

## GOD HAS GIVEN US ETERNAL LIFE!

by Herb Montgomery  
Director | Speaker



*"He who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in his own heart, but he who does not believe God makes him out to be a liar by refusing to accept God's testimony of his Son. This is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is found in His Son." -1 John 5:10,11*

Recently, I have been curiously pondering the belief that many hold of the natural and inherent immortality of the soul. What strikes me is its subtle, but effective ability to circumvent the work that God, through the revealing of His love, is seeking to accomplish in our hearts.

First, there is one point that must be clearly understood from the beginning or nothing after this will make sense. God is ever seeking, through the bright rays of Calvary, to convert us from our self-centered bent to His other-centered love.

*"And He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf." -2 Corinthians 5:15*

Now consider what happens when you interject the thought that the soul is naturally and inherently immortal.

Everything you do becomes tainted by the desire to convince God to let you spend eternity in heaven rather than hell. Therefore everything in your religious experience will be colored by the desire to be saved! That's not conversion, that's self-preservation and we will be destined to ultimately live out of our own self-concern for our eternal well-being. As Jesus stated, *"Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it..."* -Luke 9:24

But back up! What if the soul is not naturally immortal? The options left are immortality or death (I know...still very egocentric at first, but keep watching).

*"...that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." -John 3.16 [emphasis added]*

*"The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life..."* -Romans 6:23

Without immortality of the soul, things begin at a different starting point. Pay close attention. In the beginning, Adam and Eve were created with immortality. Yet this immortality was forfeited when they sinned. *"Then the LORD God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he*

*stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"* -Genesis 3:22

Mankind lost their immortality! Adam and Eve could not pass on to us what they themselves no longer possessed. *"In Adam all die."* -1 Corinthians 15:22

So now we are faced with two options: Live forever or perish. We still begin the journey very egocentrically, but notice the hearts transformation as the truth of the Gospel begins to dawn upon us.

We begin to realize that we should be dead right now! We are not immortal! We have sinned! God warned us that "in the day" that we sin we are to die (Genesis 2:17). Wait! I've sinned, but I'm still breathing. Modern Christianity would tell us that the reason is because the soul is naturally and inherently immortal and can't die, but the Gospel cries out a much different explanation! Look carefully at the verse we started with today. Before we exercise any faith on our part, before we respond to the "testimony" given of God's son in belief or unbelief, that "testimony" is delivered to our hearing! The Gospel comes to us with news of what God has done first, before we have believed or disbelieved it yet! Why is this important? Because look what the news is!!!! *"That God has already given us eternal life!"* -1 John 5:11

Before we ever believe or disbelieve, God has already given us eternal life!!! We should be dead! Yet we are alive, not because we are naturally immortal, but because Jesus died for us and rose again...all of us! Which means, if the options were eternal life or perish, God has

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### Thoughts to Ponder

"By this time you ought to be teachers, but instead you need someone to teach you the ABC's of God's oracles over again. It comes to this: you need milk instead of solid food. Anyone who lives on milk is still an infant, with no experience of what is right. Solid food is for adults, whose perceptions have been trained by long use to discriminate between good and evil. Let us stop discussing the rudiments of Christianity. We ought not to be laying the foundation all over again: repentance from the deadness of our former ways and faith in God, by means of instruction about cleansing rites and the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgement. Instead, let us advance towards maturity."

(Hebrews 5:12-6:1, REB)

# MINISTRY UPDATE

## Rio Lindo Academy

What I love most about working with today's generation is the questions they ask! Theirs are the questions that resonate with my headspace and have fueled my quest for understanding God's love for as long as I can remember. They aren't easy questions by any means, but they are real questions. These are the kinds of questions the young people of Rio Lindo Academy are asking as well.

I was privileged last month to be able to spend a full week with the students there in Healdsburg, CA. What an enriching experience it was. Each morning we spent about thirty minutes together, but then in the evenings we were given more time to really delve into the tough questions surrounding the character of our God.

What we all discovered was that God is not anything like we've been taught. The religious conditioning of this world has left us ill prepared to encounter Him the way He would have us experience Him according to the scriptures. His love is broader, wider, deeper, and higher than anything we have yet conceived.

In the nine sessions we had together that week, the memories that are the most meaningful are those of watching the light turn on in the hearts of today's generation and witnessing their excitement as their questions finally find satisfactory answers. Though they sense that God's love is far beyond their full comprehension it makes sense to them, nonetheless!

At the end of the week we closed with the clearest picture of God's other-centeredness that I believe has ever been given to our world—the cross! Almost the entire school, as well as some faculty, came forward and made decisions to surrender all. They allowed God to lead them from that experience away from all the lies that surround what He is like and into the

glorious light of His truth.

Recently, I was told, "It's really good to know God love's us, but we need the meat too." That way of thinking always brings a crooked smile to my

face. This is exactly where we miss the point! Young people get the Sabbath! They get the state of the dead! They get the doctrines! Those subjects are easy. What they want to know is how God's love harmonizes with all of the suffering of today's world! How God's love harmonizes with many of the stories of the Old Testament! How God's love harmonizes with what they have suffered in their own lives! They ask questions like "If God loves me, why is it so hard to understand? Why don't I feel like it? Why aren't my prayers answered, if God is so good?" I would like to suggest that if we are going to be studying God's love throughout eternity, maybe it's not as "milky" as we have thought. We might just have it backwards! Milk is where we start, but understanding the many faceted puzzlements of God's love is what feeds us and enables us to grow into mature "Godlike" Christians.

