


ELDER'S DIGEST

A Quarterly Resource for local Church Elders Vol. 8 No. 4



**“A New Commandment
I give unto you, that ye
love one another.”**

See the articles:

The Eleventh Commandment

Causes for Neglecting Church Discipline

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Cover photo by Tanya Holland



Elder's Digest

Publisher Ministerial Association
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

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Subscription rates and address changes:

US\$9.95 for one year (four issues) and
US\$ 25.00 for three years; US\$3.00 single issue.
Please send all subscriptions and address changes
to *Elder's Digest*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring,
MD 20904-6516.

To Writers: Articles about the work of the local elder are welcome and may be submitted to *Elder's Digest*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6516. A stamped, self-addressed envelope should accompany unsolicited manuscripts.

Elder's Digest is published quarterly by the Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Association © 2001, which retains full editorial control. It is printed by the Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1350 N. Kings Road, Nampa, ID 83687-3193. PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

Editor's Note: The articles in this publication have been revised slightly or updated to conform to the intended audience and nature of *Elder's Digest*.

Issue 34 **Vol. 8** **Number 4**

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Developing a spirit of participation in the congregation

Joel Sarli

Most of the work done in the local congregation is on a voluntary basis. The motivation for most of our local leaders is a kind of spiritual satisfaction and the sense of responsibility toward Jesus Christ our Savior.

In many churches, enlisting leaders for the next year is one of the most dreaded tasks. Pastor, elders and nominating committee members, approach enlistment with the mind-set that people really don't want to work or accept responsibilities. I am convince that your congregation can find every worker God has for you if you follow some steps in looking for leaders to meet the need. If you take shortcuts along the way or skip some steps, the guarantee is null and void.

Prayer

In Matthew 9:38, Jesus said, "Pray ye therefore to the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." That prayer at the beginning of the nominating committee meeting is nice, but it's not enough. Ask each member of the nominating team to take a portion of the positions to be filled and pray each day for the weeks that the nomination process is going on.

Ask God to show you the person in the church He would take for that responsibility. Yes, even pray about the teachers who have been teaching the same class for 20 years. It will be a blessing to go to them and ask them to teach again with confidence that God has confirmed their being in that position.



Make a list of needed leaders

Include every position to be filled for the following year.

Make a list of potential officers

You should include every church member who is capable of serving and is acceptable to the church. Many nominating teams take a decision for the person. Someone suggests a name, and another member of the team says: "He won't do it. We asked him last year, and he turned us down." That is not the right approach. We don't know what God may do in their lives. Our job is to pray and contact the person God will lead us to contact.

Make a list of training opportunities

Include the following and other options:

- Training offered by your Conference leaders.
- Training offered by the Union departmental people.
- At least one training event your local church should offer every ecclesiastical year to the leaders in different capacities.
- There are individual training opportunities designed for self-study. (The Ministerial Association of the General Conference is offering Elder's Curriculum as an option).

You should include dates and times for each training opportunities. Don't take a shortcut here! Put these training opportunities on paper.

Pray again

Ask God to lead you to the person in the church to teach this class or accept this training ministry position.

Decide on one person

Often the nominating committee prays for God's leadership, decides on a person and contacts that person. Then decides on a backup just in case the answer is no.

Think about that practice. Why do we need a backup? The only reason is that we started the process too late, and we don't have time to pray again. Decide

(Continued on page 29)



Preparing for Preaching

Mike Stickland

The use of the writings of Ellen G. White

The Lord used the ministry of Ellen G. White to guide Seventh-day Adventists in a host of ways, and her writings remain a source of blessing, inspiration, and instruction. The Adventist preacher ought to have the *Conflict of the Ages*¹ series on the home bookshelf and read from them deeply. These can be added to as the budget allows. The writings of Ellen G. White, however, should not be misused. They should be used for personal blessing, not to fill up the body of the sermon.

It is a good practice to take a chapter of *The Desire of Ages*, for example, and read it in conjunction with the Scripture passage on which it is based. Let it inspire you and give insights you might otherwise miss. Apply it to your own life. Put yourself into the shoes of the man born blind (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 470) and experience what it was like for him as he was healed, what it is like for you when you "see" for the first time in your life. This kind of broad reading inspires your soul, whether or not it is ever preached in a sermon.

Avoid the temptation to take a volume of Ellen G. White into the pulpit and quote lengthily from it. In a prayer meeting, or for a devotional thought at some smaller meeting, it is appropriate to read a passage from her writings, but in the worship service on Sabbath, Adventists preach from Scripture.² The key is expressed within our basic tenets, as recorded in the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*.

"The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to humanity the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the

authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history. See: 2 Peter 1:20-21; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5-6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 4:12."³

Wide general reading

Read from a wide variety of books, to include:

- Christian books such as biographies, Bible commentaries, theologies, devotional books, practical Christianity (missions, evangelism, women's ministry, children's ministry, men's ministry, and counseling). Read books from Adventist and non-Adventist sources to provide you with a broader understanding of the Christian faith.
- Books of general knowledge from a wide spectrum of subjects.
- Books of sermons by many preachers. (Not with a view of "borrowing" the sermons but to learn to use a wider style of preaching yourself). Avoid "canned" books of sermons and illustrations, not least because you may find that others have used the same material before you!
- Denominational and other Christian periodicals. The *Adventist* magazines in general keep you abreast of church activities and opinions throughout the world and keep you in touch with the thinking of denominational teachers and leaders.

Christianity Today is an excellent Evangelical magazine which provides information and discussion of many contemporary issues facing Christianity.

Developing a filing system

As you read, and as you invest time in this general cultivation of the garden of your soul, you will come across information, ideas, illustrations, and

themes which you will want to keep tabs on for future reference. There is nothing more frustrating than to distantly remember having seen something somewhere but to find yourself unable to recall just where to find it.

One of the simplest methods to get started with a filing system is to buy an inexpensive manila concertina-type envelope file from a stationery store. Write brief notes on clean A4 note paper and place them in the file under an appropriate heading. Whatever system you use, keep it simple and make it practical. If it is too elaborate, not only will it clutter up space, but you will quickly find you stop using it. An easily accessible drop-file is the best system.

W. E. Sangster, a renowned British Methodist preacher from the 1940s and 50s and author of the book *The Craft of Sermon Construction*,⁴ made the following suggestion to help the preacher preserve and nurture those ideas which flash across the mind so elusively:

When a text or theme chooses you it is because it leaps out at you during your reading, or during someone else's sermon, or from a comment someone makes. A text confronts you and says "Preach me." To capture this creative influence from the Lord; keep a notebook in which you record every idea.

- Write the idea down at once! Write a few more notes to remind you what you saw in that gleaming moment. Keep each idea on a separate page.
- Once a week, turn over the leaves of this notebook to remind yourself of each idea you have written. Let this stimulate your thinking. Add any further thoughts or insights that have occurred to you on the same theme.
- The subconscious mind will sift over these ideas when you are not particularly thinking about them. It will recover from the files of your mind other related ideas or clues to follow up.

Sangster also adds the following comments:

- However much the business demands increase upon the modern minister, he is determined, above all else, to be a servant of the Word. He aims at an average of four

hours' study a day.⁵

- [A preacher will not just be a reader, but a thinker too]. After his devotions, the best hour of his day will be the hour given to sheer thinking: assembling the facts, facing their apparent contradiction, reaching up for the help of God and, then, driving his brain like a bulldozer through the apparent chaos to order and understanding at the last.⁶
- Let a man respect his own preferences here, but let him be sure that he thinks. Books may serve to start the current of his thought, as a little water thrown into a pump can create enough suction to secure a steady flow, but his own thinking is the really valuable thing and will mark all his preaching with the hallmark of distinctions.⁷
- So much, then, for what we have called general preparation. It is real because it is life: life in its day-to-day events as lived with God; the secret life of the soul; the strenuous life of the mind.⁸

Cultivate the habit of making notes

Cultivate the habit of making notes of thoughts and ideas which flash across your mind. They may come while you are reading, working, or even when listening to someone else preaching, and since these moments of inspiration may have come as a prompting by the Lord, they need to be noted and nurtured for later use.

Then when asked to accept a preaching appointment, you will have a seed-bed of ideas which have been gestating and are beginning to take shape as a worthwhile sermon.

Mike Stickland writes from England. He is the director of SDA Discover Centre in Stanborough Park, Watford, England.

Notes:

1. The series includes Patriarchs and Prophets, Prophets and Kings, The Desire of Ages, The Acts of the Apostles, and The Great Controversy.
2. We shall spend a lesson later in the series examining the role of Ellen G. White in context of the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist lay preacher.
3. SDA Church Manual (1990), p. 23.
4. *The Craft of Sermon Construction* (CoSC) was the standard textbook for homiletics at Newbold College and with Home Study International for many years. It is still a valuable tool if you can obtain a copy. This particular summary quotation is taken from chapter seven.
5. CoSC 156.
6. CoOSC 157.
7. CoSC 157.
8. CoSC 158.



