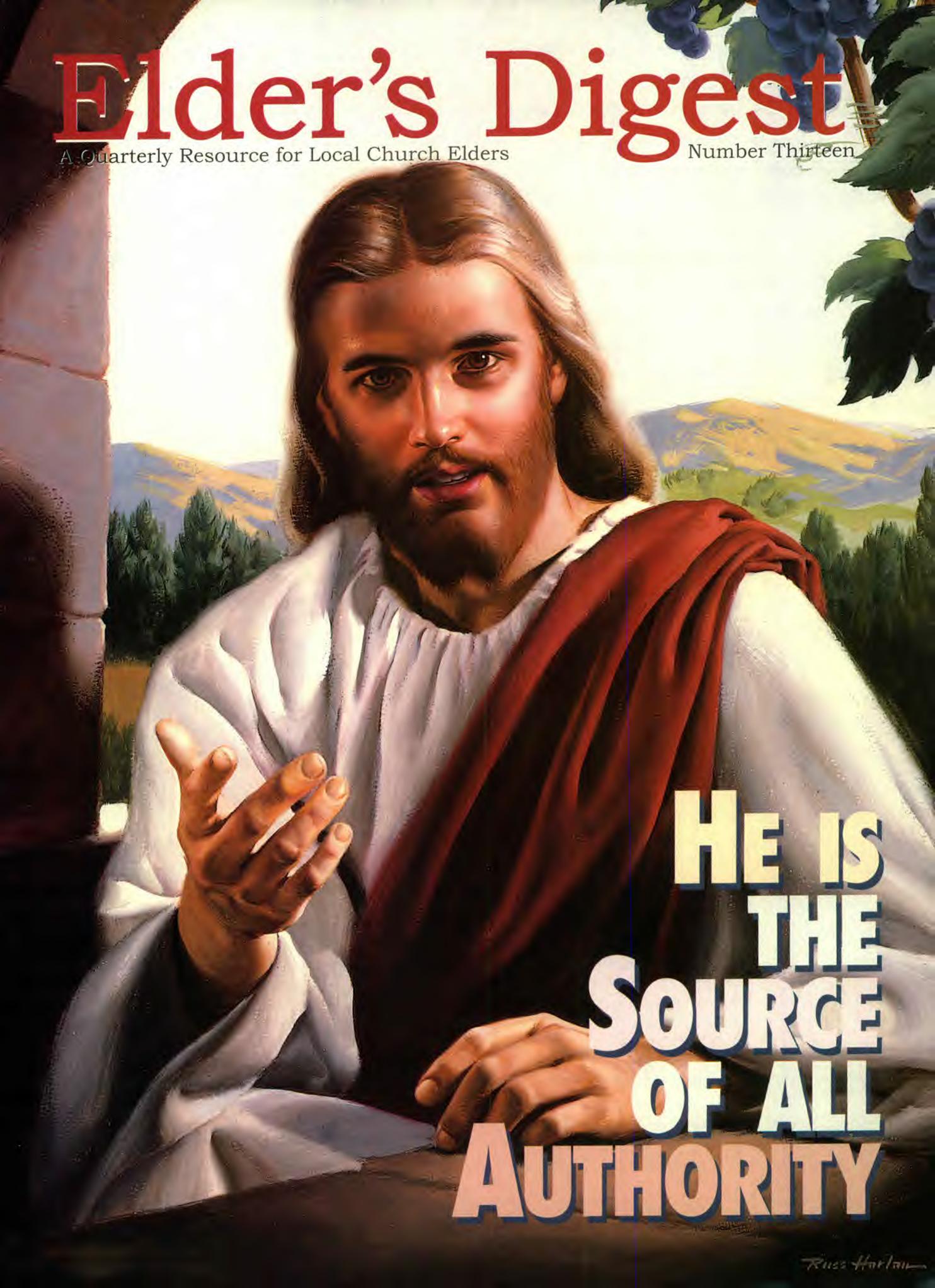


Elder's Digest

A Quarterly Resource for Local Church Elders

Number Thirteen



**HE IS
THE
SOURCE
OF ALL
AUTHORITY**

Elder's Digest

NUMBER THIRTEEN



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Why do we have so many committees in the church?



pp. 19 and 22

Learn some of the skills needed to successfully lead a committee.

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Broad Vision and the Narrow Way

Joel Sarli



Broad vision is a desirable virtue. Growth is an ideal that should be fostered by every sector in the church. But as we try to expand the work of the Lord we must watch for some trumps that the devil can put in our way.

There is increasing danger that as we grow larger and spread out as a people, we shall lose that oneness, simplicity and fidelity to the simple faith of this movement that characterized our early days, and be tintured by the subtleties and philosophies of the world about—a world that has lost its way, wandered from God and the truth of God.

There is real danger that our young men and women attending the universities of the world will unconsciously absorb ideas that blur the clear vision of truth, a condition resulting in the yielding of a little here, the compromising of a shade there, and the disastrous broadening of ideas in another place.

These little changes become tangents that lead farther and farther away from our basic platform. That has been the course of every historic religious body that once had a mission and a message from God. We need to apply ourselves one and all to the study of the blueprint. We still need to study carefully the Bible. We still need to listen to God's orientation revealed to us through the prophetic ministry of Ellen G. White. We need to check our attitudes. We need to watch and to adjust. Some have already gone from us. Others will go. "He who would serve Christ cannot follow the world's opinions or meet the world's standard. Heavens's path is too narrow for rank and riches to ride in state, too narrow for the play of self-centered ambition, too steep and rugged for lovers of ease to climb. Toil, patience, self-sacrifice, reproach, poverty, the contradiction of sinners against Himself, was the portion of Christ, and it must be our portion, if we ever enter the Paradise of God." (*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p.138).

The Advent pathway will become too narrow for some. Remember that broad is the way that leads away from God and vital truth, and ends in destruction of the faith. Jesus warns the believers, "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matt 7:13-14).

One of the goals of *Elder's Digest* is to help the leaders of the local congregation to be everything that God wants us to be. So let us each examine ourselves to see whether we have departed in some degree from the faith. If so, let us repent and return. This is no academic matter. It is a question of vital significance. **E**



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"I Remember Our Dear Old Church Elder . . ."

A history of how an Elder helped Arthur Daniells

DANIEL A. OCHS and GRACE LILLIAN OCHS

When the United States government established the Veterans' Homes for the children of soldiers as well as Veterans' Hospitals, "to care for him who shall have borne the battle," as Lincoln put it, it located a home for children in a town near West Union. There Mrs. Daniells planned to place her children until she could provide a home for them.

The decision to separate from her children had been difficult. Now that the moment had come, she felt heartbroken. Mrs. Daniells, a Christian of the Methodist faith, often prayed for guidance. As she leaned against the buggy wheel and wept, her body shaking with sobs, she pleaded, "Dear Lord, guide me in the right way. Be with my children, and keep them safe and pure."

Wiping her tears away, she drove the horse toward the yard gate. Tying him to the wooden hitching post, she looked toward the house. All three children were watching, each one's nose flattened against the windowpane. The sight of their bewildered, forlorn faces started the tears coursing down her cheeks again. Quickly entering the house, she pulled her children into her arms and hid her tear-stained face.

"Children," she said quietly, after gaining her composure, "we must leave now. I will miss you very much. But just as I am sure that God loves and takes care of all the creatures He has made, I know that He will watch over you until I can bring you home to be with me again."

Putting the bundles of clothing and a few toys into the back of the buggy, and lifting her children onto the seat, she started the horse on a brisk trot down the oft-

traveled road to the nearby town.

Months passed by. Arthur had turned seven and the twins five, when they learned they had a new father. Mrs. Daniells had married a West Union rancher by the name of Lippincott.

"I will go after the children myself," Mr. Lippincott told her after the wedding. "They need their mother, and I intend to see that they have a good home."

Mrs. Daniells-Lippincott was not satisfied with her religion. Her inability to understand the Bible as she wished, troubled her. One day she visited a former neighbor whom she remembered as observing "Saturday for Sunday" and asked him for reading material he might have that he thought would interest her. The man lent her *History of the Sabbath*, by J. N. Andrews. She read the book, studied her Bible, and later was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. George Butler baptized Arthur when the boy was ten years old.

Years later, looking back upon his boyhood, Daniells said, "There came an hour in my experience (as happens with boys sometimes) when I was awfully discouraged. I felt self-condemned, for I was not praying. I was not trying very hard. So when it came to bearing testimony in the meeting, as we used to do, I refrained, because I felt guilty. But I did say, 'I will do better this week; and then I can testify next week, with a good conscience, with some feeling of decency.'"

But Arthur forgot through the week. When the next Sabbath came, it looked to him as though he had done worse than ever. However, he told himself, "I will have to give it another trial."

The old white-haired elder of the church put his arms around him and said, "I will pray for you every day."

"The next week was worse still," Daniells remembered, "and when that Sabbath came, I sank down, and said I was not made to be a Christian. I was not the type of boy for a Christian. I would give it up. When the meeting closed, I shot out of the place so no one could speak to me."

Although he wanted to go straight home, he had to wait to walk home with his mother. So he went around the corner of the church and stood there, looking and feeling downcast.

The old white-haired elder of the church came up to him and said kindly, "Arthur, I want to see you. I am interested in you."

Then he got to the point. "I have noticed that you have not been speaking in meetings now for three services."

The lad replied, "No."

"I want to know what is the trouble. I would like to help you."

"I do not think there is any help for me," Arthur answered. Pausing a moment to gain control, the boy continued, "I am not the kind of boy to be a Christian. I cannot do it. I have tried and failed. I have given it up."

"You won't give it up, will you?" the older man asked.

"Oh, yes," Arthur declared, "I have."

"You must not," the elder pleaded. "Will you not join me in prayer this week that you will try?"

Young Arthur had great confidence in the man's prayers and thought that, if the elder would pray for him, his life would get better. Looking up, he answered, "If you will pray for me, I will try."

The old man put his arms around him and said, "I will pray for you every day. You pray, and I know that the Lord will help you."

Daniells concluded his story by saying, "God visited me that week and . . . that elder lifted me from the depths of the darkest place into which I have ever sunk since I started to be a Christian. From that time, I have never reached the place where I said, 'I will not try.'"

Arthur Daniells said further of the same man, "I remember our dear old church elder. . . . He had two compartments in his pocketbook; one was his, and one was the Lord's. That was for the tithes. It was his rule always, when he got a dollar, to put ten cents in the Lord's side. . . . When I saw that old man, gray with years, working hard in the harvest field (I used to bind wheat with him) and when I saw him get his pay, divide it, and put the tithe in the other side, he created confidence in my heart, and it had an influence upon me." ■

This article was taken from the book The Past and the Presidents published in 1974 by the Southern Publishing Association, Nashville, Tennessee.

Seven Facts About JESUS CHRIST

"The sages and heroes of history are receding from us; but time has no power over the name and deeds and words of Jesus Christ."—
William E. Charming.

