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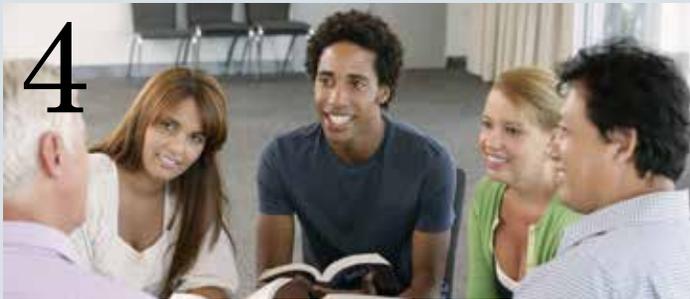
DIGEST



WHAT IS IN
YOUR HEART?

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LESSONS FROM BIBLE CHARACTERS

Much can be learned from studying the various characters in the Bible. Each individual mentioned in Scripture is discussed for a particular purpose and is important in the unfolding of God’s divine plan. They were real people, just like us. By studying the lives of Bible characters we can learn from both their strengths and weaknesses, developing a stronger knowledge of God’s Word and a stronger walk with God in the process.

For example, the Bible begins with the first family, Adam and Eve. They exhibited positive traits, including fellowship with God, worshiping the Lord, and community with one another, yet they also showed the consequences of sin through disobedience to God’s command.

Hebrews devotes an entire chapter to retelling the accounts of key biblical characters and lessons of faith learned from their lives. In the conclusion of the chapter, the author notes that their lives and our lives are in some way connected: “These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect” (Heb. 11:39, 40).

Careful examination of the lives of several leaders described in the Bible indicates that the purpose of leadership is not fame, power, or fortune; the purpose is to lead people with truth and righteousness. Leaders, as well as ordinary people, must be ethical and should not cover up injustices, even on the part of loved ones.

First Corinthians also notes that the sinful actions of past biblical characters are examples of how not to live:

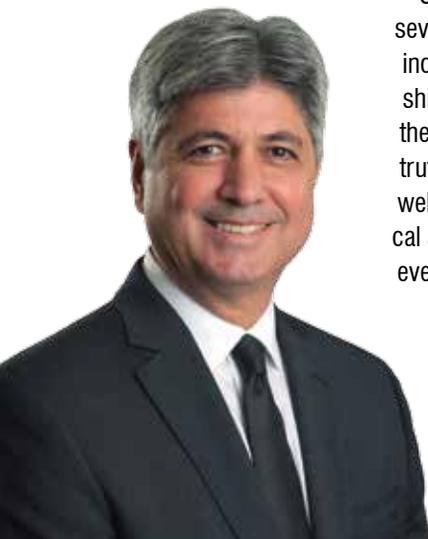
“Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.” At times, people struggle with the judgments of God recorded in Scripture. Despite the seemingly harsh consequences upon people at times, these accounts help instruct today’s readers toward what is right and away from what is wrong.

The apostle Paul once told his readers to follow him as he followed the example of Christ (1 Cor. 11:1). There are both positive and negative reasons for studying the lives of the people in the Bible. We can look at the life of Jesus for a perfect example of how to live. Further, we can study the lives of godly people from Scripture to learn how to live in order to please God.

We can also learn from the mistakes of both godly and ungodly Bible characters in order to avoid these problems in our own lives. Thankfully, the Bible places before us a spiritual “Hall of Fame”—raw, uncensored, gritty stories of men and women who sometimes soared and who often stumbled through the incredible life of faith. They wrestled with sin, experienced God’s grace, struggled with weakness, and overcame by faith. Their inspiring biographies have been memorialized in Scripture, not simply because of their faith in God but because of God’s faithfulness to them.

These great lives from God’s Word provide more than realistic portraits for appreciation; they also provide relevant principles for application. In fact, the lessons learned from mistakes often have a more lasting and powerful impact than those learned from doing things right. These lessons are not only valuable for individuals in positions of leadership but for all people who wish to improve their characters.

There are many ways to study Scripture, yet one of the most personal is the study of individual Bible characters.



JONAS ARRAIS | General Conference Associate Ministerial Secretary



WHAT IS IN YOUR HEART?

LESSONS FROM A BIBLICAL CHARACTER

Paying close attention to biblical characters can provide useful insights for preaching and teaching the Bible. This essay illustrates this claim by looking at the prophet Ezra. Israel had been in Babylonian exile—according to Jeremiah, it would last 70 years—and the Jews were allowed to return to their land under the Persian king Cyrus. But this happened gradually, with different groups returning. Ezra 7–8 reports on the journey of one group that returned from Babylon to Jerusalem. They left on the first day of the first month in the seventh year of Artaxerxes and arrived on the first day of the fifth month. Quite a journey! Today, by plane, the trip takes one or two hours.

But the return of the Jews from exile is mentioned here as a backdrop; the focus is on Ezra as a person. We appreciate people who have influenced us in a positive way. We appreciate those who have set an example in loyalty, courageous behavior, and commitment to a good cause. Biblical characters are among them and often are the first to be listed. Good lessons can be learned from biblical characters. One of them is Ezra. In Ezra 7:1-6, he is described as a priest and as “a scribe skilled in the law of Moses which the Lord God of Israel had given.” In verse 11, this description is repeated in other terms: Ezra is a priest and “a scribe, a scribe of the words of the commandments of the Lord.” The term

“scribe” is repeated twice in verse 11. Some translations render the second occurrence as “skilled in” the words of the commandments of the Lord. With verse 12, the decree of Artaxerxes begins. Again Ezra is called “the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven.” Most remarkable, in my opinion, is verse 10: “For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.”

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

This text provides us with at least four insights.

1. *The heart counts.* Many people today do their jobs because they have to. Jobs may be difficult to find, so people are forced to take what they can get. They have to make a living and earn money. Some have the luxury of choice and find a career that allows them to make a name for themselves and/or to earn plenty of money. Apart from the lucrative financial benefits, however, their hearts may not be in their jobs.

Ezra 7 tells us that Ezra was a scribe by profession, but he didn't just do his job because it was his task to do it. Ezra was personally involved. It must have been his heart's desire to be familiar with the word of God. Ezra set his heart to seek the word of God, do it, and teach it. This phrase is primarily talking about commitment, devotion, and dedication. The heart

STUDY OF THE WORD OF GOD IS A PREREQUISITE FOR KNOWING GOD, HIS PLAN OF SALVATION, AND HIS WILL. IT IS THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE AND OUR SPIRITUAL JOURNEY.

was not only the seat of emotions but also of the intellect. Thus, the heart stood for the mind, will, and determination. Ezra “had ‘devoted himself’” to the three things mentioned¹—studying, observing, and teaching.

The term “for” connects verse 10 with verse 9: “the good hand of his God was upon him.” Why? Because he had devoted his life to his ministry! His heart was in it! A job performed for a secular company may be done without much personal involvement, though it is better even then to have a personal interest in what one is doing.

This is even more true when what we do has to do with the

kingdom of God. Halfhearted service and divided interest are not enough when it comes to God. In the Bible, Jesus said, “You cannot serve two masters,” “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also,” and “Seek first God’s kingdom and His righteousness, and all the things important to life will be added to you” (Matt. 6:21, 24, 33). Ezra’s commitment was paired with God’s blessing.

2. Study Scripture. Ezra felt it important to commit himself to literally “seeking” (that is, exploring and investigating) the law (Torah) of Yahweh, which is the Word and also the law of God. The Word of God is like a mine which we can dig to find treasure. While some treasure is found at the surface, much is not. One has to dig and search, read and try to understand, compare one with another, and establish a biblical teaching.

Even a child can grasp the simple concept of how we can be saved. But the Bible also contains complex concepts and statements that challenge our minds and our lives, and no wonder—we are dealing with issues that relate to God and surpass humanity. We are talking about human paradoxes and limitations of our understanding because we can reach out beyond our own dimension and get in touch with the transcendent Lord, the Infinite One. And yet, reading and studying the Bible regularly comforts us, moves us, helps us to new insights, and brings us in contact with our Maker.

Study of the Word of God is a prerequisite for knowing God, His plan of salvation, and His will. It is the foundation of the Christian’s life and our spiritual journey.

3. Practice what you have found. Searching and exploring does not achieve much if we are only intellectually enlightened. While this is good, it is not good enough. Studying Scripture must affect our daily lives. Ezra allowed this to happen. He practiced what he found. He lived the will of God, as can be seen later in the book. An uncompromising commitment to the will of God led to a change of behavior

and attitude in Judah (mixed marriages); in modern terms, we would describe it as revival and reformation. Oftentimes, Christianity appears unattractive because its adherents are no different from the secular population. They are still as greedy and angry, as selfish and proud, and as pleasure-loving and compromising as many others. Nietzsche, the atheist German philosopher, said that Christians would need to look more like redeemed people in order for him to believe in their Savior, and many agree with him. Adherents of other world religions say the same thing.

There are plenty of Christian scholars and university professors who study and teach Scripture, but it does not make a difference. Why? Because they have not allowed the Bible to be the Word of God and make a difference in their lives. They have not been changed themselves. They do not have a living communion with the Lord, a heart of compassion, peace in Christ, or assurance of salvation. One has to do the will of God to experience growth and change. Ezra had set his heart on practicing the will of God, living with Him, and obeying Him.



4. Teach what you have found and practiced. Ezra taught the Word of God. In the Old Testament, teaching the law of God was a function of the priests and Levites. Ezra was a priest, and he fulfilled the task to which he as a priest had been called. But Ezra was also a scribe. Scribes were sometimes professional secretaries and sometimes government officials. Scribes may have recorded the decisions of the elders, court rulings, and marriage contracts. They may have also been in charge of various records and copied documents, including biblical documents. But, for some, their task was not exhausted in recording decrees or passing on traditions. They also taught the Word of God.

In New Testament times, teaching had already moved to the scribes. They were professional theologians, biblical scholars. Some of the most famous scribes in Jesus’ time

“GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT, TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL THAT I HAVE COMMANDED YOU; AND LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN TO THE END OF THE AGE.”

—Matthew 28:19, 20

ing put deliberately in this right order, each of these was able to function properly at its best: study was saved from unreality, conduct from uncertainty, and teaching from insincerity and shallowness.”³

“The model teacher in Ezra is a doer. And the doer can be no mere demonstrator. He must *be* what he would have his disciples be.”⁴ Today, we are a priesthood of believers. It is important that we practice what we find in the gospel; we also need to teach and pass it on to our children, to non-Christians, and even to Christians. In so doing, it will become even more important, meaningful, and fresh for ourselves.

The Great Commission is addressed to all disciples and calls us, among other things, to get involved in teaching: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:19, 20).

Although some people in church are especially gifted with teaching, all of us in one way or another must teach. But teaching must be based on studying and practicing.

In Acts 19, a sad story is recorded in which these three dimensions were not connected. Some Jews got involved in exorcism; they attempted to expel evil spirits from people. However, they did this in a strange way. They used a kind of formula and thought it would work. The formula was: “In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you

were Gamaliel, Hillel, and Shammai. They interpreted the Torah and applied it to their situation. Later, in Judaism, a teacher of Torah was called a rabbi. Ezra was at the transition point when the teaching office began to pass from the priests and Levites to the scribes. This transition occurred after the Israelites’ Babylonian exile.

Let’s look again at the three aspects of ministry to which Ezra was devoted: studying Scripture, living Scripture, and teaching Scripture. “These three aspects of ministry are interdependent. One called by God to teach must also study and obey.”² Ezra “was not only a student of Scripture, but explicitly a practitioner and especially a teacher of its requirements . . . what he taught he had first lived, and what he lived he had first made sure of in the Scriptures. With study, conduct, and teach-

to come out.” This formula is revealing. First, they thought they could use a sentence like magic, and the desired outcome would happen. It did not. Secondly, they had heard about Jesus and Paul, but they did not seem to believe in Jesus or practice discipleship. The result was devastating: “The evil spirit answered them, ‘Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?’ Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding” (Acts 19:15, 16, NIV).

CONCLUSION

“Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and ordinances in Israel” (Ezra 7:10). This was his call, and he followed it. The same call is ours today. No matter our profession or job, we must devote ourselves wholeheartedly to studying Scripture, practicing Scripture, and teaching Scripture. As we do this, the Lord will bless us as He blessed Ezra and will make our ministry fruitful and our life meaningful. His gracious hand will be on us (Ezra 7:9).

