



REFLECTION

THE FAMILY IN LARGE CITIES

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This article aims to raise awareness regarding the dangers that families face in big cities. It is very important to consider what God warns about life in these overly populated areas, where pollution, stress, noise, and bustle dominate everywhere.

Let us first look at Lot's situation in ancient times and consider what the Lord's holy word says. "And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." Genesis 13:10-13.

This is a very sad story. Lot had to suffer the terrible consequences of his wrong decision. As we know, his wife died after escaping from Sodom, turning into a pillar of salt when she disobeyed by looking back. And not only that; to obtain offspring, his daughters committed the terrible sin of incest with him.

Now let us consider what God explains through the gift of prophecy. "When Lot entered Sodom, he fully intended to keep himself free from iniquity and to command his household after him. But he signally failed. The corrupting influences about him had an effect upon his own faith, and his children's connection with the inhabitants of Sodom

bound up his interest in a measure with theirs. The result is before us. Many are still making a similar mistake....

"There is not one family in a hundred who will be improved physically, mentally, or spiritually by residing in the city....

"You moved your families into places of temptation, and the ark of God, your glory and defense, you did not consider essential; and the Lord has not worked a miracle to deliver your children from temptation...."

"Take your families away from the cities is my message.

"The time has come when, as God opens the way, families should move out of the cities. The children should be taken into the country. The parents should get as suitable a place as their means will allow." -*The Adventist Home*, pp. 138, 137, 139.

I conclude this article with some statements and warnings found in the same book (Chapter 20).

Health. "The physical surroundings in the cities are often a peril to health. The

constant liability to contact with disease, the prevalence of foul air, impure water, the crowded, dark, unhealthful dwellings, are some of the many evils to be met."

Cities foster iniquity. "The cities are filled with temptation."

Turmoil and confusion. "It is not God's will that His people shall settle in the cities, where everything is constant turmoil and confusion."

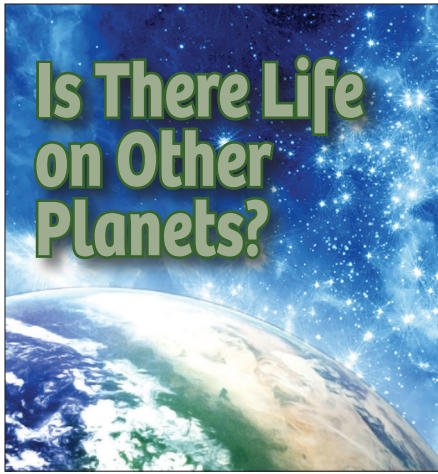
Labor troubles. "Through the working of trusts and the results of labor unions and strikes, the conditions of life in the city are constantly becoming more and more difficult."

Impending destruction. "The time is near when large cities will be swept away, and all should be warned of these coming judgments....

"Life in the cities is false and artificial....

"Get out of the large cities as fast as possible." -*The Adventist Home*, pp. 135, 136, 139.





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The question has been asked, "Is there life on other planets in the universe?" One famous scientist who thought so was Carl Sagan (1934-1996), Cornell University Professor, American astronomer, planetary scientist, cosmologist, astrophysicist, astrobiologist, author, and science communicator, co-writer, and host of his famous program "Cosmos: A Personal Voyage." He is reported to have once said something like, "If there are at least one million stars in the Milky Way and at least one million other Milky Ways, and if there's only life on one in a million planets, there's got to be one million other planets with life on them."

This was in the 1980s, before the Hubble Telescope was launched in 1990. After that, it was discovered that there are at least one billion stars in the Milky Way and at least one billion other galaxies. But in December 1993, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) did a retrofit on the telescope's lens, installed better cameras, and improved the workings of the telescope. The estimate of the number of stars in the Milky Way was changed, along with the number of galaxies, to around 250 billion, plus or minus 100 billion.

