



# Assimilation Manual [draft]

by  
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## WELCOME

We're glad you've chosen to learn more about Toledo First! This Assimilation Manual is the basic introduction to our church family. Some of us were raised inside the church. Others of us were not. Since we come from many different backgrounds, this manual was designed to explain where we came from, who we are, and where we believe God is leading us by His grace.

### Who are we trying to reach?

Unchurched young people and their families and friends in addition to our own young people and their families and friends needing [according to the monumental Adventist study of our own young people entitled Valuegenesis] meaningful Bible study and worship, a grace based church, and service to the community.

(Paul) *"I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. 23I do all this for the sake of the Gospel"* (1 Corinthians 9:22-23, NIV)

*"...Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some. I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings."* (1 Corinthians 9:22, NLT)

**Explorers** – unchurched and unconnected

**Beginners** – ordinary outreach participators

**Growing** – willing followers/members

**Christ centered** – sincere followers/members

### What is our objective?

Explorers   ►   Beginners   ►   Growing   ►   Christ-centered

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Toledo First's objective is to keep moving people toward Christ centeredness by encouraging personal spiritual commitments. Specifically, we call people to three basic commitments. We call them Our Three Big Things.

## **OUR THREE BIG THINGS:**

### **1. Growing from the Children's Divisions Up [Building Families]**

*"You are members of God's very own family...and you belong in God's household with every other Christian."* (Ephesians 2:19 LB)

*"From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love."* (Ephesians 4:16 NIV)

### **2. A Christ Centered Church [Providing Hope]**

*"Continue to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."* (2 Peter 3:18)

*"Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the head that is Christ."* (Ephesians 4:15)

### **3. Shouting the Gospel with Our Lives [Empowering Community]**

*32If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. 33And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. 34And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners,' expecting to be repaid in full. 35But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great."* (Luke 6:32-35 NIV)

*"If you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of my followers, you will surely be rewarded."* (Matthew 10:42 NLT)

## **THE TOLEDO FIRST STRATEGY**

*What makes our church different from others*

The Seventh-day Adventist Church began as a search for a relationship. William Miller, a Baptist farmer, and lay preacher, was convinced that Jesus was going to return to this earth in 1844. He wanted to see Jesus face to face. Soon many “Millerites” as they were called, from all existing Christian churches, were sharing his message about the soon coming of Jesus. But Jesus did not return in 1844 and the unlearning began.

Among the individuals doing so in the years to follow were James and Ellen White along with a retired sea captain, Joseph Bates. They proved instrumental in the founding and eventual organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1863. Today, sixteen million Adventists around the world continue to proclaim the surety of Christ’s return. That was especially important back then since most of the churches in the mid 1800s believed that there would be a thousand years of peace before Jesus came back; that the world was gradually getting to be a better place.

### **Sabbath**

Most people have heard of Charles Darwin’s famous book, *Origin of Species*, which he published in 1859. What is not so well known is that he sketched his first outline in 1844. About the same time God raised up a church with the Sabbath as a symbol of a six-day creation before the theory of evolution became popular. Celebrating the seventh day Sabbath honors the Lord who sanctified it for all humanity and reminds us of the finished work of our Creator [Genesis 2:1-3] and Redeemer [John 19:30].

### **Second Coming & Salvation**

Dispensationalism is the dividing of history into specific periods according to how God is said to have dealt with humanity. Its systematized teaching began with the Plymouth Brethren movement of John Nelson Darby (1800–1882) in England. When the Adventist church finally organized in 1863, dispensationalism had not yet taken over as the dominant American theological understanding of doctrine. But today as the popularity of the *Left Behind* novels and movies attest there is no doubt that dispensationalism is here to stay. Seventh-day Adventists continue to proclaim the surety of Christ’s audible, visible, once and for all 2<sup>nd</sup> coming instead of a secret rapture and that salvation is by grace alone whether one lived before or after the cross.

### **Death & Hell**

God raised up a church to teach the Hebrew holistic understanding of what happens to persons when they die. When most churches embraced the Greek dualistic thinking of bodies that at death went to either heaven or burned in hell, Adventists taught that you slept in the grave until the resurrection. This teaching was very important because it was in the middle of the 19th century that the Fox sisters would popularize spiritualism—that you could call up the dead and talk with them. This holistic understanding most clearly reveals that God really is love and does not torture people, even those who reject Him, for eternity in a place called hell.

## **Health**

God raised up a church to emphasize the true meaning of health. Most churches of the time were concerned only with the spiritual side of humans. The Adventist church taught that humans are made up of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual, and that it is important to take care of our bodies because they are the temples of the Holy Spirit. Our salvation does not depend on diet, but our health is a significant witness testifying to the vitality and abundant joy of following Jesus.

## **Sanctuary**

The Sanctuary doctrine is one of the most misunderstood doctrines in the church and has been the source of much anxiety among Adventists. But the real meaning of the Sanctuary is to prepare—not scare—people to enter into a personal relationship with Jesus making every day lived by faith in the crucified Christ a “Most Holy Place” experience.

## **Many Lessons To Learn**

Ephesians 4:21 says, “Surely you heard and were taught in him accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.” But in time, Adventists became so fervent for these neglected truths they forgot about The Truth, about keeping a relationship with Jesus. Paul was the first person to warn us about this hundreds of years earlier. In Galatians 1:6-8 he wrote, “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!”

So Ellen White, one of the founders of this church, urged the church to take up Jesus as their message. “Hanging upon the cross Christ was the gospel. Now we have a message, ‘Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.’ Will not our church members keep their eyes fixed on a crucified and risen Saviour, in whom their hopes of eternal life are centered? This is our message, our argument, our doctrine, our warning to the impenitent, our encouragement for the sorrowing, the hope for every believer” (*MS 49, 1898, 6 BC 1113*).

## **Many, Many To Unlearn**

And though the median age of an Adventist in North America is 52 in 2009 [*Source: Center for Creative Ministry, Lincoln Nebraska*], more and more churches like Toledo First are beginning to see how desperately we need to “Fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher, of our faith” [Hebrews 12:2]. More and more Adventist churches are focusing less on what separates us and more on what unites the body of Christ. More and more Adventists are showing and sharing grace in their communities. And more and more Adventists are grasping and teaching emerging generations principles of modesty and Christian witness instead of rigid policies of dress and adornment.

In short, we've been known as a church that worships on a different day and that doesn't eat certain kinds of food. But we at Toledo First are creating a new normal Adventist church—one known primarily for making the cross and Lord of the Sabbath who died on it central in our teaching and in our lives. “We have many lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn. God and heaven alone are infallible. Those who think that they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed” (*Counsels to Writers and Editors*, pp. 36-37).

### **Greatest need**

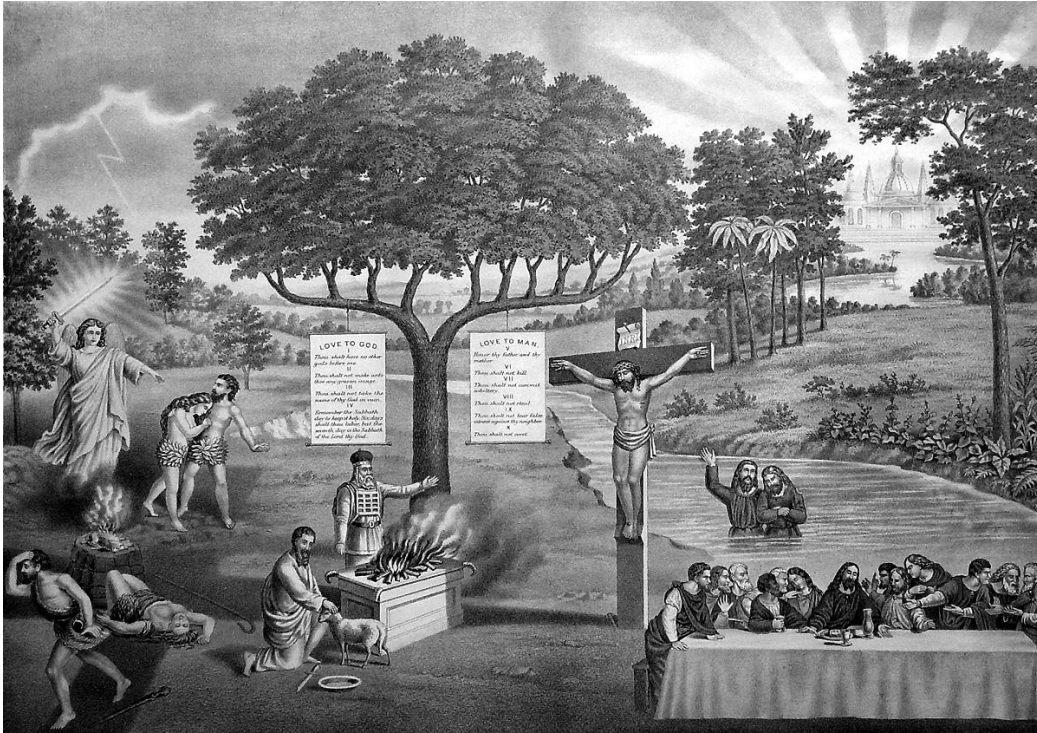
But why is the truth as it is in Jesus on the cross so important for us today? Because the cross tells us that God loves us like crazy!!! The cross tells us that God would rather die than spend eternity without you!!! The cross tells us that this life is only the beginning of an eternal relationship with God. The cross even tells us how to grow the church in the meantime. Jesus said in John 12:32, “But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” Jesus knew the cross is what would draw all men because right before He said that, a bunch of Greeks showed up to learn more about Him [cf. John 12:20-31].

Maybe that’s why Ellen White encouraged all the preachers in the Adventist church to emphasize the cross as our greatest need. “The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that stream from the cross of Calvary. I present before you the great, grand monument of mercy and regeneration, salvation and redemption—the Son of God uplifted on the cross. This is to be the foundation of every discourse given by our ministers” *Gospel Workers*, page 315).

