise that He will hear the prayer of the contrite soul. Keep your petitions continually ascending to Jesus, and believe that He hears you, and He will hear you and deliver you from every trial and temptation. The apostle says: “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus.”

The coming of the Lord has been in all ages the hope of His true followers.

The Savior’s parting promise upon Olivet, that He would come again, lighted up the future for His disciples, filling their hearts with joy and hope that sorrow could not quench nor trials dim. Amid suffering and persecution, “the appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” was the “blessed hope.” . . .

On rocky Patmos the beloved disciple hears the promise, “Surely I come quickly,” and his longing response voices the prayer of the church in all her pilgrimages, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20).4

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR SHARING
1. The author says: “Every hope we have of salvation out of Christ is a vain hope.” How do you see the significance of this statement for the church generally, and for you personally?
2. What is the message of this reading for (a) those who feel righteous and self-sufficient, and (b) those with a chronic feeling of unworthiness? What is the healthy attitude to have?
3. How does the message of the Second Coming affect your life as a Christian? How personal is this event to you?

Ellen G. White was one of the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Her work continues to be a prophetic voice among Adventists.
Journey of

Hope

Holding on to hope

BY MARGARET TAGLAVORE

FIRST SABBATH
Just One Look!

Memory Text: “God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son so that whoever believes in him may not be lost, but have eternal life” (John 3:16, NCV).

Motivational Aid
Put up a big banner with the word “HOPE” on it. Then ask, “What does this word mean to you?” Explain that hope means: to desire with expectation getting something; to look forward to; to anticipate.

Story
James hurried to the school door and rushed outside. The cold, crisp winter air felt good on his face. Winter was his favorite time of year. There were so many fun things to do! The ground was covered with fresh snow—perfect for a snowball fight with his friends. His mom wouldn’t be home from work for two hours, and James was planning to walk home with his two friends, Josh and Bobby.

James lived in a small town, and his school was only a half mile from his house. There were many interesting things to see and do between his house and the school. Now he waited under the old oak tree for his friends.

“Hey, James!” yelled his buddies.

Josh and Bobby were already packing the soft snow into snowballs. James darted behind the tree and started his own pile of snowballs. The fun began.

“Let’s go by the park today,” Josh had run out of snowballs and was ready to move on.

“Yeah, the pond is frozen solid, and I can beat both of you getting across,” Bobby spoke up as they picked up their books and headed in the direction of home.

“Well, guys,” James replied, “my mom said the pond looks safe, but sometimes looks can be deceiving. She told me to
stay away from the pond."

"I saw the pond this morning, and it looked OK to me," Bobby replied. "Come on, James," Josh spoke up. "We can just walk past it. We don’t have to race across it."

James hesitated. He knew what his mom had said, and he wanted to obey her. But just a look wasn’t hurt anything.

"OK?" James began to run. "Last one there is a rotten egg!"

When the boys reached the pond, it was a memorable sight. The ice on the top of the pond glistered under the evening sun. It was indeed tempting to skate on its slick surface. In fact, several children had donned their ice skates and were beginning to move out onto the pond.

James, Josh, and Bobby watched. They wanted so much to join the others out on the pond, but they all knew James’s mother’s warning must be followed. James, Josh, and Bobby had a choice. They could obey Mom, or take that dare and race across the pond. Suddenly someone screamed! "The ice is cracking! Get off the ice!"

Just then a boy plunged into the cold waters of the pond.

"Help!" Everyone wanted to save the boy in the water, but the ice was too dangerous for them to get near him. They could hear the fire-truck sirens screaming in the distance, and in just minutes the firefighters were there with their long ladder to rescue the freezing child. The boy was saved.

James, Josh, and Bobby bowed their heads for a prayer of thanks. James’s mother’s warning must be followed. James, Josh, and Bobby had a choice. They could obey Mom, or take that dare and race across the pond. Suddenly someone screamed! "The ice is cracking! Get off the ice!"

