

Jesus Said Go, So Let's Go

by Chris Famisaran

I don't know about you but I our worship team has left me invigorated. Thank you so much for the harmonies are singing Ben, thank you for that strokes of impressionism I don't know. I don't know what to say. But thank you doing a great job. Let's go and pray. Father in heaven, thank you for the opportunity to come together once again as a church family and as we take our time as we study the Word, be with us in Jesus name, amen.

There once was a young rabbi who found a very, very serious problem in his new congregation. During the Friday night service, half the congregation would stand for prayer, and the other half remained seated, each side shouting at each other insisting that theirs was the right and true and faithful tradition. Nothing the rabbi said or did help to solve the impasse. Finally, in desperation, the young Rabbi sought out the synagogues 90 or 99 year old founder. He met the old rabbi in the nursing home and poured out his troubles. And he pleaded with him. So tell me, was it the tradition for the congregation to stand during the prayers? The old rabbi said no. And the young rabbi said, Ah, then it was a tradition to sit down during the prayers to which the old rabbi said no. And in exasperation, the young Rabbi responded, Well, then we have complete chaos, half the people stand and shout, and the other half sit and scream. To which the old Rabbi then said, Ah, that was the tradition. Humans are humans. Sometimes we just can't always get along, unfortunately, amen. As once somebody once said from a very famous movie, that's just like your opinion, man.

Today, I want to continue on kind of some of the challenges that the church, the early church, the Adventist pioneers, the Adventist faith, and even today, we sometimes struggle with the fact that we don't always agree. In some ways, however, though, sometimes disagreeing can also feel and catalyze us to move forward because if everyone thought the same thing, would we grow? No. Sometimes it takes challenges, sometimes some verbal disagreements, some would say conflict, to help us to understand and open our eyes and just maybe we don't always know everything.

As we continue in our journey, we're focusing on the early church or the the Adventist pioneers. Last week, we talked a little bit about the role of Ellen White, she emerged as a leader but Ellen White was metaphorically she served as a rudder to the SDA Church or the Seventh-day Adventist Church, many regard her in the church as a prophet. But as I indicated last week, some were very hesitant. She was very hesitant to call herself one. Now, did you know that Ellen White is the most translated female nonfiction author in the history of literature? As well as the most translated American nonfiction, author of either gender. And yet, as influential as she was, she was also very misunderstood. She was charismatic. People believe that what she said was important. It was from God, there was no doubt that she experienced visions. But when somebody can do that, what do they start to do? They ascribe to her, Oh, she's special. She's a prophet. And when you give somebody the attention that not necessarily is healthy, much like let you look up to somebody in sports or politics or whoever. It's often easy to provide value on that person as if there's some special person almost as if they're godlike. Ellen White, though she was a prophet was a servant of God. She was not perfect. She had her own faults. And yet one of the challenges one of the mistakes that we as a church have made over the years is to... Well, not everybody, but some have taken her writings and equated it with scripture. She of course indicated no,

no, no, no, no, no. Look, God revealed things to me. But I'm not here to write things that are equal of the Bible, but to help support the Bible. In fact, George Knight writes, Seventh-day Adventism, at its best, has been a Bible oriented movement. We believe in Scripture as a rule of faith that accepts the scriptural teaching of the gift of prophecy. However, one of the unfortunate aspects of Adventist history is that some of the church members have too often abused Ellen White's gift by giving it more prominence in the Bible. Both of the Whites meaning in reference to Ellen and also her husband, James, and the other founders of Adventism rejected that non biblical position, the gift of prophecy is a blessing to God's church. But true Adventism is always been a has always uplifted the primacy of Scripture.

