



Be Not Afraid

by Larry Sharon



As human beings we tend to be fearful. We worry about what others think of us. We are concerned about the future of our country. We are anxious for what we see happening all around us and wonder if this is “the end of time.” Some fret, some worry, and some are afraid. We get caught up in our fears to the point that they can consume both our thoughts and our time.

When I was about 4 years old, dad told me not to throw rocks at the chickens. I remember waiting till he was gone and promptly began tormenting the chickens again. Then I heard, “Bub! I thought I told you not to do that!” I knew what was coming next and ran for the house and flew under my bed. The only thing wrong with that was that my feet were sticking out in plain sight. I remember hearing chuckles from Mom and Dad. When I crawled out, Mom told me that maybe I shouldn’t throw things at the chickens anymore. I was certainly afraid when I ran away to hide.



I John chapter 4 verses 12-13 and 18-19 have something to say about fear. “No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. . . We love Him because He first loved us.”



In Cruden’s Concordance there are twenty-one references to the phrase “be not afraid.” These speak of our anxieties. “The angel said, go down, be not afraid of him; be not afraid of sudden fear nor desolation; lift up thy voice, lift it up, be not afraid; be

not afraid of their faces for I am with thee; be not afraid, only believe; be not afraid of their terror, nor be troubled.” What wonderful counsel and assurance we are given in God’s word!

Years ago, the choir sang a song titled “Be Not Afraid.” Based on Isaiah 43:1-4, the comforting lyrics say: “Be not afraid for I have redeemed you: Be not afraid I have called _____ you by name. When you pass through the waters I will be with you: when you pass through the floods, they will not sweep o’er you; when you walk through the fire, you will not be consumed; you are Mine, you are precious in My sight. My love for you is everlasting. My love for you shall have no end.” Be not afraid.

Larry Sharon



Valued Volunteers—Social Committee

by Carolyn Karlstrom



Every church deserves, and needs, an outstanding Social Committee. Fortunately, here at the Village Church, we have one. Joe Braley, who has headed ours up for the past three years, is imaginative, invested, and motivated. He’s working with a stellar team of committee members who, with him, offer up a very highly active and endlessly interesting schedule. There is something for everyone.

The group sponsors walks for those who enjoy being outside and moving. Fort Walla Walla, Bennington Lake, and the grounds of Whitman Mission are frequent and favorite locations. For golfers, there is a much-anticipated 24-person golf tournament at a course in Milton-Freewater every year; it is always on a Sunday in September.



There are game nights at the church, often also including a well-chosen film that can be enjoyed by the whole family. There is always food involved, and much laughter, with interesting conversation, often with folks one hasn’t had a chance to get fully acquainted with until that point.

Last June, during the Walla Walla Sweets baseball season—the Sweets being Walla Walla’s summer college-player league—Joe purchased a bunch of tickets to a game. It wasn’t enough, he says, to satisfy the level of interest shown by our members; many who wished to attend with our church group weren’t able to go. Joe is nearly doubling the number of (free to you!) tickets he plans to make available this year.



The game was a function Rick and I were able to attend last year and we can report having had a grand time. We whooped and hollered and cheered our local team on, and got nicely acquainted with Joe himself and several other people we knew only in passing. We plan to go again this year and know to respond early in order to be sure of getting tickets. If you, too, would like to attend, you’re advised to do the same. Watch for the announcement. You might want to take your glove if you have one, as you may find yourself within reach of a foul ball hit your way.



Other opportunities for fellowship that Joe says are coming up include more game/movie nights, a watermelon feed in season, an ice cream social accompanied by a special musical treat, the possibility of group visits to extended care facilities in the area on Sabbath afternoons, continued walks, and more.

Joe and the rest of the committee desires and urges your participation in the various events. He points out that the gatherings are “light-hearted, easygoing, come-as-you-are” get-togethers. He promises a “very welcoming atmosphere.”