A scientific research effort to discover life elsewhere is called SETI-Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence. It can be looked up on the Internet. It is an institute that is looking for some kind of sound that might come from a wireless communication device, such as a radio, TV, or telephone. The spectrums of light and sound are enormous. Our eyes see only a small portion of one spectrum, and our ears also hear only a tiny portion.

The searchers reason that if the universe is billions of years old, then by now some creatures somewhere should have come up with a way to communicate wirelessly (and thus have sent out detectable communications); and therefore, we should be able to pick up traces of that communication. So far there has been nothing. Does that mean that this inhabited planet is alone in the universe?

Mankind has been sending out wireless communications for about 120 years, since the time of the early radios. Such signals would have only reached into space about 100 light years' distance up to now. Considering that the Milky Way is 100,000 light years across, 100 light years is hardly 1 percent of the way across the Milky Way—an insignificant distance. In cosmological terms, man has not even reached the end of his nose, much less the end of the block or the next town (the next galaxy).

A few Bible verses shed light on this subject. The first is Hebrews 1:1, 2. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds." God made other worlds. While this verse does not say that He created other worlds with life on them, there is a verse that implies that. "And God said, Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness..." Genesis 1:26.

The phrase "in our likeness" implies that God had made other beings in other worlds that were not in His likeness. And in the book of Job is a confirmation that this is so. "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them." Job 1:6; see also Job 2:1. Who were these "sons of God"? In the Bible, this phrase applies to those who are born again. They are "sons of God" by recreation and are no longer classed with "the children of men." But there is another class that is not often thought of as being born of God—those like Adam, who came forth directly from the Maker's hand. "Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God." Luke 3:38.

Some may argue that the sons of God in Job 1 and 2 were from the redeemed of earth, based on the idea that when people die they go straight to heaven or hell. While not considering the con-

cept of soul sleep and the resurrection, it cannot be denied that the following reference points to a time when no one had yet died on the earth and therefore no one could have gone to heaven when the creation of earth was finished and the "sons of God shouted for joy!"

"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" Job 38:4-7.

These verses imply that there are other worlds with life on them and that the first created beings from those worlds are "sons of God" and have direct access to the councils of God. How often such councils take place we cannot know, but there is a hint in Isaiah 66:23. "And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me, saith the Lord." So it is possible that the councils spoken of in Job happen at regular intervals, perhaps once a month. The point is, these "sons of God" were the first created beings of other worlds.

Another text sheds light on this subject. It is the parable of the good shepherd, who risked his life for his lost sheep. "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth



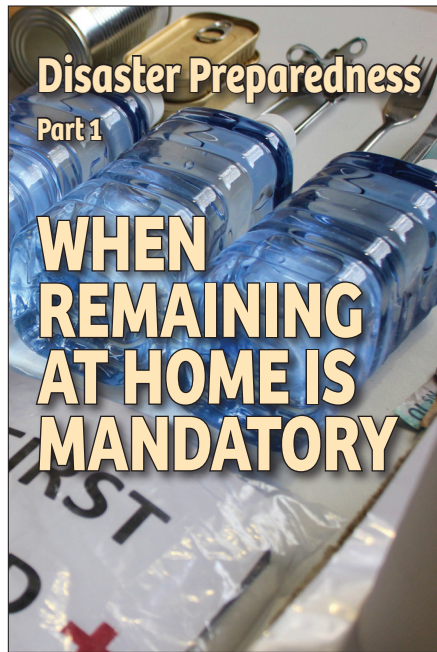
together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost." Luke 15:4-6.

Since Jesus is the One through whom God made the worlds, if one of them should go astray, someone needed to go and seek that which was lost. This parable, if taken literally, could say that there are 99 other inhabited worlds; but that is stretching the parable too far—or not far enough. Jesus was implying that He was the One who came to redeem man and the world. The question is, Who will accept the salvation that He brought about?

He who, "for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2), calls man to join Him on His throne: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne." Revelation 3:21.

