

Taking Off Adventist Sunglasses

We opened our eyes – now we see!

John 9:6-15

Tom & Judy Shewmake

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We were born into the Seventh-day Adventist subculture but during a church evangelistic series we found ourselves examining our beliefs. When we opened our Bibles to discover truth in God's Word we found ourselves studying our way right out of the SDA church – but first we had to take off our Adventist sunglasses!

We opened our eyes to truth during an evangelistic series! The exact medium designed to promote the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) church to local Christians and at the same time keep members in the church opened our eyes to what the SDA church actually teaches. A traditional evangelist came to Placerville for a seven-week series in March 2009. Being involved deacon and deaconess, music leaders, marriage ministry leaders, and hospitality team members we pitched in to help. During the course of the series, we began to question what we were hearing from the evangelist, so we opened our Bibles to see what the Bible teaches on these subjects, and then we found ourselves – as happens to many – studying our way right out of the SDA church. First, we had to take off our Adventist sunglasses and then we opened our eyes and we discovered the truth!

We were both born into the SDA subculture – Judy was 6th generation Adventist her great-great-great grandfather and great-great grandparents helped to establish the Artichoke SDA Church in south Minnesota in 1872, one of the first Scandinavian SDA congregations. Tom was 3rd generation Adventist; his grandparents came into the church through evangelistic tent meetings in Reno, Nevada in the 1940's, and his father is a retired SDA pastor.

I (Judy) have always felt privileged to be raised in an Adventist home within the “Adventist bubble” which shielded us from realities of the world, taught us a healthy lifestyle, encouraged higher education, and provided community, belonging and solidarity. I felt privileged to know the “truth” and be a part of a global church family. My parents took us to Sabbath School and church every week; they also made it a priority to send my siblings and I to 14 years in the SDA educational system. All through my life I've heard stories about family members who believed in the second-coming of Jesus. I remember my grandmother and great-grandmother talking about “the hope” the “truth” a relative “sleeping waiting for Jesus” etc. My parents faithfully had family worship and instilled in us the duty of Sabbath keeping from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. I remember sitting in stair-step fashion on the second row of the church with my siblings and mother while my father the head elder conducted the “kings business” part of the services feeling proud of our standing in the church.

Even though I (Judy) was a sixth generation SDA and had attended numerous evangelistic series and spent 14 years in the educational system, the evangelistic series in March 2009 showed me that I did not fully understand all of the details and theology of the 28 SDA Fundamental Beliefs. I know that I did not believe some of them; at times I picked and chose which ones made sense or felt comfortable to me. I inherited being an Adventist. I absorbed it, lived it, ate it and breathed it. I followed the SDA beliefs to the point that I honestly did not know Jesus because I found my identity in a religion, not in a relationship!

Church standards had never made sense to me – such as the hours of the Sabbath and not participating in certain activities on Sabbath; girls not allowed to wear pants while I was growing up; you could not eat meat but “vege-meat” filled with gluten, salt and fat was acceptable; Disney movies were OK in the school gymnasium but not in the theaters; reading any books that were not published by SDA publishing companies was discouraged; it was ingrained in me to not associate with those who did not belong to the local church or school. While at boarding academy I remember that the length of my skirt – no more than two inches off the floor when kneeling – was of more importance to the faculty than the condition of my heart; again it was all about works and what looked right, not about a relationship with Jesus. Discussions of what could or could not be done and Sabbath keeping regulations took any joy out of the day. Many things at home, school, and church were about how it looked to others, what we did when, and who saw it.

Everything was all about what looked right rather than the true condition of your heart. Adventists excel in enforcing the behavior, the works, and the looks, while glossing over the controversial core beliefs and doctrines. They teach members enough proof texts, often taken out of context, to explain the Sabbath, proper things to eat, and soul sleep. While the church covers up the discrepancies and other relevant details such as what the Bible unquestionably teaches Christians and what mainstream Christianity believes. While the prophet EGW's false teachings and the truth about the history and heritage of the SDA church are overlooked. I learned to be careful not to disappoint my angel or go anywhere he wouldn't (movie theater, bowling alley etc.) which also fed into the looks and works mentality. Reading about Satan, the constant references to his demonic activities (mentioned 9,956 in Ellen G. White writings compared to only 47 times in the Bible) the constant battle between good and evil mentioned repetitively in EGW writings fed many fears and uncertainties. As a child, I (Judy) was taught that angels were recording every word, thought, and deed that this information one day would be used to determine if I was worthy for salvation during the investigative judgment. Somehow I began to be petrified of Satan appearing like my late grandmother and trying to convince me that my SDA beliefs were wrong, and I constantly rehearsed how I would respond should that happen. I learned that Jesus died to forgive my sins; BUT I needed to continue working exceedingly hard, doing right, and daily confessing sins to keep that sin blotted out of the books of heaven. Again, it was not all wrong, but as with anything, along with sound the false was added. These are just a few of my memories.

I (Tom) was a 3rd generation SDA. My father is a retired SDA minister, and my mother the author of six books on prayer and the sanctuary published by Review & Herald. As a PK (preacher's kid), I rebelled at what seemed my parent's excessive time spent doing "church work" along with all the rules and expectations that hung over a pastor's family. Sabbath afternoons were a time for me to get into trouble with the other kids whose parents were also busy with church activities. Left alone to do whatever we wanted to in the church basement or upstairs in bedrooms of homes we visited, many times we did things our parents would have been appalled had they known. I often got into trouble at church school – a church school principal once said to me "Tom you are too wicked to go to heaven!" The unfortunate fact was I believed him!

Born and raised in the church we were both totally educated in the SDA school system first grade through university. We met while at Pacific Union College, married while Tom attended Loma Linda University, and we raised our children in the church passing along the "works and looks" mentality by raising them in a similar way to our own upbringing. Both of us had difficult experiences in our early years at school and so we decided to teach our children at home. This decision led us even deeper into how things looked as Judy became leader and editor of the *Adventist Home Educator* publishing a guidebook, newsletter, website and email list. Being a leader meant our children had to behave, dress and act a certain way – again everything had to "look just right."

In the mid-1980's, we knew that things were not right in the SDA church, and we knew that something was missing in our lives and so we began looking to fill the emptiness we were experiencing. We missed connecting with the Ford, Rae and Brinsmead movement warned off by Tom's father, a SDA minister and blindly accepting the conference explanation of the Ellen G. White (EGW) plagiarism debate. Tom's aunt and uncle did leave the SDA church during this time and just hearing how they were "lost forever in apostasy now that they had walked away from the truth" kept our minds closed and those Adventist sunglasses firmly positioned.

We began attending the Wheeling, Standish and other historical SDA meetings and it threw our family into an ultra-conservative movement with even more of the "looks and works" oriented SDA lifestyle. If

you just wore long denim skirts, kept your limbs and neck covered, ate 100% vegan diet, believed that the SDA denomination was in apostasy and that colored money, Sunday laws and the end of time were eminent. And you obeyed the Mosaic laws, listened only to music with the “right” beat without drums or guitars, read the *KJV Spirit of Prophecy Study Bible* only. And if there was plenty of fear and striving for perfection in the equation you might be able to squeeze into heaven – especially if you moved to the country, grew your own food and shunned society and technology.

This time of ultra-conservative works and perfection lasted about two years before disillusionment surfaced; along with the reality of not being able to obey all those rules and so we returned to our familiar SDA upbringing and church. We were sadder and wiser but still wearing those Adventist sunglasses. In late 1999, when the board of the conservative Camino church that we had belonged to for 15 years voted to exclude the Gospel Bluegrass music we loved to play as a family, we moved our membership to the progressive SDA church in the next town. The Placerville SDA church welcomed us, music and all. We soaked up the teachings on grace and practical Christian living for two years until this pastor was transferred because he was “teaching too much grace!”

When people inquired which denomination we belonged to, we were always tentative and often hesitant to admit that we were Adventists. We would apologetically say “We attend the SDA church but we do not believe this and we do not practice that, and the church is progressive sometimes we have contemporary praise and worship music.” We felt like we could never invite friends to go to church because the love of God and joy of the Spirit was missing from the services, as the pomp and circumstance got in the way of true worship. Also you never knew if there would be a isolated spiritually uplifting sermon or the more often than not guilt-trip message of how you were not giving enough, or serving in a church position, or if a school band would be playing, etc. Most important of all the joy of the Lord was absent! Yet because of life-long habit, parents and family who attended, a need to belong and a belief that there was nothing else better available, we continued attending, working, doing, and trying to look good.

Our marriage had been difficult at times. In 2004, we experienced a healing miracle through Caring for the Hearts ministries. We were so excited about the changes in our relationship that we wanted to share what we learned with others, so we took the advanced counselor training necessary to share with other struggling couples. During this time of growth, we met some incredible Christian couples who were actually joyful, Spirit-filled and who seemed to know God in a way we had never experienced. To this day we remain particularly close friends with one couple and we began to wonder how these remarkable people could actually be lost. Meanwhile, the many mainstream Christian books we were reading had broadened our thinking about Christian teachings and beliefs. These teachings had made us receptive to opening our hearts to the truth.

My (Tom’s) journey out of the SDA church started in 2004 when God began a detailed work in me where I began to see the sinner I actually was. The Holy Spirit convicted me of wounds in my youth and through an extraordinary spiritual journey based on Psalms 139:23-24 my Adventist sunglass shaded eyes started to open. I went through an incredible realization that I was responsible for my dysfunctional marriage and wounded children. I cried out and confessed to God and those I had wounded because of my pride and reactive behaviors from wounds of childhood. Although during this time I clung to the SDA beliefs ingrained in me from birth, while I wondered why there was so much hypocrisy and pride in our church. About a year ago my oldest son was convicted and expressing questions about the validity of the church’s prophet EGW. At the time I was uncomfortable with him questioning the SDA beliefs but the Holy Spirit used this experience to work in my heart.

I (Judy) had always longed to know Jesus in a profound way, but I always came up feeling that a key part was missing. I felt there was a wall between me and Jesus I was lacking faith and a fearful emptiness often filled my heart. An investigative judgment, SDA rules and unreasonable demands of perfection from the prophet EGW, and the time of trouble constantly hung over my head causing me to doubt my eternal destiny. I confessed sins over and over again and never felt forgiven! I knew that I did not quite know Jesus the way I wanted, let alone have a steady relationship with Him. At times the relationship had been wonderful, but it never seemed to last. The second half of 2008 found me again feeling dead inside, no joy, no spark, and no desire to read, at times barely able to pray. When I did pick up the Bible or SDA books no matter how hard I searched, peace was a slippery quest to me. I experienced questioning with no answers, seeking with no results. I prayed and tried as hard as possible to obtain a blessing at church and still felt nothing. I realized that I did not have a conversion story – born in the Adventist bubble you do not need one – nobody else has one and no one else even asks about it! This is the problem with the SDA system – you cannot find Jesus when you are stuck in the artificial plastic bubble of rules, works, and regulations with Adventist sunglasses clouding your perception of who Jesus actually is!

