

Education > Week >

7th – 14th August, 2021 >

Moving Forward >



***I will instruct you and teach you in the way >
you should go; I will counsel you >
with my loving eye on you >***

Psalms 32:8 >



Adventist
Education

Trans-Pacific Union

Introduction

There are so many distractions in our world today. The global pandemic we are facing is one. This is challenging Adventist education but God does not want us to be going through life looking in the rear vision mirror. God knew that this will happen. He has already warned us to be ready for there will be such a time as this. MOVING FORWARD is our theme for this year's Adventist Education Week. It implies that despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, despite the many uncertainties about what the future holds, we can continue to move forward if we allow God to 'instruct us' where to go and so I WILL GO.

Don't become stagnant in this journey because of what is happening around us. It is time to keep moving forward and focus on what is before us. God wants to do far greater things in our life and in our schools. He wants us to rise up to our full potential in Him. He has called us to do mighty things. It is only in moving forward that we can ever accomplish what God has called us to do. Yes, it can be hard. But it is the only way if we want to move on in God and accomplish His mission for our life, family, school and church. Do not be afraid to keep moving forward, for He has promised He will be with us every step of the way.

A father and his young son raised their violins in perfect unison. Their bows met the strings and the music began. Perfect timing, perfect harmony. With a display of unity and the sound of elegance they blessed the hearts of the audience lifting their thoughts heavenward in worship of God. All the while, the eyes of the young boy never left the face of his father. Without a word, the eyes of the man guided his son as they played. It was obviously a stance they had taken many times before, one that was comfortable to both of them. Each one focused on the other. The father lead, the boy followed. The result was magnificent.

Our key text for this week is Psalms 32:8, I am reminded of the father and the young son scene and the importance of keeping our focus where it needs to be – on the face of the Master Teacher. He calls us to embrace His plans, keep moving forward and trust Him each step of the way. He wants us to look at our schools not just as an adventure, but also as a constant series of opportunities to reveal Him. May you be challenged and encouraged during this special week. Do not become distracted. Stay focused for He instructs us to move forward together. To create a vibrant Adventist movement, living our hope in Jesus and transforming the Pacific.

Blessings

Mere Vaihola
Education Director



About the Writer

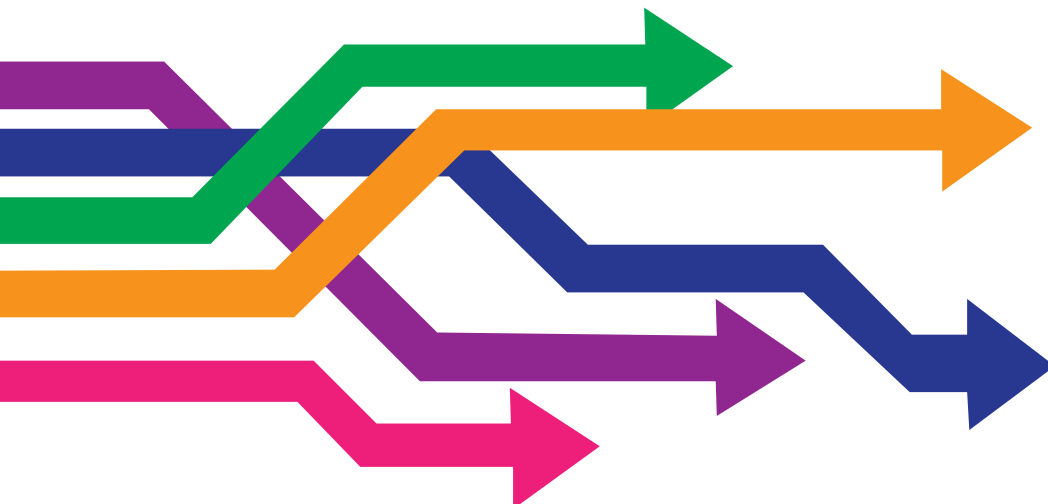
Tepora Taala Fuimaono is from Samoa. She holds a Bachelor of Education majoring in Chemistry and Biology from Pacific Adventist University, Papua New Guinea. She enjoys reading, baking and singing.

Currently she is the principal for Samoa Adventist College and teaches Chemistry and English for senior classes and has been blessed to serve the Samoa mission for 25 years. She is married to Dr Aleki Fuimaono with four children: Papafo, Puafuamatala, Faaiulaufala, and Josef. She would like to dedicate this reading to her parents: Pr Papafo and Mataina Taala. They were very strong supporters of Adventist Education. They served the Samoa Mission for 34 years before they were called to pastor Samoan churches in Australia. They have been called to rest to await their Master's return.

Her prayer and desire for this special Week of Adventist Education Emphasis is that despite the uncertainties life may bring, we will trust God and keep moving forward until He comes back and take us home.



May you be blessed, and may His Name be glorified!



Sabbath: **Where To?**

Key Texts: Psalm 139:7

Where can I go from your Spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?

Psalms 32:8

I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye.

Any keen traveler needs to know three things: the destination for the trip, how to get there and when the trip will take place. These will provide the necessary information required for any trip regardless of who is taking the trip.

I can recall the time I left my home in Samoa for PNG to attend PAU. It was the first time for me to travel so far from home and I was really excited and looked forward to going on this trip. According to my itinerary, I was supposed to transit in New Zealand for only one day before heading to Brisbane International Airport, where I was to wait for five hours before flying to PNG. However, I got the timing mixed up. I checked into Auckland Airport late afternoon the following day only to discover that the flight was in the morning. I missed my connecting flight to Brisbane and I did not make it to PNG until almost a week later, just in time for registration.

It was quite an experience and one that taught me a very important lesson about the need to fully understand the details of any trip I take before it happens. Apart from missing the flights, my family needed to spend more money on rescheduling my flights so I can get to PAU in time for registration.

In sharing this experience, we are reminded of the many different trips that we take as Christians in life. Our answer to the main question for today's reading - 'where to?' sets the pace for moving forward, as we kick start this Education week. While understanding where we are heading is a must, getting there takes a lot more than just packing our bags and taking off. Just as the Psalmist echoed his experience and relationship with God in Psalm 139:7, "where can I go from your Spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?" we are reminded of God's omnipresence and that no matter where we go, He is there.

It is also interesting to note that travelling internationally is not as easy as it used to be. Many people are not keen to travel anywhere. These are some of the impacts of this aggressive Covid-19 pandemic. A lot of restrictions were placed on international travel and most airlines suffered a huge blow and a lot of workers have been laid off. Most airports are still in lockdown mode and a lot of commercial airplanes line their tarmac like lifeless giants. It was and is a strange sight to see, most of the busiest places around the globe, come to a standstill.

There was and still is a lot of uncertainty. Where is the world heading to? As Christians how should we respond to the uncertainty around us? When is this pandemic going to end? How can we move forward in these troubled times?



Moving forward can pose many challenges in different ways, in different situations and in different contexts when we look at all the uncertainties around us today. But God continues to remind us in our theme text - Psalms 32:8; that He will 'instruct us of where to go and will guide us with His loving eye'. Not only does God want to instruct us where to go but He is more than willing to guide us there.

As Christian teachers we have an important role to play in helping our students and our schools move forward. We can start by analysing where we want to go, and how we can get there. If we understand the forward direction we need to go, we can also influence our students to follow suit.

The Bible contains a lot of examples of people who made choices where to go and we can quickly look at how those choices affected their lives in the long run. I want to share three scenarios from the Bible to illustrate the importance of going where God wants you to go as opposed to you going your own way.