When that happens, all of the questions will be answered directly by Him who has all of the answers. Only "God ... knoweth all things." 1 John 3:20. "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen." 2 Peter 3:18.

That is the essential knowledge. "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" John 3:17; 17:3.



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What is a disaster? A sudden calamitous event bringing great damage, loss, or destruction.

As Seventh-day Adventists, we are well aware of the signs of the times telling us that the end is near. Natural disasters seem to be increasing in frequency and severity. But it can be not only something that occurs in nature, such as a flood or an earthquake; a disaster can be caused by an electrical or gas malfunction starting a fire, or a plumbing issue that floods the interior of a home. Whatever the case may be, being prepared can help in surviving a disaster and minimizing suffering, damage, and loss. In the recent hurricanes, Helene and Milton, according to news reports, Florida was considered to be well prepared, while North Carolina was not.

In this article, I will discuss what should be done when remaining at home is the best option—called "sheltering in place" since the COVID-19 event. Circumstances that could dictate this scenario might be significant road damage, in which case local authorities may advise that it is safer to remain at home rather than venture out. This assumes that one's home is safe; otherwise, an outbuilding, barn, shed, or tent may serve as a temporary shelter. In future articles, I will address the issue of being ready to evacuate on a short notice and being prepared for a possible disaster while driving or traveling.

Let us consider a few basics of disaster preparedness. For physical survival, air, water, food, and shelter are required. We can survive 3 minutes without air, 3 days without water, and 3 weeks without food. Shelter from excessive heat or cold is also necessary. Any state of preparedness needs to address these fundamental facts. This is especially true in different regions where one faces particular challenges, such as residents in the southeastern part of United States, who are frequently threatened with tornadoes, hurricanes, and flooding, while in the western states fires and earthquakes are more likely to occur. Admittedly, in the fallen world in which we live, a disaster can happen anywhere.

To personalize this article, my own involvement with disaster preparedness began 15 years ago when my 90-year-old mother started her Alzheimer's disease decline. Since I was working as a home care physical therapist, I decided to keep her at home with caregiver support while I was at work. One of my neighbors, a retired police officer, was very helpful in advising me how to set up the household for any potential calamity. In addition, a close friend who had already lived off the grid in Oregon for a few years was a wealth of information on maintaining materials and supplies. During this time, I also read numerous books and articles and spoke with fire fighters and others who were knowledgeable on disaster preparedness. Following is a list of basic necessities that are recommended when the best option in view of a calamity is to stay home.

Water. The general recommendation is 1 gallon of potable water per person per day. This includes drinking, cooking, and basic hygiene. If possible, more would be better. A water supply may be necessary if the city cuts off water because of an earthquake, or if well water is not available because of loss of power. Potable water can be stored for prolonged periods of time in specially made containers (ranging from several to 100 gallons or more) with added iodine to prevent bacterial growth. Even with added iodine, it is a good idea to change the water every few months. Another option is to buy and store bottled water. In areas where a river, stream, or lake is nearby, having a portable water filter is recommended, such as one used for camping.

Food. While in previous articles I have recommended the use of fresh foods, when it comes to preparing for a disas-

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ter, having prepackaged food is a wise choice. When gas or electricity are in short supply or unavailable, having canned or packaged food can be a lifesaver: beans, lentils, vegetables, fruit, nuts, seeds, chips, crackers, and energy bars. There seems to be an ever-increasing variety of these foodstuffs. Consider MREs (meals ready to eat), which are distributed to people using Meals on Wheels and are also available in stores that sell camping supplies. Each person in the family should have enough food to last at least a month. Do not forget food and water supplies for pets and animals that you may have.

Light. Loss of power during storms or from other causes necessitates the use of flashlights or more antiquated sources of light, such as oil lamps or candles. It is always a good idea to have at least two flashlights available in a household, along with fresh batteries. Oil lamps and candles should not be left unattended.

