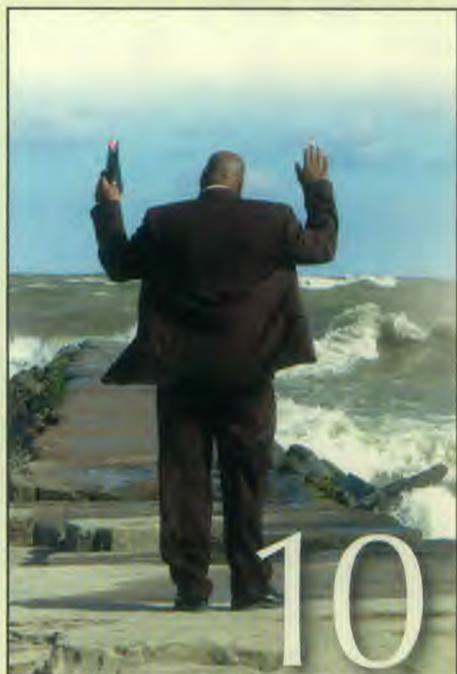


quarterly resource for local church elders † october/december 2006

# ELDER'S DIGEST

POSTURE *in*  
PRAYER

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OCTOBER/DECEMBER 2006

VOL. 12 NO. 4

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# ELDER'S DIGEST

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# COUNSELS TO LEADERS

"For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?" (Luke 14.28)

No one can accuse Jesus of not planning. It certainly was not His plan to study at a university, earn a degree, become an ascending professional, get married, have children, and grow old serenely beside His family. His plan was to become incarnate, announce the kingdom of God, and make many disciples as a result of this proclamation. To reach all of these objectives, Jesus was often praying, gathering information, and preparing to execute His Father's plan. As followers of Christ and leaders in His church, we need to follow in His footsteps.

Above all, we need to demonstrate a disposition for reaching our objectives. Nothing is accomplished if we don't want to reach the goal. We know how hard it is to lead people who do not wish to follow or work together. Rather than following or supporting, they see only problems and difficulties. They always remain on the defensive or on the sidelines. They form pockets of resistance against leadership just for the sake of opposition.

*"For which of you, desiring to build a tower . . ." It is fundamental to want to move your will in the direction of your desired objective. Without this determination, everything becomes jammed. As leaders, we need to believe in a God who works in us both to will and to work (Phil. 2:13). We serve a Lord who acts upon the emotions, upon the reason, and upon the will. Why don't we pray, asking Him to give us the spirit to build towers?*

Planning must address two basic matters: the objectives we wish to accom-

plish and the means to attain those objectives. In this text, Jesus first takes us to the purpose of what we are doing; then it takes us to the conclusion of the project—the completion of the tower.

We need to have eyes to see—to see from the planted seed to the harvested fruit; from the bare soil to the completed building; from the evangelized individual to the growing church. Where do we want to go? That is the question. What do we effectively long for? Toward what goal can we allow ourselves to aspire? Without losing the notion of reality, we must dare to dream.

But planning must also address the means for accomplishing the project. Jesus affirmed that we must "count the cost to see that we have enough." Evaluation of the means is vital. First, it promotes balance among the available resources, whether time, money, energy, or people. Second, it identifies any deficit that needs to be overcome. The purpose of Jesus is not to discourage the builder from building the tower. He only warns: "If you don't have enough, do something positive to promote your vision and go after the necessary means."

It is important to note that none of this is done without first "sitting down" to plan. It is very interesting that Jesus availed Himself of this important process: "First sit down." To move your goal from dream to reality, you and your followers—motivated and unmotivated—need and deserve time for reflection. Praying, thinking, talking, and seeing in depth are vital for the execution of the plan. Of course, no one actually builds a tower while sitting down. But in order to build appropriately, you first need to sit down.

As we approach the end of another year, we are making plans for ourselves and for our church. Follow Jesus' example and focus on the necessity of good planning. May the Lord bless us in this process! **ED**

**Jonas Arrais**

General Conference Associate Ministerial Secretary



# Interview with Two Church Leaders



**Cesar Gonzalez**

*Bryan Collick, assistant editor for Elder's Digest, spoke with two church elders and asked their views and opinions on local church leadership.*

*Cesar Gonzalez is an elder at the Washington Spanish Adventist Church. He lives with his wife, Grace, in Silver Spring, Maryland.*

*Terrence D. Nichols is an elder at the Mt. Carmel Adventist Church. He lives in Felton, Delaware, with his wife, Denise, and their college-aged son.*

**ED:** Thank you for your time. Tell me briefly about your history of church involvement.

**Cesar Gonzales:** I was born and raised an Adventist and I grew up very involved in all aspects of church work. I was in Pathfinders, served as AY director, taught Sabbath School, planned socials, etc. Then I graduated from academy and went to a public college. I left the church at that point and did not return for about five years.

**Terrence Nichols:** I've been a member of the church for more than 32 years. I've



**Terrence Nichols**

served as an elder for many years, and before that, I was a youth elder. My work in the church has primarily involved working with young people, prison ministries, Sabbath School, and other areas as needed.

**ED:** What does it mean to be a church elder?

**CG:** It's a heavy responsibility. Recently, our church was without a pastor for more than a year. The elders ran every aspect of the church. It was a difficult time for us, but we all became close and the church carried the load with us. We came out of that experience tired but stronger and we are all better leaders for it.

**TN:** The most vital role of the church elder is to model the Christian life. Elders assist the pastor in creating a vision for the church—through evangelism and by challenging and encouraging people to grow in their spiritual walk.

**ED:** How can we train and prepare members for the duties of eldership?

**TN:** I think that before an elder is trained, he or she must first have a calling and

the gifts needed to be an elder. The best training is a converted life and a heart for ministry, with a desire to prepare the church family for the kingdom of heaven. As a lifelong church member and the head of a large workforce, I have been trained by God to be a church leader. These factors, along with a strong prayer life and much Bible study, have equipped me for my work as an elder.

**ED:** What challenges face the church elder?

**TN:** The elder faces two major challenges. One is trying to assist the pastor when he or she has a vision that the church does not embrace. Second, ministry is a full-time job; even for an elder, the demands are enormous.

**ED:** Can a pastor assist the elder in facing these challenges?

**TN:** The pastor and the elder must be united. The church can be blessed and experience growth only when its leaders work together and are united in ministering to the body of believers.

**ED:** A pastor needs support from the elders. How can elders provide this assistance?

**CG:** An elder will give positive analysis of church needs, help the pastor make a plan of action, and work together to achieve the goal. Unity is paramount. If you can't work together as a team, everything falls apart.

**ED:** Unity seems to be a recurring theme in your comments. Let's include the church in the equation. How does your church encourage and affirm your pastor?

**TN:** We also recently hired a new pastor. We haven't yet had a Pastor's Day, but I think it's a good idea, one we will implement. My church encourages and affirms the pastor through acts of love and by supporting the direction and plans that the pastor shares. Over the years, I have found that when a love relationship exists between the pastor and the church, the relationship is self-evident and church becomes a place where members want to be.

**ED:** What is your church currently doing and which challenges demand the most attention?

**CG:** We have a five-year plan for growth, new ministries, and discipleship. It's quite comprehensive, and finding ways to motivate and unite our people will be a big part of it.

**ED:** And which ministry has been successful in your church?

**CG:** Young-adult ministry has flourished in the last couple of years, which is great

because we have been able to integrate these energetic young people into leadership positions. I think every church could use more leadership.

**ED:** Definitely. What three qualities do you think are most important for a local church leader?

**CG:** Spirituality: If you are trying to lead people to God, you'd better know the way. Wisdom: You need to know how to react to difficult situations. And finally, the ability to unite very different people behind one cause. This cannot be over-emphasized. If your work is not uniting the church, it is not the Lord's work.

**ED:** What lessons have you learned from your role as an elder?

**CG:** I need to be close to God all the time. When you work for Him, you are on duty 24/7/365. You never know when there will be a crisis, and you have to be spiritually prepared for it.

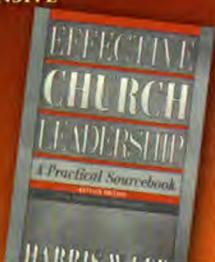
**TN:** The most powerful lesson I have

learned is that it is not about what people think or do—it's how I respond. I've also learned that it is an awesome responsibility and a great privilege to serve the Lord and His church.

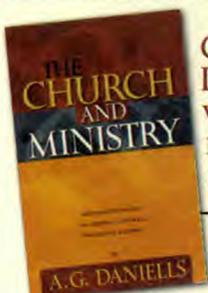
**CG:** Exactly. I actually work for the denomination full-time, but I have come to realize what I do at work is my job. What I do at my church and in my home is my true ministry.

**TN:** Local church leadership can be a very arduous task. It can often be frustrating, and sometimes it seems unrewarding. Yet knowing that I have been called to serve, seeing God move, answer prayer, build a church, or increase membership in spite of our shortcomings, knowing that He is faithful and uses whosoever will—it makes it all worthwhile. It's an awesome feeling to know that God uses me to build His kingdom. Only a loving God would do such a thing. That's my God. **ED**

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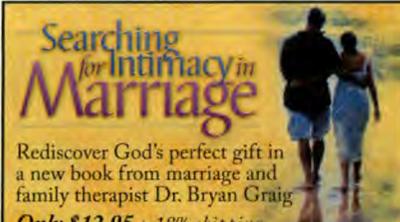
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# PASTOR'S DAY 2006

## Fourth Sabbath of October

*"Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God." (Heb. 13:7)*

Every day, church members and officials have opportunities to express appreciation to their pastors. But in many parts of the world, the denominational calendar includes one day that is set apart especially for this purpose.

When the fourth Sabbath of October was first celebrated as "Pastor's Day," the idea was to show appreciation and gratitude to the pastoral family for the work they accomplish.

In some Divisions, the Ministerial Association provides posters, ideas, and information on how this day can be celebrated and remembered. We recognize that pastors have a great ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Many believers have been encouraged, supported, and assisted by their pastors. Through sermons, visitation, evangelism, special ceremonies, and fellowship, these pastors have been instruments of blessing in God's hands.

