

THE LITERATURE EVANGELIST

july-december 2016

God Touches
an Atheist

In Tune With
the Times

Partying With
a Difference



MISSION
IMPOSSIBLE

THE LITERATURE EVANGELIST

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WRITE TO US

We welcome your literature evangelism testimonies as well as your opinion about the magazine and response to articles. If you'd like to contribute in another way, contact us for more information.

Let's Give God a Chance

I have made assumptions about how receptive people ought to be in matters of faith and religion. Growing up in a culture where everything pointed to the existence of a supreme being: greetings, goodbyes, daily economy, and values all point to the existence of someone mightier than humanity. It is through these lenses that I developed assumptions about faith and its practices. Like many around me, I took a lot for granted; people simply ought to know and believe that there is a God, period. After all, hasn't He revealed Himself clearly in Scripture and through daily happenings?

In such societies, because of poverty and struggles, life-altering events often lead people to seek spiritual meaning or reasoning for things that are perceived as an act or will of God (differentiate this from definitions given by insurance companies). Almost everything is viewed in the context of God (a quick look at comments on social media, such as Facebook, reveal this trend). These societies that tend to be communal, nonindustrialized, and non-Western invoke the name of God for peace and healing and have a strong sense of futuristic expectation for a better life.

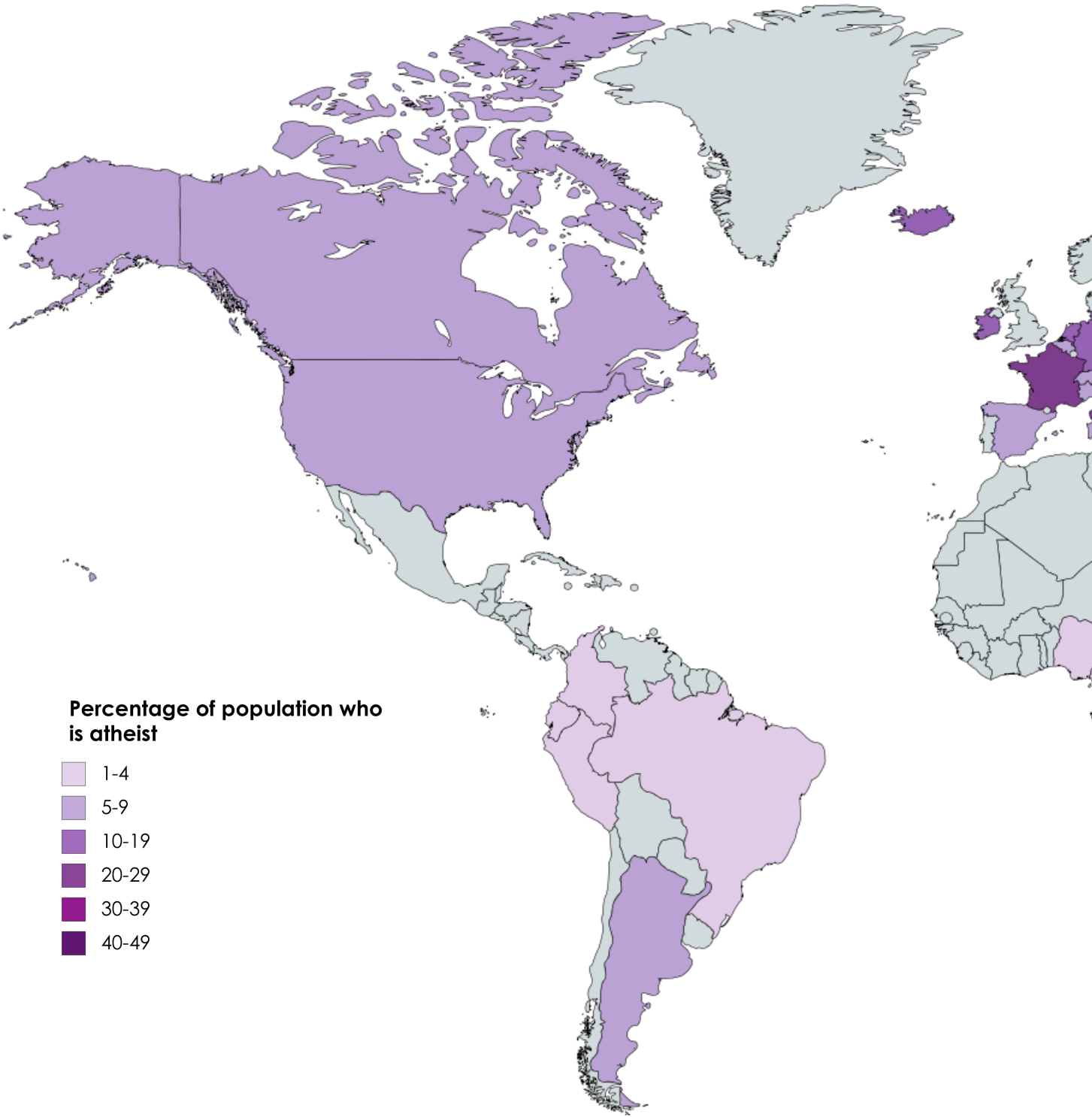
Industrialized and Western cultures, however, tend to be more secular, seeking reason and logic in interpreting events. Rarely, if at all, is God considered a part of the equation of life. Instead, failed science, technology, or human error is often blamed. God is seldom, if ever, featured in daily life. John Stonestreet said: "A secular society assumes that the world is one of our own making, where we invite God into. The Christian worldview begins with a very fundamental premise: we live in God's world; He doesn't live in ours."

