



ELDER'S DIGEST

A Quarterly Resource for local Church Elders Vol. 7 No. 3

Together in Diversity

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Essentials—Landmarks— Fundamentals

Joel Sarli



In the last two weeks of December 2000, Elder James Cress and the editor of *Elder's Digest* met more than one thousand elders and pastors in training seminars in the territory of the South American Division. Surprisingly it seemed to us that quite a number of elders and

pastors are confused about the role and action of some "independent ministries," and what their relationship is to the church and the fundamental teachings of the Adventism. To help elders as well as pastors and members in general to understand the meaning of fundamental teachings or "landmarks," *Elder's Digest* is reprinting what Ellen G. White wrote about the relation to the receiving and disseminating of advanced light.

"In Minneapolis God gave precious gems of truth to His people in new settings. This light from heaven by some was rejected with all the stubbornness the Jews manifested in rejecting Christ, and there was much talk about standing by the old landmarks. But there was evidence they knew not what the old landmarks were. There was evidence and there was reasoning from the Word that commended itself to the conscience; but the minds of men were fixed, sealed against the entrance of light, because they had decided it was a dangerous error removing the 'old landmarks' when it was not moving a peg of the old landmarks, but they had perverted ideas of what constituted the old landmarks.

"The passing of the time in 1844 was a period of great events, opening to our astonished eyes the cleansing of the sanctuary transpiring in heaven, and having decided relation to God's people upon the earth, [also] the first and second angels' messages and the third, unfurling the banner on which was inscribed, 'The commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.' One of the landmarks

under this message was the temple of God, seen by His truth-loving people in heaven, and the ark containing the law of God. The light of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment flashed its strong rays in the pathway of the transgressors of God's law. The nonimmortality of the wicked is an old landmark. I can call to mind nothing more that can come under the head of the old landmarks. All this cry about changing the old landmarks is all imaginary.

"Now at the present time God designs a new and fresh impetus shall be given to His work. Satan sees this, and he is determined it shall be hindered. He knows that if he can deceive the people who claim to believe present truth, [and make them believe that] the work the Lord designs to do for His people is a removing of the old landmarks, something which they should, with most determined zeal, resist, then he exults over the deception he has led them to believe. The work for this time has certainly been a surprising work of various hindrances, owing to the false setting of matters before the minds of many of our people. That which is food to the churches is regarded as dangerous, and should not be given them. And this slight difference of ideas is allowed to unsettle the faith, to cause apostasy, to break up unity, to sow discord, all because they do not know what they are striving about themselves. Brethren, is it not best to be sensible? Heaven is looking upon us all, and what can they think of recent developments? While in this condition of things, building up barriers, we not only deprive ourselves of great light and precious advantages, but just now, when we so much need it, we place ourselves where light cannot be communicated from heaven that we ought to communicate to others. Never can the heart [be] stirred up with envy, with evil-surmising, with evil reports, but the intellect becomes unbalanced, and cannot decide correctly any

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Parleying With God

Robert H. Pierson

“And Samuel said, what meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?” (1 Sam. 15:14).

The words are familiar to us. God told Saul to destroy everything—people and livestock, everything that pertained to the Amalekites. He was to spare nothing. But Saul reasoned that it was all right to spare Agag the king and some of the best of the cattle.

You remember how Saul rationalized his deviation from the direct command of God. He was sure the Lord would not object to his saving some of the animals for sacrifice—this was part of worship. Having Agag around, Saul reasoned, would be a constant testimony to the living God and His power to deliver His people.

The reasoning—humanly speaking—was fine. The problem was, Saul was not doing what the Lord told him plainly and specifically to do. He was rationalizing!

According to the dictionary, to rationalize is “to produce plausible but untrue reasons for conduct. . . to substitute a natural for a supernatural explanation.”

It is too easy to explain away what God says if we want to do something different, or if another way appears to be easier and does not rock the boat too much and the consequences are not too dire. The rationalizing person who does not wish to follow exactly the counsel God gives and yet wishes to “do what God wants him to do” does not deny that God has given the counsel—he just attempts to explain away that counsel. He convinces himself that a way short of God’s explicit

direction is acceptable to the Lord and is really all right to follow.

Saul wanted to keep the sheep and cattle, so he rationalized himself into believing there was really nothing wrong in doing so. Do we do the same in making some of our decisions?

We speak of “de-emphasis” today instead of rationalization and compromise. We didn’t hear much of the word until recent years. When we don’t like “rationalize” or “compromise”—shady implications of deviation—we talk about “de-emphasizing” certain things. When we wish to gain favor with those not of our faith, we begin to de-emphasize our differences. “Let’s get closer together.” Let’s play down our differences. After all, maybe some of these points aren’t so important. We don’t change—we just de-emphasize the sanctuary, the judgment, and some of our distinctive truths.

From a source I can no longer identify I read these words on rationalizing: “While addressing the World Council of Churches in New Delhi in 1961, the late Prime Minister Nehru said: ‘The politician is constantly inclined to compromise. Sometimes this might be all right for him, but once you begin to compromise it is a slippery path. Every step seems a small step, and yet it takes you further

away from your basic position. By contrast, the true man of religion will stick to the truth as he sees it regardless of the consequences.’”

What sobering words for us to ponder prayerfully. Dare we hold a lower standard than a non-Christian politician?

*“The true
man of religion
will stick to the truth
as he sees it
regardless
of the consequences.”*

There are some gray areas where the issues are not altogether clear cut. It is agonizing to make some decisions. How much we need the wisdom of the Lord to help us at such times.

But let's face it—sometimes it is more comfortable to follow the path of least resistance. Any other course will bring on disagreement, opposition, frustration, unpleasantness, or we may be suspected of fanaticism. How we fear that label in this sophisticated age!

Then that insidious little demon of rationalization commences his hellish work—“Perhaps the servant of the Lord didn't mean what she said. Perhaps there were time and setting factors that influenced her. If she were living today, possibly she would look at things differently.

It is better to have peace and harmony than to have everything upset in disunity. The time hasn't come yet for us to get excited about these things.”

So we hang another harp on our willow tree. We write another “Ichabod” over the lintel of God's glorious house of truth and righteousness.

Instead of the bleating of sheep in our ears, let us make His Word and the Spirit of Prophecy our court of final appeal. “Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it” (John 2:5). **E**

Robert H. Pierson was president of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists when wrote this article.

Sing Unto the Lord



Frank Belden was one of the three most outstanding Seventh-day Adventist hymn writers. The other two were Annie R. Smith, and Roswell F. Cottrell. Music wasn't Belden's only talent. In addition to artistic talent, he had good business sense. More than once he served as business manager for the Review and Herald Publishing Association. He also went into business for himself. His compositions numbered in the hundreds.

Twenty-three of Belden's hymns have been preserved in the Church Hymnal. He often wrote the music to go with his words. One of his hymns, “Look for the Beautiful, Look for the True,” has found its way into the official hymnbook for the Brethren Church.

Annie R. Smith was a poet who wrote for magazines, including the *Review and Herald*. She wrote a number of hymns, eight of which are found in the Church Hymnal. Her consecrated life and talented pen made a definite impact on the church. But her work as a contributor was cut short when she fell prey to pulmonary tuberculosis. The disease progressed rapidly and she died at the age of twenty-four.

Roswell Cottrell, the third of the three most outstanding Seventh-day Adventist hymn writers, has three of his compositions in the Church Hymnal. Cottrell served as a corresponding editor at the Review and Herald Publishing Association. He also had experience in tent evangelism, as a tent master and occasional speaker. In the summer of 1856 he received \$3 a week for performing these duties.

Other early Adventist writers contributed one or more hymns to the repertoire of sacred songs we enjoy today. Time and space do not allow for much to be said about them. Some we know, others are buried in anonymity. Early Adventist believers were so concerned with the Second Advent and everything pertaining to it that they sang their music enthusiastically, and didn't worry too much about keeping records. So it is that the identity of some early writers has become lost.

Learning as much as one possibly can about our hymn writers is a fascinating pastime. A study into the circumstances that surrounded them when they were writing their hymns helps us better to appreciate the musical heritage they have passed on to us. **E**



Managing Committees Before They Manage You

Betty Stirling

Churches are run by committees. This seems to have been the order of things, ecclesiastically speaking, for many years, and appears to be the order for the future. Thus if the church is to be run efficiently and effectively, the minister and his associates need to search for efficient and effective committee methods.

Committees come under the behavioral science classification of "small groups." Much research has been directed toward small groups, and the results can be used to improve the effectiveness of church committees. For instance:

Leadership

Once upon a time much attention was paid to identifying the personality of leaders. This research wasn't too successful, and wouldn't be too useful in making up church committees. Fortunately, many different kinds of people can learn to be leaders, and if the church is to carry out the gospel commission, more of the membership must learn how to lead. Working on and with a committee is a good place for them to begin to learn.

Most church committees are groups of "experts." The best leader for this kind of committee, where all are equally skilled or unskilled, or equally knowledgeable or "in the dark," is a democratic leader. The democratic leader arranges for the quiet to get a chance to talk and the perpetually vocal to get a chance to be quiet and think. He is a facilitator who tries to get all to participate in useful ways.

Committee leaders should try to keep the group together and on track. They need to remember also that the judicious use of humor "oils" the proceedings. (Members might remember this too and help out the leader, if necessary.)

The leader should be aware that some visiting and small talk is necessary at the beginning of a session, especially when the committee is new and members are trying to size each other up, but part of his function as leader is to get the group busy on the business at hand.

The minister can help by carefully observing the new committee and its leader. Unobtrusively—outside the committee—he might remind the leader that being a democratic leader does not mean not leading. It means moving the group by consensus. The minister should encourage the leader to politely stop someone who talks too much, in order to allow the timid and quiet to speak. He should sympathize with the leader who has tried to keep the group on track and point out if necessary that at first this may mean finding the track to get on.

The minister also needs to bring to the leader's attention the fact that problem solving groups, which is what most church committees are, should follow the problem solving process: find and define the problem, get the facts, consider the range of possible solutions, and then pick out the best solution.

For the harried leader who has found a committee occasionally fragmenting into irrepressible subcommittees, the minister might suggest that they deliberately break into smaller groups occasionally for brainstorming.