Now, Ellen White when she was young, she was only 16 and 17, when she started to help move the church forward. Her husband was also very young, Joseph Bates, who was I believe, a retired sea captain, he was the one who actually brought the idea of the concept of Sabbath into the Advent movement, that and there's actually I believe he was also one of the early vegetarians of the church. But between these three, they were in essentially we consider them the founders, but Ellen White, she really served, she took forward and God used her to be able to help lead up the church, I don't know that there would be well, okay, it's not impossible, God can bring people up to leave the church. But she had a very profound, profound ministry in the church, he helped to lead and to guide and to move the church forward. Now, between 1844 and 1860, there were many bands of administer, getting together in small groups. And then in 1860, they decided, okay, we need to kind of become one under this one in a banner. And so they they got together. And in October 1, 1860, they had of what they call the General Conference of believers, they agreed to officially call themselves as a denomination to be referred to as set the Seventh-day Adventists. But they wouldn't officially incorporate until 1863. Now, many were hesitant, because they were maybe skeptical of having an organized group, they wanted to believe that this was a movement, we didn't want to become a church, if we'd become a church, then it seems like we don't have faith that Jesus is going to come. But there were challenges to this, because if they were not incorporated, the churches that they had, they had ownership, they had property, they needed to be able to refer to a place. And not only that, they wanted to have a general idea of have a common set of beliefs, because there were people who were taking the message that they had, and they were twisting it and saying things that were not true. So they had to have a centralization. And if they were decentralized, they would also be better equipped to organize, to take the message forward. We see that as they organized under one banner, then they could really take off and James White, he established the admittance review, they continue to print the printing press was a huge centerpiece in the ministry of the church moving for printing magazines, books, and documents and tracks to quote, make things quote, go viral. They didn't have social media back then unfortunately, things were slow, you had to write a letter. And that would could take days, it could take weeks and maybe even months, especially if it was going to go across the world. Now be incorporated. And together they with the ministry, as we talked about last week, the health message and also education. They wanted to become a movement not just in North America, because that's where they were primarily centered. They believed in Jesus call us we talked about last week to go not to Kentucky, not to Canada, not to California, but to all of the world. And in 1874, the Adventist Church became an international movement in the 1870s by sending Jan Andrews some of you have heard Andrews University and to his named up, named after he was the first Is avendus Minister, missionary? Anybody know where he went first? Anyone want to guess? Where New Guinea, no. Europe, anybody want to try to take a step? England and Switzerland. And so after that Adventism was no longer a North American identity, it became a worldwide identity. They were preparing for missions, because they truly believe that this gospel

ministry that had been given to the early believers, and now we're entrusted to believers of that day, and of course, for us, was to go out into all over the world. Because they believed that until everybody heard about Jesus, then then Jesus could come once everybody had been told.

My own family is a product of Adventism of missionaries that went out into the world, anybody else did maybe somebody go out into the world, they shared the good news with your family, and it kind of trickled down anybody, or am I just the only one? Many years ago, I don't know if it was before, after the Second World War. But as as missionaries went to the Philippines, to Asia to everywhere, Africa, South America, but in my case, they went to the Philippines, and my great grandfather, my grandfather, and maybe my grandmother attended a tent meeting the camp meeting, as it was back then. And they heard and receive the Adventist message. From my grandparents, it wasn't just that they were joining the church, they actually they made a career out of it. My own grandfather started to work for the publishing house to help print books and tracks to share with others about this great movement. Of course, at the time, this was very unconventional, because the Philippines, as many other colonies that were many countries that were colonized by the Spanish was predominantly what Roman Catholic, for them to go against this trend was very, very unconventional, however, they were faithful. My grandfather worked for the publishing house and eventually as a teacher, at the local school. And then eventually, they decided they wanted to have a better life for their children, they moved, while the path to the United States, they moved to Guam, and there, my grandfather and my grandmother worked for the clinic. In the mission field there, they saw the work ethic of my grandfather, and they thought, let's go and send him to Loma Linda so he can become an x ray tech, and then come back and work for us. So my grandfather came here, he studied and went back and served for many years after he had worked in the publishing house, he taught and then he went back as a medical missionary, performing X rays on that very little clinic. I went back a couple of years ago, and I realized, you know, when I was there, as a child was like, it was huge. And I go back, and I realized, Oh, it was a tiny, little building. You know, when you're five years old, everything looks huge. But there's this drive within Adventism, to not just share with people around here to friends and family, but throughout the whole world. And because of that, that's how the Advent movement spread throughout the Philippines, China, England, Africa, South America, they believe that look, call to go out into all of the world to share Jesus.

