

American Union

Newsletter

Volume 42, No. 1 – January 2025

THE OPEN DOOR

you, I am the Door of the sheep. All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the Door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." John 10:7-9.

Jesus is the door through which we need to go to find salvation and life. He is the open Door that He presented to the church of Philadelphia. Yes, He is the door to the Most Holy Place in heaven. He is the Most Holy One. He is the Door to a holy way of living.

There was an entrance to the temple in Jesus' day called the sheep gate. Sheep had to be washed in the nearby pool, after which they were taken through the sheep gate into the temple to be sacrificed. In the same manner, Jesus was called to be the Lamb who was sacrificed to save man from sin.

Perhaps you are seriously considering baptism. If so, make your commitment to wash away your sins now, in 2025.

Elder Idel Suarez, Jr.
American Union President
Macon, Georgia

"I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name." Revelation 3:8.

A call to go through a new open door

To the church of Philadelphia—brotherly love—Jesus set an open door. The opening of that door, according to the understanding of the pioneers of the Advent Movement, was to the Most Holy Place in heaven in 1844. As we consider the New Year 2025, let us reflect on what else that open door may mean. It is to consider the future with a closer walk with Jesus. It is an invitation to enter a new relationship with Christ. It is a call to close the past and open a new way to being holy, just, and good. God honestly desires us to be happy, find fulfillment in serving Him, and help others in need. The open door is an invitation to be good and to do good with Jesus.

Janus, the god of doorways

In Roman times, Janus was the "god of the door and gate." The first month of

the year occurred in the dead of winter and was called Janus—January. That was the god of the "triumphal arch." Since a door is not only a way in, but also a way out, Janus was represented as a god with two faces. He could see forward and backward.¹

The name Janus comes from the Latin word *ianua*, which literally means "door." He was the god of beginnings and doorways. He was also the god of time, the master of time. He oversaw the transitions in life—births, marriages, and deaths. And he was associated with the beginning and end of war. The doors of his shrine remained open whenever Rome was at war and were closed in times of peace.² Yet Janus was a myth. He was a part of the Roman mythology of gods.

Jesus—the Door of God

In the New Testament, Jesus is presented as the true God of the doors. Jesus said that He is the Door. "Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto



Take the path of the lambs and sheep that were washed in the pool so they could be taken into the temple of God. There is a heavenly temple that we must strive to enter, but we need to be without spot or blemish. Baptism symbolizes Christ cleansing us from our sinful past.

The sheep gate was built by the family of the high priest in Nehemiah's time. It was one of the ten gates into Jerusalem. "Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel." Nehemiah 3:1.

We need to sanctify the sheep gate. Symbolically, as we start the new year, we need to seek sanctification through Jesus Christ. Let us make a resolution to be holy, even as He is holy. Sanctification is achieved through the word of God, through keeping the Sabbath, through eating wholesome food, through separating from fornication, and through setting time apart for God and eternity. Will you invite Jesus to sanctify you in this new year?

The Jews were instructed in the Old Testament to take a *Mezuzah* (parchment on which is written Hebrew verses) and place it on the doorposts of their doors and on their gates. Modern Jews just place a couple of letters on the doorways of their homes. They touch it. They kiss it. But God wants us to place the law of God on the doorposts of our being—that is, in our hearts. "And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates." "And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates." Deuteronomy 6:9; 11:20.

Memorize the law. Live the law. Teach the law of God. Ask Jesus to write His law in your mind and heart so you will love to obey Him.

Jesus, the God of time

Jesus is also the God of time. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. He holds time in His hands. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." Hebrews 13:8. The apostle Paul wrote that Jesus does not change with time. He also taught that He is eternal, infinite. Human beings change and are finite. When they come to a certain point, they cease to exist. But if they are connected with Jesus, like Him they will never cease to be.

John wrote that Jesus created time. There was and is nothing that has ever existed that He did not create. Therefore, time exists, and He created it from nothing—*ex nihilo*. Jesus is the beginning. He antedates everyone and everything together with the Father. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." John 1:1-3. There was never a time when Jesus did not exist. "He was with God from all eternity, God over all, blessed forevermore."³

"He assures us that there never was a time when He was not in close fellowship with the eternal God."⁴ John took his readers back to Genesis 1:1, where it is recorded that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Thus, in John 1, Jesus was presented as the One who created time, space, and matter. Although He existed outside of them, in His incarnation, He limited Himself to time, space, and matter. This is a mystery—the greatest mystery of all time.

Jesus was incarnated and born as a human being in Bethlehem, but He was and is from everlasting in His preexistence. He is God, who created time. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Micah 5:2.

So, as we consider the new year, let us ponder the fact that time will eventually cease for us unless we become united with Jesus. We need to use the gift of time to know the God of time, space, and matter, as Paul advised us to redeem "the time, because the days are evil." Ephesians 5:16.

Paul also wrote that we need to know Jesus in righteousness. Let this be a year in which we are right with God, with others, and with ourselves. Let God cover us right now, at this time,



with righteousness as we exercise our faith in Jesus and ask Him to bring that about. "To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Romans 3:26.

"Who will seek at the beginning of this new year to obtain a new and genuine experience in the things of God? Make your wrongs right as far as possible. Confess your errors and sins one to another. Let all bitterness and wrath and malice be put away; let patience, longsuffering, kindness, and love become a part of your very being; then whatsoever things are pure and lovely and of good report will mature in your experience...."⁵

"A new year has opened upon us. Let it be a happy New Year.... Nestle in the sheltering arms of Jesus, and do not wrestle yourself out of His arms. Just believe and praise God and go forward. We are almost home."⁶

"The Lord is coming. Look up and rejoice, for your redemption draweth nigh. I see in Jesus a compassionate, loving Redeemer, One who can save to the uttermost all who come unto Him. Bear your whole weight on the promises of God. Believe it is your privilege to believe."⁷

Will you say "Amen" to this? Amen!

¹ Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth, *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd ed., s.v. "Janus," p. 793.

² Ibid.

³ Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, April 5, 1906.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, May 3, 1899.

⁵ Ellen G. White, *Lift Him Up*, p. 15.