I hope to have shown in the above reflection how fruitful a close examination of Bible characters can be for biblical teaching and preaching, and for the devotional life as well. 

¹ Mervin Breneman, “Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther,” in *New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 129.

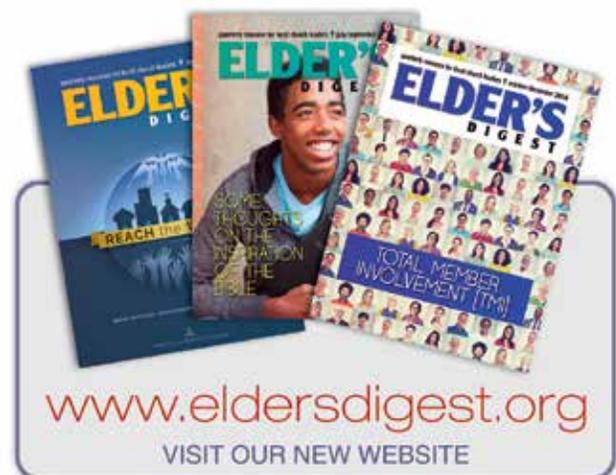
² *Ibid.*, 130.

³ H.G.M. Williamson, “Ezra, Nehemiah,” in *Word Biblical Commentary* 16 (Waco: Word Books, 1985), 93 (quoting Kidner).

⁴ McConville, “Ezra-Nehemiah and the Fulfillment of Prophecy,” in *Vetus Testamentum* 36 (1986): 47.

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SERVING THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH

DEACONS AND DEACONESSES IN VISITATION MINISTRY

Regarding the role of deacons and deaconesses visiting church members, the *Church Manual* states, “In many churches, visitation is arranged by distributing membership by districts and assigning a deacon to each district with the expectation that he will visit each home at least once a quarter. . . . Deaconesses assist in . . . visiting members in their homes when they cannot attend services.”¹

Some of the reasons for visitation are to:

- Become better acquainted with the membership.
- Strengthen new members and absentee members.
- Reclaim backsliders.
- Pray for and encourage the sick and shut-ins.
- Identify and follow up on the needs of the elderly, disabled, widows, and single parents.
- Encourage faithfulness in matters of stewardship.

Following are some practical guidelines to consider when visiting:

1. Visit in twos—one person will pray silently while the other is conversing. A husband-and-wife team is ideal for visitation in that the male and female perspectives are represented.
2. Dress appropriately.
3. When entering the home, state the purpose of the visit: to represent the church and the pastoral staff’s concern for the family.
4. Pray before entering the home and maintain the attitude of prayer throughout the visit.
5. “Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (James 1:19). Don’t gossip or listen to gossip. Don’t take sides when family members disagree. Don’t try to defend the pastor, church officer, or member with whom the family has differences. Stay objective and pray with them regarding the situation.
6. The length of the visit should be about 15 minutes. In extenuating circumstances, it may take longer.
7. Use the nine-step problem-solving process to empower families with problems to become actively involved in developing a plan of action toward finding a solution. The process includes:
 - a. *Engagement.* Establish objective and open communication with as many members of the family as possible.
 - b. *Assessment.* Appraise the situation based upon factual information presented by family members and others familiar with the situation.
 - c. *Definition.* Work with the family to define the immediate problem, the underlying cause of the problem, and the factors that stand in the way of finding a solution.
 - d. *Set goals.* With input from the family, set some realistic goals.
 - e. *Alternatives.* Look at all of the possible ways of addressing the problem and select the best one(s).
 - f. *Contract.* Establish an agreement about the roles and responsibilities of each participant. Everyone is to be held accountable.
 - g. *Action.* Take steps toward achieving goals.
 - h. *Evaluation.* Evaluate the outcome of the action to determine whether or not it was successful.
 - i. *Continuation.* Continue to follow the working plan, modifying it as needed.²
8. End the visit with a brief but comprehensive prayer that includes the family’s needs that were discussed. Mention family members by name in prayer.

By visiting members and utilizing the problem-solving process, deacons and deaconesses will be better equipped to provide quality care for families in crisis. They will have a greater awareness of the church’s responsibility to have an equitable system in place for meeting the needs of its sick, poor, and unfortunate members. As they visit and assess the physical, social, emotional, and spiritual needs of the church members, they will seek ways to meet those needs. This will require deacons and deaconesses to become knowledgeable about the available resources in the church and in the community, and the proper steps to take to obtain those resources. They are to educate the members in need on what community agencies they can go to for help, and how to apply for help.



¹ *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 71, 72.

² Naomi I. Brill, *Working with People: The Helping Process*, 2nd ed. (New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1978), 91. Note: The author of this article refers to “The Helping Process” as “the problem-solving process” and redefines the nine steps to relate to the ministry context.

Vincent E. White, Sr., D.Min., is a retired pastor and author of *The Twenty-First Century Deacon and Deaconess: Reflecting the Biblical Model*; *The Twenty-First Century Deacon and Deaconess: Reflecting the Biblical Model Workbook*; and *Problem Solvers and Soul Winners: A Handbook for Deacons and Deaconesses*. www.avasbookpublishers.com.

GREAT HYMNS OF THE CHURCH >PART 1

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

Many have found the hymns a rich reservoir of spiritual supply and enjoyment. The deep and lofty revelations songwriters have received from God's Word, the joy experienced in the Lord's presence, the comfort given when they suffer for His sake, and the solace received in the midst of trials, are embodied and voiced in the hymns they write. Spiritual songs can convey the heart and flavor of one's thoughts, moods, emotions, and experiences in a way that mere prose cannot adequately communicate. The spiritual sentiments of past Christians and the lessons learned through their many experiences of the Lord are thus captured and preserved for the benefit of all who would come after them. Rex D. Edwards in this new series, "Great Hymns of the Church" will explore the beautiful stories behind some of these great hymns. Enjoy reading!

"HYMNS BREATHE THE PRAISE OF THE SAINTS, THE VISION OF THE PROPHETS, THE PRAYERS OF THE PENITENT, AND THE SPIRIT OF THE MARTYRS. THEY BRING SOLACE TO THE SAD, ASSURANCE TO THE PERPLEXED, FAITH TO THE DOUBTER, AND COMFORT TO THE OPPRESSED. THEY SPAN THE CENTURIES OF HISTORY AND BRIDGE THE BARRIERS OF DENOMINATIONS. STUDY THEM TO BE PURE IN HEART; SING THEM TO BE JOYFUL IN SPEECH. STORE THEM IN MIND TO POSSESS A TREASURY OF WORSHIP." — Unknown

Hymns are songs by which the heart communicates with God. They rank with prayers as an expression of a person's faith. But, beyond that, they occupy a special place in our devotion, responding to a deep, inherent urge to praise divinity musically.

They cover the whole range of our religious life. There is a hymn for every season, every mood. There are hymns to mark the festive moments of the year, hymns voicing our hopes and sorrows, hymns of thanksgiving, hymns of exaltation. Most of us know by heart at least a few of the 400,000 hymns in English. Among them are those "personal" hymns written in our souls that hit a tender and responsive chord whenever we intone them. Vibrant with memories, they hold in their slender frame big chunks of our lives. In hours of stress, a hymn frequently springs to mind. According to tradition, when the *Titanic* sank in 1912 with a loss of more than 1,500 lives, the ship's orchestra struck up "Nearer My God to Thee"; passengers joined in, singing as the ship went down.

Behind these hymns looms the ageless rock of Scripture from which congregations draw their living themes. From Genesis to Revelation, there is hardly a book of the Old and

New Testaments that is not mirrored in a sacred song. The four Gospels and Paul's letters provide an infinite variety of topics, and it is Paul to whom we owe the virile strain of militancy in so many of our hymns.

But, the book of Psalms of ancient Jewry has bequeathed to us the mother lode of songs of praise. From the chanting of the Bible's 150 psalms in the temple in Jerusalem to A.D. 380—when St. Ambrose, the fighting bishop of Milan, introduced to the European church the Eastern custom of singing—it is a long gamut.

However, this early bloom bore little fruit. All through the Middle Ages, the clergy did most of the singing—usually in Gregorian plainsong—while congregations were restricted to merely chanting brief responses. This sorry state was abruptly breached by the Reformation, when Martin Luther used congregational singing as a weapon in the battle for spiritual freedom. "I would gladly see the arts, especially music, in the service of Him who has given and created them," he wrote. A gifted musician (he sang and played the lute), the former monk set about creating a hymnal of the people, for the people. His own pugnacious character, his iron will, and his contempt of death ring out in every verse

of the great hymn “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” published in 1529. Sung to Luther’s own defiant tune (later polished by Bach), it became the marching song of the Reformation.

During the next three centuries, Germany was to give the world more than 80,000 hymns. English fugitives from the religious persecutions of Queen Mary I found in the Protestant churches of the Continent an audience participation unheard of in their homeland. Once safely back in England, they became ardent advocates of congregational singing, and some began translating Europe’s sacred songs. But the Church of England, in line with Calvinist ideas, considered the freewheeling hymns nonbiblical and unfit for public worship. Because of this Anglican resistance, Baptists and Methodists are the great songsters in English-speaking Christendom.

It was Charles Wesley, the prolific Methodist genius and natural-born poet, who gave the English hymn its iridescent beauty; “Jesus, Lover of My Soul” and “Hark the Herald Angels Sing” are samples of his craft. In his long life as an itinerant preacher, he wrote more than 6,000 hymns, blending deep religious passion so wondrously with art that some of them rank with the best of eighteenth-century poetry. Contagious joy flows from such songs as “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling,” “Rejoice, the Lord is King!” and Methodism’s flagship hymn “O for a thousand tongues to sing/ My great Redeemer’s praise, / The glories of my God and King, / The triumph of His grace.”

The Pilgrims brought the tradition of pure psalms to America. The *Bay Psalm Book* of 1640 was the first book published in English in the western hemisphere. In 1703, the first church organ was imported. And, by and by, the home-grown hymn, a free American creation, came into its own. Among American originals is the beloved “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” written by Phillips Brooks for his Philadelphia Sunday School after he visited the Holy Land.

But perhaps the grandest hymn to come out of America is a song written by Julia Ward Howe, a lifelong fighter for equal opportunities for women. Her “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” sung to the rousing tune of a campmeeting song, was published in 1862, during the Civil War.

Today, new hymns, often bearing the stamp of folk music and youthful minstrelsy, are riding in on winds of change. In vast cathedrals and in small village churches, young voices praise the Lord in a new idiom. Piano, banjo, clarinet, and the ubiquitous guitar are challenging the venerable organ.

But how should hymns be sung? Charles Wesley’s pocket hymnal, *Sacred Melody*, gives these directions:

“Sing *all*. Join with the congregation as frequently as you can. Let not weakness or weariness hinder you. Sing *lustily* and with a good courage. Above all, sing *spiritually*. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing Him more than yourself . . . so shall your singing be such as the Lord will approve of.”

THE STORIES OF GREAT HYMNS

“WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS” by Joseph Scriven (1819–1886)

Joseph Scriven had wealth, education, and a devoted family in his native Ireland. Then tragedy came uninvited. On the night before his wedding, his fiancée was thrown from her horse into a river and drowned. Scriven decided to begin a new life and emigrated to Canada, where he taught in a school for the Plymouth Brethren in Bewdley, Ontario.

But tragedy struck again. This time his fiancée died from pneumonia after being baptized in an icy lake. Scriven’s lifestyle changed. He worked without pay and gave away his possessions—even his clothing—to poor widows and the needy. He became known as “the Good Samaritan.”

When his mother became ill in Ireland, he wrote a comforting letter with a poem which became the verses of the hymn “What a Friend We Have in Jesus.” It was found by a friend beside his dying body. When asked who wrote it, he replied, “The Lord and I did it between us.”



In future issues of *Elder's Digest*, I will provide guidelines on how to choose a good hymn. Further, so that you can sing with understanding, I will tell the stories of how the great hymns were inspired. These historical vignettes can be shared with your congregation before a hymn is sung.

Finally, much of Christianity's vitality lies in its hymns. Their mighty surge, their tender lyrics, and their triumphant joy set our mood during the worship service. Sung by the congregation as a body, they help create the living fellowship that has been dear to Christians since the days of the apostles. And, as they well up from uncharted depths within us, they reassert that childlike faith we are often on the brink of losing. In the word's most profound and most dynamic sense, they *are* religion.

"Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord," exhorts the last verse of Psalms. "Praise ye the Lord." 

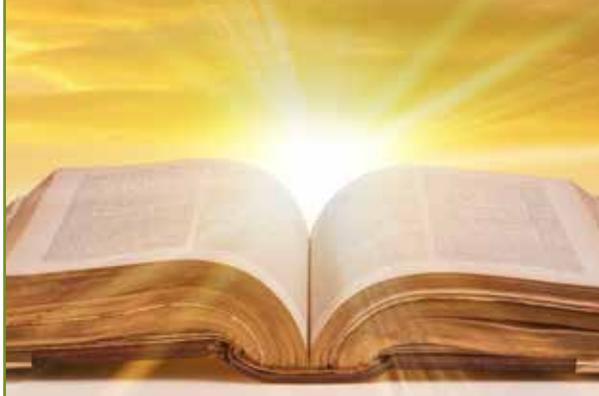
Rex D. Edwards is a former vice president for religious studies at Griggs University.

"CHRIST THE LORD IS RISEN TODAY" by Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

This triumphant hymn of the Resurrection was written by Charles Wesley one year after a "heart-warming" experience at the Aldersgate Hall in London, England, in 1738. The first Wesleyan Chapel in London was a deserted iron foundry, which became known as the Foundry Meeting House. This hymn was written by Charles for the first service in that chapel.

Following his Aldersgate encounter with Christ, Charles began writing numerous hymns, some 6,500 in all, on every phase of the Christian experience. It has been said that the hymns of Charles Wesley clothed Christ in flesh and blood and gave converts a belief they could grasp and embrace with personal faith.

Charles knew that the human condition would be hopeless if all our eternity was to be realized on this side of the grave. This hymn, based on 1 Corinthians 15, gave assurance of God's tomorrow because of the Resurrection.



"GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS" by Thomas O. Chisholm (1866–1960)

While many enduring hymns are born out of a particular dramatic experience, "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" was simply the result of the author's "morning-by-morning" realization of God's personal faithfulness in his daily life. Shortly before his death in 1960, Thomas Chisholm wrote: "My income has never been large at any time due to impaired health in the earlier years which has followed me on until now. But I must not fail to record here the unfailing faithfulness of a covenant-keeping God and that He had given me many wonderful displays of His providing care which have filled me with astonishing gratefulness." His life is a testament to Israel's wilderness lesson: that God's provision of manna for them was *daily* and that old manna cannot be stored for future use (Ex. 16:19-21).

Thomas Obadiah Chisholm was born in a crude log cabin in Franklin, Kentucky, USA. From this humble beginning and without the benefit of high school or an advanced education, he became a teacher himself at age 16. After accepting Christ at the age of 21, he became editor of the *Pentecostal Herald* and later was ordained as a Methodist minister. Throughout his long lifetime, he wrote more than 1,200 sacred poems, of which 800 have been published.

"ROCK OF AGES" by Augustus M. Toplady (1740–1778)

The story goes that while walking through the limestone cave country of Burrington Combe in Somersetshire, England, Toplady was caught in a sudden storm. He sheltered in a crevice between the limestone slabs. Afterward, he picked up a playing card which he found lying on the ground and wrote this hymn on the back of the card.

But the story is not true! The hymn entitled "A Living and Dying Prayer for the Holiest Believer in the World" was written around 1776 as Toplady's refutation of the Wesleyan doctrine of perfection. The hymn argued that even a good-living Christian had only one hope, namely, that Jesus paid it all.

The idea of Toplady writing the hymn as thanksgiving for deliverance from a thunderstorm is romantic, but the story did not start up until 12 years later, in 1850, when an ingenious vicar of Blagdon spread the rumor. Nonetheless, the "rock" in the hymn that was "cleft for me" is Jesus, who is both our Savior and Judge.

For more comprehensive details about these and other hymn stories, see *Companion to the Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* (1988).

WINNING THE WORSHIP WARS >PART 3



We continue this short series on the place of music in Adventist worship. In part 1, I proposed what I call the reductionist approach to church music. This view removes music from an inappropriate pedestal of importance in worship and brings it down to the level of a language used for communication. In part 2, I delved into how music impacts the human being and thus aids in the communication of a particular message. In this article, Part 3 of the series, I will discuss which type of music may communicate best in the context of corporate worship.

COMMUNICATING WITH MUSIC IN WORSHIP: THE PROBLEM OF EXTRA-MUSICAL ASSOCIATIONS

As we look to refresh worship through new approaches to church music, it is important to pay attention to the problem of *extra-musical associations*. This is perhaps the most serious obstacle to the introduction of new music in church. Misunderstanding the implications of extra-musical associations has caused most of the controversies around music's use in Adventist worship today.

What is an extra-musical association? An extra-musical association may be defined as non-musical imagery prompted by a piece of music; for example, the music of a national anthem evokes images of home, country, classrooms, and patriotic parades. These images are not musical *per se*, but their continued association with a certain style of music (in this case, a patriotic tune) prompts them.

Extra-musical associations should not be confused with intra-musical associations, which are ideas conveyed by the music itself; for example, a minor key is generally associated with sadness, darkness, or introspection, while major keys are associated with light, happiness, and hope. Likewise, a slow tempo is relaxing while a faster tempo is energizing. Intra-musical associations are not dependent on any context; they spring from the musical grammar, so to speak, much like the intonations of the human voice which are universally understood.

Extra-musical associations, on the other hand, occur because music has the power to attach symbolic meaning to a specific context, event, time period, etc. As Harold Best explained it, "the more a piece of music is repeated in the same context, the more it will begin to 'mean' that context."¹ (The example of the national anthem speaks clearly to this tenet.) So the issue of associating musical styles with specific secular or even non-secular contexts can pose a challenge to Adventist worship music.

Others have dealt with the issue of extra-musical associations extensively.² In this article, however, I'd like to propose a more nuanced approach to the matter of extra-musical associations in music by creating a distinction between *soft* and *hard extra-musical associations*.

Soft extra-musical associations should be self-explanatory: these associations are "soft," i.e., not strong enough to cause conflict between their original, secular context and a

new context—in our case, a worship setting. The style of music that we now officially call Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) is, in most cases, an example of soft extra-musical association. It uses modern instruments, the melodic lines are similar to acceptable popular musical forms, and the overall feel is more “folky” than “classical” or erudite. In most cases, although it is close to pop music, it avoids the most extreme elements of certain pop styles such as heavy metal or punk rock. CCM is accessible to the majority of worshipers because of its familiar musical language. It can be considered a natural evolution of church music and therefore, is an acceptable form of current Christian art.

On this point, it is important to point out that, because of the vast amount of borrowing and interchange that has occurred between sacred and secular music throughout the centuries, I believe soft extra-musical associations in church music are inevitable. Whether we are dealing with traditional church music from the nineteenth century (which mimicked secular classical styles) or folk styles borrowed from American folk music (which we hear in contemporary Christian music), we are dealing with a human phenomenon of musical desensitization that is quite ingrained in the human experience. Rather than fighting and resisting this musical evolution, the church would be better off accepting it as a fresh renewal of artistic expression that is so vital to organic, relevant worship.

Conversely, hard extra-musical associations occur with musical styles whose secular “feel” is severe to worshipers in their respective cultural *milieu*. Such hard associations are difficult to overcome as the music will most likely overwhelm the message of the words or the meaning of worship and cause cognitive dissonance between its primary, secular context and corporate divine worship. In America, for example, these would be hip-hop and heavy metal; in the Caribbean islands, this may be salsa or reggaeton. However, it is important to note that the problem of musical cognitive dissonance varies in different parts of the world and to different people in corporate worship.

Having briefly considered aspects of both soft and hard extra-musical associations, I believe it is much harder to argue in favor of hard extra-musical associations in a corporate worship setting. The introduction of a musical style that is drastically different from customary styles and expectations of a certain community can be very disruptive to most worshipers. If the music has heavy, negative, secular connotations, worship will be affected because of the noise in the communication of the gospel. It will be hard for most worshipers to concentrate on the words of a song if the music forcefully calls attention to an idea foreign to corporate worship! Again, this may be more severe in some cultural contexts and to some people than to others in corporate worship. What style of sacred music one listens to privately falls under other criteria which is beyond the scope of this series.

In light of this, it is reasonable to propose that soft extra-musical associations as we see in traditional hymns and

WORSHIP MUSIC REQUIRES THAT WHATEVER THE STYLE, THE MUSIC SHOULD SUPPORT THE HIGH IDEALS OF WORSHIP AND PROTECT ITS PURITY FROM FOREIGN IDEAS, FEELINGS, AND EMOTIONS.

a local church may have different sensibilities from the church next door.

Ultimately, worship music requires that whatever the style, the music should support the high ideals of worship and protect its purity from foreign ideas, feelings, and emotions. Worship music should take advantage of the most desirable musical elements available in any particular style: those that are most likely to be universally appreciated in order that music may faithfully carry the message of the words without unnecessary interference with its meaning.

With the above in mind, we can ask: How do we introduce new musical styles in worship? Below are a few principles to keep in mind when dealing with a transition from traditional to contemporary worship style.

First, we should agree that the mere use of modern instruments in church music does not immediately cause hard extra-musical associations. Musical instruments are amoral; their effectiveness in worship depends on how they are used to support worship or to detract, cause noise, and manipulate the hearers.

Second, we should accept that music with a beat and syncopated rhythms has a different meaning to younger worshipers. From Baby Boomers to Millennials, a beat and drums have no immediate negative associations; they are part of a musical language that these age groups have grown to understand and appreciate. They are part of their own personal musical grammar.

Third, change is necessary for renewal. Doukhan writes, “Change will happen anyway . . . we should become a part of it, and make it happen in a responsible manner.”³ Church planter Robert L. Bast found that churches that transitioned from traditional to contemporary music experienced growth.⁴

Fourth, tolerance and patience will be essential in this process. New musical styles may cause conflict because most Adventists have associated worship music with nineteenth-century hymnody, accompanied by the organ and other “classical” instruments. This classical style has come to mean worship to them; new music may sound foreign to

much of contemporary Christian music and contemporary gospel music are usually acceptable, while hard extra-musical associations may need to be avoided in corporate worship or used with careful intentionality. Again, the decision of what music has hard associations will have to be made while taking into consideration local cultural sensibilities. A style that would be disruptive in a particular geographical region may not be a problem in another. Even

worship. Tolerance and patience are essential for members of the musical “establishment” as well as for the new generation of worshipers.

Fifth, we should avoid demonizing new music in worship just because it is different. This is a major problem for Adventists. We are too quick to read diabolical intentions into innovations. Tradition has become a sacrament in Adventism. Eric Fife writes, “It is so easy to have prejudices and call them principles.”⁵ Often what is simply a matter of taste can quickly escalate into a satanic conspiracy to destroy Adventist worship. Walls are erected between those who value “good music” and “true worship” and the “subversives” who are looking for a show. (I will elaborate more on this in the conclusion of this series.)

In the din of the many voices arguing for the Adventist style of music, I believe that musical eclecticism is the only way to keep Adventist worship alive. We need to allow for the “cross-pollination of music” in worship, i.e., allowing diverse styles of music to co-exist in our worship. Adventist music must live perpetually within the tension of continuity with tradition. Removing all traditional musical landmarks will represent a diminished worship experience for most Adventists; refusing to add the new will dry up the bones of a new generation of worshipers. In other words, let’s add instead of taking away. Let’s offer worship that is collage-like

rather than dualistic, appealing to head and heart, tradition, and innovation.

The effectiveness of new music in Adventist worship should be judged by its fruits and by whether or not it engages the congregation in the act of worship. It is hard to argue against any style of music that elicits vibrant congregational singing. Worship planners need to look objectively at whether a certain hymn, praise song, or instrumental piece—regardless of its style—will be conducive to engaging and transformative worship.

In our last article, I will offer some conclusions on this series.



¹ Harold Best, *Music Through the Eyes of Faith* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1993), 154.