But the nature of the pastor's job means that sometimes he or she feels lonely, isolated, insecure, unappreciated, and unmotivated.

By how they serve the church, pastors confirm the call they received from God. Pastors do not do their jobs for money; although the church offers a sustenance-salary. In most cases the pastor's spouse works outside the home to help with the family budget. Remember, a spiritual leader is someone who has abandoned the love of power to embrace the power of love. Therefore, a special day of recognition, appreciation, and gratitude for pastors shows not only that their members care for them but also motivates Adventist ministers toward excellence.

On this special day, church members are encouraged to send cards or make phone calls to the pastoral family to show love and appreciation. Churches may also show their affection through a gift or some other kind of tribute. Some could invite the pastor's family for lunch or dinner. Creativity is what counts on these occasions.

However, let us remember that on this day, church members should not prepare a special sermon. The Sabbath message is designed to feed and nurture the

congregation spiritually. It wouldn't be wise to use the entire worship service to pay tribute to any specific person; the time between Sabbath School and the worship service can be used for this purpose. Another appropriate time would be at the youth meeting, when an interview could be held with the pastor's family, or the participants could share a testimony about the blessings of ministry.

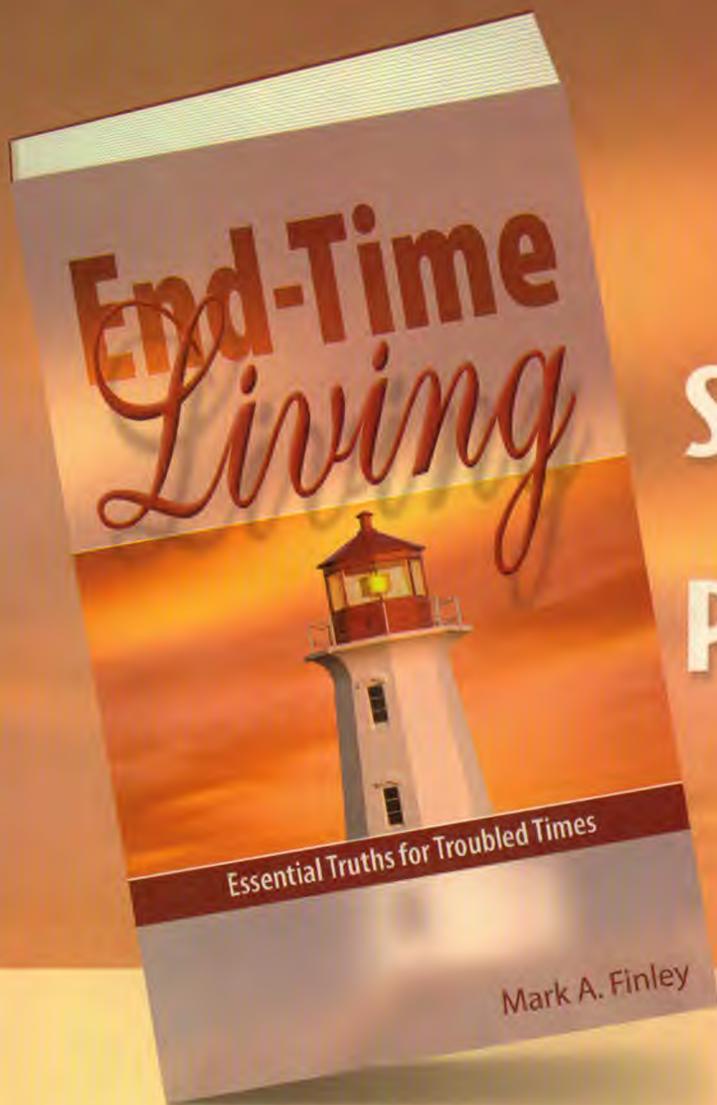
Who should conduct this tribute? The head elder would be the most appropriate person, and other people may indicate their desire to express some words of appreciation. But one person should be selected to lead out in the tribute.

Afterwards, the congregation should pray with and for the pastor in a special way. Pastors need prayer and seldom hear their own names lifted up before God's throne.

This year Pastor's Day is October 28. May this celebration be a great blessing to all. <sup>ED</sup>

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# introducing *the* GUEST SPEAKER

Theodore Carcich

Occasionally a guest speaker is invited to speak at a church or conference gathering. How should he be treated, and how should he be introduced?

First, the speaker should have prior information regarding the nature of the meeting and what is expected of him. He should also know the time and place of the meeting. If he arrives by train, plane, or bus, someone should meet him and provide transportation to the church or campground. Should overnight accommodations be necessary, care should be exercised that he does not stay with some family that delights in "talking his ears off" into the wee hours of the morning. There is no surer way of presenting a washed-out preacher at the next day's service.

The service itself should be organized well

in advance. It is disconcerting for the speaker to arrive on time only to discover that the meeting is disorganized, the presiding officer unable to find those who are to participate in the service, the rostrum chairs out of place, the auditorium not heated or ventilated, and the choir late getting to the choir loft.

Worse still, while the pastor or presiding officer rushes around trying to bring order out of chaos, someone with an axe to grind belabors the speaker with some real or imagined grievance. All this tends to make the guest frayed and worn out before he speaks, often resulting in a flat and insipid presentation. This frustrating experience can be avoided by careful preparation and organization.

In presenting the guest, the chairman of the meeting should make sure that he has the proper facts about the speaker. At times it is better to place such facts in the church bulletin. And these facts should be accurate. A few well-chosen statements are sufficient. Every book written, every degree obtained, and every office held need not be listed. If the guest did not have the necessary qualifications, he would not have been asked to speak.

Care should be taken in relating anecdotes, especially those involving the speaker. Many times such stories are not appropriate to the theme, the occasion, or the speaker. The one introducing the speaker can

be pleasant without being patronizing, brief without being disrespectful.

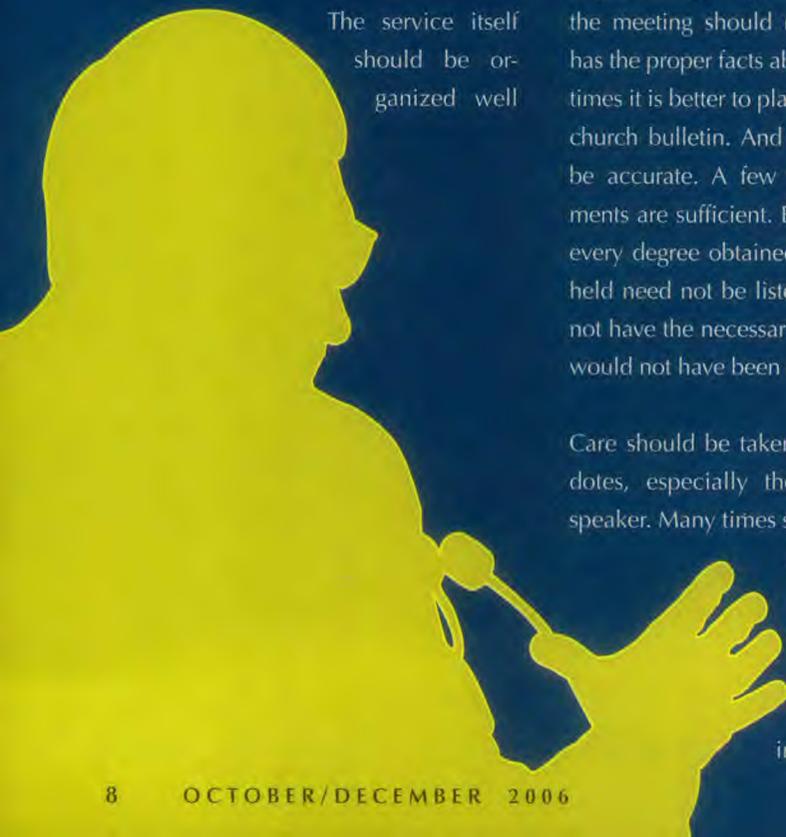
The speaker's time should be protected. It is unfair to him and to the audience when a long session precedes the address. What speaker has not watched the clock tick off the best part of the speaking hour while listening to a prolonged musical program or to lengthy announcements? Equally frustrating and destructive of a speaker's time at camp meetings are the blow-by-blow instructions on how to take care of tents in a storm or how to find lost children.

It is agonizing for a speaker to hear the chairman say: "I am sorry that we have used up so much time discussing these items, but we want our speaker to feel at ease and take all the time he needs to present his subject. Ladies and gentlemen, I take pleasure in presenting..." By this time the audience is tired, children are fidgety, and infants are crying for their dinner. Upon being presented so late, the speaker may be tempted to say, "My address this morning is 123 Main Street, Anytown, U.S.A.," and sit down!

A person is invited to speak because it is assumed that he has something to say. That opportunity should be granted him without his laboring under pressure of time and tiredness of mind. Then what is said can be a blessing. No one should rob the audience of the latter. <sup>ED</sup>

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**Theodore Carcich**, former vice president of the North American Division.



**Over the years, pastors have expressed differences of opinion regarding women's head coverings and the wearing of wedding rings. Do we need one teaching and understanding on this issue?**

Here the questioner requests the impossible. While recognizing that differences of opinion have existed for years, he pleads for one consistent teaching. I'm reminded of a training convention for local church elders which I conducted in West Jamaica. Several hundred participants, including a significant number of women elders, listened as a man enquired whether it was custom or doctrine that demanded a woman wear a hat to church. My tongue-in-cheek answer was that in my culture it was custom, but that in his culture, it appeared to be both custom and doctrine. Then I closed the subject with admonition that in matters of women's hat styles and dress preferences, men ought to remain silent!

Issues regarding wedding rings have been debated among Adventists for decades. Wearing or not wearing a wedding ring is entirely a personal conviction of the individual, and no pastor or elder may impose his or her personal views on anyone else.

**Using specific Bible passages, is it possible to prove—without bias—that women should be allowed to preach in church?**

First, let me state that it is nearly impossible to answer any question without bias because our opinions are formed by our backgrounds, cultures, spiritual experiences, or educational training. I'm sure the questioner believed I would be biased since my wife had just preached an excellent sermon at that Bible conference.