⁶ Ellen G. White, *This Day with God*, p. 9.

⁷ Ellen G. White, (Letter 31, January 1, 1887, to Martha Bourdeau, wife of an early minister in Europe) *This Day with God*, p. 9.



Barbara Watts
Norman Park, Georgia

The topics presented during the American Union Conference were selected from the apostle Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus. The motto was "Filled with the Spirit." Ephesians 5:18. This summary presents highlights from the services and workshops for the adults. Meetings and rec-



reation for the children and young people were held simultaneously in other locations on the campus.

Thursday

At 4 pm on Thursday, *Elder Idel Suarez, Jr.*, welcomed all who were present for the first meeting and shared information about ***Ephesus—A World Wonder***. "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." Ephesians 1:1. Rome ruled the world when Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesian believers, and Roman citizens enjoyed the greatest privileges. But the apostle was not free, even though he was a Roman citizen. Chained to a Roman soldier, he rejoiced to be able to reflect the light of Heaven to the believers in Ephesus and to all Christians throughout the world. And, yes, the light comes to us as well.

The letter to the Ephesians overflows with joy at divine grace and the Holy Spirit's work. At that time, there was not widespread knowledge of the Holy Spirit. That is why, when Paul asked Apollos and the men with him, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" they replied, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." Acts 19:2. They rejoiced to learn about and embrace the Holy Spirit and were rebaptized in the name of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is like the sap of a tree, giving life and healing.

The believers in Ephesus kept God's commandments and the faith of Jesus. As the first church to be addressed in the seven prophetic churches of Revelation 2, 3, Ephesus was known as "desirable." Many of the city's features made it a prototype of America, including having the four freedoms of speech, religion, press, and assembly. It was known for its library and schools. The apostle John, Mary the mother of Jesus, and Mary Magdalene lived there. The United States at its founding was blessed with pioneers of renown who preached the everlasting gospel. But just as Ephesus lost its blessings, so the U.S. has lost its moral foundation. In the message to the angel of the church of Ephesus, Jesus urged them (and also us) to "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works;..."

The worship service at 5 pm was presented by *Elder Larry Watts* from Ephesians 1:5, 11, with the title ***Sit, Walk, Stand***. This is the title of a book published in 1957 as a study of the book of



Ephesians from the sermons of Watchman Nee. The "in Christ motif" is shown in the above scriptures and others (see verses 3, 6, 8, 9, 12, 13). "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will."

Each believer is placed "in Christ" by God's act. This includes justification and forgiveness, the first of three steps. We are seated "in Him" in heavenly places. "Christ in you" is the second step. As we walk before the world in love, the Spirit

gives a revelation of Christ to the world. We are sanctified through obedience to the truth. This process prepares us for the third step—standing before the enemy and giving glory to God.

The book of Ephesians is an extended explanation of these three steps. Chapters 1-3 show what God has done in putting His sons and daughters in Christ; chapters 4, 5, 6:1-9 reveal how to walk in love (abandoning pride, love of sin, fear of loss, and ignorance); and chapter 6:10-18 portrays the victory of being “in Christ” and “Christ in you” to overcome the enemy before His second coming.

These relationships occurred in the life of Adam and also in the lives of Abraham, who learned not to make flesh his arm; Isaac, who was confronted by and patient with his neighbors over and over again until he prevailed (Genesis 26:22); and Jacob, who faced his worst enemy, his brother, after he himself overcame. Genesis 32, 33.

After dinner, *Elder Pablo Hunger* spoke on the topic **Mystery of His Will**, with reference to Ephesians 1:9; 2:3; 5:17. We serve an amazing God, whose mysteries appear in the natural world at every level and especially in the spiritual world. “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” Ephesians 1:9. “... I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass: I have purposed it, I will also do it.” Isaiah 46:11.

God makes no mistakes. “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” Ephesians 5:17. How God deals with sin is another enormous mystery. He predestinated that all men should be saved, while granting to each person freedom to choose his own destiny. God alone knows how to reach and transform the human heart. In His infinite knowledge, Jesus calls, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30. With the Holy Spirit, Jesus’ Representative on earth, living within the believers, they become invincible against the powers of darkness. Their constant prayer is, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” Acts 9:6. Wonder of wonders!



Friday

Based on Ephesians 1:13; 4:30, the morning worship was presented by *Elder Humberto Avellaneda* under the title **The Spirit’s Sealing Work**. All through the letter to the Ephesians are scattered mysteries and glorious truths concerning the work of the Holy Spirit. “In whom [Christ] ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.” In the agricultural world, animals are branded with a mark that identifies them as belonging to a certain owner. No matter where the animal may go, even if it gets lost, when it is found, that mark supplies the evidence of who its owner is. The Holy Spirit accomplishes this same thing in the believer’s heart. “And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” In Revelation 14:1, this guarantee is described as the “Father’s name written in their foreheads.”

Satan is using every means he can to turn God’s people away from truth and to make

them waver or delay action. The Holy Spirit cannot be ignored or pushed away without enormous loss. “But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.” 1 Peter 1:25. Satan cannot touch those who are “hid with Christ in God.” Colossians 3:3.

After breakfast, **Workshop 1—Rekindling Love and Respect**, was led by *Elder Elijah Zwane* in English; a separate workshop was conducted by *Elder Ciro Arevalo* in Spanish. “Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.” Ephesians 5:33. The message of Malachi 4:5, 6, which is referred to as the “Elijah message,” was intended to move the believers’ hearts to draw close to each other, especially in the family, which would prepare them for Jesus’ coming, that “great and dreadful day of the Lord.” Indeed, the Scriptures stress the importance of heart religion. “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” Malachi 4:23.

Messages concerning the family and purity of life are needed as much today among God’s people as they were for Israel before entering Canaan. Everyone needs to be wide awake to these issues. In fact, the apostle Peter urged the fathers of his day to be careful how they related to their wives, who are heirs with them of the grace of life, so “that your prayers be not hindered.” 1 Peter 3:7. Love of the truth in the church’s services, for one another in the church, and within the family all preserve the power to obey and keep each one from destruction. The angels grieve and leave if there is strife in the home; but when the family members’ hearts are softened, the angels are attracted to that home, for it gives a living testimony of God’s love. Does Jesus live in your home? Is He the center of your family’s religion?