As we're going through the history, as we were talking and talking about the starting of the missionary movement in 1870s 1880s, however, was a very big turning point, the 18 Ada General Conference was a turning point in the administration. Now for those of you who are maybe not familiar with what's the general conference every four to five years, the avenues church as a whole gets together. And they talk they share reports, they talk about policy nowadays, but back then they got together, because they were wrestling with some very important topics at the time. They were wrestling about grace in the law. Can you believe that? There were many who thought we still needed to believe in the law. And that was the most important thing and yet, two young men by the name of AJ Wagoner, and at Jones had been doing some studying, they were studying the book of Galatians. And they believed that our emphasis should be on Christ and faith, amen. And yet at the time, Uriah Smith if you're familiar, he wrote a few big books that are huge in the Adventist church early Adventism. And also G.I. Butler, who is the president the whole evenly oppose this idea. EJ Wagner talked about in preached about grace. And what was supposed to be a pleasant nice conference turned into rabid, venomous debate.

Has a church ever disagreed with each other? Let's go back to the book of Acts 15. Just very briefly, Acts 15. If you remember earlier in the book of Acts, Peter, God calls Peter to go to Cornelius and Cornelius,

was he a Jew? Was he an Israelite? No, he was a Gentile. And after Peter goes into a Gentiles house, he ministers to him, guess what he's met when he instead of sharing the wanting to hear the good news that somebody had come into the church, they're like, Dude, why don't you go and hang out in a Gentiles house? You're considered unclean. Not Oh, praise the Lord. And, and so as new believers as Gentiles and non Jews were coming to the church, there was a bit of skepticism and judgment, prejudice. And so it starts to build and finally, how did they handle all of this? Well, in chapter 15, certain men, the verse one came down from Judea to Antioch, and we're teaching believers unless you are circumcised, according to the custom, taught by Moses, you cannot be saved. Oh, boy. And in verse two, Paul and Barnabas are brought into sharp dispute into debate with them. And so Paul and Barnabas go up to Jerusalem, to see the apostles to find out, hey, how do we resolve this issue? Because these guys are saying, hey, you need to become circumcised. And the truth of the matter is, look that had already been tried. No, we're not saved by that we're saved by grace. Verse five, it says, some of the believers who belong to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said that Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the Law of Moses. And then the apostles and elders met to consider this question. After much discussion, Peter got up and address some brothers, you know that some time ago, God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips, the message of the gospel and believe God, who knows the what heart showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them just as he did to us? We're not special, God gave the Holy Spirit to them as well. He did not discriminate between us and them for he purified their hearts by what? Faith. Now then why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles, a yoke that even we our ancestors, were not able to bear? Essentially? No, we believe that it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus, that we are saved just as they are. Amen. And what was the response? Silence. It's a testament to the fact that look, even in the early church, they had their disagreements. And in the church, sometimes we're not always going to agree. But here's the thing. We have to talk about it. We have to explain our positions, hey, let's come together. Let's reason together.

Let's, let's go to the Bible. And that's what they did. Actually, they went to the Scriptures, and they look back and they saw, same with EJ Wagner. And at Jones, they went back and they showed by principle from Scripture. That's why when we talk about from the very beginning, the principles, the four principles of teaching, or Bible study, fellowship, eating food, but also especially prayer, they prayed about this thing. These were things that were continuing in that we also in 2022, we need to continue. And after this strong, I'm just very, very briefly talking about this because this was a big turning point. So much so that everybody left this meaning their faith being renewed. It wasn't so much about, oh, I need to keep the Sabbath. I need to do this. I need to do that. No, we are saved by the grace of God and all of the burdens that they were carrying, suddenly dropped and they could live with freedom, amen. And you'll also notice that after 1888, Ellen White's writings changed dramatically. Books such as Steps to Christ and the Desire of Ages become more prominent is focused on Jesus, Amen.

