



Adventist Youth Leader Magazine

Spiritual Youth Leaders Resource



- ▶ The Power of Weakness
- ▶ Embrace the Mud
- ▶ Building our Alter Life
- ▶ The Role of a Navy Chaplain

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ADVENTIST YOUTH MINISTRIES
GENERAL CONFERENCE



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In this edition of the Adventist Youth Leaders Magazine, we reflect on a series of topics in each article that illuminate the essence of faith, leadership, and personal growth.

Editorial

In this edition of the Adventist Youth Leaders Magazine, we reflect on a series of topics in each article that illuminate the essence of faith, leadership, and personal growth.

Ademola S. Tayo and Efe M. Ehioghae's "The Power of Weakness: Finding Strength in the Smallest Voice" offers a transformative perspective on vulnerability. Through the story of Elijah, they reveal that true strength often emerges in our moments of weakness. This reflection encourages us to embrace our vulnerabilities as a pathway to divine strength and healing, demonstrating that God's power is profoundly active even in our quietest moments.

In the article "Embarking on a Journey: A Pathfinder's Legacy," Ivonne Omaña celebrates the enduring impact of the Pathfinder program. By recounting the story of Austria's first Master Guide, Omaña shares how early involvement

in such programs encourages spiritual and personal growth. This narrative highlights the importance of mentorship and dedication in shaping future leaders and illustrates how the Pathfinder experience molds individuals for a life of service and faith.

Dr. Larry Green builds on this theme by detailing the multifaceted advantages of leadership roles in his article, "The Benefits Young Adults Can Gain from Leadership in Adventurer and Pathfinder Clubs." Green sheds light on how leadership ages in a young adult's life, cultivating spiritual growth, leadership skills, and emotional intelligence, preparing young adults for purposeful lives rooted in faith and community service.

Additionally, Gustavo Mujica's "Embrace the Mud" and Dwain N. Esmond's "Building Our Altar Life" provide practical wisdom for navigating life's trials and cultivating a robust spiritual practice. Mujica's metaphorical jour-

ney through the mud parallels our struggles, teaching us to find growth in adversity. At the same time, Esmond's guide to establishing a personal altar emphasizes the importance of consistent, intentional worship for spiritual resilience.

Cynthia Hurtado-Müller's exploration of digital wellness in "Screens, Sleep Hygiene, and Mental Health" addresses the critical balance between screen time and sleep. Her insights offer practical strategies for enhancing mental well-being amidst the challenges of the digital age.

This editorial also includes two articles by Dr. Andrés J. Peralta: "The Role of a Navy Chaplain" and "A Heartfelt Farewell: a Journey of Faith and Gratitude."

With many questions on who or what a Navy Chaplain is, Dr. Peralta unpacks a Navy Chaplain's various responsibilities and tasks, showing how these dedicated individuals offer crucial spiritual and emotional support to sailors and their families and community amidst the demands of naval life. Dr. Peralta has been doing this role for the past six years and will transition to this new area full-time.

Finally, Dr. Andrés J. Peralta pens a letter to youth and youth leaders worldwide. He reflects on his role as World Leader for the Pathfinder and Adventurer Clubs and highlights the

profound impact of his ministry. His journey, marked by global travels and personal connections, underscores the transformative power of faith. Peralta's heartfelt farewell encapsulates his joy and gratitude for the dedicated individuals he has worked with, celebrating their unwavering commitment to spreading God's love.

Together, these articles highlight the essence of leading with humility, the profound impact of dedicated service, and the transformative potential of faith-based leadership. They remind us that true power often lies in quiet strength and that by nurturing and guiding the next generation, we fulfill our calling and strengthen the fabric of our church. As we embrace the lessons from these narratives, may we find inspiration in our own journeys and continually seek to serve others with grace and authenticity.



By Ivonne Omaña

THE POWER OF WEAKNESS

By: Ademola S. Tayo and Efe M. Ehioghae

Article obtained with permission from Ademola S. Tayo and Efe M. Ehioghae, "The Power of Weakness," Dialogue 35:3 (2023): 19-21.

God is all-powerful, but His actions are not always perceived in that light. Like Elijah, we often expect to see something spectacular when God is at work. Elijah had fought gallantly against the false prophets. However, he lapsed into despondency after his Mount Carmel encounter with them. He had won a resounding victory, but



surprisingly, he scurried into hiding when threatened by the queen. God queried him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” (1 Kings 19:9, NIV).¹ Elijah wished he could get all the assurances he needed from the Creator God. And he did, but not exactly as he expected. There was a show of power when a great wind tore the mountains, immediately followed by an earthquake that shook the ground; the fire raged. It was all sound and fury because the Lord was not in these dramatic events.

Then Elijah heard a still, small voice, almost like a whisper. How many times have we sought God but did not find Him because of misplaced expectations or because we have been looking at the wrong places? We had hoped to hear a decibel of instructions only to receive an impression. When God speaks in a thunderous voice, we quake like the children of Israel at Mount Sinai, forgetting that His omnipotence is not diminished when He speaks in whispers.

TWO KINDS OF POWER

Two kings—Jesus and Herod—represent two different powers. One is redemptive power, while the other is destructive. Herod embraced the kind of power that devalued and destroyed destinies. His despotic power

brooked no rival, real or imagined. In one fell swoop, he ordered the killing of the defenseless infants in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:16–18). He was a paranoid king; Jesus escaped his murderous attacks by a whisker.

Herod used his power to build fortresses and monuments; the greatest, perhaps, was the Jewish temple. He spent all his time building edifices for self-promotion while at the same time filling graves with the carcasses of perceived or real enemies! He had power, but certainly not the kind that built lives. Seeking power for self-glorification is counterproductive; indeed, it is self-destructive. It is easy to acquire a narcissistic streak if one is yearning for recognition. The virus of self-aggrandizement can easily infect us if we choose to build monuments that showcase vainglorious kingly powers.

Unlike Herod, Jesus introduced a different kind of power—the power of weakness, which was revolutionary. He was equal to God but voluntarily renounced this right. As the Creator, He had everything at His command, yet while on earth, He declared, “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head” (Luke 9:58). He did not leave a legacy of breathtaking temples or formidable fortresses. We are His temple; He is our fortress. Jesus went about rebuilding lives damaged by sin. He gave hope

to the hopeless. He deployed to the fullest the redemptive, magnetic power of self-sacrifice: “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself” (John 12:32, NKJV). Jesus demonstrated redemptive power at the Cross; in weakness, He conquered. Sadly, weakness is a devalued currency in the interplay of powers in our fallen world. But we are to live like Christ, which will enable us to positively impact the lives of everyone we encounter.

John Maxwell was right when he wrote, “Leadership is influence.”² By this, he meant the power of influence, which is soft and subtle—not coercive or brutish. “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely,” as Lord Acton once indicated.³ Nobody is an island; we are influenced by others just as we influence people around us. The bad news is that our influence may not always be positive, even if we are intentional about what we do! One may intentionally (or even unintentionally) do evil and succeed in influencing many people. Indeed, a negative influence often seems to trump a good one. Our fallen nature easily yields to the pull of negative influences.

BRUISED FOR OUR INIQUITIES

The prophet Isaiah wrote about the Messiah: “But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities” (Isaiah 53:5, NKJV). Another translation renders it “crushed

for our iniquities” (NIV). Isaiah uses metaphors that suggest weakness or incapacitation. But in that condition, the Messiah unleashed the power to heal and restore. He knew what it meant to be bruised vicariously for our sins. Citing Isaiah 42:1 to 4, Matthew wrote, “A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out” (Matthew 12:20). In all of His ministry, Jesus mended bruised reeds and rekindled wicks. A bruised reed signifies powerlessness and instability, something to be discarded. Jesus ministered to many such people, wounded emotionally, spiritually, or physically, who are considered dispensable to most of the world. One example was when He told the woman caught in adultery, “Neither do



I condemn you. Go and sin no more” (John 8:11, MEV). Jesus was in the business of rekindling a smoking flax.

