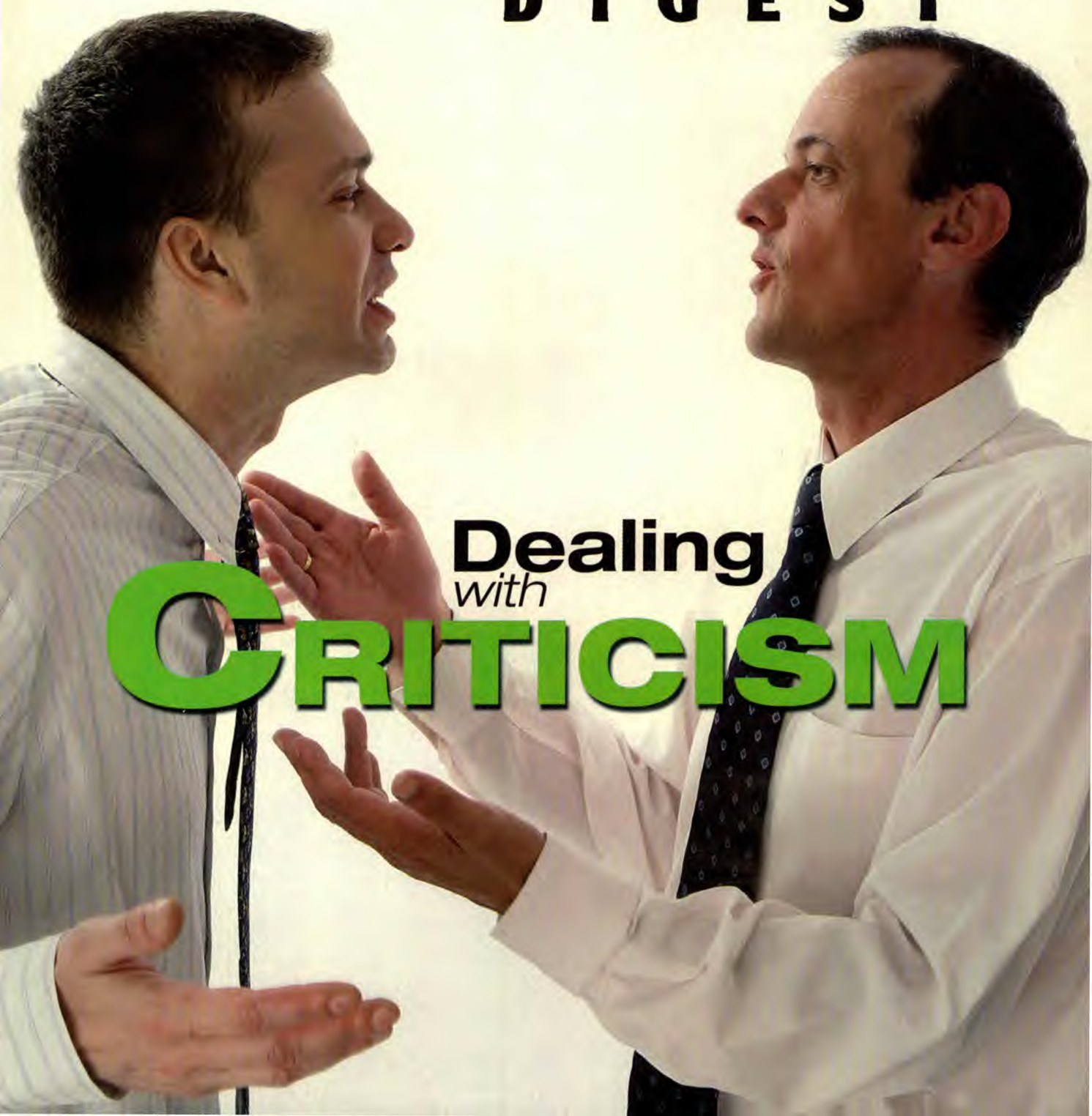


quarterly resource for local church elders † april/june 2007

# ELDER'S

## DIGEST



Dealing  
*with*  
**CRITICISM**

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APRIL / JUNE 2007  
VOL. 13 NO. 2



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# Wrong Reasons to Serve God

When someone is elected to an office in the local church, he or she must always remember that this call comes from God. I'm sure that every member who feels this conviction will have a reason to accomplish more for God's church. Thousands of volunteer workers, engaged and committed to the Lord's work, make the church grow each day in a healthy way.

But consider this: In the midst of the church's large army of workers, could someone be performing the Lord's work for the wrong reasons? If so, these individuals can cause personal damage as well as damage to the church itself.

Reasons include:

**Feelings of guilt.** God does not desire guilt as a motivating factor in the Christian's life. As leaders, we need conviction that we were called and that we are important to God. Feeling guilty may separate us from God and cause us to serve for the wrong reasons.

**Pressure.** God does not pressure anyone to accomplish the work of His church. Psychological pressures or insistence from other members, pastors, or leaders do not produce the happiness God wants to see in those who work for Him.


**A desire to please people.** Although it isn't wrong to do something for God in the hope that people will be pleased by what we accomplish, we may be more tempted to please people than to please God when we participate in a church activity. The apostle Paul expressed this concern to the Christians in Galatia by referring to his own experience: "For now do I persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I would not be a servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10).

Working for the church in hopes of pleasing others can surely be dangerous.

**Pride.** A well-controlled ego can be an instrument of blessing in God's hands and a good motivation for doing His work; however, an out-of-control ego can bring spiritual damage to the person, the church, and his or her relationships with other members. Any church activity that offers power, status, or prestige can easily produce sinful feelings of self-important greatness. Try to find happiness in the simplicity of a pure spirit of dedication and service.

**Reaching for salvation.** There is absolutely nothing you can do to buy salvation. Salvation is free and is never achieved by your own works. Salvation will always be a gift from God—so that no one can glorify himself or herself (Ephesians 2:8-10). God's workers should always possess certain Christian motivations: knowledge about the gift of redemption performed by God in their favor, the conviction of His call for the service they perform, the comprehension of the purposes He has for their lives, and the desire to glorify His name. These are surely good motivations for your service.

Ellen G. White emphasizes certain characteristics that should be considered when nominating people to certain church responsibilities: "When responsibilities are to be entrusted to an individual, the question is not asked whether he is eloquent or wealthy, but whether he is honest, faithful, and industrious; for whatever may be his accomplishments, without these qualifications he is utterly unfit for any position of trust" (*Christian Service*, 242).

To work for the church is a great privilege. To serve with the correct motivation is even better. "So that, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not without fruit in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). This was Paul's advice to the Christians in Corinth, and it still applies to us today. Think about that! 

# Interview *with* Northern Asia-Pacific Division

Recently Jonas Arrais, editor of *Elder's Digest*, sat down with leaders of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division to discover more about the church and the role of local church leadership in that part of the world.



**Miguel Luna**  
Ministerial Secretary in the Northern Asia-Pacific Division

Our division territory includes China (the most populated country in the world), Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and Mongolia. The church, long established and thoroughly developed in Korea and Japan, is relatively new in Mongolia—the very first converts there were baptized in 1993. In China, we have a limited organizational structure, with most Adventist churches and believers—like all other Protestants—affiliated through the national Three-Self Movement, which oversees and controls most religious groups in the country. Nearly 2,500 individuals serve as pastors in China, and many of them are women. Korea actively sends pastoral couples as teams to plant new work in other countries such as Japan, Taiwan, Mongolia, or China. Likewise, the ministerial training program at Seoul's Sahmyook University provides an abundant group of theologically-trained graduates each year.



**Yukio Ebihara**  
Ministerial Secretary in the Japanese Union

The Japanese Union Conference focuses just on Japan, home to approximately 120 million people. The primary religion is Buddhism. Our Union has 114 churches and 40 companies. Pastors, including pastoral interns, number 115, along with nearly 200 elders.



**Robert Wong**  
Ministerial Secretary in the Chinese Union

Our mission area includes mainland China, as well as the Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan Conferences and other overseas Chinese districts. This territory is home to 1.5 billion people, and the main religions are traditional Buddhism and Taoism. There are 3,170 churches and companies in the Chinese Union Mission. Approximately 230 pastors and Bible workers cover this territory, but we don't have exact numbers because there are thousands of lay pastors in China. The exact number of elders is also hard to pinpoint.



**Elbert Kuhn**  
Ministerial Secretary in the Mongolia Mission

Mongolia has 2.6 million people. The population's main religions are Buddhism and Shamanism. Mongolia has 23 churches and companies, with Ad-

ventist church membership reaching nearly 1,000 members; these members are served by 10 pastors and 15 elders.



**Sung Sun Hong**  
Ministerial Secretary in the Korean Union

Our Union covers just one country, Korea, with a population of 50 million people. The religions, in order of size, are Buddhism, Protestantism, Catholicism, and Confucianism, plus a few other smaller faith groups. The Korean Union has about 900 churches and companies served by 901 pastors and 2,700 elders.