This type of food is for thought and feeling, and at Rio Lindo Academy last month, those thoughts and feelings became life changing realities and set an incredible stage for an exciting school year. I look forward to seeing what God does on that campus in the ensuing months.! †



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already made a decision for every person that they will live forever! He has accomplished all that was necessary to make this happen for each of us! This is a gift! I know, I know...not everyone will be saved in the end, but listen carefully. If anyone is lost at last, it will not be because they did not do enough to convince God to save them! It will be because they threw away the salvation God had already so freely and generously given to all!

Watch what this does to our hearts. No longer is all of our religious duty colored by a desire to convince God to let us live forever rather than perish! Instead, our life becomes a poetic expression of gratitude, appreciation, and love for the One who so generously gave to us. Our entire life becomes centered in the desire to thank Him, to live for

Him! Love's goal accomplished! We "no longer live for ourselves but for Him who died for us and rose again." Will you believe the gospel, dear reader? God has given you life when you should not be living today! His intension in the gift is that this life will never end, but He has left it up to you. Will you let the life He's given you be eternal... or will you make it temporary?

*"Everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die."* Do you believe this? -John 11:26

*"For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers."* - 1Timothy 4:10 †

### "It is Finished"

by E.G. White

Christ did not yield up His life till He had accomplished the work which He came to do, and with His parting breath He exclaimed, "It is finished." (John 19:30) The battle had been won. His right hand and His holy arm had gotten Him the victory. As a Conqueror He planted His banner on the eternal heights. Was there not joy among the angels? All heaven triumphed in the Saviour's victory. Satan was defeated, and knew that his kingdom was lost.

To the angels and the unfallen worlds the cry, "It is finished," had a deep significance. It was for them as well as for us that the great work of redemption had been accomplished. They with us share the fruits of Christ's victory.

Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds. The archapostate had so clothed himself with deception that even holy beings had not understood his principles. They had not clearly seen the nature of his rebellion.

It was a being of wonderful power and glory that had set himself against God. Of Lucifer the Lord says, "Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty." (Ezek. 28:12) Lucifer had been the covering cherub. He had stood in the light of God's presence. He had been the highest of all created beings, and had been foremost in revealing God's purposes to the universe. After he had sinned, his power to deceive was the more deceptive, and the unveiling of his character was the more difficult, because of the exalted position he had held with the Father.

God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power.

It was God's purpose to place things on an eternal basis of security, and in the councils of heaven it was decided that time must be given for Satan to develop the principles which were

the foundation of his system of government. He had claimed that these were superior to God's principles. Time was given for the working of Satan's principles, that they might be seen by the heavenly universe...

This is not an act of arbitrary power on the part of God. The rejecters of His mercy reap that which they have sown. God is the fountain of life; and when one chooses the service of sin, he separates from God, and thus cuts himself off from life. He is "alienated from the life of God." Christ says, "All they that hate Me love death." (Eph. 4:18; Prov. 8:36) God gives them existence for a time that they may develop their character and reveal their principles. This accomplished, they receive the results of their own choice. By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them.

At the beginning of the great controversy, the angels did not understand this. Had Satan and his host then been left to reap the full result of their sin, they would have perished; but it would not have been apparent to heavenly beings that this was the inevitable result of sin. A doubt of God's goodness would have remained in their minds as evil seed, to produce its deadly fruit of sin and woe.

But not so when the great controversy shall be ended. Then, the plan of redemption having been completed, the character of God is revealed to all created intelligences. The precepts of His law are seen to be perfect and immutable. Then sin has made manifest its nature, Satan his character. Then the extermination of sin will vindicate God's love and establish His honor before a universe of beings who delight to do His will, and in whose heart is His law.

Well, then, might the angels rejoice as they looked upon the Saviour's cross; for though they did not then understand all, they knew that the destruction of sin and Satan was forever made certain, that the redemption of man was assured, and that the universe was made eternally secure. Christ Himself fully comprehended the results of the sacrifice made upon Calvary. To all these He looked forward when upon the cross He cried out, "It is finished." (*The Desire of Ages*, p.758-764) †

## TESTIMONIES . . .

“Oh!! How the picture of what God or whom he wants to get the good news to has become so warped. Can we not just stop judging and see everyone needs the simple truth? When I went through your seminar the Bible became so plain and simple to understand. My husband went with me and he has a wonderful mind now. God restored many things for him. For me, it’s a lot harder to see and understand. The words God blessed you with and the understanding in which you presented it, opened up a whole new world for me. I hope and pray you continue to share God’s love.”—KP

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*“Thank you very much for your superb contribution to the wonderful Good News Tour Conference. You have a very unusually deep understanding of the incredible love of God and of the great controversy that is being waged over it.”*

—KG



## CALENDAR

### October 10-19, 2008

Lewisburg SDA Church  
Lewisburg, WV  
304.647.5925

### October 24-25, 2008

Mississauga SDA Church  
Mississauga, Ontario CANADA  
905.608.0013

### October 31-November 1, 2008

Bible Study Fellowship  
Dallas, TX  
214.564.0223

### November 7-9, 2008

Durant SDA Church  
Durant, OK  
580.924.4019

### November 10-13, 2008

Review and Herald Publishing  
Association  
Hanerstown, MD  
301.393.3000

### November 17-21, 2008

El Dorado Adventist Academy  
Placerville, CA  
530.622.3560

### January 9-10, 2009

Pleasant Hill SDA Church  
Pleasant Hill, CA  
925.934.5803

### January 16-25, 2009

Carson City SDA Church  
Carson City, NV  
775.882.3541



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