

ELDER'S DIGEST

A Quarterly Resource for local Church Elders Vol. 9 No. 3

How i make
an altar call

What church
members expect
of an elder's spouse

"Trust in the Lord forever,
for the Lord is the rock eternal."

Isaiah 26:4

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Cover photo by Gladys B. Ríos



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 © 2003, 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 36

Vol. 9

Number 3

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“SOUND A CLEAR CALL”

Joel Sarli

The apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 14: 8 says: “Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will be ready for the battle?” This is a clear challenge to every one of us and I would like to apply these words here to my dear friends, the elder in the local congregation.

When the Lord raised up this Adventist Movement He laid upon the leaders a dual responsibility. Not only were we to warn the whole world of the impending judgment, but we were also to prepare a people to meet our Lord. Only those who possess the faith once delivered unto the saints will have the power to separate from sin and become citizens of God’s kingdom.

One hundred and sixty years ago our pioneers were laying the foundation of what was destined to become a worldwide movement. They were weak numerically, but they were strong spiritually, and had a firm conviction of their divine call, they moved forward in faith. The results of their work we see today. I believe that is the reason why Ellen G. White wrote these words: “Had the purpose of God been carried out by His people in giving to the world the message of mercy, Christ would, ere this, have come to the earth, and the saints, would have received their welcome into the city of God.”—*Testimonies*, Vol. 6, p. 450.

The history of our pioneers teaches us the lesson of the possibilities that reside in people who have conviction. Joseph Bates, a prominent Millerite, traveled six hundred miles in the midst of winter, down to the Eastern Shore of Maryland, a slave State at that time. In the midst of one of his meetings a heckler arose to declare that a mob was forming to ride him out of town on a rail. He assured the man that if they would put a saddle on the

rail, he would rather ride on it than walk in the muddy streets of their town. Then looking the man squarely in the eye, he added: “You must think that we come 600 miles, through the ice and snow, at our own expense, to give you the midnight cry, without first sitting down and counting the cost. And now, if the Lord has no more for us to do, we had lied at the bottom of the Chesapeake Bay as anywhere else until the Lord comes. But if He has any more work for us to do, you can’t touch us!”—Bates, *Autobiography*, p. 279.

I confess I like to read a statement like that. It makes my spiritual nerves tingle. It makes me proud of my spiritual forefathers. They were militant people. They were so tremendously persuaded that they had the truth, and they must preach that truth for God, that they could not think of letting anything stand in their way. Oh how we need preachers like them today! They never permitted themselves to be on the defensive. They followed the old military maxim, that attack is the best defense. Militancy, like any other quality of the human spirit, may be turned to wrong purposes, but true militancy is born of conviction—conviction not only that there is something worth fighting for, but that we are determined to fight for it.

We must not forget that either we are defenders of the cause that rests on great certainties, or else we are nothing. If we really believe that we have certain truths, then why should we hesitate to admit that they constitute the very promises of our faith?

One distinctive mark of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that bases the faith on revelation is that there are some things that are established beyond all doubt, things of which we can be so sure that we would be willing to die.

The foundation of our faith and the facts of our history require that we make them known to the world, and only people with certainty in their souls can measure up to the demands of our world today. **E**



Four months Nehemiah was compelled to wait for a favorable opportunity to present his request to the king. During this period, while his heart was oppressed with grief, he constantly endeavored to carry a cheerful and happy countenance. In his seasons of retirement, many were the prayers, the penitential confessions, and the tears of anguish

Prevailing prayer

Ellen G. White



witnessed by God and angels; but all this was concealed from human sight. The regulations of Eastern courts forbade any manifestation of sorrow within them. All must appear gay and happy in those halls of luxury and splendor. The distress without was not to cast its shadow in the presence of royalty.

But at last the sorrow that burdened Nehemiah's heart could no longer be concealed. Sleepless nights devoted to earnest prayer, care-filled days, dark with the shadow of hope deferred, left their trace upon his countenance. The keen eye of the monarch, jealous to guard his own safety, was accustomed to read countenances and penetrate disguises. Seeing that some secret trouble was preying upon his servant, he suddenly inquired, "Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? This is nothing else but sorrow of heart."

This question filled the listener with apprehension. Would not the king be angry to hear that while outwardly engaged in his service, the courtier's thoughts had been far away with his afflicted people? Would not the offender's life be forfeited? And his cherished plan for restoring the strength of Jerusalem—was it not about to be overthrown? "Then," he said, "I was very sore afraid." With trembling lips and tearful eyes he revealed the cause of his sorrow—the city, which was the place of his fathers' sepulchers, lying waste, and its gates consumed with fire. The touching recital awakened the sympathy of the monarch without arousing his idolatrous prejudices; another question gave the opportunity

Nothing can drown the soul's desire. Above the din of the street, above the noise of machinery, it rises to the heavenly courts. It is God to whom we are speaking, and the prayer is heard. Ask then; "ask, and it shall be given to you."

which Nehemiah had long sought: "For what dost thou make request?" But the man of God did not venture to reply until he had first sought direction from One higher than Artaxerxes. "I prayed," he said, "to the God of heaven."

Nehemiah felt that he had a sacred trust, which required help from the king, and that everything depended upon addressing him in a right manner. In that brief prayer, Nehemiah pressed into the presence of the King of kings, and enlisted on his side a power that can turn hearts as the rivers of water are turned.

A precious lesson is this for all Christians. Whenever we are brought into difficulty or danger, even when surrounded by those who do not love or fear God, the heart may send up its cry for help and there is One who has pledged Himself to come to our aid. This is the kind of prayer Christ meant when He said, "Pray without ceasing." We are not to make ejaculatory prayer a substitute for public or family worship or for secret devotion, but it is a blessed resource at our command under circumstances when other forms of prayer may be impossible. Sailors in the busy marts of trade, crowded and almost overwhelmed with financial perplexities; travelers by sea and land, when threatened by some great danger, can thus commit themselves to divine guidance and protection. And in every circumstance and condition of life, the soul weighed down with grief or care, or assailed by temptation, may thus find comfort, support, and succor in the unfailing love and power of a covenant-keeping God.

All things are possible to those who believe. No one who comes to the Lord in sincerity of heart will be disappointed. How wonderful it is that we can pray effectually, that unworthy, erring mortals possess the power of offering their requests to God!

What higher power can man require than this—to be linked with the infinite God? Feeble, sinful man has the privilege of speaking to His Maker. We utter words that reach the throne of the Monarch of the

universe. We pour out our heart's desire in our closets. Then we go forth to walk with God, as did Enoch and Nehemiah.

We speak with Christ as we walk by the way, and He says, "I am at thy right hand." We may walk in daily companionship with Him. When we breathe out our desire, it may be inaudible to any human ear, but that word cannot die away in silence, nor can it be lost, though the activities of business are going on. Nothing can drown the soul's desire. Above the din of the street, above the noise of machinery, it rises to the heavenly courts. It is God to whom we are speaking, and the prayer is heard. Ask then; "ask, and it shall be given to you."

Nehemiah and Artaxerxes stood face to face—the one a servant, of a downtrodden race, the other the monarch of the world's great empire. But infinitely greater than the disparity of rank was the moral distance, which separated them. Nehemiah had complied with the invitation of the King of kings, "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me." The silent petition that he sent up to Heaven was the same that he had offered for many weeks, that God would prosper his request. And now, taking courage at the thought that he had a Friend, omniscient and omnipotent, to work in his behalf, the man of God made known to the king his desire for release, for a time, from his office at the court, and for authority to build up the waste places of Jerusalem and make it once more a strong and defended city. Momentous results to the Jewish city and nation hung upon this request. And, says Nehemiah, "the king granted me according to the good hand of my God upon me."—*Southern Watchman*, March 8, 1904. **E**

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



THE REVOLUTION OF THE CHURCH

Osmar Reis

There will be unbelievable changes when the elders and the members are involved with the Small Groups program.

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

In this passage Peter indicates our condition and mission. He reveals that all of us belong to a "royal priesthood," and that we are all called to "announce Jesus." That means that our ministry is

part of the spiritual body of Christ.

Peter points out that we are ministers, because we belong to a royal priesthood. All of us as ministers have the mission to guide and evangelize. When that takes place in our midst a true revival will take place in the church and we will experience the same awakening that took place in the primitive church.

In the primitive church all Christians took part in pastoral care and evangelism. The pastors were the apostles and missionaries, who went everywhere planting new churches and organizing others. The primitive Christians met mainly in homes.

It is evident that those churches were small groups (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Phil. 2).

The apostles appointed lay leaders to direct the small groups.

The biblical ideal is for lay members and pastors to do the ministry.

There was a gradual separation from this ideal, but we need to return to the model of the New Testament Church. This return must also be gradual. That will not be easy, but we must begin under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

The beginning must be with much prayer so that the Holy Spirit may direct the church toward a new revival.

The primitive Adventist Church followed closely the model of the New Testament Church.

For about fifty years after its organization, the pastors evangelized and the churches were taken care of by lay leaders. Apostasy was considerable less.