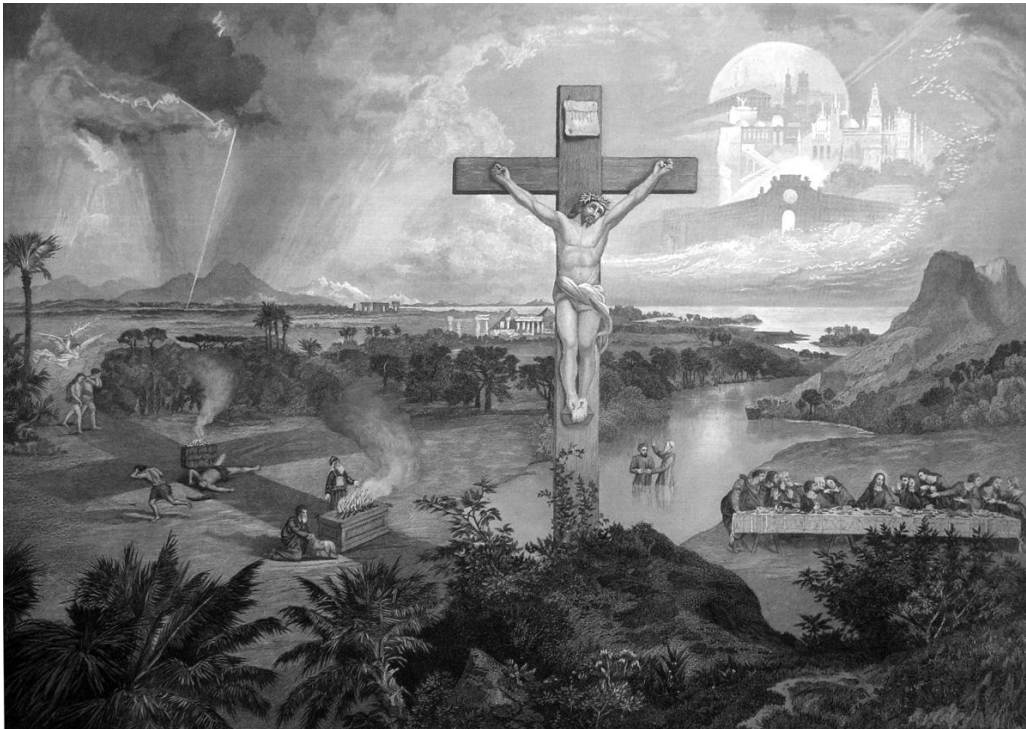
### **Which Picture Will We Take?**

On the next page, there is a picture that James White commissioned to illustrate the mission of the Adventist church. It is a picture of the plan of salvation and mission of the church from Eden to Eden. You see Adam and Eve exiting the Garden of Eden. There is Cain and Able, the sacrificial service. Over on the right of the picture is the baptism of Jesus, the Lord’s Supper, and the New Jerusalem. But in the middle is a huge tree with ten branches, one for each of the Ten Commandments. Jesus is on the cross. But it is the law that is the dominant motif in this picture.

# Which picture will we take?



**“The Way of Life” 1876**



**“Christ – The Way of Life” 1883**



## **Our Mission, Should We Choose To Accept**

The title of the picture was “The Way of Life, From Paradise Lost To Paradise Restored.” The name of Jesus never appears in the title. This picture was completed in 1876. But James White died in 1881. And after he did, his wife [and co-founder of the church] Ellen White commissioned a new picture to illustrate the plan of salvation and mission of the Adventist Church. This new picture was finished in 1883 and was entitled “Christ—The Way of Life.” The same elements are there but note the big change: The law has been moved to the foothills of Mt. Sinai behind the cross pointing people forward toward it. What were the ramifications of this proposed paradigm shift?

In 1888 the most significant General Conference on the gospel convened in Minneapolis. Two young men, Jones and Waggoner, argued for the preeminence of the gospel while Butler, the General Conference president and Uriah Smith the editor of the church paper, the *Review and Herald*, argued for the distinctives, the landmarks as they called them.

## **Attempted change of emphasis**

Ellen White tried to change the direction of the church from the first picture of her husband, to the second picture with Jesus as the center. She joined Jones and Waggoner in uplifting Jesus. “My burden during the meeting,” she wrote a few weeks later, “was to present Jesus and His love before my brethren, for I saw marked evidence that many had not the spirit of Christ.”

“We want,” she told the denomination’s leaders during the Minneapolis session, “the truth as it is in Jesus...I have seen that precious souls who would have embraced the truth [of Adventism] have been turned away from it because of the manner in which the truth has been handled, because Jesus was not in it. And this is what I have been pleading with you for all the time—we want Jesus.”

## **Central Truth**

There are hundreds of statements by Ellen White about the vital importance making Jesus Christ front and center of everything that we do. Here is a sample of two. “There is one great central truth to be kept ever before the mind in the searching of Scripture—Christ and Him crucified. Every other truth is invested with influence and power corresponding to its relation to this theme. It is only in the light of the cross that we can discern the exalted character of the law of God. The soul palsied by sin can be endowed with life only through the work wrought out upon the cross by the Author of our salvation” (*Manuscript 31, 1890*).

“Of all professing Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world. The proclamation of the third angel’s message calls for the presentation of the Sabbath truth. This truth, with others included in the message, is to be proclaimed; but the great center of attraction, Christ Jesus must not be left out” (*Gospel Workers*, page 156).

## **Where Is The Love?**

Adventists have traditionally made the Sabbath the key distinguishing mark of the true church. But it is not doctrine that determines who will be saved and how those who are should be recognized. We are always saved, as the Protestant Reformers taught, by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

Jesus said nobody was perfectly obeying the law when He walked this earth [John 7:19] and according to Paul nobody will in the future either [cf. Romans 3:23 in Present Continuous Greek]. That's why Romans 5:18-19 says, "Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous."

Obedience is important to Jesus [John 14:15], but it is not what saves us now or in the end of time. Salvation has always [Hebrews 11] and will always be about Who you know [John 17:3]. And because Jesus lived a perfect, obedient life, He has the right to give it to us as a gift of His grace to all who believe [John 1:12]. For an accurate history and balanced explanation of our understanding as a church of salvation, please read Stuart Tyner's book published by Pacific Press entitled *Searching for the God of Grace*.

### **What's Love Got To Do With It?**

So if we aren't supposed to be recognized by our right doctrine or obedience, how are we to be recognized? The Bible says we are supposed to be recognized not by the day we keep but the love we show. "By this will everyone know that you are my disciples by how you love one another" (John 13:35).

In his epistle, the apostle John adds these words: "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us" (1 John 4:7-12).

As she grew in her understanding of truth, Ellen White encouraged us to grow in ours [see Appendix 1 entitled "The Continuing Quest for Truth" or read Graeme Bradford's brutally honest but Biblically accurate book about prophets and the gift of prophecy entitled *More Than A Prophet*]. "Those who wait for the Bridegroom's coming are to say to the people, 'Behold your God.' The last rays of merciful light, the ***last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love*** (emphasis supplied). The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them" (*Ministry of Healing*, pp. 415, 416)

"After His resurrection, Christ ascended to heaven, and He is today presenting our needs to the Father. 'I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands,' He says: Isaiah 49:16. It cost something to engrave them there. It cost untold agony. ***If we would humble ourselves before God, and be kind and courteous and tenderhearted and pitiful [compassionate], there would be one hundred conversions to the truth where now there is only one*** (emphasis supplied). But, though professing to be converted, we carry around with us a bundle of self that we regard as altogether too precious to be given up. It is our privilege to lay this burden at the feet of Christ and in its place take the character and similitude of Christ. The Saviour is waiting for us to do this" (*Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 9, p. 189).

## IMPLICATIONS FOR TOLEDO FIRST

Our church started in Toledo in 1888 committed to lifting up Christ on the cross and serving the community [for more read *The Story of Toledo First Church* page 24]. We were the first Adventists to do so in this area and that's why we call ourselves the Toledo First Seventh-day Adventist Church. While we have changed locations a few times and have struggled like every other church trying to understand and implement methods for reaching the rapidly changing world Christ calls us to serve, we have not changed our mission or purpose for existence. As such, we make no apologies for continuing to be Christian first and Adventist second in our philosophy.

It is Christ who saves us, not being Adventist. This does not mean that we ignore the Sabbath, Death and Hell, and other doctrines. But we make sure we teach them in such a Biblical, expository, Christ-centered way that no one will be in any doubt that we believe in Jesus.

You will find at the end of this manual in Appendix 2 our *Essential Beliefs and Approved Baptismal Vows* that have been rewritten to include the gospel in every statement. Representatives from the General Conference and Andrews University Theological Seminary have approved these summary statements and the Review and Herald Publishing Association has published similar ones for church use such as Pastor Steve Case's preparation for baptism manual entitled "It's My Choice." Both of these summaries are used to help baptismal candidates and individuals wishing to transfer their memberships to Toledo First understand the commitment they are making to Christ and the church.

### Here are more implications for this emphasis at Toledo First:

**Adornment**—How people dress is not an issue at Toledo First. Instead, every baptismal candidate and new member is taught the principles of Christian witness and modesty leaving individuals to decide how they wish to represent Jesus. For a more detailed look at this subject see Appendix 3 at the back of this manual.

**Sabbath Keeping**—The Bible does not give detailed instruction on how to keep the Sabbath. It gives only a very few examples of Sabbath keeping. Instead, it lays down the principle that the Sabbath kept right is a delight and a holy day but it leaves it up to each family to decide what that means for their family. So do we.

**Diet**—We teach people the principles of a good diet and the advantages of a vegetarian life-style but we do not mandate it. This has always been true for the Adventist church. In appropriate venues, we also teach the health risks of caffeine but do not mandate that people cannot drink it or that it cannot be served to others at church. We leave ashtrays outside in the courtyard of the church for smokers even though we teach people the risks of smoking and we ask people to commit to stop smoking when becoming a member.

**Worship**—We believe sincere and authentic worship leaders using their unique spiritual gifts should lead a unified congregation of engaged worshippers into actively learning about, focusing on, and lifting up Christ. Doing that often looks different depending on the congregation and target audience because unity is not uniformity. Dr. Ed Christian, former editor of the *Adventist Theological Society* and ordained elder and member of the Blue Mountain Academy Adventist Church in Pennsylvania, best explains the Biblical principles we've adopted for congregational worship in his book *Joyful Noise*. One of those principles is that, based on the sheer variety of musical instruments utilized for worship in the Bible, we at Toledo First do not believe there is only one way to worship. Which is one reason our 2<sup>nd</sup> worship service called *Connections* was birthed in 2002. Our understanding is reinforced when studying the history of congregational worship in the church.