Just as my less-secular societies crowded me with nuances of a God, secular societies crowd individuals with entertainment, science, reason, individualism, and materialism. The pursuit of God is stifled by the pursuit of pleasure, happiness, and self-satisfaction. In the words of one writer: "Progress brings heaven." The fear of God is stifled by the ability to overcome obstacles in life through the belief in sheer hard work. In most cases this system works, and results can be seen. Why would anyone need a God?

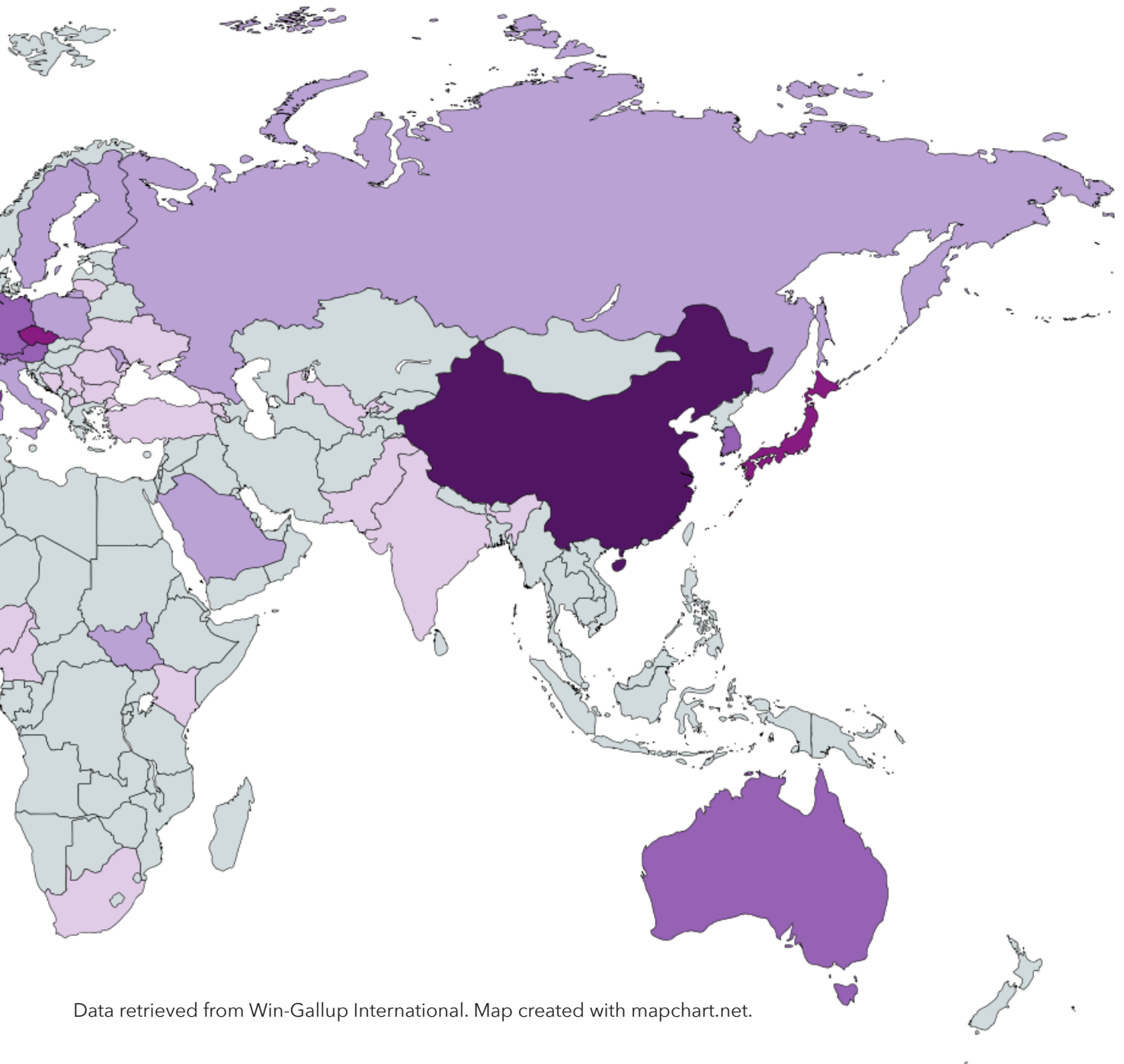
How can anyone effectively maintain and share faith in such a world? How do I help a mind-set that has crowded out God? How can I effectively give others a chance to know God? This issue seeks to address these questions. The testimonies and stories point to individuals who gave God a chance to show them He opens doors and hearts to receive Him.

