

WELCOME TO THE FAMILY: PILGRIMS IN PROGRESS

We all have had the experience of having someone we looked up to disappoint us. People we have respected and even loved have let us down. Except for Jesus, no one is perfect. The apostle Paul was unquestionably the greatest of the apostles. But even he admitted to having shortcomings: “This is a faithful saying,” Paul wrote, “and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.” (1 Tim. 1:15) The Bible makes it clear that we are all sinners. We’ve all fallen short of the glory of God.

KEY POINTS

Over the past weeks we have learned some fascinating truths from the Bible. We have learned that Jesus, God Himself, bore our sins and died for us on the cross, and that through faith in

1 John 5:3

“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.”

His sacrifice we can have forgiveness for our sins and receive eternal life. (Rom. 3:28; Eph. 2:8-10)

We also studied the truth about the Ten Commandments. We saw that we are not saved by keeping the law, but that we keep the law because Jesus has already saved us. (1 John 2:3) And because we are saved by Jesus, we love and obey Him. “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.” (1 John 5:3) We saw, too, that at the heart of those commandments is the Sabbath. We looked at how Jesus kept the Sabbath and healed people. We saw that it was never changed and that

God expects His people to observe the Sabbath today.

Many of you have studied, you’ve prayed, and you’ve made a decision to be baptized. You have decided to follow Jesus, Who says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” (John 14:6) I commend you for that decision. And many of you are ready to join the Seventh-day Adventist church and become part of the family of God. We warmly welcome you to our church family. You are becoming a part of God’s last-day remnant that gains three thousand new members every day! You are joining a special church full of wonderful and committed Christians. You are joining not just a church, but a prophetic movement with a wonderful message for the world.

God has always had a people who would proclaim truths about Him. And yet when we look at those messengers, we see that few if any of them always lived up to the truths they proclaimed one hundred percent of the time.

Look at some of these messengers from Bible history. Take Noah, a “preacher of righteousness” (2 Pet. 5:2). He did a great work, but when it was done the Bible tells us he lay naked in front of his family. Not good conduct for a “church leader.” And how about David – a leader of God’s chosen people, who murdered a man so he could marry his wife. The same failings can be seen in the New Testament church. Church leaders showed favoritism towards Jewish widows at the expense of Gentile widows. (Acts 6:1). Even Paul had problems getting along with his co-workers Barnabas and John Mark. (Acts. 15:36-39).



The family of God is a special place with special people.



Even the great men and woman of the Bible had character faults.

Now, what is the point of all this? It is to tell you that God is perfect, but God's people are not. That is why throughout these meetings we have been pointing you to Jesus and His Word, the Bible. The truths you have learned have come from the Bible, not from a person. The Word of God will endure forever. (1 Pet. 1:24-25) And because we have learned these truths, many are getting ready to be baptized and to join the Seventh-day Adventist church. And again I say, God bless you. Welcome to the family of God.

We welcome you as you become part of a world-wide family of more than 16 million people in 200 plus countries around the world. We are a church that speaks 717 languages. This church is growing by more than 3,000 members a day, or 21,000 members a week! This is now your church!

You are joining a church that believes in healing. Your new church operates more than 500 hospitals and clinics. It operates the largest protestant educational system in the world. It has radio and TV stations that broadcast the Gospel around the world. And all these ministries have one goal, and that is to tell the world about Jesus and His soon coming! And now, you too can have a part in spreading this message around the world.

And yet, you will soon discover for yourself that the church, and the people in it, are not perfect. Only God is. One day the pastor might do something that disappoints you. Maybe a church member or church leader will disappoint you. But remember to look at the pastor's hands. You won't find scars from the cross there, will you? No, the pastor didn't die for your sins. Look at the church member's or church leaders' hands. He or she didn't die for your sins, right? No, there's only one person who bore those marks for you, and that's Jesus. Jesus alone should be the main reason you join the church. It's because you love Jesus and want to follow Him and keep His commandments that you are joining the church. In the end, remember, you are not saved because your name is on the church books. You are saved because of Jesus. Look to Him. Look for truth in God's Word.



You too can have a part in spreading this message.

TAKE-HOME MESSAGE

As a member of the church, we must always keep our eyes on Jesus – for He alone is perfect. He alone will not disappoint us. Jesus told a parable in which he taught us that the church would not be perfect – but that one day, He would separate the wheat from the weeds. That separation is His work. (Matt. 13:24-30) Until then, keep your eyes fixed on Jesus who alone is the author and finisher of your faith! (Heb. 12:1-2).



Jesus will separate the wheat from the weeds.

BETWEEN YOU AND GOD

Perhaps you have not yet made the decision to unite with God's family, His church. That invitation still stands. Christ is calling you to be a part of His last-day church, those who keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus. (Rev. 14:12) Please make plans today to be baptized and join those who are proclaiming and waiting for the soon coming of Jesus!