Spiritual Emphasis:

The first one is the story of Abraham and Lot found in Genesis 13. The story tells how Abram invited Lot to decide on where to settle as they stood on the hill overlooking the Jordan Valley. When Abram gave Lot the opportunity to choose where to settle, he chose "the fertile plains of the Jordan Valley" (Genesis 13:8-11). He then 'pitched his tent toward Sodom', verse 12. Why was this a bad decision on Lot's part? We can find the answer in verse 13 – 'but the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.' Lot did not anticipate that his selfish decision to move to Sodom, would cost him the life and the salvation of his loved ones, including his dear wife (Genesis 19:26).

Let us look at the story of Zacchaeus. This scenario was a result of his curiosity to see Jesus. It must have been a difficult decision for him to make, especially for someone of his status, yet he climbed the sycamore tree. I take this story in Luke 19:1-10 as Jesus' shortest evangelistic campaign, found in the New Testament. Straight after Zacchaeus climbed down, Jesus declared "today salvation has come to this house" (Luke 19:10). Zacchaeus' decision to climb the sycamore tree brought salvation to his household.

The last scenario is the story of Jonah and how he ran away because he did not want to go where God wanted him to go. God told him to go to Nineveh but he detoured to Tarshish instead (Jonah 1:13). However, God intervened in the form of a storm. As the storm raged and the boat almost sank, Jonah finally decided to confess to the strangers on board that he was the cause of the storm; and was 'exceedingly afraid' (Jonah 1:9). Jonah's decision to run away from God and change his destination from where God wanted him to go, almost cost the lives of the strangers on board the boat. At the end of the story we find Jonah taking a whale ride back to where God wanted him to be, in Nineveh (Jonah 3:3). When he was finally in the right place, God used him to save the people of Nineveh (Jonah 3:5-10).

Application

As Christians it is crucial to understand where we are in our Christian journey with God. As Christian teachers, it is even more important to know that 'where we go' impacts the lives of the students in our care. We have been commissioned to go forward no matter what.



Moving forward as the theme of our Education Week this year, implies that despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, despite the many uncertainties about what the future holds, we can continue to move forward if we allow God to 'instruct us' where to go!

Often times we are like Lot, we make decisions based on our own selfish desires. At such times, we forget about the ripple effects those decisions may have on our loved ones and the people around us in the long run. Sometimes we are tempted to 'go where' we can get more money, status recognition or any other benefits that we feel can help us climb the corporate ladder to being successful in life. If we are not careful, we too can be distracted from moving forward in the right direction like Lot's wife.

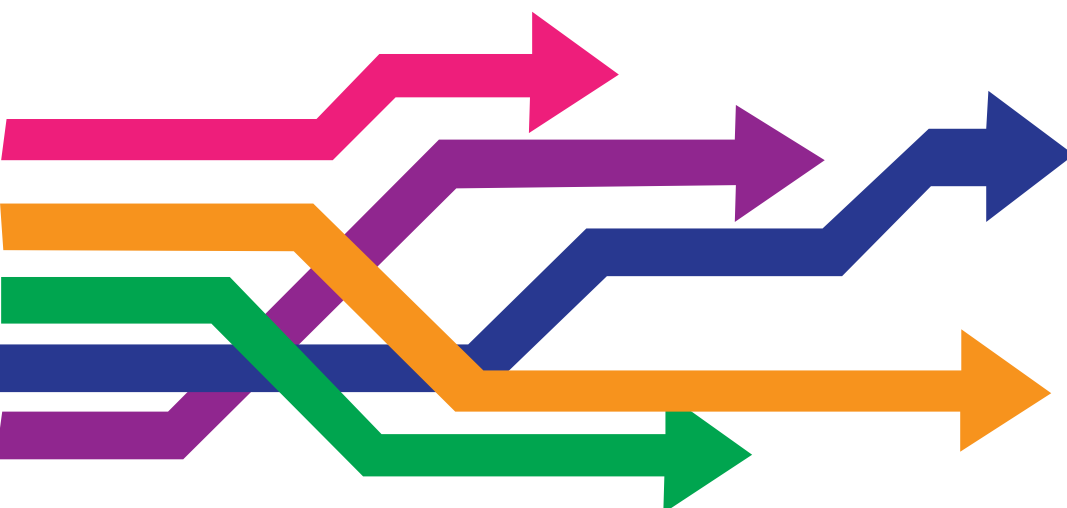
The story of Jonah shows that just as God intervened to bring Jonah back to where he should be, He can also do the same for us. Sometimes, God intervenes in our lives to make us realise that we need to change directions and move to where He wants us to move to. God will bless us if we allow His intervention to guide us. In moving forward, we need to allow God to intervene in our plans and let Him use us in the way He sees fit for His glory.

The story of Zacchaeus should be our response in these times of uncertainties. Sometimes we only think of taking the upward climb when we face difficulties and problems. We are encouraged to take that upward climb to see Jesus, a daily habit. And when we behold and see Jesus the way Zacchaeus did, salvation will be ours to share within our classrooms, within our families and within our communities. We will become blessings to the students in our care, we will become blessings to our families and we will become blessings to the communities we serve. How awesome is that!

Conclusion:

I would like to conclude by sharing words from one of my favourite songs 'Show me the Cross and I'll find my way home'. It tells of a little boy who was lost in a busy city and could not remember where his home was. A policeman tried to assist him but the little boy could not remember the name of the place. As the little boy tried to explain where he lives he suddenly remembered 'an old church where the big cross was lit'. With a smile on his face, he told the policeman:

'Show me the cross and I'll find my way home,
show me the cross and I'll know where to go'. Amen



SUNDAY: **Moving forward by Faith!**

Key Texts: Hebrews 11:6

And without faith, it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

George Muller is considered a faith warrior of his time and his story remains an inspiration to many. He was a Godly man who took care of more than 10,000 orphans with very little resources. When he was moved by faith to establish two orphanages, he not only cared for the neglected children but he also educated them. He gave them hope and inspired most of them to become Christians. Many of these orphans came to know Christ through his positive influence and above all, his faith in God.

The word 'faith' according to the online Oxford Dictionary is defined as 'complete trust or confidence in someone, (in our case as Christians, that someone is God); or something. Furthermore, that complete trust can lead us to believe and have faith in God based on our own spiritual convictions and does not necessarily need any external proof. The Bible also defines faith as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," (Heb 11:1-2). In other words, faith is the essence of accepting without a doubt that God is real.

Interestingly, note that the conditional phrase found in our first key text - Heb 11:6, 'and without faith, it is impossible to please Him'; emphasises the connection between believing God and His response to us. Faith needs to be part of our relationship with God first, it's a fundamental step in establishing a meaningful partnership with Him. We need to fully believe that we serve a living God who longs to fellowship with us and rewards those who seek Him 'diligently'. But sometimes, this is easier said than done.

Back in 1991, I was offered sponsorship by our local mission to go for further studies at PAU, and I was excited to go. However, while waiting for them to sort things out for my departure, cyclone Val hit our islands and the entire old school buildings were blown away. Shortly afterwards, I was informed by our mission office that it was committed to rebuilding the school and could not afford to sponsor me for that school year.

I was devastated, because I knew that my parents could not afford to pay for my fees if I was to go as a self-sponsored student. I immediately made the decision that maybe this was not God's will for my life and decided to stay home. However, my God-fearing mother looked at me and said 'God has a thousand ways to help you, all you need to do is to have faith in Him and go'.

With only a one-way ticket that my parents were able to afford at the time and a lot of faith, I left home for Papua New Guinea. And I can testify that during those four years in PAU, God came through for me in so many unexpected ways and remained faithful to me until I graduated. Looking back, I can say that those were some of the best years of my life. Of course, I faced a lot of challenges, but those were nothing compared to what God was able to do for me and through me throughout those four years in PNG. Moving forward by faith, one step at a time, knowing that God is there, every step of the way. What a wonderful reminder!

