



THROUGH

CRISIS



*Living Through Crisis: Youth/Young Adult Devotional and Prayer Journal*

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# Introduction

**I**n an effort to encourage and strengthen many youth and young adults during the coronavirus pandemic, the Atlantic Union Conference Adventist Youth Ministries Department embarked on a devotional project. The collaborative effort of more than 50 Atlantic Union authors (youth ministry directors, associates, coordinators, and leaders; pastors and elders; and conference and union administrators and directors), *Living Through Crisis: Youth/Young Adult Devotional and Prayer Journal* is intended to deepen the readers' faith as they are positioned to experience God's abundant favor in 2021 and beyond.

Readers are actively drawn into the experience through reflective journaling, and/or a prayer chat between the reader and God.

Through personal testimonies, stories, and the Word of God, the authors' devotional entries are written:

- To encourage joy, hope, peace, strength, thanksgiving, selflessness, trust, faith, and compassion in crisis; and
- To celebrate by faith, soaring above crisis, defeating crisis, and deliverance from crisis.

Each devotional, with its biblical foundation, will give readers an opportunity to face the day with the assurance that God is still in control of the earth's affairs, and that He will never leave nor forsake His own.

Read and be blessed as the sweet Holy Spirit continues to empower you to be a conduit of hope.

David McKenzie

*Atlantic Union Conference Adventist Youth Ministries Director*

# Acknowledgment

**T**he Atlantic Union Conference Adventist Youth Ministries team extends warm gratitude to all the writers (youth ministry directors, associates, coordinators, and leaders; pastors and elders; and conference and union administrators and directors) who took the time to be intentional about encouraging our youth and young adults. Your written words will last a lifetime. Thank you.

# Dedication

**T**o all youth and young adults in the Atlantic Union Conference territory (Bermuda, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont), and beyond; and to all who have traversed the year 2020, amidst social, political, and health challenges, and face 2021 by faith. Maranatha!

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Trusting in

# Crisis

# He Touched Me

*He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. Psalm 40:2, KJV.*

I contracted the coronavirus and was hospitalized for 18 days. I had pulmonary emboli, high blood pressure, an elevated temperature, and was given 15 liters of oxygen to assist my saturation. Nine days after I was in the hospital, two doctors visited and told me that my condition was not improving. Therefore, they were going to put me on a ventilator. I agreed, not realizing the danger, as a recent study examining the outcomes for coronavirus patients admitted to 12 hospitals in New York and Long Island between March 1 to April 4 showed that just “3 percent of patients over 65 on ventilators survived, and men had a higher mortality rate than women” (Robert Langreth, *New Study Shows Nearly 9 in 10 Covid-19 Patients on Ventilators Don't Make it*, Bloomberg, April 22, 2020).

The doctor called my wife, June, and told her of the decision to put me on a ventilator. She objected passionately. “I don’t want my husband to be put on a ventilator,” she protested. Please understand the reason for her objection. This was during the height of the pandemic; it was the month of April and fatalities were exceeding six times the normal level. (*Coronavirus in the U.S.: Latest Map and Case Count*, *The New York Times*, April 23, 2020.)

The doctor explained that they could not continue to give the 15 liters of oxygen treatment, since it was not working. He then added, “It is now 10:30 a.m.; by 1:30 p.m., we will put him on the ventilator or take him off the oxygen.”

Darkness enveloped June’s soul, but she summoned an army of prayer warriors, who launched a tsunami of prayer, asking God to touch me. By 1:00 p.m., when the doctor was contacted about the ventilator, he replied, “Ventilator? Oh! We are not going to do that again because he has taken a drastic change for the better.” Praise God! The tsunami of prayers worked. He answered, He touched me, He brought me up out of an horrible pit, set my feet upon a rock, and made me whole.

**Alanzo Smith** is the executive secretary of the Greater New York Conference in Manhasset, New York.

# Reflections

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# God Protects

*God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. Psalm 46:1-3, NIV.*

**I**t was a beautiful, sunny morning. The day started like any ordinary day. I would never have imagined that this beautiful day would turn out to be such a disaster. On my way to a meeting, the unthinkable happened. Two planes crashed into the World Trade Center, and those tall, majestic, sturdy buildings folded and fell to the ground, leaving behind a pile of rubble and filling the air with dust.

Many people died, but the God who protects kept many people safe. The Bible tells me that “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging” (Psalm 46:1-3, NIV).

We don’t have to be afraid of the terror in the day or the terror in the night because God promised that He would protect us under His wings. We are covered. We don’t have to be afraid, because He was, He is, and He is to come. In the good times, and during a crisis, we can trust Him. He will never leave nor forsake us.

Are there things that make you afraid? Does it feel as if things around you are crumbling down? Trust God and remember, “The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe” (Proverbs 18:10, ESV).

**Marlene C. Alvarez** is the Education, Children’s Ministries, and Early Childhood Education associate director for the Atlantic Union Conference in Lancaster, Massachusetts.