The first Adventists attended three basic religious services, every week:

1. Sabbath service. They found themselves each Sabbath in church praising the Lord as a body of believers. That gave them the feeling of belonging to the same organization. That conviction was reinforced during

camp meetings, where the first Adventists met hundreds and thousands of other Adventists. That helped them to understand that they belonged to something bigger than the small group in the church.

2. Sabbath School. That was the study period of the Word. There the intellectual needs of the believer were reinforced.
3. Small groups. That was known as a social gathering. In these groups there was social growth of the members. The small group also contributed to close relationship and friendship among the members.

Ellen G. White describes the activities of those social meetings: "What is the object of assembling together? It is to inform God, to instruct Him by telling Him all we know in prayer? We meet together to edify one another by an interchange of thoughts and feelings, to gather strength, and light, and courage by becoming acquainted with one another's hopes and aspirations; and by our earnest, heartfelt prayer, offered up in faith, we receive refreshment and vigor from the Source of our strength. These meetings should be most precious seasons and should be made interesting to all who have any relish for religious things." *Testimonies*, Vol. 2, p. 578. **E**

Osmar Reis is in the Personal Ministries Department of the South American Division.

Translated by Antonio A. Ríos.

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The pastor and elder relationship

Mintje Makarewa

A pastor is a shepherd as well as an elder. What is the work of the shepherd? He watches over, feeds, protects, and leads a flock of sheep. The leaders of God's people are frequently called shepherds in the Old Testament. The prophets in speaking to the leaders of Israel addressed them as shepherds.

The Lord Jesus saw the absence of true shepherds as the underlying cause of Israel's spiritual condition at the time of His earthly ministry. Looking on a multitude of needy people, Jesus was deeply moved. Matthew said, *"And seeing the multitude, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd"* (Matt. 9:36).

Being without a shepherd is an abnormal situation that leaves sheep vulnerable and devastated. Every gathering of the Lord's people has a similar need for a shepherd gifted by Christ to feed and watch over them.

Christ is the Pastor of all pastors. He is called the good shepherd, the great shepherd, and the chief

shepherd. Peter describes Christ as the shepherd of our soul. Though Christ has ascended on high, He is still the chief Pastor of the church on earth. His plan for shepherding the church calls for under-shepherds who directly and immediately care for the flock of God.

The concept of the pastor or shepherd was more clearly revealed as the New Testament was written. Paul, under inspiration, wrote of the church leaders whose responsibility it was to equip the church for her work of ministry. *"And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers"* (Eph. 4:11).

The association of local elder and pastor, developed early in the history of the church. When Paul gathered the elders from Ephesus at Miletus to bid them farewell he gave a most comprehensive statement on the work of elders. *"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which he purchased with His own blood"* (Acts 20:28).

Another important reference to this association is found in the writings of the apostle Peter: *“Therefore I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God, and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock ”* (1 Pet. 5:1-3).

Both Paul and Peter assign the pastoral responsibility to elders. Since a plurality of elders is the norm in the New Testament church, are all elders equally pastors or are some elders set apart to be pastors? The answer comes from an examination of all that the New Testament says about elders. The fact that Peter identifies himself as an elder and that the apostle John also calls himself an elder would in itself indicate that there is more than one class of elders in the New Testament.

The New Testament speaks of two kinds of elders. Peter and John were apostles, yet they were elders, in the Adventist Church system the elders and pastors work together in this function. A careful study of the Scripture passages dealing with eldership raises a question as to these designations. There appears to be an overlapping of duties, and elders are not neatly divided into pastors and elders.

The key passage for this consideration is 1 Tim. 5:17-19: *“Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle the ox while he is treading out the grain” and “The laborer is worthy of his wages.” Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.”*

The elders described here have these distinctions:

1. They rule well.
2. They deserve double honor.
3. They work hard at both preaching and teaching.
4. They receive remuneration for their work.

It seems that this description fits the pastoral role as well as to elders. The pastor is an elder who both rules and teaches. He is an elder who is elevated to the position of coordinator not because of his gifts but because of the need. The church in the act of pastoral ordination recognizes this.

In 1Thessalonians 5:12-13 Paul rounds out his

understanding of the pastor. *“But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.”*

He was to be appreciated, esteemed, and loved by the brotherhood for his diligent labors among the saints. Again in this passage the responsibility of instruction is coupled with the charge to give oversight to the assembly.

The local elder is the undershepherd and likewise responsible for both the spiritual and the administrative oversight of the congregation, but he works under the coordination of a pastor.

The New Testament holds the evidence that there were two kinds of elders in the early church. The implications seem to indicate that there is a distinction between the pastor-elder and the lay-elder.

The Apostle gives us in these Pastoral Epistles a good many glimpses of church government in the early church. It is evident that the principal official ministers in the church at Ephesus were elders and deacons.

It is also evident that the words *elders and bishop* were used interchangeably and that they both denote an office of spiritual oversight. A little later there is a distinction in 1Timothy 5:17 between two classes of elders, the one that seems only to have exercised authority and rule, the other class who “labor in the Word of doctrine.” In other words, the one was a ruling elder, the other a teaching elder.

The Jerusalem model

The first assembly of the church age was at Jerusalem. Its unusual growth under the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is recorded in Acts. At its inception the apostle Peter was the obvious leader and spokesman of the congregation. The sixth chapter of Acts details the selection of deacons to supplement the leadership of the Apostles. No mention is made of elders at the beginning of the work. This is probably due to the composition of the church. As a totally Jewish congregation many of its converts were elders, and they continued to minister as such in the new body of believers.

As the apostles scattered in the missionary labors one elder took on prominence in the Jerusalem

(Continued on page 28)

How to develop a mutual fellowship

Orley M. Berg

“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” To this the prophet responded, “Here am I, send me”

So you have been asked to serve as elder of the local church! This may be your first year in this responsible position or perhaps you have held it for several years. In either case the anxious question in your heart is: Just what is expected of me and how can I most effectively fulfill those responsibilities?

This article is an answer to questions being asked again and again by elders just like you serving in churches all around the world. You may be in a district where the pastor has two or more churches, making it impossible for him to be with you each Sabbath. This does indeed place a heavy burden on you, for in his absence you are fully responsible for the conduct of the church program. It may also be necessary for you to conduct the weekly prayer meeting and at times the church board meetings. These and many other responsibilities will be discussed in this column in the months to come.

Even a quick survey of your responsibilities will point up the extreme importance of the office you hold. *You are the one that stands next to the pastor, sharing most in the concern and over-all work of the church, seeking always to assist and encourage the congregation in its mission.*

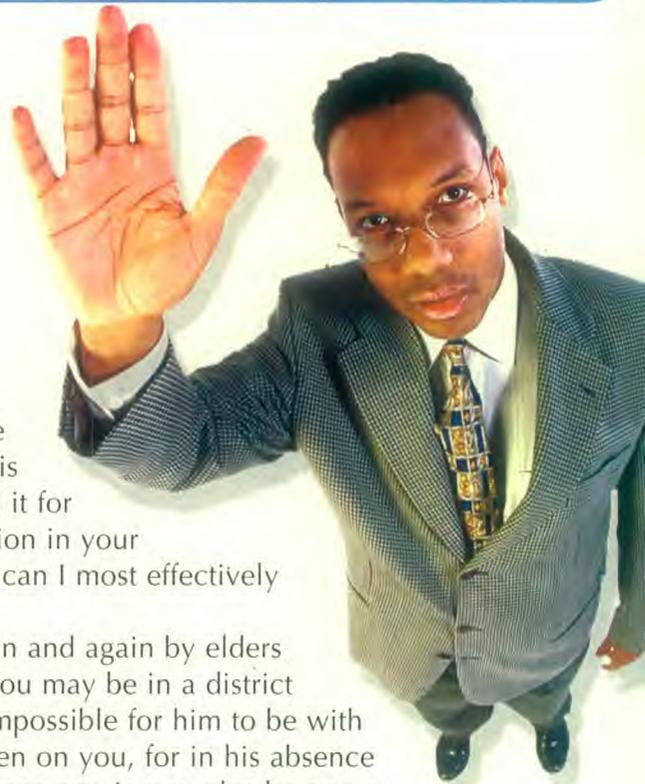
Considering the qualifications for this important office as noted in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, one can readily see that without much of the grace and power of God he can never measure up. The work is too important, the standards of conduct too high, for any man to assume them except first he looks to God in true consecration.

That feeling of unworthiness

As you think of the responsibilities to which you are called and of the sacredness of the office, and then of your own poor heart you may be led to exclaim with Isaiah: “Woe is me! For I am undone” (Isa. 6:5). If so, be thankful. Rejoice first that you have that sense of need, and second that God responds so quickly. To Isaiah came the immediate answer: “Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged” (verse 7). Then came the call, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” To this the prophet responded, “Here am I, send me” (verse 8). Isaiah never forgot the experience of his early years. This same experience kept fresh in our minds will help to keep us humble and trustful as we try by God’s grace to answer our call to service.