So as we move forward, change is sometimes necessary for growth. We live in challenging times. Now the principles that we have, in Scripture do not change how we minister how it looks like. It can vary. But the principles love, grace, empathy, studying scriptures, getting being together prayer, even with one another. And that's just a little bit. The many principles that we can find in Scripture are still valid for today. But how do we minister in a world that is changing daily, amen. I'm going to let Bill handle that next week. Now he's going to preach and he's going to talk about in wrestles, we're in a world that is changing. How do we minister how do we preach the gospel, be in the world, but not to come and be

part of the world? Amen. We can't always keep doing the same thing over and over as well. We have to learn we have to grow, we have to adapt, we have to be mindful, and to know what Scripture says, but also how do we apply that, to ministering to our brothers and sisters, especially when everything seems to be changing and shifting, and when we thought we knew is changing drastically.

So there's a couple of things. So for growth as we move forward, though, because in order to be able to affect change, we also have to number one, we have to be able to listen more than talk, there's a list that I found, I don't know who wrote it, but you have to be willing to listen more than talk, you have to admit that, hey, I made a mistake here. I'm wrong. I observed before acting on a situation. Am I able to agree to disagree? I desire information more than the answers, I enjoy asking questions. Am I open to suggestions and new ideas? Am I comfortable asking advice or getting directions? Am I willing to be patient and be a willing student? Do I enjoy reading for information that is practical and applicable? Do I seek out new perspectives and also ask questions? And can I also accept criticism without being deeply wounded? Friends, what should we reflect on what holds you back from sharing Jesus with others? Because this movement, what is the purpose, it's in our name, Seventh-day we worship on Sabbath. But we're awaiting the Advent, the return of Jesus and God has called us to go out doesn't mean that we have to stand on the corner and tell everybody JESUS IS COMING you need to get ready. It's not necessarily the most effective approach. But we can start with being kind to one another, getting to know our neighbor getting to know our coworker. Getting to know our family member, maybe reconciling, see the change, being a witness so that they can see that Jesus is working in your life, what holds you back from sharing Jesus with others. As we move forward, just as a first step, something very, very simple. This week, try this as a start as a starter, compliment or thank three people you don't know. You can also compliment those that you do know, but try to find three people that you don't know, compliment something about them. They have great hair. They move with. I heard that. Lourdes just mentioned gray hair. All right, I'm getting older, I accept it. As we move forward, find opportunities to thank or compliment people. Or maybe, for instance, if you know a place that I was at the store, yesterday, Guitar Center, and there was a guy who was trying to fix an amp, and he couldn't find a place. So I just simply gave him two numbers to call people that I've worked with. And look, it was nothing for me to write down, look at my phone and then write down these phone numbers. Simple little things. I saw that join us I was like, thank you I have a reference point because he needed to fix this. And this is nothing great about me. But it just it was a reminder of like something so little, can have such a big reaction. So may we all do even the simplest of things to affect change. And to have a starter point to perhaps begin a friendship and ultimately, to share Jesus not because you're told to because you genuinely love and want to Amen.

Father in heaven, thank you for the many lessons that we can learn from our past or we don't want to repeat the Lord, we did not always agree. But we've come together we reason together, we've prayed and we've studied. May we continue to do this as we move forward, especially as we live in challenging times. Help us to remember the lessons from the early church, and also our Advent as pioneers. And as we next week, talk about today and also in the future. How do we take this gospel message with some of just a handful of lessons that we've already talked about? There's so many more lore that we could take, we just don't have time to go through all of them. But how can we move the flag further? In Jesus name, amen.

Grace and peace