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"Help!" Everyone wanted to save the boy in the water, but the ice was too dangerous for them to get near him. They could hear the fire-truck sirens screaming in the distance, and in just minutes the firefighters were there with their long ladder to rescue the freezing child. The boy was saved.

James, Josh, and Bobby bowed their heads for a prayer of thanks.

Frank remembered seeing his mom. Every evening Frank rushed home from school and delivered his papers before doing his homework. Needless to say, he had no time for sports! It was an awful time to get up.

Then he thought about that new bicycle he wanted and quickly got out of bed and headed for the garage, where he would band his brand-new wallet and his own money to get it.

One day as Frank bandied the papers, he started to read some of the stories. To his amazement, most of the stories were BAD NEWS! Frank started thinking, I’m a messenger of BAD NEWS! That thought bothered Frank for several days. He did not like being a messenger of bad news. "I want to be a messenger of GOOD NEWS," he reasoned. "How can I do that?"

Frank remembered seeing his mom make a newspaper called The Good News for the primary Sabbath school.

Activity
Let’s make a snowflake to hang in your room with the word "HOPE" on one side and the memory text (John 3:16) written on the other side. You can decorate your snowflake with glitter if you would like.

SUNDAY
The Messenger

Memory Text: "Jesus said, ‘Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust in me. There are many rooms in my Father’s house; I would not tell you this if it were not true. I am going there to prepare a place for you. After I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me so that you may be where I am’" (John 14:1-3, NCV).

Motivational Aid
Divide the children into groups of three or four. Provide them with poster-size papers and markers. Ask each group to write down different types of messengers. They could look into history to list messengers of ancient times, such as the Greek messenger who carried the news about military attacks, etc. Tape them all around the room. Then ask the children, "How is carrying messages today different from long ago? Would you rather be a messenger today than be one in ancient times? Why?"

Story
Frank was only 12 years old, but he wanted a job. He had so many things he needed, but no money to get them. His parents told him he would have to earn the money in order to get them. So he applied for a position as a newspaper boy. He would deliver the newspaper each evening and Sunday morning and would earn the money by himself.

"Frank, get up!" It was Mom. "You must have your papers delivered by 6:00 a.m. This is Sunday morning."

Frank opened one eye and looked at the clock. Four a.m.? "Wow, what an awful time to get up." Then he thought about that new bicycle he wanted and quickly got out of bed and headed for the garage, where he would band his papers and load them onto his old bicycle for delivery.

Every evening Frank rushed home from school and delivered his papers before doing his homework. Needless to say, he had no time for sports! It was all worth it, though. He now had a brand-new wallet and his own money to put into it.
He remembered hearing his mom sing a song that said, “The good news is God made a way.”

“That’s it! I’ll put some good news into each newspaper I deliver.”

That is exactly what he did. Frank went to the Adventist Book Store with his mom and tried looking for something that told the good news of Jesus. He wanted people to know about Jesus their Savior. Finally, Frank found a small pamphlet that he could insert into each of the papers as he put the rubber band around them. Frank believed in Jesus and hoped for the day when he would see Him. He wanted to share with the people in his neighborhood this wonderful hope.

Someone in the Bible was also called to be a messenger of hope to many people. His name was Moses.

Can you tell me anything about Moses?

Yes! He was hidden in a basket when he was a small baby. He was raised by the Pharaoh’s daughter and became an adopted prince. He saw his people being treated badly and wanted to help them. God called him to become the leader of the Israelites to lead them out of Egypt. He was to lead them to the Promised Land—a land they could call their own.

Did Moses get to see the Promised Land?

No, he did not, because he got angry and did not follow God’s instructions. But even though Moses did not get to see the Promised Land of Canaan, he did not lose hope in God. After his death, God raised him from the grave to be with Him in heaven. His hope was only delayed!

Jesus told us He has prepared a place for us and that He will come again to take us to live with Him. Don’t let this hope grow dim.

**Application**

Make a list of things that you can do to be a messenger of hope. Share them with a friend. Then make another list of things you should avoid if you want to bear good news to others.

