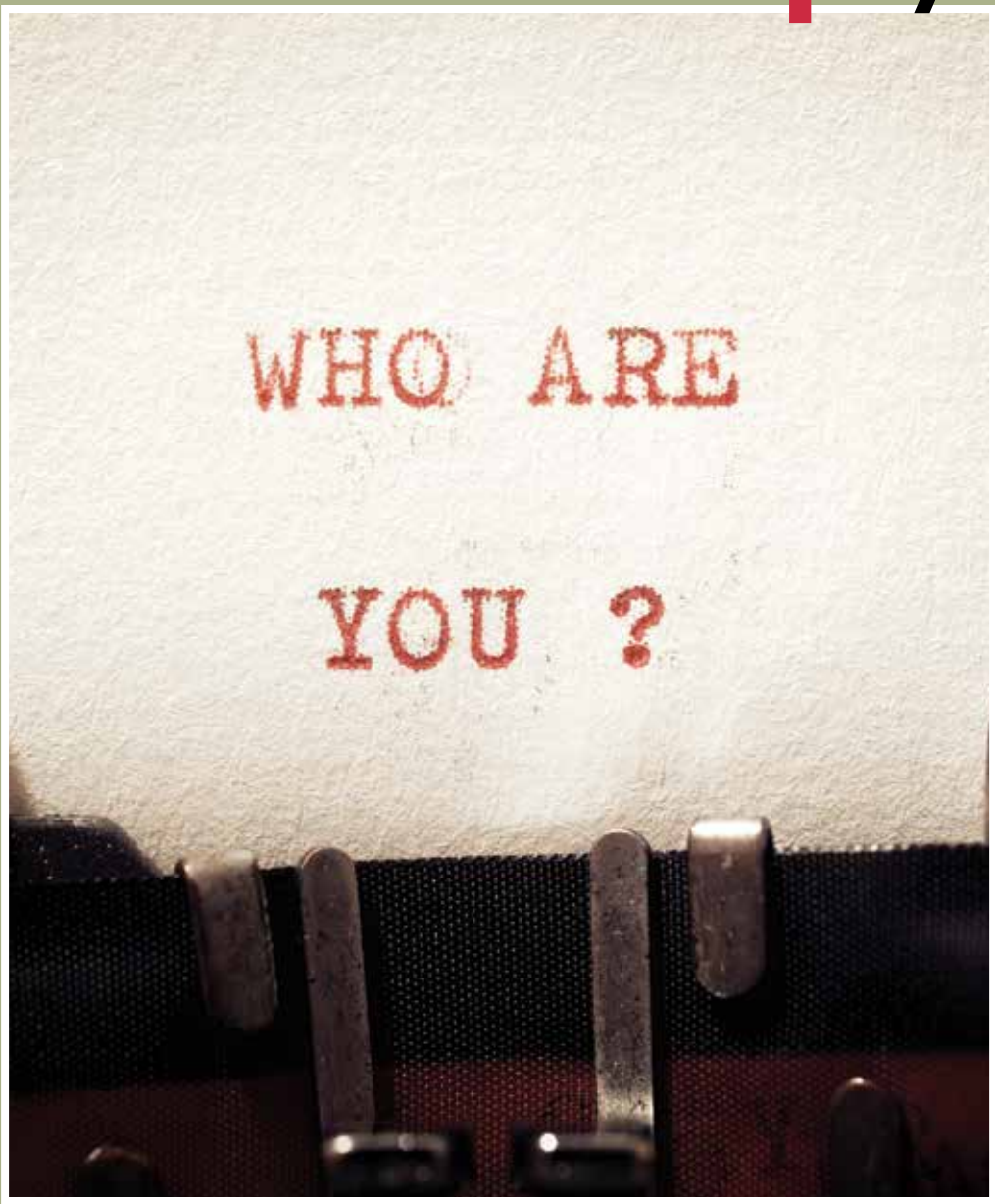


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*A Journal for Seventh-day
Adventists in Military and
Public Service*

For God & Country



WHO ARE
YOU ?



WHO AM I?

By Mario E. Ceballos, D.Min, BCC

Director/Endorser, World Service Organization—General Conference

For *God and Country* is a magazine for Seventh-day Adventists serving their governments and communities, in peace, during times of wars, and during natural disasters. Knowing who we are is vital as we serve our governments and local communities.

On the official church website under *Who are Seventh-day Adventists?* we find this definition. “Seventh-day Adventists are a global family of Christians who hold the Bible as the ultimate authority. There are, however, a few distinguishing characteristics that set them apart from many other Christian denominations.”¹

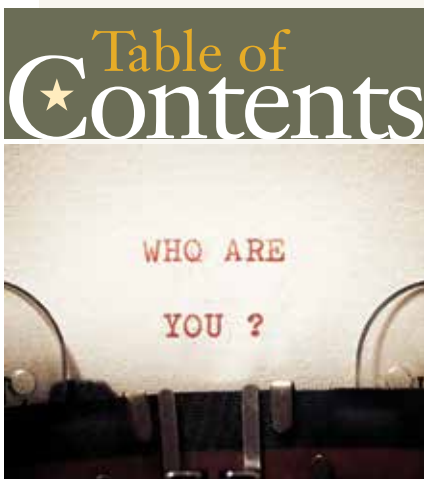
It is essential to know and understand who we are and what our identity is. Our religion is a vital part of our identity, and it informs our

beliefs, actions, words we speak, how we live our lives, etc.

Merriam-Webster defines identity as “the distinguishing character or personality of an individual: individuality. b: the relation established by psychological identification. 2: the condition of being the same with something described or asserted establish the identity of stolen goods”²

You first want to ask yourself, “What distinguishes me from others?” Next, ask others around you the question, “What do you see that distinguishes me from others?” The second question you need to ask yourself is, “What do I want others to see in me?”