Jesus said: "They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me" (John 15:21, NIV). Many people have not had the chance to know God, His love, and His grace. We need to give them the chance.

Countries With an Atheist Presence



{ How can LEs approach people who don't believe in God?
Submit your opinion to: react@theliteratureevangelist.org }



The events held by the Publishing Ministries Department are often very intense, and in 2016 things were no different. Enjoy reading through some of the highlights that occurred during 2016's second semester.



The West-Central Africa Division (WAD) Literature Evangelist (LE) Congress was the event with the largest number of participants in 2016. About 600 LEs representing 10 unions and 21 countries were present. The congress was held July 22-25 at the Babcock University campus, located near the city of Lagos, the capital of Nigeria.

Abraham Obaya, WAD Publishing Ministries director, organized a vibrant program with motivational seminars, spiritual messages, and inspiring LE testimonies. The General Conference (GC) was represented by Almir Marroni, publishing director; Stephen Apola and Wilmar Hirle, publishing associate directors; and Guillermo Biaggi, a vice president and Publishing Ministries Department adviser.

The iShare Conference, an event organized by youth from the Pacific Union and North American Division, took place August 11-13 in Visalia, California. "It was one of the most exciting youth meetings I have ever attended!" said Almir Marroni, GC Publishing Ministries director.

The focus of the event was to celebrate God's blessings youth experienced while canvassing during the summer. More than 300 youth participated, sharing the most inspiring stories for two days. "It is impossible not to be moved as you listen to their enthusiastic reports," Marroni said.



The South Pacific Division (SPD) annually holds a Literature Evangelist Summit for LEs from Australia and New Zealand. This year the event occurred in the Totara Springs Christian Center near Matamata, New Zealand. About 100 LEs and leaders convened for one week to celebrate many miracles God has performed in that region. The summit theme was "Passing the Word Along," and one of the highlights was its strong spiritual content, including morning prayer meetings, testimonies, and seminars on professional growth and spiritual life. Seminars were presented by Almir Marroni, GC Publishing Ministries director, and Julian Archer, director of Faith vs Finance, a Christ-focused, nonprofit ministry. The most inspiring moment was the baptism of a young woman who decided to join the army of LEs in New Zealand.





The Inter-American Division distributed 6 million copies of the Missionary Book of the Year in 2016 under the leadership of Publishing Ministries director Erwin Gonzalez, who is a passionate promoter of this project. From September 15 to 18, GC Publishing Ministries director Almir Marroni traveled throughout the Chiapas territory, attending four meetings with union and conference leaders, pastors, LEs, and local church publishing coordinators. These events were planned by Chiapas Mexican Union leaders Ignacio Navarro, president, and Rogelio Morales, publishing director.

