

Women's Ministries Emphasis Day
June 8, 2019

The Call to Arise and Shine

Sermon resource packet

Written by Raquel Arrais
associate director of women's ministries
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists



Prepared by the Department of Women's Ministries
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, MD 20904
women.adventist.org



Department of Women's Ministries
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, Maryland 20904 USA
January 24, 2019

Dear Sister-Leaders:

Joyful greetings. What a privilege it is to serve with you in Adventist women's ministry. We are blessed as we travel from country to country by your meetings and projects and the women who participate. We pray that you will be abundantly blessed by God who knows your commitment, your dedication, your desire, your effort to serve Him and to encourage others into a relationship with Him.

Thanks to Raquel Arrais, associate director for General Conference Women's Ministries, who inspires us with her enthusiasm to rise and shine for Jesus. The theme of this packet is "The Call to Arise and Shine." Isaiah 60:1, 2 is the theme text: "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Women will discover that Isaiah gives us a clear message, a wholistic message, a message to serve, and a message of challenge.

In the afternoon program, women are challenged to shine brightly as we examine what it means to be "Shining Within, Shining Out, and Shining Together." These ideas fit well with our Women's Ministries mission of nurture, empower, and outreach. Each section contains its own script and slides.

Please feel free translate and edit this packet according to the needs of your division territories, including the best Bible version for your use. Also, you are free to adapt the packet according to the needs of your cultural audience.

"For with you [Lord] is the fountain of life; in your light we see light" (Psalm 36:9, NIV).

We pray that God's Word will be a lamp to your feet and a light to your path as you reflect His glory through your service for Him.

General Conference Women's Ministries

Table of Contents

ABOUT THE AUTHOR	4
ORDER OF DIVINE SERVICE.....	5
SERMON: THE CALL TO ARISE AND SHINE.....	6
CHILDREN’S STORY: KEEPER OF THE LIGHT	13
SEMINAR: SHINING WITHIN, SHINING OUT, SHINING TOGETHER.....	16

The 2019 Women’s Ministries Emphasis Day resource packet contains:

1-SERMON PACKET, Word document (also includes the seminar script)

2-SERMON PPT

3a-SEMINAR PPT (part 1) **SHINING WITHIN**

21 Ways to Build a Strong Spiritual Life by Victor M Parachin

3b-SEMINAR PPT (part 2) **SHINING OUT**

Arise and Shine in Your Community: Plant a Seed Ministry by Heather-Dawn Small

3c-SEMINAR PPT (part 3) **SHINING TOGETHER**

Reflecting His Light by Raquel Arrais

4-SERMON PACKET PDF

About the Author

Raquel Quiroz da Costa Arrais, is the author of *The Call to Arise and Shine*, the 2019 Women's Ministries Emphasis Day sermon resource packet.

Raquel Arrais serves as the associate director of women's ministries at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, USA. She was elected to this position in 2005.

She was associate director of women's ministries and the Shepherdess associate director for South American Division and later was elected director of children's ministries. She served as an educator and administrator in Brazil.

Arrais earned a master's degree in pastoral ministry from Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA. She is currently a postgraduate candidate for a master's degree in Arabic studies from Middle East University, Beirut, Lebanon.

Arrais loves reading, walking, and playing the piano. She hopes more women will accept God's call to participate in the mission of the church. Her favorite Bible text is Joshua 1:9.

Arrais and her pastor husband, Jonas, have two married sons and three grandchildren.

Order of Divine Service

Divine Service A Call to Arise and Shine

Call to Worship: #869 (Isaiah 12:4-6, TEV)

"Give thanks to the Lord! Call for him to help you!
Tell all the nations what he has done!
Tell them how great he is!

"Sing to the Lord because of the great things he has done.
Let the whole world hear the news.

"Let everyone who lives in Zion shout and sing!
Israel's holy God is great,
And he lives among his people."

Opening Hymn: #615 "Rise Up, O Church of God"

Alternate Hymn: #616 "Soldiers of Christ, Arise"

Pastoral Prayer

Children's Story: "Keeper of the Light"

Call for the Offering

Special Music

Scripture Text: Isaiah 60:1, 2, NKJV

"Arise, shine; for your light has come!
And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.
For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth,
And deep darkness the people;
But the Lord will arise over you,
And His glory will be seen upon you."

Sermon: "The Call to Arise and Shine"

Closing Hymn: #595 "Let Every Lamp Be Burning"

Closing Prayer

Sermon: The Call to Arise and Shine

The Call to Arise and Shine By Raquel Arrais

Introduction

Our scripture this morning begins with Isaiah 60:1 "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee" (KJV). Isaiah calls us to arise and shine because the "light is come."

Ellen White defines that call, using the imagery of "arise and shine," in a powerful message: "If ever there was a time in the history of Seventh-day Adventists when they should arise and shine, it is now. No voice should be restrained from proclaiming the third angel's message [and this proclamation is part of our service to the world]. Let none, for fear of losing prestige with the world, obscure one ray of light coming from the Source of all light. It requires moral courage to do the work of God for these last days, but let us not be led by the spirit of human wisdom. The truth should be everything to us. Let those who want to make a name with the world go with the world."¹

Arise and Shine for your light has come, says the prophet Isaiah.

The word *arise* means "to get up or to stand up as from a lying or sitting position," "to come into notice," "to be recognized," "to ascend." This means you should expect today to get up, stand up, ascend, and come into notice (to be recognized). To *arise* also means to move on to the next level, a higher level.