## What support do the elders give to their pastors?

**Ebihara:** Elders pray for their pastors. They work in partnership with pastors to train church members and plan evangelistic programs.

**Hong:** Elders are very important for the church, and pastors need their help as partners in mission. Elders should lead church members into mission activity as well.

**Kuhn:** In Mongolia, local elders are the ones who lead the churches and companies to make them grow.

**Wong:** Elders are the right and left arms of their pastors in preaching, planning, holding board meetings, and visitation. Without faithful, gifted elders, church work would be almost impossible.

## Does your field provide training for local church elders?

**Kuhn:** We have four training sessions each year for our church elders and pastors. We cover all subjects relating to the church—from theological and practical issues to relational and evangelistic themes. We still lack material and resources even though we are translating as much as we can. Next year we will start translating *Elder's Digest*.

**Ebihara:** We provide each elder with the *Elder's Handbook*. Each conference provides regular training seminars for our elders.

**Hong:** In Korea, each conference provides training programs for the elders and their wives at least twice each year, and the union also sponsors an educational program for newly elected elders which utilize both the *Elder's Handbook* and *Church Manual*.

**Wong:** We have distributed the *Elder's Handbook* as a helpful resource. A few churches sponsor elders' fellowships. Sometimes there are training classes for newly-elected elders, but most elders are also experienced ministers.

## How important is the role of the elder in the local church?

**Hong:** Elders are very important for the church, and pastors need their help as mission partners. Elders should lead all members to join the church's mission activities.

**Ebihara:** Without elders, our churches would lack unity and become weak. Pastors could not accomplish their work without elders.

**Wong:** In our structure, the role of lay

people—and even the role of the elder—is often neglected or not adequately emphasized. When laity leadership is weak, the church is weak as well. In certain churches, the church board and elders find difficulty in their relationship with their pastor, particularly new, young pastors and women pastors. Even though we are not the same as other denominations, we still should mobilize and bring the initiative of elders into full participation. Some need to be re-educated. Pastors themselves should realize the very important role of elders and delegate authority to them to accomplish the work.

**Kuhn:** Local church elders are people called by God to lead His church. In Mongolia, they are the ones who are making the church grow, and we can easily see how much God is using them in His service.

## What types of recognition do the elders receive from their pastors?

**Kuhn:** Pastors can recognize what elders are doing, both publicly and privately. Pastors must also encourage laity leaders in both their church and personal challenges. Pastors are not only to lead the elders; they must minister to them as well as to the rest of the congregation.

**Hong:** Without elders, pastors cannot minister to the church. Pastors should recognize their authority and role, especially in front of the church members. It's very motivating for elders to be regularly recognized by their pastors.

## What are the challenges the church is facing in your area?

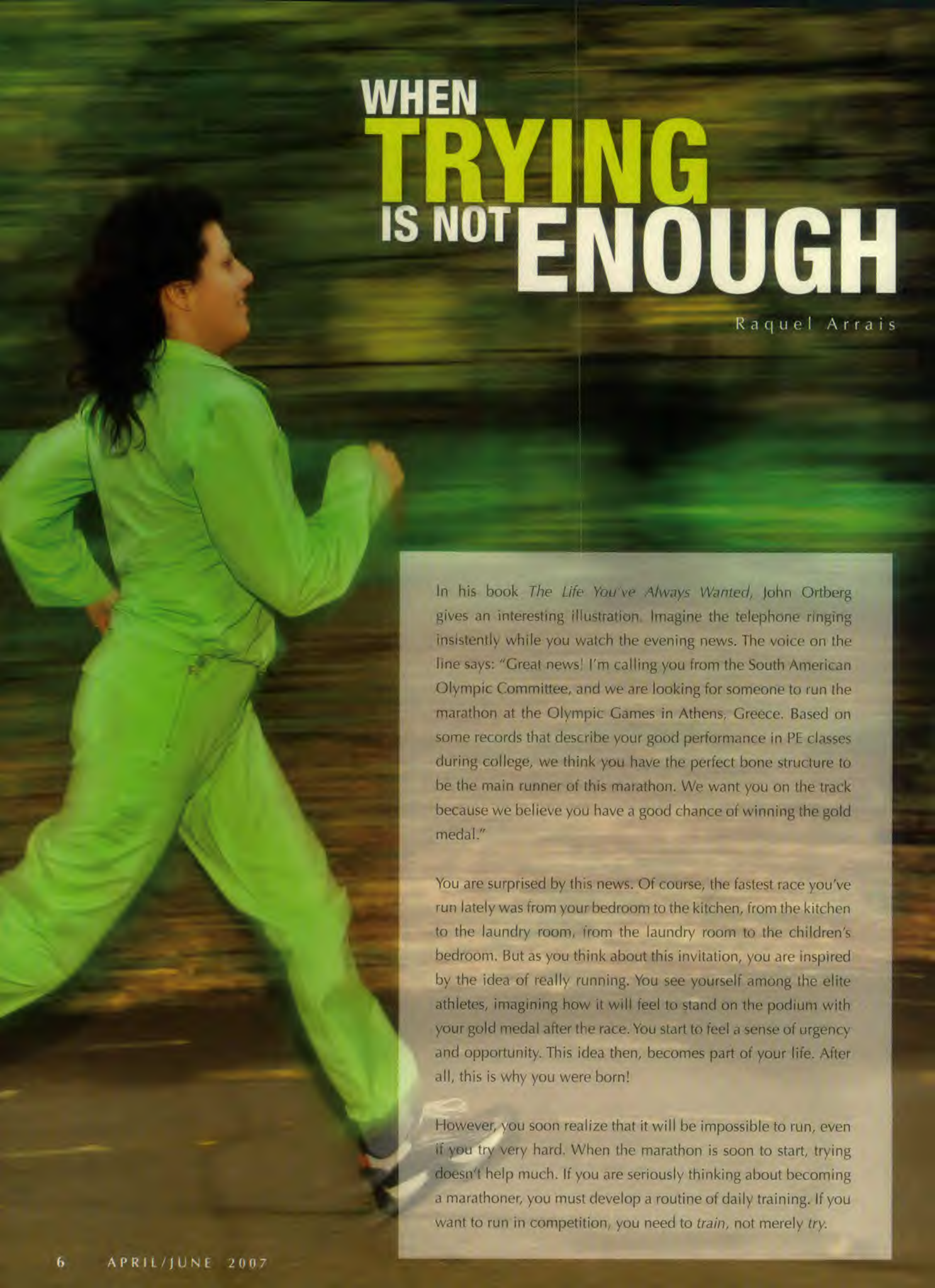
**Wong:** Secularism and individualism.

People are often so busy that they miss the true priority—to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. We also need repentance and zealotry. Our church members urgently need to focus on the true spirit of the Adventist movement.

**Kuhn:** In Mongolia, the challenge is to reach the hearts of nomadic people and a population who existed under Communism for more than 70 years, which only now is beginning to open to the outside world. The Mongolian culture currently faces harsh extremes. On one hand, the population still preserves many Shamanist and Buddhist habits. On the other hand, in a free country, most are now seeking to make money and have better lives, so there's not much interest in religion. We are preaching the gospel in many ways, such as public evangelism: in 2006, we conducted nearly 25 evangelistic series. We also provide community service, personal evangelism, and small groups.

**Ebihara:** The most serious challenge that churches face is to keep the vision, to keep faithfully following God and His commission, and to develop steadfast love for Jesus and our neighbors in this materialized and secular society. Our churches deal with these pressures by encouraging a deep devotional life and involvement for evangelism. Church pastors and elders are key to accomplishing these objectives.

**Hong:** Our biggest challenge is that all church members should constantly maintain a spirit to spread the gospel through their personal lives of discipleship. We try to encourage them in this endeavor through education programs for pastors and elders. **ED**



# WHEN TRYING IS NOT ENOUGH

Raquel Arrais

In his book *The Life You've Always Wanted*, John Ortberg gives an interesting illustration. Imagine the telephone ringing insistently while you watch the evening news. The voice on the line says: "Great news! I'm calling you from the South American Olympic Committee, and we are looking for someone to run the marathon at the Olympic Games in Athens, Greece. Based on some records that describe your good performance in PE classes during college, we think you have the perfect bone structure to be the main runner of this marathon. We want you on the track because we believe you have a good chance of winning the gold medal."

You are surprised by this news. Of course, the fastest race you've run lately was from your bedroom to the kitchen, from the kitchen to the laundry room, from the laundry room to the children's bedroom. But as you think about this invitation, you are inspired by the idea of really running. You see yourself among the elite athletes, imagining how it will feel to stand on the podium with your gold medal after the race. You start to feel a sense of urgency and opportunity. This idea then, becomes part of your life. After all, this is why you were born!

