

Adventist World

**Week of
Prayer**

Sep 2, 2023

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“Ye Shall Receive Power”



Imagine with me a small group of disciples assembled in Jerusalem, waiting anxiously to hear Jesus' last words before His ascension. Clinging to every word, they listened as He gave specific instructions on what they should do upon receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. He clarified that it wasn't an earthly kingdom He had come to establish, but that they, as His followers, had a special part to play in preparing

people for *another* kingdom—a heavenly one. He said, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). These disciples, who had been instructed by Jesus Himself, were called to witness for Him and prepare people to accept the message of salvation.

God is still instructing through His Word and is still calling today. He desires those who see their need of His transforming power; who humble themselves and seek Him in prayer; who, following in Jesus' footsteps, show dignity and respect to all people; who are willing to share Revelation's sometimes-unpopular warning of the three angels' messages; and who empty themselves to be filled with the Spirit's grace and freedom.

In the following pages you'll read stories of biblical characters who were mighty witnesses for Christ in a variety of situations: Joseph, who witnessed despite personal struggles; the young maid who witnessed to her master in a foreign land; Daniel, who witnessed to powerful earthly rulers; and others who shared in their own sphere of influence.

We are told, “The words of Christ just before His ascension to heaven mean much to everyone who shall accept the truth as it is in Jesus. . . . All the followers of Christ are to be witnesses for Him. Everyone who receives the precious treasure of truth is to impart of the same to others” (Ellen G. White, in *Review and Herald*, Feb. 9, 1892).

Would you like to be a witness for Jesus? I invite you to take a few moments during this Week of Prayer and ask the Lord what He would have you do to share His love with others as a faithful witness.

Maranatha!

Ted N. C. Wilson, president
Worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church



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We believe in the power of prayer, and we welcome prayer requests that can be shared at our weekly staff worship every Wednesday morning. Send your requests to prayer@adventistworld.org, and pray for us as we work together to advance God's kingdom.

First Sabbath

Abraham as a Witness

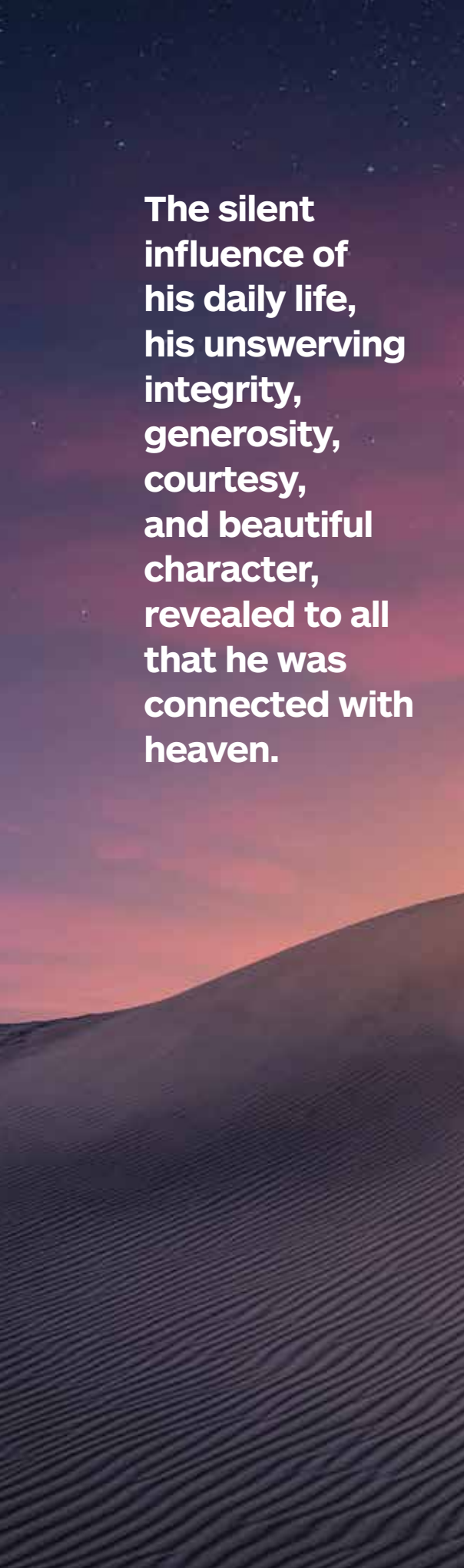
Leading by example

BY TED N. C. WILSON

The fabulous city of Ur, located in the heart of ancient Mesopotamia along the banks of the mighty Euphrates River, was the center of a wealthy empire that drew traders from around the then-known world. With its busy port close to the Persian Gulf, “Ur was a bustling metropolis with shops, narrow streets full of cattle carts and donkey caravans and craftsmen who made everything from leather goods to precious ornaments.”¹ Goats and sheep dotted the landscape surrounding the city where rich farmland boasted groves of date palms, and irrigated fields produced barley, lentils, onions, and garlic.

Dominating the city skyline was a massive ziggurat, a pyramid-like temple honoring the moon god, Sin. Rising 65 feet (19.8 meters) from a base measuring 135 by 200 feet (41.1 by 60.96 meters), the ziggurat had three platforms, each with a different color, and a silver shrine at the top.² Human sacrifices were known to have taken place there.³

The city and temple, built not long after the Tower of Babel rebellion, was a center of idolatry and heathenism. Nevertheless, out of the corrupting influences of this ancient city came one of God’s most faithful witnesses—Abraham.



The silent influence of his daily life, his unswerving integrity, generosity, courtesy, and beautiful character, revealed to all that he was connected with heaven.

“Idolatry invited him on every side, but in vain,” wrote Ellen White. “Faithful among the faithless, uncorrupted by the prevailing apostasy, he steadfastly adhered to the worship of the one true God.”⁴

How could this be, given that his own father, Terah, was serving “other gods”?⁵ One possibility is that Abraham, born approximately 350 years after the Flood,⁶ learned about the true God of heaven from his great-great-great-grandfather Eber, who was the great-grandson of Shem, Noah’s son. While most of Abram’s generations of grandfathers had already passed away, Eber lived to be 464, including at least 100 years after Abram’s birth.⁷ It is quite possible Eber shared God’s truth with his young descendant.

Regardless of exactly how he learned of God, we know that “by faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going” (Heb. 11:8).

Leaving what was then the wealthiest, most civilized place on earth, Abraham was willing to be a witness for God wherever he was called to go. Let’s briefly consider some of the ways this great patriarch was a witness.

A WITNESS TO HIS FAMILY

After a brief stay in Haran, where his father died, “Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother’s son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan” (Gen. 12:5). Pitching his tent near Shechem, Abram first built “an altar to the Lord” (verse 7). When he moved again, he “built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord” (verse 8). Encouraging family worship, Abram invited everyone within his encampment to

the morning and evening sacrifices. When he moved to a new place, the altar remained as a silent witness to all who passed by.

While Abraham exercised “the greatest care” to “shut out every form of false religion”⁸ he was known in the communities where he lived to be a kind, courteous, and just man and was respected by all.

A WITNESS TO THE LARGER COMMUNITY

Abraham was peace-loving. When fighting broke out between his and Lot’s herdsmen, he pleaded, “Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren” (Gen. 13:8). Allowing Lot first choice in where to settle, Abraham allowed him to choose the lush, rich valley of Siddim while he remained in the more mountainous regions.

Later, when all the inhabitants of the valley were captured by King Chedorlaomer and his allies, Abraham showed he did not hold any grudge against Lot’s earlier ingratitude. “All his affection for him was awakened, and he determined that he should be rescued. Seeking, first of all, divine counsel, Abraham prepared for war.”⁹ Victory was swift and complete, with all prisoners and goods recovered, and Abraham ascribed triumph to God.

“The worshiper of Jehovah had not only rendered a great service to the country, but had proved himself a man of valor,” wrote Ellen White. “It was seen that righteousness is not cowardice, and that Abraham’s religion made him courageous in maintaining the right and defending the oppressed. His heroic act gave him a widespread influence among the surrounding tribes.”¹⁰

Abraham was an educator, and as he shared his faith his household continued growing, eventually

comprising more than 1,000 people. “Those who were led by his teachings to worship the one God found a home in his encampment; and here, as in a school, they received such instruction as would prepare them to be representatives of the true faith. Thus a great responsibility rested upon him. He was training heads of families, and his methods of government would be carried out in the households over which they should preside.”¹¹

Respected by all the surrounding nations, Abraham’s “allegiance to God was unswerving, while his affability and benevolence inspired confidence and friendship and his unaffected greatness commanded respect and honor.”¹²

A WITNESS BEFORE GOD AND UNFALLEN BEINGS

Abraham honored God, and God honored him by speaking directly with him and revealing His purposes. Nevertheless, Abraham was human, and Scripture records at least three times his faith faltered: (1) when he lied about his wife to Pharaoh (Gen. 12:10-20); (2) when he took Hagar as his wife to produce an heir (Gen. 16:1-4); (3) when he lied to King Abimelech about Sarah being his wife (Gen. 20). These instances reveal the danger of (1) going where God has *not* called us to go; and (2) listening to those who may be trying to help but are not if they aren’t in line with what God has indicated.