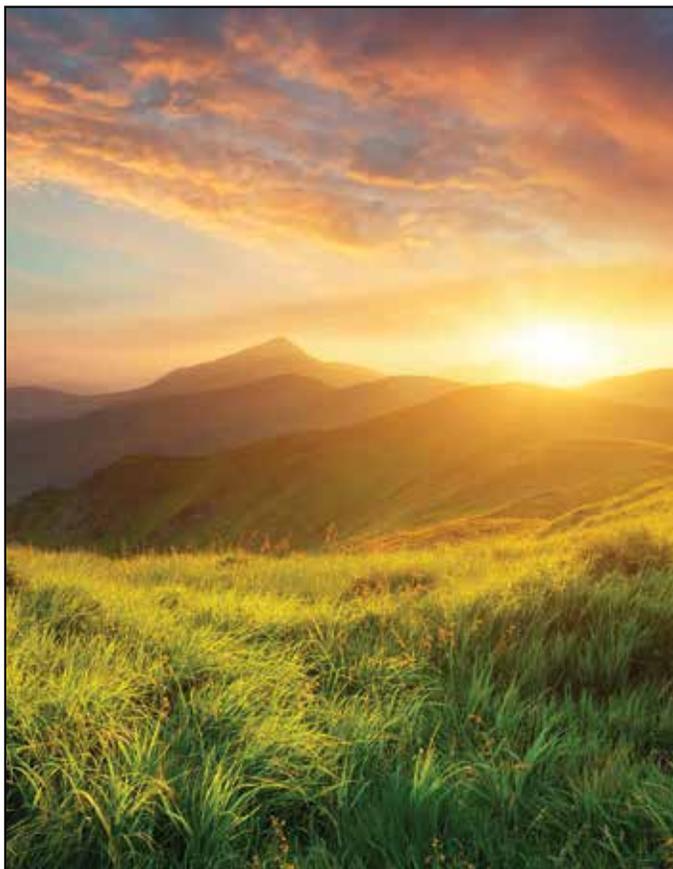
² See, for example, Lillian Doukhan, *In Tune with God* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2010), 65-69.

³ Ibid., “Historical Perspectives on Change in Worship Music,” in *Ministry* (September 1996), 7-9.

⁴ Robert L. Bast, *The Missing Generation* (New York: Reformed Church Press, 1991), 157, 158.

⁵ Eric Fife, “The Stubborn Dilemma of Church Music,” in *Ministry* (July 1972), 15-17.

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NO HARSH WORDS NOR DEBATING SPIRIT

>PART 2

NO REFERENCE TO OPPONENTS' CLAIMS

The Holy Spirit will apply the word that is spoken in love to the soul. But let it be understood that no good is accomplished when the voice or the pen expresses that which is harsh, or even expresses the truth in a harsh manner. Let the region of human passion be passed by, lest the truth be misapprehended, misinterpreted, and misconstrued. The truth will have quickening power that is spoken under the full influence of the grace of Christ. God's plan is first to reach the heart. Speak the truth and let Him carry forward the reformatory power and principle; but let us not work according to our own individual impulse.

What matter of good can be accomplished for souls who are in darkness by castigating them with denunciations? Those who have not a knowledge of the truth, who are blinded and warped in judgment, do not understand what it means. Speak the truth in love. Let the tenderness of Christ come in to the soul. Make no special reference to what opponents say, but let the truth alone be spoken--"It is written." The truth will cut to the quick. Let not your own spirit and passions mingle with the truth as common fire with the sacred flame. Plainly unfold the Word in all its impressiveness.

Many who are now the bitterest opponents of truth are acting up to their honest convictions of duty, but they will yet see the truth, and become its warm advocates. Those who now treat them with ridicule, who manifest a harsh spirit toward them, will fall under temptation, and bring reproach upon the cause of God, and cause the loss of souls through their indiscretion. Many who go into the field at the call made at the eleventh hour, will through the grace of Christ so present the truth, that they will be accounted first.

We are not to voice inconsistency. It is our work to advance the light, to inculcate ideas in the spirit of meekness and dependence upon God. Let us seek to become overcomers, and thus receive the overcomers' reward. Do all in your power to reflect light, to bring souls to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, but abstain from speaking irritating and provoking words. Present the truth in its simplicity, for it must be confessed before man as it involves their eternal interest.

NO COMBATIVE ARMOR

The combative armor, the debating spirit, must be laid off. If we would be Christlike we must reach men where they are.

INAPPROPRIATE DEBATE

We have the most solemn message of truth ever borne to the world. This truth is more and more respected by unbelievers because it cannot be controverted. In view of this fact, our young men become self-confident and self-inflated. They take the truths which have been brought out by other minds, and without study or earnest prayer meet opponents and engage in contests, indulging in sharp speeches and witticisms, flattering themselves that this is doing the work of a gospel minister. In order to be fitted for God's work, these men need as thorough a conversion as Paul experienced. Ministers must be living representatives of the truth they preach. They must have greater spiritual life, characterized by greater simplicity.

MORE ARGUMENT, MORE OPPOSITION

Often, as you seek to present the truth, opposition will be aroused; but if you seek to meet the opposition with argument, you will only multiply it, and that you cannot afford to do. Hold to the affirmative.

LIMITATIONS OF DEBATE

Never should you enter a discussion where so much is at stake, relying upon your aptness to handle strong arguments. If it cannot be well avoided, enter the conflict, but enter upon it with firm trust in God and in the spirit of humility, in the spirit of Jesus, who has bidden you learn of Him, who is meek and lowly in heart. And then in order to glorify God and exemplify the character of Christ, you should never take unlawful advantage of your opponent. Lay aside sarcasm and playing upon words. Remember that you are in a combat with Satan and his angels, as well as with the man.



This article is excerpted from the book *The Voice in Speech and Song*, pp. 240-242 by Ellen G. White.

PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Matthew 13:1-23

When Jesus shared the parable of the sower, I think what He was saying in this story is about everyone's hearts and how we respond to the Word of God.

Everything we think, do, and believe flows from our hearts. And each type of soil represents a type of heart condition. Ask yourself today: Where is my heart? How am I hearing today?

For Jesus, the point is not whether or not you hear; it's how you hear. There are four heart conditions revealed by Jesus in Matthew 13:1-23.

I. THE FIRST SOIL REPRESENTS HEARING WITH A HARD HEART

It is described as soil along the path. This ground has been trampled, and the evil one comes and snatches the seed so that it cannot sink in.

What makes a heart hard? Sin hardens the heart, and a heart that is hardened will sin even more. There's a principle: Sin leads to a rejection of God's truth, and the rejection of God's truth leads to even more sin.

Virtually everything said about God in the Bible will be offensive to a person who is hard-hearted. Whether this means God's sovereignty, His holiness, His love, His unchanging character, His judgment—all of this will be a different kingdom mindset and will be snatched away by a person like this.

Hard-hearted people are particularly called out in kingdom parables because "kingdom" means "rule." And "rule" means God is in control, and the hard-hearted do not like that! When Jesus came and preached the kingdom of God, He came preaching God's right to rule over the hearts and minds of all people.

People want to be their own gods and make their own decisions. They want to do what they want to do. They say, "Who are you to tell me?"

II. THE SECOND SOIL REPRESENTS HEARING WITH A SHALLOW HEART

Jesus describes it as seed falling on rocky ground. This person receives it, but when troubles come, he or she quickly falls away.

The church has people like this. Shallow hearts are attracted to the joy and excitement of a church where much is happening. They hear the gospel and seem to fit in. But then something happens—loss of a job, sickness, moral failure—someone or something comes along and pulls them from Jesus.

Just being in church, saying the right things, and doing the right things does not make you a person that Jesus wants.

III. THE THIRD TYPE OF SOIL REPRESENTS HEARING WITH A DISTRACTED HEART

This is the one that the Lord describes as being sown among the thorns who hears the message and responds, but the worries of life and the deceitfulness of wealth come in and cause distraction.

It's interesting how the Lord singles out two things here as the thorns: worry and wealth. We do not need to point out how many lives are choked by riches today. It was true even in Jesus' day; we know that Jesus presented many warnings against riches in His kingdom-minded teachings. Think about these:

- "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:23).
- "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:25).
- "Woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort" (Luke 6:24).

Think of this: If this was true in Jesus' day among people whom we would regard for the most part as being very, very poor, how much truer it is in ours! How much more choked we are with riches—we who have cars and houses and boats and bank accounts and all the modern gadgets of our materialistic culture.

There is something else to point out, too: Riches do not choke a person all at once; it is a gradual process. Like the weeds in Christ's parable, riches grow up gradually.

There is nothing wrong with riches; it's whether they are distracting us from God's work in our lives.

IV. THE FOURTH TYPE OF SOIL REPRESENTS HEARING WITH AN EXPECTANT HEART

Jesus says this: "As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields" (Matt. 13:23, ESV). God gives grace for people to hear with their hearts, but there needs to be some expectation that God might speak. Open your heart to that!

CONCLUSION

In a strange way, the reality is that the kingdom of God has come to be received by some

but rejected by others. And though we may not understand it, the kingdom will only have partial success, and this success is also partly dependent on human response and expectation.

So, the question is: Do you have an expectant heart or not? Do you dread the stranglehold that Jesus seems to put on you? Do you find yourself reluctant to pray and receive Him?

The difference is that, in the case of the fruitful soil, the kind of hearing that is described is an ongoing, warm acceptance of the Word of God in a person's life. It is like soil that is continually cultivated and nourished to encourage growth and fruitfulness.

May the Lord help us to hear His Word and understand with an expectant heart so we may bear fruit and yield an abundant harvest for His glory!

EO

General Conference Ministerial Association

HELPFUL QUOTES FROM ELLEN G. WHITE:

"Throughout the parable of the sower, Christ represents the different results of the sowing as depending upon the soil. In every case the sower and the seed are the same. Thus He teaches that if the word of God fails of accomplishing its work in our hearts and lives, the reason is to be found in ourselves. But the result is not beyond our control. True, we cannot change ourselves; but the power of choice is ours, and it rests with us to determine what we will become" (*A Call to Stand Apart*, 23).

"By the parable of the sower, Christ illustrates the things of the kingdom of heaven, and the work of the great Husbandman for His people. Like a sower in the field, He came to scatter the heavenly grain of truth. And His parable teaching itself was the seed with which the most precious truths of His grace were sown. Because of its simplicity, the parable of the sower has not been valued as it should be. From the natural seed cast into the soil, Christ desires to lead our minds to the gospel seed, the sowing of which results in bringing man back to his loyalty to God." (*Christ's Object Lessons*, 33).

PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Luke 10:27-37

The context of these verses gives us only a glimpse of this great parable that we call “The Good Samaritan,” but within these verses, we find the complex truth of loving as Jesus loved. We read that the Law said to love God and love people. The good Samaritan portrayed this love, and Jesus told a young lawyer to go and love the way that Jesus loved.

Notice three things His love portrayed and why we should love like Jesus.

I. HIS LOVE WAS DISPLAYED BY COMPASSION

Verse 33—If you read the entire passage in Luke 10, you will find that at least two men had seen the poor stranger and decided for their own reasons not to help. It is evident in the commentary of this passage that the intent is to show the weakness of these men in meeting the real meaning of the Law.

Here is a truth that we need to remember: Love is not found in religion. Religion always causes us to put religion first and live religion second. By helping the man in trouble, the good Samaritan displayed true compassion.

If this is the way Jesus loved (and it is), we must put our religion, our preferences, and our stereotypes aside and love those who are unlovely, which is loving like Jesus.

II. HIS LOVE WAS DEMONSTRATED BY CONTACT

Verse 34—If we study this parable in detail, we will see that everyone except the good Samaritan refused to touch the wounded traveler. The reason seemed legitimate: If the religious persons touched the man and he were actually dead, they would be denied service in the Temple for one year. How could they give up this important duty for a man they did not know? Yet, it was the Samaritan’s willingness to get his hands dirty that demonstrated true love and compassion.

The Bible records that Jesus was touched by the feelings of our infirmities. He was touched by the limits of the flesh. He was like us in every way, but He was without sin. Being unafraid to be touched by the sins of others allows us to minister to them in their darkest hours, and that is loving like Jesus loved.

III. HIS LOVE WAS DELIVERED WITH CARE

Verses 34, 35—In these verses, we find that

the good Samaritan took care of the wounded traveler. He bandaged the injured man’s wounds with bandages that should have been reserved for him on his travels. He poured oil and wine in the wound to sear it and treat infection that most assuredly would come. He put him on his own animal and led him to an inn to recover. He paid for his stay, gave money for a future stay, and promised to pay the balance if the money did not cover all the expenses.