Strategies for keeping

New Members

James A. Cress

Applying theology in the real world is simultaneously the great need and the great challenge for the church. When Jesus called for the church to be "in the world, but not of the world," He envisioned that what the church believed would be lived out in how its members acted.

Thus, Jesus' measurement for discipleship is based more on the attitudes that exist between church members than on theological orthodoxy—"By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35). This is not a call, however, for poor theology. Rather it is an invitation command if you will—to demonstrate theological orthodoxy in the crucible of the real world and in daily living.

We must also understand that living in today's "real" world calls for strategies that meet today's real needs. George Barna says: "Clearly, the Christian Body cannot hope to have much of an impact if we respond in the same ways we have in the past. These are new challenges, demanding creative, unique responses. The solutions that worked ten or even five years ago will fail in the coming decade. We are being confronted with a new wave of obstacles and opportunities. After careful study of our options, and discerning the mind of God, we

must tailor new strategies to address this new environment."¹

Demographic changes demand strategy changes. The great demographic phenomena today is the baby boomer generation's passing mid-life and the essential changes in society this has brought. For example, only 15 percent of today's families fit the traditional model of the nuclear family; 70 percent of mothers with young children now work outside the home; 45 percent of all households are headed by a single adult; 25 percent of parents have only one child; and another 25 percent of couples will have no children at all. "Church ministries designed for the needs of the sixties will not work in the eighties and nineties. While the church's message should never change, her methods must do so frequently. We must deal with society as it is, not as we hoped it might be."² Especially as we move into the new century, we must learn to meet the real-life challenges of today's society with new and invigorating strategies, rather than relying on assumptions and methods of the past.

One of the greatest challenges facing the church in dealing with reality is our own self-image. Frank Tillapaugh says, "We are heir to a mentality that is basically defensive. In fact, it's not too strong to say

that we have retreated to our fortresses with a disabling, deep-seated inferiority complex. Subtly the message has come through that the world out there is modern while we are old-fashioned. The world is seen as moving too quickly; it's too affluent, too educated, too sophisticated to be interested in biblical Christianity. In effect, we are ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We do not believe that the world could possibly want or need what we have . . . (The) average local church with its modest facilities needs to get the message loud and clear. 'Believe it or not, they really do need us out there.'¹ ³

Further we shall view three long-understood essentials that new members need from the church as they begin the Christian life and see how these essentials are interdependent and build upon each other. These principles may be timeless, but their implementation demands appropriate applications for today's "real world." Thus, a correct understanding of these essentials should drive strategies which will impact what the church does to, for, and with new members.

The ultimate benefit for the new believers would be for a congregation to utilize these strategies to develop a wide smorgasbord of options which they would then apply and offer as needed in the individual situation. To paraphrase the apostle Paul, the church would then "become all things to all people that by all means some might be preserved." This means appropriate approaches to today's predominant group—both baby boomers plus generation X. We must find ways to attract the newest generations without alienating the graying ones. "If we want to minister to today's society, we must speak to baby boomers in ways and words they can both accept and understand. We must be willing to 'become all things to all men'—in this case, all 76 million of them."⁴

Sharon Cress underlines three essential ingredients that are necessary for new members both to remain and to thrive within the church family:

"1. He/she must be able to articulate the doctrines of his/her faith.

"2. He/she must have friends (church growth studies are showing the necessary number to be six to eight) within the congregation.

"3. He/she must become involved in meaningful group activities."⁵



While theoretically it is possible to have a modicum of adherence with only two of these three ingredients functioning in the life of new members, reducing the experience of the new believers to only one of these three essential factors almost guarantees that they will depart.

We will expand in the next article these three essentials of articulating beliefs, having friends, and being involved in meaningful activities as the basis for developing more effective strategies aimed at keeping new members.

Although the primary emphasis will be on keeping new believers, another benefit will be in developing strategies that integrate new transfer members into the life of their newly chosen congregation. After all, even though the new transferees may be well able to articulate their beliefs, initially they most surely will be without friends and may never become involved in meaningful group activities unless the church has developed intentional strategies toward this accomplishment.

James A. Cress writes from Silver Spring, Maryland. He is the Ministerial Secretary of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Notes

1. George Barna, *The Frog in the Kettle*, p. 223.
2. Mike Belan, *Baby Boom Believers*, p. 132.
3. Frank R. Tillapaugh, *Unleashing the Church*, p. 60-61.
4. *Ibid*, p. 130.
5. Sharon M. Cress "Why Members Leave," *PRAXIS* (Summer, 1987), p. 13

Ideas for better Worship Service (Part II)



Elder's Digest file

About children

1. Use an object lesson rather than just telling a story.
2. A little sleight of hand always captures children's attention. It can be used to drive home the point that things aren't always what they appear to be.
3. If the schedule is full, drop the children's story, but prepare pictures for the children to color during the sermon. Invite them to come to the front during a hymn to pick up their supplies. That gives them a chance to move around, but doesn't add to the time.
4. Invite the children to draw their interpretation of the sermon's message. Collect the drawings at the door as they leave, and put them on the notice board the next week. Make a feature of the display.
5. The week before Communion, have the children draw their interpretation of the meaning of Christ's death on the cross. Then put the drawings on the walls around the church on Communion day.
6. Plan a children's church once or twice a year. Let them be responsible for as much as possible.
7. Include the children's story in the sermon itself, telling them, in advance, to watch for some cue that will mean that their story is about to begin. It adds an element of suspense.
8. Encourage the older children to prepare an outline of the sermon.
9. Have a five-minute "adults' corner," then preach the entire sermon to the children, getting it down to their level.
10. Make a baby dedication part of the children's corner, using it as a springboard for a discussion about God's love for children and families.
11. As the congregation sings or the organ plays "Jesus Loves Me," invite all adults in the congregation to go to a child and tell him or her how happy they are that the child is part of the church family and how much they love having children in the church.
12. While the foot-washing ceremony is in progress during the Communion service, have a meaningful section for children that includes more than just nice little stories.
13. Have the children come to the front, form them into an impromptu junior choir, and have them provide a special item for the adults.
14. Form a choir of children. After a few rehearsals, have them provide a special item for the worship service.

About the use of testimonies

1. Interview someone in the congregation about his or her conversion, profession, outreach, etc. If something really good has happened to someone, interview the person about it. Let people share their joy and their gratitude toward God with the entire congregation.

2. Videotape an interview with a member, giving the person a chance to share his or her testimony. Show the person in the workplace, in the home, participating in a pastime, and at church.
3. Videotape a shut-in member, letting him or her share with the congregation the joy found in serving God—despite adverse circumstances.
4. Provide opportunity for members to express emotion when something has happened that affects the entire congregation—a major tragedy, a wonderful blessing, a crisis, etc.
5. Prime two or three people to react to the sermon, outlining how the truth just presented has affected their lives. Then open up to spontaneous comments. Be careful not to let comments run too long.
6. Don't limit reports of exciting outreach to Sabbath school or the Personal Ministries period. Give people the opportunity to share with the entire congregation. The interview format may help to keep them on track and to the point.

Ministry magazine, October of 1991, pp. 32-34.

The price we pay

Through the ages Jesus has called the world
 To follow in His loving way
 Sometimes we find this call convenient
 Sometimes the price is too high to pay
 Many tragedies occur in life
 Many people cut each other down
 But there is One who's always there for us
 The One who wears a righteous crown
 The world will laugh and scoff and sneer
 Heartless words will cause deep pain
 But with our Master to guide our steps
 We don't have much to lose but
 everything to gain.

Melisa A. Ríos

Melisa A. Ríos writes from Laurel, Maryland.

Pastoral Prayers

[We are including in this section some samples of pastoral prayers in answer to many requests received from elders]. The Editor.

Communion

Merciful Lord Jesus,

At your generous table, we share the cup of life and the bread of strength. Here our errors can be cleansed, our lives made new and our future secured by your grace.

As we have eaten and drunk in remembrance of you, so let us live in remembrance of you.

Let us care for the needy, in remembrance of your mercy.

Let us resist evil in any form, in remembrance of your victory over Satan.

Let us show compassion to all, in remembrance of your tender care of the suffering.

Let us forgive those who have sinned against us, in remembrance of the forgiveness you have lavished upon us.

Let us be constant in prayer and worship, in remembrance of your faithfulness.

Let us be diligent and careful in our work, in remembrance of your labors on our behalf.

Let us be quick to nourish hope and faith in others, in remembrance of the comfort and strength we have found in your Presence.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

(2) Communion

Redeemer Lord,

Long ago, on a distant road to a place called Emmaus, your disciples came to recognize your Presence with them through the breaking of bread. Today we, your disciples, journey upon far different roads, but our need for you is the same.