Viktor Frankl is quoted as saying, “Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.” “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” John 8:32.

Following lunch, Sister Margie Seely presented **Workshop 3—Choosing the Right School—the Golden Window.** Concerning the apostle Paul, Acts 19:9, 10 says, “But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.”

Early American history records that by 1636—within sixteen years of their arrival in the new world—the Pilgrims had an educational system in place. Until the early 1800s, it was believed that “Religion, morality, and knowledge—comprising the public philosophy—are no less essential to public happiness and good government.” —Hans Zeiger, Pepperdine School of Public Policy, “Educating Citizens: Have We Kept the Founders’ Ideals for Higher Education?” The system was financed primarily by churches. But by the 1830s, free public education financed by governments and taxes became dominant. In 1852, Massachusetts became the first state to pass a compulsory universal public school education law. But it was in the 1960s that the federal government’s role grew much larger. While at first done secretly, state-funded schools were primarily established to get rid of

If His love prevails, there will be harmony in your home, and your whole family will delight to say soon, “Behold I and the children which God hath given me.” “And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.” Hebrews 2:13; Isaiah 25:9.

Workshop 2—Parenting Solutions was held next by Elder David Moreno; Elder Inocencio Guardado guided the workshop in Spanish. In the key text, Ephesians 6:4, the apostle Paul addressed fathers: “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” The only qualification for this important role is to become a parent, which generally is not difficult to accomplish. The fact that such counsel is given means that there are multiple aspects that require thought and action. Sister Ellen G. White understood and wrote a great deal about the importance of parenthood. Books of special value include *The Adventist Home*, *Child Guidance*, and *Messages to Young People*.

Children are going to grow up, no matter what parents do. But Proverbs 22:6 is clear about the responsibilities and authority of parents to their children; it should be obvious that the children are not responsible for their parents. “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Parents have to work at this together in preparation, effort, and uniform firmness, with the common goals of their children’s salvation and their being a blessing in society for God’s honor. If the father and mother are not a team, rebellion will be the result, brought about because of discouragement

and provocation that arise when love is lacking and unreasonable demands are made.

Parents prepare their children to deal with the varied issues of life by bringing them up in the fear and admonition of the Lord, primarily by their direct influence and example. The home is to be a copy of heaven, as Sister White wrote: “Home should be made all that the word implies. It should be a little heaven upon earth...” —*The Adventist Home*, p. 15. Following is a list to follow for a well-ordered family.

- Make God the center of the family (worship)
- Maintain the sacred circle of privacy
- Seek unity and consistency
- Allow for individuality to think and act (God in you)
- Prioritize character development
- Share age-appropriate responsibilities
- Lower family stressors
- Provide a restful home environment



Christianity. Already in the 1800s, Sister White wrote that it was not safe to send one's children to state schools.

God is above all concerned about the safety of the mind. True education is the preparation for eternity, the training of new soldiers for Christ. Too often we send our children to battle before they have been trained; we send them to public schools, where they try to fit in by copying "accepted" ways of eating, dressing, and acting. But now, more than ever before, liberal leaders are pushing gross immoral, idolatrous concepts in state-funded schools.

Childhood is a very special time of formation, particularly in the acceptance of Jesus into one's heart. That is a window of opportunity that generally closes after the age of 30. The brain is the last to reach maturity, so the best time to make an investment into children's education is when they are young. This is an act of faith, especially on the part of parents. Choose home schooling; Orion Christian Academy, directed by Sister Margie, is an excellent option. God wants us to save our children, to invest time, funds, and ability in their education. You can also sponsor students and adopt children. But do not let your children be educated away from the church.

The afternoon was devoted to preparing for the Sabbath day. At 5 pm, the Sabbath opening service was presented by *Elder Joel Barnedo* on the topic **The Saints' Inheritance**, based on Ephesians 1:18. "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened: that ye may know what is the ... riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." The depths of love and grace were probed in considering Jesus' life on this earth. The Pharisees asked why He was eating with publicans and sinners—who we are! This Sabbath was a very special day for all who attended the

conference. Beginning with this meeting and going through the evangelistic meeting held after the Sabbath, all of the events were held in the auditorium, which included Sister Karola Kraenzmer playing the pipe organ with the piano for the congregational singing. To worship on the Sabbath with believers from so many different states and countries in this place was truly a delight, a little taste of heaven. The gospel was preached, the family was together, we had fellowship with the Creator, we worshipped Him with all our being, and we lifted our praises from hearts full of love for our Saviour, Lord, and King.

Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:1-3. God is watching over and gathering His children, preparing each one to pass safely through earth's last events. But He is also taking care of their future! What an amazing future that will be. Can you imagine living forever? Now is the time to be joyful that we belong to a church that matches the truths of Scripture! White robes will be given to all the saints, demonstrating Jesus' righteousness that is granted to every repentant sinner. Filled with His Spirit, we will rejoice in denying self and being crucified with Christ!

The last service of the day was presented by *Elder Neptali Acevedo*, titled **The Hope of His Calling**. The key text was the other portion of Ephesians 1:18. "... That ye may know what is the hope of His calling." To understand God's call, man must first understand why that call is necessary. God sees every person as he or she really is—born in sin, with a totally corrupt, depraved nature, under condemnation without any act on his or her part. The apostle Paul described it this way: "For I know that in me (that is in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." Romans 7:18, 19.

God does not blame man for being in this condi-



tion. Paul wrote, "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin." Verse 14. One may try by himself to get out from under Satan's control, but that is impossible. We need to open our eyes and see as God sees. Then we will hear and understand that the gospel is calling us to repent and turn to the Saviour for forgiveness and character transformation. Through the blood of Jesus Christ, being clothed with His perfect righteousness, and being filled with the Holy Spirit, we can live without sin. Jesus' sacrifice made that available to every human being, while the Father committed all heaven to accomplish it. The hope of His calling is real and mighty! It is rooted in God's plan—Christ in you, the hope of glory!

