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THE LOVE FACTOR

When I first came to Christ I knew very little about the Bible. I said a simple sinner's prayer, experienced God's boundless forgiveness and fell madly in love with Jesus. When I was confronted with the Bible evidence for the seventh-day Sabbath, Jesus' words, "if you love Me, keep My commandments" sealed the deal. The love factor has made all the difference for this raised Catholic, "born again" in Calvary Chapel, nurtured by a Pentecostal youth group and now a baptized Seventh-day Adventist Christian.

It's been over 30 years and I am still growing in wisdom and Bible knowledge with God's love as the final arbiter. Not long ago I got jazzed about the easy to read, modern language Message Bible, until I read its rendition of Revelation 1:10:

"It was Sunday and I was in the Spirit . . ." (Message Bible).

Not only did it end up on my heresy shelf, but it caused me to do some serious thinking about modern Bible versions, which then led me to compare every version I could find with Revelation 1:10—my new "litmus-test-text" (say that really fast 10 times). The results were shocking. No less than seven post-2000 Bible translations had Sunday

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as the "Lord's day" including one Spanish version:

"On the Lord's day [probably a reference to the "first day of the week, Sunday . . .]" (Expanded Bible).

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, [c-Sunday] . . ." (Holman Christian Standard Bible, 2004).

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day (the first day of the week), (The Voice, 2011).

"I was in Spirit in the Sunday . . ." (Wycliffe Bible, 2001 by Terence P. Noble).

"And I was in the spirit on the first [day] of the week . . ." (The Hebraic-Roots Version, by James Scott Trimm, 2004, 2005).

"Pero un domingo[a] quedé bajo el poder del Espíritu

Santo . . ." (Traducción en Lenguaje Actual (TLA, 2003).

Neither the Greek nor the Bible itself supports the idea that the "Lord's Day" is Sunday. From Moses, the first Bible author, to Jesus and His final Revelation, God's word teaches that the Lord's Day is Saturday, the "seventh-day" Bible "Sabbath" (Exodus 20:10; Mark 2:27-28).

Yet the Sunday/Sabbath issue is not just about a day. There is a principle involved that reaches beyond our intellectual grasp of truth. It's about God's love. Do we believe that Jesus is in love with us? Are we in love with Jesus? Have



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WHO AM I?

IT'S A LOADED question, one that probes my very existence. Jesus faced it (John 8:24-25, 28). When I face it, I usually answer with the name from my earthly family. But we each have an identity from a larger family that draws its identity from the Father “of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named” (Ephesians 3:15). We have multiple layers of identity that overlap, but hopefully they are complementary.

But what if they contradict? What if my human family doesn't identify with my heavenly? Both the fifth commandment and Jesus' counsel

in Matthew 10:35-38 show the importance and the limitation of earthly familial ties. Those closest to us on earth can be the greatest threat, as well as benefit, to our bigger identity in God.

Consider with me the importance of our core identity, the danger of conflicting identities, and the amazing corporate identity given to Seventh-day Adventists. Learning the unfolding story of God is the key to knowing who we are.

In 2 Corinthians 5:14-6:1 Paul addressed our most important identity, using unlimited, inclusive

(and even exclusive) terms like “all,” “they which live,” “no man,” “any man,” “all things,” “the world.” Paul tells us we each have an identity that died in Jesus at the cross (verse 14), and another that arose in some sense with Him at His resurrection, which is reflected in unselfish living (verse 15). This new identity changes how we view all others (verse 16), realizing the “new creature” identity conceived and crafted “in Christ” (verse 17).

There is a staggering paradigm shift for each one of us personally, as well as for how we are called to view each

“Again and again I have been shown that the past experiences of God’s people are not to be counted as dead facts. We are not to treat the record of these experiences as we would treat a last year’s almanac. The record is to be kept in mind, for history will repeat itself. The darkness of the mysteries of the night is to be illuminated with the light of heaven.”

Ellen White
Publishing Ministry, p. 175

“Those who have a hold of the truth theoretically, with their finger tips as it were, who have not brought its principles into the inner sanctuary of the soul, but have kept the vital truth in the outer court, will see nothing sacred in the past history of this people which has made them what they are, and has established them as earnest, determined, missionary workers in the world.”

Ellen White
Selected Messages, vol. 2, p. 388

“In the name of the Lord, I declare to you that it [our organization, structure] is to stand, strengthened, established, and settled. At God’s command, ‘Go forward,’ we advanced when the difficulties to be surmounted made the advance seem impossible. We know how much it has cost to work out God’s plans in the past, which has made us as a people what we are.”

Ellen White
General Conference Daily Bulletin, January 29, 1893



WE WANT AN IDENTITY THAT IS CONSISTENT WITH OUR DEEPEST NEEDS

other. It is a shift to which we must voluntarily submit at some point. Then, from that point forward, we grow to “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). This changes everything. As Paul wrote, “all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

But we are constantly tempted to divide life into contradictory segments. Even if we have begun to grasp this new identity, we have portions of our existence—how we think and feel and act—that effectively oppose the new identity. Jesus addressed this divided self by simply saying, “No man can serve two masters” (Matthew 6:24). So our identity must be complete and integrated, and it eventually will be. In the end we will be on one side or the other, though many will still be deceived. There are no fence-sitters at the end of Revelation 20.

Post-modernism illustrates the danger, one we could describe as individualism run amok. In an article I found over twenty years ago titled,

“To Thine Own Selves Be True,” it is boldly declared that “a new breed of psychologists says there’s no one answer to the question ‘Who am I?’” They claimed that a “disparate groups of selves . . . inhabit us all. . . . There is the sense that we are often, if not always, playing, . . . the sense that each of us can switch roles as easily as we switch costumes” (*Los Angeles Times Magazine*, August 23, 1992). Can we hear distinct echoes of the answer Jesus received to His question, “What is thy name?”, to which the answer came, “My name is Legion: for we are many” (Mark 5:9).

But let’s leave fantasyland and come back to reality. We want an identity that is consistent with our deepest needs, to be known and loved, to finally meet Him who made us, and redeemed us at infinite cost, and *not* have Him say, “I don’t know you” (Matthew 7:21-23; 25:11-12). To know Him we must dwell in the land of genuine stories, not the realm of make believe. As Israel was instructed, we must repeat

constantly the stories that make us what we are (Deuteronomy 32:7; 6:6-9). We must hear them, believe them, and remember them.

Over 120 years ago the issue of our corporate identity as a movement, what makes us what we are as Seventh-day Adventists, became a recurring theme in Ellen White’s writings. It was a refrain she continued to repeat for the last two active decades of her life. (Visit lightbearers.org for a copy of these statements.) It is clear from the history of these twenty years that an attack was being made on our identity as a people, from within even more than from without. History has a way of repeating itself. Seventh-day Adventists were raised up to possess a special identity and execute a special mission consistent with that identity. Have we truly embraced our identity and mission? Do we know who we are?

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... THE LOVE FACTOR *(continued from page 1)*

we tasted the passionate power of God's love to decimate our selfishness? If not, we will, in spirit or ink, re-translate God's word to justify our own personal practices. The only difference between those who "follow the Lamb wherever He goes" and those who follow

Him nine-tenths of the way, will be the love factor (Revelation 14:4). Ultimately we need to be more than right about the truth, we need the "love of the truth." Amen.



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