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EDITORIAL

The Attack from Within

FEATURE

Can God Really Help Me?



The Attack from Within



The Attack from Within

How many of you have ever experienced a cold or the flu? How many of you have ever experienced discouragement? We know that both colds and flus are caused by different kinds of viruses. But what about discouragement? What causes that?

It doesn't take much to feel the effects of discouragement — a word, a look, a disappointment, a rejection. These simple things can send us into a state of discouragement. But on more than one occasion, God told His people, *“Don't be discouraged.”* In other words, don't allow yourself to be discouraged — so there must be something we can do!

Discouragement starts in the mind. We tend to think it's a result of our circumstances — perhaps something didn't work out, or so-and-so said such-and-such. But it isn't as much about our situation as it is about what we think of our situation. Negative thinking leads to discouragement.

Feeling discouraged is different from being discouraged. The *feeling* affects our emotions, whereas the *being* affects our actions. Everyone feels discouraged at some point, but not everyone becomes discouraged. Just because you feel that way doesn't mean you have to *become* discouraged — not if we handle it God's way. When we dwell on negative thoughts, our confidence is weakened, our faith is neutralized, our hope is forgotten, and we feel broken.

Words are powerful, and sometimes people — even well-meaning ones — can say things that lead us down the path of discouragement. If we're honest, sometimes we have discouraged others, and sometimes we are the cause of our own discouragement.

Why is discouragement so destructive? Because it leads to doubt. Doubt weakens faith. Without faith, we are hopeless — which results in giving up. And getting us to give up is the enemy's mission. When we stop trying, stop believing, or stop doing, the enemy claps his hands and cheers. Discouragement will make us think we can't, or that



Jim Micheff

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God won't. It makes us feel overwhelmed, under-equipped, or undervalued.

And here's the thing: this kind of thinking destroys faith — which also originates in the mind. Negative thinking never comes from God. God tells us, *Don't go there. Don't let yourself go to the place of discouragement.*

If you've battled with discouragement lately, don't listen to the voice of discouragement inside your head. Listen to God instead:

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." — **Joshua 1:9**

Did you notice that God links discouragement with fear? A major cause of discouragement is fear — fear that things won't work out, fear that circumstances won't get better, fear of failure, fear of isolation, fear of rejection. Fear. Fear. Fear.

Did you also notice that God links the remedy for discouragement with His nearness and presence? The reason none of us should allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by discouragement is simple: wherever we go, whatever we face, whatever our circumstances, the Lord will be with us.

So what do we do when discouragement threatens to steal our confidence, rob our joy, defuse our strength, and push us to give up? Refuse to dwell on the negative thoughts that lead down the path of discouragement. Listen to God's encouraging voice instead: ***"Don't be afraid. Don't be discouraged. Be strong. Keep going. You can do this. I am here."***

The story of Elijah in the Bible illustrates the impact that negative thinking has on our ability to be used by God to minister to others. When Elijah confronted King Ahab, he was fearless. Faithfully, he carried out his assignment — boldly sharing God's message of judgment and then patiently enduring being hidden away for 3½ years.

Then he summoned the nation to a challenge on Mt. Carmel, where he stood alone — no one gave him public support. He knew his life depended on God's protective hand. But while he clung to God as his strength, he was invincible. God responded in a way that confirmed Elijah as His special messenger. As a result, the king and all the people were ready to carry out his directives.

After Elijah prayed, God sent a full-blown rainstorm, and in the darkness Elijah guided King Ahab's chariot the 20+ miles to Samaria. Even though he was physically exhausted, he lay down content, believing that now everything would be different. He thought the tide of evil had turned — but when he was awakened with Jezebel's message that she would kill him that very day, his courage failed. Forgetting that God was his source of strength, he ran in terror for his life.

Elijah was fearless before King Ahab and the people, but he ran in fear at the threat of Jezebel. Why the difference? He was totally dependent on and trusted in God before Ahab, but he succumbed to discouragement, which weakened his faith. As a result, he forgot God and reacted in his own effort to save his life from Jezebel.

Our success is not based on our strength or effort but on putting our trust and faith in God. Our success is assured when we are connected to Him.

So if your circumstances seem hopeless, or you feel like your life is coming apart, instead of **meditating** on negative thoughts driven by your problems, turn your attention to God's promises. Remember: to meet the attack from within, we must have divine help. Choose to entrust your life into God's hands and accept His solutions and the grace needed to overcome the power of discouragement.

If God is for us, who can be against us? 🙏

By Jim Micheff, President



Taariq Patel with his family. From left to right: Ishmael (11), Viviana (8), Taariq Patel, Igdaly, and Tirzah (5).



Can God Really Help Me?