Ellen G. White speaking on this topic of identity says, “We have an individuality and an identity that is



2 Perspective

4 Is Your True Identity Showing?

12 From the Counselor's Desk

14 Ivan Omaña Appointed ACM/WSO Associate Director

16 Tempering Ships Hulls and Human Hearts

20 Living Life to the Fullest

28 World Service Organization Database Launched

...the bottom line is that our beliefs drive our daily life, how we behave toward others, at work, and all aspects of our lives.

our own. No one can submerge his identity in that of any other. All must act for themselves, according to the dictates of their own conscience.”³

There is a lot in these few lines. We can’t unpack it all in this *Perspective*. The pages of this magazine will address this theme, but the bottom line is that our beliefs drive our daily life, how we behave toward others at work and in all aspects of our lives. As Seventh-day Adventist Christians, we are to reflect *our concept of God* in all we do. What people see in us as people of faith is what they believe is our image of God. “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”⁴

Our beliefs influence our behavior, which, in turn, determine our actions towards others. Religion is probably the strongest belief system that has existed for thousands of years. It creates a code of conduct, a rule book that allows believers to function in what we generally consider to be a civilized manner.

It is no surprise that our religious beliefs are crucial to our thinking patterns and play a vital role in the formation of “who we are.” They shape our attitudes and influence

cultural norms. Children are particularly receptive to religious beliefs and the concepts of God.

The other day my grandson traveled with his father to meet us for a short vacation. Running late to catch a flight, they were having trouble finding a parking place. He told me about the ordeal and said, “Grandpa, I prayed, and we found a parking place!” At only six years old his behavior and action was guided by his belief in the power of prayer

The more we study scripture, contemplate, and reflect on the life of Christ, the more our behavior at home, work, and all aspects of our life will reflect His character in us.

May all those around us see Christ in us and identify us as Christians who believe God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh day, He sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem us from sin by dying on the cross to atone for our sins, and is coming soon to take us home. That is why we call ourselves “Seventh-day Adventists.”

¹ <https://www.adventist.org/who-are-seventh-day-adventists/>

² <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/identity>

³ https://whiteestate.org/devotional/rc/05_04/

⁴ Colossians 3:17, KJV

IS YOUR **TRUE IDENTITY** SHOWING?

By The Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries staff



Identity. From birth, our identity begins to form. We are given a name which we learn to respond to as we grow. A birth certificate is issued that contains vital statistics, such as date and time of birth, length and weight, names of parents, and sometimes the name of the delivering doctor. We learn that some of our physical features or mannerisms might reflect those of a grandparent or an aunt or uncle.

Our cultural and ethnic identity may be passed down to us by our immediate and extended family. This can include the foods we eat, the music we listen to, and the languages or dialects we speak.

With the passing of years, we acquire documents and other identifiers such as a driver's license, passport, for those in the military—a military ID card, for those in law enforcement—a badge.

Our religious identity forms as we grow in spiritual truth. Religious identity often centers around a communal faith that provides rituals, beliefs, and practices. It may begin when a child associates with their parents' religion. As individuals study the Bible and grow in understanding of biblical teachings, they choose to remain within the same religious identity as their

parents, while others may choose a different religious identity.

WHAT'S ON YOUR SPIRITUAL RESUMÉ

Should your spiritual identity be obvious to the onlooker? What do you want others to see in you as a Seventh-day Adventist? Being able to verbalize our spiritual and religious identity often doesn't come as naturally as providing the statistics of our life. It's easy to write a resumé that lists our education, achievements, awards, and work history. Writing a spiritual resumé can prove to be more difficult. It should include more than our date of baptism, where our church membership is located, the tally of tithes and offerings we've given, and the list of church offices we've held. We need to identify who we are as a Christ-follower and how the people around us observe those characteristics in us.

Jesus talked about a spiritual resumé with His disciples when He asked them, "Who do people say I am?"¹ His disciples responded with the list of what other people believed. Then Jesus persisted with the question, "Who do you say I am?" Peter identified Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus already knew what others were saying,

RELIGIOUS IDENTITY
OFTEN CENTERS AROUND A
COMMUNAL FAITH THAT PROVIDES
RITUALS, BELIEFS, AND PRACTICES.

AS CHRISTIAN ADVENTISTS, WE ARE CALLED TO HAVE OUR LIVES, FAMILIES, AND POSSESSIONS SURRENDERED TO JESUS.

but He wanted His disciples to be able to verbalize the identity of who they were following. As the disciples' understanding of His teachings grew, their confidence increased in Him as they faced what lay ahead.

Our own spiritual identity needs to be first grounded in our belief that God created this world. After sin invaded creation, God's Son came as the one and only Saviour to redeem humanity. When we accept Jesus and His gift of salvation, we become His disciples. But our spiritual identity doesn't end there.

As Seventh-day Adventists, we have unique identity in our denominational name and our distinct teachings. As our denomination has grown since 1863, the identity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its members centers around the idea that we are Bible-believing Christians who accept all the teachings of scripture. This includes the Ten Commandments, the Seventh-day Sabbath in particular, and living in anticipation of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

When we embrace our identity in Jesus, we can recognize our purpose. In Matthew 28, Jesus outlined the orders for the taskforce He established. "*Go and make disciples of all*

the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."²

LOOK FOR THE DISCIPLESHIP CLUES

Jesus didn't leave us without clues on how we make disciples. In 1 John 4:8, the Apostle John wrote, "Anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love."³ Our actions demonstrate whether our identity is in God. Jesus reiterated this when He said, "Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."⁴

As Christian Adventists, we are called to have our lives, families, and possessions surrendered to Jesus. Being faithful to this calling can be recognized in public settings by the way we act and speak. Seldom has this been more crucial than it is today. In our local communities, nations, and our world, we have experienced major upheaval in the past two years. We must, however, believe that this is just the precursor



of the “beginning of sorrows.”⁵

How will our faith accomplish assurance for ourselves and for those around us if we become so engrossed in arguing about things which may in a short time seem so shallow? If we really believe in the message the church has taught since 1863 and before, are we allowing our belief to give us the inner peace that is then automatically reflected to those who see us?

What are some specifics that should build us to be pillars of faith pointing to the Source of Hope? We can find them in each of the twenty-eight beliefs. Let's focus on specifics dealing with major themes of the day.

UNCERTAINTY OF LIFE

We are truly saddened by the deaths of so many who seemed to be in good health. The pestilences that were promised to fall upon the world will continue and most assuredly increase. We also know the weakening of all life is due to sin. It is bringing us to a recognition of our need to do all we can to become and to stay healthy. We want our friends and family to live healthier and happier lives. As a part of our Adventist identity, a practical way is through sharing important lifestyle information with our co-workers.

The uncertainty of life also reminds us that Jesus is coming soon to take



us away from all the struggles of our earth. This is the only thing that can save us. Nothing else can give us assurance. Because “we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.”⁶ It won’t get better for us until Jesus takes us home, but He wants us to live a full and hope-filled life while we are here on earth.