The simple answer is No! There are no texts that command women to preach in church. Proof-texting our way to answers, however, may be the weakest approach to finding truth.

Scripture and our own denominational heritage provide ample examples of women preaching. For example, the Samaritan woman at the well was the first individual that

Jesus commissioned as a public evangelist. She got amazing results. Mary, fresh from meeting Jesus at the tomb, was the first to preach His resurrection. Her results were not as great; although her message was understood, it was not believed. Jesus later scolded His disciples for refusing to believe her proclamation. Priscilla held such an esteemed leadership role that she instructed other preachers, and our own Adventist heritage has relied on the effective preaching and writings of Ellen G. White.

If you still need a proof text, try Galatians 3, in which the apostle declares "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." The church's polity decision not to ordain women should not be confused with the Lord's call for every believer to proclaim His word.

**Does our doctrine require that a man marry a woman that he has impregnated after the church board has disfellowshipped them?**

The timing of the board's action has nothing to do with the issue except to remove the church board as party to the discussion. Furthermore, the church board is never authorized to remove any individual from membership. That discipline can only be administered by the church in a business session.

Specifically to this question, however, premarital sexual relations are a sin. They are also a reality. Perhaps the church should offer more premarital education, especially to young people, with the goal of avoiding sinful situations rather than punishing sinners.

The answer to sin is repentance, confession, forgiveness, and walking in new life. Marrying an individual with whom I have sinned does not atone for that sin. A marriage certificate does not move immoral behavior from the "prohibited" column to the "approved" column. That would be salvation by works. <sup>ED</sup>

# can the **PASTOR** do it **A L O N E ?**

*Can the Pastor Do it Alone?* by Melvin J. Steinbron, is the title of an interesting book that I read recently. As I read, I was reminded of an article written years ago by Ellen G. White entitled "The Duty of the Minister and the People" in which she said, "The minister and the church members are to unite as one person in laboring for the upbuilding and prosperity

of the church. Everyone who is a true soldier in the army of the Lord will be an earnest, sincere, efficient worker, laboring to advance the interests of Christ's kingdom. Let no one presume to say to a brother who is walking circumspectly, 'You are not to do the work of the Lord; leave it for the minister'" (*Review and Herald*, July 9, 1895).

Equipping laypeople for ministry is the challenge of pastoral ministry (see Eph. 4:12). The leadership role of the pastor has been strengthened in the past two decades by church members who expect a pastor to motivate, stimulate, challenge, enable, equip, and empower them as church leaders. The contrast is seen in how well the pastor can involve



others in leadership rather than trying to do everything alone. The rewards of pastoral ministry are many. The workload of planning, coordinating, implementing, and evaluating church programs and services is distributed and shared when using the talents of the people.

It is not easy to move from the traditional Superman/Lone Ranger style of ministry to a more shared pastoral ministry. In his book, Steinbron says, "Lay people can be the 'love with skin on.'" He suggests that people should be helped to identify their pastoral gifts. There are people in every church who are gifted and caring, capable of loving, available to "be there," and perhaps even waiting to be called into this kind of ministry. Steinbron says, "Peter was not an installed pastor. Yet Jesus told him, 'Feed My sheep.'"

The pastor-dominated church is fast becoming a relic. Laypeople can do pastoral work. Members will accept pastoring from laypeople. Using the small-group concept, Steinbron suggests calling together 12-15 people to work with the pastor in a "ministry group." There is a very good guide in the back of the book that I recommend for pastors and church leaders who want to better understand the biblical model of lay ministry.

Let's face it! There are reasons that we have so few people involved in ministry. The analysis given above by Ellen White is as true today as when she first wrote it. "There are a few who devise, plan, and work; but the great mass of the people do not lift their hands to do anything for fear of being repulsed, for fear that others will regard them as out of their place. Many have willing hands and hearts, but they are discouraged from putting their energies into the work. They are criticized if they try to do anything, and

finally allow their talents to lie dormant for fear of criticism, when if they were encouraged to use them, the work would be advanced and workers would be added to the force of missionaries" (*Review and Herald*, July 9, 1895).

"Many of those who stand in places of trust cherish a spirit of caution, a fear that some move may be made which is not in perfect harmony with their own methods of labor. They require that every plan should reflect their own personality. They fear to trust another's methods" (*Review and Herald*, July 9, 1895). It would be good if this message could be shared with the local church as it plans for service.

The Lone Ranger style of ministry is not getting the work of the gospel done. "Ministers should take the officers and members of the church into their confidence and teach them how to labor for the Master. Thus the minister will not have to perform all the labor himself, and at the same time the church will receive greater benefit than if he endeavored to do all the work, and release the members of the church from acting the part which the Lord designed that they should" (*Review and Herald*, July 9, 1895). The church exists for ministry, not administration. This is an important distinction.

It is fulfilling to see young people to whom you have ministered remaining loyal to the church and serving as lay leaders in the church and community. And it is distressing to see capable young people inactive in the church or leaving the church because of confusion, disillusionment, or conflict. We can find ways to walk with our young people in their troubled times and help them discover their spiritual gifts. Achieving this may not be as easy as it sounds, but here are a few suggestions:

### **Share the vision of laity in ministry.**

Visions are much akin to faith. Visions are "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." By envisioning, elders gain a good report, and by sharing their faith and their vision, they understood that the worlds were formed when God spoke" (Heb. 11:1-3, paraphrased).

"Where there is no vision the people will perish" (Prov. 29:18, paraphrased). The objective is that people will not perish, but rather have everlasting life. "Vision" in Proverbs 29:18 is prophetic hope. So let's envision.

### **Envision that it is God's will for people to grow.**

Convey that message to the membership. Remember, the concept is more caught than taught. Let the preaching, teaching, bulletins, newsletters, prayers, and general conversation impart the message, "We can grow."

### **Make sure councils and committees are coordinated with the vision of the congregation.**

Coordination means teamwork. Coordination enhances clarity of purpose. It is always a plus when people know what their responsibilities are and where accountability lies.

Many people in the local church can do what pastors do. The pastor's task is to equip these people for ministry and to support them by example. Steinbron calls this the "pastorhood of all believers." ED

---

**Harold L. Lee**, retired president of the Columbia Union Conference. He was executive secretary of that union when this article was written.

# POSTURE<sup>in</sup> PRAYER



Daniel L. Eckert

Is one kind of posture required for effective prayer? Variety of prayer posture characterizes the practice in all churches. Not only is there is a variety in the actual postures utilized, there are also many attitudes regarding correct prayer posture. You'll likely find as many opinions as you will individuals to express their views.

Various prayer postures are used in three major monotheistic religions. Judaism practices standing prayer. Christianity uses the bended knees as the proper prayer posture. Islam not only requires bended knees but almost complete prostration. Multiple prayer postures also

characterize polytheistic religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, etc.

Some Christians seem to believe that kneeling is the only effective posture for prayer. They assert that no other posture is acceptable for genuine Christians than the bended knee or bowed body, and that this posture in some way contributes to effective prayer. For these individuals, no other posture is real praying. They say that if the body is not bowed before God, neither is the heart.

## **New Testament examples**

Scriptural examples of prayer indicate

that our Lord knelt or prostrated Himself in prayer at various times (Matt. 26:39). Peter knelt as he prayed for Tabitha (Acts 9:40). Paul knelt with the elders of Ephesus at Miletus and with the church at Tyre during his farewell journey to Jerusalem (Acts 20:36; 21:5). Paul also said, "I bow my knees unto the Father" and "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow" (Eph. 3:14; Phil. 2:10).

In the Gospels, the father of the paralytic knelt before Jesus when he sought healing for his son. The leper knelt before Jesus when he begged for cleansing, and the man who wanted to learn how to obtain



eternal life knelt before Jesus as he asked His advice (Matt. 17:1; Mark 1:40; 10:17). But the forgiven publican stood as he prayed (Luke 18:12). Attitude, not posture, was the issue for him, and he went home “justified.”

In the post-resurrection days of the early church, there was no mention of posture during prayer. We are not told that the 120 were on their knees when the Spirit came upon them on the day of Pentecost. When Philip evangelized Samaria, there is no indication that the Spirit came upon the Samaritans because—or while—they were on their knees (Acts 8). The eunuch did not leave his chariot and kneel to seek salvation (Acts 8:26ff). There is no indication in the account of the conversion of the first Gentile, Cornelius, that he and his house or Peter were on their knees when the Spirit fell on all who heard the Word (Acts 10:44). As one proceeds through the record in Acts and examines what Paul and his converts did, there is no evident discussion of prayer posture.

This problem in churches today often centers around various conflicts of which posture in prayer is only one point of debate. Some assert that they cannot

believe that a proper attitude or a proper approach to God can be experienced with a bowed head and heart, yet not on bended knee. Among some fundamentalists, the idea is frequently held that unless Christian believers or penitent sinners are on their knees before God in prayer, the salvation cannot be accomplished, and a changed life cannot occur.

### What is essential?

Is it necessary that any one pattern of prayer posture be practiced by all the members of a local congregation in their worship services or in their midweek and other special-group meetings? Can there be freedom in the matter of posture during prayer? If, within the same congregation, one member kneels, another sits with bowed head, and still another stands during prayer, is anything essential lost or is something being introduced which makes the congregational prayer ineffective? Shall the one who stands for prayer look with disdain on the one who remains seated? Is it permissible for the one who is kneeling during prayer to look with censorious implications on those who remain seated and bow their heads in prayer? In other words, can there be freedom in posture during prayer within any congregation or denomination?

It should be clear to any Christian that it is highly improper to judge a fellow believer on the basis of his or her posture during prayer. Undoubtedly, in the absence of clear Scriptural directives, the one who judges is in greater danger of sinful offense than the person who prays in whichever posture seems suspect to the judgmental observer.

Clearly, the attitude of the praying person matters most to God. Is not prayer a private as well as a public matter between the individual Christian and his God? And even during public and corporate worship, is not prayer also a private matter? Are those who are infirm and unable to kneel incapable of joining the worship experience of those who assert that everyone must kneel?