Leadership has been defined as the process by which a group brings together the efforts of the members. The position of leader includes legitimate authority to use the process of leadership. But the leader must also gain the necessary power to do so through proper exercise of this role. Three types of leaders gain power in these ways:

1. The ascribed leader inherits power and authority, but there are no ascribed leaders in church committees—only in kingdoms and

such. (If you have that situation in your church maybe you should take another look at it!).

2. The appointed leader gets authority from appointment, but must earn power.
3. Elected leaders are already in the process of earning or consolidating power (that is why they were elected), and this power then gives authority when they are elected to the position.

The leaders in church committees are either appointed or elected, though probably most are appointed by nominating committees or other committees on committees. Appointed or elected leaders can earn the power they need in several ways. The leader may choose one or a combination of the following ways as they fit each situation best:

1. He or she can risk everything by making clear cut and important decisions. In doing so they may succeed totally—or miserably fail. The democratic committee leader will probably avoid this way.
2. The leader may choose a slow process of building up success in decisions. Some of these decisions may be outside the knowledge of the particular committee where one is trying to earn power. If they are, the leader can let the group hear (in some appropriate and modest fashion) of past successes, but not say too much about failures. Another way of building up power, especially in committee action, is to find out well ahead by study and investigation how a certain course of action is likely to turn out. If it seems appropriate to the committee's problem the leader can suggest that route to the group. The group will have greater faith in him or her when it succeeds, because they knew what they were doing, and the result is an increase of their power as leaders.
3. Church members who want to become leaders and must be elected before gaining authority, or who hope to receive a particular appointment, can announce their intention. This is typical of the democratic method, though not usually of the church. These kinds of leader must be able to take some failure in stride—assuming a casual attitude toward it—since everyone will see it anyway and they can blame only themselves. This method is a successful way to get power to do a good job, and may be combined with the second method, too.

Followership

Much study has been given to leadership. Very little has been given to followership. Yet the majority of members of committees at any given time are obviously followers. It is also true that individuals who are leaders in one group may be followers in another. What can the minister do to improve the quality of “following”?

First, some questions about followers: How does a person become a member of a church committee? Usually by being chosen or appointed. Occasionally a church member may ask to be on a committee. Why do church members become members of committees? They may be interested in the purpose of the group. They may only be interested in associating with the particular people who will be on the committee. They may feel a need to belong to something, to have some usefulness or importance in the church.

While different reasons for joining a committee will affect the behavior of each member, the fact that they have agreed to serve means that they have some interest in the success of the committee. Possibly the best way to instruct committee members on good followership would be to discuss the subject with them as a group, or perhaps to prepare a list of “rules” in an attractive form and give it to each person joining a committee. Here are some suggestions for a start:

1. Members should feel responsible for what the group does.
2. Members should support the leader if it is at all possible. Remember the golden rule and apply liberal amounts of empathy before criticizing. (One who is follower today may be leader tomorrow!)
3. When a member feels strong disagreement with the leader one way to handle the disagreement is to ask a question rather than express disagreement in a dogmatic way.
4. While “complete oneness” is a beautiful ideal, and it is good if the group can express fears and disagreements openly in the meeting and still accept one another, there are times when it would be better to go directly to the leader (or another member) in private.
5. Part of members' energy in any meeting is taken up in satisfying their own needs. The members should be able to do this if the group is functioning properly, but committee goals should come first.

6. At times a request for clarification of the committee's activities or decisions in writing will enable the member to get better direction from the leader for the group's work, yet not obviously detract from the leader's role.
7. A group member who feels a strong desire to be a leader may contribute to the committee in a positive way by paying extra attention to the membership roles, by volunteering to do extra projects to help the group, or by serving as a chairman of subcommittees. And as a last resort, the minister could indirectly remind the member (outside of the committee) that he or she is a "follower" in this situation, but might be considered for leadership in another committee.
8. If a member finds himself totally unable to work with the group or its leader he should withdraw, doing it in a spirit of cooperation "for the good of the group." A member who finds himself in this spot should remember that the conflict between him and the group may be as much his fault as the committee's.

to the last point of general agreement. Try a different direction from there.

What if the group hits a low point where it appears that the problem cannot be solved, or the ills cured, or whatever? The chairman feels frustrated and discouraged, and the members feel like quitting. This too is a normal stage for new groups with tough problems—and may repeat itself. Much of this feeling comes from working too long at too high a level of tension. When it happens, the group should take a break, divide into subgroups for some brainstorming, relax, or change the subject for a while. In other words, change the pace. Sometimes a member can be a catalyst by introducing a new idea.

The following yardstick might be provided to groups that wonder whether they are really getting anywhere:

1. Is the group reaching its own objectives?
2. Does it move with nominal friction from problem to solution?
3. Is it free from subversive sub-groups?
4. Is the leadership acceptable to the group?
5. Are all members free to participate to the benefit of the group?

There are certain practical aspects of committee dynamics that new leaders or followers may not be familiar with, and which they need to know. The first is timing. Church members are often very busy people; certainly the ones most needed on committees are busy. The time set for meetings should be as convenient as possible, it should be specific and definite, and then the meeting should begin on time and end at the *pre announced* time for quitting. Members should be able to depend on the leader to stick to the schedule. If possible, an agenda should be sent to members ahead of time. If an agenda is not possible, or if only one item is to be considered, then a statement of the purpose of the meeting or the problem to be tackled should be sent.

The place of meeting is likewise important. Members should know precisely where it is and how to get there. The room should be unlocked and all physical environment controlled (such as heating, lighting, cooling) so that the meeting can proceed on time. Seating arrangements affect group dynamics. The leader may want to experiment with different arrangements, particularly if problems develop with unauthorized subcommittees. The leader should be in a place to be

Committee Dynamics

Members of a new committee in a church may be well acquainted, or they may barely know one another's names if the church is large. With the exception of their common faith, they may differ from one another in background, occupation, and life style. In problem solving groups this heterogeneity may be a good thing, but it may be hard to manage until the collection of new committee members really becomes a group.

In the first few meetings there will probably be jockeying for position, especially if some of the members have been leaders before. The leader needs to let the group do this kind of exploration, but relate to it casually, meanwhile keeping the group focused on its tasks.

There may be conflict, both covert and overt, for a while. This is normal in new groups. As members get acquainted there will be affiliations, sometimes subversive, usually not. The group may test the leader for a while. Occasionally people will drop out of the group. Sometimes this is a good thing!

There are times when a committee may proceed fairly well for a while and then come to a place of complete disagreement. What can a leader do if the only thing on which a group agrees is that there is no agreement? Build on this tenuous point of "agreement" and then back up

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The Fine Art of Visitation

James Cress

Some believe pastoral visitation is dead. However, when members describe qualities of the ideal elder, they typically list visitation as a high priority.

While societal trends may change expectations, most members still welcome a personal visit from their elder. When I surveyed my members on their desire for visitation, most indicated their strong preference for visitation only by appointment. Other pastors say that their members have different expectations and want the visitor to “drop in” anytime.

Pastoral visitation is not dead. It may be bungled at best or ignored at worst, but it remains a fine art that brings enormous benefits when practiced rightly. Consider the following suggestions:

View visitation as spiritual work in which you serve your members and extend Christ’s kingdom by inviting others to accept His Lordship. “There are families who will never be reached by the truth of God’s Word unless His servants enter their homes, and by earnest ministry, sanctified by the endorsement of the Holy Spirit, break down the barriers. As the people see that these workers are messengers of mercy, the ministers of grace, they are ready to listen to the words spoken by them.” —Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, pp. 435, 436.

Announce your intentions. Let your members know the conditions under which you will visit. For example, I informed my members that I would visit either by their invitation or my initiation, but I would not visit without an appointment. I also shared with them that they would receive a visit when they were hospitalized, but that such a visit might be provided by an elder.

Make visitation a priority. Set aside a specific time each week for visitation. If you fail to prioritize visitation time, other demands will prevent you from acting on your own good intentions. Contact visitors to your church immediately after their attendance. You should also visit members who may be experiencing challenges or crisis situations, those who have initiated contact with radio or television programs, others who are potential members, and your nonattending members.

Do not visit alone. Taking an companion with you has its advantages. It’s in accordance with Christ’s example of sending out His disciples two by two. It’s a good technique for selfpreservation: why risk damaging your reputation because of what others might report you said or did when you were in their home alone? It helps train your laity. If a person whom you visit needs to begin Bible studies, you can immediately turn that contact over to the person who has accompanied you.

Train by association. You will enlarge the vision of your lay leaders by taking them with you in visiting. They will see that this work is important to you, and they will come to believe that they could reproduce your skills because they have observed you doing it rather than telling about it.

Conserve your time by asking some individuals to come to you rather than traveling to them. Set the appointments at your church for those who can easily commute there for Bible studies or counseling session. Grouping your visits in one section of the city or an area of your district always helps.

Make short visits. A visit need not be everlasting in order to have eternal benefit. In the hospital, tell your parishioner that you have stopped by to pray for their need. Encourage them that God cares. Ask if they have a prayer request. Share a Scripture promise and pray for their need. Meet other patients in the same room and include them in prayer.

In evangelistic visits you can usually accomplish more in five or ten minutes than if you stay an hour. Clearly state the purpose of your visit by giving them a tract or booklet. Thank them for attending your meetings. Ask an open-ended question regarding their receptiveness to what they are hearing, and request permission to pray a blessing upon their home before you leave. **E**

James Cress is the Ministerial Secretary of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Why the Heavy Losses Among Converts?

L. E. Froom

There is very little mystery concerning why many of our converts drift out of the faith after a short time. The fault is not with the message, which is eternally true. It lies in the human factor. Many contributing reasons might be cited. But there are four basic factors which we do well to note. Most of our difficulties center around violation of four fundamentals of sound and abiding evangelism. Let us note them briefly.

Lack of Sound Conversion as the Companion to Thorough Instruction

Too many who are won to the faith are intellectually convinced without being spiritually converted. But intellectual assent alone will not usually hold converts permanently. There must be a genuine "heart warming," as Wesley called it, "a regeneration, or new life" if the soul is to be abidingly anchored in the faith. Nothing is more out of keeping or disappointing than an argumentative doctrinarian whose heart and life have never been transformed by the love and grace of Christ. Such recruits to our ranks are not only potential risks, but are unsatisfactory and cantankerous members while they remain with us.