Heat and energy. Disasters may lead to the loss of sources of heat (electricity, oil, gas, and coal), so it is important to have lots of warm clothing and blankets. A more powerful way to stay warm is to use a multi-fuel generator that runs on gasoline or propane. Propane is safer to store and may be available when or where gas is not. Propane heaters can make it possible not only to keep warm, but also to prepare food. It is imperative to learn how to use these tools in advance and to know the safety factors associated with keeping propane tanks and gasoline containers on your property. Generators, like other mechanical devices, need to be started and run for 10-15 minutes every month. Gasoline needs to be refreshed every few months, along with the additives provided to help keep it stable. Generators can be useful in keeping refrigerated or frozen food from spoiling in the event of a prolonged power outage or other calamity.

Personal experience. Once, during a January cold spell, the heater in my house broke down on a Friday afternoon. The necessary circuit board was not available until the following Monday morning. I was able to close part of the house and keep my elderly mother warm and comfortable with the use of a propane heater. From time to time, I needed to open the window to let in some fresh air.

First aid kits. Local pharmacies offer a variety of sizes of first aid kits. For home use one of the larger kits is advised, if

for no other reason than that they often have an instructional manual included. Read the manual and train all of your family members in how to use the first aid kit.

Make sure that everyone knows where the kit is located!

Medications and toiletries. Just as with food and water, make sure that you have extra medications and toiletries to last at least one month. With mail order prescriptions, as well as in local pharmacies, a physician's request is needed to override an existing prescription.

Tools. One of the common problems with tools is not the lack of them but not knowing where they are. In a well-organized household, there is a place for everything and everything is in its place. After using tools, clean them and return them to the tool box or the designated cabinet where they are kept.

Emergency exits. If a fire, smoke, or carbon monoxide alarm goes off in the middle of the night, instruct the family members how to proceed based on a previously arranged exit. This should especially be taken seriously if the dwelling is a two-story house. Also, remember to keep fire extinguishers in the house—at least one of them in the kitchen. Make sure everyone who is able to do so knows how to use them.

Communication. In addition to a generator, it may be a good idea to have a power bank to charge cell phones and extra batteries to run a small transistor radio. They may be the only way to have a connection to the outside world.

Lessons from the Bible. In antiquity, loyalty to and dependence on a tribe were considered highly valuable virtues. People depended on one another and the community for day-to-day survival. In stark contrast, at some point in U.S. history, a different set of values developed among pioneers living on the frontier— independence and rugged individualism. While we may have the frontier spirit, living in small or large communities requires both independence and interdependence for survival, especially because family members often live far away from each other and society in general is becoming increasingly depersonalized.

As an example of well-planned disaster preparedness, consider a small, isolated community along the Northern California coast. Dillon Beach is a census-designated community in Marin County, California. It is one of the many tiny hamlets that dot the Point Reyes

Peninsula. The population was 246 in the 2020 census. This small community is a few miles west of the Shoreline Highway and connected to it by a narrow road. The residents are aware that they live near the epicenter of the great 1906 San Francisco earthquake, and that in the event of an earthquake or fire, destruction of the only road that connects them to the rest of the world would mean isolation and an inability to obtain necessities for an indefinite period of time. In addition, first responders are often called upon to give priority to larger communities first, while smaller communities in remote and isolated areas tend to be the last to receive assistance. For all these reasons, Dillon Beach residents have a highly organized way of preparing for disaster, including privately and publicly held materials, supplies, and other necessities for survival. They also keep lists of skills that different people have to offer to assist the afflicted and to restore and rebuild damaged buildings.

The example of this small community may be of some value to the believers who are seriously considering moving out of the cities and into the country as part of their preparation for the end times. It is a daunting task to foresee all the possibilities that may occur and placing into effect methods that address response to a disaster. But I think it is helpful to have at least some of the basic knowledge of materials and processes that can help to minimize the harm and stress caused by a sudden calamity.

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