ANXIETY

More people today are treated for psychological illnesses than ever before. So many are crippled by fears of things that are real and things that don’t exist. The fear quotient has exploded in the past two years.

Is it possible so many people fear because we have not shown them the love of God? If we are anchored in the understanding of the promises of God, we need to share it with others. “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”⁷

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.”⁸

Living a Christian love-filled life will be demonstrated in how we live in times of peacefulness as well as the actions we demonstrate in times of crisis. How do your friends, co-workers, and even your family

WHO HAS INFLICTED WHAT ON WHOM? WHERE DOES THE RESPONSIBILITY LIE? WHAT IS THE JUST SOLUTION? HOW SHOULD IT BE DEALT WITH?

perceive you in a time of crisis? There are many people who experienced troubled families and need a loving and caring environment. Do your actions and demeanor give others hope they, too, can find peace in all areas of their lives?

FACING INJUSTICE

Each of us has our personal feelings concerning the right and wrong of sub-cultures and entities within the overall population. Who has inflicted what on whom? Where does the responsibility lie? What is the just solution? How should it be dealt with?

Without a doubt, some have been hurt more than others. Is there a way for us as Christians to inflict true justice? Some have their ways, but to fulfill them, one must leave their piety in the arms of a Saul as we administer it.

Truth is, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”⁹ “Let him among us who has not sinned cast the first stone.”¹⁰ It is when we are the angriest that we need to withdraw to allow the calming grace of Christ to remind us of the witness our lives are to emanate.

An angry protest displays an unsettled spirit. We must be more concerned about discipling others

than being caught up in the world’s noise. Isaiah wrote, “The effect of righteousness will be peace; the result of righteousness, quiet trust forever.”¹¹ The righteousness described here is defined as “the state of him who is such as he ought to be.”¹² As Christians, we know that we ought to be like Jesus. When we harmonize our lives to reflect the character of Christ, we want to lead others to that same character. Taking time for spiritual reflection, setting your mind on God alone, and cutting out unnecessary distractions provide the path to find rest in God.

POLITICAL CHALLENGES

Great division exists in many nations concerning government and the “right” direction for a country to move. No matter our personal beliefs, government has a God-given role in making decisions that affect each of us. “There is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.”¹³ There are right ways and wrong ways to address these challenges.

Jesus never railed against the Romans. Quite the opposite. Even though taxes were oppressive, He instructed the disciples to “Render therefore to Caesar the things that

“WE KNOW THAT ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD TO THOSE WHO LOVE GOD, TO THOSE WHO ARE THE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE.”

are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”¹⁴

His instructions to us are to “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”¹⁵ This is a life journey. It leaves little time to become involved in the arguments of political correctness or otherwise.

We will occupy ourselves with visiting orphans and widows in their trouble and keeping ourselves unspotted from the world.¹⁶ That will keep us busy and out of trouble for a while. But trouble will certainly find us.

LIFE PURPOSE

It seems entire generations are entering the age when they should be in the workforce, but without any real direction or purpose in their lives. This isn’t new. It may just seem more obvious now because there is greater opportunity for them to afford to do so. Because now so many complete their work, in order to be able to play, the encumbrances of previous expectations are removed.

Life goals aren’t affirmed. Service to others is often ignored. Commitments are old-fashioned. But the joys of pleasing oneself are

shallow. They require more and greater excitement to fill the void. More danger, more extravagance, more narcissism. It inevitably leads to greater emptiness.

There is something far greater. “We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”¹⁷

God intended that our lives be lived for more than just to seek to fulfill ourselves. “For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.”¹⁸

SPEAK

All these struggles have given us as Adventists a remarkable opportunity to speak to many people. Some of them are long-time friends. Most are probably people we meet as we go about our errands of necessity. Inevitably someone will bring up one or more of these issues. Everyone has an opinion. So do you. And our belief tells us we are to witness to others the hope we have in the coming of Jesus.

We have all spoken to people about these issues. They affect each of us. It



also gives us the privilege to visit with others who don't have the assurance of their salvation. Many don't know Jesus. We all meet them every day. We don't have to go to jungles in the 10-40 window to tell people that Jesus loves them. When they speak in fear of what is happening, that is our invitation to introduce them to the only Solution.

For your friends filled with anxiety, do they see you as a safe person to talk to? Will they find compassion, understanding, and a listening ear? Do your friends in crisis see you as empathetic? Are you known as a good listener? Do your friends see you living a life filled with hope in something greater than this world?

Jesus is coming soon. We as Adventists should be telling people about Him. We should be turning them from the stresses of the day and toward the Way and the Truth and

the Life. Are you showing your true identity to those around you?

¹ Mark 13:8

² Matthew 28:19-20

³ 1 John 4:8

⁴ John 13:34, 35

⁵ Matthew 24:8

⁶ Romans 8:22

⁷ 2 Timothy 1:7

⁸ 1 John 4:18

⁹ Romans 3:23

¹⁰ John 8:7

¹¹ Isaiah 32:17

¹² *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament*. Tyndale, 1995.

¹³ Romans 13:1

¹⁴ Matthew 22:21

¹⁵ Matthew 6:33

¹⁶ James 1:27

¹⁷ Romans 8:28

¹⁸ Revelation 17:17\

"BIG C.... LITTLE A."

By CH (LTC) Dan Bray, U. S. Army, Retired, MS, MDiv.
Counseling Psychologist
U.S. Army, Darnall Army Medical Center, Fort Hood, Texas

"BIG C....little a." That is how one of my former military parishioners described what it is like being a Christian, Seventh-day Adventist. Usually, we put the word "Christian" at the end of the phrase. And I learned a great deal from this statement. The discovery came about not just by the words, but by the life and example of the person who vocalized it.

This happened during the mid-1990s when I served as a military chaplain in Kitzingen, Germany. We had a Seventh-day Adventist church service located on the military installation on Larson Barracks. People sometimes drove two+ hours just to attend services because it was the closest one available.

One day, we as a group got to talking about what it means to serve God. My friend made this statement that "I want to be a big C, little a." I must have demonstrated a quizzical

I am a follower of Christ first and foremost in my life. But I happen to be identified as a Seventh-day Adventist in my beliefs.

look on my face because he had to explain it to me. Finally, he stated, “You see, I would rather be known as a Christian first. Then secondly, I am an Adventist.” Hence, the title: “Christian, Seventh-day Adventist.”

