

# In His Presence

Carolyn Rathbun Sutton

EDITOR



**Pacific Press**<sup>®</sup>  
Publishing Association

Nampa, Idaho | Oshawa, Ontario, Canada

[www.pacificpress.com](http://www.pacificpress.com)

Cover design by Erika Miike  
Cover design resources from Dreamstime.com/ © Andrii Vatsyk  
Inside design by Kristin Hansen-Mellish

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ISBN 978-0-8163-6412-1

June 2018

# About the Editor

Carolyn Rathbun Sutton

finds great joy in “being there” for other women, especially those struggling to find renewed purpose after a major life setback. She particularly enjoys helping women share their own personal stories of God’s faithfulness.



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## Dear Reader,

The North American Division (NAD) Women’s Ministries team welcomes you to the 2019 edition of the Women’s Devotional book. We are pleased and grateful that all proceeds from sales of the book in the NAD will be used exclusively for scholarships in our territory.

We are praying that you will be blessed this year as you read devotionals from women like you—real women with real stories of God’s love and providence in their lives. We look forward to hearing from you, and we hope that you will be inspired to submit your own stories to share with others.



We have a two-person department. Carla Baker has been the NAD Women’s Ministries director since 2006. Her union women’s ministries and teaching background have made her the department’s resource specialist. Carla is a Texan who loves living in Maryland with its four distinct seasons. She has a grown son, Brandon, and three grandchildren who have all been born in Texas while she’s been in Maryland. Needless to say, Carla gets back to Texas several times a year.



Erica Jones joined the Women’s Ministries Department in 2014. She didn’t come far, having grown up and lived all her life just a few miles from our headquarters in Columbia, Maryland. Her background in youth ministry has given her a heart for teens and their struggles. Combined with her media experience, it was easy for her to find her ministry niche in our department—teen girls and social media . Erica lives with her four-legged children—Boots the cat and Maisy the miniature shepherd mix.

# Women Helping Women

There is an aspect of this book that is unique

None of the contributors has been paid—each has shared freely so that all profits go to scholarships for women. Approximately 2,460 scholarships have been given to women in 132 countries. Recipients of the Women’s Ministries scholarships are talented women who are committed to serving the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

## General Conference Women’s Ministries scholarship fund in the North American Division

New this year: all profits from sales of the Women’s Ministries devotional book in the North American Division support women’s higher education in Seventh-day Adventist colleges and universities in the United States and Canada.

## Purpose of the women’s devotional book

*Among Friends*, published in 1992, was the first annual women’s devotional book. Since then, proceeds from these devotional books have funded scholarships for Adventist women seeking to obtain higher education. But as tuition costs have soared in North America and more women have applied for assistance, funding has not kept pace with the need. Many worthy women who apply must be turned down.

Recognizing the importance of educating women—to build stronger families, stronger communities, and a stronger church—each of us can help. Together we can change lives!

## There are many ways to support our sisters

- Pray for women worldwide who are struggling to get an education.
- Tell others about the Women’s Ministries scholarship program.
- Write for the women’s devotional book (guidelines are available).
- Support women’s education with a financial gift or a pledge.

To make a gift or receive materials, send us the following information:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

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Website: <https://www.nadwm.org/>

The scholarship application and devotional book writers’ guidelines are available at our website.



# I'll Do It Later

I tell you that the "right time" is now,  
and the "day of salvation" is now.

—2 Corinthians 6:2, NCV

Let me begin with a confession: procrastination has been a challenge for me all my life, and that's why I developed, many years ago, the mantra "Do it now." I've found through the years that this mantra has helped me to stay on top of the many things I had to do and kept me from being late or falling behind. But I've also found that as I get more mature (older), my mantra is harder to follow. I realize that's because my list of things to do has been increasing; and on many days, the list is just too long to fulfill. So what do I do?

Well one thing I have done is to say no a bit more often. I've also learned that I must delegate more items to my staff or my family. I can't do it all.

From conversations with other women, I've found that there are many areas of life in which we procrastinate: Beginning an exercise schedule. Pursuing higher education. Making that appointment for a mammogram that we've put off for the past few years.