For example few people realize that the introduction of hymns into the worship service once aroused as much controversy as the introduction of contemporary music and drums into the present worship scene. Steve Miller in *The Contemporary Christian Music Debate* page 120 says, "John Bunyan's attempt to introduce hymns resulted in the split of his own church. In 1691, after his death, the church finally reached a compromise. Those consciously opposed to the hymn could either sit through the hymn singing in silence or remain in the vestibule until that portion of the service was over."

Isaac Watts was the great innovator who first made hymn singing acceptable. But even he was accused of using a worldly art—poetry—in the service of the church. "You must keep the church separate from the world" he was told. To which Watts replied "They will venture to sing a dull hymn or two at church, in tunes of equal dullness; but they still persuade themselves... that the beauties of poetry are vain and dangerous."

Why did our ancestors feel that hymns were so wrong? Until the 17th century people had sung only the psalms and paraphrases of Scripture. Hymns introduced secular poetry into the church. There must be no mingling of the secular with the sacred. Therefore since poetry came from the world it could not be used in the church. We may smile about that today. I know of no Christian who feels that hymns are a threat to his or her spirituality yet three hundred years ago well meaning Christians split churches in two over the use of hymns. They fought over hymns the way some of us fight over drums.

We must be very careful what we make an issue of. Yes, the devil is going to try and lead us astray. Yes, the devil is cunning and devious. Yes, Christians must be careful. But let us be careful that we do not relegate to second class status other brothers and sisters who have different views on this subject when there is no clear "thus saith the Lord" in this area.

Music has always been controversial in the church. What we accept today our ancestors fought over in the past. We need to be careful that we do not fall into the same trap that they did.

Steve Miller tells us of other issues in Christian churches, "At one point in church history, certain musical intervals were thought to be sensual. The Babylonian Talmud refers to a woman's voice as 'a sexual incitement.' The early church forbade the men and women to sing together, because it was seen as a symbol of sexual union. Carlstadt stated, 'Relegate organs, trumpets, and flutes to the theater. Better one heartfelt prayer than a thousand cantatas of the Psalms. The lascivious notes of the organ awaken thoughts of the world.'" [*Ibid.*, p. 28]

Those who oppose drums in worship little realize that the organ, which they revere, occasioned the same controversy in past ages that drums cause today. Cotton Mather (1663-1728) pastor of Boston's North Church argued that if organs were permitted, other instruments would later be acceptable, and then dancing would follow. [*Ibid.*, p. 140]

But we are called to praise God with everything we have and with all the skills that we have. "Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens. Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness. Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD" (Psalm 150:6, NIV).

Notice all the different instruments with which we are commanded to praise God and notice in particular the stress given to the percussion instruments. The passage on worship also talks about worshiping God in dancing. That is another controversial area that demands greater theological honesty and depth. We forget that culture, tradition, past practice, our preferences, our comfort levels, often dictate what we believe is right and wrong when the issue under discussion has nothing to do with morality and everything to do with our preference.

**Prophecy**—We believe in prophecy. And will continue to teach it primarily in Assimilation Class and Circle groups in good standing. But it will not be the all-consuming passion that it is in many Adventist churches. Why?

Because the Bible says love is more important than prophecy. 1 Corinthians 13:1-7 says, "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres" (1 Corinthians 13:1-7).

The world is also not the same as it was in 1863. Or 1950. Technological developments like the Internet have allowed unfettered access to vast amounts of information. Much of which concerning prophecy and the Adventist church is simply inaccurate at best or blatantly harmful at worst. Results from its continued use prove that prophecy remains a useful tool to win the Gospel the right to be heard by first generation immigrants, people in developing countries primarily south of the equator, and the 3% of Americans interested in it [see research from Monte Sahlin, Jon Paulien, or Russell Burrell with the North American Division of Evangelism Institute (NADEI) for details]. But the vast majority of ordinary Americans simply do not respond to mass mailed brochures about it.

This could be because, according to the most reliable research from *The Barna Group*, research shows only one third of Americans today have even the most rudimentary understanding of the Bible. One third of Americans know Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount. Fewer than half of can name the first book of the Bible. And it doesn't get much better among professed Christians either. Eighty percent of surveyed Christians believe the phrase "God helps those who help themselves" is in the Bible [which it's not. That bad theology came from Ben Franklin].

Additionally, throughout the history of our own church there has been so much abuse of prophecy and so many false alarms stemming from it that we do not want to be part of scaring people into heaven as prophecy has been used. So for Biblical balance, changes in world conditions, and to prevent further misuse and/or abuse of prophecy, we choose to be more careful and intentional about how, when, and who uses it.

Primarily instead, we at Toledo First choose to focus on shouting the Gospel with our lives inviting others to “come and see” the difference Jesus makes in them. We will continue to emphasize “Ordinary Outreach” as the year round evangelistic emphasis we employ and invest in financially. Traditional Adventist church sponsored prophecy seminars and evangelistic methods with accompanying literature may be made available upon request but will not be prominently displayed throughout the church.

### **Tithe and Offerings**

How we look at tithe and offerings is different from the traditional view. It is such an important topic that we address it in some depth later in this Toledo First Assimilation Manual.

## **TOLEDO FIRST CHURCH STRUCTURE**

The Leadership Team derived primarily from individuals the church in business session appointed to comprise the search committee that recommended hiring Pastor Mike. It meets every Tuesday morning @ 10am. It is made up of pastors, salaried staff, lay pastors, and heads of church ministries. It makes recommendations on major decisions to the church such as hiring of new staff, making key policies, but its main role is to oversee Ordinary Outreach and church growth.

### **The Toledo First Leadership Team is made up of:**

Mindy Flack, Visitation Team  
Shawn Flack, Media Team  
Steve Bills, Worship Team  
Marilynn Marsh, Treasurer  
Carla Szczechowski, Discipleship / Circles Elder  
DeLaura Caulder, Administrative Assistant  
Kendra Bills, Women's Ministry  
Linda Bilby, Children's Ministry  
David Case, Nurture Elder  
Allan Wolfson, Head Elder / Sabbath School Coordinator  
Mike Fortune, Senior Pastor

### **The Toledo First Finance Committee is made up of:**

Marilynn Marsh  
Jerry Marsa  
Ron Szczechowski  
Mike Fortune  
Allan Wolfson

## HOW TO BECOME A MEMBER

1. If you are already a Christian with membership in another church you take the Toledo First Assimilation Class based on the *Toledo First Assimilation Manual*. If you are in agreement with *Our Three Big Things, Strategy, Implications, Structure, and Essential Beliefs and Approved Baptismal Vows* as learned in the Assimilation Class you fill out the membership transfer portion of the Information Sheet given to you. We will send for the transfer and have you voted in as a member. You will receive a *Certificate of Church Membership* that includes our *Essential Beliefs and Approved Baptismal Vows*.
2. If you have never been a Christian, you study the meaning of our *Essential Beliefs and Approved Baptismal Vows*. After professing your trust in Jesus, you are baptized by immersion into the body of Christ (unless you have been baptized before, then baptism is optional) after which you receive a *Certificate of Baptism*. If upon completion of the Assimilation Class you also wish to become a member of the Toledo First congregation, you will be welcomed as an official member of the local church and receive a *Certificate of Church Membership* that includes our *Essential Beliefs and Approved Baptismal Vows*. We encourage you to invite all your relatives and friends to both of these ceremonies celebrating your commitments to Christ and the church.
3. What should I wear when I am baptized? Women should wear a modest swimsuit under their provided baptismal robe [shorts and shirt could be substituted]. Men may wear a swimsuit under their provided baptismal robe [shorts and shirt could be substituted]. Bring a change of clothes, a towel, and a plastic bag for your wet clothes. We provide changing rooms.
4. Will I have to say anything? No. Not unless you want to. Some like to write out a statement of how they came to Jesus. Others will give their story via video-tape. You will wait at the edge of the pool for your turn to be baptized. Pastor Mike Fortune or another elder will introduce you, briefly lower you just under the water, and then you can leave the pool, dry off, and watch the others. You've just made one of the most important decisions in life. Way to go!!! We're here to cheer you on!!!

## HOW THE CHURCH IS FINANCED

**Tithe** – 10% of your income is God's. Because of your covenant relationship with God, He appeals to you to put Him first in your life (Matt. 6:33). As evidence of your relationship with Him, God invites you to return His *tithe* (Malachi 3:10). Just as the Sabbath is holy, so is God's *tithe* (Leviticus 27:30).

Tithe pays for the pastors' salaries. It also pays for the running of the conference, union, division, and General Conference offices, which includes the salaries of all the ministers, secretaries, and other support staff, the maintenance of the buildings and all other expenses required to run such offices. In addition some of the tithe subsidizes the salaries of pastors of smaller churches.

Tithe also pays part of the salary of elementary teachers, religion teachers in academy and college and other education expenses (about 15 cents of each dollar). It pays for camp meeting ¼ cent on the dollar, subsidies to small conferences 0.8 cents on the dollar, and so on. Only about eight cents on the dollar goes overseas. Ninety-two cents remains in North America.



One hundred percent of any money marked *tithe* is sent to the Ohio Conference. Toledo First does NOT keep any money marked tithe. The Biblical purpose of tithe is to pay those who minister for God. It is church policy to pay all tithe to the local conference since the pastors are paid from tithe and obviously the conference needs money to pay their salaries.

It is not unbiblical to use the tithe to pay people working in the local church. It just cannot be marked tithe since all tithe by policy is sent to the conference. Some people split a portion of their tithe between the conference and the local church and place the local church portion in the local staff salary fund. This is an individual decision and is not the policy of the Toledo First Church.

**Offerings** – are freewill gifts to God. After your tithe is set aside God asks you to consider His many blessings to you. In response to your love and gratitude for His gifts (Psalm 116:12-14, 1 Corinthians 16:2), as you are able He appeals for *freewill* offerings to support the work of His Church in your community.