Be it noted, however, that it takes soundly converted preachers and Bible instructors to truly convert others. In altogether too many cases there is grave weakness at this point. The lightness, joviality, and secularism, coupled with the obvious lack of genuine spirituality, the reliance upon the mechanics of method, organization, argument, devices, and oratory for evangelistic equipment, are all too tragically reflected in the converts of some.

This need for true conversion is basic, and it is personal. God forgive us if unsanctified hands handle

the Word of life, if untransformed lips merely parrot the message of life or death to the soul. A converted ministry, with a resultant consecrated, converted church, is our greatest need. Sound conversion is the first sheet anchor of the soul, to avoid drifting with the tide onto the rocks of separation.

Lack of Thorough Instruction in the Verities of the Faith

In some of our high-pressure evangelistic campaigns, where there is all too little personal work and home instruction, many are hurried into the church with serious gaps in their instruction. Vital subjects were missed because of irregular attendance and only hastily reviewed in the baptismal class. The distinctive teachings such as Spirit of prophecy and tithing truths, health, educational, and other reforms, and much else that goes to make a genuine, intelligent, fully-rounded Seventh-day Adventist, are neglected and sometimes even omitted.

We have too often rushed people into the baptismal pool before they were properly prepared and ready. Thorough instruction, then, is the second anchor to hold the soul when the buffeting winds of trial would drive it aground.

Failure to Integrate Our Converts into the Throbbing Heart of the Movement

Too often we do not properly integrate our converts into the spirit and comprehensive program of the advent movement. Every family won to this message should not merely be joined to the church. All should be inducted into the Sabbath school as regular and active members, the young people tied into the activities and objectives of the Adventist Youth Society, the children and youth

enrolled in our church schools and academies, the parents brought into our various layman endeavors, the home regularly supplied with our periodicals and books, interests and activities tied into our evangelistic projects, and our world-wide missions, habits of health, diet, drink, dress, and recreation tactfully revised and reformed. In other words, our converts should be integrated into the spirit, life, and vital activities of the church. They must become full-fledged participants in God's organized movement, not mere members of the church, as are most adherents of popular Protestant denominations. This is the third sheet anchor to the soul. When this is fastened to bedrock, it will be a strong aid in keeping converts from drifting into carelessness

Let us not be quick to lay on the evangelist all the blame for failure here. He is the victim of a system of intensive and too often superficial evangelistic campaigning that has developed. Moreover, he is judged by his immediate record of baptisms, rather than by the permanency of his converts. Were we to change the checkup and standard of convert evaluation, to the number of those still in the church at the end of a year after baptism, the entire picture would change. This is the test of true evangelism, not merely how many, but how abiding.

We go to great expense and pains to gain converts. But we often rush our evangelists through their efforts. We transfer them too soon, even before their efforts are properly bound off and their converts soundly established. No one else can so establish these new recruits in the faith as the one who first leads them to accept it. His instruction needs to be more full, thorough, and complete. We should not rush him or permit him to be pulled away from an effort with his work only partly done, to repeat the incomplete procedure in another place. Both the conference committee and the evangelist must share the responsibility for failure here. We must revise our

evangelistic schedule if we are to conserve our fruitage. Conservation is imperative today, for our own sake, for the sake of souls at stake, and for the honor of God.

Failure of Coordination Between Visiting Evangelist and Resident Pastor or District Leader

The frequent lack of coordination at this point, though in a slightly different category, is serious. Oftentimes there is failure on the part of the evangelist to actively tie the resident worker into the effort, so that the converts are jointly his converts and his charge. Sometimes the tragic human trait of indifference or

jealousy shows itself. They are not my converts, the pastor may say. Intensely busy with his own problems and interests, he lets them drift through neglect. Nevertheless, they are souls within his parish, and there is inescapable responsibility.

Sometimes the pastor is out of sympathy with the evangelist. At times this may be sheer lack of cooperation. In other cases it springs from revulsion against an evangelist's boastful publicity, or perchance his careless and superficial work. And then, when the credit for all souls won in the city for the duration of a campaign goes to the visiting evangelist, it is easy to see how there is

naturally a lack of ardor on the part of the resident pastor and a failure to tie in with the effort. This matter of faulty relationship is a serious weakness that should be resolutely remedied. New converts have to be nursed along for a time. This responsibility must be shared. We do not leave the newborn infant to shift for itself. We do not say, it is not my child; I have no special responsibility for it. Or, to change the figure, there needs to be active, vital, persistent husbanding of our fruitage. The tender plant must be cared for, watered, sheltered from the burning sun, cultivated, and fed until its roots are firmly set and it can stand alone under storm, stress, or drought,

Our converts should be integrated into the spirit, life, and vital activities of the church. They must become full-fledged participants in God's organized movement, not mere members of the church.

bearing fruit and honoring the expectations of the heavenly husbandman.

Few people are harder to reach again than those who have become only half Adventists and have drifted away from the faith. Only partially indoctrinated, not understanding the genius and spirit of their new faith, not being willing to abandon completely their former worldly life, they are moved to repentance by nothing. Such individuals often develop an indifference and an apathy toward the church that puts them beyond the pale of help.

It is a fearful thing to bring a soul part way along the path of a new life and then allow him to become confused and lose his way because the signboards are not clear, the lighting is dim and insufficient, or the road is beset with unmarked bypaths, and sometimes marred by

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unknown ruts or pits. Leaving such to struggle along behind the procession, to stumble off the pathway back to the familiar and enticing life of the past, involves most solemn accountability which we cannot pass on to others.

Fellow workers, this situation presents a tremendous challenge and confronts us with fearful responsibility. We must grapple with the problem and alter the situation. We must change our methods, attitudes, and relationships. We must never rest until this great wastage has been stopped. For the sake of souls, for the cause we love, for the honor of the church, and, above all, for the sake of Christ, who gave His life for the souls of men, let us change this situation. ■

Leroy Edwin Froom, well known researcher and writer, at the time of writing was Associate Secretary of the Ministerial Association of the General Conference.

Instill Responsibility in Your Fellow Leaders

Elders make sure officers accept responsibility for their actions. Use these five guidelines to plant responsibility where it belongs:

1. Turn a deaf ear toward excuses.

Some people who fail to live up to their commitments may try to shirk responsibility by refusing to treat a problem seriously or by rejecting all solutions. Don't allow them to shrug off their responsibility.

2. Refuse to take the monkey off their backs.

Some officers after the election may repeatedly try to get you to do the heavy lifting for them. Resist these ploys by always directing responsibility back to where it belongs—to those who can and should produce the desired results.

3. Don't spoon feed answers to your fellow leader.

Challenge them to solve their own problems. If you keep giving them solutions, they may not learn anything on their own.

4. Seal the escape hatch.

Some people make commitments and then give themselves a way out if they can't deliver as promised. Force them to succeed by denying them any means of escape.

5. Confront concerns head-on.

Don't expect thorny issues to go away on their own. Example: If an leader misses the first planning or board meeting, investigate immediately rather than waiting for a second incident to occur.

—The editors

The Pastor's Relationship to the Sabbath School

John R. Loor

Why do I, as a Seventh-day Adventist minister, feel so keenly the importance of the Sabbath school? Why do I feel that it is vital that my church officers and I be most faithful in our Sabbath school attendance and participation? It is because, in all my life, I have never known a really staunch Seventh-day Adventist who did not attend the Sabbath school regularly. In addition, I read in *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 5, page 127, the following: "The Sabbath school work is important, and all who are interested in the truth should endeavor to make it prosperous." If there is anyone on the face of the earth who should be "interested in the truth" to the maximum degree, it certainly is the Seventh-day Adventist pastor. Hence, in the light of my own observations and this inspired statement, I feel that it is a pleasure to encourage maximum Sabbath school attendance. Here are a few suggestions that I feel Seventh-day Adventist pastors and other church leaders, with certain adaptations, can incorporate into their program to inspire the greatest possible appreciation of the importance of the Sabbath school.

1. Enthusiasm

The pastor or elder must be genuinely enthusiastic about the Sabbath school and must not hesitate to let it be known in a word, smile, attitude, et cetera. To a large degree, every church is a reflection of its pastor and elders. This is a "ministerial law." The enthusiasm of the church members and officers will be in direct ratio to the leader's "burden."

2. Personal Attendance

The pastor should be present personally in the Sabbath school, greeting people as they arrive. One little background fact is prerequisite to this, however. Get up

early enough on Sabbath morning to make this a reality. There is no magic formula to take the place of this. Loving, tactful encouragement of the minister and elder's family along these lines is essential. Again, in this area, personal example is primary. Coming back to the first sentence in this section, it must be recognized that a church leader with more than one church must adapt this to his circumstances.

3. Bulletin Emphasis

If the church has a bulletin, the Sabbath school program should be printed in it. This adds psychological importance to the Sabbath school. I personally feel that the Sabbath school program should be listed first, that is, before the worship hour. After all, in most of our churches the Sabbath school program comes first, does it not? It should be the first part of a Seventh-day Adventist's experience in his worship of God and study on Sabbath morning, hence its listing in "proper order." Also, the pastor or elder should use the bulletin to regularly emphasize other vital Sabbath school items, such as Thirteenth Sabbath, Investment, Visitors' Day, et cetera. There is something about *reading* material relative to these important things as well as *hearing* about them that makes for a deeper mental impressions.

4. General Visitation

The minister or elder should know who is habitually absent from the Sabbath school or sporadic in attendance, and in his pastoral visitation with them he should let them know that they are missed, that *he* misses them, and he should urge them to be present. There is no substitute for the direct, eye-to-eye, heart-to-heart approach. Of course this must be done with warmth, love, and tact, but the direct appeal can accomplish

wondrous things.

