

Elder's Digest

A Quarterly Resource for Local Church Elders

Number two



The Future
of the Church

Christ-centered Preaching

✠ JAMES H. ZACHARY

“Evangelism is a whole new experience when the preacher makes Christ the center of every sermon,” says Joe Hagan, public relations director for the Central Ghana Conference. He states that in the past “My preaching had been argumentative and vindictive,” but now “I have found a better way to win people to the Lord Jesus and His truth.”

Paul learned this lesson during his ministry. He wrote, “I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2).

In the past century the first Adventist preachers developed skills in presenting certain “testing” truths to American Christian audiences. From this beginning, our preaching and teaching continues to be strongly doctrinal even though our audience has changed. We can no longer assume that our audiences know the Lord Jesus.

Now we need to set aside many of our sermons and lessons and retain only those that reflect the biblical message Christ commissioned His people to share with the whole world. Whether from the church pulpit, an evangelistic lectern, or in a Bible study, we must teach Christ and Him crucified regardless of the topic. Without Christ, humanity has no hope. Jesus came so that we could have abundant life. We need to emphasize this in our sermons and lessons.

“All roads lead to Rome” goes the familiar saying, and every doctrine must lead to Jesus. As

elders, pastors, and evangelists develop the skills of Christ-centered preaching and teaching, the listener will see that in rejecting a certain doctrine one may be rejecting the Lord Jesus in his or her life. Every doctrine must be interwoven with the gospel of Jesus.

Elder's Digest is committed to the task of transforming Adventist preaching and teaching. We have pockets of legalistic belief scattered throughout the world in the Adventist Church. These people have accepted the arguments for each doctrine without developing a personal faith relationship with Jesus. You would be surprised how many young people and older members of our congregations really doubt they will be saved when the Lord returns. How sad! We have work to do among our people! I am convicted that every Bible teaching, correctly understood, opens the student to new revelations of our Lord. This understanding must result in a transformation of the believer's daily experience. We need to reiterate—Jesus is our friend, and with Him all things are possible. Jesus said, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32). Christ-centered preaching and teaching remains as the only detergent to remove the tough stains of legalism.

Elder's Digest begins a Christ-centered doctrinal section this month. I pray that elders and pastors around the world will discover new power in presenting the special message God has for the world today.



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Igniting the Fire

■ RUSSELL BURRILL

We need the Holy Spirit in the local church. Could the way we conduct church make it difficult for the Holy Spirit to work? Do we need a restructuring on the local level?

Revival fires! How the church longs for the Holy Spirit to enliven it for the final accomplishment of its mission—reaching the world for Christ. We can never divorce the Holy Spirit from the mission of the church. This was the whole reason for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

As Jesus ended His ministry and returned to the Father, the obsession that stirred His soul was the need for the disciples to fulfill His mission and their need for power to do it (Matt. 28:18-20).

Judaism of the first century had become an exclusive club of people who thought they possessed the truth. Salvation, they believed, was assured as long as they had membership in the seed of Abraham. Jesus came and disturbed their exclusiveness, calling them to account for their failure to fulfill His mission.

Now Jesus was concerned lest the same thing happen to the Christian church. It was not our Lord's purpose that the church become an institution interested only in its internal affairs. He had called this new body into existence for one purpose: to make disciples among all ethnic groups. His was a call for commitment to that mission. And for its

accomplishment, He promised the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

In this initial endowment of the Holy Spirit, we discover its purpose: empowerment for the accomplishment of mission. The Holy Spirit is poured out for action—for the accomplishment of the task of Christ. We must never see the Holy Spirit as separate from His great function—the making of disciples. That's why we cannot finish the work without the Holy Spirit. The Spirit cannot be poured out unless there are people willing to be filled with power, enabling them to share Christ with the world around them.

The early disciples spent 10 days praying for the deluge of the Holy Spirit. The instruments were ready to be used by God. The Holy Spirit was poured out upon the waiting company, and immediately they became involved in the fulfillment of Christ's mission. Again, there is no separating the Holy Spirit from the accomplishment of mission.

How was the Holy Spirit manifested in the early church? In response to what Christ Himself had promised in Mark 16:15-18, miraculous signs and wonders occurred with increasing rapidity. The disciples spoke in new languages (Acts 2:1-4), the sick were healed, and other miracles occurred. All of these were spiritual gifts that empowered the church for action.

The New Testament seems to emphasize the



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more miraculous of those spiritual gifts: tongues, healings, and other miracles, for example. Yet the New Testament indicates that nonmiraculous spiritual gifts were also imparted by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 12:6-8).

Since we now live in the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, we can expect the same spiritual gifts that were so active in the New Testament church to be active in the remnant church. Yet strangely, Adventists have sometimes avoided spiritual gifts and have been almost afraid of the more miraculous spiritual gifts. Perhaps this arises from our concern not to be deceived by the counterfeit. However, we must not be so frightened of the counterfeit that we reject the genuine outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our midst. Such a rejection would be even more amazing because of the heavy emphasis early Adventists placed on spiritual gifts—especially the miraculous gift of prophecy manifested in the writings of Ellen White.

For a church that was so blessed with one spiritual gift (prophecy) in its early days, it is strange indeed to be overly concerned today about the manifestation of spiritual gifts in our midst. We pray much for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain. But what is the latter rain but an intensification of the early rain of Pentecost? In this first explosion of the Holy Spirit's power, the Holy Spirit manifested Himself by pouring out spiritual gifts upon God's church, including the more miraculous gifts. Should we not expect that the latter rain will witness the same thing?

If we are to be ready for this final outpouring of the Spirit upon the church, we need to restructure our churches for the reception of spiritual gifts. Then, as the Holy Spirit is poured out upon God's last-day church, our congregations will be ready to receive all the gifts that God sends.

In addition to dispensing spiritual gifts, the Holy Spirit empowers God's church through the fruit of the Spirit: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law" (Gal. 5:22, 23, NIV).

The fruit of the Spirit as well as the gifts of the Spirit enable the church to accomplish its mission in pentecostal power. The difference between the charismatic emphasis on spiritual gifts and the function of spiritual gifts as set forth in the Bible is that charismatics tend to see the gifts as primarily for producing feelings of spiritual ecstasy, whereas the Bible describes these gifts as given for the accomplishment of mission. Remember, Pentecost

resulted in tremendous church growth; so will the last-day Pentecost. Any manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit that does not result in souls won to Jesus is a counterfeit.

While the supernatural gifts of the Spirit call the attention of the world to God's people, the fruit of the Spirit demonstrates through them the perfect character of Christ. *God cannot call the attention of the world to the remnant as long as they are fighting one another. This can happen only if they reflect the character of Christ.* Ellen White graphically stated it this way: "Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 69).

The Bible declares God's character to be love (1 John 4:8). Love is the firstfruit of the Spirit. The result of God's people reflecting the character of Christ—a loving and lovable people of God—is the fulfillment of the mission of Christ.

Notice as Ellen White continues: "Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened and Christ would come to gather the precious grain" (*ibid.*). And "if we would humble ourselves before God, and be kind and courteous and tenderhearted and pitiful, there would be one hundred conversions to the truth where now there is only one" (*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 189).

The greatest need facing our church today is to receive the Holy Spirit. To receive that Power will do two things for the church: it will produce the fruit of the Spirit, and it will empower the church through the gifts of the Spirit.

Yet we must not wait until some future time when the Holy Spirit will be poured out in latter-rain power. If we are not now receiving the Holy Spirit so that our lives manifest both the fruit and the gifts, we will not receive the latter rain when it falls.

Could it be that somehow in the way we conduct church today we are making it difficult for the Holy Spirit to perform both of these works in His remnant body? It is this author's contention that it is time for a total restructuring of how we "do church" on the local level.

It is the author's contention that this return to a biblical model of the church will help unleash the baptism of the Spirit and help free the church to become the channel for the final display of the character of God to the world.

Principles of the Servant-Leader

■ NOEKU MOSES MSIMANGA

Jesus has been called the ultimate servant-leader, and we are to be like Him. An African brother provides guidelines on how to become a servant-leader.

Jesus, the world's greatest leader, came to serve. Today we would call Him a servant-leader. Only Christ's method of leadership can produce practical and effective leaders. Like Christ, a servant-leader must live a life worthy of emulation by others. The leader's life must silently say that he or she is an imitator of the Lord (1 Thess. 1:6), and become a model to all the believers (verse 7).

A servant-leader does not leave all the work to others, nor does he or she take on the whole task. Like Moses when Jethro advised him on his workload, a self-motivated leader assigns work equally among those who have been chosen to help him or her to lead. Jesus used this delegation method.

Christ's leadership style does not necessarily negate all other models, but it does contain some essential components. Five major aspects of a good leadership model are:

1. Physical. A servant-leader submits his or her body to do the will of God. God says our bodies are His holy temple, thus they must be guarded from external (immoral behavior) and internal (unhealthy personal practices) impurity.

We maintain our bodies for service—rather

than vanity—by following a preventive and temperate lifestyle. Exercise and a nutritious diet keep the body fit and strong so that illness is less likely to become a barrier to effective leadership. The servant-leader offers oneself to God as a living sacrifice.

2. Mental. The servant-leadership role can be too demanding for an intellectually lazy mind. Leaders must keep learning and listening all their lives.

An effective leader thinks before talking and does not talk too much, giving others a chance to express themselves. The servant-leader will be open to the ideas of others, not feel threatened by rivals, and will acknowledge mistakes.

A thinking leader works at being organized, saving time and energy. He or she engages the mind in analyzing daily challenges instead of acting too hastily, and therefore does not become confused about priorities. The servant-leader uses all five senses, adding to them common sense, and the supersensitivity made possible by daily conversion to Christ.

3. Social. First of all the servant-leader must be a loving and responsible spouse and parent. Paul says one cannot be effective in serving and loving on a large scale if he or she does not love on a smaller one (in the family). Next, the servant-leader must know the purpose of God's call to be



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the “light of the world.” To reflect God’s light, the leader’s presence must be seen; it must influence his or her surroundings, dispelling darkness. Such light will be a beacon for the lost, clearly showing the difference between good and evil.