How is one filled with Jesus' presence? By submitting himself to God, having his heart united with Him, having his mind united with Jesus' mind, and living His life. Today is the day. God's call is more than just a call; it is a command that involves all of Heaven's resources. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18.

The gospel is a religion of hope, drawing one's thoughts increasingly higher, emptying man of self and sin. He "is passed from death to life." John 5:24. That is holiness. That is eternal life. "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." Romans 6:22. Do you want that? Whoever abides in Christ is made perfect, as expressed in God's holy



law. It is the gospel of hope, the Spirit of God living in his heart to transform every aspect of his life. Let your mind expand heavenward and embrace His call, the hope of glory!

Sabbath

At the morning worship service, *Elder Inayat Daniel* spoke about **Unity of the Spirit**, according to Ephesians 4:3. "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." This text gives the formula for unity. Jesus brought various individuals together from different backgrounds and commissioned them to become fishers of men. They were given new credentials and endowed with humility and love. It was no more tit for tat or an eye for an eye. Jesus taught the law of grace, and His disciples became people of peace. Especially on the cross Jesus gave the example of forgiveness and kindness, praying, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Luke 23:34. To the thief He spoke kindly and forgave him, promising him a place in His kingdom. After the ascension, the believers remembered His words; and "when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place." Acts 2:1.

Then persecution came upon the infant church, especially after the stoning of Stephen, and the people were scattered. They lost everything, but they did not lose their unity and faith. The conversion of the apostle Paul gave a tremendous impetus to the early Christian church. Now it is our turn to teach the law of grace—to be united and to educate the people to be God's sons and daughters. If we are persecuted, we are not to take revenge but to maintain the peace and unity that characterize heaven. We will be blessed if we

make this a top priority. From the very beginning of the Christian church—even as false teachings crept in, such as Satan's attack against the holy Sabbath day—through the Protestant Reformation, the Advent Movement, and now the Reform Movement, the message is the same: "Keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The Sabbath at this conference was a wonderful example of this!

Elder Uldarico Alejos led the **Sabbath school**. Missionary experiences were related by *Elder Pablo Hunger*, who told about the Rescue projects of the General Conference Missionary Department. He introduced small, colorful cards containing God's promises that can be handed out wherever one goes. For the health minute, *Sister Persia Suarez* told about the heart and its importance in health. What a person eats has a direct effect on his heart. One can be a vegetarian and eat junk food, but that is not wise. It is critically important to maintain a good diet of the very best whole foods. The Sabbath School Lesson was titled "Imparted Awareness." There were classes in Spanish and English and also for the children and young people. "Through faith in Christ, every deficiency of character may be supplied, every defilement cleansed, every fault corrected, every excellence developed." —*Education*, p. 257.

"The great storehouse of truth is the word of God—the written word, the book of nature, and the book of experience in God's dealing with human life. Here

are the treasures from which Christ's workers are to draw. In the search after truth they are to depend upon God, not upon human intelligences, the great men whose wisdom is foolishness with God. Through His own appointed channels the Lord will impart a knowledge of Himself to every seeker." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 125.



Before the sermon topic, **Filled with the Spirit**, was presented by *Elder George Gowie*, a children's story was told by *Elder Pablo Hunger*. *Elder Idel Suarez, Jr.*, summarized the activities and mission of Norman College and invited all who were in attendance to give generously of their time and means to support the work of the American Union. The youth choir sang a special song, and an instrumental ensemble of flutes and clarinet played "There Is a Place of Quiet Rest."

Elder Gowie pointed to the beginning of this world, when God created the earth, everything in it, and man. His Spirit "moved upon the face of the waters." Now, as the great adversary is marshalling his forces to destroy all who believe in God, Heaven is ready to pour out His Spirit in the latter rain. But God's people must be ready for this outpouring in heart, mind, and soul. The plan to redeem man after the fall was in harmony with the original creation, for God wants His children to live forever. The power that brought the world into existence is the power of redemption.





Jesus was what He taught—the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He accomplished His mission to sacrifice His life for the sin of the world during His stay on this earth. And then He sent the Holy Spirit as His Representative to sanctify His people through the truth, to transform each person's character, and to convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He promised to return and take to His Father's house all who embraced Him as their Saviour and

Lord. It is only by being filled with the Spirit that anyone will be fitted to inherit eternity.

The example was given of Zacchaeus, a tax collector and outcast in Jewish society. The Holy Spirit worked in his life, overruling human pride and moving him to repentance and reconciliation with God, which included making things right with his fellowmen. The day came when his burning desire was to see Jesus, and he persevered until this

happened. The Lord passed under the tree which he had climbed so that he could see the Saviour. He looked up and called him by name. "Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully." "And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:5, 6, 9, 10. Goodness, righteousness, and obedience to God's law were the fruit that the Holy Spirit produced.

What do we need? What does everyone need? Without Jesus we can produce nothing good. But, as the apostle Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature:..." Philippians 4:13; 2 Corinthians 5:17. Elder Gowie called for all who wanted to dedicate their lives to Jesus to stand and to come to the front of the auditorium. Almost everyone responded to the call! Heartfelt prayer was offered for all, with the reminder that what the Holy Spirit does will have eternal re-





sults! Let each of us desire wholeheartedly to be used by the Spirit now and in the latter rain!

Under the leadership of *Sisters Melite Hunger* and *Kaila Suarez*, the **Youth Program** was held after lunch. Two Bible verses set the tone for the meeting, calling all to be faithful to God. "That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel. Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power." "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." Ephesians 3:6, 7; 1 Timothy 4:12. Choirs and small groups presented beautiful music. Sister Persia Suarez put descriptions on the screen of different Protestant missionaries, and the congregation needed to identify from a list who each one was. May God bless the young people with inspiration, enthusiasm, and great love for the things of God!

The meeting to close the Sabbath was presented by *Elder Edison Henriquez*.