Ellen White points out that “God had called Abraham to be the father of the faithful, and his life was to stand as an example of faith to succeeding generations. But his faith had not been perfect. . . . That he might reach the highest standard, God subjected him to another test, the closest which man was ever called to endure.”¹³

God commanded him, “Take now your son, your only son Isaac,

whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you” (Gen. 22:2).

Abraham knew human sacrifices were worship rituals that the heathen practiced, but not the God of heaven! The command made no sense. Why would God ask him to slay the son of promise? Nevertheless, after wrestling in prayer, the aged patriarch moved forward in faith.

“Abraham was human; his passions and attachments were like ours; but he did not stop to question how the promise could be fulfilled if Isaac should be slain. He did not stay to reason with his aching heart. He knew that God is just and righteous in all His requirements, and he obeyed the command to the very letter.”¹⁴

Little did he realize that all heaven was eagerly waiting to see what he would do. Little did Abraham or Isaac realize that what they were doing would be a lesson in the plan of salvation for the entire universe. Little did they know that it would be in the very place they were called to go that God would sacrifice His own dear Son for our salvation.

“Heavenly beings were witnesses of the scene as the faith of Abraham and the submission of Isaac were tested. . . . All heaven beheld with wonder and admiration Abraham’s unflinching obedience. All heaven applauded his fidelity. Satan’s accusations were shown to be false. . . . God’s covenant, confirmed to Abraham by an oath before the intelligences of other worlds, testified that obedience will be rewarded.

“It had been difficult even for the angels to grasp the mystery of redemption. . . . When the command was given to Abraham to offer up his son, the interest of

all heavenly beings was enlisted. With intense earnestness they watched each step in the fulfillment of this command. When to Isaac’s question, ‘Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?’ Abraham made answer, ‘God will provide himself a lamb’; and when the father’s hand was stayed as he was about to slay his son, and the ram which God had provided was offered in the place of Isaac—then light was shed upon the mystery of redemption, and even the angels understood more clearly the wonderful provision that God had made for man’s salvation.”¹⁵

OUR WITNESS TODAY

Abraham’s life of faith, obedience, and service provides an important example of witness for us today. The silent influence of his daily life, his unswerving integrity, generosity, courtesy, and beautiful character, revealed to all that he was connected with heaven. He was able to look beyond what is seen, and grasped eternal realities. “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness” (Rom. 4:3). ☉

¹ Andrew Lawler, “City of Biblical Abraham Brimmed With Trade and Riches,” *National Geographic*, Mar. 11, 2016, <https://on.natgeo.com/3isuYmQ>.

² *Ibid.*

³ John Noble Wilford, “At Ur, Ritual Deaths That Were Anything but Serene,” *New York Times*, Oct. 26, 2009, <https://nyti.ms/3k1nKqm>.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1890, 1908), p. 125.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Time line based on Genesis 5, 11. See chart, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1953), vol. 1, p. 185.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 141.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 134.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

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Sunday

Witnessing in Times of Personal Struggle

Learning from Joseph

Jane Marczewski (“Nightbirde”) exuded quiet confidence and peace as she stood on the stage and told the judges her story. She was a singer-songwriter, she was 30 years old, and the cancer she had been battling off and on for several years had metastasized. As she sang her original song, the judges and audience wiped tears from their eyes. When the judges expressed their awe at her positivity, she remarked simply, “You can’t wait until life isn’t hard anymore before you decide to be happy.”¹

Jane openly shared her faith and her struggle with cancer on her blog. “Even on days when I’m not so sick, sometimes I go lie on the mat in the afternoon light to listen for Him. I know it sounds crazy, and I can’t really explain it, but God is in there—even now. I have heard it said that some people can’t see God because they won’t look low enough, and it’s true. If you can’t see Him, look lower. God is on the bathroom floor.”²

Have you ever thought that it would be better to wait until you are healthy or successful before witnessing to others about God? It’s easy for us to think that we need to have everything “together” before we share the gospel with others, but several stories in the Bible show us just how effective it is to witness through the chaos and struggle of our daily lives, even in the most difficult of circumstances. Joseph is a prime example.

As the older son of his father’s favorite wife, Joseph was privileged and loved above his brothers. By 17 he had been gifted a beautiful robe by his father and received prophetic dreams that predicted his rulership over his brothers and even his father. It was too much for his brothers. When presented with the opportunity for revenge, they seized Joseph, took off the offending robe, and threw him into an empty cistern. Then they sold him to a passing caravan of traders destined for Egypt.

FROM SLAVE TO TRUSTED SERVANT

Joseph survived the trip to Egypt and was sold by the Ishmaelites/Midianites to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard. But “the Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man” (Gen. 39:2).³ Joseph may have been forced to leave his family, but he

Joseph may have been forced to leave his family, but he brought his faith with him.

brought his faith with him. He did not hide his beliefs from Potiphar, and while Potiphar may not have worshipped Joseph's God, he saw and understood that God was with Joseph and that his household benefited from the blessings God poured out on him.

This prompted Potiphar to promote Joseph to overseer of his entire house. God acknowledged this positive treatment of Joseph: "From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had, in house and field" (verse 5).

FROM PRISONER TO RULER

Unfortunately, Joseph's success did not last. Potiphar's wife attempted to seduce him, then accused him of a terrible crime. Although he was innocent, Joseph was cast into prison. Joseph could have allowed himself to despair. Who would blame him? There seemed no hope of freedom or seeing his family again.

He could have let circumstances diminish his faith and morality, or at least his work ethic! Instead, he continued his habits of faithful service, and God blessed him, even

in prison. "But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. . . . And whatever he did, the Lord made it succeed" (verses 21-23).

Joseph's interaction with the chief cupbearer and the chief baker reveals his sympathy and respect toward his fellow prisoners. Ellen White wrote that "it was the part he acted in the prison—the integrity of his daily life and his sympathy for those who were in trouble and distress—that opened the way for his future prosperity and honor."⁴

His behavior during a time of personal darkness was a witness to those around him and an example for us today. "Every ray of light that we shed upon others is reflected upon ourselves. Every kind and sympathizing word spoken to the sorrowful, every act to relieve the oppressed, and every gift to the needy, if prompted by a right motive, will result in blessings to the giver."⁵

It was several years before Joseph was released from prison, and even after he was promoted to governor of Egypt it was some time before he was reunited with his family. When he finally revealed himself to his brothers, he declared to them: "Do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life" (Gen. 45:5).

When he was first sold into slavery, Joseph could not have known that he would become governor of Egypt or that his leadership and God-given wisdom would secure the well-being of his family and all of Egypt. He could not see how God would use the terrible situation he was in. But Joseph did not wait until he was overseer of Potiphar's house or governor of Egypt to be faithful to God or give Him the

glory for his successes. Indeed, it was *because* of his witness that Potiphar and Pharaoh recognized the true source of Joseph's success.

He did not give up even when his circumstances worsened. Instead, he used every opportunity to live the faith of his fathers, bringing light to the very darkest corners of Egyptian society. As a slave Joseph could speak with common members of Potiphar's household and possibly other estates. In prison he encountered inmates of various backgrounds. And as governor he mingled with leaders. God used Joseph to reach every social strata.

Perhaps you find yourself "on the bathroom floor," like Jane, or "in the pit," like Joseph. You might wonder how you could possibly be a witness during a time of personal darkness and pain. Yet even as you cling to God in your struggle, your perseverance and faith may be an inspiration to others. ☺

¹ Michael Foust, "AGT's 'Nightbirde' Dies at 31: Her Legacy Is the 'Strength She Found in Jesus,'" *Christian Headlines*, Feb. 22, 2022, <https://www.christianheadlines.com/contributors/michael-foust/agts-nightbirde-dies-at-31-her-legacy-is-the-strength-she-found-in-jesus.html>.

² Nightbirde, "God Is on the Bathroom Floor," Mar. 9, 2021, <https://www.nightbirde.co/blog/2021/9/27/god-is-on-the-bathroom-floor>.

³ Scripture quotations are from *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1890, 1908), p. 218.

⁵ *Ibid.*

Questions for Reflection:

1. How can you be a witness where you are right now?
2. Think about a time someone was a blessing to you. How did God use them to bless you?
3. What may keep you from committing to proclaim God's grace in your life, no matter what the circumstances are?



Monday

True and False Witness

The little maid and Gehazi

Ever since our daughter was old enough to understand the simple task of picking up toys, we have encouraged her to tidy her room or play area. We help her, of course, and as she has grown, she has learned to make her bed by herself and put away her own clothes.

On occasion we have rewarded her for helping us with other tasks around the house, such as folding laundry or other tasks not normally expected of her. One day she came to us, beaming and expectant, and asked for a reward because she had picked up some of her toys! We explained that we were happy that she had done such a good job, but that her toys were her responsibility anyway. Her reward was a job well done.