5. "Oblique" Emphasis

A great deal can be accomplished for the upbuilding of the Sabbath school if the pastor or elder will be constantly "plugging" this part of God's program. He can do this in sermons and especially in sermon illustrations. Weaving it in this way can usually be much more effective than a straight announcement. In the announcements at the church service, or in the "King's business," he can allude to the wonderful blessings received by those who were at Sabbath school, letting the Sabbath school absentees know what they missed because they have come to the church service only. A couple of methods that I like to use from time to time are the following:

(a) In welcoming people to the worship hour, I often like to say, "What a beautiful Sabbath it is to be able to come to God's house and worship Him in the *Sabbath School* and worship hour." You see the point.

(b) Often when introducing my first text in the sermon, I like to say, "Let us open our Bibles that we brought to *Sabbath School* and church to..." A constant, varied oblique emphasis can greatly encourage Sabbath school attendance. Radio and television commercials, musical jingles, et cetera, work to a certain degree on this principle of constant repetition and constantly "hitting" the human mind from different angles. It is amazing how the use of this principle really helps the message to sink in.

6. A Direct Word

I touched on this principle, in the home setting, under point number four. Now it comes again, but this time in a different setting. As the members leave, following the close of the church service, the pastor or elder, as they greet them at the door, can tell those who were absent

from the Sabbath school that *he/she* was missed and will look for them to receive the full blessing next Sabbath. If the leader is truly sincere and really loves his people, they will know it, and this little procedure, properly followed, will not cause embarrassment. Much depends here, of course, on the elder/pastor's rapport with his people.

7. Support the Sabbath School Officers

The pastor/elder should never be too busy to attend the Sabbath school council meetings. His presence here is essential to the morale of the officers and the resultant morale of the Sabbath school. In this area sincere compliments and kind words of encouragement passed on to his Sabbath school officers will be helpful. A word that is "fitly spoken" "in season to him [or her] that is weary" will be like the balm of Gilead to their souls. Holding up the hands of his Sabbath school officers should be a elder/pastor's constant aim.



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8. Thorough Grounding of New Converts

New converts to the message, prior to baptism should be thoroughly instructed as to the importance of being present in Sabbath school each week for the development and maintenance

of a strong Christian experience. More than this, these new converts should *actually be attending* Sabbath school prior to baptism. While these dear people are in their first love, every solid groundwork for the Advent message should be laid *then*. Sabbath school is part of this solid SDA groundwork and message.

9. Selectivity in Choosing Sabbath School Leadership

When nominating committee time comes round, the elder or minister should encourage the committee to make the best possible selection of Sabbath school leadership. This should not be done hastily. Carefully,

prayerful thought and attention should be given. Always begin the work of the nominating committee early, so that no hasty, poorly thought out choices will be made, especially in the realm of the Sabbath school officers. Remember that the church will only be as strong as its Sabbath school. The pastor and elder are in a position to encourage all of the church officers in the importance of their attendance at Sabbath school and, specifically, their attendance in a Sabbath school class. There is sometimes a tendency to wander around during the lesson study, thus giving a sense of unimportance to this phase of the Sabbath school. In the elder/pastor's meetings with the entire church leadership, all officers should be made aware of the importance of their example along these lines.

10. Elder/Pastor's Contribution

The elder/pastor, if at all possible, should teach a Sabbath school class. I have found it always beneficial to teach what I choose to call "a class in great doctrines of the Bible" designed for those who are not members of the church. The pastor should also be willing to help

out from time to time in the Sabbath school program aside from teaching a class, perhaps making the mission appeal occasionally or giving a short talk encouraging daily lesson study. He should manifest a real interest in the various divisions by an occasional visit and perhaps a story to the children. His contribution during the Sabbath school hour will prove much in solidifying this area of church life.

Every elder or pastor desires his church to be a strong, Spirit-filled church. A strong Sabbath school means a strong church. May God help us to be most enthusiastic and most diligent about this all-important phase of His great program for the salvation of precious souls, and in the preparation of men, women, youth, boys, and girls for a place in the great Sabbath school of the hereafter. **E**

John R. Loor, wrote this article as pastor of Arlington, California.

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How Do You Listen to the Divine Word?

Mauro Cardoso

Matthew 13: 1-23

I. Introduction

The psalmist described the person of true success as one who listens to and gives earnest heed to the teachings of God's law (Ps. 1:1-3).

Jesus concluded the Sermon on the Mount with a declaration that only those who obey the Word can enjoy a secure life in the present as well as enjoy the hope of an eternal home hereafter (Matt. 7:21-27).

Jesus gave voice to the parable known as the Parable of the Sower in order to emphasize the supreme importance of being a good listener as well as a consistent doer.

The Parable of the Sower expresses the profound faith that if one will sow the divine Word, there will be an eventual harvest.

The great majority will hear the words, but will not really listen and respond.

Do you really want to hear a word from the Lord?

Without our being aware of it, many of us have developed very poor listening habits.

A university professor has made a study of the listening habits of some of his students and has listed ten of the worst listening habits as follows:

- (1) One can decide immediately that the subject is uninteresting.
- (2) One can criticize the speaker's delivery and not listen.
- (3) One can permit oneself to become overstimulated by a facet of that which is communicated and then miss much of what is said.
- (4) Some listen only for parts of what the speaker is saying.
- (5) Some fail to listen because of their efforts to make an outline.
- (6) Some have developed the habit of just staring at the speaker and pretending to listen.

- (7) One can tolerate or even create distractions that will prevent him from hearing what the speaker is saying.
- (8) One can fail to hear because s/he deliberately avoids that which is difficult and technical.
- (9) Some fail to hear because they let emotionally loaded words or terms throw them off the subject.
- (10) One of the worst listening habits is to skip off on some mental tangent suggested by the speaker and so miss what is being said.

The listener can think much faster than the speaker can talk. It is possible to let eighty percent of one's brain power idle and still comprehend what is being said with the remaining twenty percent.

Do you let poor listening habits prevent you from receiving what God is trying to say when you study the Bible or when you listen to your pastor?

II. The Sower

The sower is none other than Jesus Christ Himself. There is nothing wrong with either the person or the purpose or the method of the divine sower.

III. The Seed is the Word of God (Matt. 13: 19)

The Word of God has a living vitality about it. It can produce tremendous changes if it is received into the heart in faith and commitment.

IV. The Soil (Matt. 13; 15)

As Jesus discusses the various types of soil, in reality He is talking about the manner in which people listen to the divine Word.

- A. Are you a wayside hearer? Are your heart and mind hard and unreceptive? Have you neglected to prepare your mind to receive the seed of divine truth? Jesus tells us that the devil is trying to prevent us from receiving the divine truth. He snatches it away as birds snatch away seeds that have fallen on the pathway where there is no soil to cover them.
- B. Are you a stony-ground listener? Do you listen in a shallow, superficial manner, making little response at all to the Word of God? If there is no real change within your life and within your habits, it probably means that you

are a stony-ground, shallow, superficial listener.

- C. Are you a compromising, distracted listener? Do you hear the Word of the Lord and welcome it? But then do you let the cares of this world crowd it out and prevent you from responding as your heart tells you you should respond?

The cares of the world include all of the claims that are made upon us by our neighbors, our business, our profession, our household duties, our school duties.

The love for wealth and the things that wealth can bring can hinder our Bible study and prevent us from being regular in our worship habits. The desire for things material can completely destroy the desire for things spiritual. Living in a competitive and materialistic society which judges success in terms of money, every believer needs to be on guard.

- D. Do you listen with an open, receptive heart, eager to respond fully to the Word of the Lord? We should listen to the Word of the Lord. . .
 1. Attentively.
 2. Prayerfully.
 3. Responsively.
 4. Obediently.

Jesus said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

V. Conclusion

Your worship will take on much greater significance if you develop the right kind of listening habits. Decide now to:

- A. Really hear.
- B. Receive the message.
- C. Put it into action in your life.
- D. Trust the Holy Spirit's promptings and its directions.
- E. Obey the precepts.

Let Jesus Christ become your teacher, friend, and guide.

VI. Illustration

Obedience means marching right on whether we feel like it or not. Many times we go against our feelings. Faith is one thing, feeling is another. —Moody. **E**

Mauro Cardoso lives in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

The Shape of Our Christian Citizenship

Daniel Custodio

I. Introduction

The epistle to the Philippians is an epistle of gratitude and joy.

With genuine love, appropriate wisdom, and great optimism, Paul spoke to them. And as he spoke to them, he speaks to us today.

Philippi was a Roman colony, and its citizens enjoyed the privilege of being citizens of Rome. They enjoyed legal rights there as if they lived on Roman soil near the capital of the Roman Empire. Paul reminds these believers on two different occasions that their real citizenship was heavenly (Phil. 1:27; 3:20). Paul is not suggesting that they ignore the obligations of earthly citizenship, but he challenges them to live in the pagan city of Philippi as citizens of the holy and higher kingdom of God.

Paul voices greetings from the saints in Caesar's household as he comes to the end of this epistle. This could serve as a challenge to those in Philippi to be faithful and devoted servants of Jesus Christ (Phil. 4:22). If you could live for Christ in Caesar's household, it follows that you could live for Christ also in Philippi or in any modern, contemporary city.

The shape of our response to God must take many different forms according to the pressures and the needs which we encounter. It is interesting to note the manner in which Paul hoped that they would conduct themselves as citizens of the kingdom of God.

II. He Would Have Them Stand Firm in One Spirit with One Mind (Phil. 1:27).

The threat of divisiveness or disunity has always threatened the witness of the church. This is true in the modern day, and it was true in those early days of the Christian movement.

We need to recognize that there are many handicaps or hindrances to maintaining a unity of mind and spirit.

- A. The immaturity of God's family can cause disunity.
- B. The individuality of persons can create disunity.

- C. Honest differences of opinion can sometimes be very divisive.
- D. Physical and emotional fatigue can create disunity.
- E. We must recognize that our enemy, the devil, is always seeking to divide the people of God in order that He might conquer.
- F. The difficulty involved in effective service may not contribute to unity.

The apostle Paul was urging the church in Philippi to make definite movements toward unity within the body in order that they might properly reflect the grace and the goodness of God in their city.

III. He Would Have Them Strive Together in a United Effort

- A. We must strive together, side-by-side, for the sake of the gospel

The followers of Jesus Christ should work together like dedicated and disciplined athletes on a winning team.

The disciples of Christ should cooperate with each other in redemptive activity like the members of a choir singing in perfect unison and in tune with each other.

