

Seventh day
adventist experience
religion essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

From the very beginning of time many people have asked the same questions: Who am I. Why do I exist. Is there someone or something above us that created it all? Humankind has wondered about God or a supernatural higher authority thru ought history. And since that time cultures and countries have developed their own beliefs and opinions on what is religion and God. From ancient sacred indigenous religions to present day contemporary practices, many religions contain similar basic traditions and beliefs, but yet there are so many sects of the religion and many different followings. From polytheistic beliefs to monotheistic views people have chosen their path based to what best suites their personal self. When focusing on a certain popular worldwide religion such as Christianity you may get lost in all the many diverse teachings and sects. In all these so called Christian denominations you can find teaching from the scripture “ The Holy Bible” being translated in many different perspective views. From theology to soteriology to theodicy and bibliology each denominations chooses its own teachings. There are multiple examples to list , one being many Christian sects that believe in God, Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ, but look at all of those parts of spirituality differently. They range from the very conservative to so called liberal denominations. Even though all Christians read and follow the teachings from the same sacred text “ The Holy Bible” it all comes down to how their bibliology is translated.

The theology of the Seventh-day Adventist is similar to Protestant Christian teachings like the infallibility of Scripture. Typical teachings include the unconscious state of the dead and the doctrine of an explanatory judgment.

The church is also known for its stress on diet and health, its encouragement of religious liberty, and its conservative principles and lifestyle. (Wilson 4)

Seventh Day Adventists were founded by a group of leaders William Miller, S. S. Snow, Joseph Bates, James White, Mrs. Ellen G. White. Ellen G. White has written some books that the Seventh Day Adventists follow up on. Adventists recognize her as the Lord's messenger. Her writings are a continuing source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction which are listed in the "28 Fundamental Beliefs". Some of the 28 fundamental beliefs are the following; belief in Trinity, Life death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Experience of salvation, Unity in the body of Christ, Baptism in full water submersion, lords supper, Spiritual Gifts and ministries, And most important keeping the Sabbath. (Wilson 1)

The sacred scripture that the Seventh Day Adventists use is Holy Bible. They focus on the Old Testament mainly for their doctrinal laws, and use New Testament to follow up those scriptures. Unlike many other Christian denominations the Seventh Day Adventists are very strict on what they believe in.

When it comes to salvation the Seventh day Adventist believe that one has to believe by faith that Jesus Christ Is lord and savior and that he paid the penalty on the cross from remission of all sins. " That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Romans 10: 9-10)

There are two strong doctrines that the Seventh Day Adventist stress on which is the returning of the messiah, and keeping the Sabbath holy.

Throughout the history of their religion there have been many attempts of individual leaders who proclaimed the day of the revival of the lord. Trial after trial they have failed, but still to this day have hope in the day of their return of the savior Jesus. When it comes to keeping the Sabbath, they believe that Saturday is a holy day and no labor is to be done from Fri night to Saturday. Due to the Old Testament scriptures when God said he rested on the 7th day after creation.

Like most Christian denominations the Seventh Day Adventists believe in final judgment day, where every human being will be judged on how they lived their life on this earth. Then the outcome of their judgment will decide where they will prolong their eternal life in hell or in heaven.

My journey starts at the Slavic Seventh Day Adventists in Fort Myers. The church service was on Friday evening and it was located in Ft. Myers Florida where my co workers friend lives and attends service regularly. As I soon found out there are many different rules that apply to dress codes as well as codes of behavior, and even though in a sense this particular division or sect of Christianity has the same basic principles as the church I grew up in there are many marked differences.

The first rule that I was introduced to was, that after sunset on Friday night through sunset of Saturday night, no work is to be done, nothing is cooked or cleaned and there is only limited driving is allowed. The Seventh Day Adventist observe the Sabbath and treat it with respect as the day God “

rested” and this is a time for worship and prayer as a family as well as the attending of church services on Friday night and Saturday morning.