The servant-leader sees God’s image in all people, regardless of color, nationality, religion, or tribe. On this truth, many leaders stumble and fall. Failing to represent their Saviour, they cause many to turn away from the light. A competent leader cultivates good public relations, and becomes an asset to his or her community by involvement. Such a leader tells the community that the church cares.

4. Economical. An important principle of the servant-leader role is to remember that leadership is not ownership. A leader has been given responsibility by God first, and second by his or her peers. The servant-leader must be accountable to both.

a. Time. A leader has no time to waste, for time is more precious than gold. Time cannot be manufactured. Time comes to us as a gift of life. This gift can be saved and used effectively, or be thrown away. There is a time to work, a time to rest, a time to be with family and friends, and a time to praise God. As a steward of time, the leader needs to follow a schedule.

b. Talents. People choose a leader because of certain talents he or she possesses. The servant-leader uses his or her unique talents to the maximum. Being true to oneself, the leader does not copy predecessors or heroes. Unlike time and money, talents are not saved but used. The more they are used, the more they multiply.

c. Treasure. The servant-leader acknowledges the ownership of God over all living creatures and treats them with respect and value. Because our treasure is in heaven, the leader recognizes God’s ownership of money and all earthly riches. These things are to be shared laterally (with people) and vertically (with God to spread the gospel). A servant-leader cannot be “bought or sold” but serves without expecting incentives or worldly reward.

5. Spiritual. Spirituality is the roof over all the rooms of the Christian leader’s model. The servant-leader has one ultimate goal: to lead people to Christ. The Christ he or she brings others to does not just dwell somewhere in the heavens, but also dwells in the heart. The leader opens up the treasures of peace and joy that come from his or her own heart-to-heart relationship with Jesus. The leader’s relationship with Christ gives him or her the motivation to serve whenever and wherever needed. Genuineness, sincerity, and truthfulness characterizes a servant-leader who does not pay lip

service to the church nor pretend piety. Turning to Christ for strength, such a leader struggles and wins in the battle with discouragement. Convinced that Christ died for all (2 Cor. 5:14, 15), the servant-leader is constrained by the love of Christ.

Multiple components make up the servant-leadership model, and I have named only five major ones. These elements are interdependent. A spiritual leader must have good public relations, but a noble image remains useless if the leader lacks a living spirituality. Fitness and strength will be wasted without an intellect that can put them to good use. An old English proverb accurately states: “A fool and his money [time, talents] are soon parted.”

Who Is the Servant-Leader?

E ROBERT K. GREENLEAF CENTER

The servant-leader is servant first. . . . It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. . . . The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant—first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society [or the church]; will they benefit, or at least, not be further deprived?”

Well-known servant leaders exist, but many more servant leaders—most, in fact—have by their very nature remained anonymous, even though their contributions have been equally meaningful. By their lives and their achievements, they have illustrated several principles which Greenleaf has identified concerning leadership.

(1) The best leader is the one who leads from a primary motivation *to serve*;

(2) Individuals, through their actions, *can and do make a difference*, even in a modern society seemingly dominated by technology and bureaucracy; and,

(3) Human successes, like human failures, are composed of *one action at a time* and achieved by one person at a time.

The Robert K. Greenleaf Center, 1100 W. 42nd Street, Suite 321, Indianapolis, IN 46208, has as its mission to improve the caring and quality of all institutions through a new approach to leadership, structure, and decisionmaking. Servant-leadership emphasizes increased service to others; a holistic approach to work; promoting a sense of community and the sharing of power in decisionmaking. Those interested in receiving resources and catalogs from them may write to the above address.

Elder Plants Trees and Churches in Bolivia

■ JAMES H. ZACHARY

Local church elders can be among the most overworked members in the church. But when there is no one else to do certain tasks, God gives them a special measure of strength.

Unless they are retired, most elders have full-time jobs in addition to their church-related tasks. Walter Britton, ADRA project leader in Bolivia, is no different. His long workdays include overseeing infrastructure projects, eight health clinics, agricultural programs, mother-child clinics, adult literacy education, and a reforestation program of planting 2 million trees in the next three years.

You will notice that the laborers are women. I was privileged to visit a group of these dedicated ladies as they prepared a stone surface for a road to their community. USAID through ADRA provides a salary for them paid in foodstuffs.

With all these projects to coordinate, Walter Britton is indeed a busy man. But when the West Bolivia Mission laid plans for a citywide evangelistic meeting, he wanted to be involved. Britton selected a target area in La Paz that had no church.

Others joined him in preparation for the meetings. Pastors and elders of the congregations in La Paz, El Alto, and the surrounding area assisted him. For two months Britton preached to the people. During the first month he held daily meetings. The sessions dropped to four times a week the second month. When he com-



A Bolivian mother supervises the road project, even as she cares for her child.

pleted the meetings, those attending begged him to continue with Bible studies. Some families walked three kilometers one way to hear the gospel.

“After a long day with ADRA I felt so exhausted,” states Britton. “But as I made my way to the hall for the evening meeting, the Lord provided new power. The joy of seeing people accept the gospel thrilled my heart.”

The Lord blessed Britton and all the faithful laypersons and pastors helping him, with a total of 891 baptisms. Congregations continue to follow up another 905 persons in baptismal classes. Thirty-two new churches have formed from this evangelistic endeavor. Today Britton serves as the elder of one of the new congregations, having 45 members and 40 children.

Team effort made the La Paz crusade successful. This large number of converts was possible because God was able to use the dedicated involvement of pastors, mission officials, and laypersons of which Walter Britton was only one.

Many believe that because the denomination has employed them in God’s work, they have done their share. But Britton responds, “ADRA work is the Lord’s work, but unless I give some of my personal time, I feel I have not done my part.”



Walter Britton, local elder, checks ADRA tree planting project.

Laity: The Future of the Church

■ ELLA RYDZEWSKI

On a Sabbath in 1993 three Mongolians joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church as the firstfruits of work started in their country by laypersons Brad and Cathie Jolly. What made this event special was that the three youth belonged to a people group without a viable Christian witness.

In 1988, while working on his master's degree, Brad took a job in the office of Adventist Frontier Missions (AFM). AFM, a privately funded mission agency operated by Seventh-day Adventist laity, recruits, trains, and sends missionaries to unentered areas of the world. Brad married Cathie in 1989 and together they trained to work in their target country of Mongolia. This land, once ruled by Kublai Khan in the thirteenth century, is surrounded by Siberia and China. Though still largely Communist, a new way of life is making inroads in this remote area.

The couple left for Mongolia in September 1991. They needed to know the language, and so they entered as students living in the dormitory of the main university.

In a land where the ground lies frozen most of the year, Cathie and Brad have endured extreme cold, food rationing, sickness, rejection, disappointment, and isolation from friends and family. Why did Cathie and Brad Jolly go to one of the most difficult places on the earth to work? They believed God called them. The gospel must go to *all* the world, and the church has a future in these developing countries.



The first baptism

Cathie and Brad made friends and held meetings in their small apartment. After two years two young women and a man expressed their desire to join the Adventist family. These young people became the foundation of the church in Mongolia. Recognizing an important breakthrough, General Conference president Robert



Brad and Cathie Jolly at home in Mongolia

Folkenberg traveled to Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, and conducted the baptism of the women. The man was accepted on profession of faith. And an added blessing: Folkenberg ordained Brad as an elder.

God's Word has spread around the world to many nations and people groups. Though the Seventh-day Adventist Church started in the United States, approximately 90 percent of its members live outside the North American Division, and most of those live in developing countries. In some of these lands enthusiasm remains high and evangelism fervent; in others Christian groups are sparse or unknown. But in all these countries evangelism must ultimately be carried out by the people themselves—dedicated lay workers. Even now those who joined the church in Mongolia (as the result of American lay missionaries) have become church leaders, teaching the gospel to their people. When the Jollys leave, Mongolians will be the leaders and evangelists. Young people make up more than half the population. The church will belong to them and their children.

Current statistics point to the church of the future as a youthful, multiracial entity. *Elder's Digest* hopes to provide resource material for lay leaders in developing lands as they seek to guide their growing churches in often hostile and difficult circumstances.

How to Present the Sabbath

■ ROBERT BENARDO

“Pastor, why is it that we’re not visiting that gentleman who was having trouble with the Sabbath? I told him all about the difference between the two days, and he still didn’t understand. It’s just straight facts; I don’t know how anybody could miss it.”

Does the above scenario sound familiar? In Adventist churches all around the world, laypersons and pastors preach the Advent message to those in need of Christ. As they lead these people along the trail of Bible truth, they often have good success, encountering only a few places where the trail seems steep. Then many times near the end of an evangelistic series or Bible study they find that the Sabbath becomes a rough spot that the student finds impassable. The worker shows the facts clearly, but somehow the student seems unable to escalate above the issue of mere days. The lack of some essential element impedes progress.

Could it be that Adventists (myself included) have left something out of the Sabbath truth that needs to be there? As the world spins toward eternity, have we neglected to proclaim the Sabbath more fully? What is the Sabbath a sign of, anyway?

In recent Bible study I have found new beauty in the Sabbath. I found it to be a symbol of everything that Jesus is to the prodigal world. The Sabbath becomes a sign of Creation, rest, blessing,

and holiness found only in Jesus. It tells us of a Creator who was Himself refreshed and made glad on that day (Ex. 31:17), and He wants us to enter into His joy. It tells of a God who loved unlovable, unthankful, sinful slaves enough to pull them out of their pit, treat them as sons and heirs to the kingdom of heaven (Deut. 5:15), and deliver them through Calvary. Maybe now I can help others see the Sabbath more fully, for “the Sabbath of the Lord” and the “Lord of the Sabbath” cannot be separated.