- 1. The Pre-existence of Christ.**
 - a. As the Son of God, He existed with the Father from eternity. John 1:1, 2, 14.
 - b. The active agent in creation. John 1:3; Colossians 1:16.
 - c. While on earth, Jesus acknowledged His pre-existence. John 17:5.
- 2. The Incarnation of Christ.**
 - a. God became man in the person of Christ. John 1:14; Philippians 2:5-7.
 - b. The "how" a great mystery. 1 Timothy 3:16.
 - c. The reason. Hebrews 2:14, 15; 1 Peter 3:18.
 - d. The record. Matthew 1:18-21; Galatians 4:4.
- 3. The Sinless Life of Christ.**
 - a. Tempted as a man. Hebrews 4:15.
 - b. In harmony with the sacrificial prohibitions He was "without sin." 1 Peter 2:22.
 - c. Satan was unable to overcome Him. Matthew 4:1-11.
 - d. The secret of His victorious life:
 - (1) Absolute surrender to the will of God. Psalm 40:8; Matthew 26:39.
 - (2) Constant dependence upon God. John 5: 19, 30.
 - (3) Fortified His humanity through prayer. Luke 6:12; Matthew 14:23.
- 4. The Death of Christ.**
 - a. A substitutionary death. 1 Peter 2:24; Isaiah 53:6.
 - b. A voluntary death. John 10:11, 15, 17, 18.
 - c. An atoning death. Hebrews 9:26; Ephesians 5:2.
 - d. A supreme manifestation of God's love. 1 John 4:10; Romans 5:6-8.
- 5. The Resurrection of Christ.**
 - a. Foretold by prophets and Jesus. Psalm 16:9, 10; Matt. 16:21.
 - b. The Evidence: The Empty Tomb. Matthew 28:1-8. The Eyewitnesses. Matthew 28: 16, 17; 1 Corinthians 15:4-8. The Existence of the Christian Church. Luke 24:30-48; 1 Corinthians 15:14. Personal Experience. 2 Timothy 1:12.
- 6. The Ascension of Christ.**
 - a. Announced. John 6:62; 20:17.
 - b. The occasion. Luke 24:50, 51; Acts 1:9-11.
 - c. The reason:
 - (1) Closer contact. John 17:7; 14:18.
 - (2) Advent of the Holy Spirit. John 14:16, 17, 26; 16:7.
 - (3) Commence His mediatorial ministry. 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 4:14-16.
- 7. The Second Coming of Christ.** Hebrews 9:28.

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Preparing New Converts for Baptism

ALBERTO R. TIMM

The level of commitment of the future generations to the Adventist message is being decided largely by the way we prepare new converts for baptism. As many pre-natal influences leave their traces on the child after his or her birth, so the pre-baptismal preparation affects decisively the spiritual identity of the new church members and, consequently, the identity of the church itself.¹

If “the accession of members who have not been renewed in heart and reformed in life is a source of weakness to the church,”² then “the time to instruct converts thoroughly is *before* their baptism,” when they are still “eager to learn, and the fires of their first love are burning brightly on the altar of their hearts.”³ But what is involved in a thorough preparation for baptism?

It is not always possible to generalize the actual content of the pre-baptismal Bible-study series to be given, because converts might come from different professional, social-cultural, and religious backgrounds. But, despite these variants, there are three main religious areas the new converts should become familiar with before baptism.

CONVERSION EXPERIENCE

The first of these areas is the theoretical-experiential knowledge of the plan of salvation through Jesus Christ, which leads the person to a genuine experience of personal conversion. This is a foundational aspect of all Bible study series, specially because of its priority over all the other topics. Christ himself stated that eternal life consists in personal knowledge of the Godhead (John 17:3; cf. Hos 6:3). For this reason Ellen White insists that “the very first and most important thing” of all Bible-study series “is to melt and subdue the soul by presenting our Lord Jesus Christ as the sin-pardoning Saviour.”⁴

As soon as possible, the new converts should become

acquainted with the true Biblical concept of salvation, because among Christian in general (and even among Evangelicals) it proliferates a false dichotomy between salvation in the New Testament (by grace) and in the Old Testament (by works). We should, therefore, explain that the sinners of both the Old *and* the New Testaments were always *saved* by grace (Eph 4:8), *justified* by faith (Rom. 5:1), and *judged* by works (Rev 20:13), for it is impossible that sometime sinners could have been saved by their own merits.

The plan of salvation should be presented in a contextualistic way, as flowing through the unfolding sanctuary motif, which (1) started with the patriarchal *altars*; (2) continued with the Mosaic *tabernacle* and the *temple* of Jerusalem; and (3) culminates with Christ’s death on the *cross*, His priestly ministry in the *heavenly sanctuary*, and His glorious and mighty *second coming* for the final salvation of His children.

After understanding this broad view of the plan of salvation, the new converts should be made conscious of the fact that all this becomes effective to them personally (f. 2 Cor 5:18-20) only if they repent

from their own sins (Acts 2:38) and accept Christ’s vicarious death (John 3:16) and His priestly ministry (Heb 4:14-16). Those who give Bible studies might significantly help new converts in making their surrender to Christ.

But at this point the crucial question arises: Are the understanding of the plan of salvation and personal surrender to Christ the only real conditions for baptism?

BASIC BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE

Some experiences of the New Testament (see Acts 2:1-41; 8:26-38; 9:1-18; 10:1-48; 16:13-15, 19-33; 18:8;

“The time to instruct converts thoroughly is *before* their baptism,” when they are still “eager to learn, and the fires of their first love are burning brightly on the altar of their hearts.”

19:1-5) seem to suggest that, apparently, the only condition for a person to be baptized is to believe in Christ. This could be the case, if we were living in the days of the apostles and our mission was to preach to the Jews of that time or to people already acquainted with the teachings of Judaism. In this case, our basic mission would be restricted to lead people to accept Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah.

We should not forget, however, that times have changed significantly, and that within the religious (and even Christian) mosaic of our days new converts have “much to *learn* and much to *unlearn*, all of which takes time.”⁵ If we believe that post-apostolic Christianity went through a deep process of apostasy which extends itself until our days (cf. Dan 8:9-12; 2 Thess 2:1-12), then we need also to reverse that process in order for us to return to the pure faith of early Christianity.

We should demonstrate: (1) how the power of the little horn cast down the system of truths connected to the heavenly sanctuary (Dan 8:9-12; 7:25); (2) how that system would be restored at the end of the 2300 evenings and mornings (Dan 8:13-14), through the proclamation of the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6-12; and (3) how the Seventh-day Adventist movement came into existence at that specific time to restore the truths of Christ’s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, the perpetuity of God’s Law and the seventh-day Sabbath, the personal and visible second coming of Christ, the conditional immortality of the soul, the abiding gift of prophecy, etc.⁶

The various doctrinal components of our message should be always presented in a Christ-centered way; because, according to Ellen White “every true doctrine makes Christ the center, every precept receives force from His words.”⁷ And more, “of all professing Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world.”⁸ We should, therefore, proclaim enthusiastically to the world our broad vision of what Christ *did* (at the cross), *is doing* (in the heavenly sanctuary), and *will still do* (at His Second Coming) for our salvation.

DISTINCTIVE LIFESTYLE

There are also those who deny the social influence of religion by claiming, in a dichotomous and one-sided way, that what matters is only the inside person and not the outside. This theory, however, is clearly rejected by Christ when He stated that Christians are not only “the salt of the earth” (Matt 5:13) but also “the light of the world” (Matt 5:14-16), and that true religion is recognized by its “fruits” (Matt 7:15-23; John 15:1-5).

As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe that the human

being is an indivisible whole, and that inside religion reflects itself on the outside. This means that we also have to teach the new converts the biblical principles of the Adventist lifestyle. They should understand clearly that a people who profess to be living now “in the great day of atonement,”⁹ preparing themselves to the soon return of Christ, need to live in accordance to the faith they profess. Such a people will never ask: “What is the least we need to do in order to be saved?” but rather: “What is the best way to serve Christ?”

The presentation of the Adventist principles of lifestyle should include devotional habits, health reform, stewardship, dressing and adornments, as well as the many aspects of the social behavior of a Christian. If “every true disciple *is born* into the kingdom of God as a missionary,”¹⁰ then we should also teach the new converts to start witnessing of their faith *prior to* baptism. It is very important that we explain to them that our church is not a monastery of saints who are already perfect, but rather a “spiritual hospital,” where all need to be helped (cf. Phil 3:12).

R. A. Anderson comments that “accepting the light on such points of faith as health reform or systematic giving or the divine gift of prophecy” is easy for people who are preparing themselves for baptism. But, “if these and other features of the message have to be discovered afterward, it is not to be wondered at that confidence begins to break down and the fires of that first love begin to die. All have doubtless known of some who have lost their way and given up the message simply because at the time they were brought into the church some of these things were not made clear.”¹¹

FURTHER REMARKS

To believe in the Lord Jesus Christ does not mean only to profess His name, but also to accept His will in our lives (see Matt 7:21), in a deep spiritual experience which reflects itself outside. All genuine acceptance of Christ as a personal Savior leads to the spontaneous question: “Lord, what do You want me to do?”

If we instruct our new converts only in one of the areas mentioned above, we are not only partial with them but we are also distorting the all-embracing nature of our message. If we present them only a Christ without doctrines, we are promoting *pluralism*, a certain kind of internal ecumenism which destroys the identity of any denomination. If, on the other hand, our Bible studies propagate the doctrines without Christ, we are spreading *legalism*, which steals from the message its sanctifying power. If, lastly, we proclaim a lifestyle which does not derive from an inside true spiritual experience, we are

Continued on page 9

Sermons and Sleep

MARVIN HUNT

In the little church where I was baptized, the head elder snored while the pastor preached. It was a regular Sabbath event to watch and see how long the elder could stay awake as he sat behind the preacher. Yes, the sermon left something to be desired, but sermon delivery isn't easy, even for professionally trained ministers.

Sermon preparation requires lots of thinking, and thinking is the hardest thing a human being can do. The old saying is, "Five percent of the people think; 10 percent think they think; and 85% would rather die than think."

When you sit down to prepare a sermon and begin to think your way through the presentation, it seems your mind will do anything to escape the process. You suddenly remember the yard needs mowing, the dishes need washing, the dog needs shampooing and the cat needs to be put out. Your mind will find endless excuses to keep you from beginning your preparation. Be persistent! Someone has said, "If I spend 20 hours preparing for a sermon, I can preach 30 minutes exactly. However, if I spend 10 hours preparing, I can preach 40 minutes or so, and if I don't spend any time preparing, I can preach all day long!" As one ill-prepared preacher told his wife on the way to church, "This sermon may not be fantastic but it sure is fresh."

Delivering a sermon is a lot like driving a car, you learn a few elementary things such as operating the brakes and the gas, then you memorize some basic traffic rules and after you pass a test you're given a license. However, if you decide you want to graduate from a Model-T Ford and become a driver in the Indianapolis 500, things change drastically. It doesn't take long to realize that a race car is a much more complex machine reacting to aerodynamic forces and all sorts of physical laws of which you never dreamed. So too, is the relative degree of complexity that separates a poor sermon from a good sermon. Would be sermonizers, this article is intended to help you understand the basics and become a good speaker. Sorry, but you'll probably have to get classroom training to become an Indy class sermon driver. However, you should remember that, "God takes

men as they are and educates them for His service, if they will yield themselves to Him. The Spirit of God, received into the soul, quickens all its facilities" (*Gospel Workers*, p. 285).