We are invited as Christian teachers to move forward by faith, but we often find that our faith is challenged in so many ways almost every day. It could be a difficult student who is always

rebellious in class, it could be the lack of funds to get the resources you need, it could be the passing of a loved one dear to you, and the list is endless. The important thing to remember is, how we cope in such situations can reflect the strength of our faith in God and thus our perseverance to pursue difficult students, or situations with God's help. This also demonstrates our willingness to move forward by faith, despite the challenges we face along the way.

The Bible is filled with many examples of faith warriors and their stories can encourage us in moving forward when we are reminded how these ordinary people, achieved extraordinary results because of their faith in God. We can also experience God's faithfulness in unexpected ways, if we believe in His leading and move forward by faith.

Spiritual Emphasis:

There are two faith stories that I would like to share and the first one that stands out for me is found in Mark 5:25-34. Here we see a certain woman who was sick for twelve years. From the story we know that she had suffered for so long and had spent all that she had but no physician was able to cure her. However, when she "heard about Jesus, she came" (verse 27). She did not hesitate but went to fight her way through the crowd, so she could touch Jesus' garment. The story says and "immediately...she was healed of the affliction", (verse 29). This is what I call, active faith at its best. She had so much faith that even Jesus felt it - "...immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, he turned around"(verse 30). There were so many people thronging around Him, but He sensed and felt the touch of faith from the sick woman. Eventually when He came face to face with her, He said to her "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed"(verse 34). What a powerful display of moving forward by faith!

The other faith story that is worth mentioning is found in the book of Ruth chapter 1. I would like to emphasise verse 16, where Ruth replied 'entreat me not to leave you, or turn back from following after you: For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God'. For a Moabite woman to make this kind of commitment is quite something. Naomi could not persuade her to return to her own family nor stay back in her native country. She was so determined to follow her mother-in-law back to a completely different culture and was even willing to forsake her own religious beliefs. She demonstrated such strong faith for someone who was considered a heathen by Jewish beliefs and culture. Once they reached Judah, Ruth kept her promise and took care of Naomi with all she had. At the end of her faith story we see God's wonderful blessings upon her and the women of the town said to Naomi 'praise the Lord for...your daughter-in-law who loves you and has been better to you' (Ruth 4:14-15). Ruth's faith and hard work to take care of her mother-in-law, was noticed by others and they praised God for her life.

Application

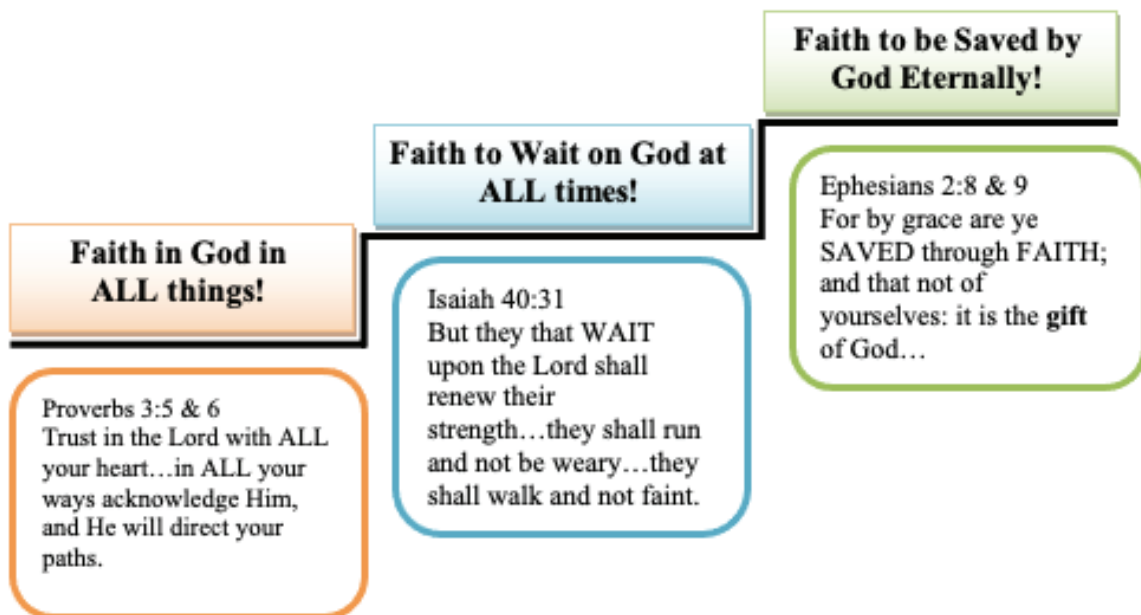
Integration of faith and learning is an important aspect that makes our Education system unique and different. How effective are we, in demonstrating that faith in our ministry as Christian Educators? Is our faith strong enough like the faith of the sick woman who sought Jesus in the midst of the thronging crowd believing that if she could only touch His garments, she would be healed? One aspect I admire about this woman's faith journey was the fact that she did not hesitate when she heard about Jesus' visit to their town that day. Nothing much is said about her identity, but her ability to act on her faith that day is commendable. This is an important lesson we can take away from this story. We need to act and move forward by faith whenever we are asked or need to do something.

The story of Ruth on the other hand, is a reflection of how Naomi and Elimelech's family must have demonstrated a strong faith which impressed and impacted her life. So much so that she was influenced to give up her own family, her cultural upbringing and even her religious beliefs to follow Naomi back to Judah. Ruth's faith journey can inspire and remind us, that we have the opportunities to do the same. We can leave lasting faith impressions and help impact the lives of the students in our care to become committed to a journey of faith. I wonder how many people we come in contact with will respond and say to us 'your God will be my God'. This is our ultimate goal of moving forward by faith.

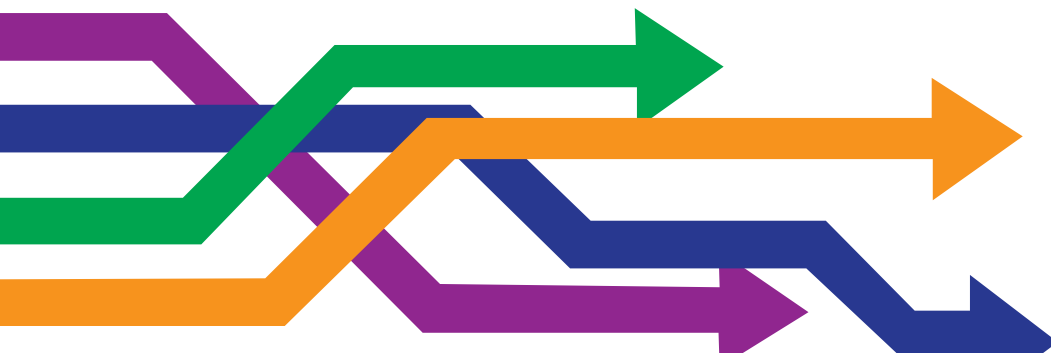
Because of our faith, how many people will praise God when they witness what God has done for us and through us?

Conclusion

To conclude, we all experience different faith journeys, but the one common aspect that binds our experiences together is that fact that God is at the center of every faith story. He is the common factor that holds and sustains us in order to exercise our faith in Him. I would like to think that as we work on building and maintaining our faith relationships with God, we can use the following steps to keep us grounded in our faith in Him and be able to inspire someone to move forward by faith:



1. To have enough faith to acknowledge God in ALL that we do, and He will direct our paths.
2. To have enough faith to wait on His leading at ALL times. When we wait upon Him, He will renew our strength and keep us moving forward no matter what.
3. To have enough faith to accept God's ultimate gift of salvation and be part of His eternal family when Christ returns. Amen.



Monday: Moving forward in Obedience!

Key Texts: Deuteronomy 5:33

Walk in obedience to all that the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.