Have we moved on to the next higher level? We live in a world that has shrunk to our fingertips: laptops and tablets, Wi-Fi and Bluetooth, Facebook and Twitter. Does high-speed, high-tech performance indicate humanity is rising to high levels of civilization? Some say it is.

However, in the midst of so much progress in knowledge and communication, there is a darkness that is repulsive and frightening; a darkness that cuts across nationality, age, education, culture, and profession; a darkness that challenges the humanity of each one of us and diminishes the spirituality of all of us, particularly those of us who have taken the name Christian or Seventh-day Adventist.

¹ Ellen G. White, *Christ Triumphant* (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1999), 358.

What is this darkness I am talking about? Take a look at the world around you. Consider your church. Examine your workplace. Inspect your own home, your college, and your surroundings. Is there darkness in any of these areas?

As a woman, and as one involved in women's ministry, I suggest to you:

- That as long as one in three women continues to experience some kind of abuse in her life, darkness is in the world.
- That as long as women are subjected to genital mutilation, childhood marriages, dowry oppression, honor killings, rape, physical and verbal abuse, workplace discrimination—appallingly, even in our pastors' homes and in our colleges—darkness is in the world.
- That as long as 1.2 million children are trafficked around the world every year, darkness is in the world.

Yes, there is darkness—gross darkness, defiling darkness, and defying darkness. To us living in that world of darkness—the darkness outside, the darkness inside—and to us who want to minister to our daughters and sisters, to mothers and wives, comes Isaiah's call: "Arise [and] shine, for your light has come! ... For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the LORD will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you" (Isaiah 60:1, 2, NKJV).

Isaiah is addressing a nation that will go into the darkness of Babylon's bondage some 120 years after the prophet's ministry. He knows that Israel has suffered many a dark period in the past, such as the Egyptian bondage and the Assyrian assaults. To a people so used to living in the fear of darkness, to a people who seemed to have lost all hope, the prophet predicts freedom from fear, hope in the midst of despair. He seems to be telling them: Darkness shall come, but it need not envelop you forever; the night of hopelessness must give way to the bright and glorious dawn of sunrise. The promise and the challenge of God is a simple one: "Arise and shine." Arise. Come out of fear. Let darkness of abuse flee. Shine in the glory of the light that comes from God and Him alone.

It is so easy for us to ignore what Isaiah says. Yet, if we want to weather the storms ahead of us, to face the moral, social, and cultural threats that overwhelm us, we must learn to allow God's Word to speak to us.

So what does Isaiah say?

A clear message

First, a clear message: God Himself is the light. The psalmist has already given us that assurance: "The LORD is my light...whom shall I fear?" (Psalm 27:1, NKJV). But Israel, as often happens with all of us, was mistaken in its own strength and saw within itself a light that seemed sufficient for the journey ahead. And that self-centered approach only led to bondage.

It is to these imprisoned people, people in self-made chains, that the promise from the Word of God comes: "Arise from your self-delusion and look yonder: there is the Lord your light. With that light in your hand and in your heart, arise and shine" (Isaiah 60:1, 2, *paraphrased by author*).

When Israel shines that light—God's light—the nations around will come to experience the "brightness of your rising" (v. 3, NKJV) the brilliance of the dawn, the radiance of a new day that has come upon you. But that new day is not one of self-glory; it is a mighty event of global witness. God not only liberates Israel from the darkness of bondage; He makes Israel a medium of light. This is the means of letting nations know that God, who Himself is light, will banish every form of darkness and let His light shine brightly. His light will confront all human darkness.

Now, let us move that prophetic promise to a present reality. The meaning is as relevant today as it was in Isaiah's time. Jesus said, "You are the light of the world.... Let your light so shine before men, that they may ... glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14, 16, NKJV). "Jesus does not bid the Christian to strive to shine, but just to let his light clearly shine distinct rays to the world."²

That is the crux of the matter. If we know we are called to be the light, we will choose to let that light shine. Through our life, acts, and ministry, the radiance of the Father's glory will dispel the social, the relational, and the abusive darkness that surrounds us in the world today.

But what does it mean for us to be God's light in the world? How does the light of Jesus shine through us?

The light of Jesus shines through our recognition that all human beings are created in God's image, and all of us are children of God. As members of His family, we must recognize the oneness of the entire human spectrum: north and south, east and west, white and black, male and female, young and old. When that unity is recognized, the light that shines in us and through us will dispel every shadowy corner of darkness, including the darkness of abuse and hatred.

The light of Jesus shines through our acts of love and grace. As the called ones of the Lord, we are the fulfillment of Isaiah's vision. Given that context, Jesus designates us as His light, reflecting the radiance that streams from Him. He calls us to a life of meekness. He bids us to hunger and thirst for righteousness and justice. He expects us to reflect Him through our mercy, our purity of heart, our quick efforts to reconcile with adversaries, our sexual fidelity, our truthfulness, our refusal to take vengeance, our prayer and fasting. These are obedient works reflecting the light of Jesus that shines through us into the darkness surrounding us.

² E. G. White, *This Day with God* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1979), 316.

The light of Jesus shines through us when we produce the fruits of the Spirit. Those fruits are: love in a world of hate; joy in times of sorrow; peace in times of conflict; patience in the face of irritation; kindness when life is so rough; goodness that overcomes evil; faithfulness that dispels dishonesty; gentleness in a terrain of roughness; and self-control in a world of selfishness.³

A wholistic message

Second, Isaiah points to the wholistic nature of the light that shines upon us. When the light of God dispels the darkness of our hearts, it brings about a total transformation of life.

