

Subscriptions

For a free subscription to our newsletter or to order our Good News Tour DVDs, audio CDs, or book, please contact us by email at office@heavenlysanctuary.com or by calling our toll-free number at 1.888.250.4612.

If you prefer to mail comments, suggestions or financial support our postal address is:

HeavenlySanctuary.com

PO Box 4, Redlands, CA, 92373

You can access our entire online catalog via The Internet at <https://www.heavenlysanctuary.com/hscommerce> and can also download a copy of this newsletter at www.GoodNewsTour.com.

the **HeavenlySanctuary.com** network

HeavenlySanctuary.com: Everything about the character of God: discussion forums, featured stories, on-demand streaming video, podcasts and MP3 audio sermons, live video conferencing, online and downloadable Bible study guides, PowerPoint slides, sermon manuscripts and more!

GoodNewsTour.com: Information about The Good News Tour, speaker information, event locations, schedules and dates.

GodsCharacter.com: A book by book Bible study given by Dr. Brad Cole. Video on demand, audio streaming, PowerPoint slides, PDF documents and more!

Events & Schedules

March 20-21, 2009 — The Good News Tour (Dr. Greg Boyd, Dr. Brad Cole, Herb Montgomery, Pastor Manuel Silva, Marco Belmonte): Vancouver Central Seventh-day Adventist Church in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, GoodNewsTour.com.
Contact: Dorothee Cole @ 888.250.4612. Church contact information: 604.266.6727, www.oakridgeadventist.ca.

April 11, 2009 — Forest Falls SDA Church (Dr. Brad Cole): Contact: Jacquee Peterson @ 909.831.1804

August 3-9, 2009 — Lake Tahoe Camp Meeting (Marco Belmonte): Join Marco for a third year of discussion about his favorite subject: God! We look forward to seeing you there! (youth event) **Contact:** Jamie Eaton @ 775.225.0609

September 21-26, 2009 — CUC's Week In Spiritual Emphasis (Marco Belmonte): Canadian University College's "WISE" (Week In Spiritual Emphasis) will have Marco Belmonte returning to the campus where God became his greatest Friend. **Contact:** Pastor Paul Antunes @ 403.782.3381 x4033