The title was **God's Household**, based on Ephesians 2:19. "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God." The apostle Paul presented the church as a place where people who suffer because of strife and division can find a place of peace, a message of hope, and a new influence. Indeed, when a person is in Christ, he gains a new identity that is very different from his previous one. This was a message that the apostle Paul—the one who was sent by God to give the gospel to the Gentiles—and Peter were especially inspired to preach. Since the Jewish leaders despised the Gentiles so much, it must have been an indescribable joy for them to hear the message, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew for the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness

into His marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." 1 Peter 2:9, 10.



The church as a family is made up of children of God, as well as parents with children. It is a household in which God is the Father, the believers are His children, and Jesus is their older Brother. The privileges of being members of God's household include (1) being sustained, protected, and educated; (2) having a deep, intimate relationship



with the others in that household; and (3) exercising love, respect, acceptance, understanding, and submission. For children to obey their parents in the Lord means to love them. Furthermore, the church is founded on Jesus Christ, who is the Chief Cornerstone, the Sure Foundation. That is the secret of family unity, for as each member comes close to Christ, he comes closer to his fellow believers. Furthermore, God is glorified as His people unite with each other and grow in grace, carefully guarding their spirits, actions, and words. There is no violence or neglect of any kind there—verbal, emotional, psychological, or physical. Rather, time is devoted to personal culture, training, education in right principles, and being a godly example. What are the responsibilities of the children (members) of the household? They are to live lives worthy of the heavenly Father, to love their enemies, to have a relationship with God's Son Jesus Christ, and to share the Holy Spirit.

After dinner, *Elder Henry Dering* presented the first of two evangelistic meetings. The title was **Finishing the 16th Century Protestant Reformation**. The upbringing and experiences of Martin Luther (1483-1546) were significant in the Protestant Reformation. He desired, as do all whose hearts are moved by the Holy Spirit, to be free from sin. As a monk, he tried the options that he learned in the Catholic Church but found no peace. His friend, Johann von Staupitz (c. 1460-1524), a German Catholic priest and theologian, university preacher, and Vicar General of the Augustinian friars in Germany, told him, "Look to Jesus Christ!" "Trust in Jesus!" Martin Luther remarked, "If it had not been for Dr. Staupitz, I should have sunk in hell." What Luther saw when he visited Rome, as well as the church's selling of indulgences, showed him the great difference between the church's teachings and the word of God. He was moved by the Holy Spirit to preach the

Word with clarity and power. He was excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church, and his books were burned.

Frederick of Saxony was Luther's protector, who intervened to take him and keep him safe in the Wartburg Castle in Eisenach, Germany. This

made it possible for Luther to translate the Bible into German so that the common person could read the holy Scriptures. Around the same time, the Holy Spirit moved other men to translate the Bible into the common languages of other countries.

The five *solas* of the Reformation are five Latin statements that summarize the core beliefs of Protestantism:

- *Sola Scriptura*: The Bible is the sole authority for Christians in faith, doctrine, and practice.
- *Sola Gratia*: Salvation is a gift of grace from God, not a result of human works or merit.
- *Sola Fide*: Salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ alone.
- *Solus Christus*: Salvation is found in Christ alone.
- *Soli Deo Gloria*: Salvation is a work of God for His glory.

But where does Protestantism stand today in comparison to the time of the early Protestant Reformation? Having accepted the Roman day of the sun as the holy day in place of the Sabbath day of the Lord and also having embraced the deceiver's lie from Eden ("Ye shall not surely die), the churches that once held the Bible to be their source of faith and practice are welcoming more and more Roman Catholic teachings. In addition, considering an individual's actions a means of salvation causes them more and more to adopt false forms of worship. The three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12 and the messages in 18:1-4 are of great importance for all the world to understand. God is calling His children out of those organizations that reject the sacred truths of the Scriptures. The final messages from Heaven will soon have reached every corner of the world, and God will finish His work of gathering His faithful people into His kingdom. Where will we stand?

At the end of this meeting, it was a great joy to hear Sister Karola Kraenzmer play "A Mighty Fortress" on the pipe organ.

Sunday

Elder Joami Barnedo gave the morning worship service on the topic of **The Spirit's Fruit**, from Ephesians 5:9. "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth." Why do some people become church members in other countries and then leave the body of Christ when they come here? In the great commission, Jesus taught, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Matthew 28:19, 20. He set the example as a missionary by healing, preaching, performing miracles, and looking for every opportunity to help someone. Do we do that? Can we talk to anyone?

Elder Barnedo told his own experience of relocating to Ohio. A brother called him and asked, "Are you ready to work for the Lord?" He was actually ready to drive a school bus. He replied, "Yes!" But then he had to pray, "Lord, help me! I don't know what to do!" However, slowly but surely he realized that this was the chance to do a great



work, for Jesus said, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” No one is alone; others will help; God helps! After all, how many people can say, “I work with the Creator of the universe”? The counsel of the apostle Paul is, “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children.” Ephesians 5:1. Follow Jesus’ example. Devote your life to God as a missionary, and you will produce fruit through the work of the Holy Spirit in you.

After breakfast, *Elder David Cabrera* presented **Workshop 1—Money Matters**. The same topic was presented to the Spanish-speaking group by *Elder Marcio Paz*. The Bible verse in Acts 19:19 was referenced, which describes the converted Ephesian believers’ burning their books on magic and witchcraft. Their conversion led to repentance and a complete change of habits and principles, including how to value property and money. Everyone handles money, some more successfully than others. Only few are able to handle a lot of money; if one has no respect for it, he will get burned.

The first principle is that everything we have came from God, and everything in the world belongs to Him. What governs our concept of giving back to Him? Is it limited to the tithe? If so, then the church will be diminished. Why? Because offerings are what keep things up—buildings, expenses, and activities such as education, production of literature, helping the poor, health counseling, and so on. That is why offerings also need to be systematic. Giving 10 percent tithe plus 10 percent offerings results in great blessings. In Christian stewardship, all we have is 0. We came into this world with nothing, and we will leave it with nothing. If we do anything at all in this world, it is simply stewardship for God. The parable of the talents shows the importance of doing what one likes and is good at. If one is not increasing financially, that talent is being buried. We need to define our goal and do our very best in our business or job. If we work only for money, we will fail. Luke 14:28 talks about counting the cost, which means to make a budget. It is possible to plan so that one can increase his income. Related to that is the concept of debt, which should be avoided at all costs, except to secure a loan to start a business.

