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*Agents of Hope:  
God's Great Missionaries*

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## Introduction

### Agents<sup>1</sup> of Hope

Swede Ingmar Bergman told a story about a knight named Antonius Block. The knight is kneeling in front of a confessional<sup>2</sup> to confess his sins. He does not know until later that he is talking to Death—a person in a black robe who acts as a priest. Block says that he is not looking for faith. Instead he is looking for knowledge.

“I want,” Block says, “God to stretch out His hand toward me, show Himself, and speak to me.”

Death answers that perhaps there is no God. He adds that perhaps there is only nothing.

“Then,” says Block, “life is a terrible horror. No one can live in the face of death if he or she knows that all is nothingness.”

Today millions live in the face of such nothingness. They have no faith in God. They have no hope in anything past the world around them. No wonder that so many people focus on the comforts of this life. They look for comfort in many worldly pleasures. The Christian faith is strange to them because it asks us not to look “at what we can see. Instead, we look at what we can’t [cannot] see. What can be seen lasts only a short time. But what can’t [cannot] be seen will last forever” (2 Corinthians 4:18, NIV).

As Christians, we are God’s agents to bring these people hope. We are to show that there is a God who loves and cares for them. We also are to show that life has many terrible horrors. But it is not the final terrible horror because God will finally make all things right.

The Bible gives us many hope-filled stories of God’s agents of hope. In this quarter’s Bible study guide we will focus on some of these outstanding missionaries.<sup>3</sup> We will study who they were and what they did in trying to bring others to a saving knowledge of the Lord of salvation.<sup>4</sup>

Ellen G. White tells the story of a man who was almost frozen to death in deep snow. He was about to give up struggling (fighting) for his life when he heard the cries from a fellow traveler nearby. He decided to try to rescue the other man. When he found the traveler, he rubbed the man’s frozen limbs. He finally got him to his feet and carried him through the snow to safety.

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1. agents—workers who are given the authority (power and permission) to perform (do) a job or a project.

2. confessional—a place in a church where a priest hears you say what sins you have done.

3. missionaries—persons sent out by a church to spread its religion in a foreign country.

4. salvation—God’s plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death; the gift of eternal life.

Then “the man understood that in trying to save his neighbor he also had saved himself. By helping his neighbor he caused the blood to flow faster in his own veins.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 4, page 319.

The point? A healthy church is a church focused on mission to others. Sharing God’s love with others around you brings fresh life and energy into the church.

It would be a mistake this quarter to study these Bible agents as only interesting historical figures. Rather, we need to catch the inspiration of their lives and focus on our mission to this dying world. There is nothing more life-giving than helping others to find Jesus Christ.

Our prayer is that this quarter’s guide (lessons) on Bible agents of hope will lead us to share God’s love with our neighbors and friends and in mission fields around the world. By doing this, we may just find that we have entered into a new area in our Christian lives.

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