

## Q4 L09 - **Turn Their Hearts** - 2021-11-27

Shawn Brummund: Hello, and welcome to another edition of the "Sabbath School Study Hour." We're just so glad that you have joined us here today. For those of you who are joining us live, good morning. It's nice to be able to have you join us from around the country as well as around the world. Welcome to the Granite Bay Seventh-day Adventist Church, right here in the Greater Sacramento area of California. It is our privilege to be able to come together and continue to study as we have been for the last couple of months now in the book of Deuteronomy. Today, we're looking at lesson number nine, issues of the heart, and so we're going to get right into the heart of the issues and of this very important topic as, of course, God is interested in our hearts more than anything else.

We have a special guest. We'll be talking about that just a little bit later, but before we invite our singers out to be able to lead us out in worship and in song, I want to invite all of you to take advantage of a special gift offer that we have for you during this particular program, which is entitled "Is It Possible to Live Without Sinning?" written by Pastor Joe Crews. Now, you can get a copy of this if you live in North America or in the U.S. territories. All you have to do is dial 1-866-788-3966, and ask for free offer number 187. Again, that's 1-866-Study-More. So take advantage of that, and we'll be happy to send that out to you. If you have a phone, which almost all of us do nowadays, and you'd like to get a digital copy of that, that also is available for you, and you can go ahead and text the code "SH040," and you want to dial that to 40544. So go ahead and text that code, and we'll be happy to send you a free digital copy of that as well.

We have a very special guest with us. For many of us that are local here and have been attending the "Panorama of Prophecy" seminar, you have been blessed, night by night, as Pastor John Lomacang has been blessing us in song, and so we have been just so tremendously blessed in that way, but he is going to be joining us and be our teacher here today as well. And John and I first met, boy, about 24 years ago. I was interning in college. We met at a pastor's retreat meeting right here in Northern California, and he was pastoring for Northern California Conference at the time and had actually pastored here in this conference for 18 years, and so he's very well acquainted with this part of the country and in this part of the state. He has lots of good heritage, lots of good friends, and so on.

He's now pastoring in Illinois Conference part time, and then he also is on the staff with 3ABN, Three Angels Network Broadcasting. And so many of us are familiar with Pastor John and his ministry, have been blessed tremendously through many of the programming that he's been involved in at 3ABN. We're blessed to be able to have him here today as well.

So before we invite him out, let's ask the Lord to be with us in prayer. Father in heaven, we are thankful to be able to come together to be able to worship You. We thank You for Your Word. We thank You that we have this freedom and opportunity even right now to be able to freely open Your Word and to be able to study this deep and instrumental book that You have given to us in the very beginning, books of the Bible from Your first biblical author and prophet Moses. And, Lord, we want to pray that, as we open up the Word and as we look at this important topic concerning our hearts, that You will speak to us. We pray for Your Holy Spirit to be our Teacher, to guide us into all truth. We pray a special anointing upon our teacher here as well, Pastor John, and, Lord, we thank You for answering our prayers even right now, amen.

John Lomacang: Good morning, everyone. And those of you that are joining us, whatever the medium may be, we thank you also for coming this morning. And we are on lesson number nine, and it is entitled "Turn Their Hearts." And so if you have your lessons with you today, you can follow us along. It's a very interesting lesson because it addresses the issues that are so pertinent

in the Christian life. And so when I began to study this lesson, I began to realize that, before we can be qualified followers of Jesus, something has to take place.

So I know that prayer was just offered, but I'd like to go ahead and have prayer anyway as we open the Word of God together. Loving Father in heaven, thank You that You are the author and finisher of our faith as we now examine our hearts to see where we stand in the journey of Christian character development. Speak to us, we pray, in Christ's name, amen.

Now, our memory text--and you could read this with me. It'll be on the screen. It is from Deuteronomy chapter 4, verse 29, and I'd like us to read that together. Are we ready? Here we go. "But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find him if you seek Him with--" how much of your heart?-- "all your heart and with all your soul." As we study this lesson, we'll find out the central theme of following Jesus is conversion--not only conversion, but it is a change in direction.

Now, as a pastor, I've discovered that, so often, people join our church because they agree with our doctrinal position, you know, when we talk about the Sabbath, we talk about the state of the dead, we teach the 2,300 days, we go through the line of prophecy, and people are convinced that the Word of God is clear, and that's true. The Word of God is clear, but so often, when people get baptized, they get baptized into an intellectual change. They change the way they think, but then something comes along that reminds them that changing the way we think and changing the way we live are not the same thing. Changing the way we think is saying that we are becoming intellectual Christians, but the Christian journey doesn't end with a change in the way we think. It continues as the Lord changes us in the way we live.