Over the years, I have pondered on these words, and I have come to the conclusion that they epitomize what I should be. I am a follower of Christ first and foremost in my life. But I happen to be identified as a Seventh-day Adventist in my beliefs.

Looking at it in another way, let’s just say that I like ice cream. There are all kinds of flavors and colors of ice cream out there. But my favorite flavor is anything with chocolate in it. In my mind, this is an illustration of what it means to be an Adventist within the world of Christianity. With so many different options to choose as a Christian, I am most comfortable with being called a Christian, Seventh-day Adventist. There are plenty of other flavors of churches out there; I have been in Baptist and Methodist churches

and felt very comfortable with how they demonstrate Christianity. But I feel that living as an Adventist is the closest option to the standards and teachings of the Bible.

One of the reasons is that I like to be “right” in whatever I do or say. Personally, I believe that being an Adventist enables me to live as close to being a Christian as possible. The reality is that there are many things I do not know or that I am wrong or misguided in my beliefs. But, for now, it works for me.

Being a Christian Seventh-day Adventist does, at times, cause us to stand out from the crowd. Most notably is the day we choose to worship. For many people changing their traditional day of worship to another day is very challenging. Often, those who have been Christian Adventists for many years forget the sacrifices and lifestyle changes others make to be identified as Seventh-day Adventists. It takes courage, strength, and determination to live a consistent Christian lifestyle.

IVAN OMANA APPOINTED ACM ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Dr. Ivan Omana has been elected as the Associate Director of Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. He will assume his duties on November 1, 2021.

Omana currently serves as an Assistant Director of Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries for the North American Division. He chairs the Adventist Chaplaincy Institute Board of Certification, is endorsed as a chaplain by Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries—North American Division.

Born in Venezuela, Omana's family history is tied closely to the growth of Adventism in that country. "My great grandfather, Julio, became a Seventh-day Adventist in 1922," says Ivan. "In 1935, at the General Conference Session in San Francisco, he became the first Venezuelan Pastor to be ordained to the gospel ministry."

Other Omana family members have also served the church. "My paternal grandfather and father were ministers, one of my aunts served as undertreasurer for the Inter-American Division," says Ivan. "My mother was the Children's Ministries Director and Shepherdess coordinator for the Inter-American Division while my father served as Ministerial Secretary."

At age 18, Omana came to the United States to complete his undergraduate degree in theology at Columbia Union College (now Washington Adventist University).



Dr. Ivan Omana

Following graduation, he returned to pastor in Venezuela for the next 10 years. Two years after his return to Venezuela, Ivan met and married Anabel. "One year and one week later, we welcomed our daughter, Ivonne, to our family," says Ivan.

"My move from pastoral ministry to chaplaincy was completely directed by God," says Ivan. "I was on vacation in Florida when I met with Mario Ceballos, who was a chaplain at Florida Hospital at that time. I had always been interested in chaplaincy and wanted to learn more about this form of ministry. We discussed

chaplaincy and the requirements for health care chaplains.”

Before Ivan finished his vacation, a chaplaincy position opened, and he decided to apply. “I was hired, and my family and I returned to Venezuela to pack up our home. We announced in prayer meeting on Wednesday night that we would be holding a sale on Sunday. By the end of the week, we had sold everything, including our car.”

Ivan began his chaplaincy at the Adventist Care Centers in the Greater Orlando area. “I was the chaplain for three care facilities,” says Ivan. “During this time, I quickly discovered the value of using volunteers to supplement my ministry.”

Following the events of 9/11, the care center staff turned to Ivan for reassurance and comfort as the nation mourned the loss of life and the tragedy that had occurred.

In 2002, Ivan transitioned to Florida Hospital Kissimmee as the full-time chaplain.

His first day on the job was May 10, 2002. On May 13 there was a major training accident in Orlando which killed two firefighters. “One of those firefighters also worked as a nurse at our hospital,” says Ivan. “Our staff was devastated. To this day, I can close my eyes and smell the burned flesh and hear the commotion in the room as the team struggled to save the life of one of their own.”

Crisis was once again the catalyst for Ivan to bond with those he ministered to. The hours that he spent listening to and praying with staff built solid relationships. “During those days after the accident, I was no longer the chaplain that the administration had assigned to the hospital,” says Ivan. “The staff began to call me their chaplain. They would

I HAD ALWAYS
BEEN INTERESTED IN
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tell people that I had been through the tragedy with them. Our relationships remained strong for the next 15 years while I was there.”

Omaña holds a Master of Divinity degree from Florida Center for Theological Studies and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Denver Theological Seminary and is an ordained Seventh-day Adventist pastor. He is a Board Certified Pastoral Counselor by the American Association of Christian Counselors, a Board Certified Chaplain by the Association of Professional Chaplains, as well as the College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy and an Associate Clinical Pastoral Education Supervisor with College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy. He is also certified in Acute Stress, Grief, and Trauma Intervention by the American Association of Christian Counselors. He is a member of the Association of Professional Chaplains, the American Association of Christian Counselors, the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education, and is endorsed by Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries.

TEMPERING SHIPS' HULLS

and HUMAN HEARTS

By HT 1 Richard Lydick, E-6, United States Navy,
with Deena Bartel-Wagner, Editor, Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries

Richard Lydick had to travel to the Kingdom of Bahrain to meet Christ and accept Him as his personal Saviour. "I grew up in the backwoods of Pennsylvania. My mom and dad were very loving and caring when I was growing up," says Richard. "We sporadically attended church services, but I never felt the need to pick up and Bible or find out what God's plan was for my life."

During his teen years, the lure of smoking, drinking, and drugs drew Richard into their grasp. It seemed like the manly thing to do when his uncle exposed him to drugs, and his dad drank alcohol.

By nineteen, boredom began to set in. Richard felt he was in a dead-end job, and he yearned for something different in his life. "I had been a typical American kid and dreamed of one day serving in the military," says Richard. "One day, I'd had enough at my job and stopped by the Navy recruiter's

office. Unfortunately, the Marines and Air Force offices weren't open, and the Coast Guard wasn't hiring."