When you do your job, do you expect a reward? Probably not, although it is wonderful to receive words of affirmation. What about when you witness to others? Do you expect a reward from God? Second Kings 5 tells the story of two kinds of witnesses: those who tell others about God without expecting a reward and those who think they deserve something for their efforts.

A CHILD'S WITNESS

The narrative begins with the witness of a child, a little girl carried away from her home in the land of Israel to serve in the house of Naaman. She is unnamed, but her words set in action a course of events that resulted in the conversion of the Syrian commander.

Naaman, we are told, was a great military leader in Syria. God had used him to give the Syrians victory. But Naaman was a leper. Rather than seek revenge against the commander who had either personally captured her or overseen the raid that led to her

There are people all around us who are broken in spirit and in body, who need the healing that only Christ can offer.

capture, the little girl had compassion on the diseased man. “She said to her mistress, ‘Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy!’” (2 Kings 5:3).¹

The nations of Israel and Judah had largely failed in the purpose God had intended for the descendants of Abraham: “In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). Rather than modeling love for God and neighbor, they had adopted the pagan practices of the nations around them and oppressed and exploited their own people. There were those who persisted in their faith, however. They continued as a witness to their fellow Israelites and, when taken into exile, brought a blessing to the foreign homes and courts where they served.

Ellen White wrote, “The parents of that Hebrew maid, as they taught her of God, did not know the destiny that would be hers. But they were faithful to their trust; and in the home of the captain of the Syrian host, their child bore witness to the God whom she had learned to honor.”²

A FALSE WITNESS

Naaman took the girl’s words seriously and traveled to Samaria in search of healing. He came to the house of Elisha, expecting a miraculous display by the prophet, but instead he was sent to the river Jordan to bathe. Despite his initial anger at Elisha’s command, he obeyed and was healed. He returned to Elisha’s house a healthy man and, in gratitude, offered gifts to Elisha. The prophet refused to take them and sent him home.

Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, was indignant that the prophet had not accepted the gifts of the Syrian commander: “See, my master has spared this Naaman the Syrian, in not accepting from his hand what he brought. As the Lord lives, I will run after him and get something from him” (2 Kings 5:20). Out of greed Gehazi reasoned that if Elisha would not take his due, then he at least would take some reward.

Naaman had received one witness from a young Israelite girl, a true witness based on faith in God and empathy for a sick man. Now he received a second witness, a false witness from Gehazi, who told a lie to gain wealth for himself. Gehazi said that he had been sent by Elisha to take gifts—a talent of silver and two changes of clothing—for two visiting sons of the prophets. Naaman was eager to show his gratitude and urged Gehazi to take double the amount of silver he requested.

When Gehazi returned, Elisha questioned him, and once again, Gehazi lied. But Elisha knew what had happened: “Did not my heart go when the man turned from his chariot to meet you? Was it a time to accept money and garments, olive orchards and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male servants and female servants?” (verse 26). A miracle performed by God was not the time to accept gifts. Elisha was not

responsible for the miracle—God was! Taking a gift sent the wrong message about God, who had healed Naaman out of mercy. As a result of this sin, Gehazi became a leper.

We do not know what happened to the little Israelite girl, but her words of sympathy and truth brought healing and faith to the household of Naaman. By contrast, Gehazi desired material gain, as if he were somehow responsible for the miracle God had performed. His false witness brought upon himself the very disease from which Naaman had been healed.

It is legitimate and necessary that ministers, Bible workers, and all those employed by the church receive payment for their efforts. But we should not offer witness about the One who paid the ultimate cost with the expectation of material gain. There are people all around us who are broken in spirit and body, who need the healing that only Christ can offer. Our witness may result in someone’s choosing to follow Christ; perhaps our prayers are answered with miracles, but we should always remember that our reward for giving testimony to the mercy and love of God is in heaven. Glory and honor are His alone. ☉

¹ Scripture quotations are from *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

² Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1917), p. 246.

Questions for Reflection:

1. What does it mean to be a true witness?
2. Whom are we called to witness to?
3. What is our reward for proclaiming the love of God?

A close-up, high-angle photograph of a lion's face, looking slightly to the left. The lion's fur is a rich golden-brown color, and its eyes are a pale yellow. The background is a dark, solid blue.

Tuesday

Witnessing in the Court of Kings

Daniel as a witness

Throughout history faithful believers have been brought to the centers of political influence. We've already learned about Joseph. Others include Daniel, Esther, and Nehemiah. All of these were taken to court as captives or exiles and served in a variety of roles.

Daniel 1 describes Jerusalem's capture and the deportation of young men from royal and noble families who displayed wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. "Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah" (verse 6).¹

These young men further distinguished themselves by refusing to defile themselves with the king's food and wine. God blessed them with "learning and skill in all literature and wisdom," and Daniel was given "understanding in all visions and dreams" (verse 17).

DANIEL'S PUBLIC WITNESS

It becomes clear early on that Daniel would play an important role in the Babylonian government. His unique calling as a prophet placed him in a privileged and dangerous position.

Nebuchadnezzar's first dream, recorded in Daniel 2, is flattering to the king, who is represented by the head of gold. But his second dream was a direct condemnation of his pride and asserted that God was the true ruler of the world.

When the king called him to interpret this dream, Daniel was visibly upset. Imagine telling the king of the greatest empire in the known

world that if he didn't shape up, God would turn him into a beast! Daniel recognized that God had given Nebuchadnezzar a warning, however, and it was his duty to explain it.

After interpreting the dream, Daniel offered advice: "Break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity" (Dan. 4:27). This counsel did not come from his years of studying Chaldean language, wisdom, and literature—it came from his knowledge of the God of the universe. Sadly, Nebuchadnezzar did not humble himself, and the prophecy was fulfilled. His madness came to an end when he finally acknowledged God as sovereign.

The wise counsel from Daniel did not successfully pass to Nebuchadnezzar's successor. When Belshazzar called Daniel to interpret the writing on the wall, the Babylonian Empire was on the edge of extinction (Dan. 5). Daniel had been deferential and even sympathetic toward Nebuchadnezzar, but Belshazzar blatantly defied God and ignored the warnings given to Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel's words to him were sharp: "And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this, but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven" (verse 22). The city of Babylon fell that night, and with it Belshazzar. As predicted in Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the mighty statue, another kingdom arose in place of Babylon: Medo-Persia.

DANIEL'S PRIVATE WITNESS

Daniel's service was retained in the new royal court of Darius the Mede as one of three officials over the many satraps throughout the

Daniel was faithful to the King of kings and the law he followed was more binding than anything a human could devise.

kingdom. He is described as being “distinguished above all the other presidents and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him” (Dan. 6:3). Indeed, when his colleagues attempted to find something in Daniel’s behavior or service to complain about, they could find nothing, “because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him” (verse 4). The only way they could accuse him of misconduct was by devising a law they knew Daniel could not keep: that no petition should be made “to any god or man for thirty days” except the king (verse 7). The punishment for disobedience was to be thrown into a den of lions.

When Daniel heard that the king had signed the law, he went back to his house. He was no longer a young man. He had seen power-corrupt rulers and officials. He knew something of the cruelty of empires and the fate of those who disobeyed kings. He could have said, “I’m too old for this,” and simply closed his windows while he prayed. After all, this was his pri-

vate affair. But Daniel was faithful to the King of kings, and the law he followed was more binding than anything a human could devise.

With his windows open toward Jerusalem, Daniel knelt and prayed three times a day. He might have seen the conspirators watching him, gleeful in anticipation of their triumph over their political rival. Despite the king’s efforts to rescue Daniel from the decree’s penalty, he was thrown into the lions’ den.

Daniel’s faithfulness had already been a profound witness to the royal court. But his deliverance from the lions’ den demonstrated to even his enemies that the God he served was the most high God and that his success and survival was a result of God’s blessing and intervention.

Daniel served the king well, but he served God better. Like Nebuchadnezzar, who had been awed and humbled by God’s revelation through Daniel, Darius wrote a decree following Daniel’s rescue that all people should fear God, “for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end” (verse 26).

Carlos Elías Mora writes that “God used the captivity to bring a powerful testimony to the center of the Babylonian and Medo-Persian nations. The failure of God’s people that resulted in the exile of Daniel and his friends was not an obstacle for the Lord to accomplish his purpose of revealing his character to the nations.”²

In his public and private life Daniel witnessed to those at the very highest levels of imperial courts. He was not corrupted by greed or the desire for power. His political success derived from the work of the Holy Spirit in his life and the faithful service that naturally followed. He was a

prophet to unbelievers and brought the Word of God to the very empire that conquered and destroyed his homeland, city, and temple.

Daniel did not dilute the stark truths God revealed to Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar or try to escape the punishment of a law he could not keep. He faithfully bore witness to a higher order and reminded those human rulers that there reigned in heaven a King above all kings whose law is just, merciful, and full of love.