We only need to look around to see that many people are smoking wicks or bruised reeds that need help. They are hurting and carrying heavy burdens of rejection and ostracism. Some are suffocating in the stifling embrace of unjust social structures that alienate and disenfranchise. What can we do? What if we ourselves are the bruised reeds?

AGENTS OF HEALING

Henri Nouwen wrote *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* some years ago. In a sense, we have all been wounded by sin. But even though we have been bruised or broken, we can still be agents of healing. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are to rebuild fragmented lives. We all need someone to blow the invigorating wind of affirmation into our sails in our life journeys. Sometimes, no other person may do it except ourselves. We may be jumpstarting our stalled lives by reaching out to give a new lease of life to somebody else, offering them a kind word and a reassuring smile. We can individually ask ourselves: How am I using the power of my brokenness in my interactions with people?

Viktor Frankl, an Austrian psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor, gave insights into the human

We may be jumpstarting our stalled lives by reaching out to give a new lease of life to somebody else, offering them a kind word and a reassuring smile.

search for meaning. He rightly observed that “life is not primarily a quest for pleasure ... or a quest for power ... but a quest for meaning.”⁴ As Christians, we believe that the goal for life is to fulfill God’s purpose for our individual lives by deploying power in a redemptive manner. We can inflate the flagging sense of meaning in a world of meaninglessness. There are myriad ways we can do this on our campuses and in our communities. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok are powerful influencers that can be creatively utilized to give a sense of purpose and meaning to people’s lives.

Paradoxically, though, with all the almost endless platforms offered by social media,

the world seems never to have been so disconnected as it currently is. There is a feeling of loneliness and “aloneness,” among young people particularly. The hype about connectivity is hollow if we are not connected to God. Social media can be used to connect people to the One who said, “Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:14). Through visitations and the distribution of lifegiving gospel literature, students can be given—and give to others—the opportunity to experience life at its best. We have been called to change the narrative and be agents of hope to the hopeless.

In our brokenness, we will begin to exhibit the magnetism of selflessness. As we model authenticity in our relationships, our lives will become a pleasing aroma to those around us. There is a specific hidden power in weakness that we are to individually discover for ourselves, just like the apostle Paul did when he said, “When I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10, ESV). If we recognize our weakness, we will more likely depend on God so that His power may rest upon us. The power that redeems is not a thing to be grabbed; we may have to be wounded or bruised before it can be released.

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EMBARKING ON A JOURNEY: A PATHFINDER'S LEGACY

By: Ivonne Omaña



In a time where we often hear that young people are leaving the church, it is ___ to see a young person rise to the call for leadership. In recent years, the Austria Pathfinder Ministry has grown by leaps and bounds through the work of missionary Master Guides but has never had a Master Guide investiture for the locally trained leaders. At the recent International Camporee, Jonathan Freiburghaus was invested as the first ever Master Guide to be trained in Austria. His story is a testament to the power of determination, mentorship, and faith.

Raised in Switzerland, Jonathan Freiburghaus was homeschooled by his parents and found his social circle and spiritual foundation in Pathfinders. Starting at the age of seven, he was introduced to the ministry alongside his younger sister, and this early involvement planted the seeds for a lifetime of service. As he reflects, “I grew with it. For me, it’s personal development, not just leadership development. It’s about learning things that guide you in life.”

When his family moved to Austria, his commitment to Pathfinders only deepened. Under the guidance of a passionate leader, Freiburghaus was given leadership responsibilities, shaping him into a leader at a young age. “That’s where my leadership role kind of started,” he recalls, “It was about understanding what kids like and what they don’t. That insight

was invaluable.” At 16, he completed the Guide class, and started a Pathfinder Club at his local church, becoming the Club Director for the next nine years.

But it wasn’t just about leadership for him. It was about something much more profound. He embarked on the challenging journey of becoming a Master Guide following the 2015 General Conference curriculum, which took him three years. It was arduous, requiring extensive reading, completing honors, and attending seminars. “It was a lot of work, but it was worth it,” he says, “because I learned many things about the church, the Pathfinder ministry, its history, its meaning, and most importantly, about myself and my relationship with Jesus.”

For him, the Master Guide program was not just a badge of honor; it was a path to personal growth. “It’s about the relationship with Jesus. We are in this church because of Jesus, not because of the other people,” he emphasizes. This perspective is crucial, especially for young leaders who may face discouragement from others. Freiburghaus advises, “Don’t let yourself be discouraged by the behavior of older people. It’s not about them; it’s about Jesus.”

As the first Austria-trained Master Guide, his journey wasn’t easy. He had to navigate the complexities of the program with limited resources. His advice to others in similar situations? “Find a good mentor. It helps a lot. Someone you can talk to about your difficulties.” His own mentor, Mark, was a pivotal

figure in his journey. Through an unlikely connection—an email offering to help translate the Wiki Honors into German—he became part of a global team, which led him to the North American Division and, eventually, to international opportunities.

As we spoke at the international Camporee, where Jonathan Freiburghaus was representing Austria and would officially be invested as a Master Guide, he reflected on his mission: to inspire the next generation. He plans to encourage young adults at the next Camporee by showing them that it's not just about the achievement itself but the journey and the growth that comes with it. "I hope this ceremony will encourage them to do it because if they do, they will be the next person on this stage."

In Austria, the Pathfinder Ministry is still growing and strongly focuses on outdoor skills. Yet, the need for future leaders is clear. Master Guide Jonathan Freiburghaus sees the Master Guide program as a crucial part of this growth, providing the knowledge and skills needed to take on responsibility within the church. As he puts it, "It's about giving young adults



the possibility to know why they are Adventists, to get some knowledge and skills to take on responsibility inside the church."

His story is one of perseverance, faith, and the pursuit of personal and spiritual growth. It reminds us that it's worth walking even when the path is difficult. "When God closes a door, He opens a window," he says. And for this young leader, that window has opened wide, leading him on a journey he could have never envisioned.

In his words to emerging leaders who might be hesitant because of others' judgment, "It's not about the people; it's about Jesus." This is the heart of his message: focus on your relationship with Christ, and the rest will follow, just like Matthew 6:33.

As he continues to lead, both in Austria and beyond, his story will inspire others to take up the mantle of leadership, not for recognition but for the personal journey it offers—a journey that leads ever closer to Jesus.



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THE BENEFITS YOUNG ADULTS CAN GAIN FROM LEADERSHIP IN ADVENTURER AND PATHFINDER CLUBS

By: Dr. Larry Green



As far back as I can remember, I have been a part of the Adventurer and Pathfinder Club ministries within the Seventh-day Adventist Youth Ministries. Everything about who I am today has its roots in these clubs. They have significantly shaped my life, mainly through the leadership roles I've had the privilege to hold. Young adults can gain much more from being leaders in these ministries than they may initially realize. When you step into a leadership role or any area of service within Adventurers or Pathfinders, you not only serve others but also experience tremendous personal growth—spiritually, emotionally, and socially.

One of the most beautiful things about the Adventurer and Pathfinder Clubs is that every youth who wants to serve can find a place to do so. These clubs don't just ask you to serve—they provide you with the training and tools necessary to serve exceptionally. Whether it's through the Master Guide program, leadership training, or specific skills workshops, the clubs offer a structured path that equips young people for impactful service both in the church and in the broader spectrum of life.

Reflecting on my own experience, I vividly recall my journey from being a young Adven-

turer to a Pathfinder to completing the Master Guide program, Senior Youth Leadership, the Pathfinder Leadership training, and the Advanced Pathfinder Leadership program. At times, people would question why I was so invested in these trainings, especially while pursuing pastoral studies and later serving as a church pastor. However, through these programs, I gained the tools necessary to guide children and teens in the Seventh-day Adventist uniform ministry and was equipped with the nuts and bolts to offer service to youth in my community. More importantly, I witnessed firsthand the growth and transformation in the lives of young people as they matured, not just in their faith but in their leadership abilities, emotional intelligence, and sense of responsibility.