My mom used to call us undercover agents for God, and we took it seriously. God assured her, “I’m not done with your family. I’m going to save your children.” I didn’t know that God wasn’t just trying to save my job, he was saving my life.

Taariq Patel was dying. Several of his friends had fatally overdosed, and he knew that the drugs that enslaved him would kill him too. But it was Friday night, and his mom always had food in the fridge. As he rummaged through the kitchen, he heard a murmur in the living room. His mother’s living room was full of about 15 people, digging into the Word. Patel, knowing deep down that he was dying, wanted out of his life of addiction. So, for reasons unknown to him at the time, Patel sat in the back row of the Bible study. As he listened to

the familiar Bible stories, he began to wonder, “Can God really help me?”

Taariq Patel was born in England in 1981 to a father with strong Muslim roots, and a mother who had strayed from her Adventist upbringing. Patel, his twin brother, and their older brother were raised as Muslims. Patel says they grew up reading the Qur’an, learning the Arabic alphabet and prayers, and going to the mosque every day.

When Patel was one, the family moved to Hartford, Connecticut, where his two sisters were born. They regularly attended the mosque with their

father. When Patel was about 7 years old, his mother went through her belongings and found a book in a suitcase that her mother had placed there. The book? *Steps to Christ*. When his mother read the book, “Her heart just melted” Patel says. “It broke her heart and she fell in love with God.” She decided to get baptized, and when Patel’s father found out, “He threatened her life and showed her the knife he was going to use on her,” Patel says. Despite that, his mother remained steadfast in her decision to give her life to the Lord. The next morning, she got us dressed, and “My dad walked out of the house

My mom used to call us undercover agents for God, and we took it seriously.

on Sabbath morning, quiet like a lamb,” Patel says. After her baptism, even Patel’s older brother chose to follow Christ.

Life in Saudi

Around this time, Patel’s father was offered a job in Saudi Arabia, and in 1989, the family packed up and moved. Patel’s mother had many spiritual books, and she did not want to leave them behind, so she packed as many as she could. While they were traveling, she felt convicted to dress as Muslim women, which was something she’d never done. “She put on a hijab and covered herself,” says Patel.

When the family arrived in Saudi Arabia, “A bunch of guys with AK-47s took our first suitcase on the conveyor, unwrapped a sweater, and they found a Bible,” Patel says. But seeing a Muslim family, they let the family through—never realizing they carried suitcases full of the Spirit of Prophecy.

In the apartment complex, Patel’s mother diligently led the children in secret worships, giving her children Bible studies when her husband was gone. When their father came home, they would hide the books, and pretend they were playing.

“My mom used to call us undercover agents for God,” Patel says, “and we took it seriously.”

The secret worships, unfortunately, were discovered by Patel’s father. He confiscated the books and took them and the children along with him to work. His coworkers would “pick out different confiscated books and start reading them,” Patel says. “They were talking about them. I like to tell people that the Lord borrowed those books because a woman couldn’t go in there.”

Separation and Hardship

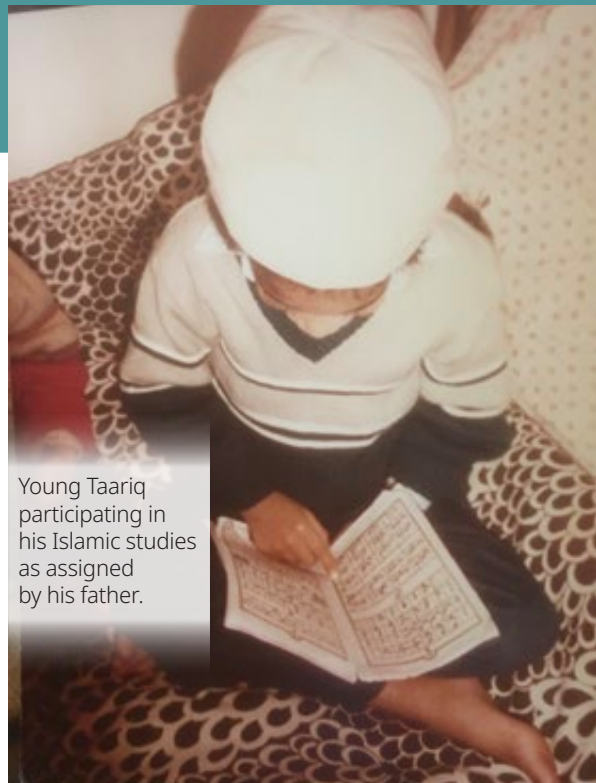
It wasn’t sustainable to keep the children with him at work, and as soon Patel’s mother was left alone with them, she resumed worships. One day, Patel’s mother finished a worship about Joseph, a boy taken away from his family, and just after the worship, Patel’s father came home and told the boys they were leaving.