When was the last time you did this? When was the last time you gave up things that were intended for yourself and gave them to someone who was “wounded and dying”? That would be loving like Jesus loved. When was the last time you put someone up in a motel or gave someone a room in your house until he or she could “recover”? When was the last time you loaned out your car and paid the expenses? When was the last time you helped someone out of the gutter? Love is delivered with care, and that is loving like Jesus.

No one wants what you have unless you think it is so valuable that you *have to share it*. Have you ever received such a large or wonderful gift that you just had to share it with someone? How about the time you received an unusual gift for service you rendered on your job? How about a bonus that was far above your expectations? Do you just keep that to yourself and not feel compelled to share it with those less fortunate? How about the time when your child was given a clean bill of health? Did you go and visit with families whose children received tragic news?

How about those who have been displaced by a hurricane, a fire, or a tornado? Do you take a few days off and help with the recovery or do you send a small gift just to soothe your conscience?

I’m not trying to put a guilt trip on you; I’m only trying to get you to think about loving as Jesus loved. His love was not in word only; His love was on display for all to see. Will we live our lives in like manner?

CONCLUSION

A group of businessmen were late getting to their plane and were rushing through the airport when they bumped into a blind girl who was selling apples to waiting passengers. The apples rolled all over the floor, but the men did not stop. They got to the gate just in time, but one of the

men, a Christian, felt terrible about what they had done to the young blind girl.

He told his friends to go on and that he would catch the next flight because he had to go back and check on the girl. They protested, but he had been so moved by their selfishness that he could not think of leaving without at least offering to help.

When he got back to the terminal, he saw the girl trying desperately to gather her apples. The young Christian businessman knelt down and told the girl that he was sorry and that he would help her pick them up. When they had picked up all the apples, he took out his wallet and paid for a few of the apples they had bruised. He apologized to the girl again and began to turn away when she asked a question he never forgot: “Sir, are you Jesus?”

Probably no one will ask us this question, but it would sure be nice if someone, somewhere, sometime would ask, “Are you a Christian?” It gets no better than that because that would be loving like Jesus.

You have His Word on it!



General Conference Ministerial Association

HELPFUL QUOTES FROM ELLEN G. WHITE:

“In the story of the good Samaritan, Christ illustrates the nature of true religion. He shows that it consists not in systems, creeds, or rites, but in the performance of loving deeds, in bringing the greatest good to others, in genuine goodness” (*The Desire of Ages*, 497).

“This question Christ answered in the parable of the good Samaritan. He showed that our neighbor does not mean merely one of the church or faith to which we belong. It has no reference to race, color, or class distinction. Our neighbor is every person who needs our help. Our neighbor is every soul who is wounded and bruised by the adversary. Our neighbor is every one who is the property of God” (*Christ’s Object Lesson*, 376).

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

Daniel 3:16-18

Daniel, whose name means “God is my judge,” was a statesman in the court of four heathen monarchs. Taken captive as a youth to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B.C., he spent the rest of his long life there as a government official and as a prophet of the true God. Jesus identified him as the prophet in Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14. Throughout his life, he was uncompromising and faithful to his God.

Because of the events recorded in chapter 2 (Daniel interprets the king’s dream), Daniel was given a place of prominence and responsibility in Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom. After the king’s death, Daniel apparently fell from favor but was recalled to interpret the writing that appeared at Belshazzar’s feast (5:13). He was made one of three presidents under Darius (6:1) and lived until the third year of Cyrus (536 B.C.). His ministry was to testify, in his personal life and in his prophecies, to the power of God.

The story in chapter 3 along with the story of Daniel in the lions’ den, is one of the favorite ones in the book of Daniel. We know about the three young Hebrews. We have heard and read about their demonstration of faith in the fiery furnace. Even though they were very young, they were believers of firm character.

If these young teenagers had this kind of character, facing what they were facing, it seems like older believers should have even better character. No doubt we need more Christians with character like that of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

What was it that gave them this kind of character? I think it was their faith in God. Christian character comes from trusting God. The three young Hebrews trusted God. This becomes obvious as we observe how they responded to the king’s insistence that they bow down to false gods.

What would you have said to the king? Let’s look at the ingredients of their godly character. If we trust in God, we will have Christian character with the same ingredients.

I. FAITH GAVE THEM CONVICTIONS (VERSE 18)

They said, “We will not . . .” A person with Christian character will have convictions based on the Word of God. There are certain things this person will not do, and he or she has already made up his or her mind about those things.

To have biblical convictions is to find out

what God’s opinion is (from the Bible) and to make His opinion our opinion. A conviction is not based on personal preference but is solidly based on what God has said in His Word and our determination to follow it.

II. FAITH GAVE THEM CONSECRATION (VERSE 17)

They said, “God whom we serve . . .” We need Christians who are totally devoted to the Lord. These Hebrew boys knew that God would deliver them out of the king’s hand, whether God delivered them out of the fire or not. Dead or alive, they would be delivered. They knew who they served. They knew who their master was, and their devotion was 100 percent for the Lord. We need Christians with this kind of consecration.

Christian character comes by trusting God. This faith in God will give you biblical consecration and devotion to God first of all.

III. FAITH GAVE THEM COURAGE (VERSES 17, 18)

They said, “If it be so, our God . . . is able to deliver . . . but if not . . . we will not serve thy gods.” These young people had some courage! They said that they believed God could deliver them if He wanted to, but if He decided not to deliver them, they were not going to serve the king’s false gods anyway.

And they knew what they were facing, for they had already been warned about the fiery furnace prepared for those who would not bow. These young men had character. I have heard people say, “Lord if you will get me out of this problem, I’ll get back in church, but if you don’t get me out of this problem, don’t expect to see me in church.” That is not real character, right?

Many Christians today say, “Lord, I’ll tithe if you will bless me.” But will they go on to say, “If you do not bless me, I’ll tithe anyway”? The last statement takes courage and character.

IV. FAITH GAVE THEM CONSISTENCY (VERSE 16)

They said, “We are not careful to answer thee in this matter.” What they were saying was, “This is always the way we answer this kind of temptation.” Do you remember in chapter 1 when they refused to defile themselves by eating the king’s meat? Their answer is still the same. They didn’t even have to think about it. They already knew what they were going to say because

their trust was in God, and they consistently put Him first.

If you will make the right decisions long enough, you won’t have to think about what to answer. I don’t have to think twice about saying “No” to going to a bar. Some people do. I don’t have to think about whether or not I am going to church. Some people do. The reason some people waver is because they haven’t made the right choices long enough. If you will trust God and His Word, you won’t have to be inconsistent in responding to temptation.

It will make the devil mad, too, but it will make the Lord happy. Just keep on choosing right. That’s Christian character. Christian character comes by trusting God. This faith in God will give you biblical consistency (1 Cor. 15:58).

V. FAITH GAVE THEM COMPANIONSHIP (VERSES 16-18)

All through the first chapters of this book, we see “they,” “them,” “we,” and “our” in relation to the young Hebrews. You will travel with the kind of people that you want to be. Charactered people attract other charactered people. The opposite is true as well.

Do you want to have friends who are honest and hardworking and loyal? Then be that kind of person. Be a person of character, and you will attract people of character. You will also choose your friends from those who are charactered people. You may not have many friends, but the friends you have will be good friends and good people. Thank the Lord for the friendship of quality people. Christian character comes by trusting God. This faith in God will give us biblical companionship.

CONCLUSION

We need Christians who have given themselves totally to the Lord and who have taken God’s wish as their command. Someone once said that “character is what you do when no one else is watching.”



General Conference Ministerial Association

Sermon Notes:

MY GOD CAN

Psalm 78:19

The Bible question written in Psalm 78:19 would not be so absurd if God had not parted the Red Sea. Think of all the mighty miracles that God worked in the land of Egypt in the process of delivering the Israelites. We must answer as Christians with a loud Amen!

I. GOD CAN SAVE THE UNSAVABLE

God saved Saul of Tarsus. “Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? Who are you, Lord? Saul asked. I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting, he replied. Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do” (Acts 9:1-6).

I seriously doubt that the early church was praying for Saul’s conversion. Is Saul of Tarsus a candidate for salvation? I don’t think so. But God has the ability to save the unsavable.

God saved the whole city of Nineveh. Do you think that Jonah prayed for the salvation of those in Nineveh? I think he thought they were unsavable; however, Jonah discovered that God is able to save the unsavable.

God saved homosexuals in Corinth. What do you think about this? “Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

II. GOD CAN RESTORE THE UNRESTORABLE

God restored David, who was guilty of the murder of Uriah and adultery with Uriah’s wife Bathsheba. Surely David couldn’t be restored in human terms (read Ps. 51).

Ellen G. White says, “Men have no power to justify the soul, to sanctify the heart. Moral dis-

ease cannot be healed save through the power of the great Physician. The highest gift of heaven, even the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, is alone able to redeem the lost. What gratitude, what love, should fill our hearts as we contemplate the love of God!”¹

God also restored Peter after his denial (Matt. 26:69-75; compare John 21:15-22). It had been settled when Peter went out and wept bitterly. What our Lord forgives, He forgets.

III. GOD CAN DO THE UNTHINKABLE

Remember Elisha and the axe-head? “As one of them was cutting down a tree, the iron axe-head fell into the water. ‘Oh no, my lord!’ he cried out. ‘It was borrowed!’ The man of God asked, ‘where did it fall?’ When he showed him the place, Elisha cut a stick and threw it there, and made the iron float” (2 Kings 6:5, 6).

These words came from the lips of a man who was trying to do good with a borrowed axe. The axe-head fell off and sunk to the bottom of the Jordan River. What do you think this man thought when Elisha put the stick into the water? What happened next was unthinkable.

God can raise the dead. Read Mark 5:35-43 and you will discover that those associated with this man and his daughter had accepted that she was dead and there was no more need for Jesus. However, that’s not what Jesus thought! Jesus as the incarnate God in a human body had no problem raising the dead. He did so because God can do the unthinkable.

God can be everywhere at once. “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care” (Matt. 10:29). It is unthinkable that anyone has the power and presence and omniscience to know when a sparrow falls to the ground anywhere on Planet Earth. However, God does.

God can recall every idle word. “But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken” (Matt. 12:36). We better watch what we say because this is going to happen because He said it would. How big is our God? Can God remember every idle word that we say, even the ones we say under our breath? Yes, He can.

IV. GOD CAN SUPPLY THE UNSUPPLIABLE

“And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given

the Macedonian churches. In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord’s people” (2 Cor. 8:1-4).

People who are involved in faith-promise missions can learn from these verses. Paul uses the words “deep poverty” to describe them. Yet, he said they gave beyond their power. It is not hard to figure out that if they were giving beyond their power, God was supplying them with money to give.

What can we learn from this? We learn that when God supplies, we can promise money that we don’t have to give to His work. Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Yes, He can.

CONCLUSION

Ellen G. White affirms: “There has never been a time when the people of God have had greater need to claim His promises than now. Let the hand of faith pass through the darkness, and grasp the arm of infinite power. While we speak of the necessity of separating from sin, remember that Christ came to our world to save sinners, and that He is able to also save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him. It is our privilege to believe that His blood is able to cleanse us from every spot and stain of sin. We must not limit the power of the Holy One of Israel. He wants us to come to Him just as we are, sinful and polluted. His blood is efficacious. I entreat you not to grieve His Spirit by continuing in sin. If you fall under temptation, do not become discouraged.”²

May the Lord bless each one of us as we believe His precious promises, accept His power to save the unsavable, restore the unrestoreable, do the unthinkable, and help us to move forward in faith!

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, May 2, 1892.

² ———, *Lift Him Up* (1988), 341.

General Conference Ministerial Association

Sermon Notes:

CHURCH MANUAL

WHY DOES THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH HAVE A CHURCH MANUAL?

God is a God of order as evidenced in His works of creation and redemption. Consequently, order belongs to the essence of His church. Order is achieved through principles and regulations that guide the church in its internal operations and in the fulfillment of its mission to the world. In order for it to be a successful ecclesiastical organization at the service of the Lord and humanity, it needs order, rule, and discipline. Scripture affirms that “all things be done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:40).

Adventist Church co-founder Ellen G. White pointed out such needs in 1875: “The church of Christ is in constant peril. Satan is seeking to destroy the people of God, and one man’s mind, one man’s judgment, is not sufficient to be trusted. Christ would have His followers brought together in church capacity, observing order, having rules and discipline, and all subject one to another, esteeming others better than themselves” (*Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 3, page 445).

