

General Conference
Theology of Ordination Study Commission
Worship—Monday, July 21, 2013
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Title: Images

Text: Deuteronomy 6:5-7 NKJ

A. Images of a Hindu boy.

1. He was only eight years old when he was sent away from the village where he was growing up with his 12 siblings.
2. His job was to be a companion to his older sister and help her with chores while her husband was gone for many days at a time working at a factory, building supplies related to the war—World War II.
3. Even though the little island seemed far away from the fighting, Trinidad was a British colony and was therefore involved in supporting the Allies. It was the war effort that sent the young boy from Caratel Village to Diego Martin. We will see that it was God’s effort to transform the lives of generations.
4. One evening, Ram, as he was called—shortened from Ramnarine, was sent by his sister to retrieve wood for the cook stove fire. By the time he had gathered the wood and was heading home it was getting dark, so even though his arms were heavy with wood, he did not want to take his usual shortcut through the cemetery.
5. His Hindu faith had led him to be afraid of cemeteries. He was taught the belief of reincarnation where the dead person would come back as some other creature depending on what kind of life he or she had lived. In the cemetery he was not sure what images he might see in the dark as the dead transitioned into their new bodies.
6. Ram decided to take the *long* way home. As he walked, he heard some music. He felt he had never heard such a beautiful sound. He followed the music to a building and his curiosity led him peer through the cracks in the wall boards. They sung, “Are you downhearted, No, no, no...” The music continued for several minutes and the little boy listened.
7. Then the lights were turned off and there he saw a big screen with pictures being projected by what he later learned was called a “magic lantern” or slide projector.
8. Ram did not understand much of what the speaker was saying but he was fascinated with the image he saw on the screen. It looked like a statue of a man made of different kinds of metal. His little heart was delighted as he imagined to himself that he was seeing a movie, something he could never afford. He was determined he would come again.
9. It was now dark. Slipping out of the building he hurried home.
10. Ram was scolded for his lateness as supper was delayed because there was no wood to cook with.

11. After explaining why he was late he was forbidden to go those Christian meetings again.
12. He did not know what the word Christian meant. He had heard it only once before. It was after he had come across three vertical pieces of wood in the hills. Each had a horizontal piece near the top. He had wondered why it was there and someone had said it had something to do with the Christians. That's all he knew.
13. The next evening found him back in town in the same meeting place. This little Hindu boy wanted to go to "the magic lantern" show and see more pictures. He didn't care if the people there were Christians.
14. When Ram returned home that evening, he found they had locked him out. But he knew how to get in, so he snuck in and went to bed. Nobody mentioned it the next morning.
15. The meetings ended.
16. The war ended.
17. Ram returned to his village.
18. The metal man image was soon forgotten in the faces of the Hindu images that his family worshipped.
19. There were so many of them.

B. The image of Daniel 2.

1. Eleven years later, when Ram was 19 he was accepted into a specialty vocational school in Point Fortin owned by the British Oil company to prepare for work as a machinist in the oil industry.
2. There were many young men in the vocational school and they were always searching for fun.
3. One of Ram's friends heard that a church in town was having some meetings and suggested they go look at the girls, cause some mischief, and *disrupt* the meetings.
4. Having nothing else do, seven or eight of the apprentices, including Ram, decided to go.
5. As he peered in the windows of the church a magic lantern cast its light and on the screen and Ram saw something that looked vaguely familiar. He heart raced as he connected the image to a memory of something he had seen when he was eight years old. It was his metal man image.
7. This time, because Ram had studied world history, he understood what the preacher was saying and it was verified by his secular education.
8. *You* know that great image in Daniel 2 that the evangelist described:
 - a. The head was made of gold and represented the kingdom of Babylon.
 - b. The chest and arms were made of silver and represented the kingdom on Medo-Persia.
 - c. The belly and thighs were made of bronze and represented the kingdom of Greece.
 - d. The legs were made of iron and represented the kingdom of Rome.

e. The feet were made of iron and clay and represented the divided kingdoms.

f. Then there was a great stone that struck the image on the feet, and broke it into many pieces, but the stone became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

This represented whose kingdom? God's kingdom, which would stand forever.

