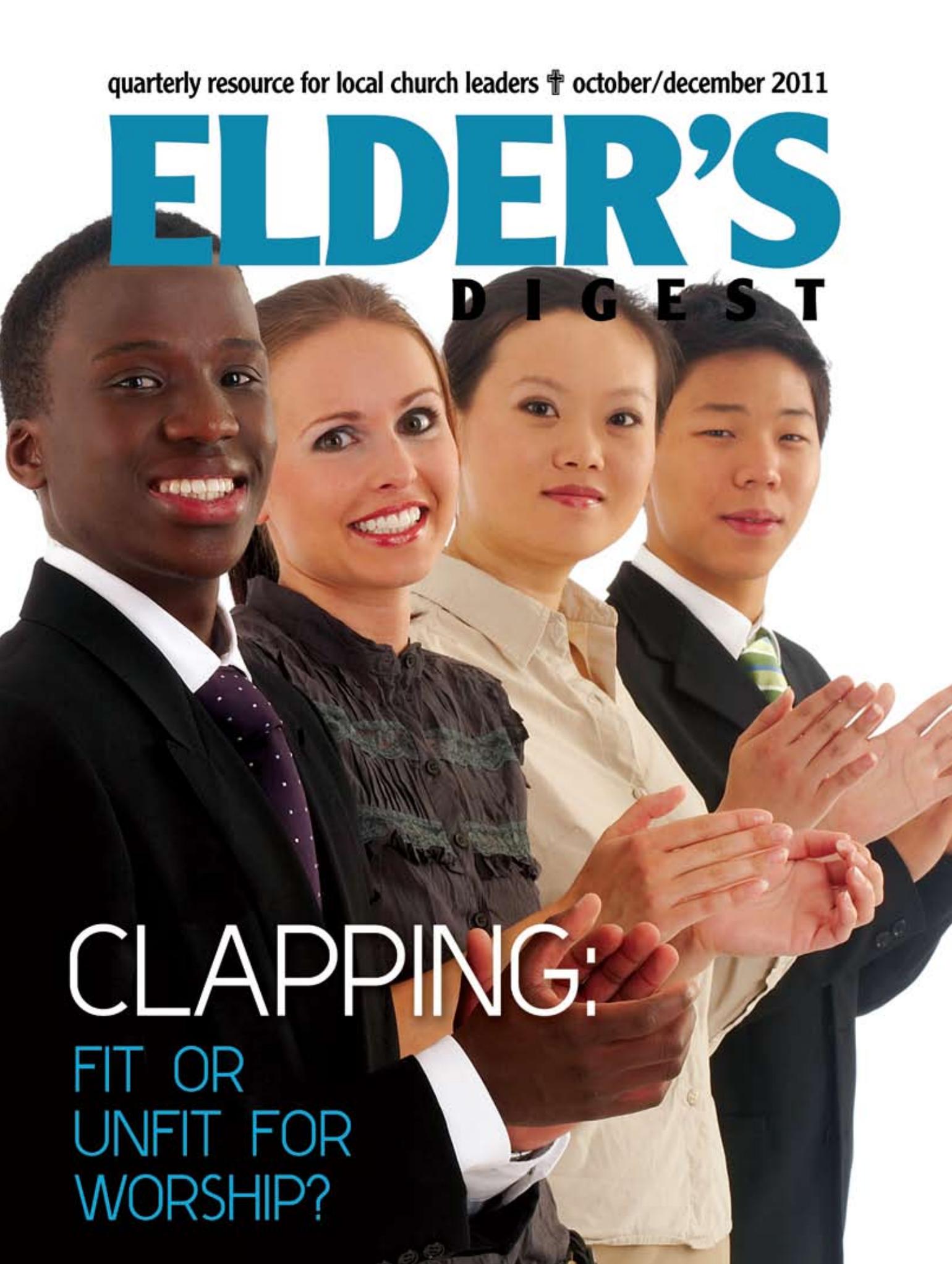


quarterly resource for local church leaders † october/december 2011

ELDER'S DIGEST

A photograph of four people of diverse ethnicities (Black, White, Asian, and Hispanic) dressed in professional attire, clapping their hands. They are arranged in a line from left to right, with the Black man in the foreground on the left and the Asian man on the right. The background is plain white.

CLAPPING:

FIT OR
UNFIT FOR
WORSHIP?

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SUPPORTING ministry

BEING A PASTOR IS NOT AN EASY TASK. SOME PASTORS SUPPORT SMALL CONGREGATIONS WHILE OTHERS CARE FOR LARGE CONGREGATIONS. ALL PASTORS NEED ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUPPORT FROM THEIR CHURCH MEMBERS AND ESPECIALLY FROM CHURCH ELDERS. AS AN ELDER, YOU MAY HAVE WANTED TO SUPPORT YOUR PASTOR BUT BEEN UNSURE OF HOW TO GO ABOUT IT. HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR PASTOR.

Pray for your pastor. Pastors and other church leaders face the most dangerous attacks from the enemy, the devil. The devil knows that to scatter the flock, he must first deal with its shepherd. That explains why most of Satan’s arrows target church leaders and pastors. It is therefore important that you, the church elder, stand in the gap and pray for your pastor’s protection. Remember that most pastors pray for their church, its members, and God’s work, but sometimes they forget to pray for themselves. That is where you come in. Remember your pastor in your daily devotions.

Visit and encourage your pastor. Take time to visit your pastor’s home, office, and Web site(s). Let your mouth speak encouragement to this humble servant of God. Pastors need to feel appreciated as they commit their lives to the work of God. Write a thank-you note for a sermon that spoke to your heart. Bring a surprise gift to the church office. Pastors who receive encouragement from their congregations appreciate this affirmation and are grateful to know that they do not labor in vain.

Run with their vision. Pastors carry the vision of the church, and they need your support. If your

pastor comes up with an idea for a new project on the church premises, embrace the vision and provide what is needed. When the project is completed, the whole church benefits, and God is exalted. Pastors should not struggle alone; church elders are there to embrace and support their pastor’s visions.

Speak well of your pastor. Whenever you open your mouth to speak about your pastor, be positive. Let people know your pastor by the good reports you give. “Do not touch my anointed ones, do my prophet no harm,” says the Lord of hosts (Ps. 105:15). Speak ill of God’s servants at your own risk. But if you speak well of these servants of God, you can be assured of blessings.

What a wonderful supporting ministry you can provide for your pastor. You can make a difference in your pastor’s work and in his or her personal life. Think about that!



Jonas Arrais
General Conference Associate Ministerial Secretary

BIBLE FACES

BRINGING THE BIBLE TO LIFE



Photo by Joel D. Springer

Dr. Dick Stenbakken's dynamic ministry career includes service as a pastor, a U.S. Army chaplain, a family therapist, the world director of Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries, and now as someone who gives first-person narrative presentations at U.S. Senate/Staff Bible studies, the Pentagon,

campmeetings, churches, and other events. He has published a book about the Centurion at the cross and the resurrection, done four DVD sets, and appeared on 25 half-hour TV programs with Shawn Boonstra.

The ministry materials he develops spring from his four Master's degrees and his Doctorate in Education. He blends these disciplines with pastoral experience to bring Bible characters to life. He has taught high school, college, and graduate courses.

Dick and his wife Ardis live in Loveland, Colorado, USA. Ardis edits the annual women's devotional book, and Dick typically does 90-100 first-person presentations per year. They have two adult children and four grandchildren.

WHEN AND WHY DID YOU START THE "BIBLE FACES" MINISTRY?

I began doing first-person presentations as a result of an assignment to prepare and present a Christmas program for Army chaplains and staff members at Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri, when I was a young Army chaplain. My directives were to provide something which would be "entertaining, spiritual, and have to do with the Nativity story." My research turned up a first-person narrative sermon by a Presbyterian pastor, Fredrick Speakman, where the Nativity story is told to Luke by the old Bethlehem innkeeper looking back at that night. After doing the presentation in costume for the group, another chaplain insisted that I do it for both of his worship services on Sunday just before the Christmas break. Although reluctant, I did both services, and immediately I saw the impact of these kinds of presentations. That started me on the track of research, costume construction, and a growing list of characters.

HOW MANY CHARACTERS HAVE YOU PLAYED? WHICH IS YOUR FAVORITE?

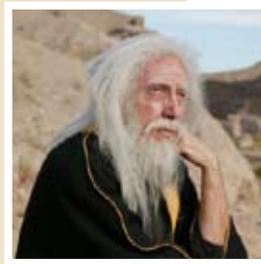
At this point I have done over 60 different charac-

ters. Most of them are biblical people, but a few historical folks are in the fold as well. Probably my signature character is the Centurion at the cross and the resurrection. I've learned so much from Roman military history that has enlightened my understanding of the New Testament in ways that are not found in commentaries. The discoveries have come from deeper historical study and the construction of three different styles of first-century Roman armor. Yes, I made the Roman armor myself and modified other items that were purchased. Because of that and because of my 24 years of active duty as a U.S. Army chaplain, I can readily identify with some of the issues raised by that character.

WHAT KIND OF AUDIENCE RESPONSES HAVE YOU RECEIVED FROM CHURCHES AND VARIOUS PLACES?

The responses have been totally amazing—from the first presentation to those young Army recruits many years ago, to the open acceptance of folks at the U.S. Senate/Staff Bible study groups where I have been privileged to do presentations (six presentations at the Senate to date).

ACES:



People most often respond with statements like, “I felt like I met someone who walked right out of the Bible! The story is more real to me now.”

In one campmeeting series, the mother of a 7-year-old boy told me that her son sat right on the front row every evening and never moved. He was riveted to the characters. The next day at home, he would essentially repeat the presentation to her (he got it!). Then, a theology professor with a Th.D. commented on the same presentations: “You put some pieces together for me that I had never connected! I am enriched. Thank you!” That’s quite a spread—a 7-year-old to a Th.D.—to be excited about a Bible presentation and Bible character and to “get it” and retain it.

Seven years ago I presented the Centurion for an Easter Son-rise service at the invitation of a very senior Roman Catholic Army chaplain on a major installation. Whenever I see him, he can go right down the story line of that presentation. He continues to invite me to new places where he is assigned. He is a real supporter and friend.

The day after one prayer breakfast (the character was Nehemiah), I met a man who had been there. He was so excited that he was jumping up and down. “I went home and read the whole book of Nehemiah for the very first time! It is a fantastic book! I learned so much!”

In a recent conversation, a young man told me, “I remember when you came to my school and shared. I was in the fourth grade, and I still remember it.” The stories stick. People remember them, retain them, and are impacted by them. That makes it worthwhile for me to continue developing and presenting characters.

HOW CAN THIS MINISTRY BENEFIT WORLDWIDE CHURCH ELDERS AND LEADERS?

Bible characters have great appeal to people because they make the Bible alive, contemporary, real, and relevant. Stories about people speak in ways that straight

theological lectures don’t, yet there is tons of theology woven into the narratives. Jesus told stories. The Old and New Testaments are replete with stories. People remember stories.

One major aspect of these kinds of presentations is that they capture interest and build bridges rather than raising tempers and burning bridges. They are a great, non-threatening way to do community outreach, especially around Easter, Christmas, and other religious or civic holiday periods. Believe me, it is much easier to get free newspaper coverage for these events than for other kinds of outreach because they are unique and have wide appeal.