If you look at the journey of the Israelites, you'll also find, if you look up that word, "repent" or "repentance," you'll find the Bible states that word about 68 times, which means the Lord intended in the Old Testament times as well as New Testament times for the Israelites of old to repent and for those who became followers of Jesus to repent because think about it: If all you do is say, "I want to join your church because your church checks all the boxes," then, as one person once says, "You go into the baptismal pool a dry sinner, and you come up a wet sinner."

But Christ, He desires to change us not just the way we think, but He also wants to change the way we live. In your Bible, if you turn to Ezekiel 18, it's one of the chapters where the Israelites had a continual battle with Jesus--not with Jesus but with the Father. And they were arguing that His way was not fair. But notice what he said in Ezekiel 18, in verse 30. He said to the Israelites, "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to His ways, says the Lord God." And then hear the words--and He notices--we'll notice that He connects two words together. He says, "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions so that inequity will not be your ruin."

I want you to notice the two words, "repent" and "turn." What are those two words? "Repent" and "turn." So "repentance" is not just a change in the way we think but in the change of the direction of our lives. The Lord was saying to the Israelites, "Repent of your sins, and turn, go in a different direction." Also, you find that, when John the Baptist introduced Jesus in Matthew chapter 3, in verse 2, one of the first things he said before the baptism of Jesus, he said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

If there's any reason why the people of God should repent, it is that we should repent in preparation for the kingdom of God, meaning, the Lord saves us as we are, but He's not going to be taking us into heaven the way we were. He wants to change us. As God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt the way they were, but He did not take them to Canaan the way they used to be.

So between our deliverance and our entrance into the Promised Land, there's a changing. There's

a repentance, and there is a turning. And John the Baptist made it very clear, as Jesus was about to begin His ministry, he said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." You also find Jesus rebuking the religious leaders in Matthew chapter 12, in verse 41. Look there with me. Matthew 12, in verse 41, one of the most resistant prophets the Bible talks about is the prophet Jonah, and when Jonah was given direction to go to preach to Nineveh, we know he ran in the opposite direction, but when God finally, through a series of what I call miracles, Jonah is the only prophet that knows what it's like to arrive at an evangelistic series in the belly of a fish. But when he got there, God got his attention, and the city of Nineveh repented, 120,000 people repented.

But when it came to the Jewish leaders in the days of Christ, notice the words that Jesus repeated to them. Matthew 12, in verse 41, He said, "The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation, and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and, indeed, a greater than Jonah is here." Jonah, in his reluctant spirit, God worked through him to convert the city of Nineveh. Can you imagine if that happened in Sacramento if, with one sermon, the entire city repents? God was able to bring a wicked, recalcitrant city to repentance through the preaching of Jonah.

And then you find one more example before we dive deeply into the lesson. You find the apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians--in 2 Corinthians chapter 13, verse 5, look at these words. The apostle Paul connects repentance to something even deeper, and the reason why this passage is clear--let's read it together. You can look at it as I read it.

Paul the apostle says, "Examine yourself." What are the two words? "Examine yourself as to whether you are in the faith." Then he says, once again, "Test yourself." Notice where the focus is. The focus is not on testing the other church members, but the focus is on examining yourself, testing yourself.

And then he says, "Do you not know yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you?--unless indeed you are disqualified." Why is that so vitally important? Paul, the apostle, was the Pharisee of Pharisees. He was a keeper of the law. He boasted about that. He understood his religious requirements, but he did not have a connection to Christ. And so in his Damascus Road experience, when God shut his eyes to give him a better vision, he realized, when his eyes were opened again, that he had to examine himself.

And as you know, if Paul the apostle lived in our day, many of us might have a difficult time having him as a church member. Can you imagine Paul saying, "I want to become a member of your church"? And then they read his name, and somebody says, "Wait a minute. Is that the guy that used to be Saul? Is that the one that consented to the persecution of maybe hundreds of Christians?" We would have a difficult time.

But here's the reason I mention that. When someone repents and they change the direction of their lives consciously, then God makes it His responsibility to change the way they live. And God had so changed the apostle Paul's life, that he was safe to be in the ministry. Can somebody say, "Amen," to that? So the Lord not only encourages us to change our direction, but when we change our direction, then He makes Himself responsible for the change in our lives.

And notice the two changes: When you're being taught, there's an intellectual change, but if we forget that there needs to be a spiritual change, we may be intellectual giants, but we might be spiritual pygmies, small in our walk, small in our faith.

I want to give you a story. October 31, 2000, Singapore Airlines Flight 006 was taking off at Chiang Kai-shek Airport in Taipei, Taiwan. They had 159 passengers aboard, and all three pilots flying a 747-400. My wife and I know what that is. We've been on them quite a few times. It's a long-hauler. It's the flight, the type of plane that is needed to cross the Atlantic or the Pacific Ocean.