Our eye opening experience began in March 2009. Because of pressure from the conference the outgoing pastor had scheduled an evangelistic series. He disappeared and left the new pastor to work with the evangelist. The advertisement showed the typical scary beasts and end time events, and there was no indication of where the meetings were, but the address was the Placerville SDA church. Being use to this, having seen it several times before, this time it struck us as dishonest. We began attending and helping out as deacon and refreshment hosts, but we felt darkness in the message, an oppressive atmosphere in the church, a judgment in the sermons. Many of the things preached caused us to question what the Bible truth actually was. We took the first step on a journey to discover for ourselves what God Word teaches about the SDA beliefs. We finally started reading God's word without our Adventist sunglasses.

Everything I (Judy) had grown up with and worried about as an adult, all the fears I had repressed out of hopelessness; the investigative judgment of my sins – remembered or forgotten; surviving the time of trouble without an intercessor. All the striving to be right, look right and do right; the inadequate feelings I'd manage to push aside – these all came tumbling back – brought to the forefront by the evangelistic series. Along with this came the questions – He sounds convincing but is this correct? What does the Bible actually teach? Why do I feel such oppression during these meetings? Something is wrong about this! Where is Jesus? Where is God's grace? The Bible says Jesus fulfilled the law, so why the investigative judgment? These questions were the beginning of an incredible journey – one I never imagined that I would ever expect – the destination was uncharted territory, I was both excited and terrified!

Our whole family was decidedly uncomfortable with the scare tactics and works orientated message presented at these evangelistic meetings. After two weekends – not only of the continued emptiness, but the added darkness of the four meetings each weekend had brought to my spirit – I (Judy) could no longer endure. I was craving to genuinely know Jesus, to know for sure the truth in my heart and soul. I felt guilty for questioning the church teachings that I had been so indoctrinated by, but I was becoming desperate for something I did not even understand. Sunday morning, March 15, 2009 seemingly out of the blue but now we know it was by divine prompting – we decided to attend Green Valley Community Church and we took another step on our journey to freedom!

It was with trepidation the first time we entered a "Sunday church." We expected to feel like outsiders, our religious upbringing told us these people were lost, in apostasy (EGW teaches that Christian churches are the "daughters of Babylon") and that they were worshiping on a false day for which they would receive "the mark of the beast." Our SDA background had also taught us that these people were only seeking entertainment and that they would one day persecute us for keeping "the real Sabbath." Is it any wonder we were somewhat nervous that morning?

What we found that spring day at Green Valley Community Church (GVCC) was joyful praise and worship music that ministered to our spirits, teachings directly from God's Word that touched our hearts and showed God's grace and plan for our lives, refreshing openness and sincere Christians. The lack of a "club house atmosphere" and formal dress was evident as the pastor was wearing jeans. The people were warm and welcoming, friendly, joyful, and experiencing a freedom in Christ we had only dreamed of until now. Most of all we genuinely experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit during the worship service!

I (Tom) will never forget the incredible worship presented through music and teaching at Green Valley. I had never worshiped like this before and was finding that I could freely express my joy and love to the creator of the universe. Absolutely incredible!! My family and I could not get enough of this and we began to attend both Saturday and Wednesday night meetings. I had never been motivated to go to midweek services previously, and I could not believe the number of believers attending on Wednesday night. One event led to another, and the Adventist sunglasses continued to fall off.

Attending GVCC was the turning point but along with this came more questions – foremost of all – how is it that the joy of the Lord and the apparent filling of the Holy Spirit were found in a community church and evidently lacking in the SDA church that considered itself to be "the true" church? Were these people actually lost simply because of a day? What would happen to us for attending a community church – let alone enjoying the worship music and the teachings, and planning to return every week? Why did the SDA church books show 800 members when less than 200 were even coming to church? Why was a group in the SDA church beginning to follow all the Mosaic laws and celebrate Jewish feast days and celebrations? The questions multiplied – but they led us into deeper Bible study!

I (Judy) began studying what the Bible actually taught regarding the 28 Fundamental SDA beliefs. I documented this journey in part two of this story. I would read for a few minutes and then literally have to get up and walk around and absorb what I had just learned, both in amazed wonder at what God's Word truly stated, and in total dismay at having been taught and followed falsehoods all these years. When I took off the Adventist sunglasses that had obscured the true teachings of the New Testament, and read Galatians, Hebrews, Romans, and Second Corinthians through the pure light of Jesus Christ – I found freedom in God's saving grace, a loving Savior who died for me, and the assurance of salvation! I found the truth and I am blessed beyond measure with a real relationship with Jesus Christ. Everything I had been looking for was there all along, but it was obscured by "Adventist truth" – Adventist sunglasses! When I read about how Jesus died for me – rather than causing extreme guilt as it had previously – I experienced a joyful thankfulness for this gift of grace! Jesus did not pay the price only for me to continue to make payments – grace is a gift that I accept in faith. I now have a conversion story! My Adventist sunglasses were not only removed – but cast aside at the foot of the cross!

As I (Tom) study thoroughly for the first time in my life the 28 Fundamental Beliefs of the SDA church, I realized there was serious error right from the start. Much to my dismay I discovered that EGW was not only a sick child but this carried into adulthood where she made many outrageous claims that were not true, along with founding a false church. I started to learn about cults and I am shocked to realize that the SDA church I belonged to fit most of the criteria. I thought the SDA church had been founded on Bible truth. I thought that EGW never came in front of the Bible truths. You could say I was a bit gullible in all this and had never intensely studied for myself. The evidence is all out there, and it does not take long to see the complete Bible truths. I am choosing not to blame anyone and accept full responsibility for my beliefs and actions all these years. I understand for the first time that it is not what I do through my strength that counts when it comes to spiritual success. I am doing everything that is necessary to obtain eternal life, which is to believe and have faith in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. He did it all on Calvary, I am no longer enslaved to the old law, but I can walk in total surrender to the New Covenant, free at last. My moral choices come from an empowered spirit fed by the Holy Spirit to give me the strength I need. No more striving to what I regard right, but rather give my whole heart and soul to Christ who has already done everything that is necessary for me to be saved.

During our studies we found that the SDA church does teach the divinity of Christ along with a partial-grace message, the problem is that they add the SDA beliefs of works, theology, perfection, and the teachings of a false prophet named Ellen G. White (EGW) – and in doing so adhere to many faulty doctrines, the four principal ones being:

A false doctrine of 1844, the “investigative judgment” and sanctuary teachings. Where believers are judged for salvation by their ability to keep perfectly the law. This false doctrine is based on 22 assumptions that cannot be proven from the Bible, and all are contrary to the New Testament gospel of grace. This doctrine teaches that what Jesus did on the cross for us was incomplete and also denies followers the joy of assurance of salvation! We can attest that this teaching is the foundation of much fear in the life of an Adventist. This doctrine cannot be proven in scriptures, and is utterly false and the SDA church is the only church to believe this doctrine.

A false prophet who forged predictions, plagiarized writings, manipulation of people; “visions” that were nothing more than the result of her frontal lobe brain injury; and questionable “angel guides” prove that nothing she wrote or copied can be trusted. Denominational leaders propagate these falsehoods, covering up the truth about doctrines that cannot be Biblically proven; the plagiarism they are fully aware of; and insisting that “*the writings of Ellen White are a continuing and authoritative source of truth.*” If you were to remove the teachings of this prophet and there would be no SDA church.

A false day – the Sabbath, a day given to the Israelites, so they would not forget God, was built up with works, rules, and regulations too numerous to mention by the SDA church and called “the seal of God.” SDAs teach that Sunday keepers are lost and in “Babylon.” The day has become more important than a relationship with Jesus. Six days for me, but I’ll give him the seventh. Where SDA’s err is on making the Sabbath day a prerequisite of salvation. We are free in Christ to choose to honor God on Saturday, Sunday or Wednesday but most importantly to abide in a relationship with him today and every day!

A false remnant church – the denomination teaches that the SDA church is THE only remnant church of God separates Adventists from the Christian community, gives a false sense of security and pride, teach that SDAs are the remnant church of Revelation 12 and are “called out from the world” while

Christians are lost. SDAs are taught that they have “confidential information” and mainstream Christians are left in the dark about what God expects from “His remnant” people but it is the responsibility of the SDA people to influence others into the church.

The four main pillars – false teachings, false prophet, false day, and false remnant church – along with numerous other supports of Adventism immediately began to fall, and we opened our eyes wider! One morning we boxed up 46 EGW books, 10 SDA commentaries and 12 SDA daily devotionals, then a few months later we had a bonfire. We also did a thorough purging of hundreds of other books containing false teachings from our library – those Adventist sunglasses – gone for good!

We pulled out our baptismal certificates to see exactly what we had agreed to 35 years ago. When we saw the list of 13 vows we were horrified! Seven of them – we no longer agree with – we are making plans to be baptized in Jesus Christ alone summer 2010 at the river baptism at GVCC.

We enjoyed GVCC so much, the praise and worship music, the basic gospel teachings, the simple services that were touching our hearts – we were drinking in the knowledge and desired more, so we started attending mid-week services. We could not believe the blessing we received from the additional time of praise and worship music, teachings from the book of Acts and later Ephesians, and worshiping with other Christians mid-week. Then we realized again that something was terribly wrong! At the Placerville SDA church with “the truth,” 15 people came to prayer meeting. While just two miles down the road at Green Valley Community Church, over 500 people were worshiping mid-week, joyfully praising God, learning from the Word, filled with the Spirit, and rejoicing in their freedom in Christ!

Along with three Sunday services, GVCC has a Saturday night service. For a few months we pretended we were still Adventists – taking our daughter to Sabbath School in the morning, staying for church only long enough or often enough to fulfill our deacon, greeting, secretarial duties, and then worshiping, praising and reveling in the teachings of GVCC church on Saturday night. We no longer pretend to be Adventists, and along with attending Sunday morning church services, we are continuing to seek truth, we cannot wait to wake up each morning and see what God will teach us each day!