**Discussion**

1. If God has called you to be a messenger of hope, what preparation do you need?

2. What qualities can you learn from Moses that can help you to be a good messenger?

3. What are some ways you can share this hope with your friends and neighbors just as Frank did?

**Activity**

Make a “newspaper” with only good news in it. You can entitle the paper HOPE. Write short news clips and draw pictures to illustrate this news.

**MONDAY**

**Adopted**

**Memory Text:** “Because of his love, God . . . decided to make us his own children through Jesus Christ” (Eph. 1:5, NCV).

**Motivational Aid**

Try to find a picture of a family with adopted children (or an actual family you know). Tell (or ask the family to talk) about their experience. Can anyone tell me what “adopted” means? Yes! It means to be taken voluntarily into another family. Then ask, “How do you feel if a loving family takes you in?”

**Story**

Kathy was playing happily with her neighbor Lei when sounds of sirens went fleeting by.

“It must be a fire,” she said casually to Lei.

Kathy and Lei were so engrossed in their Barbie dolls that they did not notice that police cars, ambulances, and people were busy at an accident scene. A four-car crash had just taken place at the end of the road, and it was causing a huge traffic jam.

Before long, Kathy heard Lei’s mother, Mrs. Wong, calling her urgently:

“Kathy, Kathy!” Mrs. Wong called earnestly. “Come quickly. Something terrible has happened to your mom and dad.”

Dropping everything, Kathy ran out to the gate to meet Mrs. Wong. Her heart was beating fast, and her hands were growing cold.

What could happen to Mom and Dad? Kathy thought solemnly.

In a matter of hours Kathy was told that her mom, dad, and brother were all killed in that accident. She cried herself to sleep that night. What would happen to her now? Who would...
Kathy! Yes! Kathy learned to know Jesus! Her life started to change. She became a Seventh-day Adventist Christian.

There are many people who do not know Jesus. The Bible mentions Rahab as one. She didn’t know Jesus, but she had heard of Israel’s God. She took the risk to save the two spies from Israel when the king of Jericho wanted to arrest them. The spies brought her the message of hope, and she accepted it. When the walls of Jericho tumbled down, everyone was destroyed. Only Rahab and her family were saved, because she obeyed the spies’ instruction to tie a red thread on her window. She accepted Israel’s God. She was adopted into the family of the Israelites, and Rahab became an ancestor of David, who was an ancestor of Jesus.

Application
Make a list of things you can do to help children who have become orphans. Can you visit them, or become a friend to one of them? Perhaps you can pray with them? Can you share your toys and clothes with them? Share this list with your pastor and Sabbath school teacher to see if they could arrange for you to visit an orphanage.

Discussion
1. When you are adopted into the family of Jesus, how should you live your life?
2. How do you help orphans want to become adopted by Jesus?

TUESDAY
Released at Last!

Memory Text: “You can throw us into the blazing furnace. The God we serve is able to save us from the furnace and your power. If he does this, it is good” (Dan. 3:17, ICB).

Motivational Aid
Pass out colored strips of paper to the children and ask them to write down some of the trials people have faced in their lives. For example, were they or someone they know ever wrongly accused of something they didn’t do? Do they know of anyone going to prison for believing in Jesus? Have them share their take care of her?

After all, she was only 7 years old!

Yes, Kathy had become an orphan! But two weeks later Uncle John and Aunt Sarah came to help Kathy pack up.

“But where am I going?” asked Kathy, with a curious look in her eye.

“We are going to take you home with us, Kathy. You are going to become part of our family. We are going to let you share the room with your cousin Gina. Wouldn’t you like that?” smiled Uncle John.

“We are going to adopt you!” Aunt Sarah said excitedly.

“Really?” exclaimed Kathy as tears flowed down her cheeks. “You are going to love me like you love Gina?”