The person who prepares and presents a character as a first-person narrative will need to dig deeply into the Word, into history, and into the culture of the character in order to do a credible job. That will pull the presenter into the Bible in ways that are unique and will bless the person doing the preparation. The presentation is merely the overflow of what you have learned and the insights you have gained. You become the one who is deeply blessed by your preparation. The people are then blessed by experiencing (quite different than merely hearing) the presentations.

For those who may not have the resources or time to develop their own presentations, and in response to people who have experienced them, there are several DVD sets—ministry tools—that are easy to use in local settings.

WHAT DO THE DVDS INCLUDE?

There are currently three first-person sets and one group-discussion set. The first-person sets are:

- *Faces Around the Cross*, with seven characters: John, Judas, Peter, Caiaphas, Marcellus Sylvanus (a pagan-Roman priest), Pilate, and the Centurion.
- *Faces Around the Manger*, with six characters: Herod the Great, Joseph the Carpenter, one of the Magi,



Jesse the Bethlehem innkeeper, James the Just, and a Bethlehem shepherd.

- *Miracles of the Master*, with six characters: Luke, the man born blind, Jairus, the leper of Matthew 8, Simon the Pharisee, and Malchus.

Each set has two DVDs and a booklet with one page of background on each character and another page of discussion or assignment questions for the users.

The *Armor of God* DVD is made up of eight 30-minute sessions where five panel members look at various pieces of the armor of God in Ephesians 6. The two-DVD set has over 60 pages of downloadable high-resolution photos, historical backgrounds, and discussion-guide questions for each of the various pieces of armor. Essentially it is four hours of presentations and a book in a box.

More DVDs are in the works, but they are not yet finished.

WHERE ARE THE DVDS TYPICALLY PRESENTED? CHURCH SERVICES? SMALL GROUPS?

The materials all run about 30 minutes, so they can

be used in wide and varied settings: worship services, small-group studies, men's ministry groups, vespers, youth groups, classrooms, homeschools, home Bible study, and outreach. They have also been used as introductions to evangelistic meetings. The only limits are the imaginations and ingenuity of the users. The presentations have been broadcast worldwide on TV since they fit into a 30-minute program slot.

WHAT MESSAGE/LESSONS ARE YOU TRYING TO CONVEY THROUGH YOUR MINISTRY?

My goals are to show that the stories and people of the Bible are real, relevant, current, and viable. The Bible is not a book of the dusty, irrelevant past; the Bible has immediate applicability to us today. The clothing and customs may have changed, but the "people issues" are constant, as is God and the total package of truths found in the Bible. I want people to get new insights and challenges and then dig deeper into the Word for themselves. That will develop character and their relationship with the God of the characters they have seen in these presentations.

ED

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THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE AND THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

THIS QUARTER, OUR Q&A COLUMN HAS BEEN ANSWERED BY PASTOR TED N. C. WILSON, PRESIDENT OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH.

HOW SHOULD CHURCH LEADERSHIP REACT TO OPPOSITION CONCERNING THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE AND THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY?

We must be very persistent in our defense of the Bible as the authoritative Word of God. Once people start to utilize the historical-critical type of scholarship, our beautiful understanding of the Word of God begins to disappear. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has historically used the “historical-biblical” or “grammatical” method of scriptural interpretation. It is vital that we maintain this approach when analyzing Scripture. In addition, the Spirit of Prophecy helps us to more fully understand so many of the truths in the Bible. For instance, the ninth chapter of *Patriarchs and Prophets* gives us a wonderful demonstration of how God created the earth in six literal days. When we understand the beautiful message from heaven about a loving God who created us and died for us, we will be better able to completely share this message with others without being afraid to share what we believe. We must always give a resolute answer to anyone who asks us about the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy, and the authority of Scripture. The Holy Spirit will help unite us around the world, in spite of our differing cultures and perspectives.

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT IN THESE END-TIMES TO KEEP RELIGIOUS FREEDOM A STRONG COMPONENT OF OUR CHURCH WORK?

We must be ever vigilant to maintain strong religious freedom and freedom of conscience for all people. If we fail to advocate for others, we will be denied our rights as well. Religious freedom is something provided to us by God Himself. Strong efforts should be made to maintain religious freedom so that we might have more time to share the precious three angels’ messages.

Seventh-day Adventists are called to stand for the principle of liberty of conscience for all. In keeping with our love for others, we must be ready to work on behalf of groups whose freedom of conscience is inappropriately impinged by the state. Such work may result in personal and corporate loss. This is the price we must be willing to pay in order to follow our Savior who consistently spoke for the disfavored and dispossessed. ED



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.

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CLAPPING:

FIT OR UNFIT FOR WORSHIP?

MANY PEOPLE HAVE ATTEMPTED TO RESTRICT APPLAUSE IN CHURCH SERVICES. MOST RELIGIONS, INCLUDING EARLY AND MODERN CHRISTIANITY, HAVE MADE SPACE FOR SOME SORT OF DANCING IN WORSHIP. WHILE SOME BELIEVERS FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE WHEN PEOPLE IN WORSHIP SERVICES SWAY OR CLAP IN TIME TO THE MUSIC, THE YOUNGER GENERATION WELCOMES THE PRACTICE.¹



The custom of clapping seems to walk hand-in-hand with human history and conventions. It has been proved that clapping formed part of Egyptian culture and history. According to Herodotus, Egyptians clapped their hands or used castanets and rattles during festivals in their processions² as they traveled from town to town.³ In a fresco from Tell Ahmar/Til Barsip, two of the three Assyrian dignitaries can be seen clapping their hands. According to Plutarch, the *felicitas* was a political phenomenon in which a popular audience was involved. He reports that Pompey envisioned entering the theater for its dedication while the people were clapping.⁴ At Corinth, citizens would greet Timoleon and show his preeminence by sending him on his way with shouting and clapping.⁵

The ancient Romans had a set ritual of applause for public performances, expressing degrees of approval: snapping the finger and thumb, clapping with the flat or hollow palm, or waving the flap of the toga, for which the emperor Aurelian substituted handkerchiefs (*orarium*) that he had distributed to the Roman people.⁶ In Roman theater, at the close of the play, the chief actor called out "Valete et plaudite!" and the audience, guided by an unofficial *choregus*, chanted their applause antiphonally. This was often organized and paid for.⁷ Extravagantly and falsely, according to Tacitus the historian, "it was their traditional custom to flatter any ruler with reckless applause and meaningless zeal."⁸ The context of hand-clapping was games and theater, where spectators saluted the names of their heroes.⁹

Applause (Latin *applaudere*, "to strike upon, clap") is primarily expressed by clapping or striking the palms of the hands together to show appreciation via some degree of noise for whatever is being executed. Audiences are usually expected to applaud after a performance, such as a musical concert, speech, or play. The custom of clapping is perceived as an audience's nonverbal communication that could indicate its relative appreciation of a performance; the louder and longer the noise, the stronger the crowd's approval.

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF CLAPPING

Clapping during the church worship service is forcing its way into many churches today. It is thought that clapping is an expression of religious feelings (cf. Ps. 47:1); however, clapping as the church practices it today may not resemble the biblical paradigm. In the Old Testament, four main terms express the act of clapping: *macha'*, *nakah*, *saphak*, and *taqa'*. These terms are used in connection with the Hebrew *kaf* (palm) or *yad* (hand), and they connote the act of clapping or striking something or someone. They are also used with different meaning.

The term *saphak* (clap one's hand) is combined with *kaf* in Numbers 24:10 as a sign of King Balak's strong disapproval of Balaam blessing Israel. The context seems to indicate that the clapping of the pagan king was intended to prevent the prophet's speech. Called to curse Israel, not only did Balaam bless them (Num. 24:1-9a), he also returned the curse against Moab, saying, "Blessed are

those who bless you, and cursed are those who curse you" (verse 9b, ESV). The word *saphak* is also a sign of derision or mockery. In this context, it is used in association with *shaqû* (hiss) and *yani'û* (shake the head) (Lam. 2:15; cf. Job 27:23).

The meaning of the verb *nakah* ranges from beating to killing. It could be used for someone hitting another person (Exod. 2:11, 13), striking someone on the cheek (Ps. 3:7, 8; Lam. 3:30), and to indicate clapping as a sign of the coronation of a king (2 Kings 11:12). The priest Jehoiada, the captains, and the temple guards presented their honors to Jehoshaphat by clapping, a conclusive act of his coronation and anointment. Thus, though the anointing took place in the house of the Lord (verse 4), clapping concluded the coronation ceremony.

Of all these words, the term *taqa'* appears to be the most controversial, since it appears in Psalm 47:1 when the psalmist invites all people to clap their hands and "shout to God with loud songs of joy." The context seems to be eschatological (verses 5-8), though here it may indicate an action of joy; the same term is used derisively at the downfall of Assyria (Nahum 3:19). In the book of Proverbs, the word indicates the conclusion of a legal action securing a pledge with a third party in a treaty (Prov. 6:1; 11:15; 17:18; 22:26; cf. Job 17:3).

In Psalm 98:8, natural elements are called to clap their hands before the Lord's coming for judgment. The term used is *mâcha* (to clap the hands). The rushing river and the trees of the field clap the *kaf* and *yad* respectively in signs of joy when the prophet uses a personification of the trees (Is 55:12). It is "the rushing rivers recently filled from the thunderstorm which sounds like a grand audience clapping hands, and the rain-drenched mountains sing for joy" (98:8). As in Psalm 29, this storm is a theophany of the Lord, "who comes to judge the earth" (96:13; 98:9).¹⁰ When it is done as sign of joy or jubilation because of God's promises and everlasting deliverance, it is used with the word *shâmach* (joy). Finally *mâcha* is used as a sarcasm toward the Ammonites after they rejoiced over the fate of Israel by clapping their hands to indicate their scorn of the land of God's people and His sanctuary (Ezek 25:6). It is coupled with the stamping of feet for merriment.

