

quarterly resource for local church elders † january/march 2010

ELDER'S DIGEST



THE UNDERSHEPHERDS

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MY PRIORITIES

How would you live your life if you knew you had only one year left to live? What would your priorities be?

In Luke 13:6-9, Jesus used a fig tree to teach His disciples a lesson. The tree had borne no fruit for three years. He asked the gardener to cut it down. The gardener requested that it be allowed to live for one more year.

The fig tree is an allegory for the nation of Israel. The owner of the vineyard is God, and the vinedresser is Jesus. Israel is being given one last opportunity to bear fruit. If it fails, it will be cut down. A fruit tree had been planted. The purpose of the tree was to bear fruit. The tree was protected in the vineyard with other fruit trees. The gardener had been patient with the tree, waiting for it to bear fruit.

We have been planted by God and chosen by His grace. Our purpose is to bear fruit. We are being protected by the presence of other fruit-bearing Christians. God has been patient with us. If I knew I only had one year left to live, I would make a few things my priority.

I WOULD LIVE MY LIFE ACCORDING TO PRIORITIES

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all of his righteousness." He knew there would be some things that needed to be second and third. He also knew we would be tempted to put secondary things ahead of necessary things.

1. *My family would be a priority.* David did not spend enough time with his family. Eli spent too much time in the temple and neglected his boys. If I knew death was imminent, I would want some quality time with my wife, my sons, and other family members. If you are too busy for your family, you are too busy! No one on their deathbed will regret not having spent more time at the office, but many will regret neglecting their families.

2. *My church would be a priority.* I grew up in this church, I was baptized in this church, I was married in this church, I was called by God to work in this church, I was ordained as a pastor by this church, I have preached many of sermons in this church, and I plan for my funeral to be in this church.

The church can be like a family. There may be some crazy cousins, eccentric aunts, and a few black sheep. However, the church is as much a part of my life as the air I breathe. Churches aren't perfect because people aren't perfect. However, the church is a body, and Jesus Christ is its head. It has the backing of God the Father and the Holy Spirit. It has my support as well.

3. *My devotional life would be a priority.* This includes praying, studying the Word of God, and meditating. We often use lack of time as an excuse, but there always seems to be an excessive amount of time to fulfill our wants. We have time to do what we think is important to us.

I WOULD DO PERSONAL SOUL-WINNING

Proverbs 11:30 says that "he who wins souls is wise." I think one of the great joys of heaven will be seeing other people there whom we have helped to bring to the Lord. Ellen G. White wrote, "It was the joy of Christ to save souls. Let this be your work and your joy."^a

I think it would be embarrassing to stand before God in heaven without having led anyone to Christ. Some of the greatest experiences I have had in my ministry have been one-on-one soul-winning encounters.

I WOULD INVEST IN ETERNAL THINGS

The Bible talks more about money than it does about heaven. The widow was commended for giving all she had. It wasn't much, but it represented a real sacrifice. Money talks. It says something about us. It says something to other people. It also says something to God. The Bible deals with three things: our relationship with God, our relationship with other people, and our relationship with things (stewardship). That makes stewardship pretty important.

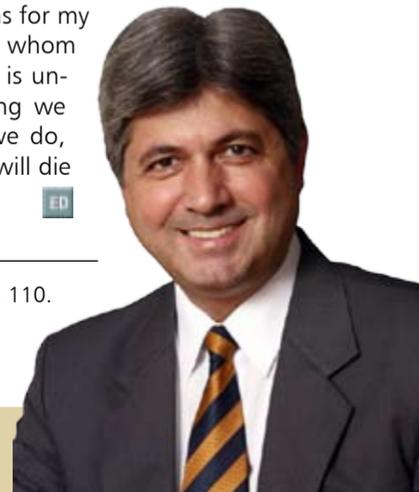
"Selfishness is occupying much time that the Lord would have devoted to religious activities. I have been shown that the money that is lavishly spent by many believers for unnecessary things should be given to the work of winning souls that are ready to perish."^b

What will you give that will keep giving when you are gone?

As a church pastor for nearly 28 years, I have preached many sermons for my church members, some of whom died the following week. Life is uncertain. Who knows how long we have to live? In everything we do, we should live as though we will die tomorrow.

^a Ellen G. White, *Christian Service*, 110.

^b *Review and Herald*, Sept. 16, 1909, paragraph 3.



Jonas Arrais
General Conference Associate Ministerial Secretary

THE FASTEST HIGHWAY TO BE GOD'S HOLY PEOPLE



NamYong Han, 69, is the Head Elder of the Chilbo SDA Church in Jeollabuk-do, Jeongeup, in the Chilbo-myeon region of Korea. The Chilbo Church belongs to the Southwest Korean Conference. Elder Han holds a bachelor's degree in Theology and for many years used it to serve as an agriculturist missionary in Bangladesh, the Philippines, and China. He also has served as the vice president of the Korea Organic Farming Association and professor at the Public Service Training Center. He enjoys writing agricultural topics which include 'Secrets of Grape Therapy' and 'Country Life and Organic Farming'. His other passions are spreading the gospel and heading the elders of his church.

1. WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO TRANSCRIBE THE BIBLE?

I worked as a volunteer in China for 8 years from 2000 to 2007. At that time, I struggled with many difficulties related to religious activities, so I had conflicting thoughts and felt disappointed. I realize that being closer to the Lord was the only solution to my problem and so I studied the Bible carefully everyday to fill myself with spiritual food. I tried to reflect the Gospel and the fragrance of Jesus through my life and behavior. Then, I was requested to support agricultural development projects from North Korea. As I cannot carry the Bible into North Korea, I started to transcribe the Bible by memory with the Holy Spirit's guidance.

2. HOW DID YOU TRANSCRIBE THE BIBLE?

I have copied the Bible six times since January 7, 2003 to today. My third transcription was the Chinese Bible. I also transcribed the series of the *Conflicts of the Ages*. It took me 375 days.

3. WHAT BENEFIT OR LESSONS DID YOU LEARN THROUGH THE BIBLE TRANSCRIPTION?

The most important fact is that Satan tries to deprive humans of the Word of God, while God is trying to protect it. To be a son of God or Satan depends on whether we keep and practice God's Word or not and it is also the way of restoring the image of God. When we study the Bible, we can meet

God, walk with God, see God, and talk with God. The more I read the Bible, the more I realize that God is great and holy in contrast to me who is so small. Depending on God, we can accomplish sanctification. Reading, copying, and living according to the Bible is the same way that Enoch walked with God.

4. YOU MADE A FOLDING SCREEN WITH THE TRANSCRIBED BIBLE. HOW DID YOU MAKE IT?

I made twelve-folding screens with the fifth transcription. It shows the content of Old and New Testaments at a glance. God sent me a good artist who asked me to make this screen. Many people who look at the screen were so touched and decided to copy the Bible too. The *Conflict of the Ages* series was also produced as a ten-fold screen.

5. WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE PLANS?

God has aroused a Bible-transcribing movement in many countries including Korea, China, the Philippines, Taiwan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan through me. The *Follow the Bible* project initiated by the General Conference emphasizes the importance of the Bible to all people. If possible, I will do my best to transcribe the Bible more and to spread this movement all over the world.

6. WHEN WAS THE FIRST TIME YOU READ THE BIBLE?

I have been reading the Bible since 1959. At that time, I did not have

enough money to buy a complete Holy Bible, so I read Bible books in pieces every evening. I borrowed a complete one from a church elder to copy it.

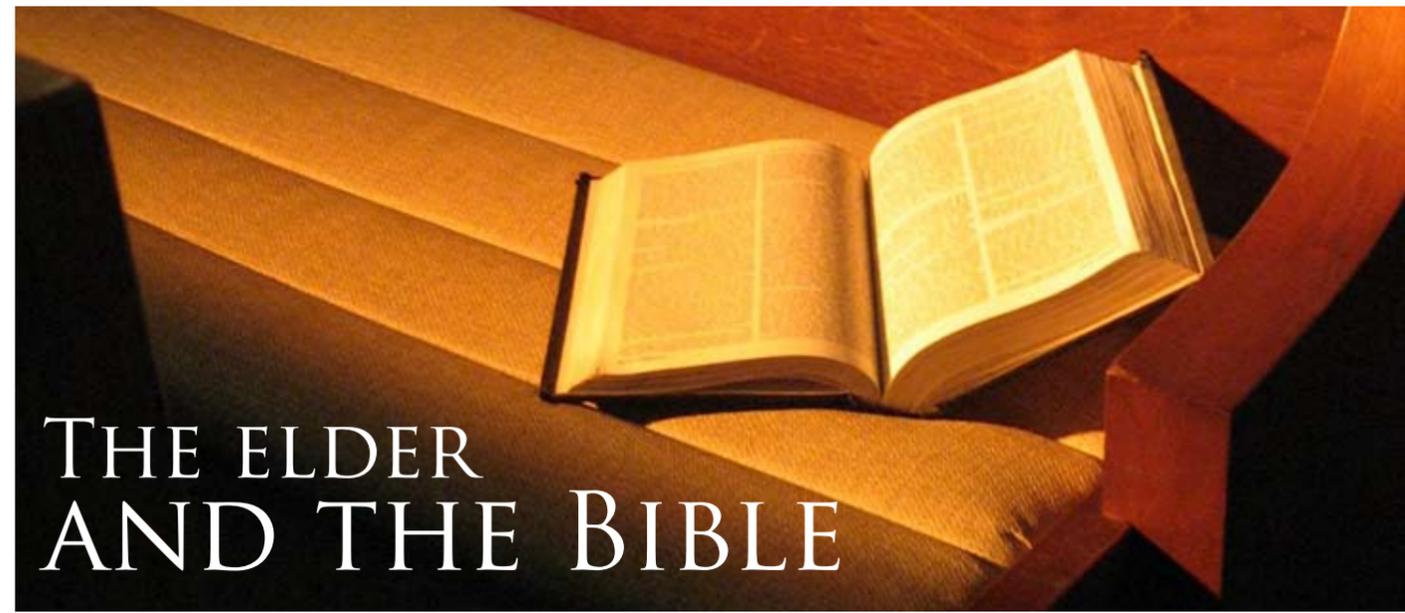
7. IN CLOSING, ANY WORDS TO CHURCH MEMBERS?

Satan deprived people of God's Word using idols during Old Testament times. He also captures people's minds through fame, money, pleasure, sports, TV, and computers in the present age. God's people must practice and keep His Word until death just like the Waldensians did. As Waldensians observed God's Word through Bible transcription movement, this movement will bring a second Waldensian age. John 17:3 says "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent". I wish all of you could meet and walk with Jesus Christ through the Bible.

This interview comes from *News & Views*, July/August 2009, the Northern Asia-Pacific Division magazine. Used with permission.



Twelve-folding screens transcribed



It is almost impossible to adequately fulfill the office of church elder without having a firm commitment to studying and obeying God's Word. The nature of the office, the qualities of those who exert it and the responsibilities implied in it, compels the church elder to be a person with a good knowledge of the Bible.

Christian maturity, life example, the ability to teach others, and the knowledge of God's plan for His church are prerequisites for being a good elder. On the other hand, it is expected that the elder be able to preach and counsel, always focusing on what the church believes and preaches. How could an elder do that if he or she is not connected to the Word of God, the source of all knowledge? Impossible!

The apostle Paul was right when, in counseling Timothy to learn how to conduct the church, he included advice such as the following; similar advice may also be found in Paul's epistle to Titus.

- "A bishop then must be blameless . . . able to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2).
- "Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (1 Tim. 4:13).
- "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).
- "But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:14, 15).

• "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction,

for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

• "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers" (2 Tim. 4:2, 3).

These texts clearly reveal the value the apostle gives to the fact that each church leader, especially elders, should study the Bible so that he or she may talk about it, teach it, and preach its truths. Furthermore, Paul presents it as the power that can make church members improve themselves in following God's will.