Previously we had been so caught up in doing what looked right even if our heart was not in it or in doing good works by holding positions in the church. Now, grace allows us to have friends, to be real, to accept others, and be honest, loving and accepting. We both find our thoughts turning to God more often through the day rather than feeling guilty for a thought, or feeling like we were not doing something right. We learned that Jesus died on the cross and fulfilled once and for all the law and won the victory over our enemy! We now feel an overwhelming freedom and love for Jesus like we’ve never before experienced! We listen to the NLT Bible while driving together, and often find ourselves shouting for joy over verses that had previously been hidden from our understanding because of our Adventist sunglasses, are now suddenly coming to life and being revealed to us by the Holy Spirit!

When we stepped out from the bonds of the SDA church, and began truly worshiping and experiencing Jesus, our married children began openly sharing their journeys. Our oldest daughter and son-in-law had been investigating what they believed for the past six months but had not wanted to hurt us with their new beliefs, now we all attend GVCC together.

Our youngest son left the SDA church a few years ago. When we shared our journey with him, he laughingly said, “My foundations are shaken!” He attends GVCC with us and recently shared with us

that he believes in Jesus Christ and plans to be baptized this summer. We are encouraging him to discover for himself what he believes and develop a strong relationship with Jesus Christ.

In 2000, our oldest son was a Bible Worker for a year with an evangelist at three SDA churches. During this time, he taught in the teen division at Redwood Camp Meeting, baptizing young people in the river – he was on fire for Jesus! He attended Black Hills Mission College of Evangelism where three of the requirements were to: read the nine-volume *Testimonies*, serve at three others churches and give an evangelistic series. He graduated with a degree in Youth Pastoral Ministries and then spent a year as a youth pastor at Rio Lindo Academy. All of these experiences opened his eyes to the inner workings of the SDA church, and he soon left in disillusionment. In 2008, he started his journey back to God and began questioning the SDA beliefs, subtly dropping us hints that his belief in EGW and basic SDA doctrines was changing, yet he was afraid to discuss this with us. It has been an awesome blessing to have him one step ahead on the journey, to share our mutual growth and study, and most of all watch him return to a relationship with Jesus.

Our 13 year-old daughter is learning right along with us, reading, and making her own decisions about her beliefs. She wanted to share her thoughts:

“Hey my name is Aarika and this is my story about being a 7th generation Seventh Day Adventist. My journey began when an evangelistic series came to our church. I came to the first meeting with great anticipation, got a folder and started listening. By the time he was 10 minutes into it I was BORED! My friends and I sat together writing notes saying that he sure knew his “Babble on.” He did all the church services too; so before we knew it, we were not getting a blessing at all! Then one beautiful Sunday my mom suggested that we try out Green Valley Community Church (GVCC) and my dad agreed. I went along begrudgingly – bringing a bag of books, something to draw on and even my MP3 player – thinking that it would be just like all the other church services – fancy pew’s, people who would stare daggers at you if you lifted up your hands, formal music with no joy, and pastors that gave you more guilt trips than sermons of God’s love and grace. GVCC was none of those! Instead, there were orange plastic chairs, people who lifted up their hands to praise God, a full worship team (including drums!), and pastors that gave you a wonderful and fulfilling message of love and grace. As you might have guessed I never even opened my bag! I’ve heard my parents discuss this, and listened to messages from Mark Martin, and I feel exhilarated about our new beliefs. I’ve joined the youth group and have seen a huge difference in the spiritual atmosphere as the people there are so accepting and joyful. I’ve found a new perspective of Jesus and look forward to growing in a New Covenant relationship with him!”

Since both of our parents go to Placerville SDA church, they soon noticed our lack of attendance. Tom’s father, knowing we were attending Green Valley Community Church confronted us and stated: “You know they are teaching error over there.” Tom replied that since he refused to attend services with us how would he know if there was error or not. His response was: “Just look at what day they keep.” This was more evidence that SDA beliefs close Adventist minds to any other way of thinking.

We know our decision to leave the SDA denomination is causing our parents and relatives pain. We pray for respect and the right words, as we share our journey to truth with them, while continuing to enjoy a special relationship with them. We are still a part of the large family of God, and enjoy a strong relationship with Jesus and this will be our common bond. The SDA church teaches that friends and family members who apostatize and discard the SDA doctrines will be eternally lost, try to convince others to leave the “remnant church” and eventually persecute those who remain. We reassure you that we are following the teachings of Jesus and a genuine, uncluttered gospel truth and are closer to him than we have ever been. We are not abandoning the Adventist relatives and friends – only the SDA denomination and false doctrines.

There are many challenges ahead for me (Tom). I am beginning to feel the rejection of parents and fellow church members most are sincere, but also brainwashed into believing some false doctrines. They have invested much time and also stand to lose face if they were to admit that they have been wrong all these years. My family and I have chosen to leave the SDA church because it does not support the Bible and the Bible only truths. I am discovering more meaningful worship and am learning more about Gods Bible truths from a local community church than I have ever found in the SDA church. The decision to leave was not about someone or the pastor of the church hurting me, rather it was the mixture of the teaching of Bible truth combined with error that has led me to leave the SDA church. I cannot and will not support a church that will not admit that the "pillars" of the SDA church are not supported by the Bible. This is heresy and I will not longer be a part of it! I sincerely believe that the old covenant and Ten Commandments that the SDA church is following have been done away with, as clearly expressed in the New Testament teachings. I am free at last to stop trying to figure out what to do or not to do on the Sabbath to keep it holy. I now see that the Holy Spirit is the spirit of prophecy, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, I will have God's laws written in my mind and heart to desire to serve Christ and love like He loves. I am no longer struggling to be good, but instead focus my attention on prayer and Bible study to stay in relationship with Christ, so that He can live in me and through me to give me the power to overcome. It doesn't work any other way. I have tried for years to be good with no avail. For the first time in my life, I have full assurance of salvation and hope of eternal life, and that is worth everything to me!

We are convicted that our choice of church membership is a reflection of our beliefs and our relationship with Jesus Christ. If we were to maintain membership in the SDA church, we would be telling other's that we agree with the 28 Fundamental Beliefs and doctrines of the SDA church. Since we no longer believe the SDA beliefs, and are now supporting Green Valley Community Church with our attendance and offerings – we choose now to withdraw our membership from the Adventist denomination and from now on to be known as New Covenant Christians!

We still shake our heads in amazement that previously we did not seriously challenge the SDA beliefs, we never studied for ourselves, and we just chose to stay in our comfortable Adventist bubble without fully understanding the cost. When we studied the Bible for ourselves without Adventist sunglasses, and prayerfully opened our minds and hearts, we found Jesus and his gift of eternal life. Jesus perfectly fulfilled the law, and did everything necessary for our salvation through his life, death on the cross, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. We found the assurance of Salvation without the fear of judgment. We gave up a day of rules for a constant, everyday relationship with Jesus. We found freedom, not to run away in fear or rebellion or to do whatever we please, but to thrive in a real relationship with Jesus, which includes his forgiveness and love where we are not attempting to work our way to Heaven but walking with Jesus every day. We have discovered the freedom of worshiping Jesus without the SDA rules and works that previously clouded our vision. We have chosen to be filled with and guided by the Holy Spirit and Christ's love, and we willingly follow all of the teachings of Jesus as New Covenant Christians.

Love and prayers to each of you – with hearts thankful to Jesus and free in a relationship with Him,
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This story is online at: <http://www.connectingrelationships.org/TakingOffAdventistSunglasses.pdf>
Read Part 2 below as Judy shares more details and documents our journey.

Part 2

Details of the Journey...How the Adventist Sunglasses were Removed

Judy Shewmake

You just read our story, now I want to share the details of my journey the summer of 2009, how we removed the Adventist sunglasses, where I found the answers to many questions and struggles, and how I arrived at this decision. I share these resources so you will see that along with prayer I have been diligent in studying and that this decision did not happen casually. The individuals I have shared my journey with feel that something terrible must have happened to me in the SDA church, that I do not appreciate the new pastor, or that I have drifted away from God. I assure you that nothing happened, and the pastor is an amiable guy. As a result of this journey, I have drawn even closer to Jesus in a way I never dreamed possible, because I took off the Adventist sunglasses that were keeping me from seeing him clearly!

Where do I start studying?

Some Christian friends reading this will probably think that Tom and I were thoroughly confused. What many people do not realize is that if you have been raised in the Adventist bubble, this is a way of life, everyone around you is living in it also and you know no other way! It is quite possible to be born in an SDA hospital; attend Sabbath School and SDA church beginning at birth; be educated in SDA schools kindergarten through university; attend SDA summer camp; marry an SDA spouse; work for a SDA educational or medical institution; have every friend and relationship be an SDA; live in an SDA community; shop at SDA grocery store; retire in an SDA retirement center; and die in an SDA nursing home. The bubble is enormous; the roots run deep; the beliefs are ingrained; guilt, doubt, confusion and fear control behaviors; and the Adventist sunglasses are firmly in position!

The SDA church makes desperate attempts to appear to be Evangelical to mainstream Christians and many members – like I was – are unaware of some of what I am going to share here. The SDA church must deal with these unbiblical doctrines, the false prophet, and then obey God's Word 100% before it could ever be considered part of mainstream Christianity. We totally understand now why the SDA church does not encourage its members to study anything except for the conference produced books and publications. When you began to read the Bible only without wearing your Adventist sunglasses, the honest truth of the gospel jumps out, and there is no turning back once you have experienced the freedom of a New Covenant relationship with Jesus Christ!

It was a monumental step for me to start investigating my beliefs. A step that I resisted and a journey that I did not want to take without much prayer and study. Part of me rebelled at questioning these long-held beliefs. I had essentially avoided dealing with my questions of EGW and other doctrines of the SDA church over the years – an "ostrich with head in sand" comes to mind – but then once I delved into this study "having the rug pulled out from under you" is exactly what happened! I had been taught that if you question the SDA beliefs that you are sliding down into a sinful lifestyle, giving up on God, and that you are lost forever in apostasy! I also had decided years ago that the SDA church was the "best of what was available" so why should I disrupt my comfortable little Adventist bubble? Things looked pretty decent in there, especially wearing my Adventist sunglasses!

My son had written out his thoughts and questions and sent me the document in October 2008. When I read it the full impact did not occur to me, but it did add additional questions to the list in my mind. He wrote about the different types of Adventists, historical, evangelical, liberal, social etc. and he raised

some intriguing questions and proof of how what God's Word teaches and much of what EGW wrote are in complete contradiction. Reading this opened my eyes to more of the issues, and my Adventist sunglasses slipped down just a bit. I still did not know what to do with this information, why should I shake my world and look for answers when I was satisfied where I was?