Our spirit is transformed by the Spirit of God, so that we are no longer our own, but His: to do His will, to walk His way, to witness His glory, to embrace our brothers and sisters, and to shed light in order to dispel all darkness that surrounds us.

Our mind is freed from the shackles of sin and darkness. The seat of our thoughts is free to embrace God's vision for life, to face the darkness of the world, and to cultivate the renewing of our minds so that we may reveal "what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2).

Our body comes under the renovating power of the Spirit. We recognize the sacredness of the body as God's temple. The responsibility of guarding that sanctity extends not only to our own bodies, but also to those of every human being with whom we come in contact.

Our passions ascend from the abyss of darkness to embrace the pure and sanctified life God has set for us. The light so transmutes our emotions that we shun the forbidden zone in interpersonal relationships and stay within the confines of God's love and care.

Our relationships are no longer defined by the benefits that may derive from them, but by the transforming warm-heartedness of God's light. Our relationships are not governed by the blood in our veins, but by the blood of Jesus that makes us all His children.

Yes, as bearers of light we must expose darkness. We are the light when we stand for justice and truth in the public square, at work, in our homes, in churches. We dim that light when we indulge in pride, jealousy, strife, abuse, and immorality. If we hate our brothers and sisters, if we indulge in abuse, we are no longer light and can no longer walk in light.

A message to serve

Third, Isaiah urges a life of service. The idea of light is often understood as something distinctively glorious appearing in great, powerful demonstration. But the prophet teaches us that true light appears in service.

³ See Galatians 5:22-26 and James 3:17, 18.

Service is a profound and frequent theme in Scripture. Isaiah already anticipated in chapters 42 and 53 that the Messiah would come as a servant, with no outward splendor. His appearance would be like the least of those around. ***Yet hidden in that normality was the true power of the Christ: the power of love, the power of humility, the power of self-sacrificing service.***

Jesus lived among the poor, worked among the downtrodden and rejected, lifted the afflicted and the abused, and finally died on a cross. The most glorious manifestation of divine power was demonstrated with no outward form of glory. The greatest manifestation of power and glory was revealed in darkness and ugliness. This is why the gospel was foolishness to the Greeks, scandalous to the Jews, and a joke to the Romans. None of them could understand the meaning of the servanthood of Jesus, nor could they comprehend the redemptive grace that flows from the cross.

The true light of Jesus appears in service. The call to arise and shine is linked to light that comes with the coming of the Holy Spirit. It is light that dispels darkness. It is light that implies an invitation to serve, to rise to what we are created to be. Since the first promise of God to Abraham that the faith community is to be a channel of blessing to the nations, God's people are to be an example. If we lived up to the calling of being servants, we would be blessed. And in our obedience, the world would be blessed. The erosion of darkness would be significant.

A message of challenge

Fourth, Isaiah's message challenges us to be light that shines through darkness, that dispels darkness. Jesus charges us: "You are the light of the world... let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16, NIV).

Paul reminds us: "For you were once darkness, but now are light in the Lord. Live as children of the light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord" (Ephesians 5:8-10, NIV). This is our calling, and we must discover ways to live out that call as His community of disciples.

The commission

We are commissioned by Jesus to illuminate the darkness [let your light so shine] and to expose evil. "Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them" (Ephesians 8:11, NIV).

Clearly, our task is to carry our lamps into the shadowy corners of the world and to brighten the corners exposing darkness. Ellen White encourages us to make a difference in our communities, even when we face great personal difficulty in illuminating the darkness. "God has scattered His children in various communities that the light of truth may be kept shining amid the moral darkness that enshrouds the earth. The deeper the darkness around us, the

greater the need that our light should shine for God. We may be placed in circumstances of great difficulty and trial, but this does not prove that we are not in the very position assigned us by Providence."⁴

The challenge for us as women is to make time to "make a difference." What small difference can we make? What spark might we kindle that will ignite God's light to shine through the darkness in which our daughters, sisters, and wives are subjected to live? What is the task today of those involved in women's ministry?

The six challenge issues of Adventist women in ministry

"Touch a heart, reach my world" is the motto of Adventist women's ministry. Our vision is to help those in need. We seek to accomplish this by addressing six major challenge issues that afflict women globally: abuse, illiteracy, workload, poverty, health, and education.

Abuse and violence: Global statistics show that one in three women experiences physical and sexual violence in her lifetime. Of the 1.2 million children trafficked every year, 80 percent are girls. As a result of the global outcry on this issue, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency and the Department of Women's Ministries launched the **enditnow**[®] advocacy campaign in October 2009 to stop violence against women and girls.

Since that time, seven departments of the world church formed a coalition for ensuring that **enditnow**[®] remains an active and vital initiative of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. These departments include Children's Ministries, Education, Family Ministries, Health Ministries, Ministerial Association, Women's Ministries, and Youth Ministries. Today our challenge is **enditnow**[®].