Therefore, it is the duty of each church elder to be committed daily to studying the Bible as a matter of great personal importance and as a need for their office. I believe studying the Sabbath School quarterly and reading the Bible helps us to become better leaders. We also need to read it to gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of church doctrines. On the other hand, it is very healthy for elders to share biblical truths with other people and with small groups; this practice will improve the elder's ability to teach the distinctive elements of the Adventist faith, and he or she will seek opportunities to teach the Word of God publicly. Regular church services, public evangelism, and special weeks of spiritual emphasis may be a great help for doing that.

Are you an elder? Then start studying the Bible!

Roberto Herrera is the head of the Religious Liberty department for the Inter-American Division. He is a distinguished preacher and author of the books *101 Ideas Para Usar la Vida Sabiamente* and *Primero lo Primero*.



In most discussions about spiritual gifts, people turn first to the New Testament, especially to the writings of Paul. And no doubt, the great evangelist had much to say about spiritual gifts. But in this area, as in all others, let us be careful to examine the entirety of Scripture. Spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy, are not simply a New Testament phenomenon. A quick survey will illustrate this point.

- Long before the experience of Pentecost in Acts 2, the Lord promised to give Moses the ability to speak the language necessary to clearly articulate his message (see Exod. 4). This, of course, is the biblical definition of speaking in tongues.

- Later in Exodus, we see the Lord declare of the craftsmen Bezalel that He had “filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship” (31:3).

- After Daniel and his friends passed God’s test of loyalty, the Lord gave them “knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams” (Dan. 1:17). Seventh-day Adventists in particular value the harmony of the prophetic gift in both Testaments as we see the amazing parallels between the writings of Daniel and those of John in the book of Revelation.

Certainly other gifts were manifested in the annals of Scripture—Nehemiah’s administration, Rahab’s hospi-

ality, Peter’s gift of healing, etc.—but of all the spiritual gifts the Bible describes, none is more often mentioned and clearly demonstrated than the gift of prophecy. Interestingly, prophets of both the Old and New Testaments, along with Jesus Himself, describe the gift of prophecy as being alive and well among God’s people long after the time of the early church. Note Peter’s citation of Joel 2 as he opened his explanation of the events of Pentecost: “And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.”^a From Joel’s inspired perspective, he could say assuredly that the people of God would have the guidance of prophecy in their midst even until the last days.

Notice also that while the Bible continually distinguishes between the God-ordained roles for men and women in the home and in the church, the role of the prophet is and always has been a position which both men and women are appointed to fill (Exodus 15:20; Judges 4:4; 2 Kings 22:14; Luke 2:36).

It is interesting to note that while the true prophetic gift has been a distinguishing feature of God’s people throughout time, Satan has been resisting their efforts through the “ministry” of false prophets. Jeremiah and

Ezekiel spoke at length against the dangers of such messengers, and Jesus warned of their deceptive practices extending through the final days of earth’s history. Looking back on the history of Israel and looking forward to the work of the Christian church, the apostle Peter clearly states, “But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you.” In Matthew 24, Jesus explains Satan’s goal in employing such agents of deception: “For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible.”

Given that the gift of prophecy has been and still remains a valid manifestation of the Spirit of God, and knowing that Satan desires to deceive even the most discerning believers with his counterfeit messengers, it behooves us to take seriously the Bible’s admonition to test the prophets (1 Tim. 5:19-21). To this end, the Bible outlines the following four hallmarks of a true prophet:

- Any future events prophesied must come true (Deut. 18:21-22).
- All prophecies must harmonize with Scripture (Isa. 8:19-20).
- All teaching must affirm that Jesus came “in the flesh” (1 John 4:1-3).
- The Christ-like results of their work must be evident (Matt. 7:15-20).

As outlined in the eighteenth fundamental belief of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we recognize that all of these criteria were met in the ministry of Ellen G. White. And as he has done so often in the past, Satan is now making every effort to thwart the work of this remnant people by undermining our confidence in the prophetic gift. Looking ahead to what I believe are the times in which we are now living, Ellen G. White cautioned, “The very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God. ‘Where there is no vision, the people perish’ (Prov. 29:18). Satan will work ingeniously, in different ways and through different agencies, to unsettle the confidence of God’s remnant people in the true testimony.”^a

It is my prayer that as leaders and members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we will continue to stand firm upon the Bible truth regarding the gift of prophecy. As we see the final events of earth’s last days unfold, let us not concede one inch of territory to our great adversary, but instead move forward in full confidence of God’s Word and His chosen messenger, Ellen G. White.

^a Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 1:48.

Kameron DeVasher is an associate pastor at the Avon Park Seventh-day Adventist Church in Florida. This sermon, adapted for *Elder’s Digest*, was presented in May, 2008.

MINISTRY

PLEASE TELL US ABOUT YOUR PASTOR

In the summer of 2010, *Ministry, International Journal for Pastors* is publishing a special issue to coincide with the General Conference Session held in Atlanta, Georgia, United States. The focus of the issue will be the work of pastors—specifically pastors in local congregations.

We are asking church elders, leaders, and members in general if you would be willing to help us with this issue. We would like to receive short statements telling us a little bit about how you view the work of the pastor. What do you appreciate about some of the pastors who have led your congregation? What are your hopes and expectations from pastors? How has your congregation helped a pastor in carrying out the various responsibilities? We would love to hear from you and your fellow members.

Send your remarks to: ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org or *Ministry Magazine*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600 USA

Please share this request with others in your congregation as well. Thank you.



President Jan Paulsen of the Seventh-day Adventist world church commends the Ministerial Association for the *Elder’s Digest’s* 15th year anniversary issue presented at Annual Council on October 13, 2009, with editor, Jonas Arrais, and Ministerial Secretary, James Cress.

CHURCH ELDERS AS ADVOCATES FOR ADVENTIST EDUCATION



Are you worried these days? Do you have sleepless nights? The economic environment in recent months has been depressing. The future looks bleak. Stocks and shares have tumbled drastically; 401Ks have decreased in value, and you wonder if you need to keep working instead of retiring this year. You have lost all faith in investments. But, there is one investment that does not crash and tumble even when the Dow Jones falls. It's an investment that yields great dividends. Yes, it's our investment in Adventist education! It's our investment in children and young people who attend Adventist schools. Are we willing to invest time, energy, and financial resources in them?

I believe church elders can play a significant role in encouraging members to send their children to Adventist schools. When elders are passionate about Adventist education, they can impact parents in their congregations. Through the years many parents have attacked the Adventist school system as inferior, complaining about lack of facilities, small class size, poor teaching, and low achievement. But do they know what recent research shows?

A landmark division-wide research study, *CognitiveGenesis*, which began in 2006 and was conducted at La Sierra University, surveyed 30,000 students, grades 3-9 and 11, who were enrolled in Adventist schools across North America. The two goals for the study were:

- To determine the achievement (and ability) levels of students in Adventist schools, compared to national norms.
- To examine relationships between student, parent, teacher, and school factors related to achievement (and ability).

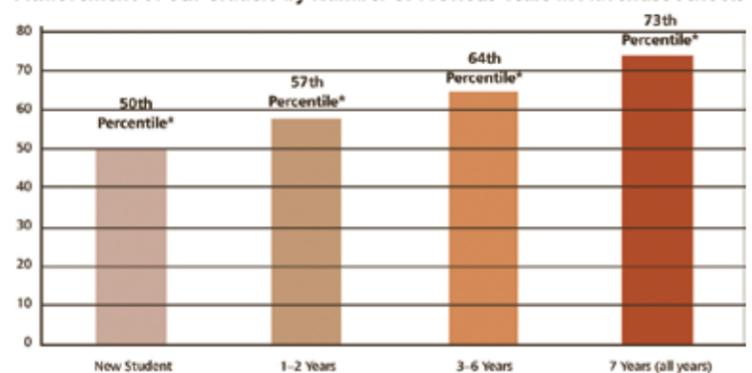
The latest preliminary results from the first three years of the study show both positive outcomes and areas for further investigation. The following are the results for the United States.

POSITIVE FINDINGS

- Above average in achievement
- Above average in ability
- Above prediction in achievement
- Above average and above prediction in all subjects
- Above average and above prediction for all grade levels

- Above average for all school sizes
- Above prediction at all ability levels
- Yearly gains in achievement greater than expected for continuing students
- Yearly gains in ability greater than gains in achievement
- Yearly gains in achievement and ability greater for more years in an Adventist school (see graph below)

Achievement of 8th Graders by Number of Previous Years in Adventist Schools



* In overall achievement the average score of 8th grade students in Adventist schools was better than 50%, 57%, 64%, or 73% of other students in the IFBS national norm group depending on how many years students had attended an Adventist school.

Based on 2006 data.

AREAS FOR INVESTIGATION

Some subjects and grade levels have tentatively been identified as areas for further study. In most cases these areas show satisfactory results, but the results are not as superior as the results for other subjects and grades. Examples include:

- Math computation—The North American Division has appointed an *ad hoc* committee to study math computation. It has met, analyzed the *CognitiveGenesis* data, and is now collecting additional data based on classroom observations and interviews with teachers. It will meet again to make recommendations for practice based on all data collected.
- Social Studies
- Grades 4 and 5

According to Elissa Kido, *CognitiveGenesis* project director, this rigorous research is validating and shows that overall, Adventist school students perform better than the national average. Although 60 percent of Adventist K-8 schools are considered small schools (schools with three or fewer teachers), students in these schools perform just as well. The study

also shows that children attending Adventist schools not only achieve half a grade level higher in all subjects than predicted based on their ability scores, they also gain the benefits of Adventist education shown by other research in strong spiritual lives and healthy lifestyle choices.

Indeed, Adventist education offers great potential for our children and youth! We need to acquaint the parents in our churches with the value of investing in Adventist education. When I first joined the Adventist Church as a teenager, my head elder was passionate about getting me and my friend into our Adventist school. We were rather reluctant at first because we had heard about the low standards of these schools. But after attending one quarter of classes, it changed my life!

So, church elders, here are some things you can do in your churches to promote Adventist education.

Preach about Adventist education. Whenever there is a special Christian Education day or a special Sabbath offering designated for Christian education, elders can seize this opportunity to preach a sermon on the values of Adventist education. Inspire the members and parents with your testimony of how Adventist education has impacted you, your children, and others; or study the Spirit of Prophecy's counsels on the importance of supporting Adventist education.

Ellen G. White strongly advocates the operation of church schools when she says, "In all our churches there should be schools, and teachers in these schools who are missionaries. It is essential that teachers be trained to act well their part in the important work of educating the children of Sabbathkeepers, not only in the sciences, but in the Scriptures. These schools, established in different localities, and conducted by God-fearing men or women, as the case demands, should be built on the same principles as were the schools of the prophets."¹

In her counsel to parents and teachers, Ellen White again reiterates that "[all] our youth should be permitted to have the blessings and privileges of an education at our schools, that they may be inspired to become laborers together with God. They all need an education, that they may be fitted for usefulness, qualified for places of responsibility in both private and public life."²

Hold question-and-answer sessions with parents. Before the beginning of a school year, elders can work together with the pastor to organize a meeting with parents to answer questions about Adventist schools. This is a good time to supply parents with information on the various church schools that are available for their children, the types of scholarships offered, or tuition discounts that are available. Such a meeting can be valuable to parents who are looking for guidance in making a decision.

Model your belief. Elders need to practice what they preach. If elders believe in Adventist education, they will send their children to Adventist schools. Such a consistent lifestyle helps to build confidence in parents who may be wavering in their decision and helps to dispel misconceptions about Adventist schools.

Provide tuition scholarships for members' children. Elders can encourage their church to set up a special education fund to help parents whose children attend church schools. Children can be given tuition scholarships annually as a support to parents. Some churches provide a 50 percent matching fund

to assist members' children who attend our schools. Elders who have good contacts with willing donors can encourage them to contribute to this special scholarship fund for young people. It's an investment that will yield great dividends.

Celebrate special achievements of children and young people. Church elders can initiate a celebration to honor young people who have received an achievement award or are graduating from elementary school or academy. If it is the pastor's children, the elder is in a better position to suggest such a celebration. Celebrating achievement provides an opportunity for the church to rejoice together with these young people who are the fruits of their investment. Graduating seniors can participate in a special worship service of thanksgiving to God.