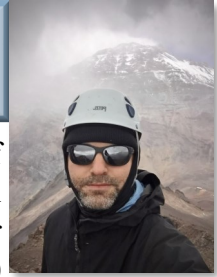
The team positions are Nominating Committee-appointed but Joe says help is always welcome. Be in touch with him if you have questions, suggestions, or a desire to serve in some way.

We’re most grateful to Joe and his teammates for their time, energy, and dedication to the social needs of our congregation. Besides Joe, we also thank Beth Travis, Jim Cain, Hildred Davis, Auggie Herrera, Linda McCloskey, Rudy Sanchez, Patty Travis, and Edna Villarreal for their involvement.

We appreciate every one of you very much!

Climbing Mount Aconcagua

by Nathan Tidwell



In January, I joined an international team of mountaineers to climb Mt. Aconcagua in Argentina. Located on the Argentine-Chile border in the Andes range at 22,857 feet (6,967 meters) Aconcagua is the highest mountain in both the western and southern hemispheres. This three-week experience grew from my passion for the great outdoors and a chance to test myself physically and mentally. On January 15, my wife, Margie, took me to the Tri-Cities airport, where the journey to Aconcagua began. Upon arrival in Mendoza, Argentina, I met the rest of the team and our experienced local guide. On the mountain, we hiked several hours each day, staying at tent camps along the way to base camp, with active rest days throughout the trip to acclimate to the higher elevation.

On the Mountain: Four days after beginning, we reached the tent city at base camp at 14,327 feet, approximately the same elevation as Mt. Rainier. I spent my first Sabbath of the climb resting and enjoying God's majestic creation with snow-covered peaks surrounding the camp. The next week, after climbing a nearby peak to acclimate and resting at camp some more, our team began to move our gear higher up the mountain. Each stage of the climb was a challenge as we struggled to breathe in the increasingly thin air where temperatures plunged far below freezing at night and the direct sun on the cloudless days could burn our skin. Throughout the week, we steadily moved up to Camp 1 at 16,500 feet, Camp 2 at 18,250 feet, and Camp 3 at 19,700 feet. The stars in the nighttime sky reminded me that God was still there.

Going for the Top: The night before our summit push, the winds calmed while heavy snow fell. It felt





providential that the winds stopped because we would not have been able to summit before a big storm blew in for several days afterwards. Our team went to bed around 6 p.m. with final admonitions from our guide to sleep with our clothing, electronics, and water bottles inside our sleeping bags to keep them from freezing. I was grateful for the prayers of family and friends at the Village Church for safety. At 3 a.m. on summit day, February 1, we all woke with nervous anticipation and struggled to put on our clothing and climbing gear in the subfreezing temperatures. As we stepped out of our tents, the shocking air and falling snow reminded us of the risks of climbing at extreme altitudes. We plodded slowly up the remaining 3,000 feet of the mountain, pausing hourly to stay hydrated in the dry air and replenish our energy. The lack of oxygen took away my appetite. There is only about 40% oxygen on Aconcagua compared to sea level. While I stayed warm inside several layers, the freezing, dry air made it even more difficult to breathe. By midday our team plopped down in the snow at 21,800 feet to eat and rest, protected by a rock buttress. Two of our team members made the difficult decision to go back down, as did an entire team of other climbers. Other teams floundered in the snow, unable to breathe or take another step. For more than two hours, the remaining three

from our team and our guide continued higher. The lack of oxygen made it feel like breathing through a straw. Finally, around 2:15 p.m., after 10 hours of climbing, we emerged over the final snow-covered rocks at the flat, snowy summit. Instead of elation, I simply felt relieved that the climbing part was over. After whispering a prayer of thanks, I joined the team for quick photos as the snow continued to fall.