Ecclesiastes 12:13

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

Life in their beautiful garden home was perfect. Everything was lovely and they adored their home. Furthermore, they always looked forward to their favourite part of the day, when their Master came to visit them and they would talk and fellowship with Him. Then, on this particular day, everything changed! For the first time they were afraid and felt the need to hide, "and they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden", (Gen 3:8).

God: "Adam, where are you?"

Adam: "Umm, I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."

God: "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?"

Adam: "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate."

This all too familiar scene is a reminder of how sin first became a human problem, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God back in their garden home. This episode recorded in Genesis 3 clearly shows that despite God being a regular visitor in their home, it did not stop Adam and Eve from disobeying Him. Despite the fact that they loved fellowshiping with God on a daily basis, it did not prevent them from facing the consequences of their disobedience. They were evicted from their beautiful garden home. They lost their face time slot with God. They were subject to all the suffering brought upon them as a result of their disobedience which allowed sin to invade life on earth as they knew it.

According to the online Oxford dictionary, obedience is defined as 'compliance with an order, request, or law; or submission to another's authority', and it is a noun. It is formed from the word obey and both words come from the Latin obedire, which literally means "listen to" (<https://www.vocabulary.com>). To obey is to be obedient.

Moving forward in obedience is our main focus for today. This is one of the fundamental attributes that can have a controlling impact on our existence. We can interpret it anyway that makes sense to us. We can even look at it as the DOs and the DON'Ts of life. But I like how the wisest man who ever lived, expounds it when he penned the reminder found in Ecclesiastes 12:13 where it says "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man". He beautifully sums up the main reason for which we were created and I fully agree with him. In other words the whole purpose of our existence is to fear God and keep His commandments.

The context of our main text in Deuteronomy, is when God reminds the Israelites about obeying, and following 'all that He has commanded them'. Interestingly, the reminder is followed by a list of consequences or benefits if they obey Him. It makes one wonder why was it difficult for them to obey and follow God when they were given such promising and ideal conditions if they simply obeyed God,?

After wandering in the wilderness for forty years, they should have been happy to have finally reached the land promised to them by God to be their new home. God did not disappoint when He delivered on that promise. Yet the Israelites forgot time and time again, that in order for them to be fully enjoy the benefits of their new home, they needed to follow and obey God faithfully. Not just when they needed a favour or something from God.

Sometimes, it is easier said than done. I can recall an experience while I was in high school back in the day. It was my first year in boarding school and I soon discovered that life was very different in a boarding school. There was an incident where some girls were caught smoking and their punishment was suspension for two weeks. I can vividly remember that morning, when the girls on suspension lined up, in front of the dormitory and we had to say goodbye to them. The sad look on some of their faces, filled with regret and sorrow. It was so heartbreaking at the time and it still is the same today. Disobedience can separate us from God and from those we love and care about. It creates barriers and drives wedges between us and God, and between ourselves and each other.

Spiritual Emphasis:

Think of the time when the thirsty Israelites complained and God told Moses to speak to the rock (Number 20:7 & 8). But he was so upset that he struck the rock instead (Numbers 20:10 & 11). God gave him a very simple task, 'to speak to the rock', yet he disobeyed. By using his rod to strike the rock twice, Moses showed that he did not trust God enough and let his anger towards the Israelites get the best of him. He failed to obey God. Sadly, the consequences of his disobedience just this once, was all it took to prevent him from entering the land, that God promised to the Israelites, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them" (verse 12).

Sometimes, when people face life threatening situations they become obedient. Shortly after the miracle of water flowing from the rock, the children of Israel rebelled against Moses and cursed God for bringing them out of Egypt. In response "the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died"; (Numbers 21:5 & 6). Soon they realised they had sinned and sought forgiveness from Moses. God forgave them and instructed Moses to build a 'fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live', (verse 8). Moses obeyed and built the serpent, placed it on a pole and many looked up at the serpent and were saved.

Application

To become a better Christian, one must be willing to obey God and keep His commandments. There should be no room for 'do your own thing' kind of mentality. When we do, we have all sorts of problems. As teachers we experience discipline issues in schools, when students fail to obey school rules. We become sick when we do not obey health rules. We witness a lot of crimes in our society at all levels, because some people refuse to obey the law of the land. We see parents struggling because their children do not want to obey family rules; and we wondered where we went wrong.

Like Moses, we sometimes tend to think that it is ok to obey God in the way that suits us. The consequences were dire for Moses and they can be serious for us as well. God knows that when He is lifted we will be drawn to Him. We will feel His love for us and that motivates us to obey Him. Our life is happiest when following God's directions.

Conclusion:

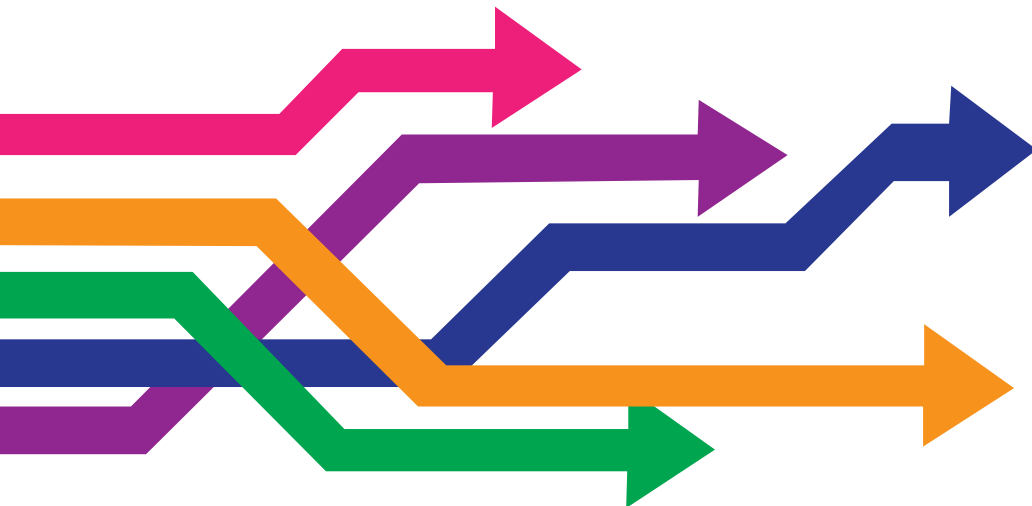
Moving forward in obedience can be a rewarding experience for us, when we focus on Jesus and willingly commit ourselves by obeying His precepts. He loved us enough to give His life for us, and we should love Him enough in return to obey and live for Him.

In doing so may we experience the joy expressed by the words of that well known, hymn penned by Don Moen, 'Trust and Obey.'

When we walk with the Lord in the light of His word,
What a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will, He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.

Chorus:

Trust and obey, for there is no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey. Amen.



Tuesday: **Moving forward with Reassurance!**

Key Texts: Isaiah 43:2

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you.

Psalms 16:8

I keep my eyes always on the Lord, with Him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

After Jesus' ascension, the disciples were sad and felt abandoned. However, Jesus reassured them that there will be Another, which the Father will send to help them (Acts 1:7 & 8). The disciples anxiously waited for the arrival of the Promised Helper and were overwhelmed when the Holy Spirit finally arrived. It filled them in a powerful way. They became bold witnesses for the Lord. As a result Peter preached one sermon and 3000 plus souls were converted to follow Christ. What an experience. How the disciples were reassured that Jesus' was still with them through the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:2-4). They realised that God was with them. They moved out into the community with reassurance, spreading the good news about salvation and converting souls for the Lord (Acts 2:17-21).

In our chaotic world there is a lot of confusion and many are lost. But as Christians we are reassured by Isaiah 43:2, that 'when you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you.' If God is reassuring us that He will be with us, then we do not need to worry about anything. From David's experience recorded in Psalms 16:8, he said, 'I will keep my eyes always on the Lord, with Him at my right hand, 'I will not be shaken'. What powerful reminders and it should be sufficient to propel us forward and we can move ahead with reassurance.