# Reflections

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## God's Perfect Strength

*And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, NKJV.*

**T**he virus doesn't affect younger people. You will be fine; just rest; don't go to the hospital. Those were all phrases that I heard when I began to experience symptoms of COVID-19. I thought it would pass quickly, but it didn't.

For weeks I grappled with fever, exhaustion, body aches, loss of smell and taste, headaches, hallucinations, dizziness, and coughing. It was only by God's grace that I was able to receive hospital treatment after being found unconscious in my bathroom. In those moments of fear and trepidation, all I could do was call on the name of Jesus and ask Him to see me through my situation, which seemed impossible. In March 2020, many were still trying to figure out the virus, but God had it all figured out, and I thank Him for hearing my cry.

When I reflect on my experience, I realize that the strength that carried me through was not my own. As read in the text above, I realize that in the moments in which I was the weakest, God's strength was made perfect within me. So I say to you who are struggling and feel that you are weak, tired, stressed, and ready to give up, hold on! In these most difficult moments, the moments of vulnerability, God is giving you perfect strength to get you through your crisis. Always remember, His strength is perfect.

**Ingrid Pierre** is the coordinator for Public Campus Ministry in the Northeastern Conference with headquarters in Jamaica, New York.



# Reflections

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## The Heartfelt “Why?”

*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning? Psalm 22:1, NKJV.*

**T**he psalmist was experiencing uncertainties, and he expected God to answer his query: “Why have you forsaken me?” God welcomes questions from His children, especially in times of crisis and discouragement. Questioning is not offensive to God. What is offensive is our disbelief in God.

Paul and Silas were unjustly incarcerated in prison when their desire was to be free to do God’s work. They chose to do what we all can do in hard times—they began to pray and sing (Acts 16:35). In their desperate circumstances, like the three Hebrew young men, they realized that God could give victory and deliverance from a burning furnace (Daniel 3:20-25) and from prison in the middle of the night (Acts 16:26). When they prayed, God emancipated them from prison. Their crisis was an urgent matter to God, and He not only released them from prison by His amazing power, but He allowed them to be a source of encouragement to youth who want to do His soul-saving work.

No, God has not forsaken you. Yes, He may not immediately answer when you call, but your call will be answered on time. God is holy; therefore, His deeds are holy, and you can depend on Him to give victory when it appears that life has dealt you a death blow. God delights in hearing from you. Speak to Him.

**Trevor Forbes** is the undertreasurer, as well as Personal Ministries and Prison Ministries director for the Atlantic Union Conference in Lancaster, Massachusetts.

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## My Disappointment: His Appointment

*But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. Genesis 50:20, NKJV.*

**A**s Joseph came into the strange land of Egypt at the tender age of just 17, his head probably hung low, and his spirit was in despair. Betrayed and sold into slavery by his very own brothers, his once promising future now looked dreary and bleak. Who would have thought that the Lord was leading this young man down a path which would change the trajectory of a world superpower and raise up a mighty nation?

The Egyptian people lived around the banks of the Nile river. When merchants came to trade, they followed a single trade route down the Nile that took them through the land of very wealthy landowners, known as Nomarch, who charged taxes as they pleased to pass through. The Pharaoh ruled the country but did not own the land.

Joseph rose to the second most powerful position in all of Egypt (Genesis 41). Under his leadership, and just as God revealed, Egypt experienced a period of plenty. Joseph built canals, expanded farming lands, and stored surplus grain. Then followed the seven years of famine. The wealthy landowners, out of desperation, sold their very lands to the Pharaoh. Ultimately, Joseph received and saved his father's house along with his brothers in Egypt. Sometimes God brings us into situations, not only to *teach* us something but to *make* us something.

**Carl Behrmann** is a pastor in the Southern New England Conference with headquarters in South Lancaster, Massachusetts.

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## In All These . . . God Cares

*Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. 1 Peter 5:7-9, NIV.*

**L**et's face it. The times are different. No one anticipated that we would find ourselves in such heightened uncertainty. We cannot visit friends as we used to. School as we knew it has changed. Work arrangements have been severely altered. Travel plans are checkered with unexpected restrictions, not that travel wasn't already stressful!

In addition to the incessant effects of the coronavirus pandemic, racial tension, issues of inequity and inequality, social exclusionism, economic insecurities, and the need for one to assert spatial plenitude also challenge us. In the midst of all the uncertainties, one thing remains. We cannot trust any other person to have the solution to all these challenges and problems.

We find consolation in the Word of God. "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings" (1 Peter 5:7-9, NIV).

One thing that is often forgotten when faced with uncertainties, challenges, insecurities, and tragedies is that the devil uses these as tools to discourage, confuse, and create panic in society, thereby causing us to lose focus and faith in Christ. Remember, we are not alone (1 Peter 5:9) and we have One who cares so much that He will not leave us to the whims of the wind that has taken over our society.

**John K. Amoah** is the Ministerial and Evangelism director for the Southern New England Conference in South Lancaster, Massachusetts.