How should one invest? First, define the goal, which is to advance God’s kingdom. There are four steps: (1) Support missionary work; (2) develop more; (3)



get educated in how to increase one’s earnings; (4) help those in need.

Money is an instrument for reaching a goal. How can one improve his work and make it more efficient? Here are some steps: (1) Hire others to assist; (2) educate others to assist; (3) create a family budget that can grow and meet the goal; (4) honor God with the budget; (5) remember who brought you to the point where you presently are, and be gratefully generous; and (6) it is good to have holy ambition by seeing resources as tools.

Workshop 2—Growing a Medicine Garden was presented in two parts—first by *Brother Paulos Haile*, and then by *Sister Lisbeth Hunger*. Ephesians 3:17 was the referenced Bible verse: “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love.” According to *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 183, God’s plan for Israel was that each family have a home on land with sufficient ground for tilling, thus being a useful, industrious, self-supporting style of life. This plan has never been improved on; it avoids widespread poverty and wretchedness. A small, well-planned plot of land can provide food for a family.

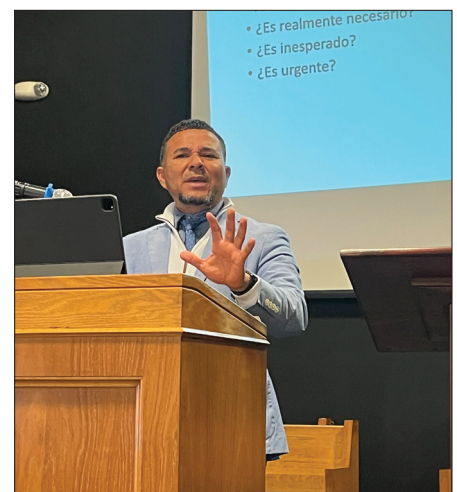
Brother Paulos explained about no-till farming (regenerative farming is related to this), in which the soil is carefully prepared and maintained, including non-edible cover crops planted so that earthworms and microbes are plentiful, the soil is constantly improved, weeds are smothered, pests are controlled, the chance of disease is reduced, erosion is slowed, and biodiversity is increased. It is important to acquire knowledge of and experience in the best organic farming methods; this will include analysis of the soil that one has and acquisition of knowledge and skill in how to improve it.

A summary about cover crops includes: (1) always try to cover your soil; (2) use cover crop as a living pathway; (3) cut but do not overkill; (4) in autumn, after it rains, plant cover crops, cover with a cloth cover.

Sister Lisbeth spoke about the Bible verse above. Food is medicine; and because we do not really know where the food we buy comes from, it is important to start immediately to grow some kind of garden, depending on the soil that is available. It takes time to gain experience, and good soil takes time to develop. She mentioned certain crops that are very beneficial for natural healing, such as artichokes, cardoun (artichoke thistle), garlic, carrots, and comfrey. She brought elderberry clippings that she shared and explained how the plant’s berries, flowers, and leaves all have health benefits.

May God give grace to His people to learn as quickly as possible how to use the gifts of the land that He has so generously provided. Let it all be rooted and grounded in love!

For the **Conference Close**, a few of the ministers spoke final words of encour-





agement and instruction. *Elder Larry Watts* expressed gratitude for those who were present at the very first meeting of the conference and remained to the very last. What does the church need? What does God need? When in the Bible prophets, kings, and helpers were called, what were they doing? They were busy—using their time wisely and doing their very best with whatever resources they had. God’s cause is looking for young people who are also busy working. May the Lord make you a fisher of men.

Elder Uldarico Alejos read Psalm 100:1-3. “When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them. The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.” Remember God in whatever you do, and pay close attention to how He guided you to where you are. God bless everyone who was present at the conference as well as all who read this summary.

Elder George Gowie explained that he will be visiting the Dominican Republic and asked to take greetings with him there, which were happily given by waving hands. He read Acts 1:6, 8: “When they therefore were come together, they asked of Him, saying, Lord wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” America has the responsibility to send the gospel to the rest of the world. There are faithful people praying and longing for the message from Heaven. Pray that you will be part of the great movement

to extend the kingdom of God!

Elder Idel Suarez, Jr., read Ephesians 6:21, 22: “But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts.” The apostle Paul ended the letter to the Ephesians with words of comfort, and Tychicus

was the messenger of these things. “He who will give himself fully to God will be guided by the divine hand. He may be lowly and apparently ungifted; yet if with a loving, trusting heart he obeys every intimation of God’s will, his powers will be purified, ennobled, energized, and his capabilities will be increased.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 283.

Elder Suarez expressed his gratitude to all who contributed to the smooth running of the American Union Conference, including the ministers of the American Union and the General Conference, the kitchen staff and volunteers, the transportation team, Sister Blanca Feliciano, who performs the housekeeping at Norman College, the interpreters, those handling the registrations, the musicians,



the multimedia team, and all of the attendees. We also thank those who provided photographs for this issue: Brothers Larry Watts and Adriel Arevalo, and Sister Helen Martinnen. The elders and ministers came to the front, and the benediction was pronounced upon the congregation after the singing of “God Be with You ‘til We Meet Again.”

After lunch, the American Union delegates began intensive meetings to learn about and make decisions concerning matters of Union-wide administrative, spiritual, financial, and legal importance. Their meetings continued on Monday and Tuesday.

The evening worship service was presented by *Elder Humberto Ajucum* on the topic of **Ambassadors for Jesus**. In Ephesians 6:20, the apostle Paul wrote, “For which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I



ought to speak.” These words, penned while he was imprisoned, reveal the essence of a true ambassador of Christ—someone who is faithful to his mission of proclaiming the gospel, even when under pressure. Sister White emphasized, “To everyone who becomes a partaker of His grace, the Lord appoints a work for others. Individually we are to stand in our lot and place, saying, ‘Here am I; send me.’ Whether a man be a minister of the word or a physician, whether he be a merchant or a farmer, professional man or mechanic, the responsibility rests upon him. It is our work to reveal to men the gospel of their salvation. Every enterprise in which we engage should be a means to this end.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 148.