JESUS

Creator:	John 1:1-3; Heb. 1:1, 2
Rest:	Matt. 11:28-30
Blessing:	Acts 3:25, 26
Holiness:	Col. 1:22; Eph. 1:4
Delight:	Ps. 37:4
Sanctification:	1 Cor. 1:30
Deliverer:	2 Cor. 1:10; Col. 1:13

SABBATH

Sign of Creation:	Ex. 20:11; Gen. 2:2
Rest:	Ex. 20:11; Gen. 2:2; Heb. 4:11
Blessed:	Ex. 20:11; Gen. 2:3
Hallowed:	Ex. 20:11
Delight:	Isa. 58:13, 14
Sanctification:	Ex. 31:13; Eze. 20:12
Deliverance:	Deut. 5:15



■ ROBERT BENARDO

Robert Benardo is a church elder who resides in Graham, North Carolina.

Supporting the Baptismal Class

■ DOUGLAS E. ROBERTSON

Introduction

One of the most important periods of Christian development is that spent by a new convert in preparation for baptism. Baptism is the symbol of entrance into the family of God's church. "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life" (Rom. 6:4, NIV).*

"Baptism is a most solemn renunciation of the world. Those who are baptized in the threefold name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, at the very entrance of their Christian life declare publicly that they have forsaken the service of Satan and have become members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King" (*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 91).

Right at the beginning of their Christian experience, those preparing for entrance into the church need the most careful attention and support. A person who has been well instructed in the baptismal class will have been given a good start toward living a happy and victorious Christian life.

Preparing Candidates for Baptism

Time of instruction. Time spent in preparation for baptism ought to be a time of instruction. Jesus urged His disciples to "go and make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to obey everything I

have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19, 20, NIV).

Preparation for baptism is a time when the candidate is taught the truths of Scripture. The great themes of the Bible need to be clearly presented. Each should be taught in a simple manner so that the person finding his or her way to Christ can grasp their importance and accept them by faith (Acts 8:30-38).

- the Fall and the great controversy between Christ and Satan
- God's plan of salvation
- the Incarnation
- the sinless, serving life of Jesus
- His all-forgiving death on Calvary
- His resurrection and His atoning ministry in heaven
- the distinctive Bible doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Because of heavy pastoral responsibilities, the pastor is often prevented from studying the Bible with every new believer. Elders and other church leaders who have teaching abilities may assist the pastor in this work by meeting with these people and bringing them to an understanding of Bible truth and of Christ's demands on their lives.

Time of spiritual development. Early in their spiritual experience, new converts should be led through the steps of becoming children of God (Acts 2:37-41). The baptismal class will assist new con-



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verts in understanding and experiencing:

- repentance, confession, and forgiveness
- how to accept Jesus Christ into their lives as Lord and Saviour
- how to overcome temptation
- how to develop a strong devotional life
- how to strengthen their faith in God to develop a strong, mature Christian lifestyle

Baptismal class teachers often concentrate on doctrinal topics, excluding many essential truths. At the time of their baptism, most candidates have a good understanding of the distinctive doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Unfortunately, many people are baptized without a clear understanding of God's plan of salvation and how to live as Christians in non-Christian surroundings. Therefore, many have little strength to resist temptations that come after their baptism. Those being prepared for baptism must be brought to Jesus and taught how to accept Him as the Lord of their lives. Jesus said, "I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (John 12:32, NIV). Hearts that have been melted by the love of Jesus will happily accept all other demands on their lives. Spiritual development grows from a relationship with Jesus.

Time of preparation. During the early days of the Christian experience, those preparing for baptism should be trained and prepared for the privileges and responsibilities of being a Christian in God's church. You will be able to instruct these people in correct forms of:

- Christian behavior
- Church organization and procedures
- principles and practice of worship
- tithe paying
- Sabbath keeping
- Christian stewardship
- sharing their faith

You will also assist them in discovering what gifts the Holy Spirit has given them and train them how to employ these talents usefully in helping to build up the church and its witness.

Time of social change. When people make the decision to be baptized and to join the church, they are often subject to demanding social changes. Their decision is often misunderstood by relatives and friends who may show opposition to them being baptized. Sometimes their decision to follow Jesus will cause them to be rejected by their family and friends. To be shut out and excluded from their families or to be socially rejected by friends will place these new Christians under a great deal of stress.

When people make the decision to become Seventh-day Adventist Christians, there will often be quite a dramatic change in their lifestyle. Some will be leaving membership in another church to join with your congregation. Others will have to leave one form of employment and look for another job that does not require them to work on God's Sabbath. Some will have to turn their backs on certain social and cultural practices that are not compatible with a Christian lifestyle. As the person preparing them for baptism, you should be aware that changes such as these are not made easily.

When people are called upon to change their religious beliefs, their jobs, and leave behind the support and security of friends and family, their lives come under considerable strain. Many are leaving behind so much that has been familiar and reassuring to pursue a new lifestyle that, for them, has many uncertainties. As you lead them toward accepting new beliefs and a new lifestyle and help them to make new acquaintances within the new church community, you are going to need to provide them with very special support to assist them through this process of change. Encourage your church members to be very accepting of these new people. Help them to feel that they belong and are welcome in your church. Approach people in your congregation to make a special effort to befriend these new folk. Their social integration into your church family is vital to their long-term spiritual growth and security. (See Luke 11:24-26.)

Methods of Instruction

In most areas of the world, people are prepared for baptism through a series of Bible studies that are usually given in the homes of the people or in a baptismal class. Others are instructed through Bible correspondence courses, through Bible classes, or through individual study. Whichever method is used, the content of the lessons should include the major teachings and beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

However, it is important to remember that more is required for baptism than just a knowledge of the beliefs of the church. During the course of instruction there should be several occasions when you, as the instructor, have opportunity to get personally acquainted with each candidate. This will give you time to study and pray with them and to assess their needs and spiritual condition. It will also give them opportunities to ask questions and share their joys or concerns with you. You should satisfy yourself that the people you are instructing understand sufficiently their involvement in God's

plan of salvation and their duties and responsibilities as they become members of His church.

“There is a need for more thorough preparation on the part of candidates for baptism. They are in need of more faithful instruction than has previously been given them. The principles of the Christian life should be made plain to those who have newly come to the truth . . . It is the duty of the pastor to have special meetings with them. Read to them the teaching of the Bible in regard to conversion. Show what is the fruit of conversion, the evidence that they love God” (*Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 91-95).

When Are Candidates Ready?

To be ready for baptism, candidates must give evidence:

- that Jesus is Lord of their lives (1 John 4:15; Rom. 10:9; Matt. 10:32).
- that repentance and conversion have taken place (Acts 2:38; 3:19).
- that they have an active belief and trust in Jesus (Mark 16:16).
- that they have a daily, saving relationship with Jesus.

- that they have completed a course of instruction in the teachings of Scripture and the distinctive biblical doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (Matt. 28:20).
- that they have been prepared for responsible membership in God’s remnant church.
- that they are involved in the worship and witness of the church.

Before baptism, there should have been visits by the elder or church pastor to confirm their readiness for baptism. And finally, they should have approval for baptism from the church board.

Baptism is an extremely important experience in the life of a new Christian. Careful preparation for baptism is vital to their future development. Every lesson, every Bible study, and every visit that new Christians receive should be well presented so that the best possible opportunities are provided to strengthen them for their Christian walk.

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MEDITATION

Does Anyone Care?

I was built with lots of love, sweat, tears, and sacrifice.
Because you cared.
I sheltered your young and old.
I saw your marriages begin,
Your children dedicated to God,
your youth and adults nurtured,
and your loved ones laid to rest.
You took care of me then—
I knew you loved me.
But the years took their toll—
now my carpet is frayed, my lawns appear ragged.
Weeds have taken over my flower beds.
I sag, I’m worn, and I weep.
And no one cares.

Could it be that some of those who once cared are gone,
and others too choked with worry and work?
Visitors come to see if they will be welcomed—
will anyone notice them?
Will they find love here?
Instead they see my wrinkles and flaws, and
people rushing here and there,
turning away from them.
I heard an echo somewhere—“Let us start building”
(Neh. 2:17)
Do you hear? Will you answer?
Does anyone care?

—Peggy Harris, church elder
Beltsville, Maryland

What about your church building? Is it inviting? See page 22.

Church Leadership and the Law

E PAUL CHAFFEE

Members entrust church leaders with legal and ethical responsibilities. This article shows how to maintain that trust.

Corporate board members in the business community are legally required to work ethically. The same standard of intelligent, loyal care is appropriate for clergy and lay leadership and may, under some circumstances, be legally required.

A congregation's governing body is, generally speaking, legally responsible for most of what happens at the institution, including off-site activities. Leaders are expected to assume this responsibility in good faith.

The following practices are not all required by law. But they express good faith and give substance to the desire to be responsible in leadership activity. They can be useful not only to members of the governing body but to anyone doing congregational business.

Suggestions for Decision-makers

1. Remember the purpose and mission of your congregation, and always work for its best interests.
2. Become familiar with your church structure and rules. [The constitution and bylaws appear in the front of the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* and discuss the structure of the worldwide church

organization. The *Yearbook* should be available in your church office. On the local level, the critical rules that Seventh-day Adventist congregations have accepted for themselves can be found in the *Church Manual*.]

