

# OUR BELIEFS

## Seventh Day Adventists

As a Christian church, Seventh-day Adventists are a faith community rooted in the beliefs described by the Holy Scriptures. Adventists describe these beliefs in the following ways:

God's greatest desire is for you to see a clear picture of His character. When you see Him clearly, you will find His love irresistible.

For many, "seeing God clearly" requires that they see God's face. However, how He looks is not the issue. Seeing and understanding His character is what's most important. The more clearly we understand Him, the more we will find His love irresistible. As we begin to experience His love, our own lives will begin to make more sense.

God most clearly reveals His character in three great events. The first is His creation of man and woman - and His giving them the freedom of choice. He created humans with the ability to choose to love Him or to hate Him! The death of Jesus Christ, God's only Son, on the cross as our substitute is the second great event. In that act He paid the penalty we deserve for our hateful choices toward God and His ways. Jesus' death guarantees forgiveness for those choices and allows us to spend eternity with Him. The third event confirms the first two and fills every heart with hope: Christ's tomb is empty! He is alive, living to fill us with His love!

Jesus' disciple John wrote that if everyone wrote all the stories they knew about Jesus, the whole world could not contain them. Our knowledge of God helps us understand His love, character, and grace. Experiencing that love begins a lifelong adventure in growth and service. This knowledge and experience powers our mission to tell the world about His love and His offer of salvation.

Scripture is a road map. The Bible is God's voice, speaking His love personally to you today.

The Bible speaks the Creator's directions to us, like a detailed road map that clearly shows the exit ramp directly into heaven. It is also much like an owner's manual for a life ready to be lived on the cutting edge of liberty.

Sometimes His voice speaks through stories, such as those of David and Goliath, Ruth and Boaz, Naaman's little servant girl, Christ on the cross, and fisherman Peter learning how to tend sheep. Some of these stories teach us how to handle the troubles we face each day. Others fill us with hope and peace. Each of them is like a personal letter from God to you.

Portions of Scripture are direct instructions and laws from God such as the Ten Commandments, recorded in Exodus 20. These tell us more about God and His expectations for us. When people asked Jesus to summarize these commands, He focused on the way God's love affects the way we live. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and soul," He said. "And love your neighbor as you love yourself."

On other pages the Bible gives God's practical advice and encouragement through parables, lists, promises, and warnings. Amazingly, though many different writers throughout thousands of years wrote the Bible, each page describes the same God in ways we can understand and apply in our lives today. This book is always His voice talking personally to anyone who is willing to read and hear.

God loves us even when we choose to reject His love. In those times He allows us to walk away into the life of our own choices. Yet He is still there, always ready to redeem us from the results of our decisions.

Jesus is the one who never changes in a universe that always does. Jesus is Creator, Sustainer, Saviour, Friend, God's Son, and God Himself!

Everything in this world is always changing, even our desires, interests, skills, and body shapes. But Jesus? He's consistent. He's always the same. Sure, He's always surprising us and touching our lives in thousands of new and different ways, but His character is unchanging. He's God's Son, the Creator, our Saviour, and Friend.

Jesus has promised to be all of that, and more, for each of us. We can trust His promises because He is God. When the words of Colossians say "in Him all things hold together" (1:17, NIV) that includes everything in our lives. He keeps us whole when the enemy is trying to make us fall apart.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that Jesus is one of the three persons, called the Trinity, who make up our one God. The Bible describes Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit as each being committed to our growth as Christians and to our salvation as their children. They made this salvation possible when Jesus came to Bethlehem as a human baby. He lived a life perfectly in accord with God's will and then died innocently for all of our sins. He was placed in a borrowed tomb, but He came back to life three days later. Now he is in heaven interceding with the Father for us, preparing for our deliverance from sin and death.

When everything may be falling apart, when you feel totally alone in the universe, Jesus is right there in the center of it all, offering personal peace and hope. Allow Him into your life. He immediately begins "remodeling" who you are and how you live. Jesus, in fact, is busily transforming His followers into accurate representatives of God's character.

Look to Jesus, and you'll be looking into the understanding and loving face of God.

God's vision for you is life as He lives it! God loves you, and wants to give you the highest quality of life imaginable.

No, not a second-rate existence somewhere on earth, but the highest quality of life imaginable, here and in eternity with Him! That's what God wants us to have. The best!