He took his sons to an Islamic boarding school in India. Patel had just turned nine years old. For some reason, Patel and his brothers couldn’t stay at that boarding school, so they went “to one village,

to the next... we were just three boys practically by ourselves just bouncing around from village to village.” They bathed in wells, and Patel didn’t brush his teeth for seven months.

While in India, Patel came down with malaria. Two teenage students carried Patel miles to the nearest doctor. There, Patel was “placed on a table,” and given an injection with a large needle. They held Patel down as he screamed, but that injection saved his life. “I like to think that maybe those two guys were angels that God sent to protect us,” he says.

For seven months, Patel’s mother didn’t know where her boys were. Islamic evangelists would continually knock on her door, telling her that if she would convert to Islam, her boys would be returned to her. Meanwhile, her children were far away, covered in lice, and sleeping in huts made from cow manure and hay. Her faith did not waver, and in 1990, she asked God for an army to save her children.



Young Taariq participating in his Islamic studies as assigned by his father.



A family photo, taken while Patel (center, top row) and his family were in Saudi Arabia.

(continued on page 6)

(continued from page 5)

God's Intervention

In 1990, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. The invasion caused instability in the Saudi Arabia. Bomb sirens were going off, and Patel's father extracted the children from India. He took his family back to England. "My mom would always say that [invasion] was an answer to her prayers," Patel says.

In England, Patel's mother divorced his father, and moved herself and her five children to Elmira, New York. "We lived in some grimy places, with roaches and rats, but it was a five-star hotel compared to India," Patel says.

Patel was enrolled in the local public school, as the private school was too expensive, and there he became "indoctrinated in hip hop music," he says. "It became my identity and my life. I started to smoke weed."

The family moved to California when Patel was roughly a sophomore in high school. By this time, Patel had begun smoking cigarettes and "was always high." He rapped, made music, and sunk deeper into drugs.

After graduating high school, Patel joined the Army, and during his time in the Army he began experimenting with more potent drugs, "I'd black out and wake up in the morning, wondering why I was in the bushes. I didn't know how I got there."

"I was in darkness," Patel says, "I didn't have a father in my life. I carried pain in my heart, and I just had this mindset that you got to tie up your boots and just keep pushing forward, but I was burying things. I was a time bomb."

Patel was in a bad place. His digestive system wasn't working properly. His friends were overdosing. He tried rehab and clinics, but nothing worked. Three years later, "I was drooling on myself in public, and there were holes in my shoes, because I was living just to get high."

While Patel spiraled, his mother never stopped praying. "She said to the Lord, 'You delivered my sons out of Egypt only for them to be slaves in Babylon.' God assured her 'I'm not done with your

family. I'm going to save your children,'" so in faith, she continued to pray. At this time, Patel's twin had children, and his mother began to take her grandkids to church. Patel's mother had married a



Patel checking into rehab at the St. Helena hospital (an Adventist hospital) on January 3, 2011.



Patel praying outside of the rehab program in St. Helena.

God assured her, "I'm not done with your family. I'm going to save your children."

pastor, and every Friday there was a Bible study in their home.

Patel, who was using all of his money for drugs, would frequently come over and find food that his mom had cooked. As he sat in the back row of the Friday night Bible studies, he began to hear some of the same stories he had heard as a child in Saudi Arabia, the stories of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He began to wonder, *Is God real, and can He really help me?*

"The word of God was like daggers piercing through my foggy mind," Patel says.

His mother urged him to go to rehab, but Patel refused. On the verge of losing his job, and with eviction notices posted on his door, Patel prayed. "I started to practically curse God," he said. "I was going to lose my job, lose my apartment, lose everything, so I prayed. I was disrespectful and rude. I asked him why he wasn't in my life and then I just started to weep like a baby. I said, 'God, if you can save my job, I promise I'll go to rehab and read my Bible every day while I'm there.'"

An Unbelievable Answer

The next day, Patel told his HR manager that he

was addicted to drugs and needed help. The manager then told him that there was a policy that employees who were struggling with addiction could be sent to a rehab of their choice—and the company would pay 85% of the bill. In addition, once the employee is released, their job would be waiting for them. Once the HR manager and Patel finished speaking, the manager went into her cabinet and pulled out a Bible. “The Holy Spirit has been working in my life,” she told Patel, “and the Holy Spirit wants to work in your life.” Patel was in shock. “I tried to be a tough guy, but I had tears coming out of my eyes. I couldn’t believe it, because I prayed to God that Sunday night to save my job, but I didn’t know that God wasn’t just trying to save my job, he was saving my life.”

Patel checked into the St. Helena hospital in Northern California—an Adventist hospital—on January 3, 2011. His mom sent him with a lesson quarterly and a Bible, and “I kept my promise,” Patel said. “I wore out the Bible. Within the first week, it never left my hand.”

