

Letting Go of the Reins

by Joshua Lewis



“I believe God exists. I have had experiences in my life where I knew God helped me. But I have questions,” one of my worker friends, the cabinet installer, asked. “Why did Japan kill 20 million Chinese? Why did Hitler kill so many people? What about Pol Pot?”

For the last year and a half (minus the time we were on furlough), the group of men working with me on our house have been supporting each other with laughter and love and growing in the knowledge of God through repeatedly reading a collection of seventy key Bible stories. We have been real. I am not the same person. They are not the same.

I have gotten to know how Muslims think, not just how Westerners assume they think. I had conflated Islam as a religion of fear, but many of these men serve God because they love Him. I have seen how powerful the simple telling of stories is, and how each is connected. I glean much from hearing their comments on the Bible stories known by these Muslims, learning which details are the same and which are different.

I have learned not to try to extract every lesson possible from a verse—just expose them to the story, make one good point, and then stop. New layers will emerge every time the story is revisited. It is now food in their pantry. God can pull it out anytime He wants, mix it with a different passage and make something delicious. Even better than me giving them a takeaway is letting them come up with one for themselves. Often, the questions we ask become clear a few days later if we are patient.

For example, my friend, the cabinet installer, had asked God some pretty big questions. Although he was no longer working on our house (the installation was finished), his questions and frustration still rang in our ears a few days later when it came time to read Jesus’ parable of the wheat and the tares. God had certainly sown good seed, we agreed. All the men recalled that He had pronounced everything good seven times in the first chapter of Genesis. As we continued talking, it hit us like a meteorite: The enemy had created a situation where eliminating all the bad before the appointed harvest time would ruin everything. God needed to prove that He was good without immediately destroying evil. He did that through the life, death and resurrection of His Son.

Now, my seventh-generation Adventist mind always wants to be sure they reach the same conclusions handed down to me. But I have to let go of the reins—which is scary—and let the Bible speak to them, simply asking, “What caught your attention about this passage?” Then whatever it is that God is speaking to them will come out. It is valid if it is Biblical, even if it is not what I would have said. In the rare

instance when a comment strays into opinion or philosophy, there is another question: “Where do you find that in the Bible?” God’s unchanging Word pulls us back on track.

Some of the first men hired have been through the same stories two or three times now. They tell the stories from memory to newcomers. They pray. I have not made a passionate appeal for them to forsake Islam and follow Christ yet. I have not felt God telling me to do this. I am in that valley with God right now.

When I first arrived as a missionary, my Bible studies lacked direction. But these men have transformed me into a Bible teacher. As I talk with these men, whom God has sent, we get to discuss things that are dear to their hearts. I can say anything to them in love, and I have. They know I love them. And although I sometimes think they are not listening, I will later get a call out of the blue and they will tell me about an answered prayer or thank me for praying for them. That is the difference one and a half years of daily Bible study with these men has made in me.

Joshua Lewis is a full time missionary in Cambodia with Adventist Frontier Missions. This story has been shared with permission of Adventist Frontier Missions.

World Church Prayer Requests

NOVEMBER 28 - DECEMBER 4, 2025

- **World Church:** Pray for those in church leadership who are having challenges with their health. Pray that God will give them solutions and healing in His own time and way.
- **South Africa:** Pray for the staff of the Thlaho e Makatsang Wellness Centre, a center of influence opening in December. Pray that they will have the funds to get the books and equipment necessary. Pray especially for a reception desk so that the guests will receive a clear picture of a beautiful and orderly God as they enter.
- **Nigeria:** Pray for spiritual growth for the church members and for hearts to be open to receive Christ as Friend, Lord, and Savior. This is especially important as Christians are currently under severe persecution in this country.
- **Uganda:** Pray for the health center of the Kanyambara SDA Church, an initiative of the women's ministries seeking to reach people in hard to reach areas, especially women in labor. Due to various challenges, the center has been closed. Pray that God will guide in finding proper administration for the facility and that it will be reopened to continue its work to those who need the care.
- **England:** Pray for Chatham Church. The members seek to be a beacon of light in the community as they undertake intentional outreach work. Pray that their efforts will be effective, not because it is theirs, but because it has been fully surrendered to Jesus.
- **Canada:** Pray for the Red Earth Creek Fellowship Group as they have formed Adventurers, Trailblazers, and Pathfinders clubs. Pray that these youth events will be a true blessing to the youth and to the community. Pray that it will break down barriers of prejudice and fear and be a tool of Jesus to love the community as He does.
- **United States:** Pray for the Pueblo First SDA Church as they plan their outreach for the coming year. Pueblo was listed as one of the most dangerous cities in the United States so the members seek God's help as they engage with people of many backgrounds and living situations.