Today, many congregations are invited by their worship leaders to kneel for prayer; other congregations are in the habit of standing during prayer. Still other congregational leaders simply say, “Let us pray” to the seated congregation. It would seem that a prayerful attitude is more important rather than some particular posture for prayer.

The basis for any directive regarding prayer posture should be based on the realization that prayer during public worship is a special religious activity—distinct from other facets of worship such as hearing Scripture, singing, testimony, or proclamation—and that it is enhanced by a change of posture. Whatever the posture, prayer is a spiritual and experiential activity that, more than anything else, must consist of a sincere, expectant approach to the almighty God in the name of Jesus. <sup>ED</sup>

—Adapted from *The Watchman Examiner*, Feb. 25, 1960.

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Daniel L. Eckert

The day was spectacular: blue sky, fresh breeze. Everyone was in good spirits because Jesus was coming to town. I had heard about Him but had never seen Him. People would say, "No one teaches like He does. He makes the truth about God so plain. He delivers good news to the poor and the oppressed. He heals the sick and cures the demon-possessed."

I was primed for a blessing, but little did I know how blessed I would be! I didn't know He would change my view about *everything* and *everyone*.

Let me tell you about myself. I was like any other Jew: I kept the Sabbath day holy—wouldn't do anything that I shouldn't, went to the synagogue every Sabbath, returned my tithe, and gave a liberal offering. But I also had my shortcomings (which I thought were my strengths). I hated the Romans (oppressors who taxed us left and right). I hated the publicans (Jews who collected taxes for the Romans—actually, they overtaxed us and kept the excess for themselves). I hated the Samaritans (half-Jews with mixed blood). Divine light was for us faithful Jews, and not for those lost heathens—Jewish or otherwise.

One Sabbath, as Jesus was speaking, I heard a commotion behind me. I thought a fight was about to break out. Oh yeah, there was another group I hated: lepers. You see, we all were convinced that leprosy was a curse from God. Lepers were contagious, so they couldn't come to the synagogue (but being cursed, God wouldn't want them there anyway).

Some were saying that this Jesus was the Messiah, sent from God. Some claimed He was even God Himself! I was not quite sure how God could be on earth and in heaven, too. But as I was saying, there was a commotion.

Honestly, I had never seen a leper up close. Grotesque. Gruesome. Oozing sores with draining pus. Honestly, I had never smelled

anything quite like that either. Well, I certainly wasn't about to get in the way. I stepped back, almost wanting to throw up at the sight and smell. And now he was standing right in front of Jesus. He said, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."

How can he call Him "Lord"? Lord equals master. How dare he think that this great Man would be willing to heal such an outcast! Jesus *could* make him clean. But why?

I was watching for Jesus to ignore this man, to send him back to where he came from and get back to more important things. But without hesitation, Jesus said something that caught me off guard: "I am willing. Be clean!" Then He *really* shocked me. I figured He'd speak words of healing. Perhaps He would wave His hand to bless the leper (and fan away the odor at the same time). What He did was something I did not expect. *Jesus touched him!* Who would do such a thing?

Two articulate people nearby were conversing, and I overheard them. I realized that (1) this Messiah was God, and (2) this Man was showing us the love of God for even the most down and out. He healed the leper in the most intimate fashion possible—by touching him.

I saw that man's skin become more soft and supple than my own. I don't know how old he was, but he who looked so old before now looked baby-skin young. I saw a physical metamorphosis right before my eyes! And I also saw a psychological transformation. The leper had low self-esteem, but with a touch from Jesus, he walked like a child of royalty! The leper wasn't the only one touched that day, not the only one to experience a metamorphosis. He was changed physically on the outside. *I was changed spiritually on the inside!* I saw that this leper was actually better off than I was. He was a leper on the outside, but *I was a leper on the inside!* My hatred, anger, and bitterness were destroying me!

I decided to keep following Jesus. I didn't feel worthy to ask if I could become one of His disciples—I preferred to follow Him from a distance. I was drawn to Him, yet I didn't want anyone to know that I was associated with Him.

I learned so many lessons even at a distance:

- To love your enemies (Luke 6: 27-36).
- To be like the Good Samaritan (Luke 10—Everyone is my neighbor).
- The story of the Prodigal Sons (Luke 15—It was as though He was talking about me, that I was *both* sons, sometimes the wandering one and sometimes the loyal, jealous bitter one).
- To treat others as He treated Zacchaeus (Luke 19).
- That it is possible to respect a corrupt government (Luke 20:20-25).

Later I witnessed some of the events surrounding His final Passover. The five court appearances before religious and civil rulers. The mad crowds, the torture, the insults, His carrying that cross, the nails driven through His wrists and behind His ankles. I can still hear those agonizing groans as He wrestled for every breath.

*Then I was touched again!* He looked at me, and the look in His eyes said, "I am doing this for you."

Just a few days later I heard, "He is not dead. He is alive." I didn't see Him anymore, but I heard that it was promised to those who did see Him that He would return just as they had seen Him go into heaven (Acts 1:11).

I made up in my mind to see Him again. Now I have only one more desire: to have Him to touch me in glory! <sup>ED</sup>

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**Willie Hucks II**

Assistant Editor, *Ministry Magazine*

When we compare the experiences of the Israelites in Egypt with what is happening in our world today, we see that God is always looking out for His people.

Egypt's water turned into blood (Exod. 7:19-25). Frogs appeared everywhere (8:1-14). Next came a plague of lice (verses 16-19), and then a plague of the flies covered the land, except in Goshen, where God's people were living (verses 22-24). Moses tried repeatedly to negotiate with Pharaoh to let God's people go. But he never compromised with Pharaoh.

At this point, Pharaoh was getting tired of all these plagues. This last plague of flies seemed to him a total catastrophe. The plague of flies was more severe than we could ever imagine. These flies were worse than our modern-day gnats! The flies would fasten themselves upon the human body—especially upon the edges of the eyelids—and torture people by stinging them until their victims became disfigured by the swelling. These flies also killed the plants in which they deposited their eggs.

These plagues were finally getting to Pharaoh. In fact, Pharaoh became so alarmed that he sent for Moses and Aaron and gave them permission to sacrifice to their God "in the land."

Pharaoh was being taught that the God who sent this plague was not some common deity of Egypt, one among many others. Rather, this God was "Jehovah." He was the author of the plagues—the One who had authority over Egypt and who possessed supreme authority over all creation. Israel's God was and is the absolute Deity.

Pharaoh was now ready to offer a compromise (read Exod. 8:25). He acknowledged God's existence because he had felt the punishing power of the God whom previously he had professed not to know. He told Moses, "Go sacrifice to your God, but remain here in the land."

Pharaoh allowed the Israelites to go worship God, but he insisted that they do so in Egypt. Imagine! He was still trying to compromise with God.

Moses told Pharaoh that it was not acceptable for Israel to worship within Egypt. He explained, "The sacrifices we offer are detestable to the Egyptians, and they will try to stone us. Besides, the Lord commanded us to take a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices."

Then Pharaoh tried to make another compromise with Moses and Aaron (Read Exodus 8:28). "I will let you go, but don't go very far. Now please pray for me." Pharaoh was now asking for prayer! It appeared that he was starting to soften as he offered this proposal for compromise, but he still had not done as God asked.

Satan offers compromise today. He says, "Go ahead and attend church on Sabbath; just live for me during the rest of the week. It's okay if you do this or you do that. It's okay if you sin—who's going to know?"

God's Word says that we are called to a different lifestyle than what Satan and this world offer us. The New Testament reminds us that "Jesus was not of this world" (John 15:18-20) and admonishes us that "we are not to be of this world" (17:14-17).

We need to reject all the things that Satan and the world have to offer us, even if those things appear to be okay. Let us reject compromise just like Moses rejected Pharaoh's offer (read Exodus 8:27).

Many people tell us, "Don't go off the deep end" or "Don't carry that religion too far." And I've noticed something about people who say things like this. They're just like Pharaoh. When they are desperate, they are the first ones to plead, "Pray for me." Don't

misunderstand, I have no problem praying for anyone. I just want to point out that even the most hard-hearted people ask for prayer at desperate times.

Besides, Christ calls us to have a complete commitment to Him. In Romans 12:1-2, the apostle Paul gives us an example of the kind of commitment that Christ is looking for in us.

In the story of Moses and Pharaoh, more plagues had to occur—plagues on the cattle (Exodus 9:1-7); boils on the Egyptians (verses 8-12); the plague of hail—before Pharaoh offered another compromise. But the Israelites were spared these plagues, thus showing the Egyptians that God was in control.

Pharaoh was still trying to compromise with Moses (read Exodus 10:8-11). "Moses, I will let you go, but you have to let your families stay here." Of course, this compromise was totally unacceptable to Moses and to God.

Like Moses, we must determine that we will never compromise with Satan when it comes to our families. More than anything, Satan wants to have our families in his possession. But our families are to serve God with us (Joshua 24:15).

Pharaoh tried to compromise one more time (Exod. 10:24-27). He asked the Israelites to leave their possessions and go serve the Lord. Today, Satan offers the same enticements—to compromise our faith, our family, and our possessions. In short, Satan doesn't want God to have either you or your possessions.

When we compromise God's Word and ways, we put ourselves in bondage to Satan and the world. But total commitment to Christ leaves no room for compromise. Allow Christ to be Lord of all in your life. **ED**

General Conference Ministerial Association



When we contemplate the compassion of Jesus, we find it beautiful and amazing, touching and motivating, challenging and even threatening. Consider these passages:

“When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matt. 9:36).

“When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, He had compassion on them and healed their sick” (Matt. 14:14).

“Jesus called His disciples to Him and said, ‘I have compassion for these people; they have already been with Me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way’” (Matt. 15:32).

“Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed Him” (Matt. 20:34).

“A man with leprosy came to Him and begged Him on his knees, ‘If you are willing, you can make me clean.’ Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out His hand and touched the man. ‘I am willing,’ he said. ‘Be clean!’ Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured” (Mark 1:40-42).