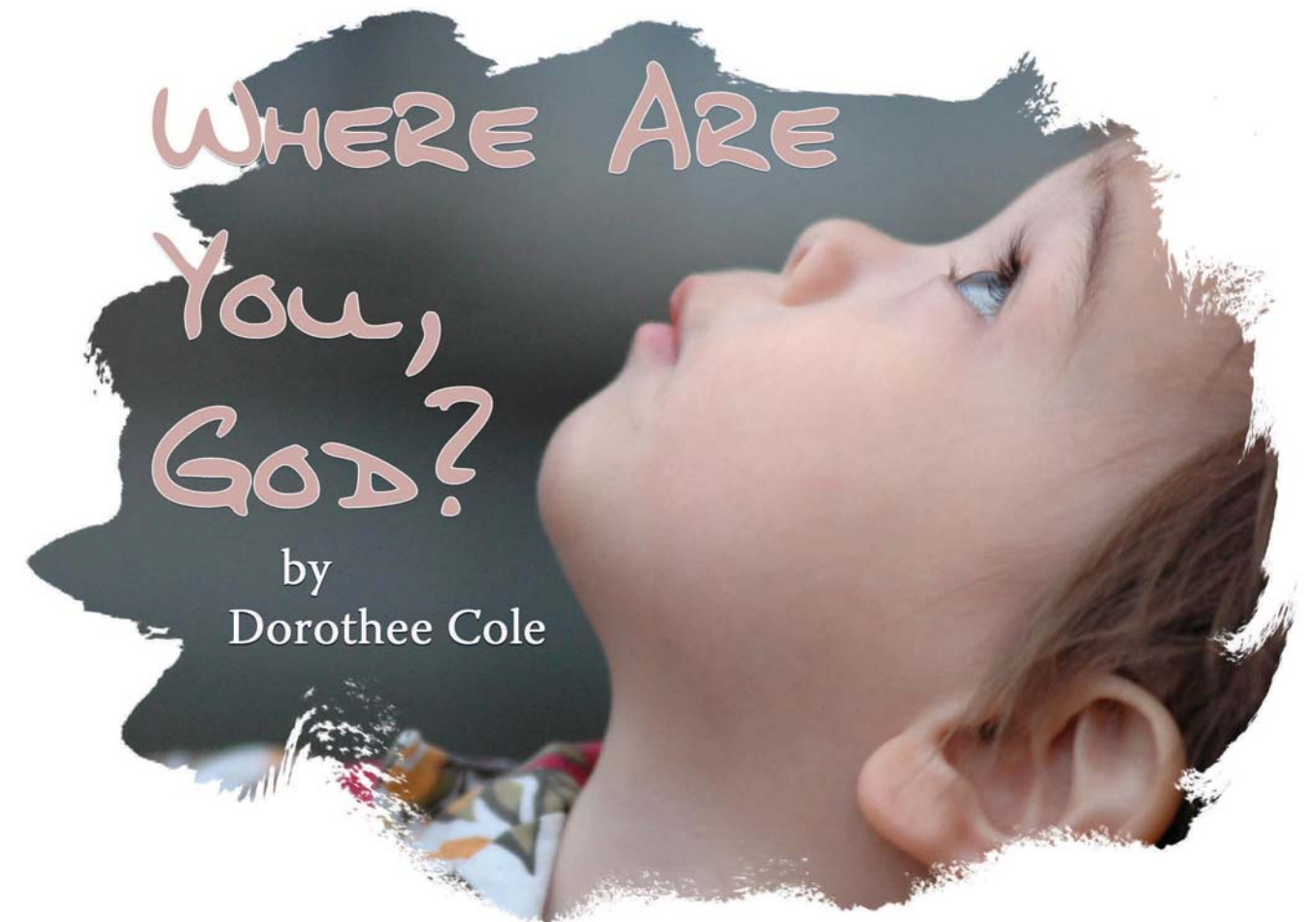
Ongoing Weekly Events

Thursday, 12-1 PM — Loma Linda University Medical Student Bible Study (Dr. Brad Cole): See GodsCharacter.com

Monday, 12-1 PM — Loma Linda University Allied and Public Health Bible Study (Dr. Brad Cole): See GodsCharacter.com

The Good News

A NEWSLETTER ENTIRELY ABOUT GOD : ISSUE TWENTY-FOUR : MARCH, TWO-THOUSAND AND NINE



There are experiences in life that can make us lose our trust in God. Even the most devout Christian who delights in the knowledge of God's kindness and love is not entirely immune to it. When suffering, pain or grief strikes, the world around us darkens and we feel abandoned by the One we thought was our Friend.

The brutality of suffering and pain in our world, and especially in our personal lives, frequently causes people to lose trust in God or even to doubt His existence. "If God is as loving as Christians say He is, why do I suffer so much?" "If Jesus cares for my sick relative, why doesn't He answer the prayers in her behalf?" At our 2007 Portland Good News Tour, an eight year old child asked one of our speakers why God allowed his Dad to die. His mother added that Dad was just starting to appreciate the beautiful message about God's character. Why did God not intervene?

Below is an e-mail excerpt from a friend who has gone through such an experience. I'd like to thank him for his honesty and...

a newsletter **entirely** about God

[**CONTINUED FROM FRONT**] courage to ask such difficult questions of God and to share his thoughts with us in an attempt to understand why God appeared to have left his side:

“My wife died just a few days ago. She had been hit with several strokes following successful brain surgery. I am grappling with the hard issues of life now that she is gone. I had about a year to pray for her during her illness, and felt confident that it was God's will for her to live. Why would it not be? But I never saw one speck of evidence of God's intervening on her behalf though she was anointed twice and hundreds of prayers ascended daily for her. She was young, only 57, strong physically and strong in the work of the church, dedicated to ministering to young people through many years of Pathfinders and recently as Food Services Director for the Summer camp Ministries here in B.C., Canada. I believed that by standing on the promises and by engaging in passionate prayer the battle would be won in her favor. I don't understand why it couldn't work out that way. Why does God bring back lost kitty cats and find lost car keys in the sand but we can't depend on Him to rescue our loved ones no matter how we trust and pray?”

Later, he wrote: *“I have talked to others who are coming to the opinion that prayer is like rolling the dice, results could fall either way. I can understand that God does not want us to be just "rice Christians", but if we stand on the promises, adhere to the conditions and pray with passion should we not have a reasonable expectation of a favorable reply? Or even just a reply? I really do feel that these unanswered questions may destroy what faith I have left.”*

How can we come to grips with this painful issue? Perhaps it helps somewhat to recognize that all of humanity suffers... and dies and that nobody is immune to misery; yet it is the magnitude and unfairness with which misery presents itself that we have difficulty reconciling. Our world is the result of living apart from the paradise which God originally intended for us. So perhaps we can find some consolation in the fact that God did not intend for us to live this way, but that He wanted us to live in happiness and harmony with each other – free from fear, sadness, suffering, and death.

With this in mind, our thoughts drift to Jesus – the Creator in human form who prayed, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” (Matthew 6:10 NKJV) And if Jesus’ asks us to pray for God’s will to be done on earth, we must assume that it isn’t currently being done. In fact, most of the time, God’s will isn’t even remotely apparent on this planet!