Support church school activities. Elders can encourage other members to support all church school activities whenever possible. If the children or youth are raising funds for a mission project through a Walkathon, walk with them, but don't forget to rally other members to support these young people, too. If students are participating in a musical production, get your church to attend the performance. Promote such activities enthusiastically from the pulpit; enthusiasm is contagious! Such moral support impresses upon the minds of young people the value of Christian education.

Pray for the children and youth. Our children and youth today face many challenges at home, at school, and in the community. It would be wonderful if the church prayed for them regularly. The head elder or any other elder can work with the pastor to design a prayer announcement on the back of the church bulletin each Sabbath. It can list the names of two to three children or youth who will be the subjects of prayer that morning. In one church that I attended, the elder called these young people up front before the pastoral prayer and asked them if they had special prayer requests. It was heartwarming for these young people to know that the church family was praying for them. This will undoubtedly help our young people feel that they belong to the church and will most likely "keep them in the church."³

Yes, considering the recent *CognitiveGenesis* results, we can be proud of our Adventist schools. This study can provide elders, pastors, principals, and all of us with a new, powerful marketing tool. In the past, parents have lost confidence in the academics of the Adventist education system. Now elders, as well as pastors, teachers, and all church members, can rebuild confidence with this documentation of student achievement, which can also be shared with parents. Church elders can become active and strong advocates for Adventist education. Get your church on board to invest in our children and youth. Their dividends are large in achievement, changed lives, character development, and spiritual growth!

¹ Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1913), 168.

² *Ibid.*, 332.

³ Myrna Tetz and Gary Hopkins, *We Can Keep Them in the Church* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2004).

Linda Mei Lin Koh is director of Children's Ministries at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.



The pastor is the shepherd of the flock, and the local elder is the undershepherd. Together they have the responsibility of caring for the sheep. On Sabbath they help to provide proper spiritual nourishment, inspiration, and encouragement through Bible study, worship, and fellowship. Sabbath should be a high experience for every Seventh-day Adventist Christian. Each Sabbath should be a step in spiritual growth and another milestone on the road to holiness. Each service should contribute toward the great objective, "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

However, as important as the Sabbath service is, we can never feel that our responsibility to the flock begins and ends with the Sabbath. What happens during the week may actually determine the salvation or loss of many souls. Here is where the care that the shepherd and the undershepherds becomes exceedingly important.

THE MISSING SHEEP

On Sabbath the anxious shepherd will look carefully to see which sheep are missing. His heart will go out to the absent ones, particularly to those whom he knows are experiencing spiritual struggles.

It is easy to report to the church board that Brother Blank has not been in church for six months, one year, or perhaps several years, but what has been done during that period to encourage the missing member to return?

Visitation with former members have revealed that many of them could have been rescued if they had been contacted, prayed with, and encouraged during the early periods of their declining experience. Eternity alone will reveal how important the visits of faithful pastors and elders have been in saving members for Christ and His church.

MY EXPERIENCE

There was a time when, as a teenager lad, I had become unsettled and careless. I began slipping away during the worship service, then finally skipped Sabbath School as well. My church was a country church without a pastor, and the full pastoral responsibilities were on the local elders. I shall never forget the night the head elder (a farmer) and one of his associates came to our home. They soon made it known that they had come to see me. Mother directed them into my bedroom, where a friend and I were hanging out. It so happened that the friend was also on the list to be visited. So they made a most earnest appeal to both of us. They let us know how much they missed us at church and explained how we could be a help, especially to other young people. They pleaded with us to return to Jesus and the church, assuring us that our loving Savior was very willing to forgive and stood eager to help us in our Christian life.

The words touched my heart. I loved the Lord. In fact, as a junior I had already felt the call to the ministry. But then the devil had lured me into the broad and popular way. Now I knew that I must change, and the decision for change was made while these humble lay leaders of the church talked and prayed.

A number of years later, I learned that this head elder, who for years had given spiritual leadership to my home church, was seriously ill in a rest home near where I was then pastoring. I seized the first opportunity to visit him. What great encouragement came into his life, then ebbing away, as I expressed to him my great appreciation for his visit that dark night! Tears of gratitude flowed from each of us. I have often wondered just what would have happened to me if he had not come, if he had not made that personal appeal!

Church Elder, how is it with you? Do you have the same concern? Are you willing, after a busy day at your office, in

your shop, or perhaps on your farm, to leave the comforts of your home and go out to search out a missing member of the flock, perhaps a teenager? What efforts are you putting forth to encourage discouraged souls? What are you doing to bring them back to the sunshine of God's love?

The care of the flock has been entrusted to the pastor and elders of the church. This is not an option; it is a decided responsibility. It can be neglected only at the loss of some dear souls.

In the larger churches, some type of undershepherd plan should be in operation by which the church membership is organized into groups, with undershepherds over each. Where this plan is followed, the prime responsibility for seeing that this plan is actually a functioning process rests with the elders. The deacons and deaconesses should be involved, but the leadership, by precept and example, must come from the elders.

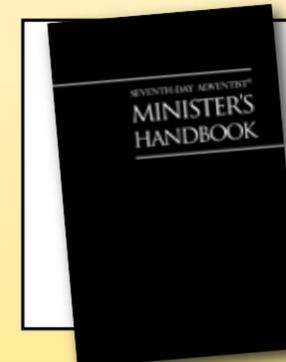
DO NOT NEGLECT YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

This phase of responsibility is too often neglected, and as a result we have the wrecks of human souls strewn along the highway to the kingdom. Just recently a dear

woman came into my office to discuss a problem with me. She had been disfellowshipped for lack of attendance. There were extenuating circumstances. Admittedly, she could have made a greater effort to contact the church, but through the experience that continued for quite a period of time, little effort was made by the church to contact her. Finally the post office brought her the news that her name had been dropped from the church records. Thankfully, she is preparing to have her membership reinstated in a church in the city to which she has moved. She loved the Lord enough to take the initiative. It would have been much easier for her to have grown bitter and turned completely away from the church.

May the Lord bless both pastors and elders as together prayers are offered, plans laid, and efforts made not only to win souls for the church but to hold those who have already been gathered in. It is part of the self-sacrificing but rewarding labor that God has called you to do. And in thus looking after the flock, you are following the example of the Great Shepherd.

Orley M. Berg was associate Ministerial Secretary of the General Conference when he wrote this article.



THE TITLE SAYS IT ALL. This Handbook, updated in 2009, covers the gamut of issues involved in the ministry. The chapters deal with everything from personal appearance to conducting funerals and weddings. This small book is filled with lots of information that all pastors and elders at some time or another will find very useful. The price is **only \$8.95 (USD)**, plus shipping.

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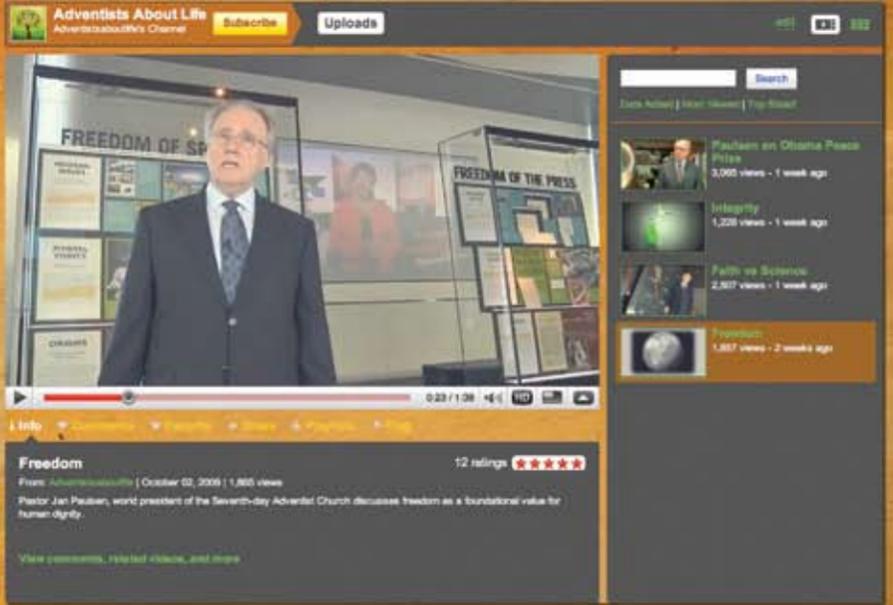
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ABOUT LIFE

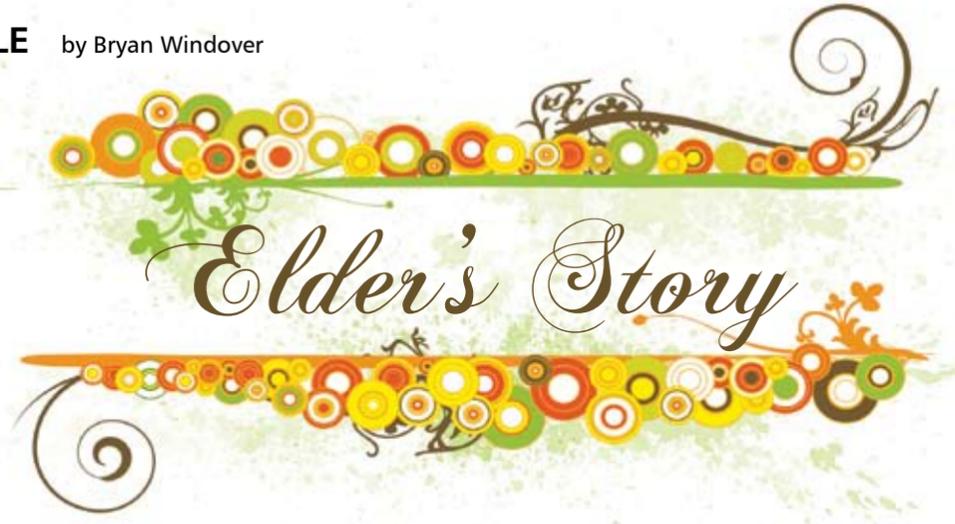


*Jesus
Christ
love
faith
freedom
health
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ARTICLE by Bryan Windover



Elder's Story

I moved from upstate New York to South Texas about three years ago. Being head elder in the beautiful Adirondack Mountains was very different from being an elder in a bilingual church in the wonderful Gulf Coast region of Texas.

As we were getting acquainted with our new church family, one man stood out from the rest. Brother Rito's strength and compassion and his dedication to the church and the Word of God was amazing. You could tell that the Lord was using him and his wonderful family—wife Genny and daughters Kimberly and Carolyn—to further His work.

Shortly after we arrived, Brother Rito was diagnosed with a very aggressive type of cancer. You could see the cancer taking the strength from his body, but his love and determination to live for God and to set an example grew stronger every day.

At the young age of 30, I was elected to be head elder of my Texas church. If the Lord had faith in me, I should have faith in myself! Brother Rito was getting weaker every week. Every Sabbath the pastor would ask for special prayer for Brother Rito, and we elders would lay our hands on him and anoint his head with oil. Every Sabbath Brother Rito would shake hands with everyone as they left the church. This effort took all his physical strength, but his emotional strength was amazing. He was Job-like; Satan could hurt his body, but God had his mind. That enraged Satan even more. In a matter of months, Brother Rito had taken a turn for the worse and was given only a couple months to live.

At that point, the pastor decided to have a Week of Prayer for Brother Rito and to anoint him every night during that week. Each church leader was assigned a night to give a brief sermon, after which we prayed together. My assigned talk was at the end of the week, and each night I searched my soul to see if there was anything that would prevent the healing that our church so desired. I thought all week about what to say that had not already been said, but I couldn't think of anything! Our petition was before the Lord; what more could I do?