Soon, other patients came asking Patel to teach them to pray and read the Bible. There was a Sabbath School program called Vineyards and Friends in the hospital, and Patel would attend. By the end of the program, about 15-20 others were attending with him. Nicknamed Pastor T by his friends in rehab, Patel said, “That year, God changed my life. The more I held onto His word, the more He gave me courage, hope, and strength.”

When Patel was released from rehab, he connected with a young woman whom he had previously been romantically interested in when he was in 9th grade. “I was shy; I couldn’t talk to her, but in 9th grade, I really had a crush on her. She just always left an impression on me.” They had connected briefly when he was in the military but he hadn’t seen her in 15 years.

The two reconnected and held Bible studies over the phone—Patel was in California, and she was in Florida. “The Lord would have it that she would be my wife, that I would marry the woman of my dreams. God cleaned me up first. You don’t know what your heart needs, but God does.”

On January 5, 2013, Patel married his wife, Igdaly, just two years and two days after going to rehab. Patel’s wife was called to work at Pacific Union College (PUC) in Angwin, California. Patel enrolled in PUC, switching from religion to theology after a year.

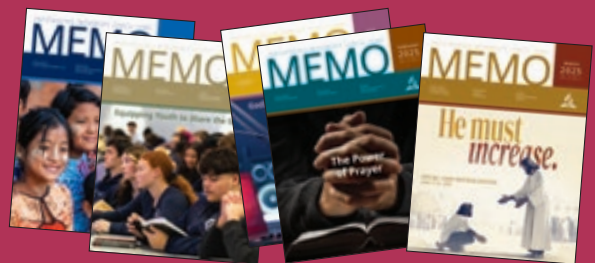
To get to the college, you have to drive past the Saint Helena hospital. “Every day I passed that

hospital as a student at PUC,” Patel says. During his time in the area, he became an assistant chaplain at the hospital. “I used to go to rehab, and then I became one of the teachers. I would go and share and give my testimony to those who were in the very program that I graduated from.”

In that very same hospital, Patel’s son, Ishmael, was born. “I tell people that my son was born in the hospital where his dad was born again.” Since then, Patel and his wife have welcomed two daughters, Viviana and Tirzah.

After studying theology at PUC, Patel completed his Master of Divinity degree from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan, in 2019. He served in the Iowa-Missouri Conference for six years before being called to the Michigan Conference in 2024, where he still faithfully serves. 🙏

By Judy Ringstaff, Member, Lansing Church



CONSIDERING THE FUTURE OF THE MICHIGAN MEMO

Thank you to everyone who shared your appreciation for the *Michigan Memo* and its continued value to our Conference family. In response to your feedback, we plan to continue offering a print edition as an insert in the *Lake Union Herald*. Following the November/December issue, there will be a brief pause in printing as we prepare for this transition, with the goal of launching the new format in the spring—most likely with the March edition. We deeply appreciate your engagement and support as we continue sharing the stories and mission of the Michigan Conference in print and online.



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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

NATURE NUGGET There's a Moose!

While leading a Camp Au Sable Nature tour in Grand Teton National Park this summer, my plans included spending most of a day searching for a moose. We were rewarded with two bull moose! Moose are the largest member of the deer family. They show us how life changes with the seasons. In spring and summer, bull moose grow new antlers covered in soft velvet, which carries blood and nutrients to help them grow. By late summer, the velvet dries and peels away, leaving strong, polished antlers used in fall battles and displays during the rut, or mating season. When winter comes, the bull sheds his antlers, and for a time he walks bareheaded until the cycle starts again the next spring.

Moose adjust to other changes in the seasons, too. In the summer, they feed on water plants and leafy willows along rivers and lakes, like the one in the photo. When deep snow arrives, their food becomes tougher—branches, bark, and shrubs that help them survive the long winter. Their thick coats keep them warm, and when spring returns, fresh plants appear and calves are born in the greening valleys. Each season brings what they need, and the moose are ready for it.

The life of a moose can remind us that change is part of God's plan. Just as the moose grows, sheds, and regrows his antlers, we also go through times of gaining and times of letting go. Every season has a purpose, and even the hard times prepare us for what comes next. Trusting God with those rhythms can help us face change with courage and peace.

"For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven." –
Ecclesiastes 3:1 (NLT) 

*Dr. Gordon Atkins, Head Naturalist, Camp Au Sable
Photo by Dr. Gordon Atkins*



MONTHLY CALENDAR

November

Oct 31 - Nov 2 Public HI-C (CAS)

7-9 Lay Advisory Retreat (CAS)

7-9 Northwoods Family Retreat (Camp Sagola)

26-27 Office Closed (Thanksgiving)

December

Dec 26 - Jan 1 Office Closed
(Christmas/New Years)

*CAS = Camp Au Sable