We also find procrastination reflected in smaller arenas of our lives: delaying the housecleaning, not hemming a dress until wanting to wear it, or even delaying that call to a friend who may be sick.

As I thought on this topic of procrastination, one troubling question came to mind: Are we, as Christians, procrastinating when it comes to preparing for the second coming of Jesus? How many times have we said to ourselves, "I will begin my daily devotionals next week"? Or maybe we've told ourselves, "I'll start reading the Bible through at the beginning of next year so that I can start at the beginning," or "When life slows down, I'll find time to attend the Bible study group."

So many reasons for putting off spiritual preparation, and each one seems like a good reason. Yet at the beginning of this new year, I thank God that the Holy Spirit keeps calling us to a deeper and more meaningful relationship with Jesus, which brings me to our text for today.

Paul admonishes the Corinthians, "I tell you that the 'right time' is now, and the 'day of salvation' is now." I must admit to hearing and using these words in many evangelistic meetings when making an appeal for someone to give his or her life to Jesus. But I realize these words apply to all who put off salvation for another day when today is all we have.



January 2

# Saved by the Bell

Before they call, I will answer.

—Isaiah 65:24, KJV

It was the first school day after Christmas break. I was thirteen years old. I sat in my usual seat on the left-hand side of the classroom near the front. Toward the end of the class period, the teacher said, “I would like for each one of you to stand beside your desk and tell what you got for Christmas.”

*Oh, no!* I thought. My family was very poor. A local charity organization gave gift boxes to children but only up through the age of twelve. Since I was thirteen, I had no longer qualified for a gift box that year. So all I had gotten for Christmas was a much-needed white slip!

It was decision time: *Do I tell the truth and have the kids tease me without mercy? Or do I tell a lie and keep the kids off my back?* My mother had taught me that I should always tell the truth, so this was a very hard decision for me to make.

As the teacher got closer and closer to my desk, the more anxiety and stress I felt. *What do I do?*

Then the teacher started asking students in *my* row to share what each had gotten as a gift for Christmas. At this point, I was stressed to the limit. *What do I do?*

Just as the teacher was about to question me, according to the order of our desks, I heard a loud *ring!* If you were to ask me how I would spell the relief I experienced from this tense situation at that moment, I would answer, “B-e-l-l.” I was *so* relieved! In fact, I could have cried with relief as I was literally saved by the bell.

So many times as adults, we don’t understand certain situations and unintentionally put children in a position that presents them with at least two equally stressful, if not undesirable, choices. The teacher thought he was doing something nice for the class by letting his students share. Yet he was unintentionally placing me in a position where I must choose between a clear conscience with a miserable social life or vice versa.

As with my mother, we must teach our children to pray for God’s help in doing what is right. We can also lead them to understand that Jesus will help them in every situation. I am so glad that Christ understood my needs that day. He answered even before I called on Him.

Ruth Cantrell

# Down and Almost Out!

Worry weighs us down; a cheerful word picks us up.  
—Proverbs 12:25, The Message

**D**o you sometimes feel absolutely helpless, as I do, when a friend hurts? Fortunately, having a partnership with God gives us comfort in knowing that what we can't do for a friend, He can do. Yet almost always, there are a few things we can do:

- Pray for and with the friend.
- Lend a listening ear.
- Ask, “Is there is anything you *want* me to do?”
- Offer to do something that you *think* might help.

We all need friends to share in the good times and help us through difficult times. A friend told me this story about her friend Paula (not her real name), whom she met when they were teenagers. Recently, Paula, orphaned as a toddler, confessed to her, “I’d actually been contemplating suicide the very day we met. I felt I didn’t fit in with anyone and was lonely. Everything was going wrong. It was difficult growing up without parents. I didn’t feel wanted where I lived. But because you were friendly and offered to help me with algebra, I felt hopeful again. I really can’t explain it, but for the first time I felt like someone cared about me.”

Paula waited a few years to tell my friend about that dark day that turned bright because she feared my friend might consider her too emotionally unstable to be her friend. Now that both are professional adults (my friend became a professional counselor and her friend a mathematics teacher), Paula felt the time was right. My friend didn’t have a clue that Paula had been feeling so down and almost out those many years ago. Yet her friendly offer to help Paula made a life-saving difference. My friend knew only that Paula was obviously struggling with her studies. So she offered to help.