3. Be known for your faithful attendance at meetings and keep careful records of your work.
4. Being a yes-person all the time is as disastrous as being a no-person all the time. Take responsibility for your own decisions. Without intellectual independence and integrity, a leader devalues his or her role in the community.
5. Brush up on your analytical skills! Remember to listen to all points of view. Ask questions until you are satisfied that everything is on the table. Be willing to make mistakes, and on discovering them, be quick to correct yourself.
6. Give financial documents and decisions special attention. When you do not understand a financial issue or report, continue asking questions until you do. If you object to a financial decision, voice your concern, and have your vote recorded in the minutes.
7. Let your conscience be your guide when voting, and be willing to disagree.
8. Investigate difficulties, seeking a healing outcome. Sweeping problems under the rug usually guarantees bigger problems in the future.
9. Follow the rules. This includes obeying the



E PAUL CHAFFEE

The above condensation from Chapter 2 of Paul Chaffee's book *Accountable Leadership* concerns the church and the law and is written for congregations in the United States. The principles, though, apply to local church leadership around the world. Published last July, the book is a guide through legal, financial, and ethical issues facing congregations. Chaffee's experience includes pastoral work, staff work in nonprofit agencies, research and writing for the United Church of Christ insurance program, and editing a monthly newspaper. The book can be obtained from ChurchCare Publishing, 2107 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94109 (1-800-230-4635), 251 pages, US\$14.95, postpaid.

law, spending money as designated by appropriate decision-making bodies, and following the strictures of the congregation's founding and corporate documents.

10. Build at least two people into the information loop regarding money, pledged, collected, and disbursed. The best person to propose a more-than-one policy is the treasurer, to keep feelings from being hurt.

11. Turn to experts when making decisions regarding property, legal matters, and bonds or securities associated with fund-raising. Securities law is particularly complex and demanding, with both the agents and the securities requiring registration, unless specifically exempted.

12. Make a habit of talking about important issues to members of the congregation, help keep lines of communication open, and correct false rumors.

13. Learn to be wise supervisors. The relationship between clergy and governing board is complex and in need of ongoing respect and care. Abuse can come from either side of this relationship.

14. Be fair and affirming to others, the secretary, choir director, custodian, and to volunteers, vendors, and contracted service providers.

Maintaining a Legal Frame of Reference

Leadership means carrying a greater burden of responsibility before the law than other members. This does not mean that you need to become a lawyer, nor does it mean that most decisions made by a governing board need the nod of an attorney. It does suggest the wisdom of knowing the scope of your responsibilities and endeavoring to fulfill them in good faith. Leaders are legally enjoined to be prudent—careful with the authority entrusted to them.

Some specific legal constraints exist which leaders need to know:

Suggestions for Obeying the Law

1. Resist any personal financial profit from your leadership activity.

2. Bylaws define the scope of leadership responsibility and the procedures for decision-making in the community. They deserve to be treated as legally binding. Ignoring bylaws undermines any leader's credibility and record. If existing bylaws do not serve the congregation well, go through the appropriate procedures to amend them.

3. Contract law is an elaborate system for keeping promises. Leaders need to know how the

system works. Breach of contract creates financial vulnerability. Never sign a contract for the congregation without authorization or indicating your official role. Legally, the use of the preposition "by" when signing establishes that the signer is acting as an agent and, consequently, is not *personally* liable (as long as signing is within the scope of his or her authority).

4. Never voice a congregation's endorsement or support of a political candidate. Joining a candidate's political campaign threatens your nonprofit tax exemption. Endorsing and supporting legislation *is* allowed, however, as long as it does not represent a substantial portion (more than 10 or 15 percent) of the congregation's program or budget. [This law applies to the United States, but is good policy in every country.]

Most important, leaders must do their work without negligence. Most civil suits against congregations involve injury as a result of allegedly negligent leadership. Taking care may come naturally to a faithful person; in the eyes of the court it is *mandatory* for leaders vested with corporate authority. In some states directors and officers are held personally liable for negligently performing their duties.

Examples of negligent leadership:

1. Knowingly allowing an unsafe condition to exist, in the facility or in an activity, which causes injury or death.

2. Writing checks against insufficient funds.

3. Carelessly supervising activities so that injury or death results.

4. Allowing or authorizing copyright infringement.

5. Making false statements to a potential donor, lender, or extender of credit.

6. Terminating an employee for an insufficient or impermissible reason.

7. Causing injury through careless driving while on church business.

In short, negligence causes accidents, and accidents cause pain and suffering. Lawsuits and severe court judgments may result.

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How to Deal With Criticism

■ REX D. EDWARDS

Every church leader faces criticism at some point. Dr. Edwards suggests how we may cope with it, as well as warning us about what doesn't work.

The ministry is one of the few professions in which all that its practitioners do is evaluated, for good or for ill. Criticism simply goes with the territory. Because local church elders often take the place of the pastor and act as church leaders, they must also learn to cope with criticism. Church leaders live a unique existence. They play a multiplicity of roles. Those in church ministry must be counselors, preachers, evangelists, community leaders, priests, and prophets to their congregations.

Parishioners expect things to go well (unless they are among the few who work to make things go poorly) and tend to notice only the mistakes. Church leaders may joke about what congregations expect, but behind the smiles lie disturbing realities.

On the other side, remember throughout this article that church elders may also occupy the seat of the critic. At the feeling level, church members (including many elders) expect the pastor to be in the office when *they* telephone or drop by, but otherwise to be out calling or attending meetings. They demand that the pastor be adept at personal counseling as well as at building a church. Mem-

bers anticipate that the pastor will find time to prepare sermons and do continuing education, yet never leave town; be more Christian than anyone else, yet never offend anyone's political or economic prejudices; be totally ethical, yet understand and forgive *their* indiscretions; be open and honest, yet never admit any shortcomings.

But whether you are a church elder or pastor, you may be subject to criticisms of style. Such criticisms seem puzzling because style has little to do with one's performance on the job. Such things as sense of humor, whether one preaches wearing a coat on a hot day, whether one's best thinking hours come late at night or early in the morning, or how one looks in a certain hat have little to do with the gospel. Yet these behaviors seem important to some members.

Church leaders are fair game for criticism. If an elder or pastor vents frustrations in the presence of others, he or she pays a price. Critics rarely seek change or reconciliation, any more than hunters do with their prey. The fun is in the stalking and the shooting.

So how does one relate to critics? Beware of the following stances. They are guaranteed *not* to work.

Pastoral: See the critics as having personal problems and in need of help.

Parental: Tell yourself the critics are engaged in childish antics; some will "mature," while others



■ REX D. EDWARDS

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will remain hopeless but lovable.

Psychological: Dismiss the critics as motivated by psychological problems; label them as paranoid, schizophrenic, or neurotic.

Adversarial: Try to win a contest of wills, since the critics are wrong.

Righteous: See the critics as less Christian than yourself and therefore acting out of envy or ignorance.

Retreating: Retreat into family, hobbies, studies or preparation for more specialized jobs to avoid hurt.

Professional: Call parishioners “clients” who lack the expertise to tell leaders how their jobs should be done.

Arrogant: Declare, “I am the only one who knows what is right, just because I am me.”

Manipulative: Arrange the church structure so that only those favorable to oneself remain in power.

Divisive: Separate the congregation in for and against camps, isolating critics in a minor congregation operating alongside but separate from the “real” congregation.

Escapist: Flee to another church to minimize criticism and to increase the honeymoon period experienced in a new situation.

Analytic: Label critics by organizational or management terms.

Ubiquitous: Try to become all things to all people until you lose your own identity.

Martyrdom: Create an unhealthy dependency relationship with those who side with you, allowing others to become disgusted and possibly leave.

Prophetic: Do not take critics seriously because prophets expect criticism.

Intellectual: Treat criticism as it is treated in the Old Testament wisdom literature, an interesting exercise in marginal scholarship.

Reconciling: Seek out critics and wheedle them into a tearful reconciliation. (Few critics will go through such an episode more than once.)

These methods allow us to *cope* without actually *dealing* with the criticism. Criticism needs to be dealt with at the human level. We must treat critics as children of God. You have to face them on three levels: the emotional, the rational, and the practical.

1. The emotional level. Controlling emotional reactions does not come easy. Criticism

makes a direct attack on your self-esteem, and the natural response is to feel resentment and anger. But to openly express these emotions makes you more vulnerable; to dwell on them causes you to poison yourself.

Jesus said to *pray* for your critics, to bless them that hurt you (see Luke 6:28). This may seem preposterous to someone smarting under the lash of undeserved criticism, but amazingly such prayer relieves hurt. If you make a conscious choice to pray for your critic, you cannot simultaneously brood over the injury done to you. Jesus reconciled Himself with His critics by relating to them through God. “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

In terms of incarnation, God in Christ dwells in our fellow beings. We cannot dismiss the idea that through criticism God may be talking to us. *Coping* with criticism involves how we relate to the critics. *Dealing* with criticism means asking God what His Word has to say to us.

How do you steady your emotions under attack? Remember that strong men and women have always been criticized. If your life has vitality, if you want to get things done for God, and if you tend to blaze new

paths, you will encounter hostility and opposition. Christ experienced bitter criticism and finally crucifixion by His contemporaries who could not endure His revolutionary ideas.

Abraham Lincoln once said, “If I were to try to read, much less answer, all the attacks made on me, this shop might as well be closed for any other business. I do the very best I know how—the very best I can; and I mean to keep doing so until the end. If the end brings me out all right, what is said against me won’t amount to anything. If the end brings me out wrong, 10 angels swearing I was right would make no difference.”

2. The rational level. The second step in coping with criticism is to be rational. Take the criticism and examine it objectively, for as Theodor Leschetizky, a great piano teacher, remarked, “We learn much from the disagreeable things people say, for they make us *think*; whereas the good things only make us glad.”

Ask yourself if there is any truth in the criticism. Beware of self-excuses and rationalizations; if you give in to these, you only compound the original error. If you conclude that your critic states the

Controlling emotional reactions does not come easy. Criticism makes a direct attack on your self-esteem.

truth, you must acknowledge that truth. This should silence him or her—what more can be said? Another positive result—other people tend to rally around someone who can admit mistakes.

Another rational approach involves examining the qualifications of your critic. Is the person reputable and sincere? If so, you cannot afford to dismiss his or her criticism too readily. Has he or she reason to be spiteful or jealous? Then perhaps you can dismiss your critic. In such a case, dignified silence may be the best response. But if the criticism is false and damaging, you *must* respond. In such a case the best reply is simply to state the facts rather than retaliate.