On my way home from work Thursday night, I put the top down on my convertible so I could have it out with

God. As I drove through the solitary ranchland, I looked up at the vast Texas night sky and felt closer to God as I looked up into His creation. In desperation, I asked the Lord, "What do you want me to do? You know what we want! How many more anointings do you want us to do? What must I say? Is my prayer wrong? Am I not saying the right words? Lord, if there was ever anyone who deserved healing, it would be Brother Rito. His family needs him, and Your church needs him. What do you want me to do? Please let me know!" Suddenly, it was as though someone had snapped their fingers. A calm came over me, and a voice said, "Don't you know that I love Brother Rito more than you can comprehend?"

That was it! No matter what happened to Brother Rito, God loved him and would do whatever was best for him, even if I could not understand it.

The next night I shared my experience and we anointed Brother Rito again. But his condition got worse, and a month later he died. His death was a great loss to the church's leadership and morale, but I am happy to say that Brother Rito's wife has stepped in to fill his shoes. She is the church's first woman elder, and the Holy Spirit has empowered her in her work with the church. The same strength and conviction that her husband had, she now brings forth.

Brother Rito's passing was a trying time for my church and I, but we have grown from this experience and now have a better understanding of God and His love for us. In these uncertain times, we need to strengthen our faith and believe that God knows what is best for us. We also need to recognize that the love that He has for us is greater than we can imagine. We need to trust Him, even if we can't understand. We also need to appreciate the people God places in our lives. I consider myself privileged to have known Brother Rito. I thank God that He used his life to teach our church a valuable lesson and to strengthen our faith.

Bryan Windover is the head elder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Victoria, Texas.

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BOOKS
OF THE
YEAR

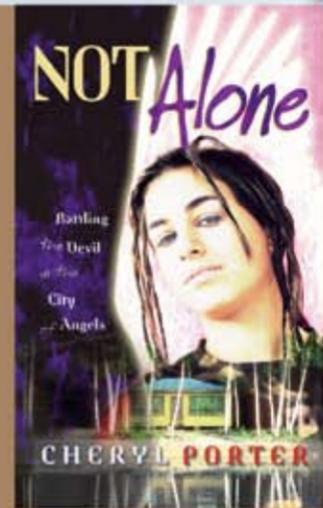
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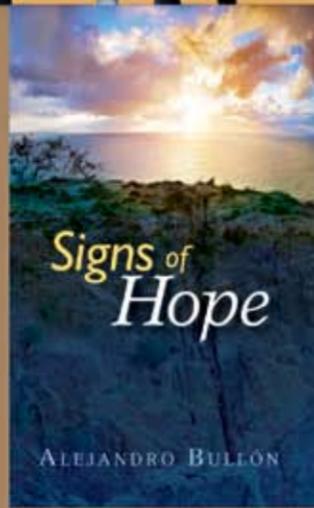
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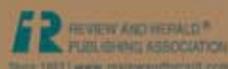
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| SERMON 1

COMMITMENT VS. CONVENIENCE

Matthew 19:16, 21-24

Is serving Jesus a commitment or a convenience? Many people today do not want to be totally committed to the Lord because it demands too much of them. Let's be honest: commitment becomes someone else's responsibility when it interferes with our schedules!

According to Webster, "commitment" means "to pledge to some particular course or use." Commitment to Jesus is more than a definition; it requires my life, my soul, my very being! And it's not just twice a week or even once a week, but all the time!

Just look at the cross: Jesus was committed to you *all the way*.

Many are not committed to the things of God, only to what is *convenient* before God. A clear example of this lifestyle is when someone says, "I go to church on Sabbath morning. Isn't that enough?"

Webster defines "convenient" as "suited to one's comfort or ease."

Are we living a life for Jesus that is suited for our own comfort? Do we want to be committed as long as it is easy? What if Jesus had decided not to die for our sins? Where would our eternity be?

I want us to look at being totally committed to God. This commitment should be a part of our everyday lives, not just something we do when it's convenient or comfortable.

THE CONVENIENCE OF THE SELF-SERVING

The self-serving focus on themselves rather than on God. In Matthew 19:16, we see someone asking Jesus what they need to do to obtain eternal life. Self-serving has to give up something to follow God.

In verse 21, Jesus says, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions . . ." Many today have an uncommitted focus on keeping their possessions rather than having a giving attitude.

In verses 21 and 22, Jesus continues, "Give to the poor, and you will have treasures in heaven. Then come follow me. When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth." This command doesn't apply only to money. Commitment can be giving of your time, energy, and possessions for God. Many of us have idols in our lives that are not money. Maybe it is work, sports, etc. Jesus is telling the rich young ruler (and us) to get rid of such things and focus on



I cannot serve God with a divided heart.



Ellen G. White, 14MR, 274

serving the Lord and following Him unconditionally.

Mark 8:36, 37 says, "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"

The rich young ruler wanted to follow Christ, but he wanted it to be convenient. How about you and me? This young man was looking for a better way to get what he wanted rather than wanting God to make him a better man. Are we looking to get what we want out of convenience rather than wanting God to make us better Christians?

God does not give up on the self-serving, no matter what the situation is or what you or I have done in the past. God allows U-turns, and today you can make that U-turn in your life.

YOUR ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN YOUR WORDS!

Have you ever asked yourself: "Whose job is it to serve God?" Have you ever answered yourself by saying, "Well, it is the pastor's job. He'll take care of it because we pay him to do it." If that is your answer, you are lying to yourself. Let's read what the Bible says about serving the Lord.

First, what is the Bible for? (Read 2 Tim. 3:16, 17.) We are *all* instructed to work for the Lord! Second, what is the work to be done? Matthew 28:19 says, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." We should preach the Gospel to *all*! Finally, who should serve the Lord? (Read Joshua 24:15.) Being committed to service ought to be the church members' top priority. Sometimes actions speak louder than words, and God watches both actions and words. While we are still here on earth, we have an opportunity to

continue serving the Lord so that He is pleased with us.

If you are not dead, your service to God is not over.

HOW CAN YOU BE TOTALLY COMMITTED TO SERVING GOD?

Do you want to be totally committed to the things of God? Then pledge to focus on a relationship with Christ rather than on other things!

"For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man's enemies will be the members of his own household" (Matt. 10:35, 36).

The committed focus on denying themselves and following Christ rather than loving only themselves. "And anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:38). The committed focus on discovering the Source of Life rather than being self-serving. "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matt. 10:39). The lives of the committed shine for Jesus! To what, then, should we be committed?

Committed to God (Matt. 22:37). Jesus replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment."

Committed to church (Heb. 10:24, 25). "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

We ought to be committed to the things of the church! It is convenient to attend church once a week, but commitment means serving no matter what, no matter when. Life happens and things get in the way, but the Lord never gives us more than we can handle.

CONCLUSION

Are you totally committed to God in every area of your life, or are you conveniently committed to Him for the sake of your comfort or ease? Jesus is totally committed to us! Are we willing to be totally committed to God?



General Conference Ministerial Association

THE EVEREST OF MESSIANIC PROPHECIES

Isaiah 53:6

INTRODUCTION

A. Mount Everest, in the Himalayas, has an altitude of approximately 29,000 feet; it is the highest peak on earth. Likewise, Isaiah 53 is the highest prophetic revelation about the suffering Messiah.

1. No other Bible passage presents in a clearer way Christ's vicarious nature and the character of His death. It is the anticipated story of Christ's suffering.

2. Although it was written in the seventh century B.C., it could almost have been written yesterday. Carlos Spurgeon, the acclaimed evangelist, said "What a chapter, a miniature Bible, the Gospel in its essence!"

B. Its inspiration and its power to move hearts are unmeasured.

C. Ellen G. White says that Satan diligently studied Isaiah's prophecies and other prophecies which referred to the Messiah. The prophecies instilled in him fear and apprehension, and he decided to blind the people so that they could not see the relevance. He was mostly successful, and he is still trying to prevent us from understanding the sacrifice Jesus made for us and from giving Him our love. Ellen White also states that we should "let the imagination grasp each scene" of the life of Jesus, especially the final ones. "This chapter should be studied. It presents Christ as the Lamb of God [...] The entire chapter should be committed to memory" (Ellen G. White, *SDA Bible Commentary*, 1147).

JESUS FORETOLD (ISAIAH 53:1-3)

A. A plant has a root that sustains it. When a tree is cut to the root, a tender plant grows and flourishes from the apparently lifeless root.

1. Revelation 22:16 says that Jesus is the "root and the offspring" (generation). The root tells us of His divinity; the offspring tells us of His humanity.

2. The "offspring" tells of Bethlehem's baby. The word became flesh. It took part in our nature.

B. "Dry ground." There was neither life nor joy; however, the root was there. Any farmer knows that it is not normal for a sprout to appear in dry land. The laws of nature demand moisture in the ground for germination.

1. The servant would come precisely from an origin as strange as "dry land."

2. From a human viewpoint, this last comparison is very appropriate: "What

“
Jesus came to this earth
to accomplish the greatest
work ever accomplished
among men.”

”
Ellen G. White,
Adventist Home, 133

distinguished person was born in a stable? Who among the great men of the Earth has worked hard to conquer and influence others only by his integrity, character, and virtue?"

JESUS IS THE SUBSTITUTE (ISAIAH 53:4-6)

A. In Isaiah 53, the vicarious nature of Christ's suffering is emphasized 11 times:

1. He has borne our grief;
2. Carried our sorrows;
3. Smitten by God, and afflicted;
4. He was wounded for our transgressions;
5. He was bruised for our iniquities;
6. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him;

7. By His stripes we are healed;
8. The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all;

9. He was cut off from the land of the living;

10. He was stricken for our transgressions;

11. Sinners are justified through Him, and He will carry their iniquities upon Himself.

B. The suffering was vicarious, voluntary, in obedience to the Lord, for us all, and for mediation.

1. Jesus took upon Himself our grief and blame and their consequences. Through Christ's death, both mercy and justice would be kept.

2. He suffered in our place. "It is for thee that the Son of God consents to bear this burden of guilt [...] He, the Sin Bearer, endures the wrath of divine justice, and for thy sake becomes sin itself" (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 755, 756).

"The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart" (ibid., 753).

JESUS FULFILLED THE SCRIPTURES (ISAIAH 53:7-9)

A. Isaiah presents Jesus as being obedient until death.

1. The term "as a lamb" points out the victim's submission. He did not protest or defend Himself. Silence was the evidence of total and unconditional submission.

2. He emptied Himself from His divinity (Phil. 2:6-8; 2 Cor. 5:21).

B. He fulfilled the prophecies about Himself:

1. Suffered for others (Matt. 26:28).

2. Silenced before abuse (Matt. 26:63; 27:12-14).

3. Was counted among the transgressors (Mark 15:27, 28).

4. Interceded for the transgressors (Luke 23:34).

5. Shed His soul until death (Matt. 27:50).

JESUS AND THE FRUIT OF HIS WORK (ISAIAH 53:10-12)

A. The battle to free Satan's captives was terrible. While Satan tried to exalt himself to be like God, Jesus divested Himself from everything. He humbled Himself.

1. He prospered despite His terrible humiliation.

2. Seeing the fruit of His work in the conversion of the nations, even He, through this work, felt fully repaid by the agony He suffered.

3. Christ Himself saw His crucifixion as a fulfillment of this prophecy (see Luke 22:37).

B. How great is a person's value to God! In what will the Messiah find satisfaction? He will be happy to see the plenitude of the glory that comes from the Father. He rejoices in seeing the countless millions of people who seek Him with honest faith and become new creatures.

CONCLUSION

Seeing that it pleased the Lord to save us, let us be thankful by accepting His salvation today. 

Laercio Mazzaro is the communication secretary for the Central Brazil Union.

GOD'S CREATION

INTRODUCTION

A. Three classic questions of humanity—*Where do I come from? Why am I here? and Where am I going?*—have been satisfactorily answered by philosophical arguments.

B. It seems that the human race has lost its identity. The enemy's suggestions have confused man's reasoning (read Rom. 1:21, 22).