We needed to descend quickly to thicker air. Going down was difficult in a different way, though it only took four hours. Darkness was descending on the mountain as we staggered toward the welcoming lights of Camp 3. Exhaustion and the thin air caused me to fall asleep on my feet, a potentially dangerous situation. The camp staff brought thermoses of hot water and bowls of instant noodles: a warm welcome back to camp. I crawled into my tent, took off the crampons and double-layer boots, and slept for 12 hours.

Life Lessons: On the way down the mountain the following days, I reflected on God’s mercies and some of the lessons I learned.

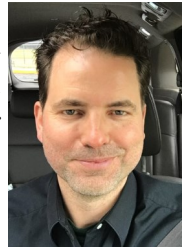
Follow the leader: On the climb, we would have been lost without our guide’s leadership. He gave sound advice on how to acclimate at each stage, led us on the best path over the barren mountainsides, and made sure we took proper precautions against

cold, fatigue, isolation, dehydration, and potentially fatal falls. As we followed in his footsteps in the snow, he set a reasonable pace that we could sustain for hours while still getting us to the summit and down before nightfall. When I was tempted to look at other groups and compare our progress, my steps would falter, prompting me to keep my eyes on our guide. This re-



Parting Thoughts: As the highest mountain in the world outside of the Himalayas, Aconcagua’s location in the southern hemisphere makes it an ideal place to climb when all other mountains in the northern hemisphere, like the Himalayas, are snowed in during the winter, making them impossible to climb. So, for about half an hour, my team members and I were the highest people standing on the planet at that moment. As I reflect on this experience, I am thankful for this opportunity and grateful for the support and prayers of family and friends, including at the Village Church. I’m also thankful for the wisdom David Forsyth shared from his experiences staying warm and setting up camp on cold mountains, and for loaning me some gear to use on Aconcagua. The memories of this trip, and the lessons learned, I will cherish for a long time.

Nathan Tidwell



“That God who keeps the mountain in position has given us promises that are more immutable than these grand old mountains. God’s Word will stand forever, from generation to generation.

If man complies with the conditions, then God will fulfill His part, though the foundations of the earth should be broken up and the heavens should pass away. God’s Word, God’s will in His law, remains unchangeable, eternal. The God of the mountains is our defense, our strong tower. We will find in Him help and strength ever to do His will.”

—Ellen G. White, 4LtMs, Ms 29, 1885

Prayer Weekend with Pastor Kevin Wilfley

March 6 and 7, 2026

by Patricia Williams

Retired pastor Kevin Wilfley is well known as a man of prayer. He was invited by Trina McCoon and her prayer team to present a seminar on prayer at the Village Church. Prayer ministry teams from nearby churches were invited to attend the seminar, and several of these individuals did so.

Pastor Kevin's relaxed manner of presenting is easy to listen to. He includes many personal stories that encourage and inspire the listener. We all experienced this at the church service on Sabbath morning. Nothing in his presentations was theoretical or out-of-reach. Instead, every point was illustrated with personal testimonies,




Kevin Wilfley

his and those of many others. If I could choose one word to describe the take-away from this weekend it would be *encouragement*. Pastor Kevin made prayer so desirable and achievable that many of us felt like a fire for prayer was kindled in our hearts.

Friday night's meeting opened to a very full chapel. His first task was to dismantle the common view of prayer as a gift that God gives to some people. He countered this by showing us that prayer goes hand-in-hand with the gospel and is a skill that every Christian is meant to learn. Prayer is a challenge to most of us. He said in our fallen nature we are not wired to want to pray. We struggle to keep our minds focused; we don't always know how to pray about a situation; we get sleepy; we can't always find the necessary time; we wait long for answers and this can leave us feeling abandoned, etc. The message repeated throughout the weekend was, "Don't feel guilty if you struggle with prayer."



Pastor Kevin reminded us that every skill takes time, education, and continued effort to master, and prayer is no different. Jesus both asked and taught His disciples to pray, and has sent us the Holy Spirit. Each time we feel the need for prayer,  this is the Holy Spirit working upon our hearts, drawing out prayers and penitence, praise and thanksgiving. The gratitude that flows from our lips is the result of the Holy Spirit.