The purpose of the meetings was to promote the work of literature evangelists, inspiring and instructing local church publishing coordinators to promote the 2017 Missionary Book *Story of Hope*.



From September 22 to 25 Almir Marroni, GC Publishing Ministries director, had the opportunity to visit Romania, an East European country where the publishing work is quite developed. The itinerary started at the *Viata si Sanatate* (Life and Health) Publishing House, near Bucharest.

The Literature Evangelist Convention was held in Brasov, where the Adventist Church owns a training center with excellent facilities for meetings, such as LE training. Lorand Balla, Romanian Union Publishing Ministries director, organized the program, which included the participation of Stefan Tomoiaga, Romanian Union president, Iacob Pop, Life and Health Publishing House president, and Marroni.

LEs from the entire country and their spouses attended the convention. They had the opportunity to share many inspiring stories on how God has been guiding their work in different places. A vibrant group of 22 student LEs attended the convention as well, adding joy and glow to the program. Let's pray for the faithful LEs in Romania and their leaders.



More than 100 student leaders came together at Centro de Treinamento de Cotia (Cotia Training Center) for leadership training and preparation. The energetic and enthusiastic group, comprised of university students and conference and union publishing directors, pledged to recruit more than 950 students for next year's student canvassing program in the East and Central Brazil unions, under the Brazil Adventist University program. The program, which included reports, testimonies, leadership seminars, and devotional motivations, was led by Paulo Pinheiro, Brazil Adventist University student LE coordinator, and Adilson Morais, South American Division publishing associate director.





MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

Witnessing in difficult places

A MUSLIM WOMAN'S
INTEREST IN JESUS
AND BIBLE STUDY
SURPRISES AND
EMBOLDENS A
LITERATURE EVANGELIST

Freddy Alvarado Pimentel

One day as I canvassed with my coworker in a small village near Lake Issyk-Kul, in Kyrgyzstan, we knocked on a door. A woman of Kyrgyz nationality came to greet us. We showed her our books, and she said:

"Oh! I don't have any money, but these books are so good!"

One could see that she was not well off financially, and that several kids were running around in the area. Immediately I thought I should give her a book, and gave her *Formula for Health*. She opened it, looked through it, and, at the end of the book, saw information for a Bible study correspondence school. When I noticed that page caught her attention, I became a bit nervous and quickly tried to ratchet down the Christian origin of the book.

"This book is from Russia," I said. "That page is just an advertisement."

"Really? Is this just an ad?" she asked sadly.

"So there aren't any Bible study lessons?"

"Would you like to study the Bible?" I asked.

"Yes, I would."

"We can arrange that, but why would you like to study the Bible? Aren't you a Muslim?"

"Yes, I am Muslim, but our mullah said Isa will meet us, so I want to get to know Him better; I want to know Isa. I want to know what kind of person He is. Is it written all about Him in the Bible?"

"Yes, it's written about Him in the Bible."

"That's why I would like to study the Bible," she responded.

Hearing those words was like balm for my soul, and I could hardly hold back tears!

"You know," I said, "I have one more book."

And I gave her a copy of *Steps to Christ*.

"*Steps to Christ*," she said with admiration and curiosity. She opened the book and began reading some words aloud: "Forgiveness . . . Confession . . ." And then she said from the heart:

"I really want this book!"

She held the book strongly and said:

"I really do want this; I want to get to know Isa so much!"

"Don't worry," I told her. "We can help you! There are people not far from your village who can help you get to know Isa and understand the Bible. You can call and talk to



them. They also render different services, give massages, and conduct a health program."

"How wonderful, but what I would like the most is to receive Bible studies. I will call; I want to study the Bible so much!"

We were about to leave, but I decided to ask if I could give her a hug. She agreed, and after we embraced I told her: "We are your sisters!"

She said: "I think so too! I always thought that God created all people and that we all originated from Adam."

"Yes, we all originated from Adam."

I thought to myself: *She is this one who is teaching me!* We embraced each other, and I asked:

"How many children do you have?"

"I have four kids," she answered.

"And I have three," I replied.