Let's begin by defining a sermon. A sermon is a picture you make by using words for paint and your hearers' minds as a canvas. A sermon must have one specific purpose that is as obvious as the theme of a Norman Rockwell painting. When Rockwell pictured a family gathered around the table with a large turkey being carved, everyone immediately knew the theme was Thanksgiving. Sermon word pictures should be as clear as a Rockwell painting.

The super salesman Frank Bettger said, "Show people what they want and how to get it, and they will move heaven and earth to get it." Sermons are your opportunities to show people how to satisfy the longing God has put in their hearts. It is not telling someone what to do, instead, both the speaker and the listener hear the word of God. You preach His word by standing between God and man and persuading men and women, boys and girls to accept God's love for them. Well crafted sermons influence people to make life changing decisions; they are not just entertainment or random thoughts. Regardless of your education or training, you are expected to do your best. Steven Vitrano writes in his book *How to Preach*:

You are not a professional public speaker or preacher. Therefore, you may have to settle for less than the ideal. But you are not excused from doing your best. You are not free to step into the pulpit on Sabbath morning and just fill the hour. The pulpit is not the place for you to tell of your trips abroad, the churches you have visited, and the wonderful Adventist friends you have met, except as you use such experiences to illustrate the point. The pulpit is not the place for you to ride some hobbyhorse of doctrine (no matter how basic it may be), to whip the saints for being so unsaintly, or to fumble and stumble through some article you have read.¹

A local church elder told of how the quality of his preaching drastically improved after he started studying and receiving training on how to preach. He said that when he started preaching, his sermons were made up of a few stories and a string of texts. His preaching was poor. He and the congregation both knew it, but he felt that was all that could be expected, so he never tried to improve. However, when he finally began to study and learn about public speaking he soon realized that preaching is a privilege and an honor that should humble the speaker and temper all that is spoken from God's pulpit.

Your sermons do not have to put the congregation to sleep. By God's grace and your hard work, you can enjoy the blessing of sharing the Good News with power and strength from your local pulpit.

YOUR CONGREGATION'S BILL OF RIGHTS

Your congregation has the right to expect that your sermon will be based solidly on the Bible. This means that you will not use the Bible as a launching pad to go into orbit about your pet peeves or favorite topics. Your listeners deserve to have the question answered, "Is there any word from the Lord?"

- Your congregation has the right to expect that you have spent hours in prayer, study and preparation so that you will not waste the thirty minutes of their lives they have given to you.
- Your congregation has the right to expect a sermon more than one mile wide and one-inch deep. You cannot preach the Bible until you know your Bible. The Bible needs to fill your mind, rule your heart and be a lamp unto your feet.
- Your congregation has the right to expect that your sermon will have a clear beginning, middle and ending and that they will know when you have arrived at your final destination.
- Your congregation has the right to expect an Adventist sermon, one with that "certain" sound. Just like Sabbath dinner, they have the right to expect that the meal laid out before them will be one especially made to feed Seventh-day Adventists. They have the right to expect that if you stand behind an Adventist pulpit, you will preach a message that will attempt to move God's Remnant Church forward.

He [Christ] did not preach fanciful doctrines or

sensational suppositions designed to gratify the curious or to establish His own prestige with the fickle crowd. So, today, ministers are not to include mere human traditions and opinions in their sermons. Only the Word is adequate to meet the needs of sin-weakened men and women (*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 347).

¹ Steven Vitrano, *How to Preach* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1991), p. 87.

Martin Hunt writes from Georgia where he works as pastor.

Preparing New Converts for Baptism

Continued from page 7

stimulating *formalism*, which characterized Pharisaism of the days of Jesus (cf. Matt 23).

An adequate preparation for baptism, which (1) leads to a conversion experience, (2) provides the basic doctrinal knowledge, and (3) fosters the living of our distinctive lifestyle, does not necessarily enlarge the preparation process, but it might involve a change of *methodology* that restores our true prophetic-Adventist identity. If we want our Church to preserve her denominational identity, we need to invest in an adequate preparation of the new generations who are joining our congregations. **E**

¹ The influence of pre-baptismal preparation upon new church members is considered in more detail by Roy Allan Anderson in the chapter "Preparing Converts for Church Membership" of his book entitled *The Shepherd-Evangelist: His Life, Ministry, and Reward* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1950), 257-274.

² Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), vol. 5, p. 172.

³ Anderson, p. 257, italics in the original.

⁴ White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 53-54.

⁵ Anderson, p. 258, italics supplied.

⁶ For a more detailed study of the formation of the Seventh-day Adventist doctrinal system, see Alberto R. Timm, "The Sanctuary and the Three Angels' Messages, 1844-1863: Integrating Factors in the Development of Seventh-day Adventist Doctrines" (Ph.D. diss., Andrews University, 1995).

⁷ White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 54.

⁸ Idem, *Gospel Workers*, rev. and enl. ed. (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1948), p. 156.

⁹ Idem, *The Great Controversy* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1950), p. 489.

¹⁰ Idem, *The Desire of Ages* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1940), p. 195, italics supplied.

¹¹ Anderson, p. 258.

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The Government of the Church

P.G. DAMSTEEG

After Jesus' ascension the leadership of the church rested in the hands of the apostles. Their first organizational act, in counsel with the other believers, was to elect another apostle to take Judas' place (Acts 1:15-26).

As the church grew, the apostles realized the impossibility of both preaching the gospel and caring for the church's temporal affairs. So they turned the church's practical business over to seven men whom the church appointed. Though the church distinguished between the . . . ministry of the word . . . and . . . serving tables . . . (Acts 6:1-4), it made no attempt to separate clergy from laity in discharging the mission of the church. In fact, two of the seven, Stephen and Philip, were noted for their effective preaching and evangelism (Acts 7 and 8).

The church's expansion into Asia and Europe called for additional steps in organization. With the establishment of numerous new churches, elders were ordained "in every church" to ensure stable leadership (Acts 14:23).

When a major crisis developed, the parties involved were allowed to state their respective positions to a general council comprised of apostles and elders representing the church at large. The decisions of this council were seen as binding upon all parties and were accepted as the voice of God (Acts 15:1-29). This incident illustrates the fact that when it is a matter of issues affecting the entire church, counsel and authority on a much broader level than that of the local church are necessary. In this case the decision of the council grew out of the agreement reached by the representatives of all parties involved (Acts 15:22, 25).

The New Testament makes it clear that as the need arose God guided the leadership of His work. With His direction, and in counsel with the church, they formed a church government that, if followed today, will help safeguard the church from apostasy and enable it to fulfill its great commission.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

1. *Christ is the head of the church.* Christ's headship over the church is based primarily on His mediatorial

work. Since His victory over Satan on the cross, Christ has been given "all authority" in . . . "heaven and on earth" . . . (Matt. 28:18). God has put "all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church" (Eph. 1:22; cf. Phil. 2: 10, 11). He is therefore "Lord of lords and King of kings" (Rev. 17:14).

Christ also is the head of the church because the church is His body (Eph. 1:23; Col. 1: 18). Believers are "members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones" (Eph.5:30). They must have an intimate connection with Him because from Him the church is "nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments" (Col. 2:19).

2. *Christ is the source of all its authority.* Christ demonstrates His authority in (a) the establishment of the Christian church (Matt. 16:18), (b) the institution of ordinances the church must administer (Matt. 26:26-30; 28:19, 20; 1 Cor. 11:23-29; John 13:1-17), (c) the endowment of the church with divine authority to act in His name (Matt. 16:19; 18:15-18; John 20:21-23), (d) the sending of the Holy Spirit to guide His church under His authority (John 15:26; 16:13-15), (e) the appointment within the church of special gifts so that individuals can function as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors (shepherds), and teachers to prepare its members for service and to build up "the body of Christ" till all experience unity in the faith and reflect "the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:7-13).

3. *The Scriptures carry Christ's authority.* Though Christ guides His church through the Holy Spirit, the Word of God is the sole standard by which the church operates. All its members are to obey that Word because it is law in the absolute sense. All human traditions, customs, and cultural practices are subject to the authority of the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

4. *Christ's authority and the offices of the church.* Christ exercises His authority through His church and its specially appointed servants, but He never transfers His power. No one has any independent authority apart from Christ and His word. Seventh-day Adventist

congregations elect their officers. But while these officers function as representatives of the people, their authority comes from Christ. Their election simply confirms the call they received from Christ. The primary duty of the elected officers is to see that the Biblical instructions for worship, doctrine, discipline, and gospel proclamation

are followed. Since the church is the body of Christ, they are to seek its counsel regarding their decisions and actions. **E**

P.G. Damsteeg writes from Berrien Springs, Michigan, where he teaches at the Adventist Theological Seminary of Andrews University.

Should Our Church Elders Resign?

Don Schneider

What would happen if all church elders would resign their positions and say, “For one year let me work only with the kids of this church”? What would happen if every church nominating committee searched first for the junior and the earliten Sabbath school leaders and the Pathfinder directors?

Wouldn’t it be a dynamic church if we *specialized* in working for our own kids! In addition to seeing that anyone who wanted it would have the chance to attend church school, we would have an abundance of activities at the church for our young people. We would probably never get over the impact on the church.

I remember what a church elder did for me years ago. My father was out of work for months because of an accident. The church elder knew that Christmas presents at our house would be in short supply that year, so he gave me a yellow jackknife for Christmas. Although I’ve received many other gifts since, few have been as important to me as that knife. That elder, Glenn Lemon, of the Buchanan Church in Michigan, has remained special to me all of these years.

What would happen if we would go to church next Sabbath determined to say something good to every child we would meet? When he was small, my son said, “Mr. ___ talks to you, but he wouldn’t even notice me if you weren’t there.” On the other hand, we noticed that our children were always good when we were with Howard and Jean Voss, because they would talk to our

kids one-to-one, even though Don and Carol were quite young.

How wonderful if every child would think that you and I are at least *just like Jesus*—kind, gentle, caring, long-suffering and forgiving.

When I was a pastor in Minneapolis, a family with whom I had been studying the Bible was planning to come to church for the very first time. They prepared their young son for the experience by telling him that “Jesus would be there.” The boy did not know much about Jesus, but he kept his eyes open for Him. They came to our home for lunch after the service and the youngster innocently asked my wife if Jesus would be there too. Stumped briefly, my wife stuttered, “Well . . . uh . . . yes, Jesus will be here.” (She was thinking that Jesus’ presence is always with us.)

A few minutes later the little boy ran excitedly to the kitchen and dragged my wife to the front door, saying, “He’s here! Jesus is here now! He’s parking the car.” And my wife arrived at the door in time to see *me* coming up the walk.

How wonderful if every child would think that you and I are at least *just like Jesus*—kind, gentle, and caring . . . long-suffering and forgiving. When I go to church this week, I’m going to think about how Jesus would want to be represented to the kids in the church, and I’ll ask Him for the power to do it. Jesus said, “If you love me, feed my lambs.” Let’s do it this week . . . this year. **E**

Don Schneider is the president of the Lake Union Conference. He writes from Michigan.



Why Committees?