On your offering envelope (in your folder) you will see **Local Church Budget**. The money given here pays for the cost of running Toledo First such as utilities, insurance, repairs, office supplies, paper, materials for church programs, evangelism, advertising, etc.

**Building Fund** – consists of funds given for our future growth and expansion of our school, Toledo Junior Academy.

**Staff Salaries** – This pays for the salaries of our Youth Minister and Administrative Assistant. None of your tithe money pays for these salaries.

**Special Needs** – Often there are special needs such as putting on a new roof, or replacing parking lot light poles. These are all paid for from offerings that people give. Each new year Toledo First votes a local church budget for the next year and this will give you an idea of local needs and how much you need to contribute.

**Ohio Advance** – This offering on your envelope is sent to the conference and pays for public evangelism, building projects, Mount Vernon Academy, Camp Mohaven and Retreat Center.

**MVA Development** – This pays for capital improvements at the only conference boarding academy.

**World Budget** – Gifts to this fund help take the gospel to more than 200 countries around the world. It also supports multi-media outreach such as *It Is Written*, *Voice of Prophecy*, *Breath of Life*, disaster and famine relief, Andrews University, Loma Linda University, and Oakwood College.

You can see that there are a lot of needs not counting all the other charities that come knocking on your door all the way from *The United Fund*, to *March of Dimes*, *American Lung Association* and so on. You need to prayerfully consider where God is leading you to place your funds remembering that you can never out give God.

## HOW THE ADVENTIST DENOMINATION IS STRUCTURED

Toledo First is part of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is organized with a representative form of church government. This means authority in the Church comes from the membership of local churches. Executive responsibility is given to representative bodies and officers to govern the Church. Four levels of Church structure lead from the individual believer to the worldwide Church organization:

1. The local church made up of individual believers
2. The local conference, or local field/mission, made up of a number of local churches in a state, province, or territory
3. The union conference, or union field/mission, made up of conferences or fields within a larger territory (often a grouping of states or a whole country)
4. The General Conference, the most extensive unit of organization, made up of all unions/entities in all parts of the world. Divisions are sections of the General Conference, with administrative responsibility for particular geographical areas.

Each level is “representative,” that is it reflects a democratic process of formation and election. Churches elect delegates to the conferences, which meet “in session” every five years. Executive authority between sessions is exercised by the Conference Executive Committee and the executive officers (normally President, Secretary and Treasurer), all of whom are elected by the session.

A similar process operates for Union sessions usually 5 years and General Conference sessions, at which times officers and committees are elected, reports given and policies decided.

Within these four levels the Church operates various institutions. In their world outreach, Adventists serve the whole person and have developed educational, health-care, publishing, media (radio, print, television, web, satellite), and other institutions. The multiple units of the world Church, whether congregations, conferences, health-care institutions, publishing houses, schools, or other organizations, all find their organizational unity in the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists in which they have representation.

The General Conference is the highest earthly authority for the Church. The General Conference in session, and the Executive Committee between sessions, is the highest organization in the administration of the Church's worldwide work, and is authorized by its constitution to create subordinate organizations to promote specific interests in various sections of the world. When differences arise in or between organizations and institutions, appeal to the next higher organization is proper until it reaches the General Conference in session, or the Executive Committee at the Annual Council. During the interim between these sessions, the Executive Committee shall constitute the body of final authority on all questions where a difference of viewpoint may develop.

Administratively, the world-wide Church has 13 Divisions, which are composed of churches grouped by a collection of missions, fields, or states into unions of churches. The Divisions, and headquarters:

- [East-Central Africa](#) (ECD) Nairobi, Kenya
- [Euro-Africa](#) (EUD) Berne, Switzerland
- [Euro-Asia](#) (ESD) Moscow, Russia
- [Inter-American](#) (IAD) Miami, United States of America
- [North American](#) (NAD) Silver Spring, United States of America
- [Northern Asia-Pacific](#) (NSD) Koyang City, Korea.
- [Southern Africa-Indian Ocean](#) (SID) Harare Zimbabwe
- [South American](#) (SAD) Brasilia, Brazil.
- [South Pacific](#) (SPD) Wahrenonga, Australia.
- [Southern Asia](#) (SUD) Tamil Nadu, India.
- [Southern Asia-Pacific](#) (SSD) Cavite, Philippines.
- [Trans-European](#) (TED) St. Albans, England.
- [West-Central Africa](#) (WAD) Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire.

Toledo First is part of the Ohio Conference, which is part of the Columbia Union, which is part of the North American Division, which is part of the General Conference.

## WHY BELONG TO A CHURCH?

**At Toledo First we recognize the need for formal membership. We ask you to commit to membership for four reasons:**

### **1. A Biblical Reason—Christ is committed to the church**

“...Christ loved the church, and he gave his life for it” Ephesians 5:25

“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Now the body is not made up of one part but of many...If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it” (1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 26-27).

### **2. A Cultural Reason—It is an antidote to society**

We live in an age where very few want to be committed to anything...a job...a marriage...our country. This attitude has even produced a generation of “church shoppers and hoppers.” Membership swims against the current of America’s “consumer religion.” It is an unselfish decision. Commitment always builds character.

### **3. A Practical Reason—It defines who can be counted on**

Every team must have a roster. Every school must have an enrollment. Every business has a payroll. Every army has an enlistment. Even our country takes a census and requires voter registration. Membership identifies our family.

### **4. A Personal Reason—It produces spiritual growth**

The New Testament places a major emphasis on the need for Christians to be accountable to each other for spiritual growth. You cannot be accountable when you’re not committed to any specific church family.

## EXPECTATIONS OF ME AS A MEMBER

At Toledo First we never ask our members to do more than the Bible clearly teaches. These responsibilities are spelled out below.

### 1. I will protect the unity of my Church

**...By acting in love toward other members**

**...By refusing to gossip**

**...By following the leaders**

*“So let us concentrate on the things which make for harmony and on the growth of our fellowship together.”* Romans 15:19 (Ph)

*“Live in complete harmony with each other — each with the attitude of Christ toward each other.”*  
Romans 15:5 (LB)

*“Have a sincere love for your fellow believers; love one another earnestly with all your hearts.”*  
1 Peter 1:22 (GN)

*“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of our mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs...”* Ephesians 4:29

*“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be no advantage to you.”* Hebrews 13:17

### 2. I will share the responsibility of my Church

**...By praying for its growth**

**...By inviting the unchurched to attend**

**...By warmly welcoming guests who visit**

*“To the church...we always thank God for you and pray for you constantly.”*  
1 Thessalonians 1:2

*“Go out into the country...and urge anyone you find to come in, so that My House will be full.”*  
Luke 14:23 (LB)

*“So, warmly welcome each other into the church, just as Christ has warmly welcomed you; then God will be glorified.”* Romans 15:7 (LB)

### **3. I will serve the ministry of my Church**

**...By discovering my gifts and talents**

**...By being equipped to serve by my pastors and other staff**

**...By developing a servant's heart**

*"Serve one another with the particular gifts God has given each of you..." 1 Peter 4:10 (Ph)*

*"God gave...some to be pastors and teachers to prepare God's people for works of ministry, so that the body of Christ may be built up..." Ephesians 4:11-12*

*"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ...who took on the very nature of a servant..." Philippians 2:3-4, 7*

### **4. I will support the witness of my Church**

**...By attending faithfully**

**...By sincerely living a godly life**

**...By giving regularly**

*"Let us not give up the habit of meeting together...but let us encourage one another." Hebrews 10:25*

*"But whatever happens, make sure that your everyday life is worthy of the gospel of Christ." Philippians 1:27 (Phillips)*

*"Each one of you, on the first day of each week, should set aside a specific sum of money in proportion to what you have earned and use it for the offering." 1 Corinthians 16:2*

*"A tenth of all you produce is the Lord's, and it is holy." Leviticus 27:30*

*"Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ." Colossians 3:24 (NLT)*

**You will find in your packet an information sheet. Please fill it out and hand it in to your instructor so we know a little about you. We will also take your picture for our pictorial directory.**

## CONTACT INFORMATION

<b>Website</b>	toledofirstadventist.org
<b>Church Phone</b>	419.882.6200
<b>Church Address</b>	4909 West Sylvania Avenue, Toledo, OH 43623
<b>E-mail</b>	<a href="mailto:dee@toledofirstadventist.org">dee@toledofirstadventist.org</a>
<b>Office Hours</b>	Tuesday & Thursday 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
<b>Worship/Sermons</b>	Complete sermons are available on the website
<b>Mike Fortune</b>	Cell Phone: 419.386.8918; email: <a href="mailto:mike4tune@gmail.com">mike4tune@gmail.com</a>
<b>DeLaura Caulder</b>	Home Phone: 419.485.0333, email: <a href="mailto:DELAURA6150@aol.com">DELAURA6150@aol.com</a>
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<b>Church Treasurer</b>	Marilynn Marsh: Home Phone: 419.885.5958, email: <a href="mailto:mlmarsh@buckeye-express.com">mlmarsh@buckeye-express.com</a>
<b>World Church</b>	<a href="http://www.adventist.org">www.adventist.org</a>

## THE STORY OF TOLEDO FIRST CHURCH

On January 29, 1888, our church was formed with five members who had been working in Toledo giving Bible studies and distributing literature. By 1894 their evangelistic efforts had increased the membership to 35 members and Elder Van Horn became the first full-time pastor. As you will see in the following paragraphs, from its very early years our church has given emphasis to children, education, helping people in need and lifting up Christ to our neighbors.

In 1898 health food store owners, Archie and Lelia Hilliard, opened their home to host the first Adventist school in Toledo, but it survived only one year.

In 1899 the church realized its goal of a downtown mission. The Light House Medical Mission at 120 St. Clair Street provided food, shelter, and medical treatments for those in need. With the downtown mission, a Bible worker, and repeated evangelistic meetings, the church grew to 91 members by the year 1900. [In 1903 the "mission" building was sold and the money was saved for the purchase of a church building.]

During these early years, the congregation moved many times, always renting, but in 1908 they purchased [for \$1,000] the Church of Christ building at 885 Orchard Street. It was a 20-year dream come true!

In 1919 a church school was organized in the rear of the church, and by 1921 the membership had swollen to 192! Recognizing the space limitations of the Orchard Street church, a building program was begun.