The family that opened their home for me took me to a Friday night prayer and worship service at their local church, and in fact it was near the home so the family and I walked to service. The females in the family were required to wear long skirts as this is the proper attire for the women of this religion, many of the women do not ever wear pants and shorts for recreational purposes. Now this I thought was really weird and out of date. The no pants rule was actually a little odd for me seeing as I never knew that there was a part of the Bible that disagreed with women wearing pants, but the father of the family pointed out to me that in the bible there is in fact a statement about women wearing men’s clothing “ A woman must not wear men’s clothing, nor a man wear women’s clothing, for the LORD your God detests anyone who does this. (KJV, Deuteronomy 22: 5).). I always thought the Deuteronomy verse was actually talking about women taking on the roles of men and vice versa, however the Adventists believe that this is a clear cut rule about dress code. This is just one of the many strict rules they follow.

The other requirement that I had a hard time understanding was when the females had to wear head covering, since most women who are married or have children are asked to wear a head covering as a sign of respect to God or their spouse. Thank God we men don’t have to wear covering on the head, it looked very uncomfortable. Although I personally believe that the wife’s “ submission” to a husband is a necessary but no to a part of religion on closeness with God, but although its odd and uncomfortable for me to see

this, it seemed disrespectful to disregard their sense of tradition and faith, because they believe it is sinful for a women to have her head uncovered.

Once we entered the sanctuary it was obvious that there were a couple differences there as well. To my surprise the men and the women were sitting on separate sides of the church, even though most of them were married couples. So I was expected to sit on the “ male” side of the church. This again was a little off-putting to me since I was not brought up to see a spiritual difference in the sex of an individual, and I was always taught that we are “ all” created equal in the eyes of the Lord. I was unsure of why exactly the men and the women were separated. But then one individual told me that this was to keep the sanctity of the church and to not tempt people. I still do not understand what the “ temptation” is, but perhaps it is to keep people focused on the message and not on who is sitting next to them.

The service itself was very peaceful and mellow. It was a little more serious than what I expected it to be. When it came time for the congregation to sing, I was expecting some loud jamming praise of what I am used to. But to my surprise the congregation stood up and started to sing old, traditional hymns. Now I have not heard such songs in my life before, their lyrics were true and really inspiring. They brought peace to my soul and had tremendous meaning. To my surprise I actually enjoyed their melodious sonnets.

Now when it came to the final sermon I was preparing myself for an uplifting prosperity sermon. But once again as the preacher walked up to the pulpit and his face seemed to have humble serious look. His facial emotion made

me feel very awkward and curious on what he was about to say. And then he began to preach. Wow was I in for a surprise! His topic was on the lackness of spiritual foundation in our lives. And then he went on convicting individuals on their sins. I felt as if he was preaching " Fire and Brimstone" like a " dooms" day type of sermons as if the whole congregation was going to hell. Now as I was intensely listening to the sermon, I started to realize that he's been preaching for almost an hour. This I am not used to at all, most sermons I've listened to were at most 20 minutes long. After all it was a crazy new experience for me. This made me question a lot of other sermons that are being preached in allot of contemporary liberal churches today.

The worship and sermon was then followed by a couple long prayers. Now when prayer comes to my mind, I picture standing up or sitting down praying easy short straight to the point prayers. Well not in this case. Many of the elders and pastors each had a minute to offer their own prayer out loud. I kneeling their on my knees praying to God to have them finish faster because my knees where going numb. The prayers were interesting in the sense that people were weeping out loud, something I am not used to since the worship and prayer services I have been exposed to, were always happy and excited. During prayer every member of the congregation was expected to be kneeled on their knees, which remarkable was very interesting to me, to see the united front they presented in prayer, there were young and old from babies to grandmas, kneeling in prayer together. Now this set a whole new idea of prayer in my mind. The prayer went on for probably fifteen minutes, which felt like a whole day. Now to end the service the whole congregation chanted the Lord's Prayer. " Our father in heaven... ect." This I

found interesting due to the fact that I never had the experience of praying the prayer in a church with all the members out loud.