Pastor Kevin cited many examples from Scripture of people whose prayers made the difference in difficult situations. He promised that prayer does get easier with time and practice and shared some practical tips including:

1. Incorporate Scripture into your prayers
2. Speak aloud
3. Vary your prayer location
4. Make a list of topics
5. Incorporate music
6. Journal your prayers
7. Find prayer partners
8. Follow an anagram
9. Participate in prayer meeting



The Sabbath afternoon meeting in the Fellowship Hall was also well attended. Pastor Kevin began by addressing a question he is often asked: “How do you know when God is speaking to you?” He said, “It starts with reading the Bible. As you do this more and more, you will learn His voice.”



He also spoke to a common question about praying over people, especially when they don’t exhibit the changes you expected or they seem only to harden against God. His answer to this was that a fence post is easier to pray over than a person because a person has a will and that will can be very stubborn. He then gave us some principles for prayer:

1) Ask. There are two parts to prayer. Ours is to ask, seek and knock. God’s is to give, guide us to the answers, and to open doors. Pastor Kevin’s observation is that we aren’t used to anyone

caring about us the way that God does, and this is one reason why we so easily become discouraged.

2) Effort. This one was surprising, but his advice makes sense. If you are motivated enough to ask God about something, you should be motivated enough to do something about it.

3) Faith. Faith must grow by exercise, and it goes without saying that faith is grown before you receive anything else.

At this point in the presentation, Pastor Kevin led us in a time of silent prayer, asking God to grow our faith.

4) Praise. He encouraged us to begin the practice of praising God even before we see the answers to our prayers. God dwells in an atmosphere of praise, and that can happen here on earth as well as in heaven.

At this point he asked us to pray silently and consider one habit we can start to practice which will increase gratitude in our hearts.

5) Persist. This is one of the hardest principles, but one for which Jesus gave us several lessons.

His advice? Keep on praying, keep on believing, and keep on thanking God.

6) Accept God's answer, especially if it didn't turn out like you wanted it to.

7) Obey. Everyone struggles with sin, and we don't even know how sinful we are or how permeated with sin. Every person who catches a glimpse of God's glory will be silenced. He also made the point that obedience is not the basis of our salvation, but God does ask us to obey and surrender our hearts.

At this point, he led us in a time of silent prayer, searching our hearts for an area where we need to come into obedience.

Pastor Kevin closed with this thought: the real, beautiful thing about prayer is that it grows our relationship with God. There is an area in our brain, at the top of our frontal lobe, near the crown of our head that lights up on PET scans when we pray. Prayer is the highest function of the human brain. It is



a skill we all need to acquire. And as we cultivate a habit of prayer, remember that we are developing a relationship with the One who is the best Friend we will ever have.

Pastor Kevin referenced many Scriptures and shared many stories and testimonies that I have not included.

However, I typed his name into my Amazon app and right away three books on prayer came up, ranging in price from \$3.50 to \$9.00, in the Kindle edition. They are also available in print through the ABC. I am sure they will be just as encouraging to you as his seminar was to those who were able to attend.

Pat Williams



Health and Wellness Cooking Class

by Karen Ekkens



February 22, 2026, about 45 people gathered in the Fellowship Hall where the Health and Wellness committee hosted a cooking demonstration titled Quick and Easy Entrées for the New Year. Terry Forsyth shared tips on how to prepare a tasty, nourishing, and attractive goulash. Lorie Cummings demonstrated how to prepare a very flavorful and easy-to-prepare dish. Samples were readied in the kitchen and these were shared with the audience early in the evening.

Lisa and Joe Shewchuk were the main presenters. They also shared several practical highlights on how to live a happier, healthier life. In the handout for the class they included illustrated directions on how to prepare a charcoal poultice and specifications for how to use it to treat insect, spider, and snake bites.