After our experience in March with the SDA evangelist, I woke up to the seriousness of the issue of what the SDA doctrines actually were, and I realized that I needed to thoroughly understand what I believed. I printed out the 28 Fundamental Beliefs of Adventists to refer to during my study: <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html> I soon found out that I didn't fully understand or agree with everything that the SDA church taught!

I asked my son for suggestions on where to begin studying; he recommended I start with former SDA pastor Mark Martin's website: www.exadventist.com. Mark is now the pastor of Calvary Church in Phoenix, AZ where 10,000 Christian believers worship. Mark continues to reach out to former Adventists and there are many excellent articles and audios on this site. I found a very helpful article by Mark entitled, *A Quick Introduction to Seventh-day Adventism*: <http://www.exadventist.com/Home/Intro/tabid/64/Default.aspx> I was truly embarrassed to realize that though I claimed that I was a SDA, I did not fully understand yet alone believe many of these core SDA teachings.

When I visited www.exadventist.com I noticed testimony stories so being curious as to how others arrived at their decisions I began reading. I expected to read a lot of bitter, angry, and vindictive thoughts. I was very pleased to see that these stories were happy, positive and full of the joy of the Lord. They, like me, were sorrowful to leave what had been so familiar but the joy of a real, unencumbered relationship with Jesus far outweighed any discomfort they had experienced.

One of the first stories I was drawn to was *My Journey Out of Legalism* by Clay Peck a former SDA minister <http://www.exadventist.com/Home/Testimonies/Peck/tabid/65/Default.aspx> Clay talks about how the SDA church teaches Christ + Adventist Extras = salvation. He shares his own questions and his journey to where he now teaches the grace of Jesus Christ at Grace Place in Colorado where he is the minister and the 1000 participating covenant members sign a yearly commitment to the church.

The next story I read was that of Greg and Paula Taylor. Several things in their story jumped out at me, one being that people who step away from Adventism are considered by practicing SDAs to be "fallen, lost, and entering into sinful lifestyle" of apostasy. But this is NOT the case with the ones who leave as a result of diligent study rather they are growing closer to Jesus Christ. This was important to me because I had already realized that I wanted a deeper relationship with Jesus without the religion of the SDA church. Greg and Paula also noticed how mainstream Christians are so passionate and sold out for Christ – something Tom and I had also experienced at Green Valley. Greg talked about many other things I've questioned also – how sending 100% tithes out of the church disables it; the Sabbath day and Old Testament laws that is a barrier with other Christians; what makes the SDA church think they are the only remnant? Greg made a statement that really impacted me: "A day of worship is NOT the final test of loyalty to God, the test is FULL surrender to Jesus sealed with indwelling of the Holy Spirit." I ordered Greg's book *Discovering the New Covenant, Why I am no Longer a Seventh-day Adventist* from <http://www.lifeassuranceministries.com/dnc.html> all the issues of Adventism are addressed in this incredible story of their journey out of the SDA church to freedom in Christ and the New Covenant.

If Jesus died for my sins, why is He in the sanctuary judging me?

The SDA church teaches that right now Jesus is performing an “investigative judgment” in heaven. They believe that this started on October 22, 1844, beginning with Adam and going through those alive now, Jesus is judging people to evaluate if they have perfectly kept the Ten Commandments (especially the fourth one), and if they have done the works necessary for salvation. That is right, judging if they are worthy to be saved, if they have confessed every sin and lived a perfect life! This was the number one concern for me all through my life; since Jesus paid it all, why is my worthiness for salvation being judged – possibly right now this very minute, but then you never know, maybe it has already happened and I am working hard at being good for nothing when I’m not going to make it after all? Hear the confusion? Never in my life had I ever felt totally assured of salvation, forgiveness or my place in heaven with Jesus!!! Strange thoughts from a 6th generation Adventist, but I found out that I was not the only one. With the Adventist sunglasses firmly in position, you can look right past salvation given freely on the cross by Jesus Christ and His complete fulfillment of the law and jump straight to the laws and rules and additional requirements of the SDA church that keep you in the bondage of fear. My leading question was how to find Jesus, who he actually is and experience what he has done for me.

I found that there are hundreds of places where the Bible and the writings of SDA church’s prophetess Ellen G. White (EGW) conflict, often they are entirely different! No wonder confusion reigned; no wonder many other Adventists are also confused! When you are taught one thing, and then read another in the Bible confusion is to be expected! Seventh-day Adventists teach that if there is ever a question, EGW is the final authority. Early SDA pioneers set numerous dates for the second coming of Jesus. They predicted it in 1843, and then when it did not occur in spring of 1844 they changed it to the fall of 1844. So the church began in confusion and chaos. To cover up this error, they teach that Jesus entered the heavenly sanctuary to begin the work called the “investigative judgment” on October 22, 1844. Approximately 18 dates were set for the second coming, clearly contrary to Jesus’ statement that “no man knows the day or hour” but to early SDA leaders this did not mean they could not predict the month or year!

EGW wrote: “Jesus entered the most holy of the heavenly sanctuary at the end of the 2300 days of Daniel 8, in 1844 to make a final atonement for all who could be benefited by His mediation.” *Early Writings* page 253. Many texts such as John 5:24; John 3:18; Romans 8:1; Ephesians 1:7; 1 John 1:7; Romans 5:1 each refutes EGW’s statement. Hebrews 9:12 says that Jesus “...entered the Most Holy Place once and for all, having obtained eternal redemption.” So the wonderful news to me is that Jesus has been there all along, it was his blood that bought redemption and freedom for me (Ephesians 1:7) once and for all and he forgives my sins, he is not judging me, he loves me and wants a relationship with me! This is what I had been missing all along – the relationship that I couldn’t see while wearing Adventist sunglasses!

No one can prove this investigative judgment doctrine, which is unique to SDAs, in any Bible – but the SDA church found a way – they wrote their own bible *The Clear Word Bible* and added about 80 words to Daniel 8 that “explain” this SDA fundamental belief. Now unsuspecting Adventists have false proof that the investigative judgment started in 1844 because their denominationally published, paraphrased bible says it did! Many other problems with *The Clear Word Bible* are found here:

<http://www.lifeassuranceministries.com/pdf%20files/4-17-01%20Deliberate%20Distortions%20in%20SDA.pdf>

To make this dangerous doctrine more palatable SDA's have begun to refer to the investigative judgment doctrine as "the pre-advent judgment." In the recent past SDA's have tried to take the rough edges off this doctrine by making more false claims: that God is allowing us to see truth, to judge for ourselves his actions, or introduce a "moral influence" theory that by dying on the cross Jesus was showing us God's mercy. All of these false theories gloss over the fact that atonement for mankind was COMPLETE at the cross and there is nothing for us to do but "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved." (Acts 16:3, John 3:16)

This article reveals the many falsehoods surrounding the SDA doctrine of the investigative judgment: <http://www.nonsda.org/study4.shtml>

What about that chart, the great disappointments of 1843, 1844, and the Sanctuary?

It was difficult to make total sense of the SDA chart, the days/years, prophecy, rebuilding and more, and why couldn't they decide on a year and why do they say God held his hand over part so they wouldn't understand? I grew up with it and that's just the way it was. SDA proof texts attempted to explain it, and church leaders taught it so why did I need to fully understand every detail?

I shared on the previous page that SDA's predicted Jesus was going to return October 22, 1844 but when that did not happen, they covered their error, calling it the great disappointment, and – based on a "vision" in a cornfield – came up with the false teaching that Jesus was moving from one part of the sanctuary to another to begin the investigative judgment. This is a false doctrine because God's Word tells us "...through His own blood, He entered the holy place, once for all, having obtained eternal redemption." Hebrews 9:12. God's Word repeats this teaching many times!

I have sat through at least 8 different evangelistic meetings, 14 years of Bible class at SDA schools and I still did not completely understand exactly how it all tied together. Come to find out, I'm not alone and it's because the chart is based on error, mathematical miscalculations, proof texts that don't tie together, false "visions," faulty theology, presumptions and misunderstandings. *Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists* by Dale Ratzlaff goes into more detail:

<http://www.lifeassuranceministries.com/c.html>

The Sanctuary and Bible Truth versus Adventist Truth: <http://www.nonsda.org/study5.shtml> also helped clarify this for me.

But Adventists have "the truth" don't they?

I grew up being taught that the SDA church was God's remnant and the only church that had "the truth" and the millions of other mainstream Christians were in error. Adventists are taught this from infancy in Cradle Roll, in SDA schools kindergarten through college, and in weekly adult Sabbath School lessons. The results of this belief were reinforced one Sabbath at Placerville SDA church. We were looking at the new building project (that the church only had 1/3 of the funds to build) and an older elder in the church turned to us and said "If we build it they will come because we have the truth!" And I said to myself, "If the SDA church really has the truth why are people not here now, why is the church so empty, why don't they have the money to complete this building?" So I wanted to know why – when SDA's read God's Word as other Christians do – were Christians happily going to church on Sunday and experiencing a joyful relationship with Jesus that I was clearly missing out on? Here's the false part, I thought that this relationship was void because of something I wasn't doing right. I

learned that it was because I was wearing Adventist sunglasses that kept me from seeing who Jesus really was and knowing what he had already done for me!

The best explanation of this is an article by Dale Ratzlaff entitled *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventist "Truth"* <http://www.lifeassuranceministries.com/pdf%20files/8-4-07%20tt%20wosod.pdf> This concise 15 page article explains the problems behind the basic SDA beliefs like the prophet EGW, remnant church teachings, Sabbath – the “seal of God,” the investigative judgment, the mark of the beast, soul sleep, and how the Adventist church teaches Christ plus works, plus EGW, plus fundamental beliefs, plus... Here is a quote from page one of this article: *“There are a large and ever growing numbers of Adventist scholars, pastors, administrators and laity who know that many of the historic teachings of Adventism are unbiblical, anti-gospel and should be rejected. Many more, however, tenaciously hold to traditional teachings of Adventism as the truth. Today the Seventh-day Adventist church faces a dilemma. To renounce its cultic past and jettison its unbiblical teachings would split the church, erode its financial support and could damage the many good things that Seventh-day Adventists do. However, to cling to and try to defend the historical teachings which many know to be unbiblical is to continue to give reasons for informed members to exit Adventism.”*

How can you give up the Sabbath?