- B. We must strive together to protect the purity of the faith that we believe. There are those who would seek to mix error with truth. We must strive together to protect the purity of our message.
- C. We must strive together side-by-side in proclaiming the Good News in our personal world.

IV. He Would Have Them Stand Firm Against Opposition

It was no popular thing to preach a message of a crucified but risen Savior in the world in which Paul lived. Because of the multiplicity of idols and shrines, many with vested interests opposed any religion that would disturb the status quo. Bravery was essential for success in the face of opposition to the gospel message.

V. He Encouraged Them to Be Willing to Suffer for the Sake of Christ (v.29).

In many parts of the modern world it is popular and socially acceptable for one to be a professing Christian. Such was not the case in Philippi. Such is not the case in many parts of the world today.

Many contemporary followers of Jesus Christ have never faced up to the fact that the cross is the symbol of our faith and our commitment to the will of God. If we would be true followers of Jesus Christ, we must be willing to suffer for our faith as He suffered, and as others have suffered.

VI. Conclusion

What is the shape of your Christian life in the modern world? Philippi was a Roman colony, and the citizens of Rome were encouraged to dress like Romans, act like Romans, think like Romans, speak like Romans, and never forget that they *were* Romans.

Paul encouraged the saints at Philippi to dress, act, think, and speak in a way that would be worthy of Jesus Christ. Let us strive with the help of the Holy Spirit to be good citizens of the kingdom of God in our community now.

VII. Illustration

In the third century, Cyprian, the Bishop of Carthage, wrote to his friend Donatus: "It is a bad world, Donatus, an incredibly bad world. But I have discovered in the midst of it a quiet and good people who have learned the great secret of life. They have found a joy and wisdom which is a thousand times better than any of the pleasures of our sinful life. They are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They are masters of their souls. They have overcome the world. These people, Donatus, are Christians. . . and I am one of them."

Ellen G. White Quotations

The Shape of Our Christian Citizenship

In His Gift to the world, the Lord has revealed how solicitous He is that we bear in our lives the marks of our heavenly citizenship by letting every ray of light we have received shine forth in good works to our fellowmen— *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 42.

"The Lord would have us represent Christ, and show to the world his attractive character. . . . If we indeed have our citizenship above, and a title to an immortal inheritance, an eternal substance, then let us have that faith that works by love and purifies the soul from every spiritual defilement—*Supplement to Review and Herald*, "To Every Man His Work," p. 44. **E**

Daniel Custodio writes from M.Gerais, Brazil

The Two Covenants

Lourdes Contessoto

Key Text: Hebrews 8:6-10

I. What is a covenant?

A covenant is an agreement between two or more persons. A testament. A solemn pledge or promise based on conditions.

II. "First," or "old," covenant. Heb. 8:13, 7.

1. Agreement between God and His people Israel. Ex. 19:3-8.
2. Made in connection with giving of law. Ex. 24:3; Deut. 9:10, 11.
3. God's part of the agreement. Ex. 19: 5, 6.
4. Israel's part of the agreement: "We will do." Ex. 19:7, 8.
5. Israel's covenant was repeated, and confirmed or ratified by blood. Ex. 24:3, 4, 7, 8.
6. God's part of the contract kept. Eze. 20:11, 12.
7. Israel's part of the agreement broken. Verse 13; Ex. 32:7, 8.
8. Old covenant built on Israel's faulty promises. Rev. 9:6-8
9. Broken tables symbolized Israel's broken promises. Ex. 32:19.

III. "Second," or "new," covenant. Heb. 8:13,7.

1. God's true Israel. Gal. 3:16, 26-29; Rom. 29; Gal. t:6; Col. 2:11.
2. God again covenants with Israel. Heb. 8:9, 10; Jer. 31:31-33.
3. New Covenant again based on God's law. Heb. 8:9-10; (Ps. 40:8).
4. New Covenant built on "better promises" than old. Heb. 8:6.
5. Built an God's promises, not the people's. Jer. 31:33.

6. God promises to write His law in mind and heart. Heb. 9:10 .
7. Renewed tables of the law—a type of the new covenant. Ex. 34:1, 4. Moses, representing the people, provided second tables—a type of the people giving their hearts to God so He may write His law in their hearts.
8. Allegory of New Jerusalem to teach lesson of new covenant. Gal. 4: 22-26; (Gen. 15:8-17; Heb. 6:13-20).
9. New covenant formally made at Lord's supper. Matt 26:26-28.
10. Confirmed, or ratified, by Christ's blood. Heb. 9:14, 15.
11. Cannot be changed after Christ's death. Heb. 9:16, 17; Ps. 111:9.

IV. Similarities between the two covenants.

1. Both are called covenants.
2. Both are ratified with blood.
3. Both were made concerning law of God.
4. Both were made with the people.
5. Both were established upon promises.

The Old Covenant

If
If you
If you will
If you will do all
If you will do all, then
 you shall be My people,
 and I will be your God,

The New Covenant

I
I will
I will do
I will do all
 I will do all, and will
 be your God, and you
 shall be my people. E

Lourdes Contessoto writes from Portugal.



In Case of Baptism— Read These Instructions

Joel Sarli

We are living in a world that is continuously fragmenting. More and more, men and organizations want to set their own rules and go their own way. The results are evident in the lawlessness and lack of unity that is seen in virtually every area of human behavior.

Unfortunately, this spirit is making inroads in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the resulting confusion and perplexity are having serious effects upon the church and its ministry to its people and to the world. We do not believe that this is in keeping with the spirit of Christ's prayer for unity, nor in the best interests of the work of the world church.

To protect us against such disunity and fragmentation the Lord has blessed this movement with inspired counsel in both the Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy. We have also been blessed with an exceptionally fine organization, which is the result of divine guidance. Another valuable and vital aid in the ministry of the church is the *Church Manual*, which has been produced by the world church after much study of Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy. *The Church Manual* is the guidebook for our practices and patterns in all of our church activities. The principles outlined there represent the thinking of the world church and no one should feel at liberty to disregard them.

The Ministerial Association recommends the following guidelines regarding baptism and church membership. They are designed to help bring us to a uniformity of understanding and practice in this matter and aid us in keeping the church together in these days when so much is expected and so many dangers of serious fragmentation exist. Their appeal is that all our workers bring their practices into line with the guidelines outlined below. They urge all ministers to become thoroughly acquainted with the *Church Manual* and

suggest that conference presidents take time in workers' meetings to study and discuss the *Church Manual* and the working policies of the church.

Guidelines on Baptism and Church Membership

1. Ministers and Elders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are to work in harmony with the church policy enunciated in the *Church Manual*.
2. In the interest of the unity of the church for which Christ prayed (John 14), we should conduct our evangelism in harmony with the procedures and principles recognized and authorized by the *Church Manual*.
3. On the basis of the teachings of the New Testament and the Spirit of Prophecy, the church has long required that candidates for baptism and church membership be fully instructed in the truth of Jesus Christ as entrusted to the remnant church. This kind of instruction leads to full repentance and confession of sin and to saving faith in the blood of Jesus Christ together with acceptance of the commandments of God as an evidence of the genuineness of conversion and a recognition of the obligations being assumed in entering the ranks of the remnant church. It has also been a means of helping the new convert to give a reason for the hope that is in him.

In New Testament times, although the Philippian jailer and the Ethiopian eunuch seemed to have little preparation time for baptism (and examples of a sustained period of instruction before baptism are not in evidence in the New Testament), it should be recognized that the book of Acts makes no pretense of being a detailed accounting of earliest church history, and that the parallel between the New Testament world and ours in 2001 is by no means exact. The "wine of

Babylon” has been drunk by the world and the church in the interim, and a host of evil practices has invaded the Christian world. Hence the greater involvement of the “everlasting gospel” in its “last day” form (Rev. 14), and the necessity for clear-cut evidence of a marked separation of the baptismal candidate from the old life.

It should be noted also that there is neither theological nor exegetical support in Matthew 28:19, 20 for the idea that baptism should precede teaching. The going, the baptizing, and the teaching are all in the present continuous tense, so that all three are involved in the process of the gospel imperative, “disciple ye all the nations.” How can the church “disciple” (teach, K.J.V.) Without the teaching process? The baptizing and the teaching are alike involved in the process of “discipling.”

If baptism symbolizes the death and burial of the old life, and the rising to walk in a new life in Christ Jesus (Rom. 6:1-23), then there cannot be any insincere or incomplete laying aside of things of the world just for the time of a baptism. Death to the life of sin and worldliness must precede the burial! (See *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1075).

“Only when the Church is composed of pure, unselfish members, can it fulfill God’s purpose. Too much hasty work is done in adding names to the church roll.

Serious defects are seen in the characters of some who join the church. Those who admit them say, We will first get them into the church, and then reform them. But this is a mistake. The very first work to be done is the work of reform. Pray with them, talk with them, but do not allow them to unite with God’s people in church relationship until they give decided evidence that the Spirit of God is working on their hearts” (*Review & Herald*, May 21, 1901.

4. A Seventh-day Adventist Church recognizes that baptism represents an experience of death to the old life in the world, and that the candidates need to have opportunity to adjust their occupations, life-style, habits and practices, before being buried

in the waters of baptism, so that they can be readily recognized as Seventh-day Adventists by those who know them.

5. He gains for his converts the acceptance, the loving ministry and support of the pastors, church officers and members, by integrating them in his soul-winning endeavors and by gaining the right hand of fellowship for these new converts by the church they will attend, since it is they and not the evangelist who have the right to give or to withhold membership.

“The new birth is a rare experience in this age of the world. This is the reason why there are so many perplexities in the churches. Many, so many, who assume the name of Christ are unsanctified and unholy. They

have been baptized, but they were buried alive. Self did not die, and therefore they did not rise to newness of life in Christ” (*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1075).

“Baptism is a most solemn renunciation of the world. Self is by profession dead to a life of sin. The waters cover the candidate, and in the presence of the whole heavenly universe the mutual pledge is made. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, man is laid in his watery grave, buried with Christ in

baptism, and raised from the water to live the new life of loyalty to God. The three great powers in heaven are witnesses; they are invisible but present” (*Ibid.*, p. 1074).

See 2 Cor. 6:17, 18; Col. 3:1-11.