The church believes strongly in the committee system. This is

so not just because of our tradition,

but because of our theology. The

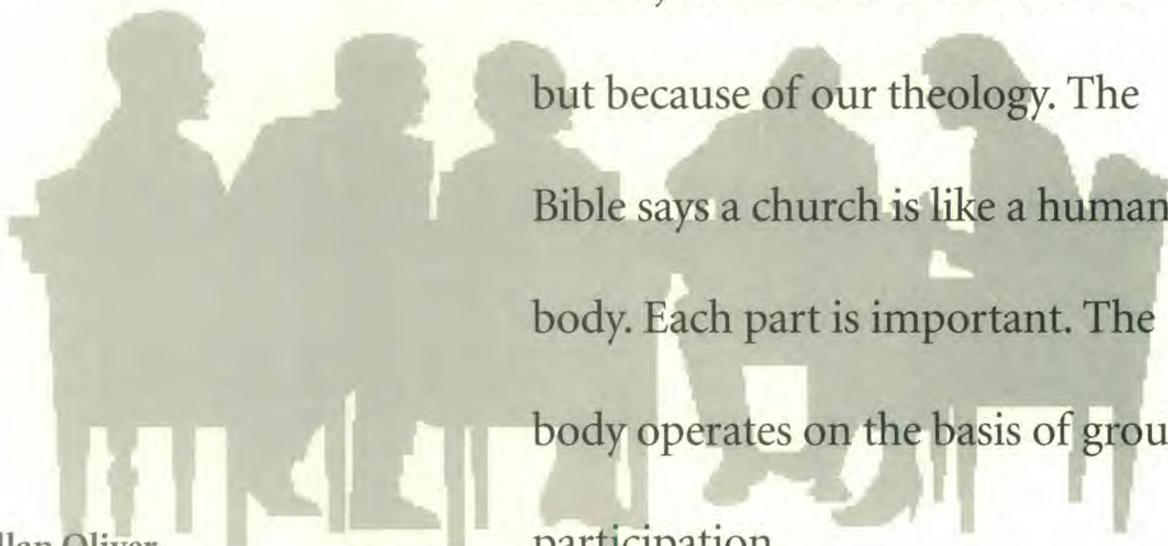
Bible says a church is like a human

body. Each part is important. The

body operates on the basis of group

participation.

Allan Oliver



Christians are to love and trust each other. If we do, it will be proven by our respect for each other's judgment and point of view. We take the Bible seriously when it says, "Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety" (Prov. 11:14, KJV). All of us together are bound to be wiser than any one of us alone.

Ellen White agrees: "In counseling for the advancement of the work, no one man is to be a controlling power, a voice for the whole. Proposed methods and plans are to be carefully considered so that all the brethren may weigh their relative merits and decide which should be followed" (*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 259).

SUGGESTIONS TO THE COMMITTEE LEADER

Christians spend much time in meetings, so committees do more than just make decisions. Committees also exist to grow and to show the fruit of the Spirit. Committees take up a lot of our best energy. Here are some time and energy saving suggestions:

1. *Don't chair too many committees.*

Committees may run the church, but that doesn't mean that you as elder must run every committee. You, or any elder designate, should presumably be an ex officio member of every committee. Sometimes you need to attend to show your interest in and

support of the group. When especially significant items are considered, committee chairpersons appreciate your support. On the other hand, an elder's perpetual presence can be at times intimidating. As elder you have a right to chair the church board once while in consultation with the pastor, and probably should. Sometimes, depending on your availability, personality, leadership style, and local available leadership you may wish to delegate this to another church elder.

2. *Eliminate the trivial.*

Make decisions at the lowest level possible. For example, don't take to a business meeting items that can be settled by the church board. Don't take to the board items that can be settled by the Sabbath school council. And don't take to the Sabbath school council items that can be settled by the Sabbath school superintendent. This not only saves time, but improves committee attendance when committee members know that only significant items will be considered.

On the other hand, don't handle at lower levels the most significant items that affect the whole congregation. The business meeting, not the church board, is the highest authority in the congregation.

Combine a simple supper with your business meeting to increase attendance, and make it a time of fellowship for the entire church.

3. *Double up.*

Hold committee meetings before or after other services such as prayer meeting. Have several committees going on at once, perhaps starting at different times. This way you may be able to spend some time with each committee.

4. *Evaluate annually.*

Review the work of each committee every year. Is a particular committee necessary? Are the right personnel on it? A good rule of thumb is that one third of a committee's membership should be new each year. Is the committee size-efficient? Research indicates that committees should not be larger than six to 12 members. When committees become large, members feel less obligated to attend and are less likely to speak if they do attend. In such situations the more aggressive members tend to take control. Does each committee have properly defined terms of reference, its areas of concern, its authority to act or recommend for approval by another body? **E**

Allan Oliver writes from Silver Spring, Maryland.

*Committees
also exist
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and to
show the
fruit of the
Spirit.*



Board Meeting Devotionals

*A short, well
planned
devotional creates
the atmosphere
for a successful
committee
meeting.*

Robert H. Pierson

Devotional 1

**BEWARE WHEN ALL MEN
SPEAK WELL**

Aim:

To warn against permitting popularity that may come to the church through the press and other media from giving us a false impression of spiritual prosperity.

Text:

Luke 6:26: When we should beware.

Thoughts to be developed:

1. Favorable publicity the church is receiving today from many quarters.
2. History of apostasy in the Christian church-popularity succeeded when persecution failed.
3. A "called out" people; we are to be separate.
4. Beware lest we equate popularity with spiritual prosperity.
5. Call to rededication.

Supporting Scriptures:
John 15:19; 1 John 4:5;

Luke 6: 22-25; 2 Timothy 3:12; Revelation 18:4; 1 Peter 2:9; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Revelation 3:17; Hosea 4:7.

Spirit of Prophecy and Other Helps:

See E. G. White **Index** and the **S.D.A. Commentaries** for comments on Scripture references.

See also: GC 42-Satan's subtle plan; GC 43 -What happened to the early Christian church; GC 144- Spirit of the world same today; PK 570-Constant danger; 8T 127-If we glory in anything save Christ; PK 570-God's people must strictly guard; PK 571-The Lord requires vigilance; PK 570-Demarcation line distinct.

Illustrations:

Use illustrations from your own experience.

Appeal:

Base on 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18: A challenge to dare to be different. Then we may be sons and daughters of God.

Devotional 2

**A CHANGELESS CHRIST
IN A CHANGING WORLD**

Aim:

To lift up Jesus as the One who alone is constant in our changing world.

Text:

Hebrews 1: 10- 12: "They shall be changed; but thou art the same."

Thoughts to be developed:

1. The changing world in which we live.
2. The needs of mankind have not changed.
3. A changeless Christ still meets our every need.

Supporting Scriptures:

Psalm 102:25-27; Hebrews 1:11 (last part); 1: 12 (first part); 2 Corinthians 4:18; 1 Corinthians 7:31; Joel 3:10; Hebrews 1:12 (last part); Philippians 2:5, 6. (See also New English Bible, Weymouth, Phillips, and Barclay.)

Spirit of Prophecy and

Other Helps:

See E. G. White **Index** and the **S.D.A. Commentaries** for comments on Scripture references. See also: 5T 273-Great changes soon; 6T 436-Rapid changes soon; 9T 11-Changes ahead; MH 200 -Mountains and hills changing.

Illustrations:

Select from recent magazines and newspapers outstanding illustrations of change in different parts of the world.

Appeal:

May God help us to be

more like the changeless Christ in this changing world.

Devotional 3

**CHRIST IN OUR
SCHOOLS**

Aim:

To emphasize that truly Christian education prepares young people to be *like* Christ in this life and to be with Christ in the life to come.

Text:

Colossians 3:10, 11: To have one all-consuming passion, one goal; to be new men and women, born again in Christ Jesus.

Thoughts to be developed:

1. Our education greatly influences the place Christ occupies in our lives.
 - a. What our school emphasizes influences us.
 - b. Only a truly Christian education emphasizes Christ.
 - c. Only a truly Christian education leads youth to Christ.
2. Christ must be in the hearts of our teachers and school administrators.
3. Christ must be in the hearts of those who support the school-parents and patrons.
4. Christ must be in our school curriculum.
5. Christ must be in the social and recreational activities of our schools.
6. Professional excellence to be maintained without sacrificing Christian principles.

Supporting Scriptures:

Job 27:11 (margin); Isaiah 28:26; Jeremiah 9:23, 24.

*Spirit of Prophecy and
Other Helps:*

See E. G. White **Index** and **S.D.A. Commentaries** for comments on Scripture references. See also: CT 90-Education affects this life and eternity; CT 37-The key that opens heavenly portals; CT 17-Folly to seek education without Christ; Ed 13-Our concept of education too narrow; 4T 419- Staff must love and fear God; 4T 419- Teachers exert great influence; 4T 428-Parents give ear to students' complaints; 4T 429-Parents to put selves in teachers' place; CT 64-Education more than certain course of study; FE 534-Lining up with the world; 5T 21-Study of Scriptures first; 5T 11-Religious interests always guarded; 3T 160-Truth best appreciated by intellectual Christians; Ed 225-Do not ignore scholarship.

Illustrations:

Use illustrations from your own experience about Christian Education.

Appeal:

That Christ be in the faculty, the curriculum, the parents and patrons, the social and recreational activities of the school.

Devotional 4

FACING THE CRISIS

Aim:

To inspire faith and

courage to meet the crisis just ahead.

Text:

Judges 16:20: Must have God with us to meet any crisis successfully.

Thoughts to be Developed:

1. Some crises ahead— world trouble spots.
2. Some spiritual crises ahead.
3. We must be prepared to meet these crises God can and will provide for us.

Supporting Scriptures:

Select your own appropriate scriptures that develop the thoughts suggested above.

*Spirit of Prophecy and
Other Helps:*

See E. G. White **Index** and the **S.D.A. Commentaries** for comments on Scripture references. See also: 5T 71-Great crisis ahead; 8T 315 -Relentless storm; are we prepared? EW 71-Many without shelter.

Illustrations:

Use illustrations from your own experience. Make a careful survey of current world trouble spots (crises); use them under No. 1 of Thoughts to Be Developed.

Appeal:

Base on: "The tempest is coming, and we must get ready for its fury by having repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ellen G. White, in ST, April 21, 1890, [Quoted in MYP 89]). **E**



Guidelines for New Committee Members

When you serve on a committee, the strength of your own initiative and ideas are rarely enough to get things done.

Richard G. Ensman, Jr.

So you've been asked to serve on a committee. You're excited about the challenge and eager to begin. But if this is your first opportunity for committee service, you're probably concerned about your ability to do a good job and meet the expectations of your fellow committee members.

Effective committee service is an art. This art calls for a set of skills very much unlike the skills you may have learned—and practiced—in years gone by. When you serve on a committee, the strength of your own initiative and ideas are rarely enough to get things done. Only by working with, and through, other committee members, can you begin to achieve the goals your committee sets out to achieve.

Whether you're serving on a planning committee at the church office, a school committee, or a committee of a local civic club, you can get off to a good start—with a little preparation. Here's how:

- **Know the committee's parameters.** As a committee member, you're expected to fulfill certain responsibilities. If these responsibilities are spelled out in writing, study that "job description" carefully before you begin your committee service. If your duties are not spelled out in writing, talk with the committee chair or the individual who recruited you; your job at this point is to understand the precise function of the committee—and how you fit in.

- **Understand the committee's goals.** Some committees are set up to study an issue. Others are set up to coordinate a project. Still others are set up to make certain types of decisions. Understand the goals and outcomes of your committee. If the committee is set up for a limited time only, be sure you understand the nature of the report or product the committee is expected to produce before it dissolves.