We talked about our families, and when we were about to leave, one thought came to my mind: *Invite her to church.* So I gave her the book *With a Hope to the Future* and told her:

"Goolnarochka, I have an offer for you."

"What's the offer?" she asked.

"May I invite you to church on Sabbath?"

"Aren't you Jehovah's Witnesses?"

"No we aren't Jehovah's Witnesses. We are Christians."

"We have a Christian church, but I don't want to go there."

"No, it's another church," I told her.

"And what do you do on Sabbath?"

"We study the Bible and listen to a sermon, and we also have special classes for children."

"Are the classes for kids according to the Bible?" she asked.

"Yes, of course. Please come on Sabbath at 10:00 a.m."

"I can't say for sure if I will come, but I will try. I don't know what my husband will say about it," she said.

"We will pray for you," I told her.

"Please pray very much, because I really want to study the Bible."

On that note, my coworker and I left. We were very grateful for the opportunity to witness to a Muslim woman, and we are praying for doors to open so that she can get to know Jesus.

Freddy Alvarado Pimentel is the Publishing Ministries director at the Southern Union Mission in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

This story, written by Freddy Alvarado Pimentel, was experienced by a literature evangelist in Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan. All names in the story are omitted for privacy reasons.



God Touches an Atheist

Paul Bodor

I was blessed to have had an amazing conversation with an atheist recently. As we spoke, it became obvious that he wasn't happy with how some Christians act and treat other people. He was clearly upset with the track record of a certain Christian church; consequently, he prefers to believe God doesn't exist, because he hasn't encountered anyone in the world who represents God's character.

For an atheist, he had impressive biblical knowledge, was open to hearing my thoughts and spiritual comments, and appreciated someone different from a "normal" Christian. He said: "Even though I don't know you, I trust and appreciate your opinion. You seem real." We had a long, heart-to-heart conversation, and at the end he said he had been encouraged by seeing and meeting someone whose life had been turned around and changed.

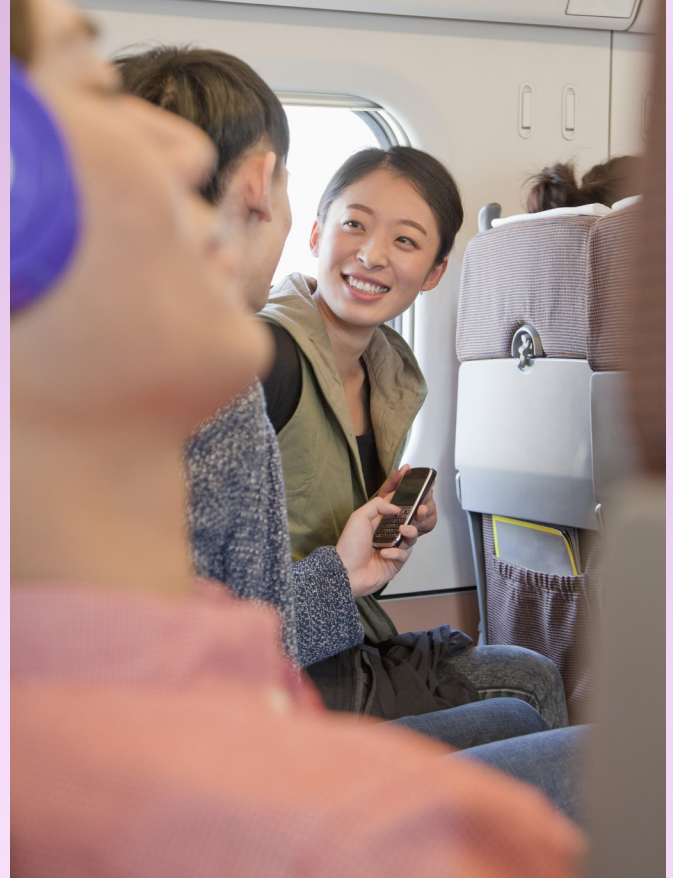
Once again, I had been given an opportunity to point someone to the One who truly changed my life. Our newfound friendship and trust encouraged me to offer him a copy of *The Great Controversy*. I explained how it covers so many topics that we had spoken about, and, although written more than 100 years ago, it speaks about a religious entity moving into stronger political connections and alliances. He was intrigued and keen to take it and said he would read it.