6. He recognizes the New Testament teaching that Christ is the Head of the church, that the church is His body (1 Cor. 12:12, 27; Eph. 1:22, 23; 5:23; Col. 1;18), and that there is therefore no basis for making a distinction or separating in point of time, entrance into church membership from the event of baptism, and that he thus bring his baptismal-church membership practices into harmony with the position and practice of the world-wide church.

“Very close and sacred is the relation between Christ

*The very first work to be done
is the work of reform.
Pray with them, talk with them,
but do not allow them to unite
with God’s people in church
relationship until
they give decided evidence that
the Spirit of God
is working on their hearts”*

and His church—He the bridegroom, and the church the bride; He the head, and the church the body. Connection with Christ, then, involves connection with His church” (*Education*, p. 268). (See also *Evangelism*, p. 318.)

7. He clearly and boldly instructs his baptismal candidates that they are entering the fellowship of the Seventh-day Adventist church, called of God to give His final warning message to the world and to gather out a people as a living demonstration of the fulness of His grace and truth, and that there are definite standards, requirements, sacrifices involved:

“The test of discipleship is not brought to bear as closely as it should be upon those who present themselves for baptism. It should be understood whether they are simply taking the name of Seventh-day Adventists, or whether they are taking their stand on the Lord’s side, to come out from the world and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing. Before baptism there should be a thorough inquiry as to the experience of the candidates. Let this inquiry be made, not in a cold and distant way, but kindly, tenderly, pointing the new converts to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Bring the requirements of the gospel to bear upon the candidates for baptism.

“One of the points upon which those newly come to the faith will need instruction is the subject of dress. Let the new converts be faithfully dealt with. Are they vain in dress? Do they cherish pride of heart? The idolatry of dress is a moral disease. It must not be taken over into the new life. In most cases, submission to the gospel requirements will demand a decided change in the dress.

“There should be no carelessness in dress. For Christ’s sake, whose witnesses we are, we should seek to make the best of our appearance. In the tabernacle service, God specified every detail concerning the garments of those who minister before Him. Thus we are taught that He has a preference in regard to the dress of those who serve Him. Very specific were the directions given in regard to Aaron’s robes, for his dress was symbolic. In all things we are to be representatives of Him. Our appearance in every respect should be characterized by neatness, modesty, and purity. But the word of God gives no sanction to the making of changes in apparel merely for the sake of fashion, that we may appear like the world. Christians are not to decorate the person with costly array or expensive ornaments.

“The words of Scripture in regard to dress should be

carefully considered. We need to understand that which the Lord of heaven appreciates. In even the dressing of the body. All who are in earnest in seeking for the grace of Christ will heed the precious words of instruction inspired by God. Even the style of the apparel will express the truth of the gospel.

“All who study the life of Christ and practice His teachings will become like Christ. Their influence will be like His. They will reveal soundness of character. As they walk in the humble path of obedience, doing the will of God, they exert an influence that tells for the advancement of the cause of God, and the healthful purity of his work. In these thoroughly converted souls the world is to have a witness to the sanctifying power of truth upon the human character.

“The knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, expressed in character, is an exaltation above everything that is esteemed in earth or in heaven. It is the very highest education. It is the key that opens the portals of the heavenly city. This knowledge it is God’s purpose that all who put on Christ by baptism shall possess. And it is the duty of God’s servants to set before these souls the privilege of their high calling in Christ Jesus” (*Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 95-97).

8. In his presentation of salvation by grace alone he is careful not to create confusion regarding the call of God for obedience to His laws, since restoration of man to full harmony with the laws of God (love in action) is the specific and primary goal of the cross and all that it stands for.

9. He recognizes the power and influence of his example, whether as a pastor, as an evangelist, as an evangelist team leader, or as a field school evangelism director. This responsibility leads him to give complete cooperation to the conference administrators in whose fields he labors, and the policies and principles enunciated in the *Church Manual*.

10. The Seventh-day Adventists recognizes that the *Church Manual* is the result of the united wisdom and experience of the world church through study of the Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy counsels. He thus acts in harmony with the *Manual* and should he have any matters which he believes merit the attention of the *Manual* Committee, he makes such known through his local conference administration. Since revisions can only be approved by a General Conference session, he recognizes that revisions of the *Manual* are only made after due study by the church-at-large. **E**

Soul-winning Elders

Carl Coffman

There are a number of departments in the organizational structure of the local church. At election time we call them “church offices,” and tend to keep them separate, letting the leaders of each office or department carry out their own obligations. This is good in itself, and actually is necessary if each is to do effective work for the church. No one can do everything.

But when it comes to soul winning, departmental fences should come down. The leaders and teachers of the Sabbath schools are to be soul winners; also the Community Service department, the deacons, the youth groups, the elders—everyone in the church, office or no office. Have we to some degree separated departments when it comes to soul winning, and deposited the responsibility on the lay activities leaders, who in turn must appeal to all other officers and members to join them in soul winning? As soon as we have said this, it savors of something that isn’t quite correct in terms of who is to finish spreading the gospel message.

To put it in another way, the church elder has his work to do—on the platform, in the board meeting, in the visitation of the members, in assistance with church problems—the list is long. And thus he could feel justified in permitting the soul-winning call of the lay activities leader to go unanswered, since his own office demands so much of him and his time. There is, however, great danger in this attitude.

Why? Because “witness” in its Biblical sense, does not necessarily take place when I give out fifteen truth-filled tracts in my neighborhood. I *could* do that simply in order to avoid feeling guilty for not doing it. Actually, the process of getting it done could be very painful to me. But I feel better afterward! If I go out and give Bible studies for the same reason—and many do—that, too, might be nothing more than fulfilling an obligation rather than witnessing.

As elders we may fulfill our office by visiting a newly baptized family and inviting them home for dinner, thus

strengthening them in their new-found faith. Or we may visit a backsliding person and attempt to reclaim him and to restore him to the fold. Or we may visit some sick member in the hospital, and leave an encouraging tract with someone in the next bed. So many good things are done to which we attach the word *witness*, but we may have done these acts only to fulfill an obligation placed upon us, which we consider a part of our official duties.

You ask, are not the items just mentioned—tract distribution, Bible studies, visitation of new members, backsliders, the sick—all witness? They may be or they may not be! We have already hinted at the difference. If we do them because our intense love for God must be shared, they are witness. But if we do them because we feel obligated to our office, or because we are members of the church and should do such things, they are not witness at all. They are then probably being done as an attempt to gain the acceptance of God by our own works.

Actually, a church member who has not yet formed a personal relationship with Christ *cannot* witness. He can do missionary work and fill out his report blank, but such is no witness. When we accept Christ genuinely, the very act necessitates that we *become* witnesses for Him. We do not then witness to gain acceptance or reward. We genuinely witness about the Lord who loves all men as He loves us. Christ in us spills over, just like a glass sitting under the water faucet. It is not difficult to tell others about the One we love. So many try to witness without a life-long “first love” to tell about. In doing so they find only a trying and painful obligation.

One of the clearest Bible examples of real witness can be found in Christ’s counsel to the demoniac. “Go home to thy friends,” Christ said, “and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee” (Mark 5:19). Luke adds this: “And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received him: for they were all waiting for him” (Luke 8:40). That man had something, Someone, to talk about. He went everywhere telling it, and with great results.

Elder's Digest

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Ellen White makes the same truth clear: "Strive to arouse men and women from their spiritual insensibility. Tell them how *you* found Jesus, and how blessed *you* have been since you gained an experience in His service. Tell them what blessing comes to *you* as *you* sit at the feet of Jesus, and learn precious lessons from His Word."—*Evangelism*, p.486 (Italics supplied).

You may now be asking, Is witness confined to the act of talking to others about Christ and our love for Him? Does not one witness when telling others about the commandments, the Sabbath, the nature of man, healthful living, the remnant, and the three angel's messages? Are we not diminishing our emphasis on the great doctrinal truth today in favor of just talking about Christ?

Yes, witness *is* confined to the act of talking to others about Christ! But that includes presenting Christ in *all* of the great Bible teachings *as* we show others what the Christ life is all about. Think this through carefully—if we show that the commandments reveal love relationships, that the Sabbath is to be devoted to further learning about Christ, that healthful living serves to give us clearer minds in order that we might more fully understand God and His love and way so that we might grow more like Him, that the three angels teach us how to truly worship Him and escape deceptions about Him—we then are witnessing to Christ as we should, regardless of the particular phase of the Christian life that is being discussed. Sadly, many have never learned this vital point about genuine witness, in spite of the abundant counsel given us.

Of course, the church must have departments with specialists in each. And the church elder should be a specialist in his work. But departments cannot be compartments, locked off and separated from one another when it comes to soul winning. The lay activities leader is not to be the only one who speaks out for help in the soul-winning program of the church. Rather, it is his work to specialize in organizing a church full of soul winners, made so by rebirth, into the most effective team possible. The church elder must be the one who leads the way. **E**

Carl Coffman, at the time of this writing, was the chairman of the Department of Religion at Andrews University.

Unity in Christ



Ellen G. White

The Lord desires to make man the repository of divine influence, and the only thing that hinders the accomplishment of God's design is that men close their hearts to the light of life. Apostasy caused the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from man, but through the plan of redemption this blessing of heaven is to be restored to those who sincerely desire it. The Lord has promised to give all good things to those who ask Him, and all good things are defined as given with the gift of the Holy Spirit. The more we discover our real need, our real poverty, the more will we desire the gift of the Holy Spirit; our souls will be turned, not into the channel of ambition and presumption, but into the channel of earnest supplication for the enlightenment of heaven. It is because we do not see our need, do not realize our poverty, that we do not pour forth earnest entreaties, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, for the bestowal of the blessing.

This is the one thing that is needed at the ———. If the workers there only knew their need, their cry would ascend with ceaseless importunity that they might have the Spirit of God to rest upon them. They would see nothing but danger in walking in the sparks of their own kindling. Devising and planning without the Lord to plan with you is to be ensnared by the enemy. Let every soul seek the Lord.