CREATION WEEK

A. God created the environment and man, and rested on the seventh day.

B. The earth was disordered and empty (Gen. 1:9). God, the Originator of the universe, still had not created appropriate life conditions. In Genesis 1, there is a sentence which is repeated five times: "...and God saw that it was good." Before the end of the chapter, we have an emphasis: "...and indeed it was very good." These expressions reflect the feelings God had about His work during creation week.

1. On the first day, He created light. Without light there can be no life. It was essential to create light when God began to establish order from chaos to new life (Gen. 1:3-5).

2. On the second day, He created the atmosphere. No life form is possible without air; our planet would be dead like the moon (Gen. 1:6-8).

3. On the third day, He created the land, sea, and vegetation. He separated the waters from the dry land, and soon vegetation was called into existence (Gen. 1:9-13).

4. On the fourth day, He created sources of light. The sun, the moon, and the stars served as permanent instruments for the distribution of light on the planet (Gen. 1:14-19).

5. On the fifth day, He created the sea, the creatures, and the birds (Gen. 1:20-23).

6. On the sixth day, He created land animals (Gen. 1:24, 25) and man—distinguishing him from the other beings—for man was created in God's image in both exterior likeness and character (Gen. 1:26, 27).

7. On the seventh day, God rested. The cessation of the creative work was part of ending the work of that week. That day would be a special blessing for man, and that is why God sanctified it and set it apart, for holy purposes.

“
The work of
creation can never
be explained
by science.
What science
can explain the
mystery of life?”

”
Ellen White
Testimonies for the Church,
Vol. 8, page 258

GOD'S PLAN

A. *Mankind in relation to God.* God endowed man with free will, with a conscience and a spiritual nature. This nature reflected the divine holiness of the Creator. On the seventh day, man would have the opportunity to reflect upon the Creator's love and kindness and thus become more like Him (Mark 2:27, 28). Before sin entered the world, God communicated directly with man, without intermediation or interference (Gen. 1:28-30).

B. *Man in relation to his fellow creatures.* Solitude would be harmful to man's well-being. Adam's companion was not an inferior being. God was the author of the holy institution of matrimony (Gen. 2:20-25) and through this institution an unending chain of interpersonal relationships began which for God should have no barriers (Luke 10:25-37).

C. *Man in relation to the environment.* Man was appointed the steward of God's creation (Gen. 1:28). He should have a harmonious relationship with the animal world (Gen. 2:18, 19) and take care of Eden, which was a revelation of God's love (Gen. 2:15).

SIN'S ENTRANCE

A. The angels had the opportunity to express their loving loyalty to God. Now it was up to mankind to decide on which side of the conflict they would be. They only had to be loyal to God's mandate (Gen. 2:16, 17). The consequences of breaking the law would be inevitable. Satan's sagacity was stronger than human will, and our first fathers yielded before temptation, thus allowing sin to enter the world (Gen. 3:1-6).

B. The first consequence of sin: man lost his close relationship with God (Gen. 3:8). He feared God's presence from the moment he was separated from the Creator (Isa. 59:2).

C. The second consequence of sin: loss of life. "For the wages of sin is death. . ." (Gen. 3:19; Rom. 6:23). To perpetuate life would mean to extend sin's existence (Gen. 3:22). The popular belief that there is life after death is based on the serpent's argument: "You will not surely die."

D. The third consequence of sin: man lost his ability to live in harmony with his fellow beings. Within a short time Cain took Abel's life (Gen. 4:8).

E. The fourth consequence of sin: man lost his control over nature. Pain, suffering, hard work, and a fight for survival became part of the human experience (Gen. 3:17-19).

F. The fifth consequence of sin: the death of God's Son to save man from the consequences of sin (Gen. 3:15). Man was taken as the enemy's hostage, but the second person of the Trinity would pay the ransom with His own life. The only way man could be free was by having a substitute to receive the punishment for his transgression (Isa. 53:6).

CONCLUSION

A. The life, death, and resurrection of God's Son allowed us to recover mankind's condition before sin.

B. If you are connected to God, you will also restore your relationship with others through forgiveness. You will be able to enjoy the beautiful nature God created, here and throughout eternity. Amen! 

General Conference Ministerial Association

PRACTICING HOSPITALITY

Genesis 18:1-10

INTRODUCTION

We read in the Nativity story that “there was no room for them at the inn.” Those are familiar words, but this is not a Christmas message. Life in the first-century Roman Empire was far different from life today. Although inns existed, most people looked to private homes for hospitality.

In the dictionary, the word “hospitality” is wedged between “hospital” (a place of healing) and “hospice” (a place of shelter). The root of all three words is the Latin word translated as “guests.” Our homes are meant to be places of shelter and healing, havens of rest. The Greek word for hospitality (*philoxenia*) in the New Testament means “a love of strangers.” In Bible times, strangers were synonymous with enemies. One way to destroy enemies was to kill them. Another way was to befriend them. Hospitality does that.

What does the Bible say about hospitality? We’ll look first at biblical instruction, then at some biblical examples, and then we’ll see how they relate to us today.

BIBLICAL INSTRUCTION ON HOSPITALITY

Hospitality is a mark of discipleship. In James 2:15-17, we read, “Suppose you see a brother or sister who needs food or clothing, and you say, ‘Well, good-bye and God bless you; stay warm and eat well,’ but then you don’t give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do? Faith that doesn’t show itself by good deeds is no faith at all—it is dead and useless.”

In his letter to the Romans, Paul directs us to “share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality” (12:13).

A modern translation to John’s commendation to the church is “Dear friend, when you extend hospitality to Christian brothers and sisters, even when they are strangers, you make the faith visible. They’ve made a full report back to the church here, a message about your love. It’s good work you’re doing, helping these travelers on their way, hospitality worthy of God Himself! They set out under the banner of the Name, and get no help from unbelievers. So they deserve any support we can give them. In providing meals and a bed, we become their companions in spreading the Truth” (3 John, *The Message*). The apostles Jesus sent to proclaim the Gospel throughout the Roman Empire depended on the hospitality of others. John is referring to the needs of these early church missionaries.

Jesus expresses His gratitude, saying, “I was a stranger and you took Me in” (Matt. 25:35). He also encourages hospitality toward others, saying, “If you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of My followers, you will surely be rewarded” (Matt. 10:42).

Peter urges believers to “offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.” We should cheerfully open our homes to those in need.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF HOSPITALITY

Hospitality is deeply rooted in the Scriptures. In Genesis 18, when Abraham saw three strangers approach his tents, he called for his wife and servants to prepare a meal for them and watched over them as they rested in the shade of a tree.

Living in the desert, hospitality was a cultural necessity, with the understanding that the host might someday be a stranger in need. Believing in the providence of God, Abraham regarded these strangers as divinely sent. This was quite true, as they turned out to be angelic messengers from God. For his humble graciousness Abraham received a rich blessing. The author of Hebrews likely had Abraham in mind when he wrote that we should “show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it” (Heb. 13:2).

Later on, Abraham sent a servant to search for a suitable wife for his son Isaac. When the servant arrived at Rebekah’s home, he was cordially received, and her family’s hospitality helped convince the servant that God had chosen Rebekah to be Isaac’s bride.

To understand what hospitality is and what it is not, we need only look to Luke 10 and observe two women who welcomed Jesus into their home—Mary and Martha. Here we learn about priorities—it’s more important to be with people, to spend time with our guests, than to fuss and be frustrated about housekeeping details. We choose our priorities by how we invest our time. Many of the Marthas of this world are frustrated perfectionists, and this includes men—hospitality is not exclusively a feminine task! We can be discouraged from entertaining because our standards are more important than the love we could be showing to others. Martha was in bondage to her standards.

The point of hospitality is not the lavishness of the food or surroundings but the relationships we develop and the love we convey by involving ourselves with others. The food

we serve is not the goal but a means to the goal. True hospitality is not pretentious—it is bringing people into our homes as honorary members of our family.

Do we really know what it’s like to linger over a meal? This may be a lost art in our fast-paced culture, where eating has been reduced to a necessary function. Go to any fast-food place, and the atmosphere, even the uncomfortable chairs, are intentionally designed to get people in and out in a hurry. We’ve gone from grazing to gulping! Some homes are like fast-food restaurants. Families rush through meals and often do not even eat together, missing opportunities for closeness and communion.

MODERN EXAMPLES OF HOSPITALITY

Now I’d like us to consider how to apply hospitality to our lives. We are our brother’s keeper. This means that when we have an opportunity to assist someone in need, we should consider it a divine appointment. Believing in God’s providence means that there are no accidents, only appointments!

One way of showing hospitality is by holding a Bible study in a home or by organizing a lunchtime study, prayer, or fellowship time at work. This could be a group project, with one person responsible for the logistics of setting up the activity and another person facilitating the activity.

Christian service projects provide ways of showing hospitality. These might include: volunteering to visit shut-ins or people in hospitals and nursing homes; working at the food pantry or a homeless shelter; preparing a meal for a neighbor who is bereaved or ill; welcoming newcomers to church and inviting them to our homes, helping out at a church dinner; or providing transportation for someone in need. God isn’t looking for any special ability, only our availability.

Hospitality extends to children. We need to welcome our children’s friends and teach our kids to show hospitality.

CONCLUSION

Hospitality is an attitude of the heart, a way of life, a form of grace. Have angels been to your home? Lord, show us how we can befriend others. Make us channels of your grace and instruments of your love. Whether we are single or married, adult or young person, show us how we can demonstrate Christian hospitality. Amen.



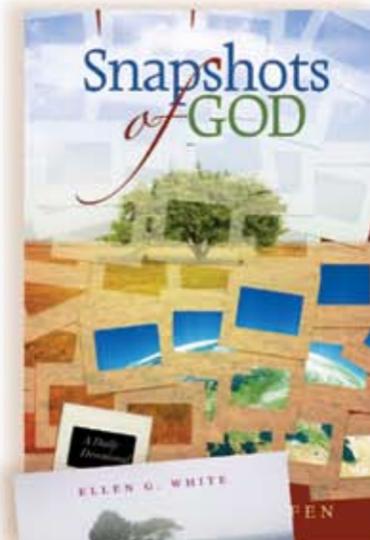
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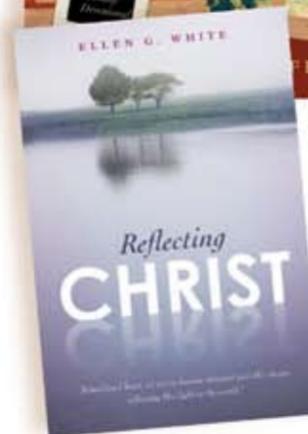
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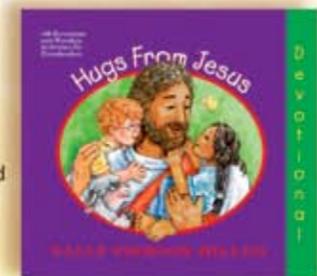
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HEALTHY TIPS FOR ELDERS

7 SECRETS FOR TRUE LONGEVITY

ADEQUATE SLEEP <



Benjamin

Franklin said, "Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise." Ben was so right! Today there is plenty of scientific evidence supporting the notion that adequate sleep is indeed a key factor when it comes to living a long, healthy life. Thus, in our list of seven secrets for longevity, getting enough sleep ranks number 3.

In our previous health tips, we studied *exercise* and *healthy diet* as the first two secrets for longevity. But many do not realize that sleep is just as important as these two items. In fact, some researchers say that "sleep should be considered as essential to a healthy lifestyle as exercise and nutrition."^a The truth is that in many instances, inadequate sleep prevents us from getting the full benefits of exercise and a healthy diet.

Here are a few of the many negative effects of poor sleep:

- Slows frontal lobe function, impairing our ability to make good decisions, concentrate, and engage in high-level intellectual tasks;^b
- Contributes to depression and anxiety;^c
- Promotes onset and increases the severity of diabetes;^d
- Impairs the body's immune system, reducing its ability to prevent and fight infection and inflammation.^e

You may be surprised to learn that you feel physically well even though you are sleep-deprived. In fact, you may be unaware that your mental or physical abilities are less than optimal.^f For instance, some people consider themselves "night owls" when it comes to sleep and rest, claiming they feel fine and more energetic being awake at night. However, the evidence points to the fact that God created our bodies with the same sleep rhythm regulated by our body's chemical laws.^g So even if you are comfortable staying up late, your body, mind, and spirit are still hurting.