We are weary.

We need your renewing Presence before we continue on our way.

Come to us, Lord, in the breaking of bread and the sharing of wine.

Let us feel the warmth of your life-giving blood flowing through us. Let us feel the fullness of your love as we share bread and body together.

In this holy meal, lift from our stooped hearts the burden of sin and guilt.

Release us from the condemnation of our conscience and help us walk with bolder stride the path before us.

Together make us part of your body in the world, bearing your creative and redeeming love to a hurting creation.

As we share this, your victory feast, fill us with energy to live out our faith in the arena of our daily

Pastoral Prayers

work and responsibility.

Train our hearts and minds to find joy in serving our neighbors and fulfillment in living for you. After we leave this table, send us out with renewed courage to proclaim the faith and hope within us to a world that needs both.

For then we shall have become your body in the world. Amen.

Baptism

God of our Salvation,

Since ancient times you have reached out to your people through water and so made them your own.

You rescued Noah and his family from the waters of the flood.

You brought the people of Israel safely through the Red Sea, out of slavery into the freedom of the Promised Land. To this day, you reach out to your beloved children through the waters of baptism, drawing them forth to new life in Christ.

Today your mercy catches hold of *[name(s)]* that *[he/she/they]* may drown *[his/her/their]* old life of sin and with Christ rise to new life through the wonder of your love for *[him/her/them]*.

For Jesus' sake, receive *[this/these]* newborn *[children]* of faith.

Set *[his/her/their]* feet firmly upon the path to heaven's high places.

Work in *[his/her/their]* heart(s) day after day to reveal new aspects of your love. Bit by bit, help *[name(s)]* grow into the *[person/people]* you created *[him/her/them]* to be.

Show *[name(s)]* *[his/her/their]* true potential as (a) disciple(s) and servant(s) of God.

Grant *[him/her/them]* the strength, the drive and the opportunity to develop fully the unique qualities you have given *[him/her/each one of them]*.

Teach *[him/her/them]* that perfect freedom comes from being bound closely to you in love and servant hood.

Help *[him/her/them]* function as your hands and your voice in the world.

Grant *[name(s)]* humility that *[he/she/they]* might learn wisdom; gentleness, that *[he/she/they]* might learn strength; endurance, that *[he/she/they]* might develop character; and fear of the Lord, that *[he/she/they]* might fear no one on earth.

We bless you and thank you for the new *[sister/brother/sisters and brothers]* in Christ you have given us this day.

We welcome *[him/her/them]* into our family of faith; we receive *[him/her/them]* as (a) coworker(s) in your kingdom.

Help us minister to *[him/her/them]* as *[he/she/they]* learn to walk the way of faithful obedience.

Together, bring us to that splendid day when we all will be united around your throne forever and always. Amen.

Causes for neglecting CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Joel Sarli

Since the birth of the church at Pentecost, there has existed a constant struggle with exercising the doctrine of discipline as it is revealed in the Bible. Historically, the church has experienced this frustration and set forth fresh statements of the need for discipline and the spiritual vigor it brings to the body of Christ. When the doctrine has been practiced biblically, it has produced valuable results.

The disciplinary boundaries that once protected the body of Christ from the contamination of sin are suffering visible erosion in the church today. Corrective discipline as a divinely-revealed instrument dedicated to the redemption of the believer and the restoration of these protective boundaries seems to be a forgotten doctrine.

Ellen G. White advises the church concerning this matter.

"If wrongs are apparent among His people, and if the servants of God pass on indifferent to them, they virtually sustain and justify the sinner, and are alike guilty and will just as surely receive the displeasure of God; for they will be made responsible for the sins of the guilty. In vision I have been pointed to many instances where the displeasure of God has been incurred by neglect on the part of His servants to deal with the wrongs and sins existing among them."—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 253, 254.

If the problem is as important as it is presented by the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy for the very existence of the church of Christ, why has such little interest in the subject been shown in modern times?

As a tentative answer to this question I would like to suggest six reasons that may help us understand the causes for that neglect and at the same time to substantiate a need for the revitalization of the discipline process.

Laissez-faire attitude

Firstly, the pronounced *laissez-faire attitude* of our society to morals in recent decades has contributed to the neglect of discipline.

The relativistic "do your own thing" morality has made a deep impact on our ability to make moral judgments. Some of the sins which automatically led to ecclesiastical censure and possible disfellowshipping in the past (i.e. divorce, fornication, the use of alcoholic beverage) are now being regarded by the church as justifiable or at least understandable within their particular context. Interestingly, in the midst of the great need for spiritual stability, there are those critics who request that the church remain non-intrusive and non-judgmental.

This *laissez-faire attitude* has developed a brash *individualism* in the Christian community. The move away from community accountability toward religious individualism is a distressing development which destroys efforts to exercise disciplinary action.

The church needs to maintain its position and refuse to become a cooped church whose patterns of thought are shaped by culture rather than by biblical perspectives.

Anti-establishment Mood

Secondly, the anti-establishment mood of the last forty years has eroded the authority of the church and further aided the decline of church discipline. In contrast to previous generations in which disciplinary actions by the church created a certain amount of spiritual trepidation, such measures have become, in some circles, a comical matter.

So the question arises: *What purpose does it serve to set out discipline when there is respect neither for the officers of the church nor for the church itself?* The absence of discipline has taken from the church a platform on which authority could be displayed. After forty years of struggle in the anti-establishment debate, today the church sel-

dom exerts authority in any area of religious life; therefore, authority is not respected.

Differing attitudes toward discipline

Thirdly, the process is retarded by the differing attitudes toward discipline among the many congregations. Some congregations have in essence no discipline, and accept virtually anyone who indicates a desire to join; others are very lax in the application of whatever rules they may still embrace. Consequently, anyone who is censured in one church can immediately withdraw from it and without difficulty affiliate with another. This substantially reduces the effectiveness of the censure.

One pastor, frustrated with this situation, puts it this way. *"How can we, as a small congregation of Adventist Christians, decide that someone should be disciplined without at least consulting with other congregations as to the wisdom and validity of our proposed act? May we declare that someone is excluded from the Adventist community when it is likely that other congregations will disagree with our decision?"*

Confusion concerning the responsibility and authority

Fourthly, there is much confusion concerning the responsibility and authority of the church today. To belong to the Lord is to belong to His church (1 Cor. 12:13) and to submit to the discipline of His people (Matt. 18:15-18; Gal. 6:1-2). Many Christians have a poor understanding of the local church and its authority in their lives. In a fashion, Christians tend to go along with the *"anti-organization"* attitudes of the world and move away from the authority umbrella of the local church. The loss of the stress on church membership in many congregations supports this contention. Christians do not see the importance of spiritual accountability in their lives.

Ben Patterson in his article "Discipline: The Backbone of the Church" in Leadership magazine issued in the winter of 1983, forcefully warned about the delusions of private religion when he records that *"the man who seeks God in isolation from his fellows is likely to find, not God, but the Devil, who will bear an embarrassing resemblance to himself."*

The problem of revenue loss

Fifthly, discipline is often retarded by the pragmatic problem of revenue loss.

Tragically, the church leadership may fear starting a cleansing action that might bring dissatisfaction and revolt in the lives of their congregation. Dissatisfaction can motivate the pocketbook of the parishioners and, therefore, treasuries of the churches.

The risk of litigation

Sixthly, further complicating the problem is the truth that those who infrequently practice this doctrine are not infrequently subjected to litigation.

Because of these barriers today, it is an exception that in some places the church attempts to uphold and practice the New Testament teachings on corrective discipline.

To further complicate the problem, the need for discipline in the spiritually impoverished church today has gone beyond the local fellowship and made a resounding impact on the rest of society, including the Christian families.

Christ's loving care over the church is evidenced in His disciplinary action. Revelation 3:19 portrays Him as the righteous Judge in the midst of His Church dealing actively with sin. Likewise the Church, His bride, surely has the responsibility to deal with the unrepentant sinner in the congregation. Since the church has experienced a loss of authority and influence in the lives of its members as well as in society, this is a pressing need that demands the contemporary church to reassess the practice of church discipline from both the biblical and historical perspective. The search for the marks of a disciplined church and the proper context for discipline are much-needed endeavors for us as representatives of God's ideal in the world.

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Number 1**Scripture reading**

John 8:48-59

Suggested hymns

Jesus is all the world to me Hymn No. 185

O, how I love Jesus Hymn No. 248

CHRIST WITH US

Margarida F. Sarli, editorial coordinator for this section.

Thought for the day

Our little world, under the curse of sin—the one dark blot in His glorious creation—will be honored above all other worlds in the universe of God with the permanent presence of Jesus.