Remember too that when criticism finally reaches your ears, it has probably become exaggerated. Beware of advice. Some people actually enjoy the excitement of a feud, and will throw gas on the flames if they can. “Come on,” they seem to say to the victim of criticism, “put up a fight!”

Another aspect of being rational means recognizing that not everyone is going to like you. (Occasionally some people rub us the wrong way for no particular reason—keep in mind that we too may rub someone else the wrong way.) Facing this simple truth will help you to not be unduly disturbed by a certain amount of unpopularity.

In dealing with criticism at the rational level, the key is not so much a matter of the leader and his or her critics, but the leader and God. The leader is first and foremost a servant of God, not of the congregation. The only opinion that counts is God’s. We might have the smoothest-running, best-oiled ecclesiastical machine around, but if we are not at one with God, then what does it matter?

Two dangers exist. First, our Lord states, “In that you do it to one of the least of these, you do it unto Me” (see Matt. 25:40). Christ is present in our parishioners. Being reconciled to God sometimes means being reconciled with a sister or brother.

A second danger exists in the potential subversion of Jesus’ own reconciliation ethic: “So if you are offering your gift at the altar, . . . first be reconciled” (Matt. 5:23, 24, RSV). What if we try to reconcile, and the other party refuses? Is Christ’s statement an absolute? The Gospels do record several instances when Jesus Himself had to slip out of town rather than reconcile with His accusers.

How to reconcile may depend on our priorities. If we accept every criticism as of equal importance the congregation may get the message that they control us rather than God controlling us. When our parishioners criticize us, sometimes they want to know if we really are leaders. In their hearts

they hope for a leader who belongs to God first.

3. The practical level. How can leaders deal with criticism on the *practical* level? You can try to help your critic. Criticism is a two-edged sword, and often the poisoned edge cuts the person who wields it. Ellen White agrees when she writes:

“Evilspeaking is a twofold curse, falling more heavily upon the speaker than upon the hearer. He who scatters the seeds of dissension and strife, reaps in his own soul the deadly fruits” (*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 176). Further, “Caviling, ridicule, and misrepresentation can be indulged in only at the expense of the debasement of your own souls. The use of such weapons . . . cheapens the mind and separates the soul from God” (*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 466).

Gossip can be nothing but criticism motivated by jealousy or insecurity. Small people find it easier to tear someone else down than try to build themselves up. But what is their reward? No one trusts them, and ultimately no one believes them.

Jesus commands us to return evil with good (see Luke 6:35). This is no pious nonsense; kindness *is* stronger than malice. Who can forget Abigail’s surly husband, Nabal, who found himself foolishly in trouble with David. Infuriated, David set out to wreak revenge. In a display of wisdom and tact Abigail skillfully turned David from his wrathful plan (1 Sam. 25). Of this story Ellen White writes, “With kind words she sought to soothe his irritated feelings” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 666). And she did, for kindness “is the most powerful argument that can be produced in favor of Christianity” (*Gospel Workers*, p. 122).

Chronic criticism usually comes from warped and unhappy people. Clutching at false importance, they try to cover up their own inadequacies by pointing out the failings of others. To reflect Christ when you encounter hostility you need to look behind the anger, understand its root, and attempt to remove it for the other person’s sake as well as your own.

As English statesman, Benjamin Disraeli, once remarked, “How much easier it is to be critical than to be correct.” There will always be critics in your world, some well-intentioned, others cruel. You can defend yourself against the unkind ones by learning to control your emotions, adopting a calm and rational attitude, and sincerely trying to help your critics to rid themselves of their anger. Remember, however, that your best defense lies in your own day-to-day conduct. It means keeping your moral standards high, having a clear conscience, and living a life devoid of deception.

Are You a Day's Journey From God?

■ BEN MAXSON

The power of an effective ministry lies in practicing the spiritual disciplines. What are the barriers to spiritual growth, and how do we overcome them?

"I haven't prayed privately for months. My only prayer life has been the prayers I prayed in public as pastor of my church." With these words a weeping pastor explained how he lost his hold on God and plunged into immorality.

At times in the experiences of each of us, our human sinfulness erupts, threatening to destroy our ministry for God. Our service loses its power, its focus, and its joy. Feeling that we are living in a spiritual desert, we wonder how we got there and where we can get help.

In the words of the Adventist Church's leading light on spirituality: "The reason why our preachers accomplish so little is that they do not walk with God. He is a day's journey from most of them."¹

We need not forget our dream of God using us for His cause. But to realize that dream we must find strength in a life strongly rooted in a living spirituality.

Too often we don't realize that the power of our ministry in the local church and in the community springs from spirituality—which, in turn, grows out of a personal encounter with Christ.

Members truly respect their leaders as the reality that Christ dwells in their lives confronts them. Credibility grows as the lives of the pastor, church elders, and other church leaders unveil the beauty of a Saviour who meets the challenge of a contemporary society going berserk in self-fulfillment and the sensational.

Defining Spirituality

Spirituality must have a private dimension before it can have public influence. Spirituality is a response to God's initiative, a movement of the entire person toward the God who first loved us. Our response leads us to center ourselves in Him—to be open to God and to submit totally to His will. Christ becomes the passion of our lives—a passion fueled by intimacy with Him.

The experience of salvation remains the basis of our spirituality. Only as we accept the gospel are we equipped to grow in the likeness of Christ. His compelling love conquers our doubts and fears. The fact that "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8) strikes at the very roots of our self-centered lives.

An ongoing struggle makes up another part of spirituality. We may experience peace in Christ, but continued growth in Him comes as the result of a continuing struggle with self. In the words of Paul, "I keep under my body, and bring it into



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subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Cor. 9:27).

Maintaining a disciplined Christian life is part of the battle. Both the surrender to Christ and the walk with Him result from a disciplined, intentional focus of the life in following Him.

The call to ministry on any level is first a call to spirituality. We share in Christ's ministry only as far as we share in His spirituality. In one of its primary forms the public dimension of spirituality creates dynamic spiritual preaching. On the other hand, preaching that has no roots in a personal spirituality quickly disintegrates into pompous exposition of cold theory, neither touching nor transforming the heart.

The spiritual church leader models a humble, authentic, and intimate walk with God. This modeling becomes one of the key elements in teaching spirituality.

Barriers to Spirituality

I have found six common barriers to a growing spirituality.

1. *Impossibility thinking.* A church leader, John, could not believe that God wanted to have the same type of experience with him that He had shared with Enoch. When someone talked of an intense experience with God, John discounted it as some form of mysticism. This denial closed the door to deeper encounters with God. As he opened that door, growing in the use of spiritual disciplines, his life turned around.

2. *Busyness.* I find it easy to be so intensely involved in ministry that I have no time for God.

Ellen White warned: "As activity increases and men become successful in doing any work for God, there is danger of trusting to human plans and methods. There is a tendency to pray less, and to have less faith. Like the disciples, we are in danger of losing sight of our dependence on God, and seeking to make a savior of our activity. We need to look constantly to Jesus, realizing that it is His power which does the work. While we are to labor earnestly for the salvation of the lost, we must also take time for meditation, for prayer, and for the study of the word of God. *Only the work accomplished with much prayer, and sanctified by the merit of Christ, will in the end prove to have been efficient for good.*"²

Far too often our busy schedule results from our own needs, not God's will. As Eugene Peterson says, "It is far more biblical to learn quietness and attentiveness before God than to be overtaken by what John Oman named the twin perils of ministry, 'flurry and worry.' . . . Flurry dissipates energy, and worry constipates it."³

3. *Ignorance of spirituality.* Many of us live for years with a strange yearning for more of God that we can neither identify nor satisfy. We must face the tragic reality that we have not developed many ways to find intimacy with Christ. Too often we don't realize we can do some things to foster a deeper experience with God; we assume it will just happen.

While there will always be a mystical dimension to our walk with God, there are specific skills and experiences that open one's life to Him. Integrating an expanded prayer life, meditation, fasting, devotional Bible reading, and other disciplines into my devotional life has revolutionized my relationship with God.

4. *Laziness.* One must work hard to experience spiritual growth and a consistent devotional life.

5. *Inconsistency.* Bob, another friend, shared the typical story of a spiritual walk with God filled with highs and lows. The climb to the mountaintop seemed too rare, and the plunge to the depths too sharp and too fast. As I listened to him, I saw in my devotional life a mirror image of his experience.

6. *Our concept of success.* This insight came during the most painful moment of my life. I discovered I had shut God out of control of my life by trying to determine just how I would work for Him. I had my own picture of what success in ministry would be. As I sought to achieve that "success" I repeatedly ran ahead of God, racing down detours and finding only pain and frustration. Learning to trust God to control my spirituality and to define my success was an unforgettable experience of freedom and faith. This struggle cannot be won once for all time. We must fight the battle again and again.

Dimensions of Spirituality

Four basic dimensions of the personal life form the foundation without which pastoral spirituality cannot stand.

1. *The committed and submitted life.* We must submit to the will of God and place Him first in our lives and ministries. "Seek ye first the kingdom of

Far too often our busy schedule results from our own needs, not God's will.

God, and his righteousness” is a basic principle of the kingdom to which we belong. Submitting self is so difficult and painful that Paul describes it as dying—as being crucified. Yet to the degree in which self remains in control, to that degree we fail to grow spiritually and be effective in God’s hands.

Commitment results from a relationship and grows into a passion for Him to whom we commit ourselves. While commitment is not an end in itself, the passion for Christ must be one of the controlling dimensions in the spiritual life. This passion for Christ grows to be greater than any other passion. It is this commitment that leads us to focus all that we do on Him.

2. *The disciplined life.* It is through spiritual disciplines that we regularly open ourselves to God. Disciplines such as prayer, fasting, study, and meditation help attune us to God. They become tools through which He transforms us into His image.

Disciplines also involve consciously choosing to develop God’s lifestyle in contrast to that of the world.

3. *Lifting up Christ.* As we focus on Him, He draws us to Himself. And the only way in which we can get others to change is by, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, lifting up Jesus Christ. He said, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32).