But church leaders did not quickly produce a book of rules for church governance, even though the General Conference met annually in session during the church’s early years and delegates voted on matters of church order and life. Finally, in 1882, the General Conference in session voted to have prepared “Instructions to church officers, to be printed in the *Review and Herald* or in tract form” (*Review & Herald*, December 26, 1882). This revealed the growing realization that order was imperative if organization was to function effectively and that uniformity in order required its guiding principles to be put into printed form.

However, when the proposal to place the articles in permanent form as a church manual came before the 1883 General Conference session, delegates rejected the idea. They feared a manual might formalize the church and take from its pastors their individual freedom to deal with matters of order as they desired.

But this fear—doubtless reflecting the opposition that had existed 20 years before to any kind of organization—evidently soon lessened. The annual General Conference sessions continued to take actions on matters of order. Though the church officially declined to adopt a manual, leaders from time to time gathered together in book or booklet form the generally accepted rules of church life. Perhaps the most impressive was a 184-page book published in 1907 by pioneer J. N. Loughborough entitled “The Church, Its Organization, Order and Discipline,” which dealt with many of the topics now covered by this *Church Manual*.

As the church worldwide grew rapidly in the early twentieth century, it increasingly recognized the need for a manual for worldwide use by its pastors and lay members. In 1931, the General Conference Committee voted to publish a church manual. J. L. McElhany, later president of the General Conference, prepared the manuscript, which was published in 1932.

The opening sentence of the preface of that first edition observed that “it has become increasingly evident that a manual on church government is needed to set forth and preserve our denominational practices and polity.” Note the word preserve. This was no attempt to suddenly create and impose upon the Church a whole pattern of church governance. Rather it was an endeavor first to preserve all the good actions taken through the years and then to add rules required by the Church’s increasing growth and complexity.

CHURCH MANUAL CORRECTION

It has come to our attention that part of an amendment to the *Church Manual* voted in July of 2015 was unintentionally excluded from the revised *Church Manual*. The section which appears on page 127 should read: “Who May Conduct the Communion Service—The communion service is to be conducted by an ordained/*commissioned* pastor or an ordained elder. *Deacons or deaconesses are not permitted to conduct the service.*” (The words italicized were voted by the 2015 GC Session, but inadvertently omitted in the latest edition of the *Church Manual*.)



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 garciamarenkoa@gc.adventist.org.

THE POWER OF HUMILITY

Leaders need to be strong to attract followers. What preacher wouldn't like to be Peter on the Day of Pentecost? Peter's powerful sermon came from the Holy Spirit's influence. Little more than a month earlier, on his own, Peter denied that he had ever known Christ.

While self-confidence and a polished presentation are desirable leadership qualities, people may be turned off by an image that's too perfect. A teacher who appears to have it all together might intimidate learners who struggle with human imperfection. Like the apostle Paul, leaders sometimes need to expose their thorn in the flesh. Three times, Paul asked God to take his thorn away, but the Lord said, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).

The following examples may suggest ways to show strength through humility.

Admit wrongdoing. "I was a jerk last week," the preacher said as he confessed his role in a misunderstanding with his family. Later he reported that "after I apologized, the climate in the home greatly improved." His honesty and humility encouraged congregational members to be more sensitive to other members of their own families.

Sometimes the consensus or an actual vote of the church goes against the convictions of the leader. An attitude of resentment may result. The first step to restoring harmony is to correct the attitude through prayer. After all, there usually are pros and cons to every issue. Sharing the process of overcoming a negative attitude will show strength rather than weakness.

Turn a negative into a positive. Just before he was to open a new facility for people who were mentally and physically challenged, the leader had an accident in which he lost both hands. After he learned to deal with his own limitations, he said, "I can better understand others with limitations, and they understand me because now I'm one of them."

Reveal your struggle with sin. While explaining that human tendency is no excuse for sin, the pastor said, "I sometimes have the urge to wring someone's neck." He explained that a natural reaction did not allow him to act out his feelings. Instead, he made a covenant to yield his temper to the power of the Holy Spirit and challenged his listeners to do likewise. At the same time, this public confession held the preacher accountable to control his anger in private.

Stories of personal struggles will affect listeners even more if leaders explain how they got through some of the problems common in today's society. Someone struggling with substance abuse will be encouraged to learn that someone else's battle ended in victory. People facing illness are inspired by a story of how faith helped someone else deal with a similar illness. In tough economic times, it's heartening to hear how God supplied daily needs for someone else.

Allow learners to outdo the leader. A group of Christians was making a list of the ways in which Christians can emulate Jesus. After a while, a usually quiet man said, "Forgiveness." The leader exclaimed, "Would you believe, I've had all week to think on this lesson and didn't even think of something as important as forgiveness?" That one incident fostered more active participation in class discussions by learners. "This class is 400 percent more interesting when you get involved," one man said.

Avoid the dramatic. As a pastor approached another pastor's desk, he inadvertently discovered a note on the sermon outline that said, "Cry here." The incident came under



discussion in a small group. “How well do you think that went over with his listeners?”

“Well,” someone said, “my pastor cries sometimes, and it seems okay.” Someone else from the same congregation said, “Yes, but when Pastor Maxwell cries, I want to cry, too.” There is a difference between human-directed drama and a Holy Spirit-directed expression of emotion that comes from the heart.

Ask for help. “I’m scheduled for serious surgery in a few days,” the counselor told a group of young prison inmates during a Bible study. “I’d like for you guys to lay hands on me and pray that my surgery goes well.”

Afterward, one of the inmates said, “I’ve never had anyone from the outside ask me to pray before. Thank you for your confidence and respect.”

Soliciting the prayers of congregational or group members for wisdom in dealing with a situation strengthens the bond between leaders and followers. Admitting that you don’t have all the answers for a decision that affects the church is more effective than saying, “God told me it should be done this way.”

Point to Jesus. After explaining to his listeners that he was not the Christ, John the Baptist said, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). A high-profile preacher agreed to serve a church as interim pastor for only two months. During that brief time, he focused on Jesus and demonstrated His love

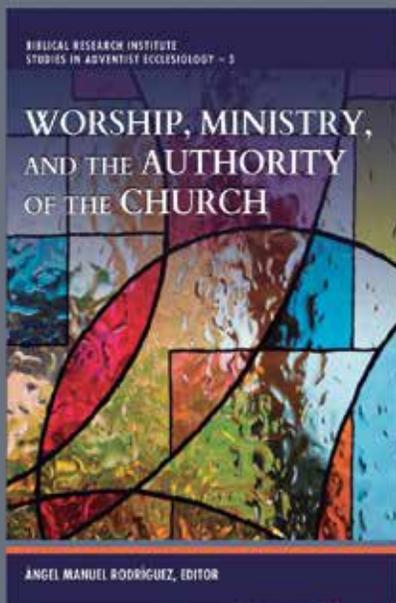
so fully that the congregation was well-prepared to work with the new senior pastor.

Develop new leaders. When the discipleship pastor resigned, one member said, “Although she was such a dynamic person, she won’t be missed as much as other pastors because she trained so many other people to help fill the gap.” Instead of demonstrating her own speaking skills, she often solicited congregational members to insert their testimony into a teaching session.

Serve others. Jesus said, “The greatest among you shall be your servant” (Matt. 23:11). The leader of a Christian writer’s conference was a skilled communicator who touched the hearts of his listeners. His strongest points, though, were made not in the classroom but in the dining hall. After quickly finishing his own meal, he became the busboy to clear the tables as others finished.

Pastors with busy schedules cannot participate in every service project, but occasional involvement in different endeavors sets a good example for others. Leaders do not need to hide their imperfections. By being vulnerable and demonstrating humility, they can build a stronger relationship with those they serve. ED

From her home in Scottsdale, Arizona, USA, Esther M. Bailey writes with a passion to share the good news of Jesus Christ to hurting people.



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SEXUAL BEHAVIOR



In His infinite love and wisdom God created mankind, both male and female, and in so doing based human society on the firm foundation of loving homes and families.

It is Satan's purpose, however, to pervert every good thing; and the perversion of the best inevitably leads to that which is worst. Under the influence of passion unrestrained by moral and religious principle, the association of the sexes has, to a deeply disturbing extent, degenerated into license and abuse which results in bondage. With the aid of many films, television, video, radio programs, and printed materials, the world is being steered on a course to new depths of shame and depravity. Not only is the basic structure of society being greatly damaged but also the breakdown of the family fosters other gross evils. The results in distorted lives of children and youth are distressing and evoke our pity, and the effects are not only disastrous but also cumulative.

These evils have become more open and constitute a serious and growing threat to the ideals and purposes of the Christian home. Sexual practices which are contrary to God's expressed will are adultery and premarital sex, as well as obsessive sexual behavior. Sexual abuse of spouses, sexual abuse of children, incest, homosexual practices (gay and lesbian), and bestiality are among the obvious perversions of God's original plan. As the intent of clear passages of Scripture (see Ex 20:14; Lev 18:22,23,29 and 20:13; Matthew 5:27,28; 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10; Rom 1:20-32) is denied and as their warnings are rejected in exchange for human opinions, much uncertainty and confusion prevail. This is what Satan desires. He has always attempted to cause people to forget that when God as Creator made Adam, He also created Eve to be Adam's female companion ("male and female he created them" Gen 1:24 NEB). In spite of the clear moral standards set forth in God's Word for relationships between man and woman, the world today is witnessing a resurgence

of the perversions and depravity that marked ancient civilizations.

The degrading results of the obsession of this age with sex and the pursuit of sensual pleasure are clearly described in the Word of God. But Christ came to destroy the works of the devil and reestablish the right relationship of human beings with each other and with their Creator. Thus, though fallen in Adam and captive to sin, those who turn to Christ in repentance receive full pardon and choose the better way, the way to complete restoration. By means of the cross, the power of the Holy Spirit in the "inner man," and the nurturing ministry of the Church, all may be freed from the grip of perversions and sinful practices.

An acceptance of God's free grace inevitably leads the individual believer to the kind of life and conduct that "will add luster to the doctrine of our God and Saviour" (Titus 2:10 NEB). It will also lead the corporate church to firm and loving discipline of the member whose conduct misrepresents the Saviour and distorts and lowers the true standards of Christian life and behavior.

The Church recognizes the penetrating truth and powerful motivations of Paul's words to Titus: "For the grace of God has dawned upon the world with healing for all mankind; and by it we are disciplined to renounce godless ways and worldly desires, and to live a life of temperance, honesty, and godliness in the present age, looking forward to the happy fulfilment of our hope when the splendor of our great God and Saviour Christ Jesus will appear. He it is who sacrificed himself for us, to set us free from all wickedness and to make us a pure people marked out for his own, eager to do good."— Titus 2:11-14, NEB. (See also 2 Peter 3:11-14.)



This statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee at the Annual Council session in Washington, D.C., USA, October 12, 1987.

PREACHING POWERFULLY: IS IT POSSIBLE? >PART 4 OF 6

Part 3 shared the story of six renowned Adventist preachers and many others who were only mentioned by name, some now passed away, some still living, but upon whom all God laid His mantle. Part 4 explains the types of sermons the preacher can choose from, plus how to organize them and record them for use, all important steps for building confidence in the pulpit.

TYPES OF SERMONS

In order to deal properly with sermon material, it's important to know and understand the various types of sermons a good preacher should deal with. There are five types of sermons.

- **Topical:** This deals with a specific subject. For example—Why a good God allows bad things to happen. What is the unpardonable sin? What happened to the Law of God at the cross? The Sabbath versus Sunday. How should a Christian dress? In this type of sermon, the preacher must bring out all the important points in the topic, but there should be a central objective.

- **Expository:** This type of sermon covers a broader theme than that of a topical sermon. It usually gives a wide spectrum of the case, but always, as should every sermon, holds a specific message for the listeners. For example—Joseph: A Humble Man For A Heavenly Mission (Matt. 1:18-25, a Christmas sermon); “This Little Light Of Mine” (Matt. 5:14-16); The Path To True Righteousness (Matt. 5:17-20); Praying Without Pretense (Matt. 6:5-8); The Pattern For Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13).

- **Textual:** This type explains all the possible meanings of one verse or verses located in either the OT or NT. For example—John 3:16 (How much God loves us); Exodus 20:15 (“Thou shall not kill”). Other verses may be used to support each idea proposed in the central verse.