EMBRACING LEADERSHIP: WHAT YOU STAND TO GAIN

1. Spiritual Growth and Mentorship

Taking on a leadership role or service in the Adventurer or Pathfinder clubs invites you into a unique position of spiritual responsibility. You're not just overseeing activities—you're actively helping to shape the spiritual journey of the children and teens in your care. Guiding them in Bible study, prayer, nature exploration, and discussions about faith encourages your own spiritual growth. As you mentor others,

you find yourself being mentored by God. Psalm 145:4 beautifully captures the essence of this intergenerational cycle: “One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts.” As you lead, you are both learning and teaching, fostering spiritual growth for both yourself and those you serve.

2. Leadership Skills and Confidence

Leadership in the Adventurer and Pathfinder Clubs provides young adults with a platform to develop critical leadership skills. You learn by doing, whether organizing events, leading groups, or managing responsibilities. Over time, these experiences build confidence and resilience. Every moment of leadership—whether guiding a young Pathfinder through a difficult task or coordinating a major event—shapes you into a stronger, more effective leader within the church and in broader life contexts.

3. Fostering Teamwork and Cooperation

Leadership within these ministries requires collaboration. You’ll work with fellow leaders, older mentors, and the young people in your charge. This intergenerational teamwork helps you learn to listen, communicate effectively, and value the contributions of others. Titus 2:2-8 emphasizes the importance of intergenerational relationships, encouraging older and younger individuals to support and learn from one another. Kara Powell, the author

of “Growing Young,” affirms this when she says, “The church needs young people, and young people need the church. When both generations work together, the church becomes more vibrant and full of life” (Powell 2016, 33).

4. Emotional Intelligence and Resilience

Leading younger children and teens teaches patience and emotional intelligence. Every child is unique, and part of your role as a leader is learning how to connect with and guide each individual effectively. This experience helps you develop empathy and an understanding of human emotions, traits that are instrumental in any leadership context. Moreover, the challenges that inevitably come with leadership—conflict resolution, managing expectations, and overcoming obstacles—build resilience and problem-solving abilities.

5. A Sense of Purpose and Service

There’s a profound sense of fulfillment that comes from serving others, particularly in a ministry setting. One of the most rewarding aspects of leadership in the Adventurer and Pathfinder Clubs is knowing that you are helping to shape the next generation of believers and leaders. Serving in these clubs is not just about completing tasks—it’s about leaving a legacy of faith and service. I once had the privilege of witnessing this firsthand. While volunteering at the General Conference



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booth during the 2024 'Believe the Promise' International Pathfinder Camporee, a young man approached me and shared how my involvement in the Pathfinder Club at Northern Caribbean University (NCU) had significantly impacted his spiritual life. He told me that my leadership had contributed to his decision to be baptized, noting that 17 years had passed since I served in the Adventurer and Pathfinder club at NCU. This life-changing moment underscored how God uses us to make eternal impacts in the lives of others. Reflecting on this, I'm reminded of the words of Ellen G. White, who said, "We know not in this life how far-reaching may be our influence, but we shall see its results in the kingdom of God. Then, by many a soul will be traced the precious influence that led them to the Savior" (White 2010, 326).

6. Building a Supportive Community

Being part of these clubs is about more than just serving—it's about being part of a community.

You are surrounded by like-minded individuals, mentors, and fellow leaders who support you on your spiritual journey. Adventurers and Pathfinders create an environment where young adults can find belonging, encouragement, and lifelong friendships. These relationships often span generations, as older leaders pour into younger ones, who in turn pass on their knowledge and experience to the next group of Pathfinders.

7. Preparing for a Life of Service

The skills, experiences, and values gained through leadership in these clubs go far beyond the confines of the church. As Ellen G. White wisely observed in “Messages to Young People”, “With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Savior might be carried to the whole world!” (White 1930, 196). Serving in the Adventurer and Pathfinder clubs prepares youth and young adults for a life of service, not just in the church but in every aspect of their lives.

CONCLUSION: A LIFE DEEPENED IN CHRIST

Through my leadership in the Adventurer and Pathfinder Clubs, my life has been deepened in Christ. I have grown spiritually as I have led others, and I have seen God work in the lives of the young people I’ve had the privilege

to serve. I encourage every young adult in our church to embrace the opportunity to lead in these clubs. Not only will you make a lasting, eternal impact on the lives of others, but you will also grow in ways you never expected. Leadership in these ministries is more than a responsibility—it’s an invitation to walk closer with God and help others do the same.

Author Bio

Larry Larrice Green is a pastor, inspirational speaker, and author with a Doctor of Ministry in Intergenerational Church from Andrews University. His work focuses on spiritual counseling, youth mentorship, and community outreach, fostering deep connections within families and communities worldwide, while his visionary leadership promotes collective growth and transformation.

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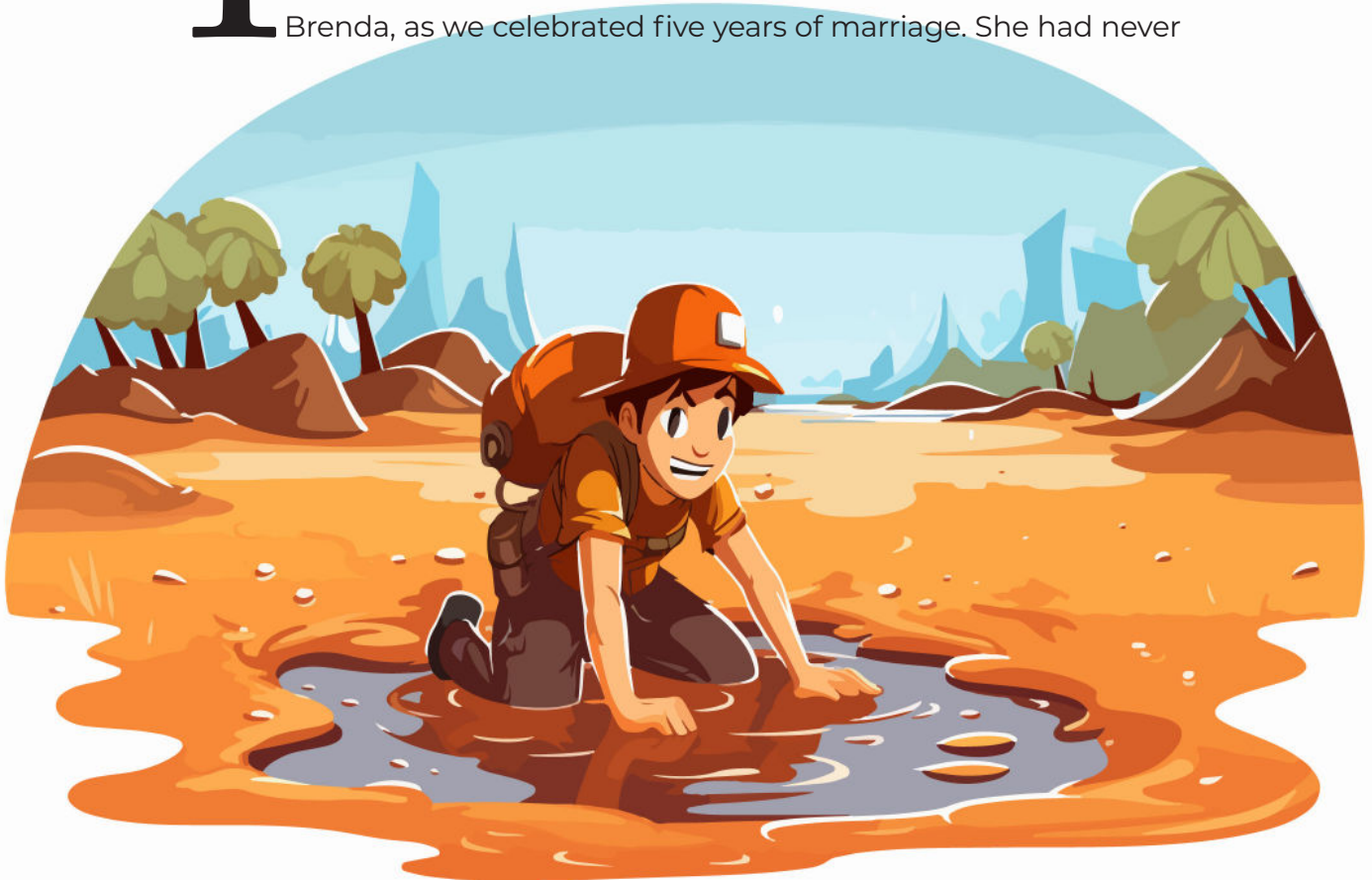
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EMBRACE THE MUD

By: Gustavo Mujica

Article obtained with permission from Gustavo Mujica, “Embrace the Mud,” *Dialogue* 35:2 (2023): 23-24.