We may not serve kings or rule provinces, but we can serve faithfully wherever we are. We can bear witness to God’s transforming power and the revelation given in His Word. There may be times we are called to testify to those in power about the higher laws of God; more likely, our witness will be in ordinary, everyday actions and attitudes. But whether in public or in private, let us be found faithful. ©

¹ Scripture quotations are from *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

² Carlos Elías Mora, “Daniel and Friends: A Model for Witnessing,” *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 5, no. 1 (2009): 97.

Questions for Reflection:

1. How can you be a witness in your workplace?
2. How should a Christian respond to a law that goes against the Word of God?
3. Do you believe that you are faithful in your service to your work, your family, and God? Are there areas for improvement? Pray over those areas and ask God to help you be a witness in every aspect of your life.

Wednesday

The Unlikely Witness

The Samaritan woman

The Man had been walking for many miles with His companions. The sun was high, and it was nearing the time for the midday meal. Dust coated His weary feet, and the hot breeze sucked the moisture from His body. He was thirsty. He sat down next to a well in the middle of a field—Jacob’s well—and waited. His friends went to find food in the Samaritan city of Sychar, but He had an important appointment to keep.

A woman came to the well to draw water. She came alone during the hottest part of the day—perhaps because her current living arrangements were not according to community standards.¹ It was not strange for a man to be there—wells were shared community spaces—and she prepared to lower the vessel into the well. Then the Man spoke: “Give me a drink.”

BREAKING THE NARRATIVE

The narrative in John 4 breaks from many social and literary expectations. First, Jesus, a Jew and the one believed to be the Messiah, traveled into Samaria. The setting is pivotal, so “Samaria” or “Samaritan” is mentioned six times in just six verses (verses 4-9).

Following the exile of Israel, those who remained in the region of Samaria mingled with the non-Israelites who were deported to the region. They intermarried, and their religion became syncretistic. Rejecting all the prophetic and wisdom writings, they followed only the five books of Moses all while worshipping at a temple they built on Mount Gerizim.²

The rift between Jews and Samaritans widened when the returning Jewish exiles refused to allow the Samaritans to participate in rebuilding the temple (Ezra 4:2, 3). Centuries later Samaritans and Jews remained fiercely hostile to each other. Jews did travel through Samaria, when necessary, but strict Jews took a longer route to avoid the region entirely.³

The second break with social convention was that Jesus engaged a Samaritan in conversation—and not just any Samaritan: a woman with a string of husbands and a current lover. Third, Jesus' conversation makes it clear that His interaction is no accident—He anticipated, even sought out, this woman. And He revealed His identity as the Messiah to her, of all people!

The conversation began with a simple request: "Give me a drink" (John 4:7).⁴ That a Jew was speaking to her would have been enough to shock the woman, but this Man was also asking something from her. She responded with blunt astonishment: "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (verse 9). Jesus ignored her reference to ethnic division and countered that she should be asking *Him* for a drink! The water He offered as a gift was life-giving. Repeatedly He led her away from issues of ethnic identity and ancient wounds to the present concern of her own soul-thirst and His ability to satisfy it.

Once she grasped the sincerity of His mysterious offer and asked Him for this water, He abruptly told her to call her husband. Her answer was simple: she did not have one. This was an honest statement—she was living with someone who was not her husband, and Jesus revealed that He knew this and her marital history.

Taken aback by His knowledge of her personal life, the woman acknowledged that Jesus must be a prophet, but deflected the conversation away from her personal life back to the topic of Samaritans versus Jews. Jesus used this as an opportunity to declare that a new era had arrived: now all true worshippers, whether Jew or Samaritan, "will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him" (verse 23).

From the beginning of the conversation, Jesus had disrupted her worldview, which was centered on the ethnic and religious conflicts between Jews and Samaritans. She had been identifying herself as someone opposite or against Jews, and therefore this Jewish Man at the well, but He had broken that narrative by engaging her in conversation and treating her with respect. She had held Jacob and her ancestors as grounds for her way of life, religious beliefs, and place of worship. Now Jesus reinterpreted and reformed those, too.

Finally, the woman moved the conversation to the one thing she knew Jews and Samaritans agreed on: "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ).

When he comes, he will tell us all things" (verse 25). His response to her statement of faith and hope was simple and astonishing: "I who speak to you am he" (verse 26).

SOWING AND REAPING

The disciples returned in the moment of stunned silence that, I imagine, followed this revelation. No longer concerned with the water she knew would only temporarily quench her thirst, the Samaritan woman rushed into town and described her encounter with the Jewish Man who claimed to be the Messiah. Hope rang out in her words, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" (verse 29).

Back at the well, Jesus responded to the disciples' concern. They had been surprised to find Him talking to a woman, but had said nothing. Now they urged Him to eat, but He refused, claiming food they did not know about. Seeing their confusion, both about the woman and the food, He stated His mission: "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work" (verse 34).

Then He gave them their mission: "Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes and see that the fields are white for harvest. Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and fathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. . . . I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor" (verses 35-38).

Even as Jesus spoke, people came toward the well from the city, excited by the woman's words. She had no professional theological training, and her understanding of religion had been, until moments ago, guided by the traditions of her people. But her encounter with Jesus made her testimony effective enough to draw the interest of an entire town. Jesus' illustration of the sower and reaper played out right before the disciples' eyes.

The disciples would not have expected Sychar to be a city worthy of their time, except to buy food. Nor would they have anticipated a lone woman to be such an effective missionary. Ellen White wrote, "As soon as she had found the Saviour the Samaritan woman brought others to Him. She proved herself a more effective missionary than His own disciples. The disciples saw nothing in Samaria to indicate that it was an encouraging field. Their thoughts were fixed upon a great work to be done in the future. They did not see that right around

The gospel
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anywhere at
any time to
anyone willing
to listen.

them was a harvest to be gathered. But through the woman whom they despised, a whole cityful were brought to hear the Saviour. She carried the light at once to her countrymen.”⁵

The Samaritans invited Jesus into their town, and He and the disciples stayed in Sychar for two days. According to John 4:39, many of the townspeople believed in Jesus based on the woman’s testimony, but after His visit even more believed. “They said to the woman, ‘It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world’” (verse 42). Jesus could not openly declare His identity as the Messiah among the Jews, but the Samaritans were prepared to recognize His divinity.

WATER TO THE THIRSTY

The story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman presents us with several important lessons.

First, the gospel can be preached anywhere at any time to anyone willing to listen. Jesus did not wait for a large audience to attend a well-promoted meeting. He struck up a conversation with one sinful woman engaged in the mundane task of drawing water. And when the Samaritan woman shared her encounter with the townspeople, she did not wait for the “perfect moment”—she spoke right away to anyone who would listen. The message she received was too important to wait.

Second, we should never assume to know who is or is not prepared to receive the gospel. Neither can we claim that someone is unworthy to receive the gospel. As Jesus explained in His many parables of sowing and reaping, the seed of the gospel is thrown on good soil and bad. Weeds may grow up alongside

the wheat, but God will sort out the righteous from the unrighteous. Our task is simply to sow and reap. God will take care of the rest.

In the beginning of His conversation with the Samaritan woman, Jesus described the water He offered as “a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (verse 14). When she accepted Christ as Messiah, the woman herself became a spring full of that living water. “He who drinks of the living water becomes a fountain of life. The receiver becomes a giver. The grace of Christ in the soul is like a spring in the desert, welling up to refresh all, and making those who are ready to perish eager to drink of the water of life.”⁶

Let’s accept the gift of living water that Jesus offers to us. And let’s share it with everyone we encounter. Every conversation is an opportunity to share that water. We cannot withhold this gift from those who are so thirsty. ©

¹ Victor H. Matthews, “Conversation and Identity: Jesus and the Samaritan Woman,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 40, no. 4 (2010): 219, 220.

² Gary M. Burge, *NIV Application Commentary: John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), pp. 140, 141.

³ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, in *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary: John, Acts* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), vol. 2, p. 42.

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⁵ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 195.

⁶ *Ibid.*

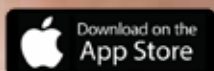
Questions for Reflection:

1. What ideas are you holding on to that God might be trying to disrupt or transform?
2. Do political or ethnic differences impact whom you engage in conversation?
3. Have you drunk from the Living Water today?



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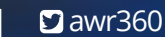
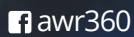
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Thursday

Witnessing in Death

The impact of Tabitha's death

Our family recently said goodbye to a beloved grandfather, father, and husband. We sat around his bedside weeping, praying, and singing songs of hope. We watched his chest rise and fall and counted his breaths. We cried and laughed over all the memories of his kindness, patience, and generosity. He spent a lifetime serving God, and we know that he will be raised up in a body incorruptible, but the pain of saying goodbye to him in this life was still agonizing. As our vigil stretched from hours into days, we recognized that we were not meant to say goodbye or to watch the life slipping away from a loved one. We were made for eternal life.

Our family gathered, and so did our community. The outpouring of food and messages of comfort and hope from around the world are a testament to the ministry of my grandparents, who served and labored and loved so many. Acts 9 tells the story of a disciple who was similarly beloved: Tabitha (or Dorcas).