“A rescued life,” my friend sighed. “God allowed me to save a life—and I discovered that making friends is a blessed ministry. It provided impetus to my own profession.” Hearing this story confirmed the importance of being friendly! No matter our age, there are people who come into our lives to whom we can be helpful friends. Furthermore, the story led me to this prayer: *Lord, help me discern who is discouraged and be that person’s friend.*



January 4

## *A Time for Everything*

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die.

—*Ecclesiastes 3:1, 2, NIV*

**W**hen I got married, I became not only a wife but also mother to two little girls. In fact, they had chosen me for their mother before their father chose me for a wife and were active little promoters until they finally had him convinced. We were a busy, happy family when little brother was born a few years later, followed by a little girl. I was sure my family was complete.

Then a few years later I got the news that I was pregnant again. My mother, who had been able to have only one child, couldn't understand why I didn't want another baby. My husband's response was, "There's always room for one more." But all through that pregnancy I worked hard and did all I could to perhaps lose the baby. Yet when little Rose was born, I loved her as much as my other children. She definitely was the missing link in our family. Since she has grown up, Rose has been a blessing to many. She became a nurse and worked for a few years as an IV therapist at a large Christian university hospital in California. When no one else could start an IV on babies, Rose could. For a while, she did blood draws on heart transplant babies.

Rose married and had two children of her own: a daughter and, later, a son. Then while her husband was studying to be a dentist and she was the breadwinner, she found out that she was pregnant again. I knew exactly how she felt, but I also knew that everything would work out for the best. Although the first few years were a challenge for this busy mother, none of the family would dream of life without her happy little girl. Later Rose started a business so that she could homeschool her children. Her business showed people how they could improve their family lives by preserving memories in photo albums. She continues doing this today, and it has been a blessing to many families, including her own children.

Life goes on, and now the little girl born to this busy mother has grown up and blessed many lives by going on mission trips to several different countries. She has also become a nurse and, in this capacity, continues to brighten the lives of others with her cheerful, caring ways.

As I reflect on our family life, I can see that Solomon was right when he said that there was a time to be born and we can just let God take care of the details.

Betty J. Adams

# Who Am I?

“For without Me you can do nothing.”  
—John 15:5, NKJV

At my own expense, I attended our church’s worldwide quinquennial conference in 1990, held in the United States. My husband, an official delegate, had his way paid. We enjoyed the various meetings as we listened to presentations by the best speakers and musicians from around the world. It was a foretaste of heaven to be among God’s people from all parts of the globe.

Leadership from our part of the world church was invited to present the worship service one morning. The previous day I was surprised to be approached by our minister, who asked me to offer the opening prayer for that service. “Oh no, not me, please!” was my immediate answer. I thought, *He is an outstanding preacher from our area, but who am I?* Hearing my response, the pastor walked away to look for someone else. I felt relieved when he walked away, but remorse and shame soon took over. I felt I had sinned against God. I was scared. Moments later that same pastor unexpectedly came by, and I gave him my consent.

The next morning I found myself on the stage looking out at a sea of faces. Stage fright took over. I felt very small as I stood up by the pulpit. India has many races and languages in its many states, and I come from one of its smallest states, Meghalaya. I had been asked to pray in Khasi. Since only the half dozen of my own people present would understand my prayer, I decided to tell the audience the sentiment of that prayer before bowing my head and offering it.

First, I told the audience that it was obvious, from my image on the big screens, that I was small in stature. Then I quickly said, “Actually, in spite of being and feeling small, I have a reason to feel great.” There was silence. I broke the silence by saying, “You know, if I were the only survivor on earth, Christ would still have come to die for me.”\* Then I pointed my hand toward the vast assembly and said, “The next reason I feel great is that you are my brothers and sisters.” The audience began to clap but stopped because I had begun praying.

Friends, we all are small. Jesus said that without Him we can do nothing. Moses said, “Who am I?” when God called him to deliver Israel (Exodus 3:11). Jeremiah said he was but a child when God called (Jeremiah 1:6). But along with Paul, we can say, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13, NKJV).

Birdie Poddar

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\* See Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press\*, 1898), 483.