



Total Reliance on God

**“For I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand,
Saying to you, ‘Fear not, I will help you.’ (Isaiah 41:13).**

I'd like to talk about something that's close to my heart. Absolute reliance (dependence) upon the Lord, leaning on Him for everything. I love the beautiful verse in John 15:5 that says for without me you can do nothing without God.

Most of the time, without God, we are nothing but we do not really fully believe it. Sometimes we fool ourselves by thinking no, I can do this; but it's only by the grace of God that we're able to do things even though we don't ask Him. Just imagine what more can God do for His people through you and through me if we absolutely rely upon Him.

I believe that the situation that we have been facing with the Covid-19 pandemic in the past couple of years is God teaching us a lesson. God allowed this pandemic. A lot of our plans have been destroyed since March 2020. That was the beginning of broken dreams and, for most of us, that was the beginning of frustrations. Just imagine how many plans have been destroyed. Graduations did not happen. General Conference Session did not happen. Weddings have been have been postponed, some even cancelled. Funerals were cancelled.

A quote from the book, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, by Ellen G. White: “The tenor [tendency] of the Bible is to inculcate distrust of human power and to encourage trust in divine power” The word “inculcate” means to teach; to fix in someone's mind by repetition. That is the theme of the Bible. This is what the Bible has been trying to tell us: not to trust ourselves, not to trust human power but to trust only in divine power. The Lord has to put us in a desperate situation that will make us look up and we'll realize that without Him, we really are going nowhere.

Here's another nice quote in *Signs of the Times* (August 24, 1891): “Whatever prevents us from making Christ our entire dependence, is abomination [disgust, terrible] in the sight of

God.” Wow, that is quite a serious statement. Whatever prevents us from leaning on God, from relying on God is abomination in the sight of God. He is so serious about us leaning on Him. If we want to move forward, we have to lean fully on Him especially in the times that we're living in right now.

The Lord desires to give us the answer to our prayers but the problem is our hearts are not prepared to receive it. This is one thing that we need to do. To lean fully on God. “The promises of God are full and abundant, and there is no need for anyone to depend upon humanity for strength” *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers.*, page 381.

We need to be praying that we would fully realize our need of the Lord that we will not rely on our own strength, on our own ways and our own methods in our own resources, but rely on the One who could finish this work for us and in us and through us.

A lot of people have been losing their minds during this pandemic. There's a lot of people who are depressed even people in our church and even people in leadership have been depressed. This is the time that we could be shining the brightest for the Lord if we lean fully on Him.

God promised us in Psalm 32:8: “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.” Isn't that a beautiful promise? Now I want to share a quote from *Testimony Treasures* volume 2. This compilation book contains about one third of *Testimonies* arranged in chronological [time] order.

“There is a necessity for the Lord Himself to communicate His own ideas to the soul. What a thought!—that instead of our poor, earthly, contracted ideas and plans the Lord will communicate to us His own ideas, His own thought, noble, broad, far-reaching, always leading heavenward!”

Why not take that offer that God is giving us?

He'll communicate to you, the Church, and the Deaf Ministry with His own ideas, not our ideas because His ideas are the best.

God is Almighty and He is all-powerful. We rely so much on men while we have a God who has all these wonderful qualities and has all the power that the world could imagine. What we need right now is the Lord's leading, the Lord's direction, the Lord's guidance.

"As the will of man co-operates with the will of God, it becomes omnipotent. Whatever is to be done at His command, may be accomplished in His strength. All His biddings are enablings." COL p. 333

I looked up the word omnipotent and it says "Almighty; possessing unlimited power; all powerful. Having unlimited power of a particular kind." So what are we waiting for? Why don't we cooperate with God? Let's submit to the One who has all power.

"Through God we will do valiantly" Psalm 60:12. With God we will do valiantly. The meaning of the word valiantly is "strong, with courage". God has special plans for every one of us. Let's look at a quote:

"The wonderful sacrifice of Christ has made it possible for every man to do a special work" Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, page 484.

Somebody may think "I don't think I'm doing anything special". Two things- either you're not doing what you're supposed to or you don't understand the importance of what you are doing.

W.D. Frazee's close friend was W. C. White, who was the son of Ellen White who was in charge of her writings. As he got to know him, he was impressed with the wisdom that the Lord had given him for the job that he had been called to do in looking after his mother's writings and in encouraging the medical missionary work. The Lord told Ellen White about her son in a vision. "I have put my Spirit upon your son, W. C. White, that he may be your counselor" Manuscript Releases, Volume 7, page 294.