It wasn't until 1936 that property was finally purchased at the corner of Auburn Avenue and North Cove Boulevard, but the first buildings on the property were portable buildings to house our school. The buildings were named Goff Memorial School. Tuition rates in the 1940's were \$.50 to \$1.40 a week depending on the grade attended. The school eventually moved in 1958 to Independence Road where it stayed for nearly 40 years.

A Dorcas Circle was also organized in 1936 to care for the needs of the poor and those in emergency situations. It was very active until the late 1970's.

In 1938 the Ohio Conference proposed that if Toledo First could raise \$800 to be added to the \$1200 in hand, a large wooden tabernacle could be built on the Auburn Avenue property and an evangelistic series would be held. The Bible Tabernacle was worshipped in for the first time on August 6, 1938. By December 1938, 165 new members united with the congregation!

In 1946 the cornerstone was laid for the permanent church at the same location and the first services were held in October 1947. Four years later the church mortgage was paid.

The 1950 – 1970's were occupied with building of the new school, later adding to it, the fruit program which raised money for the school, baptisms, outreach radio programs and 5-Day Plans to Stop Smoking, Ingathering, the beginning of the Pathfinder Club, and Dorcas work.

In February 1980, the congregation voted to sell the church and in 1982 we purchased the property at 4909 Sylvania Avenue. Church services moved to the school gymnasium on Independence Road and remained there until the first service in the new church in November 1984.

A Concert Series begun in 1985 attracted the community to our church. Thousands of people who entered our doors during the next 13 years came for the music, hospitality and the wonderful Afterglows.

In 1989 we purchased the adjacent property to our west, renting the small house and using the large one as a parsonage. During 1990 a Downtown Ministry and two senior programs were developed, Agape and Body Recall exercise.

After selling our school, classes moved to our Sabbath School rooms in 1997 and in November 1999 we voted to construct a new school attached to our church and by 2001 we had enough money to begin construction of the school. In June of 2000 we hired a full-time youth pastor.

In 2002 we began renting our church on Sundays to Christ the Word Church. Also in 2002 a second worship service [Connections] began on Saturday afternoons. In 2003 we opened a Learning Center in our building for young children. These are all ongoing.

In 2007 we began "Ordinary Outreach" to engage the community by such means as Kindness 2 Go bags, evangelistic picnics in the park, Mission Trip to Toledo, Cars 4 Kidz Car Show, nursing home outreach and much more. We want to grow from the children's divisions up a Christ centered church shouting the Gospel with our lives.



## TOLEDO FIRST STAFF

**Mike Fortune, MDiv**  
**mike4tune@gmail.com**  
*Senior Pastor*

Mike was born in Hong Kong to missionary parents and is the middle child of a now retired Adventist pastor and nurse. He has ministered in Ohio since 1996 and has been pastor at Toledo First since January 2007.

He grew up in Maryland, but went to school at Newbold College in England and Andrews University in Michigan where he completed his Masters of Divinity.

Happily married to his high school sweetheart Jackie for nearly 11 years, he has two children. Joshua is 9 and Lydia is 6 years old. They say his job [and he agrees] is talking about Jesus on stage and showing people that God loves them like crazy!!!



## APPENDIX 1

### The Continuing Quest for Truth by Ellen White

“Whenever the people of God are growing in grace, they will be constantly obtaining a clearer understanding of His Word. They will discern new light and beauty in its sacred truths. This has been true in the history of the church in all ages, and thus it will continue to the end. But as real spiritual life declines, it has ever been the tendency to cease to advance in the knowledge of the truth. Men rest satisfied with the light already received from God's Word, and discourage any further investigation of the Scriptures. They become conservative, and seek to avoid discussion.

The fact that there is no controversy or agitation among God's people should not be regarded as conclusive evidence that they are holding fast to sound doctrine. When no new questions are started by investigation of the Scriptures, when no difference of opinion arises which will set men to searching the Bible for themselves, to make sure that they have the truth, there will be many now, as in ancient times, who will hold to tradition, and worship they know not what.

When God's people are at ease and satisfied with their present enlightenment, we may be sure that He will not favor them. It is His will that they should be ever moving forward to receive the increased and ever-increasing light which is shining on them. The present attitude of the church is not pleasing to God. There has come in a self-confidence that has led them to feel no necessity for more truth and greater light. God wills that a voice shall be heard arousing His people to action.” [“The Mysteries of the Bible a Proof of Its Inspiration,” *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 5:706-9 (1889).]

“We do not claim that in the doctrines sought out by those who have studied the word of truth, there may not be some error, for no man that lives is infallible; but if God has sent light, we want it; and God has sent light, and let every man be careful how he treats it.” [“Open the Heart to Light,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, March 25, 1890, 177. Parts of this article were reprinted in *Counsels to Writers and Editors* (Nashville: Southern, 1946), 33-34, 41-42, but not the sentence quoted here.]

“Let no one come to the conclusion that there is no more truth to be revealed. The diligent, prayerful seeker for truth will find precious rays of light yet to shine forth from the word of God. Many gems are yet scattered that are to be gathered together to become the property of the remnant people of God.” [*Counsels on Sabbath School Work* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Review and Herald, 1892), 34; *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, 35.]

"Long-cherished opinions must not be regarded as infallible...However long men may have entertained certain views, if they are not clearly sustained by the written word, they should be discarded. Those who sincerely desire truth will not be reluctant to lay open their positions for investigation and criticism, and will not be annoyed if their opinions and ideas are crossed...We have many lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn. God and heaven alone are infallible. Those who think that they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed." ["Search the Scriptures," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 26, 2892, 465; repr. *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, 36-37; and, in part, in *Selected Messages from the Writings of Ellen G. White*, 3 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958-80),1:37.]

"There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without an error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation." ["Christ Our Hope," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Dec. 20, 1892, 685; repr. *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, 35.]

"There, immortal minds will contemplate with never failing delight the wonders of creative power, the mysteries of redeeming love...Every faculty will be developed, every capacity increased. The acquirement of knowledge will not weary the mind or exhaust the energies. There the grandest enterprises may be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations reached, the highest ambitions realized; and still there will be new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects to call forth the powers of mind and soul and body. All the treasures of the universe will be open to the study of God's redeemed...

And the years of eternity, as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more [the redeemed] learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character." [*The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1911), 677-78; see also *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1903), 305.]

## APPENDIX 2

### OUR ESSENTIAL BELIEFS

- **In essential beliefs — we have unity.**

*“There is one Body and one Spirit...there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of us all...”* Ephesians 4:4-6

- **In non-essential beliefs — we have liberty.**

*“Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters... Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls... So then each of us will give an account of himself to God... So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God.”* Romans 14:1,4,12,22

- **In all our beliefs — we show love.**

*“...If I hold in my mind not only all human knowledge but also the very secrets of God, and if I have the faith that can move mountains — but have **no love**, I amount to nothing at all.”*  
1 Corinthians 13:2 (Ph)

### APPROVED BAPTISMAL VOWS

1. We believe there is one coeternal God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal Persons. We believe that from before the foundation of the world the Father pledged that the Son would give His life for His creation and that the Holy Spirit would convince people of their need and grow them in God’s grace.
2. We accept the death of Jesus Christ on Calvary as the atoning sacrifice for our sins and believe that by grace alone, through faith in His shed blood, we are saved from sin and its penalty.
3. We accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and personal Saviour believing that God, in Christ, has forgiven our sins, ratified and finalized at the cross, and given us a new heart.
4. We accept by faith the righteousness of Christ, our Intercessor in the heavenly sanctuary. We accept His promise of transforming grace and power to live a loving, Christ-centered life in the home and in the world.
5. We believe that the Bible is God’s inspired Word, the only rule of faith and practice for the Christian. We are committed to regular prayer and Bible study to facilitate growth and spiritual maturity. It is through the Bible that we learn about and understand God’s gracious gift of salvation.
6. It is our purpose to live in obedience to God and the Ten Commandments, understanding that that obedience in no way contributes to the source of our salvation but is always the fruit of our relationship with God. Through the Holy Spirit, He writes His law of love on the heart of every believer. Honoring the seventh day Sabbath reminds believers of creation and re-creation. True Sabbath-keeping involves celebrating and resting in the finished work of Christ.

7. We look forward to the second coming of Jesus and the blessed hope when “this mortal shall...put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:54). In anticipation of His return we will seek by our example and testimony to help others accept Christ as Savior and Lord. At the second coming of Jesus all who have been saved by grace will finally realize the resurrection of Jesus in their own lives.

8. We accept the biblical teaching of spiritual gifts and believe that every member is a minister. God’s church will “eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy (1 Cor. 14:1). Spiritual gifts (charismata) are given to those who have accepted God’s grace (charis).

9. We believe in church organization. It is our purpose to support the church by our tithes and offerings and by our personal effort and influence. By returning to God tithes and offerings we show my dependence on and love for the One who sacrificed everything for us.

10. We believe that we should be a responsible steward of all that God has entrusted to us. We desire to honor God by following Biblical principles for good health in our spiritual, mental, physical, and social responsibilities. This includes proper exercise, rest, diet, and the management of life’s stresses by trusting in God and the discarding of unhealthful practices such as the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, foods or substances which tend to cause physical, mental, or spiritual degeneration. Since our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit we want to present it as pure to Christ as we can in honor of His pure and perfect body that He sacrificed for us.

11. We understand the basic Bible principles of living the Christian life as taught by Seventh-day Adventists and, by the grace of God we plan to order our lives in harmony with them, remaining responsive to unfolding truth in the light of the gospel. We appreciate that there will always be new understandings of truth as it is in Jesus and that there are some things He has not revealed to us yet because we are not able to comprehend them.

12. We acknowledge the New Testament ordinances of the church as an expression of faith and forgiveness of sins: baptism by immersion, and the Lord’s Supper. We understand the burying in and the lifting up out of the water as a precious symbol of our death and resurrection in Jesus, and the bread and the wine as symbols of the body of Jesus broken for us and the blood spilled that we might live.

13. Believing God has used the Seventh-day Adventist church to contribute to the ongoing process of reformation and discovery of truth; we are members of Toledo First Seventh-day Adventist Church which is part of the world community of Seventh-day Adventists. We understand that this church is part of the larger body of Christ, which is made up of everyone who has accepted the sacrifice of Christ for them.