Sabbath day keeping was ingrained in my very being – from preparation day Friday, cooking, cleaning, laundry, etc. to strict obedience beginning sunset Friday and ending at sunset on Sabbath. I mean major stress and guilt if you are not ready one-half hour before sundown Friday. Constant reminders through the Sabbath day to do this, not that, and there was no way that you could start a TV show or a school program or a game 10 minutes before sundown Saturday night! “It is not sundown yet.” is a common phrase. I often found myself saying, thinking and believing and projecting on others my beliefs saying “Not on the Sabbath.” The Sabbath day had become a day of rules and regulations. Yet it was interesting how everyone had a different set of “rules” to follow. No two people, groups, or organizations could figure out what rules were to be kept, but each one knew theirs were the right Sabbath-day keeping rules! The church even tried to come up with a 20 page list of rules and regulations! In actuality, Adventists have never kept the day the way the Israelites were instructed. And yet at the same time for Adventists this day is a cherished day of rest from work and secular things.

I was taught that the Sabbath was instituted at creation, kept by Abraham and Isaac, emphasized again to the Israelites in the Ten Commandments and kept by the Jews down through the ages. Jesus was a Jew so it must be right. EGW had a “vision” of a ring of light surrounding the fourth commandment. The SDA church also teaches that the Catholic Church changed the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday and that worshiping on Sunday would result in receiving the “mark of the beast” of Revelation 14:9. The truth is that people were worshiping on Sunday more than 200 years before there even was a Catholic religion – it began immediately after Christ’s death and was common practice by 70 A.D.

The fact that EGW and SDAs made such a big deal about Sabbath rules and observance, but Jesus didn’t say anything about keeping the Sabbath in the Bible had always made me question Sabbath observance rules! This question was answered during my study where I learned that not ONCE did Jesus give instructions for keeping the Sabbath; neither did the apostles – not once! In fact several times He was accused of breaking the Sabbath Himself! There are no rules, guidelines or suggestions by Jesus or the apostles for how to keep the Sabbath in the New Testament!

I learned that the Sabbath was not instituted at creation. Genesis 2:2-3 tells us that God blessed, sanctified and rested on the seventh day and this "rest" did not end like on the other days did with an evening and morning, this rest in God would have continued forever had Adam not sinned. There is not a mentioned in the Bible of Sabbath for the first 2500 years! But many have insisted to me that Abraham kept the Sabbath? Keeping the Sabbath day law was given to the Israelites by Moses as a sign between them and God (Deuteronomy 5:1-3, Exodus 31:12-17). The Mosaic Sabbath was a shadow of the real rest that was to come when Jesus the real Sabbath returned to earth. I'm not an Israelite and Jesus came to fulfill the law! It is blasphemy of the SDA denomination to claim that the Sabbath day is the seal of God! This teaching divides SDA's from mainstream Christians. The Sabbath was a shadow of Christ and was NEVER the seal of God or a sign in the New Covenant – that sign is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 1:13-14; Ephesians 4:30; II Corinthians 1:21-22. Another New Covenant sign is the Lords Supper (Matthew 26:28, Luke 22:19-20).

Hebrews 4:4-9 says: *"For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: And God rested on the seventh day from all His works"; and again in this place: They shall not enter My Rest." Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and to those whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, again He designates a certain day, saying in David, "Today," after such a long time, as it has been said: Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts." For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God."* The Sabbath was fulfilled in Jesus and it is about resting in Jesus everyday – in a peace that passes all understanding! Take off the Adventist sunglasses while you read Hebrews 3 and 4 for yourself.

"The weekly Sabbath, i.e., Saturday, is not the real Sabbath. It never was, and it is not now. It is a picture or a reminder of the real Sabbath. The true Sabbath is a rest; the Jewish Sabbath is a shadow, a picture of that rest. All the Old Testament shadows pointed to Christ...These Old Testament shadows were looking forward to the coming of the One who would fulfill these and thus end them. When the work of Jesus Christ was finished the shadows were no longer needed." Ray C. Stedman; *The Seventh Day*, 10/10/67, *The Beginnings: Commentary on Genesis*.

Former SDA pastor Mark Martin's study on *The Sabbath and Sunday* explained everything – Old Testament Sabbath, New Testament Sabbath, covenants, Rome did NOT change the day, history of Sabbath and much more: <http://www.exadventist.com/Home/Sabbath/tabid/53/Default.aspx>

Dale Ratzlaff, also a former SDA pastor, wrote *Sabbath in Christ* which is an exhaustive study on the rest Jesus wants to give us, not just for one day, but a constant abiding in Him.
<http://www.lifeassuranceministries.com/sic.html>

Another excellent article is *God's Seal – A Day or a Person* by former SDA pastor Sam Pestes
<http://www.sendingthelight.com/content/NewsItem.phtml?art=160&c=0&id=30&style=>

Since 1888 and even before, SDA denomination leaders have know there was a huge flaw in the Sabbath day teachings of the church. Colossians 2:14-16 makes it very plain that the entire law was nailed to the cross and the Sabbath day with it. Somehow the SDA church has grown through the deceit and excuses that have explained away this text. Kerry Wynne expands on this:
<http://www.truthorfables.com/LYING%20FOR%20GOD%20doc.pdf>

A day of rest from labors, spending time with family, a break from media etc. are healthy practices and New Covenant Christians are free to do this any day they choose – what changes here is the requirements, the rules and regulations of a day that SDA's enforce – to honoring Jesus Christ and our relationship with him every day! Jesus said "Come to me and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

Don't I have to be doing something here?

This was big in my Adventist upbringing, Uncle Arthur's *Bedtime Story Books* with stories of bad little boys and girls making Jesus and their angels sad (while those same angels are writing down everything for God to read later!); doing all the right things so everything would look right; and working my way to heaven. EGW teaches that we are to perfectly obey the Ten Commandments, to overcome sin, be ready at all times for you never know when your name is coming up in the investigative judgment.

EGW states "...it is impossible for even one soul to be saved without good works." 1SM377
But God's Word tells me "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." Ephesians 2:8-9; "If righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died needlessly." Galatians 2:21; "being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." Romans 3:23

Dale Ratzlaff shares two formulas in *Truth about Adventist "Truth"* the chapter Gospel Additions:
EGW, SDAs and other false religions teach – Faith in Christ + Good Works = Salvation
From God's Word, Christians teach – Faith in Christ = Salvation + Good Works

Am doing this right?

I wondered if there was a way to make this journey easier and found out that no there really isn't. It is difficult to examine your beliefs because Adventists are taught that if they question or leave the SDA church that they are in apostasy – worse off than if they had never known "the truth." Yet I found it was incredibly freeing as each false teaching fell away; each SDA pillar crumbled; and as I removed my Adventist sunglasses – Jesus Christ became more and more real as I discovered a freedom from man-made, prophet-made, and church-made rules and regulations!

I found *The Transitional Path* by Dale Ratzlaff where he encourages seekers to continue studying as I was. He suggests that you have to decide three things for yourself – the simple **Gospel** of Christ and what Jesus did for you; whose **Authority** you're going to follow, the Bible or a denomination; and was EGW a **Prophet** from God or not? <http://www.lifeassuranceministries.com/trpath.html>

The greatest encouragement through this journey was regularly attending Green Valley Community Church – soaking in the praise and worship and the Bible teachings. This kept me focused on Jesus and what he was doing in our lives.

It also helped to continue reading stories about how other former Adventist's studied their way out of the church and Biblical proof about New Covenant Christianity in *Proclamation!* Magazine
<http://lifeassuranceministries.org/proclamationmag.html>

What about Ellen G. White, was she really a prophet, did she plagiarize her writings?

SDA's work very hard to appear evangelical in their beliefs to the Christian community – but behind this façade is the church prophetess – Ellen G. White (EGW) and her false teachings...

This was difficult for me, and at the same time easy! Some writings of EGW had been spiritually comforting but other times they were very disconcerting and the source of much fear in my life because she wrote incessantly about becoming perfect, obtaining salvation by works and to never believe that you are saved.

You may say as many have in the past – “I don't believe EGW writings are that important, the church has changed.” But the SDA denomination maintains otherwise as the SDA General Conference President Paulson wrote in *Ministry* magazine October 1981: “We believe the revelation and inspiration of both the Bible and Ellen White's writings to be of equal quality. The superintendence of the Holy Spirit was just as careful and thorough in one case as in the other.” Then in May 2002 at the SDA General Conference, Paulson said: “The historic sanctuary message based on Scripture and supported by the writings of Ellen White continues to be held to unequivocally. And the inspired authorities on which these and other doctrines are based, namely the Bible supported by the writings of Ellen White, continue to be the hermeneutical foundation of which we as a church place all matters of faith and conduct. Let no one think that there has been a change of position in regard to this.”

It has been known by SDA denominational leaders since 1907 that EGW plagiarized her writings, to say that “...the superintendence of the Holy Spirit” was involved in her plagiarisms is blasphemy. Once I discovered the extent of EGW's plagiarism – proof of over 90%; her conveniently timed and after the fact visions which were used to “prove” incorrect doctrines; and the fact that she fails the seven Biblical tests for a prophet <http://www.ellenwhiteexposed.com/egw35.htm> - there was no turning back! Here are many examples of how EGW is not a prophet of God:

The SDA denomination did a eight-year investigation of *The Desire of Ages* called The Veltman Study which reported: “The content of Ellen White's commentary on the life and ministry of Christ, *The Desire of Ages* is for the most part derived (copied) rather than original...In practical terms, this conclusion declares that one is not able to recognize in Ellen White's writings on the life of Christ any general category of content or catalog of ideas that is unique to her.” *White Washed* by Sydney Cleveland available from <http://www.lifeassuranceministries.com/ww.html>

I learned more about how *The Desire of Ages* was plagiarized, outlined and constructed by reading: http://www.truthorfables.com/Desire_of_Ages.htm

One of the most beloved books supposedly written by EGW is *Steps to Christ*. Many SDA's would be alarmed to learn that this book was really compiled and written by EGW's secretary Fannie Bolton <http://www.ellenwhiteexposed.com/fannie1.htm>

The Great Controversy was copied from *The History of Protestantism* written by J. A. Wiley in 1876: <http://www.bible.ca/7-WL-exhibits-image-Wylie.htm> To make the story even more bizarre James White, EGW's husband, had copied his writings from J.A. Wiley and then EGW copied from James.