4. *The ministering life.* True Christian spirituality can never retreat into monastic isolationism. True spirituality bears fruit in ministry modeled after that of Christ. In fact, in the context of leadership spirituality, our work is an extension of Christ’s. As our connection with Christ grows, He leads us to lives of service. He transforms our ministry so that we focus on Him instead of on functional or institutional goals and purposes.

Fostering Spirituality

We can never find spirituality in ourselves. Instead it is rooted in and empowered by the presence of Christ. His presence is nurtured in the devotional life—in prayer, meditation, and study of Scripture.

“All who are under the training of God need the quiet hour for communion with their own hearts, with nature, and with God. . . . We must individually hear Him speaking to the heart. When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God. . . . This is the effectual preparation for all labor for God.”⁴

This intimacy comes through openness and

authenticity as we enter God’s presence. The intimate knowledge of God and His way with human beings puts our sinfulness in the context of His saving grace. We grow in trust as we immerse ourselves in His Word. Through meditation on Scripture we become familiar with those who have walked with God in past ages and we see how He wants to walk with us now.

“With the Word of God in his hands, every human being . . . may have such companionship as he shall choose. In its pages he may hold converse with the noblest and best of the human race, and may listen to the voice of the Eternal as He speaks with men. . . . He may dwell in this world in the atmosphere of heaven, . . . like him of old who walked with God, drawing nearer and nearer the threshold of the eternal world, until the portals shall open, and he shall enter there. . . . He who through the Word of God has lived in fellowship with heaven will find himself at home in heaven’s companionship.”⁵

Walking with God can be an exciting adventure. He has made us for Himself. He longs to have the intimacy of father and child with us. More than anything else, He wants to help us become all that He created us to be—His children, made in His image. We can meet the challenges of ministry successfully only as we center our lives in Him.

“With the risen, victorious Jesus at the center of your life, you win. That was all the early Christian community had against Jerusalem, Rome, Athens—and the Christians won. That’s not rhetoric; that’s history. They had only Jesus and we keep thinking that we need something else.”⁶

Let’s nurture our hunger for God. He promises to satisfy us: “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matt. 5:6). When our hearts hunger for Him more than for anything else, we will find Him. He longs to fill our lives with His presence.

¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 1, p. 434.

² ———, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), p. 362. (Italics supplied.)

³ Eugene H. Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor* (Carol Stream, Ill.: *Christianity Today*, 1989), p. 34.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1942), p. 58.

⁵ ———, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1952), p. 127.

⁶ Brennan Manning, *Lion and Lamb* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1986), p. 115.

Your Church Through the Eyes of a Visitor

■ GARY BONDURANT

Church facility attractiveness and people contacts make an important first impression.

It is hard to be a visitor. That's the lesson I have learned in recent months. As a pastor I had become less sensitive to visitors than I should have been. As a visitor I found that it wasn't easy to be a stranger, uncertain of what I would find when I entered the building. Visiting is stressful, and anyone who thinks it isn't must not have gone through the experience recently.

For 12 years I was a pastor. Then I resigned from the ministry in order to devote my time to writing. I entered this new adventure with excitement and hope. But leaving the security of the church and longtime relationships was a wrenching experience because my family and I value belonging. We need to have our place, particularly in the church. With my change of occupation we were suddenly outsiders, temporarily cut off from that reassured sense of belonging.

We visited several churches, looking for a place where we could find what we needed. Like other visitors, we were looking for those things that we valued most. We wanted a worship service in which we could encounter God, an openness to children, the availability of relationships with like-minded Christians, and a concern for the world beyond the walls of the church building.

I am convinced that like us, every visitor is searching for something. Some can articulate exactly what their expectations and longings are; others cannot—but they are searching. Any visitor who initiates a contact with the church, just dropping in without being invited by a friend or relative, has a reason that is personally important. You can count on it.

I rediscovered that most church members don't notice what visitors notice. They are too accustomed to the facilities, the worship, the way relationships work, and everything else that gives that particular congregation its unique flavor.

Some of what visitors perceive is not very flattering to the church. Please don't get defensive at this point—visitors are not generally trying to be negative. They wouldn't be there if they weren't hopeful of finding something good. But since they are experiencing your church for the first time, everything makes an impression.

The condition of the facilities makes a statement about the congregation. That may sound superficial, and in a way it is, but people form important impressions based on what they encounter first. Church members have to keep in mind that a visitor, particularly a first-timer, hasn't had an opportunity to discover how committed and loving the people are. As I visited churches, I sometimes noticed dirty restrooms, peeling paint, unmowed lawns. On other occasions the well-kept buildings and grounds spoke



■ GARY BONDURANT

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of the pride the people had in their place of worship.

If the place looks like no one cares, don't expect a visitor to care either. If it communicates "We care," the visitor can assume that the members take pride in being part of the church, and that the congregation is enthusiastic in their life together.

A good first impression invites the visitor to take a closer look. But a bad first impression discourages the visitor from checking out the church more fully.

Making People Feel Welcome

More than the condition of the property matters, of course—people make a powerful impression too. Often the official greeters are the first people a visitor encounters. That's nice, but it is still impersonal. What the church wants to communicate is "We care about you." But a greeter's friendliness is no more personal than that of the pastor who shakes your hand and says "Glad you were here this morning" as you make your way through the line at the exit. Like the pastor, the appointed greeters are supposed to be friendly. Visitors have the feeling that such people are merely doing their job. The best that formal greeters can do is to be friendly, hand a worship bulletin to the visitor, explain the availability of a nursery (if that's appropriate), and help with any other questions or obvious needs.

Contacts with the other worshipers have a greater impact. When other worshipers introduce themselves to me, I feel more welcome, and therefore more comfortable. If they invite me to sit with them during worship, that's even better. When they offer me a smile or a hymnal, or show me in some other way that I have been noticed, I am attracted by their thoughtfulness.

Everyone likes to be noticed. Visitors are no exception. But the noticing must be done in an appropriate way. Many churches like to have visitors stand during the worship service so that they can be introduced. Some visitors enjoy that kind of attention, but others do not. Having visitors stand may help the church members to know who the visitors are, but it helps the visitors only if those members sitting nearby introduce themselves and offer a warm, personal greeting.

How assertive should members be in welcoming visitors? Members need to be sensitive to the visitors' response, just as they would be in meeting new people anywhere else. Most visitors appreciate members who are warm and caring and natural.

Every church has a few friendly souls who are

genuinely caring (God bless 'em) but whose efforts seem to frighten people away. Some members latch on to strangers in an overly familiar fashion. Such a member may monopolize a visitor's attention, not allowing him or her to meet others in the congregation. Some members may even want to carry on a conversation with a visitor all through the worship service. The church must control such behavior in a firm but loving way. To ignore it means that many visitors will be turned away because of this aggressiveness.

Actually, every member affects the visitors' first impression. For example, during the worship service visitors can't help noticing people who are continually whispering or dozing off. They also notice when the people sing hymns half-heartedly. If the regulars aren't excited about what is happening, then it is unlikely that visitors will be eager to get involved.

On the other hand, when the members display lively involvement in worship and in the rest of the life of the church, many visitors will want to find out what the people find so special.

It is important that the church pay careful attention to what shapes a visitor's first impression. If that impression is positive, the visitor will be drawn further into the life of the congregation. This will provide additional opportunities to develop a relationship. But a negative first impression will likely lead a visitor to look elsewhere.

You can help your congregation make a good first impression by directing it to present itself positively. Establish a group whose job it is to look at the church from a visitor's perspective. Include new members on that committee, since they have the freshest memories of their own first impressions of the church. Have the committee review and make suggestions about the care of the facilities, the education of the membership to the needs of visitors, and the effectiveness of the church in relating to new persons.

The committee should evaluate everything a visitor might encounter—from the sign on the church lawn to the directions given during the worship service. They should consider how effectively the church communicates to its visitors the educational and service opportunities it offers, and how visitors are told whether or not their participation in Communion is appropriate.

Making a positive first impression entices visitors to become a part of the church—and gives the church the opportunity to meet their spiritual and emotional needs as only it can.

Most church members don't notice what visitors notice.

Avoiding the Steps to Destruction

✠ JAMES H. ZACHARY

Sermon Objective

To show how to avoid the steps that lead to eternal death.

Scripture: Joshua 7:20, 21.

I. Introduction

Begin by telling the story of the Israelite general lying face downward and mourning (Joshua 7:6-9).

A. His army had been victorious at the fortress of Jericho, only to suffer defeat at a small village called Ai. Why? God responded, "Israel has sinned. They cannot stand before their enemies" (see verses 11, 12). Then God commanded Joshua, "Up, sanctify the people" (verse 13).

Joshua called the nation together. They cast lots to see who had sinned. The tribe, the clan, and then the family were singled out, and finally the man, Achan, was revealed. Joshua faced the troublemaker with a command: "My son, give glory to God and make confession" (see verse 19).

1. The Bible does not mention that Achan gave glory to God.

2. But Achan had no choice but to confess.

B. Read the sermon text—Joshua 7:20, 21. As you read this text, ask the congregation to listen for the steps that led to Achan's death. Once the steps are identified ask, "At what point did Achan sin?"

II. The Four Steps:

"I Saw, I Coveted, I Took, I Hid."

A. The first step: "I saw."

1. Achan's background predisposed him to be tempted by material things. He had spent his life as a poor man camping in the desert.

a. But this was no excuse.

b. Achan could have interrupted his journey to destruction at any time. God gives us a way out if we turn to Him.

2. His eyes fell on gold, silver, and a rich Babylonian robe.

a. We cannot always avoid seeing forbidden things. We are exposed to them every day.

b. Achan chose to dwell on these things.

c. Achan went into the experience lacking spiritual insight and faith in God. This lack of preparation too had been a choice.

Explanation: Achan was already in Canaan. The Lord had safely taken him and his family through the wilderness wanderings. God had removed the Jericho fortress. All of this land and its riches would soon be given to the Israelites. He had every reason to believe in God for he knew how God had led in the past. He knew about the deliverance of Israel through the plagues on Egypt, the opening of the Red Sea, the manna in the wilderness, the crossing of the Jordan.