After Richard took the ASVAB and scored relatively high, the recruiter gave him a list of jobs to choose from. "Two of the job choices included Damage Controlmen (DC) or a cook," says Richard. "I didn't know anything about being a DC, and I didn't know how to cook. Then I saw welder on the list. I knew a little bit about welding because my dad was a mechanic. So that seemed like a good fit for me."

Initially, Richard thought he stay in for one enlistment and then return to civilian life and continue a welding career. "Now, here I am 15 years later, still in the Navy as an HT1," says Richard. "I know now that God called me into the military for a reason."

YOU DON'T EAT BACON?

His lifestyle in the military didn't change. If anything, Richard drank and smoked more. "I could sit down and



Left: Richard and his wife Shey with their daughter Sami.

Right: As an HT1, Richard uses his welding skills to keep ships seaworthy.

finish a bottle of Fireball whisky in one night, wake up the next morning, and I'd be okay," says Richard.

While Richard was in the Kingdom of Bahrain, he met Shey. They became friends, and Richard noticed things about Shey that made him ask questions. "I grew up eating bacon," says Richard. "I noticed that Shey didn't eat bacon or any other pork products. I was curious about this, and we began talking about God and studying the Bible together. One of the stories that stuck out to me is in Mark 5, when Jesus cast the demons out of the possessed man into the swine. So, I decided if Jesus chose the pigs to send the demons into, I wasn't going to eat pork anymore."

As their friendship grew, Richard and Shey dreaded the fact that orders would be coming through for Richard to move to another duty station. "Shey is a flight attendant, and neither of us wanted a long-distance relationship," says Richard. "When I received orders

to go to Japan, I asked her to marry me so we could go together."

As Richard continued his studies, he began to think about his smoking and drinking. He'd made dietary changes and decided he needed to make other lifestyle changes. "Giving up alcohol was the easiest," says Richard. "It was much more difficult for me to quit smoking. I'd started to smoke when I was twelve years old, and that habit had a hold on me. I tried using the patch, and it didn't do a thing for me. Then I tried the pill, which put a bad taste in my mouth. I grew to like the taste and found it was becoming addictive. So, I quit taking the pill and kept on smoking one to two packs a day."

One day during his walk to work, Richard listened to a study on the Book of Isaiah, with the ever-present cigarette balanced between his fingers. Suddenly, the thought struck him. *I say I'm a man of God. I don't drink, but here I am smoking a cigarette. What kind of an example am I?* "At that moment,



I crumpled my cigarette pack, threw it in the nearest trash can, and quit cold turkey,” says Richard.

The Bible studies continued after their marriage and move to Japan. “I decided to be baptized and began studying with the pastor at the local Adventist church,” says Richard. “I could tell how much he cared about me because of the effort he spent in preparing the lessons for me. Since he was Japanese, his first language wasn’t English, but he spent time writing things out and finding a way to present the Gospel to me. He helped me to understand the fundamental beliefs and the plan of salvation. Then, on the day of my baptism, the pastor presented his remarks in both English and Japanese. I felt the love of my Japanese church family, and I knew I’d made the right choice to follow Christ.”

Two months following his baptism, Richard became the lay leader on his ship. “I was the first Adventist lay leader and had many people asking why I had worship services on Saturday rather than Sunday,” says Richard. “This gave

me opportunities to share the Gospel with my fellow shipmates.”

A CHURCH FAMILY ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD

Richard has been impressed by the fact that he can travel anywhere in the world and find fellow Seventh-day Adventists. “Wherever I may be in the world, I get to meet amazing people just by going to the local Adventist church. I’ve visited ports in France, Portugal, Greece, and Turkey. I also spent time in Afghanistan,” says Richard. “We’d pulled into port in Townsend, Australia. I was walking down the street with my GPS looking for the Adventist church. Suddenly, the GPS said I’d missed the location. I’d walked right past the door. Our members are so welcoming everywhere I go. This has greatly impacted my shipmates, who I’ve invited to attend church with me. They are exposed to the kindness of the members and enjoy the potluck after church, which is always a favorite.”



Left: The ship's flight deck can be a busy location to work and perform various training exercises.

Center: The USS Milius (DDG-69) is one of several ships that Richard has served on.

Right: Richard and Shey Lydick

GOD OPENS THE DOORS

Over time as he's been faithful to God's leading, Richard can point out incidents and say he knows that they are doors God has opened for him. "Shortly after my baptism, I was promoted to E-6, and this came at a perfect time. It secured my staying in the Navy and I could retire when I have served twenty years," says Richard. "I believe the changes I've made in my life have made me a better Sailor in my work also. During a mission, we were on an amphibious ship. One of our ballast tanks developed a hole in it, which threatened the completion of the mission. With the DC training and welding skills I'd developed, I was able to make the necessary repair, and the mission continued." Richard was awarded the Navy Achievement Medal for his work during that mission.

In his work, Richard and his crew perform preventative maintenance on the equipment. They are required to pass inspections to ensure they are doing it correctly. "My work center of 32 Sailors didn't take any hits during

the inspection," says Richard. "The inspectors noted that they could see that I was a good teacher and a good example by the way the people under me were performing. I received a second Navy Achievement Medal following that inspection."

DOING WHAT I LOVE TO DO

Following his baptism, Richard struggled with whether he should remain in the Navy or return to civilian life. Today, Richard continues to serve as the Adventist lay leader on his ship. "I have contact with so many different people and can share God's love with them," says Richard. "Currently, we have people from the United States, Kenya, the Philippines, and other countries on our ship. It seems like every day, someone is asking me about Jesus or for Bible studies. As I thought about it, I realized that I could reach many more people where I'm at right now than if I left the Navy and went back to Pennsylvania. I'm getting to do the two jobs I love most—welding and telling others about Jesus."

In his Navy job, Richard wields a welding torch to melt and temper a ship's steel. As a disciple of Christ, he wields biblical truth to cut through the walls of resistance to soften human hearts and bring hope to his fellow Sailors.

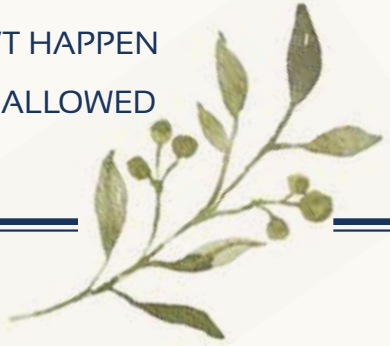


LIVING LIFE TO THE FULLEST

By Victor Maddox, Vice President,
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FINDING THAT GREATER PURPOSE DIDN'T HAPPEN
IN A DAY, BUT VICTOR'S CHOICES HAVE ALLOWED
HIM TO LIVE LIFE TO THE FULLEST.