Patriarchs and Prophets contains 65 chapter headings that are identical to *Bible History/Old Testament*, by Alfred Edersheim (1876-80). http://www.nonsda.org/egw/kaspersen/egw_eng13.htm

In 1919, a contemporary of EGW, D.M. Canright wrote *Life of Mrs. E. G. White Seventh-day Adventist Prophet Her False Claims Refuted* based on his first-hand acquaintance of the Whites and as a leading member of the early SDA church: <http://www.ellenwhite.org/canright/egw16.htm> In this book he writes: "These quotations from her different books show that Mrs. White practiced this literary stealing right along all through her life. Ten times as much could readily be given. The Great Controversy is her most popular book with her people. Every line is accepted as original with her; all inspired by the Holy Spirit. Carefully studying it, we found that it was largely taken from Andrews' History of the Sabbath, Wylie's History of the Waldenses, D'Aubigne's History of the Reformation, Smith's Sanctuary, Elder White's Life of Wm. Miller, itself a copied book, and other works."

Selected Messages was plagiarized from *Origin and History of the Bible* by C. E. Stowe: <http://www.nonsda.org/egw/egw105.shtml>

Themes from *Paradise Lost* published by John Milton in 1667 are found in many EGW books such as *Story of Redemption* and *Patriarch's and Prophets*: <http://www.nonsda.org/egw/egw102.shtml>

In 1837 John Harris wrote *The Great Teacher: Characteristics of our Lord's Ministry*, EGW plagiarized numerous portions of this book into *Steps to Christ*, *Testimonies*, sermons, letters and articles. Over a hundred examples of plagiarism by EGW are listed here: <http://www.nonsda.org/egw/egw103.shtml>

Evidence shows that EGW read health reform books written and published by Dr. James Caleb Jackson before her supposed visions on health: <http://www.ellenwhiteexposed.com/refute9.htm> More examples of EGW plagiarizing her health message: <http://www.ellenwhiteexposed.com/health2.htm> Her own health and that of her family was deplorable but somehow she was able to convince SDA's that the "health reform message" was given to her by God.

The evidence was just too incriminating for me to ignore. The plagiarism reflects on her integrity, the twisting of scriptures shows clearly what she wrote was not inspired, because God would not lie as she did, and her status of a prophet can be easily disproved because at least 95% of her predictions did not come true. I learned how she ignored her own "inspired teachings" in regards to health, eating habits, dress, jewelry, and much more. Those scathing letters to church members found in the *Testimonies* which EGW claims were "revelations from God" turned out to be gossip and were used as a way to control both the denomination and members.

Is EGW a true prophet or not? <http://www.exadventist.com/Home/Prophet/tabid/55/Default.aspx> God's test of a prophet is found in Deuteronomy 18:20-22.

Here is proof that EGW plagiarized her first vision: <http://www.ellenwhiteexposed.com/egw99.htm>

False prophets stick together, EGW plagiarized from Joseph Smith the founder and prophet of the Mormon Church: <http://www.ellenwhiteexposed.com/refute7a.htm>

In Deuteronomy 18:10-12 God's Word tells us to not communicate with the dead. Here is documentation about a conversation EGW had with her dead husband James: <http://www.nonsda.org/egw/egw61.shtml>

Reading all of this information on EGW's plagiarism I asked myself, "Why did she do this?" I found that physicians have analyzed the facial injury EGW endured when she was 9 years old and have

diagnosed it as a frontal lobe injury resulting in temporal lobe epilepsy with hyper-graphic tendencies (compulsive, excessive writing) EGW handwrote over 100,000 pages. Along with hyper-graphic, temporal lobe epileptics are also hyper-ethical, hyper-religious and hyper-moral:

<http://www.nonsda.org/egw/headinjury.shtml> Another article by two Medical Doctors shows how the visions and writings of EGW reflect a temporal lobe injury: *Visions or Partial-Complex Seizures?*

<http://www.ellenwhiteexposed.com/seizures.htm> In 1966 Charles Willis M.D. stated the visions of EGW "were distinctly cataleptic seizures" <http://www.exadventist.com/Portals/0/Articles/seizures.pdf>

Christians do not need a prophet since we have the teachings of Jesus Christ. Hebrews 1:1-2 states that "God spoke long ago in the prophets but in these last days has spoken to us in His Son whom He appointed heir of all things." Matthew 7: 15-16 tells us to "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits." The fruits of EGW are proof enough for me. There is no need for the confusion that EGW brings to the SDA church. Christians need only Bible truths: 2 Timothy 3:16; Romans 1:6; 1 John 5:13; John 20:31; 2 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 1:1-3.

When I first learned of the deception of EGW, it was easier for me to consider her to be a devotional author, but the further I got in my investigation I saw clearly that she was a plagiarizer – yes, she was also victimized and used to start a church but nobody forced her to copy from others writings. Our God of truth would never condone this behavior or instruct that falsehoods, trances, and fairy tales be used to start a "remnant church". Most upsetting to me was the realization that every time EGW wrote "I was shown..." or "I saw..." or "The angel of the Lord showed me..." it was followed by plagiarized writings, meant that the Adventist people have been lied to for many years because I was told that every single word was inspired by God. There was no longer any way I could believe that "*the writings of Ellen White are a continuing and authoritative source of truth*" as the SDA denomination declares. Because the SDA church fully believes in EGW and a prophet defines the church, once I identified who EGW really was and the role her writings had in my beliefs the rest was easy!

One argument SDA's make for EGW's plagiarism is that it was a common practice and many people did it back in the 1800's. This is entirely untrue, it has never been ethical to copy other's writings and James White renounced others for doing so with EGW's writings. As Walter Rea said, in a 2005 radio interview, "If her writings are inspired, why would God use other's words to speak to his people?"

I could say much more about EGW, prophecies that did not come true such as the outcome of the Civil War; missing pages from published books; names of those in her time that would alive at the second coming of Jesus; strange ideas on health and dress reform; multiple date settings of Christ's return; hundreds of failed predictions; erroneous teachings on marital excess and masturbation; racist comments; ties to Freemasons, occult activities such as rappings and table tipping during her "visions," conversations with her dead husband, and suspicious guides during visions; and connections to the Mormons; but I'll leave that for you to discover in your own studies!

Is the SDA church a cult?

An organization is a cult if they do two things: change the true foundation of a church – which should be the Bible AND offer an alternative foundation – something other than the Bible – such as Book of Mormon, Watchtower and in the case of the SDA church, the writings of Ellen G. White:

Biblical Discernment Ministries: <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Cults/sda/adventi.htm>

On and off through the years it would come up on the news or in books that SDAs were a cult, and then they weren't, and then they were – on and off until no one knew for sure. Of course it was all explained away how the church wasn't a cult. Dale Ratzlaff in *Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-Day Adventists* explains the fifteen characteristics of a cult, and how the Adventist church fulfils all but four.

The Watchman Expositor, <http://www.watchman.org/cat95.htm> states:

Seventh Day Adventist Church (SDA), Washington, DC: The largest Adventist church. Ellen G. White, who claimed to have “the spirit of prophecy,” was an important early leader of the movement and taught a number of distinctive SDA doctrines, including the Investigative Judgment and Sabbatarianism. While the church's official theology now appears to be generally in the tradition of evangelical Christianity, certain SDA claims and unique doctrines continue to raise questions. These doctrines include the SDA belief that Sunday worship will result in the “Mark of the Beast,” imbalanced teachings on keeping the commandments (baptism, Sabbath observance) that often implies a kind of salvation by works, the “Remnant Church” doctrine that implies that the SDA is or will be God's only true church, and the doctrine of the Investigative Judgment. Profile available: <http://www.watchman.org/profile/sdapro.htm>

Seventh Day Cult <http://www.seventhdaycult.com/> explains it this way: SDAs – add to scripture; subtract from atonement; multiply the requirements of salvation; and divide believers.

It is interesting to note that four churches were formed as a result of the Millerite movement: Seventh-day Adventist, Mormons, Jehovah Witness, and Christian Science. SDA's are quick to point out that the other three are cults but blindly consider the SDA denomination to be mainstream Christians.

During our study we found many cultic doctrines of the SDA church, here are a few:

--SDA church teaches that atonement for sins was not complete at the cross –

EGW wrote: “The intercession of Christ in man's behalf in the sanctuary above is as essential to the plan of salvation as was His death upon a cross. By His death He began that work which after His resurrection He ascended to complete in Heaven.” GC488-489

God's Word tells us: “Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.” Hebrews 9:12 “And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Hebrews 10:10

--SDA believers have no assurance of Salvation –

EGW wrote: “Those who accept the Saviour, however sincere their conversion should never be taught to say or feel that they are saved.” COL155

God's Word tells us: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” Ephesians 2:8-9 “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life.” 1 John 5:13. Also John 5:13; John 5:24; John 6:47; Acts 15:11; Romans 10:10-11; 1 Corinthians 15:2; Colossians 1:21-23; II Timothy 1:9; Titus 3:5; 1 John 5:13.

--SDA believers are judged according to how perfectly they obeyed the Ten Commandments and their works during the investigative judgment and this determines their salvation –

EGW wrote: “At the time appointed for the judgment...All who have ever taken upon themselves the name of Christ must pass its searching scrutiny. Both the living and the dead are to be judged “out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.” GC486. And this is only one quote out of hundreds denying Adventists security of salvation!

God's Word tells us: "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." John 5:24. "Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." Romans 3:24.

--SDAs believe the blood of Christ does not cancel sin –

EGW wrote: "The blood of Christ, while it was to release the repentant sinner from the condemnation of the law, was not to cancel sin...it will stand in the sanctuary until the final atonement." PP357

God's Word tells us: "He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins." Eph 1:7 "...the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin." 1 John 1:7

--SDAs teach that Satan bears the sins of believers and plays a part in salvation –

EGW wrote: "It was seen, also, that while the sin offering pointed to Christ as a sacrifice, and the high priest represented Christ as a mediator, the scapegoat typified Satan, the author of sin, upon whom the sins of the truly penitent will finally be placed." GC422 and "Their sins are transferred to the originator of sin." 5T475

God's Word tells us: "He personally carried our sins in his body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. By his wounds you are healed." 1 Peter 2:24 "God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." 2 Cor. 5:21

--SDAs believe the plan of salvation was decided AFTER the fall of man –

EGW wrote: "The kingdom of grace was instituted immediately after the fall of man, when a plan was devised for the redemption of the guilty race." GC347

God's Word says: "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight." Ephesians 1:4. See also 1 Peter 1:18-20 where it reads "He was chosen before the creation of the world..."