And a typhoon was on the way, and it was already raining hard at the airport. And all three pilots were directed by the control tower to taxi to Runway 005-left. Well, they taxied, and at that time, Chiang Kai-shek Airport did not have ground radar. In other words, they could not tell from the control tower whether or not they were on the right runway. But when they got to the runway, they radioed the tower and said, "Okay, we're on Runway 05-left. We'd like to be cleared for takeoff."

The pilots were determined to leave before the typhoon hit. They wanted to get out of the area before the storm intensified, so they were given clearance to take off on Runway 05-left, and as they begin to throttle up--and as I read the story, as they passed 80 knots, one of the pilots shouted these two words: "Something there." And before they can say another word, on the voice recorder in the plane, that was the last two words mentioned by the pilots as they piled into construction equipment that was left on the runway. Bulldozer, concrete roller, various kinds of debris, metal rods to reinforce the runways, concrete pylons were all left on the runway, and they didn't see it before they hit it.

The good news is, out of the 159 passengers, the majority of them survived, but what a tragedy. When they went to examine the site, they realized, as the investigators were looking at the wreckage, they realized that, if the pilots had only looked at their instruments, they would've realized they were not on 05-left. They were on 05-right. They were on the wrong runway, and it was too late to turn around. They said, "If they had only looked at their instruments--" and what's amazing to me is it didn't matter where the people sat on the plane, whether they were first class or coach or all the way back in coach, it didn't matter where they were. It was too late to turn around.

You see, the tragedy of living the Christian life, going in the wrong direction without examining the Word of God to let us know that we are moving in the wrong direction, it could be very tragic. Flight 006 met its fate by going down the wrong runway. And it did not matter if the people were in first class or in coach. They met the very same fate.

My wife and I travel with American Airlines, and, you know, being in first class sometimes could make you think differently about people in coach. Anybody know what I'm talking about? You know, if you get an upgrade--sometimes we get an upgrade on American Airlines. We've flown probably about two million miles, and sometimes, when we go to the airport, they say, "We put you on the upgrade list." And it's encouraging to get an upgrade, especially when you have a long flight, and you get a real meal. While the people in coach are eating peanuts, you have a full meal. Anybody know what I'm talking about?

And so, periodically, we would get an upgrade, and it does do something to you while you're sitting in first class, and you see the other citizens walking by you, and you're saying thank God, I'm in first class. And sometimes when we don't make first class, and we're, like, maybe row eight or nine, and we can hear the knives and forks, you know, clinking as people are eating, and then the flight attendant comes to us and say, "Would you like one pack or two packs of peanuts?" And we realized, "Man, I wish I was in first class."

Well, on this particular flight, my wife and I got on board. We were on the upgrade list, and when we got on board, I didn't realize it, and neither did she. When we got on board, they said--I looked at my ticket. It was row 03 window. That's first class. And my wife was in row six or row nine, and she was in coach. And I asked the flight attendant. I said, "Well, can I change my seat?" She said, "Well, sorry, the flight is full." My wife was in coach. I was in first class. And I was trying to figure out how to make the change, but the flight attendant said, "All seats are full."

So I was texting my wife. I said, "Honey, who's sitting next to you?" And at that time, no one was,

but then, eventually, a young lady came and sat on the aisle seat 009 C. And she said, "But the seat is empty between us." And I said, "Well who's on 9 C? She said, "It's a young girl who's in the military. She has on fatigues."

And so I waited till the flight was fully--everybody was on board, and the flight attendant announced that the flight is full. And I asked the flight attendant, I said, "Now, could I change my seat with someone else?" She said, "If you ask them and they agree, then you could change your seat." And I had a plan. So I got up from row three in first class, walked back to row nine, and with everyone seat-belted in, people looked at me like, "What is he doing?" And I walked over to this young lady that had her military fatigues, and she had her earplugs in her ear, and I tapped her on the shoulder, and she took it out and said, "Excuse me?" and kind of had a very like, "Why are you tapping me on my shoulder?" look.

And I said to her, "I want to thank you for your service to our country, and to show my appreciation, I'd like to give you first class." She said, "Seriously?" I said, "Seriously." And, you know, it was a wonderful moment because you know how women do it? All the ladies around said, "Aw, how nice of him," and I became a hero at that moment. But what they didn't know--that I would rather be in coach with my wife than in first class without her. Come on, husbands, say, "Amen."

So I was able to accomplish both things, but I want to tell you, as the flight was taking off and I heard the forks and knives clinking, heh, my wife said, "Are you still happy that you didn't sit in first class?" I said, "I'm more happy to be with you in coach than without you in first class."