However, you soon realize that it will be impossible to run, even if you try very hard. When the marathon is soon to start, trying doesn't help much. If you are seriously thinking about becoming a marathoner, you must develop a routine of daily training. If you want to run in competition, you need to *train*, not merely *try*.

This principle can also be applied to our spiritual growth. When it comes to running life's marathon, *trying* is not enough. We need constant, wise training so that we may really win. Our greatest challenge as Christians today is to make Christ the center of our lives, of our minds, and of our will. Running with Jesus is different. We all can win this race. For that to occur, we need to allow Him to be our coach. He wants to share with us His wisdom, counsel, and strength for the times when we stumble or fall down during the race.

How can we develop this kind of relationship with Jesus? How can we allow Him to be the main coach in our lives? Some strategies help. They allow victory to finally be ours, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our daily training.

Shirley Charlestream and Sammy Chilson are women who know many growth and training strategies. They suggest some sure ways for us to run a victorious race in Christ.

**Reaffirm your love for Christ daily and ask for His direction.** Make this your first strategy of the day. As you open your eyes each morning, say, "Lord, I love You. Thank You for another precious day of life. I want to live with You and for You today." Now you are ready to get up and start a new day in the presence of God.

**Reserve time for personal devotions.** I was alarmed when I read that the average American spends 28 hours each week—4 hours per day—watching television. Four hours that could be used in personal preparation to meet Jesus.

**Memorize the Scriptures.** Carole Mayhall wrote, "If you don't want God to

transform your life, don't memorize the Bible, for as soon as we start absorbing His words in our hearts, He starts to transform us." Those who can memorize one verse each week are off to a good start. When we decide to memorize Scripture, we will soon have a collection of texts that, when appropriate, we may share encouragement and faith with other people.

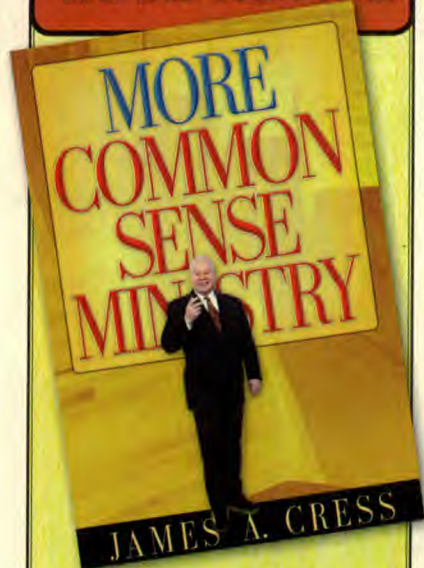
**Keep a thankful heart.** I once read a poem that said: "In happy times, praise God. In hard times, seek God. In peaceful times, worship God. In painful times, believe in God. Every time, thank God." To have a thankful heart is to live with happiness, even when times are tough.

**End each day with a prayer.** Imagine yourself in God's arms, and review your day with Him. Talk to Him, rest in His love, and sleep in peace; He is going to stay awake and take care of you!

We are starting the marathon of another new year. We don't know what obstacles we'll encounter. But by having Jesus as our spiritual and emotional coach, we, like Paul, can say: "Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14).

**Raquel Arrais**, General Conference Women's Ministries Associate Director

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# ANOTHER **ATTACK** ON THE **FAMILY**

Kenn Gangel

A few months ago, HBO premiered its romantic comedy "Big Love," whose premise displays yet another attack on traditional family life. This assault joins hands with pornography, divorce, spouse and child abuse, abortion, and homosexuality as the top family enemies of the past 50 years. Even as you read these words, the California State Legislative Assembly is debating a proposal to make "gay history" a part of required public school curriculum.

"Big Love" tells the story of a businessman with three wives who, with their collective sets of kids, live in three adjoining houses in Salt Lake City. Since polygamy is illegal in all 50 states, one would think HBO had engaged merely in harmless fiction. But the Council on Contemporary Families (CCF) has added polygamy information to its web site. Estimates from numerous sources put the number of polygamous people in the U.S. somewhere between 50,000-100,000, mostly Mormons and Muslims.

*Washington Post* columnist Charles Krauthammer claims that "stirrings for the main streaming of polygamy have their roots in the increasing legitimization of gay marriage." Taking an opposing position on either issue can be viewed in the current cultural climate as "an arbitrary, discriminating, and indefensible denial of individual choice." Krauthammer goes on to remind us that "until this generation, gay marriage had been sanctioned by no society that we know of, anywhere at any time in history."

Still, new groups advocating the decriminalization of polygamy pop up like spring flowers along a North Carolina freeway. In addition to the CCF, we now hear the voices of The Centennial Park Committee, Principal Voices, and the Canadian Justice Department. Yet a May 2005 Gallup poll found that 92 percent of Americans oppose polygamy.

Someone will surely ask, "How can we condemn polygamy when we see it commonly in the Bible, notably in the lives of Old-Testament heroes like Abraham, Jacob, David, and Solomon?" Good question. Moral decline from the divine ideal of

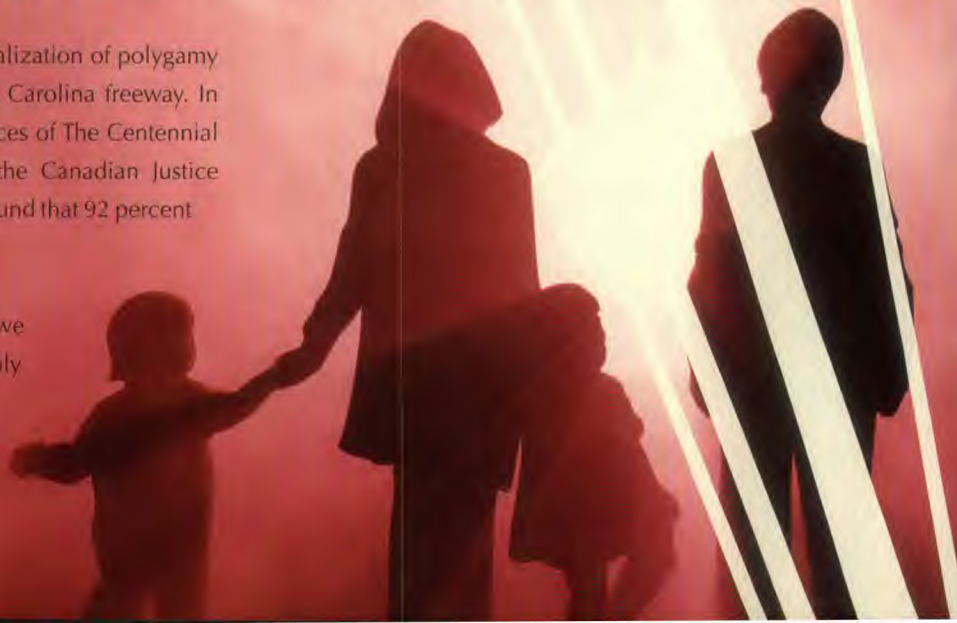
one man and one woman, established by God in the Garden of Eden, had corrupted Hebrew culture as early as the days of the patriarchs. The Apostle Paul answered the question succinctly in Acts 17 when he told the Greek philosophers: "In the past, God overlooked such ignorance, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent." In the context of this debate on the Areopagus, Paul spoke directly to the issue of idolatry, but the principle applies to all old covenant sinful behavior, including polygamy. We find not a shred of evidence that New Testament Christians practiced polygamy or homosexuality.

The traditional family, consisting of one father, one mother, and their children, continues as the only clear biblical model, even amid the distorted behavior of the twenty-first century. Though some Mormons still practice polygamy, the church officially denied its legitimacy in the 1800s. Joseph Smith's fictional vision of "multiple heavenly wives" as a preparation for God's designed eternity remains as bizarre and heretical today as it was back in Nauvoo, Illinois, 150 years ago.

Americans who wish to protect and nurture what remains of the traditional family should take a gentle but stubborn stand against both gay marriage and polygamy. <sup>ED</sup>

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**Dr. Kenn Gangel** is Distinguished Professor Emeritus at Dallas Theological Seminary and Scholar-in-Residence at Toccoa Falls College.





**Can the elders' council, together with the pastor, take votes without the church's support?**

The purpose of the elders' council is to unite church leaders with the pastor to evaluate church programs, plan the work of the board, and discuss subjects related to elders' responsibilities. This council may make decisions and present recommendations to the church, but everything that requires a vote from the congregation should be directed through a proposal to the church board and, if necessary, through the board to a church business session. The elders' council does not legislate rules for the church, nor should it attempt to perform tasks that belong to the church board. The elders' council may also meet to plan the church board's agenda, but it never legislates items that are not its responsibilities.