At times, in our zeal for and dedication to the ministry, we may unintentionally overlook the importance of healthy sleep patterns. For the sake of finishing a sermon, completing a task for Sabbath, attending meetings, or even participating in inspirational programs, conferences, or prayer meetings, we may stay up later than is ideal. If that becomes our routine, we may become sick and feel depressed, anxious, short-tempered, or fatigued. We may then pray, asking God for strength and energy. But the question is: Where do our choices and priorities stand?

Certainly it is essential to participate in prayer vigils or to be available to help others in an emergency, but these situations are usually not routine. In most cases, sleeping too late or too little or having an irregular sleep pattern is often unnecessary and avoidable. If we place a priority on this issue, we can easily rearrange things and plan ahead, while still leaving room for special circumstances.

Think about your sleep habits over the past few months. Perhaps you see a pattern of irregularity in your sleep schedule and may even have experienced insomnia or felt unable to enjoy a regular 7-8 hours of restful sleep. Here are some tips for improving sleep and melatonin levels:

- Awaken with the sun, or be exposed to at least 30 minutes of bright light starting within 10 minutes of awakening.
- Establish regular hours for sleeping (ideally before 10 p.m.), for eating, and for exercise.
- When going to sleep, be still with your eyes closed and plan for 7-8 hours of sleep.
- Keep the room quiet, dark, and cool.
- Ask God for peace and restful sleep as you lay your anxieties on Him.

Isn't it time to take a second look at the hours spent with God, family, work, and church ministry, while at the same time optimizing and planning for healthier sleep patterns? It will not only contribute to your longevity; it will positively impact those around you as well. "I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone O Lord, make me dwell in safety." (Ps 4:8). ED

^a P. Zee and F. Turek, "Sleep and Health: Everywhere and in Both Directions," in *Journal Archives of Internal Medicine*, Sept. 18, 2006. 166: 1686-1688.

^b D. Marschall-Kehrel, "Update on Nocturia: The Best of Rest is Sleep," in *Urology*, December 2004. 64 (6 suppl. 1): 21-4.

^c Neil Nedley, *Depression: The Way Out*.

^d K. Spiegel, E. Tsali, et al. "Sleep Curtailment in Healthy Young Men is Associated with Decreased Levels of Leptin, Elevated Ghrelin Levels, and Increased Hunger and Appetite," in *Annals of Internal Medicine*, Dec. 7, 2004. 141 (11): 885, 886.

^e J. Perl, *Sleep Right in Five Nights: A Clear and Effective Guide for Conquering Insomnia* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1993), 32.

^f *Creation Health Workbook*, Florida Hospital, 2009.

^g T. Monk, "Morningness-Eveningness and Lifestyle Regularity," in *Chronobiology International*. May 2004. 21 (3): 435-443.



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ADVENTIST WORSHIP

Adventist ministers in several parts of the world are frustrated about the format of their weekly worship hour. They have used the same order of service, made the same announcements, sung the same songs, prayed the same prayers, and preached almost the same sermons decade after decade, generation after generation, until recently.

Young people say their church is out of touch with the times. Significant numbers of members seem bored with worship. They're voting for change, and they're voting with their feet. Thousands of Adventist congregations have twice as many names on the books as they have worshipers in the pews. Perhaps yours is one of them.

Pastors are experimenting with new ways to worship. But these innovations have their problems, too. We must not replace traditional worship—even though time may have drained its meaning—with something that has no biblical basis.

Adventist ministers should not be afraid to experiment with new ways to worship, but they need some guidelines. And there's no better place to find them in Scripture than in that uniquely Adventist chapter, Revelation 14. Verse 7 insists we must be a worshipping people; it is worship of our Creator that makes us unique.

INGREDIENTS OF ADVENTIST WORSHIP

1. *Adventist worship should be awe-inspiring.* In Revelation 14:7, the first angel declares, "Fear God, and give glory to him." As Adventist ministers know, this word "fear" suggests reverence and awe. Worship involves having a good relationship with your fellow-worshipers; the gospel of love cannot be realized in isolation. And it involves having warm feelings toward God. But these are only parts of worship. In corporate worship, God's people enter His throne room together. Worship is not primarily for feeling good but for seeing God.

2. *Adventist worship should be joyful.* Revelation 14:2, 3 describes God's redeemed in worship: "The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. And they sang as if it were a new song." This heavenly harp-playing and singing reveal the joy and feeling that belongs in worship. When we who are preparing for heaven worship as we will in heaven, our worship will be joyful. It will include both our thoughts and our feelings, demanding clear heads and warm hearts.

Too many Adventist ministers have had the emotion educated out of them. Too many of us are so afraid of emotionalism (excess emotion) that we avoid any emotion at all. But we are wrong in presuming we defend our pioneers when we defend only the formal and the rational. Early Adventist worship included lots of relating and participating and sometimes it was highly emotional.



3. *Adventist worship should be experiential.* Referring to the song God's people sing, Revelation declares, "No one could learn the song." Why? Because it is a song of personal experience. Nobody else can do it for us. Worship is experiential.

Worship is not a routine or a tradition. It is an event, a happening. It is not a passive, spectator sport but a personal interaction between the Creator and the created.

CONTROVERSY ABOUT ADVENTIST WORSHIP

Adventist worship has become controversial. Myriads of pastors worldwide have been communicating with the General Conference Ministerial Association, asking for guidance as they attempt to navigate the minefield surrounding change in worship practice. Some don't know where to turn. What should change? What should never change?

The subject demands far more than the cursory treatment this brief article allows. Below are some questions that need to be addressed:

- How did early Adventists worship?
- What are our current worship customs or traditions? Where did we get them?
- What do our pastors and congregations think about worship?
- What do our young people think of our worship services?
- What are the Bible principles that will keep us balanced between divine adoration and human fellowship and between reason and emotion?
- What about "celebration" worship?

How does your worship service measure up? Sometime you ought to sit alone in the sanctuary, when the people are gone and the pews are empty, and ask the one question that counts: "Did they or did they not meet God today?"

Keep preaching the old message. But keep experimenting with more meaningful ways to worship until you feel certain each week that every sincere worshiper is encouraged to encounter God. Worship is encounter. ED

Floyd Bresee is a former Ministerial Secretary of the General Conference.

The art of speech

SIMPLICITY IN OUR SPEECH

Secrets of Success for the Gospel—The success of the gospel message does not depend upon learned speeches, eloquent testimonies, or deep arguments. It depends upon the simplicity of the message and its adaptation to the souls that are hungering for the bread of life. “What shall I do to be saved?”—this is the want of the soul.—COL 231.

Purity and Simplicity—Our work should be to embrace every opportunity to present the truth in its purity and simplicity where there is any desire or interest to hear the reasons of our faith.—3T 214.

Work in the Cities—The Lord is speaking to His people at this time, saying, Gain an entrance into the cities, and proclaim the truth in simplicity and in faith. The Holy Spirit will work through your efforts to impress hearts. Introduce no strange doctrine into your message, but speak the simple words of the gospel of Christ, which young and old can understand. The unlearned as well as the educated are to comprehend the truths of the third angel’s message, and they must be taught in simplicity. If you would approach the people acceptably, humble your hearts before God and learn His ways.—MM 299.

Unlocking Closed Hearts—The true, honest words of a son or daughter of God, spoken in natural simplicity, will open the door to hearts that have long been locked.—6T 115.

Simple Words May Open Locked Hearts—The most intellectual, those who are looked upon and praised as the world’s most gifted men and women, are often refreshed by the simple words that flow from the

heart of one who loves God and who can speak of that love as naturally as the worldling speaks of the things which his mind contemplates and feeds upon. Often the words well prepared and studied have little influence. But the true, honest words of a son or daughter of God, spoken in natural simplicity, will open the door to hearts that have long been locked.—6T 115.

Too Much Proof—In this age, when pleasing fables are drifting upon the surface and attracting the mind, truth presented in an easy style, backed up with a few strong proofs, is better than to search and bring forth an overwhelming array of evidence; for the point then does not stand so distinct in many minds as before the objections and evidences were brought before them. With many, assertions will go further than long arguments. They take many things for granted. Proof does not help the case in the minds of such.—3T 36.

Plain Mileposts—The world needs labor now. Calls are coming in from every direction like the Macedonian cry: “Come over and help us.” Plain, pointed arguments, standing out as mileposts, will do more toward convincing minds generally than will a large array of arguments which cover a great deal of ground, but which none but investigating minds will have interest to follow.—3T 39.

A Few forcible Remarks—A few forcible remarks upon some point of doctrine will fasten it in the mind much more firmly than if such a mass of matter were presented that nothing lies out clear and distinct in the mind of those ignorant of our faith.

There should be interspersed with the prophecies practical lessons of the teachings of Christ.—Ev 171, 172.

Seeds of Truth Too Deep—Some have cultivated the habit of too great concentrativeness. The power to fix the mind upon one subject to the exclusion of all others, is good to a limited degree, but those who put the whole strength of the mind into one line of thought are frequently deficient on other points. In conversation these become tedious, and weary the listener. Their writings lack a free, easy style. When they speak in public, the subject before them holds their attention, and they are led on and

on, to go deeper and deeper into the matter. They seem to see knowledge and light as they become interested and absorbed, but there are few who can follow them.

There is danger that such men will plant the seed of truth so deep that the tender blade will never find the surface. Even the most essential, manifest truths, those which are of themselves clear and plain, may be so covered up with words as to be made cloudy and indistinct.—GW 169.

Christ’s Words Understood—In view of all that lies before the believer, his piety should be “always abounding.” He should labor for souls with all his intelligence and powers. Not for eloquence and honor is he to strive, but for simplicity of life and simplicity of speech. Christ had no need to explain any word that He made use of. All were simple, and all were understood by the most simple.—RH Jan. 7, 1909.

A Great Variety of Minds—Human minds vary. The minds of different education and thought receive different impressions of the same words, and it is difficult for one mind to give to one of a different temperament, education, and habits of thought by language exactly the same idea as that which is clear and distinct in his own mind. Yet to honest men, right-minded men, he can be so simple and plain as to convey his meaning for all practical purposes.—ISM 19.

The Highest Eloquence—You are to be the agent through whom God will speak to the soul. Precious things will be brought to your remembrance, and with a heart overflowing with the love of Jesus, you will speak words of vital interest and import. Your simplicity and sincerity will be the highest eloquence, and your words will be registered in the books of heaven as fit words, which are like apples of gold in pictures of silver.—SD 274.

Light With Every Word—At the Queensland camp meeting in 1898, instruction was given me for our

Bible workers. In the visions of the night, ministers and workers seemed to be in a meeting where Bible lessons were being given. We said, “We have the Great Teacher with us today,” and we listened with interest to His words. He said: “There is a great work before you in this place. You will need to present truth in its simplicity. Bring the people to the waters of life. Speak to them the things which most concern their present and eternal good. Let not your study of the Scriptures be of a cheap or casual order. In all that you say, know that you have something which is worthy of the time you take to say it, and of the time of the hearers to hear. Speak of those things which are essential, those things which will instruct, bringing light with every word.

“Learn to meet the people where they are. Do not present subjects that will arouse controversy. Let not your instruction be of a character to perplex the mind. Do not cause the people to worry over things which you may understand but which they do not see, unless these are of vital consequence to the saving of the soul. Do not present the Scriptures in a way to exalt self and encourage vainglory in the one who opens the Word. The work for this time is to train students and workers to deal with subjects in a plain, serious, and solemn manner.”—6T 58 59.

Spiritual Disease—All the sangfroid which is so common, the theatrical gestures, all lightness and trifling, all jesting and joking, must be seen by the one who wears Christ’s yoke to be “not convenient—an offense to God and a denial of Christ.

It unfits the mind for solid thought and solid labor. It makes men inefficient, superficial, and spiritually diseased.—Ev 644.