I was disheartened upon seeing a person who, like many, had gotten a great yet poor impression of Christ and His love based on the character of Christians. But I praise God for converted and changed hearts. I have no doubt that our conversation had a big impact!

Paul Bodor is a literature evangelist in the Western Australian Conference.

Whom Will I Be Seated Next to?

Sandy Wallis



A woman in her mid-50s sat next to me. I was hesitant. Ten minutes into the flight, I was tired and tempted to reach out for something entertaining, but I said a brief prayer: “Help, I want to do this; I believe You also want me to.”

Gathering my confidence, I asked: “Home or holidays?”

Lyn, my seatmate, was traveling to Melbourne for three days to visit her brother in his new nursing home. “What about you?” she asked.

“I was in Launceston to promote our Christian books at church.”

When she asked which church, I saw some recognition when I replied “Seventh-day Adventist.”

Lyn told me about her Adventist coworker, and her joy in learning to cook with more vegetables (once a week they “tag”-cook vegetarian lunches). Lyn and her brother had grown up in a religious home until he became a national pilot and left his active faith. A few years back he had suffered a cerebral hemorrhage, and half his body was paralyzed. Jim had since given his heart back to God and was attending church weekly. Sadly, his marriage ended, and he went into a nursing home. Jim self-published a small book about his renewed commitment to Christ and receives letters from people who have renewed their faith because of his testimony. His Sunday visits to church have expanded to a large (van) taxi to include residents and staff who join him!

I pulled out a copy of *The Great Controversy* from my bag. “Jim might appreciate this,” I told Lyn. I introduced the chapters starting with the destruction of Jerusalem, the Reformers, and then Jesus’

instruction to watch for the signs of His soon return.

With delight Lyn said, “I want to read this before I give it to Jim!” I told her she could keep it, and promised to drop off a copy to Jim.

A few days later I dropped by to see Jim, but he was away, so I left the book with a card.

The next day I missed his call, but later listened to his voice message. A deep clear voice said:

“Sandy, I am so pleased to have this book. I am already well into it and very much appreciate it. Thank you. I hope we can meet soon.”

An hour later I received a second call. Jim’s voice broke as he spoke of his deep joy and conviction that God had led him to Jesus again. He asked, “When can we meet?” I promised to visit in a few weeks. Then Jim prayed the most earnest prayer of praise to God for his salvation, with words and a heart so sincere: “Lord I take it as Your will in my life that You have brought Sandy to meet Lyn and me. Please help me to be obedient . . .”

I can’t remember all of his prayer. But with my jaws dropped and my brain disengaged, I thanked God for the faithful Adventist member who witnessed to Lyn at her workplace, for Jim’s earnest faith, and for the confidence to say hello and to share.

Sandy Wallis is a literature evangelist in the Victorian Conference, Australia.



Partying With a Difference

Wendy Kent

A book party (health party) is a great opportunity to present valuable books and DVDs that contain life-changing truth in a fun and nonintrusive way. The presenter (book party literature evangelist) prays and, by God's leading, looks for a host. Anyone can be a host: church members looking for guidance in the act of witnessing to their family; neighbors, friends, or acquaintances. Everyone is a potential host!

Subsequent to finding a host, the host is encouraged to choose a theme for the party. Hosts may choose from any of the following: naturopathic and complementary healing, parenting and relationship development, emotional and psychological health, and physical and spiritual well-being. Although we specialize in these four different party themes to make them unique, Jesus is introduced in all themed book parties.

We like to give our potential guests a personal invitation; this can either be by word of mouth and/or by handing them one of our attractive book party invitations. Some of the most successful health parties are held in the host's home with a small group of friends, neighbors, or acquaintances; however, parties can be held anywhere: parks, cafés, halls, schools, churches. Every party is a success with God!

Book party literature evangelism is not a new idea, but was revamped in Queensland, in 2006, when Sone Mariner approached Angela May and me to start experimenting with this idea. Since then it has developed into a very natural and fun way of witnessing for Jesus.

A book party can be held on any day of the week. Full-time working hosts choose mostly Saturday nights or Sundays, and sometimes week-nights. At our parties we play health games that work in with our party theme. There are prizes given from our gift box that include a choice of



Steps to Christ, *The Great Controversy*, *Signs of the Times*, and other spiritual- or health-oriented gifts. We provide taste tests from our recipe books so that guests will be encouraged to purchase them to implement a healthy diet and assist their minds to be open to spiritual things.