B. The second step: "I coveted."

1. As he kept looking at the treasure, he saw a chance to become rich.

2. He began to think of what he could do with those riches.

Illustration: Tell the story of King David's experience. When David saw Bathsheba bathing, he did not look away. His lingering, lustful look led him to covet. Soon adultery and murder followed, and finally the loss of four of his sons.

a. Stress the need to control how we

react to what we see, and how we must immediately turn away from what is evil or forbidden.

- b. Sin starts in the mind and involves motives.
- c. At the point Achan chose to covet, he sinned.
- d. Refer to Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:27, 28.

C. The third step: "I took."

- 1. Evil actions follow wrong thinking. Taking the riches was the natural result of Achan's coveting.

Illustration: As a fish swallowing the hook, together with the bait, is taken and killed; so the covetous with their gold get many sorrows which entangle them in death everlasting. (Cawdray).*

- 2. Stress why this sin was so wrong. God had won the battle at Jericho. The Israelites shouted praises to God while the walls fell. All the loot belonged to the One who had won the battle. Anyone who took loot for personal use became a thief.
 - a. Achan failed to give God the glory.
 - b. Failing to do so was part of his sin.

D. The fourth step: "I hid."

- 1. Like all thieves, Achan had to hide the stolen goods.
 - a. He could not wear the foreign garment.
 - b. He would not be able to explain sudden spending of wealth to the community, so he had to hide his booty.
- 2. The one who steals or breaks other commandments must also attempt to hide himself or what he has done.

III. Summary

"I saw, I coveted, I took, I hid." These steps ultimately lead to destruction if no repentance is made along the way. If Achan could speak from under the pile of stones that fell on him, he would add to the first four steps, "I died." Thus death is the result when one chooses to continue in sin.

IV. Personal Application

How can you avoid the steps that lead to destruction? You choose not to follow them.

- A. The psalmist wrote, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes" (Ps. 101:3).
 - 1. Remember that what we spend time watching, we come to value.
 - 2. We become calloused to evil if we continue to watch it. We become participants.
 - a. If we cannot avoid seeing evil and it comes unexpectedly, that is the time to turn away.
 - b. The lingering look leads to coveting, sin, and destruction.
- B. Look to Jesus. A well-known chorus tells us to "turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace."
 - 1. How different Achan's story would have turned out if He had kept his eyes upon the Lord, His Saviour. God had promised to give him a full, happy life in the land of Canaan.
 - 2. But Achan ran ahead of the Lord, took things into his own hands, disobeyed, and lost everything.
 - 3. As we face decisions each day, we must keep our eyes upon the Lord Jesus and our minds on what He has and is doing for us.
 - a. Instead of destruction, He gives us life.
 - b. His power enables us to cope with daily challenges.
 - c. He will not withhold any good thing from His obedient ones.

V. Closing Appeal

Colossians 3:2 urges the Christian to set his or her mind on the things above. We find joy and peace in filling our minds with heavenly things. The pull of worldly things lessens through the power of God. We know assurance by thinking on the life and death of Christ for us. We know peace by communing with God. How many here want that peace and assurance?

* Taken from *6000 Sermon Illustrations*, Elon Foster, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA, 1992, p. 148.

Following Jesus: The Saints of the Second Mile

E. W. C. SCALES, JR.

Matthew 5:41: "And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." The Revised Standard Version says, "If any one forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles."

In the days of Christ the Roman government gave its officers and soldiers the right to force any citizen into service. If a Roman soldier had heavy packages to carry, he would speak to a Jew and that Jew had to accompany him and carry his packages for a minimum of one mile. The law required it.

Somewhere I read that every Jewish boy who lived in the country marked off a mile in each direction on the road by his house. He drove a peg in the ground so that he would know exactly how far he was required to go. A Roman mile was equivalent to 1,667 yards, or 1,000 paces.

The Jews hoped that Jesus would establish an earthly kingdom and overthrow this Roman domination. But Jesus, in His sermon on the mount, made this shocking statement to His audience: "Whosoever shall compel you to go one mile, go with him two miles."

The message Jesus conveyed and still conveys says that Christians should be willing to go beyond the call of duty—to go the second mile, if you please, and do more than that which is required or expected. Let me mention three areas in our Christian experience where all of us need to go the second mile.

1. We need to go the second mile in service. Jesus says in Matthew 20:27 and 28, "And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Now a big difference exists between one-mile saints and the two-mile saints. One-mile saints are on the church roll in good and regular standing. They are what we might call respectable church members. These people come to church on a fairly regular basis, enough to be considered members.

One-mile saints come to church just enough to be called Seventh-day Adventists. They do just enough to barely get by. In most cases, one-mile saints will never accept any church office or other responsibility, because they do not want to be tied down. Whenever you ask them to serve, they always say, "I decline." One-mile saints come to church and sit in their favorite seats—"rocking chairs." These rocking-chair Christians want to be fed spiritually, but remain unwilling to participate in any spiritual exercise that involves them in the church's work. They remind us of spectators who go to the airport to observe the planes take off and land, but they never board the planes.

One-mile saints will occasionally help with church work if it doesn't inconvenience them or cause them to go out of their way. Someone has said:



E. W. C. SCALES, JR.

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“I’ll go where You want me to go, dear Lord,
If I can have first-class accommodations.
I’ll be what You want me to be
If it doesn’t interfere with my plans.
I’ll say what You want me to say, dear Lord,
If I can still be popular with my friends.
And I’ll do what You want me to do
If I have time.”

I hope we don’t have any one-mile saints here in this church.

What about the saints of the second mile? I am happy to report that they are different. They willingly get involved in the work of the church. Even though they are busy, they will go the second mile in service. They keep on working even when they feel tired and weary. They are not dry-weather Christians. You don’t have to beg them to do the Lord’s work. They will gladly do it because they love the Lord with all their hearts. They never consider it an inconvenience to go the second mile in service. They are the ones who invite more and more people to church services and evangelistic meetings.

Second-mile saints will use their cars to do missionary work. They will give Bible studies, distribute literature, and even put extra gas in the tank and drive that extra mile if necessary.

The Man With a Consecrated Car

He couldn’t speak before a crowd;
He couldn’t teach a class;
But when he came to Sabbath school
He brought the folks “en masse.”
He couldn’t sing to save his life,
In public couldn’t pray,
But always his “jalopy”
Was crammed on each Lord’s day.

Although He could not sing,
Nor teach, nor lead in prayer,
He listened well and had a smile
And he was always there
With all the others whom he brought,
Who lived both near and far,
And God’s work prospered—for he had
A consecrated car.

—Author Unknown

In Luke 10 we discover that not only does the good Samaritan stop and bind up the unfortunate man’s wounds but he sets the man on his own beast and takes him to an inn. Then he pays the hotel bill, advancing money for the man’s continued care

and telling the hotel manager that if further financial needs should arise, he will be glad to take care of them. This is what it means to go the second mile in service.

2. We need to go the second mile in love.

In John 13:35 we read, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” The one-mile saint stands up and testifies, “I love everybody,” but seldom demonstrates this love to anybody. One-mile saints usually love those who pat them on the back and say nice things about them. It’s easy to love those who love us. It’s easy to love those who give us birthday gifts and Christmas gifts. The Jews felt that God loved only those who served Him and fulfilled the requirements of the rabbis. But this was not true.

Jesus added a new dimension to love. In Matthew 5:43 and 44 Jesus taught that we should go the second mile in love, even to the extent of loving our enemies. In other words, second-mile love enables us to love people even when they talk disparagingly about us, hurt our feelings, or persecute us. This kind of love is possible only when Christ dwells in the heart and causes us to love as He loves.

Second-mile love enables us to love the stranger, the alcoholic, the dope addict, the poor, the handicapped, the person of another race, tribe, or religion, the backslider, the down-and-out.

a. The second-mile saint loves enough to forgive.

Tom and his sister Mary were always arguing, fussing and saying terrible things about each other. After a big argument one day, both of them went upstairs to their rooms.

Mother called Mary downstairs and said to her, “You know, Mary, you ought to forgive Tom for the things he has done to you and said about you.”

After thinking about it for a moment, Mary said, “OK, Mom, I will forgive him.”

A little later Mom called Tom downstairs and said to him, “You know, Tom, you ought to forgive Mary.”

Tom immediately replied, “Oh, Mom, I can’t do that. She said some terrible things about me. I just can’t forgive her.”

Mom said, “Suppose she dies tonight.”

Tom said, “I hadn’t thought about that. I guess I will forgive her.” Tom went up to Mary’s room.

Mary said, “Tom, I said some terrible things. I’m sorry; please forgive me.”

Tom said, “I’ll forgive you because Mama said you might die tonight. But if you don’t die tonight,

I just want you to know that I'm going to get you in the morning."

If we want to be forgiven, we must be willing to forgive. Peter asked Jesus in Matthew 18:21: How often shall I forgive my brother, as many as seven times? Jesus answered in verse 22: Forgive him, not just as many as seven times, but up to seventy times seven. We ought to be willing to go the second mile and be unlimited in our forgiveness. In fact, the Bible clearly teaches in Matthew 6:14 and 15 that if we want to be forgiven, we ourselves must be willing to forgive. We must be willing to forgive people who have done us wrong whether they apologize or not. Some people say, "I will forgive you, but I won't forget." This is not forgiveness. We should also be willing to trust people, restore them, and treat them as though they have never made a mistake.

b. The second-mile saint loves enough to care. Too often we are concerned only about ourselves, and show very little or no concern for others. The psalmist David reminds us of this fact in Psalm 142:4, where he says, "I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul."

The second-mile saint cares about the members of the church family, including new members, the inactive and former members, backsliders, and young people. He or she visits and encourages all who need encouragement.

c. The second-mile saint loves enough to share. The Bible says in Luke 14:12-14: "Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."