I've always known life has a greater purpose than just eating, sleeping, and having fun," says Victor Maddox. Of course, finding that greater purpose didn't happen in a day, but Victor's choices have allowed him to live life to the fullest.

Growing up in the government projects of Atlanta, Georgia, the wisdom of his mother and

grandmother guided Victor. He was part of a voluntary desegregation program for the Atlanta school district during his middle school years. "I was bussed from what was, at that time, considered the Black side of town," says Victor. "This arrangement lasted through my high school years."

A Different Lifestyle Choice

During high school, Victor knew he wanted to go to college and believed his best opportunity to earn funds lay with serving in the United States Marine Corps. "I joined the Marines immediately after graduation. Following boot camp, I went to Twenty-nine Palms, California for a year of training," says Victor. "My military occupational specialty (MOS) was in tactical data systems and repairs. I worked on equipment equivalent to what air traffic controllers use, including radar systems, but it was mobile and could be moved to various locations."

Following his year of training, his next assignment took him to Cherry Point, North Carolina, where he served for the next three years. "We had several different missions during that time," says Victor. "I had the opportunity to serve in Germany, Norway, and Great Britain."

After enlisting in the Marines, Victor made a lifestyle decision. "I





Victor joined the Marines hoping to fund his college dreams. He served in the United States and on missions to Germany, Norway, and Great Britain.



had a very strong background in the United Methodist Church. That was the faith I was brought up in, the message I was baptized into,” says Victor. “I tried to live according to what I knew of God in the Word. But, when I went into the military, I kind of set all that aside. I got into the lifestyle of enjoying life by partying and drinking. Many of those around me deemed this to be the way to live life to its fullest. So, I did a lot of first-time things during my military years.”

The next three years found Victor wide open to nightclubbing. Then, an encounter on Easter weekend of 1982 changed his life. Saturday night was an all-nighter of partying with one of his buddies, Dale Autry. Another buddy had been unable to join them for their night out on the town. “I came back to the barracks at 7:00 a.m. Sunday and promptly fell asleep,” says Victor. “Two hours later, my buddy who’d stayed behind the night before began beating on my door and screaming to let him in.”

What If I Died?

Groggily, Victor made his way

to the door. “My buddy agitatedly told me he’d had a dream. The two of us were in some type of accident. We’d both died and ended up in hell. Although I’d only had two hours of sleep, his story got my attention, and I was wide awake,” says Victor. “I asked him what he thought we should do. He told me he was going to find a church that morning. So, I told him I thought I’d do the same.”

When the door closed behind his friend, Victor thought to himself, *“I’m not going to go to a church. I haven’t been to one in years, and I’m not going now.”* But sleep didn’t come easily because he was worried about dying and ending up in the wrong place. Finally, he decided that he’d do something to try and appease God. The Bible that lay on his nightstand to help him pass weekly inspection caught his attention.

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“I decided to read about the crucifixion, but I didn’t know where to find the story in the Bible,” says Victor. “I didn’t know how scripture was laid out, but as I fumbled through the page, I found something in the back of the book that showed me where to look for the story. Then I found a little chart that told me the abbreviations that indicated the names of Bible books.”

Finally, Victor found the story he was looking for and read it in each of the Gospels. As he read the different accounts, he noticed that each of them talked about the preparation day and the Sabbath. Then he read about the first day of the week. “As I read this, I realized this was what my mom and sister had been trying to tell me for two years. They’d been baptized into the Adventist church, and every time I’d go home on leave, they’d try to give me Bible studies,” says Victor. “But I wasn’t interested in Bible studies. I only wanted to get ready to go out on the town and party. But some of the things they’d said took hold. So, as I read that morning, I figured out that the preparation day had to be Friday, Sabbath was the seventh day, and everybody knew that Easter is on the first day of the week, which is Sunday. Putting those things together, I was instantly convicted about the Sabbath.”

That conviction didn’t sit well with Victor. Although he decided to observe Sabbath, he also vowed he’d study to prove the Sabbath is something that no longer needs to be followed. “I started studying and searching for the one text that supports the transition of Saturday to Sunday worship,” says Victor. “One day, I decided that the way to keep Sabbath was to do the things I enjoyed and avoid the things I didn’t enjoy doing. So, I’d wax my car while enjoying a cold six-pack instead of prepping my uniform and closet for inspection.”

Let Me Ask the Questions

Victor continued to party with his buddies, but he’d ask Dale about what he was learning as he continued studying. “Sometimes I was totally intoxicated, but I kept asking him questions and told him the things I learned.”

One Sabbath, after waxing his car, Victor decided to visit a friend’s home, which he frequented. No one was home at the time, but were on their way. He decided to watch television. Turning the channels and amidst the static, Victor heard the word Sabbath. Curious, he turned the dial back and found a man named Herbert W. Armstrong talking about the Sabbath. “I found myself agreeing with much of what he was saying,” says Victor.



Although Victor didn't join the Marines to find God, it was during those years of military training and discipline Victor found God and so much more.

“Then Armstrong said he knew of only three organizations that kept the biblical Sabbath correctly—the Jews, his church, and the Seventh-day Adventists.

When he finished watching the program, Victor requested Bible studies, and also began studying with other organizations. “As I read different materials, I instinctively knew that some of the things were not correct,” says Victor. “I didn’t know how I knew this, but I was convicted. So I decided that if I could find a church that taught beliefs that I considered to be basic biblical teachings, I would join it.”

Don't Convict Me, Holy Spirit!

After checking out several churches, Victor called his mother to express his disappointment. “I described my frustration, and she quietly asked if I’d checked out the local Adventist church,” says Victor. “She encouraged me to go for Sabbath School. Then if I liked it, I

could stay for the worship service.”

This seemed like a good plan, but Victor took it even further. He decided to sneak into the church right after the 11:00 a.m. service started, then he’d leave before service was over. It’s hard to be inconspicuous in a small church, and everyone noticed and greeted Victor. As Pastor Calvin Watkins preached that Sabbath morning, the convicting of the Holy Spirit tugged at Victor’s heart. “Pastor Watkins was very animated, waking across the stage and pointing his fingers at various members. But every time he pointed, he seemed to be pointing directly at me! When Pastor Watkins said the final amen, I jumped up and literally ran out of the church,” says Victor. “I’d never felt conviction like that before in my life.”