This is why He provides church families where we can belong. This is why He gives each of us special gifts and talents, so we can live life fully. Amazingly, this is why He's concerned about what you're doing, when you're doing it, and how you relate to Him. God doesn't want anything to get in the way of our friendship. He especially doesn't want us to get involved in anything damaging or hurtful. He's like a loving father or a good big brother. He's someone who loves you so much that He's always looking out for you.

When God designed you, He included special talents and skills that will help you become a uniquely valuable individual. These may be your ability to teach, your love for others, or your leadership skills. Still, whatever special gifts you have received, God has also provided all of the energy and wisdom necessary for you to use them well.

By the way, how God feels about death is part of the quality life He offers. For followers of Christ, death holds no fear. Remember, Jesus defeated death on Calvary and has given us freedom from death. Cemeteries, then, are filled with followers of God who are in the "peaceful pause before the resurrection." Yes, they are dead, but that death holds no power over their future. Jesus is coming to take them (and those of us who are still living) HOME! Death is almost like a wintery promise of spring.

The Seventh-day Adventist faith in today and in the future comes from seeing this life "overflowing" with hope!

Because love is the key aspect of His character, God is also deeply into gratitude. Before we even finish saying thank you, He's already busy sending more blessings.

In the heart of God is a place you can experience as home. God loves you, and wants to spend time with you personally, one on one, as two close friends.

Because you and God are friends, you will spend time together as friends do. Each morning you'll share a hello and a hug and discuss how you can face the day's events together. Throughout the day you'll talk with Him about how you feel. You'll laugh with Him at funny things and ache with Him over sadness and hurts. It's pleasant being God's friend, able to snuggle comfortably into the safety of your relationship. You can always trust Him to treat you well, because He loves you.

The seventh day (Saturday) is an extra-special part of the relationship. The Bible, from Genesis through Revelation, describes the seventh day as the one day God has set aside for focused fellowship with His people. God has named that day "Sabbath" and asked us to spend it with Him. "Remember the Sabbath day," He says, "to keep it holy." The Sabbath is a whole day to deepen our friendship with the Creator of the universe! A day when we're together, Jesus with us and us with Jesus.

There's another great truth about friendship with God. It doesn't end in a cemetery, for God is planning a homecoming better than anything we can dream. A homecoming filled with angels, trumpets, Jesus, and resurrections! He's promised to bring His followers, those who have accepted the offer of His life-changing love, from this earth to His home, a place He calls heaven. A place where our friendship can go on growing forever, endlessly, joyfully!

God keeps a family album-and your picture is in it. God loves you and has a plan for your life. God's love is about you.

Personally.

God made you and has a very special plan for your life. It's a plan that will fill you with hope, love, peace, and activity. In fact, when Christ paid the penalty for sin on the cross, that gave Him the right to claim you as His own. As a result, you can experience His love and priceless salvation freely and fully without limit.

By the way, pictures of everyone fill that album: Nepalese, Brazilians, Nigerians, Yupiks, Germans, people of every nation, culture, background, gender, hair color, and foot size. In God's eyes all are equally "children of the King"!

Salvation? God cleans away all our sins and replaces them with His goodness. We don't have to be "good" for Him to accept us. Nevertheless, we must accept His promise and allow Him to clean out everything the enemy has left in us. Then we begin to experience the transforming power of His love. It's like a giant war: one side pulling us toward empty pleasure and destruction, and God urging us to accept His offer of peace and purpose.

Remember, Jesus has already won the war. He is victorious! We celebrate His victory in our lives when we participate in the Lord's Supper. This meal includes three symbols:

1. foot-washing (which symbolizes our commitment to love others as Jesus loves us),
2. bread ("This bread is my flesh," Jesus said, "which I will give for the life of the world," John 6:51, NIV), and
3. wine (grape juice) ("Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life." John 6:54, NIV)

To help us understand how God can transform us into His children, Jesus modeled the process of baptism for us. Baptism symbolized dying to self and coming alive in Jesus. Seventh-day Adventists practice full immersion baptism because by being fully buried beneath the water we symbolize that God's grace fully fills us with His new life for the future. Through baptism we are truly born again in Jesus.

Eternal life, peace, purpose, forgiveness, transforming grace, hope: Everything He promises is ours, because He's offering it and He's shown we can trust Him to do exactly as He promises. Accept His gifts, and you immediately become an active part of His family, and He joyfully becomes part of yours.