These are wonderful accounts of an amazing Man! Multitudes have dedicated their lives to emulating His compassion.

A well-known example is Father Damien. In 1858, Damien decided to become a priest. Soon after entering the priesthood, he was sent from his home country of Belgium to the Hawaiian Islands. After his ordination, he was given charge of various districts in Hawaii.

Then Damien heard of the island of Molokai, a leper settlement, where the government quarantined those who were suffering from leprosy. Damien requested a transfer to Molokai.

When he arrived at the leper colony, he found that strong winds had decimated their settlements. The lepers were lying in the rain in drenched clothing under sodden blankets. He ministered to the sick by washing them, covering their sores and ulcers, and rebuilding their huts. He wanted to improve the settlement and make them comfortable. He taught his leprous parishioners to farm, raise animals, and play music.

After 12 years of this compassionate service, he stood before them and opened his weekly sermon by saying, “We lepers . . .” He had discovered in himself the first symptoms of leprosy, yet he continued his compassionate work with the lepers. In 1889, after 15 years of service to the lepers, Father Damien passed away there on Molokai; he was 49. Damien was motivated by the compassion of Jesus.

How do we define compassion? According to the dictionary, compassion is “pity; to come to the assistance of; to give aid to those in need or difficulty.” But somehow, a dictionary definition of compassion doesn’t capture the total and implied meaning of compassion, because words on a page or words in the air don’t define “compassion.”

What’s the real definition? What comes to our minds when we think of compassion?

Compassion can be a smile, a prayer, a drink, a satisfying meal, a comforting touch, or a listening ear. Compassion can also be giving money, shelter, clothing, time, care, tears, forgiveness, mercy, peace, and comfort. Compassion requires that you give something, and

the highest degree of compassion involves the sacrificial giving of yourself!

The meaning of compassion can also be illuminated in the context of biblical stories, particularly the stories about Jesus. Read Luke 15:20. In response to this touching story, Ellen White was inspired to write: “But even this parable, tender and touching as it is, comes short of expressing the infinite compassion of the heavenly Father” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 53)

As humans, we can only begin to understand Divine Compassion when we have some comprehension of our own true identity and the identity of the Divine One. What am I like? Who am I? When we look at our own character traits, we’re often disappointed. We see a lot that isn’t appealing! We are sinners, loaded with defects, destined to die, hopeless and helpless, but for the compassionate salvation of Jesus.

God is compassionate to us—with eternal consequences—and that is amazing.

Jesus didn’t just value compassion. Jesus didn’t just speak about compassion. Jesus didn’t just raise the awareness of compassion. He was—He remains—compassionate! And when someone is compassionate, there is a price to be paid. Compassion costs, and Jesus, along with His Father, paid the exacting price of compassion.

True compassion is not given out of a wealth of discretionary abundance—time, money, or energy. True compassion is giving away something that is scarce. For some of us, it may be time; for others, it may be money or energy. For example, the tired, hungry widow at Zarephath baked a final loaf of bread for herself and her son, yet she showed compassion when she shared that bread with the prophet!

God—with all the time of eternity, all the gold and silver and the cattle on the 1,000 hills, and the energy to create countless galaxies—didn't give one of His millions or billions of sinless angels. He gave something He was short on—His Son! God gave His only Son. He had no other Son in reserve. He didn't have a spare Son. That's compassion!

When we, the followers of Jesus, contemplate the compassion of Jesus and His Father, we find it beautiful and amazing, touching and motivating, challenging, and threatening. But how can the compassion of Jesus be challenging and threatening?

Here's one example. Adventism has typically emphasized character development, self discipline, resilience, and sanctification. Of course, we do need these qualities, but we don't need the crusty, hardened exteriors that are sometimes an unfortunate by-product of this emphasis.

A certain toughness and resoluteness has enabled many to leave Babylon and join and remain with the Remnant! It has enabled people to do superhuman things—empowered by their experience with Jesus. However, one of the challenges of the Christian life is to be resilient and strong and yet retain compassion and gentleness toward others.

Jesus was strong enough to resist the devil and went without food for 40 days, yet He showed compassion when He fed the 5,000. He healed the wounds of others but was uncomplaining when He Himself was wounded. He healed the ear of a cowardly gang member, even though He knew the man was going to ensure that He was beaten and ultimately die an agonizing death!

While we as Adventists are a prophetic move-

ment, commissioned to take the eternal gospel to all the world, we need to be immersed in the compassion of Jesus. It needs to drip from us! We communicate the gospel not just with magazines, tracts, TV and satellite programs, and public and personal proclamation—we communicate Jesus through our compassion.

Read the summary of Jesus' ministry in Luke 4:18, 19. Compassion undergirds the ministry of the Messiah! Good news to the poor is being compassionate, freedom for prisoners is being compassionate, sight for the blind is being compassionate, release for the oppressed is being compassionate, and proclaiming the year of the Lord's favor is being compassionate.

But does this mean that compassion should limit ministry only to the social gospel? People need Christian compassion, but they are not eternally saved through the compassion of well-meaning Christians. They need to experience Christ's compassion, His atoning grace, and His forgiveness. Compassionate Christians can introduce "closed" people to the atoning Jesus like no one else and like nothing else! The social gospel and the everlasting gospel of Revelation 14 need to embrace.

Ellen G. White wrote, "We all need to sow a crop of patience, compassion, and love . . ." (*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 6, p. 268). We live in a world full of misery and in desperate need of compassion. And in all the world, there's nothing like the compassion of Jesus! <sup>ED</sup>

**Anthony Kent**, General Conference Associate Ministerial Secretary.

# What do Adventists believe?

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In this passage, we see Israel going to war with the Amalekites. Moses sent Joshua out to war while he remained behind to pray. While his hands were lifted up, Israel had victory; when his hands were weary and slipped down, Israel suffered defeat. So Aaron and Hur supported Moses, helping to lift and hold up his hands. Israel had a great victory that day. Here are five ways that a battle can be won through prayer.

**Intercessors must pray while the soldiers fight.** Read Exodus 17:9. Moses remained behind to pray while his spiritual son, Joshua, fought the war. What an example of a spiritual father! No wonder Joshua became a great leader. He had a spiritual father who prayed for him. Too many people go to war without prayer support. Probably, this is why there are so many spiritual casualties in the Christian faith. People fail to pray. Many do not have spiritual fathers to pray for them. Joshua was indeed a privileged man. Let us look at what Moses did:

*He stood.* Standing suggests alertness. Intercessors must be alert. An intercessor is someone who stays awake in the dark and watches over the city. When the enemy comes, he sounds the alarm so that the people can arise immediately and defend the city. The Bible teaches that if the watchman falls asleep and does not sound the alarm, the blood of the people will be upon his hand. What an awesome responsibility an intercessor has! Are you standing, sitting, or sleeping in your spiritual life?

*He stood at the top of the hill.* This location gave the intercessor an overview of the battle. An intercessor should be able to see the overall purposes of God so that he will have spiritual insights on how to pray.

*He held the rod of God in his hand.* God's rod speaks of authority. This rod was given to Moses as a sign of Moses' leadership. Moses

used the rod to defeat the Egyptian sorcerers and open the Red Sea. We must use our authority over the devil when we pray. When we fight the devil in the name of Jesus, we have authority over him. We must always pray with the authority God has given to us.

**A weakening of intercessory prayer will lead to defeat.** Read Exodus 17:11. The evidence given in this verse is clear. When prayer stopped, the Amalekites prevailed. If we fail to plan, we plan to fail. If we fail to pray, we are destined to fail.

Read Matthew 26:40-41, 45. Jesus had trouble getting His disciples to pray with Him for just one hour. The disciples paid a high price for not praying. Within a few hours of their prayerlessness, they were all scattered as Jesus was crucified. Peter denied Jesus three times. The rest of the disciples ran away as Jesus died on the Cross. Only the women were left to look after His body. I often wonder if the scenario would have been different if they had prayed with Jesus at the Garden of Gethsemane. Perhaps Peter would not have denied Jesus. God may have delivered him in his time of temptation.

**One strong intercessor is insufficient; a team is needed.** Read Exodus 17:12. Moses grew tired and had to be supported by two strong men, one on each side. Sometimes we think we can leave prayer to God's appointed intercessors, but the truth is that we can't. We are all called to be intercessors. A TEAM of intercessors is needed—Together Everyone Achieves More.

Jesus needed His disciples to pray with Him at Gethsemane (Matthew 26). Imagine, even the Son of God needed His disciples to pray with Him! How much more we, as mortal human beings, need intercessors to pray with us in our times of need. We cannot live our Christian lives on the faith and prayers of a few godly men.

**Intercessors must record, recount, and pass on the prayer lifestyles to the next generation.**

Read Exodus 17:14. Moses gave two specific instructions. He wrote and recounted it particularly for Joshua. Moses wanted Joshua to know what happened up on the hill when the battle was being fought. He wanted Joshua to know that he had been praying.

Are you recording your prayers? Are you recording God's answers to your prayers? Are you sharing your testimonies? Are you passing on this prayerful lifestyle to the next generation?

Many revivals do not survive to the next generation because the prayer lifestyle of the revival generation is not passed on to the next generation. So the revival dies. All revivals are born in prayer. In the same way, revivals can only be sustained by prayer.

**Intercessory prayer creates a banner of protection.** Read Exodus 17:15. God's name *Jehovah Nissi* comes from this passage. Intercessory prayer creates a banner of protection over God's people. What a way to end this story—by remembering that God is our banner! But remember that the banner was there only when Moses lifted his hands to pray. People often assume that the banner will always be present; however, when they fail to pray, they lose the battle. The banner is there only because we pray.

What a powerful example of how we can have victory when we pray. Many Christians live in defeat because they do not pray. Start praying today, and record both your prayers and God's answers to your prayers. Prayer will surely bring a boost to your spiritual life. <sup>ED</sup>



# STEPS to SUCCESS

John R. Loor, Sr.

Every worker for God wants to be successful. We are told that a disciplined, organized mind is essential for such success. Also, the worker for Christ should not shun mental discipline. In other words, we should be willing to let the Holy Spirit organize *us*.

