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# EPHESIANS:

## *The Gospel of*

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***Jesus came  
to tear down  
the walls  
that cause  
hatred and  
suffering.***

One man at the rear of the church waited in silence. He came late for the service, sat on the floor, listened to the sermon, and took seriously the invitation that all who have accepted Jesus could participate in the open Communion that Adventists celebrate. But he knew no one; no one knew him. He eagerly waited for someone to invite him. But he seemed poor, friendless, and on the wrong side of the caste line. His position seemed desperate to himself

and embarrassing to the saints in that small church in a small town in a country where caste still defines community.

Which of the saints would offer to be the partner for this lonely man? Who would rise by stooping? The elders were busy organizing the details. The deacons were busy, fetching water from the only tap outside the church. And others . . . ? Levites and the priests are extremely busy people, not to be disturbed by trivia of this kind.

Suddenly Ravi Anandan went over to the visitor and walked with him to the basin. Ravi knelt on the cold concrete floor, cradled his partner's shoeless, dusty feet, and washed them in the clear cool water, which instantly turned a muddy brown.

One month ago Ravi would have done no such thing. He would not have allowed even the shadow of that man to come anywhere near him. Touching him would be touching the untouchable, and touching the untouchable is an act of religious impurity and social repugnance.

What happened? One month ago Ravi accepted Jesus. As he studied the New Testament, the image of the broken wall in Ephesians 2:12-16 moved him deeply. Walls or Jesus? It had to be one or the other, not both, for Jesus came to tear down those walls—walls that have caused and still cause so much hatred, misunderstanding, and suffering in this world.

# Relationships

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Ravi chose Jesus over those walls of which he was once so proud. The result? He would reach out and touch the untouchable.

That newness, that embrace, that unity in Christ is what makes the Epistle to the Ephesians a gospel of new relationships. It was John Calvin's favorite letter. William Barclay calls it "the queen of epistles." E. J. Goodspeed finds it "a great rhapsody of the Christian salvation."

We can study the Epistle for its theology, ecclesiology, or Christian sociology, but one thing we cannot escape: Paul's confidence in the new creation God has wrought in Christ and its ultimate triumph in the great controversy. From God's choice of us from "before the foundation of the world" (*Eph. 1:4*) to the battle "against spiritual hosts of wickedness" (*Eph. 6:12, NKJV*) to the promise that Jesus is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (*Eph. 3:20*), the Epistle resonates with the power of grace, prayer, and faith.

And it is with that spirit of prayer, of grace, and of faith that we must approach the study of one of the great love letters of the Bible, the book of Ephesians. It's our prayer, too, that when done, all who study not only will understand better what motivated Ravi to reach out and touch what he once deemed untouchable but also will experience for themselves the life-changing power of the gospel as it works in their hearts.

John M. Fowler, author of this quarter's study guide, is an associate director of the General Conference Education department. A native of India, John spent many years in denominational service in Southern Asia before coming to the General Conference, where he worked with *Ministry* magazine before going to the Education department. John is married and has two children and two grandchildren.

# Got Questions?

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# *So many lives to touch*



**D**haka, the capital of Bangladesh, is a city of 15 million people. It has only one Adventist church. Other groups meet in unmarked rooms, difficult to find. Let's help them establish facilities for spiritual growth and nurture in this city, in one of the world's poorest countries.

Part of your Mission Offering this quarter will help change lives in Dhaka, in the heart of the 10/40 Window.

## MISSION

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