9. Ram was enthralled by what he learned. Even though his friends ridiculed him, night after night he went back to the meetings, not to *disrupt* them but to learn more about these teachings that were *disrupting* his tradition.
10. His Hindu images were crumbling in view of this Christian God whose kingdom was a solid rock.
11. The meetings ended.
12. A *new and very personal* war was now beginning.
13. The images of the lifeless idols were beginning to erode in the face of the image of a loving God who had a plan and a purpose for him.
14. The hopeless teachings of life with an endless cycle of reincarnation were replaced with the gift of sleeping until the resurrection.
15. Senseless atrocities were given new meaning in the light of the great controversy. He now understood about a war that was started thousands of years ago.
16. As the image of a loving God grew larger and larger, Ram could no longer delay in declaring whose side of the battle he was on.
17. He was baptized in the Point Fortin Seventh-day Adventist Church.
18. This church became a hallowed spot in Ram's life. It was here, a year later that he married a wonderfully committed Seventh-day Adventist woman named Alice.
19. On the same spot, over the next two years both his daughters were dedicated to Jesus to do His will.
20. One of those daughters was me.
21. I know this is a sacred spot because when we visited Trinidad in 2003 we visited the Point Fortin Church. While there Daddy stepped into the dry baptistery. I was a distance off. As I walked closer I saw that my dad was weeping. His body shook as he recalled an image of what he had once been and what he had now become. His heart was filled with gratitude for the journey God had taken him on.
22. As we moved from the baptistery we came to the spot where my parents had said, "I do" many years earlier. Dad kissed my mom and uttered words of his love for her—words which he demonstrated daily as he took care of her needs following her second stroke.
23. We paused a bit longer as I hugged my then nine-year-old daughter, Olivia, close to me and said a prayer of dedication on the same spot where Pastor Billiny had dedicated me 44 years earlier.

24. It was March of 2003.
25. Mom died eight months later.
26. Dad died five years later (in 2008).

C. Images of my father.

1. Perhaps because of the death of my last parent (and both in-laws) I have found myself often reflecting on images of my father. These images are evidence of Dad's obedience to God's invitation and command in Deuteronomy 6:5-7 NKJ

⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

⁶ And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.

⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children,
and shall talk of them when you sit in your house,
when you walk by the way,
when you lie down,
and when you rise up.

2. As with anyone, we learn more about someone's character by watching their behavior.
3. When Dad became a Seventh-day Adventist he became one with all his heart, all his soul, and all his strength. He was committed to the message and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist. He often said how glad he was that his path to Christianity was through the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Other Christian churches taught about eternal burning hell. He would rather have taken his chances with reincarnation than a god who would burn people forever.
4. When Dad became a Seventh-day Adventist, at first, he thought the Adventist Church consisted of the people he met on the tiny island of Trinidad. He soon learned that it was a world-wide movement that had a message to take to the world. He began to live like a man on a mission. Whether he was talking, or walking, or rising up or laying down he was being a contagious Adventist. Allow me to share a few images of my dad that have mentored me in the mission of our church.
5. When Dad became a Seventh-day Adventist, his baptism was in opposition to his father's wishes. Nevertheless his father did express pride in the changes he saw in his son's life. But even as my grandfather would finally adjust to his son leaving the Hindu religion, he had NO tolerance for his own wife taking such a stand. When he learned that that my grandmother was to be baptized, he took a machete and swung to cut off her head. The midwife who was present intervened and my grandmother was spared. It was only, years later, after my grandfather died, that she was baptized.
6. When Dad became a Seventh-day Adventist, he could not keep this message to himself. His first convert was his brother Sohan. Uncle Sohan's son—my cousin—Earl Ramharacksingh is now the treasurer of the South England Conference. Uncle Dipnarine, and Uncle George followed in the years ahead as did another sister. Their children—some of my cousins (I have 61 first cousins on

my Dad's side of the family)—serve the church faithfully in the many places to which they have immigrated. Other siblings also became Christians.