Rita Schroeder greeted everyone as they came in the door and handed out informative brochures for the class.



Nancy Teale and Maylene Russell dished up samples in the kitchen while Lisa and Joe Shewchuk also worked on preparations.

Lorie and Terry shared tips on how to prepare their recipes.



Lorie Cummings, Joe Shewchuk, Nancy Teale, Jim Forsyth

The Village Pantry—hosted by Pattie Reasor

Last month I submitted a gluten version of an Indian lamb dish. This month I am presenting a Gobi Masala or cauliflower curry to go with it. This recipe came from an Indian cooking class that I did in Canada where there is a large population of people from India. The Indian lady who taught this class was asked how much hot pepper to add to the dishes. She replied, “In the store I always dig my thumb nail into the pepper and taste a small amount. If it’s hot I only add a little, but if it’s mild I may add a couple of peppers.” So please feel free to add as much or as little “heat” to your curry as you please!



Gobi Masala (Cauliflower Curry)

Ingredients:

- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 2 onions, diced small
- 1 inch of ginger, grated
- 3 cloves of garlic, grated
- ½ tsp. turmeric
- 1 tsp. red chili pepper powder or chopped fresh chili pepper to taste
- 1 small can of diced tomatoes or 2 diced fresh tomatoes
- 3 cups of cauliflower florets, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 1 cup of frozen peas
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- ½ cup water
- Cashews



Heat oil in a heavy-bottomed saucepan. Stir in the onions and when they are translucent, add the ginger and garlic. Stir in the dry spices. Add tomato and stir on low heat until the oil separates (about 10 min). Don't allow the gravy to stick to the bottom of the saucepan. At this point, transfer the gravy to a blender and blend until smooth. Return the gravy to the saucepan and add the cauliflower, peas, and red pepper. Stir until coated evenly with the spice mixture. Add the chopped cilantro and salt. Cover with a lid and allow to simmer until the vegetables are cooked. Serve with Basmati rice and a few cashews. (This recipe also works well with tofu pieces instead of cauliflower.)



I first went vegan in college because of a dare from a professor. I didn't care for western foods that imitated foods that I had grown up on such as cashew cheese... But I did learn that different ethnic foods were full of flavor and naturally did not contain animal products. This opened up a whole new menu for me!

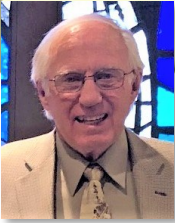


Pattie Reasor

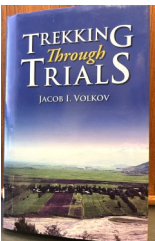
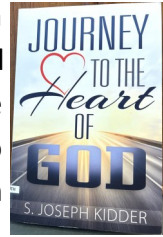
Hot peppers have their own rankings. The Scoville heat scale rates the capsaicin level based on how much sugar water it takes to neutralize the heat. It ranges from 0 to 1,641,183 Scoville heat units (SHU). The top score is for the Carolina Reaper, the hottest pepper on earth. Buying tips: Dried peppers are hotter than fresh. The thinner the stem, usually the hotter the pepper.

—WebMD.com

From the Library—by Marcel Grondahl



Back in 2019, S. Joseph Kidder wrote a book titled, “Journey to the Heart of God.” While chronicling his own story, Kidder talks about the larger picture, detailing what the journey is like and how to initiate it. He explores worship, prayer, Bible study, fellowship, fasting, forgiveness, and other common Christian practices in an intimate setting that is real and vibrant and relational. This approach changes the dynamics of the journey to cause the reader to become more and more like Jesus. Truly an inspiring story that is both real and practical.