Poverty. Of the 1.2 billion people around the world living in poverty, 70 percent are women. Poverty seems to have put on a feminine face. **To remove that scar is our challenge today.**

Threats to health. Hazards to women's health include emotional, social, and physical threats brought about by social, political, and economic factors. The quality of a woman's health directly impacts her life and her family's wellbeing. Poor health undermines a woman's ability to be a fully productive participant in God's work. About one in five women develop depression at some point in life. According to the World Health Organization, depression is projected to become the second leading contributor to the global burden of disease by 2020. **To remove that unacceptable burden is our challenge today.**

Workload. Women around the world, in all cultures, face the problem of work overload. Women are faced with the challenge of doing two thirds of the world's work, resulting in long

⁴ E. G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 6 (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1889), 182.

workdays, low wages, high hours of housework and childcare, leaving little time for personal devotion, rest and recreation, and social and spiritual growth. **To balance work and leisure, to equalize home and workplace, to offer time for growth of the mind and solace of the Holy Spirit is our challenge today.**

Education. Education for all is a basic human right. For women to achieve better health, nutrition, and quality of life for themselves and their families, they need equal access to education. **To see that girls have access to education at all levels is our challenge today.**

Illiteracy. Of 163 million illiterate young people in the world, 63 percent are women. Even in affluent countries, girls receive less education and training than boys. Illiteracy is powerfully linked to low social status, poverty, and poor health. Lack of literacy skills traps women in the cycle of poverty, with limited options for economic improvement, sentencing them and their children to chronic poverty. More importantly, literacy skills provide women the gift of reading the Bible. **To provide each woman the key to the world of literacy and self-development is our challenge today.**

To confront these challenges, to arise and shine in the midst of this darkness that afflicts women, to open wide the vista of a new world in Jesus, to free our homes, church, workplace, and community of abuse—this is the task and responsibility of every Adventist today.

Conclusion

We are the light of the world. We will dim that light, even obscure the light, when we indulge in pride, jealousy, strife, abuse, and immorality. We are called to go far and wide to shine in the dark places; but we are to carry our own lamps, we are not to mingle with other lamps.

Each one of us individually reflects the glory of God. We are challenged to leave our comfort zones and illuminate the world—as we stand for justice, grace and truth in the public square, at work, in our homes, in churches. Your time has come, Arise and Shine!

May we say together: *“For with you [LORD] is the fountain of life; in your light we see light”* (Psalm 36:9, NIV).

Go and remember: Arise and shine, for your light has come... “For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the LORD will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you” (Isaiah 60:1, 2, NKJV).

Idea for leader:

You may create a visual illustration by lighting a candle for each of the six challenge issues of Adventist women’s ministry.

Children's Story: Keeper of the Light

Keeper of the Light⁵ A Scrapbook Story of Ellen G. White

Mary's father was the keeper of a lighthouse on the coast of England. The light of these lamps shines at night to guide ships on their way and to keep them from dangerous rocks and shoals. The lighthouse seems to say: "Take care, sailors, for rocks and sands are here. Keep a good lookout and mind how you sail, or you will be lost."

One afternoon Mary was in the lighthouse alone. Mary's father had trimmed the lamps, and they were ready for lighting when evening came. As he needed to buy some food, he crossed the causeway which led to the land. This causeway was a path over the rocks and sands, which could be used only two or three hours in the day; at other times, the waters rose and covered it. The father intended to hasten home before the tide flowed over this path. Night was coming on, and a storm was rising on the sea. Waves dashed against the rocks, and the wind moaned around the tower.

Mary's mother was dead, and although she was alone, her father had told the girl not to be afraid, for he would soon return. Now there were some rough-looking men behind a rock, who were watching Mary's father. They watched him go to the land.

Who were they? They were "wreckers" who lurked about the coast. If a vessel was driven on the rocks by a storm, they rushed down-not to help the sailors, but to rob them, and to plunder the ship.

The wicked men knew that a little girl was left alone in the lighthouse. They planned to keep her father on the shore all night. Ships filled with rich goods were expected to pass the point before the morning and these men knew if the light did not shine, the vessels would run upon the rocks and be wrecked. How cruel and wicked they were to seek the death of the ships' crews!

Mary's father had filled his basket and prepared to return to the lighthouse. As he drew near the road leading to the causeway, the wreckers rushed from their hiding place and threw him on the ground. They quickly bound his hands and feet with ropes and carried him into a shed, where he had to lie until morning. It was in vain that he shouted for them to set him free; they only mocked his distress. They then left him in the charge of two men, while they ran back to the shore.

⁵ Ernest Lloyd, *Scrapbook Stories from Ellen G. White's Scrapbooks* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1949, 2012). Used by Permission.

"Oh, Mary, what will you do?" cried the father as he lay in the shed. "There will be no one to light the lamps. Ships may be wrecked, and sailors may be lost."

Mary looked from a narrow window toward the shore, thinking it was time for her father to return. When the clock in the little room struck six, she knew that the water would soon be over the causeway.

An hour passed. The clock struck seven, and Mary still looked toward the beach; but her father was not to be seen. By the time it was eight, the tide was nearly over the causeway; only bits of rock here and there were above the water. "O father, hurry," cried Mary, as though her father could hear her. "Have you forgotten your little girl?" But the only answer was the noise of the waters as they rose higher and higher, and the roar of the wind as it gave notice of the coming storm. Surely there would be no lights that night.

Mary thought of what her mother used to say: "We should pray in every time of need." Quickly she knelt and prayed for help: "O Lord, show me what to do, and bless my father, and bring him home safe."

The water was now over the causeway. The sun had set more than an hour ago, and, as the moon rose, black storm clouds covered it from sight.

The wreckers walked along the shore, looking for some ship to strike on the coast. They hoped that the sailors, not seeing the lights, would think they were far at sea.