You know, the Lord wants us to be first-class Christians, but I want to make some comparisons this morning that I found in the Bible about what was left on the runway--the concrete barriers, the obstacles--this doomed flight, and I've seen a parallel between what happened to Singapore Airline and what often happens in our lives because, so many times, we are intending to go in the right direction.

And I don't believe that there are Christians that don't want to go in the right direction, but I believe, in many ways, we intend to go in the right direction, but we confront the obstacles in our lives. And look at how I brought this out. One of the first obstacles--and the reason why I call this a "concrete barrier" is because that's the very first thing that Singapore Airline hit, a series of concrete barriers.

The greatest concrete barrier to repentance is--what, friends? Sin. Notice what's in the middle of the word "sin"--"I." In the middle of the word "sin" is "I." Or in the middle of the word "sin" is the letter "I." It's the central focus. If we can focus on ourselves, who is the central focus of the word "sin," "I," then, God can get our attention.

And notice the passage that goes with this particular focus of the concrete barriers. How did we get into sin? The Bible says in Romans 5, in verse 12, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to--" how many of us? "All men, because all sinned--" what it's, in essence, saying is "Why is repentance so necessary?" It's because of the sin of Adam. As Pastor Doug was asking during the week, "How many of you were on the ark?" or "How many of you have Noah as your family?" or "How many of you are children of Adam?" Every one of us is a child of Adam, but I want to be a child of the last Adam because, when you read 1 Corinthians chapter 15, it talks about two Adams, the natural Adam and the spiritual Adam.

A number of years ago, I did a sermon called "The Adams Family." And the question that I posed was "Which Adam is your father?" But because Adam is the natural father of every one of us, we all inherited his DNA. That DNA is the concrete block. It is sin. So whether a baby is beautiful when

it's born or whether its face is wrinkled or whether it's born into a wealthy family or a poor family or a family on Section 8, no matter what the station of birth, every one of us inherit the nature of our father Adam, which is why the lesson is so vitally important.

If you turn to lesson number nine, you'll see there very clearly--lesson number nine, there's a statement that I want to read to you very quickly. It says in the introduction, "A simple fact of life follows us all: We are sinful." Let's say that together. "We are--" what? "We are sinful." That is our spiritual DNA. Have you seen what Christians have been doing lately, linking to Jesus? Especially in this environment that we've been living in politically, so many things have been happening in the political world, and the sad reality is they have been displayed in the lives of people claiming to be connected to Christ.

There ought to be an external difference in the way a Christian lives, not just the way that he or she thinks. There ought to be a different way of living in a Christian's life. So it's not enough to say, "I'm a Christian," but if your Christianity is not working for you, how do we expect it to work for someone who doesn't know Christ?

So the greatest advertisement for who Christ is, is when a person looks at a Christian's life. But until we come to the realization that we are, in fact, sinful by nature, then we may postpone our need for change by saying, "Well look at my family status. Look at the schools, I went to. Look at my background. Look at my educational accomplishments." No matter what we have, each one of us need to be confronting our condition. Not only that, we look at, first of all, the concrete barrier.

Then the next one is the doomed flight. What dooms us? The doomed flight. What dooms us? What are the two big words there? What? Adam's nature. That means, every one of us, when we are born, we are given--and listen to this carefully--we are all given a ticket to board Adam's flight, and we are onboard with Adam throughout our lives until the turn comes. Until repentance and conversion takes place in our lives, every one of us is on a doomed flight, and here's the reason why the flight is doomed.

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 15:22--it's a short verse. Can we see it together? "For as in Adam--" how many? "All die." So Adam has defaulted every one of us to a death sentence. But Jesus, if we accept Him, has defaulted us to a life sentence. The rest of the passage says, "Even so in Christ shall all be made alive." So we have the concrete barriers, we have the doomed flight, and then we have the obstacles.

Look at the obstacles. The third one I bring out is--what are the obstacles? Sinful choices. Notice this: Sin, which is the result of Adam's nature, defaults us to make sinful choices. And by the way, if you read Romans 6:16, depending on which way you yield, whether you yield to righteousness or whether you yield to sin, in both cases, we lose control of the things that we do next. Romans 6:16 says, "Do you not know that to whom you yield yourselves as servants to obey, you are that one slave whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or obedience leading to righteousness?"

So depending on where you make that choice, you are defaulted to be under the control of the blessings of Christ shaping your life or the condemnation of Satan forming your life. But either way, we are defaulted by Adam's nature to making sinful choices, which is the reason why we need to turn and give our lives to Jesus.

Let's go to the next one. I'm taking all these from the lesson of Flight 006. The Bible says, Isaiah 53, "All we like sheep have--" done what? "Gone astray." Notice this: "We have turned, every one, to his own way." Flight 006 turned in the wrong direction, turned on the wrong runway, and the investigators said they discovered that the reason for this flight ending up on the wrong runway is all three pilots trust their judgment and not their instruments. They said, "If they had only looked down at their heads-up display, it would've indicated they were on the wrong runway, but they

trusted their judgments."