**A church member has been removed from church membership for committing a serious moral sin. Now he/she wants to be readmitted through rebaptism. What is the church's policy as to how long disciplined members should wait? Could he/she be rebaptized just four months after removal?**

The *Church Manual* does not establish a specific time before a person's rebaptism. However, under normal circumstances, such persons should not be rebaptized in less than a year, no matter the reason for removal. The practice of a church removing a person from church membership and then rebaptizing him or her a few weeks later makes mockery of the disciplinary process and should not be done. In such cases, time is a propitious factor for reflection, repentance, and reformation of those who have been disciplined. There may be some exceptions, but these should be evaluated with much care, prayerful consideration, and good sense by the church, in consultation with the administrative leadership of the conference.

What would be some of these exceptions? For instance, a member who withdrew from church participation

many years ago but was never disciplined by the church should not have to wait a whole year if he/she asks to be rebaptized. Good sense says that it is not necessary to wait a year, but it also might not be necessary for them to be rebaptized the following month. Another example would be a member who was removed for issues that, if immediately fixed, would not justify waiting an entire year to reintegrate him or her back into church membership. In every case, good judgment and consultation with the local field would be wise.

**Wouldn't it be best to limit the church elder's term of office to three or four years? This would give other members a chance to serve and would help to avoid the owner-type leader.**

The *Church Manual* says, "Like all other church officers, the elder is elected for a one- or two-year term as determined by the local church. It is not advisable for one person to serve indefinitely, but the elder may be reelected. The church is under no obligation, however, to reelect, but may choose another for eldership whenever a change seems advisable" (page 48). As local church leaders, elders should not be changed every year, just as they should not serve the church for life. Changes are healthy and provide others with opportunities to exercise leadership as well.

A leader is someone who makes disciples or followers. Good elders also work with the goal of training other leaders and will not cultivate the idea that they are irreplaceable. No one is irreplaceable in the church; but all members are useful and needed. <sup>ED</sup>



# STEPS FOR

# EFFECTIVE

# VISITATION

D E R S O N   D A   S I L V A   L O P E S ,   J R .

Visitation is a blessed ministry. When He lived here on earth, Jesus Himself used this method: "Our Saviour went from house to house, healing the sick, comforting the mourners, soothing the afflicted, speaking peace to the disconsolate" (*Gospel Workers*, 188). As servants of the Lord, we must follow His example.

Because of its importance, visitation cannot be approached carelessly. Preparation and planning are essential for successful pastoral visitation. The following steps will help make your visits more effective:

### **Personal preparation**

"All who are under the training of God need the quiet hour for communion with their own hearts, with nature, and with God. In them is to be revealed a life that is not in harmony with the world, its customs, or its practices; and they need to have a personal experience in obtaining a knowledge of the will of God. . . . This is the effectual preparation for all labor for God" (*Ministry of Healing*, 58).

Thus, the primary ingredient for an effective visit is personal preparation. Every good thing starts when we are alone with God. As the Bible says: "Out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45). We will never take Christ's words to people if we do not take time to be with Him. Bible study, Sabbath School lessons, Spirit of Prophecy books, morning devotionals, and prayer constitute a basic survival kit. Without these ingredients, there is no spiritual life. We need to spend quality time with God, talking to Him and listening to His voice. When we make ourselves available to God's leading, we become Satan's main target. This is why we must reinforce our communion with heaven to obtain power for overcoming evil and strengthening our brethren.

## Planning the visit

"Since the beginning He was specific regarding the planning and execution of His work" (*Christ Triumphant*, 2002 morning devotional, page 155). Following God's example, we should carefully plan visitation. Here are some hints for the planning process:

**Make an appointment.** If possible, arrange appointments in advance. Choose an appropriate day and time so that visitation does not become a drawback. When establishing an appointment, briefly explain the purpose for your visit and explain that your agenda will be brief and exclusively spiritual, thus eliminating any pre-visit concerns about hosting, meal preparation, etc. This should facilitate easy access to the homes.

**Choose a companion.** It is not good to visit alone. Choose an adequate companion—your spouse, a deacon, an elder, the pastor, a member undergoing training for this task, etc. When visiting the home of a lonely member or when

only one spouse belongs to your church, take care when choosing a companion for visitation. In such instances, the ideal companion is your own spouse.

**Mentally visualize the family you will be visiting.** Think about their characteristics and reflect upon potential situations that may make them uncomfortable. By doing this, you reduce the probability of making a mistake or provoking an uncomfortable situation. Reflect also on the problems that this family might be facing and think of what you can say to respond to their needs.

**Prepare some Bible texts.** Choose in advance the text to be read. During your visit, problems may become evident for which a biblical response would be helpful. Have several verses in mind for these situations. Give preference to positive verses that emphasize trust in God's love and God's care for His children. Some helpful texts are 2 Chronicles 7:15-16; Psalm 37:3-5; 40:1-3; 46:1, 2, 10-11; 103:1-5; 121; Hebrews 3:17-18; Matthew 11:28-30; and John 14:1-3; 16:33.

**Choose appropriate attire.** Do not overlook this very important detail. Home visitation does not require formal attires, but clothing should be discrete and tasteful. Do not worry about fashion, but also do not make flashy combinations. Consider the climate and the expectations and living conditions of the family you will be visiting. To be appropriately dressed is a matter of good sense.

**Ask for the Holy Spirit's presence.** Before you embark upon your visits, pray that the Holy Spirit will go before you to feed the people and prepare them to receive you as a servant of God. Also pray that He will put the right words in your mouth, making your visit effective.

## Fellowship and loveliness

"The loveliness of the character of Christ will be seen in His followers" (*Steps to Christ*, 59). When you arrive at the home, express love and kindness. Greet everyone present and take time for informal, friendly conversation. Listen attentively when people speak, especially if they are sharing difficulties that they are facing. Show empathy for their problems. Avoid subjects that may generate division such as politics, debatable theology, etc. If someone raises one of these subjects, listen with kindness and try to lead the conversation to another subject. When people are timid, talk about subjects of general interest (family, work, hobbies, God's blessings in their lives, etc.). Honestly compliment their children, house or garden. If your host seems uneasy, request a glass of water. Providing something for a guest will set the host at ease.

## Bible reading

"Prayer and Bible readings are needed in the homes of the people" (*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, 540). After spending 5-10 minutes in conversation and when everyone feels comfortable, transition to more spiritual topics, saying "I've come to share some words of Scripture with you and to pray a blessing upon your home." Even though you are moving deliberately to your spiritual agenda, try not to appear worried about the time or act as though you are working through a checklist. Read one of the Bible verses previously selected and make a brief comment, preparing the spirit for prayer.

## Prayer requests

"They also met together to present their requests to the Father in the name of Jesus" (*Acts of the Apostles*, 35). Before praying, ask each person present if he or she has a special prayer request. If so, write down these requests and tell

the family that you will be remembering them in your personal prayers.

## Prayer


"We should pray in the family circle . . ." (*Steps to Christ*, 98). If appropriate, invite those who are present if they would like to pray or if they prefer you to pray on their behalf. Never make people uncomfortable by expecting them to pray aloud. In the home, it is appropriate to kneel or to pray while sitting or standing. The prayer should be brief and objective. Pray for each request and try to mention the names of everyone present, asking individual blessings upon their lives and needs. Also ask for blessings upon the home and the family. Remember to pray for family members who are not present.