- **Be prepared to listen.** True, you may be joining the committee because you have certain skills needed by the group. But remember: your ability to interact with the group's members—and foster group spirit—is often more important than the specific skills you bring to the table.



- **Stay in tune with the tempo of the committee.** Some committees are run in a very brisk, business-like manner, with decisions made quickly and efficiently. Other committees study issues for a lengthy period. Some committees place a great emphasis on conceptual development of ideas. Others strive for consensus. Learn how the committee operates and, unless the committee is experiencing major operational problems, stick with the committee's tempo.

- **Remember that you're the**

new kid on the block. Unless the committee is just being formed, it probably has a history and life of its own, perhaps going back a number of years. Don't expect to come in and change things—or attempt to “stir up the pot”—at your first meeting. Take your duties seriously. Respect the wisdom and experience of others. And keep a low profile at first.

- **Decide what you'd like to gain from your committee service.** True, you're giving

something to your church, your church school, or your community when you serve on a committee. But how will you grow professionally as a result of your service? Will you acquire some new skill? Meet new people? “Practice” for a job in the future? By focusing on your needs and interests—and consciously working towards them—you'll enjoy your committee service much more than if you wander through it aimlessly.

- **Focus on goals.** What, specifically, is the committee

trying to accomplish in the next three months? Over the next year? In what specific ways will the work of the committee support the broader efforts of your church or school? Focus on these goals—and not solely on the mechanics of everyday committee activities—and you'll find your committee work successful and rewarding.

- **Plan the work and work the plan.** Once you understand your committee goals and responsibilities, develop a step-by-step action plan to help you achieve your goals. Develop also, a planning calendar complete with benchmarks and deadlines for key activities. And when you finish a series of activities, don't forget to evaluate. Consistent evaluation will make the job that much easier next time around.

- **Become a master of detail.** While you should always focus on key goals, don't forget that many committees must look after a myriad of details, such as logistics of events, telephone calls, newsletter deadlines, and a host of other needs. Details flesh out the day-to-day work of your committee. Ignore these details and you'll quickly find yourself becoming separated from your goals.

- **Keep your colleagues abreast of the committee's work.** If your committee's

Only by working with, and through, other committee members, can you begin to achieve the goals your committee sets out to achieve.

*Identify a
key role
for
yourself.
What
unique
skills do
you bring
to the
committee?*

work affects superiors or colleagues, keep them informed. Don't be afraid to ask them for advice and encouragement as you carry out your responsibilities. Good committees include people from a variety of backgrounds who can, in turn, reach out to associates for counsel when appropriate. By seeking guidance from others, you'll enrich the work of the committee.

- **Stick to agendas.** Committees should have meetings, and meetings should always have agendas. A good agenda is nothing more than a guide to group discussion. It presents the group with a concrete structure for reporting and decision making. If your committee does not use agendas for meetings now, encourage the group to begin.
- **Identify a key role for yourself.** What unique skills do you bring to the committee? Are you a creative "idea" person? Do you have experience in the committee's area of responsibility? Do you affirm other people well? Do you offer critical advice? Once you identify your unique strengths, bring them to the committee enthusiastically. They can make a crucial difference in the success of a committee project, or even in the life of the committee itself.

- **Be enthusiastic in public and complain in private.** There will come a time when you disagree with the actions of your fellow committee members. Don't complain about those actions or those members to others. Find the right person—it may be the chair of the committee or a trusted associate—and talk out your disagreements in private before setting your own views forth. Effective committee members seek to maintain a sense of unity and cohesion for the committee as a whole. Through collaboration, you'll be able to persuade others to accept your viewpoints in the future.
- **Support your committee's decisions.** Every committee has a different decision-making style. Some committees use a "consensus" approach to decision making. Some take votes. Still others delegate decisions to subcommittees. Once your committee "follows the process" and makes a decision on an issue, support it.
- **Get to know the other members of the committee.** Don't base your judgements of other people serving on the committee solely on what they say or do at committee meetings. Get to know your fellow committee members. Learn about their professional backgrounds, and the reasons they choose to support particular courses

of action. You'll broaden your own perspectives as a result.

- **Look for a successor.** Someday you'll leave your post on the committee. Start asking yourself, right now, who can take your place. What qualities do you want your successor to bring to the committee? In what ways can a successor help move your project or your committee work along even more effectively than you're doing right now? If you can identify a possible successor, you might even want to request that the individual join the committee now—or at least let the chair of the committee know you're thinking about succession, and about the committee's future needs.
- **Enjoy yourself.** Juice and cookies, a simple social hour, or an opportunity for committee members to relax together, can go a long way toward building unity among the committee's members. A committee's work may involve difficult decisions and occasional frustration, but a smattering of pleasure can lighten everyone's load as the committee tackles the hard issues. **E**

Richard G. Ensmen, Jr. writes from Rochester, New York.



Guidelines for Successfully Chairing a Committee

The Holy Spirit assists committees in the decision-making process, but there is still room for skills and guidelines in leading a committee.



Christians spend a lot of time in committees. The Christian Church always believed in the committee system. If it were not for the Holy Spirit, we might still make decisions by casting lots. But after the Holy Spirit's outpouring, group decisions became more democratic. Acts 15 relates the Bible's clearest example of group decisions.

But in spite of the fact the Holy Spirit assists the committee in the decision-making process, there is still room for skills and guidelines in leading a committee. That is the reason for the suggestions presented in this article. Here are some rules to successfully chair a committee.

1. Prepare an agenda.

An agenda is a list of items for the committee to consider and upon which to act. Each committee member should receive a copy of the agenda, if practical, this should be done well before the

meeting date so that members can come prepared. Under some circumstances it is wise to screen the agenda through a

Louis Maciel

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smaller group, such as the elders' council. When there is consensus among the elders, there will usually be agreement by the church board.

What if a committee member interrupts the agenda with an additional item? In informal settings this is not a serious problem. Sometimes, however, the issue introduced could be an explosive one. No one person should be allowed to control the group, neither the one interrupting, nor the chairperson. If the group votes to consider the issue, it might be added at the bottom of the agenda. A safer way is to use a screening committee as suggested above. Then the chairperson can, without seeming dictatorial, explain that items are to be passed through the screening committee before being placed on the agenda.

2. *Begin and end on time.*

Speaking of long committee meetings, Ellen White counsels: "In the hope of reaching a decision, they continue their meetings far into the night. . . . If the brain were given proper periods of rest, the thoughts would be clear and sharp, and the business would be expedited" (*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 256).

Listing agenda items can help keep a committee on time. Not everyone arrives on time, and so list first items that do not require everyone's presence, such as a treasurer's report or routine business. And then begin the meeting on time. Starting meetings late produces a vicious cycle;

next time people will come even later.

Next on your agenda, put the heavy, lengthy items. After the committee talks for an hour and members realize they've gone through only a fourth of the agenda, they'll become more businesslike. Next, place the more brief, shorter items. Finally, include items that must be considered sometime, but could be postponed if you run out of time.

3. *Provide information.*

Committees working in the right spirit with the right information will invariably make the right decision. Inadequate information often leads to wrong decisions. The chairperson need not be the source of all information, but should ensure that the committee gets the information it needs to act intelligently.

4. *Create a team spirit.*

Research shows that committees become ineffective when there is a hostile spirit within the group. Members must want to work together, want to agree. The chairperson has much to do with creating this kind of team spirit.

Don't overcontrol. Unless the committee is oversized, members shouldn't have to address the chair when they wish to speak. Dialogue should flow freely and directly from person to person. If two persons disagree vehemently, turn to others and hear their comments while the

antagonists cool down. Understand and at least informally observe the rules of parliamentary procedure. This gains respect for your leadership, establishes an organized sense of fairness, and protects the democratic process.

And nothing helps create a team spirit more effectively than a wholesome sense of humor. If you can smile together, you can usually work together.

5. *Control participation.*

Ensure a broad spectrum of participation and encourage everyone to join in the discussion. Gently bypass those who have already shared their point of view and tend to dominate. Ask specifically the more timid to share their thinking. When these nonparticipating members speak once and find their contribution is heard and respected, they will usually speak again and continue to participate.

6. *Respect others' ideas.*

Pastors and other denominational chairpersons tend to be too autocratic. You know more about the subject than your committee members, because you have probably been more involved. But this does not mean your judgment is superior to that of the group. Some chairpersons may manipulate a committee to get their own way. But people resent such an approach; it's neither wise nor Christian.

Settle the process theologically in your own

mind. Do you really believe in the wisdom of the church body as a whole? If so, you will respect the will of the committee, not only out of necessity, but out of your ecclesiological understanding. As chairperson, remain as unbiased and neutral as possible. If there is an issue in which you cannot do this, give the chair to someone else during discussion of that item. One advantage in asking someone else to chair the church board is that you can then argue openly and fairly in favor of a given plan that is especially important to you.

Frank discussion of delicate issues should never leave the committee room. If it does, discussion will be less frank and open next time. Practice and preach confidentiality.

On the other hand, understand the tendency of human nature to betray confidence. Practice the principle of Matthew 18, limiting the discussion of controversial issues to the smallest group possible. You may sometimes need to ask the permission of your board or business meeting to delegate the discussion of highly confidential details to a designated small group. The elders' council may be one such group.

7. Stick to the problem.

A committee solves problems by a cooperative pooling of information and judgment. We have addressed each section of this committee definition except

the first; a committee solves problems.

But when the problem proves difficult to solve, the group or some of its members will begin talking about something that has no relevance to the main issue. The chairperson must kindly but relentlessly keep the committee on the problem at hand.

8. Summarize periodically.

Rather than spending a lot of time on your own arguments, as chairperson concentrate more on rephrasing and summarizing the arguments given by others and work on areas of consensus. Voting, though absolutely essential, need not be a source of concern, for thorough and fair discussion by a good committee usually leads to a unanimous or near-unanimous decision.

Large problems can be solved in small steps. When faced with a difficult problem, the chair should watch for consensus developing on a portion of the problem and encourage a decision on that before continuing the discussion. For example, if the group is having difficulty deciding whether or not to put red tiles on the roof, the chairperson can listen for consensus on a part of the problem—does the church need a new roof?

9. See that decisions are recorded.

This may seem unimportant in smaller, informal groups. But forget

that you can remember, and remember that you can forget. Minutes of a meeting should be read and approved at the next meeting. Recorded minutes can keep the pastor out of a lot of trouble.

10. Support the decision.

See that assignments are made for its implementation. Few things aggravate a committee more than finding out that the pastor or other church leaders ignored the committee decision and did things their own way anyway. When you're voted down, either accept the committee's wish or bring together additional information and ask the group to reconsider. Everyone together is more likely to be right than anyone alone (including the pastor).

We must remember that God worries more about how the chairperson treats the people, than if the meeting runs efficiently; how members of the committee treat the people of the church, more than which carpet color is selected. The agenda and the meeting place must show respect for individuals. For many Christians, meetings are their mission field. **E**

Louis Maciel writes from Silver Spring, Maryland.

When you're voted down, either accept the committee's wish or bring together additional information and ask the group to reconsider.



How to Effectively Lead a Committee

There are several meetings types. If we understand them, we can choose the right type for a specific purpose.



Mack Tennyson

The church board is composed of the principal officers of the church. It has a number of important responsibilities, but its chief concern is the spiritual nurture of the church and the work of planning and fostering evangelism in all of its phases.