"To us He says: 'I AM the Good Shepherd.' 'I AM the living Bread.' 'I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life.' 'All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth.' John 10:11; 6:51; 14:6; Matt. 28:18. I AM the assurance of every promise. I AM; be not afraid. 'God with us' is the surety of our deliverance from sin, the assurance of our power to obey the law of heaven."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 24-25.

Offering prelude

"That which has been set apart according to the Scriptures as belonging to the Lord constitutes the revenue of the gospel and is no longer ours. It is no better than sacrilege for a man to take from God's treasury in order to serve himself or to serve others in their secular business. Some have been at fault in diverting from the altar of God that which has been especially dedicated to Him. All should regard this matter in the right light. Let no one, when brought into a strait place, take money consecrated to religious purposes and use it for his advantage, soothing his conscience by saying that he will repay it at some future time. Far better cut down the expenses to correspond with the income, to restrict the wants, and live within the means than to use the Lord's money for secular purposes."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 246-247.

Children's story

Objects: Some pictures of Jesus, or parents teaching children, and/or little foxes in a vineyard.

Lesson: To be obedient to what Jesus and our parents have taught us.

Just when the vines were putting out their tender blossoms, the little foxes of the Holy Land were waiting! These tender blossoms were a great delicacy for them. Vineyard owners, of course, were on the alert at this time of the year to catch the little foxes, for if they ate all the blossoms off the vine there would be no luscious grapes to harvest.

In our early years we can be compared to a vineyard. As we learn about the love of Jesus and what He has done and can do for us, we begin to bear blossoms that in later years will develop into fruit for the Master's vineyard. Satan does not like to see us learning of Christ, putting forth tender blossoms of Christianity. His aim is to destroy all the things we learn while we are young—then he will not have to worry about the future years.

Like the vineyard owners, we have to be on the alert at this time, watching to see that the things of God we are learning are not stolen from us. We must carefully remember the instructions our parents give us at home, the things we learn in church, the songs, the lessons, the stories. We must store up in our hearts the good counsel our teachers give us in Christian schools. Then we can grow up safely to bear fruit for Jesus in His vineyard one day.

Let us make it our prayer today, that nothing shall spoil the lessons of life we are given, that we will not let wrong influences take from us the good instruction that comes to us.

Suggestion: The book of Proverbs contains a lot of advice about keeping the tender blossoms of instruction. Read Proverbs 3:1-4.

CHRIST AND TIME

Text: John 8:58

A. Introduction

1. Once a preacher gave a sermon entitled "Jesus Was the Greatest" to his secretary for typing. She responded, "Preacher, I think you have the wrong verb tense in the title." He looked at it again and said, "Mrs. Givan, that is grammatically correct." "It's not the grammar but the doctrine," she said. Looking at the title again, he reworded it to read, "Jesus Is the Greatest." Thank God for wise secretaries!
2. Getting the verb tenses correct about Jesus is a difficult task.
 - a. You can say, "He was," for He lived in history.
 - b. You can say, "He is," for He lives today.
 - c. You can also say, "He will be," for He will always exist.
3. Jesus is the eternal contemporary.
Think of the bewilderment of the Jews when Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I am." There is a striking contrast in verb tense—was and am. This "I am" saying gives us insight into Christ and time.

B. Jesus is before time

The Jews looked to the greatness of Abraham.

1. They boasted of their kinship with Abraham. But Jesus claimed to be superior to Abraham. Over against Abraham's fleeting span of life, Jesus placed His timelessness.
2. Jesus lived before Abraham and before creation.—John 1:1-2.
3. Jesus enjoyed fellowship with the Father before the sand went through the hourglass.
4. Because Jesus existed before time, this means that He is from everlasting to everlasting.
5. Jesus is God in human flesh.—Phil. 2:6. Jesus is before time. He is God Himself.

C. Jesus is in time

The Jews would not grasp the fact that God entered into time and space.

1. They could not accept that a baby born in Bethlehem and reared by Jewish peasants could be the promised Messiah.
2. When Jesus entered into time, He did not cease to be God. He did not divest Himself of divinity. He entered into a new mode of being.
3. The eternal God entered into our sphere of existence. "God was in Christ," Paul said.
 - When Jesus entered into time, He identified with our plight.
 - He subjected Himself to life's trials and temptations.—Heb. 4:15.

D. Jesus is supreme over time

Jesus' words, "Before Abraham was, I am," describe Jesus' lordship over time.

1. Oscar Cullman in the book "Christus und die Zeit" (Christ and Time) builds the idea that time finds its central thrust in Jesus Christ.
2. Jesus started the phenomenon of time. Because He created it and ordained it as a part of life, He is Lord over it.
3. Jesus will stop time.
4. When Jesus appears for His final return, He will usher in the glorified kingdom. It will be timeless.

E. Conclusion

The greatest person is Jesus.

1. He was before time.
2. He was in time.
3. He will be after time ceases.
4. He is!

Number 11
Scripture reading
 John 13:31-35

A NEW COMMANDMENT

Margarida F. Sarli, editorial coordinator for this section.

Suggested hymns

This love that makes us happy Hymn No. 579
 We plow the fields Hymn No. 561

The true disciples of Jesus will be filled with love for Him and for those for whom He died, that hearts will be melted by the words they speak and the prayers they offer.

Thought for the day

"In the contemplation of Christ, we linger on the shore of a love that is measureless. We endeavor to tell of this love, and language fails us. We consider His life on earth, His sacrifice for us, His work in heaven as our advocate, and the mansions He is preparing for those who love Him; and we can only exclaim, O the height and depth of the love of Christ!"—*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 334.

Offering prelude

"In his first letter to the church at Corinth, Paul gave the believers instruction regarding the general principles underlying the support of God's work in the earth. Writing of his apostolic labors in their behalf, he inquired: "Who goeth a warfare anytime at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? Or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? Or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the Law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith He it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope."—*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 335.

Children's story . . . *Everyone needs our love*

Object: Newspaper

Lesson Jesus taught that we should love our enemies.

Outline

1. Jesus' clothes became very bright.
2. Moses saw the same thing long ago.
3. Jesus is the same as God.

As many of you know, what I have in my hand is the morning newspaper. Often your parents read it to see what is going on in our town and around the world. The newspaper is full of interesting things; the comics section and advertisements for supermarkets, for instance. But mostly we read the newspaper for the stories about what is going on in our world.

One kind of story that takes up space in the newspaper is about crimes or what we call "bad things." If you read the newspaper too much you could think that the world is very bad, but it is important to remember that newspapers speak about strange things and never the ordinary.

We would never see things like "Jimmy went to bed like a big boy last night." It is too ordinary.

Most of us do not know the people who commit crimes the newspaper tells about. This might make us think that all strangers may be people who do bad things. But this is not always true. Many strangers are good people like our parents and neighbors. In fact, Jesus taught us to love not only our friends and strangers, but even our enemies.

Sometimes if we love enemies and if we love strangers, they can become our friends. This is because everyone wants friends who can love. Maybe we can all love our enemies, and they will become our friends.

THE ELEVENTH COMMANDMENT

John 13:34

A. Introduction

1. *Charles Templeton*, in his book "Life Looks Up", said that the history of the world has been affected by two events which took place in two small rooms, separated by thousands of miles and thousands of years. One room is found in a drab flat over a dingy laundry in the Soho district of London. In this small room Karl Marx wrote "Das Kapital". It was a book which affected communism.

The other room was in Jerusalem. It was the place where Jesus ate the Passover with His disciples and spoke some meaningful words.

Just as Jesus was about to go to the cross, He bequeathed to His disciples a badge they would need to wear. It would be a sign that they were His disciples. "A new commandment I give to you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if you have love one to another" (John 13:34, 35).

2. Jesus called the exhortation to love "a new commandment." This may be labeled "the eleventh commandment."

Let us examine the various facets of this command.

B. The supreme place for love

1. *Jesus gave a supreme place to love in His teachings.*

Love was the central theme of the Master's teaching—Matt. 5:43-47.

2. *Jesus gave a supreme place to love in His life's relationships.*

Love was the basis of a relationship with God and with other human beings— Luke 10:27.

3. *Jesus gave a supreme place to love with His actions.*

The Lord loved without recommendations, without restrictions, and without reciprocation.

He always sought the highest good of human beings.

4. *Jesus wants His followers to give love a supreme place.*

Love has the prominent place for a modern follower of Jesus—1 Cor.13:1-3.

C. The unique pattern for love

1. *If love is so important, how are we to love?*

a. Jesus gave the pattern for love—John 13:34.

b. The pattern of love is not to be determined by our standard but by the pattern of Jesus Christ.

2. *Jesus loved inclusively.*

a. He included the entire human race in His love. He loved outsiders and insiders; tax collectors, harlots, and other sinners were included in His love.

b. To be in God's family is to include all people within our love. No one can obey the eleventh commandment and exclude anyone from his love.