## Farewell

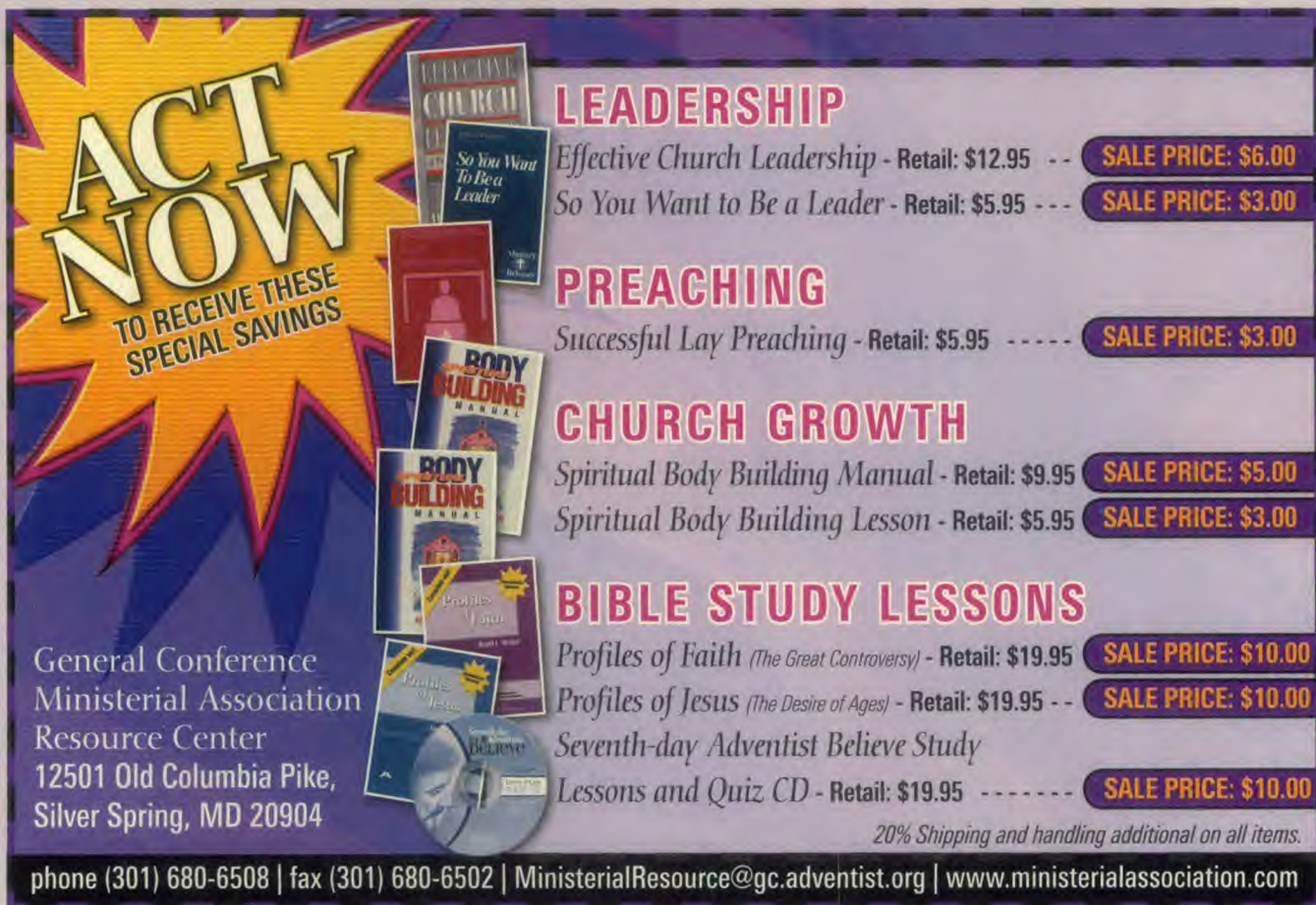
The visit should be short. Ten or fifteen minutes is usually enough, but if you sense the need for more in-depth conversation, make another appointment and return at a later time. After prayer, thank your hosts for their hospitality and the enjoyable moments you have spent together. Offer your availability for future contacts, leaving your business card or telephone number. Reinforce your pleasure in assisting them and leave immediately. This will impress upon their minds the spiritual impact of your visit rather than allowing the spiritual scope to unravel into ordinary conversation. Of course, there are appropriate times for social and relaxed encounters, but those times are not pastoral visits.

## Visitation records

After you leave, make notes immediately so that you do not forget any details. Note relevant points that deserve your attention in the future. Record the names of new individuals that you met during the visit and how they are related to this family. Note the prayer requests so that in the next visit, you can ask about the concerns for which they requested prayer.

Remember that God enables us for His work, but we must do our part. May God bless you in this special ministry! 

**Derson da Silva Lopes, Jr.** serves as an elder at the Juvevê Seventh-day Adventist church in Curitiba, Parana, Brazil.



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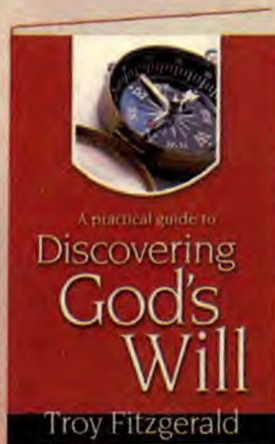


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**INTRODUCTION**

Did you know that some skeptics think that the book of Jonah is nothing more than an allegory or a parable? But although they reject the historic reality of the story, they believe the book contains some spiritual lessons. Personally, I believe everything written in Jonah is true. I believe this because our Lord referred to the story of Jonah as something that actually took place (Matthew 12:39-40). If Jesus believed Jonah's story really happened, then so do I! Because of Jesus' confirmation, we can trust that everything written in Jonah is true and accurate.

Who was Jonah and what is this book about? Jonah was a prophet of God who ministered to the nation of Israel and other nations around the 8th century B.C. One day, God told Jonah to go and preach against the great city of Nineveh, the most important city in Assyria, the rising world power of Jonah's day. But note how Jonah responded to God's instructions (Jonah 1:1-3).

God had a specific duty for Jonah to fulfill. However, Jonah did not want to do it, so he tried to run away from the Lord. Jonah refused to go to Nineveh because he hated the Assyrians there with a passion.

The Assyrians were cruel, brutal, and wicked—much worse than the Nazis of the twentieth century. After the Assyrians defeated a city, they would burn the whole city and carry away the women and children to be their slaves. They would torture their prisoners by cutting off their hands and feet or burn them at the stake. The Assyrian kings boasted of their military might by decorating their palaces with the heads of their victims.

You can understand why Jonah disliked these people! He despised them so much that he tried to run away from the Lord because he did not want the Assyrians to repent and get

right with God. Instead of going to Nineveh, the prophet headed for Tarshish—in the opposite direction.

Read Jonah 1:3-17 to discover what happened to Jonah while he was running from God. Since Jonah disobeyed the will of God, his life began to fall apart. Likewise, if we purposely disobey God, we experience turbulent and difficult times.

For example, God promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that their descendants would occupy the land of Canaan. However, in Numbers 13, the Israelites refused to follow God's plan for taking the Promised Land. Because the Israelites did not obey God, they were cursed to wander in the wilderness for 40 years, and every person who was 20 years old or older when Israel rejected God's directive died in the wilderness. Someone has calculated that this meant a funeral every 20 minutes, 24 hours a day, for 40 years. Disobedience is costly!

God also told His people not to commit adultery. However, David did not obey God's commandment. Because David disobeyed God's will, his family was torn apart. I believe that many families are in turmoil because they do not follow God's will. If we disobey God, our lives can end in disarray. God has ways of getting our attention when we stray away from His direction.

- Jonah, because of his disobedience, wound up in the belly of a large fish.
- King David, because of his disobedience, lost a child and experienced severe family problems.

It's time for us to stop being disobedient and start yielding to the will of God. What is God's will for our lives? His ultimate will is for us to be saved and to obey His Word! In Luke 8:21, Jesus said: "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's Word and put it into practice."

(See also Mark 3:35.) Likewise, when we yield our lives to God's will, we will flourish (James 1:25; Joshua 1:8).

**CONCLUSION**

Today, we have learned one spiritual principal from the book of Jonah: We need to yield to God's will. If you feel that your life is out of control and headed in the wrong direction, maybe it is because you are not yielding to God's will. God rescued Jonah from the belly of the fish, and He can do the same for you if you are willing to change the course of your life and start following His will. **ED**

**ELLEN G. WHITE QUOTATIONS**

"Noah preached the righteousness of God; Jonah called the city of Nineveh to repentance, and there is a similar work to be done today. There are now more than one Noah to do the work, and more than one Jonah to proclaim the word of the Lord. While discord and strife, crime and blood-shed are in the land, let God's people love one another. Plagues and pestilence, fire and flood, disaster by land and by sea, horrible murders, and every conceivable crime exist in the world, and does it not now become us who claim to have large light to be true to God, to love him supremely and our neighbor as ourselves?" (RH, May 27, 1890 par. 2)

**SERMON NOTES:**


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General Conference Ministerial Association

**INTRODUCTION**

In the previous sermon, we saw that God wanted Jonah to go and preach against the city of Nineveh, but Jonah did not want to go, so he tried to run away from God. We learned that we must always yield to God's will. If we disobey God's will, our lives can fall apart as Jonah's did. On the other hand, if we obey God, we can live successful and prosperous lives. Today, we continue with Lesson 2.

**Learn how to cope with problems**

Jonah had a problem: God wanted him to go and preach to the city of Nineveh, but Jonah refused to obey God's will. To flee from the Lord, Jonah boarded a ship and sailed for Tarshish.

During that journey, the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and a violent storm arose that threatened to break up the ship. After discovering that the storm was God's judgment on Jonah's disobedience, the ship's crew threw him into the sea.

Since he did not have a life jacket and could not call on the Coast Guard to rescue him, Jonah was in big trouble. He had a serious problem.

Today's lesson is about problem-solving. How does God want us to respond to problems?

**Problems are inevitable (James 1:2-4)**

James does not say if you face trials, but when you face them. He assures us that we will have trials in this world. In the Bible, many God-fearing people experienced problems.

- King Hezekiah had health problems that threatened his life.
- Daniel was thrown into a lion's den because he would not pray to the Persian king.
- In the New Testament, Peter was jailed for preaching the Word of God.

All of us have problems. At some point, every

believer will experience family problems, work-related problems, financial problems, or health problems.