Have you ever trusted your judgment, and it went bad? Have you done it more than once? Oftentimes, we do that. That's why my wife and I have built into our lives what we call a "fail-safe." One of the worst times to try to trust your judgment is when you go to a store, and the salesperson is well trained to convince you to buy what you really don't need, right?

We were at Best Buy one day, and we looked at this television, and I don't know why it is that every time you ask the salesperson, to purchase something, how is it that most of the time you're on the last day of the sale? Have you noticed that? They will say, "Today is the last day. If you come back tomorrow, today is the last day."

So my wife and I have "failed-proof" ourselves or found a way to, kind of, you know, introduce into the scenario something that they're not trained to do or not trained to answer. So they say, "Well, you know, we could wrap it up right away. We could get it ready for you. You could take it home today. It's the last day. I don't want you to miss the sale." Look, my wife and I always do this: "Well, you know, we always like to pray about it first."

They have not been trained to handle people that want to pray about their purchases. And I always like to look at their face. They say... They don't know what to do. They don't know what to do. So they-- And we say, "If the Lord wants it for us, it'll be here when we come back." And they say, "Well, thank you so much for coming in today."

You've got to plan how to address the concrete barriers in your life. You've got to plan how to address the obstacles in your life. When you plan how to address the obstacles in your life, the obstacles in your life do not find ways of mastering you.

But let's look at something else. Let's look at the bulldozer, the bulldozers in our lives. The bulldozer is the spiritual progress that some of us fail to make because there's a bulldozer in our way. My text for the bulldozer is Jeremiah 13:23. Look at this one. This is the bulldozer text. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin--" what's the answer? Can the European change his skin? Can the African change his skin? Can anyone change his skin? No-- "or the leopard its spots?" Look at this part: "Then may you also do good who are--" what's the next word? "Accustomed to do evil."

In our natural trend of life, if you wake up in the morning--and I've had this even as a pastor. Confession is good for the soul. You know the rest of the story. I've had this so often, and one of the reasons why my wife and I are glad for this little break is because we live in a vortex of activity--going, going, going, going, going, studying my lesson for Sabbath school, studying my Bible for Sabbath School panel. You know, we tape all of our Sabbath School lesson studies that you watch on 3ABN, and we do them, like, four days in a row, 13 lessons, studying my Bible to get my Wednesday night prayer meeting ready, studying my Bible for my sermon on Sabbath morning, studying my Bible for my Sabbath School lesson, studying my Bible for an evangelistic effort.

I get so busy studying my Bible to feed everybody else, that sometimes I'll forget to study my Bible to feed myself, and then, in the vortex of activity, we realize, "Wait a minute, the old ways begin to creep back."

We were driving to Texas, driving through Texas on our way to California, and this is when we were coming to start ministry in 1987. I was coming out to start ministry with Pastor Doug Batchelor, as a singing evangelist and one of his Bible workers, and I remember very well we tried our best to make it through Texas, but we didn't realize that, when you enter the state of Texas, coming from the east, the very first sign you see is "880 miles." That means that's how long you're going to be in Texas if you're on Highway 10. So we decided to stop halfway in Texas. We pulled over at a motel there in the desert and decided to sleep because there's no way we were driving 880 miles in one stretch.

We got up the next morning with our trailer connected to our 4Runner and decided back, you know, get back on the freeway and continue our journey. And my wife said to me, "That looks like the gas station we saw yesterday." I said, "Honey, Texas is big enough for two gas stations like that." Kept on driving. She said, "But that looks like the rest area we saw yesterday." I said, "Honey, do you realize how big Texas is? Surely, they must have at least two rest areas that look alike. That has to be, you know, just another rest area."

We kept driving, then we saw this tall, green Sunoco dinosaur at the gas station, and my wife said, "So are you telling me that Texas has two green Sunoco dinosaurs?" And I looked down at the side of the highway realizing instead of going 10 West, I was driving 10 East. For 45 minutes, I was driving in the wrong direction.

Now, guys, you know how damaging that is to our ego when our wives have to tell us we're going in the wrong direction because, when we admit it, it doesn't end right there. Have you noticed that? It's like you get off of the exit a lot smaller than you used to be, and you turn around as you try to reach up to the steering wheel because your wife's look makes you shrink behind the wheel, and you begin to go in the right direction. What is that?

When you repent and you begin to turn, sometimes it's humbling, but when we look at ourselves the way that God sees us, it's better to humble ourselves, repent, and go in the right direction than to be filled with pride and waste our time going in all the wrong direction, amen. It was very humbling. You know, I drove 45 minutes in the wrong direction. I heard about it for three hours in the right direction. Ladies have a great gift, don't they, husbands? Amen.