Jesus said, "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." It is in proportion to our appreciation of the necessity and value of spiritual things that we seek for their attainment. "Without me ye can do nothing," says Jesus, and yet many think that man can do very much in his own finite strength and wisdom. Satan is ready to offer his counsel that he may win the souls in the game of life. When men do not feel the need of counseling with their brethren, something is wrong; they trust to their wisdom. It is

essential that brethren should counsel together. This I have been compelled to urge for the last forty five years. Again and again the instruction has been repeated that those who are engaged in important work in the cause of God should not walk in their own ideas, but counsel together. They may regard their plans as without a flaw, but other minds may be enlightened on some points where they cannot see or may take heed to suggestions and counsels of those who see not the truth. The Lord may have plans of a different order, not after the plans of finite man.

The Lord has not endowed one man with all the qualifications essential to accomplish the work in our institutions. One man may be strong in one direction and weak on other points, and Satan understands how to take advantage of that weak point; and another may be strong in another direction, each making up for the deficiency of his brother. Let no man think himself sufficient of himself, with breadth of mind enough to carry the weighty responsibilities of running such institutions as the publishing house, the college, or the health institutions. Among a multitude of counselors there is safety.

It is essential that men in responsible positions in any branch of the work of God take advantage of religious ordinances and the means of grace to obtain all the counsels of heaven they can. Special efforts should be made by those in the medical profession to place themselves in the channel of light because they are continually exposed to a variety of temptations.

Physicians are deprived of many opportunities to attend important meetings where they might obtain a better understanding of the working of the cause of God. But they can do far better than they do if they will devise and plan with determined purpose. They do not hear the statistics of the work, they lose the direct appeals

that are made to their heart, that they may recognize the voice of God in entreaty, in warnings, in testimonies of His Spirit that they may be assured that the Captain of their salvation is leading His people. They lose sight of the importance and force of spiritual truths and fail to reach a position of exalted faith. Those who are in this position need wise counselors who shall alternate in attending the religious meeting for the benefit of the churches. Imbued with the Spirit of God, they may catch the holy inspiration and rehearse the messages of warning, and keep fresh in mind the providences of God, while they live lives of purity and faith and gladness of spirit.

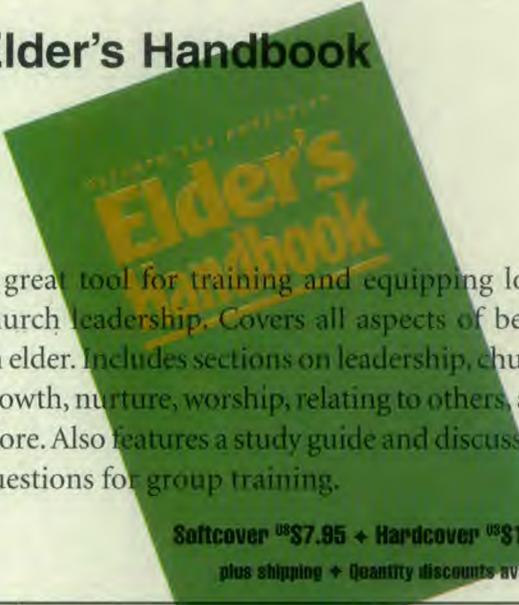
The Lord is at work in a variety of ways to bind His people together. Through heavenly and human agencies He is at work that His professed followers may all become partakers of the divine nature, that His church may be brought up to the highest standard of Christian excellence. God has made the line of demarcation between the church and the world very distinct, and He designs that it shall be discerned and practiced. . . .

The believers in all ages are to be one, and the Holy Spirit is the living essence that cements, animates, and pervades the whole body of Christ's followers. The duties devolving on the members of Christ's church are tasks

set by the Lord, and although each one of the workers is but an atom, a fraction of the stupendous fabric, inhabited by the Holy Spirit, how sacred, how holy do these duties appear! The Jews had an appointed guard whose duty it was to watch the temple night and day, and although the guard was made up of a large number of men, each one felt that he was under obligation to stand in his lot and place; for he was entrusted with a solemn charge. Suppose that the numerous body of guards had been dismissed, and the whole burden of responsibility had been placed upon one man, and that at a time when particular danger was near because of the efforts of a vigilant foe. This would be presumption. Would not the solitary guard be liable to be overcome because overcharged? Thank God, important interests are not to rest on one man's mind or one man's judgment. Every soul is to be on the alert to catch every sound, to note every movement on the part of the enemy that would endanger his God given charge. This is the spirit that should characterize every worker at the — —; for each one of you is entrusted with sacred responsibility that you may help one another, strengthen one another in keeping the fort. There is to be a building one another up in the most holy faith, and no one is to receive the least sanction in tearing others down. The Holy Spirit must abide upon every worker else he that watcheth, keepeth his watch in vain.

Let every one do his work as unto God and not unto man. Let your conduct accord with the sacred trust that has been given to you. This you may do; for the fountain of life has been opened for you, and principles of a new and heavenly order are to control your spirit and actions. Let not anyone receive the impression that a confederacy may safely be formed with worldlings. Confidences are not to be encouraged with those who are enemies of Christ. No compromise can be made with the enemy. Are you sentinels for God? Then be careful lest you betray God's people into the enemy's hands. Satan is seeking to insinuate some scheme that will result in separating God from the workers, but I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Let every one stand in his lot and place, and do the part assigned him with unwavering fidelity, and he will see and realize the fulfilment of the gracious designs of the Lord." If you become restless, as did Abraham and Sarah, and work up plans of your own in order to bring about God's promises, a condition of things which you deem desirable after your own ways and ideas, you will find that it will result in sorrow, misery, and sin.

Elder's Handbook



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Jesus comes to you as the Spirit of truth; study the mind of the Spirit, consult your Lord, follow His way. If you yield to the dictates of the mind and flesh, your spirit will lose its proper character and balance, and you fail to discern and cannot appreciate moral power. Then you will seek to carry out the maxims of worldlings. Their voices are heard on every side, Here is the path of success. . . . God calls upon you to close the door to human inventions and to open the door to divine illumination. Be careful that you do not resist the Spirit of God in its office work upon the temple of the soul. Be determined to please God, to magnify His name, to enjoy the sweet influence of His grace.

Every element of your nature is to be dedicated to God; lay not one attribute upon the altar of Satan. . . . Give all you have and are, and it is all nothing without the merit of the blood that sanctifies the gift. Could those who hold responsible positions multiply their talents a thousandfold, their service would have no worth before God unless Christ was mingled with all their offerings. Let all the glory of what is accomplished redound to the glory of God; it belongs to Him. The world cannot discern Jesus; then let me not be anxious to unite with the world, lest I, too, become blind as the worldling, so that I cannot see the beauty of the truth. By beholding, by studying the ambitious plans and projects of the world, I become more and more favorable to their methods, and become willing to listen to the suggestions of the enemy and to take the bribes of Satan, when I should instantly reject them as did Jesus when He was tempted.

There are some who talk in a regretful way concerning the restraints that the religion of the Bible imposes upon those who would follow its teachings. They seem to think that restraint is a great disadvantage, but we have reason to thank God with all our heart that He has raised a heavenly barrier between us and the ground of the

enemy. There are certain tendencies of the natural heart that many think must be followed in order that the best development of the individual may result, but that which man thinks essential God sees would not be the blessing to humanity which men imagine; for the development of these very traits of character would unfit them for the mansions above. The Lord places men under test and trial that the dross may be separated from the gold; but He forces none. He does not bind with fetters and cords and barriers; for they increase disaffection rather than decrease it. The remedy for evil is found in Christ as an indwelling Saviour. But in order that Christ may be in the soul, it must first be emptied of self, then there is a

vacuum created that may be supplied by the Holy Spirit.

The Lord purifies the heart very much as we air a room. We do not close the doors and windows and throw in some purifying substance; but we open the doors and throw wide the windows, and let heaven's purifying atmosphere flow in. The Lord says, "He that doeth truth cometh to the light." The windows of impulse, of feeling, must be opened up toward heaven, and the dust of selfishness and earthliness must be expelled. The grace of God must sweep through the chambers of the mind, the imagination must have heavenly themes for contemplation, and every element of the nature must be

purified and vitalized by the Spirit of God.

Many seem to feel that religion has a tendency to make the possessor narrow and cramped; but genuine religion does not have a narrowing influence. It is the lack of religion that cramps the faculties and narrows the mind.— *Manuscript 3*, 1892 (dealing with the "Relationship of Institutional Workers" at the Health Retreat, St. Helena, California, 1892). **E**

*The believers
in all ages
are to be one,
and the Holy Spirit
is the living essence that
cements, animates,
and pervades
the whole body of Christ's
followers.*

Ellen G. White, messenger of the Lord and one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.



Children—Our Greatest Resource

Sharon Cress

The survival of the church depends on our children. They may justly be recognized as our greatest resource. Yet too often we give them only token support. Often they seem to come last in our thinking as we plan evangelistic outreach, church nurture, and programs.

From the perspective of children's ministry in the local congregation, I am often grieved at our lack of passion for our youngsters. Once they become teenagers we suddenly panic, throwing at them all the money, time, resources, and imagination we can muster in an urgent attempt to hold them as they suddenly strike puberty, fearing that during the teenage years they will exit church fellowship. Perhaps some of the pressure we feel during the teen years and some of the tendency to exit that they show is due to the fact that little was done for them when they were younger. What about showing the same degree of urgency when children are small as we often do when they reach their teen years?

A vibrant church will build children's ministries into a strong, attractive presence. An alert church organization, corporate and local, will provide innovative resources and ideas that can be implemented in the local congregation.

In addition to allocation of resources, the most telling influence comes from the members themselves. How adult members relate to youngsters will forever imprint upon children's brains their interpretation of the character of Jesus. Their weekly or daily interaction with church members will give the children an impression of "church" that will carry into adulthood.

Recently, I watched a *National Geographic* documentary about zebras. One fascinating observation was about the

foals. When a mare is about to give birth, she moves to the edge of the herd—not too far because there is safety in numbers—but far enough to make sure she is in charge of the situation. After the baby is born, it must immediately get up and walk. Its survival depends upon this. But survival also depends upon another equally important factor. When the baby stands, the mother makes sure that it sees no other zebra's stripes but hers for the first fifteen minutes.