As in Josephus, applauding in the New Testament was equal to crying out loudly (*epiphôneô*).¹¹ Later on, with the propagation of Christianity, customs of the theater were gradually adopted by the churches. Eusebius says that Paul of Samosata encouraged the congregation to applaud his preaching by waving linen cloths (*othonais*; οθωναίς), and those who did not do so were threatened.¹²

APPLAUSE/CLAPPING AND THE ADVENTIST PIONEERS

Historically, early Adventists understood that clapping entered in the early church during a period of accommodation with pagan cultures in an effort to "win" them. Thus, E. J. Waggoner placed the origin of this observance during the time of Chrysostom, Patriarchate of Constantinople, in

A.D. 398–404. Chrysostom opposed the custom of clapping and found it a custom fitted for the world but not for the church: “Chrysostom mourns over the theatrical customs, such as loud clapping in applause, which the Christians at Antioch and Constantinople brought with them into the church.”¹³

John, Bishop of Rome in the fourth century, was also skeptical when he heard loud clapping during his homily. He rebuked it and said to the people, “The apostles, even Christ Himself delivering the Sermon on the Mount, have been listened to without interruption. Much better than noisy applause, the proper place for which was the theater or the public baths, was the secret approbation of the hearts as one reflects . . . on the words spoken.”¹⁴

Ellen G. White asserted that clapping was associated with the holiness movement at a Methodist camp-meeting at Burton. “Some things at this camp-meeting perplexed me exceedingly. I could not understand the exercises of many persons during the conference meetings at the stand and in the tents. They shouted at the top of their voices, clapped their hands, and appeared greatly excited.”¹⁵ Mrs. White believed that applause was acceptable for Jesus’ coming but not for worship. She warned about its dangers as “the food of world” and one of “the iniquitous practices of the world.”¹⁶ In fact, she said that “popular applause” is a “low standard of right and wrong” and leads people to seek men’s approval, where no man is safe, rather than the commendation of God.¹⁷ In addition, she portrayed applause as having the same stimulating powers as wine and identified it as a “snare.”¹⁸ Finally, applause is contrary to the Spirit of Jesus, for “Jesus did not seek the admiration or the applause of men.”¹⁹

CONCLUSION

Theologically, applause has no real base in biblical tradition; it seems that churches that introduce this custom into worship are just following the entertainment industry or imitating the religious services of charismatic movements and churches. Thus, though acceptable by worldly standards, applause during worship is neither biblically appropriate nor approved by church pioneers. There is no evidence that clapping was a part of worship. For the Old Testament, clapping was social and cultural, not a religious practice. What we have in the churches today is nothing but a borrowed Greek and Roman “spectacle” heritage influenced by contemporary cultural norms. Manuel Angel Rodriguez, from the Biblical Research Institute, says, “I suspect that we incorporated clapping into our services from our cultural environment. Clapping is usually associated with the entertainment industry but has become very popular in evangelical televised religious services. Perhaps we copied it from them.”²⁰

In worship, applause may steal God’s approval from worshipers and become a snare for their spiritual lives as they continue to seek men’s approval rather than seeking a personal commitment to God. If clapping is made to express welcome, enjoyment, and approval (as we see in

the intense or prolonged applause in the worship service as it is done with the secular “applause meter” to select winners of a competition), the church does not need to follow the world in that matter. The word “amen” (from *âmen*) is generally used when one regards something as trustworthy (Exod. 4:8; 1 Kings 10:7; Isa. 53:1; Ps. 106:24) or proved to be firm according to God’s will (Gen. 42:20; 1 Kings 8:26). As with *pisteuô*, *âmen* would refer to “to the relationship between reality and the essence of the subject in question.”²¹



¹ J. Stephen Lang, *1,001 Things You Always Wanted to Know About the Holy Spirit* (Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers, 1999), 37.

² In antiquity, wooden or hand-shaped rattles served to give the rhythm when clapped together like castanets. An Assyrian relief shows a few musicians; some play the harp while others clap their hands. *1000 Bible Images* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2009). See also, eight women and eight priests are depicted clapping their hands in measure. James B. Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1958), 314, 374, 470.

³ Herodotus, *Historiae* 2. 60.1.

⁴ Plutarch, *Pompeius* 46; at 68 (cf. Nicolaus of Damascus, *Caes.* 42); see, 169; Millar, Fergus “Popular Politics in the Late Republic,” in *Leaders and Masses in the Roman World: Studies in Honor of Zvi Yavetz*, eds. J. Malkin and Z. W. Rubinson (Leiden: n.p., 1995), 106.

⁵ Plutarch, *Timoleon*, 38.

⁶ George Long, “*Ora’ruim*,” *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, 2nd ed., imp. and enl., (Boston: Little-Brown, 1870), 843.

⁷ Böttiger, *Über das Applaudieren im Theater bei den Alten*, Leipzig, 1822.

⁸ Tacitus, *Historiae* 1.32, 35, 90; 2.90 (Moore, LCL).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.55, 91.

¹⁰ Mark D. Futato, “*rô’m*,” *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, Willem A. VanGemeren, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 3.

¹¹ Acts 12:22; 21:34; 22:24; Luke 23:21; cf. Josephus, *Antiquities* 4.66; 6.22, 194; 7.352; 10.266 (Thackeray, LCL).

¹² Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 30.7.

¹³ E. J. Waggoner, *Sunday: The Origin of Its Observance in the Christian Church* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1891), 104.

¹⁴ J.N.D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom: Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1995), 130, 131. See in *Gen. Sermo* 2.1 (PG 54.586); in *Act. Hom* 30.4 (PG 60.266-7). Cf. J.P. Migne, ed., *Patrologia graeca*, 162 vols. (Paris, 1857–1886).

¹⁵ Ellen G. White, *Signs of Times*, January 20, 1876, par. 14. In addition, James White, *Life Incidents* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1868), 157, mentions an episode with the Holiness Movement in New Hampshire where “noise of shouting and clapping of hands” took place.

¹⁶ Ellen G. White, *The Southern Work* (Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1966), 17.

¹⁷ Ellen G. White, *Patriarch and Prophets* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), 650.

¹⁸ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 3:185, 186; *Special Testimony to Ministers and Workers*, No. 4, 1895, 25.

¹⁹ Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1942), 197.

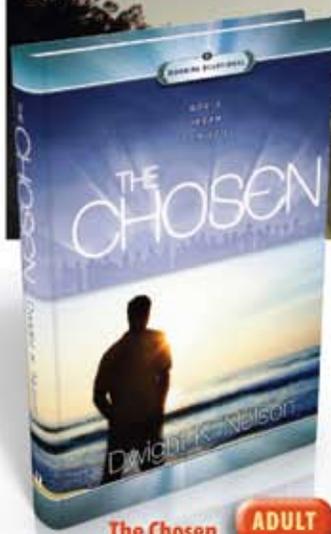
²⁰ See Angel M. Rodriguez, “Clapping in Church,” *Adventist Review*, May 1997; available on the Biblical Research Institute website: <http://biblicalresearch.gc.adventist.org/documents/clapping.htm>.

²¹ H. Wildberger, “*âmen*,” *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 1:136.

Patrick Etouhé Anani is studying for his Ph.D. at AIAS (Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies), Philippines.

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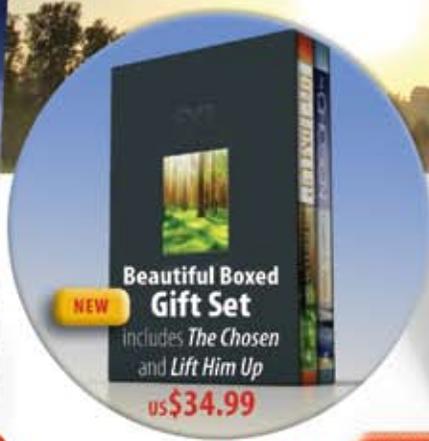


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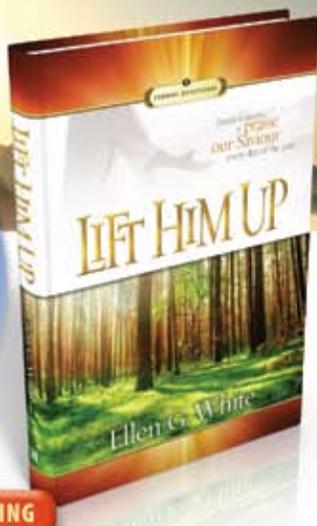


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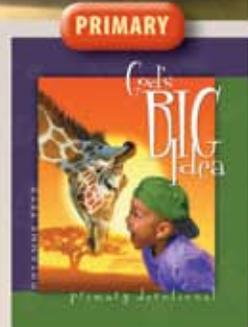


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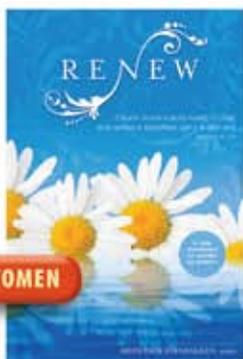


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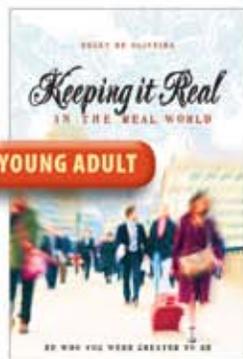
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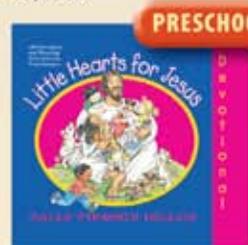


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Review & Herald



SOMETHING IS MISSING IN ALL THE CHURCHES

A young lady sitting next to me at a lunch counter abruptly turned to me and very earnestly said, “Pardon me, sir. What do you think about Jesus Christ?” She was plain-looking—nothing remarkable about her appearance—yet somehow I knew I had just been asked the most important question of my life! I don’t recall my answer; I’m sure it was nothing very encouraging, but I will never forget those ten words. After finishing her lunch, she disappeared into the crowd, and I never saw her again. She walked away, probably thinking she had failed. I hope not, because the Lord used the witness of an ordinary person to plant a powerful seed in the mind of a 28-year-old agnostic whose life had become as useless as a rotten pumpkin on the day after Halloween. She planted. Others watered. God gave the increase. A few months later, I asked God to take control of my life. Hallelujah!

Ever since that day in 1952, I’ve had a strong passion to share my faith with everyone I meet and to motivate other Christians to be witnesses for the Lord. I have been trying to understand why, according to Barna Research studies (www.barna.org), less than 5 percent of Christians ever share their faith in our wonderful Savior. I believe this statistic holds true in all churches.

My walk with the Lord has included membership in 12 churches altogether, including Methodist, Baptist, Bible, and other denominations, until I finally arrived at a Seventh-day Adventist church about three years ago. In all 12 churches, there are precious, born-again Christians who love the Lord, study His Word, and try

to live in a way that is pleasing to God. Yet in all these churches, something is missing.

Although the Adventists do a great job of sending missionaries to foreign countries, I am sorry to say that when it comes to personal witnessing in their own communities, Adventists are probably no better than any other denomination. What is missing in all churches today?

I did not know the answer until I became an elder in my church in July 2010 and was given an opportunity to preach at the 11 a.m. worship service. As a member of the Gideons (and to promote my book, *Adventures of a Witness for Jesus*), I had often spoken in churches. But to preach at the 11 a.m. service—wow, that was big-time for me! I cried out to the Lord to give me the message that He wanted me to preach. Here is what He showed me:

People who attend church regularly have heard many motivational messages about being witnesses for Jesus. They know about the “Great Commission.” They know that the first thing Jesus said to His disciples was “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19). They have probably heard a few messages from 2 Corinthians 5:20 about being an ambassador for Christ. And perhaps some have been inspired by the message of Daniel 12:2, 3: “to lead many to righteousness . . . and shine like the stars forever and ever.” Yet only a small percentage (3 to 5 percent) ever share their faith. What a tragedy! How can that be? Don’t born-again Christians have the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, etc.? Yet something is missing!

Now with the help of the Internet, television, public schools, apostate churches, the entertainment industry, drug dealers, and pornographers, the great deceiver and father of lies is on a rampage. How he enjoys leading millions of precious souls down that wide road that leads to destruction—especially our teenagers, whose three main causes of death are automobile accidents, homicide, and suicide. Why can't we stop this



And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” Matthew 24:14

diabolical killer or at least slow him down? We can!

The Bible has the answer. First, we need to expose the devil's strategy. He knows the prophecy in Matthew 24:14: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." The "end" is good news for us, but, as Satan is well-aware, the end of this world is only the beginning of eternal torment for him. Therefore, he tries to postpone his fate. How? He will do everything in his power to stop us from spreading the gospel! Satan's best weapon is to contaminate us with the sin he is famous for: pride, the sin that is most difficult to recognize in ourselves. But, you say, what has pride got to do with our failure to testify for Jesus? It's a subtle thing, but if we had no pride, would we fear rejection? Would we fear being mocked? Would we fear being hated and scorned for God's sake? Would we fear anything? No! Does that sound too extreme? Consider what Paul said in Galatians 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

Think what could happen if 95 percent of the Christians who seldom speak the name of Jesus in the presence of unbelievers suddenly began to believe His words in John 14:12: "Verily, verily I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father." Wait a minute! What is Jesus saying? Greater works than He did? Greater than healing 10 lepers just by speaking a few words? Greater than calling Lazarus to come out of the grave? Greater than turning 120 gallons of water into wine? Yes!