The great commission of Jesus makes evangelism, proclaiming the good news of the gospel, the primary function of the church (Matt 28:18-20). It is therefore also the primary function of the church board to serve as the chief committee of the local church. When the board devotes its first interests and highest energies to every-member evangelism, most church problems are alleviated or prevented. A strong, positive influence is felt in the spiritual life and growth of the membership.

There are several meetings types. If we understand them, we can choose the right type for a specific purpose. The different types of meetings function differently. The meeting types are (1) action, (2) decision making, (3) information trading, (4) conflict resolution, and (5) governance.

ACTION GROUPS

Action groups are the most common type of meeting. They fulfill a specific task. This is their life cycle: We set them up; the members meet and decide how to do their task; they carry out the task; then they decide how well they did.

We organize them. This step is vital. A successful business skillfully blends the success factors: labor, capital, and raw

materials. A successful shoe company needs people who know how to make and market shoes: This is the labor part. The company also needs equipment and buildings: This is the capital part. It needs leather, packaging, and so on: This is the material part.

Throwing these three elements together carelessly does not bring success. Too much capital or labor is costly and makes the company unprofitable. Too much raw material does the same thing. Having the skilled factory labor, but not the right raw materials is bad. The successful entrepreneur skillfully blends these things.

Some ministers see the church the same way and think of themselves as the church's spiritual entrepreneur. Suppose the church needs a program for the youth. The minister can make plans, promote the program, drive the van, watch the kids, and be the spiritual leader. Or he can bring the needed elements together. The successful church is one in which the minister blends the requirements necessary to get a job done. He can recruit good workers, line up some money, and get materials. After he assembles these components, he works to start the process. Once it begins, he is freed to start another program. The program can run without his constant care.

The workers make their plans and carry them out. They use the resources they or the minister generates. The group runs the youth program differently from the way the minister would do it himself. The program reflects the

committee's personality. Good ministers like these results.

Leading an action meeting is different from leading other types. The focus is getting the job done, so members' suggestions and plans must be concrete. For example, one can do away with high theories about youth development. It is more a question of "Where are we going, and who is driving?" The decisions are very job-oriented. So let the group members make the decisions.

Group leaders whose style is too overbearing may find themselves alone because members do not sense ownership for the plan. They simply find other things more pressing. If they feel that they did the planning, they work harder at making the plans work.

Another trait of action groups is the way they make decisions. With action groups, majority rule is not good enough. Suppose the youth committee has ten members. Some prefer to take the kids to an amusement park, and the others think it is wrong. There is hot debate. Finally six vote for the amusement park trip. We should expect only the six to take the kids to the park. The other four will not feel a responsibility to carry out the plan.

Action groups must work toward consensus, that is, a situation in which there is overwhelming agreement and those who disagree do not feel their position too strongly. In action groups, do not expect hard work from members who do not help make the plans or who oppose the program.

A well-run action group must have a self-evaluation

method. After the group decides what it is going to do, make a check list. List the outcomes that will show success and the results that will demonstrate failure. When you finish the project, go through the check list to see how well the project worked.

DECISION-MAKING GROUPS

Decision-making groups decide the way the church will proceed on an issue, but they do not carry out the decision. Some examples of decision-making groups are the church nominating committee, the building committee, and the finance committee. They all follow certain steps: (1) they clearly state the problem, (2) they identify the facts needed to make a good decision, (3) they gather the facts, (4) they work out the options, and (5) they decide among the options.

The church needs a new photocopier. The correct choice may be simple—the minister presents his favorite to the church board, and the board votes on it. However, the situation may be more complex than that. The copier may be used by the church school, so it will be hard to decide on the needed size. Don't expect the minister to take a risk and decide. That is unfair. The board should form a subcommittee, and it should select the right copy machine.

The copier committee must clearly state the problem: Which copier to get? They must identify the facts it needs: How much copying is required by the church and the school? Which copiers handle that

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*Talk out
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with those
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This
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Holy
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output? What special features are needed on the copier? How much money is available for a copier? The list goes on.

Then the committee gathers the facts and begins stating options: any of three particular copiers could nicely handle the work load, and could be either bought or leased. The committee then chooses among the options.

Think about this process before assembling the group. Choose people who know how to work through options and can make good decisions. But include some unseasoned group decision makers, for this will enable them to learn the process.

The group leader's job is to shepherd the group through these steps. A domineering leader blocks the process so that the best solution may be missed. Suppose the group leader thinks one option is best. He should reserve his opinion until the group has done its homework, developed options, and has matured in its thinking. A weak group leader, by contrast, fails to keep the group moving. The group gets little done, and members become angry. Often they choose an inferior option just to get a decision made.

Sometimes church leaders form a decision-making group even though they have a clear idea what they want done. Their purpose is to build support and validate their idea. They do not really want the group to make a decision. This strategy usually backfires. Bringing together a supposedly decision-making group and stubbornly directing the decision is a mistake. It is far better to be honest and say, "I

have an idea I want to sell you."

As with action groups, decision groups need more than a majority vote. The decision of a strongly divided group reveals itself as weak even if the majority support it. Sometimes, it is true, a simple "majority rules" may be the only way out of a serious dilemma. However, the committee should review widely split votes to see if the problem needs more work.

INFORMATION-TRADING GROUPS

The next type of meeting is information trading. Everyone contributes to the information pool, and everyone draws from it. Many church board meetings allow a place on the agenda for this. Each group reports what it is doing and talks about its concerns. The purpose is to let all the church leaders know what is going on so they can give counsel and help.

This type of committee can be larger than the other groups already described, and its membership can comprise a wide cross section of the congregation. Voting is not the focus. Informal answers are sought through the exchange of information and the discussion of problems.

An information-trading meeting requires leaders who inspire others to share information. The leader ascertains beforehand that there are enough problems to warrant a meeting. This can be difficult to discern, because sometimes the problem-sharing process brings to light even more problems. During the meeting the leader leads the process by drawing out the

timid and managing the talkative.

Churches have all too often been the victims of a cheap trick. Someone disguises an information meeting as a decision-making meeting. A church leader, perhaps the pastor, has designed a new youth program he wants adopted. He could honestly say, "I have a new program that I think you will like. Let's meet and look at it. Let me try to show you the good things about it." Instead he says, "I want to meet with you, so we can decide what we want as a youth program." The young people show up expecting to develop a youth program. Instead they end up seeing a performance by the pastor. Then to validate what he is doing, he calls for a vote. Often such a vote is meaningless. This kind of deception reduces everyone's trust in the leader. The next time he really needs help in planning a program, no one will respond.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION GROUPS

Sometimes churches must ignore conflict between members. The Bible admonishes us to talk out problems with those who disagree. This action in submission to the guidance of the Holy Spirit usually brings peace. However, in some cases we promote conflict resolution by pulling the people together.

This drawing people together can be done informally. Suppose some church members are arguing about what kinds of music are appropriate for the main church service. One group wants older hymns, and

the other wants modern music such as Scripture choruses. One strategy is to gather all the concerned members and let them work out a solution.

Or the meeting may be formal. Imagine a church dispute so complex that it is difficult even to describe it—yet this really happened. Brother Bob introduces Brother Jim and other members to Mr. Smith, a nonmember, who is raising money to start a business. Brother Jim and others lend Mr. Smith some money. But he runs off with it, and they never see Mr. Smith again.

Brother Jim and others claim that back when they were making the loans, Brother Bob said he would stand behind them. They feel that Bob should repay them the money they lost. Brother Bob denies securing the loans. The arguing and hard feelings are tearing apart the church.

Many of the members think the church should ignore the war. They say, “The church is for its members’ spiritual development—not solving all their problems.” Time does not heal this wound. Every day it looks more and more as if someone will sue.

Finally the minister, with the blessing of the board, gets all the parties to agree to binding arbitration. Three respected denominational lawyers are brought in, and the parties meet and explain their positions. The pastor instructs the lawyers to decide the issue, using both the technical legal applications and the principle of fairness. That is, the law may require signed papers that guarantee the loan, but this should not be a loophole that

lets Brother Bob off the hook if he made pledges about the loan.

The binding arbitration agreement includes a provision that stops the parties from talking about the conflict with other members. The minister moderates the proceeding and, according to the agreement, invites the entire congregation to attend.

The process proves highly successful. Everyone agrees that the settlement is fair. The parties are spared high legal costs. They preserve a moderate degree of church unity, and amazingly, the minister emerges as the great peacemaker.

GOVERNANCE MEETINGS

The last type of committee is governance. Earlier we compared churches and businesses, pointing out that some ministers see themselves as entrepreneurs who pull together the various elements that are needed to get a job done. We must not carry this analogy too far, because we can also compare churches and governments.

A church is a group working together for common purposes, interests, and standards. The only church meetings recorded in the Bible were for governing church standards, as in Acts 15. Governance meetings are the church’s legislative process. The focus is on seeking God’s will for his people in church discipline, church goals, membership policy, ordination policy, and so forth.

The real work involved in a legislative type of meeting takes place beforehand. Someone identifies problems and drafts a solution. Then the

legislative group amends the proposal as needed and ratifies the solution.

Here the model of majority rule makes more sense than in the other types of meetings. Nevertheless, the ultimate goal is not “What do most people want?” but rather “What is God’s will for His church?”

Because the group is acting on recommendations and not problem solving, it can be larger than other kinds of groups. But it should be small enough that members feel responsible for their actions. And because it involves governance, it should be representative.

COMMITTEE SIZE

Choosing the right committee size and makeup is a combination of art and science. Many factors must be balanced.

1. *The more complex the decision, the smaller and more specialized the group must be.* For example, a group for setting up the church’s retirement program will be smaller and more specialized than a group working on the missions program.

Another small, specialized type of committees might be a committee that selects music for the main service—a small committee that should have members who are gifted and knowledgeable in music and worship. A committee that plans a church banquet should be small and have people who know how to organize such an event.

2. *The wider the committee’s impact, the larger and more democratic it should*

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The ultimate goal is not “What do most people want?” but rather “What is God’s will for His church?”

Summer Schools for Elders in Australia and New Zealand

GRAEME S. BRADFORD

If we had only heard this type of material years ago we would never have been so concerned about what is happening in our church!" These words were shared with me by a group of conservative elders at the breakfast table on Sabbath morning, the last day of one of our Elder's Summer Schools.

Over the last few years the Trans-Tasman Union has run three Elder's Summer Schools lasting for one week in different locations in Australia and New Zealand with the following goals in mind: (1) To help elder's become better informed regarding the doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. (2) To help elders come to a better understanding of how the church functions. (3) To help train elder's to be able to assist their pastors in the practical work of ministry. (4) To provide a place where the leaders of the church can meet with the elders to be able to better understand their concerns regarding the issues which are dividing many local congregations.

The first was held in the Summer of 1994 at Avondale College. We chose the College because it provided the classroom atmosphere. Dr William Johnsson was the main presenter and taught classes on Biblical Theology. He was asked to spend much of his time in the areas which had caused divisions in Adventism over more recent times. His class presentations were videoed and hundreds of sets were sold. Because of this it was possible to share some of the inspiration of the meetings with others who had not been able to attend. Drs John Dybdahl and R. Bruinsma also taught classes on conflict management and church administration.