In 2013, I graduated from Antillean Adventist University in the city of the sweet mangoes— Mayagüez, Puerto Rico. Ten years later, I decided to return to the island that gave me so much during my five years of college studies. This time, I came with my wife, Brenda, as we celebrated five years of marriage. She had never



been to Puerto Rico. As the good husband I intend to be, I said, “Baby, don’t you worry. I will take you places only the locals go. I’ll take good care of you!” I carefully planned all the details and itinerary of our so-long-awaited-for vacation. I went into planning mode and created an Excel file with about six columns, color-coded, with dates, places, luggage, and activity intensity, among other items. Everything was set. The day came, and we were ready to start our vacation.

As a married couple, we enjoy the outdoors. Puerto Rico is all about that. Therefore, we went for an excursion to El Yunque National Forest. This place has an incredible diversity of plants, animals, and, more exciting for us, waterfalls. The part that I had forgotten was how muddy the park can be. As in many good tropical forests, it is constantly raining. For anybody to get to the waterfalls, he or she needs to hike. We both grew up going to Pathfinders at our churches, where we learned what an actual hike is and what it is not. But we had not done El Yunque. The path was extremely slippery, the mud was thick, our shoes did not have any grip, and the group that we were going with was much faster than the two of us. Five minutes into our hike, my wife slipped and slightly hurt her knee. My nervousness started ramping up. I tried to help her by extending my hand to hold her, showing where it was less

slippery and everything else in between. But that did not help. I started sliding as well. I did not want her to hurt herself. I did not want the two of us to struggle or suffer.

WE ARE NOT CREATED TO SUFFER

As a hospital chaplain, I have learned that nobody wants to suffer. We were not created to suffer. Suffering comes as a consequence of humanity’s Fall. Therefore, anytime one suffers, incredible tension arises from within. Our deepest fears rise like the Sun in the East every morning. And even though our faith tells us that God is with us (Isaiah 41:10), that He is our guardian and protector (Psalm 121:5–8), our direct experience tells us something different. It’s in moments of suffering when questions come to our minds; and, just like Jesus hanging on the Cross, we say, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46, NIV).¹ We experience feelings of abandonment, inadequacy, anger, and fear. This is the human experience.

Here is where prayer plays a vital role in the Christian life. Richard Rohr writes, “For Jesus, prayer seems to be a matter of *waiting* in love. Returning to love. Trusting that love is the bottom stream of reality. That’s why prayer isn’t primarily words; it’s primarily a place, an attitude, a stance.”² I believe that Jesus’ prayer, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” was a request that moved from a place of anguish to rest in a place of love.

The dichotomy is there. It's a tension between spiritual and emotional pain and relief. Between abandonment and belonging. Between being self-sufficient and fully dependent on God's love, even when suffering is present. The most beautiful part is that Jesus went through the whole human experience so we can "approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

After making it to the top and getting to enjoy the fantastic waterfalls in El Yunque, we were on our way back. The path was even more muddy, and we fell several times. At that moment, our tour guide said something that deeply resonated with me: "Embrace the mud!" In my mind, I said, "But I don't want to! It's uncomfortable, it's painful to fall, it's not what I desired for my fifth wedding anniversary, it's not how I want to see my wife. I do not want for us to suffer!" but not, "Can I embrace it?" My spirit wrestled.

I think we suffer when we resist our pain. How would our experience be if, instead of resisting, we embraced any experience (painful or not) as part of our journey? I believe that's what Jesus did when He "called out with a loud voice, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit'" (Luke 23:46). He embraced "the mud" He was going through (figuratively speaking, of course). He chose to rest in a place of love and trusted that even in the worst circumstances,

He still belonged to the Father. Then, the most incredible miracle happened: our salvation.

We made it out of El Yunque after a few hours, knees hurting and covered with mud from head to toe. At the same time, we had one of our best experiences in our adventures outdoors. We got to enjoy the natural waterslides in the waterfalls, meet new people, laugh, enjoy God's creation, and overall, we embraced the mud!

We all have different types of "mud" in our lives. Some of us may be going through the worst "mud" life can throw at us: economic crisis, broken relationships, health challenges, losing a loved one, or a spiritual problem. You name it. I am really sorry for your suffering. I hope and pray that, amid your "mud," you can feel encouraged to keep going. May you find a safe space to heal spiritually and emotionally, and, overall, may you experience God's love embracing you.

Gustavo Mujica (M.Div., Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A.) was born and raised in Venezuela, and is the Chaplain Manager at AdventHealth East Orlando, Florida, U.S.A.

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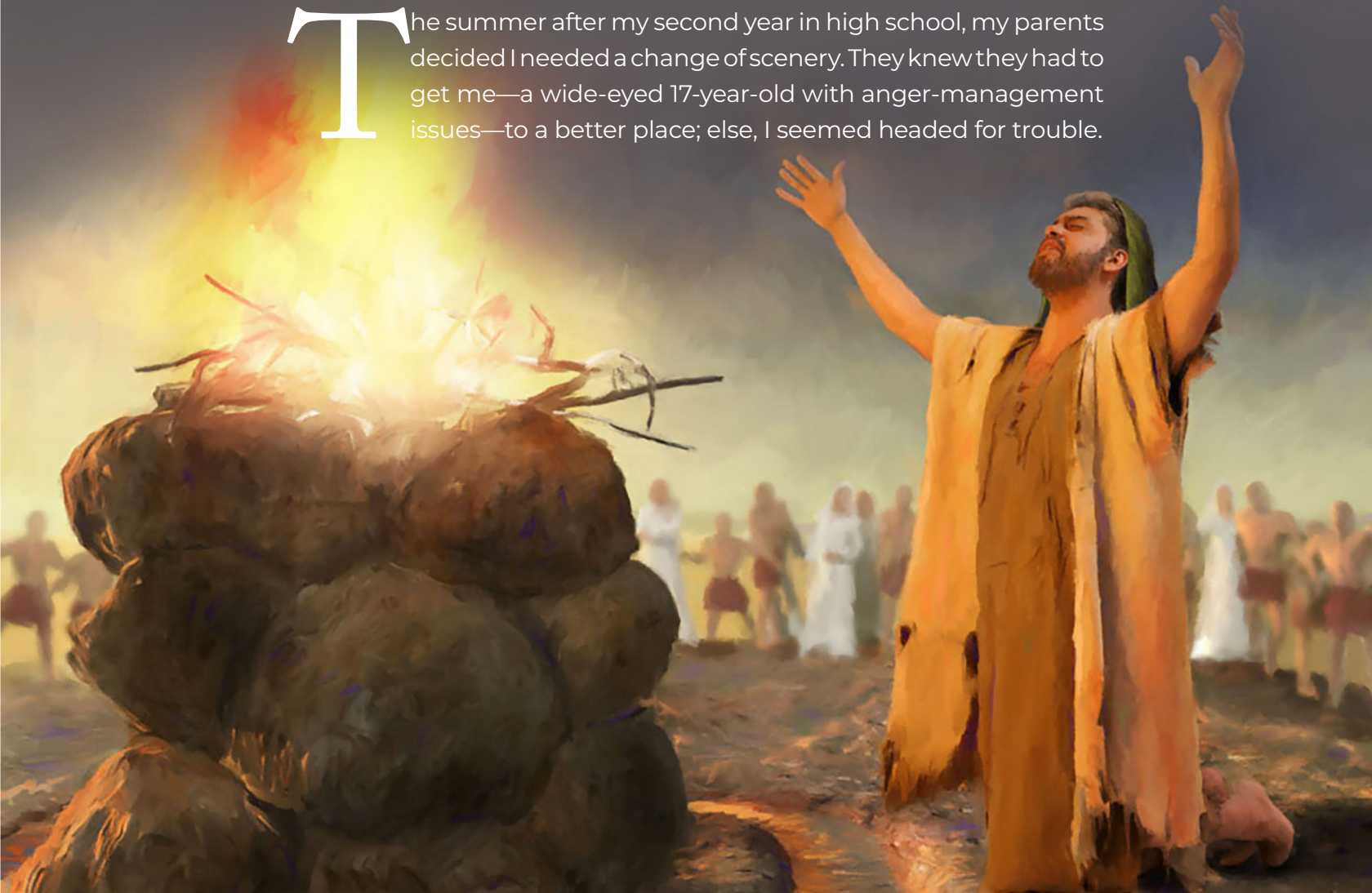
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BUILDING OUR ALTAR LIFE

By: Dwain N. Esmond

Article obtained with permission from Dwain N. Esmond, “Building Our Altar Life,” *Dialogue* 34:3 (2022): 13-16.