**Turn to God for assistance**

When Jonah was drowning in the sea, he immediately prayed to God for help (Jonah 2:1-10). God answered his prayer by sending a fish that rescued Jonah and eventually vomited him onto dry land.

When we face problems, we should first ask God for help; He can provide us with assistance, and He can deliver us from our problems.

- King Hezekiah prayed for God's help after he learned from Isaiah that he was going to die from his illness. The Lord heard his prayer and added 15 years to his life.
- When Daniel was in the lion's den, God sent an angel to rescue him.
- While Peter was jailed for preaching the Word of God, the church prayed earnestly for him, and within hours, God sent an angel to deliver him.

When we face problems, God has the power to conquer them (2 Samuel 22:2). No matter what problem you may encounter, God can deliver you from it. Whatever your problems may be, God can solve them. There is nothing too small or too large for God to handle.

**Wait patiently for God's assistance**

God had promised the great patriarch Abram that he and his wife Sarah would one day have a son (Genesis 15). However, since Abram and Sarah were both quite old, they decided not to wait for God's promise. Instead, Sarah took matters into her own hands by giving Hagar, her maidservant, to Abram.

Before long, Abram slept with Hagar, and she conceived. But soon after the child was born, Sarah became jealous, mistreated Hagar, and became angry with Abram. Because Sarah did not wait for God's solution to her dilemma,

she caused problems for herself and for her family.

If we try to solve our problems without waiting for God's assistance, we make things worse. When dealing with problems, we need to have patience and give God time to intervene.

**Maintain a positive attitude and remain faithful to our Lord (Hebrews 12:2-3)**

We must never allow our problems to consume us or cause us to lose our spiritual focus. Instead, we are to fix our eyes on Jesus and maintain a positive outlook on life.

**CONCLUSION**

Today we have learned a few principles on how to handle our problems. First, we must realize that problems are inevitable. And when we face problems, we should turn to God for assistance. Then we must wait patiently for God's assistance, maintain a positive attitude, and remain faithful to our Lord.

If the problems of this world have been weighing you down, come to God today, and ask for His assistance. He can rescue you. <sup>ED</sup>

**SERMON NOTES:**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Have you ever felt ashamed of something in your past? Have you ever thought that you disappointed God to such an extent that He would never love you again or accept you into heaven?

If so, here's good news. It is possible for us to start all over again with God. He can erase our past sins. He can help us eradicate evil thoughts. He can eliminate our disappointments. Today we will learn how to start over with God.

**The quality of God's mercy and grace**

Many people view God as unforgiving and unmerciful, as One who enjoys punishing people. But God isn't like that (Ezekiel 33:11). He is "rich in mercy" (Ephesians 2:4). He has "great mercy" (1 Peter 1:3). "His loving-kindness is everlasting" (Psalm 136).

Kindness and mercy are part of God's nature. We must realize and accept the quality of God's mercy. It will reach each of us if we desire it.

**God will give us another chance**

We have been studying the book of Jonah. As you recall, God wanted the prophet to go and preach against the city of Nineveh. However, Jonah did not want to fulfill that mission. So he boarded a ship and sailed for Tarshish. During his journey, the Lord sent a great wind upon the sea that threatened to sink the ship, so the crew threw Jonah into the sea. Jonah prayed for the Lord's help, and God sent a great fish to save Jonah.

Let's read Jonah 3 to learn what happened next. Although Jonah had initially refused to go to Nineveh, God gave him another chance. The Scripture says, "The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time." Even though Jonah had disappointed God, God gave him another chance.

God gives second chances, too! No matter what we have done, God will accept us and give us another chance. God is not interested in what we once were; instead, He is interested in what we can become.

The Bible records the stories of many people who overcame turbulent pasts and became great and faithful servants of the Lord.

- Abraham, the father of the Hebrew nation, grew up in a home that worshipped other gods (Joshua 24:2).
- David, the second king of Israel, became a man after God's own heart, although he committed adultery and murder.
- Paul, the great apostle of Jesus Christ, had arrested and killed Christians.

Although these individuals had once lived ungodly lives, they were given another chance and eventually became great servants of the Lord. So can we!

We must forget our past failures and focus on our future successes (Philippians 3:13-14).

**CONCLUSION**

Today, God is giving you another chance to get right with Him. You can unwind all the sinful mileage that has accumulated over the years. Today, you can start a fresh new relationship with the Lord.

How do you start all over with God? If you are not a Christian, God wants you to do five things to get your life right with Him:

1. God wants you to believe in Him and in His Son Jesus Christ (Hebrews 11:6).
2. God wants you to repent of your sins (Acts 17:30).
3. God wants you to confess faith in Jesus Christ (Matthews 10:32).

4. God wants you to be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins (Mark 16:16).
5. God wants you to live a faithful and obedient life, following Him to the end (Revelation 2:10).

If you accept these biblical principles, you can receive salvation and start anew with the Lord. All the sins you have ever committed will be wiped away. God will remember them no more.

If you are already a Christian but have wandered away from God, God wants you to do two things to get right with Him: repent and confess your sins to Him (1 John 1:9). Right now, the Lord has His arms wide open, just waiting for you to respond. He is a loving and merciful God, and He is willing to give you another chance to get your life right with Him.

In the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:20), do you remember how the father reacted when his son returned? God will respond to you in the same way. I invite you to come home to the Lord right now. **ED**

**SERMON NOTES:**

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**INTRODUCTION**

As you recall, God wanted His prophet Jonah to go and preach against the city of Nineveh. Jonah did not want to go, so he ran away from God and wound up in the belly of a great fish, which eventually vomited him onto dry land. God gave Jonah another chance to go to Nineveh, and this time, Jonah obeyed God. In Jonah 3, we can learn a few valuable lessons on the subject of evangelism.

**God's Word is for everyone**

Although the Ninevites were wicked people, God sent Jonah to proclaim His message to them. God's Word should be preached to everyone, including the outcasts of our society. Jesus once said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:31, 32).

As Christians, we need to stop being judgmental and start spreading the Word of God to everyone, even to people we may not like.

**God's word has the power to change hearts**

When Jonah arrived in Nineveh, he only proclaimed eight words to the Assyrians. "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned." But these eight words caught the Assyrians' attention, and they repented of their sins. God's word is powerful.

- "For the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

- "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the

salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile" (Romans 1:16).

Because there is so much power in the Word of God, we need to proclaim it. Do you have close friends or loved ones who have not given their lives to the Lord? Have you tried to talk to them? Do they refuse to listen? Don't get discouraged. Don't stop witnessing to that needy soul. Be persistent, and keep planting the Word of God! It's powerful, and one day it will bring forth fruit.

**CONCLUSION**

We have learned many valuable lessons from the book of Jonah:

- In our spiritual walk with God, we must always have a yielding attitude toward God's will.
- In our spiritual walk with God, we must learn how to cope with our problems.
- In our spiritual walk with God, we can start all over again.
- In our spiritual walk with God, we need to proclaim the Word of God.

I hope and pray that you have benefited from these lessons. **ED**

**ELLEN G. WHITE QUOTATIONS**

"The change in human hearts, the transformation of human characters, is a miracle that reveals an ever-living Saviour, working to rescue souls. A consistent life in Christ is a great miracle. In the preaching of the word of God, the sign that should be manifest now and always is the presence of the Holy Spirit, to make the word a regenerating power to those that hear. This is God's witness before the world to the divine mission of His Son." (DA 407)

"It is not always the most learned presentation of God's truth that convicts and converts

the soul. Not by eloquence or logic are men's hearts reached, but by the sweet influences of the Holy Spirit, which operate quietly yet surely in transforming and developing character. It is the still, small voice of the Spirit of God that has power to change the heart." (PK 169)

"God's power alone can change the human heart and imbue it with the love of Christ. God's power alone can correct and subdue the passions and sanctify the affections. All who minister must humble their proud hearts, submit their will to the will of God, and hide their life with Christ in God." (TM 143)

**SERMON NOTES:**

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General Conference Ministerial Association

# Dealing *with* CRITICISM



**W**hen confronted with criticism or suspicious questions, leaders often feel frustrated, perplexed, and sometimes even hurt and bitter. However, criticism is a leader's constant on-the-job companion, but no one prepares the leader for this reality. Criticism may come from opponents or adversaries, from leaders of other churches or entities, or even from the very people leaders are trying to serve and lead!

Criticism from the outside is easier to deal with because leaders can find ways to excuse what "they" are saying: "Poor people, they must be prejudiced, ignorant, spiritually blind, or opposed to the truth. This is just part of the spiritual battle!" Criticism from other Christian leaders is harder to deal with because, although these leaders may represent a different denomination, line of doctrine, or worship style, they are our brothers and sisters. We fight on the same side! But we can still excuse such critics, saying that "they have a narrow vision, they are insecure, they envy us."

The worst type of criticism is that which comes from within a leader's own environment. We tend to classify such criticism as disloyalty or rebellion: "You see, the same people who implored us to accept this office now criticize us!"