So what is the greater work? How about the first thing Jesus said to His disciples: "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." And remember what He said right before He returned to heaven: "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come and you shall be witnesses unto me" (Acts 1:8).

So what is missing?

Scripture has the answer. Listen to Paul's prayer in Ephesians 6:19, 20: "Pray for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth *boldly*, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak *boldly*, as I ought to speak" (emphasis added). And consider Acts 4:31, "And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken and they were all filled

with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with *boldness*" (emphasis added). And again in Acts 13:46, "Paul and Barnabas spoke out *boldly* and said, 'It was necessary that the word of God was spoken to you first . . .'" (emphasis added). And I love Proverbs 28:1: "The wicked flee when no man pursues, but the righteous are *bold* as a lion" (emphasis added).

According to Galatians 5:22, boldness is not one of the fruits of the Spirit. Holy boldness comes only with power from the Holy Spirit, and that comes only with prayer. Even the apostle Paul had to pray for boldness.

Witnessing is God's idea; therefore, He will give you all the help you need to do it. First of all, we need to rebuke Satan in the name of Jesus. Then, realizing that the natural man cannot understand spiritual things, pray that God will prepare the hearts of those with whom we intend to share the incredible love of Jesus. And pray that God will allow us to be clean vessels to be used by the Holy Spirit. ED

G. Warren Sears is an elder at the Bell Branch Seventh-day Adventist Church in Gambrills, Maryland, USA.

Scripture references are taken from the King James Version.

THANK YOU



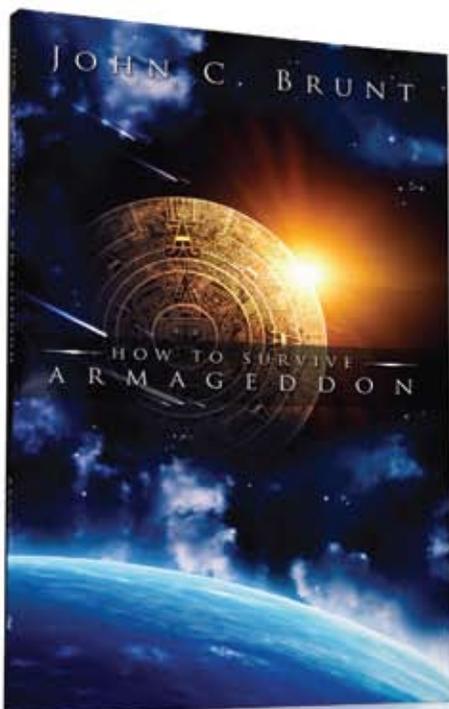
RICARDO BACCHUS

The General Conference Ministerial Association team would like to express their appreciation and gratitude for Ricardo Bacchus' outstanding work during the past three years as Production Assistant of *Elder's Digest* magazine. He has been invited to work as Editorial Assistant for *Collegiate Quarterly Bible-Study Guide*. May God continue to bless his ministry in this new position.

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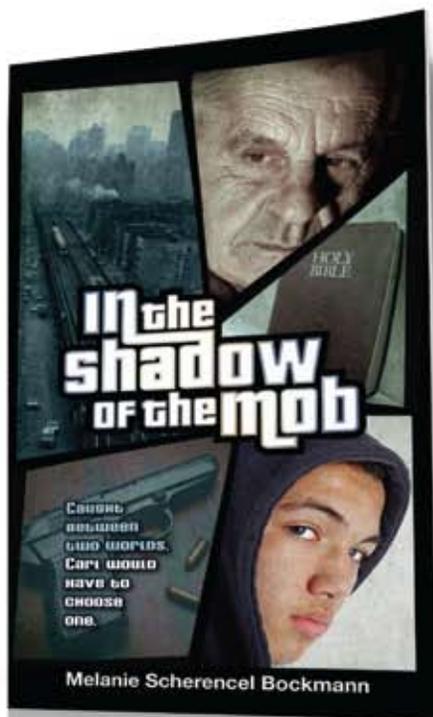
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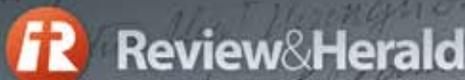
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THE FAST THAT GOD HONORS

Isaiah 58:1-9

When you hear that someone is fasting or when a friend urges you to practice fasting, what do you think? In today's Bible verses, how does God define a true fast, one that genuinely honors Him? And what is a counterfeit fast?

I. FASTING THAT DOES NOT PLEASE GOD

In Isaiah 58, the prophet is the mouthpiece of God, explaining what God thinks about ostentatious religious displays by the people of Judah. Their show of religiosity is far from true worship. They have the external form without genuine worship. God accuses them of rebellion.

A. Objectives

Why rebellion? What is the basis of this indictment? Let's consider the objectives of those who observe fasts that are displeasing to God.

1. *To deceive God.* The first objective of those who put on a great show of fasting is to deceive God. But God makes it clear that He is not fooled by their charade. Their fast means nothing because He sees their hearts.

2. *To serve self.* The second purpose of this pompous display was to serve self. Isaiah records the complaints of those who had "piously and earnestly" fasted before the Lord. They complain that God hasn't taken notice of their actions. "Look, God, we've done what You required. What more do You want? Why are You ignoring us?"

3. *To make money.* Their third concern is profit. "Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please . . ." Some note that this suggests business as usual. Rather than being a day for spiritual growth, the fasting day was treated as an ordinary workday. The central focus was money. The act of fasting had no real impact on their lives; it was merely an external ritual devoid of significance.

B. Results

We've noted the objectives of counterfeit fasting. Now consider the results of such a fast:

1. *Exploitation of workers.* The first result is the exploitation of workers. The purpose of a true fast is to draw a person to God and to strengthen that person's concern for others. Those whose fast was merely a display to impress others felt no sympathy for workers who were not treated fairly. Are any of us today putting profits ahead of fair treatment?

2. *Quarrelling and strife.* Rather than growing closer in love and concern when they celebrated special fast days, the people quarreled and argued. Their outward display

of piety masked a mean, hard, and critical spirit.

3. *External humility.* Those whose way of fasting displeased God made a great show of humility, but it was merely a facade. They viewed their hunger and their pretense of humility as ends in themselves rather than as a means of spiritual growth.

4. *Insincere mourning.* The final aspect of bogus fasting is insincere mourning, a display without genuine repentance. Sitting in sackcloth and ashes, which was intended to symbolize self-abasement and true repentance before God, had become a mockery.

II. THE TRUE FAST

Now we have looked at the counterfeit fast, but how does God define a true fast? What does God see as the purpose? What will we become as a result of genuine fasting?

A. *We will exercise justice.* The first objective of true fasting is to become just and fair. Those who practiced an insincere fast exploited their workers. But a true fast produces sympathy and self-denying love, a desire to ensure justice for everyone, especially the weak and powerless. We will work toward this ideal.

B. *We will set the oppressed free.* The second act of justice is to set the oppressed free. The word "oppressed" means to be unjustly or forcibly held down. Genuine fasting and truly humbling ourselves before God will cause us to grow in His love, valuing every person and working to end injustice.

C. *We will share food.* Next God tells us clearly to share our food with the hungry. It is not enough to read about the poverty around us; we are to act and to personally share with those in need. If our fasting and repentance are genuine, we will be stewards of all God has given us, spending to help others rather than to impress them.

D. *We will provide shelter.* We are also told to provide shelter for the homeless. This doesn't just mean paying for a hotel room, setting up a tent in the backyard, or calling a relief agency to take the needy person in. God asks us to make room in our homes and make the needy feel welcome. God has always met us on a personal level, and He expects the same of His children.

E. *We will clothe the naked.* The final way to show true godliness is to clothe the naked. Granted, we may never see someone with no clothes. But we often hear about people who have lost everything through fires, floods, earthquakes, or other catastrophes. We may encounter people on a daily basis who go without basic necessities. What recent disaster has affected your country, province, or city? What can you do to help?

F. *Results.* Our passage closes by describing the results of true fasting. Verses 8 and 9 begin with the word "then." The blessings are dependent upon true fasting. For the people of Judah, this meant that they were to exercise justice and provide relief to the poor and needy. Is the message any different for us today?

III. WHAT ARE THE RESULTS OF TRUE FASTING?

A. *God's love will shine.* First, the love of God will shine through us. His love is light and warmth to those who receive it. If you want to know the love of God in full measure, practice true fasting. If you want to reveal God's love to others, practice true fasting.

B. *Complete restoration.* The second result is complete restoration of your body, your mind, and your spirit. Here the word "healing" indicates a recovery from sickness unto death. When we are preoccupied with our own pleasures and ignoring the needs in our own communities, we are infected with the disease of selfishness that will lead to eternal death. But by serving others, we will experience spiritual health.

C. *Enveloped by the presence of God.* True fasting will give us a sense of being enveloped by the presence of God. Isaiah portrays an army whose leader and rear guard is God Himself. An army surrounded by God—what a comforting picture!

D. *Prayers will be answered.* Instead of complaining that God has not rewarded our counterfeit fasts, we have the assurance that He will hear and answer. "You will cry for help, and he will say: 'Here am I.'" God is not distant; He is right beside us, giving aid and comfort and longing to open our eyes to what it truly means to worship Him.

CONCLUSION

Isaiah 58:1-9 compares a fast that is displeasing to God to the true fast He requires. Does this mean that true fasting involves abstaining from food? No. Going without food can help us focus our attention on God, but fasting is not an end in itself. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer points out, fasting "has only one purpose—to make the disciples more ready and cheerful to accomplish those things which God would have done."

Our challenge is to experience the true fast as God has defined it. Then we will become a blessing. We will be moved to action on behalf of others because of our deep love for God. His love will shine through us.



General Conference Ministerial Association

THE SABBATH IN CONGREGATIONAL WORSHIP

Luke 4:16

It was Jesus' custom or habit to be in church on the Sabbath. As the Creator and Keeper of all things, He could not abandon something He Himself created, sanctified, blessed, and left as an example for all humanity.

As human beings, we were created to worship God. In our innermost being, we long for what is eternal and divine. The Creator wants to fill our lives with real joy and happiness, especially when we are united in an Adventist congregation.

- The Sabbath is a day of praise and worship toward our Creator God.
- On the Sabbath, congregational worship is just a sample of what our worship in heaven and in the New Earth will be like.
- Jesus worshiped God on the Sabbath day (Luke 4:16).
- The apostles also worshiped God on the Sabbath (Acts 17:2).
- The redeemed will worship God each Sabbath for all eternity (Isa. 66:22, 23).

I. CONGREGATIONAL WORSHIP AND THE SABBATH

Every week, our heavenly Father gives us the privilege of resting from our daily routine to join together with other believers and worship Him. In congregational worship, we feel delight in worshipping God, receiving His holy grace in our lives, and enjoying His unlimited love. "The Lord draws very nigh to His people on the day that He has blessed and sanctified."¹ "That specified portion of time, set apart by God Himself for religious worship, continues as sacred today as when first hallowed by our Creator."²

II. OUR PARTICIPATION IN THE SABBATH WORSHIP

The Sabbath is a priceless gift that God gave to mankind. With this gift, He has given us the opportunity to worship Him in His church.