W. C. White worked with his mother in the preparation of her books and getting them published in many languages. Then Jesus told Ellen White that W.C. White cannot be separated from this work for it is his lifeblood. "For this purpose was he born" Selected Messages, Book 1, page 55.

I'm sure that was an encouragement to W.C. White to read those words that Jesus had said about him. Don't you wish something like that could be true about you?

Whatever we are doing, if we know that Jesus has given us the assignment, it is a

special work and it's getting us ready for some more special work God has in mind for us. Remember, your life is like no other one. Every day, morning, and evening, go over things with Jesus, your Leader and Friend, and ask Him what it is He has for you to do today. He has a special work for each one of us.

Amanda Colgan

First Deaf Youth Camp in Washington



June 24-July 2 was a historic week at Sunset Lake Camp in Washington State not far from Seattle area. This is an Adventist camp full of many fun activities with the important goal of pointing children to Jesus. During their first week, we hosted the very first Deaf Youth Camp. And what a great week we had! Because this was our first one, news was slow to get around. Also COVID has caused some families to be a little anxious about sending their kids off to camp. So, we had two campers, one Deaf and her brother (who is also a CODA).

Deaf camp offered all the fun activities, including archery, zip line, climbing wall, giant swing, horseback riding, banana boat, art, bike riding and more. Pastor Jeff Jordan was our camp pastor. He gave worship talks and led Sabbath morning worship service. We planned to have our own worship in the evening, but our Deaf camper was very curious about what the hearing group was doing, noticing the outdoor stage looked like a boat. She loved it and so every night we stayed with the hearing, watching the nightly play which showed that Jesus wants to save us and have us share the good news with others. But we have to make the decision.

This was the first camp experience that our Deaf camper ever had. And she had a lovely

time. She and her Deaf counselor Nicolette Reynoso stayed with some hearing girls in a cabin. Although she was older than the hearing girls, she developed sweet friendships with them. The young girls loved her and tried to sign with her. Watching their friendship grow was sweet.

We were so impressed with the camp staff. Those young adults were eager to learn more about Deaf ministry. Several sat with us to eat in the cafeteria and one joined us for morning worship. Several knew some signs and several others learned a few basics. Several told me that they want to learn more in college and they were excited to know that Southern Adventist University offers ASL classes and that Pastor Jeff Jordan is one of the teachers. I met a few hard of hearing people who felt inferior. Being around us was meaningful to them. So, our Deaf Camp was more than reaching out to the Deaf youth, but this also gave us the opportunity to educate many about the Deaf culture and the needs in ministry. This is important because these young adults will not forget their positive experience and some of them will become church leaders.

Nohelani Jarnes and I are on the camp committee with Duane Talley as the chair and Deaf youth camp director. Duane has had several years of experience working with the Deaf youth camp at Camp MiVoden in northern Idaho back in the 1990s when Christian Deaf Services and Project Spear sponsored many Deaf children to attend. That Deaf camp was very successful with around 60 Deaf kids sponsored. Christian Record Services had several Deaf camps around the USA during this time, but Camp MiVoden was the largest of them all. We wanted to bring back that very positive experience to the Deaf youth who need to know God.

The Deaf Youth Camp expenses were covered by Washington Conference, the North Pacific Conference, the North American Division, and many private donors. The staff of counselors and interpreters volunteered their time. All of these people believe that sharing Jesus with Deaf youth is one of the most important things we can do.

The next Deaf Youth Camp will be July 2-9, 2023. If you know of anyone Deaf between the ages of 10-15, please encourage them to contact us! They can email camp4deafyouth@gmail.com.

Esther Doss

Returning to Church Big Day



On the Sabbath of July 9th, 2022 known as the “Big Day,” 25 Deaf attendants at the Portland, Oregon’s Tabernacle SDA church. We were blessed by having the in-person Bible studies, sermon, and potluck which was followed by an afternoon workshop. We studied the week’s Sabbath School lesson in a large circle in the chapel that we were able to use the entire day. After Sabbath School completed, we assisted each other by arranging the seats to prepare for the worship service with our guest speaker, David Trexler. Pablo Alejo had arranged a Zoom video with a projector for Pastor Trexler to use for his slide presentation. We were glad to be able to share the presentation with those who did not have a church to attend via Zoom. Having ASL guest speakers during the Big Day gathering has always been truly a blessing.