And so it was that Kathy went to live with Uncle John and Aunt Sarah. They loved her just like their own daughter. She attended the Adventist church school and academy. Everything in this school was strange to Kathy. The way the other students talked and dressed. The way they acted. The school had special classes about the Bible, and everyone attended worship in the morning and went to church on Saturday.

Can you guess what happened to Kathy? Yes! Kathy learned to know Jesus! Her life started to change. She became a Seventh-day Adventist Christian.
answers. Then ask, "How does it feel when you are wrongly accused and everything seems hopeless?"

**Story**

Civil war was raging in the country of Sri Lanka. Two religious groups were fighting and killing each other. Everyone was under suspicion. In fact, no one dared to go out of their house unnecessarily. Even Christians who go to church to worship were under suspicion.

One evening young pastor Alex was home preparing his sermon for Sabbath services when there was a loud banging on his door.

"Open up!" shouted the people outside his house. "Open up!"

Everyone in the house stood together nervously as Pastor Alex opened the door. Several people dressed in police and army uniforms stepped inside. They started to accuse Alex of hiding enemies of the other religious group in his house, and of helping them to escape through the church.

"No! No! I didn't do that," answered Alex loudly. "It must be a mistake! I am a Christian!"

Everything went so fast that before he knew it, Alex was arrested and put into jail in a faraway town. He was away from his family, lying in a damp, dirty prison cell filled with crawling creatures. But Pastor Alex remembered God's promises to deliver His children. He continued to pray every day, to trust in Jesus, and to share Jesus with the prison for their faith. Perhaps an uncle of hiding enemies of the other religious group in his house, and of helping them to escape through the church.

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Everything went so fast that before he knew it, Alex was arrested and put into jail in a faraway town. He was away from his family, lying in a damp, dirty prison cell filled with crawling creatures. But Pastor Alex remembered God's promises to deliver His children. He continued to pray every day, to trust in Jesus, and to share Jesus with the other prisoners. Later he was able to get hold of a Bible to study with the other prisoners.

Do you know how long Alex stayed in prison? More than 15 long years! But he never gave up hope that God is in control and will deliver him. He helped many prisoners to become followers of Jesus, and they were baptized in the prison.

God did not forget Alex! In the year 2000 Alex was released from prison!

Do you remember Daniel? Can you imagine how Daniel felt when he was facing many difficult moments in his life? He was only a young boy when he was taken prisoner to Babylon. He had to leave his mother and father and go to a foreign land where he didn't know their language or their customs. Everything seemed hopeless! But Daniel remained faithful to Jesus. He did not forget what his parents had taught him. He did not forget to honor God in his daily life, including the food he ate. Eventually Daniel and his three friends were found to be the wisest in Babylon. God gave him wisdom to interpret the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar. He was promoted to become a minister under this powerful king for many years.

Once more, when he was wrongly accused and thrown into the lions' den, Daniel could say firmly, "My God sent his angel to close the lions' mouths. They have not hurt me, because my God knows I am innocent. I never did anything wrong to you, my king" (Dan. 6:22, ICB).

Daniel lived to an old age, serving God eventually defeated his evil enemies, and Daniel was placed in the highest position of Babylon.

**Application**

Make a list of names of people who are facing trials now, and pray for each one of them. Maybe some are in prison for their faith. Perhaps an uncle couldn’t find a job because he refused to work on Sabbath. Maybe a friend is dying of cancer. Practice praying two to three times a day.

**Discussion**

1. Why is it important to keep a trusting spirit in difficult times?
2. In what way can a person under trials and difficulties remain faithful to God?
3. If you were misjudged or wrongly accused, how would you handle the situation?

**Activity**

Write a prayer journal with names of friends who are going through difficulties, and pray for them. Send a card to tell someone in trouble that you are praying for them. Cut out a heart from red paper, and put a text of hope on one side and the picture of Jesus on the other.

**WEDNESDAY**

**Mary’s Hope**

**Memory Text:** "She will give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21, NCV).

**Motivational Aid**

Bring a basket filled with things needed for babies. Ask the children to identify them and discuss what each item is used for. Talk about the excitement of having a new baby brother or sister. "What preparation did your mom make before having the baby?"