The enthusiastic response of those who attended encouraged us to conduct another school the following year. This time we had Dr Gary Patterson from the General Conference dealing with the topic of inspiration as found in the Gospels, and Ed Dickerson a layman from the State of Iowa, teaching classes on the book of Revelation. The early part of the school in New Zealand started out somewhat stormy as some of our more conservative elders felt threatened by some new concepts that were being presented. By the end of the week, however, that had changed quite dramatically and many were declaring that they were seeing some things in a

different light.

Workshops were also conducted by the Trans-Tasman Union Departmental team on: Six different ways that people think; how young people look at the church; developing preaching skills; how to make Sabbath School more relevant; understanding our health message.

Our last school, conducted at the beginning of 1997, featured Dr Jon Paulien from Andrews University teaching classes on: Eschatology; studies from the book of Romans; reaching the secular mind.

Workshops were conducted by local personnel in the following areas: How the church organization works; how to chair board and business meetings; styles of leadership; how to make pastoral visits; how to handle stress.

Classes were also conducted by Lylell Heise, our newly appointed Worship Director for the Trans-Tasmanian Union Conference, on how to develop more positive worship services in our churches on Sabbath mornings.

Elders who attended were only required to pay one third of the cost of accommodation and transportation. The local conference and local church also paid one third each. There was overwhelming affirmation given to us in the evaluation sheets filled in at the end of each school. So many said that they were thrilled that the church was prepared to spend some time and money on their laymen to have them better equipped and informed to help in the work of the ministry. However, another vital return from the schools is the bonding that took place as church leaders and local elders spent a week together. It wasn't only what took place in the classroom that was appreciated, it was also the fact that key church leaders made themselves available to be part of the group dynamic. The conversations that took place out of the classroom and at meal times were very important in bringing about mutual understandings and bonding. So far we have put some 850 elders through our schools.

As an outgrowth of the schools an opportunity has been created for Theological Consultations with some of our more conservative and loyal laymen and women. So far we have run three and plan another three during 1997. In these consultations we invite by mail a select few

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Bible Prophecy and the Judgment

MARTIN WEBER

The recent peace accord between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization has intensified interest in Bible prophecy. Many Christians believe that the events leading up to Christ's return will center around the nation of Israel. They believe that a rebuilding of the Jewish temple there on the ancient site of the Temple Mount has great prophetic significance.

The New Testament, however, points away from any rebuilt temple on earth. It focuses instead on heaven's sanctuary, where Jesus intercedes for us. Notice: "Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man" (Hebrews 8:1,2).

THE PRE-ADVENT JUDGMENT

In connection with the sanctuary is a pre-Advent judgment. Just before the destruction of this world, God sends three angels with a special worldwide warning. Each angel proclaims a segment of the message that is God's last communication to the human race. Of course these angels are symbolic—they are not flying over our heads with a megaphone. The message they share, however, is real and vitally important. We find the first warning in Revelation 14:6, 7:

"Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water'."

Here's the everlasting gospel, the grand old message of salvation—but now with a new urgency. Why? Because "the hour of His judgment has come."

It only makes sense that a judgment of some kind takes place before Jesus returns to this earth. Because when He does come back He brings His reward with Him for everyone alive on earth. So He must have already completed an investigative judgment of those He will reward with eternal life, and those who won't go to heaven.

From the prophecies of Daniel, Adventists understand that this judgment began in the year 1844, at the close of the 2,300-year prophecy, and it proceeds until just before Jesus returns.

Many Christians tremble at the thought of facing God's judgment. If they could only understand the biblical meaning of judgment, they would realize that God is on our side. It's His good pleasure to give us the kingdom. In fact, He takes upon Himself the responsibility of defending His people.

Well now, if God defends us in the heavenly judgment, who is our accuser? You guessed it—the devil. The Bible calls him the "accuser of the brethren," who "accuses us before God day and night" (Rev. 12:10). Apparently Satan is jealous about our going to heaven where he used to live as Lucifer, prince of the angels, before his rebellion and expulsion. Now he condemns God's children as being unworthy to occupy his former home.

Well, we are unworthy, aren't we? How do we counter the devils accusations? Notice the thrilling answer: "And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 12:11). It's by the blood of Jesus that you and I overcome Satan's accusations! God cannot deny the devils contention that we are sinful. But in the blood shed on Calvary's cross He finds the evidence He needs to pronounce us innocent. So He dismisses Satan's charges, endorsing the security in Christ we have enjoyed since we accepted Him.

So God in the judgment takes our side against Satan. Jesus our advocate assists Him by interceding for us in heaven's temple. God finds in the sacrifice of His Son the legal basis to accept repenting sinners and count us perfect. I like that, don't you? It makes me feel confident in Christ about my salvation!

Now you may wonder, why would God need a judgment anyway? Can't He just brush aside the accusations of the devil and bring His people up to heaven? The problem here is that when the devil challenges God's acceptance of sinners, he raises doubts about God Himself. Is He really fair? Then how could He cast the devil out of heaven but build mansions there for other sinners?

You see the problem. In this judgment God must settle doubts about Himself, His fairness. Since His government operates through loving trust and loyalty, He allows the citizens of the universe to audit the record of His dealings throughout history. Notice this from the apostle Paul: "Indeed, let God be found true but every man a liar. As it is written, 'That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are judged'" (Rom. 3:4).

So in this judgment going on in heaven's temple before Jesus comes, God allows Himself to be audited by the citizens of the universe. At issue is His fairness in dealing with the human race by accepting repenting sinners into heaven. His goal is to defend His government and the salvation of His people from the accusations of Satan. **E**

Martin Weber writes from Silver Spring, Maryland where he works presently as pastor of the New Hope Adventist Church.

How to Effectively Lead a Committee

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be. A committee that chooses the sanctuary carpeting should have a broad range of members selected from the church's subgroups. This provides diverse input and encourages a large support base for fund-raising.

3. *The more the activity depends on volunteer help, the larger the group.* The principle here is that the people who do the work should make the decisions. Conversely, the people who are not doing the work should not make the decisions.

4. *The more governance the group exercises, the larger the group.* A large group can better represent the congregation's different interests.

5. *The smaller the group, the better.* There are several reasons for keeping groups as small as possible for the task. Small groups will often make better decisions and make them more quickly than larger groups. Members of small groups will feel responsible for their decisions. They are more careful thinkers and will work harder to follow up on their decisions and make them work.

Think about committees on which you have served. If you were one of several score, you put less thought into the decision making than if you were one in a dozen.

This is because you feel less influential in the large group, so why work to develop and debate a position? Also, if the group is large, you will feel little shame if the group's decision proves wrong. Moreover, you would not feel a great sense of responsibility to follow through and make the decision work. With small groups, the opposite holds true.

Weigh the size factor of each group when determining the group's composition. Some factors may work at cross purposes, so you need the right balance for size, representation, and expertise. Skillfully balance all the factors as you develop the right group for the job. **E**

Mack Tennyson writes from South Carolina where he works as public accountant and associate professor of accountancy.

Summer School for Elders in Australia and New Zealand

Concluded from page 28

of our conservative people who we feel would benefit most by attending the consultation. We like to have between 25 to 30. If the group is too large we lose the ability to be able to communicate. The local Conference and the Union share the costs. These people are our guests for the weekend at a campground or motel. We stress that there will be no winners or losers. We are simply coming together to listen to each other.

Presentations and discussion is invited on the following subjects: What is true historic Adventism?; the role and function of Ellen White in settling doctrinal differences; how to study the Bible; the nature of Christ and sinless perfectionism; why has Jesus not returned?

The results and unity it has given us have encouraged us to conduct more. The second time around we will let those who are the attendees nominate the subjects to be presented and discussed.

We regard the summer schools and the theological consultations as playing a vital part in helping to bring unity and understanding among church administrators, pastors and laity. We are finding that when you sit down and listen to people you usually find that they have some fairly valid reasons for thinking the way they do. Most people do not sound so 'way out' when you let them explain their convictions for themselves. **E**

Graeme Bradford writes from Australia where he is the Ministerial Secretary for the Trans-Tasman Union Conference.

Church Discipline

Ellen G. White

In dealing with erring church-members, God's people are carefully to follow the instruction given by the Saviour in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew (See Matt. 18:15-18).

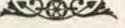
Human beings are Christ's property, purchased by Him at an infinite price, bound to Him by the love that He and His Father have manifested for them. How careful, then, we should be in our dealing with one another! Men have no right to surmise evil in regard to their fellow-men. Church-members have no right to follow their own impulses and inclinations in dealing with fellow-members who have erred. They should not even express their prejudices regarding the erring; for thus they place in other minds the leaven of evil. Reports unfavorable to a brother or sister in the church are communicated from one to another of the church-members.

Mistakes are made and injustice is done because of an unwillingness on the part of some one to follow the directions given by the Lord Jesus.

"If thy brother shall trespass against thee," Christ declared, "go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." Do not tell others of the wrong. One person is told, then another, and still another; and continually the report grows, and the evil increases, till the whole church is made to suffer. Settle the matter "between thee and him alone." This is God's plan.

"Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbor hath put thee to shame. Debate thy cause with thy neighbor himself; and discover not a secret to another" (Prov. 25:8,9). Do not suffer sin upon your brother; but do not expose him, and thus increase the difficulty, making the reproof seem like a revenge. Correct him in the way outlined in the word of God.

Do not suffer resentment to ripen into malice. Do not allow the wound to fester and break out in poisoned words, which taint the minds of those who hear. Do not allow bitter thoughts to continue to fill your mind and his.


"Even if he (the erring one) does not repent, even if he stands outside the church, God's servants still have a work to do for him."


Go to your brother, and in humility and sincerity talk with him about the matter.

Whatever the character of the offense, this does not change the plan that God has made for the settlement of misunderstandings and personal injuries. Speaking alone and in the spirit of Christ to the one who is in fault, will often remove the difficulty. Go to the erring one, with a heart filled with Christ's love and sympathy, and seek to adjust the matter. Reason with him calmly and quietly. Let no angry words escape your lips. Speak in a way that will appeal to his better judgment. Remember the words, "He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:20).

Take to your brother the remedy that will cure the disease of disaffection. Do your part to help him. For the sake of the peace and unity of the church, feel it a privilege as well as a duty to do this. If he will hear you, you have gained him as a friend.

All heaven is interested in the interview between the one that has been injured and the one who is in error. As the erring one accepts the reproof offered in the love of Christ, and acknowledges his wrong, asking forgiveness from God and from his brother, the sunshine of heaven fills his heart. The controversy is ended; friendship and confidence are restored. The oil of love removes the soreness caused by the wrong; the Spirit of God binds heart to heart; and there is music in heaven over the union brought about.

As those thus united in Christian fellowship offer prayer to God, and pledge themselves to deal justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God, great blessing comes to them. If they have wronged others, they continue the work of repentance, confession, and restitution, fully set to do good to one another. This is the fulfilling of the law of Christ.

"But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses

every word may be established.” Take with you those who are spiritually minded, and talk with the one in error in regard to the wrong. He may yield to the united appeals of his brethren. As he sees their agreement in the matter, his mind may be enlightened.

“And if he shall neglect to hear them,” what then shall be done? Shall a few persons in a board meeting take upon themselves the responsibility of disfellowshipping the erring one? “If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto *the church*.” Let the church take action in regard to its members.