## What causes criticism?

We need to accept that criticism is part of the environment surrounding the role and functions of leadership. There's a saying: "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen." Those who choose to remain in leadership positions subject themselves to criticism.

It is important to understand that criticism is inevitable, comprehensible, and completely legitimate, even when leaders are not at fault. Why is that?

- When functioning properly, leaders are usually agents of change, and for most people, change of any kind seems uncomfortable and threatening, even if the changes are for the better. In any group, some people will always resist change.
- Leaders look to the future and then work to reach the goals and objectives that lie ahead. Therefore, their work is always undone, and they will always have projects in progress.
- Many times, criticism and questions arise from the simple fact that people cannot see the future as clearly and completely

# “If you can’t stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.”



as their leaders. Actually, if followers *could* see the future as clearly as their leaders, they would soon become leaders themselves! Those in leadership must constantly work to mobilize their followers to reach for the future. An absence of questions or criticism would probably indicate that the leader is not leading properly.

- Criticism may also occur when people do not possess or comprehend all the data that their leaders have, and thus, they draw the wrong conclusions. Leaders must be careful to keep their followers well-informed.
- During difficult times, followers often lose sight of their leader’s original objective. Obstacles loom larger than the goal—remember Israel’s experience in the desert? But such

difficult times—when things appear to be going badly or when people want to quit—are exactly when leaders can perform their most valuable ministry.

- There also will be times when people criticize because they can see real dangers or mistakes that have escaped the leader’s attention. Sometimes, leaders are so busy with the long-range goals that lie far ahead that they fail to notice the traps in front of them. In this case, followers can help leaders by alerting them to these dangers.
- Sometimes criticism occurs because of personality differences. Some people can grasp the scope of the entire task before taking the first step. These individuals will always ask many questions. Other people may identify potential problems. And people at-

tempt to delay progress by demanding additional, unimportant answers.

- Some people may have been hurt in the past by irresponsible, authoritarian, or insensitive leaders. When dealing with criticism from these individuals, leaders will need discernment, patience, and wisdom.
- Because leadership is closely connected to power, leaders will often encounter people who desire leadership but who have been rejected as leaders. These individuals may allow envy to control their behavior. This is not new: “And they were jealous of Moses in the camp and Aaron the saint of the Lord” (Psalm 106:16).
- Finally, it is always easier to criticize the initiatives of others than to create

something new. As Gene Edwards says: "The ability to see mistakes is a cheap and common talent." Criticism creates the impression that the one criticizing could have performed much better than the leader and, as it creates this impression, the critic feels secure because he or she does not have to do anything to demonstrate this supposedly superior ability!

### Dealing with criticism

Since criticism is inevitable and therefore must be accepted as a fact of human life, how should a leader deal with criticism?

1. *Do not automatically reject criticism.* A leader might think: "Let them talk among themselves; I won't pay any attention." This attitude could be dangerous! Just as leaders avoid poison, they should also avoid arrogance. No matter how unfounded the criticism, it can always serve as a remedy against pride or arrogance.
  2. *Do not become discouraged.* Criticism tends to weaken the leader's courage, especially when it derives from those whose opinion the leader values. We might find some consolation from a fellow leader or a small group who could encourage us. But ultimately, our strength comes from Christ and from the assurance that He is with us. When David's men wanted to stone him, "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God" (1 Samuel 30:6).
  3. *Do not allow criticism to demoralize you.* This can be worse than discouragement. Sometimes, when feeling cornered, leaders resort to unethical methods that are contrary to biblical principles. Thus, a leader might become so overloaded by the external weight of criticism and opposition that he or she loses the will to resist.
- In such moments, every leader needs what Paul asked for: "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man" (Ephesians 3:16).
4. *Do not be controlled by criticism.* Leaders might be tempted to yield to every question and immediately change their plans or procedures to satisfy critics. Will this create unity? No! Those who were satisfied before may now become dissatisfied and start to ask if the leader possesses firm convictions or lives only to please the public. Do not be inflexible, but remember that rapid, short-term adjustments made only to decrease criticism may result in deviation from your legitimate, long-term goals.
  5. *Do not personalize criticism.* This might be the most important recommendation but also the most difficult to practice. Leaders may falter in two ways. When criticism is directed at their programs and action plans, they may perceive the challenges as attacks upon their integrity, character, or capability. They may also react personally against the critics, rejecting the person altogether—even if that person had a legitimate opinion and viewpoint.
  6. *Do not automatically reject bad news.* Always consider criticism in the light of your ultimate objective. It is important for a leader to maintain the following attitude: "If you can help us make a better decision, I will remain open and grateful for your help." Even a critic's wrong motivation does not constitute sufficient reason for leaders to automatically reject criticism. Leaders must recognize that sometimes the wrong person, at the wrong time and with the wrong motivation, can say exactly what leaders need to hear.
  7. *Seek to discover the reason for the criticism.* Many times what a person says and the way the criticism is expressed do not represent the problem itself. It may be only a symptom of an underlying problem. If leaders can discover what really motivated the criticism, they will know better how to respond. For instance, similar criticism from different individuals may have similar root causes:
    - *Fear of change or fear of the future.* This person needs to be reassured.
    - *Mistake, error, or lack of comprehension.* This person needs information or additional explanation.
    - *Discouragement when facing difficulties and challenges.* Encourage and renew this critic as a vital part of the team.
    - *Perception of a real mistake or danger.* Pay attention to the danger and act to correct the mistake or avoid the danger.
    - *Rebellion or a futile dispute that will go nowhere.* Such criticism needs to be refuted; otherwise, it can dissipate the group's energy and obstruct progress.
    - *An expression of pain or hurt as a vestige of bad experiences with other leaders from the past or present.* If current leaders have hurt the person, they should recognize their responsibility to ask forgiveness and seek to heal the injury. There are, however, painful situations that do not represent any fault of current

leadership. For example, if someone desired a certain office that was given to someone else, there is no fault; even so, effective leaders should seek to help the person and heal their emotional injury.

- *Wrong attitude, wrong spirit: envy, jealousy quarrelsomeness or sectarian spirit.* It is imperative for leaders to oppose such attitudes. At the same time, leaders must take care not to characterize a criticism as being ill-motivated if, in reality, the problem is within the leader—defensiveness, pride, or insecurity. In general, if leaders do not completely perceive their own motivations, how can they position themselves as infallible judges of other people's motivation? "Remember that you cannot read hearts. You do not know the motives which prompted the actions that to you look wrong" (Ellen G. White, *Mind, Character, and Personality*, Vol. 2, pg. 755).

#### When you are personally attacked

Sometimes criticism will attack the leader's personality or character. In such cases, it is important to remember the following recommendations:

- *Do not respond in the same manner.* If the critic's attitude is wrong, the best way to overcome is to respond with the opposite attitude. For example, if the critic exhibits a spirit of quarrelsomeness, respond in a calm, non-threatening manner. If the critic attempts to hurt, respond with love. If confronting a spirit of stinginess, respond with generosity. If a spirit of pride, respond with humility. If a spirit of arrogance, respond with a teachable, eager-to-learn approach. If a spirit of deceit, respond with truth. If you encounter a spirit of distrust, respond with confident faith and affirmation.

- *Do not allow your emotions to dictate your responses.* It becomes easy to spill out your own pain or rage when responding to criticism. Be careful not to nurture bitterness, to hold on to resentment, or to adopt a "poor me" self-pitying attitude. One cost of leadership is to be misunderstood by those who are being led. Also, remember that others may be hurt even more than you—your spouse or children, for example.

- *Do not become the personal focus of a division.* Only in rare instances is a problem solved in a fruitful way when factions remain opposed to each other on opposite sides of an issue. If continuing with divided opinions appears to be the only viable option, seek a peaceful resolution based on principles to which all may agree. Find some common ground and use that to build toward a new solution. Avoid "win/lose" situations where the personality differences of one group or the other become the focus.

- *Do not allow others to be attacked through you, and do not distance yourself from those to whom you owe loyalty when they are attacked.* True loyalty affirms: "I'm on your side, even if others oppose you. I will defend you at any cost or risk to me." True loyalty also affirms: "We remain stronger when standing together than we could ever be if we were to become separated." <sup>ED</sup>

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# BIBLES *that* DIVIDE

K e n C o r k u m

There is a division of thought among us over Bible translations that is worthy of discussion. Some people believe that using a translation other than the King James Version opens our church to deception and blasphemy. Let me share some issues that impact Bible translations and attempt to make a small contribution to the discussion, as well as point to sources for further study. This debate focuses primarily on the English-language translations and paraphrases of the Bible; many other languages are blessed to have only one Bible version.

## **Word-for-word vs. thought-for-thought translations**

If you were told that you were included in the last will and testament of a distant relative who lived in Germany, would you want the will translated word-for-word (the author's wishes), or would you be satisfied with a more general interpretation (the translator's wishes)?