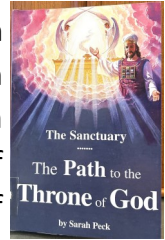


Persia, or Iran as it is called today, is the setting for this book by Jacob Volkov, written in 2016. This is Jacob’s life story. It covers the period from the early 1900s down to the 1960s. During this time period Jacob and his family became Christians, escaped from Communist Russia to Persia under the rule of the Shah, and settled in Tehran. At that time Christians were able to worship God in peace. After many experiences where God intervened, Jacob and his family were able to immigrate to the United States where he now resides in California. The title is “Trekking Through Trials.” Fascinating story.

“Pitcairn,” written by Herbert Ford and published in 1972, invokes images of an island paradise that would be home to Adventist converts descended from the original Mutiny on the Bounty crew. Today there are less than 100 of the descendants of those original peoples on the island. This book is an update on what is going on in modern times on that little island isolated in the vast Pacific Ocean. The story is an interesting one that you will enjoy.



Sarah Peck is the author of “God’s Great Plan” which was the Bible curriculum for Adventist students in our English speaking schools around the world. In this book “The Sanctuary—The Path to the Throne of God” Sarah uses her accumulated wealth of understanding regarding the message of the sanctuary. She echoes the pioneers in her interpretation of the application of the Sanctuary to our lives today. For her sources she leans on people like Ellen White, Uriah Smith, S. N. Haskell, F. C. Gilbert, M. L. Andreasen, and others. An informative read.



Family Matters—by Bev Donahey

Do You Hear, Do You Care?

Do you think listening is a love language? I think it is, and I think it’s more than that. It’s essential for communication even with people we don’t know. Talking, listening, and responding are human interactions. That’s how we inform, learn, interact, and cooperate with others. It’s respectful and efficient when done well.



Communicating well requires basic skills that aren’t difficult at all. It involves giving messages and receiving messages. In giving a message, we tell something to someone else. Maybe we tell about something that happened or how we feel about something; we give information or make a request. We tell what we think, feel, and want. Giving clear messages is important.

I can be an active listener.



Receiving messages is equally important. When someone tells you something, give undivided attention. Stop what you’re doing. Make eye contact. Listen. Don’t discount it by saying, “Oh well, that’s life.” Say something like, “Oh!

Really? I didn't know that." Or repeat back what was heard, such as, "So you want me to... Right?" Ask questions if you need more information. How someone feels about what happened is usually more important than the fact that it happened. You share his feeling. You recognize it and acknowledge it. Put your hand on him and show that you care. Listen more than you talk.



Yes, listening is a love language! Everyone needs to be heard, whether age 2 months or 100 years. By listening we show respect and caring, we learn what each other thinks and wants, and we build relationships. Even very young babies benefit from our eye contact, our touches, and our voices as



we interact with them. Good communication skills help build relationships, enable families and other groups to be efficient and successful, and meet emotional needs. Let's listen especially kindly to children and teenagers.



Bev Donahey has degrees in psychology and Applied Behavioral Science and shares tips she picks up from her experiences, friends and research.

"Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. . . His heart of love is touched by our sorrows and even by our utterances of them. . . Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice. . . The relations between God and each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not another soul upon the earth to share His watch care, not another soul for whom He gave His beloved Son."



—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* p. 100

Dear Village Voice readers,

So many beautiful gems of truth sparkle in the book, “The Acts of the Apostles.” Here’s one to ponder. It comes from the chapter titled, “Transformed by Grace” p. 557, and contrasts two of Christ’s disciples, John and Judas. Of John we read, “He yielded his resentful, ambitious temper to the molding power of Christ, and divine love wrought in him a transformation of character.”

In contrast, Judas “could not bring himself to yield his ideas in order to receive wisdom from heaven.”

Moment by moment, by deliberate choice, “One, daily dying to self and overcoming sin, was sanctified through the truth; the other, resisting the transforming power of grace and indulging selfish desires, was brought into bondage to Satan.”

In this we see both warning and infinite hope. John focused on Christ’s power, tenderness, majesty, meekness, strength, and patience. By yielding to divine love he was transformed.

May this be our experience as well.

God bless you!

Karen Ekkens, editor



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