Sometimes our situation may seem hopeless and we feel trapped in our expectations. I can recall when our late principal became ill in 2018; we all prayed very hard for his recovery. We fasted and prayed like we've never prayed before, hoping that the Lord will perform a miracle for him. It was difficult and as we watched him slipping away, that knot of helplessness squeezed tightly around my heart, making it hard to breathe. I remember crying and asking God, why him? The school needed him. His elderly mother needed him. His precious wife and children needed him. His extended family needed him. His church needed him. Why God? Then after a while I reminded myself, why not?

Now and then we all go through those off days when your world is being turned upside down and you feel like giving up. That experience where you feel unappreciated or even unaccepted for who you really are. Sometimes the devil uses this tactic to distract us from doing what God wants us to do. But we are encouraged to move forward with reassurance. Claim God's promise that He will hold our hand, and we will not be shaken. No matter what you are going through right now, God understands and He wants to reassure you that 'He is with you.'

Spiritual Emphasis:

Elijah appeared before King Ahab and warned him about God's wrath and the drought that will affect the land of Israel because of their wickedness. God instructed Elijah to hide himself near Cherith Brook and then God commanded the ravens to bring him food every morning and evening (1 Kings 17:2-4). It says in the Bible that 'Elijah obeyed the Lord's command, (verses 5 & 6) and he had water to drink and the ravens brought him food to eat. While famine raged through the



land because of the drought, Elijah was sustained by the Lord, he drank water from the brook and the ravens kept him fed until the brook dried up.

Then the Lord directed him to go to the town of Zarephath, where Elijah met a widow and her son. The Lord prepared this widow to help take care of Elijah. In doing so, the widow and her son were also saved from starvation. The widow was reluctant at first. She had very little flour left for her and her son, but Elijah reminded her, 'do not fear...the bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the Lord sends rain on the earth.' (1 Kings 17:13 & 14).

The widow gladly prepared bread for Elijah knowing that the Lord has blessed her bin of flour and her jar of oil. There was food in their house as long as the prophet was with them, and the Lord blessed them because of Elijah. Her son was even brought back to life by God through Elijah. The widow was convinced that Elijah was a man of God (verse 24).

Application:

From the story of Elijah, we can clearly witness God's provisions for those who trust and believe in Him. Elijah was reassured that God's power would provide his needs. Elijah did not expect that the ravens would take part in God's plans to provide his meals from day to day. It is amazing how God works to prove His unfailing love for us, to provide for our needs from day to day.

The widow and her son on the other hand, were not expecting that Elijah would come along and changed their fate. They were very poor and were only planning to have their final meal and then die, (verse 12). However, God saw their need and intervened to change their fate. God used her to cook and provide for His servant Elijah and at the same time kept her and her son from starving to death. It is like killing two birds with one stone.

As Christians we can rest assured that God is in control of everything. We can move forward with the assurance that He continues to sustain us and provide for us. We do not have to fear anything for He is with us. He will hold us with His right hand, and we shall not be shaken.

Conclusion:

In these times of spiritual drought, many people are seeking for things to satisfy their spiritual thirst and hunger. As Christians we can move forward with the reassurance that God can keep and sustain us, until He comes to take us home where we belong.



Wednesday: **Moving forward with Wisdom!**

Key Texts: James 3:13 & 17.

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

Proverbs 9:10:

'For the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...'

From a poor, troubled childhood to becoming one of the world's top neurosurgeons, Dr Benjamin S. Carson's story never fails to inspire. From humble beginnings, Sonya Carson who was a single parent, tried to raise her two sons the best way she knew how. She worked hard to support them and at the same time, tried to discipline them. She wanted them to do well in school but also to become better young men. It is beyond amazing how she managed to inspire her boys to become successful students and later became top professionals in their areas of expertise, when she herself could not read and write at the time.

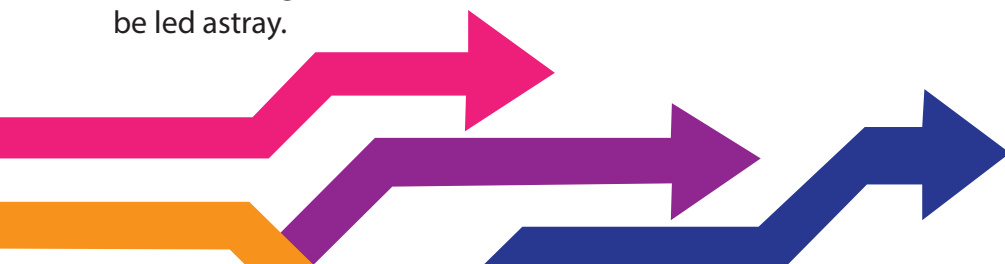
Dr Ben Carson was the first ever neurosurgeon who succeeded in separating Siamese twins. He became a famous neurosurgeon who performed many difficult surgeries that saved lives around the globe. His hands were indeed gifted, as his autobiography, 'Gifted Hands' claimed. Dr Ben Carson also feared God and the Lord blessed him with knowledge and wisdom.

In the Hebrew Bible, the word wisdom is mentioned 222 times. Wisdom was regarded as one of the highest virtues among Israelites. They valued wisdom as much as they valued kindness and justice. No wonder Mary was vigilant in teaching Jesus as He was growing up and we find in Luke 2:52 that confirmation, 'And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men.'

Our main texts further explain that wisdom goes together with understanding and is reflected by good conduct or behaviour. Not only that, it emphasises that 'the wisdom from above is first pure...' and out of that purity other good qualities are produced. It also claims that the 'fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.' This is the formula for those who want to have wisdom – 'fear God'.

This is why our Education ministry emphasises that in order to educate the mind, we need to educate the heart to 'fear God' and bring students to first develop a redemptive and intimate relationship with God. This is the foundation of Authentic Adventist Education. Wisdom is manifested when we fully understand that God is the source and reason of our existence and all that we are or hope to be we owe to Him. This understanding should help us grasp the immensity of God's love for the human race. He has called us as Christian educators to help impart this wisdom and share God's love with the young lives that He has entrusted to our care.

Sometimes we feel that knowledge with its accessibility through modern technology enables students to learn whatever they need at the touch of their fingertips. We need to be vigilant and help build a strong foundation for them to have the wisdom to discern what they perceive, so they cannot be led astray.



Spiritual Emphasis & Application:

I love our main texts especially this part, 'But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.'

The wisdom from above is first:

- 'pure' - Purity is an important concept in the Bible. Jesus mentioned in His Sermon on the Mount, 'blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,' (Matthew 5:8). Therefore, pure wisdom has to do with how we see and understand God, allowing Him to accomplish His will through and for us. This happens when we focus our hearts and minds on spiritual and Godly things.
- 'peaceable' comes from the word peace, and it is one of the qualities that is associated with having wisdom. Jesus also mentioned this in His sermon that 'the peacemakers, shall be called the sons of God,' (Matthew 5:9). When we have the wisdom from above, we have God's peace 'that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,' (Philippians 4:6). This is the kind of peace we need and it equips us to guard our hearts and minds, for these are the organs that process our thoughts and actions.
- 'gentle' this part of the verse is probably referring to our character. It could also have the same meaning as the phrase 'meek in spirit'. Jesus also mentioned this in His Sermon on the Mount, 'blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth,' (Matthew 5:5). When we humble ourselves before God, He can do so much for us and through us.
- 'willing to yield' or freely submit ourselves to God. God can use us if we are willing to yield to Him. He cannot force someone who is stubborn and unwilling. Even though He has ways that can help convince us we need to be willing in order for Him to use us accordingly.
- 'full of mercy' or being merciful. God is love and is full of mercy, imparting His wisdom to us means we need to do the same. Jesus said, 'blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy,' (Matthew 5:7). We should be agents of God's love to those around us.
- 'good fruits' or fruits of the Spirit. The evidence of God's wisdom is we shall bear the fruit of the Spirit. A whole list of these fruits are found in Galatians 5:22 & 23. But in verses 24-25 it reminds us that if we bear these fruits, we belong to Christ and 'have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit.' This is very important as we need to walk the talk. We need to be the living examples of what we teach and preach.
- 'without partiality and hypocrisy' or favouritism and being contradictory. With God's wisdom, we will be sincere with what we do and will treat everyone equally. We will not be hypocritical in the way we treat others. Often times we are tempted to focus on the bright students and there is always that outstanding kid that is easy to like and appreciate. The text is reminding us that even God does not show partiality as He 'is NO respecter of persons,' (Acts 10:25-37).