Apparently, baby zebra brains imprint the stripes of the mother into their brain's "hard drive." Since every zebra has different stripes, it is vital that the baby have the imprint of its mother's pattern. If it looks at another zebra and imprints those stripe patterns, the baby could die because it will be confused as to where to look for food and protection. Imprinting the correct stripes in the first minutes of life makes the difference between survival and disaster. The mother circles and shields the baby from other curious zebras who want to look over the newborn because she knows that her baby must see no stripes but hers.

As church members we need to learn from the zebras—making sure our children receive the right imprints early so that they will remember these throughout their lives. Spiritual survival during the turmoil of the teenage years may depend upon the correct imprinting when they are young. **E**

Sharon Cress is Associate Ministerial Secretary of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and director of Shepherdess International.

What Is the Meaning of:

Elder's Digest explains some difficult passages in the Bible.

Acts 12:15

“And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel.”

Some religious sects believe that people become angels after they die. Did these friends of Peter believe he was dead and that he had become an angel? Not if they believed the words of Scripture.

Mark these facts:

1. Angels existed before any human being died (Genesis 3:24). So the existence of angels does not depend on the death of mortals.
2. Angels belong to a different order of created beings (Psalm 8:5).
3. Children have guardian angels ever with them (Matthew 18:10).
4. Angels witness all we say or do (Ecclesiastes 5:6).
5. They are constantly ministering to the “heirs of salvation” (Hebrews 1:14).

Undoubtedly Peter’s friends were talking about his guardian angel in the text under consideration.

Romans 5:13

“For until the law sin was in the world but sin is not imputed when there is no law.”

Some contend that the phrase “until the law” means that the law did not exist between Adam and Sinai. But the balance of the text, coupled with Romans 4:15 proves the opposite. Sin was imputed to Cain for slaying his brother, therefore the law had to be in effect. God upbraided Ms people for refusing to keep Ms

“commandments and laws” (Exodus 16:28). He also honored Abraham who kept His “commandments . . . statutes . . . and laws” (Genesis 26:5).

The meaning then is clear: the law did not exist in written form prior to Sinai. People were punished for breaking any one of the ten commandments before Sinai indicating that the law existed, and sin was imputed. Note the ten commandments before Sinai:

First —Genesis 35:2-4

Second —Genesis 31:19-34

Third —Genesis 12:3

Fourth— Exodus 16:4-26

Fifth— Genesis 9:20-25

Sixth— Genesis 4:8-15

Seventh —Genesis 39:9

Eighth —Genesis 44:8, 16

Ninth —Genesis 27:12

Tenth —Genesis 25:29-34; Genesis 27.

Israel had largely lost sight of the principles of God’s law while in Egyptian bondage. So God wrote that law with His own finger to bring it forcibly back to mind.

Romans 7:4

“Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.”

Paul is here illustrating the changed status of one who is freed from the bondage of sin to be married to Christ. Three principal figures are used in his illustration: a woman, her husband, and the law of marriage. Which one of these parties dies? Not the law, as some interpret.

If so, the whole argument over adultery would be pointless.

There could be no adultery without the law containing the prohibition.

No, it was the husband who died, and he symbolized the “old man of sin” who dies at conversion (Romans 6:6). This death to the law of sin (husband unconverted nature) was brought about through the “body of Christ,” by His death. The condemnation of the law, (sentence of death) was nullified by the deliverance wrought through Christ. But please notice that Christ’s death only cancels the penalty—not the law itself. Peter says He “bare our sins in His own body” (I Peter 2:24). Paul says Christ tasted “death for every man” (Hebrews 2:9).

Now that the binding power of the law of sin is broken, the individual is free to marry another, even Christ. The law of marriage has not been cancelled. “We are crucified with Christ” as Paul puts it, but the law remains. With the death of the carnal nature verses 5 and 6 now declare that we no longer “bring forth fruit unto death.” The death sentence of the law has been satisfied through the sacrifice of Jesus, and the new marriage to Christ brings forth obedience through love. Finally in verse 7 Paul emphasizes again the fact that the ten commandment law remains to point out sin. “*For I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.*” **E**

Source: *The Editors*

Essentials—Landmarks— Fundamentals

continued from page 3

controverted point.”—E. G. White, *MS 18, 1889*. (See *Counsels to Editors*, pp. 21, 22,)

If we will but accept them in the right way, the challenge of critics, the attacks of opposers, and the criticism of friends will prove a blessing in disguise by driving us to deeper, more comprehensive study. They will force us to find new evidences, stronger reasons, more invulnerable proofs. Thus our enemies can become our friends—though without a benevolent design. **E**

Managing the Committees Before They Manage You

continued from page 8

seen and heard by all members, and can serve as the focus of communication.

And finally, back to our first statement: the church runs by committees. Is it possible at times to challenge this truism? Before setting up more committees, why not take a look at the problems and see whether individual members might not be responsible for solutions, calling on assistance as they need it? Would your church be better off if half the committees were abolished, and the remaining half run more efficiently? **E**

Betty Stirling was director of institutional research for the General Conference Board of Higher Education when she wrote this article.

Slices of Life

continued from page 31

“Perseverance is the ability to stick to something you’re not stuck to.”

“Power steering is what a person has when he lets God guide his life.”

—from Wilma Ross Westphal, *Tin Miner’s Son*, p. 154

Sermon Outline

What We Possess, as found in Hebrews:

1. A deliverance — “Obtained eternal redemption” — Hebrews 9:12
2. A relationship — “To call them brethren.” — Hebrews 2:11
3. A High Priest — “Such an High Priest.” — Hebrews 8:1
4. Access — “Boldness [liberty] to enter in.” — Hebrews 10:19
5. A hope — “Which hope we have.” — Hebrews 6:9
6. A city — “We seek one to come.” — Hebrews 13:14
—From *Bible Themes for Busy Workers*, by C. Inglis. **E**

Henry Feyereabend writes from Oshawa, Canada.

Slices of Life

Henry Feyerabend

What Should We Preach?

The Scriptures are replete with subjects for sermons. When deciding on a sermon topic, consider these two suggestions:

First, we should preach the subjects on which Christ and His apostles preached.

Second, the subjects that Christ and the apostles emphasized by repetition we also should preach repeatedly.

For example, the second coming of Christ is referred to more than three hundred times in the New Testament. It was a favorite theme of both Christ and the apostles. Therefore, it is not only a subject that should be preached, it is also a subject that should be repeatedly preached.—*John Osborne.*

Perception

“In matters controversial my perception is very fine; I always see both sides of things, the one that is wrong and mine.”—*Baker’s Pocket Book of Religious Quotes.*

Upgrade Your Effectiveness With Non-Christians

Peter Wagner, in *Your Church Can Grow*, contends that effectiveness with non-Christians decreases with maturity in Christ. If you are finding this true, take some helpful hints from Becky Manley:

1. Be Yourself.

God made some of us shy, others outgoing. We should praise Him for that. Remember, shyness is not an excuse to avoid relationships—rather it is a means to love the world in a different way than an extrovert.

2. Be a Risk Taker.

Being a Christian means taking risks, risking that our love will be ignored. If you find yourself in a situation in which you believe God has put you, then accept the risk for His love’s sake.

3. See Beneath the Crust.

Once we get beneath the surface of a person, we’ll

usually discover a sea of needs. We must learn how to interpret those needs correctly, as Jesus did.

4. Avoid the “Holy Huddle Syndrome.”

Don’t be a “rabbit-hole Christian” whose only contacts with the world are those mad, brave dashes to and from Christian activities.

5. Be Positive!

Our attitude in responding to people is crucial. . . . If you communicate enthusiasm, not defensiveness, and carefully listen instead of sounding like a record of “Answers to Questions You Didn’t Happen to Ask,” non-Christians will become intrigued. — *Evangetical Newsletter*, Dec. 31, 1976.

Bumper Sticker

“Don’t follow me—I’m lost!” (Meant to be humorous, but consider the spiritual implications!)

Religion Increasingly Important to Outstanding Teen-agers

Religion is playing an increasingly important role in the lives of outstanding teenagers, according to a poll of high school leaders in the United States. The survey, based on responses from 22,000 high achievers, was conducted by Who’s Who Among American High School Students, of Northbrook, Illinois.

The students who believe religion plays a significant role in their own moral standards and actions increased from 63 per cent in 1986 to 99 per cent in the current poll. Fifty per cent said the role of religion is “very significant.”

Collected by H. M. Tippet

“Empty wagons rattle loudest.”

“If there were no difficulties, there would be no triumphs.”

“Are you helping with solution, or contributing to the problem?”

continued on page 30

Elder's Handbook

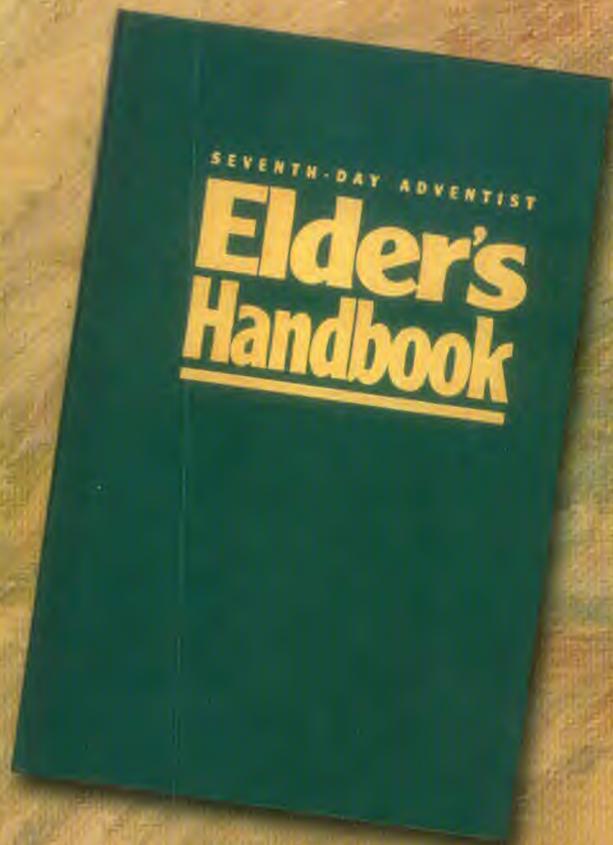
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