The summer after my second year in high school, my parents decided I needed a change of scenery. They knew they had to get me—a wide-eyed 17-year-old with anger-management issues—to a better place; else, I seemed headed for trouble.



I always had a “thing” for words and language.

I excelled in any subject that involved English or writing, and this started at an early age. So, when I encountered Hip Hop music, which had burst onto the scene in the late 1960s and early 1970s, I was hooked. I overdosed on the wordplay of Run-D.M.C., The Fat Boys, LL Cool J, Eric B. and Rakim, and others. Added to the music was a new craze called breakdancing, and I was doubly hooked. It was fresh. It was urban. It was me.

“By beholding, we become changed,” Ellen G. White often wrote, building on the Apostle Paul’s counsel in 2 Corinthians 3:18.¹ This was definitely true of me. I had been changed by what I was pumping into my ears and setting before my face. I was “rappin’” in a small group, breakdancing with my friends, and dreaming of pop stardom. I still went to church with my parents, participated actively in Pathfinders and Adventist Youth Society (AYS), but I was losing my way. My parents could see it, and anyone else who cared to look close enough could see it, too.

My parents found the perfect antidote to my problems: Pine Forge Academy—an Adventist boarding school in the hills of Pine Forge, Pennsylvania, U.S.A., I agreed to go—I really did not have a choice— somewhat happy to put the “drama” of my public high

school behind me. I comforted myself with the thought that though I would be far away, I would not be far away from the music I loved. Little did I know at the time that something else would have a much greater impact on my life than my new school.

TAKE THESE

As my father readied our car for the trip to Pine Forge, he gave me a two-volume set of Ellen G. White books. My dad loved her writings, and he would liberally sprinkle her quotes into the conversation wherever he found a listening ear. Regrettably, I also knew of less-careful Ellen White zealots who would breathlessly invoke her writings to beat into submission anyone whom they felt was out of line. It did not take long for the beauty and sweetness of Ellen White’s counsels to be lost on me during my early teenage years. Nevertheless, I accepted my father’s gift, and off I went.

When I finally opened the two volumes of *Mind, Character, and Personality*, something happened to me. I cannot fully explain it, but somehow, I had arrived at the intersection of desiring a personal change in my life and the resources to begin that change. I knew I had gotten into some bad things in my previous school, and Pine Forge was my opportunity to make a clean break with my former life, to start over, despite my young age. Nothing did



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more to transform my life at that time than the Bible and the books my father gave me. As a young man coming of age, immersed in city culture, I felt God began to put His finger on the difficult things that held me fast, such as music. I was growing up in a home in which God was cherished, worship was constant, and church life prized, but I still began to lose my way. I needed help. I needed a deeper walk with God.

I wanted desperately to be a good student, and here God worked through Ellen White to supply the tools I needed to not only change my spiritual life but also become a high academic achiever. It was during this period of my life that I read this: “As an educating power, the Bible is without a rival. Nothing will so impart vigor to all the faculties as requiring students to grasp the stupendous truths of revelation. The mind

gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. ... If never required to grapple with difficult problems or put to the stretch to comprehend important truths, it will, after a time, almost lose the power of growth.”² This statement alone transformed my Bible study habits. I gave priority to Bible study, and the results I experienced were staggering. My mind grew calmer, and my ability to grasp difficult concepts in my studies greatly increased.

No chapter in this amazing two-volume Ellen White compilation impacted me more than chapter 11 of volume 1, “Bible Study and the Mind.” After reading it, I began to study the Bible with intention and precision. That experience was the beginning of my “altar life” with God.

THE ALTAR LIFE

One need not possess a physical altar to worship God. In fact, if a follower of Jesus lives in consistent, earnest, Bible-bathed communion with God, he or she has erected an altar as real as the one that Elijah built on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18).

The altar life encompasses one's connection with and commitment to God, and this will be seen in his or her consistency in personal worship of God. Jesus told the woman at the well that God was looking for worshipers: "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him" (John 4:23, NKJV).³

Nothing will transform one's life like a vibrant devotional life. My altar life began late in high school, and the benefits soon followed. I graduated fairly high in my senior class. As I prepared to leave for university, I knew the next four years would shape the rest of my life. I knew that very important decisions were ahead, and I wanted to get them right. I also knew that if I did not intentionally work to develop my devotional life, I would not be successful in life. I might have a good career, maybe even achieve some fame, but would I fulfill God's destiny for me? I was terrified by the possibility of not doing so, so I prioritized my worship experience with God right from the start at the university.

Step 1: SET A TIME

If we think we're too busy to set aside time to worship God, we're too busy. Personal devotional time is the compass that God uses to set the direction of our lives. If we miss it, we will be off course—fast. When the Israelites were delivered from Egyptian captivity, God commanded Moses to tell the people, "One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight" (Exodus 29:39). Worship was to be the spiritual bookends of Israeli life—a way of ordering their steps morning and evening, day to day. According to Ellen White, this connection to God is critical: "There is not an impulse of our nature, not a faculty of the mind or an inclination of the heart, but needs to be, moment by moment, under the control of the Spirit of God."⁴

Let's plan our time with God and never, ever break it. If life gets in the way, as it often does, start again with God. If we set a time to be with God, He will meet us every time!

Step 2: CHOOSE A PLACE

I lived in the men's dormitory on the campus of Oakwood University (Huntsville, Alabama, U.S.A.) during my first year of college. My room became the place where I built my altar life. My worships were not long, but they were meaningful. I was blessed to have a roommate who also had an altar life. We gave each other room to worship. When we awoke early in the morning, we did not talk much. He

needed to worship, so I gave him space. He, in turn, would do the same for me. Little did I know that I was building devotional habits that would last a lifetime. I still meet with God at the beginning and end of each day.

Maybe the place of our altar will be a room, a bench, a meadow, or a field. Or perhaps the place of our altar will be mobile, changing from day to day. Do whatever works best, but find a place and spend time with God there!

Step 3: QUIET YOUR SPACE

When we attempt to erect our altar life, we will soon discover that our life is quite “loud,” filled with many distractions. According to several recent studies, our cellphones/smartphones are perhaps the biggest distraction we will face in our spiritual life—single biggest threat to our altar life and to our overall well-being. The average social media user, it is said, spent two hours and 27 minutes a day on social media in 2022,⁵ and a 2020 study reported that people used mobile devices for more than 50 percent of the time that they spent on the



Internet.⁶ One Internet research organization found that based on self-reported data, the average person taps, clicks, surfs, and swipes his or her phone an average of 2,617 times per day. The heaviest users average 5,427 touches per day.⁷

Our smartphones not only offer multiple methods of communication (voice, text, Zoom, social media, and e-mail) but also serve as a radio, disco, newspaper, dance club, library, newspaper, camera, GPS, cinema, banking tool, and much, much more. As a tool of distraction, they are unequaled by anything else in history. Our altar life will never get going until we quiet our space, and that especially means our smartphones and tablets. Sure, we can use them as a part of our worship experience, but it would be so much better to forgo them altogether during worship time. Read the Bible and see if there is an attitude to change or adopt, a person to serve, or Jesus to see. Play an instrument and sing out loud to God. Read a devotional book the old-fashioned way, and spend a quiet season in prayer, meditating on what you read.