For three and a half years, we saw God’s will for the suffering. Jesus healed everyone – no questions asked. Whole villages were free from disease and the recipients of His healing touch weren’t even necessarily devout or knowledgeable about God. Jesus’ heart was full of compassion and love with an ever-willing desire to heal and forgive. And Jesus assured us that in Him we have seen the heart of God (John 14:9).

But if God exhibits the same kind of tenderness of heart toward us as Jesus did toward the sick and suffering of Israel two thousand years ago, why doesn’t He heal us today when we pray earnestly to Him? I have often wondered what would happen if God answered every honest and heartfelt prayer of this sort. All of His friends would be free from pain and suffering. If God lifted the scourge of every true Christian, it would be quite easy to spot them in this world. God’s people would stand out from afar. “Look at them – those who are blessed with health and who escaped poverty, disease, and abuse!” “Look how it pays to serve the Lord for He will take good care of you.”

Yet when we read the Bible, it seems that God's friends are often hit the hardest. The first

child of Adam and Eve was murdered and ever since that time, God’s people have experienced unspeakable hardship. The prophet Elisha, who had healed Naaman of leprosy, was sick in bed with a fatal disease which eventually caused his death (2 Kings 13:14). Isaiah is said to have been sawed in half in a hollow log. Jeremiah was hauled off to Egypt where he was stoned to death, and Paul who served the Lord with all his being suffered from a painful physical ailment (2 Cor. 12:7). John the Baptist, the greatest prophet who ever lived (according to Jesus) ended his life by having his head served on a plate to a young girl who danced for the king. We read about James who received no help from God and was killed, while at virtually the same time Peter received help from an angel who opened the prison doors. Didn’t people pray for James, one of the most prominent leaders of the early church? Did God let him die, because he wasn’t as valuable as Peter for the spread of the message? Why was James left to die and Peter allowed to live?

But none stand out as clearly and unforgettably as our Lord Himself – the Creator who became a human being, lived the life of a Servant, and died the cruel death of a criminal even though He never hurt anyone and never turned anyone away. Like so many others who have suffered and begged for God’s intervention, the Son of God also pled with His Heavenly Father to take away His cup of suffering. In Him, we witness the pinnacle of unfairness, the high point of injustice in human history! And in the darkness of grief, it was our Lord who cried, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Jesus Himself experienced the darkness of a sense of God-forsakenness and separation from the Source of life. Jesus Himself experienced the horrific and undeserved consequences of sin. Jesus Himself became a casualty of the devil’s kingdom.

If God desires our well-being, why hasn’t He consistently rescued his best friends from suffering and death? To begin to answer this question, we must turn our attention toward the Great Cosmic Conflict over God’s character that has been waging on this earth ever since it was created. We begin to gain insight into the issues at stake in this War, a war that was won in principle 2000 years ago, but that is still waging in the physical reality of our minds, bodies, and everything that encompasses this planet – a war that still brings much suffering to active participants as well as to innocent bystanders. Perhaps, despite His tender love and compassion toward us, our God is unable to help in all of those situations because he would be accused of paying off those who serve him by providing an easy life for them. That was Satan's accusation of God in the book of Job, the man who trusted God even though he and his family became innocent victims of the attacks of God’s enemy, even though God seemed very far away to him. And although we don’t understand why some prayers are answered and some aren’t, this should not suggest that prayer is ineffective. We remember Jesus, our Brother, who prayed daily to remain in agreement and unity with His Father...and our Father. Our prayers are powerful, not to accomplish a life without suffering, but to accomplish at-onement and intimacy with God – a God who suffers with us for our sake. Even Daniel’s prayer took 21 days to be answered; and it took Michael, the protector of God’s children to personally intervene. We can be sure that our God works tirelessly for our benefit all within the boundaries of the kind of freedom that ensures our happiness and the

happiness of our loved ones for eternity, even if the results of His work are not always immediately seen by us.

One thing is for sure: we don’t have all of the answers yet! One day, God will “pull back the curtain” for us to see the complexities and cosmic forces that were involved in every single prayer. God welcomes our questions and our honesty today. He listens to our honest prayers that lament our pain and even our doubt in His unfailing love. He is ever-willing to lead us through our rough time and to help us regain our trust in Him. He is Immanuel (God with us), because He himself experienced unjust suffering on His own body. His ultimate desire is that we become witnesses for Him and vital participants who help bring this War to a close – people determined through His Spirit to actively transform this world back into God’s paradise where goodness and happiness reign forever. God doesn't have very many friends like that! And even though all of our sadness was never His will, perhaps we will allow Him to unite with us amidst our suffering and together we can help others to see that God is still Love. [**END**]