... use whatever modern versions are available, as long as they say more clearly, more correctly, and more conceptually what is already in the KJV.

### Dynamic-and-functional equivalent

Dynamic-and-functional equivalent is another way of saying thought-for-thought. “Dynamic equivalence is a theory of translation based on the premise that whenever something in the original text is foreign or unclear to a contemporary English reader, the original text should be translated in equivalent terms, rather than literally. In actual practice, dynamic equivalence goes far beyond this definition by frequently making interpretive decisions for the reader and adding commentary to the text” (*Bible Translation Differences*, by Leland Ryken, p. 7).

The challenge resulting from this method of translation is that readers do not know where a translator is making a translator’s interpretation of the text. To give uninspired translators the liberty to place their thoughts over the Bible writers’ is to open the door to inaccurate bias, even though it makes for easy-to-read Bibles.

### Translations from interlinear to paraphrases

How do you know if your Bible translation is based on the original writer’s words? Usually the introduction of the Bible will tell you, or you can ask at a Bible bookstore or do a little research on your computer. The spectrum ranges from literal, interlinear translations

(where English words are placed directly below the Greek originals, thus creating difficult or rough readings) to paraphrased Bibles such as *The Message* or *The Clear Word* (which may provide interesting devotional that may be only partially true to the original Bible text).

Not having some standard for Bible translations beyond individual preference for use in the pulpit, for one’s primary Bible study, or for giving Bible studies ultimately undermines a unified doctrinal understanding and creates confusion and division among us.

### The original texts

There is little debate over the Old Testament (OT) Hebrew text used in Bible translations. There are primarily two Greek sources for today’s New Testament (NT) translations—the Alexandrian Text and the Received Text. Both of these NT sources were brought together in the latter part of the 1800s. The Alexandrian Text is based mainly upon two Greek manuscripts given the names *Sinaiticus* and *Vaticanus*, which were discovered in the 1840s and dated from the fourth century after Christ. The Received Text came together in 1881 by Scrivener, who based his Greek text upon the manuscripts of texts that had come down through the centuries and which were used by Tyndale and many other reformation leaders. Scrivener created his Greek text by taking the popular King James Version

(KJV), which was based on many Greek manuscripts, and creating a new Greek text from English back into Greek. He consulted at least 17 different Received Texts that influenced the original KJV and created one known as the Scrivener Text. It is of interest to note that there are no original Greek texts of the NT; we only have copies from later generations.

Most English translations used today come either through the text based on the Alexandrian Text or the Scrivener Text. Serious questions are being raised today about the reliability of trusting either the Sinaiticus or Vaticanus manuscripts, which differ internally from one another. The differences in many translations are over this issue alone—which Greek manuscripts were used in the translation?

### Church perspective

Visit the Biblical Research Institute’s Web site (<http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org>), click on “Bible” in the left column, and select “Canon and Versions.” There you will find three articles: “Ellen G. White’s Counsel on Versions of the Bible,” “Modern Versions and the King James Version,” and “Which Version Can We Trust?” These articles will give you insight, balance, and appreciation for the ways in which God has watched over His Word.

### Ellen G. White’s use of translations

“God has always provided faithful

witnesses to whom He has committed the truth and who preserved the Word of God. The manuscripts of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures have been preserved through the ages by a miracle of God" (Letter 32, 1899).

Author and lecturer Ron du Preez provides a chapter devoted to this topic in his book *No Fear for the Future*, in which he notes "over 500 instances in which Ellen White used renderings of texts other than that found in the KJV. . . . She did so from 27 of the 39 Old Testament books as well as 22 of the 27 New Testament books. . . . Ellen White used at least five other translations . . . in more than 40 of the books of hers currently available. So there is no doubt that Ellen White did make use of versions other than the KJV" (p. 111). He summarizes his study of Ellen White's use of translations by saying, "that is, to use whatever modern versions are available, as long as they say more clearly, more correctly, and more conceptually what is already in the KJV" (p. 118).

### The King-James-only debate

In some areas, there exists a protest

over translations being used other than the KJV. Of course, if this were a valid debate, then every believer worldwide would be forced to learn KJV English to study the Bible for themselves. In the minds of others who do not hold this "KJV only" position, there is a genuine concern that the translations primarily used for preaching and teaching should be from a "word-for-word" translation from the Received Text line.

The KJV in circulation today is not the translation of 1611. There have been four translations since: in 1629, 1638, 1762, and 1769. Today's KJV is from 1769, with historical roots from the 1611 KJV and Received and Scrivener texts. The KJV is not a re-inspired original, but rather a translation from the Greek texts into English—and a good one.

### Level-headed, Bible-loving people

I am deeply concerned when some of our members take Bible teachings for granted and do not study the Bible for themselves. I am alarmed that all kinds of Bibles are being used in our pulpits as primary Bibles that are not translations


of what the Bible writers wrote. I am also worried about the impact of those promoting the KJV only; they appear to be creating a secret society based upon some legitimate points but often become extreme, divisive, and often un-Christian in attempting to discuss the issues.

It seems reasonable that we should have more Bible forums within our church where the issues and guidelines for selecting Bible translations can be discussed by level-headed, Bible-loving people, rather than ignoring, becoming indifferent to, or fighting over these matters.


Many believers are happy and content just to find quality time for reading the Bible and are unsettled by the claims of those who maintain that the only reliable translation is the one that goes back to 1611. I believe it is time for us to come out of our personal comfort zones and seek more light and less heat. <sup>ED</sup>

Ken Corkum is president of the Maritime Conference in Canada.

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## “NOS” for Young Elders

For 35 years, Daniel F. Roth was a Seventh-day Adventist pastor in German communities across the United States. When he passed away, his son, Don A. Roth, was sorting boxes of items that his father had collected. He discovered a sheet of paper containing 20 points of counsel for young church leaders. These counsels are still valid for leaders of every age and are particularly applicable to those who are just beginning to function as church leaders. Although Christian leadership should be characterized in positive terms, Pastor Roth's "Nos" may be considered significant factors to direct leaders toward success in caring for their churches.

1. Do not live beyond your income.
2. Do not be penurious.
3. Do not preach your doubts.
4. Do not preach so much against something, but in favor of principles.
5. Do not be tempted, no matter the occasion, to preach less than the best possible.
6. Do not consider any occupation in God's church as having more prestige than others.
7. Do not be pessimistic.
8. Do not pay attention to gossip.
9. Do not lose your temper in public.
10. Do not ignore the Bible when looking for your sermon topics.
11. Do not envy other church leaders.
12. Do not create constraining situations for other people in public.
13. Do not be artificial or sensationalistic.
14. Do not despise small things.
15. Do not neglect the sick and afflicted.
16. Do not be lazy.
17. Do not disclose secrets but maintain trustworthy confidentiality.
18. Do not stop carrying out your duties.
19. Do not allow anyone to extinguish the brightness of the message.
20. Do not forget to pray.

# PRINCIPLES

# of Worship

Compiled by J. A. Buckwalter

"Unless correct ideas of true worship and true reverence are impressed upon the people, there will be a growing tendency to place the sacred and eternal on a level with common things, and those professing the truth will be an offense to God and a disgrace to religion" (*Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 5, p. 500).

"The test questions for every Christian to ask himself are, 'Have I, in my inmost soul, supreme love for Christ? Do I love His tabernacle? Will not the Lord be honored by my making His sacred institution my first consideration?'" (*Gospel Workers*, p. 433).

"Every morning lean thine arm awhile / Upon the window sill of heaven / And gaze upon the Lord. / Then with the vision in thy heart, / Turn strong to meet the day" (Author Unknown).

## PROMPTNESS

"I myself will awake early. I will praise thee, O Lord, among people" (Psalm 108:2, 3).

"It is a part of my religion not to interrupt the religion of others" (the reply of a devotedly pious lady to the question why she always went early to church).

"Whoever through indolence or indifference, is behind time, sins against God, his fellow worshipers, and his own good. A tardy

courtier offends his prince—how much more a tardy worshiper his God" (Anonymous).

"We believe if congregations made it a part of their religion not to twist their necks almost out of joint to witness the entrance of every person who passes up the aisle during the service, it would be better both for their necks and their religion" (R. A. Bertram).

## REVERENCE

"So worship God acceptably with reverence" (Hebrews 12:28).  
"If He be 'our Lord,' let us do Him reverence" (Adams).

"True reverence for God is inspired by a sense of His infinite greatness and a realization of His presence" (*Education*, p. 242).

"There are practices tolerated in religious congregations which Christians who are jealous for the honor of their Master's house should utterly condemn. Decorum is the handmaid of devotional feeling, and for this reason the house of God should never be disturbed by the slightest approach to irreverence" (Anonymous).

"Unless you educate yourselves to respect the place of devotion, you will receive no blessing from God" (*Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 5, p. 608).