After his great triumph on Mt. Carmel, Elijah faced threats on his life by Queen Jezebel. The forlorn servant heard God's gentle whisper after the wind, earthquake, and fire (1 Kings 19:11–13). It is in the quiet spaces of life that God speaks the loudest.

Step 4: FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

No person in Scripture had a more powerful altar life than Jesus. Amid a busy life of daily ministry, constant threats, and withering assaults from the devil, Jesus made time for long seasons of prayer and worship. He who was equal with the Father (Philippians 2:6) still thought it important to be still and know that God is God. Jesus understood from an early age that His calling required constant connection with His Father. This was the only way to carry the sins of the world to the Cross. Ellen White described the altar life of Jesus: "The Majesty of heaven, while engaged in His earthly ministry, prayed much to His Father. He was frequently bowed all night in prayer. His spirit was often sorrowful as He felt the powers of the darkness of this world, and He left the busy city and the noisy throng to seek a retired place to make His intercessions. . . . All night, while His followers were sleeping, was their divine Teacher praying. The dew and frost

of night fell upon His head bowed in prayer. His example is left for His followers."⁸

Jesus craved communion with His Father. This was a habit that He developed early in His life on earth and continued until He ascended to heaven. It was the source of His power and the secret to His peace while on earth. Just as Jesus depended on His Father for everything, so must we depend on Him: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

The time we spend building our altar life will be time well spent. If we build and lean on the altar of prayer, there, God will meet us and will lead us, guide us, and bless us. If our prayer altar is sure and certain, from then on, we can be sure and certain that God will meet us there and carry us through the rest of our lives.

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ACCESS YOUTH RESOURCES



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3. All Scripture passages in this article are quoted from the *New King James Version* of the Bible. Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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8. Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1915), 106. Pronouns referring to Deity have been capped at the author’s request.

Amid a busy life of daily ministry, constant threats, and withering assaults from the devil, Jesus made time for long seasons of prayer and worship. He who was equal with the Father still thought it important to be still and know that God is God.

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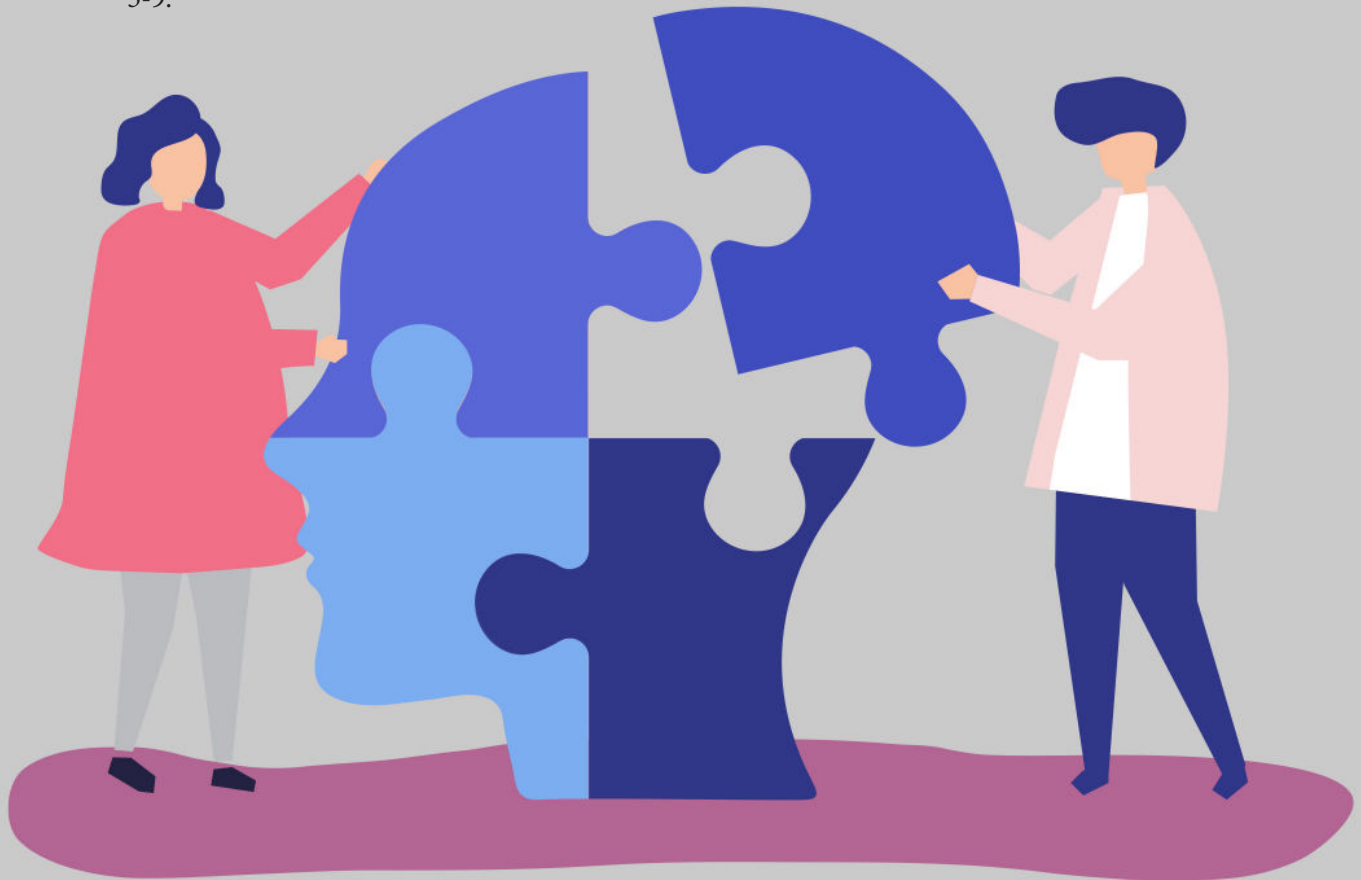
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SCREENS, SLEEP HYGIENE, AND MENTAL HEALTH: FINDING BALANCE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

By: Cynthia Hurtado-Müller

Article obtained with permission from Cynthia Hurtado-Müller, "Screens, Sleep Hygiene, and Mental Health: Finding Balance in the Digital Age," *Dialogue* 36:1 (2024): 5-9.



I invite you, for a moment, to envision your nights as a university student: you, your learning materials, and the hum of the digital landscape. Your routine unfolds under the soft glow of the virtual assignments you must hand in, the theoretical content you must prepare for your exams, and the text messages and e-mails, Internet searches, and videos that interrupt the evening. It's your comfort zone and your escape from reality. But what if this nocturnal digital date is more than just a study session? What if I told you that this habit plays a fundamental role in your mental health?

Screens (TVs, computers, phones/tablets, and video games) have become ubiquitous throughout our daily functions and obligations, and for this very reason, they have become a natural part of student and work life. If we add the time we spend playing video games, watching movies and television programs, and using social networks, it is evident that we spend many hours in front of a screen. I suspect that we spend more time using them than we think.

At the same time, it is no secret that many nations are experiencing major mental health crises, especially as the result of the COVID-19 pandemic.¹ It shouldn't come as a surprise

that cases of anxiety, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and paranoia have increased—and will likely continue to do so—due to the characteristics of the world in which we live. According to the latest research,² some of the most vulnerable groups in this regard are adolescents and university students.

Over the past few years, college counseling centers have reported a steady increase in the number of students with psychiatric illnesses. Rates of depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and suicidal behavior are reaching levels that have never been seen before.³

But can we separate physical health from mental, emotional, and even spiritual health? I invite you to explore what the experts say.

The American College Health Association (ACHA) conducted a mental-health survey of 54,202 undergraduate students throughout the United States in Spring 2022.⁴ The results of this survey revealed that 76.6 percent of respondents were experiencing moderate to severe psychological distress, 29.5 percent met the criteria for suicidal ideation, 12 percent had intentionally harmed themselves in the past year, and 2.9 percent had attempted suicide in the past year.