At this moment Mary decided she would try to light the lamps. But what could a little girl do? The lamps were far above her reach. She got matches and carried a small stepladder to the spot. After much labor she found that the lamps were still above her head. Then she got a small table and put the stepladder on it. But when she climbed to the top the lights were still beyond her reach. "If I had a stick," she said, "I would tie a match to it, and then I could set a light to the wicks." But no stick was to be found.

The storm was raging with almost hurricane force. The sailors at sea looked along the coast for the light. Where could it be? Had they sailed in the wrong direction? They were lost and knew not which way to steer.

All this time Mary's father was praying that God would take care of his child in the dark and lonely lighthouse.

Mary, frightened and lonely, was about to sit down again, when she thought of the old Bible in the room below. But how could she step on that Book? It was God's Holy Word that her mother had loved to read. "Yet, it is to save life," said she; "and if mother were here, would she not allow me to take it?"

In a minute the large book was brought and placed under the steps, and up she climbed once more. Yes, she was high enough! She touched one wick, then another, and another, until the rays of the lamps shone brightly far above the dark waters.

The father saw the light as he lay in the shed, and thanked God for sending help in the hour of danger. The sailors saw the light, and steered their ships away from the rocks. The wreckers, too, saw the light, and were angry to see that their evil plot had failed.

All that stormy night the lamps cast their rays over the foaming sea; and when the morning came, the father escaped from the shed. Soon he reached the lighthouse and found out how his little girl had stood faithful to duty in the dark hours of storm.

[family.adventist.org/childrens-stories-keeper-of-the-light/Scrapbook Stories of Ellen G. White](http://family.adventist.org/childrens-stories-keeper-of-the-light/Scrapbook%20Stories%20of%20Ellen%20G.%20White). Used by permission.

Seminar: SHINING WITHIN, SHINING OUT, SHINING TOGETHER

[SHINING WITHIN]

21 Ways to Build a Stronger Spiritual Life⁶

By Victor M. Parachin

Used by permission

“Arise [and] shine, for your light is come! ... For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you.” Isaiah 50:1, 2, NKJV

Before we can learn how to shine in this dark world, we must first understand what it means to make Jesus our rock, our refuge and our all in all. The 21 ways to build a stronger spiritual life will give you a path to walk as you rise and shine wherever God has placed you.

Because we live in a culture that increasingly leans toward commercialism, materialism, and secularism, it is not always easy to keep the soul nourished.

The challenge of these days, when times are not hospitable to spiritual growth, is how to nurture, feed, heal, restore, and renew the soul. Here are 21 practical suggestions for building a stronger spiritual life.

1. Be a river, not a swamp.

The Bible says: “Rivers of living water will flow from the heart of those who believe in me” (John 7:38, margin, NLT⁷). Remember, it is the mountain stream that carries fresh, life-giving water because it flows out. However, the swamp is stagnant and life-devouring. A swamp collects and retains water that comes its way. Don’t be the kind of person who seeks to accumulate much before allowing a little to flow through.

As Christians we are to let blessings flow through us and on to others. When we hoard and dam the blessings in our lives, we are in danger of becoming spiritually stagnant, emotionally detached, and intellectually cynical. Resolve to break up the dam and let blessings flow like a river. The freshness is in the flow.

2. Identify blessings.

Too often we go through life oblivious to the good that comes flowing into our lives. Try this spiritual exercise for one week: At the end of the first day, identify a blessing that came to you

⁶ Victor M. Parachin. Used by permission. <http://www.vibrantlife.com/?p=199>. “21 Ways to Build a Stronger Spiritual Life,” *Spiritual Health*, January 12.

⁷ Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996. Used by permission by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.

from a family member. At the end of the second day, a blessing from a neighbor. Third day, from a friend. Fourth day, from a work colleague. Fifth day, from a stranger. Sixth day, from a child. On the seventh day, a blessing that came from an “enemy.”

3. Be like Moses—speak words of blessing.

One of the most beautiful and compassionate passages in the Bible contains these words of blessing pronounced by Moses:

May the Lord bless you and protect you.
May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you.
May the Lord show you his favor and give you his peace
Numbers 6:24-26, NLT

Get creative with language, and speak words that will uplift, encourage, hearten, and bless other people. As you build them up, your own spirit will get stronger.

4. Nurture a shared prayer life.

Increase the amount of time you spend in prayer by sharing in prayer with others. Some ways to do this include letting friends know you are always available for prayer; attending regularly held prayer groups; participating in a prayer chain.

5. Take a step of faith.

Spiritual growth means taking a leap of faith from time to time. Rather than trying to get everything in place before you start something important, why not follow God’s leading and allow the plan to evolve? This means taking a step of faith and trusting God to provide what may be needed for success.

6. Restore someone’s faith.

Today, make time to heal a wounded heart, to extend kindness to someone who really needs a friend, or to help gather up pieces of a broken dream. Today, do whatever you can to radiate God’s unconditional love.

7. Be a grateful person.

Start every day with a morning prayer of gratitude to God for the gift of a new day. Do this even if the day ahead appears ominous. Conclude every day with an evening prayer of gratitude to God for the gift of the preceding hours. Do this even if you’ve had a very tough day.

8. Share the journey.

Hook up with one other person who is seeking to grow spiritually. Agree to meet once a week for a period of time to study and reflect on spiritual matters. A friend of mine, who is a busy executive in Toronto, Ontario, met for six months with another man to do Bible study. “No matter how hectic our schedules, we always met each week during our lunch hour at a

downtown church that kindly provided us with a room for our meeting. Those were good months when a lot of spiritual growth took place," he says. Notice the spiritual growth taking place in your life.