**Story**


How many of you have a baby in your house? Babies are special, aren’t they? Once a year the world focuses on a very special baby. Can anyone tell me who that baby is? Yes! It’s the Baby Jesus. Today, we want to focus on Baby Jesus’ mother, Mary. The Bible tells us that Gabriel, an angel from God, was sent to tell Mary she would have Baby Jesus (Luke 1:26-35). Mary wasn’t married, and this would be her first baby. Do you think she was afraid? I think she was surprised and afraid. The angel told Mary that she was chosen by God, and her baby would be very special. The angel told Mary to name the baby “Jesus.” Do you know what answer Mary gave to the angel? Yes! She said she was the servant of God and would do everything the angel told her to do.

Mary was so happy to be chosen to serve God and have a special little baby named Jesus. Luke 1:46-55 says that Mary was so happy she praised God aloud for everyone to hear. Do you know why Mary was so excited?"
Because she knew Jesus was going to be the Savior of the world. God had chosen her to take care of the One who would save us all from the evil one, Satan.

Mary did all God asked her to do. She took very special care of little Jesus and taught Him to love and honor God and love those around Him. She watched Him grow to be a man, and she let Him go as He went about His mission to teach and heal those around Him. Mary was always aware of who Jesus was and what His mission was on this earth.

Boys and girls, there are many stories in the Bible about Jesus' life on this earth. Can anyone tell me what happened to Jesus? (Let children answer.) Yes, wicked men killed Jesus and hung Him on the cross to die. How do you think Mary felt? Her heart was broken. Even though Mary knew Jesus had come here to save the world from the evil one, her heart was still broken. Mary was still the mother of Jesus, but she knew God was stronger than Satan.

Did Jesus stay dead? No! Jesus arose from the tomb, and when He did, He sealed the hope of heaven for all of us who believe in Him. Mary, His mother, must have sung with joy when she learned that her Son, Jesus, had overcome the evil one who causes death.

Application

Write down three things you could say to a friend or neighbor about your hope in Jesus. Maybe you want to tell about His love for everyone? Or that He is coming again? Find the time to call on those friends.

Discussion

1. Is there any other way that God could save us without letting Jesus die?
2. What does the resurrection of Jesus mean to us?

Activity

Let each child make a simple cross as a bookmark to carry in their Bible. Ask them to print the words "HOPE" horizontally and "LOVE" vertically on their cross.

THURSDAY

Paul: Changed Inside Out!

Memory Text: "If anyone belongs to Christ, then he is made new. The old things have gone; everything is made new!" (2 Cor. 5:17, ICB).

Motivational Aid

Show some newspaper clippings of two convicted teenagers. Have children identify the bad things they have done. Then ask children to write down several ways they could help these convicted teens change their bad ways. Who can help?

Story

Osman was looking forward to attending Ridgewood High School. He had moved from a small country school to the city where his dad had found a new job. The city was always better. At least that’s what Osman thought. Life in the city would be more interesting with lots of fun things to do.

He made many friends at Ridgewood High, and they introduced him to many exciting things he had never seen or ever tried. Of course, the parties were great, and he even tried some beer. He was growing up, all right!

One afternoon as he was packing up his bag to go home, his buddy Hosni called out.

"Hey, Oss, do you want to do something different tonight?" Hosni asked invitingly.

"What would that be?" Osman replied with a look of curiosity. "Come and see for yourself—just meet at the same old place," reminded Hosni as he dashed out of the door.

That night the five “musketeers,” as they called themselves, got together to try a very harmful drug called “speed.” They thought at first it was exciting and fun. Many more nights were spent in trying other drugs that were passed on to them.