--SDA doctrine teaches that Jesus entered the most holy place in 1844 –

EGW wrote: "Jesus entered the most holy of the heavenly (sanctuary) at the end of the 2300 days of Daniel 8, in 1844, to make final atonement for all who could be benefited by His mediation." EW253

God's Word tells us: "Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption." Hebrews 9:12

--SDAs teach that Christians should be perfect, sinless and holy –

EGW wrote: "As the Son of man was perfect in His life, so His followers are to be perfect in their life. A well-balanced character is formed by single acts well performed. One defect, cultivated instead of being overcome makes the man imperfect and closes against him the gate of the Holy City...In all the redeemed host not one defect will be seen." *The Faith I Live By* p44

God's Word tells us: "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23; "I do not treat the grace of God as meaningless. For if keeping the law could make us right with God, then there was no need for Christ to die." Galatians 2:21

--SDAs believe that works plus grace brings salvation –

EGW wrote: "While good works will not save even one soul, it is impossible for even one soul to be saved without good works. 1SM377

God's Word tells us: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast." Ephesians 2:8-9 "I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain." Galatians 2:21

--SDA doctrine teaches that Christians will stand without Christ's intercession before God – EGW wrote: "Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator." GC425

God's Word tells us: "Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." Hebrews 7:25

I can just hear Adventists who read this story saying "I don't believe those things EGW wrote!" Well I didn't either! But this is what the SDA prophetess wrote and each one of these doctrines are found in the 28 Fundamental Beliefs of the SDA church. By being a member of the SDA church you are telling the world that you agree with these teachings. Adventist sunglasses not only color your view, they also disguise the true identity of the SDA church!

On this journey I've found a surprising number of Adventist's who do not agree with some or many of the doctrines of the SDA church. I've heard these doctrines referred to as a smorgasbord – ok I'll take a big helping of the Sabbath because I like to rest; but I'll pass on the investigative judgment I'm a good person; I want to go to heaven so I'll take that; I can't stand the writings of EGW she makes me feel guilty so pass on that one; marriage is good so I'll go with that one; but I don't want to give the church much money so I'll take a small helping of stewardship; I don't agree with the health message so I'll have a big helping of chicken and give me a glass of wine with that! It doesn't work like this – the SDA church has 28 SDA Fundamental Beliefs and they go together as a package. The SDA church began in confusion from the beginning so it's no wonder that confusion continues with Adventists today!

What about the state of the dead?

SDA's teach the doctrine of "soul sleep." When people die they are non-existent, sleeping in the grave until Jesus comes again – the SDA fundamental belief #26 states that "death is an unconscious state for all people." Often Adventists quote Ecclesiastes 9:5 where it states that "the dead know not anything" – ignoring the rest of the thoughts through verse 6..."under the sun."

Throughout my study of what the Bible teaches I began to read texts that teach the Biblical view of death, such as: 2 Corinthians 5:6-8,19; Philippians 1:21-24; Revelation 20:12-15; Romans 8:38-39; 1 Thessalonians 5:10, 23; Matthew 22:31-32; Matthew 9:24; 2 Timothy 1:10; Mark 12:18-27.

All of us were created with bodies, breath and spirits. When we accept the Holy Spirit into our lives our God-given spirits awaken and this is how the Holy Spirit speaks to us, guides us through our spirits and this is the part of us that always knows and abides with God. When we die this spirit part of us returns to God. As a believer we always have eternal life in Jesus Christ.

Mark Martin's Bible study on *The State of the Dead* explains "Jesus' promise to Martha in John 11:25-26 "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies,

and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"

<http://www.exadventist.com/Home/Dead/tabid/56/Default.aspx>

In *Death – Oblivion or Graduation?* author Sam Pestes, writes "According to Ephesians 2:1-3 and Colossians 2:13, when we are born into this world, we are born dead in trespasses and sins. Our bodies were not born dead. Our minds were not born dead. What, then, was born dead? Our spirits, which had not yet been touched and enlivened or quickened, by action of the Holy Spirit! True conversion links our spirits to the Holy Spirit who is the life-giving Spirit!"

<http://sendingthelight.com/content/NewsItem.phtml?art=157&c=0&id=30&style=>

Old Covenant, Ten Commandments, Mosaic Law, New Covenant – was anyone else confused?

It was interesting to learn that during various times in history God has had different agreements or covenants with His people. The original Covenant was given to Abraham and all those who believed in God by faith and the sign was circumcision. Next, the Israelites were given the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai and the Sabbath was their sign. Galatians 3:19 tells us that this ten commandment law had a beginning and ending time. Jeremiah 31:31-31 tells us that a New Covenant was coming.

The New Covenant was Jesus Christ who came, died on the cross and completed everything necessary to secure our salvation, and when we believe in him by faith we join the New Covenant where, baptism the infilling of the Holy Spirit and the symbols of the Lord's Supper, his body and blood, are the signs.

Romans 7: 1-6 tells us we are released from the law through the body of Christ! Everything clicked into place for me when I read Galatians beginning to end, over and over about four times. It finally sunk in – we are NOT to go back to the law (Mosaic, Sinai, Ten Commandments, Torah or any other Jewish law), we are free from these laws because of what Jesus completed on the cross for us and we are to share this good news with others! Colossians, Romans and the books of Corinthians also clarify this – but when you're wearing Adventist sunglasses this good news is hidden from view!

The SDA church has erroneously extracted and reserved the Ten Commandments from the Mosaic law when the two are never to be separated (Deuteronomy 5:2-3; 1 Kings 8:9, 21; 2 Chronicles 6:11). John 1:17 tells us that the law was brought by Moses, but grace and truth comes only through Jesus Christ. We cannot obey the old Mosaic law and at the same time have a New Covenant relationship with Jesus Christ. If we try to, we are as Paul tells us in Romans 7:1-6, committing spiritual adultery! The books of Hebrews, Romans, and Galatians show over and over how the old covenant was null and void once the New Covenant arrived and the new is much better because it is rooted in Jesus Christ! (Hebrews 8:13). Second Corinthians 3:1-18 shows us the difference in the law and new covenant – the old kills, the new gives life; the old brings condemnation the new brings righteousness; the old fades while the new is glorious; the old fades and the new remains; and best of all the old was written on stone, the new is written on our hearts!

The big protest I hear from people is: "We need the ten commandments to tell everyone what to do!" The law points out sin, so those who are not Christians may need this law. Romans 7:4-6 tells us that we are dead to the law because of the death of Jesus Christ. New Covenant Christians have chosen to be filled with the Holy Spirit and follow Jesus 100%. We have to be dead to the law so we can live for God (Galatians 2:16-21). God's law is written on our hearts (Galatians 6:2; Galatians 5:13-14, 16; 2 Corinthians 3:1-8) and when you have the Holy Spirit as your guide, you have no need for the ten

commandments which were nailed to the cross along with the torah and other old testament, Mosaic laws (Colossians 2:14).

“The seventh day Sabbath was legal, given under the Law dispensation. Christian believers under the present ‘dispensation of the grace of God’ (Eph. 3:2), since the death and resurrection of Christ, are under the New Covenant. Much of the confusion on this point would be cleared up in the minds of the people if it were remembered that our very Bible is divided into two major sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The word Testament means ‘covenant.’ So one may speak correctly of the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. Read carefully these Scriptures, and remember that we are not living under the Law (the Mosaic, Jewish dispensation before the time of Christ), but we are under ‘grace’ the new covenant instituted by our Lord by His atoning death and bodily resurrection. Here are a few of the many Scriptures showing this. Galatians 3:24-25, 4:1-7; 4:25-30; (‘we are not children of the bondwoman’ – law – ‘but of the free’ – grace v. 31); Gal 5:13-14; Romans 6:14,15; 7:1-4 (‘ye also are become dead to the law...that ye should be married to Him who is raised from the dead,’ v. 4); Romans 10:4; 2 Corinthians 3:1-18 (the law, called ‘the ministration of death,’ is done away,’ vs. 7, 11); Acts 15:1-4, 19, 24, 28; Hebrews 8 (the new covenant replaces the old covenant); John 1:17; Ephesians 3:1-9 (the church, not revealed in the Old Testament, is a new body that replaces the law and Israel); Mark 2:21-22 (there must be a new dispensation for the new gospel). Galatians 3:19 makes it clear that the law was added until the Seed (Christ) should come. Now that Christ has come the law has been set aside.” *Why We Must Reject Seventh-day Adventism* by Fred J. Meldau

John 1:17 says “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” In Galatians 3:10-13 “the works of the law are under a curse...no one is justified by the law, the righteous man shall live by faith...the law is not of faith, on the contrary he who practices them shall live by them...Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us.” “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” Romans 10:4

Mark Martin’s article *The Gospel and the Covenants* explains the covenants here:

<http://www.exadventist.com/Home/Covenants/tabid/54/Default.aspx>

What about “the time of trouble”?

This one doctrine alone brought much fear and trembling to my heart from a very early age on until the past year! The SDA church teaches that Adventists are the only ones keeping the fourth commandment and at the end of time all of the Sunday keeping churches and non-believers will unite to persecute, imprison, and kill Adventists for keeping the Sabbath commandment. During this time of persecution they will be without an intercessor (for Jesus will have closed the books that he has been pouring over since 1844) and they will have to live a perfect life on their own during this horrific time.

This false teaching not only brings fear and trembling to Adventists but serves to give them a sense of pride, of being perfect, of being “right,” of being so special the rest of the world is persecuting them for their peculiar beliefs.

This has been such a source of fear in my life that I can’t make total sense of it at this time, but I am looking forward to researching this subject in God’s timing. What I do know is that the great tribulation spoken of in the Bible is a persecution of ALL Christ-followers – not just the little group of SDAs!!

So what exactly did I agree to when I was baptized into the Adventist church?

This question nagged at me until I went to the file cabinet and found my Certificate of Baptism and read the 13 vows I had pledged to follow when I was baptized. I was horrified! I no longer believed more than half of them:

#4 "...recognizing him [Christ] as my Intercessor in the heavenly sanctuary."

#6 "...it is my purpose...to keep God's law of Ten Commandments, including the fourth, which requires the observance of the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath of the Lord.

#7 "...abstaining from such things as alcoholic beverages...and from unclean foods."

#8 "...believe that the Spirit of Prophecy [the SDA church teaches that the Spirit of Prophecy is EGW] is one of the identifying marks of the remnant church."