There's another part to that. Let's look at the excavators on the runway. The excavators. The excavators are the instruments that dig holes in the concrete, and there were holes these excavators dug in the concrete on Runway 05-right, that, if the plane was going on the right runway, it would not have encountered these excavating machines or the large potholes left in Runway 5-right.

Look at my analogy of the skewed decisions that these holes in our lives lead us to make. The Bible says in Proverbs 14, in verse 12, when our lives are not converted, when we don't turn, the Bible says, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is--" what? "The way of death."

So when we look at the bulldozers, the concrete pylons, when we look at all the defect conditions of our lives, only then can we appreciate what the Bible writer said that there is a need for conversion and the change in our direction. But sometimes, as we go on--and I say this to those of us who know the way, because, the apostle Paul, much of the challenges he had was not with non-Christians, but many of the challenges Paul had was with Christians. What Paul wrote to the Romans, to the Philippians, to the Thessalonians, the writings of the apostle Paul were to the church. And if you look at the church, he was saying to the church, "Examine yourselves." And the Bible makes it very clear that our skewed directions, the things that happen in our lives are often that which default us in the wrong direction.

But I want to begin to wind this down with a very important point, and I want you to listen to this. You know, sometimes we join the church, and we say, "Praise the Lord, I made a decision to be born again," and I've had people that have been baptized. Even as Pastor Doug had said, when he got baptized, he ended up in jail that evening. I always smile about that. I know his story so well.

You know, sometimes I give my testimony. He gives my testimony better than I, and I think I give his testimony better than he does. But the details of his life are amazing--no pun intended. And the details of my life are incredible, being abandoned by my mother at three months old, in the home of an Adventist babysitter so God can shape me into the man I am today. Somebody, say, "Amen."

But what I've noticed, as I was growing up in the world, growing up in the church, going to church



every Sabbath, sitting in the building, I was in the building physically, but I was not in Christ. And at 16 years old, I had another encounter. I met my wife-to-be, who was my girlfriend at the time, who's my wife now, who is still my girlfriend, and she was determined that she was not going to marry someone who's going in the wrong direction.

But at 16 years old, she could not invite a boyfriend over because she had five brothers--wait, let me restate that. She had five Jamaican brothers. Jamaican brothers are brothers on steroids, and being the youngest of eight children, being the youngest girl, they really zeroed in on protecting their sister. Believe me, I experienced it. But she was determined to get my life to go in the right direction.

So one Friday evening, when I was partying, gambling, pool hustling, living for the clubs, living for the world, she invited me to her home one Friday evening for family worship. And that evening, she introduced me to the book, "The Great Controversy," and the very first chapter she introduced me to was "The Time of Trouble."

I'm going to tell you one. If you want to help somebody turn around, read "The Time of Trouble" to a sinner. It scared the sin out of me, and I fell to my knees, and in the next chapter we read was the promises of Christ's return, and that evening, I was preparing, after that family worship, to go party. After I read that, I gave my life to the Lord. That Friday, I went to work with a pool stick and a boom box as I worked at Bank of America. That Monday morning, I went to work again with a Bible and "The Great Controversy." Come on, say, "Amen," somebody. And I got my first Bible study on Monday morning without any help of any Bible schools.

When the Lord turns your life around, it is amazing what God can do. But why do I share that story with you? So many people--and I want to make a point: Externally, I wasn't any different. I still had my records at home. I still had my two turntables that I partied with. I still had all the albums lined up on my wall in my room. There was no external changes in my life yet, but I knew that Jesus had given me a chance to turn my life in the right direction.

Listen carefully: So many people join the church, and we don't see their external changes, and sometimes they feel that, since they have not yet gotten the victory over the challenges of their lives, that they are not yet accepted by God. But a few months ago, as I was reading the book "Evangelism," I found a quotation that has thrilled my heart to simply say this: When someone gives his or her life to the Lord and they make a decision to turn, they may follow some of the things that they had been driving past before, which is what I've learned. When I made that turn on Highway 10, I noticed that I saw, going in the wrong direction, I saw a gas station, I saw a rest area, I saw a dinosaur, what I'd seen before, and I learned the lesson.

When the things of your past begin to show up again, that's an indication you're going in the wrong direction, but when you're going in the right direction, sometimes it takes time to get the things of your life out. Yet what I don't want you to miss is that the Lord accepts you the moment that you make the turn.

Look at this quotation. It's pretty lengthy, but I think I'd like to wind up with this. "Evangelism," page 286, in paragraph 1, servant of the Lord says, "I have been shown that many have confused ideas in regard to conversion. They have often heard the words repeated from the pulpit, 'You must be born again.' 'You must have a new heart.' These expressions have perplexed them. They could not comprehend the plan of salvation.