3. *Jesus loved indescribably.*

There is no way in the entire world to describe the lofty height of Jesus' love: "Greater love hath no man than this." Jesus went to the limit of self-giving love, even to the extent of giving His life on a cross.

4. *Jesus loved selflessly.*

Jesus never loved anyone for what it could do for Him. He loved thinking what it would do for others.

D. The distinct purpose of love

1. *The purpose of love is to identify true disciples—John 13:35.*

Loving as Jesus loved distinguishes disciples from the world. The identity of a Christian is not the

(Continued on page 30)

Qualifications for

Successful Leadership

Ellen G. White

Prudence and forethought

While Nehemiah implored the help of God, he did not fold his own hands, feeling that he had no more care or responsibility in the bringing about of his purpose to restore Jerusalem. With admirable prudence and forethought he proceeded to make all the arrangements necessary to insure the success of the enterprise. Every movement was marked with great caution.—*Southern Watchman*, March 15, 1904.

The example of this holy man [Nehemiah] should be a lesson to the people of God that they are not only to pray in faith, but to work with diligence and fidelity. How many difficulties we encounter, how often we hinder the working of Providence in our behalf, because prudence, forethought, and painstaking are regarded as having little to do with religion! This is a grave mistake. It is our duty to cultivate and to exercise every power that will render us more efficient workers for God. Careful consideration and well-matured plans are as essential to the success of sacred enterprises today as in the time of Nehemiah.—*Southern Watchman*, March 15, 1904.

How to counteract discouragement

The servants of the Lord must expect every kind of discouragement. They will be tried, not only by the anger, contempt, and cruelty of enemies, but by the indolence, inconsistency, lukewarmness, and treachery of friends and helpers.

Even some, who seem to desire the work of God to prosper, will yet weaken the hands of His servants by hearing, reporting, and half believing the slanders, boasts, and menaces of their adversaries . . . Amid great discouragements, Nehemiah made God his trust; and here is our defense. A remembrance of what the Lord has done for us will prove a support in every danger. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" And "if God be for us, who can be against us?"

However craftily the plots of Satan and his agents may be laid, God can detect them, and bring to naught all their counsels.—

Southern Watchman, April 19, 1904.

Those who, standing in the forefront of the conflict, are impelled by the Holy Spirit to do a special work will frequently feel a reaction when the pressure is removed. Despondency may shake the most heroic faith, and weaken the most steadfast will. But God understands, and He still pities and loves. He reads the motives and the purposes of the heart. To wait patiently, to trust when everything looks dark, is the lesson that the leaders in God's work need to learn. Heaven will not fail them in their day of adversity. Nothing is apparently more helpless, yet really more invincible, than the soul that feels its nothingness, and relies wholly on God.—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 174-175.

The Lord calls for soldiers who will not fail nor be discouraged; but who will accept the work with all its disagreeable features. He would have us all take Christ for our pattern.—*Review and Herald*, July 17, 1894.

Those who today teach unpopular truths need not be discouraged if at times they meet with no more favorable reception, even from those who claim to be Christians, than did Paul and his fellow workers from the people among whom they labored. The messengers of the cross must arm themselves with watchfulness and prayer, and move forward with faith and courage, working always in the name of Jesus.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 230.

Gentleness

The spirit that is kept gentle under provocation will speak more effectively in favor of the truth than will any argument, however forcible.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 353.

As the dew and the still showers fall upon the withering plants, so let words fall gently when seeking to win men from error. God's plan is first to reach the heart. We are to speak the truth in love, trusting in Him to give it power for the reforming of the life. The Holy Spirit will apply to the soul the word that is spoken in love.—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 157.

A tender spirit, a gentle, winning deportment,

may save the erring, and hide a multitude of sins. The revelation of Christ in your own character will have a transforming power upon all with whom you come in contact. Let Christ be daily made manifest in you, and He will reveal through you the creative energy of His word,—a gentle, persuasive, yet mighty influence to re-create other souls in the beauty of the Lord our God.—*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 185.

Impartiality

So long as He lived among men, our Savior shared the lot of the poor. He knew by experience their cares and hardships, and He could comfort and encourage all humble workers. Those who have a true conception of the teaching of His life, will never feel that a distinction must be made between classes, that the rich are to be honored above the worthy poor.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 73.

When you turn from those who seem unpromising and unattractive, do you realize that you are neglecting the souls for whom Christ is seeking? At the very time when you turn from them, they may be in the greatest need of your compassion. In every assembly for worship, there are souls longing for rest and peace. They may appear to be living careless lives, but they are not insensible to the influence of the Holy Spirit. Many among them might be won for Christ.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 191.

The gospel invitation is not to be narrowed down, and presented only to a select few, who, we suppose, will do us honor if they accept it. The message is to be given to all. Wherever hearts are open to receive the truth, Christ is ready to instruct them.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 194.

Honesty—Faithfulness—Industry

When responsibilities are to be intrusted to an individual, the question is not asked whether he is eloquent or wealthy, but whether he is honest, faithful, and industrious; for whatever may be his accomplishments, without these qualifications he is utterly unfit for any position of trust.—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 413.

Leadership

Unselfishness

Christ's work is to be our example. Constantly He went about doing good. In the temple and the synagogues, in the streets of the cities, in the marketplace and the workshop, by the seaside and among the hills, He preached the gospel and healed the sick. His life was one of unselfish service, and it is to be our lesson book. His tender, pitying love rebukes our selfishness and heartlessness.—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 31.

The motive that prompts us to work for God should have in it nothing akin to self-serving. Unselfish devotion and a spirit of sacrifice have always been, and always will be, the first requisite of acceptable service. Our Lord and Master designs that not one thread of selfishness shall be woven into His work. Into our efforts we are to bring the tact and skill, the exactitude and wisdom, that the God of perfection required of the builders of the earthly tabernacle; yet in all our labors we are to

remember that the greatest talents or the most splendid services are acceptable only when self is laid upon the altar, a living, consuming sacrifice.—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 65.

Of all the people in the world, reformers should be the most unselfish, the kindest, and the most courteous. In their lives should be seen the true goodness of unselfish deeds.—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 157.

Cease to worry

Things will go wrong because of unconsecrated workers. You may shed tears over the result of this; but don't worry. The blessed Master has all His work from end to end under His masterly supervision. All He asks is that the workers shall come to Him for their orders, and obey His directions. Everything—our churches, our missions, our Sabbath schools, our institutions—is carried upon His divine heart. Why worry? The intense longing to see the church a living and shining light as God designs it shall be, must be tempered with entire trust in God.—*Review and Herald*, Nov. 14, 1893.

Cultivate restfulness, and commit the keeping of your souls unto God as unto a faithful Creator. He will keep that which is committed to His trust. He is not pleased to have us cover His altar with our tears and complaints. You have enough to praise God for already, if you do not see another soul converted. But the good work will go on if you will only go forward, and not be trying to adjust everything to your own ideas. Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, and be ye thankful.

Let the Lord have room to work. Do not block His way. He can and will work if we will let Him.—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 136.

Bear the divine credentials

God can use every person just in proportion as He can put His Spirit into the soul temple. The work that He will accept is the work that reflects His image. His followers are to bear, as their credentials to the world, the ineffaceable characteristics of His immortal principles—*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 144.

Christ's name was to be their watchword, their badge of distinction, their bond of union, the authority of their course of action, and the source



of their success. Nothing was to be recognized in His kingdom that did not bear His name and super-scription.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 28.

Minutemen

Be faithful minutemen, to show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.—*Review and Herald*, Jan. 24, 1893.

God's servants should be minutemen, ever ready to move as fast as His providence opens the way. Any delay on their part gives time for Satan to work to defeat them—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 423.

His commandment-keeping people are to stand constantly in readiness for service.— *Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 247.

Those who are really representatives of Christ are working for the good of others. They delight in advancing the cause of God both at home and abroad. They are seen and heard, and their influence is felt, at the prayer meeting. They will try to supply the place of the minister, whose labors they cannot have. They do not seek to exalt self, or to receive credit for doing a great work, but labor humbly, meekly, faithfully, doing small errands or doing a greater work, if necessary, because Christ has done so much for them.—*Review and Herald*, Sept. 6, 1881.

Brave and true

What the church needs in these days of peril, is an army of workers who, like Paul, have educated themselves for usefulness, who have a deep experience in the things of God, and who are filled with earnestness and zeal. Sanctified, self-sacrificing men are needed; men who will not shun trial and responsibility; men who are brave and true; men in whose hearts Christ is formed "the hope of glory," and who, with lips touched with holy fire, will "preach the word." For want of such workers the cause of God languishes, and fatal errors, like a deadly poison, taint the morals and blight the hopes of a large part of the human race.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 507.