After six months Osman got so hooked on these drugs that he started stealing his parents’ money to buy them from drug peddlers around the school. Soon, his school grades were dropping day by day, and he was beginning to skip classes several times a week. Osman and Hosni were put on probation. One night the two boys even robbed a 7-Eleven store and got away with hundreds of dollars. Crime does not pay. Soon they were arrested and charged in court. They were sent to a juvenile detention center for special help. It was there that they met Gerry, a Christian counselor, who introduced them to Jesus. Only Jesus could help them change their sinful ways. They had lots of time to read inspirational books and study the Bible.

One year later the joyous day came when Osman gave his life to Jesus. He
knew it wouldn’t be easy, but he believed that “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13, NKJV). Indeed, Osman felt like a new man. He was changed inside out!

Similarly, when Saul met Jesus on the road to Damascus, he surrendered his life to Him. He became Paul the apostle. Instead of persecuting the Christians, Paul became a changed man when he gave his life to Jesus. Paul found the hope in Jesus Christ exciting, and it changed his mission and his goal for life. He was no longer thinking of selfish ambition. He had no concern for fame and popularity among friends.

Mind you, many Christians in the church were suspicious of Paul at first. Was he really truly sorry for his sins? Maybe it was a trick to get more Christians killed. But as Paul committed himself to working with the other apostles and believers for several years, they finally believed that his conversion was genuine. He was on fire for Jesus Christ, taking several missionary trips to Asia Minor to preach this hope of salvation.

Paul suffered lots of hardship for Jesus, but he did not mind. Instead, he continued to encourage Christians everywhere to “carry each other’s burdens” (Gal. 6:2), to unite as one in Christ Jesus. Paul’s life and ministry lifted up the hope that “now Christ is risen from the dead” (1 Cor. 15:20, NKJV), and that we are to “press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called . . . [us] heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14).

Application
Volunteer to give a testimony in the church or Sabbath school class on how Jesus changed your life after you made the choice to follow Him. Share with a friend in school the joy and hope of believing in Jesus.

Discussion
1. If you become changed in Jesus, does it mean you won’t get into trouble anymore?
2. Suppose someone said to you, “I have tried many times to stop smoking but have had no success,” what would you say? How can you help them find the hope in Jesus?

Activity
Ask your mom or Sabbath school teacher to help you plan a party for a friend who has accepted Jesus. Decorate the room with your drawings and cutouts. Have lots of food. Invite them to tell one change that Jesus helped them to make in their life after they accepted Him.

FRIDAY
John’s Hope

Memory Text: “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. . . . And I saw the holy city . . . coming down out of heaven from God” (Rev. 21:1, 2, NCV).

Motivational Aid
Show pictures of children with handicaps. Have children identify the various types of handicaps: Hearing loss. Blindness. Speech loss. Then ask, “How would you feel if you had a physical handicap? How would you deal with it at school and in public places?”

Story
Bryan sat in his wheelchair near the west window. The warm sunlight made tracks across his lap. It was cold outside, but Bryan was warm with the sun and the lap quilt his aunt Louise had given him. He liked to sit at the window and watch the schoolchildren load onto the buses after school.

All was quiet in the house. Bryan was alone. Both Mom and Dad worked outside the home, and his older sister had not gotten home from her school. Bryan was 10 years old and could take good care of himself for most of the time. He had learned to operate his motorized wheelchair, and the house was built so he could go just about anywhere he wanted. He had a schoolteacher after lunch from 1:00-3:00 p.m. every day during the school year. Although Bryan’s legs were crooked with polio, his mind was bright and he was a quick learner. His family did not live near a church school, and his parents did not want Bryan to attend the public school in their city. They had hopes of getting Bryan and his sister into church school and were working out the transportation problem. But in the meantime it could get lonely at home.

Although Bryan could not walk, he loved God. He accepted his disability without questioning God. Bryan trusted God and knew that He would use him and his disability as a witness.
to everyone around him. Bryan also knew he would go to heaven to live with God and Jesus someday. When he did, he knew he would run like the wind and chase the lion cubs as they played with him. Bryan kept in his heart this hope that we all have: Jesus died to save us and will take us to live with Him in heaven.