Conclusion:

Moving forward requires us to have wisdom. God has promised to give us the wisdom from above if we are willing to accept it. As Christians God has shown us all that we need to know about Himself and how He wants us to relate to Him. He has provided His word, the Bible to help us find direction as we journey through this life. He wants to impart His wisdom to us and we need His wisdom to guide us.

With so many new theories and many new beliefs, we need the wisdom from above to help us navigate through life. We can rely on the wisdom from above for this wisdom is filled with all the qualities that can make us truly wise.

Thursday: **Moving forward with Alacrity!**

Key Texts: 1 Peter 3:15-17

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

1 Peter 5:8:

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

The word alacrity can be defined as 'forwardness of the mind...in readiness to act or respond to,' as in being alert. Every time I go to the zoo, I am always fascinated by lions and would spend most of my zoo time, observing them. They are beautiful and powerful creatures. Sometimes when a zoo visit coincides with the animals' feeding time, it is even more interesting to watch them eat. Lions are no exception. They love to eat and you would not want to be around them when they are hungry.

Lions are carnivores (only eat meat) and are also called predators because they prey on defenseless animals. In the wild when they hunt for their food, they become very fierce and dangerous. They can kill and eat any animal they can find, from birds to crocodiles, to elephants, to rhinoceros, to hippos and even tall giraffes. No animal is safe in the wild if lions are around. And mind you, they are very keen hunters when they are hungry.

If you want to find more information about lions, you will find some interesting facts which include the following:

- Most of these wild beasts are found in Africa and a small population is found elsewhere in the world.
- Most male lions weigh up to 190 kg and females up to 165 kg. They are big eaters that hunt, kill and eat their prey.
- They are communal animals and a pride of lions is usually a group of related females and their cubs, plus a few males who defend their pride.
- They rear their cubs together and the cubs can suckle from any female lion with milk.

Interestingly, the Bible compares the adversary or the Devil to a hungry roaring lion. In 1 Peter 5:8, it says 'be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.' If the Bible say the devil is walking around like a roaring lion, then he must be angry and wants to devour those who follow Christ.

Both texts contain a reminder and a warning for Christians today:

Warning: Christians 'BEWARE OF THE ROARING LION' (the devil)

Reminder: Christians 'BE READY TO GIVE A REASON FOR THE HOPE THAT IS IN YOU.

The warning and the reminder serves to get our attention and at the same time brace ourselves to expect the unexpected if you like. Thus as Christians, we need to be on the alert at all times. The devil knows that his time is running out and he is doing all he can to deceive God's chosen few. We need to move forward with alacrity.

There are subtle changes happening around us, in our work places, in our churches and even within our own homes. If we are not alert to pinpoint these, they will deeply affect the way we live and serve God. For example, the advanced development of technology enables many of us to access all sorts of entertainment from the comforts of our homes. Some people would rather spend hours in front of a PC monitor or a TV than finding a job to earn a living.

Many young people today find church and church activities boring and would rather stay home and watch their favourite programs on You Tube, than go to church. Sometimes we spend too much time on our iPhones, iPads, tablets and other devices so that we gradually lose the ability to communicate effectively within our families. This also distracts us from doing what we are supposed to do from time to time. It affects how we carry out our responsibilities because our focus has shifted elsewhere.

Sometimes it's the company or the friends that we hang out with that can influence us negatively. We see this a lot in students where peer pressure often pushes students to break school rules. There is an increase in crime rates involving domestic violence especially within families. We see vulnerable and abused women and children everywhere.

Watch out, that lion maybe roaring inside our living rooms, inside the foyers of our churches, or at the gates of our schools. We don't seem to hear it because we are not sober enough or we are not vigilant enough. How prepared are you to give a reason for the hope that is in you? As Christians we are encouraged to move forward with alacrity.

Spiritual Emphasis:

It's like the parable of the 10 virgins who were invited to celebrate the wedding feast, but the bridegroom took his time and arrived in the early hours of the morning. They waited for a while so they slumbered and their lamps ran out of oil. The five wise virgin who came prepared were able to refill their lamps and joined the celebration. The five foolish virgins went to look for oil and missed out on the celebration altogether because the master of ceremony would not open the door to them. They were late. This well-known parable recorded in Matthew 25:1-13, has a lot to teach us.

Look at the disciples when Jesus was going through those very difficult hours before He was arrested and taken to be executed. He needed them to comfort and pray for Him. Instead they fell asleep. When Jesus asked them, "...couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" (Matthew 26:40) and Peter replied, "...the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." (Matthew 26:41).

Jesus reminded them, "watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation," (verse 41). It must have been hard. The Saviour went through this ordeal alone. His disciples, who were his closest friends, failed to accompany their Master when He needed them most.

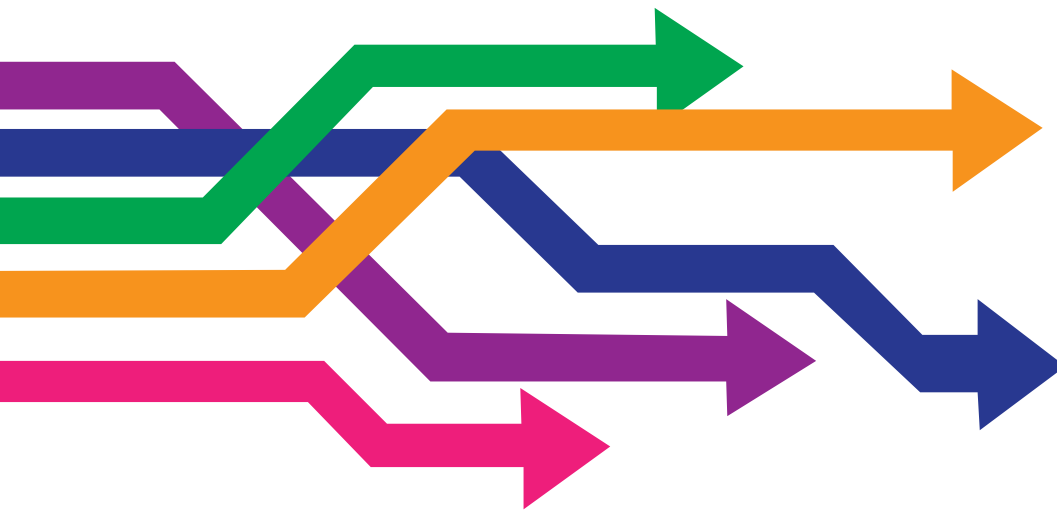
Application:

Like the 10 virgins, Christians can only be placed in two groups. Those who are wise and those who are foolish. The grouping of which Christians belong to which group, is entirely up to the Bridegroom when He comes. But that decision is based on our choices. Our part is to stay alert and be prepared. We need to trim our lamps and invite the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts so that we can remain sober and vigilant until the bridegroom arrives.