During the government’s lockdown, many of us had appreciated the Sabbath School and sermons through a video conference program, Zoom, at home throughout the closure of the church. We remain blessed with technology that helps us to continue worshipping God with video conferencing software. However, we were in a need of an in-person gathering. I am reminded of what apostle Paul had instructed us not to “forsake the assembling of ourselves together” in the last days (Hebrews 10:25). Those church Zoom sessions at home were great, for I have met some new faces of Deaf Adventists that I would not have otherwise known. America is such a big country, and there are hundreds of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Adventists that communicate mainly in sign language which is scattered throughout the states. Therefore, a gathering of local Deaf members with out-of-state guests has always been a God-given opportunity, which makes the “Big Day” gathering event at the Tabernacle church a true blessing. The eventful Big Day Sabbath had come to a close after the workshop followed by a long farewell. It was a “see you soon” farewell as some of us were

heading to the Milo camp meeting. I hope that we will have more of in-person gatherings every Sabbath.

Boyd Garner

Western Deaf Camp Meeting



For some of us, the Western Deaf Camp Meeting is a lot like a taste of heaven. It was so good to be back again after COVID caused the camp meeting to be disrupted. But this year, this camp meeting still faced some challenges, such as travel costs. Air fare fees are crazy! And gas prices were at their highest during the camp meeting, July 10-17. One man drove from New Mexico and was astonished at how much he paid for gas in California. So, attendance was low this year with 23 attendees. But we found that we had more time to spend with each other and our spiritual experience was very rich. We did not mind that the numbers were small, though we missed some regular faces. Because of Pablo Alejo's hard work, others joined us on Zoom so they could at least benefit from the presentations. But there is nothing like being here in person. We even played the traditional game of volleyball and shot some basketballs.

The main speakers were Alan Meis and Esther Doss. In the afternoons and evenings, we spent a lot of time in Bible study discussions led by Chuck McGehee and Steve Nobles. We really enjoyed that so much that we kept studying together for hours past the schedule time! I know that I learned a lot and made a long list of Bible texts. Paul Kelly gave a report on 3ADM, to keep us aware of what 3ADM is doing. We who were curious asked many questions. Elder Larry Evans, the director for Adventist Possibilities Ministries at the General Conference, joined us

for Sabbath and he shared a few encouraging words with us.

Sabbath afternoon, we had a special memorial service to remember Billy Butler who passed away on January 29, 2022. Then we went to the Umpqua River. Billy told his wife Pamela that he wanted his ashes to be distributed in the same river where he was baptized in 2009. Our hearts were heavy as we miss Billy but we know that he will rise and see Jesus in the clouds one day soon. He is the second Deaf person whose ashes were brought here to the camp meeting. Lillian Davidson's ashes were buried in center campus back in 2009.

Afterwards, we were thrilled to watch Sara Snider (from California) be baptized in the cool waters of the same river. She grew up in Ecuador to an Adventist family. In fact, her father was an Adventist pastor. She did not understand fully the teachings of the church and decided to be re-baptized, now knowing much more about God and the teachings in His Word. Seems that Satan tried to keep this baptism from happening. Bob fell and got a concussion soon before they left home. They waited until he felt better and got permission from the doctor for him to drive the long distance to the camp meeting.

As I mentioned, this camp meeting is very much a taste of heaven. This camp meeting is more than just a group of people coming for a lot of meetings. Most of us remember this place

well as where we developed a much closer walk with God. We made precious lifelong friends and great memories here. Some have even met their future spouses. We have witnessed many baptisms, weddings, memorial services, and

even put people to rest in their grave. This is a special place and I am so thankful that God has blessed us with this camp meeting here for over 40 years. I highly encourage you to attend a camp meeting somewhere sometime soon.

Esther Doss

World DeafNation Expo at Las Vegas, Nevada



Two weeks after the spiritual-filled camp meeting at Western Deaf Camp Meeting ended in Oregon, my wife, Tina, and I attended the DeafNation World Expo in Las Vegas from August 1-4, 2022. Chuck and Barbara McGehee assisted us in the booth ministry. They met many friends from their old days. Throughout the three days, some of them kept stopping by just to discuss different biblical topics. Some of them went out with us to dine on some occasions. One of them felt spiritually inspired. DeafNation had quite a turnout as it attracted 5,200 Deaf attendees from all over the world. There were many exhibitions, sessions, entertainments, presentations, etc. Las Vegas also attracted many people to gamble their money at many casinos. The gambling machines and tables were everywhere. Gambling isn't something to get involved because it is destructive to an individual's well-being. Apostle Paul warned us in 1 Timothy 6:9-10 that "Those who want to become rich bring temptation to themselves and are caught in a trap. They want many foolish and harmful things that ruin and destroy people. The love of money causes all kinds of evil. Some people have left the faith, because they wanted to get more money, but they have caused themselves much sorrow." This is our opportunity to reach out to Deaf people and lead them to the right path to heaven.