Victor didn’t expect the tenacity of one of the elders. “As I ran to my car to get away from the church, one of the elders ran to keep up with me. He hollered for me to stop so he could talk to me. I yelled back, ‘I don’t have time to talk. I’ve gotta

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go!” says Victor. “That elder held on to my car, wouldn’t let go, and kept me from driving off. He invited me to dinner, but I told him no thanks. As I drove away, I was fully convicted but too proud to accept the fact that this church taught everything I was looking for.”

The next Sabbath, Victor attended Sabbath School and then left immediately after it finished. He felt intimidated by how much everyone seemed to know about the Bible. “Every Sabbath, I kept going back, staying a little longer, and learning more,” says Victor. “This continued from April until December when I gave my heart to Christ and was baptized. I always say it took several ministries to bring me into the church—literature evangelism, television ministry, word of mouth, personal ministries, and an evangelistic series.”

Baptized, But What About Sabbath?

Once he made his baptism decision, God provided a way for Victor to observe the Sabbath weekly. “We’d been assigned to oversee operations with several other branches of armed forces at a location 60 miles from our base,” says Victor. “The Sabbath before we received these orders, my pastor announced the opening of

the University of the Saints. The coursework would include instruction in giving Bible studies and leading people to Jesus Christ. There would be a four-dollar tuition charge. I thought this would be worthwhile to attend, so I signed up.”

Back on base, Victor learned that anyone attending classes would be granted special privileges regarding their work at the remote location. “Several guys were attending classes at the local college. I told one of my officers I had just enrolled in a course at my church. I wondered if that would qualify me for the same option,” says Victor. “He said he didn’t care what I was studying. As long as I paid tuition, I qualified. The bus schedule was one trip back to the base on Friday afternoon and a return trip Monday morning to the remote location. On Friday afternoon, I returned to the base, attended the Sabbath morning worship service, and the afternoon Bible class, and had Sunday for myself. For the first six months as a baptized member, God provided a way for me to keep the Sabbath.”

Even though he wanted to continue in the Marines, Victor knew that his Sabbath-keeping commitment would become a more significant issue. So, he made the difficult decision to complete his enlistment and return to civilian life. He wanted to utilize his military training in a civilian career.



Eventually, he received an offer from Litton Industries.

Take the Job or Remain Faithful

“I flew out to California for a final interview and received the job offer,” says Victor. “In the back of my mind, a little voice asked a question, *What about the seventh-day Sabbath?* So, I immediately asked the person if it would be possible for me to have the seventh-day Sabbath, which is Saturday, off.”

The person affirmatively responded that if Victor were staying in the United States, it wouldn’t be a problem. However, he was scheduled to be sent to another country, and Saturdays were a workday there.

“I didn’t hesitate at all. I simply said I had to turn the job down,” says Victor. “He looked at me and said, ‘You’re going to turn the job down to keep a religious day?’ I thought he was going to argue with me. But, instead, he abruptly sat down in his chair and said, ‘You know what? I need to pay more attention to my own religious beliefs.’”

Victor left the office and thought about how he only had \$110 in his bank account. Then during his flight back to Atlanta, he talked with God

about his need for a job. “When I walked into the house, my mom told me I’d received a call from Xerox, and they wanted me to come for an interview on Monday,” says Victor. “I didn’t think I had a chance when I learned there were 60 other candidates. At the end of the process, they hired three candidates, and one of them was me.”

For the next three years, Victor enjoyed his job at Xerox. Then, one day as he sat in his car, he had the thought that he could be doing God’s work instead of working for a corporation. Victor mulled the idea over and that evening talked with his mother and grandmother about the idea. Both affirmed Victor when they each told him that they believed one day he would be a pastor.

The Answered Fleece

Impressed that he should attend Southern Adventist University, Victor laid out a fleece for confirmation. “I needed a job that would pay a certain amount of money, and I wanted to work in some type of electronics repair. I also needed scholarships to be able to afford the tuition,” says Victor. “One other thing that I included was that I’d earn enough to maintain my standing bills. Within five days of my visit to Southern, every one of those items was answered. I ended up being one of the highest-paid students on campus.”

Each semester seemed to pass quickly. With graduation just around the corner, Victor believed that he probably wouldn’t receive a pastoral call from the conferences that visited the campus to hire pastors. “Although I didn’t know anyone in conference

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AND USE THEM TO SERVE HIM.



administration, a friend of mine encouraged me to attend several interviews,” says Victor. “The Florida Conference hired me as the first African American pastor to work in the conference.”

Equipping Others to Share Jesus

Today, Victor serves as the Vice President of Pastoral Ministries and Evangelism in the Georgia-Cumberland Conference. He equips others to share how to live life to the fullest. His advice to anyone serving in uniform today is four-fold.

- 1 Have serious conversations with God about where He is leading your life. Take time to listen to where He is leading you.
- 2 Understand that there may be times when you deal with situations or people that are anti-God and anti-religious beliefs. This can lead you to question your faith in God. Hold on even tighter during those times.
- 3 Be faithful in your worship time with God morning, noon, and night. These serve as anchors for you.
- 4 Don't be afraid to share the good news that you know with others. Others observe your life and

how you live it. “We don’t always get it right,” says Victor, “but when we don’t, we know how to handle that, too. We go to God and ask for forgiveness. And if we’ve wronged a fellow Soldier, Sailor, or Marine, we ask them for forgiveness as well.”

Seed Planting Despite Brokenness

Victor Maddox knows what can happen when a person searches for answers and the lifelong benefits it can bring. Twenty-five years after his nights of partying with his buddy Dale, Victor listened to a voicemail message on his phone. “The caller said, ‘This is Deacon Dale Autry. If this is the phone number of Victor Maddox, please call me back,’” says Victor. “I was floored. Could this be the same Dale I used to hang out with? I called back and began to catch up with my buddy. During the conversation, I asked him which church he was serving as a deacon. I couldn’t believe it when he told me he was a Seventh-day Adventist! One or two little seeds must have been planted while I was intoxicated and talking to a fellow Soldier. God is amazing in how he can take all of our brokenness and shortcomings and use them to serve Him.”