A WOMAN OF GOOD WORKS

We don't know much about Tabitha: how old she was, whether or not she was married, or if she had children. What we do know is that she was a disciple and was "full of good works and acts of charity" (Acts 9:36),¹ some of which included making clothes for widows (verses 37, 39). This met a very immediate need for the women in Joppa and seems to indicate that Tabitha was a woman of means, perhaps even the owner of a garment production business.² She certainly had the skill and resources to make different kinds of garments. Her designation as a disciple also suggests that she was a leader in the community of believers.

The death of a witness may be the end of a life, but it is not the end of the witness.

Tabitha's illness and subsequent death was a terrible blow to Christ's followers in Joppa. While my grandfather died at the end of a long and full life, Tabitha died prematurely. Her body was washed and laid in an upper room, where the widows gathered around her and wept. The very clothes they wore bore witness to her love and care for them and the community.

Not far away in the town of Lydda, Peter had healed a paralyzed man, and the news had spread through the region. The other disciples in Joppa sent messengers to Peter, urging him to come at once to Joppa, clearly hoping for a miracle. Peter arrived to find the believers in a state of deep sorrow. The widows who had gathered to mourn showed him the clothes she had made for them. Undoubtedly, Peter was moved by their testimo-

nies of Tabitha's life of service. He sent everyone out of the room, then prayed for her resurrection. In faith, he turned to the dead woman and said, "Tabitha, arise."

God breathed life back into her body, and she took Peter's hand and rose. Imagine the joy and delight when he presented her alive to the believers! As a result of her resurrection, many in Joppa believed in the Lord. Tabitha's death, which was a terrible and sorrowful thing, was turned into triumph in her resurrection. What a witness to proclaim that she had died and was brought back to life again!

DEATH AND DELAY

But what about those who die and remain dead? Haven't there been countless men, women, and children who have faithfully served God and yet have died in the prime of life? The war between God and Satan has resulted in many casualties, whether death has come early in life or at the end of many years. This is the nature of war. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ gives us hope for life beyond the grave, when those who have died in Christ are raised up to live with Him (Rom. 6:8). But we are not yet immune to sickness and death—our bodies are still mortal.

How do we cope with the continued reality of death and dying? I have found great comfort in the knowledge that the death of a faithful believer is itself a kind of witness. At the end of his life, my grandfather could not examine a patient, give Bible studies, preach sermons, or even pray aloud. The witness was not in what he could or couldn't do, but in who he was: a man who was a friend of God.

On his deathbed he was surrounded by those who cherished the memories of his kindness and faithfulness, much like the widows

who surrounded Tabitha. Even as he lay dying, we received countless messages giving glory to God for the love he had shown to so many. The medical personnel were touched by the devotion of the family members and friends who scurried around his bedside taking care of him or sat singing or reading Bible passages. He had shown us how to love and offer comfort, and during his last days we took care of him as he had taken care of so many others.

The death of a witness may be the end of a life, but it is not the end of the witness. Whether the resurrection is soon after death, as with Tabitha, or delayed until the Second Coming, those who remain can continue the work of proclaiming God's message of truth, hope, and love. Let's carry on the legacies of those who have used their talents and resources to bless the communities around them. And may we ever give glory to the One who sustains and sits with us in our grief and who will someday wipe every tear from our eyes. ☺

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² Teresa J. Calpino, *Women, Work and Leadership in Acts* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), p. 141.

Questions for Reflection:

1. How can you use your talents and resources to benefit your community?
2. If you were to die today, what would your legacy be?
3. In what way can a believer's death be a witness?
4. What hope can we claim following the death of a loved one?

Friday

The Witness of Two

Aquila and Priscilla, the witness of fellow workers

Every movement needs leaders, and some of the most effective leaders are couples. James and Ellen White were married on August 30, 1846, and together became two of the most influential leaders in the movement that became the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They preached, taught, corrected, and counseled across North America. The publishing work that James initiated was a driving force in globalizing the Adventist message, and Ellen's writings brought vision and prophetic guidance to members and churches around the world.

We might call them the ultimate Adventist “power couple”—a pairing of two highly influential individuals that complement and strengthen one another. The early Christian church also had a power couple—Aquila and Priscilla—who, like James and Ellen, strengthened the church wherever they went.

EARLY CHRISTIAN POWER COUPLE

We first meet Aquila and Priscilla in Acts 18 following Paul's journey from Athens to Corinth. Corinth was a major cultural, political, and economic center, and with two harbors providing an influx of travelers, it was a prime location for sharing the gospel.

Aquila and Priscilla were recent immigrants to Corinth. They, and all other Jews, had been forced to leave Rome by the edict of Claudius, likely as a result of conflict over the preaching of Jesus Christ.¹ It appears that the couple were already Christians before Paul arrived, and they welcomed him into their home and business.

Both Aquila and Priscilla were tentmakers, and the trio worked closely together at their craft, likely in a workshop on the ground floor of their residence.² They probably used this space to speak with customers about the gospel, and perhaps small groups of believers met there.

Silas and Timothy joined Paul in Corinth, and, following conflict with the Jews, the mission work expanded to the Gentiles. Priscilla and Aquila were likely also active in this ministry. Later Paul traveled with them to Ephesus and left them there to evangelize and form a company of believers (Acts 18:18, 19). In this way they functioned much like Barnabas, Silas, and Timothy, in that they worked with Paul as “missionary partners.”³

In Ephesus the couple worked with the believers and eventually established a church in their home (1 Cor. 16:19). They attended the synagogue and heard Apollos, a Jew from Alexandria, speak about Jesus (Acts 18:24-26). Priscilla and Aquila had a more accurate and thorough understanding of the gospel than Apollos had, possibly because they had been Christians longer or because their theological understanding had been broadened and strengthened by their time with Paul. They recognized the talents with which God had blessed Apollos, so, rather than correct him publicly, they took him aside and “explained to him the way of God more accurately” (verse 26).⁴ Their hospitality, tact, and theological instruction were well received, and Apollos went to Achaia, the region Aquila and Priscilla had left, to continue his ministry.

At some point the couple moved back to Rome, and Paul sends greetings to them in Romans 16:3, 4, commending them as “my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well.” He also sends greetings to the church in their house, demonstrating that they continued the practice of operating a house church wherever they went (verse 5).

This brief but powerful greeting

The power of Aquila and Priscilla's witness lies not in their theological knowledge or their balance between trade and ministry, but in the relationships they forged with Paul, Apollos, and other believers.

suggests that the Jewish couple had not simply focused their attention on ministering to Jews, but had aided Paul in evangelizing Gentiles as well, to the extent that “all the churches of the Gentiles” gave thanks for them.

The last reference to Priscilla and Aquila can be found in 2 Timothy 4:19, where Paul asks Timothy to greet the couple. They had moved back to Ephesus, where they likely worked with Timothy in strengthening and growing the church.⁵ This migrant couple, equipped with the tools of their trade and a love of the gospel, opened their homes in three different cities to Paul and other believers and furthered the gospel wherever they went. They were not paid ministers; rather, they worked

their trade and used what resources, time, and knowledge they had to educate and evangelize those in their communities.

THE WITNESS OF HOME

We live in an age of globalization; today travel is infinitely easier than the long voyages undertaken by Paul, Priscilla, and Aquila. We can communicate swiftly via texts, emails, or phone calls. Yet for all our connectivity, many of us long for the relational connectiveness evident in the early Christian church.

The power of Aquila and Priscilla's witness lies not in their theological knowledge or balance between trade and ministry, but in the relationships they forged with Paul, Apollos, and other believers. Their home provided Paul with lodging and a means to provide for himself while he carried on his ministry. It provided the setting for offering further theological education to Apollos. And their home, in each place they lived, became a house church, a place of worship and refuge for believers.

A husband and wife, working together to share the gospel and opening their home to those thirsty for relationship and connection, offer to the world a glimpse of the image of God. In a world of broken relationships and unsafe homes, the refuge of a healthy Christian household offers spiritual and emotional healing.

It is important to note that team ministry is not limited to married couples. God can use any manner of partnerships, whether teams of friends, such as Paul, Silas, and Timothy (Acts 18:5), or other family members. Each offers unique benefits for furthering the gospel.

Ellen White wrote, “The work to which we are called does not require wealth or social position or great ability. It requires a kindly,

self-sacrificing spirit and a steadfast purpose. . . . Our sphere of influence may seem narrow, our ability small, our opportunities few, our acquirements limited; yet wonderful possibilities are ours through a faithful use of the opportunities of our own homes. If we will open our hearts and homes to the divine principles of life, we shall become channels for currents of life-giving power. From our homes will flow streams of healing, bringing life, and beauty, and fruitfulness where now are barrenness and dearth.”⁶

We do not have to be paid ministers in order to be effective witnesses. We do not have to be wealthy. We must only be willing to do God's work, to follow His call wherever it may lead us, and to unite with other believers to proclaim the gospel to the world. ©

¹ David W. Pao, “Acts,” in *The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary*, ed. Gary M. Burge and Andrew E. Hill (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), p. 1201.