Paul Kelly

Southern Deaf Fellowship Camp Meeting



The Southern Deaf Camp Meeting was held August 10-14 at the lovely Cohutta Springs Retreat Center in Crandall, GA. A large group of members and visitors came from several states and enjoyed a wonderful time together in Christian fellowship. The theme focused on the last days and the second coming with Paul Kelly and Esther Doss as main speakers. Sadly, Paul Kelly and his wife both came down with COVID and so they had to stay home. But the good news is that technology saved the day! Paul spoke to the camp meeting attendees by using Zoom, though his presence at the camp meeting was sorely missed. The youth have their own classes too! They were divided up into three groups and had excellent teachers.

The Sabbath began in the evening with the lovely communion service. Just before that service, an ordination service was held for the new elders, Marc Grundy and Brian Kelly. Tania Greer came all the way to Georgia from Michigan with her little infant just weeks old. The family went forward for a special service to dedicate this baby to the Lord. Also, the Georgia-Cumberland Conference showed their support for Deaf ministry. Several church leaders shared a brief message of welcome and encouragement during the weekend. One of them was the conference president Gary Rustad.

Sabbath afternoon was extra special. This was because Shakira Reynoso (MD), Maggie Solomon (MD), and Tania Greer (MI) were all three baptized. Keep them in your prayers that

they will remain faithful and continue to grow in the Lord.

Campers who come to this camp meeting can enjoy many activities. Of course, the best times are spent studying the Word of God, making new friends and catching up with old friends. But there were plenty more to do! One could swim in the lovely pool, zip down the zipline, ride the banana boat, take a hike, ride on a pontoon boat, exercise in the fitness center and even relax with a massage! Those who like a slower pace enjoyed feeding turtles swimming below the cafeteria deck or quietly gazing over the horseshoe-shaped lake. The lake and the shore had plenty of wildlife. Besides jumping fish, there were beaver, turtles, dozens of geese, and deer. This weekend was truly a retreat for the mind, body and soul.

Their next camp meeting will be August 9-13, 2023. Maybe we will see you there!

Esther Doss

In Memory of Mario Romero



Mario Romero was born on March 4, 1967, to Jose Jesus Alfonso and Maria del Carmen Romero in the town of San Salvador, El Salvador. He had one older brother, Alfonso and two younger brothers, Daniel and Jose, and a younger sister Gessela. Mario's father and grandfather both died of a

disease that left them blind, deaf, and paralyzed with hundreds of tumors on their central nervous system. Only later would the family learn the name of the disease: Neurofibromatosis Type 2. They would learn that it is a genetic disorder that would eventually take Mario's older brother, Alfonso.

When Mario was twenty years old, he began to lose his hearing, and he, too, was diagnosed with Neurofibromatosis Type 2. Over the years, he had dozens of surgeries, radiation treatments, and therapies. Despite his many challenges, Mario kept going with a positive attitude and a sense of humor.

Mario's first language was Spanish, his second language was English, and when he became deaf, he learned American Sign Language. Despite his disability of deafness, he attended college. He began his studies in Puerto Rico hoping for an electrical career. Then he came Florida and received an A.S. degree in Computer Programming from Valencia Community College. Lastly, he earned a B.S. in

Management Information Systems and Technologies with a minor in Economics from the University of South Florida. It took him many years to accomplish these goals in between surgeries, therapies, and treatments.

He worked for many years in different jobs. His last job was working for the Center for Independent Living as their IT person. He loved working with computers and everything digital.

Mario and Ybon met in February 1996. They had both taken short-term, temporary assignments at Equifax. They always believed God orchestrated the whole thing since they were both there for a short period of time. Ybon was taking sign language courses and realized Mario was deaf. They started having lunch together so Ybon could practice her sign language outside of class. Soon they began dating.

One day Ybon invited him to a Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Orlando area that had a sign language interpreter. She learned Mario had ties to the Adventist church through his other grandmother, but he had stopped attending because of his hearing loss. Mario enjoyed the experience with the interpreter and later took Bible studies with Pastor Stunkard and Brian, the interpreter. At the end of the studies, Mario was baptized. Mario was always a good man, but once he gave his life to Jesus, he became a better man. He was kind, thoughtful, caring, loving, respectful, and patient.