An ambassador serves as a representative of his own nation in a foreign country. In this world, we represent the heavenly kingdom. Jesus declared,

"My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36); and as citizens of heaven, our calling is to reflect the principles of His kingdom—justice, love, and truth. Even when he was in chains, Paul spoke boldly, because he understood that he represented not a man or an earthly nation, but God Himself. He preached and wrote with even greater intensity under hardships, for they revealed the sufficiency of God's grace. Our testimony is dependent on God's work within us, not on our external circumstances. "The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He could solicit from His Father for the exaltation of His people. The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 671.

As the apostle, we are called to be ambassadors at all times, even if bound by the chains of adversity or misunderstanding. This privilege requires sacrifice, courage, and absolute dependence on the Holy Spirit. Only then can we represent the kingdom of God faithfully and proclaim His message of salvation with boldness.

After dinner, *Elder Henry Dering* presented the second evangelistic meeting, titled ***The Transforming Power of God's Grace***. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)." "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Ephesians 2:4, 5, 8, 9. God's grace is free to all who come to Jesus in faith. Yet the grace of God is the costliest of all gifts, for it cost God's Son His life.

What is grace? It is unmerited, undeserved, unearned favor—a gift offered by God Himself to every sinner. God loves man supremely to an infinite degree, and that is why John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." There is nothing anyone can do to make God love him more, and there is nothing anyone can do to make God love him less! Jesus' death on the cross, where



He carried and died for the sin of the whole world, was the ultimate expression of divine love and grace!

"The Bible does not teach that the sinner must repent before he can heed the invitation of Christ, 'Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.' Matthew 11:28. It is the virtue that goes forth from Christ, that leads to genuine repentance. Peter made the matter clear in his statement to the Israelites when he said, 'Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.' Acts 5:31. We can no more repent without the Spirit of Christ to awaken the conscience than we can be pardoned without Christ.

"Christ is the source of every right impulse. He is the only One that can implant in the heart enmity against sin. Every desire for truth and purity, every conviction of our own sinfulness, is an evidence that His Spirit is moving upon our hearts." —*Steps to Christ*, p. 26.

Salvation is the gift of God at every step. Justification (forgiveness of past sins), sanctification (transformation into God's image, becoming a new person by the Holy Spirit's abiding in one's soul), and glorification (physical change into immortality at Jesus' coming) encompass the righteousness that is given freely to all who accept Jesus as their Saviour and Lord.

All over the world, disaster, war, famine, economic upheaval, immorality, crime, and injustice are exploding. These are signs that Jesus' coming is very close. The promises contained in the holy Scriptures are messages of love from the Creator. He says, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." Luke 21:28.

May you be richly blessed and protected in the new year. God is in control of everything, of our very lives. Let us accept His rich gifts, especially the Holy Spirit, praise Him with all our being, trust Him fully, and live by faith.



Disaster Preparedness

Part 2

WHEN EVACUATION IS MANDATORY

Emil Bainhardt
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"Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved." Matthew 24:20-22, English Standard Version, 2016.

In a previous article on disaster preparedness, I passed along some advice on setting up the household for staying or sheltering in place during a calamity. In this article, I will discuss a number of steps to be taken well in advance so that one is ready when evacuation becomes mandatory. Most of the time, evacuations are mandated because of a major disaster such as an earthquake, flood, hurricane, tornado, or wildfire.

However, householders may also need to evacuate immediately if a fire happens to start within the home. Likewise, if a washer or other appliance leaks water and floods the interior of a residence, those who live there may need to evacuate to avoid the possibility of exposure to mold and mildew. Whatever the case may be, I cannot emphasize enough the importance of following the mandates of health and safety authorities to leave the premises immediately or within the specified time period. Failing to follow such directions will jeopardize not only your own life, but also the lives of your loved ones and

others in your surroundings, including first responders.

The mandate to leave one's home may be immediate, or one may have a few hours to prepare before having to leave. Sometimes people are instructed to prepare and wait until further notice.

I will illustrate these points in the context of the following examples, which happened a few years ago and were the most destructive wildfires known in Northern California. Several fires erupted at the same time, prompting firefighters from different parts of the world to come and help.

One of the fires raged about 30 miles north of where I live; flames driven by fierce winds destroyed entire neighborhoods in the city of Santa Rosa. My immediate supervisor, who lived in one of those neighborhoods, was wakened by first responders and instructed to leave her home immediately, which she did with just the clothes on her back and her little dog in her arms.

In the second example, some residents were given two hours to leave their homes. They loaded their vehicles with a few cherished belongings, water, food, extra clothing, and other necessities. They lived in their cars for a few days, parked on safe, quiet streets in nearby small towns.

One of the reasons why those fires were so difficult to bring under control was that the terrain consisted of densely forested hills with no fire roads.

In the third example, authorities notified citizens of high-fire-risk communities to pack up and evacuate on short notice. Fortunately for the last group, the fires that were headed in their direction were extinguished and the residents did not need to leave their homes after all.

We as human beings get attached to our homes and belongings; it seems like that is the natural order of things. But as Christians we are taught to avoid forming too strong an attachment to the things of this world. We look forward to the future glory that awaits God's faithful people in the kingdom to come.

Now, from a strictly worldly perspective, most possessions are replaceable and not worth risking one's life to save in a flood, fire, or other calamity. For many, at the top of the list of irreplaceable items would be family albums, cherished inherited items, like the box of grandma's favorite recipes or grandpa's woodworking tools. There are a number of ways to prevent losing such items in a disaster. One is to divide them among relatives so that at least some items would survive if there was a disaster. Photographs can be scanned, digitized, and copied now, with the originals being kept in a home safe or a safety deposit box in a bank. Firefighters recommend that a fireproof safe be kept in or near the corners of a house where the fire temperatures are not as high as in the center of the home. In addition to keeping original photos and important documents in a home safe or in a safety deposit box, more and more people see the wisdom of having external backup drives that are automatically kept up to date.