We, who are so accustomed to organizing others, must not resist organization ourselves. And this goes for our workers too. Sometimes this can be painful, if we have been lax along these lines. Our type of work is a perfect target for Satan as he strives to create disorder. We have no time clock to punch like some other workers. The responsibility of faithfully utilizing our time is ours.

God's servant tells us that we must have rules to achieve success through order and discipline. What are some of these rules?

**Recognize priorities.** "By dallying over the less important matters, they find themselves hurried, perplexed, and confused when they are called upon to do those duties that are more essential."<sup>1</sup> We need to know how, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to put first things first.

**Have a plan.** "Everything must be done according to a well-matured plan, and with system."<sup>2</sup> That doesn't leave much out, does it? Sometimes we all feel too busy to take time to plan. But if we would do this, we would save *more* time in the final analysis.

**Cultivate regularity and punctuality.** Even the best schedule can be interrupted; nevertheless, a definite schedule is necessary for us to work smoothly and successfully. "Regularity in all things is

essential. Never be late to an appointment."<sup>3</sup> None of us likes to see people straggling late into Sabbath school and the worship service. How do we feel when the situation is reversed?

**Make works and time count.** We should never be too busy to help precious souls, and may God guard us from "professionalism," but we should avoid useless motion. "In no department or office should time be lost in unnecessary conversations."<sup>4</sup> Let us make our time count for Christ, for souls, and for eternity.

**Prompt attention to important matters.** By important matters we mean more than priority. We need to recognize *what* is important, but we must also move ahead quickly on those things. If you question this at all, listen to this counsel: "The unfortunate habit of neglecting a special work which needs to be done at a certain time trebles the difficulty of performing it later with exactness and without leaving something neglected or unfinished."<sup>5</sup> I don't believe that any of us want to triple the difficulties of our work.

**Have a notebook and use it.** "If necessary, have a small book in which to jot down the things that need to be done, and set yourself a time in which to do your work."<sup>6</sup> If you would avoid many "slips" and the constant clouds of uneasiness involved in wondering whether you are forgetting to do something, make good use of your little book.

**Have no sidelines.** There is much that could be said in this area and in matters of definition. May the Holy Spirit guide all of us, as we consider the principle enunciated in the following: "Elder X will surely lose his bearings unless he ceases to interest himself

in work that God does not require him to do, work that demands attention to business details. By engaging in secular work, he would not be doing that which has been appointed him by God. The proclamation of the gospel message will be his light and life.<sup>7</sup> What is our real "light" and "life"?

**Observe regular rest hours.** This point should be noted as being clearly supported in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. God's Word says we should be "temperate in all things." Do we sometimes even boast of our irregular, intemperate programs as though we were almost proud of them? If God's worker is tired, nothing seems right. His God, his own experience, his church members, and his own family all suffer as a consequence. It takes discipline to get sufficient physical rest. Rest *is* important. Leave some things unfinished. The late Robert Frost put it this way: "I leave a great deal to unfinished business."

Lest anyone misunderstand, let me hasten to add that this does not contradict the previous points on our list. Donald Culross Peattie's comment on Frost's statement will clarify:

"Toss them about in your mind, you worried and hurried ones. Savor the richness of time and patience, of hope and faith that lies in this simple utterance. For there is much in the business of our lives that we cannot hasten for all the urgency of speed that today devils us. There is much—and this is true of the most important of our affairs—that cannot be concluded in a day, or a week, or a month, but must be allowed to take a guided course. We are too prone to bring it with us to our rest, and thrash it over uselessly . . . . When an acorn fallen from an oak at last splits its husk, sprouts, and begins to take root, how

much unfinished business lies ahead of it! It has no contract with the sun and rain to have become an oak tree by a certain date. But with their help, it will grow until it towers and spreads shade, in the good time we call God's. We ought as trustingly to let our plans and problems ripen to solution, knowing there is another Hand in the business besides our own. To leave a question to 'unfinished business' is not to abandon the task. It is to attain the serenity which will give us strength to carry on with it when the call to effort comes." Thus, even in God's work, we must, in this sense, leave a great deal to "unfinished business."

If, by the grace of God and with the help of His Holy Spirit, we follow such God-given suggestions, what will be the

result? "Such a training is necessary not only for the young men but for the older workers in order that their ministry may be free from mistakes, and their sermons be clear, accurate, and convincing."<sup>8</sup> May God give us such an experience and such a ministry. **ED**

**Ellen G. White Books:**

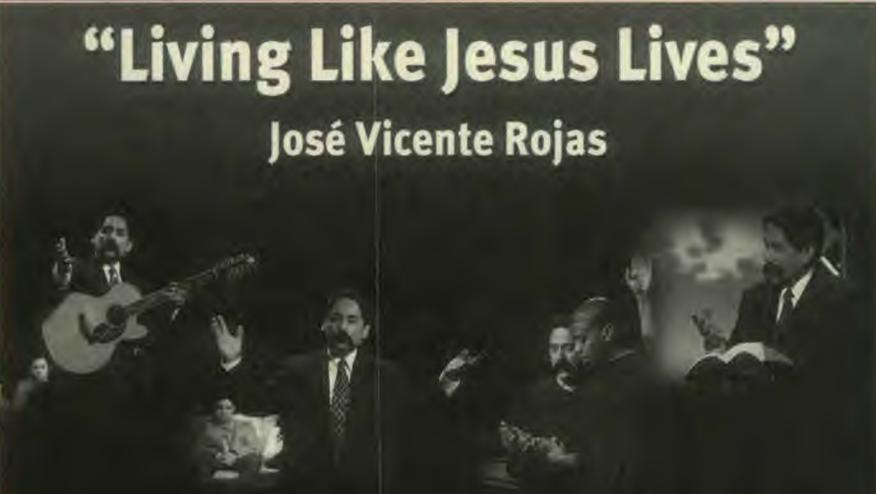
1. *Evangelism*, p. 649.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*, p. 651.
6. *The Youth's Instructor*, Jan. 28, 1897.
7. *Evangelism*, p. 654.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 648.

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# COMPETENCE TO LEAD



*"To gain the follower's trust is an essential requirement for leadership."*

Elders are responsible for the church's progress. In theory, they are the church members most prepared to move the church forward. However, reality shows that the lack of preparation in many of these leaders is greater than expected, especially in day-to-day situations.

Often, local church elders are admired or hated according to the manner by which they relate, communicate instruction, demand progress in the church's day-to-day activities, sanction rules, or deal with high-pressure situations.

Church members expect elders to be capable and prepared to lead the church, to set the tone of discussions, and to guide the rhythm needed for the development of the entire church or a specific department. Many hope that the elected leadership will be able to provide ways to solve all problems and challenges. But in reality, many elders are far from this desired objective. Today we face a serious crises in leadership.

Throughout the years, several researchers have focused on the subject of "leadership," seeking to evaluate this phenomenon and relate characteristics and abilities present in those people who stand out as leaders. These studies differentiate behavioral styles, value situational aspects, and point out different variables that may interfere with this process. Research shows that the leader's admirable

characteristics—honesty, competence, vision, and inspiration—head the list of attributes possessed by most successful people. All of these attributes may be summed up in one single word: credibility.

## **Credibility**

What people most expect from a leader is that he or she creates trust and earns credit by demonstrating coherent action and consistent ideas. It is not the command that works but the leader's example and ability to communicate the vision, the mission, and the challenge of new conquests. Through personal example, leaders demonstrate that they are capable of getting others to follow. Leaders must gain their followers' trust. Therefore, their actions and professed beliefs must be congruent. To have credibility, leaders need to live according to their values, be coherent and consistent, and do what they say they will do. Then they will be trusted.

Credibility is a relationship built between leaders and followers, and clear, transparent communication is fundamental.

One can have credibility only when what is said and what is done are in agreement. Unfortunately, too many would-be leaders do the opposite of what they say they will do. For too many in leadership, the old saying still applies: "Do as I say, not as I do."

Beautiful words are easily spoken, but in too many cases, the difference between speech and practice is so evident that observers end up ridiculing the speaker. Words have power, but there is more power in example, and people notice this difference. Worse, when such a situation occurs, leaders lose the informal support of those they are supposed to be leading.

This lack of credibility in modern leadership may be the primary reason that more and more people ask: "Why aren't there more leaders? Why do people resist answering the call of their leaders?"

Popular notions in many people's minds transform leaders into mythical figures, people who, due to their courage, give up everything to attract followers. Others think of leaders as visionaries

with magical powers. Another popular notion views leaders as "charismatic," possessing special gifts. Another myth associates leaders with superior positions that cannot be questioned, isolating the leaders at the top of an organization.

Tradition tries to make us believe that elaboration of a great strategic plan is the leader's main task. However, more than words, a leader's actions are much more important—the most important credibility factor in determining if leaders will continue to be followed.

### Shared aspirations

The most dangerous myth is the one that assumes that leadership is reserved only for certain individuals. This myth is reinforced every time someone says: "Leaders are born, not made." We must remember that leadership is not an end in itself; rather, it is a process. Leadership is not recorded in a gene or in a secret code that cannot be interpreted by anyone else. Leadership is a set of practices, abilities, and capabilities that may be observed, studied, and learned.

The belief that leadership cannot be learned constitutes a much more powerful obstacle to the development of this ability than the nature of the leadership process itself.

Leadership is a way to mobilize others to work toward shared aspirations. Leadership is best expressed when the leader understands people's needs and desires and then takes into consideration their interests, dreams, hopes, visions, and values.

No leadership exists without support. More than just representing a personal point of view, successful leaders persuade others to join and follow them in pursuit of a common goal. Followers can then be directed to positive action, which

will result in accomplishment which will be seen as improving the group's well-being.

The excuse "We've always done it this way" definitely does not fit into any creative leadership role. The vision of the leader must be panoramic. The leader should be shrewd and analytical about reaching the target and eager to learn. When asked about their best experiences, great leaders speak about occasions in which they imagined an exciting future for their organization and inspired others to join their quest to turn that vision into reality.