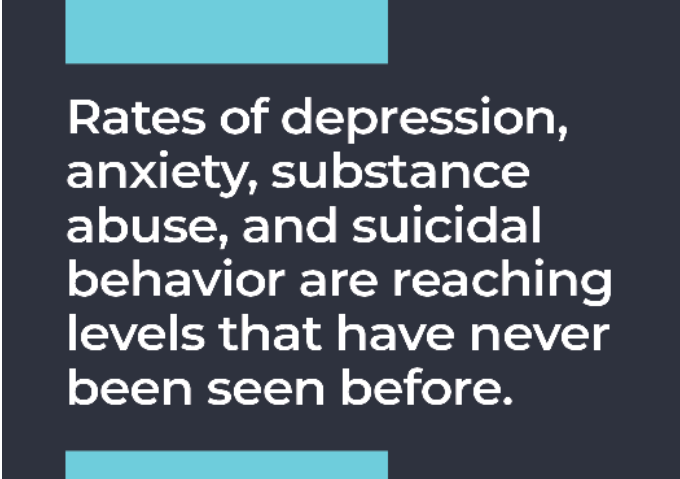
The web-based *Healthy Minds*, one of the world's most renowned ongoing studies of mental health in university students world-

wide, analyzed 96,000 students from 133 campuses across the United States during the 2021–2022 academic year. The results of this survey revealed that 44 percent of students reported symptoms of major or moderate depression, 38 percent had anxiety disorders, and 15 percent had seriously thought about suicide in the past year—the highest rates recorded in the history of the survey.⁵

In their 2022 joint survey, “Stressed Out and Stopping Out: The Mental Health Crisis in Higher Education,” Gallup, a well-known analytics company, and the Lumina Foundation, an independent, private organization focused on creating accessible opportunities for postsecondary learning, found that 48 percent of bachelor’s students reported “frequently” experiencing emotional stress, and 36 percent of bachelor’s students and 44 percent of associate degree students had considered dropping out in the past six months due to emotional stress and the need to prioritize personal mental health.⁶

Given the urgency revealed by these studies, consider some research that examines the habits associated with sleep and the time students spend in front of various screens in connection with mental health.

A 2015–2017 study that surveyed 7,626 American college students revealed that 27 percent described their sleep quality as poor, 36 percent



Rates of depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and suicidal behavior are reaching levels that have never been seen before.

reported obtaining less than seven hours of sleep per night, and 43 percent reported that it took >30 minutes to fall asleep at least once per week.⁷ A study published in 2019 in the journal *NPJ Science of Learning* noted that, on average, college students tend to go to bed at 2 a.m. and wake up at 9 a.m.⁸ Do you see yourself reflected in these results?

Interestingly, the results of studies in other countries reveal similar results as those focusing on university students living in the United States. In a research study published in 2016 that surveyed 1,040 students from eight medical schools in Peru, it was found that 77.69 percent of those surveyed suffered from sleeping problems and that there was a connection between poor sleep quality, stress, and anxiety.⁹ Another study, on Norwegian medical students visiting their primary physi-

cian, concluded that their prevalence of chronic insomnia was 48.3 percent, while 46.9 percent reported chronic sleep problems of more than three months' duration, and 17.8 percent reported hypnotic use.¹⁰

Indiscriminate use of and exposure to screens has been related to poor sleep and, in turn, has been associated with a greater vulnerability to mood disorders and a decline in academic performance. But what does one thing have to do with the other? How do screens affect the functioning of our brain and, therefore, our ability to rest and enhance our mental health? To answer that question, we need to understand the organ—my favorite one—that coordinates and supervises each of the functions of your body: the human brain.

In 1 Corinthians 6:19, the apostle Paul asked: “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own” (NIV).¹¹ Taking this question into account, I want you to think about that temple and imagine that the main office or headquarters of that structure is your brain. If that office is not well managed—if it is not organized and clean—it won't work properly, and the rest of the temple won't work well either. Simply put, everything that happens in your brain affects the functioning of the rest of your body: how you feel, how cold or hot you are, your ability

to memorize a text, or how well you can pay attention. Therefore, the key to experiencing good in class.¹² mental health is knowing how your brain works and understanding what it needs to function optimally. Just as a high-performance car requires quality fuel to run smoothly, our brains require proper nourishment and care. Daily exercise, a balanced diet rich in essential nutrients, fostering healthy relationships with others, and getting adequate sleep will contribute to fueling the brain and nurturing mental well-being. By prioritizing these factors, individuals can cultivate a resilient mind and experience greater overall mental health and happiness.

First, if you are under 28 years old: Congratulations! Your brain is still in the process of developing.¹³ Contrary to what was thought years ago, before we had the technology we have now, the human brain does not finish developing at 18 or 21 years old. Today, we know that the neurodevelopment process is a complex progression that ends between the ages of 27 and 28. We have also learned that while you are experiencing this process, your brain will be extremely permeable to each of the stimuli it registers.

This means that everything you do—the kind of friends with which you surround yourself, what you eat and drink, what you read or watch on Netflix or YouTube, the podcasts



you listen to, the TikTok accounts you follow, the number of hours you sleep, and when you obtain that sleep—create the stimuli that will have a long-term effect on your brain.¹⁴

Most people agree that few things feel better for the body and mind than getting a good night’s rest. This is because sleep is essential for physical and mental health. Sleep is closely related to the circadian rhythm, which is one of the four biological cycles in the body. It is responsible for telling the body when to sleep, wake up, and eat, based on cycles of

light and darkness. Almost all living organisms have circadian rhythms: plants, animals, and even microorganisms!¹⁵

Located in the suprachiasmatic nucleus of the hypothalamus (which is found the middle of your brain), the clock that maintains the circadian rhythm receives lighting signals from the retina in the eye and sends that information to various parts of the brain. One important area that receives these signals is the pineal gland, which releases melatonin (the sleep hormone). These signals vary

throughout the day, which means that the circadian rhythm usually follows the cycle of the sun. At night, our central nervous system receives signals that our environment is dark. This sends a message to the brain that prompts it to release melatonin, which makes us sleepy. The opposite occurs during the day because light exposure suppresses melatonin production.¹⁶

Do you have trouble sleeping, or wake up feeling tired even after you sleep? This almost certainly has to do with your sleep hygiene. When you hear the word *hygiene*, the first thing that comes to mind may be oral hygiene (brushing and flossing your teeth) or personal hygiene (showering, grooming, etc.). Sleep hygiene, although different, is just as important as those other daily practices. Sleep hygiene is another way of describing sleep habits—that is, the conditions that you choose to enhance your sleep. When good habits are practiced on a consistent basis, you fall asleep more quickly, stay asleep for longer, and experience deeper and more restful sleep.¹⁷ Because sleep plays such a crucial role in the functioning of human beings, the lack of proper sleep hygiene can lead to a series of consequences that affect your behavior, memory, emotional management, and ability to learn when you are awake. These consequences may include lack of attention, irritability, hyperactivity or hypoactivity, poor impulse control, memory impairment, mood

swings, and in extreme cases, hallucinations.¹⁸

What can you do to sleep better and, consequentially, count on having your brain work better? Here are some tips to improve your health and cognitive functions:

1. Remember that your sleep cycle begins in the morning hours. Encourage yourself to wake up early and get some sun for 15 to 20 minutes with no sunscreen or sunglasses (avoid looking directly at the sun), and again in the afternoon, wearing as little covering as possible (shorts and a T-shirt, for instance). This will “reset” your nervous system, boost your body’s production of vitamin D, and help ensure that you generate adequate levels of melatonin at the correct time.¹⁹

2. Establish a sleep schedule: Try to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends. This will help your biological clock become more regular and will improve the quality of your rest.

3. Create an atmosphere conducive to sleep: Ensure that your bedroom is completely dark (if possible, eliminate even power lights from devices, TVs, and extension cords), has good ventilation (even during the winter), and is between 60 to 68 degrees Fahrenheit (15.6 to 20 degrees Celsius).²⁰

4. Limit exposure to electronic devices for at least two to three hours before bedtime: The blue light emitted by cell phones,

tablets, and computers can interfere with the production of melatonin, even when you use a filter for this type of light.²¹

5. Limit naps and keep them short: If you feel the need to take a nap, limit it to about 20 to 30 minutes. Long naps, or those taken late in the day, can interfere with nighttime sleep and do not replace the hours missed during the night.