7. When Dad became a Seventh-day Adventist, he was a great cricket player for the British Oil Field team. He was their opening bowler. When Sabbath conflicts arose, they changed the game schedule so that Dad could still bowl/pitch for them. When this became too complicated, Dad chose to give up the sport he loved in order to honor the God he loved *more*. My nephew Steven, upon hearing this story chose to make the same decision when it came to his hockey team in Barrie, Ontario.
8. As a Seventh-day Adventist, I cannot look at the stars without remembering the many times my father would point to the constellation Orion and tell me that Jesus would come through that constellation someday. He lived for the Second Coming.
9. As Seventh-day Adventists, while living in England we attended church in the New Gallery Center off the Piccadilly Circus train stop. We commuted there each week on the Underground tube train from White Chapel and later East Ham. It was a church that was active in evangelism. Images of my father include our family week after week, stuffing envelopes with invitations to the meetings.
10. As Seventh-day Adventists, train commuting time was not wasted. On the way home from church my sister, Ellen, and I would be passing out Voice of Prophecy enrollment cards to the people on the train. The Voice of Prophecy radio broadcast played an important part in my Dad's spiritual development in Trinidad, England, and Canada.
11. As a Seventh-day Adventist, my dad faithfully returned tithe and offering. He believed this church was organized for the purpose of taking the message to the world; therefore we all had a part to do in supporting it financially. When I was little he would let me put his offering envelope in the offering plate as it came by. I well remember the day when as a five-year-old I received some money and I got to put in my *own* offering envelope. I too had become a part of the mission.
12. As a Seventh-day Adventist, wherever Dad was, he never knew a stranger. He talked to everyone. He told me that in order to have the opportunity to share the gospel you have to be able to open your mouth and say, "hello".
13. As Seventh-day Adventists, my images are of our family huddled around the Bible in our apartment claiming God's promises, asking God to provide for our needs and helping Daddy find a job. When I was eight years old our family moved from England to Canada. Dad worked two jobs while trying to find work in his field of mechanical engineering. He was offered managerial positions but conflicts with honoring God and the Sabbath always came up. Time and again the job offers would fall through, but Dad's faith never wavered. He knew God had a plan even though we could not see it *yet*.
14. As Seventh-day Adventists, one of the reasons our family had moved to Canada (Toronto, Ontario) is because my parents wanted their children to have an Adventist education. My image of my father is of him working an extra job at the corner gas station pumping gas for customers so my sister and I could stay in church school. (Christmas sandwich story.) You can see why I value Adventist education.

15. Eventually Dad went back to school and became a respiratory therapist. Now he got to work with people not equipment. God did have a plan. Patients who interacted with Dad were often facing their mortality and Dad had the opportunity to give them the good news. Dad soon became head of his department at the hospital in Scarborough, Ontario.
16. Images of Dad as a grandfather. (Story of the heater in the bathroom.)
17. Images of Dad when Ellen came back after 25 years. "I'm a sinner too."
18. People with the gift of evangelism can embarrass those around them.
Daddy with Mom's cremains and Ascension Rock, 1844 etc.
19. Images of Dad facing death. Taking people to church three months before he died. DVD's for the hospice people to watch.
20. Images of his hands of blessing when we did not know if we would see each other again.

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D. The images we leave for those who watch us/those who know us.

1. May those who come behind us find us faithful.
2. May they say that we loved the LORD our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength.
3. May they say that we diligently taught those around us to do the same.
4. May they say that we intentionally lived out the mission
when we sat in our homes
when we walked by the way,
when we lay down,
and when we rose up.
5. In referring to the image in Daniel 2, my father said we were living in the time of the toe nails.
"You must be about your Father's business."

We must all be about our Father's business.
6. There is a cup by my bed that I see first thing in the morning when I get up and take a drink of water.

It bears the following words:

Be the kind of woman, who when your feet hit the floor in the morning,

Satan says, "Oh no, she's up!"

*Satan is not threatened by
passive living, mediocrity,
extravagant spending,
a busy schedule
or self-centeredness.*

*Satan is threatened by
intentional relationships,
excellence in character,
quiet time with the Father
and a simple lifestyle.*

7. I want to be a threat to Satan's kingdom, don't you?

8. Quote from Elle White about living intentionally.

Who has the heart?

With whom are our thoughts? Of whom do we love to converse?

Who has our warmest affections and our best energies?

If we are Christ's, our thoughts are with Him,

and our sweetest thoughts are of Him.

all we have and are is consecrated to Him.

We long to bear His image,

breathe His spirit, do His will,

and please Him in all things. (*Steps to Christ* p. ___)

9 . The image of Daniel 2 will soon crumble. God will soon set up His kingdom which will last forever.

May our Savior find us faithful as we

Breathe His spirit.

Do His will.

Bear *His Image*.