By aggressive warfare, in the midst of opposition, peril, loss, and human suffering, the work of soul-saving is to be carried forward. At a certain battle, when one of the regiments of the attacking force was being beaten back by the hordes of the enemy,

the ensign in front stood his ground as the troops retreated. The captain shouted to him to bring back the colors, but the reply of the ensign was, "Bring the men up to the colors." This is the work that devolves upon every faithful standard-bearer,—to bring the men up to the colors. The Lord calls for wholeheartedness. We all know that the sin of many professing Christians is that they lack the courage and energy to bring themselves and those connected with them up to the standard.— *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 45-46.

God cannot use men who in time of peril, when the strength, courage, and influence of all are needed, are afraid to take a firm stand for the right. He calls for men who will do faithful battle against wrong, warring against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. It is to such as these that He will speak the words: "Well done, good and faithful servant."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 142.

God calls for men like Elijah, Nathan, and John the Baptist,—men who will bear His message with faithfulness, regardless of the consequences; men who will speak the truth bravely, though it calls for the sacrifice of all they have—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 142.

The shepherd's care

The shepherd, who discovers that one of his sheep is missing, does not look carelessly upon the flock that is safely housed, and say, "I have ninety and nine, and it will cost me too much trouble to go in search of the straying one. Let him come back, and I will open the door of the sheepfold, and let him in." No; no sooner does the sheep go astray than the shepherd is filled with grief and anxiety. He counts and recounts the flock. When he is sure that one sheep is lost, he slumbers not. He leaves the ninety and nine within the fold; and goes in search of the straying sheep. The darker and more tempestuous the night, and the more perilous the way, the greater is the shepherd's anxiety, and the more earnest his search. He makes every effort to find that one lost sheep.

With what relief he hears in the distance its first faint cry. Following the sound, he climbs the steep-

est heights; he goes to the very edge of the precipice, at the risk of his own life. Thus he searches, while the cry, growing fainter, tells him that his sheep is ready to die. At last his effort is rewarded; the lost is found. Then he does not scold it because it has caused him so much trouble. He does not drive it with a whip. He does not even try to lead it home. In his joy he takes the trembling creature upon his shoulders; if it is bruised and wounded, he gathers it in his arms, pressing it close to his bosom, that the warmth of his own heart may give it life. With gratitude that his search has not been in vain, he bears it back to the fold.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 187-188.

Humility

In choosing men and women for His service, God does not ask whether they possess learning or eloquence or worldly wealth. He asks: "Do they walk in such humility that I can teach them my way? Can I put my words into their lips? Will they represent me?"—*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 144.

In trying to help the poor, the despised, the forsaken, do not work for them mounted on the stilts of your dignity and superiority, for in this way you will accomplish nothing—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 277.

That which will make our churches vigorous and successful in their efforts, is not bustle, but quiet, humble work; not parade and bombast, but patient, prayerful, persevering effort.—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 130.

The humiliation of defeat often proves a blessing by showing us our inability to do the will of God without His aid.—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 633.

The talents of the humble cottager are needed in the house-to-house labor, and can accomplish more in this work than brilliant gifts.—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 37-38.

All heaven is interested in this work that God's messengers are carrying forward in the world, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. This is a great work, brethren and sisters, and we should humble ourselves daily before God, and not feel that our wisdom is perfect. We should take hold of the work with earnestness. We should not pray for God to humble us; for when God takes hold of us, He will

humble us in a way that we would not enjoy. But we must day by day humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. We are to work out our own salvation with fear and with trembling. While it is God that works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure, we are to co-operate with Him while He works through us.—*Review and Herald*, July 12, 1887.

We are to strive to enter in at the strait gate. But this gate does not swing loosely on its hinges. It will not admit doubtful characters. We must now strive for eternal life with an intensity that is proportionate to the value of the prize before us. It is not money or lands or position, but the possession of a Christlike character that will open to us the gates of Paradise. It is not dignity; it is not intellectual attainments that will win for us the crown of immortality. Only the meek and lowly ones, who have made God their efficiency, will receive this gift.—*Southern Watchman*, April 16, 1903.

When you return from doing missionary work, do not praise yourself, but exalt Jesus; lift up the cross of Calvary.—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 596.

Before honor is humility. To fill a high place before men, Heaven chooses the worker who, like John the Baptist, takes a lowly place before God. The most childlike disciple is the most efficient in labor for God. The heavenly intelligences can co-operate with him who is seeking, not to exalt self, but to save souls.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 436.

Temperate

Would that every child of God might be impressed with the necessity of being temperate in his eating, dressing, and working, that he may do the best work for the cause of God. When the laborer has been under a pressure of work and care, and is overworked in mind and body, he should turn aside and rest awhile, not for selfish gratification, but that he may be better prepared for future duties. We have a vigilant foe, which is ever upon our track, to take advantage of every weakness, that he may make his temptations effective for evil. When the mind is overstrained and the body enfeebled, he can take advantage, and press the soul with his fiercest temptations, that he may

cause the downfall of the child of God. Let the laborer for God carefully husband his strength; and when wearied with toil that must come upon him, let him turn aside and rest and commune with Jesus.—*Review and Herald*, Nov. 14, 1893.

The misuse of our physical powers shortens the period of time in which our lives can be used for the glory of God. And it unfits us to accomplish the work God has given us to do. By allowing ourselves to form wrong habits, by keeping late hours, by gratifying appetite at the expense of health, we lay the foundation for feebleness. By neglecting physical exercise, by overworking mind or body, we unbalance the nervous system. Those who thus shorten their lives unfit themselves for service by disregarding nature's laws, are guilty of robbery toward God. And they are robbing their fellow men also. The opportunity of blessing others, the very work for which God sent them into the world, has by their own course of action been cut short. And they have unfitted themselves to do even that which in a briefer period of time they might have accomplished. The Lord holds us guilty when by our injurious habits we thus deprive the world of good.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 346-347.

Our God is ever merciful, full of compassion, and reasonable in all His requirements. He does not require that we shall pursue a course of action that will result in the loss of our health or the enfeeblement of our powers of mind. He would not have us work under a pressure and strain until exhaustion follows, and prostration of the nerves. The Lord has given us reason, and He expects that we shall exercise reason, and act in harmony with the laws of life implanted within us, obeying them that we may have a well-balanced organization. Day follows day, and each day brings its responsibilities and duties, but the work of tomorrow must not be crowded into today. The workers in the cause of God should feel how sacred is its character, and they should prepare themselves for tomorrow's work by a judicious employment of their powers today.—*Review and Herald*, Nov. 7, 1893.

Rest and reflection

The disciples of Jesus needed to be educated as to

how they should labor, and how they should rest. Today there is need that God's chosen workmen should listen to the command of Christ to go apart and rest awhile. Many valuable lives have been sacrificed, that need not have been, through ignorance of this command . . . Though the harvest is great and the laborers are few, nothing is gained by sacrificing health and life . . . There are many feeble, worn workmen who feel deeply distressed when they see how much there is to be done, and how little they can do. How they long for physical strength to accomplish more; but it is to this class that Jesus says, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile."—*Review and Herald*, Nov. 7, 1893.

The Christian life is not made up of unceasing activity, or of continual meditation. Christians must work earnestly for the salvation of the lost, and they must also take time for contemplation, for prayer, and the study of the Word of God. It will not do to be always under the strain of the work and excitement, for in this way personal piety is neglected, and the powers of mind and body are injured.—*Review and Herald*, Nov. 7, 1893.

All who are under the training of God need the quiet hour for communion with their own hearts, with nature, and with God. In them is to be revealed a life that is not in harmony with the world, its customs, or its practices; and they need to have a personal experience in obtaining knowledge of the will of God. We must individually hear Him speaking to the heart. When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God. He bids us, "Be still, and know that I am God." This is the effectual preparation for all labor for God. Amidst the hurrying throng, and the strain of life's intense activities, he who is thus refreshed, will be surrounded with an atmosphere of light and peace. He will receive a new endowment of both physical and mental strength. His life will breathe out a fragrance, and will reveal a divine power that will reach men's hearts.—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 58.

Ellen G. White, Messenger of the Lord and one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. She was a leader, writer, and public speaker.

Slices of Life

Henry Feyerabend

Him in silence

When your tongue is silent, you can rest in the silence of the forest. When your imagination is silent, the forest speaks to you, tell you of its unreality and of the reality of God. But when your mind is silent, then the forest suddenly becomes magnificently real and blazes transparently with the reality of God.—Thomas Merton.

See: Deuteronomy 4:29; Isaiah 6: 3; 55:6.

We play the game unfairly

A Hasidic story tells of a little boy playing hide-and-seek with his friends. For some unknown reason they stopped playing while he was hiding. He began to cry. His old grandfather came out of the house to see what was troubling him. After learning what had happened, the grandfather said, "Do not weep, my child, because the boys did not come to find you. Perhaps you can learn a lesson from this disappointment.

All of life is like a game between God and us. Only it is God who is weeping, for we are not playing the game fairly. God is waiting to be found, but many have gone in search of other things."