² Marie Noël Keller, *Priscilla and Aquila: Paul's Coworkers in Christ Jesus* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2010), pp. 17-20.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

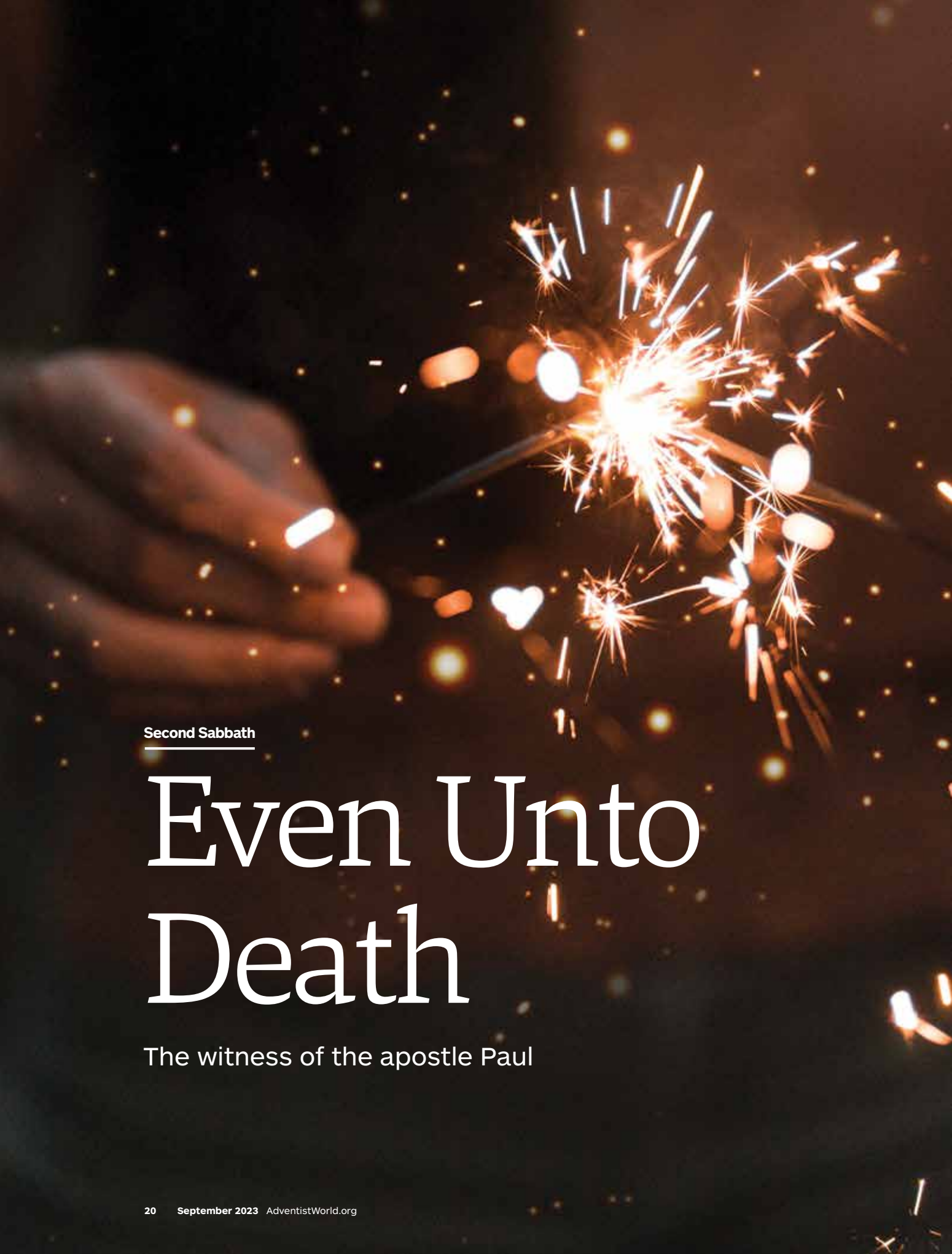
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⁵ Nguyen vanThanh, “Migrants as Missionaries: The Case of Priscilla and Aquila,” *Mission Studies* 30 (2013): 204.

⁶ Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1952), p. 32.

Questions for Reflection:

1. How can you provide hospitality either in your own home or by partnering with other believers?
2. What are some ways you can further equip yourself to teach others “the way of God”?
3. If you are married, how can you and your spouse work together to share the gospel? How can your marriage be a witness?

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a lit sparkler. The sparkler is in the foreground, with a bright, intense burst of light and numerous sparks radiating outwards. The background is dark, with many smaller, out-of-focus sparks and light trails, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall color palette is dominated by warm, golden-yellow and orange tones from the sparks, contrasting sharply with the deep black background.

Second Sabbath

Even Unto Death

The witness of the apostle Paul



BY ELLEN G. WHITE

During Paul's final trial before Nero, the emperor had been so strongly impressed with the force of the apostle's words that he deferred the decision of the case, neither acquitting nor condemning the accused servant of God. But the emperor's malice against Paul soon returned. Exasperated by his inability to check the spread of the Christian religion, even in the imperial household, he determined that as soon as a plausible pretext could be found, the apostle should be put to death. Not long afterward Nero pronounced the decision that condemned Paul to a martyr's death. Inasmuch as a Roman citizen could not be subjected to torture, he was sentenced to be beheaded.

"Paul was taken in a private manner to the place of execution. Few spectators were allowed to be present; for his persecutors, alarmed at the extent of his influence, feared that converts might be won to Christianity by the scenes of his death. But even the hardened soldiers who attended him listened to his words and with amazement saw him cheerful and even joyous in the prospect of death. To some who witnessed his martyrdom, his spirit of forgiveness toward his murderers and his unwavering confidence in Christ till the last proved a savor of life unto life. More than one accepted the Saviour whom Paul preached, and erelong fearlessly sealed their faith with their blood.

PEACE IN PERIL

"Until his latest hour the life of Paul testified to the truth of his words to the Corinthians: 'God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body' (2 Corinthians 4:6-10, KJV). His sufficiency was not in himself, but in the presence and agency of the divine Spirit that filled his soul and brought every thought into subjection to the will of Christ. The prophet declares, 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee' (Isaiah 26:3). The heaven-born peace expressed on Paul's countenance won many a soul to the gospel.

"Paul carried with him the atmosphere of heaven. All who associated with him felt the influence of his union with Christ. The fact that his own life exemplified the truth he proclaimed gave convincing power to his preaching. Here lies the power of truth. The unstudied, unconscious influence of a holy life is the most convincing sermon that can be given in favor of Christianity. Argument, even when unanswerable, may provoke only

All who associated with him felt the influence of his union with Christ.

opposition; but a godly example has a power that it is impossible wholly to resist.

AN OTHERS-FOCUSED LIFE

“The apostle lost sight of his own approaching sufferings in his solicitude for those whom he was about to leave to cope with prejudice, hatred, and persecution. The few Christians who accompanied him to the place of execution he endeavored to strengthen and encourage by repeating the promises given for those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake. He assured them that nothing would fail of all that the Lord had spoken concerning His tried and faithful children. For a little season they might be in heaviness through manifold temptations; they might be destitute of earthly comforts; but they could encourage their hearts with the assurance of God’s faithfulness, saying, ‘I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him’ (2 Timothy 1:12, KJV). Soon the night of trial and suffering would end, and then would dawn the glad morning of peace and perfect day.

“The apostle was looking into the great beyond, not with uncertainty or dread, but with joyous hope and

longing expectation. As he stands at the place of martyrdom he sees not the sword of the executioner or the earth so soon to receive his blood; he looks up through the calm blue heaven of that summer day to the throne of the Eternal.

“This man of faith beholds the ladder of Jacob’s vision, representing Christ, who has connected earth with heaven, and finite man with the infinite God. His faith is strengthened as he calls to mind how patriarchs and prophets have relied upon the One who is his support and consolation, and for whom he is giving his life. From these holy men who from century to century have borne testimony for their faith, he hears the assurance that God is true. His fellow apostles, who, to preach the gospel of Christ, went forth to meet religious bigotry and heathen superstition, persecution, and contempt, who counted not their lives dear unto themselves that they might bear aloft the light of the cross amidst the dark mazes of infidelity—these he hears witnessing to Jesus as the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. From the rack, the stake, the dungeon, from dens and caves of the earth, there falls upon his ear the martyr’s shout of triumph. He hears the witness of steadfast souls, who, though destitute, afflicted, tormented, yet bear fearless, solemn testimony for the faith, declaring, ‘I know whom I have believed.’ These, yielding up their lives for the faith, declare to the world that He in whom they have trusted is able to save to the uttermost.

THE BLESSED ASSURANCE

“Ransomed by the sacrifice of Christ, washed from sin in His blood, and clothed in His righteousness, Paul has the witness in himself that his soul is precious

in the sight of his Redeemer. His life is hid with Christ in God, and he is persuaded that He who has conquered death is able to keep that which is committed to His trust. His mind grasps the Saviour’s promise, ‘I will raise him up at the last day’ (John 6:40, KJV). His thoughts and hopes are centered on the second coming of his Lord. And as the sword of the executioner descends and the shadows of death gather about the martyr, his latest thought springs forward, as will his earliest in the great awakening, to meet the Life-giver, who shall welcome him to the joy of the blest.