*These thirteen statements are a brief summary of the 28 Fundamental Doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.*

## APPENDIX 3

### ADORNMENT

#### **Too Hot to Touch—Adornment Double Standard**

**J. David Newman, D.Min, is the senior pastor of New Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church in Fulton, Maryland and is a former editor of *Ministry*. This article was published in *Adventist Today*, July-August, 2002, pp. 18-19]**

**S**eventh-day Adventists are NOT against adornment, only against certain forms of adornment. For example, one of the devotional speakers at an Annual Council that I participated in was a woman. She wore a simple dress. Tied neatly around her neck was a beautiful scarf. Skin showed above and below the scarf. If she had substituted a string of pearls for the scarf many, if not most, of the audience would not have heard a word she said. In fact, she would not have been chosen to speak if it was known that she wore pearls.

However, there is no difference in function between the pearls and the scarf. Both served the same purpose—to complement the attire. And yes, since they are not necessary they both are adornment. If a person hangs a gold pendant around their neck it is adornment. If the same person pins that gold pendant to the dress it becomes a brooch and is now acceptable but it is still adornment.

Not only are Adventists against certain forms of adornment they are also FOR other kinds of adornment. The only function that a necktie serves is adornment. It is not necessary to cover one's nakedness. It does not warm the body. Rather it constricts the neck, takes time to tie, mops up food, and costs lots of money. It is so culturally accepted that we never give the tie a second thought as adornment.

If we were to follow the definition of adornment given by Dr. Angel Rodriguez in his book *Jewelry* we would have to all shed our ties. He defines jewelry as “ornaments made of different materials, with different functions, that can be placed directly on the body or on the garments of a person in order to enhance the appearance of the individual, establish social distinctions, and communicate personal convictions” (p. 8). If we followed this definition we would have to ban neckties, pocket handkerchiefs, broaches, scarves, cuff links, tie pins, and lace collars, and other accessories since none of these items are necessary to be clothed.

So how did we get into this fix? Some say ornamental jewelry is out while functional jewelry is ok. Who decided that? Others say If it is on the skin it is a sin but if on the lapel wear it well. Who decided that? On what basis have we drawn up a very narrow list of what is not acceptable when it comes to adornment? Is it possible that the inconsistencies, the double standards, are doing more harm than good when it comes to teaching people about simplicity and modesty?

**T**his issue of adornment has been with us right from our earliest days. The General Conference in its Session of 1866 forbade women from wearing the following items: plumes, feathers, flowers, and all superfluous bonnet ornaments, every species of gold,

silver, coral, pearl, rubber, and hair jewelry, ribbons, cording, braid, embroidery, buttons, and low-necked dresses. Men were required not to color or trim their beards. Moustaches and goatees were specifically excluded as inappropriate for men to “adorn the face.”

**A**t one time removing jewelry was part of the baptismal instructions for people entering the church. The 1932 *Church Manual* listed 21 questions for individuals preparing for baptism. Number 17 asked: “In matters of dress will you follow the Bible rule of plainness and simplicity, abstaining from the wearing of gold as ornaments and costly array, observing the principles of modesty and Christian dignity?”

This requirement for baptism was dropped in the 1942 *Church Manual* when the list of 21 questions was pruned down to just 11 questions. And it has never been reinstated in the baptismal questions. This is why there is still confusion on this subject. The removing of certain forms of adornment is a teaching of the church, like vegetarianism, not a requirement of the church. That is, if you agree that the baptismal questions represent the minimum requirements for joining the church.

### **Bible and adornment**

But doesn't the Bible condemn adornment including jewelry? The problem lies in the selective use of our traditional Bible texts on jewelry. For example, 1 Timothy 2:9-10 says too much: “I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.” The text says that women are not to wear gold. We do not teach that. We allow gold eye glasses, pins, broaches, watch bands, wedding rings, and so on. We interpret “gold” to mean a few items such as rings and necklaces. We allow braided hair. We allow pearls if they are sewed on to the dress. We have never defined what expensive clothes are.

When interpreting Scripture we must read it in its context. Is Paul writing a treatise on adornment? No. He is giving counsel on how to worship God. In the verse (8) just before he wants men to lift their hands in prayer. It seems to me that we teach the opposite here. Then in verses 11-15 he covers how women should or should not participate in worship.

The gospel brought a liberating philosophy to people and the culture. Paul said to the Galatians "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). Women had been subjected to all kinds of indignities. They could not even worship together with men. Now they were stirring themselves. Paul says "Be careful. Don't go to fast. Yes, I understand your needs but you will have more influence if you dress appropriately for worship and don't fight your culture in the worship service by demanding equal participation with men."

**P**aul's letter to Timothy discusses various problems in the church: people teaching false doctrines and creating dissensions (1:3, 4); false views on marriage and diet (4:3, 4); mistreatment of elderly parents and grandparents (5:1-16); fair treatment of church leaders (5:17-20); and problems in worship (2:1-15) of which overdressing had become more important than a worshipful spirit.

Because of space limitations I cannot deal with all the texts we commonly use to support our stand against certain forms of jewelry except to say that when read in context none of them are forbidding the permanent use of adornment.

## Old Testament texts

Isaiah 3:16-23 is another passage that says too much for us. We are so uncomfortable with these verses that almost every book I have read by an Adventist author stops part way through this section. Dr. Angel Rodriguez (in his book on jewelry just noted) as well as other Adventist commentators tries to prove too much from this passage. He says "Isaiah's attack on jewelry, which we have mentioned several times [pp. 34, 36], was a condemnation of jewelry as a religious and social symbol and as an expression of pride" [p. 40].

He rules out the use of necklaces and rings from this passage but does not say whether he believes the use of "fine robes and capes and cloaks, purses, mirrors, linen garments and shawls" are also wrong. I know of no biblical principle that allows us to take a passage where all the items are under the ban of God and then grant an indulgence to some of them.

**W**hen you read the passage in context you find that it is part of a larger judgment being pronounced on Jerusalem and Judah. While God is stripping the haughty women he is also stripping Judah of food and water (verse 1), the young rise up against the old (verse 5), men will fall by the sword (verse 25).

God is not saying any of the items listed in the passage is wrong. He simply talks about their misuse for power, oppression, and vanity. It was the misuse of these items not their use that God was against.

## Sinai rebellion

"When the people heard these distressing words, they began to mourn and no one put on any ornaments. For the Lord had said to Moses, 'Tell the Israelites, 'You are a stiff-necked people. If I were to go with you even for a moment, I might destroy you. Now take off your ornaments and I will decide what to do with you.'" So the Israelites stripped off their ornaments at Mount Horeb." (Exodus 33:4-6).

**T**his passage is one of the key passages quoted as indicating God's disapproval of ornaments. What is the context?

1. The Children of Israel had given their jewelry to Aaron to make the golden calf (Ex. 32:2-4).
2. They worshiped this calf instead of the true God (verse 6).
3. God told the people He could no longer go with them for they were a "stiff-necked people" and he might "destroy" them (33:3).
4. The people began to mourn and take off their ornaments because God told them to remove these ornaments until he decided what to do with them.

In the days of Jeremiah God's people also rebelled against Him. Again God used the same language "They were stiff-necked and did more evil than their forefathers" (Jer. 7:27). But this time instead of telling them to strip off their ornaments He commands them to "cut off your hair and throw it away;" (verse 29) and He continues "take up a lament on the barren heights, for the Lord has rejected and abandoned this generation that is under his wrath."

The argument is used that the "ornament" command must still apply today because we still use ornaments and therefore we must take them off just as God commanded the Israelites. If this argument is valid we would then, to be consistent, have to apply the same principle to



Jeremiah 7:29 and tell people that they must also cut off their hair when repenting, since we all still wear hair and we still mourn.

**W**hy did God ask the Israelites to strip themselves of their ornaments? They had just used those same ornaments to make a false god and just as God poured out plagues on the symbols of the false gods of Egypt (river, frogs, flies, etc.) He again made the symbols of false gods objects of His wrath. They took off their ornaments as a sign of mourning, of sorrow, of repentance. There is no indication that this injunction was permanent. Indeed just a short while later Moses was asking for donations from those same ornaments to construct the tabernacle.

### **Positive side of Jewelry**

There is a place in Scripture where God actually commands His people to wear jewelry. When God spoke to Moses at the burning bush he gave this command which has been strangely overlooked: "Every woman shall borrow of her neighbor, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your son, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians" (Exod. 3:22, KJV).

How do we erase our double standard on adornment which has caused and still causes so much grief and argument? We can either develop a comprehensive list omitting nothing or we can teach the principles and leave it to each person to decide how to apply the principle.

Ellen White sums up how to deal with jewelry, not by making up lists and standards, but by leading people to Jesus. She talks about those who try to pick the ornaments off other people: "Talk of Christ, and when the heart is converted, everything that is out of harmony with the Word of God will drop off. It is only labor in vain to pick leaves off a living tree. The leaves will only reappear. The ax must be laid at the root of the tree, and then the leaves will fall off, never to return" (*Evangelism* p. 272).

If we leave it up to God to convince people regarding what is appropriate adornment we will have got rid of our double standard.

## Principles Or Policies?

*First draft of a chapter in a book on Adventist Standards by J. David Newman, D.Min. Senior Pastor of New Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church, Burtonsville, MD*

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Imagine for a moment seven pictures of seven women. [Would it be possible to actually illustrate these in the book? Would be far more effective] Picture one shows a woman clothed in a black dress with a silver brooch pinned to her right side. Picture two shows a woman clothed in a black dress with one strand of pearls around her neck. Picture three shows a woman clothed in a black dress with rings on every finger, bracelets on each arm, six strands of pearls around her neck, five earrings in each ear, hair elaborately coiffured with gold and silver thread intermingled. Picture four shows a woman clothed in a black dress with an elegant scarf tied around her neck. Picture five shows a woman clothed in a black dress with a silver brooch pinned to her right side and an elegant scarf tied around her neck. Picture six shows a woman dressed in a black dress with a simple ring on each hand and a slender gold chain around her neck. Picture seven shows a woman clothed in a black dress with no jewelry but with a very stylish hairstyle that costs her \$65 every week at the hairstylist.