A. We should remember that music is the most subtle of the arts; it has more power for good and for evil than any other agent. Martin Luther said, "Music is the art of the prophets; the only one like theology which can soothe the troubles of the soul and put Satan in flight."

B. God surely deserves the best praise in Sabbath congregational worship. "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive

glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created" (Rev. 4:11). We did not come into existence by chance. We exist because a God of love created us. He gave us the wonderful gift of life. That is why He is worthy of our deepest and most solemn praise during Sabbath worship.

C. When we worship God on the biblical Sabbath, we are openly declaring that we remember His commandment: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exod. 20:8). Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord declares unlimited blessings for those who keep the Sabbath (Isa. 56:2).

III. THE CONGREGATION IN ETERNITY

The redeemed will worship the Lord every Sabbath throughout eternity (Isa. 66:22, 23). In God's eternal kingdom, we will find true and complete rest while we worship Him on His blessed day. Through the centuries and millennia of eternity, the Sabbath will remain a constant sign of God the Creator and His redeeming powers. The Sabbath will be a symbol of His eternal love and desire to forever make the redeemed happy.

Seventh-day Adventists recognize God as Creator and as the only One who deserves our worship. Ellen G. White says, "The sacred observance of God's holy day would have led the minds of men to their Creator. The things of nature would have brought Him to their remembrance, and they would have borne witness to His power and His love. The Sabbath of the fourth commandment is the seal of the living God. It points to God as the Creator, and is the sign of His rightful authority over the beings He has made."³ We are reminded of this fact every week; when we go to church, it is to praise our Creator and Redeemer.

CONCLUSION

Three men were working at a construction site. A gentleman passed by and asked all three men the same question: "What are you doing?" The first man answered, "I'm breaking stone." The second one said, "I'm making a living." The third man, smiling with satisfaction, declared, "I'm building a cathedral for God."

A. Each congregation should be a

cathedral, an altar to worship God. Communing, leaning on one another, growing together in faith—this was God's intention for the church family. During Sabbath worship, we hear the voice of God speaking to our hearts through the message and the messenger. We talk to God through our prayers, and we worship Him with our voices, tithes, and offerings.

B. The practice of worshipping God on Sabbath involves the entire being, which corresponds to the use of the mind and body, in emotional expressions and in attitudes of reverence, acceptance, and participation. We need to learn to "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (1 Cor. 16:29).

C. In Revelation 14:6, 7, there is an invitation to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people to worship God the Creator. For years Adventists have announced that this praise consists of the true worship of God on the Sabbath, the day He sanctified.

Today, millions of people around the world worship God on Sabbath. Throughout eternity, God's people will sing, "Far from all care we hail the Sabbath morning; o'er waving fields and from the distant sea swell notes of praise in harmony resounding as all creation turns her heart to Thee." 

¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, 137.

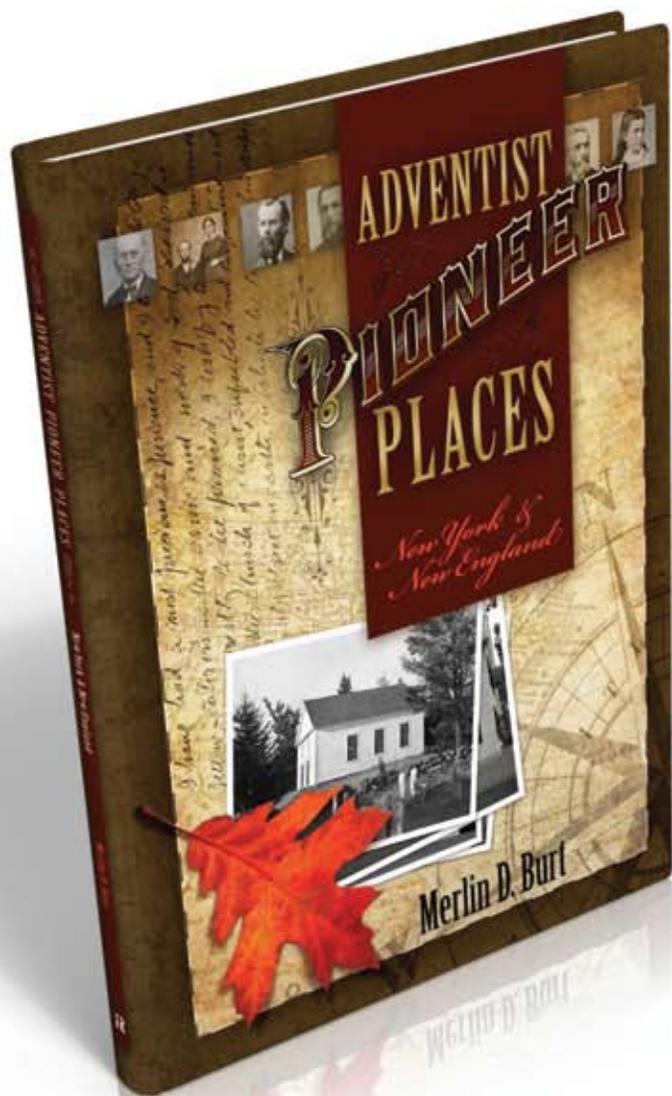
² ———, *Counsels on Stewardship*, 66.

³ *Signs of the Times*, November 1, 1899, par. 10.

Davi Tavares is chairman of the School of Theology of North Brazil.

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Review & Herald

TEACHING BY EXAMPLE:

BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES FOR CHURCH ELDERS

WITHIN THE STORY OF ELISHA AND THE FLOATING AXE HEAD ARE SEVEN TIMELESS PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE MENTORING ACROSS THE GENERATIONS.

Imagine that the local conference/mission president asks you to start a lay-training program. This is to be a live-in program that lasts for a few months, but more people participate than expected. The meeting room is cramped, and the participants start talking among themselves. What will they do? Complain? Accept the situation as unchangeable? Do something else?

In a few short verses (2 Kings 6:1-7), a lay-training leader models kingdom principles in everyday life. The next generation is impacted not by preaching but by watching how a leader handles challenging situations. They see a leader who is committed to a caring, supportive relationship with his students. The leader himself is humble, teachable, and approachable, and his students feel comfortable enough to share their concerns and ideas with him.

"At a time of widespread corruption from the surrounding nations and the breakdown of positive educative influences at home, the schools of the prophets were established to serve as a barrier against the spreading corruption, to provide for the mental and spiritual welfare of the youth, and to promote prosperity of the nation by qualifying young people to act in the fear of God as leaders and counsellors."¹

At this school of the prophets, individual thinking was valued, and problem-solving was encouraged. The young men had a solution to the problem of overcrowding: a cooperative plan to which each would contribute his own time and energies. The students were comfortable enough to approach the leader and make suggestions, and the perceptive leader was wise enough to listen.

Although he was the CEO of the institution, Elisha was seen as accessible and respectful of new ideas and suggestions. He was a good listener and was able to take

advice from his subordinates. The students' plan was sound, and the prophet gave them his blessing. But the students wanted more than their teacher's permission; they wanted his presence. So they pleaded, "Won't you please come with your servants?" (2 Kings 6:3, NIV).

Well-mentored students like to have their teacher with them because there is so much to learn from the teacher's approach to life, God, and people. And because effective mentors enjoy the company of their students and seize every teachable moment, Elisha agreed to accompany them. He could have enjoyed a well-earned day off while his students were away chopping trees. But this leader revealed his greatness by his willingness to serve, choosing to work *with* his students, to get his hands calloused and his back bent.

When tragedy struck and the borrowed axe head sank in the murky water, the students again approached their teacher/mentor/prophet. Elisha's response in 2 Kings 6:6, 7 is both impressive and efficient, concentrating on the solution ("Where did it fall?") rather than investigating the problem ("Why did you borrow the axe, and why didn't you check the axe head?"). In describing the sequence of events, Elisha was referred to as "the man of God," perhaps because his methodologies mirrored God's. When God gets involved with problem-solving, His focus is forward-looking; He looks to the future potential rather than concentrating on the past and its failures. Notice that God's solutions often include readily-available resources ("Cut a stick"), and God often includes the troubled ones as part of the solution ("Lift it out," Elisha said, and the man reached out his hand and took it).

The exciting part of the story is not the floating axe head, miraculous though it is, but rather the ebb and flow of teachable moments between teacher and students. We see:

- A good relationship where the opinions and ideas of both parties are respected and valued
- An elder who is not threatened by bright ideas from the younger generation
- A leader who is willing to join his students in physical labor
- A mentor whose personal presence is valued by his students
- A dependable and supportive person who is both available and approachable in difficult times
- A problem-solver who concentrates on the solution, not on the causes
- A leader who seeks to empower those in his sphere of influence even in times of crisis

And the underlying secret for this success story? A double portion of God's spirit (2 Kings 2:9) to guide, direct, motivate, teach, enrich, and enable. Research shows that for young people to maintain their faith, three factors are of critical importance: (1) an ongoing, caring, mentoring-type relationship with (2) someone with a shared worldview (3) in the context of community.² But there is more. A feeling of connectedness at school and at home are key factors for student success,³ and the incidence of at-risk behaviors in young people greatly diminishes when there are significant adults who take a personal interest in their lives (see sidebar).⁴

Adventist young people are looking to pastors and church leaders to model lives lived in relationship with God.⁵ A study of 13,000 Adventist youth in North America revealed that they want a deeper personal relationship with God and feel that undue importance is placed on the peripherals of religion.⁶ On the basis of these findings, Roger Dudley makes three recommendations to church leaders which directly relate to the issue of spiritual nurture.⁷ Pastors and church leaders need to:

1. Consistently model lives lived in relationship with God
2. Preach and teach that religion is basically a matter of relationships with God and fellow humans, not a system of beliefs or a code of behavior
3. Give new emphasis to practices that make a rich devotional life

When young people were presented with a list of topics and asked how interested they would be in learning more about each one either at school or in church, the topic "gaining a deeper relationship with God" attracted the highest interest, with figures of 74 percent for the school setting and 77 percent for church.⁸ Young people want to learn more about nurturing their spiritual lives, and they are looking to pastors and elders to show them how.

Becoming significant to a young person has the potential of becoming a miracle story with far broader results than merely causing an iron axe head to float. 

¹ Ellen G. White, *Education*, 46.

² Steve Garber, *The Fabric of Faithfulness* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007).

³ Gary L. Hopkins and Tim Gillespie, "Connectedness: The Key to Student Success," in *Journal of Adventist Education*, vol. 65:3, 31-33.

⁴ Jonathan Duffy and Gary D. Hopkins.

⁵ Roger L. Dudley and V. Bailey Gillespie, *Valuegenesis: Faith in the Balance* (Riverside, CA: La Sierra University Press, 1992), 270-272.

⁶ Jimmy Kijai, "A Synopsis of the Valuegenesis Study of Faith Maturity and Denominational Commitment," in *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 2, No.1 (1993), 81-84.

⁷ Dudley and Gillespie, *Valuegenesis*, 270-272.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 23, 24.

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NOTE TO ELDERS

You may want to use this passage as a small-group teaching activity for a group of church leaders/officers who would like to explore together some biblical principles on mentoring youth. Possible answers have been put in italics, but these are not the only possible answers; they are just examples.