Remember John the Beloved, one of Jesus’ disciples? He was also alone on the island of Patmos. He was sent there for preaching the hope of salvation. But John was not discouraged, for Jesus appeared to him to strengthen his hope in Him and in the church. He was given many visions about the second coming of Jesus, the new heaven and new earth, where “[God] will wipe away every tear from their eyes. . . . There will be no more death, sadness, crying, or pain. . . . All the old ways are gone” (Rev. 21:4, NCV).

The apostle John was greatly comforted as he recorded all these beautiful messages that Jesus gave him. We can be assured that this hope of meeting Jesus again in the new earth will soon be realized.

Application
Ask your mom to take you to visit a children’s hospital. Talk to different children about the hope of Jesus’ coming and heaven. If possible, give them a CD with Bible stories and encourage them to listen.

Discussion
1. What would you say to another child if they asked, “If there is a God, why didn’t He help me to see?”
2. How can you develop a positive attitude and be cheerful?
3. What is one thing you’ll like to do when you get to heaven?

Activity
Have the children draw a picture of today’s story. Let the children share their pictures with you, then place the pictures on the wall. Also, have them cut a heart from paper and write “God Is Love” on one side and “I Love God” on the other.

SECOND SABBATH
Jesus: Our Living Hope

Memory Text: “Jesus said, ‘Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust in me. There are many rooms in my Father’s house; I would not tell you this if it were not true. I am going there to prepare a place for you. After I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me so that you may be where I am’” (John 14:1-3, NCV).

Motivational Aid
Hide some “goodies” ahead of time. Then give the children two minutes to search for those things. When time is up, get together and talk about their finds. Did everyone find at least one thing? Then ask, “Did you have an easy time in your search? How did you feel when you were searching for the goodies and couldn’t find any? How serious were you in searching?”

Story
“My J-E-S-U-S. The name I love the best! He died for me, He arose again, my J-E-S-U-S!” You could hear the children in the primary class singing their hearts out.

Robert Lang hurried past the Sabbath school door. He was visiting the church for the first time. He vaguely remembered hearing about Jesus many years ago. Now his life was a mess, and he was looking for something to help make his life better. He was invited many times to visit the Seventh-day Adventist church near his home, but had not responded until today. He followed the usher to a special class for adult visitors. He was a little afraid, but he had come this far and couldn’t turn back now.

“Come in!” The jovial woman speaking to him must be the teacher. “We are so glad you’ve joined us!” She handed him a Bible and a small booklet the class members were apparently talking about. “My name is Clare Ricks. We are studying from Matthew, chapter 1, beginning with verse 18. You will find it on page 985. We are studying the life of Jesus and are beginning with His birth.”

Ms. Ricks handed Robert a small card and asked him to provide them with his name, address, and telephone number. He sat next to a man about his own age and settled back to listen. He had no intention of letting anyone know why he was here, and waited to
see what others were saying. He found page 985 and began reading. Memories flooded his mind. He remembered his childhood and the Bible stories his mother had taught him. He remembered going to church with his mom and dad, and he remembered attending Vacation Bible School. How had he gotten so far from the things he had been taught during his childhood?

Robert took the Bible Ms. Ricks offered him when he left the class. He stayed for the preaching service, and on his way out, there was Ms. Ricks again. “Robert?” she touched him on the arm. “Will you join us for a delicious meal prepared for our visitors?” He hesitated. “Well...” Ms. Ricks interrupted. “You are welcome! Come; let me introduce you to Charles and Lisa.”

Soon, “going to church” became a part of Robert Lang’s life again. He enjoyed the new friends he made. He liked the pastor and the sermons he heard each week. He was especially fond of Ms. Ricks, who seemed to be such a warm and friendly person. He liked the music that was so calming and encouraging to him. But the thing he enjoyed the most was hearing, studying, and learning about Jesus, his Savior and best Friend.