After service there was a little bit of conversation amongst the people of the congregation, and many of them were very happy to provide me with additional information, and answer my questions in regards to their religion.

One of the biggest questions I had was why they choose to follow the “ old testament” more than the newer testament as many of the other churches do. Which one of the elder brothers replied “ If God wanted only the New Testament to be observed he would have found a way to eliminate the Old Testament first, but as it is there are both there for you cannot understand the power of one without the other. The Old Testament was given by God himself to the people and it was expected to be observed and respected, and that without this beginning there would be no New Testament to follow.”(Brother Vasily). This was very interesting to me since in all honesty I was not one to pay much attention to that part of the Bible, but in a sense it was understandable where he was coming from. The Old Testament gives people one clear cut way of doing things, whether staying away from unclean foods, to following certain dress codes, it is a spelled out way to follow God. It is definitely different from what I was taught, but it was interesting to see this belief system span generations with little regard to what other people may think or say. It was amazing to be able to ask individuals that follow these set of beliefs.

My questions pertaining to the world around them even simple things such as diet. They believe in “Kosher” to follow the decryption of clean versus unclean animals.

Even the topic of family and children was interesting to discuss since in this day and age most churches do not control or even necessarily disregard smaller families or family planning. But in the religious view points of the Adventists there should be no control from the peoples end and that each child is a blessing that should be welcomed and accepted as a gift from God. In other words they don't believe in use of protection in sex. Some individuals go as far as saying that through the birth of children the women is saved or blessed from her past transgressions, this statement kind of made me wonder about the true belief in the forgiveness and life through Christ.

The other topic of religious difference that I was interested in is communion and baptism, since in the church I grew up in these were traditional parts that involved all people considered “born again”. This of course was different as well since the church community I was part of strongly believes that children under the age of eighteen should not participate in the water baptism and communion since they are not truly adults and are in a sense still under the covering of their parents.

This religious experience was incredibly different from what I grew up with and what I am accustomed to. The church I grew up in was considered Non-Denominational, where I was also taught about the Holy Trinity and about being saved through Jesus. However the church I was brought up in centered

it's teaching on the New Testament, so the Sabbath was not a much more important day than any other. Instead Sunday was the " holy" day. The other large difference was that there were no rules as far as worship was concerned; there was no solemn prayer or a serious undertone which is what I experienced in the Friday service at the Adventist church. Worship in the church was exposed to be a happy occasion with clapping, dancing, laughter and banner waving, these were all considered to be typed of worship and a way to appreciate and come closer to God. From the Adventist point of view however, this show is not only unnecessary but inappropriate in the " House Of God", it was considered disrespectful if someone were to laugh out loud or shout, and instead quiet and poised respect was encouraged, almost like a respect for the higher authority. The other big difference for me was that in the church I grew up in it was considered an individual's choice to become baptized or participate in communion as soon as they were able to distinguish being " born again" and what " sin" is.

This experience was a good one for me to step out of my comfort zone and realize that although the church and religion my coo workers friend followed is considered in a sense a type of Christianity it was as though I stepped into a different world. There is a lot of tradition and strict sense of family, God and respect, in the Adventist church, and perhaps this was an atypical experience since it was at a Slavic division. But it was interesting to see how people who in a sense believe in the same " God" as the Baptists, Lutherans, Methodist, Pentecostals and many other Protestants believe in, have a completely different interpretation of what this " God" so expecting ad even desiring from him followers. And although this is not the religion I was able to

make a personal connection with, the people of the church I visited were very gracious and even enthusiastic to show me their ways and views of God and religion. They were very welcoming to discussion as well as questions that I had towards them. It was amazing to see that within one large group of religion such as Christianity, there are so many subgroups with differences that go from mild to drastic.