The experience of the disciples reminds us that at times we really need the power from above to sustain us. We are mere humans and cannot survive on our own. We need to depend on God to give us the strength to overcome. Jesus reminds us that we need to watch and pray. This is the best way to keep the roaring lion at bay. This is a good reminder for all of us Christians – KEEP WATCHING AND PRAYING.

Conclusion:

On our own we are powerless against the roaring lion, but with God's help, we stay ALERT, we can WATCH what is going on around us and be encouraged to continue PRAYING, for we know not the hour our Lord may come. Amen



Friday: Moving forward with Resilience!

Key Texts: Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

A great example of resilience in the Bible has to be Mr Job. What an incredible man. Full of faith and love for God. He was resilient, remaining loyal to God even after all the major problems he went through. The devil was determined to destroy Job's faith in God by making him suffer every 'nightmare' experience possible. His closest friends accused him. His wife wanted him to curse God and die. But he held on until the end. Satan lost his bet with God because Job continued to trust and love God. His resilience was remarkable.

Resilience is the 'ability to recover quickly from a difficult situation or situations' in life. It could be any life changing experience, and it can also be a process 'which empowers people to accept and adapt to difficult situations and move forward', (Neil Webb/Getty images). It is the ability to take the difficulties we face and turn them into stepping stones that help us grow stronger and become better people.

Many people are finding it harder to adapt to the many problems in our world today. The ongoing struggle with the Covid-19 pandemic, climate change crisis, economic depression, political unrest, just to mention a few. There is so much suffering and catastrophes happening around the world today that it is hard to look beyond the problems. We see many people giving up and becoming victims of their circumstances. Thus the reminder that comes to us as Christians, we need to move forward with resilience.

On 29 September, 2009, we were awoken by a strong earthquake that caused the first ever tsunami that destroyed parts of our Samoan Islands. It was one of the most devastating experiences our small island country went through. It was so sudden, most people were caught by surprise and were unprepared.

I can recall the chaos, the devastating destruction of entire villages, and the heart breaking loss of loved ones. The majority of those carried out by the waves out to the sea were never recovered. However, in the wake of the waves more than ten years later, the villages and families mostly affected have shown their resilience. They have rebuilt their lives. They have moved on with many new beautifully built houses with well-kept and nicely decorated village grounds. It was like the tsunami never happened.

Our main text is short but gives a timely reminder of how we can cope with difficulties. It directly instructs us on how to build resilience, 'I can do ALL things through Christ'. It encompasses everything that we face and experience from day to day. But as humans we tend to forget that the power available to us to overcome difficulties is far greater than any nuclear weapon man has ever created. For our power source is the Creator of the Universe. He has our backs and wants us to depend on Him in any situation. That understanding alone should give us the courage to remain resilient and keep going.

Being resilient takes time and patience. It is a process that does not happen overnight. It requires strength, courage, the ability to adapt, a positive attitude and sometimes the support and help from people we trust. Of course there would be setbacks that can make one feel overwhelmed and can

cause panic, but sometimes we need to focus on what we can learn from such experiences. God sometimes challenges us to go through trials to refine us for His purpose.

Spiritual Emphasis:

After Joseph was sold by his own brothers, was taken to Egypt and was sold as a slave. Potiphar bought him and he became a servant in his household (Genesis 37:36). But he was not just another slave, he was an extraordinary slave and even Potiphar saw that the 'Lord was with Joseph' (Gen 39:3), and he made Joseph 'overseer of his house and all that he had he put under his authority' (verse 4). Joseph did well because he did not allow his circumstances dictate his actions.

When Potiphar's wife showed a personal interest in Joseph and wanted to get intimate with him, he stood up to her and refused to give in. He said 'how can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? (Gen 39:9). Joseph knew his principles as a God-fearing young man and lived by them. In the end because of his continuous refusal, the humiliated wife wrongly accused him and Potiphar sent him to prison.

In verse 21 of Genesis 39 it says, 'but the Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison'. The prison keeper had a good impression of Joseph and knew he could be trusted. He then gave Joseph the responsibility of looking after all the inmates. This allowed Joseph the opportunity to meet the other prisoners and made friends with them, including the chief butler and the chief baker from Pharaoh's palace.

We know the story well, Joseph interpreted dreams for these two men. But he did not know that this was God's plan in providing him a ticket out of the prison. Joseph did not focus on his situation nor complained that he was accused wrongly and should not be in prison. Instead, he became a blessing to those around him and he was resilient to rise above his situation. Why? Because he continued to trust God even in this foreign land, away from his family. 'Because the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper', (Gen 39:23).

Joseph was indeed blessed and he prospered and became the second in command over all of Egypt.

Application:

The story of Joseph can teach us some good lessons about being resilient:

- i. Joseph was keen to do his best in whatever task he was given. It did not matter whether he was a slave in Potiphar's household, or a prisoner or a dream interpreter. He did not just complete the given tasks, he completed every given responsibility to the best of his ability.
- ii. Joseph knew who he was because he believed in God. He continued to trust God even in the foreign land of Egypt and the Lord blessed him.
- iii. He was a man of principles and upheld those principles. This came through very strongly when Potiphar's wife wanted to seduce him. Joseph refused to commit adultery.

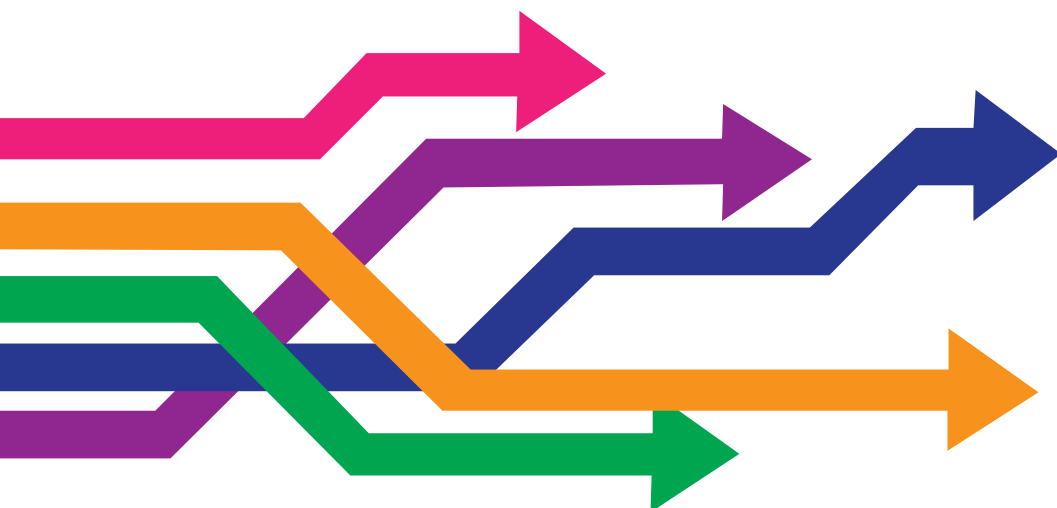
We can be encouraged to know that we can move forward in resilience when we apply ourselves to whatever task we might be given to do. Sometimes we are asked to carry out tasks that we do not want, nor like. We sometimes feel that a certain task should be somebody else's and not ours. The example Joseph set should be ours to follow.

Joseph was successful mainly because the Lord was with him. He continued to trust God and gave God His rightful place in his life. We need to do the same. We need to give God His rightful place in our lives and we need to keep on trusting him. He will bless us abundantly and give us the strength to arise about any situation we face in life.

We need to know our principles and uphold them in our everyday living. Joseph faced the temptation of sexual immorality with Potiphar's wife. We too, come face to face with problems that often test our principles and how faithful we are to God and our calling as Christians. Joseph's actions speak volumes and clearly shows that his relationship with God was his priority. We can do the same as we move forward with resilience.