When the primary Sabbath school teacher asked for volunteers to help with the children’s Easter pageant, Robert answered the call. He was talented in painting. He helped build the backdrops, and would often stay to watch the children rehearse the Easter story. The most intriguing part for Robert was when Jesus came out of the tomb and the children’s choir sang about His victory over death. Robert had studied about the crucifixion and burial of Jesus, but he had not been moved until now, when he realized that Jesus died for him. It didn’t matter what kind of life he had lived; Jesus still loved him the same. Robert’s eyes filled with tears each time the children sang. His heart filled with hope, knowing that Jesus had prepared a place in heaven for him.

On the day of the Easter pageant Robert sat near the back. He could see and hear the children but did not want others to see his emotion. His heart filled with joy for Jesus, his Savior. Robert knew God had forgiven him for his sins because Jesus had died for him. And, because of that death, Robert knew God would always forgive him when he asked. That was God’s gift to him!

Robert stood and walked to the front when the pastor asked if anyone wanted to give their heart to Jesus. His heart was filled with love, peace, and hope. He had found the “something” he was looking for in his life.

Yes, Jesus died for each of us. His life was without sin of any kind. He gladly came as a tiny baby and lived here as we do. He is coming back to this earth soon to take all who love Him to live with Him in heaven. Jesus is our living hope! Would you like to give your heart to Him today?

Application

Write your name on the decision card indicating that you want to follow Jesus, who gives you hope. Sing together the song “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus.” Let your parents and the pastor know that you want to be baptized and be Jesus’ child.

Discussion

1. If we continue to live a sinful life, how can we make a turnaround to respond to Jesus?

2. If you find joy and peace in Jesus as the living hope, how can you intentionally get others to learn about this hope?

Activity

Learn and sing the song “Soon and Very Soon,” in He Is Our Song, No. 121. Ask your Sabbath school teacher if you can share it with the rest of the children in your class.

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MARGARET TAGLAVORE is Children’s Ministries director of the Southwestern Union Conference in Texas, U.S.A. Prior to working in the union, she served as Children’s Ministries director of the Texas Conference. 
In my personal study I get the clear impression that the Holy Scripture tends to define human life as being able to act, to move. That is why the Bible emphasizes in a particular way the importance of choosing a proper “way,” or “road,” to travel. There is the way of life and the way of death. We choose the road we will travel on, and that will determine our final destination and the way we live today. Life is indeed a journey. Humans realize almost instinctively that they are not yet where they would like to be, that they are in fact on the way to achieve their plans and dreams. The human race is in a journey of transcendental importance.

As Adventists, we are a people on the move, heading toward a particular destination, namely, the return in glory of our ascended Lord and the establishment of His eternal kingdom. We know where we are heading! We, like the Israelites that left Egypt, are in a journey of hope; a journey of hope in a hopeless, fearful, and disoriented world. By that we mean that we travel light because we are anticipating the soon realization of our hope; home is very close. But we also mean that our journey is characterized by hope. Hope is not only what we anticipate but also what enriches our lives while we wait with eager expectation. Our hope has a direct impact on the quality of our lives as we journey toward the realization of that hope. This hope strengthens us when in our journey we have to travel through difficult terrain. Our journey of hope enables us to face the future in full confidence, free from the fear of uncertainty and disorientation that characterizes our world.

We, like the apostolic church, are possessed by a living hope that fills our lives with meaning and joy. Unquestionably, we are involved in a journey of hope. We should understand what that means. This year the readings for the Week of Prayer explore the nature and meaning of our journey of hope. We will achieve that goal by examining the lives of some biblical writers who chose a journey of hope. We will study the journey of Eve, Moses, Rahab, Daniel, Mary, Paul, John, and Jesus, our living hope. From them we will learn about our journey.

Our hope, a gift from God through Jesus, is so important that we should study it, embrace it, pray about it, and preach it. Yes, preach it! Let it be heard from our pulpits, let it be shared with our neighbors that our Savior is coming soon, that our journey is soon to end in the eternal portals of the heavenly Jerusalem.

May the grace of God be with you, my cotravelers, in a journey of hope.