Which one of these women would you pick for an Adventist? Probably numbers one, four, five, and seven. And yet all of them were adorning themselves. If adornment is wrong, no ifs and buts, then we need to be consistent and speak out against anything that adorns and not limit it to precious metals and costume jewelry while still allowing men's jewelry (tie pins, cuff links, etc.), fancy hair styles, lace collars, bright hair combs, etc.

What does the Bible really say about adornment? The reader should bear in mind that God nowhere in Scripture takes a practice that is intrinsically immoral or evil and gives it positive associations. Adultery is always wrong. Stealing is always wrong. Cursing is always wrong. But when we come to adornment we find it used positively as well as negatively. First we will examine the traditional texts commonly used against the wearing of jewelry.

### **Genesis 35:4**

"So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had and the rings in their ears, and Jacob buried them under the oak at Shechem."

What does this text tell us? Just because Jacob's family puts away certain things does not necessarily mean they are evil. Jeremiah 7:29 tells God's people to cut off their hair and throw it away. Do we teach that everyone should be bald? The Bible tells us that women wear long hair and always cover their hair when worshipping God (1 Cor. 10:5-6). Should we follow those practices today? No, we must understand the context and the principle behind every command.

Jacob is preparing to go to Bethel and erect an altar to Jehovah. He wants a special endowment of God's blessing. He knows that there are family members with divided loyalties. He tells them to put away the foreign gods, to purify themselves, and change their clothes. The context is one of purification, dedication, renewal of the faith before God. What part did the earrings play in this? Did they give them up because God was against adornment or was

something else at stake? The text does not tell us why they gave up their earrings. So we must interpret it. Some scholars believe that these particular rings were "employed for purposes of idolatrous worship, which were often covered with allegorical figures and mysterious sentences, and supposed to be endowed with a talismanic virtue."<sup>1</sup>

**T**his conclusion seems valid since no other adornment is specified and it is associated with foreign gods. Also there is no prohibition recorded up to this time against the wearing of jewelry. We also know that the women wore nose rings and bracelets (Gen. 24:22) yet these were not given up by Jacob's family. Only the earrings were surrendered. The text makes no moral pronouncement so we need to be careful what moral conclusions we draw from it.

If the principle is not to wear anything that reveals allegiance to a strange god then we need to put away today anything, and any practice, that compromises our faith in God.

### **Exodus 33:4-6**

"When the people heard these distressing words, they began to mourn and no one put on any ornaments. For the Lord had said to Moses, 'Tell the Israelites, 'You are a stiff-necked people. If I were to go with you even for a moment, I might destroy you. Now take off your ornaments and I will decide what to do with you.'" So the Israelites stripped off their ornaments at Mount Horeb."

This passage is used as one of the key passages indicating God's disapproval of ornaments or jewelry. What is the passage actually saying and what is its context?

1. The Children of Israel had given their jewelry to Aaron to make the golden calf (Ex. 32:2-4).
2. They worshiped this calf instead of the true God (verse 6).
3. God told the people He could no longer go with them for they were a "stiff-necked people" and he might "destroy" them (33:3).
4. The people began to mourn and take off their ornaments because God told them to remove these ornaments until he decided what to do with them.

In the days of Jeremiah God's people also rebelled against Him. Again God used the same language "They were stiff-necked and did more evil than their forefathers" (Jer. 7:27). But this time instead of telling them to strip off their ornaments He commands them to "cut off your hair and throw it away;" (verse 29) and He continues "take up a lament on the barren heights, for the Lord has rejected and abandoned this generation that is under his wrath."

The argument is used that the "ornament" command must still apply today because we still use ornaments and therefore we must take them off just as the Children of Israel were commanded to do. If this line of reasoning is valid we would then, to be consistent, have to apply the same principle to Jeremiah 7:29 and tell people that they must also cut off their hair, since we still wear hair.

**N**aturally the thinking person will recoil at the second suggestion and say "Wait a minute!! Isn't the cutting off of the hair a sign of repentance? And since that is no longer a sign of repentance today that particular application of the principle is no longer valid.

Why did God ask the Israelites to strip themselves of their ornaments? They had just used their ornaments to make a false god and just as God poured out plagues on the symbols of the false gods of Egypt (river, frogs, flies, etc). He again made the symbols of false gods objects of His wrath. They took off their ornaments as a sign of mourning, of sorrow, of repentance. There

is no indication that this injunction was permanent. Indeed just a short while later Moses was asking for donations from those same ornaments to construct the tabernacle. This place of worship was covered with as much gold as the people were and both basked in this splendor.

Recently Dr. Richard Davidson has suggested another meaning for this passage. He makes it clear that there is nothing intrinsically wrong with the wearing of jewelry: "The Bible is plain: jewelry is beautiful. God made it. And He loves it. Before sin arose in the universe Lucifer was decked with jewels; 'every precious stone was...[his]covering;' it was beautiful, splendid, and prepared by God (Eze. 28:13). In the Old Testament God likens His salvation to the ornaments of a bride (Isa. 49:18; 61:10). At the end of the millennium the holy city will descend, 'prepared as a bride adorned for her husband'" (Rev. 21:2).

"A primary principle then is that jewelry is beautiful and approved by God"<sup>2</sup> Since Davidson chairs the Department of Old Testament at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary his view of the appropriateness of jewelry carries some weight. But Davidson then tries to enunciate another principle: "But to this must be added another principle. From the Old Testament record it appears that in a time of corporate investigative and/or executive judgment God regularly asks His people to remove their ornaments as an outward symbol of the special judgment setting.

**T**he clearest example of this is recorded in Exodus 33:5,6."<sup>3</sup> Since Jewish interpreters applied this passage to the Day of Atonement and since strict Jews wear no gold ornaments on Yom Kippur today Davidson suggests that this could apply to Seventh-day Adventists since the beginning of the judgment in 1844. Davidson buttresses his argument by appealing to Isa. 3:13,14, 16-23, and Ezekiel 16.

Davidson then says: "Putting these principles together, is it possible that since 1844 Seventh-day Adventists have the privilege of refraining from wearing jewelry as a special outward sign of the unique present truth that they are Laodicea, 'people of the judgment;' that they live in the time of the investigative judgment? Is it possible that Adventists adopt this posture also because, although the church is spiritually espoused to Christ (Eph. 5; 2 Cor. 11:2), the wedding is not yet consummated? (Rev. 17:4,5) For those who understand the deeper issues, taking on the bridal ornaments before the wedding is the posture of Babylon the harlot (Rev. 17:4,5) not the true church (Rev. 12:1).

**I**t is not that wearing jewelry is wrong—but we have the privilege of waiting to do so until the wedding feast, when Jesus Himself will adorn His bride with jewels. This discussion calls for further investigation, but it illustrates how the posture of 'afflicting our souls' on the Day of Atonement may inform the practical lifestyle issues in our church."<sup>4</sup>

Davidson must be commended for trying to place the non-wearing of jewelry on a firmer biblical basis. However, there are several problems with his approach:

1. There is no consensus as to what constitutes jewelry. Do we adopt the Adventist version or the world's version? We have already mentioned this problem in chapter 1. Do we forbid all brooches, tie pins, cuff links, ornamental hair clips? Do we start to make a list? On what basis do we select certain items to be on the list? Remember at one time our church forbade rubber, coral, and even feathers.

2. He makes the same sweeping use of Isa. 3:16-23 as other Adventist commentators do and in so doing proves too much as we will see later when we discuss that passage.

3. He fails to mention that it was God who dressed His bride in all manner of jewelry (Ezek 16) and later took away that jewelry when they deserted Him.

4. Even if we were to grant some validity to his interpretation do we make it a requirement or a teaching of the church? And why should personal adornment be singled out over other lifestyle issues: house, vehicles, holidays, etc.?

5. The sanctuary service had not yet been instituted so it could not have been the day of atonement when the Israelites danced around the golden calf. Therefore there is no day of atonement imagery to suggest.

**G**od also told his people "to weep and to wail, to tear out your hair and put on sackcloth" (Isa. 22:12) as a sign of repentance. Should we suggest that we should still do that today? In other words on what principle do we emphasize certain forms of mourning and repentance and make them normative for today and not the other examples given in Scripture?

What we can learn from this passage is the principle that whatever separates ourselves from God should be given up; this might include jewelry if it becomes an idol or a source of pride. In this context their ornaments were used as a substitute for a false god. Again, God did not ask them to take off their ornaments because he was against vanity or show but because they had been used for the wrong purpose. If we use ornaments for the wrong purpose then we must take them off too.

### **Isaiah 3:16-23**

"The Lord says, 'The women of Zion are haughty, walking along with outstretched necks, flirting with their eyes, tripping along with mincing steps, with ornaments jingling on their ankles. Therefore the Lord will bring sores on the heads of the women of Zion; the Lord will make their scalps bald.'

"In that day the Lord will snatch away their finery: the bangles and headbands and crescent necklaces, the earrings and bracelets and veils, the headdresses and ankle chains and sashes, the perfume bottles and charms, the signet rings and nose rings, the fine robes and the capes and cloaks, the purses and mirrors and the linen garments and tiaras and shawls."

This passage proves too much. Quite often you will find in our published material that the writer ends with verse 21 "signet rings and nose rings" omitting completely the "fine robes, capes, cloaks, purses, mirrors, garments, and shawls." If God is against the jewelry listed in this passage then He is also against the clothing and other accessories.

It is manipulating the text of the worst order to divide it in two and say that part applies today and part does not. This can only be done if one comes to the text with an *a priori* assumption that jewelry is evil and then impose upon the text this belief. This is proof texting of the worst kind. I will not cite specific examples of this being done to save embarrassment to the authors. However, it breeds cynicism in thinking people who discover this and makes them skeptical of other interpretations.

**W**hat is God saying in this passage? The context describes judgment that God will bring upon Jerusalem and Judah and in particular the "haughty women of Zion." Men are included in this judgment as well; the chapter ends by saying that the women will exchange their fine clothes for "sackcloth" and the men will "fall by the sword" (verses 24, 25). If we take this passage literally then we must take it all literally and ban mirrors, bonnets, cloaks,

purses, veils, and so on. There is no indication in the passage that we can select what we like. If God is opposed to jewelry then he is opposed to a lot of other things as well.