True leaders are psychologically secure. They do not feel threatened by sharing the decision-making process with others or by being receptive to ideas and initiatives from others. They do not fear the healthy environment of transparency where all viewpoints are considered and any team member receives appreciation for successful results. On the contrary, outstanding leaders are the first ones to listen to what others have to say. Their main concern is not to stand out; they are part of a team that is united, committed, and creative. In that atmosphere, all will give their best in mutual collaboration.

An important part of the leader's job is to show people that they can win. No one respects a leader who takes all the credit when, in reality, the idea, job, or project was a collaborative team effort. Many leaders make the mistake of taking the glory for themselves and sharing only failures to the group.

Sometimes leadership is a science, and sometimes leadership is an art. Position, job title, or a corner office does not make anyone a genuine leader. One can only lead to the extent that he or she can generate passion and share credit

with everyone in the group. Rather than driving people like a herd of cattle, a leader needs to generate a team spirit of participation and importance. A leader serves more as a conductor who coordinates capable and talented team members to produce a beautiful symphony. Leaders conduct people to accomplish something they could not do by themselves. People work for a cause they believe in or come to believe in because they are influenced by their leaders.

True leadership is like yeast. It appears, above all, through the growth of those being led. This presumes vision and assurance. The good leader is more like a constant dripping which slowly wears down the stone, penetrating and fertilizing the surrounding territory, than like a fire which acts with vehemence and quickly burns everything to ashes, including the leader himself!

"The saying is sure: If any one aspires to the office of bishop, he desires a noble task. Now a bishop must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, dignified, hospitable, an apt teacher, no drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and no lover of money. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way; for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil; moreover he must be well thought of by outsiders, or he may fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" (1 Tim. 3:1-7). <sup>Ed</sup>

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Augusto Cesar Maia is a church elder and a psychologist in Brazil.



# basic requirements for *Leaders*

Jonas Arrais

*Visiting churches, performing elders' seminars, and talking to members has made me keenly aware of some of their concerns.*

Some have expressed frustration regarding the low level of qualification demonstrated by some local church leaders. Someone recently mentioned to me that nominating committees should be more careful and discerning when recommending names to serve in the main functions of the church. Certainly, when wrong choices are installed in office, great damage can come upon the congregation.

Too often, we make the mistake of looking at someone who has been a successful professional in business and think that he or

she is therefore qualified to exercise spiritual leadership in the church. But we must not appoint people simply based on their appearance or social status. I believe that many congregations make this mistake.

#### **Choices based on appearance**

I always think of the experience of the prophet Samuel, who made a great mistake in choosing a replacement for King Saul. Samuel's choice was based simply on appearance. God told the prophet to go to Bethlehem, where he would find a man named



*... for the Lord sees not as man sees; man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart"*

Jesse who had several sons, one of whom would be the future king of Israel.

Arriving in Bethlehem, Samuel invited Jesse and his sons to offer sacrifices to the Lord. "When they came, he looked at Eliab and thought, 'Surely this is the Lord's anointed'" (1 Sam. 16:6). Samuel believed this handsome young man who looked like a king, walked like a king, and talked like a king must be the future king. Samuel naturally concluded, "Certainly this is the man."

But the Lord intervened. "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord sees not as man sees; man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart" (verse 7).

The individual whom God had chosen to be the next king was David. But

where was he when all this was taking place? David was herding sheep. Jesse never considered that his young son David could possibly be in God's plans. Samuel asked Jesse to call David. Even though the Bible says that David had beautiful eyes and a good appearance, we know that he was chosen because of his heart.

We may learn precious lessons from this experience which would help us choose future leaders for our church. Based on several situations and circumstances in David's story, we may extract at least three basic factors that should be taken into consideration when choosing future church leaders.

#### **Individuals of heart**

When Saul was crowned king, his heart was good. He was in harmony with God's will and had the basic require-

ments to fulfill that position. But in time, he began to disobey the Lord's instructions and was rejected as king (1 Sam. 15). The Lord had called Saul, but unfortunately, Saul did not fulfill the ongoing expectations of the divine call. David was chosen to replace Saul because he possessed a righteous heart. Moral and spiritual credibility are necessary for church leaders. Leaders also need to cultivate a good reputation in the society in which they live. They need to be men and women of prayer who have intimacy with the Word of God and reflect His will before the congregation.

#### **Individuals of ability**

One of the first steps David took after he became king was to conquer the city of Jerusalem. After that, he appointed Joab, son of Zeruiah, to serve as the army's commander and chief (1 Chron. 11:6). Why did King David choose Joab from

among so many men? What criteria did he use? Which qualities did Joab possess? We find the answer in Scripture; "Whoever shall smite the Jebusites first shall be chief and commander" (1 Chron. 11:6). Joab was chosen because he demonstrated ability coupled with a spirit of service; both are basic characteristics of a good leader.

As we choose leaders for the many positions in our congregations, we would be wise to appoint those who have already exhibited basic qualities. For example, when choosing elders, we should appoint those who have already demonstrated, on a day-to-day basis, proper capability in caring for and leading the congregation. Deacons and deaconesses also should be selected because they have already demonstrated readiness, sensibility, and a spirit of service to the church's needs. In other words, we need to know a little more about the abilities of those who will be appointed so that we do not appoint someone who has no preparation for the job they are expected to perform.

The biblical example reveals that David had this same concern. Later, he chose men to serve as warriors, men who could handle weapons and who were skillful fighters (1 Chron. 12:2, 8). When we appoint people for church positions, we should consider whether their spiritual gifts are compatible with the functions they are expected to perform. We also must determine whether they will have sufficient time for their new assignment. Why appoint someone who cannot spare any time for church work?

The most urgent need of today's church is to train and equip leaders, seeking to improve their potential and qualifying them to perform the tasks they undertake. They should receive continuous instruction

from pastors, conference departmental directors, and administrators. The Ministerial Association exists, in part, to assist pastors with this task.

#### **Individuals with a sense of mission**

The third group that contributed to the success of David's army was called "the Issachar men." The Bible says that they "had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do" (1 Chron. 12:32).

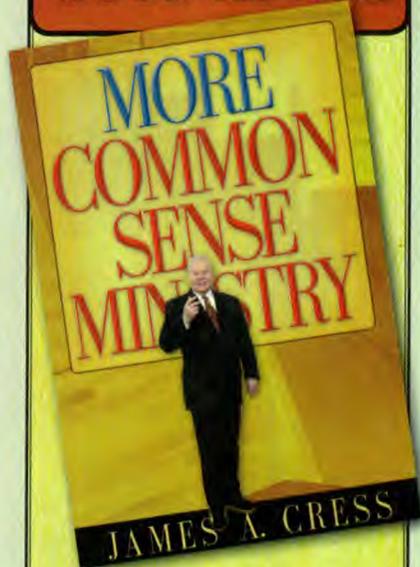
Servants of the Lord today should possess the same ability. The church would advance much more rapidly and would better fulfill its purpose if the leaders were aware of the solemn and momentous times in which we live. The missionary spirit, the integrated evangelism program—that is, the involvement of all in the fulfillment of the mission—would become the main focus of the church.

The spiritual leader needs to dream God's dream. Even if the church or company is small and destitute of resources, the leader does not see the limitations that surround it but determines what the congregation can do for the salvation of the community with the resources at hand. In the heart of such leaders, evangelism will be the main priority in the church services.

As we approach the time for nominating new officials for the next ecclesiastical year, let us consider these important qualities. Dedicating time for prayer and having clear concepts about what the church desires will enable the Holy Spirit to use the nominating committee in a more powerful way. When people are elected whose hearts beat in accordance with God's will, your church will be filled with new vitality and experience more blessings than you ever thought possible. **ED**

**Jonas Arrais**, General Conference Associate Ministerial Secretary

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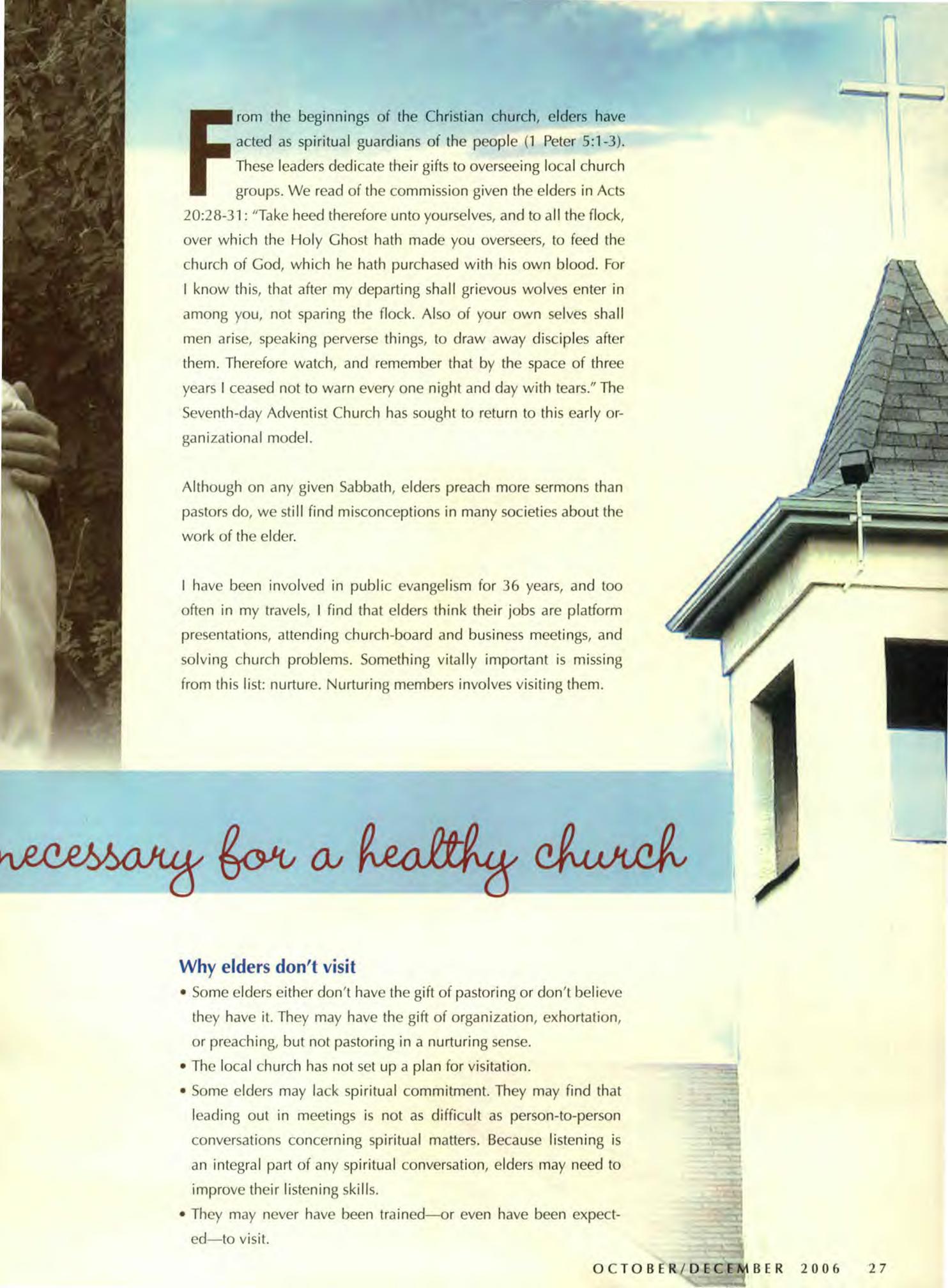
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## HOME VISITATION:

*"Many of your church members are carrying burdens that they have never spoken about. As you make visitation part of your regular ministry, they will grow to respect and trust you. They will open their hearts and you will have opportunity to point them to Jesus for forgiveness, grace, and power. This kind of ministry is one of the most effective ways elders can serve their people."*

Elder's Handbook, p. 117



**F**rom the beginnings of the Christian church, elders have acted as spiritual guardians of the people (1 Peter 5:1-3). These leaders dedicate their gifts to overseeing local church groups. We read of the commission given the elders in Acts 20:28-31: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.” The Seventh-day Adventist Church has sought to return to this early organizational model.

Although on any given Sabbath, elders preach more sermons than pastors do, we still find misconceptions in many societies about the work of the elder.

I have been involved in public evangelism for 36 years, and too often in my travels, I find that elders think their jobs are platform presentations, attending church-board and business meetings, and solving church problems. Something vitally important is missing from this list: nurture. Nurturing members involves visiting them.

## *necessary for a healthy church*

### **Why elders don't visit**

- Some elders either don't have the gift of pastoring or don't believe they have it. They may have the gift of organization, exhortation, or preaching, but not pastoring in a nurturing sense.
- The local church has not set up a plan for visitation.
- Some elders may lack spiritual commitment. They may find that leading out in meetings is not as difficult as person-to-person conversations concerning spiritual matters. Because listening is an integral part of any spiritual conversation, elders may need to improve their listening skills.
- They may never have been trained—or even have been expected—to visit.



### **The elder's job description**

In working with various churches over the years, I have developed the following job description for elders:

- The elder faithfully attends monthly elders' meetings and must be prepared to abide by and conform to majority decisions.
- The elder accepts responsibility according to his or her spiritual gifts in overseeing assigned departments of the church.
- The elder gives spiritual leadership in the church by attending and participating in worship programs, training programs, and other church ministries.
- The elder supports and promotes the church's social life.
- The elder pays a faithful tithe and supports the local church budget.
- The elder nurtures a group of church members. The group is selected by mutual consent in discussions about the members' role at elders' meetings.

### **How to conduct a pastoral visit**

The elder needs to pray for the family he or she is to visit and learn as much as possible about them, including the children. It is also important to learn as much as possible about the family (or individual member's) background: occupations, tal-

ents, leisure interests, etc. This material can be noted on a visitation card or in a membership database.

Make a visitation appointment in advance, either by phone or in person at church. After some casual conversation, inquire about the family's welfare, schooling, interests, and work. You might ask them how they became Seventh-day Adventists and who baptized them. Guide the conversation to the church and the family's relationship to various aspects of membership:

- Sabbath school: Adult, youth, and children's divisions.
- Worship services: Do they receive spiritual and social fulfillment? Do they enjoy worship?
- Evangelism in the church: Are they involved in witnessing? What contacts do they have? Do they have friends or family members who would be willing to attend services with them?
- The importance of personal spiritual life: Family worship and individual growth through Bible study, prayer, fellowship, and witnessing.
- Church finances: Find out if they understand how the church finances God's work at the world, conference, and local levels.

- If the church has a church school, discuss the school and how it is progressing. Talk about the importance of Christian education.
- Pathfinders ministry to young people.
- The importance of being involved in small-group fellowships.

End the visit with prayer, saying, "May I ask the Lord to bless your home?"

1. Speak to God as a Father who knows all about us, who is interested in each individual, and who loves and cares for us as His children.
2. Pray for each member of the family and mention each person by name.
3. Pray for the home and family as a whole. Seek God's blessing for them. Pray that they will have courage to witness to their work colleagues, friends, and neighbors.
4. Pray for the church, its work, and its witness.

5. Thank God for all His blessings, especially the gift of salvation.
6. Pray for forgiveness for what we have not done, and ask God to help us to become the obedient Christians He longs for us to be.
7. Pray that God will keep us strong in our faith and ready to meet Jesus when He returns.

### Don'ts during pastoral visitation

- Don't forget to pray before the visit.
- Don't start talking about a business proposition.
- Don't be drawn into criticism of the pastor or other church leaders.
- Don't take sides in any criticism. You will be quoted!
- Don't do all the talking. Let the people talk as they wish to—you only learn by listening.
- Don't pretend that you know everything. Be ready to say "I don't know,"

if you don't. Try to find answers to any questions and share the information later. It is always appropriate to say, "Let's ask the pastor to help us find the answer to this question."

- Don't visit in untidy dress, although there is no need to wear a suit or formal attire.
- Don't stay too long—10-20 minutes at most. You can always visit again.
- Don't try to solve big problems on your own—confer with your pastor.
- Don't betray confidences.

By following these simple principles, you can make a deep spiritual impact on the members under your care. You will be assisting the pastor, and you will be preparing individuals for the kingdom. **ED**

**Lyn Uttley** wrote this article as a church pastor in Australia.

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## VISITATION REVISTED



I recently rediscovered the power of a visit when I heard how a non-attending friend was reclaimed to the church through the initiative of a caring pastor. Expanding on this concept of pastoral visitation, I encourage you to implement the following concepts:

**Prioritize time for visitation.** If you fail to plan, you probably won't visit. Some chance encounters can have an impact, but intentionally scheduling blocks of time allows you to target who you should visit and organize a systematic approach.

**Visit by appointment.** Demonstrate the value you place on time both for yourself and those you visit by establishing an advance schedule. Although some people welcome "drop-in" guests at any moment, most prefer notice. Also, when people know you will be visiting, the Holy Spirit can prepare their minds for spiritual discussions.

**Keep it short!** Like sermons, pastoral visits need not be everlasting to make an eternal impact. Jesus' own interaction with people demonstrates how much can be accomplished during short encounters.

**Don't visit alone.** For your own protection, always take a visitation partner. "Two-by-two" is Jesus' plan. Request a

mature member to serve as your visitation partner. If you enter a home unaccompanied, your reputation is at risk from what someone might claim happened. False accusations are nearly impossible when two go together.

**Find assistance.** Pastors cannot and should not do all parish visitation by themselves. Give specific responsibility to the elders for visitation. Pastors, train your elders by having them accompany you, and then empower each one to find his or her own visitation partner and to accept responsibility for nurturing an assigned group of congregants and potential members.

**Expand the pastoral staff.** Teach members that a visit from their assigned elder constitutes a pastoral visit. Provide each elder with the pastor's own business cards and ask them to begin each visit as the delegated representative of the church—an extension of pastoral care. The elder can say, "Our pastor asked me to visit and pray with you."

**Go with an "apparent agenda."** Give a Bible tract, an encouraging booklet, a copy of the church bulletin, or a study guide to each person. This establishes that your visit is intentional, not casual, and immediately focuses the conversation on spiritual matters. Elders should begin each visit by presenting the pas-

tor's card and the "apparent agenda" gift. "Our pastor requested that I bring you this tract."

**State your specific purpose.** After setting a spiritual framework with your "apparent agenda," move directly to your specific reason for coming by asking an open-ended question which cannot be answered with "yes" or "no." For example, "How do you feel about your relationship with God at this time in your life?" or "What have you observed in our church that encourages your faith or causes challenges for you?"

**Ask questions about specific needs.** To an inactive or non-attending member: "How can your church better serve your needs?" To those who should be involved in church activities: "What areas of service for Christ would interest you if you received training to accomplish the task?" To those who have influence in the community: "Who could you introduce to me so that I might invite them to our church services?" To those who know a lot of people: "What special events, to which you would invite your friends, would you help us plan and implement?"

**Meet special needs.** For those who are grieving: "Please tell me the story of your loved one's impact on your own life." To those who are sick, "How can I pray for you to assure you of God's love, forgive-

ness, and promises?" To the elderly: "Tell me how God has led you and what provides you assurance of His value for you personally?" To parents: "What would you like me to pray for concerning your children?" To volunteers or leaders: "I want to praise God in appreciation for the contribution you make to His cause."

**Respect confidentiality.** Never gossip about information you receive. However, never promise confidentiality to those who victimize others with physical,

emotional, or sexual violence and abuse. In fact, in most jurisdictions, clergy and laity leaders are legally required to report any knowledge or suspicion of sexual violation of children or teens. Never fail to follow your professional, ethical, moral, and legal responsibility to protect the innocent from predators.

**Enjoy social events.** Every person needs to relax and enjoy festive occasions such as parties, weddings, luncheons, and birthday or anniversary celebrations

where you will likely meet new and interesting individuals. Pleasant conversation can be followed with your business card or a brief note of encouragement as an excellent way to initiate a new relationship. Remain observant for those who would welcome the opportunity to visit with you further. **ED**

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**James A. Cress**, General Conference Ministerial Association Secretary

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