Conclusion:

Moving forward with resilience is something we can do as Christians. Take note of examples from our slave turned master – Joseph. Life bombards us with problems every day but we do not need to become victims of our circumstance. We do not even need to worry about anything. All we need to know and remember, is found in Philippians 4:13, 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me'. Amen.



Sabbath: **Moving forward with Determination!**

Key Texts: James 1:12

Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord had promised to those who love Him.

2 Timothy 4:18

And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen!

Desmond Doss was an Adventist soldier who fought for the United States Army during the Second World War. He was a combat medic who refused to carry a weapon and had no part in killing. Despite this, he was awarded the Bronze Star Medal twice for his bravery during the war. He was one of the very first combat medics to be honoured with such medals.

His actions of bravery were documented in 'The Conscientious Objector Documentary' and was later turned into the movie, 'Hacksaw Ridge', released in 2016. His story as a combat medic shows a very determined young soldier who gave and did all he could to serve his country and to save his injured comrades. His determination knew no limits. He rescued and saved 75 men single-handedly in very difficult conditions while the battle raged around him.

Determination is defined as 'the firmness of purpose or the quality of being determined', (Online Dictionary), and our main texts use the word 'persevere', which is similar to the word determination. The first text talks about the blessings offered to the 'one who perseveres under trial because, having 'stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life'. This should be the ultimate goal for all Christians – the heavenly kingdom.

Spiritual Emphasis:

When Daniel and his three friends were taken captive by the Babylonians, they stood firm and were determined to remain faithful to their God. A decision that was reflected in their everyday lives. First, it was the king's food, 'and the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king's delicacies and of the wine which he drank' (Daniel 1:5). Daniel and his friends refused to partake of the king's food. 'But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank' (verse 8). Their determination to remain faithful even in the things they eat and drink, paid off.

In Daniel 1:17 & 20, it says 'as for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom...and in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm'. How amazing is that! God used these young men in a mighty way because they were determined to stand up and be witnesses for the Lord. Even King Nebuchadnezzar was truly convinced of this, after Daniel interpreted his dream for him. 'Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face, prostrate before Daniel, and commanded that they should present an offering and incense to him...truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets...' (Daniel 2:46 & 47).

When Daniel was tested for his spiritual commitment to worship the God of Israel and Him alone, even fierce lions could not deter him. He opened his window facing Jerusalem and prayed to his heavenly Father. He was thrown into the lions' den but the Lord sent an angel to shut the lions'

mouths that they could not harm the man of God. King Darius even testified that Daniel's God was the true God. After a sleep deprived night he went to check on Daniel in the lions' den. He called out, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" (Daniel 6:20).

From this experience, King Darius wrote:

To all peoples, nations and languages that dwell in all the earth:

Peace be multiplied to you.

I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel.

*For He is the living God, and steadfast forever;
And His dominion shall endure to the end.*

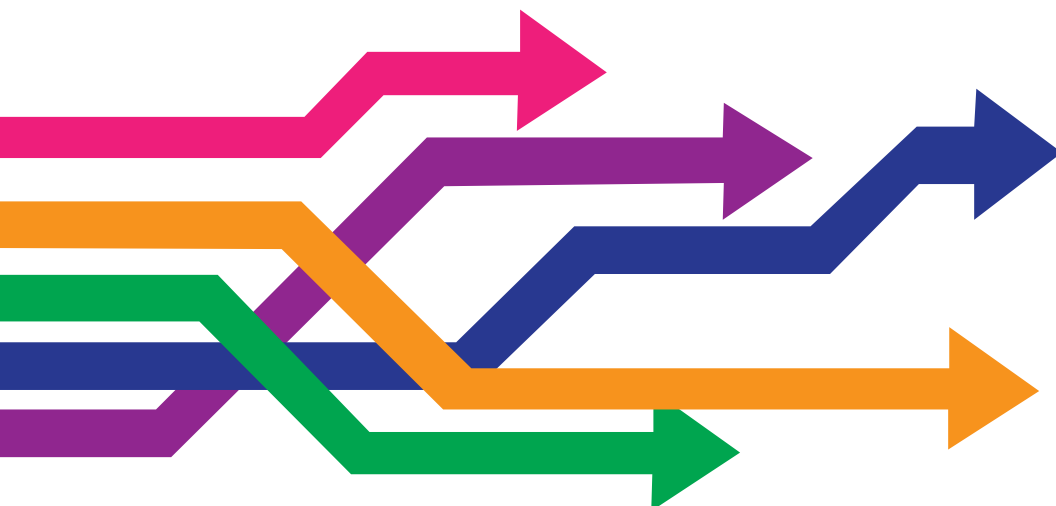
*He delivers and rescues,
And He works signs and wonders
In heaven and on earth
Who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. (Daniel 6:25-27)*

What a powerful witness. Even the King was convinced that the God of Daniel was the one true God.

Application:

The determination demonstrated by Daniel and his friends to remain faithful to their God was incredible. It impacted even kings of the kingdoms they served. They were not afraid even in the face of death, because they believe that their God will come through for them. How about us?

As Christians living in these end days, we see signs of the times everywhere. The Bible reminds us in Luke 21:28, 'now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.' Now is the time to act on our determination to remain faithful to God. Like Daniel and his friends, we should not be afraid of what man can do to us. It is time for us to stand firm and witness for the Lord in whatever we do.

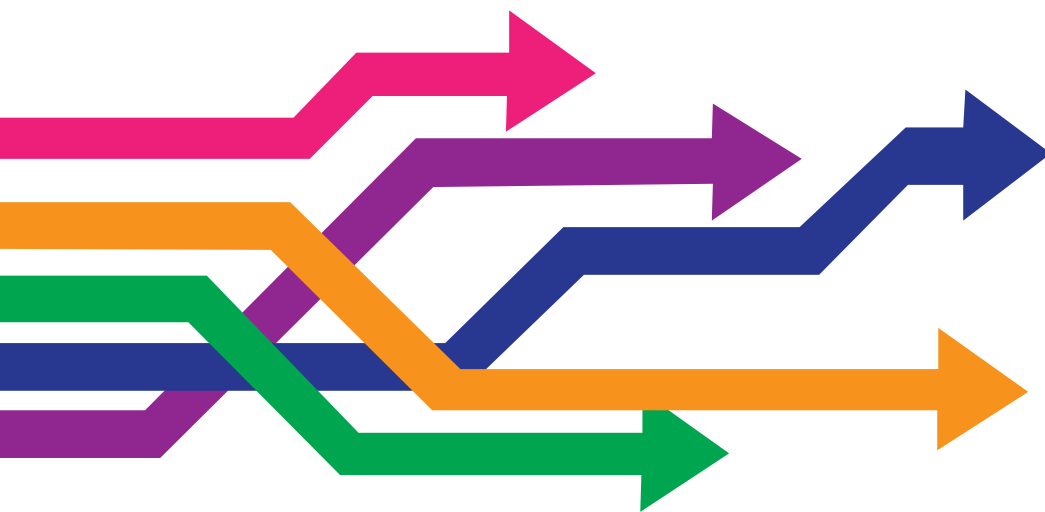


Conclusion:

As we come to the end of our Education week, let us be reminded that we can move FORWARD:

by FAITH
in OBEDIENCE
with REASSURANCE
with WISDOM
with ALACRITY
with RESILIENCE
with DETERMINATION

*"By **faith** we can trust that God is leading us through this journey
In **obedience** we submit to God's will as we sail through uncertainty
When in doubt He **reassures** us of His never ending love and care
When in trouble He grants us **wisdom** to know that He is always there
With **alacrity** we seek God's power to overcome Satan's temptations
With **resilience** we prevail and pursue God's grace to obtain salvation
And **determination** can keep us grounded as we patiently wait
For Christ's soon return on that glorious and resurrection day!"*





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Moving Forward

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