6. Remember that the quality of your rest is as important as the number of hours you sleep: For young adults and adults, the National Sleep Foundation recommends between seven and nine hours of sleep daily,²² ideally starting between 10 and 11 p.m.²³ Organize your week so that you can turn the lights down by 10 p.m., and go to bed at a reasonable time in order to give your brain (and your body) the rest it needs.²⁴

Now you know the reality of mental health, rest, and screen use. You know the impact that a lack of good sleep hygiene has on your brain, and you are informed about the recommendations made by those who study the brain. A new challenge has been posed to you: Starting today, you can make choices about your mental health based on researched evidence, not on personal opinions or habits.

And remember, if at some point you feel you can't do it—that you don't have the motivation or willpower to start changing your habits—

remember this promise in God's Word: "For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline" (2 Timothy 1:7).

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THE ROLE OF A NAVY CHAPLAIN

By: **Dr. Andrés J. Peralta**

When we think about the Navy, we often picture ships, submarines, and sailors in uniform. But there's another crucial part of the Navy that doesn't always get the spotlight: the Navy Chaplain. Navy Chaplains play a unique and essential role in supporting sailors and their families, providing spiritual guidance, and fostering a strong sense of community. Let's dive into what Navy Chaplains do, why their work is so important, and how they make a difference in the lives of those they serve.



WHO IS A NAVY CHAPLAIN?

Imagine having someone who's always there to lend an ear, offer advice, or provide comfort—no matter where you are or what you're going through. That's what a Navy Chaplain does. A Navy Chaplain is a religious leader who serves in the Navy, offering support to sailors and their families regardless of their religious beliefs. They come from various religious backgrounds, including Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, and more.

SPIRITUAL SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

One of the primary functions of a Navy Chaplain is to provide spiritual support. This means being available to listen, offer guidance, and help sailors navigate their spiritual journeys. Whether someone is struggling with personal issues, facing moral dilemmas, or simply looking for a moment of reflection, a Navy Chaplain is there to provide comfort and insight.

CONDUCTING RELIGIOUS SERVICES AND CEREMONIES

Navy Chaplains conduct religious services and ceremonies on board ships and at naval bases. This includes leading worship services, officiating weddings, baptisms, and memorial services. They ensure that sailors can practice their faith even while far from home. This aspect of their role helps maintain a sense of normalcy and continuity in the lives of Navy personnel, even amid challenging deployments.

OFFERING CONFIDENTIAL COUNSELING

Beyond spiritual counseling, Navy Chaplains offer support for a range of personal issues. They provide confidential counseling to help sailors deal with stress, relationship problems, or emotional challenges. Their support is essential in maintaining the mental and emotional health of Navy personnel. By addressing these personal concerns, Navy Chaplains play a critical role in ensuring that sailors remain resilient and focused on their duties.

CRISIS INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT

In times of crisis, such as during emergencies or after traumatic events, Navy Chaplains are on the front lines to offer immediate support. They help sailors and their families cope with the aftermath of crises and provide a steady presence during challenging times. This crisis intervention is crucial in assisting individuals to navigate through their most difficult moments with compassion and understanding.

BUILDING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Another important aspect of a Navy chaplain's role is creating a strong sense of community. They organize activities and events that unite people and create a supportive environment. This is especially important in the close-knit communities found on naval ships and bases. By promoting unity and friendship,

Navy Chaplains help build a positive and cohesive environment for everyone involved.

PROVIDING ETHICAL AND MORAL GUIDANCE

Navy Chaplains also help sailors navigate ethical and moral questions that arise during their service. They offer perspectives based on their religious teachings and personal experiences, assisting sailors in making decisions that align with their values. This guidance helps sailors maintain their integrity and moral compass while fulfilling their duties.

SUPPORTING NAVY FAMILIES

The Navy isn't just about the sailors; it's about their families, too. Navy Chaplains support families, helping them manage the challenges of military life. They offer counseling and guidance to spouses and children, helping them cope with separation and the stresses of service life. By supporting families, Navy Chaplains ensure that the broader support network for sailors remains strong.

MAKING A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE

The work of a Navy Chaplain might only sometimes be visible, but its impact is profound. Sailors often face unique pressures and challenges. Having someone who listens without judgment and offers advice can make a huge difference. Navy Chaplains provide that listening ear, helping sailors feel understood and supported.

By addressing both spiritual and emotional needs, Navy Chaplains contribute to the over-

all well-being of sailors. Their support helps individuals handle stress better and build resilience, which is crucial for personal and professional success. Their presence and support contribute to a positive atmosphere on board ships and at bases. When sailors know they have someone to turn to, they feel more connected and motivated.

FOSTERING UNITY AND BELONGING

Navy Chaplains foster a sense of unity and belonging through community-building activities and services. This is especially important in the Navy, where sailors often live and work closely together in challenging conditions. Their ability to provide a source of strength and encouragement during difficult times is invaluable.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Navy Chaplains are an essential part of the Navy, offering much more than just religious services. They provide spiritual guidance, emotional support, and a sense of community, making a significant difference in the lives of sailors and their families. Their work helps ensure that Navy personnel are not only physically prepared but also mentally and spiritually resilient. So, next time you think about the Navy, remember that behind the scenes, Navy Chaplains are working tirelessly to support and uplift those who serve our country.

A HEARTFELT FAREWELL: A JOURNEY OF FAITH AND GRATITUDE

Dear Pathfinders, Adventurers, and Leaders,

As I prepare to step down from my role as the World Leader for Pathfinder and Adventurers, I reflect on a journey that has been nothing short of extraordinary. Over the past six years, I have had the immense privilege of traveling to many corners of the world, witnessing firsthand God's incredible work through each of you. But the time has come for me to say goodbye, and as I do, my heart is filled with a profound sense of gratitude and bittersweet sorrow.

From the bustling cities to the quiet villa-ges, from grand international camporees to intimate youth gatherings, I have seen the beauty of God's work in action. Every place I visited, every event I attended, and every young person I met has left an indelible mark on my heart. I have been blessed beyond measure to witness countless young lives being trans-formed by the love of Jesus. It has been a joy to see so many of you take a step of faith, dedicating your lives to Christ and embodying His teachings daily.

The enthusiasm, dedication, and passion that I have seen in you all have been nothing short of inspiring. You have shown what it means to live out your faith with vigor and commitment. Whether it was through heartfelt worship, earnest service projects, or the simple act of kindness, each of you has contributed to a greater mission of spreading God's love and message. The stories of young people coming to faith, the joy of seeing children embrace Jesus, and the unwavering support you've provided one another have been a testament to the power of this ministry.

I will miss you all deeply. The memories we have created together—through shared laughter, meaningful conversations, and the countless moments of spiritual growth—will always hold a special place in my heart. My family and I will cherish the warm welcomes, the heartfelt prayers, and the genuine connec-tions we have made at every youth event and camporee. Your hospitality and kindness have been a source of great comfort and joy for us, and we are eternally grateful.

As I step away from this role, I encourage you to continue the incredible work that you have been

doing. Carry forward the spirit of hope, compassion, and dedication that defines our ministry. Let your lives continue to be a testament to the love of Christ, reaching out to others with the same fervor and grace that you have shown. Remember that every act of service, every word of encouragement, and every step taken in faith contributes to the greater mission of bringing others closer to Jesus.

The journey ahead may present new challenges, but with faith and perseverance, you will undoubtedly rise to meet them. Keep your hearts open, your spirits high, and your eyes fixed on the path that God has set before you. The future is bright, and I am confident that the ministry will continue to flourish under your dedicated leadership.

As I bid farewell, know that I carry with me a heart full of gratitude and love for each of you. Though my role may change, my commitment to this ministry and to all of you remains steadfast. I pray that God's blessings will be upon each one of you as you continue to serve, lead, and spread His message.

Thank you for the incredible journey, the precious memories, and the unwavering support. My family and I will forever hold you in our hearts and in our prayers.

With deepest gratitude and affection,

Dr. Andres J. Peralta



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