The foregoing offer some ideas about preparing one's home and belongings for a disaster. Now, let us consider a list of items one needs to have when evacuation is mandatory. Here are the categories of items that are recommended for evacuation, in no particular order.

- Bible, documents, important papers
- First aid kit, medications, basic toiletries
- Food, water
- Extra clothing, shoes, rain poncho, blankets
- Communication/electronic devices: pocket radio, cell phone, laptop computer, thumb drives
- Flashlights, extra batteries, energy banks
- Tool kit, utensils, knife, can opener, goggles, tarp
- Home evacuation bin

These items are packed in a backpack or duffel bag and kept in a clean, safe place. Disaster preparedness literature generally calls such things a "go bag," "grab and go bag," or "bug-out bag." Backpacks are more highly recommended than other travel containers, because they can be carried while leaving hands free for other tasks or using a walking stick or hiking pole. Every family member should have his and her own pack for food and personal items. While it is a good idea to have backup equipment and supplies, it may not be necessary for every household member to have a separate first aid or tool kit, unless separation is anticipated.

Now let us consider each category in greater detail.

Bible and documents

Make sure to have the Bible to strengthen the family's faith, maintain connection with the heavenly Father, and provide peace and quiet in the soul. Select a lightweight, water-resistant container for photocopies of the following important documents.

- Wills and trusts
- Insurance policies
- Vehicle titles
- Medical and immunization records, copies of prescriptions
- Health insurance cards
- Safety deposit box location, number, inventory of contents
- Certificates of birth, adoption, marriage, death
- Contact information for attorney, accountant, medical doctors, trustee
- Citizenship papers
- Passports, visas

- Directory or list of contacts
- User names, passwords
- Credit cards, cash (including coins)
- Social Security Number, driver's license, ID card
- Local maps

First aid kit, medications, and toiletries

(Recommended by the American Red Cross and FEMA).

- Sterile adhesive bandages in assorted sizes
- 2-inch sterile gauze pads (4-6)
- 4-inch sterile gauze pads (4-6)
- Hypoallergenic adhesive tape
- Triangular bandages (3)
- 2-inch sterile roller bandages (3 rolls)
- 3-inch sterile roller bandages (3 rolls)
- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Needle
- Moistened towelettes
- Antiseptic
- Thermometer
- Tongue blades (2)
- Petroleum jelly or other lubricant
- Assorted sizes of safety pins
- Cleansing agent/ soap
- Nitrile gloves (2 pairs)
- N95 respiratory mask
- Sunscreen
- First aid manual
- Prescription medications
- Aspirin, non-aspirin pain reliever
- Anti-diarrhea medication
- Antacid (for stomach upset)
- Laxative
- Activated charcoal (use if advised by Poison Control Center)
- Toothbrush, toothpaste
- Shampoo, brush
- Shaving kit, nail clippers
- Washcloth
- Soap, hand sanitizer
- Extra pair of glasses, if needed

Food and water

One should have at least a 3-day supply of non-perishable food. Granola or energy bars are recommended,



because they are small and filling and come in a variety of flavors. Dried fruit, nuts, and seeds are a good choice. If one may need food for a longer time, canned food can be considered along with the possible use of a camping stove. Red Cross and FEMA recommend a minimum of 3 days' water supply. A week or more would be better. The recommended quantity of water to have on hand is one gallon per person per day. This includes 2 quarts for drinking, 1 quart for cooking, and 1 quart for washing and brushing one's teeth. One may also consider mechanical water filters that can filter out contaminants. They come in many price ranges and are available at camping stores and online.



Clothing

Pack a few days' worth of clothes, including layers that you can add or remove, lightweight rain gear, waterproof boots, hats, caps, shawls, and work gloves. Adding some blankets can be helpful.

Communication/electronic devices

- Thumb drive containing an up-to-date digital version of important documents and records

- Pocket radio, operated by battery, solar power, or hand crank (AM/FM)
- NOAA Weather Radio for emergency warnings
- Cell phone
- Laptop computer or tablet
- Power bank to charge electronic devices, or portable battery
- Extra batteries

Light sources

A flashlight with extra batteries is a requirement. Headlamps are convenient, since they allow both hands to be free. A camping lantern is small but powerful.

Tools

- Pocket knife
- Multipurpose tool
- Small toolkit (screwdrivers, adjustable wrench, pliers, etc.)
- Rope
- Duct tape
- Goggles
- Tarp
- Can opener
- Utensils
- Sewing kit

Evacuation bin

To be prepared to leave because of an impending emergency, each member of the family should have his or her own Go Bag already packed with his or her personal clothing, toiletries, and other items. In addition, the family needs to have a pre-packed home evacuation bin, which contains items that can be shared by the whole family (tool kit, light sources, first aid kit, etc.). Such a

bin or bins should be carefully packed and lightweight enough that they can be easily carried by a woman or a child. Keep these bins in a place that is quickly and easily accessible. Suggested locations include the garage or a coat closet by the front door.

When an emergency strikes, you will be all packed up and ready to go.

But where should you go? In some instances, local authorities may give you clear directions. Schools, churches, and other public buildings are sometimes available for temporary shelter. But they could also be affected by a local disaster. If that is the case, driving out of town may be necessary. For such an outcome, planning ahead would be helpful. If you have friends or relatives who live out of town, speak with them in advance. Offer them a place to stay in your home if there is a disaster in their area, and ask them if you can stay with them in the event of a disaster where you live.

It is even better to have such an agreement with family or friends in three or four different locations. This brings up another related issue: What do you do if a disaster strikes while some family members are at home and others are at work or at school? Again, planning in advance helps. You can have a pre-arranged plan that your family members fully understand and even practice



as to how to communicate and where to meet if going home is not advisable. During hurricane or wildfire seasons, which are usually well known, one is advised to have at least a half tank of fuel in the gas tank, making it possible to drive some distance out of the area without worrying about running out of gas.

In the next and last article on disaster preparedness, we will discuss the benefits of a car survival kit.

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Check with your local authorities for disaster preparedness information and training specific to your region.

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