9. Serve.

Look for ways to serve the community, especially tasks that promise no reward, such as picking up litter on the streets. Read and reflect on the action of Jesus in John 13:1-5.

10. Cultivate a little solitude.

In quietness we turn our minds away from the problems of life and fix our thoughts on the mind of God. Spend some time away from the crowd and the noise of life. Set aside a few minutes to be alone—just you and God. "Solitude makes us tougher toward ourselves and tenderer toward others; in both ways it improves our character," noted philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche.

11. Fast and pray.

Prayer linked with fasting was often done by people in the Bible. Ezra 8:23 reports: "So we fasted and earnestly prayed that our God would take care of us, and he heard our prayer" (NLT). The next time you are asked to pray urgently for someone in difficulty, consider combining your praying with some fasting.

12. Turn worries over to God.

This is a clear teaching of Scripture: "Give your burdens to the Lord, and he will take care of you" (Psalm 55:22, NLT). Do this each time a worry crops up.

13. Spread love wherever you go.

That is the advice of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who advised: "Spread love everywhere you go: First of all in your own house. . . . Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God's kindness; kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile, kindness in your warm greeting."

14. Keep your priorities straight.

Know what is ultimately important and what is not. Consider the words of former President George Bush: "I am blessed with a close and wonderful family, and I want to spend the rest of my life letting them know how much I love them and appreciate them," he said. "One of my most important accomplishments, one I am still working on, is to be a huge success in the grandfather business. I would like to be remembered for integrity, service, and family."

15. Strive for excellence.

The Bible tells us: "Whatever you do, do well" (Ecclesiastes 9:10, NLT). Be the best that you can be at whatever station in life God has placed you.

16. Use it or lose it.

God has generously endowed each of us with unique gifts and talents. Make use of them or you will run the risk of losing them. "Use your gifts faithfully, and they shall be enlarged; practice what you know, and you shall attain to higher knowledge," noted nineteenth-century poet Sir Edwin Arnold.

17. Meditate on Scripture.

The Bible is loaded with verses of comfort, encouragement, and wisdom. Make it a habit to read and study your Bible in a regular, disciplined way. Highlight verses that speak to you. Meditate on those words. Memorize some of the passages so you can recall them from memory at a future time.

18. Be reliable.

Do what you say you will do-whether it's convenient or not. Follow through on all of your commitments, large and small. By your actions, show others you are a person who can be trusted and counted upon.

19. Ask God to make you a blessing today.

A great way to grow in wonder and amazement is by asking God to turn your life into a blessing. Do this each morning before resuming your daily activities. Offer a short, simple prayer like this one: "Dear God, on this day make my life a blessing to someone, somewhere." Then pay close attention to every person you encounter during the day, as God will honor your prayer, sometimes in surprising ways.

20. Spend time in nature.

This was something done by the psalm writers, and they gleaned spiritual lessons from their time in nature. "The heavens tell of the glory of God. The skies display his marvelous craftsmanship" (Psalm 19:1, NLT). "When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers-the moon and the stars you have set in place-what are mortals that you should think of us, mere humans that you should care for us?" (Psalm 8:3,4, NLT). "Mountains rose and valleys sank to the levels you decreed. Then you set a firm boundary for the seas, so they would never again cover the earth" (Psalm 104:8, 9, NLT).

21. Exercise your power of choice.

No matter what happens to you, you always have the freedom to choose. You can select joy over despair. You can select love over hate. You can select forgiveness over revenge. You can select growth over stagnation. Remember that a crisis can evoke the best in us or the worst in us. The choice is ours!

[SHINING OUT]
Arise and Shine in Your Community: Plant a Seed Ministry
By Heather-Dawn Small

“For in this the saying is true: ‘One sows and another reaps.’” John 4:37, NKJV

These words were spoken by Jesus to His disciples as He stood watching the Samaritan woman and the people whom she had told about Jesus come running to see Jesus. The disciples had returned, bringing food for Jesus to eat. But Jesus did not want earthly food. Instead He said, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to finish His work” (John 4:34, NKJV). Jesus knew His purpose on this earth was to do His father’s will. Do you know God’s will for your life?

As Jesus looked at the large group of people coming toward Him, He told the disciples that the harvest they thought was in the future was actually ready right now, that very day (see John 4:35). But the next words Jesus spoke are the ones I want to focus on. He said to them, “And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this the saying is true: ‘One sows and another reaps’” (John 4:36, 37, NKJV).

What did Jesus mean by these words? When we think of the cycle of planting and harvesting, it is not hard to understand His illustration and its application. Some people will sow the seeds of the gospel in people’s lives, and others will reap the results of the work someone else has done.

Do you fully understand the implications of what He is saying? Perhaps we have often felt that only certain people are called to sow the “good seed” of the gospel and also to do the reaping. We think of it as the work of just certain people, such as the pastor, the elders, evangelists, those gifted to do Bible studies, or trained Bible Workers. Many of us never think that we ourselves may be called by God to be the ones who sow—or perhaps reap. Those tasks, those responsibilities, were for other people, we think. But a careful look at these verses in John may change our perspective.

Jesus is saying that there are people who reap who never sowed the seeds.