Read 2 Kings 6:1-7. Then read each verse carefully, identifying the characteristics of this faith-building discipler and mentor.

Verse 1: Not every leader likes to be told when there is a problem. What sort of a leader encourages people to share their thoughts?

Humble, teachable, approachable, doesn't believe that he or she has all the answers.

Verse 2: What kind of a leader allows other people to suggest solutions to problems?

Someone who is open, respectful of other people's views, willing to learn from others, and accepting of other people's ideas.

Verse 3: Why do you think the students begged Elisha to accompany them?

They enjoyed his company; he was fun to be around; they wanted to learn as much as they could from him.

Verse 4: Why do you think Elisha chose to go with his students when he could have had a day off from school while they went by themselves?

He wanted to make the most of every teachable moment and was happy to work with his students; he was not afraid of hard work.

Verse 5: Why do you think the student turned to his leader when he was in trouble?

His leader was approachable and could be trusted in difficult circumstances.

Verse 6: How did the man of God respond to the problem?

He focused not on the cause of the problem but on the solution.

Verse 7: Why didn't the prophet provide the entire solution by himself?

He was an empowering leader who wanted the student to learn and grow from this experience.

Worship OF OUR GOD

There is much debate and discussion among various Christian denominations concerning music during the worship service. If what and how we sing or play is a matter of taste, then it is subjective and there is no room for discussion; everybody is entitled to their own taste.

But the way we worship God is not a matter of personal taste; thus, worship should not be planned according to our own preferences. According to the Bible, God Himself has given instructions to His children about the manner in which He desires to be worshiped. Those instructions should be the basis for our divine ceremonies. This was true for ancient Israel, and this

is what the apostle John saw as he looked into the heavenly realms. Was there to be a change between these time periods? Isn't there an acceptable way to express our reverence to God? God does not change. He expects to be honored and worshiped in the same way as He was honored and worshiped in the past and as He will be worshiped in the new earth as well.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE LEADERS

Church leaders have always been responsible for planning the order of the divine worship service. God gave the following instructions to Moses: "Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they

may teach their children" (Deut. 4:10). And Moses commanded the children of Israel never to forget these words.

The leaders were to consecrate and present God's people before the Lord as well as to deliver God's message to them. Unfortunately, today we can no longer stand before the presence of the Lord. Israel had that opportunity, although they were so overcome with fear that they preferred hearing Moses.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, 'Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day: for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai.' And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount" (Exod. 19:10, 11, 17). To come into the presence of God, we must "wash our clothes"; that is, we need to be cleansed. God accepts us as we are, but in His presence there is no sin.

THE TASK OF THE LEVITES

In order for the leaders to fulfill their responsibilities, they needed helpers to carry out the well-organized system of services. This, too, was done according to God's design as He appointed the Levites for this office. Their task was organized into three divisions: the priests, the gatekeepers, and the musicians. The temple service or worship centered on these three divisions. Thus, the Levites helped the leaders to consecrate God's people and present them before the Lord. David gave the following detailed instructions: "For by the last words of David the Levites were numbered from twenty years old and above: Because their office was to wait on the sons of Aaron for the service of the house of the Lord, in the courts, and in the chambers, and in the purifying of all holy things, and the work of the service of the house of God . . . to stand every morning to thank and praise the Lord, and likewise at even; and to offer all burnt sacrifices unto the Lord in the Sabbaths, in the new moons, and on the set feasts, by number, according to the order commended unto them, continually before the Lord; and that they should keep the charge



of the tabernacle of the congregation, the charge of the holy place, and the charge of the sons of Aaron their brethren, in the service of the house of the Lord" (1 Chron. 23:27, 28, 30-32).

GOD'S CALL FOR SERVICE

When King Hezekiah wanted to restore the forgotten order of worship and temple ministry, he encouraged the Levites with these words: "My sons, be not now negligent: for the Lord hath chosen you to stand before him, to serve him, and that ye should minister unto him, and burn incense" (2 Chron. 29:11). But before that, he pointed out an important step: "And said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place" (2 Chron. 29:5).

THE ORDER OF WORSHIP

"And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David, king of Israel. And the entire congregation worshiped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished. And when they

made an end of offering, the king and all that were present with him bowed themselves, and worshiped" (2 Chron. 29:26-29).

These verses show us that the worship service is not a performance where the choir performs a beautiful piece and the pastor preaches a wonderful sermon that the audience really enjoys (or if not, they leave the room—to the dismay of the greeters). During the worship service, not only did the choir sing for the people, their song also helped to sanctify them. The priests did not preach but offered sacrifice together with the people. The gatekeepers (greeters) did not socialize with those in the back but maintained order.

THE ESSENCE OF WORSHIP

The essence of worship is to sanctify, to consecrate, and to present God's people before the Lord. It begins with the leaders consecrating themselves to the Lord and is followed by the participants—musicians, singers, pulpit participants, greeters, deacons. Each of these individuals ministers before the people, and together they lift their eyes to the Lord.

"And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: for the thing was done suddenly" (2 Chron. 29:36).

ED

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15 minute break between two presentations

SEPTEMBER 30 – OCTOBER 29, 2011

DOING CHURCH FOR WHOM?

I BELIEVE THE BIG HINDRANCE TO CHURCH GROWTH ISN'T TOO LITTLE EVANGELISM. IT'S HOW WE DO CHURCH. SOMETIMES WE DO CHURCH PROGRAM LIKE OUR CONGREGATION IS A PRIVATE CLUB - ONE THAT OTHERS AREN'T QUITE WELCOMED INTO WITHOUT A LOT OF INITIATION. HERE ARE FIVE INDICATIONS A CHURCH IS DOING ITS SABBATH MORNING PROGRAMMING FOR INSIDERS - AND POSSIBLY LEAVING OUT THOSE WHO AREN'T.

1. Canceling church services. You may be doing something good instead, like camp meeting or outdoor church. But assuming that everyone who would ever want to come to your church is in the circle that will know where to find you - or feel comfortable following you there just because you put a sign on the church door - is insider thinking. Some of my dearest friends came to church for the first time on a day when church was supposed to be officially canceled. Had an elder not decided to conduct an informal worship in case there were visitors, we'd never have known them.

2. No serious preaching. My friend took her new husband (a Christian of another denomination) to several of our churches, hoping to interest him. After a few visits, he asked "Don't Seventh-day Adventists ever just have sermons from the Bible?" They'd been treated to a church school program, a choir recital, a promotional talk by a college president, an explanation of the new church budget, a slide program on archaeology - but hadn't heard a serious Biblical sermon! Your church school is important, but a whole program by the kids, while delightful for their parents, doesn't do as much for someone who's walked in the first time to get spiritually fed.

3. Events or programs whose names mean nothing to the uninitiated. We assume a church bulletin is an asset for visitors, but if it lists undefined events by names only insiders know, it may make people feel even more left out. What does "Pathfinders" mean? Or "Ingathering"? Up-front announcements too: I once heard an elder say, "When your monthly visitor comes to your house, you will also have your review at the same time." It sounded like an official from church came to your house monthly and con-

ducted an audit of some private aspect of your life. Someone who didn't know could have concluded we were the most intrusive kind of cult - but in fact he was only trying to explain that our union paper, the *Visitor*, came to the same mailing list as our official church magazine, the *Review*!

4. Unintuitive worship. I once preached in a small church that had accumulated so many worship bits and pieces that the service was nearly too complicated to follow. I found myself singing when others had stopped, then surprised by a tardy prayer response song when I'd already risen from my knees, and later I was still seated when others had stood. "But everyone knows we always stand for this song." The regulars, maybe, but I got confused - and I'm more or less an insider.

5. Embarrassing or incomprehensible sermons. You've heard them, too, those sermons on topics that make you cringe. I've promised all my churches that I'll never say anything from up front that they couldn't invite anyone to hear, without fear of puzzling their visitors or being embarrassed themselves.

Of course, if nothing is happening anyway - if no one ever visits, and you don't care if they do - then you might as well go on doing church for the regulars.

But if you want your church to be attractive to those who aren't already part of it, you may have to start thinking differently.

ED

Loren Seibold is the editor of *Best Practices* for Adventist Ministry

This was originally published in "*Best Practices*", a free email newsletter from the North American Division Resource Center.

The art of speech

PREACH IT—*Better!*

AFTER LISTENING TO YET ANOTHER SERMON CONSISTING OF BORING QUOTES AND SHOUTED COMMANDS, A LITTLE BOY QUIETLY WHISPERED TO HIS MOTHER, "TODAY I'VE DECIDED TO BECOME A PREACHER." THE MOTHER, CAUGHT OFF-GUARD BUT OVERJOYED, RESPONDED, "VERY GOOD, BUT WHY A PREACHER?" AFTER PONDERING THIS QUESTION FOR A FEW SECONDS, THE BOY REPLIED, "I THINK I WOULD PREFER SHOUTING FROM THE PULPIT THAN BEING SHOUTED AT!"

Whether we admit it or not, the success or failure, increase or decrease of membership, and life or death of a congregation's spirituality depends on the quality of the preaching. A church can have a harmonious choir, an incredible outreach program, and a tasty potluck, but if the sermon bores or scares its members, the church walls may not crumble, but the excitement on Sabbath morning will.

We must remember that preaching plays a central part in the salvation of human beings. It isn't something to be taken lightly. There is power in preaching if only we make a concerted effort to tap into it. The apostle Paul had a very clear concept of this: "Since the world in all its fancy wisdom never had a clue when it came to knowing God, God in His wisdom took delight in using what the world considered dumb—preaching, of all things!—to bring those who trust Him into the way of salvation" (1 Cor. 1:21, *The Message*).

H.M.S. Richards further expressed this with wonderful passion: "I tell you, preacher friends, it is a serious thing to preach. Many eternal decisions for right or wrong, for life or death, are in our hands. . . . Read your church history. Read not only what the lines say, but read between the lines, and you will see that in every age the fortunes of the church of God on earth have risen and fallen with the fortunes of preaching. Wherever preaching came up, the welfare of the church came up; whenever preaching has gone down, the church has gone down."¹

I firmly believe in the importance and power of preaching. I believe that, under God's guidance, the relevance, transcendence, preparation, and presentation of God's message deserves our very best! What this requires is every ounce of our energy, every atom of our intelligence, every drop of our talent, every spark of our personality, and our full and total submission to God. We want that little boy to have the desire and heart to become a preacher one day—but for the right reason!

¹ H.M.S. Richards, *Feed My Sheep* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2005), 27.

Pablo Perla is the director of the Inter-American Division Publishing Association.



“HOW TO BE A GOOD FARMER—EVEN IN A CITY: CREATING A COMMUNITY-BASED MINISTRY” APPEARED IN THE JANUARY – MARCH 2011 *ELDER’S DIGEST*. THIS ARTICLE PROPOSED “TEN FARMING COMMANDMENTS” WHICH SYSTEMATIZED JESUS MINISTRY METHOD INTO 10 INTENTIONAL ACTION STEPS FOR OUR TIME,¹ AND SERVED AS AN INTRODUCTION TO A SERIES OF *ELDER’S DIGEST* ARTICLES IN THE COMING MONTHS THAT WILL UNPACK THESE 10 COMMANDMENTS IN MORE DETAIL. BELOW IS THE FIRST OF THESE ARTICLES:

ONCE A MONTH

Jesus Comes and Holds My Hand ...