“Well-nigh a score of centuries have passed since Paul the aged poured out his blood as a witness for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. No faithful hand recorded for the generations to come the last scenes in the life of this holy man, but Inspiration has preserved for us his dying testimony. Like a trumpet peal his voice has rung out through all the ages since, nerving with his own courage thousands of witnesses for Christ and wakening in thousands of sorrow-stricken hearts the echo of his own triumphant joy: ‘I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing’ (2 Timothy 4:6-8, KJV).” ©

This article is excerpted from *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 509-513. Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry.

I Will Go to Be His Witness

BY TANYA MUGANDA





Be a Witness!

Bible Treasure: Genesis 15:12-18

It was a quiet night, and Abraham was outside. God surprised Abraham with a message: “Abraham, it’s time for you, Sarah, and your family to move to a new land where you will have lots of children and your name will be known.” Abraham thought to himself, *Wow, God is promising me a new land and more family. I can’t wait to tell Sarah.*

Sarah came outside with a surprised look. “Why are you out here in the dark? Are you OK?”

Abraham replied excitedly, “God has told me to move our family to a new land to reach more people—a land where we will be known for future generations as a huge family.”

Sarah had a confused look on her face and said, “I’m nervous about this move because we are leaving everything we know.” Abraham encouraged Sarah, letting her know that God would make a way. Abraham had lived in the land called Ur his whole life, but He trusted God’s promises to make the big move.

Can you imagine being told by your parents that you must move to a new school, church, or neighborhood, where you must make new friends?

On the way to this new land, Sarah, Abraham, and his nephew Lot carried their dishes, furniture, and clothes on their camels. Sarah complained, “It’s so hot in the desert.”

Lot grumbled, “I feel weak and thirsty.”

Abraham responded trustingly, “I am feeling tired too, but we are almost there.” God protected them till they arrived safely.

During this trip Abraham,

Sarah, and Lot walked a lot along with their camels. They saw interesting towns as they got closer to their destination. They finally arrived in the land of Haran.

Then God told Abraham to move again! This time God said that Abraham would move to what was called Canaan. Sarah and Lot were surprised that they would need to pack up and move again. It was another long trip of walking, but God got them safely to this new land.

In Canaan God would make this land Abraham’s, where he would have many children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Abraham, Sarah, and Lot unpacked all their clothes, dishes, and furniture and set up their tents for their new home in this land. It was a foreign land, but God would help them as they would witness to others around them. Abraham was a stranger in a foreign land. He was a witness to the love and power of God. You too can be a witness for God in a new neighborhood or church.

IT’S YOUR TURN

- What would you take with you on a trip? Draw something that you would take with you on your trip.
- What was the name of the final land that Abraham, Sarah, and Lot moved to?
- Have you ever had to move to a different neighborhood, country, or city? How did you feel?
- What can you share with others when you move to a new place with strangers or new friends?

Witness Even When Life Is Unfair

Bible Treasure: Genesis 39:20–41:43

“This can’t be happening!” Joseph muttered under his breath. Joseph had just been put in prison for being falsely accused of mistreating Potiphar’s wife. Joseph was sad because things were looking bad. He had been sold as a slave by his brothers to a foreign land called Egypt, and now he had been thrown into jail for doing nothing wrong. It was cold and dark. The food was terrible. Joseph felt alone and afraid. There were so many questions that he had. He wondered if this was all God’s plan. Joseph had some doubts, but he still trusted God’s plan.

“I know God will help me through this tough time,” said

Joseph. While he was in prison, he helped the prisoners. Some of the prisoners started having dreams that they couldn’t understand. “Joseph, can you help me understand this scary dream that I had?” Joseph asked what had happened in these dreams. They described these weird dreams, and Joseph, through God’s help, was able to explain those dreams. One of the prisoners left the prison and went back to work for Pharaoh, but he never mentioned Joseph’s name. Joseph had been forgotten.

The jail guard was impressed at how Joseph was helpful toward the prisoners. Joseph had been put in charge by the jail guard. Despite how bad things were, Joseph wanted to help others around him in prison. Would you be able to help others when you are going through a tough time? Joseph did show that despite everything going wrong, he wanted to be God’s witness. Joseph waited on God while God worked behind the scenes.

A few years went by. Now Pharaoh was struggling with

some strange dreams, but no one in the palace could help him. “I know of someone in prison who can help interpret your dreams,” said Pharaoh’s butler.

“Go get him. What are you waiting for?” said Pharaoh.

Pharaoh told his dreams to Joseph: “Well, I saw these thin-looking cows eat the healthy cows that had gone to eat grass.” God helped Joseph to understand and explain to Pharaoh that there would be a famine. Pharaoh was amazed at the wisdom and saw that Joseph would be a good leader. Joseph was given the job as the ruler over all of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh!

Joseph’s witness was not easy, with all the bad things that had happened to him, but he continued trusting God through prayer. We can learn from Joseph’s story that no matter how hard it gets, we can trust God to help us. God has a plan for each of us.



IT'S YOUR TURN

- What happened to Joseph when he was falsely accused by Potiphar’s wife?
- Would you have responded the way Joseph did?
- What would you do if you were mistreated by a classmate or friend? Would you continue to pray and trust God?
- List some things that can help you witness even when you feel misunderstood and alone.



The Strangest Disease

Bible Treasure: 2 Kings 5:1-16

“What is that spot on your skin?” asked Naaman’s wife.

“I just noticed it recently,” said Naaman. Naaman had something strange going on with his skin. He started getting white spots all over his body. There was no cure, and nothing was working.

“It looks like you have leprosy,” said Naaman’s wife.

“Oh, no. How can I continue to be a commander with this disease?” sighed Naaman. Naaman was the commander in chief under the king of Syria. He was in charge of all the soldiers in the king’s army.

There was a young maid from Israel who worked in their household and overheard their conversation. She felt bad that Naaman had white spots on his

body. She decided to witness to her master about the prophet Elisha.

“I have good news about curing the master’s leprosy,” she told Naaman’s wife. “God can heal him,” said the young maid. Naaman’s wife ran quickly to tell her husband. Naaman didn’t know what to think, taking advice from a young slave girl, but he listened. The young maid had mentioned a prophet by the name of Elisha who was led by God. Elisha could help Naaman. Naaman would have to go to prophet Elisha in Israel to find out what he would need to do to be healed from leprosy.

It was a long journey to go to Elisha’s house in Israel from the kingdom of Syria. Naaman went with some of his men and servants to find out if there was going to be a miracle for this disease that he had. Naaman arrived safely in Israel.

The instructions were specific. Naaman would have to go dip himself into the Jordan River seven times! “Is that even possible, that I could be cured by dipping myself in dirty water?” Naaman asked. One of

his servants encouraged him to listen to the prophet’s message. With a scared look on his face, Naaman went into the water seven times, and when he came out, his skin was new again.

“This is truly a miracle! There is no other true God than the God of Israel!” exclaimed Naaman. The young maid didn’t just work for Naaman, but became a good friend. The young maid’s faith in God and witness helped others like Naaman to see how powerful God is. It doesn’t matter what age you are; God will give you the strength to help someone in need. The next time you feel sick, remember this story and how God can heal you.

IT’S YOUR TURN

- What did it take for the little maid to witness to her master? Why was it difficult?
- Share with two friends how God healed you when you were sick.
- How did your friends respond when God healed you?

Sleeping in a Lions' Den

Bible Treasure: Daniel 6

Daniel loved God. Daniel lived in the land of Babylon. He prayed three times a day and knew that God would never leave him. Daniel had been put in charge of various things in the kingdom, and King Darius trusted him.

But not everyone was happy with him. "Hmm, Daniel thinks he is better than us. We will get him!" some said. These bad men were thinking of ways to get Daniel in trouble and have King Darius hate him. The bad men suggested an idea to the king to make a law that everyone worships only him.

"OK, it's now a law, and anyone who breaks this law will be thrown into a lions' den," said the king.

"Aha, now Daniel has no choice but to obey this law," said the bad men.

When Daniel heard of this new law, he continued to pray, and he did not stop praying! The bad men couldn't believe their eyes! "How can Daniel not obey this law? He is in trouble now," echoed the bad men. Daniel was not afraid, for he knew that God would be with him.

Daniel was a witness showing there is a God of heaven. Daniel was not afraid to pray even though the bad men were watching him. These men reported what they saw to the king, who was disappointed,

because he liked Daniel. He had no choice but to throw Daniel into the lions' den for disobeying the law. Daniel was not afraid, but still trusted God to save him.

"Look at Daniel. It's over for him; we will see if his God will save him, ha-ha, ha-ha," the bad men laughed.

As Daniel was thrown into the lions' den, King Darius watched sadly. "Daniel, I hope your God will save you," he said. Daniel was in the lions' den all night. Early the next morning the king went to check to see if Daniel was still alive. "Daniel, did your God save you?" asked the king. Daniel yelled out that he was safe. The king was happy to hear that Daniel was kept safe from the lions. God had protected him! The bad men were so angry that their plan had failed.