- **Biographical:** This tells the story of one person, male or female, with the purpose of showing how their experience can impact us either negatively or positively. For example—Saul, who, through sliding into disobedience little by little, grieved away the Holy Spirit, ended up taking his own life, and thus lost eternal life; Peter, who through many errors, finally repented, and was used mightily of God; David, who, through two grievous sins with Bathsheba and Uriah, was punished by God, but later repented, and was ultimately called a Type of Christ.

- **First Person:** The preacher acts out the drama of his/her topic. For example—the story of Ruth; the story of the thief on the cross.

All sermons should be Christ centered—which means that in one way or another, the members can see the love of Christ for sinners at the heart of the sermon.

SERMON ORGANIZATION

Every sermon should be properly organized in order to create a natural flow of the topic so that the congregation can easily understand your ultimate point and appeal. The recommended sequence is the following:

- **Title of Sermon:** The title generally states the topic.

Examples:

Parable of the Hidden Treasure.

Voices of the Holy Spirit.

Everything We Ought to Know About the Bible.

The Transformation of Peter.

Don't make your title too long or clumsy. Keep it succinct so you can easily remember it.

- **Text:** It should be the principal text on which all the sermon material hangs (sometimes this may be a combination of texts, as in the Voices of the Holy Spirit below). You can use other supportive texts in your sermon, but this one is the most important. Examples: Parable of the Hidden Treasure: Matthew 13:44 (This will probably be the only text as it is a textual sermon). Voices of the Holy Spirit: John 16:5—14. Everything We Ought to Know About the Bible: 2 Peter 1:21. This is the closest verse to the topic, and this topic may not need a Bible verse. The Transformation of a sinner: Romans 12:1, 2.

- **Aim:** The aim tells you what you want to accomplish in the sermon in the lives of the listeners. Examples:

Parable of the Hidden Treasure: To teach the value of the Word of God.

Voices of the Holy Spirit: How the Holy Spirit changes us from sinners to saints.

Everything We Ought to Know About the Bible: To deepen our confidence in the Bible.

Five Reasons Why I'm So Serious About Attending Church Regularly: To help the members be more consistent in church attendance.

The Transformation of a sinner: To show that we as sinners can believe and accept that we can be changed.

- **Introduction:** Use some type of illustration that gets the attention of the congregation. Don't use illustrations just because you think they're really great; in other words, don't bend an illustration to force it to make your point, so that the congregation has difficulty in getting your point. Each illustration must have a direct relationship to the subject and be clearly understood.

- **Body:** This is the part where the sermon, or topic, is explained. The development of the topic should be sequentially progressive, with a natural and logical flow of ideas point by point, with one idea building on the former idea. Further illustrations can be used, but not too many or too long or your whole sermon will be just one big illustration.

Don't use too many Bible texts, and don't use too many references to Ellen White, or from any single other source. A good preacher will use Ellen White quotes when appropriate, and shouldn't be timid about it; but too many quotes may bring some of your listeners to believe that you are looking to her more than to the Bible.

- **Appeal:** This is the moment when you ask people to act upon the point of the sermon. For example, Give your heart to Jesus, rededicate your life to Jesus, start a regular prayer experience in your life, learn to ask forgiveness of others, accept and start keeping the Sabbath, make a decision for baptism. It is sometimes appropriate to have a final illustration that is connected to and will make your appeal more powerful.

OUTLINE

Below is a good format for your sermon outline:

- Title: The Pearl of Great Price.
- Text: Matthew 13:45, 46.
- Aim: To show that the pearl is the Gospel and Jesus.

He is who saves us.

Introduction: Illustration.

- Body:

I. Beginning of main point of your sermon.

A.

B.

1.

II. Illustration (Optional)

(It is easier for you to follow if you use numbers. Dots are harder to remember).

III.

IV.

V. Illustration (Often useful).

- Appeal.

SERMON FORMS

- **Manuscript form.** Everything is written out, word for word. There are two methods for using it:

a. Reading eloquently and with meaning—not in a monotonous voice and not with your eyes glued to the paper. To do this, you will need to read over it several times.

b. Memorization.

- **Manuscript Outline form.** The manuscript is turned into an outline through highlighting.

- **Extemporaneous.** You know your material so well you can preach it without notes or manuscript.

(To be continued).

ED

Lamar Phillips is a retired minister and church administrator who served for 39 years in six world divisions.

LESSONS FROM DANIEL 8

SO FAR WE HAVE ENCOUNTERED TWO LONG-TERM PROPHECIES IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL, COVERING WORLD HISTORY FROM THE TIME OF DANIEL UNTIL THE COMING OF THE FUTURE KINGDOM OF GOD (DAN 2, 7). IN DANIEL 8 AN OVERVIEW OF WORLD HISTORY IS PROVIDED AGAIN WITH ADDITIONAL DETAILS.

I. STRUCTURE OF DANIEL 8

- *Prologue* (v. 1).
- *Vision* (vs. 2–14).
 - Ram, goat, and little horn (earthly dimension—vs. 3–9).
 - Little horn (heavenly dimension—vs. 10–12).
- *Audition* (vs. 13, 14), including a time element.
- *Interpretation* (vs. 15–26).
 - Call to interpret the vision (vs. 15, 16).
 - Daniel's reaction (vs. 17, 18), including a short interpretation (v. 17b).
 - Second and more extensive interpretation (vs. 19–26).
- *Epilogue* (v. 27).

II. SURVEY OF DANIEL 8

A. Time Frame

While Daniel receives his vision during the time of the Babylonian Empire, the vision itself begins with the Medo-Persian Empire, unlike Daniel 2 and 7.

The vision extends to the time of the end (Dan 8:17, 19, 26). Therefore, it parallels Daniel 2 and 7. This is important for its interpretation.

B. Distinctive Features

- Instead of five powers, only three are mentioned.
- However, two are stated by name and at a time when they had not yet played their role as world empires. The Bible is the Word of God. Its predictions are fulfilled.
- In Daniel 8 the sanctuary is stressed, while in Daniel 7 the saints are emphasized.
- The animals of Daniel 8 are sacrificial animals, while those of Daniel 7 are predators. With this feature the sanctuary is emphasized again.

III. THE DISCUSSION OF DANIEL 8

A. Prologue

Verses 1, 2: Toward the end of Babylonian rule, Daniel receives another vision. In this vision Babylon is no longer

mentioned—obviously because it is about to be defeated.

B. Ram and He-Goat

Verses 3, 4, 20: The ram with the two different horns represents the empire Medo-Persia (see the bear that is raised up on one side in Daniel 7). This empire expands toward the west, north, and south, conquering other powers. Reaching the Aegean Sea it attempts to enter Europe.

Verses 5–8, 21, 22: The he-goat represents Greece, and the first horn is Alexander the Great. With tremendous speed (“without touching the ground”) he comes from the west and defeats the Medes and Persians (compare with the leopard with four wings in Daniel 7). However, in 323 BC, at the age of thirty-three and at the peak of his power and success, Alexander died. His generals divided the empire among themselves (see the four heads of the leopard). The four kings were Ptolemy, Cassander, Lysimachus, and Seleucus.

C. The Little Horn

1. Information about the Little Horn

Verse 9–12, 23–25:

- (1) It comes out of one of the winds.
- (2) In spite of small beginnings, it grows exceedingly great.
- (3) It grows toward the south, the east, and the beautiful land.
- (4) It grows to the host of heaven.
- (5) It throws some of the host of heaven and the stars to the earth and tramples on them.
- (6) It grows up to the Prince of the host.
- (7) It takes the daily from Him.
- (8) It overthrows His sanctuary.
- (9) It casts the truth to the ground.
- (10) It is broken without human hand.

2. Parallels with the Little Horn of Daniel 7

- The enormous growth (v. 2).
- War against the saints (vs. 4, 5).
- Blasphemy (vs. 6–8).
- Suppression of truth (v. 9).
- Its destruction (v. 10).

3. Differences between the Two Little Horns

The little horn of Daniel 8 appears after Greece, not after Rome as does the little horn of Daniel 7. Additionally, the little horn of Daniel 8 comes out of one of the winds, not out of a beast.

4. Interpretation

- (1) The Hebrew grammar in Daniel 8:8b–9 supports the coming of the little horn out of one of the points of the compass.
- (2) This little horn power becomes a new world empire. The wording of the little horn in Daniel 7 and 8 is not identical (see also Aramaic versus Hebrew). The “horn from littleness” in Daniel 8 represents both the pagan and the papal Rome. Verse 9 dealing with its earthly dimension points more to the pagan Rome, while the heavenly dimension of verses 10–14 refers to the papal Rome.
- (3) The beautiful land is most likely Palestine. Rome conquered it as well as Egypt in the south and Syria in the east, becoming the new world empire.
- (4) According to the interpretation provided in verse 24, the host of heaven is the true people of God. Stars may point to their leaders and teachers (Dan 12:3).
- (5) The people of God are being persecuted (see the persecutions of Christians through the Roman Empire and later the Inquisition of the Roman Church).
- (6) The Prince of the host of God is Jesus Christ. The little horn rebels against Him. Rome crucified Jesus. In the Roman Church the preeminence and supremacy of Jesus is limited (due to the worship of Mary and the supposed intercession of the saints).
- (7) In the Old Testament sanctuary system there existed a daily ministry and a yearly ministry. This dual ministry is a type and foreshadowing of the daily and “yearly” ministry of Jesus as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. The daily ministry of Jesus is being undermined through additional mediators that the Bible does not know, such as the saints, Mary, priests, and the pope. It is undermined through unbiblical doctrines, such as the confession of sins to a priest and absolution granted by him, the mass as a non-bloody sacrifice, etc.
- (8) The heavenly sanctuary, Christ’s ministry there, and God’s authority are negatively affected through papal Rome.
- (9) False teachings are introduced. Scripture is supplemented and sometimes, if not oftentimes, eclipsed by the authority of tradition.
- (10) In Daniel 2 the stone comes without involvement of human hands and destroys all powers. So also the little horn will be destroyed.

D. The Time Element

Verses 13, 14, 26: The entire vision, which begins in Medo-Persian time (vs. 2, 3) and lasts till the end, includes

2,300 evenings and mornings. These 2,300 evenings and mornings are 2,300 years.

Daniel does not receive further information and therefore does not understand the time element. After the 2,300 years the heavenly sanctuary will be cleansed. From verse 10 onward the chapter deals with the heavenly dimension. Also, after AD 70 the earthly sanctuary no longer existed. The cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary corresponds with the Day of Atonement of the earthly sanctuary (verbal and thematic parallels between Daniel 8 and Leviticus 16). The sanctuary and God’s people are finally freed from sin; at the same time the Day of Atonement is a period of judgment (see Lev 16 and Dan 7). After the end of the 2,300 years begins the second phase of Jesus’ ministry as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. After its completion He will come again and erect His kingdom of glory.

However, based on Daniel 8 we are not able to date the 2,300 years. Daniel 9 will furnish more information. In any case: We live in the last time of earth’s history, and Jesus is involved in a special ministry on our behalf. Soon he will come again. We want to be ready.

E. Daniel’s Reaction

Verse 27: Although Daniel did not completely understand what was revealed to him, nevertheless he transmitted it faithfully. God again has allowed humans to look behind the scenes. His Word is being fulfilled exactly.

IV. APPLICATION

- Among other things, Daniel 8 is dealing with truth. What is truth? In the New Testament it is Scripture and the teaching contained in it (John 17:17). It is also Jesus (John 14:6). To be in the truth means to be in Jesus and agree with His Word and His teachings. This truth is being attacked today. Many people are not interested in God. They fabricate their own theories and religions, but are without orientation because they have become their own yardsticks. But true Christians have a sure foundation and grow in Christ.
- The sanctuary has to do with God’s presence among His people. It is also the place from which judgment and salvation come. God does not allow for His plan of salvation to be destroyed, nor does He permit that His way of obtaining salvation be replaced by another system. It is still best to follow Him instead of a man-made system.
- While we live in the last period of earth’s history when error increases and various kinds of problems become insurmountable, we look forward to Christ’s second coming and prepare for it. 