—James S. Hewett.

Against the current

I thought when I became a Christian I had nothing to do but just to lay my oars in the bottom of the boat and float along. But I soon found that I would have to go against the current.—D. L. Moody. See: Romans 12:2; Hebrews 11:24-25; Titus 2:12.

Thinking of the next world

If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this.—C. S. Lewis.

Inner strength needed

If within us we find nothing over us we succumb to what is around us.—P.T. Forsyth. See: Romans 12:2; 1 Corinthians 10:13.

Our throw-away society

In this society we save whales, we save timber wolves and bald eagles and Coke bottles. Yet, everyone wanted me to throw away my baby.—David Boehi, quoting a pregnant woman.

See: Exodus 23:2; Matthew 16:26; Ephesians 2:2.



Where is the church?

You know what your own country is like. I'm a visitor, and I wouldn't presume to speak about America. But I know what Great Britain is like. I know something about the growing dishonesty, corruption, immorality, violence, pornography, the diminishing respect for human life, and the increase in abortion.

Whose fault is it? Let me put it like this: if the house is dark at night, there is no sense in blaming the house. That's what happens when the sun goes down. The question to ask is, "Where is the light?"

If meat goes bad, there is no sense in blaming the meat. That is what happens when the bacteria are allowed to breed unchecked. The question to ask is, "Where is the salt?" If society becomes corrupt like a dark night or stinking fish, there's no sense in blaming society. That's what happens when fallen human society is left to itself and human evil is unrestrained and unchecked. The question to ask is "Where is the church?"—John Stott. See: Matthew 5:13-16; Daniel 12:3; John 5:35; Proverbs 11:11; 14:34.

God and the "Me" generation

Rabbi Harold S. Kushner's book: "When Bad Things Happen to Good People" was a best seller not only because it is so well written, but also because it caters to a narcissistic age. For us, any suffering, confusion or tragedy is patently unfair and undeserved because we stopped trusting a God whose presence makes suffering, confusion and tragedy bearable.—William H. Willimon. See: Matthew 5:11; 10:39; Acts 9:16.

World movers

We do not want, as the newspapers say, a church that will move with the world. We want a church that will move the world.—G. K. Chesterton. See: Matthew 5:13-16; Mark 9:50; Luke 16:8; Romans 12:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:5.

Metaphor for today

The best metaphor for our world of today is astronauts speeding through the cosmos, but with their life-supporting capsule pierced by a meteorite fragment. But the Church resembles Mary and Joseph traveling from Egypt to Nazareth on a donkey, holding in their arms the weakness and poverty of the Child Jesus: God incarnate.—Carlo Caretto. See: Matthew 5:14-16; Mark 9:49; 2 Timothy 3:1-2.

Trivial pursuit

In biblical days prophets were astir while the world was asleep; today the world is astir while church and synagogue are busy with trivialities.—Abraham Joshua Heschel. See: Psalms 74:9; Amos 8:11; Romans 12:2.

The generation of self

While evangelicals reject "unbiblical Narcissism," there is little remorse today for the sinful self; prime concern centers, rather, on self-potential, self-fulfillment, and even self-veneration. No clear line is drawn between self-indulgence and self-affirmation.—Carl F. H. Henry. See: Lamentations 3:40; Luke 8:14; 2 Timothy 3:1-2; 2 Peter 2:13.

A Church is not an audience

A sharp distinction ought to be made between a church and an audience. An audience is a group of unrelated people drawn together by a short-lived attraction. An audience is a crowd. A church is a family. An audience is a gathering. A church is a fellowship. An audience is a heap of stones. A church is a temple. Preachers are ordained, not to attract an audience, but to build a church. Coarse and worldly men, if richly gifted, can draw audiences, but only a man who is given to the Lord Jesus Christ can build a church.—Charles E. Jefferson. See: Deuteronomy 14:2; 32:10; Acts 20:28; 2 Corinthians 6:18; Galatians 4:6.



Francis D. Nichol

Should we kneel in prayer?

A reader calls attention to the statements in the Spirit of Prophecy that strongly advocate kneeling in prayer and then expresses perplexity over the fact that in certain of our religious assemblies there seems to be a tendency to have the congregation stand for prayer, even when there is ample room to kneel. He wishes to know what is really right in the matter. Undoubtedly in many instances there are valid reasons for asking a congregation to remain standing during prayer. But in any discussion of the subject of the bodily posture in prayer we may well consider the following from the pen of Mrs. White: —

"Christ's followers today should guard against the tendency to lose the spirit of reverence and godly fear. The Scriptures teach men how they should approach their Maker—with humility and awe, through faith in a divine Mediator." The psalmist has declared:

"The Lord is a great God,
And a great King above all gods . . .
O come, let us worship and bow down:
Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker."

"Both in public and in private worship, it is our privilege to bow on our knees before God when we offer our petitions to Him. Jesus, our example, 'kneeled down, and prayed.' Of His disciples it is recorded that they, too, 'kneeled down, and prayed.' Paul declared, 'I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' In confessing before God the sins of Israel, Ezra knelt. Daniel 'kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God.'"—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 48.

Speaking personally, I like to kneel in prayer, for there is a certain relationship between pose of body and mood of spirit. It seems to me that a mood of contrite confession and genuine adoration can find best expression in the soul when one is on bended knee.

However, it would be sad indeed if in any of our churches we permitted the question of kneeling

versus standing to become the occasion for controversy. In that event our prayers would likely avail little, no matter what our bodily pose.

Are our church buildings too fine?

A reader writes that he is troubled over the fine Adventist church buildings that are now being erected in some places. He seems to feel that structures much simpler, and thus less expensive, would suffice. He believes that when we spend money on these fine buildings we merit the criticism he declares he received from a non-Adventist who declined to contribute when he visited him at ingathering time.

I don't doubt this brother's sincerity—others have expressed similar views at times—but I'm unable to agree with him, and for certain definite reasons. In the first place, I don't believe that our presently constructed church buildings are too lavish. There is little or no evidence of ornateness in the interior finish. The exterior is occasionally stone, often brick, and not infrequently wood. In the case of virtually all of our larger church buildings, especially those erected in cities, the building code largely determines the nature of the building material, particularly with a view to fireproofing the structures.

I think of a further reason for not considering our church buildings lavish. A church is something more than four walls and a roof to keep out the rain. Rather, it is a monument constructed to the glory of God. Certainly it ought not to be a whit less well built or furnished than our own houses. It ought to be built and furnished at least a little better. Part of the witness that we bear in the community is the building that we erect for our services.

I'm wholly unimpressed by the criticism said to have been offered by the person approached for an Ingathering gift. I can recall the day when one of the favorite means by which critics tried to discount Adventists was to remark that they met in

halls or in little run-down buildings on the edge of town. The comment was in part true, for we were very small and very poor in our earlier days. Let us be thankful that God has blessed us as the years have passed by, and that He has put it into our hearts to build a house for Him in our various communities.

We will never escape criticism, but we need not be troubled by the kind of criticism that grows out of the fact that we have respectable church buildings. Let us have more of them. We should never be content to meet in a hall any longer than is required to raise a fund to build a church. Let us constantly be in the business of rising up monuments to the glory of God. Such monuments stabilize the work in a community and put it at a great advantage.

Friendliness in the church

A brother writes with deep feeling of the "coldness and indifference" in his church. His beloved companion of many years has died. His heart is heavy with grief and longs for thoughtful words that will bring healing to sorrow and give him a sense of fellowship. But, he says, his wife was hardly buried before the church members seemed to have forgotten the tragedy. They appear to act—or so he interprets their actions—as if they thought he ought also to forget her as quickly and fall into a routine life.

It is not unusual for us to receive a letter from some member, often a new convert, who feels that more of a sense of friendliness should be evident in the church. Occasionally one even writes that he could be absent from the church for months and his absence not be noticed.

Now, it is difficult to evaluate accurately such strictures on the church. Friendship is a two-way street; it calls for reciprocal action on the part of two persons. Some people, by their very nature, make it difficult to be friendly with them. They may be excessively shy, slipping quietly, and they hope unobserved, into a seat, and as quietly and quickly hurrying away afterward. A person would need to be on the alert to intercept them. Or they may have some other quality, or defect, of personality that makes people hesitate to draw near to them in spirit. In other words, this much should be said in defense of the church: Many times, a part of the apparent unfriendliness is due to the very nature of the person who brings the complaint.

But having said this, I come to what seems to be a

real lack in some of our churches. It is so easy for us to greet those whom we know and to forget that there may be a stranger in our midst. That stranger may have recently come into the faith. What a glorious opportunity for us to increase the circle of our friends and to bind more fully to the blessed Advent Movement someone who may still walk uncertainly among us. There would be a new zest to attending services if we made a special point out of seeking for the new face in the church and extending the right hand in greeting. After all, the real joy in living is found, not in money or houses acquired, or in honors secured, but in the fellowship of kindred minds. Perhaps the stranger has small children like your own. Ask about them. Nothing can bring a light to the eye more quickly than to have someone inquire about the children. In fact, it is so simple to make friends that it seems strange that most people do not have more.