Many have stumbled to ruin because of the erroneous doctrines taught by some ministers concerning the change that takes place at conversion. Some have lived in sadness for years, waiting for some marked evidence that they were accepted by God." That's powerful. "They have separated themselves in a large measure from the world, and find pleasure in associating with the

people of God, yet they dare not profess Christ, because they fear it would be presumption to say that they are children of God. They are waiting for that peculiar change that they have been led to believe is connected with conversion."

Are you gathering that? In other words, they've been told that, "When you are converted, the change happens." Well, listen to this: "After a time some of these do receive evidence of their acceptance with God, and are then led to identify themselves with His people. And they date their conversion from this time. But I have been shown--" this is beautiful. "But I have been shown that they were adopted into the family of God before that time. God accepted them when they became weary of sin, and having lost their desire for worldly pleasures, resolved to seek God earnestly. But, failing to understand the simplicity of the plan of salvation, they lost many privileges and blessings which they might have claimed had they only believed--" and here's the end-- "when they first turned to God, that He had accepted them." Somebody ought to say, "Amen."

You know what in essence is being said? So many people say, "I haven't--" this is revolutionary. Are you ready for it? This is revolutionary because sometimes somebody gets baptized, and a week later, some Adventists are saying, "Are you still eating cheese?" There was a guy at our church once that brought pork and beans to a potluck, and everybody ate it first, and they said, "What's the secret ingredient?" And he said, "pork and beans," and nobody knew it. When he found out it was incorrect, then he changed his life.

Here's the point I want to make: When God convicts a person by the Holy Spirit and that person turns his life over to God, Jesus makes Himself responsible for the changes in that person's life, being confident of this very thing that "He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ." Can somebody say, "Amen"?

So the lesson, "Turn Their Hearts," is what the Lord wants to do. That's why we're offering you this special offer, "Is It Possible to Live Without Sinning?" You can text the number-- the letter "SH040," to 40544, and you can have a free copy of this. May God bless you as you turn your life over to Christ and make Him responsible for the changes in your life. Happy Sabbath. Let us pray.

Father in heaven, thank You for the power of change. Thank You for the work that You promised to do in us as we turn our hearts and put our lives in Your hand. May You be glorified by the changes that You have made. In Jesus' name, we pray, amen.

Announcer: Don't forget to request today's life-changing free resource. Not only can you receive this free gift in the mail, you can download a digital copy straight to your computer or mobile device. To get your digital copy of today's free gift, simply text the key word on your screen to 40544, or visit the web address shown on your screen, and be sure to select the "digital download" option on the request page. It's now easier than ever for you to study God's Word with Amazing Facts wherever and whenever you want and, most important, to share it with others.

Announcer: "Amazing Facts Changed Lives."

Male: My greatest wish is that my children will see me the way I see my own father. He's a very devoted man, and that kind of framed my childhood, going forward from there, where I was always involved in church work, and I had a very rich experience with the Lord at a young age, all the way up through college.

Then after I got married, I got in a company called Comcast, and I spent the past roughly eight and a half years, nine years at Comcast, and I was actually watching television with my son, and a Comcast commercial came on the air, and he said, "Oh, Daddy, that's Comcast. That's where you work, Daddy." And most fathers would be proud of something like that, but it really struck me that, you know, my son's getting older, and he does not see me as a servant of the Lord. He sees me as a servant of my company.

And I knew that I would have to make some changes because I wanted him to know me as a man of God. I never thought I would be a preacher or anything like that, but I knew that there was room in the work for me and for my talents, and I wanted my son to see me operating in the work. That's when I knew that my time there was coming to an end.

I was sitting in my office one day, and I was kneeling in prayer, and I said, "God, you know, show me what You want me to do because it seems like a big move here, and everyone's thinking I'm crazy, and I don't know exactly how, you know, things are going to go if they don't go well." It's a crazy thought when you're thinking about God. And I lifted my head up in prayer, and there were, just, like, a flock of maybe 300 birds that were just flying, and they were swooping down over the water, and they would fly back up, and then they would chase each other around. And, you know, I was just looking at the pattern of the giant flock, and the promise of the Lord came to me where He says that, you know, He takes care of the sparrows, and you don't see them worrying about how they are going to be taken care of from day to day. You know, they don't, you know, wring their hands with wondering, you know, "Will there be any worms to eat tomorrow?"

And that promise really stood out to me and He said, "How much more do I love you?" You know, "I'm not going to send you on a mission to do My work and leave you high and dry because you claim to be My child. You claim to be My son, and everyone knows that." That assurance allows me to know that whatever happens here, whatever happens after here, we're sons of God, and there are certain things that we shouldn't worry about.