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THE WORSHIP EXPERIENCE WE LONG FOR: THE HOW OF WORSHIP

Have you ever longed for meaningful worship? In the previous article of this series, we discovered that God's identity as the powerful and good God is the reason—the why—of worship. Now that we know the why behind our worship, it's time to answer the question of how. Amidst all our discussions of worship, we often center on the style of worship. The intent of this article is to describe how to behave in a worshipful way, whether in a personal or corporate setting, given insights gleaned from Psalm 100.

WORSHIP THE LORD WITH JOY

Joy should be a significant part of how we worship. "Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs" (Ps. 100:1, 2).¹

In Hebrew, the word translated as "gladness" or "joy"² means "a glad shout, such as loyal subjects might utter when the king appears among them, the emphasis being on the gladness."³ For Christians, this is a call to exuberance because the King of kings, our Creator, put infinite value on our lives by laying down His life on the cross. When we have our Sabbaths, our convocations, and our festivals, we ought to come with gladness, not drudgery. We are coming face-to-face with the Lord and basking in His presence.

We must not confuse joy with happiness. Happiness is a subjective emotion dependent on circumstances. There are times in our lives when we can and should be sad, but we can still have joy in those moments (James 1:2). Joy is a state of mind produced by the Holy Spirit dwelling within us and reminding us that ultimately, we have the victory in Christ. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and

self-control" (Gal. 5:22, 23). Our worship is an outpouring of that joy. "Rejoice in the Lord always, I will say it again, rejoice" (Phil. 4:4).

WORSHIP THE LORD WITH ENTHUSIASM

Enthusiasm is another requisite for worship. Psalm 100:1 says, "Shout for joy." "Shout" is the same word used for a battle cry in Joshua 6:10. The people were told to "shout" victoriously after marching around Jericho. When we worship God, we're called to do it enthusiastically. But some may wonder, "Doesn't reverence require silence?"

A choir anthem says, "The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him" (Hab. 2:20).⁴ A study of this passage shows that God is not talking to worshippers but to an enemy nation receiving judgment. A similar usage is reflected in the use of silence in the book of Psalms.

I once went through the psalms and looked at all the references to silence, and almost every one was negative.⁵ For example, Psalm 115:17, 18 says, "It is not the dead who praise the Lord, those who go down to silence; it is we who extol the Lord . . ." (See also Ps. 31:17 and 30:12).

Sometimes we need to be silent to listen and decide for Christ. Silence allows us to reflect on what we've read and learned (Ps. 4:4), but the attitude should still be one of enthusiasm.

But what about reverence? Ellen G. White and the Scriptures inform us that our worship time should be reverent, but that doesn't mean quiet; rather, it means full of awe and respect for God (Gen. 31:31; 2 Kings 17:34; Matt. 10:28; Acts 9:31).⁶ This reverence should saturate all our lives. In the Old Testament, reverence is roughly synonymous with fearing God and obeying His commands (Lev. 19:14; 25:17; Deut. 25:18).⁷ Biblical reverence is an attitude that affects our character and actions. Thus, this fear and reverence should lead to greater enthusiasm in our praise, fellowship, and offerings.

WORSHIP THE LORD WITH TRUE THANKSGIVING

One manifestation of enthusiasm is thanksgiving. Psalm 100:4 says, "Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name." This is not just a simple "thank you." The word for thanksgiving means to give public acknowledgment.⁸

Let's suppose you prayed, sent out resumes, had interviews, and finally landed a job. You know you couldn't have done it without God, so you thank Him in your prayers.



That's great, but you haven't given true thanksgiving. Biblical thanksgiving occurs when you share about this blessing in your faith community and with others. Thanksgiving is a testimony about the power of God in your life.

Do you have anything to be thankful for? One man answered this question with these words: "Think of what He has done for you, in you, with you, and promised to you." If we come with this kind of attitude, our individual and corporate worship will improve dramatically.

HOW DO WE WORSHIP?

According to Psalm 100, the how of worship is deep joy, enthusiasm, and thankfulness. Whenever we worship, we can do so with passionate exuberance, expressing to our communities our thankfulness to God for what He has done for, in, and around us. This psalm has provided us with a wonderful framework for our practice of worship, but to get the final ingredient for this divine recipe, our third and final article will turn to Psalm 103 and explore the topic of praise. 

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Bible quotations come from the New International Version.

² Per www.blueletterbible.com, the Hebrew word *simchah* occurs 94 times in 89 verses in the Old Testament. In the King James Version, it is translated as "joy" 44 times and as "gladness" 31 times.

³ James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1971), 811.

⁴ The Hebrew word *hacah*, translated here as "silent," is only used 8 times in the Old Testament (Num. 13:30, Judges 3:19, Neh. 8:11, Amos 6:10, 8:3, Hab. 2:20, Zeph. 1:7; Zech. 2:13). This word carries the meaning of a command for silence, often as a means of correction. The context of Habakkuk 2 is very clear that it is about judgment on the nations. After giving five woes (2:6, 9, 12, 15, 19), the command is given to the nations to be quiet in order to receive God's judgment.

⁵ Note that Psalm 46:10 uses the word *raphah*, which deals with "relaxing" or "letting drop." Therefore, "be still" is not about sound but about a state of mind. Psalm 131:2 contains the word *damam* for "quieting myself," which can mean silence, but, based on the context of a weaned child, deals with quieting one's mind to remove anxiety by putting hope in the Lord (see verse 3). Some examples are Psalm 8:2; 39:1-2, 9; 50:3, 21; 63:11; 107:42. (Ps. 28:1; 35:22; 39:12; 83:1; and 109:1 deal with a desire of man for God not to be silent.)

⁶ In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word *yare'* and its derivatives (see *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, [TWOT], 907, 908) are usually translated as "fear," with connotations of being afraid, respectful, or in awe. In the New Testament and the LXX, the Greek word *phobos* and its derivatives (see W. Mundle, "Fear, Awe" in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 1, Colin Brown, editor [Grand Rapids: MI, Regency Reference Library, 1975], 621-624) mean terror, fear, alarm, fright, reverence, respect, and awe. For both the Hebrew and Greek, it is context which determines the meaning.

⁷ TWOT, 907.

⁸ TWOT, 847b.

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GLOBAL HEALTH ISSUES: CANCER

It seems a week does not go by without us learning of someone we know who lost their battle with Cancer. Cancer is the second leading cause of death globally and in some countries it is now number one. Cancer deaths are on the rise. According to a report, 25% of all deaths can be attributed to Cancer, an increase of 15% since 1960.¹ Mexico, Turkey, Finland, Switzerland and Japan have the lowest mortality rates from cancer, while Hungary, Slovenia, the Slovak Republic and Denmark bear the highest rates.²

Due to this rise in rates, there is an intentional effort to increase cancer screenings and to reduce the risk for this deadly disease. The #3 United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) is to improve health by strengthening “the capacity of all countries, in particular developing countries, for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks.”³ They hope that by 2030 they will “reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases [like cancer] through prevention and treatment.”⁴ How would they do it? Understanding the related causes or risk factors helps.

There are more than 100 different kinds of cancer, usually named after organs in which it starts. Among those risk factors, some we can change, but some we cannot.

Non-modifiable risks we cannot change are:

- **Age.** As one gets older the risk increases.
- **Genetics.** There are cancer-specific genes.
- **Gender.** Males have higher rates than females in all countries, but especially in South Korea, Turkey, Estonia, Spain and Portugal (nearly twice as much in males than females).

The good news is that only 5-10% of all cancers come from non-modifiable risks. About 90-95% are related to modifiable risks⁵ which we can change, such as:

- **Smoking**
- **Obesity**
- **Lack of exercise**
- **Excess sun exposure**
- **Environmental exposures**

Additional modifiable risk factors related to diet have been documented. The World Health Organization (WHO) has made it clear that red meat is linked to some forms of cancer. The Adventist Health study results support that, pointing to the fact that choosing a plant-based diet over animal foods lowers cancer risk overall. Hence, a lifestyle with increased physical activity, high intake of fruits, vegetables,

whole grains, nuts and avoidance of meat, plus maintaining a healthy weight and having careful sun exposure (using sunscreen when UV rays pose dangerous levels), are all critical in reducing cancer risk.

February 4th has been set aside by the UN and the WHO as *World Cancer Day every year*.⁶ It gives us an opportunity to meet a global need. As an elder and church leader you can do much to assist in reducing cancer mortality. We are reminded, “Let them find out what constitutes true health reform and teach its principles, both by precept and by a quiet, consistent example.”⁷ So first, be a role model and ask God for power to live this preventive lifestyle described above.

Secondly, take the opportunity to educate members and the community (*World Cancer Day* is a perfect opportunity). As a health-hope-wholeness center, churches can teach the importance of preventive lifestyles and encourage people to have routine cancer screenings (prostate and colorectal for males, breast and ovarian for women). We can also help people access treatment and care as needed.

Reducing the risk of major killers like cancer is part of God’s plan for us to experience a full life.⁸ For church members, it means living longer, healthier, and more productive lives in service to others. For the church, becoming involved in partnerships in the community aiming at cancer reduction can open up many doors for ministry and build bridges to share the hope that is in us. That gives us an opportunity to connect people with the Life Giver. Then, “as the sick is brought into touch with the Life giver, their faculties of mind and body, will be renewed.”⁹

¹ OECD (2013), *Cancer Care: Assuring Quality to Improve Survival*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264181052-en>

² OECD (2015), *Health at a Glance 2015: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/health_glance-2015-en

³ <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/health/>

⁴ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg3>

⁵ Anand, P. et al. (2008), “Cancer is a Preventable Disease that Requires Major Lifestyle Changes,” *Pharmaceutical Research*, Vol. 25, No. 9, pp. 2097-2116

⁶ <http://www.worldcancerday.org/>

⁷ White, E. G., *Counsels on Health*, 449.

⁸ *Bible*, John 10:10 NIV

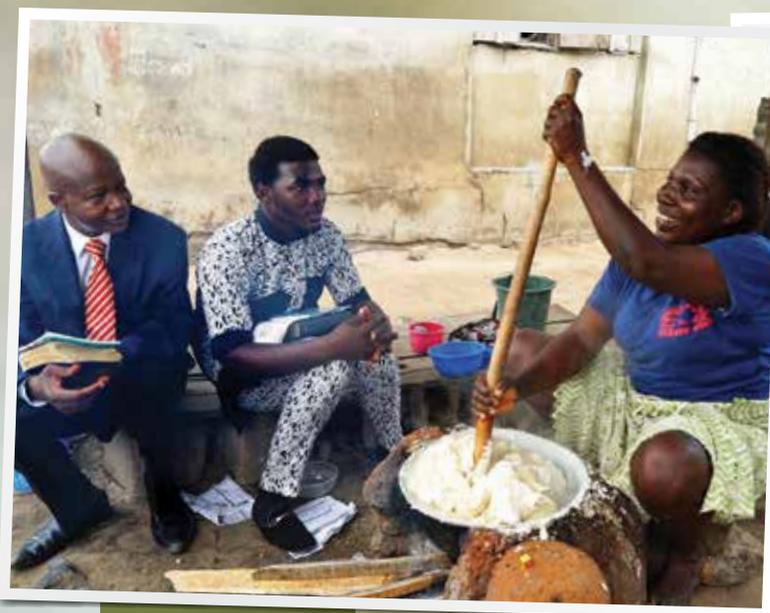
⁹ White, E. G., *Medical Ministry*, 262.



Katia Reinert is associate director of the Health Ministries Department for the General Conference.

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Nigeria

61,684,000*
Unreached population

95*
Unreached people groups

Taiwo, left, and Onifade, center, work in southwest Nigeria. They are helping a small Adventist congregation grow. Each day they visit people to ask about their needs, pray with them, and if possible, study the Bible together.

"There is such great need in this city," says Onifade. "It's almost overwhelming. We don't have many resources, but we do what we can to help meet the people's physical and spiritual needs. We want them to know that we love them."

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*from JoshuaProject.net



Indonesia

163,676,000*
Unreached population

222*
Unreached people groups

When Roy, a Global Mission pioneer, accepted an assignment in the mountains of Indonesia, his first task was to register at the government office—this two-day walk took him over a 14,000-ft mountain. He tried to find an easier way back to his village, but he finally decided to walk. Not even a day later, he walked five hours to a funeral in a nearby village.

These long treks are tiring, but Roy feels blessed to be able to minister to the nearby villagers. Nearly 30 people have expressed interest in being baptized, and so far, 20 have been baptized. Please pray for strength for Roy and other Global Mission pioneers.



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