All methods of literature evangelism are equally important in God's mission; book party literature evangelism provides an excellent way to reach people whom you may not find at doors or who possibly would not buy books through any other evangelistic method, but this gives them the same opportunity to experience the power of the Lord's literature and to connect with Jesus.

Another opportunity called "Book It In" has been developed for Sabbath School classes and small groups within our church to use book party literature evangelism as a part of their missionary outreach. This allows for more people to be involved and works toward our worldwide goal of Total Member Involvement. Dedicated church members are happy in the Lord as together we hasten the second coming of Jesus, by spreading the gospel through this medium and supporting local church evangelism goals. Ellen G. White's message to the church from God comes to mind: "Christ's method

alone will give true success in reaching people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good" (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143).

The success of the book parties, I believe, is the action of taking time to have fun, relax, and laugh, while building friendships and trust. It's the seeking of souls through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the living aligned to God's mission with a prayer always on our lips. Through these parties and the purchasing of our books, people have implemented a healthy diet, stopped smoking, have come together in marriage, attended Bible studies and church, and most of all—given their hearts to Jesus.

"The publications sent forth from our printing houses are to prepare a people to meet God. Throughout the world they are to do the same work that was done by John the Baptist for the Jewish nation. By startling messages of warning, God's prophet awakened men from worldly dreaming. Through him God called the backsliding Israel to repentance" (*Colporteur Ministry*, pp. 3, 4).

Wendy Kent is a book party host and literature evangelist in the South Queensland Conference, Australia.

In Tune With the Times

Be alert. Be focused. Be active.

Larry Carter

Los Angeles, California, is listed as the tenth-least-religious city in the United States by the *Huffington Post*. In August 2015, 24 percent of its population were listed as unaffiliated to any religion. Living amid growing secularism is challenging. How do Christians maintain their faith while living in such a culture? For many years I viewed Revelation 3:11 with a prophetic mind-set because of its similarity to Revelation 22. As I studied this verse in the context of the Philadelphia church, it spoke to me on three vital points on living a sanctified Christian life today.

Always live with Christ's imminent return in mind

After more than 2000 years the statement "Behold, I come quickly" (Rev. 3:11, KJV) becomes questionable! The issue, however, is not when He is coming, but that He might show up at any time! Always live with Christ's imminent return in mind, so you won't be caught off guard! Not out of fear, but in wisdom, as one guards for eventual break-ins (1 Thess. 5:2).

Why Philadelphia? The church gave up much for their beliefs. In Revelation 3:10 John tells us they are special because they were faithful. Verse 11 states how they could be faithful. First, they lived as if Christ were coming quickly, not looking to a future, but imminent. This is the major motivating factor in living the sanctified life. The "pursuit of happiness" (materialism and hedonism) loses focus while being weighed down by unnecessary cares. Keep your mind clear and alert each day. Life is meaningful in the same way that one prepares to see a long-lost relative or friend.



What do you have?

Second: “Hold fast what you have” (Rev. 3:11, NKJV). No, it’s not a suggestion to ensure all your titles and holdings are legal. It’s an injunction to prioritize our relationship with God, something that cannot be stolen or destroyed (Matt. 6:19-21). The first part of this verse bleeds over to the second, that if you are preparing to see Jesus, you must invest time in study and prayer. You cannot invest all your time and energy pursuing superficial things of life. Houses, cars, sports, clothing are put on the back burner. You find joy and peace in knowing Christ by studying and talking to Him, the cornerstone and center of your existence. By clinging to God’s Word, you find strength, joy, and peace.

Who needs jewelry, anyway?