Coming now, more directly, to the burden of the letter referred to in the opening paragraph. True, it is often hard for us to enter into the sorrows of others. But it is a heavenly skill eminently worth acquiring. Christ best displayed it. He entered deeply into the problems, the heartaches, the tragedies, of others. Those who came into His presence sensed that fact. Part of our development of character as Christians is the acquiring more fully of a feeling for the woes of others.

We need to be able, not simply to say a few sympathetic words the day of the funeral, but to maintain a genuine sympathy in the weeks, and probably months, afterward. We must never forget that though the funeral of Brother Jones or Sister Smith may be only a sorry statistic to us, it may be like the end of the world for the one bereaved. And it is always hard to rebuild a world, especially if it has to be inhabited alone.

Christ came to abolish death. Until that glorious day when death is swallowed up in victory, it is our joyous privilege as Christians to take from death as much of its dreaded sting as possible by applying, whenever opportunity affords, the soothing balm of genuine Christian love and solicitude. (Francis D. Nichol, *Questions People Have Asked Me*, p. 85-86.)

Francis D. Nichol was editor for the *Review and Herald* when he wrote this article.

Loving people you don't like

Paulo Sarli

I know that many times it is not easy to get along with people in the congregation or accept certain ideas that we feel to be quite naive. Sometimes it is just a question of difference in personality, sometimes it is a question of prejudice created in some specific circumstances, but in all cases it is a question of the lack of acceptance spirit so clearly shown in the figure of the father in the parable of the Prodigal son told by Jesus. (Luke 15: 11-31).

As leader you will be many times challenged in accepting ideas and people you don't like. In case you face such a situation I recommend you look at the way Jesus dealt with different people who were bothersome.

A leper and a demon-possessed maniac—two people no one would choose to associate with, especially in Jesus' day. Both were outcasts of society. Jesus allowed both to come to Him. More likely they grabbed His garments or legs as they knelt (Mark 1:40-44; 5:1-20).

Consider Peter or Judas. Neither of these men was particularly lovable. Peter blustered about like a bull in a china shop. Judas sneaked about, stealing from the common pot and ultimately betrayed Jesus.

The leper came and pleaded for healing. Jesus "stretched out His hand, and touched him, and said; "I am willing; be cleansed" (Mark 1:41). In an instant, before their eyes, the leprosy disappeared, and the man was clean.

In Mark 5 the demon-possessed man from the Gadarenes ran out of the tombs. At night people heard his eerie wailing as he threw himself about and gashed himself with stones. The man could not even speak. Rather, the demons spoke, "What do I have to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?" (Mark 5:7).

Think of the scene. The maniac is grasping Christ's robe. His eyes are frantic, his hair matted with blood and dirt, his clothes, such as they were, smelled of the tombs and sweat and blood.

Jesus welcomed him and healed him. The people came 'and observed the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind' (Mark 5:15).

How did Jesus do it? How could He endure so many difficult people? How can we? Or should we?

A part of living under the lordship of Christ is allowing unlovable people into our lives, people whom we would never choose on our own. They enter our lives, often like a storm, disturbing our tranquility and testing our patience.

Paul gives us some guidelines on dealing with these people: "*Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to his edification . . . Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.*" (Romans 15:1-2, 7)

The first requisite for loving the unlovable is to realize how Christ accepted you.

Where would you be today without Him? What if His acceptance had been conditional? Realize that right now Christ fully accepts you as you are, full of imperfections and problems, all of which He completely knows.

The second requisite emerges from a basic decision to accept everyone God brings across your path.

In God's plan there are no accidental meetings. In each encounter God has a purpose for both the needy person and for you. You may be the one who can really help and counsel that person.

Determine to be an encouragement to everyone whom God brings across your path. It costs little to say a kind word and to communicate a sense of support. But like the girl who doesn't want to encourage a suitor, we fear that kind words will lead to further demands. Such is the risk.

One great help to me is to recall how people hurt me. As a young high school student I remember a particularly painful interview with an Army captain. I traveled by train from Campinas to Sao Paulo. There I stayed at a little hotel. At stake was the continuation of my education. I was nervous and self-conscious. My white shirt was one of those old drip-dry kinds with the collar wrinkled and looking just like what it was—a cheap shirt.

My blue suit was, at best, acceptable. My black shoes were old-fashioned. It was clear that I did not come from a socially conscious home. I knew just enough to know that I didn't look quite right.

The interview is still painful to recall. I felt much put down. In my application I had stated that I liked music. The captain began to ask questions about classical music. Where was Bach born? I didn't know. And so it went through the interview. It was disastrous. The captain may not have intended to intimidate me. He probably was doing his job picking the most poised and the one with the best leadership potential. I think I was at least in the "unlikable" class. That memory helps me remember not to put anyone down because of how they look or their lack of poise.

Through the years others have so graciously put up with my pestering personality. I asked skeptical questions in college classes. I'm certain I exasperated my professors. In my early years, I know I was abrasive and demanding. Many of my friends graciously ignored these signs, helping me to grow. I am grateful for those who were patient with me. Even today, I know that I can irritate people of a particular personality type, yet they accept me.

I appreciate the instruction of Hebrews 13: "Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoner, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering." (Hebrews 13:1-3, NIV)

We never know where a kindness will lead, because only God can see the potential of that man or woman in our presence.

Through the years, my wife and I have encountered many people in our ministry who were not easy to love. Yet today we see many who are in places of responsibility both in the secular and Christian world. They grew and developed. God worked in their lives and burnished the rough edges.

What a blessing to see them today! May God help us as leaders to totally love and accept every person He brings across our path, as Christ totally loves and accepts us. May He bring our human responses under His lordship?

Paulo Sarli writes from Campinas, Brazil. He is producer and speaker of two radio programs in Brazil.

(Continued from page 3—Editorial).

on one person. If he or she says no, pray again. "Lord, who is the person in our church that you would choose to help in this training ministry?"

Make an appointment

This is important. Make a commitment that no one will be enlisted in the hallway or on the parking lot. When we enlist without an appointment, we are suggesting: "This ministry isn't very important. I didn't even bother to arrange a time and place where we could discuss it." Consider meeting at the church in the room where he or she would have the training class.

Make a nominating contact

Tell prospective officers about your prayer and that you feel God has led you to invite them to accept this ministry. Take some teaching materials with you and discuss the preparation of a lesson. Don't take a shortcut. Ask them to pray.

Contact potential officers for their reply

Give them a week to pray. This contact can be made by phone.

Follow up

Invite workers to sit in on a class similar to the one they will be leading. Check with the officer after a month to see how much progress has been made. Make sure those training events really happen.

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3. Can the church board in some special situation disfellowship a member?
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5. Who can be the chairman when church discipline is considered?
6. What to do when a member requests to be disfellowshipped and there is no clear reason for it?
7. What kind of discipline should be applied when a couple had sexual intercourse before getting married and that becomes known by the congregation days later?
8. What do you do when it is discovered that an elder committed adultery about seven years ago and was not disciplined?
9. Should a person who committed adultery be elected as an elder?
10. What is the proper procedure in dealing with people that are not faithful in returning tithe and offerings at the time of the election of new officers?
11. What should be done when a man abandoned by his wife gets married again without having evidence that his former wife had adultery problems?
12. What to do when an Adventist partner of a travel agency approves for the agency to be open for business or sabbath?
13. What to do if the church board recommends to disfellowship a dishonest member and the congregation votes against the motion?
14. What to do when a member was disfellowshipped and your church requests reconsideration?

(Continued from page 17—Sermon).

creed he or she recites or the church to which he or she belongs, but the love which the Christian has for Jesus and other people.

2. *The purpose of love is to attract lost people.*
 - a. The world will be attracted to those who love.
 - b. In a popular song we are reminded that what the world needs now is "love, sweet love." The world will be attracted to people who love each other.
 - c. *Henry Drummond*, in his classic sermon *The Greatest Thing in the World*, suggests that by putting a small piece of iron in the presence of an electrified body, that piece of iron for a time becomes electrified.

Putting a committed life in the presence of Christ would mean that Christ's nature could be seen in that life.

E. Conclusion

1. The world desperately needs love.
2. Christ enables people to love.
3. Will you not obey the eleventh commandment?
4. It will mean that you will love one another.

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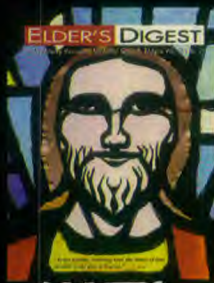
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