It won't always be easy when you are put through tough

things, but God can protect us, too. Sometimes when you stand for God, you will be hated by your friends, but He has promised: "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10, NIV).

IT'S YOUR TURN

- Have you ever been tempted to disobey your parents or your teacher at school?
- Read Matthew 5:16. In what way was Daniel's witnessing a light for the king?
- Try some creative ways to pray. Maybe do a prayer walk with an adult and friends in your community.



Frenemies

Bible Treasure: John 4:1-26

It was a hot day. Jesus walked in the desert for a long time. He decided to stop at a well to rest His dusty feet. Jesus was very thirsty. As soon as Jesus sat at the well, He saw someone coming toward Him. A Samaritan woman stopped by the well to get water. In those days there was no store to buy water; people would have to go to a well for it. The wells back in those days were deep and needed some type of bucket with a rope to get down to get water. Imagine having to carry around a bucket just to get water from a well. That was how life was for many people back in those days.

“Please, can I get a drink of water?” asked Jesus. The Samaritan woman was surprised.

“Why are you asking me for water?” she said. In those days Jews and Samaritans did not talk to or befriend each other, so it was a surprising encounter for the Samaritan woman. It did not matter to Jesus who the woman was or where she was from. Jesus loves everyone and was not afraid to ask for water.

“If you knew who I was, you would have asked Me for living water,” said Jesus.

“What do you mean, living water? You can’t even get water from the well!” the Samaritan woman responded. Jesus told the Samaritan woman that anyone who drinks from the well will thirst again, but those who drink living water from Him will never thirst again. The living water

that Jesus was talking about was the message of salvation and everlasting life with God.

“Wow, tell me more about this living water!” said the Samaritan woman. She asked more questions. Then Jesus explained to her that He was the Messiah! “You have made my day; I finally get to meet You in person!” said the Samaritan woman. The Samaritan woman got so excited that she ran off to tell everyone that Jesus was there and to go see Him. A crowd came right behind the Samaritan woman as she came closer to Jesus. What a sight it was. The rest of the Samaritans believed the woman because of what she had told them, and she was encouraged by Jesus’ love and the way He treated

her even when she made bad decisions. When you share the story of Jesus, more people will come to know who He is.

IT’S YOUR TURN

- Have you ever been friends with someone no one liked?
- What does the story of the Samaritan woman teach us? How would Jesus want us to treat others?
- Is it easy to share Jesus with a friend?
- Think of something nice that you can do for a new child in your school or church. Maybe give them a new Bible, a card, or a care package.



Second Chances

Bible Treasure: Acts 9:36-43

There were beautiful quilts laid out in Tabitha's living room. She had a special gift for being generous, and she would sew quilts, clothes, and blankets for people in her town. She was a friend and helper to poor people. Tabitha was also known as Dorcas. She lived in a town called Joppa, which was a busy port by the sea. Many boats came to Joppa with visitors.

Tabitha was known as an apostle or helper of Jesus because of the love she had shown making clothes for those who needed them. "Hey, Tabitha, thanks again for that pretty scarf you made for me," said a visitor standing outside her door.

"No problem; I just want everyone to have what they need," said Tabitha. Everyone loved Tabitha. She welcomed everyone into her home with a warm meal and a gift of something she made. If a family didn't have enough money to buy new clothes, Tabitha made sure to help by making clothes for some of these families. Many people were encouraged and thankful for someone like Tabitha. God gave Tabitha not just a gift of hospitality but also the gift of sewing. Tabitha loved God and loved people.

One day Tabitha got very sick. She got worse and worse, and the doctor could not find any medicine to help her get better. After a while Tabitha died. What



a shock it was to those who loved her. Everyone in that town was heartbroken and cried. Her body was washed and prepared for burial.

Meanwhile, some people heard that Peter was nearby in another town. Some of the people remembered that Jesus' disciples not only healed but also brought people back to life. They believed that Peter could bring Tabitha back to life. They sent some men to find Peter and ask him to come to help them. "Peter, please come as fast as you can; Tabitha has died!" they said. Peter went with the men, and when he got there, he went upstairs to the

room where Tabitha was lying. "I need all of you to leave the room, please," Peter said. He knelt and prayed to God. Then he looked at Tabitha and said, "Get up!" Tabitha opened her eyes and got off the bed. As she walked out of the room, everyone looked with amazement and praised God.

"A miracle from God has happened. Tabitha is alive!" they said.

The people started telling everyone what Peter had done through the power of God, and many started to believe in Jesus. God brought Tabitha back to life to show how marvelous He is.

IT'S YOUR TURN

- What good things can you do to help others in your community or church? Maybe you could pick up trash at a park, help the needy by donating money with the help of your parent, or give away clothes that you don't need anymore.
- How is helping the poor and needy a good way to witness?



Tentmaking for Jesus

Bible Treasure: Acts 18:1-3

Have you ever seen tents made from animal skin? Aquila and Priscilla were known as tentmakers. There were no sewing machines, so they sewed large tents by hand with huge needles. Tentmaking was a good job for them to bring home money.

They were a loving Christian couple. Paul, also a tentmaker, met Aquila and Priscilla when he was traveling to different cities. They welcomed Paul into their home and worked with him in the city of Corinth. Priscilla and Aquila also made tents with Paul. As they all worked together, Paul would share God's Word with them. They

learned a lot from Paul. Paul stayed a long time in Corinth and continued sharing the gospel during that time. Aquila and Priscilla wanted to help Paul teach the Word of God to others. They enjoyed it so much that they decided to go on a mission trip with Paul. It would be a new experience, but they were happy to share how good God was to them.

"Paul has been such a good friend to us. I'm so excited that we are joining him on this mission trip," Priscilla exclaimed joyfully.

Aquila agreed with Priscilla. "Yes, God has been blessing us through this ministry of tentmaking and friendships." Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla packed up their belongings to go on the mission trip. They traveled by boat to share the gospel with as many people as they could. It was like a tour of many cities, to share the love of God.

They landed at Ephesus, which was one of the largest cities at that time.

They would travel to different places telling people about Jesus. People were very excited to hear about the Word of God, and many people believed and became Christians. It must have been such an amazing sight to see crowds come to hear about God.

Aquila, Priscilla, and Paul stayed for a while in Ephesus. Paul left Aquila and Priscilla behind in Ephesus to continue traveling and sharing the Word of God. Many people turned their hearts and lives to God and became Christians. Because of the hospitality of Aquila and Priscilla to Paul and many others, people came to know the one true God. There are many ways that we can share the good news about God too. God can give you a talent or gift to help others. You can serve God through music, preaching, teaching, sewing clothes, or many other ways.

IT'S YOUR TURN

- Have you ever traveled on a world tour of countries or maybe visited some states where you live? Did you meet new people and taste interesting foods?
- If you can't travel to many places, can you still tell others about Jesus? Suggest some ways.
- Do you have friends that can help you share the love of God? What creative ideas could you come up with together?

Miracles in Prison

**Bible Treasure: 2 Corinthians 1:8-11;
2 Corinthians 11:23-29; Acts 16:25-40**

Paul enjoyed traveling and teaching about God in different cities and countries. Some days were long. Paul would get tired and sad, but he knew that God was with him. When most people met Paul, they felt God's presence. There was always a feeling of peace around Paul, and he performed many miracles.

One time Paul and Silas were thrown into prison because an angry mob was not happy with them teaching the gospel. Some believers warned them to leave, but Paul continued preaching and felt that God was with them.

"Leave our town; you are bringing trouble here," shouted the angry mob. Paul and Silas were hurt by their actions. Paul and Silas prayed and worshipped God even when they were going through a tough time. It felt as if they were all alone and barely hanging on. But God was working behind the scenes.

While in prison, Paul and Silas prayed to God and sang hymns with so much joy. Suddenly there was a loud boom. It was an earthquake! Doors flung open all over the jail, but Paul and Silas continued praising God. While they (and the other prisoners) could have escaped, Paul and Silas stayed so they could share the good news with the jailer. The jailer was amazed to see Paul and Silas still in their prison cell singing praise songs. *Even in prison, Paul and Silas are still happy praising God, I must find out about this God they worship,* the jailer thought to himself.

The jailer invited Paul and Silas to his home and gave his

life to Jesus. In the most unlikely place, God worked a miracle. God used this experience for His glory. Paul and Silas were an example that when it seems as if there is no hope, God provides a way. Even in the most unexpected places, God gives us joy. Maybe you have experienced joy when you are helping others even when you are having a bad day. God can give you strength to get through life and to share that joy with others, who will learn about how loving He is. ☺

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IT'S YOUR TURN

- Have you ever gone through a tough time? Maybe you didn't do well on your test or didn't get picked to play on a sports team at school. How did you react, and what did you feel?
- Ask your parents how God helped them through a tough time.
- How can you help others experience joy during a tough day at school? What are some things you can do for others to know more about God?

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