The question that comes to mind is, **“Who did the sowing?”** Whoever it was, they were focused on sowing. They did not mind that someone else would reap where they had sowed, that someone else got the credit. They were sowers, sharing the Good News of the Gospel.

Let’s look at another familiar text that talks about God’s purpose for our lives.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19, NKJV).

Here, God is calling **all** believers, every one of us, to go and tell the world. No doubt the way we tell, the way we share the gospel, will vary. The gifts, talents, and abilities that God gives us vary. One person is a teacher, another a housewife, another a medical technician, another an architect. Whatever work you may be doing in order to pay the bills, remember that's not your highest purpose. It is one avenue that God has given you to fulfill your life's purpose. It is one avenue that God has given you to fulfill your life's purpose, which is to "go" and tell the world about Jesus.

So the teacher tells her students through her kindness, her patience, her fairness. The housewife tells her family and her neighbors through her cooking, her hospitality, her concern for others, the example of her devotional life. A worker's honesty, industry, calm temper, and even neatness, may preach a quiet sermon. And on and on.

There are many ways for us to plant seeds, but the best way is to plant seeds of love in the lives of people we meet.

We may not know how to give a Bible study. We may not know how to convince someone that the seventh day is the Sabbath. But we can all plant seeds of love in someone's life.

A stranger, a co-worker, a friend, a family member, a neighbor. That was Jesus' method (*Ministry of Healing*, p. 143). He focused on loving people to His father. He made genuine, caring friendships, and as a result people had confidence in Him. He cared about people enough that He did all He could to meet their needs. Jesus was planting seeds of love in people's lives, and as a result hearts opened so that He could tell them about His Father. Jesus was planting seeds of love. Can you do this? Yes, all of us can.

Now you may wonder, how can I plant seeds in someone's life. Let me share some ideas.

- Do you love to read? You could visit the elderly in a senior citizens home and spend time reading to them. Visit the hospital and read to those who can't read for themselves. Someone in your neighborhood may be sick and would be happy for someone to read to them. That's planting seeds of God's love.
- Do you love to cook? You can cook some food for someone you know who is sick. Or someone who has lost a loved one. You can teach some of your neighbors or coworkers to cook food that is healthful. You can bake bread and take it to a homeless shelter or a new neighbor. That's planting seeds of love.
- Do you love to do crafts? You can make cards and give them to people whom you meet every day in the supermarket, the pharmacy, the hotel, the airport. Leave a card of thanks and encouragement for them with a few kind words and a text for their day. That's planting seeds of love.
- Are you elderly and unable to move around? You can take your telephone book and call some people each day and ask if you can pray for the problems in their lives. You'll

be amazed at how many people will tell a total stranger their problems and let you pray for them. That's planting seeds of love.

- Say thank you to the car park attendant with a smile. That's planting seeds of love.
- Do you love to listen? Then take time to listen to people who are desperate to unload their pain and their problems. There are many who are desperate for someone to listen to them and validate their feelings. That's planting seeds of love.
- Volunteer to tutor some children in church or in your neighborhood who are having a difficult time keeping up in school. That's planting seeds of love.

You may never reap from the seeds you've planted. But that's okay. When God uses us to plant a seed of His love in someone's life, He will nurture it. He'll send the rain, His Holy spirit, to help that little plant that grows from the seed. He'll send other people to add some plant food, to nurture the plant as it grows until it reaches maturity. And then God will send the reapers. You may never see these people, but that's okay. Jesus said, some will sow and some will reap.

Are you one who reaps or one who sows? Even if you feel that not many are called to reap, we are all called to sow. Every church member is called to be part of the great work of telling the world.

The question is, what are you doing? May God help you discover your part—as sower or reaper. And once you know this, go out and use the gift, the ability, the talent, that thing you love to do, to reach souls for Jesus by planting seeds of love in their lives.⁸

Women's Ministries Outreach resources:

Plant a Seed postcard and nine other ministry idea cards at:

<https://women.adventist.org/ministry-idea-cards>

Outreach Is for Everyone: Women's Ministries Evangelism Manual at:

<https://women.adventist.org/outreach-is-for-everyone>

⁸ *Outreach is for Everyone: Women's Ministries Evangelism Manual*, Appendix J, "Plant a Seed Ministry," written by Heather-Dawn Small (Silver Spring, Maryland: General Conference Women's Ministries), 117, 118.

[SHINING TOGETHER]
Reflecting His Light
By Raquel Arrais

“Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.’” John 8:12, RSV.

God can use women in an amazing way. With their organizational abilities, spirit of service, love, compassion, and spiritual discernment, women together can shine and radiate a beautiful light everywhere.

God is willing to use us. All the time. Not necessarily to bring people to church. Some people are not ready. But he is ALWAYS willing to use us to BE CHURCH for people around us. To serve them, love them, hear them.

This is what the Spirit does with those who believe by faith. We become temples, we become sources of light, truth, forgiveness, acceptance, and we become a bridge between heaven and earth. May the Spirit give all of us this sensibility, to know that church is not a place we go to, but to know that **we are the church**, every day, wherever we go.

Many people living in darkness in this broken world urgently need to see God’s light. But they can’t look directly on God in heaven. Instead, they see God when they see His light reflected in our lives, in the lives of those who are already connected to Him: people, just like you and me.

When we love God passionately and commit ourselves to Him, His light shines brighter in our lives, reflecting His love, grace, and compassion to others, drawing them toward Him, out of the darkness.

So, how can we “together” reflect God’s light?