This article is excerpted from the practical resource, *Counsels on Speech and Song*, by Ellen G. White. The entire book is available for purchase at www.pacificpress.com.



RE-ELECTION AND MARRYING SOMEONE FROM ANOTHER FAITH

CAN A PASTOR OR A CHURCH COMMITTEE PROPOSE THE RE-ELECTION OF ALL THE OFFICERS FOR THE FOLLOWING YEAR?

The answer is "No." It is possible that all officers could be re-elected, but we need to follow the steps outlined in the *Church Manual*, chapter 11.

In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, officers are elected every one or two years (see p. 49) through an appointed nominating committee. This committee brings its report to the church, which then acts on the names presented. This procedure enables the church to give careful study to each name prior to election, and avoids the public competitive element that may arise when nominations are made from the floor.

WHAT IS THE PROCEDURE IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN RELATION TO A MEMBER WHO MARRIES SOMEONE WHO DOES NOT PROFESS THE SAME FAITH?

I invite you to carefully consider the following points:

1. The church does not recommend unequal yoke (see *Church Manual*, 183). "The Spirit of Prophecy consistently counsels against marriage between 'the believer and the unbeliever' and further cautions against uniting with fellow Christians who have 'not accepted the truth for this time'" (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, 5:364).

2. The church cannot use authority or constraints to prevent it (see *Church Manual*, 183). ". . .the Seventh-day Adventist Church strongly discourages marriage between a Seventh-day Adventist and a non-Seventh-day Adventist, and strongly urges Seventh-day Adventist ministers not to perform such weddings."

"The church recognizes that it is the prerogative of the individual to make the final decision relative to the choice of a marriage partner. However, it is the hope

of the church that, if the member chooses a marriage partner who is not a member of the church, the couple will realize and appreciate that the Seventh-day Adventist pastor, who has covenanted to uphold the principles outlined above, should not be expected to perform such a marriage."

Because this is a biblical orientation, a courtship of this nature may disqualify the person from holding church leadership offices, because it might give the impression that the church condones such relationships, and others might feel motivated to follow the same example. However, the church needs to be very careful not to show rejection or discrimination to the non-Adventist partner.

This limitation has the purpose of motivating the church member to reconsider the relationship that is incompatible to his or her faith. Thus says the *Church Manual*: "If an individual does enter into such a marriage, the church is to demonstrate love and concern with the purpose of encouraging the couple toward complete unity in Christ" (183).



If you have a question about church policy or procedure, let us know! Every quarter we address these issues in our "Question and Answer" column and we would love to hear from you. E-mail us at eldersdigest@gc.adventist.org.

THE UNSPOKEN HEROES

A child learns the words, "Jesus loves me this I know. . .", a Pathfinder discovers the intricate beauty of nature during a field trip, church members reach out to a family in need at the food bank and youth help to build a chapel during a spring break mission trip. These are snapshots of unspoken heroes at work in our churches. Taking on responsibilities, performing tasks and taking risks on behalf of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Who are these unspoken heroes? They are the thousands of volunteers who make ministry possible on a 24/7 basis. Stop and ask yourself this question – How would your church, school or conference accomplish its mission if it had to depend solely on paid denominational employees? The fact is it couldn't be done! Volunteers are the heart and soul of ministry, but do we take them for granted? As an elder, you have been chosen to be a leader in your congregation of this mighty army of Christian soldiers.

Using a quotation from Dr. Ken Blanchard, let's set a vision for 2010:

"I think people (volunteers) want to be magnificent. It is the job of the leader (church elders) to bring out the magnificence in people (volunteers) and to create an environment where they feel safe and supported and ready to do the best job possible in accomplishing key goals. This responsibility is a sacred trust that should not be violated. The opportunity to guide others to their fullest potential is an honor and one that should not be taken lightly. As leaders, we hold the lives of others in our hands. These hands need to be gentle and caring and always available for support." ~ (Situational Leadership II – The Article pg. 2) Are you up to this challenge?

How do we manage the risks associated with such a diverse army of volunteers? Often we neglect our duty by taking the stance that the Lord will automatically provide safety at all church-related activities. "Where there is no counsel the people fall; but in a multitude of counselors there is safety" admonishes King Solomon in Proverbs 11:14 (NKJV). Taking adequate time to address safety issues during church board, elders meetings and other ministry planning sessions should be a critical focus and part of your congregation's strategic vision and plan for ministry. Allowing apathy to fog clearly focused plans to conduct all church activities in a safe manner is a sure

prescription for a serious accident that can cause physical harm or bring financial hardship and loss to your congregation.

"Leadership begins with our thoughts even before our actions. When our minds and our attitudes are right, we position ourselves to lead well." ~ (John C. Maxwell, *The Maxwell Leadership Bible*, p. 754.) Safety is a habit that is learned by example and repetition of doing the right thing the right way at all times. As an elder, the members of your congregation will be looking to you for leadership and guidance during church activities. If you cut corners or take un-warranted risks you can expect other church officers to do the same. The words you say and the things you do all establish the example others will follow. As a leader you have a responsibility to uphold the standards that will lead to the safe achievement of your ministry objectives.

You need to be sure that appropriate training of volunteers takes place so each individual understands their roles and responsibilities. It is dangerous to assume that just because the person is an adult volunteer, they will automatically know what is expected of them in their given ministry role. Remember it takes training and practice in order to learn your duties, regardless if it is giving a bible study, supervising a children's outing, setting up a fellowship dinner or conducting a church work bee. Your congregation needs to establish codes of expected conduct and safe practices that will be followed during all church activities. Accidents can happen at any time. A person's reputation can be ruined by an unguarded act. Being well trained and prepared is the best way to create the proper environment so your ministries can thrive.

Adventist Risk Management invites you to visit our website: www.adventistrisk.org to learn more valuable safety information that can assist in your role as an elder as you plan for the numerous and critical roles that volunteers perform each and every day for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They truly are the unspoken heroes to whom we owe our greatest thanks for being – "That good and faithful servant;" who share of their time, talents and resources motivated by a loving heart.



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Vice President – Adventist Risk Management, Inc.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE MINISTRY

Quality leadership enables organizations to meet their goals. Numerous books, articles, and papers have been written on the subject. Cindy Tutsch's book, *Ellen White on Leadership*, is a very resourceful book on leadership because it deals with some of the most essential characteristics of spiritual leadership. In this volume, the author compares Ellen White's leadership counsels with contemporary leadership publications. Because one could hardly imagine that a nineteenth-century author could articulate such a comprehensive position on spiritual leadership, Tutsch's book about Ellen White's outlook on spiritual leadership is fascinating. Tutsch gives some key components that define what spiritual leadership is. She talks about the leader's relationship with God, self-sacrificial service, delegating, and the need for an exemplary lifestyle. There were several insights in *Ellen White on Leadership* which are pertinent to ministry, but this report will only seek to highlight the most significant insights.

The first insight Tutsch highlights is related to the most basic characteristic of a spiritual leader. She asserts that a spiritual leader is one who uses his/her influence to promote Christ. *Ellen White on Leadership* underscores the fact that true leadership cannot exist without the knowledge of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The author emphasizes that Ellen White's view regarding the necessity for the leader to be empowered by the Spirit seems stronger than that of any current leadership author. This is especially significant in today's world, where the spiritual authority of leaders has experienced numerous attacks. Another reason why this is significant is that a leader who is not guided by the Holy Spirit will not be able to give a good representation of Christ. Furthermore, the spiritual leader's effectiveness is directly connected to his or her relationship with God or the quality of time he or she spends with God. Channeling one's influence to promote Christ comes from a connection with God. Certainly, spiritual leadership is centered

on a leader's relationship with God, whereby he or she uses his or her influence to honor God.

In addition, Tutsch shows that Blackaby and King, Christian leadership authors, concurred with Ellen White's perspective on spiritual leadership when they argued that experience alone cannot be our guide; every experience must be controlled and understood within the realm of Scripture. The high view of Scripture proposed by Blackaby and King was emphasized by Ellen White more than a century ago. This is extremely vital for the future of spiritual leadership because relativism, postmodernism, and the New Age movement seem to be engulfing today's society, leading most people to look to reason and situation ethics as the guiding light of their lives. For the spiritual leader, reason, feelings, and societal norms are certainly not enough. In fact, these things have been found to be inadequate. The only sure foundation is the Word of God. Another significant outlook is that only the Word of God (written or living) is able to transform lives and enhance character development. History is full of examples which illuminate the fact that experience alone is insufficient when it comes to spiritual leadership. There is an urgent need for spiritual leaders to return to the foundation of leadership, the Bible. Obviously, this insight will lead spiritual leaders to be more conscious of the fact that spiritual leadership is rooted in the Word of God.

The idea that spiritual leadership is servant leadership is emphasized by Tutsch in reference to Ellen White's leadership principles. The term "servant leadership" was coined by Robert Greenleaf. According to Ellen White, spiritual leaders serve, sacrifice, and engage in selfless behavior not because of their innate goodness but rather to emulate Jesus' humility demonstrated in the incarnation. God, who is the source of true leadership, has set the example of what it means to be a servant leader. Self-sacrificing leadership has become popular today, but only in theory. In reality, the principle of servant leadership appears to be missing from the lives of many of today's spiritual leaders. The world needs spiritual leaders who exemplify and embody servant leadership.

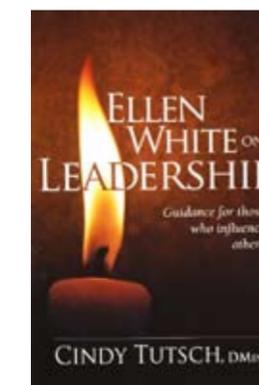
Furthermore, the essential components of empowerment and mentorship were insights gleaned from *Ellen White on Leadership*. Tutsch writes that spiritual lead-

A LEADER WHO IS NOT GUIDED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL NOT BE ABLE TO GIVE A GOOD REPRESENTATION OF CHRIST.

ers empower individuals and function as mentors to those who have been empowered. A spiritual leader whose responsibilities do not entail mentorship and empowerment ceases to function as an effective leader. Motivating people is a crucial leadership component because leaders who do not train anyone to take over after they leave are deemed ineffective leaders. In other words, leaders who are not creating successors are not really leading. This is significant because the success of one's leadership is not solely dependent on the success the organization experiences when he or she is

leading. On the contrary, its success also depends on the accomplishment it experiences after the leader has left. Certainly, empowerment and mentorship are directly connected to spiritual leadership.

In conclusion, *Ellen White on Leadership* is one of the most comprehensive books written on spiritual leadership. The way in which the author presents the information empowers leaders to be relevant and practical as they seek to embody and exemplify Christian leadership in this postmodern age. Likewise, the parallels that are drawn in this volume between contemporary writers and Ellen White could certainly change the way leaders approach ministry. The parallels used by Tutsch in this volume are similar to the object lessons that were used by the true Servant Leader, Jesus Christ. Undoubtedly, this book is a masterpiece on spiritual leadership. ED



Cindy Tutsch's book, *Ellen White on Leadership: Guidance for Those Who Influence Others*, was reviewed by Marlon Robinson, a student at the Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. The book, published in 2008, is available from The General Conference Ministerial Association for US\$12.95, plus shipping. Phone: 1-301-680-6508, Fax: 1-301-680-6502, E-mail:

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SHARING THE GOOD NEWS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

One afternoon while I was standing on a river bank, I saw a huge box floating downstream with the river's current. Then I saw a tiny fish going upstream against the current. Two objects crossing each other's paths. One going down, the other going up.

What was the difference? It was LIFE!

The box was very impressive looking, well decorated with all kinds of designs but it did not have life, which is why it was going downstream with the flow.

However, the fish, tiny as far as its size or capacity was concerned, was so small it wasn't even good enough for Sushi – "Tuno" I mean, but it was going upstream because of its life. Its life was its mission.

The mission of the church is outreach. Outreach is not just an activity of the church; it is the mission of the church.

However, in its institutional preoccupation, some of the churches have abandoned their real identity and reason for existence. They developed a very inward-looking passive culture. "Come and get it!"