“There was a man in a church who was a deacon. He was one of those deacons who didn’t “deac.” Every church has deacons that don’t ‘deac,’ and this was one of them. The pastor approached this guy and said, ‘You know, you don’t do anything around here. Could you at least drive the van that takes the youth group to the old folks’ home when they put on a worship service once a month?’ The guy agrees, and the first week helps and stands in the back while the kids are leading out up front. An old man in a wheel chair, obviously senile, grabs the deacon’s hand and holds it. All during the service he holds it. The same situation repeats itself the following month when they go—and the month after that, and the month after that. And then one time they go back, and the guy is not there. The deacon asks for him. They say, ‘Oh, he’s dying, he’s not going to live out the week, probably not the night.’ He’s four doors down the hall. The deacon goes down and there are tubes and electronic things all over this guy lying there with his mouth open, obviously unconscious. He grabs the old guy’s hand and prays that the Lord will deliver him to everlasting life in heaven. When he finishes the prayer, the seemingly unconscious man squeezes the deacon’s hand very tightly, and he knows that the prayer was heard. The deacon is so moved by this that tears well up in his eyes, and as he’s stumbling out of the room, he bumps into a middle-aged woman who says, ‘I’m his daughter. He’s been waiting for you.’ The deacon said, ‘For me?’ She said, ‘For you. He said he didn’t want to die until he had the chance to hold the hand of Jesus one more time. I kept on telling him that in the next life he would have a chance to hold the hand of Jesus.’ He said, ‘Oh no, in this life he got to hold the hand of Jesus. Once a month Jesus comes and holds my hand. And I don’t want to die until I have a chance to hold the hand of Jesus one more time.’”

When Tony Campolo told the above story he said, “I don’t know what you think Christianity is about. But it is ultimately about this—that you become Jesus for somebody.”²

Those who become Jesus for somebody need the heart and hands of Jesus. And they can be more effective

when they use His ministry method.

This current article will elaborate on the first “Farming Commandment”:

1. *Thou shalt study Jesus’ ministry method and pray for:*

- A spirit of revival, of love, and caring for the people in your community – resulting in more workers (“Pray ye therefore. . .” Matt 9:38, KJV);
- The workers as they work in the harvest field;
- **The Rain – the Holy Spirit** – throughout the growing season. *No Rain – no crop and harvest!*

Thou shalt study Jesus’ ministry method . . .

What was Jesus’ ministry method? When He gave His inaugural address in Nazareth, He outlined His ministry and the way He would carry it out. Luke 4:18-19 quotes Isaiah 61:1, 2—the Messianic job description: “The Spirit³ of the Sovereign Lord is upon Me, because He has:

- Anointed Me to preach good news to the poor;
- Sent Me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners;
- Provided recovery of sight to the blind;
- Released the oppressed;
- Proclaimed the year of the Lord’s favor (Jubilee terminology);⁴
- Comforted all who mourn.

As we read the Gospels we see that Jesus lived up to His Messianic job description. Matthew summarizes His ministry method in Matthew 9:35-38: “Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.’”

This passage, along with Isaiah 58 and others, are parallel to the well-known explanation of Jesus’ ministry method found in *Ministry of Healing* (MH), p. 143:3: “Christ’s method *alone* will give *true* success in reaching

the people. The Saviour *mingled* with [people] as one who desired their good. He showed His *sympathy* for them, *ministered* to their needs, and won their *confidence*. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me'" (emphasis supplied).

A friend of mine organized MH 143:3 into a formula and two different models—"The Dichotomous Model" and "The Holistic Model."⁵ Here's the formula:

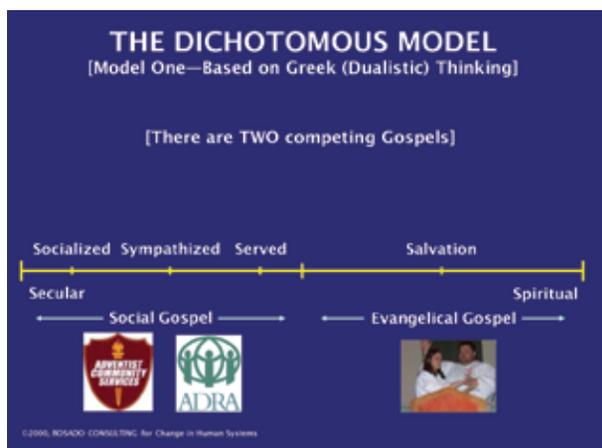
THE FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

- | | | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. SOCIALIZE: | "The Saviour mingled with [people]" | [Open networks] | } CONFIDENCE |
| 2. SYMPATHIZE: | "He showed His sympathy for them" | } 1+2+3=
[Attachments] | |
| 3. SERVE: | He "ministered to their needs" | | |
| 4. SALVATION: | "Then He bade them, 'Follow Me'" | [Conversion] | |

I have noticed that sometimes church leaders might skip or de-emphasize steps 1-3 and go straight to #4 (which of course is also very important). However, Jesus placed great importance in *all* four steps, and, after he did steps one to three, "then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'" We can never go wrong in doing things as Jesus did!

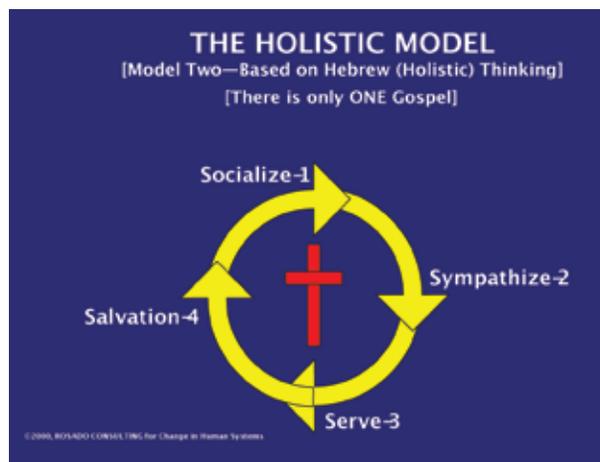
Now to the first of the models: It's easy to say that we are **not** dualists on the subject of the nature of man, and it's just as easy to **be** dualists when it comes to ministry. "The Dichotomous Model (below)," based on Greek Dualistic thinking, presents the steps in MH 143 as two competing Gospels: The "Social Gospel" and the "Evangelical Gospel." A mathematician would call this graph between the secular and the spiritual "inversely proportional." This means that the closer you get to the evangelical-spiritual end—the further you get from the social end, and vice versa. Have you ever seen an actual ministry model that reflects this situation? I admit that I have.

The second model, "The Holistic Model," is based on Hebrew Holistic⁶ thinking. In this model, there is only ONE Gospel. Ministries of compassion are portrayed as impor-



tant as traditional forms of evangelism. They flow together and there is a synergy among them. Speaking of an urban church movement in Lima, Peru, Harvie Conn and Manuel Ortiz said, "The church's urban interests have forged a healthy *balance* between the dynamic, verbal proclamation of the gospel message, and the proclamation of that same message through the loving, caring deeds of a social ministry program"⁷ Does this describe your church?

The next paragraph after MH 143:3 advises that "There is need of coming close to the people by *personal effort*. If less time were given to sermonizing, and more time were spent in personal ministry, greater results would be seen. The poor are to be relieved, the sick cared for, the sorrowing and the bereaved comforted, the ignorant instructed, the inexperienced counseled. We are to weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice. Accompanied by the power of persuasion, the power of prayer, the power of the love of God, *this work will not, cannot, be without fruit.*"⁸



If your church has not achieved this balance, this "ONE Gospel" model, it would be good to head in that direction, don't you think? You will be in very good company, for that's how Jesus did it! The apostle John advises that "Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did"(1 John 2:6). Who better can we follow as our ministry model?

In 362 AD, Emperor Julian launched a campaign to revive paganism. The Christians, whom the pagans thought were going to fizzle out, were growing and getting the upper hand, and the pagan leaders were very worried. Julian's advice to a prominent pagan priest expresses his concern: "I think that when the poor happened to be neglected and overlooked by the priests, the impious Galileans [Christians] observed this and devoted themselves to benevolence.... [They] support not only their poor, but ours as well, everyone can see that our people lack aid from us."⁹ Christianity taking over an empire in less than 300 years stemmed from the help and compassion from Christians. Even now, that way "*will not, cannot, be without fruit.*"¹⁰

... and pray for ...

- A spirit of revival, of love, and caring for the people in your community;
- The workers as they work in the harvest field;
- The Rain – the Holy Spirit – throughout the growing season. No Rain – no crop and harvest!

Matthew 9:38 hints at “the cruciality of prayer: Pray ye therefore The prayer is not to be a substitute for the labor; the disciples were to be reapers¹¹ as well as praying men. But the work will not be done without prayer.”¹² “Jesus Himself, while He dwelt among us, was often in prayer. Prayer went before and sanctified every act of His ministry”¹³ Bathe your community outreach in prayer. Rally your church’s prayer warriors, your prayer partners. Have a prayer corner in your church bulletin, a prayer box at church. Do prayer walks and pray for the people in your community, by name when possible.

In these end times, when the Seventh-day Adventist Church is highlighting revival and reformation, there is a renewed call to prayer that goes before every act of our ministry. Where there is earnest prayer in the church, and where there is personal labor for souls, as modeled by Jesus, these “are God’s appointed opportunities for giving the early and the latter rain.”¹⁴ Are you ready to prayerfully take on Tony Campolo’s challenge to do what it takes to become Jesus for somebody in your community? **ED**

¹ The 10 Farming Commandments are: (1) Thou shalt study Jesus’ ministry method and pray for. . . ; (2) Thou shalt assess the resources in thy church; (3) Thou shalt establish a Social Action Leadership Team (SALT); (4) Thou shalt choose and narrow down thy territory; (5) Thou shalt do a demographic analysis on the chosen territory; (6) Thou shalt drive or walk around the cho-

sen territory and note the homes, businesses, churches, people, etc.; (7) Thou shalt talk to community leaders and business people to discover community needs as they see them; (8) Thou shalt earn “Social Capital”; (9) Thou shalt develop a church strategic plan for church community involvement based on the felt community needs thou has discovered and the resources and dreams of thy church; (10) Thou shalt look for ways that God is already working in thy community. Celebrate, acknowledge, cooperate. . . . AND an 11th Commandment: Thou shalt not ignore commandments 1-10, and thou shalt remember to Reap where thou hast farmed and keep what thou doest reap (disciple –preserve the harvest)!

² Adapted from a story told by Tony Campolo on a DVD entitled *The Least of These*, produced by Old Fashioned Pictures, 2004. Used by permission. To order a DVD of *The Least of These* go to www.oldfashionedpictures.com.

³ Having the Spirit of the Lord on us, in answer to prayer, is an important first step, as reflected in the First Farming Commandment.

⁴ Jubilee was an equalizer of society—to give everyone an opportunity to begin anew. Debts were forgiven; property that was sold was restored to the original owner; prisoners and slaves were set free. It was about taking one’s gains and redistributing them to equalize society.

⁵ Formula/construct and graphics from Caleb Rosado, adapted from Ellen White. Used by permission.

⁶ Sometimes spelled “Wholistic.”

⁷ Harvie M. Conn & Manuel Ortiz, *Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City, and the People of God*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001, p. 204. This is a comment about a Christian and Missionary Alliance church movement in Lima, Peru. (Emphasis supplied by author.)

⁸ *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143:4.