Speak right, true, honorable and trustworthy words to one another. When you talk, you make a series of choices about what subjects to discuss, what memories to bring up, and what points to make. There always are negative things to say, but there also are positive ones. Choose the positive. As Paul wrote, *“Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification” (Romans 14:19)*. We are responsible for the kind of words we say. Our thoughts, our words, are something that we develop and feed daily. Paul asks us to acquire a taste for good thinking. He challenges us to think about whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, excellent, and worthy of praise. How we think will ultimately determine how we act. If you think about the right kind of things, you’ll have the right kind of attitude and enjoy the peace of God. To become more like Christ, meditate on Who He is...True, right, pure, lovely.

Ellen White also urges us to speak kindly: "Kind words are as dew and gentle showers to the soul. The Scripture says of Christ that grace was poured into His lips, that He might 'know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.' And the Lord bids us, 'Let your speech be always with grace,' "that it may minister grace unto the hearers'" (quoted from *The Youth's Instructor*, March 31, 1908).⁹

"God calls upon believers to cease finding fault, to cease making hasty, unkind speeches."¹⁰

Partner with other women to make the world a better place. Recognize that our efforts to love and serve people in need can have a greater impact when we work together with other women than when we work alone. Work together toward common goals, combining each of our talents, skills, and resources to help people in need. Trust God to multiply our gifts and efforts tremendously.

Always point back to the source of light. When Jesus said, "Let your light shine before others," the sentence was incomplete. He went on to give the reason why it's important to shine where you are: "so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16b, NRSV). If each one of us would share the light of Jesus with ten neighbors, friends, or relatives, we would be on our way to lighting the world around us and leading people to the true source of light. Think of one thing you can do each day that is visible to others as you point back to the source of light.

During World War II, a beautiful young woman named Darlene Deibler Rose was captured by Japanese soldiers with her husband while they serving as missionaries in New Guinea. Separated from her husband, she placed was into a women's work camp, where she lived in dirty, over-crowded barracks, doing hard labor in the hot tropical sun.

Her soft, fair skin became rough and weather-beaten. Her slender body became ravaged by diseases such as beriberi and dysentery. Beriberi caused her legs to swell out of proportion while the rest of her body shriveled into a gaunt frame.

One day, some young boys who also lived in the labor camp shyly told Darlene that they thought she looked like a movie star. "Thank you, boys," she replied with tears welling in her eyes. For months she had watched her physical beauty slowly melt away, but it blessed her to realize that others still saw beauty when they looked at her. She knew it was not her beauty but the beauty and light of Jesus Christ shining out of her heart.¹¹ It's a matter of the heart.

⁹ *Outreach is for Everyone: Women's Ministries Evangelism Manual*, Appendix J, Plant a Seed Ministry, written by Heather-Dawn Small (Silver Spring, Maryland: General Conference Women's Ministries), 117, 118.

¹⁰ E. G. White, *Adventist Home* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1952), 435.

¹¹ Darlene Deibler Rose, *Evidence Not Seen: A Woman's Miraculous Faith in the Jungles of World War II* (New York City: Harpers Collins, 1990).

Ellen White encourages us to rise and shine in service for God no matter who we are or where we are.

“We need not think that because we are only a tiny light, that we need not be particular about shining. The great value of our light lies in its consistency in shining amid the moral darkness of the world, in shining not to please ourselves and glorify ourselves, but to honor God with all there is of us. If we are doing service for God, and our work is corresponding with the ability God has given us, that is all He expects of us.”¹²

We shine only when we reflect God’s glory. The only way to reflect God’s light is to be in constant communion with Him, being filled daily with the light of His glory. Ellen White also writes:

“We know that the lamps which give us light have no light in themselves. They cannot fill themselves. So the holy appointed ones must empty the golden oil into the golden tubes. And the heavenly fire, when applied, makes them burning and shining lights. Our hearts cannot reflect light until there is a vital connection with heaven. This alone can make them burn steadily with holy, unselfish love for Jesus, and for all who are the purchase of His blood. And unless we are constantly replenished with the golden oil, the flame will die out. Unless the love of God is an abiding principle in our hearts, our light will go out.”¹³

Our commitment to God becomes evident by our daily replenishment of the golden oil. This vital connection to Jesus reveals our holy, unselfish love for Him. If you desire your life to shine and your heart to glow, fix your eyes on the light, Jesus Christ. Why?

“For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.” Psalm 36:9, NIV

Additional Ellen White Quotes

“The diligent, prayerful seeker for truth will find precious rays of light yet to shine forth from the word of God. Many gems are yet scattered that are to be gathered together to become the property of the remnant people of God. But light is not given simply to be a strength to the church, but to be shed upon those who are in darkness.... Christ has said of His people, “Ye are the light of the world,” and it is the mission of the light to shine out and illuminate the darkness.”¹⁴

¹² E. G. White, *This Day with God* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1979), 98.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ E. G. White, *Counsels on Sabbath School Work* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1938), 34.

“Every fact [of Scripture] which immediately concerns the salvation of souls will be made so clear that none need err or walk in darkness.”¹⁵

“In many places consecrated men and women may be seen communicating to others the light that has made plain to them the way of salvation through Christ. And as they continue to let their light shine...they receive more and still more of the Spirit’s power. Thus the earth is to be lightened with the glory of God.”¹⁶

Idea for the leader:

The afternoon seminar would work well with three women each presenting one section.

¹⁵ E. G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 2 (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1871), 692.

¹⁶ E. G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), 54.