God is talking about excess not moderation. He is telling His people that outward show is not a substitute for the inner being and motives. The context concerns "haughty women." God has nothing to say about women who are humble, who are not haughty. Their dress only becomes a matter of comment when it is over emphasized and full of pride.

### **1 Timothy 2:9, 10**

"I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God."

First, let's look at this text by itself, simply as a proof text. What is it saying? It says that women are to "dress modestly, with decency and propriety." No one would argue with those principles. Then Paul gives some examples of how to apply these principles: "not with braided hair, gold, pearl, expensive clothes." But he does not conclude here. I have never read or heard that women must perform "good deeds." That part is always left out of any discussion on jewelry.

Notice what we do not forbid. We don't forbid "braided hair." We don't forbid "gold." Gold is commonly worn in the form of brooches, watches, hair clips, tie-pins, cuff links. We don't forbid "pearls" unless actually worn on the body. And we don't give any definition as to what "expensive clothes" might be. We conclude from this text that earrings, necklaces, finger rings, and bracelets are forbidden. What kind of exegesis is that?

Secondly, we have completely divorced these texts from their context. The preceding verse says: "I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger, or disputing." We actually discourage our people from following this text. Some have said that this refers to the giving of the benediction. But where does it say that in the text.

The subsequent verses say: "A woman should learn in quietness and silence and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent" (verses 11,12). We do not practice this admonition of Paul at all. "Hey wait a minute" someone says "aren't we supposed to interpret these texts? If we took everything absolutely literally we would come up with all kinds of strange things?" Of course we must interpret but we should apply the same principles to all parts of the passage not just to one sentence or paragraph.

**R**ead the whole chapter. The context concerns instructions on proper forms of worship and is given within the Jewish and Gentile setting of the time. The gospel brought a liberating philosophy to people and the culture. Paul said to the Galatians "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). Women had been subjected to all kinds of indignities. They could not even worship together with men. They were to sit behind a screen in the synagogue. Now they were stirring themselves. Paul says "Be careful. Don't go to fast. Yes I understand your needs but you will have more influence if you dress appropriately for worship and don't fight your culture in the worship service by demanding equal participation with men."

**P**aul's letter to Timothy discusses various problems in the church: people teaching false doctrines and creating dissensions (1:3, 4); false views on marriage and diet (4:3, 4); mistreatment of elderly parents and grandparents (5:1-16); fair treatment of church leaders

(5:17-20); and problems in worship (2:1-15) of which overdressing had become more important than a worshipful spirit. Since the instruction on how women should dress comes in the context of worship a case could be made for Paul speaking only about how women should dress when they come to worship God. Only if you take the text out of its context can a case be made for a prohibition against adornment at all times.

Other questions could be raised. Since Paul did not mention silver is that alright to be worn? If he was to extend his list would that include scarves tied around the neck, watches or eye glasses hanging from gold chains? And why were only the women singled out? Men also wore jewelry in Bible times. There is no condemnation anywhere in Scripture against men wearing adornment.

**M**adelyn Jones-Haldeman (professor of New Testament at La Sierra University) adds further insight to the context of this passage: "'To have authority over a man,' (verse 12) is not the usual verb to describe one's power or responsibility. Rather, in Greek, the word conveys the idea of both seduction and murder. Female teachers in both Greek and Roman times had the reputation of sexually seducing their students. The word also suggests murder—to have full power over someone to the point of destroying the person. Thus the dress of these women suggested seductive powers, and the money they controlled suggested power of another kind. The passage truly deals with highhanded power and authority, used in the most unscrupulous ways."<sup>5</sup>

The principles are clear: modesty, decency, and propriety. Beyond that we must leave it up to each person how they will apply those principles in their own lives.

### **1 Peter 3:3, 4**

"Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight."

What is the context of this passage? The passage really begins with chapter 2 verse 13 and extends to 3:12. Peter is discussing relationships: first, between government and citizens; second, between master and servant; third, between husband and wife; and last, between fellow Christians. This whole passage is about relationships not about jewelry. Why then is adornment mentioned?

**P**eter is talking about how believing wives could best witness to unbelieving husbands. He tells them not to rely on their outward beauty or on how well they dress but to rely on a gentle and quiet spirit. He says your husbands will know that you are Christians not so much by how you look on the outside but how your inner character shines through.

**S**trangely enough we have turned this text on its head. We say that you tell an Adventist by what they are not wearing rather than by their attitudes and relationships. Peter says the way you tell a Christian is by his or her attitudes and relationships not by how he or she looks.

Again we try and quantify the text. We neglect the "braided hair," interpret the "gold" to mean body jewelry, and avoid saying anything about fine clothes. An interesting point concerns the phrase "fine clothes." There is no adjective modifying clothes in the Greek. Peter is literally saying "wear no clothes." Of course we don't believe that Peter meant no clothes that is why we

add a qualifier. But there is no qualifier in the Greek. If we can add a qualifier here it is just as logical to add a qualifier before "gold jewelry" such as "excessive gold jewelry?"

Again we must understand the times in which the Bible writers gave these admonitions. Madelyn Jones-Haldeman reminds us: "The austere dress suggested in 1 Peter contrasted starkly with the elaborate and exotic dress worn by female participants at the feast of Artemis. Writers of the day describe in detail the beauty of women who paraded through the streets dressed in purple chitons, their hair elaborately braided with gold and jewels. The women who dressed in such a fashion presented themselves as erotically attractive; male observers of the spectacle became convinced that these women were immoral . . ."

"Rich women were to be extremely careful in their dress so that society would not consider these Christians as immoral as the women who attended the cultic feasts. Husbands could more readily be won over to the Christian religion if the women conformed to the norms of dress outlined by society because the husbands would not worry about the morality of the wives' new religion or the purity of the marriage bed."<sup>6</sup>

**I**f the context and the historical situation are ignored we can make the same case for putting disobedient children to death (Ex. 21:17, forbidding eunuchs becoming Seventh-day Adventists (Deut. 23:1), refraining from men cutting their hair or beard (Lev. 19:27), abolish the wearing of neckties for ministers since they must not wear anything that might make them sweat (Ezek. 44:15, 17, 18), greet everyone with holy kisses (Rom. 16:16), do not eat any meat with the blood still in it (Lev. 19:26) as we can for the discarding of jewelry under all circumstances. In fact a stronger case could be made for making these injunctions apply today as they are all actual commands of Scripture whereas the text in Exodus is the only explicit command against ornaments in the whole Bible.

### **Wearing of jewelry**

There is a place in Scripture where God actually commands His people to wear jewelry. When God spoke to Moses at the burning bush he gave this command which has been strangely overlooked: "Every woman shall borrow of her neighbor, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your son, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians" (Exod. 3:22, KJV). Here God commands them to wear the ornaments they took from the Egyptians. How could God tell them to do this if the wearing of jewelry is a sin? Sin is always sin.

Without belaboring the point too much we need to explain better why we apply some texts literally (and even then not really literally) and ignore others. There is at least one command in those just cited that is still a valid health law and which we as Adventists take no stand on whatsoever. I refer to the prohibition against the eating of blood. We prohibit unclean food, recommend a vegetarian diet, and yet say nothing about the eating of blood.



### **Positive side of Jewelry**

The Bible says much about beauty and adornment. The sanctuary, the temple, and the high priest's clothing, glittered with gold and jewels (Exd. 35:22; 1 Chron 29:2; Exod. 28:8-24).

Lucifer was adorned with jewels (Ezek. 28:13).

The maiden in the Song of Solomon is praised for wearing earrings and necklaces (Song 1:10, 11).

God commands the children of Israel to wear the jewelry they took from the Egyptians (Exod. 3:22).

**I**n the allegory of Ezekiel 16 God tells how He adorned His bride (Israel) with: "Jewelry, bracelets, necklace, ring in nose, earrings, and a crown on her head" (16:11, 12). No where in Scripture do we find God using something that is evil in a positive light. The pig is never regarded positively. Idols are never regarded positively. Prostitution is never regarded positively. We do have examples of things that once were good becoming evil because the people misused them. The bronze serpent that Moses made to heal the Israelites later had to be destroyed by Hezekiah because the people had begun to worship it (2 Kings 18:4). We also have examples of good things being given up for a time such as when people fasted, or took off their regular clothes and donned sackcloth. But we don't have an examples of evil things being also addressed positively unless jewelry is the only exception.

**W**e know that the New Jerusalem will sparkle with all kinds of jewels (Rev. 21:10-23). Over and over again in Scripture we have jewelry used as positive similes (Lam. 4:7; Mal 3:17; Prov. 3:15, 16; 8:11; 20:15; 25:12; 31).

In oriental times there was a very practical reason for wearing jewelry. There were no banks or safe deposit boxes. The safest place to store one's wealth was upon one's person. That was why it was so important for a wife to get a good dowry. She usually received this dowry in the form of jewelry which she then wore and could sell if she ever became destitute.

### **Use of Scripture**

Time and place must always be considered when interpreting Scripture. As we have already stated you can prove anything you want from Scripture if we use an isolated text. What may be valid under one circumstance may be the complete opposite in another.

John the Baptist lived as an ascetic. He practiced a very simple lifestyle. Jesus said of him "For John the Baptist came neither eating bread or drinking wine" (Luke 7:33). Then Jesus contrasts John's lifestyle with His own "The Son of Man came eating [bread] and drinking [wine]" (verse 34).

While Jesus practiced a simple lifestyle He did not practice the asceticism of John. What was appropriate for John was not necessary for Jesus. One could use the texts about John not eating bread and drinking wine and only eating locusts and honey to make just as good a case for us following the same practice today as we use the texts for bidding certain forms of jewelry to be worn. We need to distinguish between what is essential and what is tangential and we need to clarify the difference between principles and policies. Above all we need to distinguish between the requirements of the church and the teachings of the church.

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<sup>1</sup> *Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 1, p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Davidson, "The Good News of Yom Kippur," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, Vol. ? p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> Madelyn Jones-Haldeman, "Adorning the Temple of God," *Spectrum*, Vol. 20, No. 2, p. 52.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.