#10 "I believe in church organization, and it is my purpose to support the church by my tithes and offerings, and by my personal effort and influence."

#12 "Knowing and understanding the fundamental Bible principles as taught by the SDA church, it is my purpose by the grace of God to order my life in harmony with these principles."

#13 "I believe that the Seventh-day Adventist church constitutes God's remnant people, and rejoice to be accepted into its membership."

The list of 13 SDA Baptismal Vows is here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adventist_baptismal_vow

What people don't realize is that these vows are for life. To have your membership removed from the SDA church records there are only three options – death – missing – apostasy. If you choose to leave the SDA church it is assumed that you are in apostasy and living apart from a relationship with Jesus Christ. No option exists for "I studied for myself, I no longer agree with SDA doctrines and I choose to worship Jesus Christ with fellow Christians elsewhere." Since that's the way it is, I am choosing to apostatize from the SDA denomination, but most certainly NOT from Jesus Christ!

Since I was only 12 when I was baptized, going along with the "annual dunking of the lambs" and didn't have all this information to make an informed choice – I decided that it was time to look at what I believed as adult in the light of God's Word alone from a New Testament point of view. Tom and I have a new relationship with Jesus Christ and have accepted his New Covenant, so we are making plans to be baptized at GVCC's river baptism August 29, 2010!

They just disappeared, what happened to the Adventists I used to know?

It's sad when I recall all those who have left the SDA church, I wonder if they found Jesus and a new church family, or have they given up on a relationship with Jesus all together because of a false religion? We were taught by the SDA church that these people were lost forever because they turned their backs on "the Sabbath truth." I still remember how Tom and I just brushed off his aunt and uncle when they left the SDA denomination in the 1980's. The feeling that they were deluded and didn't really know what they were giving up was very strong and I sincerely regret my behavior and unwillingness to accept their decision and dialogue with them. Recalling this experience gives me insight while speaking with others now.

I could never understand why the records at Placerville SDA church showed there were over 800 members and less than 200 people ever attended church on a given week. I have found that a few have gone on to join Christian churches, while most others have simply disappeared. Unbelievably Adventist parents prefer that their children be "visiting" out in the world for a time than to have them remove their names from the SDA church records and actively be involved in mainstream Christianity.

Studies estimate that between 2000-2005, 1.5 million Adventists left the church, officially asking for their memberships to be removed; approximately 300,000 leave each year and this doesn't count for the thousands who simply no longer attend; somewhere between two and five million SDAs have left the church in North America where previously there were over 2 million SDA's there are now only 750,000; other studies show that for every baptism there are three who leave – this is not church growth, but the names are kept on the books so the numbers don't look as bad as they really are. Currently, there are approximately one million who refer to themselves as former Adventists.

The SDA denomination admits there is a problem in *Ten Who Left* by Fred Cornforth by Tim Lake that “The majority of those born into a Seventh-day Adventist family in North America in the post-World War II era have dropped out of the church.”

Why are so many Adventists leaving? http://www.nonsda.org/sda_losing_members.shtml

Estimates are that between 50-75% of SDA church members do not attend church regularly: <http://www.exadventist.com/Home/Articles/numbers/tabid/507/Default.aspx>

Why does my decision upset so many?

Some people have said to me “So now you think you can do whatever you want to – what about the ten commandments? We need the law!” There was envy in their voice, along with criticism and anger. What they meant was now I could worship on a different day, not be restricted by Jewish food laws or the clothing restrictions of the SDA denomination, or I could do whatever I felt was best because I was no longer tied to the law but being guided by the Holy Spirit, how convenient for me and yet still restraining for them! The very fact that I made a different choice made many feel threatened.

I do not seek to change anyone's thinking while sharing my journey, but many people seem intent on showing me that I am wrong and they are right. It's amusing to note that they are threatened when hearing that I have left the SDA denomination. They really don't care to listen to what I say but are only intent on proving their own beliefs. I understand their reasoning because I was once there – I had to be right! I'm confident in my beliefs because they aren't built on dead corn stalks, but are firmly rooted in Jesus Christ and I understand what he did for me on the cross!

After we sent our exit letter requesting our names be removed from denominational records (copy at the end), we received a call from the pastor requesting a meeting. At that meeting the pastor said that he felt responsible because this “happened on his watch.” He likened this to a divorce, he said that he wanted an amicable divorce and wanted us to know we were welcome to visit anytime. He said that he would defend us if anyone in the church questioned our spirituality and we thanked him for his thoughts and prepared to leave. He should have stopped there because the more he talked he became spiritually abusive, he started telling us that certain persons and “publications were destroying the SDA church, twisting a knife.” He closed with a prayer that was very disconcerting. This was mild compared to the stories I've heard from many new friends.

In my new relationship with Jesus, yes there is freedom from man-made, prophet-made, church-made laws but because I love Jesus Christ and allow the Holy Spirit to guide me, I now choose to have his new commands written on my heart and to be under the New Covenant. Jesus said “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” John

13:34-35. Since I am born again in Christ and have accepted God's grace freely given, I am dead to sin and truly seek to follow God's plan. The moral laws found in the New Testament (Galatians 5:13-2; Ephesians 4:31; Colossians 3:1-25; Romans 8:1-5; John 17:20-22; Romans 7:1-13; John 1:17; Romans 7:1-13) that guide the New Covenant Christian.

Where do I go from here?

I am not angry or bitter, though occasionally at the beginning of this journey those feelings did cross my mind, mostly I felt sad and disappointed; sad for the indoctrination, sad for the time that has been wasted, sad for those still in bondage to the SDA doctrines, disappointed in the SDA leadership who fully know the issues yet continue to deceive church members by withholding truth, sad for the way our beliefs affect our decisions while raising our children, sad for what could have been different in our lives. I have two regrets; the first is that I didn't study for myself and open my eyes much earlier; the second that no one shared this information with me. But I am confident that "He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it" Philippians 1:6 As long as I have studied out what I really believe for myself "Let each man be convinced in his own mind." Romans 14:5 I know that guided by the Holy Spirit I will not be led astray.

I've taken the time to grieve the past while moving forward in my journey taking full responsibility for my past and present decisions. The SDA church was a huge part of who I became, my 14 years of education, six generations of family (seven generations with my children, eight generations with my grandsons), a network of friends, relatives and acquaintances. We have been asked "Was it so bad being raised an SDA?" No, it wasn't bad at all, but it was not in accordance with God's Word only – there were too many additions, subtractions, multiplications and divisions involved!

So this journey has not been without struggle but in the end – following Jesus and becoming a New Covenant Christian – I have found a greater joy, all fear of eternity is gone, a real relationship with Jesus is blossoming, and there is an incredible peace in my heart as I spend every day with Jesus! The gospel is simple – "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." Acts 16:31

Here is what Tom and I did, we prayed fervently and studied diligently from the Bible only; we zeroed in on our relationship with Jesus first, for he has promised to lead us, "united with the Lord you will not be led astray." Galatians 5:10; we prayed for wisdom and guidance from the Holy Spirit; studied the old covenant, the law and compared the new covenant in Galatians, Romans, Hebrews; we decided to follow the Bible alone (rather than the Bible plus the added SDA doctrines); we didn't assume anything, we tested every one of our personal beliefs with the Bible; we investigated EGW and decided once and for all that she a plagiarist rather than a prophet; we started attending a community church and got to know the people. Take off your Adventist sunglasses and listen to the gospel taught at community church, look for your passion and purpose, keep looking until you find a new church family, attend twice a week; and then the decision becomes much easier! Yes, initially it is difficult to even consider this step, but in the end, the freedom and closeness of your new relationship with Jesus Christ will strengthen you so that you can do whatever he shows you.

It is obvious that I cannot stay where I was and nothing good comes from dwelling in the past. This is the story of where I was and what led me out, but not where I choose to remain. There is no going back, once you've discovered the truth and once God's word sets you free it is impossible to go anywhere but forward with Him! Both Tom and I eagerly look forward to where God is leading us in mainstream Christianity and further marriage ministry.

Because we no longer agree with the 28 SDA Fundamental Beliefs or the 13 Baptismal Vows of the Seventh-day Adventist church – there is no other choice but to request that our membership be removed from the records of the SDA church – We have chosen from now on to be New Covenant Christians!

Judy Shewmake
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More information can be found at:

www.exadventist.com – Former SDA pastor Mark Martin’s articles and audio files

www.lifeassuranceministries.org – Proclamation! Magazine, articles and testimonies

www.lifeassuranceministries.com – Source of many excellent books and articles

Cultic Doctrine of the SDA Church by Dale Ratzlaff

White Washed by Sydney Cleveland

Sabbath in Christ by Dale Ratzlaff

The “Truth” About the Adventist Truth by Dale Ratzlaff

www.formeradventist.com – Former Adventist Fellowship Forum and testimonies

www.nonsda.org – The Bible truth versus EGW, articles and more

www.ellenwhiteexposed.com – All the evidence of plagiarism, doctors reports on her injury and more
It’s Okay NOT To Be A Seventh-Day Adventist, Teresa & Arthur Beem, available from Amazon.com

Shewmake Family
P. O. Box 836
Camino, CA 95709

January 9, 2010

Pastor Ron Mellor,

This letter is to request that our membership be removed from the records of the Placerville Seventh-day Adventist church and also removed from any and all the records of the SDA denomination.

We are requesting this action because after much prayer and diligent study we find that we no longer believe or agree with the 28 Fundamental SDA Beliefs or with the 13 baptismal vows. We have discovered many doctrines such as Ellen G. White, Investigative Judgment, remnant teachings, Sabbath, Sanctuary and others to be contrary to what God's Word teaches and we can no longer consider ourselves members of the SDA denomination.

Church membership is a reflection of what we believe and our relationship with Jesus Christ. If we were to retain membership in the SDA church we would be telling others that we agree with all of the doctrines. We cannot do this and maintain our integrity.

We assure you that this has nothing to do with the pastors or with any members of the Placerville Seventh-day Adventist church. We have given considerable thought and come to this decision based on our study of God's Word. Though we are leaving the SDA church, we are completely committed to Jesus Christ and have an incredible, on-going relationship with Him.

Please ask the Placerville Seventh-day Adventist church board to approve our request in a timely manner at the next board meeting and to verify in writing that our names have been removed from the church records.

Sincerely,

Tom, Judy, Timothy and Aarika Shewmake

P.S. If you are interested in the details of our journey and how we arrived at this decision you can read it here: www.ConnectingRelationships.org/TakingOffAdventistSunglasses.pdf