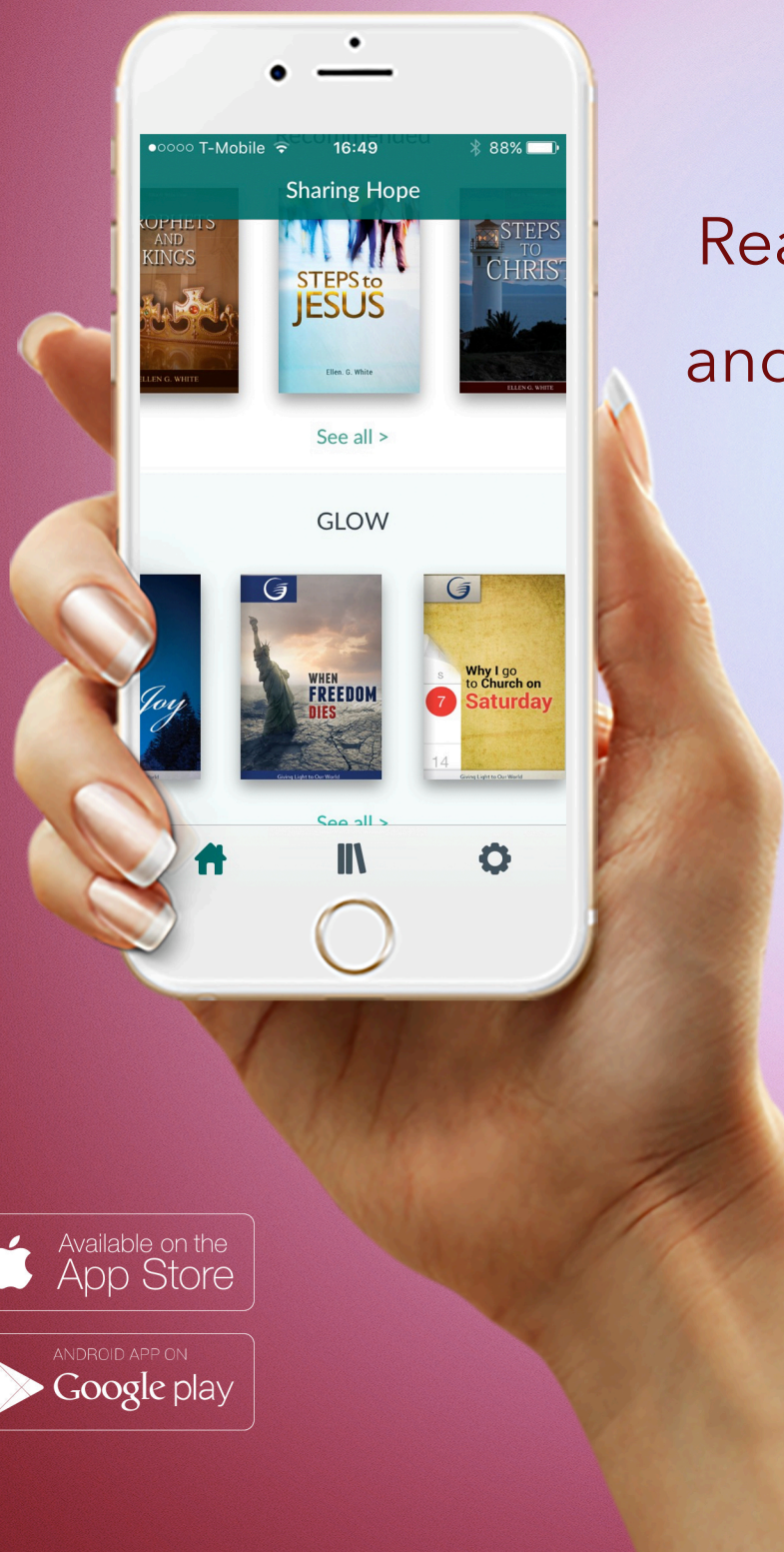
“That no one may take your crown” (Rev. 3:11, NKJV). Third, the natural results of the turned-on life is telling others about this wonderful God you serve.

The only way to lose your crown is if you have no star to put in that crown. What’s the significance of the crown with jewels? Apart from materialism, secularism leads to individualism and nominalism (a focus and emphasis on the self). Faith is not private but public. It must be shared! True joy comes not only from material gains but also selfless service to others. Heirs to the kingdom work to ensure others join them. These are the jewels on their crowns (Isa. 62:3; Zech. 9:16; Mal. 3:17; 1 Thess. 2:19). There is no greater joy than having a friend or relative come into a saving grace relationship with Christ. Living the Christian life is evangelism in action.

Focusing on the Second Coming moves us to study, pray, and witness.

Larry Carter is the director of literature ministries for the Pacific Union Conference in California, United States.

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