As stated before, in your role as elder you stand next to the pastor in the care of the church. A basic essential to the overall program, one that is perhaps the most important yet difficult task of the pastor, is that of knitting the hearts of the unbelievers together into a wonderful fellowship of love. *Until and unless the spirit of true brotherhood and unity prevails it is difficult, yes impossible, for the church to prosper.* Here then is an elementary yet most essential role in which the elder can play a most important part.

The elder often has some advantages over the pastor in creating this atmosphere. He is usually a



respected leader who has been with the church for some years. This means he knows the members well. He has seen children grow up in the church, get married, and take their role in the church and in society. He understands problems through which they have passed. His heart has often gone out to them. He has earned respect. He bears an influence not only in the church but also in the community. This being so, this influence rightly exercised can go far toward creating this sweet atmosphere of mutual trust and concern that members should feel one for another. His wisdom and kindly words can help bring unity out of disorder, confidence out of suspicion, and support instead of criticism.

Not an easy task

To gain this much-needed fellowship of mutual respect and love is not an easy task. This is best illustrated in the experience of Jesus with His disciples. They were to be the leaders of the newly born Christian church, still how unprepared they were. To the very last they were festering with pride and jealousies—clamoring for the highest seats in the kingdom they expected soon to be set up.

Seeing the desperate need of a decided change, Jesus spent the last few weeks of His ministry almost exclusively with them, trying to teach them the importance of humility and love—the elements of true greatness. In the upper room, kneeling before them, He washed their feet. It was Thursday night, just before Gethsemane and death. Facing this ordeal there was one thought uppermost in His mind. Nothing else seemed to matter. Unless this vital need was realized, all would be lost. He voices this concern in the words of a special commandment. Hear Him speaking: “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another” (John 13:34). Having said this, they walked slowly out of the city and across the Kidron Valley toward the Garden. Then Jesus began to pray. Facing death, one’s prayers are apt to express what is nearest to the heart, and the prayer of Jesus was no exception. His concern was still the same: “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou has sent me” (John 17:21).

Brother elder, this prayer still awaits fulfillment. True, it found its answer at Pentecost and that

accounts for the marvelous working of the Spirit then. But it awaits its further fulfillment today. And until the answer comes, and the true love among the brethren for which the Savior prayed is realized, it is presumptuous to expect that our work will be completed and our Lord return. It is an essential part of the true revival and reformation we seek.

This, then, is the first and most essential need of the church. To bring this experience to the congregation is the greatest challenge to the pastor. It should also be the one great concern nearest to the heart of the elder who stands by his side. This may be where you can make your greatest contribution. For until this experience comes to the church all campaigns, evangelistic endeavors, and special projects will fall far short of the mark.

How wonderful to know that Jesus stands ready to help us as we draw nearer to Him. He stands ready to forgive us where we have failed, and to help us to do better in the days ahead.

His promise is, “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (2 Chron. 7:17). Let us claim it today—just now.

My prayer: “Dear Father, humbly I confess my great need. I have sinned in not always seeking Thy glory. Self has often stood in the way, and my example has not always been what it should be. But Thou hast called me to serve as a spiritual leader of the church. Please forgive. Cleanse my heart. Then use me, O Lord, as an instrument of Thy grace to help bring to the church that true spirit of fellowship and love for which Thou didst pray. Do bless every brother and sister of our congregation. Bless the youth. Bless every child. Be especially with our pastor and guide us as we labor together. I pray in Jesus’ name, Amen.” 

Orley M. Berg was Associate Editor of *Ministry* magazine when he wrote this article.

Jesus reprimanded the Pharisees for their cold professionalism. He said, "Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte," and yet they neglected potential prospects in their very midst. The Ethiopian eunuch had become interested in the truth and "had come to Jerusalem for to worship." Evidently he was lost among the crowd of worshipers at the Temple. Could it be that no one recognized him as a stranger in their midst? There is no evidence that anyone volunteered his friendship or offered to answer his many questions. It was not until he was on his way home that Heaven intervened and dispatched a disciple to intercept the desert traveler.

A percentage of those who respond to invitations to evangelistic services turn out to be good prospects, but a much higher percentage of those who on their own initiative join us at our regular worship services are good prospects. We are careful to gather names and to follow up interest at evangelistic services, but what about those who come into our midst to worship?

In one city a husband and wife not of our faith became convicted on the matter of the Sabbath from the study of their Bible. They closed their business on Sabbath and began visiting Sabbath-keeping congregations in search of a new church home. After learning their story on our initial visit we looked in the church guest book. We found that they had registered as visitors on several occasions, but no representative of the church had ever visited them and evidently no one had gotten well enough acquainted with them to discover their interest.

Call on visitors

Elders can find time to make a brief call on all local visitors to the worship service during the week immediately following. In some churches there is a well-chosen committee who visit such names and then report to the pastor or the elder in charge of visitation the results of the visit. Where a church newsletter is used, the names of local visitors should be added to the mailing list. Visitors often come with out-of-town Adventist relatives who are houseguest. Such folks often have been receiving our missionary literature and turn out to be good prospects.

A young widow who had been reared an Adventist but who had married out of the faith started back to church after the death of her husband. She was lonely and confused. The church did not take the initiative of being friendly. After several visits without finding a satisfying fellowship, she ceased attending. The very fact that she resumed church attendance for a period of several weeks indicated that she felt a need and had a desire to return to the faith of her childhood. "When you find a wandering sheep, call him to the fold; and leave him not until you see him safely enfolded there" (*Evangelism*, p. 292).

The PROSPECTS in our midst

George E. Knowles

Organized hospitality

Some of our churches are organized in such a way that the church reception committee has enlisted the support of sufficient women to offer a Sabbath dinner invitation to every visitor attending the worship service. Often these invitations are not accepted, but it means a lot to the visitor to be invited. The hosts and hostesses gain much valuable information to relay to the pastor regarding prospective members as a result of this simple plan of hospitality. This is organized hospitality, but organization becomes essential in large congregations, and if the plan is skillfully executed, the guests need never know of the organization behind the scenes. On Sabbaths when there are not enough visitors to send to all the homes prepared to offer hospitality, a real blessing can come as a result of encouraging those prepared to entertain to invite a family in the church with whom they have never really become well acquainted.

One fine family was garnered in as the result of the use of the above plan of organized hospitality. They had been attending various Adventist churches unnoticed in a large city for a period of seven years. It was taken for granted that they were members, but they had never been baptized. The husband operated a fleet of trucks. He was literally waiting for an invitation to be baptized. He made the necessary business adjustments so that he could keep the Sabbath. His family joined him in baptism and they all have given strong support to the program of the church.

In one rapidly growing church is an elderly couple that sends a neatly handwritten greeting card to each visitor who registers in the guest book, inviting a return visit.

An alert and dedicated minister's wife noticed a woman weeping during the closing hymn of a worship service. The minister's wife made her way to the side of the woman and slipped her arm around her understandingly. After the service it was learned that the visitor had a brother who had recently become a Seventh-day Adventist. The brother in turn had won the son of the visiting woman. The son was attending one of our boarding academies. We later learned that the week this experience took place was the Week of Prayer at the academy. This woman's son had made his mother the special object of his prayers during the week. God had touched her heart, and she had made her way to church for the first time. How fortunate that there

was someone there that Sabbath morning that was watching for souls. This contact was followed up, and another soul was gained for God's kingdom.

Choose receptionists carefully

Those who greet the visitors in the church foyer on Sabbath morning should be carefully chosen. Their dress and deportment should be representative of our message. They should be alert and should cultivate the ability to remember names and faces. I have seen the same guests being greeted as strangers by the same receptionists week after week. This is embarrassing. Special attention should be given to notice those newly baptized. New members should not be classed as visitors. They need to be made to feel that they belong. The receptionist should demonstrate by a happy countenance and a cheerful disposition a sincere interest in people. Never should conduct in the church foyer be boisterous. The receptionists should not become absorbed in conversation with one another. Theirs is an important work. They are to watch for souls as they that must give an account.

Many elders show by their presence in the foyer Sabbath morning that they feel this is the most valuable place they can be as their people come into the sanctuary to worship. The elder will want to personally greet the visitors and extend an invitation to visit Sabbath school and church.

Neglected young people

Sometimes neglected groups in our midst are the teenage children of Adventist parents who for some reason have not been baptized along with the rest of their age group. There is usually a problem in such cases that will need personal attention. Each succeeding year that such young people remain unbaptized, the chances of their ever becoming members will be reduced. Often the father is not a member, and the young person is torn between loyalties to two parents who differ religiously. It is a challenge to win the confidence of such young people and to lead them to the Lord.

Successful elders budget ten minutes for the junior division and ten minutes for the youth every Sabbath morning during the opening exercises of Sabbath school. The department leaders know just at what time the elder will be there and work it into

(Continued on page 28)



Q & A

Ellen G. White.