Mario and Ybon were married on December 27, 1998. She says, "I was the happiest wife I could be" and "I became a better person because of him." God was always the center of their home.

Neither had finished their education at that point, and through Mario's encouragement, they returned to the University of South Florida and graduated together in the spring of 2001.

Over the years, the couple welcomed two dogs into their home: Sol and Lady. Mario taught them tricks. He proudly told friends that his dogs were trilingual. People would say, "Trilingual?!" He answered. "Yes! They know Spanish, English, and Sign Language!"

Mario longed to write a book about his life. He said that since they didn't have children his name would be lost forever. He wanted to leave a legacy so that when he was gone, people would remember him, and he would still be an encouragement to others going through difficult times. He wanted others to come to know Jesus through his experiences. Mario and Dale Finley Slongwhite worked hours, months and a couple of years on the book, squeezing in time between surgeries, illness, treatments, and therapy.

Sometimes they worked through interpreters, sometimes they hand-wrote notes, and sometimes they sat side by side typing messages to each other. At one point, it looked like he was going to die, so they worked harder and faster to finish the book. Mario considered writing the book to be one of his greatest accomplishments.

In 2008, Mario's health was getting worse, so he decided to retire early to focus more on Deaf Ministries. Mario joined the virtual Seventh-day Adventist Church for the deaf based out of Tennessee and led by Jeff Jordan of Southern Deaf Ministries, who himself is deaf. Mario was a board member, web designer, prayer group leader, IT person, and designer of the group's logo.

A number of individuals in central Florida who were deaf came together regularly on Sabbath. Mario taught Sabbath School and then they watched Pastor Jeff Jordan preaching on livestream. The group did not have a home church and traveled from church to church.

In 2009, Sandra Doran invited Mario to present at Kress Memorial Church. The entire deaf group attended and loved the warm welcome. They asked Pastor Eric Dorn if Kress could become their permanent home, and the response from the church board was, "Of course!" Pastor Doran offered his own office as a meeting spot. Twice a month the group met and had a place for potluck and fellowship afterwards.

At Kress, Mario helped with web design and volunteered Wednesday night at the Soup Kitchen for the homeless.

On June 22, 2021, Mario had a major surgery that lasted 12 hours. He was almost paralyzed from the neck down. He needed total care and Ybon lovingly provided every bit of it at home, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They were unable to attend church and relied on unreliable public transportation with an access van for medical appointments. Thanks to Kress Church, Pastor Orlando, sister Myrtle, Pastor Ron, and a few generous donors, Mario and Ybon were able to purchase an access van. They used it for the first time Christmas Day 2021. Ybon says, "The church gave us a grand welcome! Mario was so happy to be able to come to church."

On July 13, 2022, Mario had surgery that left him in a coma and totally dependent on a ventilator. He was deaf, could not open his eyes, and was paralyzed.

On Thursday, September 22, 2022, at 2:52 a.m., Mario fought his last battle with NF2. He is now sleeping in the Lord. The next time Mario opens his eyes, he will see Jesus. He will hear

his name, "Mario" being called among the faithful. He will fly on eagle's wings and dance on streets of gold.

Mario is survived by his wife Ybon, his mother Maria del Carmen Morales, his brothers, Daniel and J. Eduardo, and his younger sister Gessela Morales.

In Memory of Jane Meis



Jane Carol Meis, 78, passed away Wednesday, October 19, 2022, in a local hospital.

She was born in Ringgold, GA, and has lived in the Bradley County area for over forty years. She was a member of the Southern Deaf Fellowship of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in McDonald. She was a loving wife, mother,

and grandmother. She loved decorating her home for all the seasons and cooking and baking for her family. She was preceded in death by her parents, Eli Center and Euphie Deverell Center; and brother, Joel Center; and twin brother Wayne Center.

She is survived by her loving husband of 56 years, Gordon Gayle Meis; two children, Alan Meis and wife Ruth of Zeeland, MI, and Alisa Barnes of Cleveland; four grandchildren, Autumn DePas, Isaac Plata, Isabel Barnes, and Skylar Barnes; one brother, Richard Center and wife Alethea of Ooltewah, TN, and sister, Myra Center of Ringgold, GA; and several nieces and nephews also survive.

A celebration of her life was conducted at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 23, 2022, in the chapel of Ralph Buckner Funeral Home with Pastor Jeff Jordan officiating.

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