“But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.” If he will not heed the voice of the church, if he refuses all the efforts made to reclaim him, upon the church rests the responsibility of separating him from fellowship. His name should then be stricken from the books.

No church officer should advise, no committee should recommend, nor should any church vote, that the name of a wrong-doer shall be removed from the church books, until the instruction given by Christ has been faithfully followed. When this has been done, the church has cleared herself before God. The evil must then be made to appear as it is, and must be removed, that it may not become more and more widespread. The health and purity of the church must be preserved, that she may stand before God unsullied, clad in the robes of Christ’s righteousness.

If the erring one repents and submits to Christ’s discipline, he is to be given another trial. And even if he does not repent, even if he stands outside the church, God’s servants still have a work to do for him. They are to seek earnestly to win him to repentance. And however aggravated may have been his offense, if he yields to the striving of the Holy Spirit, and by confessing and forsaking his sin gives evidence of repentance, he is to be forgiven and welcomed to the fold again. His brethren are to encourage him in the right way, treating him as they would wish to be treated were they in his place, considering themselves, lest they also be tempted.

“Verily I say unto you,” Christ continued, “Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

This statement holds its force in all ages. On the church has been conferred the power to act in Christ’s stead. It is God’s instrumentality for the preservation of order and discipline among His people.

To it the Lord has delegated the power to settle all questions respecting its prosperity, purity, and order. Upon it rests the responsibility of excluding from its fellowship those who are unworthy, who by their unchristlike conduct would bring dishonor on the truth. Whatever the church does that is in accordance with the directions given in God’s word, will be ratified in heaven.

REMISSION OF SINS

“Whosoever sins ye remit,” said Christ, “they are remitted; . . . and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained” (John 20:23). Christ here gives no liberty for any man to pass judgment upon others. In the sermon on the mount He forbade this. It is the prerogative of God. But on the church in its organized capacity He places a responsibility for the individual members. Toward those who fall into sin, the church has a duty, to warn, to instruct, and if possible to restore. “Reprove, rebuke, exhort,” the Lord says, “with all long-suffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2).

Deal faithfully with wrong-doing. Warn every soul that is in danger. Leave none to deceive themselves. Call sin by its right name. Declare what God has said in regard to lying, Sabbath-breaking, stealing, idolatry, and every other evil. “They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:21). If they persist in sin, the judgment you have declared from God’s word is pronounced upon them in heaven. In choosing to sin, they disown Christ; the church must show that she does not sanction their deeds, or she herself dishonors her Lord. She must say about sin what God says about it. She must deal with it as God directs, and her action is ratified in heaven. He who despises the authority of the church, despises the authority of Christ Himself.

But there is a brighter side to the picture. “Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted.” Let this thought be kept uppermost. In labor for the erring, let every eye be directed to Christ. Let the shepherds have a tender care for the flock of the Lord’s pasture. Let them speak to the erring of the forgiving mercy of the Savior. Let them encourage the sinner to repent, and believe in Him who can pardon. Let them declare, on the authority of God’s word, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). All who repent have the assurance, “He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea” (Micah 7:19).

Let the repentance of the sinner be accepted by the church with grateful hearts. Let the repenting one be led out from the darkness of unbelief into the light of faith and righteousness. Let his trembling hand be placed in the loving hand of Jesus. Such a remission is ratified in heaven.” *The Desire of Ages* pages 805, 806. **E**

This article was taken from Gospel Workers pp. 498-503.

Ellen G. White was one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. A prolific writer, she produced more than 100,000 pages by the time she died in 1915. Her work continues as a prophetic voice within the Adventist church.



Put this information in your file. It may be useful to you in the future.

YOUR MOST VALUABLE POSSESSION

On one of his journeys through the desert, Lawrence of Arabia had a man named Jasmin as a member of his party. He was a Bedouin, a lazy, shiftless fellow. The Arabs spoke of him as "Jasmin the Bedouin, not worth half-a-crown." As the party journeyed on, they were suddenly in the midst of a blinding sandstorm, and soon were separated. When they linked up again some hours later, and were preparing to make camp, Lawrence asked, "Where is Jasmin?" There was no response. "Where is Jasmin?" he repeated. The Arabs looked at each other and then someone said, "He is out there," indicating with a wave of his hand the direction he had taken. Without a word, Lawrence led his camel out into the storm. He was going to find "Jasmin the Bedouin, not worth half-a-crown." At last he found him completely exhausted. Lawrence helped him on to the camel and walked ahead. As dawn was painting the sky they reached camp. The Arabs awoke to find Jasmin in their midst, alive because their leader had found him. He had gone out into the storm to find "Jasmin the Bedouin, not worth half-a-crown." From that day forward he was treated with the greatest respect, but the change in the man himself was the most remarkable feature of the incident. Never again was he the same lazy, good-for-nothing he had been before it happened. Lawrence had thought him worth saving, and his value was enhanced beyond all knowing.

When a man regards his soul as worthless, let him remember how a greater than Lawrence went out into the fiercest storm this world has ever known. Jesus

must have considered that soul to be of infinite value if He endured such sufferings upon the Cross to deliver it from the power of sin and Satan. Against the background of what happened at Calvary the soul is surely man's most valuable possession. Why should we neglect its need of God?

FINISHED

One of the many great projects in American history was the building of a transcontinental railway line which would unite the country from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

From the outset the work was fraught with difficulties, not the least of which was lack of funds. At one period the undertaking had to be halted until the promoters could secure the necessary finance to carry on. When the news came through that this hurdle had been overcome there was great rejoicing. Finally the day arrived when the last rail was to be laid. They had reached a point on the border line between New Mexico and Colorado. It was to be an outstanding event. A laurel tie and two silver spikes had been ordered from California. The governor of each state had been invited. They were to have the honor of driving a silver spike each into the laurel tie. This would complete the work of construction. Soon locomotives would be transporting passengers and goods from both coasts binding together the two States.

The governors looked at each other, smiled, and then they hammered home the silver spikes into the laurel wood tie. A great shout arose from the vast crowd. From a tapped telegraph wire the news was flashed to the entire country and to the whole world.

We know of a day when iron spikes were driven into a rough hewn wooden cross, through the hands and feet of Jesus Christ. Around that cross they stood and watched, Scribes and Pharisees, soldiers and rabble, mockers and scoffers, while heaven draped its gates in mourning, and the sun hid its face in shame.

But when the last spike was hammered home a great shout rang through the vaulted sky, reverberated through the caverns of the damned, shook hell to its foundations, burst the tombs asunder, broke the chains of death, and opened wide the way into the Father's presence. "It is finished," was the cry! Christ and Him crucified has linked God and man together. Sing it, shout it, sound the proclamation, let the message ring out, "It is finished!"

THE PRICE OF FREEDOM

In a poor suburb of Sydney, Australia, lived an old man named Skuli Jonson. He was born in Denmark. Both his legs had been amputated. For what reason? Here is the story.

Skuli had spent the major part of his life as a guide in Iceland, a favorite among scientists who wanted to explore Askja, the great volcano. One morning Skuli guided a German doctor and his three assistants to the base of Askja. Later in the day, while the doctor and his guide were making camp, the three assistants went off to do some exploring on their own account. They disappeared from sight and were never seen again. That night there was a minor eruption and lava came trickling down the steep slope of the mountain. When the doctor and Skuli investigated, the medical man found the lava sufficiently solid to hold his weight; but when Skuli tried to stand on it he fell through into the molten lava beneath the surface. He felt a sharp pain shooting through his legs, excruciating agony beyond all bearing. Then he lost consciousness. When he recovered he found his legs had been hacked off below the knees. The doctor had had to amputate them so as to release him from the terrible hold of the lava.

To anyone who disbelieves his

story Skuli has his granddaughter exhibit a pair of trousers cut off at the knees and still bearing stains of blood. Along the edge of the cloth, following the ragged line where the trouser legs were cut off, the cloth is fossilised. There can be but little doubt that it is lava. So the legless man substantiates his story.

What a price to pay for freedom! But freedom is precious and the grip of the lava was mighty. The forces holding the soul in bondage are mightier still. Who can break their power? The One who was manifested to destroy the works of Satan can do so. He alone can set the guilty captive free. He only has power to save.

WHEN CHRIST COMES IN

A minister friend of mine was commissioned to visit Germany at the end of World War II.

Finding himself one day in a city where resided a German pastor whose address he had been given, my friend decided to visit him. He found the house after a long search, and was asked inside by the pastor and his wife. He entered the house, carrying his suitcase, and was very soon in animated conversation with his new-found friends. Time passed quickly, and when evening came the pastor said: "We are very sorry, but you know food is hard to get these days. We would like to set before you a decent meal, but I'm afraid it is not possible in the circumstances." Then the visitor lifted up on to the table the suitcase he had brought. When he had opened it they saw it was filled with good things to eat. He smiled and said: "But you see, the Lord had provided for you. I have brought enough for all of us." His German friends were speechless for a while, and then tried to express their thanks. That night they had fellowship around the table, enjoying the food which their visitor had brought.

So it is when Christ comes into a human life. He brings with Him the very things men need to satisfy their spiritual hunger. Strength for their weakness; light for their darkness; pardon for their sins; peace for their turmoil; and grace for every need.

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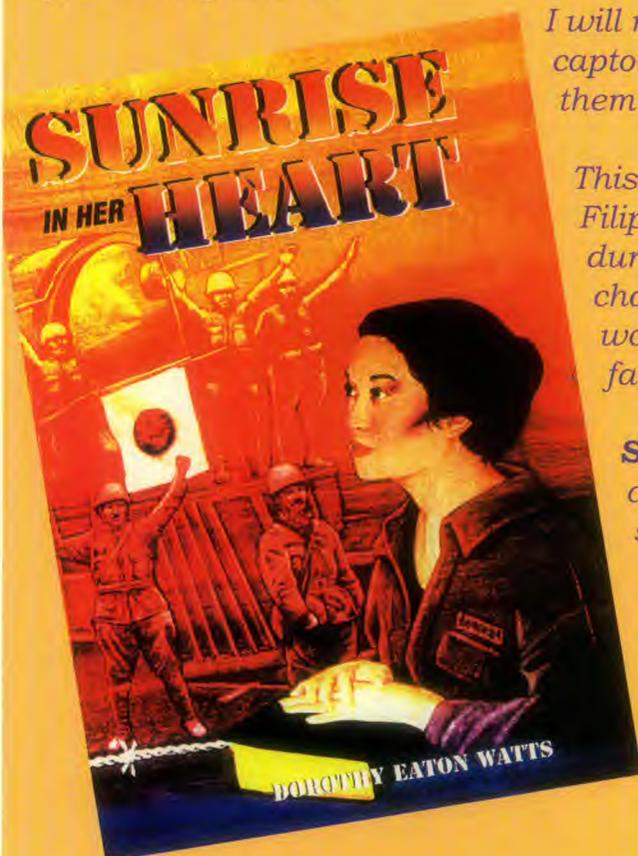
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by Dorothy Eaton Watts

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I will not cry! She promised as her Japanese captors locked the massive gates behind her. Let them do what they will, but I will never talk.

This book tells Nati's gripping story as a Filipino freedom fighter and prisoner of war during World War II. Would God finally have a chance to reach Nati's stubborn heart? And would her captors ever learn the secret of her faith?

Sunrise in Her Heart is a book which captures the true essence how to obtain salvation.

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