World Service Organization **DATABASE LAUNCHED**

The World Service Organization (WSO) is part of the Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries Department. The WSO is the church entity that supports Adventists who serve their communities, militaries, and local, regional, and national governments.

In order to support you, we need to know who you are and what you do. We have created a system to collect this information and store it securely. Now, we need you to create your profile.

WHO SHOULD CREATE A PROFILE

Any Adventist who serves in:

- a national military or defence force (This includes Active Duty, Reserves, and National Guard, and State Defense Forces.)
- Law Enforcement personnel (City, County, State/Province/Federal)
- Firefighters (City, County, State/Province/Federal)
- Search and Rescue/EMTs/First Responders
- Corrections (State/Province or Federal)
- Government (City, County, State/Province, or Federal)
- Military veterans

YOU CAN CREATE YOUR PERSONAL PROFILE AT PORTAL. WORLDSERVICEORGANIZATION.ORG.

Once you log in, choose the *Adventist in Uniform/Government Registration* platform.

You'll be asked to provide your name and contact information, government service information, and church relationship.

Be sure to complete the section on subscriptions to receive your complimentary *For God and Country* magazine subscription, occasional email updates, and texts from the World Service Organization. Don't forget to click submit.

TELL US YOUR STORY

In the days before digital photos, printed snapshots of people's stories were kept in photo albums. Those photos were the visual evidence of events, emotions, convictions, and legacies.

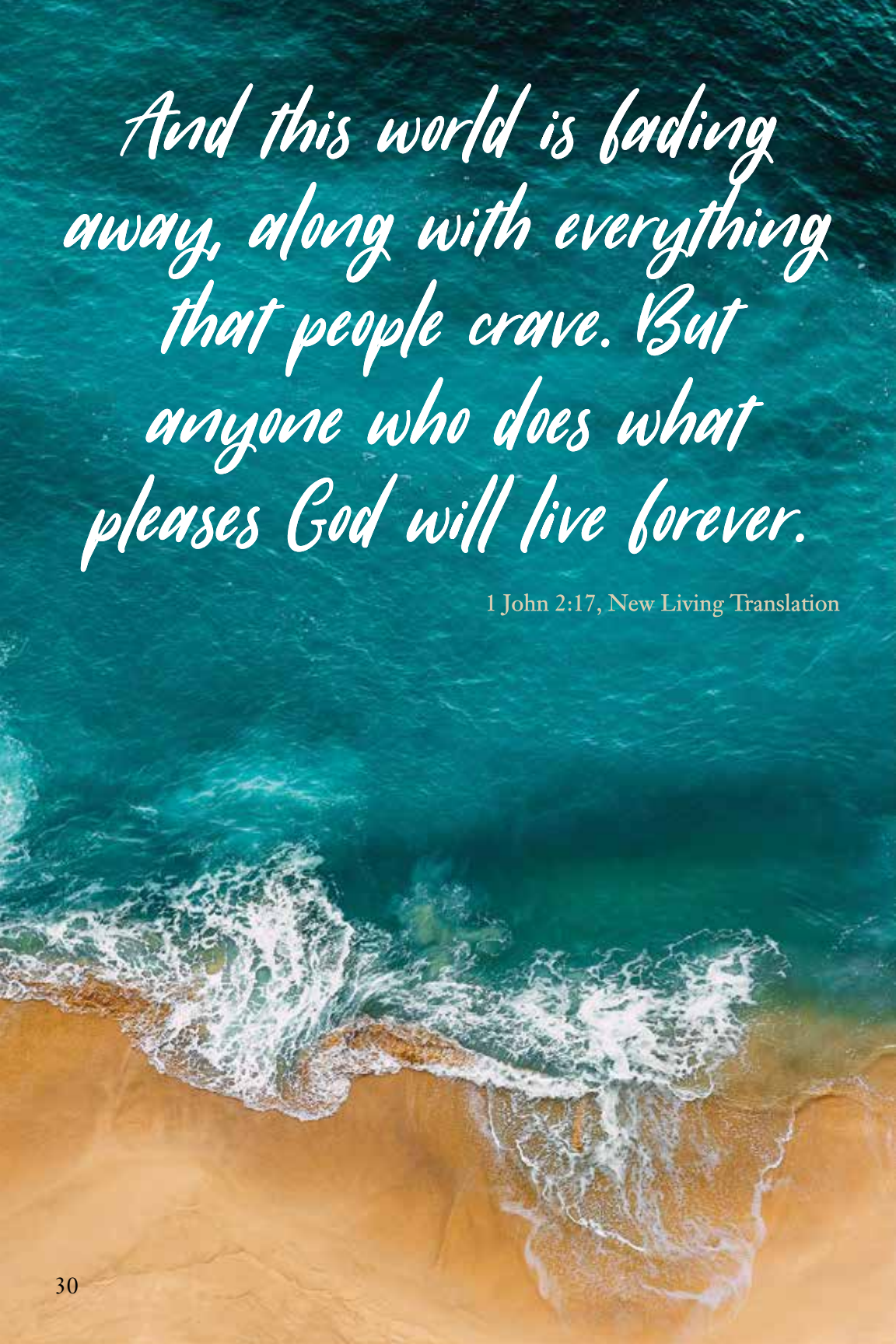
At the World Service Organization, we believe your story of service is important. We want to tell it in the pages of *For God and Country*.

We are seeking stories about Adventists serving in uniform. This includes all military—Active Duty, Guard or Reserve, and Veterans, law enforcement, firefighters, EMTs, First Responders, Search and Rescue, and others who serve their community, state, province, or nation.

To share your story, contact the *For God and Country* editor at ACMEditor@gc.adventist.org.

**YOUR LEGACY NEEDS TO BE SHARED WITH FAMILY,
FRIENDS, AND THE CHURCH-AT-LARGE.**



An aerial photograph of a beach. The top half of the image shows deep turquoise ocean water with white foam from breaking waves. The bottom half shows the golden-brown sand of the beach, with the white foam of the waves washing onto it.

*And this world is fading
away, along with everything
that people crave. But
anyone who does what
pleases God will live forever.*

1 John 2:17, New Living Translation

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The National Service Organization is the official military-relations office of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Its primary mission is to provide pastoral care and religious resources to support the spiritual well-being of Seventh-day Adventist military-related personnel.

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There is no
one who is
insignificant in the
purpose of God.

— Alistair Begg



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