Second-mile love enables us to widen our circle of love to include all of God's children. Second-mile love suggests that when we have a feast, we do more than just invite our relatives and special friends or those who are able to return the favor. We should reach out also to those who may not be able to return our hospitality—and Jesus will reward us richly.

The Good Samaritan was one of those second-mile saints. He went beyond the call of duty in his service for God and humanity. As good Christians we need to be willing to go the second mile in love.

Second-mile love reaches out to someone to

help, to lift, to encourage, even when there is no response.

Second-mile love allows yourself to feel the hurt of a person who has been disappointed and who has had one of life's bad breaks.

Second-mile love stays with a person through the trials of life when others are forsaking him and ridiculing him.

Second-mile love believes the best about a person until the person himself proves otherwise.

Second-mile love trusts others with your friendship.

Second-mile love opens the compassion of your heart to another, regardless of who or what he or she is.

Second-mile love helps someone who is down climb back on top and get on with living.

Second-mile love refuses to count a person out as a friend because he has failed.

Second-mile love applies the ways and teachings of Jesus Christ to all of life's relationships.

3. We need to go the second mile in sacrifice. I understand that when John Wesley was preaching a sermon one day, the first subtopic of his sermon was "Get All You Can." A deacon sitting near the front of the auditorium responded by saying, "Amen Brother." Wesley moved into the second part of his sermon which was "Save All You Can." The deacon exclaimed, "Amen! You are really preaching." Then John Wesley proceeded with the concluding portion of his sermon, which was "Give All You Can." The deacon then exclaimed in a disappointed tone, "Oh, no! You have stopped preaching and you have gone to meddling."

Psalm 50:5 says, "Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." What does it mean to sacrifice? It means to go the second mile in giving. Somebody said that second-mile giving means to give until it hurts, but I submit to you that second-mile giving means to give until it stops hurting.

The story of the widow's mite inspires us all. This very poor woman wanted to do something special for the cause of God, which she loved so dearly.

She looked at the gift in her hand. It looked so small in comparison with what the rich folks were giving. She had less than a penny. Giving it away was a great sacrifice because it was all that she had. What an example for us today!

In reality, God saw in her gift more than all of the combined offerings of the rich, for they represented no sacrifice. The rich people remained one-

mile saints, but the widow became a two-mile saint.

One-mile saints return their tithe out of a feeling of duty. Sometimes they give a small offering, but they never know the joy of being second-mile sacrificial givers.

In some places one-mile saints have been giving a dollar a week for Sabbath school missions and a dollar for church expense for the past 20 years. Even though they have received many raises in pay, they would never dream of giving God a raise.

One-mile saints give only because of duty, or to keep up with the Joneses, or to keep from being embarrassed. They give just enough to get by when they are capable of giving much more.

A pastor was appealing for liberal financial gifts to assist in the church building program. A man stood and proudly announced, "I'll give \$50." This church member wanted everyone to know how much he was giving. Just at that moment, a piece of plaster fell from the ceiling, hitting this proud brother on the head. The man was so embarrassed. He took out his handkerchief, dusted off his head, cleared his throat and said, "Pardon me, folks, I'll make that \$100." An elderly church member sitting near the front shouted, "Hit him again, Lord, hit him again!"

Sometimes one-mile saints will wait to be asked or begged to give, even when they know the great needs of God's cause. And when they do give, they expect praise and recognition. They feel hurt and disappointed if their names and the amounts of their gifts do not get publicized. Such are the one-mile givers.

But I am so glad that God still has second-mile saints who will not be satisfied until they have made a sacrificial covenant with Him. The second-mile saints don't wait to be begged to give. They give willingly, they give joyfully, because they love Jesus. They find pleasure in providing a Christian education for worthy students or in assisting the handicapped. They enjoy looking after the elderly members of the church who have borne the battle during the heat of the day.

Second-mile saints give without expecting any praise, and without any blowing of trumpets or tooting of horns before the congregation. They give, not to be seen or recognized, but to express their love and gratitude to God for His goodness.

Second-mile givers will even give secretly. In Matthew 6:3 and 4 Jesus emphasizes this principle: "But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly."

Once upon a time there was an old lady who received a monthly welfare check. She was having a hard time. A certain family discovered her plight and devised a plan to help her. They took her to dinner occasionally and every time they bought groceries they bought an extra supply for her. For years this remained a secret between this family, the old lady, and God. What an example for us today!

Nearly 2,000 years ago Jesus came to this earth. Throughout His ministry He set for us a perfect example by going beyond the call of duty.

He went the second-mile in service. He went about doing good. His life was wrapped up in service to others. He worked chiefly among the poor, needy, sick, and suffering. He visited them in their homes and took an interest in them. He even humbled Himself as a servant and washed His disciples' feet. He always went the second mile, and He didn't have to do it.

He went the second mile in love. He was no respecter of persons. He had no prejudices and worked for all groups of people. He associated with sinners and ate with them. He even loved those who were down-and-out—the social outcasts. He gave His greatest attention to the poor and had His greatest success working among them. He saw no human being as worthless. He demonstrated second-mile love in the way He dealt with Zacchaeus, the woman at the well, and even the thief on the cross. He loved so much that He even forgave His enemies, including His persecutors and murderers.

He went the second mile in sacrifice. He labored often without food. He did not measure His work in hours. He left the richness of heaven and for our sakes laid aside His royalty, came to earth, and became poor. As a man He knew what it was like to be hungry, thirsty, and weary. For three years He became a homeless wanderer, and often slept on the ground during the cold, damp shades of night (as noted in *Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 107).

Yes, He went the second mile in sacrifice to the point of being treated cruelly as a criminal. He made sacrifices throughout His ministry, but the greatest sacrifice took place at Calvary. He died, rose, ascended, and is coming back soon to this earth to take us to heaven.

As we willingly and fully surrender to Christ, He enables us to go the second mile. As we travel that second mile, we experience the assurance that when He comes, He will claim us as His own.

The Kind of Sermons Needed

E ELLEN G. WHITE

The preacher will not come before the people until he has first communed with God.

Will our brethren bear in mind that we are living amid the perils of the last days? Read Revelation in connection with Daniel. Teach these things. Let discourses be short, spiritual, elevated. Let the preacher be full of the Word of the Lord. Let every man who enters the pulpit know that he has angels from heaven in his audience. And when these angels empty from themselves the golden oil of truth into the heart of him who is teaching the Word, then the application of the truth will be a solemn, serious matter. The angel messengers will expel sin from the heart, unless the door of the heart is padlocked and Christ is refused admission. Christ will withdraw Himself from those who persist in refusing the heavenly blessings that are so freely offered them.

The Holy Spirit is doing its work on the hearts. But if the ministers have not first received their message from heaven, if they have not drawn their own supplies from the refreshing, life-giving stream, how can they let that flow forth which they have not received? What a thought, that hungry, thirsty souls are sent away empty! A man may lavish all the treasures of his learning, he may exhaust the moral energies of his nature, and yet accomplish nothing, because he himself has not

received the golden oil from the heavenly messengers; therefore it cannot flow forth from him, imparting spiritual life to the needy. The tidings of joy and hope must come from heaven. Learn, oh, learn of Jesus what it means to abide in Christ!

If the Christian minister receives the golden oil, he has life; and where there is life, there is no stagnation, no dwarfed experience. There is constant growth to the full stature of Christ Jesus. If we have a deep, growing experience in heavenly things, we walk with the Lord, as did Enoch. Instead of consenting to the propositions of Satan, there is most earnest prayer for the heavenly anointing, that we may distinguish the right, the heaven-born, from the common.

If we are fighting in the strength of the Mighty One, we are on the side that will win at last. In the end we shall conquer. The greatest work, the most perilous scenes are before us. The deadly conflict we must meet. Are we prepared for it? God is still speaking to the children of men. He is speaking in many different ways. Will they hear His voice? Will we place our hands confidently in His and say, "Lead me, guide me"?

There is cheap religion in abundance, but there is no such thing as cheap Christianity. Self may figure largely in a false religion, but it cannot appear in Christian experience. You are workers together with God. "Without Me," said Christ, "ye



E ELLEN G. WHITE

Ellen G. White was one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. A prolific writer, she produced more than 100,000 pages by the time she died in 1915. Her work continues as a prophetic voice within the Adventist Church. This article comes from *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1962), pp. 337-340.

can do nothing.” We cannot be shepherds of the flock unless we are divested of our own peculiar habits, manners, and customs, and come into Christ’s likeness. When we eat His flesh and drink His blood, then the element of eternal life will be found in the ministry. There will not be a fund of stale, oft-repeated ideas. There will be a new perception of truth.

Some who stand in the pulpit make the heavenly messengers in the audience ashamed of them. The precious gospel, which it has cost so much to bring to the world, is abused. There is common, cheap talk; [there are] grotesque attitudes and workings of the features. There is, with some, rapid talking, with others a thick, indistinct utterance. Everyone who ministers before the people should feel it a solemn duty to take himself in hand. He should first give himself to the Lord in complete self-renunciation, determined that he will have none of self, but all of Jesus.

The Word is the preacher’s light, and as the

golden oil flows from the heavenly olive tree into the bowl, it makes the lamp of life flash with a clearness and power that all will discern. Those who have the privilege of sitting under such a ministry, if their hearts are susceptible to the Holy Spirit’s influence, will feel an inner life. The fire of God’s love will be kindled within them. The Bible, the Word of God, is the bread of life. He who feeds the flock of God must himself first eat of the bread which came down from heaven. He will see the truth on every side. He will not venture to come before the people until he has first communed with God. Then he is led to work as Christ worked. He respects the varied minds that compose his audience. He has a word that touches the case of all, not worldly, confusing ideas. He has no right to introduce the worldly perplexities. The bread of life will satisfy every soul hunger.

For further study: *Gospel Workers*, pp. 374, 391-396, 489, 490; *Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 492-509; vol. 9, pp. 216-218.

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