⁹ Ayerst, David, and A. S. T. Fisher. *Records of Christianity*. Vol. 1. Oxford: Blackwell, 1971, pp. 179-181, quoted by Rodney Starks, *Cities of God*.

¹⁰ *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143:4.

¹¹ Remember, they [and we] must also do the other parts of farming before they [we] reap.

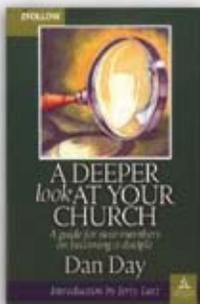
¹² *The Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 7, p. 362.

¹³ Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, June 18, 1902.

¹⁴ See *Review & Herald*, March 2, 1897, paragraph 6.

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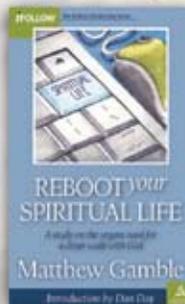
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PORNOGRAPHY: STAY AWAY!

Pornography is a huge money-making business and a disastrous problem in the world today. The pornography industry is bigger than Microsoft, Google, Amazon, eBay, Yahoo!, Apple, and Netflix combined. According to the Barna Research Group, 38 percent of adults believe that looking at pornography is acceptable. Unfortunately, 28 percent among Christians—those who say they're "born again"—believe (even though they're aware of Matthew 5:28) that there is no problem with viewing pornography. The saddest reality is to know that about



Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.” Matt. 5:8

50 percent of Christians and 40 percent of church leaders admit that they are hooked on pornography.

Men and women, young and old, Christian and non-Christian—everyone is vulnerable to this plague. Pornography surrounds the world with its tentacles. Ellen G. White says, “This is an age when corruption is teeming everywhere. The lust of the eye and corrupt passions are aroused by beholding and by reading. The heart is corrupted through the imagination. The mind takes pleasure in contemplating scenes which awaken the lower and baser passions. These vile images, seen through defiled imagination, corrupt the morals and prepare the deluded, infatuated beings to give loose rein to lustful passions.”¹

For many in the church, pornography (also known as “lust”) is more than a struggle; it is an outright addiction that enslaves men and women. Unfortunately, pornography has entered the church like a flood, leaving anecdotal and documented evidence that families and churches are being damaged—mostly by Christian men. As Christians and as church leaders, we need to understand the following facts about pornography:²

1. **Pornography is a sinful practice.** God created sex and sexual expression between a man and a woman in the context of marriage (Gen. 2:24). Pornography is a distortion of something beautiful and sublime created by God. God approves when a man and a woman relate sexually to each other in the context of marriage, but He reproves when the sexual experience becomes trivial and vulgar (1 Thess. 4:3-7).

2. **Pornography depicts unreal sex.** In pornography, one cannot find romanticism, expressions of tenderness, and the holiness that should be present in the marital bed. Pornography presents a sexual act destitute of love, respect, and intimacy.

3. **Pornography steals time.** Pornography is a great stealer of time, time that could instead be dedicated to

a person's spouse, children, friends, and communion with God. It also steals time from work, recreation, and sleep.

4. **Pornography treats women as objects.** A man addicted to pornography has a distorted vision of women, seeing them only as objects of pleasure. He makes the woman in his life feel inferior, betrayed, and incapable of matching the lust within.

5. **Pornography steals your money.** Pornography steals not only your time but your money as well—money that could be spent on school, family, bills, the mortgage, etc. Pornography businesses gain millions of dollars through private cable signatures, magazines, Web sites,

etc. People who habitually access pornography strengthen and expand the industry.

6. **Pornography makes people captive.** Being addicted to pornography is similar to being addicted to alcohol and drugs. Many people struggle for years to abandon their addiction to pornography, but they are unable to escape. In many cases, long-term therapy and participation in support groups are needed, using the same steps as Alcoholics Anonymous.

7. **Pornography destroys marriages.** Wives of men addicted to pornography feel they have been traded for virtual women. Many times this betrayal ends in divorce because women are not able to endure such situations.

Church leaders should speak out against pornography and do everything possible to keep people and themselves far away from it. Let us not allow the enemy of our soul to destroy our faith, life, and hope. Ellen G. White affirms, “Those who would not fall prey to Satan's devices must guard well the avenues of the soul; they must avoid reading, seeing, or hearing that which will suggest impure thoughts. The mind must not be left to dwell at random upon every subject that the enemy of souls may suggest. The heart must be faithfully sentinelled, or evils without will awaken evils within, and the soul will wander in darkness.”³

It is my prayer that you and your church members will remember that “whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable; if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things” (Phil. 4:8).



¹ Ellen G. White, *Letters to Young Lovers*, 60.

² <http://www.clickfamilia.org.br/>

³ Ellen G. White, *Letters to Young Lovers*, 60.

Jonas Arrais is the editor of *Elder's Digest* magazine.

HEALTHY TIPS FOR ELDERS

TIPS FOR HEALTH MINISTRY

LET'S MOVE! ADVENTISTS IN STEP FOR LIFE:

AN ANSWER TO THE CHILDHOOD OBESITY EPIDEMIC

What is the perfect model for ministry? We must answer this important question if we are to fulfill our mission. We are reminded to revisit the early Christian church. After all, where else in history was a group of believers more successful in allowing God to use them in a powerful way to bring large numbers into the family of God? What was that church's secret for success? I can think of two important aspects.

1. *They received the baptism of the Holy Spirit in full measure.* Once the Holy Spirit was poured out, they started to experience the gifts of the Spirit: love, patience, kindness, temperance, and self-control. Their care for one another resulted in health, healing, and wholeness in their communities. Many joined this loving group of Christians who knew Christ deeply, loved Him supremely, and shared Him passionately.

2. *They accepted Christ's commission and followed His methods of ministry.* Christ had sent them "to preach and to heal" (Luke 9:2), and their homes became centers of healing and wholeness. There they cared for each other and shared the Christ they knew well. They had tasted God's love and grace and had a deep bond with their Savior. The result was a passion to share His love with others by meeting their needs.

Should our methods be different today? People still have the same physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs. When we look at the world, we are reminded that it "needs today what it needed nineteen hundred years ago—a revelation of Christ. A great work of reform is demanded, and it is only through the grace of Christ that the work of restoration, physical, mental, and spiritual, can be accomplished."¹

When we talk about sharing Christ and following His methods, we are talking about making every church a place where physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual healing is facilitated by His grace. This church will be seen by the community as the place where one may find loving people with open arms who share God's love not only in words but also through their actions. To share love in action means to meet the needs of those around us.

One of the major needs in our communities today is related to the burden of disease. Our nation is strug-

gling with the epidemic of obesity. Thirty-three percent of the U.S. population—including children—is obese. Scientific evidence confirms the links between obesity and diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and other major killers.

What are Adventists doing about it? Recently the church in North America launched *Adventists InStep for Life*, the Adventist response to the epidemic of obesity. Families and leaders in churches, schools, and communities are called to join in this effort. As part of this initiative, a special event called "Let's Move Day" is being planned to mobilize as many people as possible and to engage the community in physical activities, sending a message that we care about this problem and about our neighbors' health. (See www.AdventistInStepforLife.com for more details.)

By showing an interest in this very real issue, we will have the opportunity to follow Christ's example of mingling, showing sympathy, and meeting people's needs.² We will not give stern lectures about what people must do to live free from disease; rather, we will have the opportunity to present a loving God who gave us a special gift—a health message. This gift is not forced on us, and it does not make us holy. Instead, it allows us to experience a more abundant life.

What a privilege to help meet the needs of those around us in this way. Our call is to model our ministry after that of Christ and His early church, making our church today a center for health, healing, and wholeness in the community. Before that can be achieved, we are called to "choose life" ourselves. Christ has shown to us the path of life (Ps. 16:11) through His gifts of grace. "I have set before you life and death. . . . Choose life so that you and your children might live" (Deut. 30:19). I invite you today to "Choose Abundant Life, Tell the World," making your church a "center for health, healing, and wholeness in your community."

For more information go to www.NADhealthministries.org 



¹ Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, 143.

² *Ibid.*

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HOW TO HAVE A PERSONAL REVIVAL

Are you desperate to know God better? Have you reached the place where you feel you cannot go on unless God does a new and powerful work in your heart? If so, then personal revival is available for you. God wants to fill you up as much as you desire.

Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled" (Matt. 5:6, NIV). You have to hunger and thirst before you can be filled. When you get a dry mouth, you realize that more than anything else, you want water. Christ made it plain: "When you become hungry and thirsty for Me, then you will be filled."

What should happen in our lives if we're going to have personal revival?

BE DISCONTENT WITH THINGS AS THEY ARE

The status quo won't do anymore. We become sick of "as is." Perhaps you're a joy-filled Christian, but you still cry out, "Lord, I want more of You!"

Do you feel stuck in the routine of your Christian life? If so, God insists, "I want you to experience growth. I want you to have more. I want you to know Me intimately. I want to be in complete control of your life and draw you closer to Me."

I want to be discontent and ask God for more.

SEEK GOD'S PRESENCE DESPERATELY

We will never have a deep knowledge of God until we become obsessed with Him more than anything else. When we rise in the morning, as we go through the day, until we lay our heads on our pillows at night, we look to the Lord and pray, "God, I must know You more because I love You, and I'm desperate for You."

When we want God more than we want toys, games, positions in society, successful businesses, new cars, or new houses, when we want God with a holy obsession, then He will reveal Himself to us.

COME TO THE PLACE OF DEEP REPENTANCE

To experience true personal revival, we must repent not only of outward sin but of everything that dishonors God in words, thoughts, and actions. When God shines His searchlight into our hearts and shows us the sins we didn't even know were there, we will see sin like we've never seen it before.

When we reach that point of deep repentance and start to plumb the depths of our souls, God begins to open us up. He says, "Here's a sin, there's an iniquity, and here's a transgression." When we start to confess those sins, God's

Spirit will begin to be poured out on us, and we will feel the refreshing winds of revival.

MAKE WRONGS RIGHT

It's not easy to seek pardon and restitution, but revival requires it. When Zacchaeus met Jesus, he said, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount" (Luke 19:8, NIV). His repentance led him to seek forgiveness and restoration with others.

When we seek forgiveness from others and work to make wrong things right, God can turn our lives around and send revival.

POSITION YOURSELF FOR REVIVAL

This is a place of constant prayer. Paul says, "Pray continually" (1 Thess. 5:17, NIV). This means determined prayer that doesn't give up. Jacob was a man who understood this; he wrestled with an angel and wouldn't quit. He refused to let go until the angel blessed him (Gen. 32:24-32).

Some people pray when it's convenient, and others pray when they're in crisis; that kind of prayer doesn't bring revival. Instead, let us pray, "Lord, renew us, and we're going to lock horns with You until revival comes."

But there's another place—the *place of love for the Word of God*. Love the Bible, love what's in it, and let it come alive in you. There's power in that Book; it's alive, and it can bring us to life. Study the Bible until its power is real in you.

Ellen G. White encourages, "When we understand what this book means to us, there will be seen among us a great revival."¹

COME TO THE PLACE OF TOTAL OBEDIENCE

If we say, "God, I love you" but do not seek to obey Him, He cannot pour out His Spirit upon us. Revival will come when we say with conviction, "Whatever You want, whenever You want, I am going to do it."

If you want revival, it is available to you. Make sure your heart is right with God. Start praying and obeying His Word. God promises, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." When He pours out His Spirit on you, nothing will ever be the same again. 

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By*, 345.

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