The inspiration of the Prophet

Francis D. Nichol

A brother writes to confess his confusion of mind as to the relation between the inspiration of the prophet specifically Mrs. White, and the frail humanity of the prophet. In other words, he wonders how we can know when Mrs. White is speaking by inspiration and when she is simply giving to us her own finite thoughts as a human being. He inquires: 'May we, as we read her writings, say: 'Here she speaks by inspiration, there she is expressing only her own thoughts.'

I don't know that it will ever be possible for us finite creatures in our sinful state to know in all instances where inspiration ends and the finite aspect of the prophetic messenger begins. When God said to Moses to take off the shoes from his feet because the ground whereon he stood was holy, there is no record that God marked out with stakes or in any other way the dividing line between that holy ground and the unsanctified desert. There must have been a dividing line somewhere, but I'm sure that Moses erred on the safe side in walking a long distance away from the burning bush before he put on his sandals again. Or let me state the matter another way. When a light shines brightly, it illumines a certain area, but ultimately we come out to the periphery, where there

is shadow and darkness. I think of the revelations God gives to His prophets as so many lights that shine in a dark world. While we are standing safely near the light we have no question about the shadows. But with a revelation, as with any other light, we finally reach the far edge of the circle of light, where the shadows begin and the night comes on. In other words, there is a point where inspiration has finished its task of lighting the way; for we must remember that God has not given all light on every detail to us.

I am thoroughly persuaded that the light that comes down from God to illumine a prophet's mind is a pure light, free from all error and all distortion. I feel that while I'm walking in that light I can be safe and sure in my path. Beyond that I can't be sure. I have never tried too hard to discover just where the divine ends and the human begins. I'm afraid I might find myself confused and bewildered. That applies to the Bible prophets as much as it applies to Mrs. White.

I never cease to marvel at the contrast between the power of Elijah on Mount Carmel and the weakness and fallibility of Elijah a few hours later when he argued with God and made a very great mistake in arithmetic. He thought that he alone served God, but God informed him that there were seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Skeptics jeer at this fallibility of Elijah and would throw a shadow over all his life, even over Mount Carmel. But I am unimpressed by such jeering. I am sure the light on Mount Carmel was from Heaven and thus his message to those sullen Jews was from Heaven.

I am equally sure, for the Bible so declares, that his later discussion with the Lord was a display of his own thinking and that he was grievously mistaken in his conclusions.

I am fully persuaded that when Mrs. White declared she had a message from God for the Advent people or for some member in the Advent cause, she meant what she said, that she said the truth, and that therefore that message should be received as from God. Indeed, I believe that when we read any of her books, consistency calls for us to take the position that the entire writing is inspired even though each chapter may not specifically declare that its message came from God. Otherwise we fall into the modernist error of picking and choosing inspired parts. Modernists say, not that the Bible is the Word of God, but that it contains the Word of God. And they, of course, feel they must decide which parts are truly inspired. How can we claim to be able to do with Mrs. White's writings what we declare the modernists are incapable of doing with the Bible? Or how can we consistently reason that God guided the minds of the ancient prophets from the first to the last of the books they wrote, thus giving us sure guidance through them, but that He failed to do that with the prophet He gave to the remnant people today, thus leaving us in uncertainty?

When Mrs. White wrote, for example, a personal, informal letter to some friend or relative, I do not believe that there is necessarily any inspiration in it, nor did Mrs. White so claim. Nor need we attempt to take the impossible position of trying to square every remark she ever made or every act she ever performed, with an idealistic conception of infallibility and perfection. Why claim more for her than for Elijah? She made no such claim.

I think we need have no perplexity or fear whatever as to the divine origin of Mrs. White's revelations. I believe them firmly and fully and thank God for them daily. There would really be no Advent Movement today if it had not been for the gift of the Spirit of Prophecy to guide us through the troubled years of our history. Of that I am also fully persuaded. Taken from the book *Questions People Asked Me*, pages 293-295. **E**

Francis D. Nichol, is a very respected author among the Seventh-day Adventists. He wrote this article when he was Editor of the *Adventist Review*.

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The Son of God is interceding before the Father. The Holy Spirit is interceding in hearts. As ambassadors of Christ, we must give the invitation, bring the listener to the “threshold,” and help him open the door to the Savior’s knock.

Roland R. Hegstad

Why is the deskbound former editor of *Liberty* writing on the technique of making altar calls? What does he know about this evangelistic *sine qua non*?

First, and most important, he has made them. And, as pastor and evangelist, he has baptized people as a consequence. He makes them still, during a Week of Prayer in academy or college, or a revival series, which he tries to hold once or twice a year.

Further, he used to make altar calls while promoting *Liberty* magazine on Sabbath morning. In one of our largest churches once he made a determined appeal at the close of the Sabbath school lesson on justification. And some much-needed decisions were made that morning.

Now let’s dispose of the third-person approach and get to the I-you state of acquaintance. Please understand, I am not doing a comprehensive study on altar calls. I am simply going to mention convictions I followed in making appeals, and stress the fact that successful altar calls need the personal touch.

1. I seek never to forget that the Holy Spirit should be the agent that brings souls to the altar.

Should be, I say, for an inspired pen tells us that Satan, too, has his converts in every meeting! When we use Satan’s techniques—humor, flattery, cajolery, social pressures, appeal to pride, avarice, status, fear—we can expect to swell *his* congregation, not the Lord’s.

Essentially we must stand in Christ’s stead, using His methods—earnestness, forthrightness, tenderness, love, assurance, encouragement, reason, sensitivity—and plead, “Be ye reconciled to God.” If ever there is a place for humor in a sermon, it is not during the altar call. Earnestness, please. Decisions of universe-shaking import are taking place. Spectators from other worlds are watching with breathless interest. The Son of God is interceding

How i make

before the Father. The Holy Spirit is interceding in hearts. As ambassadors of Christ, we must give the invitation, bring the listener to the “threshold,” and help him open the door to the Savior’s knock. In this work we must not use the Spirit, but let the Spirit use us as we work in cooperation with Him.

2. I do not follow a rigorous after-this-sermon-I-make-an-appeal, after-this-one-I-don’t, approach.

Nor do I always determine that the response will take one form and not another. Of course, I do prepare—I have organized my sermon to get a specific response. Experience tells me that I can expect that response. But God alone knows hearts; at times I have had to abandon my plans for an altar call—and even the sermon I had intended to preach—because I have sensed that a call would not be propitious.

Sensitivity to the need of a congregation comes with experience, experience with God and with preaching. Early in my ministry I was inadaptably; as when giving filmstrip Bible studies, I was bound to a rigid approach. Now I seek to sense readiness and to capitalize on God’s providences.

In a large western church a while back, I found the people shivering in overcoats. The oil tank had been filled during the week, but the church was cold. Just before the sermon an elder whispered to me that a leak had been discovered in the tank. It was empty. The people had come to meet with God in a warm church; they met with Him in a cold one. I had come to preach on religious liberty, and I did. But I approached my material through the parable of the foolish virgins, to a congregation uncomfortably conscious of the need for having oil in their lamps. Would you have missed the opportunity for an altar call?

Just before Sabbath school in a Southern church a member’s car was hit broadside as he turned into the parking lot. He, his wife, and children were



an ALTAR call

taken away in an ambulance, extent of their injuries unknown. (They were not seriously hurt.) That morning I was to preach. I did not preach the sermon I had prepared. Instead I spent the Sabbath school hour putting a new subject together. Perhaps the expectant congregation will never again be so receptive to the lessons of my text: “Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts” (Heb. 3:15). An appeal followed naturally.

In other words, an altar call should not be simply a routine affair, a perfunctory obligation imposed on the congregation, but rather the consequence of sensing God’s providence, of observing the work of the Holy Spirit on hearts.

We must recognize, however, that the preacher has a vital part to play in preparing the congregation for an altar call. Here is one method I have used with success.

3. I state at the beginning of my sermon what response I am going to ask for.

I began this after noting that it is effective in fund raising. “People need time to overcome pocketbook resistance,” Cyril Miller, when he was president of the Chesapeake Conference, and a very successful fundraiser, had told me. “Let them know early in the sermon what you expect from them.”

Why wouldn’t the same method work for altar calls? It does. Try something like this: “Tonight you are going to leave this auditorium a new person, walking with lightened step, the burden of sin you bear, gone. Like Christian in Pilgrim’s Progress, you will leave your burden at the cross. And as Bunyan wrote: ‘Then was Christian glad and lightsome.’ Tonight I am going to invite you to the altar. The Holy Spirit will impress your heart and you will respond.” I refer to the response I want several times during the sermon.

I have found this preparation a decided help when I am preaching against the clock—especially on Sabbath mornings. In a sense your whole sermon becomes the altar call. A protracted appeal is not necessary.

I have heard him do something similar. Before the sermon, he tells the people, in a few well-chosen, confidently spoken words, the blessing that they will receive from that night’s subject. Words of assurance condition the audience to expect a blessing. Why leave them in doubt for the first half hour of your sermon what blessing you want them to receive and in what manner you want them to indicate its reception?

4. I do not always state at the beginning of my sermon of appeal what I am going to ask for.

This is true when time is no factor and when spontaneity is desirable, or when I make a progressive appeal. The progressive appeal is particularly effectual in that it carries the listener from an initial (he thinks *final*) easy response to the altar. Reuben Engstrom when in Mountain View, California, church—and a veteran evangelist—was a master of this. After carefully preparing the people and leading them into prayer, he may suggest, almost casually, that some might desire to be remembered for victory over some specific problem. “Are there those who would slip up a hand?” Then: “And would you not like to show God your need and determination by standing quietly where you are?” Then: “I would like to pray especially for you who have indicated this awareness of your need and of God’s power to deliver. Will you not slip quietly down the aisle to the altar?” It was after watching Elder Engstrom in action earlier in my ministry that I saw how jarring and abrupt some of my appeals were.

Occasionally I do just the opposite: I stress how

difficult public commitment is: "To stand alone, to dare to bear public testimony takes courage; but can we say, in the light of Calvary, that any testimony is too hard to make for our Lord?" I find this approach especially good for academy youth toward the end of the Week of Prayer.

5. I take care not to embarrass either members or nonmembers by putting them on the "spot."

I recall a meeting I attended in a Protestant church at which the evangelist ordered his listeners to close their eyes. "I can embarrass you if you don't," he threatened, and then directed the deacons to lock the doors so that no one could leave while he was making his call! I sat through his call, all right, but I didn't listen. Nor did I return.

We can embarrass non-church members by singling them out for special attention—having someone urge a visitor to go forward is dangerous. Judiciously done, it may get a decision. I do this only in the case of a visitor I know well, and whom I feel impressed will respond favorably. Too often I have seen one approached this way refuse to come again.

Our church members, too, can become embarrassed if we pressure friends whom they have encouraged to attend. A professional man told me recently that he would never again invite anyone to Elder _____'s meetings. "The effort was not well attended, and he seemed to feel his reputation was at stake" the member said. "He pressured people unmercifully. My friends resented his calls." Other church members gave the same report.

I would rather see a man go home uncommitted but still friendly and receptive to my visits and appeals, than with a stop sign erected on the avenue to his heart.

6. I do very little talking during an altar call.

In this day of frenetic action, or radio and TV announcers to whom a dead spot is anathema, we are inclined to feel that silence is a sign of incompetence on the preacher's part. George Vandeman used just some words during a protracted appeal—the kind all of us should make once or twice during a campaign. You will forget that he is in the pulpit. But during the quietness you will see evidences that the Holy Spirit is working. A "Bless you, son" or "Yes, come; God sees your tears and walks with

you," will serve to let those who are praying their way to victory know that others are going forward. Spend three, four, five minutes without a word. Appeal hymns played softly—and I mean softly—are effective. Read a few verses of Scripture (Hosea 11:1-4; Isaiah 53) slowly, solemnly, and well. A verse of Scripture is worth a thousand well-reasoned words.

7. I make altar calls.

Yes, here is the irreducible minimum, for the way to make an altar call, after all, is to make it. I would like to invite you to join me in the ministry of the altar.

As I have listened to you speak in your church, I have wondered whether many golden opportunities to call men and women to new decisions are not passed by.

"There are souls in every congregation," says Mrs. White, "who are hesitating, almost persuaded to be wholly for God. The decision is being made for time and for eternity; but it is too often the case that the minister has not the spirit and power of the message of truth in his own heart, hence no direct appeals are made to those souls that are trembling in the balance. The result is that impressions are not deepened upon the hearts of the convicted ones; and they leave the meeting feeling less inclined to accept the service of Christ than when they came. They decide to wait for a more favorable opportunity, but it never comes" (*Testimonies*, Vol. 4, p. 447).

Yes, there are souls suffering defeats. Souls wearied with the struggle. Souls who have found the cross too heavy and painful to bear, and who have put it down. They are still attending church. Still looking up to you, praying, hoping for encouragement and, yes, an invitation to start over. There have been times when I, too, have needed your altar ministry. And I have prayed, "Lord help him to make a call. I need to make a new decision."

Look at your flock next Sabbath. How long has it been since you answered their prayers for the therapy of public commitment? I may be there in the congregation, praying with them. Will you let us go without commitment at your altar? **E**

Roland A. Hegstad, former editor of *Liberty*, writes from Silver Spring, Maryland.



Children's story

1 Perfect peace

"Thou will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee. Isaiah 26:3.

Many years ago there lived a great man called Chrysostom. He was a good man, noted for the beautiful, kind words that he spoke. But one day he said something that offended the emperor. It was something true, but it was a truth that the emperor did not want to hear, so he decided to punish Chrysostom.

Consulting his great men, he asked, "What shall we do to punish Chrysostom?"

"Banish him from the kingdom," said the first counselor. "Take away all his money," suggested another. "Put him in prison," a third one said. "Put him to death," came from another of the counselors. Then the voice of another man was heard—a heathen man, but he had more wisdom than the others.

"All these men have given wrong advice," he said. "If you banish Chrysostom from the kingdom, he will not be unhappy. He will be glad that he can preach Christ to others. If you take away his money, you merely rob the poor, for all Chrysostom's money goes to help the poor. If you put him in prison, he will sing as some of the saints of his church sang. If you tell him you will kill him, he will have cause to rejoice, for happy are those, he says, who die for their Lord. No, there is no way to punish Chrysostom, the servant of Christ."

Chrysostom had the perfect peace that nothing could disturb. His happiness did not consist of the things of this life, but in the things of the life above, and that is why nothing could hurt him. He had the perfect peace that comes when, as the verse that we read tells us, our minds are "stayed on" God.

Do things upset and disturb you? Leave them with Christ and they won't worry you. You will have the peace of God in your heart.

2

The grasshopper on the royal exchange

"Remember his marvelous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth." Psalm 109:5.

Never forget the wonderful things that God does for you.

One of the places that visitors to London go to see is the building known as the Royal Exchange. It is the heart of the business world.

On the top of the building is a cupola on which is a weather vane in the form of a grasshopper. The Royal Exchange was built in honor of a great man called Sir Thomas Gresham, and he specially asked for the grasshopper to be placed there because the grasshopper had a special meaning for him.

One day a little boy on his way home from school heard a grasshopper chirping away in the field, and he lingered, watching it. He thought he would like to catch it, so he hopped over the fence to try to catch it—and there right beside the grasshopper he saw something that interested him much more—a tiny baby, abandoned by its parents. He forgot all about the grasshopper and picked up the baby and took it home to his mother.

When attempts failed to trace the baby's parents, the little boy's mother decided to adopt the baby. He grew up to be the great Sir Thomas Gresham, in whose honor the Royal Exchange building was erected. Sir Thomas never forgot the story of how he was found, and he always felt he owed a debt not only to his foster mother and brother but to the grasshopper that led his foster brother to the spot where he lay, a helpless infant. He ever remembered the way the Lord had led through such a humble creature as a grasshopper.

Has God done something wonderful for you? Perhaps He made you well after an accident or a severe illness. Perhaps you were an orphan and God blessed you with a good mother and father through adoption. Resolve never to forget the wonderful things God does for you.

You remember the story of the ladder that Jacob saw going from heaven to earth, and how it taught him that God is always giving us help. To help him never to forget this, Jacob built an altar. Read about it, in Genesis 28:16-22. **E**

Sermon #1

Open my eyes that I may see

Paulo Pelegrino

Text: Psalm 119:18.

Introduction

In the longest chapter of the Bible, we find more prayers that we can possibly pray along with the psalmist.

The motive behind our praying is important — Psalm 119:17.

A. The motive in praying.

1. Jesus had much to say about praying with the proper motive. — Matt. 6:5-8.
2. James declares that an unworthy motive can deprive us of an affirmative answer from God when we pray. — James 4:3.
3. The psalmist prayed for the abundance, which God is able to provide. The Revised Standard Version translates his petition, "Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live and observe thy word" — Psalm 119:17.
 - a. Today's English Version translates it, "Be good to me, your servant, so that I may live and obey your teachings."
 - b. This saint of long ago was requesting that God deal generously with him in order that he might be able to live a life of obedience and helpfulness to others.
4. He could have prayed for riches.
5. He could have prayed for acceptance and popularity.
6. He could have prayed for that which would be pleasurable to his appetites.
7. He could have prayed for that which would have contributed to his comfort.

B. The psalmist prayed with a proper motive.

We should examine our motives and try to bring them into conformity with the character and will of our Father God.

A prayer for spiritual sight

"Open my eyes, that I may see the wonderful truths in your law" — Psalm 119:18.

1. It seems as if sin and selfishness create a film over our eyes that makes it difficult for us to see anything except that which is physical, tangible, material.
2. Paul taught that it was the strategy of Satan to put a blindfold on the minds of unbelievers so that they could not see the truth of God as it was revealed in Jesus Christ — 2 Cor. 4:3-4.
3. Throughout the ministry of Jesus He was seeking not only to cure those who were physically blind, but He sought to open the spiritual eyes of His disciples that they might see the truth of God.
4. It is significant that, following His resurrection, ". . . he opened their minds to understand the scriptures . . ." — Luke 24:45.
5. Every time we open up God's Word, we need to pray for eyes that truly see the marvelous things that spring up out of God's truth.

a. Ellen G. White says: "When the word of God is opened without reverence and without prayer; when the thoughts and affections are not fixed upon God, or in harmony with His will, the mind is clouded with doubts; and in the very study of the Bible, skepticism strengthens. The enemy takes control of the thoughts, and he suggests interpretations that are not correct" *Steps to Christ*, p. 110.

b. We need eyes to see God as we study His Word — Isaiah 6:1.

c. We need eyes that will enable us to see ourselves as we read God's Word — Isaiah 6:5.

d. We need eyes that see the needs of others as we study God's Word. — Matt. 9:36-38; John 4:35b.

In our praying we should ask the Lord, "Take the veil from over my eyes and help me to see what You want me to see."

prayer of gratitude — Psalm 119:24.

In verses 21-24 the psalmist speaks of troubles and of enemies who were plotting to bring about his downfall.

1. During this time of great travail of soul, he found strength, comfort, and help by listening to the great truths of God's Word.
2. He had discovered that studying God's Word could be a listening experience.
3. It is more important that we hear what God has to say than to give voice to our petitions.

Conclusion

1. Do you want God to deal bountifully with you? Then examine your motives as you pray.
2. Do you understand all of the mysteries and problems that perplex you?
3. If not, then pray that God will open your eyes as you study His Word.
4. As you read God's Holy Word, listen to the voice of His Spirit.

Spirit of Prophecy supplement

"It is impossible for the church to be a living, active church unless its members shall be willing to bear burdens and assume responsibilities. In church relationship are brought together different temperaments and dispositions. There are a few devoted, God-fearing faithful souls who pray much, who carry the burden of the church, and whose happiness is in the prosperity of its members. Here, as elsewhere, Satan is constantly at work to drag down and demoralize. It is the business of the adversary of souls to weaken and destroy every organization which, if prospered, would glorify God." *Testimonies*, Vol. 5, p. 114.

Julio Pelegrino writes from Parana, Brazil.

Sermon #2

Prayer and the Word of God

Marcos Garcia

Text: Psalm 119:27.

Introduction

1. Psalm 119 is an acrostic poem composed of twenty-two stanzas, each of which uses and emphasizes one of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet.
2. It is a poem that exalts the law, the testimonies, the ways, the precepts, the statutes, the commandments, the words, and the promises of God.
3. One of the finest ways to pray effectively is to pray the prayers of biblical characters.
4. We can pray the same prayers that the psalmist prays with great profit.
5. Let us look at some of the prayers in this stanza of Psalm 119 that we might have some assistance in our prayer life.

“Revive me according to thy word” — Psalm 119:25b.

1. Prayer for revival
 - a. We hear the psalmist praying for a revival or for a renewal in his innermost being.
 - b. He is discouraged and depressed.
 - c. He feels as if he is down in the very dust of life.
 - d. He cries out to God for a revival and a restoration of the vital energies of life.
2. There are times when each of us needs to pray this prayer.

“Make me understand the way of thy precepts” — Psalm 119:27a.

1. *Prayer for clarity and understanding*
 - a. The psalmist is here praying for insight into the inner meaning of the teachings of God's Holy Word.
 - b. We can discover truth by research.
 - c. We can discover truth by reason and logic.
 - d. But the greatest discovery of truth comes through divine revelation.
 - e. G. White says: “There are many things apparently difficult or obscure, which God will make plain and simple to those who thus seek an understanding of them. But without the guidance of the Holy Spirit we shall be continually liable to wrest the Scriptures or to misinterpret them.” *Steps to Christ*, p. 110.
 - e. The psalmist is crying out to God for inward spiritual understanding so that he will then be able to speak of all of God's wondrous works.

“Strengthen me according to thy word!” — Psalm 119:28b.

1. The psalmist was aware of his weakness and his inability to do what he needed to do.
 - a. He felt overwhelmed with heaviness and grief and sorrow.
 - b. He stood in need of divine spiritual resources.
 - c. He cried out to God for strength to face life.
2. In the New Testament we are encouraged to be strong in the Lord and the power of His might. — Eph. 6:10. The implication is that we have no hope of overcoming evil and achieving what we need to achieve apart from the strength that comes from God.
3. Paul found strength through Jesus Christ and was confident that he could make all adjustments in all of the things that he needed to do through faith in Jesus Christ. — Phil. 4:13.

k. There is not a day that goes by when we, as the children of God, do not need to say, "Amen" to this petition offered by the psalmist.

"Put false ways far from me" Psalm 119:29a.

. The psalmist was eager to have removed from him the ways of falsehood, the ways of untruth that would lead to the wrong kind of destination in this life and to failure as far as the next life was concerned.

a. He felt a need to be delivered from deception, falsehood, and untruths.

b. This is a prayer that we need to pray so that we might be able to see through the sham of much that is presented in our world today.

c. We need to be delivered from falsehood and deception.

. The psalmist was eager to enjoy the grace of living according to God's truth rather than being destroyed by falsehood.

"Let me not be put to shame!" Psalm 119:31.

. The psalmist had a healthy fear of failure.

a. He did not want to experience humiliation and embarrassment.

b. He did not want to cast reflection upon his God.

c. He prays that he might be saved from failure.

. Paul warned the followers of Christ at Corinth against the danger of failure and expressed his determination that, through discipline and dedication he would avoid personal disappointment and failure. — 1 Cor. 10:24-27.

. When Paul wrote to the Roman Christians, he expressed great confidence in the power of the gospel to save. He declared that the gospel had never disappointed him up to this point.

Conclusion

. In the words of this stanza in Psalm 119 we find many petitions from the heart of the psalmist that we can and should concur with.

. As we read this prayerfully, we should be able to say a sincere "Amen" to each of these petitions.

. The psalmist had prayed our prayer for us.

Spirit of Prophecy supplement

Our heavenly Father waits to bestow upon us the fullness of His blessing. It is our privilege to drink largely at the fountain of boundless love. What a wonder it is that we pray so little! God is ready and willing to hear the sincere prayer of the humblest of His children, and yet there is much manifest reluctance on our part to make known our wants to God. What can the angels of heaven think of poor helpless human beings, who are subject to temptation, when God's heart of infinite love yearns toward them, ready to give them more than they can ask or think, and yet they pray so little and have so little faith? The angels love to bow before God; they love to be near Him. They regard communion with God as their highest joy; and yet the children of earth, who need so much the help that God only can give, seem satisfied to walk without the light of His Spirit, the companionship of His presence." *Steps to Christ*, p. 94.

Marcos Garcia writes from Quito, Ecuador.

Speaking words of praise and encouragement will enhance our husband's influence in his ministry



What church members **EXPECT** of an **ELDER'S SPOUSE**

Gladys B. Ríos

There is no counsel that I reject more than the one given by someone who talks the talk but doesn't walk the talk. Therefore the best counsel is the one received by someone that talks the talk and with action walks the walk. I am not perfect, far from it, but as an elder's wife and pastor's daughter, I would like to share with you what I think we need to be—for us, for our husbands, our children, our church and our community.

Biblically or theologically speaking there is no difference between the minister or pastor and the elder of a church. The church made the distinction. So in reality, whatever applies to one applies to the other.

To be on the cutting edge in today's world, you have to have an edge to cut. The edge to cut is goal setting. Decide what is important in your personal life, family and in your ministry as an elder's wife. Write it down on an index card and read it often out loud. Then it will be the desire of your heart. Once it is in your heart, you will talk about it, and act accordingly.

The only one we can control best is ourselves, so let us start by controlling our attitude and temper. Develop a winning attitude and a sweet disposition. Strive to be the woman of Proverbs 31. How do we do that? As Christian women we should live a

prayerful life, keeping our souls in the love of God, and having constant connection with our Maker by studying His Word. We also should hold the reins of our tongue. "The mouth of the righteous man [woman] utters wisdom, and his [her] tongue speaks what is just" Proverbs 37:30.

We have a tremendous influence on the people that surround us; at home we should be the thermometers that keep the tempers and emotions happy and stable. At church we should be the ones that extend our hand to welcome a visitor, talk to a teenager, hug a child, smile to a regular member. As an elder's wife we need to think outside the box and find ways in which we can love and care for one another. In order to be able to love and care for others, we need to have a daily relationship with God. The love of God will be reflected on our faces, then we'll be able to impact people in a positive way; that is true success.

In Proverbs 18:21 it says: "The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit." It is imperative that we learn to control the words that we speak. Speaking words of praise and encouragement will enhance our husband's influence in his ministry.

It would be well if every elder's wife examines her conversations by asking herself these questions: Is it true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable? If the answer is yes, do talk about these things.

I'll paraphrase and apply to women what Paul said that elder's should be, in chapter one of the book of Titus. Let's ask ourselves: Am I well thought of? Are my children believers? Do they respect me and stay out of trouble? It is important that a church leader's wife be responsible for the affairs of God's house, be looked up to—not pushy, not short-tempered, not given to vices, not bossy, not money-hungry. I must be hospitable, helpful, wise, fair, and reverent, have self-control, and have good knowledge of God's Word, knowing how to use the truth to either spur people on in knowledge or stop them if they oppose it.

Saturday afternoon was a delightful time while I was growing up. My father is the kind of pastor that visits the members of his church for many different reasons. Maybe they had not been in church for some time; maybe they were sick, or discouraged and needed a word of prayer. Some other times we would give Bible studies. The fun was that my father took the whole family on these outings. Today my father is retired from his pastoral position, but continues as an elder of the local church. He and my mother are doing the same things they did before, with the exception that their children are grown and don't accompany them anymore.

What an example they have been! It seems to me they are doing what Ellen G. White wrote, stating: "If a minister's wife accompanies her husband in his travels, she should not go for her own special enjoyment, to visit and to be waited upon, but to labor with him. She should have a united interest with him to do good. She should be willing to accompany her husband, if home cares do not hinder, and she should aid him in his efforts to save souls. With meekness and humility, yet with a noble self-reliance, she should have a leading influence upon minds around her, and should act her part and bear her cross and burden in meeting, and around the family altar, and in conversation at the fireside. The people expect this, and they have a right to expect it. If these expectations are not realized, the husband's influence is more than half

destroyed. The wife of a minister [elder] can do much if she will. If she possesses the spirit of self-sacrifice and has a love for souls, she can with him do almost an equal amount of good" *Testimonies*, Vol. 1, p. 452.

"Let the minister's wife [elder's wife] who has children remember that in her home she has a missionary field in which she should labor with untiring energy and unflagging zeal, knowing that the results of her work will endure throughout eternity. Are not the souls of her children of as much value as the souls of the heathen? Then let her tend them with loving care. She is charged with the responsibility of showing to the world the power and excellence of home religion. She is to be controlled by principle, not by impulse, and she is to work with the consciousness that God is her helper. She is to allow nothing to divert her from her mission" *Evangelism*, p. 676.

"The minister's wife [elder's wife] may be a great help to her husband in seeking to lighten his burden, if she keeps her own soul in the love of God. She can teach the Word to her children. She can manage her own household with economy and discretion. United with her husband, she can educate her children in habits of economy, teaching them to restrict their wants" *Gospel Workers*, p. 203.

A beautiful promise is made to the wife that is devoted to God in helping her husband: ". . . Their reward will be equal to that bestowed on the husband." *Testimonies*, Vol. 1, p. 451.

Someone said of Mother Teresa that she was free to be nothing; therefore, God could use her for anything. So I write to my fellow sisters in Christ, let's be nothing in the world's eyes, so God can use us to do mighty works for His honor and glory.

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go" Joshua 1:9. **E**

Gladys B. Ríos writes from Laurel, MD. She is the editorial assistant for *Elder's Digest*.



"Let your light so shine. . ."
(Matt. 5:16).

Service

By love serve one another. Gal. 5:13.

In Persian legend, hell is a great banquet hall where the multitudes that have been consigned to perdition sit at a long table upon which a rich repast is spread. But each one there is chained in such a way that he cannot get the food to his mouth. And so the victims sit, with fleshless bones, enduring the terrible and endless gnawing of hunger while that which might satisfy their pangs is denied.

Exactly the same situation is found in heaven, according to the legend. There in a great banquet hall are those who have been found worthy of the delights of paradise. They also are chained in such a way that they cannot get to their mouths the delightful bounties on the table before them. But, instead of suffering the agonies of eternal starvation, each is well nourished and happy, for each has found that although he cannot bring the food to his own mouth, he can place it in the mouth of his neighbor. But those in hell, because they never learned to serve others while on earth, cannot now think to help their neighbors in perdition, and so they starve amid plenty.

The lesson of the legend is clear, and helps to illustrate the gospel truth that the law of life is the law of service.

We can have a foretaste of heaven's joys here if we learn and practice the lesson of sharing with others God's unique blessings.

"We die by living to ourselves. We live by dying to ourselves."

Use a large basket

The recompense of a man's hands shall be rendered unto him.
Prov. 12:14.

A group of coolies had been hired by an Oriental farmer to bring in his grain harvest. All through the day each man carried one basketful after another on his head to the barn and emptied it into the bins.

As the sun was setting and the coolies made their way in with the last of the grain, each one was met at the barn door by the farmer, who said, "Don't empty this basket. It is your pay for the day."

Some of the coolies went happily home with their full baskets. Some others were not so happy. The happy ones had used large baskets all day. The unhappy ones had used small baskets.

Our reward at the end of life's day will be in propor-

tion to the service we have rendered willingly and wholeheartedly to God and to our fellow men. If we serve grudgingly and of necessity it is an indication that we are using a small basket, and our reward will be correspondingly small. Indeed, we shall be in danger of losing the reward entirely.

But if we serve generously and heartily as unto the Lord we are certainly using a large basket. Then, at the end of the day we shall find that our reward will be of "good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over" (Luke 6:38).

"As little children"

And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said: Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Matt. 18:2, 3.

The surgeon had been brought up in a Christian home, but gradually, as he was forced to look upon so much suffering, so many broken bodies, and so much death, his faith and belief in God died. How could God, a reputedly all-powerful, all-loving God, permit so many heart-rending tragedies as he was forced to witness, he thought. Why did He permit those four small children to be left motherless? Why did He allow that little girl to die as she did?

One day a blue-eyed, curly-haired boy of four or five was wheeled into the operating room to have a badly infected appendix removed.

"Well, sonny," the surgeon smiled, ruffling the blond hair, "we're going to take your pain away.

"You are! How are you going to do it?"

"You're going to go to sleep, and when you wake up the pain will be gone."

"But I'm not sleepy now. Look, the sun is still shining. It's not time to go to sleep."

"Never mind, you'll go to sleep, and then your pain will be all gone."

"Am I really going to sleep?"

"Yes!"

At that the little lad climbed off the operating table and knelt on the floor of the operating room.

"Dear Jesus, the doctor says I'm going to sleep now. Please forgive all my sins, and keep me. And bless us, every one. Amen."

Then he climbed back onto the operating table and closed his eyes. Describing the incident to a friend in a letter later, the doctor wrote, "As I

looked at the little boy there on the operating room floor, and as I listened to his simple, trusting prayer, I suddenly knew that there is a God, and the faith of my earlier days came back to me.

Are you honest?

Render therefore to all their dues. Rom. 13:7.

The honesty we have in mind has little to do with the usual connotation of the word "honest," for the question is prompted by the following little incident that I read some time ago. Norma Norris tells the story in the Australian magazine *Health*.

"Mrs. Smith said you were the best laundress she ever had, Norah," we remarked as dainty muslins were taken from the sack.

"Did she ma'am?" The woman looked up for a moment, but her face expressed no particular pleasure at the praise. 'Then it was to myself she should have said it, long ago, but she never did. During the months I worked for her she never said if things pleased her or not. She just looked at them and said nothing. I'd do my best for her, but all the time I did it with the feeling that she wasn't satisfied. I thought she was an honest woman.'

"Honest, Norah?" we questioned. 'Why, she paid you, didn't she?'

"She paid the money, ma'am; but if she liked my work, it was no more than my dues for her to say so,' was the answer. 'But she kept that back!'"

When Paul wrote the words of our text he was not thinking of appreciation and praise. But in our context we believe we are not amiss if we so apply it. Paul would say that the one who failed to render his just and legal dues to his government was dishonest. Is one who fails to return proper appreciation for services rendered dishonest?

Let us now consider a few specific questions: Do mother and father know we appreciate what they are doing for us? Do we who are parents let our children know we appreciate the little things they do for us? And husbands, have you told your wife lately how much you enjoy her cooking? Wives, does your husband know you are grateful for the help he gives around the house? And how about all those other people who work with and for us? Do they receive the appreciation that may be their rightful due? **E**

(Continued from page 8)

The pastor and elder relationship

church. They are first mentioned in Acts 11:30: *“And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.”*

The first indication of a new leader for the Jerusalem church can be found in the next chapter of Acts. Peter, assisted by an angel, had escaped from prison. He went to a gathering of believers in the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, and directed the Christians to report this matter to James and the brethren.

It seems that the implication of this instruction was that James served as the recognized leader of the church as a pastor. Peter's message to the elders was to go through James, their leader and spokesman. It seems that Luke underscores the practical meaning of James position. The position of James in the Church at Jerusalem as pointed out is unequivocal circumstantial evidence indicating his position of leadership as bishop or pastor of that church, and this is the title given him by the early church historians. Acts 15:13; 21:18 and Galatians 1:19, along with still other texts, indicate clearly his position of leadership in the Jerusalem congregation.

The conclusions about James leadership are significant. It is, of course, necessary, that when the need arises, one of the elders should act as leader and spokesman for the group (it is hardly practical that all should speak in unison), but James ultimately occupied a position, which was much more than this. He becomes more even than first among equals; he became first pure and simple, and emerged distinctly as leader of the group. James came to a place of leadership in the first Christian assembly that can be considered the equivalent of the pastor's leadership in a contemporary church.

It is the conviction of this writer on the basis of this study that in order for the ministry in local congregations be effective, all the supportive leaders and members must understand the prerogatives of the pastor and elder leadership.

The congregation under the direction of the Holy

Spirit places both in the pastoral role. But only when both, pastor and elder, understand this working principle and relationship, the groundwork has been laid for rich interaction that will bring countless blessings to the congregation. **E**

Mintje Makarewa writes from Manado, Indonesia

(Continued from page 12)

The prospects in our midst

their program accordingly. During the lesson study time this same elder teaches an inquirers' class. Each Sabbath morning he meets with the three groups in the Sabbath school that has the greatest potential for baptisms. This plan enables the leadership of the congregation to keep in touch with another neglected group—the young people in the church who do not attend church school. The elder's interest in this group will be a factor in encouraging them to attend church school.

A mother who has been reared as an Adventist will often bring or send her children to Sabbath school on Sabbath morning without attending herself. The department leaders and teachers checking to see where the children in their departments come from can often reclaim a wayward parent.

A prominent attorney who had taken one of our Bible correspondence courses told me that he had made at least ten visits to worship services in one of our churches in a neighboring city. There are many who, like Nicodemus, are not yet ready to come out publicly to manifest their interest in the truth in their home communities, but they are interested nonetheless. Such cases need to be handled with the greatest tact.

A minister of another faith who will be a baptized Seventh-day Adventist by the time this article appears in print told me of two occasions when he visited the Adventist church in different cities because he was becoming interested. On another occasion he visited one of our Book and Bible Houses. He was interested and felt drawn to our people, but he was not yet ready to declare his interest openly.

Personal contact necessary

In most such cases, a personal contact with a Seventh-day Adventist is a necessary step in maturing such an interest into a settled decision for the truth. We need to tactfully take the initiative in such situations. "Many are on the verge of the kingdom, waiting only to be gathered in" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 109). This work of gathering demands initiative on our part as workers.

When a stray cat or dog comes to your door it is usually a sign that it is hungry. If you feed it, it will stay around. The analogy is obvious. When visitors come to your church on their own initiative, it usually indicates a spiritual hunger. Give them warm fellowship and spiritual food.

Dear elders, be aware of the highways and the hedges for prospects, may you never neglect the prospects in our midst. ☒

George E. Knowles, an active retired pastor, writes from Chula Vista, CA.

"Prayer and effort, effort and prayer, will be the the business of your life. You must pray as though the efficiency and praise were all due to God, and labor as though duty were all your own. If you want power you may have it; it is waiting your draft upon it. Only believe in God, take Him at His word, act by faith, and blessings will come."

"In this matter, genius, logic, and eloquence will not avail. Those who have a humble, trusting, contrite heart, God accepts, and hears their prayer; and when God helps, all obstacles will be overcome."

Ellen G. White
Testimonies, vol. 4, pp. 538, 539.

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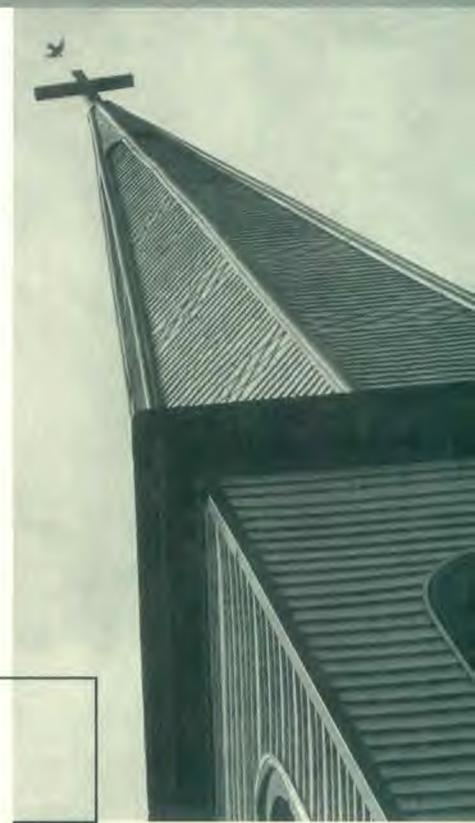
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James A. Cress



Honoring Pastors

When Pastor Tercio Sarli, president of the mega-size Central Brazil Union, writes me twice about the same issue, the matter is clearly important. When this twice-scribed topic is expressing appreciation for pastors, the matter is clearly important to each of us and its significance provokes us to publish this article simultaneously in *Ministry*, *Elders Digest*, and *Shepherdess Journal*, along with my personal request that every reader copy and distribute a copy to all church officers.

Why express appreciation to pastors? Note the Bible command: "Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their

work. Live in peace with each other" (1Thessalonians 5:12-13, NIV). "Remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith" (Hebrews 13:7, NIV).

Today's increased societal suspicion of all leaders has combined with clergy scandals, occasional mediocre performance by some pastors, and unrealistic expectations from some members to reduce the levels of high esteem with which professional ministers have traditionally been viewed.

Too often it seems easier to criticize than to affirm and express appreciation for the outstanding service that pastors give. For example, one member recently wrote to complain that his pastor does not spend sufficient time preparing sermons while someone

from a different church, griped that all their pastor does is study to prepare sermons. One complains that pastors never visit while another opines that the pastor only goes from house to house. Why can't we get more letters like the elder who recently said, "I have no other reason to write except to tell you how wonderful our pastor serves in our congregation." Believe me, I answered that letter and sent a copy to the pastor and the conference president.

What the denomination can do. Pastor Sarli encourages the entire church to adopt an annual Pastor's Day in which we affirm the role of ministry in general and express appreciation for our local pastors, particularly. And he puts his energies and money alongside his opinion. Recently he sent every pastor a letter of commendation with a special gift of appreciation. All pastoral families in his union are regularly affirmed in special conventions designed for their spiritual growth and continuing education.

**General Conference
Ministerial Association
requests every reader to
duplicate and distribute
this article to his
local church board.**

Various denominations have emphasized one weekend in October. My own congregation commemorates the anniversary of the date when our pastor first came to serve our church. While it may be impossible to select the same day throughout the world, surely every field can schedule a Pastor's and Ministerial Vocations day upon which currently-serving pastors are honored and young people are invited to prayerfully consider whether God is calling them to ministry.

What unions or conferences can do. Uplift the role of ministry, value pastors, and ask each local congregation to plan something special which will honor their pastor. Perhaps designate a specific date for your territory and request that each church plan accordingly. Follow Pastor Sarlis example by writing each minister to express your personal appreciation for the valuable contribution they bring to God's work.

Charles Heskey, Ministerial Secretary of the North Caribbean Conference sent a bookmark to every church member in the conference. Titled, "Pray for Your Pastor," it listed specific prayer objectives for the ministers personal life and family needs (you can view a sample at www.ministerialassociation.com).

What the local church can do. Host a special Sabbath that celebrates the blessings your congregation receives from the pastor. Even weak performers might respond to you affirming higher expectation. Plan a fellowship meal, provide flowers or a cake, and present your pastor with a plaque, a new Bible, or a useful book (better yet a gift certificate so they can select their own). Volunteer for a specific task that will lighten your pastors work load; offer to visit or give Bible studies with your pastor; establish a pastoral resource fund from which your pastor can purchase useful ministry tools. Invite your pastoral family to lunch, or send them to dinner and baby sit their youngsters. Rather than criticizing, try "grand-parenting" their teens. Express concerns quietly and only to the pastor. Above all, express your appreciation verbally and write a letter of praise to conference leadership.

What pastors can do. Serve your churches in a manner worthy of being praised. Give your best to ministry and your example leadership of the power of God's Spirit in your life will rally others to eagerly follow and honor your leadership. **E**

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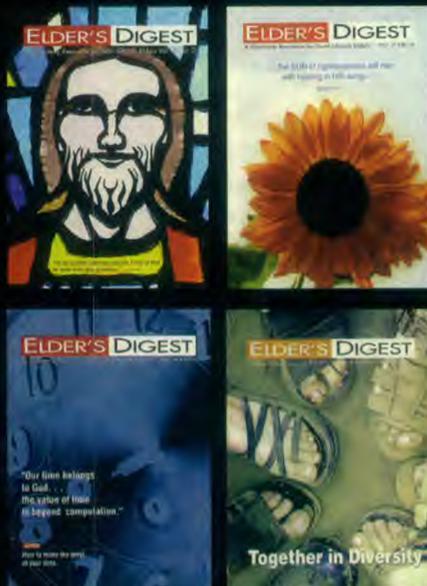
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