Their message to people outside the church is to become like us, believe like us, dress like us, eat like us, act like us, like what we like and dislike what we don't like. But look at Jesus' evangelism strategy: instead of "Come and get it," it was "Go Get 'em!"

Jesus went to places where the people were. Therefore we need churches where people are. Mostly, people are not coming to us; we have to go to them.

There are times that we as Christians in the church are great about speaking the truth without Love. We have the

truth and know that people desperately need the truth, but the challenge is that people cannot hear it from us because we have not earned the privilege and trust to share it.

This will require shifting our efforts from just growing churches into transforming communities. Are we making any impact on the communities where our institutions are located?

Consider our churches, schools, and hospitals: Are the communities a better place to live because of our existence? The challenge is **not** about our ability to do this; it is about our **pride** and **our lack of** concern for people that God cares about.

Ellen G. White said, "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior **mingled** with men as one who **desired** their good. He **showed** His sympathy for them, **ministered** to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He **bade** them, 'Follow Me.'" (*Ministry of Healing*, p. 143)

If I paraphrase the above statement, it says Jesus mingled with people, identified their needs, met their needs, and developed a trust relationship.

Through the trust relationship He built a bridge, and then He said to the people, "Follow Me."

In Jesus' eyes, it is more important to BE a good neighbor than to know WHO your neighbor is. Let us proclaim the Good News and demonstrate the love of God.

Sung Kwon, National Executive Director
North American Division Adventist Community Services

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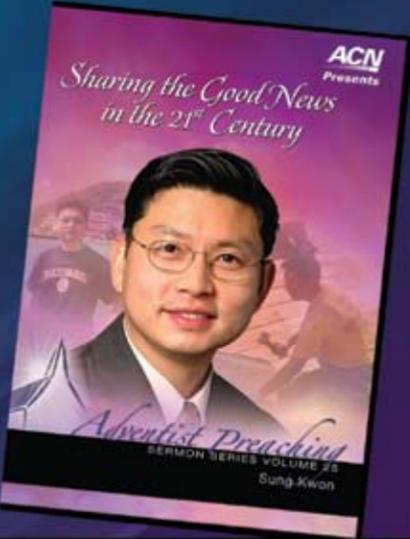
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| ARTICLE by Ray Allen

SOLDIER FOR CHRIST



At an Adventist World Radio training session in Ethiopia, I met a most fascinating person: a former soldier who knew nothing about God until death stared him eyeball to eyeball on the battlefields of war. He eventually became a soldier for Christ, working as a producer for AWR.

Haben is from the Tigrigna region of Ethiopia. From age 6 to 15, he lived in a Christian orphanage. He had no interest in God and didn't care to know anything about Him. After leaving the orphanage, Haben began studying for his future career.

In 1992, war broke out between Ethiopia and Eritrea; Haben was conscripted into the military and began training as a soldier. Soon he became a qualified commando with the Special Forces and was sent into battle, where he spent 3½ years. The battlefield is a trying place, even for the most experienced soldier. Haben was young, and being in the heat of battle was a terrifying experience.

While on the battlefield, Haben discovered AWR. He recalls, "I used to listen to AWR a lot when I was on the battlefield. [It] gave me a lot of comfort. I would always pray to the God I learned about from AWR. I remember the producer saying 'This is Adventist World Radio, the Voice of Hope.' I would always pray, 'God, help me to escape from this battle.' I prayed this prayer every time I was about to enter a battle."

Some battles brought Haben face to face with death. It was in these critical situations that he began making promises to God. He remembers a distinct occasion when his heartfelt promises ascended from a smoke-filled battlefield.

The incident took place during a very bad fight at a place called Alambassa. The soldiers

in Haben's unit went without food or water for three days, leaving them very weak and tired. During the battle, many soldiers were either killed or badly wounded. Finally, only Haben and a fellow soldier were left fighting a well-equipped enemy force, which was approaching rapidly.

The two soldiers only had a medium-sized boulder for protection, which left their legs exposed. Yet, despite the heavy artillery fire, they remained unhurt. Haben knew that soon they would be hit. He prayed, "God, if you want me to die, that's OK with me. I will see you in the resurrection. But if you save me from this bad situation, I will serve you until the end of my life."

A commander from the other section of the Ethiopian army spotted the two isolated men through his binoculars and arranged to send backup. Soon the enemy was in retreat, and Haben's life was spared. "There's no doubt in my mind," says Haben, "that God saved me from that bad situation. I'll never forget that. When I was in battle, I saw for myself the love of God. And because of that I opened myself, my heart, to God."

At the end of his military term, and after the war had ended, Haben returned to the capital, Addis Ababa, and began work at a government office. He fasted and prayed for God to lead him to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and to discover how

he could serve Him for the rest of his life in fulfillment of his side of the bargain.

A fellow ex-soldier heard Haben was trying to find the Adventist church and directed him to the Ethiopian Union Mission office. Haben received Bible studies and was baptized within a year of leaving the armed services. He went on to study for two years at a Bible College and then worked as a pioneer church planter for a short period of time. Today he is a Tigrigna producer for the station that introduced him to God on the battlefields of war. He frequently gives his testimony over the air and receives many responses from soldiers who are interested in knowing about the God that Haben now serves. 

Ray Allen is the AWR Global Training Director & Africa Region Director

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SEEKING THOSE WHO MAY NOT APPEAR TO BE LOST

The condition of those who are lost is not always apparent. Three parables in Luke 15 merit a closer study as several areas of our world field launch an intensive search for former and inactive members.

Although their individual journeys are unique, those represented by the lost sheep, coin, and son all end up the same: Each of them begins as part of the “saved” and ends up lost. They start out as part of the group and end up all alone.

The sheep wandered off alone. Its journey away was not a bold move or a mad dash; if it had been, the shepherd would have noticed immediately and launched a rescue mission. More likely it was unintentional drifting of such a gradual nature that neither the group nor the shepherd (or even the sheep itself) realized it was leaving until it was all alone.

The coin never left the premises. It remained in the general vicinity of the group and was found right where it had remained. Nevertheless, it was alone. A person can be lonely even in a group of familiar faces!

The son deliberately chose to leave. He put Palestine in his rearview mirror and probably slammed the door as he left. His choice was clear, and his exit was announced. Everything but the end result was carefully planned. He did not plan to end up alone!

Alone! Perhaps the worst part of “lostness” is the separation—from Christ or from His body. Regardless of how people exit our fellowship, far too many are left alone at the very time we should be searching for them.

HOW TO FIND THOSE WHO ARE LOST

These three parables offer helpful insights into what it takes to find those who have ended up alone, regardless of why they left!

Count. The shepherd would never have known that one sheep was missing if he had not counted the others. A careful record of those who are regular in their attendance and who participate in fellowship is essential in determining who is missing or inactive.

Risk. The shepherd risked the safety of the 99 sheep to search for the one that was lost. Somehow I had always pictured the group safely protected within the sheepfold. My perception was that the shepherd ventured out into the wilderness only doing everything possible to assure security and comfort for the group. But the text says the shepherd left the 99 exposed to the dangers of wild places while he sought the lost.

Labor. When the woman determined to find the coin, she went to work! Nothing of value comes without effort. The greater the value, the greater the effort that is demanded. To find her coin, the homemaker stirred up some dust as she cleaned thoroughly. Stirring up dust probably aggravated her allergies. Have you ever noticed that some people are allergic to soul-seeking? We need to cure these allergies.

Wait. God’s timing is not my timing. The parable of the lost son reminds us that God never gives up—and neither should we. At the very point when all seems hopeless, heaven becomes most patient. How can I know what circumstance or event might trigger an awareness of need?

Pray. Prayer—that key in the hand of faith that unlocks heaven’s blessing—is not for the purpose of changing God’s attitude toward the lost. Prayer changes my attitude and my efforts toward the lost as I begin to see them as Jesus sees them. And what a thing to pray for—to view every person’s potential through heaven’s eyes!

Love unconditionally. Jesus does not picture the father as placing any conditions upon his love for his runaway son. Love, acceptance, and forgiveness were always ready. This was what the father also offered the son who remained. In fact, loving those who remain is sometimes the greater challenge.

Welcome. The whole atmosphere was conditioned to embrace the prodigal. The father ran to meet his son. His boy had nothing to prove except that he understood which direction to head when he wanted to go home. Everything expressed warmth and welcome.

Restore. The prodigal son has squandered much with his foolishness, but all was restored when he returned home. The robe, the shoes, and the ring declared his status. The prodigal came home expecting to be a servant and discovered that he was a son! He expected little; he received everything!

Rejoice. Throw a party when the lost are found. Invite the crowd and celebrate the good news of resurrection. Dead sons and daughters are alive! Lost souls are saved! All of heaven rejoices when one sinner repents. The least the church can do is sponsor a potluck lunch and a special worship service to welcome the wanderer back. God won’t give us more blessings than we are happy to receive!

Yes, we need to seek even those who may not appear to be lost.

James A. Cress
General Conference Ministerial Association Secretary

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Lawrence Geraty is the President Emeritus of La Sierra University. He grew up as a citizen of the world in a Christian missionary family who ministered in China, Burma, Hong Kong, and Lebanon. Educated in seven different countries and various states across the USA set him on a lifelong course committed to the values of diversity. Lawrence Geraty earned a PhD with distinction from Harvard University in Hebrew Bible and biblical archaeology, taking examinations in 10 languages. In his notable scholarly career, Dr. Geraty has received numerous honors, including a Fulbright Fellowship and serving as advisor on archaeology to former Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan. As well as being president of several scholarly societies, he has also served as Professor of Archaeology and History of Antiquity at Andrews Theological Seminary, President of Atlantic Union College, and more recently President and Professor of Archaeology at La Sierra University.



Marguerite Shuster is the Harold John Ockenga Professor of Preaching and Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary. She joined the School of Theology faculty in 1992 after serving as an adjunct assistant professor. Her courses include Homiletics, Systematic Theology, Making Doctrine Live, and various preaching practica. Marguerite Shuster’s published books include *The Fall and Sin: What We Have Become as Sinners* (2004), *Perspectives on Christology: Essays in Honor of Paul K. Jewett* (1991), and *Power, Pathology, Paradox: the Dynamics of Evil and Good* (1987). She also edited and completed Jewett’s *Who We Are: Our Dignity as Human* (1996) and has published many articles, sermons, chapters, and reviews. She is currently working on a long-term project on the doctrine of divine providence. Marguerite Shuster is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and served as an associate pastor for six years then a solo pastor for five years.



Roy Adams is the Associate Editor of the *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World*, serving in this position since 1988. He was born in the Caribbean, and received his education at schools in Grenada, Trinidad, Canada, and the United States. The bulk of his pastoral work was in the Ontario and Quebec provinces of Canada. After obtaining a PhD in Theology from Andrews University, he lectured at what is now the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIAS) in the Philippines. From that base, Roy Adams’ teaching and speaking appointments took him to many other Asian countries, and he continues to be a highly sought after international speaker at major clergy professional development meetings. Dr. Adams has also served as associate secretary of the Canadian Union. Roy Adams is a prolific writer and has authored several books over the years. His three latest: *Crossing Jordan* (2005); *From the Heart* (2007); and *The Wonder of Jesus* (2008).



Miroslav Volf is the Henry B. Wright Professor of Theology at Yale Divinity School, and Founder and Director of the Yale Center for Faith and Culture. A native of Croatia, Dr. Volf has forged a theology of forgiveness and non-violence in the face of the horrendous violence experienced in Croatia and Serbia in the 1990s. While he maintains active interest in many aspects of faith’s relation to culture, his primary work has focused on theological understandings of work, the church, the Trinity, violence, reconciliation, and memory. Miroslav Volf has given many prestigious lectureships and is a highly awarded author. *Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace* was selected as the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Lenten Book for 2006. *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation* received the 2002 Grawemeyer Award. He has also been featured on National Public Radio’s “Speaking of Faith” and Public Television’s “Religion and Ethics Newsweekly.”



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