From the day we arrived at AFCOE, it's been obvious that God has blessed the Amazing Facts Ministry, the AFCOE program. And I will be using my AFCOE experience no matter where I go to reach people because the personal touch of face-to-face evangelism, speaking and sharing the Word of God out of your own mouth, there's no replacement for that, and Amazing Facts has been very instrumental in helping me find the area of the work of God and showing me how large and how broad it is. It's been a tremendous blessing to be in a place where we're around people seeking to do God's will and listening for His voice in their life, and that's very, very important today.

Announcer: Together, we have spread the Gospel much farther than ever before. Thank you for your support.

Announcer: "Amazing Facts Changed Lives."

Female: By the time I got to high school, abuse was just a way of life for me. I just thought that that was the way it was and that many people were going through that, and I found out that a lot of the girls were not going through the abuse that I was going through. I started acting out and playing up and misbehaving in school. I felt, when I spoke to Mom, she was too busy worrying about where Dad was, what Dad was doing. When I spoke to the older siblings, they couldn't be bothered. I had stupid questions.

I seem to feel very lonely all the time, and I just forgot at that point where God was and felt that I didn't need Him because, anyway, when I did need Him, He was never around for me. I was living a very, very busy life working till 2, 3 o'clock in the morning and then drinking alcohol till 5 o'clock so that I could get to sleep for a few hours, wake up and then get back to work at 8 o'clock at night.

So my life continued and spiraled until I decided I needed to do something different, so I packed my bags and spent 11 months crossing Africa from Zimbabwe, all the way through to Switzerland. Met a lady in a missionary who spoke to me about God and gave me a Bible, and that was when I started thinking again that "God, maybe You led me on this trip," and that was the start of me really rethinking, "What am I doing with my life?"

I'd made a decision that "God, this time, I'm never going to let You go. I know You've never let me

go. It was always me who let go." My return to Jesus was the most amazing feeling that I'd ever experienced. I felt as if this time I'd made a connection with God.

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Announcer: "Amazing Facts Changed Lives."

Male: I've had to say that I had a wonderful childhood, growing up. I went to a private school up until the seventh grade, till junior high. I believe it was at that point in junior high that my life began to change. Going from a Christian education into a public school was a big difference. There was a lot of secular influence, a peer pressure, and, for me, it was the music. I started listening to heavy metal music. Every concert they would come to town, I was there. That had a profound effect on me.

I started using marijuana probably at the age of 14. I started drinking, using a lot of cocaine, and that led to methamphetamine, and that completely changed my life. I dropped out of high school my sophomore year and went to work. I would get off of work, and we'd go into the bar until 2 o'clock in the morning, and I'd get back up at 5, and I'd go back at it again, six, seven days a week.

At the age of 20, I lost my dad to a heart attack. I didn't know how to handle the loss, so I tried to mask my pain with alcohol and drugs. I got three DUIs in one year. I was arrested. They gave me a year in the county jail, and the moment I got out, I went back to doing the same thing, hanging with the same people, the same crowd.

I was involved in a hit-and-run motorcycle accident, and I was charged with a felony DUI. Even though, at the time of the accident, I was not under the influence, I still had methamphetamine in my system. At my sentencing date, I left the courtroom, and I didn't come back, and that left me with a felony warrant, and I had fallen asleep at a park, and I woke up to a park ranger knocking on my window. I knew I was wanted, and I knew that I was not going to just turn myself in. I turned to him, and I had made the comment, "Not today," and I took off, and I led five different agencies on about a 35-minute chase.

And I realized at that point that I wasn't going to get away and that this was going to end up either me killing somebody or myself, and so I made the decision to pull over. At that point, everything that I had, I lost. I was sentence to two years in state prison, and it was there that God got ahold of me, and it was through Amazing Facts Ministries.

I remember listening on my radio to Pastor Doug Batchelor. I wanted to get to know the Bible. I wanted to know God. And so my Aunt Marilyn sent me the Amazing Facts study guides, and it was there that my relationship with Christ began.

I had called home, and I knew my mother wasn't doing well, but I didn't realize that she had cancer. She had about a 30% chance of making it through her surgery. She had told the doctors that she was not going to have chemo and she was not going to have radiation that, if her God was going to save her, then he would save her. I remember hanging up the phone to what I thought was my last conversation with my mom. I turned around. I got down on my knees, and I prayed to God, and I said, "God, if You're there, please save my mother. Wherever You lead me in life, whatever You want me to do, I am Yours." And I had a feeling of such peace that I knew that my mother was going to be okay and that my life was going to change.

There are no words that I can adequately express to Amazing Facts, and to Pastor Doug, to say thank you to all those people who support the ministry. I am a product of your support. My life is changed because of this ministry, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart.