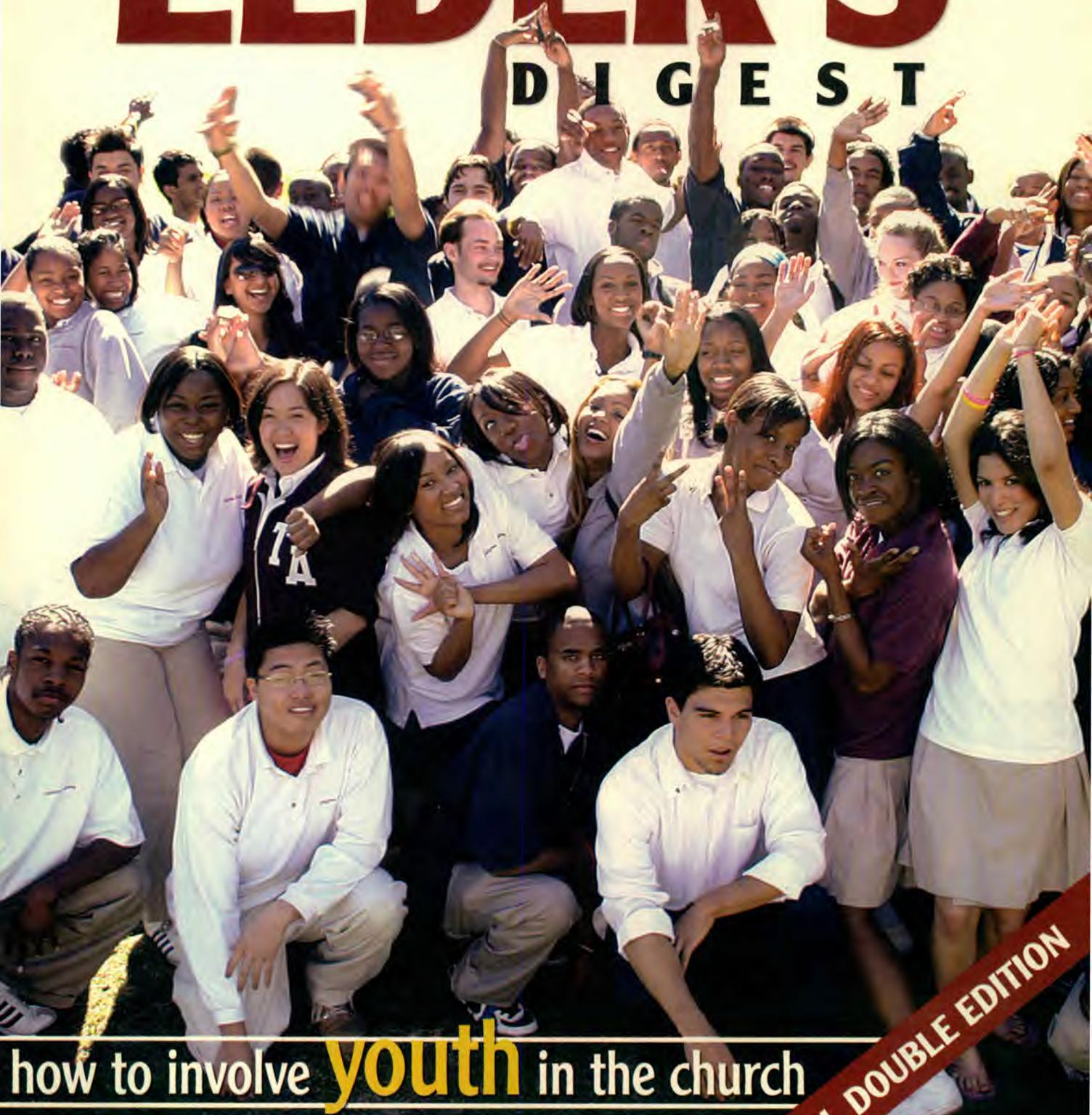


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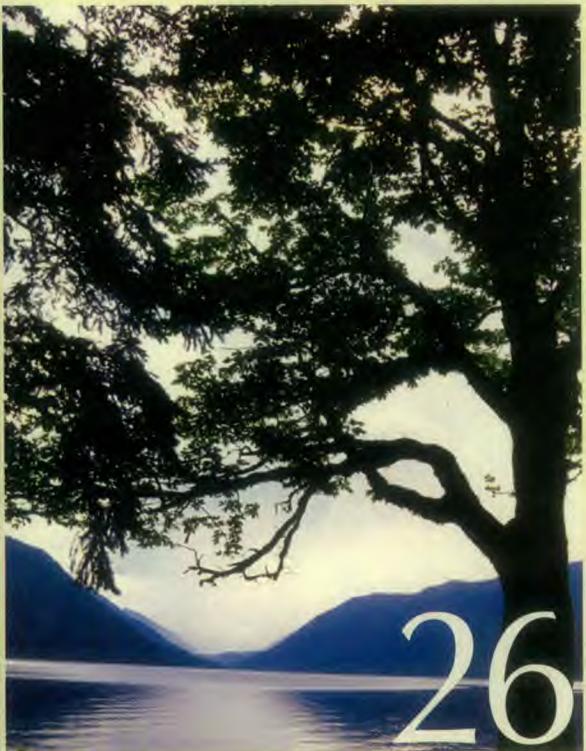
# ELDER'S DIGEST



how to involve **youth** in the church

SPECIAL DOUBLE EDITION

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# A New Horizon

It is a real joy to present the new *Elder's Digest* magazine. For many years Pastor Joel Sarli, with wisdom and ability, prepared this helpful resource for local church leaders. We would like to express our gratitude for his ministry and vision.

This special double issue includes the last quarter of 2005 and the first of 2006; however, *Elder's Digest* will continue as a quarterly resource magazine. As you can see, we feature a new design and format with the intent to provide more attractive and interesting material for our readers. Each magazine will contain an interview, four sermons, questions and answers, articles written by different departmental leaders from the General Conference, plus many other fascinating resources which feature the church's programs for local leaders.

We recognize the importance of elders in the local church.

Today, we have nearly 100,000 churches and companies around the world, with more than 200,000 local church leaders preaching, visiting, and evangelizing. It is almost impossible to imagine the church working effectively without these volunteers. But what are you, church leaders, receiving from our church? As pastors and members, we have a deep respect, appreciation, and gratitude for everything you are doing to help this ministry grow. But is that enough?

We understand that you were called by God to accomplish a special assignment in His church. And you are doing your best for Him, because you love Him and understand the solemn times in which we are living. For these reasons, you are working with passion to see Jesus coming soon. Can the church do something more for you? We think so.

With this vision and understanding, we want to transform our magazine to deliver more training, better support, and to become a more effective equipping tool for all elders in their multiple functions as partners in pastoral ministry. We firmly believe that if we set quality material in your hands, you will be able to serve the church with more motivation and effectiveness. However, in previous years, this magazine has been put in the hands of few church elders.

Our dream is to see that each local church elder around the world receives this magazine. Perhaps in some locations it will be necessary to translate the magazine into the local languages while in others places, our church administrators will need to provide financial support to share this tool freely. In this way, church pastors should serve an important role as facilitators and motivators. None of these obstacles can keep us from visualizing this bright new horizon. What a challenge! With God on our side, we can reach these goals together.

We ask for your support as we transform this dream into reality.

**Jonas Arrais**

General Conference Associate Ministerial Secretary



# Lifestyle in the church

## INTERVIEW: CARLOS ALBERTO HEIN

Pastor Carlos is a fourth generation Adventist from Argentina. He is married to Graciela and has three children: Nancy, Billy, and Erwin. He worked with the missionary launch in the Amazon, Brazil, between 1980-1984, and he also directed the Northeast Argentina Mission for many years. At the present time, he is the Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Director at the Austral Union, Argentina. Recently, he finished his doctorate in pastoral theology; the theme of his dissertation was "The Adventist Lifestyle." This is what he talks about with the readers of *Elder's Digest*.

### **Elder Digest (ED): What made you write about the Adventist lifestyle?**

**Carlos A. Hein (CAH):** I had the privilege of working side by side with Graciela as a missionary with the Adventist Community Service Launches in the Amazon. There, I understood that we should teach the local people how to have a better quality of life. Years later, working as a pastor in the city of Rosario, Argentina, I accompanied two physicians from the National University of Rosario, who were doing comparative research between the health of the Adventists and non-Adventists in that city. Unfortunately, the research could not be done. It was verified that although there were seven Adventist churches, only three members followed a lifestyle different from the rest of the population. This fact bothered me a lot, and I decided to do something about it, so that my church could have a better lifestyle.

### **ED: What is your definition of lifestyle?**

**CAH:** Lifestyle is an ensemble of habits that an individual puts into practice in his/her daily life, in such a way that it may cause the preservation of his/her health or for the cure of diseases.

### **ED: What is the lifestyle indicated by the Adventist Church?**

**CAH:** Since the nineteenth century, Adventists, encouraged by Ellen White, have as an orientation the eight natural remedies: pure air, sunlight, abstinence, rest, exercise, proper diet, the use of water, and trust in divine power.

### **ED: What are the main causes of death in the world?**

**CAH:** First of all, heart disease, followed by cancer, obesity, and diabetes. One third of deaths are caused by cardiovascular diseases. Each year, nearly ten million people in the world develop some kind of cancer, and approximately six million die. For the year 2020, fifteen million new cases of cancer are foreseen. Since 1980, the number of obese adults has doubled. Today, eighteen million Americans suffer from diabetes.

### **ED: What are the main causes of these diseases?**

**CAH:** Genetic predisposition, age, race, and family history. These causes are reinforced by the lifestyle, particularly by physical inactivity, sedentarism, poor diet, overweight, smoking, and alcohol.

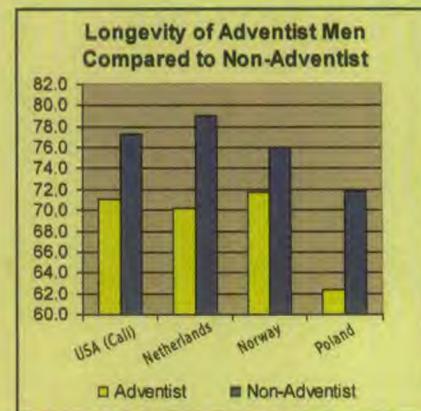
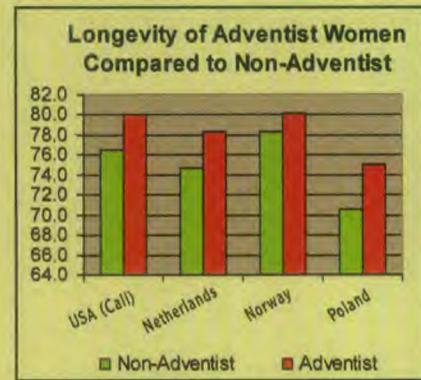
### **ED: Do Adventists practice a healthy lifestyle?**

**CAH:** In 2000, Dr. Allan Handysides, director of the Health Department of the General Conference, fostered a study with

3,500 Adventists who attended the General Conference Session in Toronto, Canada, among which fifteen percent were from South America. Analyzing the results, Dr. Handysides observed that church members are not practicing adequate physical exercise and are not eating enough portions of fruits and vegetables. He concluded that "Adventists should practice more what they preach."

### **ED: Talk about the life expectancy of Adventists compared to non-Adventists.**

**CAH:** From 1945 until July 1994, 236 studies and scientific researches were done in relation to the lifestyle of the Seventh-day Adventists in countries like the United States, Canada, Poland, Netherlands, Norway, and Spain. Life expectancy has always been higher among Adventists than non-Adventists. Observe the following figures:



**ED: Does the sun influence our disposition?**

**CAH:** It improves our disposition and produces the sensation of well-being. People who suffer deep and chronic depression should take every opportunity available to get sunlight. Psychologically, sunlight strengthens the character, stimulates the production of endorphins that cause the sensation of well-being and neuromuscular relaxation. It has been proven that during the winter, when there are entire days when the sun doesn't come out, the occurrence of nervous depression increases. On the other hand, sunlight relieves the pain of inflamed bone articulations.

**ED: Give us your opinion about rest.**

**CAH:** The reposition of physical and psychological energies spent during the day's activities can only be obtained through rest. There is no drug or procedure that may substitute this disconnection of the conscience with the exterior environment, during which the nervous cells recover their functional capacity and develop physical and psychic vigor to the individual. The organism has been designed in such a way that it cannot function without adequate periods of rest. To keep an excellent level of health, it is necessary to balance activity with rest. This is the only way to restore body and mind. Infections like pneumonia, flu, or the common cold respond positively to rest. Rest reanimates the body's defenses and allows it to dominate the infections. It also helps to cure wounds and traumas like fractures and luxations.

**ED: Is physical exercise really indispensable?**

**CAH:** The human body is a machine designed for movement. Contrary to what

happens with any machine built by men, inactivity wears the body out. Studies show that inactivity exerts a higher risk of mortality than some diseases widely feared, like diabetes, heart disease, and smoking. A person with normal weight who does not exercise has the same possibility of life expectancy as an overweight person who does exercise.

**ED: Is it possible to change eating habits?**

**CAH:** Eating is a voluntary and conscious process, and therefore, teachable. It depends on a free decision by the individual. Exchanging bad habits for healthier ones requires profound conviction.

The ideal diet recommended by most health organizations is low in calories, high in fibers, and characterized by the regular consumption of vegetables, fruits, and cereals.

**ED: What are the principles of a healthy diet?**

**CAH:** They are simple: eat regular meals, use whole foods, and avoid empty calories, fried foods, and fats. Obey the laws of a good diet as far as quantity, quality, balance, and suitability. Avoid the use of meat and excessive sugar. Eat a nutritious breakfast in the morning and a light meal at night.

**ED: Is it really important to use water?**

**CAH:** All chemical and electrical reactions of the body are produced in a liquid environment. Water is used each time something is swallowed, a box is lifted, the back is scratched, a tennis racquet is moved, or a letter is written. Water makes the muscles, tendons, cartilages, and bones more flexible. Besides that, water as a purifying agent does more than wash away sweat and perspiration:

it stimulates the circulation, which clears the mind; helps the digestion process; and makes white blood cells circulate as a means of defense against microorganisms, thus increasing resistance against diseases.

**ED: How does trusting in God's power bring therapeutic effects?**

**CAH:** Trust in God provides something more than the mere fundament of a philosophy. It is a structure for the entire life, including a recipe for physical health. Studies of scientific validity confirm that prayer and faith in God are good practices for a faster healing of the sick.

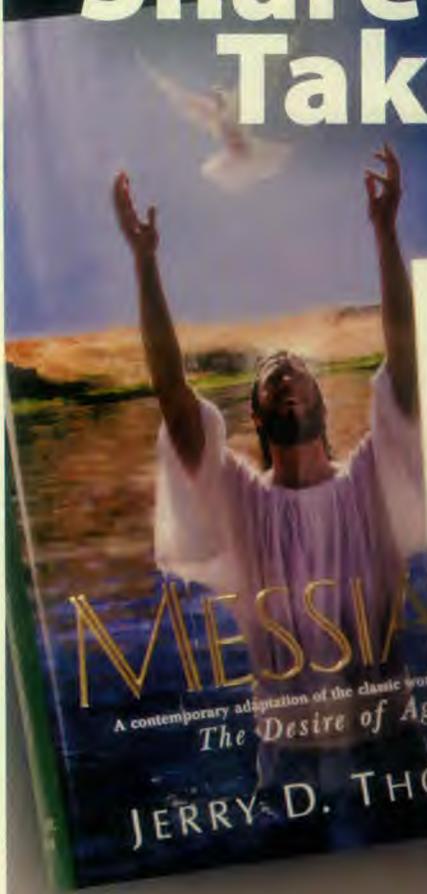
**ED: What are the aspects that worried you the most as you studied this subject?**

**CAH:** Basically, two things: the first is the myth that temperance is not eating meat, ignoring the value of the balanced use of the eight natural remedies; and the second, which I also consider a cause, is to speak so little about the Adventist lifestyle. Forty-seven percent of the people interviewed in the research mentioned that leaders preach, at most, one sermon a year about health, and there is almost no stimulus or promotion in their churches to follow healthy lifestyle principles.

**ED: Why do you believe this subject is so important?**

**CAH:** If Adventists live the lifestyle proposed by God, the efficiency of the pastors will be doubled and the work of the lay members will be multiplied 100 times. As a result, the work for this time will be concluded more rapidly. Therefore, we not only should teach the people the doctrines, but we should also help them to have a better quality of life. ED

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# Youth Ministry

Trudy J. Morgan-Cole

In its very earliest days, the Seventh-day Adventist Church had no specific "youth ministry"; young people were as active and involved in the work of the church as older ones were. Indeed, the original Advent movement was very much a youth movement, led by people like James White, who began preaching at twenty-one, Ellen White, who received her first vision at age seventeen and John Loughborough, who began preaching when he was seventeen. These young people needed no one to minister to them; they themselves were the ministers, sharing the exciting truths they had discovered in God's Word.

Soon after the Adventist Church was organized and began to grow, people recognized the need for a work specifically directed at young people. And from those earliest days, the emphasis was on youth who would be *workers* for God. Ellen White's best-known statement about youth makes this emphasis quite clear: "With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Savior might be carried to the whole world!"<sup>1</sup> Ellen White strongly advocated youth work within the church, but the work she envisioned was not one in which youth would be passive recipients of adult-directed programs. She foresaw a youth work in which youth would be trained and equipped for evangelistic work that they themselves would carry out—a true "army" to finish God's work in the world.

Appropriately, the credit for actually starting Adventist youth ministry goes to two teenagers who felt a need and

sought God's help in meeting it. Many lifelong Adventists are familiar with the story of 14-year-old Luther Warren and 17-year-old Harry Fenner, who in 1879 knelt under a tree in their hometown of Hazelton, Michigan, to ask God's guidance in how to win other young people to Christ. Inspired by that prayer, the two teenagers formed the church's first young people's missionary band, with a charter membership of nine boys.

That Hazelton youth meeting, which included prayer, hymn-singing, election of officers, a report on mission work done, and an offering to purchase literature, soon expanded into a young people's society that included both boys and girls. Their activities involved not only religious services but such popular nineteenth-century social events as taffy pulls, sleigh rides, and sugaring-off parties. Though parents and other adults in the church became involved, leadership was still very much in the hands of the youth, particularly of young Luther Warren, who went on to a lifetime of youth ministry and evangelism within the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

A group similar to the Hazelton missionary band was formed in 1891 in Antigo, Wisconsin, by Meade MacGuire. Looking back on the experience in later years, MacGuire said, "I was but a youth, and had no one to counsel with, but I felt that something ought to be done to help and inspire the young people. I had never heard of any young people's organization among our people, but acquaintances of mine attended meetings of the local Christian Endeavor Society and the Epworth League, and I felt that our own

young people needed something of this kind as much as did those of other denominations. I proposed holding a young people's meeting, but my proposal was met with almost universal disapproval. However, the elder, a saintly old man... placed his hand on my shoulder and said, 'My boy, you go right ahead. You may have the church for your meeting, and I will stand by you'"<sup>2</sup>

The Antigo young people's society had 30 members, and their meetings were similar to the ones Luther Warren had organized in Hazelton. Along with singing, Bible study, and prayer, there was time for personal testimonies. Participation was wholehearted; MacGuire recalled that there was intense disappointment if even one member failed to testify, but that this hardly ever happened. Reflecting on the success of that early society and the initial reluctance of the church to support it, he commented: "I believe God restrained the enemy because He wanted this work to go forward, and the people were not sufficiently in favor of it to stand by us if mistakes were made."<sup>3</sup>

Within a few years of the formation of the first young people's societies, similar groups sprang up in Adventist churches all over the United States. The first such society outside North America was organized in Adelaide, Australia, in 1892. Ellen White encouraged the growth of Adventist youth ministries, and, like Meade MacGuire, she suggested as a model the Christian Endeavour Society, a youth organization active in many Protestant churches on that time, which emphasized missionary activity.

At the General Conference session in 1901, the Seventh-day Adventist Church took the first steps towards organizing its youth ministry. A recommendation was passed to organize young people's societies and form a committee to plan their organization; Luther Warren, at that time the most active youth worker in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, chaired the committee. For the first time, youth ministry began to move forward at the denominational level. The Sabbath School Department of the General Conference was given responsibility for encouraging young people's work, and that responsibility was enthusiastically taken up by the department's secretary, Mrs. L. Flora Plummer, another pioneer of Adventist youth ministry whose name deserves to be remembered. By the summer of 1901, the tireless Mrs. Plummer had contacted church leaders all over the United States, "agitating the organization of young people's societies everywhere."<sup>4</sup> When confronted with the fact that only three of the fifty conferences were able, or willing, to appoint young people's secretaries to be responsible for this work, Mrs. Plummer simply wrote to all the Sabbath school secretaries in the remaining forty-seven conferences and informed them that until a youth secretary was chosen in their conference, they would be regarded as leaders of the young people's work. Her ploy worked, and the Sabbath school secretaries added youth work to their agendas.

By 1905 Adventist youth work was growing, not just in the United States, but in Australia, Germany, England, Trinidad, Jamaica, Canada, and other countries. In 1907, at the Sabbath school and young people's convention in Mount Vernon, Ohio, the name "Seventh-day Adventist Young People's Society of Missionary Volunteers" was chosen for the new youth department of the General Conference. Usually shortened to "Mis-

sionary Volunteers" or simply MV, this name served the denominational youth work for many years and highlighted the emphasis on youth as active participants in soul-winning. From that meeting also came the resolution that "the primary object of young people's societies is the salvation and development of our youth by means of prayer, study, and personal missionary effort."<sup>5</sup>

In the years immediately following the 1907 convention, Adventist young people's societies sprang up in Africa, Tahiti, Singapore, Fiji, Portugal, Bermuda, Japan, the Philippines, and Central America. Missionary Volunteers were truly becoming a worldwide army. Familiar elements of the Missionary Volunteer program, which older church members today will recall from their youth, began during these early years. These included the *Morning Watch* devotional calendar, the Missionary Volunteer Leaflet Series, the Reading Course, and the Bible Year reading plan.

During these years, separate Junior MV societies for younger children also began to spring up in Adventist churches around the world. At first, the JMV societies were very similar in structure to the senior MV societies, incorporating a Junior Reading Course and Junior Bible Year. But in the years following the first World War, many Adventist youth leaders became convinced that junior youth needed a different approach. JMV societies began to include storytelling, hiking, camping, arts, and crafts—a more "hands-on" approach to suit the more active learning style of juniors. Many leaders used the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts program, as a pattern for these junior youth societies. This new direction in junior youth ministry naturally led to the development of junior youth camps in the 1920s. The Junior Missionary Volunteer society was formed as a separate branch of the Mis-

sionary Volunteer Department during those same years. The JMV society, which in 1950 became the Pathfinder Club, was a tremendous success in attracting junior youth and helping them to become active in God's church. Today, the work of the Pathfinder Club continues around the world, channeling the energies and interests of youth in their pre-teen and early teenage years.

The first Seventh-day Adventist Youth Congress was held in Germany in 1928, and was attended by three 3,000 youth and youth leaders from all over Europe. Twelve thousand youth attended a North American youth congress in San Francisco in 1947, and 6,000 youth from 25 countries gathered in Paris, France, in 1951. As youth congresses grew and spread, the emphasis on youth sharing their faith with others remained constant. Today, youth rallies and conventions are held all over the world at the local, national, and international level, sometimes with special emphases such as Bible study, prayer, or drug-abuse prevention. Pathfinder camporees, also organized on every level from the local up to the international, have become another effective way of drawing Adventist youth together. An amazing 22,000 young people gathered in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, USA, in August 1999 for the "Discover the Power" Pathfinder camporee. For Adventist young people, especially for the many who attend small churches and small church schools in isolated communities, gatherings like camporees and youth rallies do indeed help them to "Discover the Power"—the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives first and foremost, but also the power of belonging to a worldwide movement of young people.

Another aspect of Adventist youth work that has always been central to the movement is the publication of youth-oriented magazines. The Seventh-day Adventist

Church has always been a church that believes in the power of the printed word, as evidenced by the avalanche of books and periodicals produced by our publishing houses over the years. A paper for young people, *The Youth's Instructor*, was being published long before Adventist youth work was formally organized: it was started by James White in 1852. For many years *The Youth's Instructor* was the staple of Adventist youth work, aided by other materials such as the MV Program Kit (renamed *Youth Ministry Accent* in 1975) and the Sabbath school lesson quarterlies.

After 118 years, *The Youth's Instructor* was given a fresher, more contemporary look in 1970, under the new title *Insight*. *Insight* magazine continues to minister to the high-school-aged youth of the church, but it is no longer alone in the field of Adventist youth publications. In 1953 the *Junior Guide* (now *Guide* magazine) was launched, "packed with stories, pictures, games, puzzles, campcraft, Junior Sabbath school lessons, and interesting Pathfinder activity."<sup>6</sup> *Guide* has changed its appearance and format many times over the intervening years, but it still appeals to its target audience of 10-14-year-old readers, perhaps because it is still "packed" with many of the same features it advertised back in 1953.

Seventh-day Adventist youth work has grown so much and in so many ways since Luther Warren and Harry Fenner first knelt together in 1879 that the movement we are a part of today would probably have astounded those first pioneers. Let us hope, though, that it would not have disappointed them. The focus of Adventist youth ministry—preparing youth for service in God's work—has remained the same in over a century of growth, and is manifesting itself in new and exciting ways each year.

The General Conference department responsible for youth work changed its name in 1978. The term "Missionary Volunteers" was cherished by generations of Adventists, but it carried unfortunate connotations in some parts of the world. At a time when many countries had won their independence from their former colonial masters, the term "missionary" carried echoes of centuries of colonial domination by Western nations. The more widely acceptable term "Youth Department" replaced the old name. But the focus on service to God and others has not changed. Programs such as the college student missionary program, which began in the 1950s, and the short-term mission projects for high school and college students that became so popular in the 1980s and 1990s, continue to give young people the experience of serving God outside their own countries. Local youth programs involve young people in service and outreach within their own communities in a variety of ways. The "Missionary Volunteer" spirit marches on.

As youth leaders, we often focus so much on the day-to-day aspects of our ministry—teaching the Sabbath school lessons, planning the weekend retreat, hosting the Saturday-night social—that we lose sight of the "big picture." A glance back at the long and proud history of Seventh-day Adventist youth work helps put our work into perspective. And the most important part of looking back is recognizing that this youth ministry has always been about leading youth to know Jesus, and then training them to share Him with others. We are still training that army of youth Ellen White dreamed about—and they are accomplishing His work. Through the Spirit's power, they will soon finish it.<sup>ED</sup>

1. Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 271.

2. Nathaniel Krum, *The MV Story* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1963), pp. 11, 12.

3. Ibid., p. 12.

4. Ibid., p. 25.

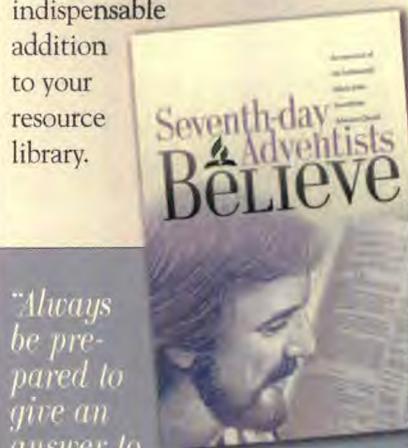
5. "Report of Sabbath School and Young People's Convention," p. 188. Quoted in Krum, p. 39.

6. Ibid., p. 65.

# What do Adventists believe?

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# THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD

Dr. Peter J. Prime

No baby was ever conceived like Him; no child ever grew up like Him; no youth ever matured like Him; no adult ever achieved like Him. Who is He? His name is Jesus. No one was ever tempted like Him; no one ever prayed like Him; no one ever taught like Him; no one ever obeyed like Him. Who is He? None other but Jesus. No one ever healed diseases like Him; no one ever calmed the sea like Him; no one ever fed the crowds like Him; no one ever forgave sins like Him. Who is He? The one and only Jesus. No one ever loved like Him; no one ever lived like Him; no one ever died like Him; and no one was ever resurrected like Him. Who is He? Jesus and Jesus alone. No one ever ascended to heaven like Him; no one will ever judge the world like Him; no one will return to claim His own like Him; no one will ever reign in glory like Him. Who is He? "Sir, thou knowest"; nonetheless, I will tell you over and over again, His name is the one and only Jesus.

What was the central cornerstone on which the whole life and ministry of Jesus was constructed? What made His life so sublime, so divine—the perfect model for all humankind? Does the decisive secret of His life lie in His incarnation? If it were so, no human person could ever successfully follow in His steps, for we are all "shapen in iniquity" and "in sin" did our mothers conceive us (Psalm 51:5). Does the decisive secret lie in His fasting and praying for 40 days? Others beside Him have done similarly and yet, like John the Baptist, one of the tallest of them all, they dared not untie the latchet of His shoes.

Does the decisive secret, then, lie in His knowledge of the Scriptures? There were others not only gifted in the Scriptures but writers themselves, and yet they pale in significance before Him. The list of probable factors that may be identified as the decisive secret of the life of Jesus Christ may go on without end, yet without coming to the real truth. This supreme revelation of Himself only Jesus is qualified to give, and give it He did so very plainly and without fanfare and trumpets that all may understand, and having understood, may follow in His steps.

The decisive secret, which He Himself read from the Scriptures, is this: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." The power of this affirmation is better appreciated when it is viewed within its biblical setting, which is as follows:

"And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season. And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recover sight

to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:13-21).

The preceding biblical reference does not merely detail WHAT the essence of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ was and still is all about, but also emphasizes HOW the life and ministry of Christ would both realize their complementary ends. The HOW is nothing less and nothing more than the Holy Spirit.

Accordingly, Jesus Christ's absolutely constant and perfect cooperation with the Holy Spirit, who filled Him without measure (for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him—John 3:34), constitutes the decisive secret of His perfect life, perfect ministry, and perfect sacrifice. The Scriptures assert:

"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from the dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:14).

Thus the two complementary components of Jesus' spotless life and flawless victory are (1) His perfect infilling with the Spirit, and (2) His perfect cooperation with the Spirit. Iterating His total commitment to the divine will, "Jesus saith

# GOD IS UPON ME

unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 3:34). "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

Accordingly, He was more than delighted to announce in the opening ceremonies of worship on the Sabbath day in the synagogue of Nazareth the prophetic Oracle pertaining to Himself: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me . . ." Consistently His total life and public ministry with His teachings and miracles carried the insignia "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me."

Accordingly, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount did not bear His exclusive stamp, but that of "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." Jesus gave orders to the apostles by the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:2). Similarly, His parabolic teaching bore this indelible emblem, as did every miracle. Confirming the Holy Spirit as the divine instrument of His miracles, Jesus declared, "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you" (Matthew 12:28).

Finally, His sacrifice, His death and resurrection carried the selfsame stamp—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God" (Hebrews 9:14). "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Romans 8:11). "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me" was indeed the decisive secret of Jesus' totally

commanding victory over the world, the flesh, and the Devil, and His simultaneous fulfillment of His substitutionary role and function as the world's Redeemer; and it is likewise our only means of victorious Christian living. Plainly, there is just no other, for all others are empty vanity and a vexation of spirit.

A Christianity without the Spirit of Christ is nothing but a devious satanic device. A Christian without the Heavenly Dove can never enter the portals above. If we are to enter our heavenly homeland, the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, will have to take us there. The way of the Spirit, which is the way of the cross, is the only way that leads toward home, our sweet heavenly home.

This Spirit is readily available to all, for this was one of the principal reasons why Jesus Christ came. Successfully He came to win back for us our supernatural privilege of having the Holy Spirit in us without measure. In this regard, John the Baptist commented, "I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost" (Mark 1:8). Jesus endorsed how available the Holy Spirit is when He declared, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:13).

From the womb to the tomb, the Spirit of the Lord was upon Jesus. They never parted company, not even for a fleeting moment; for Jesus to have done so would be to have exposed Himself and His mission

to the threat of certain failure. Therefore, Jesus and the Holy Spirit remained inextricably bound together. Never did the Holy Spirit, the symbolic dove that descended from above upon Him, ever desert Him, but rather He saw Him through to a sure and unassailable victory, a victory that is ours to share.

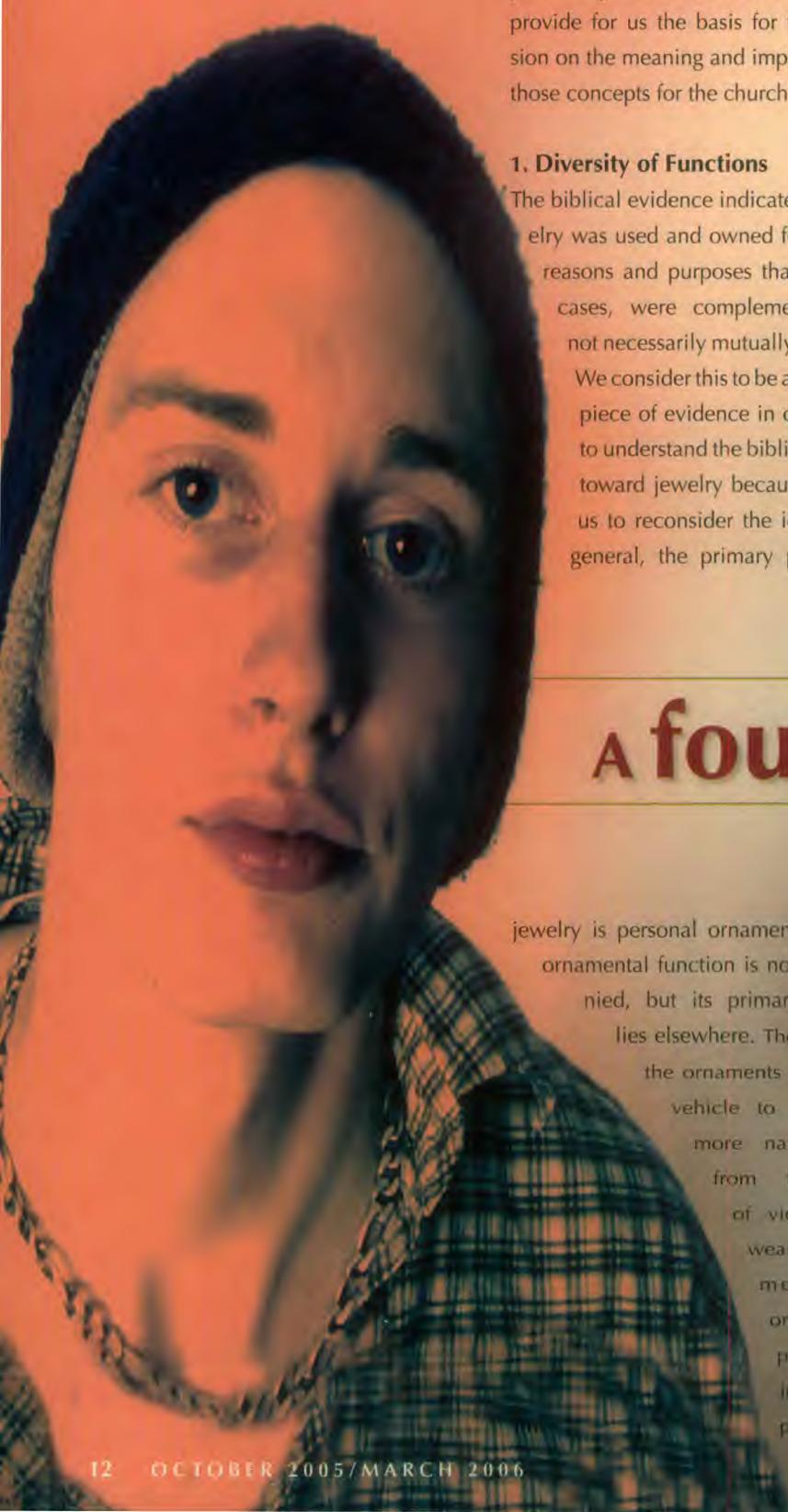
The Holy Spirit is very much available, but it will be given on request, sincere request. Therefore, let us all together, the total leadership and membership alike of this church body, on the threshold of the new millennium, embark on the largest prayer-request program ever undertaken in quest of the most historic movement of the Holy Spirit ever encountered. This movement must equip us and successfully prepare us and our communities for the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

May each of us, like Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, be able to honestly say from today on, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me."

"Let the Holy Spirit be upon me is my earnest cry, for without the Holy Spirit upon me I dare not live or die. Let me so live that the whole world may see that without a doubt the Holy Spirit is upon me."<sup>ED</sup>

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This article is excerpted and adapted from the practical resource, *The Spirit of the Lord God is Upon Me: Introducing Holy Spirit Emphasis Week to Your Congregation* by, Dr. Peter J. Prime. The entire book is available for purchase at <[www.ministerialassociation.com](http://www.ministerialassociation.com)>.



## **Summary of the Biblical Teaching on Ornamental Jewelry**

As we look back to the results of our biblical inquiry into the subject of jewelry, there are a number of things that could be said as we try to summarize the major concepts associated with it. This will provide for us the basis for the discussion on the meaning and implications of those concepts for the church today.

### **1. Diversity of Functions**

The biblical evidence indicates that jewelry was used and owned for multiple reasons and purposes that, in many cases, were complementary and not necessarily mutually exclusive. We consider this to be a significant piece of evidence in our attempt to understand the biblical attitude toward jewelry because it forces us to reconsider the idea that in general, the primary purpose of

with personal wealth, social position and power, or religious function.

### **2. General Pejorative Attitude**

Biblical evidence clearly demonstrates that overall, there is a pejorative attitude toward jewelry in the Scriptures. We find God Himself asking His people to remove the ornaments from their bodies in the context of a call to re-commitment to the Lord (Exod. 33:5, 6; cf. Gen. 35:2-4). This is also indicated by the prophetic indictment against almost all types of jewelry worn by both men and women (Isa. 3:18-21). The fact that the Israelites removed their ornaments from Sinai onward suggests that early Israelites did not wear jewelry. Archaeological evidence indicates that such may have been the case because, with rare exceptions, excavations in early Israelite sites have uncovered very little jewelry and only of a poor quality.

# **A foundation for the**

jewelry is personal ornamentation. Its ornamental function is not to be denied, but its primary function lies elsewhere. The beauty of the ornaments becomes a vehicle to achieve a more narrow and, from the point of view of the wearer, a more meaningful or important purpose; for instance, to impress others

This tendency to devalue jewelry is reflected in the fact that no mention is made of it in cases and situations where we would expect reference to its use. For instance during the creation of Adam and Eve, and particularly after the Lord dressed them (Gen. 3:21), there is no explicit or implicit reference to ornaments. In Revelation 12:1, 2, a woman is used as a symbol of God's people, but there is a total absence of jewelry on her body. Yet, the woman representing the enemies of God's people is described as loaded with jewelry (Rev. 17:4). Moreover, in total discontinuity with ancient Near

Eastern practices, the God of Israel wears no jewelry. He never appears using ornaments, and He is never seen in vision by the prophets wearing them. Once it is acknowledged that a significant number of passages in the Bible deal with jewelry, it would be incorrect to attribute this situation to mere chance. It does reflect the attitude of the biblical faith toward jewelry and suggests that in general, it was not positive.

### 3. Not Intrinsically Evil

One should also accept the fact that the Bible does not consider jewelry to be essentially evil. Otherwise it would have been impossible for God to order Moses to make a dress for Aaron adorned with jewelry, or for the king to wear a crown, or for anyone to have a signet ring. But all of those cases are to some extent appropriate usages of jewelry. Jewelry cannot be essentially evil because the

attitude toward the use of jewelry. Here we must take care to distinguish what is acceptable from what is not. The fact is that most usages of jewelry are rejected by the biblical writers.

Religious, magical, and protective jewelry is probably rejected because of idolatry. More important is the fact that no religious jewelry was prescribed for the Israelites through which they could express their religious convictions and their commitment to the Lord. This is not an argument based on the silence of the biblical record. The Lord, as we have demonstrated, told the Israelites what to wear in order to inform others that they worshiped Him alone and not other gods. We required from them a particular symbolic attachment on their clothes, but it was not jewelry. His symbol indicated that they were holy to the Lord (Num. 15:37-41). According to the

tinctions, the prophets raised their voices against them (Isa. 3:18-21; 1 Tim. 2:9, 10; 1 Peter 3:3-6), indicating that this type of jewelry was not fully acceptable. But those exceptions serve to show that, at least in some cases, functional jewelry was accepted.

### 5. Ornamental Jewelry Is Rejected

The Scriptures are clear that ornamental jewelry was not to be part of the personal adornment of the people of God. Although jewelry enhanced the appearance of the individual, it was worn for another reason. The jewelry used by the high priest beautified him, but its primary purpose was to identify him as the leading spiritual figure in Israel and a representative of the people before the Lord. Whenever the functional nature of a piece of jewelry was rejected, its ornamental function was also rejected. In other words, there

# standard of the church

beautiful materials used in its production were created by God Himself. Moreover, minerals are not moral agents, but humans are. The evil of jewelry is to be located in the heart of the wearer and not simply in the object itself.

### 4. Restricted Use of Jewelry

If we are willing to accept that in the Bible jewelry has different functions, that there is a general pejorative attitude toward it, and that, nevertheless, it is not intrinsically evil, then we must also accept that not all of its usages are approved by the Lord. The Bible does have a restrictive

New Testament, such a holy life should adorn the Christian (1 Peter 3:4, 5).

The use of jewelry as symbolizing social status, power, and authority is restricted only to a few cases. Here we can mention the dress of the high priest, the jewelry of the king and the queen, and the signet ring. Of those, only the first was explicitly instituted by God Himself, the others seem to have been permitted or tolerated by Him. In these cases, the element of adornment plays a secondary role. When others besides the royal couple used jewelry to establish social dis-

is no evidence to indicate that, for instance, magical jewelry was acceptable if used only for ornamental purposes. Rejection of the one was also rejection of the other.

In New Testament times, jewelry was commonly used for personal adornment, but even there, other functions were associated with it also. In cases where jewelry was primarily ornamental, the biblical passages are clear in rejecting it, and in describing the nature of true personal adornment as the enactment of Christian virtues in the daily life of the believer (1 Tim. 2:9,

10; 1 Peter 3:3-6). To be sure, personal adornment is not totally rejected, but a particular type of exterior adornment is identified as incompatible with the Christian life. Ornamental jewelry falls into this category of adornment.

We can summarize our discussion by saying that the Bible rejects the use of ornamental jewelry by God's people, while at the same time accepting or tolerating a restrictive use of some functional jewelry. It is obvious that the issue of jewelry in the Bible cannot be dealt with in terms of categories of totally wrong or totally right. On this basis, the church must abide by what is clear and use biblical principles to deal with those areas where a personal decision is required.

### **Foundation of the Adventist Standard on Jewelry**

Our study has shown that there is significant material on the subject of jewelry in the Bible, distributed from Genesis through Revelation. The subject is well attested in the Scriptures and of concern for biblical writers. This phenomenon should limit significantly the argument that the Adventist standard on ornamental jewelry stems from the Victorian age during the 1800s. The fundamental reason why the Adventist Church established this standard was because our pioneers believed that it was a biblical teaching, one they inherited from other Christian communities.

A Christian standard on jewelry existed long before there was an Adventist or a Protestant. It appears in the time of the early post-apostolic church, to say nothing of the apostolic church, where it was supported not simply on the basis of cultural concerns but on the basis of the Scriptures.<sup>1</sup> It is a fact that during the first three centuries of the Christian era, the church

held to a very high standard on the use of ornamental jewelry. Tertullian (160-225 A.D.) wrote against ornaments consisting of gold, silver, and gems, but indicated at the same time that he was not encouraging disregard for good personal appearance. He pointed to "the limit and norm and just measure of cultivation of the person. There must be no overstepping of the line to which simple and sufficient refinement limit their desires—the line that is pleasing to the Lord."<sup>2</sup> Obviously he had in mind 1 Peter 3:3, 4 and 1 Timothy 2:9, 10, which he quoted in other places where he discussed proper Christian adornment.<sup>3</sup>

We also find Clement of Alexandria condemning ornamental jewelry, challenging women to "utterly cast off" ornaments<sup>4</sup> and telling men that there is no need for them to wear ornaments of gold.<sup>5</sup> Earrings are rejected because "the Word prohibits us from doing violence to nature by boring the lobes of the ears."<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, Clement makes a distinction between ornamental jewelry and functional jewelry. He argues that the Word permits a man or woman to wear a finger-ring of gold "for sealing things which are worth keeping safe in the house."<sup>7</sup> But he goes further by suggesting that women married to men who are not Christians and who want them to wear ornamental jewelry should do it only to please their husbands. But it should be their goal gently to draw their husbands to simplicity.<sup>8</sup>

During the third century, one can begin to detect a slight tendency to relax the standard on jewelry. However, it was still defended by writers such as Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage (d. 258), who admonished wealthy women who wanted to use their wealth as they pleased, to "use them, certainly, but for the things of

salvation; use them, but for good purposes; use them, but for those things which God has commanded, and which the Lord has set forth. Let the poor feel that you are wealthy; let the needy feel that you are rich."<sup>9</sup> Then he quoted Paul, Peter, and Isaiah to demonstrate that those who adorn themselves with gold, pearls, and necklaces "have lost the ornaments of the heart and the spirit."<sup>10</sup> Cyprian associated jewelry with moral corruption (prostitution) and immodesty.

By the fourth century, jewelry was becoming common in the church, leading John Chrysostom (c. 347-407 A.D.) to address the issue in some of his homilies. He considered ornaments of gold unnecessary for men and women. In fact, it was ridiculous, he said, for a woman to come to church wearing her gold ornaments: "For what possible reason does she come in here wearing golden ornaments, She who ought to come in that she may hear [the precept] 'that they adorn not themselves with gold, nor pearls nor costly attire?' (1 Tim. 2. 9). With what object then, O woman, dost thou come? Is it indeed to fight with Paul, and show that even if he repeat these things ten thousand times, thou regardest them not? Or is it as wishing to put us your teachers to shame as discoursing on these subjects in vain?"<sup>11</sup> Chrysostom concludes this section with a very specific appeal: "Let not the image of God be decked out with these things: let the gentlewomen be adorned with gentility, and gentility is the absence of pride, and of boastful display."<sup>12</sup>

I have given special attention to these early Christian writers because they illustrate the initial Christian understanding of the biblical view on ornamental jewelry, long before the Victorian Age. The early centuries are marked by strong

resistance to the use of ornamental jewelry by believers. After the fifth century, as Bacchiocchi has pointed out, jewelry became the official adornment of the clerical orders and during the remainder of the Middle Ages was very popular among Christians.<sup>13</sup> The Reformers condemned this practice of the church and called Christians back to a life of simplicity, discouraging the use of jewelry for personal adornment. This was particularly the case among the Anabaptists who sought to reform the church, not only in terms of doctrines but also in biblical lifestyle. This tradition was continued among the Mennonites, Brethren, and Methodists, among others.<sup>14</sup>

Adventists are inheritors of this genuine biblical, early Catholic, and Protestant understanding of personal ornamentation. History indicates a recurring tendency among those who have upheld the high biblical standard on ornamental jewelry to relax the standard until it is virtually non-existent. Perhaps the reason is that its biblical basis is forgotten or considered irrelevant. This is the kind of pressure the Adventist church faces today.

## Conclusion

The multiplicity of biblical references to jewelry, when carefully analyzed, reveals a consistent pattern of meaning and coherence throughout the Scriptures. By recognizing that, in the Bible, jewelry has different functions, and that some of them are accepted or tolerated while others are rejected, we are able to understand the attitude of the biblical writers toward jewelry. It was precisely that biblical material that provided to the Christian church, and more particularly to the Adventist church, the very foundation for a biblical standard on jewelry. **ED**

resource, *Jewelry in the Bible: What You Always Wanted to Know But Were Afraid To Ask*, by Angel Manuel Rodriguez. The entire book is available for purchase at [www.ministerialassociation.com](http://www.ministerialassociation.com).

1. Excellent material on this subject is cited in Bacchiocchi, *Christian Dress*, pp. 74-100.
2. Tertullian, "On the Apparel of Women," I.4; II.5, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 4, edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), pp. 16, 20.
3. Tertullian, "De corona" 14, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, p. 102.
4. Clement of Alexandria, "The Instructor" II.13, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2, p. 268.
5. Ibid., III.1, (p. 271).
6. Ibid., III.11, (p. 285).
7. Ibid. The seal was expected to have some Christian emblem engraved on it. See F. L. Cross, editor, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 1167.
8. Ibid.
9. Cyprian, "Treatise II: On the Dress of the Virgins" 11, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, p. 433.
10. Ibid., 13, p. 433.
11. John Chrysostom, "Homilies on Hebrews" XXVII.13, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 14, edited by Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), p. 497.
12. Ibid. See also his "Homilies on Timothy" VIII, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 13, pp. 433, 434.
13. Bacchiocchi, *Christian Adornment*, pp. 83-86.
14. Ibid., pp. 83-94.

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# how to involve the **YOUTH** in the church

Erton Kohler  
SAD Youth Director

Often I have heard people say: "Our young people don't want anything to do with serious involvement," or "Our youth seem to be lost," or "They are too secularized and have lost their interest in things related to God." In many places these words are absolutely true.

Young people are not interested, or they may even be leaving the church. We need to act in order to change the situation. It is interesting though, to see how the youth situation can be negative at one church, and positive at another. Young people are active, interested, and even leading out not only in Youth Ministry, but in the church itself, and they are especially involved in evangelism. Why is there such a difference? Could it be that the reaction of young people may vary from one city or state to another, or does it have to do with the region they live in? If that is the case, why is it that at different churches in the same city, young people present contrasting situations?

We cannot escape the reality that our young people are a result of the way their church considers them. That is why I want to challenge you, dear church elders, to think about how the young people have been treated at your church. If we want to see our young people enthusiastic, involved, and committed, we need to invest in them, believe in them, and love them. They have a tremendous potential that needs to be guided, so that they may channel all of it into God's cause. I get excited every time I participate in a meeting of Personal Ministries leaders, small group leaders, church elders, or leaders of any other area of work in the church, and I ask how many young people are participating. Usually there are many, or they are the majority. This means that they want to work. I know, however, that they could do much more, and that we could involve more young people. What is the secret?

The key words are found in the title above—to involve them! That is when the difference begins to show between churches that have active young people and those where they are discouraged—



particularly when children are young, when their emotions are defined. They want to feel a sense of "belonging," not of simply being an additional number. They want to feel that they are remembered, loved, accepted, special, and needed. If they feel that the church and its leadership believe in them, are willing to support them, and understand their limitations, they will react positively.

Some churches, innocently deceived, try to win their young people by offering them public shows: youth meetings, rallies, Sabbath morning worship services, and other events. The thought seems contemporary: "They are demanding, so we need to bring them what is best." Great musicians and preachers come in, and the youth enjoy the programs, but they are not involved, or built, and continue to be inactive, uninterested, and secularized.

There is another way. If your church wants to get young programs and activities *for* the young people, but *by* them and *with* them. It does not need to be anything complicated; it's enough to:

1. Invite them to give their opinions in the decision-making of the church;
2. Invite them to preach;
3. Organize special programs where they can share ideas, make plans, and execute them;
4. Bring in fewer "stars" and encourage them to plan their own programs;
5. Organize community projects;
6. Develop outreach projects with them, where they can see the results of the work they have done.

These are just a few ideas. They can be added to and improved upon at church elders meetings, where the sincere concern should be to involve them

and save them. One thing is important, however, in implementing any project involving young people: they need to feel that the projects are not mechanical, the kind that imply: "That is the opportunity you were looking for. Make sure you don't waste it." They want to feel they are valued. The leadership needs to show love and honest interest, walking by their side. Young people see beyond the attitudes; they perceive the intentions. They will feel more motivated to participate, to love God and the church When:

1. Parents, leaders, and other adults live what they teach. When this does not happen, a discouraging poison is spilled;
2. The program of the church is prepared with them in mind and becomes attractive to them;
3. There are young people leading out in different areas of church work;
4. The church leadership shows concern for all the aspects of their lives, not only the spiritual;
5. Leaders are concerned more about loving and helping them than about condemning them.

To get young people involved with the church and with things related to God is a huge challenge. I don't believe it is difficult, but it has to go through a partnership between parents, church leaders, and youth leaders. If these three areas are united, with honesty and prayer, following the advice just presented, they will have wonderful surprises. Always remember that in this partnership, there are three words that summarize what needs to be done: appreciation, involvement, and consistency. These three words seasoning the attitude of the church elders, and molded by the power of God, will result in miracles for the salvation of our young people. **ED**

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The first generation of Christians approached mission with a sense of urgency, for the apostles' command to "go into all the world" was an imperative that could not be denied. They were compelled by their life-transforming experience with Jesus, by three years of friendship and fellowship with their Savior, and by all they had witnessed personally. The early church was energized by its certainty of the Lord's soon return, "the blessed hope—the glorious appearing" (Titus 2:13).

We are an extraordinary global family, with a specific identity, a clear mission, and an acute awareness of the lateness of the hour in which we live. For the Seventh-day Adventist Church today, this sense of urgency is as relevant now as it was in the days of the apostles. What is our central purpose as a church? As we review the past years and look toward the future, what key values define us as a people?



## Compelled to Mission

### • Our witness is not optional

Without mission there is no church. As Ellen White writes, "The burning, consuming love of Christ for perishing souls is the life of the whole system of Christianity" (*Lift Him Up*, page 134). Christ's love compels us to share with others the hope and joy that we ourselves have found. This is our mission.

### • Our witness is personal

Lay people are central to all the church's outreach endeavors.

### • Our witness is global

During the Year of World Evangelism 2004, more than 30,000 pastors con-

ducted some form of outreach, involving more than 4 million lay members. Adventist News Network, the church's satellite network, continues to grow in programming and global reach.

### • Our witness extends to difficult areas

God's Spirit is at work in areas where previously the church has struggled. Adventist World Radio continues to reach across borders to touch lives where the church can't officially operate.

### • Our witness is creative

In Hong Kong, two young Global Mission pioneers—Sonya and Phoebe—work in the middle of a high-rise residential area. They operate a center where children from cramped apart-

ments can come after school to study in a more comfortable environment and learn more about Jesus.

### • Our witness is long-term

When it comes to mission, discipleship and nurture are not optional extras. When a person accepts Christ and enters into fellowship with his/her family, this marks the beginning—not the end—of their Christian growth. A new life lies ahead, and a new believer must be prepared and equipped for that life.

### • Looking ahead

How can we find committed, qualified pastors and administrators to lead a church that is growing exponentially?

How do we anticipate challenges and plan for them? Two new offices, Leadership Training and Strategic Planning, have been established at the General Conference, and these will become increasingly important for positioning our church in its mission.

## Compelled to Community

### • A shared identity

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in 2005 is truly a worldwide community.

### • An inclusive church

In the body of Christ, all members are valuable; all have a contribution to make. Are we doing all we can to ensure that each person is active in church life? Are we utilizing the talents of the women of our church? Are we listening to what our young people are saying?

### • Staying close

It is God's plan that we are one around the world—bound together by shared faith and common hope in the soon

injustice, ignorance, and sickness: we are called to proclaim to the world Christ's victory over the evil one and his handiwork.

## His Love Compelled Us

May we never forget what it means to be Seventh-day Adventist—living in joyful anticipation of soon return of our Savior. And I pray that each of us may ever be willing instrument in the hand of God.



Adventist work is now established in 204 of the 230 countries and areas recognized by the United Nations, and our message today is communicated in 882 languages and dialects.

We rejoice in the bountiful range of gifts and talents the Lord has given our church members. But we also have a common identity that we must continue to nurture, a heritage that must be shared with new believers. We are a prophetic movement with a God-given purpose.

It is vital to find ways to more effectively pass on this spiritual inheritance—through our schools, our churches, and our literature; within our family circles; and through new initiatives.

return of our Lord. We need to talk with one another, defer to one another, and consistently look beyond our own four church walls.

## Compelled to Service

The “abundant life” Jesus promised has many different facets. Our lives become spiritually full as we experience the forgiveness of sin and the assurance of salvation. Our priorities and values begin to change.

But this quality of life has a broader, physical dimension. Christ's healing ministry and His concern for society's most valuable members call us, His followers, to a life of service. Poverty,

*“May the God of Peace . . . equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen”*

*(Heb. 13:20, 21). ED*

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**Jan Paulsen**, president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Adapted and compacted from his report presented on June 30, 2005, in St. Louis as originally presented in the *Adventist Review*.



# TELL *the* WORLD

Mark A. Finley



Without an emphasis on reaching people, the church fails in the reason for its existence as described clearly in the mission statement: "The mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to communicate to all peoples the everlasting gospel of God's love in the context of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12, as revealed in the life, death, resurrection and high priestly ministry of Jesus Christ, leading them to accept Jesus as personal Savior and Lord to unite with His remnant church; and to nurture believers as disciples in preparation for His soon return."<sup>1</sup>

Over the next five years, the Seventh-day Adventist Church will embark on a strategic plan directly focused on its God-given mission: "*Tell the World.*"

## Vision

*Tell the World* is a vision for how the gospel of Jesus will be shared by the Seventh-day Adventist Church from 2005–2010. It focuses the church on its identity as a called-out community and its end-time mission of proclaiming the gospel to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (Rev. 14:6, KJV). The vision is clear: to invite every person in the world to respond to the good news about Jesus and His soon coming.

## Values

*Tell the World* is more than a program. It is more than a slogan. It is a vision of what the church, by God's grace, will be and do in fulfilling the command of Jesus to preach the Gospel to every creature. *Tell the World* is an individual and corporate commitment to live out the key val-

ues of quality of life, unity, and growth in God's family.

*Tell the World* inspires the church to know Jesus personally, to share Him enthusiastically, and to proclaim His name with one voice. Can we even begin to comprehend what God might do through His people in reaping earth's harvest? Imagine a global community living out the life of Christ in selfless service, a praying people empowered by His Spirit, nurtured on God's Word, and united in mission who will fulfill their destiny as God's ambassadors to a waiting world.

The church has identified seven key areas on which to focus its resources, energies, and prayers. These seven areas will unite the entire church in a vision of sharing the good news. They will involve every

level of church leadership, every institution, every service, every initiative, and every church member.

## Goals for 2005–2010

**1. Spiritual Growth:** Increase the percentage of church members spending time in daily Bible study and prayer from 50 percent to at least 65 percent. Recent surveys indicate that Seventh-day Adventists have confidence in the Christ who redeemed them. They have accepted the assurance of salvation through Christ alone. But other data relating to spiritual life raises serious concerns. Most church members do not spend time in daily devotions.

**2. Community Involvement:** Growing churches equip and train their members for service. They reach out to the community to meet felt needs. These dynamic growing congregations are sensitive to community needs, while at the same time, they are intentionally evangelistic. Only one in three Adventist church members are sharing their faith or involved in community service. One of the strategic goals of *Tell the World* centers on increasing the percentage of members involved in the community from 29 percent to at least 40 percent.

**3. Personal Witness:** *Tell the World* challenges five million Adventists to reach at least one person for Jesus and bring them into fellowship with God's family in the next five years. If five million Adventists win five million of their friends and neighbors to Christ in the next five years, we will baptize as many people from this initiative as we have in all others combined in the last five years. "Win One" is a *Tell the World* initiative where

each local region of the world field will develop action plans and programs to equip five million lay people in witnessing activities.

**4. City Outreach:** While in many areas the church experiences rapid growth, a huge challenge still remains. The world has a population of more than six billion. Every second, four babies are born. The greatest population growth in the world resides in big cities that soon will be home to more than half of the world's population. But in this increasingly urban world, most Adventist congregations are located outside the big cities. World divisions of the Adventist Church have targeted 66 major cities in a master strategy to make an impact on their massive populations. More than 400 cities in the world have a population of 1 million or more. The church is building on its *Hope for the Big Cities* outreach plan to plant and establish new congregations in more than 27 large cities around the world.

**5. Church Planting:** Plant and nurture 20,000 new congregations in unaltered areas while also providing proper nurture for the 17,000 congregations planted between 2000 and 2005. The early church exploded in growth because it constantly focused on planting new churches. New congregations generally pulsate with spiritual life. New members bring freshness to the body of Christ.

**6. Evangelistic Programming:** Involve every church in an annual evangelistic event resulting in 400,000 evangelistic outreach and discipleship programs, including 100,000 youth evangelistic series. Whenever Christ is exalted, the Word is preached and appeals are made, the Spirit moves, and people are converted.

**7. Media Ministry:** Creatively use technology and communication channels—radio, television, Internet, publications—to reach every person in the world with the gospel message.

## Implementation Priorities

1. "Owned" by divisions, unions, and conferences with the General Conference providing support through visioning and resource assistance.
2. Flexible, incorporating the plans and initiatives of divisions, unions, and conferences.
3. Placed on the agenda at each Annual Council for discussions, reports, and actions.
4. Communicated to the world church clearly, quickly, and regularly.
5. A high priority for all departments, institutions, and entities throughout the world field.
6. A matter of prayer and consideration for all church leaders, at every church level, as they develop plans within their spheres of responsibility.

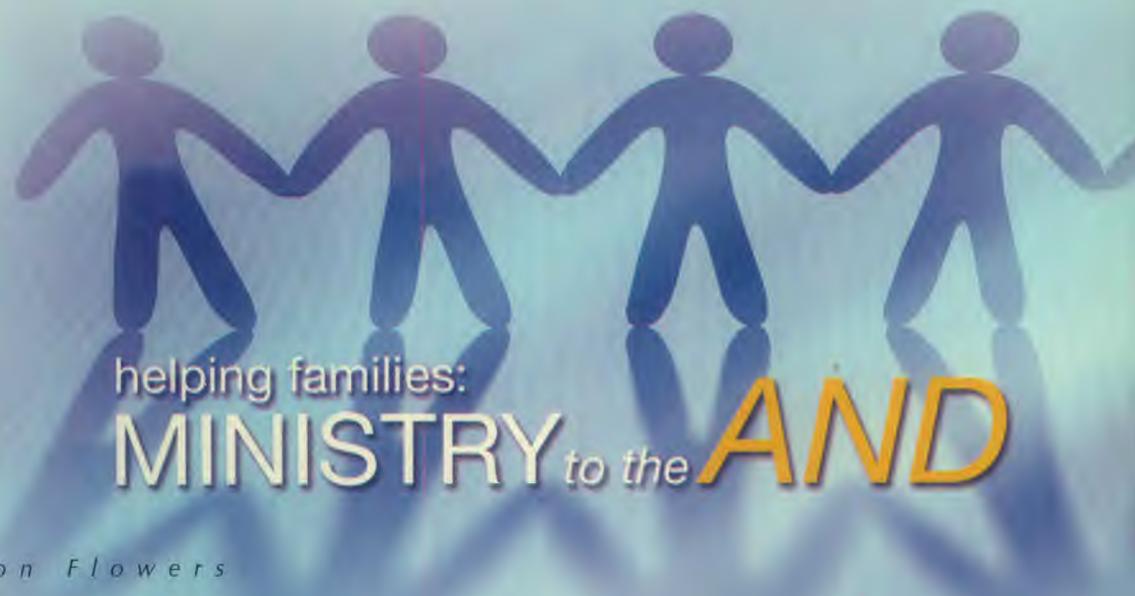
*Tell the World* envisions a church of praying members, filled with the Spirit, nurtured on God's Word, a church where all departments, entities, leaders, and members are unified in a single-minded mission, a church that provides an opportunity for the entire world to hear and respond to the good news about Jesus Christ. ED

1. *Working Policy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church*, 2004–2005 ed., A 05 05.

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**Mark A. Finley**

General Conference Vice President



Karen and Ron Flowers

The woman's eyes were misty as she paused on her way out of the seminar. "Thank you," she said. "There are just so many things that I never understood before—about myself, about my husband, about our children, about relationships, about Jesus." The words tumbled out as her thoughts raced ahead. "What a difference this is going to make. And I want my friends to know too."

"It's all so exciting," she went on. "Now not only do we feel a burden for families, but we're also beginning to feel that we can do something. More than that, the skills we're learning and taking back to our churches will make us more than just better husbands and wives, moms and dads, brothers and sisters. They will make us better witnesses for Jesus. All around us are people who need to feel understood, cared for, and loved. Christian families who know how to love are naturals for pointing the way to Jesus." She had just completed a weekend leadership-development program in family ministries for church leaders, a program occurring with increasing frequency worldwide as our church fulfills its mission to make disciples who follow Jesus where they live, perhaps most especially in their homes.

There is good reason to minister to families and households. Not only are their needs great, not only do healthy families contribute to healthy churches, but family ministry addresses a vital aspect of Christian living—our relationships. Family ministry is unique from other ministries in that its focus is on the family as a whole and on the special connections within the family group. Family ministry is a ministry to the “and” of husband and wife, father and mother, parent and child, brother and sister.

Instituted at Creation with the union of the first man and woman, "family" is as old as Eden. It also is lodged firmly in the history of God's people through the ages. In the circle of the family, people's deep and abiding needs for belonging, love, intimacy, and social contact are to be met. Here the establishment of identity and the development of personal worth take place. Here the earliest work in the socialization of individuals occurs. Here values are implanted in the young and carried from one generation to the next. By God's grace, the family can be a powerful agency in the discipling of its members for Christ.

God intends that we shall gain a revelation of His character and His ways from our relationships in our families. (See Ps.103:13; Isa. 54:5.) So special and significant is the family that domestic imagery is often used to convey theological truths. (See Isa. 49:15; Jer. 31:32; Eph. 2:19; Rev. 21:2.) In Malachi 4:5, 6, family reconciliation and restoration become a focal point during last-day events. The Bible predicts that before the great day of the Lord, a message will go forth as in the days of Elijah that will turn the faithful toward God and family members toward one another. As the message of Revelation 14:7 goes forth about God as Creator, it is fitting that the creation design for marriage and family be lifted up, even as the creation Sabbath is lifted up.

The subject of home and family was close to the heart of Ellen White. The quotations that follow are indicative of her view of the strategic importance of the Christian home:

"The restoration and uplifting of humanity begins in the home. The work of parents underlies every other. Society is composed

father and mother, parent and child, brother and sister.



of families, and is what the heads of families make it. Out of the heart are the 'issues of life' (Prov. 4:23); and the heart of the community, of the church, and of the nation, is the household. The well-being of society, the success of the church, the prosperity of the nation, depend upon home influences."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 349.

"Our work for Christ is to begin with the family, in the home. . . . By many this home field has been shamefully neglected, and it is time that divine resources and remedies were presented, that this state of evil may be corrected."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 429, 430.

Family ministry reinforces and encourages wholeness in families. It is a ministry of grace that thinks inclusively. Singles and marrieds, intact families, divorcing and divorced families, step-families, nuclear and extended families—all have relationship needs that are within focus. All the possible *ands* that comprise households are worthy targets of our endeavors. Because families are the foundational unit of the church, family ministry seeks to foster closer bonds within the larger family of God. Here indeed is the *and* with a capital "A."

While families benefit from specialized programs especially tailored to their

needs, they are also helped by caring churches that consider the impact on families of all church activities and seek to embed family strengthening features into existing programs. (For a summary of family ministries in the local church, see the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, Revised 2000*, pp. 116, 117, 130, and 131.)

Meeting the challenge of the family today is an enormous task. Happily, many resources abound. The General Conference Department of Family Ministries produces an annual resource called the *Family Ministries Planbook* including program materials for the annual emphases on "Christian Home and Marriage Week" and "Family Togetherness Week." For 2006, the planbook is entitled *Managing God's Resources at Home*. Contact your local conference Family Ministries Director. GC Family Ministries has family life education resources available for downloading on its Web site: <<http://adventistfamilyministries.org/world>>.

**source.org** also stocks a large line of family ministries resources for sale. But the greatest resource of all is caring church leaders who think "family," who put family first in their personal lives and in their service to the church.

A ministry to families is a ministry to the "and"—husband *and* wife, parent *and* child, mother-in-law *and* daughter-in-law, brother *and* sister—creating practical experiences in relational growth. **ED**



#### Karen and Ron Flowers

Department of Family Ministries Directors of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.



a ministry for every woman

# TOUCH a HEART TELL the WORLD

Heather-Dawn Small

During this new quinquennium 2005–2010, the General Conference Women's Ministries Department is focusing on combining evangelism and ministry. We are taking our marching directions from Isaiah 61:1-3 and this quote from E. G. White found in the book *Ministry of Healing*:

"Christ's method ALONE will give true success in reaching people. The Savior mingled with [people] as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. THEN He bade them, 'Follow Me'" (p. 143, emphasis supplied).

This emphasis on evangelism and ministry means that we must change the way we do evangelism. We have been involved in evangelism and in ministry, but to combine the two will result

in even more souls brought to God. It will mean placing more intentional emphasis on our Six Challenge Issues and helping each woman find a ministry that will help women who face these challenges. It will mean helping our women see evangelism in a new way, for God has called us to proclaim to the world Christ's love and to be His touch in this world as we serve Him.

The Six Challenge Issues that impact women around the world are (1) threats to health; (2) a woman's work load; (3) poverty; (4) lack of training and mentoring; (5) abuse; and (6) illiteracy. Interestingly, these issues tie in with the United Nations Eight Millennium Development Goals (see <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>) and with the challenges women face as noted by the Committee on the Status of Women at their Beijing Conference in 1995.

**1. Threats to Health.** A Women's health includes her emotional, social, and physical well-being and is directly affected by social, political, and economic factors. The quality of a woman's health directly impacts on her life and well-being, her family, and society. Yet women around the world are still victims of poor health.

**Ministry Ideas:** Breathe Free for Women, blood pressure/cholesterol programs, osteoporosis prevention, exercise, weight control, vegetarian cooking, nutrition classes, cancer screening/awareness, reproductive health classes, grief and loss support groups, support groups, stress reduction.

**2. A Woman's Workload.** Women around the world and in all cultures face the problem of work overload. Women are either faced with the challenge of doing 90 percent of the world's



agricultural work, which includes long work days, small salaries, and then the additional hours of housework and child-care with limited access to basic necessities; or the balancing act of societal expectations for maintaining an intact and healthy family while achieving in a highly competitive work environment that results in long days, limited rest and recreation, and little time for time with God.

**Ministry Ideas:** Time management, organization seminars, management classes, small business classes, self esteem, Bible study skills, working-mothers seminars.

**3. Poverty.** The Unifem report, "Progress of the World's Women 2005," presents some startling information on this question of women and poverty. Progress for women in this is improving, but very slowly. The report notes that "despite parity in primary education, disparities are still wide in secondary and tertiary education—both increasingly key to new employment opportunities."

**Ministry Ideas:** Small business development, money management seminars, preparing for retirement seminars, professional mentoring, time management, budgeting, widow support groups, debt reduction.

**4. Lack of Training, Mentoring, and Opportunities.** Education for all is a basic

human right. For women to achieve better health, nutrition, and quality of life for themselves and their families, they need equal access to education. Lack of education results in women being trapped in a cycle of poverty with limited options for economic improvement, which results in sentencing their children to chronic poverty and limited education.

**Ministry Ideas:** Leadership training, mentoring programs, communication classes, parliamentary procedures seminars, women's ministries committees, spiritual gifts seminars.

**5. Abuse.** Domestic violence, incest, rape, and battering are all-too-common burdens that women carry. Physical, sexual, and psychological battering happens to small girls, adolescents, single, and married adult women, and elderly women. No stratum of society is immune from the epidemic of violence, and as a church, we believe that tolerance of abuse within the church, is a denial of Christ.

**Ministry Ideas:** Abuse education seminar, women's shelters, support groups, healing seminars.

**6. Illiteracy.** Nearly one billion people in the world are illiterate, one-fifth of the world's population. One out of every three women in the world cannot read

and write. In many developing countries 80 percent of the food is produced by women, and women in rural areas women are mostly unpaid laborers. Statistics show that two-thirds of the world's non-literate population and one-third of all heads of households are women, yet they carry two-thirds of the world's work load.

**Ministry Ideas:** Basic literacy training, computer literacy, second language training programs.

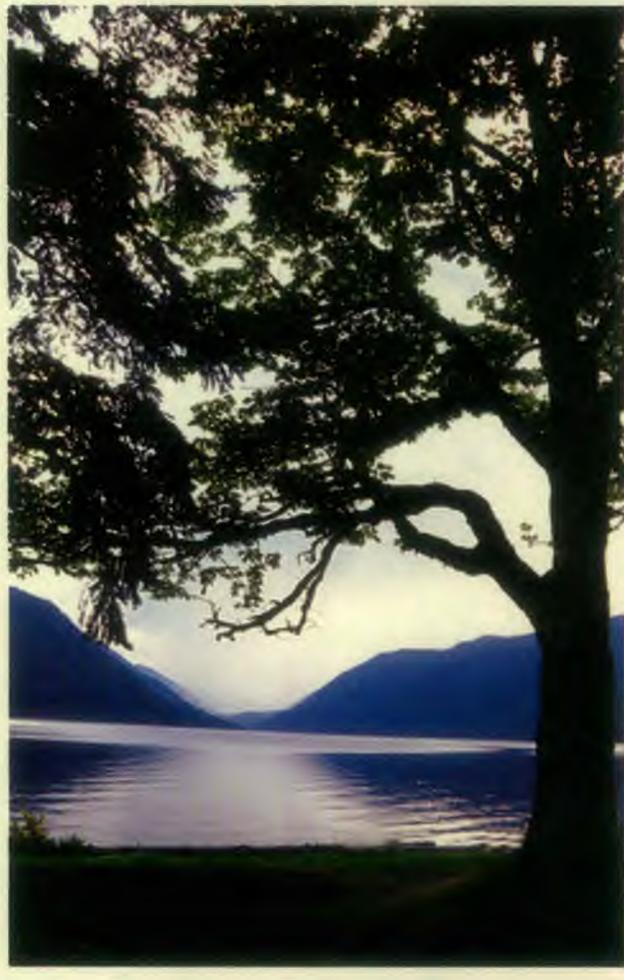
The Women's Ministries Department cannot work alone. We need the support of leadership as we challenge women with their potential to share the good news. Our desire, by God's grace, is to provide ministry ideas that encourage women today to take up their mission as disciples of Jesus Christ. As church leaders today, we can make a difference by talking with one another, supporting one another, and consistently looking beyond the church walls.

The women of this church are eager, ready, and more than willing to do God's work. May God help us to accomplish our task by uniting our efforts as we touch hearts and tell the world! ☩

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**Heather-Dawn Small**

General Conference Women's Ministries  
Director



God brought the Israelites to the banks of the Jordan River in the spring of the year. The melting snows from the mountains had brought the river to flood stage, making it impossible to cross at the usual fording places. Only a miracle from God would make the crossing possible.

# Specializing in the **IMPOSSIBLE**

George E. Knowles

Notice three points in the experience of ancient Israel at the Jordan:

1. God's challenge.
2. The response of God's people.
3. The necessity of spiritual preparation.

In Joshua 1:2, we find God's challenge to His people, "Arise, go over this Jordan." Their response can be summarized in two words: "They removed"

(chap. 3:1). God gave the assignment and His people moved.

It is significant that as they began to move forward, they reached a point in their experience when they were receptive to the admonition, "Sanctify yourselves; for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you" (Joshua 3:5). When we begin to move forward in service for the Lord, we soon realize our need of divine

strength. If we do not stay close to the Lord in prayer and Bible study, we will soon give up in discouragement in our attempts at soul winning.

## Spiritual Preparation

When we who claim to be God's people move out in obedient service for Him, we become more aware of our spiritual



needs. At the same time, we qualify for a greater infilling of the Holy Spirit, which is given for service.

The power that piled up the waters of the Red Sea 40 years before Jordan was the power that opened for the people of God a path through the river. The same God is ready to do wonders today if His people will be committed and willing to receive the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit.

God, then, can communicate His message without human instruments. He does not need us, but we all desperately need the involvement with Him in service. God could have performed a different type of miracle than He did to get the Israelites across the Jordan, but He chose a means that would test the faith of each individual. He gave them a seemingly impossible command, and not until they accepted the challenge did He miraculously intervene to open the way before them. There was no miracle until the people moved forward in response to God's call. Do you see the parallel for our day?

As members of the church, we think our assignment is impossible, and, humanly speaking, it is. When we consider becoming actively involved in a soul-win-

ning project, the devil presents many reasons why it is impossible—physical reasons, economic reasons, social reasons, and reasons of disposition. But when we do what is in our power to do, the miraculous power of God will do the rest.

## Lay Preaching

Sarah Walker attended a lay preachers' institute and caught a vision of what could be done by the small, rural church of which she was a member. The inspiration she received at the institute revived memories of her youth in the West Indies. She remembered the group of laymen who banded together as a soul-winning team. One was the speaker, another had charge of the music, others looked after ushering, advertising, visitation, and so on.

Sarah was the only one from her little church to attend the institute. She went home fired up with enthusiasm, certain that one of the men in the church would be willing to step into the role of lay preacher. But the men had not attended the institute. They had not caught the vision and the inspiration. Finally, in desperation, Sarah asked, "Will you support me if I do the preaching?" The church members assured her of their support.

It seemed impossible—a woman from the West Indies preaching in a conservative rural community with a 99 percent white population.

The meetings were held in a country schoolhouse. After two months of preaching and personal work, seven adults were baptized.

God knew that there was a harvest to be gathered in that little community. He arranged the timing of that lay preachers' institute and planned that Sarah Walker should be there to get the inspiration. God laid on her heart a burden, and she did something about it. Her actions opened the way for God to work and perform miracles of conversion.

## The Mission

When Jesus gave the gospel commission to His little band of disciples, their reaction might easily have been "Impossible!"

To go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature could appear as a physical impossibility; the disciples did not have the means of transportation and communication available to us. It was a numerical impossibility; they were only a handful. It was a financial impossibility; they had no money or material possessions. It was a social impossibility; who would listen to these adherents of a new religion, and these followers of an unknown Jew, a Galilean carpenter?

But Jesus' followers had seen Him command a man with a withered arm—"Stretch forth thine hand" (Matt. 12:13). It looked impossible, but there was a power in the command that made it possible. Jesus' disciples had seen Him command a cripple who couldn't even stand on his feet—"Rise, take up thy bed, and walk" (John 5:8). This, too, seemed impossible, but once again, in the command of Jesus was the power that made it possible.

For a person knowing nothing about the principles of flight, it may seem impossible for a jumbo jet filled with passengers and cargo to leave the ground and fly through the air. But the laws of aerodynamics make the seemingly impossible possible.

When the sister of the Wright brothers received a telegram telling of their first successful flight, it included the message "Home for Christmas." She took the telegram to the editor of the local paper and told him about the flight. He looked at the telegram and said, "I'm so glad your brothers will be home for Christmas."

After she left, he turned to his associate and said, "Who does she think I am? Anyone knows that flying is impossible." That editor missed a news scoop

because he was too quick to say, "Impossible."

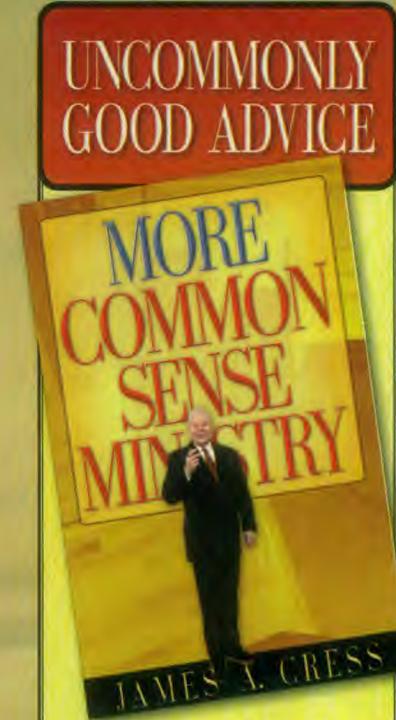
The authority and validity of God's commands are important factors in accomplishing the seemingly impossible. The apostles accepted the command to witness "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea. . . . and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8) on the authority of their Lord. When they were brought before the Jewish leaders for following this command, they declared, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (chap. 5:29). Constrained by the love of Christ, they declared fearlessly, "We are His witnesses" (verse 32). Verse 40 describes how they were beaten and commanded not to speak in the name of Jesus. However, there was a command from a higher authority, and the record says, "They ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (verse 42).

The apostles who were stirred to action by Jesus' command to witness were fishermen, tradesmen, and businessmen. They did not have the opportunity to receive formal theological training, but they had the privilege of association with Jesus. That association impressed upon their minds the urgency of carrying the gospel to everyone, everywhere.

You and I have the privilege of spending time with Jesus in Bible study and prayer, and out of such communion will grow the conviction to do our part. **ED**

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This article is excerpted and adapted from the practical resource, *How To Help Your Church Grow* by George E. Knowles. The entire book is available for purchase at <[www.ministerialassociation.com](http://www.ministerialassociation.com)>.



More than three decades of practical wisdom and insight gleaned from experience in ministry and leadership, summarized in language that is clear and applicable to every pastor's experience. This book is an indispensable tool to the pastor who is searching for practical and proven solutions to the everyday challenges of feeding God's flock.

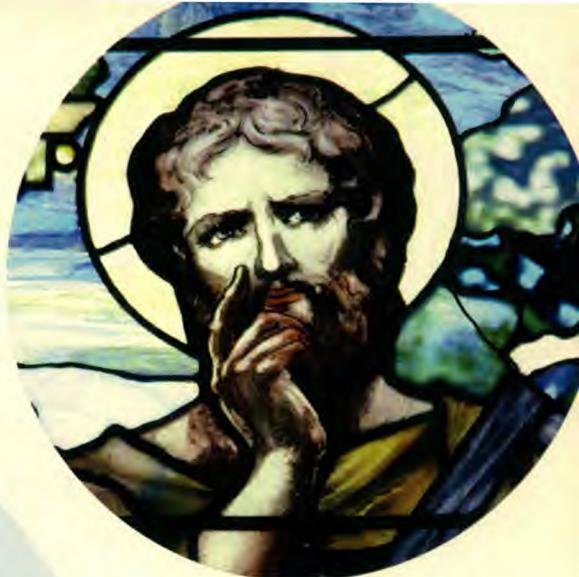
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Sharon Cress

# Laborers together with GOD

The apostle Paul is one of my favorite biblical authors because so much of his writing is so relevant to our lives today. In 1 Corinthians 3:9, Paul gives us both an admonition and a promise when he says, "We are laborers together with God." I believe this text can be specifically applied to you and me as the spouse of a church leader in several ways.

1. Sometimes, as the spouse of a church leader, we need to remind ourselves that we, too, are "laborers" in ministry. We are not just the immobile half of a marriage to a leader, standing in the background waiting for them to serve out their elected position. Although we are not obligated to serve the church because our spouses have chosen to serve an elected responsibility, we are obligated to serve the church because we love God. This is so important to remember. We do not actively serve because we love the church or love our spouse.

We are all gifted by God and privileged to use the talents to His glory simply because we love Jesus. This must be our only motivation. If this is not our reason

to serve, we are walking down a path that has the potential to lead us into bitterness, resentment, and a load too heavy for us to carry.

2. We must remember we are in this together with the Lord. This is the promise part. God has not asked us to bear the workload without Him. He really does not want us working on our own without His presence and guidance. He desires that He work with and through us.

I don't much like dusting our house, and it seems like a full-time job to stay ahead of it. I could look at my dust mitt and demand that it dust the house all by itself without my presence, but not a lot would be accomplished; probably the only place that would be dust-free is where the mitt is lying. But by putting my hand into the glove, I can be accomplished a lot. The lesson: We need God to be inside everything we do. Then and only then will it be done to His priorities and accomplished in His way.

3. Paul knew the importance of earthly friendships. In his writings, he consis-

tently remembered his friends who were church leaders and kept in contact with them. They prayed for each other. They supported each other.

North of San Francisco, California, are the beautiful Muir Woods. Great coastal redwoods tower high toward heaven and make a natural cathedral of trees. Many of these trees are more than 1,000 years old. But you don't find them growing in isolation—they are clustered together and actually hold each other up. Most of their roots are entangled, and this network provides them with support during raging storms. This is why they have survived so many years—they have clung together for strength during the bad times. As spouses of leaders, we need to uphold each other; support each other, and pray for each other.

Let's again remember in a new way that "we are laborers together with God."<sup>ED</sup>

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Sharon Cress

General Conference, Shepherdess and Pastoral Families

In *Manuscript Releases*, volume 14, pages 23 and 24, could Ellen White be suggesting that Christ and the Holy Spirit are the same persons?

The text says: "Cumbered with humanity, Christ could not be in every place personally; therefore it was altogether for their advantage that He should leave them, go to His Father, and send the Holy Spirit to be His successor on earth. The Holy Spirit is Himself divested of the personality of humanity and independent thereof. He would represent Himself as present in all places by His Holy Spirit, as the Omnipresent. 'But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall (although unseen by you) teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you' [John 14:26]. 'Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will come not unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you'" [John 16:7]."

To understand this statement it's indispensable that we correctly interpret the second and third sentences, which, in the English original, appear the following way: "The Holy Spirit is Himself divested of the personality of humanity and independent thereof. He would represent Himself as present in all places by His Holy Spirit, as the Omnipresent." Isolated from its context, these sentences end up becoming ambiguous. Consequently, the reflexive pronoun "Himself" that appears in the expression "the Holy Spirit is Himself" could be interpreted as if referring to the Holy Spirit or to Christ. If we choose the first alternative, then we'll have to understand the sentence the following way: The Holy Spirit Himself is divested of the personality of humanity and independent thereof. But, in this case, the pronouns "He," "Himself," and "His" of the following sentence would be interpreted as also referring to the Holy Spirit, which would force us to understand the sentence as follows: The Holy Spirit would represent Himself as present in all places by His Holy Spirit, as Omnipresent. But such interpretation is deprived of meaning and, therefore, unacceptable.

Despite any ambiguity, the context confirms that in both sentences the pronouns "He," "His," and "Himself" are referring to Christ and not to the Holy Spirit. Thus, the sentences may be understood the following way: "The Holy Spirit is Christ divested of the personality of humanity and independent thereof. Christ would represent Himself as

present in all places by His Holy Spirit, as the Omnipresent." This interpretation is confirmed by a parallel declaration found in *The Desire of Ages*, p. 669, which states that "the Holy Spirit is Christ's representative, but divested of the personality of humanity, and independent thereof."

Some claim that, when affirming that the Holy Spirit is Christ, Ellen White would be affirming that the Holy Spirit is a mere uncharacterized energy that flows from Christ. But such interpretation is not confirmed by the context in which the above-mentioned expressions appear. By attesting that the Holy Spirit is Christ "divested of the personality of humanity, and independent thereof," Ellen White suggests a clear distinction between the divine nature of the Holy Spirit and the divine human nature of Christ. Moreover, the statements that the Holy Spirit would be sent by the Father in the name of Christ (John 14:26) and by Christ Himself (John 16:7), quoted in the same paragraph, affirm that the Holy Spirit is distinct, both from the Father and from the Son. To be sent by both people, the Holy Spirit must have a personality distinct from both of them, for no one sends himself.

When suggesting that the Holy Spirit is Christ, Ellen White employed an expression to accentuate the meaning similar to the one Christ used when He said, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). These expressions emphasize the essential unity between the Holy Spirit and Christ, and between Christ and the Father respectively, without denying the distinction of personality of each one of them. Hence, by saying that the presence of Holy Spirit in the world as Christ's representative would not represent any loss for the disciples. No matter how much people may seek endorsements for their anti-trinitarian theories in the declaration of the *Manuscript Releases*, such attempts will never be able to obscure the clear teachings of the Bible and of Ellen White about Divinity as formed by three distinct Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. ED

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**Dr. Alberto R. Timm**, from the Ellen G. White Research Center in Brazil, provided the answer to this question. The purpose of this section is to clear any doubts about subjects related to church doctrines and ministerial questions.

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# Far From Home, Close to God

## Daniel 1

### INTRODUCTION

A. The prophetic book of Daniel was written for our time. Its prophecies have more meaning to the present generation.

1. The angel Gabriel told Daniel specifically, "Seal the book, until the time of the end" (Dan. 12:4).

2. The biblical prophet Daniel describes in vivid details the world events that are now occurring. His predictions, covering 2,500 years of history, clearly describe the world events since his time (600 years before Christ) until our time.

B. Today we'll study Daniel's story and the special way God guided his life. We'll see our own story in the life of this son of God, and we'll learn how he attained spiritual strength to be victorious. God wants you and me to be victorious.

1. Far from home, in a foreign land, subject to pressures caused by mental manipulation, Daniel triumphed. He triumphed over the enemy's temptations. You can also triumph!

C. Daniel, chapter 1, introduces the theme of the entire book: A great con-

flict between good and evil. He shows God's divine power in an uncommon manner. God is never surprised. He is never caught unprepared. His plans triumph even in situations that seem to be completely unfavorable.

### I. FAR FROM HOME

A. The first verse in Daniel starts with a great conflict in the Middle East. Two nations were involved: on one side, Babylon; on the other side, Judah.

1. In 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, fiercely attacked Jerusalem. These two cities represented two lifestyles, two ideologies, two philosophies.

2. Babylon was the center of the rebellion against the true God. It represented apostasy and a false religious system based on the worship of idols in opposition to God's law.

3. Jerusalem, the city of Daniel, represents loyalty, faithfulness, and fidelity. It represented worship and obedience to the true God.

B. In the first verse of the book of Daniel, this conflict between the forces of good and evil is introduced—the great conflict

between good and evil that started in Heaven (Rev. 12:7-9) and continues on Earth.

1. Just like Daniel and his friends, we live inside this same great conflict between good and evil.

C. Captive hostages Something very sad happened: Some people in Jerusalem were taken hostage to Babylon. There was nothing more cruel to a person than to have his/her freedom taken away.

1. Daniel was a teenager when he was taken as a slave. He was sent far from home, far from his family, to a foreign country in all senses. The food was different, the language was different, the habits, the religion—everything was different.

2. He felt lost in that situation. He must have been afraid and he probably cried, missing the loved ones at home.

3. Sin has also separated us from God. Like Daniel, we live in a world that is not our home. Satan kept us hostage. Sin has enslaved people and taken from them one of the most beautiful things God had given them: freedom.

D. The Hebrew young men whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into captivity were special (read Dan. 1:3, 4): noble young men, without blemish, skillful in all wisdom.

1. Nebuchadnezzar had made provisions to change their identities (read Dan. 1:6, 7). The king intended to change their characters and personalities.

2. Nebuchadnezzar began a selective process of "brain washing," changing the names of the Hebrew young man to names that represented Babylonian pagan gods. Thus, he wished to destroy their previous identities.

## II. CLOSE TO GOD

A. Daniel made a decision that changed the course of his life. (Read Dan. 1:8).

1. The word “resolve” means “to determine” or “to decide.” The power that reigns inside our minds is our will. When we choose to do what’s right, God gives us moral power so we may choose between good and evil.

2. The Holy Spirit guides us to make the best choices and, when we decide, He gives us power to accomplish it.

B. Even far from home, Daniel remained close to God. He decided that it didn't matter what happened to him—he would

be with God. This made the difference in the life of Daniel and will make a difference in your life also.

1. Daniel chose not to get contaminated.  
(See Dan. 1:12).

2. Daniel's faith led him to reason that God would honor his choice. He knew God would never disappoint him.

C. Miraculous results happened:

1. Physical results (Dan. 1:15)—Their appearance was better.

2. Mental results (Dan. 1:17)—God gave them learning and skill in all letters and wisdom.

3. Political results (Dan. 1:19, 20)—They stood before the king.

4. They were found ten times wiser than everyone else

## CONCLUSION

Daniel's faithfulness to God brought him blessings. When we make the right decisions, when we do what's right because it is right, we may also expect abundant spiritual blessings from a loving heavenly Father. **ED**

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SERMON NOTES:



## SERMON 2

# God in Control of History

## Daniel 2

### INTRODUCTION

In Daniel 2, God reveals Himself as the only one who really knows the future. In this chapter, God clearly outlines 2,500 years of history in advance, previewing exactly the rise and fall of empires. It is impressive to observe God's ability to guide the nations' destiny.

If He is wise enough to predict the future and powerful enough to orchestrate the rise and fall of nations, He can certainly guide our own personal lives. We can all trust in God.

### I. THE DREAM OF KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR

A. Read Dan. 2:1-15. That night, an uncommon dream disturbed Nebuchadnezzar. The following morning, he summoned the magicians and enchanters to tell him the dream and its interpretation.

1. The wise men of Babylon completely failed. God, miraculously, hid the dream from Nebuchadnezzar's mind, and he could not remember what he had dreamed about. If the king had told the dream, the magicians and enchanters would have been able to

invent an interpretation that would convince Nebuchadnezzar.

2. They all failed to tell him the dream and its interpretation. The king, furious, condemned to death all wise men of Babylon.

### II. GOD REVEALS THE FUTURE

A. Read Dan. 2:16-30. Daniel was the first one they sought to slay, because he was part of the group of wise men who stood before the king. But Daniel didn't even know what was happening and, at that moment, Daniel only asked for some time and left to consult with God (Dan. 2:16-18).

1. Here we start to understand one of the keys which opens the doors to the solution to our problems: prayer. It is in praying that you may find answers about the future, about your life.

B. God has wisdom and power.

God revealed in Nebuchadnezzar's dream the history of the empires of this world and what shall come to pass in the last days of Earth's history. Nebuchadnezzar's dream focuses on the

end time. He predicts events that occur during the closing of Earth's history.

### III. THE DREAM AND THE INTERPRETATION (DANIEL 2:31-35)

#### A. Babylon

1. Gold is an appropriate symbol for Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar ruled the world since 605 B.C. until 539 B.C. Located in Iraq in modern days, about 62 miles south of Baghdad, the city which was the capital of Babylon became the center of the most powerful nation in the Middle East at the time. Its most important god, Bel-Marduk, was made of solid gold. His golden image depicted him sitting on a golden throne beside a golden lampstand, in front of a golden table in a temple with a golden dome. The prophet Isaiah also calls Babylon "the city of gold" (Isaiah. 14:4).

2. However, Babylon would not last forever. It would be defeated by another power.

B. Mede and Persia. The Medes and Persians defeated the Babylonians in 539 B.C. Cyrus, the general who commanded

the Mede and Persian army, was foretold by name 150 years before, in Isaiah 44:28 and Isaiah 45:1. The Mede and Persian Empire ruled the world from 539 B.C. until 331 B.C.

C. Greece. The Greek nation defeated the Medes and Persians. Greece ruled the world from 331 B.C. until 168 B.C. Alexander the Great conquered the world at 33 years of age.

D. Rome. The Romans conquered the Greeks in 168 B.C. The Roman Empire ruled the world during the time of Christ. Cesar Augustus, Roman emperor, decreed that everyone should pay taxes. A Roman tribunal judged Jesus, and Roman soldiers nailed Him to the cross.

2. The prophet Daniel foretold that the Roman Empire would be divided. The division of the Roman Empire occurred from 351 until 476 A.D. No fifth empire defeated the Romans. Rome was divided exactly the way the prophet had foretold. The barbarian tribes from the north invaded the Roman Empire, and it was divided in separate, distinct states. The European nations of today—France, Germany, England, Italy—were foretold in this frightful dream.

## CONCLUSION

A. Prophecy fulfilled. In Daniel 2:43, the Word of God is clear. Those thirteen words "They (the divided nations of Rome) will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay" have stopped each pretender from conquering as the centuries pass by. The Biblical prophecies are exact; the future is with God.

B. Hope in sight. Read Dan. 2:44. 1. The return of Christ is the hope that is before our eyes. Christ is the Stone (I Cor. 10:4). Soon, the evil forces will be crushed, broken in pieces and destroyed.

2. Soon, the heavens will open and we will see Jesus coming to establish His kingdom forever.

C. Pray today: Lord Jesus, I choose to follow you in all things and be one of your children. I want to be remembered when you come in Your Kingdom. Lord, I give You my life today, together with those habits that are not pleasing to Your will. **ED**

SERMON NOTES:



## SERMON 3

# The Fire Will Not Burn You

Daniel 3

### INTRODUCTION

A. For each truth in the Bible, there is a counterfeit. Since the creation of the world, the devil has been determined to deceive people. Since the beginning, his work has been the same: to deceive.

He is the father of lies (John 8:44). He lied when he deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:4), and he has been deceiving people since then. In contrast, Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). His will exposes Satan's lies. Truth is something worth living for, it's something worth dying for! Our faithfulness to Jesus and to His truth will finally determine our eternal destiny.

B. Our Bible text for today reveals the cost three young men were willing to pay for the truth. Instead of accepting a counterfeit, disobeying God, and being deceived by Satan's lies, they put their lives at risk. Their faith took them to the fire, and the fire did not burn them. Today we will discover how we can have this faith that challenges death at the end of this world's history.

### I. CHALLENGED BY A COUNTERFEIT

A. Read Daniel 3:1. You may remember that, in chapter 2, God gave Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, a dream revealing the future. In chapter 3, the king built his own counterfeit image. In opposition to God's vision for the future, Nebuchadnezzar intended to hold the future in his own hands. He intended for his kingdom to be forever. He wished to take God's place.

B. God revealed the future as being dominated by empires of gold, silver, bronze, and iron. But the statue that Nebuchadnezzar built was only made of gold, indicating his desire for Babylon to last forever.

C. Everyone should worship the statue. Read Daniel 3:3-5.

1. Nebuchadnezzar summoned all representatives of his kingdom. The decree was universal. The main subject of this growing conflict was centered in worship. The false and the true crashed into

each other. In a moving drama on the plain of Dura, the king's loyalty crashed into God's loyalty.

2. Whoever did not worship the image would be cast into the fiery furnace. The three Hebrew young men were in a very difficult position. Staying loyal to God meant being disloyal to Nebuchadnezzar.

D. In Acts 5:29, the apostle Peter gives us a very important instruction for when we are in a situation of conflict, between obeying God or going against His will. He said: "We must obey God rather than men."

### II. THE PRICE OF COMMITTING TO GOD

A. Read Daniel 3:16-18. They decided to be faithful to God. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's answer was immediate: "We do not fear to answer thee in this matter" (verse 16). They were determined. Procrastination, hesitation, or delay would have made them vulnerable to Satan's temptation.

1. The only safe way when facing temptation is to take a decisive stand for what is right.
  2. As a result of their decision (Dan. 3:19-21), they were bound and cast into the fiery furnace.
  3. Apparently, they would face death alone. But looking carefully at the flames, hoping to see the Hebrews immediately consumed, Nebuchadnezzar was astonished because he did not see three, but four men inside the furnace. And they were not bound, but free.

## CONCLUSION

- A. Nebuchadnezzar saw four unbound men—not three bound men.

1. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, entered the fiery furnace and miraculously freed the Hebrews.

2. The only thing that was burned was the rope that bound them.

B. Jesus is present in the trials of our lives. In life's torments, Jesus is also present. When we walk through the flames, He is present.

C. Here are some wonderful promises of encouragement for difficult occasions:

1. "Fear not, for I am with you, be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand" (Isa. 41:10).
  2. "Cast all your anxieties on him, for He cares about you" (1 Peter. 5:7).
  3. "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him" (Rom. 8:28).

D. When we face the most dreadful moments, He is present. He is the Son of God. He became a human and lived in human flesh, so He does understand our sufferings and longings.

You may even be thrown in the fiery furnaces of problems and hardships in this life, but you will never be alone. Jesus will be with you, and the fire will not burn you.<sup>ED</sup>

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SERMON NOTES:



# From Glory to the Bottom of the Pit

## Daniel 4

### INTRODUCTION

A. God often reveals Himself to us in surprising ways. Sometimes He speaks with a soft, quiet voice, trying to lead us to the right path. At other times, with an insistent voice through our conscience, He tries to convict us of sin.

B. Sometimes God's voice is loud.

1. It interrupts our routine. It makes us stop in our tracks. It shocks us, especially when life seems to be disintegrating, and everything seems to be upside down.

2. We may even be in danger of losing the things for which we have struggled. And when we least expect it, God surprises us. He enters our life in an amazing way.

C. That happened to Nebuchadnezzar, and it may happen to us as well.

### I. NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S TESTIMONY

A. Read Daniel 4:1-3. Nebuchadnezzar found the source of inner peace.

He found the One who provides stability and inner tranquility (Isa. 26:3). He seemed to be bubbling over with gratitude to God. The life of the pagan king was changed.

1. Nebuchadnezzar was changed by God's grace. He needed to tell his story. He wanted to share the greatness of the God who changed his life.

2. If God changed Nebuchadnezzar, He can change us too, no matter how many mistakes we have made. If your life is full of misfortune, God can change you.

### II. TRAGEDY PREDICTED

A. Nebuchadnezzar described how happy and calm his life was before he learned about God (read Daniel 4:4).

1. It is very easy to become proud when things go well in our lives. Occasionally, God permits setbacks and adversities to come upon us in order to lead us to Him.

2. Nebuchadnezzar had a new dream that predicted that an adversity would befall him. Full of pride, at the height

of his power, Nebuchadnezzar was chopped down. We can learn a lesson from his experience.

B. God is in control of everything, and we need to admit that we depend on Him.

1. In his dream about the tree, Nebuchadnezzar saw the collapse of his own kingdom. The chopping down of the tree represented Nebuchadnezzar's fall from God's favor, and the loss of his kingdom.

C. For seven years ("seven times"), the king would experience an insanity that would make him reason and act like a beast. It is difficult to imagine the brilliant and popular king of Babylon wandering the fields like a wild beast. Afflicted with temporary insanity, he let his nails and his hair grow, and he did not bathe. He felt better among the beasts than in the royal court.

1. What a contrast with his previous life in the palace! The king got to the "bottom of the pit." His life became a total disaster, an absolute wreck. There

was no place to look except up. There was no one to turn . . . except God.

become confused and not know where to turn.

SERMON NOTES:

### III. GOD'S APPEAL TO REPENTANCE

A. What advice did God give the king?  
(Read Daniel 4:27.)

1. The judgments of God may be avoided if we repent. It is something very dangerous to continue, by "our own" will, to disobey God. The lack of God's blessing allows tragedies to come into our lives.

B. Full of pride, at the height of power,  
Nebuchadnezzar was chopped down.

1. What a lesson to us! Neglecting to recognize God in our lives may result in our becoming unprotected victims of tragedies.

2. Only when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, recognized the true God did his sanity return. The king looked up to heaven and recognized the God of the Universe. And his life was suddenly changed.

B. Victory will come only to the one whose repentant heart is willing to recognize that all that he possesses and all that he may obtain in this life come from God. Victory will only come to you if you admit that God is in control of everything.

C. God extends to us an invitation in Isaiah 45:22: "Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other."

1. God invites us to come to Him. In Him we will find the safety that we long for.

2. Life is so fragile. Our work, our homes, our marriages, and our health offer very little safety. We may lose everything in a moment, at a blink of an eye. In God and in Him alone may we find strength, meaning, and purpose for our lives.

3. Today, wouldn't you like to run to Jesus' arms? Wouldn't you like to feel His loving embrace and hear His quieting voice, saying, "You are Mine. I will never forsake you"? **ED**

## CONCLUSION

A. In a sense, the story of Nebuchadnezzar is my story and your story! We too, need the grace of God. We may also

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# WHY LAY P R E A C H I N G ?

**Preaching is important to Christians because it is important to Christ.**

My father was dying. Doctors had given up and sent him home to be with his family. He got word to each of his four children that he wanted us to come. I was living in Texas and he was in Oregon. I couldn't afford the trip; besides, I was very busy. But of course I went anyway. Dad had first priority.

With his family around him, Dad slipped into a coma. There was nothing more we could do for him, and I left to fulfill a speaking appointment 2,000 miles away. Before my assignment was completed, word came that Dad had died, and the family was called back for his funeral. By now I was really

behind in my work and even less able to afford the trip. But of course I went anyway. Dad's death had first priority.

It was then that, for the first time, I really understood Jesus' words in Luke 9. He had invited a man to follow Him, but the fellow excused himself by insisting that he must first bury his father. Jesus replied, "Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and *preach* the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:60, KJV). Jesus' words had always seemed a little heartless to me, but now I understood. He wasn't being disrespectful of family responsibilities; He was talking about priorities. He had illustrated the importance of

preaching by comparing it to a father's burial, the very thing we naturally give first priority. He had picked the thing that was the most plausible excuse possible for neglecting preaching and proclamation of His kingdom; He said that that excuse was not good enough. In other words, preaching must come before everything. With Jesus, preaching had first priority.

Jesus not only taught that we should give preaching a high priority, it was central to His own ministry. Preaching, or proclaiming, is mentioned three times in His Nazareth sermon where He lays out His methods of ministry. "The Spirit



He had illustrated the importance of preaching by comparing it to a father's burial, the very thing we naturally give first priority.

of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to *preach* deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To *preach* the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18, 19, KJV). If preaching was that central to Jesus' work, it must be central to ours.

*Preaching is important to church leaders because it is important to church members.* A frustrated physician wrote to me on behalf of other worshipers, pleading that the one who preaches be "someone who senses the deep spiritual hunger we experience. Someone who has a kind of sensitive awareness of the devotedness of people who come to church week after week seeking food, yet too often whose efforts are rewarded with scarcely crumbs. Someone impregnated with the vibrant meaning of 'feeding the flock.'"

On safari in Africa, we watched from our vehicle as a pride of lions relaxed under the trees. I counted 17. Some were asleep with their legs in the air. The young were playing with one another and crawling over the adults. Why such

a peaceful scene? The guide explained, "When they're full, they're at peace. When they get hungry, they'll kill." You see hungry animals fight. If there's fighting going on between your church members, feed them. Hungry animals get weak and sometimes even die. If church members are growing weak or dropping out altogether, feed them. Good preaching feeds your people, keeping them strong and at peace.

*Preaching is neglected by Adventists.* It's not that we mean to. Historically, we have encouraged congregations to keep the pulpit at the center of the church platform to symbolize that preaching is central to our worship. But we may not have lived up to our intentions as well as we ought.

My father was a Seventh-day Adventist pastor. I literally grew up in an Adventist pew, always assuming that Adventists preached more sermons than other churches, and that our preaching was somewhat superior and exceptionally biblical. Then I began work on a Master's Degree and chose for my thesis to attend the principal worship services both in Adventist and other

Protestant churches. I listened to and analyzed 50 typical contemporary sermons. I was a bit shocked to learn that SDA preachers did not quote from the Bible more than the average. Adventist congregations did not use their Bibles more in worship.

Later, in conducting preaching seminars for clergy of all faiths, I often asked how many sermons their congregations expected weekly. I typically got the most votes for three—Sunday morning, Sunday night, and prayer meeting. Adventist congregations may expect only one or two.

Actually, Adventism carries some built-in temptations to neglect preaching. One temptation is that our message is so exceptional that we worry less about telling it well. We seem to assume that the message is so strong that it's not too serious if the telling is weak.

A second temptation results from our having a monopoly on Sabbath worship. If Sunday worshipers don't feel fed in their church, they may start attending across the street at another Sunday church. Sabbath worshipers usually have no choice but us. We dislike us-



ing the word "competition" in regards to preaching. Nevertheless, human nature being what it is, a little competition tends to improve the product. Communism's failure around the world has proven dramatically that, without competition, performance deteriorates.

*Preaching is rewarding.* It may be the hardest work you'll ever love. The sitting down to prepare is difficult for all of us. But when you step down from the pulpit knowing that God has used you to help someone take at least a tiny step toward Jesus, you thrill with excitement and know the rewards are well worth the work.

Preaching is important. But what about lay preaching?

## Lay Preaching Is Important

On any given Sabbath around the world, perhaps as many as 80 percent of Adventist sermons preached are preached by lay preachers—usually, but not always, by local church elders.

All elders may not be preachers, but the Bible suggests that they should be "able to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2), and teaching is a basic part of preaching. Paul further counseled elders, "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). Elders are shepherds, and a principal work of a shepherd, is to feed the flock. However, lay persons have a serious disadvantage in preaching, for most have had little or no training.

## Lay Preaching in New Testament Times

Christianity began as a lay movement. Even Jesus did not have formal theological training. The apostles were working men whose only training was on-the-job training. Yet Jesus set them aside "that he might send them out to preach" (Mark 3:14; see also Matthew. 10:7 and Luke 9:2.)

A few decades later, clergy made a sharp separation between themselves and the laity. It was eventually assumed that

only clergy could be trusted to teach and preach. But the fire of Pentecost went out. Down through church history, when only clergy were presumed capable of speaking for the Lord, the church has always grown cold.

## Lay Preaching Women

Women have historically played an active role in the mediation of salvation. Deborah, Judith, Esther, Priscilla, Tabitha, and Lydia are a few Bible examples. Paul insists that Christ has broken down every barrier that divides people, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). Romans 16 lists many women whom the Holy Spirit had called to special ministries in the early church.

But were any women preachers? We know there were women prophets in the New Testament church. For example, Acts 21:9 says Philip had four "daughters who prophesied." Paul insisted that a woman must wear a head covering when she "prays or prophesies" (1 Cor. 11:5). Foley suggests, "This reference seems to indicate rather clearly that women not only spoke in the liturgical assembly but, since prophets, as we know from other early texts such as the *Didache*, offered the Eucharistic prayer and gave what we today call the sermon or homily, women prophets might well have filled these roles" (Foley, p. 66).

Whatever reservations Paul had about women preaching were not because of some Christian standard regarding women. Rather, he did not want Christianity to become unnecessarily controversial by going contrary to the standards of the

surrounding society. When social standards did allow it, God reached down and picked women to speak for Him. One was Ellen White, whom He chose to be His special spokeswoman in the end time. Mrs. White never received ministerial training or ministerial ordination, yet through both pen and pulpit, God used her mightily. Who is to say that the Holy Spirit cannot do the same with other lay women preachers?

## **Historically Adventism Began with Lay Preaching**

William Miller, though never a Seventh-day Adventist, is considered to be the father of the Advent Movement. And Miller was a farmer! Born into a frontier farm family of 16 children, he was able to attend school for just six years, and then only during the three winter months when farm work was slowest. Becoming a farmer, he began teaching the Advent message as a lay preacher. Although he eventually received a license to preach, Miller never really left the farm.

Like many other lay preachers, he stubbornly resisted the call to preach. For eight years he argued with God that he was not used to public speaking, that he was not educationally qualified, that no one would listen (Knight, p. 43). But when he acquiesced, God's calling was proven, for Miller's preaching produced conversions from the very beginning.

The list of lay preachers who joined Miller in preaching the Advent message is almost limitless.

## **Theologically, Adventism Supports Lay Preaching**

Adventists believe that every church member should have received the Holy Spirit and that everyone receiving the Holy Spirit receives some gift(s) to be used in performing some ministry for Christ (1 Cor. 12:7, 11). To say we have no spiritual gift would be to say we have no Holy Spirit.

The three principal lists of spiritual gifts are found in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4. Among these gifts are those most helpful to preaching: teaching, probably the primary gift for preaching; exhorting or encouraging; wisdom; knowledge; discernment; and possibly even prophesying.

The purpose of spiritual gifts is "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Eph. 4:12). Peter says that each of us is responsible for making the right use of our gifts. "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others" (1 Peter 4:10). Laity given the spiritual gifts needed for preaching are responsible for using them.

It is theologically wrong and logically absurd to assume that only clergy have been given the gifts conducive to effective preaching. It is just as wrong to assume that every pastor has all the preaching gifts.

Laity given those preaching gifts that their pastors lack are responsible for using those gifts in such a way that the church body is benefited by every gift

the Holy Spirit has placed in the congregation. No pastor is good at everything. Supportive congregations, instead of criticizing, find others in the church family who can make up for the pastor's lack by exercising the gifts the pastor was never given.

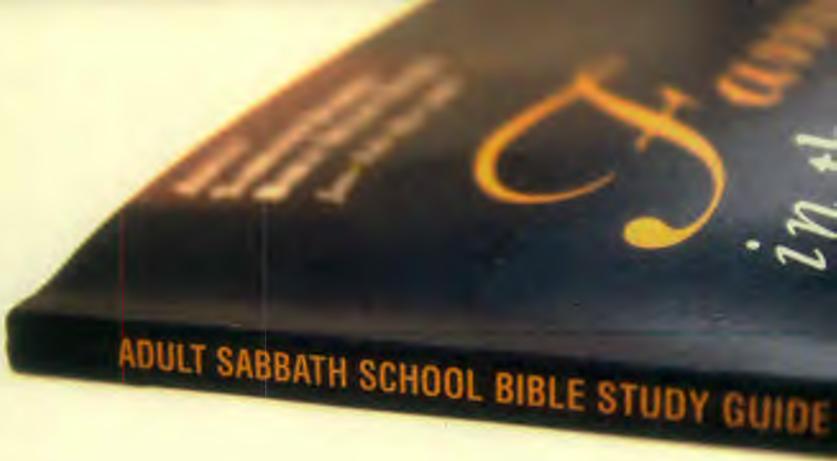
## **Practically, Adventism Needs Lay Preaching**

The SDA church is growing as never before. It took us 107 years before our membership reached one million in 1955. Now, we are baptizing a million new members every two years. We have about 20,000 ministers available to serve approximately 14 million members. When we subtract those ministers in non-pastoral positions, it's obvious that we don't have enough pastors to go around.

Lay preachers are needed, but they need to take their preaching seriously so they can preach effectively. Ellen White encourages the lay preacher, "Thus the message of the third angel will be proclaimed. As the time comes for it to be given with greatest power, the Lord will work through humble instruments, leading the minds of those who consecrate themselves to His service. The laborers will be qualified rather by the unction of His Spirit than by the training of literary institutions. Men of faith and prayer will be constrained to go forth with holy zeal, declaring the words which God gives them" (*Great Controversy*, p. 606). ED

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This article is excerpted and adapted from the practical resource, *Successful Lay Preaching* by W. Floyd Bresee, Ph.D. The entire book is available for purchase at <[www.ministerialassociation.com](http://www.ministerialassociation.com)>.



# 1852–2060 SABBATH SCHOOL

## WHERE IT CAME FROM AND WHERE IT'S GOING

Garry B. Swanson

In world history, the year 1853 was not particularly eventful. Buenos Aires gained its independence from Argentina, only to be reunited again six years later. The first train in Asia was completed in India—between Bombay and Tanna. A train of another kind, the *Underground Railroad*, was formed by Harriet Tubman, a system organized to aid the escape of slaves from the U.S. South through various communities northward to freedom in Canada. One of the major stations along the way was Rochester, New York, which in the very same year was also the location of a significant event in the history of Adventism.

In 1853, only a few years after the first group of Sabbathkeeping Adventists was formed in Washington, New Hampshire,

James White organized the first regular Sabbath School in Rochester. In 1852, estimating an informal membership of about 1,000 in the state of New York, White had written a series of 19 lessons appearing in the new *Youth's Instructor*. He authored some of these earliest lessons "in the form of questions and answers" as he traveled in a covered carriage with his wife and three-year-old son, Edson, throughout New England. Ellen White describes how he composed much of this material during noon stops; while the horse was feeding, he used the "dinner box" or the top of his hat as a desk to write on.

From its inception Sabbath School has focused on four emphases that remain essential: fellowship development, com-

munity outreach, Bible study, and foreign mission. A solid balance of these elements characterizes the most vital Sabbath Schools around the world. Together they comprise a rich program of discipleship.

- As local members grow closer together in small groups, they help one another to grow spiritually as individuals, to hold one another accountable in positive Christian relationships. Potlucks, picnics, socials, and a variety of other outlets bring members into closer relationship with Jesus and with each other.

"Jesus, the divine Teacher, assured His disciples of His love toward them. He assumed human nature for no other pur-

pose than to display to men the mercy, the love, and the goodness of God in providing for the salvation and happiness of His creatures" (*Testimonies on Sabbath School*, p. 39). In the family of God, there are no outsiders.

- Vibrant Sabbath Schools also provide rich spiritual growth through an array of community outreach projects: vacation Bible schools, branch Sabbath Schools, hospital and nursing home visitation, singing bands, and a host of other creative approaches to the community. "The object of Sabbath School work should be the ingathering of souls" (*Testimonies on Sabbath School Work*, p. 47).

Personal ministries have always been an integral part of the vitality of any Sabbath School, and members are ever seeking new ways to represent Christ in their communities. The view from Sabbath School is outward!

- The study of God's Word forms the very heart and center of Sabbath School. "The prayer of Christ for His disciples was, 'Sanctify them through Thy truth: The word is truth'" (*Review and Herald*, March 4, 1884).

When members interact with Scripture and with one another, they are exposed to the everyday value of the Bible in drawing them into closer relationship with Jesus and with the world around them. Where else can they go for answers to the questions that occur to any half-awake viewer of the six o'clock news?

- Throughout its history the focus of Sabbath School on foreign

mission has inspired creative and exciting projects that have impacted the far corners of the earth. "God's people have a mighty work before them, a work that must continually rise to greater prominence. . . . [They] are not to cease their labors until they shall encircle the world" (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 23, 24).

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering, weekly mission stories, and *Mission Spotlight* have focused attention on ministry needs around the world. In 1890 Sabbath School offerings were the sole source for the building of the *Pitcairn*, a schooner used for ten years to transport missionaries across the Pacific Ocean. The heart of Sabbath School's emphasis on world mission beats north and south, east and west.

Rooted firmly on these timeless four emphases, from its beginning in 1853, Sabbath School membership has exploded from a handful of believers in upstate New York to an estimated 14 million today. Worldwide, in fact, attendance at Sabbath School each week exceeds that of the worship service. This underscores well Ellen White's assertion that "the influence growing out of Sabbath School work should

improve and enlarge the church" (*Testimonies on Sabbath School Work*, p. 29).

The General Conference Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department provides a rich resource of creative initiatives and activities to encourage discipline of church members at <http://cq.adventist.org/cooltools/cooltools.htm>.

General Conference President Jan Paulsen has said that Sabbath School is like breakfast. For more than 150 years, it has provided the spiritual nourishment that is needed to meet the challenges that arise during the rest of the week. 

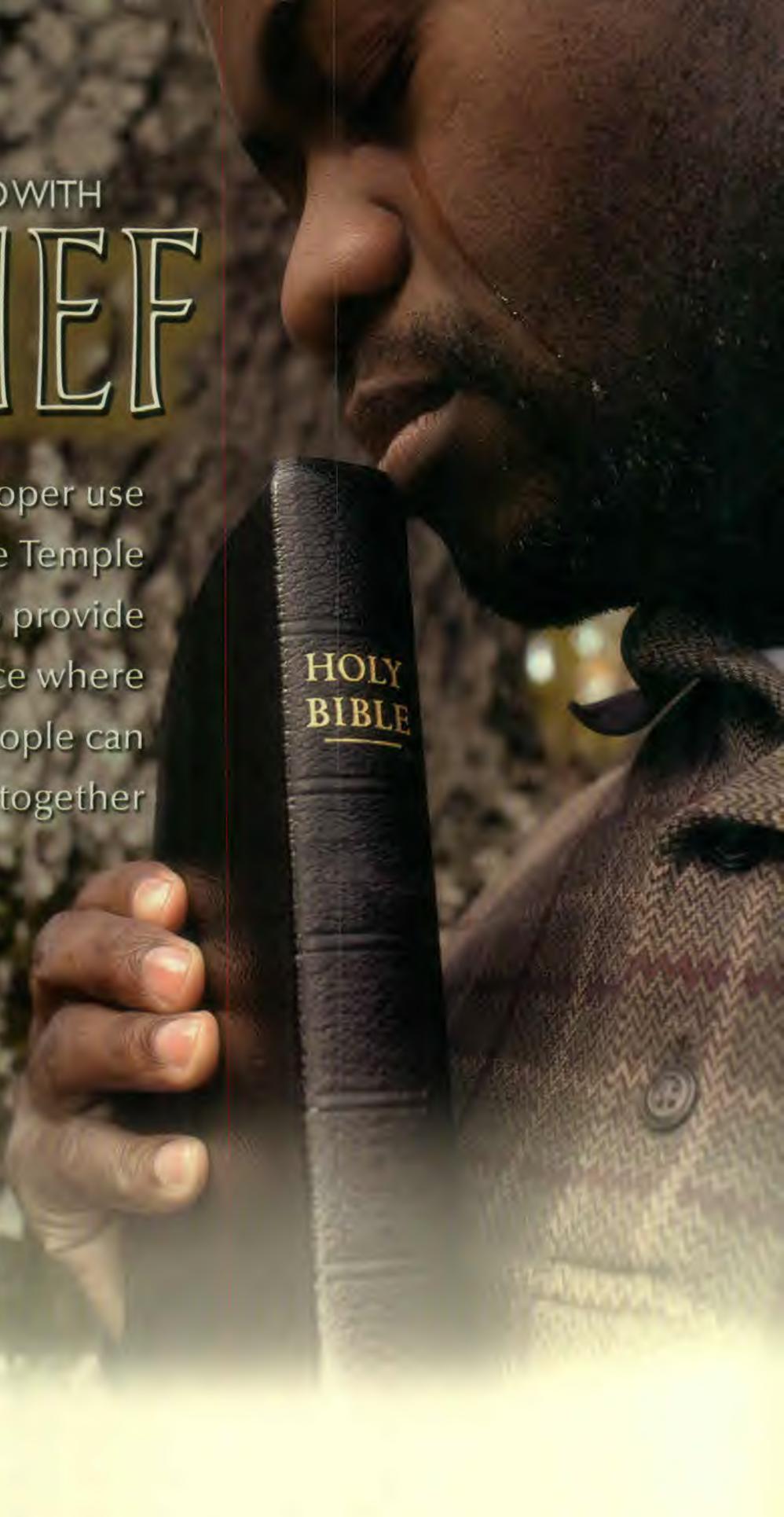
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#### Gary B. Swanson

General Conference Associate Director  
Sabbath School and Personal Ministries



STRANDED WITH  
**GRIEF**

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a dark brown leather-bound book. The book is oriented vertically, showing its spine which has "HOLY BIBLE" printed in gold letters. The person's hands are clasped around the book, with one hand on top and the other partially visible behind it. The background is dark and out of focus.

The proper use  
of the Temple  
is to provide  
a place where  
people can  
grieve together

# GRIEVE. LET IT FLOW. TELL GOD ABOUT IT.

D

Do you remember the old nursery rhyme that the children used to recite? It went: "Hark, hark, the dogs do bark, the beggars are coming to town, Some in rags and some in tags and some in velvet gowns."

Somehow I think that we have to be honest with ourselves and come to grips with the fact that all of us are hiding some grief underneath velvet gowns, manicured lawns, beautiful automobiles, and mink stoles. These do not cover the deepest pain in life, and let's understand that.

Some grieve because they never knew their fathers; others grieve because they did. Some grieve because they have never made it in their chosen profession; others grieve because they have made it and have found that it's empty, and they stand at the peak of their profession and, like Peggy Lee in her song, cry out: "Is that all there is?" Some grieve because they never had children; others grieve because they did. Some grieve because they miss the hometown, the neighborhood school, the high school football days, being a cheerleader, lost youth, and that those days can never come again. Others, like old all-Americans, look over their shoulders and, fondling their trophies one more time, realize that baldness and grayness and stooping shoulders must come to all. Some grieve because

they have left home; others grieve because they can't. But whatever it is that causes your heart to be heavy, whatever the situation may be, the church ought to be a place where people can come together and grieve.

Early in my ministry I preached a sermon on the subject of grief because my people were going through some heavy difficulties. Later in the week, I was confronted by a gentleman who had heard the sermon and was livid with anger. With fierce emotion in his eyes, he looked at me and said: "The church is no place for anybody to talk about grief." I finally realized that the sermon had activated his unresolved grief concerning the death of his mother several years before. I think my friend did not understand the truth of the Spanish philosopher, Unamuno, when he observed: "The proper use of a Temple is to provide a place where people can grieve together."

If the church is going to be anything, it must be a place where we can come together and bring our sorrows and griefs. In fact, as I looked at the Old and New Testaments, I was overwhelmed by the fact that we talk about Jesus, the man who was acquainted with our grief, who has borne our sorrows. We talk about the Holy Spirit as the Comforter of God. We talk about our not being ignorant

about those who are departed. The New Testament is clear in its understanding that God gives comfort to those who go through difficult places. But in the stupidity of twenty-first-century America, we have a crazy idea that people are never supposed to show their emotions. If anything ever goes wrong in your life, don't ever tell anybody. The idea that church is a collection of people who have been victors in life is wrong. It's not even Christian.

I get terribly concerned with people who seem to think that because life has dealt them a body blow, they can't come back to the household of faith. I wish that all of us could attend church dressed in rags one Sunday so that we could bring into the open what we're trying to hide inside.

Grief is a universal experience. You're thinking: I haven't lost anybody; there have been no funerals at my house lately. That may be true, and you may somehow think you're immune. You may live in a big house that's half paid for. You may command a salary that's greater than you deserve. You may have an incredibly good education, and you may be getting great advancement in business. I am not talking only about those who have lost loved ones in that ultimate difficulty called death, but most

of us hide things that are so deep we cannot utter them anyway.

I want the church to come to grips with the fact that the church ought to be a place where we can be honest enough to grieve together. You may grieve because there's no feeling in your life. You may grieve because there's too much. But all of us go through it. There are various stages of it.

All of this is enough to drive us to despair, to drugs, to drink in order to forget our minks and automobiles. All of this, when we come to realize the heavy load of pain that most people carry, is enough to make us like Job, thinking about cursing God and dying. When ultimate loss and separation come into a life, as Granger Westburg has noted in his book *Good Grief*, there are several approaches that people use in attempting to handle grief.

First of all, when a person realizes grief has come, there is a sense of *shock*. "I can't go on. I can't believe it." Then there's a sense of *emotional relief* when maybe tears or laughter or another kind of emotional expression breaks through. Then there's the third stage when people begin to feel terribly *depressed, isolated, cut off*. Sometimes physical symptoms move in. One study I read indicated that 38 percent of the people in a certain hospital were patients who had suffered a significant loss prior to their hospitalization. The fourth stage is a *sense of guilt*. Someone says, "If only I had done this" or "If only we had done that, then this would not have happened." The fifth stage is a *sense of anger*. People do not always follow this uniformly, but there's a sense of anger when you reach out. The doctor is wrong, I'm mad at him; or the church didn't do something and I'm mad at it. Something is wrong;

in anger you reach out and fight at the world for what's happened to you. The last stage is a *sense of hope* where the cloud breaks and hope emerges. You begin to understand what Paul meant when he said: "Grieve, but not as men who have no hope."

As Christian people in a Christian community, we grieve as those who do have hope, for we've learned that the gospel moves in at a time of need. Look in the Old Testament, and you realize that when heavy grief moved upon the people of Israel, God took them out of their bondage. You look in and see that when Job, brokenhearted and his body filled with sores, sat on the ash heap, God came in and gave him a sense of hope. When Jeremiah wept over a country that he had lost, God moved in and gave him a sense of hope. When Isaiah was weeping over the burdens and sorrows of the Israelites, he came to the place where he was able to utter that magnificent cry, "Surely he will bear our sorrows."

And Luke, the talented physician, understands God in the ultimate way when he says: "He came to heal the broken-hearted." And I would say in parentheses: "Not to congratulate the successful, but to heal the brokenhearted." And the early Christian community echoed Paul: "We would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that ye may not grieve as others do who have no hope."

You see, the Christian is not immune from grief, but the Christian wants to turn bad grief into good grief. The Christian wants to go through the stages of grief with hope. The Christian wants to pass through the pain of grief with understanding that there's more out there than the emptiness—the empty room.

There's more there than the emptiness of a life where relationships have been severed. The Christian goes through this with an understanding that God has not abandoned him. I want you to view grief not as ultimate pain but, hopefully, in a Christian stance as opportunity.

It is difficult in the grief experience to recognize any good at all. Sometimes it is only in a crucial situation like grief that the depths of our personal, inner resources are tapped. We never know the strength and sureness of our faith until we have to search our very souls and measure our ability to cope with this situation. It is like a general in the army who really never can tell how disciplined and well-trained his troops are until the battle is raging. Grief can either conquer you or push you forward into new frontiers of personal growth.

Remember that when God talks to the church, He says things like: "He was despised and rejected by men. He was a man of sorrow, acquainted with grief." As one from whom men hide their faces, "He was despised and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our grief and carried our sorrows. Yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted, but he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole. With his stripes we are healed." Grieve. Let it flow. Tell God about it. Grieve, but not as those who are without hope. The church, the proper use of the temple, is to make it a place where we can grieve together. ED

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This article is excerpted and adapted from the practical resource, *Survival Kit for the Stranded* by Carolyn Shealy Self and William L. Self. The entire book is available for purchase at <[www.ministerialassociation.com](http://www.ministerialassociation.com)>.

# The Church Elder According to a MINISTER'S WIFE



We had recently arrived at a new district, and my husband was mentioning the names of the brethren who were the elders of the church.

They would preach when my husband was going to be away visiting other churches. Their phone numbers, home addresses, and personal information were also recorded as very important.

Standing outside with the luggage that had recently arrived, I observed as they got organized and talked. I could clearly see that these men were going to be a support to my husband. They were going to be the ones who would give directions, including where to go on visits to the church brethren, and what were the less dangerous times to go out. They would accompany him to the hardware stores for purchases to remodel and build churches. And they would be the ones who would stay with the congregation when we got transferred, and would take care of the church that had elected them—elected them as local “pastors.”

But what I treasure the most in my heart is a deeper sense of gratitude when I remember some on them, such as the elder who presented to the Lord my oldest son. He took the small baby in his arms, and pleaded before our heavenly Father’s throne of grace that He would protect and accompany that child throughout his entire life. The same occurred with our younger children. And while my husband and I, as parents, were kneeling down, the church elder, prayed pleading for the pastor’s son and for the pastor’s daughter. What’s impressive is that as

the years went by, we had to accompany him the day he left one of his own sons in the last dwelling place on earth, but the elder held firmly to the promise of resurrection for his son.

Things apparently so simple repeatedly take place in our lives, yet they are deeply significant to our spiritual experience.

But I not only remember these occurrences. There was one church that was very significant for me, especially on Sabbath days.

As usual, I sat in the very first row to avoid my children getting distracted. My husband was not always on the platform to listen to the message from God every Sabbath, but there was always a brother, a church elder, who would exhort us in a divine message from the Bible. But the moment that would fill me with most thankfulness was when he prayed for our needs, for the sick, and for the church families. Every Sabbath the elder would include us as a family before God. Kneeling down, by his own free will, this elder would mention our names and ask God to strengthen my husband, as he labored, set an example, went about his work. When this elder prayed, my heart would overflow with thankfulness to God, because I felt that in our Heavenly Father, we were real brothers and sisters.

He felt the need to present us as a family to God because he knew that we had to struggle against the hosts of darkness, and he wanted us to be victorious. Many times these simple prayers would strengthen me in my Christian

walk. Though I never confided this to the church, how good it is to work in harmony and peace with all our brethren. I wish to thank every elder of the church for their prayers, and for the support they offer each pastor who arrives at their district, each one of them quite different from the other, but all of them called to do God’s work in the churches.

Your prayers are like showers of blessings for the pastoral family—the pastor, his wife, and each one of their children.

Your patience and tolerance are an encouragement to go on every day. Your advice, given in love, is a path that helps to trace the pastor’s work.

Your example reaffirms our children to continue being faithful to God, to love the church, and to learn that one can commit himself unselfishly to a cause that represents the truth, and that represents our heavenly Father.

What else could I say as a pastor’s wife?

Thank you for loving the pastoral family who arrives at your district, for trying hard to get to know them, and for taking good care of their spiritual needs and encouraging them to accomplish their work successfully.

Thank God there are elders in our churches. **ED**

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From the South American Division Ministerial Association



# The SPIRITED MEETING

It is 11 p.m. The board meeting is dragging on. The members are making an important decision, but Pastor Jim's mind wanders. This would not be so bad, except that he is chairing the committee.

The church board is choosing the sanctuary's carpet color. One group wants a bright rust color, the other wants a light beige. The beige group thinks the rust looks too cheap, and the rust group thinks the beige group is crazy to put white in a public place: "It'll be dirty in a week."

Brother Boyce raises his hand, and Pastor Jim reluctantly nods for him to speak. He knows what is coming. Boyce is a wonderful soul who speaks without breathing: "I believe that we need a brighter color than the rust color, and the beige is

just fine, but who can tell for sure whether it will hold up under all the traffic that we have in the sanctuary? I am sure that it would look good in my house; well, for that matter the rust would look good in my house, even though I wouldn't have it because I personally believe that it is too flashy. I am not saying that those who want it are too flashy, I am just saying that it is too flashy for . . ."

Pastor Jim scans the room. Most members look brain dead. Brother Boyce is famous for his soliloquies. The longest that Pastor Jim ever timed was 20 minutes. Brother Boyce goes on and on and on and Brother Ebenezer interrupts. He prides himself as a down-to-brass-tacks, no-beating-around-the-bush type of person. He says, "That's the dumbest thing

I've ever heard. Who cares whether the rust or beige carpet looks good in your house? I move we don't get carpet and use linoleum instead. It lasts longer, and nothing is prettier than shiny linoleum. We once had linoleum. Linoleum was good enough when I was a kid, and it is good enough now!"

Pastor Jim immediately shifts from being partially asleep to a state of high anxiety. There has never been a church board meeting without an argument with Brother Ebenezer.

Pastor Jim chooses his words carefully. "I agree with you a little, Brother Ebenezer. I prefer to keep the old carpet one more year and use the money for outreach. But our very last vote was for buying

# Christian committees exist to find God's will.

new carpet. So I don't think opening it up again is okay."

"We never discussed linoleum. I say we should vote again. Linoleum is a good idea."

Pastor Jim says, "All who favor using linoleum, raise your hand."

At first only Brother Ebenezer raises his hand, then his wife timidly joins him. But linoleum is voted down. Finally everybody gets tired, and since Pastor Jim does not want new carpet, they all go home.

Walking home, Pastor Jim looks at the stars and wonders, "Why do we make decisions in meetings? Why couldn't I visit the sick or do counseling or do anything? I hate meetings! I don't remember Jesus in committees. I can't see Him saying, 'I hear a motion that we go heal the sick by Galilee. Is there a second?' Then again, I'm not Jesus. What would Jesus do with Brother Boyce and Brother Ebenezer? Sometimes I wish I could punch Brother Ebenezer's nose. Is the Holy Spirit in this? I thought I was Spirit-led, not committee-led!"

The stars leave the questions unanswered. Pastor Jim is too tired to care.

## Meeting Theology

Pastor Jim raises some interesting questions about meetings. Everywhere in Christianity, groups are making deci-

sions in meetings. The Presbyterian Church is making big decisions about church members' sexuality, and a little church is making little decisions about painting the Sunday school classroom. Because Christians spend so much time in meetings, it seems we need a Meeting Theology. Any Meeting Theology must answer two questions:

- (1) How did Bible characters make church decisions?
- (2) How does the Holy Spirit fit into group decision-making?

*Church Decisions*—The Bible often speaks of individual decision-making, as in Joshua 24:15: "Then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve." Scripture rarely shows groups making decisions. Americans view democracy as a God-given right, but defending that position solely from the Bible is difficult.

Throughout the Old Testament, leaders issued decisions by decree. The patriarchs firmly ruled their families. The judges ruled Israel by the commands God gave them. The kings ruled by military and inherited right. Advisers gave counsel, but the decision always came from one person.

One exception may be observed in Moses' appointing the elders as assistants. However, these elders functioned as sole decision-makers dealing with mundane matters. They used their authority to make decisions that relieved their over-

worked leader. Scripture does not say that they were a decision-making group; they individually attended to the people under their care.

The gospels relate how Jesus led the disciples' as He made the decisions for the group. The group members followed, even when they opposed the direction He was taking. The people had nearly stoned Jesus and His group on a recent visit to Jerusalem. Jesus directed His followers to return, even though the group thought that going back was unwise and that they would be following Him to their death. Yet they respected their leader and followed Him (Matt. 16:21-23; Mark 10:33-34).

Only the book of Acts shows groups making decisions. Church decision-making appears three times. The first time was after Jesus' death but before the Spirit descended (Acts 1). To replace Judas, the disciples set up a guideline: The person must have followed Jesus from His baptism until His resurrection. They proposed two men, Joseph and Matthias. They prayed for guidance, cast lots, and thereby decided. This decision-making process blended intellect and supernatural involvement.

## The Holy Spirit and Decision-Making

Can people who sit around discussing and then voting really be God's agents in the twenty-first-century church? It seems that God could have found a better way.



Why no more mystical wall writing or talking donkeys?

Developing a Spirit-directed theology of life can be easy. Seeing the Spirit working in an individual's life can be easy. Seeing him guide a person can be easy. But doing the same things for a group seems hard. Are we left to our own devices?

The Spirit leads a church the same way He leads an individual. Think how He has guided you. Think about struggling with a decision. Flashes of great Spirit-filled inspiration are rare. But as time goes by, alternatives come into focus. Some become more logical. The direction becomes clear, and you have peace about your decision. An outsider sees you make a rational decision just as everyone else does. You weigh the alternatives using logic, experience, and acquired knowledge.

The non-Christian uses the same decision-making process, because God built this into the human brain. But for the non-believer, the process lacks the vital link that makes it great. The Spirit-filled Christian follows the same process as everyone else, except that God gives wisdom and leads the way. To make decisions using logic, experience, and additional knowl-

edge is God-given. Linking it with the Holy Spirit makes it divine.

The same reality exists when groups make decisions. A public school board makes decisions based on its best wisdom, using logic, experience, and the available data. The church board uses the same God-given process but adds an extra, Spirit-filled vitality.

## Group Guidelines

*Christian committees exist to find God's will.* The group chair leads this spiritual search and weaves it into the members' role. The members prayerfully seek His will and are the means by which God communicates His will. The agenda allows ample time for the searching. The meeting room is a place appropriate for conducting the search. This first premise weaves through every part of the meeting.

The second premise is that *people are more important than meetings.* A Christian spends much time in meetings, so committees do more than just make decisions. Committees also exist to grow and to show the fruit of the Spirit. God worries more about how the chair treats the members than whether the meeting runs efficiently. How members treat Brother Ebenezer concerns God more than which carpet color is selected. The agenda and meeting place must show respect for individuals. For many Christians, meetings are their only mission field. ED

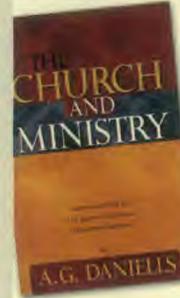
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This article is excerpted and adapted from the practical resource, *Making Committees Work*, by Mack Tennyson. The entire book is available for purchase at <[www.ministerialassociation.com](http://www.ministerialassociation.com)>.

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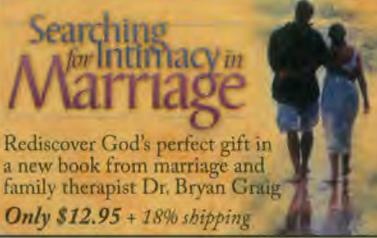
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## REFLECTIONS FOR A NEW YEAR

The start of a new year is traditionally known as the best time to make new resolutions or promises. Such measures become not only a guiding compass that will lead life's priorities throughout the year, but will also become a motivating factor that will give new meaning to life. The beginning of a new year, for many, has also been a precious time to adjust certain aspects of life that did not go well the previous year. Certainly, this is an excellent occasion to make good resolutions for a better life in the personal, familiar, professional, and spiritual contexts.

I believe that it is an opportunity where we can go a little beyond the simple resolutions and remember the importance of certain fundamental truths that sustain life. There are certain expressions we hear every day, and although they are not absolute truths, they teach practical lessons that may help us in the 365 days we have before us.

### "THINGS ARE NOT ALWAYS WHAT THEY SEEM"

This is a very popular saying. In the Bible, we find an account that illustrates this truth. John 11 narrates the story that one of Jesus' best friends became ill. Lazarus was dying; Mary and Martha sent a message asking for help. Jesus' answer was: "*This illness is not unto death; it is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by means of it*" (verse 4).

Nevertheless, in verses 14 and 15, Jesus says: "*Lazarus is dead; and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.*" There seems to be a contradiction in Jesus' words. However, we find an important principle here. Good things and bad things may often have similarities or look alike. But no matter how bad things may look, we must trust that God is working on something good for us.

Many times where we see tribulations, God sees an opportunity to develop our characters (Rom. 5:3-5). Where sometimes we see only pain, God sees an instrument to cure our hearts from something temporary (2 Cor. 1:4). What we call a trial, God calls an opportunity to develop empathy for others (2 Cor. 1:4). Where we see struggle, God sees a laboratory for shaping and strengthening our faith (2 Cor 1:9). Where we see misery, God sees a pulpit from which we may demonstrate His grace (Phil. 1). What we call suffering, God sometimes may call discipline (Heb. 12:5-11).

### "GOD DELAYS BUT DOES NOT FAIL"

Here is another common expression. To better illustrate, let's go back to the account of John 11. Jesus receives the news that his friend is sick and needs urgent help. Lazarus was dying; Jesus, however,

# 24 HOURS



"stayed two days longer in the place where he was" (verse 6). Doesn't this sound bad to you? What kind of friend delays so much? How would you feel if you needed help from a friend on Monday and he came on Thursday?

Why was Jesus late? The answer is simple: "I don't know." But we know Jesus' character; we know that it was certainly for a good reason.

Are you also waiting for something in life? Is the answer to your prayer delayed? Perhaps words of encouragement and recognition never seem to reach you. There is no doubt that these are the hardest moments in life. Many times we are tempted to think that God doesn't care about us, and we get discouraged, thinking that our problems are insignificant for the Lord. When we think that, we miss the opportunity to understand that God's apparent "delays" are always there to develop something in us, never to discourage us.

Consider some reasons why God may delay or be silent about some aspect of your life:

- **Delays of mercy:** This might mean that God is giving you time for repentance. It is also possible that He is keeping the knowledge of something that now should not be revealed.

- **Delays for the development of our faith:** One of the hardest moments in Christian life is when we feel silence from God. At times God wants to see how much we trust His Word, although evidences seem to be against us.

- **Delays waiting for an opportunity:** Sometimes God waits until we are calm, so He can work with us. Our problems may be a great opportunity for God to act in our life.

- **Delays for the preparation:** The delay may be a divine strategy in preparing us for certain circumstances of life. Sometimes we ask for things that we are not ready to receive.

- **Delays that go beyond human comprehension:** The Bible says that God's ways are many times inscrutable. There are moments, as in the case of the patriarch Job, when no explanation is given.

In these cases, trusting is the best and wisest attitude.

When life puts you in a difficult situation this year, remember that God's silence does not mean inactivity from Him. "Silence" or "delay" may seem painful, but it is sometimes necessary.

## "THE BEST TIME TO DO THE RIGHT THING IS NOW"

Two days later, Jesus told his disciples "Let's go into Judea again" (verse 7). The disciples didn't think this was a good idea or good timing. The last time Jesus went to Judea, some Jews tried to kill Him (verse 8). So they advised the Lord that it would be best to stay away from there.

Jesus answered them with, difficult words: "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any one walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if any one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him" (verses 9 and 10).

These words are difficult to interpret. We may do things best when we see where

## THE YEAR OF 2006 OFFERS EACH ONE OF US NEW POSSIBILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES.

we are going. We'll certainly save time when we work in daylight. Consider the fact that, in Bible times, there was no electricity.

The difficult task here is to understand what Jesus was trying to say with such words in the context of Lazarus' death, and what the words mean to us today. I believe Jesus was saying to the disciples that He only had the daylight and that He needed to use it doing the work His Father had given Him. In the spiritual context, to walk in the light means to be obedient to the Father. John presents this truth when he says: *"If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth; but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin"* (1 John 1:6, 7).

How do we apply this to our lives? Very simple: The wise person uses the time granted in this life to do what God asks him to accomplish. In the Bible we find clear instructions about God's will. The problem is that sometimes, because we have objections to observing such pre-

cepts, we resist obeying Him. For instance, we know that the Lord asks 10 percent of our income (tithe) for Himself, but because we have other financial responsibilities, we resist obeying this precept. Jesus is trying to tell us that if we don't do what's right today, we'll end up stumbling in the dark tomorrow.

The Bible also tells us that we need to forgive those who offend us. But if we do not desire to forgive our brother, we run the risk of stumbling in the dark. In other words, do not leave for tomorrow that which should be done today.

### **"YOU SEE WHAT YOU IMAGINE"**

The disciples did not want to go back to Judea. When Jesus said that Lazarus had fallen asleep, they thought this was a good sign and that Lazarus was getting better. Of course, if he was getting better, there was no need to go to Judea, right? No, wrong! Then Jesus explained, "He is dead."

It is interesting what Thomas, also known as Didymus, says: *"Let us also go, that*

*we may die with him"* (verse 16). How many times do we identify ourselves with Thomas? How many times do we assume negative and pessimistic attitudes in life, therefore missing the possibility of contemplating a miracle or blessing! Although life puts us in complex situations, we may choose to behold the future with confidence and hope.

The year 2005 is gone, and a new year is before us. Let us not waste this precious time looking back, cultivating frustration for things that should have been done but weren't. The year 2006 offers each one of us new possibilities and opportunities. It is up to us to choose how to live and what to do for God and for others. Let us remember, God is in control. He loves us and never makes mistakes. Let us trust Him, do His will, and allow Him to continue accomplishing the work He began in us one day, and we'll surely have a happy 2006. **ED**



# Which Version of the

In the United States we have an abundance of Bible versions. We could easily list 100 versions that have been translated into English. To help you sort through what you may find on the shelf of your local bookstore, the following descriptions are offered.

## Versions: Formal and Dynamic

Versions of the Bible are basically divided into two groups: the formal and the dynamic. The formal translation group tries to reflect the ancient manuscripts word for word whenever possible. These attempt to be extremely accurate and leave any questionable words or passages for the reader to decide which is best. Unfortunately these versions are not always very readable. They include: *The New American Standard Bible* (1960) and *The New Revised Standard Version* (1989). Some scholars feel that *The New American Standard Bible* (1971) is probably the most accurate translation yet produced. However its accuracy does not make it easy to read, especially from the pulpit.

The second group of versions are referred to as dynamic. These translations

try to reflect the thought they think the Bible writers were trying to convey. To do this, difficult passages are smoothed over according to what seems best to the translator. However, if the translator believes the righteous dead are now alive in heaven and the unrighteous dead are now suffering in hell, that person's beliefs will obviously color how the text is presented. Dynamic versions are very useful, especially for devotional purposes, but the speaker should avoid their use for doctrinal study or pulpit use.

Dynamic versions vary from conservative to outright paraphrases (which can be a loose rewriting of the Bible). An example is *Psalms/Now* by Leslie F. Brandt, first published in 1973. The author's preface states, "These offerings are by no means an attempt to be scholarly or textual. I am expressing what the psalmist might be saying if he were living in the twentieth century." Brandt's paraphrase has a modern up-to-date sound to its use of words.

His version of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm begins:

*The Lord is my companion. There is no need that He cannot fulfill. Whether His*

*course for me points to the mountain tops of glorious ecstasy or to the valleys of human suffering, He is by my side, He is ever present with me.*

Other dynamic versions and paraphrases include the *Good News Bible*, also called *Today's English Version*. (1966, 1976); *The Living Bible* (1971); *The New Century Version* (1987); *The Clear Word* (1994); and *God's Word* (1955), to name only a few. The preface should tell you if you are reading a translation or a paraphrase.

Other versions of note include the *Jerusalem Bible* (1966), a Catholic Bible in common English with explanatory notes; the *New World Translation* (1961), a Jehovah's Witness Bible; the *New Jewish Bible* (1962); and the *New American Bible* (1970), an American Catholic Bible translated from the original languages. Prominent Adventist theologian Frank Holbrook notes, "It ought to be noted that all the basic truths of Scripture—including the Sabbath, Ten Commandments, and Second Coming—can be taught from Catholic Bibles. But there will be a contradiction on the state of the dead because the Catholic Old Testament con-



# BIBLE Should I Use?

tains a group of writings known as the Apocrypha, which supports the belief in the immortality of the soul."

Sakae Kubo, retired professor and eminent Seventh-day Adventist authority on Bible translations, offers the following summaries:

## The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

The NRSV (1989) is a revision of the *Revised Standard Version* (1952), which is a revision of the *American Standard Version* (1901), which was a revision of the *King James Version*. This version has had input from a wide group of scholars representing all the leading churches and is the most reliable of versions.

## The New International Version (NIV)

This translation is the product of a wide group of international evangelical scholars representing many denominations from the English-speaking world. It has had general acceptance among evangelical groups. It has been carefully translated and is generally reliable. Its English has

been checked by experts and reads well.

## Revised English Bible (REB)

This is a revision of the *New English Bible* (1970), which was the work of the leading church groups of Great Britain. Using modern British English, their translation is fresh and spicy. However, they probably erred in some cases on the side of being a bit too down to earth. One of the criticisms the REB has sought to address was that in some of its readings, it was not dignified enough for pulpit purposes. The REB has improved in several areas and can be used for pulpit reading, but it uses British English, which in some cases may not be understood by an American audience. Questionable verses can be checked with the NRSV or the NIV.

## New American Bible (NAB) and the New Jerusalem Bible (NJB)

The NAB and the NJB are both Bibles translated by and for Catholics. They are both good translations and are similar to their Protestant counterparts. The NAB is for American Catholics, and the NJB is for British Catholics. Catholic Bibles today

have removed most of their objectionable features, such as the Catholic interpretations in the notes.

## The King James Version (KJV)

The KJV is still widely used among Adventist laypersons, and for this reason, you may be required to use it. It has excellent literary qualities and may be familiar to many. However, you should be careful to use a modern version with it so that it may be clearly understood by younger members and by new members who have no Bible background. You should compare the KJV with one of the newer formal translations because the KJV translators did not have many of the early manuscripts available today. More recently discovered manuscripts provide additional information that the KJV translators did not have.

## The New King James Version (NKJV)

While the NKJV has modernized the language of the KJV, it has kept the text of the old KJV. Therefore, if using this version, you should always check a new version to make sure you are not reading something that is not found in modern

# Seventh-day Adventist Church has never produced a denominational Bible.

versions.

The language of the *King James Version* is getting more and more out of date. Over time, words change their meanings. For instance, the word "prevent" in 1 Thessalonians 4:15 has an entirely different meaning today. Now, we would use the word "precede." Another example comes from Ephesians 4:22, which uses the word "conversation," which meant "way of life, conduct, or behavior." Never once does the word "conversation" in the KJV mean the word we use today—speech. To update problem words such as this, a *New King James Version* (1979) was introduced. This version has become a respected member of the formal translation group and can be a big help for bridging the gap from the old to the new.

In 1995, the American Bible Society released the *Contemporary English Version*, which they refer to as " [having] diligently sought to capture the spirit of the *King James Version* by following certain principles set forth by its translators in the document."

## Which Version?

Which version is the best? There is no simple answer. If only the *King James Version* is used, the younger generation will not understand much of the language and may think the Bible belongs to another age. Children, new Christians, non-Christians and non English-speaking peoples may find it hard, if not impossible, to understand. Committed Chris-

tians will miss the KJV's beauty of words and expression if newer, more modern version are used exclusively. However, there is nothing to prevent the speaker from pausing and explaining and updating the KJV as he speaks.

Perhaps in these days when an abundance of very good translations abound, there is a translation of the Word of God for everyone. Regardless, the rule is, don't run ahead of your congregation. If the majority is using the *King James Version* and you quote from a newer version, it will be very difficult for them to follow along. The pulpit is not the place to try to introduce new versions. Break new ground in prayer meetings and Sabbath School, where the people have time to get accustomed to a more modern reading and the reason for using it.

Finally, it should be understood that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has never produced a denominational Bible. Our church uses translations that the general Christian world accepts. In the final analysis, the truth does not rest on an English translation, but on the original Hebrew and Greek. <sup>EP</sup>

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This article is excerpted from the practical resource, *So You've Been Asked To Speak? A Practical Guide to Preaching and Public Speaking*, by Marvin Hunt. The entire book is available for purchase at [www.ministerialassociation.com](http://www.ministerialassociation.com).

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# Write to *Elder's Digest*

*Elder's Digest* is a quarterly resource for local church elders. It has been developed in response to a worldwide need for church elders who often have to take the place of pastors in multi-church districts.

## What types of articles does *Elder's Digest* publish?

The best way to find the answer to this question is to read a recent issue. In planning an article, remember to focus it toward church elders. In order to be accepted for publication, your article must speak to the *Elder's Digest* audience.

Our readers are on the move, busy all the time, and have little time for platitudes or articles that appear irrelevant. They enjoy being challenged by new ideas or methods. They enjoy digging into their Bibles and studying. They enjoy knowing how other elders deal with problems. They like to learn about principles or discover things that will help them minister more effectively.

Are you qualified to write for us? YES! We would like to think that anyone (even ministers) who has practical experience or knowledge that is valuable to elders is qualified to write for *Elder's Digest*. If your material is interesting and helpful enough, we are willing to do the necessary editing to prepare it for publication.

## Types of articles we seek

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- How-to articles about the practice of ministry, coping with problems, nurturing, lay evangelism, and preaching.
- Theological articles within the framework of Seventh-day Adventist beliefs.
- Bible expository articles.
- Sample sermons and outlines.
- Articles dealing with church administration.
- Articles on family and time management.
- Devotionals especially slanted to be helpful to elders.
- Articles on developing Christ-centered worship services and how to plan all aspects of the worship service.
- Articles on what makes a good church leader.
- Interviews with lay leaders who are developing good programs in the local churches.
- Reprints of articles from other magazines that have been helpful to you as an elder.

The main qualification for any article is that it must be relevant to our audience: church elders and lay leaders. We need articles that will encourage these types of people and help them in their ministry.

## Articles length

An average printed page in *Elder's Digest* contains approximately 750 words. Articles with fewer than 1,500 words are preferred. Seldom are articles with more than 3,000 words accepted. We do not accept articles which are simultaneously submitted to other periodicals. Sermons should have up to 1,500 words. Remember that a good article for a training magazine should be short, practical, and objective.

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## Faithful 'til He Comes



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- Living Water
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- Keep On Keeping On
- Thank You

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*Pastor, Dallas First Church  
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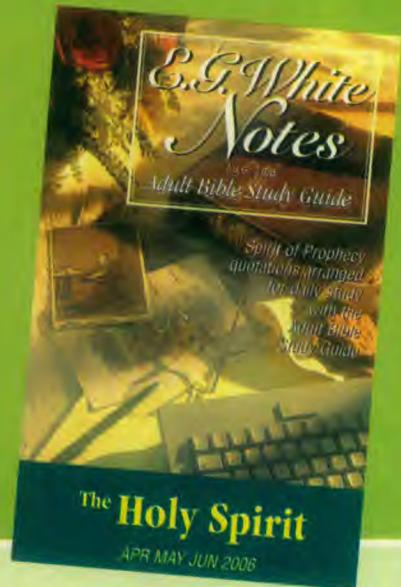
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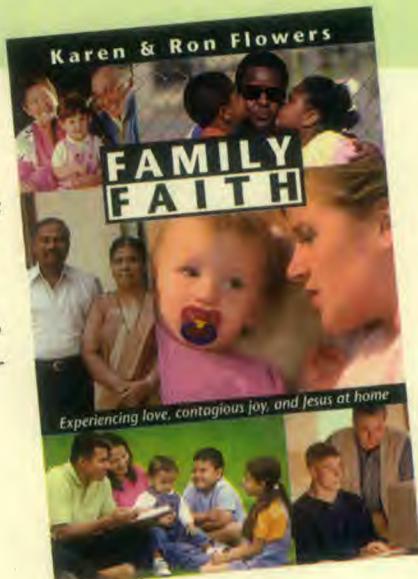
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# involving pastors and elders in the **SPIRITUAL NATURE OF CHILDREN**



Linda Mei Lin Koh

Christ's mandate to feed the lambs (John 21:5) and to let the children come to Him (Mark 10:13, 14) commissions the Church to evangelize children and to nurture their spiritual growth. This commission undoubtedly includes bringing the gospel to children as well. Ellen G. White clearly reminds us that "when Jesus told the disciples not to forbid the children to come to Him, He was speaking to His followers of all ages—to officers of the church, ministers, helpers, and all Christians. Jesus is drawing the children, and He bids us, suffer them to come; as if He would say, they will come if you do not hinder them" (*Evangelism*, p. 580).

In the local church, Jesus is calling all pastors, elders, and local leaders to be involved in this important ministry of spiritual nurture and faith-building. In today's world, where children are flooded with ideas and values that conflict with those of the Adventist Church, it is imperative that leaders find ways to help children make right decisions about their faith.

How can pastors and elders get involved in helping children develop a loving, serving relationship with Jesus? Here are some points worth considering.

## **1. Organize Children's Ministries in the Local Church**

- Appoint a good children's ministries leader who has a passion for children.
- Set up the Children's Ministries Committee with 5-6 capable individuals who love children and have experience working with them.

## **2. Empower Children's Leaders**

- Provide opportunities for children's

leaders to serve in planning committees where they can learn leadership skills.

- Support Children's Ministries programs by helping out in areas of presentations, transportation, promoting of events, etc.
- Encourage leaders to try new ideas.
- Provide budgets for them to organize children's programs.
- Send children's leaders to attend conference-wide Children's Ministries training events.

## **3. Provide Protection for Children by Screening Volunteers**

- Appoint a screening committee.
- Assist with the screening of volunteers.
- Do reference checks on volunteers.
- Follow the guidelines established by Adventist Risk Management for screening volunteers.
- Support the ruling of the screening committee.

## **4. Nurture Passionate Spirituality in Members**

- Encourage families to conduct regular family worships and to study the Sabbath School lessons with their children.
- Promote the importance of investing money by purchasing Bible lessons for children.
- Encourage parents to buy good Adventist books for their children.
- Help to teach a lesson or two in the children's division.

## **5. Organize Inspiring Worship Services for All Ages**

- Involve children in worship by encouraging them to do scripture reading, special music, or collect the offering.

- Prepare sermons that allow children to participate by looking up scriptural texts, giving an answer, etc.
- Include a children's story during the worship service.
- Incorporate 1-2 children's songs in the worship service.
- Have a variety of worship programs (such as Children's Church) once or twice a month. Celebrate Children's Sabbath once a year in conjunction with the world church.

## **6. Organize Regular Child Evangelism**

- Try to schedule a week of evangelism on the church calendar.
- Provide a budget for child evangelism.
- Work with the Children's Ministries leader to purchase a good program for use during the evangelism week.
- Allow children who got involved in evangelism to give testimonies up front in the church.

Children's Ministries should be a vital part of any Seventh-day Adventist church. As pastor or elder, you can play a major role in helping the children develop a loving, serving relationship with Jesus. You can provide opportunities to train and mentor children as future leaders of today and tomorrow. You can inspire your congregation with a vision to lead and nurture children in their spiritual journey. Support their programs and involve them in all aspects of church life. Remember, building tomorrow's church begins with today's children! ED

**Linda Mei Lin Koh**

Director of Children's Ministries General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists



From Pastor to Elders

# Who's to Blame?

Who's responsible when towers topple? In tragedy's aftermath, we seek to explain the unexplainable.

Unfortunately, even some church leaders plunge into speaking without carefully studying the Word of God. Some have even declared that God uses tragic events to punish specific brands of sinners—liberals, homosexuals, civil libertarians, and abortionists. Such misguided individuals, along with their dangerous pronouncements, are wrong.

Scripture provides reliable answers: "There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish'" (Luke 13:1-5 NKJV).

# God does not use Satan's terrorist tactics

Beware jumping to quick conclusions. Enquiring minds might leap to at least three possible conclusions, only one of which is biblically valid.

**1. Sometimes towers fall.** Even solid-appearing buildings might disguise engineering defects which collapse the whole building. This seems to be the case when the tower of Siloam fell and killed 18 people. Insurance policies call random tragedies "acts of God" when structural insufficiency may be to blame. Clearly this is not what happened in New York City. The destruction of the twin towers was not the consequence of shoddy workmanship.

**2. God's wrath targets certain brands of sinners.** Equally erroneous is the conclusion that God is punishing some sinners who are worse than others. Jesus allows no such when He twice queries, "Do you suppose they were worse sinners than all other men?" Scripture provides no offensiveness scale defining categories of sinners. All sin is offensive to God's holiness. Just as God hates all sin, He loves every sinner.

As Myron Augsburger says, "Men are all alike sinners, but not sinners alike." Those who categorize some types of offenders as especially deserving punishment misread the Bible. This false logic is so appealing because the first preacher to declare God's intent oppor-

tunistically defines the terms of debate. In rushing to pronounce God's wrath on your sin, I ignore His wrath on my own. I presumptuously compare my strengths with your weaknesses, like the man who prayed, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men.' I even abuse prayer in self-congratulation. However, contrast my faults with your strong points, and I do not appear so pious."

**3. An enemy hath done this.** This is the conclusion of Scripture. Galileans worshipers had been murdered by the terrorist, Pilate. Did this tragedy come about because they were worse than other sinners? Jesus says, "I tell you, No!" Answering the question of ultimate responsibility for evil, Jesus says, "The tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil" (Matt. 13:38b, 39).

God does not use Satan's terrorist tactics. Jesus warns of rebellion's final consequence. "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." But Scripture relentlessly affirms, "God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

"To many minds, the origin of sin and the reason for its existence are a source of great perplexity. They see the work of evil, with its terrible results of woe and desolation, and they question how all this can exist under the sovereignty of

One who is infinite in wisdom, in power, and in love. . . . It is impossible to explain the origin of sin so as to give a reason for its existence. Yet enough may be understood concerning both the origin and the final disposition of sin to make fully manifest the justice and benevolence of God in all His dealings with evil. Nothing is more plainly taught in Scripture than that God was in no wise responsible for the entrance of sin; that there was no arbitrary withdrawal of divine grace, no deficiency in the divine government, that gave occasion for the uprising of rebellion. Sin is an intruder for whose presence no reason can be given. It is mysterious, unaccountable; to excuse it is to defend it. Could excuse for it be found, or cause be shown for its existence, it would cease to be sin. Our only definition of sin is that vein in the word of God; it is "the transgression of the law;" it is the outworking of a principle at war with the great law of love which is the foundation of the divine government" (GC 492, 493).

Rather than rushing to pronounce God's judgment, we would better proclaim His love so that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ED

---

JAMES A. CRESS

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